

A WORD TO THE OFFICE BEARERS

They tell me that it is my responsibility to assemble the office Bearers and members for the meetings, and that soliciting their input and judgment in a properly managed meeting is a primary function of the Master.

I think that is right, there is no question that our effectiveness will be greatly enhanced **if we all** manage our meetings properly.

Conversely, our Lodge will suffer if we fail to execute this important element of our leadership responsibility. We are, for better or worse, the leaders of our Lodge for the 2017-2018 term.

I have planned for many types of meetings will be held.

Some will be small, like the next one in November. Some will be large to include Stated Meetings and Degrees. (As for March in 2018 – 3rd Degree)

The important principles of managing meetings remain the same.

1. We will start on time.
2. We will have a prepared agenda and we will follow it.
3. As much as possible we will be decisive and impartial.
4. We will enjoy ourselves

We will abide by the Constitution of the UGLQ and By-laws of our lodge, the rules of order, and finally, always end on time.

I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that a properly planned and executed meeting results in good participation and a happy disposition.

A poor meeting achieves the opposite results.

For the purpose of this discussion, meetings are divided into three categories: stated meetings, degree meetings and committee meetings.

A. STATED MEETINGS

The primary forum by which the business of Freemasonry in general and our Lodge, Tullibardine, in particular, is conducted is the stated meeting.

At a rehearsal meetings we may make decisions, committees may meet and agree on specific issues, but always remember that nothing is firmly resolved until it has been brought before and voted upon by the brethren of the Lodge present at a Stated Meeting.

Then and only then can these decisions be considered the policy and practice of the Lodge.

I well realize the limits of my authority as Master and will seek approval, by a vote of the membership, prior to proceeding on any new policy and/or practice, even if the issue is seemingly insignificant. I firmly believe that the brethren will be offended if not consulted, and rightly so.

Our Stated Meeting is of utmost importance. If we use it to our advantage, we will be successful.

1. THE STATED MEETING AS AN EVENT

Stated Meeting should be promoted as an event not to be missed. Please do so.

Remember that something important, interesting and exciting are the ingredients for a good evening program. We need to plan and develop exciting evenings and then promote them extensively.

Perhaps we might consider appointing a chairman and small sub-committee for each stated meeting. This will give others a sense of involvement and, if a junior office bearer is delegated, it will offer him some vital training and experience.

Start with a supper for the members. A good meal at a reasonable price always attracts additional members. Let us make our harmony repast interesting and adequate.

We should always follow up our supper with a program of activities, i.e., guest speakers, awards, etc.

I believe that we should always have some program that will attract the interest or encourage others to feel an obligation to attend. Everyone should feel that they should attend so that they will not miss out on something important.

Following our program we adjourn to the Lodge room, but we should provide for additional activities or programs for the ladies and guests that you have left behind.

2. Planning a Stated Meeting

Please do not forget that I plan a **Third Degree in March 2018**. We might have a volunteer candidate but it will be a full-on Third degree.

Prior to every Stated Meeting, we need to plan our agenda for the business that must be transacted.

Do not leave agenda planning to others such as the Secretary. His workload is quite heavy. He will always assist but we ought never load him up with additional duties.

Stated Meetings are **our** meetings and must be planned and executed by us alone with some input sourced from others. Delegating this responsibility to allows others to dictate the priority of business and severely reduces our authority as the office bearers of the Lodge.

Once the agenda has been developed, we need to, and we will, publish the highlights of the next meeting in the newsletter to attract the interest of the brethren. We need to let them the members know what business is to be conducted, what decisions are going to be made and perhaps, they may find something of interest and attend.

If there are a number of important items to be considered, place a stack of prepared agendas outside the lodge room for every member to take a copy for reference. Everyone can now be aware of the order of business and can become involved.

3. Start On-Time and End On-Time

The By-laws of your Lodge dictate the starting time for our Stated Meeting.

The starting time is specific....BUT....from time to time we may need to adjust the starting time. For instance **our Third Degree ceremonies are long degrees**. so that we finish at a reasonable hour we will look at an earlier Tying time.

- A meeting should not commence either before or after the designated time. We may need to establish “end” times for each degree.
- Meetings that start on time, end on time.
- Meetings that start late, either end late or the business is rushed and poorly transacted. If the meetings begin to start late, you can depend upon attendance declining.

When the clock strikes the designated hour, the gavel must sound and we will **always** start on time. No man is so great that the Lodge will wait.

4. Stick to The Agenda

The order of business is clearly outlined and we will follow it.

We will conduct our business by the numbers, and I am sure will find that decisions are made, time will remain for a lively informal time after the meeting.

The brethren can then depart at a reasonable hour.

A business meeting that lasts approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour should be sufficient to conduct our required business. Anything longer, on a routine basis, will result in declining participation.

B. DEGREE – MEETINGS

The evenings of degrees are of vital importance to the success or failure of our Lodge.

The first impression that you and our Lodge generally make upon the candidate occurs during his initial exposure to the manner in which the degrees of Masonry are conferred.

For the purposes of this publication, I have not dwelled upon ritual. However, you know in your heart the importance of properly executing our ritual to make that first impression positive and lasting.

That lasting first impression can also be greatly enhanced by proficiently organizing, planning and executing the degree nights of your Lodge.

The following are some helpful hints that can assist us in achieving successful degree nights:

1. Orientation

The orientation of a candidate starts before he is initiated into our fraternity.

A simple letter or conversation with him is not enough to provide him and his family with the necessary information on what is expected of him during the process of his becoming a full member of your Lodge.

After his acceptance, and before his initiation, schedule a meeting with the candidate and his family to discuss exactly what is going to happen to him and what are the expectations of your Lodge.

He should be fully informed on the process, his proficiency requirements, and the proper conduct and dress expected within the Lodge. A candidate embarrassed over a trivial mistake is a candidate that may never return.

After the initial meeting and the initiation ceremony, the candidate's coach should be fully trained to continue the education of the new member. There is ample information available through the Grand Lodge assist you in this endeavor.

2. Consistent Scheduling

Attending Lodge is a **duty** that must be ingrained into the membership.

Consistency in the scheduling of the dates and times for our degrees is desirable if candidates are available, or at least a practice, on the days chosen, if candidates are not available.

For this reason I have selected:-

MARCH - THIRD (3RD) DEGREE

MAY – SECOND (2ND) DEGREE

JULY – FIRST (1ST) DEGREE

I chose the dates above because if we are fortunate enough to obtain a candidate, *and we have already undertaken our First degree*, then we will be doing another one asap. Two firsts are not required of any lodge unless there are a number of actual candidates.

If this is Thursday, there must be a degree", should be the scheduling system with every Lodge.

Our Lodge will never be a "Sausage machine" Lodge, churning out candidate after candidate. Masonry is bigger and better than that. Clearly we will maintain our ritual skills but we will also practice Freemasonry, in Lodge and at home.

Keep with our schedule and our members will know what to expect.

3. Have Your Act Together

It is most important that each office bearer who cannot attend Lodge nights must notify us in if they will be unable to attend. Please...no "last minute notifications...no sudden emails...no late phone calls.

- Not to have a **full complement** of the required officers is inexcusable.
- To hurriedly scramble to assemble a team, immediately before a meeting, certainly puts doubts in a visitor's mind as to the quality of our organization.

It is understood that every officer cannot be present at every meeting but by and large we can each recognize this fact of life and prepare for the inevitable.

I am seeking to create and maintain a list of the members of our Lodge who can properly perform the required ritual in specified stations and degrees.

If the worst happens we need to know early so that we can call the day prior to each degree, make a list of the stations, and specific degree, and personally confirm with each individual that he will be present and ready to participate.

As office bearers we should always be present and only notify the Lodge when we cannot. You can assist in this.

Remember that list of members who can do the parts in each degree. If a vacancy occurs we will fill from our list. If you have abilities with charges and you would like the opportunity to present them in Lodge then let that desire be known. Do not hide your light under a bushel.

4. Greet Your Brethren

Special care must be made to assure that you personally greeted every member in attendance.

One of our officers can, on a permanent basis, welcome visitors. Perhaps the Lodge Almoner, a man of experience.

All our members and visitors should feel that they are among brethren, not strangers. This is so important.

5. Keep on Schedule

Degrees can be as short as the ritual requires or as long as you allow them to drag out.

The key to a meeting of appropriate length is:-

- START ON TIME
- NO PROMPTS
- NO HESITATIONS

The secret to successful degree nights is to (again) start on time, always.

Secondly, make the required breaks in ritual short, but adequate, for the brethren to take a break and briefly socialize.

Lastly, keep the comments at the conclusion of the meeting pertinent to the situation. Some comments are best left to the banquet room during refreshments. If we run an orderly and efficient degree meeting, the brethren will appreciate it and our attendance will reflect our efforts.

7. Supper or Harmony

We need to take the necessary time and make the necessary effort to make the refreshment time an enjoyable occasion for all.

Poorly prepared refreshments and sloppy presentation in cluttered surroundings equal a negative impression on the new candidate, our visitors, and also with our membership.

There is no excuse for poor refreshments. Our Worthy Junior Warden has the specific responsibility for this task. He should do his job. If he cannot our job is to correct the situation. At a minimum, the following standards should be met:

a. The tables should be arranged in an orderly fashion, properly covered, set and ready for use. No giant square formations. They are not conducive to interaction.

*b. Either the Stewards or the Refreshment Committee should be dismissed, prior to the closing of Lodge, so that refreshments are served and **waiting on the table** for the arrival and enjoyment of the brethren.*

*c. The Stewards or Refreshment Committee are standing by to serve the needs of those attending. They, themselves, should **not** be seated until all have been served and no further service is required.*

d. Conduct a short program: introductions, comments, etc. Make it short and to the point so that the brethren may depart at an appropriate time.

8. Follow up Immediately

9. The Master , DC and Chaplain MUST always be among the very first to attend the harmony. Never late. Start immediately and our chances of success are greatly enhanced.

10. No jokes at the Harmony. Nothing demonstrates a total lack of something intelligent to say than a joke.

SO

If there anything I would ask of you it is this...

Irrespective of the Degree we are working:- Open and Close Without Prompt and Without Hesitation

All our tasks are important and necessary to the continuance of Lodge Tullibardine..be a part of your Lodge, an active part.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY

Bring your smiles and happy demeanor to Lodge, leave scowls and adverse thoughts and comments somewhere else, we don't want them.

At the meeting no criticism, no snide remarks, just be happy and communicate happiness.

If you just have to demonstrate your knowledge concerning some error we might have made...do not do so at the meeting...**do it tomorrow**....adopt the manana (MAN-YAR-NA) policy.

We will feel better and so will you, you really will.