

St. John's Lodge No. 9, F. & A. M.

Trestleboard



Serving Seattle since 1860

DECEMBER 2021

Jim Russell, editor

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FROM THE EAST

[S. Ashley Brinkley](#), Master



VW Ashley Brinkley
St. John's Master

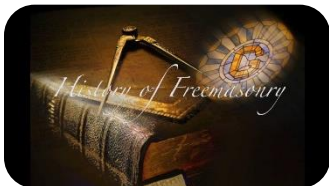
The time has certainly flown by, and I can't believe this is my last article as the Master of St. John's Lodge. There are not enough words to express my honor and gratitude to serve our Lodge in 2021. It is not just one officer who leads the Lodge, but it is a team of all the elected and appointed Brothers. Each person brings something new to the table and makes their own mark improving our fraternity. It has been said many times that once a Master's year is done, he can now just sit on the sidelines and relax. I believe; however, the Past Master's job is never done, and they are the backbone of our fraternity. We have so much to offer with the wisdom and knowledge we have gained over the years. Please do not hesitate to seek us out as we are always available and willing to assist our Brothers.

This is an exciting time of year for all of us with many holiday festivities and installations. Please remember to stay focused on the positive and I look forward to a fantastic new year in 2022.

IT'S TIME TO RENEW
YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

Consider, my brother; Freemasonry is old, very old. No man knoweth just how old, but deep students of the art have gathered unimpeachable evidence; evidence of the character which would be convincing in a court of law, that the principles which underlie Freemasonry and which are taught in its symbolism, go back beyond the dawn of written history. Freemasonry's symbols are found wherever the physical evidences of ancient civilizations are unearthed. Secret orders of all ages, all climes, all peoples, have, independently of each other, sought the Great Truths along the same paths, and concealed what they found in much the same symbols. Freemasonry is the repository of the learning of the ages, a storehouse of the truths of life and death, religion and immortality; aye, even of the truths we know regarding the Great Architect of the Universe, which have been painfully won, word by word and line by line, from the books of nature and of the inquiring mind, by literally thousands of generations of men.

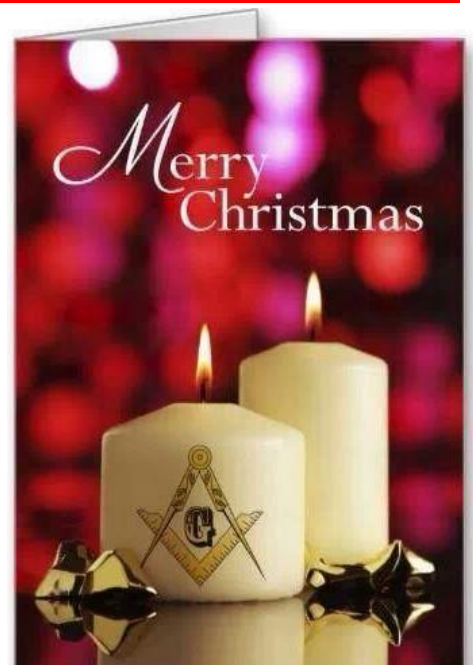
From Short Talk Bulletin – Vol. III No. 4 – April 1925



CALENDAR



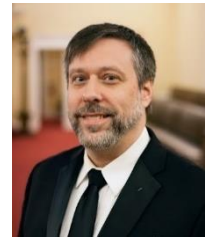
- November 28 – December 6: Happy Chanukah
- December 8 (7pm): Fellowship Zoom teleconference
- December 9 (7pm): Officers meeting teleconference
- December 15 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: **St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated Public Installation of Officers**
- December 25: Merry Christmas
- December 27: Feast Day of St. John the Evangelist
- December 31: **Deadline for payment of 2022 Lodge dues**
- January 3 (7:30pm): University Lodge 141
- January 3 (7:30pm): Eureka 20
- January 5 (7:30pm): Greenwood Lodge 253
- January 6 (5pm): Lafayette 241 installation of officers
- January 13 (7pm): Officers meeting teleconference
- January 13 (7:30pm): Queen Anne Lodge 242
- January 19 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: **St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated**



BLAIR NEUMANN INVITES ALL TO PUBLIC INSTALLATION

Yep! It's a return engagement. WBro. Blair Neumann will be installed as Master of St. John's with (hopefully) a true physical presence in the East.

