

## The Situation of Buddhism In Da Nang From 1997 To The Present Day



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**ABSTRACT:** This article systematically examines the situation of Buddhism in Da Nang from 1997 to the present in various aspects: organizational structure, places of worship, the monastic and follower community, as well as ritual activities, festivals, activities of associations and groups, and charitable work. The author combines two main research methods of Historical Science (the historical method and the logical method) to exploit and use various sources of information. Additionally, the analysis and synthesis methods are employed to highlight the current status and dynamic factors of Buddhist activities in Da Nang. To complete the research objectives of the article, the author utilizes primary sources, including official documents, reports, articles, etc., from relevant agencies and scholars studying Buddhism in Da Nang since 1997. These primary sources are essential for the author to gain a comprehensive overview of the situation of Buddhism in Da Nang from 1997 to the present. Based on this foundation, the author will analyze and clarify the development of Buddhism in Da Nang during this period, contributing to the study of Buddhism in Da Nang specifically and Vietnamese Buddhism in general.

**KEYWORDS:** Buddhism, Danang, places of worship, monks and nuns, Buddhist followers.

### INTRODUCTION

Da Nang is a city undergoing comprehensive development. Beyond economic, cultural, and social factors, religion also receives attention from the city government. Currently, almost all major religions in Vietnam are present in Da Nang. Buddhism, which emerged around the 14th century, is the largest religious organization in the city, comprising three branches: Mahayana, Theravada, and the Vietnamese Medicant Sect. Notably, in 1997, Quang Nam-Da Nang province was divided into two administrative units: Da Nang, a centrally-governed city, and Quang Nam province. From 1997 to the present, Buddhism has always accompanied the city's residents in the cause of building and developing the city. It has achieved relatively comprehensive development in terms of organizational structure, places of worship, the monastic and follower community, as well as ritual activities, festivals, association activities, and charitable work. Understanding the situation of Buddhism in Da Nang from 1997 to the present will help portray an overall picture of the development of Buddhism in the city, contribute to the study of Buddhism in Da Nang specifically and Vietnamese Buddhism in general, and further enhance the role of Buddhism in accompanying the nation.

### ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

On April 19-20, 1997, during the first Congress of the Buddhist Representative Assembly of Da Nang city, the Congress appointed Most Venerable Thich Quang The as the Head of the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang from 1997 to 2005. Over the past 20 years, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha of Da Nang city has gradually perfected its organizational structure from the city level to the district level and has had many favorable conditions in Buddhist activities. Since 1997, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang city has undergone six congress terms, which are organized every five years. The organizational structure of the Sangha has changed according to the regulations adjusted in the Charter of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha through each term.

**Table 1: The numbers of members in Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee in the terms 1997-2027**

	1997-2002	2002-2007	2007-2012	2012-2017	2017-2022	2022-2027
Patronage Committee	-	-	3	4	2	7
Executive Committee	25	23	46	53	53	67

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Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee

After six congress terms, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang has increasingly perfected its organizational structure, with the scale of its committees growing stronger and the number of members continuously increasing. With a solid organizational system, the Executive Committee of the municipal Sangha has been and will continue to effectively carry out Buddhist activities and tasks through each period, contributing to the overall development of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha as well as the development of Da Nang city. Along with the Executive Committee, several specialized Committees have their own functions and duties, playing a significant role in the Buddhist activities of the municipal Sangha.

First of them is the Committee of Sangha Affairs. Since its operation from 1997 to the present, the Sangha Affairs of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang has had 731 monks and nuns practicing and studying at various temples in the city. Among them, there are 440 monks and 291 nuns [8]. Additionally, the number of ordained members of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang has also changed during this period (See Table 2).

**Table 2: The numbers of ordained members in Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang in 2021**

No	Region	MOST VENERABLE	HONOR VENERABLE	CHIEF OF BUDDHIST NUNS	BUDDHIST NUNS
01	Hải Châu	4	6	3	1
02	Thanh Khê	3	2	1	1
03	Sơn Trà	1	2	1	1
04	Liên Chiểu	1	1	1	5
05	Ngũ Hành Sơn	2	4	0	3
06	Cẩm Lệ	2	0	1	0
07	Hòa Vang	0	0	1	1
<b>SUM</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>

Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee in Danang

Among them, 2 members participate in the Patronage Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha (GHPGVN), and 5 members participate in the Executive Council.

The Phuoc Hue Commandment Altar in 1996 was organized by Most Venerable Thich Quang The as the Ceremony Master.

