

FREEMASONRY

Is the oldest fraternal organization in the world.

VISION OF THE GRAND LODGE OF CANADA IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

To be the foremost Fraternal Organization.

ITS MISSION STATEMENT

*To encourage a Way of Life, promote Fellowship,
and Practise Universal Benevolence and one's
Faith for the Cause of Good.*

ITS PHILOSOPHY

Through its lessons, charitable work and fellowship amongst its members, Masonry stresses the principles of kindness and consideration at home, honesty in business, courtesy towards others, dependability in one's work, compassion for the less fortunate and being a good citizen of the world. Masonry recognizes that each man has obligations to his family, his work, his religious beliefs, his community and himself - these must take priority and Masonry does not interfere with his ability to meet these obligations.

ITS ORIGIN

As with anything with its roots in antiquity, a definitive answer as to the specific origins of Freemasonry is not possible. Its traditions, however, can be traced directly to the operative Masons who built the stone cathedrals and castles of the Middle Ages, men of exceptional character and high ideals.

Modern Freemasonry was founded in England in June 1717 when four lodges banded together to form the first Grand Lodge. From Britain, it spread over much of the world, playing a significant role in our culture and civilization.

MISCONCEPTIONS

Masonry is *NOT* a religion or a substitute for religion; however, every candidate must affirm a belief in a single Supreme Being. Masonry recognizes each individual's right to his own beliefs. Religion is never discussed within the lodge. Each member is free to pursue his religious convictions in the manner best suited to him.

Masonry is *NOT* a Secret Society. It is a fraternal association of men of good will and high ideals. Masons, however, consider that the benefits they receive from membership must be protected from intruders and are careful before admitting a self-professed Mason into the lodge.

Much has been made of the secrets of Freemasonry over the centuries by non-Masons. Secrets are confined to modes of recognition by which a visitor can prove himself to be a Mason and thereby become eligible to enter a lodge in which he was otherwise not known.

AIMS

As a fraternity, Masonry provides an opportunity for men to enjoy friendly companionship. It encourages goodwill towards all mankind. It promotes self-improvement and teaches the basic principles of brotherly love, charity and truth, which Masons are encouraged to practise in their daily lives.

EXPECTATIONS

Masonry welcomes men who seek harmony with their fellow man and who wish to participate in making the world a better place in which to live by promoting the Masonic ideals of reverence, morality, kindness, honesty, dependability and compassion.

MASONIC CHARITY

While Charity is considered one of the cornerstones of Freemasonry, Masonry is first and foremost a fraternity; it is neither a service nor social club, nor is it a benevolent society; fund-raising for particular purposes is not its all-consuming goal. Throughout North America, however, Masonry and its Concordant Bodies support charitable causes in an amount exceeding half-a-billion dollars annually.

Through financial support of The Masonic Foundation of Ontario, a public foundation registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, Masons support various causes affecting the community, including hearing research, a bursary program for university and college students, and alcohol and drug awareness programs in elementary and high schools.

Masonry also places particular emphasis on supporting the Canadian Blood Services Donor Program; Ontario Masons make or sponsor approximately 35,000 donations annually.

IS FREEMASONRY FOR ME?

It is the goal of Freemasonry to take good men and make them better by generating fraternal fellowship and building strong moral character in its members.

Masonry can set out the advantages of membership; the decision to join, however, must be a personal one, based on an assessment of what the Craft has to offer and its net worth to the individual.

Masonry offers the opportunity to make each man better through its teachings, his Masonic associations and a philosophy that has served the social needs of men for centuries, by promoting:

- *Personal Development:* learning portions of the Ritual and participating in the Degree stimulates the mind and, coupled with committee work and lodge management, presents the opportunity to develop leadership and organizational skills, build self-discipline through commitment, poise and self-confidence, and strengthen presentation and public speaking proficiencies;
- *Sense of Accomplishment:* participating in lodge projects, be they charitable or social in nature, provides the opportunity to contribute, work with others and enjoy the success of effort well expended;
- *Fellowship - Belonging to a Like-minded Group:* the modern work environment has reduced or eliminated social association with co-workers; joining with lodge members in a fraternal atmosphere can substitute for that former workplace fellowship lost;
- *A Break from the Workaday Routine:* Masonry brings together in lodge men of diverse backgrounds, where the daily pressures of a career can be left outside the door and where fellowship is the common theme.

These attributes are summarized in the tenets, or fundamental principles of Ancient Freemasonry: Brotherly Love; Relief; and Truth. If these values address your needs, Masonry would welcome you.

REQUIREMENTS TO JOIN

Membership is for men 21 years of age or older of any race, colour, or creed, who are of good moral character and who believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.

Because tradition requires every candidate to come forward free of coercion, Masonry does

not improperly solicit for members. *An interested man must ask.* A man interested in learning more about the fraternity, however, is encouraged to approach any Mason.

A man wishing to join need only submit an application to his lodge of choice signed by two members of that lodge willing to act as his sponsors.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this brochure is to provide an overview of what Freemasonry is, its philosophy and its role in society. To obtain additional information, or to seek answers to any questions you might have, there are various sources available, including:

- Check out the Grand Lodge Web site at www.grandlodge.on.ca
- Ask a Mason of your acquaintance; he will assist you directly, or obtain replies to you queries;
- If you do not know a Mason personally, contact the Grand Lodge Office.



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