



THE Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons is the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world.

Volumes have been written about it. Yet, to many, Freemasonry remains a mystery.

This folder is an attempt to relate a few facts that will be informative to all and to correct a few misconceptions.

### History

Some historians trace Freemasonry to the Tenth Century, B.C., during the building of King Solomon's Temple. Records reveal that Freemasonry was introduced into England in 674 A.D.

Freemasonry is directly descended from associations of operative masons, the cathedral builders of the Middle Ages, who traveled through Europe employing the secrets and skills of their crafts.

In the 17th Century, when cathedral building was on the decline, many guilds of stone-masons, known as "Operative Masons" or "Free Masons," started to accept as members those who were not members of the masons' craft, calling them "Speculative Masons" or "Accepted Masons."

It was from these groups, comprised mostly of "Adopted or Accepted Masons," that Symbolic Masonry or Freemasonry, as we know it today, had its beginning.

### Grand Lodges

In 1717, four Lodges of Freemasons meeting in London, England, formed the first Grand Lodge.

This first Grand Lodge chartered Symbolic Lodges and Provincial Grand Lodges in many countries, including the United States.

Today, there are more than 150 Grand Lodges in free countries of the world with a membership of more than 6,000,000.

The Grand Lodge is the administrative authority in its territory, known as Jurisdiction.

In the United States, there are 49 Grand Lodges. They include 48 states and the District of Columbia. Hawaii is under the Grand Lodge of California, and Alaska, the Grand Lodge of Washington.

There are approximately 4,000,000 Freemasons in the 49 Jurisdictions of the United States—nearly two-thirds of the world's total.

### Symbolic Lodge

The basic unit of all Grand Lodges is the Symbolic Lodge, or "Blue Lodge," as it is commonly known.

It is the Symbolic Lodge that issues petitions for membership, acts on petitions and confers the three Symbolic Degrees, known as the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason Degrees.

There are more than 600 Symbolic Lodges in the Jurisdiction of Pennsylvania, with a membership of approximately 250,000.

### Membership

Membership is limited to adult males who can meet the recognized qualifications and standards of character and reputation.

A man becomes a Freemason through his own volition. No one is asked to join its ranks. When a man seeks admission to a Symbolic Lodge, it is of his own free will and accord. The choice is his.

One of the customs of Freemasonry is not to solicit members. One seeking admission must have a desire and must request a petition form from one whom he believes to be a Mason.

The petitioner must be recommended by two members of a Masonic Lodge and pass a unanimous ballot. The petitioner must be 21 years of age, mentally and physically competent, of good moral character, and believe in the existence of a Supreme Being.

### Masonic Secrecy

Contrary to what many believe, Freemasonry is not a secret society. It does not hide its existence or its membership.

There has been no attempt to conceal the purpose, aims and principles of Freemasonry. It is an organization

formed and existing on the broad basis of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Its constitutions are published for the world to behold. Its rules and regulations are open for inspection.

It is true that we have modes of recognition, rites and ceremonies with which the world is not acquainted. In this regard, all human groups and institutions have private affairs. For instance, families have discussions on subjects which do not, and should not, concern their neighbors.

### **Freemasonry and Religion**

Freemasonry is not a religion even though it is religious in character.

It does not pretend to take the place of religion nor serve as a substitute for the religious beliefs of its members.

Freemasonry accepts men, found to be worthy, regardless of religious convictions. An essential requirement is a belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.

### **What is Freemasonry?**

Freemasonry is not an insurance or beneficial society. It is not organized for profit. However, the charity and services rendered are beyond measure.

It teaches monotheism. It teaches the Golden Rule. It seeks to make good men better through its firm belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and the Immortality of the Soul.

### **Tenets of Freemasonry**

The Tenets of Freemasonry are ethical principles that are acceptable to all good men. It teaches tolerance toward all mankind.

It is known throughout the world, even behind the Iron Curtain where Masonry cannot exist.

Freemasonry proudly proclaims that it consists of men bound together by bonds of Brotherly Love and Affection.

It dictates to no man as to his beliefs, either religious or secular. It seeks no advantage for its members through business or politics.

Freemasonry is not a forum for discussions on partisan affairs.

### **A Way of Life**

Freemasonry is kindness in the home, honesty in business, courtesy in society, fairness in work, pity and concern for the unfortunate, resistance toward evil, help for the weak, forgiveness for the penitent, love for one another, and, above all, reverence and love for God.

Freemasonry is many things, but, most of all:

**FREEMASONRY IS A WAY OF LIFE.**

PUBLISHED BY THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL  
GRAND LODGE OF THE MOST ANCIENT AND  
HONORABLE FRATERNITY OF FREE AND  
ACCEPTED MASONS OF PENNSYLVANIA  
AND MASONIC JURISDICTION THEREUNTO  
BELONGING

# FREEMASONRY



# A WAY OF LIFE