

16th March 2020 - Letter issued by the Grand Lodge of Scotland



The Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland
William Ramsay McGhee, MStJ, D.L., Grand Master Mason

16 March 2020

From today, press conferences will be hosted by the Prime Minister and Senior Ministers on the coronavirus pandemic, supported by scientific and medical experts including the Chief Medical officer Chief Scientific Advisor. The Grand Lodge Of Scotland will abide fully with all recommendations emanating from the Government press conferences. Accordingly, Lodge Secretaries will receive updated advice immediately it becomes available.

Included in their latest announcement is the recommendation that arranging group event of 500 people or more be discouraged. For this very reason we have decided to postpone the Divine Service Scheduled to take place in Glasgow on Sunday 29th March 2020.

I have been asked why we are not following Ireland, Sweden, Denmark and other countries in having a total ban – my understanding is that they have only done so because of Government intervention, if our Government issue similar instruction we will comply immediately for as long as necessary albeit I am aware that many Lodges have significant milestone events during May, June, July and August we will do our best to accommodate those meetings if at possible to do so.

The safety of our members and their families remains paramount - the NHS and BBC Virus update pages remain very useful and can provide far more regular updates than any other source - please visit them regularly to keep yourselves safe and aware of the latest developments **but let me emphasise that those aged 65 or over, especially with respiratory, diabetes or heart issues should refrain from attending meetings.**

Whilst we have not yet imposed a blanket suspension on all Lodge activity throughout the Grand Lodge of Scotland, we do urge our Provincial and District Grand Masters to use their judgement at a local level and take such local decisions as are necessary and I have no hesitation in giving dispensation so to do.

We will constantly be in touch as and when significant updates are available - simply to ensure that you all have access to the best possible guidance and advise.

As a quick guide, the following recommendations are made for the safety of brethren and their families.

- Members who fall into the "higher risk* Category (those over 65 or with underlying health issues should not attend meetings).
- Almoners should try to contact higher risk members (not in person) to check on their welfare.
- Members should refrain from any physical contact at meetings (including handshakes).
- Members who have had close contact with anyone who has had cough, Fever, breathing difficulties within the last 14 days should not attend meetings unless that person has

subsequently tested negative for coronavirus or if anyone in the same house as a member is diagnosed with coronavirus then that members Lodge(s) should all meetings for the next 14 days.

Members have a duty of care to all other Lodge Members and should immediately report a positive coronavirus diagnosis to their Lodge Secretary. Likewise, Members have a duty to report symptoms (cough, fever or breathing difficulty) or any close contact with someone else who has symptoms. Failure to do so puts other members at risk. Upon receiving such notice, the Lodge should consider cancelling all meetings next 14 days, or longer as maybe deemed appropriate,

Yours sincerely and fraternally

Ramsay McGhee
Grand Master Mason