JOHN R. S. HIGGINS 1939-2024
Grand Chaplain Emeritus

In 1999, Reverend Doctor John Higgins became the Senior Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, after the death of Rt. Wor. and Rev. Oscar Guinn. That fall, TROWEL magazine featured an article about Brother John, describing how hard he worked – not just for the Craft, but in his capacity as a clergyman and as a clinical psychologist.

He was, at all times, a caregiver – as a minister, as a psychologist, as a man and a Mason. His first mentor as a Grand Chaplain was Brother Guinn; he said that he had the opportunity to further learn the meaning of pastoral care from Brother Guinn, who taught the importance of that role and that every Brother in the Lodge from the youngest to the eldest had a talent for something, and had something to contribute.

Brother Higgins came to Masonic light in Dalhousie Lodge in Newtonville in 1963; he was raised by Past Grand Master M.W. Brother J. Philip Berquist. He was active in that Lodge, serving as Master in 1984; he also affiliated with Norfolk Lodge, the Masters Lodge and Marine Lodge. In the York Rite, he was a member of Gethsemane-De Molay Commandery, serving as Eminent Commander in 1985; he affiliated with St. Bernard Commandery in 1998. He received the degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in 1971, and was active in the Lodge of Perfection, Chapter of Rose Croix, and Consistory. In 1996 he was made an honorary member of the Supreme Council 33°. In 1999 he was decorated with the Henry Price Medal by M. W. Fred Kirby Bauer

This recitation of Masonic memberships and leadership positions, honors and medals delineates only the most visible aspects of his Masonic life. He served in many bodies as Chaplain, "bearing before the Throne of Heaven the spiritual needs of his Brethren." In Dalhousie Lodge, in the Scottish Rite, and from 1989 as a Grand Chaplain of this Grand Lodge, he was a pastoral leader – a man who could give a fervent prayer, a forceful sermon, or just provide a kind word. He was also active with the Scottish Rite Learning Centers, particularly the flagship body in Newton, where his mother lodge was located.

His experience outside of Masonry was considerable. He was active in St. Mary's Parish in Newton Lower Falls, was a Certified Supervisor in the Association of Clinical Pastoral Education, serving as Northeast Regional Director from 1976 to 1990. For many years he was Chief Psychologist at the Hogan Regional Center, a residential setting for clients of the Department of Mental Retardation – many of whom were former patients at the Danvers State Hospital, and one of whom was my own oldest brother; it was an interesting crossover relationship that we shared.

In 2015 Brother Higgins became a Grand Chaplain Emeritus, stepping back from the regular duties of the office, but would sometimes be present at Grand Lodge events, to the delight of his many brethren and friends. He was a well-known face, a true and faithful Brother. He can now serve as Chaplain in the Celestial Lodge above, where he is in the presence of the Master whom for so long he so dutifully and joyfully served.