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# THE LYCEUM

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A Publication of  
The Masonic Education Alliance

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# From the Desk of R.H. Johnson



## History:

Started in xxxx, The Lyceum, an e-magazine dedicated to Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, has undergone a necessary evolution in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Originally a publication of the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand Lodge of Illinois, the magazine was the collaborative effort of two committee members. However, with the departure of one member and the Grand Lodge's change in direction, The Lyceum faced the threat of going defunct. In response, all previous issues have been rebranded, removing any association with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While previous versions may still be available on certain websites, they are no longer offered by the publisher. These changes in branding ensure that The Lyceum can continue as a free and independent publication, focused on promoting Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, regardless of oppositional forces in any Grand Lodge organization. It is important to note that the content, authors, and publisher of The Lyceum do not represent any statements or positions of any Grand Lodge, unless expressly stated.

## About:

The Masonic Education Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative, has emerged as a beacon of Light in the realm of Freemasonry. Born out of the necessity to bridge the gap left by dwindling education committees within various Grand Jurisdictions, this alliance has taken on the responsibility of providing a limitless educational magazine dedicated to all things Freemasonry. Unrestricted by the restraints of any particular jurisdiction, the Alliance unites Masonic scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around the world to create a platform where knowledge can flow freely and uninhibited.

In the past, education committees were the pillars of Masonic educational activities, disseminating knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the Craft within their respective jurisdictions. However, due to various circumstances, these committees have been effectively gutted, leaving a void in the educational landscape of Freemasonry. Recognizing this critical need for a comprehensive educational platform, the Masonic Education Alliance was formed.

Unlike traditional Masonic publications, which are often confined by the limitations of a specific Grand Jurisdiction, the Masonic Education Alliance embraces the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Its mission is to foster a love for learning, share profound insights, and explore all aspects of Freemasonry in an unbiased and global

manner. By removing these boundaries, the Alliance opens doors for Masons and non-Masons alike to delve into the mysteries, history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry from diverse perspectives.

Through the publication of a cutting-edge digital magazine, the Masonic Education Alliance brings forth a wealth of articles, essays, research papers, and creative works that elevate the intellectual understanding of Freemasonry. Drawing upon the expertise of its contributors, the Alliance takes readers on a journey of intellectual expansion, inviting them to explore the depths of Masonic teachings and traditions.

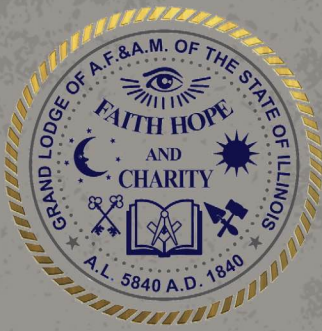
In this rapidly changing world, where traditional modes of education are transforming, the Masonic Education Alliance stands as a beacon of progress and innovation. By harnessing the power of technology, this alliance is able to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience across continents and jurisdictions. As a digital platform, the Alliance ensures that no Mason is left behind and that access to Masonic education is available to all seekers, regardless of geographical boundaries or political constraints.

In essence, the Masonic Education Alliance is more than just a magazine; it is a revolution in Masonic education. With an unwavering commitment to intellectual growth, unlimited collaboration, and global connectivity, the Alliance cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community of Freemasons hungry for knowledge. Together, members of the Alliance strive to preserve the essence of Freemasonry while embracing the transformative power of education in an ever-evolving world.

## The Seal:

The seal of the Masonic Education Alliance embodies the organization's commitment to providing rich and unbiased content to its readers. The golden hue represents the wealth of knowledge and information offered, while the borders ensure the protection of the Alliance from external influences and attacks. The Square symbolizes the Alliance's dedication to staying true to its research and providing accurate information to its readers. The presence of the All-Seeing Eye signifies the recognition of a higher power, while the book represents the Book of Nature, with a stalk of vegetation on one page and an illustration of a germ and the solar system on the other. Absent is the Compass, for the search for knowledge knows no boundaries.

