

January 2021

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Dear Companions, I thank you for electing me as your 2021 Grand High Priest and would particularly mention MW and ME Jim Scarce for his encouragement;; he is greatly missed. I also thank ME

Clyde Perry for nominating me as Grand Master of the First Veil. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to Rt. Ex. Andy Anderson, our Grand Secretary. The work he does to support the Grand High Priest and the Chapters is often below the radar, but his efforts are essential to our Grand Chapter.

I know that we will confront many of the same challenges in 2021 that we faced in 2020, but I am very optimistic that we can turn these challenges into opportunities and have a very successful Capitular year.

In future issues of the Keystone, I will discuss a number of initiatives we are taking to include formation of three new Grand Chapter Committees on Membership, Chapter Services, and Information Technology, that will focus on some of the key issues we face.

Grand Chapter has also developed a strategic plan to engage the entire elected line and to ensure continuity from one Grand High Priest to the next. We also will be upgrading our officer training – and there is much more to discuss.

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This month I want to focus on my primary concern: a number of Chapters have not been able to open because they cannot attract the required nine members. This problem has been compounded during the COVID crisis, with many Chapters not even trying to open.

In order for Royal Arch to prosper, it is essential that each Chapter meets each month. Our preference is for every Chapter to have its usual in-person meetings at its regular meeting place with the required minimum of nine companions. I am mindful that some Companions do not attend Chapter meetings because they live too far away from the meeting location, can't travel at night, have medical conditions that do not allow them to travel, need to stay home to watch their children or, in the current COVID situation, feel they would be at risk if they came to the meeting.

Accordingly, I am directing that there be a Zoom component to every in-person meeting. The Chapter would do the opening ritual and then activate Zoom to allow Companions who ordinarily do not attend the Chapter meeting to be able to participate, see what is going on, and talk with their Companions.

If the Chapter cannot open because nine Companions are not present, I direct that the Zoom feature be activated, and we would count both the in-person and Zoom attendees to meet the nine companion requirement to open the Chapter. In this circumstance, we would not do the opening ritual, and the High Priest would simply declare the Chapter open in ample form.

I will allow all business to occur, including voting, but there would be no ritual or degree work.

I anticipate a third situation, when the High Priest decides that it is not practical to have an in-person meeting. In this case I direct the High Priest to have a Zoom meeting, with Companions able to join from their home, office, or the Lodge. Again, we would not do the opening ritual, and the High Priest would simply declare the Chapter open in ample form. All business can be conducted, including voting, but there would be no ritual or degree work.

By using Zoom every Chapter should be able to open every month, and we also can encourage Companions who don't regularly attend in-person meetings to remain active in Royal Arch and engage with their Companions.

Regardless of whether we want Companions to join our meetings in person or by Zoom, we must recognize two things. First, we need to get the word out. I would urge the High Priest to enlist his dais officers, and perhaps a couple of the active Companions, to call Chapter members before the meeting and personally urge them to attend. Newsletters and email only go so far-- it is the personal contact that makes a difference.

Second, we need to make the meetings worth attending. No one should ever leave a Chapter meeting without knowing more about the Royal Arch than when they arrived, so it is important that each Chapter has an Education Officer responsible for ensuring there is an educational program at

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each meeting, most especially at a meeting when there is no degree work. If your Chapter has Companions who do research and draft papers, they can provide the program, but you should become familiar with the educational programs and materials available on the Grand Chapter website, which include links to other Grand Chapters. Thus, even if a speaker with an original talk is not available, the Chapter can use a program posted on our website.

The High Priest also should ask the Companions to be prepared to give a one-minute discussion on a topic of interest or relevance to the Royal Arch. Even if time is limited at a meeting, there generally is enough time to call on Companions to give a one-minute presentation followed by discussion. It does not take much effort to put together a one-minute presentation, and meetings where the Companions can engage, discuss, and interact are generally more interesting.

I realize that some Chapters are unfamiliar with Zoom and may have Internet and connectivity issues. Rt. Ex. Emmett Pate, our Grand Webmaster and Chair of our new Information Technology Committee, and his team will work with each Chapter to assist in using Zoom, and the Committee is also preparing a tutorial explaining how to use Zoom in a safe and efficient manner.

Stay safe, and know that I, your District Deputy, my team, the Grand Line Officers, and the Grand Lodge Committees are all available to help you and your Chapter; you just need to ask.
Fraternally, Ed Cohen

The Grand Almoner's Message

Companions, it is an exceptional time. I refuse to call this the new normal, as there is nothing normal about the claims and counter-claims with regard to the COVID virus. The virus is here and will probably be here in one form or another for some time. The vaccine under development will likely mitigate the effects of the virus, but like the flu shot will probably be a yearly event. In the meantime, we must take whatever precautions are necessary to protect ourselves and families, and those for whom we raise funds. I am speaking of those afflicted with Alzheimer's disease.

Not only are funds required for Alzheimer research, but also are required for the extra care these patients need at this time. It is up to us, Companions, to dig deep into our creative minds and look for ways to raise the needed funds.

