

GRAND LODGE
OF MASSACHUSETTS

MASONIC WIDOWS' PROGRAM





GRAND LODGE
MASONIC WIDOWS' PROGRAM
FOR
INDIVIDUAL LODGES

COMPILED BY
THE MASONIC WIDOWS' PROGRAM COMMITTEE
OF THE
MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE
A.F. & A.M.
OF
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
2015



**THE MOST WORSHIPFUL GRAND LODGE
OF ANCIENT FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS**

of the

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Harvey J. Waugh
Grand Master

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My dear Brethren, Freemasonry continues to face many challenges in the hectic world in which we live. We must never forget that our first priorities are to our families and to our employment that enables us to support our families. This is always true, but it is particularly important in difficult economic times. And just as the 24-inch gauge reminds us how to divide our time other lessons and obligations of Freemasonry remind us of the importance of charity and providing assistance to those less fortunate than ourselves.

We must never forget the widows of our departed brothers. We welcomed them and enjoyed their friendship as we did those of our departed brothers, and that relationship should never end with our brothers passing. With that in mind, I have asked our Service Department to prepare this new guide to help our lodges strengthen their programs and efforts that are specifically designed to help our Masonic widows. I hope that every lodge will carefully study this guide and implement programs for those who have given so much to Freemasonry .

Fraternally Yours,

Harvey J. Waugh

Harvey John Waugh

Grand Master

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The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts

Masonry in Action

Suggestions for the
Establishment and Operation of
A Program for Masonic Widows' by
The Grand Lodge Service Committee
March 2015

“A time honored tradition

Care of the Widows is a major obligation of a Master Mason. It is very important that a Widow continue to feel included in her late husband's Masonic activities and to feel that she still has standing among the Brothers of his lodge.”

M.W. Fred K. Bauer

The formation of a Grand Lodge Widows Program, a program created within the Grand Lodge Service Committee, to foster the establishment of Widows' Programs in Lodges without them, and to strengthen those programs in existence in our Lodges. It was inspired by Mrs. Kay Bauer, the Widow of the M.W. Fred Kirby Bauer, the 74th Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts and supported by Grand Master, M.W. Harvey J. Waugh.

One of the core values of our Fraternity is concern for our Brethren and their families, with special emphasis on the Widow of a deceased Brother.

There are unfortunate cases when the widow loses all contact with the Lodge after her husband dies. Adopting a Widows' Program can ensure that the Lodge keeps in touch with and can offer needed assistance to, the widows of our departed Brethren. We encourage every Lodge to adopt a Widows Program.

This manual contains material and ideas derived from programs and publications of other Grand Lodges as well as other Widows' programs within our Lodges in Massachusetts. We are particularly grateful to the Grand Lodge of Maine from which we have drawn heavily, and adopted a likeness of the format of their excellent work.

1. Purpose

To provide appropriate material for a program that will enable each individual Mason in Massachusetts to demonstrate his fidelity to the obligation he took upon himself whereby he will contribute as liberally as he can to the relief of a distressed Brother Master Mason, his widow and orphans, without injury to himself or family.

2. Scope

This manual addresses the needs of the widows of Master Masons of Massachusetts, where-so-ever located. Further, it provides the procedures and suggested responsibilities for the implementation of a viable Masonic Widows Program within any Lodge

3. Background

3.1 What is it? - It is a planned program, structured and organized to manage and effectively utilize the knowledge and expertise existing in this Grand Jurisdiction. It has been developed to enable each individual lodge to be of greater service to its membership. It provides an opportunity for each member to participate in a clear expression of concern for our Masonic widows.

3.2 What does it do? - It provides each lodge with suggested minimum standards, including appropriate language that may assist each member in fulfilling his often repeated obligation to the wife of our deceased Brother.

3.3 How does it function? - A lodge which participates will utilize and call upon the Special Committee on Masonic Widows' Program of the Grand Lodge to provide the essential details. Each Worshipful Master shall appoint a Lodge Chairman of the Widows' Program Committee who shall assemble a Lodge committee of not less than three other members to implement this program.

3.4 Why is it needed? - Too often a lodge conducts a Masonic memorial service for a deceased brother, sends the Widow a card of sympathy and then discontinues further contact until someone reports that she is in need of help. Too many widows live a solitary life with minimum contact with the outside world and are in need of nothing more than simple, yet vital, human contact. The greatest need of many of our widows is social interaction. Many feel lonely and deserted.

3.5 How can I help? - Every Mason has an obligation to ascertain if his lodge is participating in the program, specifically the following:

- If a lodge does not have a program for its widows, bring the message contained herein to the attention of the membership.

- Compile a list of Masonic widows residing within your lodge jurisdiction, however incomplete it may be at this time.
- Demonstrate individually and collectively that Masonry “does care for its own”.
- Adopt a positive attitude that may stimulate interest and improved attendance by new members. Many of today’s candidates are entering Masonry to be of service to the community. A Masonic Widows’ Program is a great and meaningful way to be of service.
- Begin practicing Masonry-in-action by implementing a Widows’ Program.
- Ensure that your wife’s future (as a possible widow) will not be one of loneliness and neglect. This will give you, as a Mason, peace of mind knowing your widow will be attended to.

