

9th April 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

Brethren

April is always a busy month both Masonically and in terms of celebrating our various religious festivals; this Sunday is Easter Sunday, the most important day in the Christian calendar, our Jewish Brethren will celebrate Pesach today, while our Muslim Brethren will start the first day of Ramadan on the 24th and our Sikh Brethren will celebrate Baisakhi on the 14th of the month. May I wish you all continued good health throughout the month to celebrate in the manner of your calling.

Last Saturday, despite coronavirus, we made history by having our first full blown video conference for our District Grand Masters. What a pleasure it was to see so many of the DGM's albeit over the airwaves. 20 out of 26 Districts were able to participate. It is fair to say that all our Lodges in over 40 countries throughout the world are in some form of lockdown. My thanks to Bro Rabhi Jarmakani, our DGM in Lebanon for organising the technicalities of the event.

Over the past few weeks, I have become very aware of the number of Lodges, Provinces and Districts who are all using similar technology to keep the Lodge members in contact with each other. This is commendable and I would encourage Lodges, if possible, to use programmes such as Zoom to facilitate such informal meetings.

Mrs Dawn Oliff, our Homes Manager has very kindly given me the following update on the Homes –

I am very pleased, and relieved, to be able to advise that, at present, the Staff are coping very well. I am in daily touch with both Managers, and generally morale is high and the Staff are committed to taking all the precautions which they can (both inside and outside of work) to enable them to continue to provide care and support for the Residents. In terms of the Residents we have had no instances of Coronavirus.

We are acutely aware that families are unable to visit their loved ones at the present time. To try and combat this, a closed Facebook page has been set up by the Staff in each Home so that messages, pictures and information on life in the Homes can be shared. We have had overwhelming support for this. We are also actively encouraging and facilitating contact via Facetime and telephone calls.

I am incredibly proud of our Staff - no-one has faced this situation before but their training and tried and tested coping mechanisms are standing them in good stead, as is their strong commitment to do the best they can for the Residents.

I'm sure you'd wish me to thank all our staff at both homes so ably led by Mrs Oliff for the tremendous job they are doing in such difficult conditions and to convey to all staff and residents our best wishes for health and strength throughout this very trying and testing time.

As I have mentioned previously, I applaud the efforts of our Provinces, Districts and Lodges as they continue to find ways in which to help each other and their communities. It is very heartening to read, every day, of the various initiatives that are springing up in Lodges everywhere. My sincere thanks to you all for flying the flag of Scottish Freemasonry in such positive and practical ways. Keep the good work going.

Many of our Brethren, their wives and families are heavily involved in various roles in the NHS, in the emergency services and carrying out many essential services in transport, logistics, public transport, in our shops and much, much more. As this virus continues to take a hold, please pause for just a minute each day and give thanks for their commitment, their energy and their courage at this difficult time.

The issue of GDPR has been raised in respect of the updates - the names that I mention are the key members of staff who are continuing to work from home but thanks to their combined efforts keep the wheels of our organisation turning - the telephone numbers that I give out are three temporary numbers which have been purchased so that our members can get in touch if they have a pressing issue. If the names and numbers were not given, it would defeat the object. All I ask is that you don't use the numbers unnecessarily.

Dawn Oliff- 07464 683630, Sue Williams 07881 440272 and Andrew Paterson 07787 217772. Emails to Sue at pa@grandlodgescotland.org will also be picked up and forwarded to the correct person.

Since the last update, the survey continues to grow. My thanks to all Brethren who have participated - the survey will continue for another 20 days after which it will be taken down and the analysis will begin. Still time to complete it if you haven't already done so.

Can I also thank the 175 Secretaries, Treasurers and others who have attended the Database Workshops facilitated by Bro Jimmy Young over the past week. The feedback has been excellent especially in terms of the changes that have been made as a result of the original four workshops. Work will continue to improve the database thanks to your continued feedback.

Please take care of yourselves - stay safe and over the Easter Weekend, please take heed of the Government guidelines and stay home.

Kindest regards to you all.

Ramsay McGhee
Grand Master Mason