

How to get new members:

Be knowledgeable—what is the Independent Order of Odd Fellows? (a brief history)

The **Independent Order of Odd Fellows (I.O.O.F.)** a beneficial society that is non-political, non-sectarian international fraternal order of Odd Fellowship; is not a religion, but founded on ethical and moral principles. It was founded in 1819 by Thomas Wildey in Baltimore, Maryland, United States. Evolving from the Order of Odd Fellows founded in England during the 18th century, the I.O.O.F. was originally chartered by the Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity in England but has operated as an independent organization since 1842, although it maintains an inter-fraternal relationship with the English Order. The Order is also known as the *Three Link Fraternity*, referring to the Order's "Triple Links" symbol, alluding to its motto "Friendship, Love and Truth".

While several Odd Fellows Lodges had existed in New York City circa 1806–1818, because of its charter relationship, the American Odd Fellows is regarded as being founded with *Washington Lodge No 1* in Baltimore at the Seven Stars Tavern on April 26, 1819, by Thomas Wildey along with some associates who assembled in response to an advertisement in the *New Republic*. The following year, the lodge affiliated with the Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity and was granted the authority to institute new lodges. Previously, Wildey had joined the Grand United Order of Oddfellows (1798-) in 1804 but followed through with the split of Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity (1810-) before immigrating to the United States in 1817.

In 1842, after an elementary dispute on authority, the American Lodges formed a governing system separate from the English Order, and in 1843 assumed the name Independent Order of Odd Fellows.

Like other fraternities, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows began by limiting their membership to white men only. On September 20, 1851, the I.O.O.F. became the first fraternity in the United States to include white women when it adopted the "Rebekah Degree" by initiative of Schuyler Colfax, later Vice-President of the United States.

Beyond fraternal and recreational activities, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows promotes the ethic

of reciprocity and charity, by implied inspiration of Judeo-Christian ethics. The largest of all fraternal orders of Odd Fellows since the 19th century, The Sovereign Grand Lodge enrolls some 200,000 members divided in approximately 2,000 lodges in 30 countries, inter-fraternally recognized by the second largest, the British-seated Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity.

THE FOUNDATION OF ODD FELLOWSHIP— rests securely upon a belief in the Fatherhood of God (a Supreme Being) and the Brotherhood of Man.

Its aim is the development of a higher, nobler, practical manhood; the elevation of character to antagonize selfishness; to extend sympathy and aid to those in need, making their burdens lighter, relieving the darkness of despair; to war against vice in every form, and to be a great moral power and influence for the good of humanity.

The first tenet of the Order is **purity**—a purity of life and conduct; the three golden links, **friendship**, **love** and **truth** weld us together—the foundation of our Order. The three pillars of, **faith**, **hope** and **charity**, staunchly support us through the journey of life. As a final crown, our Order teaches **universal justice** for one and all.

True fraternity is of the spirit. If you have true spirit of fraternity, you will live and promote the principles of Odd Fellowship.

The Door of Odd Fellowship

The Initiatory Degree is the door to Odd Fellowship. Once across the threshold we find the first lesson of our fraternity, in which there is an endeavor to create a light of understanding, to remove the bonds of selfishness or envy, to establish the first lessons of faith, hope, purity of life and conduct, love, truth and to offer a challenge for a pathway of life.

Here is unfolded in brief the story of creation, wherein God created the heavens, the earth, the plants, all forms of animal and bird life, and as his final masterpiece he made Man. Here is awakened the responsibility of the individual to God the Creator.

As the sands in the hour glass slowly trickle through the narrow neck to the bottom of the glass, so are we reminded that our span of life here on earth is slowly passing away. It therefore behooves us to

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awaken to a sense of our responsibility, utilizing, to the best of our ability, the amount of time we have upon this earth in the services and causes of humanity. In the performance of such services there will be found a happiness, a contentment, and a fuller and richer life.

Only one life, so live it well,
Keep thy light trim and bright;
Eternity, not time, will tell
The worth of that Life's light.

As the evening of life draws to a close, may we hear that plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord." Thus is the lesson of frail mortality brought forth; an admonition for purity of life and conduct, with a pathway of life presented for us to follow, but there is also presented the **Hope** of eternal life.

Upon this broad basis the door of Odd Fellowship is opened—a fraternity established, and as other degrees of the Order are presented, a richer and fuller aspect of Life is given, extending through the Odd Fellow Lodge and into the Encampment or Patriarchal Branch, wherein is unfolded deeper lessons in **Faith**, a broader scope of labor in the cause of humanity, a richer meaning for **Hope** and **Charity**.

