

**“After enduring 300 years of time, has Freemasonry evolved enough to still be relevant to young men in 2017? Explain.”**

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The decline of global membership strength during the last fifty years of three-century old Freemasonry commenced with the cyberspace age of new science and new technology of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the current century of the *Anno Domini* era in Gregorian Calendar<sup>1</sup> when young men are actively obsessed with internet and networking. For 300 years, freemasonry passed through three transitional era of transformation and composition with restraint historic evidence about the strength and participation of young men. Henceforth, the Craft<sup>2</sup> gradually advanced the 18<sup>th</sup> century European reflection of thoughts during its establishment in 1717. Its evolvement towards the future was outlined and conceived by the necessity of goodwill and charity in 19<sup>th</sup> century coupled with impressive ritualistic masonic education cultivated for the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, masonic scholars have organized programs to alleviate the declining membership but resulted to a 58-year failure.<sup>3</sup> Today of 2017 demands concerted effort to reclaim the depleted membership strength. It is about time for Freemasonry to focus the Grand Principles and Cardinal Virtues to young men for the enhancement of masonic endeavors to reinforce the declining membership by recruitment and retention; for mentoring and activation in lodge management; and, its adaptiveness to latest science and technology in the execution of creative programs for lodge advancement.

The alarming rate of declining global membership during the past **six decades**<sup>4</sup> commands urgent reinforcement by recruitment and retention as the goal of every lodge. Though records revealed worldwide **six million** membership<sup>5</sup>, we should infuse the relevance of masonry to young men while ushering awareness of social change<sup>6</sup> to augment the downward statistical trend. The membership statistics across the English Constitution<sup>7</sup> shows 56.6% roster drop within 72 years from 500,000 in Post War (after 1945) that remarkably decreased to 214,000 in 2017. This U.K.<sup>8</sup> statistics declares the age bracket distribution of 34.65% for age 21-70 and

65.35% for age 70+<sup>9</sup> that comprises a very low 9% young age under 40 and 65% elderly age 50-80.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, the USA Masonic Service Association statistics<sup>11</sup> shows the 20<sup>th</sup> century highest record of 4,103,161 members in 1959 but recorded a frightful 1.28% steady average annual decrease for 56 years from 1959 to 2015. This 71.70% membership reduction equates to 2,941,908 lost members. The irreversible decline of US and Canada combined membership<sup>12</sup> shows 4.11% negative variance from 2014 to 2015. Aside from US mortality rate<sup>13</sup> of 0.8237% including death after work retirement, the major causes of the membership loss are demits, suspensions, lack of interest leading to voluntary resignations and expulsions.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it is noted from the English Constitution that organization and management are dominated by the elderly rather than by the early matures which shows an average age of 44 at initiation. The 55% of members at retirement age of 63 is also the average age of the seating three lights and officers during the last four years.<sup>15</sup> The quarterly communication<sup>16</sup> of UGLE and SGC<sup>17</sup> propounded the recruitment schemes such as “member-get-member”; constitute lodges for young men; and, attraction of fresh professional graduates. Correspondingly, retention of young masons should be focused on attentive equality treatment; initiatives; social function and decision-making participation; and, the esprit de corps among members. These statistics and observations clearly show the declining membership but support the formulation and execution of ingenious programs for recruitment, retention and engagement of young men towards effective governance.

Mentoring programs of young men for management and decision-making procedure merit challenges of efficient and prolific organization of the lodge. Whereas, the activated novice masons essentially create dynamic mind of reverence and allegiance to the masonic culture. These mentored and activated young men are the natural prospect for lodge governance to become tomorrow’s perfect lodge managers.<sup>18</sup> During quarterly communication,<sup>19</sup> WB CE Lord

and WB JR Soper suggested the necessity of involvement and mentoring of young men to lodge organization and decision-making process, thus, stated:

Some lodges, in order to do just that, have abolished the Lodge Committee so that decisions are taken by the whole Lodge – this ties in with our early comment about the relatively high average age of decision makers. And if you find you have a Masonic star in waiting, let him move forward quickly and become a **Young Master** as the chances are he could help ensure the future of your lodge as well as being of huge benefit to your Province or the Metropolitan Grand Lodge.

Moreover, it is the way to mix old life experiences with young new ideas to form associated results as well as implement landmark charity works. This is the concept that coincides the thoughts of Bro. Holly Ellyatt.<sup>20</sup> as he theorized that:

Young people bring new ideas. We can get all the 60 year olds that we want but it's important to bring in people with new ideas. Unless we get that, the way we interact with the outside world, freemasonry is not going to change.

