



The Deacons

"Brothers and you have been respectively appointed (or elected) Senior and Junior Deacons of this Lodge, and I now invest you with the jewels of your office. It is your duty to attend the Worshipful Master, and assist the Wardens in the active duties of the Lodge, such as the reception of candidates in the different degrees, and in the immediate practice of our rites and ceremonies. These rods, (A rod is handed to each Deacon.) the badges of your office, I entrust to your care, not doubting your vigilance and attention. The Deacons hold their rod in their left hand when saluting before being escorted to their stations."

Installation, Canadian Work, Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

deacon (n.)

Middle English *deken*, "one who reads the Gospel in divine worship, one of a body of assistants to a priest or other clergyman," from Old English *deacon*, *diacon*, from Late Latin *diaconus*, from Greek *diakonos* "servant of the church, religious official," literally "servant," from *dia-* here perhaps "thoroughly, from all sides," + PIE **kon-o-*, from root **ken-* "to hasten, set oneself in motion." Related: *Deaconess*; *deaconship*.

Historical

In the early years of Speculative Freemasonry, not all Lodges had Deacons and if they did they may not have had the same duties as they do now. In some Lodges the Deacon was the presiding officer while the Wardens often served as the financial officer. During the Great Schism, the rivalry period between the Antients and the Moderns, the former had Deacons while the latter had Stewards (there were some exceptions as there always is).

With the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), the Lodge of Promulgation recommended the adoption of both the Deacons and Stewards as they were seen as useful and

necessary. Through a succession of the ages we now have two Deacons as we see them today.

Both of the Deacons carry staffs. The name of these implements may change from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Looking at history, Deacons were associated with columns, but around 1822 the Wardens took over the columns as the symbol of their office while the Deacons were given the staffs. The tops of the staffs have changed and can vary with each jurisdiction. The tops are also the jewels of the office, which today is the sun for the Senior Deacon and moon for the Junior Deacon, both within the Square & Compasses.

In the early years of the UGLE, the staffs were topped by pine cones, but this would then change to doves that are also seen as messengers. The dove was also a symbol of peace and harmony, and the Deacons should remember they are officers of peace. One can see this during the initiation when the Senior Deacon is escorting the candidate. The Senior Deacon places himself between the candidate and the Altar, thus protecting the Altar from the uninitiated man, but once the candidate becomes a Master Mason, the Senior Deacon moves to his left side.

The use of staffs by officers is very symbolic and has been used in a variety of cultures. The most obvious use is by the Greek god, Hermes, who was the messenger of the gods, just as the Deacons are the messengers within the Lodge, and who carried the caduceus. The word "**caduceus**," from Latin, is a modification of Greek karykeion, from karyx, meaning "herald." Strictly speaking, "**caduceus**" should refer only to the staff of the herald-god Hermes (Mercury to the Romans), but in practice the word is often applied to the one-snake staff as well.



Caduceus

This wand was used to ward off evil and to ensure that he was unimpeded in his journey. Carrying a staff is a mark of authority and we see this with the king's scepter, the bishop's or verger's staff, the mace of Parliament, and, Biblically, with the staff of Moses. Now we can't talk about the Deacon's staffs without talking about the rods that are carried by the Stewards of the Lodge as one of the origin theories of these implements surrounds the Stewards of the King in England.

Nigel D. Brown wrote in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*:

“In the early days of Freemasonry the caduceus of Mercury (or Hermes) was a branch of olive wood around which were entwined snakes. Mercury was in olden times the emblem of the Deacons and some old lodges have retained this symbolism. The change to the dove was probably influenced by the Duke of Sussex to replace a pagan association by one from the Old Testament.” (1991 vol. civ . pp. 220-21.)

Assignment #1

The positions of the Senior and Junior Deacon are regarded as a fairly recent addition to the officer's role within the lodge structure. Do you feel that their position in lodge is necessary and justified? If so why? If not, why?

