

Presentation : Hope

Brethren, in respect of the current day I will share my thoughts on the topic of Hope. Like its sisters Faith and Charity it is one of the most powerful “tools” in Mason’s toolbelt. Faith is powerful, but it is a personal matter between a Mason and his concept of a Supreme Being. Charity and benevolence we have discussed before so it is fitting we address this vital subject.

Everyone at one time or another faces adversity in its many forms. It may be physical adversity, being alone on a darkened road, with dead cellphone and mechanical breakdown. It may be health, and some challenge of the mind or body that seems insurmountable. Or it may be misfortune in our business or personal lives that strickens us. Whatever the case may be, it is punishing. And as that darkness surrounds, and the cruel waves of despair threaten to pull us under, there is a brief moment...a tether that holds us and keeps us from falling into the abyss. That tether is Hope. Hope is what catches us in our darkest hour and grants us the ability to draw ourselves out of whatever calamity according to our own means, and back to a better alternative.

Although our Craft does many benevolent Works, we are not a service club. Although we carefully examine morality and virtue, we are not a religious order. Both of those groups are currently facing troubling erosion, no matter how worthy their intent, but they are not us. We are both and so much more. Masonry is needed now more than ever. A careful examination of quality of life whether at home or abroad mirrors the ebb and flow of the prevalence of Masonry in that jurisdiction and the extent within its broad social order independent of class, status, profession origin, or beliefs. Simply put, when Masonry flourishes so does broader society. The society builds more, cares more and creates opportunity for more. Masonry shares a great message and bestows great benefits for those who take up its calling. But it takes all of us to take up the mantle to educate and to inspire others to join our ranks. Our world is being challenged by pestilence, intolerance, poverty, famine, and the spectre of war. But it has faced these demons before and trampled them beneath its feet.

When I began my term of office our lodges, like businesses were shuttered, and many of us were confined to our homes by health, family obligation or

occupation. Some wondered will we ever get back to lodge again, will our membership survive? In those dark hours, I saw glimmers of light. I heard the relief and appreciation felt by W.Bro Mehnert's grandchildren when this District rallied around and comforted them. I listened to the compassionate stories of Brethren who picked up groceries and medication, and kept contact with home-bound Brethren and Widows. I saw the fortitude of Brethren who met and socialized virtually, and who engaged their Brethren some of whom long left our District but continue to support their Lodge. And I witnessed the resilience of Lodges keeping Candidates seeking advancement engaged, and inspiring Applicants for Initiation to remain committed. And I met new Brethren from around the globe that I never would have encountered, and I myself learned new subjects I could scarcely have imagined before during Education sessions in this District and on other jurisdictional forums.

Most recently I completed an analysis of engagement, interest if you will, for our District website with data provided by our District Webmaster. Brethren, I must share with you I was pleasantly astonished. The consumption of bandwidth, time spent on our website grew from 44MB to well-over 1GB entirely comprised of all-new visitors, not just the same ones over and over (Google filters that). Think of it as being the difference of spying the Ice Cream Parlour and driving by, to one of stopping, buying large cone, watching the boats go through the locks, chatting with a few locals, and maybe taking some pictures with the kids. What this means Brethren is RELEVANCE in our times. People are looking, learning, liking what they see, and growing more interested in Victoria District. As we come out of the restrictions of COVID carefully, we have the foundation not only to pick up but to grow. Brethren, there is HOPE. Please accept my best wishes on this day to you and your family from mine for continued health and happiness during this Springtime of renewal.