

"Who are you Freemasons, anyway?"

In most ways, Freemasons are very ordinary people, probably very much like you yourself. We are your friends, your neighbours, people on the bus, men you do business with. Freemasons come from all walks of life and professions, both rich and poor. There are Masonic Lodges in almost every nation and Masons belong to virtually every religious and ethnic group. Canadian Prime Ministers, American presidents, royalty and nobility from around the world, scientists, writers, philosophers, giants of industry, athletes and musicians have all been Freemasons. A list of famous Masons of the last 300 years reads like a Who's Who of history.

We welcome all mature men of good character, regardless of their profession, education, race, religion, political beliefs or wealth.

***"So what is Freemasonry?"***

Freemasonry is very much one of those things where you get out of it what you put into it. One could say that it's an opportunity to meet and socialize with like-minded men. That's true, of course, but any Mason willing to put in a bit of work and examine what he has been presented will find that it offers much more than just that.

No man can ever be perfect; perfection lies with God. We can however make ourselves better. That, ultimately, is the goal of Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is a beautiful system of morality, a philosophical approach to self-improvement, a way for a good man to make himself better – better as a citizen, better as a worker or employer, better as a friend, neighbour or acquaintance. It has survived hundreds of years of malign rumours and periodic persecution, not by trying to be flashy or popular, not by changing with every new fashion or vogue, but by appealing to men's core values of right and wrong.

"I've heard about rituals and such..."

Masons use, oh, let's call them small plays acted out according to very old scripts as an effective way to emphasize moral and philosophical points. The details vary from place to place, but all of them have some key elements in common.

Many organizations have rituals of one sort or another. Parliament, for instance, has its own rituals, some hundreds of years old. A Parliamentary session often starts with a military honour guard outside (itself full of long-standing rituals). Parliament is formally opened by a procession led by the Usher of the Black Rod, who carries a ceremonial ebony staff as a mark of his or her authority. A 1½ m long gold mace is ceremoniously carried into and placed in Senate as a symbol of Royal authority.

"What about those aprons?"



Spallumcheen Lodge No. 13, BC. 1891

There's no denying that Freemasonry is full of symbols and the apron is one of them. The whole world around us is full of symbols, of course. Red octagons mean 'stop' long before we get close enough to see the word. Airports have symbols for luggage, for male and female washrooms. A stylized heart indicates love. Having learned them, such symbols have meaning to us all. A Freemason's apron is itself full of symbols. One of them, of instance, is the white colour of the apron, intended to remind

him of innocence and the purity of heart he should aspire to.

Actually, almost everything in Masonry is designed to direct a Mason's mind to the moral tenets of the Craft, things such as honesty, prudence, compassion and generosity. The famous square-and-compasses symbol of Freemasonry is an example of this and is derived from the tools used by operative masons in stonework. The square reminds one who has been so taught to treat everybody fairly, with integrity and virtue. The compasses remind him to keep his behaviour and conduct within certain prescribed limits. The G stands both for Geometry, which the ancients considered the noblest science, and for God.



When a Mason enters a Lodge and puts on his apron, he is surrounded by reminders of the philosophical and moral lessons he has been presented.

"But that's so corny!"

Perhaps. We would prefer to think of it as a way to help guide our actions in a confusing world, one full of uncertainty and moral ambiguity. Morality and integrity never go out of fashion. Think not? Think about a world where such things are completely absent...

Again, a man gets out of Freemasonry what he is willing to put into it. As our Grand Lodge website notes, Freemasonry is in some ways a support group for men who are trying to make the right decisions. It's easier to practice these virtues when you know that those around you think they are important, too.

"What's the link to King Solomon's Temple?"

We mentioned that symbols are important. Freemasonry also makes heavy use of allegory, what one dictionary has described as, "a representation of an abstract or spiritual meaning through concrete or material forms."

In Freemasonry, the building of the Temple in Jerusalem by King Solomon is used as an allegory touching on the challenges a man will meet in his life and of the changes he will go through as he matures.

"Who was Hiram Abiff?"

The Old Testament tells that King Solomon received a lot of help building his temple in Jerusalem from a friendly nearby king, Hiram of Tyre¹ (now in southern Lebanon). One of the requests Solomon made was for the assistance of a man skilled in metal work². The man who came from Tyre was named Hiram Abiff, who cast many brass ornaments for the temple³.

