

## Quality Lodges for Quality Masons

Brethren, I want you to think outside the box for a few moments.

We talk about guarding our West Gate, and making sure that we receive only good quality men into our Fraternity. When they get there, what about the quality of the meetings they are going to attend? There are two main areas where we lose Brethren from the Craft: we overwhelm our new Masons with ritual and protocol, combined with a lack of **MENTORSHIP** to help them progress through their Masonic Journey. Our Senior Brethren are becoming increasingly disenchanted with the Status Quo, (which will be discussed in a moment), and lack of stimulating Lodge meetings

The Craft has been undergoing several changes over the last few years, changes that will make

us more relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We talk about how to make our meetings more interesting and exciting rather than living with the Status Quo.

What is the Status Quo? We open our Lodges in the appropriate degree to do our Work: invite guests to the East, read minutes, Treasurer's report etc. Let us put some thought into making some changes.

Before I do that, I must clarify or reiterate that I am not promoting innovation to our Ritual or our Landmarks. Remember, all Worshipful Masters made a solemn oath not to make those changes.

There are three areas of Work in Freemasonry: Ritual, Governance and Education. Most Lodges work with them together. One example is, the Stewards, who assist at repasts and social

functions; and are also responsible for lectures in the EA and MM degrees.

I propose that we split the Work into the three different categories that were mentioned previously: Ritual, Governance and Education.

There are many Brethren who sit on the sidelines of the Lodge year after year, who are business owners, retired managers, Military personnel and Community leaders who do not wish to proceed through the different offices of the Lodge because they feel that they cannot do all the ritual that is required to be done while holding those offices. They may not be great ritualists but are great managers who can look after the Governance of the Lodge. Of course anyone who proceeds through the chairs will be required to do the necessary ritual for the opening and closing of the Lodge in the different Degrees. By removing the Degree Work from their duties, the Officers can

now give their undivided attention to running the Lodge, in a manner that will stimulate the minds of the other Brothers. This, together with implementing Lodge Degree Teams for Degree Work will provide the quality time in Lodge that has been talked about for many years.

How do we now provide that quality time in Lodge you ask?

Most Lodges have 10 stated meetings per year, along with any emergent meetings that may be required to carry out the different Degrees that must be conferred. We must take time to plan our stated meetings.

The Senior Warden of a Lodge should presume that he will be going to the East the next year. He must organize and plan what is going to be done during his Stated Meetings for his year in the East. He can then have a meeting with the Past Masters of the Lodge and lay out his plans

for the ensuing year. This meeting should take place before his Installation, so that he can make any changes that may arise from the Past Masters meeting.

Emergent Meetings should be held for the Conferring of Degrees only. There should be no business conducted at that time; this should be the time to dedicate our attention to our Candidate completely.

Let's take the mundane business out of the Lodge and put it to a Lodge Board of General Purposes. This is where the business of the Lodge should be carried out. How many of us have sat in another Lodge that we are visiting and have to hear, at times, the dirty laundry that a Lodge is airing because it comes under old, deferred or new business? If we all do our business, which is of the delicate nature at the Board of General Purposes it is kept in a private setting and it may encourage Brothers to speak

up in that more personal, safe and private environment because it is in front of his Lodge Brothers only. The Senior Warden of the Lodge should Chair the Board of General Purposes; this will give him the experience that he needs to conduct a meeting during his year as Worshipful Master. So, when it comes to dealing with the business of the Lodge at the Stated Meeting, the Senior Warden gives a report on the Board of General Purposes and makes a motion to accept the recommendations of the Board. End of business.

After the acceptance of the Board's recommendations we now have the time to say, put the Lodge at refreshment and have a guest speaker address us in our Lodge so that they can see how a Lodge is set up; a discussion period where two Brothers can be involved with putting their opposing points of view

forward on paper followed by discussion with the Brethren; a video presentation or any other educational information that the Worshipful Master or any other Brother may want to present. During refreshment you could get the DeMolay to come in and exemplify one of their degrees, or even hold their meeting during our refreshment. I would encourage all Lodges to think outside of the box and be imaginative as to what can be done during this refreshment period.

Further to having the Officers looking after the Governance side of things; more time can now be dedicated to the arranging of more social activities; implementing and participating in different programs that are offered by Grand Lodge; and getting more involved with our youth such as Rainbow Girls or DeMolay. We must endeavour to work diligently with our youth so that both of those organizations can

grow and prosper through our Mentorship. We must be proactive and encourage the same changes in their organizations as we are, in attempting to make the positive changes in our Gentle Craft.

The next area that we must work on is RITUAL.

How many of us have sat through a Degree and listened to a Brother being prompted every second line or actually have read the RITUAL out of the book? This is disrespectful and irresponsible for a Brother to do this to our Candidates.

When a Brother is being installed as a Worshipful Master he consents to the Ancient Charge number 11 which reads as follows, “You admit that it is not in the power of any man, or body of men, to make alteration or innovation in the body of Freemasonry, without the consent first obtained of Grand Lodge.”, but

what is wrong with variation? There are ways in which Ritual can be delivered without innovation.

Would it not be prudent for a Lodge to develop a Degree Team for each Degree?

Let us form our Lodge Degree Teams from our Members and if there are not enough Brothers in our own Lodge to fill all the parts, then let us bring in Brothers from other Lodges to help out. The one thing that would have to be done, is to see that there are backup Brothers for each station to fill in as necessary. By implementing these Teams, we can be assured that our quality men that are coming through our West Gate, receive quality Degrees throughout their Masonic journey.

We can also have the major parts (Lectures) of the different Degree's done by numerous Brothers and be somewhat imaginative on the

floor work, as happens at Outback Lodge. We have a great opportunity to put some real drama and period costuming into the second section of the Master Mason Degree in our Lodges. Get the Worshipful Master dressed up as King Solomon, the SW as Hiram King of Tyre, and all the actors to be dressed in costumes from the time of the building of the Temple. (Use Royal Arch, Preceptory or Scottish Rite Costumes?)

There are areas in our business practises that should be changed. We must be willing to look at using Visa, Master Card, e-transfer or even PayPal as a payment avenue for our different social functions. Usually, the Lodge that is putting on the function, needs upfront money to be able to get things started, for example partial payment to a Caterer. We, as Freemasons must develop a different attitude toward our timing when we notify a Lodge that

we will be coming to their event. The major factor of timely notification to any event, is the requirement of the notice to the Caterers. Every Lodge and Grand Lodge tries to be fiscally responsible by putting on a particular event without losing money and catering is a big factor. Please keep in mind that a 2 week notice to the Lodge that you are attending would be a great help in controlling the cost of the meals. It would also prevent the embarrassment of having the event running out of food. Also, we, as Freemasons must understand that if you commit to attending a function you pay for the meal even if you don't attend.

In Conclusion My Brothers, I quote Bro. Matt Nelson from his book, A 5 Step Guide to Masonic Reform, "We must understand that the Fraternity is an interdependent network of complex levels. Caution: what gets us to where we are now is not good enough to keep us

going. “GOOD” is not enough, you need to be “GREAT.” GOOD got us here. GREAT gets us there. When we are there, that is the new GOOD, which – again – will not be enough. It will take continual effort to evolve.”

My Brothers, we must make our Lodge meetings more interesting and exciting than what’s on TV that evening, and to give all our Brothers a sense of pride and well being when they leave the Portals of their Lodge.

If we were to pursue and implement these changes, we will eventually have -

**Quality Lodges for Quality Masons.**