THE
Ashlar
A PUBLICATION FOR MINNESOTA MASONS, STARS AND FRIENDS

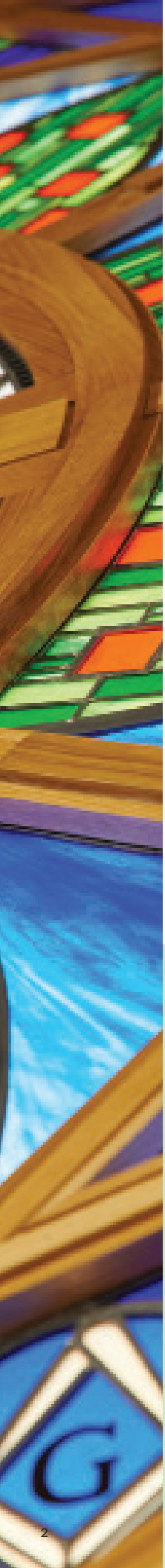
MINNESOTA MASONIC CHARITIES

MINNESOTA FREEMASONS ORG. 1853

February 2025 VOL. 1, NO. 11



INSIDE
2025 ANNUAL COMMUNICATION



A MESSAGE FROM THE GRAND MASTER

Foster Solem



To all the brethren of Minnesota,
It has been my distinct honor and pleasure to be your Grand Master this year. When I tried to come up with a theme for the year, I struggled to find something that both reflected my passions and would be a meaningful gesture of the Brotherly Love and affection we should feel for one another. A very special brother came up with the idea "Year of the Hug,", and it has served us well! With every hug I have been given, I have been privileged to receive the love and support of the craft.

This year has gone by extremely quickly, and it seems unreal to think that in a couple of months, it will be time to pass the torch to our next Grand Master. The year has been filled with experiences that I could only have had as your Grand Master.

My travels up to Manitoba Canada for their Annual Communication was my first trip out of the country. I have had the honor of presenting three 150-year plaques to Lodges. I was able to perform three Lodge building dedications with our Grand Lodge Officers; an honor not all Grand Masters will have. I did my first podcast for Minnesota Masonic Charities with Brothers John Schwietz and Reed Endersbe. I have spoken at several Hiram Award Ceremonies and assisted in presenting many longevity awards to many distinguished Brothers. More recently, it has been my privilege to be the Installing Master for several Lodge Officer Installation ceremonies.

The next couple of months will be filled with more travel and more opportunities. In January, it was my pleasure to sit in the East at One-Day-to-Masonry to welcome more than thirty new Master Masons to the fraternity. February will be my busiest month, when I will travel down south to Florida, Texas and Arizona to visit our Minnesota Snowbirds. I will also be traveling to South Carolina to attend the North American Conference of Grand Masters and the Midwest Conference of Grand Lodges. Also in February, we will be having our annual Leadership Academy training, along with our Area Deputy and District Representative training conference. The next couple of months will be very busy.

My main talking point for the year has been not losing sight of who we are as Masons. I have always believed (and still believe) that Masonry is needed in our world as much today as it ever has been. The true tenets of Masonry have always drawn people to the craft, and I believe that "if we are what we say we are," they always will.

We are all in possession of something so great and so special. I hope and pray that we do not fall prey to the restless spirit of innovation. Masonry has stood the test of time, and although the way we apply Masonry to our lives today may evolve, Masonry itself does not and should not change.

If we know that our primary function as Masons is to break off the corners of our own rough stone, as best we can, and hone it into the smoothest ashlar possible, we will represent the best in humanity to all who cross our path.

If we always remember to contribute to the relief of our fellow brethren and watch over them and their families; if we never forget to watch over and care for our widows and orphans;

If we never forget to spread the cement of Brotherly Love and affection to all who come within the reach of our cabletow;
Masonry will remain a bright and shining star for our communities and for the world at large.

I wish to thank each and every one of the brothers in Minnesota for all the love and support you have shown and given me this past year. It has truly been my honor and privilege to serve as your Grand Master. I look forward to returning to the quarries and continuing to labor in pursuit of the craft.

With fraternal gratitude and brotherly love,

Foster D. Solem, Grand Master
Grand Lodge of Minnesota, AF & AM

A MESSAGE FROM THE WORTHY GRAND MATRON

CJ Brase



As I have traveled the state and visited other jurisdictions, the common thread I have found is our Sisters' and Brothers' passion for helping others. In the Order of the Eastern Star, we are working with our Masonic Brothers to help promote Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth. We aim to stop suffering and want. We look for constancy and truth. We offer hospitality and hope. We can be a force for compassion and caring in our relationships with others and on the world stage.

The countless hours given volunteering, planning, organizing, and promoting events to enable us to do great charitable work is amazing and humbling. We have so many members working together,side by side, to make our world a better place. Our communities are the local focus, but the goodwill builds from there, and collectively, we make a difference. Our chance to help others less fortunate than ourselves through food banks, shelters, service dog providers, Masonic hospitals, youth services, scholarships, and more allows us to serve mankind.

And what do we get? What is in it for us? We learn to apply our Masonic and Eastern Star lessons and principles. We know in our hearts that we are working for a greater good for all. We also build friendships while we do this work together. That is our payoff-our gift. Sisters and Brothers serving others learn how to be of service to each other as well. The saying that charity starts at home is accurate. It's apparent in the pride we feel when we help another member with their memory work or lectures. Then, we watch them shine as they do initiations or installation ceremonies. The sounding board we can be for our leaders when needed, or the council and guidance we can offer from our history and experience are priceless treasures to share as we journey through our lives.

We can do these things together as members of the Masonic family–this family we chose. We chose well.

We choose to serve rather than be served, which is the essence of our leadership roles. So, I thank all of you who have stepped up into leadership roles for what you are doing, knowing that we serve the rest of our members.

May 2025 bring us all remarkable successes.

CJ Brase, Worthy Grand Matron
Grand Chapter of Minnesota Grand Lodge of Minnesota, AF & AM

APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN FOR MINNESOTA MASONIC CHARITIES SCHOLARSHIPS

Minnesota Masonic Charities is proud to support Minnesota high school graduates and current college undergraduates through a variety of scholarships. With awards ranging from $2,500 to $24,000, these scholarships recognize academic excellence, leadership, and dedication to the community.



Opportunities include scholarships for four-year college students, those pursuing vocational or technical programs, and a unique award celebrating kindness through the Selfless Scholar Award. Applications are now open and will close on February 28, 2025. Don't miss this chance to fund your future. Earn more and apply today at mnmasoniccharities.org.

Special thank you to the University of St. Thomas BUSN200 students who have helped uncover Selfless Scholar stories, connect with area schools, and further our robust scholarship program objectives!



MINNESOTA MASONIC CHARITIES

SCHOLARSHIP

Minnesota Masonic Charities proudly represents the charitable interests of Minnesota Masonry, and encourages the engagement of Masonic Lodges and Order of the Eastern Star Chapters with their communities across the state. Listed below are ways in which MMC supports the efforts of Minnesota Brothers and Sisters, and links to important documentation.

CLICK HERE TO SEE OUR 2024 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT:

STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP | COMMUNITY SCHOLARSHIP & MATCHING GRANTS

IMPORTANT DATES

2024 Scholarship Winners Announced

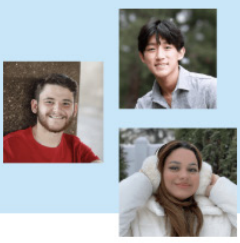
APPLY NOW

QUESTION? TALK TO BETH

MINNESOTA MASONIC HAS GIVEN OVER

$13 MILLION

IN SCHOLARSHIPS TO DATE.



ANNUAL COMMUNICATION 2025



The 172nd Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota will take place April 11 – 12 at The Park Event Center in Waite Park, MN. Grand Master Foster D. Solem urges all Minnesota Lodges to send their full quota of delegates to this year's meeting. While only the Master and Wardens are voting delegates, all Master Masons in good standing are welcome to attend. Attendees are encouraged to bring their spouse/partner for a weekend of Masonic fun and fellowship.

Registration and meal tickets will be available in mid-February. The room blocks at the Hilton Garden Inn and Residence Inn Hotels are still open. Please note that the booking deadline for our group rate is February 23.

Please visit the official ANCOM page - www.mnfreemasons.org/ancom25 - for information on registration, hotels, agenda, etc.

This year's session will feature new Grand View training opportunities, as well as breakout sessions on the new A.T.C. Pierson Lodge Excellence Award, Prospect Management Training (how to effectively engage/talk to prospects), Lodge LEOs, a meet and greet with the Regional Directors, and more.

We look forward to seeing you in April!







MINNESOTA MASONIC CHARITIES EXTENDS U OF M INVESTMENTS TO INCLUDE HEALTHY AGING

Minnesota Masonic Charities publicly announced a transformative new gift to the University of Minnesota, growing the organization's previous investments in long-time research priorities, like cancer and pediatrics, while also launching a new investment in the field of healthy aging. This $35 million gift brings the total financial investment in the U of M by the Minnesota Masonic Charities to $195 million over the 60-plus-year relationship between the two organizations.

This latest investment commits $15 million to the Institute for the Biology of Aging and Metabolism (iBAM), an interdisciplinary, trans-departmental endeavor across the University of Minnesota Medical School, to advance research on the fundamental biology of aging. Led by globally recognized aging research experts Laura Niedernhofer and Paul Robbins, and supported by other donors and government funding, the institute is designed to discover ways to therapeutically extend the period of good health in old age and quality of life for the elderly.

"We are deeply grateful that Minnesota Masonic Charities recognizes the significant momentum of aging biology research," said Niedernhofer. "This new and invaluable partnership reflects a critical investment in translating our groundbreaking discoveries to benefit the citizens of Minnesota, enhancing our understanding and promotion of healthy aging, and accelerating clinical trials to bring these innovations to life."

In recognition of this most recent gift, the University will add the Masonic name to the institute, now known as the Masonic Institute for the Biology of Aging and Metabolism (MiBAM). This new named recognition will be added to four existing named facilities: Masonic Cancer Center (2008), M Health Fairview Masonic Children's Hospital (2014), Masonic Cancer Clinic at Fulton Ave. (2016), and Masonic Institute for the Developing Brain (2020).

"Minnesota Masonic Charities has been a proud partner of the University of Minnesota Medical School for more than six decades, beginning with the opening of the first Masonic Memorial Cancer Hospital in 1958," said John Schwietz, CEO of Minnesota Masonic Charities. "Our commitment to advancing cancer research and care has expanded over the years to include a focus on children's health and wellness, reflecting our belief in the importance of caring for individuals across every stage of life. Now, with the naming of the Masonic Institute for the Biology of Aging and Metabolism, we are honored to come full circle, returning to our roots in supporting the aging population—a mission that began more than a century ago with the founding of the Masonic Home. We look forward to the continued impact of this extraordinary partnership."

The remaining $20 million of this latest gift will be added to previous gifts to the field of cancer research and care ($15 million) and pediatrics research ($5 million).

"With the renewed and steadfast backing of Masonic Charities, the Masonic Cancer Center will continue to pursue bold cancer research and treatment initiatives. This latest gift will amplify our efforts to uncover new solutions, directly improving the lives of patients and their families while advancing our vision to reduce cancer's burden worldwide," said Jeffrey Miller, interim director of the Masonic Cancer Center.

"The Masons have made a real difference in the lives of children, not only in Minnesota, but around the world," said Joe Neglia, chair of the U of M Department of Pediatrics. "Their commitment to improving health across the lifespan and across geographies is truly amazing."



Minnesota Masonic Charities presents a ceremonial check to U of M leaders during a break at the Gopher football game at Huntington Bank Stadium on Nov. 23, 2024. (Pictured, L-R, Foster Solem, Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Minnesota; Ben Schwietz; John Schwietz, CEO, Minnesota Masonic Charities; Dr. Jakub Tolar, Dean, University of Minnesota Medical School; Dr. Rebecca Cunningham, U of M President; Kathleen M. Schmidlkofer, CEO and President, University of Minnesota Foundation

MESSAGE FROM M HEALTH FAIRVIEW MASONIC CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

The care we provide takes a village,and we are grateful to have such a generous village supporting us. Over the holiday season, our community of donors stepped up to bring extra joy and magic to the children and families staying at M Health Fairview Masonic Children's Hospital.

A truly special part of our annual holiday celebration is the creation of The North Pole—a magical space made possible by the donations and volunteers who help transform the area each year. This enchanting space brings the season's magic to life for families who can't leave the hospital. Head elves, Santa, and many others join together to make this a memorable experience, bringing cheer and creating lifelong memories for the children.

The North Pole would not be possible without the incredible support from donors and volunteers, like the Minnesota Freemasons, who helped set up and create this elaborate space.



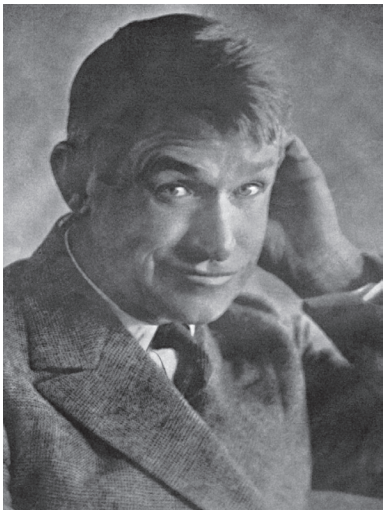
Interested in participating in volunteer events like this? Get in touch with Reed Endersbe to learn more about bringing memorable experiences to life for more families in 2025.

Featured in This Photo Are:

Michael O'Dell, Jay Dworsky, and Reed Endersbe

CONUNDRUM101

WILL ROGERS



The answer to conundrum #101 is Will Rogers. Brother Kurt Walleser from Rochester #21 answered correctly.

Some time ago, I heard a radio program that explored the life of Will Rogers—a famous performer, actor, writer, and humorist. I was on my way to Menards, and the program was so captivating that I stayed in the parking lot for an extra 30 minutes to finish listening. While I found his life story fascinating, it was the tragic way it ended and the public's response that particularly caught my attention. Some sources suggest that the public sense of loss at the time was second only to that felt after Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

Later, while traveling Route 66 (and after a failed visit to Oklahoma's last Ku-Ku burger), I learned that one of its nicknames is the "Will Rogers Highway." Additionally I was informed by my travel companion that Will Rogers was a Mason. You can learn more about him in this Scottish Rite Hall of Honor video, but this article contains some highlights.

Son of Clement Rogers and Mary Schrimsher, William Penn Adair Rogers was born a citizen of the Cherokee Nation Indian Territory near present-day Oologah, Oklahoma on November 4, 1879. Rogers. Clement Rogers was a soldier, attorney, and judge and served several terms in the Cherokee senate. Although mixed race, both of Will's parents considered themselves Cherokee. The eighth and youngest sibling, Will grew up working his family's ranch. His upbringing honed a skill for roping that would ultimately take him around the world, earning work in circuses and vaudeville, and eventually paving the way to movie screens. He ultimately had a role in 71 films. At one time, he was the highest-paid actor in Hollywood. While doing a show at Madison Square Garden in 1905, a wild steer broke out of the arena and made its way towards the crowd. Rogers roped the animal to the delight of the crowd – an act that would award him much national attention. He was also a prolific writer, writing more than 4,000 syndicated newspaper columns.

Will had a talent for poking fun – especially at politicians – and did so tactfully, without offending those around him. Despite his jokes, he famously stated, "I never met a man I didn't like." To get an idea of his wit and style, I recommend listening to his famous Bacon and Beans and Limousines talk from 1931. Putting politics aside, I am often amazed at the strength and resiliency of those who endured the great depression, and this talk is an echo of that time. Also known as the Cowboy Philosopher, as is so eloquently stated on the Will Rogers Memorial Museum site, "Will Rogers' masterful roping tricks would enter the Guinness Book of Records while his words about brotherhood and human kindness would be written across the heart of humanity."

With respect to Masonry, Will Rogers was initiated on February 18, 1905 at the age of 25, passed on March 10, 1906, and was raised on March 13, 1906 at Claremore Lodge #53 in Claremore, OK. Claremore Lodge was later renamed Will Rogers Lodge #53 in his honor. He was also a member of the Scottish Rite and the Shrine.

Brother Will Rogers was a lover of aviation, often sharing stories of his worldly travels and befriending famous aviator Charles Lindbergh. His sense of adventure and passion for flying ultimately led to his tragic demise. In 1935, while exploring Alaska with his friend and fellow aviator, Wiley Post, Rogers decided to land, check bearings, and visit with locals. During takeoff, the plane suffered engine troubles and crashed. Both men died instantly. Will Rogers passed on to the Celestial Lodge on August 15, 1935.

Numerous landmarks, monuments and memorials exist across the U.S. in Will Rogers' honor. This is a testament of the impact he made in life.

References and Further Reading

- Heritage and Childhood | Will Rogers (Will Rogers Memorial Museum)
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Will_Rogers
- Hall of Honor | Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, S.J., U.S.A.
- Freemason: Will Rogers | My Freemasonry | Freemason Information and Discussion Forum
- The Midnight Freemasons: The Hickiest Fellow You Ever Saw

Conundrum #102

Short and sweet, and please don't cheat (by looking it up):

How many times does the Earth fully rotate on its axis in one year?

Send answers to masonicconundrum@gmail.com. Please also include an explanation for your answer. I will send a prize to whoever provides the best explanation.

Discover the Stories Behind the Symbols

Tune in to Minnesota Masonic Histories and Mysteries

Hosted by Reed Endersbe, **Minnesota Masonic Histories and Mysteries** dives deep into the fascinating world of Freemasonry and its impact on communities, families, and history. Whether you're a lifelong Mason or simply curious about the organization's traditions, this podcast offers something for everyone.

Recent Episodes Include

- Masonic Cancer Researchers who are exploring the genetic, lifestyle, and environmental factors shaping the health of Minnesota families.
- Thought-provoking discussions on the power of social capital, collaboration, quality relationships, and the role of the Masonic lodge in the community.
- The rich history of Masonic family lineages and the legacy and inspiration they leave behind.
- Conversations on civil discourse in today's society and the art of agreeing to disagree with mutual respect.



Listen on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

Follow today and join the conversation!

With expert guests and insightful storytelling, **Minnesota Masonic Histories and Mysteries** unravels the profound connections between the past, present, and future.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2025 Minnesota Masonic Events

- **February 22** Edinburg, Texas, Saturday, Echo Hotel Conference Center
- **February 28** Mesa, Arizona, Friday, Apache Masonic Lodge

For the reunions above, please RSVP to Jennifer Harrison via email at **Jennifer.Harrison@mnmasonic.org** or by phone at **952-948-6206**

April 11-12 Grand Lodge of Minnesota Annual Communication, Waite Park

May 2-3 Minnesota Order of the Eastern Star Grand Chapter, St. Cloud

Order of the Eastern Star Casino Night

Tickets are $30 pre-ordered or $35 at the door

Includes light dinner and casino tokens

To register, email Linda Lattimore **llattimoremn@comcast.net**

or call **763-258-4654**

Robbinsdale #238

4228 W Broadway Ave, Robbinsdale, MN

Dance the Night Away to Support the Minnesota Grand Chapter Cancer Project

Dancing, Sloppy Joe Dinner, Raffle, Quilt Auction, Pie Walk and More!

Saturday, **March 1** at 5:30 p.m.

Rosetown American Legion

700 County Road C West, Roseville, MN

Bowling for a Cause

Proceeds benefiting Jack's Basket, Jacksbasket.org

March 16, 2025

Check-in starts at 11 a.m.; Tournament starts at noon

Register/contact by emailing **dtniles@comcast.net** or calling **763-227-7685**

Seeking Balance in a Changing World

In my previous article, I explored the values we hold dear, the pressures we face, and the integrity required to stay true to what matters most. I also touched on the lessons we can learn from our works and repeated a profound question asked by a past Grand Master: "Are we who we say we are?" In an earlier piece, I discussed our journey and situation here on Earth, emphasizing the need for balance of body, spirit, and mind. As we turn our attention to the leadership academy and focus on educational topics like planning and structure, it seems fitting to revisit and connect these themes.

Begin with the end in mind. Shape your future by creating a mental vision and purpose for any project, large or small."

Stephen Covey; 7 Habits of Highly Effective People



Many of the significant challenges we face cannot be solved alone, and within Masonry, the vital nature of collaboration becomes quickly apparent through our symbols and rituals.In our Grand Lodge-sponsored training, we guide incoming Junior Wardens to proactively create a calendar for their year well before assuming the role of Worshipful Master. We also coach them to reconcile the various needs for that calendar, ensuring clarity around officers' and members' involvement and contributions to the plan.

"People don't buy what you do; they buy why you do it. And what you do simply proves what you believe."

Simon Sinek; Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action

To foster an environment free from contention, everyone must understand the vision and their role in it. This requires considered communication structures and feedback loops—concepts that become even more critical as collaborations extend beyond a single lodge.



The challenges are not unique to our craft; product development and organizational leadership are key themes across many industries. Unfortunately, one often overlooked pre-condition for success in these areas is understanding team dynamics and making the necessary adjustments to accommodate them. Embracing this means moving beyond one-size-fits-all solutions and recognizing that people are not interchangeable cogs. It requires revisiting our goals and setting iterative objectives that respond to what we learn. A yearly calendar is a good place to start, but success requires more. It relies on the relationships we build and how we leverage them. Considering this, I am also reminded of the striking statistic shared by WB Reed about the rise of AI companions and the increasing loneliness in society. Masonry offers a powerful antidote to this trend. I would ask each of you to consider how well you know your Brothers, their interests, aspirations, and families.

"When you like people and treat them like individuals who have value, you begin to develop influence with them. You develop trust."

John C. Maxwell; The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential



This brings us to why I put this article together—to address what happens when vision, commitments, or communication cause us friction. Hopefully, we have enough self-awareness to recognize it, and strong enough bonds to discuss and work through it together.

We are a volunteer organization, which presents unique challenges and demands a leadership style that encourages voluntary engagement. Over the past five years, we've encountered additional obstacles and societal shifts, including the widespread transition to remote work. Growing responsibilities, commitments, and competing demands have further strained volunteer time and intensified the risk of burnout.

As Masons, we are taught the importance of dividing our time effectively. Great leadership books prompt us to look at our various roles and needs and prioritize around them. In a world that has so many things demanding our time, and with the rise of burnout, continually reflecting on this is important. Continued growth, flexibility, and adaptation to a rapidly changing landscape are important.

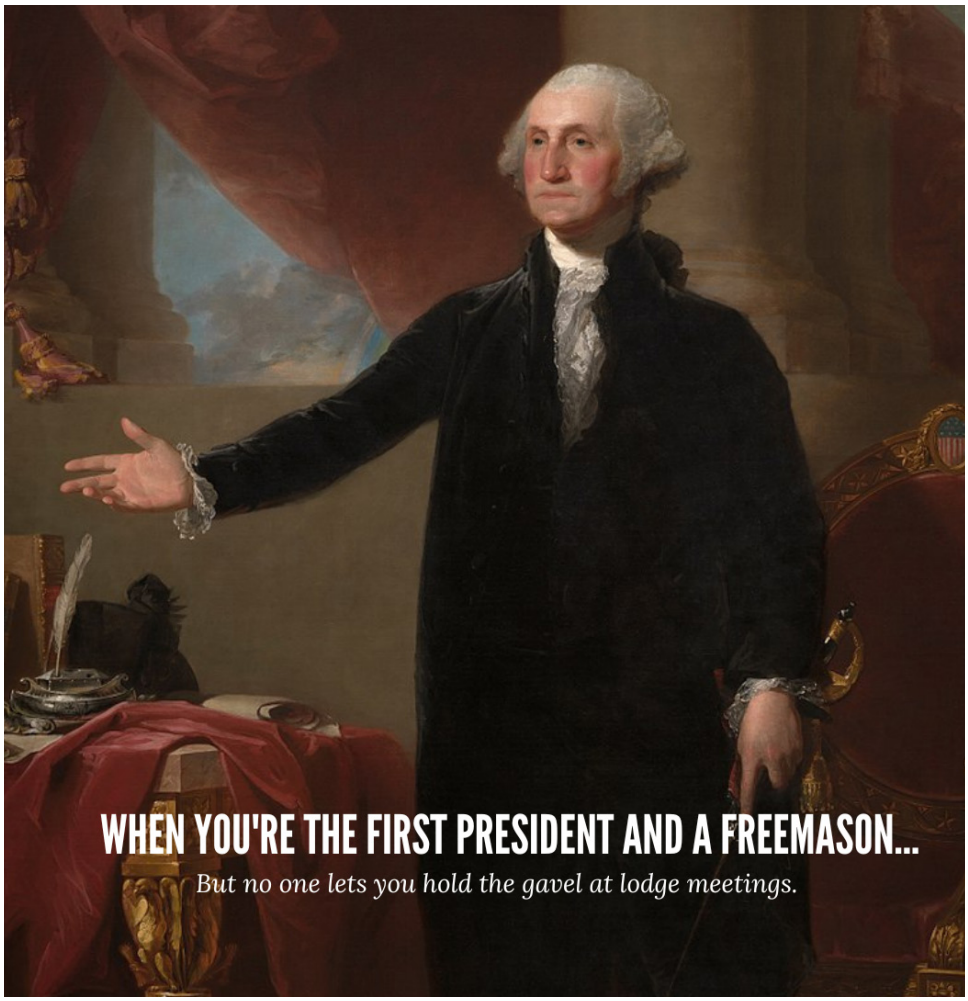
"Trust is the foundation of real teamwork."

Patrick Lencioni; The Five Dysfunctions of a Team: A Leadership Fable



In this article, I've quoted some thought leaders in the space of organizational leadership and referenced their books. While not specifically Masonic, they have come up in discussions I've had with other Masonic educators, specifically relating to leadership concepts. I have read each and typically re-read them periodically,each time learning something new. I hope you find them useful resources and that they help unlock further collaborations and approaches to solving problems with those around you.

There are no easy answers to the challenges we face. Please take a moment and reflect on how we as Masons might help bring relief to burnout and help others find their place in Masonry. I will explore this further in my next Ashlar article.



THE Ashlar

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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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.