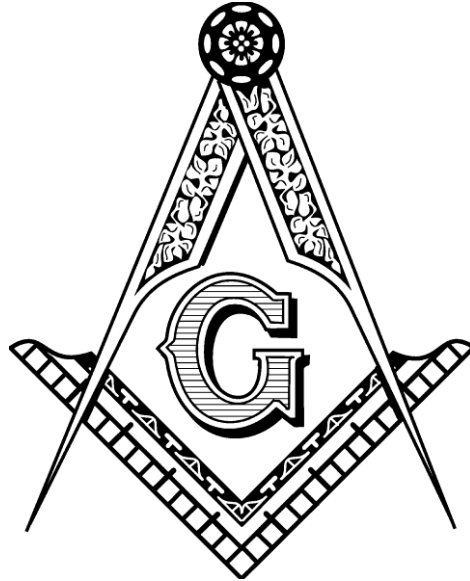


Instruction Booklet

To be used by the lodges in advancing the
Lodge System of Masonic Education



Prepared for the
Grand Lodge of Mississippi F&AM
By the
Committee on Masonic Education
For the use of the Subordinate Lodges
and their Members

June, 2019

THE PLAN IN BRIEF

The essentials of the Lodge System of Masonic Education may be described in a few brief sentences:

Name: The program takes its name from the fact that it is the Lodge itself rather than some individual, voluntary committee, or independent organization that carries it on.

Purpose: The sole aim is to guarantee that every Candidate shall be properly instructed in those fundamentals – in the Ritual and in Masonic practice – which every newly made Mason ought to know.

Machinery: A Committee of five members of the Lodge, appointed by the Worshipful Master, is all the machinery that is needed. However, any number up to twenty members may be used on the Committee if the Worshipful Master so desires.

Method: The Candidate meets with the Committee once before taking the First Degree, and once after each Degree – four times in all.

Cost: Nothing.

Rewards: Innumerable.

THE PURPOSE

Every Candidate is a stranger to Freemasonry and Freemasonry is a stranger to him. It is not merely a local Lodge that he joins, but a great Fraternity, with nearly 16,000 members, and more than 200 Lodges in the state of Mississippi, with nearly 2 million members and more than 10,000 Lodges in the United States, with other thousands of Lodges and tens of thousands of members in other countries throughout the world. Freemasonry, with a history stretching back over many centuries is an intricate system of laws with a large number of purposes, ideals, and obligations; a set of rights, privileges and duties; a set of Landmarks to be preserved; the whole carrying on a program of activities of a great variety of kinds. It is a challenging task for even the most studious of men to engage upon without a roadmap to success.

It is too much to expect of any man that without guidance he shall be able to make himself at home in such a fraternity, or that he shall unaided be able to take his own proper place in his local Lodge's work with credit to himself and honor to the Brotherhood; he has a moral right to expect that the local Lodge itself shall give him much of the information he needs. It is because so many Brethren never receive this information, and are permitted to come – and perhaps go – undirected and uninstructed, that they either cease attending Lodge at all, or, too often undertake an active part, but for lack of knowing better, blunder into humiliation to themselves and damage to the Lodge.

There is nothing new in these statements. For years, responsible Craft leaders, in the local Lodge and the Grand Lodge, have been only too aware of them, and have realized that this failure to properly prepare the Candidate for his new duties and privileges is at one and the same time a failure on the part of the Craft to discharge its just obligations to him, and a weakness in the fundamental system of Initiation which incurs the danger of weakening the whole structure by thus attempting to build enduring walls with rough ashlar and un-tempered mortar. Moreover, it is not solely a matter of teaching the new member the ceremonies he is to go through; it is necessary that he become imbued with the spirit of Freemasonry and they believe in – as well as understand – its purposes and ideals. Our Fraternity does not rest on compulsion or military rule; if its own members are at odds with its aims it becomes a house divided against itself. It is not too much to state that in a large number of the cases when Masons cause dissention in a Lodge, it is not out of malice or a desire to make mischief, but because they do not understand the rules and laws of Freemasonry.

Countless methods have been devised for the Masonic Education of the newly made Brother and under favorable conditions they often proved successful; but in the majority

of cases they have been marked by two internal, serious weaknesses: first, they have been sporadic, uncertain, and have left it to the Candidate to seek Masonic Education and Instructional aid of his own free will, thereby bringing it about that those who most needed instruction have not received it; second, they have been conducted by volunteers or by some organization set up independently of the Lodge, and thereby have lacked its stability and official sanction. The Lodge System of Masonic Education here recommended is strongest at just these two points where others are weakest; for it, first, takes in every Candidate, automatically and without exception; and, second, it is an enterprise of the local Lodge's own proper work.

It is not only the Candidate who profits by this. The local Lodge itself is strengthened from having new members who, from the very beginning, are able to take a part in its activities; who are more likely to become regular attendants; and who can most quickly grasp the aim and purpose of the Lodge's endeavors. They come in already prepared for work, and the Master has a larger staff of trained members to work with as a result.

METHOD AND MACHINERY

As already stated, the method and machinery of the Lodge System of Masonic Education is of the simplest.

1. The Worshipful Master appoints a Committee of five. However, any number, up to twenty members, may be used on the Committee if the Worshipful Master so desires.
2. After a petition has been favorably balloted upon, the Candidate is notified by the Secretary to meet with the Committee at a specified time and place.
3. At the first meeting the Committee will give him such instructions as he needs at that stage to enable him to receive the First Degree in a proper spirit, and at the same time furnish him such information about the principles and teaching of Masonry as will give him a clear understanding of what kind of fraternity he is about to enter.
4. The Candidate will meet with this Committee three more times, once after each of the Degrees. Upon completion of the Educational Program he should have a clear understanding of the expectations, rights, responsibilities, obligations, and the historical and practical applications of the lessons taught to him with a clear knowledge "of what Freemasonry is about."

