



WISCONSIN MASONIC HANDBOOK

CHAPTER 4

COMMITTEES

A. INTRODUCTION

The Worshipful Master is the chief administrative officer, and is, therefore, responsible for all the lodge's activities within and without the lodge room. An effective leader realizes that he cannot and should not do everything himself, that all must share the work. For example, in building Solomon's Temple, King Solomon, "classified and arranged the workman so that neither envy, discord nor confusion, was suffered to interrupt that universal peace and tranquility . . . such is the task in planning to be an effective Master. Careful selection and assignment of qualified brethren to each committee should be given serious thought.

Without conflicting with the present Worshipful Master's plans, the Senior Warden should select the people to chair committees during his term as Worshipful Master, long before the election. The people chosen should have an enthusiasm for Freemasonry and for the program they direct.

The Senior Warden should review the responsibilities currently assigned to each officer, committee and member of the lodge. Do they include all the functions and activities in which the lodge should be active? Are there areas of responsibilities that overlap or are not assigned? Do these conform to your bylaws?

Successful, active lodges assure continuity of their activities by careful organization and definition of such activities to prevent their loss or delay with a change in lodge administration.

The brethren chosen to chair committees should have knowledge, special talent or an interest in the area of their assignment. They should have time to devote to the committee. They should agree to work amicably with anyone whom the Worshipful Master may appoint to chair other committees; and they should also have a deep sense of responsibility.

No appointment should be made without asking the brother individually and specifically if he is willing to accept the appointment and to work diligently at the task assigned. This must be done before the committee appointments are announced.

Whatever committees are appointed, plan them well in advance and be sure that the committee chairman understands that each committee is expected to discharge its responsibilities. No one can afford committees in name only - see to it that they work. One of the best stimuli in accomplishing this is to make it known that committee reports will be called for at specific times.

Some general rules for the operation of a successful committee are:

- Have active chairmen who are delegated authority to recruit their committee members.
- Follow a planned agenda.
- Start on time, work your plan, and adjourn early enough.
- Give advance notice of each meeting in writing; then call and remind each member a day or two in advance.
- Keep a written record of important items of each meeting.

Perhaps some lodges will use more committees than may be found in the following paragraphs. Members of committees usually take an active part in the lodge. Committee appointments activate old as well as new members of the lodge. Attempt to involve a large number of members in committees, which will stir their interest and activity.

B. SUGGESTED COMMITTEES AND THEIR DUTIES

The following is a list of some typical lodge committees, their duties and responsibilities:

1. ATTENDANCE COMMITTEE

The chairman of this committee should very likely be the Senior Deacon and should consist of enough members so as to efficiently discharge the following duties:

- A constant striving toward better attendance.
- Use this committee as a telephone calling committee for local members. Each local member should be called at least four times during the year.

- When calling, offer transportation. A brother is more likely to attend a meeting if someone offers to pick him up.
- Maintain statistics relative to the effectiveness of this committee. Teams could be selected from within the committee who might want to compete with each other in securing better attendance.
- This committee should be used to call the membership advising them of a Memorial Service.
- Specifically, be sure the brethren are called to attend lodge on the anniversaries of their raising and on their birthdays. Send birthday greetings on behalf of the lodge. The Lodge Secretary will have the dates.
- Close coordination and information sharing with the Program Committee is needed.

2. PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Senior Warden might well be the chairman of this committee but when he is not, the committee must coordinate with him. Programming is of such importance that a separate section of this handbook is devoted exclusively to this subject. (See: Lodge Programming, Chapter 5 of this HANDBOOK.) Duties of the committee include, but are not limited to:

- Planning specific programs in advance of the year and second half of the year. Degree work, because the timing and amount is usually uncertain, can be worked in as specials, if necessary, not interfering with any planned programs.
- Consulting with the Worshipful Master for any preferences or suggestions he might have.
- Consider assigning each program to a separate brother or group of brethren for developing and arranging.
- Making sure that the Attendance and Publicity Committee are kept well informed of your plans so that proper information can be given to the membership.
- Arranging meetings involving a dinner or potluck or buffet as they are usually well received - remember, one way to a Mason's lodge attendance, like a man's heart is often through his stomach.

- Encouraging lodge visitations on those evenings when an especially good program is being planned.

3. DEGREE COMMITTEE

This committee has no single chairman but probably three co-chairmen - one for each of the symbolic degrees which could be the **Worshipful Master** for the **Master Mason Degree**, the **Senior Warden** for the **Fellowcraft degree**, and the **Junior Warden** for the **Entered Apprentice Degree**.

A Degree Part Checklist can greatly assist in planning who is to do the various parts of each degree. By reviewing this form, one can ascertain who has what part and what parts need to be assigned. It would be a wise act for the Worshipful Master at the beginning of his term to fill in the blanks with names along with alternates. It is a good mark of planning and it reflects accordingly. Copies of this form can be found in Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK. Be sure you have the Multiple Letter Cipher available for use in the ritualistic work.

