



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

April 30, 2011

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A while back, a number of us got together via email and decided that we have to do something unique if we want the order to survive. Make no mistake, the order is dying, branches of the order are closed or closing, lodges by the tens and twenties are failing, and those of us who remain must decide what are we going to do? Our group is not a group of crackpots – we have Past Grand Masters, a Past Sovereign Grand Master, Past Grand Lodge Officers, Grand Lodge Board of Directors Members, and many other prominent members in our ranks. We have invited anyone and everyone to be part of our group. We entertain all ideas, and are willing to listen to anyone, and if you are not yet part of our group, you are welcome to join now. We are not doomsayers, but if we don't recognize the problem, we will sooner or later succumb to it. We as Odd Fellows and Rebekahs have been lucky enough or skilled enough to survive as an order, thus far, so the question we wish to answer is how do we survive to move into the future, because certainly, that is what we want to do: Survive and thrive in the future.

If the reason you haven't joined our committee is a personality based issue, it is time to bury the hatchet. If we do not forget the resentments and harbored grudges that we all have held over the years, we are doomed to fail as an order because of them. Let's for a moment examine what our alternatives are if we do not accept the need for change. Nothing. That's right. Those who have said that they are not interested in change have not offered a viable alternative. One member told me that he is too old to accept change. Another told me that he is afraid of change. By change, we do not mean that your own life should change. We are trying to visualize how our order appears to the world. Nothing more. It should not be offensive to anyone. It does not alter the ritual, history, or the code (unless we as an entire order choose to do so.). Whether or not you agree with every idea from every member misses the point. The point is that we are dying as an order, and if we don't do something pretty quick, there will be little or nothing whatsoever to argue about.

We, as a group support the order completely, but we also hope that the order can make a swift and lasting change to modern times. What is needed by every member is simply to remain objective, realize that your fellow members - whether or not you agree with their actions - mean to cause improvements and not distress. Too many lodges are now at their lowest ebb. If we wait too much longer to take these steps, it may become too late. Consider this, in some states, it already is too late! But we in California are fortunate, we are the most populous state in the U.S., and hence most capable of adapting ourselves to today's world. What does this mean? This means that your lodge may become vital again, your lodge may gain members, and your lodge may be able to (finally) seat all its official positions. How will this become possible? We have examples around us. The Davis Lodge is booming and now, alone, already contains 4% of all



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members statewide. The Hayward Lodge, just reopened this past year, has gotten 70 members in one year's time. The San Francisco Lodges are growing by leaps and bounds. And yet, the smaller lodges throughout the state are shrinking. What is happening? Simple. Those lodges that have a clear view of who their members are stand a chance of growth. Those lodges that have forgotten the likes and dislikes of their members are dying on the vine. No lodge can sustain growth and attract new blood simply by promising dinner once a month to their members. Members do not join in droves just to sit in meetings where they do not feel involved. This is the crux of the issue. We have to give our members, both new and old, something of interest. This should be a no-brainer, but many of us have forgotten this simple concept. How many of us have seen our members sitting quietly in a mostly empty room waiting for a meeting to begin? Don't we begin to wonder why are they, and in turn ourselves, still members? Conversely what has revitalized certain lodges are not their member's personalities, but the personalities of the committees and discussion groups they have formed within their lodges. Davis, Hayward, San Francisco, all form committees where individual members can follow their own interests. Some of the committees border on the bizarre but that is what drives them – Davis has the Zymurgy committee (a group of members who brew beer), Hayward has a chamber music committee. Do you see the connection? The connection is that they create committees which draw the member's interests. Is this really that offensive? Who in their right mind would be offended? Can we do it in other lodges? Of course, the only lodges where personal interests can't be cultivated are the ones that are dead in the water already. Are these new and vital lodges "real Odd Fellows"? You bet, in fact, they perform the ritual, often memorize their charges, and perform degree work in full regalia. Which is the real Odd Fellow lodge, the one with 4 remaining members looking hopefully towards the door for the fifth and final member to complete a bare quorum, or the one doing degree work in full regalia?

So, what is the obstacle to universal change, at least in our own state? The only obstacle is inertia - the inability to do something. But, the status quo is not an alternative. We can see by the example of the failure of states all around us that maintaining the status quo is suicide.

Please join us at Grand Lodge, on May 19, at 6pm for a dinner/meeting where we will have a fine Doubletree Hotel hosted dinner, and listen to short presentations from some of our committee members. Originally, we set our sights on obtaining 50 members, but we are likely to end up nearer 100! If you sign up soon, we can offer you a deal of \$19 per dinner, which our committee has worked hard to obtain. Once we reach the magic 80 member mark, we will have to revert to the Doubletree charge of \$39 per person.

We offer the following endorsements for these members seeking office –

Paul Pike for Grand Master

Rod Metoyer for Deputy Grand Master



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Rick Boyles for Grand Warden
Jay Johnson for Grand Treasurer
Paul Hamer for GLBOD
Dave Rosenberg for OFHC Board
Vic Bucher for OFHC Board

Several of these members are not members of our committee but all have expressed a willingness to listen, and that is all we ask. They are all fine members who have the order's best interests at heart. I, personally, want to emphasize Jay Johnson for Grand Treasurer. He is my best friend in the order, and any who have seen his work in the office of Grand Treasurer in his initial year can testify that his work ethics and capabilities are above reproach. And certainly, Dave Rosenberg, also a close friend, is an exemplary choice for whichever office he should choose and certainly will continue to do a fine job on the OFHC Board where he currently serves as Vice Chairman. Please join us in unison on May 19 in celebrating our order & our bright future! In Friendship, Love, and Truth, Rick Boyles