

Board of Custodians Decisions

Grand Lodge of Minnesota, A.F. & A.M.

The following represent general rules relative to the work in all three degrees, and general information common to all lodge procedure.

In the First Degree the Bible is opened to Psalm 133. In the Second Degree the Bible is opened to Amos, Chapter 7. In the Third Degree the Bible is opened to Ecclesiastes, Chapter 12. ***Many lodges have members of other faiths and it is therefore appropriate to display their sacred texts upon the altar as well. The Bible should remain in its customary spot, centered on the altar. Additional holy books may be displayed on either side of the Bible, but will remain closed.***

The Deacon's rods are black in color and are taken whenever the Deacons are called up as Deacons, and are carried whenever they perform Deacons duties. (Exceptions: first knock of the gavel ***when JD closes doors***; balloting; second section of Third degree; when W.M. declares lodge closed or at refreshment.) Rods should be taken after rising, grasped with the forearm parallel to the floor, so that the hand remains in the same position for carrying. In every degree the Senior Deacon stays on the same side of the candidate he started on throughout the work.

All speeches should be spoken loudly enough to be clearly audible except as specifically noted otherwise.

Opening of the three degrees is similar in form, but there are necessary differences. In the First Degree, if the S.W. calls up the Dc. they both approach the West and ground their rods. In the Second and Third Degrees the S.D. does not ground his rod until after he has communicated the P.W. to the S.W. and backed down. The J.D. grounds his rod while the S.D. is giving the P.W., and after S.D. has backed down, J.D. communicates P.W. to S.W. and backs down and grounds rod again. In all cases, deacon ascends to same level as officer at station to communicate P.W. Any Brother whom the S.W. recognizes may vouch for an unknown Brother whether he has given the P.W. to a deacon or not. When leaving the East or West Dc. must both turn out. The Dc. should stop in positions 45° from the center of the Altar when returning West from the W.M.'s station.

The three burning tapers are lighted before the Bible is opened and extinguished after the Bible is closed.

The Steward's rods are white in color and are carried whenever they perform duties as Stewards. When Stewards act as assistant Deacons they do not carry their rods. The Jr. Sd. precedes Sr. Sd. to preparation room door and allows Sr. Sd. to enter first. The Sd., with rods properly grounded, direct candidates to stand while propounding interrogatories. In the second and third degrees the Sd. should be sure that the candidate knows how to step off in the preceding degree or degrees. The Sd. should be sure the candidate is properly prepared for reception; symbolically divested of all metals, actually if possible, but permitted deviations such as wedding rings, etc., or others not possible to remove, should be covered if possible, but otherwise disregarded. The candidate in all cases should be given the advantage of all help properly permitted. The rods are to remain in the same room as the Stewards.

In the Second and Third Degrees the reception of more than one candidate is accomplished by having the Sr. Sd. bringing in one at a time while the Jr. Sd. holds the remaining candidates at the door. The S.D. lines

the multiple Cd. from North to South, across the West, stopping each Cd. with the left hand on Cd.'s right shoulder, and starts his receiving lecture on last Cd. brought in; "I receive you . . .", saying nothing to candidates in between first and last candidates, but receiving them properly, then completing the lecture at the first Cd. brought in, "It (or . . .which) is to show (or teach) . . ." S.D. conducts last candidate received.

During the circumambulation the S.D. and his Cd. only, form the front line at the Wd. stations. All other Cd. and assistant Dc. form one line *left to right* behind S.D. and his Cd. with that line centered on the Wd. The S.D.'s Cd. stands directly in front of Wd. and W.M. On first pass to J.W. they clear just East of Altar. When Cd. or Cd. go around to salute Wd. and W.M. there is only a single line formed at each station. The same is true when being taught how to wear apron and when approaching the East. In all cases the S.D. and assistants pivot on the Cd. when facing about.

On the word "obeyed" the Dc. or Dc. drop the peculiar grip and do not take it again in that degree, but support and guide the Cd. by a grip on the elbow. He should be warned he is approaching the Altar before he is caused to kneel.

Nothing is ever placed upon the Altar except the three G.L. and the Cd.'s hands. The S.D. may dispose of his rod as convenient to prepare the Cd. but will retrieve it before reporting to the W.M. The S.D. should determine that all Cd. are in due form before reporting. During the Ob. the W.M.'s hands are on the Cd's hands from the words "do hereby" through "swear" inclusively. While the W.M. recovers, the S.D. and assistants put Cd. or Cd. at ease by removing hands from G.L. and causing them to kneel on both knees. Hands may be kept on edge of Altar. In kissing H.B. the Cd. are to be guided by a hand on shoulder only, and in cases of more than one, starting with S.D.'s Cd. The W.M. controls the H.B., not the S.D.

When the lines are formed from East to West, the S.D. determines that the lines are straight. The W.M. steps backwards to the East. On the words "You now discover me" the W.M. hesitates momentarily, then advances towards Cd. W.M. gives du gu and sg while approaching the Altar. *Before* arriving at the Altar, W.M. stops on step of the degree *in full view of the candidate* and explains du gu, then assumes normal position and continues.

When explaining the gp and wd, the W.M. steps around North side of Altar "on convenient side of burning tapers" and addresses S.D.'s candidate. He must not reach over the Altar at any time. Assistant Dc. will give grip from Cd's left side only. In the 1st degree the W.M. takes a regular or normal handclasp to begin with. In the 2nd or 3rd degree the W.M. takes Cd. by grip of preceding degree immediately. The W.M. assists Cd. to arise (assistant Dc. do likewise). S.D. and assistants take charge of Cd. immediately.

When the lodge is seated, the S.D. and assistants, if any, conduct Cd. or Cd. by way of East side of Altar to Wd. stations starting with J.W. to S.W., then to Altar to salute the W.M. The S.D. and assistants, if any, instruct Cd. or Cd. on giving the du gu and sn. The Wd. and W.M. must return these du gu and sn.

In presenting the apron, the W.M. holds it with the bib facing the Cd. When he hands it to the Cd. he reverses it by crossing his arms. The apron is tied or applied to the Cd. by the S.D. before the S.W. begins his speech. Just before the words "thus . . ." the S.W. hesitates and the S.D. arranges the apron.

When the S.D. is on the South end of the line of multiple Cd. he should go behind Cd. to the North end of the line to conduct Cd. to the East or to the preparation room door. In the First Degree, assistant Dc. are dismissed at the preparation room door when Cd. are returned for reinvestment. In the Second and Third Degrees they are dismissed when they have placed their Cd. in position to receive W.T.

In presentation of W.T. to multiple Cd. the S.D. works from the left end of the line, which should be formed diagonally from the N.E. corner to the N.E. corner of the Altar in all three degrees with Cd. directly facing W.M. The S.D. goes up on the word “uses” to get W.T. from W.M. and backs down with them. He presents them to first Cd. as the W.M. tells the Cd. what they are (“The W.T. of a(n) _____ are . . .”). The Cd. pass the W.T. down the line and the S.D. goes behind the line to retrieve W.T. from Cd. nearest the Altar, and returns (still behind the line) and goes up as before to return them to the W.M., who remains silent until S.D. has backed down into position before he explains them. (In the case of a single Cd, the S.D. remains on the Cd’s left side when presenting and retrieving W.T.) In describing the W.T., the W.M. holds the instrument up during the explanation of its operative use and sets it down before explaining its symbolic use. The instruments are to be held upright, plumb, square, and level.

The Board of Custodians recommends that the Cd. be seated in the N.E. and that the lectures be given from West of the Altar, with answers given by the Brother facing the Cd.

In the First Degree the C.T. is tied with the knot under the left ear with one loop and one loose end ahead of the shoulder, and one loop and one loose end behind the shoulder. In the 2nd or 3rd degree there is no prescribed method for tying the knot in the C.T.

The Board also recommends that in the Second Degree, where possible, B. and J. be moved out away from the preparation room door so that the S.D. can start his lecture with Cd. in proper place agreeable to Stair work. In the South, during the Stair work, the P. G. is given and dropped immediately after the P. W. is given.

In the Third Degree, second section, no matter how Cd. answers question “Is it so?”, the S.D. will answer according to the cipher. At the Altar the S.D. will complete his speech before he allows Cd. to kneel. When Cd. rises, S.D. turns him one quarter turn to the North and faces him directly to talk to him. They should begin walking at “It was the usual custom . . . “

Ja and Jo follow this routine: Stop Cd. - drop hands - talk - shoves Cd. back to S.D. who has stepped back a little behind Cd. He holds Cd. until he has finished his speech before advancing again. This process is repeated through every demand and answer. However, Jm retains hold on Cd. from beginning to end. The S.D. does not touch the Cd. once Jm has assumed control of him. In cases of multiple Cd. in the Third Degree the Rf. will complete their dialog in the N.E. corner on each Cd. The Cd. is then carried to the S.E. corner, lowered, then immediately carried on South side of lodge to the West without conversation. Other dialog may be omitted on all but last candidate to the point of rs.

In case of multiple Cd. the G.M.W. and explanation of G.M.W. to words “low breath” will be given. Complete explanation will be given to last Cd. On “foot to foot” the right foot will be used, (not the left foot.)

The S.W. starts the circumambulation from the West when he steps down from his station. All brethren join in simultaneously, except the W.M. and J.D. The W.M. will fall in behind the S.W. The J.D. remains at his place throughout.

In case of multiple Cd. when the procession is started the S.D. leads the remaining Cd. who have been seated in the N.E. corner, into the circle where they make only one partial circuit. After passing the S.W.’s station they fall out of line on the North side of the Gr., facing south and extending East to West. The S.D.

then goes to the Cd. and removes Hw. Other brethren continue around and on the third circuit the S.W. steps out of line and permits K.S. to pass him to go to head of Gr. At the same time the S.D. steps into line on the North side of K.S. K.S. then gives G.H.S. of D. alone. The S.W. then leads the brethren in giving G.H.S. of D. This time K.S. does not participate. In cases of multiple Cd., after the last Cd. is rs. and before the explanation of the F. P. of F. begins, the S.D. forms the remaining Cd. in a line, or lines as space permits, with the last Cd. in the center of a line extending North and South, and facing East.

Previously in this section, when Cr. enter they come in from tiled door as a group, not as a military file, and work from the S.E. corner - not between K.S. and Altar. With twelve F.C., the three principle Cr. are ordered to proceed West, but before meeting W.F. man the other nine go out through preparation room door in groups of three. The principle three wait and then meet W.F. man, then go out preparation room door and pick up other nine, and come back in through tiled door. The second time all twelve go out preparation room door and three return by way of tiled door, stop at Gr., get Rf. from preparation room, return through tiled door and go to the East. All twelve F.C. return after the execution, and after instructions go directly to the Gr., and directly from the Gr. to the East. With three F.C. the same procedure is followed exactly, except the nine are disregarded. The F.C. move in a counter clockwise direction at all times.

After the Charge is read in the Third Degree the Cd. should sign the bylaws.

The W.M. should not remove his hat except in attending prayer, when obligating Cd., when surrendering his gavel of authority, or as provided elsewhere in the ritual. In the F.C. work when the W.M. rises, he removes his hat, holding it in his right hand until the word "bow" (the bow is not held) at which time he assumes the attitude of prayer.

The peculiar position of a Mason at prayer is made by placing the left arm over the right with the tips of the fingers as close as is comfortable and conveniently possible to the shoulders, the arms in a comfortable position on breast with the head slightly bowed. The attitude should not be a strained or difficult position.

In closing the Lodge, the W.M. gives knock, but should hold brethren until G.L. are closed and burning tapers extinguished, but the knock is given before the Dc. move. ***In all cases, the gavel knock signals the moment that the lodge is opened or closed. The floor work begins at this moment, and the Wardens columns are displayed appropriately at this time.***

The proficiency lecture is to be used for the candidates memory work, but is not to be substituted for the first section of the lecture on any degree.