LAYING OF CORNER STONES OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND MASONIC HALLS

A special communication of the Grand Lodge is opened on the 3rd Degree by the GM or his Deputy. The Grand Marshal forms the procession in the following order:

- Flag
- Other Bodies
- Commanderies
- Grand Tyler
- JGS
- SGS
- MMs
- MMs
- PM w/ corn
- PM w/ oil
- PM w/ Wine
- Architect w/ tools
- Custodians
- DGS
- G Mus
- G Sec
- GTr
- PM w/ Great Lights
- G Ch
- PGLO
- Public Officials
- MM w/ Blue
- MM w/ red
- JGW
- SGW
- MM w/ White
- DGM
- MM w/ Book of Constitutions
- JGD
- GM
- SGD

Grand Marshal: “Open order, MARCH; HALT; inward, FACE.” The Grand Marshal passes through the lines and escorts the Grand Master and Grand Lodge Officers through the lines, in reverse order, to the platform.
PUBLIC INTRODUCTION TO FREEMASONRY

Brethren, ladies, and citizens of (town), welcome to this cornerstone laying ceremony for the new (name of facility). It is an honor for the Grand Master and the officers of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, Ancient Free & Accepted Masons to participate in this ceremony for such a beautiful new building.

Before we begin today’s ceremony, I would like to take a few minutes to explain some of what you will see and hear during the cornerstone ceremony. This will allow you a better understanding of the proceedings. After the ceremony is finished, please feel free to ask any Mason present about anything that you did not understand or about which you are curious. We would be most happy to explain more about either our symbols or the ceremony.
Modern Freemasonry began with the founding of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717 and much Masonic language and symbolism dates from that time. The Masons are the world’s oldest fraternal organization, older than the Elks, the Moose, Eagles, Kiwanis, Rotary and a host of others. Because Masonry is a fraternity, Masons refer to each other as “Brother.” It is a sign of our respect and commitment to one another.

You will hear the word “worshipful” used in introducing many of these men. That title, as used by Masons, has nothing whatsoever to do with religion. It is used in its eighteenth-century sense, and is the equivalent of “honorable” in modern English; in some court systems in English-speaking countries, judges are still referred to as “worshipful,” and addressed as “Your Worship.” The “Master” of a Lodge is its chief presiding officer, analogous to the president. Thus, “Worshipful Master” means “Honorable President.”

Some other Masonic officers—the wardens, deacons, and stewards—have inherited their titles from the structure of the English church in the eighteenth century. The “Senior Warden” is, in effect, the vice-president of a Lodge, and the “Junior Warden”
the assistant-vice-president. The Master, Wardens, Treasurer, and Secretary of a Lodge are elected annually by the membership, and serve one-year terms. The duties of the appointive deacons and stewards are primarily ritualistic. The deacons assist the Master and Wardens during the meetings; the stewards are in charge of setting up the meeting room and providing refreshments after a meeting. The Marshal conducts processions such as the one we had today and the “Tyler” is the officer who guards the door of a Lodge while it is in session to ensure that persons who are not members of the Fraternity do not disturb the meeting.

You may also hear us refer to some of the Grand Lodge Officers as “Right” and “Most.” These terms generally merely set off and acknowledge these officers as being elected rather than appointed. The term “Right Worshipful” is ascribed to the Senior Grand Warden, Junior Grand Warden, Grand Treasurer, and Grand Secretary. The Deputy Grand Master and Grand Chaplain are also referred to with the title of “Right,” although they are appointive officers. The term “Most” is reserved exclusively for the Grand Master.
Masons wear aprons as symbols of the leather aprons worn by our ancient predecessors, the stonemasons of the Middle Ages to protect their clothing while they were at work; our aprons are white, as a symbol of purity of thought, word, and deed.

You will note that the "Grand Master," or presiding officer is wearing a hat. This is an ancient tradition and is a symbol of his leadership. Only the Master is allowed to wear a hat in our meetings. It represents his responsibility to govern wisely and at the end of his term in office, to pass that authority on to the next leader.