St. John's brothers are encouraged to invite their friends and family to our 162nd annual installation of officers as we arrive at the end of our Masonic year. Members of our "new" leadership team will be installed into their stations and places at the December 15th installation of officers. This grand ceremony will be held on the evening of our stated communication. The ceremony will be "off-session" to permit our ladies and other guests to enjoy the evening.



Blair Neumann
Master-elect

Past Grand Master MWBro. Alvin Jorgensen will install our Master-elect WBro. Blair Neumann. WBro. Neumann, who "sat" in the East from his own living quarters during the bulk of the 2020 pandemic, will lead an array of talented officers as we continue our efforts to promote Masonic Enlightenment

The newly elected and appointed officers may be asked to assemble for pictures before dinner.. A complimentary meal will be provided for members and guests at 6:15 prior to the ceremony.

Assisting WBro. Neumann in the chairs this year will be WBro. John Murray Louderback as Senior Warden and WBro. K. Eric Koteles as Junior Warden. VWBros. Jim Russell and Jim Maher will be returning as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Appointed officers are WBro. Tom Lamb, Senior Deacon; Bro. Kemal Alaeddinoğlu, Junior Deacon; Bro. Ken Woo, Chaplain; VWBro. Neil Quinn, Marshal; VWBro. John Adamson, Senior Steward; VWBro. Chuck Brockway, Junior Steward; WBro. Terry Grove, Tyler and WBro. Adam Creighton, Musician.

WBro. Hans Wehl, WBro. Eric Koteles, and VWBro. Chuck Brockway continue as elected members of the Board of Trustees. Senior Warden John Louderback also serves on the Board along with the Worshipful Master and Secretary and Treasurer in their ex-officio capacities.

Please make your dinner [reservations](#) with the secretary at 206 623-0261 by Friday, December 10. Do you know of a brother who has not attended Lodge in a while? Call him and ask if you can pick him up and bring him to Lodge. And invite your non-Mason acquaintances for a taste of Masonic ceremony and instruction.



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Return to

AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

**St. John's Education Committee
Introduces another Chapter**

*Beginning in January we'll be exchanging ideas and
Masonic Enlightenment
at our stated communications and on Zoom*

Masonic education is the study of Masonic values, history, symbols and myths. It also encompasses lessons in leadership, self-improvement and community building. Our purpose is to help members learn more about Freemasonry and personal growth.

*** January 19 Stated: Chamber of Reflection**

*** January 5 Zoom: The Morgan Affair**



Public invitation to

St. John's Lodge No. 9

Installation of Officers

For the year 2022

Wednesday evening, 6:15pm, December 15, 2022

Invite your
Family & Friends

*Dinner Followed by Installation Ceremony
RSVP please!*

Greenwood Masonic Center

Brothers Called to Celestial Lodge

We mourn the loss of nine of our brethren who have been called to distant shores in the past twelve months to continue their work in the Celestial Lodge.

Bro. **Horace Henry (Tom) Sawyer** served our Country in the Air Force. He worked as an inspector for Boeing and then for Sears and Roebuck in farm equipment. He loved to fish and spend time with his family.

Bro. **Charlie "Chuck" Barnard** was a mailer at The Seattle Times. Our Brother was active with his church where he acted in plays, taught Sunday school, and tutored K-5 children.

Bro. **Charles Tine** was born in Rijeka, Croatia. As an 8-year-old orphan he departed from Zagreb on a month-long journey from Croatia to Canada unaccompanied. As an adult he immigrated to Seattle. Charlie began working at New England Fish Company, later became part owner of the Continental Pastry Shop in Seattle.

Bro. **Roy Dale Sam** was born in a sod house in North Dakota. At 17 he joined the Merchant Marines and was assigned to his first ship as a Mess Man. Always curious and industrious, he learned and studied, moving to the engine room by his second voyage. He rose to "Chief Engineer," the highest level outside of Captain.

WBro. **William "Bill" Collison's** formative years were spent in Coulee Dam. Following his father's transfer to Yakima during his senior year, Bill met fellow Yakima High School classmate, Andrea "Aundie" Trenner while roller-skating. It was the beginning of their lifetime together. By the late-1960s, Bill worked with the Seattle School District where he helped to establish its first mainframe and served as a systems analyst. In the late-

1970s, he and Aundie transitioned to residential real estate – working as a team for over 30 years – retiring with Windermere Real Estate.

Bill served as Master of St. John's Lodge in 1971. He was elected and served as a member of its Board of Trustees for many years. He served as a Masonic Retirement Center Trustee for the Grand Lodge of Washington. Our Brother received the distinguished Hiram Award for service to the Lodge in 2010.

Bro. **Loudon Hamilton Fraser** was born in Glasgow, Scotland. He moved to the United States (becoming a citizen in 1968) and started his career as an accountant for Shell Oil Company.

WBro. **Kenneth Maurice Lane, Sr.,** Kenny, or "Grump" brought two sons who served St. John's as Master following their father's 1999 term successively. He was encouraged to join the electrical union where he went to work at Todd and Puget Sound Naval Shipyards. He later worked at the Seattle Times as a maintenance electrician and worked there until retirement. His friends called him "Grump," a nickname he earned from his children when they were teens and later became an endearing term.

Bro. **Steven Specht** was raised a Master Mason in St. John's Lodge in 1997. He served our Lodge as Tyler for a couple of years and was also a member of Myrtle Chapter, OES before deteriorating health became an issue.

As a teenager MWBro. **Satoru "Sat" Tashiro** discovered a love of math and engineering, and he pursued that passion as a career. Sat was particularly committed to the ideals and philosophes embodied by the Masonic fraternity. He was active to his death, having risen to serve as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Washington.

Scotland Tour Scheduled for Autumn 2022



Did you enjoy our trip to DC in 2016? To Boston this year (2021)? Or wish you joined your brothers if you missed these opportunities? Well, here's another chance to gain some knowledge and enjoy

the experience. We're going to visit Scotland in 2022, with the guidance of a professional tour agency and assisted by one of our own members of the Lodge who was born and raised in Scotland – WBro. Thomas Lamb!

As usual the Lodge will subsidize the cost of the trip for St John's Masons. However, this year the subsidy will be designed to give more assistance to those who would like to go but can't afford it. Actual details will be available once we know how many St John's Masons are interested in the tour.

Members of the Lodge have recently been sent three documents (check your email) which we would like you to complete and return to help us plan this event.

Four brothers have already committed to the tour. Will we have eight – 18 – more? It depends a lot on YOU! Please return these forms to our brother WBro. Tom Lamb at nalamb@umich.edu

Character of Freemasonry in Scotland

Source Wikipedia

Freemasonry in Scotland has a character distinct from that practiced in other parts of the British Isles. When the Grand Lodge of Scotland was founded in 1736, the majority of Masonic Lodges then in existence in Scotland did not engage with the new body. By their absence from the initial discussions to which these Lodges had been invited, 79% did not support the creation of a new, centralized Masonic system as already existed in England and Wales and in Ireland. In addition, because all of the Lodges in Scotland pre-existed the new Grand Lodge at the time of its proposed formation, these had developed traditions and practices that they were reluctant to give up.

