

Why Do Deacons Carry Wands?

Bill Douglas PM, Kenilworth Lodge #29 GRA, 2001

Well, we know that they use them to form an arch over a visiting dignitary when escorting him into lodge, but what other uses are there.

It was suggested at one practice that the wands be left behind when conducting a candidate as they just get in the way, and I as D. of C. ,very foolishly, was inclined to agree. But everything in the masonic ritual has a reason or a hidden meaning that we have to root out so that we understand why we do what we do.

On the south coast of England, in the county of Sussex, near the town of Wilmington, there is carved into a hillside, the figure of a man with arms outstretched and in each hand he holds an asherah or staff. The figure is 70 metres high which is approx. 125 feet. Nobody knows who carved it there, but it is known to be several thousand years old.

The word asherah is the name given to the wooden staff, approx. 6' in length which was carried by the attendants to the high priests in ancient times and was the insignia of their office. The wooden staffs were named for the Goddess Asherah who was the mother of twins Shachar and Shalem who were respectively the God of Dawn and the God of dusk. That is significant as will become apparent later.

The word deacon is a derivation from a Greek word which in translation means attendant. So two deacons with wands are the equivalent of two attendants with asherahs.

In the J.W. lecture it states that a masonic lodge is situated due east and west for three reasons.

First, the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Remember Shachar and Shalem the Gods of dawn and dusk, sunrise/sunset, there is a connection there. Second, we'll put that one aside as it has no significance here. Third, the tabernacle of Moses and the temple of Solomon were so situated. 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 by the way and is 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.

And that brethren is why the deacons carry wands.