

The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio

KEITH W. NEWTON
GRAND MASTER



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June 5, 2020

Grand Master's Edict 2020-5

To: All members of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ohio,

Thank you to all Masons in Ohio and brothers and sisters of our appendant orders. On March 16, 2020 I asked you to "Step into the Light" and be leaders in our communities following the direction from the Ohio Department of Health and Governor Mike DeWine during this COVID 19 pandemic emergency. I commend you for your support and patience during the period of Lodge closures to date. Together, our efforts helped to keep each other safe and healthy while limiting the spread of coronavirus during the stay at home order.

Following the announcement from Governor Mike DeWine on June 4, 2020, I am pleased to announce Ohio Masonic meetings and activities may resume on June 10, 2020 if Responsible Restart Ohio guidelines are adhered to, reference web site:

<https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/responsible-restart-ohio/>

Expectations for Safe Ohio Masonic Lodge practices:

- Thoroughly clean and sanitize all areas of your Lodge building regularly.
- Hand sanitizer stations and face masks should be made available for use.
- Maintain group size and safe distancing guidelines.
- For Lodges electing to have meals, follow the guidelines for Banquet and Catering Centers, ref: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/static/responsible/Restaurants-and-Bars.pdf>.
- Open meetings in the Entered Apprentice or Fellowcraft Degrees unless the Master Mason Degree is required.

Expectations for members of the Grand Lodge of Ohio:

- ❖ For our members in a high-risk category, DO NOT feel obligated to return to lodge, or any event, until YOU are comfortable doing so.
- ❖ If you have a temperature or do not feel well, please stay home.
- ❖ Respect each other's decision pertaining to personal contact whether it be a handshake, elbow bump, fist bump or hug, brotherly love should always prevail.

Ritual work revisions effective June 10, 2020 until further notice:

- Our primary concern is that ALL Lodge Officers/Participants and Candidates are comfortable, safe and agree to proceed before Opening, Closing, and/or Ritual work of any Degree is performed.
- Prior to each Degree, the Worshipful Master or his designee MUST explain the entire Degree experience with the candidate, elaborating on the use of a guide and grips as may be applicable for the upcoming experience. If the candidate has ANY reservation, immediately stop and reschedule the Degree to a later date.
 - It is important to continue regular communication with the candidate and invite him to participate to the level he is able.
- If the candidate elects not to participate in the traditional manner, an alternative Degree conferral is available:
 - Candidate is seated on the sidelines to observe the Masonic Degree.
 - Lodge Officers/Participants perform the Ritual work using a volunteer exemplar candidate.
 - A Master Craftsman is assigned to sit near the candidate to educate him as the Degree is conferred.
 - Report the use of this alternate conferral to your District Deputy Grand Master.

Virtual Meeting revisions effective June 10, 2020 until further notice:

Virtual meeting tools are useful for social gatherings, but not appropriate for esoteric topics due to the difficulty of providing security. We are learning a great deal from their use. Many lodges find them popular with members. Due to their success, effective June 10, 2020, Virtual Meeting tools are acceptable for SPECIAL lodge meeting use. The guidelines remain the same as before except conducting lodge business has been eliminated;

- A password protected secure tool for members to utilize for accessing a virtual Lodge Stated meeting (e.g. Zoom, GoToMeeting, WebEx, etc).
- An email to the lodge members sent from our Grand View membership program and posted on the lodges Grand View dashboard.
- The Worshipful Master or Warden in charge will proclaim the meeting open: "This SPECIAL Meeting is symbolically opened in the Entered Apprentice Degree."
- Fellowship with our brethren.
- Education programs.
- The Worshipful Master or Warden in charge will proclaim the meeting closed: "This SPECIAL Meeting is symbolically closed in the Entered Apprentice Degree."

Note: Ritual work of any type or nature, candidate examinations, and candidate balloting are not permitted.

Actions by the Governor now permit certain limited venue activities such as weddings and wedding receptions, etc. under certain restrictions. All banquets/receptions are opened under this category as long as you comply with the guidelines imposed by the Department of Health and the Governor at the time.

Third Party use of our buildings is appropriate subject to the Governor's orders and the associated restrictions. Each building owner determines if the activities are appropriate for their facility. If so, they may resume third-party events at their discretion. Each third-party event must satisfy all health and safety guidance issues provided by the Ohio Department of Health and accept all liability for its event including any citations or fines issued by a governmental authority. Monitor the local directives from the State, County and City in which you operate.

I am confident Ohio Masons will continue to follow the rules in our Code and the Laws of the land. Keep each other safe as Freemasonry adapts to the world and the time in which we live.

These guidelines remain in place until further notice.

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

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith W. Newton".

Keith W. Newton

Grand Master