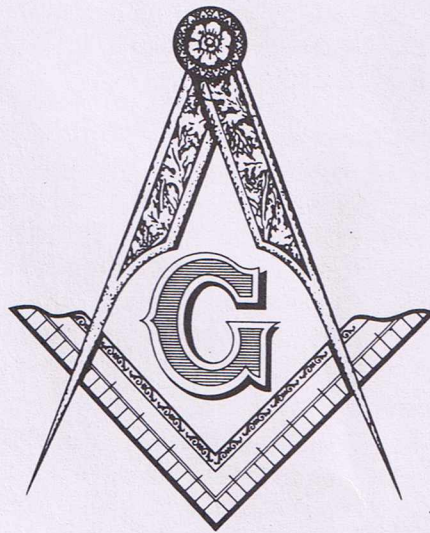


MASONIC CHARITY



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Benevolence and charity are basic principles of Freemasonry. Every Mason is expected to maintain an attitude of benevolence toward all mankind and to perform acts of charity for those in need. This distinguishing characteristic of its members is a foundation stone of the fraternity.

In the Middle Ages each lodge of operative masons, who built the cathedrals, abbeys and castles, maintained a charity chest to help widows and orphans, or members in distress. In addition, they assisted a fellow mason by giving him a day's work or the means of travelling to the project of a neighbouring lodge.

LODGE ACTIVITIES

In the same manner, Masonic lodges of today have an account reserved for charitable purposes to which every member is expected to contribute. These funds are used to quietly assist members in need, send remembrances to widows, or special greetings to brethren confined by age or illness. Many lodges extend their benevolent activities by supporting worthwhile community projects.

DISTRICT RESPONSIBILITIES

To assist the individual lodges and to encourage benevolent and charitable activities, each Masonic District has a Chairman of Benevolence. He receives, investigates and makes recommendations on requests for Grand Lodge benevolent funds. His knowledge of the availability of social services and health programmes can be of valuable help to the lodges in his District.

An increasing number of Districts are becoming involved in community fund raising projects such as disaster relief, specialized hospital equipment, vehicles for the physically challenged or additions to hospitals. In planning these undertakings, Districts are urged to contact The Masonic Foundation for counsel and administrative advice. The Foundation encourages local initiatives by making a financial contribution to the project.

MASONIC BOARD OF RELIEF

In previous years, Boards of Relief existed in 19 Ontario centres to assist in administering Grand Lodge benevolence. With changing roles, the number has decreased and the few remaining primarily address local Masonic and social needs. Some operate under the title of Masonic Service Guild.

GRAND LODGE COMMITTEE ON BENEVOLENCE

The first cornerstone given to every Mason is "Benevolence/Charity." A strong appeal for this Masonic virtue was eloquently put in an address made by M.W. Bro. J. S. Martin in 1929, of which he said: *"The individual Mason and the Constituent lodge are charged with the sacred trust, to care for the widow and the orphan of our departed, and also to guarantee that our aged and infirm brethren do not suffer or spend their declining years in poverty and distress."*

While each lodge has the first responsibility for benevolence toward its members and their dependants, further assistance may be available through the Grand Lodge Committee on Benevolence.

This committee has revenue produced by the Memorial Fund with which to assist Masons and their dependants in Ontario. In years when the Memorial Fund revenue has not met the needs, additional funds have been provided by Grand Lodge.

To request assistance on behalf of one of its members, a lodge submits an application to the District Chairman of Benevolence. The Grand Lodge Committee reviews the request and advises the lodge of its decision. Before submission, each application must first be approved by the lodge, anonymously if appropriate. The lodge is expected to provide some financial help in each situation.

Committee grants are made in one sum or over an extended period depending on the need and are distributed through the requesting lodge. Individual grants, which tend to be modest, are designed to provide a measure of comfort beyond that available through governmental agencies.

MASONIC FOUNDATION OF ONTARIO

The Masonic Foundation of Ontario is a public charitable foundation founded in 1964 by a special Act of the Ontario Legislature to provide a means for using the Craft's financial resources for the benefit of the community at large.

The Foundation was initially endowed with \$161,500 from Grand Lodge; over the years, the capital account has grown nearly fiftyfold. Funding is provided primarily from three sources: investment income earned on the capital; contributions from Masons and friends of the Foundation; and Bequests received from the estates of individuals. Three major fund raising campaigns contributed significantly to the increase: Project H.E.L.P. (Hearing for Every Living Person), "Help Nip Drugs in the Bud" and "HELP-2-HEAR" raised \$600,000, \$1.1 million and \$2.1 million respectively. Interest on the capital fund now provides over \$400,000 annually to support a broad spectrum of activities in Ontario.

The Masonic Foundation has a strong interest in helping the youth of Ontario to become the best that they can be. A non-refundable grant programme for students in post secondary institutions was introduced in 1965. It assists students who encounter an unexpected financial emergency during the final year of a two- or three-year programme, or the third- or fourth-year of a four-year programme.

Project H.E.L.P. supports research directed at determining how the auditory system evolves, which has led to successful cochlear implants in children as young as one year, and universal neonatal hearing screening across Ontario. The HELP-2-HEAR programme currently supports three research projects dealing with: the proper fitting of digital hearing aids to infants; the use of brain imaging techniques to assess hearing problems in young children; and the study of language, literacy, socio-emotional and academic development in preschool children with hearing loss.

Since 1981, the Foundation has financially supported VOICE, a provincial organization that helps hearing

impaired children to function in the hearing world, and Kerry's Place, which provides special programmes to assist families with members suffering from Autism. Through the Help Nip Drugs programme, the Foundation provides annual grants to the *Council on Drug Abuse* and *Parent Action on Drugs* to conduct Peer Education programmes in primary and secondary schools across Ontario on the dangers of drug abuse. Financial support also goes to groups of youth who will be in the forefront in making the world better for future generations, such as Scouts Canada, Girl Guides, 4-H and DeMolay.

INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

Masonic charity extends well beyond our provincial borders. Often Grand Lodge is called upon to support many worthwhile causes from disaster relief to assisting a member in difficulty while outside our country.

All communication with other Grand Lodges must be done through the Grand Secretary's office and this practice is to be followed on all matters including benevolence beyond our jurisdiction.

PARTICIPATION

Masonic charity in Ontario distributed through benevolence and the Masonic Foundation currently totals over half a million dollars each year. This is an achievement in which every member can take pride, and in which every member can take part.

Within his own lodge a Mason can contribute to the benevolent fund and participate in work projects to help widows and the indispensed, visit those confined to home, hospital or care centre, and be a member of a phone contact committee. He can support Masonic worship services, the offerings from which are used for benevolence.

Every member should take an interest in District fund raising projects, contributing and participating within his ability to do so.

Available to each Mason is the opportunity to support the Grand Lodge Memorial Fund and the

Masonic Foundation. Gifts to these capital funds are frequently in the form of bequests, life insurance policies, or assets such as stocks, bonds, mutual funds, or term deposits. Information on this or other items concerning Masonic charities is readily available from the Grand Secretary's office.

Donors should be aware that the Masonic Foundation, most district fund raising projects, some Boards of Relief and some lodge benevolent funds are qualified as registered charitable organizations and may issue income tax deduction receipts.

THE NEED CONTINUES

Even with increased availability of governmental social assistance, there remains a pressing need for Masonic benevolence and charity. Kindly acts of remembrance toward older members, the infirm and widows are always required. Practical assistance for those in distress is still the responsibility of those who can help.

Therefore, every Mason through his private efforts, his lodge and the other avenues of Masonic charity, ought to consider what he should, can, and will do to assist others.