Reports

of
The Grand Master
The Grand Treasurer
The Grand Secretary
Boards, Commissions and Committees

at the

239th
Annual Communication

of

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

Winston-Salem, North Carolina
September 25-26, 2026

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Report of the Grand Treasurer

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

I herewith submit my interim report as Grand Treasurer as of June 30, 2026, including projected expenditures for the year and suggested budget for calendar year 2027 as proposed by the Committee on Finance.

Deposits:	**Amount**
Petty Cash	$ 100
First Citizens Bank (operating account)	$ 574,449
First Citizens Bank Money Market	$ 715,384
Total Cash & Money Market	**$ 1,289,933**

Investment	**12/31/2025**	**Unrealized Gain**	**6/30/2026**	
Grand Lodge investment with NCMF	$1,059,225	$79,062	$1,138,287	$1,138,287
Total Cash & Cash Equivalents				**$ 2,428,220**

Special Funds Summary	**12/31/2025**	**6/30/2026**	
Special Contingency Reserve	200,000	200,000	
Emblems and Awards Reserve	8,017	8,017	
Automobile Reserve	56,041	56,041	
Operation Reserve	132,139	118,029	
Grand Lodge Building Reserve	107,966	108,451	
Retirement/Health & Life Ins.	8,000	8,000	
Legal Fees Reserve	11,000	21,000	
Office Equipment Reserve	5,638	5,638	
Charity Fund	100,353	100,353	
Helene Charity Fund	124,100	27,099	
Library Fund	5,030	5,030	
World Conference Reserve	2,055	2,055	
Subordinate Lodges Real Estate Sold	403,879	403,879	
Lodges donate to Building Fund	1,854	1,854	
Total Special Funds 6/30/2026	$ 1,166,072	$ 1,065,446	($1,065,446)
Total General Funds Available			**$ 1,362,774**

Respectfully Submitted,
Lewis R. Ledford, PGM, Grand Treasurer

Report of the Grand Secretary

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

I herewith submit the budget adopted for the calendar year 2025 and the receipts and disbursements for that year, restated on the basis described in the Report of the Committee on Finance.

Grand Lodge of North Carolina Budget and Actual, Calendar Year 2025

	Account Name	Budget 2025	Actual 2025
INCOME			
700-01	Master Masons Per Capita Tax @ $35/member	850,500.00	836,867.00
700-01A	GWMNMA @ $1/member	24,300.00	23,948.00
700-01B	GWMNMA @ $1/member Payout	(24,300.00)	(23,948.00)
700-01C	Per Capita Tax from Endowed Members	32,000.00	37,298.00
	Total Master Mason Per Capita Tax	**$ 882,500.00**	**$ 874,165.00**
700-02	Initiation Fees @ $21/candidate	14,700.00	11,319.00
700-02B	[GL Building @ $1.00]	(700.00)	(539.00)
700-02C	[NC Charities @ $10.00]	(7,000.00)	(5,390.00)
	Total Initiation Fees	**$ 7,000.00**	**$ 5,390.00**
700-04	Penalty for Late Returns	500.00	470.00
700-07	Membership Services Fees and Dues Cards	45,000.00	50,250.00
	Total Income & Per Capita	**$ 935,000.00**	**$ 930,275.00**
700-08	Dividends/Interest Income	12,000.00	18,169.00
700-09	Background Check Income	16,000.00	8,568.00
700-10	Middle Chamber Books Sale	6,400.00	6,150.00
700-11	Initiate Packet	70,000.00	16,220.00
700-06	Miscellaneous Income	1,000.00	1,276.05
700-13	Drewry Memorial Grand Secretary Fund	18,000.00	19,000.00
700-14	NCMF Contribution for Services	12,000.00	12,000.00
700-15	NCMF Contribution for NC Mason/Communications	60,000.00	60,000.00
700-15A	NCMF Reimbursement -- Masonic Public Relations	0.00	40,000.00
TOTAL INCOME		**$ 1,130,400.00**	**$ 1,111,658.05**
Acct. No.	**EXPENSE SUMMARY**		
800-00	Philanthropy	34,450.00	32,200.00
810-00	Salaries and Fees	363,094.00	416,364.00
820-00	Administration Costs	198,350.00	176,858.00
830-00	Building Expenses	72,000.00	86,411.00
840-00	Membership Fees and Dues	3,400.00	1,674.00
850-00	Travel and Officers Expense	46,900.00	37,615.00
860-00	Boards, Commissions, & Committees	17,000.00	23,129.00
870-00	Out-of-State Visitation	19,500.00	17,637.00
880-00	Annual Communication	101,000.00	107,876.00
890-00	Miscellaneous Expenses	21,500.00	19,956.00
900-00	North Carolina Mason	120,000.00	96,472.00
	Total Expenses (Series 800-900)	**$ 997,194.00**	**$ 1,016,192.00**
	Net Receipts Over Disbursements	**$ 133,206.00**	**$ 95,466.05**

Grand Secretary's Business Report

Brethren,

It remains the greatest privilege of my professional and Masonic life to serve you as Grand Secretary. This report marks my fifth year in the office, and I am grateful for your continued trust and for the labor of the staff of the Grand Lodge Office — Matthew Robbins, Vicki Lam, Hayley Moll, Eric Greene, and Chris Wright — whose daily work sustains the vital business of North Carolina Freemasonry.

Over the past five years, this office has moved deliberately from review toward implementation — clarifying staff structure, strengthening financial transparency, modernizing our records, and improving communication with our lodges. Those reforms were never undertaken for their own sake. They were undertaken to prepare the Grand Lodge for the honest conversation this report is meant to advance. We have spent several years putting our operations in order — we are still at that work, and there is much yet to do — but the time has now come to place our finances on a foundation as sound as the institution they are meant to preserve.

This year, more than any before it, I must ask you to consider not merely how the Grand Lodge operates, but *how it is sustained*. Our challenges are no longer principally operational. They are structural. And structural challenges cannot be met with symbolic economies or another year of deferral. They require a plan. The pages that follow offer both an account of the year's work and the beginning of that plan.

A Year of Transition and Continuity

This has been a year marked by continuity of service and purpose. It is my privilege to serve under Most Worshipful Grand Master Steve M. Norris, together with Deputy Grand Master Gilbert D. Bailey, Senior Grand Warden Michael A. Register, Junior Grand Warden Philip R. Johnson, and Grand Treasurer Lewis R. Ledford, PGM, whose steady counsel remains invaluable to this office.

It is also appropriate to recognize the service of Past Grand Master Robert W. Rideout, whose leadership did much to steady the Grand Lodge, restore a sense of direction, and establish a course that Grand Master Norris has continued with candor, plain speaking, and practical leadership.

The particulars of the Grand Master's year—his travels, his visitations, and the initiatives he has set in motion—belong properly to his own report, and I leave them to it. I note only that this continuity of leadership comes at a moment that demands long-range thinking rather than year-to-year improvisation. The reflections that follow proceed from a conviction shared by the Grand Master and officers, and one I have come to hold firmly after five years in this office: the decisions before us are too consequential to be made one budget year at a time.

The State of Our Membership

The final 2025 Annual Return provides the clearest year-end picture of our jurisdiction. North Carolina Masonry remains active: our lodges continue to raise new Master Masons, restore former brethren, and welcome affiliations.

Nevertheless, our overall membership continues to decline. Our beginning rolls stood at 29,475. During the year, lodges reported 1,029 gains and 2,273 losses. After accounting for roll adjustments and merger-related reconciliations, we ended the year with 28,357 members — a net decline of 1,118, or approximately 3.8 percent of our beginning membership.

The story is told in the categories. Among our gains, the most encouraging figure is restoration: we recorded 364 reinstatements — matching, exactly, the 364 brethren raised during the year. New candidates will always be essential, but restoring brethren who have already passed through our degrees is proving to be an equally important part of any serious membership strategy. Among our losses, the largest category remains, as it has for many years, death: 1,088 brethren were lost to us in 2025. That is a sorrow we cannot budget away, and the mortality of an aging membership will continue to shape our rolls for the foreseeable future.

The second-largest category tells a different story. We suspended 794 members for non-payment of dues. Unlike mortality, this is a loss against which lodges and the Grand Lodge can act — through earlier intervention, focused contact, and better communication with brethren at risk. Early figures from the first quarter of 2026 are cautiously encouraging on this front: sixty-five reinstatements against thirty-three non-payment suspensions suggests that restoration work is beginning to gain traction. **The front door is functioning. The difficulty is that the back door remains larger.**

This is not only a membership concern; it is a financial one. After exemptions, our final Annual Return shows an assessable membership of 22,674. **That is the practical base upon which all per capita income must be planned.** As that base declines, the same record-keeping, communication, compliance, and administrative support must be carried by fewer and fewer paying memberships. Every figure that follows in this report should be read against that single, sobering number.

Financial Realignment and the Fifty-Year Exemption and a Shrinking Base

One budget pressure deserves particular attention, because it is growing quietly and steadily. Because North Carolina assesses per capita on every active membership record, our analysis must count active Master Mason records rather than individual Masons alone — plural memberships are part of the assessable base, and so they affect both income and exemption.

By the end of 2025, approximately 4,654 active membership records had reached fifty or more years of Masonic service. At our current per capita rate, that represents roughly **$162,890** in annual per capita income that is not assessed, by reason of the fifty-year exemption. This figure will not hold steady. As the large classes raised in the late 1970s reach the half-century mark, the number of exempt records is projected to grow — to approximately 5,082 by the end of 2027, 5,486 by 2028, 5,901 by 2029, and 6,345 by 2030. At the present rate, the annual value of the exemption would rise from about $162,890 to roughly **$222,075** over four years — an additional $59,000 in income removed from an already shrinking assessable base.

Let me be clear about what this observation is, and what it is not. It is not a criticism of the fifty-year recognition. That exemption is an expression

of the Craft's gratitude to brethren who have given a lifetime of service, and it is worthy of the honor. But the data make plain that the tradition now carries a measurable and growing cost, and that the cost is being shifted, year by year, onto the remaining assessable memberships. For the sake of long-term stability, the Grand Lodge should decide, deliberately, whether the current structure remains sustainable — or whether the cost should be recaptured through a modest adjustment — rather than allowing the question to answer itself through slow erosion.

I therefore recommend for your consideration a modest, fluctuating per capita adjustment designed to offset the revenue that the fifty-year exemption removes from our base as that exempt population grows — in effect, a small shared contribution by which the active Craft funds, rather than quietly erodes, the recognition our veteran brethren have earned. Is it not worth a few dollars from each of us to declare that a lifetime of faithful service will always be provided for? And because such an adjustment would arise from a permanent and honorable feature of our fraternity, I would urge that these dollars be earmarked — placed into the Permanent Fund and our endowment — so that the cost of honoring fifty-year service is met not from next year's operating budget, but from a growing fund dedicated to the long life of the Craft.

Operations: Records, Proceedings, and Infrastructure

The ordinary work of the Grand Lodge Office continued at a high level throughout the year. I am pleased to report meaningful progress in addressing the backlog of published Proceedings, a matter of institutional memory that I have personally pursued. The volumes for 2012 and 2013 are now in the final stages of review, as are several subsequent volumes. The office remains committed to bringing the published record current and, where existing production arrangements do not permit the necessary pace, will continue to explore practical alternatives so that the record of the Craft is neither lost nor indefinitely delayed.

I would be remiss not to name the brother who has made this possible. Worshipful Brother Matthew Robbins took on the recovery of our Proceedings as a personal undertaking — teaching himself the software the work requires, and devoting countless hours to mastering the exacting crafts of document editing and book composition. Without him, this work simply could not be completed, and the Craft owes him a sincere debt of gratitude. Brother Robbins has also cleaned and catalogued our Grand Lodge library, transforming it into a superb reference space that is used, quite literally, every day, and his embrace of technology has made even our oldest records accessible once more. I would encourage his continued labor extracting the orders, opinions, and actions of our Grand Masters and of the Grand Lodge into an expanded compendium — a work that rightly follows the esteemed path of Past Grand Master A. B. Andrews and his celebrated digest of Masonic jurisprudence.

Our investment in electronic records and membership infrastructure continues to mature, and with it our capacity to report, verify, and serve. Work is underway on the systems that support our operational software so that our data, our reporting, and our member services rest on a stable and modern foundation. This infrastructure is not glamorous, but it is the machinery on which nearly every service the Grand Lodge provides now depends — and, as I note below, it is not cost-free to maintain.

In our communications, the Board of Publication has taken practical steps to reduce waste in the distribution of The North Carolina Mason, adjusting default lodge quantities while working to better publicize the print-and-electronic preference options that serve our members — especially older brethren who rely on the printed page.

Freemasons Hall itself remains in excellent condition and is being used more actively than it has been in some time, hosting a range of Masonic and civic gatherings through the year. A building well kept and well used is a credit to the Craft and a good steward's return on a permanent asset.

Lodge Health and the Work of Consolidation

The health of the Craft is measured not by the number of our lodges but by their vitality — by financial viability, sound facilities, capable leadership, and the quality of the Masonic experience they provide. For some lodges, honest health now means difficult conversations about merger or consolidation, and I am grateful for the thoughtful way the Craft has taken up that work this year.

The ad hoc committee formerly described in terms of "merging and consolidation" has been reframed as the **Fraternal Future Development Committee**, a name that better reflects its purpose. Drawing on brethren with experience in data and district-level support, the committee has identified several focus areas, including a lodge self-assessment tool to evaluate viability against building condition, membership trends, dues, and expenses, and a clearer, standardized process for lodges that may need to merge — coordinated with the Grand Lodge Office and informed by recent experience. During the past year twelve lodge mergers were completed, with several more from late in the year awaiting final approval. To support lodges facing these decisions, the North Carolina Masonic Foundation funded a professional video explaining the merger and consolidation process, and has agreed to underwrite a permanent library of recorded educational presentations for use across the jurisdiction.

Closely related is a jurisdiction-wide review of our fraternal insurance. A committee of experienced brethren, ably led by Brother Michael Harris, has convened to examine the full scope of our needs — liability, directors-and-officers, and property coverage — and, with the assistance of this office, to collect a report of lodge properties and insurance needs from every lodge in the State. That committee has prepared a thorough insurance report, which I commend to your careful attention, and I want to record the sincere appreciation of this office for their diligent and valuable work. The inventory behind it is a valuable exercise in its own right, giving us a clearer picture than we have ever had of the property the Craft holds and the risks it carries. An update on the progress of this endeavor is expected in time for this Annual Communication.

Too Cheap to Sustain Ourselves: The Verdict of Our Own Returns

I have said that our challenges are structural. This year, for the first time, I wish to lay the lodge-level evidence before you in plain numbers — drawn entirely from the financial returns our own lodges filed. Those returns tell a story we have long been reluctant to say aloud: we do not charge enough to sustain the fraternity we have built, and we have not for a very long time.

Consider what the 2025 returns show. Set charity aside for the moment — I will come to it — and look only at what it costs simply to keep a lodge's doors open: its lights and heat, its insurance and upkeep, its records, and the per capita it owes the Grand Lodge. Across our 348 reporting lodges, that recurring overhead came to roughly $4.8 million. Those same lodges collected just $3.3 million in dues. Dues, in other words, covered only about **two-thirds** of the basic cost of operating a lodge. And when the comparison is narrowed to the bare, unavoidable minimum — utilities, insurance, the telephone, and per capita — dues barely stretch to cover even that, leaving almost nothing for the roof, for programs, for charity, or for the future.

What Our Dues Actually Cover (2025)

Measure	Result
Reporting lodges	348
Total dues collected	$3,288,915
Cost of keeping the doors open (operating overhead)	$4,825,569
Share of that overhead covered by dues	**68%**
Lodges whose dues do not cover their overhead	**248 of 348 (71%)**
Typical lodge (overhead funded by dues)	78%
Average dues per member	**$116 / year (about $10 a month)**

Source: 2025 Lodge Financial Report audit rollup (348 reporting lodges). Overhead excludes charity, fundraising-event costs, and one-time items.

The consequence is visible in nearly every lodge ledger. Of our 348 reporting lodges, 248 — **nearly three-quarters** — did not take in enough dues to cover even their own basic operating overhead, and the typical lodge funded barely three-quarters of its own keep from the dues it charged. These are not troubled outliers. This is the ordinary condition of a North Carolina lodge.

And notice what that comparison has already set aside: charity. It is tempting to point to the roughly **$2.6 million** our lodges disbursed to charity in 2025 as proof of our health — but honesty requires a distinction we too rarely make. Our lodges did not, for the most part, fund that charity from their own treasuries. They raised it from the public — through raffles, breakfasts, barbecue plates, and appeals — and passed it through. We need not take this on faith: our own Commission on Subordinate Lodge Special Activities independently audited these events and found that lodges raised **$1.25 million** from the public in 2025 and delivered **$823,224** of it to charity. That single figure accounts for roughly three-fifths of all the ordinary charity our lodges reported once a lone lodge's extraordinary Hurricane Helene relief is set aside, and it confirms what the financial returns only imply: that most of what we count as Masonic charity is the public's generosity, administered by Masons. There is a real and important difference between overseeing a charitable act and financing one. It is worthy work, and no less worthy for being the public's — but it is not evidence that the Craft can sustain itself or its charity.

That same audit should give us pause for two further reasons. First, our fundraising is a strikingly inefficient way to do charity: of the $1.25 million the

public gave in 2025, barely two-thirds reached a charitable purpose, while a full third — some $424,000 — was consumed by the cost of staging the events themselves. Second, this work rests on fewer shoulders than we like to admit; only 151 of our 338 active lodges, fewer than half, held any public fundraiser at all. And for all the effort, the total has not grown: the Commission recorded $833,000 in charitable proceeds in 2023 and $823,000 in 2025, a slight decline even before inflation is considered. Measured against membership, our celebrated fundraising delivers about twenty-eight dollars of charity for each Mason on our rolls.

Masonic Fundraising in 2025 (Commission on Subordinate Lodge Special Activities)

Measure	Result
Active lodges holding a public fundraiser	151 of 338 (45%)
Gross raised from the public	$1,247,522
Consumed by event costs	$424,298 (34%)
Net delivered to charity	**$823,224**
Change since 2023 ($833,366)	–1.2%
Captured on lodge financial-return forms	**~89%**

Commission figures are independently audited; the financial returns capture about 89% of the same fundraising, the remainder reflecting the timing lag between events and year-end reporting.

How, then, do lodges close the gap between what dues bring in and what a lodge truly costs? They close it on everything except dues — on hall rentals and supper receipts, on donations and building-fund transfers, and, most troubling of all, on the sale of their own assets. In 2025 our lodges booked more than two million dollars in asset sales and real-estate gains. In too many cases we are selling the patrimony our grandfathers built in order to pay this month's light bill. That is not a business model; it is a slow liquidation. –

The root of it is a number we have refused to look at squarely: the price of membership. The average North Carolina Mason pays about **$116 a year** in dues — less than ten dollars a month. That is less than most men think nothing of spending on a phone bill, a streaming service, or a single evening out, for a full year's share in a fraternity we are fond of calling priceless. And it is not merely low; it is low because it has been allowed to erode. A dollar of dues set in the mid-1970s is worth about seventeen cents today. That $116 dues bill, respectable as it may sound beside the dues of fifty years ago, amounts to less than twenty dollars in 1975 money. We are asking our members to sustain a 2025 institution on 1975's pocket change.

The same erosion has hollowed out every fee we charge. A century ago the initiation fee, adjusted for inflation, would stand near seven hundred dollars today; our Grand Lodge minimum is fifty. The per capita that supported the Grand Lodge in 1924 would be roughly forty-seven dollars in today's money; we charge thirty-six. At every level — lodge dues, initiation fees, and per capita alike — we have let inflation quietly accomplish what no committee would ever have voted to do: it has cut the real price of Freemasonry in North Carolina by more than eighty percent.

Charges That Never Kept Pace with Inflation

Charge	We charge now	Inflation Benchmark
Grand Lodge minimum initiation fee	$50	≈ $690 (1924 basis)
Grand Lodge per capita	$36	≈ $47 (1924 basis)
Average member dues	$116 / yr	≈ $20 in 1975 dollars

Illustrative, based on the U.S. Consumer Price Index. A dollar of dues unchanged since 1975 retains about 17% of its value today.

This is the failing I most want the Craft to reckon with, precisely because it is not the fault of any current officer or any single year. It is the accumulated result of nearly half a century of deferral — of well-meaning brethren, in lodge after lodge and communication after communication, choosing the comfort of low dues today over the survival of the lodge tomorrow. We told ourselves we were being frugal. We were, in fact, quietly disinvesting in our own fraternity, one unchanged dues card at a time.

And here is the paradox that ought to trouble us most. We are not a poor fraternity. Our lodges together hold more than **$71 million** in reported assets, including buildings whose true market value was estimated only two years ago at nearly a quarter of a billion dollars. We own cathedrals of the Craft, and we fund them like rented meeting rooms. The wealth is real, but it is locked in brick and land while our operating accounts run dry — asset-rich and income-poor, a fraternity slowly consuming its inheritance because it will not price its own future.

An Inheritance We Are Letting Decay

This year, for the first time, we asked every lodge to document the condition of its building, and the facility returns sharpen the paradox into something closer to a warning. Of the 295 lodges that responded, 261 own their building outright. Those buildings are old — a median of sixty years, with seven in ten at least a half-century old, one in five older than seventy-five years, and sixteen lodges meeting in structures that have stood for a century or more. In many of our towns, the Masonic building is among the most significant historic structures still standing.

And we are not keeping them up. A quarter of our lodges sit under roofs more than twenty years old, and one in ten under roofs older than thirty — well past the life of the materials beneath them. More than a third of our lodges have not upgraded their electrical systems in over thirty years, and nearly one in five not in over fifty; the plumbing tells the same story. These are not cosmetic concerns. Aging wiring and failing roofs are precisely how historic buildings are lost — slowly, and then all at once, to fire, to water, or to a system that finally gives out against a treasury that cannot answer.

We compound the danger by underinsuring what we could never replace. Only a little more than two hundred of our lodges could confirm that they carry fire coverage on their building, and about the same number comprehensive liability; the remainder either carry none or cannot readily document it, and it is hard to say which is more troubling. Nearly half carry no coverage at all on their valuable papers and records — the charters, minute books, and registers that are, quite literally, irreplaceable. And after a year in which Hurricane Helene showed us how quickly a building can be taken, only eight lodges in the entire jurisdiction carry flood coverage.

The Condition of What We Own (2025 facility returns)

Measure	Result
Lodges responding / owning their building	295 / 261
Median age of lodge buildings	60 years
Buildings at least 50 years old	**71%**
Roofs 20 or more years old	25%
Electrical systems not upgraded in 30+ years	**37%**
Lodges confirming fire coverage on the building	~208 of 295
Lodges carrying any flood coverage	**8**

Source: 2025 Annual Return Lodge Facility and Insurance Questionnaire (295 responding lodges).

Put the two halves of the picture together and the conclusion is inescapable. We hold, in trust, tens of millions of dollars in historic property, and we are allowing a meaningful share of it to depreciate quietly toward ruin — not because we do not love these buildings, but because we have refused to charge ourselves what it costs to keep them standing. An asset a man will not maintain is not truly an asset. It is a liability on a delay, and the delay is running out.

None of this argues that Freemasonry should be expensive, or that dues alone measure a lodge's worth. It argues something narrower and more urgent: that the price we charge must at last bear some honest relationship to the cost of what we provide. For fifty years it has not. The returns in your hands are not an accusation; they are an invoice — one that has been accruing quietly for half a century, and that the next generation of North Carolina Masons will be asked to pay whether we acknowledge it now or not.

A Necessary Reckoning: Re-aligning Our Financial Expectations

I must now make an observation that is, I think, rather obvious: **the Grand Lodge's financial challenges are structural rather than merely operational**. Careful expense control remains necessary, and this office will continue to practice it. But symbolic reductions and isolated cuts will not place the fraternity on a stable foundation. Delaying maintenance, reducing communication, or thinning administrative capacity may ease pressure for a season, but none of these addresses the underlying imbalance between the services the Craft expects of its Grand Lodge and the revenue available to provide them. The plan must be larger than the cuts.

For many years, the Grand Lodge operated on an income that, adjusted for inflation, would approach $1.5 million in today's dollars. During the era of higher membership — the mid-twentieth century and into the 1970s — the size of the Craft concealed the weakness of the funding model. It masked the problem; it was never a cure. And so the pressure to adjust revenue never seemed urgent. As membership declined and costs rose, flat budgeting and delayed adjustments gradually eroded our position. What once seemed manageable became structural. The imbalance before us today is not the fault of one budget, one committee, one officer, or one expense. It is the accumulated

effect of decades in which income did not keep pace with the cost of operating the institution. Careful management has kept our books in balance — we did not, in the actual accounts, end the past year in deficit — but balance sustained by vigilance and by non-recurring measures is not the same thing as a revenue model that fits our costs, and even the recent per capita increase has not closed the underlying structural gap.

What I propose is not a windfall, and not a single reform, but a disciplined, phased strategy built on four principles: to recover the actual cost of specialized services; to modernize our initiation fees; to establish predictable per capita adjustments; and to protect our investments and reserves as a buffer, not a bailout. The goal is simply to stop subsidizing today's operations with yesterday's assumptions.

Investments and Reserves

Our investments and reserves are essential to long-term stability. They provide flexibility, protect us against sudden disruption, and let us plan beyond a single year. They may have an appropriate role in a phased plan — to absorb an unusual expense, to provide temporary stability, or to bridge the cost of implementing reform. But reserves are not recurring revenue, and they must not become a substitute for a sustainable structure of dues, fees, and per capita. The Permanent Fund and our endowed assets exist to provide long-term support through a disciplined distribution policy; drawing down principal to subsidize an outdated revenue model would trade a temporary fix for lasting institutional harm. The principle should be stated plainly: investments and reserves may support the Grand Lodge and our lodges; they must not be used to excuse an unsustainable revenue model.

Cost Recovery and Expense Alignment

A larger plan should begin where costs are real but not clearly recovered. This is not a call to turn every service into a transaction, nor to abandon valued programs — it is the recognition that several recurring expenses are currently absorbed into general per capita even when they could be identified more specifically. *The North Carolina Mason*, one of our most important communication tools, deserves a clear budget line showing the full cost of printing, postage, electronic distribution, and editorial support, so the Craft can decide deliberately how it should be funded. Annual Communication carries substantial venue, audio-visual, and logistical costs; while the right to participate in the business of the Grand Lodge must always be preserved, optional meals, materials, and programming could reasonably be priced separately. Administrative services should reflect their true cost as well: an in-house background check, which requires staff time beyond the vendor charge, should carry a minimum fee, and existing fees for replacement patents, certificates, and duplicate documents should be enforced consistently. Finally, our substantial investment in database and records infrastructure, on which appendant bodies increasingly rely, should be governed by a clear and fraternal understanding of access and cost-sharing. In each case the principle is the same: specialized costs should be visible, not quietly absorbed into the general budget.

Per Capita and the Cost of Grand Lodge Operations

Per capita is the primary support for the ordinary operations of the Grand Lodge — the record-keeping, database administration, lodge support,

financial processing, compliance, communication, and governance that every lodge depends upon whether or not those services are visible in a given year. The difficulty is arithmetic: our practical assessable base is moving toward roughly 23,000 paying memberships, and at that level every dollar of per capita matters a great deal. A one-dollar adjustment yields about $23,000 in annual revenue; five dollars, about $115,000; ten dollars, about $230,000. Small expense reductions remain worthwhile, but they cannot substitute for a per capita structure that reflects the actual cost of supporting the fraternity. We cannot cut our way into long-term stability while the underlying revenue model remains outdated.

A phased adjustment would be far more responsible than a sudden correction forced by crisis. One reasonable model would raise per capita in measured, predictable steps — for illustration, from the current level to forty, forty-five, and then fifty dollars over three years — bringing ordinary operating revenue into line with ordinary operating cost, and then, beginning in the fourth year, adjusting annually by the lesser of CPI inflation or three percent, rounded to the nearest dollar, unless suspended by vote of the Grand Lodge. Such a policy would not remove the Grand Lodge's authority to review or suspend any adjustment. It would simply establish the honest expectation that the cost of operating a statewide fraternity rises over time, and should be addressed gradually rather than deferred until a larger and more painful correction becomes unavoidable. This is not untried ground: several Grand Jurisdictions, including our neighbor South Carolina, already tie their per capita to such an index, and the practice has spared them precisely the crisis of deferral we now confront. The specific figures are properly the work of the budget process; the principle is what I ask the Craft to accept.

These recommendations are part of a larger financial reset, not a stand-alone package. Cost recovery alone will not solve the problem; the challenge is too large for isolated reductions. **The choice before us is straightforward**. We can continue relying on outdated assumptions — drawing on reserves, stretching staff, deferring necessary work, and hoping small adjustments will suffice. Or we can begin right-sizing the Grand Lodge deliberately and responsibly, while there is still time to make thoughtful choices rather than forced ones. The time for temporary fixes has passed.

As one who held this office before me is remembered to have put it: **we tried cheap, and we know it does not work**. The difference today is that we are no longer relying on memory or instinct. We now have fifty years of data to prove it.

A Candid Word on Dues, Pride, and Plain Speaking

I would be failing you if I closed this analysis without addressing, respectfully, the objection that every recommendation in it will meet. There is a sincere and widely held conviction in our fraternity that Masonry should cost very little — that a hundred dollars a year, or two hundred, is plenty, and to some brethren already too much, for what a lodge provides. I want to take that conviction seriously, because it springs from a good instinct: that Freemasonry is not, at its heart, about money, and that no worthy man should be priced out of the fraternity he loves. That instinct is right, and it is worth protecting. But an instinct about what Masonry means is not the same as an accounting of what Masonry costs, and for too long we have let the first stand

in for the second.

Part of the difficulty is simply that we have never taught this. We ask our brethren to vote on budgets, per capita, and dues without ever having equipped many of them to read a balance sheet, or to feel the difference between a fee that is nominally 'the same' and a fee that has quietly surrendered eighty percent of its value. That is not a failing of intelligence or of character; it is a gap in education — and it is one the Grand Lodge helped create by never making financial stewardship a part of Masonic formation. If our members do not always see the crisis written in the numbers, it is in no small part because no one ever taught them where to look. That is ours to remedy, not theirs to apologize for.

