

Attracting Younger Masons and Communicating With Them
Worshipful Jason S. Wamsley
Division 1 Provost

We are all proud to be Freemasons. We enjoy the fellowship and the ritual, and we proudly share the wonders of the Fraternity with all who we can. But as we contemplate what prompted us to become Freemasons, we also should consider how we can attract a younger generation of men to the Fraternity.

Many Masons joined because a family member was a Mason; for some it was because of a neighbor or a friend, and for others it was because they were curious, and asked the magic question: “how can I become a Mason?”

The author of this talk is one of the “younger generation.” I joined because a neighbor was a member, and I began asking him questions and getting a feel for the Fraternity, before I asked that magic question. So I thought it would be useful to discuss how I believe we can attract younger men into the Fraternity, and keep them active.

We need to start by appreciating that the younger crowd has a small slice of time that they can devote to a hobby or organization. The majority of their time is spent at work where they are building their careers. Moreover, many are newly married or with a young family. They help around the house, and want to spend significant time with their wife and watch their children grow and learn. As a result, many in this younger generation may feel that they will not have enough time to devote to our Craft, or after

joining, may feel left out because they cannot be as active as they seem to be expected to be.

This problem is compounded if the older members do not appreciate the pressures these new Masons are under, do not remember what this period was like for them, and do not appear to understand why the younger Masons are sometimes absent from Lodge or do not want to step in line. If the younger Masons are not mentored, and do not build relationships with other members of the Lodge, they begin to feel unwanted, wonder if they are wasting their money, and ultimately choose to demit, or worse yet, simply not pay their dues.

To attract and retain this younger crowd, the Lodge needs to make a special effort to make them feel needed, but not overworked, so they have the time they need to spend, during the formative period of their career, marriage, and family, on these important activities.

Holding events that are open to the family or the public in general can help attract and retain younger men. This is win-win for them. They can have fellowship with their Lodge Brethren, but also be with their family.

Picnics, softball games, hiking or camping trips, or other family outings are a great way to help bring the new younger Mason and his family into our Masonic family. It allows the wife and family to become friends with other Masonic wives and their children, so an additional bond is created. In addition, charitable events, such as blood drives, Child ID programs, fundraisers for a local or Masonic charity, public dinners, performances, or educational events where non-Masons can attend or participate exposes the wives to the good that Freemasonry does in the community. Indeed,

the more the wife knows the other Masons and their families, and understands the benefits of Freemasonry, the less she will be concerned if her husband attends his Lodge meeting.

In the same way that we must understand and accommodate the family obligations of our younger Masons, we also must understand their communications preferences. For many of our younger Brethren, cell phones, computers, e-mail, and social networking are the ways they stay in touch and communicate on a daily basis.

A Lodge website is a great idea and can help keep everyone informed, especially the generation that grew up familiar with this technology. However, a website isn't enough; if its content is not kept fresh and changing. A Lodge website that looks the same months after it was first viewed, is seen as defunct and no longer a place to visit. Thus, keeping your Lodge website information rich and up to date is very important. But this is also a job that can be given to some of your new, younger Masons. It will help them feel that they are doing their part for the Fraternity, they can work on it at home, and they can improve the public face of your Lodge to the other younger Masons, to sojourning Masons, and to young men who may be interested in becoming Masons.

Facebook is the popular social network right now. Your Lodge may wish to consider having a Facebook page as another way to keep the membership up to date and informed about the Lodge, its meetings and activities, and to spread the word about Freemasonry in general.

Another way younger Masons communicate is by text messaging. There are some of us who have heard about text messaging, but don't know how

to do it, and some who don't even know what it is, but I'm willing to bet there are several in each Lodge who use it on a daily basis. Ask one of your younger Brethren to be in charge of text messaging those who wish to be notified with updates and reminders using this method. The Brother can send out a text message to several cell phones simultaneously and help keep everyone informed.

E-mail lists are another great way to keep the Brethren informed and can be a very inexpensive way to send out your trestleboard. Even if some of the Brethren do not use the Internet, sending the trestleboard by e-mail to those Brethren who do – or simply posting it on the Lodge website will significantly reduce the monthly postal costs, which the Lodge would otherwise incur.

These are only a few of the ways that a Lodge can attract and communicate with their younger Brethren. As Masonic leaders, it is our job to find what works best for our Lodge and our Brethren, and, as appropriate, to use these new approaches.