

The Masonic Legacy Society

The Guide



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Facilitation Guide



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

A Facilitation Guide

Table of Contents

Page

Section I: Purpose of Guide

3

Section 2: Self-Guidance Mode

5

**Section 3: Group-Facilitation
Guidance Mode**

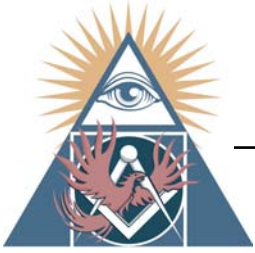
7

**Section IV: Training Aspiring
Facilitators Guidance Mode**

18

Section V: Supporting Documents

20



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section I: Purpose of Guide

This guide is designed to help one make better use of *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* in three different modes:

Self-Guidance Mode

Your personal commitment to your own adventure of seeking and applying Masonic Light is a demonstration of integrity. This mode is designed to assist you in that endeavor as you develop your individual practice and routine within the privacy of your own chosen space.

Group-Facilitation Guidance Mode

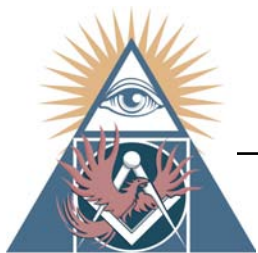
If you are considering becoming a facilitator for *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*, it suggests a number of positive things about you. Firstly, it definitely speaks to your appreciation of the personal value provided by the document. Secondly, it reveals your love of our Craft and other human beings. These two qualities describe the bedrock upon which you should lay the foundation of your work as a facilitator. Your personal commitment to your own Masonic journey and quest for More Light provides you with ever-developing practical insight about how to assist others in doing likewise. Furthermore, your deep care and concern for others keeps your heart and mind focused on serving their best interests. This mode elucidates many important details about how you can effectively perform that service.

Training Facilitators Guidance Mode

If you are interested in training Masons desirous of becoming facilitators of *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* within their respective circles, this mode provides additional tools and guidance for what is described in the Group-Facilitation Training Mode.

Supporting Documents

The last section of this guide provides supporting guidance materials that you may find quite useful to *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*.



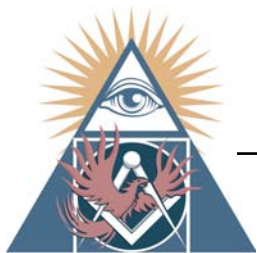
Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section I: Purpose of Guide

NOTE: As we were developing this Guide, there were many discussions amongst the Brethren as to which was the best approach—provide a clear structure for facilitating *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* or leave it somewhat open-ended thereby allowing Facilitators the freedom to do as they felt most strongly. While the latter approach has value in certain settings and may be followed in some instances, it seems providing a clear structure at the outset for Facilitators aiding participants in approaching, appreciating, and moving within their Internal Lodge in a clear and directed manner is indeed most prudent.

Not unlike many meditative modalities with long traditions and history and, in some cases, considerable peer-reviewed research (Zen, Mindfulness, Transcendental Meditation®, etc.) and months-long in-residence training courses to both understand the associated Tradition and the structure for facilitating a successful experience for those seeking to learn said technique effectively, the benefits of providing an unmistakable structure for *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* becomes evident. In short, consider viewing this Guide with its attendant structure and examples as a toolbox from which may be drawn the needed tool of the moment. Possessing all of the tools within said toolbox does not mean each will be used in every instance; merely, that the needed tool is available should an occasion warrant its use. Therefore, in providing structure for Facilitators to draw upon allows each to be in a position to bring significant educative value to participants. Not to mention the value which may be derived by those undertaking the Guide as a self-study mechanism alone.

This approach, we believe, is essential in aiding Brethren in embracing this modality, not merely for the short-term, but successfully folding it into their lives for the long-term in service to their communities and all social spheres within which they travel.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section II: Self-Guidance Mode

Attendance of meetings/communications of your Lodge (External Lodge) and participation, whether active or passive, in Lodge ceremonies and educational programs are essential to your capacity to draw more knowledge from the well of Freemasonry, to recharge your energy with faith and hope, and to contribute to building the sacred band of brotherhood with your fellow Masons.

However, given that most of your time will not be spent in the External Lodge, you will find *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* most useful to your individual study and contemplations in the direction of transforming yourself from a *rough ashlar* to a *smooth/polished ashlar* and thereby building your Internal Lodge.

Below is a suggested 7-step template which may serve as a guide for your individual use:

1. Use the 24-inch Gauge Tool

Carve out time for your Masonic self-improvement on a regular basis in your daily and/or weekly routine.

2. Tile Yourself from “Without”

Select the private space within which you would apply the practice without interference from the world of the profane and its preoccupations.

3. Tile Yourself from “Within”

Put yourself in a state of *internal silence* to make you more receptive to the transmission of Masonic Light. Follow these useful steps:

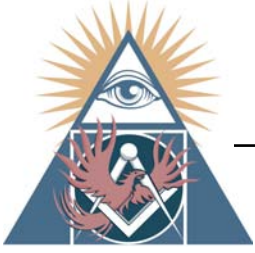
- a) Still yourself by sitting or lying down, relaxing, breathing peacefully, and being quiet.
- b) Invoke the aid of Deity in whatever way is meaningful to you.
- c) Wait in silence for a while, simply focusing on your selected aspect of Ritual, giving your heart and mind an opportunity to intuitively respond. As you meditate in silence, you may find that a response from the heart may differ from the one from your mind. As responses from the heart and mind become aligned and in harmony with one another, Masonic Intuition develops within one's self.

4. Meditate on Selected Aspect of Ritual

When you are ready, apply the following questions to the selected aspect of Ritual within the context of your Internal Lodge:

What meaningful applications does this (Ritual, sign, symbol, etc.) have?

- a) How did it apply, or what meaning did it have when I first became a Freemason?
- b) How does it apply, or what meaning does it have as I look to my next stage of life?
- c) What inner guidance am I receiving now, or what is being asked of me in my continued learning as a Freemason?



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section I: Self-Guidance Mode (cont.)

5. Identify Areas for Improvement in Your Internal Lodge

Having meditated on the deeper meanings of an aspect of Ritual and its potential applications to improve yourself within your Internal Lodge, meditate truthfully on your shortcomings or weaknesses in applying it to the building of your Internal Lodge. For example, since *beauty* is one of the three pillars of one's Internal Lodge, meditate by raising questions:

- a) Are my thoughts, words, and deeds truly aligned with the pillar of beauty?
- b) Why are some of thoughts, words, and deeds not truly aligned with the pillar of beauty?
- c) Document your findings and internal explanations

6. Draw Your Internal Lodge “Tracing Board”

Having identified your areas of improvement pertaining to your applications of an aspect of Ritual, the next step is to design your own *tracing board*. The internal tracing board is the architectural design that you draw to transform yourself through Masonry from a rough ashlar to a smooth/polished one using the various tools, implements, and symbols of the Craft. In other words, it is your action plan for *improving yourself in Masonry*. For example, if an area of improvement in applying the deeper meanings of the pillar of beauty to one's thoughts, words, or deeds, has to do with *keeping one's passions within due bounds*, one meditates on questions like these:

- a) What would it look like if I were to more effectively manage my passions?
- b) What are some concrete ways that would make my life better?”
- c) How do I go about doing it?

Your next step would be to develop your own *SMART* (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Time-bound) objectives to overcome that shortcoming and transform that weakness into strength.

7. Track Your Self-Improvement in Masonry

Document your progress on a regular basis and meditate truthfully on your progress report.

NOTE: Once your work on your Internal Lodge is undertaken, repeat the same 7-step process in the context of the other two Lodges (External and Universal).



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group-Facilitation Guidance Mode

If you are considering becoming a Facilitator for the *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* this mode elucidates many important details about how you can effectively perform that service. It describes the fundamental nature of facilitation, the essential skills, and the considerations for working with different audiences; it also provides a general outline for workshops and presentations, as well as a guided meditation script.

A. A Facilitator's Charge

As a facilitator, one's primary charge is to provide individuals and groups with experiential opportunities to engage the framework and process of *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*. While it is sometimes necessary to give instruction about the background and contents of that document, a facilitator's role is not to lecture about Masonic symbolism, philosophy, or history. A facilitator welcomes and encourages others' curiosity and, whenever possible, assists them with embracing the Mysteries of Masonry by conducting contemplative experiments. A facilitator thus helps others understand, enjoy, and refine a way of discovering their inner Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty, thereby freely forming their own insights about the symbols and information provided by the Ritual.

B. Essential Skills

In order to serve as effectively as possible, facilitators are committed to building and employing the following skills: welcoming, guiding meditation, active listening, and time management.

a. Welcoming

Whether assisting an individual or a group, facilitators nurture an atmosphere in which others feel welcome to share their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experiences. They also prompt consideration of the meanings and applications across the Three Lodges – Internal, External, and Universal. Understanding that what seems simple or obvious to one person may be a profound revelation to another, facilitators consistently communicate their respect and gratitude for others' insights and questions. In group discussions, facilitators invite input from those who are less outspoken, and they encourage everyone to speak directly with each other rather than limit discussion to a series of exchanges with the facilitator.

b. Guiding Meditation

As conspicuously noted at the very end of the *Practicing the Art of our Mysteries* document, it most highly values the meanings found in the heart. In that sense, the heart should not be misunderstood as referring only to the emotions. Instead, it is the deep core of who and what we are; it is the quiet Sanctum Sanctorum of the Internal Lodge where we are most open to communing with the Light that is our Mystic Tie with Deity, our Brethren, and others. The mind then responds to the ineffable promptings that arise from the heart, forming insights and questions that can help unfold greater Wisdom, Strength, and Beauty in one's life.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode *(cont.)*

Guiding others through this part of the process is a facilitator's most specialized skill. One should therefore strive to become adept with the four steps of Tiling and Opening the Internal Lodge:

1. Stilling ourselves, relaxing, breathing peacefully, and being quiet
2. Invoking the aid of Deity
3. Waiting in silence for the heart and mind to intuitively respond
4. Quietly exploring questions about the focal point of contemplation

To be optimally effective with these steps, facilitators carefully adjust the volume, tone, and speed with which they speak. Slow, steady, soothing speech naturally assists others in becoming still, relaxed, peaceful, and quiet. A script of specific instructions through these steps is offered at the end of this document. While using the script with beginners gives consistency across facilitators, practitioners with greater experience may benefit when facilitators use other instructions capable of achieving the same ends. In any case, facilitators must have enough familiarity and practice with their instructions that the words flow smoothly with clear and proper pronunciation.

c. Active Listening

In periods of discussion, facilitators listen carefully because they understand that clearly hearing and comprehending others is more important than thinking about what to say. Facilitators likewise avoid making assumptions, and they freely ask for clarification and elaboration. They also know that deeper meanings of things are often revealed through feelings, and so they empathically listen for emotional words and tones of voice, and they look for non-verbal cues such as facial expressions and other body movements. As active listeners, facilitators paraphrase and summarize what they believe to be others thoughts and feelings, and invite either confirmation or amendment of their understandings. When working with groups, facilitators attend to everyone, and they highlight the similarities and distinctions between things voiced by different participants.

d. Time Management

Facilitators attend to time in order to permit a reasonable flow through the various steps and phases of the experiences they provide. With either groups or individuals, facilitators ensure that everyone is informed of any time constraints, and encourage others to be aware of time and to help ensure its efficient use. For example, time spent for instruction and discussion should not be allowed to overrun time allotted for silent contemplation. Likewise, during group discussions, facilitators tactfully intervene as needed to ensure that more outspoken individuals do not monopolize the time and prevent others from being heard.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode (cont.)

C. Audience Considerations

Facilitators should be prepared to employ their skills in ways befitting each of the three basic audiences:

- **The Curious:** Masons and/or non-Masons with an initial interest in *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*
- **Beginners:** Masons ready to actually engage the process for the first time
- **Practitioners:** Masons already practicing the process

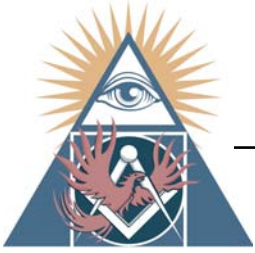
Before examining specific considerations for each audience, it should be noted that groups may often be composed of members from more than one audience. Facilitators must therefore ascertain the predominant type of audience present in a particular group. While that assessment determines the primary goals and objectives for the group as a whole, the facilitator should also make adjustments to serve members of the group from other audiences. For example, experienced practitioners may not need explanation of the framework and process in *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*, but if there are also persons present who are beginners or merely curious, then the facilitator should give adequate time to such explanations.

a. The Curious

Some people will only want more information about *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*. Facilitators may encounter this audience in spontaneous casual conversations with either individuals or groups, but should also be ready to provide formal presentations. The primary interests of this audience are likely to be about becoming familiar with the document's contents, how it came to be written, who was involved, and what motivated them. Facilitators should therefore be well informed on all these matters. Members of this audience may also be entirely unfamiliar with contemplative practice or its relevance to Masonry, yet inquisitive about how they might personally benefit from it. Facilitators should therefore be prepared to note the many different ways contemplative practice is explicitly and implicitly urged by the Ritual. Relatable anecdotes about the experiences of others and oneself can also prove very helpful. Finally, some members of this audience may wish to have a brief experiential introduction to the process, and facilitators should therefore offer that option while avoiding forcing it on anyone.

b. Beginners

While everyone is welcome to teach themselves the framework and process of *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*, facilitators can provide significant assistance. Because of their greater familiarity and experience, facilitators respond to questions, offering clarifications and speaking in greater depth and detail about the ideas and methods presented in that document. They may also help dispel myths and misunderstandings about the esoteric and about contemplative practice. Facilitators reassure beginners of their freedom to seek their own insights, ask probing questions, form interpretations, and develop personally meaningful applications. Most importantly, learning the four steps of Tiling and Opening the Internal Lodge can be greatly enhanced by facilitators. With their guidance, beginners can focus on more directly engaging the desired shifts in consciousness, freed from distractions with recalling the steps or wondering if they have given each sufficient time and attention.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode *(cont.)*

c. Practitioners

Individuals or groups already using the process require less instruction. Facilitators may therefore serve these Brothers with structured opportunities for longer periods of deep contemplation and discussion. Furthermore, facilitators may give even more time to listening as practitioners reflect on their contemplative experience, and then offer positive feedback and suggestions for improvement. Facilitators should also reemphasize the importance of putting insights into practical application, and encourage practitioners to more widely share the benefits of their contemplative activities.

d. General Outline for Workshops and Presentations

The following outline is adaptable to working with groups or individuals of most audiences, but has been designed with beginners' groups in mind in order to provide the most comprehensive checklist of elements and activities. It provides sufficient detail to assist facilitators with little to no experience organizing such events. After deciding on any adjustments, begin clarifying who is responsible for each element. Under supervision, aspiring facilitators should be used in different capacities as part of their training.

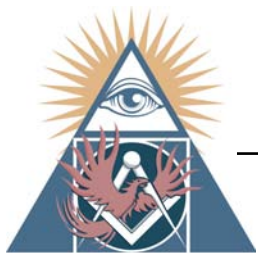
I. Preparations

a. Personnel

- i. Audience – Who and how many will be in attendance?
- ii. Facilitators – With optimal groups having 6-10 members per facilitator, how many facilitators are needed, how are they recruited, and how are they communicated with? (When presenting to a group of the Curious, only one facilitator should be necessary with even the largest group.)
- iii. Assistants – How might the workshop benefit from having people specifically assigned to manage logistical matters? How many could be used, and what specific roles would they take? How is their recruitment, management, and communication to be handled?
- iv. Others – Who are the contact people for the venue and any other services that may be arranged?

b. Venue

- i. Suitability – How clean and pleasant is the workshop space? How secure is it from intrusions and other distractions while also permitting attendees the freedom to come and go for restroom breaks?
- ii. Seating – How conducive is the seating to sitting still in silent contemplation? How easily can seating be rearranged for different types of activities?
- iii. Scheduling – What reservations need to be made and how far in advance? What schedule conflicts can be foreseen and avoided?
- iv. Audio/Visual – What audio/visual equipment is available or needed?



