

THE SUPREME COUNCIL 33°
OF THE ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED RITE
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES
AND ITS DISTRICTS AND
CHAPTERS OVERSEAS
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**10, DUKE STREET,
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17th December 2020

**TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ANCIENT AND ACCEPTED RITE
WITHIN HOME DISTRICTS OR GROUPS
UNDER THE SUPREME COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND AND WALES**

Dear Sir and brother,

As we approach the end of an extraordinary year, the Members of the Supreme Council for England & Wales wish to thank you for your continued support of this beloved Order. Owing to circumstances beyond anyone's control, you have of course been unable to enjoy your membership of the Ancient and Accepted Rite fully this year, and the Council is particularly grateful to you for your tolerance and patience at this trying time.

Whilst it was most disappointing to be unable to celebrate the 175th anniversary of the Order by visiting Districts and Groups in person during 2020, the Members of the Supreme Council have greatly enjoyed carrying out a 'virtual tour' of all our Districts and Groups within England & Wales, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man in recent weeks, visiting over three thousand brethren across the country and listening to your questions and concerns. They have also been most grateful to you for your engagement with the National Consultation back in August; over nine thousand of you completed the survey and your responses were of tremendous benefit in assisting the Council in its deliberations as to how best to serve the Order and its members in these challenging times.

That consultation showed that half the membership wished (at that time) to be permitted to carry on attending meetings and half the membership wished to be prohibited from doing so. The Council was, therefore, very aware that its decision to continue the suspension of the Order until at least the end of 2020 would be a disappointment to many, especially when the Craft was lifting its own suspension and allowing Lodges to meet. The Supreme Council always tries to work in concert with the Craft where it can; indeed, it has always been clear about the vital importance of the Craft to the flourishing of our own Order and was delighted that many Lodges have been able to continue to meet during 2020. However, Craft freemasons are, on average, younger and less likely to be vulnerable or shielding than members of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, so it has been appropriate for the two institutions to take slightly different approaches over recent months.

The last few weeks have seen great strides made in the development, approval and distribution of a vaccine to combat the current global pandemic and it is therefore with cautious optimism that the Supreme Council looks to 2021 and, with that in mind, a broad set of principles has been agreed for a

gradual reopening of the Order within England & Wales over the coming year. With effect from 1st January 2021, therefore, the Supreme Council has decided as follows:

- Chapters within Tier One may, if they wish, resume meetings;
- Chapters within Tier Two, and all Chapters in Wales, may not currently meet (but may tentatively make plans to be meeting again by Easter 2021);
- Chapters within Tier Three may not meet.

Two documents are attached to this letter. The first expands upon the above decision and its ramifications in detail; the second sets out the temporary amendments to the ritual that are to be observed by those Chapters that choose to meet.

The Supreme Council realises that this partial reopening will, in the first instance, affect few Chapters, although as other areas gradually move into Tier One its application will become more widespread. With good fortune, good citizenship and widespread availability of a vaccine, the Council is hopeful that in the coming months the majority of England & Wales will once again be able to enjoy the Order to the full. Until then, your patience and forbearance are greatly appreciated. In a year when many institutions have foundered, some of them centuries old, the Supreme Council is fully aware of the risks of remaining suspended and is immensely grateful to you all for playing your part to ensure the safety of the Order's future by the simple fact of your continued membership.

All nine Members of the Supreme Council offer you their sincerest best wishes for a happy Christmas and a much improved 2021.

Yours faithfully and fraternally,



Dr G R E Shilson 33°
Grand Secretary General H.:E.: