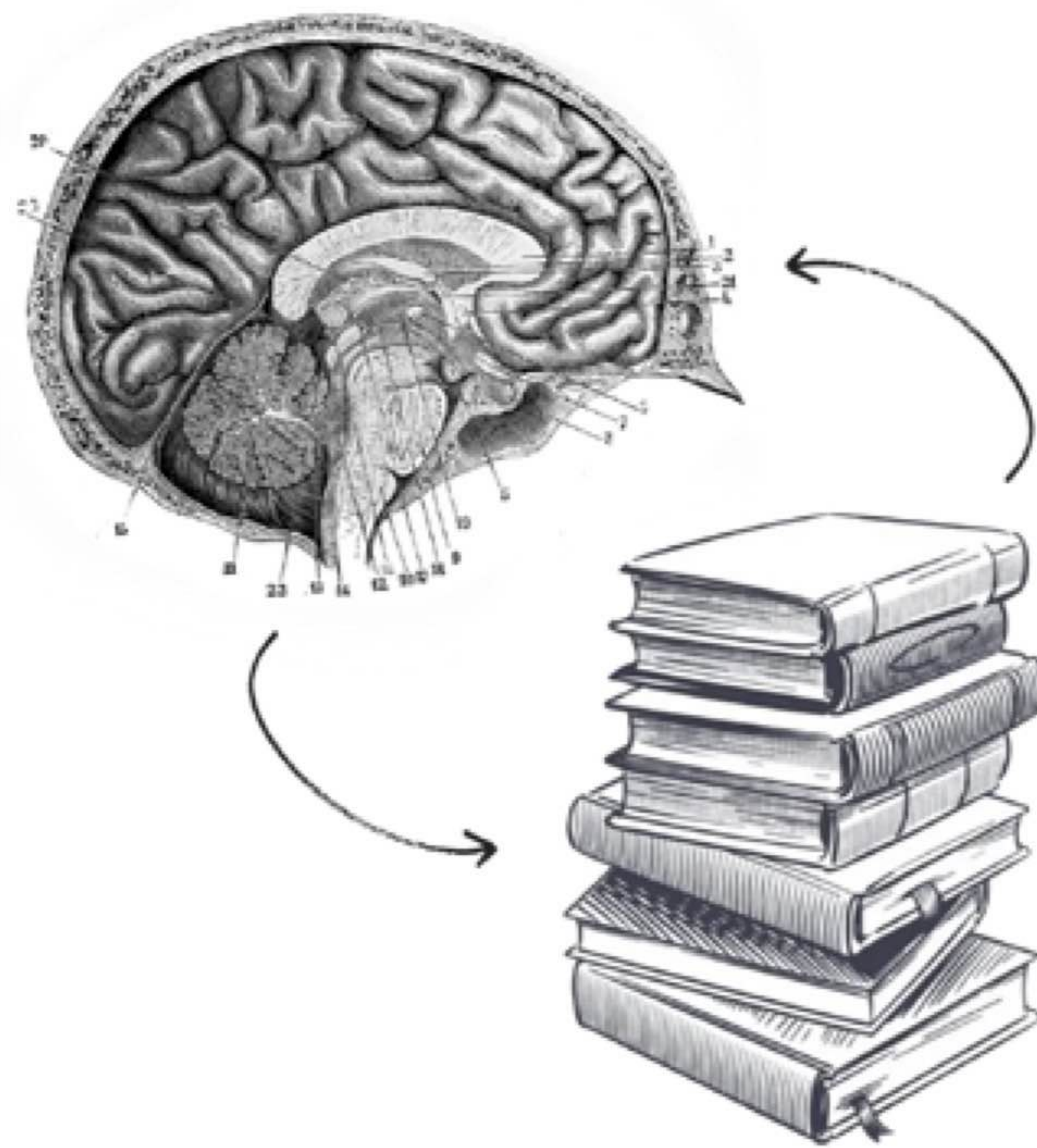


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# The Lyceum

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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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\*Deceased

Find us online @  
[ilmason.org/masonic-education](http://ilmason.org/masonic-education)



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# FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Brothers all,

This issue's theme is "How to do Masonic Education." WB: Darin Lahners has curated a superb selection of articles relating to our theme. Masonic Education is for everyone, but it's not the same for everyone. We're all unique—from Brothers to entire lodges, there—just an approach that can work...If we choose to rise to our obligations. You won't find anything in this issue that mandates how you should go about it. Just the opposite.

In our Featured Article, Bro. Brian L. Pettice, 33°, takes us on an adventure to motivate a Masonic Lodge to take on Education. He had an idea of what to do, but we find out in short order that it's not as easy as it seems—but also, there are unexpected consequences. We're also pleased to publish, for the first time, an article by WB Lahners written for this specific issue—"Lodge Education – A How-To Guide." Darin points out our options, inspires us with ideas, and advocates for us.

Over the last 30+ years, two names stand out in Illinois Freemasonry in Education. RWBs, Ed Rund and Ira Gilbert. They both were prolific writers, and we've decided to posthumously publish two of their articles in this issue. RWB: Gilbert goes through our resources as Masonic educators, and Ed Rund gives us some essential guidelines we've been missing in our attempts to offer Masonic Education—it starts with investing in the Educators themselves. As part of this month's theme, we've also published a solid list of Masonic podcasts for you to check out if so inclined.

Rounding it out, we've got a piece from Bro. Chad Lacek, 33°, called "Keys to the Front Door." In this article, Chad takes us through some great feelings when he tells us about a vacation and a Lodge visit he had some years ago. But what starts as a warm and fuzzy feeling about Brotherhood—turns into an epiphany about something dire.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this issue. Happy Holidays!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. H. Johnson".

R. H. Johnson



# ***From the Chairman***



Brothers,

It is that most wonderful time of the year again. I hope that this finds you all happy and healthy. The Committee and I wish the happiest of Holidays to you all. To all my Fellow Secretaries, I hope this finds you especially well since this is our busiest time with Dues, elections, and such. In This issue, we look at Masonic Education as a How-to; it doesn't have to be complex. It can be a simple discussion over a working tool, or if you're up for it, things can get more complex—for example, aligning your Chakras. I believe that we can best focus on the basics of our ritual by peeling

back the layers and utilizing this to help us become better men.

