

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **W. David Akridge**
Years in Masonry: **12**
Lodge Name and Number: **Federal Lodge No. 5 (NH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My Grandfather and Great Grandfather were Masons. While I did not know my Great Grandfather at all and my Grandfather passed away when I was very young, I wanted to be a part of something that they valued.

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

Masonry has lapsed in that it has not guarded its West Gate. However, I also note a resurgence from the age group in the 25-35 age group in that they have researched traditional Freemasonry on line and have high expectations that too often we fail to deliver on.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

We are servant leaders, but we are also charged to set the Craft to Work and give them proper instruction. My version and belief of the Charge to the Worshipful Master are William Preston's original Installation Charge to the Worshipful Master. I do not subscribe to the mistaken notion that we are a community service organization. The word Charity in its purest form means love. And while love can certainly be expressed in Community Service and should be, that is but a fraction of the service that a Master should direct.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

That in a sacred space, we have no regard for social status, wealth, or trappings of the profane world. Rather we meet in this sacred space to perform and equally important engage in the discussion of the same to further understand and make our respective Masonic journeys deeper.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I have not seen the documentary. However, festive boards and table lodges are what I like to call accentuators. They are part of the fellowship of fellow Masons. Another gathering is Agape which translates to love. I am also a member of Phoenix Lodge #105 which is a traditionally observant Lodge, and we always conclude our Stated meeting where we have Agape. Here the fellowship and discussion continues. It is a long evening but the time flies.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Our speculative employment is fully engaging in the Work of traditional Freemasonry. Accordingly, we should not take an Apprentice unless he has a full understanding and, more importantly, the sincere desire to follow the path of Freemasonry and all that entails.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Absolutely not. A progressive line establishes a practice of "your turn" leadership. The Anderson version is that he who is best able to "Set the Craft to Work and give them Proper Instruction." While one might argue that a progressive line allows for training and establishing suitability to be Master, we have devolved into its his turn or nobody else wants to do it. If we are to further the resurgence of traditional Freemasonry, then our Master should be those best suited to teach and instruct the Craft.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Esoterica, Symbolism although I also like history.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***Freemasonry as a Way of Awakening* by Remi Boyer; and**

***The Ceremony of Passing*, by W. L. Wilmshurst.**

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

That it is a life-long Journey that merely begins at the conclusion of MM Degree. That it is a means of going within and removing the clutter and imperfections as we aspire to that moment when we stand before the Supreme Grand Master and hear the words, Well done thou good and faithful servant.

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Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Delvin Azofeifa**
Years in Masonry: **25**
Lodge Name and Number: **King Solomon Lodge No. 8
(PHA – KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

It seemed like a better version of college fraternities.

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

Although membership is declining, I believe change is coming, and we will experience a Masonic Renaissance in the next 10 years.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I agree, because we are supposed to be servants in the community. The Master should lead by example.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

It means no brothers are better than any other despite material wealth, education or rank.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

We host an annual banquet where the community is invited.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Some Lodges have too many members who are dead weight. If a civilian is judged to be unfit for the Order, and exception shouldn't be made.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

I don't agree with a progressive line, because if there is a weak link, it could destroy the Lodge, especially if that weak link is a Master or Secretary.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History and Philosophy.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Look to the East by Ralph P. Lester; and

The History of Prince Hall Freemasonry in Kentucky, by William Henry Ballard.

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

2B1 Ask1.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Greg Bosen**
Years in Masonry: **10**
Lodge Name and Number: **Shoshone Lodge No. 25 (ID)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was raised a Mormon and a Boy Scout. I was accustomed to initiatory ceremonies. Later in life I read TONS on Masonry and enjoyed the mysticism. My Grandfather passed away and was a 77yr mason. His Masonic funeral was touching. I knew I wanted to join. It took several more years and lots of reading. I was intimidated by the amount of memorization. I finally decided to just jump.

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

I believe there are 2 types of Freemasons. #1 are interested in the fraternity. #2 are interested in the mysteries.

The "Fraternalists" outnumber the "Mystics." And as such, have not invested in education and development in understanding the deep secrets of Freemasonry. This essence isn't lost, but isn't promoted.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Sure.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

There is a spark of divinity within each human being. And more so with the brotherhood of Freemasonry. In Freemasonry, we promote the concept of equality on a human basis. We don't take into consideration, wealth, status, color, religion, etc. Master Mason is the highest "rank" of Freemasonry, therefore even the Masonic offices are not a place of superiority. These tenets are what help build democracy instead of kings and dictators.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

They are rare but done. Even the simple social outing of beers after lodge in full suit / tux is super fun. This shows the community that we are a brotherhood of strength and fellowship.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

We need to dedicate our work in coaching them in their career as a Mason. If there is no one who will take this burden, then we can't take new members.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal

Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit."

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a "progressive line?" Please explain your answer.

Generally we seek to make Good men Better. Therefore a core "goodness" must be found in a candidate / Master Mason. And offices within the lodge need to be based on their work and effort toward the lodge instead of popularity, vanity and power.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Philosophy, Esoterica, Symbolism. I like how the Craft ties into lots of early philosophies and religions. Freemasonry gives me the ability to go off on tangents or learning. Nothing concerning knowledge is considered forbidden. I grew up with lots of censorship and gaslighting information outside the circle of accepted books. This was tragic.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***A Path to Providence: The Creation of the Middle Chamber Program* by Shaun Bradshaw; and**

***Illustration of Masonry (A Seat of Knowledge Series Book 1)*, by William Preston.**

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

You must "want it." If you truly do, then you must "ask for it." Then, there will be mentors who will "help you get it."

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Covington, Kentucky

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Name: **David Brown**
Years in Masonry: **26**
Lodge Name and Number: **Alki Lodge No. 152;**
Mark P. Waterman Lodge No. 177
(WA)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I became aware of Masonry because of my Grandfather. He had a picture on the wall of his office with representations of all of the degrees of Blue Lodge, the Scottish Rite, and the York Rite, and he had annotated it with the dates when he received those degrees. I asked about it, he explained what he could, and I went on with my life. Eventually, after getting married and buying a house, I remembered my previous interest and petitioned the local lodge.

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

We seem to be emerging from a time of low interest. I have visited several lodges and was excited to see several prospective members at each. In fact at last night's stated meeting, we read 4 petitions for the degrees, after years of receiving no petitions.

I am optimistic about the current state of Masonry.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I do. Most of the teachings of Masonry are organized about the concept of labor. We build up the foundations of good men.

If you are aspiring to sit in the oriental chair, you are aspiring to lead the workmen. A leader that is unwilling to serve the workmen forgets that he is also still working to better himself..

Masonry is essentially a volunteer organization. There are no real carrots or sticks other than the regard of your brethren, so leading by example is the most effective form of leadership.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

To me it means that no matter your role in the outer world, be it judge, police officer, doctor, laborer, or office worker, in the lodge you are judged only by your actions. You are not given a pass because you are rich or because you occupy an outer position of power.

We are ideally judged only by our actions and the content of our work.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

We do have the occasional table lodge and/or festive boards. I see a benefit in that it is another way to spend time together as brethren in something other than a normal lodge meeting.

It is a benefit as long as the participants feel it is a benefit, as with any other Masonic activity.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

My interpretation is that it is pointless to take a student if you've got nothing to teach with. But that doesn't feel accurate.

I would only think it applies in contemporary Masonry if lodges were accepting petitions and then not moving the candidates forward through the degrees. I do not mean to imply that we must always progress men through the degrees as fast as possible, as I think that does the Craft a disservice. But I do think it is important that a candidate failing to move forward should be because of the candidate's choice, and not because of the lodge's tardiness.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

I do agree that the phrase quoted seems to argue against the standard "progressive line" practice of advancing men through the lodge positions, marching them inexorably to the oriental chair.

But I also believe that the reality of running a functioning lodge makes that phrase more of an ideal to always be working towards rather than an absolute

rule.

I believe that one of the best ideas of Masonry is that no one is in a position of power indefinitely; this necessarily implies that we will be placing men into positions that they are not necessarily currently suited for. But this is how learning is accomplished.

It also leads to the problem of how this "merit" is measured -- are we talking about the ability to do a particular job? Or is this "merit" a reward for some other accomplishment unrelated to the actual office being filled?

It sounds very proper to say that we only choose people based on "merit," but the truth is the only real way to know if someone merits a position is to place them in that position and see if they do a good job.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History and Philosophy are my two main interests.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***The Freemasons: A History of the World's Most Powerful Secret Society* by Jasper Ridley (of only that power included the knowledge of how many people are coming to dinner); and**

***The Purple of the Fraternity: A Handbook for District Deputy Grand Masters and Grand Lodge Officers*, by Daniel D. Hrisko.**

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

It is a lifetime commitment that brings value to your life and will deliver on the promise of making Good Men Better.

I tell them that the true secret of Masonry is the benefit you get by living a life guided by Masonic values.

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Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Ed Burrige**
Years in Masonry: **43**
Lodge Name and Number: **Templum Phoenix Lodge No. 57**
(New Brunswick)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I'm not sure. My Dad was a Freemason although he didn't ever talk about it (part of the old presumed prohibition against speaking about the Craft or one's membership). He didn't ever apply any overt or subtle pressure on me to request acceptance. I guess that I was interested and, being from a small community, it gave me something to do on one Thursday a month.

