

WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?

(A Presentation)



*Property of the Grand Council
of Cryptic Masons
of the State of New York*

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**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

This program is written to be presented by FOUR Companions.

The Companion serving as NARRATOR should be a Past or current Illustrious Master.

All participating Companions should be clothed as CRYPTIC MASONS, if permitted by the Chapter.

The Companions will place themselves as follows in the North, West, South and East.

- (a) The NARRATOR will assume the Master's station in the EAST, with the TROWEL.**
- (c) The Companion presenting the ROYAL MASTER DEGREE will assume a place in the NORTH directly opposite the Junior Warden's Station.**
- (e) The Companion presenting the SELECT MASTER DEGREE will assume the Senior Warden's station in the WEST.**
- (g) The Companion presenting the SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE will assume the Junior Warden's Station in the SOUTH.**

Each portion of this presentation may be read. But each participating Companion must familiarize himself in advance with his part.

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

(Given from the MASTER'S STATION in the EAST by the NARRATOR.)

INTRODUCTION

**GOOD EVENING MY COMPANIONS! MY NAME IS _____,
AS MANY OF YOU KNOW, I AM A PAST HIGH PRIEST OF _____,
CHAPTER NO. _____. BUT I AM HERE TO TALK WITH YOU
TONIGHT AS A (PAST) ILLUSTRIOUS MASTER OF _____
COUNCIL NO. _____, CRYPTIC MASONS, WHICH MEETS IN _____.**

**WITH ME THIS EVENING ARE (ILLUSTRIOUS) COMPANIONS
(Names other Companions taking part _____, _____,
AND _____ . AT THE FRATERNAL INVITATION OF YOUR
EXCELLENT HIGH PRIEST, WE ARE HERE TONIGHT TO SHARE
WITH YOU SOME FURTHER LIGHT IN MASONRY BY EXPLAINING
THE DEGREES THAT ARE CONFERRED IN A COUNCIL OF
CRYPTIC MASONS.**

**YOU MAY BE THINKING, WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?
WHY SHOULD I AS A ROYAL ARCH MASON BE INTERESTED IN
LEARNING ABOUT THESE DEGREES? AND WHAT FURTHER
MASONIC LIGHT CAN I LEARN FROM THEM, IF I SHOULD SEEK
TO BECOME A CRYPTIC MASON MYSELF?**

**ANCIENT CRAFT MASONRY IS COMPRISED OF THREE
DEGREES, WHICH EACH ONE OF US HERE TONIGHT HAS
RECEIVED. OVER A PERIOD OF MANY YEARS IN THE HISTORY
OF OUR FRATERNITY, BROTHERS JUST LIKE YOU AND ME
CONCEIVED, DEFINED, AND PERFECTED ADDITIONAL DEGREES
TO IMPART FURTHER MASONIC LIGHT TO MEMBERS OF OUR
CRAFT WITH A GENUINE DESIRE TO EXPAND THEIR MASONIC
INTEREST AND KNOWLEDGE. THE FACT THAT YOU ARE HERE
TONIGHT AS A ROYAL ARCH MASON IS TESTIMONY TO YOUR
BEING A MASON WHO IS EAGER TO EXPAND YOUR
UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE OF FREEMASONRY.**

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

HOWEVER, MY COMPANIONS, YOUR HAVING EARNED THE RANK AND TITLE OF ROYAL ARCH MASON DOES NOT MEAN THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED ALL THE LIGHT THAT MASONRY HAS TO OFFER.

THE CRYPTIC DEGREES ARE SAID TO COMPLETE THE "CIRCLE OF PERFECTION" IN A MASON'S UNDERSTANDING. MY COMPANIONS, YOU BEGAN THAT CIRCLE WHEN YOU RECEIVED THE SYMBOLIC DEGREES IN YOUR LODGE. YOU CONTINUED IT WHEN YOU RECEIVED THE CAPITULAR DEGREES IN YOUR CHAPTER. THE CRYPTIC DEGREES ARE WHERE YOU COMPLETE THAT CIRCLE OF PERFECTION AND WITH IT, GAIN A NEW AND FULLER APPRECIATION OF THOSE PRECEDING DEGREES.