Senior Deacon



Senior Deacon Jewels

The Senior Deacon sits to the right of the Worshipful Master. He is the Master's messenger and does lots of walking. He welcomes and escorts both visitors and new candidates into the lodge and usually introduces distinguished visitors. During degree rituals, he is the guide for the new candidate, conducting him around the lodge room. In the opening and closing ceremonies of the lodge, the Senior Deacon opens and closes the Bible, and lights or extinguishes the candles at the altar. In many lodges, he also carries the ballot box around the room when new members are voted on. Senior Deacon – A Dove or Mallet, Both the Senior and Junior Deacon carry long

staffs, or rods. Because they are messengers of the lodge, the rods they carry are symbolic of the caduceus, or wand, that the Roman winged god and messenger Mercury carried. The rods are topped by their jewels of office, to match the ones on their collars. . In the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. A Dove or Trowel is the Senior Deacons jewel. There are one or two lodges in our jurisdiction that use the sun and moon, and one or two that use Hermes. They would have to be early lodges, constituted before the descriptions were added to the *Constitutions*.

Those old lodges prior to the constitution may have alternative jewels such as the Sun within the Square and Compasses which signifies that his position is in the east, with the Master. (In other parts of the world, the jewel worn on the collar of the Deacons may be a dove, while their rods are topped by a figure of Mercury or a dove with an olive branch.)

Junior Deacon



Junior Deacons Jewels

The Junior Deacon sits to the right of the Senior Warden, guarding the door to the lodge. He is the messenger of the Senior Warden, as well as the lodge "doorman." It is his job to be certain the Tyler is guarding the door on the outside, and he allows visitors to enter, after they've been properly vouched for. He and the Tyler communicate with each other by knocking back and forth on either side of the closed door.

Some jurisdictions split up this position into the Junior Deacon and an Inner Guard.

The Junior Deacon's jewel of office is the square and compass, like his senior counterpart. The difference is that the Junior Deacon's jewel has a moon in the center, signifying that he is in the west. In the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon. A Dove or Trowel is the Junior Deacons jewel. Those old lodges prior to the constitution may have alternative jewels such as the Moon within the Square and Compasses.

Assignment #2

What other duties does the Senior Deacon and Junior Deacon in your lodge have or are involved in within your lodge.

THE DEACONS SYMBOLS AND SYMBOLISM

To quote the Books of Ceremonies:

"... you have been respectfully appointed Senior and Junior Deacons of this Lodge, I now invest you with the jewels of you office. It is your duty to attend the Worshipful Master, and assist the Wardens in the active duties of the Lodge, such as the reception of candidates in the different degrees, and in the immediate practice of our rites and ceremonies. These rods, the badges of your office, I entrust to your care, not doubting your vigilance and attention."

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Definition of the 'rods': RW Bro Trevor McKeown writes –

"According to Frederick Smyth, who quotes Bernard Jones, the Deacons' rod is an emblem of power, dignity and significance - derived from the King's sceptre or Speaker's mace entrusted to them by the Master at their investiture. The Deacons derive their authority from the rods having been entrusted to them by the Master". Rods or Wands: The Book of Ceremonies styles them as 'rods' and not 'wands'.

Why do the Deacons carry rods? To answer this question I refer you to 'The Educator' by V.W. Bro Norman McEvoy who wrote and I quote:

"A Brother writes: As a new member I am rather curious to know the significance attached to the rods or wands that are carried by the Deacons. They seem to be so much in the way at times that unless there is some deeper meaning to their origin and use than is apparent the Officers would be less hampered without them."

A great many of our Masonic ceremonies, and the paraphernalia associated with them, have their origins in the distant past, in ancient mystery rites of thousands of years ago, as well as in the customs and practices of the operative building masons of the middle ages. In the ancient mythologies of Greece and Rome, Mercury (in the Greek, Hermes) was *"the winged messenger*

of Jove” who carried the messages and commands of the chief Deity to the four corners of the heavens.

