



FREEMASONRY

International Order of Freemasonry
for Men and Women
LE DROIT HUMAIN

WHAT IS FREEMASONRY?

AND WHAT IS THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF FREEMASONRY FOR MEN AND WOMEN LE DROIT HUMAIN?



Freemasonry has existed for over three centuries, originally and for a long time, as an organisation only for men. But what would you say if you knew that –

- *freemasonry is a dynamic pursuit*
- *freemasonry has admitted women alongside men since 1893*
- *freemasonry admits all persons without making social, ethnic, philosophical or religious distinctions*
- *freemasonry provides a forum for women and men to meet together on an equal footing*
- *freemasonry is enlightening*
- *freemasonry unites persons of very different social and cultural backgrounds*
- *freemasonry is a way to open up your understanding of what is important*
- *freemasonry is a place where the only real secrets are in your heart*
- *freemasonry is a place where the real you can be set free*





Out of the beginnings in France in 1893, when Maria Deraismes and Georges Martin founded the first lodge for men and women, came the birth of the first and only truly international masonic Order for men and women. From the start, through its title «Le Droit Humain», the Order promoted human rights, social justice, equality of women and men, and a symbolic method of working together which can be understood all over the world.

In 1902 the Order was implanted in Great Britain by Annie Besant, who assisted its spread to many countries, and it is now established in more than 60 countries over five continents.

In a world where totalitarian regimes have often threatened, the Order professes no dogma and rejects dogmatism.

THREE IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF OUR ORDER ARE:

- *men and women work together in perfect equality and harmony*
- *it is the only truly international masonic Order*
- *we follow an integrated path of development, from initiation through 33 degrees*

We work together to promote freedom of conscience, tolerance and harmony, in a fraternal system without distinction on grounds of social or ethnic origin, philosophical opinion or religion. Our members are respectful of the right to absolute freedom of conscience of all.

Our members are encouraged to study the meaning of masonic allegory and symbolism and to work at improving themselves. Through discussions in lodges, and actions in the outer world, members seek to realise on earth the greatest possible degree of moral, intellectual and spiritual development for all people.



THE MOTTO OF LE DROIT HUMAIN IS:
ORDO AB CHAO –
ORDER OUT OF CHAOS.





WHAT DO FREEMASONS DO
WHEN THEY MEET TOGETHER?



