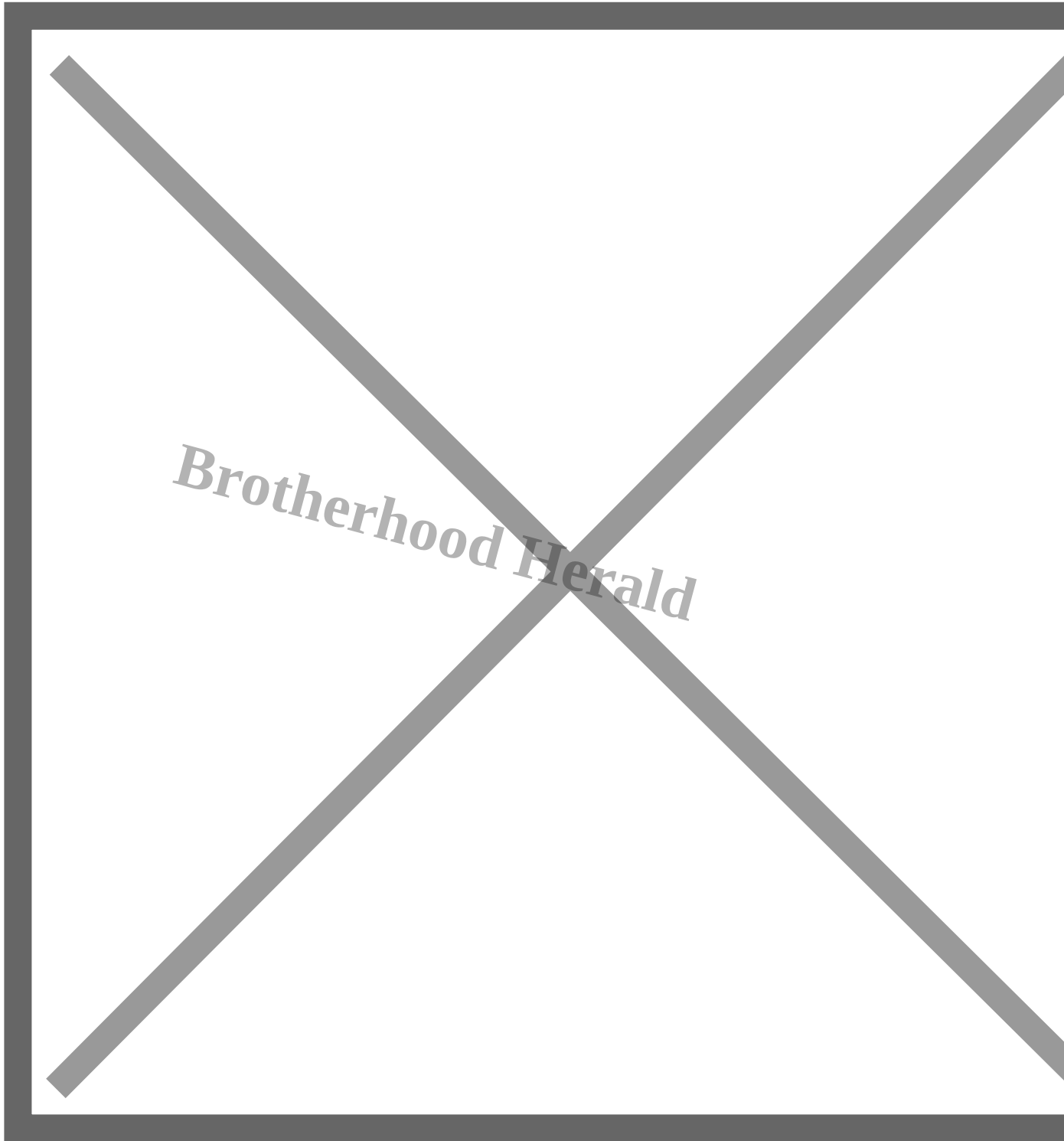




What does it mean to do FLT?

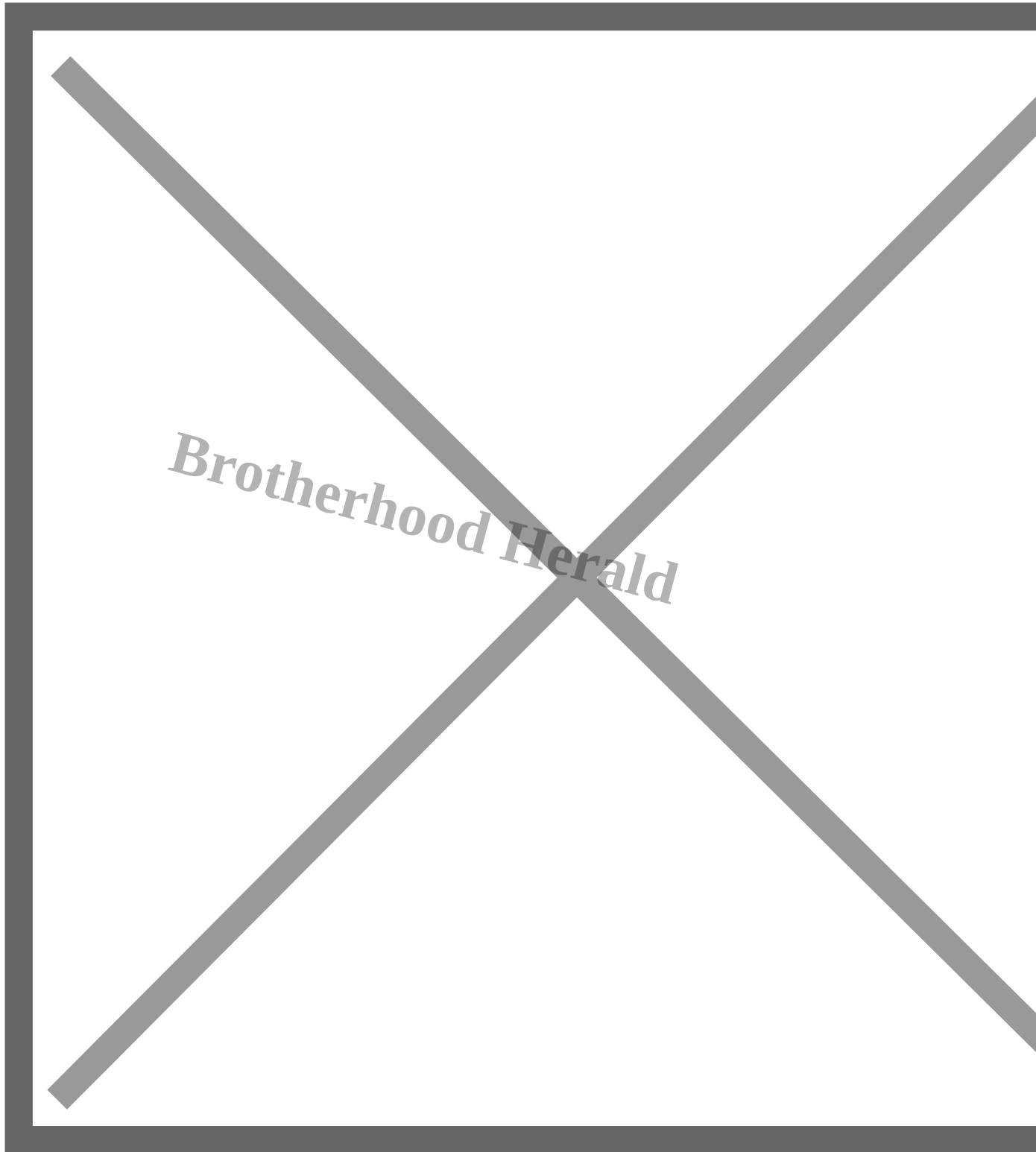
Description

For those uninitiated, FLT, or Friendship, Love and Truth is the motto of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. They make up the three links of Oddfellowship, its most important symbol. That being said, why do these principles hold such a high importance in the order? How do we actually do FLT?



The three links, guiding principles of the order

On the face of it, it seems very straightforward, even somewhat basic. After all, we all have had a friend, we all love someone, and we all know it is good to tell the truth. These principles we teach to children on the playground. Be nice, tell the truth, love one another. We need to look past this surface level to see just why Friendship, Love and Truth as principles may actually hold the keys for how we can run our lodges and do good in the community.



