

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

There but for the grace of God, go I...

Proverbial saying attributed by some to John Bradford (1510-1555)  
[http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/there but for the grace of God go I](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/there_but_for_the_grace_of_God_go_I)

Dedicated to the Memory of all Odd Fellows  
Who made Odd Fellowship Relevant in their Times

## Introduction

My first tweet:

- these notions are not intended to offend anybody... these are only one man's thoughts... they are offered to others to ponder... in FL&T...

I have been thinking about Odd Fellowship since I joined the Order about a decade ago. But only recently did I begin to write these thoughts down and enter them on the microblog, Twitter, at <http://twitter.com/belovedorder/>...

These ideas are not really mine. My father and my grandfather were longtime Odd Fellows. It was only after I joined the Order that I made the connections between Odd Fellowship and what they had been telling me all my life about how I should conduct myself. I was raised to be an Odd Fellow without any direct sense of that...

My tweets have been random thoughts, recorded as they have been created. I started in the beginning of July 2013 to record these thoughts. It is now about two months later and I am hoping that these thoughts in this format will make a bit more sense than they do as random notions thrown up only as they occurred to me...

### **Stuck in the Past**

There are probably as many ways to look at a fraternal organization as there are people who participate in or attempt to fathom the fraternal purpose, the history, and the ritual. Most folks, I guess, base their assessments of fraternalism on legend and tradition. There is also a fascination, both on the inside and the outside, with the secrecy and mystery. There is no doubt that Odd Fellowship has a rich and colorful past. That past extends back to a time centuries ago in England when men of good character came together to form local groups for the purpose of social interaction and mutual support. All their concerns were very immediate and local to an intimate community. They knew one another. They could trust one another. And they could rely on one another...

But the world has changed over these centuries and fraternal organizations have not kept pace with this greater change. Most of these organizations are gone now and I suspect that this loss is due to the failure of these organizations to remain relevant to the new generations of folks who make choices about their involvement in their communities. Add to this the fact that many of these brotherhoods have clung onto their old traditional rites and practices that, in arcane mystery and secrecy, simply lost their resonant connections and relevance with an ever-changing culture...

Social institutions must remain relevant to their constituents if those members are to remain interested and involved, and if new members are to be drawn into that group's mission. When we observe any decline of interest in religious or political or cultural institutions, we also can see that these institutions have lost their relevance to the people that they seek to attract and hold. There may be many reasons for this loss of influence but the result is the same. There is no compelling need to be involved. And with today's many options to engage a broad range of rich socially active environments, fraternal organizations have suffered especially...

And yet, the principles of Odd Fellowship remain relevant to us all at all levels, locally and nationally and internationally. Odd Fellowship is the quest for civility in an uncivil world. On the one hand, Odd Fellowship seeks to bring a rich and deeply satisfying social experience. On the other hand, Odd Fellowship hopes to prepare its interested members to work together to create a better and chaos-free world...

And this is all accomplished with the enhancement of individual personal character through the virtues of friendship, love, and truth...

My related tweets:

- history of the Order begins some 300 years ago... those beginnings are the stuff of stories and mysterious legend...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- the pace and progress of the Order is a reflection of another slower time... 21st century requires real time presence, immediate response...
- the past has been important to know how far we have come... it is now time to let go of the past, act in the present, look to the future...
- there is nothing wrong with pointing to where one has been and being proud of accomplishment... but odd fellows must always look forward...
- when odd fellows let go of the past they do not let go of who they are and what they believe... they are only letting go of who they were...
- we must have a vision of the future so we can know to where we are going... the past is either our foundation or our anchor... our choice...
- odd fellowship needs to sacrifice nothing to shine in the 21st century... but it must sacrifice its pre-21st century views to be relevant...
- there is a need for odd fellowship in today's world... there is a place for odd fellowship when we remove the mystery...
- imagine the past is erased and you are left with nothing more than friendship, love, and truth... where does an odd fellow go from here...?

### **The Need to Change**

Change is so difficult. There can be no question about that. We need to hold onto our principles. We need to hold onto our quest for civility. We need to strive for the enhancement of personal character. And we need to maintain our hold on the belief that these things are found in the practice of friendship, love, and truth. We must find the way to tell ourselves what we can do and to reject the temptations to tell ourselves what we cannot do...

