

A Future Vision for Freemasonry

The Grand lodge has a Strategic Plan for the future called “Rebuilding the West Gate.” I have mentioned this in the past and spoke of the importance of this plan.

The Grand Lodge Vision statement says ;

“Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario.”

The Grand Lodge Mission Statement says;

“Grand Lodge’s mission is to provide effective and sustainable leadership to Ontario’s Masonic community and preserve the timeless Masonic initiatory system as a framework for all good men to transform their lives through the ancient and enduring tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.”

Now I must admit that when I first read those statements it didn’t leave me with a warm fuzzy feeling as having worked at Ontario Hydro/Bruce Power, we were used to seeing new visions and missions brought out on a regular basis and the normal comments were “hear we go again”. These visions and missions always seemed to be somewhere up there with little contact with the people actually on the ground floor or little relationship to what most people felt needed to be done. But on closer reading of the Grand Lodge Strategic Plan it started to make more sense, and it also focuses much of the plan at the Lodge level, improving what is the true heart of Freemasonry the Lodge room. But before this plan can work **you** have to buy into it. **You** have to **read** it and understand the path that has been planned. Every Worshipful master needs to lead his

lodge on this path. Not everything can be done at once but the Cornerstone Project is a good start and one I hope every lodge will try to carry out. Following this plan is not an onerous challenge but it is one which will help improve your lodge.

Over the last ten years, based on data from 2001 – 2007 and extrapolating it forward, I estimate we have initiated in excess of 10,000 new members into Freemasonry in Ontario. Now on the face of that we could project that the future of Freemasonry is looking good. But as we all know in this district, not every lodge is in a healthy condition. And I know not all lodges in Ontario are in a healthy position either. Like our own district some lodges are closing or very close to closing. As I have spoken about in the past, bringing a man into Freemasonry is not the hard part it is keeping them there. How do we keep men within the lodge? Well we need to understand why men join, and not everyone joins for the same reasons. So the challenge is to provide what each needs to retain him. It is said, “Sincere Fraternal affection is the cement that binds us together.” The stones that are bound together cover a number of areas within the Craft. Some are attracted by the fellowship and social intercourse. Some are attracted to the Philanthropic work done by the Masons, although we don’t tell people about these works. Some are attracted to the social principles Fraternity, Liberty and Equality. Some are more interested in the deep philosophical mysteries of Freemasonry. The esoteric mysteries of the craft. Some people think that means strange rites or mysteries. Actually the word “esoteric” means “within” and is defined as something “Profound, taught to, or understood by, only a select circle. That is what Freemasonry is truly

about learning and understanding your self, what is inside you. You are the temple, that you have to build.

W.L. Wilmhurst wrote more than seventy years ago

“Spiritual quality rather than numbers, ability to understand the masonic system and reduce its implications into personal experience rather than the perfunctory conferment of its rites are the desiderata of the craft today.”

And I thought that the word “Desiderata” was from the 70’s!

But whatever reasons a man decides to join Freemasonry there is always a place for him to fulfill his needs. He may have to look for it and we may have to help him find it, but it is there And for us to retain him as a member, we must ensure he finds what he needs within the Craft and make him feel part of the Lodge. We sometimes forget about the new members once they become MM, this we cannot do, not if we wish to retain them. Some members are looking for the social side but they are also able to make great contributions to the craft. Working diligently inside and outside the lodge to help out in the many things that need to be done for any organization to be successful. These are the ones who help with dinner preparation, help the Blood Donors clinics, help set up the lodge and welcome guests. Others work hard to carry out the Charity work, that we all participate in monetarily, but not always having time for some of the organization that it takes. These are both also the people who drive

patients to hospital and visit the sick. But there are also those who want to have a deeper understanding of the philosophy of Freemasonry and we must help those who do, to find that understanding and not let them wither in the seats. This is where Masonic Education becomes important. Not just the usual quotes take from the Book of the Work, or Masonic Manual but some deeper study of the symbols and allegories that are used to present Freemasonry to the candidates. This will then stimulate those who are looking for deeper meanings to go look for it

So my Brethren the success of Freemasonry in the future depends on you. There is a saying "We must get our own house in order." First you as an individual need to know what your needs are and carry these out within the structure of the lodge. The lodges have to present and assist the brethren to find what they are looking for. Then the Lodges need to get their own lodge in order in all areas. The Stonemasons art is three-dimensional length, breadth and height of the stones, and so is Speculative Freemasonry, social, instructive and philosophical. If every lodge can get their own house in order, then that will strengthen the District and then the District will be more able to assist in "Rebuilding the West Gate".

M.W. Bro. Lou Copeland, Grand Master 1985-1986, made a statement of the Credo of Freemasonry, which is worth repeating;

"I believe in people and I especially believe in Masons. I have found in Freemasonry a cause to be championed, a

life to be lived, a truth to be shared, and a future bright with promise.”

My Brethren to keep M.W. Bro Copeland’s belief alive and to make the Rebuilding of the West Gate a success, we must all put more into Freemasonry in any way we can. Only then will the future of Freemasonry continue to shine like the bright morning star and continue to provide a place for good men to transform themselves into a better men. It isn’t up to Grand Lodge or to the Worshipful Master it is up to you. Leadership just doesn’t come from those at the top or those perceived to be in charge it comes from you. Lead by example and others will follow. A single horse will have difficulty pulling a heavy load but a team will move down the road with ease. Be one of the team and let us all pull Freemasonry into the future for your benefit, the lodges benefit and indeed society ‘s benefit.

Thank you my Brethren