

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

Trestleboard

AUGUST 2022

Jim Russell, editor



Serving Seattle since 1860

meets: 7910 Greenwood Ave. N.

Lodge phone: (206) 623-0261

jimrussell58@frontier.com

[web: www.seattlemasons.org](http://www.seattlemasons.org)

FROM THE EAST

Blair Neumann, Master



Blair Neumann,
Master

Brethren, the hot summer months are upon us, and with elections coming up, a heated political environment as well. I mentioned last month that Brethren may speak on politics outside of Lodge, so what does that look like?

First, it doesn't need to look like anything, because the choice to speak on politics outside of Lodge is yours and yours alone. If you don't want to talk politics, don't talk politics.

If you choose to talk politics outside of Lodge, I believe it doesn't look much different from what we each do already. Politics come up in casual conversations, and while we may shy away when they do, we don't need to shy away, we just need to stay

within due bounds.

Our meetings are under the protecting folds of the flag of our Country, and every one of us salutes that flag and pledges allegiance to it. I believe that every one of us loves our Country and wants to see it prosper, though we may vary in our opinions about what that prosperity looks like and on means to get there. We speak within due bounds on all manner of opinions all the time, so why should this one be different?

We have promised to befriend and relieve any Brother who needs our assistance, and in this age of information warfare, we need the assistance of our Brethren to help keep us honest, and our Brothers may require relief from the distresses that disinformation creates. Every one of us is victim to our own echo chamber, and every one of us is subject to the pleas of our enemies to divide ourselves and weaken our beloved Country, which we as peaceable citizens should not aid. Yet we often do when we repeat or retweet divisive messages despite our good intentions.

Masonry is about doing the right things in the face of life's obstacles, so what could be more Masonic than doing right by our Brothers despite knowing their politics. We often know our Brother's religion by name, and he may share with you his religious doctrine outside of Lodge. I believe most of us stay within due bounds on such religious topics, and the rest of us should subdue our passions. Where in Masonry does it tell us to treat political topics any differently?

Masonry is a force for peace and reconciliation among men who might otherwise remain perpetually at a distance. Ours is the perfect antidote for the geopolitics of division. Our Fellowship brings people together, not by pretending that our differences don't exist, but by treating all men as Brothers, even those whose political opinions differ greatly from our own.

CALENDAR



- August 10 (6pm): Board of Trustees *teleconference*
- August 11 (6pm): Officers meeting *teleconference*
- August 17 (6:15pm): St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated
- Sept. 4: *Happy Birthday to us!*
- September 7 (7pm): **Fellowship** *Zoom Educational teleconference*
- Sept. 14 (6pm): Board of Trustees *2023 Budget preparation*
- September 17: **Underground** *Seattle Tour family event*
- Sept. 23 (6pm): **162nd Anniversary Celebration** *Ivar's Salmon House*
- September 30 – October 3: Districts 2, 4, 5 Lodge Leadership Retreat *at Rainbow Dream Camp*
- October 9-18: **Tour of Scotland**
- October 13 (7pm): Officers meeting *teleconference*
- October 19 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated
- November 9 (6pm): Board of Trustees
- November 10 (7pm): Officers meeting
- November 16 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated *Past Masters Night; Election of Officers*
PGM MWBro. Cameron Bailey will be our keynote speaker
- November 24: *Thanksgiving Day*

St. John's Lodge No. 9 meets every 3rd Wednesday at 7910 Greenwood Ave. N., Seattle

- Social "hour" 5:30pm
- Free parking available on the Catholic Church asphalt playground after 6:00pm. Located ½ block west of Greenwood Ave. N. on southside of N. 80th Street.
- Dinner 6:15pm
- Stated Communication 7:30pm
- Refreshments and fellowship following

GUEST SPEAKER VIEWS NORTH AMERICAN IMPACT ON AUSTRALIAN FREEMASONRY

Freemasonry has been associated with the British discovery and settlement of Australia from the very beginning. Sir Joseph Banks (1743-1820), the naturalist who sailed into Botany Bay with James Cook in 1770 became a Freemason prior to 1768 and was a member of the Old Horn Lodge No. 4 in England. Was South Australia founded as a Freemason colony? In the case of South Australia, established by and for free settlers according to the Wakefield theory of colonization, Freemasonry was included in plans for the new colony. In 1834 the South Australian Lodge of Friendship was formed in England for prospective settlers.

