

Guidance for a Prospective Member



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For use in Waverly Lodge

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INTRODUCTION

Having shown an interest in becoming a member of our Lodge, this information will assist you to understand more about our organization. It explains what you may expect on becoming a member and what is expected from you.

From the time you are balloted for within the Lodge and accepted as a future member, your mentor, proposer, seconder and the Secretary of the Lodge will keep you informed regarding your application to join us and will help you with your anticipated start in Freemasonry.

Although you will become a member of our Lodge from your first evening with us, before becoming a full member and enjoying all the rights and privileges of full participation, you will be conducted through a series of three progressive separate simple ceremonies. This process may take a few months or more depending on the pace you set for yourself, but we expect you to attend all our meetings to enable you to enjoy your involvement within the Lodge and to begin your introduction to understanding Freemasonry during this period.

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

- Freemasonry is one of the oldest and largest fraternal societies in the world.
- It will provide you with a code of living in today's community, based on good moral and ethical standards.
- It is an organization of men who try to live by the principles of integrity and goodwill which unifies them, regardless of color, creed or worldly status.
- It is a non-profit making organization that is involved in supporting charity and service to the community.
- It will provide you with a common interest where you can meet and enjoy the company of like minded men from all walks of life.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF FREEMASONRY?

We try to impress upon the minds of our members the principles of personal responsibility and morality, encouraging each member to practice in his daily life the lessons taught through the symbolic ceremonies held within the lodge. Although these stories and symbols are from times of long ago, we relate their relevance to modern Freemasonry and describe it as a special way of life.

Freemasonry also has an important part to play in a world where the only constant is change. It sometimes appears that every known thing in today's world is changing at an ever increasing and sometimes alarming rate. With our principles, which have survived many changes for over 300 years, our organization will provide you with a solid foundation upon which to anchor yourself and will encourage you to accept and move with these changes.

WHAT FREEMASONRY IS NOT!

Since its beginning there has been much misinformation published about Freemasonry. For the benefit of every prospective candidate, it is only fair that we give information on what Freemasonry is **not** and which it has never claimed to be. The most important points are as follows:

- Freemasonry is **not a religion**, nor is it a substitute for religion. It has a philosophy which we believe is acceptable to every religious institution in the world. Therefore, because there are different ideologies and thoughts in the world and to avoid disharmony, we do not allow partisan religious discussion at our meetings.
- Freemasonry is **not a secret society**. Certain parts of our rituals, which are the methods by which we recognize each other, are the only secrets we have. We prefer to keep them available for members only.
- Freemasonry is **not a benefit society**. There are no paid insurance policies to give protection against unemployment, sickness, death or old age.
- Freemasonry is **not for promoting social or economic advancement** of its members to the prejudice of non-members.
- Freemasonry is **not connected in any way with a political body** or ideals. A Freemason's political views and beliefs are his own and every lodge will have members who support the many different and divergent political ideologies. For this reason partisan political discussion is not allowed at Masonic assemblies.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR MEMBERSHIP

The three **essential qualifications for membership** to Freemasonry cover your spiritual, moral and physical aspects. The qualifications are as follows:

The essential **spiritual qualification** is that you must believe in a Supreme Being. Membership is open to men of any race or religion who can fulfil this essential qualification and who can satisfy the other two requirements.

The **moral qualification** is that you must be of good repute, a loyal citizen and obedient to the laws of the land.

The **physical qualifications** are that you are male, at least 18 years and a resident of Wisconsin for a minimum of the last 6 months. The age qualification exists to ensure that you are free to formulate your opinions, and exercise your own judgement.

Wives, partners and families of members are of course, encouraged to enjoy many of the social aspects and related groups of Freemasonry, but it is only men who are eligible for membership in the lodge.

WHAT FREEMASONRY CAN OFFER

Freemasonry is a way of life where men can meet regularly in order to be active in the support of its own members, their ideals and of the community at large. What you will get out of membership of Freemasonry will be directly reflected by the effort you make to integrate with the other members of the Lodge. **We are sure that you will gain far more from your membership than you expect, by becoming a Freemason and a more useful citizen in your community.**

We hope however that you will decide to progress through the various positions of responsibility within the ritual to become Master of this Lodge. One of the benefits of becoming active in the ritual side of our ceremonies, which will assist you in everyday life, is that by increasing your mental capacity for memorization it will give you more self-confidence in speaking in front of your fellow men.

WHAT FREEMASONRY EXPECTS OF YOU

Freemasonry is judged largely by the actions and lives of its individual members. When a man is known to be a Freemason, it is the standard by which the outside world judges our organization. To ensure that our reputation remains impeccable we expect you to maintain the standards set out in the qualifications for membership.

Freemasonry demands and expects that every member will place the needs of his family first, his obligations to his vocation second, and after these his duties to Freemasonry.

There are certain financial responsibilities associated with your membership, just as there are costs in membership of any organization. These however, are not too onerous. The fees payable are set by the Lodge in its by-laws which include:

- An **initiation fee of \$120.00** payable in instalments prior to obtaining full membership in the Lodge. This covers your registration with Grand Lodge and the provision of other materials which will be presented to you amongst other costs. This also includes some donations to ongoing Masonic endeavours. The first \$30.00 is due with your petition.
- An **annual fee of \$67.00** payable to the Lodge. The Lodge uses this to maintain the facilities of the Lodge, either to cover the rent of premises, or the maintenance of owned buildings, social occasions and for all other matters of lodge administration.

At various times during the year you may be asked to contribute time and/or money to **charitable projects** being organized by the lodge or lodge members. Your contribution must at all times be determined by **what your circumstances will permit**. This is for you to determine and at no time should you place your personal financial viability at risk.

There is no implicit dress code. Members are strongly encouraged to dress in a professional or businesslike manner within their means for all meetings and ceremonial events unless otherwise instructed. Many members have been inspired to purchase their first suit or tuxedo through their participation in the lodge. Strictly social activities that occur in the outdoors or away from the lodge may have less formal dress requirements which will be communicated in advance.

THE LODGE STRUCTURE

Within the international world of Freemasonry, the most important entity to you will be your Lodge. Worldwide there are Grand Lodges that govern specific geographical territories and each individual lodge relies on its own Grand Lodge for the setting of standards and for recognition with other Grand Lodges. In our Lodge the controlling body is the **Grand Lodge of Wisconsin** with over 13,000 members working in 183 lodges around the state. Our Lodge has about 100 members in total and has been in continuous existence since 1854.

Every lodge is presided over by a Master, who normally holds office for one year, and who will be pleased to meet and receive you at your first lodge meeting or at your request.

We are obliged by Grand Lodge rules, to ensure that all Candidates for joining Freemasonry are elected by secret and unanimous ballot of the Lodge members.

Other decisions concerning financial and administrative affairs are democratically made in open lodge by all the Lodge members present. Voting is usually by show of hands, but if the Master deems it necessary, decisions may be made by secret ballot, ensuring that at all times the will of the majority prevails. Once you complete the three degree ceremonies you will become eligible to vote on any matters concerning the Lodge.

Your proposer will explain to you on which night the Lodge meets and in which months of the year. It is expected that you will make every effort to attend the Lodge at each of its meetings, to receive maximum benefit from your membership and to assist those who rely on your attendance. Regular Lodge Meeting dates are fixed and can be determined each year well in advance. If unable to attend, it is expected that you will be in contact with the lodge to let the appropriate members know of your absence.

At Lodge meetings, ceremonies are conducted to bring new members into Freemasonry or to take them to the next step towards becoming a Master Mason. Once a year we install a new Master. On other occasions there may be a guest speaker giving a talk on a subject of Masonic interest or there may simply be a discussion among the Lodge members.

Following the meetings, the members and their visitors usually gather in the dining room for a meal and to enjoy each other's company in a relaxed and informal environment.

Visiting other lodges, either in this State or for that matter anywhere in the world, is always an enjoyable experience. It will give you the opportunity to increase your circle of Masonic friends, learn how other lodges conduct ceremonies and generally to enjoy the wider Masonic life that membership brings in a less formal environment. This opportunity will become available to you once you have completed the three degrees of Freemasonry and are received as a full member.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

If it is your intention to join Freemasonry, your first step is to request an application called a petition. This may be accompanied by other documents designed to assist the lodge members in getting to know you better. Part of this stage is the requirement that you be sponsored by two current lodge members that know you. If you do not know any current Freemasons, you are encouraged to attend lodge functions and get to know members. In time, two of these may decide to sponsor your petition. The time this takes is directly related to the amount of time you spend getting to know our members. These documents must be submitted signed and accompanied with the first instalment of your initiation fee in the amount of \$30.00.

The second stage involves an informal background check and a personal interview by three members of the lodge. This interview typically takes place at your home and your family may be present, particularly if they have questions about Freemasonry. The results of the interview and background check are reported to the lodge after which it may be balloted upon.

A ballot will be held at a regular Lodge meeting, where all members present will vote on your admission. If the ballot is successful, the Secretary will contact you and advise you of the date at which your admission can be fitted into the Lodge program of meetings or other steps that will be taken.

During this time, a member of the Lodge, usually your proposer or the Secretary will maintain contact with you and invite you to any open meetings or social functions held by the Lodge, where you will be able to meet some of the members.

WHAT HAPPENS ON YOUR FIRST VISIT TO THE LODGE?

You will be brought into the Lodge room and take part in a simple but solemn ceremony which has been basis of Freemasonry for the past 300 years. During this ceremony you will hear a number of short lectures on the aims and objectives of Freemasonry and on your part you will be asked to promise to:-

- Preserve the customs of the Lodge
- Obey the civil laws of the Country
- To be kind and thoughtful to others
- Not to discuss religious or political matters within the Lodge
- Not to reveal the methods of recognition by which we identify each other in the Lodge
- Not to use Freemasonry for personal gain.

At all times in the ceremony during which you will become a member of this Lodge and worldwide Freemasonry you will be accompanied by one of the members. Afterwards during the meal or festive board as it is popularly called, you will then have the opportunity to meet many new friends and most probably renew friendships with other men you have met outside of Freemasonry.

CONCLUSION

Freemasonry constantly strives to receive trustworthy men into its organization and through its teachings will assist you to appreciate the friendships and improve society in general. Men like yourself, who we hope will actively participate at our meetings, will enjoy a unique comradeship and develop a confidence in communicating with others that will enable you to put our Masonic ideals to good effect.

Please remember, to want to become a Freemason must be your decision and yours alone, but like most of our members, you will wish you had joined sooner!

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