As a result, the new Grand Lodge of Scotland had to trade off any attempt at standardization of ritual for the prospect of attracting the independent Lodges to join the centralized system. In essence, Grand Lodge agreed not to interfere with local custom and practice as long as the Lodges were willing to join the new Scottish Masonic Constitution.

Having guaranteed the principle of independence to those Lodges founded before 1736, it was considered impossible to deny Lodges founded after 1736 the same privilege. These were permitted to devise their own procedures, regalia, and distinctive rituals. This and subsequent developments ensured that Freemasonry in Scotland is far less standardized than in any other Masonic jurisdiction.

MASTER MASONS RAISED IN DECEMBER

Date Raised:

12/29/1961	Joseph W. Ackermann
12/30/1964	Paul A. Smith
12/30/1972	David J. Stanford
12/21/1979	Paul T. St. Clair
12/8/1984	Daryl E. Anguish
12/10/1987	Kurt W. Lavrinc
12/8/2001	Thomas G. Eastman
12/8/2001	Frederick A. Eastman



PAST MASTERS OF ST. JOHN'S HONORED

In honor of our dedicated brothers who have served this and our sister Lodges so faithfully, our Past Masters and affiliated Past Masters were given special recognition at our November stated communication.

Affiliated Past Masters in attendance (9) were VWBro. John Adamson (Valley 71, Corinthian 38), WBro. Dennis Archambault (George Washington 251, University 141), WBro. Fred Eastman (Eureka 20), VWBro. Tom Eastman (Eureka 20), WBro. Al Gustafson (Lafayette 241), MWBro. Gale Kenney (George Washington 251, Grand Mound 3), WBro. Tom Lamb (Edmonds 165, Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research 251), VWBro. Jim Maher (Daylight 232), and VWBro. Neil Quinn (Rainier 189).



Past Masters of St. John's line up by earliest to latest served (L-R)

The Worshipful Master requested the Past Masters of St. John's to form west of the Altar, facing the East in order of their serving our Lodge. In attendance (11) were WBro. Hans Wehl (Elliot Bay 257 1968), WBro. Mike Wilderman (1978), VWBro. Jim Russell (1991), VWBro. Chuck Brockway (Ionic 90 1992, St. John's 1996), WBro. Terry Grove (2003), MWBro. Al Jorgensen (2010), WBro. David Flood (2013), WBro. Eric Koteles (2014), WBro. John Louderback (2016), WBro. Jeffrey Pullen (2017), and WBro. Blair Neumann (2020). They were accorded the public Grand Honors and presented beautiful Masonic baseball caps with the promise that additional gifts will be forthcoming.

Senior Warden's Message

WBro. Blair Neumann



Brothers, thank you for your trust in me to serve our Lodge as Master for another year! 2020 proved to be a very different year than I think most of us hoped or expected. I hope that 2022 will prove itself more hospitable, and I expect our Lodge will experience a very different year than we did the last time that I was in this station.

My focus will be on Education this year, ensuring that we fulfill our promise made to every new Brother that Freemasonry consists of a course of moral and philosophical instruction. We have an Education Committee already doing great work to help deliver on this promise throughout the year.

I'm also looking forward to redoubling our labors related to Charity. Our Lodge is incredibly fortunate to have the resources that we do, and so we as Brothers have a unique opportunity to do well in our communities with the support of our Lodge. If you're willing to invest your Labor toward some Noble Cause then St. John's can help support your Work financially. Please contact me with your ideas if you'd like to know more.

Finally, I'm looking forward to continuing to invest in Fellowship. In addition to our Stated meetings and our regular online Fellowship meetings (which are also Educational), I look forward to getting the Brothers together this year to help celebrate our Lodge history, and to visit various Lodges both near and far together with you, my St. John's Brothers.

Masons host benefit for Family Abuse Center

WACO, Texas — The Baylor Masonic Lodge #1235 numbers are growing and they're getting back on track with their mission starting with *victims of domestic violence*.

