



RITE NOTES

Membership and Recruiting
15 October 2021

Making Your York Rite Bodies New Member Friendly

Companions and Sir Knights,

We have been focusing on what people want in a fraternity and what drives people away. We've organized a membership committee and surveyed how others see our York Rite Bodies. It is now time to put this information into practical application.

This exercise can be done individually or, preferably, as a committee. This section can be a bit painful as it will take a hard look at your members and attitudes. It may even challenge your attitudes. When I severely damaged my knee, it was not fun doing physical therapy. I preferred the narcotic muscle relaxers and pain-killers. Pop a few pills and the pain went away. But I wanted to be able to be able to walk again without a cane, it was necessary to endure the pain. The pain I endured was small compared to what I was able to accomplish.

The same is true for your York Rite Body. Stagnant chapters, councils and commanderies suffer from a lot of dry-rot, that has crept in over a long period of time. Some of it has been around so long that we don't even recognize it until it hits us right in the face.

In this exercise, you are going to focus on what it is that drives people away. You will look for ways to bring improvement and make people want to be part of your organization,

You will also be looking for strengths. These are areas that you can promote and expand upon. , Remember, no organization does everything well. Your goal is to do that best you can.

One problem with this exercise will be dealing with difficult personalities. Some people can be a real problem as their personalities drive people away. These are the people that desperately want to be loved by others, yet their very actions drive people away. Some of you can talk over a cup of coffee, and they will be willing to listen. Some will simply become belligerent. A little diplomacy combined with privacy and a true brotherly concern can help to make these transitions smooth.

Begin with your legal pad. Divide your page into two columns. In the left hand column, put the various categories that drive people away. In the right hand column, list those problems that pertain to your York Rite Body.

A word of caution. If you name names in this exercise, be very careful who you share your paper with. It can certainly be a bombshell in the wrong hands. This is not meant to be a witch hunt. Always keep in mind the due bonds of fraternal brotherhood.

Now let's look at some of the problems.

Security, How safe do your members feel coming to your Lodge. Does the place have proper lighting? Is there a feeling of security?

Many of our older Masonic Centers are located in changing neighborhoods. There may be a need for lighting or cameras. Also once inside, make sure there are signs pointing to the restrooms, dining hall lodge room, etc. A new member or visitor will not know where to go. Hallways should be well lighted.

Are there any people that belong who will make others feel unsafe? As members, as members we need to screen our organization from unsavory types. Masonry has had a long history of being a quality organization. Do not compromise our standards in order to bring in new members. We don't need drug addicts and pedophiles as members. Our members, as well as our families, should feel safe when they are among members as well as our Masonic Centers.

Is there a sense of class in belonging? Most members, and their families want to belong to something that will enhance their status in the community. Masonry has long provided that opportunity. Just how classy is your York Rite Body.

When it comes to class, it is the little things that count. The greatest of programs can look cheap when the details are ignored.

One of my pet peeves is paper plates. I've been to some to some formal banquets where they have served the meal on cheap plates. While easier to clean up, it is supposed to be a act, this defies it.

Is your Masonic Center clean and presentable? Is it a place where you can feel proud to take visitors? How about language used by your members? Some of the profanity used in some of our temples betrays the image. Masonry is supposed to present to the world.

The key to class is details. Pay attention to them, and give everyone a feel of pride.

Education--Are there opportunities to improve oneself? This has been one of the major motivating factors to a man becoming a Mason.

We are living in a time when once again people are seeking self improvement. A man's income potential can, and well, depend upon his skills. Freemasonry has offered opportunities for leadership and character development. This has been accomplished through the teaching of the ritual as well as association with good men.

Every lodge needs a good library. There should be an education officer that can give shorts on various aspects of freemasonry.

Give a member an opportunity for advancement and he will usually take it. That will only help to attract new members, but also retain them.

INTERNAL BICKERING -- There's always going to be the same. After all, our lodges and York Rite Bodies are composed of human beings. The question: is the bickering becoming destructive?

In our lodges and York Rite Bodies that have split into "armed camps", new members are often are often "triangled" into being an unwitting member of one of the factors. Everyone wants the new member, because it's one more vote for their pet project or to help them in their peeves.

New members, unless they like to fight, will quickly withdraw from such organizations. They have to put up with this type of behavior at work. They don't want to belong to something that will be simply another fight.

If your lodge or York Rite Body suffers from this kind of internal bickering, identify the problems, camps and players. How can the group begin to come together again? How can various personalities find ways to work together in the spirit of cooperation?

This can be a very difficult task. It requires tact and diplomacy as the persons who confront the factions leaders works to help them see beyond the petty problems.

Time, patience and perseverance can overcome this problem. If no effort is made to reduce the tensions death will not necessarily eliminate the problem. These kinds of people rise up and disciples who carry on the warfare after their beloved mentor has died. Only by dealing with the problem in a brotherly fashion can it come to a point of healing.

Some tips including listening, speaking one on one, learning the history of the conflict, and trying to help people get beyond it. It is like being a marriage counselor.

On a similar note are the small minded generals who want to be the big fish in the small pond. Everything must pass through them or they become offended. How they deal with the alleged "slights" will vary among individuals. Some will explode, others sabotage the project. Often they do not realize that their conduct is destructive. They need someone to help them to see a better or different way. Masonry is about people working together for a common good.

Communication--How well does your lodge or York Right Body communicate with its members? What are the official and unofficial channels?

New members, especially, need to be contacted by members of your body on a regular and timely basis. contacting them should not be a last minute thought. How well does your group do when it comes to keeping everyone informed on what is going on?

Unwritten rules--What are some of the unwritten rules that "everyone knows"? These are things that need to be shared with a new member as they are being mentored. Make a list. This might take some time as they are so ingrained into us that we don't often realize that they exist.

Lack of Fellowship--Are there opportunities for fellowship amongst the members? These include coffee before and after meetings , dinners, activities, events for the family and more. What are ways that people in your York Rite Body? How can it be improved?

Feelings of embarrassed and humiliation--Are people cruelly embarrassed for mistakes? There's good natured fun; then there is just plain meanness? We must always seek to build up our members, not to put them down.

Lack of direction--Where is your York Rite Body heading? Does it have any direction(other than surviving another month)? If it does not, the Body needs to do some long-range planning. It must to develop a vision of where it wants to be 5, 10, and 25 years down the road. How does it relate to the community? How about its members? Getting and retaining members depends heavily upon what kind of direction your Body is heading in.

Lack of Purpose--This goes along with the above entry. If there doesn't seem to any purpose, don't be surprised if your members don't come out.

Useless projects--What kind of projects does your Body do? Do they build up the organization, or simply consume time and do nothing for the community or your members? List the projects you do annually, and what they accomplish. Including any fundraising projects. You may be surprised that a few are actually money-losers.

What to do with the information--This depends on whether this is a committee doing it or just one of the members.

If you are the membership committee, work closely with the officers. Show them your finding (be careful when naming individuals). Discuss it over a cup of coffee in a relaxing area. If it is presented to a York Rite Body, it needs to be fine-tuned so that it has a recommendation of a plan of action. If it is presented to the Chapter, Council and/or the Commandery, don't use names of individuals. That will only defeat the purpose and may even fan the flames for real trouble. Remember, the purpose of this exercise is to improve the York Rite Body, not to destroy it.

This is being done by an individual, have others thinking about the future of your Body. A small group that is committed to improving the organization can go a long to achieving its goals.

Problems must be addressed in the spirit of brotherhood.

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

EXCERPTS FROM THE GRAND ENCAMPMENT CONSTITUTION:

Section 139, Election of Officers

Any member in good standing is eligible to election to any office in the Commandery.

DECISIONS FROM THE GRAND MASTER:

Permanent removal from the jurisdiction does not make or affect a members' eligibility for Grand Commander office so long as he is a member of a constituent Commandery of that jurisdiction and otherwise qualified. (1913, p.51-52, No. 14, Melish 1988 Digest - 314)

According to Templar Law any Sir Knight in good standing is eligible to be elected from the floor to any office of the Commandery, but before he can be considered a Past Commander he would have to serve his full term of office as Commander. He could not be elected, resign and then be considered a past Commander whose rank gives him permanent membership in the Grand Commandery. (1961, p.48, No.17, Wieber, 1988 digest - 130.)

Finally, we have already begun our Fall Festivals. There is still time to receive petitions for membership. Go to the Blue Lodges and speak to existing Masons about "further light" and great newly raised Masons with information about what we are all about.

We have had a great Spring recruiting effort in 2021 with 170 new Knightings for the year, let us continue the good works, and in the next three months, our membership should swell. We must, however, keep our NPD's as low as possible. Bring them back and put them to work. We can add to that 170 number, with possibly two more festivals, one in Ft Myers (Dec) and one in Jacksonville (Dec) If you have any candidates that were unable to attend our festivals in September/October this will be that last opportunity this year.

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 2021 and I will put it in the next newsletter, and on the website. Remember, Membership and Retention is everyone=s business.

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New Membership by District for 2021:

DISTRICT	LOCATION	#	DISTRICT	LOCATION	#	
1	Palm Beach	2	6	Cocoa	4	
	Ft Lauderdale	2		8	Melbourne	
	Miami	12		42	Fort Pierce	10
2	Manatee/Bradenton/Trinity	5	7	Jacksonville	5	
	Sarasota/Venice/Trinity	14			Fernandina	2
	Everglades				St Augustine	1
	Fort Myers	3			Palatka	1
3	Tampa (Ivanhoe)	10	8	Lake City	1	
	St. Petersburg (Sunshine)	4			Middleburg	3
	Clearwater (Springtime)	4			Gainesville	7
4	Lakeland	3	9	Tallahassee		
	Plant City	4			Marianna	1
	Sebring (Highlands)				Panama City	
5	Daytona (Halifax)		10	Fort Walton Beach	1	
	Lake Sumter	4		8	Crestview	5
	Sanford				Pensacola	4
	Orlando	6				

REMINDER: MASONIC MEMBERSHIP SOLUTIONS (MMS) RULES STATE THAT NEW COMPANIONS AND SIR KNIGHTS NEED TO BE PLACED IN MMS WITHIN 15 DAYS.

MMS IS NOW ON GOOGLE CROME

New Membership by York Rite Body 2021:

DISTRICT	DATE	LOCATION	KNIGHTED
1			
2	1 May	Ft Myers: Ft Myers (1)	1
3	12 & 13 Mar	Tampa: Tampa (6), St Petersburg (4), Clearwater (3), Plant City (4), Manasota (5), Lakeland (3), Ft Myers (2), Orlando (3), Lake Sumter (6)	36
	2 & 9 Oct	Tampa(4), Clearwater (1), Orlando (3), Sarasota (14)	22
4			
5	13 & 20 Mar	Orlando: Cancelled	
	9 & 16 Oct	Orlando Cancelled (moved to Tampa)	

6	11&12 Mar	Ft Pierce: Ft Pierce (9), Cocoa (3), Palm Beach (1), Miami (20), Ft Lauderdale (5)	38
	1-2 Oct	Ft Pierce (3), Miami (22), Ft Lauderdale (3), Cocoa(1), WPB(1)	30
7	3 April	Jacksonville: Jacksonville (1), Fernandina Beach (2), Palatka (1), Gainesville (7), Lake City (1), Lake Sumter (2), St Augustine (1)	15
8		Jacksonville (4), Middleburg (3)	7
9			
10	10 Apr	Crestview/Pensacola: Pensacola (6), Ft Walton (1), Crestview (5)	12
	28 Aug/4 Sep	Pensacola (3), Ft Walton Beach (1), Crestview (4), Marianna(1)	9
TOTAL 2021 KNIGHTINGS			170
TOTAL 2019 KNIGHTINGS			134

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

Fraternally,

Henry A. Adams
HENRY A. ADAMS, PGC, KYGCH, KCT, OPC

"Every Christian Mason Should Be A Knight Templar"

Some excerpts, from the Grand Commanders Handbook, published by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States, reprint from Aug 2009, intro. and Grand Commandery of Florida, Baderstadt, Jon L. " Making Members" pp 55-64, and from the Grand Commanders Handbook given to the Grand Line Officers. Membership Development, Grand Encampment, 2003-2006

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