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Masonic relief

by MW Bro. John L. Cooper III

Masonic philanthropic outreach to society is a centuries-old tradition

Masonic relief for the less fortunate as an organized activity is often considered a modern phenomenon. Many people think of masonic charities, such as the Shriners Hospitals or the RiteCare Childhood Language Program of the Scottish Rite, as purely modern inventions within Freemasonry, something newly created in the twentieth century to "reach out" to the non-masonic world through organized charity. It may come as a surprise to learn that "masonic outreach" is more than two centuries old, and a commentary on its function within Freemasonry is found in a powerful masonic work published in Germany in 1778. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was a contemporary of other distinguished freemasons, such as George Washington and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. As a representative of the German

Enlightenment, he was almost without equal. In 1778, he wrote *Ernst und Falk*, a dialogue patterned after Plato's *Dialogues*. Falk is a freemason, and, when the dialogue opens, he is engaged in a conversation with his friend Ernst. Ernst says to Falk, "Are you a Freemason?" Falk responds, "I believe myself to be one." Falk agrees that he was initiated a freemason in a masonic lodge, but insists that this is not the real reason why he claims to be a freemason. Falk says, "I believe myself to be a freemason—not so much for the reason that I was initiated by older freemasons in a warranted lodge, but because I understand and perceive what Freemasonry is and why it is." Ernst is intrigued with what Freemasonry means to Falk, and Falk is glad to explain it.

One part of the dialogue is especially intriguing as it relates to masonic relief. Falk, when challenged by Ernst to recount the things that freemasons do



Bro. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729 - 1781) was a German dramatist and playwright known as the "father of German criticism". Two of his works, *Ernst und Falk* and *Nathan der Weise*, are of particular interest to freemasons. Depending on whether you believe Albert G. Mackay or Kenneth Mackenzie, Lessing was either initiated into lodge Zu den Drei Goldenen Rosen in 1771, or raised in Hamburg on 14 October 1770.

for others — as opposed to themselves — is treated to a litany of masonic philanthropies of the day: a foundling hospital in Stockholm, a workhouse for poor young girls in Dresden, a school for poor boys in Brunswick, and a free public school in Berlin.

Falk is modest, but Ernst presses him to admit that freemasons do all this for the publicity they receive. Falk vehemently denies this, saying,

"The real deeds of the freemasons are so great, look so far ahead, that whole centuries could pass by before one was able to say, 'That have they done!'" Ernst closes this part of the conversation with a riddle: "Good deeds...aim at making good deeds superfluous."

Think carefully about the meaning of this riddle as you read about masonic relief. Lessing is saying that good

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Masonic relief
from page one

deeds are not just done to relieve a temporary distress, but rather to set in motion things that will ultimately make those deeds superfluous. In Lessing's day, there were no hospitals for the poor; but freemasons started them, and soon society came to accept responsibility for medical care for the poor. In Lessing's day, there were no widespread public schools; but freemasons created them, and soon society came to accept its responsibility for free public education.

Freemasonry believes in equality of men before God, and in 1776, a new political society, America, took its place among the nations of the Earth based on masonic principles. Freemasons founded the Shriners Hospitals when children suffered from infantile paralysis. When that dreaded disease had been conquered, they turned to helping children with other needs.

Freemasonry is thus much more than a "relief society" dedicated to doing good works. It is an idea and an ideal — a force for good that changes the world for the better. And it has been doing so for almost three hundred years.

Reprinted from the *California Freemason* (Winter 2002).
MW Bro. John L. Cooper III is Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of California.



W Bro. Palmer Cox

What is it for?

It is not the primary function of Freemasonry to initiate candidates, nor to enlarge its membership. Were that so, there would be no basis for our laws against proselytizing. The primary function of the Craft is to train its members to an understanding of the truth which its rituals and ceremonies are calculated to inculcate, to develop its members as benevolent men, to cultivate the social virtues and to propagate the knowledge of art.

The chief concern of our lodges is with the welfare, happiness and masonic development of its members, not with the admission of those who seek entrance at its doors. Success as a masonic lodge cannot be gauged by the extent of its membership nor the size of its accumulated funds.