Sunday afternoon the Masons of Baylor Masonic #1235 held an event they called the "Coming Together Event" in downtown Waco benefitting the Waco Family Abuse Center.

"This is an attempt for us to collaborate with the community to try and do something good for a nonprofit locally," said Jon Spann, a Mason with Baylor Masonic Lodge #1235. "We came out here so we can see if we can raise some awareness, some funds and some donations."

It was a free event for anyone who brought requested donations for the Family Abuse Center. The center helps provide victims of domestic violence shelter, counseling, and legal services.

Amongst items collected included toys for kids, kitchen appliances and personal hygiene products. Masons accepted donated items as well as monetary donations to help the center keep its doors open and provide for victims of domestic violence.

Josh Barnard, a Mason, says that's what this whole season is about – giving.

"Anything that we can do to take the attention away from ourselves and put it on people that need it, I think is definitely worth our time and efforts," he said.

Junior Warden's Message

WBro. John Murray Louderback



It was not that long ago that I was elected to be St. John's Senior Warden. It has been an honor to serve the Lodge. I very much appreciate the honor. The leadership positions that you have elected me to have given me the promises made to me as an Entered Apprentice. As I have said before, you receive what you give of yourself. It's not that hard. Get involved in Lodge programs. Volunteer an educational program. Understand that leadership begins with you. Lead from the front!

Tygart Valley Scottish Rite Masons Donate to Fraternal Order of Police

West Virginia – The Tygart Valley Scottish Rite Masons club recently donated \$2,000 to the Fraternal Order of Police for their Christmas fundraiser. The FOP supplies assistance during Christmas to the children from six different counties — Barbour, Pocahontas, Randolph, Tucker, Pendleton and Grant counties.

Freemasons Donate Industrial Fans to Youth Center



Amy Wojciechowski (center), Armory Youth Project executive director, accepts a donation of two fans from Thomas Mallison (left), Worship Master of the Manistee Masonic Lodge No. 228; Ronald Grew, secretary; Sam Miller, tiler; and Fritz Boehm, junior deacon.

The Armory Youth Project recently received a donation of two industrial fans from the Freemasons at Manistee Masonic Lodge No. 228 (MN).

The Armory aims to provide a safe environment where young people grades 6-12 can build community and be encouraged in their educational, emotional, physical and Christian spiritual development.

"We are so grateful for the donation from our friends of the Masonic Lodge," said Amy Wojciechowski, executive director, in a news release. "The fans have made a huge impact on everyone involved in our gym activities, including youth basketball, Mary Paine's exercise and yoga classes, Jazzercise, pickleball, Young Life and many more."

According to Wojciechowski, the fans help maintain a cooler environment for all those utilizing the facility. They also provide better air circulation throughout the building and assist with overall air quality.

LET'S LOOK AT THAT A LITTLE CLOSER

In the first degree we learn that a Mason's charity should be universally extensive – that we are always and in every situation – Masons. There is not a place or time in the world where we are not. Everywhere we go, everywhere we are, all of the time, we are to act as Masons should. We don't get to take a break. We don't get to shut it off. It is love for others that enables us to put another's needs ahead of ours own. Charity is part of who we are as we continue to be better people.



The Form of a Lodge and the Universality of Masonry

by Midnight Freemason Emeritus Contributor
Brian L. Pettice, 33°

I would like to discuss an interpretation of a passage from one of the lectures of the First Degree. This interpretation isn't original – others have written about it. In spirit, it will be very much like other ritual interpretations I have shared with you before. The interpretation will be very similar to the idea spelled out even more strongly in the Charges delivered in the rituals of some other Grand Jurisdictions that all of humanity has claim upon our kind offices and that we as individuals are to do good unto all. So, while the interpretation I am about to propose to you has been commonly known in many circles of Freemasonry, it seems that, in our sometimes tumultuous and divided times, it has not been as commonly remembered or practiced and bears repeating.

