

Synopsis of the 238th Annual Communication
of the
Grand lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina
September 19-20, 2025 Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Presiding and Present were:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • Robert W. Rideout, Grand Master | • Julian C. Setzer, Senior Grand Steward |
| • Steve M. Norris, Deputy Grand Master | • Gary D. Handy, Junior Grand Steward |
| • Gilbert D. Bailey, Senior Grand Warden | • Christopher T. Canipe, Grand Tyler |
| • Michael A. Register, Junior Grand Warden | • John T. Frazier, Grand Chaplain |
| • Lewis R. Ledford, Grand Treasurer | • D. Lee Short, Grand Historian |
| • Jonathan A. Underwood, Grand Secretary | • P. Christopher Lee, Grand Lecturer |
| • Philip R. Johnson, Senior Grand Deacon | • Craig J. Horton, Grand Orator |
| • C. Alvin Billings, Jr., Junior Grand Deacon | • Matthew W. Cockman, Judge Advocate |
| • J. David Cashion, Grand Marshal | |

Introductions and Greetings

At the opening of the 238th Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina, Grand Master Robert W. Rideout set the tone with a message of unity of purpose. He reflected on how this guiding principle has carried our Craft through the past year, most especially in the face of adversity brought by Hurricane Helene. The steadfast resolve of our brethren to aid and assist those in need embodied the essence of Masonic charity and brotherhood. With his unifying theme, *Together We R.I.S.E.*—standing for **R**ecognition, **I**nnovation, **S**tructure, **E**veryday—Grand Master Rideout emphasized how these values have guided the operations of the Grand Lodge, strengthened our fellowship, and inspired renewed commitment among the Craft.

Greetings were brought by:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • RW Andrew H. Barnett, Deputy Grand Master of Alabama | • RW John A. MacLeod, Deputy Grand Master of Massachusetts |
| • RW Zachary A. Holmes, Grand Secretary of Alabama | • RW John Haslam, Sr., Junior Grand Warden of New York |
| • RW Bradley D. Andrukitis, Deputy Grand Master of Maryland | • MW Rick Baccus, Grand Master of Rhode Island |
| • RW Thomas W. Foster, Grand Secretary of Maryland | • RW Boyd E. Hodges, Jr., Senior Grand Warden of South Carolina |

- MW W. Douglas Deaden, Grand Master of Tennessee
- MW Roy C. Etherton, Past Grand Master and Grand Secretary of Tennessee
- RW Gino W. Williams, Grand Senior Warden of Virginia
- MW Daniel T. Thompson, Grand Master of the PH Grand Lodge of North Carolina

Appendant and Concordant Bodies and National Masonic Organizations brought greetings through:

- MI Ted D. Inman, Grand Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina
- ME C. Richard Patton, Grand High Priest of the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina
- RE Michael M. Hoff, Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of North Carolina
- MW & Ill. A. Gene Cobb, Jr., Sovereign Grand Inspector General of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, Southern Jurisdiction, in North Carolina
- Lane Mashburn, Second Ceremonial Master for Sudan Shriners at New Bern, North Carolina
- Joseph Burris, Oasis Shriners, Charlotte, North Carolina
- Steve Owens, Assistant Rabban, Amran Shriners, Raleigh, North Carolina
- W Shawn E. Eyer, Director of Communications and Education, George Washington Masonic National Memorial

Past Grand Officers and Past Grand Masters present included:

- RW William L. Mills, III, Past Deputy Grand Master
- RW T. Walton Clapp, III, Past Grand Secretary
- MW Richard G. Moore, PGM, 1993
- MW Charles M. Ingram, PGM, 1999
- MW Jerry R. Tillett, PGM, 2002
- MW Leonard Y. Safrit, Jr., PGM, 2004
- MW Gene T. Jernigan, PGM, 2006
- MW W. Berry Rigdon, PGM, 2007
- MW Dan C. Rice, PGM, 2009
- MW William L. Dill, PGM, 2010
- MW Lewis R. Ledford, PGM, 2011, Grand Treasurer
- MW Robert E. Gresham, Jr., PGM, 2012
- MW Dewey R. Preslar, Jr., PGM, 2013
- MW Douglas L. Caudle, PGM, 2015
- MW A. Gene Cobb, Jr., PGM, 2017
- MW C. Speed Hallman, PGM, 2018
- MW D. MacLauchlin Sigmon, PGM, 2019
- MW P. Shaun Bradshaw, PGM, 2020
- MW R. David Wicker, Jr., PGM, 2021
- MW Larry B. Thompson, Jr., PGM, 2022
- MW Kevan D. Frazier, PGM, 2023

The Oration

Worshipful Craig J. Horton, Grand Orator, gave the oration.

