

## A Pilot Test to Evaluate the Intender Program

by Edward Rund, P.M.

Wilmette Park Lodge No. 931

Freemasonry's primary purpose is to accept good men as members and help them to become better men by exposing them to Masonry's moral philosophy. This is done by assisting candidates to learn and apply that philosophy on an individual or group basis, or both. The key to achieving this purpose is to ensure men learn the specifics of our morals and values through a mentor-guided or self-directed educational process.

Then we must ensure they remain actively involved with more seasoned Masons in the lodge and elsewhere, especially by participating in lodge meetings and degrees. Minimally, this needs to be a sufficient length of time in order for the candidate's new, Masonic-based thoughts and actions to take hold and become enduring habits.

### **What We're Doing**

Our Grand Lodge's Intender Program is designed to provide the guidelines and resources to accomplish this behavioral improvement. The brothers at my lodge are conducting a pilot test to determine the most effective way to use this Program in order to achieve our candidate education goals. We are exploring a combination of one-on-one learning opportunities with an assigned Intender as well as group events, bringing together all candidates, their Intenders, and a few lodge brethren.

We currently have nine apprentices, and shortly a tenth, so we have a good supply with which to work. Our first initiative was to conduct a two-hour Intender training program using the Grand Lodge training materials, both video and print items. We next made sure the one-on-one aspect was being carried out, including work on the catechism. Last month we scheduled our first group session and, interestingly, it included a few apprentices and Intenders from other lodges. Unfortunately, two of Wilmette's candidates were working that evening.

Our agenda was to provide a guided discussion that covered reasons for wanting to be a Mason, the lodge's expectations of candidates, and a review of (and answer to) the questions at the end of their Guidebooks. We provided time to answer their general questions about Masonry plus opportunities for comments and opinions from the Intenders and other Masons present. One of the purposes of the group aspect was to get everyone acquainted and begin building a base of friendships, as well as starting their habit of coming to the Temple. All attendees believed the session was worthwhile and wanted to know when the next one was scheduled. As the Intender Coordinator, I followed this up with calls and emails to Intenders and candidates to assess how the continuing one-on-one's were progressing, and assessing how soon they would be ready for their catechism exam.

### **What We Hope to Achieve**

1. Decreasing the number of newer Masons drifting away from lodge involvement or even leaving the Fraternity during their first few years.
2. Creating Masons who are more knowledgeable about our Fraternity, its history, philosophy, and symbolism and also building greater commitment to the lodge and its activities.

3. Building fraternal bridges between new and longer-termed Masons; between the young and the more senior members.

#### **A Continuing Process of Evaluation and Adjustment**

We recognize we're in an all too human and voluntary environment. The process of making good, committed Masons isn't easy, but using the above-mentioned educational materials and procedures, we have a much better likelihood of success. That is, than by leaving it to chance, as we have all done in the past. Continuing evaluation of the different components and making appropriate adjustments should increase those chances of success. Finally, ongoing results and problems will be fed back to the Committee on Masonic Education.