

Supporting Others

Maintain a sensible rhythm of contact. A light monthly touch, a more in-depth conversation each quarter, and always being in touch around illness, bereavement, missed meetings, or significant milestones are good starting points. Give particular attention to the more vulnerable members: the recently bereaved, those who are seriously or chronically ill, the isolated, the newly joined, and those who have quietly stopped attending.

Watch for signs of withdrawal, ill health, a carer who is worn thin, loneliness, hardship, or any significant change in a brother's usual character.

Practical things you can do include: simply turning up or ringing; offering a lift to meetings; carrying the Conclave's greetings; and, where there is hardship, ensuring the brother knows what support the Order offers and, **always with his consent**, alerting the Provincial Almoner or Supreme Ruler.

When to seek help: report anything impacting a brother's safety, serious illness, or a personal crisis promptly, with his knowledge where possible. Never carry a serious worry alone.



A Quick Guide

First steps as a new Visiting Deacon

1. Ask the Secretary for your list of brethren.
2. Make personal contact with each, introducing yourself.
3. Note how each brother prefers to be contacted and how often.
4. Agree when you will next be in touch and put it in your diary.
5. Be ready to report at the next Conclave meeting.

Introduce Yourself

"Good evening, Brother ——. My name is ——, and I have the pleasure of being your Visiting Deacon. That simply means I'm the brother whose job is to keep in touch, see how you're getting on, and make sure you have everything you need from the Conclave. There's nothing you need do — I only wanted to introduce myself, and to find out how best to stay in touch with you."

Do's

- Make contact personal and regular.
- Listen more than you speak.
- Keep your promises to call or visit.
- Respect confidences.
- Report welfare concerns promptly.

Don'ts

- Wait only for meetings to make contact.
- Press a reluctant brother.
- Try to diagnose or fix (notice and refer).
- Carry a serious worry alone.
- Forget the brother who has stopped attending.



THE VISITING DEACON

A guide to the office

*"The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David."
(1 Samuel 18:1)*



Welcome

Congratulations on your appointment as a **Visiting Deacon**. This office is perhaps the one closest to the heart of our Order, drawing its inspiration directly from the profound friendship between David and Jonathan: **loyalty, watchfulness, and a readiness to act for a friend's good.**

As a Visiting Deacon, you are the living expression of that friendship. Your role is to keep in touch with the brethren in your care, to notice when one might be in need, and to ensure that the Order's support and care actually reaches him. This office requires no oratory or complex ritual. **Its demands are simple yet profound: genuine interest in your brethren, a little of your time, and unwavering reliability.**

Purpose

In the Craft, a Deacon acts as a messenger within the Lodge and the Almoner tends to the welfare of the members; In the OSM, the Visiting Deacon carries out these duties and fulfils the Order's care out to the individual brother, wherever he may be. The concept of a "secret monitor" is that of a friend who watches quietly over another, much as Jonathan watched over David. This office makes that ideal a practical reality, brother by brother, ensuring that no member is ever left unregarded.

Visiting Deacons are the pastoral and administrative heartbeat of the Conclave. They are pastoral in being the personal link to a small group of brethren, and administrative because through their regular contact and reports, the Conclave remains aware of the well-being of all its members.

Your Duties

The duties of the Visiting Deacons are set out at Clauses 73 to 80 of the Book of Constitutions. What follows is a plain-language guide; for the authoritative wording, always refer to the Book of Constitutions itself.

- ✓ **Your objective** — to search out and call upon any brother who may be in danger, distress, or ill health, or who needs fraternal monition, sympathy, consolation, or assistance.
- ✓ **Appointment** — every Conclave appoints not more than four Visiting Deacons; the duty is recognised in the Conclave's by-laws.
- ✓ **Your allocation** — the membership roll is divided so that each Deacon has the personal care of roughly a quarter of the brethren.
- ✓ **Between meetings** — keep in regular contact so you know all is well, and can act quickly when it is not.
- ✓ **At the meeting** — you report on the status, health, and whereabouts of your brethren at each meeting.
- ✓ **Apologies** — a Brother who cannot attend should always send his apology to the Secretary as well as informing his Visiting Deacon, so every absence is properly recorded.
- ✓ **Working with the Conclave** — the Secretary keeps the records and provides your list; the Provincial Almoner can help bring relief; your part is to maintain the contact and keep the Conclave informed.