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode (cont.)

c. Materials

- i. Hardcopy – What handouts are needed? When and how should they be distributed?
 - ii. Audio/Visual – What electronic media is needed?
 - iii. Food and Drink – If provided, what is included and when and how is it served?
- b. Invitations – How are prospective participants invited, registered, and kept informed?
- c. Pre-Workshop Survey – Relevant to the workshop's specific objectives, how helpful might it be to assess participants' knowledge and experience or their expectations of the workshop? If a survey is to be conducted, when and how is it administered and the results processed? (This step is not advised for a group of the Curious.)
- d. Financial – What if any expenses are necessary for the workshop, and what are the options for funding? What is the process for acquiring funds and accounting for expenses?

2. Workshop Activities

a. Check-In

What process is used to record participants' attendance? If it is used, when and where does it occur? What workshop materials are delivered at check-in?

b. Opening

- i. Welcome – Be sure to thank and praise the group for their interest in seeking More Light. Lead the group in silencing cell phones and eliminating other similar distractions.
- ii. Invocation
- iii. Introductions – Facilitators, assistants, and attendees should introduce themselves, report their personal interests or involvement with the framework and process of *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*, and share at least one personal goal for the workshop.
- iv. Explain Programmatic Goals – Briefly state the general goals as well as audience-specific objective for the workshop.
- v. Review Materials – Distribute any materials not provided at check-in. Familiarize participants with the materials so they can more easily follow any references made to them during the workshop.
- vi. Establish Guidelines – Explain the importance of welcoming each other to be their authentic selves, freely sharing their own physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experiences, insights, and questions. State that speaking specifically in terms of one's own spiritual or religious beliefs and practices is entirely appropriate. Consider engaging practitioners in generating ideas about guidelines that can support those aims and maintain peace and harmony in the group. It may also be helpful to record and post these ideas for all to see throughout the workshop. (This step is not necessary for presenting to a group of the Curious.)



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode *(cont.)*

c. *Present Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries*

Without relying too heavily on the actual words of the text, work through each of these topics, welcoming any questions for further clarity. (Covering this section in depth should be unnecessary with a Practitioners audience, yet some review may prove beneficial. This section is the backbone of presentations to the Curious.)

i. What is the document's philosophy about the functions and purposes of Freemasonry?

Address each of these points:

1. Initiation and the work of transforming self
2. Service to Deity and humanity
3. Importance of engaging freedom
4. Essence of the obligation and its allegorical penalties
5. Importance of practicing silence
6. The Mystic Tie and realizing unity – The important effects of understanding that human beings are interconnected with Deity and each other.
7. Value of achieving harmony and balance

ii. What is the document's purpose? Providing a framework and process for reinvigorating the Craft and aiding the Masonic Renaissance.

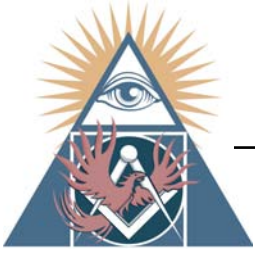
iii. What are the intentions that shaped the document?

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.

iv. Who are the Brothers of the Masonic Legacy Society?

v. What is the framework?

1. Meaning of *exoteric* and *esoteric*
2. Three interconnecting dimensions, spaces, or layers of The Lodge
 - a. The Internal Lodge – regarding oneself as a Masonic temple
 - b. The External Lodge – the sacred space of the Lodge room as well as the brethren who meet there
 - c. The Universal Lodge – one's greater community and beyond into the whole of humanity and creation



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode (cont.)

3. Guidelines for contemplation on a particular aspect of the Ritual
 - a. Consider its possible relevance to all four elements or aspects of being
 - i. Physical – our bodies and their actions
 - ii. Emotional – our feelings, sentiments, desires, and passions
 - iii. Intellectual – our thoughts, memories, and imaginings
 - iv. Spiritual – our intuitions, inspirations, and creative energy
 - b. Integrate the relevance of the four aspects with the Three Lodges by considering how they interact with each other within ourselves and in our various relationships with others.

vi. What is the process?

1. A personal experience, with freedom to follow one's speculations and contemplations wherever they may lead.
2. A contemplative embrace of mystery, curiosity, and inquisitiveness.
3. A valuing of questions, how they can lead to further questions, how our answers can change over time, and how our answers can sometimes elude our ability to fully express them in words.
4. After selecting an aspect of Ritual, the process is engaged with in four essential steps:
 - a. Still yourself by sitting or lying down, relaxing, breathing peacefully, and being quiet
 - b. Invoke the aid of Deity in whatever way is meaningful to you.
 - c. Wait in silence for a while, simply focusing on your selected aspect of Ritual, giving your heart and mind an opportunity to intuitively respond.
 - d. When you are ready, apply the following questions within the context of each of the three Lodges (note the emphasis on application, finding ways to make our insights actually useful):
 - i. What meaningful applications does this aspect of Ritual have?
 - ii. How did it apply, or what meaning did it have when I first became a Freemason?
 - iii. How does it apply, or what meaning does it have as I look to my next stage of life?
 - iv. What inner guidance am I receiving now, or what is being asked of me in my continued learning as a Freemason?
 - v. How can I bring key elements of my Masonic education into the greater community?
 - e. Make use of other questions from "Section 3: Examples of Application."

d. Facilitate the Process

This section can be repeated with a different focus each time. Consider taking breaks between repetitions. (With an audience of the Curious, this and following sections may be replaced with a question and answer period about the *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* document and the Masonic Legacy Society.)



