

Education Monthly

October 2011

From the Chairman's desk

Brethren:

This is the first of a series of monthly letters from your committee on education. Each month we will send it out to as many Masons in Ontario as possible. It is designed to supplement the educational resources of Grand Lodge. These include our various courses, a quarterly newsletter, "Reflections", the Grand Lodge library, Ontario Mason magazine and our Book Sales.

The topics will be short, capable of being presented in lodge but also chosen to stimulate conversations among brethren. These discussions may be no more

than occasional ones between brethren or a more formal discussion in Lodge.

Please write and let me know your ideas on whether these monthly letters are interesting and useful or whether you would like to see other topics covered. Please e-mail the Education Monthly to a fellow Mason. If you'd like to submit articles of general interest please do so. However please ensure that they are short (300-400 words) and of general interest.

R.W.Bro. John Forster

Chairman: Committee on Masonic Education

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Stimulating and Engaging Membership

Freemasonry provides an enabling environment within which good men can make themselves better if they choose to do so. We cannot force change: we can provide the stimulation and encouragement to our members. Without this we will continue to suffer membership decline with high rates of suspension and demits which indicates dissatisfied members.

In its July 2008 report to Grand Lodge, the Committee on Lodge Resources noted that **close to 40% of the new masons initiated do not complete their journey and become Master Masons** (2008 Annual Proceedings, p 108).

Can this situation be slowed or even reversed? And can it be based on existing Lodge resources without calling for new and increased investments of money and time? In both cases I think the answer is "Yes." All Lodges should be encouraged to consider some "best practices" which are already being implemented:

1. Masonic Toolkit: Most initiation fees cover the costs of a Bible, Constitution and By-Laws (given out at Initiation) and a Book of Work, apron and case (at the end of the Third Degree). Some Lodges also provide a one-year subscription to *Reflections* to the newly initiated Mason. The publications here are a start in encouraging the new member to begin to accumulate and use a masonic library.
2. Masonic Education: Many Lodges include a 3-5 minute presentation during a meeting, often related to the work of the evening. At the end of a third degree, for example, it would be useful for a member of the Lodge to cover some particular part of that degree. During the year the Lodge program may provide for a Masonic or non-Masonic speaker on a particular topic of interest (in the latter case the Lodge would call off, or the speaker address the members at the festive board, for example).
3. College of Freemasonry: For those who seek a more formal approach to Masonic education and self-improvement there is a four-part College of Freemasonry program. Completion of the full program entitles the member to be called a "Fellow of the College of Freemasonry," and to place the initials "FCF" after his name. Those interested in the College program should obtain details from their Lodge Secretary.
4. Protocol and Etiquette: Many Lodges have the Director of Ceremonies cover an item of protocol or etiquette in a two- or three-minute window at the end of a Lodge meeting. Grand Lodge's Protocol and Etiquette Essentials is a useful tool, but the DC can demonstrate many important (perhaps critical) matters and explain them at the same time. One of the most difficult actions to learn are those of The Grand Honors and the DC can walk members through it slowly while explaining the meaning of each movement.
5. Masonic Study Circle: in the two Ottawa Districts interested Masons meet every 3-4 months at a quality restaurant and use a private room where they can discuss items of common interest. Topics covered in the last two years include: books (Dan Brown, Jack Whyte's Templar trilogy, for example), stamps portraying Freemasonry, music connected with the Craft. The topics are limitless.

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6. Masonic Quiz: the two Ottawa Districts hold annual quizzes and often hold an inter-district “quiz-off.” Prizes usually include a publication of masonic interest.

Beyond these best practices, however, there is one key area where I believe change is crucial to improvement. This relates to the need for some instruction on the roles and responsibilities of Sponsors. This is perhaps the most important area for us: the relation between the new applicant-cum-candidate-cum-Mason and his sponsors should be a life-long attachment. The sponsors should escort the new mason on his voyage, visiting new Lodges where he is properly introduced, participating with him in the Mentorship program undertaken by his Lodge, and a host of other activities. In this way the new mason becomes an important part of our fraternity

V.W.Bro. Michael Jenkyns,
Grand Historian.



“Reflections”: The Newsletter of the Committee On Masonic Education

“Reflections” is a newsletter published four times a year by the Committee of Masonic Education. Its primary aim is to make available articles and presentations written by Ontario Masons for Ontario Masons. The publication is a rich resource for every Mason to help him make his daily advancement in Masonic knowledge. It is an ideal educational tool for Masonic Education Chairmen at both the Lodge and the District levels.

Freemasonry is a microcosm of life. It is a silver thread that links men through time and space. It provides purpose and meaning, direction and support. “Reflections”, strengthens that thread that gives, purpose, meaning and direction to daily Masonic life. The publication provides its readership with interesting papers and informative learning opportunities to increase one’s Masonic knowledge and understanding as well as providing a forum for discussion among Brethren. Short articles in “Reflections” are designed to be used for that short piece of Masonic Education that should be a part of every of every Lodge meeting.

The Committee on Masonic Education is focusing on making Reflections an important part of Masonic Education in this Grand Jurisdiction. We call on each Mason, each subscriber, and each Lodge to promote readership of the newsletter. Reflections is nothing without you and your support to make it a vibrant, thriving part of our beloved Order.

R.W. Bro. Garnet E. Schenk, FCF
Subscriptions Manager

“Reflections” is issued four times per year and includes exciting and informative articles that help Ontario Masons understand who we are and where we came from. We’d love for you to contribute by submitting any educational or historical paper you fell might help your brethren “Get Understanding.”

If you want to get current issues, you can to subscribe by sending \$18.00 to

**“Reflections” c/o 870 Third Street,
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