



GRAND LODGE
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK

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Grand Master

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Dear Brethren:

If I were to list all the local and global changes that have taken place as a result of the pandemic, I would be typing for hours. Probably days.

We have seen governments adapt to things from car inspections to collecting taxes. We are seeing countries banning people from other countries. And we are seeing states placing quarantine measures on those from other states.

Masonry is not immune to the effects of Covid-19. We have utilized our common sense and masonic teachings to pull back from physically meeting and implemented other means of keeping Masonry alive through technology and streaming methods.

Methods that were unheard of at the time our Constitution was developed.

Some say desperate times call for desperate measures. I don't view our issues as desperate ones. I view them as challenging times that open our minds to new opportunities to continue what we do best. Helping others as men and Masons.

You have been patient, passionate, and understanding as we adhered to the "stay-at-home" guidelines. You have remained optimistic that we would soon reopen and slowly move into "another normal"

I truly appreciate you and your positive energy and now we will take small steps in resuming our lodge meetings.

Like everything else I have done as Grand Master, I need your help.

As of this message, I am authorizing Lodge Meetings to resume as of July 11, 2020. I will be following this up with an edict that will serve to help you if your by-laws do not provide for July and August meetings.

I realize some lodges "go dark", but with over 4 months without meetings there may be some lodges who would like to meet.

Meetings during July and August are purely optional.

The State of New York is gradually moving ahead with different phases aimed at re-opening our businesses, libraries, schools, churches, synagogues and communities

towards normalcy, coinciding with the progress and successful implementation of safety and health measures to reduce the dangers of the Covid-19 virus. As of the writing of this message, parts of our State have achieved various levels of phasing in keeping with the regulations set by State and Local governments.

How do these regulations governing each phase affect our Masonic Lodges, Concordant and Related Bodies and Masonic Clubs and Associations? As Masons, you will act in accordance with the occupancy parameters and rules established for "houses of worship" of the specific phase assigned to your location. Bear in mind, if parts of the state revert back to a "pause" situation, we will adhere to the local and state parameters.

During the months of July and August, those Masonic Lodges that are interested in holding Communications in areas of the State where such meetings are permitted, a general dispensation will be granted that will establish precise rules and guidelines to ensure that all proper and prudent safety and health measures are followed.

I know the new normal is different and old habits are difficult to change, but for the protection and wellbeing of each member of the Fraternity and the community at large, we must and will need to strictly adhere to a new set of policies. I have listed below several stipulations that must be adhered to in contemplation of holding Masonic meetings:

Our Constitution and Masonic Law state that if a lodge decides to have a meeting outside of what their By-Laws indicate, it would have to be a Special Communication. With that said, if your by-laws do not provide for July and August meetings, each meeting will be a Special Communication with a purpose stated in the notice. Example: Elections, Balloting.

You can send one notice indicating plans for your next several meetings indicating the work for the meeting.

Each Lodge is required to SUMMON its membership for its annual meeting, which may be a STATED or SPECIAL communication. The meeting must be conducted prior to September 30, 2020, and must include budget adoption, election, and installation of officers. The Secretary will immediately report the results of the election to the Grand Secretary in accordance with Constitution section 313.7. Lodges of Research are exempt from this requirement but must conduct elections and installations at the next STATED communication.

There will be no Public Installations.

There will be no District Investitures. All investitures will be in the Lodge

All attendees must wear masks at ALL times. No Mask, No Meeting. No Exception.

There will be no hand shaking.

There will be no hugging.

There will be no embracing.

Some people are touching elbows. Maybe placing your hand over your heart would be a better greeting. Perhaps, greeting each other with the sign of fidelity would be another way to show brotherly love and affection.

Consultation with Medical Doctors who work with patients agree that cotton gloves and gloves of other material hold and transfer the virus. Unless disposable gloves are constantly disposed, they will also transfer the virus. Hand sanitizers and hand washing are the best answers

During the Masonic Ritual for opening and closing the Lodge, the use of hand grips or close proximity will not be put into action. (Further guidelines will be provided as needed.)

All Lodges or Halls must provide hand-sanitizers for the attendees. The lavatories and restrooms of all Lodges or Halls must provide liquid hand soap together with clean and sanitary paper towels.

All Lodges or Halls must have an ample supply of spare face masks available. Social Distancing must be adhered to. Not just side to side but back to back.

The Chaplain's place will be relocated to a chair that is Socially Distant near the altar.

The summer months are indeed hot and usually muggy, and many Lodge Buildings do not enjoy the comfort provided by air conditioning. As such, I am encouraging the wearing of collared short-sleeve dress shirts (typically golf shirts) and summer weight slacks to be permissible at meetings in July and August. Many people wash their clothing when returning home from such gatherings. Beside relief from the heat, not wearing suits helps to avoid dry-cleaning bills when money can be tight.

Both Elections and Balloting may take place with due and timely notice and in accordance with our Constitutions, rules and regulations, and your lodge By-Laws. If "too many" want to be at the meeting to vote or ballot, you must rotate members in and out of the lodge room to maintain Social Distancing.

It should be no surprise that Masons love to eat. Be smart and ensure that your fellow Masons and guests sit 6 feet apart in all directions. The distribution of food is complicated and will need special attention with disposable utensils, plates and cups and absolutely no self-serve buffets.

Who may attend these Lodge Communications? You will only be permitted to visit/attend your "Mother" Lodge only. Exception is if you are an officer of another lodge(s). Example being Secretary.

If your Mother Lodge is not within visiting distance, you may visit the Lodge you normally would attend that is local to you. In some instances it is a dual member lodge.

Grand Line members will not visit any Lodges unless it is their "Mother" Lodge.

District Deputy Grand Masters, Grand Lodge Staff Officers, and Assistant Grand Lecturers may be asked to attend a Lodge for a specific reason, but not all together as a group or delegation.

Lodges that want to meet “outdoors” can do so if the proper security and dispensation is in place.

With regard to the conferral of Masonic Degrees, you will be receiving updated options regarding the work of Masonic Degrees.

If a Masonic Lodge decides to hold a Special Communication during July and/or August, they must send an e-mail to the Grand Standard Bearer, RW Scott Peat (GrandStandardBearer@NYMasons.org) two weeks prior to the meeting to review safety measures and to obtain the appropriate dispensation.

Lodges at Masonic Hall in NYC will need to contact the Grand Standard Bearer, RW Scott Peat (GrandStandardBearer@NYMasons.org) at least two weeks prior to the event, since elevators will have limited capacity 3 passengers at a time. Preliminary plans are to move all meetings to the 2nd floor allowing members who are physically able, to walk up the stairs and not congregate in the lobby waiting for an elevator. Be prepared for your temperature to be taken upon entering the building.

My Brothers, please use common sense and travel upon the higher road with the best welfare of your fellow brothers in mind. Signage will be placed at the entrance of all doors to Lodge Buildings, instructing anyone with fever or flu-like symptoms not to enter.

Masonic Funerals and Masonic Memorial Services are permitted based upon the parameters and restrictions of the phase assigned to your region/location for Funeral Homes.

Picnics, BBQ's and other Fund Raisers are permitted provided all Social Distancing and sanitizing methods are strictly adhered to in accordance with the phase assigned to your region/location for such activities.

Lastly, Virtually Social Meetings, such as Zoom, are encouraged now and in the future for Committee meetings, Past Master caucuses, and especially meetings for those who cannot get to Lodge for any reason, the Virtual Social Meeting will remain a viable option.

May you, your family and your friends and neighbors be well and keep safe.

Fraternally,



M.W. William M. Sardone, Grand Master