As St. John's continues to focus on Masonic Education, WBro. Ian Hyde of Walter F. Meier Lodge of Research No. 281 has been invited to speak at our August stated communication. His topic will be "Inadvertent North American Influences on Australian Freemasonry."

Dress will be casual in anticipation of warm weather. St. John's customarily does away with suit and tie in July and August. We will return to more formal wear after Labor Day.

All Brothers are encouraged to join us for our 6:15 dinner preceding our stated communication. Please make your dinner [reservations](#) with the secretary at 206 623-0261 by Friday, August 12. Doors open at 5:30. 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 an enjoyable dinner!



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Look for Company Store Clearance in October



AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

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

*This year we're 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 themselves.

- * **August 17 Stated: Inadvertent North American Influences on Australian Freemasonry**
- * **September 7 Zoom: Freemasonry's Influence in the Development of Scouting in America**
- * **September 21 Stated: Letters from Freemasons around the world**

Civility Support Correction

During our June stated communication, Past Grand Master MW Sam Roberts addressed "Civility," placing emphasis on the Civility Task Force as introduced at the Grand Masters Conference a few years ago. Civility is a big part of what Freemasonry is all about.

MW Roberts introduced the www.civilitycouncil.org broad agenda to promote civility: the seal of approval for organizations that pledge to conduct their business and relationships civilly, goodwill Ambassadors of Civility, and other approaches to bring improved harmony to our society. The Civility Project hopes to bring the many civility programs available onto one platform for improved communication. Last month it was erroneously reported that St. John's Lodge contributed \$10,000 toward this effort. That should have been \$5,000.

Senior Warden's Message

[WBro. John Murray Louderback](#)



I have been recently contemplating what happens at the end of life.

I have been told by others, who have had their heart stop, to not be afraid, to go to the light.

I remember asking God to show me the light, only to discover Freemasonry in the process.

I also understand that energy cannot be created or destroyed but transformed.

Speaking from physics, what happens to our energy our sole our spirit? Some say it goes to heaven.

Physicists claim that all the visual matter in the Universe only accounts for 6% of all energy and matter.

Visually there is a lot of stuff out there! Could the other 94% of what is called dark matter or dark energy be made up in part from those that were living in the past? Or is it the past? Dark matter has been described as being similar to a different frequency that you could not see – perhaps because it is in a different dimension. Others would perhaps say multiverse. What is that other 94% and why can't we see what's there? That 94% surrounds us right now!

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



Mark it on your calendar. St. John's Lodge will celebrate 162 years of Freemasonry in Seattle with dinner at Ivar's Salmon House, Friday evening, September 23. Social hour begins at 6pm. It's rapidly approaching, so if you haven't already, make your reservations with the Secretary for an evening of good food, a bit of entertainment, and just plain fun.

☛ *Choose your selection of entrée options from Alder Grilled New York Steak or Wild Salmon Sampler, or Penne Pasta Pomodoro (followed by assorted mini cheesecakes for dessert) when you make your reservation.*

A beverage bar will be available, as well as an assortment of wines for each table. Dress is evening attire for the ladies, suit and tie for the gentlemen.



Ivar's Salmon House views downtown Seattle from Lake Union

Didjaknow?

Freemasons come from every walk of life, but some are more well-known than others. Freemasonry is found in almost every country in the world, and has even been on the moon. Astronauts Buzz Aldrin, Gordon Cooper, Edwin Mitchell, James Irwin, John Glenn, Wally Schirra and Gus Grissom were all Masons.

