

## Step Guide - Step 11: Retrieving Members

There will always be some members who decide that Freemasonry is not for them and who resign at an early point. By following Steps 1 to 6 in PATHWAY this number should be kept to a minimum. Resignations that come later in a member's experience of the Craft tend to follow a change in one or more circumstances and can often be anticipated in advance. Lodges that recognise the warning signs and respond early to these circumstances can often avert resignations before they happen. Where warning signs are not recognised and action taken and a member submits his resignation, it is very difficult for the Lodge to persuade him to reverse his decision. Help offered by Divisional Officers has been most successful at retrieving memberships, whether within the same Lodge or by the member moving to another. Early recognition and action are key to the success of any attempt to avert or retrieve a resignation.

### Warning Signs

A reduction in the pattern of attendance or participation is the key indicator of a potential resignation. Such changes in patterns often follow an event that may have been missed or underestimated by others but which may have been of great significance to the member concerned. In some cases personality differences or issues prompt members to leave their Lodge, although they might be content to continue in active membership of another Lodge. Brethren who are experiencing a change of circumstances or difficult times in their lives sometimes offer their resignation precisely when Freemasonry could be on hand to render assistance and support. Those who move home or make other changes to their lifestyle may consider resigning from the Lodge. Many who do resign are reluctant to disclose to members of the Lodge the **true reason** why they did so. Other warning signs of a potential resignation include: - unwillingness to take office, commit to ritual or assist with Lodge activities - a lack of preparation prior to Lodge meetings or events - delays in paying the lodge subscription - not responding to telephone calls, emails or letters.

### **Guidance for Lodges**

- Implement the guidance in Step 10.
- Encourage all members to be alert to the warning signs of a potential resignation. If warning signs are noticed, ask the Lodge Officer best placed to address the issue (eg, Lodge Secretary, Almoner or Mentor, or the member's Personal Mentor or sponsor) to contact the member.
- Take early action to: - identify the needs, concerns and expectations of any member who may be at risk of resigning - address those needs and concerns and provide support as far as is possible within the Lodge - refer the matter to the Province if the Lodge is unable to resolve the issue to mutual satisfaction.
- On receipt of a notice of resignation, report the matter to the Lodge Almoner and to the Visiting or Divisional Officer. Do not accept the resignation until: - the Lodge Almoner and / or others have made contact with the member - the Lodge has had the opportunity to invite a member to withdraw his resignation.
- In the event of Resignation - the opportunity for the Brother to reconsider must be understood by setting out how a Lodge can invite a member to withdraw his resignation. If the resignation is due to a decline in circumstances (such as finances or health), arrange for the Lodge Almoner to offer support to the member. Accept that if the Lodge cannot retain a member it may still be possible for the Province to retrieve him if he moves to another Lodge.

- Maintain contact with a member who resigns due to a change in personal circumstances; he may be able to re-join at a later date.
- For example: - the Lodge Almoner could keep in touch with him, sending him birthdays cards, etc - he could be supplied with information concerning the activities of the Lodge - he could be sent Provincial newsletters - he could be sent copies of Freemasonry Today - he could be invited to social functions - he will continue to be eligible for relief grants from the Masonic Charitable Foundation.
- Inform those who do resign their Lodge membership that, unless they also resign from the Craft, they continue to be a Freemason and may visit any Lodge **once** as an "Unattached Freemason".
- If a member resigns due to his relocation to another area, contact the Provincial office to trigger the migration process and encourage the member to retain his membership at least until he has joined a Lodge in his new locality.

Please find attached a pie chart showing the reasons for resignations in Wiltshire since October 2017