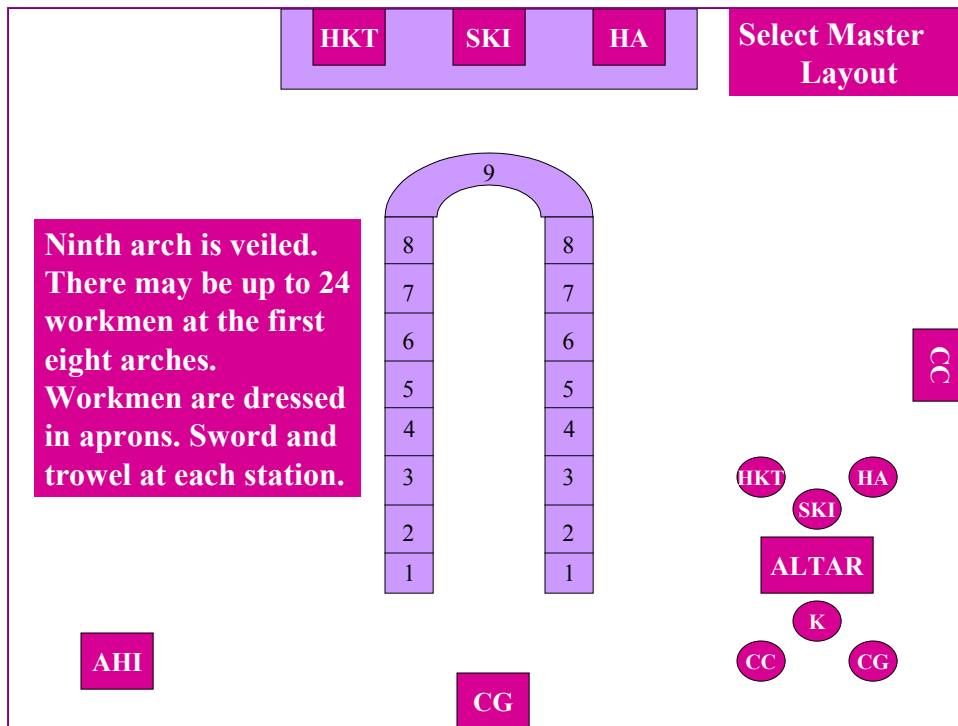




The preparation room represents King Solomon's most retired apartment, and the Council Chamber is the Secret Vault with its nine arches, the first eight of which are in the process of being completed. The western part of the room represents the first arch and the eastern part is the ninth arch. The altar is in the southwest corner of the room, the cast positions represented are during the obligation.

Lights should be dimmed as drama starts. Lights are brought up after the obligation. The CC takes K into the preparation room and instructs as follows:

"In this degree you represent Azbud, a particular friend of King Solomon. As you enter you will be toward the east, if asked Who comes here, reply "A zealous brother desirous of participating in your labors". When entering CC should take K by the left. Class should be seated in the northwest corner of the room.

CG is guarding the first arch. Ahishar is pacing directly in front of the preparation room door.

AHI In truth, this is the life of a mongrel dog. Evening after evening I walk here, up and down, back and forth, until my feet are weary and my legs scarce hold me to my path. Nine to twelve, night after night. "When prying eyes sleep," they say." *Yawns and stretches.*

I could do with a little sleep myself. Would that I were with my friends at the Inn by the city gate. They know how to treat me. Full three months since anyone approached this Arch, save those who work behind there. *Walks a few steps in silence.*

I wonder what they work at? A precious secret it must be within those Arches to make a man suffer so. And if I ask, wherefore I stand guard? What answer is given? Solomon says, "Be content good Ashishar, in due time you will receive your reward." *Begins to lean back on one elbow.*

Guard well your post they say to me. A foolish task for a man to guard against no one. *Yawns and settles further back.*

Two long hours to pass before low twelve. My eyes scarce will open now. *Falls back on floor asleep across the inner door opening.*

CC *Conducts K into room, CC on left side. Both step over Ashishar.*

CG Who comes here?

K A zealous brother, desirous of participating in your labors.

CG Advance and give the Sign and Token of your entrance.

K I can not.

CG An intruder! An intruder!

Workmen drop their trowels and grab their swords. The first workmen on each side of the arches go to the assistance of the CG. SKI, HKT & HA enter hurriedly from the ninth arch, passing through the arches, SKI in the lead.

