

## Why I became a Mason

by R.W. Bro. Chris Reid, DDGM 2015-16 Prince Edward District GRC

I was sitting in Lodge one night watching two Brothers receiving the Junior Warden's Lecture. I took a close look at both of them. Their mannerisms were so different to each other. One was very interested in everything going on around and every word spoken. The other was very indifferent to what was happening and seeming to be a bit bored with it all. This started me thinking of what reasons lead men to Freemasonry.

There are probably as many varied reasons why each of us chose to join our craft as there are brothers among us. Many of us would share some common ground such as having family members who were masons, or knowing friends or having met people in our community, whose conduct inspired us to seek further light. While some may have wondered about the significance of the square and compasses, curious to learn about the so-called mysterious side of masonry, particularly today when one has so much information available.

I must confess that although I am extremely proud to be a part of this fraternity I sometimes have difficulty responding when asked why I am a Freemason. I feel my answer, although important to me, may not be convincing enough to persuade someone to join our fraternity. It is of great concern to me that my answer does not cause someone to turn away from masonry. I do not want my answer to sound like a sales pitch promoting a product, however on the other hand I want it to be genuine and enthusiastic enough to spark some interest and promote further interest and conversation with the person asking the question.

Questions to the candidate in the first degree suggest that he is expected to have a favourable opinion preconceived of the institution. What does Masonry do to provide these grounds for an opinion, either favourable or unfavourable? Do we as masons ever attempt to foster good opinion in the community?

A few months ago, I visited a lodge and was pleasantly surprised and very interested to learn that the master had approached three of the lodge members to give a talk on what had prompted them to join masonry. Two of the brethren were long time members of the lodge while the third was a newly raised brother who in fact would later that evening very ably prove his proficiency.

The first brother an accomplished speaker rose and approached the lectern, removed his well-prepared speech from his jacket and gave a very interesting talk with a few humorous stories as to how and why he had chosen to join. When he had finished and was returning to his seat, I remember thinking well done, such an enjoyable presentation. It was nice to hear someone else's prospective, many points were similar to my own experience. He seemed to have covered all the points what more would the next brother have to offer and how relieved I was that I was not the next to speak.

Just then, the master called on the newly raised brother. He did not go to the lectern but instead approached the east, remained on the level and turned to address the lodge. I noticed that he did not have a prepared speech. He started a bit nervously but with a little humour stating that he did not know what to say as the previous brother had stolen his speech. He then soon gained everyone's attention as he made the following remarks, which I will attempt to convey to you. He began by saying that " he had known very little of freemasonry but he had learned that Masonry accepts Good Men and makes them better". His next remark will probably stay with me forever. He said sincerely "I believe I am a Good Man but would like to become a better man" so I thought I would like to be a Freemason. I cannot imagine a better reason to seek out the light in masonry. He went on to explain the steps he took to enable him to join and his appreciation of the brethren who had assisted him thus far. He then turned to address the W.M. and requested him to meet with him on the level. Reaching out his hand to the W.M. he remarked how pleased he was that Masonry would accept him and even though he was newly admitted, how impressed he was that this experienced brother, who had rose to become the master of the lodge, would still meet him as an equal. This reinforced in me that actions speak louder than words. As this brother returned to his seat I remember thinking. I would not want to be the brother to speak next.

Masonry does have a different meaning for each of us, but for all of us it includes the practice of morality. Brethren so often, we struggle to solve a problem when the solution is right in front of us. My wife often remarks to me "don't over think it just do it".

We do not need to explain masonry, just live our lives by the principles it teaches us, and masonry will explain itself. If we strive to fulfill all the teachings and values that recur so frequently in our ritual we will come closer to achieving that state of perfection of an ideal Mason outlined in the Final Charge of the Installation ceremony. It is by this example that a non-mason may obtain a favourable opinion of our order.

A brother whom I held in high regard, in his wisdom, told me that Freemasonry takes care of itself and that people will find what they seek in it. At the time, this seemed as a peculiar answer to me; however, in time I understood. I truly have to say he was right. If you only seek a ring, you will only have one. If you seek knowledge and truth, you will have a path that will guide you on a journey for the rest of your life. Though we all come for different reasons, we will find what we seek.

The first lecture given to our candidate from the Mentor's programme informs him "the basic principles of Freemasonry include brotherly love, relief and truth. That is to say, we strive to be friendly, kind and sincere in all our dealings with others. In Masonry, you will find men of good will and high ideals men who believe in the existence of a Supreme Being. In addition, who try to live in a spirit of universal brotherhood. In general terms a Masonic Lodge is a place where all can work together looking towards a brighter tomorrow. Or as we all have heard on many occasions from the General Charge: to be happy ourselves and to communicate that happiness to others"

Brethren, as I drove home that evening, happy that I had attended lodge, I knew that from that moment forward if anyone should inquire of me why I had chosen to become a freemason, my reply would be: "because I believe myself to be a good man who wanted to become a better man".

As our Grand Master, M.W. Bro. John C. Green said:

*Brethren, never be afraid to display the pride you have of being a Mason to those around you in your daily path of life.*

So, Dear Brothers, at this last Official Visit of my term, I thank you all for your support, and to let you know I love you all, my Brothers. I will now ask you one last question – "Why did YOU become a Mason?"