

COVID CRAFT ADAPTATIONS

General

The principal problem is the “social distance” involved. Halving the distance to one metre should make it many times easier not only to maintain the dignity of the ceremonies but also to accommodate a sensible number of Brethren for a meeting. Discreet prompting is an issue, but should not be allowed to lead to any encouragement to Masters to read ceremonies rather than deliver them from memory. Ceremonies with multiple candidates should almost certainly be avoided. A Third Degree should not be carried out under present conditions.

The precise location of Officers will have to be dictated by the size and shape of the room. All must maintain the required social distance, including the **IPM** and the Chaplain (who may therefore have to move to the south of their normal positions). It is suggested that the **JD** sit diagonally opposite the **SD**, at the west end of the front row in the south, and the **IG** at the west end of the front row in the north, diagonally opposite **the DC**.

Compliance with all relevant government requirements is essential, and any deliberate disregard of such requirements should be regarded as activity, which may bring Freemasonry into disrepute and therefore result in disciplinary action.

As a general principle, only one person should handle any individual item of regalia or furniture during the course of a meeting. Singing should also be avoided.

First Degree

The opening and closing involve no insuperable difficulties, but some modification is likely to be needed for opening and closing the VSL and the changing of Tracing Boards. N.B. for a ceremony a pedestal – or a small table – immediately in front of WM’s will be required to take the VSL.

The Candidate for Initiation will be required to prepare himself under the supervision of the Tyler. No slipshod – simply remove right shoe; no cable-tow (Tyler explaining what would normally have happened). Substitute a pair of sunglasses (the darker the better) for hoodwink (Tyler explaining to Can that he would normally be blindfolded).

Ceremony proceeds till WM orders admission of Can.

SD in placing kneeling-stool takes care only to handle the end.

IG opens door. “Do you see this poniard?” Stands aside after Can answers.

JD directs Can to follow him to kneeling-stool.... Directs Can to kneel... Directs Can to stand and step back while kneeling-stool is removed. (NB Deacons do not cross wands for either the prayer or the Obligation)

JD instructs Can to follow him (squaring) round the Lodge to JW’s pedestal; halt facing JW across ped. No “knocks”. Words exchanged; no taking of hand. Repeat at the SW’s pedestal.

(Meanwhile SD does not take p.....d to WM.)

SW does not take Can's hand or give sign.

JD when directed by SW, directs Can to follow him to a position on N side, where he leaves him momentarily while he demonstrates the three steps; then instructs Can to do likewise.

For the obligation EITHER the Lodge VSL will be used (care having been taken not to touch the pages at which it is opened) OR a small VSL brought by Can (or specially bought for the occasion). The Can will be directed to kneel and place his r h on it. The second pair of Cs will be on the north side of whichever VSL is used and the Can will be instructed how to hold them. The WM will not touch the Can's hand or the VSL during the obligation. At the end the Can will seal it in the usual way.

The Can will be restored to light, not by the JD being directed, but with some such formula as "Normally the JD would remove the hoodwink with which you would, up to this point in the ceremony, have been blindfolded. On this occasion, however, you will yourself remove the dark glasses you are wearing, on the count of three. ["One, two, three" to synchronise with movements of gavel.] You will place the glasses in the bag which is in front of you to your right." Continue as normal, but WM does not take Can by r h.

JD instructs Can to take up a position at a social distance from the north of the WM's pedestal.

Ceremony continues as normal, except "...for on your entrance into the Lodge the poniard then shown to you would normally have been presented..... There would likewise have been this cable tow, with a...."

WM demonstrates the G or T with his own r h on his l h and ensures that Can copies. In the exchange which follows the JD must be particularly alert to jump in quickly to prevent the Can giving the word.

Examination at JW's and SW's pedestals as in the first perambulation.

EA apron will need to be on a chair at a social distance from the SW, and Candidate will be told to put it on. SW strikes his own apron on the word "badge".

At the "North East Corner" it is strongly recommended that no alms dish is used, whatever the custom of the Lodge.

Working Tools may need to be on a "distanced" table or chair.

WM should show the Book of Constitutions and by-laws to the candidate, but not hand them to him, telling him that clean/sanitised copies are awaiting him in an envelope outside.

Either immediately before the Can retires, or at the beginning of the Charge, he should be told that the ceremony he has passed through has been conducted somewhat in a modified form to take account of the prevailing pandemic.

NB Maintain a social distance from the SD when Can is seated at the end of the Charge.

Second Degree

Before the meeting begins the Can should be told where he will need to stand for the questions before Passing.

After Can has answered the questions, JD takes him to North of WM's pedestal. WM demonstrates P-G on his own hand.

The Candidate will be required to prepare himself under the supervision of the Tyler. No slipshod – simply remove left shoe.

Ceremony proceeds till WM orders admission of Can.

JD in placing kneeling-stool takes care only to handle the end.

IG opens door. "Do you see this square?" Stands aside after Can answers.

SD directs Can to follow him to kneeling-stool.... Directs Can to kneel..... Directs Can to stand and step back while kneeling-stool is removed. (NB Deacons do not cross wands for either the prayer or the Obligation)

SD instructs Can to follow him (squaring) round the Lodge, salute WM, and to JW's pedestal; halt facing JW across ped. Words exchanged (as in examination in first degree). After saluting SW, turn to face East (at social distance).

After WM's announcement, SD instructs Can to follow him (squaring) round the Lodge, salute WM and JW, and to SW's pedestal; halt facing SW across ped. Words exchanged (i.e. no taking of hand, but P-G demonstrated by Can). SW does not take Can's hand but does give sign.

SD when directed by SW, directs Can to follow him to a position on N side, where he leaves him momentarily while he demonstrates the five steps; then instructs Can to do likewise.

Procedure for the Obligation as in first degree, WM explaining that the Can's left arm would normally have been supported in the angle of the Sq, but on this occasion he will hold his arm unsupported in that position. The WM will not touch the Can's hand or the VSL during the obligation. At the end the Can will seal it in the usual way. WM does not take Can by right hand.

JD instructs Can to take up a position at a social distance from the north of the WM's pedestal.

Ceremony continues as normal. WM demonstrates the G or T with his own r h on his l h and ensures that Can copies. In the exchange, which follows the SD must be particularly alert to jump in quickly to prevent the Can giving the word.

Examination at JW's and SW's pedestals as in the first degree.

FC apron will need to be on a chair at a social distance from the SW, and Candidate will be told to put it on after removing the EA apron.

Working Tools may need to be on a "distanced" table or chair.

No additional modifications required.

Installation

The ceremony of Installation, despite its relative simplicity, poses a number of difficulties of its own because of the conflict between (a) the strong imperative that no object should be touched by more than one person in the course of a meeting and (b) the movement of individual Brethren from one chair to another, with its attendant risk of infection. These difficulties can be greatly diminished, if not actually eliminated, if the practice of the Grand Lodge at the Annual Investiture is followed and, except where it is unavoidable, the outgoing Officers continue to act throughout the meeting, including the closing – even though most will have been replaced in the course of the ceremony. It is therefore strongly recommended in addition that, whatever the normal practice in the Lodge, those Brethren who will occupy the Warden's chairs and act as IG for the Inner Working should take those offices from the very beginning of the meeting to the very end, so that only the Installing Master and the Master Elect will need to change their seats in the course of the meeting. It is also strongly recommended that the Chair for the Master should have no arms, in order to minimise any risk of the occupant passing or receiving infection from touching them. It is suggested that the Master anticipates his investiture as IPM and wears the IPM's collar instead of the Master's from the beginning of the meeting, and that the actual Master's collar and jewel be placed in readiness with the apron for the ME on a convenient chair.

Presentation and Obligation: The ME moves from a conveniently located chair to a position on the floor of the Lodge, facing the Master and about six feet from the latter's pedestal. The DC presents him, either standing in his own place, or from a position beside him at a social distance. Ceremony continues as normal. The procedure at the Obligation (which must not be omitted even for a Past Master) will be similar to that in the case of a candidate in the first or second degree (see above). At the end the ME will seal it in the usual way. IM does not take ME by right hand. ME returns to his conveniently located chair.

MMs in retiring must be careful to maintain a social distance.

Inner Working (Master Mason): It is suggested that the kneeling stool should not be moved and that the ME stand immediately in front of it from the beginning. Prayer and Obligation as in other cases. After the three great lights, IM directs ME to rise, telling him that he would normally take him etc.... Traditional History continues in the normal way except that the G can only be demonstrated (at a distance) by the IM using his r h on his own l w. The ME must invest himself with the apron, and with the collar and jewel, under the IM's direction. IM directs ME to take up a position standing in front of the Master's chair, and adapts the usual words so as to direct him to take his seat in the chair. If possible a spare gavel should be available for the new Master's use. For the IPM: "Brother, I have much pleasure in figuratively investing you with that jewel.....". The salutes are as normal.

Inner Working (Past Master): As above, but ME will only need to put on the Master's collar, and can be safely directed to take his seat in the chair in the manner in which he was installed on a previous occasion.

Perambulations, Investiture of Officers and Addresses: Perambulations as normal (unless, with social distancing, the dimensions of the room render them impracticable – in which case it is suggested that the IM immediately deliver the proclamation in that degree). For Working Tools, it is suggested that the tools are not removed from the box, but are explained *in situ*. The attention of the Master is drawn to the Warrant, Book of Constitutions and the by-laws. If the Lodge has a Hall

Stone Jewel, the new Master should not be invested with it.

Each Officer should stand to be figuratively invested, the Master adjusting the wording to the effect that he draws the notice of the Officer to, e.g., his gavel, column or wand.

Addresses as normal.