

JUST PART OF THE COMMUNITY

Despite many years in Freemasonry trying to encourage a more outward looking attitude, even I was surprised a few weeks ago to realise just how introverted we have become and how much damage that has done to us.

We have recently had a change of Vicar in our Parish and, because the previous one was at best, apathetic about the Craft, I sought discussions with the newly appointed Vicar, a lady, to find out her opinion.

As a result, she invited me to attend one of her clergy "Team Meetings" to talk about the Craft. Now, where I live, the "Team" means the vicar, seven retired Vicars including one canon, three Lay Readers, one Lay Reader Emeritus and one Lay Reader due to be ordained in July 2006!

I took a ritual book, Book of Constitutions, my regalia, Annual Reports from all our four charities and the pictorial celebration of 275 years.

I explained that I would answer any questions, except those about our modes of recognition, but I told them why (i.e. that they are only used within the Lodge Room) and added that, if they really wanted to know them, they could probably be found on the internet.

A question and answer session went on for over one and a half hours and would have lasted longer had it not been for another meeting which followed mine. Perhaps not surprisingly the main themes were "secrecy", prayers and the GAOTU, but a lot of other ground was also covered.

Since the meeting, the feedback has exceeded all my expectations and is, without exception, positive ranging from one Lay Reader who stopped me to say how interested she had been and that it had allayed her doubts "but why hasn't someone done this a long time ago?" to a letter of congratulations for being "Daniel in the Lions Den" and dealing with it so well.

A final thought. We were taught to be cautious, but that does not mean to hide our membership and refuse point blank to answer any questions. To me it means being normal about my membership, just as I am about my membership of the Church, the Rotary Club, the badminton club etc. and sensible when answering questions about the Craft.

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