



A Basic Look at Freemasonry

A Publication of The United Grand Lodge of Queensland

Thank you for your interest in Freemasonry

It's possible that you do not know a great deal about Freemasonry, and if this is the case we think it is important that before you continue any further we should touch base with a few matters of importance. Things you really should know.

Please read the following pages very carefully. We have given you information that will allow you to make a carefully considered decision based on a knowledge of what Freemasonry is and is not.

It may be that once you appreciate these things you might have other thoughts about applying for membership or on the other hand you might see, as we do, that Freemasonry is *a great place to be and a better way to live*.

Whatever your decision we wish you well in your endeavours.

About the Fraternity

Freemasons meet in buildings plainly identified as Masonic Centres and public announcements of their meetings are often published in daily and community publications. There is no attempt to hide the names of community leaders who are Freemasons.

Freemasonry is a fraternity of men bound together by vows of morality in public and private life, who believe in God and the constitutional rights of members to free choice of religion and political persuasion.

To convey the messages Freemasonry has to give and for uniformity of presentation in our ceremonies we use a ritual.

Our ritual is often considered by Freemasons as having been the most moving experience of their lives.

We employ the tools of the stone mason as symbols of basic moral truths and our Masonic ritual dramatises a philosophy of life based on morality.

Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the individual, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community. One of our proudest claims is that we **"make good men better"**. Freemasonry thus strives to make good men better -- to teach its members to be "better than themselves". It accepts only men of high moral character.

The fraternity of Freemasonry encourages self-improvement, promotes patriotism and respect for the rule of law, sanctions equal rights under law, practices good will towards all men, and contributes generously to worthy causes.

Freemasonry is not a benefit society or a Charity but it is a charitable institution. It assists members in various ways through times of hardship, but it is not an insurance society with sickness, death, disability or old age benefits. Masonic Charities are renowned world-wide for work with medical research and other noble purposes.

Freemasonry is not a secret society. It is a well-known, nation-wide fraternity whose members proudly declare their membership.

The bond of faith and confidence among Freemasons is largely the result of the common knowledge that all, having experienced the memorable rituals, accept the high ethical standards it teaches as guides to their conduct.

Freemasonry, with its dedication to education, morality, brotherly love, non-sectarianism in religion and politics, and equal rights, is a steady influence that balances and consolidates the social, religious and political life of Australia.

Freemasonry is not a religion and favours no religious practices or beliefs over others. You are not only allowed to practice your faith of choice but are encouraged to do so, whatever that faith may be. It teaches men to be religious without advocating a particular doctrine, or creed. It encourages its members to support their Church.

The discussion of politics and/or religion at Freemasonic meetings is strictly forbidden as is any other subject likely to excite personal animosities.

Freemasonry's principle tenets are themselves important religious teachings applicable to all faiths: Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

Freemasonry demands from its members a respect for the law of the country in which they live.

Its principles do not in any way conflict with its members' duties as citizens, but should strengthen them in fulfilling their private and public responsibilities. It requires its members to be good citizens, but free to choose their medium of political expression.

The use by a Freemason of his membership to promote his own or anyone else's business or personal interests is condemned, and is contrary to the conditions on which he sought admission to Freemasonry.

A Freemason's duty as a citizen must always prevail over any obligation to other Freemasons, and any attempt to shield a Freemason who has acted dishonourably or unlawfully is contrary to this prime duty.

Contrary to many popular myths, Freemasonry is not elitist and exclusive; nor do you have to have a relative in the Fraternity. Our membership is open to all men of good character.

Freemasonry is purely voluntary! The only requirements for membership in this fraternity are that you must be a man of eighteen years of age or older, of good character and who believes in a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul.

A Freemason is entitled to invite a friend to join. The friend must then voluntarily seek membership by contacting a Freemason and announce his desire to do so. It is hoped that those who see the good works and services performed by Freemasons will desire on their own to join us.

If you are interested in Freemasonry, just remember this simple guide:

To Be One, Ask One.

As for our supposed secrecy, we are not a secret society. All members are free to acknowledge their membership, and will do so in response to inquiries for respectable reasons. Its constitutions and rules are available to the public.

There is no secret about any of its aims and principles. Like many other societies, it regards some of its internal affairs as private matters for its members. The secrets of Freemasonry are concerned with its traditional modes of recognition.

You found us didn't you? How hard was it for you to contact our "secret" organisation? Not much of a secret is it?

We appreciate your interest in Freemasonry and it is important to us that you take any decision to seek membership for the right reasons.

There are things that Freemasonry can and will do for you but you may entertain ideas and expectations of matters that in reality Freemasonry can not and will not do for you.

