

THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

OF THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER

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:

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| Section 1003 vii | The Master is the Head of the Lodge. |
| Section 1003 xiii. | No person can be installed Master of a Lodge unless he be a Past Warden, except by dispensation of the Grand Master. |
| Section 2301 | Penalty if Lodge is not represented at Regular Grand Lodge Communication. |
| Section 2304 | Voting and Balloting at Grand Lodge |
| Section 3200 | Who are Officers of a Lodge |
| Section 3201 | Certain Officers to be elected annually. |
| Section 3207 | Prerogatives of the Master, defined |
| Section 3208 | Duties of the Master, defined |
| Section 3209 | Extent of powers of Master |
| Sections 3210
through 3217. | Further on the powers and authority of the Master |
| Section 3224 | Duty of Master and Wardens to attend regular Grand Lodge Communications, requirements of proxies |
| Section 3404 | Master responsible for omission of Stated Communication |

Section 5001	Master alone has the power to admit or exclude a visitor
Section 5104	Duty of Master to order examination if not satisfied with avouchment
Section 7006	When Master may permit another to confer degrees
Section 7100	Master-elect must receive Past Master degree

Policy & Procedures Manual – All Documents, especially Qualification of Master

Numerous Articles and Books

Discussion

As stated in the Landmarks, the Master is the Head of the Lodge. By this is meant much more than simply the presiding officer over a deliberative body such as a legislative body, association or club. The Worshipful Master of a Lodge of Freemasons has unusual powers and prerogatives. He is not bound by any system of parliamentary procedure, his decisions cannot be over-ruled by the Lodge, and he is expected to take a very active role in the planning and execution of the Lodge program. In addition to presiding, he is the business manager of the Lodge, its inspirational leader and motivator, and disciplinarian when necessary. Only the Grand Lodge, the Grand Master or his designated representatives have authority over the Master of a Lodge. It is a position of great authority, but likewise of great responsibility, and worthy of great respect.

While this document describes duties and responsibilities of the Master based upon the Grand Lodge Rules and Regulations, it also contains many suggestions which are not mandatory, but which if followed, will enrich the experience of the Master during his term of office, and will also be of significant benefit to his Lodge.

Preparation

The brother who hopes to become Worshipful Master of his Lodge should begin his preparation for the office well before his installation. Some Lodges are fortunate enough to have progressive officer lines, and those are the lucky brothers who will have several years of preparation. But regardless, it is well to commence detailed preparation as much as two years prior to being installed.

The minimum qualifications to be installed as Master of a Lodge are to be a Past Warden and to meet the requirements of the Policy and Procedures Manual document regarding Qualification of Master. But much more can and should be done.

Active work on Lodge committees, attendance at Grand Lodge seminars and training programs, visiting other Lodges, reading and studying the Grand Lodge Rules and Regulations, especially the references cited above, familiarization with the Policy and Procedures Manual, Nickerson's Digest and most especially the Bylaws of the Lodge will improve the general and specific Masonic knowledge of the prospective Master. Observation of how current Lodge officers perform (or fail to perform) their duties will provide examples of what to do and what not to do.

As he is about to become the chief executive of his Lodge, the prospective Master will be responsible for the conduct, records, finances, work, and progress of his Lodge, and for its compliance with the written and unwritten laws of the Grand Lodge and for maintaining Masonic tradition and custom. He must therefore organize the members of his Lodge into various committees to promote the Lodge's work and welfare. This means that he must have plans and projects to carry on his Lodge's labors in the areas of ritual, attendance, membership, investigation of candidates, charity and benevolence, programs, social activities, Masonic information, financial responsibility, public relations, and publicity.

A successful Master plans well in advance, not only in the choice of his appointive officers, but also the make-up of his committees. He should start early to line up the men he wants to carry out his policies. Waiting until the election may be too late, and early notification will get them thinking early as well.

Consequently, it is the Master's prerogative to appoint all committees and to be ex-officio chairman thereof. He should consult his officers and/or Past Masters for suggestions and advice; still, he must choose all committees. The responsibilities of such appointments belong solely to the Master.

