

# The District Light

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## A Study of Tolerance

Shortly after becoming masons, we became aware that Freemasonry is much more than a social fraternity.

Freemasonry accepts without religious, racial, national or political prejudice or without regard to station in life, upright and moral men as Brothers.

As its highest ideal, Freemasonry unites men who, in brotherly formations and through honorable and ritualistic methods, endeavor to achieve spiritual understanding and moral refinement.

The challenge is great, but we have the examples of the good men around us, the stories and lessons presented in the lodge, and the ideals of moral values.

From ancient times, what we call the Cardinal Virtues: Temperance, Prudence, Fortitude, and Justice, have had a prominent place in most systems of ethics.

The first, Temperance, refers to abstaining from excess. When we consider it from a moral perspective, we are dealing with Tolerance.

Tolerance is difficult to achieve when we see that political parties disparage the opposition, religious groups assume that they are the true path, and when others around us ridicule any who are perceived to be different.

Attempts to remove objectionable or hurtful language may make us more sensitive, but may be dismissed as silly 'political correctness'.

Let's look at some examples of 'humour'.

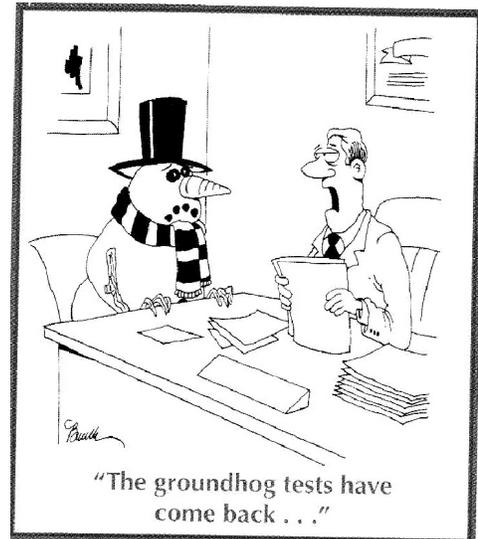
Instead of saying that a man is balding, we might say he is in follicle regression. Or not that he is a bad dancer, only overly Caucasian.

Making jokes about a man's thinning hair is considered 'fair game' by many, but a sensitive person might reconsider if he thinks the man would rather not have his condition discussed.

And the second joke certainly deals with racial differences.

## Cartoon Fun

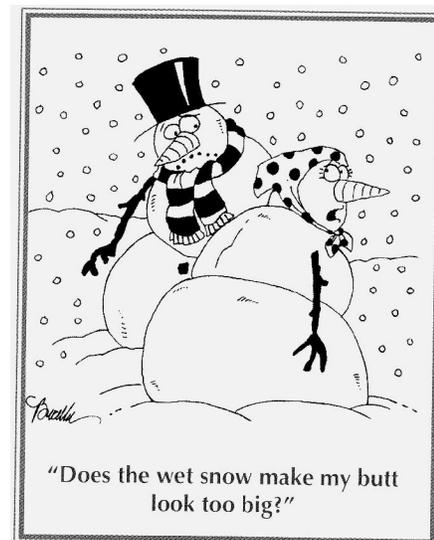
Here are two cartoons from a masonic magazine from last winter:



The cartoon is clever in that it requires us to recall the import of Groundhog Day and then apply that to this particular individual.

Still, it suggests death, and some people might prefer not to think about that.

How about this one?



**Funny or Not?**

The second offering plays on a common theme. One mason wrote to the magazine:

“The caption made by the female snowman is obviously gender based and while some may find humour there, I do not. I find it offensive in nature.

“Now I enjoy humour as well as the next mason; however, in a masonic magazine this cartoon was out of place, especially when it makes fun of one sex or the other.”

We may roll our eyes at the sentiments but the man cared enough to write. And we should care enough to listen when others express their concerns, even though we may disagree.

We enjoy finding fun in situations, we share the laughs with people like us, and we may suspect that any who don't agree ‘have no sense of humour’.

**But Seriously . . .**

You might think the previous observations to be frivolous, but it is likely that you have been distressed by events or attitudes which you know to be disturbing or destructive.

For example, many masons have expressed distaste at some of the emails that encourage fear, distrust, or hatred of other groups.

That mind-set is satirized in this passage from a story by Roger Zelazny:

As the old man came down from the mountain, he stopped to watch the group of men who were burning their neighbour's home.

“Tell me,” he asked one of them, “why do you burn your neighbour's home which, I now note from the barking and screaming, still contains your neighbour, as well as his dog, wife, and children?”

“Why should we not burn it?” asked the man. “He is a foreigner from across the desert, and he looks different from the rest of us. This also applies to his dog, who looks different from our dogs and barks with a foreign accent, and his wife, who is prettier than our wives and speaks with a foreign accent, and his children, who are cleverer than ours, and speak like their parents.”

**So?**

Tolerance, like Intolerance, is a learned behaviour. Either can be unlearned.

As men trying to foster a more moral society, we need at least to be sensitive to the concept that we might say or do something which is hurtful to another. We need to edit ourselves.

And we must also not be silent when we are presented with a behaviour which we regard as inappropriate.

This quote presents an achievable ideal:

“Freemasonry unites men who, in brotherly formations and through honorable and ritualistic methods, endeavor to achieve spiritual understanding and moral refinement.”

**A New Masonic Year**

We meet again and the work continues.

Some lodges have already been active with events. There were a few picnics this summer and Macnab Lodge had a fish fry at their first meeting.

Our District Deputy Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Tom McClellan, will make Official Visits to four lodges in October. He had this to say in an open letter to the district:



I am truly honoured to be your District Deputy Grand Master for this masonic year. Over the years I have been impressed and inspired by the dedication of so many of you throughout our District who work diligently to preserve and strengthen their Lodges.

I commend you for it. It can be hard work and often it is not recognized but it is nevertheless essential to the continued health and wellbeing of each and every Lodge.

**To The Light**

Each masonic year we have a new DDGM. He chooses a secretary and Committee Chairmen, plans his activities, and informs the district.

This year, R.W.Bro. Tom McClellan has chosen the theme *To The Light* as his motto. He explains it this way:

To me, Masonry is primarily about personal growth or coming to see the Light. At our initiation the greatest revelation for each of us occurs when we declare that by far the strongest wish of our heart is Light.

To me, this moment is indicative of leaving behind the darkness of ignorance and selfishness and moving to the Light of Truth, Brotherly Love and Service (Relief).

Truth serves us as we rise above the conditioning of society to see clearly for ourselves the people, situations, and influences in our daily lives in the Light of our own, now uplifted, understanding.

We then carry this personal illumination into our daily lives as wise and discerning Service that enables us to continue to grow in Brotherly Love.

For, the more we grow, the more we see in the Light that we are all one in Brotherhood and one in Brotherly Love.

**A Revisioning of Our Work**

Because our rituals are representations of printed scripts, there is a sameness to the work. This may lead to a dullness of the witnessing experience.

R.W.Bro. Bruce Renner had this insight into his viewing or participating in the dramas we present:

I have to say that my approach to ritual, and for that matter, Freemasonry in general, has always been highly intellectual, a dominant trait for me.

However, some of my best experiences have come when my less dominate emotional nature comes to the fore. It is then when one realizes that the words, floor work, props and furnishings, memorization, and even the lessons of the ritual are only half of the story. It is only when you feel the ritual in an instinctual, visceral, emotional way that you have a full appreciation of its meaning.

**The MasoniCHip Program**

The Child Identification Program is sponsored by our Grand Lodge in association with law enforcement agencies.

The MasoniCh.I.P. program uses modern, police-approved techniques to create a child identification kit for the ones you love, whether they be children or seniors.

The kit collects photos, video, voice recordings, digital fingerprints, dental impressions, saliva swabs as well as traditional statistical information (height, weight, hair and eye colour, etc.).

This information is matched to work seamlessly with Ontario's law enforcement providers to assist with the safe recovery of missing people.

The MasoniCh.I.P. program is brought exclusively to families by dedicated Masons and their volunteers, free of charge along with the sentiment that "We hope you never need to use it."

**In Our District**

This September at the Welland Fairgrounds, W. Bro. George Sider, chairman of the CHip Program for Niagara B District, organized 30 masons who volunteered to process 140 children.

George will be talking about the event at the Official Visits on October 3, 4, 9, 23.

But you can see what happens first-hand when you visit the Port Robinson Fire Hall Open House on Wednesday, October 10, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Again, masons such as yourself will be managing the affair. It would be a good time to find out how your lodge could sponsor a similar event.

**Last Thoughts**

Unless a commitment is made,  
there are only promises and hopes; no plans

They say that time changes things,  
but you actually have to change them yourself.

You have a brain in your head.  
You have feet in your shoes.  
You can steer yourself  
in any direction you choose.

Dr. Seuss