

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

Brethren,

The April issue of the California Freemason Magazine has an article on taverns where old lodges used to meet, and where some still meet!¹ The Grand Lodge of California has taken several bold steps to rejuvenate their membership. They have encouraged the formation of new, small lodges – about thirty brethren with a common interest in one of the aspects of the Craft. Some are focussed on charity, others on history, and yet others on esoteric studies. And to aid them financially, as well as to free them from the drudgery of maintaining a temple, they have allowed them to meet in undedicated rooms. Some meet in restaurants, some in private clubs, libraries, or museums, and one even meets in a columbarium!

“Freed of the need to form hall associations, repair a leaky roof, or find rental tenants, these lodges are able to direct their attention toward richer pursuits, like hosting guest lectures or family picnics or charity drives.”

“One of these new lodges is the Thirty-Three, whose primary purpose is philanthropy. Membership is capped at just 33, and members are required to be Grand Master–level donors to the California Masonic Foundation. Dues of \$1,200 per year fund an annual \$10,000 philanthropic budget”. “Beyond the focus on charity, the lodge’s members envision a level of grandeur to their meetings, which will take place at various unusual locations, such as Hollywood’s Magic Castle”. Their founding Worshipful Master “stresses that membership in the Thirty-Three is meant to augment Masons’ connections to the fraternity, not replace them.”

“Hermes Lodge is another such lodge. Unlike the Thirty-Three, the group opted for a permanent home, inside the Long Beach Scottish Rite Temple, where its members are dedicated to the study of esoterica”. “We want to craft the experience around the mysticism and magic we think are central to traditional Masonry”. “The extensive library and the overall feel of the [Scottish Rite Temple] fit our purpose perfectly.”

“Clearly, not every new lodge is for every member. Rather, they aim to be just right for a distinct few. Where the Thirty-Three and Hermes tend toward grand, ornate visions of what a lodge meeting can be, another newly instituted lodge, Palos

Verdes, based in Gardena, is taking things in another direction. Its members are aiming for a kid-friendly environment with frequent, casual family gatherings”.²

Another idea that I heard on a Grand Lodge of California webinar is called Club 50. Masons gather at a restaurant to enjoy a speaker, fellowship and a fine meal. It started out in France as a place where Freemasons of different obediences could meet as friends without violating their obligations, much like the Sankey lectures, the ICHF and now, international videoconferences. In California they have expanded them to include their partners as well.³

Elsewhere, Masonic clubs have been a topic of discussion for isolated areas.⁴ In remote places too small to sustain a lodge, there usually are a handful of Masons. And a number of men who are interested in Masonry. Informal local clubs could be the answer to keeping the flame of our philosophy lit in those communities. Temiskaming District is already exploring this.

As I said in my speech to the World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges held in San Francisco in 2015, and which was reprinted by the Hamilton District [C]hronicle: “Many a present-day Mason thinks Grand Lodge will not let them explore these options, so we have to give them *permission*. And some ideas of where to start their thinking, like the ones mentioned above. As long as they don’t alter the Ritual or the Landmarks, they’re open for discussion. The funny thing is that none of the above is an innovation. They are all things that Masons have done in the past!”⁴

David J. Cameron
Grand Master

1. <https://californiafreemason.org/2021/03/22/pub-crawling-through-history/>
2. <https://californiafreemason.org/2020/11/29/the-deconstructed-lodge/>
3. <https://californiafreemason.org/2021/03/22/the-salonnier/>
4. <http://www.grandlodgemontana.org/mmm/MFM%20Aug%20Sept%202019/mobile/index.html> p. 20
5. https://www.hamiltondistrictcmasons.org/upload/newsfile_file134.pdf pp. 7-8

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

Like all organizations we need to utilize technology to be efficient and relevant today. Our current technology is outdated and doesn't allow us to take advantage of the efficiencies of more modern technology available today. Although our timing in light of a pandemic may not be the best, it is necessary to upgrade the technology that we use now!

The Grand Master and I appointed a Technology Committee just over a year ago. The Committee is Chaired by R.W. Bro. Richard Kaufman and ably supported by our Grand Secretary, M.W. Bro. Garry Dowling; Grand Treasurer, R.W. Bro. Ed Standish; Community Outreach Pillar Chairman, R.W. Bro. Art Di Cecci and our Chief Operating Officer, R.W. Bro. Lou Domjan. The committee's mandate is to determine our technology needs both current and into the future and to find suitable technology to meet those needs. The Committee with the assistance of a consultant have spent the last year documenting our requirements, evaluating potential technology solutions, and estimating both the implementation and annual operating costs. The Committee is in the final stages of vendor selection as you read this Communique. Although their work is still ongoing, we need to recognize the enormous amount of volunteer hours that this very experienced project team has invested, often meeting twice a week to get to this point of selecting the right vendor and products for our needs.

This is a sampling of the "Business Needs" that were identified and prioritized to evaluate available products against:

Single Membership Database with Lodge Secretary online (Cloud Based Solution) access to maintain member information. (one member=one record). It will incorporate features that benefit Lodges, including communication to membership, printing of various membership lists and reduced administrative burden through automation of many routine tasks.

Automation of Clearance Requests for membership applications, most Dispensations, Return of Officers Form and the Semi-Annual Return.

Online Voting

Enhanced Communication with our membership by both the Lodges and Grand Lodge.

Improved Website Content Management

Improved Document Management

Needless to say, this project is quite involved and will provide us with a cloud-based system that is much more than a "Membership Database". When we hear about technology upgrades, we automatically assume that "savings" are the primary driver to such projects. If you recall when computers were first becoming common in the workplace, one of the projected benefits was the reduction in the use of paper. That didn't happen, in fact initially there was an increase in the use of paper! Only recently, with further improvements to technology has there been an actual decrease in paper consumption! Initially, we are not budgeting any direct financial savings from the implementation of the new technology. However, with the improved efficiencies that the system will give us, both Lodges and our Grand Lodge will enjoy savings of time and resources in the future!

Immediately following product and vendor selection the Committee will oversee and coordinate the implementation of our new system. Much like building a home, we are making payments for work as it is completed. The goal is to launch the new technology January 1st, 2022. Prior to this date all Lodge Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries will have received orientation on the use of the new system. Prior to the launch, the Lodges will be updating the new system with their members' information not currently held by Grand Lodge. This will include, address, phone numbers, email address, spouse's name, etc. This data can be electronically uploaded into the system when provided in a compatible format.

Beginning in January 2022, Lodges will be able email their members directly from the new system. They will have the option to invoice their members for dues and track the payment of those dues in the system. The system will provide the Secretary of reminders of milestone dates such as a 25- or 50-year long service award. Applications for Clearance will be responded to in seconds, not days. And the semi-annual return will become a semi-annual invoice from Grand Lodge based on your up-to-date membership data! All this is intended to make **us, our Lodges and the Grand Lodge Office** more efficient, improve our communication with both our Lodges and members and overall allow us to become a modern organization that leverages technology to the benefit of our membership!

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Secretary ...

Brethren,

Several reminders related to upcoming elections and the Annual Meeting of Grand Lodge.

Elections for District Deputy Grand Masters:

See details of Feb 12 2021 letter sent to all DDGMs and details of March 01 2021 letter sent to all lodges. ALL Districts will elect their DDGM via an electronic election with voting on June 18 and June 19 2021.

Electronic Registration will be June 12-June 17; a registration link will be distributed in early June 2021 and posted on the Grand Lodge website. Your Grand Lodge certificate number is required to register. If you do not have your certificate number please obtain from the lodge Secretary as soon as possible.

Voting details for brethren without computer access are detailed in the March 01 document sent to all lodge Secretaries.

Elections for Grand Lodge Officers:

See details of March 01 2021 letter sent to all lodges. Registrations from the DDGM election will be automatically carried over to the Grand Lodge elections.

Electronic Registration will be July 12-July 18. A registration link will be distributed in early July 2021 and posted on the Grand Lodge website.

However, if you did not register for the DDGM election you must register to vote in the Grand Lodge election. Your Grand Lodge certificate number is required to register. If you do not have your certificate number please obtain from the lodge Secretary as soon as possible.

Voting will take place July 19 and July 20 2021.

Voting details for brethren without computer access are detailed in the March 01 document.

Voting on proposed 2021 Constitutional Amendments:

Voting for the proposed amendments will take place at the same time as voting for the Grand Lodge officers on July 19 – July 20 2021.

Proposed amendments have been distributed to every lodge (April 19 2021).

Amendments will be on the same ballot as the Grand Lodge officer elections.

Voting for members without Computer access:

The document emailed to all lodges on March 01, 2021 outlines the procedure for enabling an eligible member without computer access to vote.

Annual Meeting of Grand Lodge:

The Annual Meeting of Grand Lodge will be a virtual meeting held on Wednesday July 21, 2021 beginning at 9:00AM EDT. Registration information will follow closer to the date, including the link to register and join the Annual Meeting.

Installation of Grand Lodge Officers and District Deputy Grand Masters:

The Installation of Grand Lodge Officers and District Deputy Grand Masters will NOT take place during the virtual Annual Meeting. Elected officers will be authorized to perform their duties effective July 21, 2021, but Installation details will be announced later.

Fraternally, Garry

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