Hello, Brothers! I am the new Mentoring Chair for the District. I am honored with this important task, and plan to follow in the footsteps of my predecessor, Bro. Gabriel Iza (who wrote our Mentoring Manual). I also look forward to each Lodge’s Mentoring officer’s input and suggestions on what has worked for them, or has not. We don’t want to re-invent the wheel!

Mentoring is a very important activity, as it seriously impacts retention of newly raised Brothers. It has at least three important components: Protocol, Liturgy and Social. Every new member needs to learn how to deal with our ceremony Protocol, which is most likely new and different to them. Very important is for them to understand what meaning such ceremonies convey, as Freemasonry’s method of teaching is through images. Finally, the newly-raised Brothers need to quickly feel at home in their new Lodges, and to know their Lodge Brethren.

We look forward to visiting the District Lodges with our DDGM, and to getting in contact and working with our Lodge Mentoring officers, to accomplish this task.

Fraternally/Jorge.

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September 18, 2014.
Hello, Brothers! Just a short follow up on our Mentoring activities. We have been visiting some of our District Lodges with the DDGM, meeting some of you, and leaving my email and phone (which are also included below) in case you want to contact me.

We have mentioned in such visits how Mentoring activity is different from Masonic Education. Mentoring takes place during the crucial first year of newly raised Brothers’ Lodge life, and can seriously impact their retention. Masonic Education is a lifelong endeavor, and builds upon that.

One of the first questions that we may deal with, during Mentoring, pertains to explaining what is a Mason. For, many of our newly raised Brothers may not have a clear idea of what we are, or stand for. There are many explanations, all of them very correct. But I prefer Brother George H. Free’s poem: “What Makes a Mason?” which begins and continues as follows:

What makes you a MASON, o Brother of Mine? It isn’t the duegard nor is it the sign (...) That you to your sworn obligation are true – ‘Tis that, Brother mine, makes a Mason of you (...)

The entire poem can be found in http://www.masonicworld.com/education/files/fb03/nov.htm

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October 8, 2014.
Hello, Brothers!

Our Institution has many facets, and allows us to develop different interests in it. For, Freemasonry is like a mirror: you get out of it, just as much as you put into it.

A new Brother may already have, in his mind, a specific objective to achieve. For example, he may seek Fellowship, which is very legitimate. Or he may look for self-improvement, or esoteric knowledge. But Freemasonry offers much more! As mentors, we should discover these specific objectives, and help our new Brother to accomplish them. And we should also show him, how to achieve so many other goals that our Institution inspires.


Am I a builder who works with care  
Measuring life by the rule and square;  
Or am I a wrecker as I walk the town  
Content with the labor of tearing down?

For, through its ethical component, Freemasonry helps build better men and citizens, stronger families and friendships, fruitful communities, and fuller lives.

Fraternally/Jorge.

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Hello, Brothers!

I received an interesting question (and they are most welcome!). Who can be a Mentor? First, there should be at least two. One is the Brother who introduces the candidate. He can acquaint the new Brother with other Lodge members, sit with him in Lodge, and explain to him what is happening, and what to do, when. The second Mentor deals with the significance of our Ritual and our Craft. And the case can be made for selecting, as Mentor, a relatively novel Brother.

When instruction happens, the teacher usually learns as much as the student. The novel Mentor has an opportunity to fix and expand on what he has, himself, learned. He also has a more recent experience about what a candidate, or a newly raised Brother, encounters after joining our Institution. The novel Mentor should regularly consult an older, and more experienced Brother. And above all, he must Read! For there are certain books the Mentor must review.

First, is the *Standard Work and Lectures of Ancient Craft Masonry* (the little black book). Then, the *MDC booklet* that, most likely, the novel Mentor has studied, himself. Then, is the *Mentoring Guide* that V.W. Gabe Iza carefully prepared: every Lodge in our District has a copy. Finally, there is a jewel of a book: *The Builders* ([http://sacred-texts.com/mas/bui/index.htm](http://sacred-texts.com/mas/bui/index.htm)), written one century ago by Bro. Joseph F. Newton, Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Iowa. It remains very current and instructive, and has an excellent and complete discussion of the history of our Institution. One can borrow *The Builders* (and other books) from our own *Chancellor Livingston Library* ([http://www.nymasoniclibrary.org/](http://www.nymasoniclibrary.org/)), or buy it from *Macoy* ([http://www.macoy.com/](http://www.macoy.com/))

Finally, if a Mentoring team combining a novel and an experienced Brother is formed, it is even better!

Fraternally/Jorge.

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Hello, Brothers!

We have been talking about ideas to implement with new petitioners, entered apprentices, fellow craftsmen, and raised brothers, to combat attrition and help them in their first steps toward becoming good masons. Notwithstanding all things already said, there is one that stands out, and that has been raised time and again throughout the years by many Brethren, including our own Grand Master William J. Thomas: avoiding Boring Lodge Meetings!

Reasons for Boring meetings, as well as ideas to enrich them have been identified in many books and articles (e.g. About Time: http://www.msanana.com/aboutime_foreword.asp), as well as opinions, from developing new ideas (e.g. “A Pilgrim’s Path”, by Bro. John J. Robinson), to better implementing older ones (e.g. PGM Dwight L. Smith’s “Withering are we Travelling”, in: http://pictoumasons.org/library/Smith,%20Dwight%20L.%20~%20WhitherAreWeTraveling%20 %5Bpdf%5D.pdf and ”Why This Confusion?”, also available in the Internet: http://masonicrestorationfoundation.org/documents/DLS_WhyThisConfusion.pdf). All of them present and illustrate very interesting, valid and persuasive points of view.

Some ideas include developing a Bank of Speakers in our Districts, available to all Lodges; or inviting outside speakers, to develop interesting topics. Drawbacks include difficulties in finding skilled speakers with appropriate subjects, that will interest most lodge members.

Liverpool Syracuse Lodge has successfully used the Question Box. A box is placed in the foyer, where anonymous questions are submitted. At the end of each meeting, questions are introduced, then resolved by general participation. Seasoned brethren enjoy sharing their knowledge about the issue at hand, while novice ones enjoy acquiring more Light in Masonry. Everyone gains.

Whatever the approach, it is definitely necessary to make Lodge Meetings interesting: not only to keep in the new members, but also to raise attendance among the old ones! Interesting lodge meetings build stronger lodges and better educated masons. They also build a stronger Craft.

Fraternally/Jorge.

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