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Official publication of the Scottish Rite bodies of the



Orient of Nebraska

March-April 2024
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Membership

It is a well-documented that Freemasonry grew exponentially after World War II, hitting its membership zenith in the 1950s. Grand Lodges responded to this growth by emphasizing social events over ritual and education. As membership declined from the 1960s onward, Grand Lodges continued to accentuate quantitative gains over qualitative.

In the mid-1980s, shorter proficiency requirements in Nebraska sought to slow the decline in membership by making it easier to raise Master Masons. Were Nebraska Masons seeking quantity



Tangier Shrine dance, c. 1950s

over quality? Whatever the case, it was not working as anticipated.

The current full-form proficiency tacitly acknowledges a decline in membership, but seeks to address it by engaging Entered Apprentice Masons with a mentor to learn ritual; by the time they take their obligations as Master Masons, new members ought to be knowledgeable and capable ritualists. Many Lodges have

raised Brethren who are excellent ritualists and who prove the value of this approach, while other Lodges struggle to get newly obligated Entered Apprentice Masons past their proficiency.

I don't propose to debate short-form versus full-form proficiency - they both have positive and negative aspects - but our full-form requirement in Nebraska is one example of the Grand Lodge reacting to the decline of Masonic membership with a different approach. . . . continued on page 7

plan on it!

a RiteCare vision for the future

Every year, the RiteCare Clinicians across the state send us stacks of thank you letters written by grateful parents and families.

Parents whose child learned to communicate - maybe through an alternative augmentative communication device (AAC) or perhaps learning how to use throat and mouth muscles to make the sounds his mind is thinking - are profoundly appreciative for the RiteCare speech and language therapy services they might not have been able to afford otherwise.

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Orient Calendar

- Mar 2Hastings Spring Reunion (H)
- Mar 8, 15, 22..... Fish Fry Fridays (O)
- Mar 10.....Corned Beef & Cabbage Feed (H)
- Mar 6, 13, 20, 22 Wednesday Lunches (H)
- Apr 9..... Remembrance & Renewal (H)
- Apr 18..... Community Playhouse event TBD (O)
- Apr 18-20.....Leadership Conference (Kansas City, MO)
- Apr 3, 10, 17, 24..... Wednesday Lunches (H)
- May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29..... Wednesday Lunches (H)
- May 15..... Spring Outing (O)
- May 24-25.....Alliance Spring Reunion (A)
- June 5, 12, 19, 26..... Wednesday Lunches (H)
- June 6, 7, 8 Omaha Spring Reunion (O)
- Sept 25..... RiteCare Classic (O)
- Sept 25-28.....National RiteCare Conference (O)
- Oct 13.....Spaghetti Feed (H)
- Oct 25..... Friends of RiteCare dinner & auction (O)
- Nov 19..... Feast of Tishri (H)

**Please check with your
Valley for most current updates to
Scottish Rite events**

Lodge of Perfection meetings:

Alliance, 4th Friday of each month

Mar 22, Apr 26, May 24, June 28
July 26, Aug 23, Sept 27, Oct 25, Nov 22, Dec 27

Hastings, 1st Tuesday of each month

Mar 5, Apr 2, May 7, June 4
July 2, Aug 6, Sept 3, Oct 8, Nov 5, Dec 3

Lincoln, 3rd Wednesday of each month

Mar 20, Apr 17, May 22, June 19
July 17, Aug 21, Sept 18, Oct 16, Nov 20, Dec 18

Omaha, 3rd Monday of each month

Mar 18, Apr 15, May 20, June 17
July 15, Aug 19, Sept 16, Oct 21, Nov 18, Dec 16

**For more information,
contact the General Secretary in your Valley**

- Art Stricker, 33° (Alliance) (308) 762-4324
- Phil Odom, 33° (Hastings) (402) 462-5813
- Bruce Wood, 33° (Lincoln)..... (402) 435-2144
- John Maxell, 33° (Omaha)..... (402) 342-1300



As I write this in January, 2024, I can't believe how the holidays came and went so quickly. Our SGIG Dan Wendorf, 33° came all the way to the Panhandle, and we were thrilled to welcome him at our Christmas party. The group was small, but we enjoyed great fellowship over a bowl of chili, cinnamon rolls and a cup of hot chocolate. I wish more Brethren could have joined us, but it is a busy time of year.

I am looking forward to our Spring Reunion on May 24-25. We already have one paid candidate and one signed up for the Reunion. Come join us for great Degree work. Take a part, help on the stage crew, or just sit on the sidelines to welcome our new 32° Scottish Rite brethren.

By the time you receive this Scottish Rite Journal, John Ferguson, 33° will be our Grand Master. I am excited that a member of our Valley from Kimball will be representing us in the Oriental chair. John has been active with the Valley, taking Degree work at Reunions, and has served as Personal Representative to the SGIG for many years.



M. W. John Ferguson, 33°

As I reflect about the Fraternity, it represents to me an organization setting an orderly way of life to help us proceed in the direction our Creator has intended. We reach toward God through the course of Masonry, as a fellowship of men, and a system of morals and philosophy. And yet at times, I begin to wonder if that great light is growing dim for many of our Brothers. We should all strive to engage our Lodge Brethren even as we reach out to new Brethren, and remind them of the fellowship and virtues which we all hold so dear. I hope this finds all of you well and healthy in this new year, and hope to see you all at our next Reunion in May.

~ Art Stricker, 33°
Valley of Alliance General Secretary
artstricker77@gmail.com

OFFICERS ON DECK

The Hastings Valley Scottish Rite Lodges began the new year in earnest at their January 2nd business meeting. SGIG Dan Wellendorf, 33° lead the installation of officers in all four bodies for 2024.

Brother Ronald A. Nielsen, 32° KCCH will serve as Venerable Master, leading the Lodge of Perfection. Monte Malouf, 33° will serve as Senior Warden. Brethren continuing as officers in all four Lodges are Robin Koozer, 32° KCCH as Almoner, Phil Odom, 33° as Secretary, and Les Seiler, 33° as Treasurer.

Brother Kirk McNeal 32° will serve as Wise Master for the Hastings Chapter of Rose Croix with Randy Jones, 33° and Dan Deffenbaugh, 33° as Senior and Junior Wardens. Greg Seiler, 32° KCCH serves as Personal Representative to the SGIG.

Hastings RiteCare Clinic Sponsors Tree at 40th annual Festival of Trees

The Hastings Museum held its 40th annual Festival of Trees in December, with Christmas trees throughout the museum. Each tree was decorated by a local non-profit organization, including the Hastings RiteCare Clinic.

Clinicians Kris Althouse and Sydney Norton decorated the trees with ornaments related to their mission of speech therapy for children.

“Nonprofits from around the community kind of come in, and in a way get together and spread their message,” said Curtis Gosser, Curator of Exhibits at Hastings Museum.

The festival of trees is a great way to share information about the speech therapy services. Thirty-five organizations participated in this years’ festival, with new participants joining each year. Look for the Festival of Trees at the Hastings Museum in December, and keep an eye out for the RiteCare tree!



One of the 2023 Christmas trees



Spotlight on the Scottish Rite: Paul J. Younes, 32°

For more than fifty years, Paul Younes has been a member and leader of the Kearney community.

their children and spouses, as well as 15 other family members who are involved in day-to-day operations. He contributes his company’s success to a team concept that values employee input.

Born in Haifa, Israel, Younes came to the United States in 1972 to attend Kearney State College, where he earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration. After working as a dishwasher at a Kearney motel’s restaurant, he became the motel manager, which was the start of his career in the hospitality industry.

“It’s simple,” he said. “Respect others and they will respect you.”

Younes is an active member of the community and has served numerous boards and organizations, including Kearney Area Chamber of Commerce, CHI Good Samaritan Hospital Foundation and UNK Foundation.

Today, Younes is president of Younes Hospitality, a Kearney-based hotel chain that includes 14 properties across Nebraska, and Younes Conference Center in Kearney. His hotels are also in Fremont, Columbus, Hastings, Grand Island and Norfolk.

He was inducted into the Nebraska Business Hall of Fame in 2013, and in 2015 was honored as a Distinguished Nebraskalander at the Annual Statehood Day Dinner.

Paul and his wife, Linda, created Younes Hospitality as a family business with

Paul credits his success to his customers and his employees. During the floods in 2019, he wasted no time in joining his



employees, moving every guest out of the hotels to safety. He then worked to find new venues for weddings that booked at the Younes Conference Center. Kearney turned out to help Paul, providing room and board for his employees who lived on campus, and Five Points Bank lent him office and meeting space while he dealt with the aftermath of the flooding.

Paul is a 28 year member of Rob Morris Lodge #50, as well as Tehama Shrine, and joined the Valley of Hastings Scottish Rite in 1996.



Lincoln Scottish Rite Installs 2024 Officers

The Officers for the Lincoln Scottish Rite were installed on Wednesday, January 17th at the Lincoln Scottish Rite. Mike Gray, 33° served as Installing Master, Bill Nelson, 33° served as Installing Marshal, and Micheal Buchardt, 33° was Installing Chaplain.

Ed Bennett, 32° KCCH was installed as Venerable Master for the Lodge of Perfection, Oscar Sinclair, 32° as Wise Master for the Chapter of Rose Croix, Edward Boone, 32° KCCH as the Eminent Commander for the Council of Kadosh, and Lee Andersen, 32° as Master of Kadosh for the Lincoln Consistory. Nick Hanson, 32° will be installed at a later time as Knight Master for the Knights of St. Andrew.

Ed called Nick Furchert to the East, and presented him with his Past Venerable Master's pin and thanked him for his service to the Lodge of Perfection. Nick took the opportunity to call David Bloomquist, 32° KCCH to the East, and presented him with the plaque recognizing him as the Scottish Rite Mason of the



Dan Wellendorf, 33° congratulates David Bloomquist, 32° KCCH on being honored as Scottish Rite Mason of the Year



Ed Bennett presents Nick Furchert, 32° a Past Venerable Master's jewel for his service as Venerable Master in 2023.



We have a great group of officers. I am eager to utilize their collective wisdom to create shared plans for 2024.

~ Ed Bennett, 32° KCCH

Year. Nick thanked David for his many accomplishments, having served as officer of the Scottish Rite, Blue Lodge, York Rite, and with Masonic Youth groups.

After the installation ceremony, members adjourned to the dining room where Ed and Joni hosted a reception with heavy hors d'oeuvres.



Meet the 2024 Venerable Master

Ed Bennett was raised a Master Mason in Thistle Lodge #61 in Lexington, Nebraska in 1983. He joined the Hastings Valley Scottish Rite, and Tehama Shrine that same year and later joined Dawson Chapter #33, OES. Ed is a Past Master of Thistle Lodge #61 in Lexington, Past President of the Tri-county Shrine Club, Past Patron of Dawson Chapter #33, and was a Chapter Dad of DeMolay in Lexington. He also served as Chaplain on the Tehama Shrine Divan. He is now a dual member with Lancaster Lodge #54 and the Lincoln Valley Scottish Rite.

In non-Masonic activities, Ed is Past President of the Lexington Community Foundation, as well as the Lexington Lion's Club, and past board member of the UNK Student Lutheran Center. He is currently on the Council of Sheridan Lutheran Church in Lincoln serving as liaison for the Worship Arts Committee.

Ed's working career was primarily involved in the area of broadcasting. He was the Director of Operations for the Nebraska Rural Radio Association, which owned the Rural Radio Network and several Ag stations across Nebraska. The "mother" station was KRVN in Lexington. Ed retired from broadcasting in 2013 and moved to Lincoln, where he was on the board for a broadcast software company.



Doug Reed, 32°, Venerable Master for the Lodge of Perfection and the 2024 Officers

Scottish Rite Lodge Officers Installed for 2024

Paul Rutherford, 33° served as Installing Master on January 15th, installing the 2024 Officers for the Scottish Rite bodies and boards. Schadd Gray, 33° served as Installing Marshal and James B. Parks, Sr., 33° was Installing Chaplain.

Doug Reed, 32° is Venerable Master for the Lodge of Perfection; Bob Pelletier, 32° KCCH is Wise Master for the Chapter of Rose Croix, Patrick Graves, 32° KCCH is Eminent Commander for the Council of Kadosh, and T.J. Brumfield, 32° KCCH is Master of Kadosh for the Consistory. Roy Bradburn, 32° is Venerable Master for the KSA.

The newly installed Masters presented Past Masters jewels to the outgoing 2023 Masters and thanked them for their service last year.

Doug Reed, 32° served as Master of Ceremonies for the banquet afterward, welcoming guests. The Culinary Masters served an excellent roast beef dinner and the KSA served ice cream afterward.

Bob Pelletier, 32° KCCH shared his vision for the coming year, saying "My responsibility as the Rose Croix Wise Master is to mentor and prepare my line officers to be successful Wise Masters in the future. I also intend to continue the Rose Croix tradition of being the most active line to the Scottish Rite. As President of the Omaha Valley Line Officers, my goal is to enhance the flow of information and improve inter-communications so that each Master can accomplish their goals."



Photos: Knights of St Andrew, Council of Kadosh, Chapter of Rose Croix, and the Omaha Consistory

1914

SOCIETY

DONORS

THROUGH JUNE 30, 2024

- Ed Anderson, 32°
- Kyle Beckner, 32° KCCH
- Tom Brummett, 33°
- Greg Carlson, 32° KCCH
- Scott Christiansen, 32°
- John Crouch, 32°
- the Culinary Masters
- Carl Diamond, 32°
- Micah Evans, 33°
- Wally Farley, 32°
- Alan Gardner, 32°
- Rick Gilmore, 33°
- Okley Gibbs, 33°
- Dr. Harold Huff, 32°
- Ralph Joos, Jr., 33°
- Steve Keast, 32°
- Walt Keast, 33°
- Mo Krishna, 32°
- Don Leu, 32° KCCH
- John Maxell, 33°
- Mel Morton, 32° KCCH
- Terry Nelson, 32°
- John T. Parsons, 33°
- the Pelletier Family
- Michael J. Precella, 32° KCCH
- Tim Peters, 32°
- Matthew Schell, 32°
- Carl Simmons, 32° KCCH
- Wayne Stuberg, 32° KCCH
- Leland Terry, 33°
- Gary (Grip) Williams, 32° KCCH
- John Williamson, 32°
- Steven Zimmerman, 32° KCCH

1914 Society donations of \$250 or more for the 2023-2024 year will be recognized on the Omaha section of the Nebraska Scottish Rite Journal through the May-June, 2024 edition. 1914 Society donations support the upkeep of the historical Scottish Rite through the Building Fund. (Donations can not be considered tax-deductible for tax purposes.)



Omaha Scottish Rite Christmas Banquet a Salute to our Active and Veteran Servicemen

The Omaha Scottish Rite hosted the annual Christmas banquet for the December Lodge dinner. This past year, Armel MacDonald, 33° and John Hardy, 32° KCCH drew inspiration from the 1954 movie *White Christmas*, starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye and Rosemary Clooney. The movie tells a story of the camaraderie of veterans from the 151st division who rally together in support of their former General whose inn is on the verge of financial collapse.

The friendship and support for veterans was the theme for the evening. Our Master of Ceremonies for the evening was Duan Rockette, a retired Marine first sergeant. Carl Diamond, 32°, Bill Pickle, and Fritz McMullin, 32°, representing the National Sojourners® presented the colors in colonial uniforms, with Carl Simmons, Grip Williams, Kevin Petrowsky, Dan Alati, and Bob Pelletier, all representing their respective branches of the military. Carl and Carolyn Diamond gave the Toast to the Flag.

Duan called guests' attention to a table on the stage, set with caps representing each branch, who are missing from our midst. A POW-MIA flag flew over the table. Duan then led guests in a toast to fallen comrades.

He then welcomed US Air Force Brigadier General (retired) and Congressman Don Bacon (Waterloo Lodge #102) who



Top: Dan Alati, 32°, Gary 'Grip' Williams, 32° KCCH, and Bob Pelletier, 32° KCCH
Bottom: Duan and the table honoring fallen servicemen gave a short address to guests.

Armel MacDonald, 33° gave a brief history of military history in Nebraska and western Iowa, including Fort Atkinson, Fort Omaha, Fort Crook, and Offutt Air Force Base. He then recognized every member or guest in attendance and their respective branches of service.

The evening closed with Jonathan Paz, 32° KCCH singing a beautiful rendition of Silent Night in German.

Christmas in Lincoln



The Lincoln Valley hosted a Christmas banquet on December 20th, with about 50 Scottish Rite Masons, their ladies and guests attending.

After a great dinner catered by the Venue, Ed Boone, 32° KCCH served as emcee and led guests in some light-hearted games for some prizes. The star of the evening might have been one-year old Astrid, daughter of Nathanael Gabel, 32°.

RiteCare Clinician Paul Laikko Given UNMC's Highest Award

RiteCare Clinician Paul Laikko has been providing speech therapy for children for more than 35 years. He's been thinking about retirement for a while now.

As he reflects on those years, he often thinks of a child able to say their name or a sibling's name for the first time. Or seeing Mom and Dad light up when their child can finally say, "I love you."

Perhaps he remembers Tessa, a bright girl with Down Syndrome, but who just wasn't speaking intelligible words by age 7. Her family brought her to Paul, who worked with her to treat Childhood Apraxia. After two years of therapy, her parents wrote us that Tessa was "absolutely flourishing!" She was not only speaking words, but entire sentences!

Maybe Paul remembers Eva Brumfield, whom he also treated for Childhood Apraxia of Speech. Eva's parents Sarah and T.J. Brumfield, 32° KCCH, gratefully call Paul a "miracle worker." "He customizes therapy for each child's unique situation and he makes speech therapy not seem like 'work' for kids," said Sarah.



Paul Laikko, M.A., CCC-SLP

Those kinds of success stories — plus feedback from the kids and their families, as well as his colleagues — make Laikko want to stick around for a while.

Paul was recognized for his involvement in so many of those success stories as a recipient of the prestigious 'Gold U' award. The most prestigious award at UNMC, the Gold U is given out to UNMC employees who consistently deliver outstanding performance and service to the university.

"It's just an acknowledgment as to how lucky I have been," Paul said of the award. "To be able to work here and the support we get, to our department, to the university system. It's a nice honor."

Over the course of his career, Paul has handled cases involving pediatric feeding and swallowing. Now he's become a go-to person to treat severe speech sound disorders. The bulk of his caseload is made up of patients with Childhood Apraxia of Speech.

Paul typically treats children, between 2 and 4 years old, who aren't making progress in therapy at school. Many of these patients struggle getting their brains to tell their mouths how to move and make the right sounds.

Communication is a key piece of cognitive development and socialization, Paul said. "That impacts these children's ability to function at their maximum level rather than getting stuck falling behind and not being able to talk and socialize at a young age," he said.

"You're helping them get started."

Paul also expressed his appreciation to the Nebraska Scottish Rite Masons, who have speech therapy at MMI, making it possible for children to receive therapy.

Membership, continued

One Masonic author noted that as membership decreased, internet and new technology helped the pendulum swing back toward an emphasis on Masonic philosophy and symbolism. Certainly, the Scottish Rite Master Craftsman program or the College of the Consistory program have embraced study and reflection of the philosophy and lessons of Scottish Rite degrees.

Nebraska has put greater emphasis on Masonic education, whether through the Grand Lodge education breakfast at Annual Communication or through the Sts. John Lodge of Education. As SGIG for Nebraska, Dan Wellendorf, 33° has emphasized the need for education in Scottish Rite bodies. The Hastings Valley has preceded each meeting with an informal gathering, with Dan Deffenbaugh, 33° leading conversation about the Degrees.



Brothers hosting the Studio 357 podcast, from Bee Hive Lodge #184

Masonry needs to walk a delicate tightrope. Ritual is important as the foundation for the fraternity. It is what separates us from being a service club like the Rotary or Optimists or Kiwanis Clubs. But merely reciting the words makes us trained parrots. We need to build on the memorization of esoteric words and allegorical symbols with a deeper understanding and reflection of how they help Masons progress from the rough Ashlar

to the perfect Ashlar.

But that still is not enough. Freemasonry remains, at its heart, a fraternity. Members seek a connection with one another, all for different reasons. And some of those reasons are social. As it was 100 years ago, the social element is equally important, whether it is the Lodge dinner, the ubiquitous pancake feed, book club, or movie night.

I've always thought Masonry's problem is not recruitment, it is retention (and by extension, engagement). The trick is to balance full-form proficiency with on-going education and reflection about the meaning of those words, how they apply to our lives, as well as the fun things Brethren do. If Lodges find that balance, Lodges could overcome membership loss with true membership engagement.

Giving the Gift of VOICE

... continued from page 1

Of all the things we do as Scottish Rite Masons, I hope you are proud of the thousands of children our dollars have served over the years.

You should have received the 101-Club appeal letter last December, asking you to consider a donation toward the Scottish Rite speech therapy program. As of January, we have raised almost \$18,000, and every single dollar goes directly to RiteCare speech therapy at the Munroe-Meyer Institute and the University of Nebraska at Kearney.

If you have not yet made a donation to the Scottish Rite Foundation of Nebraska, please consider a tax-deductible donation or IRA distribution.

Each \$101 donation represents a session of speech therapy for a Nebraska child, and new donors will receive the 101-Club lapel pin. I hope you will wear the pin with pride and explain to Brethren at Lodge, co-workers, friends and family the significance of the 101-Club pin.

For \$300 donations, I will send you the lapel pin and list your name for a year in the Nebraska Scottish Rite Journal, honoring your commitment to RiteCare programs. While our parents are grateful to Scottish Rite Masons for their support, I am grateful for your generosity toward our philanthropy.



Masons often ask about ways to maximize the impact of their donations to our Masonic philanthropies.

One extremely powerful way to leave your Masonic legacy the Scottish Rite RiteCare program or your favorite Masonic philanthropies are through an IRA Distribution. You simply direct your 401(k) or IRA provider to distribute a designated portion of your annual required distribution to the philanthropies you choose. You pay no tax on the distribution, and the Masonic philanthropy receives the full value of your distribution. It's as easy as that!

A second impactful measure is to direct your annual gift toward an insurance policy that names the Scottish Rite Foundation as the beneficiary. You receive a tax benefit, and the non-profit will eventually receive an amount far in excess of what you might otherwise be able to give.

As always, consult a financial advisor or attorney about how these donations impact your own financial situation.

SCOTTISH RITE JOURNAL
OF FREEMASONRY ♦ SOUTHERN JURISDICTION ♦ USA

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Micah I. Evans, 33°

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**SGIG Circle Donors
(\$300+) to the Scottish Rite
Foundation of Nebraska:
Sept. 1, 2023 - Sept. 30, 2024**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Valley</u>
Scot Albertson.....	Omaha
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William Cook.....	Lincoln
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Jim Turpen.....	Omaha
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Thanks to the generosity of Scottish Rite Masons, RiteCare children receive all the speech therapy they need, without regard to a family's ability to pay. SGIG Circle donors have pledged \$300 or more toward speech therapy for the year. **Please consider a donation or pledge and make a significant impact on our ability to provide exceptional speech therapy for Nebraska children.**

*“Your dues change the light bulbs.
Your donations change the world.”*