



**The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free
and Accepted Masons of Virginia
Committee on Masonic Education**



DEO Presentation Program Paper

A NEW YEAR – A NEW BEGINNING

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Here is the ideal case. The Masonic year has barely begun. Full and honest consideration was given to those chosen to fill the important Chairs in the Lodge, the election of the officers has taken place, they are duly installed, and the Worshipful Master has begun to put his plan in motion with the goal of making this year one of the best ever for their Lodge. Every member has full confidence in the new officers' ability, energy, zeal and their genuine desire to advance the image and welfare of their Lodge and the Fraternity in general.

This attitude of confidence by the Brethren and a readiness on the part of the officers is really essential to the success of the Masonic year. Nothing is more detrimental to the health of a Lodge than apathy and ignorance of Masonic protocol, traditions, and law on the part of the Brethren, or a careless approach to planning and a lack of skill in conducting the meetings and degree work.

The position of Worshipful Master is the highest honor a Lodge can bestow on a Brother, and it is of the utmost importance that he measures up to the expectations of his Brethren, and demonstrates that he deserves the distinction of being called Worshipful, meaning “worthy of respect.”

It is expected that the Brother elected as Worshipful Master should be true, trustworthy, and well-skilled in our Craft. It also is expected that his conduct should be above reproach, and his courtesy and demeanor in his interactions with his Brethren and the public should be exemplary. It is for these qualities that he is held in high esteem by the Brethren. But there are some additional qualities that are necessary in order to be a good Worshipful Master. These include the ability to plan, and execute programs that will hold the interest and generate the cooperation of the Brethren. And, no matter how capable, he should not try to do everything himself, but delegate to his officers and committee chairs, and motivate them to help the Lodge accomplish its goals for the year.

Of course, not every Lodge will, in every year, be presented with this ideal situation. And, while the Worshipful Master may be doing his best and expending the necessary time and effort, he may not have all of the qualifications we have just described. This is not surprising because each of us has certain weaknesses and gaps in skill or experience. But the Worshipful Master should be able to rely on the Past Masters and other members of the Lodge to help him where he is weak. When the Worshipful Master is prepared to accept such help, the Lodge will prosper; and when the officers and members are able to provide such help, their level of engagement is increased and their enthusiasm heightened.

The take away from all of this is that the reputation and prosperity of the Lodge is the responsibility of every member. Indeed, we only need to think back to the Charge at the end of the Master Mason's Degree when each of us was told that: "To preserve the reputation of the Fraternity unsullied must be your constant care" and "by the regularity of your own behavior, afford the best example for the conduct of others less informed."

Thus, even in the best of times, it should not be thought that the Lodge is solely the responsibility of the Worshipful Master or the officers. Nor should a Worshipful Master think of this year as "my year." The success and progress of the Lodge depends on the time and effort that each member contributes to its workings, and it is incumbent on each of us to volunteer his assistance to help with what is required to run the Lodge. Even if a number of Brethren can help only just a little, it adds up, and it is through the combined contributions of all that the Lodge will succeed. Moreover, as a result, the Brethren will improve their fraternal experience and the candidates and new members will be encouraged to become active.

While it is true that some must lead and others must follow, it is teamwork that is important. This Masonic solidarity, harmony and unity, this banding together by a mutual feeling of brotherly love is at the core of our principles. This was vividly illustrated during the building of King Solomon's Temple, constructed over a period of seven years, wherein over 156,300 craftsmen worked together under the supervision of three Grand Masters. Yet neither envy, discord nor confusion was suffered to interrupt

or disturb the peace, harmony and good fellowship which prevailed among the workmen.

We can help promote that same environment of harmony and peace, by refusing to speak evil of another Brother, by refusing to sit idly by when another is in need of assistance, and by doing the work of the Lodge for its own sake without thought of recognition or reward.

If each of us will adopt this approach, then, at the end of the year, we will be able to look back and know that we have skillfully applied the Working Tools, and know that our Lodges have become that much stronger due to our efforts and those of the Worshipful Master and the officers.