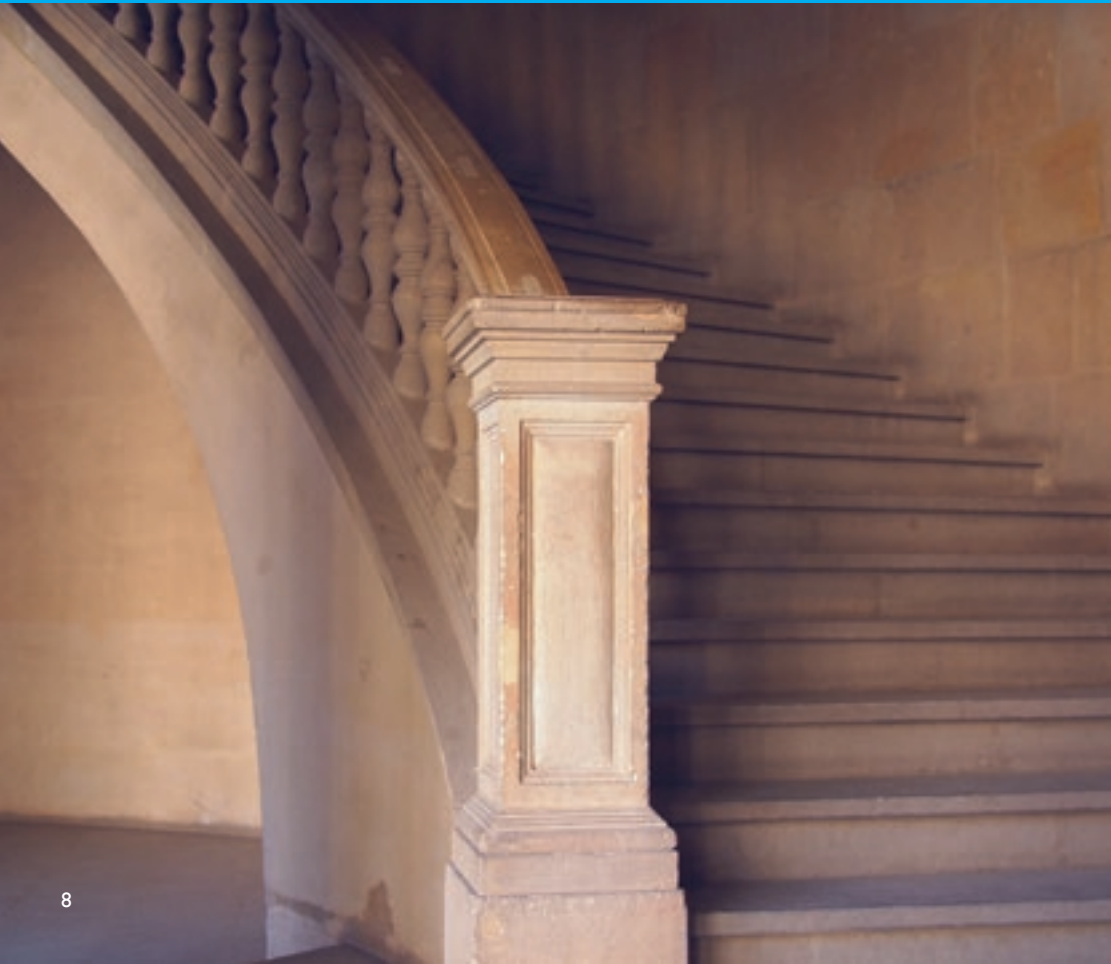
Freemasonry is an initiatory process which relies primarily on knowledge of self, of other men and women, and of the world around. Our Order has 33 degrees, which are enacted in ceremonies, similar to the mystery dramas and plays of the middle ages. The first degree, initiation, deals with birth, the second degree with life after birth and the third with our passage when we approach the end of life. Subsequent degrees delve yet further into masonic lore and tradition. They all contribute to one's personal development.

THE DEGREES

Freemasonry is a path for personal, spiritual growth, developing the mind, body and spirit. Physically, when we are born, we emerge out of darkness into light. So masonic 'birth' namely the first degree, the start of initiation, takes us from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge, that is to say knowledge of ourselves. 'Man, know thyself and you will know the universe and gods', and here we have a path to follow towards self-knowledge.

The first degree in Freemasonry begins by simulating this 'darkness' of ignorance by keeping the candidate in the dark, literally. He or she is helped, through this, to understand the power, the value, of light, and to appreciate it, to take it into his or her heart. In stonemason's terms, he or she is a piece of rock, hewn out of the quarry, to become his own self, with an individuality, with a responsibility for his own actions, his own destiny.

He is now an Entered Apprentice and undergoes a period of study and reflection, to consolidate what he has learned through initiation. This period is in itself rewarding, leading to knowledge and to some aspects of himself and of the world that he may never have experienced or understood until now.



Once that is accomplished, he can proceed to the second ceremony. Here he will learn how to access tools, allegorical and symbolic aids, to help him progress, tools such as art and science. His intellect expands but often it is the intellect of the heart as well as of the mind. After this second ceremony, the candidate is once again immersed in reflection and study – a further consolidation of what he has learned. He then proceeds to the third ceremony, following which he is known as a Master Mason. Subsequently, if he shows the desire, he may take additional degrees, the highest of which is the thirty third.

The period between the degrees can vary, so that the candidate will only progress to the next degree, after a year or so. Much of what is contained in these ceremonies involves the use of symbols, as Freemasons lay stress on being able to understand those things which cannot be communicated by the written or spoken word. None of the above affects in any way religious belief, since this is a matter for the individual. Freemasonry is not a religion. Freemasons are free to follow their own beliefs, if any, while enjoying absolute freedom of conscience. Nor does Freemasonry interfere in social, political or ideological matters.



LODGES



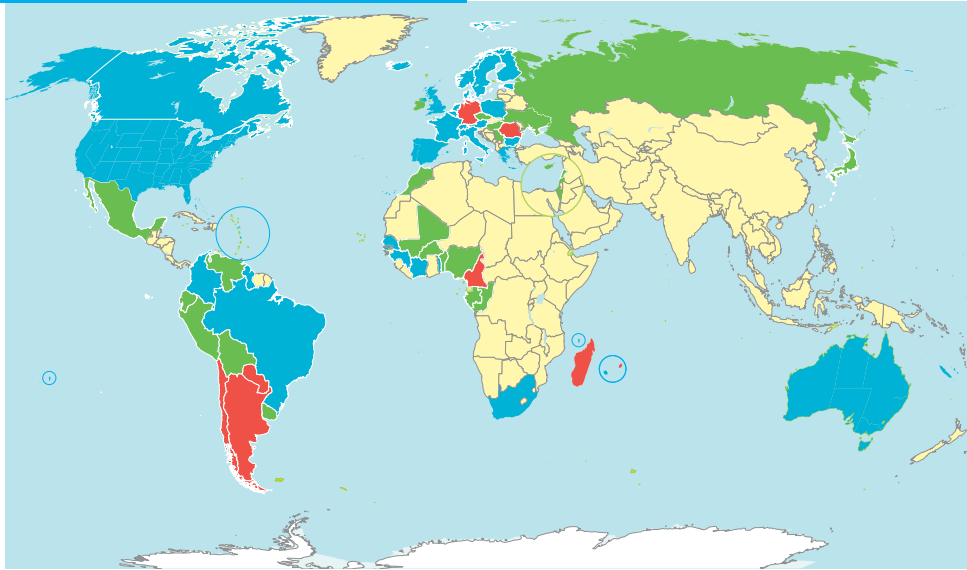
Freemasons meet together in lodges. A lodge is a group of freemasons under the direction of a Master; who may be a man or woman, with their officers, each of whom takes a part in the ritual of opening and closing of the lodge and in the degree ceremonies themselves. The Master, man or woman, is elected annually by the members of the lodge.

The opening of the lodge is a way of collectively raising the consciousness of the members. It allows a member to leave his everyday concerns outside the lodge and to work with his brothers and sisters in harmony. Sometimes in the meeting a member will deliver what is called a 'Piece of Architecture', which consists of his own reflections and insights into the symbols and allegories that strike him, or which he finds interesting. A lodge meets in a lodge room or temple once or twice a month.

ORGANISATION

Lodges have their own bye-laws and are also subject to the regulations of the International Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women Le Droit Humain, whose headquarters are in Paris, where the Order originated. The Supreme Council in Paris is the body which governs all Federations, Jurisdictions and Pioneer lodges.

LE DROIT HUMAIN WORLDWIDE



● Pioneer lodges ● Jurisdictions ● Federations

Lodges are grouped according to their number and that of their Federations, Jurisdictions or Pioneer lodges. In January 2016 the Order is well represented in 61 countries.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A FREEMASON?

WHAT DOES IT DO FOR ME
IN PRACTICAL TERMS?
HOW WILL I FEEL DIFFERENT?

All this depends on the individual person. Some people say that it is possible to recognise another freemason by his or her character, attitude to life, or spiritual presence. But most freemasons will say that becoming a freemason has helped them to achieve their true potential, has made them better morally and intellectually, has given meaning to their life, has benefited their relationships with their friends and family, has made sense of much that they previously found confusing or difficult.



REQUIREMENTS FOR JOINING

All men and women of good character and goodwill are eligible to join. You need to have an open mind and heart and to be someone who will join in a group and to be a 'team player'. You will need to commit yourself to attend all, or most of, the meetings, and to pay an annual subscription. A collection is taken at lodge meetings for the relief of those less well off or for the relief of suffering. You may give as much or as little as you like.

IF YOU FEEL THAT

- *you would like to discover other aspects of yourself*
- *you would like to develop your understanding of the world*
- *you want your life to be more fulfilling*
- *you would like to help the progress of humanity*

then we invite you to join us!

CONTACT US

By Post:
The International Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women,
Le Droit Humain, British Federation,
Hexagon House,
37-39 Surbiton Hill Road,
Surbiton,
Surrey,
KT6 4TS

Phone: 020 8339 9000
email: membership@freemasonryformenandwomen.co.uk
website: <http://freemasonryformenandwomen.co.uk>