The common gavel is a tool used by stonemasons—the craftsmen Freemasons refer to as “operative masons”—to remove irregular or rough edges from freshly-quarried stones, and to make the stones square, plumb, and level. Freemasons—called “speculative masons”—use a gavel as a signaling tool in our meetings. In a lodge, it is used by the Master and Wardens to keep order, much as a modern day judge uses his gavel in the court room. In the hands of the Master of the Lodge, it represents his elected authority to conduct meetings and maintain order. It is Masonic tradition that three knocks of the gavel (***) signal those in attendance to rise, while a single knock
(*) seats them again. We will use this convention in this ceremony, and the presiding officer, usually the Grand Master, will announce whether the signal is intended for all or only for Masons in attendance.

In response to prayers, Masons use the phrase “so mote it be.” The word “mote,” in eighteenth-century usage, is the equivalent of the modern words “may” or “might.” Thus “so mote it be” is the same as “so might it be,” and is the English translation of the Hebrew word “amen.” It is simply a repetition of “amen.”

The Public Grand Honors are given by Masons only. They consist of clapping the right hand over the left 3 times, then the left over the right 3 times, and finally the right over the left 3 times.

The ceremony of laying a cornerstone dates from antiquity. In the time of the builders of the ancient cathedrals of Europe the first stone of a building was placed with extreme care and with reverent ceremony. It was of great importance that the stone be square, level, and plumb, because the exactness of the entire building was dependent
on the trueness and the position of the cornerstone. It was checked carefully by the
workmen with their tools, the square, the level, and the plumb, and only then was it
approved by the Master in charge of the project.

As time passed and the building sciences became more exact and far more
mechanized, the cornerstone laying ceremony became more symbolic and less
practical. As late, however, as two hundred years ago, when George Washington
presided over the Masonic ceremony of laying the cornerstone for our nation’s capital,
the stone did continue to be laid as a symbol of the beginning of the construction
project. In more recent years, it has frequently been placed as a building is ready to be
put to its intended use. Such is the case today.

And so we now enter upon the traditional ceremony which has been conducted by the
Masonic Fraternity for generations. It is now my pleasure and honor to present to you,
Most Worshipful Bro. Donald E. Mosier, Grand Master of Masons in Iowa. Please join
me in giving him a hearty welcome.
CORNERSTONE LAYING CEREMONY

GRAND MASTER: From time immemorial it has been the custom of the ancient and honorable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, upon request, to lay, with their ancient forms, the corner stones of buildings erected for the worship of God, for educational or charitable objects, for Masonic uses, or for the purposes of the administration of justice and free government, and of no other buildings.

This corner stone, therefore, we may lay in accordance with our ancient law, and we gladly do so, thereby testifying our obedience to the law and our desire to show publicly our respect for the government under which we live.

As Freemasons we are taught that we should never enter upon any great and important undertaking without first invoking the blessing of Deity. Let us, therefore, give attention while our Grand Chaplain offers prayer. * * *
GRAND CHAPLAIN: Almighty and Eternal God, by Whom all things are made, grant that the building here erected may be to Thy glory and to the honor of Thy great name.

Bless the members of this ancient Craft where-so-ever dispersed around the globe, make them true and faithful unto Thee, and when the end of our labor is drawing near, graciously enable us to pass through the “valley of the shadow of death” supported by Thy rod and Thy staff to the mansions beyond the skies where love and peace and joy reign forever before Thy throne. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

GRAND MASTER: *

*After the prayer, the choir will sing a selection or the band may play something appropriate.*
GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Grand Treasurer, it has ever been the custom upon occasions like the present to deposit within the cavity prepared for its reception, a casket containing memorials of the time in which we live, so that, should the lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance, or the devastations of war lay bare these foundations, an enduring record may be found to bear testimony to the energy, industry, and culture of our time. Has such a deposit been prepared?

GRAND TREASURER: It has, Most Worshipful Grand Master, and the various articles are safely enclosed in the casket now before you.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Grand Secretary, you will read, for the information of the Craft and the people here assembled, a record of the contents of the casket.

Grand Secretary advances and reads the list prepared.
GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Grand Treasurer and Grand Secretary, you will now deposit the casket in the cavity prepared for it, and may the Great Architect of the Universe grant that ages shall pass away ere it again be seen by men.

Grand Treasurer and Grand Secretary deposit the casket.

GRAND TREASURER: Most Worshipful Grand Master, your order has been obeyed.

The Architect (or Marshal) delivers the square, level, and plumb to the Grand Master.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Senior Grand Warden, and Junior Grand Warden, receive these implements of your respective offices. (Presents.) With your assistance and that of the brethren here assembled, I will now proceed to lay the corner stone of the edifice, here [to be] erected, according to the custom of our ancient Craft.

[Worshipful Grand Marshal, order the craftsmen to lower the stone.]
The Grand Marshal with the aid of the workmen will then see that the stone is properly placed in position.

The Grand Master spreads the first troweful of mortar. (During this time, have appropriate music.)

**GRAND MASTER:** Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, what is the proper jewel of your office?

**DEPUTY GRAND MASTER:** *(steps forward)* The Square.

**GRAND MASTER:** What are its moral and Masonic uses?

**DEPUTY GRAND MASTER:** Morally, it teaches us to square our actions by the square of virtue, and by it we prove our work.

**GRAND MASTER:** Apply the implement of your office to the corner stone and make report.
DEPUTY GRAND MASTER *(applies the square and gives the military salute)*: Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be square. The craftsmen have performed their duty.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Senior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office?

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN: The level.

GRAND MASTER: What are its moral and Masonic uses?

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN: Morally, it teaches us equality, and by it we prove our work.

GRAND MASTER: Apply the implement of your office to the corner stone, and make report.
SENIOR GRAND WARDEN (applies the level to the stone and gives the military salute): Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be level. The craftsmen have performed their duty.

GRAND MASTER: Right Worshipful Junior Grand Warden, what is the proper jewel of your office?

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: The plumb.

GRAND MASTER: What are its moral and Masonic uses?

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: Morally it teaches us rectitude of life and conduct, and by it we prove our work.

GRAND MASTER: Apply the implement of your office to the corner stone, and make report.
JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN (applies the plumb to the stone and gives the military salute): Most Worshipful Grand Master, I find the stone to be plumb. The craftsmen have performed their duty.

GRAND MASTER: This corner stone has been tested by the proper implements of Masonry. I find that the craftsmen have skillfully and faithfully performed their duty, and I declare this corner stone to be well formed, true and trusty, and correctly laid, according to the rules of our ancient Craft. May the building, here [to be] erected, have been [be] constructed and completed amid the blessings of plenty, health, and peace. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

GRAND MASTER: Worshipful Grand Marshal, present the elements of consecration to the proper officers.

*The Grand Marshal presents the vessels*

   Corn to the JGW  Wine to the SGW and  Oil to the DGM
JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN (advances to the corner stone with the vessel of corn): I scatter this corn as an emblem of plenty. May the blessings of bounteous heaven be showered upon us, and upon this and all noble undertakings, and may the Great Architect of the Universe fill us with virtue, wisdom, and gratitude. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Marshal places a taper of blue wax on the south side of the stone.

SENIOR GRAND WARDEN (advances to the corner stone with the vessel of wine): I pour this wine as an emblem of refreshment. May the Great Architect of the Universe so refresh and strengthen us that we may never become weary in well doing, and may the spirit that shall go herefrom cheer and refresh the weary and heavy laden. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Marshal places a taper of red wax on the west side of the stone.
DEPUTY GRAND MASTER (advances to the corner stone with the vessel of oil): I pour this oil as an emblem of joy and gladness. May the blessing of heaven abide with us continually, and may the Grand Master of Heaven and Earth shelter and protect the widow and orphan, and vouchsafe to them and the bereaved, the afflicted, and sorrowing everywhere the enjoyment of every good and perfect gift.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

The Grand Marshal places a taper of white wax on the east side of the stone.

GRAND MASTER: The Grand Stewards will advance and place flowers upon the cornerstone as emblems of the love and beauty that this edifice adds to the peace and tranquility of the community.

