



**The Grand Court
of the
Masonic Order of Athelstan**
in England, Wales and its Provinces
Overseas

**M W Bro Paul W. Johnston, SGM
Grand Master**

Monday, 23rd March 2020

To all members of the Grand Witan, the Grand High Almoner, Provincial Grand Secretaries for onward circulation and unattached Court Secretaries.

Dear Sir and Brother,

Re: Suspension of all Freemasonry

You will by now be fully aware of the current restrictions that of necessity the UK and other Governments have placed upon us all. These restrictions and in particular the restriction of staying indoors, will affect each and every one of us. Over the coming weeks and months, the Coronavirus (COVID-19) will inevitably, in some way or another, touch upon members of our family; and of course, our Order and our wider 'Masonic Family'. Frankly it will change in so many ways how we enjoy our lives, the way we socialise, with so many things that we have accepted as normal no longer applying. Even that which we have taken as the normal may well become just happy memories of a bygone era.

We have a duty to look after our loved ones and it is essential that we do this. With the current restrictions this contact will naturally be by telephone contact or via email or social media. Let us not, however, forget our Masonic family who through various circumstances depend upon our Masonic meetings for not only friendship but as an essential means of contact and socialising.

The qualification for 'Instruction' into our Order is such that the age profile of our members is higher than that of other Orders. This has not been an overriding issue for our Order as we have been able to instruct many experienced Freemasons into our ranks and benefit from their undoubted ability and talents for the furtherance of our common aims. This must not mask the fact, however, that many of our members are over the age of 70 and they together with others who are suffering with underlying health conditions must now remain at home to stop the spread of Coronavirus and to protect themselves.

It is my earnest desire, that Brethren of our Order should not have to worry about those mundane matters that up to a few weeks ago, we all took for granted. We must accept that many folk are naturally concerned about going shopping, having to queue and then finding basic items are not available; they are concerned about not being able to window shop, go to the local pub or have a meal out etc. We must accept that those who live alone worry more about such matters as they are essential to their well-being and may affect their mental health.

We have the Office of Almoner in our Courts, but such is the potential level of assistance now required that they alone cannot do everything themselves. There is only so much gardening that we can do or boxsets that we can watch. Let us make a conscious decision to all become 'Deputy Almoners' and to phone each other on a semi-regular basis. Humans are a social creature and we all like to be thought of now and again. If you live alone and are restricted to not leaving home, then a phone call will mean an awful lot. During this crucial period, we simply cannot have enough Almoners and the reporting of the current welfare of our Members is a fundamental necessity.