

NORTH CAROLINA THE MASON

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VIRTUAL REALITY NC FREEMASON STYLE

By Beth Grace
Mason Editor

Keep calm and carry on used to be just a fun slogan on posters and T-shirts.

These days, it's a marching order for the whole world.

Since mid-March, the world has grown smaller, measured in square feet – from the home office to the kitchen to the living room and back. Lodges have gone dark, meetings were cancelled, and annual fundraisers (and the fun that goes with them) postponed or called off altogether.

The Masonic community has taken a hit, along with the rest of the world. But it stands strong.

The future is uncertain in many ways, but in the ways that count, says Grand Master Shaun Bradshaw – it's not so different.

"Our Craft has been around a very long time. It has weathered all types of concerns and issues and problems," he says. "These are not the final days, just echoes of a pandemic.

"We have a strong brotherhood and we will continue. In some ways, we'll be stronger for it."

GM Bradshaw and the Grand Line officers have faced a reality no one has faced since 1918, when the Spanish Flu shut the world down. Unprecedented issues have put Grand Lodge leadership in a

hard position: trying to predict an uncertain future with little historic precedent on which to rely. The average age of today's brother is in his early 60s, so the Craft is potentially more vulnerable to the virus.

"The decisions I've made, I've made not for today but for the future," GM Bradshaw says. In March, he ordered lodges closed in accordance with the state of North Carolina's self-isolation policies

"I'm trying to strike a careful balance, and frankly, I can't predict the future and the potential need for a lodge to meet, so I felt like I had to give them the ability to meet if they needed to, to conclude it's a possibility with some restrictions."

On March 16, GM Bradshaw alerted lodges that the state had issued guidelines covering face-to-face meetings, and he reminded lodges that under the Code, they could not meet without a quorum. He asked brothers to check on each other and determine if anyone within the Craft needed help. A few days later, as the spread of the virus rose and the state increased its guidelines for closures, he cancelled the remainder of his District Meetings.

On April 29, he released a deeply researched, four-part

■ see REALITY, page 2

Bro. Joe Martinez is a veteran of the US Army and former Counterintelligence Special Agent. Bro. Joe is the current Junior Warden of Manasseh Lodge No. 182 in Manassas, Virginia, as well as a Master Mason in Maryland, Massachusetts, and UGLE.

Open to All, this is Not a tyled event.

Steven Alex Wilson
April 27 at 2:04 PM
Masonic Education Master Craft Quiz 4 Essay
Mercy towards Masons/ All Humanity
Religion vs. Spirituality

North Carolina Masons and Refracted Light: Bending the Present
Bro. Joe
A virtual presentation
The Old Charges and A
Tuesday, May 19, 8:00



Grand Chaplain's Corner

During these “unusual” times, we are all constantly looking for ways to connect and enjoy the fellowship and Brotherly love that has brought us together. I have noticed over social media and through phone conversations we have done a very good job at staying in touch with one another. I want to suggest that we need to stay connected to the one in whom we place our trust as well. Sometimes we can't get that immediate text or call back that we need, but in our trust in the Divine we always have access to a listening ear or a shoulder to lean on. I want to offer a prayer this month for uncertain times as we crave our fellowship and time together.



Most Gracious Architect of the Universe, we come to you in these days of uncertainty, chaos, turmoil, illness, and even death. We come to you because it was in you we first placed our trust. We rely on our brothers to walk with us through earthly times, as well as you. We miss our conversations with one another, a friendly embrace, a smile, a nod, yet in all of these missed actions we know that you are present in our lives. For we first entered alone, then moved to the reassurance that you, as the Divine Architect, were beside us all of the way. Keep us mindful, that you are still there, in these “different times” and will continue to be with us in what may be a “new normal.” For it is in you we place our trust and faith. SMIB. AMEN.

Faithfully and Fraternally,
Rev. Mark M. Vickers
Grand Chaplain
GLNC AF & AM



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opinion on whether lodges could meet virtually. He concluded that lodges could, with proper notification to all members in advance, hold a stated communication virtually if they have dispensation from the Grand Master, but must use approved technology rules offered by the NC Grand Lodge Tech Committee. Lodge must open ritualistically; opening lodge symbolically or by proclamation was prohibited. Recording meetings also was prohibited. Lodges also were not permitted to examine candidates or conduct a secret ballot.

On May 13, the Grand Master offered a phased-in approach to resuming Masonic contact. He wrote that Masters could, at their discretion, allow up to 10 officers of the Lodge to meet in person (with proper distancing) at the lodge for ritual practice, and allowed coaches and candidates to meet in lodges for in-person coaching. No business was allowed to occur in lodges during this time and stringent disinfection after all meet-ups within lodges were required.

He also urged Masters to ensure that their lodges have adequate disinfectant, cleaning supplies, and hand sanitizer available and that all surfaces members may come into contact with are regularly disinfected prior to and following any gathering in the lodge. The Master should take an inventory of the number of pairs of white gloves they have available, as some members may wish to wear gloves once meetings are permitted to resume. Wearing masks is highly recommended, he said. Brethren are encouraged to wear them at all activities.

As for the months to come, “I will follow a phased approach similar to what the governor has laid out. Sometime after the governor permits us to move to Phase II — when that happens — I’ll make the judgment on when to permit business meetings again. But I don’t anticipate any degree work for quite a while — distancing can’t be maintained in those cases.”

When Phase III comes, it likely will return the state to business as

usual. If there is a capacity limit within that state order, Masons will comply with that.

“Once we are completely reopened — I’m hoping late summer — we’ll target five areas I was not able to get to for completing my district meetings: Wilmington, Charlotte, Lenoir, Asheville and finish at Stokesdale Lodge. We may hold that at the Greensboro temple if we need extra capacity.

“My message will be a little different than it was earlier this year,” he said with a chuckle. “Things are a lot different now.

Meanwhile, care was being taken to secure the health and safety of our charitable homes — the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford and WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community in Greensboro. Both closed to the public in March. Because of those efforts, coupled with strict new policies for disinfection, food service and general care of those who live in the homes, not one case of COVID-19 had been reported in either population as of presstime.

Board members of both homes have not let the pandemic stop progress. Both boards in May held their quarterly meetings online and got their work done well, and in record time.

