

GRAND MASTER’S MESSAGE

My Brothers,

First, I would like to thank you for electing and installing me as your Grand Master for the ensuing year. Never in a million years would I have believed that I would be serving you the Craft of South Carolina as Grand Master once again.

As all of you know, this has been a most difficult two years... with the lack of communication from the Grand East the first nine (9) months after the installation of our Past Grand Master and then the Pandemic comes along causing all Lodges to close by order of the Governor.

I believe that during this period of time, the Craft has lost faith and trust in our Grand Lodge.

My Brothers, that is now in the past. I know it will be hard to forget all that happened during those two years, but in order for us to go forward, let’s just say “This is day one in a new era; we will be “OK.”

I pledge to you there will be open communication from the Grand Master’s Office. I will meet you on the level and listen to you. We may not agree on everything, but we will agree to disagree at the end.

I remember just as all of you something we hear every time we meet. “Harmony is the chief strength and support of all regular institutions, but more especially this of ours.” Brothers, without harmony in our Lodges and Grand Lodge, nothing is going to change.

I feel that you, the Craft, have lost trust in your Grand Lodge and the Elected Line. We want to earn that trust back. As Most Worshipful Jack Marler, PGM has said over and over in the past, it is important to be a TEAM. Your new TEAM is going to work extremely hard to earn your trust back, therefore we need to know what you need from us. Call, text, email or just catch us as we travel around.

TRUST! You will hear that word often over the next year.

You may be wondering about my Grand Master’s Pins. I could not order them until after the election at Grand Lodge. They should be delivered during the middle of June. I will make sure that your District Deputy Grand Master gets them as soon as they arrive.

The message on the pin reads, “Working Together – Making A Difference.” My Brothers, I am asking you to work with us as we work to make the future of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina, AFM better not only for ourselves, but for all of those that will be coming after us.

Fraternally,
Ronald C. Mitchum
Grand Master

MASONIC EDUCATION CORNER

There’s got to be a morning after!

In 1972, the Poseidon Adventure, one of the best disaster movies of all times, hit the big screen.

At midnight on New Year’s Eve, the SS Poseidon was struck by a 90-foot tidal wave and capsized. Of the over 1700 passengers and crew aboard, only 9 survived led by Reverend Frank Scott.

Several events led to the disaster that unfolded that dreadful night. The decisions of the leadership of the company combined with a natural disaster produced a nightmare that would cause much pain and agony.

The Poseidon was pushed to her limits in an effort to complete her last voyage and stay on schedule to be de-commissioned. The leadership of the company made the decision to dump the ballast and let her ride high in the water in order to make more speed.

An underwater earthquake produced a 90-foot tidal wave that capsized the Poseidon plunging her crew and passengers into darkness.

Nine passengers had faith enough in the leadership of Reverend Scott, to follow him upward and find their way out of the darkness into the light, while some of the passengers followed a leader that was using unsound judgement to their death.

The theme song of this movie was “The Morning After.” Two of my favorite lines from this song are: “We have a chance to find the sunshine. Let’s keep on looking for the light” and “Oh, can’t you see the morning after? It’s waiting right outside the storm.”

Brothers, we have been through quite an adventure this past year. We were cruising along enjoying our Masonic Journey and all of a sudden out of nowhere, that tidal wave know as Covid-19 struck our ship, sending us into total chaos.

Decisions were made by our leadership, some necessary but not popular. Some extremely hard to understand and some that plunged our ship into total darkness.

However, as the song says, “We have a chance to find the sunshine.” During our Annual Communication, held in April, new leadership emerged and asked us to follow him upward out of the darkness into the light. Some of our Brothers wanted to continue to follow a path that led to chaos and certain destruction.

The Craft said, “Let’s keep looking for the light” and elected a new slate of officers to lead our Grand Lodge. With Most Worshipful Brother Ronald C. Mitchum on the Bridge, I feel certain that we will find the **Morning After** because **It’s waiting right outside the storm.**

Brothers, we have weathered the storm and now it is time for us to focus on the horizon and move forward to new adventures as we endeavor to grow our Fraternity. Welcome to the Morning After!

