



***B.L. Hooks Tennessee Council of Deliberation, 33°***

*Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry  
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Date: October 24, 2023

To: The Elected and Appointed Council Officers, Grand Inspectors General, Commanders of the Rite, and members all of the B.L. Hooks Tennessee Council of Deliberation.

To: The Elected and Appointed Assembly Officers, and members all of the R.T. Butler Council of Assemblies

Subject: Open Letter on Peace and Unity

Greetings Fraters and Loyal Ladies,

On Saturday, October 21, 2023, I was invited by Kelly Consistory No. 227 and Kelly Assembly No. 227 to be the guest speaker at their Peace and Unity Banquet. It was a wonderful event attended by their membership, others in the Masonic body, and the public. They honored two long-time members of their Consistory and Assembly, as well as a scholarship recipient.

I want to share some of the excerpts from my speech that I feel are relevant for the all the Scottish Rite and Masonic bodies in general. These are simply excerpts, and not the speech in its entirety.

### **Peace and Unity**

It's always talked about and prayed upon, but not seen often enough in our several thousand years of existence. It's an idea that seems to escape our world...our country...our communities...our relationships...and even our families.

In our Order, our fraternal relations, our Masonic brotherhood and sisterhood, there can often be divisiveness (disagreement or hostility between people). Amen!

### **We need to understand and explore this word Peace.**

The Meaning of Peace. In English, the word "peace" conjures up a passive picture, one showing an absence of civil disturbance or hostilities, or a personality free from internal and external strife. The biblical concept of peace is larger than that and rests heavily on the Hebrew root *slm*, which means "to be complete" or "to be sound." The Hebrew word we translate as peace is "shalom." The way "shalom" is used does not mean to feel calm nor the absence of conflict. Instead shalom, peace, is the result of right relationships with God, one another, and with creation. The concept of peace is wholeness in all of life. Most people yearn for one thing more than anything else: inner peace. Without it, they have no lasting joy or security. The word peace is used in the Bible in three main ways. First, there is spiritual peace—peace between God and man. Second, there is psychological peace—peace within. Third, there is relational peace—peace among mankind.

## **How to achieve Peace**

The question of how to achieve peace is a complex one, and there are many different approaches to it. One perspective is that peace begins with the individual, and that we must first cultivate inner peace before we can hope to create peace in the world around us.

There are also practical steps that individuals can take to build peace in their own lives and in the world around them. For example, you can start by making a conscious effort to listen to others and understand their perspectives, even if you don't agree with them. You can also challenge "us vs. them" thinking in yourself and others, and make an effort to care about what happens to people who are marginalized or ignored.

Ultimately, achieving peace requires a collective effort from all of us. By working together and taking small steps towards peace in our own lives and communities, we can help create a more peaceful world for everyone.

### **Unity in the Bible refers to a state of being undivided or one.**

Unity is a desirable state of being, but it can be difficult to achieve and maintain. Here are some challenges that can hinder unity:

**Diversity:** People come from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences. These differences can lead to misunderstandings, conflicts, and divisions.

**Pride:** Pride can make people unwilling to compromise or admit their mistakes. This can lead to conflicts and prevent unity.

**Selfishness:** Selfishness can make people focus on their own interests rather than the common good. This can lead to conflicts and prevent unity.

**Lack of communication:** Communication is essential for building trust and understanding. Without communication, misunderstandings can arise, leading to conflicts and divisions.

**Lack of trust:** Trust is essential for building relationships and working together. Without trust, people may be unwilling to cooperate or compromise, leading to conflicts and divisions.

**External factors:** External factors such as political, economic, or social issues can also affect unity. For example, discrimination, inequality, or injustice can create divisions and prevent unity.

### **Unity has numerous benefits, both in the spiritual and secular realms. Here are some of the benefits of unity:**

**Promotes teamwork and cooperation:** When people are united, they can work together towards a common goal. They can achieve more than what they could have done individually.

**Encourages mutual understanding and respect:** Unity fosters a culture of respect and understanding among individuals.

**Leads to collective action and shared goals:** Unity enables people to come together and work towards a common objective.

**Creates a sense of community and belonging:** Unity helps to create a sense of belonging among people, which is essential for human well-being.

**Helps to resolve conflicts and disputes peacefully:** Unity promotes peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes.

**Facilitates problem-solving and decision-making:** Unity enables people to come together and brainstorm solutions to problems.

**Supports and strengthens relationships:** Unity strengthens relationships between individuals, groups, and communities.

The Bible speaks of unity in numerous contexts, from unity among believers, unity in the family, and unity in prayer, to unity in Christ. One of the most profound scriptures on unity is found in *Psalm 133:1*, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” This verse immediately sets the tone for the biblical meaning of unity. It is something good, something pleasant, something to be desired. In the biblical sense, unity is not merely about conformity or uniformity. It is about harmony, mutual respect, and love despite differences.

In the spiritual realm, unity is fundamental to the health and effectiveness of the Masonic Order.

**The Bible contains several passages that warn against the dangers of disunity and encourage peace and harmony among people. Here are some of them: (each quoted during actual speech)**

Psalm 133:1 (NIV) John 17:21 (NLT) Romans 12:16 (NIV) Ephesians 4:3 (NIV)

Colossians 3:13-14 (NIV) says, “Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.” This passage encourages forgiveness and love as a means to achieve perfect unity.

Unity is pleasing in God’s sight and is something we should pursue as Christians. Each of us that make up the body of Christ, and humanity as a whole, do have different purposes, skills, personalities, and backgrounds, yet we can still be a unified body. This is how God has established it, that we would be in perfect unity with one another, and even though this may not be a popular concept or goal in the world, unity is God’s good and perfect way.

When it comes to Peace and Unity, God has given us the tools through his word, but we must go inside ourselves to achieve it. **END OF SPEECH**

**Fraternal and Loyal Ladies please be mindful that it is incumbent upon each of us to help achieve and maintain peace and unity in the Masonic Order. We must refrain from “sowing seeds of discord” a chargeable Masonic crime which can result in expulsion. Be very careful of what you say and who you say it to. Ask yourself, does it promote peace and unity or division and divisiveness? If you don’t know, stay silent.**

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