

2021 Jurisdictional Report of the Grand Lodge Education Officer Grand Lodge of Minnesota, AF&AM

“There is nothing which can better deserve our patronage than the promotion of science and literature. Knowledge is in every country the surest basis of public happiness.” – Brother George Washington

Each One Teach One, in 2021

In an effort to encourage every brother to see himself as more than a passive recipient of Masonic learning, the above phrase has been adopted by me as the “theme for the year” in masonic education. I have emphasized that every Brother has knowledge that he can impart, be it on major topics or on some small aspect of the Craft. Every time we communicate that knowledge, even if it be to one other brother in casual conversation, we have achieved a moment of Masonic education. Every Mason has the potential for, and can be, a Masonic educator. By emphasizing this point of view, it is my hope that more Minnesota brethren can see themselves as part of the collective tradition of preserving and communicating learning and knowledge across time and generations.

The Deep Challenges of the Pandemic Year

One year ago Minnesota Masonry was on the cusp of a monumental and challenging year, one which had not been seen in a century. Our customs and traditions were about to be seriously challenged. The ways in which knowledge and learning were imparted and shared among the Craft were going to be altered in all ways; yet as Masons, we rose to the occasion brilliantly and with considerable flexibility and agility.

This year of the SARS-COVID19 pandemic led us to first cease meeting together. That cessation terminated the abiding tradition of face-to-face learning that has served Masonic Education for so very long. But the need to help fight the virus’s propagation also led to us working together, remotely, and through the massive hard work of several Grand Lodge Committees, we embraced the world of video education.

Teaching via Remote Learning

Starting soon after the edict curtailing our ability to meet in Lodge assembled, the Grand Lodge of Minnesota’s Mentoring Committee, in conjunction with numerous others, mastered the Zoom web conferencing system and enlisted those able to make several presentations to those who were able to “tune in.” As one of the presenters, in my role as the Grand Lodge Education Officer, I was able to deliver several lectures on a variety of topics covering multiple aspects of the Craft’s dedication to the seven liberal arts and sciences.

Even more gratifying was the fact that several Minnesota Lodge Education Officers were able to add their own learned contributions to meetings that typically drew more attendees than is usually seen for a tiled stated communication, thus extending the “reach” of Masonic education across the state and indeed, based upon those who regularly attend, the nation and the world.

As the appointed Grand Lodge Education Officer, I encourage all LEO's to consider adding this new method of communicating learning to their Lodges as a regular adjunct to their more welcome tradition of meeting together. It gave us all an added way to bring more light to Masonry.

Minnesota Mason Newspaper:

Despite the immense challenges presented to the Craft by the pandemic, the fundamental means of state-wide masonic communication, especially for Education remained the individually-distributed Minnesota Mason in print format. Topics in the past year included an examination of the history of the operative level; the International Order of Odd Fellows; a consideration of time and the calendar in Masonry; the Acacia tree and a look at esotericism and Masonry.

The *Masonic Conundrum* also published in the paper continued to draw in entrants from throughout the jurisdiction. Some *Conundrum* questions were intentionally hard, and others made a bit easier in order to encourage others who may have not otherwise chosen to do the research to "dip their toes" in the waters of Masonic study. As always, all Masons were encouraged to submit Masonic Conundrums for future use in upcoming issues.

Minnesota eMason

The monthly eMason, which is distributed to all with an operable email address and features remarks from the Grand Master, District Representatives and the Grand LEO, continues to grow and thrive as another venue for state-wide Masonic education to thrive and prosper. The digital platform has allowed for greater accessibility to all Masons and has served to enhance learning about new topics and subject matter each and every month. eMason educational topics included recommended recent books on the Craft and associated real life events; the Masonic Honor Points; the blazing star; mosaic tiles; the four virtues; the Master's gavel; the use of star images in Masonry, and other topics.

Monthly Masonic Education Bulletin

This monthly bulletin aimed specifically for LEO's has continued to be sent out in all but June, July & August for their use. The Bulletin readership has furthered the active sharing of materials among Masonic educators between this jurisdiction and others who now subscribe to the Bulletin. Topics included an examination of King Solomon's quarries; the act of expressing gratitude; links to various digital talks and lectures; the Saints John and the solstice and the Maker's Mark both in operative and speculative Masonry.

Minnesota Masonic Writers Guild

PGM Tom Hendrickson was kind enough to submit the aforementioned piece on the usage of time and calendar which we received with great interest. Nebraska PGM Thomas Hauder also shared his delightful essay linking the great novel and film, *The Princess Bride* and Freemasonry. Both works drew interest and praise.

As Grand LEO, I continue to stress to those interested in making contributions that writing for publication need not be an act of great eloquence or deep, deep research. All Minnesota and other brethren were encouraged to submit their written thoughts for publication, be it digital or in print. The Guild is always seeking new voices from all Brethren, wherever assembled.

Masonic Speakers Bureau

The shutdown of normal interaction and in-person educational activities did not stop the Brothers who serve as speakers this year. They all stepped up and provided learning via the Grand Lodge Zoom lecture series. They are well worth recognition for their willingness to share their collective body of great work through the video conference platform and continued their mission to help bring more light to Masonry.

Social Media

Please look for “MN Masonic Lodge Education Officers” on Facebook and join your fellow LEO’s for thoughtful discussion and sharing of materials. If any MCME members wish to join, please reach out via PM and we will add you to the Group.

Finally, I have been honored to have been appointed by Grand Master Rolf Widstrand to serve another year from April, 2021 to April, 2022 as Grand Lodge Education Officer and look forward to new opportunities to bring some small amount of further light in masonry.

Very respectfully submitted,
Andrew Niemyer
Grand Lodge Education Officer
Grand Lodge of Masons in Minnesota, AF&AM