As an emblem of his office and an indication of the purpose of his travel he carried a short rod or wand surmounted by a figure known as a caduceus. It was something like a combination of the serpent and rod or dollar sign and an airman’s badge.

This rod or wand also acted as a talisman having power to ward off all evil spirits from the pathway, so that nothing might impede Jove’s messenger on his heavenly journeys. In the Ancient Mysteries, the Herald, who conducted the candidates through the ceremonies of Initiation, always carried a wand surmounted by the figure of the caduceus of Mercury, and to it was attributed the power to ward off the spirits of evil which might impede the progress of those in search of the spirit of light and good. Even in the present day some religious denominations carry a wand in processions which is presumed to have the same effect. It was the custom in the mediaeval building age for a selected Craftsman to be entrusted with the task of carrying the messages and instructions of the Master Mason, or Architect of the building, to the various departments of the work and to see that they were correctly and punctually executed.

In the ceremonies within the Lodge he carried out similar duties as assigned to him by the Master Mason, and in the period of Transition from Operative to Speculative Freemasonry his duties included the introduction and conducting of candidates who were being “made Masons,” and the performance of various acts similar to the work of Deacons today. In the early Speculative period the Deacon’s wand was surmounted by the caduceus, and in some foreign Grand Lodges it is still used as the insignia of the Deacons and the emblem on their wands. Towards the latter part of the eighteenth century Christian influences were instrumental in substituting the dove (which is the present emblem), as more appropriate to Biblical concepts of the messenger than the pagan symbol of Mercury. Even outside the Craft wands are not unusual as British marks of office. Church wardens and sheriffs carry them, as do certain officials in the houses of parliament.

They add to the dignity of our ceremonies in the Lodge and have their use in forming the square within which candidates are obligated, and Grand Lodge officers are received and honoured. Our new Brother will note, therefore, that like many other usages and customs associated with the Craft, there is a wealth of ancient symbolism even in such a simple thing as the Deacon’s wand. The deeper significance becomes more apparent, too, when we realize that a symbolic sense the Worshipful Master in the Lodge represents the G.A.O.T.U. the Light of the East.

We’ll take the tabernacle of Moses because he and his followers were always on the move, and it provides a great example of the use of the Asherah. All holy or sacred buildings at that time

were situated due east and west and the tabernacle of Moses was no different except that Moses and his followers were on the move for 40 years.

So the tabernacle, which was of course a tent, had to be dismantled and re-erected every time they moved, and at the rebuilding it had to be situated due east and west. So Moses and his two attendants, complete with asherahs, would go to the chosen site where the tabernacle was to be erected just before dawn, accompanied by the heavy gang who were going to do the erecting. Moses would then choose the spot where the altar was to be and instruct one of the attendants to place his asherah on that spot.

When the sun rose above the horizon, the rays from the sun would strike the asherah and send a long thin shadow towards the west. The other attendant would then place his asherah on the other end of the shadow and that would designate the centre line of the proposed tabernacle. The heavy gang would then move in and erect the tabernacle with the altar at the east end and the entrance at the west end. Just as an aside, that is the way that all lodges were set out, with the altar in the east directly in front of the W.M. The idea of having the altar in the centre of the lodge is a fairly recent one and I think is peculiar to North America. However, that's of no importance here. Obviously, the magnetic compass had not been invented at that time so all holy and sacred buildings had to be set out with the aid of two asherahs and K.S. temple was no different. And so, the asherah, being the very first tool or implement to be made use of at the building of the temple makes them of extreme importance from a Masonic historical point of view, and as such should be carried at all times as the insignia of the office of the deacons and in particular when conducting a candidate.

The Legend of the Dove Jewel



Following the Genesis flood, as the ark was resting on Mount Ararat, Noah released a raven and dove from the ark at different times. The goal in sending these birds was to determine if the flood waters had abated enough for Noah and his family to exit the ark.

