



Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario

PROTOCOL & ETIQUETTE ESSENTIALS

Prepared by the Grand Lodge P. & E. Committee
Issue No. 36 – February 2016

Greetings from Your P. & E. Committee

Welcome to the February issue of *"P&E Essentials"*. With this issue, we are resuming the publishing of these informative and easy-to-read newsletters. Our thanks are extended to those brethren who found past issues helpful and encouraged us to continue.

"P&E Essentials" is intended to be an interactive instrument, designed to help you make an advancement in Masonic knowledge. It will hopefully also assist you to achieve high quality in the delivery, comprehension and insight of the lessons communicated on the floor of the lodge. The Committee welcomes questions and/or suggestions for topics that could be addressed in future issues. Questions or suggestions not related to Protocol and Etiquette will be forwarded to the appropriate Grand Lodge Committee for response.

Committee Members

The current Protocol & Etiquette Committee members are:

Gordon Crutcher (*Chairman*); Howard Adams; Art DiCecco (*Team Leader*); Saliem Khoury; Michael Litvak; George McCowan; Bryan Middleton; James Pearson; George Pohle; Kennard Pratt; David Purvis (*Secretary*); and David Stevens.

With appropriate advance notice – and subject to travel constraints – any member of the Committee would be happy to make a presentation about P&E in your Lodge, or at a District Meeting.

"FREEDOM OF THE LODGE"

There is a wide-spread innovation by lodges in our Jurisdiction which has never been defined, nor sanctioned, nor encouraged by our Grand Lodge. Indeed, no mention is made to this practice in any of our reference material. This innovation is known as *"freedom of the lodge"*.

There are differences in interpretation by our lodges as to what is intended when a WM grants *"freedom of the lodge"*, with perhaps the most common being that:

- (1) It is typically an unscheduled, informal break in lodge proceedings;
- (2) The lodge remains open – but not at work;
- (3) The VOSL remains open;
- (4) The outer door remains closed and tyled;
- (5) Brethren are free to walk about the lodge and converse with each other;
- (6) Brethren are NOT at liberty to leave and re-enter the lodge room at their discretion (although some do).

Is there anything amiss with this practise? Well, please consider our approved ritual. Our ritual provides for the opening and closing of a lodge in each degree, plus a specific ritual for calling from L. to R. and from R. to L.

Nowhere is there any ritual pertaining to *"freedom of the lodge"*.

Our research also indicates that no other Grand Lodge makes any formal provision for *"freedom of the lodge"*. In fact, at least one Jurisdiction, (the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon), formally condemned the practise at its Annual Communication in 2010.

(See: http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/masonic_bulletin/74/lxxiv04.pdf)

So a lodge is either open or closed; either at L. or at R. These are the only options. These two options were established a couple of centuries ago and are uniformly practised throughout the Masonic world. There is no provision for temporary cessation or suspension of activities which may detract from and disrupt the meeting.

Granting *"freedom of the lodge"* takes away from the solemnity of our proceedings and detracts from what would otherwise be a serious and meaningful meeting.

There may well be circumstances when a break in the proceedings is essentially necessary, (such as when several of the older brethren need to use the washroom facilities). In such cases, the lodge must be called from L. to R. in the proper manner.

Please share this newsletter with other members of your Lodge – and your Masonic friends

