

THE SECRET OF FREEMASONRY

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This paper started its existence as a series of bullet points jotted down into my phone at around the time when the Grand Secretary responded to newspaper attacks with his *#EnoughIsEnough* campaign.

It was intended to provide a robust outline of Freemasonry and to be used to stand up to our critics. I posted it on social media and got a lot of positive responses. I share this with you in the hope it may be of some use.

There is nothing secret or secretive about Freemasonry and its organisations.

- We exist. We don't pretend otherwise.
- Our buildings are open to the public for meetings, tours and events.
- We appear in public at, for example, the Lord Mayor's Show.
- We publish lists of our officers every year.
- We are active on social media and have many websites.
- We donate to local and national charities
- We try to get articles in the press but for some reason they don't always want to tell our story.
- Our members are free to disclose their membership providing they do not seek any personal advantage by doing so.

Our meetings are private, not secret.

- They are open only to members and candidates whom we have approved for membership.
- Candidates are approved on the basis of a belief in a Supreme Being (the deity of any religion) and adherence to a moral code.
- Meetings are contemplative environments built on the bond that comes from a shared experience.
- They consist of morality plays acted out by candidates and through which we learn to build ourselves to become better people.
- Many other organisations also hold private meetings with a restricted attendance (eg, boards of directors, trusts, committees, other clubs and associations).

The secrets referred to in Freemasonry are dramatic elements within the morality plays; they are part of the script.

- These secrets are used within the plays as proof of a qualification as a Mediaeval Stonemason.
- They are the equivalent of diplomas and arose when people were not literate.
- They act like passwords and PIN numbers, granting or blocking access to the next part of the dramatic story.
- The scripts are on sale and you can buy them.
- I am happy to discuss the storyline of the morality plays.
- But don't ask me to discuss in detail the scripts - to do so will spoil the impact of the experiential learning involved.

Freemasonry is an enlightenment organisation.

- it arose during the age of enlightenment.
- Its founders were leading enlightenment figures.
- It promotes tolerance, mutual understanding, respect for each other and our differences.
- Discussion of religious or political dogmas and differences are banned at our meetings because they are divisive.
- It brings people together based on the good things that unite them rather those that divide us.
- It formed the basis of the US constitution.

Women can be Freemasons.

- Women may join a women only or a mixed Lodge.
- The most popular Masonic organisations are single sex, partly because of history and partly because that's how their male and female members want them.
- Many women choose to spend some of their time in female only environments just as many men choose to spend some of their time in men only environments.
- Single sex organisations have a valid and important place in our society and do not imply misogyny or unfair discrimination.
- There are far more female only organisations in the UK than male only organisations.

Access to our membership lists are governed by data protection laws.

- We are not permitted to disclose membership details.
- We are like all membership organisations in that sense.
- Individual members may disclose their membership providing they don't seek personal gain in doing so.
- Members declare their membership in registers of interests in connection with public, charitable and statutory appointments.

Freemasonry is open.

- You can become a Freemason.
- You only have to ask.
- Like all private membership organisations, we define qualifications for membership.
- If you profess a belief in a Supreme Being and live by a moral code, you will be welcome to join us.

Freemasonry is not for everyone.

- if you don't acknowledge the Creator, Freemasonry would make no sense to you.
- If you don't recognise the source of morality is from "above rather than within" and that there is a force greater than us, Freemasonry would be of no interest to you.
- If you don't wish to be of better service to others and learn to live in peace with your fellow man, Freemasonry would be a waste of your time.
- If you don't wish to work at your personal development and improve your understanding of self and others, Freemasonry is not for you.

Freemasons live by standards of integrity.

- if you use your membership for personal gain you will be expelled.
- If you are convicted of a criminal offence you will be expelled.

Freemasons have been stigmatised, attacked and persecuted since the 18th century.

- Like all organisations that stand for something, Freemasonry has always had its detractors and critics.
- There is a lot of misinformation about Freemasonry as a result.
- Myths and fantastical stories abound.
- Check your sources and check your facts before perpetuating the rubbish.
- Best of all ask us or visit us to find out the truth.

Why are Freemasons being singled out with hearsay, baseless allegations, stereotyping, prejudice and bigoted accusations?

The accusers don't bring forward evidence, only anecdotes. They don't quote primary sources, only "someone they know".

When such anecdotes are investigated, they normally show the story started with an issue of self-perceived merit as opposed to what others perceived as failings or even incompetence. The result was a sense of unfairness, jealousy, resentment, bitterness and scapegoating. It is too easy for a person who thinks they have been wronged to blame others – including Freemasonry – rather than face up to their failings.

As Freemasons we declare our standards. One is that we require members not to use membership for personal gain. We also take action against any member who contravenes that rule.

So why are we, the Freemasons, the ones being accused? Why are the groups in which mutual personal gain is allowed - and possibly even encouraged - not investigated? Why are sports clubs, social clubs, old school networks, and others, not subject to criticism and challenge?

The time has come for all Freemasons to stand up for Freemasonry, to be proud of what we stand for, of our long history and traditions, of our contributions to our communities and society and of our capacity to help people change for the better.

#EnoughIsEnough See www.ugle.org.uk

Tony Harvey
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