

# **ALLOCUTION OF THE 152nd GRAND COMMANDER**

**May 2026**

## **Executive Summary**

I want to first welcome each of you to our 204<sup>th</sup> Grand Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Virginia. Just saying that sentence connects us to something very old but something that is needed now more than ever. We are the ones who carry the standard established by men years ago, and we feel a deep connection to the traditions and faith that guided them. Your presence here means more to me than I can express, and I appreciate each and every one of you.

This document presents the Allocution of the 152nd Grand Commander—an official address intended to mark the closing of a year of leadership by reviewing the goals, actions, and outcomes achieved while at the same time, renewing our shared purpose, and to communicate the themes that will guide the Commandery's work. It sets a tone of continuity and stewardship while also recognizing the opportunities and responsibilities that come with this office.

Within this allocution, the Grand Commander offers reflections on the Commandery's mission and the values that anchor its ritual, fellowship, and service. Readers will find remarks that connect tradition to present-day practice, highlighting the importance of unity, disciplined leadership, and active participation across local and statewide efforts.

This allocution also acknowledges those whose dedication sustains the organization—officers, Sir Knights, committees, supporters, and partner bodies—while outlining practical priorities for the term ahead. These priorities include strengthening membership and engagement, supporting Commanderies and their officers, expanding charitable and community impact, and improving communication and coordination throughout the jurisdiction. Most especially, our Order owes a tremendous debt of gratitude

to our Ladies, to our families, and most especially, to our Savior Jesus Christ, the giver of every good and perfect gift.

Finally, the allocution closes with an invitation to action: a call for members to recommit to the work, support one another, especially their new Grand Commander, and carry forward the Commandery's standards with humility and purpose. Readers are encouraged to consult the complete allocution for full context, detailed messages, and formal recognitions. The full document is available online.

Most Worshipful Grand Master, Right Eminent Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment, Right Eminent Grand Generalissimo of the Grand Encampment, Right Eminent Department Commander, Most Excellent Grand High Priest, Right Eminent Past Grand Commanders, Eminent Commanders, Distinguished Guests, and Sir Knights all:

Welcome to our 204<sup>th</sup> Annual Stated Conclave of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia. We were truly blessed to gather again in Harrisonburg, Virginia, at the Hotel Madison, to give account of the past chivalric year, to celebrate what the Great Captain of our Salvation allowed us to accomplish, and to set our face toward the work ahead. I have earnestly looked forward to this moment when I would give an account to you of my activities for the past year, but not perhaps for the reasons you might think. Our ritual states that a steadfast belief in the truths contained in the Word of God, coupled with an unswerving faith in our Lord alone affords us that strong consolation which the world can neither give nor take away. In that same Word of God, in the Book of Hebrews, 9:27 we find it written that it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that, the judgement. I told you last year when you saw fit to affix this red cord around my neck that I took it as an emblem of responsibility, not necessarily as authority. I find it appropriate, therefore, that I should give to you an account of how I used that responsibility throughout the year that followed.

I've read or heard numerous allocutions from Grand Sovereigns and most end with acknowledging the help of those who supported him. I am going to do the opposite and begin there because I believe that is where the credit for our

work this year truly belongs. I begin with my bride of nearly 40 years, Lady Luz Searcy, and thank her for her constant support and companionship throughout this year. Long miles on the road with her as my copilot...quietly napping in the passenger seat...but ready to be the life of the event when we arrived. She was my secret weapon this year, and I sincerely appreciate her. I next offer my sincere thanks to the Sir Knights who carried the labor of leadership throughout the year—our District Deputy Grand Commanders, Grand Line Officers, committee chairmen, recorders, instructors, and every Eminent Commander who kept the local Asylums open and active. I thank the Aides de Camp upon whom I placed a tremendous amount of responsibility this year...I'll talk more about them in a bit. I also thank the families who supported our travels and our service; without their patience and encouragement, much of what we did would not have been possible.

Most importantly, and mentioned last for emphasis, I give all praise and thanksgiving to our Lord and Master, the King of Kings, our once crucified but now risen and exalted Savior, Jesus Christ. He is our Blessed Redeemer, upon which all of the hopes of our poor perishing bodies rest, and I thank Him for all things.

As I looked back across the year, one theme emerged again and again: that the fires of friendship and brotherly love burned brightly even when the season outside was cold, and that our unity—within the Grand Commandery of Virginia and with our brethren of the King Baldwin Grand Commandery—was strengthened through shared labor, shared worship, shared ritual, and shared fellowship.

## Goals For The Chivalric Year

Taking my cue from the “Swords of Progress” strategic plans, I and the leadership team set 5 goals for the year.

1. Membership Enhancement – Rather than break our membership issue into the questions of recruitment, retention, etc. I decided to have an all up strategy that focused, yes, on making new knights, but also on keeping the knights we have engaged. It is my belief that engaged people don't abandon their organizations. Engaged people also become the leaders of tomorrow. So, the goal was to find ways to get and keep the SKs engaged and interested in our Order.
2. Ritualistic Proficiency – All through our time within the Craft, we are told that what makes us who we are is our Obligations. Yet, sadly, I would lay good odds that quite a few of our number did not remember their vows. Some, in fact, may not have even heard them since their own knighting. This, quite frankly, is a grave problem for us. I believe without fear of contradiction that if we do not fix this problem, our Order will eventually die. If our ritual is what makes us and we lose the ritual, we cannot help but lose ourselves. We will be like the salt that Jesus spoke of that has lost its savor. It is good for nothing.
3. Fiscal Responsibility – While I did not perceive actual malfeasance in the fiscal management of the Grand Commandery, I did see that keeping track of our finances and, more importantly, being transparent to the membership was absolutely critical. A look at old budgets required a significant amount of time to sort through. Before leaving

office, I wanted a budget and expenditure tracking process that was simple, easy to understand, and readily available to the membership.

4. Leadership Development – No organization lasts long without good leadership. Given that we rotate leaders every year, continuity of leadership and vision is important. Also, reaching further into our ranks to identify and provide opportunity to tomorrow’s leaders is likewise important.
5. Presence – People want to be a part of organizations that are doing something. We commonly call that the law of attraction, and sometimes we measure it with the term “esprit de corps”. Certain organizations never have to recruit because they naturally draw people to them by their very presence, by the way they look, act, and the things they do. I want us to be that sort of organization.

## Actions

Goals are great, but there must be concrete actions that lead to the accomplishment of the goals set. Given that the life span of a Grand Commander is a mere 12 months, and given that some of that time is spent with necessary activities such as our religious observances, official visits, etc. the question becomes how to fit everything in and make an impact, while ensuring that you bring the team, all of whom are volunteers, along at the same time. I decided to focus on a few things that I could control, make a few subtle changes, and hopefully make slight culture changes that will lead to long term impact.

## Theme For The Chivalric Year

The first step was selecting our theme for the year which was “Faithful To Our Vows”. From the time we made our first steps in Masonry, we learned that we are changed by our Obligation, called a vow in our Chivalric Order. As York Rite Masons and, especially, as Christians, our vows define us. Moreover, it is the keeping of those vows that sets us apart in the world. Many are the men who make casual promises to either take certain actions or to refrain for acts who then, when convenient, set aside or forget those oaths. This theme calls upon the Knights of the Temple to always seek to do the harder right instead of the easier wrong. To never be content with a half-truth when the whole can be won. In short, we should seek to be faithful because we serve a God who is faithful, and we should hold ourselves to that.

I spoke on the subject of being faithful to our vows at each of my official visits and provided each SK present with a little memento to keep with them each day to remind them of who and who’s they were. The talk was different each time because I believed that individuals who attended more than one visit should not hear the same talk more than once. Then, for the final visit, the topic was not on being faithful but rather, WHY be faithful. In the words of the Apostle Paul as recorded in the Book of Romans, 12:1 I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of Christ, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. This is why we are faithful. Because in so doing, we are actually being faithful to God through Jesus Christ, to whom we made our vows in the first place. For this reason, the emblem for the year is that of a cross. Under the arms of the cross are the symbols for Ancient Craft Masonry and Royal Arch Masonry,

each attached to the cross with a cable tow. Atop the cross is a crown. This symbol depicts that our faithfulness is tied to the cross which, when we bear it well, we will be deemed worthy to wear the crown. My objectives to support the goals were as follow:

### **Focus on Who We Are**

At each of my Official Visits this year, I asked that the District conduct an assigned Templar Order in Full Form in the morning and then conduct a Full Form Opening with Rehearsal of Duties in the afternoon. This supports a number of our goals.

1. Membership Enhancement – This gives ample opportunities across the Commonwealth to receive the Orders. A more predictable schedule may lead to more seamless recruitment. Further, more engagement from the members in conferring the Orders would serve to increase involvement and perhaps add to the sense of purpose for being a Member. The high number of attendees at my official visits bears witness that at least a part of this objective was realized.
2. Ritualistic Proficiency – It is easy to confer our Orders in Short Form...but so much is lost in the process, not the least of which is proficiency to confer the Orders in Full Form. A quick glance at this quarter's message from the Grand Master will show that this is a concern across the entire Order. Sadly, there appear to be members of our Order who have never even seen the Orders in Full Form. This is not as it should be.

3. Presence – Seeing a room full of Knights conducting the business of the Order cannot help but inspire pride in our Order. When we confer Orders in short form we lose the zeal that should fill the new SKs spirit from seeing men who cared enough to make the sacrifice in time and effort to be proficient in conferring the Orders upon them. Reading a Short Form Order to me says I care about you...but only enough to give you the minimum that's required.
4. Leadership Development – One of the most important aspects of being a leader is learning how to inspire others to accomplish a task, especially when the others are not compelled to cooperate with you. I assigned regional aides de camp and gave them the job of coordinating the Orders with the 3 DDGCs in their region. This is the same process that the Army uses for leader development – Assign a role without “authority” and have the individual learn the art of persuasion so that he will not rely on authority. Compelling compliance is never truly effective...it is only masked by forced obedience for a time before it yields disastrous results.

### **Budgetary Discipline**

The goal was fiscal responsibility; the objective was to instill and enforce budgetary discipline and transparency. This was quite easy. I appointed an absolutely outstanding SK to be the chair of our Budget Committee. I then turned him loose with very simple guidelines...our budget is confusing which leads to additional concerns and angst. Simplify it. And work with the remainder of the finance team (Grand Treasurer and Grand Recorder) to use the modern tools of money management so that there is easy accountability

and tracing (Quick Books) so that there is never a question of what the status of our finances is. Further, I directed that quarterly audits take place to ensure that things were happening according to what had been directed. I owe a further debt of gratitude to our Trustees for their additional guidance.

## **Be Visible**

In the connected world of today, if you are not present on social media, you simply do not exist. I was fortunate to inherit a very skilled and savvy social media team, and I thank each of them for their efforts. Taking my cue from previous Grand Commanders, I made a point of feeding them information regarding our activities. Further, we commissioned a video at the start of the year that is currently at home on the Grand Encampment's website. Special thanks to SK Josh Payne for the excellent job he did on this. I have shown it when called upon to speak to other bodies to great effect and recommend that other members of our Order do so as well.

In addition, I believe that part of presence necessarily is communications. I know we have the monthly supplements each month, but I wanted to go further than that, so I started writing a monthly newsletter directly from myself to the SKs. Each edition carried a particular theme, reviewed actions of the previous month and provided an abbreviated schedule for the next month's activities. In this way, the entire Order was kept apprised of what was happening throughout the year.

One of the highlights of the year, yes, one of the actions that I am most proud of is the bond we have forged with our fellow Knights Templar from the King Baldwin Grand Commandery, PHA. We met in June of 2025 and worked out a

framework for cooperation. I appointed SK Jeffery Peras, our Grand Captain General, as our Official Representative to this grand body and, I say for the record, he did an outstanding job both representing us, keeping our staff informed, and planning joint activities. Following up on this, we met in joint conclave at Penn Neck #33. (Thank you to the SKs of Penn Neck with a special thank you to the DDGC, SK Bill Sirman for making this happen.) We have continued to work together on acts of charity and beneficence where we have mutually supported each other. As an example only, SKs of the Grand Commandery worked with the King Baldwin team at a project for at risk youth, and, concurrently, their team made significant donations to our charity work. We all marched together at the Religious Freedom Day Parade and made a significant impact with our numbers and unity. This is a part of being visible, showing the world that our Order is strong and united under the banner of Christ.

We attended a joint conclave hosted by King Baldwin Mount Olivet Commandery No. 2 on April 8, 2026. This was well attended by Grand Commandery and, once again, the spirit of fraternity and unity was strong among all who attended.

I give a special thank you to the Right Eminent Grand Commander of the King Baldwin Grand Commandery, SK Michael Coffey, my true brother in every way.

## Highlights of the Chivalric Year (May 2025 – April 2026)

### May 2025

In May, we returned home from our Grand Stated Conclave grateful for fellowship, renewed purpose, and the privilege of laboring together as Christian Knights. We began the year with immediate focus on visiting our Commanderies and supporting the districts as they prepared for conferrals and receptions. On May 28, we gathered with the Sir Knights of Old Dominion Commandery No. 11 to celebrate Ascension Day at the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, a fitting setting to remember our Lord's victory over death and His promise to return. We then continued the momentum with Official Visits at the close of the month—District 6 on May 24, where the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross was conferred, and District 7 on May 31, where the Order of Malta was conferred. In both places, the ritual work was conducted with reverence and excellence, and I offered my thanks to the leadership teams who carried the burden of preparation and hospitality.

### June 2025

June closed the first chapter of our year with strong Official Visits and an emphasis on restoring meaning to our work by presenting the Orders in full form whenever possible. We continued encouraging our Sir Knights to be present and visible in our Blue Lodges, and on June 23 we had the opportunity to speak and support St. John the Baptist Day at Spotsylvania Lodge. We also remained connected to Masonic youth and the wider Masonic family, supporting the Grand Master's DeMolay class at Luray Caverns on June 7 and the Rainbow Girls Grand Session in Harrisonburg on June 27. The example of

those young people—taking ritual seriously and serving with joy—reminded us that we must never allow our own standards to drift.

### July 2025

July reminded us, in the month of our nation’s birth, that liberty must be guarded—and that our own vows must be lived. On July 12, we conducted the Official Visit to District 8 at Lynn Commandery No. 9 in Marion, Virginia, where the Order of the Temple was conferred and new Sir Knights were welcomed into the ranks of the Order. Later in the month, we supported the Red Cross of Constantine on July 19 and then traveled to Norfolk for the DeMolay Grand Conclave on July 25–26. In each setting—Templar, York Rite, and youth—we saw the same truth: excellence is never accidental; it is the fruit of preparation, humility, and teamwork.

### August 2025

In August, we were reminded by Scripture to number our days, and we used them well. On August 2, we gathered for a Festival of Orders in Chesapeake and welcomed new Sir Knights. On August 8, we represented the Knights Templar Eye Foundation in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia, where we participated in the presentation of a Career Starter Grant to support eye research—work that quietly and steadily helps restore sight to the blind. On August 16, we met in Norfolk for the Drill School and Competition, and once again saw how precision, discipline, and unity could become both an offering of excellence and a witness to the public. On August 23, we conducted the Official Visit to District 5 in Waynesboro, where the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross was conferred in full form, and the month concluded on August 30 with

a wreath laying at the grave of Brother Douglas McArthur in Portsmouth—a solemn reminder that remembrance and gratitude are also forms of service.

### September 2025

September brought the first hints of autumn and, with it, a renewed call to focus on the inner work that produces outward fruit. On September 13, we conducted the Official Visit to District 4 at Winchester Commandery No. 12, where the Order of Malta was conferred in full form. The work was well prepared, the hospitality was generous, and the day set the conditions for what became a very full season of Templar labor. We then represented Virginia at the Mid-Atlantic Department Conference on September 26–27. Our delegation was strong, and the reports given reflected the faithful efforts of the Commanderies across the Commonwealth.

### October 2025

October proved as busy as promised and as rewarding as any month of the year. On October 4, we supported MAHOVA Family Day in Richmond and turned out in full dress for the parade—an opportunity to demonstrate to the Virginia Masonic Family that the uniformed Orders still cared about excellence, heritage, and visible service. On October 11, we conducted the Official Visit to District 3 at Old Dominion Commandery No. 11 at the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, where the Order of the Temple was conferred and new Sir Knights were created; later reflections across the Commonwealth continued to speak of that day as a “full day,” and a great one. On October 16, we held the first ever Joint Conclave with our brethren of the King Baldwin Grand Commandery at West Point, where our theme was taken

from the Book of Ecclesiastes, written by the Illustrious Founder of Ancient Craft Masonry, Solomon, King of Israel, Chapter 4 verse 9 – Two are better than one, for they have a good return on their labor. I and their Right Eminent Grand Commander were both received together under an Arch of Steel, and we were able to strengthen the bonds of Christian unity. It should be noted further that we together laid the groundwork for additional joints acts of service to our fellow man in keeping with our stated responsibility to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bind up the wounds of the afflicted. On October 18, Fredericksburg Commandery No. 1 celebrated its 150th Anniversary, and we rejoiced that the firm foundation laid in 1875 continued to bear fruit. We concluded the month with representation at the Grand Commandery of Maryland on October 24–25, keeping our Virginia presence strong among our brother jurisdictions.

### November 2025

November allowed for a brief operational pause from Official Visits and gave us the opportunity to support our parent bodies. We were present for the Grand Lodge of Virginia on November 7–9 and then for the Grand Royal Arch of Virginia on November 20–23. The month also called our attention to the Holy Land Pilgrimage, which had continued its work of sending credentialed Christian ministers to walk where Jesus walked. We received notice of the 2026 pilgrimage dates—Group A, February 9–19, 2026 and Group B, February 23–March 5, 2026—and we encouraged Commanderies to continue bringing forward nominations for worthy ministers, as well as to continue funding this work of Christian education and witness.

## December 2025

December brought us again to Advent and to the reminder that our joy was not rooted in a season, but in a Savior. We encouraged the Commanderies and Districts to host local Christmas celebrations, to open their doors to guests, and to use fellowship as an opportunity for witness and invitation. On December 20, we gathered for the Grand Commandery Christmas Celebration. While the plan had been to celebrate at MAHOVA, circumstances required a last-minute venue change to the Richmond Commandery, and our Sir Knights adapted quickly, arranged meals and decorations, and ensured that the celebration went forward. That evening was made even more meaningful by fellowship with our brethren of the King Baldwin Grand Commandery—another step in the steady strengthening of our bonds.

## January 2026

January opened the new year at a full run. On January 11, we once again marched in the Religious Freedom Day Celebration in Fredericksburg, a public witness to the principle that faith must be free, and that the Christian religion must be defended by men willing to stand in public with courtesy and conviction. On January 17, we conducted the Official Visit to District 9 at Fredericksburg Commandery No. 1, where the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross was conferred and new candidates were set on the path toward the Orders of Knighthood. On January 24, we gathered in Waynesboro at Lee Lodge No. 208 for a Knights Templar Eye Foundation benefit that became memorable for more than one reason: we raised funds for charity, we enjoyed

fellowship, and we watched SK Tony Daniel's beard finally meet the shears—an event many insisted might only happen once in a millennium. On a serious note, Tony raised over \$1,300 for the Foundation and happily, he recovered from the event quite well. We also continued to promote the Knights Templar Educational Foundation, with grant applications due to the Grand Recorder on Friday, March 13, 2026, encouraging our Sir Knights to promote the opportunity broadly and to support it generously.

### February 2026

February reminded us that winter on the outside could not extinguish warmth on the inside. On February 21, we conducted the Official Visit to District 1 in Richmond where the Order of Malta was conferred and candidates took another step toward knighthood. It must be noted here, again for emphasis, that the overwhelming majority of the SKs present advised that they had NEVER seen the Order of Malta conferred in full form. Given that this is the first time that our candidates receive the title KNIGHT, and that in this order we take a candidate's confession, this is indeed a sad state of affairs and should not be.

### March 2026

March became a month of transition—winter leaning toward spring—and a month where leadership across the Commanderies prepared to hand responsibilities forward through elections and installations. Lady Luz and I spent just about every weekend in a neighboring jurisdiction within our Mid Atlantic Department. We represented Virginia among our brother jurisdictions during Grand Conclave seasons, including the Grand Commanderies of New

Jersey (March 5–8), Delaware (March 13–14), and the District of Columbia (March 20–22). We are blessed to be members of such a strong Department, and I can truly say that the hospitality and fellowship in each visit was beyond measure. I and Lady Luz gained lifetime friends in each state. Finally, we closed the month at home here in Virginia with our final Official Visit to District 2 in Norfolk on March 28<sup>th</sup>. We were able to welcome 10 more SKs to our ranks, and District 2 showed exceptional skill in their full form opening and reception. It was an appropriate close to our Official Visit process. I am grateful to each of them.

### April 2026

On April 5, we gathered for our annual Easter Sunrise Service at the George Washington Memorial Shrine, celebrating the Resurrection of the Great Captain of our Salvation. On April 8, we joined our brethren of the King Baldwin Grand Commandery at Mount Olivet Commandery No. 2 for a Joint Conclave in Richmond, continuing to strengthen the bonds of Christian fraternity. And as the month closed, we prepared to gather once again for Grand Conclave—beginning April 30 and continuing through May 3—ready to give account, to celebrate accomplishments, and to ensure a strong handoff to the leadership that will follow.

### Necrology

“In the solemn ceremonies of our Order, we have often been reminded of the Great Truth that we are born to die. An alarm has come to the door of our Asylum; the messenger is Death. A Pilgrim Warrior has been summoned and

there is no discharge in that war. A burning taper in the life of our Grand commandery has been extinguished.”

As I reflect on that great truth, my mind is drawn to the words of the Apostle Paul, who wrote in 2 Corinthians 5: <sup>8</sup>We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. While we will miss our dear departed fraters, I would not begrudge any of them the reward in Heaven that awaits the faithful soldier of Christ. Moreover, we are assured that if we remain true to our vows we ourselves will join them in glory and receive from our Saviors hands the crown of victory while shouting “Non Nobis, Domine, Non Nobis: Sed Nomini Tuo Da Gloriam”.

Between the time of May 1, 2025 and this writing, 35 tapers were extinguished, each of them acknowledged in a ceremony immediately after our full form opening of the Grand Conclave. We further acknowledge the loss of additional fraters who were not previously accounted for in earlier Grand Conclaves. I want to give special thanks to our long serving Grand Musician, SK Jeff Hedges and our Grand Prelate, SK Rick Saunders for preparing and conducting a ceremony that was both solemn and yet uplifting for all. Thank You!

## Decisions

During this Chivalric Year, I issued 3 Decisions. In summary they were:

**Searcy Decision Number 1, July 15, 2025: Therefore, I, William Searcy, III, Grand Commander of Knights Templar in Virginia, by the authority granted to**

me by the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar USA, and in the Constitution and Statutes and the Grand Commandery Section 8 (A)(6)(a) Grand Commandery of Virginia, reverted a SK to suspended status pending a properly conducted and declared ballot, which was also ordered to be conducted forthwith.

- Note – The affected SK was indeed restored with a properly conducted and declared ballot.

**Searcy Decision Number 2, July 15, 2025: Therefore,** I, William Searcy, III, Grand Commander of Knights Templar in Virginia, by the authority granted to me by the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar USA, and in the Constitution and Statutes and the Grand Commandery Section 8 (A)(6)(a) Grand Commandery of Virginia, relieved a Commandery Recorder due to improper activities.

**Searcy Decision Number 3, December 1, 2025: Therefore,** I, William Searcy, III, Grand Commander of Knights Templar in Virginia, by the authority granted to me by the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar USA, and in the Constitution and Statutes and the Grand Commandery Section 8 (A)(6)(a) Grand Commandery of Virginia suspended from command the Eminent Commander of a constituent commandery, appointing a Past District Deputy Grand Commander to serve in his place for the remainder of his term. This decision further codified my request to the Department Commander that this suspended commander be given priority for registration in the upcoming York Rite Leadership Development Course.

- Note – This request was made so as to give the SK former Commander the opportunity to learn leadership in volunteer, charitable organizations.

Each of these Decisions was issued after a thorough investigation, report, and recommendation from the appropriate District Deputy Grand Commander and subsequent serious deliberation. I have intentionally withheld identifying details from this report in order to not publicly traduce the character of the affected parties.

### Temporary Command

On December 4, I issued the following memo: In accordance with Section 8 (G) of the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Commandery of Virginia, Sir Knight William Searcy, III, Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Virginia does pass command of the Grand Commandery to Sir Knight Michael Huff, Deputy Grand Commander during the period of December 9 -December 17, 2025. This transfer of command is affected due to the absence of Sir Knight William Searcy, III from the country and the possibility of limited communications capabilities.

### Dispensations

During the period between May 2, 2025 and this writing, I have issued 42 Dispensations. All were for what I determined to be legitimate reasons in keeping with the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Commandery of Virginia for the good of the requesting Commandery. I denied one requested Dispensation due to the timeliness of the request.

## General Orders

**General Order No.1: May 3, 2025: The standard General Order as required by our C&S.** This GO was updated/edited, but no further GOs were required throughout the year.

## Fraternal Visits

I was privileged to represent the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia at the following Stated Conclaves of the Grand Commanderies of the Mid Atlantic Department:

- Grand Commandery of Maryland (Ocean City, MD)
- Grand Commandery of the District of Columbia (DC)
- Grand Commandery of New Jersey (Newark, NJ)
- Grand Commandery of Delaware (Wilmington, DE)

I was not able to attend in person the Grand Commandery of West Virginia, but Sir Knight Scott Lyons Fielding, Right Eminent Past Grand Commandery of the Grand Commandery of Virginia requested and received my endorsement to represent us.

I was honored to accept invitations and attend the following other Masonic Bodies:

- The Grand Lodge of Masons in Virginia - Richmond, VA
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body
- The Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons in Virginia, Williamsburg, VA
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body

- Asked to make appropriate remarks – Showed our film “Faithful To Our Vows”
- The International Supreme Council Order of DeMolay - Newport News, VA
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body
  - Honored to sit on the selection board for the Representative DeMolay
  - Provided the selection and presentation of the Grand Encampment “DeMolay of the Year” award
  - Asked to make appropriate remarks – Spoke to the young men on their potential to achieve greatness in their lives
- The International Order of the Rainbow Girls in Virginia cordially invite you to attend dinner and the Informal Opening of the Grand Assembly of Virginia's "Leading Ladies Lighting the Way"
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body
  - Asked to make appropriate remarks – Spoke to the young ladies on how they would serve to impact our world going forward
- Supreme Session Job's Daughters International – Norfolk, VA
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body
- Grand Court of the Amaranth – Virginia Beach, VA
  - Received and acknowledged as the Head of an Appendant Body
  - Asked to make appropriate remarks – Spoke regarding the mission of the modern Knights Templar

## Outcomes

### Membership

As of this writing, we have Knighted 45 new Sir Knights. This number falls well short of our goals but I am encouraged by the strong response to our Order of The Temple to be conferred at Grand Commandery. I hope and believe that we will significantly increase that number.

