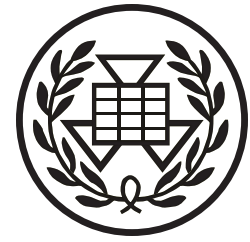




THE WORD



HELPFUL ADVICE, TIPS, AND INFORMATION TO MAKE YOU AND YOUR CHAPTER BETTER

Getting in touch

Need to contact the Grand High Priest or our Grand Secretary? Here's their contact info:

Jim Tome, MEGHP

P.O. Box 264
Sycamore, Illinois 60178
Tel (815) 508-3878
Email JMTome@RAM-IL.org

All Requests for Dispensation, notifications of degree work, and other general inquiries should be addressed to our MEGHP.

Barry Weer, REGSecretary

c/o: Bloomington Consistory
P.O. Box 3695
Bloomington, Illinois 61702
Tel (309) 838-0230
Email BWeer@RAM-IL.org

Please send all secretarial inquiries, notifications of degree work, changes to membership or Chapter status, and requests for information.

Randy Vawter, *The Word* editor

Tel (309) 357-2932
Email RVawter@RAM-IL.org
All contributions welcome!

Connecting with our Lodges

We all know that we need to have a steady, constant, and productive presences in our Blue Lodges. After all, only the Royal Arch offers that one missing piece that every Master Mason seeks – the long lost, Ancient Master Mason's Word.

So how do we get into our lodges and spread the Good Word of the York Rite and Royal Arch specifically? Here's some ideas:

Attend your Lodge

This seems obvious, but by being a good lodge brother, you are also promoting the Royal Arch. Why not wear your red jacket once in a while? How about asking the Worshipful Master if you can talk occasionally about the Chapter? Remember, the first part of the York Rite is our Craft Lodge.

Completing the Craft

There's a new presentation for Chapters and Companions to give in our Blue Lodges. It's intent – humorously and lightheartedly – is to entice our Brother Master Masons who are not yet Royal Arch Masons to consider Further Light in the Craft. You can request the presentation outline at the "Forms & Downloads" section of our web site, RAM-IL.org.

Secrets of the Chair

More than just a certificate, the Secrets of the Chair is a program that given in lodge to a Companion who is also a current Worshipful Master. It honors the commitment and leadership of our Companion who is called to govern in their lodge. Based on the ancient "Past Master" degree or ceremonies once used before a Master was installed, the ceremony talks about "noble Science... royal Art....and Mysteries." Many who have seen the presentation ceremony have asked about joining the Royal Arch.

The servant leader

Good leaders have always been valued for their communication and decision-making skills.

Although these are also important skills for the servant leader, they need to be reinforced by a deep commitment to listening intently to others.

The servant leader seeks to identify the will of a group and helps to clarify that will. He or she listens receptively to what is being said and unsaid. Listening also encompasses hearing one's own inner voice.

Listening, coupled with periods of reflection, is essential to the growth and well-being of the servant leader.

Great leaders take a look ahead

From noted businessman, Cameron Herold, here's some great advice for any leader: "Lean out into the future. Pretend you go in a time machine, three years out. Write down in three to four pages exactly what your company looks like. Describe every aspect of your company at that time. That's your 'painted picture.' Then hand that vivid description to your team. Now that they can see what you can see, they can figure out how to make it happen."

Telling stories: How to go from a good presenter to a great one

Speaking in front of a group – like your Chapter or Lodge– isn't something everyone is very comfortable doing. But talking about your personal experience as a York Rite Mason is often the best presentation you can make to bring a Brother into Further Light.

So what's the solution? Try to talk in the "present tense:"

Everyone wants to be a great conversationalist, whether you're speaking in front of a large group or just catching up with friends. Share your stories in the present tense to make them (and yourself!) more engaging and interesting. Once you set the scene, tell your story in present tense to draw others in and give them a better idea of what happened. You may also find the present tense makes you more descriptive. Here's an example:

Which one of these sounds more compelling: "A few years ago, I was leading the candidates around the Chapter as the Principal Sojourner..." or "It's the first part of the Royal Arch Degree and I'm the Principal Sojourner, walking the candidates through the dessert. All of a sudden, we approach the River Jordan, its waters were not cold....?"

Of course, you don't want to give so many small details that you go on for too long, but added detail from present tense brings your story to life. Training yourself to switch tenses as a default when you start sharing a story can take some time to make a habit, but over time it will make your stories more interesting and engaging.

New Veteran's Program

Are you a veteran? Would you like to receive some recognition for your service to your country? Your Grand Chapter is currently working on a presentation ceremony to go along with the new Masonic Veteran's medal available from the General Grand Chapter. This ceremony will honor you and other veterans and active servicemen. Watch this newsletter for further information. It will be made available as soon as it passes muster. Please help your Chapters prepare to recognize all our veterans by letting your Chapter Secretary know that you are a veteran, your rank and which branch of service you were in. Thank you Companions.

Life Membership: Take a close look

Have you reviewed your lifetime membership returns with all of your Chapter members? Is the original contribution fairly adjusted? Is it time to make a change?

Our Grand Chapter requires the contributions for those who are interested to become a lifetime member to be set at a minimum of \$300. It can be more. Half of that contribution goes into a fund for your Chapter to receive the interest it generates. The other half helps to offset lost per capita for the Grand Chapter.

Is the amount to purchase a lifetime membership enough for your Chapter? Probably not. Not even close.

We suggest your Chapter's High Priest create a committee to determine a fair value based on today's markets.

Why not amend your bylaws to allow your minimum contribution to increase at the same rate your Chapter dues are raised? Make it automatic. What if all the members of your Chapter became lifetime members? Is the interest earned enough for your Chapter to operate?

These are questions and thoughts you - and your Chapter should consider and find the answers to.

Another take on the Veil Fund

Every month, we're bringing you a new article about the Grand Chapter's Veil Trust Fund. As you know, it is neither a rainy day fund nor a slush fund. It was designed to assist the Grand Charter in their endeavors and reduce the frequencies of Per Capita increases.

This fall, the Grand Chapter Veil Fund Committee and a Grand Officer (Tim Vice), with the permission of the Most Excellent Grand High Priest, is offering an opportunity for you, your family or friends to win a Benelli Super Black Eagle 2 Real Tree Camo Shotgun - and help us to raise funds for the Veil Trust Fund. Each opportunity to win will cost you just \$10. Only a maximum of 500 opportunities will be sold. The drawing will be held December 11, 2016, just in time to make someone's Christmas Wish come true.

We ask that you support us in this endeavor. If no one has approached you and you want to participate please contact Tim Vice (309) 207-0965 or me, Skip Hamilton, at (618) 445-1814, and we will make sure you have an opportunity to participate. Thank you in advance for your support.

Communicating and connecting.

In one of our last issues, I talked about communication. A little effort can go a long way in keeping your Companions informed. But even a Chapter who communicates well - and often - can still have members who are inactive. Why? It's simple - there's no connection.

Members of any Masonic body need to feel connected to the organization. This connection keeps them engaged. Connection gives them a reason to allocate a portion of their 24" gauge to your cause.

When potential members come around, spend time getting to know them. Not because you need to determine if they meet the minimum requirements to join your body or how soon he can fill an officers seat, but because you actually care about him.

Each member finds their connection different from the next member. You have to care about each person individually. Find out what his life is like. Find out why he is interested in joining the Chapter; what he hopes to find, and what he expects of membership. Discover what barriers he might have to becoming an active member of the Chapter.

— Companion Scott Dueball

Question & answer

Q. Our Chapter members have decided to copy a program from another Chapter. We plan to do a "Buckets of Love" fund raising event. Do we need permission from the Grand Chapter to do this?

A: There are two things that come to mind. First, check with your city or county administrators for any local requirements. Secondly, a dispensation must be issued for a Chapter as such to attend any public function or service except such as are strictly masonic. Other than that, no, do you do not need to get the Grand Chapter's permission to hold a fundraiser.

Q. Our Chapter borders on the Mississippi river. We are close to another Chapter which is located across the river. We plan to attend one of their Chapter meetings. Is that a problem?

A. All correspondence and interaction by Illinois Chapters with Chapters of another jurisdiction shall be conducted through the office of the Grand Secretary, except in cases of emergency. It's a good idea to give the MEGHP a heads-up too. However, the Grand Chapter generally encourages any interaction your Chapter wants to have.

Have another question? Email RVawter@RAM-IL.org

A donkey's story

One day, a farmer's donkey fell down into a well. The jackass cried piteously for hours as the farmer tried to figure out what to do. Finally, he decided the animal was old and the well needed to be covered up anyway; it just wasn't worth it to retrieve the donkey.

He invited his neighbors to come over and help him. They each grabbed a shovel and began to shovel dirt into the well. At first, the donkey realized what was happening and cried horribly. Then, to everyone's amazement he quieted down.

A few shovel loads later, the farmer finally looked down the well. He was astonished at what he saw. With each shovel of dirt that hit his back, the donkey was doing something amazing. He would shake it off and take a step up.

As the farmer and his neighbors continued to shovel dirt on top of the animal, he would shake it off and take a step up. Pretty soon, everyone was amazed as the donkey stepped up over the edge of the well and happily trotted off!

Life is going to shovel dirt on you. Lots and lots of dirt!

The trick to getting along well is to shake it off and take a step up. Each of our troubles is a stepping stone. We can get out of the deepest wells just by not stopping, never giving up!

Remember the 5 simple rules to being happy:

1. Free your heart from hatred – forgive.
2. Free your mind from worries – most never happen.
3. Live simply and appreciate what you have.
4. Give more.
5. Expect less

NOW . . . enough of all this happy crap . . .

The donkey later came back and bit the heck out of the farmer. The gashes from the bites became severely infected, and the farmer eventually died in extreme agony from septic shock.

The moral from today's lesson: When you do something wrong and try to cover your ass, it always comes right back to bite you!

More Q&A? Sure!

Q. Our Chapter officers hold two year terms. Is it necessary to conduct another installation of officers for the 2nd year?

A. Officers of a chartered Chapter must be installed annually even though reelected or re-appointed. Why not have fun during your installation and wear the Chapter Robes and costumes during the installation ceremony?

Q. I recently took over as Secretary of my Chapter. I cannot find our Chapter's seal. Are we required to have a seal?

A. According to our Grand Chapter bylaws, every chartered Chapter holden under this jurisdiction shall have a seal, with the name and number engraven thereon, an impression of which shall be deposited with the Grand Secretary.

Q. How often is my Chapter required to meet?

It shall be the duty of every Chapter to assemble at least once in each quarter of a year. And those Chapters not meeting, for the space of one year shall be liable to forfeit all privileges under the Grand Chapter and their charter may be taken away, unless sufficient excuse shall be shown for such neglect. So go ahead and meet, Companions.

Bringing leadership lessons to you

Nobody is born knowing how to be a good Chapter, Lodge or other Masonic Body officer. While we may have some of the skills, experiences and abilities of a leader, we all need to be taught how to be a truly great leader. It's not hard! Traditionally, Companions were taught these skills as they progressed through the chairs in their Chapter.

But the more common experience in recent years is for a newly exalted Companion to be quickly thrown somewhere into the officer line – the middle, the bottom... sometimes even the dais! – without the benefit of the “on the job training” that is provided by starting at the bottom of the line and progressing year over to year to the top of the line as Excellent High Priest.

The Grand Chapter has recognized this is an issue, and so this year created a program of leadership training to provide some of the skills our Companions will need in order to lead and manage their Chapters. We've even had sizable groups of non-Companions (i.e. members who have not joined the York Rite yet) attend these sessions and bring back the lessons learned to their Lodge.

As of this writing, the program has been presented to dozens of Companions in regional sessions held in September and October in Canton, Addison and O'Fallon, with the fourth session scheduled in Homer on November 19th. The half day course is presented in three sections.

The first section presents and discussions the various attributes of good leadership and good management. The second section teaches the various functions necessary to run a Chapter including writing a plan for the year, creating & tracking a budget, membership growth & retention, and planning & executing fundraising activities. The final section ties it all together in an interactive exercise of planning the capitular year for a hypothetical Chapter.

The feedback from the course evaluation forms has been extremely positive. So positive, in fact, that Grand Chapter is planning another round of leadership development courses around the state in Spring 2017. So if you missed the Fall 2016 sessions, watch for upcoming details about what's coming next.

– Scott Dayton, Chairman, Leadership Development Committee

A bit more Q&A

Q. At our Annual Meeting, we have elections of officers. This is almost always done by acclamation. Is this allowed?

A. Technically, according to Grand Chapter bylaws (code 2-73), "The High Priest, King, Scribe, Treasurer and Secretary shall be chosen annually by secret ballot...provided, that in the case of the suggestion of only one name for an office, the Chapter may elect by acclamation."

Q. As long as my Chapter holds annual elections for the elected positions, am I required as the High Priest to fill all other offices? There are only five or six members who attend my chapter regularly anyway.

A. Every chapter shall consist of the following officers:

High Priest, King, Scribe, Treasurer, Secretary, Chaplain, Captain of the Host, Principal Sojourner, Royal Arch Captain, Master of the Third Veil, Master of the Second Veil, Master of the First Veil, Steward, Sentinel.

You are required to have 14 offices filled and no one person shall hold two offices. We recognize that not every officer can be available for every meeting. But, you are required to hold your meeting with a required five Royal Arch Masons present who are members of the Chapter.

Concurrent, declared, and joint openings: What's the deal with these?

Recently, our MEGHP traveled to a Chapter for his official visit. The annual return of the Chapter showed that the Chapter met every month. The bylaws on hand showed the same. Yet, when the Grand High Priest arrived, he was surprised to hear that it was not "Chapter's night" to open – another Body was opening that evening.

This Chapter, like many, many others, has made a decision to meet with other Bodies on their stated meeting night. The Body (or Bodies) not opening that evening are "declared" open. Is this allowable?

Nope. Not at all.

Only the sitting Grand High Priest can declare a Chapter open. Otherwise, a Chapter must be opened – on the days and times specified in its current, approved bylaws – via Grand Chapter-provided and -approved ritual by the Chapter's High Priest or, in his absence, the King or Scribe.

Does this mean you can't have other Bodies, like the Council or Commandery, open the same evening? No, not at all. But, there is no ritual in any of the three York Rite Bodies' ritual or tactic books that allow for other Bodies to be opened at the same time, in concurrence, or by declaration.

Why are we sticklers here? Simple.

Our Companions joined the Royal Arch for the experience of that Body. Same for the other two York Rite Bodies. By denying our Companions (and Sir Knights) the opportunity for that experience, you are essentially saying that that experience is not important.

So what's the solution? Simple also.

Open one Body, conduct business (or work or instruction) and then close it. Open another Body and do the same. Repeat if all three Bodies meet on the same night.

Does it bother you that our Companions use the ritual books for opening and closing? Us too. But by minimizing the number of times our Chapters meet and open, it's no wonder that we are all losing our proficiency. You wouldn't allow this to happen at your Lodge meeting. Why do you allow it to happen in your Chapter?