Therefore, I would like for us to consider this passage, “The form of a Lodge is an oblong rectangle extending from east to west between north and south, from the earth to the heavens and from the surface to the center. It is said to be thus extensive to denote the universality of Masonry and that a Mason's charity should be equally extensive.”

Let's look at the first sentence. “The form of a Lodge is an oblong rectangle extending from east to west between north and south, from the earth to the heavens and from the surface to the center.” If you think about what this sentence says you will find that the description of the form of a Lodge describes the entire world as we know it. The Lodge is our world and the world is our Lodge. Its symbolism goes much deeper than that simple sentence but for our talk tonight that sentence is enough.

Now let's look at the second sentence. “It is said to be thus extensive to denote the universality of Masonry and that a Mason's charity should be equally extensive.” The first part of the sentence explains that the Lodge, extensive as to be the entire world, describes the universality of Masonry. Universality – a word defined as the quality of involving or being shared by all people or things in the world or in a particular group or as the quality of being true in or appropriate for all situations. For us, as Masons, this means that we are universally – that we are always and in every situation – Masons. There is not a place or time in the world where we are not. Everywhere we go, everywhere we are, all of the time; we are to act as Masons should. We don't get to take a break. We don't get to shut it off.

The second part of the sentence explains that a Mason's charity should also be as extensive and universal as the entire world. His charity – that agape love for others that enables him to put another's needs ahead of his own, that lets him see a being loved by God in everyone he meets, that lets him set aside the desires of his own ego – is to extend to everyone he meets in the world.

Is this a tall order? You bet it is. It is impossible for any of us to behave like this all of the time. However, it is not perfection that Freemasons will achieve in this life, but it is perfection that we should aspire to. I am going to try. How about you?

Brian L. Pettice, 33° is a Past Master of Anchor Lodge No. 980 and plural member of Olive Branch Lodge No. 38 in Danville, IL and an Honorary Member of a couple of others. He is also an active member of both the York and Scottish Rites. He cherishes the Brothers that have become Friends over the years and is thankful for the opportunities Freemasonry gives and has given him to examine and improve himself, to meet people he might not otherwise have had a chance to meet, and to do things he might not otherwise have had a chance to do. He is employed as an electrician at the University of Illinois and lives near Alvin, IL with his wife Janet and their son Aidan.



Seasonal Gratitude

by Midnight Freemason Contributor
Randy Sanders

We as Masons understand charity very well. It's a part of our existence, right? We live in Faith, we live in Hope, and we live in Charity. As we transition into the holiday season this year, I reflected upon several deep conversations with brothers.

Charity can be a trap, and we as mentors must remain on guard as to the difference of giving as part of our selves versus giving for the feelings of return. How can charity be a trap? Helping others is no trap!

Let us examine the differences and study them so we can learn and grow together. Yes, charity for charity's sake can turn into a trap. When we feel good, we want to repeat the steps that got us to that feel good place. We want that release of hormones that flood the body with that feel-good feeling of helping our friends and neighbors, especially children. We can become addicted to that feeling and hormone release to the point of pursuing it like a drug. **next Page 8**

To that, I say don't stop doing charity, but we must understand our internal motivations. Let us examine what that means inwardly. Did we just perform an act of charity, or was that act of charity just another part of our being? Those are two different things. Those are three different things if you plug in "reward" as an option. In my opinion, charity with reward is meaningful only to those receiving the charity. Those performing charity with the intent of collecting a reward on the charitable act? I don't see that as charity.

There's another difference that should be explored, and that is coming together for fun to do or fund charitable functions. I totally agree with this, and I encourage even more participation. Charitable organizations have a big function within society, and helping them by way of pancake breakfasts, sporting day events, or other fundraising activities is absolutely legit. It is always good to have fellowship with my brothers while working toward a good cause.

Now we get down to the giving as a natural part of ourselves. We as Masons are not a charitable fraternity. We are not. We are a fraternity that works on a common goal of self-improvement. Period, but not the end. Self-improvement by nature includes helping others as we have been helped ourselves. Consider Plato's cave as an example. As we come to more and more light, the cave comparison to the degrees is staggering. We are obligated to help others again and again. We are told in lecture after lecture, charge after charge, that we are to be the examples and to lead by example.

When we are living in balance, that balance is Faith, Hope, and Charity. We can discuss the original mis-translation of Agape Love into Charity, and that is a legitimate discussion. However, let's just focus now on what charity means. Charity is a part of us. Charity/Agape balances two other pillars of that to which we aspire. Masons don't do charity because we want a reward; we do charity because charity is part of who we are as we continue to be better people.

Randy and his wife Elyana live near St. Louis, Missouri, USA. Randy earned a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry with an emphasis in Biochemistry, and he works in Telecom IT management. He volunteers as a professional and personal mentor, NRA certified Chief Range Safety Officer and enjoys competitive tactical pistol, rifle, and shotgun. He has 30 plus years teaching Wing Chun Kung Fu, Chi Kung, and healing arts. Randy served as a Logistics Section Chief on two different United States federal Disaster Medical Assistance Teams over a 12 year span. Randy is a 32nd degree KCCH and Knight Templar. His Masonic bio includes past Lodge Education Officer for two symbolic Lodges, Founder of the Wentzville Lodge Book Club, member of the Grand Lodge of Missouri Education Committee, Sovereign Master of the E. F. Coonrod AMD Council No. 493, Co-Librarian of the Scottish Rite Valley of St. Louis, Clerk for the Academy of Reflection through the Valley of Guthrie, and a Facilitator for the Masonic Legacy Society. Randy is a founding administrator for Refracted Light, full contributor to Midnight Freemasons, and an international presenter on esoteric topics.

DECEMBER BIRTHDAY CELEBRANTS

Day	
5	Albert K. Gustafson
9	Dennis J. Archambault
11	Gilbert N. Hain
11	Mark A. Gfeller
13	Ian S. Webb
13	Matthew D. Vasey
14	James R. Maher
14	Paul T. St. Clair
22	David P. Fagerlie
23	Joseph H. Oates, Jr.
24	William A. Feldner
25	Scott M. Yerger
26	Don G. Lyman
28	Serco S. Tokatlian
28	Kenneth D. Wehl
30	Phillip J. See
31	Joseph L. Bennett
31	James C. Shields



Minutes of St. John's Lodge, December 2004

Christmas Family Charity

WBro. Ken Lane, Jr., and Bro. Mark Campbell, including their families, represented the Lodge in the distribution of food for families at Thanksgiving. They reported that the gifts meant a great deal to those who received them as well as to those who were able to give. The Christmas Families committee is looking forward to help families in need during this holiday season. Many volunteered to assist VWBro. Charles Brockway (Fort Lewis) and Bro. Mark Campbell (Seattle) for the Christmas distribution of food and toys. It was *m/s/p to authorize \$1,500 for the Seattle area and \$2,500 for the Fort Lewis families Christmas experience.*

EMBLEM

The emblem is an occult representation of something unknown or concealed by a sign or thing that is known. Thus, a square is in Freemasonry an emblem of morality; a plumb line, of rectitude of conduct; and a level, of equality of human conditions.

Emblem is very generally used as synonymous with symbol, although the two words do not express exactly the same meaning. An emblem is properly a representation of an idea by a visible object, as in the examples quoted above; but a symbol is more extensive in its application, includes every representation of an idea by an image, whether that image is presented immediately to the senses as a visible and tangible substance, or only brought before the mind by words.

Hence an action or event as described, a myth or legend, may be a symbol; and hence, too, it follows that while all emblems are symbols, all symbols are not emblems.