The Grand Stewards advance and place flowers upon the corner stone.
GRAND MASTER: These schoolbooks are the symbol of intellectual liberty, the heritage of America’s millions, without which there can be neither civil nor religious freedom. They are particularly emblematical of the great Public School System of our country, the foundation of that universal enlightenment which is the crowning glory or our institutions. Devoted championship of the public schools is a cardinal teaching of Freemasonry. We are unalterably opposed to any one organization directing and controlling a building housing a school, a church, and a seat of government. The public school is America’s Marne. Before its door, this Order takes its stand and says to all who would assail the sacred citadel, “You shall not pass.” It calls upon all Americans to rally beneath the Flag that floats above the schoolhouses of our land. Civil, religious, and intellectual liberty are the triple temples of our country’s greatness, but they must stand alone, upon separate foundations and under separate roofs.
These books, representative of those carried by millions of American boys and girls every day, are just as vital symbols of American liberties as the Holy Bible, which is the rule and guide of our faith, or the Flag which protects the church, the school, and the seat of civil power. Ignorance is the parent of superstition, bigotry, fanaticism, and intolerance. Freemasonry, waging a never-ending warfare against those terrible enemies of mankind, regards the American System of Education as its mightiest ally. I therefore charge all present to stand unswervingly for the protection and perpetuity of this Public School, for the support of the Public School System in general, and for the education of the masses.
GRAND MASTER (advances to the corner stone and extends hands): May the corn of nourishment, and the oil of joy be abundant among men throughout the whole world. May the blessing of Almighty God rest upon this undertaking. May He have protected the workmen from every accident. May the structure, here erected, be contrived by wisdom, executed in strength, and adorned with beauty. May it long be preserved as a monument of the energy and liberality of its founders, and of this free and enlightened government, under whose protecting care it is our privilege to live. Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

GRAND MASTER: Masons only *** (strike the corner stone three times with gavel): Brethren, unite with me in giving the Public Grand Honors of Masonry. xxx xxx xxx *
GRAND MARSHAL: Most Worshipful Grand Master, I present to you __________, the architect of this building, who is ready with craftsmen for the work.

GRAND MASTER: Worthy sir, having thus, as Grand Master of Masons in Iowa, laid this corner stone according to the rules of our ancient Craft, I now deliver these implements of operative Masonry into your hands with the fullest confidence that by your skill and tact, aided by faithful craftsmen, a fabric will rise which shall add new lustre to this city and state. May there be no envy, discord, or confusion among the workmen. May the important duties confided to you be performed, not only to the satisfaction of those who have entrusted you with their fulfillment, but in such a manner as shall secure the approbation of your own conscience, and thereby redound to the honor of our common country.

Worshipful Grand Marshal, you will make the proclamation.
GRAND MARSHAL: In the name of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Iowa of Ancient, Free, and Accepted Masons, I now proclaim that the corner stone of the structure, here erected, has this day been proved square, level, and plumb, true and trusty, and laid according to the rules of our ancient Craft by the Grand Master of Masons. This proclamation is made to the East (one blast of the bugle), to the West (two blasts), to the North (three blasts), to the South (four blasts), that all persons having due notice may govern themselves accordingly.

All present now join in singing a – Closing Ode.

After which may be delivered a suitable – Oration

GRAND MASTER: The benediction will now be pronounced by the Grand Chaplain. ***
Benediction

GRAND CHAPLAIN: Glory to God on high, on earth peace and good-will toward men! O Lord, we most heartily beseech Thee with Thy favor to behold and bless this assemblage; pour down Thy mercies, like the dew that falls upon the mountains, upon Thy servants engaged in the solemn ceremonies of this day. Bless, we pray Thee, all the workmen engaged in the erection of this edifice; keep them from all forms of accident and harm; grant them health and prosperity in life, and finally, after this life, may we all, through Thy mercy and forgiveness, attain everlasting joy and felicity in Thy bright mansion, Thy holy temple, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Amen and Amen.

RESPONSE: So mote it be.

After which the Grand Lodge, with escort, under the direction of the Grand Marshal, returns to the place whence it started, and is closed. The lodges and other Masonic bodies return to their respective halls.