THE CRYPTIC DEGREES ARE ALSO CALLED THE "*DEGREES OF PRESERVATION*" BECAUSE THEY FOCUS OUR ATTENTION ON THAT WHICH WAS PRESERVED AT THE TIME OF THE BUILDING OF KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE FOR THE BENEFIT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS SUCH AS OURS. THE CRYPTIC RITE HERE IN AMERICA IS A PART OF THAT PROGRESSION OF "SOLOMONIC" DEGREES WHICH WE CALL THE YORK RITE. ONLY ROYAL ARCH MASONS MAY JOIN A COUNCIL OF CRYPTIC MASONS. THE NAME "CRYPTIC" DOES NOT MEAN "MYSTERIOUS". IT REFERS TO THE UNDERGROUND "CRYPT" OR "SECRET VAULT" BUILT BY KING SOLOMON WHERE AS A ROYAL ARCH MASON, YOU DISCOVERED THE LONG LOST MASTER'S WORD.

AS CRYPTIC MASONS WE ARE KNOWN BY THE TITLE OF "*SELECT MASTERS*", THE REASON FOR WHICH WILL BE EXPLAINED TO YOU WHEN WE HEAR MORE ABOUT THAT DEGREE. INDIVIDUALLY, CRYPTIC MASONS ADDRESS EACH OTHER AS COMPANIONS, THE SAME AS IN THE CHAPTER.

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?b
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

WE MEET IN LOCAL BODIES KNOWN AS COUNCILS. OUR COUNCILS WORK UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE GRAND COUNCIL OF CRYPTIC MASONS OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK. WE IN NEW YORK STATE ARE PROUD TO BE THE BIRTH PLACE OF ORGANIZED CRYPTIC MASONRY. THE FIRST COUNCIL EVER WAS FORMED IN NEW YORK CITY JUST A FEW YEARS AFTER THE FOUNDING OF OUR GRAND CHAPTER AND IS STILL ACTIVE TODAY.

WE CONFER TWO DEGREES IN A COUNCIL OF CRYPTIC MASONS. THE FIRST IS THE *ROYAL MASTER DEGREE*. IT IS A PREREQUISITE TO RECEIVING THE SECOND OR *SELECT MASTER DEGREE*. THERE IS A THIRD DEGREE, *THE SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER*. HERE IN THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, IT IS AN HONORARY OR OPTIONAL ONE WHICH IS SPECIALLY CONFERRED.

THE DEGREES WE CONFER IN OUR COUNCILS ARE DIRECTLY CONNECTED TO THE SYMBOLIC DEGREES YOU AND I RECEIVED IN OUR LODGES AND THE CAPITULAR DEGREES WE RECEIVED IN OUR ROYAL ARCH CHAPTERS. WHEN YOU RECEIVE THE DEGREES IN THE COUNCIL, YOU, AS THE CANDIDATE, ARE AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE CEREMONIES, JUST AS YOU WERE WHEN YOU WERE IN YOUR LODGE AND CHAPTER.

WHAT MAKES THE CRYPTIC DEGREES UNIQUE? THEY CONTINUE, AND MORE IMPORTANTLY, COMPLETE THE MASONIC STORY OF KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE. THEY COVER A PERIOD BEGINNING JUST PRIOR TO YOUR MASTER MASON DEGREE IN THE LODGE TO A TIME IMMEDIATELY LEADING UP TO THE START OF YOUR ROYAL ARCH DEGREE IN THE CHAPTER.

**WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

MY COMPANIONS AND I WOULD LIKE TO INDIVIDUALLY HIGHLIGHT FOR YOU EACH OF THE CRYPTIC DEGREES. THE TROWEL IS ONE OF THE DISTINGUISHING EMBLEMS OF A CRYPTIC MASON. I WILL NOW PASS THIS TROWEL TO:

(ILLUSTRIOUS) COMPANION _____ IN THE NORTH WHO WILL DESCRIBE FOR YOU THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE.

(CARRY THE TROWEL TO THE COMPANION IN THE NORTH, THEN RETURN TO YOUR STATION IN THE EAST.)

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

***(GIVEN FROM THE NORTH, DIRECTLY
OPPOSITE THE JUNIOR WARDEN'S STATION)***

ROYAL MASTER DEGREE

***(COMPANION RECEIVES THE TROWEL FROM THE COMPANION
IN THE EAST.)***

MY COMPANIONS, *THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE* GIVES YOU A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF YOUR "MASTER MASON DEGREE."

IN OUR JOURNEY TOWARD BEING MADE A MASTER MASON IN OUR RESPECTIVE LODGES, EACH OF US HERE TONIGHT WAS REQUIRED TO SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENT GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF WHO WAS SLAIN FOR REFUSING TO COMPROMISE HIS INTEGRITY AS A MASTER MASON.

IN THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE, YOU MY COMPANION, MEET AND TALK WITH GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF DIRECTLY. IN DOING SO, YOU COME TO UNDERSTAND WHY HE WAS CHOSEN BY OUR EARLY BRETHERN TO PERSONIFY ALL THAT BEING A MASTER MASON MEANS.

THE SETTING FOR THIS DEGREE IS KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE. THE STORY PORTRAYED IN ITS CEREMONIES TAKES PLACE AT A POINT IN TIME IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO AND JUST AFTER THE DEATH OF GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF AS TOLD IN YOUR MASTER MASON DEGREE.

IN THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE, YOU AS THE CANDIDATE SYMBOLICALLY REPRESENT ADONIRAM. THE HOLY BIBLE

**¿WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?¿
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

INFORMS US THAT HE WAS BOTH A TRUSTED FRIEND OF GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF AND HIS ASSISTANT. HE WAS CHARGED WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OVERSEEING THE CUTTING OF THE TIMBER IN THE FORESTS OF LEBANON AND THE QUARRYING OF STONE USED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE.

IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE, GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF SHARES WITH YOU AS THE CANDIDATE, WHAT IT MEANS TO HAVE ASSUMED THE CHARACTER OF A MASTER MASON. HE TALKS WITH YOU ABOUT THE PROFOUND AND LASTING INFLUENCE YOU AS A MASTER MASON MAY HAVE, AN INFLUENCE THAT YOU MAY NOT EVEN BE AWARE OF. AND HOW FOR THAT REASON, YOU ARE TO REMAIN TRUE TO YOUR MASONIC CHARACTER AND PRINCIPLES NOT ONLY WHILE IN THE COMPANY OF MASONS BUT WHILE ABROAD IN THE WORLD.

HE SHARES ALL THIS WITH YOU THROUGH RITUAL THAT HAS BEEN DESCRIBED BY NOTED MASONIC HISTORIANS AS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND ELOQUENT IN ALL OF MASONRY.

IN THE SECOND SECTION OF THE ROYAL MASTER DEGREE, YOU ARE ADMITTED INTO THE PRESENCE OF KING SOLOMON FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF. FOR REASONS THAT ARE MADE KNOWN TO YOU IN THE CEREMONIES OF THE DEGREE, KING SOLOMON CHOOSES TO CONFER UPON YOU THE NEW RANK AND TITLE OF ROYAL MASTER.

**WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

MY COMPANIONS, IT WAS YOUR CHARACTER AS A MAN WHICH LAID THE FOUNDATION FOR YOUR SEEKING TO BE MADE A MASON. YOUR DESIRE TO BUILD ON THAT FOUNDATION AS A MASTER MASON LED YOU TO BECOME A ROYAL ARCH MASON AND RECEIVE THE MASTER'S WORD.