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode (*cont.*)

- i. Specify the Focus – For a Beginners audience, “of my own Free Will and Accord” is the standard first focus. In any case, encourage the group to memorize the words or develop a clear image for use during the meditation.
- ii. Meditation – For a Beginners audience, the script at the end of this document is highly recommended.

e. **Contemplative Dialogue**

After a sufficient time for silent contemplation, divide into small groups as needed. Welcome group members to share any experiences, insights, or questions that arose for them. Remember to use all the welcoming, listening, and time management skills explained above. Revisit the five basic questions of the process as needed. Wrap up the dialogue by asking group members to each share one way they might begin actually applying the Light they have just received.

f. **Participants Debrief**

When the contemplative dialogue has ended, ask participants to remember their personal goals for the workshop and review their experience. Useful questions are:

- i. What went well?
- ii. What was most helpful?
- iii. What was challenging?
- iv. How might this workshop have been better?

g. **Closing**

Be sure to thank everyone for their participation, encourage them to continue making use of the framework and process, and invite them to inquire about future workshop possibilities. What if any workshop materials are collected at closing? Consider including a benediction.

h. **Post-Workshop Survey**

Relevant to the workshop’s specific objectives and any pre-workshop survey, how helpful might it be to assess any changes in participants’ knowledge and experience or collect their evaluations of the workshop? If a survey is to be conducted, when and how is it administered and the results processed?

i. **Check-Out**

What if any process is used to record participants’ completion of the workshop? If it is used, when and where does it occur? What if any workshop materials are collected at check-out?

3. **Facilitators and Assistants Debrief**

As soon as possible after the workshop, gather or contact facilitators and assistants to respond to these questions:

- a. What went well?
- b. What was most helpful?
- c. What was challenging?
- d. How might this workshop have been better?



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode (cont.)

E. Guided Meditation Script

Instructions for the facilitator are in italics. Everything else should be spoken aloud slowly, steadily, and with a soothing tone. Line breaks indicate short pauses. Thorough familiarity and practice with this script should be accomplished prior to actually using it with a group or an individual.

We are about to begin the process of stilling ourselves, relaxing, breathing peacefully, and sitting quietly, so please take a position in which you can be comfortable without moving for the next several minutes. Unless you practice some sort of meditation posture on the floor, it is recommended that you have your feet on the floor and do not cross your legs. Likewise, you may place your hands in any position you wish, and it is comfortable for most people to simply rest them on their thighs. You are welcome to close your eyes now, but if you prefer not to do so then you may simply allow them to gaze at some particular point in front of you.

Pause for a moment to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to become settled.

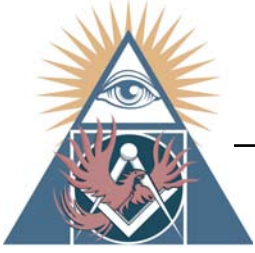
Begin to relax and become more centered by feeling the Earth's gravity pulling down on your body. Feel the gravity pulling your feet against the floor. Feel it pulling down through the muscles in your legs, and pulling you into your seat. You might notice some unnecessary tension in those muscles, tension you don't need to keep you sitting in a healthy posture. If so, release that tension and allow gravity to pull you into a deeper state of calm, peaceful relaxation.

Feel the gravity pulling down through the muscles in your belly and lower back. You might notice some unnecessary tension in those muscles, tension you don't need to keep you sitting in a healthy posture. If so, release that tension and allow gravity to pull you into a deeper state of calm, peaceful relaxation.

Feel the gravity pulling down through the muscles in your chest, upper back, and shoulders. You might notice some unnecessary tension in those muscles, tension you don't need to keep you sitting in a healthy posture. If so, release that tension and allow gravity to pull you into a deeper state of calm, peaceful relaxation.

Feel the gravity pulling down through the muscles in your upper arms, forearms, and hands. You might notice some unnecessary tension in those muscles, tension you don't need to keep you sitting in a healthy posture. If so, release that tension and allow gravity to pull you into a deeper state of calm, peaceful relaxation.

Feel the gravity pulling down through the muscles in your neck, your jaw and tongue, around your mouth, in your cheeks, around your eyes, and in your brow and scalp. You might notice some unnecessary tension in those muscles, tension you don't need to keep you sitting in a healthy posture. If so, release that tension and allow gravity to pull you into a deeper state of calm, peaceful relaxation.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode *(cont.)*

Now turn your attention to your breath, flowing in and out in its own peaceful, natural rhythm. You simply allow your body to breathe without directing it in any way, and with each breath you can feel yourself becoming more relaxed and centered.

You can increase your focus on the breath by mentally repeating the words *in* as you inhale and *out* as you exhale. With each breath you can feel yourself becoming more relaxed and centered.

Repeat the words in and out a couple of times, stretching out their sounds to approximate the duration of inhaling and exhaling. Pause for several breaths before continuing.

Now let go of the words and the focus on your breath to simply notice the quieter space within.

In the Sanctum Sanctorum within the Internal Lodge of your own being, you are now welcome to silently invoke the aid of Deity in whatever way is meaningful to you.

Pause long enough for a silent prayer.

