



GRAND LODGE  
FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS  
OF CALIFORNIA  
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GRAND MASTER  
ARTHUR H. WEISS

### **Virtual Stated and Special Meetings** October 19, 2020

At the recently completed 171<sup>st</sup> Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge, Sections 807.000 and 807.010 of the *California Masonic Code* were amended to allow for virtual Stated and Special Meetings when assembling the required number of persons for holding a Stated or Special Meeting is prohibited by competent local, state or national authority, as determined by the Grand Master. I made this determination when I issued my recent decision continuing most of Grand Master Trauner's restrictions on in person Masonic gatherings.

Until further notice is received from me, Lodges may hold virtual Stated and Special Meetings, if the following requirements are met:

1. The meeting must be held using conference telephone, electronic video screen communication or electronic transmission which allows each member of the Lodge participating in the meeting to communicate with all of the other members concurrently. Each member participating must be provided the means of participating in all matters before the meeting, including, without limitation, the capacity to propose, or to interpose an objection to, a specific action to be taken by the Lodge. A lodge may use any software the lodge determines can meet this requirement. I find that the following software can meet this requirement if properly used to satisfy the foregoing conditions: Zoom, Cisco Webex, GoToMeeting, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, ClickMeeting.
2. Such meetings must be held without the Lodge opening or closing ceremonies in the Ritual and without any other esoteric or secret portion of the Ritual.
3. The following business may not be conducted at any such virtual meeting: reports of investigating committees, balloting, examining a candidate in the Candidate's Lecture of any degree or conferring of degrees.
4. During a virtual meeting, all questions should be decided either by a voice vote or by hand. Some virtual meeting software has polling and raise hand features which can be used for voting. If three members request a written ballot on any matter, the presiding officer may specify how the written ballot shall be taken. Among other possibilities, he could specify the polling feature in the virtual meeting software or the distribution of written ballots by mail to those who were in the virtual meeting when the question was called.
5. A Lodge's virtual Stated Meetings shall be held on the same date and at the same time as provided in its Bylaws for in person Stated Meetings. Notice to the Lodge members of the means of electronic access to the virtual Stated Meetings must be given by four days' written notice if mailed or forty-eight hours' notice if delivered personally or by telephone or other electronic means. Once this notice of the means of electronic access to a virtual Stated Meeting has been given, no further notice shall be required unless and until that means of access has been changed. No notice is required for in person Special Meetings. Therefore, no notice is required for virtual Special Meetings.

6. Reasonable steps should be taken to tile virtual meetings. How tiled shall be left to the sound discretion of the presiding officer. As a virtual meeting may not include any esoteric or secret portion of the Ritual, the standard of security at a virtual meeting is less than that required when such portions of the Ritual are communicated. For example, to tile a virtual meeting, the presiding officer might review the gallery of those participating in the virtual meeting to verify each's eligibility to be present and ask for each attending to verify that he has taken all reasonable steps to prevent anyone not eligible to be present from observing or hearing what is happening on his screen. No virtual meeting should be recorded.
7. Except as provided in this letter, all other rules under the *California Masonic Code* applicable to Stated and Special Meetings shall be followed, including without limitation the Code's meeting quorum requirements.
8. If questions arise with respect to the implementation of this decision, the Grand Secretary may be contacted for further guidance.

Attached to this letter are the Virtual Stated Meeting Agenda, the Virtual Special Meeting Agenda, and the script for Virtual Stated and Special Meetings to be used.

If the Lodge cannot comply with these requirements for the November or any subsequent Stated Meeting, the power of the Lodge to appropriate money to pay essential Lodge bills whose payment cannot reasonably be deferred may be exercised by a majority of the elected officers of the Lodge, subject to ratification of their action at the next in person or virtual Stated Meeting of the Lodge. I remind everyone that all Lodge bills paid in this fashion since March 18<sup>th</sup> must be presented at your Lodge's next virtual or in person Stated Meeting for ratification, whichever comes first.

Under the Code, Lodge elections are held annually at the November Stated Meeting. Because of my directive on no in person Masonic gatherings, Lodges may only hold a virtual November Stated Meeting. If your Lodge does not have a virtual November Stated Meeting, an application should promptly be made by the Lodge requesting the Inspector to issue a dispensation to hold the election at another time. A Lodge must hold an election even if the elected officers will continue in their current positions for another year.

It has come to my attention that there may be otherwise qualified Master Masons who seek to be Master or Warden of a Lodge who have not yet received a Certificate of Proficiency in the Candidate's Lecture of the Master Mason Degree. Of course, no one can obtain that certificate until the Lodge can meet again in person at a Stated or Special Meeting to conduct the examination required for the issuance of that certificate. No such Master Mason can be installed Master or a Warden until an in person meeting is again allowed where he has passed his examination. In appropriate circumstances, I would consider a dispensation to allow such a meeting to be held under such conditions as I then might set for that proficiency to be given. Requests should be directed to the Grand Secretary.

This decision shall have no further force or effect after my term as Grand Master ends.

Sincerely and fraternally,



Arthur H. Weiss  
Grand Master

## Virtual Stated Meeting Agenda

### Opening:

1. Verification that all present are Masons
2. Verification that a quorum is present: no fewer than five Master Masons of the Lodge, at least one of whom is the Master or a Warden of the Lodge
3. Prayer at Opening from the *Monitor and Officers' Manual*
4. Declaration that a Lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons is now opened virtually for the transaction of business (Gavel rap)
5. Pledge of Allegiance (optional)
6. Reminder to those present that no signs may be given

The order of business at every virtual Stated Meeting of the Lodge shall be as follows:

1. Reading of the minutes (use form in the *Monitor and Officers' Manual*)
2. Reception of applications
3. Miscellaneous and unfinished business:
  - a. Reports of Special Committees
  - b. Bills and Communications
  - c. New Business

### Closing:

1. Ask if there is any further business to come before this Lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons. If not, proceed to close.
2. Prayer at Closing from the *Monitor and Officers' Manual*
3. Declaration that this Lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons is now closed (Gavel rap)
4. Dismissal

## Virtual Special Meeting Agenda

### Opening:

1. Verification that all present are [Masons][Fellow Craft Masons][Master Masons]
2. Verification that a quorum is present: no fewer than five Master Masons of the Lodge, at least one of whom is the Master or a Warden of the Lodge
3. Prayer at Opening from the *Monitor and Officers' Manual*
4. Declaration that a Lodge of [Entered Apprentice Masons][Fellow Craft Masons][Master Masons] is now opened virtually for the transaction of business (Gavel rap)
5. Pledge of Allegiance
6. Reminder to those present that no signs may be given

The order of business at any virtual Special Meeting of the Lodge shall be limited to:

- Collections or appropriations for charity
- Funeral service
- Installation
- Electing a representative to the Annual or a Special Communication of the Grand Lodge

### Closing:

1. Ask if there is any further business to come before this Lodge of [Entered Apprentice Masons][Fellow Craft Masons][Master Masons]. If not, proceed to close.
2. Prayer at Closing from the *Monitor and Officers' Manual*
3. Declaration that this Lodge of [Entered Apprentice Masons][Fellow Craft Masons][Master Masons] is now closed (Gavel rap)
4. Dismissal

**Virtual Stated and Special Meeting**  
**Script for Opening and Closing**  
Approved October 19, 2020

Officers: The following officers are needed to and open and close the lodge: Master, Senior Warden, Secretary, and Chaplain.

Paraphernalia: The following paraphernalia should be present and visible during the meeting: The Holy Bible, Charter, American flag. The Holy Bible should be open at the start of the meeting without ceremony. If the square and compass are used, they should be separated.

OPENING

MASTER – *\*(gavel rap)*

MASTER – Brother Senior Warden, are all present Masons?

SENIOR WARDEN – Worshipful Master, all present are Masons.

MASTER – Brother Secretary, is there a quorum present to conduct business?

SECRETARY – Worshipful Master, there is a quorum present. *(If a quorum is not present, the business cannot be conducted)*

MASTER – Brother Chaplain, you will lead us in prayer. *(Removes hat)*

CHAPLAIN – Great Architect of the Universe in Thy name we have assembled, and in Thy name we desire to proceed in all our doings. Grant that the sublime principles of Freemasonry may so subdue every discordant passion within us, so harmonize and enrich our hearts with Thine own love and goodness, that the Lodge at this time may humbly reflect that order and beauty which reign forever before Thy throne. Amen.

RESPONSE – So mote it be.

MASTER – I now declare *(lodge name and number)* open for the transaction of business.

MASTER – *\*(gavel rap)*

MASTER – *(Optional at the Master's discretion)* The brethren will kindly repeat with me the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of our Country. *(Master removes hat before and replaces it after the Pledge of Allegiance)*

MASTER – Brethren, I remind you that no signs are to be given during this virtual meeting.

(Continued below)

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

For Stated Meetings:

### Reception of Applications

1. Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business
2. Reports of special committees
3. Bills & communications
4. New business

## CLOSING

MASTER – Is there any other business to come before this lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons? There being none, we will proceed to close.

MASTER – Brother Chaplain, you will lead us in prayer. (*Removes hat*)

CHAPLAIN – Supreme Grand Master! Ruler of Heaven and Earth! Now that we are about to separate, and return to our respective places of abode, wilt thou be pleased so to influence our hearts and minds, that we may each one of us practice out of the lodge the great moral duties which are inculcated in it, and with reverence study and obey the laws which thou hast given us in thy Holy Word. Amen.

RESPONSE – So mote it be.

MASTER – (*Removes hat*) May the blessing of Heaven rest upon us and all regular Masons. May Brotherly love prevail, and every moral and social virtue cement us. Amen. (*Replaces hat*)

RESPONSE – So mote it be.

MASTER – I now declare this lodge of Entered Apprentice Masons to be closed.

MASTER – \* (*gavel rap*)