

The District Light

The information bulletin
of Niagara B District

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Masonry Simplified

Masonry is difficult to explain to someone who questions us, but this issue is an overview.

The structure of the order is that of a fraternity with the import being that of a philosophy. (Philosophy is the love and pursuit of wisdom by intellectual means and moral self-discipline.)

In American ritual, the applicant is asked, "What come you here to do?" The answer is, "To learn to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry."

Freemasons promise to maintain harmony in the lodge. Nothing that will disturb others is allowed to be brought forward.

Moral Code

Masons believe that there is such a thing as honour.

If you were to be sworn in as a juror, you would be given the choice "to swear or affirm".

This means either making your oath with your hand on a Bible or making the declaration 'on your honour'. Although eliminating the Bible might lead some to assume that the oath is less binding, not so for masons. We are used to living up to our promises.

To a mason, "I will" is as good as a contract. Or, put another way, "My word is my bond"

Other Features

Charity: We are organized not for profit but to promote the welfare and happiness of all.

Education: Freemasonry teaches a system of morality and brotherhood by the use of symbols and dramatic presentations.

Religious: Freemasonry is not a religion, but it is religious because it requires its members to have faith in a Supreme Being, according to the individual's beliefs.

Inclusive: Membership is open to anyone who asks, if he is deemed a good person.

Socially responsible: We are required to obey the laws of the land while opposing any destruction of human rights or dignity.

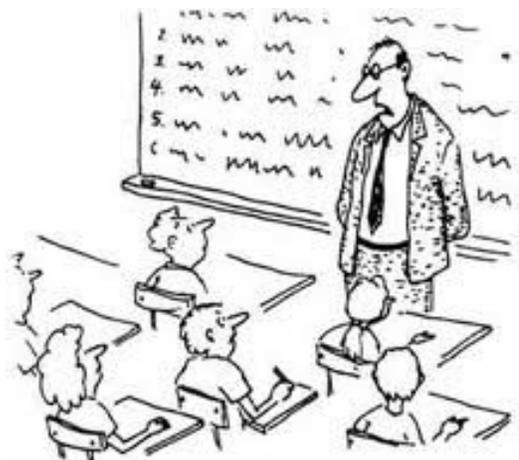
Non-political: A Freemason acts according to his beliefs and conscience, but no discussion of politics or religion enters the lodge.

Equality: We meet 'on the level'. Within the lodge, financial or other status determinants have no bearing.

Be Good

In the installation charge given to the master of a Masonic lodge there is the following passage which encompasses the moral code:

"Charge the brethren to practice outside of the lodge those virtues they have learned in it; so that when a man is said to be a mason, the world may know that he is one to whom the burdened heart may pour out its sorrows, to whom distress may prefer its suit, whose arm is strengthened by justice and whose heart is expanded by benevolence."



"I expect you all to be independent, innovative, critical thinkers who will do exactly as I say!"

A Mason Speaks

A newly-made mason was asked “Why did you join?” Here is his reply:

My introduction to the fraternity was likely similar to that of everyone else: I saw the symbols in popular culture and then I noticed that they began reoccurring through my education in History and English.



Curiosity getting the best of me, I began to ask questions, but having no masonic lineage I was at a standstill. One day at work, I overheard my boss telling my co-worker that he was going to be initiated and I immediately talked with him. He put me in contact with a well-known mason in the region and I began the process.

Before this, as any modern man would, I had consulted google for some information and was amazed at the polar-opposite positions people had on the subject. To some, Freemasonry was a beautiful system and lifestyle that promoted good men to become great; to others Freemasonry was the reason the dinosaurs were extinct as well as the reason every single conflict in history ever happened.

The more I asked of real Masons and drew my own conclusion the sooner I learned the truth. Freemasonry was simple. It was about being the best man you could be.

In a society that has become so decadent in respect to the classical ideals of society, Freemasonry offers just the opposite. Today, people are more concerned with what celebrities are doing, or missing their favourite reality show, or with what is happening on Facebook instead of actually doing something productive in society.

To me, Freemasonry offers a code of conduct that ensures that a man stays genuine and true to the ideals that make a difference and make society a better place; without the rigidity of formal religion.



As a Mason I believe in doing whatever it is I can to help others, to be a true and virtuous man, to act with kindness and charity, and to do all of this out of the good of my own heart. I do this without expectation of reward or recognition, just as I have received mine. I know, myself, that I am a good man and with every positive choice and action I make more progress toward the man I wish to become.

Today it is rare to find people who are genuine, keep their word, and take a real interest in others without the hopes of profiteering.

I wish to align myself with those who still believe in this.



Nearing the End

The masonic year is different for each lodge, but the Official visits are over.

At the recent ‘Homecoming’ of our DDGM, R.W.Bro. Tom McClellan, he was given the appreciation that he so rightly deserved.



But he and we are not finished yet. There is much masonry still ahead.

In the next two months, several lodges will hold their Installation and Investiture of a new slate of officers. Visitors are always welcome.

Each man is assigned his new chair with the pomp that such a move requires and you will get to hear some well-presented charges.

The banquet that follows allows us to gain in friendships and calories.

And soon you will be hearing of strawberry socials, picnics, and barbeques.

Is this a good life, or what?



Communication

We can be surrounded (and attacked) by electronic messages, but still we, as masons, seem isolated. Your own lodge sends a monthly summons to you. The other lodge summonses are sent to your secretary and usually stop there.

Suggestion: We would benefit from reading other summonses. Secretaries: please send yours to each of the officers of the other lodges.

Reasons: Information about degrees, events, or scheduled masonic education would attract visitors.

The officers of the lodges would realize that their summons could be improved.

Examples: Hugh Murray Chapter posts messages from the three principal officers each month and includes masonic education.

The secretary of Myrtle Lodge does a great service to the members by providing many pages of current information.

For Example

Here is part of the most recent message from Charles Watson, the master of Myrtle Lodge:

Thank you to R.W.Bro. Sean Fuller for the thought-provoking Masonic education you gave. One of the thoughts touched on secrets.

The next day my son asked me what I was thinking about. (He says my thinking look is similar to my confused look.)

I told him that many ‘Masonic Secrets’ have been exposed.

I was wondering if there were any left. I went to the computer. One web site said Masons controlled over 70% of the world’s money.

I called Grand Lodge right away. I talked to someone on the phone. She didn’t know anything about it. I thought she was new so I asked for someone senior. (If you are looking for your share of the 70% of the world’s money do not call them. They are busy with real work and don’t appreciate being called ‘senior’. At least that is what she said before she hung up.)



(continued)

Another web page claimed that we were shape- shifting lizards. My 12-year-old son thought that was cool and wanted to know if he could join. I told him he would have to wait until he was 21 AND keep his room clean. I know that letting him believe that he can become a shape-shifting lizard might be wrong, but his room has never been cleaner!



Even if all the secrets have been exposed, there are still questions.

Why do men gather if there is no money, no power or position to be gained?

The ‘secret’ is in our bond of brotherhood, our relief of suffering, and commitment to truth. How we get there is through the ritual.

Think of the symbols in lodge as a map, and the lectures as an index teaching us how to read the map. Any one person having possession of one or the other, and trying to decode the secrets by himself, would be unsuccessful. Such work must be done together with our brethren. These secrets are learned through participation.

[This is half of the Master’s message]

Pearls from the DDGM

R.W.Bro. Tom McClellan inspired us with his words at each of the Official Visits. Here is an excerpt from one such talk.

The Grip of a Mason



In Masonry we place much emphasis on symbolism and the Grips of a Mason. We are given grips in each degree but there is one common point in all Masonic Grips and that is of the other man’s hand returning the grip.

So we come to understand by doing each grip that each Brother is vitally important and that a grip isn’t one-sided at all, but is totally dependent on both Masons fully participating.

We see again that the Masonic Brotherhood of equals is displayed every time Masons exchange a Masonic Grip.

The Quest of a Mason (R.W.Bro McClellan)

We, as Masons, are often told that we are on a quest. We are seekers. We are told we are searching for that which has been lost. We, as men, have all been searching for something deeper in our lives, something more noble than that which we see in our daily world.



As Freemasons, we may have descended from those very noble Knights Templar, who bravely fought against all odds for their ideals and perhaps even did find the Ark of the Covenant.

So are we too in search of our own genuine secrets, our own noble ideal.

Instead of being told to follow certain external rules, we are informed that we need to go within.

We are told that it is there, in the very centre of our Being – where Absolute Truth abides.

Masonry: Masonry is one of the most sublime and perfect institutions that ever was formed for the advancement of happiness and the general good of mankind, creating, in all its varieties, universal benevolence and brotherly love.

(Duke of Sussex)

Masonic Image on Television

A recent episode of *Castle*, a light cop show, used the masonic compasses in a series of images which were presented as coming from a deranged killer. The compasses were identified as symbolizing resurrection, but the analysis of the grouping was, “Rebirth, resurrection . . . This video obviously resurrects something from the great beyond – something dangerous, something murderous.”

The masonic symbol is then displayed prominently on the police bulletin board along with pictures of mutilated people. There is even a picture of a square and compasses branded into a person’s skin.

See for yourself at

http://www.tubeplus.me/player/2114788/Castle/season_5/episode_17/Scared_To_Death/

Where Does It Come From?

This issue of The District Light includes submissions from an Entered Apprentice, a Lodge Master, a District Deputy, and royalty.

For coming publications, more members of Niagara B District will be asked to place pen to paper (how quaint) and express their views.

Prepare yourself.

You observe, read, listen, learn, and make conclusions. Through this newsletter, your thoughts can be given voice. We await.

Using Our Language

Language evolves and we adapt with it. However, too often we carry verbal baggage that has outlived its usefulness. The next issue of this publication will deal in greater detail, but for now, let’s look at one item:

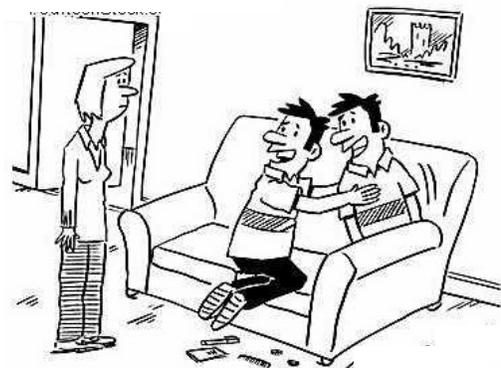
What’s Wrong With Me?

Recently people have been saying “myself” when they mean “me”.

A cheerleader would not shout, “Give myself and ‘A’”, or you would not, at a dinner, ask, “Could yourself pass to myself the salt?”

Yet we hear people say, “You can get the tickets from myself”, or “John and myself will be at the event”, or the double problem of “On behalf of myself and the members, I . . .”

The word is a reflexive pronoun referring back to a previous noun or pronoun with the intention of stressing ‘with this body’ as in “I did it myself”.



“Finally, I’ve found myself.”