The First Link in Odd Fellowship—Friendship

The greatest lesson of **Friendship** is that portrayed by the lesson of Jonathan and David in the book of Samuel, for here you find one who was born of royalty, raised to be a King, an heir to a Kingdom, every want, desire and wish to be his, drawn close in the bonds of a deep faith, love and tenderness, to a shepherd lad of lowly position, through his virtues of courage, judgment, faith and wisdom; a friendship so deeply rooted that Jonathan was prepared to sacrifice not only his rights to a Kingdom, but his own life in defense of his friend.

We find so many elements in friendship—faith, tenderness, love, truth, sympathy, sincerity, unselfishness, confidence, generosity, all of which are freely given; for we do not choose our friends—they are self-elected. The root of all friendship is **Faith**, the first pillar of Odd Fellowship, for without faith the other elements of friendship would vanish as though non-existent, for there would be no bond to cement all the other elements into that firm compact of understanding and trustworthiness.

When friendships are real, they are not fragile—but the solidest things we know. A friend is a person with whom one may be sincere; be one's self, taken at his or her own values and respected for what we each may be. A friend would not have you other than you are, with all your faults; yet may criticize you in a tender manner, will be truthful, sincere and devoted.

Friendship is that higher virtue which destroys envy; releases one from their tendency towards selfishness and isolation, placing all on that higher plane where generous deeds, unselfish purposes, tenderness, sympathy, love and protection rule thoughts and actions, uplifting character and bringing joy and happiness to all with whom he or she comes in contact. Life is sweet because of the friends we meet; the smiles we share, the clasp of hand; for where would we be if we did not have a friend?

In Odd Fellowship, **Friendship** extends to many cities, states, provinces and lands, assuring you a warm reception in clasp of hand and a welcome such as only a friend can give.

The Second Link of Odd Fellowship—Fraternal Love

The central link in the chain of Odd Fellowship was forged by the fires of Friendship. **Love** is one of the basic elements of a true friendship, creating within the individual unselfishness, tenderness, sympathy and understanding. **Fraternal Love** hears the cry of humanity and answers its call. Thought of one's self is pushed aside in answering the call of humanity, in the performance of deeds of goodwill to those less fortunate; assisting in the building of a stronger character; affording the opportunities of education to those who need it; rendering assistance for the physical needs of those less fortunate; uplifting those who are despondent by a cheery word, a smile, a comforting thought and a clasp of hand. Through **Fraternal Love**, unselfish purposes and generous deeds form a bond of unity, creating an estate wherein no man lives unto himself alone.

In **Fraternal Love**, forged by the fires of **Friendship**, wide vistas of opportunity are opened before us—opportunity for service to humanity, to our friends, to society and to God. Those opportunities are ours to grasp and whenever we accomplish one of these opportunities it enlarges the field of our labors and opens up to us new and greater opportunities for our accomplishment. Love gives us the strength and ability to perform these greater responsibilities; to make of our own life a richer meaning; to enrich the principles of our great Order by acts and deeds and to strengthen the importance of Odd Fellowship by its usefulness.

A component part of **Fraternal Love** is the principle of **Charity**, the third pillar of Odd Fellowship, wherein these lessons in **Charity** are the motive and power which provides the means for creating all of the opportunities for greater responsibilities for the betterment of mankind. Without **Charity**, the journey of life, **Fraternal Love** would have no meaning and acts of humanity would

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be non-existent, for there would be no thought of welfare of others, but only selfishness and greed.

Our bonds of Unity, **Love** and the Pillar of **Charity**, bring richness to our principles and through their acts and deeds show to the world the usefulness of Odd Fellowship.

The Third Link in Odd Fellowship—Truth

The third link of Odd Fellowship — **Truth** — is a natural result of faithfulness to the duties and principles of friendship and love. It is the fundamental element of true moral character.

Truth condemns the wrongs, the sins and the falsehoods of society—the culmination of calm investigation by an open mind. **Truth** strengthens character; affects man's speech and actions; creates justice; wins respect from one's neighbor; purifies the soul and blesses all with whom it comes in contact.

Truth as taught by Odd Fellowship is derived from the person and life of Jesus of Nazareth, thus presenting to all Odd Fellows, a pattern for a way of life. Following this pattern of the pathway of life required a reverence for God, a trust and belief that He guides and directs our daily walk of life, a realization that our actions, our deeds and our thoughts and speech affect all with whom we come in contact, requiring a striving for perfection in the practices of the principles of **friendship, love and truth**.

Exemplification of this way of life has its material reward in sterling character, the securing of involuntary respect from all with whom one comes in contact, the knowledge that this way of life has been one of justice towards all and an inspiration for others to live the truth from day to day, spreading not darkness and doubt, but a shining light to all the world.

Rebekah — Odd Fellowship

Expanding upon the lessons of the Bible, Schuyler Colfax wrote the Rebekah Degree based upon the principles of faithfulness, hospitality, unselfishness, helpfulness, purity and dedication of self as portrayed by women characters of the Bible.

Among the duties of Odd Fellowship are '*visiting the sick and relieving the distressed, caring for and educating the orphan*'. Woman is especially adapted for this work—a natural and practical nurse, and with experience of sickness in her own home — better qualified to minister to the sick in other homes. Sympathy and tenderness with the ill and suffering is intensified by her own past experience and she has learned the best course to pursue to relieve pain and to quiet restlessness. She has thoughtfulness and a delicate caution, a depth in her sympathy, a

magnetism to her touch and more tenderness than that of man, better qualifying her for the care of orphans. Men have not the yearning pity and the delicate tact of woman, and there is helpfulness in everything that she does and very often in what she may say. Women know all the minute details of homemaking and the material needs to make a family comfortable—they know what to do and just how to do it, and have more delicacy and tact in learning the needs of the family and the best way to supply without causing humiliation or giving offense.

She is the natural comforter for those in sorrow, for her tender, sympathetic nature enables her to share the sorrow of others, lighten their burdens, lessen their grief, provide them with courage and show them there are those who care and wish to help them carry the load of sadness.

She is refined, has a moral sense of right, a love of the pure and good, and an abhorrence of all things vile, and a direct influence for good upon the character of man. She is thus endowed with the characteristics necessary for the promotion of the principles of Friendship, Love and Truth.

Such are the object and purposes of Rebekah - Odd Fellowship. It is therefore highly essential that there be a close harmony and cooperation to the fullest extent between the Rebekah and Odd Fellow Lodges if the obligations they have assumed are to reach full realization, that the true principles of Odd Fellowship may render the service to their communities for which it was organized. —
SERVICE IS OUR GOAL.

Principles of the Order—

§ 2. Our Principles. (A.B. Grosh)

To a good and energetic person, who will use the facilities the Order affords for self-improvement and well-doing, its means and advantages are so numerous, and its agencies so far-reaching, that our language may appear faint and cold compared with the reality. And yet we fear to speak unguardedly. We would not raise expectations that *may* be disappointed. Let it, then, be fully understood here, once for all, that—

1. Odd-Fellowship is *not* the regalia or decorations of its officers and members, nor the banners and drapery of its Lodge-rooms. These have their meanings and uses, but they are not Odd-Fellowship. They should be used as not abusing them, and valued for their teachings; but they could all be changed, or dispensed with, and Odd-Fellowship still remain.

2. Nor is it its form of government. That has gone through great and almost total changes, (and may be

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as greatly changed again,) and yet Odd-Fellowship survives, essentially the same as ever in its principles. It is not best, therefore, to be hypercritical about any remaining defects in the forms in which its power is lodged, or the modes by which that power operates. These, it is true, should manifest fully the beneficent spirit of the Order, and conform to the institutions of the land, and the spirit of the age we live in, and should operate, in the most kind and effective manner, to elevate the condition and ameliorate the present wants and sufferings of our race. But our Order *is* a progressive one: it has greatly progressed in the past, and progression is even now gently and yet surely at work in it. And, under every form of government through which Odd-Fellowship has passed, or may yet pass, it has always consisted of the same general principles, and wrought out the same general good. Its ability to conform its government and measures to its own spirit, is greater now than ever; and in due season, therefore, all needed changes and additions will undoubtedly be effected.

3. Odd-Fellowship is not its mere ritual and ceremonial. Whatever language may be used in its lectures and charges, whatever emblems, signs, or pass-words it may prescribe to insure the instruction and mutual recognition of its members, these are but *means*; the objects they aim to effect are *the ends*. Instruction may change or alter its drapery, but the lessons taught—the ideas embodying the principles—these are the spirit and the life. It is not well, therefore, to rest in these outer habiliments, or to stumble at any *seeming* unfitness in them; but to pass on and secure the realities they unfold and impart.

4. Nor is Odd-Fellowship even the works of the Order: it consists not wholly in deeds of mercy, benevolence, and brotherly love. These, it is true, are its genuine manifestations, without which we might pronounce it asleep or departed: these are the outward appearances by which it discloses its inner life and its true self. But to produce these works, there must be an interior spirit, working out for itself this living form and action.

