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Celebrate Freemasonry

MW Bro. R. Glenn Allen

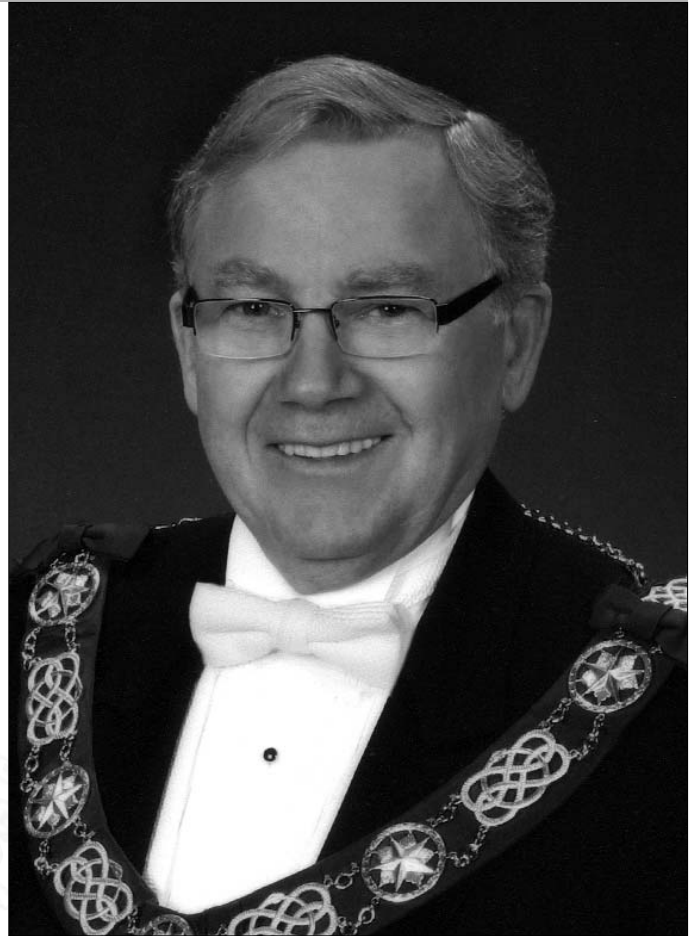
This year I have been preaching to the converted. I don't have to tell you about the pleasures of our great fraternity, the joy of fellowship, or the enrichment of visitations. Your continued membership is proof enough that you know the true value of Freemasonry. So let's engage in a celebration of the greatest fraternity the world has ever known, or ever will experience. We're all drawn to the mysteries of Freemasonry for different reasons. Some of us are encouraged by family members, others meet a rôle model, a mentor, only to discover that that man is a freemason. Some are seeking some direction in life, others are merely curious. We continue this life-long journey because we never fully understand all of the mysteries of Freemasonry. I've spoken recently with brethren receiving their 50 and 60 year jewels, and they are still marvelling at the lessons of our beautiful

Craft. So let's celebrate Freemasonry.

My theme this year has been "Focus on the Basics". Allow me to take that word Focus and apply masonic descriptors to each letter.

F is for Fun, for Fellowship, for Fraternity. We've assembled of our own free will. We could have stayed home, watched a football game on tv, enjoyed a quiet family evening. But we chose to gather to renew old friendships, meet new friends and continue our masonic education. Let's enjoy our time together, let's have fun!

O is for Optimism. There is no other fraternal organization which has thrived and grown so well under the shadow of vicious rumour, innuendo and persecution. Freemasonry has been attacked and slandered by a myriad of forces over the centuries. Yet here we are, strong, wholesome pillars of society, and stalwarts of every profession and vocation. The



M.W. Bro. R. Glenn Allen
Grand Master 2008-2009

glare of the internet spotlight has failed to find blemishes with Freemasonry. We've survived every attack, we've overcome every challenge. What better cause for celebration?

