

[Embargoed till Thursday, 21 February 2019, 6.55 pm]

Media Release



20 February 2019

News Editor

HOLY SMOKE & INCENSE: THE BURNING MATTER

*Interfaith discussion on smoke, scents and sensibility
builds on experiential journey by youth*

During the annual Mid-Season Festival (or more popularly known as Hungry Ghost Festival), Taoists and Chinese in Singapore embrace and enliven the occasion through the burning of joss sticks and papers. While most other communities brace themselves for the resulting smoke and dust released into the living environment across the festival period, burning is not a practice only unique to Taoism or traditional Chinese belief. From Europe to Asia and across the Pacific, subscribers of varying faiths globally believe that incense fumes mark prayer, respect or sacrifice to the heavens, deities or ancestors.

2 As part of its SGSecure efforts under the South West Future Plan, the South West Community Development Council (CDC) will be holding its second Common Senses for Common Spaces (CSCS) @ South West interfaith dialogue session to deepen mutual understanding, respect and appreciation, focusing on an interesting topic. **Common Senses for Common Spaces @ South West - 'Holy Smoke & Incense'** aims to explore the senses and spirituality of incense burning and offerings across communities.

3 Three distinguished and senior faith and community leaders of different denominations – **Hinduism, Taoism** and **Judaism**, will share on their respective religion's use of fumes and perfumery, a shared practice held by many faiths. This would be followed by a free-flowing, frank yet friendly floor discussion. Please refer below for the speakers' profiles.

4 For the first time, a learning journey was organised culminating to the interfaith dialogue to deepen appreciation and understanding through shared experience. The Learning Journey was organised for youth in the South West District and facilitated by OnePeople.SG to two sites of worship on 16 February 2019 – the Sri Thendayuthapani Temple and Singapore Yu Huang Gong. Over 20 youth signed up and took part in the visit to these two sites of worship, immersing themselves in the sights and sounds of the respective cultures and engaging in conversations with the community stakeholders.

5 **Ms Low Yen Ling**, Mayor of South West District, will be gracing the interfaith dialogue, comprising faith, community and youth leaders and activists. Mayor Low says, "The series of discussions aim to provide a safe platform for the community to voice their questions about various faiths and their practices, for instance, the burning of incense and offerings. The immersive learning journey for youths gives them a rare chance of experiencing different places of worship on-site, and the opportunity to engage with religious leaders. With deeper mutual understanding of each other's beliefs, we are strengthening our interfaith ties that will help us withstand threats to our religious harmony that could emerge from time to time."

6 Common Senses for Common Spaces @ South West is part of the nationwide CSCS interfaith dialogue series, which seeks to identify, emphasise and amplify commonalities across faiths. The CSCS Nationwide is jointly driven by the five Community Development Councils with the support of the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle (IRCC) and driven by WISE SG.

Speakers	Faith	Designation
Mr. T Raja Segar	Hinda	CEO, Hindu Endowments Board
Master Dean Wang	Taoist	Manager, Taoist Federation (Singapore)
Rabbi Mordechai Abergel	Jew	Chief Rabbi of Singapore

7 Details of the event are as follows:

Event : **Common Senses for Common Spaces @ South West – Holy Smoke & Incense**

Date : Thursday, 21 February 2019

Time : 5.30 pm to 8.30 pm (Media to arrive at 6.30 pm)

Venue : JEM Office Tower

Level 6 Auditorium

52 Jurong Gateway Road, S609690

Guest of : Ms Low Yen Ling

Honour Mayor of South West District

8 We would like to invite your reporter and photographer/TV crew to **Common Senses for Common Spaces @ South West – Holy Smoke & Incense**. Interviews can be arranged upon request. Please contact our media liaison officer for queries. We look forward to receiving you and your crew/photographer.

Media Liaison Officers

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Programme

pm

- 5.30 Registration & Dinner
- 6.30 Arrival of Guest of Honour, Mayor Low Yen Ling
- 6.40 Opening Video
- 6.50 Learning Journey Highlights Video
- 6.55 Welcome Address by Mayor Low
- 7.00 Panel Presentation
- 7.30 Floor Discussion
- 8.15 Closing Summary
- 8.20 Presentation of Tokens of Appreciation
- Close

About the South West Community Development Council (CDC)

The South West Community Development Council (CDC) was formed on 24 November 2001, with the mission to Assist the Needy, Bond the People and Connect the Community.

Through local help programmes, the South West CDC provides assistance to help the less fortunate in our community. The South West CDC also organises projects and programmes to promote community bonding and social cohesion. The South West CDC adopts the "Many Helping Hands" approach to encourage community ownership among residents, community partners and corporations to realise its vision of "Owning Your Community".



Mr T Raja Segar

Mr Raja Segar is Chief Executive Officer of the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB). A trained teacher, he started his career as an Economics teacher in a government school, before moving on to hold important positions at numerous public and private institutions. He holds a Masters Degree in Finance from RMIT, a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics from NUS, and a Diploma in Education from NTU. His interests include IT, philosophy, performing arts, and education management.



Rabbi Mordechai Abergel

Rabbi Mordechai Abergel is the Chief Rabbi of Singapore and currently the principal of the Talmud Torah Hebrew School. Rabbi Abergel received his smicha at the Tomchei Tmimim Rabbinical Seminary in Brooklyn, New York. He represents the Singapore Jewish Community in many official capacities and is a Council Member of the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO). The Rabbi lectures widely on Judaism in Singapore, which is essential in providing exposure and understanding of the Jewish views towards issues facing the world today. He speaks Hebrew, English, Yiddish, French and Arabic.



Master Dean Wang Koon Lee

Master Dean Wang is completing his PhD studies in Chinese religion at the National University of Singapore. He has presented papers in several local and international conferences, covering various topics on Taoism. Master Wang was ordained in 2018 as a Taoist priest of the Orthodox Unity Sect at the Celestial Master Bureau in Jiangxi, China. He joined the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO) in the same year and was elected as a Council Member. He serves the Taoist Federation (Singapore) as its Manager and is the Secretary General of the Youth Group.