



A BRIEF HISTORY OF FIAT LUX LODGE N^o 1717

Fiat lux et facta est lux: Let there be light and there was light. In Genesis 1: 1-3 we read: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. "

The first of a series of informal discussions on the formation of what is now Fiat Lux Lodge No. 1717, took place in 1998, gathering steam during the last quarter of 1999. The Primary Mover was WBro. Victor Adegbite, PM. He, having consulted many brethren on the subject, invited WBro. John Orleans Lindsay, PM, WBro. Dr. Kwame Acquah, PM and Bro. Rev. Canon Daniel Darko to join him in the conceptualization, formulation, design and implementation of the new Lodge.

As the Board of Founding Brethren, WBro. Victor Adegbite, PM, WBro. John Orleans Lindsay, PM, WBro. Dr. Kwame Acquah, PM and Bro. Rev. Canon Daniel Darko, held several meetings during 1999 and early 2000 at the Takoma Masonic Center, Singleton Masonic Hall, Scottish Rite Center and at various other venues. It is reported that at one of their initial meetings, WBro. Adegbite, reminding the Brethren of the great importance of their undertaking, quoted from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar:

'There is a tide in the affairs of men, which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune; omitted, all the voyage of their life, is bound in shallows and in miseries. On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.'

Energized by this charge, the Founding Brethren worked assiduously in the development of the new Lodge. Among the names they considered for the Lodge were: Silver Cord, Anchor, Unity, Prudence, Faith, Blazing Star, Trowel, Fellowship, Rainbow, Equity, and Mercy. Finally, on January 21, 2000, early in the morning, WBro. Adegbite called WBro. Dr. Acquah with the name: *Fiat Lux*. It was obvious the name came to him in the silence of the night, because it was heavenly inspired.

On January 28, 2000, the Board of Founding Brethren, having agreed on the defining characteristics of the Lodge, WBro. Adegbite, met with MWBro. Mansour Hatefi, Grand Master and MWBro. Stewart Miner, Grand Secretary, at the Grand Lodge Offices to discuss the formation of the Lodge. WBro. Adegbite reported that he was received enthusiastically and the Grand Master and Grand Secretary expressed their interest in the proposed Lodge and pledged to support it. The meeting agreed that the new Lodge should avoid siphoning members from existing lodges and such members as it has, should be universally representative, by being truly balanced in every respect, reflecting geographical equilibrium, and eschewing any semblance of lopsidedness in its composition and heritage.

On January 30, 2000, the Board of Founding Brethren finalized the Vision Statement, Mission Statement and Guidelines for the Operation of the Lodge and a Master Plan outlining goals and objectives, policies and programs for the Lodge. The Lodge was to open, close, and confer all three degrees in accordance with the English Emulation Ritual and to endeavor to

honor the cherished English Masonic customs, traditions and practices. The Mission Statement highlighted attracting and retaining committed Masons, furthering Masonic literacy, advancing Masonic life and career improvement with emphasis on life-long spiritual growth and development, promoting cultural tolerance and understanding, and fostering community outreach. All prospective members of the Lodge were to be apprised of these foundational values.

Having formalized the principles undergirding the new Lodge, the Founding Brethren approached a select group of Masons from diverse lodges within and outside the jurisdiction, preferably with background in the practice of English Emulation ritual, and invited them to consider becoming initial members of the Lodge. Those who accepted this honor, together with the Founding Brethren, were: WBro. Adegbite, WBro. Orleans-Lindsay, WBro. Dr. Acquah; Bro. Rev. Canon Darko WBro. Dr. John Greenwood, PM, WBro. Harold Grainger, PM, Bro. Dr. Francis Nicol, Bro. Dr. Elkanah Faux, WBro. Major Alex Crowther, PM and Bro. Donald Hamilton.

On March 18, 2000, a Petition for Dispensation to form a Lodge and supporting documents, having been prepared by WBro. Dr. Acquah and signed by WBro. Adegbite, were submitted to the Grand Master for consideration, together with a Sponsorship Certificate from Sojourner Kilwinning Lodge No.1798 and a check for the requisite fees donated by WBro. Adegbite.

On April 10, 2000, in the late afternoon, the Board of Founding Brethren met at St Monica's Episcopal Church at 1340 Massachusetts Avenue, SE Washington DC, where Bro. Rev Canon Darko was serving as Rector. He led the Brethren in a solemn prayer in the sanctuary:

'Our Heavenly Father and Supreme Ruler of the Universe, we four Brethren who have assembled here today give you our heartfelt thanks for all the blessings you have bestowed on each one of us. We thank you especially for giving us wisdom, foresight and a sense of vision and purpose to start a new Lodge called Fiat Lux Lodge, U.D. Pour down upon us the continual dew of your blessings, so that assisted by Your grace, we shall be empowered to perform our duties with fervency and zeal. Also, aided by Your divine providence, mercifully assist us to let the Masonic light shine in our lives to Your praise and to Your glory. Endow each member of our Lodge with such a competency of Your divine wisdom, so that assisted by the secrets of our Masonic art, we may be the better enabled to unfold the beauties and excellence of true godliness, to the honor and glory of Your name. In Your most holy and precious name we pray. Amen.'

Following the prayer, the members of the Board, with due reverence, signed and sealed the founding documents of the proposed Lodge, containing its Mission statement, goals, objectives and guiding principles. These documents were subsequently approved and adopted at a meeting of the Lodge.

On April 18, 2000 the Grand Master, MWBro. Hatefi, announced that he had granted the petition for a dispensation to form Fiat Lux Lodge, U.D. Following his announcement, the Grand Master appointed an Oversight Committee to oversee and guide the operation of the Lodge while under dispensation. The Committee was made up of MWBro. William E. Chaney Jr., PGM (Chairman), WBro. Hugh Y. Bernard, Jr., PM, RWBro. Albert McNair Smith, PM, Senior Grand Steward, and RWBro. Mickey Ander, PDDGM.

On April 29, 2000, MWBro. Hatefi, accompanied by a suite of Grand Lodge officers, instituted Fiat Lux Lodge, U.D. and installed the Primal Officers at an impressive ceremony attended by many brethren from the jurisdiction, who filled the Lodge room at Takoma Masonic Center with no seat to spare. The Primal Officers were: WBro. John K. Orleans-Lindsay, Master, WBro. Dr. Kwame Acquah, Senior Warden, Bro. Rev. Canon Daniel D. Darko, Junior Warden, Bro. Dr. Andre Salmon, Chaplain, Bro. Jeffrey Howard, Treasurer, WBro. Harold Grainger, Secretary, WBro. Victor Adegbite, Director of Ceremonies, MWBro. Dan. L. Frederick, PGM, Almoner, WBro. Bilal Raschid, PM Charity Steward, Bro. Dr. Francis Nicol, Senior Deacon, Bro. Dr. Elkanah Faux, Junior Deacon, Bro. Edward Berry, Organist, WBro. Lt. Col. Alexander Crowther, Asst. Chaplain, WBro. Akram Elias, PM, Asst. Almoner, Bro. Roger A. Branch, Inner Guard, Bro. Dr. Akash Taggarse, Senior Steward, Bro. Augustine Boyce, Junior Steward, and WBro. Edwin Whitcomb, PM, Tyler.

The Lodge's dispensation authorized it to meet quarterly, and during its first year, it met at the Takoma Masonic Center and conferred the three degrees on its first set of candidates, Major Juan Arcocha, Mr. Barima Afrane and Dr. Roger Chinery, as follows: Entered Apprentice Degree on October 7, 2000; Fellowcraft Degree on February 17, 2001; and the Master Mason degree on May 5, 2001. Since 2000, Lodge communications have had as part of their agenda, a presentation on Masonic education, and labor in the temple has been followed by a traditional English Masonic Festive Board. Besides the communications, the Lodge also holds Lodge of Instruction sessions and Committee of General Purposes meetings. The Lodge continues to meet and work at the Takoma Masonic Center.

Good work often gets recognized. On February 17, 2001, through the efforts of WBro Ken Gibala, PM, who was later to become a member of the Lodge, a huge number of visiting brethren, who were in Washington, DC attending the Annual Philaethes Feast and Forum, honored the Lodge by their presence at its called communication. It was a most memorable evening. One of the visiting brethren, RWBro. Bil Vassily, PM, at the time Chairman of Custodians of the Work, Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M. of the State of New York, was so impressed with the quality of the Lodge's ceremonies and festive board celebration that, the week following the visit, he posted a full report of his experiences, with effusive praises, on the global Philaethes listserv. By this gracious action, RWBro. Vassily, perhaps unintentionally, put the Lodge on the world map, and it has stayed there since that date. In the same month that RWBro. Vassily published his encomiums, WBro. Dr. Acquah used that report as the basis for a lengthy article on the Lodge for publication in the *Voice of Freemasonry* of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. RWBro. Vassily, subsequently became not only a member, but an officer of the Lodge.

