



# GM's Proclamation & Decisions

EDUCATIONAL COMPONENT OF  
28 APRIL 2020 MEETING

BY: CODY M. COCKROFT

## **GRAND MASTER'S PROCLAMATION**

### **Cancellation of Stated and Called Meetings**

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused substantial and material disruptions in the lives of all Americans, including the activities of Texas Masonic Lodges. For this reason, I issued an Order cancelling all gatherings of Texas Masons which were anticipated to exceed ten in number. This Order included stated meetings of Lodges for an indefinite period of time unless, in the discretion of the officers and members of the Lodge, the meeting would be in the best interest of the Lodge and, most importantly, would not pose a risk to the health of those attending.

Since that time, the Governor of Texas and state public health officials have strongly discouraged all meetings of ten or more individuals. At this time, it is not known when the pandemic will end or whether the conditions that are now occurring in Texas will worsen.

The charge of the Worshipful Master given and accepted at every installation requires, among other things, that he "cheerfully conform to the laws of the country in which he resides". The action taken in this proclamation is consistent with the above affirmation.

Because of danger to human life that presently exists, and the directions of various officials of the State of Texas concerning the risks of holding meetings, I am today issuing the following Proclamation:

It is ORDERED that no Texas Lodge may hold a stated or called meeting until this order is rescinded by subsequent proclamation of the Grand Master.

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I and your Grand Lodge Trustees are well aware that this Order will cause substantial disruption in the operations of Texas Lodges, including perhaps the election and installation of Lodge officers. However, the existing world-wide crisis requires the Grand Lodge of Texas to take extraordinary action to protect the lives of its members and follow the lawful directives of Federal, State, and local authorities.

Paul D. Underwood,  
Grand Master – 2020  
(Published March 21, 2020)

GM  
Proclamation

**Grand Master's Decision 2020 No. 1**

QUESTION: Does the Grand Master have authority to indefinitely suspend stated and called meetings of the Lodge?

ANSWER: Yes, if a local, state, national or world crisis exists that would warrant such action. This would include pandemics or other crises that result in national, state and/or local orders directing or requiring such suspension of such meetings. Although, at present, there is no specific authority in our Grand Lodge law authorizing such action, nevertheless, the Grand Master has the power and duty to superintend and direct Masonic activities and to ensure compliance with all national, state or local orders directly pertaining to the operations of the Craft.

Paul D. Underwood  
Grand Master – 2020  
(Published March 27, 2020)

# GM Decision No. 1

# The Grand Lodge of Texas

ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS

*Message from the Grand Master*

Wednesday, April 15, 2020

## GRAND MASTER'S DECISION N<sup>o</sup>. 2

QUESTION:

May the esoteric work of Masonry be studied by telephone between two brothers known to each other?

ANSWER:

Yes. The two brothers must know each other as Masons and must assure each other, as far as practical, that the telephonic "voice-only" conversation is secure and is between those two brothers only. No other electronic or digital video or audio platform, service or device is permitted.



Paul D. Underwood  
Grand Master, 2020



# Grand Master Decision No. 2

# Quick Discussion & Meaning of the Edict

- Timeline & Response of the Grand Lodge of Texas
- Decision No. 1: Indefinite Suspension of Stated and Called Meetings (for the good of the Order)
- Decision No. 2: Appropriate (Lawful) studies
  - By telephone only
  - By two Brothers only (each to satisfy himself)
- Personal Thoughts
  - Big step forward
  - Decision expresses esoteric work. We should understand this to include ritual, “secrets”, discussion on allegory, etc



# Ecclesiastes 12:1-7

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# Background & Context

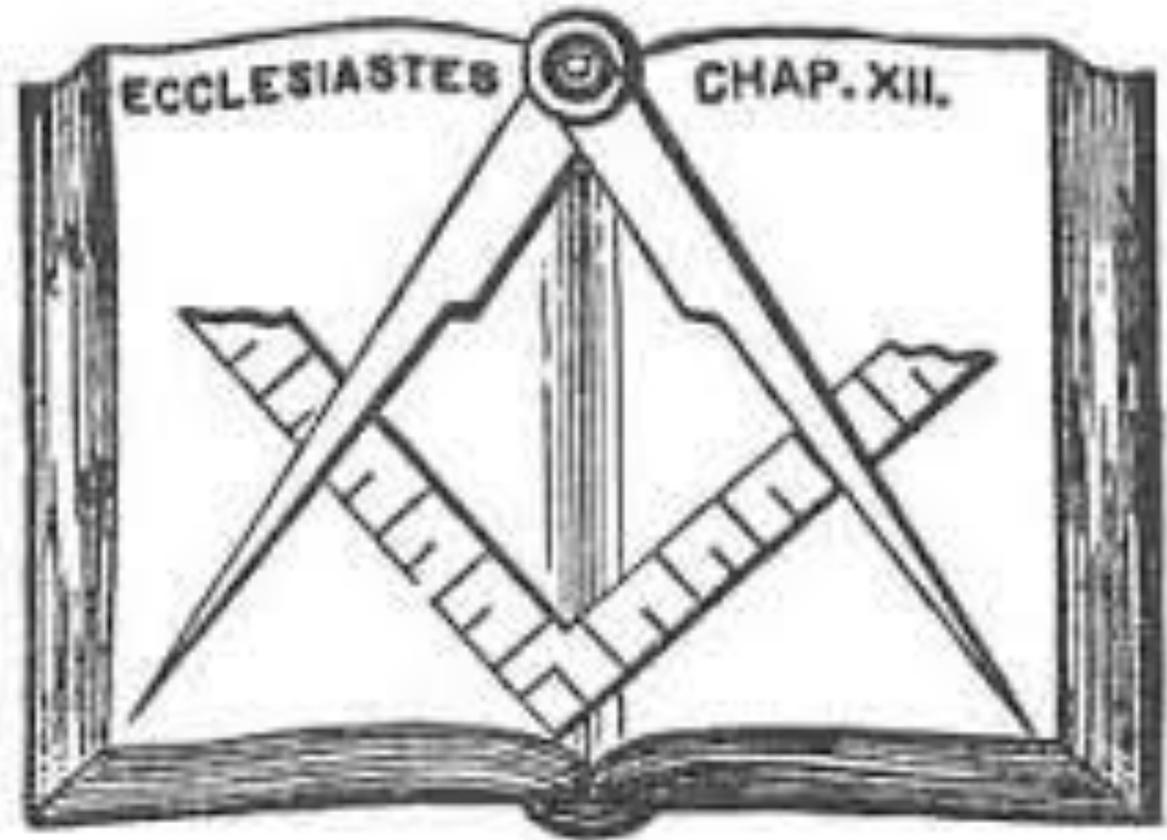
- ▶ Three primary books of Wisdom found in the Great Light
  - ▶ Job, Proverbs & Ecclesiastes
- ▶ Similar to Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
  - ▶ Is a book of instruction (or Didactic)
  - ▶ Written to and for the reader
  - ▶ Practical and philosophical issues of life (“living under the sun”)
  - ▶ Think of it as a graduate level course of ancient times
- ▶ Unlike Proverbs, Ecclesiastes
  - ▶ Written for a more mature audience (like Job) and who are capable of dealing with dark and difficult life questions
  - ▶ Written for the ancient elite and educated

# Background & Context Continued

- ▶ Author refers to himself as the “Preacher” (KJV) / “Teacher” (NIV); “Son of David” and “King in Jerusalem”. Scholars generally agree the author is Solomon.
- ▶ Reign: 970 – 930 B.C.; Temple Construction: 970 to 931 B.C. (Kings 9:10.....took 20 years)
- ▶ Aware of other ancient texts from Mesopotamia and Egypt, e.g., “Epic of Gilgamesh” and “Egyptian Harper Songs”, respectively.
- ▶ With all his wealth and wisdom, Solomon describes life as a puzzle that perplexed him. His quest (pilgrimage) is to take the reader along for the pleasures of the flesh, accumulation of wealth, and the reality of death.

# Background & Context Continued

- ▶ We SHOULD learn from Solomon
  - ▶ His mistakes
  - ▶ Living independently from God is like “chasing the wind” – **ABSOLUTE FUTILITY**



# 12:1

- ▶ Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth
  - ▶ Many young and middle-aged people overlook their surroundings and God, but as old age comes to them they start to become concerned with how they have arrived at where they are. The audience is encouraged to look at the world through the lens of the Word, especially while they are young. Make God your central reference point
- ▶ While the evil days come not
  - ▶ When your body and mind don't work the way they did in youth
- ▶ Nor the years draw nigh
  - ▶ Your time and years are drawing to a close
- ▶ When thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them
  - ▶ When you can't do that which took no effort in youth to do, and now all you can do is sit and watch or have someone else do it for you



# 12:2

- ▶ While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened
  - ▶ When death finally prevails and you are no longer part of the wonders of life and nature
- ▶ Nor the clouds return, after the rain
  - ▶ Rains created new growth and life, a fresh start. And the sun or the stars once again appear



# 12:3

- ▶ In the day when the keepers or the house shall tremble
  - ▶ The keepers or the house are the hands, the arms, and legs, the trembling comes with the feebleness of old age
- ▶ And the strong men shall bow themselves
  - ▶ When they become stooped over, or bow legged, no longer able to stand erect
- ▶ And the grinders cease because they are few
  - ▶ The grinders are the teeth, which can be very few (in old age)
- ▶ And those that look out of the windows be darkened
  - ▶ The windows are the eyes. Failing sight is a trait common to old age