Let's take a closer look at a few matters.

Who can join?

Membership is open to men of all faiths who are law-abiding, of good character and who acknowledge a belief in God.

Freemasonry is a multi-racial and multi-cultural organization. It has attracted men of goodwill from all sectors of the community into membership.

If you could not sit in harmony and peace with men of different races and religions then Freemasonry is not for you. Do not proceed with an application.

No Improper Solicitation

As previously mentioned Freemasonry has always required that men should come to its doors:-

- o Entirely of their own free will and accord; not as a result of importunity or idle curiosity, but

- From a favourable opinion of the fraternity
- A genuine desire for knowledge, and
- A sincere wish to be serviceable to one's fellows.

Some men are surprised that no one has ever asked them to become a Freemason. They may even feel that the Freemasons in their town don't think they are "good enough" to join. But it doesn't work that way.

For hundreds of years Freemasons have been forbidden to ask others to join the fraternity.

We can talk to friends about Freemasonry. We can tell them about what Freemasonry does, we can tell them why we enjoy it but we do not coerce or pressure, anyone to join.

There's a good reason for that. It isn't that we're trying to be exclusive. It is because becoming a Freemason is a very serious thing.

Joining Freemasonry is making a permanent life commitment to live in certain ways.

- To live with honour and integrity,
- To be willing to share with and care about others,
- To trust each other, and
- To place ultimate trust in God.

No one should be "talked into" making such a decision.

So, when a man decides he wants to be a Freemason, he asks a Freemason for a petition or application, fills it out and gives it to the Freemason, and that Freemason takes it to the local lodge.

If curiosity is the driving force behind your application then please reconsider your motives, or if your friends are coercing you to apply for membership against your own better judgement do not continue with your application.

Belief in a Supreme Being

Freemasonry is a fellowship of disinterested friends who meet together for fraternal friendship and association. This fellowship is founded upon a system of morality based on a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.

No non-believer can be made a Freemason.

Freemasonry teaches the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul. It constantly holds before man the duty he owes to God, his country, his neighbour, and himself.

Freemasonry does not involve itself with religion or politics, but endeavours always to bring out man's highest and noblest qualities.

The aim of the true Freemason is to promote a brotherly feeling among men and to help the distressed and afflicted to the best of his ability.

If you do not have a belief in a Supreme Being then reconsider your application.

The Purpose Of Freemasonry

The purpose of Freemasonry is moral and spiritual improvement, not the gaining of any material advantage.

It should be clearly understood and borne in mind that Freemasonry is not to be entered into in the hope of material gain or advancement. Admission must not be sought for mercenary or selfish motives.

If such were your motives you would be sadly disappointed and therefore we recommend that you reconsider your application.

No Material Benefits

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that Freemasonry is not a benefit society. Membership will not confer you any special right to sick benefits, death benefits, burial expenses, and the education of your children or the support of your dependents.

Failure to understand this has sometimes caused families to hold false impressions, which have led to disappointment, misunderstanding and embarrassment. The practice of charity is however, a fundamental virtue taught in Freemasonry. Membership in the fraternity will not gain you employment advantages beyond your merit nor will it bring advancement in life that is not commensurate with your demonstrated abilities.

Those seeking such benefits should reconsider their application for they would be greatly disappointed.

Financial Obligations

It is obvious that the membership must carry the burden of the cost of Lodge facilities, operations and functions. Like any organization there are entrance fees, set annual dues and some initial costs.

An applicant must, therefore, be willing and able to meet his financial obligations for the entrance fees, degree fees and annual dues without material handicap or detriment to his family or dependents.

Please consider any impact the payment of fees and dues might have on your family situation. We consider the payment of prescribed fees by individual members as proof of their sincerity.

It is important that this be clearly understood. We would not wish to see a family disadvantaged because of Lodge dues.

If the payment of such financial obligations were even the slightest difficulty then please reconsider your application.

Freemasonic Meetings — Frequency — Location

Each Lodge meets formally once in every month and informally once in every month. All members of the Lodge are expected to attend the formal regular monthly meeting.

This is a personal commitment of time and it is a duty.

If you cannot make and meet this commitment at this time in your life you should reconsider your application.

What goes on at the meetings?

For members only, two basic kinds of activities take place in a lodge.

- A simple business portion, and
- What we term "the work" for the evening.

"Degrees" may be performed ("the work") to either admit new members, or progress members to the next level in their advancement. At other times we provide interesting and informative matters of discussion.

Every lodge serves more than its own members. Frequently, there are meetings open to the public. Examples are Ladies' Nights, Bring a Friend Nights, Film nights, Supper dances and other special meetings supporting community events and dealing with topics of local interest.

Clothing – Meetings

Freemasons adopt a basic dress code that in Queensland varies from summer to winter. This is usually a black Dinner suit for the Winter months and a white mess jacket (Eton jacket) and black trousers for the Summer months.

For more formal occasions the dress standard increases but this should not be a concern to you for some years. However there is a dress code and you need to be aware of this.

It is important to us for many reasons that the standards of our organization are maintained. If this would cause you concern then reconsider your application.

Clothing Ceremonial

It is usual for candidates to wear ceremonial clothing, which we provide. This clothing is modest and freshly cleaned. It's meaning is explained during the ceremony. It includes outer garments and ceremonial shoes.

While it is “different”, rest assured that we have all gone through precisely the same procedure you would encounter, however if you do not wish to take the path we have all taken, then Freemasonry is not for you; please reconsider.

Loyalty

Loyalty to one's country is an essential qualification in Freemasonry, and only those are acceptable who cheerfully conform to every lawful authority.

Disloyalty in any form is abhorrent to the teachings of Freemasonry and those of such a mind-set would do well to reconsider their application.

The Aims Of Freemasonry

The aims of Freemasonry are noble and unselfish. It deserves and expects your sincere attachment and your faithful service. It will make demands upon your time and energies. We ask you to consider that if you proceed and you are accepted it will be a duty and a privilege to attend our meetings and to contribute your share to any of our useful undertakings.

If admitted, you will be required to obligate yourself to secrecy in purely Masonic matters, such as the ritual, means of recognition, results of balloting and the like.

If you cannot agree to such aims then Freemasonry is not for you. We ask you to reconsider your application.

ON THE OTHER HAND

If you are looking for a place where you can confidently trust people and trust your family with them also:

Go ahead with your application

If you are looking for a place where, (within moral and civil guidelines) free thought, free speaking and the spiritual growth of man, can grow to their fullest potential:

Lodge your application.

If you are looking for a place to meet outstanding individuals from all walks of life, that you would not otherwise have had the opportunity to know and to call *brother*:

You have found one, submit your application.

If you want a place where you can be part of an organization that has for its principal tenets – Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth:

Lodge your application.

If you want to be part of a group that provides its members with self-development opportunities, leadership training and experience, and to improve public speaking skills...

Then proceed with your application

If you want a place you can go to seek support as well as give it. Go ahead, ***submit your application.***

If you are looking for a place where moral virtues are taught and through these teachings a regular reinforcement of the moral virtues is experienced,

Then submit your application.

Do you want a place to spend time with a group of brothers, who by acting as good men, want to become better men. Not better than others, but better than they would have otherwise been:

This is it, submit your application.

If you want a place where you can become better equipped to serve your Church and your community:

Look no further, submit your application.

If you are looking for a place to meet with established members of the community and to become a part of the community:

Submit your application.



Once Again, Things That We Do Not Do

We do NOT discuss or participate in any religious or political matters. These subjects are forbidden in the lodge and its precincts.

We do NOT conduct any form of "Masonic" religious practice...

other than some brief totally non-denominational prayers which are deemed suitable for men of all religious beliefs to share. These prayers should be considered as the equivalent of those held in a school assembly, council etc., rather than as part of a religious service.

We do NOT indulge in secret schemes, plots or conspiracies.

We do NOT use Masonic membership for personal gain

We do NOT use knowledge of another person's Masonic membership to favour him at the expense of a non-Freemason.

We do NOT keep secret: knowledge of any criminal matters, or of dishonourable conduct, in an attempt protect a fellow Freemason...

a Freemason is always expected to put his duty as a law-abiding citizen before any obligation to other Freemasons or Freemasonry in general.

Well there you have it, it wasn't earth shattering but they were essential items and matters that should be known to you. We hope the information provided will help you to appreciate Freemasonry and to let you consider and decide on your application.

If you do decide to approach Freemasonry, do so with a pure heart, with a receptive mind and with an eagerness to learn. It is only in this state can your preparation be worthy of what you are about to receive.

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

Remember this: in a Freemasons' Lodge you will always be treated with care and respect.

Whatever your destiny in life and wherever it carries you the right hand of Masonic fellowship will always be extended to you.

To proceed and/or for additional information, contact :-

United Grand Lodge of Queensland
Masonic Memorial Centre
311 Ann Street
Brisbane 4000

GPO Box 2204
Brisbane 4001
Phone (07) 3229 3533
Fax (07) 3229 9288
Email grandsec@freemasonsqld.org.au



FREEMASONS
Queensland

Issued 2007