

# The Masonic Legacy Society

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The Document



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

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Inspired by the Life of John E. Fetzer 33°

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# Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

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## Welcome to Further Light

Freemasonry is an initiatic society dedicated to the transformative work of improving oneself to be of greater service to Deity and humanity. The process of initiation, when undertaken with proper intention, leads to both a broadening and a deepening of awareness of reality, liberation from the chains of ignorance, and an artistic desire to humbly and wisely strengthen and beautify one's community. Even when only partially understood and applied, the lessons contained within Freemasonry are nothing short of revolutionary.

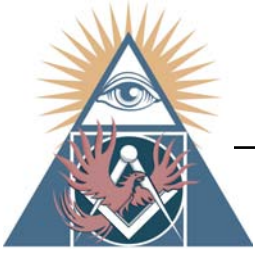
Masonic initiation is primarily concerned with one's personal growth. It takes place in the social setting of a Lodge, yet has its effect in the greater community. The Entered Apprentice (EA) Degree is the foundation of Masonic initiation. It is the beginning of learning about Silence and the Masonic Obligation and is the first step in the process of realizing one's Freedom and the "Mystic Tie" that binds Freemasons together as a sacred band of Brothers. The realization of this unity is essential to one achieving the *harmony* and *balance* which leads to a well-spent life: only through serving others is one truly able to find one's self. Therefore, understanding the wisdom of the EA Degree's ceremony enables one to deepen one's knowledge of this and all subsequent Degrees in Freemasonry.

In a digital age where the impact of our Fraternity is not as apparent as it was in decades long past, new inspiration is needed to reinvigorate our Craft with a sense of meaning and relevance. We, the Brothers of *The Masonic Legacy Society* (TMLS), provide within this document a suggested framework and process to facilitate such a Masonic Renaissance, with threefold intention:

1. To better enable Brothers to draw their own transformative knowledge from the deep well of Freemasonry, and not merely accept the interpretations of their predecessors;
2. To encourage Brothers to remain committed to Freemasonry, without directing them to traditions beyond the Craft; and
3. To reawaken the ability of Freemasonry to make profoundly meaningful differences in the world at large.

This document is freely distributed to all – Masons and curious non-Masons alike – with hope that those who read it will find it a useful tool for reflection, introspection, and personal application.

The Masonic Legacy Society  
December 27, 2019



# Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

## Section I: The Framework

### Exoteric and Esoteric

Every aspect of one's Masonic experience has both *exoteric* and *esoteric* dimensions.

The word *exoteric* comes from the Greek *exoterikos*, meaning “external.” Every aspect of the Ritual and its rich ceremonies has an external meaning – obviously stated as one hears it or sees it during the Ritual.

The word *esoteric*, on the other hand, comes from the Greek *esoterikos*, meaning “internal,” signifying that it is understood by the initiated. Every aspect of the Ritual and its rich ceremonies has layers of internal meaning that may only be discovered by efforts at deeper interpretation.

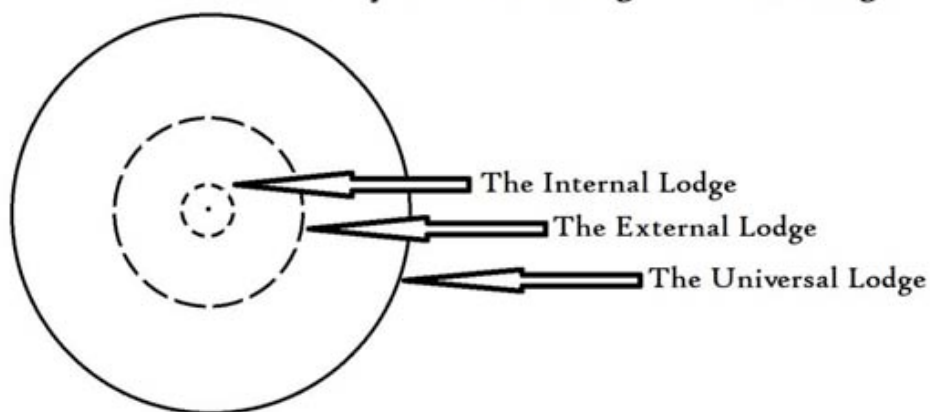
For example, the EA Degree ceremony includes the taking of an Obligation, which is a commitment to a fraternal bond, integrity, and the observance of silence; it is what makes one a Mason and is taken of one's own free will and accord. Furthermore, the Penalty is a reference to personal responsibility and the allegorical consequences of breaking said Obligation.

### Setting

These exoteric and esoteric teachings rely on setting as well as syntax to deliver their message. The work of Masonic initiation takes place in three dimensions or specific spaces:

1. The “Internal Lodge” - the *inner temple* that one is called upon to build within one's self
2. The “External Lodge” - a consecrated space where Brethren gather to engage in internal and external work in pursuit of Light
3. The “Universal Lodge” - the greater community, the world, and ultimately the universe

Three Layers of Meaning for "The Lodge"





# Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

## Section I: The Framework (*cont.*)

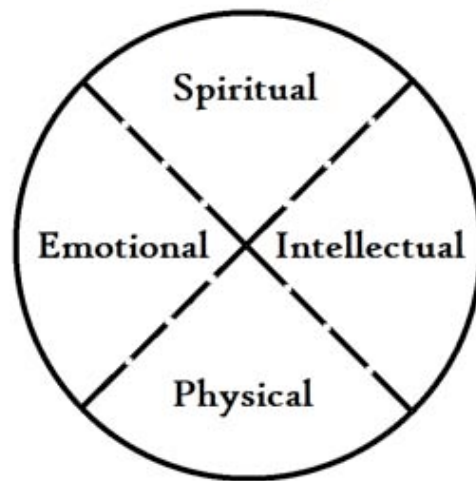
Through the reception of our Ritual in the External Lodge, an amazing transformation takes place across the three Lodges through the “Mystic Tie” that binds them. The Ritual of the Lodge is a system of ceremonies that facilitate a collective contemplative experience designed to activate deeper and broader consciousness. This Ritual takes place within the External Lodge, and in due time, is mirrored within each Brother’s Internal Lodge. Through subsequent application of the teachings contained within the Ritual in one’s day-to-day life, one affects the world (the Universal Lodge) in new, beautiful, and meaningful ways.

### GUIDELINES

The following guidelines and questions might prove useful when contemplating an aspect of the Ritual.

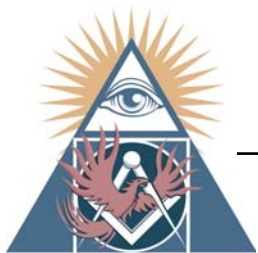
**GUIDELINE I:** When contemplating an aspect of the Ritual, think about it in terms of the four elements or aspects of our being – spiritually, intellectually, emotionally, and physically.

#### The Four Elements or Aspects of Our Being



**GUIDELINE II:** Consider how each aspect relates to (a) your Internal Lodge, (b) the sacred space of the External Lodge and the Brethren gathered there, and (c) the Universal Lodge (community/world).

What dynamic relationships of this aspect exist between the three Lodges? How might this prove useful? What guidance does this provide moving forward (as an individual, among Lodge members, and within the greater community)?



# Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

## Section 2: The Process

The following exercises are an introduction to meaningful contemplation and may thus be considered a doorway of understanding. Keep in mind that these exercises are not a test in the traditional sense. Their contemplation is a truly personal process that, should one choose to undertake it, will span one's entire life.

One may find that answering a question leads to yet more questions. Also, one may find that one's answers change as one evolves. Moreover, one may discover that some answers may not be easily expressed with words. These results are entirely normal.

With the guidelines of the Framework in mind, choose an aspect of Ritual, and then, as if to Tile and Open your Inner Lodge, contemplate with the following steps:

1. Still yourself by sitting or lying down, relaxing, breathing peacefully, and being quiet.
2. Invoke the aid of Deity in whatever way is meaningful to you.
3. Wait in silence for a while, simply focusing on your selected aspect of Ritual, giving your heart and mind an opportunity to intuitively respond.
4. When you are ready, apply the following questions within the context of each of the three Lodges:
  - *What* meaningful applications does this (Ritual, sign, symbol, etc.) have?
  - *How* did it apply, or what meaning did it have when I first became a Freemason?
  - *How* does it apply, or what meaning does it have as I look to my next stage of life?
  - *What* inner guidance am I receiving now, or what is being asked of me in my continued learning as a Freemason?
  - *How* can I bring key elements of my Masonic education into the greater community?

These questions are a starting point for contemplative inquiry and may be expanded into further questions as illustrated in the examples the next section. Developing and considering such questions is a vital skill in this work.

Along your journey, you may find that it is useful to supplant your personal knowledge with that of other seekers. Bear in mind, however, that one's own insights, no matter how significant they may seem, do not necessarily translate into either (a) secret or hidden meanings consciously intended by the originating ritualists, or (b) meanings that others should find equally significant for themselves. Each must find one's own meaning.

*Accept not knowing. Be curious. Embrace mystery.*



# Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

## Section 3: Examples of Applications

Consider the following questions regarding the phrase “...of my own Free Will and Accord...” within the contexts of the Internal, External, and Universal Lodges:

- Why are these words pronounced?
- Who is affected by them?
- What effect do they have?
- Where were they pronounced during the various stages of your initiation?
- How do I use them to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry?
- When do I find myself acting “of my own free will and accord?”

The essence of the Lodge is fully described in the Entered Apprentice Degree, including the Form, Supports, Covering, Furniture, Ornaments, Working Tools, Lights, and Jewels of a Lodge, how it is situated, and to whom dedicated. Consider what meanings these symbols, singly and collectively, hold for you.

Other aspects to reflect upon individually and collectively are the Trestle Board, Rough and Perfect Ashlars, Pillars, Mosaic Pavement, Square, Compasses, the Square/Compass placed on the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Plumb, the Level, Apron, Sun, Moon, Blazing Star, Canopy of Heaven, Saints John, Point Within the Circle, Jacob's Ladder, Due Guards, Penal Signs, Cable-Tow, Blindfold, Sharp Instrument, Divestiture, Circumambulation, etc.

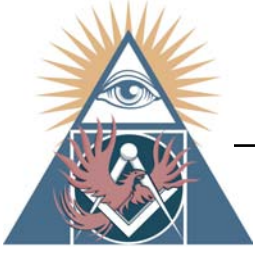
Likewise, consider questions regarding the essential elements of the Masonic ceremonies, such as Opening, Closing, Initiation, Passing, Raising, Receiving, Consecrating, Installation, Electing, Investigating, Balloting, and Trial. For example:

### Tiling

- Why is the Lodge Tiled?
- Who is affected by the Tiling?
- What tools are used to Tile, and what effect does each tool have on the Tiling?
- Where does the Tiling take place?
- How do I Tile to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry?
- When do I find myself Tiled?

### Opening and Closing

- Why is the Lodge Opened and Closed?
- Who is affected by the Opening and Closing?
- What are the “pillars” in the Opening and Closing, and what effect do they have individually and collectively?
- Where does the Opening and Closing take place?
- How do I Open and Close to subdue my passions and improve myself in Masonry?
- When do I find myself Opened? When do I find myself Closed?



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## Appendix: Suggested Reading

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but you may find it useful in your studies.

- **Mackey's *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry***  
An Encyclopedia of Freemasonry and Its Kindred Sciences Comprising The whole range of arts, sciences and literature as connected with the institution by Albert G. Mackey, M.D., 33°.
- ***Masonic Initiation* by Walter Leslie Wilmshurst**  
The Masonic Initiation is the powerful sequel to W. L. Wilmshurst's other enduring classic, *The Meaning of Masonry*. Here, we find the author's most advanced expression as he explores the profound depths of Masonic ritual as a contemplative art, and offers his vision of the future of the Order.
- ***Signs and Symbols* by Allen Roberts**  
Symbolism is the life-blood of the craft and is what distinguishes Free Masonry from other Fraternal Organizations.
- ***Contemplative Masonry: Basic Applications of Mindfulness, Meditation, and Imagery for the Craft* by Chuck Dunning**  
Brother Dunning provides Freemasons with a unique system of practices derived directly from the Degrees of Craft Masonry, without reliance upon other religious, spiritual, or esoteric traditions.
- ***Freemasons for Dummies* by Chris Hodapp**  
*Freemasons For Dummies* is the internationally bestselling introduction to the Masons, the oldest and largest "secret society" in the world. This balanced, eye-opening guide demystifies Freemasonry, explaining everything from its elaborate rituals and cryptic rites, to its curious symbols and their meanings.
- ***The Builders* by Joseph Fort Newton**  
An outstanding classic in Masonic literature offering the early history of Freemasonry and an exposition of the faith of Masonry.
- ***The Initiatic Experience* by Robert Herd**  
Freemasonry is an Initiatic Order teaching lessons of philosophy, morality, psychology, and spirituality. It contains elements of perennial wisdom, much of which has been handed down to it by other orders and cultures throughout the history of civilization.
- ***The Newly Made Mason* by H.L. Haywood**  
Haywood gives a good, brief history of Freemasonry and then takes us from the petition to Freemasonry's place in the world.

Always remember that the meaning that you find in your heart is more important than any meaning found in mind, whether yours or another's.