**COVID 19 AND THE LODGE ALMONER**

The role of the Lodge Almoner and their care of our widows and brethren is one of the cornerstones of our organisation and the need for their help and assistance is now required more than ever. However, and regrettably, most of our Lodge Almoners are in the very vulnerable age group of 70 plus and during this Covid19 pandemic they need to remain at home and to keep themselves safe.

It is therefore very important that our younger members of the Lodge step up to assist during these unprecedented times.

We are aware that several Lodges already have systems in place and that is great, the following are a series of suggested guidelines and steps to assist those Lodges who have yet to arrange something, to help them and their Almoners during these trying times.

**Lodge Masters, Lodge Secretaries and Lodge Treasurers**

* Prepare a “phone tree” of members and widows and allocate a group to each of your younger members. Their role is to act as a conduit between the member/widow and the Lodge, to call them regularly and to aid where required.
* Secretary to attempt to keep the location of each of the group members in the general area of the member responsible.
* Secretary to provide on lodge letter head, a letter listing the members/widows that the brother has been allocated.
* Master to maintain regular contact with those who have been allocated a group to ensure their tasks are being carried out.
* Master to keep District Grand Master informed of lodge activities and of any issues that may arise.
* Lodge Secretary to continue to send out a monthly Lodge Notice (not Summons) and Master to use this to regularly communicate with his brethren.
* It may be necessary for funds for groceries etc to be channelled through the Lodge Bank account. The Lodge Treasurer is to facilitate this, and aid where required.

**Lodge Almoners and Assistants**

* Regularly contact the members and widows on your list.
* Where required assist with the collection or purchase of groceries, medication etc (see below guidelines)
* Keep your Lodge Almoner, Master and Secretary informed on the health of your members/widows and of any issues that may arise.
* The Freemasons Charity will reimburse any actual and reasonable expenses incurred whilst performing your duties. A claim form is available from your Lodge Secretary or District Charity Officer.
* The Freemasons Charity is available to help with “Hardship Grants” where you feel there is a genuine need for financial assistance. Talk to your District Charity Officers who will be able to help you through the process.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE COLLECTION AND DELIVERY OF GROCERIES AND MEDICATION**

**NOTE: That in providing this service, the first responsibility of the member performing these duties is to keep themselves safe and to abide by all instructions of the Government and Police.**

We strongly suggest that any nominated shopper be between the age of 35-55.

The nominated shopper MUST live within the neighbourhood of the Brother or Widow they are shopping for – this is important as we do not want anyone getting in their vehicles and travelling all over the place!

* Always carry with you your letter from the Lodge listing the names and addresses of those members and widows under you care.
* If questioned by an official, explain the role of an Almoner within a Lodge and note that this is not a new role but rather has been performed within the Lodge since Freemasonry began 300 years ago.
* Have no physical contact with the person, which includes anything they have touched, shopping bags, cash etc. Use gloves or sanitise everything with a spray or wipe.
* Under no circumstances accept a cash, bank/credit card, eftpos card or pin number from a Brother or Widow. Please pay from your personal account and the Lodge Treasurer will arrange for reimbursement from the Lodge account.
* Arrange with your Brother or Widow a safe and secure method of delivering those goods purchased – i.e. ring when you are at the door/gate and leave goods on the doorstep - DO NOT enter the homeowners bubble!
* Ensure the person you are assisting is aware that they must wash their hands thoroughly after uplifting the goods.

Here are some additional tips from the COVID-19 Government website:

* If you’re healthy and under 70, you should go to the supermarket instead of shopping online. This will leave delivery slots free for the people who need them most.
* Shops will be doing their best to limit the number of shoppers – helping you keep 2 metres away from others.
* Be kind to essential workers, and others you’re sharing the shop with.
* Come prepared with a list so you can get in and out as quickly as possible
* Only send one person from your household to do the shop.  Keep 2 metres away from others, including staff – they need to keep safe too!
* Use a contactless card if you can, not cash.
* Bag groceries away from others if you can.
* Only touch what you want to buy.
* If you like, take a soapy towel in a small container to wipe down trolley or basket handles etc.
* Take out produce when you get home, and rinse first in soapy water, then in clean water to remove any soap residue.
* Wipe down packaged goods with a soapy clean towel, then dry.
* Wash your hands before and after you shop.

Once again, we thank you for your compassion, support, time and assistance but please remember, you must keep yourself safe also!