



Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario

## *PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS*

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee

**Issue No. 31 – May 2014**

### **Greetings from Your P. & E. Committee**

Welcome to the May issue of “*P&E Essentials*”. It is anticipated that these informative and easy-to-read newsletters will be published six times a year, normally between January and June.

“*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. Questions or suggestions not related to Protocol and Etiquette will be forwarded to the appropriate Grand Lodge Committee for response.

### **Committee Members**

The current Protocol & Etiquette Committee members are:

Gordon Crutcher (*Chairman*); Steven Armstrong; Art DiCecco; David Fernandes; Dennis Hawman; Saliem Khoury; Michael Litvak; George McCowan; Bryan Middleton; James Pearson; George Pohle; David Purvis (*Secretary*); David Stevens; and Refik Yoney.

**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 MASONIC MEMORIAL SERVICES

### **SIGNIFICANCE**

1. The importance of the Memorial Service to the Craft cannot be over-emphasised. It is the only time that Masons appear clothed in regalia to perform Masonic Ritual in public. For many people, it is the first and only time they will see a Masonic Lodge in action and experience Masonic principles in practice. The image of Masonry in the community will be well served when the Memorial Service is conducted with sincerity, competence and dignity.

2. Many sons and grandsons have joined the Craft as a result of the impression made upon them by a well-

conducted Memorial Service, when their father or grandfather died.

3. While the Service is conducted primarily for the benefit of the family and friends of the departed brother, it is also an opportunity for us to say goodbye to him and to acknowledge his contributions to our Lodge.

4. Every effort should be made to make the family feel a part of the Service. Under no circumstances should their view of the Service be impeded.

5. Take your responsibilities seriously. Do the best you can to leave a lasting impression upon the family, and to honour the memory and accomplishments of our departed brother.

6. The family’s (and the public’s) perception of the Service will depend upon how well you conduct it. Remember – it doesn’t matter what you INTENDED to do, but how well you actually did it.

7. Also bear in mind that when you appear in public in your regalia, every pair of eyes in the room will be watching you. Anything you do, (good or bad), will be noticed and remembered. (Such as your cell phone ringing during the Service.) Every cough, every scratch, every inappropriate remark, every laugh; and whether you conducted the service in a confident, or a confused, manner.

### **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

8. Masons in other Jurisdictions have been conducting Memorial Services for departed brethren since at least from 1632. Our Grand Lodge first prescribed such a Service in 1856. It has been revised and shortened over the years, with the basic Service as we know it today being approved in 1938.

9. A Graveside Service was discontinued by our Grand Lodge in 1972.

10. For further background information, please refer to *Whence Come We?*, pages 203-204, 1980.

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

## REVIEW

11. There are three Services outlined in the latest edition of our Grand Lodge booklet entitled "*The Memorial Services*":

- One is the Service which is normally performed in a funeral home.
- The second is the same Service, which can be held in a Lodge Room instead of a funeral home. It is identical to the first, except for the omission of four words – "*the mortal remains of*". Family and friends may be invited. The Lodge is either not opened, or it is called from labour to refreshment.
- The third is a special Service to be held in a tyled and opened Lodge Room, at which **only** Masons can be present. This non-public Service is usually performed once a year in remembrance of all the brethren of the Lodge who have passed to the G.L.A. during the preceding twelve months.

12. A Masonic Memorial Service is normally conducted in a funeral home but it could be held in another suitable place, such as a church or chapel, a community hall, or even in a private home. For the purpose of this guide, let's assume the Service is being conducted in a funeral home.

13. A Memorial Service may be held without a casket being present. In these circumstances, a small table at the front of the room may be draped appropriately. The deceased brother's regalia, a photograph of him, a basket for the acacia, and possibly a plant or flowers – even an urn from a cremation – can be placed on the table.

14. A Masonic Memorial Service may be held on a Sunday, (Section 273, *Book of Constitution*). Dispensation is not required.

15. The latest version of our Masonic Memorial Services booklet is still the 1999 edition. It can be obtained from our Grand Lodge Office and costs only \$1. All Masons should obtain a copy and keep it with their regalia. You never know when you are going to need it.