My Lodge, Mt Carmel No. 133, held its elections and closed installation on 8 Dec. 2020. The new Worshipful Master, Todd Cunningham, provided some remarks about how the Lodge "stepped up" several times in the past few years to solve problems. The key phrase is "Stepped Up" in all of these solutions. From banding together to solve a \$20K sewer issue in the Lodge to providing computers to under-privileged youth needing computer assets for the COVID distance learning, the members stepped up. Companions, we need to "Step Up," embrace the current environment and look at ways to fundraise under the restrictions

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imposed by the federal, state, and local governments. The big walks we created and participated in during 2019 and previous years are no longer viable, so create multiple smaller ones. The ubiquitous pancake breakfast is out, so team up with a local restaurant/eatery in a buy-a-meal program, where a percentage is donated to Alzheimer's in your District/Chapter's name. Got some Widows Sons motorcycle association members in your Chapter? Team up with them to host a Poker Run with the Alzheimer's Foundation as the beneficiary. (I would wait until warmer weather for this one.) Pass a virtual hat with the proceeds going to Alzheimer's. There are no boundaries on the ideas. Throw the "Post it" notes on a wall, sort them out and see what is practical, might be practical, and what might be out of reach for your group. If something sounds good but is in the "out of reach" category, investigate teaming with another Chapter, District or other group. It then might be within reach.

Finally, Companions, we are not in this alone. Alzheimer's affects many people and there are many who are looking for a way to contribute and help during these trying times. It is up to us to "Step Up" and provide the leadership necessary so that they can "step up" and rejoin the fight against this awful disease.

Alzheimer's is the ultimate robber of memory, family, and ultimately life. My wife lost her mother to Alzheimer's. It was a seven-year journey through hell watching her slowly diminish as she went from cane to walker to wheelchair to bedridden. I am in this for the long haul, as no one - victim or family - should have to suffer the emotional and financial stress this disease causes.

Fraternally,

RE Chuck Trude
Grand Almoner

The Alzheimer's Charity Project

Greetings to our Royal Arch family. I am Gwen Cohen, Ed Cohen's wife, and want to inform you about my charity project on behalf of the Royal Arch.

As you know, serious money is being directed by the government to deal with the pandemic, and very significant contributions are being made as well to help deal with this crisis. This is as it should be, but it has had the effect of reducing contributions for Alzheimer's research, treatment, and support.

Alzheimer's is not taking a vacation because of COVID. There are more than 5 million Americans living with Alzheimer's and each of these people has a family that is severely impacted by the disease. Moreover, this disease is the 6th leading cause of death in the United

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States . The need to find better treatments, if not a cure, and to offer significant support for the families of those suffering with this condition has not diminished, and I believe we can help.

Borrowing from the program started by Lady Barbara Steele, I am personally putting up \$1,600 in prize money to be awarded at the 2021 Grand Annual Convocation. First prize will be \$1,000, second prize will be \$400, and third prize will be \$200. This is in support of a charity raffle with **all monies** collected going to Alzheimer's Foundation Research.

A book of tickets will be mailed to each Royal Arch Chapter. If the Chapter can spare the funds, it can buy the tickets, send the money to the Grand Almoner, Rt. Ex. Chuck Trude, and then resell the tickets to the Companions and the public. If funds are not available, the Chapter can sell the tickets and then send Companion Trude the monies collected.

The tickets are 2 for \$5.00, or 6 for \$10.00 for a chance to win the grand prize – \$1,000 in cash. If each of our Chapters purchased or sold \$10.00 worth of tickets to 20 people, that would raise \$200 for Alzheimer's, and if all 47 Chapters could do this, that would give us \$9,400. I hope we can raise even more!

I know you have always been generous in your support of our Royal Arch charity, and I thank you so much for participating. We all have been through very rough times, so I am sending hugs and love to you all.

God Bless,

Gwen Cohen

P.S. Our Grand Almoner's contact information is email: trudecr@comcast.net,
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Downtime:

Webster defines the word "Downtime" to mean a time of reduced activity, and that's exactly what we are all experiencing since the arrival of COVID-19.

In most cases this downtime has kept us at home – which is the safest place to be. The only time we depart our domicile is for groceries, medical appointments, many of which have become *virtual* appointments unless it is an emergency. As you can see, our entire lifestyle has changed.

Lodge and Appendant Body meetings have been limited in what they can and cannot do during the virus. The Grand Master has issued directives outlining policy that must be followed for our own safety and the safety of others. The same applies in the outside world when going to

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the store or elsewhere. We must follow the rules and work together to avoid spreading COVID, so we can all return to a more normal way of life. It is not going to be easy, but we can do it if we all pull together.

Being idle can be downright boring. I have found that writing articles about our Craft keeps me busy, and I do not mind doing the research. The computer is an amazing tool that can answer just about any question you ask. The voluminous amount of material that is available at the stroke of a key is literally amazing. No more running to the library like we all did back in the day or even thumbing through an encyclopedia. It is all right on the screen. Search and you shall find.

This downtime we are experiencing is also a good time to take a walk or a drive through the countryside or catch up with house chores or a hobby. Be active with something. Take time to learn a part of the ritual or polish a part that you already know. And brighten up your day by calling a Brother.

Unfortunately, the wearing of a mask and keeping our distance will be with us for quite some time, even after the vaccine becomes available. I do not know how many times I've gone places and forgotten my mask. Luckily, most places have extra masks to hand out but, to be on the safe side, I now keep an extra mask in the car glove compartment as a backup.

If you follow the rules, you'll be fine, but like anything else, there is never a guarantee, but you increase the odds in your favor by doing what is right. You are not alone. This is a world-wide pandemic that impacts each and every one of us - young and old.

Here is what we can expect to happen in the next few months. Bars, restaurants, salons will once again close their doors, and this might very well extend to our Lodges. COVID is not a game like some seem to think. Just look at how many deaths it has caused. It still irritates me to see people in groups and in stores not wearing a mask. All I can say is - do not let your guard down. Make the best of the downtime and stay safe. There has to be light at the end of the tunnel. So Mote It Be!

Ex. Companion Ed Tooma
Shenandoah #17