

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

Brethren, spring has not arrived, here in the Ottawa Valley, as I look out the window and watch some white stuff and hear the freezing rain hitting the glass. However, we all know that soon the warmth will return, the grass will turn green and the flowers will bloom.

In many Lodges this month, the election of new Officers will take place and once again the Brethren will choose the Master and his Officers and the renewal of the Lodge will continue as it has done since the Lodge formation.

Unfortunately, this will not be the case in all Lodges. Some Lodges will return the present Worshipful Master to the Master's Chair - perhaps for far too many times. In some Lodges, many of the Lodge Officer chairs will be filled with Past Masters or the Master Masons who have perhaps sat in that chair for two or three times. Some Lodges will continue to function at this level and wonder how much longer they can survive.

My challenge to those "some Lodges" would be the following: have you ever tried the Grand Lodge program Friend to Friend/Mentor. The Friend to Friend/Mentor program of Grand Lodge has been around for years and many Lodges have modified it by using a more casual approach. I truly believe if you take the time to have your members invite a friend to an evening of fellowship. May I suggest a small dinner to talk with them what Masonry means to you, and answer their questions; perhaps one friend will decide to join our Fraternity.

On a recent visit, in the Ottawa Valley, I witnessed a once quiet older Lodge with many young members who occupied the Lodge Chairs from the Junior Steward to the Senior Warden. My visit was the Election of Lodge Officers night. The present Master had held the Master's chair for three terms that the younger Officers could advance one chair at a time, and as a result, each Officer elected was a Master Mason including the new Master elect.

What was the secret of their success? The secrets are the Cornerstone Program, the Blood donors, Masonichip Foundation Program, Friend to Friend/Mentors nights.

They formed a registered not-for-profit group called "Masons at Work", with donations to several different local charities, from hospitals to food banks, in other words - community involvement. They took advantage of the 300th Anniversary Celebrations last year by holding a well-publicised Open House. They organized a 300th Anniversary parade and had the

Shriners join with them where the main street was closed down and at the end of the parade they had a children's village which was almost over run with kids.

Success was caused by youthful enthusiasm of new Members. They were guided by senior members who assisted and did not stand in the way but yet kept them in due bounds combined with the programs of Grand Lodge.

Brethren, there is room for improvement all across Ontario and I challenge you take advantage of all the different programs of Grand Lodge.

When you use the Grand Lodge programs more than once, with your best effort, I can almost guarantee your Lodge will be like this small Lodge in the Ottawa Valley.

Such is the nature of our institution that, sometimes after all effort has been expended and every avenue explored, the question becomes is it better to struggle for existence or for those faithful members, who have tried everything, that the Lodge close and the members move on to another Lodge. Grand Lodge can play no part in this decision. It is the responsibility of the members of the Lodge.

Brethren, I remind you that this month, the nominations for the different Grand Lodge Officers will become known. I encourage you to educate yourself on each nominee, perhaps by reading their bio on the Grand Lodge Website and then come to Grand Lodge and vote.

"Ideals are like stars. You will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but like the seafaring man, you choose them as your guides and, following them, you will reach your destiny". ~ Charles Swartz

***Paul E. Todd
Grand Master***

From the Deputy ...

Brethren, as we have been looking at right-sizing our Board, I asked R.W. Bro. John Forster, current Chair of Blood Donors and a retired physician, to write a white paper on the Future of Masonic Blood Donation. Here is an abridged version of his report:

Introduction

Masonry in Ontario is facing a persistent loss of membership. This in rough terms amounts to 60% fewer members in the last 50 years.

The world we now live in is, in many ways, vastly different from the one in which the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario had when there were over 100,000 members. It therefore becomes reasonable to ask how 60% fewer active members can expect to perform the same number, and level of quality, of its activities as it did in 1960.

History

*The Masonic commitment to donating blood can be traced back to V.W. Bro. William Hoyle of the Electric Lodge No. 495 in 1941 when he persuaded his Masters and Wardens Association to take an interest in donating blood. At this time, blood was not collected, but donated directly to the recipient. **As a result, a list of donors was required to ensure that when blood was needed, a donor was available.** V.W. Bro. Hoyle and a dedicated group of Masons made up the majority of that list. On the evening of May 23rd, 1944, the Moose Hall was the scene of a horrific fire. V.W. Bro. Hoyle was contacted to rally the Masons and report directly to the hospital to help save the lives of the people who had managed to get out of the fire. Shortly after this truly charitable act of brotherly love and relief, V.W. Bro. Hoyle, and the Hamilton Masons, joined forces with The Red Cross to improve the system by which blood donors were recorded and could be contacted.*

As time progressed, and the ability to store blood arrived, the Masons continued to aid The Red Cross, and later Canadian Blood Services, in their work.

Today

For the last reported year, of 42 Districts, only 20 were able to report more donations than reported under Partners for Life (PFL). This implies that little or no activity was occurring beyond that which would have occurred without any input from lodges or districts.

Of the 22 Districts that reported greater numbers than the PFL report, 10 had clearly had a significant

involvement in sponsoring or assisting physically at blood donor clinics or provided input into the activities of

Canadian Blood Services. A handful of brethren associated with these Districts stand out as champions of blood donation. I would contend that these brethren would continue to act in that capacity were the Grand Lodge Committee to no longer exist. Many Masons are involved with charitable work in their community, through churches, United Appeal etc. without Grand lodge doing anything to "organize" such activity.

Are there any negative consequences of discontinuation?

A small number of brethren, I estimate about 12 at most, could feel that their past work has been found valueless and unrecognized. Their activities however, have been recognized in annual reports and would undoubtedly be valued by CBS should they continue.

Certificates are presented to brethren donating "milestone" numbers. These are valued by the recipients. The numbers however, are small and if a District or lodge wished to, recognition could be given by them rather than the Grand Lodge.

Conclusion

Discontinuation of this activity at the Grand lodge level would make very little difference in the ultimate purpose of blood donation (the collection of blood and blood products) in Ontario and would free up personnel and resources for other activities.

Our Masonic Blood Donation program began when blood was in extremely short supply and could only be donated DIRECTLY into the recipient and not collected, preserved, stored and moved as it is today. The amount of blood being collected from Masons themselves forms only a small fraction of the total reported and would probably not diminish should we proceed with discontinuation.

There are some negative consequences of such an action but I believe these are outweighed by the need for contraction of the scope of our activities.

Respectfully submitted,

R.W. Bro. John Forster

Chairman of Blood Donors

Brethren, donating blood saves lives. But collecting statistics does not. I hope you and your lodge continue to donate blood and plasma and organs, and continue to help the Canadian Blood Services by sponsoring and/or working at clinics

**David J. Cameron
Deputy Grand Master**