SKI What is the cause of this intrusion?

CG An intruder has entered our Secret Vault!

SKI Put him to instant death.

One of the workmen raises his sword to carry out the order. CG suddenly recognizes the prisoner and steps forward, parries the blow with upraised sword and says:

CG Hold! *Turns to SKI*, Illustrious King Solomon, are you aware upon whom you are about to execute the sentence? This is none other than your particular friend Zabud.

KS *Surprised.* Zabud! *Approaches for a closer look at the prisoner, pauses moment in thought, then says:* Companion Captain of the Guard.

CG *Salutes.*

SKI Bind him fast and have him forthcoming when called for, or your life shall answer for his escape.

To HKT & HA, Illustrious Companions, let us retire to the ninth arch for consultation.

CG binds K with workmen's help. K is not removed from the room. CG guards him. Workmen return to their places.

SKI Companions, you are aware that Zabud has long been my particular friend and favorite. If it were possible I should be glad to pardon him. My worthy Companion of Tyre, what is your opinion?

HKT Illustrious King Solomon, our Obligations are such that but 27 can be admitted. Our number is full. How then can he be pardoned?

SKI My Worthy Companion Hiram Abiff, what do you say?

HA Illustrious King Solomon, it would seem that curiosity and disobedience prompted him to enter. He should therefore suffer the penalty.

SKI *Meditating a moment.* It seems indeed impossible to save him. Let us return to the First Arch and announce our decision.

SKI, HKT & HA return to the First Arch, through the arches.

Bring forth the prisoner.

CG and CC bring forth the prisoner, CC on the left, CG on the right. Workmen cease their labors and stand silently while watching and listening.

SKI My unfortunate friend Zabud, your curiosity and disobedience have cost you your life. I have consulted with my colleagues and find them inexorable. The nature of our obligation is such that I could not pardon you. You must therefore prepare for death.

CC *Speaking for the candidate:* Illustrious King Solomon, I pray your Majesty to remember by great and sincere attachment to your sacred person, your service and your secrets; of late, finding a secret work going on with which I was not made acquaintance, I feared that I had lost Your Majesty's favor and grieved in silence until unable to bear it longer; I humbly made known my fears to Your Majesty, when you directed me to remain content, for a door would soon be open for my reception. This assurance satisfied me. This evening having important business to communicate to Your Majesty, I sought you as usual at your private apartment.

On finding the door open, I too it for granted that it (*HAT should move toward prep room door and observe Ahishar sleeping on duty, then returns to the first arch as HKT speaks*) had been left open for my reception, and entered. But I beg Your Majesty to believe that it was not curiosity or disobedience that led me hither, but fervor and zeal in Your Majesty's service.

HKT Illustrious King Solomon, if this be true, Zabud is not guilty of the charge alleged against him. His offense was owing to an unguarded explanation of your own. He ought to be pardoned and admitted one of our Select Masters.

SKI My worthy companion of Tyre, how can that be? Is not our number full?

HA 'Tis true, Illustrious King Solomon, our number is all full, but Ahishar the guard is no longer worthy of our confidence. He is sleeping at his post. Let him be dismissed and executed and Zabud appointed to the work.

- SKI My worthy Companion, I thank you for this advice. It shall be done. Companion Captain of the Guard.
- CG *Salutes.*
- SKI Let Ahishar be put to death instantly.
- CG *Goes to Ahishar and shakes him. Ahishar, Ahishar! Awake! Arouse! Thou art condemned to die.*
- Ahi Mercy! Mercy! Is there no mercy?
- CG *Dragging Ahishar to the prep room door. None for you. It has been extended to another. Both exit. After a few moments CG returns and reports:*
Illustrious King Solomon, salutes, Your Order has been duly executed.
- SKI Zabud, are you willing to take upon yourself a solemn obligation to keep the secrets of the Secret Vault?
- K I am.
- SKI Then arise.
CC and K rise.
- SKI Free him from his shackles, and conduct him to the Altar.
CC returns sword. CG & CC remove shackles. CG conducts K to Altar. If there is a class, CC directs them to follow K to the Altar. Craft exits. CC follows CG and assists in placing K.. K kneels at altar, on both knees, both hands on the H.B. S & C.
CG, K & CC form a triangle in back of the altar, CG on the right, CC on the left.
SKI, HKT & HA form a triangle at front of altar, HKT on the right, two paces behind SKI, HA on the left in line with HKT.
Stew remains at station.
- CG Illustrious King Solomon, the Candidate is in due form.
- SKI The class and the active candidate will say "I", pronounce your name in full, and remain silent.

