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TO:-

All Brethren and Companions  
of the Masonic Province of Dorset



13 March 2020

Dear Brethren and Companions,

### **Important Advice regarding the Coronavirus and our Lodge/Chapter Meetings**

It is rare that I write to you all directly; the very fact that I am doing so should make it clear that I am taking the subject of Coronavirus (COVID-19 ) very seriously; I would be very grateful if you would please read this carefully and comply with my wishes regarding how we conduct ourselves over the coming weeks.

We must, if we truly believe in our Masonic Principle of Brotherly Love, do everything in our power to protect any Brother who may be vulnerable to catching this virus. The morbidity rate for the over 75s or those who are vulnerable is frighteningly high – Brethren, this is a serious matter.

The Provincial Grand Secretary sent out UGLE's guidance last week and I trust you have read it. All the guidance is on MIDAS in the "Province for Members" section – please read this carefully but meanwhile, here in Dorset- it is my wish that you follow these steps

We have a duty of care to each other, let's not try and circumvent the instructions, we need to contain the spread of the virus.

### **Every Brother must wash their hands thoroughly when**

- **they enter a Masonic building,**
- **just before and immediately after meetings for 20 seconds with hot water.**

**This advice stands whether you do or do not wear gloves during your ceremonies.**

I ask Committees for Masonic Halls to IMMEDIATELY look at their hand washing facilities. Experts say that the best hand cleanser is a bar of soap rather than Hand Sanitizers.

Ensure that sufficient paper towels are provided (or hot air hand driers) and a large Bin, with a lid, for the disposal of the paper Towels.

Such provision will not over stretch the Hall Budget and is essential in maintaining good hand hygiene.

The incubation period (the time between catching the virus and showing symptoms of the disease) for COVID-19 ranges from 1-14 days but is most commonly around five days. This means we could pass on the virus without even knowing we were ill. Just imagine how devastating it would be if we lost a Brother to this illness simply because we couldn't be bothered to follow these few simple steps or through a stubborn refusal to change our plans? I am certain Grand Lodge will provide us further guidance over the coming days and weeks but there are too many meetings happening each week for us not to act.

I would ask every Brother who feels unwell – for whatever reason - to stay away from his Lodge Meeting until he is better.

The symptoms of Coronavirus are a persistent cough and a temperature above the norm of 37.8C.

If a Brother suspects he has those symptoms he must self-quarantine for at least 7 days. Of course some of us may get the symptoms but they may be so mild as for us not to notice.

All Brethren will have received notification from UGLE today as to guidance. Things are changing so rapidly, and I have to consider the welfare of our Brethren here in Dorset, not the rest of the United Kingdom.

I have therefore taken the decision this morning that, because of our age demographic in Dorset, I **MUST RECOMMEND that ALL LODGES AND CHAPTERS** in the Province follow the detailed Instruction below, as soon as possible and that the instruction remain in force until the situation eases, and I advise accordingly.

#### Detailed instructions.

- **Lodge meetings must only be held with the minimum number of Brethren present.** The Lodge should open and close, the meeting be Minuted and No Festive Board should take place.
  - The **minimum number is for** five Brethren to be present, excluding the Tyler, for a Lodge to be opened or a Degree worked (Rule 119, BoC). Two of those present **must** be members of the Lodge.
  - The meeting **must** be Minuted.
- Regular meetings **must be opened and closed with only minimal work being undertaken and only the necessary Brethren present to carry out that work.** Everyone should keep a minimum distance of 1 metre (Approx. 3 feet) between them.

- **Installation meetings must only be held with the minimum number of Brethren present.**  
The Lodge should open, Installation be carried out, the meeting recorded. No Festive Board should take place.
  - Three Installed Masters are required to form a Board of Installed Masters and carry out the Inner Workings of the Ceremony of Installation.
  - There is no need for actual contact during the meeting; at the Obligation, the Master Elect must be instructed to rise rather than assisted and similarly there is no need for actual contact during the Inner Workings
  - Officers **must** be invested at a later date apart from the Senior and Junior Wardens (unless they are past Masters) who must be invested to comply with Rule 109 of the Book of constitutions.
  - The meeting **must** be Minuted.
- **1st Degree ceremony – Must** be postponed as these could not be undertaken without physical contact between Brethren.
- **2nd Degree ceremony** - Could be undertaken without contact between Brethren but Lodges may wish to consider postponement.
  - the Grips or Tokens must be explained rather than demonstrated.
  - The Candidates must follow the Deacon, either beside or behind.
- **3rd Degree ceremony - Must** be postponed as these could not be undertaken without physical contact between Brethren.
- Demonstrations, Orations, White Tables, any other Talks **must** be postponed.
- The semi-finals of the Dorset Masonic Knowledge Quiz **will** be postponed until a future date.
- All Official Visits by the Provincial Grand Master, The Grand Superintendent and his accompanying Officers will be cancelled with immediate effect.

Keep well Brethren and watch out for my next missive which will inevitably follow in a few days.

Please follow my advice above and this will go some way to keeping all our Brethren healthy, safe and well.

Kind and fraternal regards