This internal, truly living spirit of Love and of universal fraternity, pervading all our rituals and ceremonies; recognized in emblems, colors, and regalia; using every adjunct for strengthening its influence on the soul; speaking to ear and eye in every lecture, charge, sign, and token, and to the touch in grip and pressure; and manifesting itself (silently, like rain, and sunshine, and electricity) in beneficent organizations and institutions; this soul of all its teachings and workings is Odd-Fellowship, the hidden name in the white stone, which he knoweth best who most truly possesses it.

The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of

man, then, are the great principles of our Order, embodied in the mottoes thereof, “In God we trust”, and “Friendship, Love, and Truth”. To illustrate these principles on the limited scale prescribed by human abilities and our pecuniary resources, we have united in Lodges, each of which is a mutual improvement and mutual aid association. And further to extend our operations, and increase our advantages and usefulness together, we have united all these Lodges in a general Order, which we desire to render universal as the family of man on earth.

Programs of the Order—incorporate an Order related program into your community — promote the commands of the Order: ‘visit the sick, relieve the distressed, bury the dead and educate the orphan’. There are many social programs available through the government, but there are many options where assistance from the lodge makes a difference in the services offered.

Our homes—both Grand Body and local lodge—offer stay at home assistance.

Educational Foundation—offer scholarships.

A youth program: Junior Lodge, Theta Rho Girls’ Club, United Youth Group; the Pilgrimage for Youth; Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

An eye program—reading to the blind or sight impaired, glasses, computer assisted reading along with high intensity lamps with magnifiers. Assistance in getting to the eye doctor as well weekly errand service.

Partner with local organizations in community projects—Red Cross, Toys for Tots, etc

Food Bank and clothes closet.

Fireman, Policeman, EMT, Teacher of the year.

Relief reported — most likely more: Spent for Relief.

The amount expended for relief in 2022 was \$6,932,452.10 as compared with \$5,553,402.89 in 2021.

The amount expended for relief by subordinate units from 1830 through 2022 now totals **\$935,494,418.36**.



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Who is eligible to join:

(from the Code of general Laws)

CHAPTER III MEMBERSHIP

¹⁷SEC. 1 **Generally.**

A. ²²Reference to 'Lodge' will also be known to mean – Encampment, L.E.A., Canton, Club, and Group where applicable.

B. Eligibility: a person of good character who believes in a Supreme Being, the Creator and Preserver of the Universe sponsored by a member of the Order, shall be eligible for membership.

(1) Qualifications as to Character: the authority to determine character shall vest in each lodge, however, membership shall not be denied on the basis of their age (other than that of minimum age to join the branch of the Order to which application is made), disability, ethnicity, gender, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or other social identity.

(a) Exclusion practices at membership application or after membership has been established based on age (other than that of minimum to join the Unit), disability, ethnicity, gender, race, sex, sexual orientation, religion or other social identity is deemed an offense against the Order and shall be cited as specification under the charge of conduct unbecoming an Odd Fellow.

(2) ²¹Belief in the existence of a Supreme Being who is the Creator and Preserver of the Universe, is an integral requirement to hold membership in this Order. The denial, disbelief, or inability to believe with certainty in the existence of a Supreme Being as previously mentioned is incompatible with membership in this Order.

(a) Loss of belief in the existence of a Supreme Being is conduct unbecoming an Odd Fellow.

C. Membership in an Odd Fellows lodge shall be primary; secondary and ancillary membership shall be in the Encampment, and Canton.

D. Membership in a Rebekah Lodge may be primary.

(1) ²²Females who have primary membership in the Rebekah Lodge, may have ancillary membership in the L.E.A..

E. ¹⁸Residence. Membership may be obtained in a jurisdiction other than the jurisdiction in which a

member resides if the by-laws of the local unit have no restrictions on residency.

(1) ²¹In moving membership to a jurisdiction in which the member is not a resident, this shall sever membership in that branch in the jurisdiction of residence (original membership); as well the member shall not have associate membership in the branch within the jurisdiction from which they moved the original membership.

(a) Should the member become a sojourner or have place of employment in another jurisdiction, associate membership may be obtained there.

¹⁷SEC. 2. **ELIGIBILITY.**

A. **Odd Fellows Lodge**

(1) Continued from above and at least sixteen (16) years of age, shall be eligible for membership.

(2) May Not Hold Membership in two (2) Odd Fellows Lodges. No member shall hold membership in more than one lodge except as provided by associate membership.

