

William O. Ware Lodge Research

VOICES OF FREEMASONRY

Welcome to this, the first edition of *Voices of Freemasonry*, a new endeavor of William O. Ware Lodge of Research.

Freemasonry does not speak with a single voice. Grand Masters, of course, are the official voice of their respective jurisdictions, but the extent to which they speak for Freemasonry is limited, obviously, by geography and their term of office.

But all Freemasons have a voice.

At William O. Ware Lodge of Research, we encourage the individual Freemason to find his voice. As Fellow Craft Masons we are charged to study Grammar, Rhetoric and Logic. As members of the Lodge of Research, we are further encouraged to put those skills to use in offering accessible, factual and well-reasoned views related to the history and philosophy of Freemasonry.

Individually and collectively, here are the *Voices of Freemasonry*. If for no other reason, because of their geographical separation, these are the voices of men who, but for their involvement in Freemasonry, would have remained at a perpetual distance.

Demographically, the men who participated in this study form an interesting sampling of the Fraternity. The participants are from six U. S. states and one Canadian province. They range in age from 29 years old to 92 years old. In terms of Masonic experience, the range of their years of membership falls between 1 year and 66 years. Two of the participants are Past Grand Masters. One is currently an elected Grand Lodge officer in his jurisdiction. Of the 22 participants, 20 are Past Masters of their Lodge. One participant is an Entered Apprentice whose advancement has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As an engaged group of Freemasons, they are truly exceptional, and, sadly, atypical of the current state of the Craft. It is currently estimated that there are roughly 1 million Freemasons in the United States. Previous studies indicate that only about 6% of that number are actually engaged in the life of their Lodge. In that respect, the participants in this study are not representative of Freemasonry as a whole (perhaps a blank page would be an accurate representation).

While the responses to the several questions vary according to the background and experience of each participant, the tone of the responses is remarkably consistent.

Presented here are some of the voices of Freemasonry. *Is your voice heard?*

If you would like to participate in future questionnaires from William O. Ware Lodge of Research, please send an email expressing your interest to: wkumason@gmail.com.



William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Barry Eastham**
Years in Masonry: **25**
Lodge Name and Number: **Greenup Lodge No. 89 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Interest in the esoteric side of the craft; family history.

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

I would have to give a caveat first: American Masonry overall is poor, worldwide only slightly better. Forms and ceremonies are spot on in other countries (UK and the continent), but “regular” Freemasonry regardless of where it lies is sometimes (most of the time) afraid of esoteric or spiritual discussions about the craft. Over the years I’ve accepted that for the most part maybe it’s supposed to be this way.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

Finding people of like mind in my esoteric pursuits; and being part of a worldwide brotherhood stretching back centuries. And, ironically enough, associating with men who, though they hold no interests similar to my esoteric interests, are true pillars of morality and honor. I’m both proud and humbled to be counted among their number.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would impose the TO [Traditional Observance] standard upon lodges, or at least make a better more uniform set of rules regarding etiquette, dress, dues, or what's expected of initiates. That's just to start. And in doing so, I would start that process slow (baby steps!). A sudden change would be detrimental, I think.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

The TO movement and the esoteric movements took off by themselves, in areas of the country that were widely dispersed in the pre internet days. It sort of just "happened" on it's own.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Lack of commitment and apathy.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

Within my lodge to make it the best I can and lead by example; in my jurisdiction, to fight against apathy and ignorance of our true purpose, intent, and standards.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The casual aspect of it on almost every level.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Not much, other than the aforementioned TO/esoteric movements, but they are in small pockets and not widespread.

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

Why do you want to join? What do you expect to find? Make sure you commit to whatever reason you are joining for (philanthropy, fellowship, esoteric, whatever). Freemasonry can do much for a man, but he needs to “return the favor” and put some time, effort, and sacrifice back into it.

Worshipful Bro. Barry Eastham was initiated, passed and raised in Greenup Lodge No. 89 in Greenup, Kentucky. W. B. Barry is a Past Master of his Lodge and a Master Ritualist. He is a member of the York Rite (KYCH) and a 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason. W. B. Barry served the Grand Lodge of Kentucky as Grand Marshal in 2009. He is a member of the Royal Order of Scotland and the Rubicon Masonic Society.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Bill Lorenz**
Years in Masonry: **54**
Lodge Name and Number: **Trinity Lodge No. 163 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

- A) My Mother spoke highly of her deceased Father, as being a Mason,**
- B) A close friend joined, so I thought I would also.**

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

Beneath what it was and beneath what it still could be.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

- A) Good Fellowship wherever one travels.**
- B) Taking satisfaction in seeing a project through the combined efforts of several, come to fruition.**
- C) Ritual.**
- D) Doing things for others.**

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

Individual, one on one education on what Freemasonry really is; what it means; and what one can accomplish in Freemasonry for his own satisfaction. A small group would also work. Teach the new member and he will teach another.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

Interest in education is on the rise. I believe that Freemasonry will survive, but in a different phase, probably in an unfamiliar manner to current thinking. To what effect, I do not know.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Disinterest, Lack of motivation, and lack of leadership, (Not necessarily in this order).

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

A supportive member. A supportive member.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

I am not disappointed in Freemasonry. It disappoints me that so many are apathetic.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Dramatic disinterest in precise ritual, lack of use of those with creative ideas, poor dress is becoming more acceptable, and using the same people over and over instead of teaching a new member, I have learned over the years, that giving a project to someone who may be shy or stands in the background can amaze you with their results.

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

Go for it! I will help you anyway I can. Have any questions? I will be glad to answer them.

Worshipful Bro. William J. Lorenz was initiated, passed and raised in Henry Barnes Lodge No. 607 in Dayton, Kentucky (now Trinity Lodge No. 163). W. B. Bill served as Master of Henry Barnes Lodge on four separate occasions. A member of William O. Ware Lodge of Research since 2010, he served as Master of the Lodge of Research in 2018. In 2019, W. B. Bill was named to the initial class of William O. Ware Research Fellows.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Carroll M. Curtis**
Years in Masonry: **66**
Lodge Name and Number: **Mount Olivet Lodge No. 291 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father was a Mason, and I remember him receiving the *Masonic Home Journal*. While in the military service in Korea during that war, I had some conversations with an Oklahoma Mason. How much those conversations influenced me I am uncertain, but it was at that time I decided that I wanted to be a Mason. When I returned to the United States, I petitioned Mount Olivet Lodge, No. 291. After receiving the first two degrees by courtesy in Sedalia Lodge, Mo. 236 (Fellow-Craft proficiency in Granite Lodge, No. 282) in Sedalia, Missouri, while still in service, I was raised a Master Mason in Mount Olivet Lodge, No. 291, on August 9th, 1954, a few days after being honorably discharged from the service.

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

On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being excellent, I would rate it a 5.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

- a. Studying, researching, and learning the many aspects, teachings, and potentials of Freemasonry.**
- b. Learning the ritual, conferring the degrees, giving all of the lectures and charges, and witnessing others doing so.**

c. Fellowship, and meeting many fine men which otherwise I would not have experienced.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

a. Charge lodges not to be overly concerned with numbers, thoroughly investigate petitioners, and admit only the worthy.

b. Properly confer the degrees and give all the lectures and charges.

c. Teach candidates not only the wording of the ritual for their proficiency but explain its meaning and teaching and impress upon candidates that the ritual is not just a set of words but its teachings are to be lived.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

A slight realization of the need for Masonic education.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The continued concern for numbers and the thinking that group public activities is the answer to Freemasonry's problems.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

a. Remaining active in my lodge; doing ritual work, when requested; and giving Masonic educational commentary at times.

b. My role in the Jurisdiction will considerably depend on Grand Masters.

1. Through many years of research, I compiled the *Kentucky Ritual*, which is based on the monitorial work published by the Grand Lodge in 1808, so I could be used to instruct the brethren in the restoration of the old Kentucky work, as

well as assisting in using it. This does not require action by the Grand Master of Grand Lodge; it can be done for individual lodges or groups of lodges at their request of me to do so.

2. Having served on the Committee on Jurisprudence for 12 years and having studied not only the Grand Lodge Constitution, but various aspects of Masonic jurisprudence for many years, I could be used in that area of Freemasonry.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

- a. The general lowering of standards.
- b. The “watering down” of some Masonic laws.
- c. Degeneration in ritual work.
- d. Casualness.
- e. The conduct of some individuals.

