

THE COMMUNIQUE

Published by
Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Issue 3

November 2020

From the Grand Master ...

*So they gathered the crippled, the wounded, the maimed
And they shipped us back home to Australia
The legless, the armless, the blind, the insane
Those proud wounded heroes of Suvla*
- Eric Bogle, "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda"

Brethren,

My great uncle, Pte. Robert Franklin Gordon Cameron, died in the Great War and my father was given one of his names in remembrance. The story I recall being told that he was killed just after Armistice Day, a very sad circumstance. But years later, while researching my family history, I found the letter from his C.O. along with a hand-written account by one of his comrades. He had died the end of August, but it was this letter that my family had received in November. The description of his death was gruesome.

As a teen I belonged to the Youth Group at our church. We almost never did anything religious, but we got together for activities. Sometimes I liken it to Masonry. Just the act of hanging out with people of a like mind helps to shore up your own principles. We would regularly go to Westminster Veterans' Hospital to play bingo with the men there. The Four Counties wing was a series of rambling, one story buildings which provided assisted living. There we encountered men who had lost limbs, or were blind, or, it seemed to us, were just old. But not all their wounds were visible. Their sacrifice but didn't really hit home. However, driving in and out we had to pass by the multiple story psychiatric building, much larger than the Four Counties wing. We never went in there, but Eric Bogle's song always brings a chill to me, especially the third line. That building was so big.

In those days they called it "shell shock" but now we say Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. This condition is not limited to soldiers. Health care and other front line workers are also prone to it. Those nurses and caregivers who are having to deal with multiple COVID deaths come to mind.

Indeed anyone who encounters trauma – abused women, accident victims, police officers – can be affected. And, although to a lesser extent, the isolation of the lockdown can also disrupt one's mental health. But help is available. The sad thing is that we, as men, tend to not ask for that help. It's okay to not be okay. Please ask for help if you need it.

November 11 is coming up soon. This year is the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II. Anniversaries are important. They bring things into focus. Two years ago on the centenary of his death. I made a point of attending the Cenotaph ceremony in Brussels, where Uncle Gordon's name is inscribed. I felt it important to be there. Past Grand Chaplain, R.W. Bro. William M. White, once said that one of the most important things we do as Masons is to be there. When a brother is feeling low, we are there for him. When a widow is grieving, we are there. We hold a Masonic Memorial Service and large numbers of brothers show up, just to "be there" for the family.

This year we cannot hold Memorial Services because the risk of transmission in small confined areas is too great. (Think not only of the funeral chapel but also of the regalia room and the hallways.) The last thing we want to do is transmit the virus to the grieving family. So we will hold our memorials later.

In a similar vein, participation at a Cenotaph ceremony, even though outside, is not risk free. Therefore The Royal Canadian Legion's National Remembrance Day Ceremony in Ottawa will have very limited attendees, no parade and the wreaths will be pre-placed. However, we can participate virtually and I urge you to do so.

Please stay safe, keep others safe, and remember.

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

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

As I mentioned last month, our Chief Operating Officer, R.W. Bro. Lou Domjan, has spent a lot of time setting up a GoToMeeting account for each District to be shared with each Lodge via the District Deputy Grand Master in order for each Lodge to schedule a monthly virtual meeting to keep the Masonic spirit alive in each member. The access information was sent to each District Deputy Grand Master who was charged with providing this to each of the Lodges in their respective District to share. It was suggested that a District schedule be created such that every Lodge can host a monthly meeting on their regular meeting night to communicate with their membership, cover any business that is permissible, provide some Masonic Education and generally, to take an accounting of the health of their membership and Lodge.

Although this tool will never compare to a good old fashioned Lodge meeting with handshakes and bear hugs, it is being used by many individual Brethren, Lodges and Districts to scratch that Masonic itch that we feel 'once a month' or more. Your Deputy Grand Master has been fortunate enough to have been invited to many of these video conference meetings to speak or to just enjoy the fellowship of the assembled Brethren. Some have been quite ingenious to improve the Masonic experience. I have experienced a Lodge banquet where each attendee was encouraged to bring their own dinner to enjoy together, singing together as if we were all holding hands around the banquet room, and of course Masonic Education to keep our minds engaged and spirits enlightened.

Last week one of our Lodge video conference active Worshipful Master's was telling me how difficult it was to get his members to present some Masonic Education for these meetings. I told him about my Mother Lodge when I was just a young Entered Apprentice Mason where the Worshipful Master used to just assign a Brother each month to do the Masonic Education for the next month. Being quite fresh to the Craft, it pained me for a month of empty preparation until my mentor told me it didn't have to be me talking for fifteen or twenty minutes, it could be as simple as starting a discussion of all Lodge members with a simple question. Two days later, my EAMs simple question was why are the W.Ts. of an E.A.M. the 24 I.G., the C.G. and the C.? I gave my take for a minute and the rest of the members carried the conversation for the next thirty minutes easily.

Our Grand Master is off to greet a screen full of members to a video conference Masonic Education meeting with the comment of how fortunate we are during this time to be able to access the finest Masonic

speakers around the world during this pandemic via a video conference and have no airline or hotel expenses to fly them in. There are many libraries of Masonic speakers who used to offer their services if their expenses were covered – makes it pretty easy now. The hardest part now is to juggle the differences between time zones of your Lodge and their home base.

We have another resource bank right here at home, and you already know them. Your Grand Lodge Committee Chairmen are rightly proud of the work of their Committees and would be more than willing to get some free publicity for their programs by addressing your Lodge or District. They are always appreciative of your feedback as a measure of compliance to our Strategic Plan.

R.W. Bro. James Broomhead at 1921glbgp@gmail.com would love to bring you up to date on all of the plans for accessing a library of Masonic Education on the Grand Lodge web site. He can also share the successes of the monthly Grand Lodge Masonic Education virtual presentations on the first Saturday evening of every month.

Heard about The College of Freemasonry but don't know where or how to get started? – R.W. Rick Cadotte does - rickcadotte@hotmail.com

Want to know how we prepare our District Deputy Grand Masters for the leadership of their District? Give R.W. Bro. Jamie Wark a buzz at jameso@bmts.com

Does your Lodge Condition of Masonry report need further explanations? R.W. Bro. Michael Locke is your guy at mjlocke@cogeco.ca He will even offer some tips for improvement to turn all the green lights on!

R.W. Bro. Howard Adams - hadams5@cogeco.ca - and the University Partnerships Committee have been leaders in the spreading of their message with the Sankey Lecture being delivered into our homes on Sunday, November 15. Howard and his team would be pleased to share their next project of developing University Clubs to get started on the fraternal development before joining.

We'll continue with my Grand Lodge Chairmen recommendations for your virtual meeting presenters next month. Stay well until then!

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