There is a harder truth beneath the objection, and I raise it gently, because it deserves gentleness. For some of our brethren, the honest cost of sustaining a modern lodge is a genuine strain — not a matter of unwillingness, but of real and limited means. That is nothing to be ashamed of, and I say that it is no mark against any man. But it is a painful thing to feel, and pain that cannot be spoken has a way of coming out sideways. It rarely arrives as 'I am not certain I can afford this,' which is a hard sentence for a proud man to say. It arrives instead as 'the Grand Lodge is elitist and out of touch with the common man,' which is a far easier one. I do not dismiss that frustration. I only ask that we listen for what is underneath it.

And I ask that we answer it honestly rather than defensively — because the framing itself is where we go wrong. There is no 'Grand Lodge' standing on one side and 'the common man' on the other. The Grand Lodge is not a distant landlord sending down demands; it is simply the brethren, organized. The bill it presents is not the whim of an out-of-touch elite; it is the plain cost of the records, the buildings, the charity, and the fellowship that all of us say we want, arriving at last with an honest price attached. When we cast the question as us against them, we mistake the messenger for the expense. There is no them. There is only us, and a cost that has been ours all along.

Once that framing is set aside, the choice that remains is unwelcome but not complicated, and it is the same one every household and every institution must eventually face: we pay for what we intend to keep, or we make our peace with losing it. Wishing the cost were lower does not lower it. Declaring our dues sufficient does not make them so. The figures in this report are not an opinion that can be voted down; they are arithmetic, and arithmetic is patient. It will wait for us, and in time it will collect.

That is why the gravest danger before us is not that we might decide, soberly and with open eyes, that there are things we can no longer afford. A fraternity can survive hard choices honestly made. The greater danger is that we will decline to choose at all — that we will let the discomfort of the question stand in for its answer, and allow resentment rather than reflection to decide for us. It would be a bitter irony if men who truly love this Craft, unwilling to admit that its price had grown difficult, chose instead to let it fail rather than fund it, and mistook that for principle. I do not believe that is who we are. But I would not be honest with you if I did not say that it is the road we are traveling, and that the only way off it is to learn to speak about money as directly, and as charitably, as we speak of everything else we hold sacred.

Philanthropy and Charitable Stewardship

If this report has dwelt at length on revenue, let me be equally clear about purpose. The point of a solvent Grand Lodge is a Craft strong enough to care for others, and by that measure 2025 was a year of extraordinary generosity. Our 348 reporting lodges held more than **$71 million** in assets and nearly $70 million in equity, and they disbursed approximately **$2.6 million** in charity, scholarships, and support to our Masonic homes and Foundation — more than double the prior year's $1.22 million. Much of that increase reflects the response of North Carolina Masons to Hurricane Helene, whose devastation across the western part of our State called forth relief that will be remembered as one of the finest hours of our fraternity's charitable life.

That generosity must be matched by discipline. In recent years this office, together with the North Carolina Masonic Foundation's President George Marut and Chief Development Officer Chris Richardson, has worked to establish Lodge Charity Accounts so that funds raised from the public are collected, accounted for, and disbursed under the Foundation's 501(c)(3) status — protecting the lodge, the donor, and the fraternity alike. It is essential that we continue to distinguish between internal fraternal giving and public-facing fundraising, and that all public fundraising flow through the proper structure. Timely and accurate reporting to the Grand Lodge and to the appropriate authorities is not a bureaucratic burden; it is a fraternal duty, and it is what allows North Carolina Masonic charity to remain worthy of the trust and the privileges it enjoys.

Fraternal and Institutional: Holding Both

Members sometimes ask why dues, per capita, and oversight continue to rise. The honest answer is that we have built expectations that cost money to meet. We expect our lodges to maintain safe buildings, clean kitchens, and adequate insurance. We expect our Grand Lodge to answer the phone, process records, verify status, maintain databases, and meet the compliance obligations of a modern nonprofit. We expect our lodges to serve as visible charitable partners in their communities. Each of these expectations is worthy, and each of them requires revenue.

Freemasonry, in its purest form, is not expensive. A lodge that meets in rented space, keeps minimal overhead, and exists to transmit our ritual and uphold our moral values can be sustained modestly. Our costs rise precisely because we have become something larger — an institution with civic presence, charitable reach, and public accountability, in addition to a fraternity of men bound in ritual and fellowship. We are, in truth, both of these things at once, and that dual identity is not optional. We cannot hide behind the simplicity of the one when it is convenient, nor neglect the responsibilities of the other when they become difficult. We have been doing more and more with greater expectations of service and commitment with fewer and fewer resources. Such a model is not sustainable. To be Masons in the fullest sense is to accept both the intimate circle of brotherhood and the broad responsibilities of stewardship. The world in which we labor is complex, and the trust placed in us by our members and by the public demands nothing less.

The Plan, Plainly Stated

I have laid a good deal before you, and I do not want its parts to be lost in its length. So let me set down, simply and in one place, the plan that five years in this office has led me to recommend. It is not a demand, and it is not final; it is a framework, offered so that the Committee on Finance, the Grand Lodge Officers, and the several committees of this Grand Lodge may take it up, refine it, and carry it forward. Taken together, these are the steps I believe will move us from managing decline to securing our future:

1. **Modernize our initiation fees** so that the price of entering the Craft once again bears an honest relationship to its real value.
2. **Adopt a phased, predictable per capita increase** — measured steps over several years to bring ordinary revenue into line with ordinary cost and, thereafter, a fluctuating, CPI-based adjustment so that we never again fall a half-century behind.
3. **Offset the fifty-year exemption** with a small fluctuating assessment that funds the honor our veteran brethren have earned, earmarked for the Permanent Fund and endowment rather than drawn from next year's budget.
4. **Recover the true cost of specialized services** — *The North Carolina Mason*, the optional components of Annual Communication, background checks, and database access for appendant bodies — so these costs are met by those who use them, not quietly absorbed into general per capita.
5. **Govern our investments and reserves by clear policy**, as a buffer for genuine need and a support for our long-term mission — never as a substitute for sound, recurring revenue.
6. **Make financial stewardship a part of Masonic education**, so that no brother is ever again asked to vote on a budget he was never equipped to read.
7. **Fund the preservation and adequate insurance of our historic buildings**, before we lose to neglect what generations before us built and entrusted to our keeping.

These are the recommendations of one Grand Secretary, grounded in the data your own lodges have provided. They will not all be adopted at once, and they should not be. But I lay them down together, and without apology, because after five years of preparing the ground, I am convinced that the ground is ready — and that the Craft is owed not merely a diagnosis, but a plan it can act upon.

Closing

Brethren, let me thank you once more for your attention, your commitment, and your faith in the work we are doing together. The challenges before us are real, but so are the opportunities, and I remain deeply grateful to labor alongside men of such conviction and goodwill. I am especially appreciative of Grand Master Norris and your Grand Lodge Officers, whose energy and candor have set the tone for a year of honest work, and of the dedicated staff of the Grand Lodge and the North Carolina Masonic Foundation, whose quiet labor sustains the daily business of the Craft.

I have not written a comfortable report, and I know it. But I would rather bring you a plan while there is still time to choose than an emergency when there is not. Our membership is not measured in dues alone, but in the stewardship we provide and the legacy we build. May we be found faithful in both, so that the Craft we inherited may endure in strength, purpose, and light for generations yet to come.

Membership Statistics

Final 2025 Annual Return

Membership 1/1/2025 (beginning rolls)	29,475
Gains	
Raised	364
Affiliated	232
Affiliated (out-of-jurisdiction)	69
Reinstated	364
Total Gains	**941**
Losses	
Died	1,088
Suspended Non-Payment of Dues	794
Demitted	371
Suspended Un-Masonic Conduct	2
Expelled	18
Total Losses	**2,273**
Net Roll Change	**–1,118**
Total membership 12/31/2025 (ending rolls)	**28,357**
Exemptions	5,683
Assessable Membership	**22,674**
Number of lodges as of 1/1/2025	349

Note: Beginning and ending rolls reflect roll adjustments, merger-related reconciliation, and annual-return accounting; reported gains and losses do not tie precisely to the ending roll for that reason.

Service Awards for 2026

Twenty-Five year Service Awards presented 373
Fifty Year Veteran Awards presented 409
Sixty Year Awards 183
Seventy Year Awards 34
Seventy-Five Year Awards 10

Fraternally submitted,
Jonathan A. Underwood, Grand Secretary

Report of the Committee on Finance

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Committee on Finance herewith submits the suggested budget for the calendar year 2027, together with the budget adopted for 2026 and the receipts and disbursements through July 15, 2026.

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
INCOME				
700-01	Master Masons Per Capita Tax @ $35/member	805,000.00	793,345.00	764,750.00
700-01A	GWMNMA @ $1/member (1)	23,000.00	22,667.00	21,850.00
700-01B	GWMNMA @ $1/member Payout	(23,000.00)	(22,667.00)	(21,850.00)
700-01C	Per Capita Tax from Endowed Members	32,000.00	40,033.81	40,250.00
	Total Master Mason Per Capita Tax	**$ 837,000.00**	**$ 833,378.81**	**$ 805,000.00**
700-02	Initiation Fees @ $21/candidate	11,550.00	10,185.00	10,500.00
700-02B	[GL Building @ $1.00]	(550.00)	(485.00)	(500.00)
700-02C	[NC Charities @ $10.00]	(5,500.00)	(4,850.00)	(5,000.00)
	Total Initiation Fees	**$ 5,500.00**	**$ 4,850.00**	**$ 5,000.00**
700-04	Penalty for Late Returns	1,000.00	565.00	500.00
700-07	Membership Services Fees and Dues Cards	54,000.00	49,550.00	52,000.00
	Total Income & Per Capita	**$ 897,500.00**	**$ 888,343.81**	**$ 862,500.00**
700-08	Dividends/Interest Income	12,000.00	10,213.78	15,500.00
700-09	Background Check Income	2,500.00	4,049.50	
700-10	Middle Chamber Books Sale	6,400.00	7,050.00	
700-11	Initiate Packet	55,000.00	5,259.00	
700-06	Miscellaneous Income	1,000.00	847.61	1,000.00
700-13	Drewry Memorial Grand Secretary Fund	21,500.00		23,900.00
700-14	NCMF Contribution for Services	12,000.00		12,000.00
700-15	NCMF Contribution for NC Mason/Communications	60,000.00	0.00	60,000.00
TOTAL INCOME		**$ 1,067,900.00**	**$ 915,763.70**	**$ 974,900.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
EXPENSE				
800-00	**Philanthropy**			
800-01	Charity and Relief	30,000.00		
800-06	Masonic Youth Organizations	4,250.00	4,250.00	
800-07	Wilkerson College/Scholarships	1,200.00	1,150.00	0.00
	Total Philanthropy	**$ 35,450.00**	**$ 5,400.00**	**$ 0.00**
810-00	**Salaries and Fees**			
810-01	Grand Secretary	84,522.00	51,057.50	99,878.00
810-02	Office Personnel	229,599.00	125,327.76	236,487.00
810-03	Retirement/Health and Life Insurance	50,820.00	29,612.56	65,300.00
810-05	Social Security Tax	24,950.00	13,793.70	25,400.00
810-06	Unemployment Tax	1,000.00		1,000.00
810-09	Summer Intern, Office Assistant	750.00		
810-12	Grand Secretary Supplement (Drewry)	(12,000.00)	0.00	0.00
	Total Salaries and Fees	**$ 379,641.00**	**$ 219,791.52**	**$ 428,065.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
820-00	**Administration Costs**			
820-02	Printing	7,000.00	1,102.87	5,000.00
820-04	Office Expenses	15,000.00	13,119.02	15,500.00
820-05	Postage	10,000.00	4,911.86	12,500.00
820-06	Office Equipment	2,500.00	375.36	2,000.00
820-07	Office Equipment Maintenance	13,500.00	5,728.19	13,750.00
820-08	Telephone/Internet	8,500.00	3,938.07	8,750.00
820-09	Membership Services Expense (Grandview)	45,000.00	14,251.31	45,000.00
820-10	IT/Grand View/Lodge Consultant	45,000.00	14,341.88	15,000.00
820-11	Auditing/Tax Services	17,500.00		22,000.00
820-13	Legal Fees	10,000.00		
820-14	Background Check Expense	900.00		
820-15	Initiate Package Expense	20,900.00	0.00	0.00
	Total Administration Costs	**$ 195,800.00**	**$ 57,768.56**	**$ 139,500.00**
830-00	**Building Expenses**			
830-01	Utilities	15,000.00	6,934.84	15,000.00
830-02	Building Grounds Maintenance	28,000.00	16,008.86	28,000.00
830-03	Building Equipment Maintenance	5,000.00	4,810.91	6,500.00
830-04	Hazard Insurance	12,000.00	14,522.60	16,000.00
830-05	Building Reserve — Transfer to Building Reserve	10,000.00	0.00	10,000.00
	Total Building Expense	**$ 70,000.00**	**$ 42,277.21**	**$ 75,500.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
840-00	**Membership Fees and Dues**			
840-01	Masonic Service Association	2,250.00		2,250.00
840-02	Conference of Grand Masters	1,150.00		1,250.00
840-03	GMC Committee on Recognition	100.00		150.00
840-05	Northeastern/Regional Masonic Conference	950.00	0.00	950.00
	Total Membership Fees and Dues	**$ 4,450.00**	**$ 0.00**	**$ 4,600.00**
850-00	**Travel and Officers Expenses**			
850-01	Grand Master's Travel	11,000.00	6,804.37	12,500.00
850-02	Grand Master's Automobile — Reserve	10,000.00		10,000.00
850-03	Grand Master's Office	250.00		500.00
850-04	Grand Secretary's Travel	7,500.00	4,191.30	8,500.00
850-05	Grand Secretary's Automobile — Reserve	8,000.00	2,874.34	8,000.00
850-07	DDGM/DDGL Orientation, Travel, Other	8,000.00	3,459.78	11,000.00
	Total Travel and Officers Expense	**$ 44,750.00**	**$ 17,329.79**	**$ 50,500.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
860-00	**Boards, Commissions, and Committees**			
860-01	Board of General Purposes	7,500.00	846.96	2,750.00
860-02	Board of Custodians	2,500.00	1,941.64	2,750.00
860-04	Masonic Public Relations	1,000.00	727.42	250.00
860-05	Finance Committee	100.00	865.24	250.00
860-06	Code Commission	100.00		250.00
860-07	Lodge Service Commission	100.00		250.00
860-08	Masonic Education	2,500.00		500.00
860-09	Middle Chamber Books Expense	4,000.00	5,807.82	0.00
	Total Boards, Commissions, & Committees	**$ 17,800.00**	**$ 10,189.08**	**$ 7,000.00**
870-00	**Out-of-State Visitation**			
870-01	Visiting Other Grand Lodges	3,000.00	1,448.44	3,500.00
870-02	Conference of Grand Masters	8,000.00	5,044.91	6,000.00
870-03	Conference of Grand Secretaries	2,000.00	1,876.18	2,000.00
870-05	Regional Conference (NE)	5,000.00	2,565.80	4,250.00
870-06	World Masonic Conference	4,000.00	0.00	4,000.00
	Total Out-of-State Visitation	**$ 22,000.00**	**$ 10,935.33**	**$ 19,750.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
880-00	**Annual Communication / GLO Installation**			
880-01	Grand Lodge Officers	3,500.00		3,500.00
880-02	Past Grand Masters	4,500.00		4,500.00
880-03	DDGM Travel	5,000.00		6,000.00
880-04	DDGL Travel	2,500.00	94.40	3,000.00
880-05	Boards, Committees, & Comm.	3,500.00		4,000.00
880-06	Guests	12,500.00		12,500.00
880-07	Auditorium, Banquets, Etc.	46,500.00		50,000.00
880-08	Hosting	8,000.00		9,000.00
880-09	Printing	5,000.00		5,500.00
880-10	Ladies Luncheon	500.00		1,000.00
880-11	Installation Expense	18,000.00	0.00	18,000.00
	Total Annual Communication / Installation	**$ 109,500.00**	**$ 94.40**	**$ 117,000.00**
890-00	**Miscellaneous Expenses**			
890-01	Awards, Aprons, and Emblems	14,000.00	2,725.48	15,000.00
890-02	Grand Master's Portrait	500.00		750.00
890-04	Miscellaneous	1,000.00	612.00	1,500.00
890-06	Grand Lodge Library & Archives	5,000.00	1,636.42	3,000.00
	Total Miscellaneous Expenses	**$ 20,500.00**	**$ 4,973.90**	**$ 20,250.00**

Grand Lodge of North Carolina 2027 Proposed Budget

	Account Name	Budget 2026	Actual 2026 through July 15	Proposed Budget 2027
900-00	**Communications**			
900-01	Communications Director	25,000.00	15,616.98	26,250.00
900-03	Printing	80,000.00	19,179.53	50,000.00
900-04	Postage Expense	32,000.00	11,894.77	14,000.00
900-09	Internet Services/Web Page Domain	1,250.00	1,191.63	1,250.00
	Total Communications	**$ 138,250.00**	**$ 47,882.91**	**$ 91,500.00**
Acct. No.	**EXPENSE SUMMARY**			
800-00	Philanthropy	35,450.00	5,400.00	
810-00	Salaries and Fees	379,641.00	219,791.52	428,065.00
820-00	Administration Costs	195,800.00	57,768.56	139,500.00
830-00	Building Expenses	70,000.00	42,277.21	75,500.00
840-00	Membership Fees and Dues	4,450.00	4,600.00	
850-00	Travel and Officers Expense	44,750.00	17,329.79	50,500.00
860-00	Boards, Commissions, & Committees	17,800.00	10,189.08	7,000.00
870-00	Out-of-State Visitation	22,000.00	10,935.33	19,750.00
880-00	Annual Communication	109,500.00	94.40	117,000.00
890-00	Miscellaneous Expenses	20,500.00	4,973.90	20,250.00
900-00	North Carolina Mason / Communications	138,250.00	47,882.91	91,500.00
	Total Expenses (Series 800-900)	**$ 1,038,141.00**	**$ 416,642.70**	**$ 953,665.00**
	Estimate Surplus/Deficit	**$ 29,759.00**	**$ 499,121.00**	**$ 21,235.00**

Report of the Committee on Charity

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The following charitable disbursements have been made this year for worthy needs as well as continued support for Hurricane Helene relief:

To Joppa Lodge No. 401	$8,000
To Kedron Lodge No. 387	$50,000
To Bingham Lodge No. 272	$3,200
To MP	$3,000
To TC	$10,000
To Haywood County	$10,000

Respectfully submitted,
Johnny Surles, Chairman

Report of the Grand Historian

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Brethren,

Greetings from your Grand Historian.

It should be of no surprise to you dear brothers that we find ourselves in the midst of a grand celebratory anniversary, having now arrived at such a coveted milestone for these United States.

As we celebrate America's semiquincentennial, let it not be lost on our Craft to give pause and reflect on how those excellent tenets of our order had a hand in the birth and building of this great nation.

Imagine, if you will, the present state of Freemasonry had our fore-brothers not withstood British advances to quell their desires for independence and self-governance. While our ancient and honorable society may very well have survived the Revolution, would it have matured into the brotherhood we know it as today? As Americans, would its doctrines have held the same purpose and weight had we remained subjects of a foreign crown? Conversely, how would our homeland have fared without those same principles serving as a guiding light at the outset?

Though Freemasonry is not a uniquely American institution, the virtue of its precepts as it served the American cause for liberty and freedom was no doubt influential, vital, and far-reaching. It dwelt in the hearts and minds of those patriots who battled loyalist forces at Moore's Creek Bridge, who penned the resolves at Halifax, and who laid the framework for the Declaration of Independence.

It was the aim of your Grand Lodge this year to commemorate such monumental events as these for the enjoyment and education of the Craft. The special committee appointed for this expressed purpose worked diligently to prepare a calendar of events at important sites around the state where Masons

were actively engaged in matters of American independence.

Already our brothers have traveled about the Old North State to pay tribute. They toured Moore's Creek National Battlefield, near Currie, this past February. It was where the first battle waged on North Carolina soil during the Revolution led to a swift patriot victory and the end of royal authority there.

This was followed by a March tour of Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, in Greensboro. Fought in 1781, that fight was a tactical win for British troops but would ultimately lead to their surrender at Yorktown seven months later.

In April, we gathered at Halifax where the cradle of American independence is arguably centered. The revered document, the Halifax Resolves, signed on April 12, 1776, is now generally agreed upon to be the earliest official documented action taken by the colonies in recommending their separation from Great Britain.

Your Grand Lodge then convened in North Carolina's first colonial capital to ring in this year's Independence Day celebrations. Several members from our grand jurisdiction attended Edenton's annual Fourth of July festivities. Edenton being the home of one of the state's three signers of the Declaration of Independence, Joseph Hewes, we therefore honored our fellow brother by placing a wreath at the monument dedicated to him at the foot of Edenton Bay.

Additional events for which your Grand Lodge committee is planning a Liberty Gala at Phoenix Lodge No. 8, in Fayetteville, and a battlefield tour at King's Mountain.

Moreover, as we journey through this year of festive occasion, looking back with retrospection on both our country and fraternity, attest to and contemplate just as well your unique place in history as Masons.

Your Grand Historian draws attention to a report tendered by J. Edward Allen who, serving as Grand Historian in 1945, pressed the notion that we find the enduring value in preserving as well as celebrating our own Masonic milestones.

In calling attention to the few remaining lodges that received their charters in the 1840s, he said:

"…it would be a very fine piece of Masonic inspiration to see each of these [lodges] celebrate its centennial at an appropriate and suitable time. Even in the midst of much degree work time can be found for this, and it will be a reminder of the fact that Masonry shall not live by ritual alone."

Such a conviction that "Masonry shall not live by ritual alone" is quite telling, for without some sort of decorated acknowledgement of our past, the work we strive to do as Masons — both inside the tiled recesses of the lodge as well as beyond them — is partially lost.

It was Brother Allen's recommendation, in concluding his report, that each lodge prepare a historical sketch of their doings, preferably every quarter century, and then to be filed with the Grand Lodge.

In echoing that sentiment and appealing to our Craft during this time of national celebration, consider taking stock of your archives or revising your lodge history. Such an effort put forth by our brethren would help insure against great loss for, as Allen claims, "the thief may come…fire may destroy

the property of that lodge; but whenever it is desired, its story of the past is ready to be consulted."

Today's observance of our special moments, may they be your lodge anniversary or the founding of this country, is due to the subtle, sometimes mundane, yet extraordinarily consequential task of making note of these things for tomorrow and those days long after.

Continue to observe these times of exceptional circumstance dear brothers all the while broadening our narrative of Freemasonry for the benefit and recognition of future generations.

Humbly Submitted,
Paul M. Vincent, Grand Historian

Report of the Committee on Permanent Building

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Grand Lodge building continues to serve as a working home for the Craft — a library and archive, a venue for lodges and civic partners, and a growing center for the digitization and preservation of Masonic records. The following report summarizes the year's activity.

The Grand Lodge library has been consolidated into a single, large reference collection. All 1,819 items have been accessioned into a catalog viewable online, with covers and title pages available for every entry. Many of the items are more than 100 years old and are in the public domain. This listing has allowed us to valuate and insure the collection more accurately. The catalog can be viewed at <librarything.com/catalog/NCGrandLodge>, where tags allow sorting by keyword, including proceedings, ritual, jurisprudence, and more. All lodge histories currently held by the Grand Lodge are part of this collection. Lodges whose history is not represented are encouraged to submit a copy to the Grand Secretary for inclusion in the Grand Lodge's library.

Several organizations have rented and used the building this year. The North Carolina Chapter of the Police Benevolent Association meets quarterly in the space. The Triangle Calligraphy Guild held its annual weekend training workshop in the classroom in March, which included a viewing of some of the Grand Lodge's historic minute books alongside expert instruction. Lifeline Screening holds a quarterly event in which the classroom is converted into a makeshift clinic offering stroke and heart disease risk screenings to the public for ages 40 and above. The Order of Saint John held its Christmas reception in the building as well. The Grand Lodge remains committed to supporting public safety, charitable, and civic organizations through the appropriate use of its space.

The Grand Lodge partnered with US Modernist to host an open house with public tours for more than 200 guests, sharing the mid-century design of Brother Leslie Boney's (St. John's No. 1) Grand Lodge Executive Office Building with a national community of design professionals and enthusiasts. Boney's granddaughter was a distinguished guest. On August 27th, the Grand Lodge Office also hosted the group for a survey of modernist houses across the state. North Carolina ranks third in the nation for Modernist houses, a legacy shaped in large part by the establishment of the School of Design at

North Carolina State College in 1948. Through a visual tour of more than 50 homes from across North Carolina, US Modernist CEO George Smart explored the defining features of Modernist architecture, the architects and clients who helped shape the movement, and the challenges of documenting and preserving these increasingly threatened properties. US Modernist is a national non-profit educational archive that provides donors, volunteers, and advocates the information and organization they need to document, preserve, and promote residential Modernist architecture.

Lodges continue to make use of the Grand Lodge's free digitization services. Columbus Lodge 102 has had its historic minutes scanned; these are now available in the Grand Lodge's historic repository hosted on DigitalNC, made possible through the Grand Lodge's partnership with UNC Libraries, for which the fraternity is truly grateful. Lodges interested in having their historic minute books scanned free of charge should contact Assistant Grand Secretary Matthew Robbins at mrobbins@glnc.us for more information. Original minute books may be returned to the lodge or kept in the Grand Lodge's fireproof vault, at the lodge's election.

Every lodge's annual return from 1869 through 2020 has now been digitized. The project involved scanning microfilm reels, microfiche sheets, and 115 banker's boxes containing more than a million sheets of paper — a stack that, if piled together, would stand taller than the dome of the North Carolina State Capitol. Special thanks go to Brothers Eric Greene (115), Jimmy Stevens (231), and David Serxner (218) for dedicating many hours to scanning and recording this data. Lodge returns contain a listing of membership, elections, affiliations, degree work, and more. Lodges wishing to obtain a copy of their return should have their Secretary contact Assistant Grand Secretary Matthew Robbins at mrobbins@glnc.us.

Many of the Grand Secretary's correspondence files are also in the process of being digitized, a project undertaken by volunteer Rickie Williams, Jr. (770). All Trial Dockets since 1935 have been relocated upstairs to the main administration room pending internal digitization of the complete unbroken set.

The digitization of much of this material has resulted in a surplus of metal filing cabinets, which were donated to the Annex of the Greensboro Masonic Temple. This has freed additional space on the lower level of the Grand Lodge for Masonic purposes and events. Raleigh Lodge 500, William G. Hill 218, and Greenville 284 have held stated and emergent meetings in the event hall, and local lodges also make regular use of the building's smaller spaces for coaching during business hours. Any lodge may make use of the space upon request. The Board of General Purposes established a fee schedule in 2025 for fraternal and non-fraternal uses. Interested groups should reach out to mrobbins@glnc.us.

Museum exhibits continue to rotate every few quarters. Currently featured is a statewide map of more than 500 Masonic cornerstone ceremonies conducted since 1793, along with rare photographs, artifacts and historic stones. Additional displays include material on the four time-immemorial lodges that predate the Grand Lodge, the story of Army Lodge A, and a reproduction of the original 1787 Tarborough Constitution. These exhibits draw on both the Grand Lodge's in-house collections and materials loaned from sister institutions.

Public interest in Freemasonry remains strong. Staff now conduct between 15 and 20 tours each month, both fraternal and non-fraternal. Lodge

Secretaries frequently bring newly raised Master Masons for a personal introduction to Grand Lodge history, the museum exhibits, and signed dues cards. These moments help ground new brothers in the larger story of North Carolina Freemasonry and reinforce their connection to the Craft.

All Masons are reminded that this building is their Masonic home. Lodges, committees, and members are encouraged to make use of the facility, and the Grand Lodge is actively promoting that engagement as a benefit of membership. In the coming year, the Grand Lodge is working to launch regular open house events and informal gatherings such as coffee hours and receptions, bringing together Masons, local leaders, and guests in a clean, professional, and fraternal environment. Tours, meetings, and educational events can be scheduled during business hours, and after-hours or weekend events can be accommodated upon request. Please contact the Grand Lodge Office to plan a visit.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew C. Robbins, PM
Assistant Grand Secretary

Report of Lodge Service Commission

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Since our Annual Communication in September 2025, the following applications and inquiries were received and considered by the Lodge Service Commission:

1. An inquiry from W.B. Nick Yakas, President of the Fayetteville Masonic Center, concerning the prospect of leasing a vacant portion of the property. Additional information as to whether there was a pending offer or whether there would be an application to permit an undeveloped portion of the property to be listed for leasing was sought. W.B. Yakas confirmed that it has been listed with a broker, that the limited prospect for a lease offer would suggest that it may be better wait to see if an offer is actually made before any action is taken on an application. W.B. Yakas was advised that the listing agreement and any document obligating the Center must contain a provision that any Lease must first be approved by the Lodge Service Commission.

2. An inquiry from Glenn R. Sigmon on the board of the Charlotte Masonic Temple Association. East Gate Lodge No. 692 sold its interest in the CMTA to Phalanx Lodge No. 31, leaving it as the sole entity owning the CMTA. Phalanx is currently meeting in the Charlotte York Rite building as tenants. They are interested in financially assisting in improvements in the York Rite building and are unsure of the best route to accomplish it.

   Question 1: Can CMTA contribute from its building fund to Charlotte York Rite improvements?

   Question 2: If this is not feasible, could Charlotte York Rite be invited to join CMTA?

   Scenario 1 would involve some agreement between CMTA and Charlotte York Rite for permanent tenancy, reduced rental fees, and return of investment should the York Rite property be liquidated.

As the entity no longer owns any real estate and only has one lodge as a member, there no longer appears to be any purpose to be served by continuing the Association's existence. The Lodge Service Commission recommended and approved that Phalanx Lodge No. 31 dissolve the Charlotte Masonic Temple Association and distribute its assets to the Secretary of the Lodge to turn over to the Treasurer. The Lodge can then use its funds for proper masonic purposes as authorized by the Code and was advised that:

1. Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval is conditioned upon the proceeds being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low, and
2. Any rental agreement for more than five years would require Lodge Service Commission approval.

3. The Lodge Service Commission considered the application of Joseph Warren Lodge No. 92 to sell its lodge building and rent one of the Lodge rooms of Mount Lebanon Lodge No. 117. The application was approved with the following conditions:

   1. If the rental agreement with Mount Lebanon Lodge No. 117 will be for more than 5 years, LSC approval will be required for both Lodges.
   2. As the proposed rental space is a one-story lodge building, dispensation by the Grand Master will be required.
   3. Reg. 38-4 provides: The location of a chartered lodge shall not be changed permanently unless authorized by the Grand Lodge, except as provided in Regulation 42-1.1 (13-3.8.G; 13-3.8; 41-5; 42-1.5; 42-3.1; 42-3; 45-7; 71-14). As Mount Lebanon Lodge is located outside of Joseph Warren Lodge's Jurisdiction, Grand Lodge approval will be required for Joseph Warren Lodge to meet there permanently.
   4. Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.
   5. Any offer to purchase must be approved by the LSC. This should be done before execution of a contract by the Lodge or, if time is of the essence, it must contain a provision that it is not enforceable by the buyer without Lodge Service Commission approval.

4. The Lodge Service Commission considered the application of Derita Lodge No.715 to sell vacant land it owns. The application was approved with the following conditions:

   Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-

8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.

5. The Lodge Service Commission received an inquiry involving the disposition of the Gastonia Masonic Temple Association, Inc. and its property resulting from the proposed consolidation of Gastonia Lodge No. 369 into Unity Lodge No. 462.

   Based upon the following assumptions:

   a. Title is vested in the GMTA, and Gastonia Lodge No. 369 is its only member/stockholder, to be confirmed by counsel.

   b. That the consolidation will result in ownership of the temple only by the consolidated lodge, not by multiple Masonic organizations.

   Conditioned upon these assumptions being confirmed, Lodge Service Commission approved Gastonia Lodge No. 369 or its successor voting to direct its corporation board of directors to vote to dissolve the corporation and deed the property to the trustees of Gastonia Lodge No. 369 or the lodge owning the corporation as the result of consolidation.

   Reg. 43-8.7 will apply, and the trustees can/should deed the property to the consolidated lodge trustees per the Code, which does not require Lodge Service Commission approval.

   The lodge subsequently auctioned the property and made application to sell the property. The Commission approved this sale subject to the condition:

   > Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.

6. Received an inquiry from Brother Keith Phelps, Acting Secretary of Wiccacon Lodge No. 240 regarding the disposition of its Lodge Building due to its merger with Davie Lodge No. 39. The Lodge building is titled in the name of a non-profit corporation, Harrellsville Projects, Incorporated established in 1975, not in the name of the trustees of Wiccacon Lodge No. 240. Apparently, all of the Directors for the non-profit corporation are deceased, and the corporate records are reportedly lost together with all of the Lodge Minutes covering that period of time. The previous Secretary reportedly had dementia and is now deceased. His predecessor is now blind, and it is our understanding that he is homebound. The corporate records on file with the North Carolina Secretary of State show that the corporation was formed by individuals who are reflected in the Grand Lodge records as officers of the Lodge at that time.

The property has been conveyed to Davie Lodge with the assistance of an attorney.

6(b). Application was made for the sale of the old Wiccacon Lodge No. 240 Lodge building by Davie Lodge No. 39. The Lodge Service Commission voted to approve the application subject to the following conditions:

1. Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval is conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.
2. The only form of deed approved for use for the sale must be a Quit Claim Deed or Special Warranty Deed.

Note: Subsequent to the transfer of the property, parties claiming to own Harrellsville Projects, Incorporated are claiming ownership, have engaged an attorney, and are demanding a return of the property. As the cost of litigation would exceed the value and the outcome would be uncertain best, it was recommended that the trustees of the Lodge deed the property back to the corporation, and this was so ordered by the Grand Secretary.

7. Application was made for the sale of Swannanoa Lodge 561 Lodge building. The building has been condemned for meeting by the local fire marshal. The application was approved with the following condition:

   Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.

8. Application was made for the sale of King Lodge No. 722 old lodge building. The building is no longer used, and the building and land have been landlocked by an NCDOT highway condemnation. There is leased a cell phone tower located on the property that they manage and receive money from each month. The buyer has offered $1,000,000 for the purchase of the property with the Lodge retaining ownership of the cell phone tower.

   The application was approved with the following condition:

   Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues

to be artificially low.

9. Application was made by Charles M. Setzer Lodge No. 693 for approval of a long term lease for a cell tower. The Lodge Service Commission has considered the application and has approved it subject to the following conditions:
    1. Inasmuch as the CODE requires all Masonic Lodges to pay their operational costs from the membership dues, (See: Reg. 77-1, Reg. 77-8) approval should be conditioned upon the proceeds of the lease being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.
    2. Lessee must acknowledge the existence of the deed restrictions in the Lodge's chain of title and waive any warranty or liability by the lodge respecting the same in writing.
10. We have received inquiries concerning: Leaksville Lodge No. 136 receipt of a civil summons concerning distribution of a decedent's estate distribution; Rental of Lafayette Lodge No. 83 property; Possible sale of Maxton Lodge No. 417 building after merger with Red Springs Lodge No. 501; Disposition of Seaboard Lodge No. 378 property; Possible sale of Pigeon River Lodge No. 386 Property; Possible grant of easement by Vesper Lodge No. 554;
11. The Lodge Service Commission approved standard by-laws submitted by the Charlotte Masonic Temple Association.
12. Application was made by Hickory Lodge No. 343 to sell the lodge building which is jointly owned with the Hickory York Rite Bodies. Both parties agree that the building is too large for their respective needs and too expensive to maintain. The Lodge Service Commission approved the application with the following conditions:
    1. No contract is to be entered into by the Lodge until the terms have been approved by the LSC and agreed to by the Hickory York Rite bodies.
    2. Approval is conditioned upon the proceeds of the sale being invested by the Lodge for use as a building reserve account or other charitable purposes. The proceeds of the sale are not to be used in such a manner as to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the Lodge or used in such a manner as to cause their membership dues to be artificially low.
    3. Any purchase, construction or long term lease of a replacement property must have prior approval of the Lodge Service Commission.

I would like to thank the members of Lodge Service Commission, Worshipful Brothers Doug Calhoun, Jay Chaulklin, Aaron Jackson, and Brandon Christian for their dedication and service to this committee.

Respectfully submitted,
Christopher L. Burti, Chairman

Report of the Committee on Fraternal Correspondence

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

During the past year, your Committee on Fraternal Correspondence received new requests for recognition and amity, maintained correspondence with regular Masonic jurisdictions, and monitored the findings of the Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons in North America (CGMNA). This Grand Lodge continues to rely upon the standards established by the Commission when considering the regularity of a foreign Grand Lodge. These are:

1. Legitimacy of Origin
2. Exclusive Territorial Jurisdiction, except by mutual consent
3. Adherence to the Ancient Landmarks, specifically:
   a. Belief in God
   b. The Volume of Sacred Law as essential Lodge furniture
   c. Prohibition of partisan political or sectarian religious discussion in Lodge

Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Lebanon

In March 2026, this Grand Lodge received correspondence from the Grand Lodge of the Free and Accepted Masons of Lebanon — a letter from Most Worshipful Grand Master Patrick S. Abdel Karim addressed to our Grand Master, followed by correspondence from Grand Chancellor Raffy H. Timonian — requesting the establishment of amity between our two jurisdictions. In its 2026 report, the Commission on Information for Recognition found that the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Lebanon, constituted in 2023 through the amalgamation of lodges formerly of the Syria-Lebanon District of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York, meets the Standards of Recognition. That Grand Lodge reports amity with more than one hundred regular Grand Lodges, including New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Florida.

Recommendation: Extend fraternal recognition to the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Lebanon.

National Grand Lodge of Greece

In July 2025, this Grand Lodge received a suggestion of mutual recognition from the National Grand Lodge of Greece, submitted by Grand Chancellor R.W. Bro. Dimitrios Skiadopoulos on behalf of Grand Master M.W. Bro. Ioannis Benetatos. The National Grand Lodge of Greece is not in amity with this Grand Lodge, and our review does not support the extension of recognition. That body was formed in a 1986 schism from the Grand Lodge of Greece; it was recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England only from 1993 to 1999, after which that recognition was withdrawn; and the United Grand Lodge of England, together with the mainstream of regular Grand Lodges, recognizes the Grand Lodge of Greece as the sole regular and sovereign body in that territory. To extend recognition to the National Grand Lodge of Greece would conflict with the principle of exclusive territorial jurisdiction and with our existing recognition of the Grand Lodge of Greece.

Recommendation: Decline the request. This Grand Lodge does not recognize the National Grand Lodge of Greece and continues its recognition of the regular Grand Lodge of Greece.

Grande Oriente do Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil)

This Grand Orient, whose December 2023 request for recognition was tabled in our last report, renewed its inquiry in February 2026 through its Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Bro. Wagner Lopes da Cunha, and now represents itself as a member of the Confederação Maçônica do Brasil (COMAB) and the Inter-American Masonic Confederation (CMI). As of its 2026 report, the Commission on Information for Recognition has not reviewed this body, and it is not referenced in the Commission's findings.

Recommendation: Acknowledge the inquiry and continue to table any action until verifiable documentation of origin and jurisdiction is received and the Commission has reviewed the request.

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan A. Underwood, Chairman

Petitions for Restoration

TSN (Docket No. 893), formerly a member of Newell Lodge No. 739, Newell, was expelled July 20, 2016. He filed for restoration with the lodge on July 6, 2026, and with the Grand Secretary on July 8, 2026.

MEF (Docket No. 903), formerly a member of Clifford Duell Lodge No. 756, Fayetteville, was expelled on March 1, 2017. He filed for restoration with the lodge on May 28, 2026, and with the Grand Secretary on June 48, 2026.

Report of the Judge Advocate

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

This report is prepared this 26th day of July 2026 and most respectfully submitted for your information and disposition.

1. **Docket No. 994:** Brother WCW, a Master Mason and Member of Washington Lodge No. 675, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 86-1(5), 86-2(27), 86-2(28) of The Code. On or about October 20, 2023, Bro. WCW was found guilty after a jury trial in Beaufort County Superior Court of Second-Degree Murder in violation of N.C.G.S. 14-17(B) [Class B1 Felony]. Bro. WCW was sentenced to 300-408 months in the N.C. Department of Adult Correction. Bro. WCW appealed his conviction to the N.C. Court of Appeals.

   Bro. WCW was served with the complaint and filed an answer requesting that his case be held open until the appeal was decided. On December 17, 2025, the N.C. Court of Appeals filed their opinion affirming the conviction. A Trial Commission was empaneled on June 27, 2026, and Bro. WCW failed to appear. Evidence was presented, and the Trial Commission found Bro. WCW guilty of Un-Masonic conduct

and entered a judgment expelling him from Masonry.

2. **Docket No. 1004:** Brother DEK, a Master Mason and Member of Bula Lodge No. 409, was charged pursuant to Regulation 90-9 of The Trial Code for multiple counts alleging Un-Masonic conduct including entering into a joint enterprise, exceeding his authority, breach of fiduciary duty, secret and self-dealing, and violation of North Carolina ABC laws. During 2024, Bro. DEK entered into an agreement with other Grand Lodges for the purchase and management of the Grand View system, authorized transfer of funds for the purchase without prior approval, and failed to disclose the transaction to necessary parties. Additionally, Bro. DEK held a charitable fundraiser for the NC Masonic Foundation which included providing alcohol as a gift for making a donation.

   Upon receipt of the complaint, the Judge Advocate began to investigate the allegations. The Grand Lodge of North Carolina was able to terminate their part of the agreement to purchase a share of Grand View. Upon unanimous consent of the delegates at the 2024 Annual Communication the installation of the Grand Master and Deputy Grand Master was held prior to the Grand Lodge being closed. The sole remedy for charges pursuant to Regulation 90-9 is removal from office, which was effectuated upon conclusion of all business at the 2024 Annual Communication.

   The Judge Advocate entered an Order of Dismissal of the complaint on October 25, 2024. The decision of the Judge Advocate was overturned at the 2025 Annual Communication with the additional provision that an independent investigation into the allegations be made.

   The independent investigation was completed and submitted to the Grand Lodge Committee on Appeals. The Judge Advocate entered an Order of Dismissal of the complaint on July 27, 2026, pursuant to Regulation 90-8.

3. **Docket No. 1010:** Brother JDH, a Master Mason and Member of Keller Memorial Lodge No. 657, was charged in a three-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3(5),(11),(13),(14); 86-1(5); and 86-2(1),(10),(11),(13),(50) of The Code. Brother JDH utilized social media to post videos making false accusations and derogatory comments about lodge members and their families. After repeated warnings to stop making the posts, lodge members met with Brother JDH at the lodge to discuss the issue and remind him of his masonic obligations. After the meeting, Brother JDH continued posting the same comments on social media including a statement that he secretly recorded the meeting. The Grand Master demanded the recording be turned over to the DDGM, and Brother JDH did not comply.

   Bro. JDH was served with the complaint via certified electronic mail. Upon his failure to answer or respond, default was entered, and Bro. JDH was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on January 28, 2025. The decision of the Judge Advocate was overturned at the 2025 Annual Communication due to lack of service in compliance with the Trial Code.

Bro. JDH was served with the complaint on October 4, 2025. Upon his failure to answer or respond, default was entered, and Bro. JDH was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on October 27, 2025.

4. **Docket No. 1021:** Brother WDT, a Master Mason and Member of Marble Springs Lodge No. 439, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulation 86-2(27) of The Code. On or about February 10, 2020, Bro. WDT entered a plea of guilty pursuant to North Carolina v. Alford to Possession with Intent to Distribute Methamphetamine in violation of Georgia statute § 16-13-30, a felony under the laws of the State of Georgia. Judgment was entered where Bro. WDT received a sentence of 15 years with the first 7 years to be served in confinement and the remainder to be served on probation.

   Bro. WDT was served with the complaint. Upon his failure to answer or respond, Default was entered, and Bro. WDT was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on September 9, 2025.

5. **Docket No. 1022:** Brother JRC, a Master Mason and Member of Rockingham Lodge No. 495, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 86-1(5) and 86-2(27) of The Code. On or about October 8, 2025, Bro. JRC was found guilty after a trial by jury to one count of First-Degree Murder in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-17 [a class A felony] and two counts of Intentional Child Abuse Serious Physical (Mental) Injury in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-318.4(A) [class D felonies]. Judgment was entered where Bro. JRC received a sentence of life without parole and a consecutive active sentence of 65 to 90 months.

   Bro. JRC was served with the complaint. Upon his failure to answer or respond, Default was entered, and Bro. JRC was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on November 24, 2025.

6. **Docket No. 1023:** Brother MVM, a Master Mason and Member of Granite Lodge No. 191, was charged in a three-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(27), 86-2(30) of The Code. On or about August 7, 2025, Bro. MVM entered a plea of guilty pursuant to North Carolina v. Alford to one count of Accessing Government Computers for Improper Purpose in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-454.1(B) [a class H felony], Simple Assault in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-33(A) [a class 2 misdemeanor], and Providing Alcohol to Minor in violation of N.C.G.S. § 18B-302(A1) [a class 1 misdemeanor]. Judgment was entered where Bro. MVM received a sentence of 6 to 17 months, which was suspended and he was placed on 30 months of supervised probation.

   Bro. MVM was served with the complaint. Upon his failure to answer or respond, Default was entered, and Bro. MVM was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on December 22, 2025.

7. **Docket No. 1024:** Brother PLB, a Master Mason and Member of Pleasant Hill Lodge No. 304, was charged was charged in a four-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations

52-3, 86-1(4), 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(28), and 86-2(41) of The Code. On or about July 7, 2022, May 30, 2024, and May 14, 2025, Bro. PLB was convicted of Fail to Work After Being Paid in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-104 [class 2 misdemeanors]. These were three separate and unrelated cases which resulted in convictions. In each case, judgment was entered against Bro. PLB where he received a probationary sentence to include paying restitution to the individuals he defrauded. From May 6, 2021, through January 27, 2025, Bro. PLB was also served with three civil complaints for breaches of contract through his business, including not completing work or paying back the money he received for the jobs. All three civil complaints resulted in judgments against him.

Bro. PLB was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on June 27, 2026, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing all the evidence and arguments of the parties, the Trial Commission found Bro. PLB guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment expelling him from Masonry.

8. **Docket No. 1025:** Brother BMM, a Fellowcraft and Member of Marble Springs Lodge No. 439, was charged in a two-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(11), and 86-2(36) of The Code. Between October 14, 2025, and November 1, 2025, officers of the lodge attempted to mentor Bro. BMM regarding his behavior in the lodge and the community. Issues escalated until a verbal altercation occurred between Bro. BMM, Bro. KRM, and officers of the lodge prior to their stated communication on November 1, 2025. The altercation included cursing, insults to lodge officers, and concerns that the altercation could become physical. The lodge's Reference Committee recommended that masonic charges be issued, which was approved by the lodge.

   Bro. BMM was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on April 25, 2026, Bro. BMM failed to appear, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing the evidence presented, the Trial Commission found Bro. BMM guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment expelling him from Masonry.

9. **Docket No. 1026:** Brother KRM, a Fellowcraft and Member of Marble Springs Lodge No. 439, was charged in a three-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(11), 86-2(36), and 86-2(50) of The Code. Between October 14, 2025, and November 1, 2025, officers of the lodge attempted to mentor Bro. KRM regarding his behavior in the lodge and the community. Issues escalated until a verbal altercation occurred between Bro. KRM, Bro. BMM, and officers of the lodge prior to their stated communication on November 1, 2025. The altercation included cursing, insults to lodge officers, and concerns that the altercation could become physical. The lodge's Reference Committee recommended that masonic charges be issued, which was approved by the lodge.

   Bro. KRM was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on April 25, 2026, Bro. KRM failed to appear, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing the evidence presented, the Trial Commission found Bro.

KRM guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment expelling him from Masonry.

10. **Docket No. 1027:** Brother LAH, a Master Mason and Member of Elberta Lodge No. 654, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 86-1(5) and 86-2(27) of The Code. On or about October 13, 2025, Bro. LAH entered a plea of guilty to one count of Attempted Indecent Liberties with a Child in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-202.1 [a class F felony]. Judgment was entered where Bro. LAH received an active sentence of 20 to 33 months, was required to complete sex offender treatment, and register as a sex offender for 30 years.

    Bro. LAH was served with the complaint. Upon his failure to answer or respond, Default was entered, and Bro. LAH was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on March 2, 2026.

11. **Docket No. 1028:** Brother TJC, a Master Mason and Member of Hibriten Lodge No. 262, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 86-1(2), 86-1(5), 86-2(28), and 86-2(29) of The Code. On or about January 15, 2026, Bro. TJC entered a plea of guilty to Driving While Impaired in violation of N.C.G.S. § 20-138.1 [a misdemeanor]. Judgment was entered where Bro. TJC was sentenced as a DWI-Level 2. Bro. TJC received a 12-month suspended sentence and was placed on supervised probation for 18 months to include a 7-day split sentence.

    Bro. TJC was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on June 27, 2026, Bro. TJC failed to appear, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing the evidence presented, the Trial Commission found Bro. TJC guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment expelling him from Masonry.

12. **Docket No. 1029:** Brother OCJ, a Master Mason and Member of Atlantic Lodge No. 294, was charged in a two-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(28), and 86-2(37) of The Code. On or about September 5, 2024, Bro. OCJ entered a plea of no contest to Assault on a Female in violation of N.C.G.S. § 14-33(C)(2) [a class A1 misdemeanor]. Judgment was entered where Bro. OCJ received a 45-day suspended sentence andwas placed on supervised probation for 12 months.

    Bro. OCJ was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on June 27, 2026, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing all the evidence and arguments of the parties, the Trial Commission found Bro. OCJ guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment reprimanding him.

13. **Docket No. 1031:** Brother LWS, a Master Mason and Member of Spencer Lodge No. 543, was charged in a two-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 86-1(5), 86-2(1), 86-2(11), and 86-2(27). Bro. LWS was serving as the Assistant Treasurer of the lodge. After the new Treasurer was installed on December 2, 2025, the new Treasurer began to reconcile the financial accounts. The Treasurer noticed that there was a missing check. Bro. LWS was repeatedly asked about the missing check and was ordered

to get a copy of the relevant bank statements. Bro. LWS presented an incomplete bank statement before eventually providing the full bank statement, which showed he had issued a check for $600.00 to his wife. The commission of the acts as alleged would violate of N.C.G.S. § 14-93, Embezzlement by Treasurers of Charitable and Religious Organizations, a class H felony, and § 14-100, Obtaining Property by False Pretense, a class H felony. The lodge opted to seek masonic charges instead of filing a police report.

Bro. LWS was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on July 18, 2026, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing all the evidence and arguments of the parties, the Trial Commission found Bro. LWS guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment expelling him.

14. **Docket No. 1032:** Brother AF, a Master Mason and Member of Campbell Lodge No. 374, was charged in a two-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 52-3, 55-9, 59-13(2), 86-2(1), 86-2(11), and 86-2(13) of The Code. Bro. AF was the duly installed Senior Deacon of the lodge. During the stated communications in January and February 2026, Bro. AF spoke in open lodge in an aggressive and disruptive way which involved Grand Lodge Speakers Bureau visitors presenting masonic education. The lodge was required to send letters of apology to the speakers afterwards. Bro. AF continued the aggressive and disruptive conversations through a group text thread with lodge officers. Some of the messages were taken as potential threats against the lodge. The Reference Committee attempted to have the issues resolved but was unsuccessful as Bro. AF was unwilling to cooperate.

    Bro. AF was served with the complaint and filed an answer denying the charges. A Trial Commission was empaneled on July 18, 2026, and evidence was presented. Upon reviewing all the evidence and arguments of the parties, the Trial Commission found Bro. AF guilty of Un-Masonic Conduct and entered a judgment suspending him for one year.

15. **Docket No. 1033:** Brother BRL, an Entered Apprentice and Member of Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118, was charged in a one-count complaint alleging Un-Masonic Conduct in violation of Regulations 86-1(6), 86-2(9), and 86-2(11) of The Code. On or about April 12, 2026, Bro. BRL sent a message to his coach confessing that he had written down part of the catechism to assist him in memorizing it. Bro. BRL admitted that he had left the writing unattended at his place of employment where the document was stolen. The document was never located or recovered.

    Bro. BRL was served with the complaint. Upon his failure to answer or respond, Default was entered, and Bro. BRL was expelled from Masonry by the decision of the Judge Advocate on May 28, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew W. Cockman
Judge Advocate

Report of the Committee on Bylaws

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Your committee on Bylaws of Subordinate Lodges reports that amendments to the bylaws of the following lodges were approved during the year 2025-2026. They are as approved.

Lodge Name	No.	Article	Remarks
St. John's	3	9	Petition fee increased to $365
		10	Dues increased to $149 + per capita
		11	Affiliation fee increased to $225
Unanimity	7	10	Dues increased to $186 + per capita
Eagle	19	10	Dues increased to $214 + per capita
Mt. Moriah	27		Full Revision
Phalanx	31	6	Typographical correction
		8	Stated 1st Thursday at 7:30pm
		9	Petition fee increased to $400
		10	Dues increased to $90 + per capita
		11	Set affiliation fee at $72
		13	Raise charity allowance to $500
		19	Remove optional voting procedure
Davie	39	19	Add alternative voting procedure
		22	No alcohol on lodge property
Davie	39	8	Stated 3rd Thursday at 9:00am
Morning Star	85	8	Stated 2nd & 4th Tuesday at 7:00pm
		9	Petition fee updated to $150
		11	Affiliation fee updated to $40
		13	Charity fee increased to $200
Joseph Warren	92	1	Moved location to Wilson
		8	Moved location to Wilson
		2	Petition fee updated to $225
St. Albans	114	8	December Stated at 6:30pm
		13	Raise charity allowance from $100 to $750
		21	Update to current standard
		22	Update point Q: no use of tobacco in the lodge room
Blackmer	127	8	Stated 1st Tuesday at 7:30pm
		9	Petition fee increased to $150
		11	Affiliation fee increased to $150
Junaluskee	145	8	Change meeting times

Carthage	181	10	Dues increased to $184 + per capita
Cary	198	10	Dues increased to $200 + per capita
Cary	198	14	Change committee on finance and budget to be appointed rather than elected
Catawba Valley	217	10	Dues updated to $140
North Iredell	226	8	Stated 2nd & 4th Thursday at 7:00pm, except June, July, & August 2nd Thursday only
Corinthian	230	8	Stated 2nd Thursday at 6:45pm
		10	Dues increased to $129 + per capita
		19	Updated verbiage for alternative voting procedure
Hibriten	262	10	Set dues to $80 + per capita
		19	Provision for appointing chaplain
		19	Rules for the consumption of alcoho on premises
Hibriten	262	9	Petition fee updated to $250
		10	Dues updated to $114 + per capita
Tabasco	271	8	Provision to dispense with meetings in summer and on holidays
		13	Charity fee updated to $500
Wallace	279		Full Revision
Wallace	279	9	Petition fee updated to $150
Eureka	283	9	Petition fee increased to $150
Greenville	284	10	Dues increased to $89 + per capita + GMT per capita
Atlantic	294	9	Petition fee increased to $150
		10	Dues increased to $140 + per capita
		11	Affiliation fee increased to $150
Coharie	379	8	Stated 2nd Monday at 7:30pm
Forest City	381	19	Remove alternate voting procedure
Jefferson Penn	384	8	Stated 1st & 3rd Tuesdays at 7pm
Kedron	387	9	Petition fee updated to $100
		10	Dues updated to $174 + per capita
Lebanon	391	10	Dues increased to $114 + per capita
Orient	395	10	Dues increased to $164 + per capita
Joppa	401	9	Petition fee increased to $165
		14	Define terms for lodge Finance and Budget Committee

Denton	404	10	Dues increased to $150 + per capita
Henry F. Grainger	412	8	Change meeting location
Relief	431	8	Stated communication 2nd Tuesday only in December
		9	Petition fee increased to $300
		10	Dues increased to $200 + per capita
Vanceboro	433	8	Stated 2nd Tuesday at 7:00pm
Blue Ridge	435	10	Dues increased to $64 + per capita
Matthews	461		Full Revision
Unity	462		Initial set of bylaws for consolidated lodge
Unity	462	16	Increase trustees from 3 to 5
Southern Pines	484	8	Annual communication in November
Creedmoor	499	8	Stated 2nd & 4th Monday at 7pm
Whetstone	515	10	Dues increased to $65 + per capita
Fairmont	528	8	Lodge dark in December
Hollis	535		Full Revision
Glenville	551	10	Dues increased to $64 + per capita
Vesper	554	10	Dues updated to $100 + per capita
Waxhaw	562	22	Removed provision prohibiting alcohol on lodge property
		19	Added provision for third party alcohol usage on property
Richlands	564	8	Stated 1st & 3rd Thursday at 7pm
Andrew Jackson	576	8	Provision to dispense with meetings in summer and on holidays
		9	Petition fee increased to $350
		10	Increase dues to $120 + per capita
		11	Obsolete
Apex	584	10	Dues increased to $124 + per capita
Roseboro	585	10	Dues increased to $125 + per capita
Lowell	590	10	Dues increased to $160
Lowell	590	8	Stated 1st Tuesday at 7:30pm, except July 2nd Tuesday
		8	Updated street address
		8	Annual communication in November
Riverside	606	10	Dues increased to $225 + per capita
Belmont	627	10	Dues updated to $160
Proctorville	643	9	Petition fee increased to $250
		10	Dues increased to $125

Bladen	646	8	Annual communication in November
		11	Affiliation fee increased to $50
		13	Charity allowance increased to $250
		21	Revised to match current recommended standard in The Code
		22	Update point Q: no use of tobacco in the lodge room
			Update misc incorrect code references
Providence	678	10	Dues increased to $100
Fellowship	687	10	Dues increased to $164 + per capita
Garner	701	10	Dues updated to $94 + per capita
Advance	710	10	Dues increased to $120 + per capita
Newell	739	8	Stated 1st Monday at 7:00pm, except September 2nd Monday
Oak Island	758	9	Petition fee increased to $300
		10	Dues increased to $300
James K. Polk	759	19	Add alternative voting procedure
Wilkerson	760		Full Revision
Wilkerson College	760	8	Stated 2nd Saturday in February, May, August, & November at 10am
			Annual communication in November
		13	Increased charity allowance to $500
Knights of Solomon	766		Full revision
Sophia	767	1	Change location
		8	Change location and meeting times
Knights of Solomon	768		Full Revision
Prometheus	775	10	Dues decreased to $175 + per capita

Respectfully submitted,
Jonathan Underwood, Chairman

Report on the Committee on WhiteStone

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Committee on WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community is pleased to report its findings and recommendations to the delegates and attendees of the 239th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. For 114 years, our home in Greensboro has provided care for our senior brothers, sisters, and family members in need. Some 400 residents call WhiteStone home. The community employs nearly 300 full- and part-time employees and operates on a $28 million annual budget. The continued growth

of the community and excellence in care would not have been possible without the ongoing support of individual brothers, their lodges, and the Grand Lodge.

Our committee is charged with visiting our home in Greensboro and reporting on its conditions and management. Throughout the year, committee members attended board meetings and toured our home. We are grateful for the assistance of the Executive Director, Brother Mark Lewis, for his assistance with our work and for his and the Chairman of the Board, MW Brother Gene Jernigan's consistently outstanding leadership throughout the year. We also extend our appreciation to the WhiteStone staff for their dedication and service to the residents and their support of our committee this year.

We are pleased to report to the craft that WhiteStone is financially strong, the condition of the property is excellent, and operations continue to be both efficient and professional. The success at WhiteStone has resulted in a growing number of prospects waiting to become residents.

