

stone is symbolical of the adhesive force of love. This ceremony is performed for churches, schools and other public buildings.

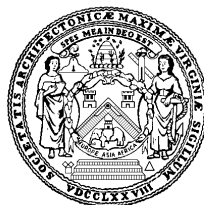
Ceremony of Consecrating, Dedicating and Constituting a New Lodge – These ceremonies constitute the actions of the Grand Lodge of the Commonwealth of Virginia to officially and formally recognize the establishment of a new Lodge, install its officers and dedicate it to the memory of the Holy Saints John, the historical patron saints of Freemasonry, and to the glory of God. It is a joyous occasion filled with hope for the future useful service of the Lodge to its members and to the community, state and nation.

Presentation of Veterans' Pins – Lodges often open their meetings to family and friends for the presentation of veteran's emblems to honor those Brothers whose loyal membership have spanned half-century or more. If the veteran Brother is not physically able to attend the Lodge to receive this recognition, public presentation in the home or elsewhere may be requested by the veteran or family. For veterans residing out-of-state and unable to travel to their Mother Lodge, courtesy presentations by a nearby Lodge can be arranged.

Masonic Evening Memorial Service or Funeral – The Masonic evening memorial service or funeral is a most prayerful, solemn and impressive Masonic ceremony

honoring a deceased Brother, performed only if requested by the family of the deceased. It is not to supplant a funeral service but is, rather, a historical, last, final token of the esteem and affection of the Lodge for a deceased Brother. It may be performed either at the graveside, the home, mortuary or other appropriate venue as requested and arranged by the family.

Additional Questions? Additional questions may be referred to the **Grand Secretary, Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., of Virginia, 4115 Nine Mile Road, Richmond, Virginia 23223-4926**, or via e-mail to grandsecretary@grandlodgeofvirginia.org.



THE PUBLIC CEREMONIES OF FREEMASONRY

of

*The Grand Lodge,
Ancient Free and Accepted Masons,
of the
Commonwealth of Virginia*

Welcome to this Masonic ceremony. We are very pleased that you have joined with us to memorialize this occasion with appropriate ceremony. We hope that this little pamphlet will answer some of the questions you may have about our ceremonies and about our ancient and honorable Fraternity. Please feel free to ask any Mason any additional questions you may have about the ceremony or about our Fraternity.

*Prepared by the
Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., of Virginia
2001*

FREEMASONRY

You are attending a public ceremony of Freemasonry in Virginia and may have questions. This is designed to answer some of your questions.

Who are the Freemasons? Freemasonry is the oldest and largest fraternity in the world. The historical evidence for the Grand Lodge system goes back to 1717. Masonic Lodge origins stretch further back for several hundred years. Members are men deemed to be of good character and reputation, with a belief in a Supreme Being, who wish to improve themselves and their communities and to associate with those with like interests to reinforce their pursuits of these goals. Many founding fathers were Freemasons and the philosophy of Freemasonry was instrumental in founding our Republic. Men must petition for membership, without being asked to do so.

Is it a religion or a cult? No. Freemasons are required to affirm a belief in a Supreme Being but the nature of each member's religion is between God and himself. Masons are encouraged to support their own Church, Temple or Synagogue. We have prayers in our meetings, but Freemasonry is not a religion.

Isn't everything secret? No. Our members usually wear symbols of their membership and our Lodges are openly marked.

Meetings may be announced in the newspaper. You are attending a public ceremony of our Fraternity. Our methods of fraternal recognition are not public to ensure our members are identified. You are encouraged to ask a Mason about our history, our good works and our philosophy, of which we are proud.

What do Masons do? Masons meet for induction and advancement of members through steps called degrees, business meetings, and social fellowship with members and families. They also support many community activities and charities, open to all, reaching over \$2 million daily of support throughout the United States.

My father was a Mason but never spoke about it. Why? Many Masons of an earlier day were unsure what they could or could not reveal or were unsure of answers to questions, so they simply said nothing.

PUBLIC MASONIC CEREMONIES

Public Installation of Officers – Many Lodges install their officers annually in what we feel to be an impressive public ceremony. This ceremony affords family, friends and the public an insight into the operation of a Lodge, the officers' duties, and Masonic philosophies. Each year, as a rule, the Master steps down and a newly elected Master of the Lodge is installed.

This democratic practice probably served as a model for Freemasonry's early and historical support of democracy in the governments of nations. The Master is called "Worshipful Master," as a title of respect, from an old English term "Worchyp." Just as English judges are addressed as "Your Worship," as a title of respect, and the King James Version of the Bible says, "Worship thy Father and thy Mother," but neither means *worship* in the sense we are to *worship* our God, this title does not mean that the Master is worshipped or adored, as anyone who has served as the head of any organization for a year will quickly assure you.

Ceremony for the Laying of Cornerstones – This ceremony probably descends from the ancient operative Lodges whose members were the builders of the great cathedrals and castles of Europe and the British Isles. The cornerstone of the Capitol of the United States was laid in Masonic ceremony by Brother and President George Washington. The cornerstones of the District of Columbia and of the White House were also laid in Masonic ceremonies. This ceremony demonstrates the spiritual dedication of the building, based upon a tested square, level, erect and true beginning, and a prayer for its future protection and public service. The symbolical consecration by corn, wine and oil spread upon the cornerstone is symbolic of plenty, refreshment and joy and gladness. The spreading of mortar upon the