3.6 What are its services? - Friendship and guidance to let the widow know that she has been remembered and that she still belongs to our Masonic family, specifically:

- Certificate of Remembrance
- Broken Column pin, Blue Slipper pin or “Forget me not” pin
- Grand Lodge recognition
- Invitations to appropriate social events of the lodge.(This has been found to be of great value to the widows.)
- Transportation to doctor, dentist, hospital, store, etc.
- Personal visits and attention.
- Personal notes -birthdays, holidays, special events. (Stress - other than Secretary)
- The monthly lodge notices and the Trowel Magazine, if requested.
- The additional services that could be provided are unlimited.

4. The Grand Lodge Widows’ Program

Committee - Grand Lodge Service Committee’s Widow’s Program -This advisory committee is composed of a chairman, his committee and the inclusion of the District Service Officers.

This committee is responsible: for the following functions:

- Provide: guidance and support to lodges sponsoring a Widows’ Program.
- Maintain and update the master copy of this manual, and distribute it to each lodge by mail or through the Service Committee web site.
- Conduct district programs through the Lodge of Instruction.
- Maintain a master file of program correspondence.
- Prepare consolidated evaluation reports for the Grand Lodge Service Director.

- Provide liaison services as required.
- Coordinate with the Grand Lodge District Deputies and Lodges of Instruction in each district.

4.1 District Coordinators / District Service Officers provide:

- Administrative support to lodges within their district
- Grand Lodge promotional programs when requested.
- Liaison services as appropriate.

4.2 The Blue Lodge Program Committee:

The Lodge Widows' program should be included within the scope of the lodge's Service: Committee. At the lodge level, the form that the program can take is based on the: ability of the Lodge members and their level of commitment. Once the program is started, it should be continuous and become part of the lodge's routine operations.

The program should consist of at least three members plus a chairman for each Lodge. It is best not to assign Lodge Officers (solicit and utilize: their ideas, talents and oversight). Remember, we are attempting to give members who are not or otherwise engaged an opportunity to practice Masonry.

Select individuals who are interested, dedicated and compassionate. Encourage members to include their families to be part of this group. Wives and children can play a large and integral role in this program. This also gives spouses a way to "share" in the work and rewards of Masonry.

Duties of the committee:

- Identify Masonic Widows in your jurisdiction; including these of non-local lodge Masons. (Utilize: secretary's records. Eastern Star, churches, obituaries. other widows etc.)
- Receive a "You are not forgotten" widows ID card available through the Grand Lodge Widows Committee or arrange through the District Representative.
- Prepare: a 3x5 index card file, or computerized database of Masonic Widows, with a printed copy for the lodge's Secretary. Maintain an up to date: database/card file: on each widow (example to be attached)
- Note the health of the widow, conditions of buildings, property, car, particular needs, and circumstances where Lodge may assist.
- Create a "calling tree:" by which the widows can be called on a regular basis for conversation as well as invitations to upcoming events.
- Schedule personal visits, at least four or five times a year. This can and should include lodge events and parries. Many lodges now host events including; holiday dinners, widow's breakfasts, summer BBQ, potluck dinners etc. The opportunities should coincide with the strengths of the lodge.

- Widows should be included on the: invitation list of the lodges “official” ceremonies; many of the widows enjoyed the “pomp and circumstance” of the Masonic tradition when their husbands were alive and enjoy seeing the tuxes, jewels and ritual; an installation, for example. Also many were members of Eastern Star and as such enjoyed the: meetings when they were able to attend.
- Many other programs can be initiated at the: lodge level, depending on the talents and ability of the members. An example can be a “helping hands” program, where brothers will shovel snow, un-stick windows, change light bulbs, or any other “small” tasks that she can’t do on her own. This can be where the lodge “handymen” can perform service.
- Other lodges, as well as the Grand Lodge will benefit from the input of what your local lodge does and should be informed of the particular program by sending a written copy of the function to the Grand Lodge Service Director.
- Widows may want to participate to a greater or lesser degree in the program at different levels. Inquire about their level of participation during the initial contact. Many widows will appreciate the chance to “give back”. Many can still drive and will enjoy being helpful. The Widows in many districts enjoy working with the MyCHIP Program as well.
- Any visitor should never give any indication that this is charity (remember their personal pride). This is a social call. State that you are a member of the Lodge Widows’ Team, whose function is to contact and connect with widows. Remind them that they are still members of our Masonic family and restate our offer of assistance and service. It is a good idea, if you are not known to the Widow you are visiting, that you have a picture ID (drivers license) to show to the Widow, where as many Widows get nervous letting strangers into their houses.
- Observe if transportation problems exist, such as to doctors, dentist, hospital appointments, etc., identifying any special needs.
- Recommend lodge assistance or services to the Worshipful Master or Secretary only. Do not discuss in Lodge, for this might be considered an invasion of privacy.
- Locate the burial place of the deceased Brother (record on index card). Periodically check the grave-site for care, markers, baskets, etc.
- Obtain widow’s birth date, month and day only, (record on index card - Attach. #4). Send card; preferably a handwritten note, each year. Consider a note for Easter, holiday, Thanksgiving, etc.
- Be ever alert for Masonic widows other than those of your Lodge

residing in your jurisdiction. Include them on your list and serve accordingly. Notify her husband's Lodge as to her present address, the widows' program, etc.

- When the Lodge learns of the death of a brother, send notification to the Grand Lodge office, attention of the Grand Lodge Secretary. This requirement is a team function and should not become an added burden or be assigned to the Lodge Secretary. (NOTE: Unless the secretary desires to do this.)

Reporting:

Submit a report at each stated lodge business meeting listing accomplishments, specifically names of widows visited, those receiving cards, etc. This report is intended to inform the Brethren on the progress of the program and, hopefully solicit additional names of widows as well as brethren wanting to join the program. Attendance at stated meetings could be enhanced by this report-type approach. Team attendance at the stated meetings is not mandatory. One member should attend to read the report, make recommendations when needed, answer questions, etc.

Suggested revision, additions, etc. should be forwarded to the Grand Lodge Service Director for incorporation and distribution. Interchange of ideas, deeds, etc. is vital.

The lodges Widow's Committee chairman reports directly to the Worshipful Master, or to the Chairman of the Service Committee.

4.3 Worshipful Masters - Provide:

The Master may provide direct oversight of the Widows' Program, or he may appoint another member of the Lodge to provide the oversight, perhaps the Chairman of the Service Committee.

The Master or the Brother he appoints will appoint a committee to coordinate the program:

- Overall supervision of lodge team.
- Performance evaluations
- Coordination services, with lodge social activities team.
- Constructive recommendations.

5. Special Requirements

5.1 Grand Secretary

- Notify Grand Service Director of deceased brethren.
- Provide liaison support at all levels.
- Provide clerical support services when available.
- Provide computer data when needed.

5.2 Lodge Secretary

- May or may not delegate these duties to Lodge Program Chairman.
- Notify Grand Secretary of deceased. (Example to be attached)
- Prepare and forward lodge letter of condolence (example to be attached)
- Provide administrative services when available.
- Notify home lodge of deceased brother from other state's Grand Lodge's jurisdiction

5.3 Grand Chaplains:

- Receive notification of deceased from Grand Lodge Service Director.
- Prepare and forward official letter of condolence. (Example to be attached)
- Forward copy to special committee.

6. Procedure:

6.1 Basic Instruction

- Master invites special committee (Grand Lodge Widows Program} representatives to explain program at lodge meeting or at a meeting when ladies are present.
- At subsequent meeting, lodge decides whether to adopt the program.
- Lodge committee is appointed, number of members dependent upon size of lodge.
- Details from lodge duties are utilized, but may be revised to special needs of each lodge.
- Article regarding program is placed in lodge notice to inform brethren.
- Special instructions will be given through Lodges of Instruction and other contacts by the Grand Lodge through its District Deputies in coordination with the District Service Officer / Chairman and Lodge Chairman and committees.

6.2 Existing Widows

- Letter is sent to each widow to familiarize her with lodge activities (follow up calls are suggested.)
- When "Remembrance certificates" and pins are presented a brief explanation should be made by letter and follow up phone calls, after presentation of pin. (Note: This is an opportunity for pin presentations at a Widows night.)

6.3 New Widows

When the decease of a brother has occurred, it is suggested that a letter of condolence be mailed, requesting permission to meet with his widow to present to her the certificate.

6.4 Schedules of Activities

A listing of each year's social events to which widows are invited is prepared and forwarded to each widow.

7.1 Coordination

- District Deputy Grand Master has appointed a District Service Officer, who will be the representative of his district for this program.
- Letters are sent to each designated representative by District Deputy Grand Master soliciting their assistance and explaining their duties.
- District workshops will be conducted throughout the jurisdiction for review and exchange of ideas including special efforts at each Lodge of Instruction as the program becomes implemented.
- Upon request of a Master, the District Service Officer will make presentation to lodge, distribute a copy of manual and when requested will assist in coordinating the program.

7.2 Promotion

- Newsletters will be mailed to Coordinators, representatives and Worshipful Masters.
- During Grand Lodge Quarterlies, a display booth will be manned to answer questions and distribute printed material.
- An internet based network / discussion forum will be utilized for distribution / sharing of information.

7.3 Expenses

- Special committee will incur costs involving printing, distribution of printed material and postage.
- Individual lodge expenses could include remembrance certificates, widows' pins and admission costs to activities, and food.
- Grand Lodge will obtain pins for Lodges to purchase and present to their widows. Lodges may utilize lodge charity funds or solicit from members the cost of pins.

7.4 Inquiries

Address questions on organization, implementation as well as recommendations to your District Service Officer, or write to:

**Grand Lodge Masonic Service Committee
The Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts.
186 Tremont St. Boston, MA 02111**

Or visit the Grand Lodge website at:

<http://www.massfreemasonry.org>

GRAND LODGE WIDOWS' COMMITTEE

Director R.W. Frank B. Gomes, Jr.

Chairman, Widows Program Wor. John VanKuilenburg

GRAND LODGE SERVICE DEPARTMENT

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