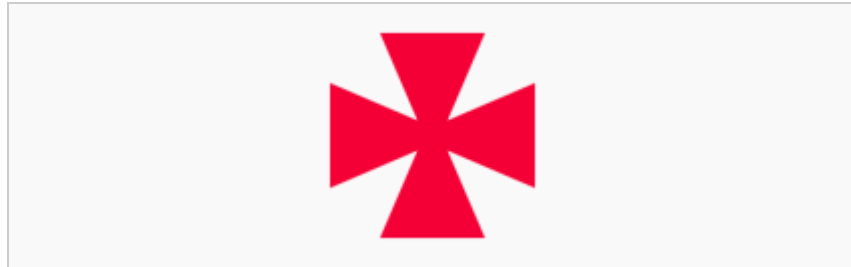




The Overy Papers

Number 26 - The Swedish Rite



Fraternal Greetings Brethren

This Paper was written with the help of a Scandinavian Mason who lived in Chilliwack, British Columbia for a while and became a friend of many masons in District 18.

The Red Cross in the above form is Scandinavian and is known as the St. George Cross. It is a commonly used symbol for Freemasonry in the Swedish Rite alongside the more common international, Square and Compasses.

The **Swedish Rite** is a Rite of Freemasonry that is common in Scandinavian countries.

There are three different Lodges:

St. John's (Craft) that covers degrees 1 through 3,

St Andrew, (Scottish) that covers degrees 4 through 6

and the **Chapter** that covers degrees 7 through 10

In addition one may attain the 11th degree, although only a very few gain this, as it primarily is given to Grand Lodge officers.

The Swedish Rite, unlike ours demands members be Christian and not just that they believe in a supreme being.

Like our system only men are allowed membership and Masonic laws prohibit any member to gain advantages outside the lodge by using the lodge as an instrument.

It also stresses the charity works of the members and the observance of the

Golden Rule; treat others as you would want them to treat you. Since 2006 all the laws of the Swedish Order of Freemasons are publicly available on the Internet.

The Swedish rite is a truly progressive system, where each degree builds upon the preceding degrees and is different from Emulation and Ancient and Canadian rites in a number of ways.

With regular attendance, Swedish Rite Masons can progress to the 10th degree over a period of roughly 15 years, and they will get their full understanding of masonry from doing so.

This progression is can be achieved by taking up a Lodge office but there is no obligation to do so and Masons who do, are not obliged to take these in a specific sequence.

For example, a Mason may be elected as Deputy Master without ever having taken another office, although they must have acquired a specific degree before taking up a specific office.

As a consequence Masons become members of a new lodge when they progress into the next level and so you don't belong to a lodge forever.

Progression from one degree to the next is not automatic and a brother not only has to be in regular attendance, but also has to show that he has a certain proficiency and knowledge of Freemasonry.

The lower degrees represent the Old Testament and the higher degrees represent the New Testament and the square and compass changes its place in the Bible from a one degree to another.

The primary business of the Lodge is only to initiate and move masons up in degrees. The Lodges are not numbered, as ours and just have names such as "Polar Star Lodge" for example.

These lodges are very busy and they often have meetings several days a week and means they usually have several people in the same office in the Lodge.

They could have up to four Senior Wardens known as First Senior Warden, Second Senior Warden, Third Senior Warden and Extra Senior Warden and so on for all the other officers.

The Worshipful Master is a six-year appointment, at least, and often longer and there is no flow through the Lodge Officers as in ours but just a flow through the degrees.

These Lodges do not have regular meetings as we have and much of the usual Masonic business is not in the lodge but in "the Fraternities".

The Fraternities are very similar to our lodge doing business work but their primary aim is for Masonic education and they have a deacon (talman) or an invited guest to educate the members on Masonic work.

Even though the Order in itself is no church, the education, which is done by the deacon in many Lodges is often a clergyman and therefore their lessons are quite similar to sermons, although always using Masonic symbolism.

The three Different type of Lodge

The St. John Lodges

The St. John Lodges are closest to our Craft Lodges and covers the same three degrees. But the main difference is that the natural progression through the Lodge is to progress through the degrees and not through the officers.

First degree - Birth

Second degree - Life

Third degree - Death

Like our craft lodges they follow the same story and reenactments, although they are a lot more elaborate. The lodge starts quite dark with only a few candles lit, but as the lesser lights are lit, the lodge lights up with hidden electrical lights.

The first three degrees are quite comparable to the three degrees of Craft Lodges and Master Masons from Swedish rite lodges are recognized by United Grand Lodge of England and are permitted to visit each other's meetings.