Detailed planning for the term as Master should begin at least one year prior to installation. This is when events are placed on the calendar and brethren should be chosen to chair committees and events. It is also the time to develop estimates of costs so that the budget can be prepared. The objective is to have the year planned in advance so that the brethren know what to expect, who is going to do it, when it will occur and how much it will cost or how it will be financed. With this level of planning accomplished, the Master is free to monitor progress, trouble-shoot, and make changes if required, but does not have to start fresh with each planned activity.

The prospective Master must prepare—well in advance of his year—general plans for his term of office. As his installation approaches, he should have his trestle board laid out in detail for at least the first half of the year. In so doing, it is important to recognize that surprises will occur and that things do change; the wise Master does not schedule himself and his Lodge so tightly that one badly timed snowstorm will wreak havoc for the entire term.

Once plans are made, these must be communicated, first to members of the Lodge so as to gain their support, and then, as appropriate, to the broader community. This can include members of Masons' families, Masonic widows, and prospective applicants.

With the overall plan in hand, the prospective Master should submit to the Committee on Masonic Education his intention to participate in the Masters Achievement Award program. In addition, the prospective Master must receive the Actual Past Master degree prior to his installation. This may be in a Lodge of Actual Past Masters, or may be conferred by the Past Masters of his Lodge immediately prior to the installation.

The Worshipful Master

Upon installation, the Worshipful Master is invested with all the powers, prerogatives, duties and responsibilities of the office, and is expected to immediately commence his leadership of the Lodge.

By the prerogatives of the Worshipful Master are meant the inherent rights and authority he possesses by virtue of his office. These were freely acknowledged by his brethren when they elected him, in recognition of his ability to exercise them properly. The duties of his office are numerous; they are thoroughly detailed in the *Grand Lodge Constitution, Masonic Law, Practice, Rules and Regulations*, especially in the Sections listed in the above References.

The position of Worshipful Master is one of great responsibility. He should therefore seek the advice of experienced brethren, but should not forget that all decisions rest with him. If in doubt and competent advice is not immediately available, action should be postponed if possible, until the next stated communication. Regular conferences should be held with the officers, not only to familiarize them with the work of the Lodge, but also to train them for future responsibility and as well that the Master may have the benefit of their viewpoint.

Ritual work is something which sets Masonry apart from other organizations. The Worshipful Master is responsible for the conduct of all ritual within his Lodge. The Master should have a thorough knowledge of the ritual. He should study and learn the lessons it teaches and be proficient. He should see that no candidate in any degree suffers degradation or humiliation. There should be NO EXCEPTION to this rule.

Local Lodge tradition may demand that a Master recite every part of the work himself — preamble, obligations, working tools, charges, etc. Common sense suggests that not every brother reaching the Oriental Chair is capable of doing that amount of ritual in a manner which will educate and inspire the candidate.

It is the Master's privilege to call on another brother to preside over the Lodge or to perform the ritualistic work, however, he remains responsible to the Grand Lodge and Grand Master for all actions in his Lodge during his term of office. Contrary to opinions of many brothers, **any** brother can perform any part of the ritual in the opening, closing, or any degree. The requirement is that the Master (or in his absence, the Senior Warden, or Junior Warden, or the Grand Master, District Deputy, or a brother specifically deputized for the purpose by the Grand Master) congregate his Lodge; thereafter, any capable brother may perform as requested by the presiding officer. This may vary during a Lodge's official inspection, but even in that instance, if the Lodge customarily expects someone other than the Master to preside over a specific degree, it is generally acceptable to the Grand Lodge.

The Master will be addressed as "Worshipful Master." It is one of the archaic terms Freemasons use, attesting to the age of the order. The dictionary defines it as "worthy of honor by reason of character or position." In Masonry, the title is given not only because of position attained, but because the character of the individual justifies the honor. In the Old Charges of Masonry we are told "All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only." From the word "worth" comes the term "worshipful" as we use it. The Master must justify in his own life, by deed and action, the title he bears and be worthy of the honor which his brethren have conferred upon him.

