

# WHAT IS FREEMASONRY

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It is an honor for me to have been invited to share with you a perspective I have of the Craft. If I may add to the information that you were given in my introduction:

- I am relatively new to the Fraternity and Brotherhood of Freemasons.
  - Initiated into the Craft in October 2015.
  - Passed March 2016.
  - Raised May 2016.
  - Just reached my three-year anniversary as a Mason.

Early on, I identified that I wanted to be a part in helping new and progressing Brothers with the proficiency of the Degrees. So, I volunteered to help Bro. Sean Edwards with proficiency lectures. Ultimately, that led me to currently being the sole lecturer for Degree proficiencies.

The topic I have chosen to share with you is membership participation in the Lodge

It is not my intention to castigate or place blame on any member, group of members, or Lodge of our great institution.

What I have observed not only in my Lodge but in other Lodges is that there is a core group of individuals actively engaged in Lodge labors. They take on additional responsibilities such as pursuing a migration path through the chairs of the Lodge, serving as secretaries, treasurers, committee members, lecturers, etc.

When traveling to other Lodges, I more often than not observed the same faces as before with little or no new faces present for Lodge activities (not visitors, but base membership).

In 2018, the average number of members of Robert M. Sirkle Lodge who attended Lodge meetings (excluding visitors) was 19.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Sirkle Lodge No. 954, Member/Visitor Register.

The average attendance number represented roughly 8% of the Lodge's 239 total members. Taking away the officers of the Lodge, the average attendance number dropped to roughly 5%.

At the District 20 meeting held on April 6, 2019, 86 members of District 20 were in attendance. That amount represented 6% of the 1,528-total number of Masons belonging to District 20 Lodges.<sup>2</sup>

Then Most Worshipful Grand Master Tim Sanders shared with the Craft at the 2018 District 20 meeting that the average rate statewide for attendance and participation was roughly 8%.

Worshipful Brother John Bizzack, in his book, *Island Freemasonry*, discusses the phenomenon of social loafing. The concept is that people in a group tend to exert less effort to achieve group goals than if they were working alone.<sup>3</sup> Bro. Bizzack cites the scientific work of Derek Jon de Solla Price who essentially quantified social loafing when he found that approximately the square root of the total number of people in an organization are responsible for 50% of the organization's work.

For example, Robert M. Sirkle Lodge has 239 members, the square root of which is 15.45.

Worshipful Bro. Bizzack applied de Solla Price's finding by taking the square root of Masons reported on the rolls in 2015 (1,161,253) and arrived at the conclusion that roughly 1,000 Brothers are responsible for 50% of the work in our entire organization.

So, where are all of our Brothers and why are they not coming to Lodge?

There are many reasons why people engage in life activities. Primarily, they find, or expect to find, that they derive some form of utility or benefit from engaging in the activity.

Here are some reasons given for not coming to Lodge:

- Aged and unable to get around as easily as they once did;
- Chronic illness;
- Entrusted with the care of a loved one or someone with a disability or chronic illness;
- No longer live in proximity;
- Still burned out from years of participating;
- Engaged in other Masonic activities;
- Keep forgetting;

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<sup>2</sup> [https://grandlodgeofkentucky.org/?page\\_id=2257&district=20](https://grandlodgeofkentucky.org/?page_id=2257&district=20).

<sup>3</sup> Bizzack, J. (2017). *Island Freemasonry – The Final Bastion of the Observant Lodge*. Richmond, VA: Macoy Publishing & Masonic Supply, Inc.

- Don't have time right now -- too busy;
- Don't need to eat another boring dinner and sit through another dull business meeting.

The concept of opportunity cost must be addressed with respect to our Lodges. The idea is that a resource, once applied toward an operational goal, cannot be applied to another operational goal. Our Lodges have a need to recognize and address opportunity cost issues.

In closing, I quote Worshipful Bro. Cameron Poe, who at our recent District 20 meeting gave a brief educational presentation where he reminded the Craft that there are four types of men:

- Non-Masons;
- Masons by name;
- Masons by nature; and
- Masons by nature and name.

Thank you for your attention this evening.