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

I think that Freemasonry, at least in North America, is slipping in terms of its genuine interest in learning, reading, discussing and debating life principles that are supported and taught and practised in the Craft. It is a rare lodge that has a Trestle Board that is focused on discussions and presentations as part of its regular business.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

In my opinion, there is no other option for a Mason [who has] accepted the Worshipful Master's seat. It is only through service that one understands what

is most needed and therefore can lead his lodge efforts to assist each of its lodge members to growth and understanding.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

I believe that this expression is used to express to brothers that there is no one in superior position than the other. My interpretation of the phrase would suggest that we all prepare to undertake the work of the lodge. We do so from a position of comparative equal understanding and commitment. There is nothing so unequal than the equal treatment of unequals. This is not intended to be pejorative. It is difficult to suggest that the variety of experiences and number of years of active commitment leads to equality. There is the equality of being a man in harmony with others.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Our lodge does hold a festive board in conjunction with its regular meetings. I believe that the experience of formal dining is a useful skill for Freemasons to develop even if there is no other occasion where the skills are used. The use of proper manners at a formal table demonstrates a commitment that a Mason makes to his Brothers to treat them with respect within the Fraternity.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I think that this language is absolutely essential in contemporary Freemasonry and ignorance of it has led to many of the problems in the Fraternity. If each Master had ruled and governed his lodge with this as one of his guideposts he would not permit himself to be dragged down the "membership" rabbit hole. We should only accept applications from men who we can employ in the

building of our temple and we should not accept excess of that, Otherwise, our newest Masons become bored by the lack of work and attention that is able to be given him.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

The "progressive line" has also led to the downfall of Freemasonry and may be fatal if not checked. It is never anyone's "turn" to be placed in a seat of authority. His failure to effectively conduct the requirements of his position will place both him and his lodge in embarrassing situations. Ambition and Greed have taken over and the principles of Freemasonry have been forsaken.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I am pulled mostly to Philosophy, Esoterica and Symbolism and to the places where they meet.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Note: I have been very ill, spending time in the hospital over the past 3 years and I have been unable to dedicate time to reading. I'm attempting to get back into it now.

2 most recent books: For The Good of the Order - John Bizzack; The 32 Secret Paths of Solomon – A New Examination of the Qabbalah in Freemasonry - Timothy Hogan. Plus books by Tobias Churton, Robert Davis and books on Gnosis, Hermeticisms, Qabbalah, Deism, Rosicrucianism.

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

I would point out the demands that are put upon Freemasons, not by having to attend fundraisers, but by being obligated to assist Brothers with their learning and understanding. This will require that each Mason prepare himself to do so. Reading and a commitment to always reading is a part of that. Freemasonry is not a part-time job. It is a commitment to a lifestyle focused on being a better man, a better husband, father, grandfather, etc., etc. The payoff is immense. The skills and strategies that one develops would not otherwise occur randomly.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Art Bush (PGM)**
Years in Masonry: **42**
Lodge Name and Number: **Tigard ~ Orenomah Lodge No. 207
(OR)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Curiosity. I saw so many Masonic rings that I asked my Captain what his ring was, and he said it was a Masonic ring. I then asked, "what are Masons?" and the rest is history.

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

I believe it to be in a state of flux. We're not the first generation to deal with the evolution of our fraternity and I don't believe we will be the last.

In my opinion, Masonry will be rendered down like soup stock and when rendering is done what is left in the bottom of the kettle will be the essence of who and what we are. It will be from this rendering that Masonry will regrow itself into what is required for it to exist for the next 500 years. You can't stop evolution.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I have never read about Brother MacBride, so I can't comment about his suggestion in the installation ceremonies. However, I will say this, a Worshipful Master needs to lead by example, always at the front and check his "ego" at the door of the lodge.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

It means to me that no one member, regardless of his race, religion or monetary stasis, is better or worse off than anyone else. We are all equal among each other, both in and out of Lodge and we should never forget that.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

My lodge holds a table or festive lodge each year. They have been a great success and have brought Brothers together from Lodges throughout the Jurisdiction. Reacquainting yourself with old friends and shaking the hand of Brothers and making new friends is always good.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

The past is the past and the only thing that is consistent is change. We have and will continue to evolve or "change" because, if we do not change, change will be done by exterior forces, and it may not be pleasant.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Leaders are no longer picked by "Divine Right." Today's lodge leaders, if trained accordingly by qualified teachers, should learn leadership as it applies to the lodge. A progressive line also puts these potential leaders under the observation from Brothers on the side lines who will ultimately determine if they are qualified or not.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History, Ritual & Symbolism. What I enjoy most is being a coach. I take great pride in [seeing] those I teach, progress through the “chairs” to the East.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***Freemasonry For Dummies* by Chris Hodapp; and**

***The Lost Symbol*, by Dan Brown.**

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

Becoming a Freemason is a life altering decision that will make your life better.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Robert Collins**
Years in Masonry: **6½**
Lodge Name and Number: **Woodstock Lodge No. 639 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father and grandfather, as well as uncles and cousins, were Master Masons, even though they would not tell me anything about Masonry other than what Masonry did for others. It was a friend at church I finally asked the right question, "How do I become a Mason?" My friend mentored me and tutored me through my proficiencies and my father was there to raise me the night I became a Master Mason. All in all, it was my father who influenced me the most with the life he lived. Without me even knowing, he had shown me how to be a Mason all my life.

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

In a word, "Aged!" At the age of 53, I have visited Lodges that I was the youngest in attendance that night. I personally believe we need younger members to come in and participate in offices to be mentored by those older members.

But, I would also say, "Strong and Diverse." While attending Educational Meetings, District Meetings and Grand Lodge, I am impressed with the different cultures and nationalities represented.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes. The Master should adopt an attitude of service to the Craft, as well as the community to show Masonry that it may help if needed and draw men to join the Lodge.

With that being said, as per the [Kentucky] Monitor (pages 260, 261), the Master is to communicate light and instruct. "Forcibly impress upon them dignity and high importance of Freemasonry and seriously admonish them never to disgrace it."

Being Master of the Lodge is the highest honor to be had as well as greatest responsibility of being regularly elected by the Brethren.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

My grandfather used to tell me, "There ain't no big 'I's' or little 'U's.'"

My friend and Brother PGM James Gibson has referred to himself as "Just James."

It matters not if one is the newest raised Master Mason or the Most Worshipful Grand Master, we are all friends, Brothers, and Masons seeking further light in Masonry.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

No, the Lodges I belong to have no formal dining events.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I think it does. It reminds me of a Brother taking the task of mentoring and tutoring a new Brother from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason proficiencies. He should not take on the task without having the time and patience to do so.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Yes and No. As we advance through the Chairs or Offices of the Lodge, we should advance in knowledge and ability to lead. But also the question should be asked, if the Senior Warden cannot open and close the Lodge if the Master is unable to attend, should he advance to the highest office or chair of the Lodge?

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History and Ritual.

I have always been fascinated with history and love the beauty of our ritual.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

I work 6 days a week driving a truck. Most of the time, sitting and reading is not an option. My time is better spent reading the *Kentucky Monitor* and [the] *Kentucky Ritual*.

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

I would tell them it would be a decision they will never regret. A fraternity and Brotherhood that, no matter where they go, they will have a Brother. And if they find themselves in need, one of those Brothers will be there to help them.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **David Daugherty**
Years in Masonry: **12**
Lodge Name and Number: **Washington Lodge No. 17 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I am a third generation Freemason. However, I did not join the Fraternity until I was almost 40. My grandfather passed away when I was a teenager. And my father did not speak freely about his experience, partly due to his personality and partly due to the jurisdiction of his membership. I did not join because they wanted me to join. Instead, I joined because of their examples. I knew the men they were, and the way other men looked at them. Very simply, I joined Freemasonry because it had to be good enough for me if it had been good enough for them. I knew it must be valuable if they committed their time, energy, and money to it. What I didn't anticipate was how much I would learn about them as a result of Freemasonry. I realized they had become the men they were because of the lessons learned in Freemasonry. I only hope Freemasonry can make me half the man either of them was.

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

Challenged. Freemasonry is strong, but it is challenged by the weaknesses of the membership. Freemasonry will always have many lessons to offer, but it will always be limited by the men who call themselves Freemasons. Regardless of the current strength of Freemasonry, it can always improve because the men who call themselves Freemasons always have room for improvement. Therefore, we must hold our Brothers to a high standard, hold ourselves to a higher standard, expect every Freemason to be better tomorrow than they are today, and very cautiously initiate only those men who will maintain these same expectations for themselves.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Agreed. Service should be the underlying reason for the actions of every Freemason. The principles of the Fraternity instruct us to assist our Brothers, our Lodge, our communities, and our families. But Freemasonry also prepares us to be of service and ensures we have the necessary tools. Additionally, we have an obligation to leave Freemasonry better than we found it. Freemasonry was here long before any one member and will live long after. Every Master and every Brother is in service to Freemasonry to ensure it is better because of his involvement.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

To be on the "level," or meet on the level with another man is to suggest you are equals. Regardless of position or status every man is to be treated as an equal within the walls of Freemasonry and within the eyes of every Freemason. There are many non-Masonic references such as a level playing field, level pegging, or to bring to one's level. All of which refer to preventing one side from gaining an unfair advantage. All things being level, everyone has the same opportunity to succeed and the same opportunity to improve. In Freemasonry, the idea of being on the level should also include the concept of bringing one's Brothers along to those new levels. Freemasonry is not a competition – there is no value to seeking an unfair advantage. We are on the same level today and we will be on the same level tomorrow, but we will strive together for that level to become increasingly higher.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I have attended numerous table lodges and festive boards in several jurisdictions. There is great benefit for Brothers to meet in this way. Even in the simplest of settings, it is advantageous for Brothers to sit together, share a meal, and discuss the happenings of the day – to better know one another. However, if care is taken to ensure a well-organized, well-choreographed, and worthwhile program, the evening can become a memorable event that excites the participants and invigorates them about Freemasonry.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Absolutely. In the context of Freemasonry, sufficient employment should never be a challenge. We are employed in the Craft to learn, to teach, and to better ourselves, which should be limitless. However, Freemasons should not initiate a man into Freemasonry unless they are committed to working with that new apprentice, helping him become a better man, and learn the mysteries of Freemasonry. This should go far beyond helping him memorize the proficiency. It should also include understanding the lessons of each degree and becoming a well-informed, educated Freemason who is prepared to take on an apprentice of his own.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

This language is contrary to the progressive line. No man should be Master of his Lodge simply because he sat in all of the chairs of the progressive line. However, the progressive line can be a valuable tool for a lodge. Assuming most men do not enter the Fraternity with all of the skills necessary to succeed as a productive Master Mason and an effective Worshipful Master, the progressive line is a training program that spans multiple years and ensures each Master is instructed in the necessary skills. With consideration to the progressive line as a tool for the Lodge, every member is committing to help every officer grow as he progresses through the chairs. Thus, a man who arrives in the Wardens’ chairs unprepared to be Master should also be viewed as a failing of the Lodge. And, if a man is incapable or unwilling to learn the lessons taught by the progressive line, he should be held back or removed from the progressive line regardless of “time-served.”

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I will claim Renaissance Mason with an interest in all categories, but this may simply be a way to dress up my inability to focus and my deficiencies in attention. My bookshelf is filled with titles from all of these categories. Nonetheless, to answer the question as asked, the gravities of History and Philosophy are perhaps slightly greater than the others. But this is much like saying I eat all of the green M&Ms first...the other colors don’t last long either.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Freemasonry series by Christopher Earnshaw which is actually a collection of four books: *Spiritual Alchemy*, *Quest for Immortality*, *Initiation by Light*, and *Royal Arch*.

Know Thyself: Using the Symbols of Freemasonry to Improve Your Life by Michael Schiavello

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

That would be a conversation that cannot be easily captured here for two reasons. First, it would be a very long conversation. Second, it would be a very personal conversation depending on the answers he gives. However, in short, the theme of the discussion would be, "are you sure?" This is not intended to discourage the man from becoming a Freemason, but to ensure he has thoroughly considered the meaning and repercussions of the journey on which he is about to embark. The conversation would also rely heavily on the questions he asks to make available all the information necessary for him to make an informed decision.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Dan Davis**
Years in Masonry: **28**
Lodge Name and Number: **Ionic Lodge No. 82 (ID)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Friends and neighbors and my wife being in Eastern Star.

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

Idaho's Freemasonry is on the verge of collapse. We have a Grand Lodge that has no answers to a constant loss of membership, nor any new ideas as to how to fix it. How many Masons does it take to change a lightbulb??? Sadly it's true, it can't be done, no one agrees.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Leadership, regardless the organization or life in general, is the willingness to serve.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

No, Grand Lodge is above the lodges. We don't have elections, that is an automatic process. We don't vote brothers into the line up, they are appointed.

In no other organization that I've seen is it this way. I did my two years as a DDGM and the Grand Master at the time, when he asked me to do the job, stated, "I rely on the Grand Lodge to give me DDGMs." I was kind of offended by that. I was asked by the previous DDGM if I would take his place. I was honored, but I wasn't honored by the GM's word.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Our lodge survives strictly by having a great meal and social prior to every lodge meeting or degree, as well as special dinners for family and friends throughout the year.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Every new Apprentice, once his proficiency is completed, should be put ammediately to work if that person so desires. That person should be immediately assigned a position.

7. Continuing with the language of the "Old Charges," we also find this phrase:

"All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit."

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a "progressive line?" Please explain your answer.

That is just one of the reasons small lodges are dying. The standard to perform is weighed above the ability to lead. Oh, but if we lower the standard they will

never obtain Past Master??? What is the worth of having a Master serve 10 or more times? It's called boredom! Lack of imagination! Brothers lives are busy, and memorizing takes time that busy brother just doesn't have. It's possible they may never reach Past Master status, but their leadership skills may far outweigh that in ability.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Ritual. That's a constant need for most.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

I don't read books.

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

Let's sit down and talk. What are your interests in the Fraternity? I never lead the discussion. I allow them to lead the discussion, injecting what it is we do locally they may be interested in. Our community service, how Freemasonry can assist you in your personal endeavors, and so on.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Danny E. Dooley**
Years in Masonry: **42**
Lodge Name and Number: **Berea Lodge No. 617 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Several of my older family members were in the Fraternity. My father-in-law also asked me if I was interested in joining the Fraternity.

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

I have concerns over the falling membership numbers. In 1994, Berea Lodge had 232 members; this year, only 87.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

The position of Master is a difficult one. He should have a genuine concern for the Fraternity and his Lodge Brothers.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

At Berea # 617 we are composed of many blue collar workers, a funeral director, C. P. A.s, insurance agents, etc. We try to treat everyone equally.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

We will show the DVD at one of our Lodge meetings to get some input. I think it would be neat if the membership approves.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

When a candidate takes his degrees, he has a sense of excitement. He is learning rotual and information he has not been exposed to. When he completes his Master Mason Degree and comes back to his first Lodge meeting, he is in for a sticker shock. Most Lodges have no training program to retain his interest and many times no duties to keep him working.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Many times officers are placed in positions that they have little knowledge of due to lack of training. Our previous Master for 2022, when at Grand Lodge, had a discussion with a Master of another Lodge about their recycling of officers due to the scarcity of membership.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

To be a well educated Freemason, all of the above must be studied.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

In Search of Light by Robert G. Davis; and

Masonry Dissected, by Samuel Prichard, 1730 (Masonic Book Club, 2021).

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

It will change your life and teach you to be a moral, upright man.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Adam C. Ennis**
Years in Masonry: **14**
Lodge Name and Number: **Jeffersontown Lodge No. 774 (KY)**
Abraham Lodge No. 8 (KY)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was looking for some direction in life. I was very interested in the history and symbolism of the Fraternity.

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

Unfortunately, it has become more about pancake breakfasts and bib overalls, and less about self-improvement, community service and education.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes, the Master of the Lodge should be a servant leader. Being of service to your Lodge, its members and the community makes one a better leader.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

The phrase is used to mean that all members of the Lodge are equal. I believe it to mean that all humans are equal and should be treated as such, regardless of status, race, or any other factor. To treat ALL people with equal respect.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Abraham 8 holds festive boards, but Jeffersontown does not. There is great benefit in this practice. It builds camaraderie and fellowship, as well as providing an opportunity to learn and grow.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I believe it means we should not bring in new members unless we are going to provide education, a path to enlightenment, and some responsibilities in the Lodge. The worst thing we can do is raise a new Brother and then ignore him or throw him in a Steward’s chair with no direction.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?”
Please explain your answer.

It is not compatible, to an extent. You can have a progressive line as long as you are putting the right people in the line. I don't personally agree with a progressive line, however. I think all Wardens and the Master should be chosen by merit and ability to lead the Lodge.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Philosophy, symbolism and ritual are my passions.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Freemasonry's Hidden Brain Science (Michael Schiavello)

The True Masonic Experience (Roberto M. Sanchez)

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

What are you expecting to get out of this Fraternity? What is your reasoning for wanting to join? You will often hear the phrase. “You get out of it what you put in,” and there is no more accurate statement regarding Freemasonry. Although you will have mentors and educators, you will need to search for your own meanings and explanations when it comes to our symbols and rituals.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Tony Foltz**
Years in Masonry: **2**
Lodge Name and Number: **Lexington Lodge No. 1 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A fascination with our founding fathers sparked an interest in Freemasonry years ago. The catalyst for me to knock on the door was when a neighbor (and member of Lexington Lodge No. 1) mentioned it to me.

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

I think that Freemasonry has, and continues to be, in a stage of "right-sizing" after what was a prolonged period of over-expansion. This "right-sizing" will continue to cause some lodges to close; but as men gravitate towards the remaining lodges that are providing a lodge experience in alignment with what they are looking for, I think the craft will overall be strengthened in its original intent.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Absolutely. I believe that all good leaders should take the perspective that they are spending time in service to those whom they lead. Taking a "servant leader's" perspective both helps to keep a leader grounded and frames their individual daily decisions around what they truly believe to be for the good of those led.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Being "on the level," to me, means that while each man may have attained (or been given) various levels of success and greatness outside of the lodge, those accomplishments do not (and should) factor into discussions and positions within the lodge.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Yes. Lexington Lodge No. 1 does, in tandem with the Rubicon Masonic Society, hold an annual festive board. I have only had the opportunity to attend one of those events, but I do think there are several benefits to doing so, which would include:

- The opportunity for a fellowship event with brethren outside of the lodge setting.

- The opportunity to have fellowship with more brethren outside of one's own lodge than a normal lodge dinner would normally provide.

- The opportunity for lodge officers to participate in fellowship that they may not have sufficient time to enjoy in a normal lodge scenario.

- A well-organized large dinner event in a formal setting, in my estimation, gives the craft a certain level “prestige” that adds to its allure.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I believe that it does still have relevance. First, it can serve as a reminder to us of the importance of guarding the west gate. It could also remind us that when accepting new members, we should be confident when doing so that we think the newly entered Apprentice will both benefit from the Craft as well as serving as a benefit to the Craft.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

I think it depends on the circumstances. If considerable thought and testing of leadership qualities are put into the initial appointment of an officer, the progressive line could still be compatible. This was probably more of a possibility when most lodges would have had sufficient numbers of brethren to do this due diligence prior to appointing an officer. In reality, in today's environment, the progressive line probably makes less sense, and is not compatible with the stated language.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I, personally, have been fascinated by the history and tend to gravitate towards that in my reading.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Lexington Experience by John Bizzack; and

Observing the Craft, by Andrew Hammer.

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

I would tell them to do sufficient research to ensure that they are comfortable that they know what Freemasonry is, and to make sure that they are joining for the right reasons.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Jaime Gonzalez**
Years in Masonry: **13**
Lodge Name and Number: **Valley-Daylight Lodge No. 511 (KY); Buechel Lodge No. 896 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I first saw a graveside Masonic funeral service and was intrigued. I asked a few questions, but not the “right” question for many years.

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

I believe Freemasonry today is struggling. The men who are active are doing a fine job, but I feel the newer Brothers are not given an opportunity to grow and blossom. With membership numbers dwindling, we must cultivate and grow our newer members.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride’s position? Please explain your answer.

I fully support the idea of servant leadership. However, I do not support innovations to the work.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Regardless of our occupation, vocation, race, religion, ethnic background, or socioeconomic status, we are ALL equal.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

My home Lodge, Valley-Daylight, does not conduct these events. Buechel Lodge conducts Festive Boards and Table Lodges. I have attended a couple of these events at Buechel and other Lodges. The fellowship and education are irreplaceable.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes. If a Master is to teach and lecture a newer Brother, the Master must make time available for this training. If the Master cannot make time available, he must delegate the training to another. Even new Master Masons need coaching and training. Lodge practice sessions are invaluable for such training for all officers.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal

Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit."

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a "progressive line?" Please explain your answer.

Yes. Merely appointing or electing a Brother to the Junior Steward chair is not doing him any favors if he has not completed some portion of the work. There is far more to the offices than opening and closing ritual. Accordingly, advancement must be according to merit. If a steward is incapable of preparing meals, he probably can't confer some portion of the work. If, however, he prepares a decent meal, and performs the interrogatories to a new candidate, he can probably advance to the next chair. The Junior Deacon must be able to perform the work during opening and closing ritual. Conferring the working tools, Bible lecture, apron lecture, Senior Deacon on the various Degrees, First Section of any Degree, various parts of the Second Section of the Master Mason Degree, and so on should be divided among the offices, so that by the time he has served and is about to be elected Senior Warden or Master, he has had the opportunity to be himself proficient in the opening and closing and other Degree rituals.

There are far too many Brothers who get dragged or pushed along and can barely open Lodge.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I like history, symbolism, esoterica and ritual.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Observing the Craft (Andrew Hammer)

Laudable Pursuit (Knights of the North; Christopher L. Hodapp, Editor)

My opinion is that both of these should be required reading.

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

Find a Lodge that is right for you. Ask questions. Rather than submitting a petition right away, enjoy several meals with the Brothers. Talk with them and get to know them, and they will get to know you. Freemasonry is a journey, not a race.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Philip Hebert**
Years in Masonry: **22**
Lodge Name and Number: **Mississauga Lodge No. 524 GRC
(Canada)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was 30+ Year members of the RCMP. The police fraternity is close knit and unique. Not everyone can, or is willing to, belong. Facing retirement, I wanted something to replace that sense of belonging. I discovered that many of those who were trusted friends and mentors over the years were members of the Masonic brotherhood. I felt it was a place I felt I could comfortably belong to.

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

I believe Masonry is as relevant as it always was. Our numbers are declining, but perhaps we are contracting to a place where we can once again find excellence. If we work at it, we can make Masonry more exclusive in the entry requirements taking men of better character and commitment, while being more inclusive with those we accept.

The interior qualities should be our focus, not the exterior. We seem to favour wealth and position while discounting those whose race or religion we do not understand. These are the wrong reasons, of course, to allow entrance or deny it. Merit of one's character should be paramount. Guarding the west gate should be our motto.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

The WM should, in my opinion, be ever aware that he serves the membership of the lodge. He should lead by example, and always seek out the opinion of his peers. His decisions should always be for the good of the lodge and the honour of the craft. His own ideas must only be one part of the decision-making process.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Today, in my lodge, the phrase is used mainly to refer to equality of status or race. In the past I believe that the influence of the guilds meant that transaction of business and social affairs was to be conducted with honesty and fidelity.

In the heady days of King James, the rift between the major religions was a life-threatening concern, and the lodge room was one place where members of both churches could converse and interact. It was also an essential place for royalists and parliamentarians to deal reasonably with each other without fear of losing one's head.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I belong to 3 different lodges which all make festive boards an essential part of the ritual. One lodge, in an appendant body, has ritual built into the festive board equal in importance to that which is done the lodge room. The breaking of bread is a custom throughout the world and its value in making bonds is no different in Masonry than it is elsewhere. It teaches

respect, improves manners creates bonds and develops understanding of others.

It is an excellent opportunity for greeting prospective candidates and allowing them to understand the lodge members, while we seek to understand them. It is also an excellent time for providing education – that part of Masonry which is often given the short stick or forgotten completely.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

IF one takes a broad look at that statement, it can be seen as an admonition not to forget the EA . The work a Master should provide is guidance to begin the work on the candidate’s personal temple. The Master should orchestrate mentoring, explanations of the ritual and literature to contemplate, so the daily improvement in Masonic knowledge can begin. IF this is not done you might as well do as the phrase suggests and not take him in. IF you ignore him, very soon, he will ignore the craft.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

It is certainly applicable. The progressive line is not fixed in stone and members progress in each step based upon merit shown in each office. Not everyone is equal in ability, so effort exhibited becomes an important factor. Unless someone falls down significantly, he should expect to progress to the East.

At some point, usually at the deacon chair, an honest evaluation must be made by the Master and advisers whether a member has done enough to fulfil the journey.

The line progresses and allows a member to grow slowly into the job learning the tasks and perfecting his own management skills, but every step along the way is based on merit and ability.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History, esoterica and symbolism seem to be my favourites.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

I have just finished Freemasonry and the Birth of Modern Science, by Robert Lomas and The Secrets of Solomon's Temple, by Kevin Guest.

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

Freemasonry is a group of like minded people who try to live a code of high morals while meeting in peace, harmony and equality. Each lodge has a personality, so meet with Masons from a lodge, attend a festive board, if you can, and find a group of men with whom you feel comfortable or which has members who share your personal interests.

There is no end to the variety of knowledge about Masonry you can be exposed to through literature, and no limit to the different Masonic groups and endeavours you can participate in, especially in our charitable functions.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Brent Humphries**
Years in Masonry: **17**
Lodge Name and Number: **Michael Dempsey Lodge No. 327
(LA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I had never heard of Freemasonry until I was working with a guy who I admired for being a "straight-shooter" honest man. I saw his belt buckle one day and asked him. Then I started looking online and became interested.

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

I believe that Freemasonry is in a decline. Many people are finding other things to occupy their time. Going to a lodge is not one of them.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I believe so, from what I know of the question. However, I have seen all too often members say the Master's job is to keep peace and harmony. They may include to keeping order outside of the lodge and getting involved when Brothers have disagreements. I don't hold that same thought.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Each member from the lawyer, doctor, laborer, Christian, Muslim, and different kinds of people should be able to get together and treat each other as equals.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I am not familiar with this documentary but it sounds like a good idea. It could bring people together more.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

No comment.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

It should certainly be on your merit to serve as Master or Warden; you shouldn't sit in the chairs if you don't earn it. Having a line of guys to go through is not good. I have seen Masters who could not conduct a meeting or even have any understanding of the Business end of the lodge. They rely on the Secretary.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Philosophy and symbolism for me. I enjoy learning and having great conversations about different topics.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Measured Expectations: The Challenge of Today's Freemasonry, by Michael R. Poll; and

Transactions of the Louisiana Lodge of Research, 2013.

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

You should look into it. There is nothing there that can hurt you, but it certainly can help you be a better man.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Martin Kantor**
Years in Masonry: **50**
Lodge Name and Number: **Independent Royal Arch Lodge
No. 2 (NY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A co-worker.

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

Varies, Lodge to Lodge, from excellent to disappointing. I see positive trends in many Lodges.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

We should all be in service to the Craft.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

We are all fathered by one all mighty parent, regardless of our station in life.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Festive boards can make significant contributions to Lodge culture and success.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Not sure.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Yes, if done wisely. There should be clear and fair evaluation before advancement.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Philosophy, ritual, history, in that order.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Builders (Joseph Fort Newton) and some of Kipling.

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

It is one of the five most important things I have done. It has made me a more religious, tolerant and better man, and keeps on helping me.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **David Kelly**
Years in Masonry: **6**
Lodge Name and Number: **Nova Caesarea - Harmony Lodge
No. 2 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was approached by members who were helping with my school students.

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

Going extinct.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

The Master needs to set the tone for the atmosphere for the Lodge. Yes, he needs to practice servant leadership, but that doesn't mean he is to do everything. Brothers join and stay for different reasons.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

To me it means we are honest up front and straight with each other. Our intentions are pure, with no hidden agenda and no power struggles.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I do see the benefits. We are having our first one in March of 2023.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Don't bring in new guys just to meet a quota. Have true intentions and teach him well. Make sure he fits your Lodge.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Right now, we get a new Brother, throw him in the line, and push him up the line, ready or not. We need to slow down and teach the Craft and move officers up when they are ready.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I am not in Freemasonry for any of these reasons. I like helping my Brothers and community. I enjoy working together as a family.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

It has been too long to remember.

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

Find a Lodge that fits your needs – a Lodge where you have family and friends.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Darin Lahners**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **St. Joseph Lodge No. 970 and
Homer Lodge No. 199 (IL)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I met Illus. Bro. Greg Knott through Cub Scouts. He was the Tiger Den leader and I was one of, if not the only, dad that stuck around to help out with meetings. Eventually, Greg and I became friends, and he approached me about petitioning the Masonic Lodge in St. Joseph, IL. After some research and thought about it, I decided to petition. The rest is history.

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

I believe that Freemasonry is unprepared for the transition it is going to face in the next 20 years as a large portion of the membership dies off. Freemasonry has not been able to keep attrition at zero as it is losing more members than it is bringing in. I believe that the average age of the membership in Illinois is 66 years old, or something like that. Being a member of a Grand Jurisdiction which is one of the larger ones, I don't believe that they prioritize Masonic Education, which in my mind is prioritized by smaller jurisdictions. I believe the smaller jurisdictions prioritize Masonic Education and membership experience because they are already in survival mode, where they are trying to bring in new younger members and are unable to rest on their membership numbers. The larger Grand Jurisdictions are going to be more impacted by the loss of their older members. I foresee that in the Metro areas, we will have more lodges and appendant bodies that survive, but the rest of the state of Illinois will see many lodges, as well as these appendant bodies, fold due to lack of membership. If I had to sum up the current state of Freemasonry, it

would be the Titanic, moments before striking the iceberg. We need to adjust the course or be sunk.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer

I do agree with this. When you become the Master of a Lodge, it is you serving the lodge and its membership. Almost every decision you make should be at the will and pleasure of the membership. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. In those lodges where this is not happening, there is probably a toxic or unhealthy atmosphere. The lodges led by servant-leaders are going to thrive while those that are managed by a top-down approach will most likely have a hard time making quorum month after month.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Being on the Level in Freemasonry means being equal with your lodge brethren, and those in the profane world with which you have interactions.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I believe that having festive boards, harmonies, table lodges, and other formal dining events is a necessary component of Freemasonry and one which is underutilized. The fellowship I have personally experienced at these events is quite frankly some of the best I have experienced during my time as a Master Mason.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Many of the Old Charges no longer have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry. This line in particular has no relevance, as it is a holdover from our beginnings as part of the Stone Mason guilds. Another line that gives me pause is the interrogatories given by the Wardens and Master during the Entered Apprentice Degree regarding if someone is "Freeborn" or not. I think that the whole idea behind not allowing someone was born into slavery is hypocritical given the tenets of Freemasonry, and while it is also a holdover from this time, it is in my opinion one line of ritual that should be removed immediately.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

The line above is absolutely arguing against the progressive line. I personally believe that we should elect the best men for the job and not sit inexperienced Masons into the Master or Warden's stations just because they are next in line. Unfortunately, many lodges have a minimum number of Masons showing up and participating in the stated meetings, so in order to cut down on the Masonic burnout that the officers would have by staying in their positions for multiple years, I believe the progressive line is, unfortunately, one way to do this. We need to make the stated meeting experience more of an event to bring more brethren back to lodge so that we have a deeper candidate pool for elections so that we can remove the progressive line once and for all.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

All of the above, but most of the reading and studying I do currently is to help with the writing of the articles which I publish on the Midnight Freemason blog or for educational presentations.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Ceremony of Initiation – W. L. Wilmshurst; and

The Early Masonic Catechisms - Harry Carr.

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

I usually ask them why, and depending on their answer I will have a good idea of whether they are serious about joining or only wanting to join for mercenary motives. If they express a desire to improve themselves, and their community, explore their spirituality or faith, and want to mentor or be mentored, I will be more forthcoming regarding Freemasonry. I believe that we, as Freemasons, should always be guarding the west gate, and this process begins when a man inquires about Freemasonry.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Chris Lockhart**
Years in Masonry: **7**
Lodge Name and Number: **Jeffersontown Lodge No. 774 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My father was a 37 year member of the Blue Lodge of Kentucky. He was a member of Kosair Shrine (Oriental Band) and Louisville Scottish Rite. He had many life-long friends who were Masons and non-Masons. My father suddenly passed in 2017, approaching the age of 80. The many comments from his friends were reinforcements of the man I knew he was! I did not fully understand the scope and meaning of being a Mason, but knew that this is a way of life I wanted to pursue.

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

Overall, I believe the current state of Freemasonry to be Strong in Kentucky. Having said that, we have our challenges. Membership numbers may be decreasing over time, however, the quality of true Brothers has never been stronger! The stage is set for the next generation of Masonic Brothers to lead this Grand Lodge of Kentucky.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer

I believe a Master shall have been an active member of his Lodge. Providing leadership, support and active industry to DEMONSTRATE an attitude of service. If a member becomes a Master, and has not "paid his dues" via hard work and commitment to the Lodge, his time in the East will result in less than desirable results. Lead by example (actions), not by talking!

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

We are all equal! We should view all our Brothers as equals. Regardless of profession, education or social economic status. We should treat each other as equals. This teaches us to learn, respect and admire the thoughts, feelings and backgrounds of our fellow Brothers.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Currently we do not offer such Lodges. I have attended Lodge within the District where a Table Lodge was held. I found it to be very interesting. The experience expanded my Masonic knowledge and I am grateful for having participated.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

No, probably served as an "out" to allow a Lodge to not accept a candidate. May have been more applicable to days when a Master was responsible for finding employment for all members of his craft.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

The "progressive line" of leadership in a Lodge is a scary situation! Some Brothers, who may not have a full box of skills or abilities, may ultimately set a Lodge backward due to an uninspiring year! It is the responsibility of the Lodge to weather this storm, or elect someone who can fulfill the responsibilities of leadership and active industry. Having stated the above, I believe it is in the spirit of Freemasonry, that any Brother whom has served in the chairs leading to the East, should be given an opportunity to serve to the best of his abilities and skills.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Having been Raised in 2017, I'm relatively new to Masonry. I typically have studied ritual work in preparing to confer degrees.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Kentucky Monitor, by Henry Pirtle, and Look to the East, by Ralph Lester.

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

This is a great Fraternity of Brothers world-wide! It is not for everyone! Be willing to study extensively for at least 1 – 2 years, in effort to receive the three degrees of Masonry. It is not easy, however, we are all here to help you succeed. Ask them, what are their expectations? Masonry is something that requires a commitment from the individual. If you are not committed, might be best to wait until you can make that total commitment. While not a religion, I

think you will find a spiritual element which provides a lasting sense of peace.
Your journey never ends.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Alexander Martin**
Years in Masonry: **12**
Lodge Name and Number: **Coverdale Lodge No. 52**
(New Brunswick)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

My Father was a Mason, and said he really enjoyed the experience. But he refused to speak to me about the goings on in a Lodge. He told me if I was still interested in a couple of years we would talk then, but we never did. Eventually he said that I would have to wait until I was old enough to petition myself to learn what being a Mason was about.

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

Hot spots in a cooling sea. At least in my District, there is one Lodge that seems to receive the majority of candidates. They hoard their boon while the other 6 Lodges around them shrink (and some even going dark).

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Being Master of a Lodge is the ultimate service. You are charged to guard the charter, and protect your members. You are going to be the first impression of new candidates, and the measuring rod for Past Masters to

examine your work. IF you go into the chair for any other reason than as a service to the Lodge, I feel you are doing it for wrong reasons.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

I believe it is meant to mean that we are all Brothers regardless of mundane station or social status... once we enter the portals of a Lodge, we are all brothers together under GAOTU.

I try to act in such a manner that it is the actual Meaning as well.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

No, my Lodge does not.

I have taken part in Table Lodges, and other Formal Dining events, and they have come across as elitist in some cases, as only certain members or certain Lodges are encouraged to participate.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

No. If a Lodge is approached by a Good Man, who is interested in joining our Order, they should not be turned away. If there are too many Apprentices at that Lodge currently, Courtesy Work may be done on behalf of that Master, which would also encourage visiting, and the expanding of the Candidate's Masonic Circles

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Yes. The path from Master Mason to Master of the Lodge should take several years to complete. While everyone should be encouraged to take an office if it is their desire, officers should only be promoted or retained if they are able to perform their duties. I also firmly believe that a Master of the Lodge should be learned in the workings of the Lodge, and that by advancing progressively through the chairs, they gain knowledge of each set of duties, and the lectures/floor work associated with each.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Ritual and history.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The majority of content I consume on Freemasonry is online. I believe the last “actual” books I read relating to Masonry were *Born in Blood* by John Robinson and *The Hiram Key*, by Robert Lomas.

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

You will never know if you don’t ask, so try it out. Thousands upon thousands of men have found something of value in the Fraternity. There is a good chance that you will too!

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Brian Morgan**
Years in Masonry: **22**
Lodge Name and Number: **Harmony Lodge No. 18 (WA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I kept running into men of high morals who wore the square and compasses, asked them about it and then looked for a local Lodge in the phone directory.

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

On the cusp of a new explosion due to technology combined with age-old lessons and interest from younger men who want something "more" in their lives.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I am not familiar with this language as it is not incorporated into Washington ritual. However, our ritual does remind a Master that he is soon to return to the ranks. I do agree with the sentiment that we are all here to serve our Lodges, each other, and Masonry, regardless of our title, number of years in the Craft or position in the Lodge.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Simply put, we are all equal – regardless of rank, background, finances, etc. And it is a reminder that the grand leveler of time will reduce us all to the same state at the time of our departure.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

I see some value in this, but it has been many years since I attended a festive board or a Table Lodge. I do caution those Lodges who do hold these events to be ever cognizant of over-consumption of alcohol. Our Lodge tends to lean towards more informal gatherings and meals.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I agree with the sentiment – I think this applies to both the petitioner/EA and the MM. For the MM, you must have something to offer a new and curious petitioner or new Mason. Otherwise, why are you in a mentoring role? Do you have time, resources, experience to help the EA along? As for a petitioner, if they do not have something to offer the Lodge or Masonry and do not realize they get out of the Fraternity what they put into it, they are perhaps not a good fit, at least for the moment.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

This is a topic that is personal to each Lodge and their Lodge practices and traditions. The bottom line is that if a Lodge does practice a progressive line, it must mentor those Brothers through the line so that, when they are about to sit in the South or the West, there is no question that they will succeed and inspire others in their new roles as they move towards the East. That said, a Lodge must always be willing to bounce a Brother from the line if he is not worthy – usually meaning unwilling to learn/listen. But first we try to counsel and mentor.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I personally gravitate to history and ritual and have yet to wrap my head around the more esoteric teachings (at least for now).