The Bible tells us that Hiram Abiff was a very skilled metalworker. Freemasons use him in an allegorical tale, making him not just an expert metalworker but the chief architect of the temple. There is of course no evidence he was such, but again, this is an allegory and not intended as factual history. Hiram Abiff is used as a symbol of courage, fortitude and integrity.

"What's a Blue Lodge?"

¹ 1 Kings V

² 2 Chronicles II:7

³ 1 Kings VII

It's an informal term for the normal Masonic Lodge of the three basic degrees. The basic apron for such Lodges is trimmed in blue, hence the name.

Another term for it is 'Craft Masonry', the word 'craft' referring to a particular skill – as in 'craftsman'. Freemasonry is sometimes referred to as 'the Craft'.

"What about those other degrees? I've heard about 32nd Degree Masons, for instance."

There are only three degrees every Mason gets involved with - Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason.

Those others are from what we call concordant bodies and are merely expansions of what is taught in a Blue Lodge. A 32nd Degree Freemason is no 'higher' than a Master Mason; he has just attended more classes on the subject. He has no more power, no more control and no more rights - just more insight.

A good analogy might be a high school. Every student there has the same intent – to study. There are however some extracurricular activities open only to school seniors. They may, if they wish, join the math club, the photography club, the football team, etc. These clubs are not the school, and being a member of one or more of them gives a student no precedence or power over any other student. Even the captain of the football team, despite perhaps having some social status, has no higher rank or grade than anyone else; he's still just a Grade 12 student.

"What are the Scottish Rite and the York Rite?"

The Scottish Rite (which oddly enough seems to have originated in France, not Scotland) and the York Rite are two streams or paths of Freemasonry that a Master Mason may choose to investigate. While quite different from each other, both serve to amplify and supplement the teachings of the first three degrees. Neither has authority over the other, nor over Blue Lodge Masonry.

Zetland Lodge follows the Canadian Rite; our rituals differ in some minor ways from those in, eg. the USA or Britain.

To add just a touch of confusion, there are some Lodges in Alberta which follow the York Rite throughout, starting with the degree of Entered Apprentice.

"Why won't you accept women into Masonry? Isn't that sexist?"

No more so than a sorority not accepting men. There are clubs, cruises, health spas, gyms, speaking groups and political caucuses limited to women and nobody calls them sexist. This is a fraternity, a group for men. There are however groups related to Freemasonry which are open to women. The Order of the Eastern Star is one such.

"What are 'landmarks'?"

There are some things in Freemasonry which can be changed, and some that cannot. The latter are referred to a 'landmarks'. One example already mentioned is that Masons must believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. Any group attempting to change or deviate from that would no longer be recognized as regular Masons.

"What about all this secrecy?"

Frankly, most of the secrecy is in the eye of the beholder, but let's look at it.

There are different types of Masonic secrets. One might be the ways of proving oneself a Mason when visiting a strange Lodge. Consider this – Freemasonry involves a lot of mutual trust. A Freemason can be sure of a warm welcome in virtually any city in the world. That sort of thing can easily attract people wanting to abuse that trust and we therefore take some pains to ensure we know who we are dealing with. Keeping a couple of things private is a prudent way of ensuring that that trust is not misplaced.

Another is harder to describe. The lessons of Freemasonry are intended to change a man, to make him a better member of society. Those changes are subtle and not reducible to simple words. To understand them in fullness, a man has to share certain experiences and lessons. Such things are 'secret' because we simply cannot explain them.

We'll get to a couple of other examples in a minute.

"So why all the rumours about Freemasons?"

We wish we knew.

One possible answer is that Freemasonry is exclusive – 'exclusive' as in excluding certain people. (As an example, a man who does not believe in a Supreme Being cannot join.) For some people,

anything they cannot personally participate in or be told everything about is a red flag, a personal insult, something that *must* be evil.

Some religious groups and individuals would like to close the doors to all other religions. Freemasonry's strong tolerance of all faiths is like a red flag to them.

Sadly, there are also those whose hatred of one group spreads to any other group in contact with it. For instance, those biased against Jews or Muslims see that Freemasonry openly welcomes men of all religions and automatically add us to their lists of hate. We welcome men of all races, too, so we are targeted by racial bigots. Those groups all add to the opposition.

