

THE COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master ...

My Brethren:

Getting off the normal track and veering from the game plan can be dangerous sometimes but I feel I must take the chance.... (Spoiler alert – this may not be a Communique for sharing with friends and family.)

I will start by repeating a paragraph from last month's Communique in case you skimmed over it:

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)."

I used to hear Grand Masters of yore and past Chairmen of Discipline regret in their year end reports that the worse part of their job that year had been dealing with all the Masonic charges, complaints and 'private piques and quarrels' over the past year. And I would think, 'we're all Masons, surely these Masonic leaders must be exaggerating?'

But as Masons, isn't any time spent in this area too much? How can we profess to be Masons, follow what we are taught and vow to uphold the principles we do, yet ignore them when it is convenient, or we feel slighted?

When we look outside our Masonic Temples, it is true, we are living in a world that is spiraling out of control. From natural disasters to violence against the innocent it is hard to imagine a time or a place when this wasn't the case. The rise of hatred in the world continues to overshadow all positives. In parts of our world, there are people huddled in darkness, fearing for their lives and those of their families. But we as Freemasons have a light. One of compassion and integrity. A path to bring out the best in those around us. When asked what do Masons do, often the response is we make good men better. We also need to lift others up regardless of their affiliation with our Fraternity, but especially within the membership of our Fraternity.

As Masons we need to remember it is okay to disagree, but it is not okay to be disagreeable. We have

an obligation in Masonry to extend the idea of Brotherly love among our members and outside into our communities as a whole. Agreeing with another person on every point, political or otherwise, is unlikely. Accepting them in the love which Jesus and Muhammad taught is very possible. This does not mean acquiescing, it means choosing our words carefully to not further enflame the disagreement, it means providing a civil discourse in all matters. We as Masons and as human beings need to strive to achieve this lofty goal. We as Masons hold an advantage, in better times we attend a space where we can practice this high virtue in a microcosm of society, so we can take the skill into the world and set an example by showing tolerance for the beliefs and opinions of others, making the world safer and brighter, but it all begins at home. If we can't live in peace in our own Temples, our teachings will end there.

In this season of peace, regardless of your religion or affiliation, I implore you to find a way to set aside the hate which comes with stereotypes or preconceived notions. Make room in your heart for kindness and forgiveness. More than ever the world needs our efforts in this endeavour. More than ever our Fraternity needs our efforts in this endeavour.

I hope everyone who reads this can start the New Year off anew and celebrate the idea of peace on Earth and goodwill toward ALL mankind starting with ALL your Brothers in Masonry.

We wish you and your families a happy and healthy New Year and may 2023 be your favourite thus far!

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

Bath – Maple Leaf Lodge for his Mother Lodge meeting on the 9th

Picton – Prince Edward Lodge for the Ceremony of Installation and Investiture on the 12th

Toronto – Victoria Lodge for Masonic Education with the University of Toronto Chapter of the Fraternity Lambda Chi Alpha on the 17th

Bath – Templum Fidelis Lodge for the Ceremony of Installation and Investiture on the 21st

Alliston – Spry Lodge for the Ceremonial exchange of the Director of Ceremonies baton on the 23rd

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

My Brethren,

First of all, I would like to wish everyone a Happy and Prosperous New Year, may God Bless you and your entire family for the year to come. May this year be better than the last. Please Brethren, spend every possible moment that you can with your family and friends, may your health and happiness be plenty and may your Masonic principals guide you.

The month of January brings us to the halfway mark in the current Masonic year. The Grand Lodge Committees are diligently working towards their goals and are making such progress. I am very pleased with everything that the Committees are doing while helping the Lodges and the membership to emerge from the pandemic as well as can be expected. The District Deputy Grand Master's regional meeting is this month and as I have been putting all of the District Reports into one big report, I have noticed many commonalities across the entire Jurisdiction. Emerging from the pandemic has been a challenge for every District. Some Lodges are coming along stronger than ever. They have great attendance, they are doing Masonic Education at every meeting, they are doing degree work and the Ritual has been really good due to having practices. Those same Lodges are bringing in new members at almost pre-pandemic levels. On the other end of the scale are many Lodges that are struggling. These Lodges may or may not have a quorum to open and do business, they are not getting any requests for membership and some are in a financially tough spot. I was talking to one Brother and he stated that his Lodge was close to not being viable so a letter was sent out to its members stating the honest facts that if something didn't change, they were in jeopardy of going dark. He said that the letter worked and the members started to return to Lodge, activity was going well and it looks like the Lodge will be going for many years to come. That sounds like a great outcome for them but it takes work, commitment and dedication. I realize that small rural Lodges have a harder time drawing in new members due to their geographical area but they must still try to retain the members that they have. Let's face it, if the Lodge has open and honest discussions and seeks out help, its chances of survival increase tenfold. There are many Committees at our Grand Lodge that can help and engage the membership and even help to bring in new

members. From having Masonic Education at every meeting, exemplifying degrees, and implementing the Cornerstone Program to looking into a long-range plan, budgeting and taking a hard look at the finances. All of these aspects of a successful meeting are well worth the effort needed.

Our new branding can also be used in a positive light to let both us as Masons and the public in general know and realize the good that we do. I believe that our new Branding will help out in making us feel good about ourselves and also let our friends and families know of the extreme good that we do for the community around us. The Public Awareness Committee has many ideas to help us promote ourselves in the community.

In conclusion for this month Brethren, I would like to talk about the Lodge Building Advisory Committee. R.W. Bro. Peter Sialtsis and his Committee are working diligently to bring the Lodge buildings and Temples into compliance. A fire inspection and plan must be completed or the Warrant of the Lodge is in jeopardy of being removed by Grand Lodge. Make no mistake, Grand Lodge is taking this initiative very seriously. We want every member to be safe in the buildings that the Lodges are housed in. Every member deserves to be able to go home to their family after every meeting. In my Lodge, the fire inspection requirement was one of the greatest things that happened to the building. There was only one way out, other than exiting through the windows, and that was a tragedy just waiting to happen. It costs some money but another exit door was put in along with proper exit lighting and a current fire plan in case of emergency. A ramp was added for wheelchair accessibility and now we have a Lodge that is ready for future use as the membership ages.

Brethren, please make your Lodges and Temples as safe as they can be for our members to enjoy.

As always Brethren, let us rub and cherish our shiny penny, plan for a bright future, keep our Lodges vibrant and make someone smile today.

Jamie R. Ireland
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Chaplain ...

Brethren,

From the moment that we initiate a man into Freemasonry, we inform him that ours is “the most moral human institution that ever existed”. And, we continue to inform him that “no institution can boast of a more solid foundation than that on which Freemasonry rests – the practice of social and moral virtue...” In the Fellowcraft Degree, we counsel him “not to palliate or aggravate the offences of the brethren; but in the decision of every trespass against our rules, judge with candour, admonish with friendship, and reprehend with mercy.”

From these words that we hear so often, that I sometimes become concerned may fall on the deaf ears of some of our brethren, the following caught my eye and I determined to share it with you as we begin another orbit of the sun.

Two friends were walking through the desert. During some point of the journey, they had an argument; and one friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand:

“TODAY, MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE.”

They kept on walking, until they found an oasis, where they decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire and started drowning, but the friend saved him. After he recovered from the near drowning, he wrote on a stone:

“TODAY, MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE.”

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, “After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now, you write on a stone; why?” The friend replied,

“WHEN SOMEONE HURTS US, WE SHOULD WRITE IT DOWN IN SAND WHERE WINDS OF FORGIVENESS CAN ERASE IT AWAY. BUT, WHEN SOMEONE DOES SOMETHING GOOD FOR US, WE MUST ENGRAVE IT IN STONE WHERE NO WIND CAN EVER ERASE IT!”

LEARN TO WRITE YOUR HURTS IN THE SAND AND TO CARVE YOUR BENEFITS IN STONE.

With sincere fraternal regards,

***Michael A. Litvak
Grand Chaplain***