



The Ashlar



December 2021

Kempsville Lodge No. 196, A.F.&A.M.
www.kempsvillelodge.org

Volume 68-12

A Christmas Message



On this special month I am taking the opportunity to talk about Freemasonry and it's role in the world.

Freemasonry, as you probably know if you are reading this article, is not a religion. We welcome people of all different faiths and beliefs into our organization we only ask that you have a belief in a supreme being. Masonry is not Christian. King Solomon, of course, wasn't a Christian, nor were either of the Hiram's. Masonry admits to its ranks any good man of faith; Christian, Jewish, Mohammedan, Buddhist... it makes no difference, so long as he has a Faith.

This brings me to the time of year we are in, Christmas. At one time in the world this was the celebration of hope as we moved from the darkest day of the year and the days began

to get brighter. We now celebrate with Christmas the birth of Christ who taught very specific lessons when dealing with your fellow man. These lessons are taught in other religions as well. It is a day when a Mason can express his thanks to the Supreme Architect that he is allowed to have a wife and family and children and friends and a lodge, because of that very 'peace on earth' spirit.

The lessons Christ taught were of tolerance, justice, hope and kindness, to only name a few. These lessons are taught throughout Freemasonry. It is because of this that I believe Freemasonry truly embodies the idea of the Christmas season year round.

In our Lodge and other Masonic organizations we daily, not just at this time of year, plan and perform acts to help the communities we are in. We teach our members, our brothers, to deal honestly and fairly with all whom we encounter. We stand on the level with our brothers whether we have known them for years or we are first meeting them on that day. We don't care what their religious affiliation is or their political affiliation; we know that if they are standing there in that room with us, they believe that we have the right to our beliefs just as we believe they have the right to theirs.

The positive energy that is generated in our lodges hopefully makes it's way into the community through the acts of the individual masons. We learn the lessons of tolerance, justice and hope so well in our meetings and Masonic activities that we instinctively act in the same way when out in the world. Charity and celebrations which create joy in little hearts and feed the hungry and make the poor think that Masons do not forget the lessons in lodge. Recall the ritual: 'By the exercise of brotherly love we are taught to regard the whole human species as one family, the high and low, the rich and poor, who, as created by one Almighty Parent, and inhabitants of the same planet, are to aid, support and protect each other'.

We have been accused of running the world, most certainly not the case. I do believe we are changing it everyday though, when we walk out into the world and display that Masonic Spirit, that Christmas Spirit and we make the world just that much better by being in it and sharing with the world the ideals that Freemasonry is founded on.

It is such a spirit that Masons join, all, in celebrating Christmas. It is on the Masonic side of the tree we dance, not the Christian side. I say this in the most secular way possible Merry Christmas to all regardless of faith, may this season bring you joy, happiness and a better tomorrow!

From The East



As my year draws to a close, I am faced with mixed emotions. My family is looking forward to a more flexible schedule and a shift in priorities. I have to admit this excites me as well.

On the other hand, I also feel a bit melancholy. My time in the East is like other professional milestones. Just as you get it figured out and a bit comfortable, it is time to pass the reins whether you want to or not.

I have been truly blessed in the opportunity to serve as your Worshipful Master this past year. My officers have been the epitome of professionals; having my back at every turn and at a moment's notice and being a solid sounding board. It is not possible to express the gratitude to all the Brothers of the Lodge for your support, mentorship, insight, and ideas that make Kempsville Lodge the premier Lodge in Virginia.

Our year started slowly as COVID dominated our authorized activity. We began with no in person meetings, no meals, no ritual. Then we endured several months of only 10 people per gathering. Our answer was to gather the Officers in the Lodge and have Zoom monthly meetings. These actually proved quite fruitful as a few of our out of state members joined for fellowship. We advanced to 25 members in person and eventually got back to a more normal operation. We traveled to other Lodges, began enjoying meals, fellowship, and a full access meetings and ritual work. We still managed to Raise three Master Masons this year.

Our Bull Roast was a huge success with record gross revenue. We participated in community service ranging from the food bank, Eagle Scout recognitions, scholarships, activities with Church of the Ascension, High School football, park cleaning, youth group support, widow Poinsettia deliveries, Thanksgiving meals, and Salvation Army Angel Tree charities. Let's not forget our weekly Zoom meeting with our British Brothers every Sunday.

Please join us in December for our Annual Stated, the election, and installation of your new Lodge leadership. They are ready to assume their roles and you will not be disappointed. I do ask that you continue to show them the same courtesies and assistance that I so enjoyed.

Thank you again for a wonderful lifetime memory and the opportunity to serve you.

Brother Mike Denning, Worshipful Master

From The West



Our ritual is enriched with signs and gestures that are primarily utilized to identify and salute one another. They are imperative to the fabric of each of the degrees, and comprise some of the

most prolific iconography of our Craft. Although we are taught that these signs are integral to the mechanics of our Fraternity, proper Masonic body language should be held in an equally important regard, especially when engaging with prospective, new, visiting, or inactive Brothers.

Posture, as it is so easily discerned from a distance, is usually the first variety of body language detected by an observer. Sitting and standing upright with our arms unfolded and hands visible illustrate to the viewer that your conversation and intentions are sincere. As you plan your next approach with a Brother unfamiliar to you, it is essential to be ever-ready and willing to orient yourself accordingly.

Oculesics, or the positioning and movement of our eyes, is another appreciable visual detail that cannot be dispensed with. When conversing with or casting passive gazes upon our Brothers, it is vital to facilitate amiable eye contact. Socially, this practice signifies your cordiality to your Brothers. Masonically, it is a healthy habit that perpetuates the vigor of degree work.

Facial expressions are the most crucial facets of body language. They serve as obvious indicators of each party's reception of a conversation, passively deciding the quality of the interaction for all communicants. The maintenance of warm and compassionate facial expressions necessitates a friendly atmosphere between two or more liaising Brothers. In an instructional environment, Masonic coaches and degree teams should take great care in the due performance of the same.

An encounter with poor body language can significantly hinder a fellow Mason's enthusiasm towards the Craft. As such, proper body language bolsters the fellowship of the Lodge and accelerates the Masonic education of those who are still progressing through the degrees. In a Fraternity such as ours, in which such great care is placed upon the knowledge that is scheduled to be instructed to us, it is remarkable that body language, which is not a component of our Masonic education, has such a profound impact.

Brother John Settle, Senior Warden

From The South



What a challenging year we have had with Covid causing some serious pauses in our regular productivity. Kempsville Lodge, in its usual exceptional manner, has risen to the occasion and excelled under the direction of Worshipful Mike Denning. As we near the close of his year, we look forward to how we can continue to improve and be attractive to new Masons, qualifying more brethren for advancement teams and coaching. Many brethren wait to be asked to step forward, however, is that how you became a mason? Or did you seek the counsel of a friend who was a Mason who introduced you to others who helped you become a better man? As I pass the baton of JW to Brother Doug Dunn, I am proud to advise him of the brothers who are volunteering their time to train, mentor, and work toward advancing the new Kempsville Lodge members. Is that you, or are you a wallflower?

Brother Pat Blankenship, Junior Warden

Trestle Board

- December 1 Princess Anne Annual Stated Communication, 7PM
- December 2 Bayside Annual Stated Communication, 7PM
- December 4 Poinsettia Delivery, 9AM
- December 4 Victory Daylight Annual Stated Communication, 3PM
- December 7 Willis V. Fentress Annual Stated Communication, 6PM
- December 9 Lynnhaven Annual Stated Communication, 7PM
- December 14 Annual Stated Communication and Installation of Officers Lodge Opens 6PM, Dinner 7PM

From the District Deputy Grand Master

District 56 uses the "rotation system" by the six lodges for the annual nomination for the office of District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM). This happens each year for a new DDGM, 2-years out. In 2019, it was Kempsville's turn for a DDGM nominee for 2021; then, along came COVID-19. Our Grand Lodge found the need to place everything on hold, and 2-years became 3-years. So, in November 2022, at the Grand Annual Communication, I was finally installed as the DDGM for the 56th District for 2022.

The DDGM is the personal representative of the Grand Master in the District. I respectfully honor those Kempsville Lodge No. 196 Past Masters who have held this honored position before me. Since being chartered in 1955, our lodge has had only 10 Past Masters to hold this office who have served our District; they are:

- 1960: William Hollowell Pierce, PM 1955 *
- 1965: George Raymond Ferrell, PM 1956 *
- 1972: Earl Lewis Polhamus, Jr. , PM 1966 *
- 1978: Dwight Paul Jones, PM 1969 *
- 1984: George Joseph Wallace, PM 1972 *
- 1990: Richard Alfred Davis, Jr. , PM 1975 *
- 1997: Vernon B. Benjaminson, PM 1976 *
- 2003: Thomas McGowan, PM 1983
- 2009: Emmett Mosley Pate, Jr., PM 2005
- 2013: Donald Edward Meyer, PM 1992
- * Deceased

If you will attend our January 2022 Stated Communication, you will hear more about these good Masons, and for those few still with us and able to attend, hopefully meet them in person.

I wish all Masons, families and friends the very best Holiday Season and Happy New Year. Let us join to make the coming year a success in our lodges and Masonic District.

Fraternally and most respectfully to all
Right Worshipful Bob Stanek, DDGM for 2022.

To Our Masonic Widows

Happy Birthday to our special ladies in December:

Carolyn Harrison	December 1 st
Peggy McGuire	December 10 th
June Wilder	December 10 th
Priscella Adkins	December 14 th
Loretta Cedola	December 21 st
Sherry Green	December 21 st

If any of our ladies are in need of assistance from the Lodge, please don't hesitate to contact Right Worshipful Bill Knowles or the Secretary.

Masonic Birthdays for December

Timothy R. Berkhimer '02	Jessie R. Ritchie '92
Dominick DiColandrea '10	James R. Smith '94
Lincoln Figuereo '01	David H. Weast '87
Timothy M. Maguire '01	Ricky T. West '83

These Brethren have a total of 198 years in Masonry!

Lodge Events

One of our many volunteer community service projects this year, seven of our Brothers and three of their wives, along with 70 other people, volunteered several hours of their time at the Church of the Ascension to put together over 30,00 meal packets for people in need in Virginia, the US, and other countries as part of the Rise Against Hunger program. These packets consist of rice, soy, dried vegetables, and a packet of vitamin powder. Some have recently been sent out to the Midwest to help people affected by the flooding there.



Many thanks to all who came out, especially Niki Pappas Blankenship, Sue Blankenship, and Melinda Hughes. We all had a great time working with the other volunteers for this worthy cause.

Special thanks to MOTY Bob Hughes, our Lodge Food Donation Coordinator, who works with the church to deliver our food donations each month and who identified this great opportunity for community service. His efforts have enabled us to build a great relationship with our church neighbors next door, and they have expressed their gratitude to us.



Congratulations to Right Worshipful Robert Wesley Stanek. Right Worshipful Brother Stanek was installed as the District 56 District Deputy Grand Master (DDGM) at Annual Grand Communication in Richmond on November 6th for the 2022 Masonic year. He was introduced and recognized at the Kempsville November

Stated Communication with a Homecoming Ceremony by our outgoing DDGM, Right Worshipful David Crook.

Right Worshipful Stanek enjoyed the company of family, friends, and Brothers at the occasion. His wife, Donna was unofficially installed as the 1st Lady of 56th District (AKA: "District Grand Master.")



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