Background

The Masonic and Eastern Star Home of North Carolina, Incorporated owns and operates a continuing care retirement community known as "WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community" located in Greensboro, North Carolina. The Community began operation in 1912 and was the first Masonic Fraternal Home in the United States created solely for the caring for the elderly. In addition, the Community is the oldest retirement home in the State of North Carolina. The name "WhiteStone" is based on the Community's first Administrator, Mr. White, and its first residents, Mr. and Mrs. Stone. The Corporation is organized as a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of North Carolina and has been determined to be an organization exempt from federal income taxes under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

History

The Community was inspired in the early 1900s by two Masonic individuals (Mr. Clymer and Mr. Monroe) who were visiting a fellow Mason at a county home for the aged and were dismayed by the living conditions of the elderly gentleman. From this visit, the Masonic individuals were determined that the Grand Lodge could do a better job of taking care of its older members. In 1903, a resolution was passed by the Grand Lodge to start a home for the aged, and in 1908 the Grand Chapter decided to join as well. In 1912, twenty-six acres of land were purchased in Greensboro, and construction began on the site of a former tree nursery. Over the next 114 years, the Community would continue to grow and fulfill its mission of serving thousands of its elderly Masonic and Eastern Star members thanks to the continued generous support of both the Grand Lodge and the Grand Chapter members throughout North Carolina as well as their respective foundations.

Operating Highlights

- $28 M annual operating budget
- Approximately 300 FT/PT employees
- Completed construction on $74M Expansion / Repositioning Project in 2023
- Achieved independent living occupancy of 96% at YE 2025
- Administered $1.3M in charitable care for 2025

Charity Summary

WhiteStone is proud to carry on the tradition of providing aid to fraternally affiliated seniors both residing on the campus of WhiteStone and living independently throughout North Carolina. In 2025, charitable care and services worth approximately $1.3 million were delivered to more than 50 fraternally affiliated seniors through the partnership of the MESH Foundation LLC and WhiteStone.

The Fraternal Friendship Program (formerly the Outreach Program) continues to see growth across the state, assisting members in their home during their time of need. Since its inception in 2016, the program has grown to the level of providing $115K in charitable care in 2025. Assistance comes in many forms, from that of emergency and long-term financial assistance as well as case management. Case management is the process of assessment, planning, facilitation, care coordination, and evaluation of options and services to meet an individual's comprehensive health needs and promote quality, cost-effective outcomes. This program has developed into an extremely effective tool to help our fraternally related members to remain at home, independently, as long as they can do so with a quality of life.

Assistance through the Fraternal Friendship Program is available by calling Mrs. Jenna Grant, Director of the Fraternal Friendship Program at (336) 601-5593.

Conclusion

Our committee wishes to thank the Grand Lodge, along with WhiteStone's residents and staff, for giving us the opportunity to learn more about our home and its charitable work. We hope you will take the opportunity to visit WhiteStone and see for yourself the impact of our fraternity's involvement in the lives of the residents there. You may even consider holding a lodge meeting there to enjoy fellowship with Masonic residents who are not able to travel to meetings or simply visit MESH Lodge #771, which meets at 2:00 pm on the second Saturday of each month. The Brethren and their lodge might also think about adopting a WhiteStone resident. This is a small investment of time and resources that yields tremendous personal rewards for the recipients, as well as those who give. Feel free to contact Brother Mark Lewis if you would like to explore any of these ideas.

Finally, the committee encourages every brother, as well as every lodge, to strongly consider regular contributions in support of WhiteStone and the MESH LLC. Your dollars go directly to support aging Brothers and Sisters in need, both at the home in Greensboro and at their own homes throughout the

state. North Carolina Masons can be proud of the good work they are doing in support of their aging brethren.

Respectfully submitted,
J. David Cashion, Chairman
Sam Boggs
Nick Wieder
Thomas VanEtten
Ranjan Varghese
Robert Dail
Jeremy Hilton
P. Mark Alexander
Jeff Ramer

Report of the Committee on the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford continues to make strong progress in its residential program, staffing, fundraising, and development efforts. The Home is grateful for the continued support of the Grand Lodge, its constituent Lodges, Masonic organizations, alumni, foundations, and individual Brethren who continue to invest in the mission of caring for children and preparing them for successful futures.

The current census of the Home is 55 youth. Of those, 13 youth are participating in the Independent Living Program, while 42 are residing in the traditional residential program. The addition of new Child Care Worker couples has allowed MHCO to increase its census, and all cottages on the lower campus are currently occupied.

MHCO is pleased to welcome Troy Nuss as the new Director of Development and Communications. Troy relocated to North Carolina from Delaware, where he gained valuable nonprofit fundraising and development experience with several organizations. The Home is especially grateful to the Foundation for its support in making this position possible.

The Home has also hired and onboarded two Child Care Worker couples. These couples are continuing their training and shadowing as they become familiar with the unique needs of the youth and the MHCO model of care. Their addition to the staff has been instrumental in allowing the Home to increase its census and provide additional opportunities for children in need of residential services.

Progress continues with the implementation of CARE, MHCO's effort to further develop a trauma-informed, evidence-based model of care. This continued investment in training and professional development will help ensure that staff have the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to provide the highest quality of care to the youth entrusted to the Home.

The summer months have provided many opportunities for the children to enjoy the campus and participate in activities together. The swimming pool has received a great deal of use, giving youth an opportunity to cool

off, spend time with one another, and participate in swim lessons. Summer Enrichment Academy took place during the week of July 29, bringing youth from across campus together for games, educational opportunities, crafts, and other activities designed to provide both fun and continued learning during the summer break. Several cottages also enjoyed a trip to Great Wolf Lodge, an indoor water park, through the generosity of the Alumni Association. Wake the World was scheduled for July 16, providing another opportunity for the kids to participate in an enjoyable summer experience. Cottages also celebrated the Fourth of July in a variety of ways, attending local festivals, fireworks shows, and other community activities.

Through feedback from both staff and youth, MHCO is also working to bring back the annual Home yearbook. The project will provide youth with an opportunity to participate creatively while creating a lasting record of their experiences and memories at the Home.

MHCO is ending the second quarter in a strong financial position. Total revenue year to date is considerably ahead of projected budget, while total expenses year to date are more than $500,000 below budget. This strong financial position provides an encouraging foundation as the Home continues to invest in its programs, facilities, and mission.

The Gift of Play mailing campaign has concluded and proved to be successful. MHCO is currently in the bidding process for a playground contractor, with the project expected to begin this fall. The new playground will provide an important recreational resource for the children and represents another opportunity for the Masonic community and friends of the Home to directly invest in the daily lives of the youth we serve.

The annual A Time for Kids Gala was held on June 20, with 201 people in attendance. The event received wonderful feedback from guests and supporters and generated a net return in excess of $50,000 for the Home. MHCO extends its sincere appreciation to everyone who attended, sponsored, volunteered, donated, or otherwise helped make the evening a success. The 2027 A Time for Kids Gala is scheduled for May 1, 2027 at the Wake County Shrine Club, Raleigh, NC. Reach out to us for tickets, sponsorships, auction items, etc.

MHCO is also grateful to celebrate recent grant awards from the Triangle North Healthcare Foundation and Inspire Brands. The support of foundations and corporate partners continues to play an important role in helping Home expand its ability to serve children and families and strengthen the programs and resources available on campus.

As we look toward the remainder of the year, we encourage the Brethren to remain engaged with their Masonic Home. There are many ways to support the mission, whether through volunteering, attending Home events, making a financial contribution, introducing others to the work of MHCO, or simply learning more about the children and families we serve. The continued involvement of the Fraternity is essential to ensuring that the Masonic Home for Children remains a place where children can find stability, opportunity, and a path toward a successful future.

Please mark your calendars for the following upcoming events:

- **October 9–11:** Annual Homecoming
- **December 12:** Masonic Christmas Party and Luncheon
- **December 13:** York Rite Christmas Observance

The Committee extends its sincere appreciation to the Brethren, Lodges, Masonic organizations, alumni, foundations, and community partners who continue to support the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford. Through your generosity, service, and commitment, you help ensure that the Home remains a place of hope and opportunity for every child who walks through its doors.

Thank you, Brethren, for continuing to support your Masonic Home and for helping carry its mission forward for generations to come. We are available to make presentations and tours. It's a great place to be kid!

Respectfully Submitted,
Alvin Billings, Chairman
Al Bouldin
Clifford Shrewsbury
Jeff Cox
Keith Eddins
Rodney Hinson
Freddie Szakasits
Kevin Roper

Report of the Committee on Unfinished Business

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The following various orders and opinions issued during the terms of Grand Master Robert W. Rideout, PGM, and Grand Master Steve M. Norris are to be considered during this Annual Communication.

Rideout Order No. 8

To the Master, Wardens, and Secretary of Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118:

It has been brought to my attention by the Grand Secretary's office that Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118 balloted on the application for advancement of LEM on September 4, 2025, and approved the application, without the application having been first submitted to and certified by the Grand Secretary's office, nor the application having undergone the proper background check as required by The Code.

The ballot taken on September 4, 2025, to approve Brother LEM's advancement is clearly illegal under the positive language of Regulation 73-6 of The Code, and is, therefore, NULL and VOID.

Since the Grand Master is empowered to order another ballot in cases of this kind, I hereby order a reballot to Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118 at the stated communication to be held on October 2, 2025. If this cannot be accomplished by October 2, 2025, the lodge shall then ballot on this application at the stated communication to be held on November 6, 2025.

This Order shall be read to the lodge at the next stated communication, entered on the minutes of that communication and a proper notation made on the margin of the minutes for September 4, 2025, referring to this Order and the date it was recorded in the minutes.

Given under my hand and seal at Wendell, North Carolina, this 29th day of September, 2025.

Norris Order No. 1

To the Master, Wardens, and Secretary of Widow's Son Lodge No. 75:

It has been brought to my attention by the Grand Secretary's office that Widow's Son Lodge No. 75 balloted on the petition of CBH on August 7, 2025, and elected him to membership, without the petition having been first submitted to and certified by the Grand Secretary's office, nor the petition having undergone the proper background check as required by The Code. Widow's Son Lodge No. 75 subsequently initiated the candidate on October 15, 2025.

Since the candidate was not responsible for this violation of the law of our Grand Lodge, I hereby Order:

That Widow's Son Lodge No. 75 heal Entered Apprentice CBH at the first stated communication following receipt of this Order, as provided in Regulation 87-6. It shall be sufficient only to re-obligate the candidate in the first degree, in a lodge opened on that degree. After the candidate has been healed, he may then be advanced when prepared as required in Regulation 72-2.

This Order shall be read to the lodge at the first stated communication following its receipt, entered on the minutes of that communication, and a proper notation made on the margin of the minutes for August 7, 2025, and October 15, 2025, referring to this Order and the date it was recorded in the minutes.

Given under my hand and seal at Ash, North Carolina, this 3rd day of December, 2025.

Norris Order No. 2

To Br. AF:

WHEREAS, it has come to my attention, through the Worshipful Master of Campbell Lodge No. 374 and pursuant to the report of the Committee of Reference, that your conduct at and in connection with the lodge has disturbed the peace and harmony of the lodge and has given rise to matters requiring investigation and review; and

WHEREAS, it has been reported that on January 22, 2026, and February 26, 2026, you disrupted meetings of the lodge by confronting guest speakers and becoming argumentative during the proceedings of the lodge; and

WHEREAS, it has further been reported that you circulated written communications to members of the lodge concerning your views of Masonry in a manner that was of a nature tending to create discord and confusion among the brethren; and

WHEREAS, it has further been reported that on March 5, 2026, when given an opportunity by the Worshipful Master and officers of Campbell Lodge No. 374 to explain your conduct, you denied wrongdoing, engaged in an extended outburst, and abruptly departed; and

WHEREAS, in my judgment, the circumstances reported are sufficient to warrant immediate action under Reg. 58-1 while these matters are being examined further;

Now, therefore, for the protection of the peace and harmony of Campbell Lodge No. 374 pending completion of that investigation and review, I hereby

suspend you from the Office of Senior Deacon of Campbell Lodge No. 374, effective immediately and until further order.

I further direct the Worshipful Master of Campbell Lodge No. 374, pending further order, to exclude you from attendance at Campbell Lodge No. 374 and not to admit you to any tiled communication thereof while these matters remain under investigation and review.

Given under my hand and seal this 11th day of March, 2026.

Norris Order No. 3

To Br. DJS:

WHEREAS, it has come to my attention, through the Judge Advocate of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, that felony charges have recently been filed against you; and

WHEREAS, in my judgment, the circumstances reported are sufficient to warrant immediate action under Reg. 58-1 while these matters are being examined further;

Now, therefore, for the protection of the peace and harmony of Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576 pending the outcome of that investigation, I hereby suspend you from the Office of Master of Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576, effective immediately and until further order.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Acting Master of Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576 shall exclude you from attendance at Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576 and not admit you to any tyled communication thereof while these matters remain under investigation, nor shall you attend any other Masonic event in this Grand Jurisdiction until further notice.

Given under my hand and seal this 1st day of June, 2026.

Amendment Group 1

The following amendment has been submitted by Stanly Lodge No. 348 at Albemarle.

This Amendment would require the oldest lodge to take precedence in name and number when lodges consolidate.

REG. 48-3 CONSOLIDATED LODGE. The name and number of the consolidated lodge ~~should~~ shall be that of the oldest lodge consolidated considering the date of charter, and no new charter shall be necessary, nor shall it be necessary to constitute the lodge again.

REG 48-3.3 The bylaws of the consolidated lodge shall be ~~determined by resolution~~ (Form 16) those of the senior lodge which were in effect at the time of the consolidation, and the stated communication of the consolidated lodge, until properly changed, shall be at the time fixed in those by-laws.

Amendment Group 2

The following amendment has been submitted by Grand Master Kevan D. Frazier, referred to Committee at the 2025 Annual Communication, and brought forward by Grand Master Norris for 2026.

This amendment would amend Regulation 34 to permanently create an Insurance Management Committee. It would also establish a new subsection in the Table of Contents of the Code for this Committee.

Chapter 34 – Grand Lodge Committees

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Chapter 34 – Grand Lodge Committees

Committee on Insurance

REG. 34-26 MEMBERS. The Committee on Insurance shall consist of five members, appointed by the Grand Master and confirmed by the Grand Lodge, each of whom shall be a member in good standing and well-informed in insurance best practices.

1. Members of this committee shall not bid, participate, or contract insurance services for the Grand Lodge, nor shall their associates, family members, or any other person whereby a conflict of interest may be of disservice to the fraternity.
2. The Grand Master shall name the chairman of the Committee on Insurance.
3. At each annual communication of the Grand Lodge the Grand Master shall appoint one member to serve for five years.
4. A vacancy in the Committee on Insurance occurring when the Grand Lodge is in recess shall be filled by the Grand Master until the next succeeding annual communication of the Grand Lodge when the vacancy shall be filled for the unexpired term on nomination of the Grand Master-elect and confirmation of the Grand Lodge.
5. A quorum of the Committee on Insurance shall consist of three or more members.

REG. 34-27 MATTERS REFERRED. Matters which shall be referred to the Committee on Insurance and its duties relative to these and other things are as follows.

1. To review all proposals to establish, amend, or cancel any guidelines

or policies related to the Insurance Coverage applicable for all properties of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina or properties of subordinate lodges.

2. To review all questions touching upon insurance matters of the Grand Lodge and its subordinate lodges.
3. Any other matters that may be referred to it by the Grand Lodge or the Grand Master.

REG. 34-28 DUTIES AND POWERS. The duties and powers of the Committee on Insurance are as follows.

1. To annually review the list of current subordinate lodges to ensure each lodge has insurance coverage.
2. To ensure each subordinate lodge, not under the umbrella coverage of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, has adequate coverage for all requirements specified throughout the Code, including but not limited to coverage for fundraisers and required bonding levels for lodge treasurers and secretaries.
3. To recommend to the Board of General Purposes any additions, revisions, deletions, or amendments to the Grand Lodge Insurance Policy.

Amendment Group 3

The following amendment has been proposed by the Lodge Service Commission.

It is implied in The Code that investments and revenue from sources other than dues may not be used to pay for the ongoing operational costs of a lodge or used in such a manner as to cause the dues to be artificially low.

REG. 77-1 MINIMUM DUES. Each lodge shall fix in its by-laws and shall collect such annual dues from its membership as may be necessary to enable it to maintain itself and discharge all of its duties and obligations. Income or revenue from sources other than dues shall not be used to pay for the ongoing operational costs of the lodge or used in such a manner as to cause the dues to be artificially low.

Amendment Group 4

This amendment has been proposed by the Lodge Service Commission.

We have existing Temple Corporations and will need to create more in the future as lodges share meeting spaces in lieu of consolidation. The following amendments are recommended to facilitate this need.

SEC. 9-2 UNIFORM BY-LAWS. The Grand Lodge, if it deems proper, may prescribe from time to time a uniform system or code of by-laws for its subordinate lodges, except as to the day, hour, and building or hall for their stated communications, and the maximum amount to be charged as fees for the degrees, for affiliation, and for annual dues, and may require all lodges to use the same and no other. (Chapter 44) It may, if it deems proper, prescribe from time to time a uniform system or code of by-laws

for temple corporations of its subordinate lodges, and may require all such temple corporations to use the same and no other.

REG. 25-2 SUBORDINATE LODGES. The same policy is stated for its subordinate lodges, except as provided by law, or as may be authorized by the Lodge Service Commission or Grand Master from time to time. (43-2.13; 43-8; 60-7; 86-2.46).

REG. 43-2 POWERS AND DUTIES

...

13. A lodge shall have and maintain complete control and authority over the use of its hall or meeting place by ownership or otherwise. Joint proprietorship with other societies or organizations is not favored by the Grand Lodge. Where other societies or organizations, other than another subordinate lodge of the Grand Lodge, occupy the same rooms with a subordinate lodge, all Masonic paraphernalia and property shall be removed immediately after the lodge is closed. (13-3.8.D; 25-2)

Amendment Group 5

The following amendment has been submitted by Grand Master Steve M. Norris.

This amendment would amend Chapter 11, Regulation 11-1.3 to add the offices of Grand Sword Bearer, Grand Pursuivant, and Grand Standard Bearer as offices that may be installed at the discretion of the Grand Master-elect. The positions of Grand Sword Bearer and Grand Pursuivant were positions appointed and installed as early as 1797 with duties defined in the Code from 1875 until 1930 when their duties were removed from the 1924 version of the Code. The position of Grand Standard Bearer was listed as an office to be installed but was rarely utilized by this grand jurisdiction but is utilized by other grand jurisdictions. Many other grand jurisdictions annually appoint and utilize these three ***non-advancing*** *additional grand lodge officers. This amendment would also amend Chapter 17, and add Regulations 17-10, 17-11 and 17-12 to add the description of the duties of the offices of Grand Sword Bearer, Grand Pursuivant, and Grand Standard Bearer.*

Chapter 11 – Grand Officers' Rank, Designation, Title, Qualifications, Term, and Succession of Office

REG. 11-1 OFFICERS. The elective and appointive officers of the Grand Lodge, their ranks, designations, and titles shall be as follows:

3. The appointive grand officers who ~~shall not~~ may be installed are as follows: (17-5; 17-6; 17-7; 17-8; 17-9.1)

1. Senior Grand Deacon	Worshipful
2. Junior Grand Deacon	Worshipful
3. Grand Marshal	Worshipful

4. Two Grand Stewards	Worshipful
5. Grand Tyler	Worshipful
6. Grand Sword Bearer	Worshipful
7. Grand Pursuivant	Worshipful
8. Grand Standard Bearer	Worshipful

Chapter 17 – Duties of Appointed Grand Officers

Reg. 17-10 DUTIES OF THE GRAND SWORD BEARER. It shall be the duty of the Grand Sword Bearer to carry the sword in processions of the Grand Lodge, assist the Grand Tyler on the outside when needed, and see that none but such as are entitled to do so shall pass into the Grand Lodge. His place is on the floor of the Grand Lodge to the left of the Grand Pursuivant.

Reg. 17-11 DUTIES OF THE GRAND PURSUIVANT. It shall be the duty of the Grand Pursuivant to guard the entrance to the Lodge on the inside, when required to do so, and communicate with the Grand Tyler, and when required to announce to the Senior Grand Warden applicants for admission, and to the Grand Lodge the entrance of distinguished visiting brethren. He shall assist in maintaining order about the door, prevent those not entitled so to do from entering the Grand Lodge or passing inside thereof, and see that the brethren are seated. His place is on the floor of the Grand Lodge in front and to the left of the Senior Grand Warden.

Reg. 17-12 DUTIES OF THE GRAND STANDARD BEARER. It shall be the duty of the Grand Standard Bearer to carry and uphold the banner of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina on all occasions of ceremony and public procession. His place is on the floor of the Grand Lodge to the left of the Senior Grand Deacon.

Amendment Group 6

This amendment has been proposed by the Committee on Finance.

This amendment restricts the power of the Grand Master as related to the annual budget adopted by the delegates of the Grand Lodge. It also amends the duties of the Grand Treasurer and expands the Powers and Authority of the Board of General Purposes and the Committee on Finance.

Chapter 13 – Powers, Duties and Expenses of the Grand Master

Reg. 13-4 Restrictions on Powers. The Grand Master has no authority to:

…

14. Amend or modify the budget adopted by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication unless and until such budget amendment or modification

has been considered by the Committee on Finance, a recommendation is made by the said Committee to amend or modify the budget and thereafter, the budget amendment or modification is adopted by not less than a 2/3 majority vote of the Board of General Purposes.

15. Spend, cause to be spent, authorize, direct, instruct, or order the Grand Treasurer or the Grand Secretary to disburse or expend funds of the Grand Lodge in an amount above any budgeted item adopted by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication unless and until such expenditure has been considered by the Committee on Finance, said Committee has, by simple majority vote, recommended such expenditure and thereafter, the expenditure is approved by not less than a 2/3 majority vote of the Board of General Purposes.

Chapter 15 – Duties of the Grand Treasurer

Reg. 15-1 Duties of the Grand Treasurer. The duties of the Grand Treasurer are as follows:

…

7. To pay warrants drawn on him authorized by the Grand Lodge or the Grand Master, not inconsistent with Regulation 13-4.15, and executed by the Grand Secretary.

Chapter 28 – Board of General Purposes

Reg. 28-3 Powers and Authority. The objects and purposes, powers and authority, and limitations of the Board of General Purposes shall be as follows:

…

5. To receive and consider all recommendations referred by the Committee Finance to expend funds above any amount set forth in the budget adopted by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication. Approval of any such expenditure shall require an affirmative vote of not less than 2/3 of the members of the Board of General Purposes.

Chapter 34 – Grand Lodge Committees

Committee on Finance

Reg. 34-4 Matters Referred. Matters which shall be referred to the Committee on Finance and its duties relative to these and other things are as follows:

…

4. Consider all requests by the Grand Master, the Grand Treasurer, or the Grand Secretary to expend funds of the Grand Lodge above any amount set forth in the budget adopted by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication.

Reg. 34-5 Duties and Powers. The duties and powers of the Committee on Finance are as follows:

…

4. To address all requests by the Grand Master, the Grand Treasurer, or the Grand Secretary to expend funds in excess of any amount set forth in the budget adopted by the Grand Lodge at its Annual Communication and thereafter to make such recommendation to the Board of General Purposes, as may be appropriate, to approve or to refuse the expenditure of funds in excess of any amount set forth in the budget adopted by the Grand Lodge and its Annual Communication.

This amendment shall become effective upon adoption.

Respectfully submitted,
Matthew C. Robbins, Chairman
Committee on Unfinished Business

Report of the Representative to the Masonic Service Association

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Masonic Service Association of North America (MSA) was formed in 1919, initially to provide aid and assistance to American servicemen returning from duty during World War I. When the War Department declined to work separately with numerous Grand Lodges, the fraternity created a single coordinating agency. From that practical beginning, the MSA developed into an enduring instrument of Masonic education, relief, and service.

Today, the MSA continues to serve Freemasonry throughout the United States and Canada through three principal areas of work:

Today the MSA performs three major functions at a national level:

1. Education and Information
2. Disaster Relief
3. Hospital Visitation

Election as Southeast Coordinator

At the 2026 Conference of Grand Masters, I was honored to be elected as a Commissioner of the Masonic Service Association of North America, representing the Southeast. I am deeply grateful to Grand Master Steve Norris for nominating me and for the confidence, encouragement, and support he extended throughout the process.

This election is meaningful not only to me, but also to the Grand Lodge of North Carolina. It gives our jurisdiction a direct voice in an organization whose work reaches the whole of North American Freemasonry. North Carolina now has an opportunity to contribute its experience, its ideas, and its tradition of

service to the discussions that will help shape the MSA's future.

I am particularly excited by the possibility of helping shape both the vision and the scope of the MSA in the years ahead. The Association has a proud history, but its mission must also remain responsive to the needs of the Craft. That includes strengthening communication among Grand Jurisdictions, expanding awareness of MSA resources, encouraging new forms of service, and ensuring that the MSA continues to demonstrate the relevance of Freemasonry through education, relief, and compassionate action.

Education and Information

The MSA is perhaps best known for publishing the Short Talk Bulletin, one of the most widely distributed Masonic publications in the world. Published since 1923, the Bulletin provides lodges and individual Masons with concise, thoughtful material on Masonic history, symbolism, philosophy, leadership, and service. The MSA and its Masonic Information Center also publish Emessay Notes and other educational resources designed to inform both the Craft and the public about Freemasonry.

I submitted a Short Talk Bulletin entitled "When the Waters Rose, Together WE R.I.S.E.," detailing North Carolina Freemasonry's extraordinary response to the destruction caused by Hurricane Helene. I am honored that we have been able to share this remarkable example of Masonic relief with our wider Masonic family.

North Carolina has a special connection to this work because the School of Graphic Arts at the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford prints and distributes the Short Talk Bulletin and Emessay Notes. This partnership is a source of pride and a tangible example of how North Carolina contributes to Masonic education far beyond our own jurisdiction.

As Commissioner, I hope to support efforts that make these resources even more useful and accessible to lodges, officers, educators, and younger Masons. Sound information strengthens the Craft, improves public understanding, and gives our lodges practical tools for meaningful programming.

Disaster Relief and Hurricane Helene

Disaster relief remains one of the clearest expressions of the MSA's value. When a Grand Jurisdiction requests assistance following a natural catastrophe, the MSA communicates that appeal throughout the United States and Canada, coordinates the broader Masonic response, and forwards the funds collected to the affected jurisdiction without deducting administrative charges.

North Carolina experienced the importance of that work firsthand after Hurricane Helene devastated Western North Carolina in September 2024. The storm destroyed homes, businesses, roads, bridges, and essential infrastructure. North Carolina lost 108 lives, thousands of homes were seriously damaged or destroyed, and entire communities lost access to transportation, water, electricity, telecommunications, and medical services.

Our own Masonic family stood directly in the path of the destruction. Brothers and their families lost homes, businesses, property, and livelihoods. Lodges suffering damage included French Broad Lodge No. 292, Pigeon River

Lodge No. 386, Hominy Lodge No. 491, Swannanoa Lodge No. 561, and Black Mountain Lodge No. 663.

The first response was not a committee, a policy, or a press release. It was a Brother picking up the telephone and asking, "Are you all right?" It was a lodge gathering bottled water, food, diapers, toiletries, generators, tools, and whatever else could be found. It was a Mason loading a truck, a Brother checking on a widow, and men from one end of North Carolina to the other deciding that Western North Carolina would not face the disaster alone.

Lodges throughout the state became collection points, staging areas, warehouses, and centers of service. Masons opened their wallets, loaded trucks with their own hands, drove into devastated communities, and quietly did whatever was necessary to help another human being. These early acts of service formed the grassroots foundation upon which a coordinated statewide response was built.

As the scale of the disaster became clearer, Masonic collection and deployment points were established in Winston-Salem, Salisbury, Lincolnton, Jefferson, and Brevard. Lodges were encouraged not to self-deploy blindly into dangerous areas, but instead to coordinate their tremendous energy so that volunteers, supplies, equipment, and transportation could move safely and efficiently.

The North Carolina Masonic Foundation became an important financial component of that statewide response. The Grand Lodge of North Carolina, the Foundation, the Committee on Charity and Relief, local lodges, individual Masons, sister Grand Jurisdictions, the Scottish Rite, the York Rite, Shrine organizations, the Masonic Service Association of North America, and numerous volunteers became part of one larger chain of relief.

The MSA answered North Carolina's call. Through its nationwide appeal, it transmitted two major remittances for Hurricane Helene relief: $250,000 on December 12, 2024, and an additional $75,061.28 on March 4, 2025. Together, those remittances totaled $325,061.28 and represented more than financial assistance. They were a message from the Masonic family throughout North America that our Brothers in Western North Carolina had not been forgotten.

The MSA relief funds were divided between the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and the North Carolina Masonic Foundation. The Foundation's portion was placed within its relief funds for administration and distribution through its own charitable process and records. The Grand Lodge received and administered its portion separately through the Committee on Charity and Relief. Those Grand Lodge distributions were reported in the Committee's 2025 report and are further reflected in the reports presented to the Grand Lodge this year.

Nineteen Grand Jurisdictions and three out-of-state Shrine Centers provided support. Lodges, Masonic bodies, and individual Masons throughout North Carolina also raised funds, gathered supplies, transported equipment, and provided thousands of hours of volunteer labor.

North Carolina worked diligently to honor that generosity. Applications for assistance through the Grand Lodge were documented and reviewed, and funds were directed toward identified needs. Care was taken to avoid unnecessary duplication of insurance or government benefits while still moving quickly enough to assist lodges, Brothers, families, and communities

when help was needed.

Relief also had to be personal. In some mountain communities, people were understandably reluctant to seek help from strangers. North Carolina Masons therefore worked through local Brothers, churches, volunteer fire departments, food banks, community associations, and other organizations that residents already knew and trusted. Relief is most effective when it preserves the dignity of the person receiving it.

Because the Grand Lodge and the North Carolina Masonic Foundation maintained separate relief funds and distribution records, no single Grand Lodge accounting captures every dollar administered through both organizations. The Grand Lodge's own receipts and distributions are preserved in the reports of the Committee on Charity and Relief. The Foundation's receipts and distributions remain matters of its separate financial and charitable records.

Contemporaneous reports estimated that the combined Masonic response provided just under $800,000 in direct financial assistance. That figure should be understood as a combined estimate drawn from separately administered relief efforts, rather than as a single total independently reconciled through the Grand Lodge's accounting records.

Several particular efforts illustrate the breadth of the response. A privately funded Grand Master's challenge coin project generated nearly $34,000 for Western North Carolina relief, allowing every dollar raised through the project to be directed toward assistance. North Carolina Scottish Rite efforts raised more than $70,000 to support food pantries, community associations, volunteer fire departments, and other rural organizations. Their food-pantry support alone was expected to make possible the purchase of more than 63,000 pounds of food.

The Shrine also helped sustain the response into the holiday season. Oasis Shrine received more than a tractor-trailer load and several van loads of donated toys for families affected by Helene. Brothers organized the logistics and visited hospitals, churches, community facilities, and homes to bring hope and joy to children who had already endured months of disruption and loss.

These representative examples do not begin to record every contribution. They do not count every case of water, every pallet of food, every generator, every truck, every mile driven, every hour volunteered, every piece of equipment, every donated building material, every meal, every toy, or every quiet act of kindness that never passed through an accounting system.

When those supplies, equipment, transportation expenses, building materials, volunteer labor, and other in-kind contributions are considered, the overall value of North Carolina Freemasonry's response has been estimated to have approached $1.5 million. Like the combined direct-relief figure, this amount is necessarily an estimate rather than a single audited total.

Even that figure cannot fully capture the good that was done. It cannot measure the Brother who checked on a widow, the lodge that gathered water and heaters, the volunteers who loaded and drove trucks, or the Masons who helped rebuild homes, lodges, communities, and hope.

The MSA made it possible for the wider fraternity to stand beside North Carolina, and North Carolina demonstrated what becomes possible when Masons act together with purpose.

The Hurricane Helene response should also inform the MSA's future. It illustrates the need for timely national communication, trusted local partnerships, responsible and accountable distribution of assistance, and sustained attention after the immediate crisis has passed. North Carolina's experience can help the MSA refine its disaster-relief practices and prepare other jurisdictions to respond with equal speed, accountability, and compassion.

Hospital Visitation

The Masonic Hospital Visitation Program has been a foundational service of the MSA from its earliest years and remains one of its most visible humanitarian programs. Through Hospital Representatives, State Coordinators, and hundreds of volunteers, Masons serve veterans at Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers and state veterans' hospitals across the country.

This service extends far beyond a simple visit. Volunteers read to patients, write letters, assist with personal errands, accompany veterans to chapel services or appointments, and provide companionship to those who may have no family or friends nearby. In those quiet moments, the fraternity offers dignity, comfort, and the assurance that service and sacrifice are remembered.

I encourage North Carolina Masons to consider supporting the Hospital Visitation Program, either through volunteer service or through the MSA's Green Envelope Appeal. It remains one of the finest opportunities for Freemasonry to place Brotherly Love and Relief into daily practice.

Looking Ahead

North Carolina's representation on the MSA Commission comes at an exciting time. We have an opportunity to bring a strong Southeastern perspective to the Association, to share the lessons learned through Hurricane Helene, and to help ensure that the MSA remains vigorous, visible, and responsive.

I look forward to working with the Commissioners, MSA leadership, Grand Jurisdictions, and our own North Carolina Brethren to strengthen the Association's historic programs while exploring new opportunities for education, communication, relief, and service. My hope is that North Carolina will do more than occupy a seat. We will contribute, listen, lead, and help shape a vision of the MSA that serves the whole of Freemasonry for generations to come.

The MSA was created because the fraternity understood that some needs are too large for any one jurisdiction to meet alone. More than a century later, that truth remains. When Masons unite their knowledge, resources, and compassion, they can lift communities, honor veterans, educate the Craft, and bring hope in the darkest hours.

Respectfully Submitted,
Robert W. "Bobby" Rideout, Jr, PGM
Commissioner, Southeast Region
Masonic Service Association of North America

Report of the Representative to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

It is a continuing honor to serve as your Representative to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial Association. As the Memorial moves forward into its second century, it remains one of the most iconic and meaningful tributes to Brother George Washington and to the legacy of American Freemasonry. Dedicated in 1932 and designated a National Historic Landmark in 2015, it stands in Alexandria, Virginia, as the only structure of its kind supported by the Grand Lodges of the United States. I encourage every North Carolina Mason to make the pilgrimage to this majestic site — whether in person or virtually at gwmemorial.org.

Leadership and Direction

The Memorial continues to grow in strength and purpose under its President, R.W. Brother Thomas K. Sturgeon, and its Executive Director, R.W. Brother Matthew T. Szramoski. Brother Szramoski, formerly Director of Development for the Supreme Council, 33°, has brought a renewed focus on preservation, education, and sustainability. Among his signature initiatives is the "Turn the Page" campaign, a comprehensive effort to restore and revitalize the Louis A. Watres Library on the Memorial's sixth floor. Closed to the public for some two decades, the library is being renovated with new carpet, refurbished restrooms, remediation of water damage, and new bookcases, so that it may become a premier national center for the study of American Freemasonry, George Washington, and the York Rite. A grand reopening was scheduled for February 21, 2026, in conjunction with the Washington's Birthday observances. The initiative is complemented by the first-ever professional conservation of the 1792 George Washington family Bible and a new exhibit built around it.

A Historic Milestone: The Exterior Restoration Completed

The past year brought the completion of one of the most significant undertakings in the Memorial's history. In July 2025 the Association concluded a decade-long effort to repoint and seal the building's massive stone envelope, including critical repairs to damage sustained in the 2011 Virginia earthquake. The work, carried out methodically from the crown of the tower downward, sealed cracked stone, renewed every mortar joint with a moisture-permeable mixture, added weather-capping and new exterior lighting, and reinforced structural elements. With the scaffolding at last removed — thanks in significant part to a generous gift from the Dunaway Family Trust — the exterior stands renewed. Attention now turns to the next phase of preservation under the "Seal the Envelope" campaign, an approximately $2 million effort to repair the building's 30,000-square-foot main roof and to address earthquake damage to the retaining walls, so that the structure will remain watertight and sound for generations to come.

Marking the Nation's 250th Anniversary

As the nation observes its Semiquincentennial, the Memorial has placed itself at the center of the fraternity's commemoration. It earlier joined the observance of the 250th anniversary of the Midnight Ride of Paul Revere, lighting two lanterns from the sixth floor in a symbolic echo of the Old North Church. For 2026 it has mounted major exhibitions, including "Freemasonry and America at 250" and "Freemasons at War," and in March 2026, in partnership with the Grand Lodge of Virginia, it convened a historic gathering uniting the Grand Masters of all thirteen original states, accompanied by a Revolutionary War re-enactment on the West Lawn. These observances remind us of our fraternity's integral role in the founding of the Republic — a story in which North Carolina Freemasons played a proud part.

A Special Recognition: North Carolina's Ambassador to the Memorial

No report on the Memorial would be complete without recognizing the extraordinary work of Brother Steven A. Campbell, Past Grand Historian and North Carolina's Ambassador to the George Washington Masonic National Memorial. Few Masons in any jurisdiction have carried the Memorial's message farther or more faithfully. Since 2017, Brother Campbell has delivered approximately 146 presentations on Brother George Washington and the Memorial — making regular treks across North Carolina and into Virginia and South Carolina, and reaching brethren as far away as George Washington Lodge No. 585 in Vicenza, Italy.

His pace has not slackened. In 2025 he gave sixteen presentations, and in the first half of 2026 alone he has already delivered fifteen more. His audiences span the whole of the Craft and the community: subordinate lodges and district gatherings, public schools and home-school classes, chapters of the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution, historical and genealogical societies, civic clubs, scouting units, and veterans' organizations. Through signature lectures such as "George Washington — Man, Mason, Memorial," "To Be a Peaceable Citizen," "The Endeavoring Idealist" on Brother Lafayette, and "Washington at War," he brings the Memorial and the values it enshrines to life, and he consistently distributes Memorial literature and copies of Washington's "Rules of Civility."

This year his labors have joined the wider commemoration of the nation's 250th anniversary, including the Grand Lodge of North Carolina's Semiquincentennial event at Guilford Courthouse Battlefield in March 2026, where he conducted a motorized tour of the field and a wreath ceremony honoring the two signers of the Declaration of Independence interred there. On behalf of the Grand Lodge, I wish to express our profound gratitude for Brother Campbell's tireless service. His example embodies the very purpose of the Memorial: to keep the memory and the Masonic virtues of Brother Washington ever before us.

Our Continued Support

North Carolina maintains a strong and enduring connection to the Memorial. Through our participation in the Memorial's $1.00 per member program, this Grand Lodge ensures steady and dependable support for its operation, preservation, and educational mission; North Carolina stands

among the more than forty Grand Lodges now pledging such per capita support, the Grand Lodge of New York having recently become the forty-first. The Memorial Association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that receives no government funding, and contributions remain tax-deductible. Beyond the roof and library campaigns already noted, the Association is pursuing a $2.5 million America250 campaign and a long-term endowment goal of $50 million to secure the Memorial's future. Brethren may also lend individual support through the George Washington Memorial Society, the Society of Washington Lodges, and planned and legacy giving.

Recommendation

I strongly encourage each Mason to consider a personal visit to the Memorial, or a lodge program devoted to its history and mission — and, where possible, to invite Brother Campbell to share his presentations. Having just completed the most extensive restoration in its history, the Memorial now turns to the revitalization of its library, its exhibitions, and the visitor experience, work that will call for our continued generosity. Supporting this beacon of Masonic Light is both a duty and a privilege.

Cordially and fraternally,
Philip R. Johnson, Junior Grand Warden
Representative, GWMNMA

Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Insurance

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Your Ad Hoc Committee reviewing the insurance requirements, needs, and options of the individual lodges has worked diligently throughout the year to gather information and consider the various ways in which the Grand Lodge might support its constituent lodges. With the assistance of the Grand Lodge and Matthew Robbins, Assistant to the Grand Secretary, we requested and obtained detailed summaries of insurance coverage and property information from more than 90% of the lodges. The committee is particularly appreciative of Matthew's careful work in organizing and maintaining the multitude of data sheets submitted by lodges across the state. The data collected has informed our consideration of the available options and provided important insight into lodge-specific risk factors, including coverage amounts, deductibles, and property values.

The committee reviewed the possibility of establishing a captive insurance company owned by the Grand Lodge. The committee determined that the required capitalization expense and the additional risks to the Grand Lodge made this option unviable. In addition, we have sought other companies capable of providing property, liability, and officer dishonesty coverage for the lodges.

Because of the diversity of the lodges — including their locations, values, and individual circumstances — we have been unable to find another company willing to provide coverage for all lodges across the state. This challenge is compounded by the scope and variety of more than 325 lodge properties located throughout all 100 counties of North Carolina. These properties vary

considerably in size, age, construction, condition, use, and insured value — with the oldest dating to 1803 and the newest to 2025 — while all remain within the broader jurisdictional structure of the Grand Lodge.

We continue to discuss and negotiate with several companies through our new agent. Although significant changes may not be available before the October 1 renewal, the information gathered, relationships established, and options now under consideration have placed the Grand Lodge and its constituent lodges on a more informed and promising path forward.

Throughout August, all lodges will be offered an opportunity to speak with our agent concerning their insurance coverage. These discussions will include a review of each lodge's plans, including deductibles and coverage limits, as well as its specific and unique needs. This process will help lodges better understand their existing coverage and potential risks.

The committee will continue its work into the coming year by pursuing additional coverage options and supporting the lodges in evaluating and addressing their insurance needs.

Respectfully submitted,
C. Michael Harris, Chairman

Report of the Board of Publications

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina:

Your Board of Publications for 2026 consists of Brothers Larry Thompson, Jr., Chairman, Alvin Billings, Anthony Rathbone, Russell Scull, and Vince Hyatt. In accordance with Regulation 34-20, the Board is responsible for establishing policies for the publication of Masonic news and information through various media, including print and electronic, and to encourage and promote the use of technology for communicating the message of Masonry among the lodges and by the Grand Lodge. The Board selects the Editor and provides editorial supervision of *The North Carolina Mason* and all similar news and informational publications, in all forms and formats. In addition to establishing policies for communicating the message of Masonry within our jurisdiction, we remain committed to delivering high-quality content efficiently within the annual budget of $120,000.

Under the continued direction of W. Brother Don Butto — Editor turned Director of Communications — *The North Carolina Mason* continues to flourish as a quarterly publication that celebrates the enduring values and rich heritage of North Carolina Freemasonry. The online supplement remains an essential tool for delivering timely news, including lodge milestones, special degrees, and service recognitions, ensuring members remain well-informed and connected throughout the year.

In 2026, the Board continued refining the distribution model implemented the previous year. Formerly, 29,200 printed copies were mailed directly to members. Now, approximately 3,700 copies are shipped in bulk to blue lodges for in-person distribution, and just over 2,200 copies are mailed directly to individuals by request. This tailored approach continues to be refined to better

match lodge needs and minimize excess. The result is significant cost savings and a publication budget that remains well under $120,000, all without compromising the magazine's quality or reach. Members living out of state continue to receive either digital or printed copies to ensure full inclusion.

The North Carolina Mason remains housed within the Grand Lodge website, NCFreemasons.org, serving as a centralized hub for current and archived issues, submission guidelines, and distribution updates. The Board extends its appreciation to the Grand Master, Grand Secretary, George Marut (Chief Financial Development Officer, NCMF), and LCS Development for their ongoing support — particularly their advertising partnership with WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community, which helps offset publication expenses.

Throughout 2026, the Board received a high volume of submissions from blue lodges, event organizers, and Masonic historians, resulting in a healthy backlog of publishable material. Feedback on the "From the Quarry" section remains consistently positive, and it continues to be one of the most well-received features of the publication. The Board expresses its appreciation to all lodges and contributors for their timely submissions and continued support.

The hybrid digital/print distribution system remains stable and effective. Each issue triggers an email notification to all members with email addresses, containing a link to the online edition. Members without email addresses in Grand View received postcards explaining how to request direct mail delivery, and more than 2,200 members have successfully enrolled in direct mail delivery through Grand View, their lodge secretaries, or direct contact with the Editor. Many lodge secretaries have taken the initiative to enroll older members who prefer printed copies. This system has now been in place for nearly two years and continues to function smoothly.

The Editor notes that members should be given credit for understanding the distribution options available to them. Some lodge secretaries may be over-enrolling members for direct mail without confirming their preference, and several members have requested removal from the direct mail list after being enrolled without their knowledge. The Editor continues to honor all member requests to be added to or removed from the direct mail list promptly.

As Director of Communications, W. Brother Butto has expanded his role to manage the Grand Lodge website, enhancing digital outreach. One of the ongoing initiatives is the development of a live online news and article feed designed to streamline the publication process and provide timely, centralized updates for lodges and members. This effort reflects our mission to use technology to strengthen our Masonic bond.

It remains a privilege to serve the fraternity by sharing the story of North Carolina Freemasonry through thoughtful and efficient communication. We invite all lodges to continue submitting their news, photos, and stories to enrich our collective journey.

Respectfully submitted,
Larry Thompson, Jr., Chairman
Alvin Billings
Anthony Rathbone
Russell Scull
Vince Hyatt

Report of the

North Carolina Masonic Foundation, Inc

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina:

The North Carolina Masonic Foundation respectfully submits this report on its stewardship, charitable impact, and continued service to North Carolina Freemasonry.

For nearly a century, the Foundation has received, invested, grown, and distributed charitable resources entrusted to it by generations of North Carolina Masons, lodges, families, and friends. This responsibility extends beyond investment management. It requires the Foundation to preserve the charitable intent of every gift, respond to the changing needs of our fraternity, strengthen the charitable work of our lodges, and ensure that Masonic charity remains available for generations to come.

Financial Stewardship and Permanent Charitable Strength

At year-end 2025, the Foundation corpus totaled approximately **$27.47 million**, compared with approximately **$19.53 million at year-end 2019** — an increase of approximately **$7.94 million, or 40.7%**. This growth reflects investment performance and additional corpus giving, net of charitable distributions made during a period of significant market volatility and economic uncertainty.

The Foundation follows a disciplined distribution policy based upon a seven-year rolling average of corpus value and a four-percent annual distribution rate. This approach balances two essential responsibilities: providing meaningful charitable support today while protecting the long-term purchasing power of the corpus.

During 2025, the Foundation provided more than **$850,000 in charitable support**, while preserving the permanent financial foundation upon which future generations will depend.

Investment strategy and performance are reviewed by the NCMF Board of Directors in partnership with CAPTRUST, the Foundation's professional investment advisor. Nottingham provides shareholder servicing, transaction processing, accounting support, and record-keeping. The Foundation also continues to strengthen it's governance, financial controls, audit practices, compliance, and reporting. Transparency, accountability, and prudent stewardship remain central to every financial decision.

Charitable Impact and Masonic Relief

The Foundation continues its longstanding support of the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford, helping advance the fraternity's historic commitment to children and young people in need.

The Foundation also continues its longstanding support of WhiteStone: A Masonic and Eastern Star Community, helping advance the fraternity's enduring commitment to the care, dignity, and well-being of older adults.

Strengthening Lodge Charity

One of the Foundation's most important areas of growth is its work directly with subordinate lodges.

A Lodge Charity Account, or LCA, allows a lodge to establish, invest, and grow charitable funds through the North Carolina Masonic Foundation. The Foundation assists with gift processing, donor acknowledgments, investment management, accounting, reporting, charitable compliance, and distribution administration.

Lodges may use these accounts to support scholarships, youth programs, veterans, food insecurity initiatives, community nonprofits, disaster relief, Masonic relief, public-safety programs, and other qualifying charitable purposes. The lodge recommends the distributions it wishes to make, while the Foundation manages the related administrative and regulatory responsibilities.

By allowing a portion of an LCA to remain invested, a lodge may also create an enduring source of charitable support that benefits its community long after the present generation of officers and members has passed. Separate Non-Charity Accounts are available for qualifying lodge funds that are not intended for charitable purposes, helping maintain the necessary distinction between charitable and non-charitable assets.

The generosity of East Gate Lodge No. 692 also inspired a new statewide initiative: The East Gate Legacy Lodge Giving Program — Building Permanent Charitable Legacies Through Corpus Giving.

The program invites every lodge in North Carolina to help strengthen the permanent NCMF corpus. Participation is measured both annually and cumulatively. Annual recognition is based upon qualifying corpus giving on a per-member basis, allowing lodges of all sizes to participate meaningfully. Cumulative recognition reflects the permanent charitable legacy created by a lodge and its members over time.

The purpose is larger than recognition. It is to encourage every lodge to consider the permanent charitable legacy it intends to leave.

Donor Engagement and the Phoenix Society

Every gift to the corpus — whether made once, annually, or through an estate — helps strengthen the Foundation's ability to provide charitable support today while building resources for the future.

During its inaugural year, the **Phoenix Society** welcomed **119 donors**, whose qualifying gifts to the Foundation corpus totaled **$104,276.93**. The average gift was approximately **$877**, demonstrating that meaningful collective impact is created through gifts of many different sizes.

The Phoenix Society is more than a recognition program. It represents a growing community of Masons and friends who believe in sustaining Masonic charity year after year.

The Foundation also works with individuals who wish to include NCMF in their wills, trusts, beneficiary designations, life-insurance arrangements, and other estate plans. These commitments allow donors to provide for their families while creating a permanent charitable legacy through the fraternity they have valued throughout their lives.

Engagement and the Year Ahead

The annual NCMF Clay Day has also become an important source of fellowship, awareness, sponsorship, and charitable support. The third annual Clay Day is scheduled for April 16, 2027, at Hunter's Pointe Sporting Clays. Visit mfnc.org to secure your team and participate in this event.

Looking ahead, the Foundation will remain focused on protecting and growing the corpus, providing dependable charitable distributions, expanding Masonic relief, strengthening Lodge Charity Accounts, growing the East Gate Legacy Lodge Giving Program and Phoenix Society, improving communications, and maintaining strong governance and financial oversight.

The Foundation belongs to North Carolina Masonry. Its strength was built by Masons who understood that charitable resources must be preserved, invested, and shared wisely. Its future will depend upon today's Masons accepting that same responsibility.

Together, we are building more than an investment portfolio. We are building a permanent charitable legacy capable of providing hope, relief, education, and opportunity today and for generations to come.

Respectfully submitted,
John Burns, Chairman of the Board of Directors
North Carolina Masonic Foundation

Report of the Ad Hoc Eagle Scout Task Force

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Grand Lodge issued thirty-three recognitions since last July recognizing Eagle Scouts for receiving the top award in Scouting America. Steven Pendergrass and Joel Shope both administered local presentations where the awards were presented for many Eagle Scouts in their area. The recipients were presented with a certificate, letter, and a patch recognizing their achievements. If your Lodge or you would like to set up a presentation in the next year, please contact me at william.highsmith@gmail.com, and we can get you more information on how to start this process.

The Committee would also like to congratulate all the brothers who received the Daniel Carter Beard Award. This award is administered by the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. Lodges can use it to recognize Master Masons who work to improve the relationship between Scouting and Freemasonry. For more information, please reach out to Will Highsmith or Homer Dearmin.

Fraternally,
Will Highsmith, Chairman
Homer Dearmin

Report of the Committee on Masonic Education

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Masonic Education is alive and well in our great state. 2026 has been a year of growth for us, with record enrollment in our Davie Academy and

Middle Chamber programs. Likewise, the Speakers Bureau continues to be a source of educational speakers for lodges around the state, and we have added three new speakers in the first half of 2026 alone. The longevity of and continued interest in our educational offerings is a testament to our brothers' commitment to seeking further light in Masonry.

To that end, I am happy to share that the revised Lodge System of Masonic Education can be found in the "Resources" tile of Grandview, under the "Master Mason" heading and "Leadership and Education" subheading. This document, which is a complete revision, serves as a pathway by which a lodge can engage their candidates outside of the catechism process. Designed to be facilitated by your lodge's education committee, the LSME is not simply an informational document but also contains prompts for discussion between your candidates and the members of your lodge. We know that we are losing an unacceptable amount of Entered Apprentices and Fellowcrafts before they are raised, and this is due in no small part to a lack of engagement with their lodges during the time that they are progressing through the degrees. By deploying the LSME, we can ensure that our candidates are not only educated and engaged, but also develop genuine relationships with the brothers in their lodge by the time they are raised. To be clear, this is to be used as a supplement to coaching, and is by no means a replacement for the relationship between a coach and his candidate, which is the foundation of engaging and educating our candidates. We are already seeing a great deal of success in the lodges and districts that are using the LSME with their candidates and look forward to see its further adoption throughout the state.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve as Chairman for another year, and I'm looking forward to the future of Masonic Education in our jurisdiction. There are currently some projects in the planning stage that are quite exciting but not ready to be shared, so keep an eye out for announcements as we move into 2027. Lastly, I would like to thank every brother who makes Masonic Education a priority in their lodge, whether he be Master, a lecturer, a coach, or just a passionate Mason. You all help to make our Grand Jurisdiction a national leader in Masonic Education.

Respectfully submitted,
Noah Goode, Chairman

Report of the Board of Custodians

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The members who served on the Board of Custodians during the year 2026 were: Steve M. Norris, Grand Master; Randy D. Ward, Grand Lecturer; Ludwik J. Wodka, Chairman; Stephen M. McCraw, Secretary; Brett A. Huffman; Ronald C. Pearce; Homer T. Dearmin; and John A. Shawver.

The Board of Custodians met regularly during the year, with meetings held on January 9th, April 10th, July 10th, and September 24th, 2026.

- Brothers qualifying for the Laudamus Certificate have been Class A, Certified Lecturers for 15 years. Those brethren for 2026 are:

First	Middle	Last	Lodge
Jacob	Ray	Abernathy, III	Riverside No. 606
Phillip	Mark	Alexander	North Wilkesboro No. 407
Dennis	Ray	Kyle	Franklin No. 109
John	Wesley	Watkins	Catawba Valley No. 217
Charles	Elmo	McCowan	Andrews No. 529

- District Deputy Grand Lecturers qualifying for the Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer Certificate in 2026 are:

District	Full Name	Lodge
9	Raeford "Butch" Pressley Freeman	Morning Star No. 85
16	Zachary Ryan Stanley	Fellowship No. 84
17	Allen Wayne Faires, Jr.	Lebanon Lodge No. 391
22	Joshua Ryan Payne	Tabasco Lodge No. 271
27	Jack William Roach, III	Enterprise No. 752
28	Matthew Allan Peeler	Keller Memorial 657
29	James Alan Burris	Stanly No. 348
32	Edward Joseph Steel	Matthews No. 461

- District Deputy Grand Lecturers qualifying for the Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer Certificate in 2026 after the final 2025 Annual Report was submitted and having served extended years or less than three consecutive years were:

District	Full Name	Lodge
1	Douglas Heath Brickhouse, Sr.	Eureka No. 317
8	James Warren Cook, Jr.	Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2
14	Clifford Laipuni Kealoha, Jr.	Raleigh Lodge No. 500
40	William David Thomas	Waynesville No. 259

• Assistant Grand Lecturers who served in 2026:

Area	Full Name	Lodge
1	Hyler Wayne Cox	Atlantic No. 294
2	Edward Earl Wells	Hiram No. 98
3	David Hubert Troxell	Laurinburg No. 305
4	Keith Bradley Rash	Harmony No. 299
5	John Marvin Burchfield	Black Mountain No. 663

The 2026 Certified Lecturer examinations were held according to the following schedule: August 8th - Greenville and Greensboro; August 15th - Wilmington and Charlotte; August 22nd - Fayetteville and Asheville. The examinations continue to be offered on Saturday to be more accommodating to our certified brethren who have work conflicts. The Board expresses its sincere appreciation to the brethren at the six locations who donated the use of their facilities for the examinations.

At the end of the 2025 examinations there were 290 certified brethren. This consisted of 266 Class "A" Certified Lecturers and 24 Class "B" Certified Instructors. Since the 2025 exams we have lost 6 brothers to death or other causes, bringing our total number down to 287 prior to the 2026 exams. Forty-seven brethren were required for re-examination in 2026 not including the six brethren that received one-year extensions in 2025.

It is our sad duty to announce the passing of the following certified brethren since our last annual report:

Full Name	Lodge	Years of Service
Fred Willard Carter	Cannon Memorial No. 626	50
Victor Michelle Hall	Queen City No. 602	41
Mervin Eugene Hogg	St. John's No. 1	44
Winston A. Riddle	Oconee No. 427	49
Charles Edward Sherer	West Gate No. 738	56

The Board of Custodians has made available on Grandview, the booklet "Important Information Concerning the Certified Lecturers." This can be found under the Resources tile in your portal (select tab for Master Mason) and is available to anyone with access to the internet. You can also find information of interest concerning BOC history, latest corrections to the OSW and Bahnson Manual, rules governing the Lecture Service and OSW/Vocabulary, various application forms, a current roster of those certified, and a roster for Coaches' Proficiency.

In 2026 the (5) five-hour mandatory Lecture Service was continued for all lodges throughout the state. The rules allow up to three lodges to work together to complete work, each being responsible for submitting their own Form 38 by June 30th. Rules also require participation of three principal officers, two deacons, and two stewards. Rules also allow for the dispensation of these

requirements for affinity-style lodges. Such styled lodges are still expected and required to maintain a level of proficiency consistent with the Code as well as fulfilling other requirements of the Board. They are still required to submit their Form 38s signed by their DDGLs.

In 2026 the mandatory School of Instruction continued for even numbered Districts:

School of Instruction

- Each lodge in a District shall participate in a full five-hour School of Instruction as required by the Board of Custodians and called bi-annually (odd Districts on odd years, even Districts on even years) by the District Deputy Grand Lecturer.
- A minimum of at least five (5) officers must attend the full five (5) hours of instruction of the school. It is required that the officer attendance includes the three principal officers and deacons, but all others are encouraged to attend.
- Regular attending officers of each lodge should fill their elective or appointed stations and places at a School of Instruction. Certified Lecturers and Certified Instructors should not fill a station or place during a School of Instruction unless they fill a station or place to which they have been elected or appointed
- If any lodge fails to meet the requirements for two consecutive Schools of Instruction, a fifteen-hour Lecture Service or other action deemed appropriate by the board, shall be held for that lodge to remove the deficiency.

The fraternity has 212 Coaches to apply for and complete The Coaches Proficiency Exam. Once passed, the Coach receives a certificate and card. This being a one-time exam, there is no expiration date on the card. To pass the exam, the coach must recite both the questions and answers to the catechisms of the three degrees and have a general knowledge of certain masonic terms and symbols.

The Board of Custodians expresses its appreciation to Grand Master Steve M. Norris for his support of the Board of Custodians and the Certified Lecturer program, and to Grand Secretary, Jonathan A. Underwood; Assistant Grand Secretary, Matthew Robbins; and the Grand Lodge staff: Hayley, Vicki, and Eric, for their valuable assistance during the year.

The Board also expresses its appreciation to Grand Lecturer Randy D. Ward, for his steadfast attention and humble spirit as he has served both the Board and Fraternity.

The Board would like to recognize and thank our retiring members who have served from 2024 to 2026: Brett A. Huffman and Randy D. Ward; 2020-2026: Stephen

M. McCraw.

The Board continues to look at how to best preserve our time-honored traditions, while also looking forward to ways to inspire and serve our brethren and fraternity today. This task would not be possible without the vigorous support of the certified brethren throughout the state. We extend a sincere

"thank you" for your continued and faithful service to our beloved fraternity and to the Certified Lecturer program. Lastly, to our District Deputy Grand Lecturers, thank you for all the hours of instruction given, all the miles driven, and your tireless contributions to your lodges, your districts, and this Grand Jurisdiction.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ludwik J. Wodka, Chairman
Stephen M. McCraw, Secretary

Report of the Commission on Subordinate Lodge Special Activities

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

Your Commission consists of Masons that freely volunteer their time to support Blue Lodge fundraising events. Our goal is to help Lodges find a way to hold their requested events, while staying within the CODE and applicable laws, both at the Federal and State levels. Additionally, we work with Lodges to ensure that they have adequate insurance coverage for their off-site events.

In 2025, it took the Commission an average of 4 days to process a new application. On average, fundraising events lasted 49 days, with final reports being submitted 43 days after the event date.

In 2025, the approximately 29,500 Masons in North Carolina delivered $823,224 ($27.91/Mason) to charities from their 201 fundraising activities, retaining $3,559 from raffles for Lodge activities. On average, each fundraising event generated $4,095 in net proceeds. This report does not include individual contributions to charity by Brethren, contributions to charity by Lodges that do not hold fundraising events, or contributions by Lodges to charity that work directly with NCMF to coordinate their event.