At MHCO, the kids and their caretakers were in good shape. Some who had left campus before the shutdown and returned went into isolation cottages for 14 days after their return. Staff and care workers were in good spirits and working hard to maintain a healthy habitat for all. Adjustments have been made campus-wide. Food supplies were plenty.

The fate of the home’s annual Homecoming in October was up in the air at presstime. Organizers will make a final decision in August. In the meantime, the pool was scheduled to open Memorial Day weekend. As a private pool, it was not subject to state shutdown regulations.

At WhiteStone, restrictions on visitors helped keep the virus out. All residents and staff were wearing

masks outside of their apartments.

Staff was also working with residents who might be feeling depressed or saddened by quarantine fatigue. Staff and a task force of residents were working hard to help keep the mood light, with pop-up concerts in the parking lots, greetings from a friend in a T-Rex costume waving happily to all, and a chance for residents to write messages for Facebook to be shared with friends and family outside.

“WhiteStone will take a slow and calculated approach to reporting and easing restrictions based on data and info that comes from health officials, to make sure we’re doing it at the right time and not posing added risk,” Administrator Mark Lewis said. “We want to make sure COVID-19 stays out of our campus. We were among the first to close and we want to be among the last to open.”

The North Carolina Masonic Foundation board, working with the charities, maintained a close eye on investments, weathering a raucous market in the early days of the shutdown and protecting assets. By May, investments were recovering nicely, said NCMF Chief Development Officer Jeff Hensley. The public Campaign for WhiteStone, suspended during the isolation, is expected to resume in early Fall.

As brothers dealt with the pandemic at home and at work, lodges opted to step back from their own planned fundraisers for the charities. Brother Charles Barrett, chair of the Commission on Subordinate Lodges Special Activities, said some 30 fundraisers were cancelled statewide. About a third had been rescheduled for later this year.

The big question for later this year will be where and how Annual Communication operates.

“Even if all the restrictions are lifted, I suspect a fair number of our brethren will not want to be present with 1,200 people in a very warm hotel ballroom,” Bradshaw said. “So we’re looking at everything right now.”

■ see NEW REALITY, page 3

Lux Libertas makes some ‘virtual’ history

By WB Bill Faison

Secretary Lux Libertas #772

With a dispensation from the Grand Master, Lux Libertas Lodge #772 made history May 2 by holding its stated communication online.

“Our lodge stepped up to provide its members with a much-needed Master Masons’ lodge experience,” RW William Mills, Master of Lux Libertas, said.

MWGM Shaun Bradshaw issued an order on March 16 for the protection of our brethren, locking down lodges, just as the governor had locked down the state. Shortly after doing so, the Grand Master asked the IT Committee to consider how lodges might continue to meet virtually during the lockdown.

On March 27, the committee recommended technology solutions and procedures for conducting virtual lodge meetings. Shortly afterward, Lux Libertas asked the Grand Master for permission to meet virtually, and he sought the advice of the Board of Custodians.

The BOC first decided that approving a virtual lodge meeting was outside of the realm of their authority. However, after the officers of Lux Libertas simulated an online opening and closing for a subcommittee of the BOC and Grand Master Bradshaw, Deputy Grand Master David Wicker and Senior Grand Warden Larry Thompson,

the BOC supported the lodge’s request to the Grand Master to conduct a virtual meeting.

Stipulations were that the charter always be visible, only known and vouched for brethren could attend, and no degree work, examinations or secret ballots would be permitted.

The Grand Master, in response to the BOC recommendations and Lux Libertas’s request, issued a well-reasoned and thoughtful opinion on April 29, allowing the lodges to meet virtually when it is in the best interest of the lodge, requiring them to apply to him for dispensation to do so, requiring that software meet certain standards and adopting the recommendations of the Technology Committee and the BOC. He also granted Lux Libertas a dispensation to meet.

“We were really overjoyed to have permission to meet,” Senior Warden Gary Handy said. “Our lodge meets quarterly and all of our brothers were really looking forward to getting together.”

“The officers of Lux had a really good time practicing for the first-ever Master Masons’ virtual lodge meeting,” said Junior Warden Bobby Meadows. “It was just like any other lodge meeting, only everyone was in their own tyled space, aproned and doing their parts.”

Before members could enter the virtual lodge waiting room, they conferenced with Tyler pro-tem

Jeremy Hicklin, who briefed them on the rules for virtual meetings and took up the pass. Eligible brethren were then given a passcode to enter the virtual lodge waiting room and from there they were admitted into the virtual lodge meeting room.

“During the meeting our secretary, Bill Faison, displayed on a dedicated lodge computer appropriate images at the appropriate times: a lodge room, the altar and three Great Lights, the flag, columns and the letter G,” said MWB Speed Hallman who was the “designated hitter,” standing by in case any officer had technical difficulties or for any other reason was not available to do his part. Lodge business included among other items, a revision of bylaws, receiving an application for affiliation and granting a demit. WB Rick Smith presented Masonic education: an overview of early UNC history illustrated with PowerPoint slides. Votes were conducted by the usual sign and by “paper ballot” using the polling function of the virtual platform.

Lux Libertas invited Grand Lodge officers and members of the Board of Custodians and the Board of General Purposes to attend the historic meeting, and members of each were present. Forty-two brethren attended, and before it was gaveled to order, and with the Grand Master’s permission, a screen shot of the assembled brethren was

taken to commemorate the event.

Lux Libertas members and Past Grand Masters Bryant Webster, Gene Jernigan, Gene Cobb, Speed Hallman and Dan Rice were supportive and instrumental in advancing the request to meet virtually. Past Grand Masters Bill Brunk (also a Lux Libertas member), Bob Gresham and Tom Gregory also participated in the meeting, as did Grand Lodge officers Kevan Frazier, Robert Rideout and Mike Register. PGM Webster spoke for many when he observed that “this was a technology leap for Masons, and I was proud to have been a part of it.”

The Grand Master closed the historic meeting in ample form, saying, “These are challenging times and we need to find innovative ways for our lodges to continue meeting the needs of our brethren. The officers of Lux diligently prepared for this meeting and did an excellent job opening, conducting and closing the first virtual lodge meeting in our Grand Jurisdiction.”

Lux Libertas, chartered in 2017, is an academic lodge whose members have an affinity for the University of North Carolina, the nation’s first public university, founded by North Carolina Masons in 1793. The lodge takes its name from UNC’s motto, the Latin words for light and liberty. The lodge has 52 members and meets quarterly in various locations around the state. ♠

NEW REALITY from page 2

Cancelling the annual meeting is not an option at this stage, he said. Brothers need their chance to vote for their next Grand Master. He said in any case, he has made it clear he will step aside to allow Deputy Grand Master David Wicker to begin his year as Grand Master on schedule.

Even when the virus becomes a thing of the past, he said, consideration will have to be given to the lessons learned and the need to update the Code to cover future virtual meetings and other rules that

would have seemed unthinkable before the pandemic.

Not all news from the Craft is about hardship. The Grand Master in his first communication asked lodges to keep tabs on current members and seek out those who haven’t been in lodge in a while, and the widows of brothers. It has worked well in many areas.

“But we have learned you have to call a few times. The first time you call an elderly brother, he’s not quite sure you are on the up and up. Call back a time or two, and you have

made a friend,” Bradshaw says. “We are re-engaging them and they feel part of the lodge again.”

Masonic education has grown and morphed to meet new needs. Numerous virtual education sessions have been offered via the Grand Lodge Facebook page and shared via MORI. Zoom, Webex, Microsoft Teams and other services have become part of the Masonic team as never before.

The Grand Lodge office has reopened with limited access. ♠



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THE MISSION OF FREEMASONRY IN NORTH CAROLINA IS TO RAISE THE MORAL, SOCIAL, INTELLECTUAL, AND SPIRITUAL CONSCIENCE OF SOCIETY BY TEACHING THE ANCIENT AND ENDURING PHILOSOPHICAL TENETS OF BROTHERLY LOVE, RELIEF, AND TRUTH, WHICH ARE EXPRESSED OUTWARDLY THROUGH SERVICE TO GOD, FAMILY, COUNTRY, AND SELF UNDER THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD WITHIN THE BROTHERHOOD OF MAN.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Masons beat back pandemic with actions, compassion

Sometimes, success is measured by what's NOT there. For North Carolina's Freemasons, what has not been there is apathy. Just look around. Lodge doors may be locked, but that doesn't mean Masons have not been busy.

It's more than clear that apathy has played no role in how brothers across the state have dealt with the pandemic that has closed lodges, cancelled countless fundraisers and kept brother from greeting brother live and in person.

Just take a look at Facebook. Post after post shows brothers doing for others. They're giving blood, they're collecting money for medical equipment for front line healthcare workers, they're chipping in for food and drink for those fighting the virus and keeping others healthy.

They're checking in on each other, as the Grand Master has requested, and on those who have not been at lodge for a while. They're finding and connecting with widows and families of brothers who have passed.

Others – in the Masonic family – also are part of the success. WhiteStone residents and others have made financial donations dedicated to funding emergency assistance as

needed in the fight against COVID.

There is plenty to celebrate, even when the lodge doors are closed.

Committees, task forces and boards all have continued to meet – albeit on a screen in tiny Brady Bunch boxes. The work of the Grand Lodge and its staff has kept at it; the annual audit is well under way, business is being done behind face masks and with proper social distancing.

Our charitable homes have weathered the viral storm with exceptional success. As of press-time, not one – NOT ONE – case of COVID-19 has been reported or diagnosed at either home. That's big news. Everyone we love and care for at WhiteStone and the Masonic Home for Children is still here.

And it shows that our homes already were ahead of the game in terms of what it takes to keep a

home safe from a viral invasion.

That is success beyond words.

In this issue, we do our best to share the stories of what your brothers, your homes and your leadership have been up to, the successes we all celebrate and the hope we all hold for a quick return to some sense of normalcy. Read on, and join us in noticing what's NOT there.



By Beth Grace
Editor

MHCO Annual Report swimming your way!

Lodges should be on the lookout for Making a Splash!, the new annual report from the Masonic Home for Children. The report has a bright, eye-pleasing new look and more graphics, making the content stand out and easy to read.

The focus of the 2019 Annual Report is the newly opened MHCO Aquatic Center, complete with special graphics and stats that show how the new pool built last year has changed everything for MHCO's kids as we head into summer. The pool is slated to be opened Memorial Day weekend. State coronavirus closure restrictions do not apply to private pools.

There's another change in the report. Lodge giving totals for the year will be sent out separately via email to lodge masters and secretaries this year, along with the regular monthly MHCO update. Questions? Contact MHCO at 919-603-3906 with questions.



FROM THE GRAND MASTER



Masonry outside the lodge

By P. Shaun Bradshaw
Grand Master

I'm composing this article from what I hope is the other side of history. At the present moment, COVID-19

(the coronavirus) has forced us to shelter in place and kept us away from so many of the people, places, and activities that bring us joy. This is especially true for us as Masons.

So much of our Masonic experience, until now, has been tied to our ability to attend lodge, perform our rituals, shake hands, share a meal, and discuss our thoughts with our brethren. But for now, at least, most of those experiences seem out of reach.

Our fraternity has existed through multiple wars, prior pandemics, various local and national tragedies, and societal upheavals, but despite all that, our lodges (mostly) continued to meet, to bring brethren together to share their experiences, hopes, dreams, and desires for self-improvement.

This time, it's different. We are faced with a pandemic that is particularly deadly for those who have compromised health conditions or are advanced in age. Unfortunately, a majority of our members, especially our most active members, meet those criteria and thus are especially susceptible to this indomitable virus. As such, (along with the requirements from our state government) I was forced to make the difficult decision to shut down our lodges, and with it, a large part of what we consider to be our Masonic experience.

Prior to all this I was traveling four to six days a week attending district meetings and various other Masonic events, but now, I'm not certain when my next trip, district meeting, or lodge visit will happen. I realize it is difficult for all of us who are passionate about our fraternity to not feel discouraged, upset, or even lonely during this time. And I sincerely hope that, by the time you read this, we will be back in our lodges – even if we have to wear masks and mind our social distancing with fist bumps or elbow taps instead of handshakes and hugs – so that feeling, that emptiness may fade.