Attend to the following words of scripture from the Entered Apprentice Ritual. “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.”

Imagine yourself as that deep, dark, void.

“And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and God said, ‘Let there be Light,’ and there was Light.”

Imagine that divine Light shining down from the heavens into you. Try to see and feel its rays penetrating the top of your head and radiating down through your brain and neck into your heart. Take a moment to more fully experience your communion with the Light.

Pause for a few breaths.

Recall *(state the words and/or image for the chosen aspect of the Ritual)* as our focus for this contemplation. Simply hold it in the center of your attention in the sacred space within. Thoughts and feelings may arise about it, but let them go and gently redirect yourself to quietly and peacefully holding the focus on *(state the word and/or image for the chosen aspect of the Ritual)*. You might also become momentarily distracted by some sense perception or lose focus for some other reason. In any case, it is good practice to gently redirect yourself to quietly and peacefully holding the focus on *(state the word and/or image for the chosen aspect of the Ritual)*. I will be a silent for a while so that you can sink more deeply into quiet and peaceful focus on *(state the words and/or image for the chosen aspect of the Ritual)*.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section III: Group Facilitation Mode *(cont.)*

Pause for several breaths.

Now recall your body, sitting here in this room. Feel the temperature of the air. Hear what you hear. Smell what you smell. Taste what you taste and, when you are ready, open your eyes to see what you see, and feel free to stretch and move.

Pause long enough for everyone to come out of the meditation.

Begin actively speculating on (*state the words and/or image for the chosen aspect of the Ritual*). You are welcome to make notes as you freely consider any possibilities or questions that come to mind, analyzing, connecting, and structuring them in whatever way seems fitting. As you do so, also consider these five questions:

- What meaningful applications does this aspect of Ritual 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?

You are also welcome to make use of questions from “Section 3: Examples of Application.”

After taking some time to collect your thoughts, we will join together in dialogue about our experiences, insights, questions, and possible applications.

Pause for a few minutes before inviting the group to begin a contemplative dialogue.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section IV: Training Aspiring Facilitators Guidance Mode

Some practitioners become genuinely committed to contemplative work and enthusiastic about the prospect of helping others learn what it is and how to do it.

Recognizing, mentoring, and training such brethren can be most joyous. It is also a solemn duty that entails responsibilities to help them develop the attitudes and skills most conducive to good facilitation. Aspiring facilitators are therefore expected to satisfactorily complete training under the tutelage of their more experienced Brethren. In doing so, they should become thoroughly familiar with this guide, study the performance of other facilitators, and actually demonstrate their own competence with the essential skills explained above.

Aspiring facilitators must be given supervised opportunities to guide others through meditation and contemplative dialogue. In their obligation to ethically serve the best interests of aspiring facilitators and the people they may eventually serve, facilitators acting as trainers should take it as their obligation to ensure all these expectations are fulfilled.

In addition to using the Group-Facilitation Guidance Mode (Section III of this Guide), below are additional important criteria to keep in mind pertaining to the selection process of aspiring facilitators:

Aspiring Facilitator Personal Skills

- Has good listening skills; clarifies and probes for understanding
- Is able to use a variety of media for delivery of information
- Is comfortable and articulate in front of groups
- Responds non-defensively to challenges
- Puts people at ease; creates a comfortable learning environment
- Shows respect for the ideas and opinions of others
- Is able to communicate and articulate one's own ideas and those of others
- Is able to think quickly, improvise, and adjust to the needs of others
- Is not judgmental

Aspiring Facilitator Administrative Skills

- Creates and keeps deadlines (time management)
- Delegates responsibilities/tasks
- Sets and meets Goals
- Good at Team management
- Experience with project management
- Problem-solving skills

Aspiring Facilitator Institutional Relationships and Commitment

- Supports the training initiative and understands why it is important to the success of the Masonic institution (Lodge, Grand Lodge, Masonic Fraternity at large)
- Is willing to devote the time required to prepare for the training
- Is willing to provide continuous mentoring/coaching and support for participating Masons after the conclusion of their training
- Has demonstrated success in working with groups as a leader or facilitator
- Is credible and respected within the target Masonic institution
- Is considered a positive model for the values being taught, both inside and outside the sessions



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Masonic Methodology to Education and Governance
(p. 19)

**Masonic Leadership: 3 Rules/Guides for Respect and/
or Team Building**
(p. 22)

Sample Workshop Illustration (Opening the Lodge)
(p. 24)



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Masonic Methodology to Education and Governance

There is often the temptation to look to the profane for answers to Freemasonry's deep questions or challenges. As an illustration, here are two typical scenarios that often present themselves:

- a) One may be tempted to consider applying self-help techniques or guides to Masonic education when it comes to bettering oneself. While one may find such techniques or guides quite useful, a Mason would need to adapt them as to become fully aligned with the teachings of Freemasonry before applying them to one's Masonic education.
- b) A Masonic Lodge or Grand Lodge can learn a lot from the vast experience the world of the profane offers in the area of good governance. It is equally important to align such profane practices with the teachings of Freemasonry.

This simple methodology of "watching the west gate" helps preserve the integrity of Freemasonry.