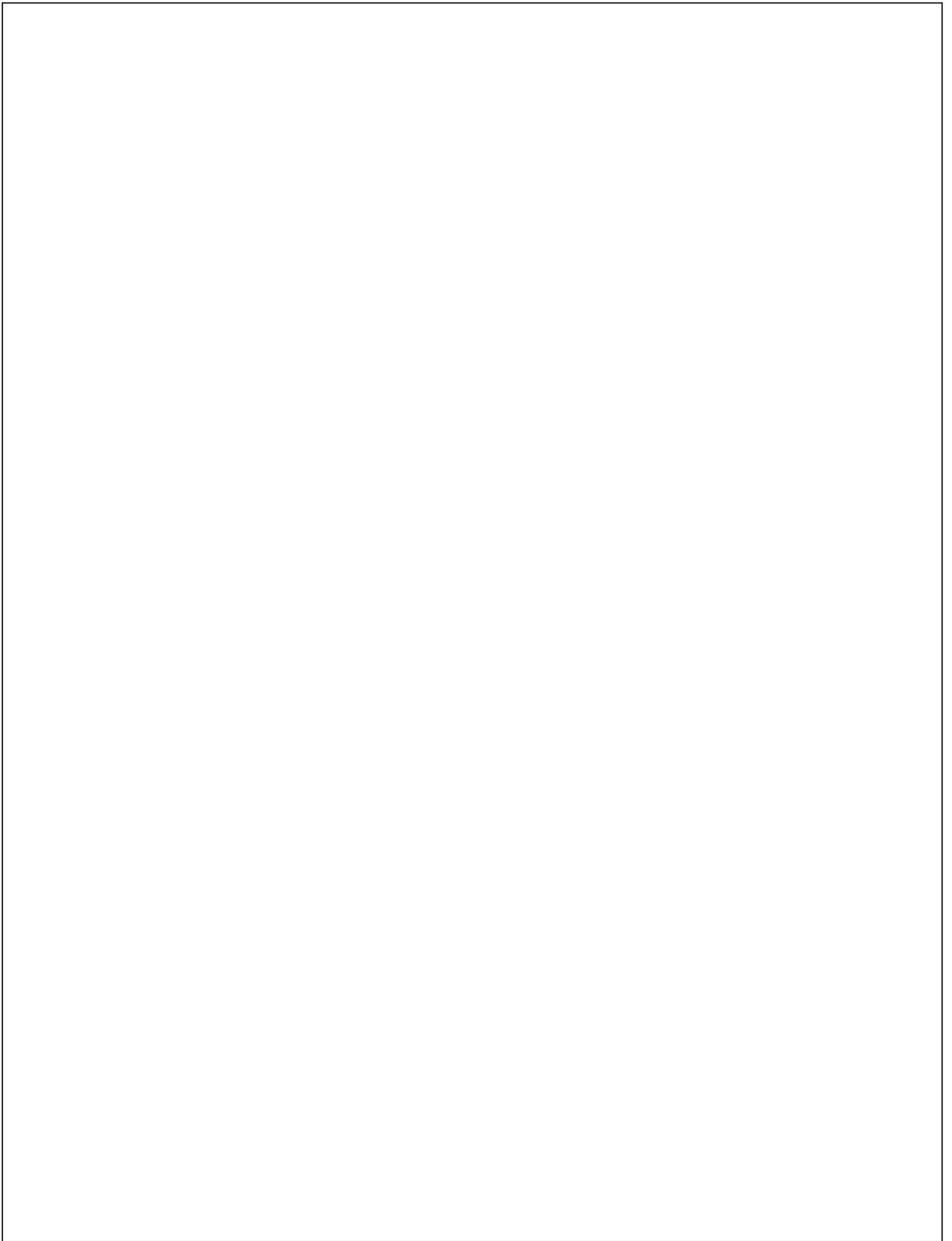
9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

A lowering of commitment to live and teach the principles and practices of Freemasonry.

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

That it is an honor to be a Mason; that Freemasonry is a serious matter; that the teachings and principles of Freemasonry are to be lived; that he should be willing to devote some of his time, study, and effort to Freemasonry, and that by doing so, his life will be enriched, and he will be greatly rewarded for doing so; that it is against Masonic principles and law to solicit members and that a man must ask to become a Mason.

The 2019-2020 Masonic year marks the 50th Anniversary of Most Worshipful Bro. Carroll M. Curtis’s term as Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Kentucky, F. & A. M. He is currently the Senior Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky.



William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Chad Lacek**
Years in Masonry: **13**
Lodge Name and Number: **Dundee Lodge No. 190 &
Illumination Lodge No. 5 (IL)**

1. *What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?*

About 9 years after I was discharged from the United States Marine Corp, I felt a need to find a replacement for the camaraderie and Esprit De Corps I enjoyed as a Marine. I did not know anything about Freemasonry but I thought that it might supply the fraternal sense of belonging and brotherhood I was searching for. I also knew there were “secrets” to be learned and that was exciting to me.

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

The state of Freemasonry today is fundamentally unchanged. If you read the Short Talk Bulletins or the old Trestle board newsletters from 80 or 100 years ago, the topics have not changed. We need more active members. We need more money for our activities. We need quality over quantity. It’s always been this way. It is easy to think that the problems we face are new ones. That our modern world has created so many distractions that men are too busy to be active members. It’s simply not true. Certain men will always want to become Masons. And certain men never will. The current state of Freemasonry is the normal state of Freemasonry.

3. *What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?*

There are so many aspects of my involvement with Freemasonry which I cherish, many of which I did not know existed before I joined. But the one I value most is the “family” I now belong to. I never had much of a family, and what little I had wasn’t particularly beneficial. I envied other people that had family traditions and connections to their ancestors. They belonged to something. They had a tribe or clan to call their own. I really wanted that, and Freemasonry gave that to me. I am a part of something that has a long list of very good men among its members. My name is written in the same book as theirs. I am a part of the long, proud history. I belong.

4. *If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?*

It’s difficult to know where to begin, but I have an idea. I would start by changing the way we assess membership dues. The current system, at least in Illinois, is that each Lodge must vote to change their annual dues. Any change made applies to all members effective the next dues cycle. Likewise, any changes to the Grand Lodge per-capita applies to all Masons on their next dues payment. The sad truth is that many of our members are very selfish when it comes to their wallets. There are always men who want to delay the dues increase until they are a 50-year member and therefore exempt, or members that are just plain stingy. The obvious problem is that every year there is a fresh group of members about to hit the 50-year mark, so dues increases are very difficult to pass. Being an unpopular subject, it is commonly avoided by Officers of Lodges that simply want to serve their 1-year term and step aside. This has kept our Lodge dues artificially low for way too long.

When I speak to men interested in joining Freemasonry and I tell them the dues we pay, most of them say, “Per month?” When I tell them it’s the cost per year, they are disappointed rather than pleased. Most of us spend more on our cable/internet bill per month than membership in Freemasonry costs us all year.

A solution to this might be affected by making all future dues increases apply only to new members. Existing members are locked into the dues amounts they currently pay. This will allow the future of the Fraternity to be properly funded, without the tooth-pulling to get the motion passed. In a few decades, a good portion of the membership will be at the appropriate dues level. This will then allow us to have all the things we wish we had now, such as nicer Lodge rooms, well-maintained buildings, proper meals, better educational programs, etc.

5. *What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?*

I am very optimistic about the current state of the Craft. In the first place, our 'product' is Brotherly Love and friendship from real human beings, in the physical world. Men that genuinely care about each other and will show up, in person, when you are in need. The more our society spends living 'virtual' lives online, the greater the need will be felt for real-world relationships, and Freemasonry is a perfect fit.

I used to think that shrinking membership and Lodge mergers/closures was a problem that needed to be addressed by active recruiting. I now realize that I was completely mistaken. Smaller Freemasonry is better Freemasonry, since the only people that will be practicing it will be the ones most dedicated to it. I would rather have thirty great Masons, who live Freemasonry in their daily lives, than one thousand men whose only connection to the Craft is a dues card in their wallet. Freemasonry is in no danger. We will get smaller, and our Grand Lodges will need to become less "Grand," but that's OK. Our ranks will swell and shrink as the needs of our society dictate.

6. *What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?*

The biggest challenge in the United States in our near future is how we will deal with the cyclical nature of Fraternal groups. As membership in all such groups swelled after WWII, the infrastructure needed to grow with it. We needed more Lodges, more administration, more programs. We did not need to worry too much about raising dues, because there were plenty of members

contributing. As we have been in a declining cycle of membership for several decades now, we have resisted the inevitable resultant shrinking of all those services. We don't need as many Lodges. We don't need the same size Grand Lodge administration. We can't staff as many committees and support as many programs. We do need to raise dues, even to support the remaining activities after the contraction. Our biggest challenge will be to realize that these changes are happening no matter how much we wish they were not. We need to adjust for the current needs of our Fraternity and let go of anything that is no longer practical or reasonable.

7. *As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?*

I have been in leadership positions almost from the moment I joined. I have served as Worshipful Master twice, a District Deputy Grand Master for four years, and am currently an Assistant Area Deputy Grand Master. I view my most important role as that of showing new Masons all that there is to be gained from their membership, even if it is not found in their local Lodge. I point them to the things they came searching for in the first place. Those things can be difficult to find, especially in Lodges that are not particularly Observant. I want to make sure these men know that Freemasonry is world-wide, and not at all limited to the walls of the Lodge they petitioned.

8. *What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?*

My biggest disappointment in Freemasonry is how embarrassingly cheap it is. The regalia is cheap. The dues are cheap. The mindset of the members is cheap. The few purpose-built Lodge buildings we still have are falling apart. Our emblems used to be made of gold, now they are colored gold. We used to buy based on quality, now we buy based on economy. Not surprisingly the ranks of our members have responded accordingly. Where are the leading men of our communities? They used to be Freemasons. Why would anyone attend a dinner away from home that is vastly inferior to the meal they could have eaten at home? That is, if a dinner is even offered.

Freemasonry is cheap to join, cheap to belong, and we get what we pay for. Freemasonry had always been exclusive and elite. There is nothing the least

bit wrong with that. When the costs and the standards are not maintained, you get what we've got now.

9. *How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?*

When I joined my Lodge, I was one of the youngest men in the room. Now I am one of the oldest. I was expecting the experienced members to lead and instruct me for many years before I was ready to be active and lead others. That was not the case. It did not take long for me to realize that if there was something lacking based on my expectations of Freemasonry, it was up to me to do something about it. At first, I thought I was the only one, but I keep meeting more and more new members with the same mindset. Rather than quitting because the experience was not what they expected, these men are rolling up their sleeves and making their vision reality. This wave of change is happening all over North America. It's very exciting.

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

Understand that Freemasonry is not a club, it's a way of life. It's not a charity, but Masons are charitable. It's not a religion, but it is highly spiritual. If you are honestly willing to work towards becoming the best version of yourself, and make no mistake it will take work, then you can find no better place to start than by becoming a Freemason.

Right Worshipful Brother Chad Lacek was initiated, passed, and raised in Dundee Lodge No. 190 in Carpentersville, Illinois. He is a Past Master of Dundee Lodge and the current Secretary. R. W. Bro. Chad is a Charter Member of Illumination Lodge No. 5 in Bloomingdale, Illinois. He is serving his second year as Sovereign Prince of the Chicago Council, Princes of Jerusalem, A.A.S.R. NMJ. He also currently serves the Grand Lodge of Illinois on the Masonic Education Committee as well as AADGM for the Northern Area.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Dan A. Lynn**
Years in Masonry: **29**
Lodge Name and Number: **Queen City # 761 (TN); Ledbetter # 952 (PM) (KY); Symsonia # 917 (PM) (KY)**

- 1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?**
 - a. My Grandfather, whom I loved, respected and admired was a Mason;**
 - b. My Father-in-law, who was a good man and whom I respected, was a Mason;**
 - c. At Ft. Campbell, several of the soldiers I served with were Masons; and**
 - d. I figured that any organization that was made up of men that I admired could only help me be a better person.....so after doing some research, I petitioned the Lodge.**

- 2. How would you assess the current state of Freemasonry?**
 - a. I believe that Freemasonry is in decline and in jeopardy of ceasing to exist.**
 - b. I don't see what current Lodges and Masonry in general offers which can draw potential quality men to our doors.**
 - c. I'm not sure that many Masons can clearly articulate what Masonry is and what it offers so that potential members can understand the benefit for the investment in their time and money.**

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

- a. I have enjoyed the camaraderie and fellowship with like-minded men of good character.
- b. I have enjoyed and drawn a feeling of contribution from the philanthropic works of the Masons especially in my work as a Driver for Shrine Hospitals.
- c. I have enjoyed learning about the impact of Masonry around the world and the impact it has had on our nation.
- d. I have enjoyed traveling, visiting and fellowship with members.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

- a. Damn good question.....truly I'm not sure.
- b. Using my business language, we need to develop a "Brand" that is recognized and seen as a strong contribution to the community. Our bicycle program was a step in the right direction.....Other activities that get us out in the community are valuable.
- c. I'd reach out to non-active members and find out why they lost interest and get their vision on what would bring them back.
- d. I'd reach out to the young men who have just completed degrees with special focus on those who have been Master Masons for 6-12 months and find out what they think about the organization and the value of Masonry in their lives.....did we meet or better yet exceed their expectations.....or did we fail to provide anything of real value beyond being a boys club.
- e. And I'd fully support surveys like this one which reaches out to active members to find out what they think!

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

- a. The Lodges of Research who are trying to capture our current status.....Articulate where we are and where we're going if we don't change.....Invaluable!
- b. We have had 5 strong Grand Masters who have provided good leadership for our organization.....we have Right Worshipful Wardens who I believe will also continue to guide our Fraternity.
- c. I have been engaged by numerous Brothers in discussions on what we need to do And are following up the discussions with action.
- d. Ritual Teams are being formed and are performing ritual work and Officer Installations to a very high standard.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

- a. The huge number of absentee members ... small number of Brothers doing all the work and "carrying" each Lodge. Repeat Masters, Wardens, etc. No real interest in most members to participate beyond showing up for the meal and hurrying thru the business meeting.
- b. Small number of petitions for new membership
- c. Lack of a standard Statewide ceremony and ritual are somewhat disappointing but the failure of most Lodges to be proficient in and adhere to their chosen ceremony and ritual is embarrassing there is very little pride in knowing the Lodge's opening and closing ceremonies and doing it right The Brothers are just as happy to laugh about and accept that the officers they elected can't open or close there seems to be very little interest in Lodges to study and know our history.
- d. It's harder and harder to articulate what makes ours an "extra-ordinary" Fraternity And what the Fraternity – and the majority of Brothers do to make ourselves and our Brothers better men.
- e. Too many Brothers more interested in and spending all their time "politicking" for positions. I've seen too many Brothers who have lived Masonry and been active in making Brothers better men and Lodges better places who are continually overlooked while the "kiss asses" -- who are always seeking attention and elbowing their way to the forefront – are the ones who get the important/impactful positions. Of the ones I have spoken with only 2 have a true vision of how they wish

to contribute to Masonry the others have no vision beyond how good they'll look in a collar and apron. Our Fraternity suffers from this malady.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

- a. My obligation to my Lodge and my Brothers is to actively support the Lodge with my participation, financial support and assisting my Brothers in being proficient in our ceremonies and rituals.
 - i. I have been the Master of 2 Lodges
 - ii. I am now the "Secretary for Life" of one Lodge.
 - iii. I work with new Brothers in becoming proficient in their appointed and elected positions.
- b. My obligation to the Fraternity as a whole is to actively participate in the support and advancement of the programs and activities laid out by the Grand Line:
 - i. I accepted a position as District Deputy to assist Lodges in my District by attending their Lodges and providing support, encouragement, and "suggestions" on how they might improve their ceremonies and attract new members.
 - ii. I accepted appointments to Grand Lodge Committees so that I could actively support and advance the programs established by the Grand Line.
 - iii. I participate in studies to determine where our Fraternity might improve and become more relevant in today's environment.
 - iv. I actively participate in Degree Teams providing support to Lodges Showing them proper proficiency and encouraging Brothers to study and become more proficient.
 - v. I am a member of Scottish Rite and Shrine And actively support their philanthropic endeavors thru monetary contributions and I am a driver to the Shrine Hospital patients in my area.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

- a. See question 6 above.
- b. Too few doing too much.
- c. No real pride in our ceremonies and rituals.
- d. Self-professed Masonic experts who actually don't know what the constitution says.
- e. "We've always done it this way."

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

- a. I joined a very active Lodge that was well attended and had a constant influx of petitions and very serious about ceremonies and ritual proficiency I now observe a lack of all the above by the majority of Lodges.

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

- a. I normally start by asking why they want to join Masonry ... that usually shapes the remainder of the conversation.
- b. I always stress that the objective is to make good men better. I share why I became a Mason and what I believe it has done for me.
- c. I normally about our origins and I talk about religion and the Masonic vision and approach to religion.
- d. I ask if they are married and if they have school age children. This leads to discussion on the time needed to complete the degrees and how marital support is necessary and that the priority is always to fulfill the obligations to the family and to be an active father.
- e. If I am familiar with the Lodge they are interested in I speak to the strengths of the Lodge and identify strong Masons who can help and mentor.

W. B. Dan A. Lynn was initiated, passed and raised in Queen City Lodge No. 761 in Clarksville, Tennessee. He is a member and Past Master of Ledbetter Lodge No. 952 in Ledbetter, Kentucky and a member and Past Master of Symsonia Lodge No. 917 in Symsonia, Kentucky. He has served on several committees of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, F. & A. M., and currently serves as District Deputy Grand Master for District 2.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **David Cassesa**
Years in Masonry: **14**
Lodge Name and Number: **Trinity Lodge No. 163 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My great-uncle Daniel Gentile was a prominent Cleveland businessman. I remembered the great respect in which he was held by the community, and how much my father respected him.

One Christmas Eve, Danny and I were talking about my life after college, and the inevitable evolution my life was experiencing with my career growth, and my friends moving away for opportunities. Danny suggested Freemasonry as an avenue to acquaint myself with “like minded gentlemen.”

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

I think Freemasonry is in a state of rapid decay. Membership is declining, and we have lost sight of the mission of Freemasonry. The result is an organization that offers nothing unique to its members. The mission of Freemasonry is trying to lure in more members.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

I have most enjoyed meeting men I would have otherwise never met. I have found some of the best friends, confidants, and mentors through Freemasonry; men whom I would have never, in a regular life, ever encountered.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I think we need to better guard the west gate. I think we need to become more exclusive. We need to only allow men that are looking at self-improvement, and men that have the drive and will to help each other improve. We should not strive for mediocrity, and we should never lower the bar. There is a difference in being a “ditch digger” and being complacent, and being a “ditch digger” that strives to be the best he can be. The world is made of men with different degrees of intellect, social etiquette and privilege. All are welcome in our lodge. When a man is complacent, and stops wanting to grow and improve himself, I believe that is the abandonment of Masonic values.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I like the caliber of men that are being attracted by Freemasonry. Whether it is a result of the “myths” surrounding Freemasonry, or a general interest in self-improvement, we are seeing more inquisitive new members, and less “legacy” members coming in. Legacy refers to guys joining out of familial obligation.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Freemasonry does not offer instant gratification, and there is, literally, no end to the journey. I’m not sure our culture is producing men with the stamina and fortitude a truly Masonic lifestyle entails. I’m not sure I possess the stamina and the fortitude.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

There is a cultural schism within the fraternity. The result of not having a clearly defined mission statement, is that we are seeing men trying to improve themselves, and genuinely trying to be “better,” who are running into resistance with the status quo.

The status quo Masons are content, comfortable and happy with their experience, and it appears they take offense to men trying to improve the environment to which they are accustomed.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

Freemasonry is not “evolving” as rapidly to meet the demands of our new society. If the institution of Freemasonry is not improving, how do we expect it to supplement the growth of the membership? The system works, but it can be modernized to be more contemporarily relevant.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during your membership?

There has been necessary consolidation, but the motivation is not because it is the right thing to do – the Masonic thing to do. The weaker lodges no longer have the resources to bullshit their existence anymore. Basically, they are being forced into doing the right thing. That is the biggest indicator of the character of the current membership at large. If only Masons acted the way we profess to be.

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

Are you looking to improve yourself? Are you willing to assist me in my journey to self-improvement? What have you done in your life to indicate that you are truly a man looking to improve himself?

Worshipful Bro. Dave Cassesa was initiated, passed and raised in Robert Burns Lodge No. 163 in Newport, Kentucky (now Trinity Lodge No. 163). W. B. Dave is a Past Master of his Lodge and a Past District Deputy Grand Master. He is a member of the York Rite and a 32nd Degree Scottish Rite Mason (KCCH). W. B. Dave served the Grand Lodge of Kentucky as a member of the Committee on Masonic Education.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: David Crickard
Years in Masonry: One (1) year
Lodge Name and Number: Lexington Lodge #1 (KY)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I have no real friends. I was looking to develop real friendships. Also, I'm looking to have interesting conversations about interesting things. For example, the seven liberal arts, performing, visual, literary arts, earth sciences, fundamental science.