It's funny, in a way, how Providence works in our lives. Like most, if not all of my predecessors, I had a plan for this year around what I wanted to accomplish, the message I wanted to bring to the Craft, and the difference I hoped sharing my story would make to some of my brethren.

In fact, prior to writing my last article I struggled about the topic I wanted to cover. You see, just prior to drafting the article there had been some issues on social media which weighed heavily on my mind and I thought I might want to address in the article.

In the end, I decided my preference was to maintain the focus of the articles on the broader topics of Masonic ritual and symbolism and my belief in the transformative power of our fraternity.

Essentially, I made up my mind at the time not to write about contemporary issues, but try to provide more insight into my feelings about our Craft. And then the pandemic hit. Sometimes Providence has a different plan from my own and I've learned not to fight it.

So in this article I am compelled to write about the pandemic, its immediate impact on our fraternity and the potential

long-term effects we may see as a result of it.

Frankly, while there will certainly be some challenges to overcome, it's not all doom and gloom. In many ways, this crisis has the possibility of reigniting the promise of who we are as Freemasons.

As many of you know, I've put substantial emphasis on the Principle Tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth this year and I cannot help but think that this crisis, this pandemic, provides us as Freemasons the opportunity to truly demonstrate our adherence to those tenets.

In many ways, this pandemic may end up being a blessing for us.

Until now, too many lodges and too many brethren only looked for their Masonry in the lodges. If a brother didn't come to lodge or wasn't regularly active, often they were forgotten. That's not what our fraternity teaches

nor what we are about.

Among the potential positives that can come out of this horrible time, I have no doubt the reconnection to our inactive brethren and our widows will be near the top.

The opportunity to live our tenets of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth and the realization that, as we are reminded in our Closing Charge, we should "forget not the duties, which [we] have heard so frequently inculcated and so forcibly recommended in this lodge" and that "these generous principles are to extend further." These tenets and our need to live by them must extend beyond the lodge and beyond our interactions with our brethren.

"Every human being has a claim upon your kind offices. Do good unto all – recommend it more especially to the household of the faithful."

With these thoughts in mind, I'd like to share just a few positive stories I've heard since the pandemic hit.

Outreach – Brotherly Love

Shortly after ordering lodges to cease Masonic meetings, I issued a directive to the Masters and Secretaries of all the lodges requesting that they prepare a list of all their lodge members and widows and begin contacting them immediately to see if they had any health concerns, needed any assistance, or just wanted to talk.

The Grand Lodge staff and I knew it was highly likely that many of these members hadn't been contacted in years, so we also asked the officers to capture and update changes to the members' contact information so the member records could be as up-to-date as possible.

Based on the reports I've received from some of the DDGMs, Masters, and Secretaries, this effort has been an unmitigated success. Many brethren who hadn't had any contact with their lodges (aside from their dues notices) were pleased to hear from the lodge and thankful for the wellness check.

In a few cases, the brother or widow requested assistance, but most of the time they just appreciated the opportunity to talk to a brother. With that said, I was told that sometimes it took two or three calls before the brethren would warm up enough to have

■ see BRADSHAW, page 7

OUR MASONIC CHARITIES AT WORK

MHCO has a history of staying safe

By Tina Gilreath

Masonic Home for Children

They say history repeats itself. And they are right.

In 1918, the Masonic Home for Children – then known as Oxford Orphan Asylum – was actually hit by three epidemics. In January, pneumonia claimed three lives. July brought an outbreak of whooping cough, but thankfully there were no fatalities. Finally, in October, the Spanish flu arrived with a vengeance! There were 250 cases of the flu and the Home lost four children to the illness.

Our Home emerged from these tragedies and continued to be a safe haven for those children in its care as well as a solution for families across North Carolina who needed a loving, caring place for their children while they rebuilt their lives.

So here we are in 2020 and the coronavirus has swept the globe. Times have changed, and so has the model of care at MHCO. The Home still stands and the children in our care are safe and healthy. As of presstime, there were no cases of COVID-19 on campus.

That hasn't happened by accident. Campus has been closed since mid-March. Social distancing, quarantine, and hand sanitizing are the new normal. Only staff and authorized deliveries have been allowed to enter.

All activities had to be cancelled and favorite annual events such as Great Landscape Day, Wilkerson College, Ambassador Orientation, and even the Baccalaureate Service were removed from the calendar.

Some of our children were on home visits during the onset of the pandemic and have since returned. When they come back to campus, they have been isolated for 14 days in a designated cottage. Their health has been closely monitored

and they are reintegrated once they are cleared.

The children have been busy! They have been continuing with academic time daily. Each cottage sets aside time for residents to complete a combination of online work through Granville County Schools and paper/pencil work. Our education coordinator delivers packets of work to our residents once per week. Completed work is scanned and emailed to the classroom teachers. Tutors are available virtually for all residents.

The children really miss the employees who don't live on campus, so they got together and organized a parade. They drove by those employees' houses that they haven't been able to see lately. Decorations on the vans and the horns honking brought joy to the kids and to everyone they visited.

MHCO has been working to help others in the community. The



Not quite the same as the Homecoming Parade, but the children organized one of their own so they could visit from a distance with staff members whom they hadn't seen for awhile.

School of Graphic Arts has used its 3D printer to make mask extenders, straps that span the back of the head and connect with ear loops. It spares pain for those who are wearing masks around the clock. The extenders were donated to the frontline workers in Granville County.

And the community has been helping MHCO. The local food bank sent excess fresh fruit and vegetables. The Granville County Senior Citizens and NC Face Mask Warriors provided enough masks for our staff and children. With the shortage of disposable facemasks, this was truly an invaluable contribution.

And despite these tough times, MHCO's friends and supporters have continued to help. One supporter mentioned that he found himself with extra money since he'd been quarantined and not driving as much. He thoughtfully sent his extra gas money to help the kids.

It has been heartwarming to see our children and staff and our community all working together as we maneuver through these uncertain and troubling times. We truly are all in this together.

Finally, we want everyone to know that the Masonic Home for Children is here and we have been busy!

We miss our friends and are looking forward to our campus reopening and resuming normal activities. We are here for families who might need help caring for their children while they work to get back on their feet.

We are grateful and humbled by the love and support we have received from so many. Our Home made it through 1918, despite all the sickness and loss. And MHCO will make it through 2020, despite COVID-19, with that same resiliency and strength.

History truly does repeat itself. Be well!

■ BRADSHAW, from page 5

a real conversation because, frankly, they didn't know the brother on the other end of the phone call and may have been a little suspicious of the contact. In other instances, I've heard from widows or the children of widows thanking the fraternity for reaching out to them.

I was very pleased to hear about some of the other activities lodges were doing to help local communities get through the isolation imposed by the virus. For example, several lodges are working with their local Red Cross organizations to host much-needed blood drives, as well as offering to feed first responders and other medical professionals who are working so hard to ensure the health and well-being of our communities.

I was also pleased to hear from Illustrious Sir Buddy Brown, Potentate of the Sudan Shrine Temple, with a request to allow the Dunn Clown unit to visit and perform (in a socially distant way) for one of the local retirement communities. The brethren uploaded a video to Facebook of their outing and it looked like it was a wonderful experience for both the brethren and the residents.

Charities – Relief

Shortly after early reports that the pandemic had reached the US, both our charities took swift action to ensure the health and safety of their residences. WhiteStone had to take the unprecedented action of closing its gates to outside visitors (with limited exceptions).

Given the highly contagious nature of the virus and the vulnerable population of our home, that action was necessary. As of presstime, none of the residents of WhiteStone have contracted COVID-19 at a time when some

retirement communities have been ravaged by the virus.

The MHCO took similar action and essentially shut down its campus to outside visitors. Thankfully, the administrative team and staff have handled this situation well and the children have continued to receive the same level of care they are accustomed to, including tutoring while schools are meeting virtually.

Further, the NCMF has stepped up to provide much-needed financial guidance to the other two charities and a commitment to assist them as much as possible while they assess and eventually recover from the impact of the virus on their fundraising activities.

In addition to assisting the charities, the NCMF through the MESH LLC Outreach program continues to provide financial assistance to our brethren and widows who are having financial difficulties. If you need assistance or know of a brother, sister or widow who may need assistance please contact Outreach Program Coordinator Rebecca Gallimore, who can assess the needs and determine eligibility for services. Rebecca can be reached at 336-601-5593 or at 833-853-1449.

Masonic Education

One of the greatest impacts to the fraternity has been the almost immediate proliferation of online resources for Masonic Education. As some of you have already seen, in anticipation of a likely shutdown, I was able to work with the brethren of Phoenix #8 in Fayetteville to make a video of my district meeting speech, which I adjusted so it could be given in an untyped setting.

We were able to upload that video to the Grand Lodge's YouTube channel just a few days later and,

the last time I checked, it had been viewed approximately 3,100 times.

If by chance you haven't had a chance to view the talk and would like to go to YouTube and search for Grand Master Shaun Bradshaw GLNC and it should show up in the search results.

For those of you who are active on Facebook, a new group called Refracted Light has also quickly come up on the scene to fill the void of access to Masonic Education. This group is administered by a small group of Freemasons from across the US and includes a few members from our own jurisdiction.

This group endeavors to provide Masonic Education programs on a near nightly basis. I even heard one brother mention that he's probably attended more Masonic education programs in the last few weeks as a result of his work with that group as he had in his entire Masonic career.

I've also heard several brethren comment that they have taken this time to do more "inner work" with the Masonic symbols. That is, they are beginning to be more deliberate in practicing meditation or quiet contemplation, during which they consider the meanings of the symbols, their personal feelings about the fraternity, and how they intend to act, change, and transform themselves as a result of the ideas that come from those times of reflection.

Brethren, this is what Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth look like outside the lodge.

I hope, once we reconvene in our lodges, we remember this experience and continue 1) engaging in the outreach programs the lodges have begun, 2) remembering and supporting our charities, and 3) reflecting on the ritual and symbols of our fraternity and how those

reflections transform who we are as men inside and outside lodges.

Virtual Annual Communication

One last item I'd like to bring to your attention. Given the current state of the pandemic and the very real possibility that there may still be some restrictions on group sizes, the Grand Lodge officers are already beginning to review how we might handle conducting Annual Communication – including the possibility of having most of the delegates participate virtually.

We are still in the early stages of our review, which includes identifying requirements in our Code, technological platforms available, and communications necessary to keep all our brethren informed. We will update the lodges and delegates as we get closer to Annual Communication to ensure the smoothest possible event.

Of course, our hope is that we will be able to meet as we have in the past, but we think it's important to be prepared just in case.

Finally, brethren, I've heard from several of you about how you have been touched by the kindness of others or have worked to ensure that others are taken care of during this unprecedented pandemic.

As always, I encourage you to share your story and if you would like to contact me about your story, please don't hesitate to do so. I thoroughly enjoy hearing from each of you. Just email me at sbradshaw@glnc.us, or if you prefer, send a letter to me at the Grand Lodge. They'll get it to me.

Brethren, keep the light and tell your story! ⚡

One of these days, we'll all be outside, shaking hands and spending time face to face again. Until then, there's a way to keep up with all the news in the NC Masonic news online.

If you want to help us save money (our printing budget will be smaller in the new year and we'd love your help!), just send a note to ncmason@glnc.us with

these words in the subject line:

OPT OUT, and in the body of the email, include your full name and mailing address. We'll take it from there.

If you want to subscribe to the online version by email, it's easy . . . Just head to this page:

<http://www.epageflip.net/t/5206-the-north-carolina-mason>

Then hit the blue "Subscribe" tab on the right-hand side of the page. Fill in the info, and you're done!

No need for trails of Post-It notes reminding you to go and hunt for the paper every other month, no reason to scribble a reminder on napkins or the back of envelopes.

Questions? Email us at ncmason@glnc.us!

THE MYSTERY OF THE PERFECT NUMBER

In the previous issue a plan of work was outlined to start at the beginning and work through the degrees of the ritual searching for esoteric relevance. Esoteric interpretation means different things to different people. Fortunately, esoterica paints with a wide brush and in many colors and interpretations.

An immediate question presents itself: where do we start? As a point of departure we will start at the physical beginning. The metaphysical beginning will be on hold until we consider "masonic spiritualism."