Source: Mackey's Encyclopedia of Freemasonry

It's a Wonderful (Masonic) Life

by *Midnight Freemason Contributor*

Bro. Michael Arce



I'd like to think that before I was a Mason that I looked at life from multiple angles. Clearly, I was trying. I saw the Holidays as a time, a season, a single episode in the yet to be determined series that would become my life. It wasn't until I reached my 30s that I really got the meaning of Christmastime. I was thumbing through the TV guide one Christmas Eve, looking for something to watch during the downtime of putting the kids to bed before we prepared for Santa's arrival. My eye caught the title **It's a Wonderful Life**. Somehow I had made it this far in life without seeing the Holiday classic. I remember my father making a big deal when NBC started airing it in 1994. To me, it was an old black-and-white movie, I preferred 24-hours of **The Christmas Story**, anyway. **Sorry Dad, I'll leave the nostalgia to you.** But something was different that night. I decided to make the two hours and fifteen-minute commitment with a full bottle of wine. I had to be sure that the kids were really asleep, after all.

It's a Wonderful Life is part of my holiday routine. And every year when I sit down to watch it, something new in the film gets my attention. How Bedford Falls represents "Everytown, USA." The bridge scene, where even with the gritty black and white film, in your mind, you can see how deep that water is and imagine how cold it must be. Knowing the hidden pain in George Bailey's eyes every time something in his life goes wrong. The joy that causes his voice to crack when everyone in town comes to his aid. I find a quiet night, start the movie, and enjoy the experience. I get joy in discovering a point that makes the experience new.

This year, Clarence's line to George, "Each man's life touches so many other lives. When he isn't around, he leaves an awful hole, doesn't he?" caught my ear. It connected a few thoughts. The first is the section of the Fellowcraft degree charge that literally discusses our personal contact with others, the influence we have on

those who share our circle. How as Masons, we strive to be charitable, honest, and humble. Whether that is bell-ringing for the Salvation Army on a cold, winter night for a few hours, collecting coats for the homeless, buying Christmas presents for those less fortunate, serving warm meals in soup kitchens, or making time to connect with those who are alone this time of year - it's rewarding to know that we have Brothers who give time to make the Holidays merry for those in need. **We realize that our work is to bring light to dark places.** And even if I don't get a chance to meet them or learn the details of their work, these men share the same title of Brother as I do, and that makes us one and the same.

The second part of Clarence's line almost brought a tear to my eye when I thought of Brothers who have laid down their working tools this year. Those men who were pillars in our Lodges as role models and mentors, whose encouraging words or kind smiles made us feel welcome and valued. And while I had visions of my Brothers who have gone to join the Grand Architect of the Universe, I also thought of a Brother who I haven't seen at a Lodge meeting in a few years. Work, his family, and caring for his aging mother are all reasons why he hasn't been able to attend a meeting night. But he also lost the passion for knowledge that could fill a small library because of a disagreement with members of his Lodge. I still hope that someday, he chooses to put on his dark suit and tie and surprise me at a meeting. A few days after watching the movie, I sent this Brother a text just to see how everything is in his world.

Lying in bed after the movie, I stared up at the dark ceiling above to reflect on this year. I realized that there's a reason why we love **It's a Wonderful Life**: watching George Bailey's story causes us to examine our own. We choose to gather with our closest family and friends this time of year for a reason. We want to remember this feeling, knowing that years from now, those hugs from grandparents or the sound of giggling kids will be our precious memories. Reflecting on the Masonic year has the same effect. Dinners, ritual practices, community service, the raising of new Brothers. Those moments serve as the highlights of our year. While we may know the men we share that time with, we may never truly understand the significance of these shared experiences in their life. The "ripple effect" as one Brother put it, is a theme I understood throughout the movie. Somehow this year, the mix of new relationships and old memories made a deeper connection to the difference we make as Masons in the lives of those we interact with. "Remember, no man is a failure who has friends."

Wherever you are this year, my Brother, I send you the warmest Holiday Greetings. May you continue to bring Light in every life you touch.

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