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

What I know is what I have been hearing in Lodge, real or virtual, is that Freemasonry is losing membership at a steady rate. In the twenty plus meetings I have attended this has been discussed quite frequently. This is something to discuss I do feel that it is being focused on more than needed. We can only really affect the lodge we attend.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

Because I'm so new to the Craft I'm limited. What I most enjoy is the ritual and my proficiency study.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would point back to my response to the first question. Instead of talking about how important education is to Freemasonry, I would invite brothers to present or invite subject matter experts to discuss topics related to the seven liberal arts, performing, visual, literary arts, earth sciences, fundamental science.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

The men of this country are looking for real friendships and deeper conversations. Freemasonry offers this. This should be how we represent Freemasonry to the world. Not, we take good men and make them better. More like we welcome men to become our brothers.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Not sure yet. Maybe looking back at question five, some men might think they are **NOT** "good," maybe this is something that holds them back from checking out Freemasonry.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

My role as an Entered Apprentice Mason is to learn my proficiency and to represent my God, Country and Lodge in a manner that brings honor and distinction to many a good and worthy man, as many have done who have gone this way before me.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

This will seem petty. Our dining hall in the Lodge is very, **blah**. We have these formal meetings and we are eating off paper plates, plastic utensils on plastic tables without a cloth or center piece. We have a dish washer. While the Master Masons open the Lodge the EA & FC could be cleaning up the dining hall. Or even better setting up dinner for after the meeting.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

N/A

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

What is it you are looking for and what do you think Freemasonry can/ will offer you?
Come to a meeting with me and check it out.

Bro. David Crickard received his Entered Apprentice Degree in Lexington Lodge No. 1, Lexington, Kentucky. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, he has been unable to advance to the Degree of a Fellow Craft.

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William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Richard A. Graeter, PM, 33°**
Years in Masonry: **25**
Lodge Name and Number: **Caliburn Lodge No. 785 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A desire for fellowship. I enjoyed the fraternal bonding that I experienced in my college fraternity and missed it. I found an adult version of that bonding experience in Freemasonry.

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

Mixed. Many (most) lodges are declining. But not all. There are a few exciting bright spots where the involvement of enthusiastic young men has reinvigorated old lodges and formed new ones. The major obstacle remains grand lodges with antiquated Masonic codes that do not flex to accommodate and serve the needs of lodges today.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

The fraternal experience, both in my lodge and as I travel to other jurisdictions.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would begin with reforming Masonic codes to be thinner and more flexible. Masonic codes, and the enforcement of their provisions by a cadre of district deputy grand masters, follow a mandate & inspect model that is antithetical to

today's young men. Our governing institutions need to be reformed to adopt a guide and support model, devolving power, authority, and accountability down to the lodge level.

Also, while this may be heresy, I would separate the lectures for the lodge degree from the degrees themselves. In other words, I would only confer the first section of each degree in open lodge and relegate the lectures to special lodges of instruction for candidates as is common in UGLE lodges. Additional candidate education could then follow the lectures. While our degree lectures are beautiful, I know that we have lost good men who have grown tired of sitting on the sideline witnessing the same lectures repeatedly month after month. Nobody wants to admit this, but we all know it is true. Attendance suffers on evenings that promise long degree work. While some enjoy displaying their memory prowess, the lectures are for the candidates, and their presentation should be reorganized and presented in a forum best suited for candidate continuing education. I would reserve the presentation of lectures in open lodge for special occasions.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

Bright spots (enthusiastic young men engaging in lodges both old and new) popping up in more jurisdictions.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The lack of what author Jim Collins calls Level 5 leadership at the grand lodge level. From *Good to Great: Level 5 leaders display a powerful mixture of personal humility and indomitable will. They're incredibly ambitious, but their ambition is first and foremost for the cause, for the organization and its purpose, not themselves.* (emphasis added)

Additionally, I am troubled by a misguided focus on bringing more people IN through the West Gate through one-day classes and PR campaigns, rather than properly focusing on guarding its EXIT. If we did a better job of keeping

those young men whom we bring in fully engaged, we would quickly solve our membership issues.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

I was instrumental in chartering the first new lodge in Ohio in 25 years. Now, 18 years later, that lodge is still thriving with enthusiastic, engaged young men (at 56, I am the “old man” of the lodge). Moreover, most of these young men are also active members in the Valley of Cincinnati, AASR, many having also assumed leadership roles.

I have long advocated reforms to our masonic code to remove the obstacles to forming new lodges, but so far, my pleas have fallen on deaf grand ears.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The Masonic hierarchy at the grand lodge level. It seems that too often the hierarchy’s primary motivation is to perpetuate itself. This is not a problem unique to Freemasonry, however, as I have witnessed a similar propensity in almost every other institution that operates on a chapter model with a centralized governing body. It is a universal human failing. I would like to believe, however, that we, as Freemasons, could do better. I believe that reforming our governance structure is the first step on the road to a brighter Masonic future.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Since I became a member, Freemasonry (in Ohio) has hired public relations firms and adopted one-day classes in a desperate effort to grow membership. I think these changes miss the point entirely and have largely failed as a result.

At the same time, I some recent grand lodge officers seem more willing to embrace change and I find that very encouraging,

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

Your Masonic experience is crafted by the brethren in your lodge. Make sure that you take the time to get to know the men in the lodge before you submit your petition.

W. B. Richard A. Graeter was initiated, passed and raised in Mariemont Lodge No. 707, in Cincinnati, Ohio. W. B. Graeter entered the family of Freemasonry in 1977, when he was initiated into Western Hill Chapter, Order of DeMolay. He later served as Master Councilor of his Chapter and is currently an Active Member of the DeMolay Legion of Honor. In 2002, W. B. Graeter joined with 11 other Master Masons to form Caliburn Lodge No. 785, the first new lodge in Ohio in over 20 years. W. B. Graeter went on to serve as Caliburn Lodge's Worshipful Master in 2004 and continues to serve the Lodge as its Lodge Education Officer. A 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason, W. B. Graeter has served the Grand Lodge of Ohio as the Chairman of the Masonic Education and Information Committee. He resides with his wife and children in Cincinnati, Ohio, and is the president and CEO of Graeter's Manufacturing Company, a fourth-generation family business renowned for making handcrafted artisanal ice cream. Graeter's Ice Cream enjoys a national reputation as the finest ice cream in the world among connoisseurs, celebrities, and especially Freemasons.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **John Cameron**
Years in Masonry: **25**
Lodge Name and Number: **John Albro Lodge No. 122**
Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

It was more like I was called to Masonry than me seeking it out. My family on both sides were Masons and I resisted the call to join for many years. Eventually I asked a cousin who was the Master of the Lodge at the time for a Petition for Initiation and he responded that "he had one at his house that he had filled out 10 or more years ago" [and was] just waiting for me to ask.

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

I believe there will always [be] Freemasonry just not in the way it is generally being practiced today. The decline in membership isn't a major concern for me. What concerns me the most is the way Freemasonry is practiced today. It has been simplified almost to the point of not being able to be restored to being the spiritual journey of self-development and enlightenment. The decline in membership will have a financial impact on the upkeep of Grand Lodge and the various Lodge buildings and it will be difficult for many to live in the new financial reality.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

I enjoy the journey and the learning opportunities presented. I feel connected to my family members who have gone to the Grand Lodge above by taking the same path and reciting the same words as my Great Grandfathers had. This is a spiritual connection for me. I also enjoy being with like minded men in a testosterone free environment where we can relate and interact on a “feeling” level.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

Well I would start by assigning qualified mentors to the younger members not only for their journey of Initiating, Passing and Raising but for a period of time until they are able to assume that role. I would change the process of the opening and closing process that is generally practiced in my Jurisdiction. I would introduce the Chamber of Reflection as well as provide time for mediation and a musical interlude. Finally, I would reduce the size of our Lodges and have a maximum number of members and then have a group “split” off and form another Lodge. Keep the Lodges small and personal.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I believe that more than ever before men are search for a spiritual connection with others and searching for a higher meaning. I believe Freemasonry more than any other organization is uniquely positioned to meet that need.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The inability or unwillingness to live up to our brand promise. I question the commitment and dedication of our general membership. It takes work and I sense that many are of the opinion that “you better do something because your end of the boat is sinking.”

7. **As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?**

Within my Lodge my role is to live my obligation within and without the walls of the Lodge. Within my Jurisdiction my role is to be a “change agent.”

8. **What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?**

The chronic display of ego. For a group of men who claim to value the internal and not the external, we sure put a lot of stock into titles, ranks and levels of degrees. This organization is so much more than just a fraternity, but while we are hung up on EA, FC, MM, PM and GM, Very, Right and Most, we can never move forward with improving ourselves. We become content, entitled and complacent to even finish the journey and far too many do just that.

9. **How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?**

Oh goodness where do I begin? I believe we have moved away from striving to be unique and excellent in what we did; to now being an organization that is satisfied with being average. Memorizing the ritual is a dying practice. Open books in Lodge is common and Masters and Senior Officers depend on an open ritual book for the simplest but important tasks of opening and closing a Lodge. Degree work is being delegated to those in the Lodge who have the desire and ability to deliver from memory the important parts of our ritual. We have become for the most part an organization of self-congratulating back slappers.

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

I would want to establish the reason for wanting to become a Freemason and then say, “follow me.” I would want to take them under my wing for a couple of years to ensure they get off to a good start.

Very Worshipful Brother John Cameron was Initiated, Passed and Raised in Minas Lodge No. 67 on the register of the Grand Lodge of Nova Scotia A.F. & A.M. in Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. Brother Cameron later affiliated with John Albro Lodge No. 122 in Halifax Nova Scotia and served as Master, Secretary and is currently Treasure of the Lodge. He is also a member of Sophia Perennis Lodge No. 139 (a hybrid Observant Lodge and Lodge of Research) and is currently serving as Secretary. He is also a member of the Nova Scotia Masonic Study Circle. Brother Cameron served as the elected representative on the Board of General Purposes for the GL of NS for six years. He is also a Past District Grand Director of Ceremonies and a Past District Grand Chaplin.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Michael A. Halleran**
Years in Masonry: **15**
Lodge Name and Number: **Emporia Lodge No. 12 (KS)**

1. **What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?**

I had read and heard about Masonic signs of distress used in battle for many years. When *National Treasure* came out, I decided to find out if all that stuff was true. I was delighted to learn that it was.

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

The fraternity is moribund. It's on life support in most jurisdictions and in hospice in others.

3. **What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?**

I enjoy Masonic history and research, ritual, and fellowship in the Blue Lodge.

4. **If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?**

Actually, I was tasked with improving the current state of Freemasonry when I served as a grand lodge officer from 2010 – 2015 in Kansas. In early 2011, when I served as Grand Senior Deacon, and with the Craft at around 25,000 Master Masons in Kansas, we engaged the Craft by a series of statewide “listening sessions.” These were led by motivated Master Masons (as

facilitators) – not the GM or his officers, it being thought that it would be better if there were no “brass” present.

Admittedly, these group sessions were not enormous – but we gave them a lot of publicity and the invitation was open to all Master Masons statewide. Additionally, they were held at several locations throughout the state and we judged participation as pretty good, although we would have wished for more input from lodges.

When these sessions concluded, the facilitators presented the results to GL. It was agreed by nearly all the participants that the Craft in Kansas was in a serious situation, losing nearly 1000 members a year despite many lodges doing a lot of new work. The work of the sessions was distilled into four main areas – we called them “lanes” – of a strategic plan that was to last from 2010-2020 with measurable goals.

The plan is found here:

https://www.kansasmason.org/cms/images/2011/03/GLKS-20110318-Vision_2020_Update_to_the_Craft-Final-File_Copy.pdf

We identified that one of the chief stumbling blocks to any sort of change started with the GM. For too long, many, if not most GM's treated the office as a personal beauty contest – you've heard it called “his year” -- and he would adopt some programs or projects that usually benefitted some outside group with a charitable donation, and then proceed to bask in the glow of his own most worshipfulness. There was little thought to trying to prepare the Craft for a rocky road ahead, and it was thought that those things would just work themselves out.

Three of the four elected officers in 2011 strongly disagreed with this approach and we determined to change this culture. The four lanes of the strategic plan were assigned to one of the four advancing GL officers, so, for instance, the Grand Senior Warden was in charge of one lane, the Grand Junior Warden another, etc. They were tasked with marshalling all the resources and personnel to make the required changes. The GM oversaw the whole effort and reported to the Craft at the annual communication. Further, the advancing officers all agreed that when the time came, their choice for Grand Senior Deacon (who would, barring some exceptional circumstances, become GM in 5

years) would also agree with advancing the program, or he wouldn't be chosen.

So, where are we in Kansas ten years later? The census shows less than 15,000 Master Masons, right on track with losing 1,000 per year. A great many lodges that were struggling in 2010 have now consolidated with more populous lodges and Masonry in their particular towns has gone dark, the brethren now needing to drive to the next town to find a lodge meeting. New men are still scarce, but in those lodges that embraced the strategic plan, we do have vibrant, enlightening and entertaining Masonic experiences.

The changes we promulgated in the strategic plan in Kansas are those which I would still recommend today (in jurisdictions that have not changed with the times), as simply sound practice, but I would go one change further. I would advocate the abandonment of mass-appeal Freemasonry and suggest that our lodges turn inward, and fully devote their time, energy, and resources to the sole benefit of Master Masons, their widows and orphans. Just as the Roman Catholic Church survived during the dark ages in their isolated monasteries, Freemasonry should withdraw from a society that is no longer what it was during the great fraternal boom of the late 20th Century. Smaller, more select, and much more circumspect lodges (with, we must be honest, higher dues) can follow the monastery model and survive, perhaps even thrive, until society again is attracted to what we offer.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

A smaller, more compact fraternity will be much more unified, and much more consistent with the original aims and goals of the fraternity as set out by Anderson's *Constitutions*.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

American society has decidedly moved away from the aims and goals of the fraternity. And the fraternity has done itself no favors, by diluting the brand, and trying to prop up appendant bodies that are in even worse shape than the Blue Lodges. The focus remains, get 'em in, and get 'em over to the Shrine [or SR, or YR] as quickly as you can. When we had a society that valued fraternal groups, with the population nationally to support giving away members like that, all was well, but since the 1990s, the handwriting has been on the wall. A few jurisdictions have sought answers, but most continue on as before...

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

I am a member of my lodge committed to making it a nice place to be. I am active in Masonic letters and I continue to advocate for a greater responsiveness to these challenging times.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The way the ritual is performed in some lodges. Nobody likes bad karaoke, unless that's the only version of the song they've ever heard.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

See #4 above.

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

Meet the members before you join.

M. W. Bro. Michael A. Halleran served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Kansas, F. & A. M., for the 2014-2015 Masonic year. He is the author of the highly acclaimed *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Freemasonry in the American Civil War*.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Mikel J. Stoops**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **De Soto Lodge No. 40 (KS)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was looking for a deeper understanding of myself and spiritual growth. I had researched Freemasonry, but much of the information was contrary to what I witnessed from Masons. They were upstanding men, active in their communities, and always first to offer aid. I decided that an evil tree could not bear such wholesome fruit.

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

Freemasonry is split into at least two major factions. The majority of Masons believe that Masonry is just a civic organization, a social charity, or a fellowship club. There is a much smaller but growing group that truly understand that Masonry is much more than those things. This second group understand that Masonry is an initiatic fraternity based on a system of self-knowledge, with lessons in philosophy, spirituality, and morality. And, that through study and understanding, Masons should become active in their Lodges and/or communities in spiritual, charitable, and civically minded ways. Unfortunately, the first group is focused on maintaining or increasing membership in any way possible. For six decades, they have played to the lowest common denominator, watering down our Fraternity, and taking what was once an elite and enlightening fraternity and made it common and mundane.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

I enjoy those occasions when I can participate in well planned and executed educational events. Fellowship with my like-minded Brother is nice, but without the educational piece, I could find fellowship in another organization.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

We must educate. We must teach that we are something much more than just a civic organization, a social charity, or a fellowship club. Many Mason will not understand, even when we present the facts to them. They do not want anything other than what they have known Masonry to be. However, we must hope that our effort will spark something in enough of our Brothers so that the fire will build, and Masonry will return to its original intentions.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I see the spark of true Freemasonry glowing in many places throughout the US. Great Brothers, like in Lexington 1 and Rubicon, are making the changes needed to bring us back to what Masonry is and what it was always meant to be. But more than that, I have seen that spark in many of our new Masons. They want more from Freemasonry than reading minutes and bills and having fish fries. If we can reach them before the "That's the way it has always been" group drowns that spark, we have a chance to put our Fraternity back on its proper course.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The emphasis on making members to maintain the revenue needed for the business of owning property and maintaining expensive charities has caused us to allow men into Masonry who are not worthy of being Masons.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

My role, at every level, is one of being an educator and leader. I do both through not only my words, but hopefully even more through my actions.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

Most disappointing to me is the fact that so many Mason are oblivious to what Masonry is and was meant to be. They complain about the state of our Fraternity but stick to their common and mundane ways of practicing what they think is Freemasonry. Freemasonry is the system of knowledge by which we can fix everything that is wrong in Freemasonry. But instead of using those tools that we have been given, most would rather sit by and complain that there were not enough people at the last pancake breakfast.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

There are more Masons who are willing to be vocal about the changes needed to put Masonry back on its intended course. There are more young Masons willing to change the status-quo because they have done their research, and they know that Masonry is more than reading minutes and bills and flipping pancakes.

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

I would emphasize that they need to do their research and find a Lodge that fits what they want their Masonic experience to be. I would let them know that my understanding of Masonry has helped me become a better man, husband, and citizen, but there is a lot of hard work in gaining that true understanding of the Masonic teachings.

R. W. Bro. Mikel Stoops is a member of De Soto Lodge No. 40 in De Soto, Kansas. He currently serves as Grand Senior Warden of the Grand Lodge of Kansas, F. & A. M. He is an honorary member of The Rubicon Masonic Society.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Raymond A. Murphy**
Years in Masonry: **24**
Lodge Name and Number: **Golden-Rule Covington
Lodge No. 109**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A number of the people with whom I worked were members and I became intrigued about how they were interacting with each other and the friendship that existed among them.

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

It is in a state of despair. Members don't know what is expected of them and there is no one willing or able to step-up and lead them.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

The camaraderie among the members.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would include the purpose of the ritual work and explain the symbolism used.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

Younger members are asking questions.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Most members are content with the status quo.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

I need to expand my knowledge of what Freemasonry is and teach it to newer members, both in the Lodge and throughout the jurisdiction.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The lack of commitment of its members.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

It has gone from being a way of life to a form of recreation.

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

If you are not willing to commit, then you should not become a Freemason.

Worshipful Bro. Ray Murphy was initiated, passed and raised in Golden Rule Lodge No. 345 in Covington, Kentucky (now Golden Rule-Covington Lodge No. 109). W. B. Murphy is a Past Master of his Lodge. He is a member of William O. Ware Lodge of Research, where he currently serves as Chaplain. He is a member of the York Rite and a 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason. W. B. Murphy currently serves as the Personal Representative for the Valley of Covington, Orient of Kentucky, A. A. S. R.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Thomas L. Nitschke II**
Years in Masonry: **10**
Lodge Name and Number: **Orion Lodge No. 222 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

As a police officer, I was needing to find an outlet that was not law enforcement oriented. Before joining, my view of society was becoming very jaded. Finding something that could renew my belief in society became very important to me. My limited knowledge of the fraternity showed that it took good men and made them better. It was my belief that fraternity and its brotherhood would be a positive light in my life and possibly negate the years of negativity that I had accumulated over the years. To that end, I have always had a favorable view of Freemasonry and the thought of being in a non-law enforcement brotherhood intrigued me, along with its history. To be truthful, the mystique of the organization was also draw.