Interim Reports of Robert W. Rideout

Most Worshipful Rideout's Interim Report (page 117) was **ACCEPTED**, as were his ORDERS and OPINION (page 51) were **ACCEPTED**.

Necrology Service and Eulogies

Most Worshipful A. Gene Cobb, Jr. presided over the necrology service, eulogizing the deaths of the 759 brethren who have since our last Annual Communication.

Thomas Warren Gregory Masonic Leadership Awards

Worshipful Brothers **William Dennis Campbell** of Crown Point Lodge No. 708, **Aaron Lazenby King, Jr.** of Conover Lodge No. 709, and **Jerry Randolph Browning III** of Blackmer Lodge No. 127 were awarded the *Thomas Warren Gregory Masonic Leadership Award* for their dedicated service to the brethren of North Carolina.

Report of the Credentials Committee

Worshipful Christopher Wright, Chairman of the Credentials Committee reported

There were 764 Lodge representatives present from 301 lodges, 14 Grand Lodge Officers, 18 Past Grand Officers, 29 members of Boards, Committees, or Commissions, 35 District Deputy Grand Masters, 24 District Deputy Grand Lecturers, totaling **879 Delegates present**.

The Budget was APPROVED

The **Proposed 2026 Budget** of the Grand Lodge was **APPROVED** with more than the 2/3rds required for its approval.

Grand Lodge Officers Elected and Appointed

The following grand lodge officers were elected or appointed for the year 2026, to wit:

- Steve M. Norris (727), Grand Master
- Gilbert D. Bailey (693), Deputy Grand Master
- Michael A. Register (493), Senior Grand Warden
- Philip R. Johnson (106), Junior Grand Warden
- Lewis R. Ledford (27), Grand Treasurer
- Jonathan A. Underwood (770), Grand Secretary
- C. Alvin Billings, Jr., (409), Senior Grand Deacon
- J. David Cashion (435), Junior Grand Deacon

- Gary D. Handy (629), Grand Marshal
- John E. Burns (708), Grand Steward
- Julian C. Setzer (709), Grand Steward
- Franklin D. Long (302), Grand Tyler
- John H. Stanley (369), Grand Chaplain
- Paul M. Vincent (75), Grand Historian
- Randy D. Ward (727), Grand Lecturer
- Charles W. Miller (249), Grand Orator
- Matthew W. Cockman (409), Judge Advocate

The installation of elected and appointed Grand Lodge Officers will be held on Saturday, November 1, 2025, at the Wilmington Scottish Rite Temple, Wilmington, North Carolina.

Fraternal Correspondence and Foreign Recognitions

Several foreign grand lodges requested recognition (Reports Book pages 27-28), including:

- The Grande Oriente de Rio Grande do Norte (Brazil) was **TABLED** until more information concerning its legitimacy could be obtained.
- Grand Orient of Paraíba (Brazil) was **RECOGNIZED**.
- Independent Grand Orient of Pernambuco (Brazil) was **RECOGNIZED**.
- Grand Lodge of Ghana was **AFFIRMED**.
- Grand Lodge of Tennessee, Prince Hall Affiliate, was **ANNOUNCED**.
- Regular Grand Lodge of Italy was **RECOGNIZED**.
- Benito Juarez Grand Lodge of the Coahuila, Mexico was **RECOGNIZED**.

Report of the Appeals Committee, Actions of the Judge Advocate, Actions of the Trial Commission

The Committee on Appeals submitted its report, to wit: three Applications for Restoration were made this year:

- **ASE (Docket No. 913)**. His petition for restoration was recommended rejected by the Committee on Appeals, and his appeal was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled.
- **JEB (Docket No. 937)**. His petition for restoration was recommended rejected by the Committee on Appeals, and his appeal was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled.
- **MTH (Docket No. 998)**. His petition for restoration was recommended rejected by the Committee on Appeals, and his appeal was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled.
- **RAS (Docket 1019)**. The Committee on Appeals reviewed his appeal, and recommended denying the appeal, and the appeal was **DENIED** by the delegates assembled.

The Committee on Appeals recommended the following actions with regard to the actions of the Judge Advocate, Trial Commission, and/or Grand Master (Reports Book page 33).