In preparation for petitioning the Grand Lodge for a charter, the Founding Brethren considered a variety of numbers to be recommended to the Grand Lodge for consideration as appendant to its name. After considerable deliberations, WBro. Orleans-Lindsay recommended 'Number 1717' to reflect the desire of the Founding Brethren to exemplify 18th Century English Freemasonry.

On May 7, 2001, following extensive consultations among the brethren of the Lodge and the submission of the report of the Lodge's Oversight Committee to the Grand Master, the Lodge submitted a petition for a Charter. The Petition was signed by WBro. Orleans Lindsay, Master, WBro. Dr. Acquah, Senior Warden, Bro. Rev. Canon Darko, Junior Warden, WBro. Adegbite, Director of Ceremonies and attested by WBro. Harold Grainger, Secretary. The petition stated among other things, the following:

'On March 24, 2000, Most Worshipful Brother Mansour Hatefi granted a Dispensation to a number of Master Masons in good standing in this Jurisdiction to assemble and work as Fiat Lux Lodge, U.D. The brethren commenced work immediately with fervency and zeal. Having labored for over a year, and in accordance with Section 69 of the Constitution of the Grand Lodge, F.A.A.M., of the District of Columbia, the Master Masons whose names are listed on an attached sheet, members of Fiat Lux Lodge, Under Dispensation, which list includes the three Brothers who were initiated, passed and raised by the Lodge, hereby respectfully petition for a Charter to permit them to assemble and work as a new and fully authorized Lodge in the District of Columbia. We propose that the name of this new Lodge be, 'Fiat Lux Lodge'. We respectfully request that the Lodge be granted the number 1717 to reflect our ardent desire to exemplify 18th Century Freemasonry to the extent permissible within the parameters established by the Masonic Code of the District of Columbia, or by the decisions, ordinances or edicts issued from time to time by the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, or by the Grand Master of Masons of the District of Columbia. We pray that the new Lodge will be permitted to open, close, and confer all three degrees in accordance with the English Emulation Ritual and to honor cherished English Masonic customs, traditions and practices. The conduct of the business of the Lodge, including the handling of petitions and balloting, shall be in keeping with the rules and regulations contained in the Masonic Code of the District of Columbia. The work of the Lodge shall be conducted in the English Language. We are committed to making our chartered Lodge an active and dynamic contributor to the efforts of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia to promote Universal Brotherhood and foster Unity in Diversity. We look forward to our Lodge attracting many good men who will receive the Masonic degrees, while it also serves as a home for sojourning brethren whose Mother Lodges are subordinate to or in amity with the Grand Lodge of England, and who are not currently active in our Grand Jurisdiction.'

At the semi-annual Communication of the Grand Lodge held on May 9, 2001, a report of the proceedings of the Lodge while under dispensation was presented together with a petition for a Charter, and, on motion, the prayer was granted without a dissenting voice. The Charter was signed by the Grand Master and the principal Grand Lodge officers on June 13, 2001.

On June 30, 2001, MWBro. Grant R. Berning, Grand Master, accompanied by a suite of Grand Lodge officers, consecrated the Lodge in accordance with ancient custom and usages. The following officers were installed as Charter Officers: Worshipful Master: WBro. Dr. Kwame Acquaaah, PM; Immediate Past Master: WBro. John Orleans-Lindsay, PM; Senior Warden: Bro. Rev. Canon Daniel Darko; Junior Warden: Bro. Dr. Francis Nicol; Chaplain: WBro. Lt. Col. Alex Crowther, PM; Treasurer: Bro. Jeffrey Howard; Secretary: WBro. Harold Grainger, PM; Director of Ceremonies: WBro. Victor Adegbite, PM; Preceptor: Wor. Bro. Phillip Palmer, Sr., PM; Almoner: MWBro. Dan L Frederick, PGM; Charity Steward: WBro. Bilal Raschid, PM; Senior Deacon: Bro. Dr. Elkanah Faux; Junior Deacon: Bro. Roger Branch; Organist: Bro. Edward Berry; Assistant Chaplain: WBro. Rev. Dr. Roland Timity; Asst. Almoner: WBro. Akram Elias, PM; Inner Guard: Bro. Augustine Boyce; Stewards: Bro. Lt. Col. Juan Arcocha, Bro. Barima Afrane and Bro. Dr. Roger Chinery; and Tyler: WBro. Jay Whitcomb, PM. During the consecration ceremony, WBro. Harold Grainger was presented with the Lodge's Fidelity Medal. The consecration ceremony was followed by a special festive board.

In addition to the installed officers of the Lodge, the following were the other Charter members: Bro. Dr. Akash Taggarse; WBro. W. Kirk MacNulty, PM; Bro. Keith M. Dunn; and Bro. Fred Gettings. The founding honorary members were: MWBro. Stewart W. Miner, PGM; MWBro. Theodore M. Kahn, PGM; MWBro. Charles S. Iversen, PGM; MWBro. Jerold J. Samet, PGM; MWBro. George R. Adams, PGM; MWBro. William Jenkins, PGM; MWBro. William E. Chaney, Jr., PGM; MWBro. Mansour Hatefi, PGM; MWBro. Grant R. Berning, GM; WBro. Dr. John Greenwood, PM; RWBro. Robert H. Starr, PM; WBro. Hugh Y. Bernard, PM; RWBro. Mickey Ander, PDDGM; and RWBro. Albert McNair Smith, PM. At a later date, the names of MWBro. Robert F. Drechsler and MWBro. Leonard Proden were added.

The founding documents of the Lodge stipulated that the dress code for all members shall be tuxedo for all communications; white tie and tails for the annual meeting for the installation of the Master and investiture of officers; and morning suit for the annual Thanksgiving Lodge, and the brethren continue to adhere to this practice. Prior to the consecration of the Lodge, the necessary regalia, paraphernalia and equipment, including a grand keyboard, were acquired from various national and international vendors. WBro. Adegbite designed the Lapis Angularis jewel, presented to the Master on his installation, and the Past Master's and Charter Member's jewels.

The following have served as Masters of the Lodge: WBro. John Orleans-Lindsay (2000) (Primus); WBro. Dr. Kwame Acquaaah (2001) (Charter Master); WBro. Rev. Canon Daniel Darko (2002); WBro. Dr. Francis Nicol (2003); WBro. Dr. Elkanah Faux (2004, 2008); WBro. Roger Branch (2005); WBro. Augustine Boyce (2006, 2007); WBro. Philip J. Palmer, Jr (2009); WBro. Rev. Canon Dr. Michael Marrett (2010); WBro. Prosper Houssou (2011); WBro. Edward A. Berry (2012); WBro. Pierrindo Palmer (2013); WBro. Steven Carlo (2014); WBro. Erick Gani (2015); WBro. William Bal Frazer (2016); WBro. Neilbert Knights (2017); WBro. Rhadyo Cayman (2018).

To express appreciation for his extraordinary service and admiration for his leadership, the brethren of the Lodge sought to confer a suitable, yet unique, title on WBro. Adegbite. In the end, the Lodge settled on simply: The Founder.

Over the past ten years, a number of the brethren of the Lodge have served the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, in every capacity from Grand Lodge Committee members, to appointed Grand Lodge officers, to Grand Master, when our founding brother Kwame Acquaaah was made Most Worshipful Grand Master in 2009.

Since the inception of the Lodge, two of its members have been recognized by the Grand Lodge for outstanding service. At its Annual Communication in December 2005, the Grand Lodge voted to award WBro. Adegbite with the Grand Lodge Distinguished Service Medal. Then, in December 2007, the Grand Lodge vested WBro. Grainger with the rank of Honorary Past Senior Grand Warden and conferred the same rank on WBro. Adegbite in December 2009.

In fulfillment of one of the landmarks of Freemasonry, brethren of the Lodge attach great importance to building relationships with brethren from other jurisdictions. They have cultivated warm fraternal bonds with many fine Masons within the US and abroad, and actively promote exchange of visits with them. Among such visits was one undertaken by a Lodge delegation led by WBro. Dr. Faux, then Master, during the week of June 21 to June 27, 2004, to Columbia Lodge No. 2397, London, UK and the Lodge of Living Stones, Leeds, UK. It was a most rewarding learning and fraternal experience.

From the very beginning to the present, the Lodge has prospered and enjoyed uninterrupted and culturally balanced growth. By the Grace of the Most High, it is our earnest hope and prayer that the Lodge will continue to go from strength to strength.

