

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Timothy Smith**
Years in Masonry: **9**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father-in-law has been a Master Mason for over 50 years. Seeing the life he has led, and how he presents himself, made me think that Freemasonry was the right thing for me to do. I would be lying if I didn't say I was trying to impress him.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Improving, but it has a long way to go.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes. We are in the process of expanding it now. It is tucked away in the corner of the Lodge and gets very little use. By moving it next to the entrance, we are hoping that others take an interest in our many books, many of which were generously donated by a Brother.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Right now, no. I am very busy with family and work. I always enjoy reading Chris Hodapp's website.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

I do not currently receive any journals.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

I haven't read any books published before 2000.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Michael Halleran's *The Better Angels of Our Nature* is one of my favorites. I have read all of John Bizzack's books. I especially like the one about the history of Masonry in Kentucky [*How and Why Freemasonry Came to Kentucky*].

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Anything by Bizzack, Halleran, or Thomas Jackson.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Michael Halleran. I have actually already done this. We had a two-hour conversation while riding to the airport. I love Civil War history!

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Being an instructor, I would tell them to think long and hard about it. It is a commitment, and if you are not willing to commit the time needed, don't do it. I have taught many a Brother who received his Master Mason Degree, only to disappear afterward.

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Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Jerry Johnston**
Years in Masonry: **8**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was active as a DeMolay advisor, so I was around a lot of Masons. My oldest son was planning on petitioning, and I decided it was time for me to petition as well.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Freemasonry needs to get back to its roots, and that will start with education. Too many Masons do not have even a basic understanding of the symbols and their meanings, etc. We need to take a hard look at ourselves and ask, "Why are we doing this?"

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes, currently it is in a small, locked room (unlocked during meetings, sometimes), and therefore underutilized. It will be moving very soon to a more active area of the building, and kept open and unlocked (except for rare editions). We hope more members will make use of the library because of the increased visibility and availability.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Regularly, no. I am so far behind in my Masonic reading (books), but if I do come across a good article online, I'll read it.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

"The Journal of the Masonic Society" is the only Masonic periodical to which I subscribe (being a member of TMS).

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Most of my personal Masonic book collection has been written since 2000, however, one that I really like is The Meaning of Masonry, by W. L. Wilmshurst. It provided a deeper explanation of the symbols to which I was exposed during my journey.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Observing the Craft, by Andrew Hammer, takes a "purist" perspective of Freemasonry; that the Craft is a good thing that must not be watered down to accommodate change for the sake of change.

Island Freemasonry, by John Bizzack, presents the idea that a lodge can be its own island of Freemasonry practiced as it should be, regardless of other lodges or even the Grand Lodge.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

For a new Entered Apprentice, Freemasons for Dummies, by Chris Hodapp. (I'm sure The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry, by Brent Morris, is also good. I just haven't read it, personally.)

For a new Master Mason, The Meaning of Masonry, by W. L. Wilmshurst.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

I can't say that I've read enough to answer that question.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

My first question is, "Why are you wanting to join Freemasonry?" Then I listen. They may not be able to express exactly why, but the kernels should be there – the need for something more in life, self-improvement, etc., that would indicate the interested man is seeking what Freemasonry can offer.

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Name: **Alan D. Martin**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Robert M. Sirkle Lodge No. 954 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Talking to a Mason who has been in the Fraternity for several decades. There was something absent in my life in regard to focusing on self-development as a whole. In talking to my friend/Brother, I felt Freemasonry could fill that absence.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

There is disarray as far as delivering on the promise of Freemasonry. I have detected a fledgling desire by some lodges to start delivering structured education in their lodges. However, only time will tell if they will follow through.

I believe too many lodges place emphasis on the number of members they have, instead of the quality of their members.

Obviously, there is a downward trend in the number of members in the Fraternity. This is not necessarily a bad trend, as those who are Masons in name *and* heart will facilitate the survival of Freemasonry.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes. It is open to anyone to self-serve the collection. It is truly an honor system, where tracking the collection is lacking.

My personal library is more extensive than the lodge library. I find this to be the case with most Brother with whom I talk.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

I do regularly access Masonic writings. This typically is a result of trying to shed more light on Masonic information that is new to me.

I access any site where I can find what I'm researching.

I find that I gravitate towards, "The Craftsman."

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

"The Masonic Home Journal." It is delivered without having to explore other journal publications.

6. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Island Freemasonry and Sins of Our Masonic Fathers [both by John W. Bizzack]. These two books have influenced me most by educating me as to what we should be as a Fraternity, and how we have in the past been our own worst enemy.

7. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

[Freemasons for Dummies](#) [Chris Hodapp] and [The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry](#) [Brent Morris].

8. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Manly P. Hall. His insight into the Fraternity was uncanny for an individual who did not become a Mason for nearly 40 years after writing his early books about the Craft.

9. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

If you have the desire to engage a never-ending pursuit of knowledge to help you improve physically, mentally and spiritually, then Freemasonry is for you. If not, consider what you are actually trying to achieve, and pursue that.

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Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Michael R. Poll**
Years in Masonry: **46**
Lodge Name and Number: **Etoile Polaire Lodge No. 1 (LA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My grandfather was a Mason. He was my hero.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Too many, for too long, know too little about Freemasonry. They have worked themselves into all levels of Freemasonry. We are at a crossroad.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

A small one. It has books in a "library room" and allows members to read them as they wish.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes, too many to list.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

Truly, I love going on the internet and going through such publications from the early 1900s.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

The Craft and Its Symbols, by Allen E. Roberts. The Newly Made Mason by H. L. Haywood, and most Masonic encyclopedias.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Most every single one that I have read.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

It depends on their area of interest. The first would be the Bible, and then their Grand Lodge law book, and/or handbook/monitor.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Manly P. Hall. I would like to talk about how he could write a book like The Secret Teachings of All Ages at 21.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Feel and follow your feelings.

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Name: **Daniel Hrinko**
Years in Masonry: **44**
Lodge Name and Number: **Arts & Sciences Lodge No. 792 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father was a Mason, as were all his friends and business associates. I noticed a special relationship between them, and I wanted to be part of that.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Masonry is in a tailspin because we have abandoned the basic essence of what Freemasonry is. We have focused on big numbers, charity and social events, and by-passed the core responsibilities of teaching Freemasonry in the Lodges and helping men improve themselves.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

No. One would be useful if we had the resources for such a facility/ We do share our personal books with each other, and offer recommendations for reading to newer members.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Very little.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

“The Journal of The Masonic Society,” “Rocky Mountain Mason,” Philalethes journal [“The Journal of Masonic Research & Letters”], “The Northern Light.”

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Carl Claudy’s, *Introduction to Freemasonry*. Dwight Smith’s pamphlet, *Whither Are We Traveling?*

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

***The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Freemasonry* [Brent Morris], *Revolutionary Brotherhood* [Steven C. Bullock], *American Freemasons* [Mark Tabbert].**

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

***The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Freemasonry* [Brent Morris], *Introduction to Freemasonry*, [Carl Claudy], *The Craft and Its Symbols* [Allen E. Roberts].**

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

William Preston, to better understand the origins and structure of our rituals.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Approach this opportunity as a life-long journey that will yield great rewards only by investing great effort. Find a Lodge that values education and personal growth, and learn what you can from that Lodge.

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Name: **Don Combs**
Years in Masonry: **7**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

The history surrounding the organization. I also have belonged to many organizations prior to Masonry, including a college fraternity and the Order of the Arrow. I was highly involved in those organizations and I was looking for something new after college.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

The current state is not very good. While you have some highly motivated individuals to attend some meetings in some areas, you have a very few who actually understand what Freemasonry is or should be.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes, members are able to check books out. While it could be utilized more, it is still a great resource for some. We have a plan to increase the utilization by making the library more accessible while still keeping it secure.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Not as much as I should, or used to.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

I need to subscribe to more of these.

6. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

***The Better Angels of Our Nature* [Michael Halleran], *Island Freemasonry* [John Bizzack], *The Craft Driven Lodge* [Daniel Hrinko].**

7. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Most of the Masonic books I've read, I have had a one-on-one discussion with the author.

8. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Take your time and enjoy the experience of going through the rituals and initiatic process. There is a lot to learn and do, but there is no reason to rush it. It is an experience worth enjoying.

