

# THE COMMUNIQUE

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## *From the Grand Master ...*

My Brethren:

The past two and a half years of pandemic have tested our organization and stretched our fraternal bonds. Many Lodges have embraced the challenges and they have flourished and grown. As your Grand Master, I will forever be in your debt for the example you have shown and what your dedication has achieved.

We now have an opportunity to come back together, and to reset the Masonic experience for future generations to come. It is our duty to come out of this pandemic better than when we entered it.

Going forward, I expect to see fewer, but stronger Lodges within our Grand Jurisdiction. The longer period of COVID-19 restrictions has shone a spotlight on our strength, endurance and achievement. It has also exposed a few of our shortcomings. Now is the opportunity for us to hit the reset button.

Lodges have had the chance to review their practices in onboarding Candidates and share their successes with other Lodges from around the world. Candidates need to be shown not only the value of Freemasonry in their lives but also the value that Freemasons place in each other. In some ways, the pandemic has been a period of reflection that has given us pause to review our Constitution with an eye to making some changes that will help us in preventing any future shut down of our labours such as has just occurred. With fourteen hundred potential candidates waiting outside the West Gate, now is the time to evaluate ourselves and put the focus back on the basics of Freemasonry and ensure quality comes before quantity.

There is currently a renewed interest in our Gentle Craft with a new generation that is looking for something to add meaning to their lives. These aspirants are well-informed through social media and already have a good grasp of who we are before they even make first contact. These will be exciting times for us, and it is our duty to mentor them well, so they understand exactly who and what we stand for; to take a good man and to help him to become the best that he can be. We, and the Brethren who have come before us, have shaped and grown Freemasonry in Ontario through the past 167-year history. A new chapter now begins, and the new Master Masons will draw on our legacy but also shape the next 167 years in their own way. I am quite confident that by instilling in them the timeless values of our Craft and by giving the best mentoring and working tools, they will make our next 167 years the most glorious yet!

It is easy to see that the Masons of Ontario have big hearts which beat strongly through the tenacity and interest of like-minded men. Since the first meeting of Masons in Ontario, we have served to unite, maintain and uphold the three great but simple ideals of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Ontario Freemasonry and pure ancient and accepted Masonry in general will continue to give future generations the pleasure that we and those who have gone before us have found in it. We, the lodge members of today, are merely custodians of Freemasonry and past performance is no guarantee of future success – the immediate future of the lodge rests in our hands.

This is a very special December: this year, the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus and the Muslim celebration of the birth of Muhammad fall in the same month, and the first night of the eight-day Jewish festival of Hanukkah falls on Christmas Eve. And so Cheryl and I would like to wish our Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Brethren and families, and all those of any faith or worldview, all the blessings of the season, and in particular the birth of new hope for their lives and for the life of the world.

Hanukkah for Jews celebrates the freedom and justice without which there can be no genuine peace; Jesus for Christians is the Prince of Peace; and Muhammad for Muslims is the Messenger of Peace. May we all enter the coming year in a spirit of peace and non-violence, with hearts open to all—including those with whom we disagree. In all we do, in all the uncertainties ahead, may we embody the spirit of Rabbi Hillel, who taught “Do not judge your fellow until you are in his place” (Pirkei Avot 2:5); of Jesus who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9); and of Muhammad to whom God said, “We have sent you, O Prophet, as none other than a mercy to all the people of the world (Qur’an 21:107).”

We wish you a safe festive season of peace and happiness surrounded by family and friends!

If you would like to join the Grand Master in celebrating Masonry in Ontario this month, he will be in:

Bath – Maple Leaf Lodge Ceremony of Installation and Investiture on December 12.

Madoc – St. Andrew’s Lodge for a seventy-year pin presentation to a dear friend and Brother on December 28. (p.s. – Please don’t tell him I am coming.)

*Thomas W. Hogeboom*  
*Grand Master*

## *From the Deputy ...*

Brethren,

It's December already, where is the time going? It has been five months since the Annual Communication of Grand Lodge and we are almost at the Christmas holiday season. As President of the Board of General Purposes I want to report that the Grand Lodge Committees are very busy and moving forward, working together like a well oiled precision machine. The Pillar Chairmen are very organized and focused and the Chairmen of the many Grand Lodge Committees are working tirelessly to bring you, the member of this Grand Jurisdiction, the best programs and the most common sense results possible.

At the upcoming December Board of General Purposes meeting, the Grand Treasurer will be giving us a six month assessment of the Budget. He will be outlining where the money is going to and what we can do to maximize further efficiencies. I believe that it's important to keep an ever watchful eye on the bottom line and to seek out opportunities if they are presented. R.W. Bro. Sydney Schatzker is our Grand Treasurer and he will endeavor to explain the entire financial process to the Board. The increase in assessment that was voted on and passed in July will start to be collected in January 2023 and R.W. Bro. Schatzker will walk us through the process of allocating those funds. The Chairman of the Audit and Finance Committee, R.W. Bro. Jeff Gatcke, will explain how the Budget is working with respect to the Committee Budgets being reported. Several years ago the Committee Budgets went from being an individual line item in the Budget to a collective sum that the Committees could draw from. R.W. Bro. Gatcke will explain to the Board how that works so that the Committees can properly set approved budgets from which to work from. We all have to understand how our limited funds are used in order to get the best value for the money spent. The Grand Treasurer and the Chairman of Audit and Finance will also be reporting to the Board on the proposed amendments to the Book of Constitution dealing with inefficiencies contained within. It is Constitutional amendments that will make these two positions work more efficiently and cohesively together. It will enable better fiscal reporting and analysis as well as a more business accepted practice of managing our funds. These changes will allow us to quantify our expenditures and to track how our proposals are either working for us or not, and if they're not working to our benefit, how can we turn that around before it costs us too much.

