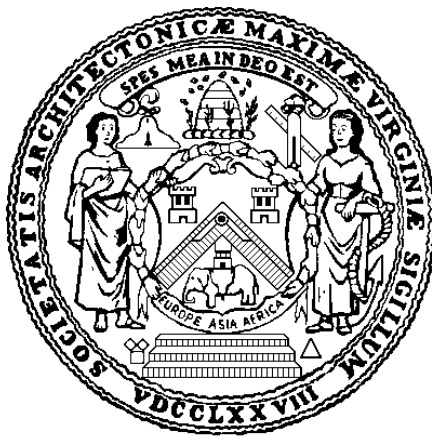
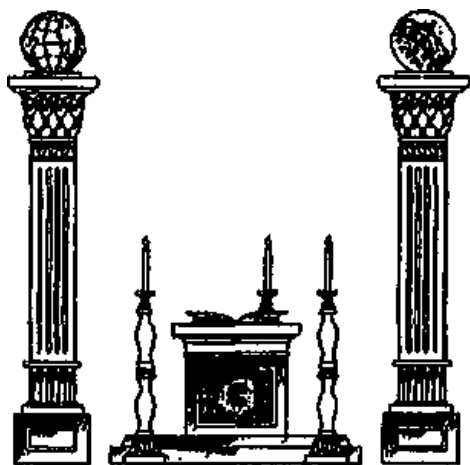


Master Mason

Educational Proficiency Manual



**Grand Lodge of Virginia
A.F. & A.M.
2007**



Grand Lodge of Virginia, AF&AM
Master Mason
Educational Proficiency Manual

There is nothing in this pamphlet that is in any way restricted. However it is NOT intended to be given to the candidate. This material is to be used as a study guide. The information contained herein is to be covered in a conversational discussion-type setting either with individual candidates or in a group. This approach is designed to encourage and stimulate thinking, and promote discussion about Freemasonry and who and what we are, what we stand for, what we teach and try to inculcate, and why. Ever remembering the only real purpose of our Fraternity is to Make Good Men Better.

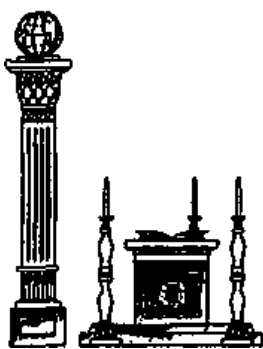
Grand Lodge of Virginia AF&AM
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There is esoteric work associated with this degree that has been handed down mouth to ear over the generations and is not proper to be written in this manual. You will be assigned a Mentor or Catechism instructor to teach you this work as well as to assist you with the information in this manual.

Part I: The Ritual of the Degree

MM-R1 What is the significance of being raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason?



It is that we are raised to a heightened level of consciousness that encourages us to pay more attention to how we live our lives. As a Master Mason entitled to the rights and benefits of Masonry, we are expected to: live up to our obligations of charity and brotherhood; support freedom of speech, thought, and conscience; and work to eliminate prejudice and undue passion.

MM-R2 Why is the Degree of Master Mason called Sublime?

This solemn ceremony is the culmination of the three degrees of Freemasonry, and also teaches profound and important lessons.

MM-R3 How is the Degree of Master Mason different from the preceding Masonic Degrees?

In other degrees, the Lodge is a symbol of the world. In the Degree of Master Mason, the Lodge is a representation of the Sanctum Sanctorum or Holy of Holies of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, which itself was a symbol of Heaven, a place where God dwelled.

MM-R4 How are the Symbols of the Master Mason Degree different from the preceding Masonic Degrees?

In the Entered Apprentice and Fellowcraft Degrees, architecture was the theme of the symbols. In the Master Mason Degree, the theme is more spiritual. The symbols of the Master Mason Degree refer to life, its tragedies and its ultimate triumph, if we lead virtuous lives.

MM-R5 What is the meaning of the reception in the Lodge room at the start of the Master Mason Degree?

The reception is a reminder that, if the lessons of Freemasonry are to serve a useful purpose, they must be implanted in your heart and become a part of your daily life. The clothing again reminds the candidate to be humble, and he is taught that his obligations become more extensive each time he advances.

MM-R6 What is the significance of the three Grand Masters?

In the legend of the Master Mason's Degree, the first three Grand Masters were: Solomon, King of Israel; Hiram, King of Tyre; and, Hiram Abif. They are recorded in the biblical account of the building of the Temple. The secrets, said to be known only to our three Grand Masters, typify divine truth which is not communicated to man – the Fellowcraft and workman – until by industry and steadfast purpose, he has completed his spiritual temple and made it a fit dwelling place for divine truth. With this truth, the reward of a well-spent life, the craftsman can travel into that undiscovered country toward which each of us is journeying.

MM-R7 Who was Solomon?

Solomon, the son of David and Bathsheba, was born about 997 B.C., and became King in 977 B.C. He reigned for 40 years before his death in 937 B.C. In the history of the Hebrew people, the reign of Solomon stands out as one in which the greatest power, prosperity and recognition of that nation were achieved. The name, Solomon, means, peaceful; his reign was one of peace.

MM-R8 What is meant by the Lion of the Tribe of Judah?

The lion is a symbol of might and royalty, and it was the sign of the Tribe of Judah. It was also one of the titles of King Solomon. Some say the term is used to refer not to King Solomon, but to the Messiah. However, each Mason can interpret this and other symbols as he chooses.

MM-R9 Who was Hiram, King of Tyre?

Hiram was a friend of King David and became both ally and friend of King Solomon. According to the Biblical accounts, he assisted Solomon by supplying certain materials for the construction of the Temple and, in return, received gifts from Solomon, including twenty cities (I Kings, 9:11). Our ritual assigns certain duties to Hiram of Tyre, but these duties are purely legendary.

MM-R10 Who was Hiram Abif?

Hiram Abif was sent by King Hiram to assist King Solomon in the erection and beautification of the Temple. Hiram Abif is mentioned in the first book of Kings, 7:13, 14, and further information is found in II Chronicles, 2:12, 14.

MM-R11 In the Drama of the Master Mason Degree, who did the candidate represent?

Hiram Abif.

MM-R12 What is the legend of Hiram Abif?

Although Hiram Abif is a historical character, the legend used in our Master Mason's Degree is not found in the Bible. The word, Abif, is translated as my father, so the name Hiram, my father, is a term of great respect, he being regarded as the father, in a patriarchal sense, of all his workmen on the Temple.

MM-R13 What lessons are taught by the legend of Hiram Abif?

It teaches that our worst enemies may appear to be our friends, and that we may be harmed by our own working tools, meaning our own inner qualities. More importantly, it teaches the importance of fidelity to our promises, and that even if we are harmed and brought low by circumstances, there is always the hope and expectation that we may be helped and raised up again, especially, with the assistance of our Masonic Brethren.

MM-R14 What is symbolized by the three Ruffians?

There are many symbolic allusions. The Ruffians symbolize the passions in each of us that we must

try to keep in check, and teach us that rewards must be earned. We learn that hard work and perseverance are keys to success, that violence is never an acceptable form of conduct, except in self-defense, and that moral shortcuts can have serious consequences. More broadly, we learn that tyrants who seek to enslave us first deny the right of free speech, symbolized as a blow to the throat. Secondly, tyrants try to control us by attacking our right to place our affections where we wish, symbolized as a blow to the heart. Finally, and most importantly, tyrants attack our ability to think for ourselves, symbolized as a blow to the brain.

MM-R15 What is the lost word in Freemasonry?

Many Masonic scholars believe that the lost word refers to Divine Truth, which we are all seeking in our own way. Others believe that the search for the lost word symbolizes our search for what God intends us to do with our life. The idea that Masons have a substitute for, but not the true word, symbolizes that while we strive for truth, we have only reached an approximation of truth, and have not yet attained perfection.

The search for the lost word leads Masons to be open to receiving truth from any source, and to reexamine their opinions in light of new information. Thus, Freemasonry is devoted to

freedom of thought, speech, and conscience. It also means that each of us needs to triumph over the prejudices, passions, and conflicts that may have developed within us. No one can be a true Freemason unless he sees each and every person, regardless of their color, race, religion, nationality or gender as worthy of respect and dignity.

MM-R16 Why does Freemasonry refer to traveling to foreign countries and refer to Masons as traveling men and what is Masonic visitation?

In earlier centuries, operative Masons worked to become proficient in the knowledge and secrets of their Craft, and become master builders who could travel freely from country to country to help build great buildings. Today, the philosophy of Freemasonry is often unknown or “foreign” to those outside the Fraternity, so the candidate for symbolic or speculative Masonry and the new Mason must learn a new language, understand new customs and traditions, and stretch their minds to interpret symbols that teach them important moral lessons. The right of Masonic visitation refers to the fact that Master Masons are welcomed in Masonic Lodges all over the world.

MM-R17 What are the symbols of this Degree?

The symbols of this degree include the 47th Problem of Euclid, the All Seeing Eye, the Anchor

and Ark, the Bee Hive, the Broken Column, the Coffin, the Hour Glass, the Marble Monument, the Pot of Incense, the Ruffians, the Setting Maul, the Scythe, the Spade, the Sprig of Acacia, and the Three Steps. These and many other symbols mainly focus on how we can build our character. A study of their meanings can be found in many Masonic books, but you can begin your study by reviewing the Manual of Work and the Mentor's Manual of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. There also is much valuable information in the *Short Talk Bulletins*, published by the Masonic Services Association (<http://www.msana.com>).

MM-R18 What is the symbolism of the All-Seeing Eye?

It is a symbol of deity. God watches over humanity and our acts are weighed against His standards of morality and virtue. The eye is never closed, symbolizing that God never closes his eyes to our problems and struggles in life.

MM-R19 What is the symbolism of the Sprig of Acacia?

An evergreen symbolizes continuity, and refers to a custom of placing a sprig of acacia by the head of the grave to mark its location and to show a belief in the immortality of the soul.

MM-R20 What are the Jewels of a Master Mason?

Jewels are things that are precious, and precious to a Master Mason are Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love. We come into the Lodge as a friend of someone who signed our petition. We extend that friendship into Brotherly Love for our fellow Masons, and we encourage each other to act morally, honorably, and courteously toward all mankind.

MM-R21 What does the Trowel teach us?

Operative Masons use the Trowel to spread the cement that holds stones together. Master Masons are taught to especially value the trowel, used symbolically to spread the cement of Brotherly Love that ties us together.

MM-R22 What is the significance of the five points of fellowship?

The five points of fellowship teach us that we should be ready and willing to help our Brethren, and that we can expect similar help from them. Brotherly Love is one of the most important aspects of Freemasonry; we are taught that one of the greatest things each of us can do is help our fellow man, especially our Brother Masons.

PART II: HISTORY & PHILOSOPHY

MM-H1 What is the significance of symbolism in Freemasonry?

Freemasonry has been defined as a beautiful system of morality, veiled in allegory, and illustrated by symbols. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that our Fraternity uses symbols to convey important moral lessons and principles. Symbolism, the art of representing abstract truths and ideas by concrete things, can: sharpen our perceptions and push us toward a fresh observation of life; increase our understanding of the world and of ourselves; and, excite our capacity for wonder and enlarge our appreciation for truth and beauty.

MM-H2 What is the symbolism of the Temple of Solomon?

The chief purpose of Solomon's Temple was to provide a dwelling place for the Most High in the midst of his people Israel. The symbolism of the Temple for a Freemason is founded upon the conception of man himself as a living Temple for the enthronement of God within each of us. We recall the beautiful passage in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, "*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you.*" Accordingly, each Mason should aspire to the same type of perfection in his temple of character as

Solomon sought for the Temple at Jerusalem. And just as he sought out the most skilled craftsmen, we should not allow our individual mental, physical, and spiritual temple to be degraded by inferior workmanship on our part.

MM-H3 What do we mean by the philosophy of Freemasonry?

Freemasonry espoused many of the principles of the Enlightenment; for example, reason over superstition – even before they became broadly accepted, and Lodges embraced the right of assembly, representative democracy, and freedom of conscience, thought, and speech before these principles found acceptance in governments and constitutions. We believe in Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. We support justice and toleration, and oppose tyranny and dictatorship.

MM-H4 How does this philosophy translate into a code of conduct?

Although each Grand Lodge is supreme within its jurisdiction and no one person speaks for Freemasonry, there are certain defining principles of conduct.

- A Mason believes in a Supreme Being, but supports freedom of religion.
- A Mason follows a strict moral code, emphasizing honesty and fairness – focused

on the Golden Rule. His word is his bond and he deals fairly and honestly with all. He seeks to walk humbly in the sight of God, do justice, and love mercy.

- A Mason is a lawful and peaceful citizen, avoiding intemperance or excess. He strives to be a good husband, a good parent, a good son, and a good neighbor.
- A Mason values hard work and independence, but is unselfish, charitable to all, and ready to assist his Brother Mason.

MM-H5 What is meant by receiving Master's Wages?

We get out of Freemasonry in proportion to what we invest in it. As we study its history and philosophy, as we associate with learned Brethren, as we visit various Lodges and meet the members, we gain personally and socially. A well-known Masonic author, Most Worshipful Carl H. Claudy, suggests that the wages of a Master Mason are the intangibles of love, friendship, respect, opportunity, happy labor, and association.

MM-H6 What is meant when we use the terms, Worshipful, Right Worshipful, and Most Worshipful – and to whom do they apply?

These are old English terms, used as a mark of respect, like honorable – the term we use to refer to

judges and other senior officials, or venerable; there is no religious implication. These titles of respect are given respectively to the Master or Past Master of a Lodge, to a District Deputy Grand Master or Past District Deputy Grand Master, and to a Grand Master or Past Grand Master.

MM-H7 When is a man truly a Mason?

After a man receives the Degree of Entered Apprentice, we tell him he is a Mason; after he receives the Degree of Master Mason, he enjoys all of the rights and benefits of Freemasonry. But in a larger sense, we do not really become a Master Mason until we have internalized the moral values and philosophy of Freemasonry and put them to work in our daily lives. Our ritual teaches us to continually strive to improve our character; we seek to lead by example, act honorably toward our fellow man, help in our communities, and seek to improve society in general.

MM-H8 Are Masons permitted to wear Masonic jewelry or symbols in public?

Yes. Many Masons in the United States display their membership proudly, with Masonic signs on their cars, emblems on their caps, shirts, and jackets, and with rings on their fingers. Masons in some countries do not display their Masonic membership in public.

MM-H9 When was the Grand Lodge of Virginia formed, and who was the first Grand Master?

The Grand Lodge of Virginia is the oldest independent Grand Lodge in the United States, for it was never a Provincial Grand Lodge, nor was it ever under the authority of a Provincial Grand Lodge. It has been continuously under the authority of the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia by the sovereign will of the Craft. The first Grand Master of Masons in Virginia was Justice John Blair, Jr., of Williamsburg Lodge No. 6. He was elected by a Convention of delegates from the several Virginia Lodges on October 13, 1778; he was installed into that office on October 30 of the same year. We date our history of the Grand Lodge from the date of his election. A history of the beginnings of our Grand Lodge can be found in the Virginia Methodical Digest and in almost every edition of the *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Virginia*.

MM-H10 How has Masonic law developed in Virginia?

The basic law rests upon the Old Charges and the Constitutions of Masonry as these laws were compiled by the Reverend James Anderson, George Payne and John T. DeSaguliers around 1722-1723. Our own Virginia law began with these and has expanded as times and circumstances have required,

until our present system of jurisprudence has evolved. The original Book of Constitutions was adopted by the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 1791. It is divided into 6 chapters: The first chapter has sections concerning God and religion, government and the civil magistrate, private qualities and duties, and the proposing of new members. The second chapter concerns a Lodge and its government. The third chapter concerns Grand Lodge; the fourth, the election and duties of Grand Lodge officers; the fifth concerns Grand Lodge charity; and the sixth concerns Grand Visitations and Communications. The reading of the Book of Constitutions is recommended to every Brother who comes into the Craft.

MM-H11 What is the Methodical Digest?

The legislation passed at the Grand Annual Communication, and all decisions of Grand Masters adopted by Grand Lodge are codified in a book called the Virginia Methodical Digest, which any Mason can obtain from the Office of the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Virginia. The Methodical Digest is divided into five sections which deal with: Grand Lodge; the Subordinate Lodge; the Individual Mason; Masonic Offenses, Investigations, Charges and Trials; and the Life Membership in Perpetuity Plan. In addition, there is a section on decisions of Grand Masters concerning

Cornerstone Ceremonies, Funerals, Masonic Home and Veteran's Emblems; a section on Grand Master's edicts; and one on standing resolutions.

MM-H12 What are Masonic Offenses?

Masons in Virginia are required to: support the established Government; obey the civil law; keep inviolable the mysteries of the Order; preserve and obey the laws, resolutions and edicts of the Grand Lodge; observe the Ancient Landmarks of Masonry; and, discharge their duties and obligations to their families, to each other, and to mankind in general. Willful failure to comply with any of these requirements is a Masonic Offense.

MM-H13 How are Masonic Charges made?

Masonic charges may be brought in only one Lodge for the same offense, and then through the process of accusation, investigation by a committee, which the Worshipful Master will appoint, and the formulation and presentation of the charge(s) itself at a stated communication of the Lodge. A Trial Commission is then appointed, and its judgment can be appealed to the Grand Master. Additional information on Masonic trials can be found in the Methodical Digest and in a Grand Lodge publication on Masonic Trials.

MM-H14 If found guilty of a Masonic Offense what can happen?

If found guilty, a Brother may be subject to reprimand, suspension, or expulsion from the Fraternity.

MM-H15 What are some of the roots of Anti-Masonry?

Dictatorships have regularly opposed Freemasonry because we support freedom and democracy. Other groups have opposed Freemasonry because we welcome men of all religions. In addition, some individuals espoused anti-Masonic views simply to make money by producing anti-Masonic books and videotapes or appearing on anti-Masonic television programs. Others have opposed Freemasonry because they do not have the facts about what Masons do and what our organization represents.

MM-H16 Was there really a political party in the United States that was opposed to Freemasonry?

Although Freemasonry played a key role in the founding of our nation and enjoyed a very positive reputation in the 1820's through the 1840's, a large group of people came to believe that Freemasonry was a bad influence. The triggering event was a claim that a man named William Morgan had been kidnapped and possibly murdered by Masons in northern New York State because he was

threatening to write a book disclosing the secrets of Freemasonry. No one is sure what happened to Morgan, but many people came to believe that Masons had acted in ways that were contrary to law and the democratic ideals of America, and they founded an official political party called the Anti-Masonic party in 1826. This party achieved some successes in electing members of Congress, state Governors and other public officials in the New England states, New York, and Pennsylvania. During this period, Freemasonry fell into disrepute, and was almost eliminated in America but it began to recover starting in the 1840's.

PART III: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

MM-F1 What is the composition of the Grand Lodge of Virginia and who has a vote?