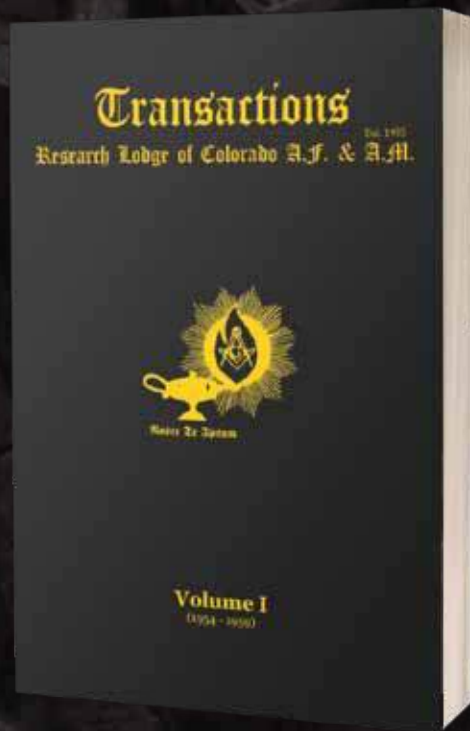
During a recent discussion, we talked about the twenty-four-inch gage, what our ritual callouts are, and how our group (a masonic Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University group) can still fit those 8 hours of service into our two and even three job schedules on top of our 8 hours at our regular vocation. I was the example of the 8 hours of rest (having had Covid, the Flu, and a constant head cold) plus having the chairmanship of the Committee and being the Secretary at my lodge--it's a lot!

If we look at the most successful businesspeople, they have businesses and investments which work around the clock for them. Hopefully, we can also achieve this same status someday. I commented to our group that for me, every hour now has value, whether it is toward paying off something or a project around the house or in my business; it's no longer free time. I am also older than most in the group, so I must protect myself even more; my body needs more to recover (a young lady I work with is amazed that being the same age as her father, I can do what I am doing.) I must admit that I also admire those younger adults working the two and three jobs for their hustle and sacrifice to achieve the goals and rewards of being stewards. These conversations often spark great moments to reflect, so please enjoy this issue.



# **Next Month's Theme**

**THE ENTERED APPRENTICE**



***Since 1953, the Research Lodge of Colorado has been producing quality Masonic Education papers. Over the last three years, the Lodge has worked tirelessly to compile the transactions into an amazing volume that is beautifully curated and printed. Volume II is coming!***

**\$20**

**[RLCOLO.Org/Items](https://RLCOLO.Org/Items)**

# Lodge Education: A How-To Guide

by AEO Eastern Area WB Darin A. Lahners



One of the questions Masonic Educators get asked most often is how to perform Masonic Education. Before I start with that, I want to make a crucial distinction between Masonic Education and Masonic

Instruction. Masonic Instruction is learning the ritual, floor work, and everything else that relates to the work being performed within a tiled lodge. Masonic Education is learning about the meaning behind the work being performed within a tiled lodge. This includes the meanings behind what we say and sometimes why we say it. All the meanings of the symbols, floor work, ritual, and the philosophical discussions about them fall under the realm of Masonic Education. Both are equally important; however, Masonic Instruction usually varies by Masonic District. Most districts that I am familiar with have a version of what is called a Worker's Club, which is a separate meeting where the ritual and floorwork are being taught. Unfortunately, Masonic Education is not given such priority. It is usually reserved for the last item of business, assuming you even have it on your Meeting Agenda. This has meant for me, speaking from experience, that if your business meeting is not well organized, the Masonic Educator is forced to give a presentation or lead a discussion for a bunch of tired and cranky brethren.

The first thing that one must do to prioritize Masonic Education within their lodge is to move it to be the first item of business on the Agenda after the Pledge and Opening of the meeting. This will require a discussion with the Worshipful Master and, in some cases, a Lodge By-Law change if your lodge has the meeting agenda set by By-Law. I am writing this article under the assumption that your lodge is open to Education, so neither of the above should be an issue. If your lodge is not open to Education, then I urge you to speak with your Lodge Education Officer (by default, this is your Worshipful Master in Illinois), District Education Officer, or Area Education Officer. If you don't know who your DEO or AEO are, you can find them listed here: <https://ilmason.org/district-educational-officers>. They can work with either the DDGM or ADGM to see how best to implement a Masonic Education Program in your lodge. In a

worst-case scenario, you should visit other lodges in your district to see if there is a lodge where education is a priority and move your membership there. I hate to say this as a Masonic Educator, but there are some lodges where Masonic Education isn't part of the lodge culture, and no matter how much one member tries, that lodge culture isn't going to change. In these cases, one should move lodges or plural at a lodge where Education is a priority. Vote with your feet.

Once education is prioritized at your meeting, it will be incumbent upon the sitting Master to appoint a Lodge Education Officer to oversee preparing and presenting Education for each meeting. If you are the one who is pushing to improve the educational efforts in your lodge, don't be surprised if this person is you. The question you are asking yourself is most likely: "Now, What?"

As Lodge Education Officer, you should focus on these two things.

1. Providing Self Study opportunities for the lodge members.
2. Providing Educational Content for the lodge members.

I will explain each step in detail below.

1. Providing Self Study opportunities for the lodge members.
  - A. Providing self-study opportunities for your lodge members is probably the easiest way to get them engaged in Masonic Education. You should recommend podcasts from the below link to the brethren in your area.

<https://masonicrevival.com/pages/podcasts>

You can also recommend books from these lists, some of which are public domain:

<https://www.nhgrandlodge.org/suggested-reading-for-masons/>

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HPiyPf2MYZ-KZAO59a2wQw9muq6Q72d\\_H/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HPiyPf2MYZ-KZAO59a2wQw9muq6Q72d_H/view)

or direct them to

<https://countcagliostrosmasoniclibrary.wordpress.com> and ask them to pick out something to read.

In 2018, our Grand Jurisdiction of Illinois's Education committee surveyed over two-thousand Freemasons within and without our jurisdiction to curate a list of the most recommended books for our Brothers here in Illinois. The final curated list of texts contained:

- Freemasonry for Dummies

- For the new or beginner Freemason

- A Masons Words

- For the everyday Freemason who wants to be confident in their knowledge of Freemasonry

- The Meaning of Masonry

- For the Freemason who wants to go one step further into the more profound philosophies of Freemasonry.

