

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

Brethren,

You will no doubt have already heard about the passing of our Past Grand Master M.W. Bro. Donald H. Mumby. He was my ideal of a Grand Master and I was honoured to have him as a trusted friend and advisor. He often sent me a note after receiving the Communiqué saying how much he enjoyed reading my message. I dedicate this one to him.

There is a story which I wanted to get down in print before the sands of time erased it. I heard this many years ago and confirmed it with two senior brethren, but if you remember actually doing this, please let me know.

At one time, Grand Lodge did not publish a Book of the Work. The Ritual was expected to be transmitted from mouth to ear. There were many advantages to this, namely that the learner and the mentor had to spend a lot of time together. A candidate had time to ask questions, to learn about our philosophy, our charities, our way in the world. An officer being mentored had time to learn the intricacies of the ritual, the plans of the officer line, and to deepen his friendship with his brothers.

There were disadvantages as well. It was hard to be sure that you were teaching your charge the right words as memory sometimes fails us. An aide-mémoire was a useful thing. Many of the "exposés" were in fact used for that purpose. I even wonder if that is why some of them were written!

And so it was that at one time, an unofficial Book of the Work was in circulation. And here is how you would get it. You would go to the flagship Eaton's store in downtown Toronto. (Bro. John David Eaton was president from 1942 to 1973. It is said that if you were a Mason who had recently immigrated to Canada, and you approached Eaton's for a job, you would be immediately be hired.)

Back to the story of the book. You would go to the Men's Department and walk up to the counter where they sold gloves. (Note: gloves.) You would tap three times on the counter with a silver dollar and the man there would reach under the counter and silently give you a small book wrapped in plain brown paper.

Can you imagine some of the problems here? Anyone could get a copy of the book. That method, although cute, was about as effective a control as asking someone how old their mother is. For those men whose mothers were, say, actually 68 years old, their answer would put them in Ingersoll!

Another issue was that this system excluded those brethren who did not live near Toronto.

But the biggest problem, however, was that the bootleg copy had many errors in it. The new official Book of the Work can be ordered from the Grand Lodge Office. Make sure you are brushing up on your ritual using the current resource!

Another thing I wanted to bring up before time slips by is recognizing the Grand Lodge Officers from the past two years. Some lodges have not had meetings yet, some are not hosting visitors, few are having large events this spring. All reasonable. But it means that we have not had a chance to properly honour these brethren, especially the Very Worshipful Brethren. They've gotten their regalia in a small ceremony or sometimes just delivered to their door. In the fall when everything has hopefully settled down, consider devoting a meeting to honouring these brethren. Invite their friends. Make a big deal of them. Have them go to the altar and give them Grand Honours. Make them the guest of honour at a Festive Board. It's what they deserve.

David J. Cameron
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren:

Although I am copied on only a small selection of correspondence between the Grand Secretary and the membership, I can sense that there is a lot of anxiety over the decision to return to Lodge, District and Grand Lodge business in person. And that is okay! It is okay to have difference of opinions and Brotherly debates over the pros and cons of such decisions. As we have stated, at the end of the day it is up to each Lodge when they will open for visitors once again, and in turn, to each Mason when they feel comfortable in returning to their Lodge – and in fact, whether they want to continue the protocol of wearing a mask while they attend Lodge or not.

What I find very startling though, is the number of Lodges that have decided to open with a bang! As I mentioned, it is the decision of the membership of each Lodge whether they open or not, but considerations must be given when they do open. The Grand Secretary has been receiving requests for dispensation to conduct five Degrees on one meeting night. Is that anyway to make a life-time commitment to a new Mason? Is he going to remember his Degree evening as a special event for him?

At the risk of repeating myself, my number one suggestion for opening our Lodge doors after two years is to go slowly and deliberately. Take the first few months to go over all the old business and get it confirmed in open Lodge. Take the first few months to get your members comfortable with their surroundings again and reach out to those not attending to find out how they are and how we can get them back into Lodge.

Take the time to practice everything – in the Lodge room and in the banquet hall. 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. We have over 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. A very big part of our reformation will be an increased scrutiny of applicants to our Gentle Craft and generally, making it harder to become a member. I am not afraid of our numbers decreasing further. I am not afraid of more of our Lodges and Buildings closing. I will take quality over quantity any day. I am a firm believer that we are selling our product too cheaply. This is of course the subject of another Communique but let me just say that one of the most important jobs we can be assigned by our Worshipful Master is to be a member of an Investigating Committee. We need to conduct serious investigations. Investigations should take longer, and they should be more thorough. We need to meet our candidates more than once, and at least one of these times, meeting him in his home with his family. We should require a more complete statement from petitioners as to what they expect from membership in a Masonic Lodge. The petitioner should appear before the Lodge at refreshment prior to his election and at social events for our families. Lodges are also encouraged to request the prospect to learn and recite a poem from memory before being given an application – a good test for the petitioner and of course for the Masons to know if he is capable of memory work. We need to know that our candidates will indeed “reflect honour on our choice.”

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. Our Worshipful Master's shouldn't feel rushed in this regard either.

Take your time Brethren – it's not a race. Your time investment at the front end will payoff huge at the back end! We are making Masons for life, and no one should ever leave because of disinterest, theirs or ours!

*Thomas W. Hogeboom
Deputy Grand Master*