

# Templum Sion Lodge of Freemasons

Winnipeg's new model of an ancient initiatory fraternity

To many people Freemasonry is something that they may have heard about from their Grandfather who may have been a Freemason. They may have seen the guys who wear the funny red hats and ride scooters (Shriners), who are all Freemasons and who raise a billion (\$) a year for their North American hospitals. They may have heard conversations or seen signs or symbols featured in popular culture- like the spoofed "Stonecutters" featured in an episode of *The Simpsons* or seen their fictional involvements in the movie *National Treasure* or even read of their transcendental knowledge in Dan Brown's *The Lost Key*. Sadly, a person may have learned about Freemasonry from others, quite mistakenly, that Freemasonry is a secret society, a testament to 19<sup>th</sup> century British Imperialism involved in global conspiracies overshadowed by dark corporate moguls and corrupt political rulers who wish to control the world in the name of some Satanic force. Indeed it is true that where a vacuum exists, lies and innuendo will pervade. Some information may be partially true while other information may be totally false. The truth of the matter is that Freemasonry is a far more interesting and deeper subject than any one person can imagine.

Briefly, Freemasonry is the world's oldest and largest global fraternal order. It is not a religion itself but its philosophy and moral teachings underlie all religions. It didn't originate in Britain but evolved through many societies and cultures worldwide over millennia. It is not a secret society but rather a society with some secrets (though the internet has pretty much allowed anyone access to read about its symbols and traditions). The "Craft" brings together people of all races, all religions, all persuasions and orientations in the name of truth, liberty, freedom and tolerance. It operates globally on all continents and proliferates in countries that are more or less democratic and has historically been the target of persecution in totalitarian, fascist or otherwise dictatorial regimes. The organization itself has no single leader but rather many "Grand Lodges" operating in each state or province representing local "Lodges" where Freemasons typically meet. There are co-Masonic groups (women and men) and exclusive women's, men's, and young people's groups represented within Freemasonry. Needless to say, it is a very human institution comprised of all too human people and therefore organizationally suffers the same weakness that any other institution suffers. But what is dramatically different than any other organization is its actual philosophical intent, which is truly ancient, and the potential that it offers to any individual who would simply trust in its design and be willing to learn the magnificence of its depths and heights.

As far as preconditions for membership Freemasonry ensures all people who might ask to join that they must: 1) Have a belief in some form of a "Supreme Being", God, Allah, Jehovah or force that exists in the universe; 2) Believe in some form of justice in the universe however they may perceive it, karma for the Buddhists, heaven or hell for the Christian, a learning experience of some form for the Gnostic and; 3) That God, or "Supreme Being" has in some shape, way or form revealed or makes available some form or portion of divine truth to humankind. Freemasonry as a rule does not accept people under 21 years of age (there are exceptions), nor does it accept or can it have as members atheists, agnostics or those with a criminal record.

Freemasonry does not solicit for membership but rather places the onus on the petitioner to have them make up their own minds on whether or not they wish to freely join of their own volition. Freemasonry seeks to have as members ethical fair minded and balanced individuals. People who can trust and be trusted, fair-minded, possess integrity, be learned and or open-minded to learning, positive and natural born leaders in their heart and orientation. Freemasonry asks of its members only that, at a minimum, they attend all regular Lodge meetings (in the case of the Templum Lodge- seven regular meetings per annum), and be willing to learn the rituals, customs and extensive knowledge that the Craft has as its content.

Through its three degree system of ritual or drama the new candidate is exposed to ethics, history, architecture, symbolism, all elements of human psychology, science and art (the seven liberal arts and sciences- a 7<sup>th</sup> century old idea still central to its ritual). The language employed of its ritual is very old, grounded in 17<sup>th</sup> century English and the very aspect of a candidate participating in the ritual itself seeks to impress upon a person a different way of viewing his own life, his nature and his relationship with his Creator. The very nature of modern Masonic ritual, over 800 years old, is rooted in a still more distant past, the building guilds of the monastic orders of the 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries CE and the much older Lesser and Greater Mysteries of ancient Greece, Egypt and Mesopotamia.

So what *is* the root of all Masonic ritual and symbolism? What does Freemasonry actually *do*? It's a multi-faceted answer really. In modern times, post World War II, particularly in North America, Freemasonry became a very wide-open fraternity for friends to join and make still more friends- though Freemasonry's original intent was not to be a mere social club. For others Freemasonry is a way for people to practice altruism and community service although Freemasonry is not a service club. However to go to the heart and marrow of the Craft the more astute will recognize the true import of Freemasonry- it's a truly ancient metaphysical legacy that promotes self-examination and awareness. It points to the fact that human beings have a unique ability to transcend themselves given their own choice and in the right circumstances will contribute to the task of building a better world. Freemasonry espouses freedom, and encourages truth, tolerance and equality. It encourages its members to seek truth in life, in the world and in themselves echoing the 2,400 year old Greek initiatic maxim "man know thyself." For no adventure could be greater nor more rewarding. In this aspect Freemasonry connects to very ancient spiritual concepts which permeated in ancient times that dealt with fundamental ideas and questions, who am I? What is the meaning of this life? And is there something after my life?

The newest product of Freemasonry within Manitoba is Templum Sion Lodge founded in 2005 which seeks to bring together the best elements of the Craft. It seeks to provide its members, any new candidates and visitors with a forum for study, for debate and for exploration in the deepest mysteries of life, art and science. It is a Lodge for the serious minded and for those who wish to belong to a future Craft that promotes spiritual evolution and development.

Templum Sion Lodge meets seven times per year on the first Saturday mornings of the months of Sept, Oct, Nov, Dec, breaks for the harshest winter months resuming operations again in March, April, May followed by a summer break. A typical meeting consists of study and conversation around a particular subject which could be about sacred space, consciousness, sacred architecture, the psychology of ritual, Gnosticism to Hermeticism, Knights Templar, Platonism and a variety of other subjects to which Freemasonry is connected. The meeting is followed up by a "repaste" or social gathering -lunch- where members may learn more about one another and the social aspects of Freemasonry might prevail or still more conversation and discussion carried from the Lodge.

The ritual of three degrees through which all new members typically progress is spaced such that it allows a new member to advance at their own pace for Masonic ritual is an experience that is meant to be thought about and relished, coached, mentored and talked about. To be sure Masonic ritual can be read about on the internet but as any reflective person will recognize *all important events in life are meant to be experienced in person.*

Once initiated into Templum Sion Lodge a "Brother" may travel freely to visit other Lodges either locally or around the world. Lodge membership is transferable if a member should have to move locally, nationally or even internationally. Any Freemason may visit (visitation is encouraged) any Lodge in the world which itself is a wonderful opportunity to learn more about cultures, people and the Craft.

A Freemason may demit (leave Freemasonry) at any time if they so wish, for membership is entirely the persons own choice and members are often reminded family and private avocations

(work) comes first. By no means is Freemasonry meant to replace anyone's life or predominate over one's activities but rather supplement and balance a person's life and bring happiness and understanding to an individual through his own efforts.

The world of Freemasonry is very broad and it should be thought of as a private undertaking and one that may be rewarding given one's own interest and efforts. The decision to join the Craft should not be taken lightly but rather be given careful thought. In the final analysis there never has nor will there ever be a greater organization to which one could belong.

**For more information contact:**

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