The Commission on Subordinate Lodge Special Activities presents this report in supporting lodge fundraising efforts. The following report reflects fundraising numbers for events held in 2025.

Vital Statistics for 2025

Number of Active Lodges in NC	338	
Lodges Participating in Fundraisers	151	
Applications Received:	206	
Final Reports Received:	201	
Total Applications & Final Reports Processed:	407	
Final Reports Past Due:	0	**Avg / Fundraiser**
Total Gross Receipts:	$ 1,247,522.14	$ 6,206.58
Total Expenses:	$ 424,298.11	$ 2,110.94
Net Proceeds:	$ 823,224.03	$ 4,095.64

Net Proceeds by Fundraiser Category

Category	#	Amount	Avg / Category
Gun Raffles	28	$ 114,749.75	$ 4,098.21
General Raffles	29	$ 74,845.55	$ 2,580.88
Golf Tournaments	22	$ 186,332.40	$ 8,469.65
BBQ	33	$ 115,813.13	$ 3,509.49
Breakfasts	10	$ 15,266.01	$ 1,526.60
Dinners	32	$ 116,427.84	$ 3,638.37
Food Sales - Other	22	$ 66,539.70	$ 3,024.53
Merchandise Sales	1	$ 360.00	$ 360.00
Other	29	$ 132,889.65	$ 4,582.40
Total	**206**	**$ 823,224.03**	

Net Proceeds by Charity Category

Charity	#	Amount	Avg / Category
MHCO	156	$ 397,618.18	$ 2,548.83
MESH, LLC	68	$ 107,062.68	$ 1,574.45
Whitestone	43	$ 46,894.41	$ 1,090.57
NCMF	72	$ 173,217.43	$ 2,405.80
Other Charities Chosen by Lodges	30	$ 94,871.41	$ 3,162.38
10% Retained Raffle Proceeds	5	$ 3,559.92	$ 711.98
Total	**369**	**$ 823,224.03**	

Summary for 2025

Total Gross Receipts:	$ 1,247,522.14
Total Expenses:	$ 424,298.11
Net Proceeds:	$ 823,224.03

Respectfully submitted,
Bryan Gordon, PM
Tom Janyssek, PM
Maurice Melton, PM
Charles Talley, PM
Kenneth C. (Casey) Shaw, Chairman

Report of the Personnel Committee

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina

The Grand Lodge Committee on Personnel continued to work under Reg. 34-23 of the Code, as it was approved by this Grand Lodge in 2017. The Committee was established to ensure compliance with state and federal laws and regulations, to implement and conduct annual employee performance reviews, and to make annual salary and benefit recommendations to the Grand

Lodge Committee on Finance.

In 2026, the Personnel Committee met on two occasions following the established protocols with regard to its duties and obligations. The first meeting was on Tuesday, March, 3, 2026, at the Grand Lodge in Raleigh, North Carolina, by the Chair, RW SGW Michael Register, to conduct the annual employee interviews with the Grand Lodge staff. The second meeting occurred on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, to determine the budget recommendations to the finance committee for the FY 2027 budget.

The Committee thanks Grand Secretary and the Grand Lodge staff for their outstanding work and dedication to our Fraternity.

Sincerely & Fraternally,
Michael A. Register, SGW, Chairman
Philip R. Johnson, JGW
Raushan Gross
Louran Weber, IV, PM

Report of the Ad Hoc Long Range Planning Committee

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Long Range Planning Committee is classified as a Special Committee established by Most Worshipful Grand Master Steve Norris in 2026. The mission of this Special Committee is to chart a strategic pathway forward for our fraternity. We, as Masons, are fortunate to share an incredible heritage and legacy of nearly 250 years of a continuous Grand Lodge in our state. Together we stand at a historic moment. We have an amazing opportunity to set a course designed to carry our fraternity onward and upward towards a brighter future for the brethren in North Carolina.

Your committee met at length twice this year to discuss long and short-term priorities and goals. We defined and discussed what is currently standing in our way and how we, as an organization, can best project and reach our strategic goals. We ultimately identified a five-year goal, a one-year annual growth plan, and established the immediate priorities to be accomplished. Our committee members are leading all of their assigned quarterly goals to completion ahead of our next meeting in October.

We have clearly determined that within five years, we want to be an organization of brothers of exemplary character, to whom the community looks for direction and leadership. We expect, with proper focus and action, we will ultimately be able to expand our membership while enjoying a growing, thriving, and stronger fraternity. The long range focus reflects the Committee's conviction that the long-term health of the Craft in North Carolina depends not merely on membership numbers or financial reserves, but on the fraternity's standing as a source of moral leadership within the communities our lodges serve. Every initiative undertaken over the coming five years should be measured against this standard: does it strengthen the character of our brethren, and does it strengthen the community's trust in us as leaders?

Our first year priorities will focus on four key areas:

- **Financial Management**
- **Leadership Development**
- **Communication**
- **Branding**

We have defined the actions to be taken on each of these areas during the year ahead, and we have a plan to review our progress and strategy each quarter. This regular meeting cadence will allow us to continue to drive all of these initiatives to and across the finish line.

These four areas — Financial Management, Leadership Development, Communication, and Branding — are not ends in themselves, but they are certainly the necessary groundwork for achieving the Committee's long range goals. Your Committee looks forward to continued progress, and will provide regular updates. We look forward to the journey ahead as together we help chart a pathway forward for the betterment of masonry in North Carolina.

Respectfully submitted,
Grand Lodge Long Range Planning Committee

Report of the Scholarship Committee

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

The Grand Lodge Scholarship Committee went to work to review this year's Charles Edward Cathey Masonic Scholarship applications. The committee divided up the applications and carefully reviewed each one. One hundred and twenty applications were received. The scholarship winners all demonstrated strong academic performance balanced with extensive volunteer service and extracurricular activities within their communities. We are most excited to have been able to award 15 Scholarships valued at $1,000 each to recipients representing the entirety of the great state of North Carolina. We hope that, through the generosity of the brethren, additional scholarships can be awarded each year.

Respectfully submitted,
Grand Lodge Scholarship Committee
Bro. Joseph B. Walls – Chairman (231)
Bro. Rory J. Byers – Member (146)
Bro. William L. Dill – Member (583)
Bro. Alan B. Wray – Member (650)
Bro. John Ross Robertson – Member (431)

Report of the Committee on Necrology

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina:

While the number of Masonic Funeral Rites increases, our membership suffers more than statistical losses. While we celebrate the lives of those who have laid down their working tools, we mourn the departure of our company, their expertise, and the opportunity we always had to grow in their midst. The challenge for us now, and always, is to be a supportive presence for our brothers in their last days on Earth. When we look at the number of those who have passed, let us set goals for the coming year to be more attentive, present, and caring for those who are about to leave us. Let us especially remember the widows and children and do unto them as we would have them do unto us. The 2026 Report of the Necrology Committee concludes with its usual recognition of all those among us who have passed from this earthly life here to that glorious and celestial lodge above where the Supreme Architect of the Universe presides.

There were no Grand Officers or widows who died in the previous year.

We are eternally grateful for each life that has touched our fraternity in so many ways from family, to mentors, to friends. May our compassion, concern, and care demonstrate the values of our fraternity particularly

Respectfully submitted,
A. Gene Cobb, Jr., PGM
Committee Chairman

Final Report

of

Grand Master

Robert W. Rideout

to

the

Grand Lodge

of

Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons

of

North Carolina

at

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

September 25, 2026

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina, Grand Lodge Officers, Past Grand Masters, Past Grand Officers, Officers of Constituent Lodges, Voting Delegates, and Brethren All:

At the 238th Annual Communication, held September 19 and 20, 2025, the Grand Lodge accepted my Interim Report, Orders, and Opinion. That report described the work of my administration through the Annual Communication. I now submit this final report to preserve the official record of those matters occurring after the close of the Annual Communication and before the installation of my successor on November 1, 2025.

This brief period was not an afterthought. It brought the year's labor to its proper conclusion. We completed the recognition program at the heart of Together WE R.I.S.E., recorded the final dimensions of our Hurricane Helene relief, addressed a transition within the Grand Line, honored the generosity of our lodges, and prepared for an orderly transfer of leadership.

The State of the Craft: A Renaissance of Brotherhood

I am proud to report that our fraternity is experiencing a true renewal. In 2024, nearly 450 men were raised to the degree of Master Mason, hundreds more affiliated with our lodges, were reinstated, or affiliated from other jurisdictions — bringing more than 1,300 men into lodges during the year.

That momentum continues. In the first half of 2025, lodges welcomed over 1,100 men, including nearly 500 new Masons. Importantly, a portion of these numbers represents brethren who returned after being suspended for non-payment of dues. One of my goals this year has been to ensure that every man has the opportunity to reengage with the Craft. Just as our lodges have a responsibility to open their doors, our members have a responsibility to reach out, encourage, and walk beside those who seek to return. In doing so, we affirm that no brother is forgotten and that every Mason truly matters.

These milestones are the lifeblood of our Craft — moments when tradition meets commitment, and the Fraternity finds new strength. This resurgence is no accident. It reflects intentional leadership, grassroots engagement, and relentless dedication. Our lodges are vibrant, our brethren are engaged, and our mission is clear: we are building a future rooted in tradition, guided by principle, and inspired by hope.

The Grand Steward Transition

On September 25, 2025, Worshipful Brother Julian C. Setzer resigned from the office of Grand Steward after thoughtful consideration of his family, professional responsibilities, and service to the Craft. I accepted his resignation with gratitude and respect. Worshipful Brother Setzer served faithfully, humbly, and with genuine love for Freemasonry. His decision did not diminish the value of his service, and I remain thankful for all he contributed.

On September 30, 2025, I appointed Worshipful Brother Russell E. Bridges as Grand Steward Pro Tem. Worshipful Brother Bridges brought recognized leadership, integrity, experience, and devotion to the office. I was confident that his wisdom and commitment would strengthen the Grand Line

during the final weeks of the term. I remain grateful to both brothers for the manner in which they placed the welfare of the Craft first.

Together WE R.I.S.E.: The Program Completed

Together WE R.I.S.E. was conceived as more than a slogan. It was a practical framework built upon **R**ecognition, **I**nnovation, **S**tructure, and **E**very Day. By the close of the year, each pillar had taken visible form.

Recognition.

We established a permanent system to honor service that too often occurs quietly and without acknowledgment. The Grand Master's One Hundred Medal recognized exceptional service to the Grand Master's mission. The Superior District Leadership Medal honored District Deputy Grand Masters and District Deputy Grand Lecturers whose performance strengthened their districts. The Chevalier Medal recognized those who served under the Grand Master's personal representative authority. These awards were joined by the Thomas Warren Gregory Masonic Leadership Award and the Joseph Montfort Medal, our jurisdiction's highest honor bestowed by a Grand Master.

Innovation.

We reconstituted strategic planning, widened the circle of input, strengthened education, improved digital communication, and encouraged solutions that respected tradition while responding to present needs. Innovation was never offered as a rejection of our landmarks. It was the means by which our enduring principles could remain active and useful.

Structure.

We put the five geographic areas of the jurisdiction into operation, rotated Grand Line officers through them, and used assistant officers as regional subject matter experts. This structure brought leadership closer to lodges and made the Grand Lodge more accessible, connected, and responsive.

Every Day.

We affirmed that every Mason matters, that we fight for every good man, and that we are our brother's keeper. Outreach to suspended brethren, mentoring, local service, daily acts of kindness, and performance based leadership were not separate programs. They were the daily expression of who we profess to be.

The strength of Together WE R.I.S.E. was proved by action. It gave us a common language for recognizing excellence, embracing responsible progress, organizing our work, and living Masonry beyond the lodge room. Most importantly, it belonged to the Craft. Whatever began as the program of one Grand Master became the work of thousands of North Carolina Masons.

Recognition and Awards

On October 29, 2025, the Grand Lodge formally announced the year's honorees. These recognitions reflected steady leadership, quiet excellence, and service across our jurisdiction. The complete lists of recipients of the Grand Master's One Hundred Medal, Superior District Leadership Medal, and Chevalier Medal appear in the appendices to this report.

Thomas Warren Gregory Masonic Leadership Award

The Thomas Warren Gregory Masonic Leadership Award recognizes North Carolina Masons who exemplify Blue Lodge leadership and servant leadership. The 2025 recipients were:

- Worshipful Brother William Dennis Campbell, Crown Point Lodge No. 708
- Worshipful Brother Aaron Lazenby King, Jr., Conover Lodge No. 709
- Worshipful Brother Jerry Randolph Browning, III, Blackmer Lodge No. 127

Joseph Montfort Medal

The Joseph Montfort Medal is the highest honor a Grand Master of North Carolina may bestow for distinguished Masonic service or achievement. Regulation 80-1 limits a Grand Master to no more than three presentations during his term. I was honored to recognize:

- Most Worshipful Brother William L. Dill, Past Grand Master, Ionic Lodge No. 583
- Most Worshipful Brother Richard G. Moore, Past Grand Master, Mount Holly Lodge No. 544
- Worshipful Brother E. William Chancellor, White Stone Lodge No. 155, posthumously

Each recipient represents the highest ideals of fidelity, leadership, and service. These honors were not merely acknowledgments of past work. They were examples placed before the Craft, calling each of us to a higher standard.

The Masonic Home for Children at Oxford

The Draft Honor Roll of the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford, reflecting gifts received through October 28, 2025, recorded more than $1.09 million in combined lodge and individual giving. This generosity is a powerful expression of our obligation to care for children and families. The honor roll preserved the names of lodges large and small whose gifts, joined together, sustained one of North Carolina Masonry's most sacred missions.

Hurricane Helene Relief: When the Waters Rose

No work better revealed the meaning of Together WE R.I.S.E. than our response to Hurricane Helene. The storm struck Western North Carolina within hours of my installation, transforming the image of one hand lifting another from symbol into duty. Our brothers answered before there was time for ceremony. They checked on widows, gathered supplies, loaded trucks,

opened lodges as collection points, drove into devastated communities, and served wherever the need was greatest.

The final documented Hurricane Helene relief total was just under $800,000 in direct financial support. When donated supplies, equipment, transportation, building materials, volunteer labor, and other in kind assistance are considered, the estimated value of North Carolina Freemasonry's response approached $1.5 million.

That relief was statewide, coordinated, accountable, and deeply personal:

The North Carolina Masonic Foundation, the Grand Lodge, the Committee on Charity, local lodges, individual Masons, sister jurisdictions, and the Masonic Service Association of North America formed a single chain of relief.

Collection and deployment points in Winston-Salem, Salisbury, Lincolnton, Jefferson, and Brevard helped move people, supplies, and resources safely and efficiently.

Assistance was directed to unmet needs through documented review, while trusted local brothers, churches, volunteer fire departments, food banks, and community organizations helped preserve dignity and reach communities reluctant to seek outside aid.

Substantial support went directly to brothers and families, damaged lodges, and Western North Carolina communities. Documented lodge assistance included $37,000 for French Broad Lodge No. 292 and $29,000 for Hominy Lodge No. 491.

The 2025 Grand Master's Challenge Coin, which I privately funded so no Grand Lodge money would be used, generated nearly $34,000 for Western North Carolina relief.

North Carolina Scottish Rite efforts raised more than $70,000 for food pantries, community associations, and volunteer fire departments, with food pantry support expected to provide more than 63,000 pounds of food.

Shriners and other Masonic partners carried relief into the holiday season, including toy distributions that restored joy and hope to children affected by the storm.

The numbers are important because accountability matters. Yet they cannot capture every case of water, every mile driven, every hour volunteered, every meal prepared, every road reopened, or every quiet act of kindness. The greater achievement was the assurance given to our brothers and their communities that they would not face the darkness alone.

When the waters rose, our brothers rose with them. They rose as individual Masons, as lodges, as appendant bodies, as charities, and as one Masonic family. We reached down, lifted one another up, and proved that Brotherly Love and Relief remain living obligations.

Physical Disabilities

In the case of petitioners with physical disabilities, The Code requires the District Deputy Grand Master to conduct an investigation and advise the Grand Master as to whether the petition should proceed through its normal process. During my tenure as Grand Master, there were twenty-one of these

investigations, and based on the information provided by the DDGMs, each of the petitions was approved for processing. The Code provisions are in place to assist in determining whether an applicant is physically able to go through the initiation process and whether he would become an immediate financial burden to the Lodge. My thanks go to the District Deputy Grand Masters who thoroughly investigated these specific instances and made a proper report to expedite my final decision.

Dispensations

During my tenure as Grand Master, I granted 106 dispensations for various Lodge needs and situations. They are listed below:

1. Move stated - Cookville 502
2. Other place - Meadow Branch 578
3. Virtual emergent communication - Excelsior 261
4. Virtual emergent communication - Excelsior 261
5. Outdoor degree - Henderson 229
6. Other place - Pigeon River 386
7. Other place - Greensboro 76
8. Temporary charter reinstatement - Round Peak 616
9. Other place - French Broad 292
10. Move stated - Knights of Solomon 764
11. Cancel stated - Lovelady 670
12. Cancel stated - Fairview 339
13. Emergent Communication - Casar 579
14. Elect Master - Mt. Pleasant 573
15. Elect Master - Lucama 527
16. Elect Master - Granite 191
17. Elect officers - Newport 706
18. Cancel stated - Glenville 551
19. Move stated - Knights of Solomon 766
20. Host Civil War Research Lodge 1865, VA - Federal Point 753
21. Move stated - James K Polk 759
22. Move stated - Friendship 388
23. Master of two lodges - Waxhaw 562
24. Move stated - Hominy 491
25. Other place - William G. Hill 218
26. Install officers other place - Linville 489 & Cranberry 598
27. Elect Secretary & Treasurer - Mint Hill 742
28. Elect Senior Warden - Ocean 405
29. Elect Senior Warden - Atkinson 612
30. Elect Secretary - Derita 715

1. Cancel stated - Hiram 40
2. Cancel stated - Neill S. Stewart 556
3. Emergent communication - Excelsior 261
4. Cancel stated - Seaside 429
5. Emergent communication - Knights of Solomon 774
6. Other place - Knights of Solomon 764
7. Master of two lodges - Knights of Solomon 766
8. Cancel stated - Grassy Knob 471
9. Elect Secretary - Cherryville 505
10. Emergent communication - Oxford 122
11. Emergent communication - Wendell 565
12. Move stated communication - Royal White Hart 2
13. Other place - State College 770
14. Other place - Knights of Solomon 766
15. Other places - Knights of Solomon 774
16. Other places - Knights of Solomon 776
17. Other places - Knights of Solomon 768
18. Elect Secretary & Junior Warden - Widow's Son 75
19. Cancel stated - Orr 104
20. Cancel stated - Perquimans 106
21. Move stated - Pythagoras 249
22. Move stated - Raleigh 500
23. Other place - William G. Hill 218
24. Emergent communication - Elkin 454
25. Other places - Knights of Solomon 766
26. Emergent communication - Ashe 594
27. Move stated - Davie 39
28. Move stated - St. Patrick's 617
29. Emergent communication - Sophia 767
30. Other place - Wilkerson College 760
31. Battleship degree - St. John's 1
32. Emergent communication - Oak Grove 750
33. Other place - Knights of Solomon 774
34. Elect Junior Warden - Knights of Solomon 766
35. Conduct business on First Degree - Greensboro 76
36. Other place - Knights of Solomon 764
37. Emergent communication - Knights of Solomon 764
38. Other place - Knights of Solomon 768
39. Elect Master - Newport 706

1. Emergent communication - Spencer 543
2. Cancel stated - Gate City 694
3. Emergent communication - Junaluskee 145
4. Emergent communication - Junaluskee 145
5. Emergent communication - Waxhaw 562
6. Other place - Wallace 279
7. Emergent communication - Knights of Solomon 768
8. Emergent communication - Oxford 122
9. Other place - Wilkerson College 760
10. Emergent communication - Denton 404
11. Other place - Knights of Solomon 768
12. Emergent communication - Nine Sisters 773
13. Elect Junior Warden - Mt. Vernon 143
14. Elect Junior Warden - Southern Pines 484
15. Tennessee Cave Degree - Monroe 244
16. Other place - Catawba 248
17. Other place - Casar 579
18. Cancel stated - Grassy Knob 471
19. Emergent communication - Bingham 272
20. Emergent communication - Oak Grove 750
21. Emergent communication - Liberty 714
22. Other Place - Mt. Olive 208
23. Cancel stated - Mt. Olive 208
24. Emergent communication - Derita 715
25. Emergent communication - Excelsior 261
26. Harvest Moon Degree - Union 618
27. Outdoor degree - Mocksville 134
28. Emergent communication - Prometheus 775
29. Cancel stated - Archer 165
30. Cancel stated - Grassy Knob 471
31. Emergent communication - Cleveland 202
32. Other place - Wilkerson College 760
33. Cancel stated - Zion 81
34. Other place - South Fork 462
35. Other place & date - Belmont 627
36. Emergent communication - State College 770
37. Emergent communication - Lux Libertas 772

Orders

During my tenure as Grand Master, I issued Eight (8) Orders for various Lodge needs and situations. These are enumerated below:

1. **To Round Peak Lodge No. 616 and Brother RVL** for the purpose of removing Br. RVL from the office of Treasurer of Round Peak Lodge No. 616 as a result of un-Masonic conduct and pending charges by the Judge Advocate. Issued October 9, 2024.
2. **To Kilwinning Lodge No. 64** for the purpose of declaring the ballot null and void and ordering a re-ballot on a Petition for the Degrees of Masonry by Kilwinning Lodge No. 64 due to a report of irregularities with the ballot. Issued March 18, 2025.
3. **To Pendleton Lodge No. 418** for the purpose of ordering Bros. KNP and TSR be re-obligated on the First Degree due to irregularities with their elections and subsequent initiations following the lodge's consolidation. Issued June 5, 2025.
4. **To Rockingham Lodge No. 495** for the purpose of suspending the Master of the lodge from office pending a full financial audit of the lodge and suspending the charter of Rockinham Lodge No. 495 pending receipt of a credible plan to restore the lodge to regular Masonic practice. Issued June 24, 2025.
5. **To Pleasant Hill Lodge No. 304 and Brother JLC** for the purpose of removing Br. JLC from the office of Treasurer of Pleasant Hill Lodge No. 304 and prohibiting him from participating in any Masonic activities in the State of North Carolina until such time as a final disposition of the criminal charge alleging embezzlement against him has been resolved. Issued July 24, 2025.
6. **To Hominy Lodge No. 491** for the purpose of declaring the ballot null and void and ordering a re-ballot on an application for affiliation by Hominy Lodge No. 491 due to the failure of the Lodge to comply with the proper balloting procedure at the time of the original ballot. Issued July 31, 2025.
7. **To Rockingham Lodge No. 495** for purpose of restoring the charter of the lodge and appointing *pro tempore* officer for the remainder of the year. Issued August 8, 2025.
8. **To Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118** for the purpose of declaring the ballot null and void and ordering a re-ballot on an application for advancement by Mt. Hermon Lodge No. 118 due to the failure of the Lodge to comply with the proper investigating procedure prior to the original ballot. Issued September 29, 2025.

Opinions

During my tenure as Grand Master, I issued One (1) Opinion. This is enumerated below:

This opinion arose from concerns regarding fundraising activities undertaken in connection with certain constituent lodges outside the established rules and procedures of the Grand Lodge. In some instances, separate auxiliary organizations had been formed, including organizations

structured as charitable entities and composed principally of spouses or other persons who were not members of the lodge. Although these organizations were not formally affiliated with the Grand Lodge or its constituent lodges, their activities were closely associated with Masonic bodies and were being used to conduct fundraising that could not otherwise be undertaken by the lodges themselves. These circumstances raised concerns regarding compliance with Grand Lodge regulations, applicable fundraising requirements, and the protection of the Grand Lodge's tax-exempt status.

On March 1, 2025, I therefore issued an opinion clarifying the relationship between the Grand Lodge, its constituent lodges and members, and such auxiliary bodies. The Opinion held that auxiliary organizations whose members were not themselves members of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina fell outside the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge. North Carolina lodges and Masons associating with those organizations, however, remained fully subject to Grand Lodge jurisdiction and could not use an auxiliary organization to circumvent Masonic regulations governing organizational structure or fundraising. The Opinion further provided that auxiliary bodies attempting to circumvent provisions of The Code could result in Masonic bodies being directed to disassociate from them and prohibited the unauthorized use of Grand Lodge symbols or intellectual property. The Opinion was referred to the Committee on Jurisprudence and to the Grand Lodge for further consideration at the Annual Communication and was approved by the delegates of the 238th Annual Communication.

Approvals

During my tenure as Grand Master, I issued thirteen (13) Approvals for various Lodge needs and situations. Listed below are the Approvals issued:

1. To Green Level Lodge No. 277 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued April 1, 2025.
2. To Pilot Lodge No. 493 for my approval of the resignation of the Secretary. Issued April 1, 2025.
3. To Newport Lodge No. 706 for my approval of the resignation of the Master. Issued April 1, 2025.
4. To the DDGM of the 25th Masonic District for my approval of the resignation of the Master of Pilot Lodge No. 493 and appointment of the Acting Master of the same lodge. Issued April 22, 2025.
5. To Angier Lodge No. 686 for my approval of the resignation of the Secretary. Issued May 15, 2025.
6. To Mt. Vernon Lodge No. 143 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued June 5, 2025.
7. To Mount Holly Lodge No. 544 for my approval of the resignation of the Treasurer. Issued June 5, 2025.
8. To Hickory Lodge No. 343 for my approval of the resignation of the Treasurer. Issued June 18, 2025.
9. To Waxhaw Lodge No. 562 for my approval of the resignation of the Treasurer. Issued July 2, 2025.
10. To Neill S. Stewart Lodge No. 556 for my approval of the resignation

1. of the Junior Warden. Issued September 29, 2025.
2. To Revolution Lodge No. 552 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued October 16, 2025.
3. To Polk County Unity Lodge No. 482 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued October 30, 2025.
4. To Angier Lodge No. 686 for my approval of the resignation of the Master. Issued October 31, 2025.

Lodge Losses and Gains

Several lodge consolidations were approved during 2025, all of which became effective on January 1, 2026. These consolidations were as follows:

1. **New River Lodge No. 736 into Lafayette Lodge No. 83.** This was approved on August 29, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
2. **South Fork Lodge No. 462, Lowell Lodge No. 590, and Belmont Lodge No. 627 consolidated to become Unity Lodge No. 462.** This was approved on September 9, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
3. **Garner Lodge No. 701 into William T. Bain Lodge No. 231.** This was approved on October 20, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
4. **Maxton Lodge No. 417 into Red Springs Lodge No. 501 to become Red Springs Lodge No. 417.** This was approved on October 23, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
5. **Pigeon River Lodge No. 386 into Waynesville Lodge No. 259.** This was approved on November 15, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
6. **Wiccacon Lodge No. 240 into Davie Lodge No. 39.** This was approved on November 19, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.
7. **Mt. Moriah Lodge No. 690 into Statesville Lodge No. 27 to become Mt. Moriah Lodge No. 27.** This was approved on December 5, 2025, and became effective January 1, 2026.

Necrology

One thousand eighty-eight Master Masons laid down their working tools during 2025. We offer our continued prayers for their families and thank them for sharing their loved ones with our fraternity during each of their Masonic journeys.

District Engagement: A Journey Across North Carolina

Among the most meaningful aspects of my tenure has been engaging directly with brethren across the state. Between December 2024 and January 2025, I held 13 district meetings, covering all 41 districts in North Carolina.

These were more than administrative events — they were opportunities

for connection, inspiration, renewal. I heard concerns, celebrated successes, and saw firsthand the dedication in our Craft — from Cleveland Lodge No. 202 to Junaluskee Lodge No. 145, North Wilkesboro Lodge No. 407, the Oasis Shrine Temple, and the Greensboro Masonic Temple. Each visit reaffirmed my confidence in our vitality.

I concluded in Goldsboro, deeply moved by the warmth and support I received. These experiences have shaped my leadership and deepened my appreciation for the brotherhood we share. I extend my personal thanks to all the District Deputy Grand Masters who hosted our fourteen district visits. Each visit was unique and memorable, providing a platform to advance our strategic objectives while also offering fellowship and brotherhood that will remain with me always.

Date	Districts	Host Lodge	Location
Dec 9, 2024	34, 35, 36	Cleveland Lodge 202	Shelby
Dec 10, 2024	37, 38, 39, 40, 41	Junaluskee Lodge 145	Franklin
Dec 11, 2024	30, 33, 35	N. Wilkesboro Lodge 407	Wilkesboro
Dec 12, 2024	28, 29, 31, 32	Oasis Shrine Temple	Charlotte
Dec 13, 2024	22, 23, 24	Greensboro Masonic Temple	Greensboro
Dec 16, 2024	11, 17, 18, 20, 21	Fayetteville Masonic Center	Fayetteville
Jan 4, 2025	25, 26, 27	Winston 167 & Salem 289	Winston-Salem
Jan 8, 2025	1, 2, 3, 5	Unanimity Lodge 7	Edenton
Jan 9, 2025	13, 14, 15	Wake County Shrine Club	Raleigh
Jan 15, 2025	6, 8, 9	Rocky Mount Shrine Club	Rocky Mount
Jan 18, 2025	4, 7	St. John's Lodge 3	New Bern
Jan 25, 2025	12	St. John's Lodge 1	Wilmington
Jan 29, 2025	10, 16	Wayne Lodge 112	Goldsboro

Operational Integrity and Financial Stewardship

Brethren, one of my foremost responsibilities is to uphold the Grand Lodge's integrity, transparency, and accountability. Last year, we took deliberate measures to honor that trust:

- Audits of travel and expenditures were referred to the Finance Committee.
- A special committee investigated past abuses to recommend protective safeguards.
- The $225,000 partial purchase of TrestleBoard LLC has been refunded in full.
- Surplus funds are being used to secure external financial accounting services.
- Up to $5,000 was allocated for new equipment, avoiding tariff costs.
- A new Grand Lodge storefront and inventory system was approved.
- We explored a partnership to expand Freemasons' Hall in Raleigh.
- Plans are underway to eliminate online inquiry bottlenecks.

- Our new Grand Lodge website launched in 2025, ensuring timely, accurate communication.

These are more than administrative actions. They are commitments to align the business of the Grand Lodge with the values of Freemasonry: honesty, responsibility, stewardship. They are not isolated fixes — they are signs of a fraternity preparing itself for long-term stability and excellence.

