Slide 1

This is a presentation and discussion about the benefits of civility in your lodge and the consequence of allowing incivility to take hold in it.

Slide 2

What is “Civility”? In a way, civility can be defined as a manifestation of how we make other people feel at the base level of our interactions. It is not about romantic or emotional feelings but more about the feeling of respect and personal safety. If you “feel” you have been treated uncivilly, the feelings invoked can be similar to the feelings of being disrespected, dismissed or threatened. None of these feelings are conducive to problem solving, team building, or collaboration. But all of these are key components of a successful lodge.

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Read slide

Slide 4

So why civility now? Can you think of a better time to start thinking about this in your lodge?

Slide 5

Let’s look at the numbers

Read slide

Slide 6

Read slide

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A recent survey conducted amongst Masons showed that more than 97% of all respondents agreed or strongly agreed that society is in need of greater civility between its citizens.

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50% of respondents indicated that they witness incivility routinely or feel that it is prevalent in their communities.

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And over 95% are concerned or very concerned about the incivility they witness around them

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And as you can see, lack of civility permeates all facets of our lives and at every level of our interactions with others.

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And the future doesn’t feel much better. When asked, 92% of teens surveyed felt that social media was contributing greatly to incivility by making it easier to feel anonymous and more willing to say things we might otherwise, at least in the past, be unwilling to say directly or in person. A reduction in the need for face to face communication has had very positive influences in areas of efficiency and information but it might be said that the reduction of in-person, interpersonal interaction has led some people to feel little need to practice the social and civil graces.

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The good news is that we, as Masons, are of the opinion that we have the ability to help restore civility to our communities and beyond and more importantly, with each passing day, we are making efforts to do exactly that.

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Why civility now? As I said before, can you think of a better time to start thinking about this in your lodge? Based on these previous observations, if incivility was a disease, it would be easily classified as an epidemic.

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Read slide. Elaborate if you like.

Slide 15

But our question here today is “Why civility in the lodge?”

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Read slide

Slide 17

The Compass

Incivility arises frequently, especially today, through disagreement. In Freemasonry we have a visible instrument in our most recognizable symbol… the compass, that when presented to us at our initiation, admonishes us to be mindful of our passions and to keep and maintain civil interaction on all occasions. At one point, we specifically single out our brethren in Freemasonry for this heightened level of desired civility. Deferring our passions in favor of harmony, ***civil*** disagreement, and ***civil*** discourse to bring about a friendlier and more harmonious resolution.

Harmony is really what we are talking about here.

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Read slide. Elaborate if you like.

Slide 19

What’s the impact of incivility on member attendance and attraction?

Read slide. Elaborate in you like.

Slide 20

Read top half of slide.

Maybe your lodge numbers are better. Maybe they are worse. But isn’t any time spent dealing with quarrels amongst brothers, too much time? Remembering to deal with each other civilly will help to reduce the amount of time you spend mending fences and allows you to spend more time building something more valuable.

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Read each bullet point one at a time.

**Reduced enthusiasm**- How excited are your members going to be if they have an uncivil environment to work in?

**Declining Attendance**- How many will continue to attend if they face or have the potential to face a hostile environment at their lodge. Our lodges mean a lot to us but they probably don’t mean more than our happiness.

**Dwindling active membership for projects, activities and service**- Fewer willing bodies means fewer hands and minds to develop, plan and execute all that we want to do.

**Reduced public awareness**- The less we do, the less the world knows about us and the less likely we are to attract the good men of our communities into our fraternity. And if we have a ***bad*** reputation in the community, especially for being uncivil amongst ourselves, what does that do for our public image and new member attraction?

**Poor member experience**- In the end, we want to have a consistently good experience in our lodge and we should want the same for others.

**The question to ask yourself is, can you look at your lodge now and point out or recall how incivility has resulted in one or more of these outcomes**?

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Read slide.

Is it possible that routine and regular stress and strife at your lodge can spill over into your family or work life? If it does, how likely are you to keep coming back to lodge?

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Read slide. Elaborate if you like.

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Incivility Contributes to:

Read each bullet point one at a time.

**Reduced Officer and Lodge Efficiency-** How efficient are you at doing something you are not enthusiastic about? Especially something you volunteer for and have the option of casting off?

**Reduced Member Morale-** Low morale is contagious and breeds contention and dissent.

**Less Innovation-** Low morale and reduced efficiency are not the breeding ground for innovation and improvement. We should be seeking new opportunities, building on our successes and repairing the disappointments with each successive year.

