

IN THIS EDITION...

CHARITABLE OUTREACH PROGRAMS
PAGE 2

MASONIC LIFE
PAGES 3 - 6

FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND SECRETARY & GRAND TREASURER
PAGE 7

DISTRICT NEWS & EVENTS
PAGES 8

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!
SEND IN YOUR PHOTOS, NEWS AND EVENTS TO PUBLISH IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE MESSENGER!
DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 1ST**

CHARITABLE ACTION PROGRAMS

BY BOBBY PITTS, MWGM

Brethren, as we enter a new year, I feel inspired and compelled to encourage an atmosphere of charity to assist our retired or disabled brothers, widows and needy children in any way possible.

The Masonic Order bears a rich history as a force for goodness and fraternity. It is my wish that our respective communities view our Lodges and respective members as an organization having a positive impact on their local district and its citizens. That is why I am requesting that each Lodge implement a plan to perform a charitable action(s) for our retired masons and their respective widows or needy children. The type of charitable action is at the discretion of each individual Lodge.

Therefore, I would request that all Lodges submit to my office, on a quarterly basis, a written report that outlines and clearly identifies the total scope of its charitable act(s), with a minimum of one (1) act per quarter, beginning immediately.

Your Lodge's added generosity equates to a minimum of 1,140 acts of charity or kindness by all Lodges across the state over a period of one year. Your reports should be cumulative, resulting in each quarter's report containing the actions of the previous quarter.

Please do not view this request as being cumbersome, but rather as a desire to have each of our communities view Masonry as an organization of qualified men they would be proud to join. I realize that many Lodges already have a successful community outreach program in place, but we can do more. I hope you will choose to join me in doing so.

In closing, let me reiterate, this program will result in a minimum of 286 Lodges performing a minimum of 4 charitable acts per year, equaling a total of 1,144 acts of benevolence by Master Masons throughout the State of Alabama, a number that shows great compassion and caring. This is a program that we can all view with pride.

NEW MASONIC TAGS ARE NOW AVAILABLE!!!
Show your Masonic pride and purchase a tag at your next renewal date.



GRAND LODGE OF F. & A. M. OF ALABAMA
P.O. Box 1070
MILLBROOK, AL 36054
CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

GRAND LODGE OF ALABAMA CHARITABLE OUTREACH PROGRAMS

The Grand Lodge offers a number of Charitable Programs designed to provide financial assistance for Lodges and persons who apply and meet the qualifications as outlined by the requirements of the specific program. A basic description of the Programs available this year, is provided below. **Some programs have specific requirements that must be met for the applicants to be considered.** This information along with the all forms necessary to apply for these programs, can be found on the Grand Lodge website "Charitable Outreach Programs" page at www.alafreemasonry.org/committees/coprog/

MASONIC SCHOLARSHIP

The purpose for the Alabama Masonic Scholarship Program is to provide financial assistance to university, college, or technical school students. Preference will be given, but not limited, to applicants who have a father, stepfather, brother, uncle, grandfather, or step-grandfather who is, or was at the time of his death, a Master Mason in good standing in an Alabama Masonic Lodge.

Awards scholarships to eligible applicants for up to \$1000. The same individual cannot receive this grant in conjunction with Scholarship Matching Fund plan.

SCHOLARSHIP MATCHING FUND PLAN

The purpose for this part of the Charitable Outreach Program is to provide supplemental financial assistance to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge to encourage them to award a scholarship to a deserving student in their community. Local Lodges can apply for up to \$500 in matching funds on a first-come first-funded basis. Grants will not be approved to anyone receiving a COC Scholarship that year.

Matching Scholarship grants to a lodge will be for up to maximum of \$1,000 for the year. The maximum amount of money paid out per application cannot exceed \$500 and is subject to the availability of funds.

MATCHING RELIEF FUND

The purpose for the Matching Relief Funds Plan is to provide supplemental financial support to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge who undertakes to render monetary assistance to worthy, specifically named individuals, families, or group of people who reside within the jurisdiction of the Lodge submitting an application.

Lodge may make more than one application for Matching Relief Funds but cannot receive more than \$1,000 from this plan each Masonic year

YOUTH SPORTS MATCHING SPONSORSHIP PLAN

The purpose for the Youth Sports Matching Sponsorship Plan is to provide supplemental financial assistance to Lodges under the jurisdiction of this Grand Lodge to encourage them to support community youth programs such as baseball, soccer, football, etc. Grants can be used for sponsorship of the team, team tournaments, or playoffs and for sponsor's signs.

Local Lodges can apply for one half of the sponsorship and tournament fee not to exceed \$500 in matching funds on a first-come, first-funded basis. Lodges can apply for one grant per year subject to the availability of funds.

