

Kicking the Door

October 26, 2015

Wardrope Lodge

Brethren, in recent weeks I have visited many of the Lodges in our District and I have spoken with many of the WMs about the strengths and weaknesses of their respective Lodges. The primary focus for all WMs always seems to be the quality of their ritual work.

Our Grand Lodge provides one very important resource in this regard by way of the individual serving the office of Custodian of the Work. The Custodian of the Work is a Past Grand Master whose position is entirely focused upon safeguarding the accuracy in the delivery of our Ritual by our Lodges. This effort is achieved through Lodges of Instruction held in several locations each year across our Grand Jurisdiction, as well as through responses to questions posed to that office.

Indeed, our WMs are obligated in this area during Installation each year as well as our Constitution clearly dictates in Section 7, "No addition or alteration of the Ritual shall be made except that authorized by the Ritual Committee". So much attention and focus is placed on this critical component of our Craft, brethren, because it is so very easy for local custom to creep into our Work and quickly take root as innovation.

Brethren, I think that the topic of why this accuracy is important has already been covered extensively so I won't beleaguer the point. This topic however gives rise to the question, "Should this attention to accuracy not also naturally extend beyond the Ritual and permeate throughout the rest of the Lodge?"

Let's consider for a moment the Organist. Masonic musical accompaniment specific to our Craft is meant to be a critical component of our Lodge nights, yet many Lodges no longer have an organist or have replaced their Organist with a pre-recording. Indeed many Lodges in our District have done away with the Organist position altogether. Likewise, many Lodges do not have men appointed and attending Lodge in the Steward chairs. More recently, we are now also seeing Lodges in our District slowly dispensing with the Outer Guard position in favour of Kicking the Door.

We are also seeing concessions being made in other areas of the Lodge such as visitation to Widows, and our sick and shut in members, phone calls to absent brethren, and even attendance at Lodge practices.

When we talk about each of these things brethren, the immediate thought that comes to mind is the lack of active members, time, and manpower to support these efforts. Time is at a premium these days in everyone's lives. The question is, how do we work smarter? And the Answer is quite simple. We work together.

Organists by their very nature have been doing this for years by attending and playing at more than just their Mother Lodge.

Consider for a moment the outer guard position. When able bodies within the Lodge room are at a premium a relationship with another Lodge could easily be established whereby the Outer Guard for each Lodge sits as Outer Guard for the other Lodge, thus freeing them up at their own Lodge to join those assembled within the Lodge room.

This sharing of resources can easily be applied further when Widows and the sick and shut-in are considered. Poinsettias and other flowers are much cheaper when bought in bulk. Delivery and visitation to those that are sick on a weekend becomes a great outing with a group.

Finally, brethren, we look at the topic of practices. Practice is essential to the wellbeing and health of a Lodge. There is no way around it. If you are a WM and not holding regular practices, you are doing a disservice to your members. But again, how do you hold a practice and get enough people out? Try holding a join practice with one or two other Lodges. Now you are guaranteed that you'll get a healthy number of people out, and the sharing of ideas and input will prove an excellent resource for your members. Consider going for coffee or a meal afterward as well to add to the camaraderie.

In closing brethren, when reflecting upon your Lodge, I encourage you to think beyond your Ritual and your slate of degrees coming up to the wider Lodge activities. Many hands make light work, and in Masonry we need only ask the question. Let's stop kicking the door.

Thank you,

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