



A Proposal for Retirement of the Academy of Reflection's Charter

Summary

The Academy of Reflection (AOR) is a chartered body under the jurisdiction of the Valley of Guthrie, Orient of Oklahoma, in the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction (AASR-SJ). After extensive consideration, and with gratitude for all the support we have received from our members, the leadership of the Valley of Guthrie, and the Illustrious Brother Joe Manning, 33°, Sovereign Grand Inspector General for the Orient of Oklahoma and Lieutenant Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of the AASR-SJ, the officers of the Academy of Reflection propose to cease operations and retire the AOR charter effective November 2, 2024.

Explanation

Chartered in September of 2012, the AOR was primarily tasked with providing opportunities for Scottish Rite Masons to explore contemplative practice. In some ways, the AOR has been successful and has therefore become internationally known. Our most noteworthy activity has been hosting meditation sessions during reunions of the Valley of Guthrie. However, we have been largely *unsuccessful* with the following goals:

- A. Engaging a significant percentage of associates and inducted members of the AOR in working through our curriculum of contemplative courses.
- B. Producing enough qualified instructors to provide adequate assistance to the relatively small percentage of individuals doing the coursework.
- C. Consistently holding special events such as contemplative retreats.
- D. Chartering new academies, despite several other Valleys having completed the Memorandum of Agreement to create Academies in Formation.

With 12 years of operational experience and hindsight, as well as the general observation that interest in and pursuit of contemplative practice is happening on a larger scale within the Fraternity -- mainly due to "grassroots" efforts and readily available published materials -- we no longer believe that goals A through C are best supported by a formal organizational structure, or that goal D is the best approach to advancing contemplative practice within the Scottish Rite. We instead suggest that more sustainable alternatives are as follows:

1. Freely distribute the curriculum, bylaws, and other AOR documents through digital files downloadable from a website. The website could either be provided by the Valley of Guthrie or by a duly authorized individual.
2. Publishing a hardcopy book on the history, philosophy, and operations of the AOR, which would also include the curriculum, bylaws, and other documents. The book would be published under copyright of the Valley of Guthrie, with royalties going directly to the Valley.
3. Whether published online or in a book, a set of recommendations should be included for the ongoing training and recognition of instructors. Those brothers currently recognized as instructors would then operate entirely independently, recognizing as new instructors those who satisfactorily complete training under their instruction. This practice does not need to be overseen and supported by an organizational structure since Masons are already bound to behave according to the plumb, level, and square, especially with each other.
4. Special contemplative events such as retreats can be organized and facilitated through the efforts of individual members of any Valley or within the Scottish Rite at large.
5. Any Valley that wishes to form a group dedicated to contemplative practice is presumably free to do so and may freely make use of the AOR model and materials to the extent that their Valley's leadership sees fit.

The AOR's intent is therefore to retire the charter and disband the organization during its regularly scheduled business meeting in the Valley of Guthrie's Fall 2024 Reunion. The appropriate authorities within the Valley of Guthrie may then decide how to proceed regarding the proposed alternatives 1 through 5 as shown above.

Questions and Answers

The following questions are anticipated, and the AOR officers' answers are provided.

Q1: Has there been any official or "political" pressure to disband the AOR?

A2: No. To our knowledge, no group or individual within any part of the Fraternity of Freemasonry has exerted any such pressure. The only reasons for this proposal are those clearly stated above.

Q2: Will scheduled group meditation sessions continue to occur during the Valley of Guthrie's reunions?

A2: Yes, the group meditations will continue for as long as there is sufficient interest and the relevant authorities of the AASR-SJ, the Orient of Oklahoma, and the Valley of Guthrie permit them to occur. Such sessions were occurring prior to the creation of the AOR, and there is no reason to suspect they will not continue to do so.

Q3: What will occur to the groups in other Valleys who have a signed AOR Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) to operate an Academy in Formation?

A3: The MOA effectively becomes null and void, and each said group and Valley is encouraged to use the resources of the AOR to proceed as they wish.

Q4: What will be the significance of the name and emblem of the AOR and its titles, such as “member,” “associate,” “instructor,” etc.?

A4: The Valley of Guthrie shall retain legal authority over the name and emblem of “Academy of Reflection.” All titles formerly established by the bylaws of the AOR will cease to have any official recognition. The title of “instructor” may continue as an unofficial honorific by way of agreement among previously recognized instructors and those whom they continue to train, mentor, and recognize as future instructors under their own personal authority.

Q5: What will become of the website and social media currently used by the AOR?

A5: The currently operating Internet platforms for the AOR are the website and its discussion forum, the private Facebook group, and the public Facebook page. In each case, as soon as possible, notices shall be posted to inform all interested parties about the impending surrender of the charter and disbanding of the AOR. The notices should include most of the information in this proposal. The private Facebook group may then undergo an appropriate change of name and description, and similar changes may be made to the website and public Facebook group unless they are entirely closed. The forum associated with the website shall be permanently closed.

Conclusion

The Academy of Reflection seeks to retire its charter and cease operations effective November 2, 2024. The appropriate authorities within the Valley of Guthrie shall then decide how to proceed with maintaining and/or distributing the curriculum, bylaws, and any other materials previously provided by the AOR.

Submitted to the Valley of Guthrie on July 11, 2024, by the AOR officers:

Chuck Dunning, 33°, Superintendent
Randy Sanders, 32° KCCH, Clerk
Doug Russell, 32°, Custodian