GRAND MASTER'S EMERGENCY FUND

The Emergency Fund is expended under the direction of the Grand Master for the relief of distressed worthy Master Masons, their wives, widows, children and other dependent relatives who reside in their households. The Mason upon whose membership the claim is based **must** be or have been at the time of death and for four years prior thereto, a member in good standing in a subordinate Lodge of the Grand Lodge.

Lodge must submit, as their portion of the grant, a check for one third of the amount requested from the Grand Lodge but not more than \$250. The Grand Master may contribute up to three times the amount provided by the Lodge but not more than \$750.

SOCIAL SERVICES

The purpose of this plan is to assist our aging members and/or their dependents. It will allow local Lodges to identify and apply for grant (non-matching) funds to assist in providing devices or structures to allow beneficiaries to remain in their homes. This plan also assists our aging members and/or their dependents with monetary needs such as medical, prescription, utility bills, or other needs that have placed our members in financial straits.

Grant funds will be written for the amount requested by the Lodge but not exceeding \$1,500 total per Lodge on a first-come, first-funded basis. No one individual may receive Grants totaling more than \$1,500 maximum from the Social Services Plan per Grand Lodge year.

WHEN a man desires to become a member of the Masonic Fraternity he signs a petition for the degrees stating that he freely and voluntarily offers himself for the mysteries of Freemasonry. After the Lodge receives the petition and the proper procedures have been followed, the hour for balloting arrives and the Master announces that the Lodge is about to ballot on the petition of Mr. John Jones to receive the mysteries of Freemasonry. The ballot being favorable, due record is made that Mr. Jones was elected to receive the mysteries of Freemasonry. On the eve of initiation before any move may be made toward entering the Lodge, the candidate must again assert that he is offering himself for the mysteries of Freemasonry.

Through each of the degrees, either in thoughts expressed or implied, the idea of mystery is conveyed to the candidate.

Scholars, historians, authorities dispute the age of Freemasonry. At times the disagreement is caused by a lack of understanding of terminology. Freemasonry is over 250 years old if by that term is meant that society which created the first Grand Lodge. If Freemasonry's earliest document, the Regius Manuscript is correctly dated, Freemasonry is nearly 600 years old. If belief in the early date mentioned in that manuscript is sustainable and Freemasons met in the City of York A.D. 926, then Freemasonry is more than 1,000 years old. If by Freemasonry is meant an organization which employs symbols and religious practices which come from the dawn of civilization, then Freemasonry is as old as civilization itself.

Whatever age we may assume Freemasonry has attained, many generations of human life are represented. In all phases of human endeavor, social, political, civic, and in the fields of science, art, and culture vast changes have taken place. Our mode of life has transformed from bare existence to luxurious living; transportation from foot to ox-cart to horse to steam to air; communication from tom-tom to electronics; kingdoms have waxed and waned; the entire world has become much different.

Through all these changes Freemasonry has retained the same ideals, taught the same principles and maintained the Ancient Landmarks of the Fraternity. Through all these ages and changes, to each one who has entered the portals of Freemasonry, the hint of mystery, the desire to know what Freemasonry really is, has ever been present.

The principles and beliefs of the Fraternity, many of the practices, the esoteric work, is published for any to read who care to do so.

But there is an undefinable something more, something which we can not explain. A Brother when asked to explain Freemasonry replied, "I know what it is until you ask, but when you ask I cannot explain." Freemasonry is an emotion deep within us, a mystery which we propose to call the Soul of Freemasonry.

In the unabridged dictionary there are several definitions of soul, four of which we find applicable to use in defining Freemasonry.

1. Soul: A person who leads or inspires.

How true this is of the Fraternity as well as of individual Masons. All the good works of the Fraternity must be done - not as an organization - but by Masons as individuals, yet it has been the result of the associations formed within the confines of the Lodge room, the result of inspiration gained from the teachings of Freemasonry, that these beneficial works came to fruition.

Consider the role that Freemasonry has assumed through its votaries in framing the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of these United States and many other important landmarks in our country's history. Consider the part that Freemasonry has played, through its members, in every forward movement of education, civic associations and government on every level. Someone has said that every movement for good in every field has had as its prime movers or most ardent supporters those who were members of the Fraternity. Surely, a part of the mystery, a part of the Soul of Freemasonry is its capacity to inspire and to provide leadership.

2. Soul: The necessary or central part of anything, that part which gives vigor and character.

Consideration of this definition of soul immediately brings to mind the ritual and the laws of Freemasonry as the central and necessary parts of our system which impart vigor and give character when properly used and consciously interpreted.

No composition is more beautiful, more majestic and more satisfying to the peace of mind than our ritual. We love it, we never tire of hearing it, and each hearing brings new meaning to us in each of its words and phrases. Only the Holy Scriptures, divinely inspired excel the ritual in majesty, inspiration and beauty.

The code of Masonic Law, with the Ancient Charges and Constitutions, the basis

of all Masonic Laws, the codes of all Grand Jurisdictions give character to Freemasonry.

Each Jurisdiction has its own code or set of laws, yet each lives in harmony with all others. Annually, or oftener, there is an exchange of new laws, a revision of old laws, and an interchange of the activities of each. We need no special dispensation, no passport or visa to visit in sister Jurisdictions, only to be able to prove that we are Brothers. Each Jurisdiction is a law unto itself, the rituals may differ, but we enjoy fellowship one with the other and experience that emotion deep within us which tells us we are Brothers.

H.L. Haywood in one of his articles, commenting on this exchange of ideas between Jurisdictions, gives birth to the idea of nations and religious denominations using a similar system of exchange of ideas and practices. Each becoming more strong, more an entity in itself yet through a free exchange of ideas, laws and freedom, all working harmoniously together. Perhaps here is a field not yet explored that Freemasons could profitably study and promote for the good and eventual benefit of all mankind. Freemasonry does have those qualities which impart vigor and character.

3. Soul: The essential part of a person's identity, that part of a man's nature where feeling, ideals and morals center.

Again it is apparent that in our ritual and our laws the ideals and morals of Freemasonry are set forth and described, but it is in the individual Brother that the feelings, ideals and morals center. The Brother who is a Mason in the purest sense of the term, is the center of, and the living Soul of Freemasonry. Each of us has experienced that special, not to be described thrill, that good feeling which comes to us in every Masonic fellowship, with every handclasp and renewal of acquaintance.

We usually think of a soul as something alive, living, immortal. It is my belief that the mystery, the Soul of Freemasonry is constituted of some part of the living immortal soul of every inspired, devoted Brother who has been Freemasonry's progenitors. Those who during their lives left such an imprint on the minds of their associates that a part of their very selves lives with us still. This thought can be best expressed by a personal incident.

In company with my daughter we visited Abraham Lincoln's home in Springfield, Illinois. We toured the rooms, we viewed the various items on display, we read the placards all in

[SEE 'SOUL OF FREEMASONRY' ON PAGE 6](#)

STAND! BE AN EXAMPLE

BY VAN KEVIN TIDWELL, SGW

Back in the fall of last year, on September 17th, in Montgomery, AL, I attended the memorial service of Brother Spence Steward, PGT. At the memorial service the Air Force performed a Military Service, followed by a Masonic Rite Service. I remember the military soldiers being dressed to perfection, as always. Their shoes spotless, their pants with perfect lines and peats, their excellent posture. I saw pride, perfection, respect and honor. As they approached the front of the audience, they carried a folded American Flag. When they got in position, they unfold the flag carefully and respectfully. Once unfolded, they proceeded to refold the flag. Each fold they ran their hands down, which adorn white gloves, carefully, willfully, purposely, among each fold. Taking their time to do it right, do it with honor, do it with respect. Once completed, they presented it to Brother Steward's widow, Ms. Jeanne. I was in awe during the entire service. I felt pride for the family, respect to Brother Steward and honor to the Flag of our Country.

Back this past year, an individual professional football player decided to disrespect the Flag, by choosing to sit during the National Anthem of the United States. He was doing this as a platform for attention to what he perceived as inequality among Americans. He, among others, demonstrated ignorance and a lack of respect for not only the Flag, but the current soldiers and previous soldiers that sacrificed their lives, to afford each of us to become what we are today, Americans.

There are two events that I spoke on above, one of respect and one of disrespect. Everything that I have came at a cost. That cost was a sacrifice of soldiers who allowed me the opportunity to be an American. The sacrifice that some soldiers and families bare to this day and the soldiers that bared it all, death, to allow us to be Americans. I do understand that what I have today was not earned by myself, but rather allowed to be earned by myself. I recently attend the North American Grand Masters Conference in Omaha, Nebraska in February. There were approximately 58 Grand Masters from North America in attendance. Before the meeting began, they played the National Anthem of our Country. Everyone in that room stood up, placed their hand properly over their breast and gave the American Flag the attention and respect that it is due. Every lodge that I have ever attended does the same. I know that the majority of Americans feel the same as I do, but it harps and offends me when some individuals, minority, try to take a short cut

SEE 'STAND!' ON PAGE 8

THE SQUARE AS A SYMBOL OF VIRTUE

BY GEORGE J. MARSHALL, JR., PM, SOLAR LODGE #914

One of the beauties of working with the properties of the many symbols found in Craft Freemasonry and the York and Scottish Rites is that the interpretation and import of these devices and instruments is largely a subjective matter, dependent upon the ability and effort utilized to arrive at such interpretations. Thus, the symbolic interpretation of any part of Freemasonry by various members may be expected to be different in what is discovered therein, but nonetheless each is meaningful and beautiful in its own right.

