



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

November 26, 2014

Dear Dedicated Members for Change,

Let's review a few basic principles. First, I assert that the single greatest problem facing Odd Fellowship today is our diminishing numbers. Our Lodges and our Branches have been diminishing as members pass away or withdraw and new member applications do not keep pace. Second, that basic problem spawns many other problems, including lack of quorums at meetings, failure to have sufficient members to impose the financial checks and balances required by our Order, and lack of leadership talent, among others. Third, the solution to the problem is simple to state, but harder to implement. We must bring in more members, and they must be of strong character and high caliber - with skills and knowledge that enhances our Lodges.

How do bring in new members? I can tell you that new members are not attracted to a Lodge that is moribund - that does little more than have a monthly formal meeting and an occasional potluck. Such a Lodge is a one-dimensional Lodge, of little interest to potential new members. The proof is obvious - a majority of our Lodges do little outside the Lodge and they are generally diminishing in members. To attract new members in the 21st Century, Lodges must become three-dimensional. Lodges must do more than hold meetings. Lodges must be actively involved in their communities, and Lodges must organize social activities for the members. Such three-dimensional Lodges are active and interesting and will attract new blood. Again, the proof is obvious. We have a few Lodges that are growing year after year - these are active Lodges that involves themselves in their communities and develop social outlets for their members. If we ignore this reality - shame on us.

And what about the concept of community service? This is not some new, radical concept. Indeed, community service was a hallmark of Odd Fellowship in prior centuries. When we say that Odd Fellowship must "change" to survive, we mean no more than recapturing what Odd Fellowship was in its heydays - it's days of growth, vibrancy and prosperity, when Odd Fellows Lodges were truly the centers of their communities.

Brother Louie Sarmiento - a terrific researcher - has found the following interesting facts when community service was a prime element of our Order. We need to recapture this spirit.

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Dave Rosenberg
Deputy Grand Master



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ODD FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNITY SERVICE

"Odd Fellowship can best succeed by making it an integral part of our members' lives and by making it an important and vital force for good in our communities. It must be a part of the community and the nation, yes it must even be a part of the world of nations. However, never lose sight of the fact that Odd Fellowship grew and prospered by adhering to the great fundamental basic lessons given to us by our predecessors. Without the commands to visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan, it just would not be Odd Fellowship." - Brother Arthur C. Tiemeyer Sovereign Grand Master, 1947-1948

The idea of lodges taking active involvement in our respective communities is not a new idea. Lodges, during World War II, had been involved in the sale and purchase of defense bonds, war savings stamps, volunteer work for the Red Cross, civilian defense, and victory book campaigns.

Although complete reports have not been received from all Grand Lodges and Lodges, the reports received gave conclusive evidence that the Sovereign Grand Lodge, Grand Lodges and general membership of the I.O.O.F. exceeded the purchase of \$100,000,000.00 in War Bonds and Victory Bonds at the close of the year 1943 and helped supply more than 100,000 pints of blood plasma to the Red Cross. During the same year, sums of money, varying in amounts up to approximately \$20,000 from some Grand Lodges, were used in the purchase of suitable equipment and paraphernalia in connection with the hospitals, and the rehabilitation work carried on for the use and benefit of people who were injured in the service of their country. Several Service Centers were also operated under the auspices of the Odd Fellows which provided clean and interesting entertainment and food to the Armed Forces. In Toronto, the Odd Fellows donated one of their buildings to the government and refugees from Great Britain benefited greatly from it.

After World War II, lodges in the United States and Canada participated with other organizations in control of Juvenile Delinquency, the employment of physically handicapped,



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Polio and Cancer Drives, Red Cross and Veterans Hospital Activities. Several lodges cooperated with School Boards and Parent-Teachers Associations and Municipal Authorities in Clean City campaigns. Odd Fellow Homes also continued taking care of orphans and elderly members.

In Europe, the Grand Lodge of Switzerland spent 26,000 Francs for relief work for people in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Holland and Germany. Many of the refugees from these countries who are members of the Odd Fellows were helped. In Denmark, a nursery was maintained by the Odd Fellows which accommodated about 50 abandoned babies. They were taken cared for in the facility for about two years while efforts were made to locate their parents. If unsuccessful or if the parents do not have the means to support the baby, they would find a way to look for people who would adopt them.

In Friendship, Love and Truth,

Brother Louie

Reference: Journal of Proceedings of the Sovereign Grand Lodge, 1939-1948