**Absenteeism-** Even dedicated officers will start to fall out if they are unhappy.

**Loss of Resources and Talent-** If people leave, their hands and ideas leave with them

**Low productivity as a group-** Many hands make light work, leaving time for more enjoyable and rewarding pursuits in and out of the lodge.

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Resulting in a lower quality experience for everyone involved.

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Read slide. Elaborate if you like.

Slide 27

Read slide

Slide 28

First Remember Who We Are

Read slide- Elaborate if you like

This is who we are and we have indirectly and unofficially promoted civility by accepting a broad array of members, acknowledging that each of us is different and at the same time by ignoring our differences and seeking paths that allow us to unite as brothers and work towards common goals…together.

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How do we fix it?

Be self-aware- Read slide

What does this tell us about ourselves? As it comes to happiness, we would rather be treated with respect and civility than be rewarded in other ways including money. In our fraternity, the real currency is brotherly love and affection which is easily translated into civil interaction and understanding.

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So be mindful of your interactions with officers, members and their families. Recognize that someone is always watching and making judgments about you and through you to the fraternity. Acknowledge that none of us has to be here and act accordingly. Always let Brotherly Love govern your actions.

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Engender Trust- Without trust, we run the risk of turning a simple disagreement into a full blown war. If I don’t trust your motives, how can I trust that you have anyone’s best interest, other than your own, at heart. Mistrust raises our awareness of feeling unsafe or threatened and can be the seed of future and extended incivility.

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Engender Trust Amongst Leaders and Brothers

Read slide 1st bullet point

Actually be trustworthy and honest. Make sure your motives are clear and well-understood. Make sure your motives are in line with the best interests of your lodge and your brethren. Have no hidden agendas or motives. Brothers will always forgive honest mistakes. They will seldom forgive or forget selfish ones.

Read Slide 2nd Bullet point

One way to build trust is to have projects separate from the ceremonial aspects of the lodge that encourage the members to work together as a team and rely on each other to accomplish a common goal. This is sometimes playfully referred to as “bonding through common suffering”. Working hard to accomplish a given task helps us to recognize that we are here for each other and demonstrates, over time, that we are worthy of each other’s trust. This recognition will help to fend off the tendency to first assume the worst from someone’s actions, helps us give them the benefit of the doubt, and opens the door to civil dialogue when a transgression occurs.

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Listen Actively

Read slide. Offer an example (optional).

After a disagreement, if an agreed upon solution has been found, the matter is usually dropped. If such a unanimous solution has not been found but all parties feel they have at least been heard, even if the solution was not what they wanted, they are more likely to let the matter go and move on. But they must feel they have been heard. If they are being dismissed or disregarded, the matter ***will*** persist. Apply the principle of the attentive ear.

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Personally, there are many things that we can do to promote civility and thus harmony, in our lodges.

**Be self-aware-** Make a commitment to be more civil and pay attention to your own reactions to conflict or disagreement.

**Think the best of others-** Don’t immediately presume that the incivility you experienced was intentional. It may have been, in which case such behavior should be addressed. But your first assumption should not be the worst of the person.

**Be self-actuating-** Look for ways to be a neutral ear when it comes to the nature of a disagreement and help with the civil resolution of disagreement among brothers.

**Encourage others-** In times of calm, gently engage in a conversation about civility awareness and even point out to a brother where a different, more civil approach, might have yielded a better result, with less conflict. Utilize the concept of the instructive tongue.

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Read the slide and note the resources

Slide 36

The 31 day Civility challenge is a way to incorporate a small amount of civility into your daily life. Most of the tasks are small and unintrusive to the normal routine of the day. But they can bring a little more joy and comfort to your day and slowly engrain civil acts and behaviors into your daily life.

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Read slide. ***Leave out the last line on the slide and say it at the end of your discussion on this slide***.

The simplest uncivil act can take but a few moments but resonate for years in a lodge. We may never know what we have lost because potential and opportunity cannot be easily measured. But diminished returns, disappointing member experiences, deteriorating public opinion and declining membership can be. There may be many reasons a lodge begins to suffer. But uncivil behavior and the bad attitudes that follow are often the root cause of such declines.

***But you can be the force for change today.***

Slide 38

Read the slide

Slide 39

Review the resources and the ideas noted on the slide