

Discussion document on women in a New Modern Installation Ceremony

As we all know Freemasonry has been around for hundreds of years and it has survived ridicule, persecution and extermination in former times.

But we did survive and following World war 2 there was a resurgence of membership, but alas this did not last, and in recent years we have been experiencing a decline in numbers as our older brethren pass away and a lesser number of new members being attracted to join the craft. As well we also have difficulty in retaining many of our new recruits as they try to juggle their other commitments to work and family, and to also give them something more meaningful in their lodge experience. So how do we do this? It is my contention that we make their women-folk more *inclusive within our fraternity.*

Many years ago Grand lodge adopted an open ceremony for the Installation of the incoming Grand Master. This is a very good showcase to show our pomp and ceremony and also to demonstrate that we are not a secret society.

Likewise at lodge level we could also showcase this same message and allow our *womenfolk the opportunity to be witness to a portion of our Installation ceremony.* In doing so I advocate that we would also retain our existing traditional ritual so that each lodge can make a choice of which one they wish to choose for each installation. My proposal is that freemasonry up to Grand Lodge level discuss the feasibility of introducing a modified showcase installation of the incoming Master which would allow our women-folk to to be part of it within the following provisions:-

- a) That Incoming and Outgoing Masters wives/partners be ushered in with master masons when they re-enter lodge after the investiture of the new Master.
- b) That Past Masters wives/partners follow Fellow-craft free-masons on their re-entry to the lodge.
- c) That Master masons wives/partners follow Entered apprentice's on their re-entry into the lodge.

In the ceremony our womenfolk would have the great experience in witnessing their menfolk participating in the trumpet calls and proclamations plus the investiture of all of the lodge officers for that year. The presentation of Past Masters jewel would follow, then the exit of Grand Lodge officers and culminating with the closing of lodge in 1st deg.

I foresee the incoming masters wife /partner being the matriarch of our attendant ladies who would organise them to enter lodge at the appropriate time. Should she not agree to be present or carry this privilege out then the lodge should not apply for the Modern installation to be used for that year.

It is my humble opinion that there is nothing in this part of the ceremony that would require any change due to the presence of our women folk, and it would showcase to them the beauty of our ceremonials.

It would also promote a meaningful masonic bond between our members and their womenfolk which would encourage more interest and participation.

To further promote this modern format I envisage that Grand lodge could grant dispensation to each lodge should they choose to carry out the Modern Installation on a Saturday, which would allow family arrangements to be made.

This Saturday option could put more pressure on District Grand lodge officers and this would need to be assessed as well.

Most of the world's bastions of male dominance have chosen to allow women into their midst and I believe that this is the first step that we can make in that direction. Should this proposal ever get off the ground then I would like to see my mother lodge be given the privilege to carrying out the First Modern Installation ceremony

Yours fraternally
M R Staples PM
Lodge Te Puni 315
11/11/17

PS: The Installation would be followed by our usual refectory that our womenfolk would be encouraged to attend. This would also show them the comradrie and convivial toasts that we follow.

Finally, this would round off a most memorable experience for them and build a common bond between our lodges and our ladies.