

# Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

Chartered January 18, A.D. 1888, A.L. 5888

904-826-4086



May, 2021



## STATED COMMUNICATIONS

Masonic Temple  
4 Martin Luther King Blvd.  
St. Augustine, FL  
1<sup>ST</sup> & 3<sup>RD</sup> Thursdays  
Meal – 6:30 p.m.  
Stated Communication — 7:30 p.m.

## DEGREE WORK AND PRACTICE

2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays

## CHARITY OF THE QUARTER

Boys Club/Girls Club

I must remind the Craft that we are still operating under the Grand Master's directive regarding masks, shields, and social distancing. As you know, we have had one case of COVID in the Lodge which should bring home the lesson that this is not over yet.

Fraternally,  
David Pierucci  
Worshipful Master

**From the East**

Brethren,

As we approach Grand Communication at the end of May please inform the Secretary of your intention to attend so he may pre-register you.

The property committee has come to a consensus on the second exit for escape in case of emergency. They will be reporting to the Craft at the first Communication in May.

# May 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 OES	4	5 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	6 STAT-ED COMM. 6:30 PM	7	8
9	10	11	12 District Instruction Middleburg 107 6:30 pm	13	14	15
16	17 OES	28 York Rite Chapter/ Council 6:30 pm	19 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	20 STAT-ED COMM. 6:30 PM	21	22
23/30	24/31 May 31-Jun 2 Grand Communi- cation	25 York Rite Command- ery 6:30 pm	26 Dist. Association Palatka No. 34 6:30 pm	27	28 Fried Chicken Shrine Club	29

## From the West

Brothers,

The future of our Lodge and indeed Masonry as a whole is dependent upon new generations of young men coming forward to petition for the benefits we enjoy. We have opened conversations with DeMolay of Florida, inquiring as to how we may assist the three chapters in our area. This is an ongoing discussion at this time, and I will report to the Craft as we progress.

DeMolay is an organization dedicated to preparing young men to lead successful, happy, and productive lives. Basing its approach on timeless principles and practical, hands-on experience, DeMolay opens doors for young men aged 12 to 21 by developing the civic awareness, personal responsibility and leadership skills so vitally needed in society today. DeMolay combines this serious mission with a fun approach that builds important bonds of friendship among members in more than 1,000 chapters worldwide.

Each DeMolay Chapter is sponsored by a group of Freemasons, a Masonic Lodge, or some appendant Masonic group such as the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, High Twelve Club, or Shriners. The responsibilities of the sponsoring body are to provide the Chapter a place to meet; to provide adult leadership and guidance through maintaining an active Advisory Council; and to assist the Chapter whenever and however needed.

Brother Jim

# June 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 GRAND COMMUNICATION	2 GRAND COMMUNICATION RAINBOW 7 PM	3 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	4	5
6	7 OES	8 SHRINE CLUB 7:00 pm	9 Dist. Inst. Cabul No. 116 6:30 pm	10 DEGREE PRACTICE TBD	11	12
13	14	15	16 RAINBOW 7 PM	17 STAT-ED COMM 6:30 PM	18	19
20	21 OES	22 YORK RITE CHAPTER/COUNCIL 6:30 PM	23 District Association Lake No. 72 6:30 pm	24 Past Masters' Night MM Degree 6pm	25 Fried Chicken Shrine Club 5 pm	26
27	28	29 YORK RITE COMMANDERY 6:30 PM	30			

## From the South

Hello Brothers,

As we enter May (and prepare for the hot summer), I want to update you on what we are doing in terms of Charity.

We have been talking with the Rainbow Girls, Eastern Star and a couple of local DeMolay groups and have offered to assist them. Masonic charities being our number 1 objective, we want to be sure we maintain our strong support of our younger future Masons, as well as current and future wives and/or sisters of Masons.

We are continuing to speak with and establish relationships with local charities that are out in our community making a difference in the lives of children, seniors, veterans and others who need their assistance. These nonprofits take on a lot to help ensure people who aren't as fortunate as we are get a helping hand and a fair shake.

Thank you so much for your support and generosity!

Wishing you all the best!

Fraternally,  
Bro Tom

## LODGE OFFICERS 2021

### Worshipful Master

**David Pierucci** 904-460-9477

### Senior Warden

James Carrick 904-501-4348

### Junior Warden

Thomas Torretta 602-881-3206

### Secretary

George Maultsby 703-956-0228

### Treasurer

Oscar Patterson III 904-955-9175

### Chaplain

William Roberts 904-501-1567

### Tyler

Mickey Cunningham 904-794-5762

## FRATERNAL NOTICES AND DATES

O.E.S. Chapter #12.....1st & 3rd  
Mondays

Rainbow Assembly #42.....1st & 3rd  
Wednesdays

York Rite Bodies.....3rd & 4th  
Tuesdays

## OTHER 11th MASONIC DISTRICT LODGES

### Palatka No. 34

Palatka—2nd & 4th Mondays

### Lake No. 72

Crescent City—1st & 3rd Mondays

### Pineland No. 86

Peniel—1st & 3rd Thursdays

### Melrose No 89

Keystone Heights—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

### Middleburg No. 107

Middleburg—1st & 3rd Tuesdays

### Cabul No. 116

Green Cove Springs—2nd & 4th Thursdays

### Hastings No. 183

Hastings—2nd & 4th Tuesdays

### Bunnell No. 200

Bunnell—1st and 3rd Tuesdays

*All meanings depend on the key of interpretation.*  
George Eliot

An excellent way to begin interpreting Masonic ritual is to examine the specific Bible passages recited during the circumambulation in each degree. In the Entered Apprentice Degree Psalm 133 is used to demonstrate unity. The Fellow Craft Degree utilizes Amos 7 to show that God has measured His people as He does all people and found them warped thus worthy of correction or plumbing. And in the Master Mason Degree, Ecclesiastes or The Preacher, the kindly cynic, provides those willing to listen a description of the passage from youth to age in what is generally accepted to be one of the most moving passages in literature and is often compared to the best of Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations* and Pascal's *Thoughts*.

Psalm 133 begins with a declaration of the usefulness of unity informing us that it is better to function altogether than with divisiveness. In the ancient Hebrew *gam shenayim* implies the goodness of those who are of the same belief system to united for a sacred purpose. And that this unity is best accomplished within a sacred space or "same place." This passage was part of the initiation of the Knights Templars and is quoted by St. Augustine as Divine authority for monastic life. The passage further admonishes us that we are brethren not only through nature and "blood," but also through our common social and personal interactions. The mutual love described is that referred to in the New Testament as *agape*.

The entire passage demonstrates that we cannot say too much about the necessity of persuading people to live together in peace and harmony and suggests that those who abide by this admonition will receive God's blessing and approval. "How good" states the passage, how proper it is to promote happiness by the diffusion of good influences from the broad spectrum of brotherhood. How pleasant and filled with delight is the mind so engaged. And though the brethren will separate and go into their homes—to their scattered habitations—it is always most pleasant to see them assembled in harmony and unity. This unity, implies the passage, will have an important influence upon the world resulting in a reduction of strife and contention.

The "precious ointment" suggests not only consecration, but also an infusion through that act to the lowest member of the society. Brotherly love, we are then told, does not diffuse its blessing unless it descends to all assembled. The implication of the passage is that if we love one another in unity and fellowship, immortality will follow. The cost of the ointment was not small, it being composed of some of the most precious spices: myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia and olive oil. Yet as is the dew, it is freely given and descends from the highest mountain to the lowest valley. The brotherly love demonstrated through the unity described in the passage is rare and is not the kind of affection that comes and goes. It represents a perfect union. We are brothers together not because of some genetic bond, but rather by a combination of commonwealth and an attachment to the same ancient Fraternity.

In the Second Degree, Amos, the shepherd-prophet of righteousness, preaches "harsh words in a smooth season." He points out to Israel their failings in social dealings and their shallow piety. The man from Tekoa articulates his encounters with the Deity—YHWH—and his successful intervention on behalf of Israel. Amos presents a conservative interpretation by condemning ritual as a futile exercise unless it is accompanied by ethical dealings among men. The book itself is considered a religious text of the highest order in which the audience participates in the cosmic drama directly and indirectly. Some scholars speculate that much of the book was intended to be a form of congregational reading or hymn with the leader asking the questions and the people answering in unison. It is also worthy of note that in Amos 5:8 reference is made to "the seven stars" or the Pleiades which are part of Masonic symbolism and often represented on tracing boards, floor cloths, and other Masonic iconography.

Amos utilizes what is best described as the subterfuge of entrapment and is compared to II Samuel 12 where David is given a case to judge in which he pronounces a death sentence for the theft of sheep only to be rebuked by the prophet Nathan who reveals the subterfuge and declares David equally guilty for the death of Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba. The rhetorical trap is set in the first two chapters and, though subtle, is directed at the audience or reader. Amos, then, declares that he will intervene on Israel's behalf which is, itself, a trap since he has now eliminated the possibility of reconciliation with YHWH. The trap is then revealed and the lion's roar, which is a metaphor for divine speech, turns into prophecy. The trap has forced the audience to judge their relationship with the Deity and sets the stage for chapters seven and eight.

Chapters seven through nine may be considered as relatively independent from the remainder of the book. The emphasis is now on Amos and his interaction with YHWH. It is recounted in the first person with some of the verses, specifically Amos 7: 10-17, being a possible later addition. The visions of Amos recounted in Chapter 7 are virtually identical--"Thus the lord YHWH showed me." For Freemasons, the critical verses are those describing the third vision which begins with "Behold, my lord was standing on a wall of *anak* (possibly tin or lead) and in his hand [was] *anak* (tin?). The passage describes how the sanctuaries will be destroyed yet foreshadow the reconciliation between YHWH and Israel.

This passage employs some of the most intricate and esoteric word-play in the Old Testament. What was *anak*? The word is used nowhere else in the Bible and has been interpreted to mean “tin,” “lead”, and, most commonly, “plumb” referring to the lead weight on a plumb-line. There are multiple layers of symbolism, however, inherent in the word and its use in these verses. Tin and lead are both soft, malleable metals virtually useless unless alloyed with other metals such as copper to create bronze. In Amos, the meaning of the word appears to shift with context. Tin is a metaphor for the suffering to be inflicted on Israel and yet YHWH appears to set Amos (tin) among the people to “set them straight.” The word *anak* displays a rich interplay within the language in which the repetition of a word can result in its transformation. Its use is reminiscent of the multi-layered symbolism prevalent in Freemasonry.

The circumambulation of the Third or Master Mason Degree utilizes Ecclesiastes 12 to demonstrate the fate of all mankind. The book of Ecclesiastes is often treated as either a depressing litany of the futilities of life, or as a simplistic series of homilies, warning people to avoid things in life that might seem good, because they are really bad ("vain"). The great, triumphant, enlightening truth of Ecclesiastes is treated, all too often, as only a slim ray of hope. Ecclesiastes is, however, the only book of pure philosophy in the Bible. It's the only one needed, because it considers, however briefly, the entire human condition, and provides the answer to human existence, thus rendering further speculations somewhat unnecessary.

### **Ecclesiastes 12:1-14**

Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when you shall say, I have no pleasure in them;

While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not darkened, nor the clouds return after the rain:

In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened,

And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low;

Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail:

Because man goes to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:

Or ever the silver cord is loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern,

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.

In this last chapter of Ecclesiastes, the argument is made that our dependence upon God and our seeking of significance in Him rather than in that which is “under the sun” is a very personal quest. The author’s words are intended to head off the mid- life crisis men face as they begin to recognize their limitations and inabilities. The text describes growing older as a natural process during which limitations and inabilities will creep into our lives emphasizing that this is normal. It is the course and the cost of life. To fight it is to be distracted by it. We must take what God gives us today, appreciate it and enjoy it.

The author is frantically searching for significance and as he grows older and has exhausted all the means by which man can find significance under the sun--including wisdom. He becomes wiser only by acknowledging *the whole duty of man is to “Fear God, and keep his commandments.”* There is no wisdom under the sun that can allow man to understand God, yet, in Chapter 11, the author informs us that the man who lives peaceably, even the unbeliever will enjoy much of life yet even the unbeliever has to remember that life is short and that the Lord provides an eternal solution given through the Preacher in Chapter 12.

### **Symbolism in Chapter 12**

Keepers of the house: The hands

The strong men: The legs

The grinders: The Teeth

Those who look out the windows: The eyes

The doors: The ears

Sound of grinding low: Hard of hearing

Rise up at the voice of birds: Rising up early as do the old, not able to sleep late.

Daughters of music brought low: Hard of hearing

Afraid of that which is high: Fear of falling

Almond tree: White blossoms, the white hair

Grasshopper a burden: Too weak to carry a burden

Desire shall fail: sex drive wanes

Long home: Eternity

Thus in Ecclesiastes 12 we see two pictures of death. The first is a silver cord holding a golden bowl in which a flame (light) burns which represents a lamp in the Ancient world. The cord breaks, the bowl is shattered, the light goes out. Death has occurred. The second image is of water, thus life, becoming unavailable or drained away. The pitcher which holds the water is shattered, a physical parallel of death. Then the wheel by which water is drawn is broken which is interpreted to refer to the heart pumping the blood through the body. It no longer works, it is broken, death is the result. These stark images are drawn to motivate us to realize that we might spend our lives trying to find something that will never be found and in doing so come to death's door realizing we could have had so much more if we had only depended upon Divine inspiration and guidance.

In the final picture, death returns us to creation. "The dust returns to the earth" is a direct parallel to the creation of man account found in Genesis 2:7. "The body returns to the earth from which it was made and the spirit, here the life of man, returns to God who gave it." Prior to giving his final verdict on the matter of significance in life, the Preacher establishes why he can give this conclusion. Experience is not the best teacher, he tells us. Personal experience of failure can show us what is wrong but it cannot show us what is right, experience is limited to that which is under the sun, to what is earth bound. Experience may show us things as being better but it cannot show us absolute best. It is similar to natural revelation in that it shows us our inability, our weakness, our smallness, but not always our greatness. Experience can show us that there is a God who is far beyond man, but experience alone cannot lead us to God's love and God's wisdom.

Knowledge in Hebrew is the word DAR-ATH and includes perception, skill, and wisdom. Ecclesiastes teaches us how to apply these principles of knowledge to daily life in which truth is to be pondered, searched out, and properly arranged. The passages further teach us to weigh ourselves on a scale to find the best truth. The Preacher searched outside of himself to reach his conclusion: "God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil."

The Second or Fellow Craft includes, in addition to the reading from, the story of Jephthah as recounted in The Book of Judges. The account, which is included in the Winding Stairs' Lecture, is there, most probably, because it is the only biblical account of the use of a password. The story that of a personal history and a vow made by that person to the Deity. A vow is an oath, with the Deity being both the witness and recipient of the promise. A religious vow indicates that the petitioner's piety and spiritual attitude outweigh all other considerations.

Jephthah, a "mighty warrior" of the Tribe of Gilead, is described as "the son of a harlot." He is driven out of the tribe by his half-brothers and goes to the land of Tod in the region of Ammon (as in Ammonites) where he associates with "worthless [also translated as 'empty'] fellows." When the Ammonites made war on Israel, Jephthah is called home to be their leader. He is promised that when he defeats the Ammonites, his position will become permanent. To achieve victory and to seal his place as "Judge over Israel, he vows that "If thou wilt give the Ammonites into my hand, then whoever comes forth from the doors of my house to meet me, when I return victorious from the Ammonites, shall be the Lord's, and I will offer him up for a burnt offering." The Ammonites are defeated and upon his return, Jephthah is met first by his daughter, his only child, but he is bound by his vow to God: "For I have opened my mouth to the Lord, and I cannot take back my vow." The vow is fulfilled.

As with the recitation of Psalm 133, Amos 7, and Ecclesiastes 12, the deeper, symbolic meaning, possibly esoteric meaning, is essential to a full understanding of Masonic ritual. It is easy to lose the lessons offered in the horror of human sacrifice, but the story speaks to us of equality; the importance of carefully considering oaths (words); the implication of keeping one's word; and the necessity of being ever watchful and thoughtful about what we say, think, and do as well as how we treat others based on preconceived notions. Jephthah was "thrust out," and, though surrounded by "worthless fellows," he creates a personal reputation such that when threatened by the Ammonites, the elders of Israel bring him back to be their leader. This teaches us that we are not bound by birth, but that we have within us the God-given ability to overcome even the most appalling circumstances and achieve by our own merits.

The story of Jephthah goes further, though, and teaches us that by overcoming and forsaking poor associations and replacing them with better associates we demonstrate our reevaluation of our life's purpose and our place in society. The story further reminds us of the power of an oath or vow, especially when made to the Deity. We can easily break a vow or oath if we assume it has no meaning. Jephthah, though, reflects upon the meaning of the oath and to whom given, and his spirituality outweighs all other concerns as it does with Masons. We, and he, are admonished to consider our tendency to speak before well considering our words; to think in narrow ways; or to act in a manner that is not pleasing to God or man.

Freemasonry teaches us overtly to subdue our passions, to reflect upon our thoughts and words, and to take action only after careful consideration. It also teaches us that an oath once taken is for an indefinite period and covers all situations. Had Jephthah more wisely considered his words, he may not have been forced to exclaim: "Alas, my daughter! you have brought me very low, and you have become a cause of great trouble to me."