Every Master knows that his duty is to "set the Craft to work". The lack of interest in some Lodges may well be attributed to the fact that the Master does not set the craft to work. People like to have a part in the work that is being done. Masonry affords many opportunities for such work. Convince a brother that he is helping and he becomes enthusiastic. The Master should study his members, learn what each likes to do best, and try to give everyone something to do that he likes.

The Worshipful Master alone is responsible to see that his Lodge and his brethren obey and uphold the bylaws of the Lodge, and also the laws and rules of the Grand Lodge of Connecticut. He should also be familiar with the unwritten rules of Masonry, that he may avoid a breach of Masonic custom. He has the right and duty to call his Lodge into its stated communication on the day and at the hour specified in the bylaws. He has the power to call special communications of his Lodge at his will and pleasure in order to confer degrees or to transact any business not prohibited by the *Grand Lodge Constitution, Masonic Law, Practice, Rules and Regulations*.

It is the duty of the Worshipful Master to see that the minutes and records are carefully kept by the Secretary, and that nothing improper is included in them. In like manner, he is responsible for the financial records of the Lodge; he should keep himself thoroughly informed of the fiscal health and needs of the Lodge, and initiate action to keep his Lodge solvent. In this area he needs to be concerned with members delinquent in their dues, with special projects requiring financial support, and with the annual Lodge budget. He, not the Secretary, is responsible for all reports to Grand Lodge.

The Treasurer and Secretary are most directly involved in the day-to-day administration of the Lodge, and the vast majority of these officers handle their duties with great skill and fidelity. Still, as noted in the installation ceremony, the Master is "to have general supervision" over the duties of the Secretary and the disbursements of the Treasurer. No Master should ever be afraid to ask either of these officers for information or assistance at any time. The Lodge always has the right to know its financial condition, and the careful Master will ascertain that the budget, developed at the beginning of his year, is as closely adhered to as possible.

While it is true that the Master has "general supervision" over the duties of both the Treasurer and Secretary, it is also true that decisions involving the financial commitment of the Lodge may only be made with the consent of the brethren. No Master (or other officer or past officer) has the right to expend Lodge funds without formal approval of the craft.

As chief executive officer, the Worshipful Master is responsible for the programs of the Lodge. The day is long past when he can depend on ritual work to keep his members interested in attending Lodge. While the degree work is the most important Masonic labor that he and his officers perform, a variety of programs must be furnished if a Master wants to begin to solve the problem of poor attendance. He must be willing to work hard arranging events which will not only interest, but also instruct the brethren. He must be concerned with policies rather than details and delegate the latter to carefully chosen committees. He must not become bogged down in details.

It is the Worshipful Master's privilege and duty to attend all communications of his Lodge, and to preside therein, except when he may be required to surrender the chair during the official visit of the District Deputy, the Grand Master, or his duly appointed representative.

If the Master is absent from a communication, the Senior Warden is empowered to open the Lodge, to preside over its activities, and to close the Lodge. If both Master and Senior Warden are absent, the Junior Warden succeeds them for that particular communication. In case of the absence of the Master and both Wardens, the Lodge cannot be opened by any person except the Grand Master, the District Deputy, or a brother appointed by the Grand Master for that purpose.

It is the duty of the Worshipful Master to regulate the admission or exclusion of visitors to his Lodge. He must be satisfied, by due examination or proper avouchment, that every visitor is a regularly made Mason in good standing. He must see to it that all visitors are courteously received, but if any member of his Lodge objects to sitting in Lodge with a visitor, he has the power to exclude that visitor. There may also be occasions when the Lodge plans to discuss private business which it would prefer not to share with a visitor. The Master cannot, however, exclude the Grand Master, District Deputy, or any other brother granted "visit and preside" authority by the Grand Master.

The Master should keep in mind that he is to govern his Lodge for the good of the craft and not for his own glory, that he is to exercise his authority kindly but firmly, with as little display of authority as possible, and that, in deciding points of order on which he is in doubt, he should give the best interests of the craft the benefit of the doubt. If he does, he will win the respect of his brethren. He has the power to control, limit, or to terminate debate on any subject or motion in his Lodge. This power must not be exercised arbitrarily or emotionally; it should be used judiciously and impartially. It is also his right to discuss all questions without surrendering his station. By duty and custom, he should never leave his station except as the ritualistic ceremonies require it.