The problem is complicated by the regrettable existence of groups which call themselves Freemasons but which behave in completely unMasonic ways. We do not recognize them as fellow Masons, but the difference between them and us is difficult for the outsider to see and regular Masons get tarred with the same brush.

Finally, as Masons do not speak much about the Craft, there are a lot of holes in the story the public sees. The fearful and the self-serving are quick to fill in those holes with rumour and imagination - the more shocking, the better.

"Where did Freemasonry really come from, then?"

That's a good question. To be honest, nobody knows for sure.

The noted US wit Ambrose Bierce once remarked,

"The order was founded at different times by Charlemagne, Julius Caesar, Cyrus, Solomon, Zoroaster, Confucious, Thothmes, and Buddha. Its emblems and symbols have been found in the Catacombs of Paris and Rome, on the stones of the Parthenon and the Chinese Great Wall, among the temples of Karnak and Palmyra and in the Egyptian Pyramids - always by a Freemason."

There's some truth in that. People with more enthusiasm than sense have always worked very hard to stretch evidence to suit themselves, regardless of the subject and some Masons have fallen into that trap.

One likely explanation, one that conforms to all the facts, is as follows.

There was a surge of construction in the Middle Ages, especially of soaring cathedrals, abbeys and other large religious buildings. Anyone who has visited cathedrals such as Chartres or Notre Dame in Paris can appreciate that they could not have been built overnight or with unskilled labour. Great ability and knowledge were required and erecting a cathedral often took a century or more. It was common for the masons employed on such a project to live together in close-knit communities or lodges on or near the construction site, with a series of ranks common to most Medieval guilds, consisting of apprentices, fellows of the craft and master masons. The apprentices were student masons, young men without skill or knowledge. The fellows (craftsmen or, using a modern term, journeymen) were former apprentices with years of training and experience; they comprised the bulk of the labour force. The masters – the true experts – supervised and planned. Such a lodge might labour on one project over a span of five or six generations.

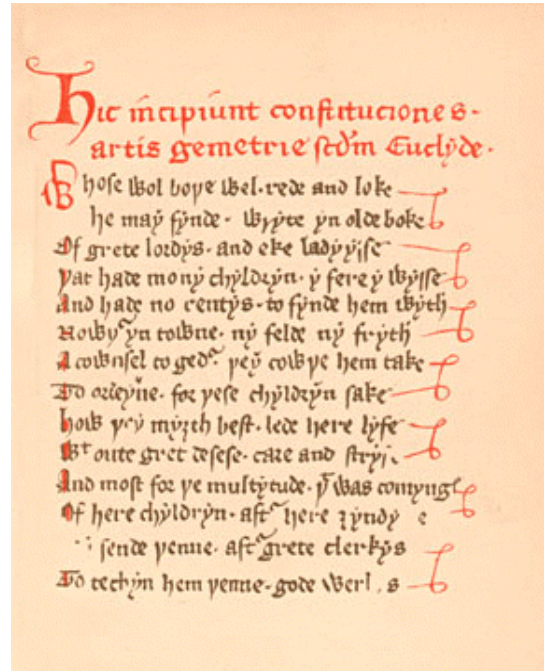


Canterbury Cathedral

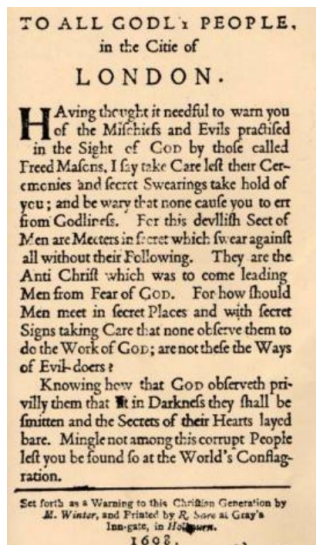
The skills and knowledge required to build such grand buildings was of course jealously guarded. To welcome just anybody with open arms would have risked unskilled fraudsters participating in the work, threatening the integrity of the project (and lowering the profits, of course). Accordingly, membership was restricted to those people properly screened, accepted and trained. Even entry into a lodge building became restricted to those who could prove membership.

