

2026

JUNE

# The Virginia Knight



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### VIRGINIA KNIGHT TEAM

Daniel J. Carter ..... Editor-In-Chief  
Michael T. Huff ..... Publisher

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### CALLING ALL SIR KNIGHTS IN VIRGINIA!

Do you have pictures, articles, event recaps, or announcements to share?

The Virginia Knight is your platform to reach Sir Knights across the Commonwealth. Help us tell the story of Templary in Virginia by sharing the good work, fellowship, service, and events happening in your Commandery.

Submissions may include:

- Commandery events and activities
- Photos from meetings, receptions, and special programs
- Announcements and upcoming events
- Articles of interest to Sir Knights and their families
- Charitable work and community involvement

Please submit all images, articles, and announcements to Sir Knight Carter, Editor-in-Chief, no later than the 3rd Saturday of each month to be considered for the next month's edition of The Virginia Knight. Let us share your Commandery's story with the rest of Virginia.



## GRAND OFFICERS

Michael T. Huff .....	<i>Grand Commander</i>
Kevin J. Harvey .....	<i>Dep. Grand Commander</i>
Jeffrey A. Paras .....	<i>Grand Generalissimo</i>
Jason C. Trenary .....	<i>Grand Captain General</i>
Joseph M. Matthews .....	<i>Grand Senior Warden</i>
Jonathan A. Giles .....	<i>Grand Junior Warden</i>
Rev. Richard E. Saunders .....	<i>Grand Prelate</i>
Jason L. Taliaferro .....	<i>Grand Treasurer</i>
Thomas L. Varner .....	<i>Dep. Grand Treasurer</i>
David R. Conner .....	<i>Grand Recorder</i>
John R. Rawls .....	<i>Dep. Grand Recorder</i>
Joseph B. Hale .....	<i>Dep. Grand Recorder</i>
Nelson C. Trinkle, Sr. ....	<i>Grand Recorder Emeritus</i>
Adam C. Duncan .....	<i>Grand Standard Bearer</i>
William A. Crosscup .....	<i>Grand Sword Bearer</i>
Ariel I. Alcantara .....	<i>Grand Warder</i>
Frederick R. Dixon .....	<i>Grand Sentinel</i>
Charles G. Steele, III .....	<i>Grand Instructor General</i>
Jason D. Matchett .....	<i>Dep. Grand Instructor General</i>
Dewey C. David .....	<i>Grand Inspector General</i>
Peter E. Terrill .....	<i>Grand Marshal</i>
Scott R. Lambert .....	<i>Grand Armorer</i>
Jeffrey C. Hedges .....	<i>Grand Musician</i>
Joel T. Bundy, MD. ....	<i>Grand Physician</i>
Kenneth L. McInnis .....	<i>Grand Aides-de-Camp</i>
David M. Strohsahl .....	<i>Grand Aides-de-Camp</i>
Daniel J. Carter .....	<i>Grand Aides-de-Camp</i>

## DISTRICT DEPUTIES

1 ... Clifford H. Gregory	4 ... Harold A. Chadsey	7 ... William A. Crosscup, V
2 ... Roger W. Taylor	5 ... Anthony L. Daniel	8 ... Joseph B. Hale
3 ... Richard E. Saunders	6 ... Mark R. Day	9 ... Charles R. Trude

## THE APARTMENT OF THE GRAND COMMANDER

Sir Knights,

Thank you for the honor and confidence you have placed in me by electing me to serve as your 153rd Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia. I am deeply grateful, humbled, and excited for the year ahead. This is not an honor I take lightly, and I know that whatever success we enjoy this year will come through the shared labor, faith, creativity, and commitment of Sir Knights across this Commonwealth.

Our theme for the year is *The Legacy We Share*. That legacy is not something locked away in old records, photographs, and proceedings. It is something we carry, shape, and hand forward by the way we serve our Commanderies, support our charities, welcome new Sir Knights, teach our work, and represent Christian Knighthood in our communities. My hope is that this year will remind each of us that the future of Templary in Virginia is not built by a few officers alone. It is built when every Sir Knight sees himself as part of the story.