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Name: **Darrin Gulla**
Years in Masonry: **8**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was looking for a connection with my new community outside of work.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

It is failing in delivering a meaningful experience, but is beginning to recognize the problem.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes. It serves as a source for further exploration of Freemasonry.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Occasionally. If I'm exploring a particular topic, I'll poke around.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

The Ars Quatuor Coronatorum is probably the best I've reviewed, though I only have one volume.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

W. I. Wilmshurst's [The Meaning of Masonry](#) and Manly P. Hall's [The Lost Keys of Freemasonry](#), probably led me to considering the spiritual elements of Freemasonry more than anything.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

John Bizzack's [Discovering Freemasonry in Context](#) was the first book I read after being raised, and it led me to consider the seriousness of the Craft more than anything.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Wilmshurst's [The Meaning of Masonry](#).

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Albert Pike, hands down! I really just want to see if he talks the way he writes.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Only pursue things if you're willing to think about, and work with, the lessons learned.

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Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **John W. Bizzack**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was drawn to the idea of the principles and philosophies on which the purpose of organized Freemasonry was established.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

As an organization, I would describe it today the same way as the Barton-Gillet Opinion Research Corporation assessed the state of Freemasonry (as an institution) following the 1988-89 survey that they were contracted to conduct by the Masonic Renewal Task Force.

The official results of that independent survey were presented to the 1990 Conference of Grand Masters of North America, and concluded that, as an organization, Freemasonry in the United States was, "largely out of touch with Mainstream America."

The idea of Freemasonry is a relevant as it has always been, however, as found in Masonic records and writings since the late 1700s, the manner in which it is provided and cared for has not always been proven to be for the good of the Order.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes, the lodge has a physical library, and it has been underutilized by members, although consistently promoted. The library is currently being refurbished and re-located to an area in the lodge that is more conducive to its use and purpose.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes. Useful sites range from Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry, Missouri and Iowa Lodge of Research, Quatuor Coronati, the world's premier Masonic research lodge, William O. Ware Lodge of Research, Grand Lodge of British Columbia & Yukon, The Scottish Rite Research Society, The Irish Lodge if Research, No. CC, California Freemason, Australia and New Zealand Masonic Research Council (ANZMRC), Library and Museum of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, Academia.edu, Museum of Freemasonry (United Kingdom), George Washington Masonic Memorial Library, The Builder, The Philaethes Society, Paul M. Bessell website, and the Transactions of miscellaneous lodges of research.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philaethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumblin, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

The Journal of The Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, The Scottish Rite Journal, Philaethes, The Plumblin, The Square and Freemasonry Today (both United Kingdom publications), and Northern Light: The Magazine of the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. Each offer articles, essays, book reviews and general information on a variety of Masonic topics and events.

The diversity of the content makes them all valuable to at least review.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

- [Anderson's Constitution \(1723\) \[James Anderson\]](#)
- [Ahiman Rezon \(1751\) \[Laurence Dermott\]](#)
- [The Newly Made Mason \[H. L. Haywood\]](#)
- [Introduction to Freemasonry \[Carl H. Claudy\]](#)
- [The Builders: A Story and Study of Freemasonry \[Joseph Fort Newton\]](#)
- [Whither Are We Traveling \[Dwight L. Smith\]](#)
- [Conversations on Freemasonry \[Henry W. Coil\]](#)
- [The Masonic World of Ray V. Denslow \[Missouri Lodge of Research\]](#)
- [A Comprehensive View of Freemasonry \[Henry W. Coil\]](#)
- [Freemasonry \[Alexander Piatigorsky\]](#)
- [The History and Evolution of American Freemasonry \[Delmar D. Darrah\]](#)
- [The Masonic Essays of H. L. Haywood \[William R. Denslow, Editor\]](#)
- [The Freemason at Work \[Harry Carr\]](#)
- [Freemasonry and American Culture 1880-1930 \[Lynn Dumenil\]](#)

The influence from these writings contributed to a better and factual understanding of how American Freemasonry unfolded in this country against the backdrop of an evolving culture and society. That offered more realistic insight about the historical design, intent, aim and purpose of Freemasonry; making a clearer understanding and explanation of the fraternity's drift to its current state and condition.

These particular books, combined with numerous other works, reveal how patterns of historical events, in and outside the fraternity, slowly altered the course of the fraternity as an organization and gave birth to the rigid devotion to the status quo that defines much of the Masonic culture found today in the United States – a culture that is passed on, and subscribed to, by many, even when adherence to that unbending status quo has not always proven to be for the good of the Order.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

- [*Observing the Craft: The Pursuit of Excellence in Masonic Labour and Observance* \[Andrew Hammer\]](#)
- [*Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbol* \[W. Kirk MacNulty\]](#)
- [*Revolutionary Brotherhood* \[Steven C. Bullock\]](#)
- [*The Mason's Words: The History & Evolution of the American Masonic Ritual* \[Robert G. Davis\]](#)
- [*American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities* \[Mark A. Tabbert\]](#)
- [*Operative Freemasonry: A Manual for Restoring Light and Vitality to the Fraternity* \[Kirk C. White\]](#)
- [*Laudable Pursuit: A 21st Century Response to Dwight Smith* \[Knights of the North\]](#)
- [*Schism – The Battle that Forged Freemasonry* \[Ric Berman\]](#)
- [*Renaissance Man and Mason* \[Piers A. Vaughn\]](#)
- [*Why Thirty-three? Searching for Masonic Origins* \[S. Brent Morris\]](#)
- [*That Religion in Which All Men Agree: Freemasonry in American Culture* \[David G. Hackett\]](#)
- [*Freemasonry: The Reality* \[Tobias Churton\]](#)
- [*Exploring Early Grand Lodge Freemasonry: Studies in Honor of the Tricentennial of the Establishment of the Grand Lodge of England* \[Christopher E. Murphy and Shawn Eyer\]](#)
- [*Handbook of Freemasonry* \[Henrick Bogdan and Jan A. M. Snoek\]](#)
- [*Macoy's Modern Worshipful Master's Assistant* \[Edited by Michael A. Halleran\]](#)
- [*Freemasons in the Transatlantic World – Papers Delivered to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge Conference 2018* \[John S. Wade, Editor\]](#)
- [*North American Freemasonry: Idealism and Realism* \[Thomas W. Jackson\]](#)
- [*Reflections on 300 Years of Freemasonry -- Papers Delivered to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge Tercentenary Conference on the History of Freemasonry* \[John S. Wade, Editor\]](#)
- [*The Craft – How Freemasons Made the Modern World* \[John Dickie\]](#)

The influence of these writings affirms and further subsidizes the findings in writings prior to 2000 and helps to broaden sensible, more workable, and more constructive approaches that address the real issues that face the fraternity today.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Read books that are balanced and eye-opening. Leave the romantic writings about Freemasonry alone until you have better understanding of the fundamentals surrounding the idea of Freemasonry.

There are books designed to serve as an excellent introduction guide for new members. Two such books, both written by well known Masons (Christopher Hodapp and S. Brent Morris), are easily found. Do not let the titles dissuade you from reading them. Both are best-sellers (*Freemasons for Dummies* and *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry*).

Consider, too: *Introduction to Freemasonry*, by Carl H. Claudy; *So You Want to Be A Freemason*, by Julian Rees; and *Operative Freemasonry: A Manual for Restoring Light and Vitality to the Fraternity*, by Kirk C. White. As you advance in your Masonic knowledge, read *Observing the Craft*, by Andrew Hammer.

To find books that offer a range of fundamental and topical information for new and veteran members alike, consider visiting the below link, where you will find The Rubicon Masonic Society's "Masonic Books, Summaries & Reviews, Edition III" (2021).

The publication offers a summary/review of 83 Masonic books, along with seven of the currently most popular Masonic journals and magazines. The link is: <https://rubiconmasonicsociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Masonic-Library-Book-Summaries-and-Reviews-as-of-Feb-7-2018-Updated.pdf>

While this publication from The Rubicon Masonic Society is not intended to serve as an exhaustive list of Masonic books for new or veteran members, it is a good start.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Henry W. Coil. Coil, the author of eight books on Freemasonry, including his 1961 *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia*, presented a consistent and learned voice about not only the idea of Freemasonry, but its factual, historical, aim and purpose.

Dwight L. Smith, P. G. M., Grand Lodge of Indiana. Smith's writings in the early 1960s about American Freemasonry offers a direct, prudent, and level-headed approach to addressing issues facing the fraternity that offered continued wisdom and truth of what was essential in the 1960s – all of which remain equally relevant and significant today.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Make an effort to understand the idea of Freemasonry – what it is, and what it is not.

Establish what it is about Freemasonry that aroused your interest in the first place. Although there is a marked social dimension to Freemasonry, there is more to Freemasonry than that. Becoming a Freemason – not just another member of the fraternity – requires a degree of commitment, not so much in time or money, as the commitment to the idea of Freemasonry.

If there is more than one lodge in your area, visit those lodges and determine whether one may offer more than another toward what you seek. Become acquainted with some members of the lodge you choose before petitioning. Talk with those you meet about what it is you seek.

Ask questions about what you can expect to experience as a member of that lodge. Ask about the average attendance of members at meetings, and how many total members the lodge has. Ask how many candidates have been admitted to the lodge over the past year or more, and how many of them

remain involved, participate and attend lodge meetings and functions. Those questions alone will tell you more about the vitality of the lodge.

As previously noted, read books prior to visits or petitioning – books that are balanced, eye-opening and serve as introduction guides for prospective Masons and veteran Masons alike.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

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Name: **Mark St. Cyr**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Sunrise Lodge No. 783 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Self-improvement via a more esoteric unveiling.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

There are three distinct parts:

- **One group does not truly understand the “whys” for founding the fraternity and couldn’t care less, for they care only about the social aspect. They are the “fish fry” and “pancake raffle” devotees. Never miss a meeting; love to flaunt the “heritage.”**
- **One group are middle-of-the-roaders who don’t know why they’re really still there, but don’t have enough reason to leave just yet. They belong, but rarely, if ever, attend lodge. They are still contemplating “is this all there is,” but yet haven’t come to a definitive answer (but they know it’s not what they originally signed up for).**
- **The remaining group understands the “whys” for founding, and feel the “fish fry, pancake” scene is beneath the dignity of the original purpose. They are constantly being put at odds with the first group, and tire quickly, seeing a “no win” situation every time they come to lodge – then – they just no longer attend, but believe in the original purpose and**

won't demit, regardless. Hoping there will come a time when they can be more active, or circumstances change.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

No.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes. Research Lodges, such as William O. Ware Lodge of Research, Southern California Research Lodge, Ohio Lodge of Research, and others.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

"Fraternal Review," published by the Southern California Lodge of Research, with "The Journal of The Masonic Society" being a close second.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

W. Kirk MacNulty's Freemasonry: A Journey Through Ritual and Symbol; and Henry W. Coil's A Comprehensive View of Freemasonry.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

C. R. Dunning, Jr.'s Contemplative Masonry.

Understanding that the practice of Freemasonry is also in the quiet.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Freemasons for Dummies, by Christopher Hodapp, and A Comprehensive View of Freemasonry, by Henry W. Coil – read as a set. Not just one or the other.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

W. Kirk MacNulty

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Do not petition or join any Lodge until we (I) sit down together over a coffee or two and have a very intimate discussion. For it's very possible you're joining for all the right reasons, but could be let down if you don't understand a few things, and vice-versa.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Neil Dolson**
Years in Masonry: **41**
Lodge Name and Number: **Templum Lucis Lodge No. 783 GRC
(Ontario)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Family connection. I was first introduced to Masonry at my Grandfather's funeral. The rest, as they say, is history.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Tenuous.

Many jurisdictions are experiencing reduced membership, yet inside these jurisdictions there is a spirit of renewal and restoration.

I feel good about the future, maybe not in terms of numbers, but most certainly in terms of quality.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

No, but one would be useful. Several of our members have private libraries.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

The Masonic Restoration Foundation, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and the Yukon, the writings of Andrew Hammer, Sapere Aude lecture series Quatuor Coronati.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

No particular connection.

6. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Observing the Craft, by Andrew Hammer, which is a lot of the basis for interest and participation in Observant Masonry.

7. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Observing the Craft, by Andrew Hammer.

8. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Meet Masons, talk with them, learn how our ideas match with your desire to learn. Be in no hurry, make sure you're joining for the right reasons.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Kent Plosz**
Years in Masonry: **8**
Lodge Name and Number: **Beacon Lodge No. 190 (Alberta)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Curiosity, and wanting a group of like-minded men.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Great; nice mixture of young, middle aged and old men.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes. Some take books, some leave books.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Many sites.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

All have unique positives and negatives. Too wide of a question to answer.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Michael Preissman**
Years in Masonry: **48**
Lodge Name and Number: **Trinity Justice Lodge No. 79 (NJ)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father's enthusiasm for the Craft.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Rapidly changing. Esoteric Freemasonry is making a comeback for a more meaningful experience.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

No, but one would absolutely be useful.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes, podcasts and YouTube. Just type in "Freemasonry."

