

# THE COMMUNIQUE

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## ***From the Grand Master ...***

*...there does a sable cloud  
Turn forth her silver lining on the night,  
And casts a gleam over this tufted grove.*  
John Milton, *Comus*, 1634

Brethren,

As the saying goes, "Every cloud has a silver lining". We certainly have been experiencing some dark clouds but they will clear eventually. However, we have discovered some silver linings during these times.

Foremost among these is the virtual videoconference. This technology has been around for a while, but who thought it could be put to such use as we have seen lately? In the spring of 2019 our Grand Lodge looked into contracting a platform that committees could use to have some meetings by video rather than simply telephone conference. We felt it would be particularly useful during the winter months when driving long distances can be treacherous. We looked at various platforms and chose GoToMeeting as it met our needs best. However, we never fully used it until COVID struck; we always preferred face-to-face, using it only to have maybe one far-flung participant join us. But here was the first silver lining: when we needed it, we already had researched the options, had everything set up and had some practice with it. The Management Committee and the Board were easily able to swing into using it.

Many lodges have been having social chats over Zoom or some such platform. While not everyone is able to join in, the silver lining is that there are a number of brethren who have joined in that had not been in lodge for years. Sometimes just because someone from the lodge actually reached out to them with a notification, but often because they had moved away and now it was too far to drive to their mother lodge for the evening. Some even sign in from other provinces or countries to visit with their old friends.

We have always talked about how Freemasonry is a world-wide fraternity but save for a few who travel widely, this was not always evident. The pandemic has affected the whole world and Masons the world over have been devising ways to cope with not being able to meet. Videoconferences have sprung up from individual lodges, districts and Grand Lodges. We have been able to meet and chat with brothers from all over the globe.

As almost nobody is doing ritual on-line, education has come to the forefront. In the past we usually had the chance to hear a renowned Masonic speaker only a few times during the year. We would bring one in for the Grand Master's banquet at the Annual Communication, and a handful of lodges would fly in a speaker maybe once a year. We had invited W. Bro. Robert L. D. Cooper, the Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Museum and Library, to speak at this year's Grand Master's banquet but the closure of things both here and in the U.K. prohibited that. Now he has become somewhat of a celebrity with his Zoom talks hosted by places as diverse as the Grand Lodge of California and the District Grand Lodge of Lebanon (Grand Lodge of Scotland). These, and many other sessions, are available on-line. Here are a few links:

<https://freemason.org/speakerseriesarchive/>

<https://freemason.org/speakerseries/>

<https://dgll.org/en/magnus-geometres/>

<https://sites.google.com/view/openlfm/home>

<https://www.lexingtonlodge1.org/resources/10-part-series-virtual-masonic-education/>

I hope as lodges get used to having videoconference education sessions and social chats over the next few months, they will expand from just having one of their own present some education, to inviting Masons from across the province, or the world, to speak. Already a few Ontario lodges and districts have hosted this year's Prestonian Lecturer, W. Bro. George Boys-Stones!

We will eventually meet again in person, but even then we may want to continue videoconferencing for some things: high profile speakers, keeping in touch with brethren who have moved away, committee meetings. It's not as satisfying as meeting in person, but it does save on travel and greatly reduces greenhouse gas emissions – another silver lining!

Until we can gather face-to-face, enjoy your window on the world with Zoom, Team, or Grand Lodge's subscription to GoToMeeting.

***David J. Cameron  
Grand Master***

## ***From the Deputy ...***

My Brethren:

It seems like forever has passed since our last Communique message and even longer since we were able to share each other's fellowship in performing our Work in our comfortable Lodge rooms. I am sure that I am not alone in saying how much I miss your presence around me. I spend most evenings on a Masonic Education videoconference and have enjoyed the opportunity to at least see some of you and hear your voices. If you are having a special Masonic Education videoconference, please don't be shy in inviting visiting Brethren to join you as well – and of course your prospective candidates if the material is appropriate.

As I signed off in the June Communique, I invited all of you back to hear how your Grand Lodge has been capitalizing on the research and marketing done by the Scottish Rite Northern Masonic Jurisdiction in "The Path Forward" and especially the "Not Just a Man, A Mason" via a program called 'BeAFreemason.org'.

Two years ago, the SRNMJ officially rolled out their new program as a gift to the whole fraternity called 'Not Just a Man. A Mason.' It was a new branded advertising and media campaign about Freemasonry that could be used and tailored specifically to meet the needs of a Grand Lodge or individual Lodge. The campaign was designed to educate the public and to inspire members about who we are and what we stand for as Freemasons.

Our Grand Master got copies of these tools, modified the Square and Compasses to conform with Section 3.1 of our Constitution and we have been using them on the Grand Lodge web site and Facebook page throughout the last year. They have been made available to any interested Lodges or Districts within our jurisdiction.

This year, the SRNMJ teamed up with the Southern Jurisdiction and Shriners International to develop a program called 'BeAFreemason.org'. This was created after all their surveys showed that Freemasonry is a resonant and viable fraternal membership option for men today. They did a trend data analysis survey of 1,000 non-Masons from coast to coast, ages 25-65.

The survey showed several things:

Men in society are looking for an identity group, like-minded men with whom to grow and evolve, and pay it forward to others;

79% are interested in joining an organization that enables them to become a better person and helps to improve the quality of life for others; and

75% are interested in an organization where men form

deep and lasting friendships regardless of race, religion, or culture.

Men in society are familiar with Freemasonry, they just don't know what it stands for. When presented with messages of fraternity, integrity, becoming a better man, etc., values of Freemasonry still resonate deeply with men across the land. When values are directly paired with Freemasonry, 57% said they would consider joining.

The foundation of our Craft is as strong as at any time in our history. Men want to join. Men are looking to join. But in many cases, men just don't know how to join.

So, we know men are predisposed to join. What is the first thing they do? Search the internet. They find their Grand Lodge if lucky but most often the results are not local, and they will find many conspiracy theories and information intended to harm Freemasonry.

BeAFreemason.org is a web site that is working its way up the search engine chain to hopefully be the number one hit when you type in Freemasonry. It is a place where the truths and rewards of Freemasonry are presented honestly, inspirationally, and is visually a nice web site.

How does the site work?

A prospective Mason gets on the site and decides to inquire about joining.

The prospect then submits basic contact information that identifies his Grand Lodge jurisdiction and will provide Grand Lodge leadership with the information they need to make initial contact.

It tells them to expect follow up from their Grand Lodge and provides them with a link to their local Grand Lodge website.

Then the contact information is provided to R.W. Bro. Ed Denbeigh and, on behalf of our Grand Lodge, decides which town or Lodge to direct this prospect information to for follow-up. Bro. Denbeigh records this information and follows up after two months to assure something was done and records it as such.

So, if this tool helps us recruit new men into Freemasonry – we must do a better job of keeping them interested and engaged in our Lodges – our biggest failure over time. Your DDGMs have heard how we are planning on assisting the Lodges in this area which I trust you will hear more of soon!

***Thomas W. Hogeboom  
Deputy Grand Master***