THE COMMITTEE

The Committee should be composed of Master Masons of experience, knowledge, and tact; who feel a genuine interest in their work and who can be trusted not to neglect it. It is wise to have at least one Past Master in its membership. This Committee should be appointed by the Master, perhaps once each year. It may be wise to appoint the first Committee as an experiment and then wait upon the results. It will be all the better if, with the passage of time, the tradition may be established that appointment to this Committee is a blue-ribbon honor, indicating that in the eyes of the Lodge a member has proved himself sufficiently expert to act as a teacher of Masonry—surely a high recognition indeed!

The Committee should have a Chairman, appointed by the Master, but needs no other officers; if desired, the Chairman can report to the Lodge upon each Candidate after the latter has attended his Fourth (and last) Meeting.

It is recommended that the Committee meet in a preliminary discussion of the work, allotting to each of the Committee Members his subject for each of the four meetings with the Candidate. Once the subjects have been allotted, each Committee Member is encouraged to present their assigned subjects over and over – this will make for a smooth, comfortable presentation.

It follows that the Candidate will thus hear five subjects at each meeting.

Let us now suppose that Candidate A.B. attends the First Meeting. (Where there is more than one Candidate they will, of course, attend together). He will meet the Committee at the specified time and place. (It may be supposed that any members of the Lodge will be permitted also to attend, if desirous of doing so.). The Candidate will hear a few words greeting from the Chairman in explanation of the purpose and spirit of the meeting; after that he will listen while each member in turn presents (from memory or manuscript) his subject. When Candidate A.B. has heard the five subjects presented he can then be encouraged to ask questions and take part in an informal discussion.

If ten minutes are allowed for preliminaries, fifty minutes for the subjects, and thirty minutes for questions and discussion, the entire time will be only one and one-half hours.

The Candidate himself has nothing to do but listen; no books to read; no papers to write, nothing to learn; it adds nothing to his burden of mastering his Lectures. But the gain to him will be inestimable; by the time he is Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Degree he will have heard twenty of the fundamental subjects presented; a larger amount of

carefully digested, useful, connected information than many Masons have been able to pick up in twenty years, when left to their own resources.

The Lodge System of Masonic Education is not a great burden on the Committee. Once a member of it has prepared his ten minute subjects and has learned them thoroughly he has nothing more to do save attending the meetings; and that will prove a privilege and a pleasure, since it will give him the satisfaction of feeling that he has had an important share in preparing a Brother for his life in Masonry.

Too much importance cannot be laid upon the need to have the Candidate know that what he hears is not the random opinion of some individual; but rather, Masonic Education sanctioned by the Grand Lodge as well as the local Lodge, and therefore to be believed, accepted in all seriousness, and acted upon. Further to make sure of this, it may be wise, and it is suggested that in beginning the System, to have one of each of the meetings held in open Lodge, opened on the appropriate Degree, except in the case of the first meeting, which may be held in the interval of a communication when called from labor to refreshment.

By such a series of exhibition meetings the whole Lodge can see firsthand what the Lodge System of Masonic Education is and how it works.

THE FIRST MEETING

The principal purpose of this First Meeting is to introduce the Candidate in a general way to Freemasonry as a whole and to prepare him in mind and spirit to receive Initiation. He is entering a strange country; his teachers will give him the necessary guidance and point out the Ancient Landmarks by which he will steer his course. And it will be impressed upon him that becoming a Mason is not a light or frivolous undertaking, but fraught with important consequences and that Initiation, Passing, and Raising are not perfunctory ceremonies to be entered into lightly, but the first and all-important steps into the fraternity of Freemasonry. He will learn that Freemasonry is a life to be lived, not a set of hollow forms to be hypocritically observed; that he must become prepared in his heart, first of all. He will also learn that in the Committee he has a set of guides and friends to whom he came for counsel at every step of his way.

For these purposes the five subjects listed here have been selected:

1. A short History of Freemasonry.
2. The Ancient Landmarks.
3. The Tenets (Friendship, Morality, and Brotherly Love).
4. The Qualifications.
5. Freemasonry's Attitude to Politics and Religion.

Talks on these subjects have been prepared by the Grand Lodge of Mississippi Educational Committee and these talks appear in Booklet No. 1 in the order listed. It is not intended that the Committee Member shall necessarily memorize these talks, but rather that they shall serve as an outline, and that the thoughts shall be given in his own words.

At this point Worshipful Masters who do not have Candidates may well be reminded that they can provide for entertaining and informative meetings by exemplifying the Lodge System of Masonic Education at a Regular, Stated Communication.

Here is how it works out: The Committee, having been appointed and organized, all other Brethren present at the First Meetings are considered as Candidates. The Committee delivers to them the desired lectures or talks. At the next or some subsequent meeting the same procedure is followed, all present being considered as Entered Apprentices, and likewise for a Third and Fourth Meeting, using Fellow Craft and Master Mason educational material respectively.

Some Masters have used with success a variation of the above plan. Instead of addressing all the members of the Lodge, a group of five Brethren from the side lines, representing Candidates, are placed in the Northeast Corner and there are addressed by the members of the Committee. This activity adds a note of realism to the presentation which proves most effective.