The old lithographs have a place in my heart

We start with Friendship, the first link of Oddfellowship. Friendship is not just about being nice. Friendship refers to the bonds between brothers and sisters not of the same blood. Think back to the lesson of the first degree! The first degree doesnâ??t tell us simply to â??be niceâ??• it tells us that even in the most desperate circumstances there are bonds which are stronger than any noble title, or blood

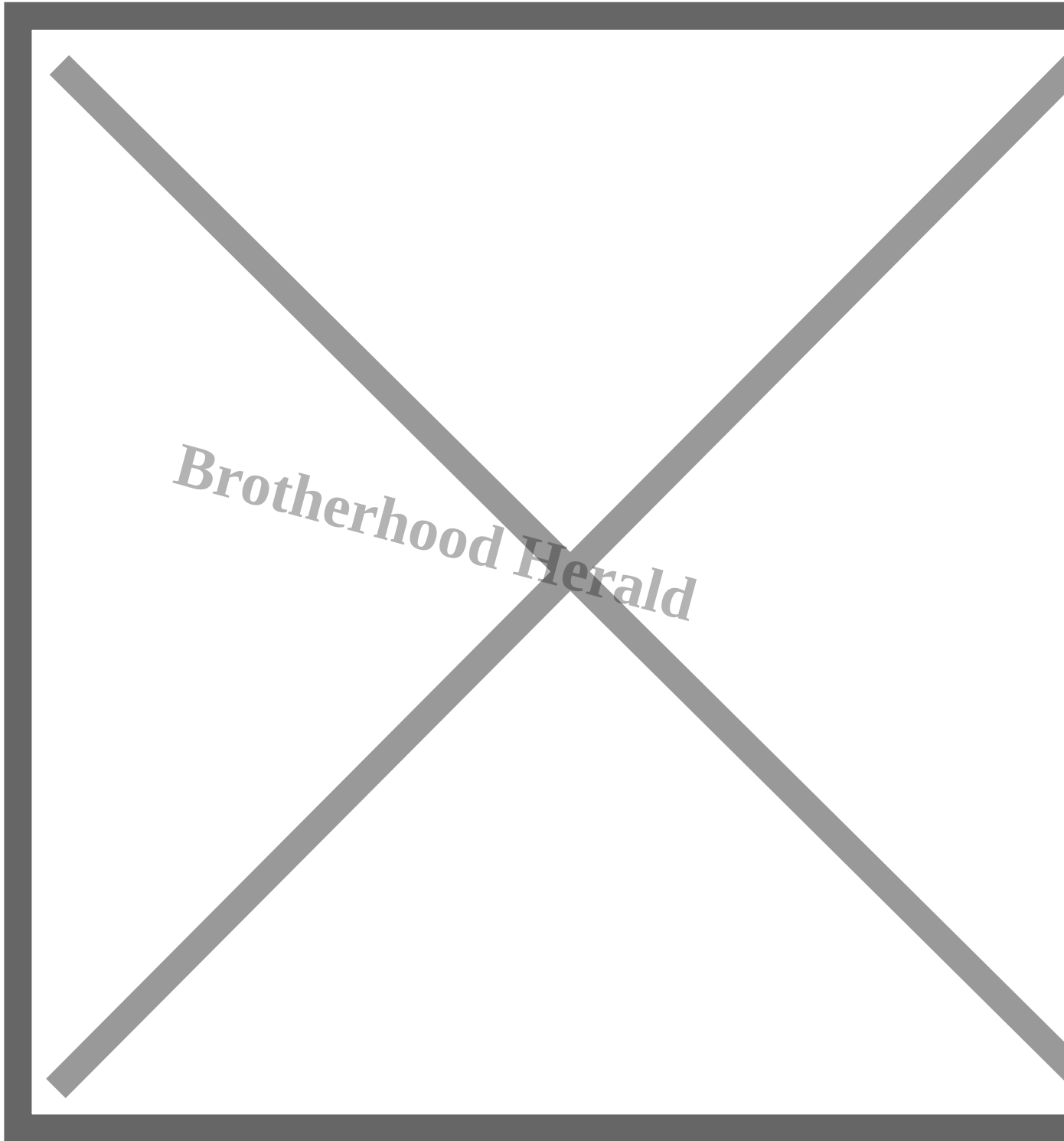
lineage. It is the bond that is found between Oddfellow brothers and sisters. We must support each other in our needs, and provide fellowship and community within our lodges.

How do we implement the principles of Friendship in our lodges?

