

Chapter VI

Programs for Tiled Meetings

ROLL CALL NIGHT

The annual Roll Call of members has become a regular feature in the year's program of many Lodges. This Service Letter has been prepared for such Lodges as have not yet adopted the practice. The suggestions are flexible and may be easily adapted to the needs and conditions of any Lodge.

WHY HAVE A ROLL CALL? One of the principal purposes of a Lodge has always been to MAINTAIN permanent contacts and a zestful and friendly fellowship among its members. In an earlier day this was not difficult to do. The majority of men lived in small communities, very often remaining in them from birth to death; they were neighbors and friends outside the Lodges as well as within, and were able to keep in constant touch with each other in the natural course of events. Today all that has changed. More men live in large towns and cities than in small communities; few of them remain in the same place all their lives, or even for many years at a time; even when they do, they are likely to live at a distance from each other.

This presents a problem of peculiar difficulty to the Masonic Lodges. Its members are under obligation to attend its communications as regularly as possible; the Lodge itself is under an obligation to foster the closest possible fellowship and to be ever watchful of the welfare of its members in times of sickness and distress. How is this to be done when its members are so widely scattered that the lodge often has difficulty even in keeping their post office addresses up to date? Roll Call Night is one of the many methods for solving this problem.

ADVANTAGES. A Roll Call Night calls for no elaborate preparation, entails no burdens on anybody, and costs little or nothing. Its results are in striking contrast to its cost in time, energy or money. Some of the most valuable reasons for having such a program are:

1. Contacts are established with non-residents. Their discovery that they are not forgotten by their Lodge will be an encouragement to them, and will inspire them with a renewed interest in Masonry.
2. Friends and acquaintances of absentees will be happy to have news about them.
3. The Lodge will protect itself against overlooking members in sickness or distress.
4. The Lodge will be put in better position to deal with absentees who are delinquent and liable to be unaffiliated.

5. A closer acquaintance will be established among resident members.
6. In addition to its own purposes, a Roll Call Night is a pleasant social occasion.
7. If an annual Roll Call becomes a custom, it will in time teach members to keep in touch with the Lodge regularly.

PREPARATION. If a Lodge is small the Roll Call may be held at some regular communication, care being taken to have as many members present as possible. If it is large, set aside a special evening to avoid the necessity of haste. In either case, the Roll Call itself may be accompanied by an appropriate program, an address, music, etc., and it may be followed by a fellowship banquet or buffet lunch.

When sending notices of Roll Call Night, describe its purposes in detail, so that each Brother attending may come prepared to give as much information about absentees as possible. Use auxiliary methods: telephone, personal letters, etc. Have each Past Master invite the candidates raised in his own year. Urge every member who cannot come in person to send a letter or word of greeting that can be read in Lodge when his name is called.

Appoint a Committee to take charge of the plans and see the program through. Have a Welcoming Committee at the door. Decorate the room, if possible, with flowers and banners. Provide song sheets to encourage group singing. Have one special feature such as a movie, illustrated lecture, invited speaker, or a review of the Lodge's history.

PROGRAM Whether given in the Lodge room during a regular Communication, or in a banquet hall, the following or a similar order of procedure is suggested:

- Invocation, by the Chaplain or another Brother.
- Opening remarks by the Worshipful Master.
- Music by Organist, soloist, group singing or record player.
- Roll Call, either by the Secretary for the entire roster, or by each Past Master for his own year.
- Music.
- Address, either historical or inspirational, by the senior Past Master or some other Brother.
- Benediction.

SOJOURNERS' NIGHT

Basic to any conception of a Lodge's relation to sojourners in its midst or to any form of activity it may plan for maintaining contacts with them, is the philosophy of a Lodge's own place and purpose in the scheme of Freemasonry as a whole. This philosophy may be summed up in one brief sentence: a Lodge is the representative to its community of the worldwide Masonic fraternity.

In the jurisdiction of almost every Lodge are Masons who retain membership in some other Lodge or Grand Jurisdiction. They may be temporary visitors or permanent residents; in either event they are sojourners. A Lodge will wish to maintain contact with these brethren in various ways, to see that their interest in the Craft is kept alive and that they will receive that attention to which all Masons are entitled from the Fraternity in general, and wherever they may be residing. One of the ways of accomplishing this aim is to hold a special occasion or program once or twice a year especially for their benefit.