But the context of our fraternal efforts must be brought into a modern world, into the 21st Century. These are not the times of Thomas Wildey or Schuyler Colfax or my grandfather or even my father. Our times are very different with another set of challenges, a new language, an unprecedented exposure to a broad range of cultural diversities, accelerating advances in the technologies for information and communications and transportation, a whole new array of possibilities in human relationships, understandings, and misunderstandings...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

### My related tweets:

- i cringe if i hear members telling each other "you cannot do that"... and more if they add "because sovereign grand lodge won't allow it"...
- if the Order is curious and open-minded about its own traditions, it can find new and relevant purpose today... it is all about relevance...
- when one is curious and open-minded, it is not hard to find a place to begin building a future for odd fellowship...
- what use beyond quaint ambience do a grip, gestures, and sundry tokens of old odd fellowship give us today...? security...? let's rethink...
- einstein ridiculed acting repeatedly with different expectations as insanity... darwin's lesson is more appropos: adapt or become extinct...
- question is this: is the Order waiting for the 21st century to come its way...? or is the 21st century waiting for the Order to catch up...?

### **Resetting a Fraternal Mission for the 21st Century**

Are we out of sync with a 21st Century world? Indeed, we are. We attempt to operate within a controlled centralized governance structure in a world that is increasingly moving toward peer-to-peer relationships. We continue to meet annually to make new rules in a world that increasingly seeks flexibility and responds to rapid change in 24/7 real time. We consider and implement changes glacially, and our adoption of technologies to further our mission is rudimentary while relying, at best, on implementing these technologies in archaic notions of top-down centralized organizational governance. We may have a laptop in our saddlebags or an iPad in our hands but we are still riding on the back of a horse headed for our next annual convention to get something decided and accomplished. All our rules do not free us but, rather, they confine us...

Despite our many attempts to define and clarify our mission to those around us, it is probably fair to say that our mission is misunderstood. There are many who know that we are good people but who also see us as a "secret society" holding onto mystery and rites that are difficult to fathom. There are many who see the Order as fat and wealthy, and ready to write a check if the need is compelling and convincing. But as we all know, there are limits to our resources. As a practical matter, the largess of the Order is not simply in the giving away of its wealth although that seems to be a perception I have commonly encountered in my conversations with a number of folks...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

The Order's mission is simply the enhancement of individual personal character through the virtues of friendship, love, and truth. And when each and every member is touched by this common mission, we become strong as a group in the way that the ritual shows us with the bundle of fragile sticks tied together...

My related tweets:

- the Order has not much in common with mankind today... its ranks are not swelling... but the Order can unify mankind on its values alone...
- the Order's challenge is explaining why all humanity should wish to set differences aside for the purposes of friendship, love, and truth...
- as required, an odd fellow's assistance is not intended to restore what was... the intent is to sustain life, spirit, and create new hope...
- odd fellows cannot be expected to bear financial costs of all problems... but odd fellows can lend a hand and offer support and expertise...
- odd fellows each share their unique knowledge and skills and expertise in common efforts to create good... in friendship, love, and truth...
- odd fellowship will not save the world or rescue anyone... the Order's goal...? make the world a better place by improvement of character...

### **Odd Fellowship Creates Connections**

The significance of peer-to-peer connections in today's world cannot be over-emphasized. It is possible now to strike up a conversation with anyone anywhere on the face of this planet. No longer do we have to follow "channels" and representative authorities to reach anyone who has the information and communications technologies that make this possible. These peer-to-peer connections strike terror in the hearts of the powerful among us who fear that these technologies threaten their traditional roles of authority and control. These people are, after all, only the brokers of information and the directors of its traffic. Now almost anyone can do an end-run with information...

Perhaps this is a good thing and perhaps not. Only history will reveal this to us eventually, but it is like trying to stop the flow of water down a mighty river. Like the water in this river, the flow of information cannot be stopped or controlled but Odd Fellows can manage the direction and use of its own internal and external information flows...

The trick for Odd Fellows will be to bring, first, civility and, second, purpose to our own flow of information. There is no reason why the Order cannot create a virtual Sovereign

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

Grand Lodge or respective virtual Grand Lodge sessions into a private and secure place on the Public Network. There is no reason why competent Odd Fellows anywhere cannot bring advice and assistance to any other Odd Fellows in need anywhere on the planet. And thereby make things better, safer, happier, and more secure for everybody...

My related tweets:

- o imagine an odd fellows network... odd fellows connected... devoted to the principles of odd fellowship... all listening and contributing...
- o how do you prioritize the following in distress...? family, friends, community, children, elderly, odd fellows... anywhere on the planet...?
- o we can stand against social neglect and injustice, and throw money at problems... but cooperation and personal engagement trump all else...
- o what will it take to turn odd fellowship into a committed way of life...? as fixed and present in all folks as their patriotism or faith...?
- o to find its way into the 21st century, the Order must find a way to reposition itself from a rigid hierarchy to an organization of peers...
- o an excuse is easy for not joining an organization but it's hard to decline an invite to join one dedicated to a good and purposeful life...

### **The Improvement and Elevation of the Character of Humankind**

The stated goal of Odd Fellowship is "to improve and elevate the character of mankind" (It is time to change that to "humankind"). This is not a simple notion because it has three (and perhaps more) dimensions...

The first dimension is the improvement and elevation of our own individual personal character. It is not something that we can attain and then forget about. Our individual personal character may be tested for each new situation in which we find ourselves. And some Odd Fellows will find this easier than others...

The second dimension is the assistance and encouragement that an Odd Fellow can give, in friendship and love and truth, as a mentor toward improving and elevating the character of others with whom he or she interacts...

The final dimension is perhaps the most difficult. It is the ability of an Odd Fellow to assess and know that others with whom he or she works can be reliable and

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

responsible and trusted to share in a common cooperative effort and commitment. The ability to evaluate and know the character of others is almost always mission-critical...

When the intentions and commitments of the common effort are directed to good and the process of that effort is governed by civility, we rely less on good luck alone for creating good outcomes...

My related tweets:

- some folks want numbers when thinking the direction of odd fellowship... here they are... seems it's getting worse... (see [http://www.webershandwick.com/uploads/news/files/Civility\\_in\\_America\\_2013\\_Exec\\_Summary.pdf](http://www.webershandwick.com/uploads/news/files/Civility_in_America_2013_Exec_Summary.pdf) )
- an odd fellow can guide and mentor... yet improvement of character only starts and continues with the improvement of one's own character...
- if we seek to improve the character of mankind, such begins with how others are regarded and included to contribute to our common efforts...
- building personal character and confidence in folks across communities enables them to understand and confront every challenge they face...
- the traditions of the Order point an odd fellow to those with the greatest needs to sustain and remediate... making this a better place...

### **Friendship, Love, and Truth**

These three words, friendship and love and truth, seem so obvious to us that we barely give them any thought. As most of us were raised as children, these three words were learned soon after we learned to call our parents' names. However, as our experiences as children -- and later as adults -- have all been different, these three words can mean very different things. Expressions of friendship, of love, and of truth can and often are sources of misunderstanding and conflict...

All of the great religious traditions speak of friendship, love, and truth. And all great cultural and ethical traditions attempt to show us how these notions can be adopted and used in the course of our daily lives. Odd Fellowship needs to find a way to raise these three foundation principles in the 21st Century to a level that is higher than any particular belief perspective and that is common to all people...

The trick here is for 21st Century Odd Fellowship to define the notions of friendship, love, and truth in a way that appeals to any member of humankind and will exclude no

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

single member of humankind. Yes, this is a very tall order, I realize, but those who might join the Order are making a choice. And that choice should be as clear as possible for as many people as possible...

My related tweets:

- it is not possible to know truth without also knowing love... there can be no love without knowing friendship...
- friendship, love, and truth are an odd fellow's guiding lights in every moment in life from deadly seriousness to the silliest of moments...
- we are all different... interests, knowledge, skills, politics, belief, experience... friendship, love, and truth rise above these things...
- success comes from shared cooperation... that cooperation comes out of shared understanding... that understanding from curious open minds...
- friendship, love, and truth are not conditional... nor should they be confined to "people like us"... all people are pretty much the same...
- friendship, love, and truth are not simple words... there are virtues associated with each word... all intended to make our lives better...

### **Degrees for the 21st Century**

There should be no need to change the traditional metrics of progress in Odd Fellowship. The basic notion of four foundation degrees (Initiatory, Friendship, Love, and Truth) remains valid and relevant in the 21st Century as the measures of personal progress and accomplishment...

But the learning of Odd fellowship needs to be fully re-examined. If friendship, love, and truth are the tools for improving and elevating individual personal character (and thereby fostering the proliferation of civility around us), then degree work should continue to be the instrument of learning how to use these tools (as degree work was always intended to be such)...

Modern instructional theory recommends that people learn new skills by:

- First, studying the information we need to practice a skill, transforming those concepts into personal knowledge and understanding.
- Second, observing how a skill is actually practiced.
- Third, actually participating in hands-on practice and, with trial and error, perfecting competence in the skill.

