

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

## Trestleboard

August 2023

Jim Russell, editor



Serving Seattle since 1860

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## FROM THE EAST

[Eric Koteles](#), Master



Eric Koteles  
Master

Brethren,  
My Brothers, how would you explain Fellowship? I ask this question because Fellowship is as important as labor; they go hand in hand. However, when I think and meditate about it, it's challenging to put into words what I have learned and held in my heart through the years.

Looking back, I feel fortunate to have received my first lesson on Fellowship from my mother. Let me explain. I grew up in downtown Mexico City, in an apartment with my mom and her sister. Once a month, on Sunday evenings, their friends from various countries, many of them war refugees from regions like

Spain, Germany, Austria, Peru, France, and Cuba, gathered at our home. My friends used to call my home the UN.

I recall asking my mom and aunt about the dinner menu, but I always received the same answer, "Don't worry, you'll find out at dinner." During dinner, something magical happened – I completely forgot about my initial question. Everyone gratefully enjoyed whatever was served at the table.

As the evening progressed, the adults shared their stories of survival – how they endured with little food and water, witnessed their loved ones being killed by the occupying army, begged for their lives, and eventually found their way to a better life. I had no choice but to stay at the table, only allowed to retire to my room when my mother deemed it appropriate (now I'm grateful for this).

I was mesmerized by their accounts; that amazing dinner table witnessed so many emotions – tears, smiles, and laughter. The experience is something I cherish and carry with me. I learned that every person deserves to be listened to, that every experience we have is important, and we should never belittle it, no matter how we feel or think about it. We deserve to be heard, not because we believe we are grandiose, but because it is a way to unburden the afflictions in our hearts. I have firsthand experience that it doesn't matter what is served for dinner because in good Fellowship, a simple piece of bread and some salt taste way better than any sumptuous dinner eaten alone.

Brothers, I came to realize that Fellowship tastes much better when we work together first, under any conditions, when we are together as Brothers.

WM K. Eric Koteles.

## CALENDAR



- August 5 (10am): Open Air MM Degree, Masonic Park
- August 9 (6pm): Board of Trustees
- August 16 (6:15pm dinner) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dress "neat casual")
- August 19 (6pm): Everett AquaSox
- September 4: Happy Birthday to us!
- Sept. 6: (7pm): Fellowship Zoom *Mozart's Magic Flute*
- Sept. 14 (6pm): Officers meeting
- September 15-17: Rosh Hashanah
- September 16 (6pm social hour, 7pm dinner): 163<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration *Ivar's Salmon House*
- September 20 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated
- October 6 (7pm): Fellowship Zoom
- October 11 (6pm): Board of Trustees 2024 Budget preparation
- October 12 (6pm): Officers Meeting
- October 18 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated *Past Masters Night; Election of Officers*
- November 1 (7pm): Fellowship Zoom – *Kirkwall Scroll*
- November 15: St. John's 9 Stated meeting and Installation of Officers
- November 23: *Thanksgiving Day*
- December 20 (6:15pm) 7:30pm: St. John's 9 (dinner) Stated

## St. John's Lodge No. 9 meets every 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday

- Social "hour" 5:30pm
- Free parking available after 6pm on the St. John Catholic Church playground. Located 1/2 block west of Greenwood Ave. N. on southside of N. 80<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Dinner 6:15pm
- Stated Communication 7:30pm
- Refreshments & fellowship following

Calling for Volunteers! We expect to be presenting a Master Mason Degree this fall. Please contact WBro. Russ Johnson to volunteer to accept a speaking or non-speaking role in this third-degree presentation. [Rajco20@me.com](mailto:Rajco20@me.com)

# ST. JOHN'S TO MEET AT SCOTTISH RITE CENTER AUGUST, SEPTEMBER

You might want to take a different route when heading for Lodge this month! Brothers voted to meet at the Scottish Rite Center in Shoreline the next couple of months following dispensation by the Grand Master to do so. Why? Primarily for three reasons.

1. Safety. Our Greenwood neighborhood doesn't provide much in the way of parking other than what can be found in tightening street parking availability. We're grateful that a neighboring church and school allows parking at their facility, but only after 6pm in the evening. This still necessitates walking a distance in the dark and, during the winter, icy walkways. Especially concerning is the darkness of evenings following our stated communications.
2. Rental expense. Our present Landlord increased our rent from \$300/month to \$1,150/month in May. While we have put up with living in a building that over the years has deteriorated since we moved here in 2005, you might say this is the "straw that broke the camel's back." Past events such as a leaky roof which destroyed some of our valued documents will not be forgotten.
3. Ambiance. As we look to recapture a spirit that proclaims our wish to be a forward-thinking Lodge of active members, desiring to learn to subdue our passions and improve ourselves in Masonry, it is imperative that we meet in a facility which proclaims that we're not only proud to be a Mason but can take pride in our "home" – our Lodge surroundings. This temporary retreat to the Scottish Rite is a first step in asking ourselves, "is this a step in the right direction?"



Scottish Rite Center, Shoreline

So, this month and next (August and September) we'll be holding our stated communications at the Scottish Rite in Shoreline. **1207 N 152nd St, Shoreline, WA 98133.** Everyone is encouraged to dress more casually in August. We'll return to suit and time and tuxedos for officers in September.



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 11. 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.

## Take Me Out to the Ballgame

St. John's Masons and families will once again head to the Everett AquaSox baseball game Saturday, August 19.

"Pre- admission" opens at 6pm into the Pepsi Food Pavilion offering hot dogs, hamburgers, salad, baked beans, soft drinks, and your reserved seat. Free parking on site.



Here's a look at our future Seattle Mariners vs. the Hillsboro Hops (Arizona Diamondbacks farm club).

Our thirty (30) game seats will be in the upper rows on the 3rd base side of the diamond (between home plate and the pitcher's mound). First pitch will be thrown at 7:05pm - fireworks following the game (around 9:30 or 10pm).

## 163<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Dinner to Feature Taproot Theatre Improv Players

WBro. Eric Koteles has arranged for our 163<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Dinner to be held Saturday, September 16, at Ivar's Salmon House. Social hour will open at 6pm followed by dinner at 7pm.

The Taproot Theatre Improv Ensemble will entertain our members and their Ladies following dinner. Everyone (that's EVERYONE) will have the opportunity to share in the improvisation performance.



Entrée choices of Steak Oscar (bacon-wrapped filet mignon) with Dungeness crab, Alder Grilled Wild Salmon Sampler, or vegetarian. Contact the Secretary to reserve your entrée selection and that of one guest.

Ivar's Salmon House sits on the north shores of Lake Union: 401 NE Northlake Way, Seattle, WA 98105

St. John's charter was granted by Grand Lodge, September 4, 1860. Eight Master Masons comprised the membership of the newly created and first Lodge in Seattle. Before the end of the year, there were 26 members of the Lodge..

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## FROM THE WEST

[WBro. John Murray Louderback](#)



The principles of Freemasonry allow a man to become a better man through knowledge, using the operative tools of Masonry as esoteric allegory in teaching ethics. Ethics are the moral principles that govern a person's behavior or actions and the fundamental part of knowledge that deals with morality.

Aristotle held that a person's inherent virtues such as justice, charity and generosity benefited both the individual as well as society. Kant makes the concept of duty central to morality as humans are bound due to a knowledge of their duty to obey the unambiguously explicit and direct imperative to respect other rational people.

The third aspect of ethics is utilitarianism in which the guiding principle of conduct should be that which produces the greatest happiness or benefit to the greatest number — that the benefit to the individual is secondary.

These principles are the bedrock of ethical leadership. Understanding this, it should come as no surprise that many revered world leaders, influential people and fourteen U. S. Presidents have been Freemasons.

## FROM THE SOUTH

[WBro. David Flood](#)



### FORMING THE TEMPLE

At our July stated meeting WB Russ Johnson highlighted the fundamental values and actions needed to move St John's Lodge beyond its present stasis into a revitalized future. The Entered Apprentice degree gives us some tools to use in moving ahead with the renaissance of our lodge. We are taught that freemasonry is a progressive science. Indeed, this mindset allows us to understand that transformation is a graded path with many levels to accomplish.

The form of our lodge mirrors the form of Solomon's temple. We likewise need a clear form or foundation for what we are building. The starry canopy above our temple reminds us that beyond our activities to benefit society and each other we have a personal goal to mature into men fit for that higher temple. Just as the Latin origin of the word 'temple' indicates a place cutoff from the world for a special purpose, so the related word 'contemplation' indicates a mental state - cutoff from ordinary distractions - in which we gaze attentively with keen focus.

In the coming weeks all the brothers of St John's Lodge are invited to contemplate the values we wish to espouse and the actions we need to take to revive the lodge. We are called to build a temple that promotes the moral and ethical growth of every brother. We have the opportunity to craft the structures and processes to build our worldly temple and to endeavor to polish ourselves as living stones.

In the spirit of brotherly love and friendship, please invest the time to scrutinize the proposed Renaissance plan, to contemplate the best methods to build new brothers into just and upright men and above all to strive to revitalize our lodge.

### "Suited up for Charity" Dinner and Auction

Grand Master MWBro. Steve Martin announces there will be a "Suited up for Charity" dinner and auction on Saturday evening, September 30, 2023.

Sponsored by our Masonic Charities, the evening will offer a fabulous steak dinner, silent auction, live auction, wine pull, dessert dash, 50/50 raffle, heads or tails, and many other fun things.



The event will be held at Seattle Police Athletic Association Pavilion, 11030 E Marginal Way S, Tukwila/

This will be our Jurisdiction's biggest fundraiser of the year and we (St. John's Lodge) hope to see you there. If you have any items you would like to donate for auction like timeshares, air miles, hand crafted items, etc., please use a donation form available through your Secretary. Any questions please contact Rozalynne Weinberg (rozalynne@comcast.net) or 206-661-8214 or Steve Dinkins (steve.dinkins@outlook.com).

St. John's has established a table for ten, with five brothers and their guests attending.

## AGE OF ENLIGHTENMENT

[St. John's Education Committee](#)

*Again, 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 and self-improvement. Our purpose is to learn more about Freemasonry and ourselves.

- **New Meeting ID 826 6692 5984** to join our 7pm Zoom Fellowships each first Wednesday of the month
  - Enter passcode **1860**

- \* **July 19 Stated: Becoming Better Versions of Ourselves part 2 – Russ Johnson**
- September 6 Zoom: Mozart's Magic Flute – VWBro. Jeremy Yielding**



## MASTER MASONS RAISED IN AUGUST

### Date Raised:

8/24/1965 George H. Bechtel, Jr.  
8/31/1966 Charles R. Brockway  
8/23/1980 Carl L. Alexander  
8/24/2002 Nicholas J. Mitchell  
8/2/2008 John R. Samudio  
8/2/2008 William A. Feldner  
8/2/2010 John Murray Louderback  
8/3/2011 Russell A. Johnson



## Pacific Northwest Highland Games



Among our several youth charities is the Northwest Junior Pipe Band. The band had a great outing at the season finale in Enumclaw at the Pacific Northwest Scottish Highland Games winning first place in both the medley and MSR competitions earning them the aggregate win for their grade. Several band members won their grades for solos and quartets.

The band resumes performances September 26th at the Pipe Band School Open House (see below) and resumes competitions at the BCPA Annual Gathering in Vancouver, B.C. next April.

## The purpose of Freemasonry?

Its purpose is the same as it has been since the day when the stones for King Solomon's Temple were hewn, squared, and numbered in the quarries where they were raised.

It is to take an individual – one man at a time and as good a man as possible – and try to make a better man out of him. That is all.

And if that technique is old-fashioned, then the experience of two thousand years is all wrong.

The mere fact that men do not comprehend its purpose does not mean that Freemasonry has no purpose, nor that its purpose is out-of-date.

It only means that the stones are not being well hewn and squared in the quarries where they are raised.

More than anything else today, the world yearns for a healing influence at work in the hearts of men.

& that remains the purpose of Freemasonry.

~MasonicFind.

## PROMISE

by William R. Fischer

Promise, which is a word of honor. The dictionary describes promise as “a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specific.” Yet, it has become just another meaningless word we use to get ourselves out of a situation. You know the kind of situation I'm talking about:

1. I'll call you next week – I promise.
2. You do that again and I will ground you forever, I promise you that.

3. I promised my wife three years ago I would paint this house and one of these days I'm going to do it.

A promise made is never forgotten, break a promise and you will lose the trust and respect of others. When you make a promise your word and reputation is on the line. This is why you must weigh the benefits and consequences. Do not make a promise you do not intend to keep, and know what you are getting yourself into before the promise.

There are five conditions in which a promise would not be binding.

1. Where the performance is impossible.
2. Where the promise is unlawful.
3. Where you were forced into a promise.
4. Where the conditions in which you made the promise do not exist.
5. Where either of the parties are not moral agents.

It is obvious that these conditions do not apply to Masonic promises.

1. Every promise is possible to perform.
2. No promise is unlawful.
3. There are no false conditions.
4. You voluntarily promise.
5. Both parties to the promise are moral agents.

Our promises are one of the moral secrets of the fraternity and are the chord that “binds” us as Freemasons.

*It's coming!!*

**St. John's**

**163<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration**

**Ivar's Salmon House**

Potlatch Room

Social hour – 5pm    Dinner 6pm

Saturday, September 16

*Make your reservations, today*

*Specify entrée choice: filet mignon, salmon, vegie*

206 623-0261

# Seattle's First Public Schoolhouse Opens on August 15, 1870

By Greg Lange

HistoryLink.org Essay 1509

On August 15, 1870, Seattle's first public schoolhouse opens. (Seattle's first school, opened in 1854, was a tuition-based or private school. The first public schooling commenced in 1862 when elementary and high school students were sent for instruction to the new Territorial University in downtown Seattle.)

Seattle Public School District No 1 purchased four lots in the "northern portion of town" (on the east side of 3rd Avenue between Madison and Spring streets) for a public school. On the lots, which cost \$2,000, contractors(Thomas Russell & (Oliver) Shorey (both members of St. John's) built a 30 x 48 foot two-story, two-room schoolhouse.



Seattle's first schoolhouse, ca. 1878

On August 15, 1870, the doors opened, and pupils were admitted. Lizzie Ordway (b. 1828) was the teacher. Elizabeth Ordway was one of the "Mercer Girls," who



Lizzie M. Ordway (b. 1828), ca 1865

arrived in Seattle on May 16, 1864. This group of women traveled to Seattle from Lowell, Massachusetts. They were recruited and escorted by Asa Mercer (1839-1917). Ordway began her career in the Pacific Northwest by teaching on Whidbey Island. After teaching in the Seattle public schools beginning in 1870, she taught at Port Madison, and later became superintendent of schools in Kitsap County.

On the first day of school, so many students arrived that within days the school district hired a second teacher, Mrs. J. H. Sanderson. By the end of the first week more than one hundred pupils were attending school.

The school building cost \$5,000, twice as much as the budget specified. The Seattle School District No. 1 delayed payment to the builders so long that Russell & Shorey sued the district for full payment. In 1871, the schoolhouse was foreclosed on, and the King County Sheriff announced in the Seattle paper the forced sale of the school building to pay construction costs. But, before the auction was held the School District settled with Russell & Shorey and the sale was called off.

The school operated at 3rd Avenue and Madison Street for 13 years before the school district sold the

building, which was moved to Front Street (later renamed 1st Avenue) and Virginia Street.

The lots at the old location, purchased in 1870 for \$2,000, sold in 1883 for \$30,000.

## Sources:

Thomas Prosch, "A Chronological History of Seattle from 1850 to 1897" (typescript dated 1900-1901, Northwest Collection, University of Washington Library,

## Sept. Zoom to Feature Mozart's Magic Flute

In early 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart teamed up with actor-manager Emanuel Schikaneder, an old acquaintance, and a fellow Mason to write a 'comedy with machines' for a theatre in the Viennese suburbs.

Mozart's "The Magic Flute" is universally recognized as being a masterpiece among masterpieces. This opera is an allegorical tale, not a fairy tale, and uses symbols to express truths about the human spirit. The overarching theme is harmony in human society can only be realized by the perfect union of man and woman, characterized by an equality that is achieved through pure love, strength of character, and the rituals of Freemasonry.



VWB Jeremy Yielding, who will be leading the Zoom narrative, is a member of Steilacoom Lodge #2, the mother Lodge to St. John's No. 9. VWB Jeremy is an avid storyteller having delivered a fascinating education program last year on "The Morgan Affair," during a St. John's Educational Zoom Program. VWB Jeremy is also part of the Grand Lodge Leadership Training program and a member of the Valley of Tacoma Scottish Rite. He is a graduate of Cornell University

## Grand Lodge of Washington

### **Important information regarding Grand Master's Trip to Scotland - April 2024**

Have you always wanted to go to Scotland? Have you been and wanted to go back? Now is your chance! Join Lady Robin and Grand Master Steven Martin to enjoy a fabulous trip.

We have a great trip planned in April 2024. We will visit Edinburgh Castle, Holyrood Palace, The Mother Lodge Kilwinning No. 0, Stirling Castle, Stirling Lodge No. 76, and Rosslyn Chapel. We will take a tour of the famous sites used in the filming of Outlander. We will have a day where you can choose to golf at St. Andrews or experience a tour of the Royal Yacht Britannia followed by High Tea on the HMS Fingal and learn highland dancing, and many other adventures

**Registration is open until August 21, 2023** or 40 seats are sold. Cost is \$3,535/pp double or \$4,768 single and includes transportation, airfare Seattle to Edinburgh, 9 days/8 nights hotel, and all tours. (Golf and High Tea extra). <https://www.wetravel.com/trips/-31293851>



# Let's LOOK AT THAT A LITTLE CLOSER



*I have seen many people die. When near death, not one of them said: "I wish I had spent more time in the office or on the job or ..."* Tomorrow may feel like today, but can I do then what I should have done yesterday with them? The quality of my life depends on the quality of my thoughts. But there is no refund for time lost, misspent or dissipated.

## "I CHEW DEATH TODAY"

Quote of July First, A.D.2023.

Paul Liberty

Seattle's public buses offer a good look at colorful collections of mental cases, drug addicts, crazies, alcoholics, and dirty people who do not see a benefit in the use of water and soap which anywhere else would transport Americans next to holiness. Some rides produce a gem or two worthy to be talked about. Today I had one of those.

There was this fellow, horribly dirty, ripped clothes, yellow teeth, several bags covered in crystallized dirt, getting onto the #132. He stank at about 12-15 miles against the prevailing winds in my estimation. After he got himself and stuff on board, Smelly Fellow turned to me and told me in a clear voice: "I chew death today." It sounded like his message for this day. Then he sat down on the only open seat or, better said, it had been quickly vacated, it's former occupant's motive of vacating not having been expressed, but understood and probably regretted by the surrounding riders without illustrative words, grunts, gestures.

Thanks, Smelly Fellow. Your four (4) words got me thinking. Can one "chew" death?

Some people probably do it. Others play around with the reality of death pending upon them more or less. In my life, the realities of post-WW2 living still haunt me. Not much of a difference actually, if you ask me, in the end product: maybe a grave somewhere, not being mourned, remembered or whatever, then forgotten.

Stoic philosophy is fashionable. That's good also for today. The Greek and Roman authors offer a structure to deal with life's hardships and with dying. Much of Stoicism rests on the notion that material possessions can be spent once and then are gone. Wisdom and insight and kindness, on the other hand, stay with me and transcend my limits. Fortune, fame, money, power, women, deals, adoration of the crowd are vanity, transitory. Akin to older Buddhist teachings, Stoic philosophers did not see happiness in the power plays of urban life in the admittedly superior civilizations of the Greek and Romans. The same considerations apply to America's vainglorious persons and politics.

For most people, death is something awfully hard to think about. People tend to avoid the subject at all cost. Yet death is perfectly normal and natural. The Stoic philosophers showed me how to detach my future death from misleading feelings. My reading and practicing of this philosophy improved my self-discipline and mental toughness. I got happier despite circumstances.

The British philosopher and erstwhile diplomat Stephen Cave published "Immortality, the Quest to Live Forever and How it Divides Civilization" (2017). It is a remarkable book. "*Death presents itself as both inevitable and impossible.*" The words seem to exclude each other, yet they do not. Do they make sense? Death is not a usual platform for people and things in America. We know rationally that we will die, yet we also struggle to understand that we will have no breath, no opinion, no achievement. Worse, *we cannot even be conscious of our own coming non-consciousness.* And, practical Stoics add, we will be forgotten just like everybody else. So much for our own efforts. Yes, life is much easier and less fraught with difficult topics if we do not allow death to enter our thoughts at all.

However, there is a problem: this choice of avoidance leads us to curtail the happiness we are living. We postpone activities which yield more meaning and togetherness: the practice of religion and of art, such as making music with others or appreciating nature or beauty in content and form. We begin to resent whatever little love and happiness there was when we withdrew from our spouses, kids and friends for the benefit of doing more work and making more money to ultimately have more time to catch up with the little ones who, in a short time, no longer will be little and do not wish to be around those who had disregarded them earlier. There simply is no catching up with time misspent or lost. Of course, as I write these words, I am not dead yet, but I am also not as fully alive as I once was. I have missed a lot. To spend time with loved ones and friends has become more and more precious, as fewer of them are still around.

We tend to copy the general advertising culture where every hair is just so, and where important things go easily and are never far from Hollywood bliss. We assume that today and tomorrow will continue to burble along like a little brook, that tomorrow will look like last week and one's last birthday so that we can do tomorrow what we did not do today. But in reality we have not filled our time, our possessions and domestic work with meaning and time which mean something genuine to everyone in the house. The Stoics ask me: Because other people are fools, must I be one of them? My job in life is to escape finding myself in the ranks of the insane. Moments evanesce. When we focus on our dying, we increase our stakes in OUR time and create clarity in OUR minds that THIS IS what we are dealing with NOW as well as from now on and not something else. I do not want to do or say anything which deserves contempt. It is an important difference.

It sounds abstract, but is pragmatic. I have seen many people die. When near death, not one of them said:

“I wish I had spent more time in the office or on the job or ...” How many Memorial Days, Fourth of July etc. did I give away? How many evenings did we look at the stars and spin stories? How many Thanksgivings or evenings will I have left with my spouse or my kids? Tomorrow may feel like today, but can I do then what I should have done yesterday with them? The quality of my life depends on the quality of my thoughts. But there is no refund for time lost, misspent or dissipated.

Not missing out on that which matters is difficult enough if one does not believe in an afterlife. With a religion, even of sorts, the discomfort of thinking seriously about life’s impermanence, i.e.. one’s mortality, is a weighty factor to make decisions about how to live and personal happiness. In “Meditations,” one of the great Stoics, the Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, wrote: “You could leave life right now. Let that determine what you do and say and think.” Just two short sentences.

Every person’s greatest asset is his rational mind. Use it. As often as needed. Sort facts from emotions, what’s important from the unimportant, the true from the misleading. Death makes you see things clearly and without frills. Then you can make realistic choices about your present moment. Choose the positive way, and you will enhance your happiness. Marcus’s line has been put on artistic and symbolic items called “memento mori”: remember that you will die.

Smelly Fellow hauled me from the #132 bus back to real living and dying. I had a choice of how to deal with it. I chose the positive aspect inherent in this happenstance. Now I chew death in order to live better, to be stronger and happier. Death smiles at all of us. All I can do is smile back.

## 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.



**See you in Lodge  
This month  
At  
Scottish Rite Center  
Shoreline  
  
1207 N 152nd St**

## Fraternal Organizations Differ From Clubs

Fraternal organizations have been around for centuries. They are different from service clubs like the Lions and Kiwanis in the sense that their main focus is not solely about community service but rather on the overall enrichment of members.

Some of these organizations have become commonly known as “secret societies” due largely to the fact that they do not publicize their beliefs.

Freemasonry is not a secret society. We are, however, a society with secrets.

Dating to 18<sup>th</sup> century London, Freemasonry is one of the oldest operating fraternal orders. Like many similar groups, the Masons were borne out of a British craft guild, wherein stone layers learned the tricks of the trade.



The concept of Freemasonry, which taught architecture and geometry, goes back thousands of years. The Greek temples, the pyramids in Egypt, you name it; none of that could have been built without a knowledge of mathematics.

Freemasonry has held tightly to its history and culture over the changing years.

Back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century when the great European cathedrals were being built, a ‘freemason’ was a bricklayer or stonemason, who was free to travel and work. This was a big deal, because most men weren’t free. There were kings and knights, but the king owned the serfs.

Uniquely, freemasons were people who were allowed to travel, work, and receive master-masons’ wages wherever they went.

Back then, you probably spent 10 years as an apprentice before you received a degree. If you gave up the secrets of geometry to someone who wasn’t worthy or well-qualified, the stonemasons might literally put you to death.

Modern-day Freemasonry, however, emerged when the stonemasonry guilds began to initiate honorary members, armchair architects or intellectuals excited about the new ideas of reason and science that were catching on during the Enlightenment.

Masons uphold ideals of equality, religious tolerance, and natural law (a.k.a. science), as well as a belief in a Supreme Being. Geometry is taught in colleges now, but 300 years ago, geometry was only taught in Masonic Lodges. During the Renaissance, men of social class joined their local Masonic Lodges so that they could learn these things.

Today, the requirements for joining are still pretty strict; you have to be an upstanding man of character in your community. We don’t just let in anybody and everybody, because it’s not just for anybody and everybody.

## Do You Know What Your Mission Is In Life?

by *Midnight Freemasons Founder*

**Todd E. Creason, 33°**

A couple of evenings last week, I took part in a group activity. I wasn't too excited about it when I first read about it, but I thought it might be interesting. The goal of this group project was to create a personal mission statement. According to what I read prior to the first session; a personal mission statement can be an extremely powerful tool. If you create one that captures what you're all about, it can help direct almost every decision and aspect of your life. That sounded like a big promise for something that's only a couple sentences long, but as I'm beginning a new adventure in life and I have spent some considerable time over the last year pondering some of these very issues, I decided it was probably well worth my time.

Prior to these discussions, we received about a dozen questions that were meant to clarify what we were about—they were strictly for our own use. I spent a couple hours answering them. After I finished, I went back and read over the pages I'd written. It was pretty easy to see some very common themes. It was also pretty obvious where my aspirations were frequently in conflict with the reality of what I was doing. We'd return to these questions over and over again over the next couple of evenings—highlighting different areas, pulling out recurring themes, and identifying the disconnects. Over the weekend I took all the things I learned during those two evenings, and I created the beginnings of a very short personal mission statement.

I realized at some point as I'm going through this exercise that I'd done some of this before. I'd asked myself many of these same questions at a certain point in my life. The last time I found myself stuck in a routine and wondering what was next.

“What's important to you?”

“Where do you want to go?”

“What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?”

“What personality traits do you need to gain to get where you want to go?”

“Which personality traits do you need to lose?”

“What does your best life look like?”

Last time those questions lead me to join the Masonic Lodge. My answers were a little different last time around, but I'm further down the path now than I was. The Masonic Lodge has been a powerful motivator in my life. It's given me focus. It's given me good examples to follow. It's given me opportunities to do things I'd never done before. It's repeatedly taken me to the next level. It changed my life and my direction. In fact, it brought me to this crossroads I find myself at right now!

Too many Masons miss what this is about. They remain the same person they were when they joined—some convinced they're a gift to Freemasonry rather than



the other way around. We hear the words, but we don't apply the principles. They read books about Freemasonry so they can discuss books about Freemasonry, but they never apply the Freemasonry! These Masons will be the first to tell you that Freemasonry is a journey, but they've never actually packed for the trip.

Freemasonry is work — some of the most difficult work you'll ever do. It involves rebuilding yourself better! Strengthening those good aspects of your character and eliminating the bad ones. About finding out what you're good at, what you're passionate about and putting that energy to good use. But the hard part in all of that is being honest with ourselves. Being able to admit to ourselves that there are some areas we need to work on. Being able to look in the mirror and see what other people see and have the desire to change what you see.

A personal mission statement is a good thing to have. If nothing else, it clarifies what is personally important to you and gives your life focus. But without a doubt, there's never been a better time . . . for many of us to take some time to do a personal inventory. We have ample time to ponder difficult questions that sometimes get drowned out in the hustle and bustle of everyday life and find that ladder to the next level.

**Todd E. Creason, 33°** is the Founder of the *Midnight Freemasons* blog, and an award-winning author of several books and novels, including the *Famous American Freemasons* series. Todd started the *Midnight Freemason* blog in 2006, and in 2012 he opened it up as a contributor blog *The Midnight Freemasons* (plural). Todd has written more than 1,000 pieces for the blog since it began. He is a Past Master of Homer Lodge No. 199 and Ogden Lodge No. 754 (IL) where he currently serves as Secretary. He is a Past Sovereign Master of the Eastern Illinois Council No. 356 Allied Masonic Degrees. He is a Fellow at the Missouri Lodge of Research (FMLR). He is a charter member of the new Illinois Royal Arch Chapter, *Admiration Chapter No. 282* and currently serves as EHP. You can contact him at [webmaster@toddcreason.org](mailto:webmaster@toddcreason.org)

### The Letter “G”



The earliest known appearance of the letter “G” inside the interlaced square and compasses is on a photo of an etching in *“Freemasonry A Journey Through Ritual and Symbol”* by Kirk MacNulty. The date shown on the etching is “5776” which we Masons know to be 1776 in standard dating form. Another very early appearance is on a cast bronze plate made by Paul Revere in 1796. By the year 1800 the combined symbol had appeared in England on embroidered aprons and upon a “Master's Tracing Board. In the language of some countries, the letter “G” does not stand for either “God” or “Geometry,” so it is not a part of their basic symbol of Freemasonry.