

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Timothy Aven**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A childhood friend told me about his experience with Freemasonry; I didn't comprehend the scope of it, but thought at first it was a networking opportunity. In 2016 I read something online that explained the principal tenets of Freemasonry and its ecumenical nature. I was blown away that such an institution existed. I then reached out to my friend and asked how I could join. I was then directed to the Grand Lodge of Kentucky, which gave me the telephone number of Lexington Lodge No. 1.

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

Aside from my own Lodge, it seems disastrous. But, from what I understand, much of this disarray is in North American Lodges. I've learned from Masons I respect – R. W. B. Tom Jackson being one of them – that in other countries Freemasonry is thriving. If I had visited another Kentucky Lodge, as opposed to my mother Lodge, I wouldn't have joined. I know there are good men in those Lodges, it's just that with my current responsibilities it wouldn't have been worth my time.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

As America is the only country that I know of where this does NOT happen, I think it's clear that Lodges should have that option. Lodges wouldn't feel the necessity of rushing men through so they can sit in on the business meetings. I was initiated on March 20, 2017 and raised on October 1, 2018. I thought that took a long time, but I wouldn't necessarily have thought that if I was able to participate in the business meetings. I think our business meetings are beautiful and edifying.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I don't know if I have a strong opinion on that. If I didn't live in Lexington, I believe I'd want to continue to be a member of my mother Lodge, though I might not want to be a member of some of the other Lodges I've seen anyway.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I have no idea about the appendant bodies. I'm very busy in the Blue Lodge, and can't imagine taking on more responsibilities than I already have. I've thought about going through the Scottish Rite, just as an educational experience, but wouldn't want to be involved. I work 50 plus hours a week, have a family, try to stay fit, etc. If you include memorizing ritual, teaching classes, business meetings, dinners, etc., I probably spend about eight hours a week on Freemasonry. That's a significant amount of time. And I still don't think it's enough.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, “Not Just A Man, A Mason?” Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am aware of it, only because I met the former Grand Master of Nevada and have seen that Kentucky is taking some of those cues. I don't really know if it is beneficial or not. The advertising is pretty slick, and it could look appealing to a certain demographic – but I cringe at the thought of someone seeing one of those advertisements, thinking Freemasonry looks appealing, and because of it knocks at the door of some of our Lodges. They'll be disappointed and feel like they were lied to. What I've seen of the campaign, it makes Freemasonry look “hip.” Because of my own personal biases – which I know aren't entirely accurate – I think things that appear trendy tend to be vapid and “lame.”

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Our dues need to keep up with existing and rising expenses. It's hard to argue with the fact that Freemasonry is worth more than \$1 a day. I believe it is. But then again, I know that my Lodge is unique. I think our dues are a value. My friends and family who know that I'm a Freemason at Lexington Lodge No. 1 are often stunned that it's that inexpensive.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

There are several reasons and not all of them are bad. Let's say my daughter becomes ill, or I need more time to spend with my family – which is a real possibility one day – as a Mason I've taken an obligation to choose my family. But I'd still consider myself a Mason, and I'd want to continue my financial

support AND be a card-carrying member. I do not think carrying a dues card makes one a Mason – but I still want to carry one.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. I have a Masonic license plate, a Masonic plaque in my office, one in my home, and other Masonic paraphernalia at my home, including tracing boards. It's not a secret that I'm a Freemason. A lot of my friends and colleagues know, and some don't. That only because some don't really care, and I'm not interested in sharing it with them unless they do. I don't take it personally, as I don't care about professional sports. If one of my friends wants to tell me that they are a Broncos fan, I'll certainly be polite and throw out some facts to be amenable, but it won't be that interesting to me unless it leads to something else.

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

If you're looking at bettering yourself, and in do so bettering the world, then it might be for you. It's going to take a lot of work, so be prepared. I would also tell them to be careful about what Lodge they join – because it might not be what they're looking for – or what it should be.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Randall Cooper**
Years in Masonry: **48**
Lodge Name and Number: **Maysville Lodge No. 52 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father. I admired the fact that he was dedicated and involved in Masonry. I wanted to be a part of something like that.

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

On the decline.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

No, as Masons we should abide by time honored rules and regulations.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, it helps other Lodges and brings us as Brothers closer together.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Absolutely. As a York Rite Mason, I have been able to understand more of the secrets of Masonry which were hidden from me as a Master Mason. I am to give better counsel and be a better Mason.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, we use it in Kentucky. I don't think it's as beneficial as it could be. Right now, the Fraternity uses 2B1-ASK1, which is okay, but we need to make a bigger impact by going after the younger men (18 – 21), in colleges and off campus by letting them know How, Why, and What we are.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I believe that should be left up to the individual Lodge. Period. I believe that yes, the Lodge is worth \$1.00 a day, but \$365.00 dues will be too much for some, as that is grocery money, a car payment, rent. Our economy is putting families in a bind, and I don't want this Fraternity to only be for old men who don't have the responsibilities that younger men have.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

More often than not, a lot of the younger members have a lot going on at home and need time with their families. In the same venue, older members feel uncomfortable driving at night, or they feel like they have nothing to offer or to gain.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Yes, even though everything can be found on the internet these days, we are unwilling to share with prospective members the real value of brotherly love and friendship.

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

Don't hesitate to ask someone about Masonry, because we, as its members, are not allowed to ask you to join.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **James Diem**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hartford Lodge No. 120 (WI)**
West Bend Lodge No. 138 (WI)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

The desire to focus on improving myself spiritually and to be around others who wish to become better. And, a very close Brother who was gently prodding me for more than 15 years.

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

Steady state to declining membership, depending upon your state and district. It has become something hardly anyone knows about. I, myself, have observed virtually no reference to it throughout my 55 years of living in multiple states and cities across the U. S. On our character, like any other organization, we have a few bad apples, but I would say lower than most.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, when we have multiple Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts in waiting, I want them to be part of our Lodge business. In addition, having the reminder of the allegory from the ritual of opening more frequently in the other Degrees provides for continual education for our Master Masons.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, we already allow it in Wisconsin. I am a Past Master of another Lodge and Worshipful Master of my current Lodge. Being a fraternity means it is about our relationships, and there are opportunities to gain even more Masonic fellowship through this. Masonic immersion beyond just the appendant bodies.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I believe it can, depending on the body. I am in the Scottish Rite (NMJ), and find the teaching relevant to growth within Masonry. I do not know why we could not incorporate this, or York Rite, into our Lodges, which would seem to make more sense with a shrinking population. The Order of the Eastern Star is great because it can tie in our ladies. Shrine has some issues and I'm not sure I would want that party atmosphere in our Lodges on a regular basis, though they do great work with their charities.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, I think the campaign (which originated in the Scottish Rite for the Grand Lodges) really helps to start to get out a message about us. It does not go far enough. I do not believe in the "ask one to be one" ... we need to expand our awareness through our good works in the community, but also through advertising. I think nationally, the Grand Lodges are struggling to get that awareness out, which is where the more national level appendant bodies can help.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Yes, we must raise dues. It will drive away some members, but I would rather be solvent and have the members who really are committed to being there, than to watch us slowly fold every Lodge. Our states are so different that a minimum amount is a different conversation. Our Grand Lodge assessment is \$45, but our Lodges charge anywhere from \$40 to \$300 across Wisconsin. My two Lodges are almost \$100 apart in dues (was more, but we raised dues in the lower Lodge).

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

This has about a dozen answers. If I could Pareto the results, I would state the reasons in this order (based on the Lodges in my area): Age (even with the offer of a ride, as they get older, many do not wish to come to Lodge), appendant bodies, internal negative relations, disinterest in Lodge activities (but like being called a Mason), distance (moved away, not doing anything with other Lodges).

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Absolutely not. We are a fraternity with secrets ... secrets that are meant solely to bind us and bring out our curiosity, and that one Mason may know another in the dark as well as in the light (which is arguably the most important). The secrecy is there for our protection of knowing the real obligation is there. Ninety percent of what we do are normal fraternity type things. I think of all the lessons between the Blue Lodge and Scottish Rite ... there is nothing secret in those Degrees ... there is allegory there for anyone to learn from.

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

If you are looking for something more out of life, or to build upon your spirituality with other like-minded individuals, Freemasonry is the place for you.

We become better men together.

We support our communities and our youth.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **R. Steven Doan**
Years in Masonry: **52**
Lodge Name and Number: **Santa Monica Palisades Lodge No. 307
(CA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father, grandfathers, and their friends were active Masons. I was then Jurisdiction Master Councilor of Southern California DeMolay.

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

I think it offers a place for young men today to deepen their spirituality outside the polarization of society.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Business of the Entered Apprentice Degree gives the newest Mason a greater sense of involvement. It is too hard mechanically to allow Lodges to open on a Degree based on who shows up for the meeting.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I see no reason why not. I belong to several, and that enriches my Masonic experience.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do, because they help our understanding of what it means to be a Mason.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am. I think that they help. They do what interest in learning more among non-Masons.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Our dues are too low, in that outsiders sometimes think we do not value what we have. More dues would allow us to do more good work. It is hard to fix a minimum because each Lodge has different circumstances.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

They believe in our cause, and they want to support it in some way, even though they may not be able to attend our activities.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

It is a society with secrets.

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

See answer to Question 2 above.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Jim DuBridge**
Years in Masonry: **31**
Lodge Name and Number: **Edgewood Lodge No. 484 (IL)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Men that I admired were Masons, and had a high opinion of the Fraternity.

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

Some of the things going on, I don't like, and the trend to change the old customs. I do not care for the blue lightning degrees and multiples.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

We do, here in Illinois; that way an Entered Apprentice can begin attending Lodge right way. We simply open on the First Degree. This has proved to be a benefit to our Lodge.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I am a member in two Lodges, and see no problem with it. I am also the holder of Honorary Memberships, which I hold as a high honor.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Most of the members of these appendants go maybe once a year. Maybe. I don't see a lot of benefit.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I have seen the slogan, but not anything else from it.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

One dollar a day (\$365.00) would cause a drop-out event. Mine is \$65.00, including Grand Lodge assessments.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Some of that is because some men join to become Shriners only.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

There is a paper called, “The Deeper Meaning of the Entered Apprentice Degree” which addresses this question pretty well. It explains the definition of the words used in the Degree.

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

Read all you can online, ask why they are a member, check out the Grand Lodge website, and, above all, do not rush the candidate the Degrees. Use the Intender Program.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Robert Durham**
Years in Masonry: **26**
Lodge Name and Number: **Louisville Lodge No. 400 (KY),**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I wanted to join as a rite of passage. My father, both grandfathers, and several relatives I respected were lodge brothers. I knew I would be at least the sixth generation in the Durham family. My grandmother was also very involved with Eastern Star.

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

Membership is declining; however, the new members seem to have a deeper interest in the history, symbolism and ritual; with less interest in the social side.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

I feel business meetings should be held on the Master Mason Degree only.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. I am a dual member because I moved from the city where I was raised. I think it should be the preference of each brother, with lodge approval.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I belong to the Shrine, but have yet to join either of the Rites, so I can't speak to whether those enhance the experience, but brothers I know who belong to those seem to really enjoy it. I'm proud to be a Shrine Mason because of the wonderful things they do for kids.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not aware of the campaign, but I don't support active recruiting. I do support educational events to give more information to those interested in joining.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

A dollar per day seems high to me. I think it should be up to each lodge to determine their dues. We must be careful in pricing out perspective members/ Meeting on the level without regard to financial status is very important.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

This happens for several reasons, primarily life situations. I wasn't active for many years due to being divorced and needing my free time with my kids. Other brothers aren't physically able to attend lodge, but are still proud Masons.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I don't. Lodge is a society with secrets, not a secret society. The secrets are necessary to keep both the mystic and give candidates something for which to strive. Without them, we are no different than social clubs.

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

I would invite them to join me at dinner prior to lodge and ask whatever questions they might have. I would stress that it is up to them to ask for a petition.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Leonard Feldt**
Years in Masonry: **33**
Lodge Name and Number: **Templum Lucis Lodge No. 747 (Ontario)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Family tradition; I'm a third generation Mason.

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

A ship going in circles, with little sense of direction, and not one person at the helm to assume any responsibility.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

No.

Business is business; Degrees are Degrees.

The two have separate and distinct needs and therefore should not cross paths.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

It depends upon how the membership is recorded.

It is admirable to support more than one Lodge, as many Lodges have distinctly different aims, styles and ways.

The issue is this: If someone belongs to three Lodges, then Grand Lodge counts them three time (one for each Lodge) and collects assessments on them three times. This is wrong and needs to be addressed.

It artificially distorts the true membership numbers.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes. The different rituals teach many different concepts and lessons in life.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes. You don't want to be the best kept secret when it comes to membership.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

As memberships decline, so too should our operating expenditures. That's just sound business practice. Why have facilities capable of servicing 100 people, when you only have 12? The dues should also be adjusted in accordance with these adjusted operating methods and costs. Why pay for something you are not using?

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

So they can say they are a member.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

It is not a secret society. It is a society with secrets.

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

You'll never be sorry you joined; you'll only be sorry if you don't.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **David Felty**
Years in Masonry: **10**
Lodge Name and Number: **Saint Johns Lodge No. 37 (FL)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I never had time to consider fraternal membership until near retirement. I joined for two reasons: [1] social; and [2] intellectual. [1] My father found Freemasonry a good place to find male friendships during his own retirement. [2] As a retired chaplain/professor of religion and philosophy, I was already familiar with the sorts of esoteric interest found in Freemasonry. Plus, the chance to be part of one of the last surviving “oral traditions.” Mission accomplished. Freemasonry has served me well in retirement as an intellectual hobby and source of meaningful friendships with a wide variety of men whom I enjoy being with (at least most of them).

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

Mixed. Men join Freemasonry for different reasons, and different Lodges have different interests, strengths and weaknesses – to which I say, “different strokes for different folks.” But I wish there was some way to “tip-off” prospective members what kind of Lodge a particular Lodge is. But usually, this cannot be done easily until AFTER a man has joined – hence the need for plural memberships (see below). I do not believe that smaller Lodges will necessarily lead to better Lodges. My observation is that mist Lodges have about the same percentage of wheat/chaff – with a few exceptions. Also,

there's a difference between being elite and just being elitist (practicing elitism).

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

BIG RISK allowing Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts to attend business meetings! They might drop out before becoming Master Masons if they find out as Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts just how boring Masonic "business" can be! No reason a Lodge should need more than four business sessions per year. If you do open business meetings in the Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft Degrees, then please be sure there's an interesting esoteric/symbolic educational component in the meeting, also. Most volunteer organizations have a small group of members (finance committee) who hammer out business details and present the results of the whole group to rubber stamp. Frankly, I think that's a better approach than endless quibbling.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Sometimes, the Lodge initially joined is not as good a "fit" as a Lodge down the road. Or it has not "delivered" on promises, with little prospect of getting better. Rather than drop out of Freemasonry, plural membership is a responsible way to test out an alternative. And are we not "traveling men?" Sometimes one moves to another city/town in some state too far away to drive back regularly. [The question] said "within the same Grand Lodge" but here in Florida we have hundreds of "snowbirds" who are faithful participants on one Lodge "up north" and another "down south." Plural memberships can be abused, of course (looking for "greener grass").

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

We all know Brothers who are just degree/chair collectors, of course. And I have found that both of the main appendant "rites," Scottish Rite and York Rite, have many serious intellectual and spiritual flaws and errors (and the "fun" bodies, like Shriners, not worth the time). But American "Symbolic Lodge," at least on the literal level, leaves the candidate in confusion and with a sense of loss, even bewilderment (incompleteness). There are those who think that "Blue Lodge" is a system complete in itself – such as [Chuck] Dunning, for instance. I do not. I see it as only a "fragment" of a myth, just part of the initiatory process, insufficient to complete the two basic spiritual tasks of rebirth and maturity. Symbolic Lodge just starts us on the journey – on the lower triad of the Tree of Life. Personally, I find Masonic Rosicrucianism and Benedictine spiritual disciplines helpful to complete the process. And I like some of the York Rite appendant bodies, especially the Red Cross of Constantine.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Not really "aware" of this "public awareness campaign." But it sounds to me like elitism without necessarily being elite (as I mentioned above). Also, a strong whiff of hubris. Sounds a little too much like "Urbemensch" for my taste. I don't see how this is an improvement over the traditional saying about making good men better. Remember all the old "Real Men Don't ..." jokes? Well, I say that "better men" don't need to brag. They have achieved a certain humility which comes with self-understanding (gnothi seauton). The last thing we need in Freemasonry today is more self-satisfied, self-righteous snobs. Got enough of them already.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Sure, the Fraternity, taken as a whole, is worth \$1 per day – perhaps even \$2 per day – but Symbolic Lodge is not the total of the Fraternity. There are appendant bodies, too. Why all the high expenses? For the same reason that so many churches have high expenses – buildings! But every city/town in USA has strip malls with empty storefronts which could be rented for a song. No need for endless upkeep. Just pay your rent! Many churches are moving in this direction. Sure, massive and beautiful Cathedrals and Synagogues and Masonic Temples are nice. Perhaps one or two or even three per state. But does every crossroads in Kentucky (or Florida) need a broken-down Lodge building with inadequate plumbing and a bad roof? Money pits!

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Probably for the same reason people continue their subscriptions to newspapers, magazines, premium TV channels year after year – inertia. With institutions like churches and fraternities, you can probably add a certain amount of guilt and perhaps the belief that paying dues will store themselves up a few treasures in heaven (or at least qualify them for a nice funeral). But when my local newspaper went from \$7 per week for four sections of news each day to \$50 per month for two sections each day, I cancelled my subscription. Got all I needed from internet and the Weather Channel. Perhaps that's why they continue to pay – but then go NPD when dues reach a certain level. The reason(s) why they no longer attend is a DIFFERENT question. Probably, the main reason they “never attend” is lack of time. Today, “time” is a more scarce commodity than “money” for most people. Other reasons: because they did not find the “acceptance” by other Brothers that they had hoped for or did not notice the “self-improvement” they felt they were promised would occur. Also, the Lodges (just like churches) have their share of hypocrites who drive sincere seekers away. Or they found that some

of the more “kinky” religious/spiritual beliefs of Freemasonry were things they just did not agree with. (This is especially true about Scottish Rite, I think.)

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

There is nothing secret about Freemasonry (including handshakes and passwords and bloody oaths) that you cannot find on the internet. There IS a certain “mystique” (as in “mystery”). But mysteries take care of themselves. You don’t need to hide them. They are “hidden in plain view” and all who are ready for them will find them. Others will not – even if they know the words and gestures. Mysteries can only be experienced.

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

I would start by asking him why he wants to become a Freemason, i.e., what does he hope to find? It would be nice if he would say, “Light” or “Wisdom” or some such. But that is rare, I suspect. If he says, in some way or another, that he is lacking or searching for something that I think Freemasonry might offer (friendship, wisdom, personal, moral, or spiritual growth, helping others, etc.) I would then ask him how much (how seriously) he wants it. Eventually, I’d invite him to attend a Lodge supper to meet a few Brothers. Or perhaps introduce him to a Brother who is a member of a different Lodge better suited to his particular interests.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Gregory A. Hornsby, Jr.**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **Gateway Lodge No. 109 (KY),
Good Faith Lodge No. 95 (KY)
William O. Ware Lodge of Research (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A family history of Freemasonry, and I've always wanted to be part of something bigger than myself (especially after I retired from the military). I believe I found it in Freemasonry.

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

Some days I feel it's pretty strong through our actions or deeds, but some days I also feel it's lacking Lodge membership support and involvement and the Brotherly love it talks about in our three Degrees. It only takes a few works to turn hearts and feelings. We need to re-evaluate and repair these transgressions where possible. A Brother on the outside or shunned is not Masonic. We need to really focus on education on these items.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I personally feel each Lodge should be able to conduct business on whatever Degree they feel works for their Lodge. Each Lodge understands better their needs than a Lodge three counties or districts away, or across the state.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, I'm a dual member to two Lodges. I feel it enhances my Freemasonry knowledge, experiences, and viewpoints through my participation in more than one Lodge, and also through my Masonic travels.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I believe it does, but I'll have a better understanding after my acceptance into the Scottish Rite soon. Also, the same as my response on questions 4 about enhancing knowledge and experiences in Freemasonry.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I believe it could be. Witnessing Masonic good deeds and such events opens the eyes of good men unaware of Freemasonry. But with that, we must always protect the West Gate to those not worthy or ready for a Masonic journey.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I personally don't have a problem with raising dues to keep up with our Masonic and Lodge responsibilities, but we should always be ready to help older Brothers on fixed incomes, so they are always involved. The Fraternity is worthy of \$1 a day.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

There are many reasons why men are absent from Lodge. From not enough personal time, to family obligations, and other outside interests, but it's more possible or probable we don't make Freemasonry as interesting as it was and should be.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Yes, I do. Even if you can find Freemasonry information online (which we can), reading about Freemasonry is way different than experiencing it. Experiencing it is what makes it a secret society.