The Tri Thu Commandment Altar in 2008 was organized by Most Venerable Thich Vien Minh as the Ceremony Master.

The Phuoc Tri Commandment Altar in 2013 was organized by Most Venerable Thich Thien Duyen as the Ceremony Master.

The Ton Thang Commandment Altar in 2018 was organized by Most Venerable Thich Thien Duyen as the Ceremony Master.

Second is the Committee on Education for Monks and Nuns (at present the Committee on Buddhist Education). In 1997, after the provincial and municipal split, the Da Nang city People's Committee issued Decision No. 3595/QĐ-UB on September 25, 1997, approving the establishment of the School of Fundamental Buddhist Studies with its own seal for transactions, as proposed by the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang city.

The Standing Committee of the Executive Council of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha issued Official Letter No. 062/CV-HĐTS on March 16, 2000, informing the Executive Committees of provinces and cities to uniformly rename "School of Fundamental Buddhist Studies" to " College for Buddhist Studies". The name "Da Nang College for Buddhist Studies" began from that point, and the Da Nang College for Buddhist Studies is an educational institution of the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang.

To train monks and nuns with cultural qualifications to undertake Buddhist activities and to enhance Buddhist knowledge to guide the company of disciples and lead to the next generations, the department has launched the following courses:

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**Table 3: Training Courses at the Da Nang College for Buddhist Studies**

<b>Intermediate Buddhist Studies Program for Monastics (referred to as Monk and Nun Students)</b>		
1	Academic Year I (1992-1996)	90 Monk and Nun students graduated
2	Academic Year II (1996-2000)	125 Monk and Nun students graduated
3	Academic Year III (2000-2004)	145 Monk and Nun students graduated
4	Academic Year IV (2004-2008)	140 Monk and Nun students graduated
5	Academic Year V (2008-2012)	130 Monk and Nun students graduated
6	Academic Year VI (2012-2016)	179 Monk and Nun students graduated
7	Academic Year VII (2016-2019)	170 Monk and Nun students graduated
8	Academic Year VIII (2019-2022)	165 Monk and Nun students in training
<b>Primary Buddhist Studies Program for New Monastics</b>		
1	Academic Year I (2015-2016)	96 Monk and Nun students received certificates
2	Academic Year II (2016-2019)	70 Monk and Nun students received certificates
3	Academic Year III (2019-2022)	75 Monk and Nun students in training
<b>Intermediate Buddhist Studies Program for laypeople</b>		
1	Academic Year I (2012-2015)	70 laypeople students graduated
2	Academic Year II (2016-2019)	76 laypeople students graduated
3	Academic Year III (2019-2022)	95 laypeople students graduated in training

**Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee**

Over nearly 30 years of education, the Da Nang College for Buddhist Studies has successfully trained 8 cohorts, with more than 1000 monk and nun students graduating from the Intermediate Buddhist Studies program. This is a significant achievement in the journey of building a stronger Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.

### **Number of dignitaries, followers, and places of worship**

Up to now, almost all major religions in Vietnam have been present in Da Nang. There are a total of 11 religious organizations belonging to 6 different religions. Among them, Buddhism is the largest religious organization in Da Nang city, comprising three sects: Mahayana, Theravada, and Vietnamese Medicant Sect, with over 120,790 followers and 699 dignitaries actively practicing.

Along with this, the number of monasteries in Da Nang city is also increasing. The number of monasteries in the city is detailed in the following table:

**Table 4: The number of monasteries in Danang (2021)**

No	Region	Number of monasteries
1	Hải châu	25
2	Thanh Khê	15
3	Sơn Trà	15
4	Liên Chiểu	12
5	Ngũ Hành Sơn	23
6	Cẩm Lệ	8
7	Huyện Hoà Vang	18

**Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee**

According to the statistics from Table 3, it can be seen that there are currently 116 monasteries in Da Nang city, distributed across all districts of the city. As of now, most of them have been renovated and grandly reconstructed, maintaining a solemn appearance.

### **Buddhist Practitioner community**

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Buddhists are individuals who have undergone the ceremony of taking refuge in the Tripple Jewels (The Buddha, The Dharma and The Sangha), accepting the Three Jewels as their masters. Among them, the Buddhist practitioners include Buddhist Laypeople and Buddhist Families.

