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What is the Purpose of the Masonic Fraternity Now and In the Future?

As technology evolves, the complexities of human interaction are becoming more and more defined by our thumbs, and not by our presence. It is not uncommon to walk into a restaurant, a coffee shop, or any other retail establishment and see the masses with

their attention turned towards a small colorful liquid crystal display. It is unfortunate that I must admit my complicity in this activity.

Collectively, we have forgotten that human socialization is a complex mechanism which is as fluid and changing as the beach sands with each ebb and flow of the waters. We have gradually begun to ignore the intricacies of conversation and company. We have gradually forgotten what it is like to be surrounded by those who are different than we are.

Social networks have improved the ability to find those who are like minded. While it was once that meeting a compatible like minded person would be happenstance, technology has developed the process to the point that simply inputting select desires into a website which will connect you with those who look, think, and act like you. But to what detriment has this evolution occurred?

We are now enclosed within our social groups as if we are defending the Alamo. Those who we choose to let in are side-by-side with us as we fight to keep opposing armies out. We separate ourselves from differences with the invisible walls of the fortification, keeping out those who offend while allowing the entrance of those who subscribe to the viewpoint of the adopted community.

It is outside of these walls that we find the place of Freemasonry now and in the future. It is within the lodge where, for a few nights a month, we set aside our electronic society and replace it with the flesh of our brothers. While we recognize that we have differences, we ignore them in favor of fraternity. We seek to surround ourselves with diversity of thought, but singularity of character.

Freemasonry persists as one of the few bastions of inclusion in an increasingly tribalistic society in which political affiliation, social movements, and religious preferences, among other sub-groups have become more important than the human condition. It is in this space that Freemasonry shall hold its niche.

Somewhere there is a man who is in search of belonging, but who also doesn't want to be tied down by the ideologies of the right or the left, this group or that group. He seeks only inclusion in the company of men of character, who though they may be of many beliefs have seen the beauty in their differences. He will find this in Freemasonry.

Somewhere there is a man who seeks to expand his knowledge of his deeper meaning. He wants to learn to develop and improve himself, and to learn how to more adequately serve his fellow man. He will find this in Freemasonry.

The role of Freemasonry is now, as it has really always been, to aide and assist in human interaction and growth. In generations past, fraternal organizations served as our entertainment and socialization prior to the advent of our on-demand mentality. Far too often, people become lost in the web of technological advances. At times it has reached points where some have chosen to disconnect. It is in Freemasonry that those who chose to disconnect can find their relief.

In "*Field of Dreams*," James Earl Jones gives a stirring speech about the longevity of baseball. I will contend that it applies more aptly to Freemasonry. *The one constant through all the years, has been Freemasonry. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It's been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt, and erased again. But Freemasonry has marked the time.* Any successful experiment needs not only variables, but a constant. Society is the experiment, eras and movements are the variables,

Freemasonry is the constant. Our fraternity has survived since before our country was founded, and it will carry-on long after we have laid down our working tools.

The role of Freemasonry now and in the future is to do what it has done since well before any of us were the newest entered apprentice.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue serve as the example of inclusion and tolerance.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue to offer that sense of belonging to men who may be in need of it.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue to serve as a guide to the knowledge, wisdom, and improvement that so many men seek within themselves.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue to serve as the reminder and instructor of the diminishing art of human interaction and communication.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue to serve as beneficent organization the seeks to serve and improve the human condition.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue to provide the continuity in a society that seems to change with every waning breath of our existence.

The present and future role of Freemasonry is to continue the work of self-improvement and to overcome the obstacles of progress. While progress is good, the inherent detriment caused by the loss of human interaction is of far greater concern than what the newest technologies will bring.

Freemasonry cannot be defined by roles of past, present, or future; it can only be defined by presence. If one wants to benefit from the fraternity, there is but one way to do that, and it is through presence. The complexities of our fraternity serve as a blessing as it

cannot be transcribed through computer code or given a virtual dialogue, our fraternity and its success can only be defined by presence.

Wisdom comes through presence of mind: a devotion to study, a willingness to endure, and the gift of mercy.

Strength comes through presence of character: the ability to remain silent and listen, the fortitude to be truthful, and enduring desire for justice.

Beauty comes through presence of the soul: remaining independent in spite of pressure, demanding equity in spite of adversity, and attainment of the improved self.