



Handout

Welcome to Freemasonry

Index

First Degree – Handout.

Summary

A hand-out for Candidates for Initiation explaining what will happen at the Initiation Ceremony.

Keywords

Candidate, Initiation, Deacon, Slipper, Obligation, Hymn

Welcome to Freemasonry

Dear [insert the Candidate's name],

You are about to join an ancient and honourable fraternity, which has at its centre the core values of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth. Freemasonry is a system of morality, which is explained through symbols and stories.

This handout explains a little about how you need to make yourself ready to be received into the Lodge. The symbolism starts now, at the door. The Tyler will ask you to adjust your clothing in a particular way, based on the procedures of the working stone masons of yesteryear. The reasons will become more apparent as you make progress in Freemasonry. They include:

- You must enter the Lodge in an apparent state of poverty. You will therefore be asked to remove all jewellery, money and other metallic items from your person before entering the Lodge. Please note that you can ask to keep any items, such as wedding rings, with important personal symbolic meaning, but we ask that they are not visible, so we will cover them with tape and ask you to pretend that you are not wearing them.
- You will be required to remove any jacket, waistcoat and tie you are wearing over your shirt, which will be unbuttoned to reveal part of your chest to show that you are male. One of your shirt-sleeves will be rolled up, to show that you are unarmed. One of your trouser legs will be rolled up to your knee, so that when you kneel to take the obligation of a Freemason, you are kneeling on a bare knee. You will also be asked to wear a slipper on one foot (or 'slipshod' in Masonic parlance), which is another reference to poverty and humility.
- Finally, you will be blindfolded (or 'hoodwinked' in Masonic parlance) for the first part of the ceremony. This represents the start of your journey from darkness to light in Freemasonry and demonstrates your reliance on others, so you will be more willing to offer support in the future to others in need.

When you are properly prepared, the Tyler will announce you and the Junior Deacon will come to lead you into the Lodge. He will look after you during the ceremony, and will give you instructions, so that you know what is expected. Please remember that we have all been through the same initiation, it is one of the many things that unite us as Freemasons. The purpose of the Initiation ceremony is to treat everyone equally, regardless of social status or personal beliefs, and certainly not to humiliate you or make you feel uncomfortable. We are all looking forward to welcoming you as our Brother at the start of your Masonic journey and we hope you enjoy the ceremony.

Yours sincerely,

[Insert the Worshipful Master's name]

Worshipful Master on behalf of the Brethren of [insert Lodge name and number]

At the end of the ceremony this closing ode will be sung:

Now the evening shadows closing,
Warn from toil to peaceful rest,
Mystic arts and rights reposing,
Sacred in each faithful breast.

God of Light! whose love unceasing,
Doth to all Thy works extend,
Crown our Order with Thy blessing,
Build; sustain us to the end

Humbly now we bow before Thee
Grateful for Thine aid Divine:
Everlasting power and glory
Mighty Architect! be Thine.

SO MOTE IT BE

Some notes for after the ceremony.

- There is a lot to take in during the ceremony, and it is unlikely that you will remember much of it. That is quite normal. The main thing is to relax and enjoy being among friends. In time you will learn more about its meaning.
- Please don't be afraid to ask someone to explain any part of the Ritual to you. You are not expected to become an expert right away!
- Many new Brethren ask if they can tell their partners or family members or others about their initiation because Freemasonry is a 'secret society'. First, Freemasonry is not a secret society, though we value our privacy, as do many other clubs and societies. You should not tell any non-Masons about the words and signs we use to recognise each other, they are secret; but you can tell people that you are a Freemason and, later, when you have thought about it, what it means to you.

##END##

Recommended use of Papers

Papers offer a simple, direct means of advancement in a particular aspect of Masonic knowledge. They can be used in a variety of ways:

- Read at home for private study
- Shared for pre-reading by members of a discussion group
- Read aloud in Lodge or Chapter, or in an LOI/COI/new members forum
 - Followed by 'any questions'
 - As a precursor to a discussion (*in which case much more time is needed, possibly more than double that allocated to the paper itself*)
 - Supported by audio-visual aids, if necessary.

They can be delivered by a single person or split into bite-sized pieces and read by multiple presenters (*in which case, the speaker(s) should have read and practiced the delivery of the paper beforehand*).

If the paper is to be used to introduce a discussion, the presenter will need to have thought about the material, done a little research, and prepared some open questions to engage with the audience. Kipling's dictum can be of help in preparing open questions, which should begin with one of his 'serving men', as follows: *'I keep six honest serving men (they taught me all I knew). Their names are, What and Why and When and How and Where and Who'*.
Rudyard Kipling

If used as part of an event, the paper should be advertised and promoted by way of trailers, flyers and announcements, in summonses, letters, emails, notice boards, and on social media.

For further papers and other learning materials visit "Solomon" at <http://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

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