



THE FREEMASONS'
GRAND CHARITY

Relief Chest Scheme

Operating Manual and Rules

April 2007

Relief Chest Scheme

Designated Fund Account Rules

(referred to in the Trustees' Annual Report and
Financial Statements as restricted funds)

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Relief Chests are charitable funds which constitute restricted funds of The Freemasons' Grand Charity. They are not bank accounts. Relief Chests are held in The Freemasons' Grand Charity Designated Funds Account, which are referred to in the Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements as restricted funds.

Designated Fund Account Rules

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Freemasons' Grand Charity established the Relief Chest Scheme in 1986, initially to help Lodges make charitable donations efficiently. The Scheme was later extended to assist the Craft overall and other Masonic organisations. Under the Scheme, a Lodge or other Masonic organisation (the "Relief Chest holder") opens a 'Relief Chest', in which the funds held may **only** be used for charitable purposes.
- 1.2. Funds intended for charitable distribution are paid into a Relief Chest. The Freemasons' Grand Charity reclaims eligible tax relief, which is paid into the Relief Chest. The Freemasons' Grand Charity invests funds held in all Relief Chests at a competitive rate of interest, tax free, and all interest earned is credited to the Relief Chests, in proportion to the balance in the Chest. Upon the request of the Relief Chest holder, The Freemasons' Grand Charity will make a donation to a charity or organisation recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as charitable, or for the relief of an individual in distress.
- 1.3. All Relief Chests are held in the name of The Freemasons' Grand Charity and form part of the Financial Statements of The Freemasons' Grand Charity as a restricted fund. Under Charity law, the Council of The Freemasons' Grand Charity has the ultimate responsibility to hold and keep safe these assets. Although donations from a Relief Chest are technically made by The Freemasons' Grand Charity, the Relief Chest holder retains the right, subject to certain restrictions, to decide which charity should benefit from its Relief Chest and a donation will only be made at the request of the Relief Chest holder.
- 1.4. It is important to emphasise that a Relief Chest is not a bank account and should not be used as such. A Relief Chest may only be used to receive and hold money intended to be given for charitable purposes. Donations for

Masonic and non-Masonic charities must be made from the Relief Chest. **It is not to be used to accumulate or hoard funds purely for investment purposes. For that reason donations may not be made to a Lodge Almoner's Fund or Benevolent Fund, even if that fund is a registered charity.** Nor may Relief Chest funds be used to pay the Annual Contributions to The Freemasons' Grand Charity under Rule 271 of the Book of Constitutions.

- 1.5. Relief Chest representatives, Lodge Officers and Brethren should understand that a Relief Chest representative acts as the agent of individual donors and his Lodge or other Masonic unit and not as an agent of The Freemasons' Grand Charity.
- 1.6. The detailed procedures governing the operation of the Relief Chest Scheme are presented below.

2. Opening a Relief Chest

- 2.1. The Freemasons' Grand Charity will open a Relief Chest for any Craft Lodge, Provincial Grand Lodge or for any other Masonic organisation recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England (e.g. Royal Arch Chapter, Rose Croix Chapter, Mark Lodge) within England and Wales to receive funds intended for charitable distribution.
- 2.2. Relief Chests for Private Lodges
 - 2.2.1. To open a Relief Chest a Lodge must pass a resolution in open Lodge. Subject to the by-laws and practice of each Lodge, prior notice of motion is not required. The Lodge is the "Relief Chest holder".
 - 2.2.2. The application form for opening a Relief Chest must be signed by the Secretary of the Lodge and is available on The Freemasons' Grand Charity's website or by contacting the Relief Chest office. Applications can be submitted at any time. The Relief Chest will become active on the first day of the following month.

