

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRO GRAND MASTER



Brethren, since I last circulated a letter in May we have been on something of a roller coaster, 2 steps forward and one step back on more than one occasion. When the partial relaxation of "Lockdown" happened, I felt a huge sense of relief, but this was tempered by all the advice being that there were likely to be rough waters ahead.

The rough waters have arrived, not as turbulent as in March, but, nonetheless, sufficiently bad to set our Masonic recovery on hold. This is depressing, most particularly for all those people who have done so much to keep things going and to inspire Masons and non-Masons alike.

I have mentioned on a few occasions how much charitable work we have been involved with around the world, both voluntary work and financial support. It has been quite remarkable and has not gone unnoticed even by the National Press who can be so unfairly critical of even our best works. The positive outcome of this attention has been a noticeable increase in potential candidates for Initiation and this was one of the reasons we were determined to try to find a suitable way to allow Lodges to bring in new blood, while keeping within the Government guidelines.

As on most occasions when changes are made to traditions caused by unique circumstances, not everyone agrees with all that is done. This is not just true of the Ritual changes, but other aspects of our masonic life as well. However, in respect of the Ritual changes, surely all would agree that to let Lodges and potential Candidates just stagnate through this long period would have been irresponsible in the extreme. Sadly, the latest step backwards has rather negated all the thought that had been put into finding ways to perform our ceremonies for the time being.

It has been inevitable that the legally required way forward is continually changing and relatively complicated to interpret for individual organisations such as ours. We are lucky to have high calibre internal advisers, not least legal advice from many led by the Grand Registrar and a Grand Secretary and many others who are highly qualified medically. Every time there is a change to the legal requirements, the legislation is crawled through by those concerned, discussed in detail, and a recommendation put forward. It is important that we put the right interpretation on the legislation not just a Lay interpretation. Such Lay interpretations are suspect at best!

I am pleased to say that the vast majority of our Brethren are appreciative of all the work that is being done at the centre and I would ask those who are less happy to be assured that nothing is being done or recommended without considerable thought and discussion. Only last Sunday there was a Zoom meeting between the Craft Rulers, President of the Board of General Purposes and its Standing Committee together with the Grand Secretary, to discuss the latest "Rule of 6" which was due to come into being the next day. This all takes time and if the advice from the centre takes a day or two to be circulated so be it. Better that than to get it wrong.

I am very conscious that the conducting of important Lodge business and the continuity of working of Lodges are important aspect of Masonic life. The Book of Constitutions is very clear on how these aspects should operate, but a great deal of thought is being given as to how certain matters can be simplified in the short term. We do not believe that there should be any question of Lodges holding virtual untiled meetings, but the Board is looking at ways of including the membership, who cannot be part of the "6", being included in the decision making process.

We must all remember that every Lodge is special to all its Members and are not the personal Fiefdom of some of the members. It is more important that the Lodge continues its work even in the absence of the majority of its Members, even the most senior, than it grinds to a halt. In these difficult times it is more likely that the younger members will be those most able to attend and they should be supported and encouraged by all others. If we can find ways of involving the whole Membership in debates, so much the better.

We have a magnificent Institution and, whilst the management can seem cumbersome at times, everything is done for a purpose. This will continue and I am extremely grateful to the thousands of Brethren, and particularly the Provincial and District hierarchies, who have shown their support, we won't let you down. To those less content, I would urge patience. We will try to circulate advice on as many matters as possible, as quickly as possible.

However, Brethren, the most important aspect of all is to remain as positive as we can, things will improve, things will get back to normal and, in the meantime, we will all continue to do all those things that Masons are so good at and have been doing for so many years.

Peter Lowndes
Pro Grand Master