

# THE COMMUNIQUE

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## *From the Grand Master ...*

My Brethren:

I submit to you that never in the history of mankind has there been a greater need for leadership. Never in the history of our churches, schools, service clubs and government has there been a greater need for leadership. Freemasonry is by no means exempt in this need as well.

A few years ago the University of Michigan did a study in terms of the greatest fears and problems in society. They came up with a top ten list, but for our purposes, I need only share the top three.

The first one was the fear of a nuclear war. Now granted, with the reduction in world tensions over the years, the nuclear war fear is somewhat subsided, but surely not gone if you are watching the nightly news. The second problem or fear was that of a worldwide famine and as we see the problems in the third world countries, that fear is still present. But the third fear or problem that was recognized by this research was the lack of leadership today.

If I was to ask each you to list the greatest leaders of our time what names would you come up with? If we surveyed the literature on leadership we would probably identify a few quickly - George Washington, Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Winston Churchill; Franklin Delano Roosevelt; Mahatma Gandhi; Albert Schweitzer; Albert Einstein; and Dr. Martin Luther King, may have all made your list by leaving their mark on leadership over the years. But isn't it a sad commentary in this world that we can only identify a very few great leaders from the past generation and before.

I further submit to you, that never in the history of Freemasonry has there been a greater need for effective, dynamic, prestigious leadership; particularly at a time when our members are staying away in droves from our Lodge meetings. I have mentioned before that we do not have a membership problem but rather we have an engagement problem. We have enough members to make Masonry in Ontario a great experience. Never in the history of Freemasonry has there been a greater need for leadership, particularly when we have so many inquiring men standing outside the West gate waiting for their chance to be admitted to the mysteries and privileges of Freemasonry. Yes

Brethren, leadership, is desperately needed for the survival of Freemasonry at this time. That is why I return to this topic so often: Leadership, and the survival of Freemasonry.

Let me pose a few more questions to you. Can Freemasonry, as we know it, survive well into the twenty-first century and beyond? I believe it can! In sales terms, we have a good product. I want to quote our Brother, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, in his philosophy of positive thinking - "As long as there are God fearing, moral men, Freemasonry will exist well into the twenty-first century." Can Freemasonry under its present form and structure exist well into the twenty-first century? Freemasonry will survive - and thrive - well into the twenty first century and beyond with God fearing and moral man, --- and leadership! An aside here - I have no doubt that Bro. Peale's Masonic training, though a Protestant Clergyman, would have him, as do I, use the term God as a universal term of reference to our own Supreme Being.

So what do we mean by the term leadership in Masonic terms?

Given my monthly limitation of 700 words in this forum, you will have to tune in next month for this explanation on the importance of Masonic leadership.

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

Bath - Maple Leaf Lodge for his Mother Lodge meeting on the 13th

Belleville - Moira Lodge for the recognition of seventy years of service to our Craft through his Lodge, District, Board of General Purposes and the Masonic Foundation of Ontario to my dear friend and mentor, R.W. Bro. Neil Britton, on the 15th

Bobcaygeon - A Day of Masonry hosted by Victoria and Peterborough Districts on the 18th

Markham - The Annual Heritage Lodge Black Tie Banquet at The School of Fine Dining on the 25<sup>th</sup>

*Thomas W. Hogeboom*  
*Grand Master*

## *From the Deputy ...*

Brethren;

With January behind us we are getting that much closer to spring, at least in the Southwestern part of the Jurisdiction. The winter months can be long and cold but this year, so far, it hasn't been too terrible. Anyway Brethren, the days are getting longer, the sun is getting warmer and life is good. Life is very good !

As many of you know, January is the month for the District Deputy Grand Master's midterm meeting. This year was no exception and thirty eight of the forty one DD's converged on Whitby Ontario for this very important meeting. The Grand Master, Grand Secretary and myself all gathered in the hotel restaurant/lobby on Friday night for a time of fellowship and reminiscing about how the year is progressing in the Districts. It was a social time that was very relaxing, very informative and well worthwhile. Saturday morning brought us all together at the Whitby Masonic Centre for the business of the day. The midterm meeting started out with the remarks of the Grand Master followed by the Grand Secretary and then by me. Once that was out of the way and everyone had settled in for the day, the District Deputy's started to give their reports on the Condition of Masonry in their Districts. It didn't take long to realize that all the Districts in the entire Jurisdiction share pretty much the same challenges as well as the same success stories. There were some minor differences due to the vastness of the size of our Province but everything in every District was virtually the same. I'll just go through some of the summary of the reports from the forty one Districts.