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

It's a great personal and brotherly journey if you're willing to open your mind, your heart and put in the work. I still feel I need to put more effort in all three areas and most of my really close Masonic Brothers say they feel the same way from time to time.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Dave Hosler**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Battle Ground Lodge No. 313 (IN),
Dwight L. Smith Lodge of Research (IN)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My grandmother gave me my great-grandfather's Mackey's Encyclopedia's for my 18th birthday. I was busy with skateboarding and punk rock music and life happened as it does. As years went by, my grandmother would give me more of his tchotchkes, like his Scottish Rite ring, and his Past High Priest ring. Our hands were the same size. I took that as a sign from the universe to start looking into the Fraternity. I started researching as much as I could and when I looked around and realized all the really good men in my life, the ones I truly could count on, were Freemasons, I knocked on the door of my Lodge.

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

I believe the current state of Freemasonry, at least in the U. S., is standing at a crossroads and is suffering from a distinct lack of engagement within the Craft. For decades we've allowed Freemasonry to be easily attained, and we've cheapened the experience in order to expedite a man's journey within our Fraternity and into other groups within our Masonic family. We've lost sight of what makes Freemasonry a life changing addition in a man's journey to mature masculinity. We seem to have taken the hinges off of the West Gate

and allowed anyone with a pulse to join because our focus has been on quantity and not quality. Many people have put forth solutions to fix our issues over the years, but, at the end of the day, this Fraternity needs to create leaders who will shepherd Freemasonry into the future. Grand Lodges can provide programs, but if we are to ensure this great and good work exists well into the future, we need to focus on quality men, a quality experience, and quality teachings. All Freemasonry starts locally, and if we are to change the current state, we must start there.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

I am quite thankful that here in Indiana we can do just that. I find that when you get the Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts engaged right out of the gate, that you can help them start to understand all the aspects of our Fraternity. By the time they are raised as Master Masons they then have a fair grasp on the administrative side of the Fraternity, which will allow for them to decide on whether getting involved in the officer line is what they want to do or whether ritual work or assisting in other matters of the Lodge is the way they prefer to spend their time with us.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I do. Decides my mother Lodge, I belong to an observant style Lodge two hours away from home that meets quarterly. I'm also an officer in our Lodge of Research. My home Lodge is undergoing some changes for the better as we begin to mix in some "observant" Freemasonry into what has been the norm for decades. It has caused issues with some members, and it's been real work, but we're seeing good results. When I need a break from that, I go to my second Lodge, where I find those things in Freemasonry I was originally looking for, such as education.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I truly believe it does. If a man can balance his time correctly, he can find joy and fulfillment in one or both of the appendant bodies. I know personally I enjoy the ongoing education that I find within the degrees of the York and Scottish Rites, and it enriches and enlarges my Symbolic Lodge experience.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am. I believe they are. We are dealing with years of men not knowing what to say to a non-Mason about our Fraternity because they were never taught what they could say. I think getting our great Fraternity the visibility it deserves all the while guarding the West Gate should be our goal. The studies have shown that there are thousands of men who need what we have to offer. Sadly, these men don't have a clue how to join and if they don't know how to knock on our doors, they lose out on a great experience that can change their life and we lose out as well.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I do. I believe that it is up to the individual Lodge, but at a minimum Lodge leadership needs to be cognizant of the costs associated with both the building as well as the events of the Lodge. This is where good budgets,

investments, and the willingness to talk openly about finances comes into play. If a Lodge can get by with lower dues because of smart investments that is perfectly fine as long as it's reviewed annually during the by-law changes or reviews.

At the end of the day, if a Lodge isn't offering anything worth anything, why should a Brother pay high dues? What does that bring him besides a lighter wallet? I believe that when you can offer what men are looking for, those men will gladly pay higher dues.

I would agree, with the above-mentioned caveats, that a dollar a day is a more than fair amount to pay for membership in our Fraternity.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

I truly wish I had an answer to that. I've asked many men on our Lodge's roster that same question and I've received a plethora of answers. Some make sense, some don't. At the end of the day, I believe those men were sold something in their journey from an Entered Apprentice to a Master Mason and the Lodge, sadly, didn't deliver on those promises in the Degrees. With that said, I believe that something changed in those men during the initiatic experience we provide, so the spark is still there and that's why they remain members. I believe it's our duty to re-ignite that spark by ensuring open lines of communication with all of our members, not just the ones who attend regularly.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I believe we have secrets, but we willingly give these secrets to any man who requests them and meets the requirements to become a Freemason. A true secret society is one where the members are sworn to secrecy about its activities. We, as Masons, are quite open about our activities. If we were a secret society in that sense, we would not hang giant square and compasses

from our buildings and have signs advertising our meetings as you enter towns.

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

I tell prospective members to do a little research on the history of the Fraternity, but beware of the conspiracy theory garbage out there. I tend to point them to *Freemasons for Dummies* or *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Freemasonry* to learn more. I ask them to read the documentation provided on the Grand Lodge website and come back with questions. I also say that to join us is not a quick process, and they should understand that we want to get to know them and also let them get to know us, so they should expect to come to dinners and public events for a few months before someone hands them a petition. Lastly, I tell them that if it's in their heart, they'll know it; and from our interactions with them, we'll know it as well.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Carl Hoy**
Years in Masonry: **12**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hartford Lodge No. 120 (WI)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I always knew that both of my grandfathers and my Dad were Masons, but it never really occurred to me to consider joining until my brother became a Mason in 2006. That made me think of the family tradition, which led me to questioning what Masonry was all about. After talking to my Dad and my brother, and doing a little of my own research, I got in touch with the local Lodge. What I learned, and what I saw, and the men that were involved really connected with me.

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

I think we (in Wisconsin, at least) are seeing an uptick in new members. My Lodge, while small, has a very strong core of men who are dedicated to making ourselves, our community and our Lodge better.

Having said that, Freemasonry has at least given the appearance of being in decline for decades. I think we need more current methods of communicating with potential candidates, and I think we need to raise community awareness of who we are, what we stand for and what we do.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

We definitely want... no, *need* ... to include Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts while they are going through the Degrees. I don't know that including them in *business* meetings is actually necessary, though.

In our Lodge, we have "Craft Club" twice a month, where we get together and do Masonic related education. We practice ritual (as appropriate, depending on who is attending) and we read articles regarding various Masonic topics.

On actual Lodge night, our Worshipful Master calls the Lodge informal after the consent agenda items are dealt with, and we spend 15 – 20 minutes on Masonic education. Everyone really appreciates that time.

There's no reason whatsoever that an Entered Apprentice or a Fellowcraft couldn't be involved in those activities without subjecting them to a business meeting.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Absolutely! We have several members who were raised here, but wound up moving a couple of towns over. We don't want to kick them to a neighboring Lodge they may not connect with, nor do we want their Masonic life to atrophy. But we have to be cognizant that that driving an hour and a half one-way for a Lodge meeting may not be practical. Dual or plural memberships allow members to develop ties to their local Lodges and communities while maintaining their connection to their "home" Lodge.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Definitely, for some. I have a tendency to go "all in" when I join an organization, which means that I can over-commit myself very easily.

My Dad was heavily involved in the Shrine, so after I was raised, I also joined. It soon became apparent that my cable tow was too taut, and now, while I have kept my membership, I haven't attended a Shrine event in three years. Based on that experience, I have resisted joining the Scottish or York Rites.

However, some of my Lodge Brothers have found different experiences and are openly enthusiastic about what they have learned from those organizations.

I think that it depends on the person, their desires and their availability to participate.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Oh, yes! I think it is an awesome campaign and have used it at public events. It gives a 60-second snapshot of who we are, and what we believe.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

We must be fiscally responsible. If that means raising the dues, then so be it.

The minimum amount of dues is, “whatever is necessary to fulfill the financial obligations of the Lodge.”

There is some level of expenditures that are optional. You can choose to do less charity. You can choose to sell your building and rent space.

You cannot choose to ignore your obligations.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

In some cases, men belong to a Blue Lodge only because it’s a prerequisite to being a part of an appendant body. I think they are missing out on a great opportunity, but that is their choice and I understand how the cable tow can pull on you.

It may be that they used to have a strong connection to the Lodge, or the men of the Lodge, and are unwilling to give that up, even though they don’t attend any more, or the men that they knew have passed.

It may be that they are holding on to the hope or a vision of themselves as a better man.

I’m not sure.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I kind of chuckled when I read this question. When people ask me this, I say:

“We publish our address in the phone book, in the Chamber of Commerce newsletter and on Facebook and other online media. You can easily find out who the officers are by a 30-second on-line search. We have the meeting

dates and times printed on the door of our Lodge. If we are a 'secret society,' we have failed miserably."

If they press further, I say:

"Sure, there are things that I'm not going to tell you. That's no different than if a random person walks up and asks for your Social Security Number. You aren't going to give it to them. And anyway, I would be very surprised if you actually were able to ask for information that I couldn't tell you."

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

Come talk to us. Let's discuss who we are, who you are, and how we can become better, together.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **James Hughbanks**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Right Angle Lodge No. 233 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My grandfather was a Mason. All of his friends were either former military or Masons, and he was a role model for me. When thinking of my grandfather, I thought that is “what a man should be.” As many say, I wish I would have done it sooner; however, I am glad that I did finally take that step.

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

I think like all organizations, Freemasonry thrives and dies at the effort of its members. I think the most important thing that will determine the direction in which Freemasonry will travel depends on its ability to adapt and change to the times. We really need to figure out a way for Virtual Meetings to have our older or sick Brothers not feel left out of our Fraternity. I feel we need to get involved in the community as much as possible and do a better job of guarding our West Gate. It only takes one bad deed to wipe away the legacy of 100 good deeds.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

No. I think all business meetings are correctly held on the Master Mason Degree. As steps to Freemasonry, the Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft Degrees are considered to me as “learning” Degrees, and therefore need further education before a Brothers is able to do simple things, like wear jewelry or display Masonic symbols. I feel just as with any job (and a business meeting is a job), you need to go through the training first.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. Some members work in different areas of the state vs. their hometowns. I don't think they should have to abandon their home Lodge if they move, but I also don't think they should be required to drive an hour or more to feel like they are at home. Plural membership accomplishes this.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

As a York Rite Mason, I do see the value in the education and involvement of the different Masonic bodies; however, for a semi-younger man, this is hard to keep up with. My involvement in the York Rite has been reduced even further due to being the Master of my home Lodge, 4 kids, and work. I think as a Brother walks through different stages of his life, these bodies add to the enhancement of fellowship and education, but as stated in the question, it's just an “enhancement” to the overall Freemasonry experience. I think the Blue Lodge is the foundation of the experience.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am aware of the campaign. I think it is a good first step, it gets awareness out through social media. I would hope that the new incoming Grand Master will continue this social awareness with a campaign of his own.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Right Angle Lodge has maybe the lowest dues in the state at \$55. We have only maybe 20-30 active members, with maybe 15 being very active. The question has been asked many times: how can we keep our dues low? This answer is quite simple. We have 60-70 "card-carrying" Brothers and keep a low overhead on the regular bills. We do massive fundraising through bingo and other various activities to support our philanthropy work. While some say card carriers are bad, because they should get more involved in their Lodge, we like to view it as they are contributing to the Lodge's survival. We need card-carrying Masons, we would prefer that they are more involved, but we never ostracize a Brother just because he doesn't attend Lodge.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

I think as Masons get older, they decide for whatever reason that they are unable to come to Lodge. Just because they can't attend Lodge doesn't mean they are ready to give up their "rights, lights and benefits" in Freemasonry.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, I view Freemasonry as a society with few secrets. I think that anytime you are dealing with something that someone does not know about, they create legends and myths. Freemasonry is full of those, but only a few actual "secrets."

