



Grand Royal Arch Chapter of the State of Illinois

CHAPTER OF CONFUSION

Revised 10.2016

Purpose of this program

This program serves two purposes: First, to provide an activity outside of what most Chapters currently have for their stated convocations. Too many Chapters simply open, conduct business, and then close. There are few with programs, presentations, and discussions that serve as events of interest to their members. This program helps to resolve that by providing an “occasional” and unusual event that is out of the norm.

Second, this program reinforces the simple and common elements of the Royal Arch – our Chapter furniture, the rituals of opening the meeting, the importance of our regalia, ceremonies, and traditions. It is designed to refresh the knowledge of Chapter that many of us have, restore our familiarity with the uniqueness of the Royal Arch, and teach new Companions about the commonly-known aspects of our particular brand of the Craft.

How this program works

Almost all of us are familiar with the way our Chapters are set up prior to opening the Chapter on the Royal Arch Degree (the only degree the Chapter can be opened): Our Great Lights also include the Delta. Our officer’s chairs are placed in different locations than they are in Lodge or Council. We have different paraphernalia, like swords, banners, and a triangular alter. Much of this we take for granted and the placement and use of these is almost second nature.



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The Chapter of Confusion seeks to test the members' knowledge of how our Chapter works and the differences it has with other Masonic Bodies. It does this by having the Chapter room set up with certain errors, absences, misleading additions, and other circumstances that are intended to question the Companions' perception, memory, and knowledge of what is right and what is wrong.

The basic premise is that the Companions will have a short, set amount of time to examine the Chapter room and determine what is out of place, incorrect, or otherwise not right to open a Chapter of Royal Arch Masons. Again, the only degree that the Chapter is permitted to open on (at least from the standpoint of ritual) is the Royal Arch Degree. Each participant will write down what he feels is incorrect. Once the time has expired, the High Priest or "Program Coordinator" will walk through each incorrect item, correcting it, and participants will keep score as to what they got correct. The Chapter may elect to reward the winner with the most items noted as incorrect.

How to start

Whomever is running the Chapter of Confusion – usually the High Priest with the assistance of a District Deputy Grand High Priest, a Grand Chapter Officer, or one other Chapter officer (who will not participate with the other Companions) – arrives early to the Temple to "set up" the Chapter. It is important that none of the Companions participating in the event be present or see what is being prepared.

The Program Coordinator sets up the Chapter room as it would be to open his Chapter meeting on the Royal Arch Degree. This is important, as at the end of the



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event, the room will be restored to this state, ready for the Chapter to open its convocation, as normal.

The Program Coordinator might even add extra – allowable elements in the Chapter room – such as the four Veils and banners. The more items that are in the room, the more opportunities for the Companions to examine and determine what is right and what is wrong.

Once everything is set up correctly, the Program Coordinator begins rearranging, adding, and deleting items, making this a “Chapter of Confusion.”

Suggestions for things that are “wrong”

Now that the Chapter is set up correctly to be opened (even with the addition of extras like the four Veils), you now proceed to make the Chapter room confusing. Here are some things you can do:

- Replace the triangular alter with a square one. You could even move it on the floor from its normal location.
- Omit items from the alter, such as the bible, some or all of Lights, add in some extras like the Council’s swords or trowel, or have another book on the alter other than the Volume of Sacred Law (be respectful, however)
- Have the Captain of the Host’s, Royal Arch Captain’s, and Veilmen’s swords either missing, not placed on top of the chairs, or with their points pointing in any direction other than to the North



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- Add the Lodge's Junior and Senior Deacon rods and rod holders to some Chapter officer's position (such as the Principal Sojourner and Royal Arch Captain)
- Mix up the colors of the Veils. The normal colors (Royal Arch Captain back to the First Veilsmen) are: white, red, purple, and blue. If you have the Veil's banners out, you can even mix those up too!
- There should be three gavels on the pedestal in the East, one for each dais officer. You could remove any or all of the gavels or put them in a configuration (all pointed the same way, for instance) than is the norm. You could have two of those on the Lodge Warden's pedestals. For that matter, you could also have three pedestals in the East (like should be for Council assemblies).
- Place officer aprons and jewels, if you have them, out of order at each officer's station. You could even mix in a Lodge or Council apron or jewel of office here or there. Another idea is to place them at locations that might correspond to officers in Lodge or Council.
- Place the Marshal's baton where the Lodge Marshal sits. This is not a Grand Chapter office, by the way, even though the officer does appear in the first three Chapter degrees.
- Relocate floor officer chairs (for instance, the Royal Arch Captain's and the three Veilsmen's) to a slightly different location, perhaps to the South of the alter rather than just to the North.
- Place items from any of the Chapter degrees in the room, in the place they may be during the degree. For instance, the wicket at the Senior Warden's station, a sword under the Junior Deacon's chair, etc.
- Remove or relocate the American flag.



