

# LODGES OF RESEARCH

Presented by Dan M. Kemble, Master, William O. Ware Lodge of Research,  
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It's an honor and pleasure to be speaking to you tonight. I would like to thank the Worshipful Master for his invitation and thank you for being here this evening.

Allow me to begin with a disclaimer: the statements, thoughts and opinions expressed in this presentation are mine. They do not necessarily represent the positions any Lodge or Grand Lodge.

When Masons talk about the last fifty years, we generally talk about the dramatic decline in Lodge membership over that period of time. Equally dramatic, however, in that same period of time is the increase in the availability of information regarding Freemasonry. Information about the Fraternity is delivered to our desktops and cell phones through technological advances that seemingly have no end in sight.

The "Age of Information" in which we live has not ignored Freemasonry, although we are at times slow to take advantage of its resources. Those interested in learning more about Freemasonry can visit various Lodge and Grand Lodge websites, listen to podcasts, read blogs and even attend a "virtual" Lodge.

In addition to information available electronically, there are organizations such as "The Masonic Society" and "The Philalethes Society" that publish quarterly journals containing scholarly works on subjects of interest to Freemasons.

In something of a chicken or egg manner, the thirst for Masonic knowledge and the increase of electronic resources and other print media providing information about Freemasonry seem, at least for the time being, to fuel each other.

The desire for more knowledge about Masonry, while exciting to observe, is not, in itself, new. Before the technology revolution and before the widespread printing of Masonic journals, Masons seeking to expand their knowledge of Freemasonry formed Lodges of Research, in which they could meet with other like-minded Masons to share information and pursue new avenues of investigation.

The world's oldest Lodge of Research is Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, founded in London in 1886. Founders included noted Masonic scholars Robert F. Gould, William J. Hughan and George W. Speth. Anyone having spent any time at all in a Masonic Library will be well familiar with those three names.

The founders of the Lodge were Masons who had concluded that the history of Freemasonry to that time had not been properly recorded. Insisting on an evidence-based approach to Masonic research and writing, these men are responsible for the application of strict academic research standards to Masonic topics. That was a radical approach in 1886, and, regrettably, it remains a radical approach in 2019.

There are now at least seventy-eight Lodges of Research worldwide, forty-five of which are in the United States (that includes the Massachusetts Chapter of Research, which focuses on Royal Arch related topics). Notable Lodges of Research in the United States include the Missouri Lodge of Research, which was chartered under the direction of Harry Truman and has published several valuable books on Masonic history, philosophy and ritual; the Southern California Lodge of Research, in South Pasadena, which publishes the monthly "Fraternal Review;" and the Texas Lodge of Research, of which Roberto Sanchez, who spoke in this Lodge in 2017 about the Chamber of Reflection, is a member.

The Grand Lodge of Kentucky has chartered three Lodges of Research within its jurisdiction. The oldest is William O. Ware Lodge of Research, located in Covington, Kentucky and chartered on October 20, 1965. The Lodge is named in honor of Most Worshipful Bro. William O. Ware, who served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky in 1957-58.

Ted Adams Lodge of Research, in Lowmansville, Kentucky, was chartered on October 18, 1983 and Marlin White Lodge of Research in Cave City, Kentucky, was chartered in October of 2018. The newest Lodge of Research was named in honor of Most Worshipful Bro. Marlin White, who served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky in 1982-83.

In addition to the three Lodges of Research, Kentucky has at least two other organizations devoted to the pursuit of further light in Masonry. Jefferson County is the home of the Greater Louisville Masonic Education Association and Lexington, of course, is the home of your own Rubicon Masonic Society.

The proliferation of Research Lodges and related organizations, around the globe and here at home, is an indicator that Masons have a desire for more knowledge and a greater understanding of Masonry. It also indicates that their desires are not being met in their home Lodges.

Let's look at the guidelines for Kentucky's Lodges of Research, which are found in Appendix F to the Digest portion of the Constitution of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

Appendix F provides that twenty-five or more Master Masons who are members in good standing of any Kentucky Lodge may petition the Grand Master for a Dispensation to form a Lodge of Research. A Charter may be subsequently issued upon approval of the Grand Lodge.

Further, Appendix F defines the mission and authority of a Lodge of Research, As follows:

A Lodge of Research shall be a Lodge of Research only and have the right, power and authority only;

- A. To promote within its own membership Masonic study and historical research;
- B. To present findings and conclusions to the Lodge for discussion and interchange of judgment;
- C. To publish at convenient intervals proceedings or transactions containing such portions of the addresses and discussion in Lodge as may be desirable to print;
- D. To publish new Masonic books of outstanding merit;
- E. To reproduce or print Masonic documents of historical importance;
- F. To reprint scarce Masonic books and pamphlets;
- G. To open and close its Lodge on the Third Degree;
- H. To have such rights and authority as may be necessary to carry out such work. Any publications shall be without expense to the Grand Lodge.