Junior Warden's Message

[WBro. Eric Koteles](#)



Dear Brothers,

As I keep experiencing the universe, the *logos* that is our Lodge, with every single one of us as a participant, I'm always happy and amazed to find knowledge from the education programs and also just sharing time with my Brothers and their journeys in life. It enriches my experience as a man who wants to keep improving in all aspects; and for that I thank you.

For example, last meeting after dinner a dear Brother showed the Temple Room to a profane (non-Mason). I have seen this happening only in this jurisdiction and I wouldn't be surprised that it happens often in this state or in all the other states.

I personally do not like that practice, because the Masonry that I carry in my heart and learned at a young Masonic age will never let any profane see our Temple where we give, not the right but the privilege, to be accepted into the Fraternity.

I need to tell you that I wasn't comfortable about it and even told my dear Brother that I was against it, but I did not stop him, because I know there are no regulations against it.

This experience made me think about my early mentors who said, "When you have to sell real estate to attract people and you don't have anything else to offer to gain their hearts and inspire their minds, we just may as well not pretend that we are a Freemasonic Lodge."

Plus, we are robbing the candidate from the mystery of the unknown and instead we are conducting an HR interview to see if he will be hired.

Later that evening at fellowship time, a member of the Lodge that heard I was against it, approached me and told me that I was the first person that said that. Well, I'm maybe the first person that said it in this Lodge, but trust me, I'm not the only one in our Lodge that feels that way.

Let's remember my Brothers, in order to keep harmony in Lodge we need to consider every Brother's feelings, opinions and thoughts and the same should apply to everyone as we navigate the profane world in our daily life.

Daylight Lodge Installs Officers Saturday

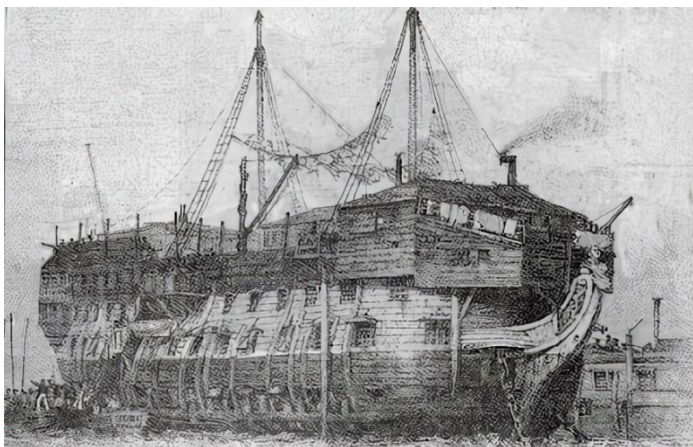
Because of Covid, the Daylight Lodge No. 232 Public Installation of Officers has been rescheduled to Saturday, August 13th at 10am. All are invited to join these brothers as they install a new face in the East, the first new Master since July of 2019. Worshipful Master Sam Rainwater, Jr. is overjoyed at finally passing the gavel on to Bro. Troy McFarland.

There will be a celebration picnic party after the installation at the Morgan Estate in Fremont. Come join the Daylight brethren in the celebration on August 13. Good food, Good Libations, Good discussions and Good Fellowship.

FREEMASONRY ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

Freemasonry had tentative beginnings in Australia. In the first 20 years from 1788 the authorities in charge of the penal colony were very suspicious of unauthorized meetings, particularly those held in private. Their caution was justified as the Australian penal settlements were the destination not only of petty criminals but also of political prisoners. This period saw revolution in France and unrest elsewhere. Concerns in Britain about threats to the established order led to the Unlawful Societies Act 1799 which governed the activities of Freemasonry in Britain until repealed in 1967.

In August 1801 one George Hales, commander of an American whaling ship named the "General Boyd," was brought ashore on Norfolk islands after becoming ill, dying on Aug 16. Bro. Hales had been made a Mason on December 24, 1789, in the Dundee Arms Lodge No. 9 which met in Wapping, London. His tombstone on Norfolk island bears Masonic symbols including square and compasses above an open book between two pillars that are surmounted by an arch.



London, 1788. Seven Dials, Prison Hulk

In 1814 the British 46th Foot Regiment arrived to staff the military garrison at Sydney. The regiment had a Lodge attached to it holding a traveling Warrant No. 227 from the Grand Lodge of Ireland. Earlier this Lodge had been in North America during the War of Independence. Apparently the Lodge lost the chest containing its regalia and Masonic furniture. The chest was returned when their American opponents discovered its contents. During 42 months military service in Australia the Lodge initiated several candidates. Members participated in a cornerstone ceremony during the construction of a private home.

Other military Masonic Lodges were attached to later British regiments. Additional soldiers became Masons. The first civilian Lodge was formed in 1820 after obtaining a Warrant from the Grand Lodge of Ireland. During the next decade two more Lodges formed in Sydney and one in Hobart on the island of Tasmania to the South of the Australian mainland.

The Craft was introduced into South Australia by the United Grand Lodge of England and in a most unusual way. A number of Brethren who were planning to come out to

Adelaide in 1834 petitioned for the grant of a Warrant. This was readily agreed to, and the Grand Master issued Warrant No. 613 on 22nd October 1834, sanctioning the formation of the South Australian Lodge of Friendship.

Hardly was the ink of the Grand Master's signature dry when the Warrant was taken that same day from Freemasons' Hall in London for a distance of less than a mile to No. 7 John Street, Adelphi, off the Strand, where the Lodge was formally constituted, and met on a number of occasions.

It was to be almost four years before the Lodge reached South Australia. On 11th August 1838, it first met at Black's Hotel, Franklin street, Adelaide. Now, it is the Lodge of Friendship, No. 1 on the Register of the Grand Lodge of South Australia. The formation of the Lodge of Friendship was to be followed by the granting of more warrants for Lodges in South Australia, and the appointment of Henry Mildred as provincial Grand Master, under the English Constitution, on 22nd November, 1847. Ireland and Scotland followed suit and the three constitutions worked together in amity.

When the desire for self-determination grew, the Brethren who formed the Executive Committee for the Masonic Union in South Australia showed great tact and foresight in not rushing matters, and in making sure that they had the full support of the Lodges. As a result, the formation of the Grand Lodge of South Australia took place on 17th April, 1884, the new Grand Lodge was quickly recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England followed by those of Scotland and Ireland. The final seal of approval came in 1888.

AUGUST BIRTHDAY CELEBRANTS

Day

- 1 Petros N. Farmasonis
- 3 Richard D. Hawley
- 5 Aren Hakobyan
- 9 Robert L. Johnson
- 10 Roger A. Barnstead
- 12 Terry A. Grove
- 13 Thomas G. Eastman
- 22 Brad D. Wolford
- 28 Ronald A. Woodall, Jr.



It's coming!!

St. John's **162nd Anniversary Celebration** **Ivar's Salmon House** Potlatch Room

Social hour – 6pm Dinner 7:30pm
Friday, September 23

Make your reservations, today

Specify entrée choice: NY Steak, Salmon, Pasta

206 623-0261

Seattle Underground Tour

With the assistance of chairman WBro. Dennis Archambault, the Master has arranged for a family outing of the Seattle Underground Tour, Saturday, September 17 – a week before our anniversary dinner. Attempts will be made to focus a part of the tour on a little bit of St. John's history, such as Seattle pioneer and member Bro. David "Doc" Maynard.

Bill Speidel's Underground Tour is Seattle's most unusual attraction, a humorous stroll through intriguing subterranean storefronts and sidewalks entombed when the city rebuilt on top of itself after the Great Fire of 1889.



The 75-minute guided walking tour begins beneath Doc Maynard's Public House, then spills into historic Pioneer Square, Seattle's birthplace, before plunging underground for an exclusive, time-capsule view of the buried city.

All the while, tour guides regale you with sidesplitting stories our pioneers didn't want you to hear. It's history with punch lines!

The tour opens at their ticket counter at 614 First Avenue, in Pioneer Place Park, Pioneer Square.



The tour ends in Rogues Gallery and the Underground Gift Shop, where you'll find displays depicting the past and Northwest memorabilia. *Sons of the Profits*, the book by Bill Speidel upon which the tour is based, is a most popular souvenir.

Doc Maynard's Public House, suitable for the entire family, offers affordable snacks, breakfast, lunch and dinner, including fresh Northwest seasonal fare, and a full bar. The tour starts with a 15-minute seated introduction, convenient for a quick bite before heading underground.)

Covid protocol is in place so masks are mandatory. Comfortable walking shoes are advised.

Make your reservations with the Lodge Secretary prior to September 10. The ticket price of the tour is on us – excluding meals or parking.

Visit Our District 5 Brethren

District 5 Lodges	Next Meeting	Time
St. John's 9	Wednesday, August 17, 2022	7:30pm
Eureka 20	Monday, September 12, 2022	7:30pm
University 141	Friday, September 9, 2022	7:30pm
Daylight 232*	Saturday, August 13, 2022	10am
Lafayette 241	Thursday, September 1, 2022	7pm
Queen Anne 242	Thursday, September 8, 2022	7:30pm
Esoterika 316	Tuesday, October 24, 2022	7:30pm

* Installation of officers

From Great Masonic Leaders Comes Scouting in the U.S.

Freemasonry's relationship with the Boy Scouts started nearly with the founding of Scouting in the United States in 1903. While the founder of Scouting was not a Mason, his brother and his great friend Rudyard Kipling were. Over time, they influenced the growth of the Boy Scouts of America.

Masons have long been strong supporters of Scouting by supporting the development of Scouting units, serving as volunteers, and assisting their Masonic Lodges in forming and sponsoring Scout units. The relationship between individual Masons and Scouting, which has existed since the founding of Scouting in America, has resulted in great benefits for both Freemasonry and Scouting.

Join us for our September Masonic Education Series at 7pm on Wednesday, September 7, 2022. Zoom 981 655 9198; passcode 1776.

Open Air Degree 2022

The Master Mason Open Air Degree event at the Masonic Family Park will be in Granite Falls on Sunday, August 6, 2022.

On this day, Daylight Lodge 232 of Seattle will be conferring the Master Mason or Third Degree at the Masonic Family Park in Granite Falls. The Lodge will open at 10am, so please allow enough time to be parked and sign in the Tyler's Register. The cost for entry at the Masonic Park is \$5.00 and will be collected at the gate (opens at 8am).



The Open Air Lodge area is still under renovation so the "Lodge Room" will be at Honor Roll Campsite.

That will provide a good location with privacy to conduct the degree for the candidates. Honor Roll is just after where the road turns one-way. Millcreek Lodge 243 brothers are providing parking support and will show you the parking location.



Masons assembled at open Lodge room, not available this year

Prior to the Park opening, Damascus Lodge 199 will be hosting their annual pancake breakfast starting at 7am.

Lunch is being prepared by Crystal Lodge 122 and will be at the Kitchen.

Brethren, the only restriction for this event is that you must be a Master Mason in good standing to attend the actual degree. So, break out a lawn chair and come out to the Masonic Family Park and enjoy a summer day with your Brothers.

LET'S LOOK AT THAT A LITTLE CLOSER



Alžběta 'Bety' Týblová is an 18 year old exchange student studying at Liberty High School near Kansas City for the current school year. Brother Randy Hicks, a member of Liberty Lodge 31, is her sponsor. Bety lives in Prague and has close ties to family and friends who are now under siege in Ukraine. In March at Liberty Lodge she gave a moving and personal account of her family and friends' experiences with the devastating war raging next door to her home. The text of her remarks to the Brothers of the Lodge follows.

The War In Ukraine - A Personal Perspective

Posted: 23 Mar 2022 03:00 AM PDT

by Midnight Freemason Guest Contributor
Alžběta Týblová



On March 14 at Liberty Lodge #31, Alžběta 'Bety' Týblová, a Liberty High School exchange student from Prague, gave a moving account of her family and friends' experiences in Ukraine. Pictured left to right are Lodge Master Rod Guzman, Bety, and her sponsoring family Randy, Linda, and Zachary Hicks.

Hello, my name is Bety Týblová, I am an exchange student from the Czech Republic staying here in America for the school year with the Hicks family. My host father, Randy, suggested I speak in this venue to try and convey my perspective of the current conflict between Ukraine and Russia and I am grateful for the opportunity to talk about this with you this evening.

First of all, I would like to emphasize that I am not here to tell you why the conflict is happening. Only one person, Vladimir Putin, can answer that question for you and I don't think there's any real right answer as to why Russia has attacked the democratic sovereignty of the Ukraine. I cannot see into Putin's mind, so I cannot tell you why he has decided to destroy innocent, free people's lives. My goal this evening is to help you understand the European perspective on this war. I hope you will have grace because as an 18-year-old girl, there's no way I can convey all of the hurt, pain, and fear felt across Europe in this crisis, but I hope that I can appeal to your empathy and compassion to emphasize how vital this conflict is not only to my country and to myself, but to everyone in this

room. I am here to help you understand that what you read every day in the newspaper about Putin's invasion of Ukraine is real, and it is happening to real people, thousands of them, at this very moment. I am here to show you how this situation is perceived by someone who is not Ukrainian or Russian, but who is also not American. First and foremost, I want to make it very clear that it is not the Russian people who are to blame for everything that is happening in Eastern Europe right now. The blame falls on one man, and one man alone, and that man is Vladimir Putin. He alone is responsible for the bloodshed, the blood of innocent citizens in Ukraine but also that of Russian soldiers who were unknowingly sent to war. Most Russian soldiers have no idea that they are at war; they have been told that they are only going to practice, or that they are going to "liberate" Ukraine. Shortly after the invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian army captured two Russian soldiers, the first of the war, who said that they had no idea that they were at war, why the Ukrainians had captured them. They had run out of gas in their vehicle on their way to Ukraine, and the unsuspecting soldiers came to ask the Ukrainian police if they had gas to spare. Both individuals were arrested immediately. It is crucial that you understand that these men did not know the game their autocratic leader was playing. It was not their decision to invade, and they did not do so willingly or knowingly. Please, do not blame the Russian people or Russian soldiers for their unknowing participation in this travesty against human life. This is the deranged mind of one autocrat, Putin, laying fear and travesty at the doorstep of innocent people on both sides.

My country is lucky to be a member of NATO and the European Union. I am grateful for the strong allies we have in Europe because without membership in the North Atlantic Alliance, it is possible that my country would be part of the war right now. While we are separate from Ukraine and Russia, and perhaps you are finding it odd that I am speaking on the issue to you here tonight as a citizen of an independent state, but we are not far from all that is going on. The Czech Republic is 242 miles from Ukraine. This is a 3 and a half hour car ride; just about the distance from here to St. Louis. Not only do we draw raw material from Ukraine, but it is common that the people in Europe travel to neighboring countries, much like you might visit Kansas or Arkansas over the weekend. As a result, some of my closest friends are Ukrainian and/or Russian. This is why this topic is so important to me and why I need to talk to you tonight. This is territory I know, territory my family has been many times. At this time, it is heartbreaking to me that I cannot do much to

help, but even more so, I cannot be with them. I can't be the emotional and mental support that they need now more than ever. The only thing I can do is to help inform you, and bring the situation closer to people who only see the conflict via TV and newspapers. To remind you that these are real people, with lives and families, who are under attack. People I have called friend and family in my life.

A few days after the war started, one of my friends here in Liberty said she couldn't understand what was going on and why it was such a problem. For those of you who don't know, Ukraine used to be a part of the Soviet Union. My friend did not understand what the problem was and why they didn't just rejoin Russia. Since 1991, Ukraine has been an independent country, more than 30 years now. Moreover, Ukraine adopted a democratic framework, and it does not exist under Putin's communist system. My friend did not understand the significance of the pain, suffering, and heart with which the Ukrainian people lived prior to this time under communist rule, and the relief felt when they were finally freed to exist as their own nation, free to express themselves as part of a democratic society finally released from autocracy and tyranny. What, in this day and age, makes Putin feel he can strip those rights, own these free people once again is beyond me. To put this into the perspective of American history, America was not always a separate state. It did not always look the way it does now, nor did it always enjoy the freedoms of democracy it now does. At one time, America was a colony of England; a then autocratic governance which found value in the ownership of an entire group of people and their land. Imagine that St. Louis was invaded by an autocracy which assumed ownership of you as the American democracy. Regardless of what you had made of your life, a ruler of a completely different country decided that that life belonged to him now. Imagine you are 18, never having even lived under that ruler's thumb, and you are told that you have two options: fight for your home and your family and your friends or be oppressed under the dictatorial rule of another state. I choose to believe that most of you would select option 1, to fight for your rights to live life how you want to live it and – remember Ukraine has been a democracy for 30 years – how your parents and grandparents endured for it to be lived that way. The Ukrainian people chose the same way and they continue to fight for their democracy right now.

Ukraine has been a troubled country for several years. In 2014, the Civil War began, which has lasted until now. There is a brief documentary on this war on Netflix, where everything is summarized in detail and I recommend everyone in this room watch it. It is called



Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom for those that are interested. In brief, Putin used this war to invade Ukraine. Putin publicly declared that he wants to "liberate" Ukraine and save them from the political system which they chose when they gained their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. This is not the first time a Russian leader has claimed something like this. In 1968, Russia invaded the Czech Republic (then Czechoslovakia) claiming the same reasoning. The Czechs did not want to be part of Russia either, but we did not have the strength to defend ourselves so the Russians occupied us, strengthening the authoritarian wing of the communist

party of Czechoslovakia. Ukraine has immense heart and bravery, and they are escalating the conflict to avoid the same fate as my country in 1968 which took 23 years to reverse.

As I said, the conflict in Ukraine is not something which just began on February 24th this year. This began when Russia wanted to take back the island of Crimea, a gift from Russia to Ukraine after the end of World War II. Before 2013, however, Russia decided to take back Crimea and declare it Russian territory once more. At that time, not only the civil war in Ukraine began, but also the war between Russia and Ukraine.

The media and television have spoken extensively about this conflict, as I'm sure you've either seen or followed. But I also understand that this is a faraway issue for many of you. This is not happening on American soil, and thankfully, does not need to. This is thousands and thousands of miles away from your home, from your family, from your friends and neighbors and land; this is another continent. It's a different world as far as I'm sure many of you are concerned. But I am here from that other continent to tell you about what is happening. I wish I could even do justice to the atrocities that are happening this very second, as I stand here and try to make you understand fully. This hurts for me to have to do. I hurt for my friends and my family that live in Ukraine, for the people I love that are standing on a battlefield right now, afraid that they are living on land that they will die on.

When the war began, the entirety of Europe was talking about it. Here in America, there was nothing. I did not know until I got home from school. The day it began and when the news was first released that Russia had invaded Ukraine, I felt overwhelmingly hopeless. The worst scenarios appeared in front of my eyes. My little sister called me that day, there was despair in her voice as she told me how the news had affected those around her. After a few minutes, the conversation led to a question. "What if it sucks and I never see you again? What if you stay in America so you don't have to go back to war?"

What if you stay in America and I never see you?" I didn't know what to say, because that's when the situation really hit me. I'm in America now, I'm isolated from it all and I'm separated from it just like you are, thousands of miles away. But the people in Europe, my family, my friends who are part of it know exactly what could happen. My best friend, who has been living in Prague for 5 years, has family in Ukraine. Two weeks before the start of the war, her boyfriend was deported from the Czech Republic to Ukraine due to documentation issues. I can't even describe in words the pain she exuded when this conflict began and every day, afraid that her boyfriend will go to war and never see him again. She's afraid when her boyfriend doesn't text her back within a few minutes. One day she texted me and then called me in tears that her boyfriend hadn't answered her messages. He hadn't called since the morning, she didn't know what was going on,



and nor did his friends know where he was. She didn't hear anything for almost 24 hours. When she did, he apologized for not calling, but he had spent the day digging trenches in his backyard for his family in case Russian troops invaded their village. Teenagers here just can't fathom this kind of anxiety, this kind of fear right now. This was not the kind of anxiety that perhaps your daughter has felt when her boyfriend doesn't respond to her texts—"is he off with some girl? Is he ignoring me? Does he not like me anymore?"—this is the kind of fear a girl feels when her boyfriend very well might be in hiding from the Russian army or, God forbid, dead. There are hundreds of stories like this, many translated on the Internet and accessible to you. These are the stories of strangers to you, but these people are part of my life, part of my home, and while these may be strangers experiencing a war to you, this is my family and friends' reality. This is my reality. I hear from my friends and family how they fight for their friends, but also about how their fathers went to war, how family members died, how they left their hometowns and homes, and they hope that that will eventually allow them to escape. These are people, in a town of the same development as St. Louis or Kansas City, who are seeing their homes flattened, their lives destroyed, everything they hold dear ruined by artillery, because of the whims of one man. They do not know if they can leave the country, or what they will even

do if they do leave the country. The only possible way out is via the Slovak Republic, the other Ukrainian borders are occupied by Russian tanks and the way is impossible. Buses that supply basic necessities for Ukrainian refugees are gathering on the Slovak border, or buses that are waiting to be filled by Ukrainians who have crossed the Russian border and then will be taken to larger cities by Slovaks. But then what? Alone, in a foreign country with a foreign language, without anything, by themselves, and only the money and belongings they could carry with them. All they can do is pray. And fight.

This is difficult for me to talk about with you. They are real stories, real people I know personally. I saw some of them just a few months ago. And now all I hear are their frightened voices. And now, every night, I read the newspaper to see what happened, how the day went, what threatens my family and friends. I have to wake up every day, go to school, and live my life, just like my friends and family in the Czech Republic. People are dying. To my friends at school here, this is just newspaper headlines, just words. But these are real people and they are really dying. Their lives are really being destroyed. Their churches, their hospitals, their schools, their grocery stores. Flattened, without a second thought, without remorse, by one aggressive man. Here people laugh and live their lives as if nothing is happening. I am not, of course, saying everyone should suspend their lives and live only in the pain and misery of Ukraine, but I think we need help. I can't tell you 100% the right thing to do to help, but by sending money to organizations to help Ukraine, for example, I think that we can help make a difference. They need it more than we do right now. I found a couple American organizations that have fundraising opportunities to support Ukraine. Beyond that, I hope you'll join me and my host father in prayer for the families and people of Ukraine right now as they experience war in their backyards. Thank you.

~ AT

(Note: following our March stated communication, St. John's Lodge sent \$10,000 to agencies providing Ukrainian relief.)

"I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and Constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manners and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times. We might as well require a man to wear still the coat which fitted him when a boy as civilized society to remain ever under the regimen of their barbarous intentions."



~ Thomas Jefferson