

Brethren,

It is indeed an honor to be elected as the Worshipful Master of Richmond Randolph No. 19 during its 225th anniversary and within the confines of this fabled building, Masons' Hall. As with all such declarations, there are many people to thank. It begins with a few of the members of Glen Allen No. 131 where I was raised. RW Donny Kelley and Wor. Joe Parker for taking the time and effort to teach me all three of my catechisms. Since, my time at Masons' Hall, I would like to thank RW Jimi Duke and Wor. Bill Heltzel for making the effort not only to work on the required elements of the Warden's Certificate, but also going above the call of duty by meeting me at my office as to better fit my hectic schedule. Also, RW Jimmy Burton, our class president and being present during our many practices, exemplifications and individual instruction. Finally, I would like to thank the many of you who have inspired me to pursue many avenues within our Masonry that I didn't think would be possible.

Under the skillful and experienced guidance of our most recent Past Master, RW Jimi Duke, we have implemented some aesthetic changes that have been well received this past year. Utilizing real candles for the Lesser Lights, music headed up by Ian Nelson, incense and time for meditation or reflection which allows our minds to expand or adjust to new enlightenment. All of these were done, and will continue, as an enhancement to our individual and group experience as Freemasons. Also, we reinstated the concept of lodge visitation, making 4 official visits this past year. This may not sound like much, but our presence elsewhere has been noticed and well received. These visits are important for several reasons. 1) They extend our Masonic network which can be useful when others are in need, planning events or if we ourselves are in need. Every degree conferred this year has involved Masons from other lodges filling necessary roles, 2) Observing what other lodges do well that we may wish to incorporate, 3) Spreading the message of Observant lodges, Masons' Hall and encouraging all Masons to start or increase philosophical discussions within their meetings. The lodge also started a book club in the 3rd quarter of 2011 which was kicked off by having author and PM, Andrew Hammer as a guest speaker. We are currently on our 3rd book, The Golden Builders for which there will be 3 discussions, with the first being on January 4th.

Looking forward to 2012, we will continue to introduce new elements to our Masonic experience. Before going forward, I want to emphasize a particular word in the previous sentence, WE. Do not allow yourselves to be disillusioned that these new elements were the brainchild of the person who stands before you as a newly installed Master or of someone power hungry and wishing to flex some new sense of entitlement. These concepts have been born of group discussion, for those who chose to participate, and are a collaborative effort of your Officers and others. First up, the execution and understanding of our ritual. The ritual is the crux of what we stand for as Masons and as such, we should strive to do it perfectly and understand the whats and whys within it. The ritual and its encompassed obligations are what set Freemasonry apart from the abundance of organizations vying for your time and money. If we cannot execute or comprehend the ritual or live by our obligations, then we are no different than

an Elk, Moose or Flying Squirrel. Every fourth Wednesday at 7pm starting on December 28th, Masons' Hall will be open for practice. Wor. Bill Heltzel has agreed to make himself available and assist us in this pursuit. You should count on being present to learn, hone or scrape off the rust of your ritual knowledge. There will also be other efforts to help achieve this goal of excellence, such as striving for the Hillman award or individually, working towards the Master Quarryman's Achievement Award and Correspondence Courses. Secondly, in an effort to make the most of your time during Stated meeting days, all business except for the clearing of the Secretary's desk will take place during the breakfast hour. This includes reports from the Treasurer, Sick and Distressed, Building & Grounds and general announcements. What will we do with the newly acquired time normally taken up by these items? We will continue to blaze the path of being an Observant lodge. Our guiding principal is that Masonry is a philosophical society which demands of its members the highest standards in all areas of its labor. To put it another way, making good men better. Therefore, focusing discussions around making our own ashlar more perfect. There must be an emphasis on labor. It takes work to make things happen. There is no entitlement to the achievements we seek for our lodge. These achievements we collectively seek cannot be obtained by being the same as every other fraternal organization in the world. Each month, someone will present a topic and an open debate on the floor will ensue. This topic will be published in advance allowing the Brethren to do their own research in preparation for enlightening others and being enlightened. This my Brothers, is what is missing in Masonry for so many of us.

As we are all aware, our temple, Masons' Hall, is in need of many things. Over the course of our multi-year plan, we will introduce several initiatives to ensure she remains a Masonic icon for another 227 years. Next month we will introduce a Capital Fundraising campaign. Link Parikh will head up this effort and we will provide all of the details in a month.

In addition to the aforementioned items there will be a focus on our interactions with one another. Keeping ourselves within the confines of our obligations and remaining centered in the circle bounded by the Holy Saints John and the Book of Constitutions. Not doing so would simply highlight the lack of intimacy between the Brothers of this lodge. We must learn to subdue our passions and Truly, agree to disagree, absent the harsh feelings that so often perpetuate disagreements or points of view among the Profane. My favorite example is Wor. Bill Bailey and I. Bill and I have worked on this building for countless days together during the past few years, usually on my Friday off from work. Mowing the grass, resetting the fence posts, cleaning, etc. During that time I've come to know Bill, his love for this building and his continuing personal obstacles. Yet, he never complains and as he told me some time ago 'I too have the bug' when it comes to caring for Masons' Hall. Some time back I broached the subject of the Chamber of Reflection. Later on, I provided Bill with a written description of one such Chamber's implementation. He came back to me a month later, after reviewing the write up, and upon further reflection, explained to me his perception of the Chamber and why he was not in support of it. Despite his objection, the lodge proceeded with the implementation of just such a Chamber of Reflection. Now, if this were a normal interaction, it could have created a rift between Bill and I. However, this is a case where two Just and Upright Masons simply did not

agree on a singular topic and nothing more. I still have the utmost respect for Wor. Bill and based on our interactions since our initial discussion months ago, he harbors no negative opinion of me for supporting this one idea. And thus, this is how it should be. We may not see eye to eye on every topic, but we should keep paramount our obligations to one another and the Craft. Unlike others, we should not shy away from differing opinions. Just the opposite, we should embrace them. How else can we claim to have an informed opinion and also have the opportunity to change our own minds?

Finally, we're going to have fun. Anyone who knows me knows I like to have fun. This year we celebrate our 225th Anniversary. To commemorate this, we will have a Table Lodge in October. Also, in August we'll travel to RW Jimi Duke's home state, to be a part of Union Lodge's Annual Cave degree weekend. I attended this event in 2008 and I can attest it'll be quite a bit of fun and a learning experience seeing other Grand Jurisdictions' degree work. This August we will go to the Cave degree weekend to observe and have great fellowship. In 2014, thanks to the Past Grand Master of Tennessee who manages the annual event, Richmond Randolph No. 19 will have the honor of exemplifying the Master Masons degree, as the center piece of the Cave Degree weekend. Brothers from around the world will be able to enjoy the fruits of our labor to come. Interspersed throughout the year we will have dinners with our spouses and a family day. I happen to know a fantastic BBQ caterer (our very own Secretary) who would fit the bill well for such an occasion. Mark Anderson has agreed to head up our Masons' Hall Rod and Gun Club. Mark has committed to organizing or linking us into already organized events throughout the year.

In conclusion, do not think that I am ignorant of the challenges set before us. Some may disagree with our efforts and chose to part ways. Some of our initiatives may fall flat on their face and fail miserably. But I say to you, do not give credence to such things. Failure is a part of the human nature of success and if we try to make everyone happy, we will end up serving no one. I challenge you: If you object, speak firmly and not behind closed doors. If you can do better, step forward and let your actions show us the way. We will welcome both, as we all have the same set of goals – make this body of good men better and to save this wonderful building from the decay of time. Use this lodge's humble beginnings as a starting point to appreciate the obstacles that have already been overcome in the past 225 years. That starting point was the number Three. In Masonry, Three is a powerful number and has many applications. In the case of Richmond Randolph No. 19, the number three has a unique value. It was just 3 brave souls from Richmond No. 10, who ventured beyond their comfort level and founded this lodge. Each of us should strive to be as brave in all aspects of Masonry and our lives as our Three lodge founders.

I thank you again for this honor and again encourage you to be vocal in your Masonry.