Summer 2026

rite now

THE MAGAZINE OF THE **VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH**

TRUTH



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about this issue

Truth is one of the three great tenets of Freemasonry, but it's often the most misunderstood. In this issue of *RiteNow*, we take a look at Truth (with a capital T) as well as truth.

What is truth? Is *your* truth different from *the* Truth? It's a complex issue to be certain – especially in today's climate, but our writers have some interesting thoughts on the subject.

Read on to discover some truths about Truth.



The Active

A message from the Supreme Council Active for Pennsylvania

SUPREME COUNCIL

All Thinking Creatures

By Paul J. Roup, 33°

One universe made up of all that is; and one God in it all, and one principle of being, and one law, the reason, shared by all thinking creatures, and one truth.
—Marcus Aurelius



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We sometimes get bogged down when discussing truth. *My truth* is a saying that has lately come into fashion. In my experience, that idiom, when dispensed, has little to do with facts, evidence, and reality. It is typically used as a sort of trump card when facts, evidence, and reality do not support the user's argument. Examples: *Well, that's not my truth. How dare you question my truth! Well, that might be your truth, but it's not mine.*

> How could you know Truth and not love your Brother?

Now, it's fair to say that everyone has their own perspective. It's based on lived experiences, inherited prejudices, and educational biases. So, we shouldn't be too quick to judge someone without walking a mile in their shoes, as the saying goes. We should also be careful not to fall into the trap that more than one Truth exists.

Freemasons already understand this. Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, right? It's a top three tenet, and, in my opinion, the most important one. Think about it. If we continually seek Truth – the perfect Truth of God – the other two fall into place. How could you know Truth and not love your Brother? How could you love your Brother and not want to help when he is in need?

Not convinced yet? Well, each section of the Quadrivium - Act II of the seven liberal arts, which we are encouraged to study – concerns truth in some fashion:

Arithmetic allows us to quantify order.

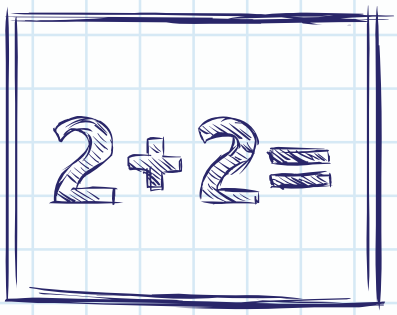
Geometry is that order in three dimensions.

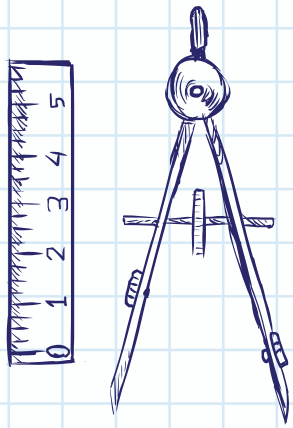
Music is the aural expression of mathematics.

Astronomy takes order and adds the element of time.

One cannot argue the result of 2+2, pi, the golden ratio, harmony, or the celestial calendar. They are all true, all provable, not subject to opinion. Each is an expression of the perfection of God's creation, continually on display for all thinking creatures, as Marcus Aurelius noted. You can feel any way you'd like about the 47th problem of Euclid, but a^2 plus b^2 is always going to equal c^2 when you have a right triangle.

Continue to seek the Truth, my Brothers – not your own truth, not your neighbor's truth – the truth. It's what we, as Freemasons, are charged to do. It's what sets us apart. And what sets us apart makes the world a better place. That's the truth. □









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The bodies of the Scottish Rite, sitting in the Valley of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, acknowledge and yield allegiance to the Supreme Council, 33°, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction of the United States of America whose Grand East is in Lexington, Massachusetts, and whose Officers are: Ill.˙.Walter F. Wheeler, 33°, Sovereign Grand Commander, Ill.˙.Keith E. Parkinson, 33°, Deputy for Pennsylvania. Other Active members for Pennsylvania are: Ill.˙.Stephen Gardner, 33°, Ill.˙.Mark A. Haines, 33°, Ill.˙.Thomas R. Labagh, 33°, and Ill.˙.Paul J. Roup, 33°.

The Chief

A message from the Commander-in-Chief of the Valley of Pittsburgh

CONSISTORY

The Search for Truth

By Joshua S. Freeman, 33°

Truth is at the absolute core of everything we do in Freemasonry and in the Valley. It doesn't really make a difference if you're talking about the traditional definition of truth (actuality, facts, and fundamental reality) or if you're speaking of the more contemporary usage of the term (to live one's Truth). For Scottish Rite Freemasons, there is no real distinction between these two concepts of truth. We are taught in the various allegorical lessons of our degrees to always seek the truth, to always tell the truth, and to always postulate the truth both amongst and outside the household of the faithful.

> I was always taught, as a kid growing up and later in the Army, that integrity is "doing the right thing, even when nobody is looking."

To me, the truth has always been fairly simple. Most of us are taught from a young age to always tell the truth, to do the right thing. To listen to that angel on our shoulder and ignore the devil on the other side. These days, however, it seems that the truth is no longer so simple. In our modern society, we are inundated on a daily basis with so much disinformation, sometimes with blatant falsehoods, and often from people in leadership positions, that it can be difficult to know and understand the truth. Luckily, as Scottish Rite Masons, we have been given a filter to help us recognize and understand the truth when we hear or see it.

As I mentioned in my last article, all the lessons and ideals of Scottish Rite Freemasonry are broken down into six Core Values: Reverence for God, Integrity, Justice, Tolerance, Devotion to Country, and Service to Humanity. For me, truth is encapsulated in these Core Values as Integrity. While all our Core Values are important, and each relies on and supports the others, to me, Integrity is the keystone of them all. Without integrity, it is difficult to do the others effectively.

I was always taught, as a kid growing up and later in the Army, that integrity is "doing the right thing, even when nobody is looking." That definition is so simple yet so accurate. As I mentioned before, we all know what right looks like. Even if we didn't before we joined the Valley, in Scottish Rite, we are given so many tools to help us learn, identify, and speak the truth. As I've gotten older, and as I progressed through leadership positions in the Army, at my job, or in the Fraternity, I've also learned an additional definition of integrity.



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It's easy to do the right thing when nothing is lost, it's much harder when we must pay a price.

Integrity is also doing the right thing, even when there are consequences. It's easy to do the right thing when nothing is lost, it's much harder when we must pay a price. Integrity is also something we must constantly work to maintain.

While most of us will hopefully always make the right decision, we must constantly apply the lessons of our Masonic teachings to ensure we maintain our integrity, that we follow the path. Much like credibility, integrity is something that we can spend a lifetime cultivating, but one bad decision, and it can be instantly wiped away. If we keep our Core Values in mind in everything we do, if we constantly do the right thing, even when no one is looking, and we use the lessons and tools the Valley has provided us to guide our lives, then I have no doubt each of us will know, speak, and live our own truth.

> No leader, but especially no Masonic leader, can do it alone.

This is the last article I will write as an active officer in the Valley of Pittsburgh. It is hard to believe, but for me, the journey of nearly 15 years through the chairs is coming to a close. It has been a tremendous honor to serve the Valley in my various leadership roles over the years, especially as Commander-in-Chief for the last two. I have met so many wonderful men and cultivated too many lasting relationships to mention. I truly enjoyed every minute of my service to the Valley, and I am incredibly thankful to all the members and my fellow officers for their trust in my abilities and their support for my efforts. No leader, but especially no Masonic leader, can do it alone. It takes the support of our families, our fellow officers, and our members to make our efforts a success. I have been incredibly lucky to have so much support and will be forever grateful for the experience. There are challenging times ahead for our Fraternity, but I have complete faith that the leaders who follow me will lead with vision, wisdom, and integrity. Remember, as we are told in our closing charge, "We have the Truth that makes men free." □



The Potent

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Gourgas Lodge of Perfection

LODGE OF PERFECTION

Time Flies

By David C. Allison, 32°

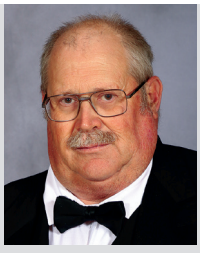
I just found out I still owed one more article for *RiteNow*. That made me reflect on the fact that if you take the time to involve yourself in Freemasonry, there is always something more to do. Over the years, life as we know it has changed rapidly from written letters and phone calls to faxes, to email and text messages. Many, in their busy lives, no longer know how to respond to a phone call or even take the time for a personal conversation.

No matter what generation we belong to, I feel we all need to be aware that we should take the time to slow down a little and actively communicate with others at their level of expertise. The youth are the future of our Fraternity, but the older members are the experience and wisdom, without either of which our Fraternity will perish.

In my Masonic journey, I met a man who at first seemed so obnoxious, condescending, and overbearing that I almost resigned from that appendant body and even considered leaving the whole Fraternity. Thankfully, through no particular plan of my own, one night, what started as a heated conversation ended with him realizing what feelings his behavior was causing and me realizing that he was a man trying to mentor me, but just didn't know how. After that night, he and I became friends and true Brothers because we learned how to communicate with each other. I am so thankful that that occurred. Because of his vast knowledge and experience, I am a better man today. Having that interaction not only opened my eyes but also opened the door to the many other Brothers who have been a help to me over the years. I would encourage everyone, old or young, to take the time when dealing with each other to find the level at which you can communicate effectively. It may come to your surprise that the man whose mere presence makes you no longer wish to attend could turn out to be your best ally.

> Because of his vast knowledge and experience, I am a better man today.

All of this becomes important because, as I said before, as you progress along your path and join and go through the lines of various bodies just when you think you have risen to the end there is always something more. All you have to do is be willing to communicate and before you know it you will be able to look back and say I can't believe I did all that, and you will become the man that hopefully others will look to and say, "I want to do that."



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Before you know it, you will be able to look back and say, I can't believe I did all that.

As my time as Thrice Potent Master comes to an end, I would like to thank all those who have helped me as mentors, advisors, stagehands, ritualists, and many others, too numerous to list.

I cannot believe how fast time goes by. If any of you are thinking that joining the officer line of a Masonic body is too daunting or takes too long, my advice would be to look back on your life. I am willing to bet that you will come to realize that the things that you remember as not that long ago indeed occurred months or even years ago. Just as children become adults, before you know it, so does your time as a Mason grow and mature in the blink of an eye. As I said in my previous article, because of the effort of the man who gave me my first degree in Freemasonry, and him putting forth the effort to make it memorable, it seems like only yesterday that I started this journey.

We all need to be the kind of man people remember as a good man.

For our Fraternity to continue to not only survive but grow, you need to be the man who attempts to make the next generation of men realize how special their place in our Fraternity is. I am aware that not everyone can be a strong ritualist, but I would advise that without you even thinking about it, the example of how you live your life and in your talking to others makes a memorable impression on them. We all need to be the kind of man people remember as a good man.



Finally, I would like to say that we all have very little knowledge of what our future holds for us, but in Freemasonry, there is always something more to come. If you think that you have come to the end of your journey when you reach the top position in a Scottish Rite or others Masonic body, you are mistaken. As long as you have any interest at all, just your staying in an active role will be an inspiration to others.

Again, I cannot express my thanks to everyone who, in some way, has been an inspiration to me, and I hope to continue seeing all of you for a long time to come.

I don't know where my path will continue to take me, but I know with the help and knowledge of others, it will be a fun ride. I hope that all of you can come to love and enjoy Freemasonry as I do. □

The Sovereign

A message from the Sovereign Prince of the Pennsylvania Council of Princes of Jerusalem

PRINCES OF JERUSALEM

Striving for More

By Robert B. McGinnis, 32°

The subject we were given for this issue was about Truth and truth, yes, two different meanings for the same word, divided by a capital letter. Oh, the crazy English language. What does it mean to a Freemason, what is the difference, and why is it important?

Now, I will say I had to do a lot of research on my computer, read a lot, and will try to show you how I feel this pertains to me and my Masonic journey. Everyone is different, as we all know, and maybe you will align with my thinking or feel differently about it. Neither is right, nor is it wrong.