16. The various parts of the Service MAY be read responsively, or one brother could read them all. (Sometimes there could be a greater impact on the family if a brother who is exceptionally good with ritual conducts the entire Service.)

17. Incidentally, there are two pages of guidelines, procedures and explanations in the 1999 edition, (see pages 11 and 12 of that booklet), which will be a big help to brethren who have not participated in many Memorial Services.

18. Whenever you are involved with a Masonic Memorial Service, the first question you should ask yourself is: "**Why are we conducting this Service?**"

19. It's not just to pay our respects and to say goodbye to a departed brother.

20. We are doing it **FOR HIS FAMILY** and his friends. So don't exclude them from the Service.

- Face them.
- Don't turn your back to them.
- Don't block their view.
- Speak up so they can hear you.
- Deliver the Service in such a manner that the family will remember it always.

21. The family could be given a COPY of the public Memorial Service, so they may follow along. (Note: Do NOT give the family the actual Grand Lodge booklet containing all three Services, as one of the Services is RITUAL.)

22. It would be quite in order to prepare an extra copy of the Sacred Roll, which could be given to the family to keep.

23. A Masonic Memorial Service is not done automatically. It is **ONLY** carried out if the family requests one.

24. The family may not be aware that **they** have to request the Lodge to conduct a Memorial Service. A close family friend, (or the Worshipful Master, or the Lodge Secretary), could discretely inform them of this necessity – either directly, or through the Funeral Director.

25. We can only enquire, or possibly suggest. We never impose.

26. It is solely the family's decision whether they would like to have a Masonic Memorial Service. Therefore, if it is **your** personal wish to have such a Service – when YOU ascend to the G.L.A. – make sure your family and/or executor are aware of this, and that they know who they have to call in your Lodge, to request a Service.

27. Unlike some Jurisdictions, all Masons belonging to the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario, regardless of their rank – whether an E.A. or a Grand Master – are entitled to a Masonic Memorial Service.

28. The status of the deceased brother is usually not relevant. Prior to his death, he could have been suspended for non-payment of dues – but the family may not know that.

29. If there is any question as to whether it would be appropriate to conduct a Masonic Service, contact your D.D.G.M. (e.g. the brother may have been expelled for a heinous crime). Under such circumstances, let your D.D.G.M and the Grand Master make the decision.

30. A Lodge never involves any other organization or body in conducting a Memorial Service, (except another Lodge). If both a Memorial Service and a formal church service are to take place consecutively, the Masonic Service always precedes the church service.

31. It is normally the **responsibility of the deceased brother's "mother" Lodge to conduct the Memorial Service** – it is not the District's, nor Grand Lodge's responsibility. However, the brother may have moved and now resides in another area, in which case you may have to ask a local Lodge to conduct the Service there. (Should the circumstances be reversed, it is also possible that YOUR Lodge may be requested to conduct a Service for a brother from another area who was not a member of, and perhaps was not even known by, your Lodge.)

32. The D.D.G.M. should be informed immediately about the death of any brother in his District. The D.D.G.M. should also be invited to participate in the Service.

33. If the deceased brother is a Past or Present Grand Lodge Officer, (or a William Mercer Wilson Medal recipient), also report his passing to the Grand Secretary.

34. When participating in the Service, familiarize yourself beforehand with your assigned part. Be very precise with your terminology, e.g.:

- It is a "Masonic **Memorial** Service", not a "Masonic Funeral Service".
- It is called a "Sacred **Roll**", not a "Scroll";
- The words "**immortal**" and "**immortality**" are used six times in the Service. Do not pronounce them as "immoral", or "immorality"!

## PLANNING – LONG RANGE

35. A Memorial Service is the only occasion when Masons typically don't get any lengthy prior notice of the parts assigned to them.

36. One of the first duties of a Lodge's new Officers could be to conduct a Masonic Service. They need to plan for this. Encourage your Officers to prepare for this eventuality.

37. There are many Wardens who have never even attended a Memorial Service, yet they will soon become the Worshipful Master and will then be expected to conduct one.

38. There won't be a lot of time to prepare for a Service, once one is requested by the family. At best, you will only have a couple of days to get all the arrangements ready.

39. Prior preparation and rehearsal is therefore very important. A Worshipful Master and a Senior Warden should be prepared to conduct a Memorial Service at any time, even if they have just assumed those Officer positions.

40. A rehearsal can be structured very formally and replicate an actual Service. It could also be informal in nature, with each Lodge Officer taking turns reading a part from the Services booklet.

41. Consider having some brethren conduct an exemplification of a Masonic Memorial Service at a Lodge meeting one evening, as Masonic Education.

42. It is important to practice reading the Service aloud, speaking slowly and clearly. Place emphasis on certain words to add meaning. Check any pronunciations of which you are unsure.

43. A Worshipful Master will need to establish a system to quickly communicate with all Lodge members and to encourage their attendance at the Service.

44. **Think of a Masonic Memorial Service as an unscheduled Lodge Meeting**, held outside of the Lodge Room. Every Officer has a role to play and they should wear their collars – especially when participating in the Service. Members need to attend and support their Officers.

## OFFICERS' DUTIES

45. Here is a brief outline of the suggested duties for each Officer:

- W.M.: Contact the funeral home as early as possible and review your requirements. Arrange for them to provide a lectern, the acacia, a basket for the acacia, a small table or stand in front of the coffin on which to place the basket, and an assembly-room for the Masons. Liaise with the family. Assign parts to those participating in the service. Arrive early before the Service, greet the family, and handle last-minute preparations.
- Secretary: Prepare the Sacred Roll (with perhaps an extra copy for the family), bring some plain sheets of paper to serve as an attendance register for the Masonic brethren (these sheets can subsequently be attached to the official Lodge Register with a notation that a Service was held at a certain date, place, etc.), the large print Memorial Service book for the lectern, some small

Memorial Service booklets for the brethren, copies of the Service for the family, an E.A. apron, and the Officers' collars.

The Secretary should also ensure that all Lodge property, (the apron, collars, Service books, and the attendance sheets), are returned to the Lodge after the Service.

- D of C: Attend to all brethren. Direct them where to assemble, hang their coats, and leave their regalia bags. Distribute the acacia and copies of the Service (or the Service booklets), and help maintain dignity and decorum. Before the ceremony, he should demonstrate the Funeral Honours and how to deposit the acacia, line up the brethren who are participating in the service, direct the remaining brethren where to stand/sit, and ensure the family is not excluded from the ceremony. After the ceremony, collect the Service booklets and make sure the brethren maintain quiet dignity as they leave the building.
- S.W.: Assist the Worshipful Master. Be prepared to replace him.
- J.W.: Assist the Senior Warden.
- Deacons: Assist the Director of Ceremonies, direct the brethren, help keep noise levels down, and act as ushers when there is a large attendance.
- Senior Deacon: Delivers a lambskin apron to the Worshipful Master at the appropriate moment in the Service.
- Stewards: Assist the Deacons.

## DRESS CODE

46. The appropriate dress code for every Mason who attends a Masonic Memorial Service in a funeral home is a **dark business suit**. (Not a tuxedo, nor a sports jacket and slacks.) Regalia is worn. As mentioned above, the Officers of the deceased member's Lodge should wear their collars. Past and present Grand Lodge Officers wear their dress regalia. The wearing of those jewels specified in Section 384 of the Book of Constitution is normal – but optional.

## PLANNING – THE DAY OF THE SERVICE

47. The Secretary should ensure the attendance sheets (and the acacia) are accessible to the brethren at least 30 minutes prior to the Service.

48. **VERY IMPORTANT.** Much activity takes place prior to the start of the Service, (e.g. the Service is being organized, brethren are arriving and welcoming each other), but try to keep the noise level down.

49. **Be respectful of your surroundings.** As far as your demeanor is concerned, you should show respect from the moment you enter the funeral home, until you leave.

50. The facilities of each funeral home typically differ from one to the next. Their physical layouts can sometimes pose a challenge for us to conduct a Service in accordance with these guidelines. The Worshipful Master should arrive early to evaluate the room where the Service is to be held. If there are no chairs in the room for the family to sit upon, consider asking the Funeral Director to provide a few. Sometimes rearranging the seating already in the room may be necessary, (with the approval of the funeral home, of course).

51. We are accustomed to regularity in our meetings and to the physical layout of our Lodge meeting rooms. We know what to expect. They are predictable. In contrast, just as the layout of funeral homes differ, rarely are two Masonic Memorial Services the same. Circumstances change from one to the next. If you are the Worshipful Master, expect the unexpected. Be flexible – and above all – be calm.

52. While it can occasionally be a challenge to conduct the Service as described herein, do your best to adapt to the circumstances.

53. There is often confusion as to where the brethren should stand while the Service is being conducted. Basically, those brethren who are actually PARTICIPATING in the Service, (i.e. those who have been assigned a speaking part), should stand in the "S/E" corner of the room, (with the location of the coffin or urn being considered as the "East"). The REMAINDER of the brethren should stand at the back (i.e. in the "West") and/or sides of the room.

54. There should be a lectern, usually placed at the foot of the casket, for the use of the Worshipful Master and the other brethren participating in the service.

55. In the case of a large turnout, consider asking two (or more) brethren (e.g. the Lodge Deacons and/or Stewards), to act as ushers, to escort non-Masonic and Masonic guests to their places. (When space in a chapel permits some of the brethren to be seated, they should always sit in the back rows of the chapel, behind the family and friends.)

56. The mandatory introductory comments in the Memorial Services booklet are designed to make the family and friends feel welcome and part of the Service.

57. As part of these comments, the family is asked to remain throughout the Service. They are also given a brief explanation about the symbolism which the sprig of acacia has to us.

58. The Worshipful Master should assign parts of the Service as far in advance of the Service as possible, either to members of his Lodge who he knows will be present, or to brethren from other Lodges. Assigning parts at the funeral home is sometimes inevitable, though not ideal.

59. The Service could be divided into several parts, involving twelve or more brethren or, if need be, the Worshipful Master could do it all himself.

60. A large-print copy of the Service, in a 8.5" by 11" book format, spiral bound and paginated conveniently for use on a lectern, is available from Grand Lodge.

61. Ensure that a nice new, clean, attractive, white, leathern E.A. apron is put aside for use by the lodge in its Masonic Memorial Services. You do not want to display a yellow, frayed, tattered old cotton apron in public.

62. Note: The deceased brother's apron is not used during the Service. However, it may be on display in the room.

## THE SERVICE

63. The family and friends of the deceased brother are seated, or assembled, prior to the procession of Masons into the room where the Service is to be conducted.

64. All Masons should enter the room together. It makes for an impressive sight.

65. The brethren line up in two columns for the procession – the Worshipful Master leading the left, and the D.D.G.M., (or another past or present Grand Lodge Officer), leading the right.

66. Only the several brethren who will be reading parts of the Service need to be at the front of the room, (in the "S/E", to the right of the casket).

67. While those participating in the Service are walking to the front of the room, the remainder of the brethren can divert to stand at the back and the sides of the room, being very careful not to block the view of the family and non-Masonic friends. If there is ample seating at the back of the chapel, the brethren not participating in the Service could sit there.

68. The actual Service is usually completed within 15 minutes. When circumstances permit, the brethren should stand throughout – without blocking anyone's view. (Elderly, frail, or infirm brethren should certainly be seated.)

69. At the appropriate time, each brother will step to the lectern, read his part from the large-print book on the lectern, turn the page on completion, and return to the **BACK** of the line in which he was previously standing.

70. Every effort should be made to have the reading of the verses from the *Wisdom of Solomon* done responsively, with the brethren taking an enthusiastic part. All brethren who are seated should stand while participating in these readings.

71. The brother who is assigned the part which explains the significance of the lambskin apron should hold up the apron, so everyone can see it. Continue holding up the apron with **two** hands until you complete the explanation. (**Tip:** You can hold a small copy of the Ceremony booklet BEHIND the apron, out of view of those seated in front of you, and simply read the part while you are holding up the apron.)

72. At the conclusion of the part describing the lambskin apron, place it:

- For an open casket: On the closed portion of the lid of the coffin.
- For a closed casket: On the bottom segment of the lid, (i.e. where it would be placed if it was an open casket).
- Note: If there is no space available on the casket lid for the apron, (e.g. because of several floral arrangements), then it could be placed on the small table in front of the casket, under the basket used to collect the acacia.

73. Important:

- If it is an open casket, do **NOT** place the apron on the body. Nor should any acacia be dropped into the casket.
- For a closed casket, be careful to place everything to the right of the line where the two portions of the lid touch. (The head of the body is on your left; the feet on your right.) You do not want anyone to take exception to having anything placed on the lid over the head of the deceased.

74. A wicker basket should be used in which to collect the acacia/evergreen. The basket could be placed on the casket, adjacent to (or even on) the lambskin apron. However, as the basket could be accidentally knocked off the curved lid of the casket, it is recommended that the basket instead be placed on a small table situated in front of the casket.

75. There are two prayers in the Service. (Both are on page 3 of the 1999 edition of the booklet.) The first prayer starts with the words, "Let us pray". The second prayer immediately follows the first. If you are seated, please note:

- Masons should **always stand** for a prayer (and when giving the Funeral Honours); and
- As you are wearing regalia, assume the **Sign of Fidelity** during each of these prayers;

- You should stand for the responsive reading of the *Wisdom of Solomon*;
- You should stand for the Closing Benediction.

76. As Masons are required to stand for these parts of the Service anyway, this is a good reason for standing throughout the entire Service, at the back or sides of the room.

77. When it is time to give the Funeral Honours, the brother who is leading everyone should **NOT** do so behind the lectern. Instead, move out in front of the casket, where you can be seen.

78. As is the case with the Grand Honours, all brethren, (including the brother who is leading everyone), would face the recipient, (i.e. the casket, or the urn) while giving the Funeral Honours.

79. Much of the impact of the Funeral Honours is lost if the brother leading everyone is trying to read from the booklet at the same time he is demonstrating the movements. To be effective, he must do the Funeral Honours from memory.

80. The Ritual Committee has authorized a change in the printed ritual, on page 4. The Worshipful Master will now say: "The brethren will copy my example and say **AFTER** me".

81. Another reason why we should all be using the 1999 edition of the Service is that the first four words of the Funeral Honours were changed when that edition was released.

82. We now say: "**We celebrate his life**", (instead of "We commit his body to the earth").

(Move out from behind the Lectern in full view when leading the brethren in the Funeral Honours – and face the casket.)

**W.M. says: "The brethren will copy my example and say after me:**

(Hands extended, palms downward)

**"WE CELEBRATE HIS LIFE."** (. . . pause)

(Hands crossed over breast)

**"We cherish his memory in our hearts."** (. . . pause)

(Hands raised over the head, as if in supplication)

**"We commend his spirit to God, who gave it."**

83. The brother leading the Funeral Honours should not rush through them. They should be carried out in a dignified

manner. Be clear and distinct in each of the movements. Pause momentarily between each, to add to their impact.

84. At the close of the service, the brethren file past the casket, (*in two lines, if there is a large turnout*), **moving counter-clockwise**, to deposit their acacia as they retire.

(*Moving counter-clockwise recalls the symbolic direction followed by the Fellowcraft when he ascended the Winding Stair leading to the Middle Chamber of the Temple.*)

85. It is recommended that the D.D.G.M. be the last to deposit the acacia, and the last to leave the room.

86. A wicker basket should have initially been placed on the casket, (or preferably on a small table in front of the casket), to receive the sprigs of acacia.

87. *The Memorial Services booklet uses the more encompassing term "evergreen" instead of "acacia". An evergreen is a plant with foliage that persists and remains green throughout the year. Acacia is an evergreen tree commonly found in the Middle East. We normally use cedar sprigs as a substitute for acacia.*

88. *In the Bible, acacia is known as shittah (singular), or shittim (plural). The wood was used extensively to construct the Tabernacle of Moses. In Canada, the acacia is known as the Honey-Locust, the Three-Thorned Acacia, or the Sweet Locust. Although not native to Canada, it is now fairly common in Southern Ontario. For Freemasons, following ancient tradition, acacia is a symbol of immortality.*

89. The proper form for depositing the sprig of acacia, is:

- With the acacia in your right hand, (or jammed into the top of your breast pocket, so it can be easily removed), assume the Sign of Fidelity.
- Grasping the acacia with the fingers of your right hand, now extend your right arm parallel to the floor, palm downward, so that your hand is over the receptacle.
- Lower your arm/hand and deposit the sprig into the basket. (Don't just drop the acacia.)
- Give the sign, by raising your right arm over your head and pointing up, with your right index finger extended.

(*This gesture signifies our belief in One Supreme Being.*)



90. The D.D.G.M. and the Worshipful Master, (with perhaps any senior G.L. Officer present, i.e. the G.M., a P.G.M., or the D.G.M.), should stand off to the side, beside the head of the casket, remaining there until all the brethren have deposited their acacia. They could then be the last to

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deposit their acacia (the W.M. first, then the D.D.G.M.)

*(This assumes neither previously deposited their acacia DURING the Service, i.e. following Part #7, which explains the significance of the evergreen.)*

91. As they leave the room, the W.M. and the D.D.G.M. should offer condolences to the family on behalf of all the brethren.

92. After depositing their sprigs, the brethren should proceed counter-clockwise, directly out of the room.

93. Do not overwhelm the widow and family by everyone offering their condolences. A long line of unfamiliar greeters, however well-intentioned, can prove an unnecessary ordeal. Let the Worshipful Master and the D.D.G.M. offer condolences on behalf of all Masons. The rest of the brethren need not do more than nod courteously when passing the family.

94. If a church service is to follow the Masonic Memorial Service, or if you are a close personal friend of the family and wish to speak privately with them, you can re-enter the room after taking off your regalia.

95. As you retire out of the service room, down the hall, and back to the assembly room to reclaim your regalia bag, please continue to observe the same solemnity as you exhibited during the Service itself. Brethren have been known to break out with cheerful chatter and loud laughter once out of the service room, shattering the benefit intended for the bereaved.

96. Continue to maintain quiet dignity as you leave the building. Again, be respectful of your surroundings. Save any discussions for the parking lot.

### ONE FINAL THOUGHT TO PONDER

97. Have you ever met a brother who said he didn't want a Masonic Memorial Service when he passed to the G.L.A., because he was tired of seeing so many Services conducted so poorly? I have.

A Memorial Service should be an inspiration, not something to be avoided. Conducted properly, it can be the most meaningful indication the grieving family has ever had of our Order's caring purpose.

The impact of the Service on the family and friends – and on the other brethren – will be directly proportional to the effort you expend on practicing and preparing for it.

98. The following items are typically required to conduct a Masonic Memorial Service. Whatever the Funeral Home cannot provide, the Lodge should.

### CHECK LIST

#### Items Needed For A Masonic Memorial Service

- Attendance Register for Masons to sign
- Baskets (2) for acacia (to distribute and to collect)
- E.A. Apron (immaculately white, leathern)
- Lectern beside the coffin
- Lectern in Regalia/Assembly room
- Memorial Service booklets (25, 50, 100 ??)
- COPY** of the Service for family
- Large print Memorial Service booklet for the lectern
- Officers' Collars
- Sacred Roll (2 – if giving a copy to family)
- Small table in front of coffin to collect the acacia
- Sprigs of acacia (cedar)

*Note: All of the above comments were extracted from the educational handout developed by the P&E Committee and entitled a "Guide to the Masonic Memorial Services". A copy of the complete guide can be downloaded from the Grand Lodge web site, as well as from several District web sites, including the Algoma District web site at:*

[http://www.algomadistrict.ca/Protocol%20&%20Etiquette/Protocol Etiquette.htm](http://www.algomadistrict.ca/Protocol%20&%20Etiquette/Protocol%20Etiquette.htm)



*This photograph shows a small table placed in front of the coffin, on which is positioned a wicker basket for the brethren to deposit their acacia. Note the placement of the lectern on the right, at the foot of the coffin.*

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