

NORTH CAROLINA

SPRING 2026

THE MASON

Official Publication of The Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina



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Senior Grand Warden - RW Michael A. Register

Junior Grand Warden - RW Philip R. Johnson

Grand Treasurer - MW Lewis R. Ledford, PGM

Grand Secretary - RW Jonathan A. Underwood

Senior Grand Deacon - WB C. Alvin Billings, Jr.

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Grand Marshall - WB Gary Handy

Grand Steward - WB John Burns

Grand Steward - WB Russell Bridges

Grand Chaplain - Rev. John Hasty Stanley

Grand Lecturer - WB Randv Darvl Ward

Grand Historian - WB Paul Michael Vincent

Grand Orator - WB Charles William Miller

Grand Tyler - WB Franklin Darrell Long

Judge Advocate - WB Matthew W. Cockman

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 04** Grand Master's Message
Steve Norris, Grand Master
- 06** More Than a Club
Jonathan A. Underwood, Grand Secretary
- 08** Strengthening Lodges, Sustaining Charity
George Marut
- 09** Time for Kids - 2026 Gala Invite
Masonic Home for Children
- 10** Celebrating Brotherhood
William Hall
- 12** From the Quarry
- 14** Reviving Masonic Light in a 'Me' World
Rev Chip Ritchie
- 16** When the rubber hits the road
David M. Carpenter
- 17** Charity Opera Show
David Padgett
- 18** A Marker for All Times
Don Barrier
- 20** Masonic Ties, Strong Bonds
José Ramos Pellot
- 21** Visiting a Masonic Lodge in Belgium
Michael Barron
- 22** That Word: "Revolution"
Gene Cobb, PGM
- 23** Shriners Made Our Surgery Possible
Melanie Dabbs
- 24** 250th Anniversary Event Calendar

ON THE COVER: *God Bless the U.S.A.*

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of
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From the Grand Master: If Within the Circle of Your Acquaintance

By Steve Norris, Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina



“If in the circle of your acquaintance, you find a person desirous of being initiated into Masonry, be particularly attentive not to recommend him unless you are convinced he will conform to our rules; that the honor, glory and reputation of the institution may be firmly established, and the world at large convinced of its good effects”

So just what is an acquaintance?

Acquaintances are people you know slightly or see occasionally, such as coworkers, neighbors, or friends-of-friends. Interactions with them are usually limited to surface-level topics

like work, hobbies, or the weather, and you typically don't make intentional plans to meet outside shared contexts. Not to be confused with a friend, an acquaintance is someone you know casually, while a friend is someone you trust, share personal experiences with, and have a deeper emotional connection.

Over the past few years, I have been informed of way too many instances where brothers have signed petitions of men they met over dinner, ONCE! I've even heard of petitions being signed after a “very good telephone conversation” with the prospect. This is not acceptable, my brothers.

The goal of Freemasonry has been to start with the best we can find and improve that best. This out of necessity, implies selectiveness. The selectiveness was based upon the quality of the man. Our Craft has been unique in that it has been able to take men from all walks of life socially, economically, culturally, etc., and provide an environment wherein the similarities of good are far more important than differences of type. I suspect the quality of the man is perhaps the major intangible force which is what brought and held us together. Freemasonry carries with good men much further than any other organization.

Without quality men there can be no quality organization. Quality will attract quality, and quality will ensure survival. We must always remember that Freemasonry was never meant to be an

organization for every man. We cannot hope to grow or even remain the same by lowering our standards.

Yet too often in a misguided desire to increase membership our lodges confer degrees upon men who are not worthy and well qualified.

The stability of our craft is not based on the numbers we admit but rather on the quality of the men whom we allow through our west gate. Just as the strength of a chain is tested by its weakest link, so is the standing of a masonic lodge as well as our total craft judged by its weakest member.

We are instructed to carefully inquire into the character of all men who seek admission into our fraternity, our Third Degree charge admonishes us not to recommend any man unless, as previously quoted, “we are convinced that he will conform to our rules,” that the honor, glory and reputation of the institution may be firmly established and the world at large convinced of its good effects”

Sadly, many who recommend men for membership in our fraternity do not remember their charges or simply choose to ignore them. They sign petitions of men they barely know looking on the external qualifications only, without knowing the intentions of their heart.

Remember my brothers, no man is so important and no increase in our numbers so urgent that we fail to take the necessary time to thoroughly investigate our petitioners. All who knock on the door of our west gate are not qualified for admittance, the reputation of our fraternity is at stake.

Freemasonry became as great as it did and remained great as long as it did,

because it accepted men as equals, good men, regardless of their profession or stature, it attracted the greatest minds, whether the educated professor or the commonsense farmer.

It was founded with higher standards and requirements, that many men would not choose to, or perhaps could not live up to, thus everyone cannot or should not be a Master Mason.

The truth of the matter is that the degrees and the principles they teach do not make a man a mason, He is made a mason every day that he chooses to live by those principles, and which in his obligations he swore to uphold. You see the real degree work happens not in the lodge, but in our daily lives, that’s when we and our craft are put to the test.

I hope that each day, as you choose to follow the faith you profess, you also renew your commitment to the ideals of our gentle craft, that you carefully and prayerfully recommend only those you are convinced of their internal qualifications. I hope that each day you choose to be a mason and practice out of the lodge the lessons taught within it, so we may always be able to convince mankind of the goodness of our order!

Look well to the ballot my brothers and vote for the good of masonry!!



More Than a Club: Why Freemasonry Still Matters in 2026

By Jonathan A. Underwood, Grand Secretary



Every few years, a familiar question returns: Is Freemasonry still relevant?

The world has changed. Churches, civic associations, and social clubs have thinned. Men are busy, distracted, and often isolated. Some look at our ceremonies and assume we are preserving an old system of “ritualistic plays” that no longer fits modern life.

I see it differently.

Freemasonry is not relevant because it is ancient. It is relevant when it is practiced—with consistency, sincerity, and attention to the very things we say we are here to do. The Craft does not need

constant reinvention. It needs men who will show up, learn the work, support one another, and take the lessons seriously enough to live them outside the lodge room.

Let me echo the sentiment of our Grand Master: we live in a time of constant communication and weak connection. Many men have colleagues, acquaintances, and digital communities, yet very few have the kind of reliable fraternity that demands character, mutual responsibility, and genuine presence. A healthy lodge is one of the rare places where a man can be known across time—where older brothers mentor younger ones, and where friendships are built through shared labor, not shared consumption.

I see that reality in my own lodge, State College Lodge No. 770 in Raleigh. Many of us are fathers, and the conversations that happen before and after meetings are as formative as anything we might schedule on a calendar. We share stories of raising children—of the exhaustion that comes with crying infants, of learning patience during stressful moments, of navigating the new world of girlfriends and boyfriends, and of trying to stay steady when life feels uncertain. That kind of education does not translate well to a screen. One-on-one facial expressions, tone of voice, a firm handshake, and a warm hug still matter. They create the kind of bond that helps a man keep his footing.

Yes, the values we prize can be found elsewhere. Men can learn integrity, charity, and self-improvement through faith communities, service organizations, volunteer work, and good families. We should celebrate that. Freemasonry does not claim a monopoly on virtue.

What we uniquely offer is a particular combination: an initiatic journey that cannot be rushed, a local brotherhood that meets face-to-face, and a system of symbols that teaches across generations. A man cannot become a Mason “in a day.” He is formed through degrees, time, instruction, reflection, and relationships. That slow process—so countercultural in an on-demand world—is part of the point.

Ritual, in this sense, is not theater. It is a method. It gives weight to ideas that might otherwise remain abstract. It requires memory, discipline, humility, and trust. And it binds us not only to our own lodge, but to a worldwide fraternity where the landmarks and lessons are recognizable across borders and cultures.

If Freemasonry ever feels irrelevant, the answer is usually not to discard the work—it is to return to it. The greatest way we can fulfill our mission is to do the very thing we claim makes us different: meet, learn, initiate, mentor, and live the principles we teach.

The world does not need us to be trendy. It needs men who are steady.



Monfort Medal Awarded



Each year the Grand Master is given the opportunity to present three Joseph Montfort medals. The highest award given by our Grand Jurisdiction. While attending the annual conference of the NC Grand York Rite, I presented my second medal to MW Berry Rigdon, PGM. MW Rigdon has been a mason over 40-years, served his blue lodge and our Grand Lodge in both the grand line and various committees. He has been in leadership roles in both the Scottish Rite and York Rite at the state level as well as nationally. More than the fact he is a dedicated mason, he is a good moral man! I’m privileged to call him brother and friend!

Please join me in congratulating MW Bery Rigdon on this great honor!!

Most Worshipful Steve Norris
Grand Master of Masons 2026

THE NORTH CAROLINA MASONIC FOUNDATION: Strengthening Lodges, Sustaining Charity

by George Marut

Founded in 1929, the North Carolina Masonic Foundation (NCMF) was established with a clear and enduring purpose: to create a permanent, reliable source of charitable support for North Carolina Masonry. Nearly a century later, that vision remains firmly intact.

Today, the Foundation stands as the largest and longest-standing supporter of Masonic charities in the state—serving as an eternal source of charity for the work that begins in our Blue Lodges and extends across our communities.

Built to Support the Lodge

At its core, the Foundation exists to strengthen Blue Lodges—not replace them. The Lodge is where Masonry lives, grows, and serves. The Foundation’s role is to provide the financial structure, tools, and partnership necessary to help Lodges carry out their charitable mission more effectively and sustainably.

As the needs of our communities evolve and compliance requirements become more complex, the NCMF offers Lodges a trusted, centralized platform to manage funds with clarity, accountability, and purpose.

Lodge Charity Accounts (LCAs) are designed to support and power a Lodge’s charitable impact. These accounts allow Lodges to:

- Receive and manage charitable donations in a fully IRS-compliant structure
- Provide donors with the benefit of tax-deductible contributions
- Build and grow funds for both immediate needs and long-term charitable goals
- Ensure proper stewardship and reporting of all charitable activity

With an LCA, Lodges can focus on what matters most—serving others—while the Foundation provides the administrative strength and oversight behind the scenes.

Non-Charity Accounts (NCAs) support Lodge-held funds that are not charitable in nature. NCAs provide:

- Flexibility in how funds are used for Lodge operations
- Secure custody and professional oversight
- Simplified management within a centralized system

Together, LCAs and NCAs give Lodges a complete financial toolkit—one that aligns with both their operational needs and their charitable mission.

A True Partnership

The relationship between the Foundation and the Lodges is built on partnership. We work alongside Lodge leadership to ensure that every Brother has access to the tools, guidance, and support needed to make a lasting difference.

Whether a Lodge is managing a small charitable fund or building a long-term legacy of giving, the Foundation provides the structure to make that vision sustainable.

An Enduring Purpose

Since 1929, the mission of the North Carolina Masonic Foundation has remained steady: to support the charitable heart of Masonry in North Carolina.

By partnering with Blue Lodges through LCAs and NCAs, we ensure that the work of Masonry—relief, compassion, and service—continues to grow stronger with each passing generation.

Each Lodge strengthened is a community served. And together, we are building something that will last.



