

To Provincial Grand Masters, Secretaries and Almoners and to Lodge Masters, Secretaries and Almoners.

Grand Lodge of Scotland
COLLECTION IN AID OF THE BENEVOLENT FUNDS IN TERMS OF LAWS 101 AND 138

Freemasons' Hall
96 George Street
Edinburgh
EH2 3DH
November, 2020

Dear Sir and Brother,

The Right Worshipful Grand Almoner, Brother Thomas Davidson, has asked me to issue the following letter for your consideration.

Yours faithfully and fraternally

William M.S. Semple
Grand Secretary

“Brethren,

Last November, when I was installed as Grand Almoner, little did I suspect the immensely challenging and worrying times that lay ahead for us all. I hope you and your families have remained safe and well during the Pandemic. Looking back to last year, when we were able to attend meetings and to deal with our Masonic business in the traditional way, I don't think that any of us could have predicted the COVID-19 Pandemic, and certainly not the impact which it has had on all our lives and on the Craft.

Whilst we await approval to resume our meetings, and, of course, this letter will therefore not be able to be read in open Lodge in the usual way, I wanted to communicate with you to keep in touch. I also wanted to highlight the excellent work which is being undertaken throughout the Scottish Constitution to provide direct support and in terms of working with other local community organisations which are helping vulnerable and needy people to cope during the unprecedented circumstances resulting from the Pandemic. I had the privilege of reviewing the applications for almost one hundred projects worldwide to access funding from the COVID-19 Challenge Appeal and of learning about the diverse and meaningful projects being organised by Brethren, some projects literally providing a lifeline in local communities. I was also pleased to note the information on projects being shared on the “Scottish Constitution Freemasonry Supports” Facebook page. It is often difficult to find positives at times of adversity but there is no doubt that the generosity, both financially and by deed, of Scottish Freemasons worldwide is something of which to be proud - when the Pandemic comes to an end I feel sure that we will have strengthened our links within our communities as a result of our actions.

I know that in some regions of the world Brethren are also having to deal with very difficult circumstances as well as with the Pandemic and Grand Lodge will try to provide whatever assistance is possible to those affected.

Many of you will, I am sure, be aware of the extremely challenging circumstances which COVID-19 has presented in Care Homes, where the age and health of the Residents mean that they are particularly vulnerable to the effects of the virus. I am pleased and relieved to advise that the Masonic Homes have remained free of the virus and I commend our Staff for their dedication and care.

Whilst we are all living through testing times, the benevolence and charity work of Grand Lodge continues to support Brethren in need and respond to emergencies. I thank you most sincerely for your ongoing support – the charitable work of our Craft would quite simply not be possible without such support”.

Thomas Davidson,
Grand Almoner.

SUMMARY OF GRAND LODGE BENEVOLENCE

	Year to 31/5/20	Year to 31/5/19
Scottish Masonic Benevolent Fund	3,775 Note 1	£ 82,190
Scottish Masonic Benevolent Fund (Extended Scheme)	Nil	386
Scottish Masonic Benevolent Fund (Christmas Gifts)	1,075	2,250
Training Scheme	Nil Note 2	3,000
General Relief Fund	<u>53,710</u> Note 3	<u>44,565</u>
Total Grants	<u>58,560</u>	<u>132,391</u>
Donations received – as apportioned to Benevolent Fund	£ 67,680	£ 78,312

NOTE 1 Due to lockdown restrictions the Annual Grants were not approved prior to the Financial year end so are not included.

NOTE 2 Due to lockdown restrictions the Training Grants were not approved prior to the Financial year end so are not included.

NOTE 3 Figure includes £9,000 in payments made under the COVID-19 Challenge Appeal which were approved in May 2020.