

The Perpetual Path Program



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The Two Paths to becoming a Master Mason



The traditional path is well known. A man petitions the Lodge, is investigated, and voted upon. If he passes the ballot, he comes to the Lodge to take the Entered Apprentice Degree. He learns the categorical lecture, demonstrates proficiency, and takes the Fellow Draft Degree. After he demonstrates proficiency in that degree, he takes the Master Mason Degree. Then, he “are” one.

Several years ago in Oklahoma, a second path was developed. Called the “Chance to Advance” program, a man who had taken the Entered Apprentice Degree in his home Lodge could be voted proficient, receive the Fellow Craft Degree, be voted proficient, and receive the Master Mason Degree in a single day, and as part of a “class” of unlimited size. Rigorous and careful education programs were included for proficiency.

That program worked well, making it possible for thousands of Oklahoma men to complete the Master Mason Degree. There were many successes. But there were also some disadvantages.

★ Several Lodges simply were unable to assimilate that many new members at once, giving them “jobs” at the Lodge, making them feel welcome, and integrating them into the Lodge family. As a result, many of the new Masons lost interest and became inactive.

★ There are several difficulties with very large conferrals.

- ◆ Finding a venue which can be tyled, can be acquired at a reasonable cost, will allow us to use the facility without non-Mason employees of the facility present, and which can provide space for food service, adequate restrooms, and easy accessibility is a challenge.
- ◆ Providing sufficient Bibles, aprons, and other supplies on time and on location is difficult and can result in excess materials.
- ◆ Arranging for food catering and knowing how many meals to provide is difficult.
- ◆ The fact that dates must be established far in advance limits flexibility.
- ◆ Since such conferrals are held at the will of the sitting Grand Master, there is no predictability as to when conferrals will be available, making it difficult for the Lodges to plan or to make full use of the program.
- ◆ The process of printing the names and addresses of all Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts who have not advanced, sending them to the Lodges for vetting, and then attempting to write to the Brothers and invite them to the Conferrals, involving attempting to get current addresses, is cumbersome at best and is very prone to oversight and error.

The Chance to Advance format remains a valuable tool with which a Grand Master can “kick start” the Fraternity when that is needed or desired, but there are advantages to adding a third format to the tools available.

The Third Path

A third path, **The Perpetual Path Program**, has been developed, providing the advantages of a Chance to Advance program without the disadvantages. Note that the Senior Grand Warden and the Junior Grand Warden have agreed to continue the program into the following years.



- ◆ It is “Craft-driven” rather than “Grand Lodge-driven;” conferrals are held when the Lodges in an area apply to the Grand Lodge for permission to hold a conferral.
- ◆ They select a Lodge which is willing to act as a Host Lodge.
- ◆ Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts who wish to participate **must purchase a Perpetual Membership**.
- ◆ As in Chance to Advance, the Candidate must receive his Entered Apprentice Degree “at home.”
- ◆ The number of Candidates for a Perpetual Path conferral is limited to from 3 to 15.
- ◆ Past the initial start-up costs, there are few costs to the Grand Lodge for the program. Neither the Lodges nor the Candidates pay anything to the Grand Lodge.
- ◆ The Grand Lodge will provide the educational sessions with recorded materials.
- ◆ As many Perpetual Path conferrals as may be needed can be done throughout the year.
- ◆ Only local calendars need to be clear—there is no need to find a date which is clear state-wide.
- ◆ All arrangements concerning venue, food (probably a local Eastern Star Chapter), etc., are made by the Host Lodge rather than the Grand Lodge.
- ◆ The Lodges supply Bibles, aprons, etc., the Grand Lodge provides a few which can be loaned if needed.
- ◆ The Grand Lodge is not responsible for the performance of the Degrees, but approves the team the Host Lodge has selected. If requested, the Grand Lodge will find a Degree Team. (Note that as is true with any Degree, the Grand Master can assume the East if he wishes.)



How Does it Work?

When the Lodges in an area have Entered Apprentices or Fellow Crafts who wish to advance—either “new” Brethren or those who have not advanced for some time—they confer and select a Lodge willing to act as host. An “area” can be a county, a district, or almost any other area which works well for the Lodges involved.

The Lodges speak with their Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts explaining the program and the necessity of purchasing a perpetual membership in order to participate. They send the funds for the Perpetual Membership **and** an application to participate to the Grand Lodge.

The Host Lodge sends a completed form asking to host a Perpetual Path conferral to the Grand Lodge.

The Grand Secretary reviews and approves the application, and notifies the Trustees of the event and date. NOTE that of course if the Grand Master wishes to confer the Degrees himself, with or without the assistance of other Grand Lodge officers, he certainly can do so.

The Grand Secretary selects a Brother who is willing to come to Guthrie, pick up the educational and other materials, and attend the Perpetual Path conferral.

The Grand Lodge provides him with a list of the Brethren who have applied to have their Degrees conferred and have paid the funds for a perpetual membership.

On the Day

The Brother selected by Grand Lodge arrives at the Host Lodge and checks to make sure everything is ready and in order.

When time comes, the Host Lodge Opens on the Master Mason Degree, and goes down to the Entered Apprentice Degree.

The Brother selected by Grand Lodge provides the Entered Apprentice Education program.

The Master of the Host Lodge entertains a motion that they be declared proficient. (This works as it did in the Chance to Advance program.)

The team moves to the Fellow Craft and confers the Fellow Craft Degree.

After the conclusion of the Fellow Craft Degree, the Brother selected by Grand Lodge provides the Fellow Craft Education program and the Master calls for a vote on the FC proficiency.



After the break, the team confers the Master Mason Degree.

After the Degree and as parting comments are being made, the Grand Lodge officer presents each of the candidates with a card reminding them to go to their home Lodge to sign the by-laws, receive their dues card and their perpetual membership certificate.

After the Day

The Brother selected by Grand Lodge completes his report and returns the report and the materials to the Grand Lodge.

The Grand Lodge sends a letter to the Brother from the Grand Master, welcoming him into Masonry, congratulating him, and enclosing some materials.



What Makes It Work?

All three paths have one thing in common. **They only work if you talk to your friends about Freemasonry.** There are two reasons some Masons don't talk to their friends:



They think it is "illegal," that it is "SOLICITATION."

They are afraid they don't know enough to answer their friend's questions.

As to the first, the Grand Lodge has officially defined "solicitation" (per the dictionary) as "to urge with annoying persistency." You **can talk** to your family and friends about Freemasonry. You just can't nag them about it. You have to take "no" for an answer if they say "no."

If you want to tell your friend where to get a good steak, all you need to know is that you liked the steak. You don't have to know the history of cattle-ranching in the west; you don't need to be a certified B-B-Q judge; you don't need to be able to debate the fine points of Angus, Brangus, Charolais, or Limousin—you just need to know you liked the steak, and you think your friend would, too. Same thing with Freemasonry! If your friend asks some question you can't answer, just say, "I don't know but I'll find out." Then call [405-282-3212] or e-mail okmason1@coxinet.net the Grand Lodge and ask. No friend ever got angry when you said "I'll find out for you."



All you have to do is talk.

Questions & Answers

How much does it cost the Entered Apprentice who wants to take advantage of the Perpetual Path Program?

Whatever your Lodge usually charges a new member, plus the cost of a perpetual (that cost is 15 X your Lodge's annual dues). There is no additional charge and none of the money goes to the Grand Lodge so the Lodge loses NO money.

Why is a Perpetual Membership required?

Several reasons:

- ❖ The candidate is asking us to waive our usual procedure, in return, he makes the commitment of a Perpetual Membership.
- ❖ A Perpetual Membership insures future income for the Lodge. The goal of the Perpetual Path Program is not maximum numbers, but the stability and health of the Lodges.
- ❖ A Perpetual Membership requirement limits the number of men who will seek this alternative path, thus assuring that the *traditional* path to membership remains active and the ritual is preserved.
- ❖ A Perpetual Membership can be paid for with a credit card, thus the candidate can make payments over time rather than all at once.
- ❖ There are additional benefits to the Brother who purchases the Perpetual Membership.
 - ◆ He will not be affected by future increases in dues.
 - ◆ For most Brethren, it is less expensive in the long run.
 - ◆ He will never lose eligibility for such things as Promises Matter, Masonic burial, OES, Amaranth, and/or Job's Daughters membership for his female descendants because of suspension for non-payment of dues.

What if an E.A. has purchased a perpetual membership and filled out the application but something comes up which prevents him from going to the scheduled conferral?

The Grand Lodge will work with him to find a conferral he can attend.

How many conferrals will there be in a year?

That depends on the Lodges. A conferral happens when a group of Lodges decide to apply for permission. The Grand Lodge helps facilitate, but it does not schedule the conferrals.

Where do we get the forms for application to host a conferral, application for a Brother to participate, etc.?

After the Grand Lodge Annual Communication in November you can download them from the Grand Lodge website. www.gloklahoma.com.

Suppose we know there is a conferral in our area, and we have a friend who decides to join at the last minute. Could he take the E.A. Degree on a Friday night and come the next morning for the conferral, for instance?

No. His application for the Perpetual Path Program, the funds for his perpetual membership, and the report from the Lodge of his initiation have to reach the Grand Lodge in time to be processed. Everyone must be registered in advance, we can't handle walk-ins. Please be sure the funds and application are received at the Grand Lodge at least 10 days before the conferral.

What if our Lodge has candidates who want to participate, but no other Lodge in our area wants to?

Two possibilities.

FIRST, if you have at least 3 candidates, consider hosting a conferral yourselves. You may find there are others in the area who would also like to participate if someone hosted one.

SECOND, contact the Grand Lodge. We will try to find a conferral your candidates can attend.

