

Conclusion of the Presentation

Questions should be invited. If unable to answer speakers should promise to find out and communicate it in writing later. Grand Lodge leaflets, the Tydeman address, and the Warwickshire Mission Statement could be distributed and advice given that approaches may be made to the Provincial Office for further information. There ought to be no attempt explicitly to recruit new members, but a warm and positive response should be given if a gentleman makes an enquiry about joining our Order.

Freemasonry is meant to be enjoyed, is a hobby, and is fun (not a riot). In the Provincial Grand Master's words "it is a force for good". It has been a rule for many years that we do not solicit members but rather wait until they express an interest and then advise them what they should do.

Non-Masons at After-Proceedings

It has become increasingly common for Lodges to entertain wives and other non-Masons to Dinner. This practice is to be encouraged.

There is nothing improper in drinking the health of individuals in their Masonic capacity even though non-Masons are present, particularly when the latter are so clearly aware of the fact that the meal follows a Masonic meeting. There is no objection to drinking Masonic Toasts in the presence of non-Masons, provided that Brethren in the course of any speeches avoid references to matters of Masonic ritual. For this reason the "fire" and the Tyler's Toast, both of which have their origins in the Masonic Lectures, should not be given on such occasions, particularly as the latter might be seen to be divisive by its exclusion of non-Masons from its scope.

It is desirable that the number of toasts proposed and drunk should be kept within reasonable bounds, so that the non-Masons are not overwhelmed or confused. It should rarely be necessary for the list to be longer than "The Queen and the Craft", "The MW The Grand Master", "The Provincial Grand Master", "The Worshipful Master" and "The Guests". Prior to the toasts being proposed the Master or the Lodge DC should explain what is going to happen and that the non-Masons are not required to join in but may if they wish to do so.

Guidance Notes for Presentations to Non-Masons

Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire

Foreword by the Provincial Grand Master

May 2008

Guidance Notes for Presentations to Non-Masons

Foreword by the Provincial Grand Master

There is little which is secret and cannot be disclosed to the public about Freemasonry. There is no secrecy about our rules, our membership or our behaviour. However, we must never reveal anything which requires instruction as to what we do or how we do it. There should be no indication of the signs tokens, words or passwords but it is permissible to say that they are only used during a ceremony, have no use anywhere else, and must not be used outside the Lodge.

The Province continues to promote Open Days at Stirling Road as part of our policy of public awareness and openness. Several other Masonic Halls in Warwickshire now hold their own Open Days. They are experiencing an enthusiasm for learning about our Order. As part of this policy, I heartily endorse the holding of Gentlemen's Evenings. These should not be seen as a recruiting exercise, but as an attempt to reveal the attractions of the philosophy of Masonry and to give an insight into the symbolism of the Lodge Room and its furniture. Those who might be invited would include friends, neighbours, colleagues and relatives, who should be asked to remain to dinner after the presentation. I also strongly recommend that ladies of members and their gentlemen guests are invited as well.

These events can be held on regular Lodge nights where a minimal amount of Lodge work is undertaken and the Lodge is closed after about 20 minutes. The guests should be entertained by one or two Past Masters, perhaps with a cup of coffee or a soft drink in the dining room, and then invited into the Lodge Room. The presentation might include descriptions of the layout of the Lodge, the jewels of the Officers, the positions of the Officers, the symbolism of the chequered pavement and the square and compasses. Questions should be invited. Afterwards members and their guests retire to the dining room for a normal Masonic Festive Board with the usual toasts, other than the Tyler's. Fire should not be given. Regalia can be worn in the Lodge Room by members during the presentation. A Dispensation is required for this purpose but it will be granted by me free of charge. Although recruitment is not the prime objective of these evenings, I know that they often produce serious enquiries about joining. The Provincial Grand Secretary or the Provincial Information Officer will be pleased to help any Lodge with the procedures for such an evening. The Rulers in the Province will also be delighted to assist by making the presentations on these occasions provided they have adequate notice.

I commend this guidance to the Brethren in Warwickshire.

Michael J Price
Provincial Grand Master
May 2008

How is Freemasonry organised?

Many non-Masons are interested in the structure and administration of Freemasonry. Some or all of the following paragraphs may help to explain:

The basic unit of Masonic association is the Lodge. This runs its own affairs, under rules in Grand Lodge's Book of Constitutions, and its own by-laws, and the customs of 'the Craft', ie Freemasonry as a whole. The Lodge has a Master, Wardens and other officers and members.

Lodges in England and Wales outside London are organised into 47 Provinces (largely matching the old counties), 37 Districts overseas (mostly Commonwealth or former Commonwealth countries) and some smaller groups of lodges. The Province of Warwickshire was established in 1728. Provinces are presided over by Provincial Grand Masters. These local Masonic authorities have disciplinary powers over the Freemasons in the Lodges in their areas. Lodges in London and a few singletons overseas are administered direct by the Grand Secretary's Office in Freemason's Hall.

The United Grand Lodge of England is the highest Masonic authority. It regulates 'the Craft', disciplines wrongdoers, and sets and alters Grand Lodge's rules. It elects the Grand Master (an annual election) who has for many years been a Prince of the Blood Royal, our present Grand Master being HRH Duke of Kent, first elected as Grand Master in 1967. He was initiated in 1963!

Independent of Grand Lodge, but drawing their members and income from the Craft, are the Masonic charities, which look after needy Freemasons and their dependants (and contribute to charitable activities which are entirely non-Masonic).

The Grand Master presides over meetings of Grand Lodge. He appoints Grand Officers to represent him as his deputies in Provinces and Districts, that is, the Provincial Grand Master and District Grand Master, to execute Grand Lodge's policies and to administer the Craft. The Grand Master is assisted by a Pro Grand Master, who takes the Grand Master's place when his royal duties prevent him from attending to Masonic business, and a Deputy and an Assistant Grand Master, and the secretariat at Freemason's Hall.

Number of Lodges

There are some 8,253 lodges under the United Grand Lodge of England, with about 1600 of them in the London area. In Warwickshire there are 196 lodges.

The rough and perfect ashlar and their symbolic nature – the rough is the Entered Apprentice, the smooth the Master Mason. The rough ashlar is man in an infant or primitive state, rough and unpolished as the stone but by the skill of the craftsman he becomes a fit member of society. The perfect ashlar is true and square and represents the Master Mason guided by Freemasonry and his God and is a further representation of the mind improved by culture.

The square and compasses and their significance, (the compasses being for the Grand Master and the square for the whole Craft) as well as the jewels on the collars worn by the officers of the Lodge. The square teaches morality, the level equality, and the plumb rule is the criterion of uprightness and truth. The Master is distinguished by the square, the Senior Warden by the level and the Junior Warden by the plumb rule. The Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden govern the Lodge by square conduct, equality and integrity.

The Chaplain's Jewel is of course a representation of the Volume of the Sacred Law. Freemasons say that this guides us to all truth, directs us to happiness and points out the whole duty of man. The Charity Steward's Jewel is the trowel representing Charity the bond of perfection and social union. The Steward's jewel is a cornucopia representing plenty. The Deacon's jewels in most Lodges today are representations of a dove bearing an olive branch but the Deacons act as messengers between the Master and his Wardens. In earlier times the jewel was a representation of Hermes, the winged messenger of the Gods.

The chequered pavement and its border provide material of great symbolical interest. The black and white carpet or the mosaic pavement points out the diversity of objects which decorate and adorn the creation. It points out the uncertainty of all things here on earth – prosperity and adversity, joys and sorrows and our varied and chequered existence through life.

The Three Degrees

The ceremonies may be briefly described as the candidate's progress through life, by means of ritualised plays (recited from memory) similar to the old morality plays.

The progression through the various offices from Steward to Worshipful Master (the highest honour any Lodge can bestow on any of its members) should be pointed out. Appointment to, and promotion in, Provincial Grand Rank and Grand Rank can be explained. The differences in regalia can be illustrated by other Brethren appropriately. The apron of every mason is white but it becomes embellished with emblems and colours as progress is made.

Charity

The Lodge Almoner or Charity Steward may supplement explanations about Freemasonry with a brief talk about Charities, Masonic and non-Masonic, and a Freemason's obligation in this respect.

Purpose of the Guidance

These notes are intended to act as guidance for Lodges who wish to invite non-Masons to events such as open days and gentlemen's evenings. It is the Provincial Grand Master's hope that senior Past Masters in particular will find them useful in presentations about Freemasonry in general, and in explaining the layout of the Lodge and the symbolism of its furniture, and what may, or may not, be disclosed to non-Masonic friends in the course of conversation. The Past Master who volunteers to make any presentation is not obliged to adhere rigidly to this guidance. He does not have to recite the advice on every topic, but may adapt or abbreviate the talk to suit the occasion. The primary objective of every presentation should be to inform, educate, and stimulate – not to pontificate nor to go on at length.

The Guidance

What is Freemasonry?

The following paragraphs are suggested as answers to this commonly asked question:

Information about Freemasonry is freely available. The Book of Constitutions (our Rule Book) is available for sale to the public and is in public libraries, as is our book of ritual. Our meeting places are known. The headquarters of Grand Lodge in London are open daily to the public. Other Masonic venues such as the Province's Headquarters are similarly open or hold open days. Grand Lodge issues leaflets and produces videos to help explain Freemasonry to the public. Members of its Lodges do not deny or conceal their membership. As a society it falls very far short of being secret.

Freemasonry is a legitimate, moral, law-abiding, God-fearing association, which plays a useful part in society.

Freemasonry is not *for* anything. Freemasonry has no grand designs, apart from 'being happy and communicating happiness' as we say in our ritual. Freemasons are forbidden to discuss religion or politics in Lodge and so men from widely different backgrounds and with very different interests can meet as friends in Freemasonry. Freemasonry provides companionship and social activity for its members and, often, for their families. It emphasises charity, which extends beyond its own people and their dependants. It teaches, by means of ritual, morality or the practical basis of living in civilised society.

We try to instil into our members morality in all things. We insist upon a belief in God, the Supreme Being, from all members and candidates without defining who that Supreme Being should be. We endeavour to ensure that our candidates are honest, and have no criminal record.

To achieve this all Lodges conduct searching enquiries which include the taking up of character references, interviews, and home visits.

Our teachings are concealed in dramatic stories very similar to the method of the ancient passion plays of the Medieval Masons. From the Bible (which English Freemasons refer to as the “Volume of the Sacred Law”), we derive much of our drama, especially the building of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Masons of that time.

The use of symbols in our ritual is also important to us. Freemasons wear aprons in Lodge emulating their forebears, the operative masons. We use the normal tools of a mason to illustrate the general principles of morality. For example, in the Initiation ceremony the 24 inch gauge is shown as being the instrument that enables an operative mason to measure his work. For Freemasons it represents 24 hours of the day – part to be spent in prayer to God, part in labour and refreshment, and part in helping any person in time of need, without it being detrimental to ourselves, our families, or our business.

The guiding principles for Freemasons

- Brotherly love, which means we show tolerance and respect for the opinions of others and behave with kindness and understanding to all;
- Relief, which is a duty on Freemasons to practise charity and to care in the community as a whole by charitable giving and by voluntary efforts and works which help others; and
- Truth, which demands that we strive for high moral standards in themselves and others.

Secrecy

‘Secrecy’ with respect to Freemasonry is very limited. Freemasons have no need to be secret about their membership or the things they do.

Freemasonry’s “secrets” are private formal proofs of membership. They are used to prevent strangers being admitted to Masonic meetings. The use of the words and signs is restricted to Lodge Meetings and Ceremonies; they should not be used in, or disclosed to, the public.

Freemasons may incline to privacy as opposed to secrecy. The affairs of many other clubs, associations and organisations (even of major political parties) are private: they do not publish membership lists and their minutes of meetings are only circulated among members. Apart from what should be kept private, Freemasons should be willing – even proud and eager – to talk about Freemasonry in general. Freemasons may freely declare their membership.

Freemasons must never use Freemasonry to advance their own interests be they personal, business, professional or whatever. If there is a conflict of interests, or even if it could be thought that there might be a conflict of interests, a Freemason is required to say so. Freemasons must

not expect, anticipate or seek any preferment or financial benefit as a consequence of being a member of the Order. A Freemason who offends this rule will be expelled from the Order and will not be able to return.

The Obligations of a Freemason

Freemasons are not members of a self-help, mutual advancement organisation. We are not a Friendly Society, nor a form of insurance.

There is nothing in a Freemason’s obligations which compels him to support a brother against the law of the land nor to advance his own interests above those of anyone else whether they are Masons or not. The obligations are better described as serious promises to keep Masonic ‘secrets’ i.e. the formal means of proof that a person is a Freemason, and concern our conduct in the Lodge and in society. The promises do not contain any commitment of allegiance by Freemasons to Freemasonry, to Grand Lodge, the Grand Master, the Provincial Grand Master, or the Master of a Lodge. We do, however, expect allegiance to Her Majesty the Queen. A Freemason has an overriding duty to obey the laws of any country in which he is a subject or may temporarily reside.

The texts of the promises and of the address on his future duties which is given to every newly made Mason are printed in books of ritual which can be bought by anyone from Masonic booksellers.

Although books of Masonic ritual can be bought by anyone, and the rituals are described in full in books which are in public libraries, we believe they have more impact on candidates if they are unknown to them before the ceremonies, when they are delivered to them in a dramatic and meaningful way. Our basic ceremonies of opening and closing Lodges, and those through which Masons are admitted and make their progress, all of which contain prayers and promises, are familiar to all Masons.

The layout of the Lodge Room

However small or large they may be, all Lodge Rooms are laid out in similar manner. It is appropriate to point out where the Master, the Wardens and Officers sit and the symbolism of the columns. It should be explained that the Volume of the Sacred Law is always on the Worshipful Master’s pedestal, and it is required to be open when the Lodge is at work. It makes the Lodge perfect. In the English Constitution the Volume of the Sacred Law is the Bible. Our candidates make their promises on it, but candidates from other religions make their promises on their own Sacred Book which can also be displayed open in a Lodge. The other important artifact that must be present at any Lodge meeting is the Warrant; without it the Lodge is not regular. It belongs to the Grand Master and the Master is the custodian and it is his responsibility to produce it at every Lodge meeting. The following are of interest in presentations: