

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

A Toast to all our differences
A Toast to common ground
A Toast to what we're seeking
A Toast to what we've found
To what brings us together
To what sets us apart
A Toast to many different souls
United with one heart.
*(from the website of the Grand Lodge of
British Columbia and Yukon)*

Brethren,

A long, long time ago Freemasons adopted the practice of abstaining from discussion of religion or politics in lodge. Whether it was Roman Catholics and Protestants, Roundheads and Royalists, or Jacobites and Whigs, the brothers of the past did this in order to maintain harmony among themselves. It served the Craft well and is one of the secrets of our longevity as an order.

Unfortunately, we again find ourselves in divisive times. Demonstrations, Social Media posts and a general strain in conversations with friends and family. An article in The Times (July 06 2021) said that a poll by Frank Luntz found “just over half of adults under 30 said they had stopped talking to someone in person or online because of something political they said” and “more than a third of people aged between 30 and 49 had stopped talking to someone over a political stance”.

When we start to circulate again we will meet brothers who have stood on both sides of the issues. There will be brothers who think the pandemic risks were overblown, and brothers who think the risks are being downplayed. There will be brothers who, because of their personal or family situations, will not be comfortable sitting in lodge meetings and there will be brothers who are raring to go. There will be brothers who are okay in a room with just their own lodge brothers but not comfortable going to larger gatherings. There will be brothers who will decline to shake your hand, not because they are upset with you, but simply because they are not comfortable with that contact yet. There will be brothers who will continue to wear a mask in lodge even after it is no longer required by law.

The key word in the previous paragraph is “brothers”. Please accept your brothers for where they are and preserve harmony in your lodge by observing our age-old practice of not discussing political topics in lodge.

As M.W. Bro. John C. Green often said, “Today in a world where you can be anything, BE KIND.”

*David J. Cameron
Grand Master*

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

I have no doubt you will have all read the great news that we are reopening our Lodges and Districts for Freemasonry once again before reading this message from your Deputy Grand Master, so I won't be breaking any communication protocol. I'm sure we are all hoping and praying that each of us practices the many suggestions that our pandemic experts have provided to keep us safe and prevent a rebound to lock-down status in two months like the last time we were in this same spot in November 2021.

It seems like only yesterday that I was preparing to travel to Hamilton to assist the Brethren of The Barton Lodge in the celebration of their 225th anniversary on Saturday, March 14, 2020. It was just the day before - Friday the 13th in fact - that, in accordance with the suggestions of the same Provincial health expert, it was decided that we would "postpone" all non-essential gatherings - including such Lodge functions.

Well, here we are, in the 24th month since that announcement and very anxious in getting back to the quarry. I say anxious because for many of us, it will be like starting all over again. I'm surely not the only one who must pull out the 'old black (or blue or red) book' on the annual occurrence in which I do that favourite piece of the Work and it appears to be new words that I am seeing for the first time!!

So, what can we do as Masons, Lodges and Districts to make this transition comfortable for one and all of our members? To this end, we have very recently charged R.W. Bro. Victor Tavares to assemble a working group of Masons to be the Lodge resource for the Masonic Restoration of our jurisdiction. Your Grand Lodge Committees have created a plethora of material, direction and guidance documents to assist in creating healthy Lodges and engaged members over the past many years. But I'm not certain how many Worshipful Masters know all the Grand Lodge resources that can assist them in the management of their Lodges, to make a positive impression on their members to the point where it is a painful waiting period between meetings, and where members of all ages and experience are engaged in the life and longevity of their Lodge.

My number one suggestion for opening our Lodge doors after two years is to go slowly and deliberately. Take the first few months to get all that old business that was so gratefully conducted by our Masters and Secretaries over the last two years,

confirmed in open Lodge. Take the first few months to get your members comfortable with their surroundings again. I don't have to tell you how many 'Rusty Masons' there will be because it is all of us! Take the time to practice everything - upstairs and downstairs. Take the time to mentor and train your Officers so they are prepared and can enjoy the experience and not be embarrassed from the lack of comfort with their Ritual and floorwork. Their number one objective must be to impress the Candidate so he can't wait for his next Degree. I have seen some Lodges opening to members only. That to me makes a lot of sense. Why would I want to have company into my house when I don't know what to expect myself? We have between 900 and 1,000 interested men standing outside our Lodge doors, many of whom will make application. Please don't rush them. They all know the reason why they haven't been processed. Take the time to do a thorough investigation to protect our West gate. Take the time to treat each one of these potential Candidates as a special event - please don't think we have to get them in and conduct mass Degree Work.

We have told Lodges and District Deputy Grand Masters that there will be no mandatory Official Visits or L-form completions for the rest of this year. Maybe your DDGM, could be given a replay since he really didn't get to fulfill his year in any way as to his expectations. If the District agrees to this idea - you may elect him again for another year. At our mid-term meetings, many of our DDGMs talked about never wearing their new formal tailcoat except around the house. There still needs to be a nomination and election but there is nothing in the Constitution that says it can't be the same Brother. I only caution you to check with the current DDGM and District Association. I know some of them will not be able to proceed for whatever personal reason and others who have a rotation system and W. Bro. Doe was to be the DDGM during the anniversary of his Lodge next year. Maybe this year's DDGM will have to wait a year, but it is an annual election to which they can be re-elected.

Take your time Brethren - it's not a race. We are making Masons for life, and no one should ever leave because of disinterest, theirs or ours!

Thanks for your focus on this very important and deciding factor for the life of your Lodge!

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Secretary ...

Brethren,

Common Misunderstanding regarding Certificates of Standing:

There seems to be a common misunderstanding of the terms of a Certificate of Standing issued by Grand Lodge, particularly upon the closing of a lodge due to a Voluntary Surrender of Warrant and the issuance of a demit In Good Standing from the lodge or from Grand Lodge. This misunderstanding related to the Certificate of Standing is causing members to incur loss of service when they had not expected that to occur.

The underlying premise behind the policy referred to below is that each and every member of the craft is accountable for his own Masonic future.

First and foremost, a Certificate of Standing has no effect on a member's status in his lodge. In fact, the text of the Certificate of Standing states: "...And further Bro. xxx retired as a member in good standing with any responsibility for dues having been completely satisfied and discharged." Note the word 'retired', as in no longer a member.

The Certificate of Standing permits ONLY the right of visitation for a period of time. It confers no other masonic rights or privileges. Thus, if a brother is issued a demit in good standing effective the date of the lodge closing, he no longer has any masonic rights and privileges as of that date and he is also not a member of a lodge or Grand Lodge from that point on (until affiliation elsewhere or unless already affiliated elsewhere).

Therefore, being no longer a member of a lodge as of the date of the demit, the member will incur loss of service until he has been accepted in another lodge.

Thus, for members of lodges considering a Voluntary Surrender of Warrant, it would be prudent for those members to affiliate elsewhere (if they so desire) prior to the demit in good standing being issued at the time of closing of the lodge.

I trust the above may provide some clarification on the Certificate of Standing and on how a member can prevent loss of service.

Lodges Celebrating 100 Years of Service:

Two reminders brethren:

Lodges must request permission to wear gold braid as per Sec. 394 of the Book of Constitution.

The ceremony of Silver to Gold is Masonic ritual and is performed ONLY by the Grand Master or his designate. Please contact the Grand Secretary for details.

Fraternally, Garry

*D. Garry Dowling
Grand Secretary*

From the Grand Treasurer ...

My brethren.

By all indications, the incidence of Covid and its impact on Masonry and our society is waning; especially for those who were fully vaccinated. It's been a long two years; but I expect we will begin to trickle back to our lodges and come to terms with the impact of the changes in our lives.

While we must consider the welfare of our brethren and the state of our lodges and the many "rusty Masons" we have become, I have no doubt that we will pick from where we left off.

In terms of attendance, participation, and potentially new membership and assessing the overall health of the lodge, it will take time.

Lodges should assess all these criteria together with their current and future viability and consider the options. Finances are vital to running any entity from a personal household to the largest business.

I would encourage you to bring your bookkeeping up to date, prepare a financial report and consider extending the numbers out for the next 5 years. You may have to do some serious planning and consider your options.

VIRTUAL TOWN HALL - WEDNESDAY MARCH 30 at 7:00pm

We are all living with rising costs and declining membership and while we plan, Grand Lodge is requesting that our membership approve an annual increase of \$10.00 per member after keeping the dues steady for a decade. I will address this increase in some detail and answer questions about reducing our own costs as well and how we budget for the future.

In addition, R.W. Bro. David Armstrong, the Chairman of the Lodge Finance Advisory Committee will discuss whether your lodge is Financially Sound and what courses of action you should consider. Again, it is about planning for the future.

To register for the workshop, please go to the following link:

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/8791333656906345230>

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

So, what necessitated the need to increase dues, 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 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 Proceedings – 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.

Finally, my brethren, we live in uncertain times. The one constant has been the Spirit of Freemasonry which has united us through the centuries to seek knowledge and champion our moral principles for the cause of good.

Be well.

Sydney T. Schatzker
Grand Treasurer