## 2. Providing Educational Content for the lodge members

Providing Educational Content for the lodge members is one of the most intimidating things that faces a Masonic Educator does. However, it should not be. Here are some ideas on how to provide Lodge Education:

A. Know your audience. Warning: If you are interested in esoteric studies but your lodge is not, the surest way to burn them out and wear out your welcome as an educator is to tackle a complex esoteric subject. You will need to gauge the interest of your lodge when it comes to topics for Masonic Education. I suggest the first Education be a discussion with the lodge members about topics they would like to unpack at future meetings guide helpful. Here are some topics that you can offer them: The History of the Grand Lodge of Illinois, The History of Freemasonry, The Deeper Meaning behind our Symbols and Ritual, The History of our Ritual, Contemplative Masonry (Basic Applications of Mindfulness and Meditation guided by Masonic Ritual), Self-Improvement, and lastly: American Masonic History. (All of these ideas for Edu were submitted by the constituents of the Grand Lodge of Illinois in a comprehensive survey the Education Committee conducted earlier in 2022. You can read about the results of this survey in Vol 2 No. 4 Pg. 10). Get their opinions and try to cover the topics they are interested in. You should also survey them to see how they might prefer to learn. Some lodges might have members that would like to watch

a video instead of listening to a presenter. Be sure to note their preferences and try to cater your education to them. Also, try to network within your district to find brethren that share similar interests to you so that you can have an outlet for discussing Masonic topics that you might be interested in but that your fellow lodge members are not.

B. Once you know your audience, you must pick your topic for your education. You can use any of the resources above to help create your presentation. Also, don't be afraid to use the Intender Handbooks, Short Talk Bulletins, the Lyceum, or the internet. The Midnight Freemasons Blog has many articles on various subjects that you can use (<http://www.midnightfreemasons.org>) for Masonic Education. If you have a lodge that prefers video learning, don't be afraid to use YouTube. The Masonic Minute series by Illustrious Bro. Steve Harrison is an excellent resource to use, as well as Refracted Light (a Facebook Group that started an entire YouTube series to provide Masonic and other educational presentations during a time of the global pandemic.) Don't be afraid to reach out to a speaker to see if they can present either in person or virtually if you can do so (<https://illinoislodgeofresearch.org/speakers-bureau>). Remember the steps below when creating the presentation for your chosen topic.

C. Follow the K.I.S.S. (Keep It Simple Stupid) principle. Any subject you present should be simple, and at the very least, you need to have a way to translate it to be easily understood by all the members of your lodge. The topic or topics you choose to present should be considered a building block for future education. For Example, instead of trying to discuss the hidden meaning behind all the symbols given in the Third-Degree explanatory lecture during one education session, present them one at a time over the course of your stated meetings. When creating a presentation, imagine that you are trying to explain the topic you are presenting to a child. Just because you have a firm grasp on a subject does not mean that everyone else will.

D. Lodge Education should not be a monologue. When appropriately done, Lodge Education engages everyone at the lodge meeting to participate in a healthy dialogue about the topic being presented. It is your job as the Masonic Educator to guide these discussions. The best way to do this is to have a list of questions to ask your lodge--get their opinions



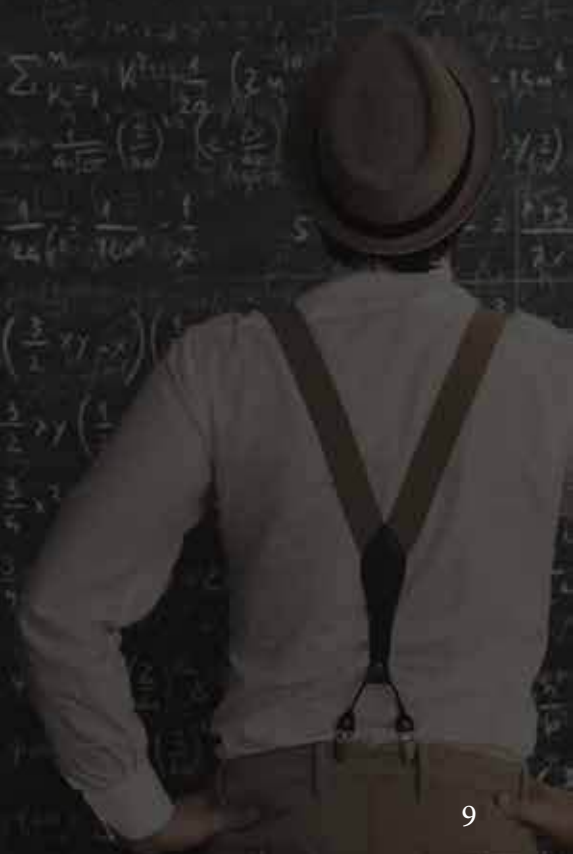
a discussion based on the topic discussed. Don't be afraid to try to engage members of your lodge who don't usually participate by asking them questions directly. The goal of Masonic Education is to ensure that everyone is participating and learning not only about the subject but also about the opinions or beliefs of their brethren.

E. It would be best if you tried to have the educational program and the discussion involved around it last at least 20 minutes and, in most cases, no more than 30 minutes. Any longer, you may edge on boring your brethren and push the time that the meeting closes back past many Grumpy Past Masters bedtimes. Be adaptable. Maybe your lodge is in the middle of a good discussion about the meaning of the term "Foreign Countries" in our ritual. Don't stop it just because the 30 minutes are up. On the reverse side, if you're having a hard time getting members to discuss a topic, don't be afraid to stop the education and move on with the meeting. There's always the next meeting. You're not always going to hit a home run. You'll strike out some also. It happens. Don't let it keep you from going back to the plate.

F. Use your DEO and AEO. Don't be afraid to bounce ideas off your District Education Officer or Area Education Officer. Ask them for help.

G. Lastly, Use your imagination. The sky is the limit. Don't be afraid to try different things. If you want to plan a Burns Dinner, don't be scared—do it. Similarly, this holds true for a Festive Board, Table Lodge, or Masonic Symposium. Again, try to network with brethren in other lodges to help plan more significant events with their lodges. Many hands make light work.

