

MIZPAH BULLETIN

September 2019





Mizpah Lodge #302
A.F. & A.M.
Omaha, Nebraska

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 Mizpah Lodge #302

Instituted November 12th, 1918
Chartered June 4th, 1919

Stated communication on the first
Wednesday of every month

Mizpah Benediction

“May the Lord watch between me and
thee when we are absent one from an-
other”

-Genesis 31:49-

May the Lord Watch
MIZPAH
302
Between Me and Thee

From the South

Brethren,

With summer ending and fall beginning, the brothers of Mizpah Lodge and their families have been scrambling to guarantee that they are ready for another year of school. Some brothers have started school themselves; others have started new jobs. These tasks are, without a doubt, stressful and time-consuming. In the face of these personal chores, the officers of Mizpah Lodge have not backed down from their duties to the lodge that relies on them for direction. In fact, it has been quite the opposite.

The elected and appointed men charged with ensuring the future of our institution have continually come to look toward that future together. So far, this has been done by studying masonic history, pouring through the details of both the Nebraska Grand Lodge and Mizpah by-laws, and becoming familiar other forms of masonic guidance. With the knowledge and wisdom gained from these undertakings, we believe ourselves to be even better equipped to help Mizpah lodge continue to further the good of our order and to continue the long-standing traditions that have helped shape it.

While we have found that Mizpah has done a great job meeting the requirements of, and fulfilling the duties associated with, Freemasonry. We have agreed that there are areas that could be improved upon, and that it is our duty to be an example for those around us in improving those areas.

We believe that we are charged to come together on the level, to find precise plumb for lodge operations, and to take actions that are square, for the good of masonry.

Sincerely and Fraternally,

Jeremiah Jones
Junior Warden



Calendar

Wednesday September 4

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

Education: Esoterika

TJ Brumfield

Wednesday September 11

Officers Meeting

6:30 PM

Wednesday September 18

Dark

Wednesday September 25

Possible FC degree—TBA

SW Tom Gibbs In Charge

Wednesday October 2

Potluck Dinner 6:30pm

Business Meeting 7:00pm

Education:

Native Americans in Masonry

Taylor Keen

AS MASONS, WHAT ARE WE BUILDING?

by T. J. Brumfield III

Brothers, for the Trestle I normally hunt down something pre-written by another Mason. This is both because it is quicker than writing something myself, and I also because I want to pull from the font of wisdom of so many other Brothers around the world with all their various years of experience. But if you'll indulge me, I'd like to step up on the soap box for a moment.

This past week I was speaking with a brother about a specific side-degree or ritual that used to be performed in Lincoln called the "Vacant Chair Degree" to honor a Brother who fell in combat. This brother objected to the notion of any new degrees. He has been a Master Mason for 57 years and never needed anything beyond the three Craft Degrees. He felt like if we tried to add anything beyond that, it was suggesting that Blue Lodge was somehow broken and needed something more.

I speak frequently (at length) about how I find value in appendant bodies, particularly the Scottish Rite and York Rite degrees. We all stood before the altar of Masonry at some point saying we wanted more Light. But even ignoring these bodies and other degrees, we're faced with the question of whether or not Masonry itself needs more than the three Craft Degrees.

WB Ben Zaayer gave an educational talk this year about how when he first joined, he asked what we did, and he was told that Masons largely just have business meetings and confer the degrees. That's it.

There is some truth to that. At our peak, lodges were so busy bringing in new members that pretty much the only thing they had time for was conferring degrees and mentoring members on memorizing Q&A for proficiency.

Our lodge charter grants us the ability to confer degrees and some would say that is the primary purpose of the lodge as a body. But is it? Do we need to do more than the bare minimum?

When I petitioned to join this fraternity, I was looking for more than that. I suspect most people who join Masonry are looking for more than that.

Recently, the officers of this lodge have been meeting to discuss in depth what we want Mizpah #302 to be. What is the purpose of the lodge? What do we want it to be in the future?

Inside the lodge I gave an educational presentation on the symbolism of King Solomon's temple, and how we use the working tools to improve ourselves as individuals. That topic is somewhat esoteric and not suited for a newsletter format like this, but I want to distinguish how we Masonically labor in our individual journeys and how we Masonically labor together as a lodge.

What are we trying to build?

We are all part of the body of this lodge. We all meet on the level. I alluded to some recent extra meetings for the officers. We're trying to work on a framework of what we want to see and what we want to present to the members on the whole, but I also want to invite further participation, input and ownership from all of our members, particularly from our Past Masters in future conversations.

We have a new mission statement we've been tossing around. (There may even be a new logo forthcoming that incorporates this statement.) I don't want to jump the gun or steal anyone else's thunder from what we've been working on and some of the things that we'll be presenting to a broader audience in the future, but I did want to particularly discuss the mission statement and how it pertains to the educational presentation I'll be giving in lodge this month. Here is our mission statement:

"Making men better through leadership development, civic responsibility, and Masonic knowledge."

As the chair of the education committee, I've been spending some time thinking about that last element of Masonic Knowledge. Two years ago I was speaking with brothers about developing an education program for Mizpah lodge. I received some pushback from people who assumed Masonic education only consists of lengthy historical lectures.

2019 Officers

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This year we've had different speakers on different topics of different lengths sometimes in different formats. I've been trying to experiment to find out what our members like the most. I'm looking for feedback from our members on which presentations they enjoyed the most, and why. I want to make sure that the programs we shape moving forward aligns with what our members are looking for.

But from my perspective, an ideal education program would align with the other two pillars of that mission statement. Our education program should expand past the presentations in our meetings. With long form proficiency, we'll need mentors for our new candidates as they progress through the degrees. What form will that mentorship take?

How can we teach and develop leaders within the lodge? That is a tough nut to crack and I don't know that I have simple answers to present at this moment, but it does warrant serious consideration.

What about teaching civic responsibility?

In a recent post on Freemasonry for Dummies (freemasonsfordummies.blogspot.com), Brother Christopher Hodapp suggested there was a specific moment where we stopped using McGuffey Readers in schools that led to a decline in society along with a decrease in our membership (both happened in the 1960s). These McGuffey Readers that schools used to teach reading skills also taught a sense of civic responsibility. Without the books, he believes these lessons have been lost from future generations.

I don't know if I completely agree that the lessons were completely lost. Newer generations may find these values taught in other sources (Superman comics or Harry Potter novels and movies for example). But I do agree that these lessons of civil responsibility do strongly align with Masonry.

I do think that it is our duty to teach these values within our lodges. That responsibility doesn't fall solely on the education committee, but it is something I want to be mindful of and I want to ensure that we do account for it in some way.

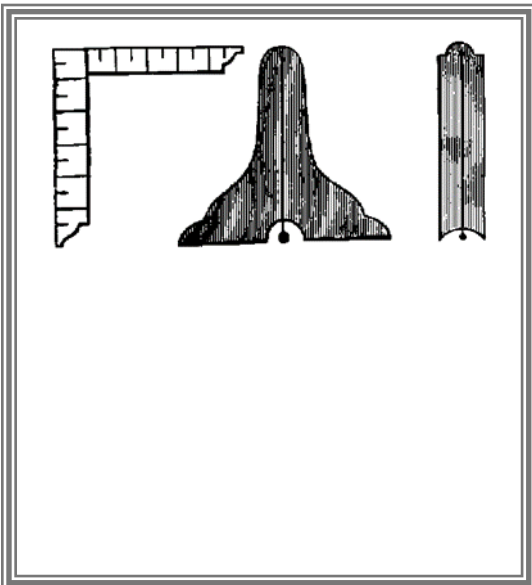
I'm speaking from the soapbox in this moment, but my aim is not merely to vocalize my own opinions rather to solicit yours. Instead of trying to present a material lesson in this space as we usually do, I merely want to leave with you with a few questions.

As Masons, what does it mean for us to Masonically labor?

Joined together as a lodge, what are we building?

How can I (and the rest of the education committee) best serve that purpose?

These are not meant to be rhetorical questions. My contact information is in the margin, and you can always grab me at one of our meetings to pull me aside for a chat. I look forward to hearing back from each of you.



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From the Secretary's Table

Brethren,

As part of our communications, I am emailing this Newsletter monthly and generally send weekly updates about the goings on at Mizpah. If you'd like to be included in these emails, please let me know.

Fraternally,
Ben Zaayer
Secretary