



Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario

PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee

Issue No. 40 – March 2018

Greetings from Your P. & E. Committee

Welcome to the March 2018 issue of “**P&E Essentials**”. These informative and easy-to-read educational newsletters are typically published three or four times a year, normally between January and June. Our thanks are extended to those brethren who have let us know they found past Issues helpful and who have encouraged us to continue publishing them.

“*P&E Essentials*” is intended to be an interactive instrument, designed to help you make an advancement in Masonic knowledge. It will hopefully also assist you to achieve high quality in the delivery, comprehension and insight of the lessons communicated on the floor of the lodge. The Committee welcomes questions and/or suggestions for topics that could be addressed in future issues.

Committee Members

The current Protocol & Etiquette Committee members are:

Gordon Crutcher (*Committee Chair*); Saliem Khoury; Michael Litvak; George McCowan; Bryan Middleton; James Pearson; George Pohle; Kennard Pratt; David Purvis (*Secretary*); and David Stevens.

With appropriate advance notice – and subject to travel constraints – any member of the Committee would be happy to make a presentation about P&E in your Lodge, or at a District Meeting.

*The P&E Committee gratefully acknowledges the invaluable assistance and insights provided by our Custodian of the Work, **M.W. Bro. D. Garry Dowling**, with this Issue of “P&E Essentials”.*

PROTOCOL FOR INTRODUCING THE DISTRICT SECRETARY

AT THE DDGM's OFFICIAL VISIT

Brethren have asked **WHO** should introduce the District Secretary at a DDGM's Official Visit, as well as **WHEN** this should be done.

For the reasons outlined below, **it is recommended that the Lodge Director of Ceremonies NOT be the one to introduce the District Secretary at an Official Visit.** This should really be the responsibility of the DDGM, at an appropriate time in the evening.

UNDERLYING REASONS

There is no existing protocol in our Jurisdiction for the introduction of the District Secretary. While creating a specific protocol for this situation seems unnecessary, the following comments may be of assistance.

Please share this newsletter with other members of your Lodge – and your Masonic friends

While a skilled District Secretary is of immense assistance to any DDGM, we must always remember that he is really part of the District Team. And, as is the case with District Chairmen, even though the District Secretary is appointed by the DDGM, the District Secretary represents the Brethren of the District.

If it is the District's custom to do so, the District Secretary may be singled out by introducing him separately, in advance of the DDGM's entrance into the lodge. However, he is not entitled to a "**special**" introduction.

An example of a "special" introduction would be to introduce the District Secretary at the same time that the DDGM is being presented. **This most definitely should not be done.**

The DDGM comes in last and alone for a reason – i.e. to show the respect for his office and to give him the honours he deserves.

When the DDGM is "presented", no one else should be "introduced" at the same time.

When the DDGM accepts the gavel from the Worshipful Master after being escorted to the East, he is to bring greetings from the Grand Master, make a couple of welcoming remarks and then return the gavel to the Worshipful Master. That is not the time for any further introductions. The DDGM will be given the opportunity to address the Lodge later in the evening.

When that opportunity arises, it would be appropriate for the DDGM to then recognize any special guests (e.g. WMW medal recipients, Grand Master's Meritorious Award Recipients, etc.) as well as the District Team and the District Secretary.

If the DDGM wished, he could also call on the District Secretary for a report or announcements, just as he typically calls for a report from the other District Chairmen.

This emphasizes that the District Secretary is a member of the District Team.

Please note that the above suggestions are not as much about **if**, or **when**, the District Secretary could be introduced, but – more importantly – when he should **not** be introduced.

ALTERNATIVE VOLUMES OF THE SACRED LAW

As one of the fundamental principles of Freemasonry is universal religious tolerance and the showing of respect for another's faith, our Grand Lodge strongly encourages our Craft Lodges to extend to their candidates the courtesy of taking their obligations on the Holy Book of their personal faith.

What are the "mechanics" involved with this protocol, and specifically with the Koran?

The use of an alternative Volume of the Sacred Law in our Lodges has been addressed many times over the past few years. Our Grand Lodge policy on the matter is well-established and clear. In fact, it is communicated to each and every DDGM at their Regional Meetings every August.

Our policy is that an alternative VOSL, (other than the King James Version), may be used **ONLY** during an obligation and may rest upon the altar **ONLY** for the remainder of that evening, (after having been removed from atop the King James Version once the obligation is complete). No other VOSLs are to be used on the altar at any other times.

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Alternative VOSLs are not to be displayed on the altar, or in any other locations in the Lodge room, when not in use during an obligation.

Our obligation is to our Craft. It is not an obligation to a Brother's Supreme Being. All Masons, regardless of their faith, are to be obligated on the Square and Compasses. Our Grand Lodge has attempted to be very accommodating to Brethren of other faiths in the policy we have adopted.

Prior to being initiated, applicants to our fraternity should be made aware, that in this Jurisdiction, all our meetings are conducted with the open King James Version of the Bible on the altar. Applicants can also be made aware of the fact that we do accommodate other faiths by allowing the obligation to the fraternity to be taken on an alternative book of faith, but that book of faith will be used for his obligation only. Therefore, after the fact, no objection should be made and no local traditions should be implemented.

NO OTHER CHANGES to the work, as stated in the Book of the Work, are permitted. That is, the candidate places his hands on the VOSL (alternative or not), the candidate kisses the VOSL (alternative or not), no gloves are used, etc. In particular, the Koran does NOT replace the King James Version of the VOSL during the initiation. Rather it supplements it in recognition of the faith of the candidate.

There have not been any conclusions by our Ritual Committee about where to open the Koran, if it is opened at all.

Some have indicated that we should ask the candidate if he has a special passage in the Koran that is meaningful to him. However, when asked, many Brethren of the Muslim faith have responded that they would not know themselves where to open the Koran. Others favour not opening it at all.

It is the opinion of our Custodian of the Work, as well as the members of the P&E Committee, and many others, that it should remain closed.

We are reluctant to say ask the candidate where to open the Koran – because prior to being obligated, the candidate really has no idea what our obligation is about and we don't want to send any false messages.

Perhaps the following comment is an appropriate insight with which to conclude this topic:

“Many Brethren fail to realize that the Bible is not on the altar as the Holy Book of any specific religion. A Lodge is not a church, not a synagogue, not a temple, or not a mosque. The Bible is there as a moral guide, one which has helped shape Western Civilization and also as the source of most of the legends and specific terminology of Freemasonry.

It also serves to constantly remind us that we work to the glory and under the invocation of the Great Architect of the Universe, who is one and the same for all monotheistic faiths.

Its presence should not offend anyone who understands what Masonry is all about.”

- Brother Michael Segall, (a Freemason in Paris, France)

Excerpt from the “**Questions and Answers**” Booklet (2013), page 8, Q. 9.

Q. If a (?) has another book of faith, how is it placed?

A. It is permissible to interpose the Holy Book of Faith of the (?) between the V.O.T.S.L. and under the S & Cs.

(See *Guidelines for Officers*, p. 6, No. 2.)
