



Grand Council Of Cryptic Masons Of The State Of New York

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Companions,

First of all I would like to address the COVID situation in the state. It is my sincere hope that it has not affected any of our Companions or their Families. This has been a terrible ordeal with so many lives lost we can only pray that it has run its course and we as a nation will soon be beyond it's grasp. Lady Lauri and I were very fortunate with several members of her Family being stricken with the virus that we ourselves did not become infected.

I have been relatively quiet during the pandemic and the lock down for a reason. We have had so many communications from so many different groups that my adding to them would not have helped. We have had the Governor, County Executives, local governments and Grand Lodge giving us daily or weekly updates and mandates, requirements and protocols that we had to follow. I didn't feel that my piling on would have helped anyone or anything. When it was necessary to issue a statement or Edict I did so.

But now, I would like to take the time to address certain areas pertaining to our Cryptic Rite.

1. Opening: We have Councils asking when can they meet or how can they address their necessary work if they can't meet. Remember you can still continue to have virtual assemblies and conduct all necessary business required including payment of all expenses. The only exceptions are for balloting on petitions and holding elections. This must be done in person. Companions, the numbers in our State have been getting better every day but we are still posting some new cases and are certainly still very vulnerable! I am not asking that every Council open and meet in person but will instead leave it up to each Council to decide. Each Illustrious Master will determine the number above nine to open in order to meet social distancing for his Council as per order of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masonry in this state. If your area is clear and you feel it is safe to do so with the "Social Distancing Protocol" and with "Masks at all times", then yes, by all means meet in person. If not, wait a little longer. Hopefully by May or June at the latest, all will be meeting in person to elect and install officers which must be done in person.
2. Degrees: The Royal and Select Degrees have been modified for the COVID Protocols. I myself have seen the Select Master performed and it worked very well. The Royal Master was re-written by our Grand Lecturer and is also very doable. These Degrees if performed will be done using these "Protocol Degrees" until further notice. Our Grand Recorder has

the Degrees and will furnish them upon request. There is being planned a Tri-State Festival for October 9, 2021 at King Solomon's Council, in Saugerties, New York. Mark your calendars now!

We now have a large number of candidates waiting to enter our Fraternity and we must be ready to receive them as they start and continue their journey through Freemasonry. Let us all make the commitment to these new Brothers and Companions in making their journey as enjoyable and enlightening as possible. Along with that we all know that the journey should include the Degrees of the Council!

3. By-Laws: Recently I was informed that the Councils are not updating their By Laws. A review of the By Laws of your Council should be done annually by the Council's By Laws Committee. If your Council has not reviewed the By Laws in several years it should be done now. If your Council doesn't have a By Laws Committee one should be appointed by the Illustrious Master immediately and this task under taken! If you find that your By Laws must be updated do so before your next meeting so they can be read then and approved during the following meeting. A copy of your updated By Laws should be sent and received by M.:I.:E. William Whittaker, Chairman of the By-Laws Review & Jurisprudence Committee on or before June 1st, 2021.

Each Council is required to have an Annual Budget which has been presented to that Council and voted upon by its membership. That eliminates financial difficulties during times in which the Council cannot meet. Perhaps Councils should all be adding a paragraph to your By Laws, such as "During an Emergency or Situation Section". This would be a statement giving the Illustrious Master, Recorder and Treasurer the ability to take care of the Council's finances during an emergency such as the pandemic or other closure. This paragraph should include the process by which this is done. This process would include any expenditure to require two signatures on any check written or cash paid out and recorded as it would be during normal times. So, if you do not have an annual Budget please prepare one and think about this clause in your By Laws. I am asking that this be undertaken ASAP! This will eliminate Councils going for months being unable to pay required bills or debts incurred during times when it is unable to meet.

4. Charities: Because of the lock down with all of us unable to make our visits and the Councils unable to meet in person the charitable donations have been slight to say the least. I would hope that we can improve on that as the state begins to open up for travel. I was hoping to have an increase in the Solomon's Arch donations. We did have a few last year but not what I had hoped for. I know this is due to the pandemic and I hope this will change as we begin to reopen. We have the beautiful awards available with Blue, Green and Purple ribbons which I hope to give as many as possible away before the end of my term. Please make this a priority when you start to meet again. I would ask all the Grand Line Officers to present the charities during their visits! I am also asking them to have the paperwork for the Solomon Arch Society with them during their visits . If the Grand Line Visits have already been performed the Illustrious Masters and Recorders, or any member, can secure the paperwork for the Solomon Arch Society from the Grand Council Website under the Charities link on the home page.

5. Annual Assembly: I would like to address the concern of our Annual Assembly in August. It is scheduled for August 20-21, 2021, at the Desmond Hotel, Albany, NY. We are making final arrangements at this time. However, we may have a limited number of in person for the annual assembly like Grand Chapter did for its Annual Convocation if so we may have to hold a hybrid format (In-person & Virtual) if that should be the case. We are looking at all possibilities and will do everything to make it a successful assembly. We will keep you informed as the date gets closer if numbers will allow greater attendance or not. The Call and the Annual Returns for this should be sent out from the Grand Recorder's Office shortly.

In Conclusion, my message to every Companion is still to seek out the entire truth and complete the story of our history which includes "Going Back to the Beginning" of our Degrees. It has always been my opinion that to complete the Masonic Journey for "Further Enlightenment" every Brother, every Companion should complete his journey by being a Council Companion. Perhaps someday things will change and we can include the Royal and Select Master Degrees in their journey by doing the Degrees in chronological order. When they become Select Masters, then and only then will All the Brothers Have, "The Rest of the Story", quoting Our Past Most Illustrious Grand Master, M.:I.: Richard Fowler.

Now, I hope everyone is as ready as I am to commence with the Council's business. I would hope that every Council is ready to start reopening, performing Degrees and increasing our numbers. But that is only part of our duties. We must make sure that we are performing tasks which keep our Companions active and interested by establishing programs and functions that are enjoyable and entertaining. If we do this we will assure every Council continued success into the future.

Start a "Calling List", contact Companions who haven't been to Council in a while. See how they are and include their families and occupations in the conversation. Invite them to again attend meetings, but have meetings they will enjoy and decide to attend regularly. Have programs that include not only Masonic interests but include hobbies, historical events, anything which stirs the interest of the Companions.

Events or speakers don't have to be Masons or Companions! Invite the local Bee Keeper, Village Justice, Local or State Police, include the local Youth Groups. I know Rainbow, Triangle and DeMolay would love to attend one of your meetings! There are a million people out there that like to talk about their jobs, their businesses, historical events or themselves! Be creative in planning events so everyone can enjoy coming back to Council or continue to attend going forward!

In closing I would like to thank everyone for being patient during this last year and it is my solemn Prayer that this communication finds You and Yours Well and Safe!

Zealously,

M.:I.: Phil Chandler