



Grand Commander



R: E: Ray Casey, Jr.

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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

Companions and Sir Knights,

On Monday August 3, 2026 I had the opportunity to attend the Salisbury Table Council held at the Winston Salem Masonic Temple. I presented the KTEF Medallion to Salisbury Commandery No. 13, along with Michael Pritchard, our Knights Templar Eye Foundation State Chairman.



REGC Ray Casey, Jr. and SK Mike Pritchard, Grand Standard Bearer present the KTEF Medallion to SK Josh Mueller of Salisbury Commandery #13

On August 5, I had the opportunity to travel to Greensboro NC with some of the Commandery members of St. Johns No. 10, in order to present the Sword of Merit Award to one of their members who lives at Whitestone. Ivanhoe Commandery No.8 allowed us to make the presentation at their regular meeting.



REGC Casey presents the Sword of Merit to SK Bruce Pugh, of St. John's Commandery #10

The Sword of Merit was presented by the members of St. Johns No. 10 to Sir Knight Bruce Pugh who had wonderful remarks to offer. Sir Knight Pugh stated he had no living relatives, so he gave the sword to St. Johns No. 10 and asked that it be displayed as they see fit. Also in attendance was Sir Knight Trent Carter from Nazareth Commandery No. 41, a previous recipient of the Sword of Merit Award.

Sir Knights, please remember the upcoming Grand Lodge Annual Meeting in Winston Salem on August 25 – 26, 2026.

Also don't forget the MHCO Homecoming on October 10. All Sir Knights that would like to march in the parade with the Grand Commandery Officers should arrive by 9:30 AM in Class A Uniforms (no swords). And please remember the upcoming Order of the Temple, at Castle McCullough in Jamestown NC on October 13.

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your Grand Commander this year. It is my Honor Sir Knights.

In your service,

Ray Casey
Grand Commander of North Carolina



(L to R): SKs Warren Taylor, Arthur Romans, Ray Casey, Sparkie Travis, Fred Whitty, and Dominick Giorgianni at the Sword of Merit ceremony

Grand Commandery Delegation Pays Visit to KTEF Grant Recipient

On Tuesday August 11, 2026 a delegation from the Grand Commandery of North Carolina had the opportunity to visit the Duke Eye Center, to meet Nataliia Klementeva, Ph.D., who has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Knights Templar Eye Foundation. Representing the Grand Commandery that day were REGC Ray Casey, Jr.; VE Deputy Grand Commander Edward Allen; E Mike Pritchard, Grand Standard Bearer and KTEF State Chairman; and MIPGM Russell Bridges, current Senior Grand Steward of the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.



(L to R) Edward Allen, Mike Pritchard, Dr. Natalia Klementeva, Dr. Vadim Arshavsky, Ray Casey, Jr., and Russell Bridges

The delegation was welcomed and given a tour of the facility by Dr. Klementeva, a Senior Research Associate, and Dr. Vadim Arshavsky, Helena Rubenstein Foundation Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology at Duke Medical Center and Director of the Arshavsky Laboratory. Dr. Klementeva was awarded the \$100,000 Career-Starter grant in support of her research project, “Elucidating the Pathophysiological Mechanisms of Photoreceptor Degeneration in Bardet-Biedl Syndrome.” According to a write-up on the Duke Ophthalmology website, “Bardet-Biedl syndrome (BBS) is a genetic disorder that causes progressive vision loss, often beginning in childhood and potentially leading to legal blindness. The vision loss occurs primarily because photoreceptors, the light-sensing cells in the retina that are essential for vision, do not function properly and eventually degenerate.”

Dr. Klementeva’s research will seek to identify the underlying biological processes that cause photoreceptors to die in BBS patients, thus laying the groundwork for potential new therapies. This research is critical, as there are no currently-approved treatments for the vision loss associated with BBS. The project thus holds great promise of fulfilling the KTEF’s stated mission “to improve vision through research, education, and supporting access to care.”



Grand Commander Presents KTEF Awards

REGC Ray Casey, Jr., and KTEF State Chairman Mike Pritchard took the opportunity at the recent State AMD Ingathering, to present seals, plaques and certificates to the representatives of several Commanderies, in recognition of their support of the KTEF and its mission. *(Photos courtesy of SK Richard Gelsomino, of Charlotte Commandery #2.)*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with SK Michael Orlando of Raleigh Commandery #4*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with SK John Barrile of Malta Commandery #19*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with SK Eric Johnson of Plantagenet Commandery #1*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with E Ken Wical of Palestine Commandery #20*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with SK Chuck Reed of Charlotte Commandery #2*



*REGC Casey and E Mike Pritchard
with E Mark Alexander of Wilkes Commandery #40*

Grand Officer Team Confers Order of the Temple



Wilkes York Rite Knighted two new Sir Knights on August 31st: Jason Winters of Wilkes Commandery No. 40, and Josh Wilkie of Lenoir Commandery No. 33.

The Order was conferred by Past Grandmaster Mack Sigmon and a majority of the current Grand Commandery officers, as a warm-up for the upcoming Castle McCullough conferral on October 13.

The cast was as follows:

- Commander - Mack Sigmon (Past Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of NC)
- Generalissimo - Mark Alexander (Grand Generalissimo)
- Captain General- Wesley Church
- Prelate - Matthew Peeler (Grand Captain of the Guard of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of NC)
- Senior Warden - Charles Talley (Grand Senior Warden)
- Junior Warden - Ken Wical (Grand Sword Bearer)
- Standard Bearer - Mike Pritchard (Grand Standard Bearer)
- Sword Bearer - Brett Huffman (Grand Conductor of the Council of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters of NC)
- Warder - Bill Smith (Grand Warder)

This article was submitted by E Mark Alexander, Grand Generalissimo and Chief Instructor-Inspector of the Grand Commandery of North Carolina, and Recorder of Wilkes Commandery #40.