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

The current state of Freemasonry, in the United States, is at a crossroads. Many Brothers have lost sight of the true aim and purpose of the fraternity all the while they cling on to the rich history of yesteryear. I see pockets of brothers beginning to discover all that we have lost due to poor stewardship and creating an experience more closely to Freemasonry's intended purpose of creating a better man and understanding himself and his God. More importantly, our leadership continues to fail to recognize large membership rosters do not equal quality membership. I see us as a fraternity as getting smaller and most Grand Lodges are not prepared to lead a smaller, hopefully more elite,

organization. Like it or not, they will have a reckoning one day soon and only the prepared will survive.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

I guess the aspect most enjoyed has been self-improvement while having the support of like-minded brothers there to strengthen me.

Freemasonry has given me the opportunity to develop my public speaking and writing skills. More importantly, it has allowed me to follow my passion of history whether it be reading, researching interesting topics, or collecting items related to Freemasonry. All these things together have enriched my life and to share it with several close Brothers cannot be understated.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would first start with the leadership. It is what guides most things in life. We have Brothers who honestly don't know what true Masonry is and it will take many leaders that have the best interest of the Craft to undo years of false perceptions and realities. These leaders must be educated in our true purpose and have the skill and ability to transform organizational practices into moments of self-improvement and enlightenment.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

Many Brothers are beginning to question our current lack of vision towards the actual purpose of our fraternity and discovering past practices that have been long forgotten. While it may seem odd that something negative in tone is something to be optimistic about; it is quite the contrary as we have begun to see our true purpose and question the status quo.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

We continue, as a fraternity, to ignore the signs of lack of education, leadership, and true purpose. Needless to say, we also continue to value numbers over quality. All the aforementioned concerns have resulted in brothers accepting and perpetuating low standards and lacking the basic fundamentals of our craft. It saddens me of what Freemasonry has to offer compared to what is actually conveyed. Furthermore, we have an “open borders” policy as it relates to accepting new brothers. Many lodges are so desperate for new members that they fail to vet them properly. In turn, many new brothers are accepted into the fraternity that are not qualified to standards. They then become the norm and recruit more like them. Eventually, standards and purpose of the fraternity are greatly diminished.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

Regarding my lodge, I am the current secretary and generally seen as an informal leader and education officer. Within the larger context, I am trying to be the transformational leader within the lodge. I have a firm belief that the change we are looking for will begin at the grassroots level. The more change we see in our lodges, the more voice we will have at the higher levels and being able to elect leaders who have our vision of Freemasonry. As for my jurisdiction, I trying to connect with like-minded brothers that are willing to make the changes needed. Coordinating with them and bringing quality education to our area is the utmost importance. The former allows us to strategize on how to implement the needed changes, while the latter begins to expose those ignorant of our true purpose and gives those wanting change the tools they need for their Masonic journey.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

My biggest disappointment is that of false promise. Most lodges begin this false promise during their candidate investigation. They tell the story of the fraternity's great history and how we make good men better. It then goes into the charitable causes they promote. The candidate then goes through all the degrees very quickly with the promise you will learn everything else later. You finally attend your first "business meeting." What little anticipation you had of secrets being revealed to making yourself better, slowly dissipates away as you hear the reading of the minutes and committee reports. The question then comes to mind of why did I go through all the degrees just to be a witness to the ordinary. The realization sets in that those guiding you on your journey have no idea themselves of what Freemasonry should be. In my situation, I wondered in darkness for some time; however, it took an educated brother to save me and show me what true Masonry was. That same brother is the reason I writing this now. It only takes a spark and caring brother to overcome that false promise given so long ago.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Freemasonry has begun the slow process of going back to its roots. When I started out 10 years ago, I found Freemasonry as an organization deeply rooted in its belief of what they thought Freemasonry was. Most brothers I came in contact with were able to recite the ritual verbatim, but could not articulate the symbolism and educational importance of it. The term "that's the way we have always done it" permeated among the craft. Towards the latter part of my membership, more and more brothers began to question this term. More educational opportunities and brotherly discussions have stemmed from this questioning. Be as it may, these enlightened brothers are still the minority. It will take true leadership and time before any real results are brought to light.

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

I would first do my homework to see if Freemasonry is right for you. You should already be a good man and not a candidate needing the benefits of Freemasonry in order to be a good man. The next step would be finding a lodge that has what you are looking for. Every lodge is different and knowing what they offer is one of the best ways to find out if it will be good fit for you. If the brothers seem uninformed and lodge appears to be in disrepair, the likelihood of you having a positive experience is greatly diminished. Finally, I would tell them that a Masonic journey takes true work. The work of transforming yourself is no small task. It will make you face uncomfortable truths and at times, can be disheartening. However, your path to a better self will be more rewarding than you may have ever imagined. Freemasonry is not for everyone, but for those chosen few, the reward of self-enlightenment and brotherly love has no bounds.

Worshipful Bro. Tom Nitschke was initiated, passed and raised in Orion Lodge No. 222, in Falmouth, Kentucky. W. B. Tom is a Past Master of his Lodge and currently serves as its Secretary. He is a member and the current Master of William O. Ware Lodge of Research. W. B. Nitschke also currently serves the Grand Lodge of Kentucky as DDGM for District 19.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Patrick Craddock**
Years in Masonry: **32**
Lodge Name and Number: **Prometheus Lodge No. 851 (CA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I met men that shared similar distinctive personal characteristics. I found that they were each Freemasons. I wanted to be more like them, so I connected a string of two dots and knocked on the door of Freemasonry.

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

Improving. There is a growing trend (albeit but small at the moment) for more Masonic education and knowledge, which – when properly applied – leads the individual toward self-improvement. If this trend continues, along with the downward trend in membership numbers, Freemasonry will refocus on its tenets and not its distractions.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

I have gained from so many different aspects of Freemasonry. Although I am not a ritualist, I have gained from watching exceptional ritual. The social side of Freemasonry allows me the male camaraderie and brotherly love needed in my life. I believe the greatest enjoyment I've had in Freemasonry is to have been introduced to men of other classes, races, and religions that I would have otherwise have remained separated from by a perpetual distance.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would not prop up failing Lodges. I would allow them to die. I would encourage Lodges with active membership to explore what it means to be a Freemason and what the duties of the Lodge are to its members. I would attempt to show that membership isn't free and that anything worth having is worth paying for. Finally, if I could wave a magic wand, I would install Brothers who have a deep understanding of Freemasonry and leadership into positions of leadership within the Lodge and Grand Lodge. On the Grand Lodge level I would work to make it more of an administrative body focused on keeping the records of the individual Lodges within the jurisdiction and not a dictatorial body telling the individual Lodge how they should work or act. I would encourage each Lodge to create its own culture and best Masonic experience, and if the Lodges couldn't manage that on their own – please reread my first two sentences.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I am optimistic about the young men who seem to be joining Freemasonry for the right reasons. They bring an open mind and fresh look to the tenets of Freemasonry and are not as concerned with “the way we've always done it.” That isn't to say they are not interested in an understanding of Freemasonry, but rather to say they are not hobbled by our previous generations ability to simply ask the question, “Why”?

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Over the last four or five decades the Craft has allowed many men into its mysteries who should have never been allowed inside the door of the Lodge. This happened in an effort to keep membership numbers up. We are now facing a successive line of “leaders” who have risen to “wear the purple of our fraternity” who know very little (if anything) of Freemasonry or leadership.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

I am not someone who looks for “leadership positions” within the Lodge, the jurisdiction, or the Craft. I use my talents (if you choose to call them that) to effect what positive changes I can – usually within the material culture of the Craft.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

I’m not sure disappoints is a word I would use when discussing the larger all-encompassing term – Freemasonry. But, if an aspect of Freemasonry is leadership, I would say I am most disappointed in the current state of “leadership” within the Craft...and that at its highest level.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Within the last decade I’ve seen a renewed interest in Masonic Education. There was NONE when I joined the Craft in 1988.

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

Do your homework. Have a good idea of what Masonry is before approaching a Lodge. When you are ready to join, visit a number of different Lodges and meet the individual members. All Lodges are different, in that the members of each Lodge create the Lodge culture of that Lodge. Find a Lodge that best fits the culture you would wish to join. Also, I’d tell them that Freemasonry is not an instant gratification club, and that the degrees are designed for the initiate to reflect upon himself and improve himself from within. That takes time, so don’t rush it. Enjoy the journey.

Worshipful Brother Patrick Craddock is a Past Master of Conlegium Ritus Austeri Lodge, in Nashville, Tennessee. He is the former President of The Masonic Society and is currently Vice-President of The Masonic Restoration Foundation. He is the owner and operator of The Craftsman’s Apron in Franklin, Tennessee. Worshipful Bro. Craddock is an honorary member of William O. Ware Lodge of Research.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Tim Redick**
Years in Masonry: **42**
Lodge Name and Number: **Russellville No. 166 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Because of the influence of my father, friends and co-workers, my recollection is that I was primarily motivated to seek admittance in order to socialize and fellowship with these men I respected and enjoyed being around.

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

First, I would comment that 'Freemasonry' in this context is probably too broad to provide very specific comments. For instance, the tenets are certainly unchanged and therefore the current state in that context might be said to be the same as it has always been.

