

The Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina



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Grand Master

Founded October 28, 1736

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Grand Master's Order- March 26, 2021

Phase Two-A: 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 during February and March our COVID-19 Infections and deaths have dropped tremendously. Thank you all for the hard work that each of you are doing to support your Lodge and keep your Brethren safe. We are hoping the numbers will stay down and Spring Break will not spike numbers again.

We are now at a time when ALL Lodges need to consider reopening. Your Lodge should start preparing for opening if it has not done so. As numbers drop, this side of the Phase Openings will progress quickly. You may be REQUIRED to open in the next few months so don't wait until the last minute to start getting ready. Those that have previously under Phase-One and Phase One-B will be have the option moving into to Phase 2-A (below).

We will be upgrading to Phase Two-A this month. Here are some changes under Phase Two-A for the month of April. Please refer to each section for details concerning easing restrictions.

- 1) Acceptance for petitions for degrees. Not to perform Degrees right now, but acceptance, investigation, and voting of petitions for degrees. PLEASE SEE SECTIONS 22 and 23 of this document.
- 2) Visitation of Lodges (if allowed by the Worshipful Master) This section also addresses Masters and Wardens, Square and Compass and county clubs. PLEASE SEE SECTION 21 of this document.
- 3) Licensed Food Vendor, Catered, and Boxed Lunches at Masonic Lodge meetings PLEASE SEE SECTION 24 of this document.
- 4) Mask Wearing Requirements. PLEASE SEE SECTIONS 8, 24, and 31 of this document.
- 5) Community projects. PLEASE SEE SECTION 34 of this document.
- 6) All Masonic Lodges should prepare to open by May 1, 2021 if ordered to do so. SEE SECTION 4 of this document.

The Works and Ceremonies Committee will review and possibly make recommendations concerning degree work or accommodations in the near future. Certain protective equipment may be required to perform degree work.

"Wisdom, Union, Strength"

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Certain parts of the previous orders will remain in effect until Lodges have opened under Phase-One and Phase One-B. This has allowed for a progressive and eventual re-opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organizations until conditions improve to the point that restrictions are needed.

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 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 Two-A, or any previous order that it is opening under during the 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 by the provisions below 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 Two-A: Re-Opening of Subordinate Masonic Lodges and Appendant Masonic Organization plan, or any previous order that it is currently opening under until further notice.

The following shall be adhered to during Phase Two-A: 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. ALL LODGES SHOULD PREPARE TO OPEN BY MAY 1, 2021. (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. If the person speaking is 6ft away from all other people, they may lower their mask to speak so that they may be heard clearly, but it should be donned as soon as their comment is completed. Officers and members that must speak frequently or for extended periods may have a covered bottled water (if allowed by the lodge). The drink should be covered when not being used. 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 Two-A: 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 Two-A. (See Exception-Works and Ceremonies-Election and Installation of Officers/Degree Work dated September 25, 2020, or newer version.

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 ALLOWED under Phase Two-A if allowed by the Worshipful Master during this Phase. Masters and Wardens/ Square and Compass/County Masonic Clubs may meet if the location/Lodge they are meeting at will allow them to meet there. Prior to such meeting, it is recommended that an agreement be made for the payment of cleaning services if needed.
22. Degree work will still be prohibited at this time under Phase Two-A, HOWEVER, Petitions for degrees can be accepted, investigated, and voted on at this time. Petitions stay approved for 3 months. COVID cases are falling rapidly and we can be ready for degree work the moment restrictions ease to a certain point or alternatives measures are allowed for degree work. *Petitions for Reinstatements, Affiliations, and Dual Memberships (see Article 101 and Section 123 of the Code) may also be received, investigated, and voted on during Phase Two-A.* 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 has authority to call a Special Communication for the purpose of candidate proficiency. Degree Practice can also be performed. Reminder:

All questionnaires, temperature checks, and social distancing must be followed during degree practice.

24. Meals, food, and drink in the lodge building are ALLOWED during Phase Two-A. Meals will only be allowed from a Caterer, boxed lunch, or licensed vendor. Social distancing is still in place while eating unless the participants live in the same house. Face Masks are still required unless you are eating/drinking at the table. Water fountains shall continue to be turned off until further notice. Please show patience during this phase.
25. Fundraisers – Fundraisers involving food prepared by or at the Lodge will be prohibited during Phase Two-A. *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. Other fundraisers are allowed. If you have specific questions please call our Grand Lodge Office.*
26. Voting on constitutional items will be allowed during this part of Phase Two-A *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, INCLUDING 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 3 hours if possible to minimize exposure time.*
28. District Masters and Wardens/Square and Compass Clubs will be ALLOWED during this part of Phase Two-A. NOTE: The Club and the Lodge must be in agreement previous to the meeting as to who will be responsible for any cleaning cost if necessary.
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/Lodge may make/order 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. During Lodge/Building Maintenance, facemasks are NOT required if there is only one person at the Lodge or Building working alone. 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. These cost have fallen tremendously since so many people are performing this service now. 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.
34. Lodge functions in the community such as trash pickup, yard sales, cemetery cleanup are to be done just like any other Lodge function with temp checks, health questionnaire, masks, and social distancing.

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

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 Two-A: 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.

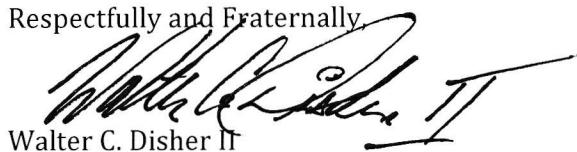
I want to thank each Masonic Brother for his patience during the past year. Our Lodges and Brethren have worked hard to keep each member safe during this crisis.

It was my greatest wish to see our lodges functioning at one hundred percent capacity before leaving office. I am sure we will be back soon after the vaccines have been given. I, like you, can't wait to see good degree work, and good fellowship without ANY 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. Thank You for your compliance to these Phase Orders during the last year. Many of you have shown your ability to do right, respect the life and health your Brethren, prevent community spread of disease, and follow your Grand Lodge. We have a huge petition base waiting to join our ranks. We have the chance to make our Craft better by making sure these hundreds of candidates learn their work before being allowed to move on to the next degree. You, the Brethren have been faithful, and I congratulate your efforts and sacrifice. I look forward to being with you in the near future.

So Mote It Be!

Respectfully and Fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Walter C. Disher II".

Walter C. Disher II

Grand Master of Masons in South Carolina

March 26, 2021