MHCO

TIME FOR KIDS

Join us for a black-tie evening dedicated to giving children the time, stability, and support they deserve. Every moment matters at Masonic Home for Children at Oxford, and your presence helps create life-changing opportunities.

EVENT DETAILS

Saturday, June 20, 2026
Doors Open: 5:00 PM
Program & Dinner Begins: 6:00 PM

Oasis Shriners
604 Doug Mayes Place
Charlotte, NC 28262

EVENING HIGHLIGHTS

- Keynote Speaker: Devante Hicks, MHCO Alumni
- Silent Auction
- Live Auction
- Elegant Seated Dinner
- Exclusive Complimentary MHCO Gift for Each Guest

TICKETS

Individual Tickets: \$150 per guest

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

White Hat Sponsor - \$5,000

- Table of 10
- Name in Program
- Recognition at Dinner
- Honorary gift

Red Hat Sponsor - \$2,500

- Four Seats
- Name in Program
- Recognition at Dinner
- Honorary gift

Black Hat Sponsor - \$1,000

- Two Seats
- Name in Program

Table Sponsor - \$1,500

- Table of 10
- Name in Program
- Recognition at Dinner



Not able to join us to celebrate another year of making a difference in the lives of children in North Carolina but still want to be apart of our story?



SCAN HERE



CELEBRATING BROTHERHOOD:

A Night to Remember at St. John's No. 3 Installation Ceremony

By William Hall

On the evening of January 7th, 2026, the Masonic Temple in Downtown New Bern buzzed with an electric warmth that only true brotherhood can kindle. Our venerable lodge now marking 254 years since its chartering by RW Joseph Montford, opened its doors for the installation of its new officers—an event that drew a large crowd of Masons, families, and well-wishers, all eager to witness a night steeped in tradition and heartfelt connection. But beyond the formal rituals and dignified proceedings, it was the profound expressions of brotherly love that elevated the occasion into something unforgettable, a living testament to the enduring bonds that define Freemasonry.

At the helm of the ceremony stood Most Worshipful Steve M. Norris, our Grand Master, whose steady presence as presiding officer radiated quiet authority and genuine affection for the craft. Assisting him with the installation were MW William L. Dill (PGM), and RW Michael A. Register (Senior Grand Warden) accompanied by WB John E. Burns (Grand Steward).

Yet the true heart of the evening pulsed with the arrival of Most Worshipful Omar S. Morris, Grand Master of Masons in New Jersey, accompanied by a distinguished delegation from Philo Lodge No. 243 F&AM. This wasn't mere courtesy; it was a

pilgrimage of love and loyalty. Philo Lodge holds sacred ground as the home lodge of our incoming Master, where he was first raised to the sublime degree 38 years prior. Imagine the swell of emotion as brothers from that very delegation, men who had stood by his side during his initiation all those decades ago now crossed state lines to celebrate his installation as Master. Their reunion was an emotional highlight: Embraces that lingered a moment longer, eyes glistening with shared memories of that important night so long ago, and stories retold with laughter that echoed through the hall.

This rare convergence of two sitting Grand Masters, one from each jurisdiction tied to the Master's journey, transformed the installation into a historic connection of masonic unity. It symbolized not just inter-jurisdictional harmony, but the deeper brotherly love that transcends borders, ranks, and time. As they exchanged greetings and words of wisdom, the room felt charged with a collective pride, a shared sense of family forged in the fires of Masonic principles.

The culmination of the evening's ceremonies brought the installation of St. John's Lodge No. 3's 2026 officer line, a group of brethren whose selection reflected not only skill and commitment but also the

deep trust and fraternal affection bestowed upon them by the lodge. Leading this distinguished line as Master was Dominick P. Giorgianni, Jr.—the very brother whose Masonic journey began in Philo Lodge No. 243 and now preparing to guide St. John’s No. 3 into its next chapter. His installation was met with enthusiastic applause and heartfelt congratulations, as brothers young and old stepped forward to clasp his hand, offer quiet words of encouragement, and reaffirm their support for the leader they had chosen.

But the congratulations didn’t end there. Joining our new Master, the following elected and appointed officers were installed,

- Senior Warden: Bro. W. Terry Tripp
- Junior Warden: Bro. Francis L. Anson
- Treasurer: Bro. Kito B. Romans
- Secretary: WB. Arthur B. Romans, PM
- Senior Deacon: Bro. Joseph S. Kawalski
- Junior Deacon: Bro. Nicholas C. Coyle
- Senior Steward: Bro. Robert W. Webster
- Junior Steward: Bro. C. Brian Fuller
- Chaplain: Bro. Aquiles P. Faustino
- Tyler: WB Jason A. Maxey, PM



As we gathered in this hallowed space, in the year of America’s 250th anniversary, the night invited reflection on our lodge’s rich legacy, a legacy not of stone and charter alone, but of lives intertwined through acts of kindness, support, and unwavering loyalty as the long line of Masters continues.

Brothers continued the celebrations after the installation, displaying brotherly love in its purest form: not grand gestures, but the casual, subtle and profound connections that make us more than individuals—a true fraternity, building upon our storied past toward an even brighter future. St. John’s Lodge No. 3 emerged from that evening not just with new officers, but with hearts fuller, bonds stronger, and a renewed commitment to the light we all share.



The New Jersey delegation, including MW Omar Morris, Grand Master of Masons of NJ, and brothers of Philo Lodge No. 243 F. & A. M. South River, NJ



Grand Master Steve Norris of North Carolina and Grand Master Omar Morris of New Jersey with the new Master of St. John’s No. 3, Dominick Giorgianni.

From the Quarry

The Trowel

Grantham Lodge No. 725



We will now proceed with the presentation of a Major Award.

Br. Sr. Deacon, conduct WB Thomas C. Williams, Jr. to the west side of the altar.

My Brother in a former presentation, some lighthearted mementos were bestowed upon you as a part of our entertainment. But it now becomes my duty to inform you, that you are not - to be left empty-handed tonight. Indeed, our gratitude for the harmony you promoted, and the solid work accomplished during your will and pleasure, have merited the honor which we now bestow.

This trowel, the emblem of brotherly love and affection, to spread the cement that unites us into one sacred band, or society of friends and brothers, is presented to you this evening in recognition of your faithful service to the lodge.

Please, share it with Nancy, who also deserves our recognition.



4th Generation Master

St. Patrick's Lodge No. 617



It was an honor for St. Patrick's Lodge in Princeton to Install their first 4th generation Master-Jan. 3rd, 2024! Scott E. Boyette Jr. (Scotty) was installed and thanked everyone for being there!

His predecessors were:

Oscar L. Boyette in 1947
his Great Dranddaddy.

Ben G. Boyette in 1968
his Granddaddy.

& Scott E. Boyette in 1993
... his Daddy.

Scotty was also honored with his personal gavel that stated:

Scott E. Boyette Jr. – Master

St. Patrick's Lodge 617
Princeton, NC

2024

Given to him by his Daddy who is very proud and excited for his year in the East.



The Liberty Tree

Zion Lodge No. 81



The Liberty Tree was a famous elm tree that stood in Boston, near Boston Common in the years before the American Revolution. In 1765, Patriots in Boston staged the first act of defiance against the British government at the tree. The tree became a rallying point for the growing resistance to the British rule over the American Colonies.

The Sons of the American Revolution, in Honor of the 250th Anniversary of the American Independence in 2026, are sponsoring the planting of Liberty Trees across America. This tree was planted as a Tribute to Veterans in recognition of their selfless sacrifice in securing our nation's freedoms by Zion Lodge No. 81 on February 25th.



Humanitarian Award

Polk County Unity Lodge 482

The Polk County Unity Lodge in Saluda, NC was proud to honor a community leader, Mr. Richard Barnwell with a humanitarian award on February 19, 2026. The award was first shared 33 years ago and was the idea of Right Worshipful Brother John Hubbs. RW Brother John Hubbs came up with the idea when he lived in upstate New York. He recently brought the

idea up and wanted to see our lodge honor a member of the community who was a non-Mason. He also said he would like to see more lodges in the state do something similar. RW Brother John Hubbs will be 90 years old this year and is an inspiration to anyone he comes in contact with. He is always willing to help any brother with ritual practice, advice, or just a listening ear.



Mr. Richard Barnwell is also a man who has been a teacher, assistant principal, apple farmer, firefighter, EMT, and a great inspiration to everyone he came in contact with. He always went above and beyond to help the students and members of his community in more ways than you would ever imagine, all while flying under the radar. His wife, Mrs. Sheila Barnwell, was with him when he received the award, as she had always been. I can personally vouch for the Barnwell family because I was a student of theirs. Also at the ceremony was the Henderson

County Sheriff Lowell Griffin, Polk County Sheriff Tim Wright, and a former colleague of Mr. Barnwell, Mrs. Rosemary. Also in attendance was the mayor of Saluda, Tangie Morgan. The lodge was full, which was a great thing to see nowadays. Right Worshipful Brother Dewey Webb did a short presentation on what is Masonry for the non-Mason members and followed it up with a Masonic education program from 50 years ago titled “Stop and Sit Awhile,” touching on how well do we know our neighbors, brothers, widows, etc.

All of this was made possible by a brother who will be 90 years old this year and has had his share of challenges and more. So for me, the next time I hear a brother say “I am too old, nobody cares what I think,” I am going to make sure to introduce them to RW Brother John and I hope they will “Stop and Sit Awhile.”



The Holy Pocketknife Grantham Lodge No. 725

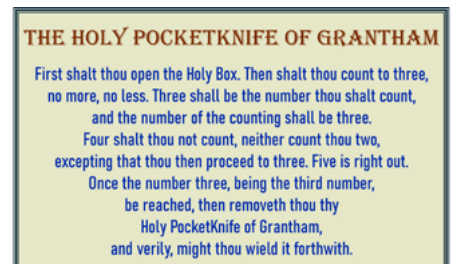


At Grantham Lodge #725, a Major Award was presented to a worthy brother by WM David Nyce.

WB Eddie Fulcher was conducted to west of the altar to receive The Holy Pocketknife.

WB Fucher, self-proclaimed “The oldest rat in the barn”, was nearly speechless (this was very unusual for him).

WB Fulcher’s past behavior and regular deportment merited the honor which was conferred. He was recognized for his faithful support and dedication to the lodge, always being there for every brother, offering his help, and serving in every capacity as may be needed. Thank you WB Eddie Fulcher!





Reviving Masonic Light in a 'Me' World:

By Rev Chip Ritchie

Lighting plays a pivotal and memorable part in our Masonic walk. If we were to take the time to look around, we might see many examples of light in our lodges. Of course, we have the luxury of electric light all around us today. As a matter of fact, our days are more governed by artificial light than they are by natural light.

As a new Mason many years ago, my eyes were opened to many pillars of my community sitting in a room welcoming me into the fraternity. Many of the men that I had grown up around and who were instrumental in my development. Men, whose Masonic light radiated through them before I even knew they were Masons. They were men of character! Men who fought in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

These men were giants. They made positive differences in the community. People aspired to be like them. Their Masonic light drew others to the fraternity like a moth to the flame. But what happened between then and now? The “Me” movement has taken over! When I joined many years ago, you had to wait seven years to start in the chairs; yet today we throw new Masons into the line after they are raised. And why is that? Lodges say ‘because we are lacking in membership.’ But why is that? Really, what is the cause?

