

# Grand Lodge of Manitoba

ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

---

## **MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER**

August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Brethren,

I sincerely hope that you have all had a happy and healthy summer. It has certainly been a summer like no other we have experienced, but I hope you have been able to spend quality time with those who are important in your lives.

One of my first actions after being installed as Grand Master was to task the Grand Lodge Management Committee to develop a plan for the safe and gradual reopening of our Lodges. The Management Committee has put together a sound plan to follow when we are in a position begin that process and I thank everyone involved for their efforts and input.

Like many of you, as the summer began, I had hoped that by now we would be in a position to start the resumption of the meeting of our Lodges this fall. This seemed like a distinct possibility in early July when the active cases of COVID-19 in our province were in the single digits and the government was moving ahead with easing many of the restrictions that had been put in place to combat the spread of the virus.

However, a lot has happened over the summer and circumstances have changed dramatically, particularly over the last six weeks. This should be a stark reminder to all of us that this virus is not gone, and we must not become complacent. We must continue to follow the health and safety recommendations, particularly social distancing, proper hand hygiene and wearing masks whenever possible in public.

We have also learned to be wary of close contact in enclosed spaces. Unfortunately, even with the best health and safety plan in place, our Lodge meetings still fall into that category.

I have sought and received input from many of our learned Brethren, and it is clear to me that we all have different thoughts and levels of comfort in respect to our current circumstances. However, it is also clear that regardless of our personal opinions, everyone understands that protecting the health and safety of our members and their families should always be our first priority.

As your Grand Master I do not take that responsibility lightly. At this point in time I believe we should be cautious, particularly until we see the impact of the opening of the schools in September and the effects of the beginning of the cold and flu season.

**For this reason, I am extending the suspension of tyled Lodge meetings until AT LEAST October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020.** We will continue to monitor and adjust as the situation evolves.

At this time, I wish to share with all of you the plan for the safe reopening of our Lodges when it is the appropriate time for us to do so. This is to give you all an idea of what our Lodge meetings may look like initially.

Please keep in mind that all things can change, and we must be flexible to adapt to circumstances as they evolve. What seems like a good idea today, may not be down the road. All I ask of you is to be patient and understanding as we all work through this together.

Also, in addition to these guidelines, the provincial government and health authority regulations in effect at the time must be adhered to, as well as restrictions and policies of the Landlords of the buildings where your Lodge meets.

I also realize that our lengthy suspension of Masonic activities has meant that many of our Worshipful Masters and their Officers have not had the opportunity to perform their duties as intended. I ask that once our lodge meetings resume, that Lodges consider leaving the current Officers in place for a second term to allow them that opportunity. I will grant any Dispensation required if that is the wish of the Lodge.

As much as visitation and fellowship is integrally woven into our makeup and practices, the safety of the brethren and their families are more important than risking any individual's health or the health of their family. I know this is frustrating to many of us, but we **must** do this.

I also believe there is opportunity in time of crisis to strengthen our fraternity. I strongly encourage you to reach out and keep in touch with your brethren via phone, skype, messenger and Zoom. Lend a hand to brother in need safely. I am sure they miss you as much as you miss getting together with them. Continue to have on-line meetings and webinar education. The Grand Lodge will be presenting an on-line Zoom evening featuring the Right Worshipful Brother Richard Lacoursiere, will be presenting this year's JRC Evans Lecture followed by some on-line fellowship. Watch for the date to be announced in early September.

Thank you for your cooperation, patience, understanding and especially your continued support as we all face these challenging times together.

Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gordon E. S. Fardoe". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Gordon E. S. Fardoe  
Grand Master

## **GRAND LODGE OF MANITOBA – Plan for Phase One Resumption of Tyled Lodge Meetings**

### **Current General Health guidelines and recommendations in Manitoba (Aug 28)**

- Indoor gatherings are presently limited to 50 persons, providing you are able to maintain social distance guideline of 2m/6ft
- People are reminded to stay home if they are feeling unwell, even if their symptoms are mild (visit [manitoba.ca/covid19/about/index.html](http://manitoba.ca/covid19/about/index.html) for a list of symptoms). If you are sick, or feel ill, STAY HOME
- If you are a member of group particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 as set out (pre-existing health concerns, age 65 or older), continue to avoid any in-person gatherings
- Maintain social distance guidelines (2m/6ft) away from those who are not part of your household.
- Traditional greetings such as handshakes and hugging are to be avoided
- Wear a face mask or covering whenever possible
- Wash or sanitize your hands frequently
- Clean and disinfect all contact surfaces regularly (toilets, faucets, tables, doorknobs, switches)