I. Masonic Education for the Purpose of Bettering Self in Masonry:

- Study:** The ritual and ceremonies of Freemasonry are the mine where the treasure lies
- Internalize:** Learn to focus using meditation on specific tools and their dynamic combinations; particular aspects of each ceremony; visualizations of part and parts of each degree; etc. for the purpose of internalizing that knowledge and making it an integral part of who you *become*.
- Explore:** When appropriate, seek knowledge about self-improvement best practices that exist in the profane world. Why? Because, "*Freemasonry lives IN this world...*"
- Align:** Align suitable profane practices with our Masonic Teachings; do not adapt Masonic practices to teachings of the profane.
Why? Because "*Freemasonry lives IN this world, NOT OF this world.*"
- Apply:** Apply Masonic Knowledge in your daily life.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Masonic Methodology to Education and Governance

2. Masonic Approach to Better Governance of Lodges/Grand Lodge Institutions

Explore: Seek knowledge about best practices that exist in the profane world outside of Freemasonry. Why? Because, *“Freemasonry lives IN this world...”*

Align: Select suitable profane practices that may enhance Masonic Governance and adapt them to the Masonic context by **aligning** those practices with our **Masonic Teachings**; do not adapt Masonic practices to teachings of the profane.

Why? Because *“Freemasonry lives IN this world, NOT OF this world.”*

Apply: Apply aligned best practices to better governance in Masonic institutions.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Masonic Leadership: 3 Rules/Guides for Respect and/or Team Building

NOTE: For each step in each of the 3 rules, develop the practice of visualizing a tool, symbol, word, or language from the Ritual of Freemasonry. As an illustration, for example, in Rule 1 (c), you may visualize the Level as the reminder of how you would think, speak and act as a Mason. The practice of internalizing tools, symbols, and teachings of the Craft can be developed through the use of the *Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries* document.

1. Rule/Guide to Avoid Personal Conflict with a Brother or Colleague

- a) Never react on the spot, especially when you feel insulted
- b) Take a deep breath, hold it for approximately 10-15 seconds to enable more oxygen to flow to the brain, and then exhale; this has an immediate calming effect
- c) At the appropriate time, away from the tension of the moment, seek out politely and respectfully an explanation from your colleague
- d) Do not make any judgement at this time
- e) Express empathy using expressions that are appropriate to the situation; examples: “I now understand” or “I was not aware” or “thank you for sharing your thoughts with me”
- f) Explain your perspective
- g) Make-up and leave on good understanding or terms

2. Rule/Guide to Avoid Insulting or Publicly Embarrassing a Brother or Colleague

- a) Do not interrupt a Brother or colleague when speaking
- b) When something a Brother or colleague is saying is not clear or understandable to you, do not tell them to speak better or more clearly. Instead, ask respectfully for clarification using expressions like:
 - My apologies; I did not understand; would you kindly explain that to me again?
 - My understanding of what I heard is the following; would you please correct it for me if inaccurate? Thank you
- c) Do not make value judgments such as:
 - “Your idea does not make sense”
 - “This is not relevant to our discussion”
- d) Avoid the use of “you said this” and “you said that”; instead, focus on the topic of discussion and what you may have understood or misunderstood to avoid personalizing the matter.
- e) Avoid making statements like “I disagree with you” or “I am opposed to what you said”; instead, take one portion of your colleague’s statement, state it is quite interesting, and then build on it to make your own point, even if it is different.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

3. Rule/Guide for Active Listening

- a) Keep eye contact to show respect but avoid making the Brother or colleague feel uncomfortable
- b) Do not interrupt the Brother or colleague while they're talking
- c) Focus on retaining what the Brother or colleague says; do not focus on what your response will be
- d) Use intermittently the nodding of your head as a way to confirm to the Brother or colleague that you are focused on what they are saying
- e) If appropriate, depending on the situation, take notes from time to time
- f) Depending on the situation, use facial expressions to show empathy if necessary
- g) When the Brother or colleague finishes speaking, do not immediately respond. Instead, express respect by saying something like “thank you” or “very interesting”
- h) Proceed to speak with respect:
 - a. Do not make value judgements
 - b. Start with few words that build on something the Brother or colleague had said



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Sample of a Structured Application for Beginners Using “The Opening the Lodge” as an Illustration

The following is but one illustration of a two-day workshop focused on the *Opening of the Lodge*. It is not meant to be a directive nor as the only way. It is simply one approach that you may find useful in developing your own. The use of the *Guidance Meditation Script* referenced in Section III (E) is essential to giving your heart and mind an opportunity to intuitively respond. Note: if a two-day workshop is not possible, you may divide this workshop into three different parts, each given at a shorter (3-4 hours) workshop.

My Temple (Internal Lodge) Practicum

General discussion about the Temple (Internal Lodge). Each officer in the Lodge symbolizes aspects of one's internal Lodge and how one should govern oneself internally first and foremost.

Preparation Practice (*First Duty of Master previous to opening the Lodge*): **Tiling**

- Neither cell phones nor smart devices are to be allowed.
- 10-minute group mediation meditation on the Tiler and the Sword; focus on thoughts, words, feelings entering and exiting the Internal Lodge to keep it “a safe and sacred space”

Opening Practice I: Opening of the Lodge

Part I: Guided Meditation

- Focus on 3 Pillar Officers individually (Individual Dynamic)
 - o Meditate on the Master (Wisdom), the Jewel (Square), and the Instrument (Gavel)
 - o Meditate on the Senior Warden (Strength), the Jewel (Level), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
 - o Meditate on the Junior Warden (Beauty), the Jewel (Plumb), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
- Focus on the 3 Pillars Collectively (Group Dynamic)
 - o Meditate on the various aspects of the group dynamics among the three Pillar Officers during the Opening of the Lodge

Part II: Contemplative Dialogue in Small Groups of Brothers (6-10)

- Small group sharing of insights on Individual Dynamics as described above
- Small group sharing of insights on Group Dynamics as described above

Part III: Guided Meditation on One's Ashlar

- Identify the “rough” aspects of one's ashlar for the Tiler and each of the 3 Pillars, their respective Jewels, and Instruments: where is the weakness? What are the rough edges that need polishing?
- Draw the “Tracing Board” to help one move from being a “rough” ashlar to a “smooth” one: what daily



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

- Draw the “Tracing Board” to help one move from being a “rough” ashlar to a “smooth” one: what daily practices should one instill in one’s routine to achieve this “self-improvement in Masonry?”
- Develop Tracing Board “checklists.”
- Design an Action Plan for the Tracing Board

Part IV: Contemplative Dialogue on One’s Ashlar in Small Groups of Brothers (6-10)

- Small group sharing of insights on “rough” aspects
- Small group sharing of insights on “Tracing Boards”, ,” checklists, practices, and routines

My/Our Lodge (External Lodge) Practicum

General discussion about the Lodge of Brothers (External Lodge) and its form of governance.

Preparation Practice (First Duty of Master previous to opening the Lodge): Tiling

- Neither cell phones nor smart devices are to be allowed.
- 10-minute group mediation meditation on the Tiler and the Sword; focus on thoughts, words, feelings entering and exiting one’s self that may affect the Lodge room (External Lodge) in order to preserve the “Sacred Band of Brothers” and nourish the “Mystic Tie” of Brotherhood.

Opening Practice I: Opening of the Lodge

Part I: Guided Meditation

- Meditate on what may the Lodge possibly do *prior* to the Opening in order to facilitate the mediation meditation on the significance of the Opening of the Lodge
- Meditate on what may the Lodge possibly do *during* the Opening in order to facilitate the mediation meditation on the significance of the Opening of the Lodge
 - o Meditate on the Master (Wisdom), the Jewel (Square), and the Instrument (Gavel)
 - o Meditate on the Senior Warden (Strength), the Jewel (Level), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
 - o Meditate on the Junior Warden (Beauty), the Jewel (Plumb), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
 - o Meditate on posture, decorum, and the use of music and light

Part II: Contemplative Dialogue in Small Groups of Brothers (6-10)

- Small group sharing of insights on everything described in Part I
- Dialogue with one another on what may the Lodge possibly do *after* the Opening (during the work of the Lodge and prior to its Closing) in order to nourish the “Mystic Tie of Brotherhood.”
- Develop new checklists
- Draw a list of ideas for potential Lodge programs and/or activities to be part of the Work of the Lodge



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

My/Our Community, My/Our World (Universal Lodge) Practicum

General discussion about the potential role of a Brother as a “Free Builder” in one’s workplace, community, and nation.

Preparation Practice (*First Duty of Master previous to opening the Lodge*): Tiling

- Neither cell phones nor smart devices are to be allowed.
- 10-minute group meditation on the Tiler and the Sword; focus on thoughts, words, feelings entering and exiting one’s self that may affect one’s circles of influence – family, work, group affiliations, community, and nation – (Universal Lodge) in order contribute to the building stronger, more beautiful and wiser environments within each.

Opening Practice I: Opening of the Lodge

Part I: Guided Meditation

- Meditate on how one may Masonically “Open” one’s circles of influence
- Meditate on what may one possibly do *during* the Opening
 - o Meditate on the Master (Wisdom), the Jewel (Square), and the Instrument (Gavel)
 - o Mediate on the Senior Warden (Strength), the Jewel (Level), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
 - o Mediate on the Junior Warden (Beauty), the Jewel (Plumb), and the Instrument (Gavel or similar)
 - o Meditate on non-verbal communication

Part II: Contemplative Dialogue in Small Groups of Brothers (6-10)

- Small group sharing of insights on everything described in Part I
- Dialogue with one another on what “threats” or “challenges” one may face when Opening to one’s surrounding worlds
- Share insights on ways to mitigate or neutralize those threats
- Share insights on how the four cardinal virtues may come into play: Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, and Justice
- Draw a list of ideas for potential Lodge programs and/or activities to be part of the Work of the Lodge that helps build one’s capacity for stronger, more beautiful and wiser engagement of one’s world surroundings.



Practicing the Art of Our Mysteries

Section V: Supporting Documents

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principle I: The Lodge (External Lodge) is first and foremost the Incubator that produces Free Masons (Builders) of self. One should therefore, therefore, focus on the Lodge's structure, ceremonies and rituals, in order first and foremost, to draw the knowledge upon which one would meditate to become a Free Builder of one's Temple (Inner Lodge).

Guiding Principle II: The Lodge (External Lodge) is also the Laboratory wherein Brethren would learn that although distinctions may exist among them along the lines of race, religion, ethnicity, and opinion, such distinctions should never become differences, but rather an embodiment of E Pluribus Unum (Out of manyMany, One). The Lodge is where the bonds are forged to build the Sacred Band of Brothers. Creative Lodge programs/activities should therefore, therefore, contribute to build one's capacity to appreciate the diversity within unity when engaging the world (Universal Lodge).

Guiding Principle III: Evaluation of one's improvement in Masonry requires two key sets of questions: one set focused on identifying tangible transformation in one's thoughts, communications, and deeds; the other focused on developing actions plans with SMART objectives.