



Independent Order of Odd Fellows
Dedicated Members for Change

December 31, 2013

Just when I have adjusted to writing "2013" I now have to adjust, again, to writing "2014."
Happy New Year's Eve to one and all.

Do you still make New Year's Resolutions? If so, put this one on your list: I resolve to bring in at least one new applicant for membership in my Lodge.

Sounds like a simple resolution. But, you know, it is a powerful one. If each and every one of us in this Order made that resolution, and actually kept it, we would have absolutely no issue with declining membership. We would reverse the 66-year trend of losses in just one year. Yes, it's true. In one year, our membership would add thousands of new members and (deducting the normal losses of members due to deaths and withdrawals) would virtually double in size.

So, why doesn't this happen? Adding new members is, without question, the single greatest challenge facing this Order. The declining membership is a problem in and of itself, but it spawns all sorts of other problems for Lodges and for the Order - including lack of financial checks and balances, self-dealing by members, diminution and loss of property, etc. So again, why doesn't this happen?

I've contemplated this dilemma and have determined that the failure to bring in new members is the result of three reasons. Here are the terrible three:

1. Inertia and ennui. Most members figure that bringing in new members is not their problem, their issue, or their responsibility. If they think about it at all, they figure someone else in the Lodge will do it. They view it as "not my problem".
2. Design and control. There are members out there who, by design, don't wish to bring in new members and don't want their Lodge to grow. Even though the aging of their Lodge is a significant problem, they are happy with their Lodge just the way it is and want it to remain that way until they die. They don't really care about the "legacy" of failure that they will leave behind. And, sometimes, these members are the ones who run everything and control everything in their Lodge. Adding new members, in their minds, runs the risk of loss of control and of changing that "old gang of mine."
3. The empty vessel. And, finally, some Lodges have diminished to such an extent that virtually nothing remains to attract new blood. If the Lodge is composed of grandfathers and grandmothers, does no community work, and only holds monthly ritual meetings with an occasional potluck, what could possibly attract a new applicant to join this "moribund society of



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the three links".

If you recognize your Lodge in the listing above, it's long overdue time to snap out of the torpor. The future of your Lodge and of this Order depends on us - each of us - pulling our own oar. As I have said many times: Growing this Order is not something that Sovereign Grand Lodge or Grand Lodge can accomplish. Ultimately, it is the job of each Odd Fellow, working within his or her Lodge, to bring in new members and save this Order for future generations.

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Dave Rosenberg
Grand Warden