In this issue, and in the months ahead, you will be exposed to articles on several major missions for the upcoming year. These include *Continuing the Legacy: Growing Together Through Engagement*, *From Interest to Involvement: Rethinking Recruitment*, *Incentives That Inspire*, *Campaigns That Connect*, and *Bringing Learning to Life Through Media*. You will also hear more about Project 153, our support of the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, the Signet Vanguard membership challenge, and new media projects designed to help educate, encourage, and strengthen our Commanderies.

I ask each of you to stay engaged, watch for the announcements ahead, and find the place where your own energy can help move this work forward. Not every Sir Knight will serve in the same way, but every Sir Knight has something to offer. If we make this year personal, if we support one another, and if we keep our eyes fixed on the legacy entrusted to us, then I believe Virginia Templary will not only honor its past, but take a confident step into its future.



  
M. T. Huff  
Grand Commander

## REMEMBERING JAY

By Joseph Brandon Hale, KTCH

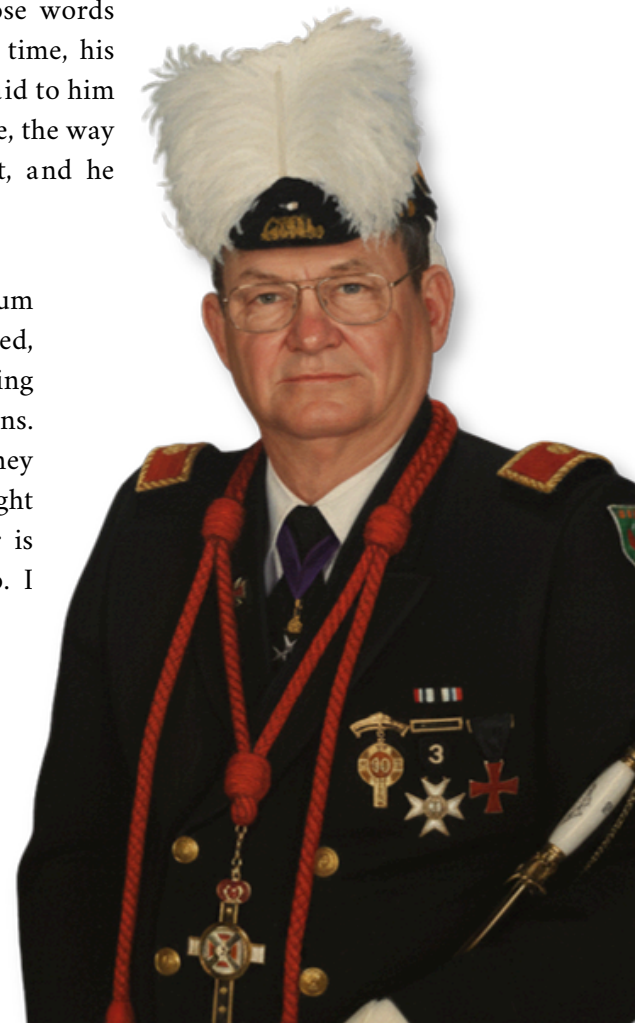
There are men we meet along this path who teach you the words of the ritual. Then there are men who teach you to live by them. Sir Knight Jay L Cotner was the latter. He did not simply guide me in the forms and traditions of our Gentle Craft. He showed me of his own example and actions. What it means to carry yourself as a Mason, Companion, and as a Knight Templar. Being upright with steadfastness, with understanding, and with a devotion to service that never sought recognition. Without the hope of fee or reward.