Some of these visitors will need to be examined. It will help to make them feel at home if the Master will always warn Examining Committees to avoid those trick questions which so often are embarrassing and in violation of the spirit of hospitality. A Committee has no duty except to elicit such information as will prove or not prove, that a given man is a Master Mason in good standing in some regular Lodge; the moment it steps beyond this duty it acts un-masonically and casts a reflection on the Master, who is the Lodge's host to all who lawfully knock at its doors.

Once a visitor is vouched for he should not be left to his own devices, but should be conducted by the Committee or some officer to the Altar, there to be introduced by name and address with the name and location of his Lodge to receive a word of welcome from the Master, and then to be conducted to a seat.

At the time the sojourner is examined or vouched for, a card bearing the particulars may be filled out and placed in a permanent file. If the same Brother should visit again after a long lapse of time, his right to enter without further examination can be easily proved by reference to the card.

In our own Grand Jurisdiction, a member of one Lodge can become at the same time a member in other New York State Lodges without forfeiting membership in the first one. While this law applies within our own Grand Jurisdiction, it may not in other Jurisdictions. It is a good thing for a Lodge to keep its own members reminded of this privilege of Plural Membership, and to explain it to resident sojourners who for sound reasons desire to maintain their membership in a home Lodge. The law against solicitation does not apply to those already Masons; they may be asked to affiliate under the plural Membership system without violation of any Landmark.

In preparation for a Sojourners' Night, your Lodge should obtain a printout of your own zip code and those of adjoining areas. This can be done for a nominal cost by using the Empire State Mason mailing list. Discretion should be used so as not to infringe upon neighboring Lodges, but this suggests the possibility of holding a joint meeting with a sister Lodge.

Each sojourner should receive a letter from the Master inviting him to meet his Masonic neighbors at a meeting called specifically for that purpose. Future meetings of the Lodge should be listed along with the names, addresses and telephone numbers of officers and committees.

Press releases should be sent to all the media in your community. It should include an invitation to sojourners who are members of other jurisdictions and whose names would not show up on the printout for your zip code areas.

SUGGESTED PROGRAMS FOR SOJOURNERS' NIGHTS

There is an endless variety of possible occasions and programs for making the sojourner feel at home. These few will suggest countless others:

1. **Dinner.** Since breaking bread together is both the opportunity and seal of fellowship, a banquet or dinner may be deemed the most appropriate of 311 ways of honoring or welcoming sojourners. They can be given seats in a group. If, in addition, a program is conducted consisting of speeches and music, one or more of them may be called upon to take part. The Toastmaster or Worshipful Master should introduce each one to the assembly by name, address and Lodge and at the end may give them a brief address of welcome.
2. **Open House.** It would be equally appropriate for a Lodge to hold an Open House, inviting both the members and their ladies. The program could consist of instrumental music, games, dancing and light refreshments. At the stated time, the Master and his officers could station themselves at the door to welcome their members and guests and to introduce them to the sojourners.
3. **Fellowcraft Club.** If a Lodge has a Fellowcraft Club, an evening of entertainment may be left in its charge. In the old days of Operative Masonry, every Fellowcraft was a sojourner for a period, traveling from country to country and from job to job until the experience of many contacts made him ready to settle somewhere as a Master in his own right. In early Masonic traditions "fellowcraft" and "sojourner" are almost synonymous. A brief talk on this theme would assist the guests to appreciate the appropriateness of the occasion.
4. **Communication.** An hour at some communication may be set aside in honor of sojourners. It may consist of music and speeches, sojourning Brothers themselves having an opportunity to speak briefly, individually or through a spokesman. Such a program may be rounded out by an appropriate motion picture or a Masonic quiz.
5. **Sojourners' Night.** The law provides that a Master or Warden may call upon any "duly authorized" and "competent" Brother to occupy the chairs. A Lodge may take advantage of this provision to hold a "Sojourners' Night" and have all the stations filled by sojourners.
6. **Souvenir Booklet.** If its funds permit, a Lodge may print a souvenir booklet about itself, to contain photographs of its buildings, a sketch of its history and a description of its activities. A copy of this, accompanied by a letter from the Master, may be sent to each sojourner when his presence in the community is discovered.