C is for Celebration, for Camaraderie, for Chivalry: We are able to set aside the disappointments of everyday life when we enter a masonic lodge. We know that we will enjoy the companionship of exceptional men. For a couple of hours we can let our guard

down, leave the competition of the outside world behind and socialize with a gathering of trusted brethren and true friends. Freemasonry is a sanctuary from the outside world.

U is for Upbeat, for Unique, for Uncommon. I always marvel at the growing list of world leaders, historical figures and heroes who have been raised to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. In a masonic hall we can meet on the level with

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Grand Master's address from page one

presidents, prime ministers, astronauts and explorers, while getting to know the local plumber, truck driver or dentist. We are all uniquely and uncommonly special. We are freemasons!

S is for Successful, for Special, for Safe. We have individually succeeded in life, not because of preferential, treatment as freemasons as some might suggest. We are successful, secure individuals because we live by the principles and tenets of Freemasonry. A freemason knows right from wrong. He is capable and willing to make the right decision, to do the honourable thing when under the watchful eye of thousands, or when standing alone. Doing the right thing is reward enough for a true freemason. We succeed in life because of the inner strength we develop and cultivate as freemasons, not because of some special favour at the hands of a brother.

I'd like you to walk from your lodge meeting with your chin held high, with a confident step and a proud gleam in your eye. Wear that masonic pin as proudly as you wear your apron.

You are a valued part of your family, of this society, and of your community. You are a freemason! ■

Summerland

The brethren of **Summerland Lodge No. 56** celebrate their centenary on Saturday afternoon, 30 May, with our Grand Master, MW Bro. R. Glenn Allen and his wife, Laura, when they will view a masonic tribute at the Summerland Museum, and then proceed to the new Okanagan Lake Municipal Park, where they will dedicate a cairn depicting a hundred years of Freemasonry in Summerland.

This will be followed by a dinner and dance at the Summerland Arena Banquet Hall. Tickets for the evening (\$30) are available from RW Bro. Len Wyllie at 250-494-9487, or lwyllie@telus.net. ■

OUR MASONIC WORLD

Québec

by RW Bro. James G. Bennie

Members of this Grand Lodge met on Saturday, 31 May 2008 in Montréal. Lest one wonders why our Grand Lodge cannot meet in a single day as well, it should be pointed out that a Special Communication was held last October to deal with constitutional changes. Among them was one to replace "inches" with "centimetres" in the description of some Grand Officers' jewels. The 24-inch gauge remained unscathed.

The Grand Master is MW Bro. Opkar Sandhu, originally from Kenya. He is active in the Sikh community of Montréal. In Québec, the Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master serve two-year terms.

Some District Deputy Grand Masters serve multiple years as well, but the Grand Master revealed the amazing fact in his report that "traces of discord" resulted in "continuing reluctance of well-skilled brethren to stand for election" in one of the districts. However, the report of the retiring District deputy Grand Master of that district glossed over any problems in his report, instead talking about information booths, scholarships, fund-raising golf tournaments and testimonial dinners.

The Grand Master was forced to appoint a committee to act as District deputy Grand Master, an act which brought scepticism from the Committee on the Grand Master's Address. Also concerning that committee—the Grand Master's revelation that 44% of all candidates for initiation and

80% of all candidates from the Grand Lodge website in 2007 were francophone.

MW Bro. Sandhu attended many noteworthy events, including the reception of a delegation of a lodge from France by one of the Montréal lodges where a "twinning agreement" was signed, and a Hands-Across-the-Border Table Lodge in Vermont.

He also suspended one brother for disrespecting the Office of the Grand Master and defying him to take disciplinary action.

Life and death of lodges carries on. Dispensation was granted for a lodge in Montréal to use the Scottish Rite ritual as is found under the National Grand Lodge of France. Why not? A second dispensation for another French-speaking lodge is being studied. Two lodges merged with no loss of membership. Two more, including a daylight lodge, surrendered warrants.

