

CORNERSTONE PROJECT

Ensuring the Timeless Vitality of Freemasonry in Ontario



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada



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CORNERSTONE PROJECT OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of the Cornerstone is derived from the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. It is important because all other stones will be set in reference to this stone, thus determining the position and strength of the entire edifice.

The Cornerstone is also symbolic to Freemasons because it provides the basic tools for understanding and growing the larger intellectual edifice. So we may endeavour to *"raise a superstructure perfect in its parts and honourable to the builder."*

As the proper placement of the Cornerstone ensures a solid foundation upon which to build any structure, so too it teaches our Lodges the important lesson of having innovative and vibrant programs to ensure that our Lodges are strong, *"until time shall be no more."*

Just as the newly Initiated EA symbolically represents the Cornerstone of the Lodge and thereby its future; so too does the Lodge symbolically represent the Cornerstone of The Grand Lodge and its long-term sustainability. Each of the constituent Lodges have their own unique challenges, but we all stand together with one common goal, that of ensuring the sustainability of the Craft.

Excerpts from a paper published in the Reflections Newsletter of the Committee on Masonic Education, Volume 23, Number 4, written by L.L. Walker Jr., P.M. Anson Jones Lodge, Fellow in Masonic Research of the Texas Lodge of Research, entitled *"The Little Lodge That Couldn't"*, remind us of some of the challenges our Lodges must overcome.

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"Once there was a Lodge that started out little, years ago; it grew larger like many other lodges did at that time and then it got little again.

The members were all good fellows. There wasn't a bad thing to be said about any of them. They attended lodge regularly because it was a pleasant way to spend an evening. The coffee was good, you sat in the same seat, and you always knew how things were going to come out. You never had to worry about surprises, or strange ideas.

In time, a lot of the members moved away and there were names on the roll that only those with the longest memories could remember. But these Brethren paid their dues and that helped keep the Lodge going.

There wasn't much Work because petitions were few and far between. But when the Work was there, there wasn't always a full slate of experienced men to fill the chairs. The Worshipful Master seldom had to worry too much about actually running the Lodge because the Secretary and some of the Past Masters saw to that.

The years went by and nothing changed and nothing happened. The coffee was still good, but there were more vacant seats at every meeting. Then one day the members began to talk about selling the old property and re-locating. But to many, a move would somehow violate tradition. So no decision was made and the Lodge didn't move because it couldn't.

Finally, with dwindling membership, a lack of petitioners and much-reduced funds, the Lodge was forced to make a painful decision. When the Brethren gathered to decide the Lodge's fate they suddenly realized the financial truth as many said, "We can't make it." And sure enough, they couldn't."

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The ***CORNERSTONE PROJECT*** has been developed to assist Lodges with these many challenges. Its primary purpose is to encourage and recognize Lodges that plan, implement and manage a well-rounded yearly Lodge program that promotes Lodge activities, brotherhood, charitable work and involvement in the community.

Although good planning and strong management is a vitally important component to the overall success of any Lodge, it must never be forgotten that in order to maintain the momentum in the Lodge, the members must have a compelling idea of where the Lodge needs to go, what type of members it will attract, what benefits it can provide, and how the organization needs to be perceived in the community if it is to thrive.

VALUE ADDED BENEFITS

When a Lodge makes the decision to participate in this program, they acknowledge their desire to increase the value of the experience that they provide to their membership. Participation will bring many *Value Added Benefits*:

- ✓ ***Increased Lodge Vitality***
- ✓ ***Enhanced Teamwork***
- ✓ ***Increased Sense of Pride in the Lodge***
- ✓ ***Greater Sense of Accomplishment***
- ✓ ***Use of the Designation of 'Cornerstone Lodge' (with the applicable years) on the Lodge Summons, Newsletter, Letterhead or other such Lodge material***

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PROGRAM

The **CORNERSTONE PROJECT** is **not** a stand-alone initiative, but rather a program that should be used in conjunction with other Lodge Resources Programs of Grand Lodge as each is designed to build upon one another to achieve the overall success and a sustainable future for the Lodge.

The Grand Lodge, through the Cornerstone Team, administers and evaluates the project, which is not a one-time event. It is an award that is valid for two years and is presented on a biennial basis. Should a Lodge wish to participate, a Letter of Intent must be submitted each and every time a Lodge chooses to participate.

To qualify for a **CORNERSTONE DESIGNATION**, a Lodge must:

Complete **1** of **3** Mandatory Standards

Complete **5** of **12** Major Standards

Complete **6** of **13** Basic Standards

Lodges that meet the qualification requirements to become a "Cornerstone Lodge" will be announced at the Annual Grand Lodge Communication in July and will be presented with a Certificate by their District Deputy Grand Master in September or October.

All Lodges should ensure that they are familiar with the most recent version of the **Lodge Resources Program Materials** as available on the Grand Lodge website. These materials **contain valuable resource information that can help a Lodge in qualifying** for the Designation of Cornerstone Lodge. In order to access this material, individuals will have to go to the Members' Section of the website, click on the 'Lodge' section, then 'Lodge Resources' and then click on the specific program, e.g., Mentor, Friend-to-Friend, etc.

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QUALIFICATION PERIOD

With the **CORNERSTONE PROJECT** qualifying window opening on June 1st of each year and closing on May 31st of the second year, you are reminded that only those events and activities that occur within this two-year time frame will be considered when reviewing the qualifying documentation.

Qualification window **opens June 1st** of each year.
Qualification window **closes May 31st** of the second year

Suggested Steps in the Process

To initiate the qualification process, the Worshipful Master of each Lodge must first appoint a **Lodge Cornerstone Project Chairman**. This person will serve as the liaison between the Lodge and the Grand Lodge Cornerstone Team. It is important to bear in mind that although a Lodge Cornerstone Chairman is appointed, it is not his sole responsibility to see this completed. The project requires a **Team effort**.

Next, the **Lodge Letter of Intent**, (see Appendix A on page 12) must be completed and submitted to the Cornerstone Committee Chairman, Committee Secretary, or the Grand Lodge Office, no later than December 31th of the first year of the two year reporting period the Lodge wishes to enroll for.

It is recommended that the Lodge Cornerstone Chairman read through the Cornerstone Activity Submission Package and identify those Standards that can be readily met. He should then, in consultation with his Worshipful Master, the Lodge Secretary and the Lodge's Committee of General Purposes, select those other Standards they plan to work

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towards, bearing in mind that each event only counts towards one Standard. Or, phrased differently, a Lodge may not claim credit on more than one Standard for any one event.

It is especially important to read each Standard carefully, particularly the requirements. For example, some individuals have thought that the six or seven senior officers in a Lodge must participate in an event in order to qualify when in fact, it is only two of those six or seven officers. Others seem to think the only way to qualify for the Blood Donor Standard is by giving blood when volunteering at the clinic is equally eligible.

As necessary, it will be important to assign responsibility to individual Lodge members for some of those various Standards. The Lodge Cornerstone team should be collecting all the necessary back-up documentation, e.g., names of participants, summonses, meeting minutes, promotional flyers, etc., as each Standard is completed, and identify which Standard each of those items relate to. If this is delayed until year end or just prior to the submission, there will likely be a considerable amount of scrambling to gather everything together by the submission deadline.

The Cornerstone Manual – *Activity Submission Package* is distributed as a writable PDF file. This should allow information to be typed in as appropriate, the file saved and then sent as an email attachment to the Cornerstone Committee Chairman or Committee Secretary. The position of Cornerstone Committee Chairman and Committee Secretary may change from time to time so it is important to identify who the current Cornerstone Committee Chairman and Committee Secretary is and send the completed document to him.

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District Cornerstone Advisor/Chairman

The Cornerstone Committee Chairman will assign a team member to act as the Regional Cornerstone Advisor in those Districts where the District Deputy Grand Master has not appointed a Cornerstone Chairman for his District Team, and as the regional liaison of the Cornerstone Committee.

The role of the District Cornerstone Chairman is to be the link between the Lodge, specifically through the Lodge Cornerstone Chairman, and the committee and provide assistance or guidance, when called on, throughout the qualification period.