Thomas E. Watson, SGW

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 283RD – 284TH ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

The combined 283rd and 284th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge was held in the Exhibit Halls A, B and C in the North Charleston Convention Center Complex located in North Charleston on April 22nd -23rd, 2021, with 996 South Carolina Brethren pre-registering and attending. At 9:00 AM on Thursday, April 22nd, MW Walter C. Disher, II, Grand Master welcomed all of the Brethren to the Religious Service which was conducted by RW and Rev. A. Robert Nix, Grand Chaplain. Rev. Nix led the Brethren in the congregational singing of the Hymns of “Morning has Broken” and “Peace Be Still.” RW Nix delivered an inspiring Sermon entitled “Peace.” The scripture readings were RW Thomas E. Watson, JGW reading Psalms 46: 1-7: RW Steven D. Hames, SGW reading Psalms 121: 1-8 and RW O. Bruce Smith, III, DGM reading Psalms 23: 1-6.

At 10:00 AM, MW Walter C. Disher, II, Grand Master, with the assistance of the Grand Lodge Officers, opened the MW Grand Lodge of AFM in SC in Ample Form for the combined 283rd – 284th Annual Communication. After the Routine Motion, the Report of the Committee on Credentials and the Recognition of the Grand Representatives, Grand Master Disher read his Address for the period of April 26, 2019 -April 24, 2020 and afterwards read his Address for the period of April 24, 2020 – April 23, 2021.

On the conclusion of the reading of the Grand Master’s Addresses, MW D. Samuel Tennyson, PGM and previous Chairman of the Committee on Jurisprudence, made the following motion: “ *In view of the obvious bias and apparent vendetta involved in the case of Most Worshipful Walter C. Disher, II, Grand Master vs Most Worshipful Michael D. Smith, Sr., Past Grand Master, I move that all the Charges, Trial Proceedings, and sentencing against Brother Michael D. Smith, Sr. be set aside and that Brother Smith be fully restored in Masonry in this Grand Jurisdiction as though these proceedings had never happened.*” The motion was seconded. Worshipful Brother Bradley Heath Burgess, Worshipful Master of Taylors Lodge No. 345, made the motion that the vote be taken by a call of Lodges in accordance with Section 14 of the Code. MW Tennyson’s motion was approved by a call of the Lodges’ vote with the vote being 623 to 107.

The Grand Lodge approved with an overwhelming majority vote the restoration of the Charters to Landrum Lodge No. 278 and Union Kilwinning Lodge No. 4 and the setting aside all of the Grand Master’s Un-Masonic Charges against the Officers of both Lodges.

During the Annual Communication Session, Right Worshipful Steven D. Hames, Senior Grand Warden, presented the H. Dwight McAlister Award for Excellence in Masonic Journalism to Alpine Lodge No. 208 for the 2020 Newsletter and to Acacia Lodge No. 315 for the 2021 Newsletter. Right Worshipful O. Bruce Smith, III, Deputy Grand Master, presented the Lodge Community Service Award to Belton Lodge No. 130 and the District Community Service Award to the Fifteenth Masonic District.

Congratulations to the Brethren and Officers of Alpine Lodge No. 208, Acacia 315, Belton Lodge No. 130 and Right Worshipful

Johnnie “Buddy” Jones, Jr., DDGM-15th District and the Officers and Brethren of the 15th District.

During the Grand Master’s Banquet on Thursday Evening and at the Annual Communication Session on Friday Morning, Most Worshipful Walter C. Disher, II, Grand Master, presented the following Brethren with the Grand Lodge’s prestigious awards:

Frederick Dalcho Certificate and Pin

Bobby J. Albert, DDGM – 23rd District
David J. Barnette, PDDGM
Otto Kaske, DDGM—2nd District
Thomas W. Moran, Grand Standard Bearer
Herman L. Resch, Grand Marshal
Dana Preston Rickards, PDDGM

Albert Gallatin Mackey Certificate, Medal, and Pin

Albert S. Couch, III, PM
Jeffery L. Honeycutt, Senior Grand Deacon
Rawl J. Scheibler, PDDGM
O. Bruce Smith, III, Deputy Grand Master

RW William “Bill” H. Salley, PDDGM, was previously presented the Albert Gallatin Award on February 1, 2020. RW Brother Salley passed away on December 5, 2020.

