

# **Most Excellent Union Grand Chapter**

**HOLY ROYAL ARCH MASONS**  
of Florida & U.S. Virgin Islands, Inc. P.H.A.

**Dr. Elton L. Lewis K.Y.C.H.**

**18<sup>th</sup> MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST**



**2025 Grand High Priest's  
Annual Address**



# Grand High Priest's Annual Address

**Most Excellent Dr. Elton L. Lewis, KCT KYGCH**

Grand High Priest of all Capitular Masonry

April 22, 2025

All reverence and honor first be to the Supreme Architect and Artificer of the Universe, his only begotten son Jesus Christ, and the comforter in the form of the Holy Spirit. Certainly, without his mercy and compassion I would not be standing before you today.

To our 20<sup>th</sup> Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Honorable Gus Harris Jr.

To our Past Most Excellent Grand High Priests:

Number 9, Johnny McCray,  
Number 10, Carl Finerson,  
Number 11 and 13, Henry B. Parker Jr.,  
Number 12 Eugene C. Johnson,  
Number 14, Lewis S. Thurston,  
Number 15 and 17, Enoch Mobley, and  
Number 16, Walter P. Russell.

To Deputy Grand High Priest, Right Excellent Peter J. Bruton, Grand King, Right Excellent Andre Reed, Grand Scribe, Right Excellent Craig Hall, Grand Treasurer, Right Excellent Jose George, Grand Secretary, Right Excellent Canary Williams, and Grand Chaplain, Right Excellent Rev. Ernest L. Powell.

To our Most Illustrious Grand Thrice Illustrious Master, Companion Reginald E. Hardee, our Right Eminent Grand Commander, Sir Knight Valentino McBride, our Eminent Prior, Knight Byron L. Willis, and our Illustrious Deputy for the Orient of Florida, Sovereign Grand Inspector General Chris Terrell.

To all Past Grand High Priests, appointed Grand Chapter Officers, Excellent High Priests, Past High Priests, Kings, Scribes, guests and dignitaries from abroad, Companions, and all God's Children. Good afternoon.

So that there be an assurance that the words of this humble servant are blessed, I ask now that our Grand Chaplain, Right Excellent Rev. Ernest L. Powell comes forward and offer a prayer to the Great I Am.

Companions, I stand here today to tell you that the state of our jurisdiction is truly EXCELLENT!

Companions, if you haven't noticed the bells seem to not ring as loud. The red on the bottom of my loafers have started to fade to black with wear and tear. The breastplate seems to be getting a bit of rust on it. The gold plate on my mitre seems to have lost a bit of its luster. This tells me that the sun is setting on my time as leader within this inner Sanctum Sanctorum...this Sanctuary.

I have but one year remaining as your Most Excellent Grand High Priest, and my intention is to finish strong. In doing so, you can expect that this administration intends to work so that beyond my tenure there is continued success and excellence continues to be the barometer and standard by which we are measured.

Any and every opportunity I get to address this body I will take a moment to express my sincere and complete gratitude to my cabinet, the Grand Council of this Grand Chapter. We have three members of this Grand Council that will no longer seek their offices. Right Excellent Grand CCFC Jordin Tylor Chandler is an awesome leader and great Royal Arch mason. There isn't a Jurisdiction that I visit where someone does not ask me about him and sends him their best regards. Our relationship started by me telling him I would fire him as soon as I took office...and I have done just that; multiple times a day for the last three years. The relationship between any Grand High Priest and his Grand Secretary is like no other. Right Excellent Grand Secretary Canary Williams has been a beacon of support and been a pillar of strength, supporting me in all of my grand undertakings. Outside of his choice of fraternity and being the King of "while I got you on the phone," there is nothing he does or decision he makes in his official capacity that has not been to make this Grand Chapter better administratively and more efficient. And then there is Right Excellent Grand Chaplain Rev. Ernest L. Powell. He is a force of nature! He has been in this Grand Council for 14 years, serving six different Most Excellent Grand High Priests. He and I have shared countless memories together and I thank him for always having an extra vat of anointing oil and holy water to douse on me if I get out of line or stray from the path of righteousness. Each of these gentlemen have made me better and this Jurisdiction is all the better because of their service to it. Capitular masonry reminds us that leaders work in concert together to lay out the work that need be completed. These gentlemen and the other members of this Grand Council work tirelessly to move this jurisdiction forward. Please stand gentlemen. I am forever indebted to each of them for their tireless work for this Grand Chapter. We are where we are today because of their dedication and perseverance. To each of them, I say thank you.

### **STATE OF THE NATION**

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Companions, our nation conducted one of the most consequential elections of our lifetime this past November. After those elections the 47<sup>th</sup> President, Donald John Trump, took the oath of office and with the greatest of alacrity began turning our democratic republic into a fascist authoritarian nation. Companions there is no bell or alarm or whistle that will sound letting you know when fascism arrives. It is here NOW!

Every generation of black people have had their moment when they had to answer the call and be about the business of saving our democracy. How will the annals of time speak about what we did here in our moment of exigence? The Trump administration is quickly eliminating our jobs from our people, obviating our history, and creating an environment where they now feel emboldened to say the quiet parts out loud. They are overt in their racism. Even the architects of Project 2025 are amazed at the efficacy and efficiency with which their plans have come to fruition via this administration.

The current administration is disappearing immigrants both illegal and legal alike. They are even detaining actual citizens of this country who happen to have the wrong last name or the wrong amount of melanin in their skin.

Article I of the Constitution names the Legislature the first branch of government, with the presidency being Article II, and the Judiciary being Article III. Article I seems to have abdicated its power and authority to Article II, leaving the people to look to Article III to save the remnants of the rule of law. Yet, Article II is willfully disobeying orders and adjudications from Article III, thus sending us into a constitutional crisis that no one seems ready or capable of rectifying.

Our nation finds itself in constant turmoil and peril. We have come to a point where our elected leaders seem committed to ensuring that this experiment started by the forefathers of this country known as the United States of America burns to the ground. We must pray. But praying alone without working and fighting to save our freedoms is an exercise in futility.

I've said this before and I will say it again, we owe it to our children and our children's children to stay vigilant in the fight for this democracy just as our ancestors fought for us. Masonry has always been on the front lines of the fight for democracy and kept a watchful eye to ensure that our people were not disenfranchised.

## STATE OF THE STATE

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The state of Florida, like several other republican-led states, is making it clear to every minority that there is a hierarchy and those in leadership have their privilege and supremacy on full display. Governor Ron DeSantis and his administration are determined to ensure that there is no end to white supremacy and the tyranny of racism that has been embedded in the fabric of this nation.

They can call it CRT, "woke," DEI or whatever they want to call it, but it still equates to the same racial epithet their ancestors were calling our ancestors. They can color it up however they like, but we see it for what it is, and we must continue to fight against the stain of racism that continues to imbrue our great state.

More than half of Floridians voted this past November to approve a proposal to allow abortions until fetal viability, which usually occurs around 24 weeks of pregnancy. The proposal would have also allowed abortions after that if a health care provider deemed it was necessary to protect the patient's health. But that 57% vote fell short of the 60% mark required to make the change to the state constitution. That means the current six-week abortion ban remains in effect.

The failure of the abortion amendment was just one of the results of Florida voters swinging more conservative. Wilkine Brutus with WLRN said the "significant right-wing shift" in Miami-Dade County "can't be understated." President Donald Trump lost Miami-Dade by 7 points in 2020, but won it in 2024 by about 11 points. Palm Beach County remained slightly blue, with Vice President Kamala Harris beating President Trump by less than 1%, a strong indication of a rightward shift.

Florida experienced three major hurricanes — Debby, Helene, and Milton — with all three hitting areas of the Gulf Coast. Helene and Milton were major storms with high storm surge, and all three brought significant flooding. The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season was the first to feature multiple Category 5 hurricanes since 2019 and was one of the costliest in history. It was also the deadliest in nearly two decades.

In Jacksonville, Duval County voters elected three members to the school board endorsed by the conservative Moms for Liberty group, giving it a majority. Right out the gate, they already have started to discuss things that it seems will turn the school board a little bit more conservative. Moms for Liberty, birthed out of Bravard County, has become a cancer within our public-school systems around the state. They are strategically and deliberately banning books and eliminating our history. Our children are now being told that our history, our culture, and our ideas are not worthy academic sources. We cannot sit back and go the way that our indigenous brothers and sisters and gone. We will end up with textbooks and curricula teaching students that we willingly came to this land and that our culture is somehow subpar. Clay County removed the most books of any school district in Florida in the last school year, 287. Florida also lead the nation in the number of book removals.

Political pundits would have you believe that we have lost our state to the red wave that has engulfed the South. Be not deceived Companions. Florida is just a few votes from being blue as seen with the recent special elections for open congressional seats in District 1 and District 6. There is still a continued effort to suppress our vote, unjustly gerrymander districts, and jail people who voted using the very voter registration card given to them by the State. All of us in the masonic family must see to it that this Jurisdiction is at the forefront ensuring that our communities are not only registered to vote but get out to the polls and exercise that right.

### STATE OF THE CRAFT

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Our capitular rite is indeed in EXCELLENT condition. We continue to be a beacon of light and a jurisdiction for others to model after. This craft has certainly been celebrated and praised all over the country for its hospitality and proficiency.

Our membership continues to grow, and we continue to have excitement surrounding Capitular Masonry. We exalted 41 Companions to the august degree of Royal Arch Mason over the last year. Give them a hand!

It gives me great pleasure to announce that over the last three years of this administration, we have given over \$14,000.00 to our chosen charity, the Alzheimer's Association of Florida this past year. Your contributions and participation in Alzheimer's Walks around the state do not go unnoticed. We have also supported the scholarship efforts of several non-profit organizations around the state who work with our children to ensure that they receive a great start on their college endeavors. This spring we will also be awarding a \$1500.00 scholarship to a member of the marching band at Atlantic High School in Daytona Beach, FL. We heard them just this past Saturday at the testimonial for MWPGM Jeffery Jones under the direction of our very own Assistant Grand Chaplain Jeremy Blackwell. We are out in our communities letting them see that Prince Hall Masonry is indeed a charitable and benevolent organization. But that's not enough and we are only beginning to showcase what we can do in our communities.

Today I want to honor several great men who have served this Jurisdiction and are worthy of the highest honor I can bestow on a Companion of this Jurisdiction. Now, by the power vested in me as Most Excellent Grand High Priest of this jurisdiction, I bestow the title of Past Grand High Priest on the following individuals:

- PHP Valentino McBride
- PHP Jose "Tito" George
- PHP Canary Williams

Companions, please come forward. Please stand and give these gentlemen a rousing round of applause. You may be seated.

### NECROLOGY

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*For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*  
*Romans 14:8*

Whereas it has pleased Almighty God in his wise providence to take out of this world 9 of our Beloved Companions, we remember that God's anger endureth but a moment; in his favor is life; we remember that weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. We, therefore, call the names of our fallen Companions:

1. Ronald Cook Jr., Maxwell #115
2. Alvin Smith Jr., Harmony #107
3. William D. Wims, A.T. Stafford #10
4. PGHP Willie Parlor, Jr., Carl Finerson #168
5. PGHP Joe L. Caldwell, Bethel #37
6. Darryl Baker, Peace #204
7. PGHP Arther J. Mincey, Crescent #50

I have no recommendations to be considered for approval at this time.

In closing, I ask that in all that you do, do it with a spirit of excellence. Understanding that before you were a mason, you were first a man. As a man, you should always endeavor to have excellent be the prevailing adjective that describes all that you do. Companions, I intimate to you, that if you embrace a spirit of excellence, you will be great, your local chapters will be great, and this Grand Chapter will indeed be EXCELLENT.

In closing, as the Most Excellent Grand High Priest, I pray the same prayer over you that the very first High Priest, Aaron, prayed over the Children of Israel. The LORD bless thee and keep thee: The LORD make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: The LORD lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

As leader of this great body, I dare not take my seat before declaring that, as I look to the North and I see Dan, Asher, and Naphtali...as I look to the South and I see Rueben, Simeon, and Gad...as I look to the West and I see Ephraim, Menasseh, and Benjamin...and as I look to the East and I see Judah, Issachar, and Zebulon...then and only then do I know that it is time to don the bells and pomegranates, breastplate and ephod, mitre and plate of gold and enter the sanctum sanctorum to offer blessings to the deity proclaiming Holiness to the LORD, Holiness to the LORD, HOLINESS...UNTO...THE...LORD!

God Bless each and every one of you. God Bless our Masonic Fraternity and God Bless all of his people.



UNDER THE LIVING ARCH in the Bond of 3 x 3,

Most Ex. Dr. Elton L. Lewis, KCT KYGCH  
*Grand High Priest of all Capitular Masonry*