

# Ashlar Lodge No. 98 Free and Accepted Masons

St. Augustine, FL

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

904-826-4086



October, 2022



## 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 MONTH

Betty Griffin Center

## From the East

Greetings from the East My Brothers,

I am most pleased that at our last Stated Communication we were finally able to make some progress on our scholarship program. It has been a long time coming and is one of the things on my list to address before I leave the East. Another is to finish the second storage

room or dungeon #2. At some point after the weather cools a bit more, I plan to have a work day and invite the Brothers to help install the shelving, which should finish things up down there.

As of now I have but a few more months to serve as your Worshipful Master. I will endeavor to leave you with a healthy, growing and harmonious Lodge and I charge my successors to keep the momentum in play and never let her go dark !

Take Care

W:. Jim

# October 2022

Sun                  Mon                  Tue                  Wed                  Thu                  Fri                  Sat

						1
2	3 OES	4	5 RAIN-BOW 7 pm	6 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	7	8
9	10	11 SHRINE CLUB 7:00 pm	12 District Instruction Ashlar No. 98 6:30 pm	13 FC Degree 6:30 pm	14	15
16	17 OES	18 YORK RITE CHAPTER/COUNCIL 6:30 PM	19 RAIN-BOW 7 pm Open Books Pineland 86 6-9 pm	20 STATED COMM 6:30 PM	21	22
23/30	24/31	25 YORK RITE COMMANDERY 6:30 pm	26 District Assn. Cabul No. 116 6:30	27 Lodge Instruction TBA	28 Fried Chicken Shrine Club	29

## FROM THE WEST

Hello My Brothers,

As we turn the corner and head for home plate this year, I am so proud of the work we have done together this year. The newer officers have really stepped up and pitched in to help things run seamlessly. The degree work, lectures and charges have been top notch. There has been consistent good attendance at our meetings. In addition, we have had a good mix of presentations from charities and masonic education from our brothers.

It feels like we have been in the Lodge together almost every Thursday this year between our regular stated communications, degree practices and degrees, but it has been a fun and educational year. I want to give a special shout out to our Stewarts who have made sure we have been fed at each and every one of these meetings. Well done, Brothers!

I am hopeful that if I am Worshipful Master next year, I can continue to get this work done. I plan on finding opportunities for us to build some deeper relationships through family events and off-site work together either working on older brothers' or widow's homes/yards or by helping nonprofits fulfill their mission at their location. In the past, I know we helped our older brethren and as Masons, we need to continue this long tradition of rolling up our sleeves and working together to help those in need, especially a worthy brother mason, his widow and orphans

Fraternally,  
Brother Tom Torretta

# November 2022

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	3 STAT-ED COMM 6:30 PM	4	5
6	7 OES	8 Shrine Club 7:00 pm	9 District Instruction Middleburg No. 107 6:30 pm	10	11	12
13	14 OES	15 York Rite Chapter/Council 6:30 pm	16 RAIN-BOW 7:00 PM	17 STAT-ED COMM 6:30 PM	18 GM Official Visit — Putnam County Shrine Club 5:30 pm	19 Open Books Pine-land No. 86 9 am—noon
20	21	22 York Rite Commandery 6:30 pm	23 Dist. Assn. Hastings No. 183 6:30 pm	24 THANKS GIVING	25 Fried Chicken, Shrine Club	26
27	28	29	30			

## FROM THE SOUTH

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Worshipful Master, Jim Carrick, for allowing me to sit in the East to confer my first degree in Freemasonry. It was an honor and a great privilege to be allowed to have the opportunity to do this. I would also like to thank all who were in attendance and all who participated in the Degree as well as all those who took their time to practice and coach me and the others in the floor work, the wording, and the degree. In closing again a huge thank you to all and I am looking forward to what we will see in the future of Ashlar Lodge.

Fraternally Terrell W Jones, J.W.

## ONCE AND FUTURE FREEMASONRY

Current research suggests that a significant portion of young people designated as “millennials”, those between eighteen and twenty-five years of age, consider themselves more spiritual than religious with a common response to survey questions being “we have dumbed down what it means” to be religious. And a Pew Research Center report states that “Gen Nexters say people in their generation view becoming more spiritual as their most important goal in life.” This generation views the Deity’s wish for man as to be happy and to do good things. They also maintain closer contact with their parents than the previous two generations and feel removed from the political process. They are more interested in world and national affairs than their predecessors, and seek strong communal and social ties. They are more motivated toward learning with a marked percentage seeking education beyond high school. They are more inclusive than their parents or grandparents, and they find their heroes close and familiar.

This new generation possess fewer prejudices and biases than their forefathers and often look with disbelief on those who still profess such or act in such a manner. But this should be nothing new to Freemasons. Theodore Roosevelt wrote that he neither disclosed nor revealed any Masonic secret when he stated that the Fraternity gives men of all walks of life a common ground upon which all men are equal and have one common interest. He also noted that Freemasonry teaches not merely temperance, fortitude, prudence, temperance, justice, brother love, relief, and truth, it also denounces ignorance, superstition and bigotry. And R.W. Gilbert Weisman, W. Grand Orator of the Grand Lodge of Florida in the Grand Oration given in May 2015 states unequivocally that “you could also define tolerance as freedom from bigotry . . . It is morally correct to encourage people to take a stand against everyday bigotry, apathy, and ignorance. It has no place in our society, our Fraternity, our schools, our place of worship, or our individual neighborhoods . . . your children, and their children’s success depend on it. Success in today’s world—and tomorrow’s—depends on being able to understand, appreciate, and work with others of any race, color, or creed . . . treating others in the way that you would like to be treated.”

When asked to name a person they admire, this generation tends not to name past heroes, they list the names of teachers, mentors, people in their community that they respect, and family members with whom they have direct contact and who, to them, exemplify what it is to be a good person. What more fertile ground for growth could Freemasonry seek? The Fraternity offers spirituality without a denominational orientation and timeless guides to ethical decision making, upright action. It—and they—they perceive, is more inclusive than was their parents’ or grandparents’ generation. Above all, it offers the example of good men made better through Freemasonry, men they know and interrelate with on a regular basis.

Cliff Porter notes in *A Traditional Observance Lodge* that “men entering the fraternity of Freemasonry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century generally have much higher expectations of their lodge and fraternal experience than did their predecessors. They are remarkably ‘old school’ in their spiritual aspirations.” He notes further that these young men have at their fingertips a wealth of information about the institution and have arrived, prior to the submission of their petition, at the conclusion that the Fraternity is dedicated to and focused on truth-seeking, self-development, education, and, above all, their spiritual nature and development. A problem arises, however, when their expectations are not fulfilled. Frustration results and with it the concomitant loss of an individual who could have been a dedicated Mason. Gotthold Lessing in the eighteenth century noted the same attraction to the Fraternity, but he also noted the same frustration and, eventually, departure.

Freemasonry is, Andrew Hammer writes in *Observing the Craft*, “a philosophical society which demands of its members the highest standards in all areas of labor.” Tolerance of different opinions is paramount to the success of the Craft and should form the basis for all Masonic discourse. When a society fails to place sound value on the acquisition of knowledge from its many sources, it is on the path to self-destruction. Each man who asks to join the Fraternity comes for his own reasons, but most come seeking the opportunity to explore new ideas and find new ways of looking at the past and themselves. Freemasonry from its beginning has offered its members the freedom to determine their own destiny and reach their own understanding of the legends, allegories, and principles inculcated in the lodge. Freemasonry serves to better one’s mind (simply memorizing the catechisms and ritual indicates soundness of mind and a retentive memory) as surely as it serves to better oneself. Freemasonry requires more than insignificant improvements in a man’s approach to life and his analytical techniques. It requires constant improvement through reading and self-discipline (see Chapter VII Ritual, Experience and Meaning). The ultimate questions a Freemason must ask himself are “is this the best I can do? Is this the best I can be?” It is through proper decorum, reverence for the Craft, respect for one’s Brothers, excellence in ritual, and sound Masonic Education that Freemasonry will survive into time immemorial.

### Future Freemasonry

Freemasonry currently appears to be experiencing a downward trend in terms of membership numbers and, some suggest, the quality of the Brothers imitated as well as the experienced gained through membership. There about half as many members in Florida Lodges (the author’s Grand Lodge) in 2015 as there were in 1980. Lodges are struggling and Grand Lodges are retrenching and downsizing. But the reduction in numbers may not be a bad thing. It is quality for which Freemasonry strives, not quantity. There has been a great deal of “hand-wringing” and predictions of Freemasonry’s imminent demise. Many have questioned the prohibition against overt recruitment and others point a finger at what they consider the “distasteful” use of secrets, but as written in Proverbs 11:3, “a tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth them.”

The call is loud and clear, notes John Bizzack in *For the Good of the Order: Examining the Shifting Paradigm within Freemasonry*: “Freemasonry has been able to pass on its gift of fellowship and its central lessons from one generation to the next because it has held onto its core ideologies and each generation has adapted them to its own needs. . . To attract quality members, Freemasonry must provide a quality experience . . . it must stay true to its principles.” The twenty-first century and the generation of young men who refer to themselves as millennials with their spiritual and knowledge-seeking focus offer the fertile ground necessary to the strengthening of the Craft and through its core tenets and principles. But it requires quality to attract quality.

There is little doubt that the Internet has increased interest in Freemasonry. The Baby Boomers and their children tended not to be ‘joiners,’ and current generations seek quality in most of their doings rather than the quantitative aspect of being part of a large group. Yet they are searching for meaning in an ever more complex and diverse world in which there appears to be no “heroes” and no sound guides to action. They, as did their forefathers, desire freedom and the right to determine their own thoughts and destinies. They seek to better their minds as they seek to better their understanding of the world. They are more educated than previous generations yet they strive to improve themselves, but they are not always focused on material gain. They are, in many ways, very similar to the men who made the Fraternity great in previous centuries.

There is within the Craft a movement to return to what is commonly termed Tradition Observance. These Lodges focus on decorum to include dress and actions within the lodge; excellence in ritual work with the accompanying reverence for the lessons to be learned there; and the belief that they can become better than they are in both a temporal and spiritual sense. They seek a high level of unity with and understanding of the Deity which they perceive is not always available through organized religion as now practiced. And, finally, they seek knowledge. The development of the modern middle class was dependent upon the rise of higher education, but for many of those in the middle class, that education was financially beyond their reach. The Masonic Lodge provided that sought after education and it can again.

A Stated Communication in a Lodge of Freemasons should not function as does that of other social organizations and clubs. Yet too often Lodges have abandoned or forgotten through disuse what for centuries made them great and important. They have become good old boys’ clubs rather than centers for spiritual and educational advancement and renewal. The lessons of the Symbolic Lodges would easily fill the curriculum of an undergraduate degree as well as several advanced degrees. They are worthy of a lifetime of study and analysis. In the seventeenth century, the first Accepted Masons gathered to discuss the latest advances in architecture, geometry, mathematics, and other philosophical pursuits. This attracted ever more members and provided the Lodges and the world with new insights into the human condition as it contributed to the overall advancement of knowledge. These Accepted Masons made themselves better men through their focused pursuit of enlightenment and, influenced by the concept of the universality of man, they contributed directly to our modern democratic and educational systems. And they noted the universal principle laid down in *The Book of Constitutions* that exclusion based on race or religion is not Masonic.

Freemasonry is not nor has it ever been a mainly social institution. It has achieved its objective by removing from the Lodge considerations of national allegiance, partisan politics, and sectarianism. Freemasonry cannot be all things to all people. It is not a religion nor a political party. It was not fashioned to accommodate all ideas or all people. It was not created in man’s image, no matter how much man has tried to change that. It is a privilege to be “Made a Mason” and so it should be treated. The nature of man is that he values least that which is easiest to obtain and comes at the lowest cost, both in money, energy, and time. He values most those things that are difficult to obtain and which few people possess such as a high status profession—a physician—or a high rank in the military. He further values those things which markedly higher price tags, otherwise luxury automobiles would not sell as well as they do. And finally, he values most that which requires his skill to obtain. Freemasonry should not be “what you get out of it,” it should require something of you to be of value.

The key word in Freemasonry should be “excellence” which comes from the Latin for “to rise out from,” “to rise up,” or “to rise above.” It does this by initiating only those who seek its wisdom and who meet the full test of investigation and the ballot—or it should. In the ancient operative lodges, not all who sought admission were accepted and the records clearly indicate that only a small number were ever advanced beyond the most basic level. Freemasonry was not then nor should it be now, a product to be bought and sold. In 1722 Preston warned that “the privileges of Masonry have long been prostituted for unworthy considerations.” The same can be written almost three hundred years later, and it is this ready availability, this lack of “specialness,” this open door policy, that many suggest has contributed to the reduction in the Fraternity’s reputation and the accompanying loss of good men seeking its wisdom.

Freemasonry should not be for the “faint of heart” or the over-committed. It is not a quick way to enlightenment or fulfillment. Like anything worth having, it demands hard work, dedication, focus, and a significant commitment of time. The essence of Freemasonry is that it must be sought by those willing to meet its demands. The new man coming into the Craft must be willing to give as much as he receives, but he must have sound guidance, solid education, and strong moral leadership. While the word is much overused in modern education, Freemasonry should be a truly **transformative** experience, but as with any craftsman, just because you possess the basic skills doesn’t make you a master of the trade.

All Lodges operate under the laws, rules, and regulations of their Grand Lodge, but every Lodge can and should uphold the highest standards of Freemasonry. A quick review of photos of Lodge activities from the last century and before indicate that, based upon the clothing worn, the Brothers in attendance took their Craft far more seriously than do many modern Masons. The intent of Blue Lodge Freemasonry is not to be a jolly club, there are other organizations that fulfill that need. Blue Lodges should be dedicated to the meaning of things philosophical and empirical. They should guard well the gate to the Temple. Potential initiates should meet with well-informed Brothers as well as Lodge officers to discuss their interest in the Fraternity and their reason for “knocking at the door.” The investigation should not be pro forma, and the background check should be extensive. Candidates should be asked difficult and pointed questions, and it should be understood that Freemasonry is not something one can inherit—it should not “grandfather” its members.

Too often Freemasonry has penalized a brother for taking the necessary time to learn our valuable lessons and, by limiting attendance at most functions to Master Masons only, has enforced the too rapid advancement of unprepared individuals as well as suggested to the less informed that they are not actually welcome within the Lodge. This does not mean that procrastination is acceptable, time is a factor in Freemasonry as it is in real life. Deadlines are deadlines, and meeting them indicates the ability of the initiate as well as his willingness to confirm to the Fraternity’s rules and regulations. But it is not unreasonable to allow a new Brother to participate fully in Lodge

activities while he “learns his lessons” and proves himself ready for further advancement. Our ancient operative brothers gave a young man seven years or more to learn the “mysteries” of the craft and, as noted, all did not “make it.” Those who did, however, demonstrated more than proficiency in their work when they produced their apprentice piece and met the judgment of the Masters.

Finally, Freemasonry should not be done “on the cheap.” It is not a public service. All of us find the money to do those things that we consider important personally and professionally, be it tickets to a sporting event or concert, or the price of a fine meal at a good restaurant. None of our members NEED to be a Mason; they are here of their own free will and accord. Historically, guild dues were set high with reports in England of dues equaling as much as a month’s wages for craftsman and more for a master. Historically, too, members of the operative guilds dressed in livery or distinctive clothing. Modern Masons should consider the example of their forefathers and dress in accordance with their respect for the Craft and their evaluation of its worth. And, as in the craft guilds, advancement should be based on merit not seniority. If an officer, elected or appointed, fails to fulfill his obligation and his duties to the Lodge, he should remove himself from the line. It is the nature of Freemasonry that he who would be first should first be last and the power vested in the Master enables him to address complacency.

Freemasonry gives no man the answers. It provides him with the working tools necessary to the attainment of further light (ongoing light). It presents him with a mirror. The author well remembers a mirror in a barracks at an Army Officer Candidates School. On top of the full-length mirror were the words ‘IS THIS THE BEST YOU CAN BE?’ Every Masonic Lodge might consider installing such a mirror in its anteroom.

**LODGE OFFICERS 2022**

<b>Worshipful Master</b>	<b>James Carrick</b>	<b>904-501-4348</b>
Senior Warden	Thomas Torretta	602-881-3206
Junior Warden	Terrell Jones	904-669-5249
Secretary	Troy Usina	904-451-5283
Treasurer	Oscar Patterson III	904-955-9175
Senior Deacon	George Maulsby	703-956-0228
Junior Deacon	Mark Williams	904-669-9694
Chaplain	Robert Harry, Jr.	904-806-1255

**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