All Masons are familiar with three raps: to alarm the lodge, inform the administrator, and denote preparation. The number three in spoken, physical, and observed ritual continues to repeat itself throughout Masonic ritual. Why? The esoteric notion of a specialized pattern of learning for Masonry assumes the repetition of the three is standard, being used from time immemorial. Yet the pattern of three, as well as the number three, has a long relationship with mathematics, oratory, literature, numerology and Providence.

For ages mathematicians have considered the number three as a natural number. Natural in number placement, as the natural number to follow two, and precede four, and is the smallest prime number.

To emphasize a point, orators often use a series of three nouns or noun phrases. Thus we commonly hear from their mouths phrases as "the sun, moon and stars," describing magnitudes, "truth, justice, and the American way" in describing the pursuits of Superman. My favorite is "there is nothing more important than the flag, mom and apple pie."

This type of oratory also denotes finality of argument.

Literature, especially theological literature, is filled with similar phrasing. For emphasis, Psalm 150 states "Praise ye the Lord, Praise God in his sanctuary, praise Him in the firmament of his power." Or Micah 6:8 reads "but do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God."

Numerologists respect the number three as positive and negative. Positive in that it is the strongest number being a triad, and negative in that bad things seem to happen in patterns of three. We, as Masons, are taught that the course of human and personal events, as the mosaic



By Donald Street
Hiram #40, Morning Star #85,
Nine Sisters #773

pavement indicates, are checkered with good and evil. The number three is the strongest of all numbers. The number one is a monad or an individual number, two is a dyad or the relationship of two monads, and three is a triad or three monads in harmony. Geometrically, this forms a delta or triangle, the strongest design.

In relation to Divine Providence the strongest design is found repeatedly. Biblically, the number three represents divine wholeness, completeness, and perfection; the Holy Trinity; the three days and nights before resurrection; body, spirit and soul; three archangels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and many other examples.

The number three is universal in Masonry: three raps, three knocks, three steps, three degrees, the prin-

cipal officers, and more. Historically, "everywhere among the ancients the number three was deemed the most sacred of numbers. In the philosophy of Plato, it is the image of the Supreme Being because it includes in itself the properties of first two numbers, and as Aristotle says, it contains within itself a beginning, and middle, and an end.

The Pythagoreans called it perfect harmony. In the mysteries from Egypt to Scandinavia we find a sacred regard for the number three. It was ... a general character of the mysteries to have three principal officers and three grades of initiation." (Mackey, 784).

As mentioned above, the image of the number three is of powerful significance, "but in nothing is the Masonic signification of the ternary (three parts) made more interesting

than in its connection with the sacred delta the symbol of Deity." (Mackey, 785).

The delta, or triangle, mentioned above is present in the lodge. Principal officers' stations are a triangle, the three lights form a triangle, and the S and C placement creates a triangle which shifts into the Seal of Solomon.

The Seal of Solomon is possessed of six triangles and one hexagon. Linear connection of the angles of the hexagon produce an additional six triangles.

Using Pythagorean numbers the six external triangles (deltas) of the Seal of Solomon and the six internal triangles (deltas) of the hexagon produce $6^2 \times 6^2 = 72$. Seventy-two!

According to Rosicrucian esoterica the steps of Jacob's ladder are seventy-two in number and

engraved on each step is the name of an emanation of God, seventy-two, total.

Thus we find there is "no symbol more important in its signification, more various in its application, or more generally diffused throughout the whole system of Freemasonry than the triangle.

"The equilateral triangle is to be found scattered throughout the Masonic system.

"It is in the ineffable degrees the sacred delta, everywhere presenting itself as the Grand Architect of the Universe." (Mackey, 800).

The mystical three is everywhere. A painter's ladder leaning against a wall evokes a plethora of metaphysical applications for, in Masonic parlance, the well-travelled. ❖

Isolation gives us time to smell the roses

I hope this article finds you and yours happy and healthy. As you well know, 2020 is turning out to be anything but typical. Without a doubt, life has changed and will continue to change as we move forward out of this pandemic.

For me, except for the occasional hurricane or ice storm, I have never known the state's lodges to close. As far as we can tell from the old Proceedings and Grand Secretaries' notes, many lodges suspended work during the Great Flu in 1918 and 1919, but not state-wide.

Of course, the business of Freemasonry continues, even if our lodges are not meeting, and the staff and I come by the office regularly to carry out necessary duties. We, like you, are looking forward to getting back to a regular schedule.

But the psychological impact is going to be felt long, long after "abnormal" becomes the "new normal."

As I pondered my message for this article, I considered renewing an emphasis on reaching out to lodge members, or finding value in smaller numbers, or caring for our buildings—all things you've heard before (which are important). But, then, my assistant prevailed upon me to simply share a story or two.

First, as we think about our health, I want to thank our first responders. They bear the brunt of the anxiety, fear, and sickness we're living through. Their job is not easy, and they remind me of my Dad, who helped organize McDowell County's first local rescue squad and was considered a first responder.

Now, Dad worked for the funeral home, but (for you younger members) back then, the only difference between an ambulance and a hearse was whether or not you flipped up the wheels to receive a casket or the tracks to take in a gurney.

Second, I think of all the medical

professionals risking their own health to care for the sick. My Mom worked at the hospital in Marion in the medical records department. I would argue she could diagnose a patient as well as any doctor and she understood the importance of medical know-how. So, when dinner time rolled around and the question was asked, "So, how was your day?" something interesting was bound to be announced from the funeral home, or the hospital, or both!

With that in mind, one day Mom and Dad strolled up to the house and found me in the yard building a palisade fort around a couple dozen plastic army men. "Little Walt, where'd you get all those popsicle sticks from?"

Mom asked. I pointed over to Dr. Archie's office. "Dr. MacIntosh gave you all those?"

"Oh no," I replied. "He threw them away. I got them out of his trash!"

I think society sometimes acts like "Little Walt." I thought I was safe. And, I was — after mom scrubbed me with bleach. Like I

said, brethren, to all those on the front lines, thank you for watching out for us.

The strange times we live in have forced us to slow down. For some, slowing down is frustrating. For others it causes anxiety. Be honest. Are you glued to the news because you're bored or have you become numb to the number of deaths reported daily?

