



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

October 23, 2012

WILL ODD FELLOWSHIP GO THE WAY OF THE DINOSAUR?

We don't have dinosaurs anymore. You have to visit a museum or a bone collection in a national park to see what is left of them. The decline and eventual extinction carries implications for Odd Fellowship today. It is easy to become complacent and to put aside the energy and ambition that brought this Order past success. But let's take a moment to contemplate the dinosaur.

The dinosaur did not plan ahead. The dinosaur gave no thought to long-term survival. The dinosaur was content with the status quo. The dinosaur was comfortable with life. Why shouldn't he be? The dinosaur was the king of the hill - ruling all it surveyed. It lived on the successes of the past, complacently unaware of changes taking place all around him. The dinosaur did not realize that it's very world, it's environment, was changing.

Are today's Odd Fellow Lodges following in the steps of the dinosaur? Many lodges with declining memberships seem to be headed in that direction. This extinction does not have to occur. If a lodge can renew and reform itself to fit its current environment, it can survive. Our lodges can't just live in a 19th Century world. Our lodges should be vital and dynamic organizations fulfilling needs in our communities, and being worthwhile places for our members.

SEEDS OF DESTRUCTION

I once read where success carries with it the very seeds of destruction. Success has a tendency to breed complacency, and if you wait too long before making some changes, it may be too late to save a lodge or Odd Fellowship in general.

DRY ROT IS EVIDENT

Dry rot is usually associated with wood, and while a structure or object has an outward appearance of being strong, dry rot makes the wood brittle, dry and crumbles easily.

Dry rot may already be at work in your lodge. A lodge may appear to be strong and stable, but if you probe a bit you may find it to be in a different condition than the outside appearance indicates. A lodge with dry rot has programs and activities that are ancient and seldom updated or revised.

The principles and teachings of Odd Fellowship will never change, but community service and activities for the dwindling membership need to be developed.



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PUTTING OUT FIRES

One of the most obvious characteristics of the declining lodge is that it is always fighting fires. Such a lodge seldom, if ever, finds itself in a position where it causes events to happen. Instead, it is in a position where events are always happening to the lodge. As a result, it is seldom on the attack, but is always fighting a rear guard action.

THE PAST AND NO MAP FOR THE FUTURE

Typically, lodge committees are composed of historians with a clear record of the past and no map for the future. While I have been traditionally aware of the great history and teachings of Odd Fellowship, I can see where lack of capitalizing on tomorrow's opportunities is of real concern.

THINKING CAP

Put your Thinking Cap on and initiate a plan of action to add new life to your lodge. I am not suggesting that you forget the traditional activities of a lodge stressing Friendship, Love and Truth. Make a special effort to instill your members and new members with a pride in the history, traditions and teachings of Odd Fellowship. Develop some worthwhile community service projects in your community, and consider adopting a well-rounded program of activities that will interest your current members, prospective new members and their families.

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