



Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia
Grand Council Cryptic Masons in Virginia

The Keystone

Nov 2020 Vol 4 No. 6



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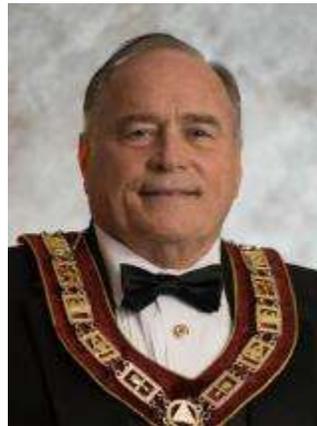
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Companions:

As I sit here composing my last article for the Keystone, I cannot help but reminisce and reflect on this year. A year ago, who would have predicted this current dilemma. I began the year fully reenergized from the outstanding Grand Convocation. It was time to execute the plans that we developed over the past 8 years. We worked tirelessly to create a calendar that would allow us to travel all over Virginia as well to visit sister states. My year started rapidly by attending out-of-state visits; however, this was halted by the Governor's mandate to shelter in place. During this busy but brief time, we met and enjoyed the company of many fellow companions from New York to South Carolina.

I was able to attend the Board of Governors of the Masonic Home, and have become quite impressed with our new CEO, and her staff. Attending these meetings allows one to understand why we refer to the Masonic Home as the crown jewel of Masonry. If you haven't visited the Home or made a donation to it, I highly recommend that you do so immediately. The home operates like a fine Swiss watch with its entire staff moving and working together in precision. I will truly miss those monthly meetings which had to be converted to virtual meetings after we began sheltering in place.

Frankly, I have been impressed with the manner in which the Grand Secretary, Grand Treasurer, and their associates run the Grand Chapter office. Kudos to Right Excellent Andy, Most Excellent Clyde Perry, Most Excellent Gordon Sprigg, and our recently departed Most Excellent James Milton Searce Jr. Our books are in great shape and these companions are to be congratulated on their fine effort and

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success. I have enjoyed conversing monthly with my Grand Line and want to wish each of them continued success and “Godspeed” as they continue their journey through the chairs. I know we will be in excellent hands and pray that this pandemic comes to a speedy close, so these fine individuals can assume their duties.

The goals that I set forth at the beginning of my term are nearing completion. We have been able to raise lots of money for our charity, and I’m certain our Grand Almoner will be reporting the year end totals shortly. I’m very proud of the Jeffrey Glen Burcham Memorial Medal project, and have embraced and included his widow, Tammy, into our Masonic family. Recently, she walked with us during our annual Alzheimer’s walk on October 24 in Winchester.

As I continue to write this article, I am thinking and praying for my Administrative Assistant, Right Excellent Dennis Haas, who was admitted to Winchester Medical Center and is recovering from bronchial pneumonia and Covid-19 at home. His wife, Laura, is also recovering from this illness at home. Please continue to keep the Haas family in your prayers. The Grand Secretary has provided me with a list of the Companions who have passed during my term. It is sad when I refresh my mind of these losses. To all the families, I share your grieving pain and have you in my prayers.

Next, I would like to record the following thoughts to my wonderful support staff and to the District Deputies who served faithfully this year:

My esteemed colleagues, I want to take a few moments to reflect upon what it has meant to

me to have you offer and carry out your various duties this year. This has been a year that I am certain you will not forget, for no other reason than this was the year of the pandemic! However, I do hope that upon your reflections that you will at least hold some fond memories as DDGHP 2019-2020!

We started the year with a bang and what seemed a long road race. As we traveled about to your District, my staff and I truly appreciate all of the hospitality you showed us. Lady Barbara and I truly thank you for those kindnesses. To those of you who presented us with a token of our visit, we thank you and proudly display these items. Your cooperation was greatly appreciated when we ceased our travels and had to schedule zoom virtual meetings. (Something that I think will continue with us for many years to come, good or bad!!) Lady Barbara cannot express adequately how she enjoyed your fellowship, and your commitment to making this year’s Lady’s raffle one of the most successful ventures ever tried. Her success is your success. As of October 31, we can report a total of over \$3,000 being collected. (This is a partial reporting, as we await the return of your tickets/money.)