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

Honestly, now a-days, mainly through the internet. The New Jersey Freemason.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

New Jersey protocol manual, Claudy's encyclopedia.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Esoteric Freemasonry (I can't remember the author).

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Claudy's Introduction to Freemasonry (Book 1 – Entered Apprentice), to get started. I am more into recommending podcasts or YouTube. Rocky Mountain Mason is really good.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Albert Pike, a man who loved the higher degrees.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

One of the best choices a person could ever make, because one bonds in a sacred way with other Masons. I could go on. Females are becoming Masons in larger numbers now, whether we like it or not.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Paul Doak**
Years in Masonry: **9**
Lodge Name and Number: **St. John's Lodge No. 9 (WA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was intrigued by the mysteries of Freemasonry, what were the teaching and history? And, to a small part, Dan Brown's Lost Symbol.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Poor, and declining overall. There are glimmers of hope with a few lodges and brothers, but overall a "fork and knife" society that exists due to the largess of the prior brother's investments.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Small and under-utilized. One brother (and a current officer) of over 25 years did not know that we have a signed and framed letter from Bro. Harry Truman.

How to make use of it:

- **Assign research projects or topics for brothers to present; and**
- **Study groups using books from the lodge library.**

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Intermittently – I have more been relying on podcasts.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

The Short Talk Bulletin. I have not subscribed or even seen any of the other publications.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Nothing comes to mind at the moment.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Nothing comes to mind at the moment.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Just hope that they read – if a person reads on a regular basis (not the National Inquired or similar), there is a promise of something more in that man.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

James Anderson – the backstory of how he wrote and when.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

**To seek something greater in themselves, and that is greater than themselves.
That is not church.**

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Mitchell Hostmeyer**
Years in Masonry: **15**
Lodge Name and Number: **Vegas Lodge No. 32 (Nevada)**
Austin Lodge No. 12 (Texas)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Boy Scouts, National Staff and various leaders.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Existing, but not understanding its potential.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes, minimally. Robert Burns Lodge UD is building our first.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes, frequently, various, also listen to podcasts.

5. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Christopher Hodapp, Rex Hutchens

6. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Rex Hutchens, interesting to talk to.

7. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Your journey will never end, there is so much that awaits you. But you must be prepared to want to learn more.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Brian T. Evans, Jr.**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My entire life, as far back as I can remember, I have been an extremely self-competitive and highly driven individual. There was a period of time in my life, approximately around 2007 (the year I was married), when I was intensely searching for people (mentors), institutions, or other self-improvement and mental growth solutions to aid in accomplishing my life goals. This journey was fueled almost entirely by a lust for personal and financial gain at the outset. However, as years passed and circumstances developed, my craving for personal growth developed into something much different and more important. It matured into a personal search for life answers and a spiritual understanding of my purpose in this world. I accidentally discovered Freemasonry in 2014. Having no previous knowledge of it, I became very curious and attracted to the romantic history, influential membership rosters, exclusivity, and global reach of this seemingly unknown organization. Further conversations and research led me to discover Lexington Lodge No. 1 and I was initiated by the Lodge in 2015.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

I believe Freemasonry is on a course to dissolve massively over time (how much time is unknown). However, I also think that some pockets of lodges and jurisdictions around the world will thrive during this dissolution period.

Those who succeed will do so due to their unwavering leadership and commitment to the adherence of heritage observance Freemasonry at the highest professional and moral standards, and incorporate Freemasonry as a way of life, not an event in life.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Our lodge has a small room we have designated as a Library in years past. However, renovations have recently been implemented at our Lodge that will make our Library the primary focal point of the Lodge, outside of the west gate.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Freemasons for Dummies website, William O. Ware Lodge of Research website, Masons of California website.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

The Journal of the Masonic Society, because of its professional production, and quality of work compared to others.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

My favorite would be the volumes of The Encyclopedia of Freemasonry by Albert Mackey, and his other writings. I enjoy his writing style and find his work most clearly defined and articulated from a historical sense.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

[Island Freemasonry](#), by John Bizzack; [Observing the Craft](#), by Andrew Hammer and [The Craft](#), by John Dickie.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

[Freemasons for Dummies](#), by Chris Hodapp.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Albert Mackey. His passion and connection with Freemasonry seems unmatched and perhaps more relevant and essential to understand today than ever before.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

My conversation would be tailored to the person with whom I'm speaking, however, if I'm speaking generally, and in a broad sense, I would be very candid, perhaps somewhat politely challenging of the recipient's intent and mental fortitude, not for degradation, but for helping them uncover their honest motivation and self-assurance. I believe it's important for them to know that Freemasonry is a great organization, but its not for most men, and that's ok. This is also what makes it so unique.

