

MONTANA SUPPLEMENT



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With no input from the outside world received, I am pulling an article I wrote several years ago and revamping it a bit to be relevant for today.

I am very pleased with everything I have been hearing about the goings on around the state in York Rite Masonry, unfortunately, I only get bits of information, so I don't have enough to write a full article about here. I have heard that we have gained some new Royal Arch Masons whom hopefully will continue to Council and Commandery.

Unfortunately, we are losing numbers faster than we can get new ones. This is mostly due to our dear Brothers passing to the celestial Lodge and our younger Masons are not joining the Rites. The Rites are not getting any younger. If the median age for a Chapter or Commandery is 70, that does not bode well for its future. We get new Brothers joining Lodge and if they continue their journey, they go straight to the Shrine bypassing the Rites all together and seldom return to Lodge. That is a sad because it is only cheapening Masonry and cheats that new Brother out of his opportunity to learn the true "secrets" of Masonry as well as missing "the rest of the story" through the Rites.

So then, how do we get those new Masons to become new York Rite Masons? That is a question we have all been asking for years and years. Several years ago, Worshipful Brother Daniel Gardiner wrote an extensive piece in the Montana Masonic News about getting and retaining membership and I am not about to try to add to or top that that.

One thing I will say about his article was that he mentioned several times that communications is key to getting and retaining membership.

You all know by now that I travel for work extensively which means I have not been in town to attend my home lodge, Chapter, Council or Commandery all that often. I have however, had the opportunity to visit my Brothers while on the road. I have sat in Lodge or Commandery meetings all over Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Georgia and Alabama. I noticed that York Rite Masonry is very active in other states and I even saw a poster in a Mandan ND Lodge that read "**All Masons are York Rite Masons in progress**". In asking about what they are doing to get and keep membership in the Rites, it all came down to communication. Going to Blue Lodges and communicating what York Rite Masonry is about and what can be learned, communicating with Brothers who express interest in learning more about it. Communicating with Brothers as they prepare for and go through the degrees and most importantly communicating with the Brothers after the work is done.

Being a former law enforcement officer, I was able to see a pattern forming; the word communication kept popping up. That is what the FBI would call "a clue". It was driven home to me that, sure we communicate when someone comes to us and we communicate during the degrees, but we are not communicating to raise interest and we are not communicating after the work is done. It seems that we are waiting for someone to come to us and then once we get them, we only communicate once a month at the meetings.

We have forgotten that the term "Brother" is actually a Latin word meaning "family", *not really*, but we are Brothers 365 days a year, not once a month and then take a break in the summer. We talk about what we need to do to build our membership but maybe all we really need to do is talk TO our membership.

Respectfully Submitted: Daniel E Koch Jr. PM, REPGC