THE FURTHER MASONIC LIGHT YOU WILL RECEIVE IN THE "ROYAL MASTER DEGREE" CEMENTS YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF WHAT IT TRULY MEANS TO BE A MASTER MASON.

I WILL NOW CARRY THE TROWEL TO (ILLUSTRIOUS) COMPANION _____ IN THE WEST WHO WILL DESCRIBE FOR YOU THE "SELECT MASTER DEGREE".

***(CARRY THE TROWEL TO THE COMPANION IN THE WEST,
THEN RETURN TO YOUR STATION IN THE NORTH.)***

(GIVEN FROM THE SENIOR WARDEN'S STATION IN THE WEST.)

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

SELECT MASTER DEGREE

(RECEIVE THE TROWEL FROM THE COMPANION IN THE NORTH.)

MY COMPANIONS, THE *SELECT MASTER DEGREE* GIVES YOU A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION OF YOUR ROYAL ARCH DEGREE.

AS A MASTER MASON, YOU WERE INFORMED THAT YOU COULD NOT BE GIVEN THE SECRET WORD OF A MASTER MASON BECAUSE IT HAD BEEN LOST WITH THE DEATH OF GRAND MASTER HIRAM ABIF. AS A ROYAL ARCH MASON, YOU UNCOVERED THE LONG LOST MASTER'S WORD AND THE ARK OF THE COVENANT BURIED IN A SECRET VAULT BENEATH THE RUINS OF KING SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

IN THE SELECT MASTER DEGREE, YOU LEARN WHY KING SOLOMON CHOSE THAT AS THE HIDING PLACE. YOU WILL LEARN THE SYMBOLISM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EACH OF THE ITEMS CHOSEN FOR DEPOSIT IN THE ARK OF THE COVENANT, WHERE YOU FOUND THEM IN YOUR ROYAL ARCH DEGREE. MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, IN THE SELECT MASTER DEGREE YOU WILL LEARN WHY THE SECRET WORD OF MASTER MASON COULD ONLY BE GIVEN IN THE PRESENCE OF ALL THREE OF OUR ANCIENT GRAND MASTERS, AND THEREFORE WHY AS A NEW MASTER MASON YOU COULD NOT RECEIVE IT AT THAT TIME.

LIKE THE ROYAL MASTER, THE SELECT MASTER DEGREE GIVES YOU YET ANOTHER PORTION OF THE SOLOMONIC STORY. IT TAKES PLACE JUST PRIOR TO THE EVENTS OF THE

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

MASTER MASON DEGREE. THE SETTING IS THE UNDERGROUND CHAMBER OR *CRYPT* WHICH KING SOLOMON ORDERED TO BE CONSTRUCTED BENEATH HIS PERSONAL APARTMENTS IN THE TEMPLE. KING SOLOMON ORDERED THE WORK TO BE DONE WITH THE UTMOST SECRECY. TO THAT END, HE PERSONALLY CHOSE A SMALL, SELECT GROUP OF HIS MOST SKILLED AND TRUSTED CRAFTSMEN. IT IS FOR THAT REASON THAT ALL COMPANIONS OF THE CRYPTIC RITE ARE KNOWN AS SELECT MASTERS.

