



## MODERNIZING THE FACE OF FREEMASONRY

Address to the Brethren and Visitors of Valley Lodge No. 100 on Feb 11, 2019 by R.W. Bro. Robin J. Colville – DDGM Hamilton District “C” on his Official Visit.

Good evening Brethren:

How many of you have visited our Grand Lodge website? What do you think of it? What do you think a prospective candidate sees when they visit this site and the first image they see is our Grand Master in full regalia? There is nothing wrong with a photo of our Grand Master and a message from him ... but should it be the first thing a non-mason sees when they access the Grand Lodge web site? What message does this convey that would encourage them to look further into our web site?

Our District web sites are not much different, and then there are Facebook pages and other social media that is not being governed by Grand Lodge but rather left up to the discretion of the media account owner to monitor the content.

Then there is the question regarding how current is the content? Hopefully not out of date ..... and if it is then what service is the web site providing to promote Masonry ?

Research has shown that short, engaging videos are the way of the future to speak to new prospects, and the Grand Lodge of Canada, the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, Kilwinning Lodge in Toronto, and the GLOE have all produced short promotional videos that attempt to inform a prospective candidate what Masonry is about and why they should consider joining the Craft. Some have catchy new slogans, like the new video from our own Grand Lodge ... “Not a Man ... a Mason”. And I am particularly impressed by the video from the GL of Massachusetts and their slogan ..... “ Reach Higher .... To Find More. “ I encourage you all to have a look at these videos on the internet to see examples of how we need to modernize our image.

In this fast-changing world, Freemasonry needs to attract and retain the best candidates, the future leaders who will assure the long-term success of the Craft. With attraction and retention identified as key development areas, it is important to ensure that a new applicant’s expectations match his actual experiences.



But the modernisation of Freemasonry is not just about what happens at a lodge meeting .... It is also about the image we project. We need a visual identity that is recognisable, that represents our values and heritage, and also reflects our relevance to society.

*“Change is the one constant .....and Freemasons have done little to keep pace with change.”*

Busy lifestyles complicate time commitments. No question about it. Where one spouse used to be the major source of the family’s income, now both spouses work. When they come home in the evening, they want time together rather than separate functions to attend, if indeed there is a desire to participate at all. This clearly means that any organization wishing to attract members must offer something of great interest to even be considered worthwhile.

Every fraternal organization, many religious denominations, service clubs, and community organizations have all suffered membership declines.

While these are valid reasons that contribute to a decline in our membership, we must also accept the fact that the world is a different place than it was 10-20 years ago. If you live in a metropolitan area, your 15-minute commute time to work is now 50 minutes— if you are lucky. We spend more time going to and from work than ever before. Current lifestyles often require two spouse incomes. Family time is squeezed into the evenings and very often the children have their own activities. The technology explosion has provided a source for entertainment/activity that competes with any organization requiring a time commitment. In short, change is the one constant. What have Freemasons done to keep pace with change? Very little!

Isn’t it about time to be realistic about our membership statistics? Population figures for the last 50 years have soared and continue to grow. At the same time membership figures for the Masonic population have dropped. This can only mean that Masons have simply not kept pace with our changing lifestyles. For example, communications technology has exploded—cell phone vs. landline; PC vs. typewriter; e-mail vs. regular mail. While these kinds of changes surround everyone living in a modern world,



Freemasons still resist any increase in dues or per capita. It is time to readjust our thinking and come to realize that both time and money are necessary factors in creating a quality organization.

*Masons must first take ownership of an identity that distinguishes Masonry from other men's organizations.* That is a complex but exciting challenge. It is time to face it; Freemasonry is not an off-the-shelf product whose value can be assessed only in quantifiable terms. Masons are not marketing soap or ketchup. Masonry is a process of lifelong learning and discovery that delivers a way of living a principled life, observable in the simplest behaviors, whether at lodge, at home, or in the workplace.

The public wants to know Who are the Masons? & how do we know them in our lives today? When we can answer these questions, then we can move forward with traditional programs for public relations, marketing communications, membership, and more.

How does the public perceive Freemasonry today? Masons are typically not visible in the daily life of their communities. Their identity is frequently misunderstood and misrepresented in the press and by religious critics. Within eye and ear range of the public, Masons have largely failed to perform what they profess; consequently, they have lost their significance within the context of community.

So what is the desired image of Freemasonry? The model Masonic fraternity would be one that defines itself in terms of *thought, energy, and action*. Under perfect circumstances, the public would know Masons according to observable accomplishments, such as

- Building community based on shared Masonic values
- Constructing a positive environment for personal growth
- Encouraging education, idea sharing, and open discussion
- Welcoming diversity across religious denominations, ethnicity and age
- Growing leadership ability
- Establishing the relevance of Masonic values to contemporary life
- Advocating concern for the well being of other Masons and their families

Likewise, the public would come to know Masons as members of a fraternity where;



- Masonry is a serious men's organization, dedicated to self-improvement coupled with community involvement.
- Masonry is a provider of camaraderie, trust in each other, instant fellowship, and brotherhood.
- Masonry brings together a group of people who emphasize individual excellence.
- Masonry is a provider of an atmosphere of inclusiveness.
- Masonry is an organization that makes good men better.

The model Masonic fraternity member would be easy to identify in the community by his actions and words. Public awareness of Masonry begins at a grassroots level. Masons must be visible in the community to demonstrate Masonic values in many aspects of their lives.

At the core of our fraternity's identity, Masonry offers opportunity for expressing individuality, but at this critical time when we need to modernize the face of Masonry it is important that:

- Freemasonry must be lodge-centered, giving members opportunities to express themselves through activities that improve the experience of the lodge and benefit the life of the community.
- Freemasonry sustains its viability as a fraternal organization through its performance of Masonic rituals and values. Masonic values guide Masons both in the lodge and through everyday life. As trustees of Masonry's rich and valuable heritage, members must continually invigorate their approach to Masonic participation, making it an experience that is rewarding, enriching, and relevant to its members, their families and the greater community.

Modernizing the face of Masonry through effective public awareness campaigns requires imagination, open-mindedness, and discipline—the discipline to say “Yes.” Put aside old habits of saying simply, “Ah, that's been tried.” Or “Yes, but....” Cast off negativism. Turn the objection around to a challenge. Encourage and reward open and positive communication throughout each stage of change. Share ideas and ask yourself to take ownership of transforming the identity of Masonry through each and every action, regardless of how small.

We have the power to make Masonry the fraternity we want it to be. *It is about time* that we did something **as** a fraternity **for** our fraternity— lodge by lodge, brother by brother.

Thank you for your kind attention.

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