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

Usually family; however, there are a couple that look to extend the fraternal ties that they might have had in a college Greek organization, or just want to do something good in their community.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Jordan Kelly**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **St. Paul's Lodge No. 500 (IL),
Sesser-Goode Lodge Mo. 744 (IL)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I grew up Masonic-adjacent. My father, great uncles, and great-grandfather were all Masons in Southern Illinois. However, outside of the annual pancake breakfast and the occasional Shrine event, while enjoyable and visibly meaningful, it wasn't a major part of life growing up, but I knew it was important.

At 25, an older co-worker gave me a petition after I had inquired about his ring and told him my family background. He signed on the third line because he told me it was more important for my father and uncle to sign the top two. That act of selflessness and recognition of family history and values stood out to me immediately, and stuck with me long afterwards.

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

I believe the doom and gloom outlook that seems to permeate Freemasonry in America is not a fair representation of the health of the Craft. Declining membership can look worrisome to an organization whose purpose is to grow in membership. But I don't believe that is our purpose. When it comes to "making good men better," I believe we are doing that at a very high level. I see a larger number of young men yearning for something greater than

themselves, something exclusive, and something to make themselves better. And I believe Freemasonry can be that something.

Are these Brethren enough to replace an aging Craft of another time and generation? Probably not in quantity, but the attitude of those on the ground level shows hopeful signs of a focus on quality and purpose.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

As an Illinois Mason, we are able to open on any Degree for the purpose of business, as long as one is there. (We would not open as Fellow Crafts if were all Master Masons in attendance.)

However, I personally feel that these should be reserved for Master Masons, exclusively. My Lodge does extensive education programs, often reserved for a tyled Lodge. It is difficult to discuss concepts from the Third Degree with Fellow Crafts in the room, etc. Our business meetings are not just for the purpose of paying bills. We also use it to plan community events, educate our Brethren, and discuss a plethora of things related to Masonry that might ought to be reserved for Master Masons only. These things are often difficult to change “on the fly,” leading to discouragement of participation and an overall diminished experience. Not to mention, why would an Entered Apprentice go further if he thinks the secrets are just paying the electric bill that month?

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I am a plural member of Sesser-Goode Lodge No. 744 in Sesser, Illinois. It is the Lodge I was raised in, and the Lodge of all my family members previously mentioned. It was important to me to join that Lodge; literally the Lodge of my fathers. It is still important to me to maintain membership in Lodge No. 744. However, I live almost three hours away from the Lodge. The Lodge I’m much

more active in, St. Paul's Lodge No. 500 in Springfield, Illinois, was very welcoming and I was glad to be able to petition, join, and take a full part in the membership, while maintaining my connection to my father's Lodge.

I have since become an honorary member of Central Lodge No. 3 PHA, in Springfield, Illinois. Which covers the same geographical area, that of Illinois, but is a different jurisdiction as they are Prince Hall Affiliate.

All of these hold special places in my heart and I appreciate that I am able to maintain these memberships, paid or honorary, in the same jurisdiction and state.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

They certainly have the capability to enhance one's experience, depending on how we treat them. Are they social hours? Are they ritualistic? Are they for the betterment of the member and the Craft? I don't know that any one way is correct, and perhaps that's why there are so many appendant bodies. As a Member of the Scottish Rite NMJ and York Rite, I get different things from both organizations, and both are different than what I get in Blue Lodge.

That being said, I fully believe a Brother can have just as complete, meaningful and purposeful of an experience even if he explores no further than the Third Degree.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I love the quality and messaging of the "Not Just A Man, A Mason" campaign. I believe it is much better than the banality of "2B1ASK1" as if it's some cryptic language that is also an inside joke that no one else gets.

When marketing campaigns can effectively communicate our purpose, who we are, and why someone should join, along with an actual “landing page” to promote that process, I believe they can be great! I was surprised to find the “Not Just A Man, A Mason” campaign to do that very well and with very high-quality production. Perhaps something on a more national scale would be beneficial to all?

7. **As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?**

I understand that not all Lodges are in the best financial position, however, it breaks my heart to see a Lodge holding a fundraiser for themselves, as opposed to a charitable organization. I believe the functions of a Lodge should be paid for by the members, and a properly ran budget would reflect what needs to be brought in, thus reflecting what dues should look like. It’s different for each Lodge. There are some that don’t need dues at all that can operate financially for 50 years, some maybe 50 days. This is not an easy question, and I don’t believe a one-size-fits-all approach will work.

I don’t believe \$1 a day is too steep, but I am glad I don’t have to pay that, especially if it were also true of appendant bodies.

I believe the true answer here is a mixture of mergers (or consolidations as we call them in Illinois), shared expenses, some increases in dues, and greater effort to give men a reason to join, thus increasing the base of those paying dues.

8. **Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?**

History, family tradition, a sense of meaning without the responsibility, a longing for connection but the inability to connect, not finding what they were hoping for but hope they might at some point, busy with kids, work, grandkids,

and not making it a priority (why should they if we don't give them a reason to make it a priority?), an unenjoyable experience but a sense of duty to stay, a lack of interesting events or knowledge of the events, and 20k other reasons.

I don't blame the Brother. He was in the Lodge's hands and the Lodge let him slip away. At least he helps keep the lights on.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I teeter between the "secret society" and a "society with secrets" line. I believe there is more to our Fraternity and ritual than many of us realize, and so, yes, in many ways we are a secret society, perhaps without knowing or recognizing what it is or what that might mean. But you can also find my Lodge on Facebook, and call our Grand Lodge office during normal business hours from the number on Google, so we're pretty bad at being secret if that's what we are.

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

As I will rarely approach someone directly, I typically bring up the things my Lodge is doing nonchalantly. As they show interest, I work towards steering the conversation into, "why am I a member?" I find this is more impactful than talking about 300 years of UGLE, George Washington, and mini-corvettes. All laudable, all amazing, but not what gets someone interested. The answer to "Why am I a Mason?" must be authentic, and so it must come from you. But my answer looks something like:

"I originally joined because of my family history, and I knew it was just something we did and could share together. But what I found was a group of guys that have become my closest friends that I never would have even met without this thing. There's some speaking involved, so my ability to speak in public, and one on one, is way better; same with vocabulary, because there are a bunch of Old English words that we use (again, in a playful, yet sincere manner). We do a bunch of community events, like our Golf Outing, and our meetings usually have some focus on self-development along with our events.

It's somehow the most serious and disciplined, yet fun and freeing thing in my life. You know, I think you can study everything we do and there are other community groups, but there's something about the initiatic experience in Freemasonry that just really changes a person when they take it seriously."

Yes, it's serious, and no, that does not scare young guys. They want it. They crave discipline, brotherhood, unexplored knowledge, and acceptance. Lean into it. Your Lodge will thank you later.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Dan M. Kemble**
Years in Masonry: **43**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hays Lodge No. 517 (KY),
William O. Ware Lodge of Research (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

It's what men in my family do. It never occurred to me not to petition the Lodge for membership.

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

A. Uneven. Practices and standards are inconsistent both within jurisdictions and between jurisdictions.

B. Disconnected. Contemporary Freemasonry is far removed from the intended aim and purpose of the Craft. It has morphed into a public service club, which represents only the tiniest fraction its overall substance.

C. Depressing. Viewing the gap between the potential that Freemasonry promises and what we actually deliver is a soul-crusher. Freemasonry contains the most powerful secular philosophy ever devised by man, and we spend our time dithering over what we cannot do within the framework of our Grand Lodge constitutions. Freemasonry is about the culture of "can," not the lament of "cannot."

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. That decision, like most others, is best left to the local Lodge. It simply serves no legitimate purpose for any Grand Lodge to dictate to a subordinate Lodge the manner in which the business of the subordinate Lodge should be conducted.

The inherent risk, however, is that when Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts see just how deadly our business meetings are, they may lose interest.

Opening and conducting business on the Entered Apprentice Degree or the Fellow Craft Degree may enhance retention rates by getting men invested in the life of the Lodge at an earlier stage in their Masonic journey. But an underperforming Lodge is not going to automatically become better merely because they are allowed to transact business on one of the first two Degrees.

A dead Lodge is a dead Lodge, regardless of the Degree on which it conducts its business.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

They are, in general, a bad idea. They should be permitted only when there is significant geographical distance between the Lodges. Too often, plural memberships are used to extend the life of a Lodge that would be better left to die a natural death. If the life of a Lodge can only be sustained by being propped up by plural memberships, what is the justification for such a Lodge to continue to exist? In such instances, plural memberships drain resources (time and money) from more viable Lodges. As an aside, if dues were more realistic, plural memberships would quickly become less attractive.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

In the spirit of making full disclosure, I am a member of the Scottish Rite (Southern Jurisdiction), and a former member of the Order of the Amaranth.

The appendant bodies (all of them) are a luxury that Freemasonry can no longer afford. They have outlived any usefulness that they may have ever had. They compete with the Blue Lodge for the limited time and resources of our members.

The notion that any meaningful "education" occurs in the appendant bodies is sheer fantasy.

Even in the best of circumstances, the appendant bodies are unnecessary. The entirety of the Masonic experience can be found in the Blue Lodge, and, in fact, the Blue Lodge is the only place where that experience can occur.

If the appendant bodies had any integrity, they would disband.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am aware of the campaign. I have mixed feelings about it. Ultimately, it is a recruitment tool. There is no reason to create public awareness of Freemasonry, other than to induce men to become Masons. It is, in the softest sense, solicitation. In that respect, it is no different than the simplistic "2 B 1 ASK 1" bumper sticker, or the exhortations of Grand Lodge officers to "Get out there in your communities, boys."