2.3. Relief Chests for Provincial Grand Lodges and other Masonic Organisations

- 2.3.1. A Provincial Grand Lodge may open a Relief Chest by completing the application form available on The Freemasons' Grand Charity's website or by contacting The Freemasons' Grand Charity office. The application form must be signed by the Provincial Grand Secretary.
- 2.3.2. All other Masonic organisations as mentioned in 2.1. above may open a Relief Chest by completing the relevant application form available on The Freemasons' Grand Charity's website or from the office. The application form must be signed by the Secretary, Scribe E, Trustee, or other officer of the organisation.
- 2.4. All Relief Chests must have a designated point of contact for communication and for requesting donations to be made from the Relief Chest. The Relief Chest representative is the **only** contact with The Freemasons' Grand Charity for general communications. If the representative is unobtainable, The Freemasons' Grand Charity will write to the Lodge Secretary or equivalent. Authorisation for donations to be made from a Relief Chest requires two signatures; the Relief Chest representative and one of the following: the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward.

3. Payments into Relief Chests

3.1. Payments into a Relief Chest arise from three sources:

- Donations — Individual or collective.
- Gift Aid tax relief — arising from a donation made by qualifying UK tax payers who have made a Gift Aid declaration.
- Interest — earned on the balance in the Relief Chest.

3.2. Donations

3.2.1. Individual Donations

An individual may make a donation into any Relief Chest by completing the Relief Chest Donation Form for Regular or Single Donations available on the website of The Freemasons' Grand Charity or by contacting the Relief Chest office. The donor is not required to be a Mason or a member of the Lodge holding the Relief Chest.

3.2.1.1. Regular Donations

An individual may donate into a Relief Chest with regular payments, for example through Regular Payment Promises by direct debit from a bank or building society account. The completed form should be sent to The Freemasons' Grand Charity office.

3.2.1.2. Single Donation

To make a single donation, the individual should write a cheque or crossed postal order payable to The Freemasons' Grand Charity. Cash donations may be made but these should be avoided, if possible, because of the greater security risks. The payment should be sent to The Freemasons' Grand Charity office, accompanied by the completed form.

3.2.1.3. Gift Aid

UK tax payers qualifying for Gift Aid tax relief can increase the value of their donation to the Relief Chest by making a Gift Aid declaration, which will apply to all donations made into any Relief Chest under the Scheme. Once the individual has made a Gift Aid declaration, The Freemasons' Grand Charity will reclaim any tax relief associated with the donation and credit that amount to the appropriate Relief Chest. In addition, donors who pay

tax at the higher rate can claim higher rate tax relief on the donation. Further information on Gift Aid tax relief can be found on the website of HM Revenue & Customs.
www.hmrc.gov.uk/charity

3.2.1.4. Legacies

Legacies may be made for the benefit of a Relief Chest. Guidance on appropriate wording is included in the Starter Pack or may be obtained from The Freemasons' Grand Charity office.

Sometimes an individual Lodge may receive a legacy under a Will. There may be circumstances where the Lodge decides that it is desirable to re-direct that legacy to a Relief Chest in order to save inheritance tax. This is normally achieved by entering into a Deed of Variation within two years' of the testator's death (and this is likely to require the participation of the executors). If a Lodge proposes to re-direct a legacy to a Relief Chest by Deed of Variation, the Lodge should notify the Secretary of The Freemasons' Grand Charity before the Deed of Variation is signed as there may be circumstances where The Freemasons' Grand Charity needs to be involved in the process.

The Freemasons' Grand Charity may incur legal fees in dealing with a legacy made for the benefit of a Relief Chest. The Freemasons' Grand Charity reserves the right to deduct any such legal fees from the Relief Chest concerned, at its discretion.

3.2.2. Collective Donations

3.2.2.1. A Relief Chest holder can make a donation into the Chest from funds it holds in another Relief Chest or has collected from

individuals. To request the transfer of funds from one Chest to another, the Relief Chest representative should contact the office for the appropriate voucher. For donations collected from a group, the Relief Chest representative should complete a Miscellaneous Form and send it with a cheque for the total to the Relief Chest office.

3.2.2.2. For collective donations, Gift Aid tax relief can only be reclaimed for individuals donating to the total if the individual can be identified and is eligible to receive Gift Aid tax relief. If a collective donation is made into a Relief Chest that comprises donations from a number of individuals (e.g. the Alms collection) each individual donor and the amount of the donation must be separately listed and the individual must have made the relevant Gift Aid declaration for his contribution to the total amount to be eligible to receive Gift Aid tax relief. To allow The Freemasons' Grand Charity to claim the possible Gift Aid tax relief for any one individual's donation, the Relief Chest representative must complete the Verification Schedule. The Freemasons' Grand Charity operates a Gift Aid Envelope Scheme; for details contact the Relief Chest office.

