

**GRAND LODGE OF A.F. & A.M. OF CANADA
IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO**

**Fraternal Correspondence Committee
CRAFT STEWARDSHIP**

R.W. Bro. Robert F. Manz
Chairman



218 Phillips Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario P7B 5L7
807-767-0265
manz@tbaytel.net

NEW ZEALAND

Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand for the period 2013-2016.

Triennial 118th Communication, Freemason House, Wellington, N.Z., November 2016

M.W. Bro. Mark R. Winger, Grand Master.

224 Lodges

6,573 Members

Several years ago, the Grand Lodge of New Zealand de-centralized, and created the positions of Divisional Grand Masters for the Northern, Central and Southern regions of the country, with the rank of Right Worshipful, to serve the current Grand Master. These regions were then divided into eighteen Districts, each governed by a Very Worshipful Grand Master. The decision was economic, to reduce the cost of supporting Grand Lodge facilities in Wellington, and to remove the burden of financing an Annual Communication among such a small and widespread membership. A Capitation Fee, payable to the Board of General Purposes, is set at the Triennial Communication for each of the following three years. This requires that the Board endeavour to anticipate the Fees well in advance, looking at future costs vs. membership trends in a fair and reasonable manner, and increasing it by a process that matches the annual Consumer Price Index increase. This has the advantage of being both practical and fair to the Lodges who can then easily manage Lodge Dues with a minimal increase. Ergo, a Communication held every three years, paid for in advance.

The Board of General Purposes, over the last twelve months, and particularly the last three years, had its focus and priority on membership, finance, and communication. The findings under these three broad headings, were presented by the Chairman in this condensed Report:

MEMBERSHIP

“We are a membership based organization. We cannot directly grow the membership of individual Lodges, as that is clearly a matter for the Lodge itself to address. But we can provide you with the tools to assist in growth and retention. The challenge has been, and always will be, to get Lodges to take ownership of their own destiny, and to address local issues that relate specifically to them. What has become very clear is that those Lodges that have engaged using the tools that are available have been proactive with their membership and have seen the fruits of that labour.

Those who have attended Divisional Conferences and taken part in workshops, as well as downloading material from the Grand Lodge Website Toolbox have all made significant progress.

“Effectiveness & Efficiency - Going Forward”

There are now over 150 individual tools within that toolbox that are available for a Lodge to use, all of which have been developed by the individual Pillar Committees.

I would like to report that our membership is now growing, but as the Grand Master has stated on many occasions, we will never return to the membership numbers of the past. I have always been of the view that our membership will eventually settle in the 7 to 8 thousand range, which would be consistent with several other membership based societies. This is compatible with world-wide trends. What we can see though, is a levelling of that decline, beginning with Initiation starting to improve against mortality. Retention and engagement is the key to our growth.

We have invested in our future leaders over the last year. Workshops were held for those seeking appointment as Divisional Grand Masters, and the subsequent selection of interviews proved how important that development has been. The same formula was used for Brethren who were seeking the role of District Grand Master, and whilst appointed by the Brethren, their advantage of preliminary training has proved its worth. We are keen to empower our people, so we are pleased that these key leaders have the tools and experience to work well for the Lodges that are under their direction.

FINANCE

Financially, the year has provided us with our share of challenges. We are very much aware that our source of income is quite narrow. In addition to that, we are now paying tax. We have strived to live within our means. We have made savings over our budgeted expenses, but with that came some big-ticket cost items that we had to address. Major changes had to be made to our National Office in Wellington to conform to new building code earthquake requirements and strengthening parts of the building in order to retain our tenants. This came at a cost of over \$300,000. Considerable work has been done over the past few years to contain expenditure to a reasonable level based on the services that we are required to provide. Should circumstances indicate a significant shortfall, or where a specific need arises, the Board will have to place a Remit before the Divisional Conferences to obtain approval to increase the Capitation Fee beyond the Consumer Price Index amount.

COMMUNICATION

We have launched a new Grand Lodge website, which is now our shop window for Freemasonry in New Zealand. All three Divisions now link to the main site, but our focus has been to ensure that only matters that are of a national interest are on the main website, and all local activities will be on the Divisional sites. Brethren will be able to access their Divisional website with specific information for Lodges and Brethren, including a blog from their District Grand Master. They are user-friendly and designed for use by Freemasons; quick, efficient and relevant. Once they are fully launched, you will be stunned by their simplicity and usefulness, and Communications within our Craft will be at an all-time high.

The Freemasons Magazine is a much-respected publication, and we have maintained four issues a year as requested by the Brethren. Articles are of a high standard, and we have been fortunate in securing some local advertising to defray costs. Despite substantially reducing the cost of printing, it remains a major expense within our Budget. In the future, greater use of electronic media is on the horizon as we balance the desire to communicate with the ever-rising cost of hard-copy publications. Our public profile is extremely important, and so these needs are at our constant attention. There is little to be gained from being the best organization in the world if we do not, or cannot, communicate that fact in a positive and constructive manner.