The responsibilities of each of the Degree Captains for specific degrees are:

- Secure and develop the degree team with satisfactory alternates in key positions. Use brothers who are not officers whenever possible. Put as many men to work as possible.
- Arrange for sufficient rehearsals so that the work may be impressively exemplified.
- Utilize the skills of the proficiency man assigned to your lodge or call on the District Lecturer for assistance as needed.
- All officers are required to participate in the Schools of Instruction and members of the degree team should be urged to attend. All lodge members are welcome.
- Keep moving the work around, giving the newly made Master Mason a chance to work in a degree.
- See that the Charges are committed to memory as part of the work when ever possible.
- The Deacons should be members of this committee and be charged with the responsibility of the proper preparation of the candidate. Others may do the preparing but the Deacons should be responsible for it and see that it is properly done.
- As a member of this committee, the Senior Warden should arrange for outstanding degree teams in other lodges to visit his lodge and confer degrees occasionally. Be sure that the Attendance Committee is informed of such visitations well in advance so that extra effort can be expended in

promoting attendance.

- Once again, all members of the lodge should be encouraged to work on a degree team. This committee should be concerned with the proficiency of the work as well as with providing ample opportunity to each member to work if he is capable and so desires.
- Encourage all posters, officers and degree team members to work toward a ritualist card or proficiency card. Further information relating to Proficiency and Ritualist Cards may be found in the Multiple Letter Cipher, pages 14, 15.

4. POSTING COMMITTEE

The Posting Committee should consist of the Lodge Counselor who is very proficient with the “Wisconsin Program”. If the lodge has a Ritualist/Proficiency man as designated by the Grand Lecturer, they should be on this committee. Their duties would be to teach candidates the prescribed ritualistic work and to conduct examinations as defined by the Masonic Code of Wisconsin.

5. PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

The appointed “News Hawk” should head the Publicity Committee. A wide-awake Publicity Committee will play an extremely important part in maintaining the vitality of the lodge. Some of its duties could be:

- To see that proper notice of all meetings is given to members of the lodge with special emphasis on special meetings. This requires a coordination of effort between the Program Committee and Attendance Committee. If the Worshipful Master uses a Trestle board he should also consult with his committees when creating the Trestle board.
- It could be most beneficial to develop and publish a monthly bulletin discussing recent activities as well as those planned for the future.
- Arrange for newspaper publicity regarding interesting events including pictures wherever possible. Advance publicity will receive more attention than post publicity. Also, arrange to send this information along with photographs to the Editor for possible use in the Wisconsin Masonic Journal. This committee should become familiar with the requirements of the media being utilized to prevent any disappointment or misunderstanding.

Refer to Chapter 18 of the HANDBOOK for timely tips on news releases and "Public Relations".

6. REFRESHMENT COMMITTEE

The inner man needs proper attention and it is the purpose of this committee to satisfy that need. The Stewards are the logical co-chairmen as stated in the installation.

Some duties could be:

- i. To see that the tables are properly furnished with refreshments as directed by the Worshipful Master.
- ii. To assume responsibility for planning and arranging the food portion of all dinners and banquets.
- iii. Take charge of dinner ticket selling and reporting of reservations. Close coordination is required with the Program Attendance and Publicity Committee.

7. VISITATION COMMITTEE

The chairman of this committee should be the Lodge Chaplain and the members could very well be composed of retired brothers. The responsibilities could include visiting brethren who are confined by sickness or ill health. Remember especially to treat the confined brother “as you would like to be treated if you were in his position”

8. GREETING COMMITTEE

This committee might best consist of the Worshipful Master and Wardens. They should arrive at the lodge well in advance of the appointed time for the meeting and greet each and every brother as he enters the lodge building. This not only creates a friendly atmosphere, but also makes each brother feel that the officers of the lodge are personally interested in his attendance. This is also a good opportunity to welcome a visitor and make him feel comfortable and at home.

9. FURNITURE AND/OR PROPS COMMITTEE

The Counselor of the lodge is the logical chairman of this committee or the chairman of the trustees. The duties should include:

- a. To see that the jewels, regalia, and furniture of the lodge are in proper order for each meeting

- b. To keep the necessary equipment used in the preparation of candidates clean and in good order at all times.
- c. To see that all aprons are kept cleaned and pressed.
- d. To make sure that all equipment is put away in its proper place at the close of each meeting.
- e. Work with the Degree Captains in providing, setting up, and returning to its proper place all of the properties needed for the conferring of degrees.

10. FINANCE COMMITTEE

Each lodge shall have a Finance Committee consisting of the Worshipful Master, Senior and Junior Wardens, as provided by the Wisconsin Masonic Code, Chapter 62.04. The basic responsibilities of this committee are to:

- a. Examine and approve all bills, claims, and accounts brought before the lodge.
- b. Periodically examine the books and vouchers of the Treasurer and Secretary and report to the lodge.
- c. Annually present an income and expense budget to the lodge for adoption. Attention should be given to special and separate accounts such as charity, repairs, etc. as well as reserve and depreciation accounts. Periodic reviews should be made of the budget process with reports made to the lodge. See Chapter 6 of the HANDBOOK.
- d. Take particular care to periodically review all dues accounts to determine the delinquencies and arrange to take the necessary action to prevent perpetuating the problem by **PERSONALLY** calling on local delinquents, and try every means possible to avoid suspension. Perhaps a payment plan can be arranged or maybe a referral to the Charity and Welfare Committee is needed.
- e. A study should be made, at least annually, of the income accounts in order to detect the possible need for adjusting any fees or dues along with an appropriate recommendation.

11. MEMORIAL SERVICE AND OBITUARY COMMITTEE

This committee usually consists of the Secretary and at least one Past Master whose duty it is to prepare the obituaries within the wishes of the family and to set up a method within the lodge to notify all the brethren of the time and place of a Masonic Memorial Service, using the Attendance Committee when applicable.

12. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The most valuable resource of every lodge is its membership. A Worshipful Master who knows his membership and puts it to work for the best interest of the lodge is bound to have a successful program. To aid a would be Worshipful Master in planning his yearly program, it would be worth the effort to assemble a profile of the membership's talents and abilities, which the lodge as a whole could benefit from. For example, the committee could compile statistics regarding its membership, average age, length of membership, proximity to the lodge building, to other members, or for uses by other committees, the Worshipful Master or Secretary/Treasurer. The information gathered from the survey could be unlimited, keeping in mind that the information is for internal lodge use only. You must comply with Chapter 89 of the Masonic Code of Wisconsin. A suggested copy of the Membership Form can be found in Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK.

13. EDUCATION COMMITTEE

"The basic function of a Masonic Lodge is to make Master Masons. This does not mean the formality of raising candidates it extends far beyond that period in the life of a Mason. The task of making Master Masons must be directed toward all of us, those who are Master Masons. At no time in Masonic history has there been a greater need for an understanding of what Freemasonry is and what it stands for than there is today."

"The fruits of our efforts to teach and to learn about Freemasonry, the interest that we show the candidates as we welcome them into the new World of Freemasonry, and the knowledge and enthusiasm which we give to our members will be evident in the years to come. We will reap in exact proportion to the amount we sow."

Because this is an area of such importance, a separate section of this handbook has been devoted exclusively to Masonic Education. See: "Educational References," Chapter 14 in the HANDBOOK, also refer to the "The Counselor Program Handbook" in the red loose leaf folder entitled, "Let There Be Light."

14. INTERVIEWING COMMITTEE

This committee, which the Worshipful Master selects for each petition, is of the utmost importance since the brethren selected are generally the ones who leave a deep and lasting impression on the petitioner and his family.

The Worshipful Master of the lodge shall appoint an interviewing committee of three members and it shall be the duty of each member of the Committee to personally interview the applicant to determine his qualifications for membership and file an individual report or a collective report with the Secretary of the Lodge. Each member of the Committee shall make a recommendation based on the facts and opinions formed from these facts.

The Worshipful Master of the lodge shall determine the method by which the members of the Interviewing Committee shall conduct their interviews. The Master may appoint a Master's Board to consider the reports of the Committee members and to interview the applicant, as the Master may order.

The Worshipful Master of the lodge may order the members of the Interviewing Committee (and Master's Board, if used) to complete the separate petition interview report prepared by the Grand Lodge Committee of Masonic Education. The forms for such reports are available from your lodge secretary or the Grand Lodge Office.

Should an interviewing committee or a majority thereof refuses to report on a petition, the Worshipful Master shall discharge the committee and appoint another one. If one member of an Interviewing Committee makes no report, the Worshipful Master may appoint another member in his place or he may order a ballot. The Master shall not demand that a member of an Interviewing Committee state his reasons for his opinions.

15. CHARITIES AND WELFARE COMMITTEE

One of the greatest attributes of a Freemason is the aid and assistance toward his fellow man through charity. Although many charitable acts are conducted on an individual basis, there are several areas in which the lodge can become involved. The Charity Committee is a standing Committee of the lodge and its duties are covered in the Masonic Code of Wisconsin, Chapter 63, Section 63.07, Regulations for Lodges.

16. YOUTH COMMITTEE

The Youth Group Funding Committee is governed by the Masonic Code of Wisconsin and defined in Chapter 29, Section 29.191 and Chapter 62, Section 62.02.

One of the most important responsibilities of the Junior Warden of the lodge is as liaison to all Masonic youth organizations. The sponsorship, support, promotion and assistance in the development of the activities of Chapters of De Molay, Bethels of Job's Daughters, and Assemblies of Rainbow for Girls is vital to their existence and well being as well as ours.