We'll start at the beginning. There have been many Lodge anniversary visits along with some Silver to Gold Ceremonies. Many milestone pin presentations, many dinners and banquets and sadly the Masonic Memorial Ceremonies. We also talked about District Charities and the role of the Masonic Foundation of Ontario.

The District Deputy's were asked to report on what is working in their respective Districts and here is what was in most reports;

The Lodges that continued to communicate and engage their members emerged from the covid pandemic in pretty good condition. Successful Lodges have provided full evenings of activity in the lodge room followed by fellowship

afterwards. The Education Chairmen have been quite busy visiting and giving their talks which are enjoyed very much. These Lodges are embracing the wishes of our Grand Master and are following the teachings of Ritual. Education and Mentoring. A great addition to the social activities would be to involve the spouses and families and like-minded men that are wishing to submit an application to join our Craft. Printing the entire collection of Mentoring Matters and putting them into a binder to be used as a Lodge Resource is a great suggestion for successful Lodges. Mentoring will help all Lodges to be successful. Also, a long range plan should be implemented along with updated bylaws to improve the viability of the Lodges and Districts. Having the newer members learn the various pieces of the Ritual can help with attendance and retention issues. Becoming a Cornerstone Lodge might possibly be one of the best decisions that can energize and revitalize the meetings and help to add membership numbers as well as retain the current members. And finally performing great Ritual means practice, practice, practice.

The next part of the midterm reports are for the things that are not working in the Lodges and Districts and I believe that we will maybe talk about that at a later time. The reason is that we all know of a Lodge that is struggling and is having real issues with conducting meaningful meetings. Many Lodges are even failing to open due to not having a quorum. I believe that if those Lodges try to do better and follow the example of the more engaged membership, that hopefully they can lift themselves up and begin to turn the corner from frustration to gain a sense of pride and revitalization.

We have to want to do better in order to succeed Brethren, we have to work on retaining our current membership as well as attracting new prospective members. It's not easy to turn the ship around but if we stay together, it's not impossible either.

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 and tomorrow.

*Jamie R. Ireland*  
*Deputy Grand Master*

*From the Grand Secretary ...*

**2023 Electronic Voting Information:**

Brethren,

Electronic Voting 2023:

**DDGM Registration for Voting:**

Registration: Monday June 12 2023 through  
Friday June 16 2023

**DDGM Voting:** Monday June 19 2023 through  
Tuesday June 20 2023

Second ballot if required, immediately after the  
close of voting on Tuesday June 20 2023.

**Grand Lodge Officer Registration for Voting:**

Registration: Monday July 10 2023 through  
Friday July 14 2023

**Grand Lodge Officer Voting:** Monday July 17  
2023 through Tuesday July 18 2023

Second Ballot if required:

Tuesday July 18 5:00PM through Wednesday  
July 19 at 12:00PM

Further details to follow.

As the eligible voters list this year will be sourced from the new Grand Lodge computer database, it will be extremely important for all Lodge Secretaries to ensure that their lodge membership and officer records are up to date prior to the extract date of the eligible voters file.

Fraternally, Garry

*D. Garry Dowling  
Grand Secretary*

## *From the Grand Treasurer ...*

My brethren.

It has been some time since my communique last summer and I wish you all a belated Happy New Year. As our lives have been impacted by the Covid and recently inflation, stock market volatility and the Ukraine war, I doubt that we will ever truly return to a pre-pandemic world. We must adapt to changing conditions with greater uncertainty.

Since September many of us have attempted to return to some semblance of those pre-Covid days. We cannot deny that isolation and fear of disease did not impact our lives and Masonry. Many lodges are struggling and have not returned to normal. Attendance continues to suffer, and it is difficult to schedule events. Even in my own district at visitations, official visits, and installations we see the same faces with the notable absence of many of our older brethren.

Many of our brethren have moved on. After all, Masonry requires a regular commitment. Despite our efforts to adapt our meetings and education to the internet - Masonry is not Facebook. It's "In Your Face". It is about attending lodge, participating, and socializing. Some of our senior brethren have passed on, or can no longer attend for health reasons, others vacation down south for long periods of time. Some lodges have lost their critical mass symptomatic of poor attendance, shortage of ritualists and internal disagreements.

### REACHING OUT

There is no quick fix to declining membership especially where older members are not attending. However, you can extend the hand of friendship and personally invite brethren of lodges that are struggling to participate in the more active ones. If lodges are experiencing problems, encourage them to seek help and make it your business in your district to inquire and to consolidate the efforts of brethren so that at least once a month every brother can partake in the Masonic experience. Downsizing may be inevitable; but not necessarily bad if we do something about it. It takes a little planning and lodges should work together.