*R.H. Johnson*



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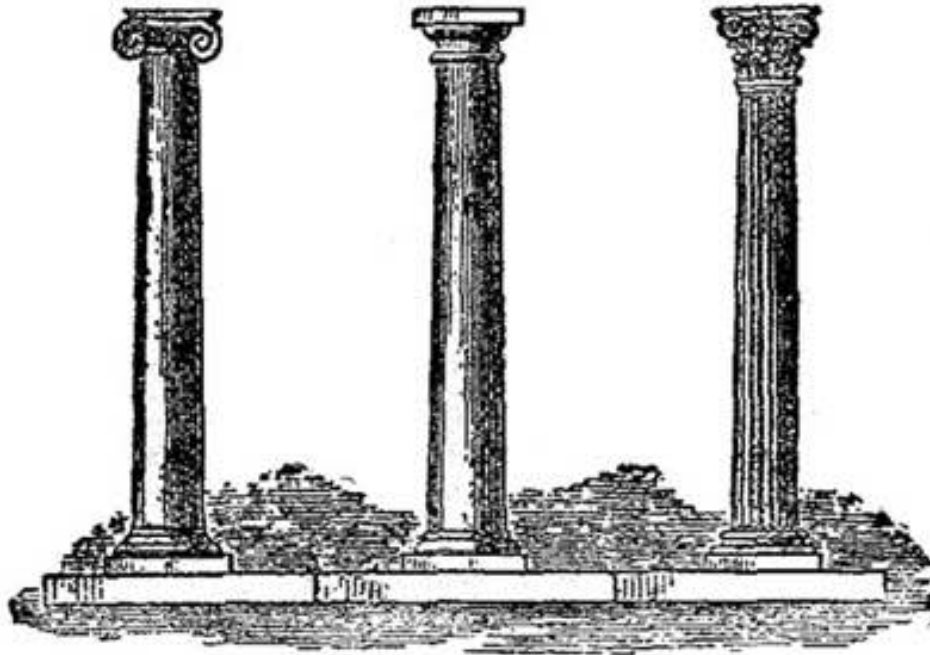
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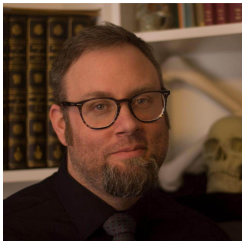
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Committee Chairman: Michael Overturf, Editor-In-Chief: Robert H. Johnson, Editor: Darin A. Lahners, Communications: Paul Cameron.



## The Editor's Word - Masonic Education Gets a Move On



The image above is one you've all seen before. Those three pillars representing Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. But in this case it's about the new directives of your Masonic Education Committee. Over the course of the last two years, the Education Committee went from a very active state to one of almost dormancy. At the beginning of 2021, WB.: Scott S. Dueball, retired as the state chair of the Education Committee. He and his wife were having twins and he had a new career opportunity. With these life changes, retirement was the right choice.

With this retirement, our Grand Master, Steven Oakley appointed Ill. Todd E. Creason to chair the Education Committee. Things were moving along well. Then, a tremendous opportunity arose for Brother Creason —an opening up into a program which would allow him to follow his dream and life calling into the Christian Ministry opened up. He had to take it. This left us once more without a Chairman.

It was at this time, our Grand Master decided to appoint our own Michael Overturf as the new head of the committee. So to say we've had some set backs is an understatement. But we're ready to get back on track.

Over the last several months, your Committee on Masonic Education has met with the Grand Master to understand what he would like to see from our committee. The Grand Lodge is unified in supporting three new pillars to Masonic Education. Those pillars are: The History of our Grand Lodge and its Ritual, The Philanthropy of Illinois Freemasonry, and Administration.

Some might initially have some concerns, as it seems the the philosophical element of Education is being lost—my Brothers, it is not. The philosophical element to our education comes directly from

the ritual. Not ritual instruction—but what it means when we do it. And of course the historical changes to our ritual, and where our Grand Lodge came from—all of this is under that first pillar.

The second pillar is self explanatory. The philanthropy of Illinois Freemasonry comprises several charities to which we manage, maintain and fund. We'll have bits on each of them in these newsletters.