That said, one of my main directions for the year was to have full form conferral of Orders during my Official Visits. This was for several reasons. First, we cannot make new members without the ritual, and the best way to ensure that we know the ritual is by demonstration and practice. The first visit was to Lynchburg where I conferred the Order of The Red Cross from the east as the Sovereign Master. This, I believe, set the tone and example of ritualistic excellence. Subsequently, in sets of three, each visit saw us work through all three of our Order three times (nine visits, each order done in succession) and, in so doing, we established that each region has the personnel and regalia to confer each order in full form. I intend to finish the year, as stated, with the Conferral of the Order of the Temple at our Grand Conclave for only the second time ever, the first by the Grand Commander. Pray for me.

Another goal was to instill in our new Sir Knights a pride in and zeal for their new fraternity. I believe that we can all acknowledge that conferring our Orders in short form, while convenient on an emergency basis, loses quite a bit in terms of the process for becoming a Knight. Sadly, short form conferral had become the norm to the extent that numerous of our numbers had never even seen the first two Orders conferred in full form. When I first saw the two

Orders myself, long after having been made a Knight, I had a sense of loss that I had missed part of the journey. I cannot say this loudly or often enough. We lose something when we take shortcuts, and I believe we cheat our candidates out of an experience that would follow them for the rest of their lives. I further believe that our “membership” issue is more a retention issue, as seen from the number of SKs who demit or who maintain membership but fail to engage with their Commanderies or attend meetings. I therefore wanted full form conferrals as that will serve to cause more engagement and excitement at the local Commandery level. I’m very happy to say that we have now established and demonstrated this regional concept and, as long as we work to keep it healthy and practiced, it will yield dividends. This payoff may not come immediately in terms of numbers of Knights made, but I remain confident that it will come in the long run in terms of Knights dedicated and devoted to the Order.

Also, in terms of membership, I attacked our retention issue in two additional ways. First, I emphasized that dais officers be proficient in the process of opening and closing their Commanderies. I further tasked the Eminent Commanders to put forth a plan for their year that included programs for their Stated Conclaves and made this an inspection item for the District Deputy Grand Commanders. No one wants to attend a meeting where the person in charge struggles to get open and then clearly has no plan for the conduct of the meeting. A few such meetings and I believe the Commander would struggle to get even the most dedicated Sir Knights to attend, especially if any adverse conditions exist.

This, sadly, was not particularly successful this year. I attended or received reports on numerous Commanderies where the very thing that I feared would happen...did. In one that I attended, the Commander had difficulty opening even in short form and then spent the bulk of the meeting complaining that more people did not attend the meetings. I left the meeting with no doubt regarding the reason for the low attendance. I believe this needs to continue to be an area of improvement going forward. No one is going to volunteer to go to a meeting to be browbeat the entire time. I strongly recommend that our future Eminent Commanders attend the York Rite Leadership Training and that they be mentored by a more senior and, importantly, successful Commander before taking command. We must each take responsibility for this.

### Fiscal Responsibility

We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to this year's Finance Team, starting with the chair of our Finance Committee, SK Cliff Gregory. I pulled him into the role starting in February of the last Chivalric Year and, in a short period of time, he was able to put together a cogent budget for the coming year, make sense of duplicate or conflicting records, and put us on a path to lasting fiscal health. Working with our Grand Recorder, Grand Treasurer and his Assistant Grand Treasurer as well as our Trustees, we should all feel good about where we are in terms of long-term viability and, we even managed to save money that can be used to send our Drill Team to California for the Triennial in two years.

## Charities

I owe a special debt of gratitude to the Chairmen of our various charities. Remember, it is our duty to “inculcate the duties of charity” in all that we do. Moreover, we know that to be great is to be good, and he who would perpetuate his name to posterity must first ennoble it with deeds of charity and acts of pure beneficence. To that end, our fraternity did some great things this year.

### **Knight Templar Eye Foundation**

First and foremost, a huge thank you goes out to our Chairman, SK Peter Terrell. His tireless efforts are the reason for our continued success.

It was my honor to be a part of a delegation consisting of our Right Eminent Department Commander, our Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander, our Deputy Grand Prelate and the chairs of our Knights Templar Eye Foundation (KTEF) and IT Committees to present a Career Starter grant to a promising researcher at the University of Virginia. I must mention here how important such grants are to continued relief of eye diseases and blindness. Our career starter grants get a lot of research off the ground so to speak and allow further research that turns into treatments and cures. A picture of our delegation as well as the dedicated researchers at UVA follows:



Jiahui Wu, MD, PhD, pictured to the far right, was the recipient of this particular award, and her research centers around **In Vivo Imaging Retinal Damage and Choroidal Neovascularization in Tree Shrews with Juvenile Myopia.**

In terms of contributions this year, the Grand Commandery of Virginia had yet another outstanding year in our support of the KTEF. During the reporting period to 4/1/2026, we donated a total of \$77,364.70. This, by the way, does not include additional pending donations from our fund raisers which included the raffle of a Grand Masters Club Award as well as the sale of the KTEF Coins and the attendant raffle of the Golden Flask. Those two events will see us adding no less than another \$5,000 which will be realized in the next Chivalric Year.

While additional details of the KTEF for the year will be included in the KTEF Chairman's report, I want to make note here in my allocution of a very special donation and gift from SK Sheldon Richman. I was privileged to have the opportunity to knight SK Richman during our OV to District Number 3 at Old Dominion #11. Within months, SK Richman made himself eligible to receive a Sword of Merit with a \$25,000 donation to the Eye Foundation. And, going completely above and beyond anything I would ever have expected, when I arrived to assist in the presentation, he gifted this beautiful sword to me. I am both humbled and honored, and have subsequently made it the sword that I use when Knighting others along with explaining to the new SKs what this



**SK Sheldon Richman on the right**

sword means. I hope to pass on to them the spirit of selfless generosity displayed by our brother and Frater.