3.2.2.3. Gift Aid tax relief will be claimed by The Freemasons' Grand Charity. Higher rate income taxpayers can claim tax relief equal to the difference between the higher and basic rate of tax (currently 18%) on all donations made to The Freemasons' Grand Charity. Since April 2004 higher rate taxpayers have the option of donating their 18% tax rebate to charity as well, by simply completing the appropriate Gift Aid box on the self-assessment Tax Return.

3.3. Gift Aid Tax Relief

3.3.1. The Freemasons' Grand Charity will reclaim any eligible tax relief arising from donations made by qualifying UK taxpayers who have made a Gift Aid declaration covering the donation. All tax repayments will be credited to the relevant Relief Chest. Advice on claiming Gift Aid tax relief can be obtained from the Relief Chest office or by viewing the HM Revenue & Customs web site.
www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities

3.4. Interest

3.4.1. The balance of all funds held in Relief Chests is invested in short-term deposits with reputable financial institutions. The funds are not invested in shares, the value of which may go down as well as up. All interest, which is earned gross of tax, is credited to individual Relief Chests monthly, on an equitable basis. The amount of interest allocated to each Chest in any month is based on the balance that has been kept in the Relief Chest during the whole of the previous calendar month.

3.4.2. The interest "compounds" monthly - effectively giving a higher rate of interest than the basic annual rate.

4. Gift Aid Tax Relief

4.1. With effect from 6 April 2000, HM Revenue & Customs has allowed tax relief by qualifying UK taxpayers on donations of any amount that they make to a charity. The tax relief is added to the donation, thereby enhancing the amount of money received by the charity. The donor must have made a Gift Aid declaration which names specifically the charity receiving the gift. The recipient charity must hold all Gift Aid declaration forms for future HM Revenue & Customs audit inspections to confirm the validity of any tax reclaims that it has made.

- 4.2. Therefore, for the purposes of Gift Aid tax relief on Relief Chest donations, The Freemasons' Grand Charity is the recipient charity and is so identified on the Gift Aid declaration. Donations paid into Relief Chests are held in the name of The Freemasons' Grand Charity and form part of the Financial Statements of The Freemasons' Grand Charity as a restricted fund.
- 4.3. Relief Chest holders should seek to maximise the value of funds in their Relief Chests through the use of Gift Aid relief. Additional information on Gift Aid tax relief can be found by viewing the HM Revenue and Customs website. www.hmrc.gov.uk/charities
- 4.4. A donor who has given a Gift Aid Declaration for regular donations can cancel it at any time by giving written notice to his Relief Chest representative who should forward the notice to the Relief Chest Office. It would be helpful if at least one month's notice could be given of any such cancellation. A donor who ceases to be a taxpayer should immediately inform his Relief Chest representative so that his claim for tax relief may be cancelled.

5. Payments from Relief Chests

- 5.1. Eligible Payments
 - 5.1.1. Relief Chest holders may request The Freemasons' Grand Charity to make donations from a Relief Chest to organisations or for purposes recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as charitable, subject to the qualifications noted in 5.2. below, for the relief of individuals in distress and to another Relief Chest. Donations may be made to a Masonic or non-Masonic charity whose work is international, national or local. Any charity with a registered charity number included on the Charity Commission's Register of Charities, (which can be viewed on-line at www.charity-commission.gov.uk) is recognised by HM Revenue & Customs as a charity. If a charity is not registered with the

Charity Commission, it may be eligible to receive a donation from a Relief Chest if the Charity Commission confirms that its purpose is charitable.

- 5.1.2. Relief Chest representatives are asked to provide, if requested, evidence to confirm that HM Revenue & Customs recognises as charitable any organisation to which the account holder requests a donation, if there is doubt as to the eligibility of the organisation to receive a charitable donation.

5.2. Ineligible Payments

- 5.2.1. A donation may not be made from a Relief Chest to any Lodge account or benevolent fund (even if a registered charity) to reimburse for a donation made previously to a charity, even if that charity would qualify to receive a Relief Chest payment had it been made directly from the Relief Chest.
- 5.2.2. Donations may not be made **under any circumstances** from a Lodge Relief Chest to an associated Lodge "Almoners Fund", "Benevolent Association" or similar description even if that associated fund or benevolent association is registered as a charity. A Lodge or other Masonic organisation is not permitted by HM Revenue & Customs to use its Relief Chest as a free banking service simply to invest its funds at advantageous rates and then repatriate the money into its own charitable fund.
- 5.2.3. Relief Chests must not be used to pay the Annual Contributions to The Freemasons' Grand Charity required under Rule 271 of the Book of Constitutions or to pay contributions to Provincial charitable funds required of them under Provincial Grand Lodge by-laws. Relief Chests may, however, be used for general donations to The Freemasons' Grand Charity, to other Masonic Charities and to Provincial charitable funds, especially for the support of Masonic Charity Festivals.

5.2.4. Christmas gifts to widows of deceased Brethren and payments for wreaths for funerals are not regarded by HM Revenue & Customs as charitable and must not be made from Relief Chests.

5.3. Donations from a Relief Chest to a Charity

5.3.1. To request that a donation be made from a Relief Chest to a charity, a resolution must be approved in open Lodge (or the equivalent). Subject to the by-laws and practice of the Lodge (or equivalent), prior notice of motion is not essential. Following approval, the Relief Chest representative must complete a Relief Chest voucher, which is obtainable from The Freemasons' Grand Charity office. For donations to the main Masonic Charities the voucher is blue. For donations to all non-Masonic charities and Masonic charities that are not listed on the blue voucher, the voucher is green. The green voucher requires the name and address of the charity and all vouchers must be signed by two Lodge (or equivalent) representatives. **One of these must be the Relief Chest Representative and the other, one of the following: Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward.**

5.3.2. The green voucher requesting donations to non-Masonic charities should be sent to The Freemasons' Grand Charity office. For all except emergency donations, where the payment to the charity is required urgently, cheques will be issued once a month. Requests received by the 15th of the month, are usually despatched within the first five working days of the following month. The Freemasons' Grand Charity will send a cheque directly to the charity with a letter identifying the source of the donation. The letter also requests that the charity receiving the donation should send its acknowledgement to the representative of the Relief Chest from which the donation was made.

- 5.3.3. A donation from a Relief Chest must be a minimum of £50.00; there is no upper limit. A request for a donation will not be met if the amount exceeds the funds in the Relief Chest.
 - 5.3.4. In exceptional circumstances, if the holders of a Relief Chest require a donation to be processed speedily, or require a cheque for presentation, a letter should accompany the voucher indicating the date the cheque is required and to whom it should be sent.
 - 5.3.5. Many Relief Chest holders request that donations be made to Masonic Charities. For donations to certain specified Masonic charities, Relief Chest representatives are supplied with numbered vouchers on blue paper at the time of opening the Relief Chest which require only the insertion of a tick in a box to indicate which charity is to benefit from the donation. This blue voucher should be sent direct to the Masonic Charity that is to benefit, together with any covering letter or other related correspondence.
- 5.4. Donations from a Relief Chest to an Individual
- 5.4.1. Funds in a Relief Chest may be used to assist any individual in distress. There is no requirement that the individual receiving the financial assistance is a Mason or Masonic dependant. There is no limit on the number of donations that may be given to an individual in distress. The minimum amount of the donation is £50. The maximum amount of an Emergency Donation is £500. Other, non-Emergency, donations for the relief of distress may be of any amount, subject to the funds available in the Relief Chest.
 - 5.4.2. In cases of extreme distress when money is required urgently, an Emergency Donation may be made from a Relief Chest. Authorisation for an Emergency Donation may be given by the Relief

Chest representative and one of the following: the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward.

An Emergency Donation for the relief of distress for an individual does not require a resolution to be passed in open Lodge approving the payment. An Emergency Donation is limited to a maximum of £500.