- **CGS (Docket 926)**, of Albemarle Lodge No. 703 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on April 10, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **TJH (Docket 990)**, of St. John's Lodge No. 3 — Tried before a Trial Commission on November 1, 2024; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and REPRIMANDED. The Committee on Appeals recommended rejecting the Trial Commission's decision and EXPELL the brother, and the action was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled and **EXPELLED** TJH.
- **JFM (Docket 992)**, of Wilmington Lodge No. 319 — After remand to trial, Brother failed to appear; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on April 28, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **PTT (Docket 993)**, of Blackmer Lodge No. 170 — After remand to trial, Brother failed to appear; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on May 5, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **REH (Docket 996)**, of Shelby Lodge No. 744 — Amended complaint; Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on December 30, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **CRT (Docket 997)**, of Cookville Lodge No. 502 — Brother served; failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on March 24, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **CGH (Docket 999)**, of Round Peak Lodge No. 616 — Tried before a Trial Commission on January 31, 2025; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and EXPELLED. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Trial Commission's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **KWB (Docket 1000)**, of Round Peak Lodge No. 616 — Tried before a Trial Commission on January 31, 2025; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and EXPELLED. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Trial Commission's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **PKB (Docket 1001)**, of Bingham Lodge No. 272 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on August 1, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.

- **RED (Docket 1002)**, of Liberty Lodge No. 45 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on October 7, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **RVL (Docket 1003)**, of Round Peak Lodge No. 616 — Tried before a Trial Commission on January 31, 2025; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and REPRIMANDED. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Trial Commission's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **DEK (Docket 1004)**, of Bula Lodge No. 409 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on October 25, 2024 (removal from office effectuated at the 2024 Annual Communication). The Committee on Appeals recommended rejecting the decision of the Judge Advocate and returning the case to him for further investigation, and the action was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled, and reopened for further investigation by the Judge Advocate.
- **CGC (Docket 1005)**, of Casar Lodge No. 579 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on November 25, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **JPC (Docket 1006)**, of Cherryville Lodge No. 505 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on December 30, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **WBP (Docket 1007)**, of Cherryville Lodge No. 505 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on December 30, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **BGF (Docket 1008)**, of Cherryville Lodge No. 505 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on December 30, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **RLW (Docket 1009)**, of Cherryville Lodge No. 505 — Complaint DISMISSED by order of the Judge Advocate on December 30, 2024. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **JDH (Docket 1010)**, of Keller Memorial Lodge No. 657 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on January 28, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended rejecting the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **REJECTED** by the delegates assembled, and the case was re-opened for proper service and/or trial.

- **MAC (Docket 1011)**, of Ocean Lodge No. 405 — Brother failed to appear; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on March 17, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **DEK (Docket 1012)**, of Bula Lodge No. 409 — Summarily tried by the Grand Master; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and EXPELLED by order of the Grand Master on January 13, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Grand Master's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **WOB (Docket 1013)**, of Traphill Lodge No. 483 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on April 7, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **RWH (Docket 1014)**, of Allen-Graham/Cabarrus Lodge No. 695 — Brother failed to appear; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by order of the Judge Advocate on June 30, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **SLB (Docket 1015)**, of Unanimity Lodge No. 7 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on April 23, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **GEP (Docket 1016)**, of Western Star Lodge No. 91 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on April 23, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **JWJ (Docket 1017)**, of Red Springs Lodge No. 501 — Summary charges DISMISSED by the Grand Master following apology by the Brother. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Grand Master's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **CTD (Docket 1018)**, of Meadow Branch Lodge No. 578 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on May 7, 2025. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **RAS (Docket 1019)**, of Pilot Lodge No. 493 — Tried before a Trial Commission on July 26, 2025; found GUILTY of Un-Masonic Conduct and SUSPENDED through February 28, 2026. The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Trial Commission's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.
- **WRJ (Docket 1020)**, of Mooresville Lodge No. 496 — Brother failed to respond; DEFAULT entered and EXPELLED by decision of the Judge Advocate on July 7, 2025.

The Committee on Appeals recommended approving the Judge Advocate's decision, and the action was **APPROVED** by the delegates assembled.

Report of the Committee of Jurisprudence and Amendments Considered

The Committee on Masonic Jurisprudence recommended the following actions with regard to the Proposed Amendments to the Code (Reports Book p. 57).