Further, the Freemasonry depicted in the ads is so far removed from the Freemasonry that actually exists in our Lodges that it is effectively a “bait and switch” maneuver. The gap between who we portray ourselves to be and who we actually are is a chasm. When men discover that, their opinion of Freemasonry may be so damaged that in all likelihood we are, on balance, worse off than we were before we began the public awareness campaign.

Our product, right now, simply isn't very good. Drawing attention to ourselves, given the Fraternity's current state, isn't necessarily a good thing.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Annual Lodge dues should begin at \$365 per year, not including Grand Lodge assessments. If Freemasonry isn't worth the paltry sum of \$1 per day, then it isn't worth anything.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Men generally make time for the things that are important to them. For most of our membership, Freemasonry really isn't all that important.

Men come into Freemasonry for different reasons. Many men came into Freemasonry searching for something beyond the typical deadly business meeting. For those men, Freemasonry did not deliver on its promise, and it is easy to see why they left. It's a little more puzzling as to why they maintain their memberships.

Some men like the perceived glamour of being able to say that they are a Mason, and having the ability to display Masonic jewelry and emblems. One wonders if paying higher dues would cause them to change their perceptions, or, perhaps, actually invest their time in the organization.

Some men retain their connections to Freemasonry for family or sentimental reasons.

In each of these instances, the common thread is that there is no engagement with the Masonic values and philosophies that have the power to bring about a transformation in a man's life.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. Just as in the instances of families, businesses and governmental entities, some of our meetings are held in private, but there is nothing secret about who we are, or what our aim and purpose is.

There is a genuine distinction to be made between "private" and "secret."

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

Masonry does not need additional members. In fact, we have plenty of members (too many, perhaps). Freemasonry does, however, desperately need committed Masons.

If you seek a service club experience, then please go join a service club. Being a Freemason is intended to be a transformative experience, but it is a lifelong process, and not an event. It requires a commitment to study and to learning. If you are not willing to commit to the process over the long term, this organization is not for you.

Is a lifelong commitment to excellence and improvement the experience you are seeking?

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Robert C. Lainhart**
Years in Masonry: **39**
Lodge Name and Number: **Good Faith Lodge No. 95 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father and father-in-law were Masons.

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

I believe we need to figure something out quickly. Membership losses through attrition are such that we will be no longer existent in 30 years.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. This will give the ability for the new members to really see what goes on in Lodge. Also, we will be able to teach and help them learn more about Freemasonry.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I agree. This helps Lodges that are hurting for membership, and maybe that new member can bring something that works in his home Lodge to help increase membership.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes. I know that being a member of both bodies has enhanced my knowledge of Masonry as a whole.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, it does. It will help get rid of some of the perceptions that are not true concerning Freemasonry.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Our by-laws state that our dues are supposed to cover the operational expenses of the Lodge. I believe that dues should be whatever it takes to cover expenses. Also, yes, membership is worth more than \$1 a day.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Some of our members are disabled and are shut-ins. Others feel that they are too busy. What we need to do is change doing the same things we have done, and make it more interesting and have Masonic education.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. We have things within Masonry that you have to be a member to know. It's like any other organization that has an oath and obligation, such as the military, Elks Lodge or Moose Lodge.

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

I believe we should set the example, whether in Lodge or in our everyday life. This will eliminate a lot of the questions and make worthy men want to be in our organization.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Malcolm R. Lane**
Years in Masonry: **14**
Lodge Name and Number: **Joppa Lodge No. 167 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

The attitude that other people, who were Masons, had about the Fraternity.

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

We need more education in the local Lodges. It's not very inspiring when you eat, pay the bills and go home. We have membership losses, but we also need to guard the West Gate better. We must teach our new members, much better, what Masonry really is.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. If Entered Apprentices or Fellow Crafts were allowed to sit in, they would feel more involved. It would be a great teaching and learning situation. They are charged dues, then are treated as second class. The Entered Apprentice Degree makes you a Mason.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

It's okay. I see no reason not to belong to more than one Lodge. It would probably help smaller Lodges because of attendance.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes. I am both Scottish Rite and York Rite. As I have progressed through these bodies, I have gained a much better understanding of myself.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I think it is probably a necessary evil in the 21st century.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I think Lodge dues should pay the bills. When a Lodge uses fundraising to support the Lodge, the same few workers burn out. When I visit a Lodge with financial problems, I see a Lodge on the decline. Some complain about the cost of dues – one pack of cigarettes a week or one Pepsi a day would cover \$1 per day. Where are the priorities?

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Do they think the ring or bumper stickers make them a Mason? Maybe they were not mentored properly. Were they made to feel welcome? Some people want a title, but not the responsibility that goes with the title.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I view Freemasonry as a special society. When I hear Masonic teaching that mirrors childhood teaching, it is hard to call it secret. The few secrets it has help make it special.

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

Freemasonry can make you a better person if you allow it. It can help you understand your connection to yourself, others and your Higher Power. These things happen when you put forth effort.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Tim Larimore**
Years in Masonry: **39**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lima Lodge No. 205 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I had no Masonic history in my family. I married into it. My father-in-law and brother-in-law were both Past Masters of Lima Lodge No. 205. My wife was in Eastern Star, and she encouraged me to join so that I could be her Worthy Patron when she sat in the East.

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

In Ohio, I am encouraged by the direction that Freemasonry is going. The Grand Lodge officers have developed a long-term plan for encouraging growth in the Fraternity. In my Lodge, we are on the way to raising ten new Master Masons this year. Most of these guys are young. The challenge we older Masons have is listening to our new, younger members and being willing to adapt to some of the new ideas they bring into the Lodge. Overall, I am encouraged with our progress, but we still have a long way to go.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

In Ohio, we have that option. We can open meetings and conduct business in any degree the Worshipful Master chooses, but only Master Masons can vote. I like it because we can have new candidates who are starting their Masonic

journey attend meetings and be part of our fellowship. I think this is a very positive move.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. These memberships allow a Brother who may have moved and cannot attend his home Lodge to still be active and involved in Freemasonry if they so choose. However, plural and dual memberships are not the answer for a Lodge who has dwindling membership and wants to stay open by attracting dual and plural members. I call this the Band-Aid approach. I believe if a Lodge is going to stay open and remain active, it has to make new Masons.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes. The Masonic education that one receives in the three Blue Lodge Degrees is just the beginning. Joining one or more of the appendant bodies will build and strengthen a Brother's understanding of what our Fraternity is all about.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, we have used it quite successfully in Ohio. We have to keep up with the times. Using social media to promote Freemasonry is a "must" these days. You can promote the Fraternity without revealing any of its "secrets." Young men today want to know the values of the organization they are joining. In Ohio, we have a website where men can submit inquiries about possibly joining the Fraternity. Those go to the Grand Lodge, who sends them out to a Lodge close to the inquirer's address. It has been very successful in our Lodge, as we have raised several new Master Masons this way. It does require

a little more investigative work to make sure that the inquirer is worthy of being a Mason. In addition to the normal investigation team, we require each new inquirer to submit to a background check before any vote is taken.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I believe that annual dues are a personal decision for each Lodge to make. I have no opinion on what minimum dues should be, as a lodge should charge enough to enable them to conduct their financial business. That will be different from Lodge to Lodge, and we should be careful not to try and fit everyone into the same mold. My Lodge charges \$50.00 plus Grand Lodge assessments per year. This currently meets our needs. I know of other Lodges that charge less, and some that charge more. Yes, I believe that Freemasonry is worth \$1 per day, but do not believe that should be the basis for establishing dues charges.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

I feel that they believe in the tenets of our Fraternity and want to see them survive. Also, they may be active in one of the appendant bodies and need to maintain their Blue Lodge membership to keep their appendant body membership. Finally, they know that if for some reason they become destitute, they can turn to their Lodge and they will or may receive some assistance.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, we are not a secret society. We have “secrets” such as modes of recognition and what goes on in our business meetings, but that is all. Part of our problem is that we do not do enough to promote our Fraternity. I believe that if the world knew what we do, and what we stand for, we would not have a membership problem.

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

Do you believe in a Supreme Being? Do you support the tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth? Are you looking for fellowship with other good men who have the same beliefs as you? If you can answer yes to all of these questions, then you should consider joining the Masonic Fraternity.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Jeffrey Lenzen**
Years in Masonry: **3**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hartford Lodge No. 120 (WI)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I knew that keeping the same “herd” my whole life will yield very predictable results. If I wanted to be more than what I was, I knew I needed to travel with a herd through life. I looked for this in other companies and the military. They never quite gave me what I was looking for. Something was still missing, and I couldn’t put my finger on it. Masonry filled what was missing.

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

Strong and unwavering, yet not as robust and influential an organization as we once were.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

There should be a minimum obligation, but Lodges should have the option to do more if they choose.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. If a Brother's cable tow allows, there should be no reason that another Lodge should not be allowed to benefit from his membership.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

It may, depending on the individual.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am. It is. If we are to be as robust and influential as we once were, there needs to be multiple avenues to become a Mason.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Yes, I would pay more. Lodges should cover their operating expenses at minimum with their dues.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

For the status symbol and the ability to say that they are a Mason.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. It seems as such because we don't advertise for membership.

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

Best choice you will ever make.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Brandon Lewis**
Years in Masonry: **5**
Lodge Name and Number: **Prince Hall Lodge No. 1 (TN)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Great friends and family. I saw what it did for them, so I decided to try myself.

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

It's competing with other organizations indeed, but it still holds its antiquity while being a progressive science and adapting. We must as a whole, however, improve our retention rate.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

In my opinion, no. The Master Mason has earned his way to be in there and hear business. An Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft has not put in the work or earned the stripes. What if they don't finish? Now you have someone that's been in your Lodge and knows your business and has no intention of getting his Master Mason Degree.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Indeed, yes. Places different perspective on lesson learned and also saves smaller Lodges from closing.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, gives you much deeper understanding and appreciate of the Blue Lodge.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not aware of the campaign.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Unfortunately, we have to adapt to overcome. Yes, that figure doesn't match the value given back from the organization.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

A. Different stages of life;

B. Not assigned to do anything after being raised;

C. Not keeping them engaged within the first 6 – 12 months; and

D. He was not asked properly, in the very beginning, what he expects from the Lodge. Maybe what he wants is the Lions Club or Rotary.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. We are very public. We post our meetings outside and have social media.

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

What are you looking for?

Why here, and not Lions Club, Rotary, men's church groups, etc.?

What are your intentions with this organization?

What do you plan to bring to this organization?

Though we accept all men of faiths, this is a NONSECTARIAN organization.

