



Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia
Grand Council Cryptic Masons in Virginia

Plus Lucis

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Royal Arch Masons in Virginia
500 Masonic Lane, Suite C
Henrico, VA 23223-4916



AN INVITATION TO “MORE LIGHT IN MASONRY”

My Companions, welcome to the first edition of Plus Lucis. As the name implies, the purpose of this publication is to dispense “more light” in Masonry, particularly Royal Arch Masonry. A newsletter is an effective form of communication. We received light, further light, and more light as we began our Masonic journey in the Blue Lodge degrees. Consequently, it is most appropriate that we refer to our meetings in the Blue Lodge as “communications.”

As we begin this year, I want to communicate to you some of the exciting initiatives just begun in our Grand Chapter. These initiatives are designed to help each Chapter make advancements in Education, Membership, and Philanthropy.

Let us first examine Membership. We have seen a steady decline in Membership throughout almost all of the Masonic bodies since the 1960s. Everyone agrees that we need to “do something,” but few have come forth with effective ideas to reverse this trend. Unfortunately, most of us don't know what to do or where to begin.

Consider the following question – what percentage of Royal Arch Masons can tell you how many degrees we confer in the Chapter, the names of the degrees, the order in which they are conferred and a little bit about the content of those degrees? Now ask yourself – can you answer those questions? The sad fact is that a small percentage of our members can produce the answers.

How can we invite a Master Mason to join an organization about which we know very little? The usual invitation goes something like this, “we have good meals, great programs, and a lot of fun.” Unfortunately, the reaction of many Master Masons, especially if they are active Masons, is that this will be yet another night away from home, the expense of another dues card, and I really don't have time for “something else.”

Sadly we have failed to communicate the most important fact about Royal Arch Masonry – our degrees are not “something else,” they are intimately related to and further explain the first three degrees in Masonry. If you are seeking “more light,” the best place you can begin after the Blue Lodge is in the degrees of the Royal Arch Chapter. Let me illustrate.

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In each of our first three degrees in the Blue Lodge we hear the Senior Warden in the opening and closing say that one of his duties is to pay the Craft their wages. Do you know when wages are regularly paid? Do you know where wages are paid? Do you know how much the wages are? Do you know how he determines whether your work is approved and if you are actually due wages? Do you know what happens to a person who attempts to receive wages not due him? The Mark Master Degree not only answers these questions, but teaches you how work is examined and approved and how you go about receiving your just wages. This is an expansion of the Fellowcraft Degree and explains many other "craft" things as well. In England it is a separate organization – the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons. This degree definitely imparts more light.

The lessons of the Past Master Degree are considered to be of vital importance to the Grand Lodge of Virginia. In fact they are so important that no one can be elected a Warden in his Lodge without having received this degree, either in Chapter or in a Provisional Lodge of Past Masters. The degree is virtually identical in both bodies.

The content of the Cryptic Council Degrees is not even included in Blue Lodge in spite of the fact that they are intimately connected to the second section of the Master Masons Degree. They deal with a secret work which was built beneath King Solomon's Temple. They deal with a conversation between the head of the craftsmen who conspired against our artistic Grand Master, and in that conversation you learn the true reason for his recanting the plot. You also learn about the plan to preserve certain secrets beneath the Holy of Holies. Although this is "new" information, it is closely related to the second section of the Master Mason Degree.

The Most Excellent Master Degree recounts the dedication ceremonies when King Solomon's Temple was completed. It is not only a beautiful and instructive degree, but explains what happened to the 153,303 men who built it, and how it was maintained after the completion. This degree also possesses one of the most meaningful charges in all of Masonry.

Finally, the Royal Arch Degree jumps forward in ancient time to when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and the Jews were taken into captivity. After more than 50 years, the Persians captured Babylon. The Persian King, ascribing his victory to God and wishing to show his gratitude, freed the Jews, allowed them to return to Jerusalem, and paid the expense of rebuilding the Temple. During this work, an arch was discovered, concealing the secret vault beneath the Holy of Holies, and within are discovered many valuable secrets including a word which you were told was lost in the second section of the Master Mason Degree.

The above brief description of the Royal Arch Degrees will prove to be extremely fascinating and interesting to most Master Masons, particularly those who truly seek more light. The work will sell itself, but only if you can speak intelligently about what we do as Royal Arch Masons. It is much more than another meeting and another dues card!

Three excellent tools to assist you are available from the Grand Chapter. First is a recruiting brochure with a brief description of the degrees. This is appropriate to give to any Master Mason and will give him an idea of what we do and teach as Royal Arch Masons. The next is a set of brochures, describing each degree separately in more detail. These are to be given individually to the candidate as he takes each degree. No secrets are revealed, but it reminds him of what took place in the degree and points out a few of the important lessons contained therein. It is not intended for those who have not yet received the degree. Finally, for those who take the degrees in festival (all on the same day), and for all Royal Arch Masons, there is a degree booklet which contains all of the information in the individual degree brochures, conveniently in a pocket-sized booklet.

Every active Royal Arch Mason should have a copy of the degree booklet and make himself familiar with its contents. Every Chapter should have a supply of the recruiting brochures, the individual degree brochures and the degree booklet. How can we do the work without possessing the appropriate tools? But, the tools will not do the work unless you actually put them to use.

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Companions, we have a structure in place at Grand Chapter to assist in our Education initiative. Right Excellent Kyle Stickland has been appointed Grand Provost, overseeing District Education Officers in each Royal Arch District. They are charged with visiting each Chapter at least once a quarter to assist with educational programs and to see that the booklets and brochures described above are being ordered and being used by the Chapters.

We have the structure, we have the tools, but these are completely useless unless they are implemented in the Chapters. The responsibility to make this plan work does not rest in my hands, nor the Grand Provost, nor the District Deputy Grand High Priest, nor the District Education Officer. The responsibility rests on each individual Royal Arch Mason.

Companions, take the challenge, take the responsibility, apply yourself with double diligence to become completely conversant in all the Royal Arch Degrees. Your education, and your speaking with Master Masons is simply the only way we can address our membership challenges. Education and Membership go hand in hand.

Finally, we have instituted a new structure in Grand Chapter to assist in promoting our charitable endeavors. Right Excellent Mark Chapman (formerly our Alzheimers Chairman) is now our Grand Almoner with District Almoners appointed to provide assistance to the Chapters. They will be visiting each Chapter in their District at least once a quarter to assist with programs and ideas for planning charitable events. They will report the activities of each Chapter each quarter. Make use of this valuable resource and lets see just how much we can accomplish if we plan and work together.

We have a plan, we have the tools, we have the structures to assist, now my Companions it is up to you. Grab your tools and let's get to work!

Donald L. McAndrews

Grand High Priest



MAKING A ROYAL ARCH MASON AT SIGHT

On Wednesday, February 11, 2015, your Grand High Priest had the rare opportunity and privilege to make a Royal Arch Mason at sight. Companion Charles "Chuck" Vealey was unable to complete his Royal Arch Degrees due to his treatments for cancer. Accompanied by Most Ex. Howard Coleman, Most Ex. Gordon Sprigg, Jr., Most Ex. Nelson Trinkle, Sr., Most Ex. Clyde Perry, and Rt. Ex. Martin Juul, we traveled to Companion Vealey's home in Chester, gave him the obligation and made him a Royal Arch Mason. Companion Vealey is a member of Petersburg Union Chapter No. 7.



Official Visit to District 17 at Manassah Lodge January 23, 2015



Official Visit to District 1 at Springfield Lodge January 24, 2015

Grand Almoner's Message



Each year Virginia Royal Arch Masons conduct fundraising activities to support finding a cure to Alzheimer's disease. This year various Chapters and Districts are organizing independent and partnering events to raise funds for the Alzheimer's Association. One of our goals is to have each District participate in one of the many Alzheimer's

Association sponsored WALK's to End Alzheimer's events that will take place throughout the state of Virginia. Virginia Royal Arch Masons are actively seeking to advance Alzheimer's research, caregiving and support.

The funds collected from Royal Arch Mason fundraising events support the Alzheimer's Association work to enhance care, research and support for all those affected by Alzheimer's and related dementias. Much of the money raised to combat Alzheimer's disease, stays in the Chapter area where the Royal Arch Mason Chapters are located. As the largest non-profit funder of Alzheimer's research, the Alzheimer's Association is committed to accelerating progress of new treatments, preventions and ultimately, a cure for this terrible disease.

Because the Alzheimer's Association is the largest non-profit voluntary health organization dedicated to accelerating the progress in prevention, cure and living with Alzheimer's disease, it is critical that they have the support of organizations such as the Royal Arch Masons. The funds raised by us are a critical need to helping us find a way to END Alzheimer's, the 6th leading cause of death in America.

As we work together to support the Alzheimer's Association, I hope that you can use some of the tools posted on the Grand Chapter website (on the Philanthropy page) to help in your activities. The partnering of the Alzheimer's Association with the Royal Arch Masons will move our collective vision of a world without Alzheimer's forward. Thank you so much for your support.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Rt. Ex. Mark S. Chapman

Grand Almoner

Grand Provost's Message



At our last Grand Annual Convocation the Companions recognized the need and importance of having a firmly established and fiercely dedicate Education and Service Committee. The duties of this committee are varied but it all comes down to knowledge and education. Providing interesting and engaging topics to our

Chapters and Companions to aid us all in seeking more light in Masonry and the Royal Arch. When we become conversant in the background and composition of Royal Arch Masonry we will be better enabled to reach out to our Brethren in our Blue Lodges, to impart wisdom and direction to the Royal Arch, and have a better understanding of the secrets contained in the Royal Arch Degrees.

Education in its broadest sense can include learning through various means such as the sharing or transmitting of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs and habits from one to another over a period of time. Education is a two way street and we as Royal Arch Masons should be so inclined to share the knowledge and experiences of the Royal Arch. Only through education can Freemasonry in general and the Royal Arch in particular continue to survive.

Tools are in place to aid in the search for more light, the Degree Booklets and Recruiting Brochures, previously mentioned by our Grand High Priest, are excellent starting points to begin your Royal Arch Education. Additional short talks and papers on various topics of the Royal Arch are being compiled and will be available on the Education page of our Grand Chapter website. All Companions are encouraged to share any educational papers so they may be included to help our Chapters and Companions. With an increase in education we come closer to revealing that which was lost and ultimately obtaining more light in Masonry.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Rt. Ex. Kyle Strickland

Grand Almoner