A quick glance at this list begs the obvious question, why aren't all Lodges engaged in this sort of work anyway?

If a Lodge is engaged in practicing the only aim and purpose of Freemasonry, which is to make good men better by equipping them with the tools to practice the necessary self-discipline to lead a balanced and rewarding life, would not such a Lodge necessarily be engaged in the activities delegated to Research Lodges under our Constitution?

To answer that question, look at the practices of your own Lodge. This Lodge has indicated that it understands and accepts as its mission the practice of Masonry's purpose. Consequently, it incorporates the characteristics of a Research Lodge into its normal operations.

In a sense, the existence of Research Lodges points out that Masonic Lodges have strayed from their mission – that of being a place where Masons can present, exchange and discuss ideas in a thoughtful and rational manner; finding points of agreement and disagreeing without being disagreeable.

A Lodge's tendency to stray from its original purpose is an inherent risk for Lodges of Research as well. A review of the history of William O. Ware Lodge of Research, will show, in its first fifteen years of existence, a focused and well-ordered Lodge that had a regular program of wholesome Masonic education and which regularly collected and maintained the presentations made at its communications.

The next thirty years or so of its existence reflect the gradual drift away from doing the things outlined in the Constitution as the work of a Research Lodge, until the point that it became another Masonic supper club, generally consisting of a bad meal and a dispirited discussion of how poor Brother Davy Crockett almost had the Mexicans whipped at the Alamo.

The renaissance for William O. Ware Lodge of Research came in 2014 when Worshipful Brother Rob Smith, Past Master of Henry Barnes Lodge No. 607, became Master of the Lodge of Research. Worshipful Bro, Rob organized a festive board, later brought Chris Hodapp in to speak and sparked a renewed interest in the mission and purpose of the Lodge of Research. Since then, Masters of the Lodge of Research have followed Worshipful Bro. Rob's blueprint to varying degrees, culminating with the extremely successful year just concluded by Worshipful Master Bill Lorenz.

The influx of newer (younger) and more motivated members has given William O. Ware Lodge of Research new energy and a renewed sense of purpose. The Lodge of Research is a partner in the Sowing Seeds of Freemasonry experiment, is planning a Table Lodge for June, is conducting a statistical survey regarding the opinions of Kentucky Masons with respect to the characteristics of an ideal Lodge and created the designation of "William O. Ware Research Fellow," honoring those who have significantly added to the body of Masonic enlightenment, of which your own Worshipful Master was one of the first recipients.

Near the end of 2018, we introduced our website, [www.williamowarelodgeofresearch.com](http://www.williamowarelodgeofresearch.com), which currently contains a growing number of articles, essays and commentaries on various topics of interest to Freemasons; papers presented at the Lodge of Research in the years 1965 to 1990; announcements of Masonic events; book reviews and recommendations; and links to other Research Lodges, Masonic journals and publications.

The experience of the Lodge of Research points out the inclination and the inherent danger, for all organizations, not just Masonic Lodges, to drift away from its original purpose. It requires vigilant leadership to hold the organization on course and adhere to the original mission statement.

The simple, inescapable conclusion is that every regularly chartered Lodge ought to be a Lodge of Research. That is every bit as much the purpose of a Lodge as to initiate, pass and raise candidates. The charter of this Lodge, like all others, I am sure sets the Lodge to work and instructs it to "make Masons." To our detriment, this is generally interpreted as raising someone to the Degree of Master Mason.

Initiating, passing and raising Brothers does not, in fact, make Masons. It merely begins the process by which a man may become a Mason, but that work (which is the work of a lifetime) necessarily includes the activities that have been relegated to Research Lodges.

In a perfect world, if all regular Lodges were practicing Freemasonry as it was intended, Research Lodges would not be the source of ongoing Masonic education, but would rather be a repository for it, facilitating access to speakers, books, journals and articles emanating from the regular Lodges.

To this end, William O. Ware Lodge of Research accepts as a part of its mission the task of encouraging regular Lodges to incorporate those activities delegated to Research Lodges into their own programs.

Until such time as Freemasonry is uniformly practiced as it was intended, Research Lodges will continue to be an important part of the tapestry of Masonic education. The challenge for each Research Lodge, then, is to be true to its mission, which, in the final analysis, is the mission accepted by Quatuor Coronati Lodge in 1886 – the pursuit of more light in Masonry and the strict application of academic standards of research.

I extend to each of you an invitation to visit William O. Ware Lodge of Research. We meet quarterly, on the fifth Wednesday, when the same occurs. You are welcome to attend any of our meetings and, if you are so inclined, we would be happy to discuss with you your possible affiliation with the Lodge of Research.

Thank you for your kind attention this evening.