Membership on 31 December 2007 was 4,441, a loss of 69 from 2006. Average attendance at meetings was 17.9 members.

The Grand Lodge's General Fund revealed expenditures were about \$1,800 less than income. *Per capita* and fees were both down by about \$4,000 from the previous year.

One District Deputy, in his report, criticised a lodge for using open ritual books during initiations and its members had responded that he was being too "old school." He also reported that another one of his lodges was working toward becoming a bilingual lodge. Québec lodges may work in English, French or both. Another lodge held a public open house with three local mayors present and cheques totalling \$8,500 were given to persons and organizations in need in their communities.

The Committee on Rites and Ceremonies decided against any changes to Grand Honours. However, it did agree with

unspecified changes to the ritual. While our jurisdiction brags about allowing four rituals, Québec authorises five. One of them is the "York Rite," akin to our "Ancient" Work. It was used when three Master Masons were raised at the summit of Owl's Head Mountain before 200 brethren at a meeting of Golden Rule Lodge No. 5. The annual event is older than Grand Lodge itself, dating to 1858.

Québec's officers include three Grand Flag Bearers and seven Deputy Grand Chaplains.

Finally, the Grand Secretary's Report reveals a new problem that seems to be spreading over the surface of the globe—he is receiving so many emails from lodges and brethren, he can't read them all. ■

Question :

What makes you a freemason?

by Rabbi Jacob Nieto

An obligation no more makes a man a freemason than does subscribing to the tenets of a particular creed make one a true follower of the doctrines inculcated by that church.

One may attend church every day and be conversant with every ceremony, and be no Christian; or attend the temple and repeat every prayer, and be no Jew.

Similarly a man may be present whenever his lodge convenes, knows the work perfectly and be only a lodge freemason. Like some frequenters of churches and temples, whose religion never strays beyond the confines of the religious edifice, his Freemasonry may be and is confined to lip service and ritual work.

Such men are never freemasons, and no amount of obligations can make them freemasons.

Men whose hearts do not realize, and whose minds cannot comprehend the real usefulness of Freemasonry; men

who cannot apply the teachings of the Craft to their lives and the practice of their daily existence, and feel their Freemasonry within the precincts of the lodge, add nothing to the cause that Freemasonry represents. ■

Rabbi Jacob Nieto (1863-1930) was Grand Orator and Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of California in 1920.

Funeral Lodge update

by VW Bro. John Keirstead

The concept of a uniform burial service for freemasons in British Columbia, dating back to 1893, is almost as old as Grand Lodge itself. Intended to be "performed as a token of respect and fraternal affection to the memory of a departed brother, and performed by competent officers", the service has undergone many changes over the years to reflect changes in social attitudes toward funerals.

The Grand Lodge Ritual Committee recently completed a revision of the funeral regulations to allow for almost every possible approach, from the full masonic funeral with the lodge being formally opened, all lodge members in regalia, with a prescribed order of march, and the departed brother's remains carried into the service in a casket, to a memorial service with either cremated remains or no remains present at all. Formats for all of these scenarios will be available shortly.

Masonic involvement in a funeral or memorial service is at the request of the deceased in his will, or his family after his death. In many cases there is no involvement except for the attendance of lodge brothers or other members of the craft.

It is believed to be several years since the last formal masonic funeral service was

performed in this jurisdiction. The annual report of the Vancouver Police Department for 2008 featured a photograph of the officers and members of **Vancouver Lodge No. 68** leading a parade of mourners from downtown Vancouver to the Mountainview Cemetery in 1917, following the shooting death of the Vancouver Police Chief Constable, Bro. Malcolm MacLennan, who was senior warden of the lodge at the time of his death. To this day, he is the only Canadian chief of police ever to be killed in the line of duty.

When masonic involvement is requested in connection with the death of a brother who is a member of a lodge in this jurisdiction, it is the duty of the lodge to which he belongs to perform the appropriate ceremony, in consultation with the family and clergy or other officiant involved. Masters, chaplains, and directors of ceremonies for all lodges should become fully conversant with funeral regulations as soon as they are installed in office. When a brother dies is not the time for a lodge to start figuring out what to do.

