

Some further thoughts on the suspension of Masonic meetings

Part Two – the return

I think it is time to put a few thoughts together on how we might manage the return to some form of Masonic life in the short to medium term future. The recent UGLE bulletin says that:

- *As soon as government guidance changes to allow groups of ten or more people from different households to meet indoors, it is expected that a lifting of the suspension of Masonic activity will be announced. The resumption of meetings will take place fourteen days after the announcement or on the date, if later, on which the government guidance becomes effective.*
- *Lodges and Chapters will be permitted to meet with no more present than the government's prescribed maximum.*

It goes on to make a number of other points concerning what types of meetings might be held and possibly how some of our ceremonies can be adapted to the new situation.

I have assumed that some form of Masonic gathering will be permissible by the time our "season" opens again in September

This paper deals with technical and administrative matters. It does not address the question of the provision of any refreshments at this stage.

You will remember from my first paper that there will a number of options open to Lodges depending on whether or not they have missed

- the Installation meeting, in which case the current Master simply stays in office
- the meeting to Elect a Master, rules by the more complicated Rule 106

It may be that Lodges will now start to consider under which part of the Rule they want to proceed, i.e. whether they want to proceed under the part of the Rule which allows them to Elect a Master at either

- An emergency meeting held three weeks or more before the regular date of the Installation meeting, the Master Elect then being Installed on the regular date of Installation, ("the three-week Rule") or
- At the regular Installation meeting, the Installation of the Master Elect then taking place within five weeks of that Election ("the five-week Rule).

There are other reasons why Lodges might wish to meet even under restricted circumstances to Elect a Treasurer, to confirm subscriptions, to approve accounts, to Elect members to the Hall committee, etc.

For Lodges governed by Rule 106 they may well need emergency meetings under either the three-week Rule or the five-week Rule. The question is how they are to be managed. They will need to be held in a Masonic centre in properly tyled premises. You will need to liaise with the centre to make sure it can accommodate you on the dates you want.

It may be that some Lodges will decide to continue with the same Master for another year. If this is the case then he can be elected at the regular Installation meeting and because no actual Installation ceremony is required, or indeed permissible, he can immediately proceed to appoint and invest his officers.

There is one other point you might want to consider. It is possible, under Rule 139(c) to move the date of a meeting by up to 28 days. If it were thought desirable, this might be a way in which you could buy some more time for things to settle down. For example, a Lodge which has missed its Election date might have an Installation date of 4th October. If it obtained a dispensation to move the date to 1st November it could then Elect a Master at that meeting and then, at an emergency meeting held within five weeks, i.e. by 6th December, Install the Master Elect. This might be a complication too far, but it does give more room for manoeuvre if desired.

In order to get some of the work done you might want to consider meetings of as few as five members, excluding the Tyler. Please refer to the previous paper for the technical details of that.

You will need dispensations for some of these matters, as outlined in the previous paper, but they will be readily forthcoming and will attract no charge.

As before, if you have any questions arising from this paper or the previous one please do not hesitate to get in touch. If you would me like to go through all the options for your particular Lodge then again, please contact me.

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