- **Amendment Group 1 (Insurance Management Committee):** Creates a standing Committee on Insurance in Chapter 34 with defined membership, referral matters, and duties (lodges' coverage review, policy recommendations). *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **REFERRED** the amendment to the Board of General Purposes for further consideration and clarification.*
- **Amendment Group 2 (Electronic Voting):** Adds electronic balloting as a permitted voting method in Chapters 19 and 12, including elections of Grand Lodge officers. *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 3 (Temporary Holding Lodge No. 777):** Establishes a temporary holding lodge for displaced brethren until reaffiliation is arranged. *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **REFERRED** the amendment to the Board of General Purposes for further consideration and clarification.*
- **Amendment Group 4 (Definition of Dues):** Clarifies lodge dues as lodge-set amount plus Grand Lodge per capita; updates Uniform Lodge By-Laws language to avoid by-laws changes when per capita changes. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 5 (Installed Appointive Officers):** Moves Grand Chaplain to the list of appointive officers who are installed; clarifies installation discretion and updates Judge Advocate installation language. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 6 (Obsolete Duty—Blank Returns):** Marks Reg. 16-1.30 obsolete (annual blank returns now handled electronically). *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 7 (Lecturer Rosters):** Updates Reg. 29-7.2 to publish lecturer rosters electronically rather than in the Annual Proceedings. *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 8 (Bi-Monthly/Quarterly Stated Meetings):** Updates Regs. 43-2.4, 45-2, and Uniform By-Laws to allow lodges to adopt bi-monthly or quarterly schedules in by-laws without dispensation. *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 9 (Obsolete—Waiver of Jurisdiction at Emergent):** Removes obsolete prohibition relating to waivers of jurisdiction at emergent communications.

Committee recommended the language be corrected since this pertained to a previous affirmed amendment and was otherwise superfluous.

- **Amendment Group 10 (Budget Oversight & Spending Limits):** Adds checks on budget modifications and over-budget expenditures (Grand Master limits; Finance Committee review; BGP 2/3 approval); aligns Grand Treasurer and Finance Committee duties. *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **REFERRED** the amendment to the Board of General Purposes and the Committee on Finance for further consideration and clarification.*
- **Amendment Group 11 (Fund-Raising Variances):** Empowers the Commission on Special Activities to grant variances to lodges regarding fund-raising requirements. *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **REJECTED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 12 (Defunct Lodges/Entities' Assets):** Clarifies that surplus assets from defunct lodges and building corporations become property of the Grand Lodge (updating Regs. 5-1, 49-7, 31-5). *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **REFERRED** the amendment to the Board of General Purposes for further consideration and clarification.*
- **Amendment Group 13 (Delinquent Dues Admin Fee):** Allows lodges to assess up to \$5 administrative cost per delinquent dues notice; mirrors limit language in Reg. 43-3.17/77-8. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 14 (Third Alternative Ballot Procedure):** Modifies the optional black-cube process to require a **written paper ballot** (rather than show of hands) on the validity of the objection. *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 15 (Code Amendment Process):** Codifies submission, publication, review, and referral steps (deadlines; website posting; Code Commission review; MJ referral by March 31). Effective Oct. 1, 2025. *Committee recommended referral; the delegates **REFERRED** the amendment back to its proposers and the Code Commission for further consideration and clarification.*
- **Amendment Group 16 (Specific Masonic Offense—Re-petition Interval):** Aligns offense language with six-month re-petition rule (instead of one year) after rejection. *Committee recommended the language be corrected since this pertained to a previous affirmed amendment and was otherwise superfluous.*
- **Amendment Group 17 (Installation Date):** Moves the earliest permissible installation date for Grand Lodge officers to the **first** Saturday in November. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 18 (Deputy Grand Lecturer):** Creates Deputy Grand Lecturer roles (Areas 1–5) with qualifications and duties to support the Grand Lecturer and Board of Custodians. *Committee recommended approval; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*

- **Amendment Group 19 (Assistant Judge Advocate):** Adds authority for the Judge Advocate to appoint an Assistant (subject to GM approval; not an installed officer). *Committee recommended approve; the delegates **APPROVED** the amendment.*
- **Amendment Group 20 (Judge Advocate Duties):** Clarifies JA's authority (prosecute, dismiss, or ADR with GM consent; promulgate rules/forms subject to GL review) and document seal. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 21 (Representation on Non-Appearence):** Permits a defendant who fails to appear for summons or trial to be represented at adjudication. *The amendment was **WITHDRAWN**.*
- **Amendment Group 22 (Per Capita Effective Date):** Sets per-capita increases to take effect January 1 following adoption at Annual Communication. *Committee recommended rejection; the delegates **REJECTED** the amendment.*

The next Annual Communication of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina will take place on **Friday, September 25 and Saturday, September 26, 2026** at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jonathan A. Underwood
Grand Secretary