



RITE NOTES

Membership and Recruiting
15 August 2020

Building Membership and Attendance

As we proceed through this year, and the dreaded Covid-19, our membership has suffered from lack of festivals to bring more knights into our commanderies. As we are able to continue the recruitment and development of members in our Chapters and Councils in this past spring and now fall period, it should bring benefits to the commanderies when we can get back to work. When that happens, we should have a large number for knighthood. I encourage each of you to continue to look for good masons to become York Rite members.

There is a story that Jesus tells about a king who is hosting an elaborate wedding banquet for his son. No expense has been spared as this is the event of the year. He sends out the invitations, only to discover that the attendance will be very poor. Everyone has an excuse as to why they can't attend. The event looks to be a total failure with lots of food left. The band will play for a few people. There will be plenty of empty seats.

The king's servants even go in person to invite those who were to be guests. Some of those invited are indignant, even mistreating the servants who have delivered the kind invitation. The king, enraged at all the excuses, decides to do something novel. He orders his servants to find others to replace those who will not attend, and according to Matthew 22:10, the hall was filled.

Does this sound familiar? It should because most of its members of a dying lodge or chapter are generally pretty happy with what is happening in the lodge or chapter. Most are unaware of the situation, and sadly, probably don't care. Those who would care will often wring their hands and say, "it's too bad" before they go on their way.

Your York Rite Body didn't get into this situation overnight. It has taken many years to build up to this state of apathy. A person will always fill their 24-hour day. If the organization has slipped into maintenance mode, it will be easy for members to drift into other things. When activating an old chapter, council or commandery, some members may even resent the "intrusion" of the group into their lives. They are happy just paying dues once a year. Somehow, being able to list membership in their obituary comforts them.

So, what's the solution to rebuilding chapter, council or commandery attendance and membership? The answer is simple. The process is a bit more difficult. It takes finding members and good ones.

The Power of Image Building

Truth is, few people want to join a dying organization. If the organization is perceived as not viable, very few want to participate. Older members as stated above, are often happy with things the way they are. They're not looking for change.

New members will bring new life into any organization. They do it with enthusiasm and excitement. While not everyone who joins will become involved, enough will get active to make a difference.

When corporations find themselves in a situation where they have negative publicity, they "spin" it to the positive view. They send a message to the world and their employees that they are viable. They build on their successes. So should our York Rite.

When there is a feeling of new life and that things are happening again, old members begin to drift back. New members can be brought into the group. Here's how to do it.

1. **Build on your successes.** Start small, but do some projects. It can be dinner before the meeting, a social activity, etc. It doesn't have to require a lot of work, and if your group is quite small, keep it simple. When it succeeds, let the members know that it has been successful. This creates an attitude of success. Success builds on success. Once you have mastered a simple project, you can go to bigger ones. Remember, children don't learn to run right away. They have to crawl first.

2. **Keep a positive attitude.** Attitudes are contagious. Negative attitudes are easy to acquire, and do little to build up an organization. Positive attitudes are also contagious. While not as contagious as negative ones, it is like water dripping on a rock. Eventually it will prevail.

3. **Be a team builder.** I have attended many meetings where the presiding officer looks around the room and proclaims, "this is all that showed up! Nobody cares!" He is wrong on two counts. One, somebody did care enough to show up. Those around the room care. Secondly, those who did show up are the people you have to build the organization on.

Building for success requires building people into a team. The presiding officer is the coach. As the coach, you should encourage each member, to bringing out their best.

How do you encourage your active members? Show them that you care. Talk to them one on one. Praise them publically. Encourage them both publicly and privately, Talk privately about individual concerns and conduct, always in a friendly way that respects their personhood. When your active members know they care, they will follow and support. Some may still be dragged kicking and screaming; but deep down, they will support you because they know you care.

4. **Tell the world what you're doing.** Communication is always a problem in dying organizations. No one knows what they are doing (if they are doing anything at all). The old adage "out of sight, out of mind" is very true saying. Remember, almost all of your inactive members don't wake up every morning thinking, "I wonder what's going on at the lodge?" As for the community, they probably don't even know your lodge exists.

How do you change that? Publicity. Begin with your members. Publish a newsletter, send them a letter and tell them what's going on. Be positive.

In England, lodges send out summons or a call before the meetings. It's four pages, with an agenda, list of officers and phone numbers, dates and more. It's simply a newsletter that is sent as a reminder before each meeting. I have seen several in my travels overseas; they are positive reminders that invoke a good feeling toward the lodge.

Send your members at least a postcard before each meeting reminding them of what's happening. Postcards are an inexpensive way to notify your members. A short newsletter requires some work, but can produce results. Keep it short. Some of the newsletters I see, ramble on, wasting trees and efforts that often end up in a waste basket.

Use the media to promote your organization. Most newspapers, especially community newspapers, willingly publish press releases about the various groups in the community. Press releases should be short (usually no more than a page), double spaced and answer these five questions:

Who

What

When

Where

Why

Include the name of a contact person so they know who to contact for more information.

Why do this? It puts your organization into the public eye. It sends a positive image that you are an active group. Your members will see that their dues are actually paying for something. When it comes to finding new members, the more people that are aware of your existence, the easier it will be to invite them to join.

5. **Plan, plan, plan.** Don't skimp on the planning stages. Proper planning does indeed bring positive results. This is especially important when reviving a dying organization. Your successes, no matter how small, are most important when you are trying to change the membership perspective. Each success will bring more success and increased membership and attendance. Good planning will help insure that you have success.

6. **Dream.** Every organization needs a vision. The founders of your lodge or chapter had dreams and visions. Over time, these dreams and visions begin to fade as an organization enters maintenance mode. Things begin to be done because of tradition. When new things are not tried, a lodge or chapter becomes stale and old. Without excitement and a sense of purpose, dry rot sets in.

What are your dreams for your York Rite Body? What about your members, especially the active ones? Dare to dream. Write them down, talk about them. Find a dream that captures the imagination of your members. It may take time, but once you find a dream that the members will own, you will see new life brought into the group.

7. **Invite people, always.** Successful organizations are tireless in promoting themselves. The members are always extending an invitation to others to join them. They do it by talking about the fun they have and what it has done for their lives.

Each person is a witness for your organization. How they present themselves to the public or members of the lodge will impact how people see your organization. If your organization looks friendly, alive and exciting, people will gravitate toward it.

Lodges that are successful have an air of success about them. The members are positive toward them. Likewise, dying lodges suffer from lack of positive attitude. The members see their lodge as dying, with little hope. Attitude makes a world of difference.

8. **It is easier to bring in a new members than to reactivate inactive members.** When I was master of my lodge, my plan was to reactivate the inactive members. It stood to reason. About 90% of the membership was inactive. They paid their dues faithfully each year, so why not get them active again?

I soon learned that getting them involved wasn't as easy as I had thought. It was easier finding men who wanted to join than bring back the inactive ones. The same is true in any organization, whether it be a church, lodge chapter or other club. New members bring new life into the organization. They have few pre-conceived ideas about the group and are like fresh clay. They can be made into masterpieces with care.

9. **Mentor your new members.** When a person joins, spend time with them. Have someone work with them, one on one to understand the signs, the lessons, protocol and more. This becomes the connection to keep members active.

You have a six month window in which to activate a new member. If a new member takes his degrees and does not return, each month that passes means a greater probability that he will become an inactive member or find another group to be active in.

To mentor means to guide. A mentor becomes a trusted friend. Many of the friendships I have enjoyed in the lodge came through mentoring new members.

10. Be a friend and brother. Fraternal groups are about friendship and brotherhood. So why not create an attitude of brotherhood among its members. It starts with you. You do not have the power to change others, but you can change yourself. Your attitude will influence others to imitate your actions, positive or negative. If you build on a spirit of brotherhood and fraternalism, others will respond in a like manner.

Membership growth and retention is a slow process. At first it may look hopeless. But persevere, and you will find it easier to build. Remember, success does breed success. Start small, publicize, be positive, and you will reap the harvest.

Remember, equip, train and send out the troops, and they will come back with results!

Note: If any York Rite Bodies plan weekend festivals, Short of Time or Slow Classes, please let me know, with the date, time, location and contact person, for the Fall of 2020 and I will put it in the next newsletter, and on the website. Remember, Membership and Retention is everyone=s business.

There is no substitute for an all-out campaign to strengthen and build our membership.

New Membership by District for 2020:

DISTRICT	LOCATION	#	DISTRICT	LOCATION	#
1	Palm Beach		6	Cocoa	
	Ft Lauderdale			Melbourne	
	Miami			Fort Pierce	
	Florida Keys				
2	Manatee/Bradenton/Trinity	2	7	Jacksonville	
	Sarasota/Venice/Trinity			Fernandina	
	Everglades			St Augustine	
	Fort Myers	1		Palatka	
3	Tampa (Ivanhoe)	1	8	Lake City	
	St. Petersburg (Sunshine)	2		Middleburg	
	Clearwater (Springtime)	1		Gainesville	
				Inverness	
4	Lakeland	1	11	Tallahassee	
	Plant City	4		Marianna	
	Sebring (Highlands)	2		Panama City	
5	Daytona (Halifax)		10	Fort Walton Beach	
	Lake Sumter			Crestview	
	Sanford			Pensacola	
	Orlando				

REGARDING THE GRAND ENCAMPMENT CONSTITUTION:

Section 65 Conclaves

Section 65, The Conclaves of Commanderies shall be:

(a) Stated; which shall be held at least Quarterly at such Place as may be specified in the dispensation or Charter or otherwise provided for by law, and at such time as may be designated.

(b) Special; which may be called by the Commander or set by action of the Commandery. The shall be held for the conferring of Orders or for such business as may be prescribed by law, and at the place for Stated Conclaves, provided that the Grand Master for Subordinate Commanderies, and the Grand Commander for Constituent Commanderies, may authorize the holding of such Conclaves (for the conferring of the Orders) at a Place other than that specified in the Charter or Dispensation. The notice or summons for all Special Conclaves shall specify the business to be transacted, and none other shall be considered at such Conclave.

(c) A Commandery may, at Stated or Special Conclaves held for the transaction of business only, consider and transact business jointly with Chapters and Councils domiciled at the same location. At such Conclaves, members of Chapters and Councils who are not Knights Templar may be admitted; provided, that in the event of an objection by a Knights Templar to balloting on petitions for the Orders by all present, such petitions shall be considered only by members of the Commandery. At such Conclaves, following prayer, the Commander may declare the Commander open for the transaction of business. (1970, p. 349-356 & 456).

DECISIONS OF THE GRAND MASTER:

A Commandery should meet at least quarterly but the Grand Encampment law does not require a specific penalty for such failure. (1913, p. 60, No. 20, Melish)

It is not necessary to open a Commandery in Special Conclave for a Christmas service and therefore family and friends of Sir Knights may be present. (1937, p. 25 & 322, No. 5, Agnew,, 1988 digest - 49).

A REMINDER: GRAND ENCAMPMENT RULES STATE THAT NEW SIR KNIGHTS NEED TO BE PLACED IN MMS WITHIN 15 DAYS.

New Membership by York Rite Body 2020:

DISTRICT	DATE	LOCATION	KNIGHTED
1	12 Sept	Miami	
2			
3	7 & 14 Mar	Tampa (1), St Pete (2), Clearwater (1), Plant City (4), Manasota (2), Lakeland (1), Ft Myers (1), Highlands (2)	14
4	3 Oct	Lakeland	
5	5 Aug	Eola: Mark Master, Past Master	
6	2-3 Oct	Ft Pierce	
	3 Oct	Gainesville	
8	3 Oct	Gainesville	
9	6 & 7 Nov	Crestview	
10	4 April & 2 May 6 & 7 Nov	Pensacola (Postponed) Crestview	
TOTAL 2020 KNIGHTINGS			14
TOTAL 2019 KNIGHTINGS			136

Also, as soon as your area determines the dates for the Fall Festival, PLEASE let me know so they may be included.

Fraternally,

Henry A. Adams
HENRY A. ADAMS, PGC, KYGCH, KCT, OPC
Chairman, Grand Encampment Membership Committee

"Every Christian Mason Should Be A Knight Templar"

Some excerpts, from Guidelines for Membership, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, reprint from Aug 2009, intro. and Grand Commandery of Florida, Beaderstadt, Jon L. "Building Membership and Attendance". 2004, pg 31-43, and from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006