

FREEMASONS CIVILITY INITIATIVE (THE INITIATIVE)

- LODGE PRESENTATION 1

Speech Version

To be delivered in the timeframe of January/February 2017

For review by the Presenter

Prior to making this presentation, please review the following.

This presentation takes about 6.5 minutes to deliver.

This is the first of several presentations on the Freemasons Civility Initiative. The committee that has put this Initiative together is hoping that Freemasons throughout our jurisdiction will take up the challenge of promoting civil actions and behaviours within the Lodge and with their family and friends.

Purpose of this presentation

To provide an introduction to the Freemasons Civility Initiative that is being proposed to our Lodge brethren. It is hoped that this presentation will encourage brethren to think about civility, assess their own level of civility and how incivility impacts their lives and those of their loved ones. We hope that brethren will be inspired to act as a Freemason in all their dealings and thereby demonstrate civility in all their actions.

To link this presentation to the prevalence of incivility you may wish to do a quick survey of the brethren prior to the delivery of the paper- have any of you seen any acts of incivility recently?

Additional information can be found on the Grand Lodge website.

Introduction

Brethren, we have a problem in today's society; the world about us is becoming increasingly uncivil.

We tolerate being talked at instead of talking with each other. Listening has become an endangered skill. We have allowed ideological intolerance to evolve into self-righteousness, condemnation and, ultimately, persecution — and we all know that's wrong.

The world is fractured by religious intolerance and bigotry; Freemasons respect all religions and welcome all believers in the Great Architect of the Universe — in whatever form that belief may take.

Polarized and hostile speech dominates the news media, our political arenas, and our everyday lives. This behavior has become epidemic. It is costing us money, our health, our dignity, and is putting our democratic heritage in jeopardy.

If we don't address this state of affairs now, incivility will soon become our "new normal." And when this happens, we may be within just a single generation of it becoming so ingrained in our collective psyche, that our children and grandchildren may not know any other way. Do we really want to imagine such a world?

Since the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* was proclaimed in Canada and has been institutionalized in our society (*i.e.*, in the schools and norms of behavior) the youth of today and millennials across Canada are not accepting of incivility. They are intolerant of bullying,

disrespect and uncivil behavior and conduct that is not inclusive. The challenge is that those not of that era who were recipients of incivility tend to be accepting of bad behavior and to some degree guilty of such practice. Add to that the unfortunate product of media coverage today appears to project a viewpoint that what is occurring remotely (and for the most part isolated) is reflection of the norm. Demonstrating civility in our conduct as Freemasons is how we can provide instruction to our peers and reassurance to the youth of today that what is seen in the media need not be the norm.

What is Civility?

Civility is all about manners, politeness, courtesy and ethics. Civility in action demonstrates consideration, sensitivity, caring and kindness in the way we treat each other and our surroundings. The civility code of conduct is based on three Rs- Respect, Restraint and Responsibility.

What we are suggesting is civility in its best form and not new world political correctness. We believe it is possible to disagree but done so in a code of conduct denoted by respectful communications and actions within society — in other words by acting like a Freemason

Why is Civility in Society Important?

Civility is essential for the success of any society. It is grounded in respect and in an attitude of inclusiveness. When we practice it we remind ourselves about the impact of our actions on others while contributing to the well being of our family, community and society at large.

Why Should Freemasons Care About Civility?

Freemasonry is based on the belief that each man has a responsibility to be the best he can be and in doing so has an obligation to make the world a better place. Each Freemason has made a commitment to take a charitable approach to life. Charity for us is more than financial; it extends to a generosity of spirit and sharing that spirit with their family and their community.

As Freemasons we are taught to meet each other upon the square and to treat each other with respect and dignity. By setting an example and acting civilly towards everyone we can be a leader. Making a contribution to society is the only way that Freemasonry will be able to sustain itself, let alone grow. We need to shine our masonic light for all to see by applying our masonic lessons.

It is our sincere hope that by stepping forward to assist society in re-establishing a more civil approach to public and interpersonal discourse, the profile of Freemasonry will also be raised. Through our actions, good men throughout society will be made aware of our purpose and be more inclined to join our efforts.

What Has Happened So Far?

With the support of our Grand Master a planning and implementation group has been established comprised of 12 Civility Ambassadors representing the areas of our jurisdiction. This group has been working since July of this year to create a plan to carry the message of civility through our brethren and out to our communities. The Ambassadors provide advice and coördinate the implementation of the Freemasons Civility Initiative in their respective areas.

This presentation is the Introduction to the Initiative. In March and April another presentation will outline for you the opportunity to become an active participant.

What You Can Do Now

As Freemasons we are encouraged:

“... to practice, out of the lodge, those great moral duties which are inculcated in it”

Every Freemason has an opportunity to **self-evaluate** and **engage** in demonstrating acts of civility in all our interactions. Live your life as a Freemason. Letting our masonic light shine though in our daily lives allows that quality to become readily evident to all we encounter. Living our masonic tenets and principles is exemplifying civility.

When Can We be Engaged in the Civility Initiative Message?

We can all start today by emphasizing civility in all our dealings with family, friends and associates. The Civility Initiative primary focus is **May 2017**. **There will be additional opportunities for Lodges to engage in civility activities** — more information will be provided in March 2017.

Where Can We Get Civility Related Resources?

Your DDGM has access to resources provided by the Civility Ambassador. In addition the following sources are available for you to access:

Web links to;

- The National Civility Center:
<http://www.civilitycenter.org/>
- Masonic Civility Resources:
<http://www.masoniccivility.org/2016-11-11-lodge-document-resources.html>

Freemasons Civility Initiative resources available from your lodge secretary:

- Civility Initiative Outline

Conclusion

Most of us can improve on our practice of civility in both our thoughts and actions.

As Freemasons, we are stewards of the language of civility. But we cannot keep it hidden in our lodge rooms. Our communities need what we have to offer. In leading by example we greatly increase the chances of others saying, “I want to be like him.” This is the best way for us to demonstrate our value to society and thereby identify Freemasonry as the home for men of quality and men who pursue self-improvement.

Our masonic virtues are the content of our character, the elements of our human spirit. They grow stronger whenever we apply them. The social investment of our masonic virtues to the challenge of improving civility is the moment we have been waiting to show we can have a positive influence on society.

The Freemasons Civility Initiative Ambassador team hopes you will take up this challenge.