I hope you find this guide useful in helping you start meaningful Masonic Education at your lodge. I can't stress point F above enough. If you need help, don't be afraid to ask for it. If your DEO can't assist you, then go to your AEO. Masonic Education is easy once you know how to do it.



## Featured Article

# A Lodge Talks Itself into Masonic Education

by Brian L. Pettice, 33°



At its stated meeting Tuesday, September 4th, 2018, Olive Branch Lodge No. 38 approved the following statement regarding Masonic Education:

“We the Brethren of Olive Branch Lodge No. 38 declare that, in order to increase the

bonds of brotherhood and the quality of fellowship among our members and assist each of us in improving ourselves in Masonry, the study and especially the discussion of the meaning of the ritual, symbolism, philosophies, and purposes of Freemasonry shall be a principal part of our Lodge experience. To that end, we shall dedicate a minimum of the first thirty minutes after the Lodge is opened on each second stated meeting of the month to the study and discussion of such subjects.”

The Lodge is choosing to move beyond the usual and obligatory Masonic Education practice of a brother delivering a short--very short, talk at the end of a tired business meeting. The Lodge has decided to attempt the type of educational experience that will give all of the brethren better opportunities to actively engage--the type of experience that allows each brother to really think about a topic, to share his thoughts, to hear the views of his brethren, and to internalize what he has learned; the type of experience that may change the culture of the Lodge and it has dedicated time to do that. My part in how this Lodge arrived at this decision is a story I hope can help other Freemasons who want their Lodges to follow a similar course. What follows is part one of a three-part series telling that story.

### Lost Focus

Since becoming a plural member a couple of years back, I had informally been giving most of the lodge education talks at Olive Branch. The talks I had been giving were usually short—maybe my thoughts on

what a particular piece of ritual meant or a bit of Masonic history—and they were usually delivered at the end of the meeting when most brethren, myself included, were ready to go home. I vaguely felt we were just checking Masonic education off on a list of tasks to complete. It was like taking a daily vitamin—you felt better for doing it, but its real value was questionable. It certainly wasn't as important as the “real” business of the lodge; if we rushed through it or skipped it, it wasn't a big deal.

Ron Vadeboncoeur was elected Worshipful Master of the Lodge this past December and asked me to be the official lodge Masonic Education Guy this year. Shortly after Christmas, Ron loaned me Michael Poll's *Measured Expectations*, a book he had received as a gift. Ron asked me to read the book and base my Masonic education pieces on the chapters of Poll's book. Receiving that book would be the first of three occurrences, happening over a brief time span, which would convince me that we needed to change our Lodge experience, especially the Masonic education part of that experience.

I decided I would read Poll's book and then go back to develop something I could present about each chapter. I soon got off this track. I like to read at night when I go to bed. In my younger days, when sleep was optional, I could finish a book that caught my attention overnight and still function reasonably well that day. Now that I have gotten older, I rarely finish a book in a single setting. It usually requires several nights, and I usually have to re-read the last couple of chapters that I finished the previous night because I wasn't really awake when I was reading them. Anyway, I was about halfway through the book when a friend of mine, Greg Knott, began a Facebook discussion group for the book—it was apparently a popular Christmas gift. Participating in this group would be the second of the three occurrences I mentioned that prodded me to seek to change our lodge's focus on Masonic education.

The group decided to discuss the book by chapter, so I re-read Chapter One, "A Young Man Joins a Masonic Lodge." This chapter is one man's story of becoming a Mason and being disappointed in what he found—a Masonic lodge whose meetings seemed to serve no Masonic purpose. Most of the discussion group shared an experience like that of the man portrayed in the book. Freemasonry had lost its focus—its Lodges and Members no longer knew its reason for existence. My thoughts began to crystalize around this general theme of lost focus, what that focus should be, and what might be done about the situation as I remembered my own experiences in lodge. Like the young man in the book and the study group members, I found Freemasonry to be an organization whose members did not know its reason for existence. The "glory" days were gone when I entered a little over twenty years ago. There were some talented and dedicated brethren, but most seemed tired. Too few men were trying to perform the activities the lodge had always performed because the lodge had always performed them. The purpose or effectiveness of the activities wasn't questioned. The stated meetings were chores to be dispatched with as quickly as possible. The degrees lacked for participants.

The organization seemed desperate to regain something it had lost but did not seem to know what that something was. Having said all of that, I would confess that I was through the chairs before I really realized the situation. Like those before me, I got on the tread wheel and ran. Five years after joining the lodge, I was elected Worshipful Master. I presided over quick and efficient "busyness" meetings and my Lodge performed the same activities it always had. I lamented the lack of attendance and participation at the lodge but didn't really have any idea why the situation was the way it was—what was missing.

#### The Mission

I think the tide is turning regarding Freemasonry's lost focus, though, for me and for Freemasonry in general. My own opinions of the purposes of Freemasonry have changed over the years, and I am more comfortable asserting them. I think more and more brethren are becoming convinced of the need to ignore activity for activity's sake, to ignore the scorecard of membership numbers, and to focus on activities the members are interested in, specifically education. For several lodges, that has meant an acknowledgement, if not a full embrace, of the need for Masonic education. In many cases, that has meant brethren making presentations in the lodge about some aspect of Masonry or the other.

Reading Chapter One a second time, though, I began to think that more than the presentation method of Masonic education may be needed. It can be too static and doesn't always offer brethren the opportunity to actively learn—to engage in the give and take that can be a more enjoyable way of learning. I, personally, always enjoy a good discussion of Masonic symbolism, philosophy, history, or even just the issues facing us as Brethren today. We need to find room and time to move beyond the presentation method alone and facilitate discussion of these ideas-- we need to offer everyone the opportunity to be actively involved rather than just passively observing.

Continuing to reflect on how a lodge might make this type of education a part of its experience, I remembered my own experience with Admiration Chapter No. 282, a fairly new Royal Arch Chapter of which I had the pleasure of working with a talented and driven group of Brothers and Companions to Charter. This Chapter began its existence through discussions among its founding members about what they wanted the experience and culture of that Chapter to be. This led to them laying out mission, vision, and goals statements describing what they wanted the Chapter to be and to do. Admiration Chapter is foremost devoted to education. Among its most successful educational endeavors have been lively discussions of Masonic values, discussions that have spurred nearly all in attendance to participate.

