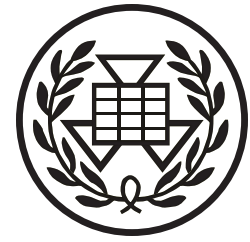




THE WORD



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!

Spring Regional Sessions

The Grand Chapter's fall Leadership Sessions have come to an end and before the last one was over, we had a second Chapter step forward saying that they would like to host something similar in the spring of 2017! Each of our four leadership conferences was very well attended. All had Companions from multiple Chapters, one was much more attended by our lodge brethren, and others had good numbers of local "seasoned" leaders in attendance. So what's in store for the spring?

Locations: Right now, we have sessions planned for DeWitt Chapter in Petersburg and another at Ford Chapter in Paxton. There will likely be two or three more locations, in the northern and southern parts of the state.

When: Once winter has passed, our spring sessions will begin. Think April and May, with the southern ones coming earlier.

How are these different: Unlike our fall conferences, these will have four or five short, hands-on sessions. They will center around planning your year as High Priest; methods to communicate with Chapter members easier, more effectively, and more often; and ideas to plan and run Chapter meetings that keep members interested and active.

We're also asking each host Chapter to plan and run one of the sessions: They might do over what they do to get new members and keep old ones active, talk about their fundraising ideas, how they use Masonic education to build their Chapters, etc.

Sessions will likely be on Saturdays, starting at 8:30am and done by 2:30pm. A lunch will be served and discussion and feedback the main point of these events. Of course they will be open to our non-member Masonic brethren so they are a great way to show potential members how your Chapter is doing things differently!

GGRAC Life Membership

Do you want to save your Chapter a couple of bucks every year? Purchase a Life Membership in the General Grand Chapter and your Chapter will NEVER pay per capita to our international, overseeing Body EVER AGAIN. Just \$25 and a quick fill-in of the short application is all that is needed for your Chapter to avoid paying this per capita on you.

This upcoming year, that amount will be \$2 per person and raise to \$3 per person in the year after that. There's also a rumor that the General Grand Chapter may raise the Life Membership Fee to \$50 or \$75 at their 2017 Triennial Session. So download the application at RAM-IL.org/GGRAC-life-membership/ and do your Chapter a favor

Your Grand Chapter wants you!

Do you have Grand Chapter Officer aspirations? Perhaps sitting on a committee and becoming part of change? How about being a Grand Representative to another state or country? Whatever your interests are we have a spot for you. Contact our Grand High Priest. Ask him what you can help with. He would love to hear from you!

Being a Better Community Member

Masons are notorious for our secrecy, privacy, and desire to stay in the shadows. Our ritual practices and even traditions demand that we stay out of the mainstream while other fraternal groups tend to be very visible out in the public. After all, the Kiwanis are busy helping our community's children. The Rotary, well, they have their parks and other social services. The Elks, Moose, Eagles, and other "animal fraternities?" Somewhat similar to the Freemasons, but with a more social, fellowship aspect. There's nothing wrong with any of this.

So how can our Chapters become better community citizens? Sure, we may do some fundraising or help out where needed, but certainly there may be other things we can do. The whole faith, hope, and charity thing.

Some ideas that come to mind, especially in the holiday season:

- Hold a food drive for the local food pantry. This is a great way to get inactive members back active. Some grocery stores will even donate large amounts of canned or preserved goods.
- Set up a holiday gift wrapping day at your temple. Rather than set a price, ask for a donation that the gift-givers feel appropriate. Maybe partner with some kids groups to increase exposure.
- Hold a gift giving event for kids at the local shelter. The Chapter can come in with someone acting as Santa and the Companions as his elves!
- Volunteer to make and serve dinner at the local shelter. Cold weather drives many homeless inside and the need is even greater during the winter months.
- Sponsor a needy family (or two or three). Beyond just food for the holidays, many need clothing, and even help finding jobs. There's plenty your members can do.

We tend to give money as a way to make us feel better and do our part to provide relief. But our services, caring, and just plain old time almost always makes more of a difference. Make your Chapter known in the community for doing good. You know — the greatest of these is charity.

Question & answer

Q. The charter that hangs on the wall in my Chapter room is damaged and hard to read. It is not legible. Can it be replaced?

A. Yes, it can be! However, there is a small fee to do that. Contact our Grand Secretary's office for details.

Q. Can my Chapter meet in another location during the winter months? It is difficult to warm the meeting hall and it's very uncomfortable.

A. There are requirements to meet in another facility. Remember, you still are required to open your Chapter formally. The logistics of moving equipment etc., can be challenging. However, contact the Most Excellent Grand High Priest for his ideas and assistance. He will very likely grant a dispensation to meet elsewhere if proper arrangements are made.

Q. I've heard the Grand Representative Program has come back. True?

A. Absolutely! We have about 20 Grand Representatives to other jurisdictions right now and the program is now under new leadership. If you're interested in becoming a Grand Representative, contact our Grand High Priest or Chairperson, Glenn Overby, at glenn@mondoj.net

Skill Sets Every Leader Needs to Attain

Recognizing, learning new leadership skills, and implementing progressive changes will ultimately help to prepare our Chapter officers to manage their Chapters, and to ultimately become better Chapter leaders. The following leadership lessons are important to understand:

Leaders Listen: Successful Chapter leaders recognize that success is ultimately a team effort. Good Chapter leaders will admit what they don't know, and it's perfectly acceptable to ask for help. No Chapter leader can have a successful Chapter by doing things himself but he can destroy his Chapter by not listening to any good advice from the Companions he leads. Therefore, listening and not just hearing others is essential.

Leaders Care: Unfortunately, we still have many local Chapter leaders who haven't quite made it into the 21st Century. Some of them still cling to the ways that things were done too many years ago. Thus, there can be considerable differences of expectations between the younger generations who join our Chapter and are confronted with Chapter officers who don't have interesting programs for their members and their families. Soon those younger members drift away from their Chapter.

Leaders Inspire: A Chapter's success depends on how well it's satisfying its members. However, changing the world goes beyond a Chapter serving its members because it's also about serving society. Therefore, a visionary Chapter leader needs to be thinking and planning about more than the next position he occupies in Chapter. He needs to be thinking about the future and what his Chapter's reputation and place in the world will be, whether it's 5, 10, or more years from today.

Leaders Work: Progressive Chapter leaders who want to change the world in a positive manner need more than talent. They also need to do the work, because hard work and dedication beats talent, especially if talent doesn't work hard enough. Nothing progressive happens in a Chapter unless the Chapter officers work hard to achieve it. Therefore, there's really no substitute for hard or dedicated work.

Companions, if we learn and practice good leadership lessons and skills, Masonry will continue to grow stronger in the future. However, the future is in your hands. What will you do with it?

— Companion John Loayza, Leadership Development Committee

Grand Sessions 2017 Sneak Peek

The 2017 Grand Sessions will be held at the Bloomington-Normal Marriott Conference Center and Hotel (the location of the last four Grand Sessions) on July 13, 14 and 15, 2017. The Grand Chapter's Grand Convocation will be Friday, July 14th.

This year, we have a brand new Grand Sessions Committee, lead by our very own Companion Barry Weer. The committee consists of nine individuals including the Grand Presidings. All are committed to planning and holding the best Grand Session we've ever had.

At our Grand Convocation, we have two very special additions, never seen before:

Our new Veteran's Committee will be showcasing their new presentation ceremony. A team is being formed and practicing and the early glimpse at the short ceremony shows it to be very moving and meaningful.

Also new will be tribute to our Fallen Companions. We saw this at the Michigan Grand Chapter Grand Sessions and it is a real tear-jerker to say the least.

Your Chapters will receive a MAILED packet (followed up with email reminders and other information) about Grand Sessions in the spring. KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR IT.

Are your Companions connected?

Last month we talked about communication. A little effort can go a long way in keeping your Companions informed. But lets say I had visited or even joined a Chapter along the way who had a modern communication package in place, I would still be inactive. Why? In one word: 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 him. Not because you need to determine if he meets the minimum requirements to join your body or how soon he can fill an officer's 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. What barriers he might have to becoming an active member of the Chapter. Find out why he is interested in joining the Chapter. What he hopes to find,. What he expects of membership.

We are all busy. Many – if not most – of you hold or have held leadership positions in multiple bodies. We constantly make decisions about which body we have time to show up and contribute to. The reasons that factor into that decision have likely changed over the past decade. We must become familiar with those factors present today.

— Companion Scott Dueball

Can you imagine? What would you do?

What if someone objects to the installing of an officer during your installation ceremony? Wow. What an interesting question.

Such objection shall be referred to a committee of three experienced members, preferably Past High Priests, who shall immediately retire to some convenient room and cite the objector to appear and state his reasons for objecting. If the objection be sustained, charges shall be preferred, the accused placed on trial, and his installation postponed until the result of the trial be declared; if not sustained, the installation shall be conducted as if no objection has been made. In case an objection is sustained against the High Priest-elect, the whole installation shall be postponed until the result of the trial be declared.

Finding Success with the Arch of Excellence, Part 1

Twenty simple ideas can convert even the most down-trodden, hopeless Chapter into one that all of the others in the state look up to. Yep, the Grand Chapter's Arch of Excellence Award is the single best program that will turn a Chapter on the brink of extinction to one that is firing on all cylinders.

Let's take a look at the first five requirements. We'll present another five every month (though you can check out our web site at RAM-IL.org to read our review of all twenty AND download the application form). In the mean time, let's get started with the first five:

Grand Convocation Attendance: Two of three dais officers plus one extra Companion need to attend the annual Grand Chapter Grand Convocation in July. There's no better chance for your Chapter to get "in the know" and to learn about how to be a better Chapter than by taking advantage of everything the Grand Convocation offers: Who's who, learning about bylaw and other updates, getting a glimpse into the new MEGHP's programs and initiatives, networking with other Companions from around the state, and more!

District Deputy Grand High Priest's Official Visit: Your Chapter will open in form (without books), receive the DDGHP, and do everything it can to have a favorable report submitted on your behalf to the Grand Chapter. A successful DDGHP visit means your officers know our simple ritual and that the day-to-day (maybe, month-to-month) workings of your Chapter are in fine order (finances, ritual, equipment, membership growth, etc.).

Open Installation of the Chapter: What better way to celebrate and acknowledge your Chapter's leaders than to host an open installation of officers? It bestows pride on the Chapter's officers and members. It shows our families and friends that you care about your Chapter. And it showcases the Chapter to others in the district and state. Why not invite the local newspaper or radio station to attend? Local governmental leaders like the mayor or aldermen? Important local business leaders? Members of other clubs and fraternities? This is your Chapter's chance to shine (and maybe attract a few new members!).

Membership Retention Committee: It's far easier to keep a member than it is to get a new one. Appoint a couple of Companions to make regular and productive contact with inactive members and then report on their actions at EVERY meeting. Chapters that do this will soon see old members showing up — and new ones less likely to wander off.

Dinner Meetings: The Chapter needs to have (at least) three of these during the year. Companions that eat together care about each other — and their Chapter. Invite in a speaker or ask a member to give a short talk or program. Have themes to your meals or plan them around holidays. Invite family, friends, prospective members, the local Lodge(s), and even other Masonic Bodies.

These are just five of the twenty requirements for the Arch of Excellence Award. See how many your Chapter can get done this year and you'll find your worries about new members, participation, and who's taking what officer chair next year will all fall behind. Be sure to visit our web site at RAM-IL.org to read our review of all twenty Arch of Excellence requirements AND download the application form for your Chapter to use as a guide to success (and also to compete for the award!).