The earliest reliable reference to such groups is the so-called 'Regius Manuscript'. It dates from about 1390 and is now held by the British Museum. The Manuscript is a 64-page poem in Middle English, hand lettered on velum in beautiful gothic script, consisting of rules of conduct for masons engaged in the building cathedrals and abbeys in Britain. The document refers to the Anglo-Saxon King Athelstan (reigning 924-939 AD), of whom it is said that he, "loved this craft full well." Whether that last is true or not, it is clear that organized groups of British masons living and working under recognized codes of conduct existed as early as the 14th century.

There are other documents and references here and there, but let's jump to the late 1600s. It was a period in which men of all social levels began to form or join clubs or groups. The Enlightenment was beginning. Gentlemen were taking a renewed interest in the arts and sciences. On the other hand, both the times and the guild system that had sustained the working lodges were fading and such lodges could well have benefitted by accepting non-tradesmen into their ranks. It is not unreasonable to conclude that gentlemen began to join working lodges, lured by their reputation for exclusivity as well as their knowledge of architecture and geometry. These things likely began the shift from 'operative' masonry (working in stone to construct buildings) to 'speculative' masonry (using stone-working tools as instructional symbols for moral betterment).



Regius Manuscript



The first anti-Masonic pamphlets were printed in England in that period. If there was anti-Masonic agitation, there must have been Masons to agitate against, so it is reasonable to believe that there were speculative Masonic Lodges in England before 1700. (There is good evidence that some Scottish operative lodges had been accepting outsiders as early as first half of the 1600s; it is quite possible that Freemasonry as we now know it spread from there into England.) For whatever reason, by the early 1700s, the old working Lodges across Britain had essentially been replaced by speculative ones.

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All regular Masonic Lodges today are derived from those early British Lodges. British Freemasons carried the Craft with them to the Continent and around the world as the British Empire grew. As strong

British Tobacco
Advertisement c. 1763

Masonic bodies here and there came into being, they were recognised in turn as having authority over individual Lodges in their area.

"How did Masonry get to Canada?"

In a number of ways. The first was with British Army regiments, many of which had travelling Lodges comprised of soldiers, Lodges that moved with the regiments. As units were often stationed in one location for long periods, civilian members of the local communities would join. When the troops eventually moved on, they and retired military Masons would remain behind as purely civilian Lodges. These in turn brought in more members; as colonies spread, so did Freemasonry.

For example, there is evidence that Masonry came to the newly-settled Ottawa area with former officers and soldiers of the 99th Regiment of Foot given land grants there after the War of 1812.

In addition, civilian Freemasons moving to Canada brought the Craft with them from other countries. The first non-military Lodge in what is now Canada was established in Annapolis, Nova Scotia in 1738 under the authority of a Lodge in Boston.

The building of the Canadian Pacific Railway across the prairies in the 1880s helped to spread Masonry, too. Railway workers who were Masons took the Craft west as they went.

There was also a native involvement. British officers and agents often exchanged gifts with local bands and chiefs, including prized pipe tomahawks. A number of natives became Masons in British Lodges and some of the pipe tomahawks were engraved with Masonic symbols. This particular one was made in Sheffield, England. It has a strong provenance; the Masonic symbol was engraved by John Blue Jacket, a Shawnee blacksmith, Methodist minister and Freemason. It was actually used in battle by a relative, Eliza Silverheels, while successfully defending her home from Confederate raiders in Lawrence, Kansas in 1863. It is now owned by her great-great-grandson. A similar pipe tomahawk exists that was once owned by the great warrior Tecumseh.



The first Lodge in Alberta was formed in Edmonton in 1882.

"What's a 'cowan'?"

It's a very old term for a man who worked in stone without having gone through the proper apprenticeship process.

You will recall that the old operative lodges worked hard to keep their professional knowledge to themselves. Accordingly, one of the main priorities when a lodge was meeting was to keep those not entitled to it (cowans) from gaining access. The word remains in Masonic use to this day, referring to anyone wishing to improperly enter a Lodge while it is in session.

"What does 'free' mean?"

Time makes that a bit hazy and there are number of possible explanations.

One theory looks back to operative masons, most of whom were bound to their lodges by contracts and custom. The most skilled ones, on the other hand, were free to work wherever they wished.

Another comes from operative masons who worked with 'free' stone – rough chunks of rock which had already been quarried – to shape and smooth it for use in construction.

"Who is the head of Freemasonry?"

Nobody.

There is no central head or governing body for Freemasonry. Not one. Not anywhere.