(Sample letter to be prepared on your Lodge's stationery)

SPECIMEN PROGRAMS

1. Music
2. Master's Address of Welcome to sojourning guests.
3. Introduction of sojourners, name by name, by the Secretary.
4. Twenty-minute address: "Traveling in Foreign Countries."
5. Reply by sojourners individually or by a spokesman.
6. Group singing.
7. Closing of Lodge.
8. Informal Reception, collation.



1. Reception of delegations
2. Reception of sojourners
3. Pledge of Allegiance and singing of Star Spangled Banner.
4. Invocation
5. Brief remarks of welcome by the Master.
6. Group singing or solo.
7. Principal Address.
8. Group singing or solo.
9. Entertainment (magician, instrumentalist, etc.)
10. Closing remarks by the Master.
11. Benediction.
12. Collation.



1. Music
2. Reception of delegations
3. Reception of Sojourners
4. Invocation
5. Master's Address of Welcome
6. Introduction of sojourners, name by name
7. Reply by one or more of the sojourners
8. Music
9. Principal Address -- by the D.D.G.M.
10. Closing remarks by the Master
11. Benediction
12. Informal Reception, collation.

Date

Dear Brother Sojourner:

We have your name as a sojourning Master Mason in good standing residing in the Village of Friendly.

You are cordially invited to attend the stated communication of Friendly Lodge No. 1562 on Wednesday, _____, _____ 19 __, at the Masonic Temple, Jackson St. near Linden Boulevard, at which time "Sojourners' Night" will be observed. Please, also extend this invitation to any other sojourners you may know.

This communication is planned to keep alive or revive your interest in Masonry while away from your home Lodge. It will enable you to become acquainted with the officers and brethren of Friendly Lodge, and permit them to welcome you to our Temple.

The brethren who attended a similar occasion last year will need no urging to attend on ; they have memories of a pleasant evening of Masonic fellowship. If you accept this invitation, I feel certain that you will attend Lodge again in the future.

If you have never visited Friendly Lodge you may hesitate about accepting this invitation. Let me assure you that you need not fear gaining admission. Should it be necessary for you to take an examination, you will find your examiner courteous and considerate.

The communication will open at 7:30 p.m. Every sojourning brother present will be introduced to the Lodge and all will be warmly greeted. A fine program is being arranged and a good Masonic speaker has been secured. After Lodge, refreshments will be served and a period of good fellowship enjoyed at the table.

If you are able to accept this invitation, I am sure that you will enjoy this evening, and we look forward to meeting you.

GRAND LODGE NIGHT

Of all the special programs possible during the Lodge year, few can be more interesting or more helpful than an evening devoted to Grand Lodge, not to its present officers particularly, but to the Grand Lodge system itself in idea and practice. The date may be set at the Lodge's convenience; the program may take any one of countless forms; but in one way or another it should be done. The materials and methods here given are suggestive only, and may be reshaped or adapted to any purpose.

MASONIC ORGANIZATION. Freemasonry as a whole is an indivisible and organic unity which adjusts itself, like a living being, to different times and conditions. To fulfill its mission in the world today it works through a number of Grand Lodges, in many lands, using various languages. In a given state, territory, or nation it organizes itself into a Grand Jurisdiction, governed by a Grand Lodge possessing complete sovereignty, and in America possessing exclusive territorial jurisdiction. In a community it organizes itself into a Lodge, or Lodges, each with full jurisdiction over its own members and material. In the realm of personal life it works through the individual Mason who is taught, obligated, and endowed with rights, privileges and duties to that end. It maintains its identity through history by means of traditions, usages, customs, and landmarks; it makes its appeal to the mind through ritual, symbols, and literature; it regulates and governs itself everywhere by means of a system of Masonic law.

WHAT GRAND LODGE IS. When Masonic organization is thus properly understood, it becomes clear that Grand Lodge is the whole Craft at work in New York State. It does not stand aloof and apart, in a spirit of arbitrary command; rather it is Freemasonry itself, organized to do its work within the scope of its State-wide opportunities.

WHY DEVOTE AN EVENING TO GRAND LODGE. When a Mason studies Grand Lodge, it is his own Masonry that he is seeking to understand. The Grand Lodge system is an element in every experience, belonging inalienably to the Masonic life wherever and by whomever lived. Wherever a Lodge is opened or the gavel falls or a candidate is initiated or a visitor passes the door or one Brother hails another, Grand Lodge is there. It knows no limitation of place, but is present in the life of every Mason. If a program for Grand Lodge Night devotes itself to this truth, it will be successful. Every Brother will go away with a clearer understanding and a heightened appreciation of his own Masonry and of his own Lodge.

