

DEAR FRIEND:

This pamphlet is provided to inform you of the nature and purpose of the Order of Freemasonry and the requirements for membership. If you have an interest in Freemasonry, obviously, you would like to know what Freemasonry is, what Freemasonry does, and how you can obtain membership in this most ancient and honorable order.

Freemasonry is the oldest fraternal organization in existence. Written records about the Order date back to 1390, and the traditions of Masonry are even older. The Grand Lodge of Virginia is the oldest independent body in the United States. A roster of Masonic membership during the early years of our country reads like a study in American history. It is led by George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Chief Justice John Marshall, Edmund Randolph, and a host of signers of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. Since those early years of our country's history, Masonic membership has continued to include many famous Americans, including United States Presidents, Congressmen, State Governors and other well known men in leadership positions. The Masonic Fraternity includes men from all walks of life; professionals, tradesmen and laborers.

Freemasonry is not a religion. It does not promise salvation. Religion and religious beliefs are not discussed in our Lodges, but through the use of symbols and allegories, Freemasonry teaches the equality of man and the value of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Freemasonry teaches and practices charity towards all who are less fortunate, and Freemasonry seeks to become the happy means of cementing its members into one harmonizing body. Thus, while not a religion, Freemasonry is religious in the sense that Masons revere God, the Great Creator, and urge every man to attend the place of worship of his choice. We

learn that our strength is to be found in our God, no matter how we may view Him.

Freemasonry is not a secret society as some would charge. Masons proudly wear the ancient insignia of Freemasonry, the Square and Compass, publicly. The location of our Masonic Lodges is known and our membership rosters are printed. We do keep secret our modes of recognition and the ceremonies of initiation to prevent imposition by impostors.

In sum, Freemasonry teaches the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God, marveling at the Divine order of the universe. It brings together men of all creeds and teaches the many aspects of the Great and Golden Rule common to all Faiths.

To become a member of this ancient and honorable Order a man must come of his own free will and accord, for the great truths taught in Freemasonry, and He whom we all serve, require us to come freely and with an open heart. We do not issue invitations to join a Masonic Lodge nor do we solicit individuals to join. If you are interested after reading this pamphlet, ask a Masonic friend for an application.

The requirements for membership are that you be a man of good character and reputation; that you be a peaceful citizen, and one who guards against intemperance and excess; and that you are one who respects genuine brotherhood and the general good of society. Freemasonry requires a belief in a Supreme Being.

Each Masonic Brother is left to his own private judgment concerning the mode and form of his religion. We meet together in harmony applying those great principles which are common to all religions. Thus, the great Fraternity has existed since time immemorial.

Each applicant for membership must be vouched for by two members of the Fraternity who know the applicant and can vouch for his character and his reputation. In addition, the

applicant must be elected by a unanimous ballot. Only in this manner have we maintained for centuries the harmony and brotherhood which has characterized the practice of our principles.

The applicant, if elected, accepts the financial responsibility for payment of initiation fees and annual dues which are required by Masonic law and which vary from Lodge to Lodge. In addition, each candidate, after initiation, is examined on his progress in Freemasonry.

This is but a short introduction to Freemasonry; what it is; what it does; and how to become a member. If you are interested in learning more, your Masonic friend who provided you with this pamphlet, will answer your questions, or he will refer you to a better informed Masonic Brother.

This pamphlet has been given to you by a friend. After you have finished with it, please return the pamphlet to your friend.

WHY YOUR FRIEND ASKED YOU TO READ THIS BROCHURE

Your friend is proud of Freemasonry and the fine character of its members. He believes that you have the qualities for membership and that you deserve the opportunity to know more about it.

This brochure will explain what Freemasonry is, who Freemasons are, what they believe in and what they do. **It is important for you to know that those who desire membership must seek it on their own.** Unfortunately, without this understanding, many qualified men have not enjoyed the special rewards of membership and fellowship in Freemasonry. If after reading this brochure, you have any questions or desire to know more about Freemasonry, your friend will be pleased to answer your questions or to obtain the answers for you.

Whether or not you decide to seek membership in Freemasonry, you can be certain that you have a special friend within the Masonic Fraternity who thinks very highly of you. Please consider it the highest compliment that he has shared this information with you. It is a message of kindness. . .from FRIEND TO FRIEND!

FREEMASONRY IS . . .

. . . A band of brothers linked together by an indissoluble chain of sincere affection, forged link by link through the binding effect of a shared experience in the great lessons taught in the Craft degrees.

. . . A Fraternity of morality, founded on the allegorical application of the tools and implements of architecture to the construction of our personalities — buildings of living stone, in the service of God and Mankind.

. . . A descendant of the ancient Craft of stonemasons, builders of the great cathedrals and churches of the Middle Ages, structures so magnificent that the Holy Church itself declared them to be designed by God alone, as the "[Grand] architect of the universe."¹

. . . Not a religion and offering no promise of salvation, but a Fraternity seeking to inculcate in its membership love for God and our fellow man, by the practice of the principles of brotherhood, relief, and truth.

. . . Not wedded to any one religion, though it requires of its members a belief in God and the Holy Bible always remains open on the altars of its Lodges. It expects of a member devotion to the religion of his choice, believing, above all, that the path to salvation is better left to one's personal conscience rather than to the rigid imposition of another's beliefs.

. . . Nevertheless frequently called the "handmaiden of the Church," for the principles that it seeks to inculcate in the individual are common to all the great religious faiths. The Fraternity, by its teachings and examples, seeks to make of every brother one who is more amenable to the dictates of his religion, whatever it may be. Thus, in the Brotherhood of Man, it unites Christian, Jew, Moslem, and Buddhist, who set aside their differences in seeking to serve God and their brethren.

. . . Charitable. Freemasons give over one million dollars each day to charities in and out of the Fraternity. To relieve the distressed is a duty incumbent on all of us. From the great Crippled Children's Hospitals and Burn Centers to the Orphanages and Masonic Homes of our various States, from the Knights Templar Eye Foundation to the specialized charities of the Scottish Rite and Royal Arch Masons, Freemasons freely give of their earnings to help others escape the bonds of poverty, loneliness and despair.

. . . All of the above and more. It is truly a system of morality, veiled in allegory and teaching men by symbols to better themselves in their religious bodies, their communities, and their families. It gathers under its umbrella men of all faiths, all nations, and all classes without distinction — save that noble distinction, "of who can best work and best agree."

. . . The World's oldest fraternal organization. It has persevered through the years, despite the attacks of the ignorant and the powerful, because it teaches toleration for all faiths, acceptance of all men of good character, and support of free government institutions, wherever found. Freemasons are loyal citizens, support a God-centered life, and emphasize man's duty to aid his fellow man.

Because we steadfastly adhere to these principles, we have lasted through the ages, despite the tyrannical attacks of despotic governments and narrow-minded sectarians. As one of us, may you always proudly bear the badge of a Free and Accepted Mason!

¹Coldstream, Nicola, *Medieval Craftsmen, Masons and Sculptors*, British Museum Press, London (1991), p.5

FREEMASONRY IN VIRGINIA — THERE IS NO SECRET TO WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe in some pretty old-fashioned things.

We believe in God.

We believe in the Brotherhood of Man.

We believe in service to those who are less fortunate. We believe in helping young people get a head start in life.

And we believe in freedom.

Surprised?

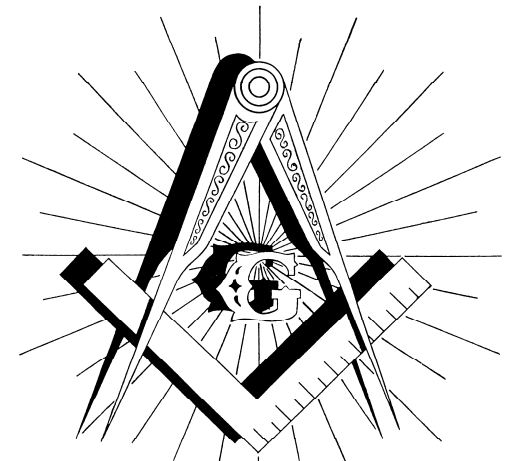
Some people are. Somehow they consider us a secret society. Yet we don't hide our purpose or our membership. Our constitution and regulations are open for all to see.

Masons provide homes for the elderly and for orphans. We provide college scholarships to promising young men and women. We contribute to blood banks, fund medical research, and maintain hospitals for crippled and burned children.

That's why it's not surprising that some of America's greatest men have been Masons. George Washington was one of 14 U.S. Presidents who were Masons, as were five Chief Justices. Masons are soldiers, like General Douglas MacArthur; businessmen, like Henry Ford; entertainers, like John Wayne, Gene Autry and Roy Clark; astronauts, like Wally Shirra and John Glenn. We come from every walk of life. And we stand tall, proud to be called Master Masons.

**I Guess You Would Have To Say
"Our Secret is Out!"**

For Your Information



Grand Lodge, A.F. & A.M., of Virginia
4115 Nine Mile Road

Richmond, Virginia 23223-4926

(804)-222-3110

Website: www.grandlodgeofvirginia.org