



## The Grand Lodge AF & A.M. of Newfoundland & Labrador

### Address to Annual Grand Communication 2016

Most Worshipful Past Grand Masters, Distinguished East, Brethren, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my honor and privilege to accept the office of Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Newfoundland and Labrador. I am humbled but also excited that you, my Brethren, have seen fit to select me your eleventh Grand Master. It is my sincere hope that my leadership example will justify your choice. Later, I will say something more about being the example. I have to say now that standing here is surreal. Never in my wildest dreams did I think this office would one day be mine.

As your new Grand Master, I think you might like to know how come I got started on this journey.

Some 39 years ago at the age of thirty-one, I was initiated into Freemasonry in Corner Brook Lodge #4832 under the United Grand Lodge of England. Needless to say, I am proud of my mother Lodge, now Corner Brook Lodge #11. What led me in this path?

The trail starts like this. As I can best surmise, when I was a youth my Uncle Sam Anthony was a recognized leader in the Loyal Orange Lodge at Pilley's Island. Uncle Sam owned a sword which was used in the Lodge. It was handed down from my great grandfather, William Vincent, who was Uncle Sam's grandfather. Note that Uncle Sam who married my mother's sister, Aunt Fanny, was also my father's first cousin. My Dad was also an Orangeman. Before he died in 1967, Uncle Sam gave me the sword, which I still have, with the expressed hope and promise that "Someday you will be a member of the Lodge."

In time, my career in public education took me to Corner Brook where I met the well known Maxwell G. Simms, a native of Triton, in whose memory the Lion Max Simms Memorial Camp in Central Newfoundland is named. On a particular occasion at his residence in his study he was showing me his certificates, diplomas and awards when in passing he noted his Grand Lodge Certificate. I told him about my Lodge sword and Uncle Sam's comment about someday being a member of the Orange Lodge. WBro. Simms, unbeknownst to me a past master of Corner Brook Lodge, 1954-55, simply responded, "If you're going to join a Lodge, my son, consider the Masonic Lodge." I regret that he died the year before I was initiated a Mason.

Along the way, I progressed through the Lodge Offices and served as the Master in 1984. My first direct involvement with Grand Lodge was serving as an elected member of the Board of General Purposes while I was the District Grand Secretary in 2002-2004 with RWBro. Donald N. Smith, the then District Deputy Grand Master. After that, except for one term, I served on the BOGP, including the two years as District Grand Master – West, until I was elected as the Deputy Grand Master in 2014. As the Chairman of the Board of General Purposes for the past two years, my job was made easy because of the interest and dedication of its members. I sincerely thank each and every one for your contributions.

We have elected and appointed today a new slate of Grand Lodge Officers and a new Board. I congratulate all of you and thank you for supporting your Grand Lodge by offering yourselves for election and for accepting appointments. You have taken on a serious role and I would simply ask that you have regard for its dignity and high importance. I congratulate our new Deputy Grand Master, RW Bro. Ian A. Murray. Bro. Murray, I look forward to working with you over the next two years and beyond.

To the District Grand Masters and the Grand Inspector: We recognize the high importance of your office. The success of your District will depend on the caliber of work of the constituent lodges in it. Freemasonry, which takes place at the grassroots level, will generally depend on your example of leadership and the skill and the attention to detail which you demonstrate in your District. Along the way, I'll be there to support you!

To the Brethren at large, I seriously charge you to support your Lodge. Be an active member and maintain a positive attitude. If we all work together for the betterment of Freemasonry then the end result can only spell success. Remember that only in the dictionary does "success" come before "work." So be prepared to work. Be involved and keep yourselves engaged.

The United Grand Lodge of England will celebrate next year in 2017 its three hundredth anniversary of modern day freemasonry as we know it. In comparison, our Grand Lodge will then be celebrating only its twentieth year since its establishment as a Grand jurisdiction. Suffice it to say, we have made tremendous growth in this short time and we are moving in a positive direction. No doubt about it, under the leadership of our Past Grand Masters we have built a solid foundation. Thank you Past Grand Masters for your foresight and contributions. Thank you, too, for your continued interest and involvement.

Having said that, when I look at our Grand Lodge jurisdiction as we plan for the future, I realize there are areas of concentration that will inevitably guide us in strength, viability and more relevancy as an organization. These have been referenced and detailed in the Strategic Plan (not the first such plan) which was adopted by our Grand Lodge just a few years ago. And while its implementation may be viewed by some as relatively slow, we need to go the course! Although some of the objectives have not been met in the given timeframe, significant progress has been made. We need to keep all goals in mind, and adapt them if necessary for their application to meet our changing needs.

I strongly suggest that we need to emphasize especially these three areas: Leadership, Masonic Education and Community Outreach.

### **Leadership**

I feel that with strong and proper leadership will come the best results as we face the challenges ahead. We need to develop and sustain a strong leadership capacity that will enable our Lodges to grow and thrive as a fraternity. Our organizational structure is such that with the lodge leadership of the Principal Officers and the coordinating and planning efforts of the District Officers we will achieve our intended goals. We must Lead by example, and plan our Masonic meetings, ceremonies and activities so as to engage and include our members and their significant others (where we can).

