



THE GRAND LODGE OF MARK MASTER MASONS

of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas

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**To: All Provincial/District/Divisional Heads of Orders, Regional Grand Prefects
and members of Executive Committees**

Dear Sir and Brother

General Guidance for the Resumption of Masonic Meetings

The General Suspension of Masonic Activity which was implemented in March of this year is due to expire on 17 July and I wanted to let you know what will happen after that date.

At the beginning of June, I wrote to all our members with a Provisional Blueprint for an Exit Strategy. This eleven-point plan set out a common approach to exiting the General Suspension based on what we had learned from our Districts overseas that had begun to resume meetings and was a joint initiative with the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) and the Supreme Grand Chapter of England (SGC).

On 23 June 2020, the UK Prime Minister announced an easing of lockdown restrictions in England and, since then, the governments of the other Home Nations have also made changes to their policies. Collectively, these changes have now created an environment in which we feel there is scope to make plans for a resumption of masonic activity.

Accompanying this letter is a copy of the announcement of those plans which will be released to the members of UGLE, SGC and the Orders administered from Mark Masons' Hall next Monday. It confirms our decision to let the General Suspension of Masonic Activity expire on 17 July and sets out general guidance for the resumption of masonic meetings after that date.

This is a significant and, I am sure, welcome step forward, but it is essential you understand that any resumption of masonic meetings can only take place where government restrictions permit and where meeting venues are able to provide a Covid-secure environment.

Masonic meetings will not resume immediately as there will be much to do before that can happen. However, the ending of the General Suspension will provide all our Units with the option to begin meeting again when the conditions are right for them.

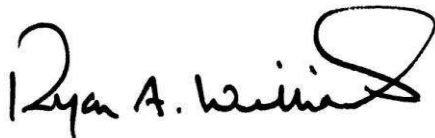
Later next week, I will issue a detailed guidance note about the administrative procedures associated with a resumption of meetings as well as further information about the virtual business meetings scheme and some new initiatives to be introduced to help Units return to work.

Our Districts overseas will continue to resume meetings when their local governments permit. Whilst the lockdown restrictions in those areas will differ from the United Kingdom, the general principles contained in this latest guidance should be followed wherever possible.

I have been greatly impressed by the way you have all responded to the challenges that Covid-19 has forced upon us. These unprecedented times have called for an unprecedented response and you should feel proud of the efforts you and your Brethren have made not just to keep our masonic family together but in reaching out to your local communities to help the vulnerable in society.

Returning to our masonic labours won't be easy nor will it happen overnight. This announcement marks the start of a long and probably difficult journey back to a new normality but with a common purpose at the heart of our intentions, we will succeed in rebuilding our Orders – ‘...we must not let the past dictate what we are, but we should let it shape what we will become...’

With fraternal regards and best wishes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ryan A. Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "R" and a decorative flourish at the end.

R.W.Bro. Ryan A Williams, P.G.J.W.
Grand Secretary



UNITED GRAND LODGE
OF ENGLAND

A joint statement from: Grand Secretary at United Grand Lodge of England
Grand Scribe E at Supreme Grand Chapter of England
Grand Secretary at Mark Masons' Hall

General Guidance for the Resumption of Masonic Meetings

1. At all times, the judicious use of common sense is to be encouraged.
2. Prevailing Government guidance (UK, Wales or Scotland, as appropriate) must be followed, in addition to local rules from Masonic Hall companies etc.
3. Disposable/medical gloves should not be worn. They are far more likely to spread the virus (if any is present) unless used correctly as they are in medical circumstances by trained professionals. Regular handwashing and avoiding touching your face are far more effective.
4. In the absence of definitive Government guidance, members who wish to wear face masks during meetings are to be allowed to do so.
5. Nobody, particularly elderly or vulnerable members, should feel coerced into attending meetings – irrespective of their office.
6. The current, absolute, maximum number of members allowed to physically attend a meeting in England will be 30 but different limits may apply elsewhere. This limit will be determined by Government guidance and by the regulations set by the masonic hall or other meeting venue as judged by, for example, the dimensions of meeting spaces, relative ventilation etc.
7. In the event of a meeting being oversubscribed, the Lodge/Chapter/or equivalent Unit should decide who attends and should do so equitably.
8. Members who are unwell or have recently been unwell and those who are under advice to self-isolate must not attend meetings.
9. For the time being, there is to be no singing in meetings.
10. There are to be no Festive Boards after meetings. Presently, guidance does not allow for mass dining but as soon as the guidance changes to allow this, dining may then be offered.

Dr David Staples FRCP
Chief Executive & Grand Secretary
United Grand Lodge of England

Ryan A Williams
Grand Secretary
Mark Masons' Hall

Grand Scribe E
Supreme Grand Chapter of England