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- Fourth and finally, demonstrating the competent practice of the skill in an assessment judged by those whose competence is already recognized...

In this way, those who have learned the valuable skills of Friendship and Love and who have attained the 3rd Degree of Truth are the indisputable master practitioners of Odd Fellowship...

My related tweets:

- a metric of degree work should be the merit earned and fulfillment seen in community-oriented efforts... the ritual rewards this success...
- degrees should enshrine the mastery of knowledge, skill and experience of an odd fellow's competence... lodge socials celebrate this feat...
- odd fellows with fraternal skills beyond the truth degree are obliged to assist those working through the degrees of friendship and love...

### **The Degree of Friendship**

The Initiatory Degree should be a "novice" degree. A novice degree is one that reveals to a new member of the Order what Odd Fellowship is about and sets expectations as to what the remaining three Degrees of Friendship, Love, and Truth will entail and what the attainment of these degrees will mean to the new Odd Fellow in the Order, in his or her community, and in his or her life...

The Degree of Friendship is where the real work of becoming a competent master Odd Fellow begins...

My related tweets:

- friendship... the first step to love and truth, neither of which can be found in its absence... friendship requires time to know another...
- virtues of friendship: trust, reliability, fellowship, awareness, and generosity... without these virtues love and truth are not possible...
- trust in friendship: now "friendship" can be made with tap on a screen... odd fellows know only time verifies how much trust we can share...
- reliability in friendship: odd fellows assess the character of those in their midst to recognize disciplines, fortitude, and reliability...
- fellowship in friendship: odd fellows know each friend they make has something to offer or contribute... face-to-face is always preferred...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- awareness in friendship: odd fellows are nobody's fool... they feel no pressure to act from words alone... they know need when it is seen...
- generosity in friendship: odd fellows give what each can responsibly spare... all odd fellows can afford active support and encouragement...
- friendship is the first step to fellowship and trust, without which folks tend to diminish their focus from results to personal advantage...
- friendship requires odd fellows to listen to things they might not wish to hear... that can be uncomfortable but might also be necessary...
- when we see another, extend a hand, offer a smile, we seem ready to listen and to learn their perspective... ready to know and understand...
- a bad seed can be planted in a friendship with mere expression of a personal jest... the fruit of this tree will be anger and resentment...

### **The Degree of Love**

The Odd Fellow's work on the Degree of Love follows the successful attainment of the Degree of Friendship. The Degree of Love must be understood and mastered before an Odd Fellow can study and master the Degree of Truth...

My related tweets:

- love... to know the experience of life from another's heart and mind... love requires friendship first and yields the valid view of truth...
- virtues of love: empathy, compassion, charity, support, and sacrifice... none are possible without friendship... love drives our actions...
- empathy in love: odd fellows see and understand things from all viewpoints... each view, each word from mind, each feeling from the heart...
- compassion in love: odd fellows are moved by empathy to do good things as need to be done... concern and compassion seed acts of charity...
- charity in love: odd fellows know a delicate balance between what is needed and what they can afford... choices are never easy or obvious...
- support in love: odd fellows have an on-going awareness beyond first charity... if there is a problem, fixing that issue becomes priority...
- sacrifice in love: odd fellows know they have a choice to act on love... they also know what will make this world a better place for all...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- in every popular belief tradition we find some variation on empathy... some call it love... some call it mercy... some call it compassion...

### **The Degree of Truth**

The Odd Fellow's work on the Degree of Truth follows the successful attainment of the Degree of Love. The Degree of Truth is the final step in the attainment of an Odd Fellow's mastery of the skills of Odd Fellowship...

But the attainment of the Degree of Truth is not the end of the Odd Fellow's journey. Mastery of the skills of Odd Fellowship continue as an Odd Fellow learns more through his or her practice of Odd Fellowship, and faces the most difficult challenges of leadership in the Lodge, in the Order, and in the communities in which he or she may become engaged...

My related tweets:

- truth... insight we all share... not because of what we each believe but because of what we all know to be valid views of what we all see...
- virtues of truth: transparency, understanding, reality, justice, and power... among friends truth is a hammer for good and odd fellowship...
- transparency in truth: odd fellows know truth requires full accountability and competent responsibility... in the heart and in the lodge...
- understanding in truth: odd fellows seek insight, assessment, and understanding of their experience... if more is known, more can be done...
- reality in truth: odd fellows cannot always agree on what they see... but they find it beneficial to know what others around them can see...
- justice in truth: odd fellows decide what is best from the truth they find and believe together... including the most difficult decisions...
- power in truth: odd fellows find abiding integrity in the power of truth and how critical the truth is in making the world a better place...
- truth as transparency is the endgame for an odd fellow... the ability to rely on others who know odd fellowship... and to recognize bluff...
- truth can always be told if it can be confirmed and if it can be expressed constructively and in a genuine spirit of friendship and love...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- truth will not be found in any attempt we make to confine our understanding... greater truth will be found in the expansion of knowledge...
- an odd fellow knows there can be a big difference between how something is said and the words being spoken... truth can be found in both...
- odd fellows have long known the truth is like a heavy, cumbersome, destructive hammer without friendship and love...
- seeking the truth from oneself should be as important as seeking truth from others if to avoid false consensus and pluralistic ignorance...
- leonardo da vinci: "where there is shouting, there is no true knowledge"... without true knowledge, good decisions are impossible to make...
- be honest with yourself... is every truth you know and hold shared with any other person...? EVERY truth...? if so, how do you know that...?

### **The Attributes of an Odd Fellow in the 21st Century**

Developing a profile of an Odd Fellow in the 21st Century is not simple. Such requires that we strip away the differences that might separate us. This includes all those things that make us distinct as individuals so that we can reveal what it is that gives us a common view of our world. Those differences that can separate us include our peculiar interests, knowledge, education, skills, politics, religious beliefs (and non-beliefs), life experience, social position, social authority (real and perceived), degrees of wealth...

In the end, perhaps all we can really rely on is our humanity, our desire to live good lives, and to ensure happiness for ourselves, our families, our neighbors, our communities, our nation, and all people around the world who seek the same good things as we seek...

My related tweets:

- an odd fellow believes in giving to real needs in the community... these concerns may not include needs created by poor personal judgment...
- an odd fellow is focused on the goals of the group, the effort related to the group goals, and the cooperation that yields the result...
- an odd fellow is remarkable for his or her awareness of the desired outcomes of those around him or her... acting only on that awareness...
- an odd fellow knows that she or he can rely on the aid and assistance from other odd fellows... and understands that should not be abused...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- every odd fellow has an opportunity to practice leadership... but an odd fellow doesn't have to be a poohbah to make a difference in life...
- odd fellows know planning for the future is better served by setting priorities well and not by diminishing the list of available options...
- odd fellows look for the connections with the community and its needs... they assist others to see and act on these connections and needs...
- “to sustain and remediate” means that an odd fellow considers and acts on relief as required... and works to fix the source of the problem...
- a good odd fellow, regardless of what she or he knows or believes, is a genuinely decent person... but one doesn't come by that naturally...
- an odd fellow is like a good shepherd... s/he feels compelled to protect the flock and to lead them to green pasture and water... in FL&T...
- an odd fellow speaks for herself or himself and rarely on behalf of others unless the others lack a capacity to speak on their own behalf...
- even the most timid quiet odd fellow we can find desires to be known, to be understood, to be relevant... every bit as much as a poohbah...
- if an odd fellow must be the final word for any issue to decide, then s/he becomes a parent... a responsible parent teaches self-reliance...
- odd fellows must be curious and open-minded to odd fellowship... only open minds can meet each challenge with fresh and effective response...
- odd fellows must focus on the present because unlike the past and future, only in the present can odd fellows act to do what must be done...
- when things go well, an odd fellow wants to know how that was done... when things don't go well, an odd fellow wants to know a better way...

### **The Attributes of Odd Fellowship in the 21st Century**

Developing a profile of Odd Fellowship in the 21st Century is only slightly less difficult than assembling a profile of an Odd Fellow in the 21st Century. The greater difficulty, though, is coming to grips with the strategic and tactical issues of making a transition from where the Order is now to where it ought to be in the 21st Century...

Such changes are always painful, particularly when the bar is set high. It is certainly not simple to create a compelling appeal for the broad swath of humanity that could make Odd Fellowship a mighty force in today's world. Imagine, though, for a moment an Odd

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

Fellowship that would appeal more or less equally to a young technologist in Silicon Valley or Madrid, a banker in London or New Delhi, a farmer in Mississippi or South Africa, a court judge in Davis or Warsaw, a merchant in Buenos Aires or Manila, a student in Cairo or Calgary...

There is, of course, also the natural tendency of great social movements to splinter and divide over time rather than to unify and consolidate. This occurs mostly as constituents find differences with the group in time and separate themselves from the group to create their own groups or to seek new or different group relationships. Such is found in the history of the Order as well as every great religious and political affiliation, but the Order can mitigate this tendency and protect itself by promoting unity as a core principle...

My related tweets:

- odd fellowship is about civility... its adoption... our discovery of all that can be accomplished with civility and our practice of FL&T...
- odd fellowship can exist with two people or among a thousand... it is not connections between us... it is simply the adoption of civility...
- takes time and effort to learn odd fellowship, and to develop skills to be a competent odd fellow both in the lodge and in the community...
- we will never all agree on all things... that's given... but odd fellowship should always seem more like a pillow fight than street fight...
- in a fraternal order there are no leaders and there are no followers... only brothers and sisters... some with more fraternal experience...
- odd fellowship is not about fixing the problems found around us... odd fellowship is about how folks can cooperate to fix those problems...
- odd fellowship is not about playing by the rules... rather, odd fellowship is about playing in the spirit for which shared rules are made...
- odd fellowship itself is a fun experience... but odd fellowship is about learning how to have fun, how to live a good and meaningful life...
- within all differences of location, language, culture, economics, politics and faith, odd fellows find only FL&T...
- odd fellowship leads toward development of character that allows all personal differences to be used or dropped for the good of the Order...
- odd fellows can describe the roles and responsibilities of odd fellowship... and their connections with community...

## 21<sup>st</sup> Century Odd Fellowship

- whenever we create a new rule, we discourage people from using their best judgment...  
odd fellows want always to make their best judgment...
- as groups age there is growing antagonism and fading spirit... resulting in splinters and splits... odd fellows attempt all ways to unify...
- odd fellowship always suffers a blow whenever it finds its affairs at any level in the Order directed by the tyranny of bullying minority...
- the california gm is right... bullies are not odd fellows... has the standard based on friendship, love, and truth been set and enforced...?

### **The Lodge in the 21st Century**

If the Order can start itself with a meeting in the back room of an 18th Century English tavern, a lodge meeting can be conducted anywhere there might be a wall on which to hang a charter. If the Order can start a new lodge in any community that never heard of the Odd Fellows or Odd Fellowship, then the lodges we see dying will be easy to resuscitate...

My related tweets:

- the social interaction of an on-location odd fellows lodge meeting or a social event should always remain the heart and soul of the Order...
- folks who become interested in odd fellowship should know that a lodge hall is not required to start a new lodge... a lodge is its people...
- an odd fellows lodge is not just the shell of a building... the lodge is the people of the community who care about all in that community...
- one could be an odd fellow without a lodge... but the lodge is the touchstone for social engagement and personal development of character...
- one's lodge should be like one's heart... predictably safe and comfortable... respectful, respected... dedicated to good deeds... in FL&T...
- the odd fellow lodge in any community should be the first place one should find the best qualified people to assume community leadership...
- when in their heart each odd fellow knows the best course of action then each can ballot... then will the lodge also know the best course...

## The Ritual in the 21st Century

The ritual is indispensable. But it must be radically revised to be meaningful to all who are drawn to use it. This does not mean that it should be "dumbed down" nor does it mean that it should include shortcuts. The ritual should be written and expressed in the common languages of the 21st Century. Competent modern meeting processes exist in today's conduct of government, business, and other areas. These processes need to be researched and the best practices should be adapted to the purposes of the Order...

My related tweets:

- o the ritual teaches basic skills of getting along and creating good... the lessons taught are timeless... the protocol is of another time...
- o social understandings are required... but there is an inverse relationship between an expanding canon of rules and a desire to be member...
- o simply stated, the ritual is a scripted set of behavioral guidelines that promotes the sense of fraternity and cooperative common purpose...
- o rituals can bring focus to communications, solving problems, and cooperation... but the language must be clear and the purpose understood...
- o the ritual is really no stranger than roberts rules of order... although i will admit that for too many folks, roberts rules seem strange...
- o i have sometimes considered the ritual a game... a serious game by which one practices to develop one's character...
- o the ritual should not be an obstacle to the future of odd fellowship or to the protocols for friendship, love & truth in the 21st Century...
- o we can lose social focus in the intensity of our daily lives -- active, busy, hectic... the lodge ritual allows us to focus and practice...

\* \* \* \* \*

I offer these thoughts with the spirit of the Good of the Order... in Friendship, Love, and Truth... to all members of the Order for their consideration and discussion...

Robin Oliver  
One Odd Fellow  
RobOliver@BelovedOrder.info  
<http://BelovedOrder.info/>  
<http://Twitter.com/BelovedOrder/> (@BelovedOrder)