The first bullet point I came across was the lowercase *truth*. Lowercase truth is about how we, you and I, conduct ourselves. This is what our parents, and if you belonged to an organized religion or club (think Boy Scouts, DeMolay, etc.), tried to instill in us. Be a good person, a kind person, a person who truly wants themselves and others to blossom and thrive. You need to keep these truths with you every day in what you see, hear, and do in your own environment. If you do this, there will be times when you struggle to stay on the right path, and by doing so, you can actually feel that the world needs you and that you are contributing to friends, colleagues, and your immediate surroundings. It is not just a good feeling to keep in your heart or soul. If you have accomplished this, it will be shown outwardly on your person. With this truth, you will always be trying to better yourself. It should not end. As I read in one of the columns, we are the rough ashlar that needs to be continually honed, and thus we go on.

> The stairs are difficult to ascend, but by taking these steps one by one, we will continue to learn, even without ever really reaching the top.

The second bullet point is the capitalized *Truth,* the ultimate light that disperses the darkness of ignorance. This is where we are to seek more knowledge and the absolute and universal reality. Big words from me, and I had to read into this further. It seemed foreign to me at first, but it described what we know as our God, or as we call him in Lodge, the Great Architect of the Universe, and how we hold our Truths to what we believe he wants for us. We see this in the lessons we learn in the degrees pertaining to geometry, harmony, and the understanding of the greatness and vastness of the universe.



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With this truth, you will always be trying to better yourself.

An example I came across was the winding stairs in King Solomon's temple. The stairs are difficult to ascend, but by taking these steps one by one, we will continue to learn, even without ever really reaching the top. We are human, and we will never understand the universe or its teachings, but it will keep us humble and wanting to learn more.

So remember, *truth* guides us on a daily journey to be a better person, and *Truth* is our desire to realize that through continuous learning, we may understand the influence of the greater universe and where we fit within it.

We will never finish this learning, especially since most of us always want to know more. When we reflect on the years that have passed, the people who have come and gone in our lives, and how they have opened our minds and/or our souls, we have learned both *truth* and *Truth*.

Brethren, always strive for more – strive to be a better person, father, son, friend, and always seek the greatness of our Brotherhood and the universe in which we dwell. □



The Wise

A message from the Most Wise Master of the Pittsburgh Chapter Rose Croix

ROSE CROIX

Navigating the Search for Truth

By Benjamin J. Douglas, 32°

The word "truth" is perhaps the most heavily weighted term in the human language. We demand it in our courts, seek it through scientific research and exploration, crave it in our relationships, and stake our sanity on it every morning as we wake. But, beneath its common usage lies a profound philosophical divide. To understand truth is to engage with the very fabric of existence, and to wonder if there is an "end" to that search. I think this very human paradox can be best summarized in the following two quotes:

> "The more I know, the more I realize I know nothing."
> —Socrates

> "The more I see, the less I know."
> —Anthony Bourdain.



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truth vs. Truth

At first glance, the difference between "truth" and "Truth" might seem like mere semantics, but, upon further reflection, we can see that it represents the gap between the empirical and the existential.

- **truth (lowercase):** This refers to facts. It is the realm of "twelve inches are in one foot." Lowercase truth is verifiable, often scientific, and descriptive of the world as it appears to us. It is data we collect to navigate life efficiently.

- **Truth (uppercase):** This signifies an absolute, universal, or transcendent reality. Capitalized "Truth" is often associated with the "Ultimate" – the fundamental nature of being, the moral law of the universe, or a divine order. While lowercase truth tells us how things work, uppercase Truth attempts to tell us why they exist and what they mean.

The word "truth" is perhaps the most heavily weighted term in the human language.

More simply, lowercase truth is a tool; uppercase Truth is a destination.

Is There an End to the Search?

The question of whether the search for Truth has an expiration date depends entirely on your philosophical lens.

- In the realm of **lowercase truth,** the search is theoretically infinite but practically cumulative. As our tools for observation improve – from the magnifying glass to the Hubble Space Telescope – we continue to refine our understanding of the world around us; however, scientific research

in fields such as higher order mathematics suggests that there are truths that cannot be proven. This implies that the "map" of lowercase truth may always have a few missing pieces.

- Regarding **uppercase Truth,** the search feels more like a circle than a straight line. Throughout history, various traditions – religious, Enlightenment, rationalist, and even Nihilist – have claimed to reach the "end." Yet, every generation re-interrogates these findings. If Truth is indeed absolute and infinite, it stands to reason that a finite human mind can never fully encompass it. In this sense, the search is not a failure to find a destination, but a continuous process of alignment. Perhaps this is the true value proposition of Freemasonry. It is making "good men better" equipped to continue the search.

Why Truth Matters

If the search is potentially endless and the definitions are slippery, why do we bother? Why is Truth – in both its forms – the cornerstone of the human experience?

1. **The Foundation of Trust:** Without a shared commitment to truth, social cohesion evaporates. Language itself relies on a "truth-contract"; if words do not reliably correspond to reality, communication becomes impossible, and cooperation turns into conflict.

Without a shared commitment to truth, social cohesion evaporates.



2. **The Antidote to Chaos:** Truth provides the boundaries within which we can act effectively. To ignore the truth of gravity is to fall; to ignore the Truth of human dignity is to invite tyranny. Truth acts as a lighthouse, ensuring that our personal and collective "ships" don't shatter against the rocks of delusion.

3. **Meaning and Agency:** Ultimately, we seek Truth because we want our lives to matter. A life built on a lie, no matter how comfortable, feels hollow. We have an innate drive to know "the real," because only in the context of reality can our choices have genuine weight.

The Perpetual Horizon

We may never find a dusty leather-bound book containing the answers to all of life's questions, and I would argue that we would be better off for not finding it because the real value lies not in finding Truth, but in the journey and transformation we undertake along the way.

As my tenure as Most Wise Master of the Pittsburgh Chapter of Rose Croix reaches its end, I want to thank each and every one of you who helped me through this journey. Please join me in supporting the rising officers as they look to continue to drive our Valley forward. □

The Venerable

A message from the Venerable Master of the Knights of St. Andrew

Knights of St. Andrew

Good Enough Is Not Good Enough

By Thomas J. Anke, 32°

Albert Pike's writings about truth were rooted in Classical Greek philosophy, and he chose to teach them to us through allegory. He argued that truth is universal and could be accessed by all, however people seeking it needed to exercise mental effort and moral excellence to ever understand it. Pike also viewed truth not as a fixed concept but rather as a dynamic and ever-changing reality that could be found through personal reflection and effort. He emphasized the importance of truth in shaping one's character and moral compass while pursuing enlightenment. Pike's views on truth are reflected in his writings and the symbolism he used to convey his ideas, which require interpretation and understanding beyond their literal meanings. Here are a few of his takes on truth extracted from *Morals and Dogma*. As you read these, think about the symbolic degrees that we enact and appreciate how Truth is embodied in our work.

> A truthful person doesn't brag or put themselves down, rather they present themselves honestly.

"The doctrines of the Bible are often not clothed in the language of strict truth, but in that which was fittest to convey to a rude and ignorant people the practical essentials of the doctrine."

"Fictions are necessary for the people, and the Truth becomes deadly to those who are not strong enough to contemplate it in all its brilliance. In fact, what can there be in common between the vile multitude and sublime wisdom? The Truth must be kept secret, and the masses need a teaching proportioned to their imperfect reason."

"Philosophy is a kind of journey. Ever learning yet never arriving at the ideal perfection of truth."

"True thoughts have duration in themselves. If the thoughts endure, the seed is enduring; if the seed endures, the energy endures; if the energy endures, then will the spirit endure. The spirit is thought; thought is the heart; the heart is fire; the fire is the elixir."

"It is most true that Truth is a divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue. To be true, and to seek to find and learn the truth are the great objects of every good Mason."

Awesome! We get it. Pike rules! But how did he arrive at those conclusions? To understand that, we must explore the man and how he



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To Aristotle, everything had an "essence," or a true nature, and that we need complete knowledge to understand that essence.

formed that viewpoint. For those who do not know, Albert Pike was an autodidact who never attended college, spoke and read several languages, and was a voracious reader of all things philosophical, esoteric, and spiritual. He read Aristotle in the original Greek, and that was where he began to come to grips with the nature of truth. Acquinas and Descartes were also greatly influenced by the same writings by Aristotle.

"To know the truth is to know the cause."—Aristotle

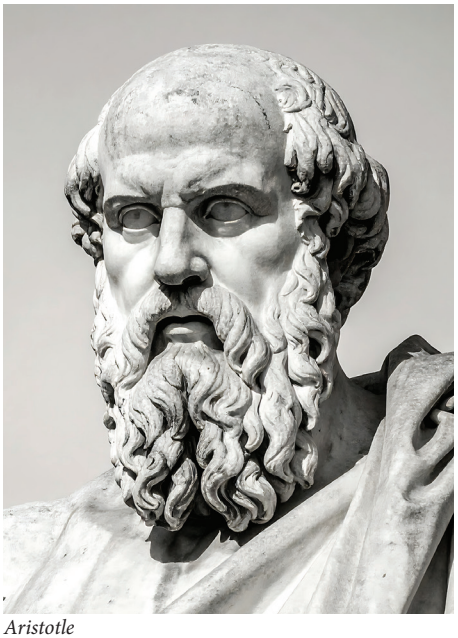
The quest to define truth has occupied the human mind since antiquity, serving as a cornerstone for epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics. Aristotle was one of the early influential thinkers to grapple with the nature of truth. His conception of truth is deceptively simple yet profoundly rich, rooted in his broader metaphysical and logical framework. To Aristotle, true understanding, or knowing the truth, comes from studying the causes of things, not just observing their effects.

Aristotle identified four types of causes that explain why something is the way that it is: material, formal, efficient, and final. Knowing these four causes provides complete understanding of a thing. He proposed that to truly understand something, you need to understand its material cause (what it's made of), its formal cause (its shape or form), its efficient cause (the agency that brought it into being), and its final cause (its purpose or function). Aristotle believed that experience alone, while helpful, could never provide an understanding of Truth on its own. True knowledge requires grasping the reasons why things are as they are, not just knowing *that* they are.

For example: consider the Washington Monument in the District of Columbia. Material cause: made of stone; formal cause: shaped like an Obelisk; efficient cause: designed by Robert Mills and completed by Thomas Casey; and Final cause: to honor Brother Washington. If we study those four causes, Aristotle would say that we have a complete understanding of the monument. Aristotle's view connects knowledge with causality, arguing that understanding the causes of things is essential for scientific knowledge.

Aristotle famously defined truth in *Metaphysics* (Book IV) as follows: "To say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true." Aristotle believed that truth meant thinking and saying things that match reality. If a statement describes the world as it really is, then it's true. If it doesn't, it's false. He didn't think truth was just about objects or facts, but that it was also about how we think and talk about them. Truth involves our minds' understanding things correctly. To Aristotle, everything had an "essence," or a true nature, and that we need complete knowledge to understand that essence. Truth happens when our minds understand that essence, and our understanding matches how things exist in the real world. In other words, truth isn't just something we find, it's something we work toward by using reason and thoughtfulness.

Aristotle also connected truth to logic. He invented a system called the syllogism, which is a way of using reasoning to go from known facts to new conclusions. For example, if we know that "All humans are mortal" and "The Commander in Chief is a human," then we can logically say "The Commander in Chief is mortal." But for this to work, the starting facts (called premises) must be true, and the reasoning must follow certain rules; Logic helps us to build and protect truth. He also discussed two types of truth: necessary and contingent. Necessary truths are always true, like the rules of math, natural science, or logic. Contingent truths depend on what we observe in the world and can change depending on who is doing the observing.