There are over 150 completely independent Grand Lodges around the world, each governing the individual Lodges in their area. Most such Grand Lodges recognize each other as legitimate, but none have authority over any others. Each is free to chart its own course, make its own decisions, open new Lodges or close existing ones. In Calgary, Zetland Lodge operates under a warrant of constitution from the Grand Lodge of Alberta. An Albertan Mason may visit Lodges in other places provided they belong to a Grand Lodge recognized by our own.

At the level of both Lodge and Grand Lodge, officers are selected by annual elections.

"What other officers are there, besides the Master?"

The Master (most organizations would call him the 'President') has two 'vice-presidents' assisting him, the Senior and Junior Wardens. Before a man can become the Master of a Lodge, he must have served as a Warden. There is a Secretary and a Treasurer, although smaller lodges may combine those two. The Tyler guards the door to the Lodge while it is in session. There are a

number of other officers, each with specific responsibilities, such as Deacons and Stewards, the Director of Ceremonies and an Inner Guard. Masons are fond of music in their ceremonies and there is often an Organist. There may be a Chaplain (who may or may not be an ordained clergyman) saying or leading non-denominational prayers during the meetings. There may be a number of other officers as well.

"What can you tell me about your oaths?"

Like much of Masonic ritual and practice, these vary between jurisdictions, but they all have some things in common, things like promises to treat all men fairly, to obey the laws of the land, to support fellow Masons when engaged in legal activities and to practice important virtues such as charity and prudence.

The oaths - or 'obligations' - in many places still include quite blood-chilling penalties for their violation. These are likely left over from the oaths of the original medieval operative lodges. Such punishments were legal and sadly common in the Middle Ages. The old penalties are retained as figurative reminder to the candidate of how he should feel if he breaks his promises. As it happens, the old penalties are specifically referred to as 'symbolic' in the ceremony. The most serious penalty Freemasonry can actually impose is expulsion.

"Is there nudity, hazing or abuse during the initiation ceremony?"

No.

"Isn't Freemasonry illegal in many places?"

Yes, in some places. It has certainly been persecuted by many dictatorships. Given that our order insists on behaviour which is moral rather than expedient and is centred on the belief in the worth of one's fellow man regardless of his politics or station, it's hardly surprising that fascism and communism in particular perceived Freemasonry as a threat. Our belief in tolerance and individual self-determination and our commitment to freedom of religion have also resulted in persecution in theocratic states.

In reality, Masonry poses no threat to government or church. No man need worry that joining would force him to compromise his religious or civic duties or beliefs.

"Did the Freemasons cause/lead/plan the French Revolution?"

Another tale comes up...

The French Revolution was a complex thing. It began at a time when France was burdened with an ineffective, debt-ridden and corrupt monarchy, a system that gave immense power and privileges to the nobility and the higher clergy and laid heavy burdens on peasants and merchants. Men had been arguing for years against this system. It was the subject of pamphlets, books and speeches. Some clubs and groups were formed specifically to fight for an end to it.

Some men of the time belonged to numerous clubs and it would be impossible for the Revolution to have happened without involving at least some of the many Masons in France at the time. Indeed, Freemasonry's central tenets of equality, free expression and liberty could not help but put it in conflict with the monarchy and its agents.

That said, there is simply no truth to the legend that Freemasonry as an organization planned or implemented it. Masons, as somebody has noted, plan picnics and BBQs – not always without difficulty.

Oh, one last point. Those stressing our involvement in the French revolution are generally doing so in an attempt to link Freemasonry to bloodshed, terror and the guillotine. They seem less concerned that the Revolution was an attempt to replace a decayed absolute monarchy with a representational democracy. Odd, that.

"Is it true that you have to be a Freemason to be elected President of the United States?"

That's another common rumour and one that a minute on the internet would show is incorrect. Only 14 of the 44 Presidents have been Masons. The last one was Gerald Ford, who served as President from 1974 to 1977.

"Is Masonry a charity?"

No. It's true that many Masonic groups sponsor specific charities. For instance, the Shriners - Freemasons all - fund 22 non-profit children's hospitals across North America. The Grand Lodge of Alberta's Higher Education Bursary Fund gave out \$200,000 in bursaries in 2011 (the only organization providing more support for higher education was the government itself). It's also true that individual Lodges provide quiet financial support to groups and individuals (most unrelated to Masons).



Shriner Fez

All that is so, but our first purpose is not charity. Charity is but one of the virtues we try to make part of ourselves.

While we're on the subject, while Masons are expected to deal favourably with fellow Masons, men are barred from joining in hopes of getting preferential treatment. It is felt that no man acting honestly needs special treatment to succeed.

"So I can't get a ticket fixed?"

Not a chance. Nor could you expect your fellow Masons to cover up crimes, commit perjury or help you escape justice if you have committed a crime. The oath we swear requires us to support each other, but only in lawful things; our civic duties are paramount. As a matter of fact, if we discover that one of our members has committed a serious crime, he's generally expelled in disgrace.

"What are some other Masonic teachings?"

Well, as a sample, we teach that faith must be the centre of our lives, with the Divine word as our guide. Moreover, as we are all children of God, all men and women are entitled to respect and fair treatment, regardless of their station, race, wealth, education, etc.

We teach that everybody is responsible for their own actions. Everybody must strive to be the best person possible ('best' in terms of virtue). That means a man needs to continually work at self-improvement.

We teach that everyone has the right to be free - free intellectually, politically and economically and free in terms of religion. Tyranny - political, racial, religious, economic or whatever - is always wrong.

We teach that the worth of a man doesn't lie in wealth, power or fame, but rather in terms of how he has helped his fellow human beings during his life's journey.

We teach that a Mason needs to continually work on improving himself. That means such things as being able to control his impulses, being benevolent, forgiving and, when needs be, steadfast in the face of adversity.

We teach that Masons must remain not only law-abiding, but both honest and fair. Integrity and morality lie at the foundation of the Craft.

"But there have been lots of Masons who didn't live up to those standards!"

Yes, sadly, that's true. As we noted earlier, men are inherently imperfect. We try to make men better but sometimes we fail. Sometimes the codes of conduct for other groups - doctors, firemen, judges, nurses, etc - fail, too. Acknowledging periodic failure, we keep trying.

"Who gets invited to join?"

Nobody.

No regular Freemason will ever invite or solicit another person to join, nor will any real Lodge or body run advertisements inviting people to join. Such offers are fraudulent and people claiming they refused an invitation to join are, um, not quite telling the truth...

To become a Mason, you need to take the first step yourself, which is to either ask one or to contact a Lodge or Grand Lodge.

"What are the requirements to become a Mason?"

In Alberta, you need to be a man who is 21 years of age or older, sound of mind and body, respectable and who believes in a Divine Being.

"What's involved in joining?"

Once he has approached us, a man goes through a fairly lengthy screening process. He will normally be contacted by a member of a local Lodge, followed later by a meeting with two or three other Masons. Later, provided everything goes well, the members of the Lodge in question will discuss his petition to join and vote on it.

A prospective Mason must be willing to make a commitment to Masonry, both financially (like most organizations, we charge annual membership dues) and in terms of time. Those commitments will be discussed with him before he is accepted.

Modern Freemasonry has three basic degrees taken from the old operative masons – Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft and Master Mason. As a man moves up through these degrees, he is presented with more knowledge, more explanations, more things to reflect on. (Here's one bit of

secrecy we certainly do practice. To keep the lessons presented during these ceremonies as meaningful and effective as possible, we prefer that they are seen for the first time at the right moment, in the proper setting. Hence, the program and lessons involved in degree work are not circulated.)

From there, Masonry branches out into many different groups or, as we call them, 'concordant bodies'. A Mason may or may not choose to get involved with them and none of them are centrally controlled or under each other's authority.

"Can a Mason quit?"

Of course. We have neither the power nor the wish to keep somebody against their will. All they need do is ask – no hardships, no penalties, no punishment.

"I see that all those 'famous Masons' you list are long dead. Who are the current ones?"

That's another aspect of our legendary 'secrecy'. We do not talk to non-Masons about our present members. It's a private thing. Nor will we coyly hint about great people who just might – nudge, nudge – be Freemasons. You can see who some previous Masons were and it's up to you to judge from there.

"Were Shakespeare and Francis Bacon Freemasons?"

Most unlikely. This rumour has been around a while, but look at when these two great men lived. Shakespeare died in 1616 and Bacon in 1626, but speculative Freemasonry really didn't get started in England until 60 or 70 years after that. (There is some evidence of outsiders joining operative or working lodges in Scotland in the first half of the 17th century, but there's no evidence either man even had the opportunity.)

