

Brethren, by way of introduction...I am Doug Messimer, a PM of Tuckahoe Lodge. I have visited this historic Lodge many, many, times over the nearly 42 years of my Masonic career, and am now, proudly, one of your newest members. My affiliation with Fraternal 53 began with an invitation, and some serious arm twisting and cajoling by our Treasurer, Rt. Wor. Al Dranoff. Bro. Al told me he knew where some of my research and writing skills could be used for the good of Masonry, and this Lodge in particular. For the last 13 years I have written and presented a series of over 110 Masonic educational programs for my mother Lodge, called 'Nuggets from the Quarry of Freemasonry'. I have retired from that job and now begin a new series of educational programs I call *'Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason'*. The Worshipful Master has asked me to present a brief program at each Stated Communication this year. So tonight we begin with my first 'living stone', titled:

Finding Your Personal Compass

I'm sure that you're all aware of the verses found in I Kings: 6 and II Chronicles: 3 that describe in wondrous detail the building of Solomon's Temple. From Masonic history you learned the number of workmen that spent nearly seven years in its erection. All the thousands and thousands of pieces of stone and timbers brought from near and far that were fitted with such exactness that when the structure was finished it looked as though it was not made by human hands. You know of the sanctum sanctorum, that special holy place deep within the marble walls where the Master Mason's Lodge was held. As Freemasons, we've all been received in that place representing the middle chamber, but for a moment let me take you on a journey, in search of something not found in our ritual. Please...clear your mind of the trials and tribulations of today...and, mentally, let's take a walk together. We've gone past the guards, down several flights of stairs....the massive stone hallways are cold and damp... but come; walk a little further with me.

Just down the hall from the middle chamber, way back in the farthest corner of King Solomon's Temple, and around the next corner we find a very plain door. Yes, the one you missed on your previous visit many years ago, or perhaps were never told of it. I found it for you. It was easy to miss because it has no markings on it, and no gilded framework.... it's just a plain wooden door with a simple brass handle on it, and behind that door was the private office of Hiram Abiff.

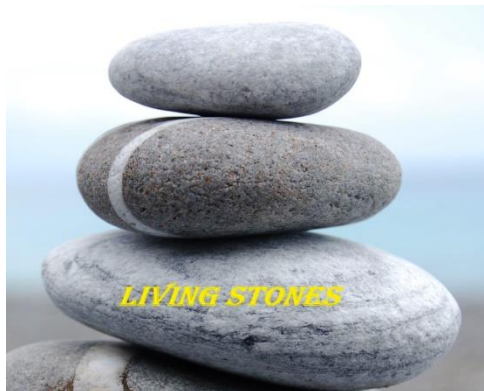
Its walls are stacked with shelves filled to overflowing with all sorts of scrolls and tablets, samples of polished stone, pieces of cedar, and over there on the shelf is the 'master cubit'. Stacked on the shelves are tools of every size and shape, available to only a few who have access to this room. In the center of the room there are a couple of thick hand hewn planks resting on wooden workhorses. On that table are the designs for this grand labor of the craft. On one corner of that table is a most important tool, one you may not know of....it was round, and held a small amount of liquid, and within its rim was a small metal needle, a pointer, if you will. Of course you recognize it....it's a compass.

This tool was acquired from merchant traders from the Far East where the sun rises to rule and govern the day. The compass allowed the Grand Master to lay out exactly how the building was to be placed according to the cardinal directions, regardless of the time of day, or if the heavens were visible or not. There is an invisible force that surrounds this orb we know as earth, and it keeps the needle floating on a small pool of water always pointing in the same direction. No matter which way you turn, indoors or out, on the high plains of Asia or the deep jungles of Africa, the compass always points in the same direction. With this tool Hiram Abiff could have determined the exact direction in which the temple was to be situated....due East and West.

That brief adventure into the depths of the Temple was, of course, just a made-up journey that we took together. But, the tool is real, and I believe it should remind us of the invisible hand of providence that will always guide us in the right direction. It will work even in the darkest hour, under stormy skies or in the depths of the murkiest forest, when you can find no clear indication of which way to go and you might even feel as if you will never find your way again. All you have to do is wait for the pool of water that is your very being to 'settle', and then allow the 'needle' of the Great Architect of the Universe to point you in the right direction. The direction never changes, it's always there. The invisible force of right and good just needs a 'silent pool' and the smallest indicator to guide those that will wait for it to set them on the true path to light.

My brethren, I offer for your consideration...the compass. It's like all the other tools you learned about early in your Masonic journey, but this one was found on a table, in a private office just down the hall from the middle chamber. Oh, it's true, it is not one of the tools found in our Virginia ritual, but if you think about it, this one might be used to help get a brother turned in the right direction...heading toward the light that we all are seeking.

I leave you with a final thought...perhaps you need to share your compass with a brother from this Lodge that hasn't been here in a while. Perhaps he needs a 'word', or a hand of friendship, maybe he just needs a way to get here to enjoy our fellowship. For whatever reason, maybe he just needs to find his way again. Perhaps *you* can help him.



Living Stones - Masonic Thoughts for Today's Mason
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Fraternal Lodge No.53

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