Aristotle

www.knightsofstandrew.org

This shows that Aristotle believed that truth comes from both thinking and experience. Just because something feels true doesn't mean that it IS true; we need to test it with logic and evidence. Aristotle didn't see truth merely as a means to gain knowledge, but more importantly he saw it as a moral value. In his book *The Nicomachean Ethics,* he said that being truthful is a virtue. A truthful person doesn't brag or put themselves down, rather they present themselves honestly. This fits with his argument that virtue is about balance, not extremes. He also believed in practical wisdom, using truth to make good decisions in everyday life. To live well, we need to see the world clearly and act based on what is real. Truth helps us to make ethical choices and serve the greater good. This concept was summed up rather well by William Shakespeare in Act 1, Scene 3 of *Hamlet* when Polonius admonishes his son Laertes, "This above all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

Today, some people argue that "everyone has their own truth." If Aristotle were still alive, he would disagree with that extreme degree of narcissism. He believed that truth isn't a personal opinion, it is a process of matching our thoughts to reality (rather than insisting that reality bend itself to our will). Ignoring the truth doesn't create a new one; it just means that we are not embracing reality. His view reminds us to think carefully, be honest, and stay committed to understanding the world as it truly is.

> Pike also viewed truth not as a fixed concept but rather as a dynamic and ever-changing reality that could be found through personal reflection and effort.

Which brings us back to the reason for this article: why did Pike include truth as a core tenet of our early ritual? To say that Brother Pike was influenced by Aristotle is an understatement. Aristotle's Correspondence Theory was used by Pike in our rituals, which teach us to be actively engaged in thought as we seek truth. He also agreed that truthfulness was a moral virtue, citing passages from *The Nicomachean Ethics.* He fully appreciated that living a true life was a virtue. He knew that our work requires us to be true unto all and be able to show our work to the Great Architect without boasting. That is the kind of work that we are supposed to do as Masons, and more specifically as Scottish Rite Masons; we are enjoined to live these values and virtues in 100% of our lives. Conscious and deliberate thought go into implementing that. Understanding the nature of truth (and our part in discovering it) is essential to knowing who we really are and thus becoming better men. Pike was greatly influenced by a man who died 2,131 years before he himself was even born, but more importantly, deemed that influence essential enough to embed it in the rituals of the Scottish Rite. We embody the Scottish Rite based on the influence of Pike when we conduct our meetings and confer our degrees, and he would want for us to think about why we do what we do, not merely obsess about what we do. The search for truth was formative to Aristotle and later to Pike, and we are descendants of both through the workings of the Scottish Rite. Be True. □



Albert Pike

Salute to Veterans

A message for Military Veterans of the Valley of Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

Legion of Honor Reboot

By Ed Hanke, 32° and Robert Ruff, 33°

We all have choices in what we say or do. Some of these choices are more difficult than others. Many choices are even life-altering and can lead us down roads that open new opportunities and interesting challenges. Stepping into the gap and putting your experience to work is nothing new to those of us who have worn the uniform of our country. Trying to fill the shoes of those stalwarts who have gone before us is never easy. Sometimes we have breadcrumbs of a trail left behind, and other times we are left with no clear pathway forward. It is just that way with the Legion of Honor as we have very little history to refer to.

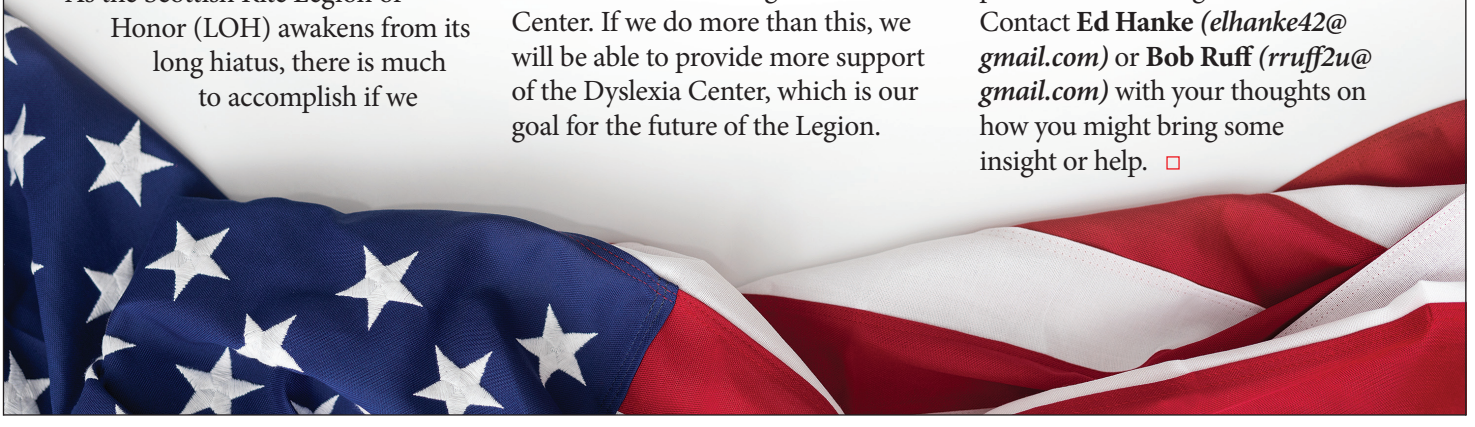
As the Scottish Rite Legion of Honor (LOH) awakens from its long hiatus, there is much to accomplish if we are to become a viable part of the organization. Every organization or business must have three basic things to make it function. First, we need to have membership with a common intent. Second, there has to be some basic finance to stoke the fire of what needs to be accomplished. Third, there has to be some organizational management to keep the other parts whole and accomplish the task or mission. When all three are present and fully functional, the objective is likely to be achieved.

> Trying to fill the shoes of those stalwarts who have gone before us is never easy.

Presently, our membership is not robust, but we are in reasonably good shape. We, like the remainder of the Fraternity, are always looking for additional members. If you are of a mind to be part of our effort, please consider joining our merry band. We have basic funds with which to carry out our objectives, a small treasury enabled by the sale of Masonic items at the reunions and other events held at the Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center. If we do more than this, we will be able to provide more support of the Dyslexia Center, which is our goal for the future of the Legion.

Our venture into reorganizing the LOH is not straightforward, as little has been left to guide us. In some ways, this makes us much more flexible in what we want to accomplish and how we can support Scottish Rite and the Dyslexia Center. The ability to pivot, dodge, and dance is ours for the taking as we are open to any and all suggestions. Innovation and ideas are sought so that we can join together to make the Pittsburgh Scottish Rite a highlight of the Fraternity. They say that many hands make light work, and we look forward to those who would step into the breach as we put things together to make the Legion a viable part of the greater effort of the Rite.

The choice is open and up to you. We listen for the ideas, suggestions and help that will be needed to make this a successful transformation from just another organization to a needed part of the Pittsburgh Scottish Rite. Contact **Ed Hanke** ***(elhanke42@gmail.com)*** or **Bob Ruff** ***(rruff2u@gmail.com)*** with your thoughts on how you might bring some insight or help. □



UniontownUpdate

A message from the Thrice Potent Master of the Valley of Uniontown

VALLEY OF UNIONTOWN

The Eternal Light: **What Truth Means to a Freemason**

By Matthew M. Brockman, 32°

There is a word that echoes through every lodge, every degree, every whispered obligation of the Masonic Fraternity. It appears on tracing boards and in lectures. It is carved, metaphorically, into the cornerstone of the entire institution. That word is **Truth.**

But what does Truth mean to a Freemason? And is it the same truth we encounter in a courtroom, a laboratory, or a casual conversation? These are not idle questions. They go to the very heart of why the Craft exists and why its lessons have endured for centuries, outlasting empires, philosophies, and fashions of thought.

Two Kinds of Truth

The distinction between *truth* (lowercase) and *Truth* (capitalized) is not merely typographical vanity. It reflects a genuine philosophical division that Freemasonry has always recognized, even when it has not always named it explicitly.

Lowercase truth is propositional. It is the truth of facts: the time of a meeting, the square of the hypotenuse, the words a man actually spoke. This truth matters enormously as Masonry demands honesty in all dealings, and a Mason who lies in his daily life has violated the very first lesson the Craft teaches. In this sense, truthfulness is a moral minimum, the ground floor of Masonic character. A man who cannot be trusted to tell the truth about small things has no business claiming to seek light about great ones.

> Truth is something one lives, not merely something one states.

Truth with a capital T is something else entirely. It belongs to the company of other capitalized Masonic virtues Light, Beauty, Brotherly Love. It points not to a fact that can be verified, but toward a principle that can only be approached. It is the nature of reality itself, the divine order underlying the visible world, the harmony the ancient builders were seeking when they laid their perfect ashlars in service of something greater than themselves.

This distinction is not unique to Masonry. The ancient Greeks separated *Aletheia,* the un-hiddenness of Being, from mere factual accuracy. The Hebrew concept of *Emet* carries not just the meaning of factual correctness but of faithfulness, integrity, and covenant. In both traditions, Truth is something one lives, not merely something one states. Freemasonry, drawing from these deep wells, has always understood the word in this fuller, richer sense.



Matthew M. Brockman, 32°

The light is worth following, even knowing we will never reach its source.

This is why the Volume of the Sacred Law sits open on every Masonic altar. It does not sit there because Masons agree on its every word. It sits there as an emblem of Truth – the acknowledgment that there exists a moral and spiritual order to the universe that no man fully comprehends but every honest man is duty-bound to seek.

The Search That Never Ends

One of the most important and most honest things Freemasonry teaches is that the search for Truth has no final destination in this life.

This is not pessimism. It is wisdom.

The legend of the lost Master's Word, which stands at the symbolic heart of the third degree, is not primarily a story about loss. It is a story about substitution. We are handed a substitute word and told to labor with it faithfully until the genuine one is restored. Every Mason who has sat with that symbolism long enough understands what it means: we do our work, we seek our light, and we remain humble about how much we still cannot see.

The great teachers across philosophical traditions have said the same thing in different language. Socrates claimed to know only that he knew nothing. The mystics of every faith tradition described the Divine as ultimately beyond description. The most honest scientists acknowledge that every answer opens ten new questions. Freemasonry, in its quiet, allegory laden way, has always been in that same tradition a fraternity of seekers, not a fellowship of the arrived.

This is precisely why Masonry uses degrees rather than a single initiation. Each degree does not complete a man's education it opens a new door. The apprentice learns to work stone; the Fellow Craft learns to study the liberal arts and sciences; the Master learns to confront mortality and the limits of knowledge.

Why Truth Matters

One might ask: if Truth is unreachable, why pursue it? The answer lies in what the pursuit does to a person.

The man who sincerely seeks Truth who questions his own motives, who demands honesty from himself before he demands it from others, who looks at the plumbline and the level and asks whether his own conduct measures up is a fundamentally different man from one who has abandoned the search. The pursuit of Truth is the chisel that shapes the rough ashlar. It is the work itself.

Freemasonry also understands that Truth has a social dimension. A lodge is a small society, and societies survive only when their members are committed to honest dealing, fair judgment, and the refusal to let comfortable falsehoods go unchallenged. Truth is the mortar between the stones. Without it, nothing holds.

The Unfinished Temple

In the end, every Freemason is a builder working on a temple that will not be completed in his lifetime. The plans come from a Grand Architect whose full design remains beyond human sight. The tools are the moral virtues, and the work is a life honestly lived.

What the Craft offers is not certainty, but direction. Not a destination, but a compass. The Mason who takes his obligations seriously is not a man who claims to have found Truth, he is a man who has promised, on the altar of his deepest convictions, to keep looking. That promise, renewed at every communication, in every degree, is itself a kind of fidelity to Truth that the world rarely asks of anyone.

The search is the point. The light is worth following, even knowing we will never reach its source. □



The Office

A message from the Secretary of the Valley of Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

Objective Truth

By David W. Morgans, 33°

Truth shouldn't be a hard thing to understand. However, we have all types of truth floating around. From your truth to my truth to relative truth to half-truth to objective truth, it can get rather confusing. Believe it or not, the office must deal with all the various types of truth when interacting with members and headquarters. Many people who call, write, email, or submit a message through the Supreme Council website seem to operate under their own truth, relative truth, or half-truth, especially when issues such as Fraternal Relief, demitting or being reinstated, receiving Valley communications, possible suspension, or being granted Senior Status are involved.

> The office must deal with all the various types of truth when interacting with members and headquarters.

The Valley Office functions best in the realm of objective truth. In this article, I would like to try to give objectively true information regarding the above-mentioned issues.

Fraternal Relief – The Valley Hospitalers serve the Valley by assisting members in need. The names of those who request help are kept confidential. No person seeking help is seen as a burden to the Valley or as a person of low character or ability, but many in need refuse to contact the Office because of pride, embarrassment, or other reasons. Brotherly love is at the heart of our Fraternity. If you need help, please ask.

Demitting or Being Reinstated – If you wish to transfer to a different Valley or put your membership on hold or resign, you must be a member in good standing which means that you are current with your dues. Every year, on August 1, your membership renewal fee is due. If you demit, then when you want to be reinstated, all you need to do is ask, and you will only be charged for the dues for the year you are reinstated. If you get suspended for non-payment of dues and want to be reinstated, then you would need to pay the dues for the year you were suspended plus the dues for the year you are reinstated.

Receiving Valley Communications – Some of our members complain that they don't receive Valley mailings or emails. There can be several causes, but it usually boils down to the fact that we don't have the objective truth regarding your contact information. If you move or change your phone number or email address, please let us know. Or better yet, go to the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction website and log into the Member



David W. Morgans, 33°
secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org

Center to keep your information up to date and accurate. If you aren't registered in the Member Center, please consider doing so. It is a wonderful resource for you and also helps us to maintain accurate records.

Possible Suspension – Every year, the Office is faced with sending out hundreds of letters to inform Brethren that they are behind with their dues payments. Many men ignore these letters, get angry at having received them, or interpret them as the Valley no longer wanting them as members. We don't want to suspend anyone for non-payment of dues! Dues are so easy to pay on time with an automatic credit card payment through the Supreme Council's safe and secure website. Please pay your dues in a timely manner. They are due every August and should be paid by the end of August to avoid endless reminders of your obligation to pay your dues.

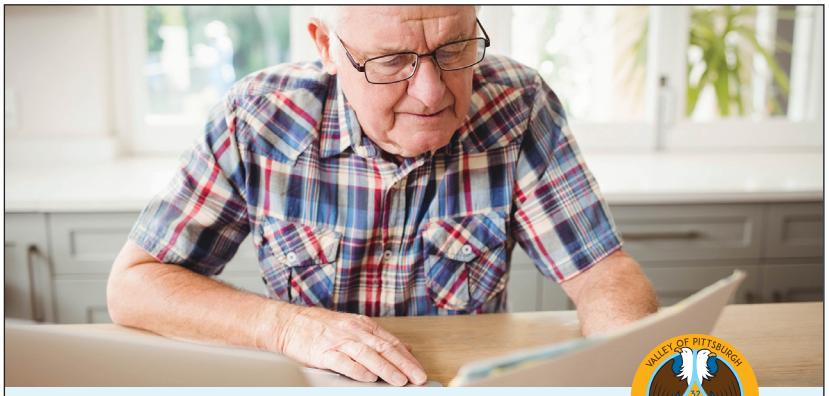
Senior Status – The truth about Senior Status (which reduces your annual dues to $0.00) is this: you must request consideration for Senior Status. It is not automatic like Blue Lodge when you reach 50 years of service. Senior Status is for men who have 50+ years of service AND are 75 years old OR any Brother 80 years or older regardless of the number of years of service, who are experiencing financial hardship, severe health issues, or combination of both that makes paying annual dues a hardship.

Brethren, the Office Staff truly love and respect the members of the Valley and want to do our best to serve you. We do this best when we all use the objective truth about the issues that sometimes occur in the Fraternity. If Karen or I can ever be of service to you, please contact us. Take care, my Brothers. □



Need Assistance?

No one likes to find themselves in financial hardship. No one likes to ask for help. However, many Brothers would rather be suspended than ask for the help that we all promised to render to a Brother when we joined the Fraternity. If you need to have your dues remitted this year, please, please, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org). Your request will be kept confidential, and you will continue to be a vital part of our Valley.



Senior Member Status

If you are 80-years old or older or are a 50-year plus member, I would like to remind you that the Scottish Rite does not automatically remit your dues. The Scottish Rite has a program for senior members. The Senior Member Program was implemented to ensure that NO member over the age of 80 (or over 75 with 50 years of membership in the Scottish Rite, NMJ) having financial hardship would be suspended for non-payment. If you qualify for Senior Membership, you will no longer have to pay dues.

If you think you qualify for Senior Member status, please contact the Office by phone (412-939-3579), by letter (Valley of Pittsburgh, 3579 Masonic Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15237), or by email (secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org).

If you are a caregiver for someone who may qualify, please contact us and let us know of the need. We are ready, willing, and able to help but can only do so if we are aware of the need.

The Word

A Message from the Grand Chaplain

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

Are You a Seeker after Truth?

By David A. Eichelberger, 32°

Our editor gave us an open-ended topic for this issue of our periodical: What does Truth mean to a Freemason? Is there an end to that search? Does Truth mean something different than truth? Why is Truth important? These are each daunting questions, and each could deserve an article dedicated to solely to that query. So let us see what we discover.

"Truth," like "facts," is a topic that we once considered to be a rather cut-and-dry concept. In former times, we would look to experts in a particular field of study for them to set out the parameters of truth in their field of expertise. Doctors knew the truth about our bodies and what was best for us to enjoy good health. Clergy knew the truth about theological questions. Lawyers told us what was truth in the law. Scientists told us the truth as they understood it about the world around us. Our task as Truth seekers was to find the right expert and accept what they said. It was rather comforting to know that "Truth" could be known and trusted.

Our task as Truth seekers was to find the right expert and accept what they said.

From the Renaissance onward, that practice began to change. One of the first challenges came in the area of our understanding of our place in the universe. Galileo and Copernicus rattled our certainty that everything we could see revolved around the earth. Other scientists came along to challenge the notions that ether or miasma causes diseases. More and more areas of certainty also came to be questioned. Protestants in Western Europe challenged the hegemony of Rome as the arbiter of truth in religious matters. Philosophers and freethinkers challenged the idea that the head of government or even of our religious traditions should dictate what we believe religiously.

This process of doubting and challenging has accelerated through time. Even some of our greatest thinkers and scientists have been shown to have only a portion of the truth in their field of study. Today, we are awash in a sea of conflicting theories and are forced to become seekers of the truth, especially with the dawn of the Artificial Intelligence computer systems that can spit out all manner of truth or falsehood in ways that can easily deceive or confuse us.

The teachings of Freemasonry and those of the Scottish Rite have shown us a path that we can rely on because they have been tested by



David A. Eichelberger, 32°

We teach men how to live good lives and become even better men, fathers, and sons.

time and have proven to be a good guide for us in finding our way through challenging times. Others can and do put their trust in other philosophies and traditions. Some have led to great success, but others have only led to disillusionment and even death.

We Freemasons have found that the foundation of our lives can be a firm and solid one when we put our trust in our Supreme Being and seek to live according to the "tried and true" ancient landmarks and lived experiences of our forefathers in Masonry. We teach men how to live good lives and become even better men, fathers, and sons. We encourage one another to develop our mental capacities through study and memorization. We exemplify values that add so much to our personal lives and benefit society as a whole. Being human, we often fall short of our ideals. Sadly, we each have experienced that in ourselves and among our Masonic brethren. In each case, have we tried to set ourselves back on the right path? Have we sought to mentor others so that they, too, can mend their mistakes? We are engaged in the serious and exhausting work of fashioning a quality life experience for ourselves, our families, and our world. This is difficult and will demand our very best.

Nonetheless, we press on, seeking the truth that transcends time and culture. I encourage each of us to do what we can to discover the essentials of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Live into them and then share them with others as they are on their journey of discovering truth. Our lives will be even more satisfying, and we can even be a light to our successor generations. □



Galileo



Copernicus











2026 Vince Monardo Sp

On May 16, Valley of Pittsburgh recognized our very own Illustrious Vince Monardo, 33°, by naming the Spring Class in his honor.

Brother Vince joined Archie K. Henderson Lodge No. 739 in September 1972. Currently a member of Lodge No. 45, he was appointed to the Grand Lodge Guest Services Committee in 1997 and eventually became an Aide to the Grand Master. He is currently the Deputy Chief Aide, a position he has held since 2009.

In 2015, Grand Master Robert J. Bateman presented Vince with the Grand Master's Outstanding Service Medal in recognition of his lifetime of service to the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. □











pring Class

Seated (l to r): *David Allison, TPM; Robert McGinnis, SP; Benjamin Douglas, MWM; Joshua Freeman, CIC; Vince Monardo, Deputy's Representative (Pittsburgh); P.J. Roup, Active; Kylie Sexton Deputy's Representative (Uniontown), David Moore, 1st LC; Eric Teasdale, 2nd LC*

Standing (l to r): *New members Michael Nadjmabadi; Nikola Tafkov; John Turcovsky II; Garrett Cooper; Jonathan Murray; Hristo Gushkov; David Colecchia; Maurice Hunter; Casey Biddle; William Spero; Jorge Medina Zambrano; Scott Wajdic; Alex Closs; and Robert Mellon, Tiler*

Our Youth

News and information about the Masonic Youth in our Valley

Westmoreland Chapter Active in the 30th District

by J. Michael Larkin, Executive Officer, Pennsylvania DeMolay

On March 7, Westmoreland Chapter, Order of DeMolay, held its installation of officers. Installed for the term were Zachary S., Master Councilor; Charles B., Senior Councilor; and David E., Junior Councilor. The ceremony was conducted by Logan Johnston, Pennsylvania DeMolay Deputy State Master Councilor, assisted by Mason Derosky, State Senior Councilor, and Xander Ellis, State Junior Councilor.



Westmoreland Chapter

The Chapter Officers developed a term plan that includes participation in statewide events such as the Pennsylvania DeMolay Convention, the Keyman Conference, and other jurisdictional weekends. These events provide opportunities for members to connect with DeMolays from across the state.

At the Chapter level, the members have planned several activities focused on engagement and fellowship, including axe throwing, escape rooms, skatepark outings, wiffleball, movie nights, and Nerf events.

The Chapter also conducts fundraising activities to support its programs. One of the Chapter's traditional fundraisers is a sub sale, which will be held on July 11 at the Greensburg Masonic Center.

Westmoreland DeMolay remains active in supporting the Masonic community throughout the district. Members assist with pancake breakfasts, chicken dinners, parades, roadside cleanups, and golf outings. They also speak at Lodge meetings before stated meetings to share information about DeMolay and its programs.

The Chapter is sponsored by Kedron Commandery No. 18, Westmoreland Forest No. 77 Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Greensburg Lodge No. 225, and the 30th Masonic District of Pennsylvania. District Deputy Grand Master James Roberts, 32°, has been a strong supporter of the Chapter's activities.

Westmoreland Chapter meets on the first and third Sunday of each month at 6:00 PM at the Greensburg Masonic Center (please confirm before attending). Those interested in learning more about Westmoreland DeMolay may contact **Tom Bahney, 32°,** at *724-672-2300* or **Bill Holtzer, 32°,** at *724-875-3877,* or the website below. □

DEMOLAY PENNSYLVANIA

pademolay.org

The Lessons of the Rainbow

by Helen Snedden,
Supreme Inspector in Pennsylvania

Picture, if you would, a light summer rain, and when you look up to the sky, you spot a rainbow! That mystic symbol that seems to touch the earth. One looks over the hills and along the land and never sees where that colorful arc ends. To a Rainbow Girl, that Rainbow ends at a Pot of Gold. This Pot of Gold is a vessel that represents the truths and responsibilities each girl seeks as she begins to learn the lessons of the Rainbow.

A Rainbow Girl may look at the bright colors of the bow in the sky and think of the lesson each color represents.

The color Red is Love. Red is a symbol of love and devotion. We learn of God's love for us as well as the love we should have for Him, our family, and friends.

The color of Religion is Orange. Orange symbolizes the heroism of religion. It is religion that is taught as love and service. We learn that we should be identified with some organized religion.

The color Yellow represents Nature in the beauty of God's great outdoors. We learn to appreciate the splendor of Nature. It has a great healing power, and part of your time should be spent there.

Green represents Immortality and is a symbol of eternal life. Immorality reminds us to make each day we live a better and richer one, being ourselves in this life for our souls to shine in heaven.

The color Blue is a symbol of Fidelity, a symbol of loyalty and trueness. We learn about being true to each other and that our word is sacred. Faithfulness, loyalty, and devotion are the cornerstones of some of the lessons of Rainbow.

As the blue appears darker, it turns into indigo. To a Rainbow Girl, Indigo represents Patriotism. It means being true to our Flag, our Country, and re-dedicating our lives to supporting both.

Violet is often the brightest color in the rainbow we spot in the sky. It represents one of the strongest lessons, that of service. Service turns the landscape into gold. Every day, there is someone we can help through a life of service.

The next time you spot a Rainbow in the sky, I hope you will have a thought about our Rainbow organization. Rainbow symbolizes the life lessons taught to young girls to help them grow into wonderful human beings. You are welcome and encouraged to attend a Rainbow Initiation Ceremony and see these "Lessons" presented for yourself. Contact **Mrs. Helen Snedden,** Supreme Inspector in PA, for information on an Assembly near you. ***(hsnedden@aol.com)***

"Rainbow Gets Girls Ready for Life"
… and that's the TRUTH! " □



parainbowgirls.org



AFTER US COMETH A BUILDER



PJ Roup, 33°

The Palace

When I was a King and a Mason – a Master proven and skilled –
I cleared me ground for a Palace such as a King should build.
I decreed and dug down to my levels. Presently, under the silt,
I came on the wreck of a Palace such as a King had built.

There was no worth in the fashion – there was no wit in the plan –
Hither and thither, aimless, the ruined footings ran –
Masonry, brute, mishandled, but carven on every stone:
"After me cometh a Builder. Tell him, I too have known."

Swift to my use in my trenches, where my well-planned ground-works grew,
I tumbled his quoins and his ashlars, and cut and reset them anew.
Lime I milled of his marbles; burned it, slacked it, and spread;
Taking and leaving at pleasure the gifts of the humble dead.

Yet I despised not nor gloried; yet, as we wrenched them apart,
I read in the razed foundations the heart of that builder's heart.
As he had risen and pleaded, so did I understand
The form of the dream he had followed in the face of the thing he had planned.

———

When I was a King and a Mason – in the open noon of my pride,
They sent me a Word from the Darkness. They whispered and called me aside.
They said – "The end is forbidden." They said – "Thy use is fulfilled."
"Thy Palace shall stand as that other's – the spoil of a King who shall build."

I called my men from my trenches, my quarries, my wharves, and my sheers.
All I had wrought I abandoned to the faith of the faithless years.
Only I cut on the timber – only I carved on the stone:
"After me cometh a Builder. Tell him, I too have known!"

—Brother Rudyard Kipling

Kipling's poem, "The Palace," tells the story of a king who, while he was preparing a site to build his palace, comes upon the ruins of one which had stood there in a past age; and while it was written more than a century ago, its message is still relevant to the Masons of today.

So often, we tend to look at our labors in Freemasonry as individual, unique. We don't view what we do for our Lodges, or Valleys, or for the Craft at large as part of a continuum, but rather as our own little snapshot in time, an island unto itself. As leaders, we are easily led into doing things because "we've always done it that way," or dissuaded from breaking new ground because "no one came when we tried that before."

The king in Kipling's poem was wise, though. He seized upon the opportunity to utilize those things of value left behind, those stones marked with "After me cometh a builder...."

It is interesting to note that he didn't build a carbon copy of what was there before. He stuck to his plan but salvaged as many pieces of the old palace as he could, changing and

repurposing them to suit his vision for the future – cutting, resetting, and even grinding some to dust.

Maybe we need to do that too. Our Lodges have gotten smaller, our attendance sparser. If we continue down the same path, with the same reasons (excuses may be a better term) for doing the same old things in the same tired way, we will soon be no more.

Membership is the *sine qua non* of the Lodge. Without members, we have neither revenue, attendance, nor, when you get right down to it, a reason to exist. Bringing men into the Rite is something we must do today. We cannot save it for tomorrow's members. It is our responsibility.

We need to channel the king and realize we are not the end, but a paragraph in a beautiful and enduring story. What we do now is as important for today as it is for tomorrow. *After me cometh a builder....*

The takeaway? Don't be afraid to reimagine. Today's Rite is not yesterday's. Tumble the quoins and the ashlars. Cut and reset them anew. Our lessons and our truths are timeless. How we teach them does not have to be. We have ways to reach today's men that the previous generation could not have imagined. But we have to meet them where they are, not where we were before.

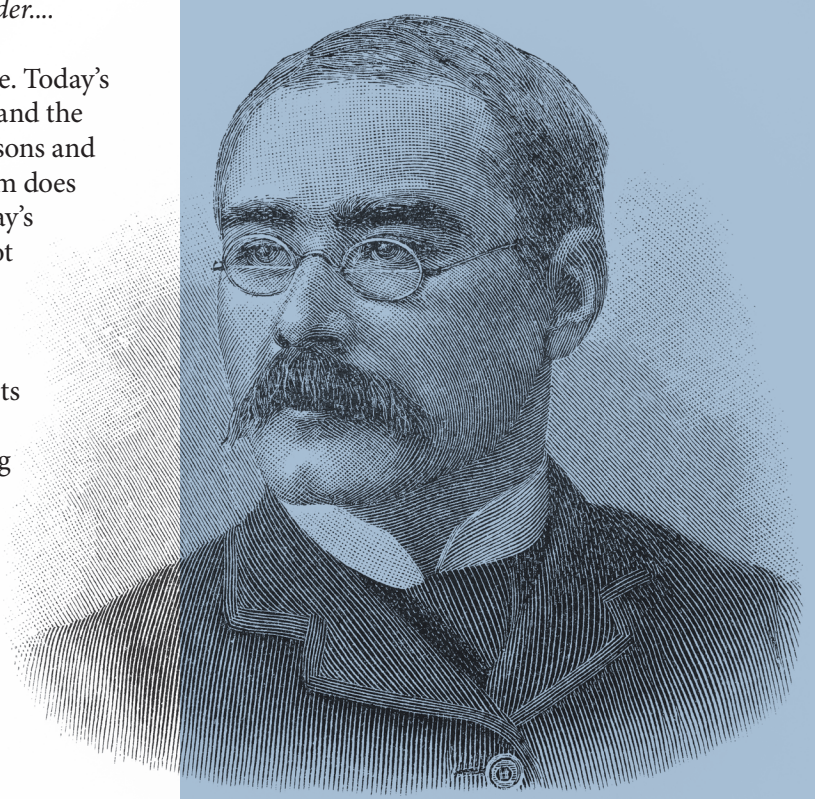
We can be greater than the sum of our parts if we are willing to learn from the past, refine or discard the things that are holding us back, and imagine a future that boldly strives to offer the enduring lessons of the Rite in new and meaningful ways.

*After **us** cometh a builder.*
Tell him we too have known.

□

BRINGING MEN INTO THE RITE IS SOMETHING WE MUST DO TODAY.

WE HAVE WAYS TO REACH TODAY'S MEN THAT THE PREVIOUS GENERATION COULD NOT HAVE IMAGINED.



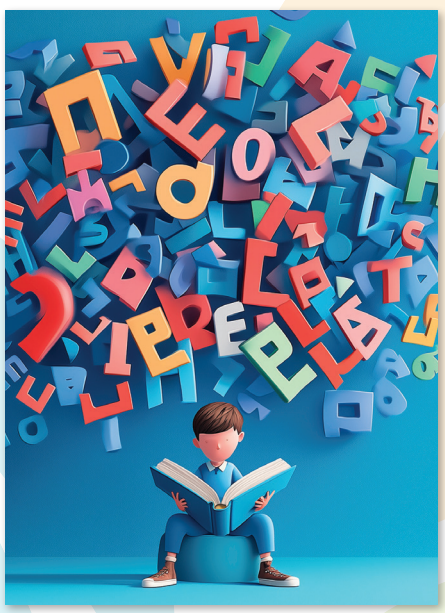
Rudyard Kipling

The Center

A message from the Children's Dyslexia Center-Pittsburgh

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

Summer News



A Hearty Summer Hello from the Children's Dyslexia Center-Pittsburgh!

We finished out the year with our annual Picnic and Graduation, which is an end-of-the-year celebration and for some, the successful completion of our program. Families, their students, tutors, and board members were in attendance, creating a cheerful atmosphere as the children and their families enjoyed a potluck with grilled specialties provided by the Masons of the Valley of Pittsburgh.

We anticipate certifying four participants from the 2025-2026 Practitioner-1 training program this summer. This March, a new cohort of trainees began their journey in learning the Orton-Gillingham approach to teaching students who struggle with reading and writing. The class teaches the processes necessary for reading. Practitioner-1 trainees learn the difficulties children can have with different parts of the process: phonology (sounds), orthography (spelling), semantics (vocabulary), syntax (grammar), and discourse (oral and written expression). Participants learn the structure and origin of the English language, the benefits of multisensory practices, how to take assessment notes, the common challenges faced by those with dyslexia, and many other teaching topics. As the course progresses, participants study and practice designing lessons that are prescriptive, and, after each session, adjusting based on the child's understanding of the content. The mission of the CDC is to help children reach their intellectual potential using an approach to language instruction that meets their needs. The truth undergirding this mission is that improving children's reading and writing changes lives for the better.

Your gifts and support of fundraising that enables our training and tutoring are inspiring.

Thank you for your support of the CDC-Pittsburgh in 2025-2026!

We look forward to the upcoming activities organized to benefit the CDC-Pittsburgh:

- **The Car Cruise on July 12th**
- **Parent Orientation and Student Game Night**
- **WALK for Dyslexia in October**
- **The Fall Mums Fundraiser**

For more information:
412-931-3181
pittsburgh@cdcinc.org

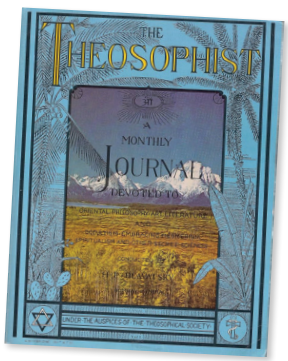
PITTSBURGH Children's Dyslexia Center

Part 2

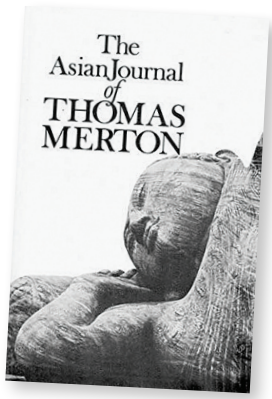
Theosophy

In the previous installment, we began our examination of theosophy – first, through quotes from some of its proponents in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, then hearkening back to its roots in ancient Greece, and the teachings of Ammonius Saccas, and his disciples Origen and Plotinus.

When the modern Theosophists began their work, they were espousing ideas that were exotic and alien to Western sensibilities, but their sense of purpose and unity motivated them to persist in the face of obstacles and resistance. In the August 1932 issue of *The Theosophist,* Henry S. Olcott wrote, "Bound together by the unbreakable ties of a common work – the Masters' work – having mutual confidence and loyalty and one aim in view, we stand or fall together."



What is that principle, that essence, that bound them together? It was that common ground among the world religions that transcends the divisiveness of orthodoxy. These proclamations of unity went hand-in-hand with progressive sociopolitical ideas – for example, from Thomas Merton, Trappist monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, who wrote prolifically about issues related to peace and justice. In *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton,* he writes, "We are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be is what we are."



