

BECOMING A BROTHER



TROWEL

MAGAZINE FOR MASONS IN MASSACHUSETTS



Should I become a Freemason?

— By M. Wor. Paul F. Gleason

This question was answered for me by my wife over forty years ago with a resounding yes. Now, as the Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts, I have to strain to remember the questions I had when I was considering becoming a Mason. My memory is clouded by the years of joy, friends, and self-betterment—you'd have to check with my wife on that last one!

I recently read a fantastic piece from Grand Lodge of Maine called *Maine Freemasonry* and our pamphlet *What it Means to be a Mason*. I will paraphrase these in hopes to answer some of the questions you may have.

What am I joining?

You are joining the oldest fraternity in the world filled with men of good character. Everyone here believes in a Supreme Being and comes together to help each other. In the process of our lodge, charitable, and civic work, Masons become the best men they can be. You will find friendship, a sounding board, and a wonderful night out each month with your Masonic Brothers. You are joining a fine group of men, all vetted as you will be, on a road of living that will help you to be a better man.

How do I become a better man?

It all starts with regular attendance at your home lodge. In lodge we learn about virtue, express our faith, and show examples of better choices. In addition, in lodge the Master and lodge Brothers decide on the ancillary actions the lodge will take. For example, a lodge can decide to make a donation, volunteer to help, or support good causes in other ways.

When your lodge decides to help with a charity, it gives each member an opportunity to do something for others. Usually, the first few times there is less of an impact on each individual Mason. However, when this becomes a habit, Masons often find themselves being more charitable in general. When a habit, Masons can look to their everyday life and see good moments for charity in the neighborhood, at work, and with friends.

Whom will I meet at Lodge?

First and foremost: friends. Your Brothers within your lodge will get to know you and you will get to know them. There will be a bonding through the initiation process, the

same process Bro. George Washington went through, that is enhanced at every meal, every Masonic event. You will have people to talk to when you are troubled as well as the opportunity to help your Brothers conquer the issues in their lives.

But beyond your close lodge Brothers, there is the extended family of Masonry. You will be welcomed in thousands of other lodges across the country and around the world. If you travel, you will be welcomed by men of similar high character. A business trip can be as lonely as a clicker in a hotel room. As a Mason, any business trip, vacation, camping trip, almost anywhere, you will have an evening available in a lodge that that will make your night and trip shine.

What about my family and work: Is there an impact?

The short answer is yes. But in a couple of senses.

In one sense, there is a profound impact. Over your time as a Freemason, you will find your relations with workers and family will improve as you improve as a man.

In another sense, there is an impact in terms of time. There are events in Freemasonry that are for Masons only and other events that are for Masons and their families. The good you get from your betterment should outweigh the time spent away from family.

If ever any Mason puts Freemasonry above family or work, then other Masons will help him get his life back into balance. Family and work responsibilities are always first; Freemasonry is not the most important thing in our lives.

My friends are joining, is it a fad?

Freemasonry is a very, very old fraternity: the origins are suspected, but not known. It is thought to date back to the building of King Solomon's Temple, but there is a document about Freemasonry that dates from 1390. The suspicion is that the origins are with the stone mason guilds of the Middle Ages. After a time these operative masonry guilds began to allow "speculative" Masons, or Freemasons, into their guilds. These Freemasons did not work in stone, but used the tools of architecture to teach moral lessons.

In 1717, in England, four lodges met and formed a Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts was formed, with the consent of the English Grand Lodge, in



1733, the third Grand Lodge in the world.

Over a course of time as long as this, the membership will reach peaks and valleys. The person who handed this to you is a Mason. Think about your friends, relatives, and co-workers who are Masons and think about the good in them. They were good men to begin with, or they couldn't be Masons, but you may ask them if being a Mason made them better. In all likelihood, they will say yes.

Who is in charge of Masonry?

Well, no one really. Every state in the USA has a Grand Master who works for his jurisdiction. I am the Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts, but there are others. Other Grand Masters are country wide—that is not how it works in the USA.

While there is a hierarchy, it is a hierarchy of responsibility not of worth or value. The Master of a lodge runs “his” lodge for his term. But, from me, the Grand Master of Masons in Massachusetts, to the Master of your lodge, to the newest Master Mason, we all can “meet on the level”—which is to say, we are equals.

If I join, what do I have to do?

Well, the first and most important step is to join and attend a lodge, at times called a “blue lodge.” You will be a candidate until you have been fully initiated as a Master Mason.

After that, it is up to you. Most lodges meet once a month, either 10 or 12 times a year. In those meetings, you will either be witnessing men becoming Masons or discussing upcoming Masonic events. You can attend or not. These events are Masonic get togethers, charity events, or civic events. You may find, as many do, that you will have many, many events that you would like to attend. We have a lot of fun and do a lot of good! But when you can say yes, when you can involve your significant other or family, you will not be disappointed.

Beyond the events, there are the appendant bodies. This means groups of Masons who have formed into another group. All of the members are Masons or Mason related. They are the Shriners, York Rite, Scottish Rite, and many others. For others, there is DeMolay, for boys, Rainbow, for girls, and Eastern Star, for Masons and the women related to them.

Why do you want me to be a Mason?

I have a number of reasons. First and foremost is for you. The person who gave you this saw something in you. He saw that you had the potential to be a Mason. I had that same potential. Had I not joined, my life would have been less joyous, less full.

In addition, I believe our influence as individual Masons—Masonry does not get involved in political matters—will better the world we live in. I want our lives and the lives of all around us to be better. We do this by improving ourselves and living our improved lives for the benefit of all. It is a big job and I need all the help I can get!

Think about it. Chat with your family. I hope you become a Mason. Your life will become a marvelous journey with Brothers by your side. ■





Freemasonry: Where Friendship Happens

◀ By Rt. Wor. Tim McGavin

The most amazing reward that I have received through Masonic membership is the gift of friendship. Most friendships form out of shared interests, occupations and backgrounds but our relationships as Freemasons are unique. Our fraternity brings together men from every country, sect and opinion, and our beliefs differ due to religious, political, social and economic reasons. However together we share a belief in a supreme being and strive to improve ourselves every day.

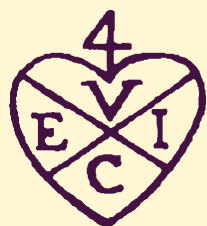
In Freemasonry, we call each other Brother and we treat each other as Brothers. We make certain promises to help, aid and assist to one another, and to be sympathetic, compassionate, and understanding, not only to our Brethren in Freemasonry, but to all mankind.

The ties that bind us together as Freemasons afford us a certain level of trust, knowing that we have each other's best interest at heart. These friends are the same men who are involved in their communities, schools and churches. They teach, coach and mentor to make life better for everyone around them. If faced with a terrible event or a challenging time, I know Masonic brothers, my friends, would be there to support me and my family.

I have come to rely on these men with whom I have built my friendships; they are the same men who repair my car, prepare my tax returns and supply me with legal advice. They are the men that I call when I need an electrician, a plumber, a painter, an optometrist or an investment advisor. They are the men that I

enjoy spending time with, whether at a Masonic meeting, dinner with our significant others, a family outing, taking in a show, enjoying a cigar, travel or just engaging in good conversation. And there is great comfort in knowing that I can travel throughout the world and no matter where I journey, if needed I can find a Masonic Brother who will be there to help if I need assistance.

I do not call on these men just because they are Masons. I call on these men because I know them, I have a relationship with them, I trust and respect them. These are my brothers, the men I call my friends, people I can count on. Nothing can compare to the relationships I have made with these remarkable, good men of our Masonic Brotherhood. ■



Step into Freemasonry: Step into History

◀ By Rt. Wor. Walter Hunt
Grand Historian of the
Grand Lodge of Massachusetts

On Thursday, December 16, 1773, Boston was under siege, and in an uproar. Parliament had imposed duties on the importation of tea into the colonies, and Patriots in Boston were refusing to allow it to be brought into the town.

That night, the Lodge of St. Andrew was gathered in Boston, but its communication—the name given to their meeting—was called to recess; and members of that Lodge, along with many other Patriots of the town, took on the role of “Mohawks” and made their way quietly to Griffin’s Wharf. With Brother John Hancock’s Corps of Cadets standing on guard, the “Mohawks” went aboard the tea-ships and steadily, silently, broke open the tea-chests and

dumped them into the harbor. By the time the moon was high their work was done: a potent demonstration of Patriot resolve to resist “taxation without representation.”

Our connection with that event and its Masonic association, and with many other events in our history; sharing the bond of initiation with so many celebrated figures past and present, including our illustrious Brother George Washington, makes Masonry a joy for me. In the course of my own journey I have been appointed to an office created for me to fill: Grand Historian of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts.

