



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

Good Practice: Surrender of Warrant or Charter

While it is always regrettable when a Lodge or Chapter decides to terminate its existence, it is extremely important for the members and in some circumstances those who depend on them [Unit Widows etc], that the closure should be conducted in a business-like way and with appropriate Masonic decorum.

Process

When the Lodge or Chapter feels that it is clear that a substantial majority of its members, having explored any alternatives, has reached the point where surrendering its Warrant or Charter is appropriate and inevitable, the following is the process that the Lodge or Chapter should follow.

Before the formal Two Closure Procedure meetings:

- The Unit should engage with the Provincial Team [if they are not already in communication on this subject] and **advise them that the Unit is seriously considering Closure as an option.**
- The Provincial Team will then work with Unit Members to identify what other Units they are in and ensure that they are presented with suitable alternative Units that they could consider joining prior to the closure of this Unit.

This stage is key when a member only has that Craft or Chapter as their unit, and should it close, they would be lost to Freemasonry.

please see next page for further reading



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

Two Closure Meetings:

Meeting One

The Lodge or Chapter should give Notice at a regular meeting of a proposition that it should surrender its warrant or Charter and that this proposition will be considered at the next regular meeting or an Emergency Meeting called specifically for that purpose by Dispensation.

Meeting Two

At the second meeting the proposition is put to those members attending and is decided by a simple majority of those present and voting. (The Master or First Principal having a second or casting vote if necessary).

There is no proxy voting in Freemasonry. The closure of the Lodge or Chapter, if approved by the vote, takes effect from the moment the Lodge or Chapter has been closed in due form on that occasion, or at the end of a future meeting, specified in the Notice of Motion.

Assets and Finances

Well before the final meeting of the Lodge or Chapter clear resolutions should have been passed by the Brethren/Companions in Open Lodge or Chapter determining the destination upon closure of all the Lodges or Chapters assets and possessions including monies. In a few cases, such as Lodges and Chapters involved with Trusts or holding shares of various kinds, it may be necessary to seek legal or professional advice on their disposal and time should be allowed for any 'such matters to take their proper course as, after a Lodge or Chapter has finally closed, it has no entity and cannot continue to transact business, financial or otherwise. Nor, most emphatically, can individuals continue to do so on its behalf.

It is not unusual for any remaining funds to be used to pay for joining fees for members into other lodges, meaning that though the lodge has closed the members are not lost to Freemasonry as a whole.

The Secretary or Scribe E is required, upon closure, to render to Grand Lodge/Chapter and Provincial Grand Lodge/Chapter a closing Annual Return and Dues in settlement of the account of the Lodge or Chapter and must also give full account of any arrears due but unpaid from the membership at the point of closure.

The Secretary or Scribe E should consult the Provincial Office well in advance of closure to obtain the necessary documents and to be informed of the amounts involved.

Use of the Name and Number when connected to a Chapter

In the case of a closing Lodge which has a Chapter sharing its name and number there is no longer any difficulty in that Chapter continuing with that same name and number.



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

Care should be taken when choosing the date of closure not to disadvantage the Master or First Principal of the Lodge or Chapter if he is occupying the Chair for the first time. In order to qualify as a Past Master or Past Z he must have served in those Offices from one Installation to another. Otherwise he will fall foul of Rule 9 of the Book of Constitutions.

Similarly Wardens in the Craft and Scribes, Principal Sojourners and Assistant Sojourners in the Royal Arch must have served in one of those Offices for a similar full year before they qualify to proceed to higher office.

Similarly, care must be taken to ensure that all members of the Lodge or Chapter understand the implications upon closure of becoming an Unattached Mason or Royal Arch Mason as a result of not already being a member of another Lodge or Chapter, or if they do not intend to join another Lodge or Chapter. This has serious implications, including barring them from appointment to or promotion in Provincial Rank.

Refer to the note under Assets and Finances with regards to joining fees to avoid this situation.

Clearance Certificates

If the closure of the Lodge leaves any Brethren standing as Fellow-Crafts or Entered Apprentices then the Lodge must obtain, via the Province, interim Grand Lodge Certificates for those Brethren in order that they can proceed further in another Lodge.

All members should be issued with certificates under Rule 175 stating whether or not the Brother/Companion was in good standing at the time of closure.

Attendance of a representative from Province

It is very much hoped that despite the unhappiness and formality of the closure of a Lodge or Chapter, the Lodge or Chapter will invite a representative from Provincial Grand Lodge or the Provincial Grand Chapter to their final meeting in order that the formality of handing the Warrant or Charter over to them may take place but also that the history and service of the Lodge or Chapter can be suitably celebrated and recognised in a proper Masonic fashion.

This is also important to contact all past members and visitors and invite them to come and celebrate the Lodge or Chapter.

Preservation of the History of the Lodge

Immediately after the final meeting the following items must be returned to the Provincial Grand Secretary's Office in accordance with Rule 190: The Hall Stone Jewel (if appropriate)

Account Books Minute Books Membership Books Attendance Books Declaration Books These are not destroyed but are returned to the Library of the Grand Lodge for perpetual storage and to assist with Masonic history and research. Lodges or Chapters contemplating closure should direct any other enquiries or difficulties to the office of the Provincial Grand Secretary/Scribe E.



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

Its other property shall be disposed of as the Lodge may, prior to its dissolution, have resolved, or in default of or subject to any such resolution, as the Grand Master may direct. A warrant cannot in any circumstances be transferred.

Suggested Ceremonial Protocols: Visit on the Surrender of Warrant

Preliminary actions

If the Lodge/Chapter wish to have a visit of this type, the Secretary/ Scribe E should inform the Provincial Secretary/Scribe E as soon as possible and, at the latest, immediately after notice of motion for the dissolution of the Lodge/Chapter have been given.

The Provincial Secretary/Scribe E will then organise the attendance of a Provincial Grand Master or Representative thereof.

The Provincial Secretary/Scribe E should then contact the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies who will arrange an escort.

The Escorting Officer will arrange the Provincial Representatives visit following the usual Provincial protocols, and should also:

- ensure that the Lodge/Chapter, Worshipful Masters / Principles, DCs, and Chaplains have received a copy of these notes and are aware of their words and actions.
- check that a member of each Lodge/Chapter is briefed to deliver a history of the Lodge/Chapter.

The Provincial Representative and the Escorting Officer will usually wear dark morning dress (short coat) undress regalia and a chain.

It should be noted that:

- the Provincial Representative is only receiving the warrants on a symbolic basis during the meeting, and it is the responsibility of the Lodge/Chapter to return them to the Provincial Secretary as required by Rule 190; and
- the Lodge/Chapter continue to exist, without meeting, until the warrants are finally cancelled by UGLE. For this reason, the meeting and dinner continues in the usual manner after the symbolic surrender of the warrant.

The Meetings

For the avoidance of doubt the History, Thanksgiving, Symbolic Surrender of the Warrant and Patriarchal Benedictions set out below should not be shown as separate items on the summons.

Opening and Ballots for Closure etc of Lodge/Chapter

- The Lodge/Chapter is opened, and the minutes dealt with in the usual way.
- The Provincial Representative will enter at the appropriate item on the agenda, usually following the minutes, and will be saluted, following the standard protocol.



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

- The WM/MEZ continues with the agenda, including the separate resolution concerning the disposal of Lodge/Chapter assets, subject to the ballot being in favour of closure.

Ballot for Closure of Lodge/Chapter

- WM/MEZ announces the agenda item to ballot for the closure of Lodge/Chapter . This is a secret ballot, conducted by the Lodge/Chapters in its normal manner. All members in attendance are entitled to take part.
- WM declares the results, for which a simple majority is required.
- The Provincial Representative can then address the members of the Lodge/Chapter, on the theme that the surrender of a warrant is a normal part of Masonic progression, with Lodge/Chapter coming into existence as and when there is a need and finishing when that need has passed.

History of the Lodge/Chapters

Provincial Representative: - "WM/MEZ is there a Brother/Companion present who can give a brief history of the XXX Lodge/Chapter No XXX (Lodge/Chapter) and its achievements?"

WM/MEZ of Lodge/Chapter: - "I call upon Brother/Companion XXX."

The Brother/Companion delivering the history rises, salutes the WM/MEZ of Lodge/Chapter.

This should be a condensed history of Lodge/Chapter, noting its prominent members and achievements, and lasting no more than 10 minutes, concluding with a role call of Past Masters. At the conclusion the Brother/Companion delivering the history should give a court bow to the WM/MEZ and sit.

Provincial Representative: - "I would like to thank Brother/Companion XXX for presenting the history of the Lodge/Chapter in such an effective and appropriate way and I hope that the Brethren/Companions have derived much satisfaction from hearing this summary of all that has been achieved by you and your predecessors."

At the conclusion the Brother/Companion delivering the history should give a court bow to the WM/MEZ and sit.

Thanksgiving

WM/MEZ: - "I now call on the Chaplain to lead us in a Prayer of Thanksgiving."

Escorting Officer: - "To order Brethren/Companions." (*sign of R*)

Chaplain: - (*reading*) "We give thanks to Thee, GAOTU, for the work and achievements of the Lodge/Chapter No XXX since xxx (*date of constitution*) for the vision and energy of their Founders; for all who have served within them; and for the contributions they have made to the building of this Lodge/Chapter to Thy honour and glory.

We call to mind with thanksgiving, the Founders, Past Masters, and Brethren who have ascended to



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

the Grand Lodge above; remember the good deeds they wrought while on this earth, and let their reward be with them and their recompense before them.

We beseech Thee to continue to preserve our Order and to look with mercy upon all the Brethren/Companions of this Lodge/Chapter. Bless them with Thy Grace, and strengthen them with Thy mighty power, that they may continue to practice the genuine precepts of the Craft/Chapter, enrich the dignity of our Order wheresoever they may be, and show forth in their lives the light of Thy Truth."

All: - "So mote it be." (*drop sign*)

Symbolic Surrender of the Warrants

The Escorting Officer collects the Warrants on a cushion from the Secretary's table, brings them to the WM/MEZ of Lodge/Chapters, who take them from the cushion. The Escorting Officer then stands to one side.

WM/MEZ of Lodge/Chapter Addressing the Provincial Representative, "The work of the XXX Lodge/Chapter on the building of our great Brotherhood has been completed, and I offer you the Warrant/Charter of this Lodge/Chapter, which is to be returned with our thanks, to the MW the Grand Master/ First Grand Principal, whose property it has ever remained."

Provincial Representative receives Warrants from WM/MEZ.

Provincial Representative: - "WM/MEZ, I symbolically receive the Warrant/Charter of XXX Lodge/Chapter No.XXX, but it is I who must thank you and all the Brethren/Companions of these Lodge/Chapters throughout the years, for the contribution you have made to the maintenance and advancement of Freemasonry in general and to these Lodge/Chapters in particular.

I now return them to the safe custody of the Secretary/Scribe E of those Lodge/Chapters who must deliver them via the Provincial Grand Secretary/Scribe E to the MW The Grand Master/Grand First Principle, as part of the administrative processes that are necessary to effect the final closure of the Lodge/Chapter."

The Provincial Representative places the Warrants on the cushion held by the Escorting Officer, who gives a court bow, returns them to the Secretary/Scribe E table and then goes back to his place.

Patriarchal Benediction

Provincial Representative: - "I now call upon the Chaplain for the Patriarchal Benediction."

Escorting Officer: - "To order Brethren/Companions." (*sign of R*)



LEVEL 3: UNIT RESOURCES

Respond > Unit Options > Unit Options

Good Practice Surrender of a Warrant or Charter by a Unit [Support Material]

Chaplain: - “May the God of our Fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the Angel of the Everlasting Covenant, who has redeemed us from evil, the Holy One that sanctify us; bless, preserve, and keep us evermore.”

All: - “So mote it be.” (*drop sign*)

Escorting Officer: - “Be seated Brethren/Companions.”

Closing of Lodge/Chapter

Provincial Representative: - “I now call upon the WM/MEZ to close this Lodge/Chapter for the final time.”

The WM/MEZ and brethren/Companions conduct the Closing of Lodge/Chapter with the change to the closing lines as below

Craft: Brother Senior Warden the labours of this lodge having ended, you have my command to close the lodge for the last time.

Chapter: Companion Principal Sojourner the labours of this chapter being ended, you have my command to close this Chapter for the last time.

Escorting Officer: - “Brethren, the 1st verse of the National Anthem.”

Escorting Officer: - “Brethren, we will sing the closing ode.” (Lodges)

Escorting Officer forms and conducts the outgoing procession.

Festive Board

This will be conducted as a celebration of the existence of the Lodge/Chapter, and the Provincial Officers attending should all pay for their own dining.

The Provincial toast list should be used in the normal way, but with one suggested variation. It is recommended that toast list can be amended to remove the toast to the WM/MEZ and its response.

Instead the Provincial Representative can respond to the Provincial toast and then immediately propose a toast to Lodge/Chapter and the future of their Members, to which fire can be given.