Save the souls at your temple, church, mosque, etc.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: Josh Long
Years in Masonry: 16
Lodge Name and Number: Washington Meredith Lodge No. 355
(KY)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was in college, working on a degree in history. I was watching the History Channel one night, when they had a show come on about Freemasonry. I was working construction at the time, and one of the bosses I worked for was on his phone quite a bit talking to people about "Lodge." I never paid any attention to it until I watched that History Channel show. I went in the next day and asked him something I heard from that show, "Is there no help for the Widow's Son?" He smiled, and said, "Yes, there's help, but you have to find out for yourself." I started questioning and found out I had to ask for a petition, so I did. He was the one who lectured me and the one who conferred the Master Mason Degrees at that time.

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

I'm not sure what my assessment would be. I joined a conservative Lodge in a conservative part of the state. I see a lot of Masons around the state that wouldn't have been voted in at my Lodge, and I'm not saying that's a bad thing. I think the morals and uprightness of character have taken a back seat around the state. That is evident from Facebook posts and visiting Lodges. I think numbers are going down simply because the way the world is. It's nothing we are doing, there just wasn't as much to do 30 to 40 years ago, so

people joined organizations and clubs and Lodges. Membership has gone down in several areas of life, especially with this generation we have coming up now. My estimate is that in my part of the state, there will only be one Lodge around a District that meets because the numbers will be down everywhere. Instead of a Lodge or two in each county, and ten or more Lodges in a District, I think there will be one Lodge in a District that everyone attends.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

No. I don't understand the problem with this, but have seen people discuss it on Facebook. I took my Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and then Master Mason Degrees back-to-back. If someone wants to be part of the business of a Lodge, they should take the rest of the Degrees. We shouldn't bend on that (I love change, and I'm not one of those who complain about change) because it's just giving in to a lazier generation and mindset that doesn't want to work to get through the Degrees.

This story is kind of what I am talking about. Both with changing things to gain more members, and conducting business outside of the Master Mason Degree:

<https://www.sperrybaseballlife.com/stay-at-17-inches/#:~:text=With our marriages, with the,We widen the plate!D>

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I think that someone who wants to be a member of more than one Lodge should be able to. However, I know some people that grow up in a county are blackballed because they shouldn't be a Mason. Then, they join in another Lodge that doesn't do a thorough background check and get in. Then they try

to go back to the Lodge they originally tried getting. Dual membership would go by the one black ball and you're out rule.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Of course it enhances it, but I think it's two completely separate entities, and I don't believe anyone is ever missing out on anything if they don't join one of those. I have joined the Shrine and the York Rite, and it was okay, but it didn't capture me make me want to get involved. I know it does some people, and that is great.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am aware. I'm not sure if it is beneficial or not. I don't want to try and get people to join. They will be more likely to become a faithful, dedicated member if they come on their own free will and accord.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

\$365 a year of a membership is too much. If a Lodge can't make it on \$100/year a member, they need to shut down and join another Lodge. I believe this is another reason we will have one Lodge per District in the future. The few having to pay hefty dues to keep one little Lodge going. Some Brothers can't afford \$365 a year.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

I believe men do this because they know how important it is, how important it was to them when they went in, how they want to continue to be a part of it even though they can't attend. I think they are still paying for that experience they had and feel obligated to, they just don't have the time to attend. I love Brothers that pay their dues even though they don't attend. Most Lodges would have to shut down if those Brothers quit paying dues.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, not at all. I did before I joined. You can google it and find anything you want to find out about Freemasonry. There aren't any secrets anymore, except the fellowship that you can only get if you are a member.

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

I would say it's been one of the best decisions of my life. I have a big family, and a big network of friends that I am involved with daily. But the Lodge has big place in my heart, too, and has brought me around Brothers I wouldn't have met if I didn't join. It's also been a big help to our community lately, and I believe that has inspired some men to come to Lodge and have fun while coming up with ideas on how to help out the community.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **John March**
Years in Masonry: **38**
Lodge Name and Number: **Williamson Lodge No. 309 (PA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I had been approached years before I submitted my petition. Actually, at that time, I believe I would have been blackballed had I then sought membership. It was actually a good thing that I put it off.

Being a rather “direct fellow,” I was considered gruff. My personal life was in flux; being a Vietnam veteran was not well received at the time. Other than my regular employment, I was a bouncer at one of the local watering holes. As you can imagine, that did not gather me many friends. During that time, I observed many different human beings. The sober and aloof all seemed to have one thing in common – Freemasonry. I was intrigued as to why.

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

Sad. No one seems to care about the ritual and learning from ritual the REAL implications of life. No one seems to care about what is actually being taught. Quite possibly that is our fault, as we mostly expect new members to get that knowledge on their own. That, my friends and Brothers, is impossible, just like learning the Etiquette of Freemasonry is impossible unless you are taught.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. In Pennsylvania, where I am a member, we may open in the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft or Master Mason's Degree. BUT no one who is not a Master Mason may vote on a motion or member. We do this to make sure our newly Entered or Passed members learn how the business of the Lodge is conducted.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

NO! It seems foolish to pay Grand Lodge dues and fees more than once, especially since one only gets one vote in Grand Lodge. That seems to be ridiculous, since, at least in my Jurisdiction, your vote means nothing in an election, since the Grand Master has long since determined his successor. It is a waste of time to attend a Grand Meeting where my voice is not heard. I am sorry if you do not agree, but that is my opinion. If the Grand Body wants to reconnect with the membership, give them a voice. Otherwise the Grand Body is an exercise in tyranny.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Absolutely!! This needs no explanation, although I will give you one. The appendant bodies increase your knowledge and appreciation of the Fraternity. It is a cliché, BUT, you really do get out of the Fraternity what you put into it. I am a Past Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Pennsylvania, only by virtue of the fact that I have never learned the value of the word, "NO." You may also know that my affiliation with the Scottish Rite of the NMJ has been curtailed because of my "outspokenness" to the Deputy for Pennsylvania.

Since I have had no response to my inquiries about this subject, I can only assume this to be factual.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I have seen this, and they are. Only if those behind the scenes believe what they state. I often find it is only lip service.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

In answer to the first question, YES. The Fraternity is absolutely worth more than a dollar a day. I implore the Lodges, and members thereof, NOT to disparage members who pay their dues and do not attend. Without them, you and I cannot afford this.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

In my opinion, and note, it is only MY opinion. Depending on age, maybe those young members you thought were going to be YOUR lifeblood, are actually doing what the obligations require. They may be taking care of their families, churches, communities. Maybe they're coaching Little League, small people's sports, etc.

In any case, they deem Freemasonry worthy of their support.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

HAHA. NO. Anything we do includes the community, family and all others. The only secrets we have are in the Degree work. You can find more on the

internet about Freemasonry today, than you could ever have accessed on my day.

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

Study the men around you. If you respect them, determine why. Investigate them and the Fraternity. When you have determined them to be men who are good and true, ask for a petition.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Brian Norris**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **Phoenix Lodge No. 719 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

It's difficult to describe an influence. I would say it was more of a subconscious calling. I don't recall any sort of influence, just something within me always wanted to become a Freemason.

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

Unfortunately, I would describe Freemasonry, as I know it to be, as a second full time job. I still find enjoyment in fellowship with my Brothers in Lodge and in the Widow's Sons, but more often than not I feel as if Lodge is a burden.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

As someone who experienced a great deal of time to progress through the Degrees of Blue Lodge, I remember feeling often discouraged and sometimes forgotten while waiting for the next Degree. It wasn't until much later after being raised to the sublime Degree of a Master Mason that I developed an understanding of the difficulty some Lodges can have to orchestrate a Degree. So my answer would be absolutely YES, a Lodge should have the freedom to

conduct business on any Degree that Lodge chooses. In my opinion, it would go a long way to developing new Brothers into active members of their respective Lodges. I believe there are a disturbing amount of Brothers who never progressed to their Master Mason Degree solely because it took longer than desired, and they were left out long enough to lose enthusiasm for the Fraternity.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

It's not likely to be something I would do, but I see no harm in another Brother choosing to do so. Personally, I feel that trying to balance the workload of two or more Lodges would cause me to lack in both, whereas giving all of my focus to one allows me to do more.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not a member of either at this point. I am, however, a member of the Widow's Sons Masonic Riding Association, and it has helped me grow in the Fraternity exponentially. It is my passion shared with those Brothers that motivates me to keep being active in my own Lodge.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Absolutely. Freemasonry isn't as commonly recognized as it once was. If the Fraternity is ever going to thrive again, and we want to see our membership

grow, we have to be seen and recognized for who we are, and what we represent.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I think any active Mason would answer yes to this question, but no inactive Mason would agree with it. People like to see something for their money.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Old habits die hard. I suppose some men enjoy the title of Freemason, but have no wish to shoulder the responsibility of work in the Lodge.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I personally do not. Freemasonry is very much recognizable in everyday life; people just haven't been taught to see it.

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

I would encourage them to pursue membership, but also stress upon them the importance of actively supporting the Lodge with their attendance.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Glenn Parker**
Years in Masonry: **24**
Lodge Name and Number: **Wentzville Lodge No. 46 (MO)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I had always been curious about Freemasonry. I needed something to make me feel better about helping others. I was a firefighter for 32 years.

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

It needs to bring its "A game" up, to influence men who are in a rut.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

They should have the option. If they don't have a lot to discuss. But not a backlog of things that need to be voted or acted on.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, it's good for Lodges that lack members. But it shouldn't take away from bringing new people in.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, although you still have members join and you never see them again. They pay the dues, but fail to participate in any business or degree work.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, you have to get the word out about the Lodge work in the community.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Yes, you have to increase dues to keep pace with inflation. As far as the increase of \$1 per day, that might be too much.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

They like to know that they are paying for the Craft. It's hard to say why they never attended the meeting.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, not secret, just uninformed of the true reason for men to belong.

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

Let them know what Freemasonry is before shoving a petition in their face. Let them think about what they want.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Paul Peacock**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hartford Lodge No. 120 (WI)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I saw great changes in a friend when he joined the Fraternity. I was also missing "something" in my life, and I started looking into Masonry. The good things that I saw caused me to join.

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

I believe that we are starting to turn the decline in membership around. I have noticed a greater interest from the public.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, because we bring men into the Fraternity and then tell them they cannot be present at a business meeting. This makes it harder to keep them involved.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, because sometimes you move away from your home Lodge, and this allows you to continue in your Masonic travels. There are some things you cannot do if you are not a member. I am a plural member of two Lodges. One is in my current hometown, and the other is about fifty miles away through downtown traffic.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, I believe so, however, I have not joined an appendant body yet. The members I have spoken to have explained about some of the further teachings that help fill in the gaps.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, I am aware of it. We use it in some of our promotions. I firmly believe that awareness campaigns are beneficial. We are a "secret" society in the public's mind. We need to let the community know we are there and help them to see the support we provide.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

A Lodge must have enough income to pay the bills. There are two parts to this: raise income and decrease obligations. We can cut out the unnecessary items, but then we are a hollow shell of what we should be. But there are limits to how much dues can be raised. I believe that the Fraternity is well worth \$1/day, but if I had to choose between eating and Masonry, that could be a problem.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Lots of reasons. Business meetings can be boring, illness, age, mobility issues, involvement in appendant bodies, too far away, work, family, etc.