Those of you who embraced “The Lost Program for Autism Speaks” by buying and selling pins will be remembered for years to come. A very special “thank you” to Right Excellent Michael T. Huff, the creator and donor of our pins. Right Excellent Mike traveled all over his District and did a superb job of selling the pins. I am happy to advise you that another DDGHP, Right Excellent Herbert Turner, an Advisor of Petersburg DeMolay, has agreed to have his Chapter

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assume the control and distribution of this worthy project. By the time of our Grand Convocation, we hope to be able to present our first donation to the James Madison University summer autism clinic. As of October 31, we can report partial receipts of \$791. A final year's accounting will be provided at our annual convocation.

Congratulations to all of you who either coordinated Alzheimer's walks, golf outings, or donations. We have accounted for over \$52,000 in donations, a figure in which we all are proud. Kudos to our Grand Almoner (and also DDGHP of District #15) for his hard work in making this year's fund drive a tremendous success. One last figure to report concerns our fundraising initiative to honor Most Excellent Jeffrey Glen Burcham. Right Excellent Jake and Illustrious John Bridegroom from Indiana co-created the beautiful award medal, which to date has raised \$12,000 for Alzheimer's research. In closing, I congratulate you again for being a part of the team and wish all of my companions a happy and safe Holiday season.

Sincerely and fraternally
Raymond D. Steele, Grand High Priest

The Grand Almoner's Message

Companions All:

By the time you read this, we will be well on our way to concluding the 2019-2020 Capitular year. I would like to first take this opportunity to personally thank Most Excellent Raymond D. Steele, our Grand High Priest, for his leadership and support during this extremely challenging year. God put just the right person at the helm of our



Grand Chapter to navigate us and we are in a positive direction in not only our philanthropies, but the Royal Arch craft in general. We are forever grateful of your service to each of us.

Second, the deadline for each District to submit charity donations for consideration in the 2019-2020 Grand Almoner's Trophy will be 5 pm on Friday, November 20. I will have a completed total of each District going into the activities associated with Grand Chapter the following morning. My hope is that one of the last events of the outgoing Grand High Priest will be to announce the District winner. I will also present the final numbers to you through the Grand Secretary once I have them completed along with my donation registry for the 2019-2020 Capitular year. The competition has tightened, and I'm looking forward to congratulating the winning District. The Trophy will be presented at the Official Visit of the Grand High Priest to the winning District next year. Our Philanthropy as of November 1 organized by charity:

Walk to End Alzheimer's:	\$13,646
Alzheimer's Research:	\$35,335
MAHOVA Memory Unit:	\$ 1,500
Project LifeSaver:	\$ 625
<u>The Lost Word – Autism:</u>	<u>\$ 791</u>
TOTAL:	\$51,897

Donations by District to Date:	
District 15:	\$14,266
District 17:	\$8,304
District 4:	\$7,996

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District 18:	\$ 5,238
District 2:	\$ 3,219
District 10:	\$ 2,453
District 19:	\$ 1,515
District 3:	\$ 920
District 1:	\$ 906
District 21:	\$ 590
District 12:	\$ 549
District 20:	\$ 500
District 14:	\$ 342
District 9:	\$ 25
<u>General Grand Chapter:</u>	<u>\$ 5,074</u>
TOTAL:	\$51,897

Third, I would like to give big shout out to the following Companions who took it upon themselves to lead Online Walk Teams for the Walk to End Alzheimer's this year. You have laid the groundwork in this program so that when we return to normalcy soon, we will enjoy significant success. Thank you for being the trailblazers and leaders of men. You have collectively raised over \$13,000 this year for the Walk to End Alzheimer's in your communities despite the Covid-19 virus. You deserve to be commended.

- (D2) Roger Taylor
- (D3) Brian Joos
- (D4) Pat Harmon
- (D8) Jonathan Giles
- (D12) Cole David
- (D15) Kevin Walek, J.D. Davis
- (D17) Norm Catterton, Paul Lockhart, Bret Thomas
- (D18) Mark Chapman
- (D19) Chuck Dirienzo

We are set for a successful future. I met with Right Excellent Charles Reece Trude on three occasions during the 2019-2020 Capitular year to prepare him for assuming the role of Grand Almoner in 2020-2021. Each training segment was developed to

ensure that continuity and consistency are observed in our Royal Arch philanthropy endeavors with our charity partners as I prepare to exit this role. I provided a focus on different aspects of the Grand Almoner's duties using forms and tools that I have developed over the past two years. I am confident that Right Excellent Trude will do a wonderful job over the course of the next Capitular year. Please support him in his responsibilities as your incoming Grand Almoner.