Another such figure was Mabel Collins, a British anti-vivisectionist, occultist, author of over 46 books, and an important figure in the Theosophical Society during the latter part of the nineteenth century. She expresses a sentiment in an excerpt from her book *Light on the Path,* originally published in 1911, where Freemasons may note the familiar trinity that concludes the quotation: "Listen to the song of life… There is a natural melody, an obscure fount in every human heart. It may be hidden over and utterly concealed and silenced – but it is there. At the very base of your nature you will find faith, hope, and love."

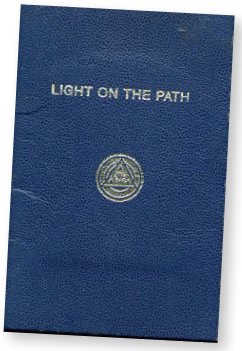
In my estimation, we are fortunate that devotees have carried this school of thought forward into the modern era. I was particularly moved when reading the biography of Radha Burnier, from the website of the Adyar Theosophical Society:



Austin R. Shifrin, 33°

by Austin Shifrin, 33°

"Mrs. Radha Burnier was elected as the seventh International President of the Theosophical Society and took office on 17 July 1980, since when she was re-elected to her fifth seven-year term in 2008. She traveled widely for the Society's work, delivering talks and lectures to members and the public, inspiring all those who attended to lead a nobler and higher life based on unity and brotherhood, as the primary reality. Her extensive lecture tours took her to every continent and her programs centered on reflection and meditative inquiry into life's deeper problems. She was also the President of several Theosophical centers in the USA, Australia, Holland, etc."



The sense of unity proclaimed by their founders persists in the contemporary. Burnier states: "When the mind is open, free, perceptive, it sees brotherhood as a truth."

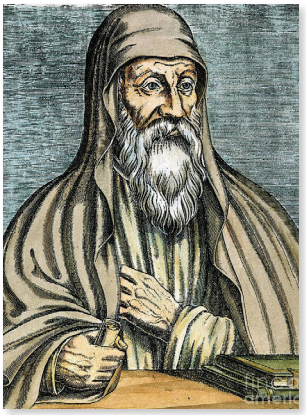
This notion of brotherhood naturally resonates for a member of the Fraternity, and I find the wisdom that the theosophists preserve and disseminate wholly harmonious with our principles and mission. Ravi Ravindra, a Canadian author and speaker on the intersection of religion, science, and spirituality, writes about Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, and one concept in particular he shared is one that I often try to remind myself of, in a Masonic context: "Each place is the right place – the place where I am now can be a sacred space." In other words, we have to let our self-improvement and spiritual practice extend beyond the lodge.

Each place is the right place – the place where I am now can be a sacred space.

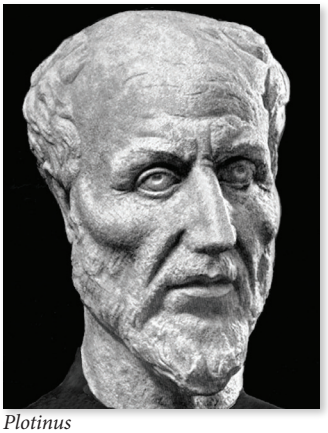
I hope this survey of the advocates of Theosophy, their maxims, and their dictums, will inspire you to explore further and leverage their perspective in your pursuit of the virtues of tolerance and brotherly love! □



Ammonius Saccas



Origen



Plotinus

VALLEY OF PITTSBURGH

All In at the Valley of Pittsburgh

The Children's Dyslexia Center-Pittsburgh hit the jackpot at their **Monte Carlo Night** fundraiser in March. Seventy guests tried their luck at roulette, blackjack, poker, and craps. At the end of the night, the top three chip winners took home gift cards donated by local restaurants.

Brethren of the Valley also contributed more than **60 luxury gift baskets** to the silent auction. "One Brother donated over $800 in wine, another donated $1000 in art work, another donated Pittsburgh Penguins tickets," said **Jack Jones, 33°, Chairman** of the Center's Board of Governors. "Those gifts helped to make the event a tremendous success."

Monte Carlo Night has become one of the most anticipated events at the Valley. This year's, the Valley's third, **raised more than $10,000** to help the Center advance its mission.













PITTSBURGH Children's Dyslexia Center








35
86








Sarris
CANDIES
SC
Milk
5 lb.


BLACKJACK
ust draw to 16 and stand on all 17s
SURANCE PAY




To
Thine
Own Self
Be
True

by D. Todd Ballenger, 33°



D. Todd Ballenger, 33°

So, what I told you was true, from a certain point of view.

—Obi Wan Kenobi (Sir Alec Guinness), *Return of the Jedi*

You can't handle the truth!

—Colonel Jessup (Jack Nicholson), *A Few Good Men*

I keep climbing even though the ground, a fine combination of broken stone and dirt, continues to slide from around my grip with every move. Hands, feet, and knees all spread like some earthbound water bug fight for purchase and stability on the ever-shifting mountainside. Climb one foot up, slide six inches back. After so long, it seems like fair progress - difficult and frustrating, but fair. The mountain will not be easily conquered. This is the way of such things. The prize at the summit must be earned, not simply won.

Finding just the right foothold to balance in the sliding dust and stone of the summit, I manage to lift my right arm, my palm stretching outward to the silhouetted figure sitting on the mountaintop. The sun shines brightly behind his head like a bright copper halo, causing my eyes to squint just to keep the small, robed man in my field of vision.

"I've done it," I say, half gasping from the climb. "I've found you."

"And so you have, my son," comes the even reply. "Now you have but to ask your question."

"I want to understand," I rasp, the words tumbling from my parched throat. "I want to know the Truth."

"The Truth?" The figure's voice becomes fuller, and the words begin to reverberate in a dark, growing crescendo. Without warning, the eerie figure leans toward me and the face coming into view in stark contrast to the surrounding peaceful mountain tableau. The visage looms large, growing in size and filling my vision while I flinch at the change in tone and volume of the voice. The eyes close to horizontal slits, piercing the space between us. The lips are drawn back, and every muscle twitches in exaggerated enunciation of the response.

"YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE TRUTH!"

Can any of us handle the Truth? Do we even recognize it when it faces us straight on and dares to be denied? Do we see it when helpful columnists spell it with a capital T? What makes Truth identifiable, and does it look the same to all men? These are interesting questions deserving deeper contemplation.

I want to know the Truth.

First, we should start with the basics. Some truths we do not question: physical things such as gravity, the passage of time, the movement of the planets, the fact that fire burns. We accept these as indisputable ideas, and they, for the most part, do not cause anyone any trouble in return. They just are, and that is quite satisfactory for the population in general, thank you very much.

These are not the types of truths that tend to give us problems. Disputes over Newtonian physics and planetary orbits are scientific staples at this point (Sorry, Flat-Earthers, you're just being difficult). What does give us trouble in this modern age are questions of faith, social ideologies, moral ambiguities, and other issues that tend to influence cultural norms. In these arenas, the Truth drowns in a sea of epithets that are only intended to injure, not educate; to degrade, not discover. What we lack is a sense of perspective.

What I mean by this is that we don't often stop to consider the logic behind what we believe to be Truth. Often, "truth" comes to us in a five-second sound bite from someone whom we support, and we regurgitate the idea as if defending the honor of an aggrieved loved one on the battlefield. But did we stop long enough to ponder the meaning and substance of the idea we are pushing on others? This is where perspective helps. Everyone experiences the world from a singular point of view. The important part of engaging with others and seeing a positive result from the encounter is recognizing that they, too, have a unique perspective on Truth. When our ideas align, cooperation and support appear without effort. Getting along is easy. But when they don't line up just right, we tend to struggle. We need to decide if our ideas of Truth, while not the same, are even compatible.

> You live what you have found and become a light to others.

Compatible? Shouldn't Truth be finite, absolute, irrefutable? Perhaps it is. Perhaps Truth is not the problem – we are. Because we all look at Truth from a unique perspective, each one of us can see Truth differently, from a different point of view. These perspectives tend to arise in the form of moral dilemmas (abortion, euthanasia, war, etc.) and may never be solved if we don't learn how to equip ourselves. That in itself is the real journey – to find your own Truth. The only way to develop a sense of Truth when encountering conflicting ideas in the world is to have a firm idea of what Truth is to you. You need to know who you are, and that can only come from within.

There is something to be said for sitting quietly with your thoughts. I sit alone and let the room speak to me. It is a bit unusual to find time alone in Corinthian Hall at the Masonic Temple in Philadelphia. Yet here I sit, by myself, just listening to the room.

The words in the East, "Fiat Lux," foretell the wisdom we should seek – Truth with a capital T, as all men under the Fatherhood of God. To seek the Truth is the point. That's where you discover yourself and the workings of the Great Architect within you. Understanding yourself may take longer. Again, it's not the destination, but the journey. Truth can be elusive, even changing given new perceptions that come with maturity. But the important search is to find your own Truth, to "know thyself." Then you can begin to balance the outside world with your inner man and find harmony, peace, and the quiet of an empty room. No one shouting, "You can't handle the truth!" because once found, you become the Truth. You live what you have found and become a light to others. As someone once said, "Let there be light."



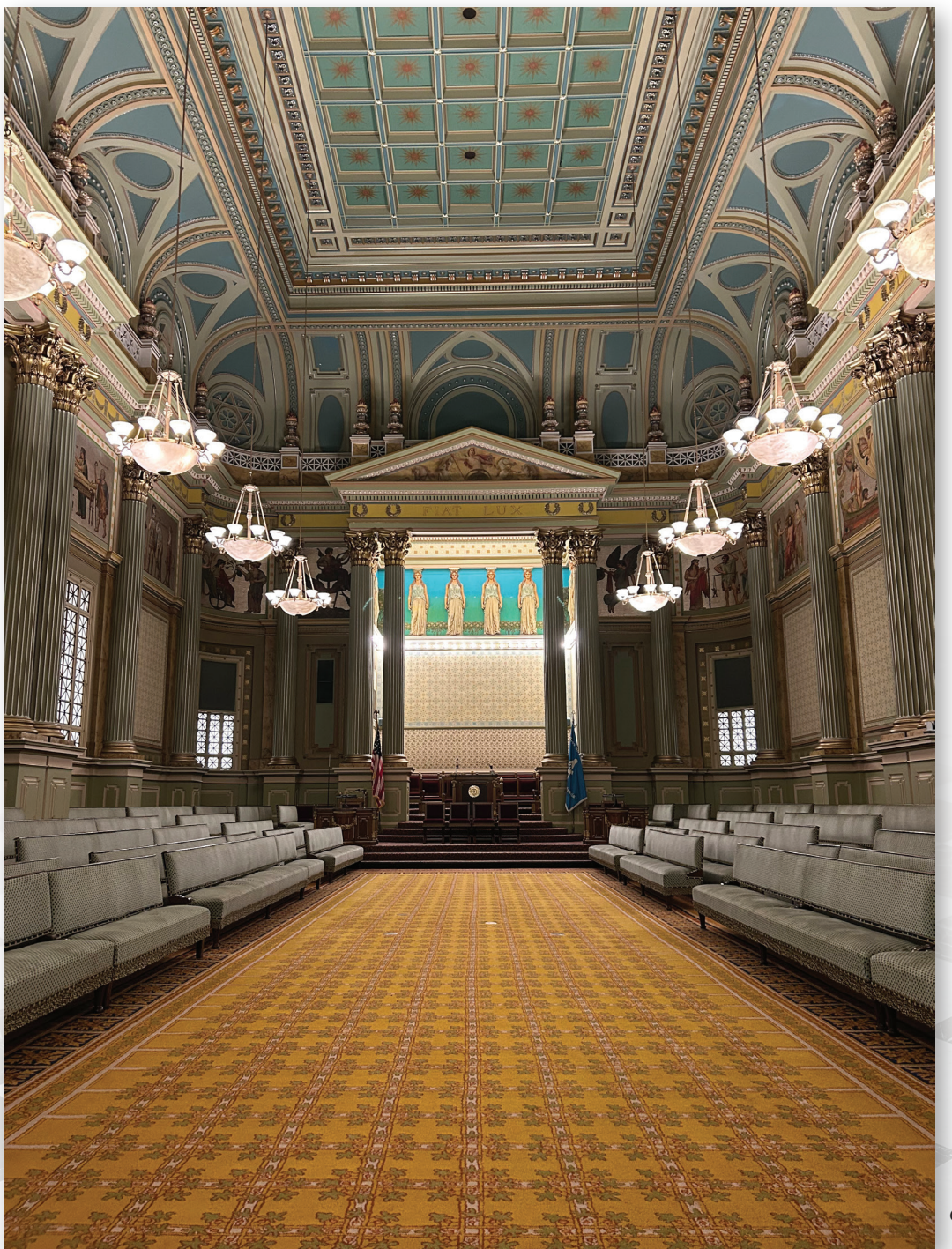
Self-made man

There is light everywhere in this room - electric light in the sconces and chandeliers; false light disguised as sunlight that shows through the window facades in the walls; sculpted firelight in torches along the ceiling rails; and actual stars painted on the ceiling fresco from one end of the room to the other. The hall is full of light. Different kinds of light, for certain, but none of them is true. The only true light comes from the East, from the wisdom of the Grand Master. We look to him for Truth – Fiat Lux – for guidance, for stability. This should always inspire us to look within. This is where Truth lives. This is where Truth grows. This is where Truth erupts into a great guiding light.

> Everyone experiences the world from a singular point of view.

Truth is internal. It comes from within each of us. We need to work on ourselves to reveal what is at our core. Light from the East should help guide our hands as workmen. The search for Truth should challenge us to look deeper and strive to be the best version of ourselves. The Scottish Rite has made us its mission by

giving us lessons to consider about its Core Values – the foundation of Truth for every Mason. Each journey is different in both the path taken and the result. That's why Truth can look different to each of us. Take the time to think, work, and discover what is inside you, and you will become the work of art the Great Architect intended you to be.



Corinthian Hall

That in itself is the real journey – to find your own Truth.

And that's the truth. □

The Latest

Important happenings coming soon to the Valley of Pittsburgh

JUN 27

Reservations are requested.
Please contact the Valley Office at:
Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

Rose Croix Degree Day

Following the Fellowship breakfast on Saturday, June 27, the officers of the Rose Croix will present a live performance of the 18th Degree. We will show the video of the 4th degree to any Candidates present. Includes a complimentary breakfast for Valley members and Candidates. Breakfast begins at 9:00 a.m. and ends at 10:30 a.m.

TIME: 10:30AM
LOCATION: GPMC
COST: None
RSVP: June 23

JUL 12

Reservations are not required.
For more information, please contact the Valley Office at: Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

Car Cruise

Join us at the Car Cruise from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on July 12th for a wonderful event featuring fantastic cars from all eras. Admission is free. Feel free to bring your own vehicle to show. Music, raffles, food, and fun are all yours for the taking. Proceeds of the event go to support the CDC – Pittsburgh.

TIME: 11:00AM-3:00PM
LOCATION: GPMC
COST: None
RSVP: Not required

SEP 3

Reservations are required for Dinner only!
Please contact the Valley Office at:
Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

September Stated Meeting

Please attend the September Stated meeting for a good meal and good fellowship. Ladies, guests, and members are invited to honor our most recent Presiding Officers for their service to the Valley and to welcome in our new officers. The dress code will be business casual.

TIME: 6:00PM Dinner, 7:00PM Meeting
LOCATION: GPMC
COST: $20 per person for Dinner
RSVP: August 31

OCT 3

Reservations are requested.
Please contact the Valley Office at:
Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

CDC Walkathon

The Annual Walkathon for the CDC-Pittsburgh will take place on Saturday morning October 3. Come out to walk a few laps of the building, enjoy food and entertainment, and help the Dyslexia Center continue to help students with the lifelong gift of reading.

TIME: 10:00AM-2:00PM
LOCATION: GPMC
COST: Donations
RSVP: September 15

Fellowship Breakfast

You can't find a better breakfast with better company that supports a better cause. The breakfast is cooked and served by our local DeMolay and Rainbow and the proceeds benefit those organizations.

TIME: 9AM to 10:30AM
LOCATION: GPMC
COST: $9/person (all you can eat)
RSVP: None required

JUN 27

To have an event listed in future issues, please contact the Valley Office at 412-939-3579, or by email at secretary@valleyofpittsburgh.org

JUL
25

Reservations are required!
Please contact the Valley Office at:
Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

Wild Things Baseball Game

Come out to Consol Park in Washington, PA, to see the Brockton Rox take on the Washington Wild Things. Only 100 seats available. Get your tickets before they are sold out! $15/person gets you a picnic beginning at 4:00 in the Passalaqua Pavilion at the back of the parking lot and a ticket to the game at 7:05.

TIME: **4:00PM Picnic, 7:05PM Game**
LOCATION: **Consol Park, Washington, PA**
COST: **$15 per person**
RSVP: **ASAP - First come, first served**

OCT
3

Reservations are required!
Please contact the Valley Office at:
Secretary@ValleyofPittsburgh.org
412-939-3579 or view our Website
at www.ValleyofPittsburgh.org

Halloween Party

The Valley will throw a Halloween Party on Saturday, October 3. Costumes are encouraged but not mandatory. There will be food, music, fun, and awards presented to some of our more creative costume-wearing guests. This party is for adults only and reservations will be required. You're not going to want to miss this bash!

TIME: **TBD**
LOCATION: **GPMC**
COST: **TBD**
RSVP: **September 25**

JUL 25 | AUG 29 | SEP 26

Looking Ahead

JUL 3 | AUG 7 | SEP 4 | OCT 2

CigaRite
FRIDAY, JULY 3, AUGUST 7, SEPTEMER 4, and OCTOBER 2
6:00PM
GPMC

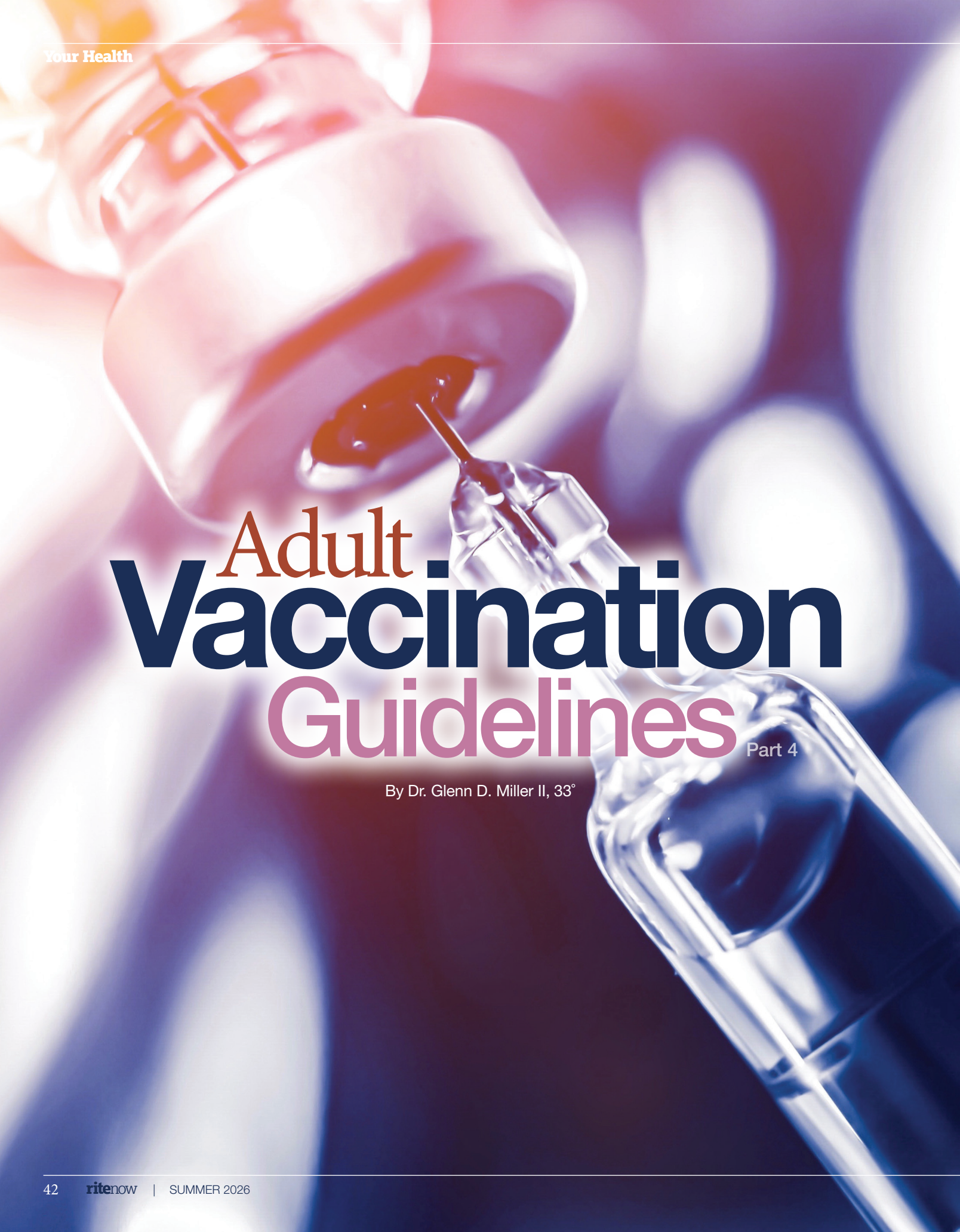
JUL
11

Council of Deliberation
SATURDAY, JULY 11

SEP
26

DeMolay Induction Class
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26
GPMC

Scan this QR code for the most up-to-date information on all Valley events:



Adult Vaccination Guidelines

Part 4

By Dr. Glenn D. Miller II, 33°



Dr. Glenn D. Miller II, 33°

In this issue of *RiteNow,* we will continue our discussion of current CDC adult vaccination guidelines by addressing the guidelines for chickenpox (varicella zoster) and shingles (shingles).

Due to the amount of material required to address these two vaccines we will postpone the vaccination guidelines for Human Papillomavirus (HPV) until a future installment. As noted in the previous articles in this series, these vaccination guidelines are available on the CDC website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines-adults/recommended-vaccines/index.html. Irrespective of any changes to what the government considers "recommended vaccines," all the vaccines we have discussed and will discuss in future issues remain available. In my opinion, each individual's decision on what vaccines to receive, or not receive, should be based on consultation with their personal physician.

The first vaccine that we will discuss is for varicella zoster. Varicella zoster, commonly known as chickenpox, is a highly contagious disease caused by the varicella zoster virus, one of the nine known viruses in the Herpes family. It is believed that the "parent" virus that mutated into the current varicella zoster virus existed approximately 200 million years ago during the Triassic/Jurassic period and that the current strain of this virus first appeared approximately 8,000 years ago. The rash that is associated with chickenpox was first described by the Persian scientist Rhazes (865-925 A.D.). The disease was first named "chickenpox" in 1658 by the English physician Richard Morton (1637-1698) because he thought it was a milder form of smallpox. In fact, the Latin term Varicella is translated to mean "little variola" or "little pox/little smallpox." The disease was definitively identified as distinct from smallpox in 1767 by the English physician William Heberden (1710-1801). The virus is only known to infect humans and is spread via respiratory droplets from an infected individual when they breathe, sneeze, cough, or talk as well as direct contact with the blister fluid of an infected individual. Similar to Rubeola/Measles, an infected individual can spread the disease to roughly 90% of their close contacts if those contacts are unvaccinated or have no immunity from prior infection.

Chickenpox can infect people of all ages, although it is primarily a childhood disease. People at the highest risk of infection include those who have not previously been infected or vaccinated, those who work in day care centers or schools, and those with children in their households. Of note is the fact that unvaccinated individuals or individuals who did not develop immunity after a previous infection can also contract chickenpox from individuals with an active case of shingles since shingles is caused by a reactivation of the varicella zoster virus in people who have previously been infected with chickenpox.

Chickenpox is usually a mild, self-limited disease in most healthy people, however, severe complications can occur in some.

Symptoms typically appear 10-21 days after infection with the virus and usually last 4-10 days, although some people may require up to 2 weeks for all skin scabs to fall off. Infected individuals are typically contagious from 1-2 days prior to the development of the typical rash/lesions until all of the lesions have dried, crusted over, and developed scabs which is usually by days 4-7. Symptoms can include fever, headache, fatigue, malaise, loss of appetite, and the characteristic rash. The rash typically starts on the chest, back, and/or face and subsequently spreads to the rest of the body. In rare cases, the rash may involve the eyes, throat, anus, vagina, and urethra. It tends to go through three separate phases. The first phase is the appearance of raised bumps/papules, which

develop over the first few days. The second phase is the development of vesicles (small fluid-filled blisters) on the papules, which then rupture and leak the fluid. The third and final phase is the formation of scabs over the ruptured vesicles or blisters.

Chickenpox can infect people of all ages, although it is primarily a childhood disease.

Chickenpox is usually a mild, self-limited disease in most healthy people, however, severe complications can occur in some. Those most at risk of developing significant complications include people who contract chickenpox as a teenager or adult, newborns or infants whose mothers are unvaccinated or never had chickenpox, children under 1 year of age who have not yet been vaccinated, pregnant women who are unvaccinated or never had chickenpox, people who are immunocompromised for any reason (HIV, cancer/leukemia, autoimmune diseases, immunosuppressive medications, etc.), and people who smoke. Significant complications from chickenpox infection include pneumonia, dehydration, encephalitis (swelling of the brain), toxic shock syndrome in women, bacterial infections involving the skin/soft tissues/bones/bloodstream, and Reye's Syndrome. Women who contract chickenpox during pregnancy are susceptible to significant complications involving themselves as well as their baby. Risks for pregnant women include more severe general symptoms and an increased risk of developing pneumonia. If the woman contracts chickenpox during the first 20 weeks of pregnancy the fetus can develop Congenital Varicella Syndrome which can include low birth weight, permanent skin scars, limb abnormalities including underdevelopment/atrophy/missing digits, eye disorders including cataracts, small eyes, involuntary eye movements), retinal inflammation, blurred/decreased vision, and neurologic disorders including microcephaly, seizures, cortical atrophy, and intellectual disabilities. Approximately 30% of infants who develop this syndrome will die within the first few months, and those who survive typically have significant long-term disabilities. If the woman contracts chickenpox approximately five days prior to delivery up until two days after delivery the baby may develop Neonatal Varicella which is potentially fatal.

The first chickenpox vaccine was developed in Japan during the early 1970's with Japan being one of the first countries to routinely vaccinate for chickenpox. Maurice Hilleman, Ph.D., an American microbiologist who developed over 40 vaccines, developed the first chickenpox vaccine used in the United States. This vaccine was developed in 1981, became commercially available in 1984, and was licensed for use in the United States by Merck Pharmaceutical Company in 1995 under the brand name Varivax. Varivax II is a second generation vaccine that was introduced in 2000. Varivax II is still the vaccine currently used in the United States and is approved for use in people 12 months of age and older. A second vaccine available in the United States since 2005, ProQuad (MMRV), is a combination vaccine that combines the Varicella/chickenpox vaccine with the Measles/Mumps/Rubella (MMR) vaccine. However, this vaccine is only approved for use in children aged 12 months to 12 years. Current CDC recommendations state that children under the age of 13 years should receive 2 doses of the Varivax II vaccine with the first dose given at 12-15 months of age and the second dose given at 4-6 years of age. People aged 13 and older who have never had chickenpox or been vaccinated should also receive 2 doses of the vaccine, with a minimum of 28 days between doses. People who have received only one dose of the vaccine should also receive a second dose. Additionally, people who are either unvaccinated or have never had chickenpox should consider vaccination after exposure to someone with an active chickenpox infection to prevent the disease or minimize symptoms if they develop chickenpox. Two doses of the Varivax II vaccine are approximately 90% effective in preventing chickenpox. In those individuals who contract chickenpox despite being fully vaccinated, the symptoms are typically milder. Potential side effects of vaccination are typically mild and include fever, mild rash, and redness/soreness/swelling at the vaccination site. People with the following conditions should not receive the Varivax II vaccine: people with HIV/AIDS or other diseases that result in an immunocompromised state; people taking



immunosuppressive medications after organ transplant or for autoimmune diseases; people with cancers or leukemias receiving radiation or chemotherapy which can suppress the immune system; people who recently received transfusion of blood or blood products in order to allow enough time for antibodies in the donated blood to "clear out" which results in a more effective immune response; and females who are pregnant or might be pregnant due to potential complications to her and/or the fetus as previously outlined.

The next vaccine we will discuss is the herpes zoster (shingles) vaccine. As many of you are aware, shingles is a viral disease that is caused by a reactivation of the chickenpox virus. After the chickenpox infection resolves, the varicella zoster virus can "lie dormant" in that person's cranial nerves or spinal nerves for many years or decades prior to reactivation. Therefore, anyone who has ever had chickenpox is susceptible to developing shingles at some point in later life. It is estimated that overall 30%-35% of people with a history of a chickenpox infection will develop shingles at some point during their lives, with that incidence increasing to about 50% for individuals fortunate enough to live to 85 years or older. It is estimated that shingles has been around at least since ancient times since the Greek physician Hippocrates (c.460-c.370 B.C.) described the ulcerative skin rash that is pathognomonic for shingles. Aulus Cornelius Celsus (c.25 B.C.-c.50 A.D.), a famous Roman medicine historian, is credited with using the term shingles (Latin and Greek for "belt") for this ulcerative rash. The word shingles came later and was derived from the medieval Latin word Cingulus which translates to "girdle."

The Hungarian pediatrician, James von Bokay (1858-1937), was the first to hypothesize in 1892 that chickenpox and shingles were caused by the same infectious agent. American virologist Thomas Huckle Weller (1915-2008) was the first to isolate the varicella zoster virus in 1952. Robert Hope-Simpson (1908-2003) was an English physician who was the first to prove in 1965 that shingles was caused by reactivation of the varicella zoster virus that caused chickenpox. However, the process by which the virus remains dormant in nerve cells for years or decades, then reactivates, is still not well defined. What is known is that the risk factors for reactivation of the dormant virus and the development of shingles include older age (50 years and older), a compromised immune system due to either medical conditions or immunosuppressive medications, suffering a chickenpox infection while an infant (0-12 months) or toddler (12-18 months), and not being vaccinated with the shingles vaccine.

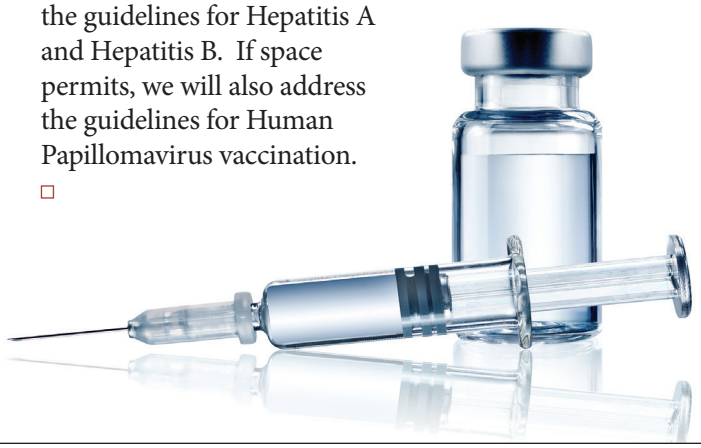
Shingles is a viral disease that is caused by a reactivation of the chickenpox virus.

The pathognomonic symptom of shingles is a painful, red skin rash with fluid-filled blisters in a localized area of the body. The rash typically follows the path of a single spinal nerve and does not cross the body's midline. The rash can occur on any nerve, but typically involves the trunk or the face. The rash typically lasts for 7-10 days with blister formation after 3-4 days and complete healing in 2-4 weeks. Other symptoms that can either precede or accompany the rash include malaise, fatigue, fever, chills, light sensitivity, sensitivity to touch, headaches, GI upset, areas of discolored skin, itching or tingling, and severe burning or "shooting" nerve pain. The most common complication of shingles is "postherpetic neuralgia," a potentially extremely painful nerve pain that can persist for months or even years after resolution of the rash. The risk of postherpetic neuralgia increases with age and affects approximately 10-20% of infected individuals. Other potential complications include bacterial superinfection

of the skin lesions, permanent skin discoloration and/or scarring, pneumonia, vasculitis, encephalitis (inflammation of brain), facial paralysis, severe persistent eye pain, vision loss, tinnitus, hearing loss, vertigo, and tooth loss. A rare condition called "Disseminated Zoster or Shingles" can occur in immunocompromised individuals which involves a larger area of the body and can lead to plexopathy (limbs weakness), pneumonia, inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), inflammation of the liver (hepatitis), and inflammation of the lungs (pneumonitis). This condition has a mortality rate of 5-15%. Shingles cannot be spread from person to person; however, people who have not had chickenpox or been vaccinated against chickenpox can contract chickenpox from someone with an active case of shingles. In those instances, the varicella zoster virus is spread via direct skin-to-skin contact with the blister fluid or by inhalation of droplets from that individual's blisters. Infected individuals are typically contagious until the blisters burst and develop scabs.

The current vaccine that is utilized for shingles or shingles is the Shingrix vaccine which has been available in the United States since shortly after its approval by the FDA on October 20, 2017. The Shingrix vaccine replaced the previous Zostavax vaccine due to a significant increase in its efficacy in preventing shingles. The Shingrix vaccine is approximately 91-97% effective in preventing shingles in people aged 50-70 years and the recipient's immunity is not believed to wane over time. The previous Zostavax vaccine, which was used from 2006-2020 was only 50-65% effective in preventing shingles in people aged 50-70 years, less effective in people over age 70 years, and had waning immunity over time. Current recommendations are that people aged 50 years and older who have had chickenpox should receive two doses of the Shingrix vaccine. The second dose is to be given 2-6 months after the first dose. People like me who initially received the Zostavax vaccine should be revaccinated with the two-dose Shingrix vaccine. The Shingrix vaccine also received FDA approval in 2021 for use in immunocompromised adults 18 years of age and older. Individuals who have had shingles in the past are also eligible to receive the Shingrix vaccine series, although the vaccine should not be administered during an active case of shingles until the acute stage/symptoms have resolved. There is no official recommendation regarding the administration of the Shingrix vaccine during pregnancy, although consideration should be given to postponement until after the mother has delivered. The most common adverse reactions to the Shingrix vaccine are pain and redness at the injection site (78%), myalgia/muscle pain (45%), and fatigue (45%). Other common side effects include diarrhea, fevers, headaches, dizziness, nausea/vomiting, generalized weakness, stomach pain, itchiness at injection site, and shivers. Rare side effects include eye pain, blurred/decreased vision, blindness, gout with joint pain/swelling/stiffness, lower back and/or side pain, fevers greater than 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit, and swollen/painful lymph nodes in the neck/armpit/groin. It should also be noted that the Shingrix vaccine may, in very rare instances (3 excess cases per 1 million doses administered), increase the risk of Guillain-Barré Syndrome within the first 42 days after vaccination. Guillain-Barré Syndrome is an acute autoimmune reaction that attacks the peripheral nerves resulting in progressive ascending (lower body spreading to upper body) muscle weakness and changes in sensation or pain. In about 15% of cases, the respiratory muscles can be affected, leading to respiratory failure requiring mechanical ventilation. Guillain-Barré Syndrome symptoms can develop at variable rates, from hours to a few weeks.

In the next issue of *RiteNow,* we will continue our discussion of CDC vaccination guidelines by reviewing the guidelines for Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B. If space permits, we will also address the guidelines for Human Papillomavirus vaccination. □



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