AS THE CANDIDATE, YOU WILL PORTRAY ZABUD, A TRUSTED FRIEND OF KING SOLOMON BUT NOT ONE OF THOSE WHOM HE SELECTED TO WORK ON THE SECRET VAULT. MY COMPANIONS, IN YOUR ROYAL ARCH DEGREE, IT WAS AN ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY IN THE RUINS OF THE TEMPLE WHICH LED YOU TO UNCOVER THE ARK OF THE COVENANT AND THE LONG LOST MASTER'S WORD. IN THE FIRST SECTION OF THE SELECT MASTER DEGREE, AS ZABUD, YOU ACCIDENTALLY DISCOVER THE SECRET VAULT AT A TIME OF ITS ORIGINAL CONSTRUCTION. FOR REASONS THAT ARE REVEALED TO YOU IN THE CEREMONIES OF THE DEGREE, YOU FIND YOURSELF BEING ADMITTED TO THAT SELECT BAND OF CRAFTSMEN. IN THE SECOND SECTION OF THE DEGREE, YOU LEARN THE AFOREMENTIONED REASONS FOR THE SYMBOLIC DEPOSITS IN THE ARK AND THE REASONS FOR PRESERVING THE SECRET WORD OF MASTER MASON.

I WILL NOW PASS THE *TROWEL* TO (ILLUSTRIOUS) COMPANION _____ IN THE SOUTH WHO WILL DESCRIBE FOR YOU THE *ψSUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREEψ*.

(CARRY THE TROWEL TO THE COMPANION IN THE SOUTH, THEN RETURN TO YOUR STATION IN THE WEST.)

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

(GIVEN FROM THE JUNIOR WARDEN'S STATION IN THE SOUTH.)

SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE

(RECEIVE THE TROWEL FROM THE COMPANION IN THE WEST.)

MY COMPANIONS, AS YOU KNOW, THE ROYAL ARCH DEGREE TAKES PLACE AT THE TIME OF THE REBUILDING OF SOLOMON'S TEMPLE, 450 YEARS AFTER THE TIME OF THE MASTER MASON, ROYAL MASTER AND SELECT MASTER DEGREES. THE *SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE* IN THE COUNCIL TELLS THE STORY OF HOW THE TEMPLE CAME TO BE DESTROYED AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL SENT INTO EXILE. IT ALSO CONVEYS AN IMPORTANT MORAL LESSON CONCERNING FIDELITY AND THE INTEGRITY OF A MASON'S WORD BEING HIS BOND WHEN GIVEN AS SUCH.

IN THE GRAND COUNCIL OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK, THE SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE IS AN "*HONORARY*" ONE, MEANING THAT IT IS AVAILABLE TO ALL SELECT MASTERS BUT IS NOT A MANDATORY DEGREE TO BECOMING A CRYPTIC MASON.

THE SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE IS ALWAYS CONFERRED IN FULL FORM HERE IN THE GRAND COUNCIL OF NEW YORK. IN THE FIRST SECTION, YOU AS THE CANDIDATE, ARE RECEIVED INTO A COUNCIL OF SUPER EXCELLENT MASTERS WHERE THE FORM OF THE CEREMONIES ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE PRECEDING DEGREES. THE SECOND SECTION IS PRESENTED IN THE FORM OF A DRAMA WHICH INVOLVES OVER THIRTY FIVE COMPANIONS WHEN DONE IN FULL FORM. IT PROTRAYS THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT OF ZEDEKIAH, THE LAST KING OF JUDAH. IT TELLS HOW HE HAD GIVEN HIS WORD AS A PLEDGE, BUT A PLEDGE WHICH HE LATER FOUND CONVENIENT TO IGNORE WHEN IT WAS PUT TO

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

THE TEST. THIS DEGREE GOES ON TO SHOW HOW NOT ONLY HE PERSONALLY SUFFERED THE CONSEQUENCES OF BETRAYING HIS WORD BUT HOW IT LED TO THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND HIS PEOPLE BEING SENT INTO EXILE IN BABYLON. MASONICALLY, IT LAYS THE GROUND WORK FOR THE START OF THE ROYAL ARCH DEGREE AND THE ORDER OF THE RED CROSS IN THE COMMANDERY OF KNIGHT TEMPLAR.