I try to reflect on the numbers daily. Every one of those victims is a person. Every one was a part of somebody's life.

While we all are numb to an extent, we are reflecting on life. We're noticing the small things and taking care to simply stop and smell the roses. It struck me: Freemasonry's teachings — to reflect, to study, to be fraternal — help us prepare for times like these. They remind us to check on the neighbors, check on our brethren. It's what we do.

When I walked into the kitchen one night recently, I saw my wife sitting at the kitchen table handwriting notes to people—like my mother did when I was young.

When I have been forced to go out for groceries or supplies, I notice people acknowledge each other in the aisle or on the sidewalk, with a nod and a smile and perhaps a

"hello."

This is new. Slowing down helps us acknowledge each other. There may be an underlying fear that the other person has COVID-19, but we still take the moment to appreciate their existence, and value our own.

I've daydreamed a little back to my childhood in Marion, NC, when time was slower (at least, time was slower for me when I wasn't dumpster diving for used tongue depressors). My father called my two younger sisters and me vagabond children because we roamed the town.

We had a routine—out early to harness up our Shetland pony, "Star." Our pony pulled us around town in a small cart. In that cart we collected empty Coke bottles. After an hour or so, we drove Star to the Winn-Dixie Store to collect the 3 cent deposit on the bottles.

We would head home so I could start my lawn-mowing service. I tried to finish all the yards early so it wouldn't be so hot. In the evening, we set Star out to graze in the yard or the vacant lot behind the house.

As evening fell, I led Star back to the barn to feed him. I always hated feeding Star after my sisters did, because they inevitably left the lid off the sweet feed barrel. If you've ever had one rat run up your arm, it's one too many. If I can impart any wisdom whatsoever, remember: Beat on the feed barrel and carry a flashlight.

Star taught the Clapp children about the corporate world. I owned 50 percent of the Clover Hill's Flaming Star Company (our bottle collection service, and the origin of Star's name), meaning I paid \$40 of the total cost of the horse when we bought him at auction in Hickory. Two of my sisters could each claim a 25 percent stake of the company, but Star was all of our responsibility. Being the principal investor, I held the position of caring for the employees — the pony — as well as maintaining the cart. The cart was a lesson in government subsidies. Dad provided the cart, I owed half the horse, and we shared him equally.



By Walt Clapp
Grand Secretary



The Grand Secretary and many other Masons throughout North Carolina made use of part of their time by donating blood.

From the Grand Historian

NC Masonry survived 1918 flu outbreak

By Ludwik Wodka
Grand Historian

The coronavirus pandemic is not the first time Masonry confronted an outbreak of illness.

Outbreaks of smallpox, tuberculosis and yellow fever have hit North Carolina at various times since the 18th century, but the most deadly was the H1N1 influenza pandemic (commonly referred to as the “Spanish Flu”) that broke out in the United States in the summer of 1918.

That particularly deadly plague has been deemed the deadliest in all of recorded history, killing over 50 million people worldwide, or approximately 3 to 6 percent of the world’s population at the time.

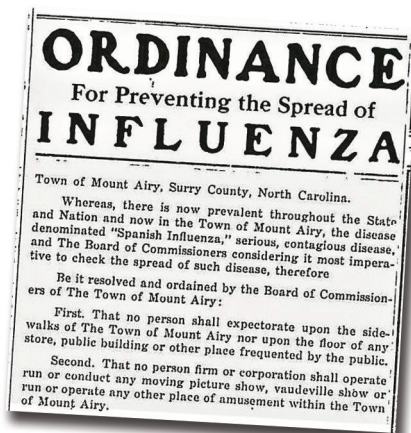
More than 13,000 people died in North Carolina alone. At its peak, it ravaged the nation from about July to December 1918. In Charlotte, a quarantine was declared for five weeks between early October and mid-November 1918.

Public meetings and gatherings were cancelled – resulting in a gap in the minutes for most Masonic bodies during this time. The length of the gap in the activity of the Masonic bodies varied, but most seem to have suspended activity between October 1918 and January



1919. This also interrupted the work of the DDGMs and Grand Lecturers who had to cancel their lodge visits during this time.

Many lodges made their buildings and resources available to assist their communities in coping with the disease. One notable example was in Asheville, where hospitals at the time were only admitting Caucasian patients. The Asheville Masons contacted the Red Cross and made their temple available to serve as a temporary hospital of the non-



Story on the Asheville Masonic Temple's offer from the Asheville Citizen-Times (left). Above is an announcement from Surry County in 1918.

Caucasian patients in the area.

The Oxford Orphanage was especially hard-hit during 1918. The Spanish Flu was only one of three epidemics they were to endure. An outbreak of pneumonia in January claimed the lives of three children, followed by whooping cough in July. In October, the Spanish flu stuck 250 children. This in turn led to 41 cases of pneumonia which took another four children.

“By the mercy of God, the Baby Cottage escaped this epidemic,” the

Grand Lodge proceedings report.

Many local women in Oxford attended to the sick children at the orphanage (as nurses were in short supply at the time), earning the gratitude and thanks of the staff and the Grand Lodge.


The Masonic and Eastern Star Home in Greensboro managed to escape the ravages of the epidemic.

When the quarantine was lifted, North Carolinians were eager to get back to life as normal.

The Charlotte Scottish Rite, for example, hosted a reception for Masons in the city as well as those at Camp Greene on Nov. 15, 1918. Hundreds attended the event held at the Masonic Temple.

Other Masonic bodies, perhaps more cautiously, did not report any activity until January and February 1919.

As the end of the epidemic coincided with the end of the war, lodges enjoyed a surge of membership from the soldiers returning from Europe following the brief hiatus caused by the quarantine.

History proves this to be true: We’ve been through this before. We’ve seen worse and have overcome it. 

CLAPP from page 9

Star was also a lesson in community. Everyone in Marion knew him. As we paraded up through town, everyone would smile and nod and laugh at us in the pony cart riding up Main Street. Everyone knew to whom we belonged.

Like each of us, our pony had a personality, and he was smart. Now dad was an ex-Marine and could weave an intricate loop in Star’s tether. So, Star never could undo his loops.

