

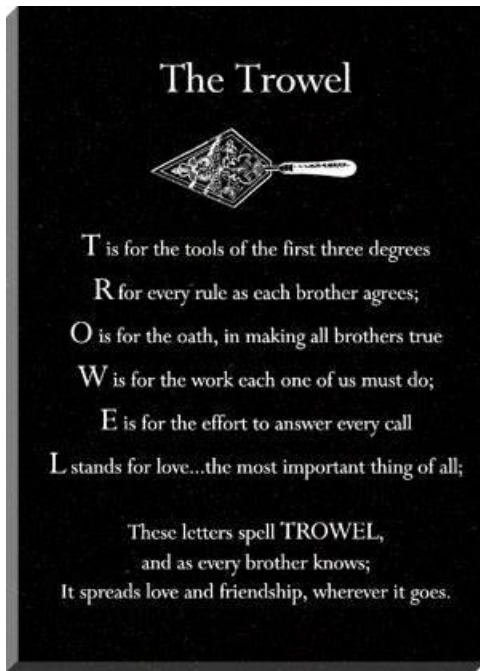
## Lodge Committees: Ecosystem of the Lodge, Biosystems of Masonry

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Merriam-Webster defines an ecosystem as: *“the complex of a community of organisms and its environment functioning as an ecological unit”*. It defines a bio system as: *“A living organism or a system of living organisms that can directly or indirectly interact with others.”* If I were to rewrite these slightly to fit as masonic metaphors for the term “committee” I might write them thus: *“ecosystem: the complex of a group of brothers functioning as a committee within a lodge”*; and, *“bio system: collection of committees or system of committees that can directly or indirectly interact with others for the good of a masonic lodge”*. But why? Why do that?

It is my belief that today a lodge may live or die according to the health of its committee system and committees. Not only do committees carry out the necessary tasks that allow a lodge to function on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis, but they serve as the training ground for the line officers who must learn what it takes to operate a lodge and, and this is a big one, committee work is the continuation of the lessons learned through the first three degrees of masonry, the mechanism for men to start their individual journey’s according to masonic principles and teachings.

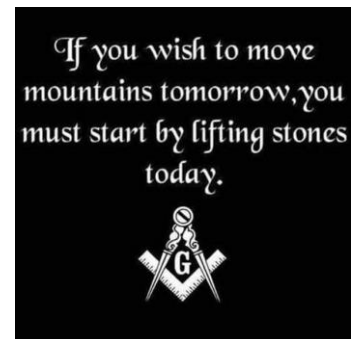
The demand on a lodge to attract and receive good men through the West Gate into masonry and get them started on their respective journeys is great. That’s our job – *to make new masons*. After taking a man through his first three lessons, it is up to the lodge to provide the new mason the means to continue his growth and to apply lessons he gained through participation in his degrees. One of the most beneficial, most readily available tools for a lodge to do this is by assigning a new brother to lodge committees. Depending on the size and needs of the lodge, it might be one committee or it might be more than one; the members of the lodge must get to know their new master mason and try to match him (and his skills & interests) to appropriate lodge committees. This is how we can transition the new brother from “the new guy” to a full member of the lodge.

One or two good committee assignments in his first year provide our new brother several lessons and opportunities to take control of his journey and pro-actively manage it. First, it is a great way to meet brothers from the lodge who he – so far – may have only seen on the sidelines or in select stations during his degrees. Regular committee meetings provide the mechanism for a new master mason to

develop new relationships, identify (natural) mentors (even if unaware that he's doing it), demonstrate to the lodge he is an enthusiastic part of the team and willing to invest his time and labors in the lodge and brothers, and, very importantly, begin learning how the lodge works. Through his committee work, he learns tasks that need to be done to support lodge functions, what a committee chairman is required to do, how to report to the lodge on committee projects, and the lodge process to discuss and approve spending. These are important things to learn for someone who may eventually enter the officer line and perhaps advance to the East.

The committee is also the way a lodge accomplishes many of the tasks needed to operate the lodge including auditing the finances, investigating petitioners, raising funds, educating brothers, taking care of the lodge property, and managing lodge finances. When a lodge's committees are functioning, they are preparing the brothers for leadership roles well into the future. When a lodge does not, or perhaps cannot adopt an active committee structure, the work of the lodge falls to the few, often past masters, who know the necessary tasks and deadlines to keep things running and keep the West Gate open. This can lead a lodge to frequently "re-cycle" past masters through the East because they are among the few in the lodge who know what deadlines need to be met and how to meet them. A thriving committee system is constantly preparing new brothers for these lodge leadership roles.

Finally, the committee system takes a new master mason from his degrees where he has been instructed on Faith, Hope, Charity (Love), the wages of a laborer, and the passage of time with the unstoppable approach of the ultimate deadline which can arrive without notice and with our life's work incomplete. He learned the importance of being true to his peers, true to his work, and true to his word as a Master Mason. Through his service on lodge committees, the new mason can apply, practice, and demonstrate all of these attributes to his brothers, to himself, and to his God. The lodge committee is the ideal gateway to his own unique masonic journey, to the task of setting and meeting his own direction and expectations in masonry and ultimately in life.



Thus, a lodge committee might be said to be one ecosystem within the body of the lodge and the committee system itself said to be the bio system of masonry within the lodge. Committee work in a lodge is the application of brotherhood and masonic principles, exemplified through common labors toward a common goal and demonstrating commitment, compromise, sacrifice, and leadership. Brothers become closer, relationships are strengthened, and a mason participates in his first living application of a recent, key lesson regarding *"that noble contention, or rather emulation, of who can best work and best agree"*.

The committee system provides life to the lodge as the heart and blood stream do for the human body. It ensures necessary tasks are done, that the labors of the brothers are distributed as needed to support lodge operations and programs. Importantly, it generates new and energetic leaders, trained and mature in the business of the lodge, ready and qualified for future leadership roles and their respective turns in the officer line.

Brethren, I hope you find this brief exploration of lodge committees useful. I wish you each a flourishing fraternity, brotherhood, and the rich benefits of a thriving lodge founded on and driven by the principles of Faith, Hope, and Charity!

I remain sincerely and fraternally yours! May the blessings of Heaven rest upon us and all worthy brothers!

*Bro. Bill*