



Orange County Scottish Rite

Orient of California, Southern Jurisdiction

Venerable Master



My Brothers,

We find ourselves at the close of the year. And what a year it's been! Although we faced many challenges, we all learned how to quickly overcome, keep our Valley moving forward and most importantly, we're still here! We're still strong!

During this time, we have collectively found opportunities to connect in new ways while keeping each other safe and healthy. Our monthly Valley meeting updates have kept us resilient and secure, and our Language Center has continued to serve the community and help our children with their communication skills!

Last month the Orient held the first virtual Reunion class, bringing new Masters of The Royal Secret into our ranks. I've never been much for inspirational sayings or annual mottos... but I have to be honest, if I had one, knowing what I know

now, it would've been "adjust, adapt, and overcome", and we have done just that.

I am proud and truly honored to have served you all as Venerable Master. When I joined our wonderful fraternity, those first moments of the initiatory process were startling. When I saw what our collective brotherhood was... it was enriching on a level I cannot explain. As I moved through the degrees, both in the Blue Lodge and in our Valley, I grew in ways I never thought I would. I evolved into a stronger, more confident man. Many of you have had a hand in that, and I thank you all. You have changed me for the better!

OC Scottish Rite 2020-2021 Upcoming Calendar

Monday December 7th	Master Craftsman Study Zoom meeting 5pm
Monday December 7th	Catching up with the Valley Zoom meeting 5:30pm In-person Stated Meeting, CANCELED
January 2020	OCSR Distinguished Speaker Series presents Hon. Ralph Shelton (date and topic TBD)
Monday January 4th	Master Craftsman Study Zoom meeting 5pm
Monday January 4th	Catching up with the Valley Zoom meeting 5:30pm In-person Stated Meeting, CANCELED
Sunday January 10th	Installation of Officers Conducted via Zoom with each respective office by the Personal Representative. There will be no in-person ceremony for the installation of officers for 2021



And as with any season... it is time for change, and time for our Valley to support the incoming Venerable Master, Hon. Mike Selix and our incoming Line of Officers for 2021, who I know are ready, and driven to perform their duties. I cannot wait to assist everyone as I move into my new role as Prelate (fancy speak for Chaplain) for our Valley, replacing Ill. David Kussman as he moves on to new and higher ranks within the Grand Commandery for the Knights Templar.

Along with all of you, I will strive to be his biggest cheerleader as he advances into his new stations. He has given so much to our fraternity, we should all be proud to call him a friend and brother.

If you'll indulge me for a moment, I'd like to thank a few people.

First and foremost, I begin with **Ill. Frank Loui**, who has always been that smiling face, a man of few words, but always kind and willing to take a minute when I needed advice. **Ill. Frankie Rosario**... you threw me into the madness when you gave me the job of being the Venerable Master of the 14th Degree. I had no idea of what was to come after kneeling at the alter having you confer that degree on me.

Although **Ill. Robert Hjorth** is no longer with us, I would to thank him for having the faith in me to run the degrees and ultimately take over your job as Director of The Work. Your mentorship was invaluable to me. **Ill. Raymond Godeke**, I know we tease each other... but as I said in January, I treasure our friendship and I am so grateful for your leadership and counsel.

Hon. Mike Selix... we've been through it together. And you've always been there, rallying the troops, bringing people together. I wish you luck and a truly prosperous year as Venerable Master. **Bro. Jamie Hopkins**, we joined this Valley in the same class, and I am so grateful for you being by my side through every single step. From assisting with our Degree work, and now as our General Secretary, your friendship and service is truly appreciated by us all.

And last but not least... to my candidate coach through my Blue Lodge degrees, the one I have taken every degree and order with from day one. **Hon. James McCallion**, I wouldn't be here without you. Thank you for your love and dedication to our craft, and to our Valley. Even at a distance, your contributions are invaluable! I've always felt that leadership isn't about climbing a ladder... the leader holds the ladder for those who come after them. It is my job now to hold that ladder, as others have done for me over the years. I will always be here for all of you. Whether you're happy to sit on the sidelines, or if you want to be involved in Officer Lines, Degrees, Knights of Saint Andrew, etc.

I tell everyone who asks me about our craft, that I truly believe in the lessons we learn in Scottish Rite. Never hesitate to reach out to me, never hold back with questions... we're here to learn and become better.

In a few weeks, I'll turn over the jewels of Venerable Master to our Honorable Brother Mike Selix and his line. But for these few last weeks, I am thankful for the time I've been able to serve all of you. And I am grateful through the challenges to have had Bro. Andrew Todd, Bro. Bob White, Bro. Rob Rappaport by my side in all of this.

And lastly to my wife Jennifer. Your support and love through all of this is truly the thing that has kept me going through a challenging year. You are my rock; I am thankful for every day I've been lucky to know you. Thank you for all you do behind the scenes to keep me sane!

May the Great Architect of the Universe keep you and bless you, and until we can meet face to face again.

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

James Cervantes, 32°
Venerable Master
Director of The Work

The Celestial Lodge

Remembering Ill. Robert (Bob) David Hjorth, 33°

On Thursday, November 19th, 2020 at 5:30am, Illustrious brother Hjorth passed to the Celestial Lodge.

Born on May 21, 1949 in Loma Linda, CA, Ill. Hjorth was a beloved brother who served as the Director of the Work at the Santa Ana/Orange County Scottish Rite for nearly a decade. He was also our Assistant Almoner for many years.

Brother Bob was a member of Orange Grove Lodge #293 and became a Master of the Royal Secret on April 28, 1990; he was honored with a Knight's Commander Court of Honor appointment in 2003 and ascended to the 33rd degree in 2009.

Please keep his wife Kathy and his family in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

General Secretary



Brethren:

On the first weekend of November, the Orient of California had our first virtual Reunion and our Valley initiated new members. This was an outstanding event and well worth attending. The feedback from our new Brothers has been overwhelmingly positive. We want to welcome **Matt Gage 32°**, **Gus Charara 32°** and **Ionut Georgescu 32°** in to the Orange County Valley of the Ancient & Accepted Scottish Rite (SJ).

There was a second mailing of 2021 dues notices from Supreme in late November. If you have any questions about your dues, do not hesitate to contact the General Secretary via email or phone. We have had a busy fall in the Valley office and I want to thank Illustrious Lloyd Clayton 33° for his help.

Our Valley would like to wish each and every Brother and his family a joyous and happy holiday season.

Sincerely & Fraternaly,

Jamie Hopkins, 32°
General Secretary
gensec@ocscottishrite.org
(714) 543-7277

Language Center News



Welcome to the RiteCare Language Center of Orange County! We sincerely hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy.

The Holiday Season is alive and well despite the challenges of this year. We hope that all of you remain safe and healthy!

We currently have 15 children enrolled for in-person therapy and 45 children enrolled for Teletherapy. With the expertise and guidance of Chapman University we continue to follow social distancing guidelines, utilize personal protective equipment and follow all of our safety protocols.

The Chapman University student clinicians have stepped up their game, bringing creative, engaging lessons to the children. They continue to discover new on-line resources for both articulation and language development.

Traditional resources such as point sheets and counters are still being used but now in a virtual setting.

The parents are much more involved which is so exciting to see. The student clinicians are making interactive parent pages to give them more information about language



and speech development. This provides homework that the parents can use to practice with their children. We are seeing tremendous growth in the children's skills!

During this season of giving please consider making a donation to our Language Center. It is super easy to donate by visiting www.oclanguagecenter.org/donate/.

We hope you will continue to keep us in your thoughts and prayers! Enjoy these pictures from our Halloween therapy sessions. Halloween is always festive at CLC, and this year was no exception!



David Frias, 32° KCCH

Chairman

RiteCare Childhood Language Center of Orange County

Please Donate!

If you have the ability to give, please consider donating to our Language Center during the new year. We are very thankful for all your support. To donate, visit:

<https://oclanguagecenter.org/donate>



A Community Program of the Scottish Rite Foundation for Children with Speech and Language Challenges

Speech Language Pathologists

Leslie Sierra-Guzman, MA CCC-SLP

Laura Garcia-Maxey, MA CCC-SLP

Chris Switzer, MA CCC-SLP

Francine Wenhardt, CCC-SLP

www.oclanguagecenter.org

Please support your RiteCare Childhood Language Center by making an individual, group, or company donation. Support our Center by becoming a member:

President's Circle: A donation of \$500 or more each year supports one child at the center for a year

365 Club: A donation of \$365 each year

Center Club: A donation of \$100 each year

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For information please contact: Chairman David Frias, 32° (714) 600-8538, dfrias@oclanguagecenter.org

Senior Warden



Brethren, I hope this message finds that you and your family are well, and I hope you had a nice Thanksgiving, and want to take this time to wish you and your families a Merry Christmas, Happy Holidays, and a Happy New Years. The theme this month is closure. How appropriate.

2020 will be a year to remember, I can say that I'm extremely thankful to see it coming to a close. We all have been affected by a year no one could have imagined. Covid-19 has changed our lives forever. It has led to the closure of several non-essential business and services, so we are told. It has forced many family owned small business to close their doors for ever, are offices and work places have been closed and many are working from home. Schools are closed, and children are learning via online classes from home. Closure has truly taken on a new meaning.

It's been said when one door closes a new one opens. I hope and pray with 2020 coming to an end, that it brings hope and change in 2021, for you and your families.

Mike Selix, 32°, KCCH

Senior Warden

Orange County Lodge of Perfection

Wise Master ◦ Masonic Education ◦ Editor



Closure

Greetings, brothers. I wanted to take a moment and thank all of you for your friendship, brotherhood, and participation this year. 2020 will not soon be forgotten (and hopefully not soon repeated!). I look forward with all of you to the coming new year and hope that it brings stability, good health, and peace of mind.

With all of the craziness we've had to deal with this year — fires, isolation, economic hardship, and a global pandemic — I thought I'd share an interesting article from NPR that was published around Thanksgiving. A good read and something to think about — a view from outside Masonry, as it were — as a most exceptional year comes to a close.

Freemasons Say They're Needed Now More Than Ever. So Why Are Their Ranks Dwindling?

Freemasons have long wielded the qualities most irresistible to thriller writers and conspiracy theorists — secrecy, politics, power and celebrity. Among their members are Founding Fathers, presidents, musicians, artists and businessmen. But today, as membership plummets within one of the oldest international fraternal organizations ever to exist, a new question persists: What is the point?

The challenges facing the organization have been decades in the making. While part of the problem is that Americans simply don't join clubs or fraternities as often as they used to, some critics argue that Masons have also struggled to keep up with



the changing face of the nation. Many lodges still don't allow women to join, and others have struggled to attract members of color. In recent years, membership has dropped roughly 75% from a high of more than 4.1 million in 1959 — when about 4.5% of all American men were members.

The Freemasons have a long history of secrecy and influence, but today many of their traditions are a simple Google search away. Here, nearly 200 "high" Masons join President Herbert Hoover at the White House in May 1932.

Within the organization's ranks, some members hoped the coronavirus pandemic might offer an opportunity to shed its reputation for mystery and secrecy and instead showcase the charitable work that Masons perform in communities

nationwide. But that hasn't been the case. Instead, the virus continues to sweep the nation, keeping men away from their lodges and making it even more difficult to induct new members — something some say is too steeped in tradition to be attempted over Zoom.

"I don't know, really, how we combat [the loss of members]. If I had the answer to that, we would have solved the problem years ago," said Christopher Hodapp, a historian and author of multiple books on Freemasonry. "But I'll tell you, something that's scaring the hell out of me is this COVID shutdown thing. God help us all when we stand back and survey the crumbling wreckage that that has caused."

Explaining the decline

Like many organizations facing an uncertain future — one that could be more online and less interconnected — Freemasons are approaching an inflection point.

It wouldn't be the first time. Lodges saw a big dip in membership in 1826 following the mysterious disappearance of William Morgan, who allegedly broke his vow of secrecy as a Freemason by working on a book revealing the organization's secrets. The scandal fueled a national political movement tasked

In-Person Stated Meetings Canceled; Valley Updates via Zoom

It is with an abundance of caution and concern for the health and welfare of our brethren and their families that we are canceling upcoming Stated Meetings until further notice.

Please join us Monday, November 4th at 5:30pm to catch up with your brothers on Zoom. Stay tuned for an email invite with the link and password!

with taking the fraternity down. But Freemasons survived the scandal — and others that followed.

“Certainly in the 18th century and moving through the middle part of the 19th century, you could be powerful and influential without being a Freemason, but it was more likely that you would have been a Freemason,” said Jessica Harland-Jacobs, an associate professor of history at the University of Florida who studies Freemasonry.

Many Freemasons see the decline in membership as symptomatic of the overall decline in all voluntary associations, rather than a problem specific to their fraternity. Membership has been steadily falling in everything from church groups and school associations to labor unions and Greek organizations, according to a 2019 congressional report. The Joint Economic Committee report found that membership rates in some organizations fell from 75% in 1974 to 62% in 2004. At 52%, the drop was steepest among fraternal organizations such as the Freemasons or the Knights of Columbus.

Part of the function of many fraternal organizations was to serve as a social safety net of sorts for its members, a driving force behind some membership, according to Harland-Jacobs. Until about the 1930s, she said, part of the appeal of groups such as the Freemasons is that they offered a way for members to acquire insurance.

“Some might’ve been more interested in the social aspect, and some might’ve been more interested in the insurance aspect: These are the days before actual insurance, so it would be nice to have your brethren to rely on if you needed them,” she said.

*John Dickie, a historian at University College London and author of *The Craft: How the Freemasons Made the Modern World*, also points to the idea that the secrecy of the fraternity that could have once intrigued men is less alluring.*

"I think possibly actually the issue is that secrecy has lost something of its magic," Dickie said. "Maybe, we've become a little bit fatigued by the whole exposé draw, and in an age when it can take two minutes or less on Google to find out what the Freemasons' secrets really are, I'm not sure that they can really hold that much mystique for members anymore. It's a trick that they've played with great success since 1717 or even before. One wonders what success it will have in the coming decades."

"Exclusive practices"

Some outside the organization say that the Freemasons would be able to offset the decline in membership more easily if the group was seen as more inclusive toward women and people of color.

"[Freemasons] should tackle head-on those issues: secrecy, race, gender, sexuality, all of those things," Dickie said of how the fraternity could attract new members. But if that were to happen, Dickie added, it could backfire and lead to immediate "ruptures in Freemasonry" because some men are in the fraternity precisely because of those "limitations."

"A man, regardless of his religion, regardless of his social position, and regardless of his race is eligible to be a member of the brotherhood. That promise is obviously really attractive to groups who are traditionally excluded," Harland-Jacobs said. But the history of Freemasonry, she said, "has been the history of this tension between this inclusive promise and oftentimes its exclusive practices."



Nearly 200 "high" Masons join President Herbert Hoover at the White House in May 1932.

Men of any race are able to join Freemasonry, but that wasn't always the case. At the time of its inception, you had to be a free man to join — meaning people who were enslaved could not. When Prince Hall, an abolitionist Black man, attempted to join a lodge in the late 1700s, he was denied despite being a free man. He, along with more than a dozen other Black men, eventually started their own branch of Freemasonry called Prince Hall Freemasonry, which is still active today.

Membership is more complicated for women. Not all lodges in the U.S. will initiate women, and even if they did, that is unlikely to reverse drops in membership,

according to Brent Morris, director of strategic communications at the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry in Washington, D.C.

"I don't think there would be a rush of people to the doors," said Morris, adding that membership was "a social experience that the men seek out and enjoy." Morris noted, however, that women are able to join affiliated fraternities such as the Order of the Eastern Star or the Order of the Amaranth.

On the issue of race, Morris said it was a challenge on which Freemasons have made major progress.

"I've been a Mason almost 50 years — 49 and a half years — and I have seen breathtaking changes that have occurred during that period with acceptance of people of color, with acceptance for Prince Hall [Freemasonry], with Black men joining mainstream lodges, white men joining Prince Hall lodges ... and it's certainly a breathtaking step in the right direction," he said.

Friendships and escape

Morris joined Freemasonry because he wanted a community of supportive men akin to his college fraternity and said he was happy to discover it helped him "establish friendships at a local level and friendships that you might not have otherwise."

"One of the things that I found so very appealing about Freemasonry is men from different backgrounds," Morris said. "It's nice to go somewhere ... and socialize on a basis other than your occupation."

Freemasons argue that the reason to uphold the fraternity goes beyond maintaining historic traditions or belonging to something that once bore immense influence. It

might not be a secret society full of presidents and powerful men pulling the strings of society from the shadows, but that's never been the point for these members. Instead, they joined to establish friendships outside of work, and vibe with a community that isn't divisive. At a time in which polarization and division in the U.S. are growing more intense, Freemasons said it's refreshing to spend time with people who aren't arguing.

"People are isolated," said Hodapp, the historian and author. "People are locked in their apartments, or locked in their parents' basement at the age of 35, and don't associate with each other, and social media has them screaming at the computer screen at 3 in the morning because somebody told them to get stuffed over something. Every Mason you talk to will stand there and say, 'Yeah, we're needed now more than we've ever been needed.' "

The challenge, he said, is finding a way to communicate that.

"How do you get the message of, yes, there is a place where you can go where people aren't at each other's throats, there's a place that deliberately stops the kind of arguments that are making your life miserable."

To all of you: Happy Holidays. May you and your families be safe and healthy during this holiday season. Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, Happy Kwanzaa, and Season's Greetings to you all.

Masonic Education

As you know, our **Master Craftsman Study Group** will not be meeting in person this month. That does not excuse us from scholarly study, however! On the contrary, with extra time on your hands at home, I strongly encourage you to

continue your journey in Masonic education. Venerable brother **James Cervantes** and I are here to answer any questions and guide you. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to either of us by e-mail:

Andrew Todd, 32° : atodd@ocscottishrite.org

James Cervantes, 32° : jcervantes@ocscottishrite.org

If you'd like to participate or are looking for information about the program, please prepare by visiting the website for information about the books and other information to get you started:

www.ocscottishrite.org/master-craftsman-program

The Master Craftsman Program

For those unaware, the Master Craftsman is a by-mail correspondence course. Each participant is required to do some scholarly reading in advance and complete a written quiz which is mailed to the Supreme Council for grading. As each quiz is completed, a new one is sent and the program progresses. The course consists of 7 quizzes, after completion of which the successful participant will receive a certificate and a lapel pin.

The Scottish Rite Master Craftsman: Symbolic Lodge course will familiarize students with aspects of the development of Blue Lodge Masonry and explore some of its developing symbolism. This will reveal that the “High Degrees”



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MASTER+CRAFTSMAN:
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began to develop soon after formation of the Premier Grand Lodge (1717). Albert Pike's book, **Esoterika: The Symbolism of the Blue Degrees of Freemasonry**, along with Arturo de Hoyos' **Scottish Rite Ritual Monitor & Guide (3d edition)** will be used to demonstrate a rational and philosophical interpretation for much of what is found in Craft Masonry.

Study with us on Zoom

We will be meeting in the "virtual classroom" on Zoom this month. **Join us on Monday, December 7th at 5:00pm** as we continue our progress through the Master Craftsman program. Stay tuned for an email invite, coming soon.



The month of December sees us continuing Quiz #4 of the Symbolic Lodge program. If you want to join us, please purchase the books and read the following in preparation for the quiz:

Albert Pike's Esoterika, pp. 385–484

If you're just getting started we can also help you with Quizzes #1 - 3. You can also reach out to me directly for information and access to our Facebook group.

Thanks to all our brothers for your interest and participation. I'll see you in the classroom!

From the Editor

I'd like to express my thanks again to the heads of body for contributing their excellent and thoughtful articles this month and for doing so in a timely fashion.

Calling All Writers!

You don't have to be a head of body or a member of the line to contribute to this newsletter! If you have something to say from a masonic perspective — perhaps insights into your masonic ruminations, scholarly endeavors you'd like to share, or general news for the brethren — this newsletter is your conduit for those ideas. I encourage any and all brothers who'd like to contribute something to this newsletter to send their ideas to:

editor@ocscottishrite.org

I'll work with you on getting your article together for the next issue.

Fraternally,

Andrew Todd, 32°

Wise Master, Chapter of Rose Croix

Editor, Director of Masonic Education

Orange County Scottish Rite Officers



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Stated Meetings on the first Monday of the month, 6:30 pm; dinner follows at 7:15 pm (reservations requested) at the Anaheim DeMolay Center, 303 W. Lincoln Ave. Anaheim, CA 92805

The Valley of Orange County, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Southern Jurisdiction of the United States of America publishes the Scottish Rite News monthly. No Subscription Price.

Edited by Bro. Andrew Todd, 32° (949) 288-3739, editor@ocscottishrite.org. All articles must be submitted prior to the 15th of the month.

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