The Worshipful Master has unusual powers and prerogatives. He alone determines the order of business in his Lodge. He may propose questions without a motion. He controls debate and determines who may speak and for how long. He may decide a tie vote with an additional vote of his own. He may speak to the question without surrendering the gavel. He may postpone an item of business until a later hour or to a future stated communication. These and other powers must be exercised with great care to see that the brethren do not feel "railroaded" or abused.

Since it is the Worshipful Master's duty "to preserve order in the Lodge," it is his prerogative to direct and control the conduct of his brethren in the Lodge. If necessary, he may remove from the Lodge any disrespectful or disobedient member, using his Deacons or others for that purpose, in which case, Masonic charges should be preferred. In all cases, his decision is final, and no appeal can be taken to his Lodge. Only the Grand Lodge has the power to reverse the decision of the Master of a Lodge.

It is also his duty to "instruct the brethren." This implies much more than teaching candidates to memorize the lectures. It means that he is required to give his brethren "good and wholesome instruction for their labors." In this area, he would do well to inform himself of the work of the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education, the Research Lodges, and numerous other sources of Masonic information. He should appoint a Masonic education committee and encourage its labors. One of the most important needs of Freemasonry is a consistent, effective program for stimulating the curiosity of its members about Masonic history, philosophy, symbolism, morality, charitable works, and its distinguished leaders.

The Master should be willing to take advantage of all the help he can get. The District Deputy knows who in the district can be of help and can provide guidance. Members of the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Education, Past Masters of the Lodge and other leaders will appreciate the opportunity to assist.

By ancient custom, the Master has the right to install his successor in office. At his discretion, and in concert with his elected successor, he may delegate this duty to a Past Master skilled in Masonic ritual and ceremonies.

A special responsibility of the Master is the appointment of investigating committees, which will interview applicants for Masonry. The committees must take their responsibility seriously, recognizing the twofold obligation they have assumed: to the Lodge, in being certain the applicant is a man of whom Masonry will be proud; and to the applicant, in providing to him and his family honest answers to their questions, and correct information about the fraternity.

The Master must appoint a committee to investigate any charges against a member of his Lodge. He has no power to revoke a resolution of his Lodge after it is duly adopted. He cannot excuse any brother of his Lodge from balloting on a candidate or petitioner. He must appoint committees provided for in the bylaws of his Lodge. It is his duty, as well as a prerogative, to attend the regular communications of the Grand Lodge as the principal representative of his Lodge; he should make it a habit to attend all district meetings, and arrange for his Lodge's full representation at these sessions. He should visit Lodges in his area to promote Brotherhood and exchange information.

Above all, it is his duty "to be a good example to his brethren." Considering the tenets and ideals of Freemasonry, this is a duty that demands the finest exemplification of Masonic virtues that "a good man and true" is capable of—and nothing less is acceptable in a Lodge that truly stands for Brotherly Love and Truth.

All this is not to say that the Master must handle all of the work alone. A wise Worshipful Master will enlist the Senior Warden and Junior Warden as a part of the management team along with the Treasurer and Secretary. The Wardens are likely to succeed to the duties of the East in the near future and will greatly benefit from the learning experience of working closely with the Master as he maps out plans for the year and carries them forward. The Treasurer and Secretary often serve in their stations for many years, and have gained much experience and wisdom that they would happily share with the other Lodge officers. Also to be considered in many Lodges are the trustees, whose wise handling of investment funds may be critical to the day-to-day operations of the Lodge.

A Master who arouses and keeps the interest of his members through well planned programs and other activities will have the satisfaction of knowing that he did his best for his Lodge, and can retire to the ranks of the Past Masters with pride.

The Past Master

Upon completion of his term of office, the new Past Master should assemble his report and submit his entry to the Committee on Masonic Education for the Masters Achievement Award.

As a Past Master, he will be called upon by subsequent Masters to provide his advice and share the expertise gained by his successful term of office.