Of my own free will and accord, in the presence of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and this Illustrious Council of Select Masters, do hereby and hereon most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, that I will forever keep and conceal the secrets of this degree, and will not reveal them, except to him or them to whom they of right belong.

I furthermore promise and swear, that I will stand to and abide by, the by-laws, rules and regulations, of any Council of Select Masters of which I may become a member, also the constitution, laws and edicts of the Grand Council under which the same is holden, so far as they may come to my knowledge.

I furthermore promise, that I will answer and obey all due signs and summons, given or coming to me in a constitutional manner, from a Council of Select Masters, or from

a worthy Companion of this degree, if in my power so to do.

I furthermore promise, that I will help, aid and assist, all poor and distressed worthy Companion Select Masters, their widows and orphans, according to their necessities and my ability.

I furthermore promise, that I will not be present or assist at, the conferring of this degree upon any person, unless he shall have regularly received all the preceding degrees, from Entered Apprentice to Royal Master inclusive, and then only in a legally constituted Council of Select Masters.

I furthermore promise, that I will not cheat, wrong or defraud a council of Select Masters, or a companion of this degree.

I furthermore promise, that I will not penetrate the ninth arch without permission of the Illustrious Master.

The class and the active candidate will now repeat after me:

All this, I most solemnly and sincerely promise and swear, without equivocation, mental reservation, or secret evasion in me whatever, binding myself under no less penalty, than that of having my eyes plucked out, my hands chopped off, my body quartered and thrown among the rubbish, should I ever, knowingly or willfully, violate this, my solemn obligation of a Select Master, so help me God, and keep me steadfast in the due performance of the same.

Stew brings up lights, SKI removes K's hands from the Bible.

SKI In token of your sincerity of purpose in these solemn engagements, you will kiss the Holy Bible now open before you.

After K kisses bible, takes K by grip and conducts him to the front of the class:

Zabud, henceforward be dumb and blind to all you have seen and heard. This is the grip of a Select Master. Its name is, "Ish Sodi", which signifies, "Man of my choice", or "Select Man".

This is the first sign of a Select Master, *places end of thumbs and first two fingers of each hand at the eyes; thrusts the hands forward as if plucking out the eyes*, and this is the second sign, *strikes the left wrist with the edge of the right hand and then the right wrist with the edge of the left hand*. They allude to a portion of the penalty of the Obligation, that of having your eyes plucked out and your hands cut off. With these signs you are to salute the Illustrious Master, on entering or retiring from a Council of Select Masters.

This is the Grand Hailing Sign or sign of distress, *draws the edge of the right hand from the left shoulder to the right hip, then the left hand from the right shoulder to the left hip*. It alludes to the additional portion of the penalty, that of having your body quartered and thrown among the rubbish.

The signs by which you will be enabled to pass the first eight arches, and in which you were deficient when challenged by the Captain of the Guard are as follows:

On being asked, "Who comes here?" You reply, "Giblim". The Guard then says,

“Advance and give the Sign and Token of your entrance.” You answer with the Sign of Silence, thus: *with the thumb and last two fingers of the right hand closed in the palm thereof, place the first two fingers diagonally across the mouth.* He responds with the Sign of Secrecy, thus: *Right hand on the left breast.* Then both give the signs of Silence and Darkness, thus: *sign of silence as before, sign of Darkness, left hand over the eyes.*

With these signs you will be enabled to pass the first eight Arches.

SKI returns K to the Altar using the grip. K remains standing.

Zabud, being obligated and instructed, you are qualified to advance to the ninth Arch.

SKI, HKT & HA return to the east through the arches, close the curtains, and are seated at their stations.

CG follows them and takes position guarding the first arch, sword drawn and at carry, facing west.

CC & K stay west of altar until all are in position, then approach the first arch.

CG Who comes here?

K Giblym.

CG Advance and give the Sign and Token of your entrance.

CC & K give sign of silence.

CG *Returns sword and give sign of secrecy. CC & K, along with CG give signs of silence and darkness.*

You have my permission to pass the eight Arches.

As CC & K pass to through the arches CG will return to his station and be seated.

