

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO



Freemasons do not normally seek to recruit candidates, though a member is allowed to suggest the possibility of joining to anyone who in his opinion would enjoy the fellowship of, what Freemasons often refer to as, “the Craft” and be willing to adopt as his own the standards we set ourselves.

For some, of course, the mystery of the unknown will be the attraction. Others will be intrigued by rumours. Most join because they see that friends whom they respect are proud to be Freemasons and clearly enjoy their membership of the Order. But the high standards of behaviour we expect from all members of the Craft make it necessary for us to know something about a man before we can accept him; in particular we need to be satisfied that he is not seeking to become a Freemason because he expects that membership will advance him in his business, or provide him with a material gain or preference. We also want to know that he will be a credit to the Craft, and will indeed become a Brother among us. But overriding all this is one most important requirement – to be a Freemason a man must have a belief in a Supreme Being (a God). No atheist or agnostic is eligible.

This does not mean that Freemasonry is a religion; far from it. A Freemason is required to practise his religion, whatever it may be, and to regard his Freemasonry as a moral code subordinate to but supportive of that religion. Members of many faiths in many countries are Freemasons, Christianity, Judaism, Islam and many others; and men of differing faiths can and do meet together in the brotherhood of a lodge without dissension, “in perfect harmony” as Freemasons put it. And it must be made clear at

the outset that in order to preserve the harmony by which we set so much store no discussion of religion is permitted in Lodge; for the same reason, there is no discussion of politics.

The first essential in understanding Freemasonry is to rid your mind of preconceived notions about it; these will almost always have resulted from uninformed talk or guesswork and even sometimes from malicious gossip. We do not pretend that all Freemasons are perfect in thought, word or deed; but we do affirm that we expect our Brethren to observe the highest moral standards, requiring each Brother to behave towards others (whether members of the Craft or not) as he would have them behave towards him, to attend his Lodge as regularly as his domestic and other duties allow, and to give in the cause of charity as generously as his means will permit.

As to the demands that will be made upon you, the most important are those of time and service. It is also essential that you should clearly understand what financial obligations you will be assuming. There will be an “entrance fee” and then there is an annual subscription; both of these are set by the Lodge committee. Each meeting is followed by a meal “festive board” and this is also chargeable to you, again the cost of this meal is set by the Lodge committee. In addition there are contributions to charity, including a collection taken at each Lodge meeting.

It is very important that you should know not only the financial obligations but also what demands there will be on your time, particularly if you have family obligations. If you are married you should be satisfied that your joining Freemasonry is acceptable to your wife. There should be no reason why she should be totally excluded from your Masonic activities; many Lodges have events to which ladies are invited and there is no prohibition against talking to her about the Craft in general terms – not everything is as secret as our critics would like to imagine. “The Freemasons” are designed as much for your family as they are for you.

The following information has been taken from the publications issued by *The United Grand Lodge of England* and *The Regular Grand Lodge of Italy*.

What is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is the UK's largest secular, fraternal and charitable organisation. It teaches moral lessons and self-knowledge through participation in a progression of allegorical two-part plays, which are learnt by heart and performed within each lodge. Freemasonry offers its members an approach to life which seeks to reinforce thoughtfulness for others, kindness in the community, honesty in business, courtesy in society and fairness in all things. Members are urged to regard the interests of the family as paramount but importantly Freemasonry also teaches and practices concern for people, care for the less fortunate and help for those in need.

What is Regular Grand Lodge of Italy?

On the 17th April 1993 has been constituted in Rome, according to the Italian laws on the associations, the "*Regular Grand Lodge of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of Italy*" or "*Regular Grand Lodge of Italy*". Its headquarters are at: Lungotevere dei Mellini, 17 00193 Rome.

The Regular Grand Lodge of Italy is the only independent, undivided, responsible and sovereign authority over the whole territory of the Italian Republic for the Government of the Degrees of the Pure and Ancient Universal Freemasonry listed below:

First Degree - Entered Apprentice

Second Degree - Fellow Craft

Third Degree - Master Mason

including the "*Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Ark*"

The Regular Grand Lodge of Italy totally admits as its own deed of association the text of the five documents approved by the United Grand Lodge of England listed below:

1. *Ancient Charges and Regulations* in fifteen articles to be read by the Secretary to the Master Elect prior to his Installation into the Chair of a Lodge;

2. *Aims and Relationships of the Craft* in eleven articles;
3. *Basic Principles. Regularity* in eight articles;
4. *The Charges of a Freemason* in six paragraphs to be read at the making of new Brethren or when the Master shall order it;
5. *Statement about relationship between Freemasonry and Religion.*

On the 9th of December 1993, just after a few months from its constitution, the Regular Grand Lodge of Italy has been recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England.

“Amore e Psiche” no.110 is a lodge belonging to the Regular Grand Lodge of Italy.

Why do people join and remain members?