The following Grand Lodge Officers were elected for the Grand Lodge Year April 23, 2021 – April 22, 2022:

MW Ronald C. Mitchum, PGM, Grand Master elected with 511 votes to RW O. Bruce Smith, III, DGM receiving 197 votes.
RW Steven D. Hames, Deputy Grand Master un-opposed
RW Thomas E. Watson, Senior Grand Warden un-opposed
RW Abram C. Flora, IV, PDDGM, Junior Grand Warden elected with 453 votes to RW Thomas E. Blackwood, PDDGM receiving 175 votes and RW Robert W. Sanders, PDDGM receiving 93 votes.

MW Jack A. Marler, PGM, Grand Treasurer, re-elected un-opposed

MW Gerald L. Carver, PGM, Grand Secretary, re-elected un-opposed

RW & Rev. A. Robert Nix, Grand Chaplain, re-elected un-opposed

The Grand Lodge accepted WB Kenneth R. Brackens invitation on behalf of the Brethren of the 29th District to hold the Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge at Myrtle Beach, SC on April 25th -26th, 2024. The scheduled dates and locations of the Annual Communications for the next three years are as follows:

April 28 - 29, 2022, Greenville, SC

April 27 - 28, 2023, Greenville, SC

April 25 - 26, 2024, Myrtle Beach, SC

ELECTION OF OFFICERS 2021-2023

Grand Master Ronald C. Mitchum (325), Elgin
 Deputy Grand Master Steven D. Hames (202), Blacksburg
 Senior Grand Warden Thomas E. Watson (350), Wellford
 Junior Grand Warden A. C. Flora, IV, (154) West Columbia
 Grand Treasurer Jack A. Marler (311), Simpsonville
 Grand Secretary Gerald L. Carver (115 & 91), Waterloo
 Grand Chaplain Rev. A. Robert Nix (14), Summerville

APPOINTMENTS

Senior Grand Deacon C. Lance Carpenter (152), Lexington
 Senior Grand Deacon Michael D. Peeler (282), Travelers Rest
 Junior Grand Deacon Joshua A. McDowell (50), Edgefield
 Junior Grand Deacon Michael E. Howard (102), Greer
 Grand Steward John King, Jr. (159), Cross Hill
 Grand Steward James M. Peterson, Jr. (101), Marietta
 Grand Marshal John R. Marcucci (398), Elgin
 Grand Pursuivant George Cobb, III (339), Walhalla
 Grand Standard Bear Ian P. Strickland (384), Lexington
 Grand Tiler Ron Lockaby (123), Leesville
 Grand Historian Richard P. Phalen (61), Reevesville

DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTERS

First District Mark Joseph Beasley (2), Charleston
 Second District Robert Henry Heck, Jr. (95), Mt. Pleasant
 Third District James Boyd Jenkins (234), Summerville
 Fourth District Craig Bernard Dopson (22 & 196), Yemassee
 Fifth District Lucius Allan Gardner, Jr. (17), Olar
 Sixth District Jacob Albert Anthony, Jr. (156), Warrenville
 Seventh District Charles Daniel Welch (230 & 71), Holly Hill
 Eighth District Richard Redman Barton (412), Lexington
 Ninth District Henry Dee Doolittle (199), Modoc
 Tenth District Ronnie Dale Thompson (395), Columbia
 Eleventh District James William Logan (358), Greenwood
 Twelfth District Bruce Paul Keisler, Sr. (203), Union
 Thirteenth District William Roscoe Bryant, Jr. (49), Fountain Inn
 Fourteenth District Barry Lane Volrath (349), Anderson
 Fifteenth District Larry Joe Granger (254), Clemson
 Sixteenth District Patrick James Mulligan, Sr. (79), Pickens
 Seventeenth District Kenneth Floyd Lothridge (24), Williamston
 Eighteenth District Mark Austin Bennett (404 & 189), Easley
 Nineteenth District James Merrell Padgett, II (271), Spartanburg
 Twentieth District Jeffery Lynn Honeycutt (201), Wellford
 Twenty-first District James Patrick Willis, II (215), Spartanburg
 Twenty-second District Nelson Dwight Horton (186), Gaffney
 Twenty-third District James Kenneth Mobley, Sr. (277), Great Falls
 Twenty-fourth District Richard Lewis Robinson (316), Jefferson
 Twenty-fifth District Stephen Earl Buffkin (72), Lamar
 Twenty-sixth District David Allen Thompson (64), Sumter
 Twenty-seventh District Benjamin Shane Byers (310), Lake City
 Twenty-eighth District Johnson Burns Dean (161), Mullins
 Twenty-ninth District Donald Clay Cox (353), Myrtle Beach
 Thirtieth District Randall Glenn Owens (165), Johnsonville

RONALD C. MITCHUM BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ronald C Mitchum was born June 1, 1944 to the late Clarence J. and Nonnie C. Mitchum of Hollywood, S.C. Ron attended Dorchester Terrace Elementary School and graduated from Gordon H. Garrett High School in 1962. He has been married to Susan Brown of Camden, S.C. for fifty-two years. He and Sue are members of Spring Valley Baptist Church in Northeast Columbia.

Over the years, Ron has served his churches, North Trenholm Baptist and Spring Valley Baptist in several capacities. While at North Trenholm he served on the Board of Deacons as well as Church Training Director and was a member of the finance committee. He played softball on the church team and coached youth baseball. After changing his membership to Spring Valley, he has been involved with the Youth Ministry by having fund raisers to help offset some of the cost of their summer mission trips and currently helps preparing meals for the church's Senior Adult BALL (Be Active Live Longer) Club.

Outside of his church, Ron has been very active in fund raising activities, especially if it benefited children. He, along with four others, planned and sponsored the Carolina Children's Home BBQ Cook-off. He participated in the competition for over ten years. He also participated in several other BBQ cook-offs around South Carolina that benefited the Shriners Hospital, college scholarships for young people, and Multiple Sclerosis Research. He has also been involved with his Square and Compass Club of the Midlands for the past fifteen years in smoking hams and turkeys at Thanksgiving and Christmas. This endeavor has allowed the Club to give over \$250,000, of which ninety percent of the funds went to 501 (c) 3 Children's Charities. Also over the last fifteen years, he and his cooking team provided meals the Sunday before Thanksgiving and Christmas for Navy Personnel Training at Fort Jackson prior to being shipped to the Middle East. For his efforts, in January, 2007, Ron was presented the "Order of the Palmetto" by Senator Joel Lourie and Senator Ted Vick on behalf of Governor Mark Sanford. The Order of the Palmetto is the highest Civilian Honor awarded to citizens of S.C.

Ron worked as an Internal Auditor for twenty-nine years starting with The First National Bank of S.C. and their successor Wachovia Bank. After the merger of Wachovia and First Union, he was assigned to the Bank's Analytical Team as a Senior Analyst where he worked until his retirement in August, 2002.

Ron was raised to the Sublime Degree of a Master Mason in Forest Acres Masonic Lodge #410 in Columbia in July, 1980. He served the Lodge as Master on three occasions and as Secretary for a total of ten years. In 2009, Forest Acres merged with Pacific Lodge #325. Ron served Pacific as treasurer for a number of years.

Ron was appointed Senior Grand Deacon in 1987, District Deputy Grand Master in 1991, elected Grand Treasurer in 1992. He was awarded the Frederick Dalcho Medal in 1997 and the Albert Gallatin Mackey Certificate and Medal in 2005. He was elected Junior Grand Warden in 1999, Senior Grand Warden in 2001, Deputy Grand Master in 2003 and Grand Master in 2005. He is a member of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Bodies where he serves as Treasurer of the Columbia Valley. He was invested as a Knight Commander of the Court of Honor in October, 2001 and Coroneted 33 Inspector General Honorary in 2005. He is a member Jamil Shrine, an associate member of Omar Shrine and honorary member of Hejaz Shrine. He represented Jamil on the Board of Governors of the Shriners Hospital for Children – Greenville from January 1, 2011 until December, 2020. He served as Chairman of the Board during the years 2018 and 2019. He is currently an Emeritus Member of the Board. He is also a member of Moultrie Camp, Charleston Chapter #28 National Sojourners, Inc. and Heroes of '76. He has been on the Senior Executive Committee of Grand Assembly of S. C. International Order of the Rainbow for Girls. He serves as their Treasurer and Chief

Cook at their Grand Assembly and Grand Family Retreat.

