

THE COMMUNIQUE

Published by

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

Issue 8

April 2019

From the Grand Master ...

Brethren, as I write this Communique, the sun is rising before 6 am and by the time you read this Communique, it will be spring here in the Hinterlands of Ontario (Vernal Equinox). It is a time of renewal, for all around us, we see the summer birds and the snow birds returning, the snow melting and soon the buds will be on the trees. Yea! we have all survived another Canadian Winter.

In April each year, Masonry in Ontario also goes through a renewal via nominations by April 1st for the different positions, which are laid out in the Constitution of this Grand Lodge. A Brother can, if he desires, withdraw his nomination before the 15th of April. It is interesting to note that the Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master shall be elected by ballot without nomination (section 46).

As Masons, we are charged to advance our Masonic knowledge on a daily basis and that can be accomplished this month by opening your **2018** copy of the Constitution of this Grand Lodge and reading Section 42 to 66 under the heading Elections and Appointments.

It is, after all, the responsibility of every voting delegate of Grand Lodge to inform themselves about the quality of those who put their name forward. In the upcoming months, these Brethren will be available to answer your inquiries regarding all issues you believe are important. They will be at Grand Master's receptions, meetings called to meet the candidates, District meetings where invited to speak, and regular Lodge meetings. I charge you to take the time to learn about these Brethren who lead us into the new Masonic year beginning in July.

Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy there is education.
~ Franklin Roosevelt

Webster's Dictionary defines "apathy" as a lack of emotion. Perhaps we could best describe it as a lack of interest - in other words total indifference.

Is your Lodge suffering from low attendance? Do you suffer from indifference or apathy? If so, how does it manifest itself? Is apathy too common in our ranks?

Unfortunately, apathy is simple. It takes no special qualification and demands little of your time to perfect. All one has to do is pay your dues each year, show up occasionally and hope that someone else does the work. Then you can complain bitterly when everything it is not done according to your high standards. Apathy can cover a Lodge in many ways and sometimes is hard to recognize. For a moment, let me give you a couple of

examples where it may be growing in your Lodge.

The new Mason, who for some reason, doesn't understand the reward of doing the required ritual well. As he advances through his degrees, and this includes his floor work and memory work, his feeling may be that good enough is, well, good enough.

The Master Mason who never volunteers for anything, is not interested in getting involved, never offers himself to the Master of his Lodge, or his time and talent and yet has nerve enough to say "well no one asked me"

How about the Past Master who has decided he has given his all; that someone else can carry the load? Of course, he knows exactly how the Lodge work should be done but is not willing to help.

Then perhaps there is a Past Grand Lodge Officer, who is held in great reverence by his Lodge and what he says is taken as gospel but unfortunately, he has not kept up with the latest ways of his Districts and Grand Lodge.

Or, has your Lodge past the apathy stage, made changes and now you have a thriving Lodge, where the Sponsors of a new Mason accept their responsibility, outline the work and help him learn the lessons of the degree.

In this new stage, your Past Masters are always there, not only with suggestions but also with offers to help; remembering that, it was through a lot of help from many members, that they had a great year as Master of the Lodge. They know how to balance suggestions, with acceptance that the new Master is in charge and he will never be "hung out to dry" by the Past Masters reluctance to be involved in the Lodge's work.

Finally, in this thriving Lodge where Past Masters, who have gone on to become Grand Lodge Officers, continue to give not only to their Lodge but to their Districts and ultimately to their Grand Lodge.

It is my opinion that apathy in Masonry, particularly Ontario Masonry, can be eliminated but it will take a commitment from all of us.

Brethren, we must continue to show emotion. We must be committed and we must continue to give of our time and talent.

A lot of you cared, just not enough
~ Jay Asher, American Novelist

Paul E. Todd
Grand Master

From the Deputy ...

Brethren,

Our Strategic Plan holds a vision of where we want to go and a solid plan to get there – for both Grand Lodge and individual Lodges! This year we have aligned the Committees of the Board of General Purposes with the pillars of the Strategic Plan.

The Membership Committee is headed up by R.W. Bro. Tom Siemiernik. Under his purview are four committees: Lodge Resources; Cornerstone Program; Seminars & Workshops and Condition of Masonry.

Lodge Resources is the curator of many of the programs that Grand Lodge has developed over the years. They currently highlight Friend to Friend and the Five Steps to Application, but have in their back pocket Brother to Brother, the Rusty Mason and others. These programs were created to help you and your Lodge. So make use of them.

Friend to Friend is a program that helps you in planning an event, to showcase Masonry to potential new members. This year it has been expanded with suggestions on running an Open House, and other less formal ways to show the public who we are and what we do.

The Five Steps to Application is being adopted by more and more Lodges as their method to assess applicants. In the old days when men joined without knowing anything about our fraternity and subsequently a number left before getting all their degrees. Freemasonry just wasn't for them.

Not only was it a waste of our time and their money, this created a body of men out there who did not think highly of us. No doubt they shared that opinion with others. By using the Five Steps to Application process, men really get to know us, what we're about and what to expect. The other benefit is that we get to know them!

The Rusty Mason program helps you plan an event to bring back those Brothers who have fallen away. We always say it is to acquaint them with the signs, etc., but really it is an outreach to acquaint them with their Brothers.

The Cornerstone Project pulls much of the above into one easy-to-use project. It has been our most successful project. It not only taps into many of the Lodge Resources programs but also gives suggestions for other activities that will result in a richer experience for all our members and their families.

And it is so easy to do; your Lodge is probably already

doing at least half the requirements, and by incenting you to add just a few more activities, you can make your Lodge experience even more exciting. 194 Lodges are currently enrolled.

The Seminars and Workshops Committee not only puts on workshops at the Annual Communication, but throughout the year. They co-ordinate the workshops put on by other Committees so we don't end up trampling on each other. If you would like a seminar in your area, this Committee is your prime contact point.

The Condition of Masonry Committee helps us better understand, serve and support the needs of our current members and their families by collecting data on various facets of our Lodge activities, analysing them, and giving the information back to the individual Lodges. Thus far they have forwarded 250 requests for information to various Grand Lodge Committees. Good work everyone!

They have refined the recommendation on Lodge Dues levels by adding a calculation on accommodation and known costs for each Lodge based on the data they submit rather than the previous \$150.00 level that was recommended as a guide for all.

On a negative note: there are two areas that have come to light. The first is Life Membership Accounts. 152 Lodges reported having Life Members but 80 of those also reported having no funds in their Life Member Account. If your Lodge is one of these, perhaps a call for help to the Lodge Finance Committee would be in order. The second area that is a mystery is that 67 Lodges have reported 333 members are more than 12 months in arrears. Given the Constitutional change passed in 2017, that number ought to be zero!

That is the Membership Pillar, working hard on their Strategic Initiative: We recognize that our Membership and their families (outside the Lodge Room) represent the heart of Freemasonry in Ontario and that the culmination of our efforts are intended to result in a richer experience for all our members and their families.

It also contains my personal favourite Strategic Goal 7: To Enhance the spirit of fraternalism by emphasizing that one aspect of Freemasonry is to have fun and to enjoy one another's company.

***David J. Cameron
Deputy Grand Master***