

THE COMMUNIQUE

Published by
Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario

Issue 7

March 2023

From the Grand Master ...

My Brethren:

What do we mean by the term leadership? If you look at the literature on the topic of leadership you will find many definitions. My favourite is the exploitation of every opportunity to take people forward towards the common goal. This goal, although known by all in an organization, often grows dim or gets lost in the challenges and the problems of our day-to-day operations. Taking people forward!! The short of it; Leadership is the art of causing others to want to do what the leader thinks needs to be done; causing others to want. Causing and want; terms that go together.

So is there and difference between the words leadership and management? I think that there is a significant difference; they are not synonymous terms; they are not interchangeable. The leader inspires, the manager maintains. The leader is the original, the manager is the copy. The leader does right things, the manager does things right. The leader looks at the horizon, the manager looks at the bottom line. The leader is concerned with people, the manager with form and structure. The leader paints creatively, the manager paints by numbers. What are you? Are you a leader or are you a manager? Do you paint by numbers or do you paint creatively. Do you inspire or do you maintain? Do you challenge the status quo, or do you accept it? As a Mason, have you caused others to want to do what you think is necessary for Freemasonry? Are you causing others to want to do what you believe is necessary for the survival of Freemasonry? How do you cause others to want to seek the common desire; to take people forward toward that common goal which often grows dim or even lost in our day-to-day operations? I submit Brethren that there are five crucial ingredients of effective, dynamic, enthusiastic leadership - challenging, inspiring, enabling, modelling and encouraging.

Challenging the process! Challenging the status quo; carefully examining the very form and very structure of an organization. John F. Kennedy once said that 'there are risks and there are costs in a program of action; but they are far less than the long-range risks and costs of a program of inaction.' Great leaders cause things to happen, they don't wait for things to happen. You can compare a good leader to an orchestra conductor; sometimes you have to turn your back to the audience and face the music. We too, in Freemasonry require that same kind of leadership. Leaders that are prepared to challenge the status quo; keeping in mind and building upon the strengths; moral truth and virtue; the four cardinal virtues and the theological values, strengths and principles of our organization. In any organization, as with our beloved Craft, it is important for leaders to shake up those in the comfortable pews; to make changes; not to accept the status quo. Although my time as your Grand Master is limited, my goal is to start the change process and lead in such an example, that my successors will follow to reap the further benefits of change.

I believe we need to look at our Freemasonry as three separate branches that form the whole: Ceremonial, Administrative and Fraternal or what we can call Leadership.

Let's start with Ceremonial, or in terms we all know - The Ritual. During the past few years, I have been somewhat concerned about the quality of the Ritual in our Lodges. Not so long ago I was in a Lodge where the Charge to the Worshipful Master from the Northeast was given. It, to me, is one of the most important charges in all of Freemasonry, even more so to the new Worshipful Master. The Brother giving that charge was prompted every third word; the Worshipful Master was squirming; the Director of Ceremonies was squirming; I was becoming very embarrassed as was everyone else, but the man was doing his level best. Brethren, we need to concentrate on the

ceremonial part of Freemasonry by having those Brethren who do Ritual well do it all the time, because they can do it best. Let those who do Ritual do it because they strive for excellence; and they succeed in portraying excellence. Too often we are forcing Brethren to participate in Ritual work, that neither have the ability nor the talent, nor the energy, and sometimes not the time, to do that work well. I once heard someone say, you give him a piece of work and if he does it enough times he will get it right eventually. But what kind of message are we leaving with the candidate or new Mason with that attitude? I submit that we want to have excellence in our Ritual and our Ceremonial Work. Let those who do it well, continue to do it well and not belabour those who neither have the talent nor the ability to do it.

On the Administrative side, we have to celebrate the good fortune of our Craft. We have many talented, expert, and knowledgeable Brethren, who could do great service in the Administrative responsibilities of the Craft. But we don't always get the right people doing the right job. Sometimes we hang onto prerequisites; they must have a rank or a title in order to serve on a Grand Lodge Committee or some other committee in the Lodge. I'm not sure that prerequisites make them any better a person when it comes to administering. We have an enormous amount of talent and capability out there and we need to use it, at the Grand Lodge and individual Lodge level. Some of the best Lodge Secretaries I have seen are not Past Masters but are young, skilled and can bring a lot of much needed Lodge support until they are ready to progress through the chairs of their Lodge to the East. Talent is just like muscle, either you use it, or you lose it. We have driven away many outstanding Masons because we have not given them an opportunity; a rank or title should not be necessary before they are given a chance to contribute.

