

FREEMASONRY - A WAY OF LIFE

You have, no doubt, heard of Freemasonry, and perhaps you have wondered who and what they are. It is natural that there should be some questions about them in your mind. This brochure, therefore, has been prepared for those who are not members of our Order, to inform them of the aims and purposes of our organization.

In our world today many are concerned about the bitterness and hate that is so prevalent in human affairs, and about the weakening of human standards, disrespect for the laws of society and for the rights of others. Everywhere there are individuals and groups that are striving to maintain decent standards in society and to preserve those ways of life that are founded on justice and integrity.

Freemasons are also concerned about these things, and hope to add their influence in protecting the honor and dignity of human life.

ORIGIN OF FREEMASONRY

Our traditions go back over the centuries to the days of the "Operative Masons", the men who built the cathedrals, abbeys and castles in times long past. In the 17th century the need for such buildings declined, but the practices and customs of the Operative Craft left an influence on a new movement that began in the second half of that century. Groups of men began to meet occasionally in various places in England, men who were not actually builders, but who evidently had some interest in the old Craft. Some, no doubt had an actual connection with it. But these new groups had no direct concern with the building trade. It would appear that they were men of integrity who enjoyed fellowship in an atmosphere of mutual trust amid the bitter divisions of the time. In order to give a basic form to their meetings It seems they adapted certain of the traditions and practices of the operative or working masons, and were Influenced by the Scottish operative Lodges. They called themselves "Masons", and when a man was admitted as a member of the group or Lodge, he was said to have been "made a Mason".

In the year 1717 four such Lodges that had been meeting regularly in London and Westminster decided to form a "Grand Lodge" and to elect a "Grand Master" as their head. As more Lodges were established in England they looked to this Grand Lodge for guidance. Thus over the years regulations were set up to govern the Craft, a Constitution was adopted, and the simple ceremonies of the earlier years were elaborated until they became the three degrees or steps which we now have. It was in this way that what we call Speculative Masonry gradually evolved.

From England Freemasonry spread to other countries where Lodges were formed, and eventually Grand Lodges were set up. There are now about 150 Grand Lodges in the

world, with a total membership of nearly six million. One of these is the Grand Lodge of Alberta with 130 Lodges and almost 7,770 members.

THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY

From very early times Freemasonry has provided an opportunity for men to meet and enjoy the pleasures of friendly companionship in the spirit of helpfulness and charity, and guided by strict moral principles. Its members are encouraged to practice a way of life that will sustain high standards in their relationships with their fellow men. In other words, the practice of Brotherhood. It is an organization which recognizes no distinction between races, creeds, or social qualifications.

ORGANIZATION

The organization of Freemasonry is based on a system of Grand Lodges, and each one is sovereign and Independent within its own territory. There is no central authority governing all Freemasonry, but each Grand Lodge in order to be "recognized" by the others, must maintain acceptable standards and follow established traditions and practices of Freemasonry. The Grand Master, with his officers, supervises the "constituent lodges", and each Lodge and each member is required to observe the regulations set out in the Constitution.

THE LODGE

The Lodge is the basic unit of Freemasonry. Each year it elects its officers to manage its affairs. Through them the members are encouraged to achieve a better understanding of the ideals and principles of our Craft. It is through the Lodge that a man becomes a member of our Fraternity. When he has been accepted, he receives, over a period of time, the three degrees of Freemasonry. It is through these degrees that our teachings are mainly presented, as each one conveys a moral lesson.

SYMBOLISM

To assist in communicating our truths and principles much use is made of symbolism. For this our ceremonies reach back to the usages of the old "operative" trade. Many of the tools and implements used by these builders are now employed as symbols to convey moral truth. Most people are familiar with the symbol of the "square and compasses", which is generally recognized as the "trademark" of Freemasonry. This symbolism became associated with the biblical account of the building of King Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem. Thus much of our ceremony is based on the facts and legends of that famous structure.

FREEMASONRY AND RELIGION

While Freemasonry has a religious basis, it is neither a religion nor a substitute for religion. Before he can be admitted a member a man must profess his belief in a Supreme Being, by whatever name He is known, and be of a good moral character. Beyond that

Freemasonry does not go. It does not question a man as to his particular faith or his religious dogma, but it does urge him to practice the religious belief which he holds.

WHAT DO FREEMASONS DO

Freemasons meet regularly in their Lodges for the transaction of necessary business, for fellowship, and for the discussion of matters of Masonic interest. They are pledged to preserve the moral fibre and quality of life, and to act in a spirit of helpfulness towards all men. They are taught to make Charity, and Benevolence a distinguishing characteristic, of their Masonic Life. Our Grand Lodge as a whole does not undertake any large public projects. It has its own Benevolent Fund, built up by the contributions of our members, through which Masons or their dependents have been helped in a time of need. The responsibility for humanitarian activities falls on the individual Lodges, as well as Grand Lodge. Each one may pick its own particular projects. Freemasons do not appeal to the public for funds; all contributions come from our own resources. In this way an attempt is made to inspire our members with a feeling of charity, and goodwill towards all mankind.