(3) Length of Residence. Unless restricted by the Grand Lodge, each lodge shall have the authority to fix the length of residence in its by-laws before becoming eligible for membership.

(4) Continued rejection of applicants, except for just cause may result in revocation of an Odd Fellows Lodge Charter after notice and hearing.

(5) ⁰⁸Rebekahs who are in Good Standing. They shall not be rejected, except for valid reasons, from membership in an Odd Fellows Lodge. Continued rejection of Rebekahs may result in revocation of an Odd Fellows Lodge charter after notice and hearing.

(a) ¹⁷A member of an Odd Fellows Lodge may resign membership (for other than 'cause') in an Odd Fellows Lodge without losing membership in the Rebekah Lodge; membership in the Encampment shall be terminated.

B. **Rebekah Lodge**

(1) Continued from above and at least sixteen (16) years of age shall be eligible for membership.

(2) May Not Hold Membership in two (2) Rebekah Lodges. No member shall hold membership in more than one lodge except as provided by associate membership.

(3) Length of Residence. Unless restricted by the Grand Lodge, each lodge shall have the authority to fix the length of residence in its by-laws before becoming eligible for membership.

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- (4) Continued rejection of applicants, except for just cause may result in revocation of a Rebekah Lodge Charter after notice and hearing.
 - (5) Odd Fellows who are in good standing shall not be rejected, except for valid reasons, from membership in a Rebekah Lodge. Continued rejection of Odd Fellows may result in revocation of a Rebekah Lodge Charter after notice and hearing.
 - (a) ²²A Sister member of a Rebekah Lodge may resign membership (for other than ‘cause’) in a Rebekah Lodge without losing membership in an Odd Fellows Lodge; membership in the Ladies Encampment Auxiliary shall be terminated.
 - (b) A Brother member of a Rebekah Lodge may resign membership (for other than ‘cause’) in a Rebekah Lodge without losing membership in an Odd Fellows Lodge. [Encampment and Canton membership would be based on Odd Fellows lodge membership.]
- C. **Encampment** – Further requirements to those found in Section 2 A above, are as follows:
Be a member of the Scarlet Degree in Good Standing in an Odd Fellows Lodge to become a member of an Encampment.
- D. **Ladies Encampment Auxiliary** – Further requirements to those found in Section 2 B above, are as follows:
Be a Sister in good standing in a Rebekah Lodge to become a member of a Ladies Encampment Auxiliary.
- E. **Unified Encampments** – A member an Encampment, LEA or a Scarlet Degree or Rebekah Degree member. For further requirements see Chapter X – By-laws, Section 16.
- ¹⁷F. **Cantons** – Further requirements to those found in Section 2 A and B above, are as follows:
(1) Be a member of the Royal Purple Degree in Good Standing in an Encampment to become a member of a Canton.

¹⁷**Youth:**

- H. **Junior Odd Fellows** – Further requirements to those found in Section 1 A (1) above, are as follows:
Males within the age range of eight (8) years to eighteen (18) years. Members may remain members through the age of twenty-one (21) years before graduating.

- I. **Theta Rho Girls’ Clubs** – Further requirements to those found in Section 1 B (1) above, are as follows:
Females within the age range of eight (8) years to eighteen (18) years. Members may remain members through the age of twenty-one (21) years before graduating.
- J. ¹²**United Youth Group** –Further requirements to those found in Section 1 A (1) and Section 1 B (1) above, are as follows:
⇒ **Males and Females** within the range of eight (8) and eighteen (18) years.
⇒ Members may remain members through the age of twenty-one (21) years before graduating.

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Once you get new members, keep your meetings interesting—have a calendar of events and programs for the year, schedule a school of instruction.  
Keep your meetings interesting and informative.

Now that you have a fundamental understanding of Odd Fellowship you are ready to **Ask** someone to join.

Use the 60 second elevator commercial:

**Independent Order of Odd Fellows**  
*The Three Link Fraternity*

Strives to make the world a better place in which to live.

*Our Motto*  
‘Friendship, Love and Truth’

*Our Objective*  
‘To Improve and Elevate the Character of Mankind’

**The Three Links**  
*The Emblem of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.*

The emblem of Odd Fellowship is the Three Links with the letters ‘F, L & T’. The three links symbolizes the chain that binds our members together and illustrates that a fraternity is strongest when joined together. The ‘F’ in the first link represents ‘friendship’, the strongest bond of fraternity that teaches goodwill and harmony. The ‘L’ represents ‘love’, the basis for all life’s ambitions, service to others and family. The ‘T’ represents ‘truth’, the standard by which we value people and the foundation of our society.