

Change

Cedar Lodge No. 270 – November 22, 2011

Some would say that “change is inevitable.”

Some would say that “change is necessary.”

Some would say that “things never change.”

How can we as Master Masons discuss change when we have promised to obey the Laws of God and man and we have been told that “The Ancient Landmarks of the order are to be preserved sacred and inviolable and never suffer any infringement of our customs or a deviation from established usage.”

Let me share with you a quote about what can be or should have been changed.

"The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance"

— *Marcus Tullius Cicero 60 BC*

Sound familiar?

But most will agree that basic rights and wrongs have been without change since the beginning of time. All major religions are amazingly similar with their basics. They believe in a “Supreme Being”, they have a statement similar to the “Golden Rule” and they have a code somewhat similar to the Ten Commandments of the Christian Church.

I’m not for a moment suggesting that we change our ritual or any of our Ancient Landmarks. The predictability of our ritual reinforces their timeless worth in shaping a Mason’s core values. In many jurisdictions the ritual is almost identical to ours. This in itself is remarkable.

The message or information that we obtain from our ritual will hold true far into the future. The ritual has been carefully crafted and consistently the right words have been used in the right place. In good delivery there is a rhythm which is most enjoyable.

Our roots come from the Middle Ages when Operative Masons created the perfect stone to be used in the erection of stately and superb edifices. Later Operative Masons evolved to Speculative Masons. Even since then cultures, societies, governments, travel and economies have changed dramatically.

We have seen speculative Masonry from its fledgling beginning in 1717 spread around the globe to become the largest fraternity in the world. The numbers have waxed and waned over the years – increasing as a result of great fellowship, and decreased in years of anti-Masonic sentiment. To-day, like most if not all other fraternities, service clubs and volunteer groups, our numbers are down from the unprecedented numbers in the late 1950s. We can easily name all kinds of reasons for this drop such as the “Baby Boomers” did not join organizations of their parents, competition for volunteers, double income families with little free time and of course Masonry not being well understood by the majority of people.

What was to be done about this change in society? Do we stand by and watch a great organization disappear? Should Masonry respond to the times that we live in?

As in many Masonic Jurisdictions around the world our Grand Lodge has responded to this societal change. Some might say too late while others would argue that any Masonic change is questionable.

Our Grand Lodge has not changed the Ancient Landmarks to which we are committed. But they have changed in other ways. They have taken advantage of the opportunity to inform the general public about who we are and what our aims and objectives are. We are informing wives and families about Masonry and what their husbands and fathers do at Lodge.

Grand Lodge has been for some time now promoting new programs to inform non-Masons about our Fraternity; for example, the Open Houses for Lodges and the Friend to Friend programs. When I joined in 1962, the feeling was that you had to be a Mason to enter a lodge room. My first glimpse of a Masonic Lodge was when I entered for my initiation. The unwritten protocol then insisted that you didn't even ask to see inside ahead of time. It was also unheard of for women to visit a lodge room. This level of secrecy is unacceptable in the era of modern communication technology.

To-day many Masonic lodges open their doors to the public in concert with the Ontario Heritage Program of “Open Doors.” In some Masonic districts all of the Masonic Lodges in the District will have an open house on the same day. Both are excellent approaches to letting the public know more about our gentle fraternity.

The Friend to Friend Program would be described as an active program where we encourage a Friend and their spouse to join with us for an informational session about Masonry. This program has proven to be very effective in providing information to our Friends and also for newly initiated Masons, Master Masons and even to experienced Masons. The positive spin off is the enthusiasm that it creates within our individual lodges.

The Open Doors is passive in nature in that the doors are open and if someone wants to drop in and look around they can. The curious person that takes the time to drop in, has a sound reason to take time to visit the lodge room, consequently you then have a great opportunity to provide them with information about Masonry. There are almost unlimited quantities of information available in printed and digital form and of course you can provide an oral description.

The Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario is indeed changing and responding to the societal changes that we have seen over the last half century. They have provided us with exceptional programs. The real question is as a Mason have you responded and has your lodge responded and taken advantage of these programs? Or putting it another way I encourage you and your lodge to respond as Grand Lodge has and move into the 21st century.

R. W. Bro. Douglas E. Galt

DDGM Ontario District