The names of the first three degrees, Apprentice, Fellow, and Master are identical to the degrees of our Craft Lodges and so is the morality being taught, and the well-known symbols of Freemasonry are the same in both rites. Freemasons from either rite will therefore immediately have an understanding when they visit a lodge working under the other rite, however, the actual layout of the lodge room and the actual rituals are quite different. (See Lodge Layouts)

The lodges meetings are very dramatic and there is a lot of theatrical interpretation.

At the beginning of the meeting the "light" is moved from the altar by the Worshipful Master, lighting the first of the lesser lights to the Senior Warden then to the Junior Wardens position.

The Junior and Senior Warden have a drawn sword and the Junior Warden will actually check that the lodge is properly tiled. The different ranks will sit together in their respective place in lodge. (See Lodge Layouts)

The St Andrew Lodges

This Lodge represents passing through Purgatory to the gates of the Temple and deals with degrees 4-5 and 6.

Here there is some resemblance between these St. Andrews degrees and the Holy Royal Arch and the Scottish Rite.

This is usually held in a different Lodge that is designed in three parts. First part of the 4-5th degree is a pathway through purgatory, second the Lodge Room and the third is a separate Lodge room, representing the Courtyard of King Solomon's Temple.

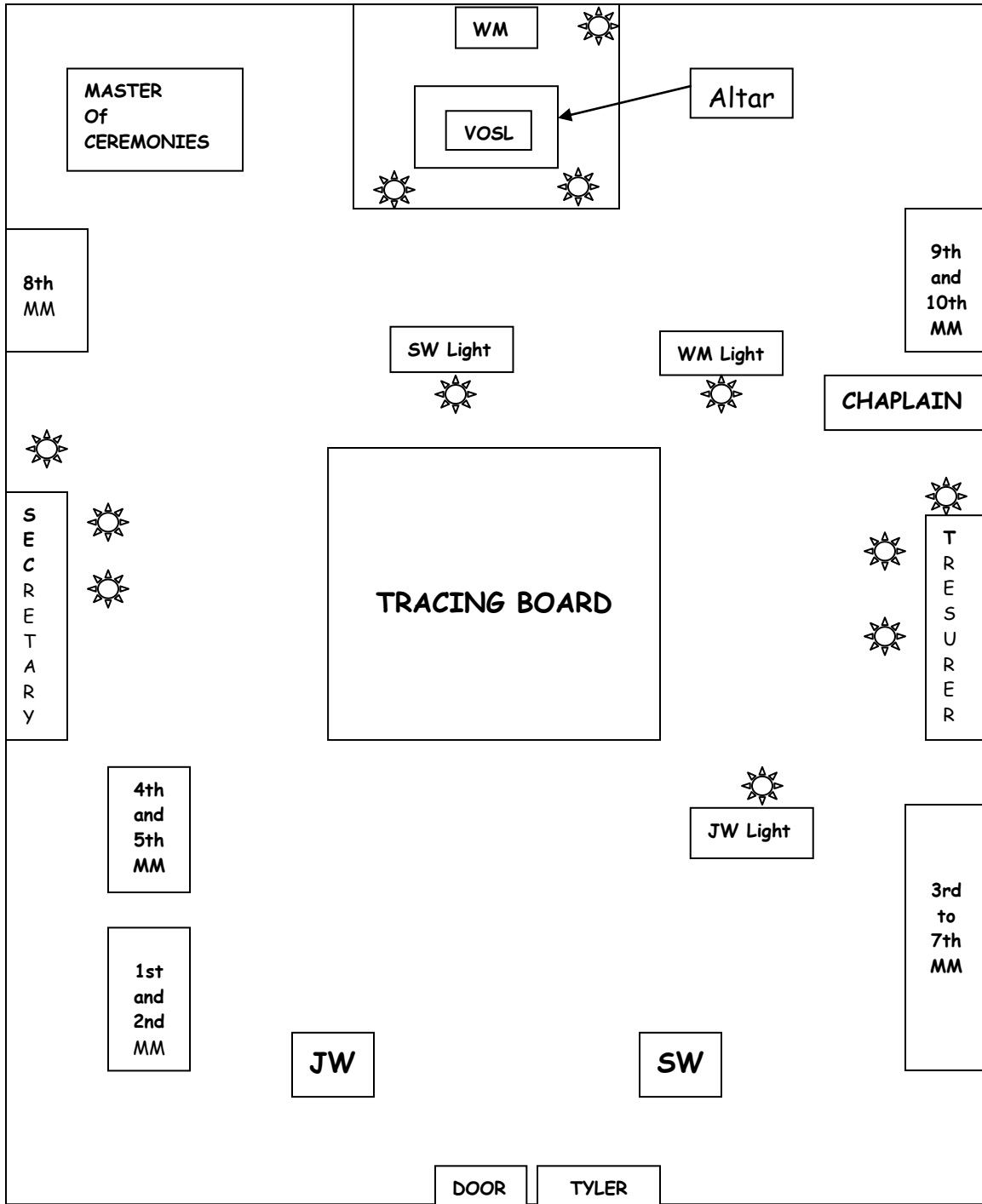
The end of the 6 degree is knocking on the KST door to prepare the candidate for the Chapter.

The Chapter Lodges

This Lodge represents passing through 7 through 10 and your entry into Kings Solomon's temple and was beyond the level of the person who gave me this information.

St. John Lodge Layout

For First Second and Third Degrees

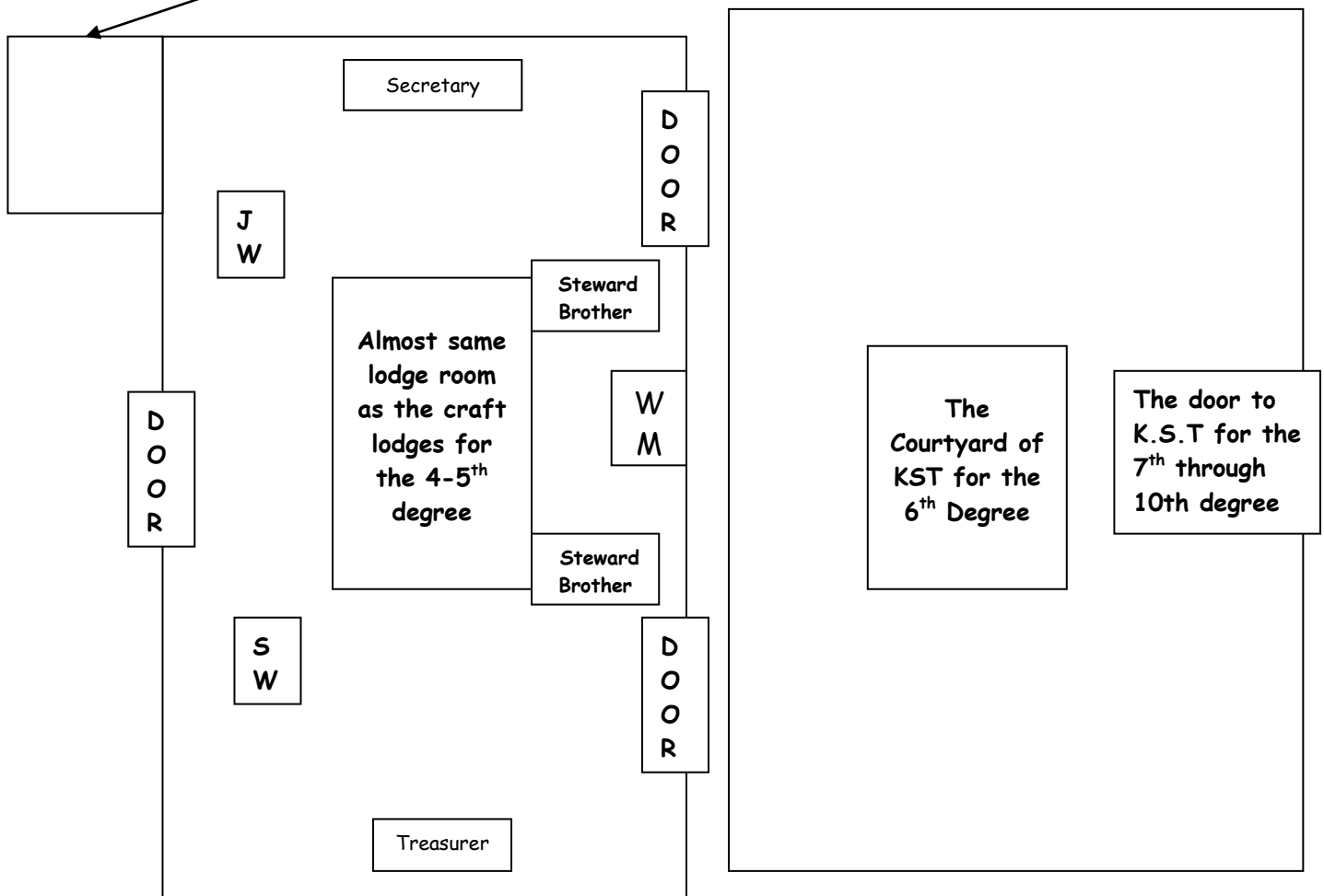


 Lights

St. Andrews Lodge Layout

For Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Degrees

The Burial Chamber 3rd Degree



Thank you and whatever I say may we continue in peace and harmony.

Bro. Bill Overy

Member of the Education Committee of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon.