

The Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina



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Grand Master

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Grand Master's Order- October 28, 2020

Phase One-B: Re-Opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations in the Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina.

Brethren, I hope this correspondence finds you and your loved ones well. I am pleased to inform you that in September we saw some of our Subordinate Lodges open for the first time in months. It is great to be back with our Brethren even if we are operating under some limitations. Thank you all for the hard work that each of you are doing to support your Lodge and keep your Brethren safe. We had less than thirty-three percent of the Lodges open in September. October's number grew and even more plan to open in November.

We have averaged one Lodge COVID-19 exposure each month for the last two months. Both were quickly contained with the Worshipful Master and District Deputy from both locations on top of the situation. I will review their information to see if we can be more proactive.

We will be upgrading to Phase One-B this month. Any area in italics has changed from the previous Phase One order to the new Phase One-B. Please see sections: 4, 5, 10, 18, 22, 25, 26, 27, 32 and 33 for updated changes from Phase One to Phase One-B.

Your Lodge needs to question the Officers and membership if they want to consider leaving the officers in place in December or moving them up. Please stay in touch with your District Deputy Grand Master. Lodges that meet on the same night of the week may need to consider getting a Dispensation to help the District Deputy Grand Master with scheduling his visits.

I recommend each Lodge follow the guidelines of the Works and Ceremonies Committee with reference to Election and Installation of Officers dated September 25, 2020. A copy will be supplied by the Grand Secretary via-Grandview.

Certain parts of the previous order will remain in effect until further notice. All required changes are in italics. This will allow for a progressive and eventual re-opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations until conditions improve to the point that restrictions are warranted.

All Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations operating in the Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina shall abide by the Orders of the President of the United States, Executive Orders of the Governor of South Carolina, Orders of Grand Master of Masons in South Carolina, Orders of the International, National, and State Appendant Body Head(s), SCDHEC rules, CDC Guidelines, as well as any applicable state, county, and municipal laws or ordinances.

The Grand Lodge of Ancient Freemasons of South Carolina is the Supreme Masonic Authority of the Jurisdiction, and faithful allegiance and implicit obedience is due to it from all the Lodges and Masons residing therein. Its functions are of a legislative, judicial and

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executive character. In its legislative capacity, it makes the laws, in its judicial it applies them, and in its executive it enforces them. Re: Article 10: Ahiman Rezon of South Carolina 2019 Edition.

No subordinate Masonic lodge or Masonic Appendant body operating in the Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina will conduct any stated, regular, called, special communication or business meeting, including any initiation or degree conferral in ANY virtual format.

Any Master Mason failing or refusing to comply with any of the provisions of Phase One-B Re-Opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations in Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina will be subject to exclusion from any subordinate lodge by the Worshipful Master under Section 199 of the Code of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina and may be subject to future Masonic charges.

All Brethren or persons failing or refusing to wear appropriate facemask or practice social distancing in a group setting while on Subordinate Masonic Lodge property or while attending a Masonic function may face criminal and civil charges under state, county, or municipal laws and ordinances.

All Subordinate Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations operating in the Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina shall meet the conditions of Phase One-B: Re-Opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organization plan until further notice.

The following shall be adhered to during Phase One-B: Re-Opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations in the Grand Jurisdiction of South Carolina:

1. No member will be required to attend Lodge or any Masonic related function if that person feels that it is unsafe to do so. The Worshipful Master, Presiding Officer, or Grand Master may still "Summon" a member to appear, but extreme caution should be given to protect the health and welfare of all members. (See: No.6 for exceptions)
2. If the Worshipful Master/Presiding Officer has determined it is safe for his lodge/body to open and all grand lodge, appendant masonic body, federal, state, and municipal orders, laws, mandates, ordinances, and guidelines have been and can be met, may do so and "Open" effective: September 1, 2020 with the restrictions listed below.
3. Each Brother will answer a questionnaire to the best of his knowledge and sign a "Waiver and Pledge of Compliance" (will be retained by the lodge Secretary) to Phase Opening Requirements (see Attachment A, previously sent) before being allowed to attend lodge. Brethren should bring their own pen and use gloves, hand sanitizer, or wash their hands immediately after signing any document.
4. If the Worshipful Master decides it is in the best interest of his Lodge to stay closed during the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be allowed to remain closed until such time as the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina has determined that restrictions have eased to a point where subordinate lodges will be required to open. Lodges that are closed are considered "dark." Conditions differ at every location. (See: No.6 for exceptions)