People became Freemasons for a variety of reasons, some as the result of family tradition, others upon the introduction of a friend or out of a curiosity to know what it is all about.

You will have your own reasons, but the following are taken from a sample of new members:

Quest for knowledge – because they are intrigued about the history and mysteries held within Freemasonry

Charity – because they feel it is a conduit to ‘put back into society’, through Masonic charity giving

Brotherhood – because it is a leveller, meaning you meet (and indeed become friends with) a broad spectrum of people – from Chairmen of large PLCs to dustmen, people that live on your estate to foreign nationals, people from 21 to 90+yrs of age – essentially, a very extensive male demographic. Simply by mixing with people from different walks of life helps to broaden the mind

Self improvement – to become a better person

Learning – networking, learning from peers and mentors and learning from practising ritual (if you hold office) and after dinner speech-making (watching others and on occasion making a simple speech)

Unusual – because there is nothing quite like it in life Achievement – progressing through office to Worshipful Master.

Those who become active members and who grow in Freemasonry do so principally because they enjoy it. They enjoy the challenges and fellowship that Freemasonry offers. There is more to it, however, than just enjoyment.

Participation in the dramatic presentation of moral lessons and in the working of a lodge provides a member with a unique opportunity to learn more about himself and encourages him to live in such a way that he will always be in search of becoming a better man, not better than someone else but better than he himself would otherwise be and therefore an exemplary member of society.

Each Freemason is required to learn and show humility through initiation. Then, by progression through a series of degrees he gains insight into increasingly complex moral and philosophical concepts, and accepts a variety of challenges and responsibilities which are both stimulating and rewarding. The structure and working of the lodge and the sequence of ceremonial events, which are usually for companionship, teamwork, character development and enjoyment of shared experiences.

Is Freemasonry a secret society?

Freemasonry is not a secret society but lodge meetings like those of many other groups are private and open only to members. The rules and aims of Freemasonry are available to the public. Many meeting places and halls used by Freemasons are readily identifiable and sometimes are used by the local community for activities other than Freemasonry. Freemasons' Hall in London is open to the public and 'open days' are held in many provincial centres. Freemasons are encouraged to speak openly about their membership, while remembering that this choice is obviously personal and they undertake not to use it for their own or anyone else's advancement.

What are the secrets of Freemasonry?

The secrets in freemasonry are the traditional modes of recognition which are not used indiscriminately, but solely as a test of membership, e.g. when visiting a Lodge where you are not known.

What happens at a lodge meeting?

The meeting is in two parts. As in any association there is a certain amount of administrative procedure – minutes of last meeting, proposing and balloting for new members, discussing and voting on financial matters, election of officers, news and correspondence. Then there are the ceremonies for admitting new masons and the annual installation of the Master and appointment of officers. The three ceremonies for admitting a new mason are in two parts – a slight dramatic instruction in the principles and lessons taught in the Craft followed by a lecture in which the candidate's various duties are spelled out.

“Amore e Psiche” Lodge meets once a month, usually the third Friday of the month. Sometimes we meet (not ritually) for a drink or dinner. Other lodges also meet several times a month.

Isn't the ritual out of place in a modern society?

No. The ritual is a shared experience which binds the members together. Its use of drama, allegory and symbolism impresses the principles and teachings more firmly in the mind of each candidate than if they were simply passed on to him in matter-of-fact modern language.

Why do grown men run around with their trousers rolled up?

It is true that candidates have to roll up their trouser legs during the three ceremonies when they are being admitted to membership. Taken out of context, this can seem amusing, but like many other aspects of Freemasonry, it has a symbolic meaning.

Why do Freemasons take oaths?

New members make solemn promises concerning their conduct in Lodge and in society. Each member also promises to keep confidential the traditional methods of proving that he is a Freemason which he would use when visiting a lodge where he is not known. Freemasons do not swear allegiances to each other or Freemasonry. Freemasons promise to support others in times of need, but only if that support does not conflict with their duties to God, the law, their family or with the responsibilities as a Citizen.

Why do the ‘obligations’ contain hideous penalties?

They no longer do. When Masonic ritual was developing in the late 1600s and 1700s it was quite common for legal and civil oaths to include physical penalties and Freemasonry simply followed the practice of the times. In Freemasonry, however, the physical penalties were always symbolic and were never carried out. After long discussion, they were removed from the promises in 1986.

Is Freemasonry a religion or a rival to religion?

Emphatically not. Freemasonry requires a belief in God and its principles are common to many of the world’s great religions. Freemasonry does not try to replace religion or substitute for it. Every candidate is exhorted to practice his religion and to regard its holy book as the unerring standard of truth. Freemasonry does not instruct its members in what their religious beliefs should be, nor does it offer sacraments. Freemasonry deals in relations between men; religion deals in a man’s relationship with his God.

Why don’t you have women members?

Traditionally, Freemasonry under the United Grand Lodge of England has been restricted to men. The early stonemasons were all male, and when Freemasonry was organising, the position of women in society was different from today. If women wish to join Freemasonry, there are two separate Grand Lodges in England restricted to women only.

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 organisation. It has attracted men of goodwill from all sectors of the community into membership. As previously stated there are similar Masonic organisations for women.

Why do you wear regalia?

Wearing regalia is historical and symbolic and, like a uniform, serves to indicate to members where they rank in the organisation.

Further Information:

Any candidate for admission to the Craft has to be proposed and seconded in the usual way. There are certain forms to be completed and these require disclosure of anything which may affect the decision of the Lodge, such as convictions by a court. This is not prompted by intrusive curiosity but is required by Grand Lodge as necessary to protect the good name of the Craft. Normally, you will then be interviewed by a committee of Lodge members who will wish to confirm in particular that you believe in a Supreme Being; that you have no “mercenary or other unworthy motive” in seeking to join but are prompted to do so by what you know of our standards and ideals; that you can attend your Lodge regularly without it taking precedence over your domestic or other obligations; and that you are prepared to play your part as an active member of the Lodge. The committee will also provide you with an opportunity to ask further questions you may have about Freemasonry. If the committee then recommends your candidature the Master will arrange a ballot of members of the Lodge to be taken. Assuming that the ballot is successful you will then be admitted or given a date on which to attend for admission.

When the time for you to be made a Freemason arrives, remember that it is not only you who is proceeding on the basis of trust; the members of the Lodge, and indeed Freemasons all over the world (not only in your own country) are also putting their trust in you. It is this trust which binds Freemasons together and it must never be abused by any of us.

Much, much more could be written; but the purpose of this general information is to give you a brief insight into Freemasonry and its aims as well as to explain what membership of the Craft involves. You will almost certainly have many more questions to ask, and that is as it should be since we do not want to bring men into Freemasonry unless they have had the opportunity to satisfy themselves that they will be joining an honourable and fraternal association in which they will be happy and which will help them in maintaining high standards in their everyday lives. Please feel free to ask your appointed Personal Mentor any questions you may have, although you should not try to press him to break confidence. All will become clear in due course.

Before you complete your application to join, you should have read and digested the above information to give you an insight into Freemasonry and what we practice and believe. To recap:

1. Masonry consists of a body of men banded together for the purpose of mutual intellectual, social and moral improvement and pledged to preserve our mysteries, privileges, customs and ceremonials. Its members endeavour to cultivate and exhibit brotherly love (friendship/tolerance/equality), relief (charity/kindness/altruism) and truth (honesty/integrity/virtuous), to one another and the world at large.
2. The essential condition of membership is a belief in a Supreme Being.
3. Masonry recognises no distinction of religion and emphasises the duties of loyalty and citizenship. It does not permit any of its members to discuss religious or political questions in Lodge.
4. It offers no pecuniary advantages binding one Mason to deal with another, or to support him in any way in the ordinary business relations of life.
5. We support a wide variety of Masonic and non-Masonic charities but Masonry is not in any financial sense a mutual-benefit society. Masonic charities are solely for the less fortunate.
6. Masonry teaches that a man's first duty is his family. People should not therefore join if the associated fees and charitable contributions will be to the detriment of their loved ones.
7. Therefore everyone should be sure:

- a. he desires the intellectual and moral improvement of himself and others;
- b. he is willing to devote time, means and efforts in the promotion of brotherly love, relief and truth;
- c. he seeks no commercial, social or pecuniary advantages; and
- d. he is able to afford the necessary expenditure without detriment to himself or his dependents.

Famous Freemasons

Over three centuries freemasonry has attracted Kings, Presidents, Prime Ministers and many key historic figures, including:

Kings: George VI, Edward VII, Edward VIII

Presidents & Prime Ministers: George Washington, Winston Churchill

Key historic figures: William Booth (Salvation Army Founder), Henri Dunant (Red Cross Founder), Dr Barnado, Martin Luther King

Musicians: Mozart, Gilbert & Sullivan, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington

Explorers: Sir Ernest Shackleton, Captain Robert Scott (Scott of the Antarctic), Astronaut Buzz Aldrin

The list could go on and on...

Writers: Rudyard Kipling, Robert Burns, Leo Tolstoy

Businessmen: Andre Citroen, Henry Ford

Actors and entertainers: Clark Gable, John Wayne, William Cody ("Buffalo Bill"), Harry Houdini, Peter Sellers

Sportsmen: Clive Lloyd, Arnold Palmer, Jack Dempsey, "Sugar Ray" Robinson

Scientists: Sir Alexander Fleming, Joseph Lister, Edward Jenner (who developed the smallpox vaccination)

Edited in 2016 by Amore e Psiche Lodge no.110 of Regular Grand Lodge of Italy, based on a book of The Masonic Province of West Kent, UK:

<http://www.westkentmentoring.org.uk/4B1%20-%20%20Notes%20for%20Candidates.pdf>