THE SUPER EXCELLENT MASTER DEGREE WHEN CONFERRED IN FULL FORM HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS ONE OF THE MOST COLORFUL IN ALL OF MASONRY. IT ADDS TO THE COMPLETION OF EVERY ROYAL ARCH MASON'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE COMPLETE SOLOMONIC LEGEND BY BRIDGING THE HISTORICAL GAP BETWEEN THE MOST EXCELLENT MASTER AND ROYAL ARCH DEGREES IN THE CHAPTER.

IT IS ALSO, WHEN CONFERRED IN FULL FORM, ONE OF THE MOST DRAMATIC AND MEMORABLE DEGREES IN ANY MASON'S EXPERIENCE.

HAVING NOW LEARNED WHAT THE CRYPTIC DEGREES OFFER, I WILL NOW PASS THE *TROWEL* TO (ILLUSTRIOUS) COMPANION _____ IN THE EAST WHO WILL EXPLAIN HOW YOU MAY BECOME A CRYPTIC MASON.

***(CARRY THE TROWEL TO THE EAST,
THEN RETURN TO YOUR STATION IN THE SOUTH.)***

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

(TO BE PRESENTED BY THE NARRATOR FROM THE EAST.)

**HOW TO BECOME A CRYPTIC MASON IN
_____ COUNCIL # _____**

**MY COMPANIONS, THE FIRST STEPS TO BECOMING A
CRYPTIC MASON ARE SIMILAR TO HOW YOU FIRST BECAME A
MASON.**

**IT BEGINS WITH YOUR HAVING A GENUINE DESIRE TO
OBTAIN FURTHER LIGHT IN MASONRY.**

**YOU MUST BE A ROYAL ARCH MASON IN GOOD
STANDING IN A LEGALLY CONSTITUTED AND DULY
RECOGNIZED CHAPTER OF ROYAL ARCH MASONS.**

**NEXT, YOU MUST ASK A COMPANION OF THE CRYPTIC
RITE FOR A PETITION.**

**THE PETITION FEE TO JOIN _____ COUNCIL # _____
IS \$ _____ .00.**

**HE WILL PROPOSE YOUR NAME TO HIS COUNCIL AND
THE COMPANIONS WILL BALLOT ON YOUR PETITION THE
SAME AS WAS DONE FOR YOU IN YOUR CHAPTER.**

**IF ACCEPTED, YOU WILL BE NOTIFIED BY THE RECORDER OF
THE COUNCIL WHO WILL ALSO ADVISE YOU WHEN THE ROYAL
MASTER DEGREE WILL BE CONFERRED.**

**"WHAT IS CRYPTIC MASONRY?"
(A PRESENTATION)**

Grand Council of Cryptic Masons of the State of New York

_____ COUNCIL # _____ MEETS ON THE _____ DAY

OF EVERY MONTH, EXCEPT FOR _____.

THE COUNCIL MEETS IN THE _____ MASONIC TEMPLE

N _____ WHERE CHAPTER # _____
(TOWN)

ALSO MEETS.

THE ANNUAL DUES PLUS PER CAPITA TAX ARE

\$ _____ .00 A YEAR.

THE CURRENT ILLUSTRIOUS MASTER IS ILLUSTRIOUS

COMPANION _____.

THE MEMBERS COME FROM DIFFERENT CHAPTERS IN
THIS CAPITULAR DISTRICT INCLUDING THIS CHAPTER.

MY COMPANIONS, WE HOPE THAT YOU NOW HAVE A
GOOD SENSE OF WHAT THE CRYPTIC DEGREES OFFER A
ROYAL ARCH MASON SEEKING TO COMPLETE THE *CIRCLE
OF PERFECTION* THROUGH FURTHER MASONIC LIGHT. WE
THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION. WE WOULD NOW
BE HAPPY TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS YOU MIGHT HAVE.
AND PLEASE FEEL FREE TO TALK WITH ANY ONE OF US
FOLLOWING THIS CONVOCATION. THANK YOU EXCELLENT
HIGH PRIEST! AND THANK YOU AGAIN, MY COMPANIONS!