Jay took me under his wing at a time when I could not yet see in myself where I needed to be and needed direction in my life. He was not a man given to flattery or easy praise. He was very honest for that, and you respected him even more for it. Everyone always knew where they stood with Jay. His guidance was firm, as a good mentor's must be. Beneath that discipline was genuine care, the kind that only reveals itself over time. In the patience he showed when I stumbled, in the persistence of his presence when I had questions, in the way he listened, and truly listened, before he spoke. He believed in the ritual. Not as ceremony for its own sake, but as lesson through which our deepest obligations are made real. Jay taught me that to perform the work with care and fidelity is itself an act of service. A gift handed forward to every Brother who would receive it after us. That lesson, more than any other, changed how I approach every labor I undertake within the Craft and beyond its walls.

Jay helped me grow into the man I am today. I do not write those words lightly, because I know what they cost. He dedicated years of his time, his patience, his counsel freely given. The debt I owe him cannot be repaid to him now. It can only be carried forward, paid to those who come after me, the way he paid it forward to me. That is the heart of our Gentle Craft, and he understood it better than anyone I have known.

The sword he carried so faithfully has been laid down and the Asylum is quieter for his absence. His example to those he cared for and loved, will not perish. Jay's steadfastness, his gentle strength, his unwavering commitment to the Ritual he loved will pass on through generations. They live in every Brother, Companion, and Sir Knight he shaped. They live in me. I will never dishonor that gift by forgetting what he taught me. I will carry it, as he would have wished, until my own labor is complete. Until we meet again my best friend, mentor, and hero. I appreciate you and all you have done.

**“WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND  
FAITHFUL SERVANT... ENTER THOU INTO  
THE JOY OF THY LORD.”**





## GRAND PRELATE'S MESSAGE

Rev. Richard E. Saunders *Grand Prelate*

In 1958, the company that makes Legos introduced the standard plastic interlocking building block. Since that time Lego sets have gone from simple building designs to complex creations limited only by one's imagination. There are Lego buildings, vehicles, starships, characters. A friend of mine just built a Lego replica of the 1966 Batmobile.

One of the most interesting things about Legos is that if you take the standard interlocking block from a 1958 Lego set, it will fit perfectly onto the blocks from a set made in 2026. The same is true for Legos from each of the past 68 years. Why? Because the company that designed Legos decided to stick with the plan.

We often develop plans, and then some obstacle comes up that tempts us to change directions. Life is always sending us unexpected surprises. But nothing takes God by surprise. He is the master planner. Things may turn against us. Problems may hinder us, but God still has a plan for you and me. And the best advice for us is to stick to the plan.

To stick with the plan, we need to remember that the foundation matters. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:24-25, "Anyone who listens to my teachings and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock." (NLT)

When building with Legos, the foundation is crucial. If the base is not stable, the entire structure can easily fall apart. Similarly, our lives need a strong foundation. That foundation is Jesus. Building our lives on Jesus involves hearing and doing. It is not enough to just listen to the Word of God; we must apply His teachings daily.

In a Lego set, every piece has a purpose and a place in the overall design. Paul describes the church as the body of Christ, where each member has a unique role. Just as each Lego piece has a purpose, we all have a specific function within the body of Christ. Likewise, we have the ability to reflect the creative nature that God has instilled in us. We need to use this ability to bring glory to God and bless those around us.

Let us build our lives on the solid rock of Jesus Christ, recognizing and supporting each other's unique roles in the Body of Christ and unite together to serve God and glorify Him. In doing so, we will be sticking to the best plan that God has for our lives.

Always and All Ways in Christ

*Rick*

## MEET YOUR NEW GRAND WARDER S.K. ARIEL I. ALCANTARA, KCT.



Sir Knight Ariel Ilano Alcantara brings to the Grand Commandery line a life shaped by service, discipline, hard work, and a deep appreciation for the fellowship of Masonry. Born in Quezon City, Philippines, Sir Knight Alcantara graduated from the Philippine Merchant Marine Academy in 1984 with a Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering. His professional life took him around the world as a Merchant Marine engineer before he immigrated to the United States in 1990, became a U.S. citizen in 1994, and later earned his United States Coast Guard marine engineering licenses. Since 2013, he has served as a civilian employee of the Department of Defense as a U.S. Navy Port Engineer.

