

# Declaration of Principles

Despite the abundance of Masonic materials produced by and for Freemasons, I remind the brethren that the structured understanding of what Freemasonry in the State of Illinois consists of is exclusively contained within the Constitution and By-Laws of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, the By-laws of the local lodges, and the edicts ordered by the Illinois Grand Master.

According to code 368 of the Grand Lodge of Illinois Constitution and By-Laws, the authorized works of Illinois Freemasonry are the Official Monitor, the Officer's Manual, the Book of Ceremonials, the Book of Standard Work, the Floor Work Instruction Manual, and the Code or Cypher containing in "question and answer" form the catechism in the first, second and third degrees.

Each of these works has been duly adopted at an annual session of the Grand Lodge and are the only books containing ritual or ceremonial work authorized by the Grand Lodge of Illinois. Code 368 further states that "the use of any unauthorized code, exposé or other work purporting to set forth the esoteric work of Masonry is an offense under this code and shall upon conviction subject the offender to the severest Masonic penalty."

When a brother ascends to the East in an Illinois Masonic Lodge, among his instructions is included the advice, "The Book of Constitutions you are to search at all times. Cause it to be read in your lodge that none may pretend ignorance of the excellent precepts it enjoins." To this end, we will read the first chapter of the Book of Constitutions.

## From the Book of Constitutions

Freemasonry is a charitable, benevolent, educational, and religious society. Its principles are proclaimed as widely as men will hear. Its only secrets are in its methods of recognition and symbolic instruction.

It is charitable in that it is not organized for profit, and none of its income inures to the benefit of any individual. Still, all is devoted to the promotion of the welfare and happiness of mankind.

It is benevolent in that it teaches and exemplifies altruism as a duty. It is educational because it teaches by prescribed ceremonials a system of morality and brotherhood based upon the Sacred Law.

It is religious in that it teaches monotheism, the Volume of the Sacred Law is open upon its altar whenever a Lodge is in session, reverence for God is ever present in its ceremonials, and to its brethren are constantly addressed lessons of morality, yet it is not sectarian or theological.

It is a social organization only so far as it furnishes additional inducement that men may fgather in numbers, thereby providing more material for its primary work of education, worship, and charity.

Through the improvement and strengthening of the character of the individual man, Freemasonry seeks to improve the community. Thus, it impresses upon its members the principles of personal righteousness and personal responsibility, enlightens them as to those things which make for prosperous human welfare, and inspires them with that feeling of charity, or good will, toward all mankind which will move them to translate principle and conviction into action.

To that end, it teaches and stands for the worship of God; truth and justice; fraternity and philanthropy; and enlightenment and orderly liberty (civil, religious, and intellectual).

It charges each of its members to be true and loyal to the government of the country to which he owes allegiance and to be obedient to the law of any state in which he may be.

It believes that these objectives are best accomplished by laying a broad basis of principle upon which men of every race, country, sect, and opinion may unite rather than by setting up a restricted platform upon which only those of certain races, creeds, and opinions can assemble.

Believing these things, this Grand Lodge affirms its continued adherence to that ancient and approved rule of Freemasonry which forbids the discussion in Masonic meetings of creeds, politics, or other topics likely to excite personal animosities.

It further affirms its conviction that it is not only contrary to the fundamental principles of Freemasonry, but it also is dangerous to its unity, strength, usefulness, and welfare for Masonic Bodies to take action or attempt to exercise pressure or influence for or against any legislation, or in any way to attempt to procure the election or appointment of governmental officials, or to influence them, whether or not members of the Fraternity, in the performance of their official duties.

The true Freemason will act in civil life according to his individual judgment and the dictates of his conscience.