# 12:4

- ▶ And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low
  - ▶ The doors are the lips, the streets are the mouth by which nourishment enters, and the sound of the grinding is the human voice. In old age when the teeth are lost, mumbling is a very common attribute
- ▶ And he shall rise up at the voice of the birds
  - ▶ The birds is the crowing cock. In old age mankind is more restless in his slumbers, and early rising is a habit with many
- ▶ And all the daughters of music shall be brought low
  - ▶ The daughters of music are the ears. The voice loses its strength and hearing becomes less acute in the aged



# 12:5

- ▶ Also, when they shall be afraid of that which is high
  - ▶ In the declining years, men fear to scale the heights which in their prime they ascended with ease
- ▶ And fears shall be in the way
  - ▶ Timidity is a common fault of older people. They are filled with apprehension at the first sign of danger
- ▶ And the almond tree shall flourish
  - ▶ It refers to the white flower of that tree and the allegorical significance is to old age, when the hair of the head shall become white or gray
- ▶ And the grasshopper shall be a burden
  - ▶ To the weakness of old age, even the weight of so small a thing as a grasshopper, is a burden, or a pest



# 12:5

## Continued

- ▶ And desire shall fail
  - ▶ The appetites and desires of youth cease in the declining years
- ▶ Because man goeth to his long home
  - ▶ Literally to his grave. Or to that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns
- ▶ And the mourners go about the streets
  - ▶ This refers to the original custom of having official mourners, who make public lamentations for the dead



