

# The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio

KEITH W. NEWTON  
GRAND MASTER



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May 5, 2020

Re: Leading Ohio Freemasonry through COVID-19

Brethren all,

I hope this finds you and your families well during this national health emergency. Sharon and I remain healthy and look forward to visiting with you again soon.

We continue to monitor the updates from our Governor and the Ohio Department of Health. The latest announcement from Governor Mike DeWine introduced the Ohio Department of Health Stay Safe Ohio Order which remains in effect until 11:59pm May 29, 2020. Following this Order, I have extended the cancellation period of all in-person Ohio Masonic activities from May 10, to now remain in effect **through May 31, 2020**.

These activities include but are not limited to Stated Meetings, Annual Inspections Ceremonies, Grand Master Receptions, Grand Master Class events and Special meetings of all Ohio Lodges holding allegiance to the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio and to all organizations whose membership is predicated on Masonic membership, including district associations, craft clubs, temple companies, and appendant orders.

The safety, health and welfare of our membership is my primary concern. Be patient.

A dispensation was issued April 6, 2020 for lodges to hold virtual Stated meetings by following a few guidelines. The responses have been very favorable. Brethren who have not been able to travel to lodge, or live out of state, are now able to join their Lodge brethren using these alternative tools to meet.

I recently met with the DDGM's in a virtual zoom meeting. The list below is intended to provide an update on how we will address some of the challenges Ohio Freemasonry is facing as a result of the current social pandemic. I enjoyed the chance to meet with them and discuss each topic. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.

1. Grand Lodge Officers are using Zoom to meet each Saturday. I must say we have accomplished more work over the past 6 weeks than ever expected. I am very proud to work with such a talented team of officers.

2. Stated Meetings. Ref Code Chapter 21, Sec. 21.01: Due to the cessation of Lodge meetings from March 12 through May 31, 2020 as directed in support of the Ohio Governor, Lodges may not meet the minimum Stated Meetings as defined in the Code. A Dispensation will be issued to waive any disciplinary action for Lodges that do not meet their minimum Stated meetings in 2020 due to the cessation order. RWB Dickerscheid, DGM, has agreed, if elected, to support the same for your Inspection Reporting in 2021.
3. Lodges that do not meet in July and August according to their By Laws will receive a Dispensation to permit STATED MEETINGS in July and August of 2020 as an opportunity to make up for our time away.
4. Inspections. It is my goal to have all Lodge Inspection forms complete and submitted through Grand View.
  - a. The requirement to perform Degree Ritual for Inspection is waived for any Inspections not already completed.
  - b. Lodge Degree progression for 2021 will continue as planned.
5. Reconsecrations. 15 Reconsecrations and/or Dedications have been cancelled/postponed to date. I plan to reschedule each one with the lodge as soon as it is safe for us to meet. Until we know more about our timeline to return, no dates have been finalized.
6. Grand Master Receptions. All remaining GMR's have been postponed at this time. Alternative Grand Master Visitations are planned at a Lodge in each District. Again, we must hold off finalizing dates and plans until it is safe for us to meet.
7. Grand Masters Award. An extension is granted for "Care for Master Masons and Widows" section, item 1 A and B. The date for completion is extended until July 31, 2020. Award details and form can be found in the DDGM Manual, Chapter 5.
8. Charities. The greatest tenet of our profession is being called upon each day. Our work continues even as our buildings remain closed. Promote the Grand Lodge Charitable Relief Fund or another charity in your community.
9. Returning to labor. We do anticipate the day soon where we can resume our meetings. I ask all lodges to plan a Celebration dinner or meeting to recognize our Essential Masons who have served their communities through this pandemic.
10. GL2020 plans. Grand Lodge 2020 session is scheduled on October 23, 2020 at Roberts Center in Wilmington, OH. The local committee continues to plan for 2000 of our closest friends. We also realize alternative plans may be required. The Grand Lodge Officers are actively working on plans to hold the Annual Communication using alternate methods if required.

During this period where normal lodge operation is on hold, inquiries to join Ohio Freemasonry are soaring. The AASR NMJ “Be a Freemason” campaign coupled with the Ohio Grand Lodge marketing campaign are reaching many potential candidates. Today there are over 700 eligible men interested in joining Ohio Freemasonry. Our greatest challenge now is to retain their interest until we convert them to members in a lodge where they reside.

We need your help! The increased volume has overwhelmed current process to place these potential candidates with a lodge near their home. If you are able to offer your time and talent with this project, please contact the GL Office staff at [dkaylor@gloho.com](mailto:dkaylor@gloho.com).

Lodges and Brethren are “Stepping Into the Light” all over our state. Please take a few minutes to acknowledge those in your District that are making a difference. I am proud to be a member of this fraternity. It is a Great Day for Freemasonry in Ohio!

Live Simply, Love Generously, Care Deeply, Speak Kindly.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Keith W. Newton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'K'.

Keith W. Newton  
Grand Master