People like to say we are not a ‘religious’ institution yet we open each lodge with a Holy Bible. We believe so steadfastly that the “G” stands for God that we had a rebellion to return it to the Square and Compass last year. But yet, we only open the Holy Bible when it suits us. Our

Masonic light is going out. Our obligations and our prayers are empty oaths on a book that we no longer read. We do not even respect our brothers when they correct us or disagree with us. We call them names, spread gossip, and yes we even threaten them! It really is about “Me!”

The “Pareto Principle” came about from Vilfredo Pareto in 1906. Pareto was an Italian and he observed that in Italy 80 percent of the land was owned by 20 percent of the population. This has come to be known as the 80/20 rule or the “law of the vital few.” So to apply this to Masonry today, we have 20 percent of the people doing 80 percent of the work. And if you apply that to the 20 percent of men attending a lodge, you will have 20 percent of those who are trying to make a Masonic difference in their community. In other words, they are trying to let this light shine!

But what happens when 20 percent of the 20 percent get burned out? Well look at your lodge, look at the ‘health’ of your lodge, look at the average median age of your members. Many a lodge is on life support, literally hanging on from the donations of a wealthy few! Many can hardly fill the chairs for a meeting. Several years ago when I was in the East, I routinely had only three members to assist with any function or event that we as a lodge voted to do. But that was as far as the ‘lodge’ participated. I cannot tell you how many times I heard: I have grandchildren to watch, I did my time in the East, I do not agree with a blood drive, or I don’t like Brother A B so I’m not coming.

Brothers, I started a coffee fundraiser for a good cause. Is the coffee expensive, yes, it is. Do you waste more money on dinner,

beach trips, or other appendant bodies? Absolutely. How will our Masonic light shine through Oxford if we don’t trim the wicks and keep oil in the little candles that are living there? How can we honestly say we care when we never follow through? How can any child or how would any person look at you and see that you are a Mason? Do not say ‘well I wear a ring;’ use that Masonic Trestle board and read where James 2:26 (NKJV) says “faith without works is dead also.” Likewise, brothers, our fraternity without works is dead!

I remember years ago, an Atheist friend of mine said if being a Christian was so good then he would see it in their lives so much so that he would look at a Christian and say “I want what they have!” And Jesus says in Matthew 5:15 (NKJV) “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”

Brothers, 20 percent of us are setting our lamps out for others to see. But 80 percent of us are smothering our lamps with wet blankets, bad attitudes, and just plain old “My way or the highway” attitudes. No one looks at us today under the same lenses of charity or Masonic brotherhood like they did forty years ago. We must let our Masonic lights shine in our communities. Let us fill those chairs, let us renew our commitment to our fraternity. Soon we all shall go the way of our first Grand Master. When you do, will you be reduced to a tombstone and an old ring that people sell or discard? Or will you be a Masonic brother whose light will shine for generations to come and some young man will wear your ring proudly and say “The man that wore this ring, that is the man I want to be like when I grow old!”



REAL WORLD MASONRY: When the rubber hits the road.

By David M. Carpenter

Tuesday, January 13th began as an ordinary day. It did not remain "ordinary". I had driven to the local grocery store for a few items and was returning to the farm on NC-150. As I approached the farm drive, I activated my turn signal, and slowed to make the turn onto the gravel road. Beginning my turn, I noticed a dump truck grill, growing ever larger in my rear-view mirror. "Oh my!" I thought, as I knew what was coming.

The dump truck struck the right rear corner of my car, and my ride began. In short, my vehicle, a Crown Victoria, was knocked across the drive into two guy-wires for the light pole. My car was about to roll, when the guy wires caught the car's left side, stopping the roll. The car fell back down on all four wheels. After a quick assessment, I released my seatbelt, opened the door and stepped out.

As soon as I stepped out, I heard, "Worshipful! Are you OK?" It was WB Jeff Meadows of Lovelady No. 670. He had been following the dump truck, and stopped to render aid. "Every human being has a claim upon your kind offices." When he recognized me, "...relieve every brother, who shall need your assistance."

WB Meadows immediately came to me, inquired as to any injuries or needs I may have. He made sure I was OK in the aftermath and stayed with me until my wife had arrived and the Trooper was finished. WB Meadows was working at the time, but he was not in a hurry. He was providing relief to a distressed Brother, me.

I am very thankful for WB Meadows, and his example. I have conferred Degrees and Lectures. We have all heard and recited the Charge at Closing. Experiencing a serious auto accident was not on my bingo card for yesterday, nor this week, but I was blessed to witness a Brother living his Obligations and the teachings of our Craft. I was the beneficiary; when Freemasonry and the rubber hits the road.



Charity Opera Show

By David Padgett

Mount Holly Masonic Lodge No. 544 recently hosted a "Charity Opera Show" on March 20, 2026, raising approximately \$1,000 to support the music departments at Mount Holly Middle School and East Gaston High School. The funds are specifically designated to help the schools purchase new sheet music.

The event was sparked by a collaboration with Unity Masonic Lodge No. 462 and Mount Holly Masonic Lodge No. 544, which was brought to life through a chance meeting between Worshipful Master (WM) Dave Padgett and local opera singer Crystal Stroupe at an HOA meeting. Mrs. Stroupe, who has performed with Carolina Voices, not only volunteered her talents but also funded the tuning of the lodge's Baldwin piano, which had sat untouched for 28 years. The ivories were tickled by her accompanist, Mrs. Nancy Lucas, who also volunteered her talents for the event.

"One of the core tenets of Masonic education is the Liberal Arts, which includes music," said WM Padgett. "This event allowed us to support a vital cause while showcasing the positive impact the fraternity has on our community."

