



THE ASHLAR

A PUBLICATION FOR MINNESOTA MASONS, STARS AND FRIENDS



THE 173RD ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

A WEEKEND OF MOMENTUM



Face It Foundation	4
Reflections From the Road	5
The 173rd Annual Communication.....	6
Conundrum 106.....	8



A MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER

SHAWN CARRICK



My Masonic journey has been both inspiring and deeply meaningful. I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the Craft for the confidence you have placed in me as your Grand Master. It is truly a privilege to walk this path with you and to labor together in strengthening our Fraternity.

Over the last several years, we have seen meaningful changes take shape. I have been fortunate to be part of the conversations and planning that focused on how we can strengthen Minnesota Masonry and better position ourselves to support Lodges throughout the state. Our goal has always been clear: to help Lodges deliver deeper value to both new and longtime members.

The changes that have been made will allow resources, guidance, and support to be more effectively connected to the Lodges that need them. We have Brothers in key positions whose primary purpose is to connect those who knock at our door to find a Lodge, and to help Lodges understand how to provide a meaningful and engaging experience for every Brother.

One of the most important ways we bring that value is through education. Meaningful Masonic education delivered consistently, thoughtfully, and

with purpose has the power to transform a Lodge. It deepens understanding, strengthens engagement, and reminds us why our Craft matters. To support this, we are working to expand the Minnesota Speakers Bureau so Lodges can easily access Brothers who are ready to share their knowledge, experience, and passion. If you are interested in being listed as a speaker, please reach out to our Grand Lodge Education Officer, WB Brad Phelps so we can include you and make your talents available to Lodges across the state.

These improvements only matter when Lodges choose to use them, and support is always available through Grand View, your District Deputy, or the Regional Directors. I encourage every Brother to participate in Grand Lodge events, including Schools of Instruction and conferences, appendant body events, and, most importantly, to be active in your Lodge. When you travel, bring others with you; those empty seats in your vehicle are opportunities to strengthen fellowship and build bonds with your Brothers.

Thank you again for the trust you have placed in me. I look forward to traveling the state, supporting our Lodges, and working together to make the Masonic experience in Minnesota stronger than ever.

Shawn Carrick,
Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Minnesota
651-755-4519

A MESSAGE FROM THE WORTHY GRAND MATRON

DEB RICKARD



By the time you read this, I should be installed as the Worthy Grand Matron of the Grand Chapter of Minnesota, Order of the Eastern Star. I didn't really know about the Order until about 25 years ago. When I was young, I remember seeing my Grandma and Grandpa getting all dressed up to go somewhere, but I had no idea they were going to an Eastern Star meeting until a friend told me about the Fraternal Family, and the pieces started to fall into place. I am looking forward to sharing the year with someone most of you know, our Worthy Grand Patron, Dave Emery.

I love that Eastern Star is the largest organization in the world that both men and women can belong to, and I am proud of the work we do for the charities we support. Two of our major projects this year are focusing on Helping Paws, which provides service dogs for veterans with PTSD, and

Alzheimer's, which is currently very close to my heart.

I have spoken with Shawn a few times, and one thing we agree on is that we need to focus on our youth. They are our future, and who better to mentor them than those of us from the Fraternal Family, with the morals we teach and live by. We are guided by the principles of "Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth," or, in Eastern Star, "Charity, Truth, and Loving Kindness." They sound very much alike to me. Please find a way to help the youth in your community.

I admit that I don't know much about the Masons, since family members who were involved are now deceased. I hope you are willing to teach me so I can get to know more about you and we can work together. We need each other, and I hope to see more of you joining our Chapters across the state.

Two dates to keep in mind are August 2, at 12:30 for the Worthy Grand Matron/Patron Reception at Lost Spur, and October 17th, Oktoberfest for Alzheimer's.

On to a fun and successful year!

Deb Rickard,
Worthy Grand Matron, Minnesota OES



The wait is over, the Minnesota Masonic Home East lobby is once again open!

We're grateful for your patience during this transition, and we're pleased to share that parking has also returned to its normal procedures, making visits easier and more convenient.

If you haven't had a chance yet, we invite you to stop by, take a look around, and experience the refreshed space for yourself.



MINNESOTA MASONIC CHARITIES GALA

Save the Date
SEPTEMBER 26

AS WE LOOK TOWARD OUR SECOND CENTURY, YOUR PARTNERSHIP FUELS IMPACT ACROSS GENERATIONS.

MNMASONICCHARITIES.ORG/GALA

Face It Foundation

BY REED ENDERSBE

At its core, the Masonic Lodge has historically been a men's support system. Our tyled space is intended to provide depth and support from brother to brother, far beyond our ceremonial customs or occasional distraction with titles and honors.

This year, we are excited to be launching a Masonic-led initiative focused on strengthening brotherhood, deepening connection, and supporting the well-being of the men in our Lodges.

To support this work, we are partnering with the Face It Foundation, a Minnesota nonprofit with over sixteen years of experience engaging men through connection, conversation, and mutual support. This initiative will help brothers truly know one another as men, and create space for honest conversation and genuine connection. Here, brothers can speak more openly about what is really going on in their lives, and feel heard, loved, and supported.

Masonry has always stood for authentic brotherhood, mutual support, and becoming better men together. This initiative is a deliberate step towards bringing those values more fully to the surface and into the Masonic experience across our state. This work will be about adding depth to what already exists, not changing who we are.

In today's world, men have never been more isolated, alone, and unsure where to turn for direction and purpose. The digital isolation and friendship recession in society has never been more pronounced, and the challenges of today's world have resulted in our brethren feeling disconnected, isolated, and desiring deeper, more meaningful connection. Essentially, this partnership with Face It intends to help us make "brotherhood" a verb and felt deeply in the heart.

This collaboration is not innovation. It's about adapting and evolving to our members' needs while maintaining our beloved traditions. We couldn't be more excited to roll this out and will share additional updates in the months ahead.



Listen to the Podcast here:



REFLECTIONS ON BROTHERHOOD, GROWTH, AND FROM THE ROAD: KNOWING OURSELVES

BY BRADLEY PHELPS, GRAND LODGE EDUCATION OFFICER

The first article I wrote as Grand Lodge Education Officer explored the importance of travel. I wrote it about this time four years ago. It hardly seems possible that so much time has passed.

True to that message, I've been on the road again—twice in the last two weeks. One trip took me to Las Vegas, the other to Des Moines. Both centered on leadership, and both gave me something far more valuable: time with Brothers and friends—some long known, others newly met.

In Las Vegas, I found myself reflecting on trust—how it is earned, how deeply it is desired, and how fragile it can be if neglected. I also found myself considering the strange tension of our time. We are seeing a rise in AI companionship and millions of people turning to technology simply to feel heard. At the same time, we have unprecedented tools to learn, discover, and connect. Yet, standing in a room with Brothers, sharing stories over a meal, I was reminded of something simple: nothing replaces authentic human connection.

I was honored to witness a deep friendship whose origin began in a Fellows program—one of those reminders that relationships don't just happen; they are built over time. I was invited to a dinner celebration at a local favorite burger restaurant as they caught up, and I felt blessed to be included. In turn, I had the opportunity to share one of my own Vegas favorites with two close traveling companions.

Somewhere along the way, I was reminded that I still have much to learn about the people around me. Life has a way of connecting people who need to understand one another. Whether by chance or by design, it serves as a quiet reminder—we are not alone. I left Las Vegas with new friendships from Arizona, New York, and California, and with a renewed appreciation for Brotherhood.

In Des Moines, I had the honor of being one of four speakers discussing Membership and Leadership. None of us collaborated beforehand, yet our messages built upon one another in a way that felt intentional—almost as if the whole thing had been designed without a human designer. That, in itself, felt like Masonry.

It was a privilege to share the stage with Team Badger (Moises Gomez), RWB Patrick Carr, and Sir Knight Jeff Bolstad, DGM GEKTUSA. Over lunch, we heard from Dr. Richard Deming, who spoke about cancer survivors traveling the world—not simply to see it, but to reclaim their lives and push beyond perceived limits. By the end of his presentation, there were few dry eyes in the room. It was a powerful reminder that while we do not control how much time we are given, we do control how we choose to live it.

I sincerely thank MWB Wade Sheeler, Iowa Masonic Charities, and my Brothers from the great state of Iowa for their hospitality. I was given a hand-crafted Masonic jewelry box, signed by the Brother who made it, and a book signed by the author with a personalized note—things I will always treasure.

I share these experiences because a few things have become clear. Some time ago, I made the decision to embark on this journey. I knew it would require effort and responsibility—but I did not fully understand how much it would shape my life. It is unlikely I would have met any of these men had I not made that choice and because I did, my life is enriched every day.

I have seen Brothers support one another through loss, uncertainty, and moments where words are not enough. I have experienced what it means to know that wherever I go, there is someone genuinely

Read the full article here:



A Weekend of Momentum: Highlights from the 173rd Annual Communication



Energy, engagement, and a shared sense of purpose defined the 173rd Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, held April 17–18, 2026, at The Park Event Center in Waite Park. With 437 Masons registered and 80 of our 107 constituent lodges represented, the gathering was a powerful reminder that Minnesota Freemasonry remains active, connected, and forward-looking.

Presided over by Most Worshipful Brother Robert S. Davis, the Communication reflected both the realities and the opportunities before us. While membership trends continue to challenge us—with a net membership of 7,584 as of January 1, 2026—the year also saw meaningful engagement, including 148 new Master Masons raised and 230 affiliations. These numbers underscore a critical truth: interest in Freemasonry remains strong, and our collective work now is to transform that interest into lasting connection and participation.

The election and installation of new Grand Lodge officers signal a renewed commitment to leadership and progress. Most Worshipful Brother Shawn R. Carrick now assumes

the mantle of Grand Master, supported by a dedicated team ready to guide Minnesota Masonry into its next chapter.

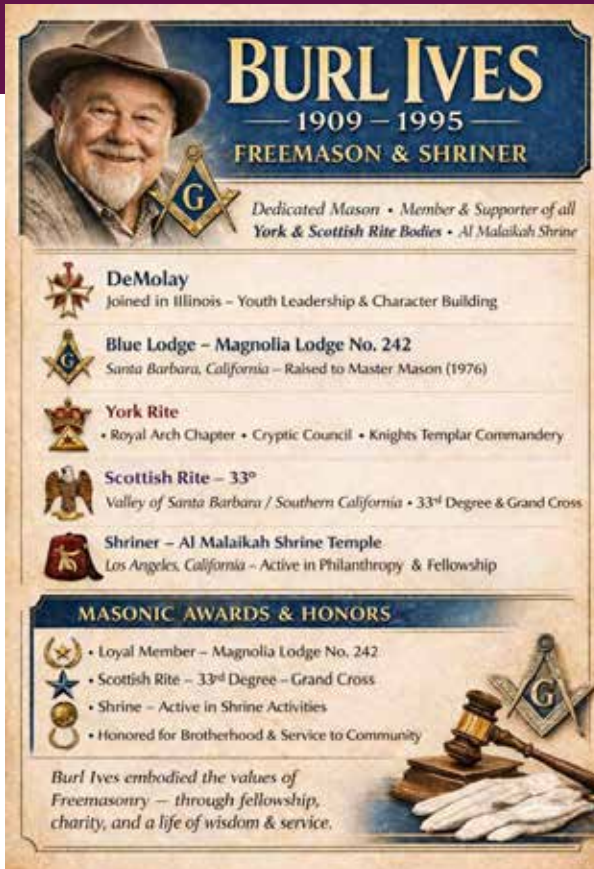
This year's Communication also showcased the strength of our broader Masonic community. Distinguished guests from eight sister jurisdictions and representatives from eleven appendant and concordant bodies joined us, reinforcing the bonds that extend far beyond our borders. A highlight of the weekend was the presentation by Dr. Theda Skocpol of Harvard University, whose research on fraternal organizations affirmed the enduring relevance of our Craft in modern society.

Recognition and celebration were equally central. From the Grand Lodge Banquet serving over 300 attendees to the presentation of prestigious awards honoring leadership and excellence in Masonic education, the weekend was filled with moments that inspired pride and gratitude.

As we look ahead to the 174th Annual Communication in April 2027, one thing is clear: Minnesota Freemasonry is not standing still. We are evolving, adapting, and—most importantly—moving forward together.



CONUNDRUM 106



THE WAYFARING BROTHER: BURL IVES, FREEMASON AND VOICE OF THE SEASON *(with assistance from ChatGPT)*

**I walked with a limp and a bag full of cheer,
Narrated a snowman we still hold dear.
A folk singer, an actor, a voice you all know,
Especially when winter begins with a glow.**

The answer to the last Masonic conundrum is **Brother Burl Ives**—the beloved folk singer, actor, and narrator whose warm baritone voice has become inseparable from the holiday season. Brother Ives was also a dedicated Freemason who rose to the highest honors of the Scottish Rite.

Resonating with key ideas of our craft, his story is one of music, traveling, storytelling, and brotherhood.

Those who answered correctly include: WB Todd Mayer (Anoka Lodge No. 30), WB Scott Rich (Mizpah Lodge No. 191), WB David Larsen (Caledonia Lodge No. 20), Bro. Jim Johnson (Mystic Lodge No. 213), WB Jerry Johnson (Accacia Lodge No. 51), WB Mark Moriarty (Arcana Lodge No. 187), WB Joel Porter (Lebanon Lodge No. 346), Bro. John Clifton (Itasca Lodge No. 208), WB Mark

Campbell (Cataract Lodge No. 2), WB Adam Martin (Accacia Lodge No. 51), WB Derek Berg (Mystic Star No. 69), WB Al Farmer (Ionic No. 186), Bro. Steve White (Meridian Lodge No. 25), WB Harlan Brand (Templar Lodge No. 176)

Life History

Burl Ives was born on June 14, 1909, near Hunt City in Jasper County, Illinois. Raised in a farming family, he grew up in an environment rich with music and storytelling. His mother and grandmother knew many traditional folk songs of Irish, Scottish, and English origin, and young Burl absorbed them eagerly.

According to family stories, Ives' first public performance happened almost by accident. While singing at a family gathering, a visiting uncle heard his powerful voice and encouraged him to perform before a larger audience. The crowd's enthusiastic reaction convinced the young boy that music might someday become more than a hobby.

Ives briefly attended Eastern Illinois State Teachers College (today Eastern Illinois University), but academic life did not hold his interest for long. One famous account describes how he left school suddenly after a disagreement with a professor and set off across the country with his guitar and banjo.

For several years he wandered the United States, performing wherever he could and learning traditional songs from people he met along the way. This period shaped his musical identity. Ives collected hundreds of folk songs, preserving melodies and lyrics that might otherwise have faded into obscurity. His experiences inspired one of the titles that would become closely associated with him: "The Wayfaring Stranger."

Read the full article here:



... and now for Conundrum Question #107: Short and sweet, and please don't cheat (by looking it up):

I am not famous for building or speech, But for disappearing just out of reach. My absence became a storm of fear, And made an old fraternity suddenly dear – Or dangerous, depending on who drew near. Find first the scandal, the outrage, the cry, The movement that swelled and then reached too high. Then name the man whose fate lit the spark, Though his end itself still lives in the dark.

Send responses to masonicconundrum@gmail.com. Remember to include your name, Masonic title, and your lodge name and number. Example: *WB Brad Phelps (Rochester Lodge No. 21)*



Minnesota Masonic Histories & Mysteries Hosted by Reed Endersbe

Relatable discussions about Freemasonry and taking agency over your life. Unafraid of vulnerability in the pursuit of authentic friendship and personal growth. Episodes bring you conversations with:

- Masonic historians and storytellers
- University of Minnesota partners advancing world-class research
- Physicians and innovators changing lives
- Standout staff from the Minnesota Masonic Home
- Community leaders, local voices, and even the occasional pro athlete

It's legacy, impact, and real people, told in their own words.

Have an idea? Want to be part of the conversation?

We're always looking for new voices and story ideas.
Email: Reed.endersbe@mnmasonic.org

UPCOMING EVENTS



- **May 20**, 5:30 p.m.,
Masonic Heritage Center,
Bloomington, MMC Scholarship
Award Reception
- **August 20**, 5:30 p.m.,
Graysolon Ballroom Duluth,
MMCCCD Annual Dinner
- **September 26**, 5:30 p.m.,
Masonic Home, Bloomington,
MMC Annual Gala



VIEW OUR LATEST PHOTOS



Introducing: The Pillars Collective



At Minnesota Masonic Charities, philanthropy isn't just something we do; it's who we've always been. The Pillars Society honors those who carry that legacy forward through meaningful support, whether by outright gifts or thoughtful planned giving. Now, we're excited to introduce something new.

Beginning this November, The Ashlar will feature the Pillars Collective, a dedicated space recognizing individuals who are deepening their impact. This includes those who have recently joined the Pillars Society, advanced to a new giving level, or committed to sustaining monthly support.

It's a simple idea: celebrate momentum, recognize generosity, and highlight the many ways people are choosing to give.

Interested in becoming a Pillar? Our team is here to help. Connect with Reed in the Metro, Ethan in the South, or Markus in the North to learn more.

Prefer to start with something simple? Becoming a sustaining donor takes just a few clicks. Visit mnmasoniccharities.com, select "Donate," and choose a recurring gift to make a lasting difference over time.

Because every act of generosity—big or small—builds something that lasts.

To connect with one of our Regional Directors in your area, contact:

Reed Endersbe (Metro): reed.endersbe@mnmasonic.org

Ethan Seaberg (South): ethan.seaberg@mnmasonic.org

Markus Mueller (North): markus.mueller@mnmasonic.org





Put Our Principles into Practice Through Volunteering

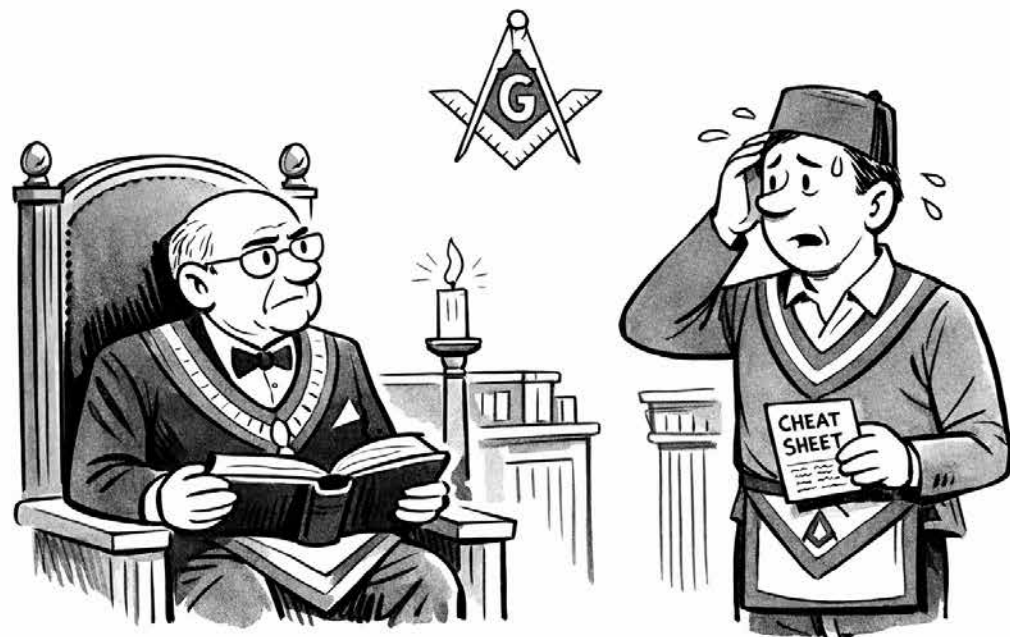


Relief is more than a tenet; it's a call to action. At Minnesota Masonic Home, you can live that commitment through meaningful volunteer opportunities that support those in our care.

Whether you can give an hour or more, flexible individual and group opportunities make it easy to get involved. From fellowship with residents to assisting with activities, your presence matters.

Because we serve a vulnerable population, a background check is required for all volunteers.

To learn more, connect with Anna at anna.mcclarey@mmasonic.org.



"Um... can I just get a multiple-choice version of the ritual?" MMK



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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

To contribute news articles and photos about your Lodge activities or upcoming events, please email them to theashlar@mfreemasons.org.



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THE ASHLAR

The perfect ashlar shows what can be done with a rough, unpolished and unsightly piece of stone as a result of skill, industry and perseverance, so man, with all his rudeness, roughness and imperfection, may, under the operation of the Divine workman be polished and prepared until he becomes a noble character fit to be included as a part of the great spiritual temple which will abide forever.