

# THE COMMUNIQUE

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

“Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come”

- Alfred, Lord Tennyson

Janus was the Roman god of doorways, gates, and passages. And thus also of new beginnings. For us, January is a time to look forward to the new year with hope.

Your Grand Lodge has been busy looking at the future for our Craft. Indeed the imposed lockdowns have given us much time for contemplation, and with Zoom and GoToMeeting we have been able to efficiently work on proposals. As the Strategic Plan for 2016-2021 draws to the end of its lifespan, a task force is creating one that will guide us for the next five years.

Another Task Force has finished up its work on the Annual Communication and turned further work on that over to a small team consisting of the Grand Secretary, the Chief Operating Officer, the Grand Master, and the Deputy. These proposals started their life at the biannual Board retreat at Crieff in 2019 and having been honed by the task force, executive and other committees.

The present system has served us well for many years, but is becoming untenable due to costs and our decreasing membership. In addition, advances in technology have made some of the options more feasible than in the past. The ability to efficiently vote from home is a game changer. It allows for increased participation from brethren in this vast jurisdiction. It would cut down on the need for twenty voting rooms at the hotel, which then opens up far more potential venues. And it is more equitable, enfranchising many members who are presently unable, due to work or

distance, to make the trek to Toronto. Videoconferencing would allow the Board of General Purposes to meet virtually, perhaps a month before, which would make things far more efficient, and reduce the time away from home for those faithful brethren.

Any change will take years to implement but we should start the process now. To facilitate whatever changes we need, we will first have to vote on some Constitutional Amendments. We have drawn up some amendments which make the rules less specific, so that we can act on whatever the Craft decides. For example, currently the Constitution says that the Annual Communication will be convened on a Wednesday. In fact, it specifies “in the forenoon”! We would propose loosening that up so that should we want a different day (or time), we could. Many parts of the Constitution talk about paper ballots and mailing things. I guess the Internet was not thought of when it was written.

As we will not be able to hold an in-person gathering of two thousand people this July, we are forced to at least experiment with some of these recommendations. As an emergency measure we will have electronic voting this year for Grand Lodge officers including DDGMs, and for Constitutional Amendments.

Details about both the special measures for this year and the amendments needed for moving forward will come out in future communications. Stay tuned so you may be well informed.

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

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

My Brethren:

I wonder how many Lodges have contacted one or more of their Grand Lodge Chairman to conduct a videoconference to educate and share the progress of their respective committee with their members?

Based on the activity and responses from our Grand Lodge Chairmen to the question, the sad answer is not many. Define not many you say? The answer is a very small portion of the Grand Lodge Chairmen have been contacted to assist the Lodges with their Masonic education during their videoconferences with the Lodge membership. Very confusing considering we have almost 500 Lodges looking for Masonic education material to share with their members every month.

Is it because not many of our Lodges are interested in the work of their Grand Lodge, its committees, projects and programs that so many of their hard-working Grand Lodge Officers have been working on for the past several months now? Not likely. It would be very surprising if a Lodge was not interested in hearing what those Brethren they elect to a Grand Lodge Office every year have been working on for their benefit; and which they pay an assessment twice a year in part to support the outreach programs of their Grand Lodge.

No, I believe the answer is that not many of our Lodges are delivering a monthly lesson in Masonic education to their members as requested by our Grand Master. Currently, our Ritual needs to be an individual opportunity for growth but many of our Lodges are not taking the opportunity to promote Education and Mentoring among their Officers and new members of all ages.

I will remind our Lodge leadership teams that in order to assist the Lodges in keeping in contact with their membership, your Grand Lodge has created a GoToMeeting account for each District. The access information has been 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 account of the health of their membership and Lodge.

We can appreciate that these virtual meetings may be difficult in some areas of the Province where

there is not adequate broadband to support such an endeavor so we implore these Lodges to keep in touch by email, newsletters, informational details of the Lodge or by good old phone to share the Grand Lodge message with all of the Lodge members.

Those Lodges that have been following this directive need be applauded for their efforts! We have had the pleasure of visiting with many of our Brethren throughout the jurisdiction on several of these very enjoyable and educational videoconferences. No, it's not the same, but it is the only way to share some fellowship with your Brethren during this Lodge shutdown period.

But we need the help of each Lodge leadership team to make it happen. This doesn't have to be a one man show – or even two men. The Worshipful Master and Secretary shouldn't be expected to arrange such Masonic education every month by themselves – especially since many of them are into overtime of the original commitment they made to the Lodge and the membership when they were Installed and Invested. What we have seen working very effectively is a team of Lodge Officers and Past Masters working together to source appropriate Masonic education for their members and prospective members who we are encouraging you to invite to these social/educational videoconferences. There are many Masonic topics that can be lectured and debated that don't infringe on the Ritual that we have vowed to protect. And this is the time to think big! We have been entertained and educated by not only our own Grand Master and our Grand Lodge Officers but Grand Masters, Grand Historians and Archivists, Grand Orators and Grand Librarians from many other jurisdictions throughout the world. Now is the time to secure a great speaker from beyond our jurisdiction – the expenses for air fare and accommodations are zero and there is no shortage of speakers sitting at home every night just like you and me. The internet is your oyster!

Please help keep the Masonic torch lit in each member of your Lodge and share your love of fellowship and Masonic education with prospective members too! If you make it entertaining – they will come.

From our home to yours, we wish you all the best of health, happiness and prosperity during the new year ahead!

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

## ***From the Grand Secretary ...***

Brethren,

We have been receiving a number of queries related to the processing of demits during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In the letter distributed to all Lodges back on October 29, 2020, we summarized the processing of demits during the lockdown as follows:

### **Processing of Demits**

First, all demits must be processed in accordance with Sections 190-194 of the Constitution.

Second, the effective date of a demit issued in good standing (no dues owing) is the date on which the demit was submitted in writing to the Lodge Secretary.

Third, to issue a demit in good standing, the member must be fully paid up as of the date of the request of the demit.

Therefore, during the lockdown, demits can be received by the Lodge Secretary who then must determine if dues are paid up to the date of the request.

If that is the case, the name will be read out at the next regular meeting of the lodge (whenever that will take place) and the demit in good standing will be issued following the meeting but effective the date the request was received by the Lodge. These demits in good standing are to be recorded on the first semi-annual return submitted after the demit was received in writing by the lodge Secretary.

Before a demit is issued, hopefully an investigation can be done by telephone to ascertain if remitting the brother's dues would solve the issue.

I hope this clarifies the situation.

***D. Garry Dowling  
Grand Secretary***