

Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

Chartered January 18, A.D. 1888, A.L. 5888

904-826-4086



October 2018



STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple

105 King Street

St. Augustine, FL

1ST & 3RD Thursdays

Meal – 6:30 p.m.

Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2nd & 4th Thursdays

CHARITY OF THE QUARTER

Ketto Primary School

Upon becoming a Freemason, this fraternity, this society you have joined asks of you one question – simple, yet profound – what came you here to do? I hope your answer is just as profound.

Because none of us needs to be a Freemason. And what I mean to say is that we all choose to be a Freemason. We choose this life because something in our nature is responding to a mysterious call. And as such, your Masonic journey is really like a mission. Your mission, should you choose to accept it is to learn to subdue your passion and improve yourself in Masonry.

Learning to subdue your passion. Which at first blush seems a bit counterproductive. Don't we learn as a child to be passionate about what we do? For the initiate of our Masonic order, this is one of the first and most important points of Freemasonry and yet this is often vulnerable to misinterpretation, and consequently it merits some examination.

First, we must understand why we use the word *passion*. As it relates to our ritual, I believe we are talking about an affection of the mind. Oxford Dictionary refers to this type of passion as “Any kind of feeling by which the mind is powerfully affected or

moved; a vehement, commanding, or overpowering emotion.”

Which is why we come here, to this temple of virtue, to learn to subdue our overpowering emotions. Because passion taken to an extreme overcomes our reason. And are we not instructed by the virtue of PRUDENCE which teaches us “to regulate our lives and actions agreeably to the dictates of reason, and it is that habit by which we wisely judge and prudentially determine all things relative to our present as well as to our future happiness. This virtue should be the peculiar characteristic of every Mason, not only for the government of his conduct while in the Lodge, but also when in the world.”

In other words, when you combine these concepts into one thought, we can say that “to learn to subdue my passions” means to through the virtuous teachings of Masonry one learns to bring commanding and overpowering emotions and desires into subjection and control. This is quite the contrary to the situation in which a man's passions and emotions have control over his sense of logic and reason – a situation which Masonry seeks to remedy and which is often described through the all too well known cliché of making a good man better. In other words, it is not within the capability of our ego-driven self to keep passion in check. We must learn to do this.

How? By improving oneself in Masonry. At first this seems like almost an obvious statement – for why else would one be here? It's so vast it almost seems like the perfect “catch all” statement. But before we gloss over it and commence with scheduling the next feast and celebration, let us consider the nature of this declaration. For it is a personal commitment. You joined to improve yourself.

Unfortunately, the Masonic experience for some is reminiscent of the fallacy of what has become a tag line for an entire generation – *Here we are now, entertain us*. But nothing could be more opposite from the truth. Freemasonry exists for YOU to discover her treasure and no one should expect it to be done for them. You come here to improve yourself in

October 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 OES	2	3 Rainbow District Inst. Lake 72 6:30 pm	4 STATED COMMUNICATION 6:30 PM	5	5
7	8	9 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	10 OPEN BOOK PINELAND 6-9 PM	11 LODGE PRACTICE EA DEGREE 6:00 PM	12`	13 MLT CABUL NO. 116 8:00 am
14	15 OES	16 York Rite Chapter/ Council 6:30 pm	17 RAINBOW	18 STATED COMMUNICATION 6:30 P-M	19	20
21	22	23 York Rite Commandery 6:30 pm	24 District Association Middleburg 107 6:30 PM	25 FC DEGREE 6:30 PM	26 Fried Chicken at Shrine Club 5-7 pm	27
28	29	30	31 ALL SAINTS EVE			

(From Last Continued) knowledge of Masonry. And it is through and from this expansion of knowledge that we begin to learn to conduct ourselves with peace and harmony with those around us.

First with our brethren, but then with the outer world. And consequently, we become a better, more improved version of earlier self.

As Masons, we are called to labor and be laborers. From the very first step in our Initiatic journey we are taught symbolically how to make use of every hour of every day by the 24-inch gauge. We are taught to divide our time equally between our service to the Supreme Architect and our worthy brethren, to our society through our vocation and to the refreshment of ourselves which includes, presumably, our family.

This is why it is so hard for many of us to sit idle, wasting the hours away accomplishing little but the short lived thrills of passing amusement. It's simply not in our nature as Masons.

If you stop and think about it, we are constantly working on a temple – whether it's our spiritual, temporal, or our personal temple.

We build – that is what we do, and there is no rest for the weary. 'Be the Difference' by its very nature is calling our craft from refreshment to labor once again. So brethren, I ask you again, what came you here to do? And with that...Let us now set to work.

NOMINATIONS FOR LODGE OFFICERS

Written nominations for Lodge Officers for 2018 must be submitted to the Secretary prior to the opening of the first Stated Communication in November. For Ashlar Lodge No. 98 that will be Thursday, November 1, 2018. Nomination forms are available from the Lodge Secretary and are included in the digital Trestleboard.

November 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 STATED COMMUNICATION 6:30 PM	2	3
4 Daylight Savings Time ends	5 OES	6	7 Rainbow District Instruction Pineland 6:30	8 EA DEGREE 6:30 PM	9	10 Open Book Pineland 9-noon
11	12	13 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	14	15 STATED COMMUNICATION 6:30 PM	16	17
18	19 OES	20 York Rite Chapter/Council 6:30 pm	21 Rainbow	22 Thanksgiving Day	23	24
25	26	27 York Rite Commandery 6:30 pm	28 District Association Cabul 116 6:30 pm	29	30 Fried Chicken at Shrine Club 5 -7 pm	

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Obligation

We each took a series of obligations at the Altar in our Lodge. An obligation is not an oath. An obligation is a binding, a tie. It joins us to each other as well as together as a brotherhood of like-minded men. It is more than an oath. It is a promise made solemnly and under penalty or sanction based on one's religious beliefs. It is made before God and man.

Our Masonic obligations do not place us above the law of the land. They do place on us a distinctive burden—to live up to our words. And the penalties are allegorical not real. There is only one truly Masonic penalty: the scorn of the Craft. A Brother may be suspended or expelled, but it is his peers, his Brothers, who extract the true penalty. He violated his obligation, his word. He is no longer to be trusted and that lack of trust is expressed in a refusal to engage in Masonic communication with him.

Our obligations bind us to every other member as well as to the greater Society of Freemasons. They require that we adhere to a world-wide code. They require us to follow a specific course of action towards the Brethren and others. They place on us a duty to discountenance all irregularities and immoralities.

A Mason's word is and must be his bond. He is required by it to be what he professes to be. He assumes the responsibility of membership with those words. His deeds reflect his adherence to our code.

We have knelt at the altar. We are bound to the save service. Let the world rave and criticize us as they will. Our magnificent structure will fall only from internal dissension when we violate our obligations.

**Election of Lodge Officers
Nomination Form**

7.02 Manner and Method of Election. – In the election of Officers, nominations shall be made in writing to the Lodge Secretary no later than the opening of the first Stated Communication in November and no other nominations will be accepted thereafter. The nominee shall also make a statement in writing stating that he will accept the position if elected no later than the opening of the first Stated Communication in November and no other acceptance letters will be accepted thereafter. Discussions regarding nominees for office may take place among Brethren, but not in open Lodge. A majority of all votes cast, respectively, shall determine. In each succeeding ballot for the same office, when more than two members are voted for, the name or names of the Brother or Brethren having the lowest number of votes, shall, by order of the Master, be dropped; and all votes cast in derogation of said order shall not be counted.

Time of Elections shall be held according to By-Law Section 7.01 of Regulation 24.05 of the Digest of the Masonic Law of Florida, Uniform Code of By-Laws. (2017)

_____ Lodge No. _____ -

Masonic Year: 20_____

Nomination for:

- _____ **Worshipful Master**
- _____ **Senior Warden**
- _____ **Junior Warden**
- _____ **Treasurer**
- _____ **Secretary**

Name of Nominee: _____

Grand Lodge Member Number: _____

Residence Address: _____

(Address) (City/State/Zip)

Residence Phone: _____ **Mobile Phone:** _____

Nomination by Brother Who Must Be a Member of This Lodge:

Name: _____ **Member No.** _____

I hereby certify that the nominee has agreed to accept the position if elected.

Signed _____ **Date** _____

WHAT THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE MAY HOLD

Just because we now live in the twenty-first century, some four hundred years after the formal founding of speculative Freemasonry, it does not follow that Freemasonry must change itself or adapt its fundamental practices or principles in order to “come into the modern age.” Freemasonry has a significant place today in providing a place for philosophical and ethical exploration by “young” men in their early 60s who, now retired, have sufficient time to devote to the Craft. Of equal, and possibly greater importance, is the need to develop future generations of Freemasons and ensure the survival of the Fraternity by coming to a common understanding that the future rests with the young and that these young people must be encouraged to participate and to hold state in the institution.

Age with all of its experience is important, but it must not be allowed to exclude or deter young men from being made Masons or from participating fully in the governance of their Lodges and Grand Lodges. We need to recognize that our organization has a purpose in the community and in larger society which is greater than the internal operations of a Lodge. If Freemasonry in 2116 is to flourish, it must act now to address the needs and yearnings of today’s youth. It must invest in human potential and again recognize that our great allegory is that of a pilgrim’s journey to enlightenment and fulfillment. What is essential to survival and growth is that the Fraternity practice externally what it proclaims internally. That its members demonstrate in their daily lives the values Freemasonry espouses and directly address the lack of knowledge, vision, dedication, and moral standards demanded of previous generations.

To accomplish this, Freemasonry may be required to turn outward as well as inward. It is easily argued that Freemasonry is more important today than it has been in its almost four hundred history notes Bondy Consulting in its report *The Future of Freemasonry* prepared for the United Grand Lodge of England. It provides, Bondy notes, a “unique combination of friendship, belonging and structure” which helps people live moral and ethical lives. There is little doubt, suggests Bondy, that there are too many myths, misperceptions, and downright falsehoods perpetuated through media which can prevent young men from seeking membership. What is essential to survival is that we, as Freemasons, do all we can to ensure that others have a fuller more complete understanding of the Craft and its purpose. The decision to seek membership must be based on knowledge based on facts not fantasy.

Freemasonry, contradictory to myth, is a transparent organization. Our constitutions, by-laws, aims, and goals are published and available to all. For example, www.ugle.org.uk contains a wealth of information about the Fraternity as does all of the websites maintained by Grand Lodges in the United States as well as a large number of sound Masonic organizations such as the Masonic Society and others. In the Bondy study conducted in England and published in 2012, it is noted that one in four young men surveyed considered becoming a Freemason but demurred because they had reached the conclusion that “it’s not for people like me.” Freemasonry traditionally is open to all men regardless of race, color, religion, political views, national origin, or social or economic standing. Freemasonry truly “meet upon the level.”

Many men, young and more mature, would probably seek membership if the Craft worked to dispel myths and misrepresentations through an expression of Masonic values by the Brothers within the community. 2017 will be a mile-stone year for Speculative Freemasonry marking the 400th year of its formation in London. And while membership numbers are falling in some jurisdictions, they are remaining stable or increasing in others. In the United Kingdom Freemasonry is second only to the National Lottery in its support of charitable endeavors, and in the United States the Shrine Hospital System is among the best known and most respected medical facilities nationwide. But men do not become Freemasons just to be charitable, there are numerous other avenues for that endeavor. They become Freemasons for camaraderie, knowledge, ethical and moral instruction, and a desire to help others. They enjoy being Freemasons or they would not remain members for fifty or sixty years.

Freemasonry is wrongly considered and often persecuted as a “secret society” rather than an affiliation with an altruistic, educational society. It provides a special bond for its members and life-long friendships are commonly forged between members. At the heart of Freemasonry, though, is its ritual which provides structure, community, continuity, and familiarity as well as moral and spiritual guidance and useful knowledge. It is the ritual of Freemasonry that expresses itself as representative of daily life, and when the Fraternity loses its center—its ritual—it no longer reflects its cause for being. During the nineteenth century and up to the early 1960s in the United States, the Masonic Lodge was the center of every town. It was a link to the past and the center of social, economic and culture. Lodges, which once served as a center for professionals to meet and exchange ideas and where voice was commonly given to thoughts and ideas which encouraged intellectual development, lost their way and no longer reflected the desire of young men to advance themselves and their society.

The predicted demise of Freemasonry has not taken place, but there has been a marked reduction in numbers and participation in the United States though not in Great Britain. The Grand Lodge of Florida (the author’s jurisdiction) counted more than 80,000 members in 1980. In 2015 that number had dropped by half to about 40,000 with only about 39,000 paying dues. This severe reduction in membership may be attributed to several things including a cultural change away from fraternal organizations and, as so many bemoan, a combination of lack of free time and “too many” other things to do. We suggest, however, that these are minor factors and that the more critical problems lie in the fact that our Lodges have lost their focus on ritualistic proficiency; have significantly reduced, if not eliminated, education and moral and spiritual instruction; have lost their sense of awe about our traditions and legacy; and have diminished the perspective that Freemasonry is an important part of our lives and thus of no more relevance than any other club.

Ritual has been since time immemorial the center of Freemasonic practice. Through it we pass not only the history and wisdom of our Craft to future generations and provide moral instruction and sound ethical decision making guidance, we also reestablish for our members the importance of ritual in daily life as a teaching and reflective tool. Each time ritual is trivialized or performed less than satisfactorily it “reflects discredit” upon those involved—both ritualists in doing no better and in spectators who accept such shoddy performance as the norm. To perform ritual as it should be done demands concentration, dedication, and an understanding of the message being transmitted. The young man who is unwilling to commit the time and effort to mastering even the most basic procedures of opening, closing, and degree work, not to speak of catechisms and lectures, has not demonstrated worthiness to be the Master of a Lodge and lead young Masons in “the paths of truth and justice.” Young men in the modern era dedicate themselves to their careers, to their families, to self-improvement, and to other aspects of their lives which they deem important. If Freemasonry is indeed important, it follows that it deserves the same dedication and commitment. Freemasonry, unlike virtually all other fraternal organizations, offers vast opportunities for personal growth, spiritual awareness, and moral development. For centuries it facilitated the making of productive, successful citizens because the membership viewed the Fraternity as being of “highest importance and profound significance” and demonstrated this in ritual proficiency.

Secondly, too many Lodges have lost their sense of spiritual and moral structure by neglecting sound Masonic education. Freemasonry is not and never has been a religion, but it does offer profound and significant depth to the meaning of life beyond the reality of surface appearance. For centuries it has based itself soundly in the most profound historical, philosophical, and cultural thinking of the era. Freemasons of past generations were encouraged to seek the significance of the Craft and to examine in great detail the meaning of its symbols, philosophy, history, ethics, and traditions. In modern Freemasonry this depth of philosophical and educational discussion and exploration has been abandoned and even among Research Lodges, the focus is on antiquarianism not the richness of meaning inherent to the Fraternity.

Finally, the imagination and psychological imperative of Freemasonry has been lost to a widespread apathy among the membership. This apathy is marked most by a deep-seated refusal to change and a constant chorus of “that’s not the way we did it in the past.” Freemasonry made a significant difference in the founding of the United States and had marked influence on a variety of public activities because it offered sound moral guidance; lead the way in the establishment of democratic government; and, more than any other organization, recognized the wisdom of considering all men equal. Too much of modern Freemasonry has seemingly turned away from these principles that make the Fraternity so great and entered into a “self-fulfilling” though pattern which can only lead to further decline.

This loss is directly reflected in a marked reduction in sincere, directed reflection upon the meaning of the Craft which has resulted in Freemasons losing respect for both our history and our legacy. They may wear the ring, even have a Masonic license plate on their car, and commonly call others ‘Brother,’ but they no longer truly cherish their legacy because they do not understand it. They have not been given sound Masonic education in the Lodges nor have they been encouraged to engage in discussion with their Brothers about our legends, allegories, symbols, and philosophy. Education and reflection are among the most dynamic aspects of human life. All men strive to learn and gaining new knowledge coupled with sharing knowledge obtained promotes a sense of loyalty and fraternity among all men.

Freemasonry is an existential philosophy in that it delves the meaning of human existence. The modern world has given rise to significant doubt about the very nature of human activity including religion, politics, external authority, even the efficacy of morality. Prior assumptions are commonly challenged and conventions are being overthrown because of a lack of knowledge about past experiences and the reason for tradition. Young men of today do now always seek certificates for their wall; pins for their lapels; or a string of honorifics after their names. Instead they desire self-improvement, harmony, diversity, organization, conflict-resolution, moral guidance, and a path for self-improvement. They also seek a fraternal bond not commonly available in other organizations. Freemasonry fulfills the human impulse to “dwell in unity” and this is accomplished only when our ritual, our education, and our reflection lead others to find the reality that so many dedicated Masons in previous generations discovered when they were “made a Mason.”

Freemasonry must not follow the way of the Odd Fellows and strip our Lodges of ritual, catechism, education, and, yes, memorization. Masonic education must again become the focus of Masonic activity. It is that which sets us apart from all the “animal clubs” and other societies. The way to enlightenment as well as to the revitalization of Freemasonry in the twenty-first century is through sound, dedicated, Masonically educated leadership which is devoted to the Craft and keeping it important in our lives as well as the life of our community and nation. At the same time, Freemasonry should not become the only driving force in human life. It is essential to balance our lives and our commitment to the craft. Freemasonry is not just the way we conduct ourselves in our Lodges, it is much more critically how we conduct ourselves at home, in our careers and in our communities. This is what marks us as “full-time” Masons who “walk the walk” not just “talk the talk.”

So whence does Freemasonry proceed? A review of the Pew Research Center analysis of the millennial generation (those born between 1981 and 1996 and thus prime candidates for membership in Masonic Lodges) provides insight that can guide Masonic revitalization. The report notes that almost 80% of that generation considers patriotism a positive character trait with almost 70% thinking the same of honesty and intelligence. Negative traits are selfishness (about 70%) yet 63% of that generation surveyed described the typical American as “lazy.” Confidence in politics and political parties has also eroded significantly, with only about 30% expressing “confidence in the political wisdom of the American people.” This generation believes that ordinary people are markedly superior at problem solving with more than 70% stating that regular citizens could do better solving our nation’s problems than politicians.

On the religions aspects of life, only 55% of those surveyed view religious organizations as having a “positive effect on the way things are going in this country” with about 25% stating the same about national media. At the same time, this generation views small business, higher education, and technology in a most positive manner. Placing large corporations, the entertainment industry, and banks on the bottom rungs of effective or key institutions. Millennials are typically less religious yet more spiritual than previous generations. About 52% of this generation express an “absolute certain belief in God” with 67% expressing a belief in heaven and 56% a belief in hell. What is most interesting about this data is its comparison to the “greatest generation” described by Tom Brokaw who coined the phrase to denote those born between about 1900 and 1927 who came of age during the Great Depression and who fought World War II. Among that generation 66% expressed an absolute belief in God; 69% believed in heaven; and only 50% believed in hell. And while the reduction from 66% to 52% on the question of an absolute belief in God appears significant, it is not markedly so and contrast with the essential parallel belief in heaven and are minor increase in the belief in hell about those born after 1980.

Millennials do not professional tradition religious beliefs, yet they are more likely than previous generations such as the “greatest generation” and “baby boomers” to engage in spiritual practices and endeavors. They profess a deep sense of wonder about the nature and workings of the universe, and note that they ponder the meaning and purpose of life at least on a weekly basis. This generation further expresses a strong sense of gratitude for what the world has offered them that is accompanied by a deep, abiding sense of spiritual peace and well-being. Essentially, then, traditional senses of spirituality, religious belief, gratitude between millennials and the “greatest generation” are not that profound. This, then, may be the key to Masonic revitalization: what was the Craft doing immediately after World War II that attracted so many like-minded men? The answer appears simple, the Craft looked to its past and observed what didn’t work (see demise of the Odd Fellows as an example), contrasted it with what did work (the emergence and vitalization of Freemasonry world-wide in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) and learned. George Santayana’s admonishment that those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it is two pronged. Yes, we need to learn from our mistakes, but we also need to learn from our successes and, even, revitalize that which has been discarded when we discover that its replacement isn’t bearing fruit.

So how does Freemasonry proceed to revitalize itself and appeal to a prime target for membership—millennials. Andrew Hammer in his book *Observing the Craft* as well in the seminars he gives nationally have a range of sound, valid recommendations that any Lodge can easily follow. The future of Freemasonry, then, lies in its relationship with those born after 1980. This generation is significantly better educated than previous ones, and tends to ask pointed questions and seek clarity in their endeavors. They do not appreciate hearing excuses and demand accountability. But, as noted above, they are seeking the same thing that the generation that preceded World War II sought: spirituality, fulfillment, and meaning. It therefore behooves Freemasonry to address their concerns and desires. First and foremost, Freemasonry must clearly define itself.

Clarity is essential in all definitions. Freemasonry is not a religion and was never intended to be one or to replace any religious tradition. It is a “system of moral instruction” which directly addresses man’s search for meaning. It is a multi-layered presentation of the ultimate in meaning and moral behavior. Our ritual from its inception pointed clearly to the direct interconnection between man and the universe as well as his relationship to an intelligence greater than himself—“The Supreme Architect of the Universe.” The Deists who made profound contributions to the Craft in its formative years referred to “The Deity” rather than to God. The millennial generation seeks spiritual clarification and direction. Freemasonry provides a uniquely creative organization for the expression—through ritual—of insights into the fundamental nature of man.

Freemasonry exists in two planes: visible (external) and invisible (internal). Its rituals and external expressions and structures are designed to fulfill the human need for external contact and validation while, at the same time, meeting the normal human urge to seek internal understanding and inspiration. The Craft exists to fulfill both the institutional function of giving expression to internal yearnings and to give insight into the significance of human existence. The Craft must recover its traditional center by utilizing our ritual to demonstrate the migration or journey from the visible and tactile to the invisible and spiritual. We are not a religion, but we enjoy a deep and vast sea of symbols, allegories, and philosophies without which our quest would make little sense. We must resurrect our focus on wisdom, on how we understand nature and our relationship to it. We must study our traditions and history, not the myths and fables, and strengthen in new Masons a deep understanding of meaning. And finally, again through our ritual, we must create a beautiful, memorial experience for all Brethren.

“One element that distinguished Freemasonry from almost all other social groups. . . with the exception of organized religious services, is ritual” notes the Social Issues Research Center in its report to the United Grand Lodge of England on the future of Freemasonry. Ritual, the report, is often deemed an ancient relic or even simple superstition. It is neither. Ritual, as noted in previous chapters, is an essential element in human life and cultural continuity. Herbert Blumer in both the 1930s and the 1960s placed emphasis on human beings interpreting or defining their actions with their responses or reactions based upon interpretation. The focus is on the meaning of the behavior, not the act itself. Ritual exists in virtually every aspect of daily social behavior. Its ubiquity is self-evident. The question for Masons, suggests the Social Issues Research Institute report, is of what import are Masonic rituals; why do they exist and what purpose do they serve. The General Secretary of the United Grand Lodge writes that “The ceremonial side is really one of our great differentiators, but. . . they are just plays . . . they are parables [and] . . . They are completely open to the public. You can have copies of them. You can go across the street and buy them. There’s nothing secret about them.”

Masonic rituals are and always have been initiation rites which in tradition societies marked the transition into manhood. Among the younger Masons surveyed both in the UGLE commissioned study and others, the view expounded about ritual is that holds a distinct attraction because it provides a sense of formality in an otherwise informal world. And Masonic ritual holds a further attraction to these more spiritually-oriented young men in that the allegories enacted provide moral instruction based on sound ethical principles. To properly engage in ritual, though, requires an educated or inquisitive mind that seeks the underlying meaning of the actions and words to explain the moral code inculcated. The act of rote memorization required in good ritualization enables those involved to engage in the activity with a more profound sense of confidence and, once the words have been successfully “committed to heart,” the opportunity presents itself to seek deeper meaning and self-actualization.

Masonic ritual did not spring forth full formed and complete. There are virtually no records of its creation, no authors’ notes. There are still in existence numerous 18th century exposes, mainly of French origin, which claim to provide accurate accounts of Freemasonic ceremonies, but they are of dubious authorship. Yet, as Alain Bernheim notes in *Masonic Catechisms and Exposures*, “Most scholars are now agreed that early manuscript catechisms and some of the printed ones provide fairly reliable information about masonic ceremonies of their time.” He further suggests that these printed documents indicate that Masonic ritual was transmitted “mouth to ear” but that some Brothers, fearing that they were deficient in memorization, put them in writing even though that violated their obligation. They do, however provide some insight into the development of Masonic ritual during the eighteenth century and, the English Masonic exposes *Masonry Dissected* (1730), *Three Distinct Knocks* (1760), and *Jachin and Boaz* (1762) “show a certain development having taking place.” in British Freemasonry. Similarly Webb’s 1818 *Monitor* and Duncan’s 1866 *Ritual* demonstrate the development of Masonic ritual in the United States.

Early Lodges, as did craft lodges, performed a single ceremony and, as noted above, evolved into a two and then three-degree system for instruction. The beginnings of Freemasonry are soundly set in progressive individualism and a search for moral authority. The rituals of Freemasonry, notes Hoffmann, “enabled Masonic ideas about moral and political order to be experienced on a physical level.” They provided in internal constitution that could direct the life of a person. Early Freemasonry viewed itself as a corrective institution in an ever-changing world by using the symbols of stone masonry to project a method for the transformation of personal life. Morality was to be as much internal as it was to be external. Inward civility became paramount and Freemasonry, solidly founded on a communal experience, followed the principle that externalization of the internal experience was essential if the Masonic value system was to be reinforced and incorporated in public life. And this was done through ritual.

The most significant question which seems to confront Freemasonry in the twenty-first century is how to proceed, what path to take. It is the apparent simplicity of the message, notes De Biasi, that is misleading. Yet, as in the life of the medieval monk, the initiation ceremony was merely the beginning. He was then expected to embark on a life-long journey of reflection and analysis as well as learning and discussion. The simple dictum “Love thy neighbor” is fraught with problems, so too are Masonic allegories, symbols, and teaching. The various rituals may be likened to lighting a candle. It becomes the provenience of Brother to utilize the light provided to find his path and to fulfill his yearnings.

The first step in Craft enhancement (and some would suggest, survival) is to carefully “guard the west gate” and better vet or make a careful and critical examination of petitioners. Why is he interested in Freemasonry? Why did he elect to petition at this time? Why does he want to join? And not only what does he think Freemasonry has to offer him, but also what does he have to offer Freemasonry? Where did he gain his knowledge of Freemasonry? There is so much misinformation available, it is important to ask this question. It is also of important to make sure that the petitioner understands fully the obligations he will incur once he becomes a member: moral, ethical, financial, and educational. More than one initiate has walked out of their first catechism class because they were not adequately instructed on what was expected and the level of commitment expected.

The second step in this process is for the petitions committee and Lodge members to do due diligence by performing a thorough background check. There are numerous data bases available that provide a wealth of information about just about everyone. Does the petitioner have a Facebook page or twitter account, for example? A quick scan of newspaper archives will reveal if the petitioner has engaged in any public activity; is a member of other organizations; and his involvement in community affairs. The petitions committee should not fear asking pointed, difficult questions and expecting full and clear answers. Committee members should talk with neighbors, employers, and others in the community who might know the individual and know him well. Freemasonry is not a hereditary society and just because a candidate’s father or any other ancestor was a Freemason does not automatically qualify him for membership. A member of the petitions committee, in fact all Brothers, should ask themselves these questions. Would I employ this person and give him significant responsibility in my firm? Would I want to work with this person on a daily basis? Or, is this the kind of man I would want my daughter to marry and be happy to call son-in-law.

When the petition has been properly vetted, accepted, and initiated, then the “real” work of the Craft begins: sound Masonic education. Freemasonry is a life-long pursuit and as such demands time, attention, and dedication. To demand that a Brother move through the degrees quickly does not match the declaration that it is a long quest. In the operative world, the apprentice could remain a “student” for seven years or more, and a fellow of the craft for life. Time is definitely a factor, however, and procrastination is not a sign of dedication or a desire to learn, but it may take some Brothers longer than others to master their catechisms. This can be paralleled with the military which regularly “recycles” recruits who do not master basic military skills. It is also paralleled in high education where the more diligent obtain a bachelor’s degree in three years while others take six or more. Each Brother has his personal “cable tow” which should be used to determine his rate of progress, not some pre-determined time-frame. There are limits, yes, but overly fast advancement does not lead to an increase in retention or activity.

Essential to the advancement of all Brothers, not just degree candidates, is a sound mentoring program that goes far beyond the memorization of catechisms. A good Lodge does not desire indifferent or incomplete work. Mentoring throughout Masonic life provides the guidance essential to a fuller understanding of Freemasonry, its principles, its allegories, and its relationship to daily life. A Lodge mentor must be solidly grounded in Masonic history, philosophy, and allegories. He should be prepared to lead his students through the intricacies of the Craft and to answer their questions as fully as possible based on sound Masonic research and documentation. But even the most profound mentor is not all-knowing, there is no shame in stating “I don’t know” and following that with “but I’ll find out.”

Tradition in Freemasonry is important, but it is not supreme. The *Book of Constitutions* states clearly that “preferment among Masons is grounded upon real worth and personal merit only.” No one is guaranteed membership in a Masonic Lodge and once a member, no one is guaranteed any specific place in that Lodge or any other. If a Brother is unwilling to become proficient in the various rituals of the Craft; if he is unwilling to participate in the numerous Masonic education courses provided which give sound instruction in Masonic Law, Lodge management, and officer responsibilities; if he is unwilling to attend regularly; and if he is unwilling to demonstrate due respect to the Craft through proper decorum; there is just cause to call into question his commitment to Freemasonry and his place in the Lodge other than on the side line.

Planning for the present and the future

Freemasonry is a fraternal organization, it is not a business endeavor, but that does not mean that business practices have no place at the local or jurisdictional level. The Craft is often uses the word “journey” to describe its activities, and a with any journey plans must be made if the journey if the desired destination is to be reached. Just as a well notated road map is necessary to success in a protracted trip, so too is a well-developed strategic plan essential to the success of the local Lodge and the Grand Lodge. A strategic or long-range plan is not to be confused with the annual plan, though the annual plan may and should be representative of long-range goals. A long-range (five or ten or more years) plan should be visionary as well as directional. It should focus not only the current year’s activities, but should project future initiatives.

A sound long-range plan begins with research to determine not only the current status of the organization, but also its vision, goals, objectives, and the strategies needed to implement them. These goals must, however, be compared realistically with current and past performance to determine if they are practical and within reach of the organization; to what extent, if any, the organizations mission has changed in the recent past; and why or why not have changes occurred. It is virtually impossible to plan for the future without measuring and evaluating pass successes and failures. Once the current position of the organization has been established, planning may begin.

The next step in establishing a solid long-range plan it to evaluate the organization’s mission statement and principles. The mission statement should clearly state the purpose of the organization and how it plans to contribute directly to its constituency as well as to the larger world. A mission statement is a springboard, not an end result and may require restructuring as circumstances demand. Along with a mission statement should be a realistic view of the organization: its physical appearance to both internal and external audiences; its size; its activities; its budget, and, above all, its people. To use a craft analogy, without people, the machinery lays dormant and grows rusty; the buildings remain empty; and organizational goals go unfulfilled. The ultimate goal of any planning, long or short -ranged, it efficient and proper utilization of personnel and the permanent achievement of goals and objectives.

The United Grand Lodge of England has published their program “The Future of Freemasonry: Our Strategy 2015-2020” based upon the information provided by the Social Issues Research Center in 2012. It is obvious that local Lodges and, even, many Grand Lodges cannot afford such in-depth research, but that does not mean that they cannot perform their own research to held in developing both an annual and a long-range plan. The first step is probably best taken among the elected and appointed officers to determine their goals and expectations as well as their interests and their strengths. Next a local Lodge should survey its membership, formally or informally, to determine what talents are to be found among the Brothers and how those talents may best be put to use to further Freemasonic principles and practices. For example, not all Brothers are ritualist and many are not inclined to such public performance. Other brothers are more comfortable as leaders while other have the experience and temperament which marks them as future leaders.

When the membership has been surveyed and their wishes, strengths, and suggestions considered, it is time to organize activities and the Lodge schedule. At the center of Masonic tradition is ritual and as such significant emphasis is properly placed on instruction and proficiency. Most Masonic Districts hold Schools of Instruction and some Lodges do so, as well, which provide in-depth instruction and practice in ritual. Most of the information contained in the preceding chapters focuses on the nature of ritual, its place in society, and its value to Freemasonry as a tool for transmitting our belief system and our meaning and because it is the practice that so significantly marks Freemasonry as being exceptional. But additional Masonic education should not be neglected since it relates directly to our ritual as well as to our history, traditions, principles, and tenets. It is through sound Masonic education that the Brother achieves fulfillment in the Lodge.

At the same time, the charitable and civic activities of the Lodge must not be neglected, either. Freemasonry is not a fraternal benefit society, though charity is at the heart of our obligation. Nor is Freemasonry a strictly civic organization even though our traditions strongly support activities outside the Lodge and we encourage our Brothers to be good men who participate fully in civil society. We also support a wide range of community activities to include scouting and other youth organizations; our various Masonic Youth groups; and a range of civic programs ranging from blood banks to shelters for abused children to recognizing educational endeavors and our first responders. We also have obligated ourselves to care for our poor and distressed which we do through a wide range of activities including the Masonic Home usually located in each state in the U.S.

To take the planning one step further, though, the local Lodge (and the Grand Lodge) is best served when strategies are put in place that support sound leadership and enhance membership involvement. Lodge governance is based in sound leadership and each Lodge should work diligently to develop new leaders and to retain proven ones. Each Lodge should also, within the limits of Masonic Law, investigate methods to attract new Brothers and to retain those initiated. A membership committee tasked to attract new members may be useful, but it is even more critical that a sound mentoring program be in place to ensure that all initiates are assigned a knowledgeable mentor who meets with them often and who is readily available for consultation.

A significant part membership development also depends upon local media coverage and the Local lodge may wish to establish a committee explicitly for that purpose. Coupled with this is the proper and efficient use of various electronic media outlets to make known to all Lodge activities and accomplishments. "Keeping one's light under a bushel" is not an effective way to let the world know of the greatness, dedication, and civic mindedness of our Brotherhood. And this type of positive publicity serves more than one purpose. We all desire to be on the "winning team," that team that is active and making positive contributions to its members and to society in general.

Finally, Masonic Lodges must also accept the fact that they are a form of business and that requires financial sustainability. It is essential that the Lodge does all possible to develop and sustain physical facilities which meet the expectations of the "modern man." Lodge property should be maintained properly and with that goes the identification and establishment of a steady income flow to ensure that the outward appearance of the Fraternity does not grow shabby. Likewise, the internal appearance should also be addressed as noted under the section of decorum above. The ultimate questions to be answered by every Lodge and Grand lodes is "do we provide a quality experience for our Brothers? Do we fully meet his expectations?"

To meet the goals established at every level, it becomes incumbent that local Lodges and Grand Lodges introduce and follow through with some form of evaluation to determine what should be amended and what retained. It is also critical that even more rigorous leadership training be developed accompanied with a focus on that solidly Masonic tradition of virtually flawless ritual. Freemasonry, notes the Social Issues Research Centre report has at its root, moral precepts and modes of conduct that are far from being at odds with mainstream society.” The local Lodge has become a place of refuge, peace, and tranquility in a turbulent world. It has been, from its beginning, an example for civil society and organizations through its encouragement of free discussion without censorship or authoritarianism. It also has within its realm of influence the opportunity to prove itself even more relevant in the present and coming age that it was in past ages. The state which once expanded to encompass so many traditionally civic activities seems now to have reached its limit and begun to contract. This provide an opportunity for Freemasonry to step from the “shadows” and regain its place as the preeminent Fraternity founded on brotherly love, relief, and truth. Social engineering comes not from government activity, but rather from the activities of men and women. It emerges from the type of strong bond that is established within Freemasonry which historically has rejected intolerance while encouraging human benevolence.

Young men are attracted to Freemasonry notes the results of the British study and confirmed by the Pew research by the attraction of friendship and belonging. Freemasonry’s altruism is also attractive, especially to millennials. It also offers sound tradition in what is quickly becoming a world void of tradition and our ritual offer comfort in times of trouble at the personal, community, and national level. Freemasonry must look closer at its past and its rituals if it is to be successful in the present and the future, and if it to remain true to the traditions of the Craft.