The Grand Lodge of Virginia is composed of:

- The Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, who has one vote and, in case of a tie, a second vote;
- The Deputy Grand Master, who has one vote, and the Grand Wardens, the Grand Treasurer, the Grand Secretary, and the Grand Deacons, who collectively have one vote;
- The Past Grand Masters, who each have one vote, and the Past Deputy Grand Masters and the Past Grand Wardens who collectively have one vote;
- The representatives of the subordinate Lodges, with each Lodge having one vote;
- The District Deputy Grand Masters, who collectively have one vote;
- The Past Masters of subordinate Lodges, not included in above classifications, who collectively have one vote.

MM-F2 When does the Grand Lodge meet, and what happens at its meetings?

The Grand Lodge meets each year in November. At the sessions of Grand Lodge, called the Grand Annual Communication, the Grand Master provides a report on his stewardship of the Fraternity and receives detailed reports from the various Grand Lodge Committees on the state of the Craft. There also is: discussion of, and voting on, proposed legislation that, if adopted, becomes a part of Masonic law and is included in the Methodical Digest; the election and installation of Grand Lodge Officers; and, a number of social events. Before Grand Lodge begins, the Committee on Work, which is responsible for the ritual, exemplifies the ritual of the three degrees as conferred in our Grand Jurisdiction.

MM-F3 Who can attend Grand Lodge meetings?

All Master Masons are encouraged to attend Grand Lodge meetings. Those attendees who are not voting members can observe what occurs at the tiled meetings of the Grand Lodge. Non-Masons are welcome at the social events.

MM-F4 Who is a Grand Lodge delegate?

The Worshipful Master, Senior, and Junior Wardens are entitled to represent their Lodge. If none of them

are present, their proxies, elected by the Lodges, represent them.

MM-F5 Who are the Officers of the Grand Lodge?

The elected officers are: the Grand Master of Masons in Virginia, the Deputy Grand Master, the Grand Senior and Grand Junior Wardens, the Grand Treasurer, Grand Secretary, and the Grand Senior and Grand Junior Deacons. The Grand Master also appoints several Grand Lodge officers, including the Grand Marshal, Grand Chaplain, Grand Lecturer, Grand Provost, and Grand Tiler. The names, addresses and the phone numbers of Grand Lodge Officers are listed in publications of the Grand Lodge, including the Annual Proceedings, and in an annual Directory.

MM-F6 How does one become a Grand Lodge Officer?

The Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master are always in nomination for the Office of Grand Master and any member of Grand Lodge can make additional nominations. The Grand Master-Elect nominates each of the other elected Grand Lodge officers, and again, any member of Grand Lodge can make additional nominations. The Grand Deacons, the Grand Wardens, and the Deputy Grand Master are known as the progressive line

officers because, most often, they will be elected each year and advance from Grand Junior Deacon to Grand Master in six years. The Grand Master-Elect also designates the appointed Grand Lodge officers.

MM-F7 What are the powers of the Grand Master?

The Grand Master presides during any session of the Grand Lodge, and controls the conduct of all business coming before the Grand Lodge. When the Grand Lodge is not in session, all of its powers are vested in the Grand Master who has the power to: suspend any law or resolution enacted by the Grand Lodge; issue dispensations for the formation of new Lodges; empower subordinate Lodges to set aside the requirements of their by-laws, and for other purposes; appoint commissions; make decisions; and, perform all other acts which are imposed upon his office by law, custom, or usage.

He reports all of his official acts to the Grand Lodge in his annual address, which is referred to the Committee of Past Grand Masters. That Committee makes recommendations to the Grand Lodge on the decisions and rulings of the Grand Master, and, if adopted by Grand Lodge, become part of Masonic law, are codified and are placed in the Methodical Digest. The disapproval of any decision or ruling of the Grand Master does not affect the particular act, but governs only its future application.

MM-F8 Who are District Deputy Grand Masters?

They are the personal representatives of the Grand Master in their respective Masonic district. The Lodges in the district recommend a candidate for District Deputy Grand Master to the Grand Master, but the decision to appoint rests solely with the Grand Master. The District Deputy observes the functioning of the Lodges, enforces conformity to the work and compliance with the laws of the Grand Lodge, and reports irregularities to the Grand Master. Lodge officers can request advice from the District Deputy Grand Master, and dispensations to change the date or time of a Lodge meeting.

MM-F9 Where is the Grand Lodge building located, and what does the Grand Lodge staff do?

The Grand Lodge building is located in Richmond, on the grounds of the Masonic Home of Virginia. The building contains the office of the Grand Master and his apartment, the office of the Grand Secretary and his staff, a conference room, and a museum and library to which all Masons are encouraged to visit. The Grand Lodge staff maintain the records and provide assistance to the Grand Master, the Grand Lodge Officers, and all of the Lodges.

MM-F10 What is the Masonic Home of Virginia?

The Masonic Home is a full-service facility with cottages and rooms for independent living, assisted-living quarters, and a care center. It is located on Nine Mile Road in Richmond. This wonderful retirement community is supported and maintained by the Masons of Virginia. It provides a home for our older Masons, their wives and widows. It is primarily for Masons who cannot afford other living arrangements, but also accepts paying residents.