During the period from 2012 to 2017, there were 125 units across the entire city, with a total of 14,620 members. The details are presented in the following table:

**Table 5: The number of buddhist groups và Buddhist followers in Danang (2012-2017)**

Duration of time	2012-2017
No of Buddhist temples	125
<i>No of Buddhist followers</i>	<b>14,620</b>
Bát Quan Trai Buddhist Group	6,715
Niệm Phật Buddhist Group	2,520
Pháp Hoa Buddhist Group	3,135
Một ngày An Lạc Buddhist Group	2,050
Tu tập Thiền Định Buddhist Group	70
Buddhist teachings class	130

**Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committe**

Additionally, the number of registered Buddhist Families is 63. Most of these units are well-organized with a large number of members. However, a few units are only minimally active and have not yet established a consistent routine, with limited membership, leading to a temporary suspension of activities.

A total of 57 out of 63 Buddhist Families are currently active in the districts, as detailed in the following table:

**Table 6: The number of Buddhist Families in Danang**

STT	Region	Số lượng GDPT	Ghi chú
1	Hải Châu District	11 units	2 units temporarily suspended
2	Thanh Khê District	12 units	
3	Son Trà District	11 units	
4	Liên Chiểu District	8 units	1 unit temporarily suspended
5	Ngũ Hành Sơn District	5 units	2 units temporarily suspended
6	Cẩm Lệ District	6 units	
7	Hòa Vang District	10 units	1 unit temporarily suspended

**Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee**

The units that have temporarily suspended activities include Hải Lạc and Hòa Tiên (Hải Châu district); Đà Sơn (Liên Chiểu district); Linh Ứng and Thái Bình (Ngũ Hành Sơn district); and Nam Sơn (Hòa Vang district).

In addition to the Buddhist laypeople and Buddhist families, the number of leaders and members within the Buddhist families in Da Nang city has significantly increased in recent years. These members participate in studying the Dharma, enhancing their knowledge, refining their moral qualities, and improving their overall understanding. Besides learning and training in meditation retreats, the members also engage in various social activities annually, such as charitable work in remote areas, etc, which have benefited the community.

### The ceremonial and festival activities

Similar to the rest of the country, in Da Nang city, through ceremonial and ritual activities, the majority of ordinary people have engaged with Buddhism. They do not come to learn the teachings as a means of spiritual practice but rather to perform rituals to satisfy their religious needs.

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**Table 7. Important Buddhist Festivals in Vietnam**

STT	Important Festivals	Date [in Lunar Year]
1	Ullambana Festival <sup>1</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup> full moon
2	The Buddha's Birthday [Vesak] Commemoration	4 <sup>th</sup> full moon
3	Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival	19 <sup>th</sup> day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> , 6 <sup>th</sup> , and 9 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
4	The Buddha Joining the Monkhood Commemoration	8 <sup>th</sup> day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> month on Lunar Year
5	Maitreya Buddha Festival	1 <sup>st</sup> day of the Lunar New Year
6	The Buddha Ascending to the Nirvana Commemoration	2 <sup>nd</sup> full moon
7	Samantabhadra Buddha Festival	21 <sup>th</sup> day of 2 <sup>nd</sup> month on Lunar Year
8	Manjushri Buddha Festival	4 <sup>th</sup> day of 4 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
9	Cundi Buddha Festival	16 <sup>th</sup> day of 3 <sup>rd</sup> month on Lunar Year
10	Mahasthamaprapta Buddha Festival	13 <sup>th</sup> day of 7 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
11	Kṣitigarbha Buddha Festival	30 <sup>th</sup> day of 7 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
12	Bhaisajyaguru Buddha Festival	30 <sup>th</sup> day of 9 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
13	Amitābha Buddha Festival	17 <sup>th</sup> day of 11 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year
14	Buddha's Enlightenment Commemoration	8 <sup>th</sup> day of 12 <sup>th</sup> month on Lunar Year

The major Buddhist festivals in Da Nang city are: *Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival* [aka Lễ hội Quán Thế Âm in Vietnamese], which is held annually on the 19th of the second lunar month; *Vesak (Buddha's Birthday)* [aka Lễ Phật Đản in Vietnamese] to commemorate the birth of Buddha, held annually on the 15th of the fourth lunar month; and *Ullambana Festival* [aka Festival of Wandering Souls, or Lễ Vu Lan in Vietnamese] to honor and express gratitude to one's parents, held annually on the 15th of the seventh lunar month.

Among these ceremonies, the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival is considered relatively large in scale, distinguishing itself among Buddhist festivals in Da Nang. The festival usually lasts for three days, with the 19th of the second lunar month being the official day. In 2000, the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival at Ngu Hanh Son was listed among the 15 major festivals nationwide by the Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. In 2021, the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival at Ngu Hanh Son was recognized as a national intangible cultural heritage by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism. Since 2023, the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival at Ngu Hanh Son has been organized on a citywide scale by the People's Committee of Da Nang.

In 2024, at the Quan The Am Pagoda (Ngu Hanh Son district, Da Nang), the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival commenced at 5:30 PM on March 26 (the 17th of the second lunar month), with the main ceremony taking place at 7 AM on March 28 (the 19th of the second lunar month). Most Venerable Thich Hue Vinh, Abbot of Quan The Am Pagoda (Ngu Hanh Son, Da Nang city), stated, "This year's festival is larger in scale, lasting one more day than last year, so we have to prepare rigorously for the festival." Specifically, the festival will take place from March 26 to 29 (the 17th to the 20th of the second lunar month).

Notably, the new features of this year's festival will include a traditional boat race on the Co Co River along with the revival of historical scenes on the river, a live drawing contest about the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival, an essay competition on works from the Van Hanh Library, the Olympic run "For Peace," and various artistic activities and folk games. The festival will also feature a seminar on promoting the values of the Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival and cultural heritage within the Ngu Hanh Son National Special Relic complex, and the opening of the Buddhist Culture Museum to welcome visitors for tours and learning. Additionally, there will be stalls showcasing and performing Non Nuoc stone carvings, OCOP booths introducing typical products of Da Nang city. The Avalokiteśvara Buddha Festival is one of the most unique cultural features of the Ngu Hanh Son region in

<sup>1</sup> Vietnamese people call the 7th month full moon festival "Vu Lan báo hiếu" (Parents' Day) or "Xá tội vong nhân" (Wandering Soul's Day). Vu Lan festival is the second largest annual traditional festival of Vietnam after the lunar New Year (Tết) festival, and it is celebrated by Vietnamese people participating in various religious rituals and humanitarian activities.

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particular and Da Nang in general. It is a blend of Buddhist cultural values and the heritage of Ngu Hanh Son. The Avalokitesvara Buddha Festival at Ngu Hanh Son is an attractive destination not only for domestic tourists but also for international visitors to experience and explore the spiritual values deeply embedded in Vietnam's Buddhist history and culture.

Besides such major festivals, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang regularly organizes other significant Buddhist ceremonies such as Peace-prayings, Requiems, Soul Freeing Ceremonies, Almsgiving, and Life Releases. These are essential spiritual activities for the Buddhist followers in Da Nang.

### Activities of associations and groups

Over the years, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang has regularly organized various association-led activities. Some notable activities include hosting the National Camp for Vietnamese Buddhist Family Scout in 2007 at Linh Ung Pagoda, Bai But, Son Tra, with nearly 5,000 campers participating. Following this was the hosting of the Vạn Hạnh III Level III Leader Training Camp at Suoi Hoa Tourist Area, Da Nang city in 2010. In 2011, they hosted the National Buddhist Follower Guidance Workshop at Linh Ung Pagoda, Bai But, Son Tra, with nearly 2,000 delegates attending. In 2018, they hosted the 12th National Buddhist Family Conference for Vietnamese Buddhist Leaders at Phap Lam Pagoda, Da Nang.

Additionally, the Sangha organized the "A Day of Peace" retreat for leaders and members of Buddhist Families's Assembly of Adults and Teenagers in Son Tra district, Da Nang city, at An Phuoc Pagoda, 68 Mai Hac De Street, Son Tra district, Da Nang, on December 25, 2022. Most recently, on April 15, 2024, the Central Committee for Buddhist Education, in coordination with the Standing Committee of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang, solemnly organized the opening ceremony of the Buddhism Pedagogy Training Course for 347 lecturers and teachers from 34 Buddhist schools nationwide, from April 15 to 21 at Sandy Beach Resort (Ngu Hanh Son district).

Organizing these activities for guiding Buddhist followers has made significant and practical contributions to the development of the young membership from Buddhist families by connecting them with the activities of the monasteries and introducing lay Buddhists who are capable and virtuous enough to take on the responsibilities of the Buddhist Follower Guidance Committee [Ban Hướng dẫn Phật tử in Vietnamese] in the future. Additionally, organizing professional pedagogy training courses provides opportunities for those involved in Buddhist education and teaching at Buddhist schools to gain more knowledge, skills, and experience in both their specialty and pedagogy to meet practical demands in the teaching process, creating motivation for each person to fulfill the tasks assigned by the Sangha.

One of the most humane organizations and activities is the establishment of the Da Nang Buddhist Family Blood Donation Volunteer Team: The Da Nang Buddhist Family Blood Donation Volunteer Team was established by the Guidance Board of Buddhist Family Subcommittee [Ban hướng dẫn Phân ban Gia đình Phật tử in Vietnamese] on November 19, 2015, with the purpose of donating fresh blood and machine platelets for emergency and urgent treatment cases at hospitals and fulfilling the mission of the Vietnamese Buddhist Family. From more than 30 members registering in the initial days of the campaign, the number of members had reached 150 by the team's launch during the year-end summary event of the the Guidance Board of Buddhist Family Subcommittee in 2015. After six years of operation, the number of members participating in blood donations had grown to 1,553 members, as shown in the following table:

**Table 8: Da Nang Buddhist Family Blood Donation Volunteer Team**

No	Year	Donation data
1	2016	413 blood and platelet units
2	2017	525 blood and platelet units
3	2018	461 blood and platelet units
4	2019	430 blood and platelet units
5	2020	423 blood and platelet units
6	2021	495 blood and platelet units

**Source:** Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee

Among them are some members who have donated blood and platelets more than 20 times.

### Social Charity Activities

With the orientation of serving sentient beings is offering to the Buddhas, social charity work is one of the key activities of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang. Over the years, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang has made numerous positive and significant contributions, accompanying the city through various social and humanitarian charity activities.

According to the Summary Reports of Buddhist Affairs during the 4th and 5th terms of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee, since 1997, social charity work has always been a priority for the Sangha, with a total budget of hundreds of billions of VND. Some major activities include: visiting and giving gifts to patients in hospitals during the Vesak festivals, Ullambana festivals, and Tet festivals, especially supporting patients in difficult circumstances; participating in flood relief efforts in Quang Binh, Quang Nam, and Quang Ngai; and building houses of gratitude in Da Nang, Quang Nam, Quang Tri, and



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Gia Lai. During the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the Sangha actively implemented many meaningful programs, notably donating masks and sanitizers to hospitals in Da Nang and Ho Chi Minh City and rescuing agricultural products for people in Quang Nam and Hai Duong during the pandemic. Additionally, to encourage the spirit of learning, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang regularly supports tuition fees for poor students who pass university entrance exams but lack the funds to attend, as well as disadvantaged students who strive to overcome difficulties.

**Table 9: Charity work spendings (2016 – 2021)**

No	Year	Amount of spending
1	2016	531,600,000 vnd
2	2017	865,800,000 vnd
3	2018	734,650,000 vnd
4	2019	665,650,000 vnd
5	2020	1,401,830,000 vnd
6	2021	484,380,000 vnd

**Source: Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee**

More specially, to contribute to the government's implementation of the "5 No's and 3 Yes's" program (no hungry households, no illiterate people, no wandering beggars, no drug addicts, no murder and robbery; having housing, having jobs, having a cultural and civilized urban lifestyle) and the "4 Safeties" (public security, traffic safety, food safety, social welfare), the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee and district-level committees, along with monks and nuns, have mobilized the construction of hundreds of Great Unity houses, houses of affection, etc.

With these activities, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang has continued to promote the noble tradition of "Protecting the nation and bringing peace to the people," closely associated with the Vietnamese Buddhist tradition, highlighting the role of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Danang's Executive Committee in uniting monks, nuns, and Buddhist laypeople in building society and the Sangha, contributing to strengthening the great unity of the entire people.

The Buddhist activities of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang in recent years have achieved many positive results in the process of accompanying the city's development. It is believed that in the coming time, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang will further promote the advantages and achievements gained, while overcoming limitations, continuing to promote the patriotic tradition of Buddhism, guiding monks, nuns, and laypeople to practice according to the correct Dharma, in accordance with Vietnamese law, to contribute to building a prosperous Da Nang, and contribute to the harmonious development of the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha within the nation, deserving the honor of being a religion that accompanies the nation in protecting the country and bringing peace to the people.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout its long history, Buddhism, since its inception, has been closely linked with the construction and development of Da Nang. The year 1997 marked an important milestone for the city when it separated from Quang Nam Province to become a centrally governed city. From those early challenging days to the present, Buddhism has always accompanied and gradually established its position in the spiritual beliefs of the city's residents.

On the journey of accompanying and developing from 1997 to the present, Buddhism in Da Nang has seen relatively comprehensive development in its organizational system, places of worship, the team of monks and nuns, as well as in ritual activities, festivals, association activities, and charitable activities. It is believed that in the coming time, the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha in Da Nang will further promote the advantages and achievements gained, while overcoming limitations and making timely, appropriate orientations and solutions to enhance the role of Buddhism in the locality and the country in the new era.

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