5. *The Worshipful Master or Lodge Secretary shall notify the lodge membership and District Deputy Grand Master of the open/closed status of his lodge. The District Deputy Grand Master will then notify the Grand Secretary and Grand Master in writing whether the lodge will open or remain closed for the next regular communication. Notification will be given to the District Deputy Grand Master as soon as possible, but no less than 7 days before the next month. EXAMPLE: The District Deputy Grand Master must report in writing to the Grand Lodge the opening/closed status of lodges in his district for the month of DECEMBER 2020 by November 24, 2020. An email will suffice for notification, but make sure it gets where it needs to.*
6. Continuing provisions of the Grand Master's previous order for suspension of lodge meetings, events, and gatherings will remain in effect for lodges that remain closed by order of the Worshipful Master. Such provisions allow for Lodges to continue paying normal bills and **not be penalized** for failure to meet at this time. **Note:** A few Lodges may be required to open for the Grand Master or District Deputy Grand Master to visit and remediate any issues occurring previous to or after said suspension of meetings since March of 2020.
7. The State Masonic Head(s) of Appendant Bodies shall be required to ensure their particular organization adheres to and continues to follow all requirements of this order as well as their appendant body rules and regulations, federal, state, and local orders, mandates, guidelines and ordinances.
8. Wearing of a facemask is required at all Masonic functions and will be worn properly as well as social distancing space of 6 feet. Any person with a health condition that will not allow wearing of a facemask should consider refraining from all crowds at this time. The CDC does not currently advocate wearing a face shield in place of a facemask. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>
9. Under Phase One-B: the Lodge Officers will meet a few days before the stated communication. All officer chairs shall be adjusted to six (6) feet distance apart at a minimum. Next, general seating in the Lodge shall be arranged by CDC social distancing requirements of six (6) feet as a minimum. The remaining chairs, that cannot be used, will be isolated/secured or removed to comply with CDC social distancing guidelines. Additional chairs may be added to the open areas of the lodge floor to accommodate the membership provided CDC guidelines for social distancing are met. **NOTE:** At no time will the Worshipful Master's or the Warden's view of the Altar be obstructed by additional chairs.
10. Signs must be in place outside the Lodge building that inform membership "DO NOT ENTER" the building if you are: sick, don't feel well, are under isolation, quarantine, or have tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 14 days. Signs can be downloaded from CDC and SCDHEC.

a. Concerning Brethren That Have Tested Positive for COVID-19: If you have tested positive for COVID-19: It must have been at least 14 days since you became ill, AND you must have been fever free without the use of fever-reducing medication for at least 24 hours. If you do not have symptoms but have tested positive for COVID-19, a minimum 14 days must have passed since

the date you provided a sample for testing. If you have been severely ill or have a severely weakened immune system, talk with your healthcare provider about possibly isolating for a longer period.

