



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

September 19, 2013

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

A few days ago I wrote about the need for each of us to reach out and bring at least one new applicant for membership to our Lodge. I spoke about our great fraternal enemy: Complacency. Some members are simply too complacent and too comfortable in the status quo. I have heard from a number of Odd Fellows and DMC Members who feel strongly on the subject. Here's an excerpt from one of the e-mails I have received:

I have met a lot of long-time members of our Order who would rather see their lodge die than change and see their lodge grow. Sadly, the lodge where I am now is like that. Every new member (mostly age 45 and below) who were initiated did not stay active and do not participate because of "older member's attitudes" of being too comfortable, complacent and close-minded. For many years, it is the same people holding officer positions and the younger ones they initiate just sit on the sidelines. As a result, these young ones do not get the "value" of attending the lodge or appreciate Odd Fellowship.

Many younger members have tried through the years to uplift and update this Order. All they got is discouragement so they become inactive.

So very true. Some of our long-time members have become so entrenched in the status quo that they don't want to change the way things are. They are comfortable with doing things the same way they have been done for the past 10, 20, 30, 40 or more years. They do not bring in new members, they cannot accept new ideas, and they will not step aside to let new members share in the leadership of the Lodge. These failures are each a recipe for decline. Simply put, we have three significant needs in this Order:

1. New members.
2. Active Lodges which keep new members interested and involved.
3. Long-time members willing to "let go" of the reins of "power" and share leadership with newer members.



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The need for new members is obvious. The decline in membership in our Order is steady, shocking, and devastating. We cannot sustain the losses year after year. Each of us (not the other guy) has the responsibility to bring in new members and add a link the historic chain of membership. But equally as important, once new members are brought into the Lodge, we have to maintain an active Lodge to keep the new members interested and involved. I have been to Lodge meetings where there are no committee reports, no old business and no new business. The Lodge conducts a meeting with little more than a formal opening and formal closing. How boring is that! How will that situation encourage a new member to remain involved? Finally, it's imperative that long-time members step to the side and allow newer members to share in the leadership of the Lodge. I have been to Lodges where I have overheard new members suggest new ideas for Lodge activities. And I have heard long-time members immediately pooh-pooh the new idea with comments such as, "that won't work," or "we tried that once before," or even "that's a stupid idea." How discouraging is that to a new member!

The goal of an Odd Fellow should not just be to hang around till he or she receives a 50-year pin. The goal of an Odd Fellows should be to add links in our historical chain of membership - bring in a new member, nurture that new member into a leadership position, and be supportive if the new member proposes a new activity or a new idea for the Lodge.

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Dave Rosenberg, Grand Warden