## **Holy Land Pilgrimage**

Our chair of this committee, SK Jake Trenary, did excellent work during this year. His passion for this work was absolutely unmatched and cannot go without notice. This year was one of the first years we were able to send a minister to the Holy Land since the earlier troubles had seemingly settled down. The minister we were sending had some health issues and we needed to substitute a minister quickly or lose our deposit. SK Jake was on the spot and we were able to get a substitute entered. Unfortunately, while he was there, the new attacks from Iran started and our minister had to be evacuated. Upon arriving safely back to America, I met with our minister and, not knowing what he would say, I asked if he would be willing to go to the Holy Land again when the current troubles were over. Without hesitation, he said absolutely. Even with the need for an emergency evacuation, he said that he found the experience enriching and that it would definitely affect his ministry. I ask, how can we not be inspired by Christian ministers with such strong faith?

Our main method of fund raising is the awarding of HLP Awards for donations of \$500. This year, we raised over \$10,700 before April 1, 2026. This does not, therefore, count the funds contributed due to the fundraiser from the year which will net an additional \$1,000. Sir Knights, this is outstanding, and I thank you sincerely.

**Knight Templar Education Fund:** Our own SK Joe Matthews managed this particular charity with zeal, passion, and excellence. He worked tirelessly at raising funds for this cause and ensuring that we had candidates to receive the benefits thereof. This year, we raised just short of \$3,000 and gained \$8,600 in

our investments. This has us gaining just a little over our \$10,000 in awards to 5 worthy candidates. This fund, as explained by SK Matthews, is a source of concern that will need to be further examined. Sadly, I just ran out of time for getting that done. While the work is good and fruitful, and the fund is viable, I would recommend that we revisit the investment strategy and management for further efficiencies.

**Baldwin Brown Fellowship Program: “Building Today for a Better Tomorrow”**

SK Jarrett Frame has been the tireless chairman of the Baldwin Brown Fellowship Program. If you are not aware, this philanthropic initiative has been responsible for significant contributions to our budget each year and has resulted in our not having to raise dues for as long as I can remember. This year, you and your Fraters contributed over \$4050 to this charity, bringing our balance to \$416,881.02 as of January 31, 2026. This represents a 4.4% increase from last year.

**Grand Commanders 2025 – 2026 Philanthropic Initiative**

I really liked SK Dennis Haas, Right Eminent Past Grand Commander’s Initiative in 2023 – 2024, carried on by SK Scott Fielding, Right Eminent Past Grand Commander 2024 -2025 and decided, with Lady Luz’s concurrence, of course, to follow through with it for 2025 – 2026. It supports all four chivalric philanthropic activities of the Grand Commandery, calls attention to these worthy causes and, more importantly, gave me the opportunity to speak about each of them at

each Official Visit. Moreover, there being no overhead, every dollar donated went to support our charities. They are as follow:

**Knights Templar Eye Foundation:**

To improve vision through research, education, and supporting access to care

**Holy Land Pilgrimage Program:**

To send credentialed Christian Ministers on a Biblical study and historical / cultural immersion experience who would not have the opportunity otherwise.

**Knights Templar Educational Foundation:**

The Knights Templar Educational Foundation supports higher education through grants and scholarships. Investment in Education is an Investment in the Future.

**Baldwin Brown Fellowship Program: “Building Today for a Better Tomorrow”**

Supports the operating budget of the Grand Commandery of Virginia.

Raffle Tickets were available throughout the year and at each of our visits throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. The tickets were sold for \$5.00 each or five (5) tickets for \$20.00. Tickets went on sale beginning May 2, 2025, and remained on sale through March 31, 2026. On April 1, 2026, 4 winning tickets were drawn by my two-year-old grandson and namesake, as promised. This was more of a challenge

than I had anticipated, but, in testimony of my constancy and courage, we managed to get it done and filmed. All winners will be announced during the Grand Commander's Awards Banquet on Friday evening, May 1, 2026. Winners will not need to be present to claim their winning prize.

**First Ticket winner: a value of \$1,000 for the Knights Templar Eye Foundation**

You will be enrolled in the KTEF Grand Commander's Club. You will receive a lapel pin and wallet card (signifying your membership). Once contributions total \$1,000.00, the individual is enrolled in the Grand Master's Club (GMC) which entitles the member to receive a lapel pin, engraved wall plaque, and the first level of the Crusader's Cross.

One Thousand Dollars enrolls you as a concerned individual in the humanitarian work of the Foundation. Your membership in the KTEF Grand Master's Club (GMC) entitles you to a lapel pin, an engraved wall plaque and the Crusader's Cross depending on how many thousand-dollar donations you have made.

If the winner already is enrolled in the Grand Master's Club, then the \$1,000 will be applied to the next quadrant on their jewel.

**Second ticket winner: a value of \$500 for the Holy Land Pilgrimage Program**

You will be awarded and recognized as a Knight of the Holy Land Pilgrimage and presented with a certificate and jewel in recognition of your \$500 donation. This jewel is authorized by Section 32 of the Constitution and

Statues of the Grand Commandery to be worn on the left breast on the Dress Uniform. If the winner already has this jewel, then the \$500 will be applied to add an additional Oak Cluster to be worn on the jewel ribbon.

**Third ticket winner: a value of \$400 for the Knight Templar**

**Educational Foundation**

You will be recognized and awarded for contributing \$400 to the Knights Templar Educational Foundation in your name. Your \$400 contribution will assist in providing financial assistance to undergraduate students as they complete their college education. You will also receive a beautiful wall plaque with your name engraved.