As I have intimated, District Grand Masters play a most valuable role in promoting, implementing, and checking the progress on any new or existing program. With proper supports, knowledge, and communications from all levels, the District Grand Master is ideally positioned to foster positive growth at all levels of our fraternity. Being the liaison with the Grand Lodge and Lodges within his District, he must know the ins and outs of all programs and be proactive in decision making.

I feel confident that with the resources available from Grand Lodge, and its direction and support, our constituent Lodges and Districts can operate successfully as they should.

### **Masonic Education**

Education is central to Freemasonry; the whole notion of darkness to light, from ignorance to enlightenment. The need for Masonic Education was highlighted by the All Canada Conference as long ago as 1947 and summarized in a statement as quoted by WMBro. Larry B. Grandy in 2014, "Masonic Education is all-embracing and never-ending. There is no horizon that places a limit on our endeavors and until we lay down the working tools of Life – more Light should be our goal; and, as we ourselves search for and discover additional Light, so should we be ever ready to impart our knowledge to those who seek our guidance."

With the Grand Lodge website updated and accessible by all Brethren and with our recent experience with Facebook, it has been shown that Masonic Education can be better ensured. We ought to embrace social media for the aid it can give to improve our communications. On the Grand Lodge Website, our Brethren can instantly access the Constitution of Grand Lodge, the Grand Lodge Strategic Plan, the Lodge Handbook, the Farnham research papers, the Proving-Up Kits and much more. Our educational resources are available. Nevertheless, where necessary, we have to plan, implement and promote a Masonic Education Program. Indeed, we must ensure that a successful program of Masonic Education is operative in every Lodge.

### **Community Outreach**

In our Strategic Plan for the operation and growth of our Grand Lodge leading to a more successful Grand Lodge, Community Involvement and visibility within the community are included as very important.

Although to be visible, should not be our main concern, it seems to me that many of our Lodges do not share with their community or each other their laudable activities in it. We should promote and develop an accurate, positive and progressive public image of Grand Lodge. We need to develop guidelines for Masonic community activities and raise awareness of them within the community and among and between our Lodges. I know that many of our Lodges are active within the community and you are to be congratulated. (Examples are posted on our Grand Lodge website.)

### **Grand Master's Theme**

It is a tradition for the Grand Master to choose a **theme** or slogan; to summarize his best intentions, to guide his term of office and to focus the direction of the Grand Lodge under his stewardship. I began this presentation by saying that it is my sincere hope that my example will justify your selection of me as your Grand Master. It behooves all of us to "Be the Example" of our Masonic teachings. It is said in *The Exemplar: A Guide to a Mason's Actions* that "Every Master Mason is a window through which others will see and decide from the experience what will be their opinion of Freemasonry." Perhaps because of that, as most of you know, at his installation the Worshipful Master of a Lodge is instructed among other things to instruct the Brethren of his Lodge to "... practice out of the Lodge those duties they have been taught in it; and by virtuous, amiable, and discreet conduct to prove to the world the happy and beneficial effects of our Ancient Institution, so that, when anyone is said to be a member of it, the world may know that he is one to whom the burdened heart may pour forth its sorry, to whom the distressed may prefer their suit, whose hand is guided by justice, and whose heart is expanded by benevolence." In other words, be a stellar freemason by example in thought, word and deed. My selected theme is "Be the Example." I will do my best to "Be the Example" and live up to the expectations you have for your Grand Master.

### **Grand Master's Charity**

It is also a tradition that the Grand Master and the Grand Lady select a charity of their choice on the occasion of his Installation. There is hardly a family in our province or a person here present that has not been touched in some way with diabetes and related issues. I see a number of you nodding in agreement. To name just a few, there was WBro. Max Simms (mentioned above) who had both legs amputated because of diabetes and PGM Larry Moss who was plagued with the disease. Among others in our family, there was my mother, Idella, Fern's two aunts, Drucilla and Lucy, and her grandmother, Tina Oake. Today, there are my niece, Pansy, and Fern's aunt Motee. And then there is Kai, the youngest of our three grandsons.

Kai was diagnosed with T1D when just three years of age. Today, Kai is a first year University of Toronto Scholar. In his honour, in particular, we designate the Grand Master's Charity, the *Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation of Canada*. In recent years much progress has been made in this area that has dramatically improved the lives of many. So it is our wish that you will join us in financially supporting the wonderful efforts in this field. JDRF's goal is to raise funds to provide on going financial support to the researchers who are accelerating the pace of curing, better treating, and preventing diabetes. Your generous support will help us reach this goal. Your Grand Master's Charity has been setup online and is accessible through the Grand Lodge Website at <http://www.glnl.ca/the-grand-masters-charity/>.

### **Vote of Thanks**

Brethren, Ladies and Gentlemen, in my books this day has been recorded a great day. And it's not over yet! My heartfelt thanks go out to our distinguished guests from other Jurisdictions, to the representatives of Concordant Bodies both within and outside our Jurisdiction, to all the Brethren within our own Jurisdiction who took the time to be a part of this event, to the organizing host committee, and to friends, neighbours and family members, particularly our daughter, Lisa, who with her mother, participated in the presentation of my collar of office. I thank all of you for your support and love. I am grateful to each and every one of you.

To all the brethren and guests here today, Fern and I are so grateful for your support. And we look forward to joining you at the festivities this evening.

Respectfully presented,  
Cluney W.G. Vincent  
Grand Master 2016-18