### PLANNING

Many lodges are struggling to be current with their membership and their financial affairs - jobs normally addressed by the lodge secretary and treasurer. It is important to take stock of your membership, personally contact every brother, update your records and try to encourage

communication and involvement. This should result in fewer demits and suspensions. Start to consider future options and begin to make plans. If all you do is talk nothing will happen. If you plan meetings and events even with the brethren of more than one lodge, then there is something to look forward to. It's a start.

### NEW TECHNOLOGY AT GRAND LODGE

We are well on the way to implementing new technology that will interact directly with each lodge member. In time many of these functions will become automatic. Grand Lodge's data base is only as accurate and up to date as the information provided by each lodge. Please take the time to update and communicate this information. There is a two way learning curve - the development and implementation of the new software and for lodges to gain confidence in accessing and working with it. There will be bugs and glitches. It will take time. Please be patient. Your feedback and suggestions would be most welcome.

### FIRE INSPECTIONS

Temples have been tasked with getting a FINAL ONE-TIME up-to-date fire inspection before moving on to a future annual checklist. The safety of these buildings is vital including the insurance implications. If you have not yet complied, please do so as soon as possible.

### DUES

I would like to thank you for approving the motion last summer to increase our annual dues by \$10.00 beginning in January 2023.

Our membership has been declining over the years and the former annual rate of \$20.00 a year per member was insufficient to prevent losses. This is despite all our cost cutting measures.

Now we must contend with inflation and stock market volatility which affects our savings and investments.

I encourage every lodge facing difficulties to reach out to Grand Lodge for guidance and assistance. We have several committees than can assist you.

We are there for you.

Be well.

*Sydney T. Schatzker*  
*Grand Treasurer*

## *From the Grand Chaplain ...*

“SO MOTE IT BE!”

Words so familiar to us that resound from our Lodge room walls. Even if the deliverer of the ritual that precedes this phrase speaks in a low voice, we can always count on the Brethren to respond with a most hearty So Mote It Be! But where does this phrase originate and what is its deeper meaning?

It is actually first found in the Regius Poem (or Halliwell Manuscript), the oldest document in the Craft, at the very end proclaiming, “Amen! Amen! so mote it be! So say we all for charity.” Its use is exactly the same today as it was intended some 600 years ago.

The word mote appears to be derived from an Old Saxon verb motan meaning “can” or “be allowed to be”. Thus, when we, as Masons, respond to a prayer whose deliverer will finish with Amen, we echo “So Mote It Be” as meaning, so may it be done.

And what of the word Amen? It is a Hebrew word with the accepted meaning of being an affirmation of declaration and first found in the Old Testament (Torah) where it appears some 30 times. It is recited after blessings where we praise the Almighty. Common English translations of the word amen include “verily”, “truly”, “it is true”, and “let it be so”. It is also used colloquially, to express strong agreement. We often teach our young children that it means “count me in”. Amen also appears 52 times in the Synoptic Gospels (those of Matthew, Mark and Luke) as well as 25 times in the Gospel of John.

Ashkenazic Jews (from Eastern Europe) pronounce it Ah-mayn. Sephardic (Middle Eastern) Jews pronounce it Ah-men. Christians tend to say Ay-men while Muslims say Ah-meen. In the end, they all mean the same. Interestingly, Wiccan followers respond to prayer with “So mote it be” with its use rumoured to have been inserted by Gerald Gardner, the founder of modern Wicca in the 1940’s, who, it is believed, was a Mason.

Kabbalists look at gematria, the numerical evaluation of words to study Hebrew scriptures. Each letter of the Hebrew alphabet has a numeric value. The word Amen consists of three letters whose numeric value is 91 (note that, generally, vowels in Hebrew are not letters but rather markings either above or below a letter indicating its sound). Thus, the “a” equals one, the “m” equals 40 and the “n” equals 50. This brought me to Psalm 91, which forms a regular part of Jewish, Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Lutheran, Anglican and other Protestant liturgies. Rabbinic interpretation states that Psalm 91 was composed by Moses on the day he completed the building of the Tabernacle in the desert. The verses describe Moses' own experience entering the Tabernacle: “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty”. Further interpretations teach that Moses composed this psalm while ascending into the cloud hovering over Mount Sinai, at which time he recited these words as protection from the angels of destruction. In Jewish thought, Psalm 91 conveys the themes of God's protection and rescue from danger. Psalm 91 is recited seven times during a burial ceremony. How fitting that Amen and its gematria take us to a psalm that asks the GAOTU for His protection!

So, my Brethren, the next time you are in Lodge and respond to prayer, give a little more thought to your response and take solace in the fact that your hearty “So Mote It Be!” may ascend to those immortal mansions whence all goodness emanates!

*Michael A. Litvak  
Grand Chaplain*