The evening featured hors d'oeuvres from Dusk to Dawn Foods LLC and a phenomenal hour-long performance by Stroupe that earned a standing ovation from the crowd. Following the success of the benefit, the lodge is already considering a Valentine's Day event for next year to continue its support of local music programs.

This is a wonderful story of community connection and a great example of Masonic outreach in action. It's impressive how a chance meeting at an HOA meeting evolved into a successful fundraiser in just three months, especially with the added touch of reviving a piano that had been silent for nearly three decades.

The \$1,000 raised will surely make a tangible difference for the Mount Holly Middle and East Gaston High music departments. It sounds like WM Dave Padgett and the brothers of Mount

Holly Masonic Lodge No. 544 found a perfect way to bridge the "Liberal Arts" tradition of the craft with a modern community need.



GRAND COUNCIL R & S. M.
IN NORTH CAROLINA
ROSCOE McDOWELL WYNN
MOST ILLUSTRIOUS GRAND MASTER
1956 — 1957

A Marker for All Times

By Don Barrier

It was 1938, Japan was beginning its second year of their military invasion of China, Germany was threatening to invade Poland, the world was poised for war, WWII. Most Worshipful Brother T. Troy Wyche, Waynesville Lodge No. 259, had a vision of creating a plea for humanity, a marker, more than just a pile of stones, but rather a monument that shared “a message for this troubled world”, a time not unlike ours in many ways. With the support of the York Rite, over 687 stones, plaques, sculptures, artifacts and minerals were gathered from Plymouth Rock, to the Pyramids of Giza, to the White House, to the Rock of Gibraltar, to the Alamo, symbolic of the worldwide universality and donated by Brother Masons from all around the world, the Americas, Europe, Asia, Africa, Antarctica, and “the Isles of the Sea”, exemplifying the core values of our Craft: equality, morality, charity, and the brotherhood of humanity. The cement binding the various stones, plaques, and bricks together symbolized the “cement of brotherly love and affection” that bind Masons together as a fraternity. The twelve-foot tall Marker was dedicated in reverence to the Craft and the world at the York Rite’s Summer Assembly in 1938 when a time capsule was installed. The next year, September 1, 1939, the world went to war, yet Masons remained united.

The Marker, also known as the Great Smoky Mountains Masonic Marker, or the Masonic Shrine, is located on Heintooga Road, approximately 17 miles from Waynesville, about 4-miles off the Blue Ridge Parkway in Haywood County. In 1948, a granite staircase

containing 3, 5, and 7 engraved steps to provide access was built and, in 1954, an iron fence was installed to protect the Marker. At the 1972 York Rite Summer Assembly, the time capsule was opened, and new mementos were added to the time capsule. As shared by Past Grand Master Barry Rigdon and relayed to him by Past Grand Master Charles Cathy, who was in attendance, a brother from the Grand Lodge of Germany then deposited a coin into the time capsule. It was a gift that they had been unable to leave Nazi Germany to contribute, because in 1938, as Freimaurer, German for Freemasons, were persecuted and imprisoned. For a generation they saved and brought the coin to be laid up in the time capsule as a memento of their unity and fidelity to us as brothers at its next opening.

The Marker and its grounds have been lovingly cared for by the York Rite Marker Committee. However, the inexorable ravages of time took its toll and many of the features slowly eroded, and some of the sculptures and symbols had become unrecognizable, lost to living memory. At the 2022 York Rite Summer Assembly, the coin was found and the resulting wear on the Marker was becoming a concern. Then in 2024, The North Carolina Park Service alerted Most Worshipful Brother Barry Rigdon, that there may have been a vandalism attack on the Marker. The York Rite Marker Committee, Worshipful Brothers Dave Cashion, Chairman, Brian Rau, Gene Canter, Jim Burrows, Michael Smith, Ted Inman, Russell Bridges, Allen Surratt, Hugh K. Terrell, and Most Worshipful Berry Rigdon sprang into action and Dave and Russell, joined Barry to assess the potential incident. To their disappointment, the

vandals appeared to have fired well over one-hundred small caliber rounds at the Marker and appeared to have brandished a hammer badly damaging several of the stone steps. Worshipful Brother Alan Mann then referred the task of repair to Worshipful Brother Kenneth Lambert. Being a highly skilled operative Mason and restorative contractor, Kenneth visited the site and met with Russell, Barry and Dave and assessed the damage, developing a plan of repair, with Kenneth affecting the repair and the York Rite providing funding and support.

Hurricane Helene struck in September 2024, preventing access to the site for several weeks and the following winter at that altitude created unfavorable conditions causing further delays and complications. Repairs began in May 2025 and took about six weeks to complete. Many of the damaged pieces required extensive repair. Materials had to be patched, colored to match, and installed with intricate artistry. Many of the plaques had to be reengraved, some refilled and then engraved.

Most of the work was performed on site in place and some pieces had to be removed and reworked under controlled conditions at their near site repair shop they built. The work included high tech materials, expert knowledge, teamwork, and hard spent elbow grease. Each piece was a totally custom, handmade repair of materials as varied as granite to sandstone to fired clay tile. A plaque from Czechoslovakia's restoration required building up and re-engraving and then re-filling with actual gold leaf. Another plaque was shattered into pieces, requiring a total reconstruction, then restoration. Some were eroded almost totally blank and required extensive research of old images and newspaper articles to determine their original image. A plaque made of stone from the Lakota Tribe bearing an Indian Head was discovered completely worn blank and restored to what was shown in the old images. A curious rounded lump of rock extending from the Marker was discovered to be a crouching frog carved from stone quarried from Mt. Fujiyama in Japan and was restored to its incredible small sculpture.