**Fourth ticket winner: a value of \$300 for the Baldwin Brown Fellowship**

**Program**

You will be recognized and awarded with the Baldwin-Brown pin and one diamond for contributing \$300 to the fellowship fund. The pin is a Knights Templar Maltese Cross and Crown Emblem, surrounded by a black and white border with “Baldwin- Brown Fellow” above and “Virginia Knights Templar” below. It is about one inch in diameter and is given for the initial donation of \$150.00. For each additional donation of \$150.00 a small diamond is affixed to the perimeter of the pin. Intended to be worn on civilian clothes, the pin may also be worn in uniform attached to the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross medal. The pin is an acknowledgement of a voluntary contribution to the Knights Templar organization and is not a reward for any particular service or

office held. The pin, with diamonds, is also a beautiful gift for the ladies, displaying their support of Chivalric Masonry.

If the winner already has a Baldwin-Brown pin, then the \$300 will be applied for two (2) additional diamonds to be added to the pin.

### **Golden Flask**

In addition to Lady Luz's Philanthropic initiative, the Grand Commander's Class of 1986 from the United States Military Academy commissioned the making of a flask by Jacob Bromwell. The model chosen was the "Vermont", which is custom and hand made <https://www.jacobbromwell.com/products/vermonter-copper-flask-9oz>. The Grand Commander contacted the manufacturer and requested a special flask be made in the same style but of 24 karat gold material. It was further specialized by adding the Cross and Crown seal of the Knights Templar to the outside along with adding the words "Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Virginia, 2025 – 2026" underneath the seal. All of this is included in a very nice wooden display box with the same seal and words on the outside of it as well. This one-of-a-kind piece was to be raffled as well, but with a bit of a twist. The Grand Commander, in coordination with the Knights Templar Eye Foundation, further commissioned the striking of a special Knight Templar Eye Foundation coin. On one side is the seal of the KTEF surrounded by the Bible verse Luke 18:35, "Receive your sight, your faith has healed you". The other side contains an embossment of Jesus when he put the mud on the blind man's eye as indicated in the referenced

Scripture, surrounded by the words “Knight Templar Eye Foundation, Grand Commandery of Virginia”. This is a beautiful example of what we as Knights Templar attempt to do. We are not capable of restoring sight by miraculous means, but we can do so by funding research that supports the science that does. In so doing, we are imitating our Savior and giving sight to the blind.

The flask and the coins were donated to the Grand Commandery by the Grand Commander and Lady Luz with all proceeds going to the Knight Templar Eye Foundation. Each purchase of a coin earned the purchaser one chance to win the Golden Flask in a raffle. This raffle was likewise chosen by my two year old namesake and will be announced on Friday evening at the Grand Conclave. This activity earned over \$4,000 which has been donated to the KTEF in addition to that previously reported. I thank all of the SKs of our Commonwealth, again, for your generosity and support.

One correction...the Grand Commander had two flasks made, so the one that will be won is one of two. Just to be completely accurate.

## **MASONIC HOME OF VIRGINIA – YOUR MASONIC COMMUNITY**

I cannot end this report with speaking to you about the Masonic Home of Virginia (MAHOVA). Each year the Grand Commander becomes an ex-officio member of the MAHOVA – Your Masonic Community Board of Directors that meets monthly. Serving as a member on this Board as well as the Finance and Facilities and Development Committees has been an amazing experience. Most Worshipful Grand Master Matt Szramoski came into office with his motto “Living Our Obligations”. Aside from it being amazingly similar to “Faithful To

Our Vows”, it speaks of the mission and work of the Masonic Home. We all took vows to look after our Brothers and their widows and orphans, and while we may not be able to do so individually, the Home provides the opportunity for us to contribute to the collective well-being of those who may find themselves in need.

I freely confess to not having much knowledge of the home prior to my term on the Board of Directors. I leave my post not only with knowledge, but with zeal for the mission of the home and as an ardent supporter of the work they do. I have personally seen MAHOVA provide for our brothers and families that, without this service, would be homeless. I encourage each of us to examine the various means of supporting this worthwhile endeavor and then, get involved. Do not put this off, it is being faithful to the vows we have made.

## Thanks, Appreciation, and Charge

Earlier, I offered my appreciation to the leadership teams who made the year possible and, having gone over everything we accomplished together, I have to do so again. To the Grand Line that was a constant presence at all of our functions, supporting us, visiting with you and carrying out the work of administration and leading by example; to our District Deputies for organizing, communicating, and hosting the Orders and Official Visits; to our regional and district orders teams for their discipline and willingness to do the hard work of full-form conferrals; to our recorders and officers who kept the machinery of the Grand Commandery running; and to our committees who quietly executed the tasks that made public events, Official Visits, and charitable efforts succeed. I also offer special thanks to our IT team for their continued work in telling our story and connecting our membership, and for supporting our ongoing efforts to share who we are with clarity and excellence. And, once again, to our Ladies who support us in this great work as Christian Knights of the Temple.

Sir Knights, the work of the Grand Commandery was never merely a calendar of events. It was, and is, the labor of Christian men who pledged themselves to live under the banner of Christ—men who understood that ritual without meaning was hollow, that charity without sacrifice was cheap, and that unity required humility. When we marched, we witnessed. When we conferred the Orders, we taught. When we supported our charities, we served. When we stood in public beside our brethren and our families, we testified that our vows were still worth keeping.

May we continue to do the internal work that produces visible fruit, to pursue excellence without pride, and to labor together in peace and brotherly love. God bless, keep, and protect you and yours.

Always Yours in Christian and Knightly Courtesy,

**SK William Searcy, III, KCT**

**152nd Grand Commander, 2025–2026**

**Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia**