

Freemasonry

A Brief Outline

For reading by any man seeking information about Freemasonry

In order that your impressions of Freemasonry may be soundly based, you are urged to read the following carefully. Should you then make application to become a Freemason you may enter the Craft intelligently and not in ignorance of the basic principles of Masonry.

In becoming a Freemason you will pass through a ceremony which has existed for hundreds of years and through the like of which every Freemason throughout the world has passed.

More information will be made available as you advance in Masonry. That is part of the appeal of the craft.

A Brief History of Freemasonry

The oldest known record of our craft written in English, is a manuscript published about 1390 A.D.

Prior to the 17th Century, membership in the society was confined to men who were engaged in the actual design, supervision and construction of buildings.

From about the year 1600 A.D. non-operative masons were admitted, and it was from this situation that theoretical and symbolic masonry, called speculative masonry, developed. This is the Freemasonry we practice today.

Nearly every community of any size in the British Commonwealth has one or more Masonic Lodge. The same is true in many other parts of the world. Each lodge is subject to the authority of the Grand Lodge of the country or state under which it holds its charter.

A Masonic convention held in Launceston in March 1890 was attended by representatives of 22 lodges which held charters at that time under the English, Irish and Scottish Constitutions. They agreed to form the Grand Lodge of Tasmanian and it was duly inaugurated in Hobart on June 26 of the same year.

Tasmanian Operative Lodge, No. 1 on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Tasmania, was formed in 1834 as No. 345 Irish Constitution and is the oldest lodge now active in Tasmania.

What is Freemasonry?

Masonry is a voluntary association of men, at least eighteen years of age and of good repute. If one becomes a Mason, it must be of his own free will and accord.

The desire to become a Mason must come from within. Freemasonry is a brotherhood of men who share a firm belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.

Freemasonry is a focus for union of men of good principles and character, resulting in strong bonds of friendship between men of the same nature who might otherwise have remained strangers. It regards all men as equals and recognises no distinctions of rank or class.

It is a serious fraternity which conducts its formal ceremonies in the Lodge rooms with high dignity, and without frivolity. At other times it encourages debate and discussion, except on matters of creed, politics or other topics likely to excite personal animosities or disharmony among the members.

Freemasonry is NOT a religion. It has a philosophy of its own which is compatible with the teachings of religious institutions. The teachings of Freemasonry transcend all denominational and sectarian divisions. In the field of human conduct it is complementary to religion, but as has been said, religious topics may not be discussed.

Freemasonry is not connected in any way with a political creed. A Freemason's political views are his own and a lodge may well have members belonging to many different political parties. For that reason, no discussion of political matters is permitted in a lodge. A Brother may not seek to persuade his Brethren in lodge to adopt this or that view in matters of Government - local, national or international.

A member is charged to be true and loyal to the Government of his country and to be law-abiding.

Freemasonry is NOT a secret society. It does not conceal its existence or activities. Masons are proud of their affiliation and publicly proclaim it. True, it has secrets of its own, such as its methods of recognition of brother Masons and symbolic instruction in its principles.

It is a charitable, benevolent and educational society.

It is charitable in that it is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of mankind and not to the profit of any individual or individuals.

Throughout Tasmania charity is expressed in a practical way with the establishment and maintenance of a number of homes for the elderly and Masonic Nursing Homes, and a Masonic Centenary Medical Research Foundation to assist in the field of increased research in the degenerative diseases and disorders of the aged.

It also provides relief as need arises to persons in adversity and educational grants to students of both sexes in necessity.

It is benevolent in that it teaches ethical principles acceptable to all men. Principles such as kindness and faithfulness in the home, honesty and fairness in business and occupation, courtesy in social contacts, help for the weak and unfortunate, forgiveness of the penitent, respect for one another and, above all, reverence towards a Supreme Being.

It is educational in that it teaches morality and lawfulness, develops self-discipline in thought and action and confidence in communicating and dealing with one's fellows. It encourages research into its origins, trains the memory and promotes the understanding, appreciation and use of the English language.

Who May Become a Freemason?

From the foregoing you will understand that to become a freemason you must believe in a Supreme Being, be of moral character and be loyal and law abiding.

You must also be at least eighteen years of age.

You should be in such financial circumstances as to be able to meet your monetary obligations as a member of your lodge without detriment to your family or yourself. The obligations include lodge subscriptions, the cost of regalia, etc., the extent of which at any time can be easily ascertained.

You must be recommended by two brethren, who will have to vouch for your character and sincerity of motive. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that you should not enter Freemasonry in the hope of material gain or advancement. If you do so you will be bitterly disappointed. Admission must not be sought from mercenary or other unworthy motives.

If married, your wife should be made aware of the likely claims on your time and efforts, and fully support your application.

What Freemasonry Expects of You

A Mason is expected to treat every man as his brother, to practice charity, temperance and justice and to respect the chastity of others. His mode of life should be such as to earn the respect and trust of those with whom he comes in contact.

He should recognise that humility, patience, charity and gentleness should be among the characteristics of a true Freemason.

He must never propose for membership any man whom he knows to be an atheist or otherwise unworthy to become a Freemason.

The Lodge

Each lodge is a separate entity and has its own office bearers and by-laws. The presiding officer is addressed as the Worshipful Master and is assisted by Wardens, Deacons and Stewards. There is also a Secretary, a Treasurer, a Chaplain and other office-bearers.

The new member immediately becomes an integral part of the Lodge and regular and punctual attendance at its meetings (usually held monthly) is one of his first duties.

As a Freemason you have the right to visit other lodges wherever Freemasonry is practised throughout the world.

Each Masonic Meeting concludes with a social gathering of the members at supper where Masonic fellowship is conducted in a lighter vein. Most lodges arrange social functions to include the wives and families of the members. If you accept office in a lodge your wife's support would be of great assistance.

Masonic Obligation

On your admission into the Craft, you will be required to make a solemn promise to fulfil your obligations to Freemasonry. You can be assured that you will NEVER be required to obligate yourself to anything which might conflict with your other duties and loyalties.

Conclusion

Having read through the above carefully, we assume you have thoroughly considered the matter in all its aspects.

Many men live a lifetime and never know they must ASK for admission to the world's oldest, most purposeful and greatest Fraternity. They do not realise that they will not be invited. They must come in of their own free will and accord, without persuasion, for, that is the manner in which many thousands of Masons in Australia and the world have been accepted.

ASK and you shall receive!

KNOCK and the door will be opened unto you!

SEEK and you shall find!