MM-F11 How are new Lodges started, and how can they be ended?

When a group of Masons wishes to form a new Lodge, they apply to the Grand Master for a dispensation to permit them to form and work temporarily. If, after a period, the new Lodge has met certain standards, the Grand Lodge may grant it a Charter. The Grand Lodge or the Grand Master can revoke the Charter of a Lodge and the Lodge then ceases to exist. In addition, a majority of members at a meeting may vote to surrender their Charter.

MM-F12 How are Lodge officers elected?

The Worshipful Master conducts annual elections by voice vote, or, if there is more than one candidate for an office, by secret, written ballot. The

Worshipful Master nominates a Brother for the Office of Worshipful Master; and the Worshipful Master-Elect makes the first nomination for the other elected officers. As in the case of Grand Lodge, any member of the Lodge can make additional nominations.

MM-F13 What are “stated” and “called” communications?

The stated communication is the regularly scheduled meeting of the Lodge provided or “stated” in its by-laws. Every Lodge is required to have, if practicable, at least one stated communication a month and the location, day, date and time cannot be changed without Grand Lodge permission. In case of scheduling conflicts or when weather conditions require, the meeting can be changed by obtaining a dispensation from the District Deputy Grand Master. The business of the Lodge is usually conducted at these meetings, although degrees also can be conferred. The Worshipful Master also is free to have special meetings, known as called communications, because they are “called” by the Worshipful Master. A dispensation from Grand Lodge is not necessary for “called” meetings, but the Brethren must be given timely notice. Except for funerals, no stated or special Lodge meetings are allowed when the Grand Lodge is assembled for its Grand Annual Communication.

MM-H14 Are “Roberts Rules of Order” used in Masonic Lodges?

We do not follow Roberts Rules of Order. Under Masonic law, the Worshipful Master rules and governs his Lodge, controls the order of business, and may refuse to entertain any proposition he deems not in the best interest of the Lodge. The decisions of a Worshipful Master can only be appealed through the District Deputy Grand Master to the Grand Master.

MM-F15 What are the Rights of a Master Mason?

The rights of a Master Mason are Masonic relief, Masonic visitation, and Masonic burial.

MM-F16 What is Masonic Relief?

Each Mason is obligated to do whatever he can to assist his Masonic Brethren when they are in need. Each individual, Lodge, and Grand Lodge may determine what is appropriate to do in each case. Widows and orphans of Freemasons also are permitted to apply for Masonic relief.

MM-F17 What are the rules about Masonic visitation?

A Master Mason in good standing is permitted to visit other Masonic Lodges, so long as the Lodge to

which he belongs is under the jurisdiction of a Grand Lodge that is recognized by our Grand Lodge at the time of the visit. If the visitor has not sat in that Lodge before, or if he is not known to and cannot be vouched for by one of the members or admitted visitors of the Lodge he is visiting, the Worshipful Master will appoint an examination committee. The dues card of the visitor is checked to determine that he is in good standing in a recognized Lodge. He will be asked to repeat the Tiler's Oath and otherwise to provide his Masonic qualifications. There is no fixed examination, but the committee must satisfy itself that the visitor is a Master Mason in good standing. A Mason should arrive early enough to allow time for these procedures to be followed, and should give advance notice to the Worshipful Master of a planned visit, if that is possible.

MM-F18 Can a visitor be barred from a Lodge meeting?

If a member of the Lodge objects to any visitor attending that Lodge meeting, the Worshipful Master must not permit the visitor to attend that Lodge meeting. There are exceptions; a Grand Lodge Officer or the District Deputy Grand Master cannot be barred from any Lodge meeting; and, if a Worshipful Master believes that a member of the Lodge is objecting to a visitor because of race, the objection will not be honored.

MM-F19 Can a Mason resign from his Lodge or join another Lodge?

If you no longer wish to hold membership in a particular Lodge, you can resign by asking for a demit – a document certifying that at the time you left the Lodge you were in good standing financially and not under Masonic charges. A demitted Mason can apply to rejoin that or any other Lodge, but must be accepted by unanimous ballot of the Lodge. A member of one Lodge can join another without demitting from the first Lodge. He simply applies for affiliation or membership in the other Lodge, and if accepted, he becomes a member of that Lodge. Virginia permits plural memberships, but, in some Grand Lodges, Masons may be allowed to belong to only one or two Lodges.

MM-F20 What are Masonic funeral services?

Each Masonic Grand Jurisdiction has a ritual that is used when the Brethren pay their respects for a Mason who has died. This ritual can be performed in public, either at the funeral home or at the gravesite. It is up to the family of the departed Mason to request a Lodge to perform a Masonic funeral service, so each Mason should inform his family ahead of time, if he would like them to make this request after his death.

MM-F21 What are the Responsibilities of a Master Mason?

To live an exemplary life in accordance with the high moral principles of the Fraternity is the best means by which we can discharge our responsibilities to ourselves and to our families, and our individual responsibilities to our Lodge and to Freemasonry in general. Every Mason is an Ambassador for the Fraternity, and should act in such a manner as to impress all with whom he comes into contact so they form a favorable opinion of the Craft.

MM-F22 What is a Mason's responsibility for Lodge attendance?

Although there is not a minimum attendance requirement nor a penalty for absence from meetings, each Mason should assist his Lodge by attending its meetings and supporting its projects and activities. As one attends Lodge events, he increasingly benefits from the fellowship, which is so much a part of Freemasonry.

MM-F23 What is your responsibility as a voucher on a petition?

First, you should not sign a petition unless you are well acquainted with the petitioner, and know him to be of good moral character. Second, you should make certain he understands what Freemasonry is all

about, and that it is the right organization for him. The voucher should inform the petitioner about the obligations we undertake to help each other and the time commitments of active membership, including Lodge meetings, serving on committees, and engaging in worthwhile projects.

MM-F24 How does the Lodge ballot on new members?

There is strict ritual about how Lodge members vote on potential new members.

There must be at least a month between when the petition is first read to the Lodge and when it is voted upon. During this time the investigating committee would have visited the petitioner and his family, and be prepared to make its recommendation. After the petition is read for the second time in Lodge, each member of the Lodge present must vote “yes” or “no” by placing a white ball or a black cube in the ballot box. If one black cube is cast, the petitioner is rejected. Balloting in Lodge on petitions is secret; under Masonic law, you must not discuss how you voted, and no one shall ask you to reveal or discuss how you voted.

MM-F25 How is voting done on other issues in Lodge?

Apart from membership issues, voting for officers or to spend money is usually done by a voice vote or show of hands.

MM-F26 What dues or other financial obligations does a Mason have?

Except for honorary members elected by the Lodge and 50-year members, every Brother must pay dues in each Lodge to which he belongs, so long as he is financially able. If a member fails to pay dues, he may be suspended. If he is suspended in one Lodge, he is automatically suspended in all of them and in any other Masonic body to which he belongs.

If you are in financial difficulty, you should speak privately to the Worshipful Master or Secretary and your dues may be waived.

In addition, given the charitable nature of our Fraternity, you should provide such voluntary support as you can for the Masonic Home of Virginia and other worthy projects, and assist individual Masons and their families who may be in need.

MM-F27 What is Life Membership in Perpetuity?

Brethren are encouraged to take care of their dues obligation in a Lodge by purchasing a Life Membership in Perpetuity (LMIP). After they have paid their current year dues, they pay into the LMIP fund 16 times those current dues. That fully satisfies their dues obligation to that Lodge for the rest of their lives, and they also help their Lodge, because this income stream will continue to support the Lodge beyond their lifetime.

MM-F28 Can a Mason be suspended or expelled?

Aside from suspension for nonpayment of dues, a Mason found guilty of un-Masonic conduct can be reprimanded, suspended, or expelled. The Grand Lodge has rules to be followed to handle allegations of un-Masonic conduct, and to conduct trials on these charges in a manner that is fair to all concerned. It is very important that Masons understand that everyone is assumed to be innocent until evidence is presented, the accused has a fair opportunity to defend himself, and an objective decision is reached.

MM-F29 What is meant by recognized and unrecognized Grand Lodges, by regular and irregular Masonry, and by clandestine Lodges and Masons?

Each Grand Lodge chooses whether or not to recognize other Grand Jurisdictions. It also appoints a representative from the recognized Grand Lodge to its Grand Lodge, and our respective Brethren are free to visit Lodges in a sister “recognized” Grand Jurisdiction.

Regular Masonry is generally considered to mean those Masonic groups that support the same fundamental principles as our Grand Lodge.

Clandestine Masons and Lodges are those who do not have a charter from any recognized Grand Lodge.

The terms, recognized or unrecognized, regular or irregular, and clandestine or not clandestine are not interchangeable. For example, an unrecognized Grand Lodge might be regular and not clandestine, but simply not be recognized by our Grand Lodge, because it is new or because it has not requested recognition from our Grand Lodge. A Lodge that has its Charter revoked and continues to meet would be a clandestine lodge.

MM-F30 Are there higher degrees than Master Mason?

There are additional degrees, for example, in the York Rite bodies (the Royal Arch and Commandery) and in the Scottish Rite, which confers the 4th to the 32nd degree. Although the Brethren get a great deal out of these degrees, they are not considered “higher” degrees, and no degree is regarded as more important than the Degree of Master Mason.

MM-F31 What are appendant bodies?

Once you are a Master Mason, you are eligible to join appendant bodies – that is other groups that require Masonic membership. These include the Scottish Rite, York Rite, Shrine, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, and others.

MM-F32 What are the purposes of the appendant bodies?

Each appendant body teaches moral and philosophical lessons by conferring degrees on their candidates. The lessons taught by the body are the central theme of its objectives. In addition to the lessons taught, each body supports a charity. For example: The Scottish Rite supports Childhood Language Disorder Centers and has two Crippled Children’s Hospitals. The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons supports Alzheimer’s programs; the

Knights Templar support the Eye Foundation; and, the Shrine runs a number of Children's Hospitals and Burn Centers.

MM-F33 Are there organizations for the Ladies?

Yes, there are organizations such as the Order of the Eastern Star, The Order of Amaranth, the White Shrine of Jerusalem, the Ladies' Oriental Shrine, and the Social Order of the Beauceant which, while not connected with Freemasonry, require that the ladies be wives or daughters, or relatives of Masons in order to qualify for membership and that the male members be Masons. Each of these organizations has wonderful activities and does charitable work. Masons are permitted to join all these groups but the Beauceant.

MM-F34 What are Masonic youth groups?

There are several organizations for young people that are supported by Freemasonry. In some of them, it is necessary to be related to or to be sponsored by a Mason to join. The International Order of DeMolay is the youth organization for young boys age 12-20. The International Order of Job's Daughters and the Order of Rainbow for Girls are Masonic supported organizations for young girls age 10-20. By supporting these groups, Masons help provide our youth with important values of morality

and, from the ranks of the DeMolay, we may find future Masons.

MM-F35 What is Prince Hall Freemasonry?

In 1775, an African-American man named Prince Hall, together with fourteen other African-Americans, were made Master Masons in a Lodge in Boston that was operating under a Charter issued by the Grand Lodge of Ireland. In 1784, Prince Hall and his Brethren received a Charter issued by the Grand Lodge of England, and later, in memory of their founder, many of the Masonic Lodges for African-Americans came to be known as Prince Hall Masonry. With some up's and down's during the years, Freemasonry for these men has prospered in the United States, and there are Prince Hall Grand Lodges and Prince Hall Lodges in all parts of our country and in some foreign countries, too. From the perspective of Prince Hall Masonry, there also are recognized and unrecognized Grand Lodges, regular and irregular Masons and clandestine Lodges and Masons.

Starting in 1989, many U.S. Grand Lodges started recognizing various Prince Hall Grand Lodges and allowing Masons to visit each other's Lodges. Today, a majority of Grand Lodges in the United States recognizes Prince Hall Masonry, as do Grand Lodges in Canada, England, and other countries. The Grand Lodge of Virginia recognizes the Most

Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Virginia,
F. & A.M., Inc.

**MM-F36 Are there similarities between our
Lodges and Prince Hall Lodges?**

Yes. They confer the degrees in almost the same way we do; they have similar Lodge arrangements and officers, Grand Lodges and appendant bodies.

MM-F37 What is meant by profane?

This is an archaic term used to refer to someone who was not a Mason. The preferred term is simply “non-Mason.”

**MM-F38 What are some books a Master Mason
can read to learn more about Freemasonry?**

The Grand Design by Wallace McLeod, published in 1991.

Let your Work become your Mark, by Stewart W Miner, published in 1986.

The Master’s Book, by Carl H. Claudy, published in 1935.

Key to Freemasonry’s Growth, by Allen E. Roberts, published in 1969.

101+ Ways to Improve Interest & Attendance in your Masonic Lodge, by the Masonic Renewal Committee of North America, Inc.

Is it True What They Say About Freemasonry? by Art deHoyos & S. Brent Morris, 2nd Edition, published in 1997.

A Pilgrim's Path: One Man's Road to the Masonic Temple, by John J. Robinson, published 1993.

Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia, by Henry W. Coil, 2nd Edition by Allen E. Roberts in 1996.

Freemasons for Dummies, by Christopher Hodapp, published in 2005.

Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe by Margaret C Jacob, published in 1991.

Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840, by Steven Bullock, published in 1996.

This list contains only a few of the many good books, pamphlets and articles on Freemasonry. The Seventh Edition of the Mentor's Manual of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, 2002, in the General Information Section list many other good books, organized by Masonic topic.

Many Lodges have libraries and are a valuable source of information on Freemasonry. Many Grand Lodges have excellent libraries. The Allen E. Roberts Memorial Library of the Grand Lodge of Virginia is located at the Grand Lodge office, Nine Mile Road in Richmond; The Pennsylvania Library is located in the George Washington Masonic Memorial in Alexandria, Virginia. The Library at the House of the Temple in Washington, D.C., and the Lexington Library in Lexington, Massachusetts, are among the best Masonic libraries in the world.

*Masonic labor is purely a labor of love
he who seeks to draw Masonic wages
in gold or silver will be disappointed.
The wages of a Mason are earned and paid
in their dealings with one another,
sympathy begets sympathy,
kindness begets kindness,
helpfulness begets helpfulness,
and these are the wages of a Mason.*

Benjamin Franklin