With that observation, as well as noting the somewhat limited objective data available in this regard, one can certainly say that Freemasonry as an organization based on membership figures, both quantitatively and demographically, is steadily shrinking and would seem to be less relevant in today's society. Some have looked forward and predicted the demise of the institution if the membership erosion is not solved somehow. Consequently, many Grand Lodges focus their activity on attracting new members. Jurisdictions advertise in the media and encourage members to 'selectively solicit.' Recognition programs are developed to incentivize the addition of new members. However, even when we add to our membership rolls, we consistently see only about six percent of any lodge's membership actually participating in lodge activities. Potential causes and possible solutions to the perceived issues we have as an institution are plentiful but still Lodges continue to close and merge. It is my humble opinion that the solution lies in the Lodge simply working to ensure it represents some value for the

individual member's investment of his time and resources. Once that is established, other problems will begin to disappear. Yet, I am not overly concerned as, overall, my personal assessment of the current state of the organization is that it is indeed as it has always been, that is to say; it is evolving.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

After these many years, I still enjoy the company of like-minded men but more importantly I have matured from member to Freemason and have come to enjoy working in my personal quarry, pursuing the attainment and application of useful knowledge that I might apply in perfecting the ashlar used to build that temple not made with human hands.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

The question here is not "if." By virtue of being Freemason, I am automatically tasked with preserving and improving the institution not only by carefully preserving our ancient landmarks, but by walking uprightly in my several stations before God and man and in so doing, influence and encourage those about me to do the same.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

There are many things I am optimistic about in the fraternity. Two recent highlights would be:

- **The response to the many Masonic virtual meetings brought on by the COVID-19 circumstances. In particular, the educational application of this media has been embraced by Masons across the globe. I believe this virtual technology will remain as an integral part of contemporary Freemasonry going forward.**
- **The growing number of newly chartered smaller Lodges, usually comprised of younger men and organized to be more observant in their practices.**

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The general blurring and relegation of the precepts of our fraternity when the institution is viewed solely through a pragmatic lens.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

(See Q4 response) I am always alert to potential opportunities to apply my personal skills and abilities to the support and betterment of the fraternity.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

Specifically, here are a few disappointing organizational observations:

- **Leadership (at all levels)**
- **Lack of focus on Masonic education**
- **The prevalence of poorly performed ritual**

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

- **Increased emphasis on the social and charitable giving aspects of the fraternity.**
- **A dramatic shift in membership occupational and educational demographics.**
- **A decrease in respect for the institution and what it represents (e.g. dress code, meeting practices).**
- **Member solicitation and advertising.**
- **Reduced new member vetting (West Gate).**

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

Freemasonry is an organized society of men symbolically applying the principles of operative masonry and architecture to the science and art of character building. Its purpose is to make men better, to build character, and to bind men together in bonds of brotherly love and friendship. The symbolism of Freemasonry deals only with the intellectual, moral, and spiritual values of life. It offers great personal rewards and a lifetime of brotherhood with like-

minded men. However, if you are not prepared to give to it your undivided attention and loyalty, then it may be better that you remain outside its ranks.

Brother Tim Redick was initiated, passed and raised in Alpha Lodge 729, in Kettering Ohio. He is a Past Master of Russellville Lodge No. 166, Russellville, Ohio, where he currently serves as Treasurer and a member of Sardinia Lodge No. 254, Sardinia, Ohio, currently serving as Secretary. He is a Past District Education Officer of the Sixth Masonic District of Ohio, currently serves as a member of the Education & Information Committee for the Grand Lodge of Ohio and is a member of the Ohio Lodge of Research. Brother Redick also has been recently appointed to serve as a DDGM in 2021 for the Sixth Masonic District of Ohio.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Richard Hanson**
Years in Masonry: **17**
Lodge Name and Number: **Thomas Devenney Lodge No. 928 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was influenced through a friend. He was always talking about Masonry and the mystique that it held. We were both really unaware of what it entailed, but it became super intriguing to me (it almost felt as if it were a calling). I personally have not had any family members to my knowledge that are Masons.

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

The current state of Freemasonry in my opinion is in an ambiguous state at the moment. We have 94% of membership that do not even attend lodge. The 6 % that do attend on a regular basis seem split. As a fraternity we cannot seem to find any middle ground. We have a majority of members who love the social aspect of Freemasonry, but they do not seem to see any deeper meaning, need for change, need for education, and see no issues with the decline of the craft.

The fraternity also has a select group of men that put an emphasis on deeper meanings, smaller [and] more unified lodges, stricter requirements to enter the west gate, and strong expectations from their members, but are labeled the Elitist from most. Which seems to leave a divide within the craft.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

The aspect that I have enjoyed most is education on the craft. Although, for the most part this has been a lone journey of having to dig this information up for myself. Upon entering I was under the assumption that the great mysteries, history, meanings of symbolism and ritual would be taught to me by more advanced brethren.

Secondly, traveling and the relationships that I have made has been another area that has been a good part of Freemasonry for me. I have met Brothers from all over that will continue to be a vital part of my growth as a Mason.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would begin with doing in-depth research on ways to rebrand and distribute the product we provide. With any long-lasting business you have to make sure you are attractive, available, and provide what you say you are providing. Consumer demands are what drives a good business. That means you have to invest in your product, not cheapen [it]. We are seeing a movement in America that have had cheap, cut-back products for the past 20 or 30 years. Now people are looking for authentic experiences again. They want craftsmanship, good entertainment, and exciting, worthwhile, genuine experiences.

There are some important areas of Freemasonry that I would like to see upgraded into the 21st Century. Masonic lodges have to be a place where men want to come. And it's our duty to make sure they have the most unforgettable experience which leaves them wanting to come back.

Our lodges need substance. It is really confounding to drive multiple hours to visit brethren for a 15-minute business meeting.

We need technology and ways to connect with speakers, education, and other lodges.

I would create a strong presence of Kentucky Masonry on Social Media Networks (like it or not, that's where most people hang out these days, especially young men).

I would also create an education program that can teach what Masonry was designed to do. I would attempt to create a program that can educate facilitators in Freemasonry's tenets and teachings so that they could convey this to not only new initiates but also the current membership.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I see young men that are forging ahead with Virtual Masonic Education and creating bonds and networks amongst themselves. That tells me that Freemasonry will live on although in a very different package.

I also see a small number of brethren who are striving to bring experience back into the lodge. Education, Festive Boards, meaningful relationships are being built, and over-all value is being sought after.

If the Grand Lodges and Masonic members of every state refuse to get on board and stand strong with these young Masons there will continue to be a huge disconnect within the craft.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Current leadership from top to bottom continue to be focused on the "numbers equals success model."

96 % of membership never attend lodge (it's astounding that we never ask why?). But, as long as they pay their dues this is acceptable.

Also, the only electable members for leadership on the Grand Lodge Level are the ones that have the ability to travel great distances on a nightly basis, are willing to spend upwards of 10-12 thousand dollars in gas/hotels and put thousands of miles on vehicles.

Individuals who are capable of bringing change, new direction, motivation, and knowledge of the craft are never considered without doing the above-mentioned format.

It would seem that with today's technology capabilities and the ability to reach brethren at a much more effective rate, it would be much more cost effective than depleting bank accounts, racking up untold miles on vehicles, and losing numerous hours of family time. This would seem to call for change at some point, but at this time is expected and encouraged. The way they currently do things seems to be misguided for the time we live in and highly unsustainable.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

My role as a Mason has always been one of support. I enjoy leadership roles, but prefer to be in the background helping my brothers create and implement new ideas. I enjoy working on ways to improve not only the Masonic experience, but ourselves. Being able to watch Masons become successful, fulfilled and growing is something I really enjoy about lodge.

Masonic education is my passion and I hope to always be able to be a part of this within my own lodge and within our state.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The lack of teaching and understanding the inner workings of Masonic ritual and its true design. Henry Pirtle stated "Masonry teaches by allegories and symbols, and it is your part to extract from them the truths that will be of service to you in the building of an upright Masonic character," but unfortunately we have no one who is teaching the basics of how to do so. So, this gets left to interpretation and often goes untouched and unlearned.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Numbers have continued to decline, lodges have [become] defunct and consolidated. All the while virtual education has sprung up out of necessity. The ones that are interested have tuned in and the ones who have no interest have continued on the path of just being part of a social aspect.

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

I would tell anyone interested that there are some very good men within the midst of our Fraternity. I would assure them that Masonry does make good men better, but everything is not as one would expect. I would have to be honest and inform them that for the most part it is a self-journey and that the teachings of Freemasonry must be sought by themselves in most areas.

I would also inform them to be prepared to become part of a Fraternity that is in steep decline, primarily interested in charitable giving, coming together for dinners, socializing, with very limited resources, and a majority that does not seem to value Masonic education at this time.

Worshipful Bro. Rich Hanson was initiated, passed and raised in Jake Rice Lodge No. 606 in Blaine, Kentucky. W. B. Rich is a Past Master of Jake Rice Lodge and is now a member of Thomas Devenney Lodge No. 928 and Ted Adams Lodge of Research. He currently serves the Grand Lodge of Kentucky as member of the Committee on Masonic Education.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Ryan Clendenin**
Years in Masonry: **9 Years**
Lodge Name and Number: **Boone-Union Lodge No. 304 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A family connection and interest in 18th and 19th Century history of the United States.

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

I feel there is a greater understanding of what it means to be a Mason by the tremendous amount of educational material. I think we as a fraternity are still seeing the effects of the rise and fall of membership post World War II.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

**The symbolism used in Masonry and how it has transcended through the ages.
I enjoy the camaraderie of likeminded brethren searching for light.**

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

I would begin by imploring members to be a "Mason at heart." This to me exemplifies the trowel.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I feel optimistic by the new members who are petitioning our lodges. We have a duty to provide them with the best Masonic experience we are capable of performing.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

The management of large structures that were built during the Masonic boom period. We seem to have a division of a quality mindset versus a growth mindset. I hope quality of membership wins the day.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

A point within a circle.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

Religious intolerance and racism. It is still in our ranks and is fundamentally wrong. We have a duty as a Mason to judge men on the internal and not the external.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

The merging and dissolution of lodges. Hopefully, the positive outcome will be a focus on quality men.

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

The experience of becoming a Mason and being active in lodge has greatly aided in my quest to “know thy self.” Masonry provides a great road map for this never-ending journey.

Worshipful Bro. Ryan Clendenin was initiated, passed and raised in Boone-Union Lodge No. 304 in Union, Kentucky. W. B. Ryan is a Past Master of Boone-Union Lodge and is also a member of William O. Ware Lodge of Research.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Sammy R. Kubesch**
Years in Masonry: **4**
Lodge Name and Number: **Good Faith Lodge No. 95 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Applied use of theology, mathematics, and natural sciences to explain deeper meaning of the world. And every military superior of high moral fiber happened to be a member.

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

The State of Freemasonry is dependent on the state of the surrounding community. Unfortunately, with moral decline and complete ethical collapse of the main "above ground" community, the subsequent underground community (F&AM) is thus negatively affected. Membership dwindles as those of good character are no longer to be found to join the fraternity. Those who are subjected to the moral collapse of the main community may them, in turn, become tainted by those with whom they choose to associate.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

The education and learning, as well as traveling and connecting with the few remaining men of like mind.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

As stated in #2, we must start with the independent variable of the outside world. With numbers so few, however, and in conjunction with Islamic eschatology (study of death and the “end”) the world will end before 2500AD. It is, in my own personal belief, that the end of Freemasonry is divine will, and is indicative of the end of humanity. Thus, to improve the state of Freemasonry, I would recommend taking a bit back of our old roots and diving deeper into theology.

Christianity, Judaism, and Islam are akin to undergraduate studies, giving one breadth into the subject of the Grand Architect. Freemasonry is synonymous with graduate studies. Using monotheism as a base, I would like to see education tying all of these in, and why Freemasonry as a whole is important to our understanding and connection thereof.

When the body is dying, the body pulls blood and resources from less necessary organs to the vital organs. Thus, I would pull membership and funding from extracurricular bodies and focus solely on blue lodge.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I see the last remaining good men forming a line, and a line of moral, virtue, and knowledge.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

I see decline. Decline in membership, decline in passion, and old people who show up to read minutes then leave.

7. **As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?**

It is my responsibility to educate the craft on the quadrivium, to learn about the trivium, and put together learning, the same learning that will be passed down to the few in the next generation of modern Masons.

8. **What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?**

Masons who are Masons in name only, not character. Masons who are too prideful and place importance on tangible objects, such as photos and decorations, not Masonry itself as a faith-based way of life.

9. **How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?**

It has not changed. This is part of a larger issue I feel. When there is always room to improve and technology to change with it, we too should change. We should change in how we reach the craft and how we educate the craft.

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

**Have a foundation for Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, and Music.
Have a basic understanding of Grammar, Rhetoric, and Logic.
Place your faith in God, know that He is always watching, and govern yourself accordingly.**

Bro. Sammy Kubesch was initiated, passed and raised in 2016 in Elvin E. Helms Lodge No. 926 in Petersburg, Kentucky. He is now a member of Good Faith Lodge No. 95 in Union, Kentucky.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Thomas W. Jackson**
Years in Masonry: **57**
Lodge Name and Number: **Cumberland Valley Lodge No. 315 (PA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I learned that men that I greatly admired were members of Freemasonry.

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

In North America, without change, we are in the process of dying but on a world level, leaders are still the Freemasons.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

Although I enjoy all aspects of Freemasonry, I greatly enjoyed ritual and friends that I made around the world.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

Being more rigid in guarding the west gate, being more rigid in our requirements to become and remain and greatly increase the education of the membership.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

Converting more to an observant style of Freemasonry (TO) and the development of more educational Masonic organizations such as the Rubicon society and research lodges.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

Our failure to attract quality members and leaders along with our willingness to accept lesser quality members to gain quantity coupled with a lack of education.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

On both levels, developing educational bodies and trying to improve the quality of who we will accept.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

I no longer feel that I can trust my brothers simply because they are a Freemason.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

In 57 years, I have seen much change and have evolved from being a total idealist to more of a pragmatist. I have also watched a drastic decline in the quality of the leadership.

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

I would point out that Freemasonry is not for every man but if he truly seeks an organization that will improve him as a man, increase committed friendships and open unimagined doors that is the potential of the Craft.

R. W. Bro. Thomas W. Jackson is an eminent Freemason, recognized around the world for his work encouraging and supporting the Masonic Fraternity. Bro. Jackson was made a Mason in Cumberland Valley Lodge No. 315 of Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, and served as its Worshipful master in 1969. He went on to serve a twenty-year tenure as the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania, retiring in 1999.

He was the first Executive Secretary of the World Conference of Regular Masonic Grand Lodges, serving from 1998 to 2014. He is now honorary President ad Vitam of that organization.

R. W. Bro. Jackson is a strong supporter of Masonic education and research, serving as the Warrant Master of the Pennsylvania Lodge of Research, a Fellow of the Philalethes Society, a Founding Fellow of the Masonic Society, a member of the Board of Directors of Scottish Rite Research Society and a member of the exclusive Society of Blue Friars.

He has also held leadership positions in many other organizations concerned with the culture of the Craft, including his service as president of the Conference of Grand Secretaries of North America, board member of the Masonic Information Center of North America, the Masonic Restoration Foundation, the Masonic Relief Association of North America and chairman of the board of directors of the Association of Masonic Arts.

He holds honorary membership in 111 Grand Lodges throughout the world. He is the only American Freemason holding Grand Rank in the United Grand Lodge of England and holds honorary Grand Rank in 42 Grand Lodges, including honorary Grand Master in 16 jurisdictions.

R. W. Bro. Jackson has presided over 18 local, state, nation and world Masonic bodies. He has spoken in over 40 countries and had articles published in educational, scientific and Masonic journals, newspapers and publications in more than thirty countries. His papers have been translated into more than a dozen languages.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Anthony Sattich**
Years in Masonry: **15**
Lodge Name and Number: **Buechel Lodge No. 896 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Honestly, It was curiosity.

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

I am certain it will continue to decrease in membership. The mindset of young men these days for the most part as I see it is they look at us as the old establishment.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

The art of discussion. Listening and being involved in spirited conversations.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

Making all our meetings a meaningful experience with more education and discussion. Topics that could hold the attention of those gathered.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

In Kentucky – Inclusiveness.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

I will refer back to the latter part of my answer in question 2. The mindset of young men these days for the most part as I see it is they look at us as the old establishment.

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

I hope to help our Lodge break away from the old normal and embrace a younger generation that wants to expand their minds. The same goes for the jurisdiction.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

The older generation that will not adjust to any change in the habits of (Greet, eat, business of the lodge and get home in time to watch the game)

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

Very little that I can see in the past 15 years.

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

I would ask, what are you looking for in Freemasonry? Are you looking for just the title? Are you willing to put the time and effort into what being a Mason is?

Worshipful Bro. Tony Sattich was initiated, passed and raised in Buechel Lodge No. 896 in Louisville, Kentucky. W. B. Tony is a Past Master of his Lodge and now serves his Lodge as its Secretary.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Masonic Perspectives Questions Vol. I

Name: **Edwin L. Vardiman, Sr.**
Years in Masonry: **51**
Lodge Name and Number: **Golden Rule-Covington
Lodge No. 109**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

The primary factor which influenced me to seek membership in Freemasonry was that both my maternal grandfather and my father were members of the Fraternity. My grandfather was also a member of the York Rite. I admired both of these men greatly, and they were a very positive influence in my early life. My grandfather's interest and membership in the York Rite was an influence in my interest in seeking greater light in Freemasonry.

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

The current state of Freemasonry, it seems to me, is that of regression. It appears the membership is shrinking to those who are dedicated and have a genuine love of the Fraternity, and have an appreciation of the good fellowship to be found there. While it is true that declining membership is a continuing concern, I do not anticipate the loss of the Fraternity within the foreseeable future.

3. What aspect of Freemasonry have you most enjoyed?

My first love has always been the Blue Lodge, and I have always wanted to be active and a part of its activities. However, I have also been active and interested in the Scottish Rite and the York Rite, and have enjoyed my membership in both.

4. If tasked with the project of improving the current state of Freemasonry, where would you begin?

As the Blue Lodge is the backbone of Freemasonry, I believe the Blue Lodge is the most vital of all aspects of the Fraternity. Any effort to improve the current situation of the Fraternity generally must begin there.

5. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that makes you optimistic about its future?

I am most optimistic as to the future of Freemasonry when I see the interest and dedication of the hard core of members in all aspects of Masonry. With this hard core of dedicated members, the Fraternity will survive, perhaps not with the numbers of previous years, but with a true and lasting appreciation of its ideals and goals.

6. What do you see in contemporary Freemasonry that causes you to be concerned about its future?

My greatest concern for the future of Freemasonry is in the efforts being made to streamline it to make it acceptable to those who may have a passing interest or curiosity about the Fraternity. How is a new member to gain appreciation of the beauties of Freemasonry unless he is taught to be aware of them?

7. As an individual Freemason, how do you view your role within the larger context of your Lodge? Your jurisdiction?

Being a realist, I am aware of my personal limitations of age and health. While my active participation may be limited, my interest and support are always available at the call of the Fraternity.

8. What aspect of Freemasonry has most disappointed you?

I cannot say that any aspect of Freemasonry has disappointed me. However, some aspects of Freemasonry have been of more interest than others. I have always been impressed with the variety of bodies within Masonry which can appeal to the interests of the various members.

9. How has Freemasonry changed during the course of your membership?

The most noticeable change in Freemasonry since I have been a member is the overall decline in membership. The fact there are fewer members has resulted in fewer special events, parades and some charitable activities. However, the basic functions of the Lodge have continued due to the willingness of the members to take on additional duties and obligations.

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

I would urge any man interested in becoming a Freemason to investigate what Freemasonry really is, and what it is not. A meaningful membership in the Fraternity requires a commitment of time and money. To join an organization in which you have no time or interest is fated to failure. Freemasonry has much to offer, and can be a life-long adventure in learning and good fellowship. However, if the man has no interest in the things the Fraternity espouses, the possibility of a successful future is doubtful.

Worshipful Bro. Ed Vardiman was initiated, passed and raised in 1969 in Crescent Hill Lodge No. 820 in Louisville, Kentucky. W. B. Ed later moved to Covington and affiliated with Covington Lodge No. 109 (now Golden Rule-Covington Lodge No. 109) He is a Past Master of Covington Lodge No. 109 and a Past Master of William O. Ware Lodge of Research (1989-90). He is a member of the York Rite (KYCH) and a 33rd Degree Scottish Rite Mason. W. B. Ed is a past Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Kentucky, Royal Arch Masons. A retired attorney, W. B. Ed served the Grand Lodge of Kentucky for several years as a member of the Trial Oversight Committee. In 2018, W. B. Vardiman was named William O. Ware Lodge of Research's first William O. Ware Research Fellow.