



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

The Keystone

October 2025 Vol. 9 No. 6



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MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST/ MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions!

Companions All,

“When we strive to become better than we are, everything around us becomes better too.” — Paulo Coelho, The Alchemist



I come to you on the eve of this final issue of the *Keystone* as your Grand High Priest, with the quiet knowledge that my season of service draws to a close. Just beyond the horizon lies our 2025 Grand Annual Convocation, and as the leaves outside my window begin their slow transformation, so too does my tenure begin its gentle descent into autumn. It has been my distinct honor to serve this year, ever mindful of the sacred obligation entrusted to me. I have labored with care and conviction to leave our Grand Chapter in finer repair than I found it; knowing that in Capitular Masonry, as in the ancient art of alchemy, the work is never truly finished. We are called to refine, to purify, to seek the elusive Master Work not in gold, but in character, in clarity, and in unity. Each Grand High Priest receives the elemental tools of our craft and begins anew the sacred task of transformation. As Most Excellent Owens and our distinguished Grand Predecessors before him shaped and tempered the essence of our order, so too will Right Excellent Strickland, to whom I shall pass the work this November, continue the refinement with wisdom and care.

This year has been crucible, not only for the Grand Chapter, but for me personally. In the quiet hours between convocations and

committee meetings, I've found myself reflecting on the nature of refinement—not as a destination, but as a discipline. Like the alchemist who stares into the flame, I've come to see that leadership is not about control, but about care. It is the slow distillation of trust, humility, and service. I have not emerged unchanged. The fire has clarified my purpose, tempered my resolve, and—if I have been faithful to the work—left behind something purer than before.

I sincerely hope that all who read this have made plans to attend our Grand Annual Convocation this November. I look forward to sharing that time with as many of you as possible. It has been my distinct honor to serve this year as your Grand High Priest, and you have my word: though my time in the Grand East draws to a close, my commitment to the Grand Chapter, my local Chapter, and the Committee on Work is only deepening. May the Lord keep and bless you all—and this gentle Craft we hold so dear.

As always, I remain at your service.

Fraternally,

James

James P. Nunn
Most Excellent Grand High Priest / Most
Illustrious Grand Master

GRAND KING'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions!

Servant Leadership: The Keystone of Our Noble Work

Greetings Companions,
I hope you all are eagerly looking forward to our 218th Grand Annual Convocation November 20th-22nd. Please reserve your room and register for the banquet and eligible Degrees. If you are a High Priest or District Deputy Grand High Priest-Select I look forward to seeing you at the King's Breakfast, please make sure you register with the Grand Secretary!

I want to congratulate Most Excellent Nunn on an outstanding year. He has labored in the quarries as a true and faithful servant and deserves our thanks and esteem. I look forward to continuing our labor within the Craft throughout the years ahead.

As we look toward our next Capitular Year, I am reminded that within the sacred bonds of Royal Arch Masonry, we are constantly reminded of the profound importance of our work and the principles that guide our lives. Among these, the concept of leadership often holds a place of distinction, but in our great Fraternity, it is not leadership in the conventional sense. It is, in fact, a form of service. The highest and most enduring form of leadership we can practice is that of a servant.

The term "servant leadership" was



coined by Robert K. Greenleaf in his 1970 essay, "The Servant as Leader." He proposed a simple, yet revolutionary, idea: the great leader is first and foremost a servant. As Greenleaf stated, "The first and most important choice a leader makes is the choice to serve."

Unlike traditional models of leadership focused on power, control, or personal gain, a servant leader prioritizes the growth and well-being of those he serves. This philosophy resonates deeply with the core tenets of our Fraternity, which consistently directs us to the betterment of our fellow man and the community.

In Royal Arch Masonry, the journey from Master Mason to Companion is one of profound self-discovery and spiritual contemplation. The rituals and allegories are not just a collection of historical lessons; they are a practical guide to living a life of purpose and service. The principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, so central to our Craft, are perfectly embodied in the practice of servant leadership.

The practice of servant leadership is not an abstract concept but a framework of tangible virtues and behaviors. Robert Greenleaf's seminal work outlines ten principles, including listening, empathy, healing, persuasion, and stewardship. These virtues are deeply ingrained in the Masonic experience. A Royal Arch Mason is taught to listen with an attentive ear,

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processing not only what is said but also what remains unspoken, as a means to identify the true needs of his Companions. The emphasis on empathy and healing encourages us to connect with our Companions on a deeply personal level, recognizing and addressing the burdens they may carry. Our lessons on persuasion, rather than coercion, are a powerful reminder that a leader's true influence comes from building consensus and trust.

Furthermore, the role of a leader in a Chapter is a form of stewardship, a temporary trust to be managed for the greater good of the Fraternity and its future.

Other scholars have expanded on these ideas, offering frameworks that echo our noble work. James Sipe and Don Frick's "Seven Pillars of Servant Leadership" (2009) include character, putting people first, skilled communication, and compassionate collaboration. These pillars are a perfect reflection of the values we are taught in Chapter. The lessons of character are at the very foundation of our Order. The emphasis on putting people first and compassionate collaboration reminds us that our work, though often serious, is ultimately for the benefit of all involved. As we are often reminded, "The true measure of a great leader is not how many people they lead, but how many people they serve."

In our Chapters, we see this form of leadership in action every day. It is in the Companion who quietly mentors a younger member, helping him to master the ritual or understand the moral lessons taught therein. It is in the officer who takes the time to check on a sick Brother, ensuring he has the support and comfort he needs. It is in the collective effort of a Chapter

working together, not for personal accolades, but to execute a meaningful charitable project for the community. In all these acts, the individual leader is subordinate to the good of the group.

The final degree of Pure Ancient Masonry, which brings to light the knowledge we have sought, reminds us that the journey does not end with a title or a degree. It is a continuous pursuit of light and truth, which can only be achieved by working in harmony with our Companions. This Philosophy, as echoed by inspirational leaders like Stephen R. Covey, holds that, "The most successful leaders are those who are guided by an ethic of service" (1989). As Royal Arch Masons, we are called to be leaders in our lives and our communities. By embracing the principles of servant leadership, we honor the legacy of those who have come before us and ensure the strength and vibrancy of our noble Order for years to come.

Join me in honing our working tools and becoming better servant leaders. "Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others..." (2015)

Please let me, or any Grand Chapter Officer, know what we can do to be of service to you.

Fraternally,

Kyle W. Strickland
Grand King

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The Past High Priest Jewel

by Grand Chapter Committee on Education, June 2015

The central element of the jewel of a past high priest is a representation of the breastplate worn by the High Priest in the Holy Temple of Jerusalem, its twelve precious stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

It was through this breastplate that God could communicate to the High Priest by causing the air currents to flicker the light from the candle onto the two sacred jewel stones held by the High Priest, the Urim (representing light and excellence) and the Thummim (representing perfection and completion), and thence reflected upon the breastplate where they would cause flashes upon the stones. A flash from each of the two sacred jewel stones onto each of the breastplate stones indicated the particular Hebrew letter engraved upon that respective stone.

When not in use, the Urim and Thummim were kept in a pocket behind the breastplate. Three equilateral triangles, or deltas, are each a symbol of the sacred name of God, the pronunciation of which is no longer known to man. The Hebrew characters, collectively known as the Tetragrammaton, inscribed on the deltas are believed to be the consonants of that sacred name.

GRAND SCRIBE'S MESSAGE

Ho Companions!

Forest Bathing

In life we all have our guilty pleasures. For me that would be mac and cheese, melodramatic Puccini operas, and Dan Brown novels. Not long ago I finished his 2017 novel, *Origin* (Brown, *Origin*), and it reminded me of an earlier Brown offering which was also a techie story- *Digital Fortress* (Brown, *Digital Fortress*). Techie books often take us into a dark and uncertain future. Some of the best overlay ethical concerns where machines and computers take over the world from man. How did we get here so quickly?

I remember as a boy knowing when to come home either by the setting of the sun, or by hearing my mom's unique whistle. Time to go home, cork ball and stick set aside for another day. Today, I would just receive a text. Remember getting on your bike to go to the library to do research and the card catalog? Or getting a letter from your friend living in Japan? Technology has made all the above easier, and we are much more interconnected, now via our smart phones. Kevin Bacon's six degrees of separation is now four.

In 1965 Gordon Moore noted that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit doubled about every two years (Moore). In other words, processor speeds will double every two years, or more generally,



technology gets faster, and at a lower price! Function increases as costs decrease.

In healthcare technology has also increased exponentially. Think about the human genome project and how quickly our genes were decoded. What about nanobots swimming in the blood stream to target cancer cells? Think about telehealth models where you can talk to a physician on your smart phone for a visit, robotic surgery, healthcare apps such as EyeNetra that uses a phone to measure eyeglass prescriptions (*A Smartphone Autorefractor*), or the plummeting cost of genome sequencing. Today, on Amazon.com you can order 23andMe for only \$99. Burgeoning programs including AI are driving clinical data analytics. Changes in data collection, equipment, drug discovery, management, analysis and treatment are happening at warp speed.

But for those of us reading this, is this good for us? Yes...but no. Of course we love the modern advances and conveniences, but this comes with a dark side. Social media and phone addiction is leading to mental health issues, especially in our youth (Naslund et al.). When life is on overdrive (turning it up to 11) it can lead to chronic stress, and with that comes elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol. In some, this can lead to elevated blood pressure, weight gain, increased blood sugars and a suppression of our immune system. High cortisol levels can

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even impair cognitive performance and impact our mental health. Is there anything we can do?

In Japan, with all the technological advancements and urbanization across the country, there was a desire to develop an “antidote to the tech-boom burnout (Waitherero, sec. 2).” Dr. Qing Li did research on solutions which have proven beneficial and have been adopted by many healthcare clinicians in Japan, and now across the world (Li, *Effects*). It is simply going outside into nature. Using all the senses can lead to activation of the parasympathetic nervous system: touching trees and leaves, smelling the flowers and dirt, tasting berries on the path, listening to the birds, or the leaves crunching under foot, and just visualizing the glory of nature given to us by the Great Architect of the Universe. For many reasons this practice has been shown to have multiple health benefits: lower blood pressure, improved immune function, better mental health and with a lower level of cortisol levels. The Japanese call this shinrin-yoku, but for us, let’s go with “forest bathing.” For those who may wish to dive deeper into this topic, I would encourage you to read Dr. Li’s 2018 book on Forest Bathing (Li, *Forest Bathing*).

Since poetry is central to the language arts of the Trivium, I wanted to share a popular poem that speaks to the beauty of the world we live in, to give us even more motivation to go outside into the woods. Robert Frost wrote such a poem that many of us memorized in school, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening (Lathem and Thompson 90–91).” I can envision those

lovely, dark and deep woods through his imagery.

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound’s the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Sometimes it just feels good to take a deep breath and walk outside. I hear the whisper of the wind through the trees with the branches swaying back and forth, the call of a blue bird, and smells from the gardenias nearby. My phone is on silent, social media is disconnected, work is now miles away, and I’m better for it.

Peace,

Joel T. Bundy, MD
Grand Scribe

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Royal Arch and Cryptic Council Leadership Course

Albert Mackey reminds us that “The ultimate success of Masonry depends on the intelligence of her disciples,” and how better to improve our masonic intelligence than through study.

The Grand Chapter and Grand Council Committee on Education and Service provides a leadership course focused for all Royal Arch and Cryptic Council Masons within the Grand Jurisdiction of Virginia.

This course has been developed to assist Virginia Royal Arch and Cryptic Council Masons, including Chapter and Council Officers, in refining their knowledge of laws governing the activities of Capitular and Cryptic Masonry in Virginia through independent learning. Make it your personal goal to complete one lesson in the leadership course each month. Hold yourself accountable and you will complete the course before the end of this year. More details and course material in two formats are available at this link: [Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia - Education](#)

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GRAND PROVOST AND/OR COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SERVICE MESSAGE

LEADERSHIP CORRESPONDENCE COURSE COMPLETIONS

The following Companions have recently completed correspondence courses. The Committee on Education and Service applauds your efforts and your successful completion.

Companion John D. Petrie,
Hiram No. 45, 7/28/2025

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND SERVICE MESSAGE

Most Excellent and Most Illustrious, Grand Officers and my dear Companions all,

On behalf of your Grand Chapter and Grand Council Committee on Education and Service, I am pleased to provide this report of our activities for the 2024-2025 year. The Companions have been working hard in the quarries and our Gentle Craft is all the better for it.

Your Committee has accomplished the following this year:

- Quarterly virtual education sessions with guest speakers – Three virtual education sessions were organized and conducted with guest speakers. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive as they were very well received and provided thought-provoking programs. We look forward to the support of the Companions and Grand Officers with increasing the attendance of these sessions in the coming year. Below is what was presented this year:

Date	Speaker	Program
22 March 2025 10:00 to 11:00 am EDT	Companion Robert S. Swanson	“Symbolism of the Mark Master Degree”
28 June 2025 10:00 to 11:00 am EDT	Companion John B. Kendrick, Grand Chapter and Grand Council Committee on Education and Service	“Symbolism in the Council Degrees” - By Companion Tim Dahlman
27 September 2025 10:00 to 11:00 am EDT	Companion Clayton Mitchell, Grand Chapter and Grand Council Committee on Education and Service	“Royal Arch: More Than An Appendant Body”

- The Keystone newsletter – Five issues of The Keystone newsletter were produced and widely distributed. The feedback is that they were well received and an excellent tool to keep the Companions educated, engaged, and involved. The editors of the Keystone encourage contributions from all Companions and request they be submitted to thevakeystone@gmail.com.

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- Many new programs were developed and shared on our website and new resource materials were also added. We have received feedback that those programs and additional resource material are being used in our jurisdiction and in others as well.
- Correspondence Course completions – Twelve (12) Companions completed the Correspondence Course this year. Unfortunately, this number is significantly less than last year. At a minimum, each incoming District Deputy and the dais officers of each Chapter and Council should be utilizing it to increase their knowledge of our art. Considering that the course changes each year, it is a great tool to employ. We continue as a committee and through the District and Chapter Education Officers, to encourage the Companions to utilize this valuable resource. The names of those who submitted their registration forms and payment as well as successfully completed the course was published in The Keystone Newsletter.

Mt. Ex, and Mt. Ill, your committee faces some significant challenges and many of its members are heavily involved in many areas of the Craft and therefore are limited in the amount of time they have available for the committee's work. Keeping that in mind, the goals set forth for the committee were ambitious but certainly necessary for the improvement of the Craft. Strong communication and cooperation among the various committees and the Grand line, as well as increased contributions from Companions, are essential elements to positive strides being made in the future.

The committee's membership for 2024-2025 was comprised of the following Companions: Huey P. Allen Jr., Michael H. Ashley, John B. Kendrick, James C. Landerkin, Joseph M. Matthews, Clayton J. Mitchell, David M. Strohsahl, Jeremy B. Utt, Ryan-nathaniel Yakstis and Stephen L. Young.

We appreciate and are thankful for the support and cooperation we have received from the membership, other committees, the Grand Chapter and Grand Council Officers, the Past Grand High Priests and Past Grand Illustrious Masters as well as your always prompt attention and guidance Most Excellent and Most Illustrious. We look forward to continuing to work toward the success of our Grand Chapter and Grand Council and we are both honored and thankful for the opportunity to serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Raymon W. Bacchus
Chairman

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GRAND ALMONER MESSAGE

Companions,

As we move into the final months of the year, your generosity continues to inspire. Across Virginia, we've already raised **nearly \$66,000**, putting us at **66% of our annual target**. Promise Garden Pin sales remain strong (75% of our target) with plenty still available, so let's keep the momentum going. Every pin sold represents hope and support for families facing Alzheimer's.

Grand Almoner Trophy Standings (as of October)

1. **District 2 – \$14,500**
2. **District 8 – \$12,600**
3. **District 14 – \$5,000**

The race is tighter than ever! Will District 2 hold the lead, or will another rise to the challenge and claim the Grand Almoner Trophy?

Upcoming Walks

These Walks to End Alzheimer's are our chance to show visible support, raise funds, and rally our communities. There are plenty of opportunities to go out and show your support over the next few months. For more information, check out our Alzheimer's Walk page on the Grand Chapter website.

October Walks

- Oct 4 – Tri Cities TN/VA & Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck & Greater Augusta
- Oct 11 – Manassas & Onancock
- Oct 18 – Newport News, DC, & Roanoke
- Oct 25 – Lynchburg, Winchester, Danville, & Williamsburg
- Oct 26 – Charlottesville

November Walks

- Nov 1 – Fredericksburg & Harrisonburg
- Nov 2 – Farmville & Blacksburg
- Nov 8 – Richmond

Let's Finish Strong

We are in the **final push**. Every dollar, every pin, and every step brings us closer to surpassing our target. Together, we can close the year with pride and ensure that no family facing Alzheimer's feels alone.

Fraternally Yours,

Craig Cox
Grand Almoner

CHAPTER / COUNCIL NEWS

Waynesboro Union No. 2 Picnic and Beard Cutting Fundraiser

Waynesboro Union No. 2 hosted the "All Masonic Organization Picnic and Beard Cutting Fundraiser" on August 16. It was successful beyond all expectations. The easiest way to measure success - the amount of donations raised to support our Alzheimer's Walk and the Memory Unit at MAHOVA, Your Masonic Community. The generosity of all those who attended resulted in donations of \$1100. This will be evenly split between our two target charities - \$550 to our Walk Team and \$550 to the Memory Unit. We also shared an abundance of friendship and Brotherly Love, more difficult to measure, but also more important than the donations!

I am most grateful to each person for taking the time to attend, for bringing so much delicious food, and for being so generous in the raffle and silent auction. The list of winners follows:

Auction: 3rd Highest bid Tony Daniel (shave my head), 2nd Highest bid Wayne Wenger (shave my mustache), Highest bid Scott Fielding (shave left side of my beard)

Raffle: Betty McRobie (t-shirt), Judy Johnson (t-shirt), Tammy McGurn (shave right side of my beard)

Special thanks to Frank "Emeril" Hall for cooking the hot dogs, George "Oasis" Dudley for drink service, Matt "Storage Wars" Caldwell for running the raffle and silent auction, Russ Snodgrass, Mary Tyree and David Hayes for post-event clean up, and Russ Snodgrass for pictures.



Tony Daniel, Steve Young, Wayne Wenger, Scott Fielding



Steve Young after auction winners have their fun



Tammy McGurn finishing the job

Fraternally,

Steve Young, Secretary
Waynesboro Union No. 2

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Keystone No. 58 Promise Garden Pin Presentation



Pictured from left to right: Companion Bill Napier, HP Russ Snodgrass, Companion Randall Arnold, Companion Caleb Smith, Companion Al Pola and Companion David Riddick

At our August Stated Convocation Keystone RAC No. 58 recognized four of our newly exalted Companions. Companion Randall Arnold presented each new Companion with one of the Grand Chapter Promise Garden pins and delivered the following message:

“Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease affect many families, and mine is no different. My grandfather, Cecil Arnold, was a Master Mason in Carlsbad, New Mexico and was afflicted by Alzheimer's. He required around-the-clock care for several years, and it was a tumultuous time for our family. The experience was very formative to me in my youth and as a young Mason at the time. It makes our mission as members of the Royal Arch under the Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia more personal. Supporting the Alzheimer's Association in their efforts to help find and fund a cure for this disease should be the care of every Royal Arch Mason in the Commonwealth because of the long-lasting impacts we can have on the lives of so many others as exemplified in the colors symbolically presented on the Promise Garden pins.

It was my great honor to support the Grand Chapter in their mission and to present Promise Garden pins to our newest Companions with the hope of impressing upon them the great importance and commitment of the Royal Arch in finding a cure for Alzheimer's.”

Respectfully Submitted,

Larry W. Claytor, Secretary
Keystone Royal Arch Chapter No. 58

Short Talk

James P. Nunn, PhD, Grand High Priest
Grand Chapter Royal Arch Masons in Virginia

The Pen Is Ours: Reclaiming the Masonic Narrative *Authoring Our Own Story*

Presented at District 20 Official Visit, September 6, 2025 Chincoteague Island, Virginia

Opening Reflection

This message began not with ceremony, but with conversation. While attending the Virginia Assembly of Rainbow for Girls, I had the pleasure of speaking with Brother John Oliveras of Warwick Lodge No. 336. As we discussed the state of the Craft in today's world, he casually remarked, *"We need to take control of our own story."*

It was said without fanfare, but it landed with force. And it became clear to me in that moment: we've too often left the pen in someone else's hand.

Across generations, we (freemasonry as a whole) have been the subject of speculation and storytelling—but too rarely the *authors* of our own. In the digital age, silence is often mistaken for secrecy, and mystery becomes the ink of misunderstanding.

Narrative at Risk: The Silence That Shapes Us

Our story—our values, symbols, and purpose—has too often been told by others. Outsiders have filled in the blanks with fiction, exaggeration, or myth. In our quietude, they've made us loud. In our dignity, they've made us mysterious. In our complexity, they've called us conspiratorial.

We trusted the truth to speak for itself. But silence, once seen as strength, has become an accomplice to distortion. What we guard with reverence has been painted with suspicion. What we intend for reflection has been recast as secrecy.

"What began as discretion now risks becoming disconnection."

Let us be clear: the world has never stopped talking *about* Freemasonry. It is time we start speaking *for* it.

We do not need a marketing campaign. We need a reawakening. Not of ritual—but of resolve. Not of mystery—but of meaning.

Freemasonry doesn't require rebranding. It requires *revealing*—and only we, the Brethren, can do it with authenticity and light.

Sharing Without Revealing

Providing some clarity to this subject: *sharing Freemasonry is not the same as exposing it*. There is wisdom in our restraint and power in our discretion. We are not called to reveal our ancient landmarks, customs, or usages—those are reserved for us who have knelt and taken upon ourselves the obligations of the Craft.

But we *are* called to live our values visibly. To share how this Craft shapes our actions, our character, our communities. When we discuss how Masonic mentorship deepened our sense of purpose, or how ritual practice forged personal discipline, we draw open the curtain—not on the stage, but on the transformation.

Our rituals protect the *how*. Our stories safeguard the *why*.

Tools of the Age

In operative times, our ancient Brethren shaped stone with the chisel, the level, and the plumb. Each tool had purpose—not only in what it built, but in the discipline it demanded from the one who wielded it.

Today, we too are builders—but the materials are different. We build not temples of limestone, but perceptions, stories, and legacies. And our tools? They are keyboards, microphones, cameras, and screens. They craft not cathedrals, but consciousness.

Just as the **level** reminds us that we meet on the same plane of equality, let the digital space reflect that spirit—not a hierarchy of vanity metrics, but a fellowship of integrity.

As the **plumb** teaches us to walk uprightly before God and man, let our communications online reflect moral straightness—measured, respectful, never leaning toward ego or error. The **trowel**, used to spread the cement of Brotherly Love, becomes the metaphorical gesture of positive outreach: a comment to uplift, a post that inspires, a message that informs.

Digital tools, like the ancient ones, are only as noble as the intent behind their use. We must ask ourselves: do our words online *build* or *chip away*? Do our posts *temper passions* or *inflame division*? Are we builders—or mere broadcasters?

In the spirit of the Craft, let us use today's implements with reverence. Let us communicate with intention. And let every keystroke echo the charge of the Master: to labor with wisdom, strength, and beauty—even in the digital quarries of the modern world.

A Call to Younger Masons

To our younger Brethren—those fluent in digital storytelling—you understand the speed at which narratives travel. You know the difference between a post that informs and one that ignites. I

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urge you: bring your fluency to our fraternity's future. Become caretakers of our image, defenders of its dignity, and ambassadors of its values.

Speak not to impress, but to inspire. And never underestimate the value of quiet consistency.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the Pen, Revealing the Light

We are not a relic of history. We are the *reminder* of its enduring values: truth, brotherhood, growth, and service.

Let us no longer whisper in the shadows while others shout from the balconies.

Let us no longer ask permission to tell our story.

Let us no longer allow others to define who we are.

The pen is ours. Let us use it—with wisdom, reverence, and resolve.

Thank you.

Fraternally,

James P. Nunn

Most Excellent Grand High Priest / Most Illustrious Grand Master



Guest
Contributor

Marcellus de Rochon de Lapérouse
Norfolk United Royal Arch Chapter No. 1

The Invisible Temple

Imagine a master stonemason standing before his work—chisel in one hand, mallet in the other—knowing that each strike will either reveal beauty or create a flaw that cannot be undone. This is the weight of purpose we carry as we labor at our moral edifice.

Like stars scattered across the night sky, we shine not in isolation but in celestial harmony. So too must Companions illuminate the darkness—not as solitary beacons, but as a constellation guided by the Great Architect's divine compass. It is this sacred geometry of companionship that brings us together within these hallowed walls, adorned with the crimson of sacrifice and the royal purple of divine truth.

"The strength of the temple lies not in the perfection of any single stone, but in how they support one another." These words, inscribed in an ancient Masonic text, echo through the corridors of time, reminding us of our eternal charge.

I am drawn to contemplate the Temple—not merely the physical structure we commemorate in our Royal Arch ceremonies, but the living sanctuary each of us is charged to build within our hearts. Just as the keystone binds the Royal Arch, transforming separate voussoirs into a self-supporting structure where each stone bears the weight of all others, the ancient stones of Solomon's Temple did not merely touch—they embraced, whispering secrets of stability through their perfect unions, teaching us that what lies between Companions matters more than their individual substance.

The operative masons of old understood that no stone emerged flawless from the quarry. Each required the kiss of chisel against stone, the patient percussion of the gavel. Some stones surrendered their roughness easily; others required persistent attention. Yet in the master builder's vision, all found their rightful place, necessary for both strength and beauty.

So too in our speculative Craft, we enter through the symbolic veils as rough ashlar—uneven, unpolished, unfinished. Through the guidance of our Companions and the application of our working tools, we journey toward—though never fully attain—the perfect ashlar. The beauty of our Rites lies not in reaching perfection, but in the shared pilgrimage toward it. Like the Triple Tau that unites Temple, treasure, and truth in our Chapter symbolism, we find our greatest worth in the connections we form with one another.

Our ancient charges speak of "that virtue which forms the cement of our fraternity—brotherly love." This cement, invisible to the profane eye yet stronger than mortar, binds us together despite our imperfections, despite our differences, despite the weathering of time and circumstance.

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Consider the profound lesson in the partnership of King Solomon, King Hiram of Tyre, and Hiram Abiff—masters of their respective arts yet incomplete alone. Their greatness bloomed not from individual perfection but from harmonious collaboration. Like the Cryptic triangle of three Grand Masters, they reveal that true wisdom emerges only through unity of purpose. This is the essence of leadership in our Craft—not domination, but service, just as the High Priest in our Royal Arch tradition serves as the conduit for divine wisdom rather than its owner.

We meet on the level, act by the plumb, and part upon the square—but we live by the trowel, spreading the cement that binds us heart to heart, mind to mind, and spirit to spirit. Just as the Royal Arch teaches us to recover what was lost, when discord ripples through our fellowship—as it inevitably will among imperfect beings—we must stand firmly upon the square, measuring our words with compassion, our judgments with mercy, our pride against the greater good of fraternal harmony.

Throughout Masonic history, when Companions have found themselves on opposite sides of Chapter matters, the true strength of our fraternity reveals itself. In these moments of tension, those guided by authentic Masonic values seek understanding rather than victory. The path to resolution is rarely simple. Strong personalities, deeply held convictions, and sincere differences of interpretation can test the bonds of companionship. Yet it is precisely in these challenging moments that our obligations to one another must be most faithfully observed.

What emerges from these tests is neither the triumph of one viewpoint nor the defeat of another, but a harmonious third path that honors the foundational principles of our sacred tradition. This willingness to subordinate individual certainty to collective wisdom exemplifies the highest virtues of our Rites and reminds us that harmony is never accidental—it is the deliberate achievement of Companions who intentionally seek to live out their obligation.

Our ritual teaches that "harmony is the strength and support of all institutions, more especially this of ours." This harmony does not fall like rain, but rather it rises like a temple, stone by stone, through deliberate action. It takes form with every difficult conversation approached with respect. It strengthens with each compromise made in good faith.

Let us remember the lesson of the trowel—to spread the cement of fraternal affection, to cover the imperfections of our Companions not to hide them, but to heal them; not to ignore them, but to integrate them into the beauty of our collective works. Like the Select Masters who preserved the sacred treasures in the Secret Vault, we too must safeguard the treasure of our fellowship through thoughtful action.

These teachings illuminate not only our Chapter rooms but cast their glow into the world beyond.

The father who practices Masonic tolerance cultivates not only more patient parenting but raises children who understand the benefit and necessity of harmony. Consider how differently a home functions when disagreements are approached with the level and resolved with the trowel—where children learn by witnessing respectful dialogue and loving reconciliation.

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The employer who sees each worker as a rough ashlar in progress creates not just a compassionate workplace but contributes to a just society. Workplaces where mentorship replaces mere management, where feedback aims to perfect rather than punish.

Or the citizen who prioritizes concord over conquest, helping to heal our fractured communities. In an age when public discourse grows increasingly discordant, the Royal Arch Mason who brings these principles into civic engagement—listening first to understand, speaking with temperance, finding common ground amid differences—becomes a living cornerstone for social harmony.

I ask each of you to search within yourselves: How might I better contribute to the sacred harmony of our fraternity? Where have I placed my own perceived perfection above our collective good? Whose rough edges have I judged too harshly, forgetting the uneven surfaces of my own ashlar? Just as we must pass through the veils of blue, purple, and scarlet to reach the light of the Royal Arch, so must we pass beyond our prejudices to discover the truth about our Companions.

Before the sun completes another cycle to our next Convocation, I challenge every Companion here to perform one deliberate act that promotes harmony. Reach out to a Companion with whom fellowship has lapsed. Offer encouraging words to our newest Companions still uncertain of their place among us. Extend your trowel where wounds lie concealed behind silence.

Choose one action—just one—but let it be meaningful. Then observe how that single stone, placed with intention, affects the entire structure of our companionship.

As we depart tonight, remember: the Temple we build is never complete, the ashlar never perfected, and the work never finished—yet in this very incompleteness lies our reason to return, to labor together once more, and to discover the divine harmony that transforms mere stones into sacred sanctuary. Like the earnest Royal Arch Mason searching for the Lost Word, we continue our quest for that perfect union among ourselves.

May the Great Architect of the Universe guide our hands and hearts as we build not merely walls of ritual excellence, but the eternal Temple of Companionship that transcends time and illuminates the darkness of an often-discordant world. I invite each of you to join us at our next Chapter convocation, bringing with you not just your physical presence but your commitment to building this invisible temple stone by stone, heart by heart, as we labor together in the quarries of brotherhood.

So mote it be.

Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.

Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it.
Proverbs 13:11

**Guest
Contributor
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How to Greet a Fellow Mason in a Public Place

How should you greet a fellow Mason? That's an easy question to answer. If you know the person to be a Mason, I always greet them in the same manner I do while in Lodge. Simply say, Hello, Brother Joe. And, don't whisper your greeting. Be proud that one Brother meets another Brother. If you don't recognize someone wearing a Masonic ring and would like to address him, you can say, 'Nice Ring you're wearing, or How long have you been a traveling man? You can even say - I notice that you are a Mason. It's a wonderful way to strike up a conversation.

While recently shopping, I met a Brother Mason who was visiting the area. We had a nice, long conversation. He was a member of a Prince Hall Lodge. In all of my Masonic years, I have never met with my African American brethren. I think it's about time that I do. Fellowship is fellowship, just as brotherhood is brotherhood. If there is a Prince Hall Lodge near you, I believe it would be a nice gesture to contact them so that arrangements can be made for visitation. (check with your District Deputy to make sure all necessary protocol or guidance is observed) It's important to remember that visitation occurs both ways. Let there be more light!

Now, how can you tell if the person you have approached is not a Mason even though they may wear a Masonic ring or a Masonic ball cap? Ask where his lodge is located, when they meet, and who the WM is. A dead giveaway would be hesitancy. If this is the case, politely end your conversation. Always be on your guard. So Mote it Be!

Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow.

**...but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead.
Philippians 3:13**