Could these ideas also be applied to an existing lodge? Would a lodge, especially one that may have lost its focus, be able to have a conversation about the mission and vision for the lodge—to answer some of these questions? What do the members want the lodge to be? What kind of activities do they want to undertake? What kind of experiences do they want to be had there? What values and qualities do they want to nurture in their members and communities? How do they plan to achieve what they agree to? What expectations do they have of their members? If the lodge members could agree to a couple of brief statements defining the lodge's mission and vision statements, wouldn't that help it regain and retain its focus?

As these ideas were bouncing around in my mind, I attended an Illinois Lodge of Research Symposium in Homer on March 24th-- the third occurrence that would shape the idea I would ultimately take to the

lodge. At this event, two of the speakers, Ben Wallace, who had been instrumental in starting North Carolina's first Traditional Observance Lodge, and Ainslie Heilich, who was vital in creating a new Odd Fellows lodge in Tuscola Illinois, related their experiences in developing new lodges. In both of their cases, a small group of people who had a clear idea of what they wanted their lodges to be and to do, the lodge mission and vision, set out to create it deliberately and intentionally. They described, in detail, how they created the experience and culture in their lodges. This confirmed to me that this is what would need to be done—a lodge would need to engage in a process where its members would decide what its mission and vision would be and what goals would be set to achieve it. It would need to document these and then work toward implementation.

In my mind, I knew what I thought that mission and vision should be, but how to lead a long-existing lodge to come to my conclusion was the question. Progress would only be made in spurts as the business of the lodge business would last until the time was too short to discuss my ideas in much detail for most of the subsequent stated meetings. I was able to outline the concept for the lodge members a couple of times. I told them my thoughts on the first chapter of Poll's book and the study group, and of my experience with Admiration Chapter, and what I learned at the Lodge of Research Symposium. I told them that I wanted us, the members of the lodge, to be deliberate about what we wanted the lodge experience to be, especially what part education would play in that experience. I said that I wanted the lodge to begin holding discussions to try to build a consensus of what we think the mission each of us should have as individual Freemasons--what is each of us trying to accomplish by being a Mason. I said that once we have discovered and documented our consensus as to what we think our mission and purpose for being is as individual Masons, I would like this to lead to further discussions about the mission and purpose for the lodge and eventually to mission, vision, and goal statements for the lodge so that the members are deliberately choosing what we want that experience to be.

To help begin our discussions about our mission and purpose as individuals, I shared a few items with them. I encouraged them to read and think about the ritual when looking for their mission. I

asked them to ask themselves a few questions. Is what you are doing as a Mason now what you expected to be doing? Has your experience been what you expected? What changes would you make? What wouldn't you change? What do you think you or others are missing? I hoped that thinking about Lodge's mission and vision and these questions would guide our discussions once we began them and eventually lead the lodge members, my brethren, to the conclusions I had already made.

### **Leading The Lodge to My Conclusion, Or Not**

By the time late July rolled around, I had realized we would not have adequate time to have these discussions during the "Masonic Education" portion of our meetings, so I moved that all interested brethren meet at the restaurant down the street two hours before our first stated meeting in August to begin our discussions. On Tuesday, August 1st, a dozen Masons met at that restaurant to start the process. I reiterated to them what I wanted to eventually accomplish—to deliberately and intentionally establish mission, vision, and goal statements that would guide our future Lodge experience. I told them we were beginning an experiment to see if an existing lodge, one with long-standing traditions, could do that—to see if its members can reflect on and examine themselves and their Lodge and define the mission and purposes they want to pursue- to deliberately define their culture and the changes needed to realize that culture.

I told them to begin the experiment that, we needed to answer two questions. What is each of our purposes or missions as individual Masons? And, considering our purposes as individuals, what is the Lodge's purpose or mission, and what should the Lodge experience be to accomplish it? I thought I already knew the answers to these questions, and though I intentionally didn't share this with the brethren, I thought the lodge would, in short order, come to the same conclusions I did. I was mistaken. We had great participation that night, with many brethren discussing what they liked and didn't like about being a Freemason. They mentioned family traditions and being part of something bigger. They mentioned charity and fellowship with moral men. They mentioned history. But these comments weren't my answer—that by studying the meaning of the ritual, symbolism, and philosophy of Freemasonry, we can truly subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Masonry, we can lift ourselves up morally, especially spiritually—and I was initially a bit disappointed. I thought this, leading the brethren to my conclusions, would take longer than I thought. Two significant

things did come out of that evening, though--an enthusiasm among the brethren to continue the discussions and a suggestion by one of the brethren that we devote time, at least forty-five minutes at the beginning of the next stated meeting, to these discussions. This suggestion led to a motion later that evening that we devote time at the beginning of every second stated meeting of the month to continue these discussions, with the goal of documenting mission and vision statements.

In preparation for the next meeting, I asked the brethren to think more about what being a Freemason meant to each of them, and we would continue our discussions in that vein. Something else happened though as well. I began to think about how I arrived at my conclusions as to what Freemasonry is and ought to be, and I realized that it took me twenty-two years to arrive at where I am right now. Truthfully, I am still evolving. My experiences and studies in that twenty-two years are not the same as that of my brethren. Their experiences and conclusions are the product of their experiences and studies and are as valid to them as mine are to me. When we arrived at the next stated meeting, we started our discussions, and the comments were already on a different level than the last meeting. The brethren talked about their feelings; how following in their uncle's footsteps made them feel; how they felt about meeting and talking with brethren of different generations (I found out I am not in the younger generation anymore); how just being with each other made them feel. I began to rethink my emphasis on everyone agreeing to the same mission and vision. I began to think this was the important part--the brethren of the Lodge devoting themselves to learning and sharing with each other without worrying necessarily where that would lead. I began to think a better idea would be for us to just study and discuss and learn together and see where that led. So, I suggested to the Lodge that we continue to dedicate time at the beginning of each second stated meeting for discussion and study. I said that I would draft a statement for the Lodge to approve at our next stated meeting describing our commitment and suggested we begin our new program with study and discussion of the Grand Lodge of Illinois Intender program, which is designed to teach the fundamentals of Freemasonry.

I formulated the statement, and then something happened that confirmed to me the correctness of my new perspective on the way our lodge would execute Masonic Education. I was at another Lodge's degree

conferral one night when I noticed their business meeting agenda taped to the master's Pedestal. It was dated from 1973, forty-five years ago. I had seen the same agenda in nearly every lodge I have been in. Nowhere on that agenda was anything about Masonic Education. Nowhere was there anything about studying Masonic symbolism or philosophy. Nowhere was there any indication of how Freemasonry was to go about making good men better. I realized that an existing lodge would not easily turn a corner quickly, nor should it be expected to. Will we ever document our mission, vision, and goals? Maybe, maybe not. Maybe those are not necessary. Maybe they would be the sort of static ideas that would still be taped to a pedestal forty-five years from now. But dedicating ourselves to devoting time to studying and discussing Masonic ritual, symbolism, and philosophy does change the experience in the Lodge. It does and will continue to change its culture. Dedicating ourselves to this does offer each of us the opportunity to subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Masonry. It offers the members of the Lodge the opportunity to always reflect on what the Lodge is and what they think it should be. That is the important thing, and all you have to do is make time for it. The subjects a lodge might study are endless. We chose a readily available program already provided by the Grand Lodge to give everyone a good basic knowledge and understanding of Freemasonry. The important thing is that we chose. We approved the statement, and we began our studies and discussions on September 18th. If you are in Danville, Illinois, on the third Tuesday of the month, stop by and see how we are doing.





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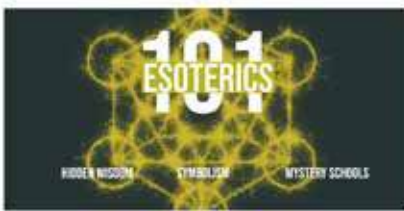
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# IMPROVING MYSELF IN MASONRY

## A BEGINNERS MANUAL

by RWB.: Ira Gilbert \*

The second question asked of a new Entered Apprentice when learning his catechism is, "What came you here to do?" An indication of the importance of the reply to this question is the fact that it is asked so early on in the candidate's education regarding the symbolism of his degree. The answer to this query is, in part, "To learn to ..... improve myself in Masonry." It is this response and the candidate's understanding of the answer that will lead to the new brother's future in our fraternity.

What is meant when the response, "to improve myself in Masonry," is given? What does a new Mason have to do to improve himself in Masonry? The answer is that he must start on a lifelong journey to learn the history, philosophy, and symbolism that lies behind the ritual he has undergone. It is this trip that eventually leads to the future in our fraternity. Will he continue to attend lodge meetings? Will he aspire to become an officer of his lodge and, possibly, in one of the committees Grand Lodge.

There are many sources of information about our fraternity, its ritual, philosophy, and history. The question is, where does a new Master Mason start his quest? The answer is, that it is the job of the Intender to start the new Mason on his journey toward enlightenment. There are questions about Masonry in the Intender Manual and Guidebooks for each degree. It is a start for the new Mason to learn the answers in the Intender Manual and Guidebooks. The next thing to do is to get the catalogs from the various Masonic supply companies. In these catalogs are listings of many books of Masonic content. It is up to the new Mason to choose those books that are interesting to him.

I suggest that the best book to start new Masons out on their quest for knowledge is *The Newly Made Mason* by H. L. Haywood. I think that this is the most readable and information-packed book for the new Mason.

The catalogs that I recommend are those from: Macoy Publishing and Masonic Supply Co., J. P. Luther Co., and George Lauterer Corporation. These catalogs can all be found online. However, the online catalogs only present Masonic clothing and para-

phernalia. If you want to get the full catalog with a listing of Masonic books, you will need to order the catalogs and have them sent to you in the mail.

There are several good websites that cater to the teaching of Masonic education. The first of these is the website hosted by Paul Bessel. His site is [www.Bessel.org](http://www.Bessel.org). The next excellent website is [www.Freemasons-freemasonry.com](http://www.Freemasons-freemasonry.com). After checking into these websites you will have many subsites from which to choose depending on your individual interests in Freemasonry.

From the years 1915 to 1930, a wonderful magazine entitled *The Builder* was published. This magazine was edited by Joseph Fort Newton, who also authored that most important Masonic book, *The Builders*. It is not easy to access this website. The way to do it is to go to [Google.com](http://Google.com) or [Bing.com](http://Bing.com) and search for the term "The Builder Magazine." About two or three entries down you will see a web site entitled "The Builder Magazine 1915-1930." Clicking on this will lead you to the website where you can access all fifteen years of articles from this wonderful Masonic publication.

I suggest that you become a member of the Illinois Lodge of Research. This is the best \$10.00 you can spend for Masonic education. Each year you will get the proceedings of the Illinois Lodge of Research containing articles of Masonic interest. The Illinois Lodge of Research also maintains an excellent library of books that can be borrowed for your reading. The Library is located in the Normal, IL, Masonic Temple and will make an excellent visit should you be in that area. (A note on this. Since the publishing of this article, the library is no longer the property of the Illinois Lodge of Research but is instead owned and operated by dedicated individuals of Bloomington-Normal Temple.)

A Google or Bing search for Masonic Lodges of Research will bring you the websites for lodges of research worldwide. Best among these are those from Quator Coronati Lodge in London, UK, The Philalethes Society, and Heredom, the magazine of the Scottish Rite Research Society in the Southern Jurisdiction of the Scottish Rite.

One final suggestion is in order. The Masonic Service Association of North America is an excellent source of Masonic knowledge at low cost. The web site is [www.msana.com](http://www.msana.com). When you log in to this site, click on Publications and Masonic Information Center. You can get their entire catalog online. The Short Talk Bulletins are a great place to get information no matter what your interests are in Masonry. One book that I suggest at a cost of only \$3.00 is *More Light ... Helpful Information for New Master Masons*, by Jim Tresner. A year's subscription to the Short Talk Bulletins is only \$8.00 (at the time of original publishing). Don't miss this resource of Masonic information. I have given you much to start your Masonic life of study. I encourage you to take advantage of these entries into your Masonic education. You will certainly gain much more light in Masonry, and the knowledge gained will enable you to say that you are, indeed, *Improving Yourself in Masonry*.