"My uncle was a Freemason. Does that mean I can become one?"

Hopefully, but everyone is judged on their own merits. If you get in, it will be because you deserve it.

"My grandfather was a Freemason. Can I find out about him?"

Maybe, but probably not all that much; Masonry isn't really a genealogical group. If you know which Lodge he belonged to, you could contact that Lodge. They should be able to tell you when he joined, when he left or died – that sort of thing. If you don't know which Lodge he belonged to, you could try the Grand Lodge for the area in which he lived.

"My grandfather left some Masonic regalia when he died. How can I find out what they are?"

Probably the best way is to get in touch with a local Masonic Lodge. If they cannot help you themselves, they can certainly point you to somebody who can.

"So I don't have to be related to a Freemason to join?"

No.

"Do I need to be rich?"

No. We do insist that prospective members be gainfully employed and self-supporting, but our members include men in all income brackets.

"I'm (insert group here, eg. Jewish, Muslim, black, native, etc). Does that matter?"

Absolutely not. We in Zetland are proud to have members of different colours, birthplaces and religions. Provided they meet the basic requirements mentioned above, all men are welcome in Masonry.

"What goes on in a typical Masonic meeting?"

If you were looking for spooky conspiracies and blasphemous idolatry (both charges have been made against us), you'd be most disappointed.

The Master of the Lodge will call the meeting to order. Any visitors will be introduced. The Secretary will read any correspondence sent or received and there may be a discussion on that. There will generally be a discussion on Lodge business - expenditures, for instance, or voting on a prospective member. There may be a ceremony to induct a new member or advance a junior

Mason to a higher degree. There is often a lecture by either a visiting speaker or a member of the Lodge, with common topics being history, ongoing Masonic activities or research into some of the more obscure Masonic symbols and what moral lessons can be gained from them. When the night's business is finished, the Master will close the meeting. Commonly, a light meal will be served before or after the meeting.

There are, of course, other events of a sporting or social nature – family events, dinners, golf days, games or pub nights, for instance.

"How often do you meet?"

Zetland Lodge meets twice a month, but is closed in the summer.

"What does 'Zetland' mean?"

The word is actually an archaic form of 'Shetland' (as in the Shetland Islands in Northern Scotland). There are dozens of Zetland Lodges around the world today. The Masons who founded our Lodge in 1913 took the name of another Zetland Lodge in Toronto. A member of the British nobility, the Earl of Zetland, was at one time very prominent in British Freemasonry and it is likely that the name was first adopted in his honour.

"I heard some Masons end a prayer with the phrase, 'So mote it be.' What does that mean?"

This is another example of Masons clinging to very old terminology. The word *mote* is a form of the Old English word *mōtan*, which referred to permission. In context, the phrase means, 'May it be so permitted' or, in more modern terms, 'May it be so'.

The phrase is used in the same way as the more current word *Amen*, which comes from the Hebrew for 'let it truly be so'. In other words, *So mote it be* is essentially the same as *Amen* and is used for the same purpose, as a statement of affirmation.

Why do Freemasons still use such an archaic phrase? One explanation might be that the first written set of rules for the medieval English operative masons, the Regius Manuscript, contains a prayer ending with, "*Amen! amen! so mot hyt be!*" It is reasonable to assume that this phrase was being used by those early masons and passed to Freemasonry with the transformation to speculative masonry in the 1600s.

"How much time is involved?"

That's up to the individual, really. We believe that a man should first of all take care of himself and his family, if he has one. That means he needs to work. He needs to play with his children, worship in accordance with his own faith, be a good husband. He owes a duty to his nation, province, city and neighbours. Once all that is taken care of, a man can essentially spend as much time with the Craft as he wants to. One or two evenings a month is normal, but he can visit other Lodges in his area (there are several dozen within easy driving distance of Calgary). He can involve himself in concordant bodies within Masonry. A Mason can spend a lot of time at it, but family, citizenship and faith come first.

"What does it cost?"

The annual dues change with each year's budget, but let's say a few hundred dollars. There is also a one-time initiation fee to cover the cost of the new member's apron and so forth. We periodically 'pass the hat' for charity, but that's entirely voluntary.

If you have any other questions, please feel free to ask us.