



## Friend To Friend – attracting new quality prospects to Masonry

Address to the Brethren and Visitors of The Meridian Lodge No. 687 on April 10th, 2019 by R.W. Bro. Robin J. Colville – DDGM Hamilton District “C” on his Official Visit.

Good evening Brethren:

I believe all of us here recognize that declining membership in Masonry is one of the key issues facing the success and longevity of the Craft. So what can we do about it?

The Grand Lodge recognized this problem many years ago, and one of the tools created to assist deal with this issue is the Friend to Friend programme. Most, if not all of us are aware of this programme, but may not be utilizing it to our mutual benefit.

In recent years as a Mason I have been aware of the Friend to Friend programme and been to open houses and BBQs organized with the intent of being Friend to Friend events .... but these were not the formal events intended by the Grand Lodge to impress potential applicants. If you wish to seek the success the programme has intended to provide, then it should be run as designed, and tonight I am going to go over that design in some detail.

I believe we are all aware of the trend of many new members to join and then soon after receiving their Master Mason certificate they disappear, in the front door and out the back door ... often to get suspended for lack of payment of dues ... or should I say lack of interest in general. I have seen it happen way too often, which is a sign that what that member signed up for has not met his expectations, ..... something we all want to prevent in the first place.

Giving the applicant a chance to learn more about Masonry and what he is getting into **BEFORE** joining is a key step to ensuring his expectations are in line with what we as Craft Lodges can deliver, and help avoid the trend of new Masons dropping out before their Masonic careers even get started.

Quality vs. quantity .... Less is **more** !

So what is the Friend To Friend programme? It is a programme designed to assist lodges to enlighten friends of Masons in getting to know us better and to increase



membership. It has been developed to exhibit Masonry and its philosophy to the non-Masonic public, especially those men considered to be potential quality candidates. It supplements and forms an integral part of other initiatives that bring Masonry to the forefront of public exposure through the use of display booths at County Fairs, public Open Houses in our lodge rooms and Information Booths in other public places.

It is important to understand that a Friend to Friend event is **NOT** an open house or running an information booth. Rather, Friend to Friend **is an event** to be **held at the Lodge** where members bring a non-Masonic friend/guest (a potential quality candidate) for the purpose of learning more about Freemasonry

The event is the catalyst of the Programme; it brings together Masons and those who have expressed an interest in learning more about the Craft at a social evening. Its goal is to contribute to the revitalization of Masonry by retaining interest, rejuvenating lost interest and attracting quality candidates. In achieving this latter goal, the Programme complements the Mentor Program, by generating new members.

The Benefits are many as it;

- Motivates the interest of all current active members
- It rejuvenates the interest of our members who are not attending Lodge
- It attracts the interest and provides information to potential quality candidates
- It increases the level of pride among brethren
- And It Creates intensity among brethren
- In short .... It is a win/win for the Lodge

There are various formats for a Friend to Friend event, but the 4 recommended ones are

- Friend to Friend Night – a “ formal banquet” followed by the Lodge Component of the Friend to Friend Program
- Friend to Friend Breakfast – “a morning breakfast” either at the Lodge or at a local breakfast establishment followed by the Lodge Component of the Friend to Friend Program
- Friend to Friend Luncheon – “ a noon luncheon” either preceded by, or followed by, the Lodge Component of the Friend to Friend Program
- Friend to Friend Evening -- Beginning with the Lodge Component of the Program followed by a social time with refreshments similar to a regular Lodge Night



The first thing on the Worshipful Master's Friend to Friend Agenda should be to appoint a Friend to Friend Chairman with four to five of the Lodge members who are interested in participating in the organization and execution of a Friend to Friend Event. Also select a knowledgeable Past Master to act as Director of Ceremonies. Proper planning takes several months, so start planning asap, four to five months in advance. Begin by selecting a date for the Friend to Friend Night.

Recognize that the Lodge Officers and new members are likely the best source of potential candidates. They are the younger members usually, and are the future of the Lodge. However the senior members of the Lodge should also be encouraged as they may have relatives, or associates which they feel would make a valuable addition to the rolls of the Lodge. Business associates, other club or society friends are primary sources of guests for the Friend to Friend Event. Young men's organizations such as the Scouts, Cadet Corps and 4-H Clubs should also be considered; perhaps even invited as a group to an Open House at Lodge. They have a great kinship to an association such as Masonry.

All Lodge Members must be keen to support a Friend to Friend Event to ensure the success of this Program.

Remember to secure dispensation from Grand Lodge well in advance of the Friend to Friend Event. Once obtained, promote the Event in the Summons and at every opportunity, reinforcing the benefits to the Lodge with the participation of all Lodge Members.

Formal written invitations should be mailed to all guests who will be invited, on Lodge letterhead and indicating the friend who has recommended the invitation.

On the day of the event, present a clean and tidy Banquet facility, washrooms and Lodge grounds. Make an Agenda of the event Program and have copies for all. Have the Guests sit amongst the members, then present the Program in a timely manner and stick to the Agenda

Element presenters should be selected with care and given several months in advance to prepare for their portion of the presentation. Each Element presented should be short and concise, 5-10 minutes each and the programme provides the suggested material to be presented. An agenda for a typical event would go something as follows:



- A SOCIAL TIME UPON ARRIVAL FOLLOWED BY A MEAL (Breakfast, Lunch or Dinner)
- MOVE INTO THE LODGE ROOM FOR WORSHIPFUL MASTER'S OPENING REMARKS FOLLOWED BY 6 SHORT PRESENTATIONS
  - A BRIEF HISTORY OF MASONRY
  - AN EXPLANATION OF THE LODGE ROOM
  - AN EXPLANATION OF THE TERM: THE VOLUME OF THE SACRED LAW
  - AN EXPLANATION OF THE TITLES AND DUTIES OF THE LODGE OFFICERS
  - AN EXPLANATION OF THE APRONS
  - SUMMATION
- OPEN UP THE FLOOR FOR QUESTION AND ANSWERS
- LASTLY THE WORSHIPFUL MASTERS CLOSING REMARKS
- FOLLOWED BY REFRESHMENTS IN THE SOCIAL ROOM

The entire time in the Lodge Room should be no more than 90 minutes. When the event is over, arrange for the Lodge Secretary to send thank you letters out to the Attendees.

Which Friend to invite? I am sure everyone in this room knows someone who they believe would be an asset to our Craft. If no person immediately comes to mind, then just run through this list of possible sources until the name or names of prospective candidates come to mind for invitation to a Friend to Friend event.

**Sons, fathers, father-in-laws, son-in-laws, brothers, brother-in-laws, cousins, uncles, nephews, co-workers, neighbours, church friends, friends from sport teams, school friends, friends from other clubs or organizations**

The Friend to Friend programme manual is available from the Grand Lodge web site, or from our District Chairman of Lodge Resources, and I recommend to the Masters and Wardens of our Lodges to familiarize yourselves with this program and plan to use it to your benefit. Attracting good quality potential members is critical to ensuring the vitality of Masonry for the future. The Grand Lodge has gone to great lengths to put this proven plan and program in place, but it is all for nought if you do not use it. Only you can make it work by bringing a Non-Masonic Friend to Lodge .... The results can be truly amazing !

Quality vs. quantity .... Less is **more** ! Let us use all the tools at our disposal to ensure the longevity and success of the Craft !

Thank you for your kind attention.

Acknowledgements: Friend to Friend Programme Manual