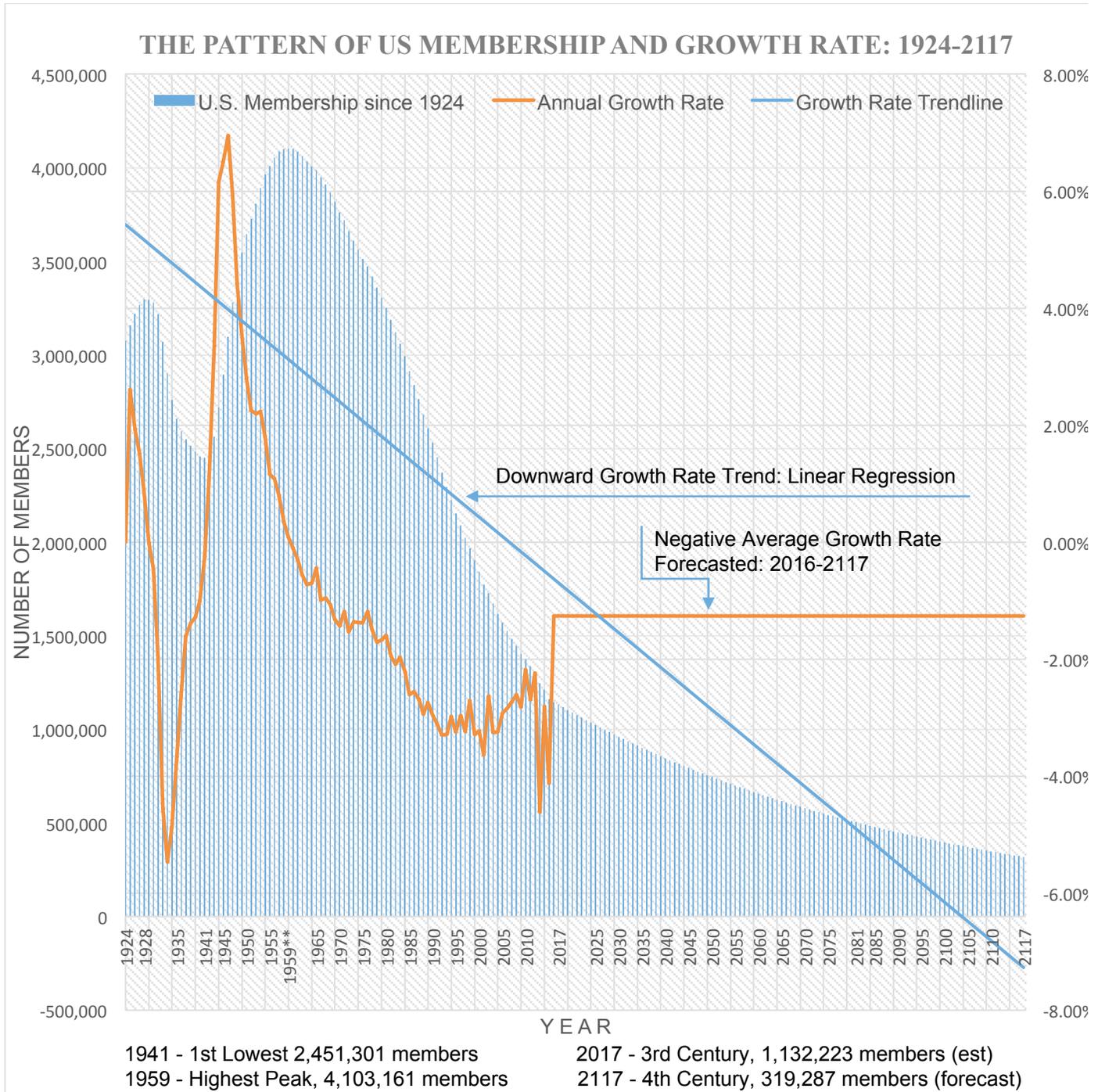
After professional mentoring, the activated young men help sustain the masonic fraternity with vigor of cyberspace culture, thereby, ensure dedication to the organization and become beneficiaries of innovative decision-making medium while enhancing and uplifting tomorrow's relevance.

The adaptiveness of young men on state-of-the-art tools and approaches of science and technology as applied to hands-on current Information Technology will be useful in the management of lodge affairs and activities. The advent of computer inventions enabled most people to utilize the internet as a fast access tool in their educational, professional and timely obligations. This extend to the essentials of discovering the neoteric vocabulary in exemplifying

Masonry through digital communication in computer networks by social media and websites of the internet.<sup>21</sup> In fact, anyone will find the caption “2B1ASK1” in masonic websites. This means “*To be One ask One*” where you connect internet links “*How can I Join*”<sup>22</sup> for enticing a promising candidate for masonry – the way to associate young masons with young internet users. The 2017 statistics about global internet users vis-à-vis World population<sup>23</sup> reveals that out of the total 7.519 billion people, 49.7% are internet users with 17-year growth rate of 939.0% from 2000 to 2017. Furthermore, 87.3 % of global internet users<sup>24</sup> have age bracket of 15-54 while 60.8% are of age 25-54. If we consider age range of 25-54 as young masons, then, 2.274 billion young people shall be the population source of future masonic strength. These figures are evidence of global prospect with masonic relevance about the young men who will adapt the cyberspace environment. While young men are exploiting the advantages of internet, networking and digital communication, they are the sustaining origin of masonic significance within the community on their onward journey.

Today, Freemasonry evolves to an ensuing Century of existence with in distress membership strength. The efforts of the Craft must lean forward to its relevance in the development of young men to reinforce the declining membership. With their adaptiveness to present network of science and technology through digital connectivity, they effectively excel in mentoring and activation of efficient management and productive organization of lodges. Beginning 2017, Masonry must maneuver the relevant active participation of young men along with the demanding time of cyberspace World of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, otherwise, the masonic landmark of charity will eventually be missed by many recipients within the next Century ending 2117.

**Figure 1: Graphical presentation derived from the data, information, calculations and analysis.**



Source of Data: Masonic Service Association, USA

NOTE: Forecasted numbers for the inclusive year 2016 to 2117 - at the end of 400<sup>th</sup> year of masonry

(Compiled by: E.R. Flores 08.25.2017)

## Notes

1. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, “Timeline of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, Era on Calendar, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/21st\\_century](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/21st_century).
2. Masonic Service Association of North America, “It’s About Time! Moving Masonry into the 21st Century”, [http://www.msana.com/abouttime\\_foreward.asp](http://www.msana.com/abouttime_foreward.asp).
3. Masonic Service Association of North America, “Masonic Membership Statistics 2014-2015,” Masonic Membership Stats. <http://www.msana.com/msastats.asp>. **Important:** This is illustrated with graphical representation of the calculations and analysis marked as **Figure 1**.
3. Holly Ellyatt, "Freemasons See Young Blood as Key to Survival", CNBC (Consumer News and Business Channel), <http://www.cnbc.com/2013/11/19/see-young-blood-as-key-to-survival.html>.
4. Masonic Service Association of North America, “*Masonic Membership Statistics...*”
4. Holly Ellyatt, *Freemasons*, CNBC.
5. Holly Ellyatt, *Freemasons*, CNBC.
6. Dr. David West, “Managing the Future of Freemasonry”, Published Feb. 3, 2016, Youtube.
7. Holly Ellyatt, *Freemasons*, CNBC.
8. United Kingdom
9. Holly Ellyatt, *Freemasons*, CNBC.
10. WBro CE Lord, OBE PAGDC & WBro JR Soper, PAGDC, “Assuring the Future of Freemasonry: Making the Craft Relevant to all Generations”, Quarterly Communication of UGLE & SGC. 12 September 2012. <http://freemasonrytoday.com/ugle-sgc/ugle/speeches/assuring-the-future-of-freemasonry>.
11. Masonic Service Association of North America, “*Masonic Membership Statistics...*”
12. Masonic Service Association of North America, “*Masonic Membership Statistics...*”
13. National Center for Health Statistics, “Faststats - Deaths and Mortality”, Source: Deaths: Final Data for 2014, tables 1, 7, 10, 20 [PDF – 4.4 MB], <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/deaths.htm>.
14. Masonic Service Association of North America, “*It’s About Time!*”

15. Lord & Soper, *“Assuring the Future...”*
16. Ibid.
17. UGLE – United Grand Lodge of England; SGC – Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of England.
18. Shriners International, “Investing in Today’s Masonic Youth Preserves Tomorrow’s Masonic Fraternity”, *Shriner Magazine*, Volume 6 Issue 2 June 2017.
19. Lord & Soper, *“Assuring the Future...”*
20. Holly Ellyatt, *“Freemasons See...”*
21. Lord & Soper, *“Assuring the Future...”*
22. Bro. Vincent Lombardo, PM., “Study on the Present Conditions of Freemasonry in the World”, QSA Members Forum for Masonic Research, February 2016, <http://www.freemasonryresearchforumqsa.com/conditions-of-freemasonry.php>.
23. Internet World Stats, “World Internet Users Statistics and 2017 World Population Statistics.” Usage and Population Statistics, <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>.
24. Statista.com, “Internet Users by Age Worldwide Statistics”, The Statistics Portal, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/272365/age-distribution-of-internet-users-worldwide>.

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