At Grand Lodge, he has served as the Chairman of the Masonic Relief Committee, on the Finance Committee and as Chairman of the Commission on Investments.

ABRAM "ACY" CLINE FLORA, IV JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN

Abram "Acy" Cline Flora, IV was born to the proud parents of Mr. and Mrs. Coleen Marilyn Livingston and Abram Cline Flora, III on September 25, 1979, in Columbia, SC. He attended public school and graduated from Lexington High School in 1997. Following High School, he attended USC Aiken studying Computer Science. After college, he took the position of the Network Administrator for Gregory Electric Company where he remained for the next sixteen years. During this same time, he successfully owned and operated his own restaurant (2004-2014) before divesting himself to devote more time to his family and other interests. In 2015, Acy was promoted to Vice President and General Manager of the then newly formed Gregory Technologies, a wholly owned subsidiary of Gregory Electric Company.

On December 19, 2009, Acy married the former Blair Deloache Utsey. They have a daughter named Margaret Raye and reside in West Columbia. Together they attend Mount Tabor Lutheran Church where Acy has been a lifelong baptized and confirmed member.

Right Worshipful Brother Flora was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason in Sinclair Lodge No. 154 in West Columbia on June 28, 2007. He served as Worshipful Master in 2011 and is currently serving as Treasurer. He holds a Lecture Proficiency Certificate for all three degrees along with the Grand Lodge Lecturer's Medal. He has served our Grand Lodge as Grand Steward (2012-2013), District Deputy Grand Master for the Eighth Masonic District (2013-2015), Masonic Services Association Committee Member for the 6th, 8th and 9th Districts (2015-2017) and Masonic Education Committee Member for the 6th, 8th and 9th Districts (2020-2021).

He is a Past President of the Square and Compass Club of the Midlands. Additional memberships include South Carolina Masonic Research Society, Columbia Chapter No. 59, Order of the Eastern Star, Fort Jackson Chapter No. 184, National Sojourners, The Royal Order of Scotland, and Jamil Shriners.

Brother Acy is a Past Grand Tall Cedar of Palmetto Forest No. 206 and current Treasurer.

Brother Acy is dedicated to serving the youth of this great state having served as a Chapter Advisor for the International Order Rainbow for Girls and serving South Carolina DeMolay International as State Dad (IT).

Most Excellent Companion Flora is a member of the Columbia and Newberry York Rite Bodies. In the Columbia Bodies, he has served as the Excellent High Priest, Illustrious Master and Eminent Commander, and Excellent High Priest and Illustrious Master in the Newberry Bodies. He is a member of several appendant bodies of the York Rite, Palmetto York Rite Sovereign College No. 70, Samuel HJ Womack Council No. 20, Knight Masons, South Carolina College Societas Rosicruciana In Civitatibus Feederatis, and Columbia Council No. 157, Allied Masonic Degrees and is a Past Sovereign Master. He has been elected to membership in Palmetto Priory No. 54, KYCH. He served as Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of South Carolina in 2019-2020.

Illustrious Brother Flora is a member of the Columbia Valley of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. He is a Past Venerable Master of Alpha Lodge of Perfection and Past Wise Master of Will Chester Plant Chapter Rose Croix. He is a Past Venerable Master of the Knights of Saint Andrews and was elected as a Fellow. He is a current Co-Director of Work. He has twice been honored by the Supreme Council by being invested with the Rank and designation of 32° KCCH on November 22, 2013 and Coronated a 33° Inspector General Honorary on August 20, 2019.

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