The third pillar is administration. As our Grand Lodge Officers traveled from lodge to lodge, it was noticed that while our Brothers could open and close a meeting, there were lots of questions about procedure and how to do things when the occasional odd scenario came up. So our Grand Line asked us to assist in the dissemination of some administrative knowledge from time to time.

As we move forward, your Education Committee is looking at several projects that will become self-serving programs which lodges across Illinois will be able to find, load up on a computer—and just press play. This takes the burden off of lodges that need the help in having good Masonic Education. It also will serve as a starting point for our more seasoned Education Officers who will be able to use these self-servicing programs as jumping-off points.

District Education Officers (DEOs) can assist your Lodge Education officers in understanding these facets of our programs and field questions. Look to your DEOs for assistance and support.

Some of the programs you can look forward to seeing over the coming months which are already in production are a fully narrated history of the Grand Lodge of Illinois - From our first Grand Lodge, to its closing down, to the new Grand Lodge into the current years. We're also working on a program of tracing our ritual origins which lodges will be able to pull and present to its members. Of course there is this new newsletter and much more coming.

It's our belief that Masonic Education is the reason for the Craft—it acts as both an attraction to Freemasonry and is a tool for retention. Your Education Committee, along with the Area and District Education Officers are here to support you and your Lodge Education Officers. We're really excited about the future and we hope you are too.

*Robert H. Johnson, PDDGM  
Committee on Masonic Education  
Grand Lodge of Illinois, AF&AM  
Editor-In-Chief, The Lyceum*



## What is the Lyceum?



The Lyceum was, in ancient Greece, a temple dedicated to Apollo Lyceus—which was as you might guess, related to the wolf. In pop-culture much of the world knows werewolves and “Lycans” thanks to the movie franchise, “Underworld.” The name itself meant, “Apollo—Wolf God.” But this newsletter isn't named after Apollo Lyceus. Instead, it takes its inspiration from what happened at The Lyceum. At the Lyceum philosophy was taught by the likes of none other than Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. The school was founded in 334 BCE by Aristotle, in fact. But even before him, the grounds had been used for philosophical debates for generations. Aristotle's school had continued to run after his passing for many years.  
(Continued on page 3.)



## Getting to know our Chairman

Worshipful Brother Michael Overturf was Raised at Lake Creek Lodge on March 17th, 2015 passed on February 24, 2015, and initiated on January 29th, 2015—35 years from the day his Father was Raised. He is a member of Equality chapter No. 6 of the the Royal Arch, AMD chapter #400 Little Egypt, Scottish rite NMJ Valley of Southern Illinois, and Scottish Rite Valley of Saint Louis, SJ.

He and his wife Mary have been married going on 24 years in November! His usual vocation is a Resident Technician/Civil Engineering Technician for the Illinois Department of Transportation, which he’s done for almost ten years. He is an active member of the Fiberglass Dune Buggy Club, Meyers Manx Club, a “failed amateur golfer”, and tournament angler. He’s a part time mechanic, and home remodeling expert. Mike also won the Educator of the Year Award in 2017 for his outstanding work in promoting learning the many facts of Masonic Education.

*What is the Lyceum? Cont.*

The Romans shut it down in or about 86 BCE. So it is in this tradition that we name the newsletter after a place that served to enlighten the world to philosophical and practical concepts, debates and in general the expanding of ones mind through the introduction of new perspectives and thoughts from our peers in Illinois Freemasonry. We hope you enjoy.

“Lyceum (Classical).” *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 23 July 2021, [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyceum\\_\(Classical\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lyceum_(Classical)).

## A Word from the Chairman

Brethren, our ritual has a deep and rich history which it is intended to, in future segments within this newsletter, explore and discover. Beyond just the memorization of the work, it is our object to focus on the contributions of those Grand Lecturers appointed in the early part of our Grand Jurisdiction. To seek and to discover the lineage from which certain aspects of our ritual came and why it was incorporated. We hope that you enjoy this!



## Who is Jordan Kelly?

Jordan Kelly’s earliest experience with Freemasonry was probably a semi-typical one for most multi-generational Masons—a Father’s Day Weekend pancake breakfast. His father had been a Mason his entire adult life, as had his uncles and grandfather, and if there’s one thing Sesser-Goode Lodge #744 could count on was Jordan's father exclaiming the morning of the breakfast that they were, “selling like hotcakes!” 20ish years later, in 2016, Jordan joined that same Lodge just West of Rend Lake in Sesser, IL and worked that same breakfast as an Entered Apprentice. He quickly found a second home at St. Paul’s Lodge #500 where he resides in Springfield, IL, currently serving as the Junior

Warden. He became the Lodge Education Officer in 2018 and moved into the role of the Western Area Education Officer for our Grand Lodge in October of 2020. Outside of Masonry, with his wife, Jennifer, he stays busy with their three black labs, traveling, and entertaining friends and family at their home. In his regular vocation, he operates a financial advisory and wealth management practice with his team based out of Springfield. He became a Freemason because of tradition and history, fell in love with the deeper aspects and ritual, but the strongest tie he has today are, as he puts it, “the bonds made with brethren across Illinois and beyond.”



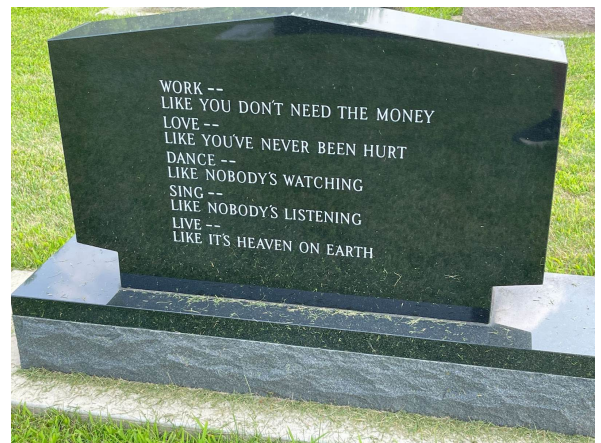
Jordan Kelly -AEO for the Western Area



## Some Sound Advice

*Reprinted with permission from the Midnight Freemasons Blog Page.*

I found these words on the backside of a tombstone during a walk in a local cemetery recently. This cemetery is located in the country, well cared for, and is a quiet place to contemplate life. I didn't know the person whose grave they marked, yet they spoke to me loud and clear as if to grab my attention telling me to pay attention.



To me, the message is simple: work hard, forgive others, live every day with meaning, and don't spend time worrying about what others are thinking of you. Most importantly, spend your life in a way that uses the most of every opportunity presented to you with faith, family, and friends.

Heaven in a religious context is a place of perfection, without pain and suffering and made by the hands of God and is prepared for you in the hopes that one day you will arrive after

death. Life on earth of course is not perfect, has troubled waters just around every corner, and can be full of disappointment and regret.

Yet striving to live like it is heaven on earth, can help you set a goal of personal self-improvement, cherishing your family members, and working towards helping build your community to be a place that is better for everyone.

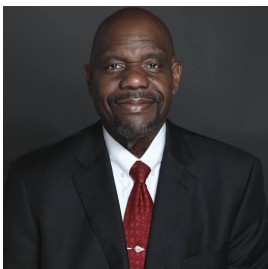
None of these, in my opinion, can be achieved without faith. Putting your faith in God is the foundational element in living life like it's heaven on earth.

Midnight Freemason founder Todd E. Creason published a piece on his personal blog about faith and the conversation he recently had with a friend. I encourage you to read this piece to find a further perspective on the topic of faith. You can find the article at: <https://toddecreason.blogspot.com/2021/07/being-transformed.html>



## Set The Craft to Work and Give Them Proper Instruction

**By RW:. Brother Wayne Spooner, Membership Committee Chairman**



An Active Lodge for Illinois Freemasonry is supported by the dedicated and passionate Brethren who serve as Lodge Officers. In particular, the three principal officers of the Lodge, the Worshipful Master and Wardens are critical to the successful leadership and management of the Lodge's activities. Their collective goals are to create an environment in which our Brethren make friends, come together to work harmoniously as Freemasons, and achieve self-improvement.

During the Opening and Closing of every Lodge meeting, we hear the words spoken by the Senior Warden while answering the question about why the Worshipful Master is in the East. That powerful statement is directly tied to the title given to this officer as "Worshipful" Master, being the Master Mason who is highly respected and regarded for his ability to lead, guide and educate the Brethren whom he serves. This recognition comes with a major assumption which is that the Brother has acquired sufficient knowledge, skill and experience to "set the Craft to work and give them proper instruction."

To assist and support every Warden and Deacon on his personal journey to become a well-informed and confident Worshipful Master, our Most Worshipful Grand Master has commissioned the creation and implementation of "The Lodge Officer Development Workshop – A Roadmap to the East" learning and development experience for these officers. During this one day in-person workshop, the Wardens, Deacons and other Master



Masons attending acquire broader Masonic as well as leadership knowledge and practice skills to help them grow into successful Worshipful Masters. Attending this dynamic and interactive workshop is a worthwhile investment in yourself and a valuable prerequisite to increase your success in effectively leading an Active Lodge for our grand jurisdiction.



## IMCAP - Did You Know?



Illinois Masonic Children's Assistance Program

IMCAP | An Illinois Freemasonry Charity



### **DID YOU KNOW IMCAP CAN HELP WITH BACK-TO-SCHOOL EXPENSES?**

As summer is winding down, families are preparing for the exciting back-to-school season. Shopping, registration, meetings with teachers, and figuring out what classes or activities our children want to participate in will keep our families very busy over the next couple of months. The last thing our families should worry about during this chaotic time is how they are going to afford their child's education.

IMCAP may be able to provide families experiencing financial challenges with assistance for a variety of school-related needs. In the past, we have provided funding for school supplies and school clothing but that is not the only way we can help make the transition back to the classroom easier for parents and students. Other ways that IMCAP can help include:

- Laptops for e-learning needs
- Tutoring cost
- Counseling and therapy co-pays
- Sports and activity fees
- Learning Evaluation costs
- Adaptive equipment
- School clothes and supplies



# Illinois Freemasonry:

*A Beacon of Light During the Coldest Winter*  
**A Short Story by Brother Justus Fischer**



Our story takes place in Central Illinois during the Winter of 1884. The coldest season to ever smack the “Land of Lincoln” to date. A record charting daytime “high” of -16 degrees Fahrenheit and a bone-chilling low of -27 degrees. (Source: [www.weather.gov/ilx/pia-cold](http://www.weather.gov/ilx/pia-cold))

As a lifelong Illinois native in the heartland of the Midwestern frontier, I can attest first hand. To the harsh realities of the winter months in the central part of the State. As a child, specifically, I can recall memories of school closures and my concerned mother, making sure that I was all “bundled up” for a battle with the elements. The roads were covered in a thick blanket of pure white snow. The cold winds stung to the touch. It is a time of primordial familiarity. The only objective in mind is survival at all costs. Everyday essentials like food, clothing, and warm shelter, become crucially vital for our sustenance during this time. In our current day and age, we take many comforts for granted. These comforts were not allotted to our ancestors, unfortunately. With the progression of modern-day Science, the harsh realities of our environment become somewhat tolerable. However, during the winter of 1884, roads were unlike the present day; they were treacherous and dark. Traveling was more of a risk than a reward, considering the lack of paved roadways at the time. Steam-powered automobiles were reserved for the fortunate few. Traveling on horseback or on foot was an everyday normality during this time.

The first steam-powered automobile introduced in the United States was patented in Racine, Wisconsin, in 1871 by DR. J. W. Carhart. At the time of its inception, this automobile was met with discouragement instead of praise. (Source: Larson, Len (2008). *Dreams To Automobiles*. Xlibris. ISBN 9781469101040. pg. 128)

The steam-powered automobile would not become popular until hitting a peak in the early part of 1930. The most popular vehicle of the time for American consumers was Henry Ford’s “Model- T.”