Features For Grand Lodge Programs.

1. An address at some regular communication. A short general program may be organized about such an address.
2. A special evening composed of music, short talks, a principal address, a movie, an illustrated lecture, or a home-talent play.
3. A dinner or banquet devoted to the Grand Lodge theme.
4. A discussion circle, or a question box with answers. This program possesses the great advantage of giving everybody present an opportunity to take part.
5. An exhibition of pictures, charts, graphs, books, curios, reports, etc., of the structure and work of Grand Lodge. A number of short talks can be based on this exhibition.

Subjects For Feature Addresses.

1. The Lodge and Grand Lodge: how the two are related, how they work together, their duties and services to each other.
2. The Grand Lodge Book of Constitutions, the Old Charges, the Unwritten Laws, the Ancient Landmarks.
3. The sovereignty of Grand Lodge: The powers and duties of its Officers and Committees.
4. The Annual Communication: where and when held, what it does and how it does it, and the report of its transactions in the published proceedings.
5. The work of Grand Lodge: the Masonic Home and the Masonic Foundation, and other charitable services; its leadership of the jurisdiction in new endeavors.
6. The Grand Master as the chief executive and judicial Officer, his work in the supervision of the Grand Jurisdiction, his Annual Message, his leadership.
7. The District Deputy Grand Master System.
8. The history of Grand Lodge: its work abroad; its relations with other Grand Lodges.

What Grand Lodge Does.

1. Provides the power by which local Lodges exist, not only in the sense that it issues their charters, but also that it brings to each Lodge the strength of the whole Craft.
2. Guarantees Masonic regularity.
3. Establishes our Masonic law.
4. Constitutes us a world-wide Fraternity, so that a Brother made a Mason here will find friends if he is traveling elsewhere, or a Masonic home if he moves his residence.
5. Renders services to each individual Lodge and member, and to humanity as a whole; concentrates the ability of all to meet the needs of each.
6. Preserves our traditions, our customs, our ritual, our whole Masonic record, -- the great rich inheritance from the past.
7. Leads to future works of Masonic greatness.

PAST MASTERS' NIGHT

Almost every Lodge holds some annual program dedicated to its Past Masters. The character of the program depends on whether or not there is degree work on the trestleboard. The following suggestions are not new, but have been tried and tested in many Lodges.

INVITATIONS. This program, like most others, is designed to get out a large attendance. Unlike most others, it furnishes in itself the machinery for bringing this about. Each Past Master has what is commonly referred to as a "class", meaning those who were raised during his administration. A personal letter of invitation from each Past Master to every member of his class will go far towards influencing them to attend. Classes belonging to Past Masters who for any reason cannot take part in Past Masters' Night should receive personal invitations from the Past Master of the preceding or succeeding year, or from the Master himself. Thus every member of the Lodge will receive a special invitation and will have a personal reason for attending.

While the observance of Past Masters' Night is primarily a matter for one Lodge alone, circumstances may warrant inviting the Past Masters of other Lodges meeting in the same Temple or located in the same District. If this is done, the visitors should be admitted by delegations, and especially welcomed by the Master. New Lodges should invite the Master and Past Masters of the Lodge or Lodges that sponsored them.

PREPARATIONS. A Past Masters' Night can be made an affair of much interest if properly planned for and efficiently conducted. The most important preparatory steps are the invitations, noted above; efficient conduct depends primarily on a planned program. Before outlining the program, a few extra matters of preparation may be noted.

Special decorations, such as evergreen or palms, when placed in the East, West and South, will add much to the impressiveness and pleasure of the occasion, if the expense of getting them is not excessive.

In some Lodges commemorative medals, certificates, aprons or other souvenirs are presented to Past Masters. If this is done once, it is only necessary in succeeding years to supply one for the Junior Past Master. Upon request, the Committee on Lodge Sales will assist in selecting suitable mementos, whether the presentation is to be a

Lodge matter, or an expression of individual regard from the Master.

Refreshments and cigars, served preferably at the close of the program, will add an element of good fellowship to the occasion. This will allow the regular attendants, especially the officers, to do missionary work among the occasional attendees.

PROGRAMS. If there is to be Degree work, it would be difficult to conceive of any higher compliment than that of placing the Past Masters in the chairs during all or part of the Degree. Assignments should be made by the Master. It is obvious that each Past Master should be put where he will function most effectively. Being familiar with the capabilities of each of them, the Master will be able to exercise the necessary tact and judgment.

If there is to be no Degree work, the best features of Roll Call Night (*page 247*) can be combined with Past Masters' Night (table of contents). Each Past Master can be called upon to greet the members who were raised or initiated during his year as Master, and the Master himself can substitute for those Past Masters who are absent.

The following suggested program can be adapted to fit either Degree work or the Roll Call Night:

- ◆ Invocation, by the Chaplain or a Past Master.
- ◆ Opening remarks by the Master, special greetings to the Past Masters.
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Escort of the Past Masters to their assigned Stations and Places (if they are to confer a Degree) or to a place near the East if they are to take part in a roll call.
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Degree Work,

or

- ◆ Roll Call, beginning with either the senior or the junior Past Master, in which each Past Master greets his class of candidates, reviews a few of the outstanding events of his year, and either introduces the next Past Master (if his successor or predecessor) or returns the gavel to the Master
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Address, by the senior Past Master or another.
- ◆ Music
- ◆ Benediction, by the Chaplain or a Past Master.

REDEDICATION PROGRAM

Rededicating ourselves to Freemasonry should not be a Just-once-in-a-while occasion. Rededication should be an annual observance held in our own Lodge room as a Lodge, devoid of all the fanfare of showmanship, -- just an honest-to-goodness reminder of all the splendid teachings inculcated in our three Degrees. The Rededication program should follow the usual business session and be simple, carried through with sincerity and decorum.

PURPOSE. The purpose is to return each of us to that spirit of dedication which stirred us all when we first took our Degrees. It was a strangely beautiful experience into which we as candidates entered, and we should not lose the value of that experience. We would not lose it, no matter how long our Masonic life, except that in a modern world filled with distractions of every kind, there are conflicting demands upon our hearts and time. Rededication Program is one way to keep our vision of Masonry from being dimmed.

ATTENDANCE. It should be borne in mind that the regulars, those who attend practically every meeting, do so because their enthusiasm for Masonry has not depreciated, but grows deeper as the years go by. They will work for the success of this program and be on hand one hundred per cent. It is the far larger number who are rarely seen on Lodge nights that constitutes the real challenge. It is imperative that an extremely careful and thorough job be done in the matter of inviting them. Certainly a special form of written or printed invitation should be sent to the entire membership, but this group of habitual absentees should receive additional attention. Personal contact, telephone, or individual letters should be freely employed, according to the possibilities in each case. Elderly and feeble Brethren should, of course, be escorted to and from the Lodge on this occasion.

PREPARATION. This program offers opportunity for special effects in decoration and lighting. The Altar, and the East, West and South may be embellished with flowers, evergreens or stands of potted plants. It will add to the impressiveness of the occasion if the Lodge be darkened during the Obligations, except for the illuminated "G" in the East, and the Lesser Lights.

PARTICIPANTS. An occasion such as this does not require the services of a guest speaker merely because of his oratorical ability. It would be better to have as speakers Brethren of your own Lodge, respected for their knowledge of the Craft, their sincerity as Masons, and their ability to convey to the Brethren a message that will leave a lasting impression. The "Conductor" is the principal speaker in each part of the suggested program, and he may be assisted by an "Instructor" who also speaks and a "Candidate" who does not. Additional participation may be obtained by assigning special parts to other Brethren. In every case, the Master should select a Brother who, by reason of his own appreciation of the spiritual lessons of Masonry, is qualified to give an impressive rendition of the part assigned to him.

MATERIAL: This complete program may be used in full or in part. When used in part, care should be taken not to eliminate the essential points, which are the obligations of each Degree. Suggested prayers and short talks are available in the Library and Museum.

PROGRAM. The business session of the Lodge should be concluded, followed by a brief refreshment, and the Lodge again called to labor. Then:

1. Reception of delegations and distinguished visitors.
2. Greeting and introductory remarks by the Master.
3. Prayer of dedication, by the Chaplain.
4. Music (group singing): "O God Our Help in Ages Past"
5. The E.A. Obligation, by the "Conductor", with the kneeling "Candidate" and the audience (standing) repeating after the Conductor.
6. Music: "Lead, Kindly Light" or "God of our Fathers".
7. Presentation of the Apron, by the "Instructor" called upon for this purpose by the Conductor.
8. Presentation of the Working tools, by a designated Brother.
9. The E.A. Charge, by the "Instructor" or the "Conductor" or by another Brother previously designated.
10. Music: "Abide with Me" or "Holy, Holy, Holy".

This may be followed by a five-minute talk on the lessons of the First Degree, or the program may proceed directly to the F.C. Obligation, more group singing ("Home, Sweet Home" or "Nearer, my God, to Thee"), and the M.M. Obligation. Depending on the time available, the F.C. and M.M. Obligations may or may not be followed by the appropriate Apron presentations, Working Tools and Charges. If they are, more Brothers can be given an opportunity to participate. If desired, the program may be closed with a brief Rededication Address by an invited speaker.

CAUTION. Careful planning is required to include just enough of the above suggestions to produce an inspiring program. Too much will defeat its own purpose.

This program was presented in Dunton Lodge No. 1017 on November 12, 1974. The Grand Master, M\W\ Arthur Markewich, was present, and the work was performed entirely by the 1974 Masters Association of the 2nd Queens District.

CEREMONY OF REDEDICATION TO MASONRY

Invocation by the Chaplain:

Almighty and most glorious Lord God, we gather here this evening in Thy name, firm in the belief that Thou art the Father of us all. And so we gather as children of Thine, and as members of the Masonic Fraternity for the purpose of reminding ourselves of our obligations.

We recollect that our first entrance into a Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons is made "in the name of God;" that following this we are taught the example of prayer to Thee; that thereafter it was explained to us that the Holy Bible delineates Thy will for us; and throughout the precepts and teachings of Masonry, we have found a definite adherence to Thee. It is fitting, therefore, that at the beginning of this ceremony, we offer our voices in prayer.

Our hearts are full of thanksgiving for Thy mercies, the greatest of which is Thy promise of everlasting life. We acknowledge our sins and our short-comings, and we beseech Thy forgiveness. We pray for a clearer understanding of our duty to Thee, to our neighbor and to ourselves. We entreat Thee to lead us by Thy spirit, work in us Thine own gracious will, and finally, receive us all to Thyself. With reverence, we offer this prayer in Thy Holy Name. Amen.

Salute to the Flag and the Star Spangled Banner

Welcome by the Master:

Brethren, tonight we will reaffirm our belief in the mission of Freemasonry, our allegiance to its precepts and our love for its cause. We agree that our Masonic obligations point the way to a mode of living that will glorify God, make us a friend of our neighbor and cause us to heed the promptings of our conscience. To these principles we will reconsecrate our abilities and rededicate our efforts.

The obligations of each degree will be presented, and you are requested to join with the exemplar by repeating the obligations as you did when you were a candidate.

The Master then declares labor dispensed with on the Third Degree and the Lodge open on the First Degree for work and instruction. The Senior Deacon attends at the Altar and the lights are dimmed.

APPRENTICE DEGREE

Obligation
Apron Presentation
Working Tools
Entered Apprentice Charge
Music -- "Come Thou Almighty King"

The Lodge is then opened on the Second Degree

FELLOW CRAFT DEGREE

Obligation
Working Tools
Fellow Craft Charge
Music -- "Home Sweet Home"

The Lodge is then opened on the Third Degree

SUBLIME DEGREE OF MASTER MASON

Obligation
Working Tools
Master Mason Charge
Music - "Masonic Doxology"

REDEDICATION OBLIGATION

Master: Brethren, kindly join with me in the Pledge of Rededication.

Say I, -- pronounce your name in full, -- and repeat after me. -- Mindful of the manifold blessings enjoyed by me -- in the fellowship of Masons -- and conscious also of my many shortcomings -- and even neglect -- of the principles of Masonry -- here and now -- in the presence of Almighty God and my brethren -- rededicate my powers of mind and body -- to those sacred pledges and promises -- made by me when I was Initiated, -- Passed -- and Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason. -- This I do, -- not only with my lips -- but deep in my heart -- and I am resolved henceforth -- to serve my God -- my neighbor my country -- and myself -- steadily exemplifying the tenets of Freemasonry upon every occasion -- thus proving to the world -- that these principles are necessary -- for the peace and serenity of the nations -- the betterment of mankind -- and the ultimate good of all. -- I promise to fraternize with my brethren -- upon every opportunity within the length of my cabletow -- and to help thus unitedly -- to bring about universal peace and harmony. -- I renew my promise of loyal support -- to my beloved Lodge -- to the Grand Lodge of the State of New York -- and to all Freemasons throughout the world -- wherever dispersed -- and may He from whom all blessings flow -- sustain me to keep this solemn vow. -- My brothers, in testimony of your sincerity, stretch forth your hand to your brothers about you in the continuance of friendship and brotherly love.

Address by the District Deputy Grand Master

Music - "God Bless America"

Address by the Grand Master

Benediction by the Chaplain

Grateful acknowledgment is made to W\ Thomas J. Conley, Master of Dunton Lodge in 1974, for his gracious cooperation in providing the details of his program and granting us permission to use the material.

BACK TO BASICS

This is to propose that Masonic Lodges re-establish study groups. These could be formal or very informal structures. The Master would request and encourage those interested in doing so to write short papers. A sampling of subject topics are:

- ❖ Masonic history
- ❖ Masonic charity
- ❖ Why I attend Lodge
- ❖ Masonic philosophy
- ❖ Masonic events
- ❖ Why I don't attend Lodge.
- ❖ Individual Freemasons, Famous or otherwise
- ❖ What the Lodge should do but doesn't
- ❖ What Changes I'd like to see made.
- ❖ Other?

As a start it might be good to request short papers a page or two in length, but if there is interest in writing a more lengthy report, it should be encouraged also.

The program committee of the lodge should review these papers and arrange to have the best ones read in lodge as evening programs. The best ones should be submitted for publication in local newsletters and in The Empire State Mason. All papers should be distributed to the Membership by mail.

A second part of such a program could be to solicit talks from the members. These should be 3 to 5 minutes in length. Four or five such talks could be selected to make up an evening program. It could be left to the individual brother to select a topic of his choice. This makes a good ladies' night program with ladies encouraged to be prepared to speak also. The best of these could be submitted for publication also.

Some lodges may want to set up a contest. Others may prefer to keep it very informal and uncompetitive. The possibilities and variations to these kinds of programs are unlimited.

RATIONALE:

1. Freemasonry teaches that we are to seek light. Light is knowledge. A reason that Freemasonry may not be attracting as many thinking people is that we have strayed away from the BASIC function of early Freemasonry, which was to provide a place for philosophical study and contemplation.
2. Over the years more emphasis has been placed on ritual than on contemplation. Study is the essence of Freemasonry. It is not possible to grasp the full power of Freemasonry by ritual alone. We offer study courses but without pointing and showing the way.
3. Those who stay away from lodge miss all the power of it. By sharing ideas and information about Freemasonry with them, we can stimulate and reactivate their enthusiasm for the power of Freemasonry.
4. Some concordant bodies provide such study and publications, but the average Freemason does not have access to the Material. This type of program belongs in symbolic Freemasonry. We need to return to basics.
5. Involvement of the brothers is the secret to better attendance and Lodge vitality.

Sample Letter on Lodge Stationary

Date: _____

Dear Brother:

_____ Lodge No. _____ is initiating a BACK to BASICS program. Its purpose is to involve every brother in lodge programming and to help each of us "improve ourselves in Masonry". In early spring a lodge program will consist of the first of a series of talks given by YOU and other interested brothers.

Please consider preparing such a talk of a topic and length of your choosing. Write about anything which you would like to express and share with us. (Remember that religion and politics are not topics for discussion in a Masonic Meeting.)

Not everyone will be inclined to write a prepared talk. But don't be shy. You are encouraged to talk for 15 to 20 minutes or for just a few. You set the time. It can be a very informal statement of your opinion or concern on a subject of interest to you.

If you need more time than by early March to complete your talk, let us know and we can schedule your presentation for a later date. Please inform me or the lodge secretary of your participation as soon as possible.

Thank you for being involved in this exciting program. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Fraternally yours,

Master

**Back to Basics
Report Form**

Date: _____

Brother: _____

Address: _____

 _____ zip code _____

Telephone: _____ *home*
 _____ *business*

Title of talk: _____

Brief outline of the talk (points to be covered):

Date to be completed: _____ Approximate length of talk _____

Other members of family or friends who may be interested in presenting a talk to the Lodge (please include address and phone number):

Comments:

