

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

VISITORS

Applicability and Responsibility

This document is applicable to all Constituent Lodges of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Connecticut, and may be of some use to coordinate and appendant bodies.

Responsibility for maintaining this document rests with the Committee on Masonic Education, and with the approval of the Grand Master.

References

Grand Lodge of Connecticut Constitution, Masonic Law, Practice, Rules and Regulations:

Sections 5000 Visitors Rights and Limitations
through 5008

Sections 5100 Examinations and Avouchments
through 5106

Policy & Procedures Manual, Processions and Introductions

Discussion

Visiting other Lodges is a privilege of every Master Mason. It affords the opportunity to meet new Brothers, to see variations in how other Lodges do things, opens the mind to new ideas and practices, and thus is an invaluable experience.

Just as one would like to be treated with respect, warmth and courtesy when visiting another Lodge, so should every Lodge endeavor to greet and treat visitors. All visitors must be known to the Lodge or must be vouched for by a Brother, or must be examined to ensure that they are qualified to be admitted.

Examination of Visitors

The prompt examination and courteous reception of visiting brethren is necessary to assure a cordial fraternal welcome to duly qualified visitors and to prevent the admission of cowans. A Master is not required to admit every visitor who knocks upon the door of the Lodge, but Masonic courtesy and custom have made it obligatory to receive all regular

Masons who want to visit, provided their presence will not disturb the peace and harmony of the Lodge.

Visitors should be greeted and examined with courtesy and dignity. To leave them standing alone and unrecognized in the hall or reception room is rude. To provide a hastily appointed examining committee at the last minute as the Lodge is about to open is a discourtesy which is aggravated by an indifferent committee which asks few questions and hesitantly agrees to admit the "stranger." It is the Master's responsibility to provide for the proper reception of visitors on every occasion. A permanent committee for this purpose will relieve him of hasty decisions whenever unknown visiting brothers appear.

Welcoming committees, whether permanent or temporary, should greet visitors cordially, check their dues cards or other satisfactory credentials, and determine whether the visitor can be vouched for by a member of the Lodge or, by reference to the visitors' register, whether he has sat in the Lodge before. Visitors who have attended the Lodge on previous occasions, or who can be vouched for, need not be examined. Proper avouchment can be made only by a brother who can lawfully declare that he has sat in Lodge with the visitor, or that he has lawful information that the visitor is a regularly made Mason. The concept of vouching for a visiting brother is based on the phrase "sat in Lodge with him." It should be strictly interpreted.

Lacking a welcoming committee, the visitor's credentials, primarily the dues card, should be verified by the Tiler. Visitors who cannot be vouched for must be examined by a committee appointed by the Master for that purpose. The examination should be thorough enough to convince the members of the committee that they are welcoming a genuine Mason.

A sincere Mason expects such testing of his Masonic knowledge. He should know the position of the square and compasses in each degree. He should know a reasonable portion of the lectures, of the working tools and their uses, of the words and modes of recognition, and of the fundamental tenets of the order. He should be familiar with the various rites, such as the reception of candidates, circumambulation, and the preparation of initiates.

Excessive interrogation which insists on a complete rehearsal of all three degrees is neither necessary nor courteous. The visitor should be examined quietly and privately. The atmosphere should be friendly and helpful. The Three Great Lights should be displayed. All concerned in the examination should place their right hands on the Three Great Lights and repeat together in unison:

The Tiler's Oath

"I, A. B., in the presence of Almighty God, do hereby and hereon most solemnly swear that I have been regularly initiated, passed, and raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason in a just and lawfully constituted Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, that I am not suspended or expelled, and know of no just cause why I should be; so help me, God."

Reception of Visitors

Every Lodge may develop its own method of receiving visitors. However, when a visiting brother has been examined or vouched for, he should be introduced to the Master or Senior Warden if the Lodge has not yet been opened. Otherwise, he should be escorted by a member of the committee into the Lodge, after proper alarm by the Tiler and the Junior Deacon's response. In the Lodge the visitor is conducted west of the altar and introduced to the Master. His name, Lodge, and titles should be clearly announced by his guide.

Some Masters make quite a ceremony of acknowledging and greeting the visitor at this point. If other visitors are present, having been admitted before the Lodge opened, they may feel unequally treated. It is more courteous to greet the visitor briefly and welcome him more formally when all the visiting brethren are introduced. Where a welcoming committee is used, a Master may ask all visitors to remain in the ante-room to be escorted into the Lodge as a group. This method honors all the visitors and impresses them with the Lodge's dignity and decorum.

Some Lodges have the welcoming committee, or Tiler, fill out visitors cards on which are recorded the visitor's name, Lodge and number, and titles. These cards are given to the Worshipful Master, who can then call on each visitor during the communication. Each one stands when his name is called. When all are on their feet, the Master greets them all and may invite visiting Masters and Past Masters to sit in the East.

This is a more efficient manner in which to receive visitors. It is far more dignified than asking them to introduce themselves. Some Masters appoint the Senior Deacon to learn the name, Lodge, and titles of visitors and to introduce them to the Lodge. The Master greets them when all have been recognized. In the case of a large number of visitors, he may request the Lodge to refrain from applauding until all the visitors have been introduced and welcomed.

Special courtesies extended to visiting Masters and Past Masters are always appreciated. Such visitors may be, for example, escorted by Past Masters of the Lodge and introduced separately at the altar.

Reception of Distinguished Guests

The Policy and Procedures Manual Document, "Processions and Introductions", provides detailed information on how to receive distinguished guests such as the District Deputy on his official visit for inspection, or the Grand Master and his suite of officers.

A District Deputy, as the representative of the Grand Master, is entitled to be received with private Grand Honors when he makes his annual official visitation to a Lodge for the purpose of inspection, or when he is specially commissioned by the Grand Master as his representative to perform some specific Masonic service. On casual visits, it is not obligatory. Any brother specifically commissioned by the Grand Master as his personal representative shall receive private Grand Honors.

All distinguished visitors, other than Grand Masters or their official representatives and Past Grand Masters, should be received with every possible courtesy and hospitality, be introduced before the altar, invited to a seat in the East, and a hearty welcome extended

to each. Private Grand Honors should be reserved for Grand Masters or their official representatives, for Past Grand Masters, and for the Worshipful Master of a Lodge as part of the installation ceremony.

Offers of the gavel should be confined to the Grand Master, the District Grand Lodge Officer, and to the District Deputy when he appears for an official inspection, to someone specifically commissioned by the Grand Master as his representative to perform some specific Masonic service, to the Master of a visiting Lodge, or to an acting Master of a degree team, who, with his officers, is to exemplify degree work.

Remarks

At the end of the program for the day, visitors and distinguished guests may be called upon for remarks. In doing so, the order is from junior to senior. Depending on how many guests he has, the Master may select a very few to speak. It is suggested that this should include the Master of a visiting degree team or contingent of visitors, the District Deputy, District Grand Lodge Officer, and the Deputy Grand Master or Grand Master if present. After the senior visitor has spoken, the Master should immediately proceed to close the Lodge without permitting any other brother to speak.

Miscellaneous Courtesies and Procedures

At dinners, the Master and toastmaster are seated at the center of the head table, with the Grand Master or District Grand Lodge Officer or District Deputy on their right and the Chaplain on their left. The Master should be sure to invite guests to the head table and show them where they are to be seated.

In parades or processions, the national colors and/or lodge banner should immediately follow the Marshal or Tiler (they are not carried at funerals).

When the Master learns of the illness of a member, he should make every effort to visit him in person or deputize some other officer or his sick and visiting committee to do so. On learning of the death of a member the Master should visit the family as soon as possible. He should agree to have the Lodge conduct the Masonic funeral service, if it is requested. (The funeral director should know all the plans.) At the close of the service, the Master should endeavor to speak to the family. It is an excellent idea for him to visit the family again a week or two later and to again offer his services in any problem that may have arisen.