The well of Masonic history is deep and ever-renewing. We maintain our connections to the past through our dedication to its preservation: recollecting those events and bringing those aged portraits back to life by recognizing our debt to them, the giants upon whose shoulders we stand. ■



Lodge Night: What We Do in Those Rooms

◀ By Wor. Lee H. Fenn



It took years. At first, my Lodge nights, 10 per year, were a constant surprise to my wife and sons. “Sorry, this is first Friday, and I’m heading to Lodge,” I would say to the boys groans and my wife’s confusion. After years, this became a fixture in our lives: first Fridays, Papa goes to lodge.

Then they started noticing how I get ready. Lodge is a special place and I dress well to go there. When I was an officer, I wore a tuxedo. Now, as a Brother on the sidelines—which is to say, not an officer—I still wear a suit and tie. They watch me prepare and know this is my special night.

It also took years for my wife to realize the futility of the question “When will you be home?” The answer was always, “I don’t know, love.” I don’t know when I’ll be back because Lodge can be very short or quite late. She grew to notice that regardless of the length of time spent at Lodge, nothing nefarious was going on. She began to trust more and more that my nights at Lodge were time well spent.

When I get to Lodge, we usually start with a meal. Some Lodges start the proceedings and then break for the meal: mine starts with the meal. I have never had a bad meal at Lodge: my Brothers laugh at to my ballooning gut as evidence! I’m a good eater.

During this meal, we reconnect with each other. We may or may not have seen each other in the intervening month, but we have this time together to laugh, kvetch, or tell each other the story of our lives. Sometimes, a Brother is suffering: this is when we help. Other times a Brother is ecstatic: this is when we revel in his joy. It is a moment when we all bond and remember ourselves as a Lodge, not just men trudging through our lives.

Then we retire to the Lodge room and Lodge is opened. There is a ritual connected with opening a Lodge. It sets this time apart from all other times in my month. One of the things I enjoy most is leaving my keys, my wallet, and my cellphone outside of the Lodge room. I have no need for any of these things in Lodge. This is a time for me and my Brothers: these items floating in my pockets tie me to the world outside of Lodge. In Lodge, I can forget the responsibilities and focus on becoming a better man.

In the opening ceremony, my Lodge says the Pledge of Allegiance. This pledge, such an absurdity when I was a child, carries great meaning for me today. It reminds me that I am part of the great American experiment and that what I do in my day to day life either helps or hinders the

steps toward freedom and liberty taken so long ago.

We also pray in the course of that ritual. The prayers are worded in such a way as to allow all to bow their heads and call on the Creator to bless each other and the work of the evening. Then, when the ritual is completed and Lodge is opened, we proceed to the business of the evening.

The business is varied. On short nights, we discuss what the Lodge will be doing in the near or distant future, we approve donations of time or money or both to charities, we hear news from Grand Lodge, we figure out how to help a Brother in need.

On longer nights, we do all of the above, and we make men Masons. This is done by men going through three degrees, usually spread a month apart. These degrees entail specific words and actions. This is what we call ritual.

On these nights, we enact the same rituals that Bro. Teddy Roosevelt, Benjamin Franklin, and Paul Revere went through. The officers do a great deal of memorization and rehearsal to instill in the new Mason the awe and reverence we all feel for Freemasonry.

These are great nights for the future Mason and anyone in attendance. There are many things in this ritual. There is a discussion of virtues, good actions, and honest behavior in this ritual. The officers show diligence and focus in their execution of the ritual. As an officer, I was surprised at my ability to memorize. The process of memorization itself really helped instill in me some of the deeper meanings being discussed in the ritual. But just listening to the discussion and watching the examples, helps me to remind myself of my potential always to be a better man. That recollection of what I can be moves me toward that goal. They are great nights.

After nearly every Lodge night, there is a collation, or desert and coffee. In a certain sense, the meal pushes away the worries of the world, the Lodge is an opportunity for change and growth, and the collation is a reverie with our new, and improved, Brothers.

After Lodge, some Brothers stay and play cards, others may go out for a cigar, but many head home. As I may have noted above, I’m a good eater; so, I head to the kitchen to see about leftovers. If any Brother is struggling, then the leftovers go to him. If, however, there is more, then I bring some home to my family. One of the joys I get over the next couple of days is their enjoying the same Masonic meal I had. ■



1 By Michelle Chaplin
wife of Bro. Michael Chaplin, Mount Olivet Lodge

Me Then:

The wife of a Mason?? Me? Uh Uh. NO WAY!! Hiding all of that secret stuff, ritualistic anti-Christian books, and those aprons from your wife? Late night meetings? COUNT.ME.OUT.

Me Now:

The wife of a Mason?? Me? Uh Huh. ABSOLUTELY! Doing all of those charitable works and helping people and brotherhood? Finding a greater purpose in our communities and life? COUNT.ME.IN.

If I can be honest here—and really, would you want me to lie? I was terrified when my husband uttered those words to me, in the car, so many years ago. "Honey, I am going to join the Masonic Lodge."

What did his joining a Lodge mean?

Secret Rituals? Hoods and Beatings? Lying to your wife and keeping SECRETS with your brethren?? Multiple late nights away from family doing GOD knows what with GOD knows who. Everything I thought I knew about Masonry was from books, whispers, and movies: it is a SECRET ORGANIZATION.

What did this mean for me? Would this pull us apart? Was it was like the clubhouses of my youth, NO GIRLS ALLOWED?

In the beginning it was hard. I did feel left out, snubbed even. There were even times when I felt it was hurting our marriage. But my husband was learning his role in the Lodge and gradually, I began to learn mine.

"Honey, would you like to come with me to do Breadmen?" my husband asked.

"Breadmen?" I asked.

He meant picking up overstock from a grocery store and bringing it to a church to help feed homeless and under privileged? Sign Me Up. Count me in. . . .

"Honey, would you like to come to lodge and wrap Christmas gifts?" He meant wrap gifts for children who

2 Wives'

may otherwise go without? Where do I sign up?

"Honey, we will be honoring the wives next month at Lodge, I can't wait for you to see our rituals and enjoy a meal with the other wives."

I'm sorry, I thought. You are inviting me to meet your brethren and their families? What time and what do I wear??

As with everything in life, there is a certain fear of the unknown but the wonderful thing about Masonry is that it is only as unknown as you allow it to be.

Sure, there are some aspects that are kept secret and ritualistic. Sure there are times when I think, damn-they've seen him more this week than I have. But then I think about what is being accomplished: the children, the charities, and the incredible works that they do and that I am privileged to be a part of it all.

I am only as left out as I allow myself to be.

There are opportunities for everyone within the Masonic Lodge. You just need to be open to them.

One opportunity was this "Secret Chef Wannabe." I actually got to cook for 28 members of the Lodge last month and it was one of the MOST satisfying evenings of my life. I was so humbled to serve that night.

So when Mike tells me he has LOI on Tuesday or Monthly Lodge on Friday or that he will be hosting a pancake breakfast on Sunday, I don't roll my eyes. I don't think, What about me? I think about how his selflessness and the selflessness of his brethren impact the many charities that the Masons support. How their acts of kindness impact the communities they serve. How their goal is to leave this beautiful blue orb a little bit better than they found it

I think to myself.... what MORE can we do as a husband and wife TEAM to better the world we live in, one small act of kindness at a time. ■



Is Freemasonry a Religion?

◀ By Rt. Wor. & Rev. Brian Marsh

Well, is Freemasonry a religion? This is a question sometimes asked by people who have a minimal, passing acquaintance with the Craft. The question, however, is never asked by Masons themselves. Masons know that Freemasonry is not a religion. This is one of the first lessons a man learns when he aspires to join

the fraternity: religious belief is left entirely to the individual. His religious beliefs are his alone. This rule is absolute.

Although Freemasonry is a secular, fraternal organization, the Craft does make one theological demand of any man who wishes to join the fraternity: he must profess belief in a Supreme Being. Accordingly, no Mason can be an atheist. A right relationship with God, we believe, is a necessary part of healthy human life and a necessary requirement for all Masons.

As a Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, I have enjoyed my fellowship with other men who serve their churches and synagogues



Tales

2

By Angela Papierski
wife of Wor. Kevin Papierski, Charity Lodge

My husband would not have become a Mason without me. It was I who had originally fostered an interest in the history of Freemasonry, thanks in part to a position I held at the Old South Meeting House, where the Boston Tea Party began and where many prominent Masons were once members. As a classical pianist, I was also intrigued to learn just how many of my favorite composers (Mozart, Haydn, and Gilbert and Sullivan, to name but a few) were Masons. Due to my persistence and a random conversation I had with another wife of a Mason, Kevin attended an Open House. The rest, as they say, is history.

When Kevin originally became a Mason, I was proud that he had joined such an venerable and influential institution. I was also happy that he would have the chance to meet people and get out of the house at least once per month. He had been the one who kept me fed and clothed for more than 5 years while I finished my degree. He had had little opportunity to pursue his own interests during that time. I wanted him to be able to make new friends and connections just as I had done with my university classmates. Little did I know that he would become Master of his lodge in just a few short years, and then a district officer. A “once-per-month” commitment soon evolved into being absent from home several nights per week at times, and included Masonic engagements and meetings on weekends as well. I joked that I had become a temporary “Masonic Widow”, but in reality I could see just how much the fellow members of his lodge meant to him, and how the principals of Freemasonry were positively affecting his life and our relationship.



Some events were (and still are) of a more social nature, where spouses and other family members were invited and included. I was able to really get to know many of his fellow lodge members and families. Suddenly, I felt as though I had an amazing community of people around me; people who, by virtue of being (or being married to) a Mason were honorable, respectful, intelligent, engaging, and productive. I also noticed that my husband’s lodge was comprised of men ranging in age from their late teens to their 80s, people who had spent their entire lives in the Greater Boston area, as well as those originally from countries in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. Many faith traditions were also represented, yet the rancor and distrust so seemingly prevalent was nowhere to be found with this exceptional group of individuals.

Today, my husband remains fully engaged and involved with his lodge and still looks forward to every meeting and rehearsal just as he did when he originally received his third degree. I enthusiastically attend as many functions as I am able (and allowed) to, and anticipate that the bonds we have formed with other Masons and their families will only continue to grow stronger with each passing year. ■

with dedication. Grand Chaplains are appointed to the office because of their service to a religious organization. They must be ordained or licensed by a religious body to serve the Grand Lodge in this capacity. We enjoy the opportunity to join with each other for periods of fellowship. One of our responsibilities as Grand Chaplains requires us to lead the devotions of Grand Lodge at regular quarterly communications, the annual Feast of St. John and other occasions. Although Freemasonry is not a religion, the Craft values the benefit of prayer. Like many secular organiza-

tions, such as the United States Congress, Masonic meetings are always opened with prayer. It is always a joy to listen to each others’ prayers, as well as to share in the often lively religious discussions that we enjoy during luncheons and dinners.

One of the great gifts of Freemasonry is to bring together men of different backgrounds and beliefs in a common fraternity where the values of “brotherly love, relief and truth” are taught and practiced. The sharing of our lives in the context of our fraternal membership is something that all Masons value.

Although Freemasonry is not a religion, the value of the Craft to individual Masons is incalculable. The emphasis upon a man’s inner growth and development and the desire of the fraternity to teach important moral lessons are often unique in today’s overly secular world. Yes, although Masonry is not a religion, the teachings of the Craft, as well as the fraternal association Masonic lodges provide, offer all men who believe in God an opportunity to share the brotherly love that is taught within the Masonic fraternity. ■



Massachusetts Freemasonry at a Glance



How **BIG** are we?

Our Masonic **FAMILY**



Shrine
Every Shriner is a Mason



Order of the Eastern Star
For Masons and the Women related to them



DeMolay
For young men ages 12-21



Rainbow
For young women ages 11-20

There are Masonic
Lodges in every county
of Massachusetts.

WHERE are we?



We **LEARN** from Masons
of **ALL AGES**



We range between
18 and 109



The **COST** of Being a Mason

Annual dues are divided into three parts:

- **Grand Lodge Dues** under \$80 at this printing.
- **\$1** to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Alexandria VA
- **Lodge dues.** Set by each lodge. It is often a calculation, like 2x to 4x Grand Lodge dues. By rough estimates, the average is under \$100 at this printing.



The **IMPACT** of Masonry

Our Charitable Donations: Vast, but impossible to determine. Some Lodges give money to many charities, a lot of lodges devote time and effort to charities



Amount given to students related to Masons
in Scholarships: **over \$500,000 annually**

EXPLORING Massachusetts Masonry

A Video About
Freemasonry



http://bit.ly/Back_To_Our_Roots

A Video of The Cornerstone
Ceremony, June 17th, 2015



http://bit.ly/Resetting_The_Cornerstone

Become a Mason



http://bit.ly/Become_A_Mason

Find A Lodge



http://bit.ly/Find_A_Lodge