We are all aware that the universally recognized symbol of Freemasonry is the Square and Compasses. In this brief article, I intend to separate the Square from the Compasses and study it alone, the better to grasp an additional meaning, I will focus especially on its symbolism as it pertains to the concept of virtue. We recall, in the presentation of the working tools of Fellowcraft, that we are to square our actions by the "Square of Virtue." Why should this builder's implement symbolize such an abstract yet important personal trait?

It may help to begin with a definition of what "virtue" is. The Free Online Dictionary has several. The ones I would have us consider are: (1) Moral excellence and righteousness; goodness and (2) An example or kind of moral excellence. Historically, a simple device known as a try-square, unmarked and with legs of equal length, was used by operative masons for testing the accuracy of right angles, and the precision with which stones were cut. Thus, it naturally became an emblem of accuracy, integrity and uprightness. Among Freemasons, then, the square was adopted as a symbol of

morality, of the basic rightness which must be the test of every act and the foundation of character and society. As the stones used in erection of a temporal building must fit

with exactness, so our thoughts and actions erect our personal structure of Character, that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens", which must be constantly tested by some standard of moral excellence (or virtue) of which the square is a fitting symbol.

Bro. George Washington once said that morality cannot be lasting without religion. In one of the earliest catechisms of the Craft, dated 1725, the question was asked: "How many make a Lodge?" The answer was specific and unambiguous: "God and the Square, with five or seven right and perfect Masons." Just as in our Lodges--God and the Square, Religion and Morality, must be present in every Brother as our rule and guide, or we fail of being just and upright Masons. In all lands, in all true Masonic rites and systems, the Square is a striking symbol of righteousness, and is applied in the light of our faith in God. Once men come to think that morality and virtue are human inventions or merely philosophical abstracts, and not a part of the order

of the world, then moral law and virtuous conduct will lose both their meaning and their influence. Not only nations, but whole civilizations have perished in the past, for lack of righteousness. History speaks plainly on this matter, and we must not disregard it.

It is fitting to close this discussion of the Square with th[is] poem penned by an unknown Masonic poet.*

*See inset for poem

*It matters not whate'er your lot
or what your task may be,
One duty there remains for you,
one duty stands for me.
Be you a doctor skilled and wise,
or do your work for wage,
A laborer upon the street,
an artist on the stage;
One glory still awaits for you,
one honor that is fair,
To have men say as you pass by:
"That Fellow's on the Square."*

*Ah, here's a phrase that stands for much,
'tis good old English, too;
It means that men have confidence
in everything you do.
It means that what you have you've earned,
and that you've done your best,
And when you go to sleep at night,
untroubled you may rest.
It means that conscience is your guide,
and honor is your care;
There is no greater praise than this:
"That Fellow's on the Square."
And when I die I would not wish
a lengthy epitaph;
I do not want a headstone large,
carved with fulsome chaff.
Pick out no single deed of mine,
if such a deed there be,
To 'grave upon my monument,
for those who come to see.
Just this one phrase of all I choose,
to show my life was fair:
"Here sleepeth now a Fellow
who was always on the Square."*

-Unknown

DEFINING FREEMASONRY

TRADITION BECOMES PRACTICAL

BY: EUGENE S. HOPP, M.P.S.

Setting aside all discussion of Ancient Landmarks and uniformity of ritual the question still remains: Are physical requirements essential to Freemasonry? To answer that question requires some thought as to what is Freemasonry? Why and how did it become speculative or philosophical from an operative origin and what has enabled it to survive?

To answer the question what is Freemasonry, we must believe that it is a fraternal Society that performs a function without which man cannot survive, without which he cannot ever hope to live in peace with his neighbor. Freemasonry endeavors to bring about a reformation in each individual human being. It differs from the many religions which have endeavored to reform man by seeking only to provide each of us with a set of standards which have stood the test of time from the beginning of history.

Freemasonry endeavors to bring about a reformation in each individual human being

The ethical philosophy of Freemasonry has been the same as the ethical teachings of small groups in every civilization but with this difference - in Freemasonry it is imparted in a matchless symbolism which is available to each and every one of us, which teaches more and more as we reflect upon it more and more.

Freemasonry is based on sound philosophical considerations and a magnificent knowledge of the fundamental characteristics of human nature. These things teach us that the only way the world will ever be better, the only way our country, our city, our neighborhood can be improved, is for each of us to strive for self-improvement. For this effort Freemasonry provides us with the finest set of moral and ethical standards which the mind of man has been able to conceive.

We have been advised by fine Masonic historians that the transition from operative to speculative Freemasonry took place for social and economic reasons. I disagree. Last summer I had the privilege of spending two months at Oxford University lecturing and doing some work in 17th century English history. With the assistance of material from the Bodleian Library,

one of the finest in the world, and manuscripts from some of the College libraries and many visits to the Ashmolean museum, I became convinced that the earliest speculatives were attracted to Masonry out of curiosity. The 17th Century was a period of revival of interest in ethical philosophy and a period of great thought on the nature of man. There were the neo-Platonists at Cambridge who stated that God had left free the human will, that the soul of man can resist the bodies' impulses. There was Richard Hooker (1554-1600) who allowed due importance to the human faculties of reason and to the moral sense but never lost sight of the orientation of man towards God. There were Kepler (1571-1630), Galileo (1564-1642) and Gilbert (1544-1603).

It was Kepler who was so influenced by Pythagorean mysticism that he was convinced God had created the Universe in accordance with certain simple mathematical harmonies. To the list could be added Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes and many others.

It is with the backdrop of this tremendous revival in the study of man and his ethical and moral relationships that we must view the admission of philosophers, speculatives to the operative Craft. On the 16th of October 1646 Elias Ashmole, antiquarian, was received into a Masonic Lodge at Warrington, Lancashire, together with his Roundhead friend and cousin, Henry Manwaring of Carincham, Cheshire. Ashmole's diary gives the time of the event as 4:30 p.m. notes the name of the Lodge's Warden, and the names of six other Masons 'then of the Lodge.' Ashmole's motives for joining were undoubtedly similar to those of the antiquary William Stukeley (1687-1765) who states in his autobiography that, in 1720, 'his curiosity led him to be initiated into the mysteries of Masonry, suspecting it to be the remains of the mysteries of the ancients.' It is conceivable that, after acquiring by the study of astrology a taste for the exploration of ancient lore and

symbolism, Ashmole not only desired to gain knowledge of such 'Pythagorean' teachings as the Lodges claimed to preserve, but that he was at this particular juncture of his life, also looking for the fellowship of brethren who, if not equally learned, would share his respect for the old and mysterious. Ashmole's note of his Masonic initiation is the earliest known record of speculative Freemasonry in an English Lodge. As has been pointed out by Josten, the note in the diary evidences an advanced stage rather than the beginning of the evolution by which the Craft Lodges were gradually transformed into esoteric societies of gentlemen and members of all professions and trades; for recent research has shown that not only Ashmole and Colonel Henry Manwaring, but all of the seven other Freemasons, whose names are given, were in no way connected with operative Freemasonry.

This brings us to the question of what has enabled Freemasonry to survive the centuries when countless other fraternal and scholarly societies have not. How has Freemasonry survived the anti-Masonry of the 18th century, the 19th century, with its Morgan incident and even the events of the 20th century?

Certainly the organization of Lodges and Grand Lodges, and the fundamental nature of the teachings have played a part. But I cannot help but believe that the most important reason is the very manner in which the great lessons are taught. What magnificent symbolism imparts the spirit of brotherhood in a certain handclasp. What better way to present the means of achieving and the importance of peace and harmony in a Lodge, than to have the candidate so prepared that these lessons are indelibly inscribed on his mind. At the same time he learns a magnificent lesson in charity. There are a great many other lessons imparted in symbolism, the duty of man to man, man to neighbor, man to God, to family and so on and on.

It is fascinating to discover that throughout all the changing periods of history for the last 2,500 years, the same basic valuations have persisted, the same conviction of the superiority of the soul over the body, of the unseen over the seen....

So it is with Freemasonry. We have a practical, realistic means of imparting the greatest of lessons but to, impress them upon the mind requires some physical application and necessitates certain physical qualifications that these lessons may be imparted in an unforgettable manner.

Reprinted with permission from the Philalethes Society; www.freemasonry.org

THE MASONIC MESSENGER

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE & ACCEPTED MASONS OF ALABAMA

Published Semi-Annually at Millbrook, Alabama

To stay up to date on all the Grand Lodge and District news, please send all changes of address and membership status to your Lodge Secretary and become an E-M@son, just visit: www.alafreemasonry.org/emasons



GRAND LODGE TRIAL COMMISSION BY BRO. LANE WEATHERBEE, PGM

Brethren, due to recent developments, your Trial Commission, with the permission of our Most Worshipful Grand Master, has adopted a new policy. It seems that the Grand Lodge of Alabama has been used to resolve problems created and involving other Masonic-related bodies. According to the Masonic Code of Alabama, the Trial Commission is available to any lodge at no cost to the lodge. This is a service offered by our Grand Lodge to provide a fair, impartial trial for any Mason accused of unMasonic Conduct.

Some members of these organizations have deemed it politically or financially expedient to let a Trial Commission panel solve the organization's problems. The financial picture comes into play when the organization's attorneys charge for their services. On today's Trial Commission, we have four outstanding attorneys who have repeatedly proven themselves as experts in the fields of prosecution and at no charge to the Grand Lodge. The only compensation they receive is for mileage and one day's per diem, as set forth in the code.

I know of several instances when they have spent a great deal of time preparing their cases so that the lodge and the defendant would have the best professional representation possible. I might add that I have asked all members of the Trial Commission to attend a training session at the Grand Lodge headquarters in March. At this writing, I have not received a reply from all of them, but the majority of the members seem excited over this first-time venture. Our attorneys will be conducting sessions concerning prosecution and defense, and I will be handling the section on the chairman's duties. None of the Trial Commissioners will receive per diem for this meeting.

To avoid future situations in which Masonic-related organizations may ask the Trial Commission to solve its problems, it was our decision to adopt a policy, possible to be followed by legislative changes at the next Grand Lodge session.

MW Grand Lodge of Alabama F&AM Trial Commission Policy Concerning Accepting Cases From Masonic-Related Bodies

With the permission of Most Worshipful Grand Master Bobby Pitts, the Trial Commission of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons of Alabama does hereby

adopt the following policy:

There shall be no Masonic trial conducted by a trial panel of the above-mentioned Trial Commission when the allegations of unMasonic conduct originate in, or in any way are related to incidents or situations in any Masonic-related organization, hereinafter referred to as organization(s). The Trial Commission may accept cases only when the organization has exhausted all of its available resources, as set forth in its codes, edicts and/or bylaws. For example, the Shrine's Article 30, the Scottish Rite's Tribunal and the Eastern Star's, York Rite's and Grotto's trial procedures.

In the event of an unusual situation in which there is a question as to the connection of

the allegations of unMasonic conduct within the organization, a representative of that organization shall submit a request for a ruling to the Grand Secretary who will forward it to the Grand Master and the Trial Commission Chairman. The Grand Master shall confer with the Trial Commission Chairman and reach a decision. That decision shall be forwarded to the organization and shall be final.

If, however, the unMasonic conduct should result in a Mason's conviction of a crime involving moral turpitude, then the provisions for expulsion, as stated in Edict 30.8 of the Alabama Masonic Code, shall be invoked, regardless of the relationship or connection with an organization.

SOUL OF FREEMASONRY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

accepted tourist fashion. As we were leaving the last room a placard on the wall read that this was the spot where Mr. Lincoln stood as he was notified of his nomination for the Presidency of the United States. Wishing my daughter to be aware of the historical significance of the place in which we stood I read the placard and told her that here was where history was made. Something in the import of that statement, something in the feeling of the atmosphere filled me with emotion, my voice broke and my daughter was constrained to ask, "Daddy what's the matter?" Now I do not believe in spiritualism or ghosts but I do believe that at that moment, somehow, somehow I was moved by the immortal soul of Lincoln. I believe that Freemasons of this day are moved by the immortal souls of Washington, Franklin, Parvin, Ray V. Denslow, Carl H. Claudy and other Masonic stalwarts who labored long and faithfully in the quarries of Freemasonry.

4. Soul: That spiritual and immortal part in man which distinguishes him from beasts.

Freemasonry though not a religion is definitely and distinctively religious, the entire philosophy, all its teachings are predicated upon the existence of God, a God in whom we can place our trust, and from whom strength and wisdom flow in response to our prayers. This definite belief in the Supreme Being distinguishes Freemasonry from other purely social orders. This is the quality which has preserved the identity of Freemasonry through generations although other organizations have started, flourished for a time but because they had no soul, have perished.

The spiritual in Freemasonry signifies

our belief in the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man and in the Immortality of the Soul. As an organization we stress more particularly the building of a noble character and moral life yet in every portion of the work we urge a study of and imply a need for the spiritual awareness.

These teachings are most evident in the drama of the Master Mason degree. This is the culmination, the acme of Masonic teaching. Here is set forth the fundamental principles by which man should live with fellowman. Here is the most solemn moment in the life of every candidate in Freemasonry, that moment when he is escorted to the altar and informed that he is to pray alone. Do we always lend to this moment of the degree the dignity and reverence which we should? The drama symbolizes to those of us who are of the Christian faith the crux of the Christian teaching, the promise that if we live according to the Master's precepts we, too, will one day be raised from a dead level to a living perpendicular and Immortal Life. For Brethren of other faiths it dramatically represents their beliefs according to the prophets of old.

Whatever our personal belief, however lax we may be in personal devotions, it seems inconceivable that any Freemason would want to be guilty of irreverence or blasphemy, but if we do not portray this drama with the dignity, the reverence and the majesty it deserves, we are, in a very real sense guilty of these sins.

Freemasonry does have that Spiritual and immortal quality which distinguishes man from beast. It is this - the Soul of Freemasonry - which has enabled our Fraternity to live and serve these 250, 600, 1000 years.

Reprinted with permission from the Philalethes Society; www.freemasonry.org

**"Taking Care of Our Own"
Masonic Social Services Program**
Financial assistance is available to our Brethren and Widows who are in need!!! Contact the Grand Lodge for more information or go online to: alafreemasonry.org/committees/coprog



FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND SECRETARY

BY TEDDY GROGAN, PGM

Brethren, first I want to give you an update on the new Grand View web based database that we are implementing. By the time you read this, we should be ready for all the Lodges to come on board. The Lodge secretaries that were our test group have been more than pleased with the database. They feel that when fully implemented that it will make the secretary's job a lot easier.

I want to take this opportunity to remind you of the Internal Revenue Service's (IRS) requirement that each lodge file Form 990-N or e-Postcard. Any lodge failing to file for three consecutive years will lose its tax exempt status. Filing electronically is easy. You will need your EIN number. If you do not know what it is, you can contact us here at Grand Lodge. We have the number for each lodge in the state. Do not get your own.

To file, go to the IRS web-site. Click on "Filing". Then click on "Charities & Non-Profits". Click on "e-file for Charities and Non-Profits". Find and click on "e-Postcard (Form 990-N)". We also have a link on the Secretaries page on the Grand Lodge web-site. If you do not have a password, you can register as a new user. Once there, you will only need to answer a couple of questions and you will be finished.

You have four and a half months from the end of the fiscal year to file this report. Our fiscal year ends September 30th, so you have until February 15th of the next year to file. There

is no penalty for filing late. However, if you lose your tax exempt status, the fee for getting it back is \$400.00 if your net assets are less than \$250,000 which includes your building. If your net assets are more than \$250,000, the fee is \$850.00. We have lodges in the state that have faced this situation, so please keep your e-Postcard current.

The second thing I want to remind you about is it will soon be time for your lodge's Annual Communication. The Masonic Code states that officers will be elected at the regular communication immediately preceding June 24, and be installed as soon as practicable after the election, but in no case longer than 45 days after the election. Also at this communication, you will vote on several proposed Constitution changes. We will send the proposed changes to you sometime around the end of April. Each lodge must file all annual reports with Grand Lodge no later than August 14. A complete list of the reports may be found in Article 6-Section 21 of the Constitution and report dates in Edict 8.13 of the Alabama Masonic Code. There are five things we will need:

- 1) Your Master and Secretary (short form).
- 2) Lodge officers (long form).
- 3) Your vote on the proposed changes to the Constitution.
- 4) The Annual Report.
- 5) Grand Lodge dues. Please remember to send these reports in on time.

FROM THE DESK OF THE GRAND TREASURER

BY RON ANDRESS, PGM

Brethren, we are fast approaching the time for our Annual Communication and I want to bring to your attention an item that was proposed at Grand Lodge, which you will be voting on.

Grand Secretary, Teddy Grogan, proposed a change to Article VI, Section 21 of the Constitution. Currently, three dollars (\$3.00) of the eight dollars (\$8.00) of our per capita tax goes to the charitable side of the Grand Lodge and five dollars goes to the fraternal side. With the proposed change, ten cents (\$0.10) goes to the Emergency Relief Fund and seven dollars and ninety cents (\$7.90) goes to the Grand Lodge.

The amount made by the Grand Lodge endowment and the current dues is not enough to fund Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge Charitable Endowment is making more than enough to cover the added expense of moving the two dollars and ninety cents (\$2.90) to the Grand Lodge. The Charitable Endowment increased by over five hundred thousand dollars last year. There is no danger to our charities.

If you decide to approve this change we will not have to ask for a dues increase. Increasing your dues is not something that we want to do and will avoid doing that for as long as possible.

Brethren, I ask that you continue to pray for our country, our leaders, our troops and for each other. I pray for traveling grace for each of you and comfort for those in need.

SHIFTING FOCUS: IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF OUR FRATERNITY

BY BRO. R. W. HICKMAN, SECRETARY, ATHENS LODGE № 16

As masons, we are taught many lessons including the principles of integrity, kindness, honesty and fairness.

Despite this foundation of high values and the lessons contained in our degrees, many consider our fraternity to have negatively evolved and become nothing more than a social group of

men who do not represent our founding father's principles and values. We must therefore take steps to reemphasize the importance of the principles on which masonry was founded and thereby redefine "who we are".

First, we must instill a mindset in which each brother looks honestly into his heart, identifies

his weaknesses and then works each day to improve himself as a man. It does not matter

how good we were when we joined, it is how hard we will work to uplift ourselves when we are exposed to the principles of Masonic teachings.

Secondly, we must refine our interview

process for new candidates and train our investigating committees how to better perform their duties. During Masonry's early years, as many as 20% of men who petitioned were turned away. There is value in numbers; however, quality is infinitely more important than quantity. We must develop an attitude

that the dropping of a black ball into the ballot box is an acceptable method of improving our fraternity.

Finally, we must demonstrate the courage to perform Masonic administrative actions against those members who are not living up to our standards. Our constitution and edicts provide sufficient methodology to enable us to separate ourselves from members who are an embarrassment to our fraternity.

