

AREAS OF FOCUS

1. Membership Growth Throughout the Virginia Masonic Family

A goal of raising 1,778 new Master Masons in our Lodges across the Commonwealth; strongly encourage the benefits of membership and participation in other Masonic bodies ("Plus One Initiative"); Restoration to the rights and benefits of Virginia Freemasonry, those good men who demitted or were suspended for non-payment of dues, because of unfulfilled expectations.

2. Training Masonic Leaders Across the Commonwealth

Emphasize the importance of Masonic education in partnership with ritual proficiency as equal components in the development of required knowledge, skills, and abilities for leaders in healthy Lodges. Through our Division Leadership Conferences, the Reid J. Simmons Academy, and other offerings, we will utilize both in-person and online training approaches to "Build Better Leaders."

3. Tomorrow's Leaders Need Freemasonry in Action Today

Continued support both financially and, most importantly, by increasing the number of adult leaders for our three Virginia Masonic Youth groups, we can expand the availability of Rainbow for Girls, Job's Daughters, and DeMolay in the Commonwealth.

However, if no such groups exist in a particular region, Lodges and districts will be challenged to seek out other meaningful and visible opportunities to make a difference in the lives of young people in their respective communities; thereby demonstrating that everyone has a claim on the goodness that is Virginia Freemasonry. Just as in the case of our Masonic Youth, financial support is not enough and requires Masons to be engaged and in action - not inaction.

4. Demonstrating Brotherly Love and Relief

Providing relief to our distressed Brothers, their Widows, and Orphans is an obligation that is incumbent on every Master Mason. We are also directed to provide for those around us in need as our abilities to perform will allow.

Every Lodge will be required to conduct one or more acts of relief for a Masonic Widow, and one or more acts of relief for a Lodge Brother who needs assistance. While this sounds simple, we must recognize that the pride of many keeps them from seeking assistance, thus every Lodge shall have regular personal contact with both its Widows and Members who are not currently attending Lodge activities to be aware of their current circumstances.

Our compassion for others must extend beyond the Fraternity, as the opportunities for "Acts of Kindness and Service" to others established by Most Worshipful Don Strehle must become the norm for every Virginia Masonic Lodge.

ADDITIONAL AREAS OF EMPHASIS

Grand Lodge Relief Fund

The Grand Lodge Relief Fund was established in 1988 to help those Masons and their families who have extraordinary financial needs. As we endeavor “to help, aid and assist” all distressed Master Masons, their widows, and orphans, we need to build our reserves in this fund and help those whose needs cannot be served by their Lodges or Brethren, the Masonic Home, or the Outreach Program. This program aids every Mason in the fulfillment of his obligation to distressed worthy Brothers. DDGMs have authority to direct up to \$500 to those in distress.

Grand Lodge Scholarship Fund

We must continue to help educate the young people who might not otherwise be able to afford a college education. Each year our Scholarship Fund provides \$60,000 to \$72,000 for up to seventy-two deserving students. Each scholarship recipient may receive \$1,000 a year for up to four years.

Ian McLaurin Shipley, Jr. Memorial and James Stanley Johnson Memorial Golf Tournaments

The Ian McLaurin Shipley, Jr. Memorial Golf Tournament is held in the spring of each year and is the primary source of income for our Grand Lodge Scholarship Fund. The James Stanley Johnson Memorial Golf Tournament is held in August of each year with all proceeds supporting The Crown Jewel of Freemasonry in Virginia, The Masonic Home of Virginia. As Grand Master, I will be supporting both tournaments and ask each DDGM to encourage the Lodges in his district to join me in these worthwhile and fun events.

Masonic Ritual

We must continually stress the importance of our Ritual as this is what sets us apart from other community organizations. Ritual can be a great tool in motivating and encouraging the Brethren. The healthiest Lodges frequently and regularly practice and analyze our beautiful Masonic Ritual. Regular Lodge ritual schools, degree practices, and a high-level proficiency among the members enable each Lodge to confer degrees with their own members. And discussions that analyze the meanings of the moral lessons embedded in the symbology of our ritual is an essential element of learning and understanding Masonic Ritual.

Membership Outreach

Continue to promote BeAFreemason.org in all our communications, correspondence, and on our Grand Lodge and subordinate Lodge websites. Take advantage of the educational and promotional materials available through the Path Forward Program supported by the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction.

Membership Support

Encourage the use of virtual meetings as opportunities for Brethren to visit with one another on a monthly, quarterly, or semiannual basis for keeping in touch and sharing activities of a Masonic nature. These do not take the place of tiled communications but are valuable for education and fellowship outside of stated communications.

Virginia Freemasonry Flag Requests

Freemasons have long recognized the value and importance of symbols as emblematical representations of the ideals which we, as a Fraternity, hold dear. Since 1991, the Grand Lodge of Virginia adopted a flag as an emblem of our Fraternity here in the Commonwealth. It contains a field of blue, on which is a circle of thirteen stars around the Square and Compasses and letter "G". Surmounting the emblem is the word "Virginia" and beneath is designated "A.F. & A. M 1778". So many symbols relevant to the Virginia Mason and our Fraternity in one proud ensign.

You can have the Grand Lodge fly this flag over the Grand Lodge on the date of your choosing to recognize and celebrate special milestones for your Lodge or individual Brothers. For a contribution of \$100, the 3' x 5' nylon flag will be flown and sent to your Brother or Lodge with an accompanying certificate from the Grand Lodge, indicating the name of the honoree, the date it was flown, the occasion for which it was flown, and attested by the seal of the Grand Lodge and signature of the Grand Master and Grand Secretary. For a contribution of \$150, the flag will additionally be folded and placed in a display case.

Virginia Freemasons have a special connection to their flag. You are invited to celebrate the connection between Virginia Freemasonry and our flag in this special way. Contact Amy Wagner at the Grand Lodge Office (veterans@grandlodgeofvirginia.org) to place an order.

Virginia Masonic Herald

There is no better way to share the good news of Masonry than the Virginia Masonic Herald. The Herald educates, informs, and celebrates all things Masonic. We all enjoy reading the latest edition of the Herald, but it is particularly important for the shut-in Brothers. It keeps them connected with their beloved Craft, and because it is read by

Masons and non-Masons alike, the Herald keeps our families and communities informed and may even generate interest and curiosity for the good man who has yet to ask the right question. Bottom line, support the Herald with articles and pictures and encourage your Worshipful Masters, Lodges and District Team Leaders to do likewise. The quality of the publication depends upon the material you submit.

The Virginia Masonic Herald is:

- A non-profit membership-oriented publication under the review of the Grand Master and Grand Secretary;
- A full color, full bleed journal published four times a year at 32 pages in length;
- With paid commercial advertisements and fraternal announcements at no charge;
- In need of constant support, especially by DDGMs!

Article Submission Due Dates

Issue Date	Due Date for Submissions
Winter Issue 2023	November
Spring Issue 2024	February
Summer Issue 2024	May
Fall Issue 2024	August
Winter Issue 2024	November

When preparing an article, a Brother often asks, "How many words?" Answer: approximately three hundred words per column. Below is general outline for word count.

Printed Article Size	Approximate Word Count
1/4 page	225 words
1 column (1/3 page)	300 words
1/2 page	450 words
2 columns (2/3 page)	600 words
Full page (3 column)	900 words
Full page (2 column)	1,000 words

Masonic Titles

In articles, use full titles. Abbreviations are given here as well.

Most Worshipful	Mt. Wor.
Right Worshipful	Rt. Wor.
Worshipful	Wor.
Brother	Bro.

In article and picture description, use M.W., R.W., Wor., and Bro.

Photograph Submissions

Photo submissions are encouraged by the editors of the Virginia Masonic Herald. All photos must be publishable quality, minimum 300 dpi unmodified, images. The standard format for published images is .TIF; images in .JPG are accepted but not preferred.

Each photo must include appropriate caption. If a caption is not provided the photo may be subject to rejection. All images are subject to being cropped and become the property of the Grand Lodge of Virginia upon publication.

Widows Programs

Each Lodge should have a Widows Program and use it to its fullest potential in aiding and assisting Masonic Widows. This is an opportunity for the Fraternity to say "thank you" to those who shared their loved ones with Freemasonry and to bring a ray of sunshine and happiness into their lives.