

Brethren:

Twice a year, in the Spring and in the Fall each lodge member of all the lodges throughout the three Hamilton Masonic Districts receives a little white card in their April or May summons and then again in their September or October summons. This card contains information pertaining to the upcoming Divine Service. Most of you by now have received this card with your summons announcing the Spring Divine Service of the Hamilton Masonic Districts' Board of Relief.

A Lodge will request to the Board of Relief that they would like to host a Divine Service for various reasons, perhaps the year that the District Deputy Grand Master in their District is a member of their lodge or for a special anniversary of the lodge. For example, the upcoming Spring Divine Service is being hosted by Acacia Lodge No. 61 of Hamilton Masonic District "B". They are celebrating the 150th anniversary of their lodge. The service will be held at the Beth Jacob Synagogue, 375 Aberdeen Avenue in Hamilton on Sunday, May 8th, 2005, assembly at 7:00 p.m. and the service will commence at 7:30 p.m. It is usually a short service, approximately one hour but all the same, the services are very enjoyable. They are well attended, but considering the number of Masons in our three Districts, we could easily double or triple the numbers in attendance. Regalia is worn with a dark suit and family and friends are welcomed. Please be prepared to have your donation ready and if you provide your name and address, a tax-deductible receipt will be promptly sent to the address provided. Of course, if you can't make it to the Divine Service, please still send your donation to R. W. Bro. Robert Kerr. His address is provided on the white card.

The Hamilton Masonic Districts' Board of Relief has two Divine Services each year to raise monies which enable the Board to carry on their assistance to needy Masons, their families or needy persons in general.

At their annual Lodge elections, each lodge in the three Districts, elects a representative to the Board of Relief. These representatives comprise the body of the Board of Relief and from their ranks, they elect, for a two-year term, a President, a Vice-President a Secretary-Treasurer and two Auditors. At present, the President is W. Bro. Eduardo Cordero, the Vice-President is W. Bro. David Gibson Sr., the Secretary-Treasurer is R. W. Bro. Robert Kerr and the two Auditors are W. Bro. Norm Boles and W. Bro. David Gaumont. The Immediate Past-President is V. W. Bro. Alan Hale. R. W. Bro. Kerr has been the Secretary-Treasure for quite a number of years and is the key officer that enables the Board to do such an exceptional job.

The Board of Relief Representative from each lodge is the important connection between the lodges and the Board. All requests for assistance should first come through the lodge. The Lodge representative is provided with a Manual which includes applications for benevolence. He will arrange to meet with the person or family in need and assist them in filling out the application for assistance. It is the Representative's job to present the case for assistance at either the Board's Spring or Fall meeting. If time is a factor, then the Executive Board will make a decision on the request rather than wait for the next semi-annual meeting. However, the Executive Board has limitations on how much they may grant for each request. This limitation is presently One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00).

Another activity of the Board to raise funds for their work is to sell Entertainment Books. These books are a great deal so if during the course of the year, you want to purchase a book, please contact R. W. Bro. Robert Kerr or myself and we will make sure we get one to you.

We usually receive the new books in early September as each annual issue expires on November 1st. The price is Thirty-two Dollars (\$32.00).

Another service that the Board can provide to Masons and/or their families in need who have lost a family member is a cemetery plot. The Board maintains a number of plots at both Woodlands Cemetery and at the Hamilton Cemetery which is across from Dundurn Park. It is one of the best kept secrets and is surprising how few Masons realize that we have these plots available.

The Hamilton Port Authority has donated a room on the second floor of an office building at Pier 10, for the Board's use for storing various pieces of equipment such as walkers, wheelchairs, hospital beds, bath seat and tray, crutches, etc. These are available to anyone who may need them. Please contact Robert or myself and I will arrange to meet with you. The present inventory is not huge as a lot of the equipment is out on loan, but we will try to meet your needs.

On the back of the white card, there is a list of assistance provided by the Board in the year 2004 - over \$33,000.00 in total.

Most prominent is a donation to the Neo Natal Unit at McMaster Childrens Hospital for Twelve Thousand, Six Hundred and Twenty-five Dollars (\$12,625.00). This was all made possible by your help. Over the years, the Board has received generous amounts of money from the proceeds raised at the Annual Masonic Beef and Corn Roast. Now there are Masons who are doing a great job. Each year, it seems to get bigger and better.

The Beef and Corn Roast will be held on Wednesday, August 24th, 2005 commencing at 5:00 p.m. at the Marritt Hall in Ancaster.

The Hamilton Masonic Districts' Board of Relief maintains its membership in the Association of Masonic Boards of Relief of the United States and Canada. Of particular note is that M. W. Bro. Eric Nancekivell served as President of that International body which was formerly known as the Masonic Relief Association of the United States and Canada.

Our Board of Relief dates back to the 1860 era and so many great Masons have helped the Board meet its objectives over the many years. These are "The Board shall be the extension of aid and financial assistance to brethren, their families and such other charitable purposes as the Board shall determine".

Many of you have helped and continue to help the Board meet its objectives. If you have not been involved in the activities of the Board, please make every effort to do so as soon as possible, perhaps at the Divine Service on the 8th of May.

Remember Masonry is not a "Service Club", however Masons can be of service.

Brethren, thank you for your patience and your kind attention.