



## Grand Commander



**Michael M. Hoff**

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### **We Need Your Help!**

Please send event news from your local commanderies to us for inclusion in the State News!

- ✘ Submissions must be received by the 20th of the month for inclusion in the upcoming edition. Submissions may be altered to fit.
- ✘ Please send emails with subject line "KT State News" to the editor.

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## Grand Commander's Message

Greeting Sir Knights,

As it is now February and March is right around the corner, I encourage you all to plan on joining us in Clemmons this year. All York Rite members are welcome to attend, and the three principal officers of each body are required to be present. If you have not yet made your reservations, please plan to do so as soon as possible. If you have not received the registration forms, please contact either myself or our Grand Recorder, Sir Knight Allen Surratt.

While many of the events and official visits have already been completed, there are still several remaining prior to our Grand Conclave in March. Masonic Week will be held February 4th through February 8th in Washington, D.C. Goldsboro/Wilson will be having a Festival on February 28th. If you have a candidate, please consider taking them to Wilson at the end of the month. Or if you cannot make that date New Bern will be having a Festival on March 7th. Kindly notify them ahead of time so they may prepare accordingly.

From February 4th through February 8th I will be at Masonic week in Washington DC; from February 27th through March 1st, I will be visiting Alabama during their Annual Conclave; and from March 8th through March 10th I will be attending the Annual Conclave in South Carolina. Our Grand Conclave will be held March 15th through March 17th. As you can see, there is no slowing down.

When many people think of February, they think of Valentine's Day. Valentine's Day, also known as Saint Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is celebrated annually on February 14th. It originated as a Christian feast day honoring a martyr named Valentine and, through later traditions, has become a significant cultural and religious celebration of love.

To all the couples out there, Happy Valentine's Day.

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not want what belongs to others. It does not brag. It is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonor other people. It does not look out for its own interests. It does not easily become angry. It does not keep track of other people's wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love is not happy with evil. But it is full of joy when the truth is spoken. <sup>7</sup>It always protects. It always trusts. It always hopes. It never gives up.

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

Sincerely and Fraternaly,

Mike Hoff

Right Eminent Grand Commander



## **Wilkes Council #35** The Grand Council of Royal & Select Masters In North Carolina

The Council cordially invites you to a  
Poor Boy's Pinto Bean Dinner  
fundraiser at North Wilkesboro  
Masonic Lodge,  
203 Temple St., North Wilkesboro,  
at 5:00 pm on March 7, 2026.

Menu consists of pinto beans,  
cornbread, coleslaw, toppings,  
a drink and dessert.

Donations for the meal will be  
accepted and given to the Cryptic  
Masons Medical Research Fund.

## The Commissioned Templar Chaplain Program – One Sir Knight’s Experience

Good Day Sir Knights and I hope that this New Year has provided many blessings to you. I wanted to highlight some information and give an overview of the Commissioned Templar Chaplain Program that is offered through the Grand Encampment Education Portal Website. This program in no way will create you a Clergy member, but does provide great insight on how you can become a difference maker in your Asylum.

The course has 12 modules and there is an accompanying text “On Being a Masonic Chaplain” which is authored by one of the creators of the course: SK Robert Elsner, who is currently serving as Associate Grand Prelate. This program allows you to work at your own pace and does not include any deadlines. In delving into this course you will find information and instruction on how to construct prayers, how to deliver these prayers, how to be an attentive ear, how to console, and how to develop leadership skills.

The course is very simple to navigate and the accompanying videos by SK Elsner are truly a delight. At the end of the course there is a ceremony in which you are Commissioned as a Templar Chaplain. This ceremony is truly beautiful and humbling. It would be great if all our Commanderies had at least one individual who completed this course - it doesn't matter if you are currently serving as an officer, or if you are sitting on the sidelines.

I can say without equivocation that this course has made me a better Sir Knight. It has given me new insight to improve my daily life as well as my daily walk with the Lord.

Best Wishes,  
SK Brett Huffman  
Lenoir Commandery #33



## **HAM SUPPER FUNDRAISER**

Saturday, February 21, 2026

4:30 - 7:30 PM

at the

Greensboro Masonic Temple

426 West Market Street

**\$12 per Plate - Eat-in or Takeout**

*(Serving Country Ham, Scrambled Eggs, Grits, Baked Apples, and a Biscuit)*

**All proceeds benefit our York Rite Charities:**



**Wilkes York Rite Highlights**

The Companions and Sir Knights of the Wilkes York Rite bodies in North Wilkesboro had a noteworthy meeting at their January Stated. The full slate of 2026 officers was installed in due form by Russell Bridges, Past MIGM of the Grand Council of North Carolina. Heading up the Wilkes bodies this year will be: Wesley Church, serving as Excellent High Priest of North Wilkesboro Chapter #78; Bill Coggins, serving Wilkes Council #35 as Illustrious Master; and Raymond Hayes, serving as Eminent Commander of Wilkes Commandery #40.



*Wilkes York Rite Bodies Officer Installation – January 19, 2026*

In addition, the January Stated featured a very special presentation. Companion Bridges, who is also currently serving as Foreign Relations Ambassador for the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons International, was on hand to present the First Responders Recognition Award, to Rob Thornburg. Companion Thornburg, a new member of Wilkes Council #35 as of last year, is the former Police Chief of North Wilkesboro. All who were on hand were delighted for the opportunity to recognize Companion Thornburg’s outstanding example of service, and honored to be part of the auspicious occasion.



*Wesley Church, Rob Thornburg, Russell Bridges (L to R)*

The First Responders Recognition Award is conferred by the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons International. The award provides an opportunity to recognize those who are currently serving (or have served) their communities as Law Enforcement, Firefighters, EMTs, Paramedics, and others who dedicate their professional lives to preserving and protecting our communities. It also serves as an opportunity for the Council to reach “both to and through the Lodge,” to demonstrate to the public that Masonry harbors a profound respect for those who “run towards danger” in order to save lives, when disaster strikes. The award may be given to any qualified First Responder, past or present; retirees are fully eligible, as are those who may have gone on to other careers. It may be presented at a meeting of any body within our larger Masonic family, but must be sponsored by a Cryptic Mason and his Council. All constituent bodies within the Grand Council of North Carolina are encouraged to consider

recognizing one of these “hometown heroes” at an upcoming Stated, by nominating a qualified individual. Further details, including the nomination form, are available on the General Grand Council website at <https://crypticmasons.org/first-responder-recognition>.

## The Journey through Masonry: Lessons from the Historical Knights Templar and their Origins

One interesting aspect of the origins of the Knights Templar is found with the number nine. The number nine has been interpreted as a symbol of completion and perfection, along with the spiritual aspect of sacred knowledge and esoteric wisdom. It is also associated with universal brotherhood, unity of purpose, infinite possibilities, and the attainment of a higher level of understanding.

Knowing this symbolism, I wish to present a history and discussion on the creation of this very significant group of brothers in Masonic history. According to Templar Expert Stephen Dafoe, “from the writings of William, Archbishop of Tyre (1130 – 1190), [...we learn that] in their first nine years of existence the Templars could raise no more than nine men.” Other sources have pinned the number of founding Templars as anywhere from 12 to as many as 30. However, it is generally accepted that nine knights established the Order.

Who were these original nine? Part of my study with the Grand Encampment Templar Education: *History of the Medieval Knights Templar* program was to learn about these original nine and what made them part of the beginnings of the Poor Knights of Christ or, as we know them today, The Knights Templar.

In 1119, the first members who would assume the mantle of the Knights Templar emerged. The man who would eventually take on the title of the first Grand Master of the Temple was **Hugues de Paynes** - a Frankish noble who was a vassal of Hughes I, Count of Champagne, with land in the Champagne region of France. He served during the first Crusade, displaying piety and courage.

Hugh offered to recruit additional members to serve as protectors to the pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land. Of the eight other knights he recruited, there has been some suspicion that they were his own relations, as was stated by Marilyn Hopkins, co-author of the book *Templars in America*. But no evidence has been shown to support this assumption, other than a claim by *Petr Payne zvaný Mistr Engliš*, writing in 1385, that Hugues de Paynes was a cousin of Comte de Champayne.

The other eight original Knights were:

1. **Godefroy de Saint-Omer**, sometimes referred to as Geoffroi or Godfrey, a Flemish knight. He may have been descended from the Lords of Saint Omer in Pas-de-Calais.
2. **André de Montbard**, who came from the Montbard family of Hochadel of Burgundy. He was an uncle to Saint Bernard de Clairvaux. Like Hugues de Paynes he was also a vassal of Hugues I, Count of Champagne.
3. **Hugues I or Hugh**, the third son of Theobald II, Count of Blois and Adele of Valois. He was known as Count of Champagne, but was more partial to Count of Troyes.
4. **Geoffroi Bisol**. Sadly little information is known about him or where he was from.
5. **Archambaud de St., Amand**. Again little is known about him or his origins.
6. **Payen de Montdidier**, who was related to the Counts of Flanders.
7. **Rossal**, who was a monk when he joined the others. Little is known about him otherwise.
8. **Gondemar (Gondamer or Gondemare)**, an abbot/monk of Portuguese origins.

The legend related to the origin of the seal of the Templars (where it displays two knights upon one horse) is associated with the claim that Godfrey and Hugues de Paynes were so poor or destitute that they only possessed one horse between them. History informs us that at their beginnings they were rich land owners. However, reflecting on the symbolism of the image on the seal, and that each of these knights gave up all they had to serve a deeper life purpose, the meaning behind the symbolism becomes clearer. (*continued on page 5*)

From a simple beginning with nine men seeking a Godly calling to serve, what was it that led to these Knights losing all they had and shrinking in membership to a level where most of them only exist in legend?

The Templars had quite a few successes: winning many victories in battle; creating a strong credit system for those traveling to the Holy Land; building a brotherhood filled with loyal and dedicated knights who had a genuine monastic reverence for Faith, Charity, and Devotion; and amassing wealth (in both coin and property) unlike any that had ever been seen. But these successes were mirrored with several challenges originating with this wealth, as the perception of greed and avarice was rumored and grew. In addition, their loss at several battles, including the defeat at the key battle at Hattin in 1187, contributed to their decline – culminating in the loss of the city of Jerusalem, the very place which provided the Templars with their name and mission. With these last challenges they had not only lost their purpose – that of service to each other, and the defense of their fellow Christians – but had in effect placed a target on their own backs. In the end, confronted by a greedy King (Phillip the Fair), and a controversial Pope (Clement I), they lost all they had built, and were forced to watch their Order fall or flee.

So, what lessons can be learned from the beginnings and struggles of these first Templar Knights? These are some of the ones I learned:

1. Great things can be created from the desire of one person, and built with the continued support of his brothers.
2. Sometimes what was built can grow to great numbers, and due to this many great things can be created and discovered.
3. One Brother's loyalty to another can have no boundaries or limits when considering devotion. But one must keep in mind that the ultimate devotion is to his Creator.
4. It is always wise to be wary of who you trust to involve in your organization, for even those who appear as friends can quickly become foes "for the right price," and for an interest in power.
5. If one truly keeps his focus on the will of his Creator, namely his Creator's will that he should do what is right in his heart, and not act based on financial or power-seeking reasons, then great things will develop from this fellowship and brotherhood.

*This article was submitted by SK S. Alex Wilson, of Ivanhoe Commandery #8*

### **In Memoriam**

It is with heavy hearts that we note the passing of SK Jim Glen Jr., Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of North Carolina for 2009, on December 23 at the age of 84.

Companion and Sir Knight Glen was an investment banker and a distinguished Veteran, having served in the United States Army on both active duty and in the Army Reserve, and retiring with the rank of Colonel. He was a dedicated Mason and a pillar of the Charlotte York Rite.

SK Jim is survived by his wife Terry and three children. He will be missed by his devoted family and his Masonic brethren alike.

*In pace requiescat.*

### **Charlotte Study Club to Offer Council Education**

Regular readers of the *Knightly News* may recall that the Charlotte York Rite bodies have a recurring Study Club, which meets four times a year in our upstairs Library. (See "Descending into the Vault," November 2024.)

At a recent organizational meeting, the members of the Club decided that in 2026, we will begin working through the official education program of the General Grand Council of Cryptic Masons International. The basic textbook for the program will be Robert G. Davis, *Cryptic Masonry Education Course* (2017).

All North Carolina Cryptic Masons are welcome to join us in working through this program. A certificate of completion will be offered to those who attend all four sessions.

For more information, contact Scott Brand at (704) 779-4312 or [scott.brand@aya.yale.edu](mailto:scott.brand@aya.yale.edu).