If we, as masons, do not get serious about the evaluation and improvement of ourselves and our membership, then our fraternity is doomed. We must set goals and challenge ourselves about whom we claim to be and who we should strive to be. If we improve the quality of ourselves, the quality and the perception of Masonry will also improve.

We must therefore take steps to reemphasize the importance of the principles on which masonry was founded and thereby redefine "who we are."

DISTRICT NEWS & EVENTS

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU! EMAIL SUBMISSIONS FOR THE FALL ISSUE OF THE MASONIC MESSENGER BY SEPTEMBER 1ST.

If your Lodge has any events or news to share, contact Parker Moore (pdmoore1@gmail.com) with details. Check out the Grand Lodge Facebook page for more news and events at www.facebook.com/GLoFAL. We will update the page as often as possible. Get involved today! Submit to the Masonic Messenger and the Grand Lodge Facebook page!!

ATHENS LODGE № 16

NEW FLOOR IS RICH WITH SYMBOLISM

BY BRO. R. W. HICKMAN, SEC., ATHENS № 16



New floor of Athens Lodge No. 16

Symbolism in many forms has played an important role in masonry since our earliest days. Many of these common symbolic elements are there to display and represent special meanings. They are not to simply look nice or impress visitors; they are there to convey an important lesson in how we are live our lives.

One of the oldest and most recognizable symbols of lodges and temples since the ancient of Egypt is the Masonic pavement. The black and white colored stones are traditional in lodges today throughout the world. The black and white floors are readily and appropriately interpreted as symbols of the good and evil of human life.

Bro. R.W. John K. Johnston wrote of the monastic floor: "Living in balance makes us healthy, happy and just. If our feet are well balance, both literally and figuratively, we may be able to serve the purpose of the Fraternity better."

In March 2016, members of Athens Lodge No. 16, Athens AL, described the concept of replacing their old carpet with a black and white checkered floor. While no one expected funding to be available for a long time, the lodge was shocked when donations began to arrive to support this project. Within about 3 months, sufficient funding had arrived and the lodge assigned a brother to head the effort. As a result, a special lodge was held on 8 December 2016 to, among other events, present the new floor. The lodge also, in support of our Order of the Eastern Star Chapter, included their star emblem in the center of the room.

This project was not just an attempt to improve the lodge facilities. It was meant to teach and remind us all of the importance of the lessons contained in our obligations and that we should all strive to live our lives in balance before God and man.

GUY T. SMITH № 883

FATHER & SON SENIOR & JUNIOR WARDEN



From right: Bro. Gregory Smith and his son Bro. Niklos Smith. Senior and Junior Warden, respectively, of Guy T. Smith No. 883

Guy T. Smith Lodge #883 of Mobile is proud to have the honor of having father and son each currently serving as one of their top three officers in the lodge. Brother Gregory Smith, born March 06,1964, who is presently serving as Senior Warden and his son Brother Nicklos Smith, born November 14,1987, who is following in his father's footsteps and serving as Junior Warden. The brothers of Guy T. Smith are proud to have them as members and officers of their Lodge. It is indeed a special moment for the lodge and for father and son as they will advance through the stations together in the following year.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECTS

The members of Guy T. Smith #883 of Mobile have been working in their community by supporting the Dauphin Island Elementary School, grades kindergarten thru 5th. The Lodge has worked to provide support for after school extracurricular activities such as the Drama Club and Astronomy Club. The lodge recently held a *BB Gun Turkey Shoot* (pictured) to raise funds in support of these programs and get the island community involved. You can see more pictures from the Turkey Shoot and past events held or sponsored by the lodge as well as upcoming events on their website: www.guytsmith883.org *Past events are located on 'Historian' page of website.

The lodge would like to extend a special thanks to all their members for getting involved beyond just 'Eating and Meeting'.



BB Gun Turkey Shoot sponsored by Guy T. Smith No. 883

FALKVILLE LODGE № 396 CELEBRATES 99TH BIRTHDAY OF BROTHER BUD HILL



Left: WM Brother Parker Moore with Brother Bud Hill Right: Brother Bud Hill opens Falkville Lodge No. 396

Best wishes to Brother Bud Hill who turned 99 years old November 27th. Falkville Lodge No. 396 held a birthday celebration in his honor. Bro. Hill opened the lodge at the behest of WM Brother Parker Moore, who said that Bro. Hill did so, without hesitation, and that he didn't miss a beat.

STAND! CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

to draw attention to themselves for selfish and ignorant reasons. No reason or platform should be used to disrespect our American Flag!

In conclusion, each American, each Mason is an example. What type of example you choose to become, positive or negative, is up to each of us to decide. I believe that standing and respecting the Flag of our County shows

the character of a man. That character is what our Fraternity needs, demands, requires and expects. We were, as Masons charged, to be true to our Government and just to our Country in our Masonic teachings. Let's demonstrate those teachings in our everyday lives to show our communities what we truly are, men of character and respect. EXAMPLES! MASONS!