

VICTORIA LODGE OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
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WHAT IS A LODGE OF FREEMASONS ?

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A Lodge of Freemasons consists of the members themselves, who when they come together in a regular manner, form a living temple. It is a union of men of goodwill who coalesce in order to learn, or fathom, the benign and profound secrets of nature and science.

A true Union, it may be observed, is the joining of members into an intimate association, for each candidate comes of his own free-will and accord and his "cable-tow" is the gossamer thread of his own self-convincing conscience. The only connection which we, as Masons, acknowledge is that of the Plumb-rule, the symbol of rectitude, which links heaven with earth.

Unconstrained therefore by any physical compulsion, a Masonic Lodge endeavours to promote Peace on earth by concord and agreement of mind, through a union of spiritual as well as temporal interest among its members.

We know that there are many good Masons whose outlook on life has been changed completely after their reception into the Craft. Unconsciously, as they have learned our ritual, they have been imbued with that wisdom, strength and beauty which is taught through our symbols. Gradually the rough ashlar has been transferred, as the latent qualities of the heart have emancipated themselves.

What Masonic Lodges claim, by virtue of the power in them vested, is to foster brotherly kindness, or a natural and moral regard for others. This, by some people, is called "self-sacrifice for the good of others," and the Craft has a right to that assertion.

The first grand principle on which every one of our Masonic Lodges is founded, being Brotherly Love, we as Brethren, strive to cultivate that quality which communicates pleasure not alone to ourselves but to others. But the Craft does not foster "love in idleness" , or slacking. The genius of our institution is labour. Every Lodge of Freemasons is, figuratively a body of searchers after light who are desirous of gaining by practice, a faculty of teaching their younger Brethren those great truths which they themselves have learned and thereby handing on the light.

This acquired ability of communicating to others at regular intervals, the instruction imparted to themselves of our speculative science, differentiates the Craft from other organizations and gives it that immutable character the ability to rejuvenate itself, which has ensured its survival from remote ages and warrants its continuance to an equally remote future.

Masonic Lodges then, consists of learners. After attaining certain degrees, the greater number of our Brethren do not aim at going forward to take office. At stated times they attend their Lodges as laymen, rejoicing in that freedom from responsibility which an office would entail. Did they not derive pleasure from these gatherings, they would not frequently put off other engagements in order to be present? It is no small solace to many a solitary man, to come in contact at his Lodge with comrades of kindly demeanor, who address him cheerily by the endearing term 'Brother,' albeit their status in the outer world may be unlike his own. Apart from that, in the Lodge itself such a

Brother finds much to engage his attention, and mental refreshment, while lending his aid to the ceremonies, which for a while, wipes away the dust from his everyday life.

Although set phrases and addresses may be repeated frequently, and the oftener they are

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reiterated the better, those who take part in the ceremonies are seldom the same. There is an annual change of officers and a constant change of candidates. Even if the parts are allotted at successive meetings identical speakers, in a ritual committed to memory, no two renderings are alike. Different points are emphasized. The intonation of the voices and the expression put into repeated phrases are varied, relieving the effect of that dull monotony which characterizes usually the reading of written words.

A keen observer of nature can watch a stream for hours and perceive fresh beauties in its diversified flow. Masonry in a broad sense, is not unlike a river working out its destiny from some remote and pure source, until it joins the great ocean of futurity. And so, to the intelligent lay brother, the continual change of attitude of those who take the chief parts in a Lodge, the musical interludes, the distinctive colors of the clothing worn, the dignified aspect of the surroundings and the critical attention of the audience, combine to keep the eyes, ears and mind of each votary on the alert..

Undoubtedly this vigilance of mind kindles a desire for further enlightenment. It leads to a questioning of ones Brethren as to how a more intimate knowledge of the Craft can be obtained.

Some one, in the outer world, asks a beginner, "Why were you made a Freemason?" An answer to that simple question has not presented itself readily. Having been taught caution, the young Brother is reluctant to commit himself. Later he knows the reply. It is, "For the sake of obtaining a knowledge of the secrets and mysteries preserved among Freemasons".

Seeking to obtain that knowledge, he peruses the Book of Constitutions and Lodge Bylaws and in further study of The Volume of the Sacred Law. "Seek and Ye shall find". How many seek to understand the meaning and signification of a Freemasons Lodge. "Knock and it shall be opened unto you." If you do not knock, and knock properly, the door remains shut.

How many knock intelligently? If during their daily avocations the Brethren of a Lodge worked as hard as they could and when they called off for refreshment, devoted daily, some part of their leisure to looking within themselves, with a determination to advance in our speculative science, marvelous collective progress would be made. Then would become a living force for good, that poetry of Masonry which attaches so much importance to the symbols used in our Lodges.

Yet it needs no great stretch of imagination to foresee that the world is destined to be canopied by a network of contentment, provided that those principles which every Freemasons Lodge professes are practiced in daily life, and may the great-great-grandchildren of the present generation live to see that glorious consummation ! Indeed, that is the meaning of Freemasonry being a progressive science. We acknowledge then, that the heart may conceive and the head devise in vain, if the hand is not prompt to execute the design of beauty and that the stumbling-block to our advancement is the weakness of human nature, unable to resist the powers of darkness unless assisted by that light which is

from above.

Thoughts such as these, bring us back to the intelligent young Freemason, for the future of every Lodge rests with him. He who has the strength of youth, whose appetite has been whetted for information, wishes naturally, to be taught and have his steps directed on the right path. The beginner who hears that a Freemason Lodge has such latent potentialities as those described, may well ask "What Makes a Lodge perfect?" To this question the answer is "Seven or more regularly made Freemasons."

In another sense, it may be added "Practice makes perfect" and practice in actual and repeated performance, is only possible by careful rehearsal. Through them familiarity with the ritual, the way to render it correctly, acquaintance with the lectures and a general knowledge of the Craft can be obtained. That which renders a Freemason Lodge complete is consequently the instruction of its members through the various channels of "Education and Research".

Having examined our single drop taken from the great river of Masonry, we return to the original question "What is a Lodge of Freemasons?" Through our magnifying-lens, we have observed that

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in a figurative sense, in the place of our earthly sojourn often set amid barren surroundings; a Freemason Lodge is a fertile spot watered by springs of refreshing ideas; a natural zone away from religious and political strife; an academy wherein students learn the tenets of our mystic art; and those of us who are members even of long standing.. Freemasonry had a great influence on our lives, and when we look back the effect can be traced and even after very long association, the Ceremonies remain ever fresh and inspiring;

S.M.I.B.