HAVING THE RIGHT MESSAGE AND MATERIAL

Once you have prepared your Lodge's plan for development, the next stage is to prepare members to engage with those who are not Freemasons.

"Having the right message and material" will help Lodge members respond with confidence to questions about Freemasonry and their Lodge.

"Being proud to be a member" then describes how members can prepare their own personal statement to talk about what Freemasonry means for them.

LODGE INFORMATION SHEETS

- You can use the Lodge outline, which is an honest self-assessment of the Lodge intended for internal use, as the basis for writing a Lodge Information Sheet.

- A Lodge Information Sheet is written for those who are not Freemasons, in everyday language, and used to promote the Lodge.

- "What are we?" provides guidance for writing a Lodge Information Sheet.

GUIDANCE FOR LODGE MEMBERS

- Whenever we as Freemasons are discussing Freemasonry with others we should comply with the statements from Grand Lodge.

- Some Freemasons are uncertain about discussing Freemasonry with non-members. In many cases they don't know:
  o what they can say about the Craft, or
  o what they can do to ensure that any approach is not misunderstood or considered as inappropriate solicitation of members.

- To clarify, a Freemason is free to disclose his membership to anyone on any occasion, providing it would not seem that he is seeking personal or business advantage in doing so.

- In fact, a Freemason is free to discuss any aspect of Freemasonry, and their experience of it, that they wish, providing they do not breach their obligation to keep the traditional modes of recognition private and providing they do not describe the detail of our ceremonies.

- The booklet, "Discover Freemasonry", uses everyday language to describe Freemasonry. Familiarise yourself with its contents so that when you talk about Freemasonry the language you use is consistent with that in the booklet.

- Before mentioning Freemasonry to anyone else, reflect on your personal experience of the Craft. "Being proud to be a member" will help you draft your own explanation.

- Respond positively, and with pride, if Freemasonry comes up in conversation.

- Be willing to give positive, honest and personal answers to questions, by drawing on your own experiences and what you enjoy about it.

- The section below, "What can we discuss" offers further guidance on discussing Freemasonry with those who are not Freemasons.

- Draw from material held on Solomon, UGLE's online repository of learning materials, and especially the section, "Seek & learn: About Freemasonry", to help you answer questions.

- One particularly useful text that can be helpful at this time is the words of the "Charge to the Initiate". On 10th June 2015, in his address to the Quarterly Communication of Grand Lodge, the Pro Grand Master, MW Bro. Peter Lowndes, said:

  "I believe there are certain passages [in our ritual] that we should be proud to show to non-members, most particularly members of our families, and top of my list would be the Charge to the Initiate."

WHAT CAN WE DISCUSS?

Freemasons are free to discuss Freemasonry, and their experience of it, providing they do not breach their obligation to keep the traditional modes of recognition private and providing they do not describe the detail of our ceremonies.

Therefore, among other things Freemasons may discuss:

- Their motives for joining.
- What they enjoy about Freemasonry.
- Details of their own Lodge(s).
- Their family's involvement in Freemasonry.

In such conversations it is very easy to adopt Freemasonry's language and to refer to ceremonies, ritual and even excerpts from the ritual. While all organisations have their jargon, which effectively is shorthand for the use of those "in the know", using jargon with those not in the know can create unhelpful barriers to communication.

In our case, much of our traditional or ceremonial language is of ancient origin and its use today carries religious overtones. Some people interpret our ceremonial language without an understanding of its history and context and conclude there is something sinister about the Craft. It would be preferable to use everyday language when describing Freemasonry to those who are not members.

The following examples illustrate this point:

Freemasonry's language	Everyday language
Temple	Meeting room
Candidate	Joining member
Ceremony	Meeting / Drama
Ritual	Drama / Script / Play
Regalia	Freemasonry dress / attire / clothing
Festive / Social board	Meal
Brotherly love, relief & truth	Friendship, respect, charity & integrity
Working tools	Visual aids
Volume of the Sacred Law	Holy book (a collective term as there are several)
Obligation	Serious promise / Commitment
Craft Freemasonry	The first three stages in Freemasonry
Orders	Branches / Extensions / Additional stages

It is also advisable to refer to our meetings as private and open only to members, in the same way that other organisations have meetings that are only open to members. It is best not to refer to secrets or secrecy as those who are not Freemasons often interpret these to mean there is something clandestine happening. In particular, it is best not to refer to Freemasonry as either a "secret society", which it is absolutely not, or even as a "society with secrets", which is perceived by many to be a play on words.

If pressed on the matter of secrecy, members can make comments such as the following:

"Freemasonry draws upon the traditions of the mediaeval stonemasons who travelled the country seeking work. Often being illiterate, they could not rely on written certificates to prove their qualifications but used instead "trade secrets" and certain words and actions. These practices continue to be used in our meetings today in exactly the same way that we use passwords and PIN numbers to access websites and bank accounts. In other words, Freemasons use these words and actions only to gain access to Freemasonry's meetings."

Should a member be asked about the nature of our meetings we can say something like the following:

"Our Lodge meetings are normally in two parts. The first covers the sort of business that any organisation has, such as approving minutes and electing officers. The second is made up of a series of dramas, each of which has some lessons to teach to the new member. These dramas are acted out with our members learning the script. There are three such dramas within Craft Masonry and another is included in an extension to basic Freemasonry, held on different occasions, called the Royal Arch. We keep some parts of them private because in that way they have a greater impact. In the same way, if I recommend a detective novel to you, I wouldn't tell you who did it."

Each member's experience of Freemasonry is different and personal to them. A person's motives for joining and their interests within the Craft may be very different from those of other members. It is worth speaking from a personal point of view and making it clear that different people derive different types of satisfaction from Freemasonry. This will come across as sincerity and conviction.

Among the many personal experiences and benefits that Freemasons report from their membership are:

- Making new friends
- Meeting regularly with diverse people who share the same principles
- Working within a formal, structured and disciplined environment
- Experiencing and taking part in traditions and ceremonies
- Developing self-confidence, especially in areas such as public speaking
- Developing memory and attention to detail
- Holding leadership and other roles.

SUMMARY

As Freemasons we can discuss almost any aspect of Freemasonry with those who are not Freemasons. It is best if we use everyday language, rather than the language of the ritual. There are several resources available to help us prepare for conversations about Freemasonry. Above all, we should be proud and positive about being a Freemason. The next thread, "Being proud to be a member", will help you to talk about what Freemasonry means to you and to prepare a personal statement.