As I said many times before, Fraternal leadership is the most crucial need of Freemasonry and our society at large today. Please don't get me wrong, we have some very capable leaders in our Craft, but if they are going to be great leaders in taking our Craft into the future, they should be out there leading the

Lodges and Districts and not being held back administrating Grand Lodge programs. Let those who lead, lead and those who can administer, administer. Let's get those Grand Lodge officers who can, out into the Craft leading, directing, causing the Lodges to develop what we want for Freemasonry. In today's society when leadership is so necessary, I think we should be electing the best possible leaders for Grand Lodge Office and let them go out and do the Fraternal work; the leadership work which they are capable of doing.

As the old saying goes, eagles soar at great heights. That's what we should be doing in Freemasonry; building upon our strengths; looking at the form and the structure; and let our capable Grand Lodge Officers soar like eagles to great heights. Let those who can administer, administer well and let those leaders lead who can lead well because strong leaders are so essential for us to succeed. We must challenge the process top to bottom within our own organization, and throughout mankind if we hope to succeed.

Again, my time has quickly passed for this month Brethren, and I only got through 'challenging,' the first of the five crucial ingredients of leadership. Please come back next month for the rest of the story on 'inspiring, enabling, modelling and encouraging.'

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

Bath – Templum Fidelis Lodge for an Initiation on the 18th

Thornhill – Quinte St. Alban's Lodge for their Silver to Gold Ceremony marking their 100th Anniversary on the 27th

Bath – Maple Leaf Lodge as the Frontenac District Senior Wardens are led by the Grand Senior Warden, R.W. Bro. Scott Doel in Passing the Grand Director of Ceremony's Son to the Fellow Craft Degree on the 29th

Thomas W. Hogeboom
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

Brethren;

We've made it through the months of January and February without too much disruption from the weather and now we're cruising into March. Spring is just around the corner and I'm feeling energized and ready for warmer temperatures. The days are getting noticeably longer and the winter blues are fading out. Life is good !

Our Jurisdiction has had a couple of " Days of Masonic Education " so far and more are scheduled to happen. The Seminars and Workshops Committee are doing a great job of helping to put these presentations together. R.W. Bro. Rick Cadotte and his Committee are keeping busy by helping the Districts to plan for and carry out the goal of our Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Hogeboom's vision of putting Masonic Education more in the forefront of our membership, to actively take part in, has taken off and is gaining momentum. The District Deputy's are lighting the torch and running with it and I applaud them for their efforts. Conviction and dedication. Hopefully the other District's will jump on board and contact Bro. Cadotte for help and direction with putting on their own " Day of Masonic Education ".

While I'm on this topic, I just want to let you know that I attended Eastern District and their " Day of Masonic Education " in Ingleside Ontario and it was great. The District Deputy Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Michael Valois and his organizing committee did an excellent job of bringing the Grand Lodge Committee information together, he had District Chairmen speaking along with Grand Lodge Chairmen and it went very well indeed. There was a question and answer component after the various presentations and everyone left that day with a better understanding of how the programs worked and what was expected from them. If anyone, any District or any Lodge has the desire to rejuvenate and energize the membership in order to succeed, this is a great way of doing it. The District Deputy's may contact me at any time in order to start their plans moving forward and have their own " Day of Masonic Education ".

Brethren, please indulge me for a moment, I want to tell you a quick story that happened to me while I was in Eastern District. As you all know by now I end my monthly talk by trying to inspire everyone who reads my Communique to do

better for themselves and for our gentle Craft. I have been trying to instill in the Brethren to always rub their shiny penny, plan for a bright future, keep our Lodges vibrant and make someone smile today and tomorrow. Well, when I was in Ingleside ON, a Past DDGM came up to me, introduced himself and he showed me a penny that he had in his hand. He explained how he had been reading the Communique and the part about the penny stuck with him. He went ahead and used his twenty ton press to imprint the Square and Compasses, exactly centered, into the penny. The penny turned out great, it looks incredibly well done ! I was taken back by the gesture of taking my " shiny penny " words to heart so when I was done looking at it, I asked if I could keep it so I could show it off to others. R.W. Bro. Frank Gordon said absolutely, he made it for me to have. Wow, I was so overwhelmed at that moment in time that my words of trying to inspire the membership came back to me like a boomerang, I couldn't believe it. As it so happens, I carry a penny with me always that a close friend gave to me for both inspiration to do better and for good luck. I pulled my shiny penny out of my pocket to show Bro. Gordon that I practice what I preach and that my words are not hollow. I think I surprised him that I actually do carry a penny around with me and I believe that, at that moment, all of the work that he put into making a gift for me was validated. R.W. Bro. Gordon, you have truly made me realize that I can reach out to the Jurisdiction with words of encouragement, hope, positivity and inspiration. Your actions that day will stay with me always and I sincerely thank you for that my friend.

Frank wanted to make more penny's so that he could inspire other people but he ran out of time before my visit there. Frank, if it's possible, I would like to purchase more of those from you so that I can spread your goodwill gesture around this great Jurisdiction of ours.

In conclusion, as always my 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. Let us all inspire someone to do better !!!

Jamie R. Ireland
Deputy Grand Master

From the Grand Chaplain ...

The Lenten period is upon us and it has made me think about a possible connection to Masonry.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday and is the solemn religious observance in the liturgical year commemorating the 40 days Jesus Christ spent fasting in the desert and enduring temptation by Satan, according to the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, before beginning his public ministry. Practised by various denominations of Catholicism and Christianity, it involves 40 days of introspection and may include fasting, repentance of sin, prayer and self-denial. It concludes at Easter with each of the denominations having subtle differences to these practices.

The Muslim community observes Ramadan in which adherents fast during the daylight hours for 30 days while observing prayer and repentance during this time. Of course, our ritual refers to the High Priest and his not entering the Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies in the Temple at Jerusalem until after many washings and purifications against the great Day of Expiation of Sins. This is known as Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement during which the Jewish community fasts for 24+ hours and fills the day with prayer and introspection, a period that began ten days earlier with the onset of Rosh Hashanah or New Year.

Introspection! This is the act of looking inward and determining where one might self-improve. This is a most serious activity and one in which every Mason ought to engage at least once per year, if not more often. While we, as Masons, profess to adhere to a higher standard, we must never forget that, after all, we are human beings subject to all of the frailties of life. I believe very strongly in the existence of Free Will, that attribute that is closely linked to moral responsibility, culpability and sin. Masons, as human beings, are not perfect and may be subject to making poor choices. Thus introspection should entail a Mason looking at himself directly in the mirror and asking himself, “am I doing the right thing?”

This brings me to the infamous “variance clause” offered to every newly-initiated Mason in the Apron Charge. I fear that this clause has been misappropriated by far too many Brethren who have misinterpreted this to mean that they can “invoke variance” when they are having an issue with a Brother. Sadly, from what we have seen, this clause has been used by those who may well be exercising their Free Will and are dissatisfied that the Brother against whom they have declared this (improper) invocation does not conform to his way of thinking. I must admit that I had never heard the term ‘private piques and quarrels’ until I served as DDGM in 2010 under M.W. Bro. Raymond Daniels. He expressed his regret that far too many Brethren were engaged in such private animosity who wanted nothing better than to bring Masonic Charges against each other. The litmus test for Masonic Charges is rather stringent and it must involve some very serious infractions such as financial misappropriation in order to qualify. Generally, we have seen that most of these grievances are of a personal nature simply because the ‘playmates cannot agree on the rules in the sandbox’ (*author’s assessment*). We have seen vile and malicious behaviour among Brethren that is so unbecoming of what I have learned as a Mason these near 35 years. It is most disheartening because some Brethren are absolutely unwilling to bend. Masonry is often described as a “code of conduct and a pattern of behaviour”; if a Brother cannot or will not see that there may be another way to approach an issue, then is he guilty of violating that code?

All that we can ask, Brethren, is that you take the time to be honest with yourself and determine if you are acting in the very best interests of your Lodge and the Craft. As we enter these holy times, I adjure you to take a moment and ask yourself those hard questions. Perhaps, you will find the answer and free yourself of anguish and pain. So mote it be!

With sincere fraternal regards,

Michael A. Litvak
Grand Chaplain