Honorary Title of Past District Deputy Grand Master

It is my privilege to recommend that this Grand Lodge grant the honorary title of Past District Deputy Grand Master to the following brethren who have completed their respective terms of service and who are now eligible to receive this honorary title in accordance with The Code:

Name	Lodge	District
Marty Eugene Silverwood	Widow's Son Lodge No. 75	1
Junior Jason Caldwell	Semper Fidelis Lodge No. 680	4
Larry Robert Liles	Royal Hart Lodge No. 497	8
Donald Gary Green	St. John's Lodge No. 4	10
Frederick Alexander Szakasits	Orient Lodge No. 395	12
Stephen Todd Owen	Oxford Lodge No. 122	13
Lloyd Carl Johnson	Raleigh Lodge No. 500	14
Eric Neal Greene	Holly Springs Lodge No. 115	15
Gary Dean McPherson	Chadbourn Lodge No. 190	18
James Edward Paschal	Corinthian Lodge No. 542	23
Dean Russell Gordon	Pilot Lodge No. 493	25
William Harvey Fulbright	Lexington Memorial Lodge No. 493	27
Aaron Dean Stone	Mooresville Lodge No. 496	30
Phillip Mark Alexander	N. Wilkesboro Lodge No. 407	33
Hugh Marcus Moss	Cherryville Lodge No. 505	36
Alvin Creed Carpenter	Vesper Lodge No. 554	37

Honorary Title of Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer

Likewise, I am privileged to recommend that this Grand Lodge grant the honorary title of Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer to the following Brethren who are now eligible in accordance with The Code:

Name	Lodge	District
Christopher Scott East, Sr.	Manteo No. 521	2
Russell Elton Jones	Lafayette No. 83	4
Donald Ray Hufham	Atkinson No. 612	5
Justin Michael Robinson	Crown Point No. 708	6
Charles Wayne Lytton	Doric No. 568	7
Michael Conrad Saviak, III	Mount Olive No. 208	10
Ronald Casey Pearce	Youngsville No. 377	13
Clifford Laipuni Kealoha, Jr.	Raleigh No. 500	14
Kyle Franklin Sledge	Phoenix No. 8	18
Billy Ray Freeland	Carthage No. 181	21
James Alfred Bouldin	Tabasco No. 271	23
Homer Thomas Dearmin	Pilot No. 493	25
Jeffrey Lynn Bullington	Corinthian No. 542	26
David Keith Potter	Statesville No. 27	30
Todd Jeffrey McCranie	East Gate No. 692	31
Travis David Rainwater	Cherryville No. 505	36

Lion and Pillar Lodges for 2025

The following lodges received recognition for their participation in the Lion and Pillar Lodge of Excellence Program and for their continued growth and active participation in their communities.

Platinum Level Lion and Pillar

Lodge	District	Location
St. John's Lodge No. 3	7	New Bern
Eagle Lodge No. 19	19	Hillsborough
Greensboro Lodge No. 76	23	Greensboro
Zion Lodge No. 81	7	Trenton
St. Alban's Lodge No. 114	18	Lumberton
William G. Hill Lodge No. 218	14	Raleigh
Kenly Lodge No. 257	16	Kenly
Hibriten Lodge No. 262	34	Lenoir
Wilmington Lodge No. 319	12	Wilmington
Campbell Lodge No. 374	30	Troutman

Lebanon Lodge No. 391	17	Hope Mills
Bald Creek Lodge No. 397	37	Burnsville
Bula Lodge No. 409	22	Burlington
Mooresville Lodge No. 496	30	Mooresville
Raleigh Lodge No. 500	14	Raleigh
Cannon Memorial Lodge No. 626	28	Kannapolis
Beulaville Lodge No. 658	11	Beulaville
Semper Fidelis Lodge No. 680	4	Jacksonville
Gate City Lodge No. 694	23	Greensboro
Shallotte Lodge No. 727	12	Shallotte
Steele Creek Lodge No. 737	32	Charlotte
Old Town Lodge No. 751	26	Winston-Salem
Lux Libertas Lodge No. 772	19	Hillsborough

Standard Level Lion and Pillar

Lodge	District	Location
Oxford Lodge No. 122	13	Oxford
Dan River Lodge No. 129	22	Madison
Jefferson Penn Lodge No. 384	22	Reidsville

Transition and Closing Reflections

On November 1, 2025, at the Wilmington Scottish Rite Temple, the officers of the Grand Lodge were installed for the ensuing year, and Most Worshipful Brother Steve M. Norris became Grand Master. The installation marked the close of my service in the Grand Line and the orderly transfer of responsibility that preserves the stability of our institution.

I express my deepest appreciation to the Grand Lodge officers, Past Grand Masters, district officers, boards, committees, commissions, Grand Lodge staff, lodge officers, and brethren throughout North Carolina. I am especially grateful to my wife, Courtney, and to our family for the sacrifices, encouragement, and love that made this service possible.

The year tested us. It also revealed us. We recognized faithful service, welcomed responsible innovation, strengthened our structure, and lived our values every day. We cared for children, restored lodges, lifted communities, and stood beside brothers in their hour of need.

Titles pass. Programs conclude. The good we do in the lives of others endures. Together WE R.I.S.E. is now in the hands of the Craft, where it always belonged.

Together WE R.I.S.E.

Respectfully and fraternally submitted,
Robert “Bobby” W. Rideout
Grand Master, 2025

Appendix A: Grand Master's One Hundred Medal

Presented for exceptional service to the Grand Master's mission. The recipients are reproduced from the 2025 Honors List.

Recipients	Recipients	Recipients
Andy Adams	Tameshwar Bahadur	David Bailey
Gary Bass	Ronald Blevins	John Burns
Elmer Butt	Doug Calhoun	Chris Canipe
Raymond Casey	Job Connor	Gary Cooke
John Crowl	John Denneny	Billy Dill
Chris Donahoo	Doug Earnhardt	Alex Edmonson
Albert Etheridge	Readford Freeman	Joseph Fuller
Richard Gardner	Eric Greene	Michael Gunter
Michael Hamrick	Raymond Hevner	Curtis Hipps
Larry Holder	Jimmy Hyatt	Aaron Jackson
Claude Laughter	Jerry Mann	James McGahan
Wes McIntyre	Gary McPherson	Tim Merritt
Karlston Millinor	Roger Millner	Matt Moore
Kevin Otis	Rick Patton	Joshua Payne
Michael Payne	Micke Pritchard	Terry Pritt
James Pugsley	Jeffrey Ray Kirkman	Tom Redmond
Matthew Robbins	Ben Roberts, Jr	Ben Roberts, Sr
Justin Robinson	Arthur Romans	Jason Ross
Tony Saenz	Mark Sears	Aaron Seifer
John Shawver	Charles Somerset	Aaron Stone
Kim Styers	Frederick Szakasits	William Thacker
Micahel Turner	Tim Walker	Kenneth Wallace
Matthew Walters	Randy Ward	Kenny Warlick
Ken Wical	Odell Williams	Joe Woodie
Horace Wyatt	Michael Wyatt	

Appendix B: Superior District Leadership Medal

Presented to district officers whose leadership strengthened their districts and advanced the work of the Grand Lodge.

District	Office	Recipient
33	DDGM	Phillip Alexander
23	DDGL	James Bouldin
26	DDGL	Jeffrey Bullington
29	DDGM	Joseph Burris
29	DDGL	James Burris
37	DDGM	Alvin Carpenter
17	DDGM	Job Connor
25	DDGL	Homer Dearmin
17	DDGL	Allen Faires
15	DDGM	Eric Greene
4	DDGL	Russell Jones
12	DDGL	Terry Kuhn
31	DDGL	Todd McCranie
16	DDGM	Matthew Moore
13	DDGL	Ronald Pearce
21	DDGM	Jonathan Puckett
6	DDGL	Justin Robinson
22	DDGM	Clifford Shrewsbury
1	DDGM	Marty Silverwood
9	DDGM	Carl Smith
38	DDGM	Douglas Tribou
11	DDGM	Douglas Turner
3	DDGM	Odell Williams

Appendix C: Chevalier Medal

Presented to those who served under the Grand Master's personal representative authority.

Position	Recipient
Assistant Grand Lecturer	Jacob Abernathy
Assistant Grand Lecturer	William Adams
Assistant Grand Orator	Phillip Alexander
Assistant Grand Tyler/Assistant to GM	Tameshwar Bahadur
Social Media Manager	Richard Bandy
Assistant Grand Historian	George Barrier
Assistant Grand Historian	Dan Beal
Assistant Grand Lecturer	Jimmy Blair
Assistant Grand Tyler	James Blankenship
Assistant Grand Chaplain	William Bridges
Director of Communication	Donald Butto
Assistant Grand Chaplain	Rory Byers
Fundraising Chairman	Jason Caldwell
Assistant Grand Orator	Alex Edmisten
Assistant Grand Historian	Jeffery Gibson
Assistant Preceptor	Clinton Greene
Assistant Preceptor	Albert Hopping
Assistant Grand Lecturer	Brett Huffman
Assistant Grand Tyler	Lloyd Johnson
Assistant Grand Historian	Nicholas Lamia
Social Media Manager	Sage Levesque
Assistant Grand Orator	Paul Miller
Assistant Grand Historian	Michael Orlando
Assistant Grand Chaplain	Mark Parker
Assistant Grand Lecturer	Ronald Pearce
Social Media Manager	Steven Potocnak
Assistant Grand Tyler	James Pugsley
Assistant Grand Tyler	Joseph Reyes
Assistant Grand Tyler	Robert Ritchie
Assistant Grand Secretary	Matthew Robbins
Assistant Grand Lecturer	Justin Robinson

Position	Recipient
Assistant Grand Historian	Thomas Sadler
Assistant Grand Tyler	Antonio Saenz
Assistant Grand Lecturer	John Shawver
Assistant Grand Chaplain	Clifford Shrewsbury
Assistant Grand Chaplain	Kyle Sledge
Assistant Grand Chaplain	Carl Smith
Assistant Grand Historian	Richard Spivey
Assistant Grand Historian	James Vance
Assistant Grand Orator	Jonathon Walker
Assistant Preceptor	Matthew Walters
Social Media Manager	Evan Watson
Assistant Grand Orator	Louran Weber

Interim Report

of

Grand Master

Steve M. Norris

to

the

Grand Lodge

of

Ancient, Free & Accepted Masons

of

North Carolina

at

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

September 25, 2026

To the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina, Grand Lodge Officers, Past Grand Masters, Officers of constituent Lodges, voting delegates to the Annual Communication, and Brethren all:

Welcome to the 239th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina. It has been my privilege and highest honor to have served as the 173rd Grand Master since our inception in 1787. We again welcome you to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, which has been our home away from home for many years and the host of our Annual Communication for 2026.

Pursuant to the requirements of The Code, I present my Interim Report for 2025–2026. Listed later in this report is an overview of the various events and activities that occurred November 2, 2025, through August 31, 2026.

State of the Craft

This year our nation observes its two hundred and fiftieth anniversary. A number like that does not pass without asking what has been done with the time. We have every reason to celebrate. Freemasons were present at the founding of this country and at the founding of this state, and men who sat in our Lodges helped to build both. That inheritance is ours, and we should be proud of it.

But an anniversary that is only a celebration is a wasted one. It is also an occasion to take an accounting — of where we stand as a nation, as a people, and as a fraternity — and to ask ourselves honestly whether we are still doing the work that earned that inheritance in the first place. I have spent this year putting that question to our Craft and traveling our state to hear your answers. What follows is what I found.

As I traveled our state, my conversations focused on the stability of our Lodges and especially our buildings. Over two-thirds of our current Lodges were chartered before the automobile was readily available, so our Brothers either walked or rode a horse to attend Lodge. This limited travel to two or three miles, even where geographical features such as streams, rivers, or mountains did not come into play. Because of this, we have Lodge buildings near one another and a declining membership unable to maintain them. This is not unique to our grand jurisdiction and has been a topic at several of the conferences I have attended this year.

The stability of our fraternity cannot be judged by the number of Lodges currently chartered or the number of members on our roster. Just as we are taught to look upon the internal qualifications of a man, so should our Craft be measured by the commitment of our Masons, not the potential capability of our members.

We have convinced ourselves that if we manage to have the minimum number of members at our meetings, if we have the finances to pay our obligations, and if our buildings are not in total disrepair, then we have a thriving Lodge. We have conditioned ourselves to accept that "good enough" is indeed good enough.

If our goal is to have someone answer the door of the west gate when our

children's children knock, then we must dedicate ourselves to being Masons and not just members; we must hold ourselves to the highest standards of conduct and appearance; and we must live and practice the teachings of our gentle Craft in our daily lives, so that we may "convince mankind of the goodness of our Order."

2026 Initiatives

What I heard from you this year was consistent, and it was practical. You are concerned about the cost of insuring buildings you can barely fill. You are frustrated with the software we asked you to use. You are asking how two Lodges three miles apart might become one strong Lodge rather than two struggling ones. And you are asking your Grand Lodge to carry more of the administrative weight, so that your Lodge can spend its evenings on Masonry instead of on paperwork.

Those are fair requests, and they are the reason for the initiatives that follow. Your Grand Lodge officers have listened, and I believed it prudent to direct our energies where they would be of the most benefit to you. Each of these is aimed at the same end — to lift burdens off your Lodge, so that the men in it are free to do the work that only they can do, in their homes, in their churches, and in their communities.

Insurance: For the past several years, insurance for our Lodges has become an important topic. Rates are rapidly increasing while membership and revenues are decreasing. In response, a committee was formed and is at work on three things: lowering what we pay, writing a blanket policy to cover the directors and officers of every Lodge in this jurisdiction, and putting affordable coverage within reach of each of our Lodges.

Membership Software: Since 2022, when we switched over to Grand View, the Grand Lodge has received numerous questions, comments, and complaints. In response, we have created an Ad Hoc Committee to explore solutions going forward. I have personally spoken with representatives of Grand View and Groupable about our needs. The committee is continuing these discussions and moving forward to determine the best course of action for our fraternity.

Strategic Planning: An Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning was also formed this year. Chaired by Worshipful Brother Trey Bolton and consisting of the appointed line officers, this committee is at work on our long-range plans, on membership development, on the experience a man has of his Lodge, on ritual excellence, and on our involvement in the communities where we live. Brother Bolton has been a Mason since 2007, is a member of Southern Pines Lodge 484, and served as Master in 2020. He brings more than twenty years of strategic planning and finance experience in the media and finance industries, and a wealth of knowledge to this committee.

Lodge Consolidations: Right Worshipful Brother Philip Johnson, Junior Grand Warden, currently serves as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on Consolidations and Mergers. I said at the outset that we have more buildings standing close together than our numbers can maintain, and that this strains the Lodges caught in it. Consolidation is one answer to that, but it is not the only one, and it is not this committee's whole charge. They are also examining shared Lodge space, and what a sustainable Lodge actually

requires. A Lodge does not need one hundred or two hundred members. It needs enough active members to sustain its operations and to discharge the duties required of it by The Code. Where consolidation is the right course, the committee is streamlining the paperwork and procedures so that no Lodge is discouraged by the process itself.

Financial Operations: We have also taken a hard look this year at how your Grand Lodge conducts its own business. We are investigating to what extent we may outsource some of our more complex financial operations, to give real assistance to the Grand Lodge office, to our Grand Secretary and Grand Treasurer, and to the Committee on Finance. We are also reviewing our investment strategy, because your Grand Lodge has for too long lived paycheck to paycheck, meeting its obligations with a per capita that must rise a little every year. I would rather we funded the required operations of a fraternal nonprofit the way a fraternal nonprofit ought to be funded — on the return from our investments, with a steady and palatable per capita we can project years ahead. What we learn from that work will not stay at the Grand Lodge office. We intend to give our Lodges better guidance in business matters as well, so that you can get on with the work of being Masons.

I have tried this year to do more than name committees. Each of these was given a charge, a chairman, and the expectation that it would come back to us with something we can act upon rather than another study to be filed. You will find their reports elsewhere in this book, and several of them will report to you in person during this Annual Communication. I would ask you to read them, because that is where much of this year's work is actually to be found. It is not finished, and the Brother who follows me will need your help to finish it.

District Meetings

My Brothers, this year district meetings have been structured less around information provided to you and more around information you provided to me. The meetings have been informally called "A Conversation with the Grand Master." It was my goal to hear from as many Lodges as possible about your concerns, your successes, and your struggles. I have not promised solutions, but I have offered ideas shared by other Lodges and assured you that we would make progress on many of the common issues facing our Craft. I have held 21 meetings with 24 districts represented through August 31st, and I have several more scheduled before the end of my term.

What I heard in those rooms was much the same from the coast to the mountains. Brethren spoke of buildings that cost more to keep than the Lodge can raise. They spoke of two and three Lodges within a few miles of one another, each straining alone at what they might do well together. They spoke of thin attendance at stated communications, and of the same few men carrying the work. But let me tell you what I did not hear. I did not hear men who had given up. I heard men asking how, not whether — and many of them were already sharing space, sharing degree teams, and sharing the labor, and wanted to know what their Grand Lodge could do to make that easier. A Lodge is not measured by the number on its roll. It is measured by how many of its members will answer when called, and by that measure I came home encouraged. The initiatives reported above came out of these conversations. What you told me did not stay in the room.

Following is a list of the 2026 district meetings held thus far:

Date	District	Host	Location
Jan 20	12	St. John's 1	Wilmington
Jan 30	6	Crown Point 708	Greenville
Feb 21	18	St. Albans 114	Lumberton
Feb 25	16	Relief 431	Benson
Feb 28	21	Roman Eagle 550	Aberdeen
Mar 14	9	Morning Star 85	Rocky Mount
Mar 20	14 & 15	Cary 198	Cary
Mar 31	17	Bladen 646	Elizabethtown
Apr 1	22	Caswell Brotherhood 11	Yanceyville
Apr 8	29	Stanly 348	Albemarle
Apr 15	7 & 10	Pleasant Hill 304	Deep Run
Apr 28	26	Kernersville 669	Kernersville
May 7	13	John H. Mills 624	Henderson
May 12	31 & 32	Long Creek 205	Huntersville
May 29	38	Kedron 387	Hendersonville
May 30	40	Waynesville 259	Waynesville
May 30	41	Robbinsville 672	Robbinsville
Jun 4	30	Mt. Moriah 27	Statesville
Jun 5	37	Bakersville 357	Bakersville
Jun 6	25	Granite 322	Mt. Airy
Jun 6	33	Liberty 45	North Wilkesboro

Traveling throughout the state allowed me to meet new members, renew old acquaintances, and enjoy the best fellowship possible. I am thankful for the respect you have shown to the office of Grand Master and for the welcome extended to me at these meetings, and I am grateful for the warm hospitality and great food.

Honorary Title of Past District Deputy Grand Master

It is my privilege to recommend that this Grand Lodge grant the honorary title of Past District Deputy Grand Master to the following brethren who have completed their respective terms of service and who are now eligible to receive this honorary title in accordance with The Code:

Name	Lodge	District
Michael Lawrence Andrews	Manteo Lodge No. 521	2
James Leroy Williams	Skewarkee Lodge No. 90	5
Morton William Sanford, Jr	Cherry Point Lodge No. 688	7
Carl Wayne Smith	Queen City Lodge No. 602	9
Douglas Allen Turner	Beulaville Lodge No. 658	11
Matthew Britt Moore	Relief Lodge No. 431	16
Job Richard Connor	Bladen Lodge No. 646	17
Timothy Wade Walker	Eagle Lodge No. 19	19
Jonathan David Puckett	Roman Eagle Lodge No. 550	21
Clifford Thomas Shrewsbury	Dan River Lodge No. 129	22
Kenneth Lee Small	Keller Memorial Lodge No. 657	28
James Joseph Toth, IV	Newell Lodge No. 739	31
Steven Javan Rice	Dillsboro Lodge No. 459	40

Honorary Title of Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer

Likewise, I am privileged to recommend that this Grand Lodge grant the honorary title of Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer to the following Brethren who are now eligible in accordance with The Code:

Name	Lodge	District
Douglas Heath Brickouse, Sr	Eureka Lodge No. 317	1
James Warren Cook, Jr	Royal White Hart Lodge No. 2	8
Raeford “Butch” Pressley Freeman	Morning Star Lodge No. 85	9
Clifford Laipuni Kealoha, Jr	Raleigh Lodge No. 500	14
Zachary Ryan Stanley	Fellowship Lodge No. 84	16
Allen Wayne Faires, Jr	Lebanon Lodge No. 391	17
Joshua Ryan Payne	Tabasco Lodge No. 271	22
Jack William Roach, III	Enterprise Lodge No. 752	27
Matthew Allan Peeler	Keller Memorial Lodge No. 657	28
James Alan Burris	Stanly Lodge No. 348	29
Edward Joseph Steel	Matthews Lodge No. 461	32
William David Thomas	Waynesville Lodge No. 259	40

Lion and Pillar Lodges for 2026

The following lodges received recognition for their participation in the Lion and Pillar Lodge of Excellence Program and for their continued growth and active participation in their communities.

Platinum Level Lion and Pillar

Lodge	District	Location
St. John's Lodge No. 3	7	New Bern
Eagle Lodge No. 19	19	Hillsborough
Mt. Moriah Lodge No. 27	30	Statesville
Greensboro Lodge No. 76	23	Greensboro
Zion Lodge No. 81	7	Trenton
Western Star Lodge No. 91	38	Rutherfordton
Mingo Lodge No. 206	11	Dunn
Kenly Lodge No. 257	16	Kenly
Hibriten Lodge No. 262	34	Lenoir
Wilmington Lodge No. 319	12	Wilmington
Campbell Lodge No. 374	30	Troutman
Lebanon Lodge No. 391	17	Hope Mills
Bula Lodge No. 409	22	Burlington
Unity Lodge No. 462	36	Lowell
Grimesland Lodge No. 475	6	Grimesland
Mooresville Lodge No. 496	30	Mooresville
Mount Holly Lodge No. 544	36	Mount Holly
Doric Lodge No. 568	7	New Bern
Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576	28	Salisbury
Atkinson Lodge No. 612	12	Atkinson
Cannon Memorial Lodge No. 626	28	Kannapolis
Beulaville Lodge No. 658	11	Beulaville
Semper Fidelis Lodge No. 680	4	Jacksonville
Gate City Lodge No. 694	23	Greensboro
Steele Creek Lodge No. 737	32	Charlotte
Old Town Lodge No. 751	26	Winston-Salem
Clemmons Lodge No. 755	26	Clemmons
Knights of Solomon Lodge No. 768	15	Holly Springs
Lux Libertas Lodge No. 772	19	Hillsborough
Knights of Solomon Lodge No. 774	40	Waynesville

Standard Level Lion and Pillar

Lodge	District	Location
Holly Springs Lodge No. 115	15	Holly Springs
Oxford Lodge No. 122	13	Oxford
Corinthian Lodge No. 230	9	Rocky Mount
Dunn's Rock Lodge No. 267	38	Brevard
Bald Creek Lodge No. 397	37	Burnsville
Polk County Unity Lodge No. 482	38	Saluda
Apex Lodge No. 584	15	Apex
Ashe Lodge No. 594	33	West Jefferson

Joseph Montfort Medals

Since April 17, 1940, The Code has given each Grand Master the privilege of presenting three Joseph Montfort Medals. Immediately after being installed as Grand Master, I presented my first medal to Most Worshipful Brother Robert E. Gresham, Jr. He served as a member of the Committee on Finance for many years and also served as its chairman before being appointed to the Grand Line in 2003. He served as Grand Master in 2012 and has also served as a member of the North Carolina Masonic Foundation for many years. I presented my second medal to Most Worshipful W. Berry Rigdon, who has served our Grand Lodge on various committees and served as Grand Master in 2007. Most Worshipful Rigdon has also served in numerous offices of the York Rite at the state, national, and international levels.

I will be presenting my final medal during our Annual Communication.

Physical Disabilities

In the case of petitioners having physical disabilities, The Code requires the District Deputy Grand Master to investigate and advise the Grand Master as to whether the petition should proceed through its normal process. The Code provisions are in place to assist in determining whether an applicant is physically able to go through the initiation process and whether he would become an immediate financial burden to the Lodge.

As of July 31, twenty (20) such requests have been submitted to me. In each case an investigation was conducted by the District Deputy Grand Master, with such assistance as he deemed necessary. Based on the information provided to me by the DDGMs, I have approved the request of all the petitioners to proceed with the Degrees in Masonry with their physical disabilities.

Dispensations

During the period from December 5, 2025, through August 1, 2026, I have issued ninety-four (94) Dispensations for various Lodge needs and situations. Listed below are the Dispensations issued to date:

1. Emergent communication - South Fork 462
2. Elect Master - Selma 320

3. Emergent communication - Waxhaw 562
4. Other place - Waxhaw 562
5. Emergent communication - Greenville 284
6. Cancel stated communication - Clifford Duell 756
7. Emergent communication - Kedron 387
8. Emergent communication - Kedron 387
9. Elect Treasurer - Gaston 263
10. Other place - Joseph Warren 92
11. Elect officers - Charity 5
12. Emergent communication - Crown Point 708
13. Other places - Knights of Solomon 766
14. Other places - Knights of Solomon 774
15. Emergent communication - Raleigh 500
16. Master two lodges - Currituck 463
17. Move stated - Winston 167
18. Move stated - Currituck 463
19. Move stated - Enterprise 752
20. Emergent communication - Royal Hart 497
21. Move stated - Lillington 302
22. Conduct business on Second Degree - Roman Eagle 550
23. Move stated & other place - William G. Hill 218
24. Emergent communication - South Fork 462
25. Elect Master - Cherokee 146
26. Elect officers - Providence 678
27. Emergent communication - Andrew Jackson 576
28. Emergent communication - JJ Crowder 743
29. Master two lodges - Doric 568
30. Emergent communication - Monroe 244
31. Emergent communication - Liberty 714
32. Emergent communication - Liberty 45
33. Elect Junior Warden - Spencer 543
34. Other places - Knights of Solomon 768
35. Emergent communication - Phalanx 31
36. Move stated - Whetstone 515
37. Cancel stated - Hiram 40
38. Move stated - Wallace 279
39. Move stated - Steele Creek 737
40. Move stated - Shelby 744
41. Move stated - Hiram 98

42. Move stated - Mingo 206
43. Move stated - Cherryville 505
44. Move stated - Mount Holly 544
45. Move stated - Derita 715
46. Move stated - Newell 739
47. Move stated - Lincoln 137
48. Move stated - Columbus 102
49. Move stated - Cookville 502
50. Move stated - Liberty 45
51. Move stated - St. John's 13
52. Cancel stated - Cannon Memorial 626
53. Cancel stated - Williams 176
54. Move stated - Hibriten 262
55. Move stated - Joseph Warren 92
56. Emergent communication - Fairview 339
57. Other places - Knights of Solomon 776
58. Cancel stated - Farmington 265
59. Move stated - Pilot 493
60. Elect Senior Warden - Eureka 317
61. Cancel stated - Granville 380
62. Cancel stated - Gate City 694
63. Emergent communication - Morning Star 85
64. Cancel stated - Nichols-W. Asheville 650
65. Emergent communication - Oak Grove 750
66. Other place - Prometheus 775
67. Emergent communication - Clay 301
68. Emergent communication - Phalanx 31
69. Emergent communication - Knights of Solomon 764
70. Elect Junior Warden - Creasy Proctor 679
71. Outdoor degree - Greenville 284
72. Outdoor degree - Orphans 761
73. Elect Master - Oak Island 758
74. Outdoor emergent communication - Yadkin Falls 637
75. Elect Senior Warden - Denton 404
76. Cancel stated - Gate City 694
77. Emergent communication - Kedron 387
78. Elect Junior Warden - Hanks 128
79. Elect Senior Warden - Fairview 339
80. Cancel stated - East Gate 692

81. Other place - Wilkerson College 760
82. Emergent communication - Spencer 543
83. Other place - Harmony 340
84. Other place - Knights of Solomon 764
85. Other place - Greensboro 76
86. Virtual stated - Wilkerson College 760
87. Cancel stated - Granite 322
88. Emergent communication - Phoenix 8
89. Cancel stated - Mocksville 134
90. Other place - Prometheus 775
91. Other place - Knights of Solomon 768
92. Cancel stated - MESH 771
93. Emergent communication - William T. Bain 231
94. Other place - Knights of Solomon 764

Orders

During the period of December 5, 2025, through August 1, 2026, I have issued three (3) Orders. Listed below are the Orders issued to date:

1. **To Widow's Son Lodge No. 75** for the purpose of declaring the ballot null & void and ordering a re-ballot on a petition by Widow's Son Lodge No. 75 due to the failure of the Lodge to comply with the proper certification and investigation procedures at the time of the original ballot. Issued December 3, 2025.
2. **To Campbell Lodge No. 374 and Brother AF** for the purpose of removing Br. AF from the office of Senior Deacon of Campbell Lodge No. 374 as a result of un-Masonic conduct and pending charges by the Judge Advocate. Issued March 11, 2026.
3. **To Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576 and Brother DJS** for the purpose of removing Br. DJS from the office of Master of Andrew Jackson Lodge No. 576 as a result of recently-filed felony charges. Issued June 1, 2026

Approvals

During the period of December 5, 2025, through August 1, 2026, I issued seven (7) Approvals for various Lodge needs and situations. Listed below are the Approvals issued:

1. Cannon Memorial Lodge No. 626 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued March 13, 2026.
2. Oak Island Lodge No. 758 for my approval of the resignation of the Master. Issued April 7, 2026.
3. Denton Lodge No. 404 for my approval of the resignation of the Senior Warden. Issued April 17, 2026.
4. Fairview Lodge No. 339 for my approval of the resignation of the

Senior Warden. Issued May 6, 2026.

5. St. John's Lodge No. 13 for my approval of the resignation of the Senior Warden. Issued May 18, 2026.
6. Lebanon Lodge No. 207 for my approval of the resignation of the Senior Warden. Issued July 2, 2026.
7. Knights of Solomon Lodge No. 774 for my approval of the resignation of the Junior Warden. Issued July 29, 2026.

