

The Grand Lodge of New Jersey permits Lodges to use the Chamber of Reflection

By R.W. Mohamad A. Yatim, GEO

Freemasonry is a universal fraternity whose roots are believed to date back to antiquity. While Freemasonry's teachings, including symbolism, tenets and ancient landmarks may have some similarities around the world, the rituals employed by different Grand Jurisdictions can be quite unique and very different from one another. The ritual is a ceremony, or a traditional system adopted by a Grand Lodge to initiate, pass, and raise members through the degrees of our ancient fraternity and, importantly, help convey the secret knowledge pertaining to them. While our fraternity places a significant importance on the preservation of ritual, the same may be quite different from one state to another.

The "Chamber of Reflection" is not a new or revolutionary idea in Freemasonry. Its usage dates back to the 17th century and remains an integral part of the initiation process for a number of regular and recognized Grand Lodges around the world.

The purpose of the Chamber of Reflection is to allow the Entered Apprentice candidate to reflect upon his past, present, and future and, more importantly, ponder his reasons for wanting to become a Freemason. Each of the objects placed in a Chamber of Reflection is intended to hold certain meanings and convey a message to help a candidate reflect upon the most important aspects of his life. The room itself symbolizes an environment of transformation. The symbols of mortality are never to be used as scare tactics, but to simply remind a candidate about his mortality and that his imperfect character by nature will symbolically "die" with his pre-Masonic life. As he is initiated into Freemasonry, he is symbolically "re-born" as a traveler on the path of enlightenment, having a renewed perspective on life that would help live as an upright Man and a Mason.

The Grand Lodge of New Jersey F&AM recognizes that the use of a Chamber of Reflection is an ancient Masonic practice used by candidates prior to them receiving the Entered Apprentice ("EA") Degree. Under the direction of M.W. Roger B. Quintana, Grand Master of Masons of the State of New Jersey, the Education and Services committees has published a manual and a guideline for Lodges that wish to

incorporate the use of the Chamber of Reflection to follow and abide by. This manual was reviewed and approved by the Grand Instructor, M.W. Larry S. Plasket.

The use of Chamber of Reflection by Lodges is totally voluntarily and the decision of whether to use it or not is determined at a Lodge level by a motion and a vote during any regular communication of the said Lodge. Should a Lodge in New Jersey decide to use this practice for the benefit of its EA candidates, then the Worshipful Master and officers responsible for the creation and maintenance of a Chamber of Reflection must plan and coordinate its use to maintain proper decorum and ensure that the environment is reflective of a solemn and meditative atmosphere. The Lodge's Chamber of Reflection must be pre-approved by the District Deputy Grand Master of the district in which the Lodge operates.

If your lodge wishes to learn more about the Chamber of Reflection and its use, please contact your District Deputy Grand Master for a copy of the approved guidelines and manual. You can also contact R.W. Mohamad A. Yatim, GEO or any member of the Education and Services committee.