I would tell them that it is mentally challenging and demanding "work," therefore only join if you are someone that follows through no matter what. Freemasonry requires patience and a tremendous commitment of time. Freemasonry doesn't offer a prize at the end of the journey; the prize is the journey, from the first step until the last. I would also tell them that there are bad apples in every organization, and they should anticipate the possibility of

the same within Freemasonry. They should be mature enough to self-determine right from wrong and ask questions when unsure of something.

Finally, I would always end on an encouraging tone and be complimentary of their initial pursuit and overcoming their fears with this first step. Should they return for a second visit, they have begun to prove themselves and begin the stages of developing a relationship that could become lifelong.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Plamen Mateev, PGM**
Years in Masonry: **21**
Lodge Name and Number: **Professor Asen Zlatarov Lodge No. 011
(Bulgaria)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My mentor during the period of my life when my wife died.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Fluctuating. Old traditions are not enough for a new reality.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Almost 20 years of a physical library, but we are also in the process of digitalizing.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes, and your site (williamowarelodgeofresearch.com) is most useful; also the site of Philalethes (philalethes.myshopify.com).

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

Philalethes. Sharing facts without manipulating comments.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Morals and Dogma [Albert Pike], The Temple and the Lodge [Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh] (still some of the information needs to be considered).

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

The Light and several books of John Bizzack. Easy for understanding.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Morals and Dogma, and all publications of KMR.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

With John Bizzack, because of exact and clear definitions and statements.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Not easiest, but the right choice.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Christopher Kolakowski**
Years in Masonry: **18**
Lodge Name and Number: **Buford-Landmark Lodge No. 41 (KY)**
Solomon's Lodge No. 13 (New York)
Potomac Lodge No. 5 (District of Columbia)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My family. My maternal grandfather and one of my uncles were Masons in Wisconsin.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Facing challenges as generations change. Lodges are closing and membership is declining from the post-WWII boom. That said, there is a real opportunity after the pandemic to offer community and engage younger generations.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Yes (all three), but not well organized in many cases. It could be an important source of Masonic education programs.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Yes. I usually read the e-newsletters from the Grand Lodge of New York (“Hiram’s Highlights,” etc.) and the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia. Paul Bessel’s site remains an unparalleled resource.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

I get three Grand Lodge magazines (New York, Virginia and the District of Columbia). The Grand Lodge of Virginia magazine is the best, as it is the least “this is what’s going on around the state” and plumbs deeper into Masonry and its principles. The others do also, but to a lesser degree (although the District of Columbia seems to be doing more on this front).

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Where to start? My Masonic Bible, probably, first. The 19th Century Masonic encyclopedia is outstanding, as is Charles Snow Guthrie’s history of Kentucky Freemasonry [[Kentucky Freemasonry 1788-1978: The Grand Lodge and the Men Who Made It](#)]. I own several works on military Masons, particularly Civil War Masons. I have used all of these both for personal enjoyment but also as sources for talks.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Mark Tabbert’s history of American Freemasonry [[American Freemasons: Three Centuries of Building Communities](#)] has to me become the standard

basic work on the subject. I use it as a reference for talks (including one that I gave at William O. Ware Lodge of Research about 708 years ago.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

In rough order:

- **Your Grand Lodge ritual. Learn it, know it – it is foundational.**
- **Tabbert, to get a sense of the great organization and its heritage.**
- **Read the structure and overview of Masonry in the front section of your Masonic Bible.**

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Albert Pike. I'd want to talk about his experiences and perspectives on the Craft. I'd also like to hear his memories of the Civil War.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

I always thank them for asking, and tell them “ask away – there’s more that I can tell you than you think.” If and as they ask, I explain the process and requirements for joining. I also say that Masonry is for men who think that “honor, service and fraternity are more than just words, they are values to live by.”

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Jeff Bryant**
Years in Masonry: **35**
Lodge Name and Number: **Fred M. Gross Lodge No. 953 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father and brothers were Masons.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Membership is in decline, but maybe we are keeping the best.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

Barely, but yes. Not enough members have lodge access to make it useful.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Masonicrenewal.org

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

Scottish Rite Journal and Masonic Home Journal, because of my familiarity with them.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

The Kentucky Monitor mostly. Several by John Robinson.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

The newly revised Morals & Dogma; and several by Robert Davis.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

I liked Born in Blood [John Robinson], but I am not sure I would recommend it to all EAs.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

Well, since I've had conversations with Robert Davis, probably Arturo de Hoyos.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

It opens many doors, but they hide in books.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **J. Bruce Steinhard**
Years in Masonry: **19**
Lodge Name and Number: **Kilwinning Lodge No. 356 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I heard about it, and then a friend told me about the Ohio Grand Master's One Day Class in 2002. I researched online while I was waiting for the Degree Day. I learned some more. I also joined Scottish Rite that day, and have participated in degrees, both taking part and singing in the choir. I have read some books and also gone through the chairs to be Master in 2018.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Unfortunately, I do not think my lodge presents it as seriously as I have seen through The Rubicon Masonic Society and the series I have listened to. I have seen the younger members not finishing their exams, not coming back, not continuing to go down the path to Master Mason. Our lectures tend to be limited to a five to ten minute-period. We seldom talk about working on the lectures, charges, apron lecture, or parts of the degree.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

No, but since we are in the Cincinnati Masonic Center we have access to the Masonic Library housed there.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Not using it much right now.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

I was not familiar with these until they were recently mentioned in Rubicon meetings.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Freemasonry for Dummies [Christopher Hodapp], and a history of our lodge by E. T. Carson, who was the founder of our lodge. I also read a book about one of the lodges that merged previously with another lodge, and then with Kilwinning.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. III

Name: **Douglas Caudle, PGM**
Years in Masonry: **28**
Lodge Name and Number: **Statesville Lodge No. 27 (NC)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

To be part of something that had both history and meaning.

2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?

Dying a slow death in most areas. However, there are some bright spots in the fund-raising type lodges, as well as several observant type lodges are growing and becoming very relevant.

3. Does your Lodge have a physical library? If it does, how is it utilized? If it does not, do you think one would be useful?

A small one in the Secretary's office that is seldom utilized. Not sure of the value for today's Mason as most utilize online sources for information.

4. Do you regularly access any Masonic writings and research available on the internet? If so, which sites do you find most useful?

Not regularly. I do look at the book and resource recommendations from a few of the periodicals that I receive.

5. Among the various periodicals and journals dedicated to Freemasonry (The Journal of the Masonic Society, Fraternal Review, Philalethes, The Scottish Rite Journal, The Short Talk Bulletin, The Plumbline, etc.), which do you enjoy most? Why?

I currently only receive the Scottish Rite Journal and the Short Talk Bulletin. I don't particularly enjoy either. I scan each looking for people with whom I am familiar, or the occasional interesting article. The publications with which I am most familiar tend to rehash stories of a "famous" Mason or a longing for the good ol' days.

6. What book, or books, written before the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

The Meaning of Masonry, by W. L. Wilmshurst. The "real" lodge is our individual personalities. The need for self-reflection and self-improvement.

7. What book, or books, written in or after the year 2000, have influenced your Masonic journey, and how has that influence been made manifest?

Island Freemasonry [John W. Bizzack] and Observing the Craft [Andrew Hammer] are the two most prominent. These and other books have given me light and hope in learning what our original intent was, how we drifted away, and how we can get it back.

8. What book or books would you recommend to a new Mason?

Observing the Craft [Andrew Hammer], Sins of Our Masonic Fathers [John W. Bizzack], Island Freemasonry [Bizzack], Lodge Leadership: A 5 Step Guide to Masonic Reform [Matt R. Nelson], The Meaning of Masonry [W. L. Wilmshurst] and their jurisdiction's Lodge Monitor.

9. With which Masonic author, of any era, would you like to have a one-on-one conversation? Why?

W. L. Wilmshurst, to gain his perspective on many topics.

10. What would you say to men who are interested in becoming a Freemason?

Take the time to visit several Lodges. Determine what you are looking for in a Lodge and ask for assistance in finding one that meets your needs.