Kenneth relayed that the biggest challenge was repairing the hammer damaged granite stairs and matching their now patinaed color and texture. The work was slow, fragile and tedious. Yet it was rewarding, his artistry and

craftsmanship and the effort of the support of the York Rite Marker Committee members brought renewed life to this important symbolic edifice for generations to come.

The work began as a repair of malevolent destruction, but from the damage a resurrection of wisdom, strength and beauty, a rediscovery of hope, and benevolence lost to living memory. This is what we Masons do, we bring hope from grief, we make destruction into resurrection, we shape not only the physical but the spiritual rough into smooth ashlars. The Marker symbolized the best of the craft in 1938 and the restoration the best of the craft in 2025, and the hopes for unity, peace, and brotherhood among all Masons are restored for our and future generations.





Masonic Ties, Strong Bonds

By José Ramos Pellot

This past September, the island of Puerto Rico became a stage where history, fraternity, and universal Masonry intertwined. As the Gran Logia Soberana de Puerto Rico celebrated its 140th Anniversary and hosted the annual COMACA (Confederación Masónica del Caribe y América) Assembly, I had the joy of inviting my North Carolina Brothers to join us. I never imagined that they would arrive not only as friends, but carrying the greetings and respects of our Grand Master and the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.

Their presence was more than a gesture of support; it was a living testament to the bonds that unite Masons across borders. Representing North Carolina were WB Al Bouldin, WB Jeffrey L. Bullington, WB Eddie R. Souther III, and EA José L. Mora. Together, they stood as honored guests and as Brothers among Brothers, strengthening ties that have long connected our jurisdictions.

The event brought together Grand Masters and delegations from across the Masonic world—Paraguay, Romania, France, Greece, and beyond—alongside the distinguished members of COMACA. During COMACA, we also had the honor of welcoming Puerto Rico's most prominent civic leaders, including the Governor and her husband, who is also a Brother Mason. Their presence underscored the respect and visibility that our Craft continues to hold in society at large, and it highlighted the enduring influence of Masonic principles within public life.

For me, and for the Brethren of Delta Lodge No. 64 in Manatí, there was something uniquely

moving about welcoming the North Carolina delegation. Having lived in North Carolina for 24 years, and still deeply tied to my Masonic home there, I can testify that the fraternal spirit that binds Puerto Rico and North Carolina is both personal and profound.

That bond was further sealed after COMACA. On Tuesday, October 30, during the first stated meeting of Respectable Logia Delta No. 64 following the event, I had the distinct honor of inducting WB Al Bouldin, WB Jeffrey L. Bullington, and WB Eddie R. Souther III as Honorary Members of our lodge. This historic act symbolized not only our gratitude but also our enduring fraternal connection. From that moment forward, they will always have a Masonic home in Puerto Rico, and our lodge will forever carry their names with pride.

During the sessions and celebrations, we shared labor and light, but also laughter, meals, and embraces. Our NC Brothers marched proudly with our Puerto Rican delegation, not as visitors, but as family. Their willingness to travel, to support, and to share in this historic occasion left an indelible mark on our hearts.

As Masons, we know that our Craft transcends languages, cultures, and geography. The visit of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina to Puerto Rico was a powerful reminder of that truth. It was proof that the Brotherhood of Man under the Fatherhood of God is not an ideal, but a living reality, nurtured by every step we take toward each other.

Masonic ties remain. Strong bonds endure.

VISITING A MASONIC LODGE IN BELGIUM

By Michael Barron

Upon learning that his wife Tammy was going to be presenting at the University of Belgium in Antwerp, Michael Barron decided to tag along. Having been recently raised a Master Mason in October 2024 in Junaluske Lodge No. 145 in Franklin, North Carolina, he was curious to see if there were any lodges in Belgium he could tour or visit.

After some research, Michael discovered Lodge Wellington 1385, a regular English-speaking lodge on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland. Not only were they located just three blocks from the hotel where he was staying, but they would be holding a meeting on November 18th - the night he arrived!

Excited at the potential of participating in lodge across the pond, Michael made initial contact with the secretary of Lodge Wellington. Since Junaluske and Lodge Wellington are under different grand lodges, the secretary directed Michael to contact the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, which in turn would contact the Grand Lodge of Scotland, which would notify Lodge Wellington of his being authorized to participate. It was a smooth and reasonably quick process, each lodge secretary's offices being courteous and efficient.

The event was to be an initiation followed by a banquet. Being an observant lodge, tuxedos were, of course, required. Michael received a warm welcome by many brothers from countries ranging from the Netherlands to New Zealand. The lodge was built in the 1930s and the lodge room was beautifully constructed in the Egyptian revival style. Large carvings of scenes with hieroglyphs depicted many of the important events in Egyptian mythology. Boaz and Jachin were remarkably tall and made of bronze.

The overall ceremony was quite similar to those held in North Carolina with the notable exception of the formality and occasional Scottish tartans. Additionally, when the candidate was received upon a sharp object, it was a real sword. Fortunately for Michael, it was an EA degree, since his Master Masons apron from North Carolina is considered an EA apron in the Scottish lodge.

When the initiation was completed, the entire assembly retired to the banquet hall where a full

Burns night celebration was held. Robert Burns, a notable Freemason, is considered to be the national poet of Scotland. A proper Burns night typically consists of a meal of haggis and the reading, performing, and singing of Burns poetry. The haggis, a unique food made from many interesting ingredients that one should research to fully appreciate, was brought in ceremoniously to the banquet hall escorted by bagpipes and drums. Once the haggis was brought to the front of the banquet hall, Burns' famous poem Address to a Haggis was read in the old Scottish dialect. Many toasts of Scotch whiskey were made to the king, to multiple Grand Lodges, and to the many visitors. The haggis was served with the traditional "neeps and tatties" (turnips and potatoes). Once dinner was over, two brothers sang Burns' poem Scots Wha Hae, which to many is still considered the unofficial national anthem of Scotland.

Although an amazing experience, it was quite a long evening by American standards. Despite starting at 6:30 p.m., Michael's wife actually texted him at 12:30 a.m. to ask if he was okay. His reply was they are just now serving dessert. He finally walked the cobblestone streets of Antwerp back to his hotel at almost 2:00 a.m.

The entire event was a living testimony to the rich history and brotherhood of our ancient fraternity. Michael is most grateful for the opportunity to have such a memorable experience and appreciates everyone from Lodge Wellington and the Grand Lodges that so graciously facilitated the event.



That Word: “Revolution”

By A. Gene Cobb, SGIG - Scottish Rite Orient of North Carolina



REVOLUTION. It conjures up all kinds of thoughts. Obviously, we remember this is the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. This July 4, our nation will proudly celebrate two hundred fifty years since we severed ties with a king and created an experiment in freedom unlike any other in the history of the world. Some people, when they hear “revolution” think of a war with suffering, death, and destruction that ushers in poverty to some and wealth to others. Some people might say they want a revolution. We all want to change the world. At least that is what the Beatles’ lyrics suggest.^w

The revolution of the Earth around the Sun and the tilting of the earth during its orbit contributes to how we understand day and night, the four seasons of the year, and even how we measure what a “year” really is. We joyously welcome this Spring and Summer!

A lot has evolved over the last 250 years. A lot can happen in a year. The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of North Carolina is changing, not because we necessarily want to change. Laws, rules, regulations, culture, and

expectations sometimes necessitate discussion of change at the very least. Sometimes, change becomes requirement. Change for change’s sake is never good. Welcomed change is a revolution that evolves into something better, dare I even say, greater than we ever thought possible.

Some of the revolution we now experience in Scottish Rite will lead us to change how we support children with speech, hearing, and learning disabilities. Some of the revolution will lead us to explore the difference between development and fundraising. Some of the revolution will include representatives appointed in all one hundred counties of North Carolina to share the message of Scottish Rite in subordinate lodges and to listen to what others need rather than acting like we always know what is best. Some of the revolution will involve our wives and children in what we do in the future. Some of the revolution will lead to initiations of those who are now Masonic Youth. Such a revolution will not be about giving away secrets or violating our vows. It will be about recognition of meeting human needs with the best we have to offer in this season of change.

Can we change the world? If we can help children communicate; promote both philanthropic giving of substantial amounts and make every coin count; reach every geographical point in the fraternity; openly share our love for this fraternity with those in our lives who matter most—our family; and make a difference caring for our Masonic Youth, then yes we can change the world!^w

Seasons change. Nations change. People change. Everybody can change. Our revolution now, as it was 250 years ago, must be for better. Together, let us change from within such that when future generations hear the word, “revolution,” wise, kind, and benevolent memories will be our legacy.

Shriners Made Our Surgery Possible

By Melanie Dabbs

My son is 12 years old and we adopted him when he was 7 from Sierra Leone, West Africa. He is a burn survivor, and prior to his adoption he had very minimal medical care for his burns. By the time he came home in 2021, he had severe contractures to both hands that caused his hands to be almost unusable. Since coming home, he has had several surgeries with UNC on both hands and his torso, leaving us with an unbearable amount of medical debt.

When we decided it was time for another hand surgery, we transferred his care to Shriners Children's Boston in hopes of being able to get a surgery without adding to our medical debt. Little did we know that our experience with Shriners would be so much more than that. On December 10, 2025, my son had his first surgery with Shriners hospital and our time with Shriners has been exceedingly more than we could have imagined.

Every step of the way, Shriners has made our surgery experience as easy and stress-free as possible. Amran Shriners have taken care of all of our flights and baggage expenses, and have been so helpful and kind. I know that if I need anything at all, Amran Shriners have our backs. While at the hospital in Boston, all of our food and lodging were taken care of, making our out-of-pocket expenses disappear.

Even the hospital coffee was better than expected! While my son was in surgery, the Boston Firefighters came to the hospital and made him an ice cream sundae to save in the freezer until he woke up, and they left the most amazing Christmas gifts in his hospital room. Having a child with medical needs means rest is difficult to find, but our experience with the Shriners

has made this experience as restful as possible. We are so thankful for everything the Shriners have done for our family, and for all the other families they serve. Our Christmas surgery was the best surgery we've had so far!



Shriners
Children's™



SUDAN SHRINERS

After weather delays, Sudan Shriners elections were held on February 14, 2026. WB Jeff Taylor was elected Potentate for 2026. Illustrious Sir Jeff is a member of Roseboro Lodge No. 585 where he served as Master in 2006 and has served as treasurer for many years. Illustrious Sir

Jeff appointed three Nobles to line positions. Noble Tim Hinnant of Manteo No.521, was appointed Marshall, Noble Mike Rivenbark of Atkinson No.612, was appointed Captain of the Guard, and Noble Dexter Mills of Pleasant Hill No. 304, was appointed Outer Guard.

The Grand Lodge of North Carolina, AF&AM
2921 Glenwood Avenue
Raleigh, NC 27608

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

250th ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

4 Jul 2026

**Unanimity Lodge Degree in the Chowan County Court House – Edenton
Statewide Recognition of Independence Day by lodges**

25 Sep 2026

250th Anniversary Dinner at the Annual Communication – Winston-Salem

17 Oct 2026

Kings Mountain Battlefield Event – Kings Mountain

3 Oct 2026

Liberty Gala, Phoenix Lodge – Fayetteville