CC *At the 9th arch gives *** ***

HA *Rises and steps down to entrance. Who comes here?*

CC Zabud, the King's friend, who has King Solomon's permission to advance to the ninth Arch, desires to be admitted.

HA Illustrious King Solomon, your friend Zabud desires to be admitted.

SKI Admit him.

HA Enter.

HA returns to station. CC conducts K into the 9th Arch.

SKI *From his seat:*

Zabud, my Illustrious companions, being deeply impressed with the zeal you have displayed in our service, have, in unison with myself, determined to renew your devotion by admitting you to the secrets of the ninth arch.

God has revealed to us in His Word, that this city and Temple which we are now erecting, will, at some future period, be destroyed, the nation carried away into

captivity, where the worship of the true God will cease for a time among them, and the forms and ceremonies which He has enjoined upon us to pursue, will also be forgotten. To avert so dire a calamity from the Craft and Jewish people, He has enjoined upon us in His Word to deposit those sacred treasures, which the people most revere, in a secret and secure place, for He has promised us that in three score and ten years, He will restore this people to the land which they now inhabit, and He will put it into the heart of a Prince of the House of Judah to rebuild the Temple to His Holy Name, and He will give him a sign as a reward and encouragement for his zeal and fidelity, and the sign shall be the recovery of the Word..

You are fortunate in having come forth at this time, as we are about to make that deposit, and which you will now have the privilege of witnessing.

We will now make the deposit.

The 3 GM;s rise, step down from the dias and form a triangle at the Ark, facing the class. SKI takes up scroll or Book of the Law and says:

The record of the Book of our Fathers says: *reads from Exodus XVI:32-34*, "And Moses said, this is the thing which the Lord commandeth: fill an omer of it to be kept for your generations; that they may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt. And Moses said unto Aaron, take a pot and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the testimony, to be kept."

SKI hands pot of manna to HKT, and he to HA, who deposits it in the Ark, after HKT has lifted the lid. SKI reads Numbers XVII: 10:

"And the Lord said unto Moses, bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony, to be kept for a token."

Deposit made as before. SKI reads Deut. XXXI:24-26:

"And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, "Take this Book of the Law, and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."

SKI takes a key and places it in the Book, saying:

Within the Book of the Law, we will place a Key to the Characters upon the Ark.

Deposit is made as before.

We will now deposit on the top of the Ark, this triangle containing the Master's Word or Great and Sacred Name. *Done*. And that it may be known that this Ark contains treasures belonging to the craft, we will place our three squares on the sides of the triangle.

After the squares are placed SKI raises his hands and prays:

O Lord God of Israel, we ask that Thou protect and preserve these Sacred Treasures

until it pleases Thee to reveal them to future generations. Amen.

All is finished.

The three Grand Masters resume their stations and are seated. CC seats K, goes to his station and is seated.

Lec In giving the history of this degree, we revert to the building of the Temple, Our three Grand Masters, Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff, being in possession of the writings of Moses and the Prophets, well knew that if the Children of Israel deviated from the laws therein contained, their enemies would be let loose upon them, their cities and Temple sacked and destroyed and all the Sacred Treasures in the Sanctum Sanctorum would be forever lost. In order to prevent this evil, they agreed to erect a secret vault under ground leading from King Solomon's most retired apartment and ending under the Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies.

This secret vault was divided into nine arches or apartments. The ninth Arch was erected by our three Grand Masters as a place wherein to deposit a true copy of all the Holy Vessels and Sacred Treasures contain in the Sanctum Sanctorum above; also to meet in Grand Council to confer the Master Mason degree when the Temple should be completed. There were employed on the other eight Arches, twenty-two men from Gebal, a city of Phoenicia, together with Ahishar and Adoniram, all of whom were well skilled in the arts and sciences generally, but particularly in sculpture. Their hours of labor were from nine at night till twelve, the time when prying eyes are closed in sleep.

During the erection of this Vault, a circumstance occurred which characterized this degree, and upon which the ceremony of initiation is founded.

One of King Solomon's particular friends, whose name was Zabud, discovered that there was a secret work going on with which he had not been made acquainted and for a long time he grieved in silence. At length he complained to King Solomon and received for an answer, "Be content, friend Zabud, the time will come when a door shall be open for your reception." Meaning that when the Temple should be completed he should receive the Master Mason degree. This satisfied him.