In [Genesis 8:6-7](#) we read, “At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent forth a raven. It went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.” The “40 days” here is after the tops of the mountains were visible (verse 5), over seven months after the flood began. A raven was released and apparently never returned. No reason is provided regarding why a raven was selected rather than another bird. However, a raven can eat carrion and would feed off dead animals in the water. A dove, on the other hand, would return to its point of origin if no land was found.

Noah sent a dove in [Genesis 8:8-9](#): “Then he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground. But the dove found no place to set her foot, and she returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took her and brought her into the ark with him.” The dove returned with no indication that a place had been found to alight.

A week later, in [Genesis 8:10-11](#), Noah sent the dove again: “He waited another seven days, and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark. And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold, in her mouth was a freshly plucked olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.” Things had begun to grow once again; the earth was becoming more habitable.

Another week passed. Then, in [Genesis 8:12](#), Noah sends out the dove one more time: “Then he waited another seven days and sent forth the dove, and she did not return to him anymore.” The dove had no need to return to the ark, since it had found a home on land. The ark could soon be emptied, and humanity could begin to establish itself again in the world.

From [Genesis 7:11](#) to 8:14, we know that the flood lasted a total of one year and ten days. The raven and the dove were released over a period of 21 days after the mountaintops became visible ([Genesis 8:10-12](#)). The raven served as a first attempt to discover dry land, and the dove became Noah’s way of determining when to leave the ark.

THE DEACONS

Duties and Grand Lodge of BC and Yukon

“...to attend the Worshipful Master and assist the Wardens...”

Your duties are outlined in the Book of Ceremonies, in that section dealing with Installation of Lodge Officers, in the by-laws of your Lodge, with which you should be familiar, and any additional Duties of Lodge Officers booklet provided by your lodge. Many lodges require officers to be responsible for certain parts of the ritual work. Know what those are. One of your important duties is to conduct candidates through the various degrees. This should be done in a firm and friendly manner, so as to impart a sense of confidence to the candidate as he enters new and strange surroundings. It is very important to ensure that the candidate is put at ease in the preparation room prior to entering the lodge room. Your rods are emblems of your authority and as such should always be carried in the performance of your duties about the lodge, except as required by your lodge ritual and historical practice when attending the Great and Lesser Lights, and when transmitting the Word. Your rods should be carried in accordance with the protocol or procedures of your lodge. Otherwise, they should be carried at a slight forward angle from the body (approx. 30°), never in a horizontal position. You may salute with a slight forward movement of your rods, bringing them back to your sides. In those lodges where the Deacons' rods are held crossed and interlocked while the candidate is assuming his obligation, the rods should be held behind the candidate and lowered the moment he has sealed his obligation. When receiving the Grand Master, the District Deputy Grand Master, or a Grand Lodge officer on an official visit, you should meet him at the entrance to the lodge room, cross your rods over him, and escort him to the altar, lowering your rods as the officer leaves the altar to approach the east, and return to your places. When a Grand Lodge officer is retiring from the lodge room, in open lodge, you should meet him at the altar, cross your rods over him and retire with him to the entrance door, lowering your rods as the officer leaves the lodge room. You should be directed to do this at the time by the Worshipful Master. It is necessary that you know your work thoroughly, as you are the officers who perform most of the floor work of the lodge. The successful performance of the degrees, and other ceremonies, depends in large measure upon the skill and ability with which you conduct yourselves. For this reason it is essential that you attend all communications of your lodge, particularly practices and rehearsals. A study of the various sections of this booklet is recommended to you, which you will find most helpful as you progress to the more important and responsible offices of the lodge. Call upon the Director of Ceremonies for instructions and for questions that may arise during a practice.

Assignment

What are the duties of the Senior and Junior Deacon upon the occasion of the Grand Master visit to your lodge both in the lodge room and at the Festive Board.

References

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Grand Lodge of British Columbia and Yukon

www.freemasonry.bcy.ca

Lodge Officers Guide *2010/06/11 Amended 2013*

“Forms & Ceremonies”, 2000, page 82;

2. McEvoy, Norman “The Educator”, 2003, ‘Deacons’