

Birmingham Masonic News

PILLARS OF PATRONAGE

Subscriptions are renewed December 1<sup>st</sup>

BIRMINGHAM44

BIRMINGHAM LODGE NO. 44 F&AM

500 TEMPLE STREET

DETROIT, MI 48201

STAMP

BIRMINGHAM #44 LODGE

TRESTLEBOARD

PILLARS OF PATRONAGE

(I will continue these 5 for a few months since they were paid for thru 2019)

In Loving Memory of Layson White Voorhees  
— from Bob Voorhees

In Dedication to Jack and Marilyn Milroy  
— from Ray Husk, PM

In Memory of Richard Pippin  
— from Joseph Wilson

In Memory of PM's Tom, George, and Tom Jr Paterson and Jim Grant— from Gerald Quinn, PM

In Memory of Allen Parrish  
— from Walter Ebling

Please send your check for \$30.00 payable to Birmingham #44 Lodge marked “Pillars of Patronage”. This is an opportunity to make a contribution “In Honor Of” or “In Loving Memory of”. Please let us know how you would like your name to appear. These subscriptions help to offset the cost of mailing the monthly Trestle Board. If you wish to make a larger donation, Birmingham #44 Charity Fund would welcome your contribution



Great, dramatic picture of The Masonic Temple, in Detroit

See our website where you can check the calendar of upcoming events, read past trestle boards, and make online payments

[www.birmingham44.net](http://www.birmingham44.net)

The Secretary's Pen

The biggest question I get at Birmingham, and also other Lodges, is: “What convinced you to become Secretary.” And the punctuation is not an error there, it’s really phrased as more of a statement than a question.. I recently ran into the Grand Secretary at Zion Lodge, being that while we’re in Detroit, why not visit more Detroit Lodges? And he told me the story of how when he first saw I was listed as a Secretary twice he was sure it was a mistake. He asked me that night: “Are you Secretary of Two Lodges?? - What are you nuts??” I remember something inside me felt and thought very differently upon the idea. I’m a young guy, (I turn 29 at this next business meeting night) took up the position of Secretary two years into being a Master Mason, never sat in another chair within the Lodge. But I feel if this Lodge and Craft is to survive certain things have to change. So there’s no question that it is my responsibility to do my part. Because we all have to do our part to complete the work.

— Dennis Martin, Secretary [secretary@birmingham44.com](mailto:secretary@birmingham44.com)

Brethren — please note the Regular this Thursday where Bro. Zane Kadro will be looking for a vote to allow the Lodge to respond more quickly to potential properties with available liquid capital, so we can compete in this real estate market for a new home. We also want to talk about what the Lodge wants to do this summer while we’re dark. Traditionally, we play golf, but any ideas are welcome.

— WM Jack

MONTHLY CALENDER — All Lodge Events at 7:30 unless otherwise stated

MAY 2022

MAY 5 — REGULAR (BUSINESS MEETING)

MAY 12 — FC PRACTICE

MAY 19 — FELLOWCRAFT DEGREE

MAY 24 — ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

MAY 26 — FELLOWSHIP NIGHT

JUNE 2022

JUNE 2 — REGULAR (BUSINESS MEETING)

JUNE 9 — TBD

JUNE 16 — TBD

JUNE 23 — TBD

JUNE 30 — TBD (MAYBE BURGER NIGHT)

2022 CALENDAR

Burger Night! — June (TBD)

Family Picnic Day — Summer (TBD)

Corn Roast — Fall (TBD)

Nov 3 — Annual Meeting

Dec — 2023 Installation of Officers — Multi-Lodge Installation

[See www.birmingham44.net/calendar for schedule](http://www.birmingham44.net/calendar-for-schedule)

NOTE TO BRETHREN of #44:

This Lodge is yours — if you have an idea for an event, please recommend it to the WM or bring it up in open Lodge. We love volunteers!

All Lodge events start at 7:30, unless noted

Greetings Brethren:

It has been quite a while since we last published a newsletter. An extended time, that has included a lot of big world drama and not a small amount of local drama that involved Birmingham 44. As I’m sure you are all aware, we sold our property in late 2020, and moved to the Masonic Temple in Detroit – which would be a big enough story – but a little global pandemic somewhat overshadowed it.

There may still be many members, especially our out-of-state members, that are unaware of the circumstances of the sale and of the move, so I’ll provide a brief synopsis. First of all, it should be stated, there were no members that I know of that wanted to sell the lodge. It was a beautiful building on a very nice piece of property in an ideal location. We moved to that location in 1964, and had had a lot of success and great experiences there. While Birmingham #44 has moved before and has had several locations over the 170 years of its existence, the bottom line is that, financially, we could no longer stay at our location. We would have bankrupted our assets, lost the property anyway through tax forfeiture and foreclosure, and possibly lost our Charter in the process. For Birmingham #44 to survive, we had to sell and move somewhere else.

We had what could be referred to as “the perfect storm” of unfortunate events that led to this. The building was aging and falling apart. Our roof was failing and water was leaking into the building -- it had gone past repair and needed replacement. The electrical and HVAC ran through the roof, so it all would have had to be replaced. At the same time, all of our HVAC units were at the end of their lifespans and needed to be replaced. Our parking lot needed to be replaced and we needed extensive plumbing work. Quotes on repairing all this far exceeded our total assets and investments. Our membership dues income did not even cover our property taxes. At the same time, our rental income – which we depended on to pay taxes, maintenance, and building repairs had fallen sharply off. Part of this was due to the condition of the building, but also due to the building being very outdated – it still looked like 1964. The final straw came when we found out our primary, long-term renter was looking for another location.

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All of this contributed to our decision to sell, but we also looked at our finances and realized that we weren’t able to perform one of our basic tenets of Masonry – Charity – as fully as we wanted to. Bringing the Lodge back to sound financial health would allow us to make more charitable donations to help our surrounding community and to build endowments that could be used for scholarships. Spending all the time and effort in trying to save a building had taken us away from why most of us had joined Masonry. We realized that a building didn’t define who we were as Masons, nor did it define who we were as Birmingham #44 Lodge.

In 2014, the Lodge voted to allow the Temple Board to explore bids for the property. We initially had a few interesting offers that would have allowed us to stay on the property, while selling the majority of the site to a developer. The City of Bloomfield Hills, unfortunately, shot all these ideas down. This process took years, but we finally sold the entire property to another developer, closing in late 2020. There were many legal complications before closing – including a small part of the property belonging to an Indian tribe in Arizona (long story) -- but it all eventually was resolved.

At our January 2020 business meeting a vote was taken to move to the Masonic Temple in Detroit, as the new location of Birmingham #44. The Masonic Temple is a grand building, and one of the largest and most impressive Masonic buildings in the world. The vote passed 44-1.

Two months later, the second part of our Perfect Storm hit: The Covid 19 Pandemic. This complicated the sale and the move downtown, but worse, it complicated our efforts in transitioning our members to the new location. Lodges were not allowed to meet for quite a while, and when this restriction was lifted, many members were still reticent about getting together in groups. Covid is still a concern as of this writing, and we are still struggling to bring back some of our members to lodge.

Fortunately, things are improving, and many members are discovering what a great facility the Temple is. We have been bringing in new members, and WM Jack Palmer has been doing a great job on getting us back on track. Some are concerned about the longer drive, and there has been a push to find another facility soon, back in the Birmingham area. Brother Zane Kadro is heading up that initiative. In the meantime, we meet in the Tudor Room on the third floor. The Masonic Temple is located at 500 Temple Street in Detroit. Parking is behind the building. The lot can be accessed off 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave, down the alley, between the buildings.

The 2000 film, “The Perfect Storm”, is based on a true story of a combination of weather patterns in 1991 – a convergence of a Nor’easter with a tropical hurricane – that created havoc on the East Coast, manifested 100 foot waves, and spelled doom for an unfortunate fishing crew. Birmingham #44 has faced its own “perfect storm” in the last couple years, and while we were jostled and tossed – and also ended up a little wet (mostly from our leaking roof) – we came through these storms in one piece, ship-shape, and ready to face the next 170 years.

Hope to see you in Lodge!

Fraternally,  
Steve Skrzycki, PM



My name is Jack Palmer and I am the 2022 Worshipful Master of Birmingham #44 Masonic Lodge. I first started my journey in Masonry in 2012 and was quickly assigned as an assistant Steward. I first became interested in Masonry after reading about the origins of Masonry in America. After I started looking into masonry I found out that some of my family members were masons and that fueled the fire. I was looking to improve myself as a person as well as looking for ways I could give of myself and help others, being a Mason seemed to be a great answer. I have a very good friend that is a member of Birmingham #44 and we started talking, well it was more like I started asking questions. He told me that there was a "Burger Night" coming up and I should go as his guest to meet some of the other members. That was the beginning of my travels. One of the greatest treasures I have found while being a member of Birmingham #44 is the people I've met. Not just the members of the lodge but their families and friends. I've also met the members of our brother lodge in Guelph and their families, and let me tell you they are great people. I can honestly say that my life is so much richer with these brothers and families in my life and I know I have made life long friendships.

Most of you already know me but of those who don't here is a basic background. I am celebrating my 22nd wedding anniversary this year to my beautiful wife Linda. Some of you have had the chance to meet both my wife and kids at some masonic events like the Kids Christmas Party, Pancake Breakfast, Corn Roast or possibly at the Lodge cleanups. My daughter is 19 going on 28 and has just finished her Second year at Michigan State University and my son is finishing his Senior year at Bloomfield Hills High School and has already been accepted at Michigan State and is planning on going into Computer Engineering. I'm very lucky to have a supportive family that realizes how important the lodge is to me. In my free time I enjoy woodworking as well as doing home improvement projects. I have lived in Bloomfield Hills for the past 15 years and I think I have some of the best neighbors.

My door is always open and as most of you know I'm only a phone call away if you need anything, I enjoy helping people when they need it.

Jack Palmer, WM

From the New Building Committee

Finding our new home has certainly not been without challenge. From lease to buy to rent it seems like everyone has their own opinion on what we should do. My goal here is to provide you with all the information you need to vote at the June business meeting on a resolution that will enable us to buy a building.

First, we combed through about 100 listings in the efforts to lease a commercial space and build out a proper lodge room. We focused on Birmingham and cities adjacent to it. The Lodge toured one building in Birmingham that was \$5000/mo, but the reactions from the brothers were mixed. The landlord quoted us around \$200,000 of build out and wasn’t willing to share the cost even with a 10 year lease. We determined at that time that renting in a commercial space in proper Birmingham was going to be extremely challenging.

Next, we started looking for purchase options. Unfortunately, there wasn’t anything in our price range, and anything that came up that was, disappeared within days in this seller’s market. We determined we need about \$300,000 to build out a proper lodge room and create a second entrance for a rental property. We found a building that was perfect --we could have paid cash and still had plenty of money in the endowment. We tried to get this under contract, but the building sold 3 days later for \$650,000.

Lastly, we engaged the Berkley lodge to secure a weekly rental, but the Eastern Star and Rainbow girls meet on Thursday nights and they were unwilling to switch to Tuesdays.

Moving forward we are focused on finding a building within our price range including buildout. For us to do that we need to have authorization from the lodge for the following:

I am asking the lodge to vote on a resolution that would give the new building committee along with the president of the finance committee and the WM the authority to put a building under contract with a \$50,000 Ernest Money Deposit and 45-day due diligence period. The day the building is put under contact we will send out a meeting time for the whole lodge to come and see the building within the first 7 days. After the meeting we will have a vote to either proceed with due diligence or terminate the contract and get our deposit back. If we continue with due diligence and the same committee that placed the building under contract determines that we can afford it and that the repair and retrofit budgets are cohesive with the perpetuity of the lodge we will vote to move forward with the purchase.

I hope to see you all at lodge this week.

Fraternally,

Zane Kadro, Committee Chair

