

Education & Enlightenment

A Special Committee of

The Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Canada



THE CHALLENGE OF RECRUITING NEW MEMBERS

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All Scottish Rite Valleys look to their craft lodges to recruit new members, with varying degrees of success. This is partly a function of the size of the Valley's location—the number of lodges it has to draw from—and partly due to the way it goes about attracting new blood. While this article will look at techniques and tactics, the truth is that face-to-face contact between an interested Master Mason and a Scottish Rite member who wants to encourage him is key to any recruitment effort. The Rite will grow one new member at a time as its members cultivate potential candidates by explaining its unique characteristics:

- Building on what is learned in Craft Lodges;
- Presenting its lessons through drama and allegory; and
- Offering expanded opportunity for fellowship and education.

Current members of the Rite should be frequently reminded of their responsibilities to actively seek new members from their Craft Lodges. Of course, we also need to be clear with people from the outset. Interested MMs will want to know the cost of membership in the Rite and the nature of the commitment they are considering. The

fact that they don't have any memory work as candidates is also a selling point.

A program for recruitment should not rely on one technique, but several. It is important to maintain a high profile for the Rite among craft lodges to demonstrate we are an active organization worth joining. Recruitment should also be a focused activity for a Valley. Someone, backed by a solid team, needs to lead the effort and ensure it is carried out with determination and thoroughness.

What follows is a brief discussion of how to go about pursuing some of these tactics.

The website scottishritecanda.ca (members section) includes a more fulsome discussion of recruiting entitled "*Recruitment Program for Master Masons*" and is an excellent resource for any AASR member concerned with recruitment. It provides considerable detail, including texts for presentations and organizational details, beyond what is possible in this paper.

MASTER MASON NIGHTS

Just as craft masonry was somewhat mysterious to all of us until we joined, the Scottish Rite is an unknown to those outside its ranks. A Master Mason's Night is an opportunity to lift that veil and give potential candidates a glimpse of what the Rite is all about.

It is important to plan in detail and start early. A date with minimum conflicts with other Masonic activities has to be identified and dispensation requested. Some Valleys seek out a sponsoring lodge that will act as host for the evening, while others try for the same approximate date each year so people can plan for it.

As noted, directed face-to-face communication works best, but extensive publicity about a MM Night is also essential. Area lodges should be asked to include a brief announcement in their summonses and posters should be put up in lodge buildings in the Valley. If possible, a lodge representative of Scottish Rite should announce the event well in advance and repeat the announcement frequently. If

there are district websites and newsletters, make sure your announcement is in them. Don't forget concordant bodies such as the York Rite and the Shrine.

Obviously, increasing membership represents a good investment, so Valleys should not be shy about making a MM Night a special event worth attending. Consider offering a dinner to potential candidates (accompanying SR members can help cover the cost) with a formal invitation from the Valley.

It is important to capture the names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses to those who express an interest in attending so the Valley can follow up later with an offer of more information or answers to questions. A welcoming table to greet visitors warmly and ensure everyone attending has registered should ensure a complete record.

It is also important to plan the evening so that it does not run too long. If MMs are sitting down to dinner at 6:30 p.m., they should be assured they will be on their way home by 9:30 p.m. The program for the evening has to fit within those time constraints and might include portrayal of a degree or excerpts from several degrees, presentations from the principal officer in all three bodies and a few words from the local Foundation rep and the Active Member. Be sure to leave some time for questions and answers and keep the presentations short and strong.

Time permitting, a backstage tour including costume and make up areas may be of interest.

Videos from Supreme Council are useful tools and can run on a continuous loop so people can look at them at their leisure. Once the evening is over, give visitors a handout that includes pamphlets on the Rite and the Scottish Rite Charitable Foundation and, of course, an application form. Website addresses for more information are essential.

OPEN INSTALLATIONS and ALLEGORIES

An alternative to a MM Night is staging an open Installation ceremony or Allegory after the 32nd degree (for those Valleys with Consistories). These also require dispensation and some minor adjustment to the script. The Scottish Rite website includes booklets on conducting these ceremonies openly.

An open installation offers the chance to invite not only Master Masons, but their friends and families to lunch or a banquet and the presentation of the ceremony itself. For the officers, it makes advancement in the Rite a more special occasion. Cultivating some interest in the Rite in a potential candidate's immediate family can only help increase his own interest.

This approach has the advantage of not increasing the workload for SR members, since they will be staging the installation or Allegory anyway. The only additional work is the vigorous program of publicity, described above, that will be necessary to get family and friends of potential candidates to attend.

DEGREE TEAMS AND PRESENTATIONS

Presentations on Scottish Rite Masonry in craft lodges are a primary means of fostering interest in membership. Such presentations can be stand-alone or can be included in an evening when a Scottish Rite Degree Team visits a lodge in your Valley. Often, lodges will welcome such visits with a high expectation that the Degree Team's work will be of exceptional quality.

A Degree Team may accept invitations from both country and urban lodges and create an opportunity to spread the SR message broadly in a Valley.

It is usually a simple matter of the Active Member or some other representative of the Valley making a short presentation on the Rite following presentation of the degree. Given that the degree itself will fill the evening, it is essential the presentation after be short and to the point. A handout that tells Masons how to get more information and an application is useful.

Lodges may also welcome a stand-alone presentation on Scottish Rite as part of their program of Masonic education. This provides a ready opportunity to explain the advantages of membership and answer questions from interested Master Masons. Be sure to mention the SR jewel as a means of identifying Rite members who can help with the process. The Membership Information material on the Scottish Rite website provides a solid source for preparing a presentation.

OPEN HOUSES

While not primarily a recruiting activity, Scottish Rite should have a presence at any gathering that provides a chance to explain our branch of Freemasonry. Given the costumes and drama that characterize it, kindling interest among visitors is usually not difficult and those visitors will inevitably include potential candidates. It is an opportunity not to be missed. A Scottish Rite presence at public functions such as Remembrance Day ceremonies and publicity around the presentation of Charitable Foundation cheques can also help to raise our profile.