

GRAND MASTER'S MESSAGE

Brethren, I sit with pen in hand contemplating my last article to you as your Grand Master. What can a Grand Master say after our Fraternity, our state, our nation, our world has endured the events that have impacted the last 14 months of our lives with the COVID-19 Crisis? Every government, business, organization, and household has been affected by this pandemic.

We have witnessed the divide in American society more than at any time during any of our lifetimes. We should have serious concerns for the future of our country and Fraternity and pray non-stop for their future.

Two years ago, you the Craft, elected me as your Leader. I had many plans and designs on the TrestleBoard to make our Fraternity better during my term in office. In many instances, we have made a great impact across the globe. Numerous in-state, out-of-state events with State and National leadership, and international visits placed our Grand Jurisdiction in a position of recognition that I have not seen in over 25 years in Freemasonry.

It was my desire for our Fraternity to establish new friendships with other Grand Jurisdictions, while growing our numbers in the state. We did establish District Deputy and Subordinate Grand Lodge Officer Training that was greatly needed. Other goals were simply not met or accomplished. We, as a Craft, are not alone in falling short of our desired goals. All nonprofits have suffered tremendous setbacks and losses during this dark time in history.

Our Grand Architect has destined each of us to be members and leaders during this time for His own reasons. I do not question our placement in time that He made. For He knows all and time alone will tell the wisdom of His calculation. We are in this together and must endure together.

From a Grand Master's perspective, last year has been an unrelenting administrative task for the total leadership of any organization, but more especially, the Masonic Fraternity. I feel sure that most, if not all Grand Officers and Appendant Body Leaders, would agree that they have never had to make so many administrative decisions before.

Some decisions that were made were not to the liking of some of our members. The majority of our membership understands, respects, and agreed with the decisions and plans that were followed. To those that reached out to me personally, I sat and let them vent. In many instances after venting, I would simply ask "If you were Grand Master right now, with the responsibility for 30,000 members, 274 Lodges, and 30 appendant organizations, what decisions would you make for the survival and safety of the membership that put their trust in your judgment?" Choose poorly and many lives can be lost. Choose poorly and the laws, government, and dynamics of our Fraternity are forever changed. I would end with "You must decide and your decision must stand, not be contradictory in nature or change

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constantly. Make your decision and tell me what your decision is now." After a few minutes, almost all left the conversation telling me that you could not pay them to have my position right now.

We have lost many great men during this pandemic. Some were a loss to COVID-19, some from chronic illness and disease, and some from a refusal to follow our laws, customs and traditions. A building is only as good as the materials and Craftsmanship used in its construction.

Many of you are men of training be it military, government, law enforcement, first responders, and industry. You realize that for the whole to survive and the team to stay intact requires training, discipline, and accountability for one's actions. During times of battle, stress, and disaster, it is imperative for your training to take over like a reflex and your discipline to stand firm. It is not a time for the group to fragment and those not in charge or not elected to lead cause disharmony and discontent. The simple fact is people are in prison for crimes that they have committed before and during COVID. There will be people in prison for crimes that they have committed after COVID.

A true Mason is a man of fact and intellect, with skills to reason, not a spreader of false misinformation, lies, and deceit. I must say that I am deeply troubled and disappointed with the small number of members in our state that have lashed out in social media without fact, but on hearsay and raw emotion.

To my wife Laura, I know that this past year has been extremely trying. You have seen, heard, and experienced things from our membership that you never thought would come from some in our Fraternity. We both find comfort knowing the majority of our Craft take time to know the truth instead acting on unfounded rumors and raw emotion. Thank you for standing with me and knowing that I would die before I would betray my trust.

To our Grand Lodge Office Staff "Thank You" for your continued labors and sacrifice. A personal "Thank You" to Ms. Debbie for 50 years of service to our Grand Lodge. To our elected and appointed Grand Line in the capacity that you serve, "Thank You" for your service. Some of you have given more than your share and your efforts are not forgotten... Well Done!

RW O. Bruce Smith, III, you have my support and loyalty. We have agreed and disagreed at times. Metal sharpens metal my Brother!

Brethren, we are hopefully at an end of this pandemic. We are being vaccinated in record numbers. For the first time in numerous months, COVID infections and deaths are falling in record numbers. Our Phase plans are moving forward, restrictions are easing, and I trust we will soon be back up running full speed with over a year's backlog of candidates.

This coming year, we have the ability to set record membership numbers. Please do it right. Please do not allow

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candidates to learn the bare minimum to pass to the next degree. They are our future Lodge leadership, and they must be proficient.

Finally, the time will soon come for our Brethren to enjoy what we have longed for in our Fraternity, which will be having more candidates than we can handle. A time of meals and laughter together, good work, true work, and square work. The Grand Architect has given our Craft another chance my Brethren. Remember me and know that I will smile for you.

May our Grand Architect hold and keep you in the palm of His Hand until we meet again.

Respectfully,
Walter C. Disher II
Grand Master

MASONIC EDUCATION CORNER

As an Entered Apprentice, we were presented the twenty-four-inch gauge and the common gavel and **instructed in their use.** These working tools were not given to us merely as a part of the Ritual to be memorized and then forgotten as we passed to the next degree. Have we really learned the lesson taught to us by the Entered Apprentice Working Tools? Have we given eight hours for the service of God and a distressed worthy Brother? Have we taken one minute to try to bring relief to some unfortunate Brother or to console someone in sorrow? Have we tried to bring cheer to a fellow creature realizing that not just those in the Lodge, but all men are our Brothers? As we read the words of the Master Mason Working Tools reminding us that we were first taught the working tools of an Entered Apprentice, not just words to say, but to live by. We are taught in the Holy Scriptures from the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:40 and 25:45 *“Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”*

Notice the small word used in the verses “it” which covers a large number of things done or not done. This must be one of the reasons our ancient Brethren reminded us to learn to use the Entered Apprentice Tools and not just memorize them and forget how to use the tools. We are to bring relief or console someone in sorrow or bring cheer to a fellow creature.

As I spent 43 days of December 2020 and January and February 2021 in the hospital and rehab due to Covid-19, then the month of February at home rehabbing and recovering from the virus, I had a great number of Brothers who brought relief and consoled me through this troubled time in my life. I received phone calls, text messages, cards and visits from Brothers who assisted me in the things I needed help with around the home. They used their working tools to help a Brother. I so appreciate each one that lifted me up in prayer. These are the examples I hope to follow when using

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my working tools in their proper matter and more so to Honor God by following his Holy word. Brothers, stop and reflect on our actions. Remember we are Master Masons!

“Our Best Is the Least We Owe Each Other”

Steven D. Hames, Senior Grand Warden
Chairman, Masonic Education Committee

GRAND LODGE ANNUAL COMMUNICATION

The 283rd -284th combined Annual Communications of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina will be held on Thursday, April 22nd and Friday, April 23rd, 2021, at the North Charleston Convention Center Complex in Exhibit Halls A, B & C, located at 5001 Coliseum Drive, North Charleston, SC 29418. The Headquarters Hotel is the North Charleston Marriott located at 4770 Goer Drive, North Charleston, SC 29406. Reservations may be made at the North Charleston Marriott by calling 888-236-2427 and referencing Grand Lodge and the April 22nd and 23rd dates. The Grand Lodge Room rate is \$134.00 plus tax per night.

Those Brethren wishing to attend the Annual Communication must have pre-registered using the Pre-Registration Form either for the Voting - Lodge Warrant Officer or Non-Voting- Past Master Registration Form and be wearing the name badge received in the mail in order to be admitted. Each badge will have a Bar Code which will be scanned when entering Grand Lodge and is NOT transferable. Masks must be worn to the Annual Communication Sessions and Social Distancing will be practiced. To avoid cross-contamination, you must sit in the same seat for all of the Annual Sessions. Voting Members will have a Red Name Badge and Non-Voting Members will have a White Name Badge. There will be reserved areas within each District for voting members. Temperatures will be taken at the doors and the previously provided COVID-19 Screening Form for the particular day must be filled out and presented to the Assistant Tiler before entering the Annual Communication Hall.

The Religious Service will commence on Thursday, April 22nd at 9:00 AM and will be conducted by Reverend and Right Worshipful A. Robert Nix, Grand Chaplain. Following the Religious Service, the Grand Lodge will be officially opened at 10:00 AM by Most Worshipful Walter C. Disher, II, Grand Master, with the assistance of the Grand Lodge Officers and Brethren. Only Brethren who have Name Badges will be admitted.

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GRAND LODGE ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

The Grand Lodge Organizational Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 15, 2021 beginning with registration at 8:30 AM at the Grand Lodge Office Building located at 1445 Pisgah Church Road, Lexington, SC 29072 (Exit 51 on Interstate 20). All Elected Grand Lodge Officers, All Appointed Grand Lodge Officers including District Deputy Grand Masters and Masonic Education Committeemen, Masonic Service Committeemen and Chancellors are required to attend. All Past Grand Masters are requested to attend. Since photographs will be taken, the dress for all Elected Grand Lodge Officers and Past Grand Masters will be black tails with black bow tie, black vest, jewel and apron. The dress for all other Officers, Committeemen and Chancellors will be black tuxedo with black bow tie, black vest, jewel and apron.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHNNIE FELTON JAMES
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
January 12, 1946 Stephens Co., GA
January 11, 2021 Seneca, SC

RICHARD ALLEN WOODEN
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
October 17, 1931 Baltimore, MD
January 13, 2021 Lexington, SC

GEORGE EDWIN BARTON, JR.
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
May 25, 1927 Charleston, SC
January 29, 2021 Lexington, SC

DAVID ELSWORTH DAWSON
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
October 4, 1924 Tampa, FL
February 11, 2021 Walterboro, SC

ELLISON WILROY MESSICK, JR.
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
January 1, 1947 Marion, SC
February 19, 2021 Florence, SC

JAMES KENNETH JOHNSON
PAST DISTRICT DEPUTY GRAND MASTER
December 14, 1943 Rock Hill, SC
March 21, 2021 Pamplico, SC

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Brother Basil Conrad Ammons, Secretary of Old Fort Lodge No. 420, AFM passed away December 29, 2020.

Brother Jesse Mango Caraway, Secretary of Robert Burns Lodge No. 337, AFM passed away February 10, 2021.

Brother Barry Dean Sammons, Secretary of Pelzer Lodge No. 217, AFM passed away March 25, 2021.

We wish to express our deepest sympathies, to the family, friends and Lodge Brethren.