His Masonic journey began at Naomi Lodge No. 87 in Norfolk, where he was raised a Master Mason in 2015. Since then, he has served with energy across the Craft, Capitular Masonry, and Templary. He is a Past Master of Naomi Lodge No. 87, has served Willis V. Fentress Lodge No. 296, and was appointed Grand Junior Steward of the Grand Lodge of Virginia in 2023. In Royal Arch Masonry, he has served Princess Anne Royal Arch Chapter No. 1607, Great Bridge Royal Arch Chapter No. 82, and as District Deputy Grand High Priest. In Templary, he is a Past Commander and current Recorder of Grice Commandery No. 16, a Life Member in Perpetuity, and has previously served the Grand Commandery of Virginia as District Deputy Grand Commander.

To Ariel, the real reward Masonry has given him has been the journey itself: the friendships formed, the brotherhood strengthened, and the opportunity to serve his fellow man and community. In his own message to the Sir Knights of Virginia, he expressed sincere gratitude for being elected Grand Warder and pledged to give his very best, support the work and program of the Grand Commander, and “protect the banner of our Order.”

He also brings the warmth of a devoted family man. He is the father of Ariel Jr. and Camille, father-in-law to Jeremy Jeffries, and grandfather to Kane and Aria Elaine. As he begins this new place in the Grand Line, the Sir Knights of Virginia may expect from him the same qualities that have marked his life and service: steadiness, humility, loyalty, and a genuine love for the fraternity. Please join us in welcoming Sir Knight Ariel Ilano Alcantara as our new Grand Warder.

## DEMOLAY NO. 4: TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF TEMPLAR FIDELITY

This year, DeMolay Commandery No. 4 marks a rare and honorable milestone: its Bicentennial.

The formation of DeMolay was closely tied to James Cushman, a Connecticut Mason whose ritual knowledge helped shape early appendant Masonry in Virginia. Through the support of Marshall Lodge No. 39 and the leadership of men such as James Penn, the work began to take root in Lynchburg. On January 25, 1826, Daniel Walker Thomas, Grand Commander of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of Virginia, issued a dispensation authorizing the Templar Orders to be conferred upon certain Lynchburg Royal Arch Masons. Those Orders were conferred on April 17, 1826, and the Sir Knights soon petitioned for the establishment of an Encampment in Lynchburg.



A dispensation was granted on April 29, 1826, with Linnaeus Dupuy as Commander, Robert H. Gray as Generalissimo, and Howson S. White as Captain General. The charter was voted and presented later that year, and in 1827 the Encampment adopted the name DeMolay. In 1856, as Templar usage developed, the term Encampment gave way to Commandery, giving us the name by which we know it today: DeMolay Commandery No. 4.

Across two centuries, DeMolay Commandery has been more than an old charter or a proud name. It has been a living body of Sir Knights bound by Christian faith, Masonic fellowship, and devotion to the principles of our Order. Its history records years of service, hospitality, public ceremony, and close friendship with neighboring Commanderies. Through change, hardship, relocation, and renewal, DeMolay No. 4 has continued its work and preserved its place in the Templar history of Virginia.

As we recognize this Bicentennial, we honor not only the men who founded DeMolay Commandery, but every Sir Knight who helped carry its legacy forward. Two hundred years of Templary is no small achievement. It is the result of fidelity, perseverance, and a shared belief that what we have received from those before us must be preserved and passed on with care.

DeMolay Commandery No. 4 will celebrate this historic milestone on Saturday, August 1, 2026, at 204 Lynch Mill Road, Lynch Station, Virginia 24571. Lunch will begin at 12:00 p.m. and is open to all Sir Knights, Ladies of the Grand Commandery, and Master Masons. The cost is \$20 per person and includes a Commemorative Bicentennial Coin.

Please RSVP no later than July 1, 2026, to S.K. Kevin Harvey, KCT, Deputy Grand Commander, at [harveykevin24@gmail.com](mailto:harveykevin24@gmail.com).

STATED CONCLAVE OF THE GRAND COMMANDERY

# 2026



# STATED CONCLAVE OF THE GRAND COMMANDERY



# STATED CONCLAVE OF THE GRAND COMMANDERY



# PROJECT 153

## A LEGACY YOU CAN SEE



With Sir Knight Michael elected as the 153rd Right Eminent Grand Commander of Virginia, the number 153 could have remained just that: a number in the record book. Instead, it has become the center of a year-long effort to bring Virginia's Sir Knights together around charity, visibility, and shared purpose.

That effort is called Project 153. The name comes from the Gospel of John, where the disciples drew in 153 fish, "and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken." It is a simple image, but a fitting one. The work of this Grand Commandery cannot be carried by one officer, one Commandery, or one group of active members. The net holds when every strand does its part.

At the heart of Project 153 is the Virginia Vision Drive, a campaign with a goal of raising \$153,000 for the Knights Templar Eye Foundation. It is an ambitious goal, but one that reflects the size of the opportunity before us. The Eye Foundation has long been one of the great charitable works of our Order, and this campaign gives Virginia a chance to make a strong statement of support.

Project 153 is also meant to be seen. Throughout the year, Sir Knights will have opportunities to take part through donations, recognitions, and special Virginia Templary items connected to the campaign. These items are not meant to sit in a drawer or exist only as souvenirs. They are meant to be worn, used, and seen as reminders that our charity and our identity are tied together.

The hope is simple: make participation easy, meaningful, and visible. Not every Sir Knight will contribute in the same way, and that is perfectly fine. Some will give; some will help promote the campaign; some will encourage their Commandery to take part, and some will wear the tie or tie bar and start a conversation. The important thing is that each Sir Knight finds his place in the work.

Project 153 is not asking Virginia Templary to do something beyond its scope. It is asking us to remember our strength. When we work together, the net does not break. It holds. And if enough Sir Knights take hold of it this year, it may be filled in a way that leaves a lasting mark on our Grand Commandery and the charitable work we are called to support.

## THE EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

Sir Knights, I write to you today as the Chairman of the Knights Templar Educational Foundation Committee. Established in 1922, it is the oldest Grand Encampment-sponsored charity and stands as one of the legacies of Templary. Today, the Foundation continues that mission by providing grants to college students as they complete their undergraduate degrees. It is different from many financial opportunities in that our recipients must be in their final two years of study and have already proven themselves to be strong students who are involved on their campuses and in their communities. Since 2020, we have awarded \$56,000 in grants to 24 different students.



The application process for Educational Foundation grants occurs during the spring semester, usually with a mid-March deadline. Recipients are notified in the early summer, and the funds are sent directly to their institution in their name. The application for the 2027-28 academic year will be available soon on the Grand Commandery of Virginia website at [www.vatemplars.org](http://www.vatemplars.org).

My first challenge to you is to consider young men and women within your connections in Freemasonry, church, work, or your community who may be encouraged to apply. If each Commandery were to identify one student, and even half followed through with an application, we would have 13 applicants—more than at any time in recent memory. The larger the pool of candidates, the more certain we can be that our awardees will be the strongest representatives of this program.

My second challenge is to financially support the Educational Foundation. This year, our Right Eminent Grand Commander, Michael Thomas Huff, has commissioned a limited-edition tie bar available for purchase at his Official Visits to the Districts and other special events. It is in the shape of a sword with the word Virginia on the blade and is available in gold or silver, depending on your Templar rank. The cost is \$20.00, and all of the funds will go directly to the Educational Foundation Fund. By purchasing one of these limited-edition tie bars or making a general donation, you will not only commemorate this year in Virginia Templary but also help continue our longstanding commitment to support deserving students.

As the Knights Templar Educational Foundation moves into its second century, we not only continue to invest in higher education but also strengthen the enduring legacy of Templar charity, leadership, and service for generations yet to come.

Yours in Knightly Courtesy,

Joseph M. Matthews, KCT  
*Grand Senior Warden*

*Chairman, Knights Templar Educational Foundation Committee*

## THE SIGNET VANGUARD



The Grand Commandery has recognized Sir Knights who bring new men into the Order. That recognition is well deserved. Some Sir Knights have a real gift for it, and every year we see faithful members sign three or more petitions. They deserve our thanks.

But during my years as Awards Chairman, I began to notice something else. Many good Sir Knights never seem to get started. I believe, for many, the work of bringing in new members can feel larger than it needs to be. It can sound like recruiting. It can feel like a campaign. It can become intimidating before the first conversation ever takes place.

That is why The Signet Vanguard was created.

The idea is very simple. We are asking a Sir Knight to bring one worthy man into the Order. Just one. That may sound small, but there is strength in its focus. We are not asking every member to become a great recruiter overnight. We are asking each Sir Knight to look around his own circle and think seriously about one man who may be ready for what Templary has to offer.

And then, make it personal.

Most men do not care what we do until they understand why we do it. They may see the uniform. They may see the sword. They may hear about our charities, our meetings, and our traditions. But what often makes the difference is when a man hears why it matters to you. Why you keep coming back. Why the lessons of Christian knighthood still speak to you. Why the friendships, the discipline, the service, and the faith of this Order are worth his time. That kind of invitation cannot be printed on a flyer. It has to come from a Brother.

The Vanguard is not about pressure. It is not about chasing numbers. Membership in our Order is voluntary, and it should always remain the act of a willing and sincere heart. This challenge is simply meant to remind us that growth begins with a conversation. One sincere invitation may be all it takes to place a worthy man on the path to becoming a Sir Knight.

During this Chivalric year, the first 153 Sir Knights who serve as the top-line signer on a new petition will receive special recognition through The Signet Vanguard. Each will receive a limited-edition lapel pin and challenge coin shaped after the Grand Commander's signet. Only 153 sets will be made.

One Sir Knight. One invitation. One petition. One new Sir Knight.

Think of the man who should be standing beside you. Tell him why this Order matters to you. Give him the opportunity to decide for himself. Then sign the line, and seal the legacy.

## FELLOWSHIP, TRAINING, AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT



The 2026 Mid-Atlantic Department Conference of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar, U.S.A. will be held September 25–26, 2026, at the Maritime Conference Center in Linthicum Heights, Maryland. This annual gathering brings together Sir Knights from Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia for instruction, fellowship, and renewed commitment to the work of the York Rite.

This year's conference offers more than the regular business and departmental sessions. It will also include the York Rite Leadership Program, giving Companions and Sir Knights an opportunity to take part in meaningful leadership training while attending the Conference. These courses are designed to strengthen the practical skills needed to lead in a volunteer Masonic environment, including self-improvement, understanding others, building stronger teams, and communicating with purpose.

The York Rite Leadership Program has long been recognized as a valuable resource for those who want to serve more effectively. Its courses focus on three major areas: Personal Effectiveness, Group Dynamics, and Influential Communication. These are not abstract lessons. They are tools that can be carried home and put to work in our Chapters, Councils, Commanderies, and Grand Bodies. Every York Rite body benefits when its officers and members are better prepared to lead with confidence, clarity, and brotherly understanding.

The Conference will also include the Commissioned Templar Chaplain Program, offered concurrently with the Department Conference. This program is especially valuable for Prelates and Chaplains, reminding us that these officers are called to do more than read a prayer. They are called to offer spiritual leadership and support within our Masonic and Templar bodies.

All Sir Knights who are able to attend are encouraged to take part. Whether you are a current Grand Officer, a local officer preparing for future service, or a member who simply wants to better serve the Craft, this Conference offers an opportunity to learn, connect, and return home better equipped for the work before us.

FOR REGISTRATION PAPERWORK AND ADDITIONAL CONFERENCE  
INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT  
**YRMADC.ORG**



@vatemplars

