



WISCONSIN MASONIC HANDBOOK

CHAPTER 22

MEMBERSHIP

A. INTRODUCTION

Freemasonry is recognized as the oldest, largest, and most widely known fraternal organization in the world. There are approximately three million Freemasons throughout the world and lodges in almost all free countries. In the United States we have over two million Freemasons, and in Wisconsin there are approximately 200 Masonic lodges and more than 18,000 Freemasons.

B. PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS

It could be stated that membership to any organization is the lifeblood to that group. Freemasonry is no exception. We as members should always be watchful for worthy prospects. Here are a few characteristics that make an excellent prospective candidate:

1. Believe in a Supreme Being.
2. Proper Age. Must be eighteen years of age or older at time he presents his petition for the degrees to a lodge.
3. Honest, faithful and responsible.
4. Sociable.
5. Interested in the welfare of others caring.
6. Good morals.
7. Financially responsible.
8. Practices temperance.
9. A charitable nature.
10. Does not gossip or run down his fellow man.
11. Capable of subduing his passions.
12. Not argumentative or controversial

13. Remain true to personal convictions.
14. Industrious in personal life.
15. Involved in community activities.
16. Law abiding citizen.

If you feel he can measure up to these standards, introduce him to our Masonic philosophy, perhaps over a luncheon. Talk about some of the things Freemasonry IS and what Freemasonry IS NOT. Emphasize that this is not a "quick sell" or a high-pressure talk.

Also stress that there are many misconceptions about Freemasonry and you would like to discuss some of the points, which Freemasonry is NOT.

Freemasonry is not a religion or a substitute for one, nor is Freemasonry any kind of a cult or offspring of any church. Masonry does not take the place of a church or synagogue, but is its friend and servant. All Masons must believe in Deity. Many Masons go to church regularly and are active workers in their church. Therefore it must be made clear that Freemasonry **IS NOT** a religion.

Freemasonry is not a secret society. Contrary to widespread belief, Freemasonry is not and never has been a secret organization. Nothing can be further from the truth. There has never been any attempt to hide our existence, our membership, or the aims and purposes of our Fraternity.

Freemasonry is not a political forum. We are not a political party nor do we endorse any political party. However, each individual member is urged, just as everyone else is to take an active part in civic affairs. Many community leaders are Freemasons, as are many of our national leaders.

Freemasonry is not an insurance company. We do not provide any kind of insurance to our members - only the assurance that we will make them better men. Here are some things Freemasonry IS. You will see that the words are mostly adjectives that tell you something about Freemasonry.

Freemasonry is reverence. We all show reverence towards God or a Supreme Being. We all believe in Deity. Many Masons will tell you that they are better men because of their Masonry and that it strengthens their sense of responsibility to God.

Freemasonry is kindness, honesty and fairness, both in our homes and in our business affairs. We expect people to be kind, honest and fair with us in our day-to-day activities, and we are obligated to treat them the same way or better.

These qualities are a vital part of our organization.

Freemasonry is forgiveness - for the shortcomings of our fellowmen in helping - for we help those that are truly in need. We contribute more money to charity than any other organization in the world. In fact, Freemasons, along with our appendant bodies, contribute nearly one half billion dollars each year in support of charities and community service and projects.

You may want to talk about some of the charitable aspects Freemasons support, which may include:

- The Wisconsin Masonic Foundation High School Scholarship Program
- The Wisconsin Masonic Foundation - Medical Fund Matching Fund Program.
- The Wisconsin Masonic Home.
- The telethons in which Wisconsin Freemasons participate.
- Local lodge charitable contributions.
- Supporting Shriner Crippled Children's Hospital and Burn Centers.
- Supporting York Rite Charities.
- Supporting Scottish Rite Charities.

Explain that our fraternal order is constantly in search of new members - good men who are willing to make a difference - to be leaders in Life.

Finally, hand him a Masonic pamphlet. There are a number of good pamphlets that explain our philosophy. Your local lodge Secretary should have a supply on hand. If not, have him contact the Grand Lodge Office to reorder more copies for your lodge.

C. DEFAULTS

Every effort should be made to recover those candidates who are in default. They should receive a personal visit from a member of your lodge (preferably the Worshipful Master) to determine why they are in default. If their working hours are such that they cannot attend regular posting classes, special

Revised 12/14/2004

arrangements should be made so one of the lodge posters can work with the candidate at his convenience. If the candidate feels he cannot memorize the required posting, reassure him that he does not have to be letter-perfect, that he will not be subjected to any embarrassment. If it is a religious matter, assure him that Freemasonry is not in conflict with the teachings of the Church. If he is Catholic, remind him that the Catholic religion no longer bans membership in the Masonic lodge.

Try to make your visit very friendly, and encourage the candidate to talk freely and determine if any animosity exists between him and any member of the lodge. If there is, attempt to determine how it can be resolved.

The Code provisions relative to advancement are covered in Chapter 76 of the Wisconsin Masonic Code, under "Regulations for Lodges."

D. DELINQUENT MEMBERS

It is indeed a sad note to hear at a lodge meeting about members who are in arrears. Many of them have not been active in attending meetings or functions and, therefore, often times they become neglectful of their responsibility to maintain a current paid membership. Then, too, there are many brothers who are financially strapped - living on fixed incomes and unable to work because of age or disability. However, the Worshipful Master (or one of the lodge officers) should personally interview each member who is delinquent. Make sure that the brother is not in need of financial assistance. This is in accordance with Section 81.03 of the Wisconsin Masonic Code. Often a brother's needs are never known unless a special call is made.

If a brother's residence is beyond travel distance and a personal interview is impractical, it is suggested that a telephone call be placed. A visit should convince the brother of the great investment that he has in Masonry and the values of retaining his membership. If in your interview you find that the delinquent brother is in distress, try to arrange to give him the assistance he needs, but in every case, try to keep the brother interested in your lodge and in the Fraternity. If a delinquency remains after your interview, send the name of the delinquent member to the Grand Secretary. He will send a personal letter to each delinquent brother in an effort to help.

E. MEMBERSHIP PROFILE FORM

The Membership Profile form was devised to help the lodges to ascertain the interest and talents of its members. The intent of this form is to have copies duplicated and made available to every member to complete and return to the

Lodge Secretary. As new members are received into a lodge by affiliation, or by being raised, they should also complete this form and return it to the Lodge Secretary to be placed on file. This file will then provide each lodge with a skill bank that will be a valuable source of information. A copy of this form may be found in Chapter 26 or 27 of this HANDBOOK.