

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?



PRUDENCE
TEMPERANCE
FORTITUDE
JUSTICE

An introduction
to Freemasonry
in New Zealand



FREEMASONRY IS UNIQUE. IT CANNOT BE LIKENED TO ANY INSTITUTION IN THAT IT OFFERS EXPERIENCES NOT FOUND ANYWHERE ELSE.

Freemasonry is one of the world's oldest and largest fraternal societies. There are approximately five million Freemasons worldwide and 10,000 in New Zealand.

Freemasons are ordinary men in the community, 21 years and over, of all religions and backgrounds, who share a concern for human values, moral standards and the rights of individuals.

There may be many reasons why a man will choose to be a Freemason. It is an organisation that promotes self-development, family and community values. It provides men with an opportunity for public service and hands-on involvement in charitable and community issues, as well as the chance to socialise with men from all walks of life.



THE FREEMASONS CHARITY

The benevolent arm of Freemasonry

Freemasons consider benevolence to be a cornerstone of the craft – to cater for those who are in need.





WHY DO YOU CALL YOURSELVES A FRATERNITY?

One of the greatest things about Freemasonry is that men, regardless of their race, creed, colour and social status, can come together as equals and share a common bond of friendship and mutual support.

Members are banned from any political or religious discussion whilst at Lodge meetings, to ensure constant peace and harmony. Freemasons often refer to the term “meeting on the level and parting on the square”, which means they meet as equals and part as friends.

After a regular formal Lodge meeting is completed, members come together and share a meal and family and friends are occasionally invited to participate. Freemasonry can provide men and their families with a fun and active social life with like-minded people. Family values are an important part of a Freemason's life and families are frequently invited to take part in Masonic social get-togethers.

WHAT DOES FREEMASONRY OFFER ME PERSONALLY?

Freemasonry offers men an opportunity to develop insights into philosophical ideals, which espouse the core values of prudence, temperance, fortitude and justice.

Prudence is to help us make the right decisions; temperance keeps us on the straight and narrow;




The Freemasons
Charity
a tradition of caring



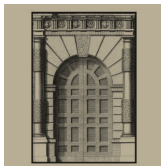


fortitude promotes self-confidence and strong self-esteem; and justice provides us with guidance in life.

Members are also provided with training in self-development, which includes public speaking, mentoring, tolerance, communication skills and self-confidence.

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY?

The precise origins of Freemasonry have been lost in time, however its traditions date back to the Middle Ages and to the stone masons who built the cathedrals and castles of Europe. To construct them, it was necessary for men to have considerable knowledge of geometry, arithmetic and engineering. These highly skilled masons formed themselves into lodges to protect the skills and secrets of their trade and to pass on their knowledge to worthy apprentices.



SYMBOLISM

A matter of interpretation

Logos and symbols surround us in the modern world. They are used by organisations and companies to represent their ideals. Freemasons use them to communicate and educate.



WHY AND HOW IS CEREMONY AND SYMBOLISM USED?

Ask any member about Masonic ceremony and he is likely to explain it as a unique and inspiring experience. Ceremony is core in Freemasonry. It is unique in that it uses a range of objects, symbols and scenarios to disseminate the values, traditions and philosophical precepts of Freemasonry. An example of such symbolism is the use of medieval stonemason working tools as vehicles of instruction.

Symbols in the Lodge room are used to define the rank of a Freemason. The most widely recognised symbol of Freemasonry is the Square and Compasses. The square teaches us to conduct ourselves properly – as in ‘square conduct’, and the compasses teach us to keep our passions and prejudices within due bounds.

Members wear the symbol to remind themselves of their obligation to the lessons learned in their Lodges and to identify their membership to other Freemasons and all people.

IS FREEMASONRY A SECRET SOCIETY?

Freemasonry is certainly not a secret society but in common with most organisations it does regard some aspects of its activities as confidential. The policy until recently was for members to be self-effacing and avoid publicity about the fraternity and its community work.

In the Middle Ages, people were predominantly illiterate. Therefore, symbols such as the square and compasses, modes of dress, handshakes and signs were used to distinguish a Mason from a non-mason, and thus protect the highly prized technical know-how of their trade. The equivalent of a modern Trade Certificate.

Developed long before our modern day modes of communication, these secret signs and passwords were later used by Freemasons to identify one another and to establish their degree or level of attainment in Freemasonry. These days, these modes



of recognition are used solely as a ceremonial means of demonstrating that one is a Freemason when in Lodge meetings.

That a Freemason does not reveal these so-called 'secrets' is basically a dramatic way of testing the good character of those who join. To become a Freemason requires a person to continually observe, with total sincerity, the high ideals of integrity and confidentiality.

IS FREEMASONRY A RELIGION?

No. This is a misconception. Freemasonry does not have any theological doctrines, offers no sacraments and does not claim to lead to salvation. It is not a substitute for religion, nor is it a forum for religious discussion. To be a Freemason you must, however, have a belief in a 'Supreme Being'.

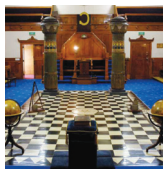
Freemasonry is made up of men who come from many different religions. There is nothing whatsoever in being a Freemason that conflicts with a member's religious beliefs or practices.

HOW IS THE ORGANISATION STRUCTURED?

Individual Freemasons come together in a local Lodge and meetings are held regularly – often monthly. Like any organisation there is a business element where minutes, accounts and plans for forthcoming events and charity activities are addressed and discussed. Lodge meetings are also ceremonial and involve a series of formalised and symbolic presentations (similar to short plays) that use drama to highlight the codes of conduct by which a Freemason chooses to live.

The Grand Lodge is the central representative administrative body.

The titles that Freemasons use to address each other have their origins in history. For example, just as mayors are referred to as 'Your Worship', the leader of a Lodge is called a 'Worshipful Master' – meaning greatly respected. The Grand Lodge is led by a 'Grand



LODGES

Where we meet

More than just real estate, our buildings are living examples of the mix of traditional and modern aspects of Freemasonry.

LEFT: INSIDE THE SOUTHLAND FREEMASONS CENTRE, INVERCARGILL



Master', who represents and oversees Freemasonry within his jurisdiction. He is referred to as 'The Most Worshipful Grand Master'.

WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED IN JOINING FREEMASONRY?

Annual membership fees are expected of members but are reasonably priced. Fees may vary from Lodge to Lodge depending on the style of the Lodge. For example, a Lodge that values fine wine and cuisine would have larger catering costs. When first becoming a Freemason, you will pay a one-off joining fee and also purchase Masonic attire.

WHAT KIND OF CHARITABLE WORKS ARE FREEMASONS INVOLVED IN?

Charity is a basic principle of Freemasonry. Members have been involved in charitable activities in this country since European settlement. The Freemasons Charity is actively involved in the community for youth support, care of the aged, medical research and services, and university scholarships. Money is raised through initiatives at Lodge meetings, dinners and other social events. In any year, Freemasons throughout New Zealand give generously and significantly to charities and not-for-profit organisations on a community and national level.



LEFT TO RIGHT: LODGE ARROW KILWINNING, ARROWTOWN; THE WAITOHI LODGE, PICTON; SOUTHLAND FREEMASONS CENTRE, INVERCARGILL; NORTH SHORE MASONIC CENTRE, AUCKLAND



WHERE CAN I OBTAIN FURTHER INFORMATION ABOUT FREEMASONRY?

We suggest that you visit the website www.freemasons.co.nz or phone the Grand Lodge in Wellington. If you know a Freemason already, speak to him about your interest in Freemasonry. Most large libraries have numerous books on Freemasonry. The Grand Lodge also has a reference library which offers access to information on Freemasonry from all over the world.

HOW CAN I BECOME A FREEMASON?

The basic qualifications for becoming a Freemason are: that your decision to join is made without improper inducement by others, nor for personal gain or reasons of idle curiosity; that you believe in a 'Supreme Being', and that you are a law-abiding person.

THERE ARE TWO WAYS YOU CAN GO ABOUT BECOMING A FREEMASON.

- The traditional way is to approach a Freemason known to you and express your desire to join. This Freemason would then become your 'proposer'.
- If you are not already acquainted with a Freemason, you are welcome to contact our membership coordinator at the Freemasons Grand Lodge Office. All you have to do is ask.



For further information please contact:

FREEMASONS NZ Level 6, Freemason House
195-201 Willis Street, Te Aro, Wellington 6011
PO Box 6439, Marion Square, Wellington 6141
New Zealand
Ph: +64 4 385 6622 Fax: + 64 4 385 5749
Email: secretary@freemasons.co.nz
www.freemasons.co.nz