Firstly, we need to check in on our brothers and sisters in need, our lodges should emphasize having a robust visiting committee to find members who are struggling and get them support. Oddfellowship has always been about mutual support, and if you have a member who can't pay rent, the lodge and its members should pitch in and help without expectation of anything in return. If a member is infirm and can't do work around the house, get a schedule together to make sure people are coming to help out. These are your duties as an Oddfellow under the principle of Friendship

Secondly, we need to foster community in our lodges. We need to have social events where brothers and sisters can come together just to hang out and socialize. A key part of friendship is building the bonds within the lodge. You cannot just get together when there is work to be done. For example, my lodge hosts bimonthly no phone nights, where we choose simple activities like card nights, or pool tournaments to do together. This requires no overhead costs, and provides good time to interact without devices getting in the way! It also always helps to have food provided. Friendship tells us to foster and support the bonds between members to build strong lodges.

Brotherhood Herald



The heart in hand is also another important symbol of love

Our second principle is Love. This is not just like the love between a mother and father. Love refers to the necessity of looking outwards, and helping people who you may not even know. Think back to the lesson of the second degree! The second degree isnâ??t just about love between friends or family, it is about giving love even to your enemies. It reminds us that we must look outwards, and do good things for our community.

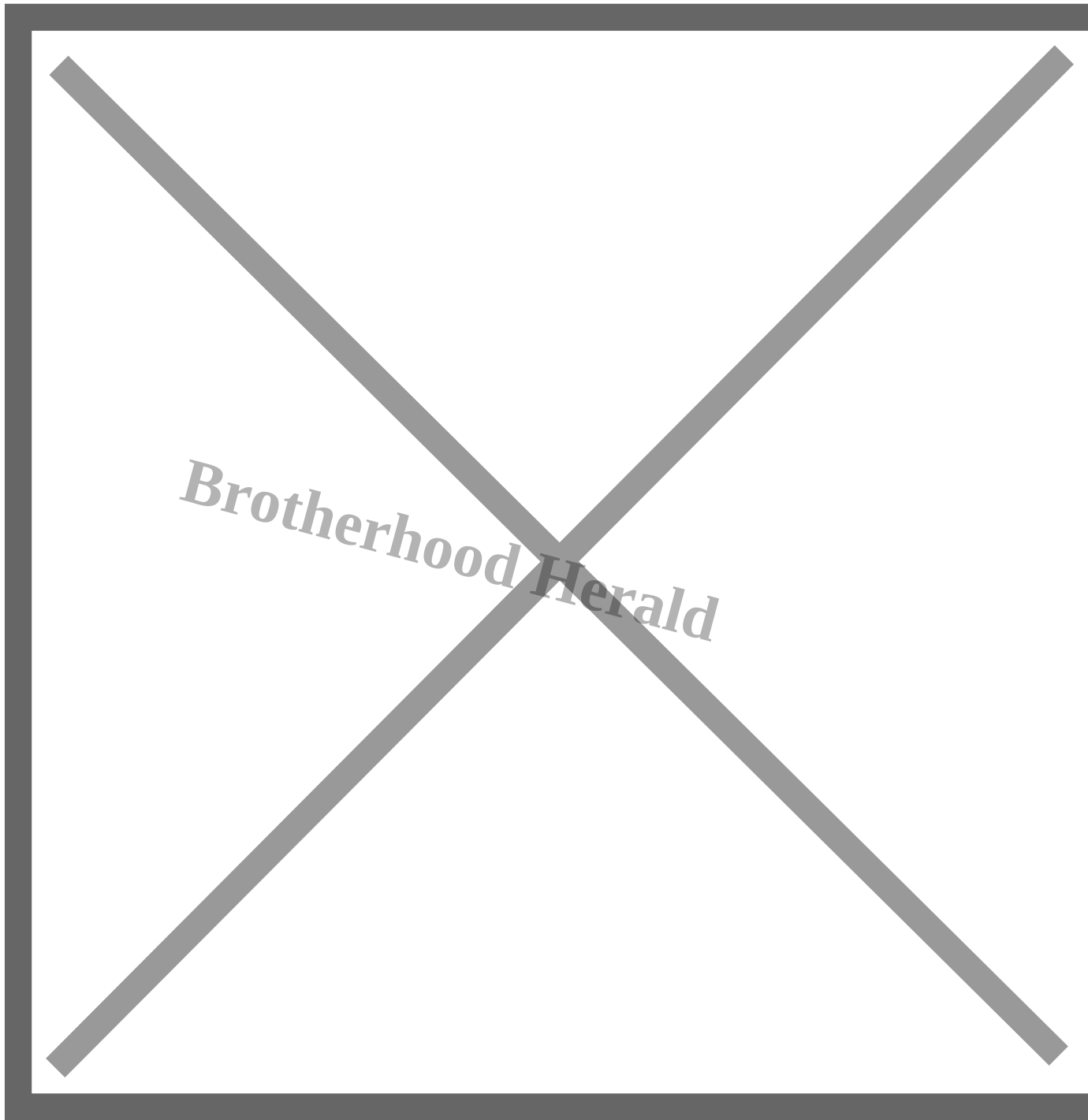
How can we implement the principle of Love in our Lodges?

The first thing that may come to mind bearing to love is fundraising. Raising money for a cause, hosting a benefit, or running a raffle to support local charities is definitely an example of exemplifying the principle of love. Be careful though, because love is not just about raising a bit of money now and then. Lodges must look outwards and work to satisfy needs they see in the community. Being seen out in the community, putting in leg work to help others is one of the greatest recruiting tactics as well. For example, every month my lodge walks around downtown and picks up garbage. This very visible, very easy event has brought good attention to our lodge while also energizing members, making them feel they are making a real difference in the community.

Finding something your lodge can do to serve the community is incredibly important for showing the worth and power of a group of people dedicated to doing good in the community. After all, why would you want to join an organization which talks about love, but never goes out to do good? Love tells us to look outwards, and that true virtue is seen in doing good works.

Our third principle is Truth. This is not just saying â??lying is badâ??. Truth is the final link which provides a foundation for the whole of Oddfellowship. Truth is about having an understanding and adherence to the principles taught in the degrees. It is also a reminder that the moral virtue of each member should reflect well on the fraternity as a whole.

Brotherhood Herald



How can we implement the principle of Truth in our lodges?

The ultimate truth of Oddfellowship is conveyed in the ritual. The degrees serve as connections to our shared past, traditions, and allow the purpose of the order to be transmitted through time. Degree work should not just be a chore to be rushed through, or a box to be checked. Degree work must be practiced, rehearsed, and delivered in a decorous manner. This is not just about tradition, although that is important. Practicing and delivering the degrees is meant to bring a lodge together. It is a sort of built in group project where everyone can contribute. It is an education for the candidates going through, but

also reinforces its lessons through repetition to the members delivering the lines.

Degree work can be beautiful and impactful, I know because when I was initiated and went through the degrees in my lodge they were still good, but delivered haltingly, with unpracticed cadence. People stopped to find their place, and each degree day seemed to be the same, never improving or changing.

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Regalia is also an important part of the experience, but that is another story

That changed when I started to memorize my lines. It started with just me, but even having only one person in a key role who doesn't have to read out of a book makes a huge difference in quality. It really feels like I am speaking directly to the candidate. Over time I have collected together a sort of degree team to fill and memorize key roles in the degrees, and even traveled to perform in other lodges. We meet and practice, getting better each time.

See my previous article on improving degree work

<https://oddfellowsguide.com/2025/04/12/degree-work-tips-by-aiden-brink/embed/#?secret=xqqdEQbZ0v#?secret=D3O2Dz94oT>

Another example of how my lodge helps to enhance degree work is having built-in time between degrees, and regular degree conferrals. We deliver all 4 degrees each fifth Saturday of the month. Each time a candidate attends they get one degree. This means, if you make all the days, you could become third degree in about a year. This adds weight to the process of advancing up the ranks. It also means that the candidates going through have to come and help with the degrees they have already received before getting their next one. This reinforces the lessons they already learned, and provides built-in time for them to learn parts and become more competent ritualists.

As you can likely see, I am passionate about the degrees. This is a part of a recognition that performing and perfecting degree conferral is a core part of an Oddfellow's duty under the principle of truth. The truth of the ritual provides a base for an understanding of the order, its objectives, and its history.

In conclusion, FLT is not just a motto. FLT is actually more like a roadmap, showing us how to live our principles. The three links are rightly placed as the most important symbol of our order. As brothers and sisters we must commit to the principles of Friendship, Love and Truth. These ancient principles have guided our order for multiple centuries, and will continue to do so into the future.

Category

1. Columnist

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