The beauty of our ritual and the good fellowship among lodge members cannot be conserved when the chief aim is to make freemasons and acquire money. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth" — the life of a lodge does not depend on the size of its acquisitions, but on the contribution which it makes to civilization and society through the influence of those whom it has helped to train in what we call masonic character.

It is the absolute duty of every lodge to put in action a plan for educating its members in masonic history, symbolism and philosophy, and to devote more of its meetings to this much neglected function.

Psychologists say that few people ever develop more than a small part of their potential ability. It is highly necessary that we increase the percentage of those who may be induced to develop a contemplative

attitude of mind. We must demonstrate to newly made freemasons the fact that Freemasonry is a life to be lived, not a formality to be observed.

If, by self-analysis, we can discover and discard those traits which seem to lead us in the wrong direction, and at the same time cultivate those natural tendencies which point the way to higher achievement, then we shall have carried into effect one of the greatest principles of Freemasonry.

If Freemasonry has done for past ages all that has been claimed for it, the question remains, what will it accomplish now? In this fast moving age in which we live it is capability and not sentiment that determines the usefulness of men and institutions. The vital test is not "What has been done?" but "What can we do now?"

The present is not the time for resting on the accomplishments of our forebears; the torch is in our hands and we must bear it forward to still greater accomplishments and strive with all our might for the good of mankind. We are honour bound to ceaseless efforts to improve the lot of all men, not only the chosen few within our circle.

Adapted from the *Masonic Circle* and reprinted in the *Masonic Bulletin*, June 1962.

Kamloops

The Kamloops Museum's masonic display has been retired, so to speak, and put into storage for the time being.

It proved to be a popular display for both the public and members of the Craft. Over 6,000 visitors attended the museum while the display was in place, taking the opportunity to learn more about our fraternity and its contribution to the community.

The assistance of MW Bro. William Ferguson, who encouraged and authorized the creation of the display;

MW Bro. William Unrau, who officially opened the display; the directors of the Kamloops Masonic Temple Association and the Community Relations Committee, without whose backing the project would not have been at all as successful; and the involvement of every masonic body active in Kamloops; is deserving of our thanks. And, of course, the museum staff must be recognized for supplying the expertise and resources that made the display more than just a collection of old papers and photos.

Submitted by RW Bro. James Baker, chairman of the Community Relations Committee.

Lodge notes

Cumberland Lodge No. 26 hosted this year's District 22 Education Night and decided to do something different. The steering committee, calling themselves the "Komox Kollege of Masonic Knowledge," developed a quiz show format they titled "The Answer is Rite." All 125 questions were gleaned from *The History of Grand Lodge, our Constitutions, The Lodge Officers Guide and Forms and Ceremonies*. Teams of three each from **Hiram Lodge No. 14, Concord Lodge No. 79, Discovery Lodge No. 149, Comox Lodge No. 188 and Rainbow Lodge No. 180** took part.

While, the team captain for **Cumberland Lodge No. 26** withdrew to give the other lodges a chance to win, the quiz was kept under reasonable control by W Bro. Ralph "Judge Jephtha, Arbitrator" Purvey, W Bro. Les "Prof. W.I.S.E. Solomon, Quizmaster" Routledge and Bro. Colin "Prof. Quasimodo The Bell Ringer, Timer" Graham. The prizes consisted of the traditional wages of the craftsmen, wine, corn and oil.

editor@freemasonry.bcy.ca

Fifty-six freemasons attended and shared several hours of fellowship, fun and learning. The quiz commenced at 11:00 am, followed by a Master Mason degree conferred by a mixture of officers from all the lodges, with the day ending at 5:30 pm.

W Bro. Les Routledge can be emailed at lmrout@shaw.ca for details and a list of the questions used.

Orion Lodge No. 51, Penticton, would like to contact brethren of other lodges who have relocated to this retirement community. Secretaries of lodges outside District 10 are requested to forward the names of such members, with contact information, to RW Bro. James L. Floyd by email at pbeavan@shaw.ca or to 137 Orchard Ave., Penticton, BC V2A 1X7.

The masonic family of Port Alberni — **Barclay Lodge No. 90**, **Euclid Lodge No. 158**, Alpine Shrine Club No. 13, Eastern Star Chapter No. 100 and Job's Daughters Bethel No. 30 — held their second annual benefit dinner this past Christmas season to raise funds in order to buy turkeys for the Salvation Army Food Bank Christmas hampers.

Over \$2,000 was raised to supply 110 turkeys to the Salvation Army, as well as provide the turkeys for the Bread of Life Food Kitchen Christmas dinner. ■

Charity in practice

Last year **Admiral Lodge No. 170**, Salt Spring Island, decided to put into practice what Grand Masters have been promoting for years: more public exposure of what Freemasonry is about. A committee was struck and a search was made for suitable projects. When the Salt Spring Island Community Services was

approached, the first words out of their mouths were "Food Bank."

Under an initiative developed by members of the lodge an 864 square foot building will be constructed on the Community Services property to be used solely for the Food Bank programme. The lodge will raise the necessary funds to erect the building and continue organizing fund raising events throughout the year to help pay for operating expenses. This dedicated building will provide the Food Bank with adequate space to accommodate food delivery, storage, packing and distribution, as well as a washroom and small kitchen for the volunteers.

The Salt Spring Island Community Services Society has been in operation since 1975 and delivers a wide range of social programmes and services to the people of Salt Spring Island with an outreach programme to the outer islands. Programmes and services include a Food Bank and Christmas Bureau, adult, youth and family counselling, a day programme for developmentally challenged adults, a residence for developmentally challenged adults, a group home for high-risk teens, alcohol and drug treatment/prevention, a resource centre for young parents with children, and a range of mental health services. The Food Bank and the majority of these programmes operate from the Community Centre building which was constructed in 1914 as the Lady Minto Hospital.

The Food Bank is open one day *per week* and provides a three-day supply of plentiful, good quality food to approximately 1,300 families and individuals annually. The service is operated by volunteers and is entirely supported by donations of food and money from the community. No government or any other form of funding is

received. The Food Bank is a member of the Provincial Association of Food Banks and the Canadian Association of Food Banks.

Since the Food Bank opened in the early 1980s it has been housed in the basement of the Community Services building, which was built over ninety years ago. The 250 square foot space allotted to the Food Bank for storage, distribution, and packing of food is shared with another high use programme. Consequently the Food Bank is only available for operation one day *per week* from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm. On that day, from twenty to twenty-five individuals and families use the service and the space is congested and inadequate.

Many people feel humiliated by the need to come to a Food Bank and this new dedicated space will provide the volunteers a way of offering a more dignified and confidential service. We anticipate that the Food Bank will significantly increase their hours of operation to meet the requirements of those in need.

The cost is expected to be about \$55,000 to \$60,000. We have pledges from some local contractors and individuals for much of the labour and some of the materials.

The building will commence in mid-April and be completed by 15 July 2005. The Food Bank is a very high profile service on the island, with extremely generous, supportive donors and volunteers, with 12% of the population accessing the service annually. We plan to invite local and Vancouver Island media to feature the project as it progresses. An opening ceremony is being planned to include an invitation to all donors and volunteers with appropriate press coverage.

I would respectfully request that our brethren throughout the province assist us in making this project a huge success. Tax receipts will be available for

Grand Lodge 134th Annual Communication

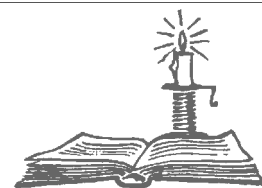
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donations received. Please make cheques out to Salt Spring Island Community Services Society (food bank building project), 268 Fulford-Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, B.C. V8K 2K6. Contact W Bro. Randall Sloan, Committee Chairman at 250-537-2975 or email rsloan@telus.net

Resolution 17

US Congressmen Paul Gillmor and Jack Kingston submitted the following resolution in the House of Representatives on 24 January 2005:

RESOLUTION

"Recognizing the thousands of Freemasons in every State in the Nation and honoring them for their many contributions to the Nation throughout its history.

Whereas Freemasons, whose long lineage extends back to before the Nation's founding, have set an example of high moral standards and charity for all people;

Whereas the Founding Fathers of this great Nation and signers of the Constitution, most of whom were Freemasons, provided a well-rounded basis for developing themselves and others into valuable citizens of the United States;

Whereas members of the Masonic Fraternity, both individually and as an organization, continue to make invaluable charitable contributions of service to the United States;

Whereas the Masonic Fraternity continues to provide for the charitable relief and education of the citizens of the United States;

Whereas the Masonic Fraternity is deserving of formal recognition of their long history of care-giving for the citizenry and their example of high moral standards; and

Whereas Freemasons have

always revered and celebrated St. John's Day, June 24th, as dedicated to their patron saints: Now, therefore, be it resolved, That the House of Representatives recognizes the thousands of Freemasons in every State in the Nation and honors them for their many contributions to the Nation throughout its history."

While it has been confirmed that this resolution was submitted, and referred to the Committee on Government Reform, the websites of Congressman Paul E. Gillmor (Fifth Congressional District, Ohio) and Congressman Jack Kingston, (First Congressional District, Georgia) fail to mention this resolution or their masonic affiliation, if any.

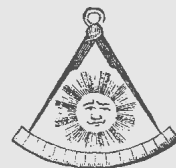
In the news

Freemasonry appears to have been a popular topic in community newspapers this past January. In the New Jersey *Burlington County Times*, an article appeared on "Lifting the veil of secrecy. The Burlington Township-based Grand Lodge of New Jersey has launched a public-relations campaign and it was noted that they would hold one-day classes at five lodges statewide in March. The classes have been promoted with newspaper advertisements and trailers in movie theatres.

Both the popular book *The Da Vinci Code* and the movie *National Treasure* were used as examples of the continuing interest in Freemasonry and the all-seeing eye and unfinished pyramid on the USA great seal obverse was once again claimed, erroneously, as a masonic symbol.

Another article in the same issue described the many symbols of Freemasonry and the appearance of the lodge.

The *Connecticut Shore Publishing* reported on the consolidation of three masonic lodges in Stonington. Gratifying



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY APRIL, 2005

2	Sweetheart Ball	Gizeh Shrine Centre	Burnaby
4	Grand Lodge Line Officers Meeting, 10:30 am		Vancouver
7 - 9	All Canada Conference		Winnipeg
14	District No. 12	Omineca 92	Smithers
15	District No. 4N	Vanderhoof 119	Vanderhoof
16	District No. 4S	Mt. Begbie 182	100 Mile House
20	District No. 10	Southern Gate 124	Oliver
21	District No. 9	Miriam 20	Vernon
22	District No. 6	Nelson 23	Nelson
23	International Night	Creston 54	Creston
30	Anniversary Celebration	Ancient Light Lodge No. 88	Delta

as it is to see items of masonic interest in the public press, curiously, W Bro. Carl E.B.

Mitchell, six-time master of the Stonington lodge, claimed that at the time he joined, one had to be invited to join.

The California *Business Wire* reported that GE Insurance Solutions recently celebrated the one-year anniversary of its Masonic Association insurance programme, available for masonic lodges and related organizations in the USA.

Chaplain's corner

by W Bro. Ian Paton,
Grand Chaplain

Pride and humility. Lets get it right!

We've all heard the old country and western classic "O Lord it's hard to be humble, when I'm perfect in every way."

We are told in at least one lecture: "To walk uprightly and with humility before God is a freemason's highest calling." We are also charged to remember that the ideal freemason does not boast of what he has done, can do, or will do.

We all feel we have a pretty

good handle on what kind of pride and what kind of humility we're talking about.

Our comfort level tends to drop when we consider the wide range of meanings that our language applies to the words humility and pride.

For example: "Pride—an inherent feeling of dignity and worth" right through to "Pride—an overly high sense of ones own value bordering on conceit and arrogance." Quite a range in meaning!

Similarly, humility can mean anything from modesty over status right through to a lowly opinion of oneself.

In Freemasonry we are taught to strive for the perfection of the finished ashlar and to bring to that perfection the inherent feeling of self worth that results from quiet achievement.

It also produces the modesty over status and achievement that is in fact, true humility

If we're perfect in the right kind of way it won't be hard to display the right kind of humility coupled with the right kind of pride.

Strive for the right kind of pride and the right kind of humility. Goodness knows there's enough of the other kind.