



DGL NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 4

Education Committee Publication

December 2006

Oor Maisters Christmas Message 2006



The Festive season is once again upon us and Brethren and their families throughout the District can look forward to a deserved and much needed rest. It is, as they say, the "Season of Peace and Goodwill to all Men". May the Great Architect let it be so.

However it is also a period in which loved ones who have passed beyond the veil are missed the most. I would encourage all of our Brethren to think of members of their Lodges and their families who may be lonely and who may benefit from a kind word or deed. We should also be aware of the good work being carried out by the Housekeepers and Staff who look after our elderly Brethren and their spouses resident in Roslin Park. Their duties can be difficult and demanding and their willingness to continue with these duties over the festive period speaks volumes as to their dedication.

The road fatality statistics over this period are among the highest in the world. It is imperative therefore, that caution should be taken when travelling long distances to holiday destinations and that the courtesy afforded to our Brethren in Lodge may be extended to our fellow road users. Please remember that your holiday starts the moment you get behind the wheel.

I would like to thank in particular the members of our Daughter Lodges for their co-operation throughout this past year and to the hardworking Office Bearers and staff of the District Grand Lodge who have gone above and beyond the call of duty in performing their allotted tasks. It is indeed a privilege and an honour to head such a body of dedicated Freemasons.

In closing, I would like to wish on behalf of the District Grand Lodge of Central South Africa, a Merry Christmas to our Christian Brethren, a Happy Chanukah to our Brethren of the Ancient Faith, and to one and all, everything of the very best for the coming year. May the GAOTU... "bring you all to us, safe again".

Bro. R.G. Law.
Rt. Wor. District Grand Master

Editors Comment:

For more information or lectures relating to the articles contained in this newsletter, please contact the Century Lodge of Research, either through the DGL offices or the Education Committee. (Contact details below)

The educational committee would like to express their gratitude for the compliments we have received from several Brethren. Please feel free to share these newsletters with anyone whom you feel would enjoy them.

We would also like to take this opportunity of wishing all our readers, everything of the very best over the holidays and for 6007 AL.

Almoners Corner:

When researching the role of Almoner it becomes abundantly clear that many orders outside of masonry have also identified the need for someone to care for others by having a function such as an Almoner. The traditional role of the Almoner can be found in the writings of the early Christian orders. Briefly this role was to find and distribute alms in **kind** to provide relief to those in need of it. These early monistic Almoners were charged with the daunting task of finding alms for the needy. This early function looked at providing for the very basic of human needs such as shelter, food and if you were very lucky shoes. The needy in those days had established a viable communication network which was based at the local church and facilitated by the church but not run by the church. Claims for alms, therefore, were made within the precinct of the church. Has the need and the role of the Almoner changed over the years? The answer is a resounding NO. With the mankind living longer and longer and the mobility of our children, we find that there are a number of people who can be classified as distressed.

The existing role of the District Masonic Almoner, although still very important, has become reactive because the communication channel is through the District Office, the Almoner only being in a position to function when advised by the District Office which is infrequent and is normally about funeral arrangements

What is distress in the 21st century? Let us list a few:

- Loneliness including loss of self esteem;
- Lack of transport;
- Health;
- Healthcare and its related costs;
- Disabilities; and
- Declining real disposable incomes.

We could list a great deal more but one can see that role of the almoner is as relative today as it was 900 years ago. What has changed? The change is that we no longer talk to one another which hides and obscures the problems to which Almoners should be attending.

We have looked at the problem and have identified one of the core problems, poor communications which result in the District Almoners taking on a very reactive role. To this end we will be taking the following steps to improve the effectiveness of the function of Almoner:

1. Create a presence on the District Grand Lodge web page giving contact details for the various almoners.
2. Ask all Lodge Almoners to advise District of all instances of distress, either directly to District Office or to one of the Almoners. This should allow a better flow of information facilitating the Almoner's role.
3. Create a follow up and a feedback protocol that ensures that we as Masons have done our duty with regard to the duties of Almoner (both District and Lodge).
4. Provide, at District level, a supportive role for Lodge Almoners.

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Contributions: If any Brother has suggestions for articles, or questions for which they are seeking answers, please address them to any of the below mentioned and we will endeavour to provide the required information.

Contact: John Grant: john.grant@inl.co.za or Grant Baird: grant@cadplan.co.za (083-293-2425) or Charlie Wilson: wilsonch@telkomsa.net

A brief history of the Tracing Boards

To begin with, the boards to which we refer as Tracing Boards are more accurately called Lodge Boards. In the ceremony of Consecration, the Lodge Board is uncovered, revealing what we call the 1st Degree Tracing Board. But, as it has been our custom, for so long, to refer to the painted boards as “Tracing Boards”, I shall continue to refer to them as such.



A true Tracing Board is indeed displayed within the 1st Degree board, as resting on a trestle and depicting a white background with drawings thereon, described as being “for the Master to lay lines, and draw designs on, the better to enable the workmen to carry on their work with regularity and propriety”. Hence, it is often referred as the Trestle Board in older rituals.

The origin of our current Tracing Boards stems from the days when Lodges met at the local Tavern, without the dignity and decorum of our current system. We have indeed progressed from the days when enterprising tavern keepers had signs claiming “Freemasons made here for half-a-crown”. In those days the floors of the tavern were covered with sand and it was the duty of the Tyler to draw rough sketches of various Masonic Emblems. These would contain symbols from depicting symbols from all the degrees.



These were later, for practical reasons, converted to a more permanent form, being that of a floor cloth, not unlike that illustrated here, although undoubtedly cruder. These could quite naturally be rolled up and put away between meetings. As this concept gained popularity, it quite naturally encouraged the more artistically talented to design their own, and then individual floor cloths for each degree, as depicted by this cloth, dated 1764 from Lurgan Lodge.394 I.C.

Later, as buildings were erected for the sole purpose of Freemasonry, the physical objects depicted on the floor cloths were introduced, thus was the floor cloth reduced to being a paintings depicting the Emblems of each Degree. Probably the most famous of these artists was a Brother Harris, who was commissioned to produce Tracing Boards for several Lodges, and it was from his designs, that the Tracing Boards which are most common today were designed, and sanctioned by the Emulation Lodge.

The Tracing Boards, and the symbolism contained thereon, still form an integral part of our craft and deserve serious study and consideration by all Masons.

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To this end we invite all brethren to open the District Grand Lodge web page where the contact information for the District Almoners may be found. Keep an eye on this site as it will be developed with further information.

We would also appreciate the contact information for all lodge Almoners which will help our order to create a synergistic approach for this function. These details can either be forwarded to any of the following District Grand Lodge Almoners:

O.L. Edwards (Cell) 083 307 3290 Email edwards@netactive.co.za

D. Hadassin (Cell) 083 227 8848

W.H. Jacobs (Cell) 083 447 8009

Or the District Grand Lodge Offices.

Charity!

By Bro. Charles Wilson

What is charity? Of course we all know that it is one of our elementary lessons, but do we really know? Is it just for giving alms to the poor and needy? I fear that there is more to it than that, lots more, what about a love for one's fellow man. The word is in fact derived from the Latin *caritas*, meaning love and affection - caring elements, probably more important than a few alms here and there, but not distributed with the same open-handedness. We are fast approaching the Festive Season when all kinds of largesse and bounty are spread around, but how much love and affection, how much caring - where does it go?

3rd Degree Tracing Board

Careful examination of the 3rd degree Tracing Board will reveal certain symbols that are not explained during any of the associated lectures. Most of these are concealed ‘from vulgar eyes’ by use of the following Masonic Cipher.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C | B | A | L | K | J |
| F | E | D | O | N | M |
| I | H | G | R | Q | P |

| | |
|---|---|
| S | T |
| U | V |

| | |
|---|---|
| W | X |
| Y | Z |

This cipher is traditionally attributed to Albertus Magnus, Bishop of Cologne, one of the great German builders of the 13th century who is said to have been amongst the first to teach the principals of that most noble of all orders of architecture, the Gothic, to his fellow craftsmen.

Using this cipher my name would be represented as:



When applying this cipher to the Tracing Board, one needs to bear in mind that the method employed, as with Hebrew, is that it is written from right to left.

Correct application of this cipher will likewise reveal the letter AL, which are the letters of the Latin words *Anno Lucis* signifying “in the Year of Light” and is based on the date from the creation of the world, which is considered to be 4000 BC. Thus 2006 AD would be written as 6006 AL.

The final symbol, not however from the cipher, is the Hebrew character **ה** (*He*) which is the fifth character in the Hebrew alphabet and represents the number 5.



This Month's Law:

Law 176:

The Mark shall be conferred only on Master Masons whose names have been registered as such in Grand Lodge.

Every Brother receiving the Mark shall, prior to the ceremony, pay to the Lodge the fee specified in the Bye-Laws of the Lodge which shall not be less than the sum set forth in the First Schedule, Item 22. The Lodge shall remit to Grand Lodge the fee set forth in the First Schedule, Item 14, for the registration and Diploma of each Brother who has received the Mark.

Comment from District Grand Lodge:

In essence this means that a Master Mason may be advanced to the Mark after his Lodge has sent their Annual Returns, with his name on the Lodges Roll, via District Grand Lodge to Grand Lodge. This generally takes place on the evening of the Lodges Installation.

Mark Workings:

Any Lodge wishing to confer the Mark Degree, and requiring assistance, may contact the Grand Superintendent, MEC Braam Visser, who will gladly assemble a team of competent Royal Arch Masons to present the working on their behalf.

All requests for assistance should be made via the District Grand Secretary's office.

December Installations:

Unison 1521 (Rededication) – Postponed to January 13 th
 King Solomon 887 – Tuesday 5 th
 Alpha Crucis 980 – Wednesday 13 th

Some years ago, my Lodge had a think about this and where it was needed, and came up with the answer – The Widows. Those ladies of yesteryear, who faithfully provided and set out the goodies for the festive board, month in and month out, and in some cases, year in and year out. Next came the question – Who are they, and where are they? A list was assembled, not an extensive list, nor is it static, but each year I have distributed parcels of Festive Goodies to most of “The List”, it is not a case of need, it is more a case of caring, of remembering. I can assure you Brethren, that the exercise may be time consuming but every minute spent is of great value to me and I know, is greatly appreciated by the Widows – after all are we not all “Sons of the Widow”.