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- Arrange or place chairs on the chapter room floor in the configuration of the Overseer's chairs. Remember, there is only one degree the Chapter opens on – the Royal Arch Degree – and if the Mark Master Degree is to be immediately conferred after opening, the chairs are rearranged after the opening of the Chapter.
- Move the pedestal in the East directly in front of the Excellent High Priest's chair (where it would be at the start of the Past Master Degree). It is normally placed slightly to the right of the High Priest's chair in the East.

Note that these are just some of the things you can do. You may discover others that aren't on this list. And you can certainly combine suggestions (the alter, for instance, presents a lot of opportunities) to make the event more comprehensive – you'll want somewhere between 10 and 20 instances of incorrect, added, or misplaced items for the participants to discover. Make some of them easy, yet others difficult.

Timing and getting the event started

When the Chapter room is set up, close all of the doors and keep everyone out. Some Chapters even place signs on the door prohibiting entrance until a set time, usually 15 or 20 minutes prior to the Chapter opening.

You should let everyone attending that the Chapter of Confusion will start at a set time. Briefly explain the rules to them:

“You are about to enter a Chapter of Confusion. You all know how a Chapter room should be set up before the opening of a Stated Convocation. This event will test your



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knowledge and perception. You will enter the room and examine it to discover what is incorrect. Make a note of each item. There is a set time limit. After everyone is done, we will all go into the room and I (or the Event Coordinator) will go through everything wrong, correcting them, and explain the correction along the way. We will then open the Chapter as normal.”

It's a good idea to give each participant a sheet of paper (and pen!) to write down the things that they see wrong. You could even provide a number range on the sheet so that they know to look for a specific number of items that are incorrect.

The amount of time you allow the participants to have will vary greatly whether everyone plays as an individual (then allow 10-15 minutes) or as teams (allow each team 5-10 minutes before the next team goes in).

Once everyone is done, invite them all back into the Chapter room and to have a seat on the sidelines. Explain that you (or the Event Coordinator) will be putting the Chapter room “back right” and explaining things along the way. Instruct the participants that they are to score the items they got right and that the person (or team) with the most items found wrong will win the event.

Putting it back correctly

The best way to put things back is to start asking the participants what they found incorrect. Go slowly. You don't want everyone shouting out things. Maybe start at one of the chairs or benches and go down the row, giving each person an opportunity to speak out.



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As each person states something wrong, put it in its correct place (or remove it, if it's an addition), explaining where it goes and why. For added items (the Council's trowel and/or swords, for instance), explain why they are not used in the Chapter.

You may very well have some difficult items that no one gets. That's fine. Save those for last. Remember, you probably want a mixture of easy items to recognize as well as one or two difficult ones. You are testing your Companions' knowledge, so make it challenging, yet fun and interesting.

Team play

If you will have a lot of participants in the event, you might want to split them up into two, three, or even more groups. You want the event to go quickly, so having groups will mean that the event does not have a lot of "down time" for the other teams and participants. As there will be more people in each team, cut down the amount of time each team has to examine the room and make their list (maybe 5-10 minutes, depending on team size).

Ritual experts

Does your Chapter have a ritual expert who you know will know everything? Having them compete may be unfair, so why not enlist their help to help you set up the Chapter room for the competition? You could even have them explain each incorrect item and its rightful place as you (or the Event Coordinator) moves to make the correction.



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Prizes

Every competition gets better participation when there is a prize. Maybe tie the prize into some aspect of ritual: A special certificate, lapel pin, or maybe a brand new ritual book. There are plenty of ways to celebrate and reward the winner(s).

Promotion

There are only two critical requirements to make anything successful: Have a plan (like this event) and promote it. This is something unusual. Let EVERYONE in your Chapter – and even nearby Chapters – know about it. It's fun, challenging, and something out of the ordinary. Promote it as a yearly event and you'll soon find others thinking up new challenges! Most of all, have fun with this.