

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

Brethren,

As our province slowly opens with restrictions, some lodges have begun meeting in person already and some are waiting until things settle down a bit more. Either is fine. The health and safety of your members should be your first concern.

The first few meetings back may seem easy. Brethren, having been cooped up for months, will be anxious to get together again. Anxious in both senses of the word. Some can't wait to be back in lodge again. Others are worried because the virus is not gone. There may be a huge number show up for the first meetings, or there may be few. Either way, we have much work to do to build up the Craft again.

Our planning must include the contingency of a step backward. Even as I write this, three of Ontario's Health Districts have re-imposed more stringent restrictions. So we must keep up with our local health units as well as the province.

When your lodge is ready to meet in person again, the lodge officers should split up the membership list and call every brother, inviting him back to lodge. Do not push those members who are not ready yet, but show them with your call that they are remembered and valued. Keep in mind that there are brethren who are at increased risk or who have family members who are at greater risk. They will feel torn so we must support them. As we tell the new DDGMs at their orientation, the priorities are their health, their family, their work, and then Masonry.

Arrange a Memorial Service early on so that we can honour those of our brethren who passed to the Grand Lodge Above during the pandemic. Call their widows and tell them what you are doing. Lodge may be called off to hold a memorial service with family present if you wish, but just letting them know you are memorializing their loved one may be enough.

Consider holding a Rusty Masons night. Even the most experienced of us are rusty at this point.

Call the men on your waiting list and assess their comfort with COVID risk. Then, if appropriate, get them started on the Five Points to Application. Figure out now who their mentor will be. Resist the temptation to initiate them all on one day. And, when you are ready, start rehearsing. Three rehearsals before a degree is performed would seem very Masonic (and practical!)

For a while, rather than shaking hands, perhaps use the Hindu greeting "Namaste".

We all look forward to getting back to normal but we have a lot of work to do to get there. And we want to do it safely. Slow and cautious wins the race.

Jill and I wish you all the best for this holy season and for the year to come.

Namaste.

David J. Cameron
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

One of the key Committees of your Grand Lodge is the Condition of Masonry Committee (COM). The title well sums up the importance of their work to all levels of our organization from the Lodge Committee of General Purposes to the Grand Master.

The Committee is charged 'to review the annual reports of the District Deputy Grand Masters (DDGM) and to make recommendations arising therefrom for the benefit of the Craft; and to study the condition or state of Masonry in general throughout the jurisdiction and to make recommendations for the benefit of the Craft,' as per Section 136. (c) of the Constitution of our Grand Lodge.

The current Chairman of the Committee is R.W. Bro. Ken Elligson, a six-year veteran of the Committee, joining the team the year after his term as DDGM in 2014. As you can imagine, experience and familiarity with this Committee is important – over the last twelve years for the most part, we have had consistent leadership of this Committee (R.W. Bros. John Hay for four; Richard Kaufman for three and Michael Locke for the last four years). This Committee has come a long way in supporting our Lodges, Districts and Grand Lodge since the days when I was a young Committee Chairman who was requesting information from the DDGM annual year-end reports that would not be received until they had been distributed to the Committee members for review, then reported back to the Chairman who would compile a report for the following year's Annual Communication. Now Lodges are receiving their post-Official Visit (OV) reports shortly after the event and a yearend report is available to Grand Lodge Committees before the first year is even over.

The data that this Committee uses to make recommendations via their reports to the Management Committee and each Lodge after the OV from their DDGM comes from the L1 form, completed by the Worshipful Master and Lodge Secretary; L2 by the District Secretary; L3 by the DDGM; and L4 by the Worshipful Master and Lodge Treasurer.

If these forms are answered honestly and completely, each Lodge will receive a 'scorecard' from which they will glean many ideas for improvement to benefit their Lodge from the COM Committee.

Given that there were no OV last year, the general recommendations to the Lodges most recently provided by the Committee were made in the report for publication in the 2019 Annual Communications Proceedings and are as follows:

1) Lodges should review their membership to ensure that they are not carrying members more than twelve months in arrears (but then the Constitution is clear that this can't happen right?)

2) If a Lodge has Life Membership, they should ensure that they have a Life Membership Account and is managed in compliance as per Part VIII – Regulations Governing Life Membership Trust Funds in the Constitution

3) Lodges are encouraged to develop a multi-year financial plan to ensure that their dues structure realistically meets the financial needs of the Lodge; and most recently added

4) Lodges are encouraged to develop a strategic long-range plan. (Spoiler alert, next month we will be reviewing the work of the Strategic Planning Committee in this portion of the Communique).

The COM Committee also has made the following recommendations for consideration of the Management Committee:

1) That Lodges be required to provide a copy of the year-end financial report together with a copy of the audited statement.

2) That District Secretaries be required to attend the DDGM preparation course prior to their appointment to the role to ensure that they are familiar with the duties of a District Secretary.

3) The Constitution be amended to require the completion of the L1 (Master/Secretary Report) and L4 (Master/Treasurer Report) no later than 5 days prior to the date scheduled for the OV of the DDGM.

4) a) If a Lodge receives a Green Report – The DDGM should attend the Lodge and congratulate them on their achievement.

b) If a Lodge receives a Yellow Report – The DDGM and the District Secretary should attend the Lodge and offer suggestions or assistance to enable the Lodge to improve.

c) If a Lodge receives a Red Report – The DDGM, District Secretary and a local Grand Lodge Officer visit the Lodge and encourage the Lodge to accept assistance from the Grand Lodge Committees that would best enable the Lodge to improve their current situation.

These last four recommendations will be on the next agenda for the Management Committee to determine the next course of action.

Stay tuned...and well until then!

All the best of the season with health and happiness abounding in 2022!

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Secretary ...

Brethren,

Lodge Re-Openings:

As you are aware some lodges have chosen to resume labours, some are holding off for now and others holding off even longer. That is the decision of each lodge and its members and we must all respect the choices our brethren have made.

There is naturally a related renewed emphasis on trying to schedule lodge elections, installations and Official visits.

I want to point out once again that lodges must not be pressured to reopen just so that an official visit can be scheduled. Likewise, no pressure must be exerted on lodges that do not wish to entertain visiting brethren at this time.

We have had queries about having Official Visits on the night of an emergent meeting. We will not be granting dispensation to allow that to happen except in one-off situations under extenuating circumstances.

To: DDGMs:

DDGM Trestleboards and Year End reports: We recognize the difficulties in preparing your District trestleboards when lodges have not yet fully reopened and may not do so for a while. As above, please ensure no pressure is placed on lodges to schedule an Official Visit if they do not feel comfortable. Simply mark the trestleboard Official Visit date for that lodge as unknown or TBD.

If a lodge is unable to complete an Official Visit this year, then that is perfectly acceptable and your year-end report will simply state that.

You can distribute a preliminary trestleboard and indicate that changes may be required later.

If required, we will find an acceptable way to manage the reporting on any Official visits carried out after your report due date this year (June 01, 2021).

ALL Meetings:

We must remind everyone that proof of full vaccination, active screening and contract tracing must be completed for every meeting including but not limited to in-person general purpose meetings, practices, emergent and regular meetings.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

British Columbia Flood Relief:

We have received word from the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon Territories that a fund has been established to assist those impacted by the massive flooding in the Fraser Valley. If anyone wishes to make an individual contribution they may make cheques payable to Grand Lodge of BC&Y and tagged "Flood Relief". They should be mailed to:

Grand Lodge of BC&Y
8555 Government Street,
Burnaby, BC V3N 4S9

E transfers can be made to etransfer@freemasonry.bcy.ca and tagged "Flood Relief".

The Grand Secretary reports that while none of the lodge buildings have been affected by the flooding some of their brethren have. They are expecting that more heavy rains will cause considerable damage.

