



PHI DELTA THETA
Become the greatest version of yourself

The Founding Ceremony of Phi Delta Theta

PREFACE:

This Founding Ceremony was adapted from work by Arthur R. Priest, the First Executive Secretary of Phi Delta Theta, and with notes from “From Six at First” by Walter E. Havighurst. The Founding Ceremony may be performed at any point during the pledge period to help impress upon the Phikeias the importance of ritual in Phi Delta Theta. It is an excellent preliminary to the actual initiation ceremony and could be conducted the evening before initiation, followed by a formal dinner. It may also be performed during a Founders Day dinner for alumni and guests.

SETTING:

A table with a white cloth is placed at the head of the room. Six azure candles sit evenly spaced along the table. A narrator stands behind a podium which is positioned to one side of the table. Six brothers wearing black robes enter the room and take their places standing behind the table. Each of the brothers will have been assigned the name of one of the Founders, and they will arrange themselves on their own right to left accordingly in this order: Robert Morrison, John McMillan Wilson, Robert Thompson Drake, John Wolfe Lindley, Ardivan Walker Rodgers, and Andrew Watts Rogers. The brother assigned the name “Morrison” will have a box of matches and, if possible, an unlighted taper in his hand. The Founders remain standing.

BEGINNING OF CEREMONY:

The man representing Morrison lights the candle in front of him, pronouncing the name “Robert Morrison” in firm, clear tones. Without hurry, he hands the taper to “Wilson” on his left who lights his candle, pronouncing the name “John McMillan Wilson,” and so on, until all six candles are lighted and the taper is extinguished.

Then the Narrator begins.

NARRATOR:

“Founders, you may be seated. This evening we are going to perform the Founding Ceremony. A similar ceremony was originally delivered by Arthur R. Priest at the Syracuse Convention in 1936. It was immediately recognized as a beautiful expression of the ideals of Phi Delta Theta.

“Tonight, we will recreate the founding of our great brotherhood. Picture if you will, a cold and blustery evening back on December 26, 1848—the day after Christmas. Classes at Miami were recessed for ten days, but stagecoach travel was slow and uncertain, especially in winter. Students hundreds of miles from home stayed at college, reading, studying, walking in the winter woods. They were drawn together by a shared homelessness in the holiday season.

“To begin the ceremony, Brother Andrew Watts Rogers will give the reading of the scriptures.”

ANDREW WATTS ROGERS:

“Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. Now I beseech you, brethren, that there be no division among you, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment, endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, be perfect, be of one mind, live in peace, and the God of Love and Peace shall be with you.”

NARRATOR:

“When Robert Morrison, John McMillan Wilson, Robert Thompson Drake, John Wolf Lindley, Ardivan Walker Rogers, and Andrew Watts Rogers first met in Wilson’s room in Old North Hall, on December 26, 1848, there was no Phi Delta Theta. These men were determined, however, to form and establish a college brotherhood, a fraternity, based on the friendship of men of like hopes and of similar aspirations.

“Two days later, on December 28, *The Bond of Phi Delta Theta*, which was co-authored by Robert Morrison and John McMillan Wilson, was presented, and on December 30, it was adopted. *The Bond* at once furnished a sure basis of union, and ample material on which to build a ritual.

“Thus it is that the ritual goes back to those first meetings—to what these six young men saw—to a vision they had caught. It was a vision of friendship, of devotion to truth, of endeavor to realize God’s likeness in their own lives.

“Let us today enter the room with the Founders—a room in Old North Hall in which at some time in his life, every Phi should stand. Listen to the warmhearted Morrison as he talks to them about friendship. Catch the thrill in his voice! Looking searchingly into the faces of his fellows, he says:”

ROBERT MORRISON:

“Men, Wilson and I have been close friends for many months. This is his room, mine is just below. We are back and forth, together much of the time. I know his mind and heart—he knows mine. We are friends. We try to be mutually helpful. There is nothing in the world quite like the congenial friendship of men. At the bottom of every friendship must be mutual respect and affection. Wilson and I believe that we six men have such respect and affection, and that our aims in life are motivated by the same high ideals. We invite you, therefore, to join us in mutual pledges. Let us resolve that we will regard each other as true friends with whom we will consult and advise concerning common interest and moral growth. We hope you will join us.”

NARRATOR:

“And now the scholarly Wilson—already spoken of by his fellows as 'Old Dad'—a substantial man who inspires confidence, speaks:”

JOHN McMILLAN WILSON:

“Men, Robert and I, as he has told you, are friends. We want to include you in our circle. We believe that you are with us in our aspirations to accomplish something more than ordinary on the Miami campus. We ask you to resolve with us to strive for a high standard of intellectual character, not seeking merely to learn the lessons assigned each day, but to seek the truth in every department of study; to keep our minds free from prejudice, and at all times to try to make our own mental improvement serve the good of those about us. Are you with us?”

NARRATOR:

“To these invitations John Wolfe Lindley, gracious and gentle, gives ready assent:”

JOHN WOLFE LINDLEY:

“I feel that learning is not for the exclusive benefit of the learned, but for the benefit of all mankind. Our purpose is to enjoy life and learning by a sharing of interests and aspirations.”

NARRATOR:

“Andrew Watts Rogers speaks next, indicating his approval:”

ANDREW WATTS ROGERS:

“I am with you.”

NARRATOR:

“Robert Thompson Drake offers consent as well:”

ROBERT THOMPSON DRAKE:

“I, too, support this union of brotherhood.”

NARRATOR:

“All look next to Ardivan Walker Rodgers, who, up to this time has said nothing. Noting that the other five are showing signs of worry and anxiety, he smiles as he speaks.”

ARDIVAN WALKER RODGERS:

“I have always been opposed to secret societies (pause) but, as this society is not a secret one to me, I like it. I suggest that we also agree to abide by a high standard of personal conduct, in accordance with the teachings of our faith as set forth in the *Bible*, and to admit to our circle no one who does not have such convictions. These ideals should be strong in the hearts of all of us.”

NARRATOR:

“They were—and in the dim light of the room, the six men clasped hands, *The Bond* was accepted and signed, and a great Fraternity was born.

“Brothers and Friends, as Phi Delta Theta proceeds forward, keep in mind those first meetings and the six Founders in Wilson's room. Try to catch and share their vision and their faith. Remember that these six Founders head a column of marching men now more than 256,000 strong!”