

## **Fun in the Sun**

Presented April 26, 2016 at Westmount Lodge No. 671

Brethren, as your District Deputy Grand Master for Hamilton Masonic District C, it is my role to represent our Grand Master to the best of my ability within our District. In recent years I have had the privilege of working with several of our Grand Masters during their terms, and I can say that, similar to DDGMs, each man approaches their role from a different perspective, and with a unique set of skills and strengths.

Our Grand Master, M.W. Bro. John C. Green, in my estimation, is particularly strong in the area of membership engagement. As his representative in Hamilton District C this year, I have attempted to further his messages of visitation, pride, visibility, and activity among our membership wherever possible.

During one particular discussion earlier this year, that I have had with our Grand Master, he said something that was quite insightful and which has stayed with me. He said that in his estimation, young men of this generation are much more involved with family and child rearing, and that they seem to have a strong desire to involve their families with their activities.

Since having this conversation, I've often thought about what this means for our Craft and how our Lodges can improve in the way that they structure their events and engage their members. In many of my speeches, I have stressed the importance of building relationships with our new members, travelling among our membership, and sharing of ideas and resources between our Lodges. At the close of, and immediately following our Fall District Meeting, I invited all Worshipful Masters and Senior Wardens of our Lodges to attend a second meeting at a local pub. At the event, we shared contact details of all assembled, and ultimately began sharing in some great ideas and feedback surrounding challenges and opportunities that they saw. This was a great step toward sharing in ideas and strengthening our Lodges through working together in mutual support, and one initiative which I hope will continue in years to come.

Throughout this year, I have seen our membership visitation improve, and overall communications within our District increase. Travelling also seems to be increasing despite the challenges our younger members face with activities competing for their attention.

At our Mid-Term District Meeting, R.W. Bro. Richard Kaufman presented a great deal of insight to our members when he compared our performance on a vast number of criterion against that of our overall Ontario Grand Jurisdiction averages. These reports for the first time, showed us a quantifiable approach to benchmarking our performance as a District comprised of each of the Lodges within it. As a district we are generally operating with average or above average performance; though we also saw some areas where we can improve.

All of this data provided a great foundation for productive discussion, which rolled quickly into the Lodge Long Range Planning Workshop which was held in February of this year. That event saw members of every Lodge within our District in attendance. Virtually every attendee committed in writing at the end of that event to create or improve the Long Range Plan for their respective Lodge.

In tandem with that effort, an ad-hoc committee was struck which consisted of W. Bro. Craig Knapman, W. Bro. John Hlohnec, W. Bro. Robin Colville and myself, together with the oversight of our District Advisors. This committee was tasked with taking all of the key learnings to date, together with any historical information that we could find and produce a Long Range Plan for Hamilton District C. This committee has been diligently working on this task for quite some time now, and is nearing completion of a plan which will be presented at our Spring District Meeting.

Now don't get me wrong brethren, this year has not been all administrative meetings, data reviews, and document writing. Far from it in fact, as we have seen several of our Lodges conducting excellent events throughout this year. We began our year in September with a William Mercer Wilson medal presented here in Westmount Lodge to our worthy Bro. Jim Maxwell by our Grand Master. More recently, Westmount Lodge hosted a Traditional Table Lodge, which was a very unique Masonic experience for me. These events certainly set a high benchmark for the balance of the year.

This year, we were also very proud to host the Ontario Masonic Education Conference in our Scottish Rite Cathedral to a sold out crowd. And, most recently, Buchanan Lodge No. 550 hosted the first Divine Service that we have had in that same cathedral, complete with the Scottish rite singers, and roughly 220 people in attendance. These events seem to have set the stage for this Friday evening where we will host a sold out Grand Master's Reception for M.W. Bro. John C. Green in that same building with over 290 people confirmed for attendance.

I could go on and on about the many events that I have attended this year, though suffice it to say that these proceedings have been a whirlwind of fellowship, learning, insights, and growth for me, and I hope by extension, our District membership as a whole.

From the start of this year, I have repeatedly stated that we are very strong here in Hamilton District C. We should be proud of what we have achieved in the past to cement such a strong foundation, and I feel that we should also be proud of what we have achieved this year.

As we switch gears now, and move into a time within our Masonic year when the warm summer weather arrives, along with Installations and casual events, I invite you to reflect upon the subject of Friend to Friend, and fellowship among your brethren. I also invite you to reflect upon fellowship with not just your members but with their families as well.

In recent years, ladies nights appear to have waned with time, as well as events which include the families in addition to the Lodge members. With a busy year slowing beginning to draw to a close, I encourage our members and our Lodges to consider taking part in the festivities that lie ahead of us in the form of two events.

Our Spring District Meeting which is quickly approaching, will run until the noon hour, when it will be followed by the Masonic Heritage Tour at the Head of the Lake. At this event, we will travel by car and learn about our Masonic heritage in the region, before returning to Dufferin Lodge for fellowship afterward. A few weeks later, we will wind up our Masonic year on June 12 with the Annual District C Family Picnic at Christie Conservation area. This is a casual event where a team from our District will be cooking up meats on the BBQ, while families and friends enjoy the fellowship and the sunshine before we all take a break for the summer.

Brethren, I ask you for your support and your involvement in these District events; bring your families and friends, and join in the fellowship and shared experiences. Masonic fellowship and camaraderie cement the foundation of our gentle Craft. I have enjoyed travelling with all of you this year, and I look forward to the events to come.

Thank you,

R.W. Bro. Devin Tuinstra  
District Deputy Grand Master  
Hamilton District C