



The Grand Lodge of Virginia *Ancient Free and Accepted Masons*



Servant Leadership Training

By: Worshipful Cliff Gregory, KYCH

1. Introduction

This training is intended for every officer elected or appointed in any Lodge, Chapter, or Commandery in Virginia, to help grow our fraternal organization. While some of the information seems second nature to the men who become Freemasons, it is also an area that has been generally neglected and has a strong effect on our ability to retain those men who become brothers, especially the younger generation. Even if a leader is doing these things, it is a good booster to ensure we don't miss necessary steps along the path.

Any Volunteer organization, whether fraternal, charitable, or civic, must depend on leaders who inspire commitment, model integrity, and uplift those they serve. The absolute focus must be on understanding that they are there to lead, but also to serve the good of the organization and the members, with a minimum of imposition, and to recognize that life situations may always arise that require compassion and care. Within the Masonic tradition, leadership is not about authority or status; it is about character, service, and the moral duty to build a better world, while creating a better you. Masonic Servant Leadership aligns deeply with Masonic values, offering a framework in which humility, compassion, and selfless action drive meaningful impact.

This paper explores how Masonic Servant Leadership principles can strengthen volunteer organizations and how these principles resonate with Masonic teachings. Although it is focused on the York Rite, many of the concepts are helpful for those leading other Masonic organizations.

2. Foundations of Masonic Servant Leadership

Masonic Servant Leadership is rooted in the example of the Great Architect of the Universe, who emphasized service over power and demonstrated leadership by meeting the needs of others. This is particularly true for those leading a Commandery of Knights Templar or a Royal Arch Chapter, but even more importantly, a Masonic Lodge.

Key Masonic Principles

- **Humility** – “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.”
- **Sacrificial Love** – “Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”
- **Stewardship** – “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.” Leadership is a responsibility entrusted.
- **Empathy & Compassion** – Seeing the inherent worth of every person, understanding their needs, and doing what is possible within reasonable limits to satisfy those needs, is the true responsibility of anyone granted leadership over Freemasons and men expected to act honorably.

These principles move leadership from simply authority to kind and moral influence.

3. Alignment with Masonic Teachings

Freemasonry emphasizes morality, brotherly love, relief, and truth—values that complement Masonic Servant Leadership.

Parallel Themes

- **Humility** corresponds to the candidate’s symbolic purification and the reminder that “all Masons meet on the level.”
- **Service to others (Relief)** mirrors God’s call to care for the least among us.
- **Moral example** aligns with the Masonic ideal of living as a “living stone,” shaping oneself to uplift society.
- **Leadership by light** resonates with the Masonic duty to spread light—not to command, but to inspire.

Thus, the Masonic servant-leader and the Masonic leader share the same foundational mission: to build moral character in themselves and others. To serve his fellow man. Remember that every person has a claim upon your kind offices, especially the house of the faithful.

Of equal importance is the obligation taken by a Master Mason, as well as one taken by the Worshipful Master during his installation.

As a Brother elected by his peers to lead any Masonic organization, he must vow to follow a specific set of criteria. They include, but are not limited to, issues directly tied to Servant Leadership.

- That they will endeavor to correct the vices, purify the morals, and promote the happiness of those in your Lodge, Chapter, or Commandery.

- That they will promote the general good of the order and, on all occasions, be ready to give and receive proper instructions, particularly from the grand officers.
- That they will preserve the solemnities of our ceremonies and behave in open Lodge, Chapter, or Commandery with profound respect and reverence as an example to others.
- That they will pay due respect and obedience to the instructions of the Grand Officers.
- That they will demonstrate the duties of charity and hospitality, and govern with justice and moderation

4. Why Servant Leadership Matters in Volunteer Organizations

Volunteer organizations frequently face challenges such as:

- Burnout from the need for many tasks with few hands. When we look at consistent attendance and helping hands. Poor leadership, or at the very least inappropriate leadership, drives those members away from attending and helping with all that must be done to keep a Masonic organization functioning and effective.
- Lack of engagement for many are asked, but few are called. In fact, all should be called upon to participate and to assume as much of the labor as they can within their situation and abilities.
- Unclear direction as poor leaders fail to lead and try only to manage. In truth, leadership and management are distinct. People are led, and things are managed. Good, respectful leadership draws people into helping and sticking to their vows, while simply managing the issues at hand, like meal planning, setting up the lodge, and such, does nothing for attendance; it only facilitates the action needed to allow those who do attend to have what they need, moderating minor irritations. While failing to manage can cost you in attendance, failing to lead will undoubtedly cost you in that vital area.
- Overreliance on key members as they overwork rather than let a task go undone. This is another issue directly affected by poor or inappropriate leadership. As an organization continues its death spiral caused by leadership flaws, the focus shifts to covering necessary tasks with redundancy or to assigning roles to talent that is not yet ready to assume them.

Masonic Servant Leadership offers solutions grounded in:

- **Empowering rather than controlling members**
- **Creating a culture of appreciation and purpose**

- **Developing future leaders through mentorship**
- **Leading by example rather than edict or command**

These practices generate a healthier organizational culture, stronger volunteer retention, and greater unity. They give greater reach to those in leadership positions, as they tend to have more support and a happier overall organization.

5. Traits of a Masonic Servant-Leader

In the context of Freemasonry and volunteer work, the Masonic servant-leader embodies:

1. Integrity

Acting with honesty, fairness, and moral clarity.

2. Humility

Recognizing leadership as service, not privilege.

3. Listening

Valuing others' voices and seeking consensus.

4. Vision with Compassion

Seeing what the organization could be, while caring for those who will build it.

5. Empowerment

Helping others discover their gifts and opportunities for contribution.

6. Perseverance

Remaining steadfast in charity, brotherly love, and duty.

7. Respecting others' time and efforts

It is essential that brothers, companions, and sir knights' time not be wasted; always remember that the time spent away from their families must have value to all concerned.

6. Practical Applications for Masonic and Volunteer Leadership

A. Building a Culture of Care

- Begin meetings with intentional moments of gratitude or reflection.
- Check in personally with volunteers; know their strengths and struggles.

- Understanding that every moment wasted during a gathering is a moment lost from time with their loved ones.
- Don't waste time on activities that do not further the goals of the organization.
- Be respectful of others, in word and deed.

B. Leading by Example

- Cheerfully participate in humble tasks (setup, cleanup, visiting the sick). When others see you act as part of the group, their respect will grow.
- Model punctuality, reliability, and kindness, as well as attention to time spent. Be the model of those traits listed in section 4.

C. Empowering Others

- Assign roles based on gifts, not convenience, with an understanding that what time is given is taken from some other function. Respect both their and the organization's needs.
- Encourage new members to lead projects with supportive mentorship, but give them time to assimilate into the organization, then provide them with the support they need to grow

D. Communication Rooted in Respect

- Seek input before publishing decisions. Know what aligns with the goals you are trying to achieve.
- Treat others in the manner you would wish to be treated at all times. At times when you are tired or angry, it is the time for you to take a moment to compose yourself before speaking or acting.
- Address conflict with compassion and confidentiality. Praise in public, correct in private. Never let your personal feelings drive your organizational actions. Everyone has a bad day, but a leader doesn't let it affect their interactions with those under their guidance.

E. Mission-Driven Decision Making

- Use the organization's core values as a guide for choices. If you face a dilemma about the best approach to a problem or issue, err on the side of supporting organizational goals and maintaining good order.
- Prioritize service over personal preference or politics. Always keep everything on the level, working together without being overbearing or offensive.

- The success of the organization is driven by the members, led by the officers; you can ill-afford to be seen as above the others, and remember that today you are responsible, but tomorrow it will be someone else's duty to shepherd the organization. You will once again be among the crowd.

7. The Transformational Impact of Servant Leadership

When leaders act in the Masonic servant-leader tradition:

- Members feel valued, never used.
- The organization's mission becomes shared and meaningful.
- Trust deepens.
- Leadership becomes sustainable rather than burdensome.
- The group's charitable work gains authenticity and strength.
- Members want to attend, to be among brothers who genuinely care for one another.

A servant-led volunteer organization becomes a living example of the Masonic purpose—to make good men better, and through them, to make the world better. You are constantly training your replacement, and your actions will have an impact on your organization far into the future.

8. Conclusion

Masonic Servant Leadership complements and enriches the Masonic commitment to moral growth, brotherly love, and service. By embodying humility, compassion, and spiritual duty, leaders create volunteer organizations that thrive not through authority but through shared purpose and genuine connection. Such leadership strengthens the bonds of fraternity, elevates the quality of service, and transforms both organizations and communities. As Brothers in Masonry, Royal Arch Companions, and Knights of the Temple, we are bound by these very principles; they matter to all of us, and they make our Masonic organization a better, more wholesome, and more welcoming place for everyone in attendance.

Leading a group of unpaid volunteers has its own set of challenges, and before accepting the role of leader, you must understand that you have no absolute control over those you are leading; they are here to support their own need to participate. In the end, you lead only with their permission. If they are unhappy, they will go elsewhere as they are giving up time with family, and whatever the cost of attending to be here. Be mindful of their feelings, their time, and their sacrifices. You will be the leader that they will remember fondly, and one of the largest compliments you will ever receive is when they emulate you as they become leaders.

Your goals as a Masonic Leader

To help make good men, better men

To Perpetuate the Organization

HOW?

Doing good unto all, especially the household of the faithful

Contributing positively to the community

Being a good citizen

Being charitable

Being honest

Being Faithful

Being loving of your neighbor

Being loving of your brothers

Being kind to yourself

Phone: 804.222.3110 | Fax: 804.222.4253

4115 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, Virginia 23223-4926

<https://grandlodgeofvirginia.org>