**MASONIC  
SECRETS**



# Masonic Podcasts

What used to be only a niche category of entertainment and education has exploded in recent years. Podcasts allow any person to take on any topic and make it accessible to billions of people around the world. In the early days of Masonic Podcasts, there were only a few. Brother Scott Blasken and his podcast called, The Digital Freemason was the first Masonic podcast with what we might call regular releases--consistency. Many have come and gone, but their work is preserved forever (or as long as they pay the hosting fees) on the internet for all to enjoy. Today, there are over 50 Masonic podcasts out there. Many have gone dark, but their old episodes are still there for consumption. Others publish regularly. If you're ever curious about more light in Masonry, there are many options. I'll brag for a moment that perhaps the best of these podcasts come, at least in some part from our home jurisdiction of IL. Brother Eric Diamond started the Ex Oriente Podcast many years ago and still releases episodes. Eric is from Oriental Lodge No. 33. I produce four of the Masonic Podcasts you'll see on this list (Whence Came You?, Masonic Radio Theatre, The Masonic Roundtable, and The Masonic Readers Podcast. Perhaps one of the best podcasts out there today that's still pretty new is one made by our own Darin A. Lahners, who works alongside Greg Knott to produce Meet, Act and Part. Our Grand Lodges cannot endorse any of these podcasts, so what you hear in them may or may not be to your liking, etc. That said, there's a world of great content out there. Have fun listening!



# WE ARE FAILING OUR MASONIC EDUCATORS

BY RWB.: ED RUND\*



## I. Introduction

Recently, I had an opportunity to review some surveys on membership and attendance in a number of U.S. Masonic jurisdictions. While the following is more anecdotal than based on careful statistical analysis, I believe the results are fairly accurate.

Among the millions of eligible adult males in the United States, only a small percentage, less than two million, know about Freemasonry and have chosen for whatever reason to join and sustain membership in our Fraternity.

Of those, over 957 have not felt the need to return to their Lodge on any kind of a regular basis after taking their Degrees. Of the remaining few percent who do attend, a fair portion of them do so only occasionally. The small fraction remaining is those men who attend fairly regularly, help from the sidelines, and have in the past or continue to take an officer's chair. The bottom line is...in general, Freemasonry in the U.S. is failing to accomplish its mission. This paper is focused on exploring the reasons for this failure and offers some recommendations for turning the situation around. The thoughts and opinions herein derive from my life experience as an adult educator and the past twenty years-- active involvement in Masonic Education at all levels.

## II. The Purposes of Freemasonry

In years of discussions and reading Masonic literature, I cannot help but notice that our brethren have crafted a variety of purposes for our Fraternity, many coming from their own felt needs. We are a social feel-good fraternity, not unlike the other fin and feather fraternal groups. We are a charitable institution; look how much we give each day. We are a service organization similar to Rotary and Kiwanis. And I must say, we do carry on such activities. Yet, the essential mission of Freemasonry is to enhance the safety, moral goodness, and quality of life in our communities, our society, and the world. And we do this, One Man at a Time, by encouraging men to

become Masons, to learn our code of ethics, and to inculcate our philosophy, values, and principles into all aspects of their daily lives. To ensure that they reflect Masonic qualities in their attitudes and behaviors displayed in all their life roles i.e., to daily model our code.

We make good men better. But how do we do this; is it simply putting them through the Degrees and hoping or assuming they will take the lessons to heart? As an adult educator, I must say the chances of reshaping a person's behavior based on those experiences alone are practically nil. We needn't worry about the age-old dilemma of whether we are to change our attitudes and the behavior will follow or approach it from the reverse. Current educational research suggests that these life aspects are quite interactive, and as such, we should target the whole person by providing the cognitive input (both Masonic instruction and the resources for his own learning pursuits) and the opportunities to associate with more seasoned Masons. Through these continuing relationships, we provide opportunities for vicarious learning and practicing (in a sheltered setting) new behaviors and new approaches to subdue his passions and improve himself in Masonry.

We learn by taking in new information, reflecting on it, comparing it with what we already know, and then integrating the new insights into our existing repertoire of skills (behaviors) and knowledge (understanding). When these insights are of a moral nature and are taken to heart, they are displayed in more ethical values, tolerant attitudes, and caring behaviors. As this begins to occur more consistently when facing difficult situations and choices, we say the person has strengthened his conscience or is building character. Our primitive survival drives bring forth certain feelings and actions early in life that, if left unabated, are very destructive to those around us. The good man struggles with these elements during the entirety of his life: pride, greed, envy, anger, lust, gluttony, and sloth. We are trying to subdue these passions by overlaying them with the Cardinal Virtues of prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice.

### III. The Realities We Face

By not bringing more men into our folds, by not conducting high-quality Degrees supported by conscientious efforts to help them understand the meaning underlying the Degrees, by not maintaining attractive environments, “I’m too busy to learn the catechism, or I’m too busy to attend lodge.” Typically, for 8 out of 10 members, we only know their attention must be focused somewhere else in life... family, career, stress-reducing activities, because they haven’t been seen in the lodge for years. They likely chose to join or succumbed to the invitation as a result of a felt need or possibly curiosity about our secrets. But as they were being introduced to the Masonic world and its family, they found they could not satisfy the need, curiosity was quickly expended, or something they experienced turned them off. They went on to pay dues (or not) and tell people they were Masons without having the slightest idea of what that meant beyond wearing a ring and lapel pin.

So there we have it; the ignorance of how to achieve our mission, the apathy that precludes truly educating our new members, and the distractions with and beyond Masonry at each level that keep us from valuing and consistently educating our membership and, yes, the public.

### IV. Some Recommendations

How often have we heard the phrase, “We do that which is important to us.” If something is valued, satisfies a need, or is just enjoyable, we’ll put the time and effort into it. So, how do we help Masons find value in Masonic education; how do we help them satisfy the need that drew them to the Craft initially, and how can we make Masonic education enjoyable and rewarding?

Ritual is visible in the written word and learnable with effort. Educating oneself and others about moral principles veiled in allegory is more difficult than moving onto new ground toward the unknown. Trying to change one’s beliefs and actions is even more difficult and scary and cannot be done overnight. It takes guidance, insight, effort, feedback, goal-oriented persistence, and self-satisfaction.

In addition to the lack of attention focused on Masonic education, there is an absence of support and recognition for our Masonic educators, whether they

are serving at the state, district, or lodge levels. The abovementioned endeavors taken at the Grand Lodge and lodge levels are fine and commendable, in fact, public visibility and membership acquisition are crucial for we need a critical mass of men to become true Masons if we are to fulfill our mission. But these endeavors should refrain from devouring the attention and energies to the exclusion of education, the true mission of Freemasonry. As with any organization, the culture is heavily influenced by the honest statements and actions of its top leaders. So, the effort to rebalance the role of Masonic education must begin there and be followed at the lodge level by the Master and his officers.

Along with increasing the value we place on education throughout a member’s Masonic career, Grand Lodges and lodges need to reach out to brethren who are or could be interested and have the capacity to take on an educator’s role. We then need to support and encourage them, along with recognizing and rewarding them for their efforts and accomplishments. Look at the emphasis and status we place on District Deputies and on Grand Lecturers. Is it unreasonable to envision a proficiency or competency learning experience for Masonic educators culminating with a special medal, pin, or apron?

In the ignorance, apathy, and distractions at each level, we have lost our perspective on the critical importance of educating our Masons and supporting their self-directed learning efforts. We need to make Masonic education “Job One,” and might this not be an important role for the Midwest Conference attendees to take on in helping their respective Grand Jurisdictions rethink their position on the real value of Masonic education and what it means to the future of our Fraternity.



# KEYS TO THE FRONT DOOR

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, Committee on Masonic Education



I love traveling as a Freemason. It seems that wherever I go, no matter how far I roam, there is always a Lodge nearby. Each of us has a place where we are welcome, filled with friends and Brothers that we have yet to meet.

Whenever I am planning a trip, I always look to see if there is a Lodge nearby that will be meeting while I'm in town. It's interesting to see the different rituals practiced in other jurisdictions, and wonderful to be met with such warm hospitality. One such trip I took in 2009 really opened my eyes and changed my perspective forever.

It was in the middle of a cold Chicago winter when I decided to escape to Florida for a week of sunshine. The woman I was dating has a sister with a vacation home there, which we were invited to use as often as we wanted. We were grateful to be able to splash in a swimming pool at a time when we would usually be shivering cold. Since I had no plans of any kind, I decided to check around for local Lodges. Sure enough, I found Punta Gorda #115 nearby, and they were having a stated meeting that evening.

I made my way to the basement of the Lodge shortly before the stated meeting time, where I found the members just finishing dinner. I was met with the usual smiling faces and looks of pleasant surprise whenever a Masonic visitor shows up unexpectedly. Everyone is eager to know what Lodge you come from, what office you hold, and how your ritual differs from their own. I didn't get more than three steps in the door before I was shaking hands, explaining how I came to be there, and answering all those common questions. It was less than five minutes after my arrival when one of the Brothers said to me, "Brother, you are going to check out of your hotel tonight. You will stay at my home as my guest. I'll give you a key to the front door, and you can come and go as you please. Stay as long as you like."

I quickly explained that I was staying in a guest house free of charge and that his generous offer would not be necessary. I thanked him for his kindness. A moment later, we were all moving in the direction of the Lodge room as the hour of the stated

meeting was at hand. This fast pace of events did not give me time to consider just what had occurred in those first few minutes of my visit.

The meeting was well organized and conducted efficiently. It was announced that one of the members was having a birthday party in a few days at a local amusement center. I was invited to join the festivities since I would still be in town, and I gladly accepted. It was a unique venue. There was a large common area for dining and two separate theater rooms. In one theater, there was a high-tech projector system and special seating that created the exact effect of being on a roller coaster! Being a virtual ride, it went much higher and lasted much longer than any real rollercoaster could. I was glad to 'get off' of it by the end. The other theater contained a stage completely filled with different types of water jets. When the program started, a symphony of sound accompanied by colorful blasts of water shot back and forth in pulsing harmony. It was really neat to watch, and I was particularly impressed that despite all the water flying around, no one got wet.

During the course of the party, I got to meet the friends and family of the Masons attending. It was a very nice time, and I felt fortunate to be welcomed so openly. Among the family members I met were the lovely wife and two young children of the Mason that invited me to be a guest in his home. We ate and chatted and sang to the Birthday Boy, then said our farewells and hoped to meet again.

Three days later, something happened to me. I was driving to or from some random errand when I was suddenly struck with sharp nausea. I never had a feeling like that before or since. It passed quickly, in just a few moments. I sat up rigidly in the seat of the car and searched for what could have caused that sensation. Then it came to me. It was that Mason and his family.

I hadn't thought about the events of my Lodge visitation, but apparently, I was processing them in the background. I remembered that Brother who invited me into his home after having known me for less than five minutes. He never even asked to see my dues card. No one did. Then I remembered meeting his wife and children. This was no bachelor that

could offer his couch to any drifter he chooses. He was a married man with a growing family. His offer of keys to the front door of his house is, in actuality, the keys to the most important aspects of his life. It's everything. All the possessions he owns and all the precious people in his care. I felt sick because I hadn't realized until that moment just how serious it is to "Guard the West Gate" of our Fraternity.

I thought that if a man submitted a petition, he was attempting to gain access to the Lodge. The truth is that in some cases, he would be gaining access to the keys of Mason's homes. I know that not everyone is so trusting or so willing to open their doors, but some Brothers are, and they are counting on us to make sure that the Mason they meet is worthy of their trust. Ever since that day in Florida, before I sign a petition for a prospective candidate, I ask myself if I would give him the keys to my front door. I know that there is at least one Mason in Punta Gorda, Florida that is depending on me to get it right.



# EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCES

Thursday-Sunday, February 8th-12th, 2023

Masonic Week

Hyatt Regency Crystal City, Arlington, Virginia

<https://amdusa.org/wp/masonic-week>

MASONIC WEEK 2023

FEBRUARY 8TH – 12TH

HYATT REGENCY CRYSTAL CITY  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

Friday-Sunday, April 28th-30th, 2023

Midwest Conference on Masonic Education

Canton Masonic Temple, Canton, Ohio

<http://www.mcme1949.org/events.html>



Saturday, April 29th, 2023

The Southeastern Masonic Education Symposium

Hillsborough Lodge No. 25 F&AM, Tampa, Florida

<https://www.h25smes.org> for more information.



For more visit, [MasonicConferences.com](http://MasonicConferences.com)

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