

**THE INTENDER PROGRAM, WHAT IS IT AND HOW IS IT TO BE UTILIZED
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Our Grand Lodge has given its permission to use new manuals for the Intender Program of education of our new candidates and Masons. As the appointed District Education Officer for two districts, it has been my experience that few of our lodges are utilizing the Intender Program as originally intended. Currently, the practice in most lodges is to have the Worshipful Master appoint an Intender, who then meets with the new candidate or brother, and simply posts him in the catechism.

This paper is an attempt to educate our local Lodge Education Officers and Intenders in the proper method of mentoring our candidates and new brethren to help them achieve all the light that our brotherhood can bring to them. It is not the purpose of the Intender Program to make our new brethren Masonic scholars. It is, however, meant to instill in them the desire to learn more and more about our fraternity and make them Freemasons more than just in name only.

The Intender Program, as it is now formatted, consists of an Intender Manual and four guidebooks, "On The Threshold", and a guidebook for each of the degrees. I think most Lodge Intenders currently see their job as simply posting the candidate or new brother in the catechism. As the fraternity now exists, this usually means the short form catechism and not the full long form catechism. Little, if any attention is given to the matters presented regarding the history, symbolism, and philosophy of our order.

Let me commence by defining just what the Intender is, what is his job, and how is the job to be presented in today's lodge. The term "Intender" stems from the days of old operative Masonry. This was in Scotland, approximately 119 years prior to the formation of the first Grand Lodge of England. At that time, the Intender was seen as being the most important person in the lodge after the Master. In fact, in most operative lodges the job of Intender was given to the Master after he retired from the Master's chair.

The Intender Program, as it now exists, is not really a new program to our Grand Lodge. In my personal library, I have a form of an Intender Program that was published and approved by our Grand Lodge and set forth by the Grand Lodge Committee on Masonic Information in the year 1949. In the opening of this program pamphlet, the author, Bro. John R. Porter, presents an article entitled, "Now You Are On Your Own". He states that if one is going to teach another how to swim, it is a mistake to just throw the non-swimmer off of the end of a pier and expect him to become an accomplished swimmer by the experience.

The same is true of our new candidates and brethren. He states as follows, "In Masonry, we welcome a candidate, expose him to the degree work, and then, with few exceptions, tell him that from this point on, in effect, you are on your own." Bro. Porter goes on to state, "Unless some kind brother gives the new member some much needed assistance, the future is bound to be confusing and unenjoyable." This reasoning is the basis why, in many instances, we do not see the newly raised Mason as a regular attendee at lodge meetings.

It is my observation that our lodges make three major errors in their implementation of the Intender Program. I will now enumerate those errors and give my opinion as to how these errors can be eliminated.

The first major error is that the Intender Program is not put into operation early enough in the process of taking a new candidate into the lodge. It has become the practice in many lodges to take the candidate's petition for joining our brotherhood after some brief meetings during the dinner hour that precedes a meeting. The prospective candidate attends one or more dinners, after which his petition is signed by well meaning brethren who wish to bring him into the lodge. After accepting the candidate's petition, the Worshipful Master appoints an examining committee who meets with the candidate for a few minutes prior to another dinner meeting. Rather than a perfunctory meeting with the candidate, and the asking of a few questions, and the report of the examining committee to the Master, we would suggest a different approach.

The Intender Program, if properly utilized will commence with the process of the examining committee or even earlier. If properly handled, the Membership Committee or the Examining Committee should meet with both the candidate and his significant other. It is at this meeting, the guidebook, "On The Threshold" should be given to the candidate. This guidebook would go a long way toward answering many of the questions that the candidate and his significant other must have regarding the candidate's entry into our brotherhood. Another function of this early appointment with the new petitioner, would be for the lodge to ascertain just what are the candidate's reasons for wishing to become a Mason. Just how does the candidate visualize his role in Masonry?

Once the initial investigation of the Examining Committee takes place, the committee's report is then given to the Master. It is the job of the Worshipful Master to then proceed with the balloting on whether or not to admit the candidate to our brotherhood. Upon a favorable ballot, the Worshipful Master now appoints a knowledgeable brother to become the candidate's Intender. The Intender will then take responsibility to guide the candidate in on his journey into Freemasonry. Also, at this time that the Worshipful Master sets a date for the candidate to receive his first degree in Freemasonry. By following this process, the candidate is well prepared to receive his entry into Freemasonry by having mastered the material presented in the "On The Threshold" guidebook. This preparatory procedure will go a long way in giving the candidate the information required to become a productive Freemason.

After going through the obligation and other ritual attendant to the first degree in Freemasonry, the candidate is now considered to be a brother. He then is given the guidebook for the First Degree. It is at this time that the Intender makes a series of appointments with the new brother. It would be preferable if the Intender could meet with more than one new brother at a time. Especially if the lodge has enough work to provide more than one new brother at a time. Further, the process repeats as the Fellowcraft and Master Mason guidebooks are given to the new brethren after their subsequent degrees are conferred.

At these mentoring appointments, the Intender should divide his sessions into several areas. It is only during one of these areas that the new brother is taught the catechism of his choice, either the full or the short form catechism. During these mentoring sessions the Intender should have a discussion of the questions regarding the history, symbolism, and philosophy of our brotherhood. In each guidebook, there are questions regarding these subjects that can be the focus of further study. I wish to repeat again, that it is the intention of the Intender Program to instill in our brethren the desire for further study of our brotherhood, leading to the acquisition of as much light in Masonry as can be obtained.

After a brother is raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason, he should continue to meet with his Intender. The Intender relationship is not meant to cease after the brother is raised. After the brother is raised, the Intender should continue his education into the history, symbolism, and philosophy of Freemasonry. It is at this time that the new Mason's interests should be ascertained and he should be encouraged to follow the pursuits that are of attraction to him. It is at this time that the new brother be encouraged to learn the full catechism of the Third Degree and present it in open lodge. Doing so, he is awarded a Proficiency Certificate from our Grand Lodge. Finally, it is at this time that the new brother is be given a list of books that can lead to further study of Freemasonry.

Please, let us never forget that the real purpose of the Intender Program is to produce brethren who will become regular attendees at lodge and who will continue to become Masons in more than just name only. The author of an earlier pamphlet entitles, "Masonic Law, Differences from Ordinary Practice, concludes with the following quote, "The Better informed a Mason is the more he will enjoy Masonry and the more he will get from his membership."