Are Quarterly Meetings a Good Idea?

According to our Grand Chapter Constitution (Section 57), "It shall be the duty of every chapter to assemble at least once in each quarter of a year." Does that mean you should meet only once a quarter? No. In fact, when we see a Chapter meeting only once a quarter, either by choice (i.e. that's what their bylaws specify or their bylaws make direct reference to meeting frequency as directed by the Grand Chapter's bylaws or Constitution) or by design (some Chapters "rotate" which York Rite Body opens and conducts business each month), we've noted time and again that these Chapters seem not to be doing well: New members are few and far between, when a new Companion is exalted they may only attend a meeting or two before stopping attending, meetings tend to have the bare minimum number of attendees, the Chapter's meeting is simply a business meeting and no more, etc. You get the idea.

Why Chapters should open every month

So while a Chapter is technically only required to open and meet four times a year, we strongly advise that that our Chapters meet every month. The reasons are simple:

Frequency = participation. A Chapter that is meeting monthly tends to have more attendees, more events and programs, better participation by the membership in general, and is very likely experiencing an increase in membership, year to year. Chapters that only open and meet once every three months (or less), probably don't have a positive or long future ahead of them.

Frequency = growth. Chapters that meet often are likely taking in petitions, talking about how they can improve their chapter, and seeing new members frequenting their meetings. Chapters that meet infrequently probably see less and less participation and more demits and suspensions. They are also likely to be in financial danger.

Frequency = positive experience. Your Companions joined the Royal Arch to gain further light in their Masonic journey. If they're not given that opportunity because the Chapter doesn't meet very often, their interest quickly fades and they cease being active members. A Chapter that meets often allows that positive experience to occur and new members quickly become active and involved with the Chapter.

Rotating openings

We see a lot of Chapters meeting along with other York Rite Bodies; sometimes the Council and Commandery, or just with one of those Bodies. More often than not (though this trend does seem to be lessening!), the two (or three) Bodies take turns opening and conducting business on their stated meeting nights.

In the best cases, each Body opens and conducts business completely separate from the others (reading minutes, discussing business, it's own programs and presentations, planning and discussing events, etc.). Perhaps one Body spends more time in "its" month than the other one (or two), but all two (or three) Bodies open, have a meeting, and close in form.

In the worst case, one Body opens and the other(s) is declared open "jointly," "concurrently," or with some other term (all of which are invalid, by the way – only the Grand Presiding of a Masonic Body can declare a Body open and there is no ritual, ceremony, or precedent in any York Rite Body for concurrent openings).

Are Quarterly Meetings a Good Idea?, continued

We've even seen these "joint" meetings where one Body opens, none others are declared open, but then business is conducted for both (or all three). In these cases, the lines between the Bodies is blurred and you might have Commandery Inspection discussions during a Chapter meeting, Council fundraising discussed during Commandery, and Chapter communications presented during Council. Confusing, huh?

There are some problems with this "model" of conducting business:

First, members (or visitors) who are not members of the other Bodies should really not be sitting in those meetings. Think about it: It's like an Entered Apprentice sitting in during Lodge meeting opened on the Third Degree. You would never do that, would you? And your Brother Mason would feel out of place and embarrassed.

Second, rarely do Chapters, Councils, and Commanderies that open concurrently, jointly, or declared proficient in any of the ritual of any of the Bodies. Our ritual and traditions are what separates and differentiates us from other fraternal organizations. By minimizing and limiting our expertise in our simplest – yet still important – ritual, we are devaluing the experience of every York Rite Body.

Finally, things get confusing. Members might not follow what is being discussed. Also, you might miss something relevant or important for one of the Bodies because discussion is dominated by another. This is especially critical if one Body is "stronger" than another or if there is timely business that needs to be addressed.