They continue to pay [dues] because they know in their hearts that they are Masons and feel an obligation to the Craft.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, we are a society with secrets, but not a secret society. Our main issue is that we do not advertise that we exist. The Shriners do better, but most lay people do not even know that the Shriners are Masons.

The secrets we have are pretty limited and should be kept secret.

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

I would have a conversation with them about the reasons they are interested, the requirements to become a member, and ask about what they know about us. I would tell them about why I am a Mason. If I am satisfied that they could be a good fit, I would invite them to a social event or to dinner to meet some of the members.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: Steve Purvis
Years in Masonry: 36
Lodge Name and Number: Lincolnton Lodge No. 354 (GA)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Friends and relatives who were Freemasons, plus the mystique and desire to search for the unknown.

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

Dismal. In Georgia, membership decreases almost before your eyes, and members who actually attend Lodge are basically unwilling to make any changes as to how to improve themselves in Freemasonry. They think this is the way it has always been and this is the way it will always be, even though they can see the Craft dissolving. They will not change, even to the detriment of the Fraternity. Simple things like implementing a dress code are generally rejected. We are in a downhill slide that I am not sure we can recover from. We might as well get used to being a smaller organization, as I see no significant growth anytime soon.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I think so. Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts are Masons and are members of the Lodge. I see no need to exclude them from the business of the Lodge. They can't vote, but should be allowed to participate in general

discussion. We may be missing a valuable resource by excluding these members.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I am a dual member, a dues paying member of two Lodges. I have been a member of one Lodge for 35 years, but wanted to affiliate with another Lodge that was moving to the observant model of Craft Masonry. Basically, I did not want to leave the Lodge I was initiated, passed and raised in, but at the same time, I was dissatisfied with attending a glorified business meeting. It was no longer the kind of Masonry I wanted. Over a period of a year, my new Lodge has moved to the observant model. I love it, but at the same time, I do not want to disassociate from my original Lodge.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I can only speak of the Scottish Rite. In our Valley, we are not more than an old man's supper club. If the Valley was managed as it was 50 years ago, there would probably be a greater chance of improving oneself in Freemasonry by continuing the Masonic journey through knowledge acquired in the higher degrees. As it is now, you are probably better off just buying the Scottish Rite Monitor and the Bridge to Light and just study it yourself. The degrees are conferred so unprofessionally that it is rather embarrassing, and this does not enhance the overall experience. This is probably so in most appendant bodies.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, “Not Just A Man, A Mason?” Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not aware of any awareness campaign other than “To Be One, Ask One.” I don’t think any of these campaigns have any affect on, or are beneficial to, Freemasonry. A waste of time and money. If Freemasonry is supposedly a “secret society,” why in the world would we want to advertise for membership? This makes no sense to me and cheapens our Fraternity.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I do support raising dues and I think \$1 per day is reasonable. Members will pay \$300 a year for gym membership. They will pay \$1,000 a year for golf course dues, they will pay \$500 for hunting club dues, but bitch about raising Lodge dues from \$60 to \$90! This is another thing that makes no sense to me. If you’re not willing to pay for a quality Lodge experience, maybe you should consider another organization to be a part of.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

They are sentimental to their Lodge, and do not want to be considered a quitter, so rather than just be suspended for non-payment of dues, or just demitting out, they just stop coming. The Lodge experience is basically nothing more than a social club business meeting, and Lodges in this condition (most of them) do not provide anything special or extraordinary that will make a man want to attend. There is just nothing there.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

The biggest secret is there are no secrets! Yet the mystique of the secrecy is there the quest to seek that which is not known. I think we should have candid discussions with anyone who wants to delve into the secrecy thing, letting them know that some things are private, but not necessarily secret. Yet, you can learn these mysterious things if you are willing to commit time and energy in your quest.

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

Right now I would be hesitant to sign a petition for membership in most Lodges in my area, because I know the experience would be less than most would expect. I've seen it too many times. You sign a petition, the guy receives the Degrees, attends a few boring meetings, and then you may see him a few times a year, or maybe not even that much. What would I say to someone interested in becoming a Freemason? I'd invite him to come have dinner with us, so he can meet the active Brethren. If he liked it, I'd invite him back. My Lodge now requires a potential candidate to have dinner with us for six months. This is for us to see if he suits our requirements, and to see if he liked those he met at our dinners. It gives us time to decide if we want to offer him a petition if he asks for one. I would tell him not to take the Fraternity lightly, and that if he didn't want to offer himself fully to our way of improving oneself, then maybe he would be better suited for another organization.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: Robby J. Ratliff
Years in Masonry: 10
Lodge Name and Number: Crittenden-Dry Ridge Lodge No. 694
(KY),
William O. Ware Lodge of Research (KY)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A long-time interest; also, a friend's father encouraged me years ago before his passing to do it. I waited many years doing so. I wanted the tradition, and I was interested in its history and wanted to belong with others who had similar interests.

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

An organization that has long ago lost its identity as an elite fraternal organization whose purpose is to elevate men, educate them and encircle them with other men who want the same. Instead, Freemasonry has morphed into a charitable organization. As a whole, the Craft's refusal to restore itself to the original principles will be, and is, its undoing.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes. This shouldn't be a hard answer. Each individual Lodge should have its choice. The problem is that too many uneducated and resentful members want to keep it status quo and foster failure.

Furthermore, it's an insult to a man who worked through his degrees hoping and expecting something great for his work, and is finally raised, only to find himself sitting in an average business meeting paying the bills.

There is no reason to not allow business in the lesser Degrees. Those who say otherwise are part of the reason that Freemasonry is dying.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I honestly do not have an opinion either way.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do not belong to any appendant bodies. I've always felt that my Blue Lodge experience had let me down, and I didn't feel the appendant bodies would be much better. Before I was raised, I was asked to join them, and the sense of desperation was evident.

I highly doubt that they would offer much more in their current form if membership is their prime focus; and I choose not to waste my time bothering with them.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do not believe in public awareness campaigns. Public awareness is just another attempt to inflate numbers. Freemasonry, practiced in the proper manner, does not need advertising.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I believe that the cost to belong to Freemasonry should be expensive. If it's cheap to join, it's cheap to leave. It is not a barrier to good men. Masonry isn't meant for everyone, and if one requires low dues to join, then they really can't afford it anyway. I'm not rich, and I do not make a lot of money, but I want my Lodge to be able to provide for me the enrichment that I want. Dues should be no less than \$500 a year and adjusted yearly if increases are needed.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

They pay their dues because dues are too cheap, so they pay them to say they belong; and they don't come because who wants to sit and listen to the minutes being read every month and arguments about to whom we are going to give money.

Start offering something besides bologna sandwiches and the typical lame business meetings, and watch and see how the Lodge will flourish. Very few want to waste their time with mediocre Masonry, which is another reason (amongst others) that newer members drop out fast.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Yes, I do. It's a society that secrets, yet it's not so secretive that it's not noticed. Having an element of secrecy is part of the allure to it. People are fascinated by it. Nobody can say they don't think it's not meant to be secretive. What's not a secret is how each individual who belongs conducts himself in public and in his daily life. Want the Fraternity to be seen? Then conduct oneself in a way that makes the public think it's secretive, but it must be good because, "look at him, he's a good man."

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

I don't. I tell them the truth if I say anything at all. I tell them their expectations will sadly be let down by how mediocre it has become. It's an organization that is out of date, and the traditions that are meant to retain their antiquity have been eroded by many decades of making it easy and boring to belong to something that was once special.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Kyle Richards**
Years in Masonry: **3**
Lodge Name and Number: **Hartford Lodge No. 120 (WI)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was influenced by a friend's recommendation that it would be good for me, and me good for it. In addition, my Grandfather was a Master Mason and 32nd Degree in the Scottish Rite.

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

In need of making a more impactful name for itself in the communities it serves, state and country. People know of Masonry, but do not know much about it, who they are, or what they do.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

I really don't have an opinion here, but if permitted to conduct opening and closing in different Degrees, it would enable us to learn more.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. Good Masons seeking dual membership are likely to give to both Lodges their time and energy.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I have not yet had the opportunity to embark on those journeys yet, however, my Brothers that have would say absolutely so.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not aware of this campaign.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I think the minimum should coincide with the budget. While it doesn't sound like a lot, \$1 a day adds up, especially currently when we are being hit with skyrocketing inflation, extreme gas prices and myself, who took a pay cut at work and am working two jobs to try and make ends meet.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

That frustrates me. They want to pay dues to be able to say they are a Mason. However, I would like to see more ACTIVE Masons in Lodge.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Not any more than any other fraternity.

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

I spend some time providing them with information about the Fraternity, learning more about them to see if they would also be a fit for us, and invite them to our next social gathering to meet our Brothers.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Stephen W. Russell**
Years in Masonry: **43**
Lodge Name and Number: **Pitman Lodge No. 124 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Friends and family members.

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

It's better than at some points in the past, but needs to be strengthened.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, with guidelines, of course. I see no reason not to allow a Lodge to make that decision for themselves.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I do. I would hope that eventually our Lodge membership would grow, and our existing members would get a zeal for the Fraternity; to take an active part to be the men they obligated themselves to be.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do. By associating with active Brothers in the appendant bodies, our members see the bigger group picture of our Fraternity, and, hopefully, want to be a more active Blue Lodge member and a better community member.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do. It lets the public see the good works of Masonry by the examples they see, and shows them the opportunities in which they may take a part.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

How will we ever know what the minimum amount of annual dues should be without a knowledge of each Lodge's expenses total? I do think membership is worth much more than the average current dues being assessed, whether that is \$1 per day is the choice of each Lodge. I do think the dues charged by each Lodge must be enough to cover their usual Lodge and building expenses, plus enough for planned maintenance, plus enough to cover most of the charitable work, scholarships, widows' support, and Lodge get-togethers, with some left over for emergencies. I think the Lodges must be self-sustaining financially, without fundraisers as the best example of how to financially run a lodge, family or business.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

It is possible that is all they know about being a Mason by what they have seen from the men they consider examples. They must be given better examples to emulate.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No. It is a society with a few secrets.

