

## MASONIC HARMONY

The Oxford dictionary defines harmony as “the combination of musical notes sounded at the same time to produce chords with a pleasing effect” or “a pleasing quality when things are arranged together well” or simply “agreement”.

Harmony affects the overall health and welfare of a Masonic Body. If you have good harmony, you can overcome financial and membership challenges; but, if you don't, the Masonic Body will suffer regardless of its financial and membership resources. Our new members have joined a Brotherhood, which by its nature necessitates good harmony.

The importance of Harmony is clearly exemplified in our ritual. We can recall in the First Degree, when the candidate is invested with the badge of our Order and is charged as follows: “But if, unfortunately, your differences should be of such a nature as not to be so easily adjusted, it were better that one or both of you should retire than that the harmony of the [ ] be disturbed by your presence”.

My concern is that we are not always heeding these words – some of our members carry grudges, sometimes for years. The severity of the situation is compounded when these negative feelings are openly shared with our other Companions.

### **Outside of the Chapter**

I think that in more recent times our behavior outside the Chapter is having a negative impact on Masonic Harmony. Our behavior inside the Chapter is clearly laid out in our constitutions, By-Laws, ritual, and P&E material and we strive to follow these guidelines. However, we sometimes go astray with our behavior outside the Chapter; particularly with the advent of modern day technology and our ‘instantaneous’ communication with our Masonic Companions. We must bear in mind that our behaviour towards our Companions outside the Chapter is as important as our behaviour within it.

### **Impact of Technology**

Is technology too quick and easy – too dangerous? When I became Provincial Grand Prior in the Knights Templar I had lunch with the late George Corbin from St. Catharines, a long standing and well respected Knight Commander of the Temple in Sovereign Great Priory. Right Eminent Knight Corbin offered me some advice: “When I get upset with someone, I write a letter stating exactly how I feel, but I don't mail it right away – I put it in a desk drawer, sleep on it, and the next morning I take it out, read it, and I usually never put it in the mail”.

I consider this sound advice and suggest that we should do the same with electronic communication – we should draft it, save it, sleep on it and decide the next day rather to send it, or delete it.

Has technology had a negative impact on Masonic Harmony?

A few examples of what I consider the misuse of Technology are:

- We sometimes email someone (or several people) with a question, rather than look it up. We don't take the time or have the patience to read the many sources of Masonic rules and regulations available to us.
- We distribute minutes of meetings to our members who have email and then move that the minutes be accepted as distributed, but have not considered those members who don't have email and have never had the opportunity to read them.
- We use email to 'cast a net' in seeking assistance to fill degree team positions. I recently received an email that was distributed to 45 Companions with seven lectures needing assistance. Most of the recipients of this email were not members of the Masonic body seeking assistance.

Before communicating with our Companions, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

- Are we respecting the personal time of our Companions? When seeking information, remember that the enquirer has an option – which process is more conducive to the enquirer learning something and remembering it – what else does the enquirer learn during his research. Is sending an email making a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge?
- Have we included everyone when we distribute important information to our members?
- When assembling degree teams, are we strengthening and growing our Masonic body when we look outside too quickly. And perhaps, more profoundly, are we taking advantage of those Companions who are always willing to help?

Companions, I find it disappointing when someone asks me a question that they should be able to research themselves. I feel sorry for those elderly members who are being left out because they don't use and will never have email. And as for 'casting a net' type of communication for assembling degree teams, I find it difficult to offer assistance to what I consider to be poor leadership and very impersonal communication.

## **Conclusion**

I once heard a church sermon on 'fairness'. We are all aware of how children behave - when one gets something and the other doesn't, you hear the phrase "it's not fair". It's difficult to understand and to accept that life is not meant to be fair; that we are dealt different hands and must make the best of what we have.

As Masons, we must endeavour to settle our differences amicably with our Companions, and sometimes we must forgive and forget in order to maintain Harmony.

Companions, each and every time that you communicate with your Companions, inside the Chapter or outside, or vote or ballot or are in that very aloof position where your vote is paramount as acceptance must be unanimous, think about the importance of Masonic Harmony and then govern yourself accordingly.

Rt. Ex. Comp. George Fairbairn  
Grand Third Principal  
August 20, 2020

Reference:

Book of the Work, Protocol and Etiquette Handbook and Constitution of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Canada in the Province of Ontario