Lastly, I want to again take this opportunity to thank each of you personally for believing in me and for supporting me in this leadership role as your Grand Almoner over the past two years. Thanks to your hard work and consistent effort, Royal Arch Masons in Virginia are now recognized as a critical partner in the fight against Alzheimer's Disease and other forms of dementia across our commonwealth. Although we had to overcome the hardships of the Covid-19 virus pandemic in 2020, we continued our steadfast support of our philanthropic charities, and were a beacon of hope for those who needed our support. I am proud of each of you and what you have accomplished. It has been a pleasure and honor to get to know each of you and work with you. As I say goodbye, I am truly excited about what the future holds.

Holiness to the Lord,
Jason Curtis "Jake" Trenary, Grand Almoner

Calendar

- November 7 Roanoke Alzheimer's Walk
Grand Lodge Annual Comm.
- November 21 Grand Annual Convocation

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The Best First Step to More Light, by Excellent Ed Tooma

Many of our Craft Lodge brothers are interested in "more Masonic light" but are not sure which path to follow. After becoming a Master Mason, you can choose from the York Rite, the Scottish Rite, the Shrine, and so on. Before you make any decision, learn as much as you can about the teachings of the Blue Lodge and then, should you decide to branch out, I would highly recommend York Rite Masonry. It is "The Best First Step to More Light." Why?

For the next 9 minutes and 14 seconds, I would like for you to view the video presented by Most Excellent Don McAndrews. In it, he will explain in detail each of the six degrees that are conferred in a Royal Arch Chapter. It is recommended that you pass this information on to Blue Lodge Brethren so they too can gain more Masonic light, light that will open the door revealing the long lost Master's Word. Let your Blue Lodge brothers know that they can contact any Royal Arch Companion for a petition or they can access the Grand Royal Arch Chapter website at <https://virginiaroyalarch.org/>. The McAndrews video can be found at the bottom of the Education page on the Grand Royal Arch Chapter website.

Your Information In the Breach – Part 2, by Right Excellent William Searcy

In the last issue, I discussed the accelerated use of the Internet for the purpose of conducting e-commerce as well as general communications. As discussed, this has led to new "cyber criminals" taking advantage of opportunities to steal your data and, ultimately, your money or that of friends who fall for supposed communications sent from you. We will conclude that discussion in this article as we discuss some more common scams run against the vulnerable.

The "phone a friend" scam is particularly insidious in that it takes advantage of our natural inclination to be helpful to those in authority. It is a type of social engineering wherein an attacker will call a potential victim and claim to represent some well-known organization, such as the FBI or perhaps even an engineer at Microsoft. The scammer will explain in clinical terms that you are in some danger of either being charged with a crime due to fraudulent activity from your accounts or maybe being cut off from the Internet due to your workstation being compromised with a virus. Here, the nature of the attack diverges. In the case of fraudulent account activity, the attacker will tell you something to the effect that your financial accounts (checking, savings, etc.) have been tied to perhaps money laundering activity or have been otherwise compromised. The goal is twofold. The attacker may just want you to "verify" your account information such as account numbers, passwords, etc., which will give them functional control of your account. Another option may be to get you to take the money out of your accounts and place it in one controlled by the represented agency so that it can be "monitored and protected". The problem is that money transferred to such an account is gone. In one particularly heartbreaking case, a nurse, nearing retirement age in New York, was taken in by such an attacker claiming to be an FBI agent. She transferred her life's savings, including retirement accounts, into the attacker's account. It was several days before she realized the scam after which, of course, the account had

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been cleaned and closed. Sadly, this lady also had to pay taxes on the retirement funds she had removed as well.

With the virus on your workstation scam, the goal is simply to get you to turn over control of your workstation to the attacker. They will ask you to go to your computer and follow a series of steps as outlined by the attacker which will have the effect of giving the attacker complete remote control of your system. The attack from there can lead to one of several different objectives. Sometimes, the attacker will encrypt your hard drive and then require money in order to allow you access again. Or the attacker might search your drive for accounts and passwords which will give them the ability now to control your accounts.

This scam is easily detected and avoided. First, understand that, as a retired Supervisory Special Agent of the FBI, I can say without fear of contradiction that no agent will ever call you and advise that you are the victim of a scam or that your accounts have been used in criminal activity. That, by the way, goes for not only the FBI but any law enforcement agency. Such information will always come to you via a visit from a credentialed Special Agent. Moreover, if you receive such a visit and have any questions regarding his identity, do not hesitate to call the local field office and verify his identity before admitting them into your residence or speaking with them. If you cannot find that number, a call to the local law enforcement agency via their non-emergency line will yield the same effect. Regarding the call from Microsoft or any other technology company to tell you that your system has a virus or any other scam, as a current Microsoft employee, I can tell you, again, that this simply does not happen. No company will monitor Internet traffic coming from your system without a court-authorized collection order. And even at that, this is done by law enforcement, not an IT company. If you receive such a call, just hang up, I can assure you without fear of contradiction that it is a scam.

The final scam I'll mention briefly is one that has been particularly prevalent lately. It involves electronic mail or text messages from various individuals or organizations requesting gift cards such as eBay or Amazon, but others may be forthcoming. The goal is to trick the victim into providing gift cards to the attacker due to either distress or with the promise of saving money. One that I received was from "DirecTV" telling me that if I provide them with a number of eBay gift card numbers up to a certain value, then I would not have a bill for 6 months or so. Let me be clear. These are all scams. Even if you get a message from a supposed friend or acquaintance, these requests are not to be believed. The reason for requesting gift cards is quite simple despite whatever excuse they provide. Once you provide someone else with a gift card number the money associated with it is gone. Forever. There is no recourse and it cannot be tracked. Gift cards are therefore desirable to the attacker because, unlike a credit card, the transaction cannot be cancelled. This makes gift card numbers the equivalent of transferring untraceable money to an attacker even if he is offshore. As mentioned in my initial discussion on this subject, we all have an innate suspicion of things that just don't seem right. Unfortunately, most of what we use is sight and visual cues which are missing in online interactions. We all need to develop new senses

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in the online world. If the request or activity seems odd, it's because it is. Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism, and more than anything, slow down, take time to think, evaluate the situation and look carefully for the tell-tale signs. If the attacker is telling you that you need to rush, you may be assured that it is because he does not want you to have time to think the problem through.

Chapter and District News

On September 3, Right Excellent Joseph Wesley Jeffries, Secretary of Chincoteague No. 75 received his Jeffrey G. Burcham Memorial Jewel. On October 1, at Waynesboro Union No. 2, Most Excellent Russel G. Snodgrass (PGHP 2002) presented Right Excellent Thomas L. Varner Jr. (Grand Master of the First Veil, Grand Provost, Grand Chapter Area Representative to the 14th Capitular District) with a gift recognizing his support of the six Royal Arch Degree paintings. The paintings represent each of the six degrees in Royal Arch Masonry and were painted by Mark Chapman, Past High Priest of Keystone No. 58 and Past Grand Almoner. The original paintings are murals displayed on the walls of Keystone No. 58. The gift is a framed collage of all the paintings. Limited edition, high quality prints of the individual paintings and the collage pictured can be purchased directly from the artist to benefit the Masonic Home Memory Unit or the Alzheimer's Association. Prints of the Blue Lodge Degree murals found in Widow's Sons Lodge No. 60 are also available. More information about the paintings and the order form are available on the Grand Chapter website, <https://virginiaroyalarch.org/paintings/>.



Companion J. Wesley Jeffries



Companions Snodgrass and Varner

On October 6, Most Excellent Grand High Priest Ray Steele presented Jeffrey G. Burcham Memorial Medals to Excellent Ken McInnis and Right Excellent Jeff Hedges at Warrenton Royal

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Arch Chapter No. 5. Finally, a superb District 15 team participated in the October 24 Northern Shenandoah Valley Walk to End Alzheimer's with Grand High Priest Raymond D. Steele in attendance. The team raised \$4,235 and was the #1 team at the event.



Companions receive Burcham Medal

District 15 Team at October 24 Alzheimer Walk

Call to Grand Chapter from the Grand Secretary

The “Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia” will hold its 213th Grand Annual Convocation on Saturday, November 21, 2020, at 9 am as a virtual convocation on Zoom. You can enter the meeting at 8 am. Register in advance for this meeting. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The link is:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwrdeqtrj8sH9wdjrGaYVW4Rt4ncGhX8LEP>

The “Super Excellent Master’s Degree”, the “Anointed High Priest’s Degree”, and the “Thrice Illustrious Master’s Degree” WILL NOT BE CONFERRED THIS YEAR. The Grand Secretary WILL NOT MEET with Chapter Secretaries. The York Rite College Reception and Banquet HAS BEEN CANCELLED. The “Grand High Priest’s Banquet” HAS BEEN CANCELLED. Installation of Grand Chapter Officers and District Deputy Grand High Priests will take place immediately following the close of Grand Chapter.

High Priests and Chapter Secretaries are requested to bring this information to the attention of all Companions during your Stated meeting announcements. SUPPORT YOUR GRAND CHAPTER BY YOUR VIRTUAL ATTENDANCE ON NOVEMBER 21, 2020.

Zoom/Call-in Information: Upon entering the meeting, you will be placed in a WAITING ROOM. The administrator will admit you to the meeting as soon as possible thereafter, but you may have to wait a few minutes. If you are using a device that allows you to view the meeting and have not already done so, it is recommended that you complete a FREE registration at ZOOM.US (<https://zoom.us>) and get your own account. This makes it easier to identify who you are prior to the meeting. If you log in with an ID such as “IPAD1234 or IPHONE1234, etc., you will NOT be admitted. I strongly advise you, if you are a VOTING DELEGATE, to log in on your own device. Zoom only permits one vote per device that is logged in. You also can call in

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from both home and cell phones. However, when calling in without the phone app, Zoom will NOT permit you to cast a vote.

Wisdom, Strength and Beauty, by Excellent George I. H. Mason of Nova Scotia

In 1993, Excellent George I. H. Mason of Alexandra Chapter presented a Rededication Service Address focused on our closing prayer about Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. It was intended to be educational as well as inspirational, for if we give more careful consideration of the different levels of meaning in our closing prayer, we can both learn more and be inspired further.

That Excellent Companion alluded first to an observation by many Masonic writers: that it is often possible to find three references, three alternative implications, or three overlapping meanings in so many parts of our rituals. It's true of this one: *Wisdom, Strength and Beauty*. And, as with other ancient texts, so with our written rituals (those writers suggest) we should look beyond literal meanings. We should look for interpretations – often easy to find, perhaps with a little digging. Some come clear only after years of exposure to our work, and increasing familiarity with it, as patterns emerge, research trails are explored, original references are discovered, and reasons are perceived – the reasons why our predecessors selected what they wove into the texts which we, many generations later hear, learn, repeat and consider. And when we do carefully consider any one of the special phrases or word-sets sprinkled throughout our texts (such as Wisdom, Strength and Beauty), we can – often – interpret such a phrase in three different ways; from three perspectives; draw three meanings; multiply our benefits; brighten the light by which we see; expand our horizons of knowledge, and come step-by-step closer to understanding why we search, what we seek, and where we might find the ultimate answers.

In the Royal Arch Degree, during the King's Lecture, we hear these words: "*The number three has always been held in high estimation by the Fraternity. We find it pervading the whole ritual.*" Indeed, we do:

- The Three Great Lights: the Bible, Square and Compasses
- The Three Lesser Lights: representing the sun, moon and Master of the Lodge
- The three Senior Officers of the Lodge: The Master, and Senior and Junior Wardens
- Three Degrees. Three distinct knocks. Three ways to meet, act and part.
- Three Masters of the Veils. Three words each – three times three.
- The Council of Three, plus the three Companions: Captain of the Host, Principal Sojourner and Royal Arch Captain, plus the three Veil Masters again – and again three times three.
- The Triple Tau, Royal Arch Masonry's emblem.

But the number three is no *new* focal point. It had a sacred, magical, or mystical significance among practically all ancient cultures. Several used it in one way or another to signify the Deity or Supreme Being who has three essential attributes: Omnipresence, Omniscience and Omnipotence. The Hebrews used the number three for the yod – a point within an equilateral triangle with three equal sides and equal angles – as a mode of expressing the incommunicable

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name of Jehovah. Many religions and mythologies – many – make reference to or use the concept of the Triad (a succession or relationship of three), a ruling trinity, or a being in three forms:

- Osiris, Isis, and Horus; Ormuzd, Mithras and Ahriman; Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva
- Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades; Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto; Iaccus, Persephone and Demeter
- Woden, Friga, and Thor; Father, Son and Holy Spirit

So, by no means has the number three been imbued with significance only by Masons. Quite the reverse. Our forefathers who planned, prepared, and perpetuated our rituals consciously and carefully crafted them to include trios, triads and other threesomes as a reflection, reconstruction and reinvigoration of what other had done long before. And they did so with enough obviousness to make sure we should not overlook it; to encourage us to think about it; and to incite us to research it. They wanted to send us a message – or perhaps three messages. One message is given in the symbolism Lecture following the Master Mason Degree. The wording varies from one ritual to another, but here's how it went in the old *Webb Standard Formula Ritual*: “*How many grand Masonic pillars are there? Three: Wisdom, Strength and Beauty. Why are they so called? Because it is necessary there should be wisdom to contrive, strength to support and beauty to adorn all great and important undertakings. By whom are they represented? By Solomon King of Israel, Hiram King of Tyre, and Hiram Abif, who were our first three Most Excellent Grand Masters. Why are they said to represent them? Solomon King of Israel represented the pillar of wisdom because by his wisdom he contrived that superb model of excellence that immortalized his name. Hiram King of Tyre represented the pillar of strength because he supported King Solomon in this great and important undertaking, Hiram Abif represented the pillar of beauty because by his cunning workmanship the Temple was beautified and adorned.*” A sufficiently valuable message? – that wisdom, strength and beauty are needed to contrive, support and adorn all great and important undertakings? Perhaps.

But there's another reference in the Craft Rite to wisdom and strength. At the raising of the body in the Third Degree drama in the *Webb* work, King Solomon says these words: “*Masons should ever remember that when the strength and wisdom of a man fails, there is an inexhaustible supply above, yielded to us through the power of prayer.*” Prayer is given as an inexhaustible source of wisdom and strength. Prayer is inserted as an alternative for beauty – or perhaps as a metaphor for the way to access it. And an allegorical meaning is offered, that God – to whom we pray – is the source of all wisdom, strength, and beauty. Again, a sufficient explanation for the multitudinous use of threes in Masonry? A sufficiently valuable message? Perhaps. But we as Royal Arch Masons know that a fuller and larger message is offered to those who seek further light and come knocking on our door.

We say that the reason the number three has always been held in high estimation by the Fraternity is: *Because it refers to God; It takes us back to when the Hebrews needed a way to express his incommunicable name, and used the yod – the point in an equilateral triangle. Masonry therefore weaves into the fabric of its work – via all the uses of the number three in the*

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Craft Degrees, and then via this further explanation in the Royal Arch Degree (both now taken together) – an allegorical emphasis on the historical past, future and eternally transcending importance of God.

The Royal Arch Degree, we are told, is “calculated to impress on our minds a firm belief in the existence and attributes of a Supreme Being, and it teaches us a due reverence for His great and holy name.” In its methods of doing so, it includes many references to ancient writings which compose the Hebrew Volume of Sacred Law (which Christians call the *Old Testament*); and to writings as old or older, from other parts of the world. The roots of these references can be traced to the mysteries of Greece, Egypt, Mesopotamia and far beyond. And to the student of those references – to the reader of those older writings – to the amazed eyes of scholars who keep coming across such evidence of how our rituals reach back across not just centuries but millennia of questing, creative, and reverent thought – to fill their minds with wonder and challenge and ever-greater reward – comes a third level of meaning, a third message. A third opportunity to understand that Freemasonry is a modern version of an old tutorial, told time and again by wise and good men wherever civilized society develops the will and ability to listen, to hear and to understand: *Without a belief in and reverence for a Supreme Being – and without the hope of ultimately standing before the great white throne, knowing we have sought His grace and having confidence in His mercy – we are nothing and can amount to nothing.*

On those essential foundations, inherited from the ancients, are built the great and fundamental principles our institution seeks to impress on our minds; for then and only then can we feel that friendship, that union, that fervency and zeal, and that purity of heart and rectitude of conduct which should actuate every Royal Arch mason and which are essentially necessary to gain admission into the Sanctum Sanctorum above. Here, where we consider those virtues, we are also necessarily led to contemplate, with gratitude and admiration, the sacred source from whence all earthly comforts come. Here, at the end of each convocation, our closing prayer recalls what we started to learn through the allegory of the Three Pillars of the Lodge, represented by the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden, who represent in turn King Solomon’s Wisdom, King Hiram’s Strength and the beauty of Hiram Abif’s integrity. And here we rephrase it in terms of reverence for the source of *all* wisdom, strength and beauty, when we say: *By the wisdom of the Supreme High Priest may we be directed, by His strength may we be enabled, and by the beauty of His holiness may we be incited to perform the obligations here enjoined on us, to keep inviolably the mysteries here unfolded to us, and invariably to practice all those duties out of the Chapter which are inculcated in it.* Here, then, we inculcate those duties we should practice before the world, in the sight of God.

But we cannot do so effectively without help. We need to be directed by wisdom, supported by strength and incited by the beauty of holiness. We can tap an inexhaustible supply of wisdom and strength through prayer – prayer to the source of all beauty. Belief that that is so – that the source exists – that there is a Supreme Being who is the epitome of all wisdom, strength and

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beauty – is not in itself a religion, though it is common to all virtuous religions and always has been. But surely it is the fundamental principle which inspired the minds and enlivened the souls of our Masonic forefathers. As we listen to the words in our rituals, as we recognize the additional symbolic and allegorical meanings, and as we learn more about the patterns of truth and virtue which have actuated all good men down through the millennia, may our minds be so inspired, and our souls so enlivened. So mote it be.

Farewell Message from Grand Provost Thomas L. Varner Jr.



Companions, this is my 20th and last issue as Editor of the Keystone. I am grateful to Most Excellent Daniel Hufford Surface for asking me to serve as Grand Provost in 2016, and to Most Excellent Joe Gilbert Broce, Most Excellent Floyd Byron Goodwin, and Most Excellent Raymond D. Steele for reappointing me. During the winter of 2017, Most Excellent Surface and I agreed to resume publishing a state newsletter. We published 4 issues and 20 pages in 2017, 5 issues and 38 pages in 2018, 5 issues and 44 pages in 2019, and 6 issues and 54 pages this year. This would not have been possible without you sending many interesting articles and pictures for publication.

In addition, we have now established the tradition of taking a picture of the attendees at Grand Official Visits for inclusion in the Keystone. Special thanks go to Excellent Ed Tooma and Most Excellent Russel Snodgrass, who contributed to just about every issue. The Keystone was designed to provide useful information about happenings in our Districts and Chapters, and to help ensure good communication and fellowship among our members. My Keystone successor will be Excellent James Landerkin of Mount Vernon No. 14, and I ask that you support him as much as you supported me.

Besides the Keystone, the Education Committee has been very active during the last four years. Our work has been displayed prominently on the Grand Royal Arch Chapter website. To help with membership recruitment, we published the Don McAndrews Royal Arch video, which has been used successfully by many Chapters. For membership retention, we expanded the library of available programs to over 70, with many more available through other Grand Jurisdictions. To improve officer training, we updated and revised the Program for Progress to make it more useful to them. We brought the Correspondence Course online and have enrolled 85 Companions during the past three years. When Chapters were unable to meet this spring and summer, we held a number of well-attended seminars on various aspects of Royal Arch ritual, symbols, customs, and history. We made sure that every District had an appointed Education Officer. We also worked on our history and published every available picture of Past Grand High Priests.

We all have a need for more light in Masonry. Our members not only attend for fellowship and food, but also to satisfy the thirst for knowledge. The more information we convey, the more we explain the teachings and traditions of the Royal Arch, the more they will appreciate it. Right Excellent Ray Bacchus will be the new Grand Provost and I look forward to seeing his plans and initiatives. I thank you for your friendship and assistance in improving our education program.