

D.D.G.M. COMMUNIQUE

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From the Grand Master . . .

“Whence come you?” and “Whither are you directing your course?” are two questions familiar to Master Masons. As we stand on the threshold of a New Year, they are questions that are pertinent and relevant. In ancient Rome, the first of January was dedicated to their God of Gates and Doors – Janus. He is depicted with two heads, facing in opposite directions; one looking to what is behind, and the other looking toward what lies ahead. Standing in the doorway – the present – Janus represents contemplation of the old year, while looking forward to the new. As the Guardian of Exits and Entrances Janus also represents beginnings in ritual. In the iconography of the Roman pantheon, Janus was often depicted with one bearded face while the other was clean-shaven symbolizing age and youth. Our month of January is derived from his Latin name: Ianuarius.

A New Year, beginning at the mid-point of the Masonic Year, provides Grand Lodge, the Districts, the Lodges, and every Officer and member with an opportunity to take stock of our progress, refocus our objective, energize our resources, and renew our resolve to ‘press toward the mark of our high calling as men and as Masons.’

At my Installation as the 74th Grand Master at the 154th Annual Communication in 2009, I announced the theme for my term in office, paraphrasing the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Scriptures: “Get Knowledge, get Wisdom, but with all they getting, get Understanding.” This implies, necessitates, and encourages serious study, extensive reading, in-depth research, earnest discussion, thoughtful reflection on the profound meaning of Freemasonry by all. While this is the chief object of the Craft, we should make a distinction between ‘education’ and ‘learning.’ It is what the individual *learns*, rather than what he is *taught*, that really matters. We must also make a clear distinction between Masonic *training* and Masonic *education*. Training in the mechanics and protocol of Masonry is important, but the ancient mysteries that embody the heart and soul of our Craft must be experienced to be discovered, comprehended to be appreciated, and understood to be transformative. There is no question that as Masons we love what we do in Lodge, but do we always know why we do what we do or why we do it? To excuse ourselves by saying, “That is the way it has always been done,” to justify our ignorance is not worthy of those who profess to be ‘Speculative Masons.’

The importance of our Ritual, the defining substructure of Freemasonry, cannot be over exaggerated. But it is not enough to be merely ‘word perfect’ in the recitation of the lectures and charges. We must strive to *understand* what is “veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.” We claim to be an initiatory Order in the business of transforming the lives of men. Do we truly know what initiation means, and have we fully experienced that transformative sea-change to arise from the Altar of Freemasonry a different person? As many Lodges are experiencing an influx of candidates for our mysteries and

privileges, it is of the utmost importance and an essential duty for Worshipful Masters to provide learning opportunities outside of the regular meetings of the Lodge to fulfil our obligation to these new initiates. Real mentoring is always on a one-to-one basis.

It disappoints me greatly to report that, during the last months of 2010, for too many issues have arisen in our Lodges resulting in Masonic Complaints being laid before the Grand Master. Many of these disputes begin as differences between brethren that are defined a ‘private piques and quarrels’ which, unresolved, escalate into division, discord and dissension that disturb the peace and harmony of the Lodge. Ego can be a powerful incentive, but it can also be a deadly poison. Simply put, ‘Where ego is master, we reach disaster faster.’ In a fraternity that claims Brotherly Love as its first fundamental principle and Equality as one of its distinguishing characteristics, there is no place for the destructive influence of self-inflated ego. The general Charge reminds us that ‘humility is an essential duty.’ In my opinion, this derives from what I have referred to above: the absence of understanding of what it means to be a true Mason. If we understood what we say and hear on the floor of the lodge; if we practised what we preach, any differences of opinion that arise could and would be settled amicably as gentlemen.

The Queen’s Christmas Message emphasized the importance of ‘co-operative endeavour’ and cited the example of team sport as an example of teaching vital social skills. Her Majesty said, “I have seen for myself just how important sport is in bringing people together from all backgrounds, all walks of life and from all age groups. . . none can be enjoyed without abiding by the rules, and no team can hope to succeed without co-operation between the players. This sort of positive team spirit can benefit communities, companies and enterprises of all kinds. . . we know that nothing is more satisfying than the feeling of belonging to a group who are dedicated to helping each other, therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” Therein is lesson for all of us in Freemasonry — the greatest team players the world has ever seen.

If the New Year is a time for making resolutions, let each of us resolve to “act as the dictates of right reason prompt us, cultivate harmony, practise charity, and live in peace with all men.”

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Raymond S. J. Daniels

Grand Master’s full itinerary at –
www.grandlodge.on.ca UNDER EVENTS CALENDAR

From the Deputy Grand Master. . .

R.W. Sirs,

The second half of your term as District Deputy Grand Masters has begun. As we enter the new year, it affords us an opportunity to take stock of the first half of our terms, reflect upon and take pride in our accomplishments and adjust our plans where required.

A good place to start any period of reflection is by a look in the mirror. Is the individual looking back an example of Masonic leadership? Has he and the District Team made a contribution to Masonry in the District? Has he listened? Has he learned? Has he diligently represented the Grand Master and Grand Lodge through good communication and solid teamwork, all with the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm? Above all, is the Brother looking back at you in the mirror aware of how he is perceived by the Brethren?

Truthfully answering these questions will provide us with an indication of how we fared as Grand Lodge leaders in the first half of our terms and provide us with the clues to where adjustment may be required in the second half. We can only reach our potential as leaders if we are accountable for our actions.

D.D.G.M. Correspondence Course: Along with any constitutional change comes a cultural change. The cultural change in some cases is even harder to implement. Our D.D.G.M. Correspondence course provides the opportunity for each candidate for the Office to better prepare himself for the duties of being the District Leader. The candidate will take on the job feeling better prepared and more comfortable and the District will benefit from higher quality leadership.

I do not believe that the real issue, in this first year, is the desire or willingness of the individual to enroll in and complete the course. I believe that the issue is the change in culture required in some of our Districts to identify the leadership candidate earlier than they may have done in the past. We know that some Districts are not aggressive in identifying candidates for the D.D.G.M. position until late in the spring. That is not fair to the candidate or the District. Brethren, I encourage you to examine the practice in your District and if you have not yet identified a candidate for 2011–2012, please focus attention on the future leadership of your District in order to see that the opportunity for his training is not wasted.

I mentioned in the last Communique that the Grand Master **will not confirm** any of the new D.D.G.M.s (or Grand Registrar) next July unless they have been issued a certificate of course completion by the Masonic Education, College of Freemasonry Committee. We are here to help in any way we can. Please help us avoid embarrassment to all. If you have any questions about enrollment, course content or effort required, please contact either:

V.W. Bro. Iain Wates: idwates@sympatico.ca

R.W. Bro. Tom Siemiernik: tom.siemiernik@sympatico.ca

Invitations: As we enter the spring season of receptions, anniversaries and other special events, as Grand Lodge Officers, we will be receiving many invitations requesting our presence. Obviously, we cannot attend them all, but I would remind you that it is common courtesy to respond to all invitations, whether you are able to attend or not.

Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada Strategic Plan: Many of you have seen the wallet cards outlining the Grand Lodge Vision and Mission and the short article in the Ontario Mason Magazine. As part of our ongoing efforts to communicate the plan, this month I want to draw to your attention the first of the five Strategic Initiatives that form the backbone of our plan, **Craft Stewardship**.

Strategic Initiative: We will embrace Craft Stewardship as a responsibility to future generations of Freemasons in Ontario as well as a critical component in the conveyance of Masonic excellence to our current membership. Craft Stewardship has four Strategic Goals:

Strategic Goal 1: Achieve high quality in the delivery, comprehension and insight of the lessons communicated on the floor of the Lodge.

Strategic Goal 2: Cultivate and utilize mature Masonic leadership throughout the jurisdiction for the betterment of the Craft as a whole.

Strategic Goal 3: Create high quality educational programs and training courses for all Brethren in the jurisdiction.

Strategic Goal 4: Enable succession planning by identifying the skills and talent required for positions of Grand Lodge leadership by attracting qualified brethren.

Rationale:

- The Masonic initiatory system is the key differentiator between Masonry and other organizations, yet the calibre of the delivery of the work has declined in recent years. New Masons understand and appreciate high standards in the delivery of the work and every effort must be made to raise the bar once again.
- Today's new Masons are taught to memorize the work of the three degrees, but are provided with little or no further knowledge of the symbolism and lessons portrayed in the degrees. Poor research and delivery of Masonic education has given it a bad name.
- The quantity and quality of the leadership pool in the jurisdiction has declined over the last decade. Community and business leaders are not presently being drawn to the Craft as in the past. The Craft is in need of the leadership that they would bring to it.

To learn more about our **Grand Lodge 2010–2016 Strategic Plan**, please contact the chairman of Long Range Planning, R.W. Bro. Wes Libbey w.libbey@unb.ca for information.

As Leaders embracing change and looking to the future, we might consider the words of Will Rogers: "*Things ain't what they used to be . . . and probably never was!*"

Happy New Year!

D. Garry Dowling