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

You have asked the right question to begin your Masonic journey. Masonry can be a great Fraternity for you to meet others who wish to do good for their family, country, community, and their Fraternity. You can enjoy friendship, charity, and brotherly love by being in our association.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **F. Anthony Skeans**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **Paintsville Lodge No. 381 (KY),
Flat Gap Lodge No. 616 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Curiosity and zeal.

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

Interesting. We are in a state of flux. Whether Freemasonry will find its way or go the way of many fraternal organizations in the past is of concern. The issue is whether we will be replaced by “virtual” groups that serve the role of manufactured extended family support instead of being limited to our geographic location.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Lodges need to quit crying and moaning about this issue. If reading the minutes of a meeting or the treasurer’s report is the most interesting part of Masonry we are using to engage new EAs then we have already lost the battle. Lodges can find other more interesting ways to engage new members short of wasting their lives in a two-hour business meeting and a discussion of what kind of onions we are eating next month.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Neither and Both. It has the effect of spreading the same faces throughout many Lodges to keep dying Lodges alive, which is a bad thing, in my opinion. It also allows for Brothers who wish to have another experience in Masonry to explore those options without demitting from a home Lodge.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, but only after you have explored what the Blue Lodge has to offer. Upon being raised as a MM, I am pretty sure I was slapped with a petition for the Scottish Rite before I got to sit down. I GOT NOTHING from the Scottish Rite experience until after I became involved more in that body after a couple of years of membership. I think that appendant bodies should be earned and not treated almost like a carnival barker.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am, and it does. It does not replace your local visible presence as a Lodge.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I have said for a long time that we are much too cheap. I routinely pay over \$1,200 per year for membership in Rotary (including meals). Why shouldn't I pay the same or more for this organization? It would run off the card carriers, and make people decide whether it is really something they want to belong to. If our dues go up, we need to increase the value we receive from our Lodges, though, and allow for a "subscription model" meaning we make a monthly payment instead of a yearly [payment] to allow for budgeting in our members' households.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Too cheap. What is cost to me to be a part of Lodge that I never go to, when in reality it is the same cost of a decent dinner out for the family?

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I do, but it should not be.

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

Becoming a Freemason is not the end of a journey or a reward; it is the beginning of both.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Terry L. Tilton**
Years in Masonry: **45**
Lodge Name and Number: **Eveleth Lodge No. 239 (MN)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was asked to consider joining by a respected member of our church congregation.

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

Western Freemasonry is declining in membership in most countries, but in the Southern Hemisphere, it is growing. Affluence, diversions, and relative freedom in most areas of our lives have made us unappreciative, and apathetic to the truths and fellowship of our Craft.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, but only 3rd-Degree members should be allowed to vote, as we do in Minnesota.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes, I believe it is a good idea. Some brothers want a larger Masonic association than just their primary Lodge. Other brothers seek the variety of Masonry that is found in other Lodges.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, it can, but for too many [it] simply siphons money and energy away from the Blue Lodge that is sorely needed.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

No, I am not familiar with this campaign. Yes, public awareness campaigns are necessary and good to combat militant and fundamentalist claims which are scurrilous and unfounded about what Freemasonry is.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Yes, membership fees must increase to save our buildings and institutions across America. I know of minimum dues of just GL assessments in a few Lodges, and some that are upwards of many hundreds of dollars. There is no single answer to what dues should be. Is membership in Freemasonry worth \$1 a day yes, and even more.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Freemasonry has, among all fraternal associations, had the longest-lasting ties to its initiates through its ceremonies and rituals. Many men sense the value of what is being taught in moral precepts and duty to God and man.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

NO, IT IS NOT A SECRET SOCIETY!! We have no secrets that are not available in many places on the web. But we do hold our members to a standard of keeping within our hearts the secrets of the Craft as they have been taught to them.

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

Why are you interested? What have you read? What do you seek? Some men have expectations that Freemasonry cannot, nor should not, meet. Others have expectations that every Lodge is the same, and it is not true.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **William Trushel**
Years in Masonry: **27**
Lodge Name and Number: **North Hills Lodge No. 716 (PA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were members.

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

Membership is declining, and I don't see a way to halt the decline. Many of the younger generation are simply not interested in joining organizations, whether it is Freemasonry or some other group.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, but the number of stated meetings conducted at the level of a lower Degree should be limited in number.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. This is a good idea, but there should be a limit to the number of Lodges one can belong to.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Absolutely! I feel that membership in Scottish Rite and York Rite enhances one's understanding and appreciation of what Freemasonry is all about.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

Yes, I am aware of that campaign. I think they help, but, unfortunately, not very many new members are coming in via such campaigns.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

The minimum should be \$100 per year. During the summer months, I visit many Canadian Lodges in the Province of Ontario. Most Lodge's dues there are \$140 per year and up. If \$100 per year is more than enough to cover the Lodge's expenses, then the excess needs to be set aside to cover future increases without having to raise dues so frequently.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Some just want to be "card carrying members" and wear a Masonic pin.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, it is not a “secret society,” and, in reality, is a society with secrets. With the advent of the internet, all of our so-called secrets are out there.

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

I would welcome their questions and tell them what I could about Freemasonry without giving away any of our “secrets.”

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Michael Vickrey**
Years in Masonry: **26**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lincolnton Lodge No. 354 (GA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Seeking knowledge about myself and my place in the world.

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

Disrepair.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes – part of incorporating Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts into the Lodge is to have them in attendance whenever possible while receiving the Degrees. If allowed to conduct business at a lower Degree, their participation would be enhanced.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

I can go either way. I have dual membership within the Grand Lodge of Georgia, and I rarely attend one Lodge (Martinez 710) and am the Junior Warden in the other (Lincolnton 354).

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do not. If the making of a Mason is realized in the Blue Lodge, I have discovered that the appendant bodies are a "low value added" proposition. They now become competitors for a Mason's most scarce resource – his time. I am now, or have been, in both the Scottish Rite (MIA) and in the York Rite (demitted).

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I am not aware of this campaign, and do not believe recruiting campaigns are beneficial to the cause of Freemasonry. A man finds Freemasonry because his soul is looking for it, not because he has been recruited.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I have found ZERO Brothers who leave Masonry because of dues. The dues should be a per capita assessment based on the approved Lodge budget. Fifty dollars a year promises pancake breakfasts and BBQ plates as long as the public will tolerate it. Let me pay WHATEVER it costs to be in my Lodge. A dollar a day is a bargain.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

It is easier to write a check for a couple of bucks than to fill out a demit. I have had “absentee” Brothers tell me they pay their dues because they want a Masonic funeral. Besides, absentees get rewarded with longevity aprons, the same as those Brothers who show up and do the work. We reward bad behavior.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

I do not. Modes of recognition are strictly an object lesson for those becoming a Mason. The first great quality in a Mason is to be able to keep a secret. The ubiquity of the internet has rendered the “secret” obsolete. The internet does NOT give context to the knowledge, which is why I go to Lodge.

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

This is what we tell them at my Lodge currently:

Interested? Good, show up for six months at dinner and public events and let us get to know you. After that, the Lodge will decide as a body if we would like to give you a petition for the Degrees of Masonry. We have two prospects currently. One just hit six months, and we voted to give him a petition. The other has only been here two months, but is eagerly participating and waiting out his six months to petition our Lodge.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Timothy Walker**
Years in Masonry: **20**
Lodge Name and Number: **Good Faith Lodge No. 95 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was in my FTO program at the police department, and my training officer was wearing a Mason's ring. I had seen the symbol prior, since my grandfather had a front license plate on his car with the square and compass. I asked my training officer about the Masons, and the rest is history.

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

Fractured. There should be a uniform ritual throughout the state. The other two states I've been a Mason in had a uniform ritual book and it was adhered to.

3. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, many other states already do this as a norm.

4. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

No opinion on this.

5. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I think it does. The first three Degrees give you the base knowledge, and they leave you asking questions. I felt that the York Rite answered those questions.

6. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

No opinion on this.

7. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

Higher dues, I think, drive people away. Personally, I think there should be less Lodges overall, and those Lodges should be the best of the best at what they do, including Degree work and education.

8. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

Some join to become Shriners or other appendant body members. Others join because it's a family tradition. Some don't return because the Lodge is stuck in the past, or doesn't have activities for its members. In my term as Master, I've really tried hard to have activities including lunches, outings and get-togethers to keep people active.

9. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

No, not at all.

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

**Why do you want to be a Mason? What do you think you will get out of it?
What do you already know about the Masons?**

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. V

Name: **Jason L. Wallace**
Years in Masonry: **15**
Lodge Name and Number: **Elvin E. Helms Lodge No. 926 (KY),
Burlington Lodge No. 264 (KY)**

11. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father was a Mason, so I thought it would be something we would have in common.

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

It is dying very slowly, with not a lot of new members coming in. Our current membership is either getting out of being a Mason, or they are dying.

13. Should Lodges have the option of conducting business meetings on the Degree of their choice? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I believe so. It gives the candidate the opportunity to sit in Lodge even if they are an EA.

14. Do you think that dual or plural memberships in Lodges within the same Grand Lodge jurisdiction are a good idea? Why, or why not?

Yes. That Brother who likes going to Lodge is probably helping out the other Lodge by being a dual member.

15. Do you believe that membership in one of the appendant bodies, such as the Scottish Rite or the York Rite, enhances one's overall experience in Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I'm not sure. I am a Scottish Rite Mason, but I have never been to any of their meetings.

16. Are you aware of the public awareness campaign, "Not Just A Man, A Mason?" Do you think that public awareness campaigns are beneficial to Freemasonry? Why, or why not?

I do, because that person might want to join Freemasonry, but really doesn't know where he needs to go, or where to start.

17. As membership continues to decline, do you support raising annual dues to keep up with existing (and rising) expenses? What, in your opinion, is the minimum amount of annual dues, not including Grand Lodge assessments, that Lodges should adopt? Is membership in the Fraternity worth \$1 per day?

I agree that the dues should be no less than \$1 per day. I believe that dues should be higher, maybe \$3 per day. A Mason should support the Lodge they believe in and shouldn't bicker over what the dues can possibly be.

18. Why, in your opinion, do men continue to pay dues to a Lodge, but never attend any of its meetings or other events?

They either lost interest at the beginning, or they have been burned out from always sitting in an officer's chair and never getting a break.

19. Do you view Freemasonry as a secret society? Why, or why not?

Yes and no. Most of our rituals can be viewed on the internet, but not all of it. I feel that we still hold some secrets in Masonry.

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

You get out of Masonry what you put into it. Join a Lodge that is proactive and making the Lodge better than what it was when you started. Learn what you can about our Fraternity, and never stop from being better than what you were yesterday.