### **Typical Components of Masonic Lodge Meetings**

- Greeting members and visitors at the door
- Ritual Opening and Closing in Three Degrees
- Installation of Lodge Officers
- Degree Work
- Proving proficiency
- Receiving Petitions, establishing inquiry committees
- Balloting
- Special Awards
- Repast and social hour

*Many of these aspects require close personal proximity and personal contact, which at present is not advised by any health authority in North America. As the true and genuine practice of Freemasonry requires certain physical components, many elements of Ritual will not be possible during our initial re-opening of Lodges.*

### **Grand Master's Directions for attending Tiled Lodge Meetings**

- My guidelines pertain to all regular Tyled Lodge meetings in MB
- There will be no Emergent meetings, other than for funeral purposes.
- All MB guidelines for social distancing and capacity that are currently in place must be adhered to
- Nobody, particularly elderly or vulnerable members should feel obligated or coerced into attending meetings – regardless of their Office
- The Tyler will be responsible for signing all members names on the register
- Visitors are NOT permitted in any lodge at this time
- DDGM's, by virtue of office, belong to their various Lodges. There will be NO Official Visitations made by any DDGM at this time.
- Ancient York Rite Lodges (Ecce Orienti) will open and work as normal – avoiding any personal contact
- Emulation Lodges (Canadian Work) will operate in the First Degree only
- No grips, handshakes or personal contact between members is allowed
- The Sign of Fidelity will be used to replace any grip or pass as necessary
- Installation of Officers is permitted provided all parties being installed or invested wear nitrile gloves and appropriate masks, AND, all parties are agreeable to limited contact to convey secrets.

### **Grand Master's Directions – continued**

- Installed officers will be directed to their stations, rather than being “led” and “placed” (ie: follow the leader). *Avoid physical contact when possible*
- Open Installation Ceremonies are NOT permitted
- Initiations and Degree Work is NOT allowed at this time.
- Members may “prove” their proficiency in a given degree, but in all cases where contact was required – it will be replaced with an explanation, under the Sign of Fidelity (IE: Five Points)\*\*
- Petitions and Balloting: Petitions can be received and Inquiry committees perform their work. The ballot can be conducted provided that at time of ballot, every member wears a disposable glove, which is immediately discarded into an adjacent garbage bin/bag
- Special Awards: Parties may be awarded 50 year jewels, etc. All parties must be amenable to attending and receiving the award, which will be handed to them. Masks and gloves must be worn by all parties participating.

*\*\* In cases where candidates are to prove proficiency in the Third Degree, the Canadian Work Lodges are permitted to Open/Close in “Short Form” using the Sign of Fidelity anytime personal contact would occur. Candidates would explain, but not demonstrate the F.P.O.F.*

### **Social Hour/Repast/Festive Boards**

- There will be no Festive Boards allowed at this time
- This includes no food, drink, coffee, alcohol, will be served or available
- Brethren are to depart the building once the meeting concludes

*There are just too many variables and special conditions for service that must be met. This would be an onerous burden on Worshipful Masters and Junior Wardens at this time. These guidelines must be adhered to.*

**Other Important Considerations:**

- Remember, these guidelines may change with the conditions
- Each Lodge is an autonomous entity. You are responsible for the welfare and safety of your members
- Nobody, particularly elderly or vulnerable members should feel coerced into attending meetings – regardless of their office.
- The WM of each Lodge is responsible to ensure his members are in compliance with all guidelines pertaining to social distancing, provision of sanitizing stations in and outside of the lodge room, the wearing of masks where required
- Each Lodge may have to provide gloves, hand sanitizer, masks, etc, to supplement their individual building. Do not rely on building supplies alone
- Each member is responsible for the welfare of his brethren. Exercise your own good judgement at all times

*Grand Lodge Manitoba is recommending patience with those members not able to pay their dues, and at this time we do not recommend suspension for non-payment.*