



**Looking To Shape Your Future...
Freemasonry Is The Answer!**

Cannon Lodge No. 104

Allow us to provide some insight as to who Freemasons are, where we came from and what we do.

While commonly called "Masons" by most people, the correct reference term is "Freemasons". Freemasonry is centuries old and the largest fraternal organization in the world. In New Jersey, our Fraternity is properly known as "The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New Jersey".

Freemasonry's roots reveal that *freemen stonemasons* were granted the privilege of free travel throughout medieval Europe to participate in the building of magnificent, awe-inspiring structures. These men lived or "lodged" together. They elected leaders and adopted rules of conduct and ethics. With the end of the "building age", these operative or working stonemasons stopped traveling and settled down. They soon began admitting or "accepting" non-working stonemasons and men of learning and position, thereby becoming a "fraternal", rather than "craft" organization, which grew to become what is known today as Free and Accepted Masons...or Freemasons.

In the Colonies, the first Lodge was chartered in Boston in 1733. On July 3, 1787, St. Johns #1 became the first Lodge chartered in New Jersey. Today, there are more than 150 Grand Lodges throughout the free world. Our worldwide membership of more than 6,000,000 Freemasons is comprised of men from every race, creed, color and political persuasion.

Freemasonry's purpose for being is founded on service; service to our families, communities and nation. Men who are attracted to our fraternity are those who want to associate with others of good character. They wish to strengthen and improve themselves by this association.

You may have been told that Freemasonry is a "secret society". Nothing could be further from the truth. Our Lodge buildings, located throughout the towns and cities of our nation; are sometimes called Masonic Temples because they are reminiscent of King Solomon's Temple. Our distinctive Square and Compasses emblem is prominently displayed. Our cars are likewise adorned. We are proud of our Fraternity and want everyone to know that we are members of it.

The only "secrets" we have are those traditional signs and words that are used between members, but if you really want to learn about them, all you have to do is go to your nearest library or book store. Our biggest "secret" is...**WE HAVE NO SECRETS!**

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Freemasonry is a fraternal organization. Therefore, only men may be admitted into membership. To be considered eligible for membership, a man must be at least 21 years of age and of good character. Race is not a consideration for membership. Freemasonry embraces men of all races and religion. These requirements are based on tradition. The United States Supreme Court upheld that these requirements are not illegal, nor are they discriminatory.

Freemasonry is not a religion. It never has been and never will be. It is not anti-Catholic, anti-Jewish, anti-Moslem or "anti" any other group. By the same token, neither does it favor any religion.

Freemasonry does not question any man's religion. The only question you will be asked is whether you believe in a Supreme Deity. This is asked because the obligations you will be asked to swear to would not be considered binding if you were an atheist. These obligations refer to a man of good conscience, keeping his word and living a moral, forthright life.

Freemasonry does not and never has claimed to take the place of any religion. Actually, we encourage our members to maintain an active participation in their chosen religions. You will find that most of our members are active in their churches or temples.

It also follows that many Freemasons are leaders in their community. All Freemasons are required to be loyal to and support the government of the country in which they live. Freemasonry does not seek to gain political control over any state, nation, or the world. The only two topics that are not permitted to be discussed in a Lodge of Freemasons are religion and politics.

In the United States, most Lodges have the Holy Bible open on the altar during meetings. However, you might find the Koran or another "volume of sacred law" on the altar during a meeting.

There is no Masonic theology and no pretense of an offer of any avenue to salvation. Our charitable works are for the help, aid and assistance of our family, community and nation. Freemasons everywhere assist distressed brother Masons and their families whenever and wherever the need arises. We are a brotherhood of men devoted to many charitable projects and spend over \$1.2 million everyday year in and year out, as we quietly go about helping our fellow citizens.

We are often asked about the titles given our leaders. The titles of our officers, etc. are founded in Old English usage. Worshipful Master means *Respected Master*. The Worshipful Master is the leader of the local or Blue Lodge. Members of the Grand Lodge (state-wide governing body) have the title of Right Worshipful added to their office. It means *Very Respected*. The Grand Master is the leader

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for the state of New Jersey. He is known as Most Worshipful, thus the *Most Respected Grand Master*.

If you decide that you want to join the fraternity of Freemasons, you must ask a member how you may join. This is done to insure that you come into Freemasonry of your own free will; without expectation of material gain. You get out of Freemasonry only what you are willing to put into it.

If the Freemason you ask believes you will be a positive addition to the fraternity, he will give you a petition for membership in his local or Blue Lodge. All men have to go through the same initiation procedure, regardless of their worldly wealth or position.

In a Masonic Lodge, the President of the United States would be considered equal to the newest member. When Washington, Truman, or the Roosevelt's sat in Lodge, they were addressed as *Brother*. Everyone is "on the level" and is judged by how he lives in the community and upholds the tenets of the Fraternity. As long as he is "on the square" with his brethren, he will be well regarded.

Your petition will be read in open Lodge and a Committee of Investigation formed. This Committee will visit you and talk with your family. You will be asked to give the Committee names and addresses of three persons you believe will write letters of recommendation.

The Committee will give a report in open Lodge and the membership votes by secret ballot. A successful ballot means you will have been elected to membership by initiation.

In order to impress upon candidates the serious lessons each degree teaches, they are required to take an oath or obligation. There is nothing in this obligation that will interfere with their duties to God or country, or any other responsibility of any kind. The "penalties" in these obligations are strictly symbolic and are those that have been handed down through the centuries.

With each degree, candidates memorize material pertaining to the degree they have just participated in. You will then be tested as to your proficiency. These degrees teach serious moral and ethical lessons.

When you complete your third or Master Mason Degree, you will be a full-fledged member. This will take a minimum of three months. The reason for this time period is to make sure that you really want to be a member and that it wasn't just a momentary thought. As a Master Mason, you have many rights and privileges, including visitation privileges to sit in Masonic Lodges throughout the world.

When you have completed the three degrees and have become a Master Mason, you are provided with a broad range of organizations you may choose to affiliate

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with, all under the Masonic umbrella. These organizations include the Scottish Rite, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Royal Arch, Shriners and New Jersey High Twelve International, to name a few.

For the ladies there are the Orders of Eastern Star, Golden Chain and the Amaranth. Our two youth groups are the Order of DeMolay for boys and Order of the Rainbow for girls. Each group or order has its particular charity that it works to support.

You should become a Freemason if you seek a more meaningful quality to life, and the spirit of charity and good fellowship which flows from it, while in the company of men of good character **who believe...**

- ***In the importance of the traditions that have made this the greatest nation in the history of mankind.***

Freemasons practice these traditions as a way of life, not just on meeting nights or at Masonic affairs.

- ***In the existence of a Supreme Being.***

Freemasonry is not a religion, but every Freemason must have a belief in a Supreme Deity.

- ***In the importance of maintaining traditional family values.***

Kindness and moral example have formed the bedrock of our nation.

- ***That the future of our nation's youth is one of our most important concerns.***

There are several continuing projects that involve family participation.

- ***In doing charitable work in the community.***

The finest work that Freemasons do involves the charitable work we do for others.

- ***In sharing the common interests and values of this society of men.***

Freemasonry requires that all men who seek to enter its ranks complete three traditional degrees or stages of membership. This is to assure the commitment of the new member to the core beliefs of the Fraternity.

- ***That our business and social dealings should reflect honesty and moral rectitude.***

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A Freemason is expected always to be "on the level" and to deal "on the square" with one and all. Ethics are a part of the Masonic way of life.

Freemasonry is continuously looking for ways to better serve our communities. Several programs, already in progress, under the heading of Masonic Renewal are:

- Masonic Child ID and Senior Citizen ID programs have been very successful in the past and are a welcomed service parents and elderly.
- Masonic "Open House", held by individual Lodges at which the general public is invited to attend an informative and educational program explaining who Masons are and what we do for the community, along with general information about Freemasonry.

Since 1978, Grand Lodge has sponsored the annual Masonic Wheelchair Track and Field Meet. The dedication, enthusiasm, eagerness and professional sportsmanship of the physically impaired participants, ranging in age from 5-18, is definitely an uplifting experience.

Easily, the best-known and world's largest single, Masonic charitable institution is the Shriners Hospitals for Crippled Children, Burn Institutes and Spinal Cord Injury Centers located throughout Canada, the United States and Mexico. The Shriners Hospitals have a three-fold purpose; TREATMENT, RESEARCH, and EDUCATION. Services provided at Shriners Hospitals are totally without charge to the patient, family, or insurance companies.

Other Masonic bodies support their own statewide and national foundations for research, teaching, treatment or rehabilitation services for children with learning or speech disorders, cancer, visual problems and need for dental restoration.

The Masonic Home of New Jersey, located on 400 acres in rural Burlington Township, embodies our commitment to providing long-term care and other services to our extended Masonic family. Our modern, spacious facility, is fully licensed by the New Jersey Department of Health and approved by Medicare and Medicaid. "We Prove We Care" is their official Motto.

These are just a few of the projects Freemasonry provides... with great success!

If YOU believe what you have just read is for you, then it is up to you to take the next step. **Remember, you must ask for a Petition for Membership if you want to become a Freemason.** The extent of your participation in your Lodge activities will determine your effectiveness.

We look forward to greeting you as a Brother Freemason.