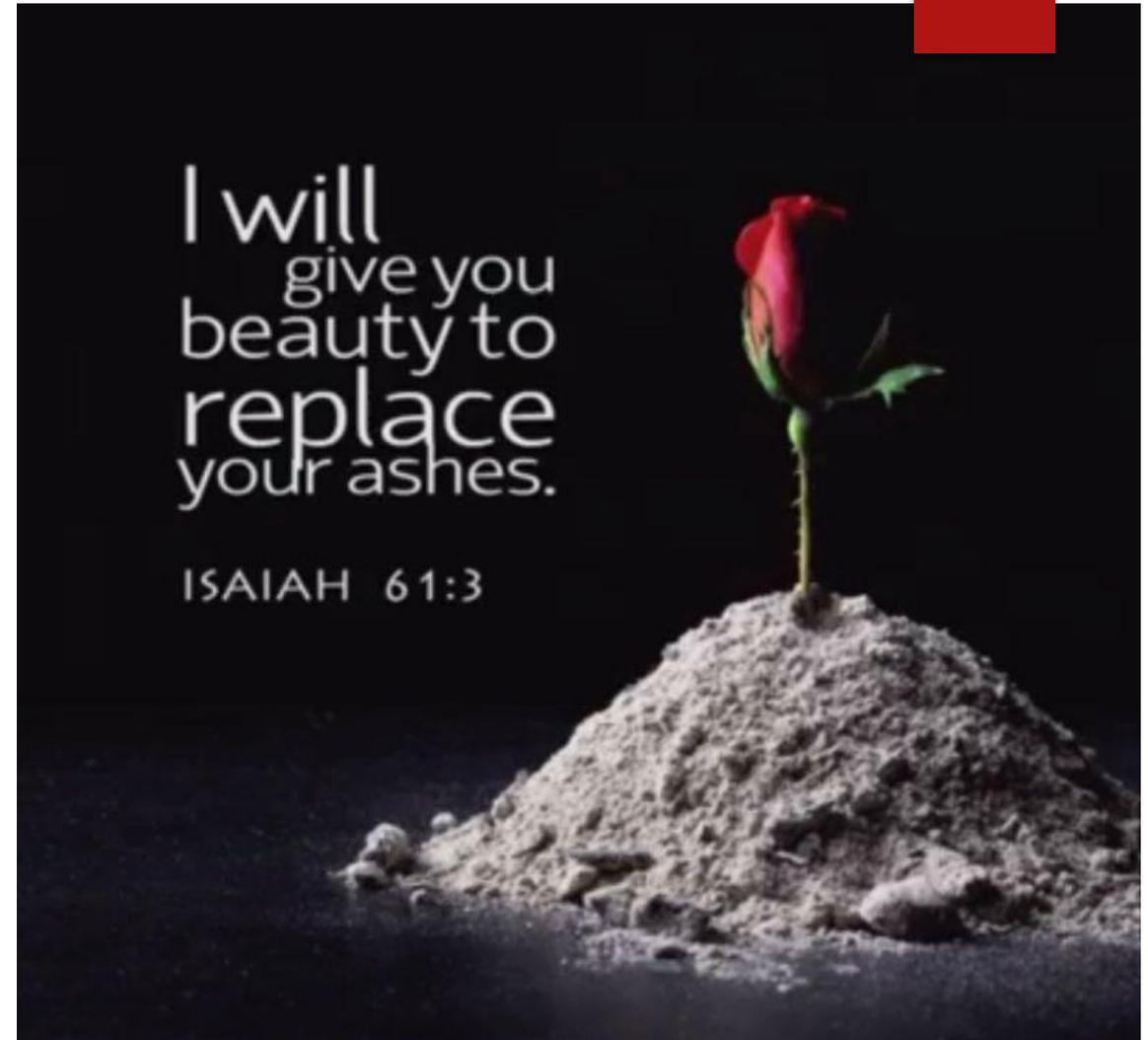
# 12:6

- ▶ Or ever the silver cord be loosed
  - ▶ The silver cord is that spiritual cord which connects man to his God the same way an umbilical cord connects the baby to its mother. This is an illustration of the fragility of life. The “silver chord” and the “golden bowl” picture a hanging lamp suspended by a silver chain. If one link snaps, its light is extinguished, and the beauty perishes.
- ▶ Or the golden bowl be broken
  - ▶ The skull is called the golden bowl, from it's yellow color
- ▶ Or the pitcher be broken at the fountain
  - ▶ The pitcher is the great vein which carries the blood to the ventricle of the heart, here called the fountain
- ▶ Or the wheel broken at the cistern
  - ▶ The wheel represents the aorta or great artery which receives the blood from the ventricle of the heart or the cistern and distributes it through the body



# 12:7

- ▶ Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it
  - ▶ Upon decomposition the body will return to mother earth from where it first originated, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it



# Credits

This lesson is an adaption of a Masonic Short Talk by William C. Bell, a Past Master of Youngstown Lodge No. 615 of Youngstown, Ohio. Additional information has been included by Cody Cockroft, Past Master of Morton Lodge No. 72 of Richmond, Texas.



# Officer Placement for MM Closing & Balloting

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# Meet, Act & Part

- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Proper Conduct
  - ▶ Show and tell
  - ▶ Positioning of the Senior Officers (especially the Junior Warden)

# Balloting Ceremony

- ▶ Observations
- ▶ Sequence (Page 61 of the Current Monitor)
- ▶ Proper Conduct for the Ceremony
  - ▶ Brothers (in line) and West of the Senior Deacon
  - ▶ Brothers within the Lodge Room
  - ▶ Brothers at the Altar
    - ▶ Signs



**VERY SOLEMN CEREMONY**

**GLOT Election Requirements for Lodge Senior Officers - See Article 276 and 276a.**

Station	Proficient Opening and Closing EA, FC, MM, & MM LOS			L.I.F.E	Leadership 101	Leadership 201
	YES	YES	YES			
Worshipful Master	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Senior Warden	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Junior Warden	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Proficient = Ritually satisfactory to the members of the Lodge in a manner prescribed by COW and approved by GLOT. It is recommended that the District Instructor or other qualified (Lodge or District) witness and provide objective judgment of the candidate's proficiency. Non-Certificate holder (A, B or C), the candidate is exempt from the proficiency testing.

Although preferred to attend the Instruction for Effectiveness (L.I.F.E) and respective leadership courses (101 & 201), Wardens are required to complete at least the L.I.F.E or both Leadership

A brother who has previously served as a Worshipful Master of a Lodge is exempt from the requirements of Articles 276 and 276a.

Recommendation: Lodges should consider initiating the Leadership Training (101) with the Senior Deacon. It is a benefit to the Lodge and the future Senior Officer candidate. This strategy reduces the potential of future non-compliance, but more importantly, strengthens the Senior Deacon's effectiveness as a candidate for Junior Warden and provides insight and potential strategies to consider as he ascends to the East.

L.I.F.E can be administered by a Lodge or District Counselor or be administered by workbook of an under study with a Lodge or District Counselor.

A senior officer candidate shall be a member in good standing, and against whom no charges are pending. A Senior Officer is EXPECTED to be in regular attendance at Lodge functions (Stated Meetings; Special Events). Previous investment to the Lodge, past behavior, and satisfaction with the effectiveness of candidate in current Station or Place should be a serious consideration for advancement.

The above requirements should be satisfied and positive results communicated to the Lodge during the Stated Meeting of which nominations and elections are had for the ensuing masonic year. The voting brethren should be fully informed in order to make the best decision for the Lodge. Furthermore, and due to the timing or location of Leadership Training, it should be a positive consideration of the candidate's intention to take the Leadership Course at a date after Installation. This man's word should be taken seriously. He is a Master Mason after all.

Documentation of completion of said courses, e.g., L.I.F.E and Leadership 101/201, should be provided to the Lodge Secretary and the Brother's Masonic Record Updated.

# Officer Elections