5.4.3. Donations (non-Emergency) for the relief of distress, where money is not required urgently, must be approved by a resolution passed in open Lodge. Subject to the by-laws and practice of the Lodge, prior notice of motion is not necessarily required. Grants approved in this way may be for any amount, subject to the funds available in a Relief Chest.

5.4.4 Vouchers are not used to authorise donations to individuals for the relief of distress. A letter in the following format should be sent to the Relief Chest office providing details of the individual and the assurance of the Relief Chest holder that appropriate due diligence has been undertaken to confirm the need for relief:

We have made due enquiry and we are satisfied that:

A.N. Other
65 High Street
Anytown, Somewhere
WX 13YZ

is suffering from distress and is in need. The (Lodge) requests that the sum of (one hundred) pounds (£100) be donated for the relief of (Bro/Mrs Other's) distress and be debited against Relief Chest No xxxx.

[signed] A.B. Smith
(Relief Chest Representative)

[signed] E.F. Brown
(Master / Secretary / Treasurer / Almoner / Charity Steward)

The letter **must be signed** by the Relief Chest representative and one of the following: the Master, Treasurer, Secretary, Almoner or Charity Steward.

- 5.4.5. A request for a donation for the relief of distress is processed immediately by the Relief Chest office and a cheque is made payable to the Lodge and sent immediately. The Lodge is responsible for disbursing the money to the individual.
- 5.4.6. To enable The Freemasons' Grand Charity to satisfy HM Revenue & Customs that each donation is, in fact, charitable, the cheque sent to the Lodge is accompanied by a pink "certificate of disbursement". This certificate should be completed by the Lodge Treasurer or the Relief Chest representative and returned to the Relief Chest office following payment of the money to the individual.

6. Support for Provinces in Festival

- 6.1. Provinces in Festival for the central Craft Charities may wish to use the Relief Chest for the purposes of collecting and saving donations for the duration of the Festival.
- 6.2. In addition to all of the benefits of the Relief Chest which are available to all Chest holders, benefits to Festival Chest holders include:
 - Support for administration of paperwork, records and statutory compliance, thus allowing the Province to concentrate on the most important task of fundraising.
 - Customised stationery i.e., donation forms, envelopes, sponsorship forms.
 - Comprehensive reports showing detailed analyses of donors, Lodges and Chapters, available both in hard copy and electronic versions.
 - Reports to assist in the allocation of honorifics, jewels, etc.
 - Assistance to the Festival Committee in guiding the Charity Stewards.

- 6.3. There are no costs to the Province for the services of the Relief Chest Scheme. All of the costs are borne by The Freemasons' Grand Charity General Fund.

7. Honorific Office

- 7.1. Information on qualification for honorific office for each central Masonic Charity should be obtained from the Charity itself or by viewing its website.
- 7.2. Donations to Relief Chests do not count towards qualifications for honorific office in The Freemasons' Grand Charity; such qualifications can only be gained by donations to the General Funds of The Freemasons' Grand Charity. Donations from a Relief Chest to any of the four major Masonic charities (including the General Funds of The Freemasons' Grand Charity) can, however, qualify members of the Lodge, or the Lodge itself, for honorific office.

8. Statements and Correspondence

- 8.1. All correspondence concerning a Relief Chest will be sent to the Relief Chest representative. The Relief Chest representative is the **only** contact with The Freemasons' Grand Charity.
- 8.2. Relief Chest holders receive a detailed annual statement covering activity in the Relief Chest. When opening a Relief Chest, the holder must designate a twelve-month period for annual reporting. Each twelve-month period must end on the last day of a calendar month.
- 8.3. At the request of a Lodge, the Relief Chest office will supply an interim statement, covering all complete months in the Relief Chest's current financial year. Interim statements provide the same information as regular statements.

9. Dormant Chests

- 9.1. A dormant chest is one in which no payment has been made out of the Relief Chest for two years.
- 9.2. To meet the expectations of HM Revenue & Customs that a Relief Chest has been opened for collecting and donating money to charity, it is important that The Freemasons' Grand Charity can demonstrate activity. A two-year period during which no charitable donations have been made requires investigation to confirm that the Chest is being maintained according to the principles of the Relief Chest Scheme.
- 9.3. For Relief Chests identified as dormant, the Secretary of The Freemasons' Grand Charity will write to the Relief Chest representative to:
 - Advise him that no payment has been made out of the Chest during the preceding two years.
 - Seek an acceptable explanation for the inactivity (e.g. saving for a future Festival or other charitable event).
 - Find out if the Chest holder wishes to close the Chest.
 - Ascertain if the Chest holder seeks to reactivate the Chest.
 - Notify the representative that the Chest will be closed if it is not re-activated or if a satisfactory explanation for the inactivity is not given.
- 9.4. If the Relief Chest representative does not reply within three months, the Relief Chest office will write to the Secretary of the Lodge or equivalent requesting the information in 9.3 above within six months from the date of the letter.
- 9.5. In the absence of an acceptable explanation for the inactivity, if a Relief Chest has not been reactivated or closed after the six-month period of notice, the Relief Chest will be deemed to be dormant and a letter will be sent to the Secretary of the Lodge notifying him of that fact. If no acceptable response is received within 21 days, any balance left in the dormant Relief Chest will be distributed equally among the four central Craft charities and the Chest will be closed.

- 9.6. Upon the dissolution of a Lodge, the Relief Chest will notify the Lodge Secretary or equivalent that the Relief Chest will be treated as dormant unless a request is made for a charitable donation of the balance. If no response or request is received, any balance in the Relief Chest will be distributed as described in the previous paragraph and the Relief Chest will be closed.
- 9.7. Payments made to a Relief Chest after the dissolution of the Lodge (or equivalent) will be returned to the donor.

10. Relief Chest Charges

- 10.1. The Freemasons' Grand Charity makes no direct charge to Relief Chest holders for the services and administration of the Relief Chest Scheme.
- 10.2. It does not deduct any of the interest earned on the investments of the Relief Chest funds or any of the Gift Aid tax relief payments to cover its operating costs. All costs of providing the services of the Relief Chest Scheme (other than legal fees incurred in dealing with legacies made for the benefit of a Relief Chest – in relation to which see 3.2.1.4) are borne by the General Funds of The Freemasons' Grand Charity.

11. Responsibilities and Rights of The Freemasons' Grand Charity

- 11.1. The Freemasons' Grand Charity is responsible for meeting the requirements of HM Revenue & Customs which does not permit Relief Chests to be used as a banking operation. The Relief Chest is intended to be an efficient vehicle from which donations to Masonic and non-Masonic charities should regularly be made. It must not be used for the purpose of accumulating or hoarding funds purely for investment purposes.
- 11.2. As a charity, The Freemasons' Grand Charity must comply with the legal requirements of Charity law in general and of the Charities Acts 1993 and 2006.

- 11.3. Neither the Council of The Freemasons' Grand Charity nor the Charity itself takes any responsibility for the choice of any particular recipient by the Relief Chest holder.
- 11.4. The Council reserve the right to recover from the donor sums of money, which The Freemasons' Grand Charity is required to repay to the Inland Revenue for any reason including infringements of the 'benefit rules', which apply to Gift Aid. Information on the benefit rules is available from the HM Revenue and Customs.
- 11.5. The Council shall be entitled to revise the rules and guidelines of the Scheme without any prior notification.
- 11.6. The Council reserves the right to modify and terminate any service.
- 11.7. Issues of dispute or difference between the office of The Freemasons' Grand Charity and a Relief Chest holder or its representatives about the interpretation and operation of the Relief Chest Scheme which cannot be settled between the parties shall be referred to the Council of The Freemasons' Grand Charity. The decision of the Council shall be communicated in writing to the Lodge Secretary or equivalent.

*Published by Order of the Council
18 April 2007*

NOTES

Relief Chest Name and Number:

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Relief Chest Representative:

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Appointed on:

NB

A Relief Chest Representative is not necessarily the Charity Steward. If a new Relief Chest Representative is appointed at any time, please remember to inform The Grand Charity Relief Chest Office.

The Freemasons' Grand Charity
is the working name of

The Grand Charity

Registered No 281942

60 Great Queen Street
London
WC2B 5AZ

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F: 020 7395 9295

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