Once the Lodge Letter of Intent has been received, the Lodge Cornerstone Chairman and the Master of the Lodge will be provided with the contact information for their District Cornerstone Advisor.

Program Application

In order to be considered for the '***CORNERSTONE LODGE***' designation a Lodge must submit the Cornerstone Manual – Activity Submission Package, to the Cornerstone Committee Chairman or Committee Secretary, detailing their activities. This ***Activity Submission Package*** and the ***Program Application*** form therein, along with the relevant documentation to support the activity claim must be received no later than **June 15th** of the second year of the two year reporting period the Lodge is submitting for. Submission packages received after this date may or may not be assessed in time for the Grand Lodge announcement.

Submissions may be forwarded electronically in the writeable PDF form. The supporting documentation may either be attached to the PDF form clearly referencing the Standard it

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is supporting; or in an organized supplementary file clearly referencing the Standard it is supporting.

Submissions may be forwarded in hardcopy. While a three-ring binder does an excellent job of keeping all the paperwork together and in order, it does become cumbersome and awkward for mailing. A flat presentation folder or Acco folder works as well. Ensure the Lodge name, number and District are clearly identified on the front page of the submission.

ONE FINAL THOUGHT

Many Lodges are under the impression that, because they are small, struggling Lodges, they do not have the resources, specifically the 'manpower', to implement the Cornerstone Program. Those Lodges are encouraged to consider the alternative perspective that by implementing this Program, they may energize their Lodge and see absent members return or see new members join, thereby addressing their issue of insufficient resources. Consider the following statement by a Lodge Coordinator that was part of the covering letter with his Lodge's package:

"The Cornerstone Project has been a real positive experience for our lodge. Last November at a "committee of general purposes" meeting a vote was held to proceed with amalgamation talks. The vote was all members in favour with one against. I was the one against and I convinced the brethren to try this project in conjunction with other Grand Lodge programs for two years and if we were not in a stronger position I would relent. Six months later and talk of amalgamation has vanished and been replaced by the prospect of attaining "Cornerstone Lodge" designation for a second time [again the next year]. The change in attitude has been amazing and it has been accompanied by a mini revival in lodge. I must thank you for your efforts and let you know that in at least one lodge they have been successful."

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Acknowledgement

The Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Canada in the Province of Ontario wishes to express its sincere appreciation to the Grand Lodge Free & Accepted Masons of Utah for providing permission to our Grand Lodge for the use of their Lodge recognition program, known as the “Master Builder Program”. This Grand Lodge of Utah program has been used as the foundation and blueprint in the development of our Lodge initiative, the Cornerstone Project.

Cornerstone Project

To: W. Bro. Mark Kapitan
Cornerstone Committee Secretary
20 Samuel Road, Grimsby, ON, L3M 4P6
905-309-9510,
glcpoocornerstoneproject@gmail.com

Date: _____

RE: CORNERSTONE Project Letter of Intent

(Please print clearly)

Dear Cornerstone Committee Secretary,

The purpose of this letter is to notify the Grand Lodge, Cornerstone Project Team, of our Lodge's intention to participate in the CORNERSTONE Project for the two year period commencing 1 June 20__ and ending 31 May 20__.

The members are firmly committed to the continued success of our Lodge and its programs by dedicating themselves to long range planning, cooperative implementation and supportive action to perpetuate our Masonic ideals and the Mission of Freemasonry within our community.

As Worshipful Master of _____ Lodge No. _____
in _____ District, the Grand Lodge of A.F.& A.M. of Canada in
the Province of Ontario, I have appointed _____ Brother _____
(*maybe the Worshipful Master*) to serve our Lodge as our CORNERSTONE Project
Coordinator (CPC), and have asked him to be your contact for this Cornerstone time frame.

CPC NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

HOME NUMBER: _____

E-MAIL: _____

Fraternally,

Worshipful Master (print name)

Worshipful Master (signature)

Worshipful Master's E-MAIL: _____

(E-mail addresses are essential for communication purposes)