But, that pony knew when his inch-thick hemp rope was rotting, and would start running and tugging until it snapped or he was able to

gnaw through it. Untethered, with knot dangling from one end of the rope, Star galloped down the middle of Main Street, right on to Morgan Street, then back up Crawford Street, past dad’s funeral home.

Dad swears every time Star passed the funeral home he whinnied and launched into his second lap.

We knew where the pony would end his running fit — in Mr. Chamberlain’s yard — and we would wait there for Star to trot into the yard and graze on Mr. Chamberlain’s beautiful lawn. Every time, we’d bring him back home.

We hoped no one would get hurt,


nor anyone capture our pony from Mr. Chamberlain’s yard before he realized it was there.

So, what’s the point of all this reminiscing? To reflect. To remember. To consider in the midst of the normal hustle and bustle that we have time to break loose every once in a while and whinny over the fence.

We have time to call a neighbor and laugh. To nod and greet those we meet on the street.

I see my neighbors picking up mail and groceries for our elderly residents. Letters being written to friends and family. Time is being

taken to tell stories and share good times—even if it is virtually or from a distance. And, remember, these times are causing financial hardship—check on your brethren, inquire of their health and their well-being and keep watch over those who may need assistance, but won’t ask for it.

COVID-19 is serious business, but we can learn from serious business and reflect on our own teachings of friendship, of morality, and brotherly love — friendship and love we need to remember to share with all people. Most importantly, with ourselves. 

Lion & Pillar requirements undergo a few revisions

It's hard to be excellent when you're stuck at home.

But no North Carolina Freemason will let that stand in the way of achieving the requirements of the Lion & Pillar Lodge of Excellence. As Past Grand Master Gene Cobb, who oversees the program, says, "We have to be flexible in times like this."

"The objective of the program was always to recognize lodges for their excellence. These revisions make it a little easier in light of the coronavirus pandemic for our lodges to shine their light!"

Here are the revisions. All deadlines remain the same.

CATEGORY 1: EDUCATION.

Three of seven items complete: Reduced to 2, adding the following options.

A. Document three members who participate in "online" educational offerings produced by a lodge, a member of the Speaker's Bureau, Wilkerson College, Davie Academy, or the Middle Chamber program between March 1 and June 15. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

B. Engage in online efforts to communicate the importance of healthy practices during COVID-19 showing your lodge cares about public health. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

C. Either both A & B above or one of the above and one of the existing options for a total of two items. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

CATEGORY 2: PATRIOTISM

Three of eight items complete: No change except added the following options to the original eight.

A. If not chosen for Category 1, engage in online efforts to communicate the importance of healthy practices during COVID-19 showing your lodge cares about public health. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

B. Document three members who



participate in "online" educational offerings produced by the Lion and Pillar Program between March 1 and June 15 on the topics of MSANA or National Sojourners. If you do both, it will count as two items in this category. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

CATEGORY 3: PHILANTHROPY

Amended the required item. Added a required item and an optional item.

A. In light of the cancelation of many fundraisers or our charities, a credit will be given to any lodge for any amount sent to all three charities. You must do all three to get credit in this category. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

B. Document three members who participate in "online" educational offerings produced by the Lion and Pillar Program between March 1 and June 15 on the topics of NC

Masonic Foundation, WhiteStone, and MHCO including watching the video "Keeping the Promise" put out by the NCMF. You must do all of these programs to get credit in this category. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

C. Make assisting a brother or sister getting assistance from MESH LLC or within your community a requirement for all lodges getting Lion and Pillar this year. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

D. Document three members who go to the MHCO, WhiteStone, and NCMF sites and LIKE THEM. You must have three per lodge between March 1 and June 15.

E. Finally, if your fundraiser got canceled due to COVID 19, document when it was and that you have rescheduled it and YOUR lodge will be given credit for completing the requirement.

CATEGORY 4 MASONIC MEMBERSHIP.

Maintained Required item. Reduced from 4 of 9 to two.

CATEGORY 5 AFFILIATED CONNECTIONS

Add some options.

A. If not chosen for Category 1 or 2, engage in online efforts to communicate the importance of healthy practices during COVID-19 showing your lodge cares about public health. Attach efforts and results with your final application.

B. Be creative. Submit up to three of your own options for approval to PGM Cobb by April 20, 2020, in this category. Attach efforts of approved options with results on your final application.

Remember. When something happens online LIKE IT. LIST YOUR NAME. LIST YOUR LODGE. THREE PER LODGE IS THE QUALIFYING NUMBER!!!

Contact PGM Cobb if you have questions, and watch the Lion & Pillar page (@nclodgeofexcellence) on Facebook for updates!

2020 Cathey Scholarship winners announced

Fifteen students have been awarded the Charles Edward Cathey Scholarship for 2020. Each student receives a scholarship of \$1,000.

In 2000, Grand Master Charles Cathey initiated a drive to raise money for scholarships that could be awarded to deserving North Carolina students. NC Masons generously supported his call to help send graduating high school seniors to college. Because of his tireless efforts on behalf of education, the scholarship was named in his honor.

Winners are:

Elijah Bassett, Robbinsville, Swain County High School

Victoria Brooks, Burlington, Walter M. William HS

Megan Collins, Broadway, Lee County HS

Whitley Creech, Zebulon, Corinth Holders HS

Preston Daughtry, Clinton, Hobbton HS

Juarez Garcia, Williamston, Riverside HS

Lee Macaulay, Sylva, Smoky Mountain HS

Jadon Midgett, Avon, Cape Hatteras Secondary School

Tyjuan Moss, Whiteville, Whiteville HS

Brianna Norris, Franklin, Highlands HS

Alexis O'Kelley, Asheville, McDowell HS

Gracie Patrick, Lattimore, Crest HS
Diandre Richie, Indian Trail, Union Academy

Haylee Smith, Wallace, Wallace-Rose Hill HS

Avery Walker, Cherryville, Cherryville HS

WELCOME OUR
NEW BROTHERS

REPORTED MARCH-MAY

Woodard, Thomas Heath 672 Robbinsville



page 2

Grand Chaplain offers
a prayer for Masons



page 6

Staying safe at our
home at Oxford



page 8

What is the
perfect number?

On the cover

Not your typical lodge meeting,
but members of Lux Libertas
entered into a bold, new world
with an online meeting. Read
more about it on Page 3

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