One evening, having some particular business with King Solomon, he went to his most retired room in search of him, and finding the door to the Secret Vault open, and not guarded, as usual by the Grand Steward, Ahishar, who was sleeping at his post, he took it for granted that it had been left open for his reception, whereupon he entered and was dealt with as you have already learned.

When the ninth Arch was completed, our three Grand Masters deposited therein an exact imitation of the Ark of the Covenant, and placed within it an imitation of the Pot of Manna, and Aaron's Rod, and also a true copy of the Book of the Law, or all the writings of the Bible up to that period, and that it might be known by whom and for what purpose it was deposited, they placed on three sides of the Ark the initials of their names, and on the fourth, the time when, meaning, "Deposited in the year of light 3000, by Solomon, King of Israel, Hiram, King of Tyre and Hiram Abiff, for the benefit of the Craft in general, but the Jewish nation in particular."

The Master's Word was placed on the top of the Ark, engraved on a triangular plate of gold, on the sides of which, in certain mysterious characters were engraved the Key or cover words by which the Master's Word may be revealed. A key to these characters

was placed inside the Ark in the Book of the Law, so that if the Children of Israel should ever be carried into captivity, and remain so long as to forget their mother tongue, yet on their return, if found, by means of this Key, the Word might be restored; and that it might be known and distinguished as the Master's Word when found they placed on the top of the Ark their three Jewels, one on each side of the triangle, knowing that a description thereof would be handed down to the latest posterity. Thus was preserved the long lost Master's Word, now the Grand Omnificent Word, or Great and Sacred Name, which Royal Arch tradition informs us was first communicated by God to Moses at the Burning Bush and remained in use until near the completion of King Solomon's Temple.

It was then lost at the death of our Grand Master Hiram Abiff, and lay buried in darkness 470 years, when, as you are aware, at the building of the Second Temple after the Babylonish captivity, through the merits of Jeshua, Zerubbabel, and Haggai, it was again restored to the Craft, in whose possession we trust it may forever remain.

APR I now present you with the Apron of a Select Master. Its color is white bordered in purple. The white is Ancient Masonry's final reminder of that purity of life symbolized in the first Apron you received as an Entered Apprentice; while the purple, the color of kings, exhorts us to rule will our own lives that we may be numbered with the select nobility who truly practice our Royal Art.

The Sword designates us as guardians, whose particular duty is the preservation of those sacred treasures which are ours through Masonic heritage.

The Trowel reminds us that we are builders, and that our lives should be constructive in their influence upon the Brotherhood and upon the world.

The Broken Triangle speaks to us of mortality – of the uncertainty of our tenure of life, of the importance of an industrious use of our time and our faculties, and of the place of wages, refreshment and rest which awaits our entrance through the gate of Death.

Enclosing this emblem of our mortal life is the Unbroken Triangle, emblematic of Deity whose love enfolds us all, whose justice and mercy are alike infinite and alike perfect, and whose Word points the way of life immortal.

May you wear this apron with such honor that it may ever distinguish you as a Mason who is truly a Select Master.

CHG Companions – Having attained to this degree you have passed the circle of perfection in Ancient Craft Masonry. In the capacity of Select Master you must be sensible that your obligations are increased in proportion to your privileges. Let it be your constant care to prove yourself worthy of the high honor conferred, in admitting you to this select degree.

Let uprightness and integrity attend your steps; let justice and mercy mark your conduct; let fervency and zeal stimulate you in the discharge of the various duties incumbent upon you; but suffer not an idle or impertinent curiosity to lead you astray, or betray you into danger.

Be deaf to every insinuation which would have a tendency to weaken your resolution, or tempt you to an act of disobedience.

Be voluntarily dumb and blind, when the exercise of those faculties would endanger the peace of your mind, or the probity of your conduct; and let silence and secrecy, those cardinal virtues of a Select Master, on all necessary occasions, be scrupulously observed.

By a steady adherence to the important instructions contained in this degree, you will merit the approbation of the select number with whom you are associated and will enjoy the high satisfaction of having acted well our part in the important enterprise in which you are engaged, and after having wrought your regular hours, may be admitted to participate in all the privileges of a Select Master.

Closing:

If any are present, the IM will receive and introduce current Grand Council Officers and Past and Present Grand Illustrious Masters.

IM * Companion Captain of the Guard. *CG rises.* I am about to close this Council. You will see that the Secret Vault is securely guarded.