Fraternally, Garry

*D. Garry Dowling
Grand Secretary*

From the Grand Treasurer ...

Brethren,

It is not often that you hear from the treasurer except to report on the annual financial status of a lodge or temple; be it good news or bad which leads to discussion, debate; some long-range planning and hopefully a successful resolution.

Last July during our online Proceedings the motion to increase the annual assessment by \$20.00 per member did not receive the necessary votes (2/3) to pass. In retrospect after discussion with brethren around the province, it was apparent that the full impact of the difficulties that many of our lodges, temples and brethren are struggling with during these Covid pandemic times necessitated a second look at our own budget and 5-year forecast.

Much of the planning was based on pre-Covid operations. As we know, the world has changed.

These changes have affected us personally; much of the world and certainly Masonry and we are not out of the woods yet; but we can see a light at the end of the tunnel.

So, what necessitated the increase, what changes have we made and what are we considering?

DECLINING MEMBERSHIP

We have known for some time that the post war booms of the last century contributed to the establishment and growth of many lodges. In time many of these brethren grew old, passed on or were unable to attend lodge. Also, the world has changed. Technology – the computer and the internet consume a tremendous amount of our business and personal time. The obvious result has witnessed and contributed to a decline in membership.

Although dues have been unchanged for over a decade and costs have risen, the reason for not raising the annual assessment was our membership numbers. We were able to break even.

Now we no longer have sufficient members.

Even if we reduce operating costs, adopt new technologies, become more efficient, embrace change, and downsize as best we can, reduced membership doesn't mean less Masonry.

As a member and past chairman of the Lodge Finance Advisory Committee for almost a decade I together with committee members provided advice to lodges and temples with financial problems. As a Chartered Accountant, CPA and Licensed Public Accountant I assisted business for over 40 years to operate profitably in the most efficient manner.

THE SOLUTION

MOTION TO INCREASE DUES – I propose to increase dues by only \$10.00 to be voted on next July. While it is difficult currently to forecast post Covid

membership, an increase is necessitated despite all our cost cutting measures to break even. The \$10.00 amounts to less than three cents a day per brother; but makes a big difference to Grand Lodge.

COST MANAGEMENT – Grand Lodge – to a great extent measures were taken that have resulted in cost savings. For example, I will list many areas where costs have been reduced going forward:

- a. Meetings – The Board of General Purposes, Committees – we have replaced travel and face to face meetings with online meetings.
- b. Workshops & education – many of these have gone online including at the district and lodge level and have been well attended. While there will be a return to in person education, it will not eliminate what we have established.
- c. Travel budgets – these have been reduced and we are examining what future costs we should incur.
- d. Voting – voting online for the DDGM and Grand Lodge officers is not only convenient and more inclusive than ever before, but also certainly more cost efficient.
- e. Grand Lodge Annual Communications – will be reduced from 4 to 2 days. Agenda will be streamlined like an annual convention and consideration for changing locations.
- f. The Hamilton office – like any temple, we will invest in the basic repairs and maintenance and do not contemplate major costly improvements.
- g. Technology – will result in a single membership data base, enhanced communication to our membership, automation for interaction between lodges and head office when requesting most dispensations, filing forms and semi-annual returns. And efficiency that will translate into future cost savings down the line.

While updating the budget and 5-year forecast has become more of a moving target, the combination of a modest increase in dues and cost management will maintain the viability of Masonry long into the future.

In the New Year, I will be holding some town hall meetings to meet the Grand Treasurer as well as the members of the finance committee. We will welcome your comments, discussion, suggestions and help whenever we can.

Finally, my brethren, as we enter this holiday season, days grow shorter and the temperatures drop and everything seems gloomy, remember that this is a time of the year when we rejoice in hope for peace, good health, festivities, and good will.

Be well.

Sydney T. Schatzker
Grand Treasurer