Conference of Grand Masters of North America

Our Grand Lodge holds membership in three conferences of sister jurisdictions, and I would say a word about why we go before I report on each of them. These conferences are Lodge visitation on a national scale. Just as a Brother who sits in a neighboring Lodge comes home with a new idea, a better way of doing a familiar thing, and a wider circle of friends, so we return from these gatherings with programs, solutions, and perspectives we would never have found on our own. The difficulties we face in North Carolina are seldom ours alone, and neither are the answers to them. The very question I put to you at your district meetings — what to do with more buildings than we can keep — was on the agenda at every conference I attended this year. Every hour spent in counsel with our Brethren from across this nation makes our fraternity stronger, and I would urge those who follow me in this office to guard that opportunity carefully.

The Grand Lodge of North Carolina is a member of the Conference of Grand Masters of North America. This conference consists of recognized grand jurisdictions in all fifty United States, the Provinces of Canada, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the states of Mexico, and the American Canadian Grand Lodge of Germany. The Conference is the largest gathering of Grand Masters in the world and assembles Grand Masters to learn of items currently affecting the Craft, to discuss best practices, and to learn of new programs that can assist grand jurisdictions in operating more efficiently.

The annual meeting for 2026 was held February 15th through 17th in Rosemont, Illinois, near Chicago. I was privileged to serve as a member of the Time & Place Committee for the Conference in 2026, along with Grand Masters from four other grand jurisdictions, and was reappointed to serve another term.

Also attending with me were our Senior Grand Warden, Right Worshipful Brother Michael Register; our Junior Grand Warden, Right Worshipful Brother Philip Johnson; and our Grand Secretary, Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Underwood. Also in attendance was Most Worshipful A. Gene Cobb, Past Grand Master and Sovereign Grand Inspector General for North Carolina.

Northeast Conference of Grand Masters, Deputy Grand Masters, and Grand Secretaries

The Grand Lodge of North Carolina is a member of the Northeast Conference, which consists of the Grand Lodges of Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

This year's conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin, July 24th through 26th, hosted by the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin. Also attending were our Senior Grand Warden, Right Worshipful Brother Michael Register; our Junior Grand Warden, Right Worshipful Brother Philip Johnson; and our Grand Secretary, Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Underwood.

Southeast Conference of Grand Lodges

After an 18-year absence, the Grand Lodge of North Carolina is once again a member of the Southeast Conference, which consists of the Grand Lodges of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

This year's conference was held in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, August 6th and 7th, hosted by the Grand Lodge of Tennessee. Also attending were Most Worshipful Lew Ledford, Past Grand Master and Grand Treasurer; and our Senior Grand Deacon, Worshipful Brother C. Alvin Billings.

Board of Custodians and Grand Lecturer

It was an honor to attend the first Board of Custodians meeting on January 9, 2026, as Grand Master and to preside as Chairman ex officio, as required by our Code. I had the privilege of serving on this Board from 2015 to 2020, and as its Chairman from 2017 to 2020. I want to thank Most Worshipful Doug Caudle for initially appointing me to this Board, and the subsequent Grand Masters under whom I served. Those who know me well know that the Masonic ritual is very important to me, and I have tried to preserve it with dignity since I was first certified in 1985.

I do not think it too much to say that the ritual is what defines us. Other men gather for good purposes and call one another brother. What sets a Mason apart is that he has knelt where every Mason before him has knelt and heard the same words in the same order, and that the man standing beside him has done the same. That tie is not mere sentiment. It is what makes a stranger from a far jurisdiction a Brother the moment he opens his mouth. Our ritual carries the whole of our teaching. It is how the lessons are put into a man, and how he is directed to walk uprightly before God and man. It cannot be slighted, and it must never be shoved aside for the sake of convenience or a shorter evening.

For that reason I have asked the Board of Custodians to work with me in holding our Lodges to their ritual obligations. This is not a matter of finding fault. It is a matter of seeing that every man who comes to our door receives what he was promised, given in full and given well. No board of this Grand Lodge carries a weightier responsibility, and I am grateful to the Brethren who serve on it.

I was also honored to appoint my lifelong friend and business partner of over thirty years, Worshipful Brother Randy D. Ward, as Grand Lecturer. Brother Randy is a Past Master and is currently serving his twelfth year as Lodge Secretary. He is a certified lecturer, a Past District Deputy Grand Lecturer, a member of the Board of Custodians, and a current District Deputy Grand Master.

In-State Visitation and Special Activities

There are several events that stand out during the past year.

I was privileged to open the Grand Lodge of North Carolina on two occasions in the Chowan County Courthouse, constructed in 1767. Both were for the recognition of historic events, and I will never forget these opportunities as Grand Master.

I was honored to present the charter and install the new officers of Unity Lodge 462 in Gaston County. This Lodge was created by the merger of four Lodges into the largest Lodge in our state and was the culmination of what can be accomplished when Masons work together.

I attended the ceremonies held at Mount Vernon hosted by the Grand Lodge of Virginia, where the Grand Masters of the thirteen original colonies each placed a wreath at the tomb of George Washington. I was honored to represent the "Old North State."

On Saturday, March 14th, I traveled to Belhaven along with the District 9 District Deputy Grand Master, Worshipful Brother Carl Smith, to present a 77-year award to Brother Roscoe Lee Joyner. Brother Joyner had just celebrated his 107th birthday, and it was a pleasure to meet him and share conversation about his life.

On August 28th and 29th I was at the historic Greensboro Masonic Temple for a joint reunion of the Prince Hall Scottish Rite and the North Carolina Orient of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite — two bodies, one class, one set of lessons. I was joined there by Most Worshipful James C. Russell, Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of North Carolina; by our Sovereign Grand Inspector General for North Carolina, Most Worshipful A. Gene Cobb, Past Grand Master; by Illustrious James H. Upchurch, Sovereign Grand Inspector General for Prince Hall North Carolina; and by Illustrious James D. Cole, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction. Forty men sat through those degrees. Forty men gave up a weekend to understand their place in the universe a little better, through moral instruction, mentorship, and honest self-reflection. That is what the Scottish Rite is: a continuation of the lessons of Freemasonry, taught in dramatic degrees that ask a man to examine his own character rather than admire someone else's. I am grateful to all who made that weekend possible.

I thank all Lodges, Scottish and York Rite bodies, and Shrine Temples for giving me the opportunity to participate in your special events. We enjoy a strong relationship among the various members of the family of Freemasonry in North Carolina, and I am thankful for the respect shown to the office of Grand Master by them.

Out-of-State Visitations

Visiting another grand jurisdiction is the same courtesy we extend when a Brother from another Lodge sits among us. We go to learn, to carry the greetings of North Carolina, and to bring something home worth having. I have not once left a sister jurisdiction without a new idea or a new friend, and most often both.

November 9th through the 12th, your Grand Lecturer, Worshipful Brother Randy Ward, and I were guests of the Grand Lodge of Alabama for

their Annual Communication in Montgomery.

In December, I represented North Carolina at the 89th annual Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas, held in Spartanburg, South Carolina. It was a pleasure to be on the field at halftime with the Potentates of the various Shrine Temples, as well as Right Worshipful Brother A.C. Flora, Acting Grand Master of South Carolina. Since the first game in 1937, millions of dollars have been raised from this event supporting the Shriners Hospital in Greenville, South Carolina, and the other Shriners facilities around the world.

December 26th, I traveled to Philadelphia to attend the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania Annual Communication. Then, on December 29th, I traveled from Philadelphia to Boston to attend the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Annual Communication.

March 11th and 12th, as a guest of the Grand Lodge of Virginia, I traveled to Alexandria, Virginia, along with our Grand Lecturer, Worshipful Brother Randy Ward, and our Grand Secretary, Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Underwood, and joined the Grand Masters of the thirteen original colonies to place a wreath at the tomb of George Washington and to tour Mount Vernon and the George Washington Masonic Memorial.

March 23rd through 25th, I attended the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee in Nashville.

April 17th through 19th, I attended the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Louisiana in Alexandria, Louisiana, along with Worshipful Brother Randy Ward, Grand Lecturer.

April 22nd through 24th, along with Right Worshipful Brother Jonathan Underwood, Grand Secretary, I attended the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina in North Charleston.

May 24th through 26th, I attended the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Florida in Orlando.

As is customary, our three Shrine Temples — Amran, Oasis, and Sudan — invited me to attend the Imperial Session. The 152nd meeting was held July 12th through 14th in Tampa, Florida. I was honored to join the other Grand Masters in attendance in supporting Shriners International at their annual session.

I will say as well that I take no small pride in how often North Carolina is on the receiving end of these visits. Wherever I traveled this year, I was met by Brethren who spoke warmly of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina and of the welcome they had been shown in the Old North State. That regard was not earned in this office. It was earned by you, my Brethren — by your hospitality, by your know-how, and by the care you take with every guest who passes through your door.

Itinerary of the Grand Master, 2025–2026

- Saturday, November 1st, Wilmington, installation of officers of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of North Carolina
- Tuesday, November 4th, first official visit to my home Lodge, Shallotte Lodge 727
- Friday morning, November 7th, Fall Reunion of the Valley of Wilmington, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite

- Friday afternoon, November 7th, Columbus County Shrine Club fish fry, Whiteville
- November 8th, Edenton, Unanimity Lodge 7, 250th anniversary of its charter, granted by Joseph Montfort on November 8, 1775
- November 9th through 12th, Grand Lodge of Alabama Annual Communication, Montgomery
- November 13th, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children Board of Directors dinner
- November 14th, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children board meeting; Greensboro, Grand Lodge Officers meeting and WhiteStone Board of Directors dinner
- Saturday, November 15th, WhiteStone, Board of Directors meeting
- December 2nd, stated communication, Hiram Lodge 98, Clinton
- Thursday, December 4th, installed officers, South Brunswick Island Shrine Club
- Friday, December 5th, Raleigh, meetings at the Grand Lodge building
- Friday, December 5th, Halifax, re-opening of the William R. Davie House
- Saturday, December 6th, officer installation, Wilmington Lodge 319
- Saturday night, December 6th, Jacksonville, 200th anniversary of Lafayette Lodge 83
- December 10th, Burgaw, King Solomon's Lodge 138, Third Degree
- December 18th, Raleigh, J.J. Crowder Lodge 743, Third Degree
- December 19th, Grand Lodge, meeting with the Grand Secretary
- December 19th, Spartanburg, South Carolina, Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas high school all-star football game
- December 26th, Philadelphia, Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania Annual Communication
- December 29th, Boston, Grand Lodge of Massachusetts Annual Communication
- Saturday morning, January 3rd, Lowell, opened the Grand Lodge for the purpose of presenting the charter and installing the officers of Unity Lodge 462
- Saturday night, January 3rd, Oasis Shrine officers installation, Charlotte
- January 6th, Lebanon Lodge 207, Whiteville, installed officers
- January 7th, St. John's Lodge 3, New Bern, installed officers
- January 9th, Raleigh, Grand Lodge, Board of Custodians meeting
- Saturday morning, January 10th, installed officers for my home Lodge, Shallotte Lodge 727
- Saturday afternoon, January 10th, Elizabethtown, installed officers of Bladen Lodge 646
- January 11th, installed officers of Pythagoras Lodge 249, Southport
- January 16th, Raleigh, Grand Lodge officers' retreat
- January 17th, Board of General Purposes meeting, Grand Lodge office

- Saturday night, January 17th, Amran Shrine officer installation
- January 18th, Salemburg, installed officers of Coharie Lodge 379
- January 19th, Raleigh, North Carolina Masonic Foundation dinner
- January 20th, District 12 meeting, St. John's Lodge 1, Wilmington
- January 22nd, Stedman, First Degree at Stedman Lodge 730
- January 27th, stated communication, Tabor Lodge 563, Tabor City
- January 30th, Greenville, District 6 meeting, Crown Point Lodge 708
- February 6th, Eastern Star Chapter 211 fundraiser, Lebanon Lodge 207, Whiteville
- February 10th, stated communication, Shallotte Lodge 727
- February 12th, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children board dinner
- February 13th, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children Board of Directors meeting
- February 13th, Greensboro, WhiteStone board dinner
- February 14th, WhiteStone, Board of Directors meeting
- February 14th, traveled to Chicago for the Conference of Grand Masters of North America, Sunday the 15th through Tuesday the 17th
- Saturday morning, February 21st, St. Albans Lodge 114, District 18 meeting, Lumberton
- Saturday afternoon, February 21st, Moore's Creek Battlefield, Grand Lodge America 250 celebration
- February 25th, Benson, District 16 meeting, Relief Lodge 431
- Saturday morning, February 28th, Roman Eagle Lodge 550, Aberdeen, District 21 meeting
- Saturday, February 28th, Valley of Fayetteville, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite reunion
- March 2nd, New Bern, 38th Annual Blue Lodge Night hosted by the Camp Lejeune Chapter of National Sojourners
- March 6th, Spring Reunion of the Valley of Wilmington, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite
- March 7th, Greensboro, Grand Lodge America 250 celebration at the Guilford Courthouse Battleground
- March 11th and 12th, Alexandria, Virginia, with the Grand Lecturer and the Grand Secretary, joined the Grand Masters of the thirteen original colonies to place a wreath at the tomb of George Washington
- Saturday morning, March 14th, Rocky Mount Shrine Club, District 9 meeting hosted by Morning Star Lodge 85
- Saturday afternoon, March 14th, Belhaven, presented 77-year award to Brother Roscoe Lee Joyner
- March 16th and 17th, North Carolina York Rite, Clemmons; presented the second Joseph Montfort Medal to Most Worshipful W. Berry Rigdon, Past Grand Master
- March 20th, Cary, District 14 & 15 meeting hosted by Cary Lodge 198

- March 21st, visited the Valley of Raleigh, Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, for their Spring Reunion
- March 23rd through 25th, Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Tennessee, Nashville
- March 28th, Shallotte Lodge 727, District 12 School of Instruction
- March 31st, Bladen Lodge 646, Elizabethtown, District 17 meeting
- April 1st, Yanceyville, Caswell Brotherhood Lodge 11, District 22 meeting
- April 8th, Albemarle, District 29 meeting hosted by Stanly Lodge 348
- April 10th, Halifax Days opening dinner
- April 11th, Royal White Hart Lodge 2, stated communication
- April 15th, Deep Run, Pleasant Hill Lodge 304, District 7 & 10 meeting
- April 17th through 19th, Grand Lodge of Louisiana Annual Communication, Alexandria, Louisiana
- April 22nd through 24th, Grand Lodge of South Carolina Annual Communication, North Charleston
- Saturday morning, April 25th, Sudan Shrine Spring Ceremonial, Farmville
- April 25th, New Bern, rededication of the monument at St. John's Lodge 3
- April 25th, Raleigh, graduation of Wilkerson College
- April 28th, Kernersville Lodge 669, District 26 meeting
- May 5th, Palmyra Lodge 147, stated communication
- May 7th, John H. Mills Lodge 624, 13th Masonic District meeting
- Saturday morning, May 8th, Henry F. Grainger Lodge fundraiser at the Granville Shrine Club
- May 8th, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children Board of Directors meeting
- May 8th, Greensboro, dinner with the WhiteStone Board of Directors
- Saturday morning, May 9th, WhiteStone board meeting
- Saturday afternoon, May 9th, MESH Lodge 771, stated communication
- May 12th, Long Creek Lodge 205, Huntersville, District 31 & 32 meeting
- Friday afternoon, May 15th, Board of General Purposes meeting, Grand Lodge office
- Friday evening, May 15th, Carolina Pig Jig, North Carolina State Fairgrounds
- May 16th, spoke at the Wilmington York Rite King Solomon Feast, Orient Lodge 395
- May 17th, Oxford, remarks at the Masonic Home for Children baccalaureate service
- May 19th, awards presentation, Denton Lodge 404, Denton
- May 24th through 26th, Grand Lodge of Florida Annual Communication, Orlando
- May 27th, awards presentation, Rocky Mount Shrine Club
- Friday night, May 29th, Hendersonville, 38th Masonic District meeting, Kedron Lodge 387

- Saturday morning, May 30th, Waynesville Lodge 259, 40th Masonic District meeting
- Saturday night, May 30th, Robbinsville Lodge 672, 41st Masonic District meeting
- May 31st, Charlotte, Masonic funeral rites for my friend and Brother C. Lee Abernethy
- June 4th, Statesville, Mt. Moriah Lodge 27, 30th Masonic District meeting and presentation of charter
- June 5th, Bakersville, 37th Masonic District meeting, Bakersville Lodge 357
- Saturday morning, June 6th, Granite Lodge 322, Mt. Airy, 25th Masonic District meeting
- Saturday night, June 6th, Liberty Lodge 45, North Wilkesboro, 33rd Masonic District meeting
- June 16th, Laurinburg Lodge 305, First Degree
- June 19th, Gaston Lodge 263, Dallas, awards presentation
- June 20th, Charlotte, Masonic Home for Children gala at Oasis Shrine
- July 4th, Edenton, 250th anniversary celebration of the United States of America
- July 12th through 14th, Imperial Session, Shriners International, Tampa, Florida
- July 24th through 26th, Northeast Conference of Grand Masters, Madison, Wisconsin
- August 1st, Red Springs, presented new charter to Red Springs Lodge 417
- August 6th and 7th, Southeast Conference of Grand Lodges, Gatlinburg, Tennessee
- August 14th and 15th, Kingston, Tennessee, Cave Degree
- Thursday, August 20th, Henderson, Masonic Home for Children board dinner
- Friday morning, August 21st, Oxford, Masonic Home for Children Board of Directors meeting
- Friday afternoon, August 21st, Greensboro, WhiteStone officers meeting
- Friday evening, August 21st, Greensboro, WhiteStone board dinner; presented 70-year awards to Brethren of MESH Lodge 771
- Saturday morning, August 22nd, Greensboro, WhiteStone Board of Directors meeting
- Saturday night, August 22nd, Burlington, combined Oasis, Sudan, and Amran Black Tie Ceremonial
- August 28th, Greensboro, banquet of the joint Scottish Rite Reunion of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite and the Prince Hall Scottish Rite
- August 29th, Sudan Ceremonial, Wilson
- August 29th, Cary Masonic Lodge Festive Board, Raleigh

Acknowledgements and Special Appreciations

I am deeply honored and humbled to have been elected on September 20, 2025, and officially installed as the 173rd Grand Master of Masons in North Carolina on November 1, 2025, in the City of Wilmington.

Almost forty-four years ago I became a member of this fraternity and was told that my journey up the ladder of Freemasonry might one day lead to where I stand this afternoon. To a twenty-one-year-old "boy" struggling to become a man, those words fell on deaf ears. I had no understanding of their true meaning and no aspirations of advancement, but other plans were being put in place by men who believed in me.

Throughout my climb, I have been fortunate to be exposed to great men and Masons who have been leaders not only in our gentle Craft, but in their churches and communities. Through my association with them, and through their encouragement and willingness to share their knowledge, I have achieved many things that on my own I know I never would have.

There are too many to name individually, but there are several I cannot allow this day to pass without naming: Worshipful Brother Thelton Hardee, my uncle, who coached me and taught me the lectures and the rituals; Worshipful Brother Woodrow Russ, who believed in me and taught me to believe in myself; Illustrious Sir Brack Wilson, Past Potentate, who appointed me in line at Sudan Shriners and put me in position to meet many influential Masons; and finally my Brother, Worshipful Brother Ed Norris, Past District Deputy Grand Inspector and Past District Deputy Grand Master for the Grand Lodge of Florida, who left us too soon.

There are others who have played an instrumental role in my being here. Illustrious Sir Albert H. Parker, Past Potentate of Sudan Temple — the Bible upon which I assumed the obligation at my installation is Brother Parker's Masonic Bible, given to me as a gift after I was appointed to this line, and I will forever be grateful for Mr. Albert's support, encouragement, and friendship. Worshipful Brother Charles Somersett of Shallotte Lodge 727, for sharing his wisdom — a rare gift these days — with me over these many years. And the Past Grand Masters of our jurisdiction, including Most Worshipful Rick Moore, under whom I served as District Deputy Grand Master in 1993; Most Worshipful Doug Caudle, who appointed me to the Board of Custodians in 2015; and Most Worshipful Speed Hallman, who appointed me to the Grand Line in 2017.

I would like to thank the Grand Lodge Officers for the support they have shown me this year. Your dedication is shown by the time you spend in service to our Craft. Your friendship I treasure, and I thank each of you for your comments, criticism, and advice as I have served our fraternity.

Our District Deputy Grand Masters, District Deputy Grand Lecturers, and Board and Committee members provide a voluntary service that is essential in managing our grand jurisdiction, many of them donating their time and expenses for the betterment of North Carolina Freemasonry. I thank each of you for serving our Craft this year.

A special thank you to all Masters, Wardens, Secretaries, officers, and members of the Lodges across North Carolina. Your service to our fraternity does not go unnoticed. You are the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, and without your work, fundraisers, and support of our distressed Brother Master Masons,

widows, orphans, and many others, we would not be able to continue as the oldest and greatest fraternity in the world.

It would be extremely difficult for our grand jurisdiction to be successful without the work of our office staff at the Grand Lodge Office. I appreciate your efficiency, your patience, and your help in answering my many questions and requests.

I want to thank my daughters Kayla, Sarah Elizabeth, and Emily for their support of all my masonic endeavors. Last but certainly not least, my wife Traci, who has stood by me on this journey from day one. During our 30 years together, I have held some leadership role in the family of freemasonry. This year, as well as the past thirty years, she has supported me and for that I am eternally grateful. I love you with all my heart!!

Before I close, let me say plainly what all of this has been for. The committees, the conversations, the consolidations — none of it is meant to make your Grand Lodge larger or busier. It is meant to clear the way for you. A Lodge that is not consumed by its building and its paperwork is a Lodge whose members have time to be Masons, and Masons with time on their hands are the only thing that has ever improved a community. Two hundred and fifty years ago, that is precisely what our Brethren did with theirs. Nothing prevents us from doing the same.

So I end this report as I have ended most of my Masonic events for 2026: with an explanation of the meanings behind the Grand Lodge pin for 2026, and with my prayer and my challenge to each of you.

In Jeremiah 17:9–10 we find, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

This passage of scripture parallels the explanation of two of our monitorial symbols or emblems found in our Third Degree — the sword pointing to a naked heart and the all-seeing eye — which are thus explained:

"The sword pointing to a naked heart demonstrates that justice will sooner or later overtake us; and although our thoughts, words, and actions may be hidden from the eyes of man, yet that all-seeing eye, whom the sun, moon, and stars obey, and under whose watchful care even comets perform their stupendous revolutions, pervades the secret recesses of the human heart, and will reward us according to our merits."

I chose to use these two symbols in the design of the Grand Lodge pin for this year. I hope that by wearing it you will be constantly reminded of that purity of heart so essentially necessary to our gaining admission into the celestial Lodge above.

So I ask you, my Brothers: "Where were you first prepared?"

My prayer is that each of you were truly prepared in your heart before you knocked on the door of Freemasonry; but if not, that once you beheld the beauties thereof, once you were exposed to the light of Freemasonry, your hearts were changed and fitted as living stones. I hope our Craft has indeed given you a deeper sense of duty to your God, your country, your family, your neighbor, and yourself. I hope that by receiving our degrees you have become more tolerant, less selfish, less prejudiced, and more charitable. But even more,

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 of whose internal qualifications you are convinced; and that each day you choose to be a Mason and to practice out of the Lodge the lessons taught within it, so that we may always be able to convince mankind of the goodness of our Order.

So, my Brothers, I challenge you: today and every day, live Freemasonry, practice Freemasonry, and talk Freemasonry — every day!

Thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving you this year as Grand Master. I am a simple man from a tobacco farm in Brunswick County — honored and humbled to be here, truly honored to call you Brother, and privileged to call you friend. May God richly bless each of you, may He continue to bless our gentle Craft, our beloved Old North State, and as we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation may he continue to bless these United States of America.

Respectfully and Fraternally,
Steve M. Norris
Grand Master, 2026

Necrology Service

The Grand Master will determine when the opening of the Grand Lodge of Sorrow takes place. The Grand Lodge of Sorrow is opened and closed as part of the Necrology Service.

The Grand Lodge Necrology Service may be a public ceremony. If it is public, the Grand Master will appropriately dispense with and resume labor in The Grand Lodge.

The Necrology Service is always conducted on the Third Degree unless labor is dispensed with in the Grand Lodge for public observance.

If, for any reason, it is a public ceremony, the Grand Master will appropriately dispense with and resume labor in the Lodge.

There shall be a white rose for Master Masons, Fellow Craft, and Entered Apprentice who have died totaling three roses in possession of the Grand Chaplain. In addition, there shall be one white rose for each Eulogy given in possession of the designated speaker.

The Marshal shall have a lighter for the candles in his possession.

It is best that the Junior Grand Warden handles the three roses and lighter until after the Grand Chaplain prays the opening prayer.

The ceremony begins when the Grand Master asks:

GRAND MASTER: Brother Junior Grand Warden, what is the hour?

The Junior Grand Warden will rise, respond accordingly if lodge is open, and say:

JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN: Low Twelve: time to call the Craft to remembrance of our deceased brethren.

If necessary, the Grand Lodge may dispense with labor at this point. The Grand Master begins:

GRAND MASTER: Brother Grand Marshal. You will present the Chair of Masonic Necrology, the Grand Chaplain, and other persons as necessary so that this Grand Lodge may prepare to remember our deceased brethren.

The Deacons move with their staff to the East of the Altar and the Stewards with their staff to the West forming a square around the Altar area.

Once the Deacons and Stewards are in place, the Grand Marshal places the Chair of the Masonic Necrology Committee at the Northeast corner of the Altar with other persons who give eulogies or memorial remarks to the right of the Chair of Necrology, facing West.

He then places the Grand Chaplain at the South Side of the Altar.

When all are in place, the Grand Marshal then says:

GRAND MARSHAL: Most Worshipful Grand Master, your order has been obeyed. All are in place.

The Grand Marshal takes his place beside the Grand Chaplain on the South

Side of the Altar.

Only the Grand Master may say the parts so designated for him. If someone else is leading the ceremony, then his part is designated as "Master." The Grand Master begins by saying:

GRAND MASTER: Most Worshipful OR Right Worshipful OR Worshipful Brother _____ will lead our Necrology Service. Brother Grand Chaplain, lead our devotion.

The Marshal conducts the Grand Chaplain to the Altar where he prays extemporaneously and then conducts him back to their places, South of the Altar after receiving the roses and lighter from the Junior Grand Warden.

The one so designated begins:

MASTER: What man is he who lives, and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? (Psalm 89:48)

RESPONSE: Man walks in a vain shadow; he heaps up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them.

MASTER: When he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not descend after him.

RESPONSE: Naked he came into the world, and naked he must return.

GRAND MASTER: I now declare the Grand Lodge of Sorrow for the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina open. Let all who are present join with us in remembering our deceased brethren.

The Grand Master descends to the altar beside the Chair of Necrology.

In whatever order is determined by the Chair of Necrology in consultation with the Grand Master, there may be instrumental or vocal music, a Scripture lesson, or poem.

An oration may be given by the Chair of Necrology, the Grand Chaplain, or another brother as determined by the Grand Master through the Chair of Necrology of no more than fifteen minutes.

Eulogies follow the oration and are for elected and appointed Grand Lodge Officers as well as Past Grand Masters. It is recommended that eulogies not exceed three minutes per brother. Each speaker will lay a white rose on the Altar after their eulogy.

HYMN: Amazing Grace how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see.

SCRIPTURE: John 3:1-4

MESSAGE: How Can This Be?

After the eulogies the Chair of Necrology, acting as Master says:

MASTER: We now remember all Master Masons, all Fellow Craft, and all Entered Apprentice. Each one was loved. Each one was special. We bow our heads to remember them and, as we are led in our hearts, say their name aloud

or silently with thanksgiving for their life among us.

The Grand Chaplain lays a rose on the altar for each degree.

The Marshal lights a candle as each rose is placed so that the three candles are burning when the final rose is placed.

At this time, brethren may say aloud the names of deceased brethren until the Master begins the act of closing the Grand Lodge of Sorrow which may include the following or proceed to Funeral Grand Honors.

MASTER: The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.

"Let us live and die like the righteous, that our last end may be like His!"

RESPONSE: God is our God forever and ever; He will guide even unto death!

MASTER: Almighty God, into your hands we leave with humble submission the souls of our deceased brethren.

The Funeral Grand Honors are also optional. If the Funeral Grand Honors are not done, the ceremony ends with the closing prayer. If the Funeral Grand Honors are given, the Grand Master calls up the Grand Lodge and the following procedure is as follows.

GRAND MASTER: Brethren, join me in giving the Funeral Grand Honors.

Both arms are crossed on the breast, the left arm over the right, and the open palm of the hands sharply striking the shoulders; they are then raised above the head, the palms striking each other, and then made to fall smartly upon the thighs.

The first and second times all say: The will of God accomplished! So mote it be. Amen.

The third time all say: We cherish his memory here. We commend his spirit to God who gave it and commit his body to the tomb.

If Funeral Grand Honors are not given, the Master may announce a hymn and the Grand Lodge may sing at this time.

HYMN When we've been there, ten thousand years bright shining as the sun

We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

Otherwise, the Grand Master returns to the Grand East and continues by saying:

GRAND MASTER: The purposes of the Committee on Necrology having been accomplished, we will now close this Grand Lodge of Sorrow. Before I declare this Grand Lodge of Sorrow closed, Brother Grand Chaplain, lead our devotion.

The Grand Marshal conducts the Grand Chaplain to the Altar for the purpose of prayer. The Grand Master calls up the Grand Lodge. The Grand Chaplain then prays extemporaneously or from an appropriate resource or as follows:

GRAND CHAPLAIN: Most glorious God, you have made all things and called them good. With you, a new day comes and with it, eternal hope, peace, and

joy. Send us forth from this place today and cause us with confidence to pray:

Every morning, lean thine arm upon the windowsill of heaven, and gaze upon thy Lord. And, with this vision in thine heart, turn strong to meet the day.[1]

GRAND MASTER: I now declare the Grand Lodge of Sorrow for the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of North Carolina opened and closed for 2026. Let us not forget those we have remembered today.

The Grand Master then appropriately seats the lodge and resumes labor if the ceremony has been public or proceeds in form if the lodge is tiled. Those who remain in place around the Altar return to their seats.

1 This prayer was often prayed by Past Grand Chaplain Victor Dowd