Grand Lodge also has a Financial Advisory

Committee chaired by R.W. Bro. Michael Steele. R.W. Bro Steele and his Committee is mandated to help the Lodge's where needed. For example, if the Lodge needs financial advice to help out during some difficult and troubling times, this Committee is here to help. If the Lodge reports to the Condition of Masonry that it's in financial despair or even just needs some guidance, this Committee will help. If the Lodge or District would like a virtual or even in-person presentation done to better engage and revitalize the membership, this Committee is in place to help and to teach. Please Brethren, put this Committee to work for you, don't be afraid to bring any and all financial issues to the attention of R.W. Bro. Steele, he and his Committee of professionals are in place to help you to succeed and flourish. I also want to bring to your attention that there is a collective fund, directed by professionals, that a Lodge can contribute to in order to capitalize on and to make some better financial gains in this trying marketplace. Lodges can put monies into this well managed fund and expect some better than normal returns. If this interests you and your Lodge, please look into the possibilities of doing better.

Brethren, we owe all of these financial professionals our sincere thanks so that we can all do better to succeed. Grand Lodge has these "financially in the know brethren" in place to take some of the unknown out of budgeting, reporting and the investing process. To R.W. Bro's Schatzker, Gatcke, Steele and their committee members, we owe you all our sincere thanks.

Brethren, on behalf of myself and my family, I want to wish you all a Happy and Healthy Holiday Season. Also on behalf of the entire Board of General Purposes and our Grand Lodge, please spend as much time with your families as you possibly can. This is the time of year to be together with people and visit, share some laughs, stories and toasts with your friends and neighbours. We all have so much to be thankful for, let us all reflect on the years past, enjoy the present together and set goals for our future.

Let us rub and cherish our shiny penny, plan for a bright future and make someone smile this holiday season.

Thank you one and all Brethren for this incredible adventure.

*Jamie R. Ireland*  
*Deputy Grand Master*

## *From the Grand Chaplain ...*

Brethren,

We know that most of the founding fathers of Freemasonry were educated and literate. Some were even ordained men of their respective religions such as James Anderson and John Desaguliers. As such, these men were skilled in reading and understanding Latin and possibly even Hebrew. They likely also were familiar with many non-Christian writings, which would have included the Torah, the Five Books of Moses, which comprise the Old Testament of the Bible.

That they created a gentlemanly fraternity in Freemasonry that has many influences from the ancient Jewish writings, therefore, should come as no surprise. Of these writings one that stands out to me is a five chapter book known as *The Ethics of the Fathers*. It contains sayings attributed to the sages over about a 400 year period. These sayings or aphorisms concern proper ethical and social conduct, as well as the importance of Torah study.

We often speak of Masonry as being a Code of Conduct, a set of standards against which to manage one's life. The Jewish sages pictured us standing before the Court on High with the first question being "Did you conduct your affairs with sincerity and honesty?" This is a dramatic illustration of the Jewish approach to life. On the Day of Judgement, we do not expect to be questioned/quizzed on religious doctrine or articles of faith. We should expect to be asked whether we led a decent, honorable and responsible life. The focus is not on dogma but on doing, not on professing principles of belief but on practicing loving-kindness. When confronted with a challenge, some may ask, "What must I believe?" Jews, however, ask, "What must I do?" Simply, "All depends on deeds". (Ethics of the Fathers 3:15)

It is not how much we say but what we say that is important. The following story from our writings expresses this. Rabbi Gamliel asked one of his wise servants, "Go to the market and bring me something good." The servant brought a beef tongue. The Rabbi then asked him, "Go and bring me something bad." Again, the servant returned with a beef tongue

explaining, "A tongue, my master, may be the source of either good or evil. If it is good, there is nothing better. If it is bad, there is nothing worse.?"

Words are powerful. While we all know that they can breed hatred or spread healing, ignite a quarrel or inspire a cause, words can trigger war or encourage peace. How do you employ words? With another Mason? With a non-Mason?

Today, we no longer take the time to write thoughtful letters; rather, we tend to operate in a world of instant communication, often 'banging' out angry missives on social media simply because we need to be right and we need to be quick. Patience, my Brethren!

We Jews pray thrice daily – morning, afternoon and evening – and in each of these services, there is a part called the Amidah or Silent Devotion. Its final words reflect this notion of the power of words, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you ... my Rock and my Redeemer."

Thus, my Brethren, be mindful of the words that you use, be mindful of how you respond to any situation and how you make another person, Mason or not, feel. Our Grand Master gets it! As I have travelled with him this Fall, he is wont to say, "Be careful how you act and what you say; you may be the ONLY Mason a person ever meets."

With sincere fraternal regards,

*Michael A. Litvak*  
*Grand Chaplain*