So, do we allow quarterly stated meetings? Yes. Do we encourage them? Absolutely not. In fact, when a Chapter changes its bylaws to reduce the number of meetings each year, we have cause for alarm (and usually a call to the Chapter's High Priest from the Grand High Priest). On the other hand, a Chapter that is increasing the number of stated meetings (or even calling special ones for instruction, work, special events, etc.) is one that is on its way up.

In conclusion

Companions, please consider the short-, medium-, and long-term affect of reducing or minimizing your stated meeting nights. You may think that you are saving your members time from being away from home, family, or work, but what you are really doing is saying that there is no reason to be an active member and that the value of your Chapter is minimal. Don't be surprised to see dwindling attendance, financial hardships, and, eventually a merge or surrendering of your charter in the future.

Let's Play! Fundraising can be fun.

Saturday January 21st @ 7:00pm the RAMCF will be hosting a Fellowship/Fundraising Event to watch The Chicago Wolves VS. The Milwaukee Admirals. A portion of the ticket and food voucher sales goes to the RAMCF. Tickets are \$26.00 apiece and include a souvenir hat. Food vouchers are also available for \$9.00 apiece and include a hot dog and a drink. A \$12.00 value. For more information or to purchase tickets please contact Patrick Robin at Patrick@randrcorp.com or via phone at 630-742-7495.

2016 Leadership Conferences Recap — and What's Next!

In the last issue of *The Word*, I gave you a status on Leadership Development Trainings sessions scheduled in the the autumn months of 2016. The Grand Chapter Leadership Development Committee delivered four Leadership Development Training sessions in various regions of Illinois from September through November. Sessions were held in Canton, Addison, O'Fallon, and Homer.

This leadership training was intended to be interactive — and it was. And, while the topics of the training sessions were the same, each of these discussions took on a unique character based on the make-up of the varying audiences who attended each of them.

Canton, the first session, had a lengthy discussion around the qualities that make a good leader. Addison was attended by mostly newer Companions (and many new Masons not yet in the York Rite!) coming up in their respective officer lines for the first time who had lots of questions about the “nuts & bolts” of how to be a good Worshipful Master or Excellent High Priest.

The O'Fallon attendees were almost all seasoned Companions with years and years of service to the York Rite. Those conversation were mostly about where Masonry in general – and Capitular Masonry in particular – seems to be heading in Illinois in the coming years ahead. The Homer session was enthusiastic and creative, with a lot of ideas bounced back and forth about how to grow a Chapter. As an aside: the Craft is alive and well in Homer. Those guys are growing something really special there. I'd encourage you to stop in there for a visit if you have the opportunity.

Based on conversations, emails, and phone calls I've received in the past few weeks, the 2016 Leadership Development Program has been well received around the state. So much so that we're already planning another round in Spring 2017.

We'll be changing up the content and the format a little bit, but warm reception of this program clearly speaks to how much of a need and desire there is in our membership for this kind of training. Our Chapter officers clearly want their Chapters to be successful, but they're just looking for a little guidance or direction about how to do it.

I keep saying: No one is born knowing how to run a Lodge or Chapter, or how to plan a year in the East, or how to write and track a budget, or how to set up ritual or a fundraiser to be successful. We've all have had to be taught how to do these things, and we, in turn, need to teach what we've learned to the guys coming up behind us if we want this organization to prosper.

For Capitular Masonry to thrive in Illinois we need a pipeline of solid leaders coming up through the ranks to manage our Chapters, Districts, and the Grand Chapter. They sure as heck aren't going to drop from the sky, so we're going to have to grow and develop our own. If you're interested in becoming one of those leaders just raise your hand. The Grand Chapter will train you, mentor you, and do everything we can to make you successful. Just call or email myself or any Grand Chapter officer, or stop by one of the Spring 2017 Leadership Conferences.

— Companion Scott Dayton, Chairman, Leadership Development Committee