Grand Lodge long ago recognized the special circumstances presented by a sojourning brother, a brother who is resident in this jurisdiction, but a member of a lodge elsewhere (for example a brother from Ontario who has retired to British Columbia and maintained his membership in his mother lodge without affiliating locally).

This situation was addressed in 1959 with the establishment, under license of the Grand Master, of **Funeral Lodge No. 1** in Vancouver, followed by **Victoria Funeral Lodge No. 2** in 1961, and **White Rock Funeral Lodge No. 3** in 1962 (disbanded in 1967). The Vancouver and Victoria Lodges continue to operate under annual licenses from the Grand Master, and their rôles are quite

clear: to perform appropriate services when requested only for sojourning brothers in their respective areas. An exception to this would be in the case of a brother who belonged to a lodge elsewhere in British Columbia or Yukon, but had requested or arranged for service and burial in Vancouver or Victoria.

In all other circumstances, masonic involvement in funeral services is the sole responsibility of the lodge to which the departed member belonged.

Information on the revised ritual, or on the rôle of the Funeral Lodge, is available from RW Bro David Officer, secretary of Vancouver Funeral Lodge No. 1 at 604-732-5414, email VMSB@telus.net.

Victoria Funeral Lodge No. 2 may be contacted through masonicguild@shaw.ca. ■

Salmon Arm

Salmon Arm Lodge No. 52 is having its centennial the weekend of 24 July in the Shuswap. The fun weekend starts with a Friday evening meet-and-greet at the lodge starting at 6:00 pm. On Saturday our Grand Master and his officers will officiate at a corner stone ceremony starting at 3:00 pm and followed by a banquet at the Senior Centre with entertainment and dancing. Sunday, there will be a church parade with a service at 10:30 am. Contact Don Vancise at 250-838-0794 or email devancise@telus.net for details. ■

Universal appeal

By Thomas Sherrard Roy

Freemasonry is a subject of perennial interest. In the words of Shakespeare: "Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale her infinite variety." We live in a day of clever phrases and

Have you researched a masonic topic?

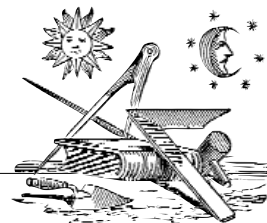
Speakers are required for the Grand Masonic Day in Langley on Saturday, 6 March 2010.

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Grand Lodge of BC & Yukon
138th Annual
Communication

June 18-20, 2009
Prince George

Online registration
freemasonry.bcy.ca/gl2009

cynical clichés, one of which consists of just two words: "so what!" We have a proud history. So what?

After we have acknowledged all that we have as heritage, and our debt to the past, we are faced with the question of the meaning of Freemasonry for today. While we have an antiquarian's interest in the past, we must live in the present; and our interest in Freemasonry is in Freemasonry *today*. Has Freemasonry got what it takes to be a constructive force in the world in this day in which we live? For we need a unifying force in the world today, something that will transcend the accidental differences of race, and class, and creed that have been driving men apart for centuries, and tie them together on the basis of their needs and aspirations.

We believe that Freemasonry meets this basic need of the present because of the positive and universal quality of its philosophy, its principles and its teachings.

The great German philosopher, Kant, gave to the world what he called a "Categorical Imperative." It is categorical because it admits of no conditions and no exceptions. It says: "Act as if the maxim of thy will were to become by thy adopting it a universal law of nature"; which means that we must act in such a fashion that it would be both safe and beneficial if all men acted that way.

Freemasonry conforms to this categorical imperative, for what we proclaim as ideal, and teach as practical, may be safely universalized. This finds no stronger confirmation than in the wide adoption of Freemasonry by men of all classes, races and creeds.

The universal appeal of Freemasonry is confirmed by the response of men the world around. Men of many races and tongues have found in Freemasonry the response to

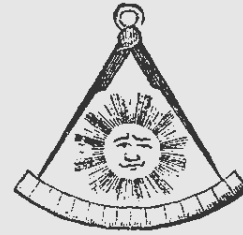
their need for fellowship and brotherhood. Members of the Craft are to be found in every country in the world.

Sometimes Freemasonry is the only unifying force in a country. The Grand Lodge of the State of Israel has a constituent lodge composed almost exclusively of Arabs. Within that lodge Jew and Arab find a fellowship in spite of the political differences that have torn the Near East to shreds. A few years ago the Grand Lodge of India was constituted. Many races and many religions are represented in its membership. It was consecrated by the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Scotland; constituted by the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ireland; and its officers were installed by the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England. We need no finer example of the universality of the Craft.

Freemasonry has this universal appeal because its emphasis in religion is upon basic realities. It refuses to make demands upon men, in the way of belief and loyalty, that are not inherent in those realities. It insists that religion is not an end in itself that men were created to serve. Rather is religion a means to an end, bringing to men the spiritual resources that will help them to realize their highest possibilities in life. The Craft stands for a unity that goes deeper than the differences in thought and emotion that constitute so much in religion today. It is not a unity that is based upon a final theory or creed of God, and Man, and the Universe, to which all must subscribe. Rather is it a unity based upon our common faith.

Freemasonry has what it takes to be a constructive force in the world today, and is relevant to every life situation because of its emphasis upon progress.

Too often it happens that a society with high ideals and worthy objectives becomes



GRAND MASTER'S ITINERARY JUNE 2009

4-6	134th Annual Communication	Manitoba	Winnipeg
11-13	104th Annual Communication	Alberta	Camrose
18-20	138th Annual Communication	BC&Y	Prince George

completely absorbed in the secondary interest of perpetuating itself. It is not seeking for light in the interest of reaching its objectives, but for those proofs that will support its claim to validity as an organization. We are not interested in keeping Freemasonry alive as an organization, just for the sake of keeping it alive. We are not interested in trying to justify our right to live today because of something that happened a hundred years ago, or a thousands years ago. Rather are we interested in making the present so vital that it will give both meaning and worth to all that the freemasons of yesterday have done to make the present possible.

Freemasonry is committed to progress. We are sure that in spite of all that has come to us, we have received light as yet but partially. There is no finality in the search for truth.

It is the urge to go on that is at the heart of Freemasonry. We talk about a "lost word," which is, perhaps, our way of saying that we are forever seeking that principle of life that will bring unity to mankind. We must go on, for we are either explorers or exploiters. We are either pushing on as seekers for the ultimate word, or we are shamelessly exploiting that which was so hard won by the pioneers of yesterday as we use it for our pleasure or our profit. Our acknowledgement of what we owe to the explorers of

yesterday is measured by the effort we put into the search for light today.

Certainly it is no compliment to the past to be satisfied with what it has brought us, and so turn away from the future. For there is much to be done. Our loyalty to the past should carry us closer to the problems of today and tomorrow.

We do not live in a perfect world. We would like to think that we live in a land of equal justice, where the rights of all men are equally respected, but honesty compels us to admit that it is not so. Some are compelled to think of themselves as second-class citizens. They are compelled to walk in the ditch while their self-constituted superiors walk on the sidewalk. Sometimes it seems that demonic forces are at work in our world, releasing the worst in man in his inhumanity to his fellow man.

This is the challenge that comes to us. As long as there is any taint of social injustice; as long as there is political corruption; as long as there is industrial exploitation; as long as there is religious superstition; and as long as there is tyranny for "the truth that makes men free"; and just so long must we make Freemasonry the agent that will release within men the beneficent forces that will enable them to find their lives in unity and brotherhood. ■

*Excerpted from Dare We Be
Masons and Other Addresses.
1966.*