11. Non-contact forehead temperature readings will be taken for every Brother outside the Lodge Hall BEFORE entering the building. Any person with a temperature at or above 100.3 degrees Fahrenheit will be required to sit in the car or shade outside of the Lodge and be retested after a few minutes. If the temperature does not drop below 100.3 Fahrenheit, the member must leave. Cost effective thermometers can be found at your local hardware, drug store or Walmart.
12. Questionnaires will be used to prevent anyone ill, infected, or under quarantine or isolation from entrance. (see-Attachment One, previously issued).
13. The Lodge Secretary shall "record attendance" of each member to prevent cross contamination of the lodge registry by members until further notice.
14. Lodge Aprons – The number of Aprons supplied by the lodge for members shall be divided in half. "Used" Aprons shall be washed after each meeting. In theory there should already be a clean set for the next meeting.
15. Handshaking is prohibited during Phase One-B. (See Exception-Works and Ceremonies-Election and Installation of Officers dated September 25, 2020.
16. At lodge meetings, the Worshipful Master/Presiding Officer shall have one person designated to attend the entrance door for persons entering and one person to attend the exit door (both wearing gloves) for persons leaving to prevent infection.
17. Hand sanitizer shall be provided by the lodge and made available in critical areas. Running water as well as soap and water shall be available to wash hands and promote proper hygiene.
18. On the meeting night, the Officers shall take their chairs first while the remaining members stay in the dining hall. The Tiler shall then allow each individual member to enter the lodge room one at a time until the remaining chairs in the lodge are filled. *Any chair(s) vacated in the dining area during this time will be sanitized before any other member present is allowed a vacated seat in the dining area. This will allow overflow seating of additional members to vote on any constitutional issue that may come before the lodge at the appropriate time. If overflow seating is used to accommodate additional members until a vote is taken, the dining area must be secured and treated as part of the Lodge. Decorum will be maintained and the Worshipful Master may need to assign additional Brethren to help control the overflow. Constitutional voting can include, but is not limited to Bylaws, major spending of lodge funds that all members may wish to speak and vote on, fundraising or any high profile item, except petitions for degrees at this time. Any ballot taken by use of the ballot box will require all members voting to use of disposable gloves.*
19. Following point eighteen will allow Lodge officers to adjust the social distance seating in the lodge, prepare appropriate locations with any needed safety supplies, and insure safeguards are in place before the entrance of regular members.

20. Gloves shall be worn by the member while attending to the Volume of the Sacred Law.
21. Visitation of members from other Lodges is prohibited under Phase One-B. At this time, only Grand Lodge Officers are allowed to visit subordinate lodges on official business.
22. Degree work will still be prohibited during Phase One-B. Petitions for degrees can be accepted and investigated, but not voted on at this time. *Petitions for Reinstatements, Affiliations, and Dual Memberships (see Article 101 and Section 123 of the Code) may be received, investigated, and voted on during Phase One-B.* During the investigation of a petitioner, all precautions will be taken to insure the investigating party and the petitioner practice social distancing and are kept safe and not exposed during the interview.
23. The Worshipful Master may call a Special Communication for the purpose of candidate proficiency. This will at least get candidates out of the limbo state with regards to coaching.
24. Meals, food, and drink in the lodge building are prohibited during Phase One-B. Water fountains shall be turned off until further notice. Please show patience and eat prior to attending lodge during this phase.
25. Fundraisers – Fundraisers involving food prepared by or at the Lodge will be prohibited during Phase One-B. *However, A lodge may arrange a ticket sales agreement with a restaurant or properly licensed food vendor for a portion of the proceeds if approved by the restaurant or vendor. All food pickup should be at the restaurant or vendor's normal place of business. Raffles: As of September 28, 2020 raffles for nonprofit organizations have been re-approved by the state of South Carolina. Please refer to the South Carolina Laws concerning Raffles and our Grand Lodge procedures for raffle approvals.*
26. Voting on constitutional items will be allowed during this part of Phase One-B if the dining area is available for any overflow of members unable to be seated in the lodge due to social distancing. *Phones, tablets, etc. will not be used to communicate between the dining area and the Lodge room. Any chair(s) in the dining area will be sanitized before any other member present is allowed to sit in a vacated seat in the dining area. This will allow overflow seating of additional members to vote on any constitutional issue that may come before the lodge at the appropriate time. The Worshipful Master may rearrange his order of business if needed for balloting or voting. If overflow seating is used to accommodate additional members until the vote/ballot is taken, the dining area must be secured and treated as part of the Lodge. Decorum will be maintained and the Worshipful Master may need to assign additional Brethren to help control the overflow and vote count, if appropriate to be taken by a show of hands. Constitutional voting can include, but is not limited to Lodge bylaws, spending of lodge funds that any member may wish to speak and vote on, fundraising or any high profile item, except petitions for degrees at this time. Any ballot taken by use of the ballot box will require all members balloting to use of disposable gloves.*

After conclusion of the vote or ballot the Worshipful Master may allow members in the dining area to leave.

27. Meetings should be kept to less than 2 hours to minimize exposure time.
28. District Masters and Wardens/Square and Compass Clubs will be prohibited during this part of Phase One-B.
29. All seats, door knobs, gavels, items, and points of contact commonly touched will be cleaned with disinfectant before and after each meeting/practice. This will be done before members leave the lodge.
30. Any location where multiple Lodges or Masonic organizations meet one day apart may wish to request a Dispensation to temporarily change their meeting night to ensure cleaning has occurred before the next lodge/body meets.
31. Lodge Repairs – The Worshipful Master may make/order minor repairs of the lodge that may be needed provided a minimum number of people are used for such repair, it has been approved by the lodge or is under the dollar amount in the by laws needed for approval. Facemask must be worn properly, social distancing observed and all other safety concerns are met. The area must be disinfected after work is complete. Minor repairs can be done under the conditions above as of August 25, 2020.
32. Any Lodge that has a confirmed COVID-19 exposure or infection at a Masonic function will be required to lock the building down until it can be sanitized (deep cleaned) by a commercial cleaner certified to do so. Inform the District Deputy and Grand Lodge of all COVID-19 exposure(s) or infection that occur on Lodge property. *The Lodge must supply Grand Lodge with proof of sanitization from the contractor before being allowed to reopen the building.* Please see-SCDHEC webpage for details.
33. Please contact our Grand Secretary and give the names of all Brethren from your lodge that we have lost to death from COVID-19. We would like to pay tribute to the Craftsmen that we have lost to this virus in our annual proceedings.

Any item not specifically listed herein may require a Special Dispensation for proper approval. Please contact our Grand Lodge Office and be willing to supply details for any special consideration. Please give sufficient time for our office to respond.

Opening under Phase One has allowed us to open slowly and proceed with caution. Thank you for moving forward into Phase One-B. Your effort and success so far has proven we are up to the task, and we can be successful in this endeavor.

After each lodge meeting, it is imperative to inform the District Deputy Grand Master of any known issues or suggestions. If we prevent the transmission of COVID-19 at the lodge, we will be able to ease restrictions as time passes and cases and deaths decrease.

Our Grand Lodge reserves the right to suspend meetings should the President, Governor, Sheriff, or local authorities deem it necessary due to deteriorating public

health conditions, civil unrest, environmental hazards to the public, or if a lodge fails to meet and follow the requirements under of any phase of re-opening.

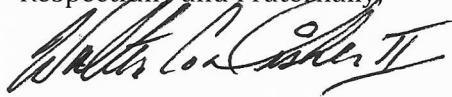
Worshipful Masters, I entrust you to strictly conform to the Phase One-B: Re-Opening requirements. You have taken an obligation to serve and protect your Lodge and your Brethren. It is your duty to ensure a smooth transition back into full service.

I am asking each Masonic Brother to have patience. It is of the utmost importance for the Brethren in South Carolina to do this right the first time. If we all do our part, abide by our requirements, and proceed with caution each time we meet, we can expand our ability to take on more and get our lodges up and running at full capacity in a shorter amount of time. Failure to do so will result in sickness and the possible loss of life to our Brethren. It is my greatest wish before I leave office to see our lodges functioning at 100 percent capacity. I only ask to have healthy Brethren, good degree work, and good fellowship without ANY new restrictions.

South Carolina has always provided our state, nation, and the world with the best and brightest Freemasonry has to offer. Now is the time and here is the place to prove our worth to the Craft and to the world. Brethren to Order! I look forward to being with you in the near future.

I ask every Mason to do his best to make this happen. Lets get back to what we do best... serve our God, serve our family, and serve mankind. So Mote It Be!

Respectfully and Fraternally,



Walter C. Disher II

Grand Master of Masons in South Carolina

October 29, 2020