In the 18th century frontier, Illinoisans had more important matters to attend to, as leisurely pursuits could easily be cast aside. However, we have an interesting story—a parallel to our current time. Many of our Masonic membership can also consider the “pandemic” era as a digital age of Masonic “enlightenment.” With the heavy isolation and confinement, many seekers of Masonic Wisdom sought Light elsewhere apart from our beloved Lodge rooms. A substitution for a Masonic experience can be delivered right to our very doorsteps, right in our very hands, instantaneously! During the winter season of 1884 in Central Illinois, our light was shining as bright as ever. Rain or shine, without the need for an informational “superhighway” more commonly referred to today as the “Internet.”  
 Source: <https://www2.lbl.gov/Science-Articles/Archive/information-superhighway.html>  
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/information%20superhighway>)

I am obliged to ask the Readership of this newsletter the following...

Suppose you wanted some Light, and the sole means of obtaining a little bit of Masonic Education, was a trek for miles in the snow during some of the coldest days in Illinois recorded history just to attend a School of instruction. Would you be dedicated enough to be up for the task? To some readers, one might argue that this particular scenario might be a problem even today--considering a lack of interest on the part of our members in the areas concerning Masonic Education. This was not the case in the early days of Freemasonry in this State.

Here is one example that I procured from our vaults for your reading pleasure. From the Forty-Sixth Annual Communication held at Chicago October 6,7 and 8 A.L. 5885:

*“SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION*

*I had the pleasure of attending the Schools of Instruction at Centralia, Champaign, Sterling, and Rockford. I failed to reach Litchfield on account of the snow blockade, which so completely impeded travel in the central portion of the State at that time. The Schools were all well attended, except the one at Sterling. For the reason just specified, it was not possible for many of the Craft to reach that point. Since the reorganization of these Schools, under the wisdom and guidance of Past Grand Master Hawley, they have gradually increased in importance and magnitude, until it is not possible to estimate the value of them to the Craft.*

*The Brethren who have attended the most, and are capable of estimating, dispassionately, their value, are loudest in their praise. The ritual, alone, is not all that is taught. Besides cultivating the social virtues, inspiring a zeal for the Institution, and a determination to know more of the ritual and symbolism of the degrees, many other points of interest are taught and exemplified - such as for example : How the officers of the Grand or constituent lodges should be received and introduced ; how the examination of a visitor should be conducted ; how and by whom he should be introduced ; and many other points of interest to the Craft generally. The interest in the Schools was never before so marked as during the past winter. The desire for information on the various points presented, the interest manifested for more light, was all that the most exacting could ask or expect.*

*Brethren, these Schools have become of so much importance to the Craft, and so much good is*

*being accomplished by them, that I cannot but think that it would be unwise for the Grand Lodge to do anything to discourage them.*

*The Board of Examiners and Assistant Grand Lectures, have, by a long course of study and teaching, become proficient in the work to a degree not contemplated a few years since. All these brethren deserve credit for faithful and efficient services rendered. To their efforts is largely due the advanced condition of the Craft in Illinois.”* (Source: G.L. Proceedings 1885 Pg. 27)

In closing, It is important to note that even in the early days of the Craft here in our jurisdiction, the need for more “Light” by the inquiring minds of our intellectually curious brethren was indeed present. The harshest winter this state had seen to date did not stop our members from attending various schools of instruction throughout the central part of Illinois. Their passion and hunger to improve themselves in Masonry, throwing caution to the wind and disregarding the limitations of their environment--it is truly inspiring. The Brethren here believed that building one’s own spiritual temple was more beneficial for their own minds than the warm comforts of the primordial man. In a time of cold isolation, this simple “Masonic School” was a beacon of hope in times of despair. This was essential for their survival.

May the warmth of our Light shine bright in our jurisdiction and in the hearts and minds of our Brothers, always and forevermore.



To contact us:

Send submissions for The Lyceum to the Editor-in-chief  
[secretary@spesnovum.com](mailto:secretary@spesnovum.com)

**Deadline is the 14th of each month by End of Business.**

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