In summary, the Board is pleased with the progress that has been achieved. We strive for efficiencies, and I feel that as an organization, we are prepared for the challenges that lie ahead. We have overcome some of the financial issues we have faced, and we are on a springboard to where our communication is poised to rebound us into the future. And while our membership does not have a silver bullet solution, there are plans to also address this challenge. I commend to you the following Address on the subject given by the Grand Master, and urge each one of you to accept the membership challenge, as the future truly lies in our individual hands.

Condensed Address of newly Installed Grand Master, M.W. Bro. Mark R. Winger.

“Last year we celebrated our 125th Anniversary of the birth of our Constitution. I was asked if the principles of Freemasonry are as relevant today as they were 125 years ago. Is the music of Mozart still relevant after 225 years? Has Shakespeare lost relevance because his works are 425 years old? The answer to those two questions is no. Our principles are entrenched in the fabric of society and are as relevant now as at when this Grand Lodge was founded.

So, if Freemasonry is still so relevant, why do we face challenges in attracting men of calibre to join our organization? And how can we act to stop the long slow decline we have endured for many years? What do we have to change so we may thrive again? I am not prepared to wait and let time alone decide our future. Wishing and waiting for today’s society to recognise our noble and magnificent organization will not help us. We must catch up. I believe that I have a way to move forward.

So, let me talk about communication. We need to communicate with those who don’t know us, who may have heard of us, but know nothing of our ways, our convictions and principles. Not only that, we need to communicate face to face, man to man. We must communicate Freemasonry in open, easy, plain English – how we make good men better, what we are doing for our communities, the power of good we bring with us, the camaraderie and fellowship we build. We must communicate this. Currently the public, especially younger men, have little or no idea of these things.

We know that most of our Candidates are only drawn to take the first step through direct, one-on-one discussion with a Freemason. Only then can a convincing impression be made of our ancient and honourable institution. And that will invite further enquiry.

My goal in my term of office is to see the long slow decline in membership come to an end. We will do this by communicating; by speaking openly and plainly about Freemasonry. With your support, and with all of us working toward the same goal, I am confident the turn-around can be made. My starting point on this issue is for EVERY FREEMASON TO START TALKING. We have thousands of members across to country who must start communicating. This is a powerful weapon we are not using. My personal experience tells me it works. Many of you tell me it works. I am convinced it can reverse the problem of membership.

Too many of us will not talk about Freemasonry openly, in public, even to friends and colleagues. Why not? Do we believe we are not allowed? Is it all secret? Can’t we talk about the good we do? Are we embarrassed or uncomfortable? Is it a lack of knowledge? Yes, some discretion is required. But a beautiful picture of the Craft CAN be drawn, what it is and what it stands for. The question that then remains is – how many of us can do that – draw the picture?

To make our communication work we must be able to answer the fundamental questions every man in the street is likely to ask:

- What is Freemasonry?
- What do Freemasons do?
- Why should I join the Freemasons?
- What's in it for me?

I want every Freemason to be armed with the answers – clear, plain and simple. The kind of answers that will provoke the first step. It is time for all of us to SPEAK UP. From Monday on I will urge all of us to speak to lay people about Freemasonry – every week to speak to at least one lay person. Yes, to speak up at every opportunity.

And that is the name we are giving to a new campaign we are beginning today:

“SPEAK UP FOR FREEMASONRY.”

We don't need the Media. It is a mouth-to-mouth campaign, and what is more convincing than face-to-face enthusiasm. The task is to explain Freemasonry in simple direct language one-to-one. Talk to non-masons about our organization – raise the topic with them. Be ready to drop our name and what we do into your conversations. At home, at work, at the Club, the course, in the café or at the party. I have no doubt you will be delighted with the response you will receive. Experience says it always does.

I make the point that this is not recruitment advertising. We don't do that, and we are not starting now. I am asking you to create a positive image of the Craft, so the good men will HEAR about us, like what they hear and will want to join us. The District Grand Masters invested today are all aware of this project and are 100% behind it. They will be actively encouraging Brethren to SPEAK UP FOR FREEMASONRY, guiding their Lodges and creating opportunities. This project will continue during my tenure as Grand Master. I have confidence in its ability to achieve my membership objective. But King Solomon's Temple wasn't built in a day, and to build Freemasonry will take time, effort and industry.

Success is always related to effort. Every Lodge should bear that in mind. Success can only emerge from the effort and action of the Brethren in our Lodges. If ever we needed perseverance, this is the time. We must start telling our story to the world. We will gather momentum. We will raise our profile. The rewards will follow. I will play my part.

From today, you will see the words SPEAK UP FOR FREEMASONRY and the image we have designed to convey this message on all Grand Lodge correspondence and communications. Be positive and proud of Freemasonry and let us put our organization back on the pedestal where it belongs.”