

The District Texting Program

INTRODUCTION

As technology is so prevalent today we have found ways that our Craft can benefit from today's technology. One example: our Grand Lodge is now using electronic voting (who saw that coming?).

In District 9 W Bro. Steven W. Chung of Prince Charles Lodge No. 153 has been piloting what has become known as "The District Texting Program". It has been well received and has proven to have a positive effect on attendance within District 9 and the Valley of Vernon. In short, he has compiled lists and then sends out reminders of meetings according to the reminders that are generated from the District 9 Masonic Calendar (the Google one that you can connect to from the Grand Lodge website <http://freemasonry.bcy.ca/calendar.html> which needs to be managed by an active district member who gets all the notices emailed to him from all the concordant bodies.) The calendar has also gained popularity with smartphone users. Some brethren have added this calendar to their personal electronic calendars and now benefit from the built-in reminders. They are reminded of *every masonic event* in their district directly in their calendars... How cool is that?

W Bro. Chung has laid out the design and how the program works, in hopes that it will be adopted by other districts and beyond. It is recommended that the program be introduced to the lodges through the DDGMs and that the DDGMs endeavor to find the right brother for the task.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS TO BE ABLE TO RUN A TEXTING PROGRAM IN YOUR AREA:

- 1 DDGM willing to promote it at every Official Visit.
- 1 Volunteer who is able to operate a texting app on his smartphone and is willing to participate with a proactive approach (needs to take the initiative to 'just do it'...).

In an IDEAL world you would also have:

- 1 Volunteer from each lodge/concordant body to send their notices to a brother who manages the Google Calendar from the Grand Lodge website.

HOW IT WORKS:

- DDGM sends a letter to the secretary to each lodge in the district explaining the program's how & whys.
- Each district must find a minimum of one volunteer to run the program

THE SECRETARIES OF EACH LODGE NEED TO:

- Poll the members for approval to participate in the texting program.
- Supply a list to the volunteer texter of the names & mobile numbers of the members who want to participate.
- To email any new participants contact information to their area volunteer as the new members come onboard.
- Send any special text requests to the district texter and supply its content. (the volunteer will abbreviate the messages as best he needs to in order to be under the 160 characters maximum.

The Volunteers need to:

Download and install the free group texting app (Group SMS - hint - their logo is 3 white envelopes)

- Add all the members on the lists into their contacts (Tip: label each contact by lodge name).
- Create text groups for each lodge/district/All-Texters etc.
- Find a volunteer to administer the district masonic calendar that contains all the regular meetings installations and official visits, etc. From all concordant bodies.
- Set up regular communications with each of the secretaries so that you are on top of any changes to the schedules or additions of practice meetings, etc. (Tip: have them send you their lodge notices).

The Volunteer should send out text messages to the appropriate group for things like:

- Meeting reminders,
- Practice reminders,
- Carpooling messages,
- Pretty much any message the lodges want texted out.

How this works once set up:

The Lodge Secretary or designate will send the volunteer instructions by:

OPTION 1 - via text message to volunteer's mobile number (all text messages are a maximum of 160 characters including spaces and punctuation.).

Text 1 - Please send the following text to XYZ Lodge Members.

Text 2 - only the text to send out.

OPTION 2 - via email to: Volunteers email address

Subject: Please send text to: e.g. Pr. Charles members

Body: the text they want me to send out.

TIP: I recommend that the volunteer keep a notes file on their device where they save frequently used text messages so they can copy and paste into the message.

BIG TIP:

Masonic Calendar: If the volunteer uses a Google calendar then they can use it for reminders of events and promote others in their district to use it on their devices.

If you have any questions or support please contact:

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Kelowna, BC

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250-878-2100 or 1-866-744-2100.

Letter to the Secretary (sample letter)

On the DDGM's Official Letterhead

Date:

Subject: New Communication Tool

Dear Brother Secretary,

Please read in open lodge.

Our district is adopting what is known as "**The District Texting Program**". As technology has become such a big part of our daily lives, we have found ways that our Craft can benefit from today's technology. One example: BCY's Grand Lodge is now using electronic voting (who saw that coming?).

In District 9 W Bro. Steven W. Chung of Prince Charles Lodge No. 153 has been piloting what has become known as "**The District Texting Program**". It has been well received and has proven to have a positive effect on attendance within District 9 and the Valley of Vernon. In short he has compiled lists and then sends out reminders via text message for meetings etc. By using the reminders that are generated from a District Masonic Calendar, he sends out text reminders. Some brethren like it so much they have added their district calendar to personal electronic calendars and now also benefit from the built-in reminders. They are reminded of EVERY MASONIC EVENT in their district directly in their calendar. How cool is that?

W Bro. Chung has laid out the design and how the program works in hopes that it will be adopted by other districts and beyond.

I have chosen to support this program in our district. I request that ALL Secretaries poll their membership to see who wants to receive reminders via text message. Then compile and send a list to the district volunteer. Then maintain the list and whenever there is a change then re-send it to the district volunteer.

Fraternally & Sincerely

RW Bro. Robert (Bob) Bagg
District Deputy Grand Master, District 9
Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon