



Independent Order of Odd Fellows  
Dedicated Members for Change

August 26, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

The Official Report of the State of the Order Committee, presented to the 2013 Grand Lodge in session stated the following:

"Membership, the Elephant in the Room. This is our most important and vexing problem. Each year we see a decline in members and the number of Lodges. In 1998 we had 189 Lodges and 6,464 members. In the Grand Secretary's report this last May he reported 4,429 members and 131 Lodge. In just 14 years we have lost 2,000 members and 58 Lodges."

Those are, unfortunately, the true numbers. And sobering. In fact, this decline has been going on longer than 14 years. The slow decline of our membership has continued, virtually unabated, for three generations - going back to the end of World War II. Unless you want to watch Odd Fellowship diminish and descend into irrelevancy, you and I and every true Odd Fellow needs to take heed.

Let me put this in the simplest possible terms: We cannot continue with business as usual. We have operated that way for the last half century and we have seen in that time a continued erosion in membership and Lodges. We cannot keep doing what we have been doing for the last half century and expect a different result. To change the path of our descent, we have to change the way we operate.

We live in 2013. We simply can't continue to operate as if we were living in 1943, Or 1953, or even 1963.

So, what can we do to alter the equation? Again, in the simplest possible terms, the answer is right before our very eyes: While our Order has been dropping in membership, there are a handful of Lodges in California which have grown in membership. Obviously, those few Lodges have re-calibrated the equation and are doing something that really works. If we want our Order to grow, we should look to the successful Lodges and see if their formula for growth will work for our Lodge.

So, what are these few growing Lodges doing that helps them to grow membership? What makes these growing Lodges different? If you dig deep, you will see that these Lodges are doing two things that make them unique, and that help grow membership in the 21st Century:



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- (1) These Lodges are offering members a varied list of good fellowship activities. Odd Fellowship is, after all, a fraternal order and people want to enjoy each others' company and have a good time. Certainly, that's what the new generation wants to do.
- (2) These Lodges are opening their doors and windows and reaching out into the community. They are working on community and charitable projects of all kinds right in their own hometowns - helping feed the hungry, working with aged-out foster kids, working on environmental projects, etc. Again, that's what the new generation wants to do.

These growing Lodges - and I emphasize this - are also holding more and more social meetings. As Grand Warden, I strongly encourage Lodges to hold social meetings. Grand Lodge encourages it and so does Sovereign Grand Lodge. Our Odd Fellows Lodge Constitution, in Article II, Section 3, already authorizes each of our Lodges to hold social meetings. So, reach out. Open your Lodge doors to the community and to potential applicants. Let the community and potential members see the Lodge and see the activities you are planning. Don't hide behind the Lodge walls. At social meetings you can discuss and plan a wide range of social activities and community activities. Of course, no secrets or ritualistic work of the Order are revealed at these meetings. Such social meetings are a wonderful and effective tool to let applicants and potential applicants know about your Lodge.

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Dave Rosenberg, GW