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Freemasonry: A French View (Roger Dachez and Alain Bauer)

The Craft: How Freemasons Made the Modern World (John Dickie)

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

If a man expresses interest, I would simply ask him, "Why?" I would ask what questions he may have. If it seems appropriate, I would share either my "elevator pitch" (for someone who seems to have a passing curiosity) for Masonry or share some of my personal experience of meeting men I would never have met, forging lifelong friendships and having a group of Brothers I can trust with my family, my home, my property, my pets, etc.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Stephen Morton**
Years in Masonry: **3**
Lodge Name and Number: **Harlan Lodge No. 879 (KY)**
Wallins Creek Lodge No. 666 (KY)

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I had family members who were Masons and had forgotten about the Fraternity. Then later in life found out my best friend was a Mason and it sparked an interest to learn more about Masonry and what it was about.

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

I feel like Freemasonry is still a strong positive influence in our communities. The bond and strength of the brothers is strong, and since day one I have always felt a sense of peace and loyalty among the craft.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I do agree with MacBride's position. The main reason being is the Master of the Lodge is there to serve his Lodge, and see that all the duties being discharged are done so properly. He should be available to any brother that needs him, and always be ready to pick up the slack wherever the need may be.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

My opinion is that it used to mean that inside the lodge we are equal and no man holds more value than another. I believe the actual meaning of the phrase means no matter where we are in life that each of us is still equal to our fellow mankind. That no one single person born holds more or less value than another.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

No response.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I believe this does hold relevance in contemporary Freemasonry, but not in the literal meaning it once held. If a master did not have a position available where an apprentice could learn and gain knowledge and skills, he should not waste that person's time. I feel that if a lodge is not willing to give a new Mason their time and knowledge then they should not waste that persons time.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?”
Please explain your answer.

No response.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

When studying I try to equally learn about the history, ritual, and symbolism of the craft.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***Esoteric Handbook for the E. A.* by Robert V. Lund;
Esoteric Handbook for the F. C. by Robert V. Lund;
Esoteric Handbook for the M. M. by Robert V. Lund; and
Morals and Dogma by Albert Pike .**

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

It is one of the best steps I have ever taken in life. There is a brotherhood that cannot be described, only experienced. If you are wanting to better yourself as an individual and want to be surrounded with like-minded men, then Freemasonry is a great place to be.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Howard Moulton**
Years in Masonry: **62**
Lodge Name and Number: **Naval Lodge No. 184 (ME)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Family.

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

I am worried.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes. Too many seem to work their way to the East, and we see them no more.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

No member of the Fraternity reaches a level above "Brother."

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Yes, and yes.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

No. In many Lodges the only work is ritual.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

No. This is self-evident. It cannot be both.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

The Path of Freemasonry, by Mark Stavish; and

The Freemasons, by Jasper Ridley.

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

I answer their questions. I ask them what sparked their interest. I ask them what they expect to find. How much time they have to devote. What do they know of the Fraternity.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Ron Mulkey**
Years in Masonry: **14**
Lodge Name and Number: **Russellville Lodge No. 166 (OH)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A conversation that I had with a retired Navy Chief Petty Officer (Jack) and member of Russellville Lodge No. 166. He asked me if I had ever thought about joining, so I revealed that I had thought about it, but due to my frequent moves and deployments during my Army career, I had never pursued it. After our discussion, I petitioned the lodge and Jack was my first line signer.

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

With the average age of a Mason being 65+, we lose more members to death each year than we bring in, so our numbers each year decline. Younger generations prefer to start a new organization rather than join an existing one. I have observed this as a veteran where younger veterans prefer to start some new veterans' organization than to join the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars. The younger generations also have so many other activities in their lives that they seem to not be interested in Masonry, or join only because their Dad or Grandfather want them to join. Many of these new members are not active. Once they become a Master Mason, they never again walk through the door. If a lodge has one hundred members, but only eighteen show up at each meeting, and these members are 65+, the lodge is nearing the end of its existence. We must develop programs that bring in younger members, keep their interest and educate them to make them better men and active in our lodges.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I do agree with his position. There are several leadership styles, but this concept of servant leadership really fits for volunteer type organizations. R. W. B. Daniel D. Hrinko states in his book, [A Handbook for District Deputy Grand Masters and Grand Lodge Officers](#), "the servant leader always keeps the best interest of the organization in mind. He pursues its interests even when it may be contrary to his personal benefit." This means that the Worshipful Master who is a servant leader is working for the success of the lodge instead of success for just him. What a great way to run the lodge.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

First, I will concentrate on the "on the level" portion of the expression. If one does an internet search for the phrase "on the level" one will find that it means honest, truthful or sincere. Therefore, if we are all on the level, one could derive that this means that we are all honest, truthful, or sincere, but we know that this is not true. Mackey's [Revised Encyclopedia of Freemasonry](#) and Allen E. Roberts's [The Craft and Its Symbols](#) both discuss the level as being a symbol of equality: not just equality, but equality before God. Therefore, "we are all on the level" means that we have the same Almighty Father and are the "Brotherhood of Man."

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

The only dining event at Russellville Lodge is the meal provided prior to the annual inspection. Normally, the Worshipful Master will coordinate with the Eastern Star Chapter to provide this meal which the OES members always are willing to do. This lodge also prepares meals as a type of fundraiser, but has never had a table lodge, festive board or any other formal dining events. I do see a benefit for brotherhood in conducting such events, but I believe that

lodge leadership tends to do activities “as they have always done” instead of some new event. Since few in this lodge have participated in formal dining events, this is not attempted or even proposed.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

This Charge goes on to say that the Apprentice should be capable of learning the Art of serving his Master’s Lord, and of being made a Brother, and then a Fellow-Craft in due time.

I think these two sections mean that the Master must have the time and ability to teach the Apprentice and the Apprentice must have the ability to learn the craft. So, for us, the “Master Craftsman” that is assigned to mentor a new candidate must have the time available and ability to mentor demonstrated by his service to the lodge over the years. A Master Mason with one year in the lodge may not be the best person to mentor a new Entered Apprentice.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Yes, I do think these two are compatible. First, I believe the progressive line is not an absolute. Not every Master Mason should be Worshipful Master. We should not “promote a Mason beyond his potential.” As a man moves through the progressive line, he needs to demonstrate his proficiency in that office. If he is not proficient in his duties as a Senior Deacon, the lodge should not automatically move him to the Junior Warden’s station just because he was a Senior Deacon. Second, knowledge is gained through study and experience.

One increases in experience over time. By moving through the progressive line, one is gaining in experience. The lodge should elect its Master due to his demonstrated knowledge, experience and leadership ability.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Much of my reading has been more about the Author than of the specific topic. I have read several books by Joseph Fort Newton, some of them Masonic while others were religious. I have read several books by Allen E. Roberts which were Masonic and leadership related. I have also read several of Carl Claudy's books. He wrote Masonic books as well as science fiction. I have read some of each.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Recently, I read Masonry Dissected by Samuel Prichard in 1730. This copy was printed by the Masonic Book Club in 2022. It contained analysis by Harry Carr in 1977 and additional commentary by Arturo de Hoyos and S. Brent Morris. I also read The Mystic Tie by Allen E. Roberts. I have read several of Brother Roberts's books. I really enjoyed his play at the end of The Mystic Tie, "The Lodge of Confusion."

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

This really depends on the man who is asking. I worked at Wright-Patterson Air Force base the last 12 years and wore an identification badge holder with the Square and Compasses on it. Several men asked me about the fraternity, but there were only a few that I assisted in petitioning a lodge. Our Entered Apprentice Degree charge admonishes us to be particularly careful not to recommend someone unless Not every man should be a Mason. We must guard the West Gate.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Reagan Overby**
Years in Masonry: **4**
Lodge Name and Number: **Richmond Lodge No. 25 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

To paraphrase Dr. Carl Jung, modern man is in search of a soul, and I am no exception! As far back as I can remember, I've been interested in the mysteries of Deity and nature. When I discovered there was a group from all walks of life dedicated to spiritual improvement and the pursuit of those mysteries, I felt like I didn't have to be an outsider anymore. My pursuit of spiritual light outside the Lodge led me directly to Freemasonry.

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

We are in a state of transition and transformation. The ever-shifting nature and social dynamics of the postmodern world have been reflected by a decrease in membership in the United States. I would argue that this is a neutral fact that presents an opportunity for a positive outcome rather than a wholly negative fact. Freemasonry was never intended to be just another civic institution among the others the general public has offered. In our state of transition, we have the opportunity to concentrate on our central purpose of initiation and reform ourselves rather than just lamenting about the drop in members. We originally met in pubs and taverns by moonlight, so we should fear no danger if we are forced to return back to a more subtle model.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I really couldn't agree with Bro. MacBride's position more. Our leadership should be held to the highest standard we could expect of a Brother. The Masters of our Lodges are tasked with providing good and wholesome instructions, so the responsibilities and work only increase with the position. When I was in the military, some of the best officers I had the honor of serving under were prior enlistees who understood what was required at all levels to accomplish our mission.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

We are all "travelling upon the level of time." Death is the great equalizer. Many traditions teach that we are made in the image of the Great Architect. Being that we carry the light of Divinity and that we will all lay down our working tools in the end, we must divest ourselves of feelings of superiority towards our Brethren. This is one of the major differences between us and the profane world; we strive toward harmony with our Brothers.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

My Lodge does not currently hold festive boards or other fine dining events, but given the resurgence of this important rite we have voiced our interest in doing so. One of the many benefits to restoring this practice is setting ourselves apart from the profane world and creating a sacred retreat where harmony can prevail, and we can contemplate our pursuit of light. By aspiring

to the highest things in every way possible, we continue to work on our ashlar and are reminded of the importance of what we came here to do.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

I could interpret this in many ways, but primarily it brings to mind that if there is disorder among the Craftsmen, we have no business multiplying that disorder by adding new men. We should be primarily concerned with the pursuit of light through initiation and if our Lodges are in disarray, we are in no condition to achieve that end. Furthermore, we should focus on quality of our candidates over quantity. We will have “sufficient employment” for them when we can focus on their individual improvement rather than accepting the petition of anybody who knocks on the door.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

This can be consistent with the progressive line, if the principle has been enforced for the entire history of every candidate who is involved with the line. I would say that in most situations, this hasn’t been the case. Our Lodges will fail if we are content to pass individuals along who are not competent to fulfill the role of the office. Nobody is entitled to continue if they do not serve the best interests of the Lodge. It is better to have candid conversations about

fitness for leadership among Brethren as well as considering a Brother's path through the line to be a long interview for the office of Master.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

I naturally gravitate toward philosophy, esoterica, and symbolism, but ritual is the frontline vehicle for delivery of these things. Proficient ritual begins the process of initiation and the continued contemplation of the philosophy, esotericism, and symbolism that it introduces to is the culmination of that process. Our ritual contains wise and serious truths, so we shouldn't be afraid of getting our hands dirty in investigating the deeper meanings of our work through research and education.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Brother Jaime Paul Lamb's *The Archetypal Temple* and Brother Piers A. Vaughan's translation of *Martinezism, Willermozism, Martinism & Freemasonry* by Papus.

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

Freemasonry is a recipient of a rich inheritance from the broader Western mystery tradition. If you are interested in improving yourself morally and spiritually through initiation, we just might be for you. However, it's also important that you are for us! If you have received "the call," reach out your local Lodge, bring all of your questions, and be yourself. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Miguel Perez**
Years in Masonry: **1**
Lodge Name and Number: **Garden Grove Lodge No. 351 (CA)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

A sincere desire for knowledge to better myself as an individual, parent, and community member.

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

Without looking at any data, I believe Masonry is in a good trajectory. In my mother Lodge, we are seeing new prospects every week, and most are waiting patiently to be admitted. At district level we are seeing Lodges coming together for support, fellowship, and unity. At the Grand Lodge level, we are observing educational and interactive programs that bring together statewide Masons and their families. My experience and observations can be summed up by network, peace and unity.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I would agree with his suggestion. Leading by example, sets the standard for Lodge Officers to perform the same, and thus spreads to the

membership. Adopting an attitude of service, I believe, starts from the moment you were Made a mason in your heart. From the time you first gave three distinct knocks at the door, with the support of the Master of the Lodge, you begin your journey learning how to be of service. While on your Masonic journey, you may stop at different stations that progress your service attitude, and you now have the capability to influence those coming after you as all who have gone this way before you, have done. Keeping a service attitude at all Officer stations is vital for the future of the lodge, your district, Grand Lodge, and for the betterment of Freemasonry in all parts of the world.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

Being on the level means the detachment of the ego, and, therefore, it is a constant chipping at the rough ashlar in an attempt to form the impossible perfect ashlar. Every day, you learn to meet, not only brethren, but also society, on the level. Regardless of status, having compassion, respect, and gratitude for all humanity, regardless of distinction, exemplifies meeting on the level.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Our Lodge does hold Masonic events where the public and Masonic families come together, and they are very engaging and fun for everyone in attendance. My personal favorite has been the Master’s Pancake Breakfast.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Not familiar with [the] Old Charges yet, but I do think every man seeking membership has a place in lodge so as long as he is coming with the intent to be of service and seeking knowledge.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

This [is] one subject that I’m trying to understand, because I have observed merit not being a factor in a progressive line and have compared it to that of a Union Shop, based on my experience in the industrial industry. Being new to Masonry I don’t have a conclusion, but I am learning to understand.

One time I was offered a job and I was told that merit would not have anything to do with my pay, that rather seniority would determine my advancement. I didn’t understand, and I declined the job offer.

Masonry inculcates (in my opinion) to be progressive with yourself, family, and in your professional and social endeavors; seek to be a better version of yourself every day, if possible.

Still trying to understand this one but I agree, the principle officers of the Lodge ought to be chosen by merit and not by seniority.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Ritual. I do like the other subjects, but being Blue Lodge at the moment I’d like to learn everything that it has to offer. I find myself observing, practicing and dissecting every inch of the ritual from the floor work and every section in the ritual. Understanding fully what I’m practicing and speaking has helped me perform my responsibilities at a high level for the benefit of the Lodge. After completing Blue Lodge, I’d like to venture off to other bodies of Masonry and study esoterica and philosophy.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

For the reason stated in answer 8 I am not reading books. I do plan to read in the near future, *Lodge Leadership: A Five Step Guide to Masonic Reform*, by Matt R. Nelson.

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

Serving as Building Manager, I have the privilege to interact with men seeking more information about Masonry. What I do mention is that we are good men on a journey to become better men, for the benefit of oneself, family and community. We use certain tools, like those used by operative Masons, that remind us how to meet, act and part. Like the cathedrals built in ancient ages, we are also building that temple not made with hands with the same tools and the four cardinal virtues. I also mention that we are a school where we practice the social and moral virtues that society has so much benefited from. I make an invitation to join our next meeting if they so have the desire for knowledge and to be of service.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Robert Rebecchi**
Years in Masonry: **16**
Lodge Name and Number: **Louisville Lodge No. 400 (KY),
Abraham Lodge No. 8 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Initially I was prompted after reading the book by Dan Brown, [The Da Vinci Code](#). In college I had discovered the teachings of Soren Kierkegaard, Albert Camus, Dr. Victor Frankel and Sartre, and realized that I was an existentialist at heart and tried to view reality beyond what today, as Freemasons, we call the veil that obscures it. The more I researched Freemasonry and was able to filter through the garbage that abounds on the internet, I realized that Freemasonry might offer the esoterics I was in search of.

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

It is obvious that Masonry had been in decline for many decades, but it is also obvious that there is a small renaissance going on amongst the Craft as is evidenced by the growth of Lodges of Research and Traditional Observance Lodges. The future of Masonry, in my opinion, is not in recruitment, but in education and the importing of knowledge to the fellow traveler. Masonry, for too long, has been dominated by what I call the "fried bologna Lodges," where members have the misconception that we are a philanthropic and social

organization. Nothing could be farther from the truth. I believe Masonry is about cultivating the soul of man and by doing so, we make good men better that way.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

I do agree. The Master of the Lodge is exactly that – the Master, and should, therefore, be the archetype of what we in the Craft in some way should espoused to – a more perfected man – the example of the rough ashlar transformed to the perfect ashlar.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

My interpretation is that we, regardless of our station in life, stand on the same ground, not necessarily with the same opportunities or privileges or challenges. Nevertheless, however we may bring our own gifts into the world, we are each unique and individual, but before God – before the Grand Architect of the Universe – we stand on the same ground level as men and Masons.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Such a thing is foreign at Louisville 400, unfortunately. But my Lodge at Abraham 8 works very hard against the currents to be a more Masonically transformative Lodge, and as such we do have festive boards and Masonic lecturers attend them, much to our enjoyment and personal Masonic growth.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes, and that exact command can be found in the Regius poem from the 14th Century. Today, we see all too often members of the Lodge focusing on numbers of membership rather than on quality of those whom we admit. As a result, these newly initiated members are never given the proper Masonic education that I believe our forefathers had designed for us, which is not simply ritual, but philosophy, esoterics, the teaching of the liberal arts all to be applied in an introspective way to grow the man from within.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

Not necessarily. I believe that the progressive line, more times than not, serves convenience rather than installing those who can most and best serve the Lodge.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

In the following order: Esoterica, Philosophy, Symbolism, Ritual, and, lastly, History. I'll be right there.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

Golden Dawn Magic, by Chic and Sandra Cicero, and The Meaning of Masonry, by W. L. Wilmshurst.

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

Are you interested in learning something ancient that deals with cultivating your soul? Something that requires working and studying? Something that you will do for the rest of your life and can apply in every area of your life if you are willing to go inside yourself and take a magnificent journey and discover what is beyond the curtain?

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Dennis Roberts**
Years in Masonry: **18**
Lodge Name and Number: **Grant Lodge No. 85 (KY),**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was always inquisitive since an early age. I would read everything I could get my hands on. Reading about history, every so often you would hear about Freemasons and things they did. Some tales were flights of fancy, and yet others were just real men with convictions. I knew a few Freemasons growing up, but not a whole lot was discussed, so I decided to look into the Fraternity. What I saw was interesting. Millions of men had become Freemasons, but many couldn't tell you much about it. This caused me to read even more into the subject. Eventually, you have to make a choice, so in 2004 I started my own journey!

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

I think we are in worse shape than most think. So many have alluded to Lodge closings and consolidations forcing Masonry to become a more regional endeavor. I have heard people give 10 years to 30 years for Freemasonry to end up like the Odd Fellows or similar organizations. I think this is incorrect. Most of our members are over 60 years old. Average life expectancy in the U. S. is back down to 78. If nothing is done now, as time and actuarial tables keep closing in, our numbers will dwindle and our decline accelerate.

Masonry, at least in the United States, hasn't allowed itself to use the tools needed to stop this decline. I do not wish to offend anyone, but we have unleashed bib degrees, hillbilly degrees, water buffalo degrees, and many other fun themes. We have tried to "Storm the State." We try traveling items, but none of these things could ever fix Masonry. Moving already initiated Brothers from one Lodge to another for a temporary "fun" degree, or "storm," does nothing to slow our decline. We are just shuffling the people that already attend Lodge into yet another function.

It is not all doom and gloom, however. People are starting to ask questions; Brothers are seeing the danger we are in and are finally starting to discuss ways to fix it. There is an energy growing, and whether we harness that energy or let it slip out of our grasp is yet to be seen. Since Masonry itself was never broken, we just need to fix ourselves. I believe that is slowing happening.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

The greatest skill of a Master, of any craft, is his ability to share his knowledge and wisdom with others. If a man is truly Master of his Lodge, he should want nothing more than to see the Brothers thriving under his leadership. To learn and thrive requires instruction and guidance, which should emanate from all the Lodge officers, most especially the Master. All that being said, the Master is the servant of the Brothers. He should provide the example. He should freely give good counsel, and light correction if needed. All of this is to serve the Brothers in their efforts to be better men.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do believe is its actual meaning?

We are taught it means to be sincere or honest. That with no deceptions, we are all on the same equal ground. For the most part, that is the actual meaning I prescribe to it, but I also see it as a reminder that as we are all on the same level, we are also equal.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

My Lodge does not.

I do see benefits, as well as pitfalls.

Every one that I have attended have had educational speakers, and I think this quite honestly is one of the most beneficial things in all of Freemasonry. We told men we would make them better, then sentenced them to decades of business meetings. Education, the transfer of Masonic Light, or knowledge, to our Brothers, is the only way we truly can help them be better men.

Pitfalls are that maybe we sometimes focus on the fancy dress more than necessary. The cost of attending one of these events could put them out of range for some. There is also a percentage of our fraternity that is put off by too fancy of a meeting.

I do believe that the education portion of these events, though, well out-weigh the pitfalls.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Had we followed this principle, we would not have had the boom of 80 years ago followed by the steep declines we have seen over the last 60 years. As stone masons, a Master taking on an apprentice when there is insufficient work could lead to the ruination of both. Neither would be able to support themselves, let alone help out the other. Also, in those times, quality was important. Therefore, if a Master was truly good at his craft, he always had plenty of work.

It is relevant today in that if a Master is unable to meet the needs of his apprentice, nor if his work is not of high enough quality, he should not accept an apprentice. In our speculative sense, we are paid for our work in knowledge. We are instructed by Masters on how to be better men, husbands and fathers. If a Master cannot pay his apprentice with this knowledge, or if he is unable to give his apprentice the work needed to obtain this knowledge, he should refrain from taking them on.

If a man is unable to work under the tenets of Freemasonry, to better himself, he has no business telling another how to better himself.

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?” Please explain your answer.

It is absolutely not compatible with progressive lines. While most every person in any progressive line I have met has been well worthy of the esteem, it is a bad practice. It is one that, in my opinion, helped get us in the situation we are in. Predictability breeds complacency, complacency breeds laziness, and laziness breeds failure. It is well proven that we, as humans, like to “rest” when we feel we have achieved our goals. We get married, we no longer work as hard at keeping ourselves up. We get the dream job, we don’t hustle as

hard as we used to. When we know we are going to advance year after year, we feel we no longer need to work as hard.

Use the Grand Line as example. Look in your Lodges. The guys running for Grand Junior Warden are everywhere. They are in Lodges nightly, on top of their other Masonic duties. These men are often the most ardent supporters of every Masonic event, the most ready to help, and some of the hardest workers in Masonry today.

Once in that line, though, and saddled with other obligations, most then attend Lodge at the rates they are then obligated to do. It's fully understandable we sometimes have to pull back.

The men that devote the most to Masonry should be the men elected to offices.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

All of it. It is a rich, intriguing subject, with many facets to study. I would certainly say the history was a good start. There are so many good books to read, though, about any aspect of Freemasonry.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***A Bridge to Light*, by Rex R. Hutchens, and *The Kentucky Monitor*, by Henry Pirtle. The first book, I was given upon my initiation into the Scottish Rite, and have finally found time to read it. The second one, we all as Kentucky Masons recognize. As long as I am a Mason, I will keep coming back to this one.**

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

An open mind is your single greatest asset. Forget what you think you know, let go of what you have heard, or rumors you have seen on the internet, and truly immerse yourself in this experience. So much in this world today is fake,

hollow, and unhealthy for us, but the ideas of faith, hope and Brotherly love will always be relevant. Masonry offers these things, but you have to work for them. There are many men who will help you with that work.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Ken J. P. Stuczynski**
Years in Masonry: **11**
Lodge Name and Number: **West Seneca Lodge No. 1111 (NY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Shared values, namely tolerance, charity, and appreciation for ritual and oral tradition.

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

Freemasonry is poised to come back strongly in new forms and is already doing so.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

What more is there to leadership than service? Service needs to be not only administrative but personal and spiritual.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

More than anything, it means we all have a fair opportunity to speak and be heard. The other side of this is that we all have a responsibility to listen and acknowledge each other regardless of differences or disagreements.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Food is an important part of culture, and therefore the psychology of what it means to be human. Most of the Lodges I belong to take this seriously to some extent; others underestimate the return on the effort.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

It should. There is always work to be done -- on ourselves, in the world -- but we often do not find a station or place for Brothers to do meaningful work outside of occupying chairs and seeking titles. If a Lodge doesn't do meaningful work, and therefore have work available for new members, bringing in new Brothers is a waste for both them and the Lodge.

7. Continuing with the language of the "Old Charges," we also find this phrase:

"All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit."

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a "progressive line?" Please explain your answer.

We need to be where we can best work and best agree. If the line provides progressive education and responsibility, then it works as it should. However, I would suggest this is rarely the case. We do not all start from equal competencies in the various skills we need, and we do not need to "advance" just because someone else does. Between the Peter Principle and the fact that not everyone is suited or desires to lead yet still wants to learn and work, we

should be wary of a progressive line to whatever extent it is merely a conveyor belt.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Philosophy, Esotericism, and Morality.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***The Meaning of Masonry*, by W. L. Wilmshurst; and**

***Thomas Smith Webb, Freemason, Musician, Entrepreneur* by Herbert R. Leyland.**

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

Find Brothers who share your interests, and know that Masonry is large and diverse and you will find whatever you seek ... IF you seek.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Sean Weaver**
Years in Masonry: **16**
Lodge Name and Number: **Phoenix Lodge No. 719 (KY)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

I was intrigued by the mystery and was looking forward to being a part of something that could bring the better out of me.

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

Our future is dependent on what we do here and now. We are in a downward spiral that we must turn around now if we are to have any chance of survival.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

Yes, I agree with Brother MacBride.

The most important part of being the Master of the Lodge is to lead by example. The more a Master leads his officers and members benefits the whole.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, “we are all on the level.” What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

That we are all equal, no matter the title you hold.

I believe it’s actually means that we should feel that way, not only in Lodge but in our everyday lives.

5. The recent documentary, “The Masonic Table,” focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

Our lodge hold festive boards and we have Masonic Education as well as spending time engaging in fellowship.

6. The “Old Charges” of Freemasonry contain the following language:

“... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him.”

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes.

Is the Apprentice doing the work of Masonic teachings? Is he making available the time to work in his Lodge and community?

7. Continuing with the language of the “Old Charges,” we also find this phrase:

“All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis’d: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit.”

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a “progressive line?”
Please explain your answer.

No

I believe that our line of officers and progression is done without giving any thought about what has that officer (or group of officers) done while in office. Have they done anything for the betterment of the Lodge and its Brothers?

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

History and Philosophy.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***Freemasonry and Its Ancient Mystic Rites* by C. W. Leadbeater; and**

***Daniel Parker's Masonic Tablet*, by Arturo de Hoyos.**

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

Freemasonry can make a good man better. It will help you become a better version of yourself if you are willing to put in the time and commitment to learn our teachings and apply them and use them in your everyday life.

William O. Ware Lodge of Research

Covington, Kentucky

Voices of Freemasonry Vol. VI

Name: **Michael Yannetti**
Years in Masonry: **15**
Lodge Name and Number: **The Villages Lodge No. 394 (FL)**

1. What influenced you to seek membership in Freemasonry?

Community service.

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

Mixed. Leadership has come to grips with the changing nature of society. While the ritual should NOT CHANGE, the structure of the fraternity should. We should become smaller, smarter and more flexible. New members will not join an organization built for the early 20th century man.

3. Masonic teacher and ritualist Andrew Sommerville MacBride wrote language into the installation ceremony suggesting that a Master of a Lodge should lead by adopting an attitude of service. Do you agree with MacBride's position? Please explain your answer.

We should service the spiritual needs of the brothers as our prime directive. There are other organizations to do community service.

4. An expression heard frequently in Freemasonry is, "we are all on the level." What, in your opinion, is that phrase used to mean? What do you believe is its actual meaning?

We should treat each other as BROTHERS. Actual meaning on an esoteric level is that we are all on a path individually and together to the divine.

5. The recent documentary, "The Masonic Table," focuses on the art of Masonic dining. Does your Lodge hold harmonies, festive boards, table lodges or other formal dining events? Do you see any benefit in doing so?

No, my Lodge does not. Great benefit in doing so.

6. The "Old Charges" of Freemasonry contain the following language:

"... no Master should take an Apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him."

Does this language have any relevance in contemporary Freemasonry? Please explain your answer.

Yes, very much so. If becoming a Mason does neither the fraternity nor the brother any benefit, everyone loses. The Lodge must have an education program that employs or works the brother in the quarries.

7. Continuing with the language of the "Old Charges," we also find this phrase:

"All preferment among Masons is grounded upon real Worth and personal Merit only; that so the Lords may be well served, the Brethren not put to Shame, nor the Royal Craft despis'd: Therefore no Master or Warden is chosen by Seniority, but for his Merit."

Is this specific language compatible with the practice of having a "progressive line?" Please explain your answer.

Yes and no. A brother gets a chance to learn and work the quarries. If he does not PROGRESS, it harms the brother and the lodge for him to move on to the east. Most lodges have trouble just putting bodies in chairs, very unhealthy indeed.

8. When studying and reading about Freemasonry, to which areas do you generally gravitate? History? Philosophy? Ritual? Esoterica? Symbolism? Other?

Esoterica and symbolism of the ritual. The spiritual path.

9. What are the titles of the last two books about Freemasonry that you read?

***Whence Come You* by Ben Zion; and**

***The Secret Power of Masonic Symbols*, by Robert Lomas.**

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

What are you looking for? Are you prepared to WORK for it?