CONCORDANT BODIES OF FREEMASONRY

The whole purpose and teaching of Freemasonry is communicated through the three degrees of the Craft Lodge. A member, however, may wish to extend his experiences of Freemasonry by participating in additional degrees such as the Scottish Rite, or Royal Arch Masonry. He can also become a member of the Shrine. The Shriners, through their colorful parades, their annual circus, and their work for crippled children, are probably the best known to the public. However to become a member of any of these bodies a man must be, and remain a member of his Craft Lodge.

Since membership in the Masonic Order is for men only there are various women's and youth organizations, which may require sponsorship by Masonic Lodges, or for those who are relatives of Freemasons. The aims of these groups have an affinity with Freemasonry. Freemasonry does not interfere in their workings and is not responsible for their actions

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

A man becomes a Freemason only through his own volition. We do not solicit members. When he makes his application the decision as to his acceptance rests with the Lodge members. If a man has some thought of becoming a Freemason he should approach a friend whom he knows to be a Mason, who will explain the procedure.

Any one seeking membership in our Order must meet certain qualifications. He must profess his belief in a Supreme Being; be a man of mature age (at least 21 years); and be of high moral standards. He must maintain honorable relations with his fellowmen, and be willing to share in Masonic activities.

He must be prepared to pay an Initiation fee to cover the cost to the Lodge of processing his application, and to pay each year his share of the cost of running the Lodge. He should be prepared to spend the time to attend the meetings of the Lodge, and to participate in the social and other activities. He should be willing to spend the time to study and learn the various degrees so that he may progress from one to the next.

WHAT FREEMASONRY IS NOT

Freemasonry is not a mutual benefit or insurance society. It offers no material benefits or gain to any of its members, though it teaches charity and tolerance towards all men. Thus the needy and unfortunate have received help from it in many quiet ways. It is not an organization for social enjoyment only, although we treasure the pleasures of fellowship. It is not a "secret society", but there are certain parts of our ceremonies which we keep to ourselves, since they can be understood only by those who have participated in them. No member hides the fact that he is a Freemason, and our meeting places are openly marked.

OPPOSITION TO FREEMASONRY

Over the years considerable opposition has evidenced itself concerning Freemasonry. Freemasons are taught to think for themselves, and not to talk about what goes on behind the doors of the Lodge. Authoritarian governments which demand implicit obedience by all their citizens, and to whom they deny the right of freedom of thought, have generally banned the Order in their territory. The Nazi Government in Germany, and the Communist governments in Eastern Europe, are prime examples. Some religions which also forbid the freedom of thought to their adherents have also proscribed Freemasonry. Many individuals ignorant of our principles and teachings also accuse us of many things. For this reason Masonry is emerging from its shell and proclaiming its principles openly to all ears, as they are of such nature as to command the respect of all.

A WAY OF LIFE

Freemasonry Is kindness in the home; honesty in business; courtesy towards others; dependability in work; compassion and concern for the unfortunate; resistance to evil; help for the weak; forgiveness for the penitent; love for one another; and, above all, reverence and love for The Supreme Being.

Freemasonry is many things, but above all it is a WAY OF LIFE.

NOT A SOLICITATION

The Information contained in this brochure is not intended, and may in no way be regarded as an invitation to become a member of the Masonic Order. Its sole purpose is to acquaint people, generally, with its significant and worthwhile aims.

Anyone seeking further Information about Freemasonry should inquire from a member of a Lodge In his community, or call the Grand Lodge Office in Calgary, Alberta, T2R 0H2. (403)262-1149

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational and religious society. Its principles are proclaimed as widely as man will hear. Its only secrets are in its methods of recognition and of symbolic instruction. It is charitable in that it is not organized for profit and none of its income insures to the benefit of any individual, but all is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of mankind. It is benevolent in that it teaches and exemplifies altruism as a duty. It is educational in that it teaches by prescribed ceremonials a system of morality and brotherhood based upon the Sacred Law. It is religious in that it teaches monotheism, the Volume *of* the Sacred Law is open upon altars whenever a Lodge is in session, reverence to God is ever present in its ceremonial, and to its brethren are constantly addressed lessons of morality; yet It Is not sectarian or theological. It is a social organization only so far as it furnishes additional inducement that man may foregather in numbers, thereby providing more material for its primary work of education, of worship and of charity. Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the individual man, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community. Thus it impresses upon its members the principles of personal righteousness and human welfare, and inspires them with that feeling of charity, or good will, towards all mankind which will move them to translate principle and conviction into action. To that end, it teaches and stands for the worship of God; truth and justice; fraternity and philanthropy; and enlightenment and orderly liberty, civil, religious and Intellectual. It charges each of its members to be true and loyal to the government of the country to which he owes allegiance and to be obedient to the law of any country in which he may be. It believes that the attainment of these objectives is best accomplished by laying a broad basis of principle upon which men of every race, country, sect and opinion may unite rather than by setting up a restricted platform upon which only those of certain races, creeds, and opinions can assemble. Believing these things, this Grand Lodge affirms its continued adherence to that ancient and approved rule of Freemasonry which forbids the discussion in Masonic meetings of creeds, politics or other topics likely to excite personal animosities.

It further affirms its conviction that it is not only contrary to the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, but dangerous to its unity, strength, usefulness and welfare, for Masonic Bodies to take action to attempt to exercise pressure or influence for or against any legislation, or in any way to attempt to procure the election or appointment of government officials, or to influence them, whether or not members of the fraternity, in the performance of their public duties. The true Freemason will act in civil life according to his individual judgment and the dictates of his conscience.

Have You Ever Considered Becoming A Mason?

Freemasonry is the oldest, largest Fraternity in the world. Its members have included Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers, Statesmen, Generals, Admirals, Supreme Court Justices, corporate CEO's opera stars, movie stars and probably your next door neighbor. And Masonry is always ready to welcome good men into the Fraternity. It's ready to welcome YOU, if in your heart you can answer "yes" to a few questions.

Do you believe that there is such a thing as honour, and that a man has a responsibility, to act with honour in everything he does?

Masons teach that principle. We believe that a life not founded on honor is hollow and empty - that a man who acts without honour is less than a man

Do you believe in a Supreme Being?

No atheist can be a Mason. Masons do not care what your individual faith is - that is a question between you and your God - but we do require that a man believe in a Supreme Being.

Are you willing to allow others the same right to their own beliefs that you insist on yourself?

Masonry insists on toleration - on the right of each person to think for himself in religious, social and political matters.

Do you believe that you have a responsibility to leave the world better place than you found it?

Masonry teaches that each man has a duty not only to himself to others. We must do what we can to make the world a better place. Whether that means cleaning up the environment, working on civic projects, or helping children to walk or read or see - the world should be a better place because we have passed through it.

Do you believe that it is not only more blessed to give than to receive, it's also more fun?

Masons are involved with the problems", and needs of others because we know it gives each of us a good feeling - unlike any other - to help. Much of our help is given anonymously. We're not after gratitude; we're more than rewarded by that feeling which comes from knowing we have helped another person overcome some adversity, so that their life can go on.

Are you willing to give help to your Brothers when they need it, and to accept their help when you need it?

Masonry is mutual help. Not just financial help (although that's there, too) but help in the sense of being there when needed, giving support, lending a sympathetic ear.

Do you feel that there's something more to life than just financial success?

Masons know that self-development is more precious than money in the bank or social position or political power. Those things often accompany self-development, but they are no substitute for it. Masons work at building their lives, and character, just as a carpenter works at building a house.

Do you believe that a person should strive to be a good citizen, and that we, have moral duty to be true to the country in which we live?

Masons believe that a country is strong so long as freedom, equality, and the opportunity for human development is afforded to all. A Mason is true to his government and its ideals. He supports its laws and authority when both are just and equitably applied. We uphold and maintain the principles of good government, and oppose every influence that would divide it in a degrading manner.

Do, you agree that man should show compassion for others, that, goodness of heart is among the most important of human values?

Masons do. We believe in a certain reverence for living things, a tenderness towards people who suffer, a loving kindness for our fellow man, and a desire to do right - because it is right. Masonry teaches that; although all men are fallible and capable of much wrong, when they discover the goodness of heart, they have found the essence of virtue. Masonry helps men see their potential for deep goodness and virtue

Do you believe that men should strive to live a brotherly life?

Masons see brotherhood as a form of wisdom, a sort of bond that holds men together - a private friendship that tells, us we owe it to each other to be just in our dealings and to refuse to speak evil of each other. Masons believe a man should maintain an attitude of good will, and promote unity and harmony in his relations with one another, his family, and his community. Masons call this way of life believing in the **Brotherhood of Man**. It really means that every Mason makes it his duty to follow the golden rule. This is why Masonry has been called one of the greatest forces for good in the world.

IF YOU ANSWERED "YES", YOU SHOULD CONSIDER BECOMING A MASON.

Freemasonry offers much to its members - the opportunity to grow, the chance to make a difference, to build a better world for our children. It offers the chance to be with and work with men who have the same values and ideals - men who have answered "YES" to these questions.

It's easy to find out more. Just find a Mason and ask him about Masonry. You probably know several Masons. Perhaps you've seen the square and compasses like the one in this brochure or on a pin or tie tack or bumper sticker. If you know where the lodge is in your community, stop by or look up the number of your local Masonic lodge in the phone book and ask for the secretary of the lodge. He'll be happy to help you.

Have you ever considered becoming a Mason?

Success is in the way you walk the paths of life each day; it's in the little things you do and in the things you say. **Success** is not in getting rich or rising high to fame; it's not alone in winning goals which all men hope to claim. **Success** is being big of heart and clean and broad of mind; it's being faithful to your friends and to the stranger, kind. It's in the children whom you love and all they learn from you; **Success** depends on character and everything you do.