CG Companion Steward. *Stew rises.* See that the Secret Vault is securely guarded, and inform the Sentinel that the Illustrious Master is about to close Blank Council Number 999 of Select Masters. Direct him to take due notice thereof and guard accordingly.

Stew *Goes to door and gives *** *** ***. Answered by Sen *** *** ***. Stew opens door.*

Companion Sentinel, the Illustrious Master is about to close Blank Council Number 999 of Select Masters. Take due notice thereof and guard accordingly.

*Closes door, give *, returned by Sen, and returns to his station.*

Companion Captain of the Guard, the Sentinel is informed. *Is seated.*

CG Illustrious Master, the Secret Vault is secure.

IM Companion Captain of the Guard, are you a Select Master?

CG I am acknowledged as such and have wrought my regular hours.

IM What are those hours?

CG From night at night to midnight, the time when prying eyes are closed in sleep.

IM Where were you greeted as a Select Master?

CG In a legally constituted Council of Select Masters, assembled in a place representing the Secret Vault erected by King Solomon under the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple.

IM Whom do you represent?

CG One of those who for their fidelity and skill were selected to assist in building the Secret Vault.

IM How many were employed in the erection of the Secret Vault?

CG Twenty-two from Gebal, Ahishar, Adoniram, and our three Grand Masters, twenty-seven in all and no more.

IM Why but twenty-seven?

CG Because there were but nine Arches and three only could be employed on each Arch.

IM Where did the Secret Vault begin?

CG In King Solomon's most retired apartment?

IM Where did it end?

CG Under the Sanctum Sanctorum of the Temple.

IM For what purpose was it erected?

- CG As a place wherein to deposit a true copy of the Ark of the Covenant, containing imitations of the Pot of Manna, Aaron's Rod, also the Book of the Law.
- IM Where was the deposit made?
- CG In the Ninth Arch of the Secret Vault.
- IM What countryman are your
- CG A Phoenician.
- IM Of what city?
- CG Gebal.
- IM What is your name?
- CG Giblem
- IM What is your age?
- CG Three times nine, or twenty-seven.
- IM What are your implements?
- CG The Sword and Trowel.
- IM How explained?
- CG As the sword and Trowel were used by our ancient brethren for defense and protection, and to cement and complete the Secret Vault, so should we as Select Masters devoutly guard the inestimable secrets of our venerable fraternity, and unite and cement the brotherhood.
- IM What is the hour?
- CG Low Twelve.
- IM What remains to be done?
- CG To retire in peace, practice virtue, and maintain silence.
- IM *Rises and gives* ***. Companion Captain of the Guard, it is my order that Blank Council Number 999 of Select Masters be now closed and stand closed until its next stated assembly, unless especially convened by order, of which due and timely notice will be given. Proclaim this to the Companions present that having due notice thereof, they will govern themselves accordingly.
- CG Companions, it is the order of the Illustrious Master that Blank Council Number 999 of Select Masters be now closed and stand closed until its next stated assembly, unless especially convened by order, of which due and timely notice will be given. Take due notice thereof, they will govern themselves accordingly.
- IM Companions, attend to giving the Signs. *IM leads in giving all signs.*
- PCW *** *** ***
- DM *** *** ***
- IM *** *** ***

- CHP Companions, being about to quit this sacred retreat to mix again with the world, let us not forget amid the cares and vicissitudes of active life, the bright example of sincere friendship, so beautifully illustrated in the lives of the founders of this degree. Let us take the lesson home with us; and may it strengthen the bonds of fraternal love between us; incite our hearts to duty, and our desires to wisdom. Let us exercise Charity, cherish Hope, walk in Faith. And may that moral principle, which is the mystic cement of our fellowship, remain with us and bless us Amen.
- ALL So mote it be.
- IM I now declare this Council duly closed. Companion Captain of the Guard, inform the Sentinel. Companion Conductor of the Council, attend at the Altar.
- CG Companion Steward, inform the Sentinel.
CC and Stew step off stations at the same time. CC goes to the Altar and closes the Bible, then returns to his station.
- Stew *Goes to door and gives *** ***. Returned by Sen. Stew opens door.*
Companion Sentinel, this Council is closed.
Door is left open. Returns to station.
Companion Captain of the Guard, the Sentinel is informed.
- CG Illustrious Master, your order has been obeyed.
- IM *