



KNIGHTLY NEWS



Version 2026, Issue 1 May 2026 Jason F. Hicks, Editor

Grand Council of Knight Masons of the United States of America
Post Office Box 508, Claremont, North Carolina 28610



From the Desk of the Great Chief

Greetings Sir Knights and Companions. I would like to take a minute of your time and introduce you to this year's KM USA officers (listed on the next page). We have a great group of brothers that are willing and able to support and assist our local councils in any way needed. Also, our Superintendents are well educated and are also available when/if needed. This year we plan to focus on making sure all councils are in compliance with tax ID numbers and education.

There are several activities taking place across the US with chances to learn, teach, and share ideas as well as confirming that ritual is being performed correctly. We have a new Grand Scribe and he can be reached at contacts listed further in this newsletter. The website will stay up to date and relevant to current events. If your council has anything upcoming please forward to the Grand Scribe and he will have it added to the webpage. The Knightly News will resume with 3-4 issues this year with information as well as stories from the councils.

This year we have a new Grand Scribe. Due to personal issues this past year the Past Grand Scribe had a change of address. This was listed on the website. A forwarding address was filed with the Post Office also, unfortunately many continued to send to the old address and unfortunately much of the mail was not forwarded. Regardless, that is behind us and as we move forward if your council has any problems with checks, orders, or general information, please contact the Grand Scribe or myself and we will resolve it. The past Grand Scribe is assisting the Grand Scribe in getting all taken care of.

Brothers, I'm looking forward to a wonderful and prosperous year and hopefully we can share some time together.

Sincerely and Fraternally Yours,

Russell Bridges
Great Chief - Knight Masons of the USA



2026 Grand Council Officers

Russell E. Bridges, Great Chief
 Bryce B. Hildreth, Deputy Great Chief
 Jack M. Harper, II, Grand Senior Knight
 David S.H. Lindez, Grand Junior Knight
 Brandon Penley, Grand Scribe
 Joshua A. Bristol, Assistant Grand Scribe
 Kevin B. Sample, Grand Treasurer
 Gerald G. Pugh, Grand Senior Warden
 Charles E. Maddox, Grand Junior Warden

Joe R. Manning, Jr., Grand Dir. of Ceremonies
 Corey F.L.G. Curtiss, Grand Priest
 Judd Wolfe, Grand Steward
 Christopher L. Hall, Grand Sentinel
 Chris M. Jessen, Grand Musician
 William (Sandy) Karstens IV, Excellent Chief,
 Great Chief's Council No. 0
 Rory J. Byers, Grand Historian

89th Annual Great Smokies Summer Assembly

This summer, July 12-14 will be the 89th Annual Great Smokies Summer Assembly of York Rite Masons will take place in Maggie Valley, North Carolina. The theme will be "Back to Basics: Ritual, Traditions & Officer Participation." All information including the registration form can be found at <https://mwsite.org/sites/ncgssa/>

Biography of Great Chief Russell E. Bridges

Born June, 1968 at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. Lived in Japan, Europe, and the United States. Graduated high school in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Served in the US Army 1986-1989 (Combat medic). Health care professional and business owner from 1991 to present. Wife is a 30+ year educator. Four daughters, one brother (active mason).

Served as Great Chief for St Patricks' # 1 in North Carolina. Appointed to Grand Council Knight Masons by D. Allen Surratt PGC.

Past Illustrious Grand Master of Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina, 2011.....Past Grand Lecturer R&S Masters in North Carolina.....Inspector General Honorary 33 SJ, Personal Rep-Orient of NC, Personal Rep-Valley of Charlotte, NC.....Past Most Illustrious Grand Chancellor, KGC, Grand College of Rites of the USA..... Regent - Asst to the Grand Secretary - York Rite Sovereign College of North America.....Grand Prior - Masonic Order of St Thomas of Acon USA.....Grand Chamberlain - Grand Imperial Council of the Red Cross of Constantine.....Grand Chaplain - Grand Council AMD of the USA,.....Asst. Grand Master, KGAC - Masonic Order of Athelstan USA.....Grand Marshall - Convent General, KYCH....Asst. Regional Gov. of USA - Masonic Order of Pilgrim Preceptors.....Grand Prelate - Masonic Order of St Patrick.....Foreign Relations Commissioner, Past Gen Grand Captain of the Guard - General Grand Council Cryptic Masons International.....Grand Steward, Grand Lodge of AF & AM, North Carolina.

Note from the Grand Secretary

To: The Great Chief, Grand Officers, Grand Superintendents, and Scribes

I want to first thank you for electing me to serve as your Grand Scribe. I look forward to working with each of you. My contact information is below. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. We have updated our order form. It will be on the website, and I have also sent each of you a copy. Please make sure that when you place an order for replacement certificates or 25-year certificates, that the names of those who are receiving those certificates are typed instead of handwritten, this will hopefully cut down on spelling errors when the certificates are printed. I also want to take a moment to go over a couple of housekeeping items.

The Grand Council will no longer accept personal checks. If you recommend a Sir Knight for the KCZ, if you place an order, file an interim report, or annual return, then a check from your council checking account must accompany those items. Each council must have their own bank account and EIN number. If you do not have this set-up and you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me and I will try to assist you with answering your questions. Also, as a reminder that all checks for your annual returns and the KCZ must be received by December 31st of each year. There is a Fifty-dollar penalty for Annual returns received after December 31st .

Again, thank you for this opportunity and I look forward to working with each of you.

Sincerely and Fraternally,
Brandon Lee Penley
Grand Scribe Knight Masons USA
828-320-7234

Biography of Grand Sentinel Christopher Hall

Christopher Lee Hall was born and raised in Robbinsville, Graham County, where he graduated as Valedictorian. After attending Western Carolina University as a North Carolina Teaching Fellow, he began his career as a high school history teacher and has resided in Gaston County since that time. Chris later moved into IT positions and received his Master's Degree from Appalachian State University. He serves as a project manager in education and is a proud Kentucky Colonel.

Chris was raised as a fourth generation Master Mason on January 15, 2005 in Robbinsville Lodge 672. He served as Master of King Solomon Lodge 704 in Gastonia in 2013 and District Deputy Grand Master of the 36th Masonic District from 2017-2019. Within the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of North Carolina, Chris has served on the Grand Lodge Masonic Renewal Committee, the Subordinate Lodge Special Activities Commission, and the Committee for the Masonic Home for Children at Oxford. He is a proud Endowed Member of Blue Ridge 435 in Highlands, NC.

Chris is a 33° Inspector General Honorary, Past Venerable Master, and Endowed Life Member of the Charlotte Scottish Rite. He is a Life Member of the Lenoir York Rite Bodies in Lenoir, NC. In 2022-23, Chris served as the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of North Carolina and received the KYGCH. He has received the NC Grand Chapter's Meritorious Service Award, NC Grand Council's Simmons Jones Baker award, and the NC Grand Commandery's Knight Commander of the Temple. He was elected by the York Rite Sovereign College of North America as Associate Regent and recipient of the Order of the Purple Cross.

Chris is a Past Excellent Chief of Saint Patrick's Council No. 1 in America and Past Governor of Western North Carolina College No. 78, York Rite Sovereign College of North America. He serves as Grand Sword Bearer in The Masonic Order of Athelstan of the USA and is an officer in North Carolina Court No. 1. Chris is a VI° member and officer of Solar White Quarry, The Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers and Bricklayers. He is an officer in St. John of Patmos Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine; Shute Chapel No. 8, St. Thomas of Acon; and Mount of the Holy Cross Tabernacle No. 1, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.

Chris is a member of North Carolina Conclave No. 24, The Masonic Order of Pilgrim Preceptors; Royal Order of the Masonic Knights of the Scarlet Cord; Grand College of Rites; Sovereign Order of Knights Preceptor; Masonic Order of the Bath; Ye Ancient Order of Noble Corks; Order of the Sword of Bunker Hill; Order of Old Saratoga; and other organizations. He is a Past Sovereign Master of J. Allen Suther Council No. 337, Allied Masonic Degrees and Past President of the North Carolina Association of Allied Masonic Degrees. He is a VII° member of the North Carolina College, Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis.

He is the 2025 Past Potentate of Oasis Shriners headquartered in Charlotte and is a proud Life Member. He is a Past Captain of the Oasis Patrol Unit, Past President of the Gaston County Shrine Club, Life Member of the Oasis Past Masters Unit, and was presented the Walt Disney Award and designated as a Class Honoree in 2014. Within Shriners International, Chris served as Imperial Public Relations Director, Region 8 from 2016-2018 and as Regional Membership Director, Region 8 (South Atlantic) and from 2017-2019. He is a Life Member of Cabiri International.

Biography of the Grand Secretary

Brandon Lee Penley was born in Claremont, North Carolina. He attended Western Carolina University where he received a degree in Construction Management. He later attended UNC Charlotte and graduated with His MBA. He started out his career working for Snider Fleet Solutions in Charlotte North Carolina. He has worked in various positions in the Transportation industry since beginning his career. He currently works as the Assistant Branch Manager for Snider Fleet Solutions in Hickory, NC and is honored to be a Kentucky Colonel

Brandon was raised as a third generation Master Mason on June 26, 2006, in Riverside Lodge No. 606. He served as Master of Riverside Lodge No. 606 in 2014, 2017, and 2019. He served as District Deputy Grand Lecturer of the 34th Masonic District from 2017-2019. He served as the chairman of the Charters and dispensations committee of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of North Carolina in 2019 and served as the Grand Historian in 2024.

Brandon received his KCCH in 2013, served as Master of Kadosh in 2014, and is an Endowed Life Member of the Valley of Charlotte Scottish Rite. He is a member of Hickory York Rite Bodies in Hickory, NC and a Life Member of the Lenoir York Rite Bodies in Lenoir, NC. In 2023-24, Brandon served as the Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of North Carolina and received the Knight York Grand Cross of Honour. He is currently serving as the Grand Master of the 1st Veil in the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of North Carolina. He has received the NC Grand Chapter's Meritorious Service Award, NC Grand Commandery's meritorious service award, and the Grand Encampment's Knight Commander of the Temple. He was elected by the York Rite Sovereign College of North America as an Associate Regent and received the Order of the Purple Cross in 2023.

In Saint Patrick's Council No. 1 in America, Knight Masons of the United States of America, Brandon is a past excellent chief and currently serves as scribe. He is Past Governor of Western North Carolina College No. 78, York Rite Sovereign College of North America. He is a Past Master of North Carolina Court No. 1 Masonic Order of Athelstan. Brandon is a VI^o member and currently serves as an officer in both Solar White Quarry and The Washington Monument Assemblage of The Worshipful Society of Free Masons, Rough Masons, Wallers, Slaters, Paviers, Plaisterers and Bricklayers. He is Past Sovereign in St. Titus Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine; He is an officer in Shute Chapel No. 8, St. Thomas of Acon, serves as Provincial Grand Secretary of the Blue Ridge Province and Grand Cellarer of the Grand Master's Council. He is an officer in Holy Sepulcher Tabernacle No. 3, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests.

Brandon is an officer of North Carolina Conclave No. 24 and a member of Mayflower Conclave No. 8, The Masonic Order of Pilgrim Preceptors and serves as Assistant Regional Marshal of the United States of America Region. He is serving as Grand Treasurer of the Grand College of Rites. He is a member of the Sovereign Order of Knights Preceptor, Masonic Order of the Bath, Ye Ancient Order of Noble Corks, Order of the Sword of Bunker Hill, Order of Old Saratoga, and other organizations. He is a Past Sovereign Master of Mecca Council No. 76 and a dual member of J. Allen Suther Council No. 337, Allied Masonic Degrees and Currently serving as Vice President of the North Carolina Association of Allied Masonic Degrees. He is a member of the Royal order of Scotland. He is a IV^o member of the North Carolina College, Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis.

He is Past Monarch of Azusa Grotto, and he is currently a member of Nubia Grotto. He is an Endowed member of Palmetto Forrest No. 99 Tall Cedars of Lebanon. He is an Endowed member of Oasis Shriners headquartered in Charlotte. He served as Captain of the Oasis Patrol Unit in 2020 and 2021. He is a member of the Oasis Past Masters unit. He is a member of the Catawba County Shrine Club, the Gaston County Shrine Club, and several other shrine clubs. He served in 2025 as the Potentates Personal Aide. He is currently serving as Membership Chairman and Outer Guard.

He was elected Grand Scribe of the Grand Council of Knight Masons of the United States of America at the Annual Meeting on February 6th, 2026.

Editor's Note

Thank you for reading the first edition of this year's *Knightly News*. Councils are encouraged to submit news articles for inclusion in the next *Knightly News*. Submit materials to the Grand Scribe (grandscribekmusa@gmail.com) and the editor, Jason F. Hicks (jasonfhicks@gmail.com). When submitting pictures please include a list of names and the date of the event.

You can request to join the official Grand Council of Knight Masons, USA Facebook Group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/knightmasonsusa>) and visit our website at <http://www.knightmasons.org> for more information. Remember, you will need a password to access the non-public information and to obtain that password contact your Council Scribe. Thank you for reading.

Fraternally,
Jason F. Hicks, Editor

Grand Superintendents

Alabama, James McGee
Vulcan 22
Wiregrass 114
Mobile 119
Capitol City 136

Arkansas, Timothy J. (T.J.) Henwood
Arkansas 80
Jack L. Sharp 91
Harvey I. Mize 101

California (North), Mark H. Rose
Connemara 39
Clanna Ruid Ruide 58
Sheehan 127

California (South), Thomas E. Colgan
Brian Boru 38
Killamey 56
Hill of Tara 116
O'Brien 117

Cheasapeake Bay, Mark Irwin
Maryland 9
Delaware 18
Universal 70
Templenoe 78

Florida (North), Henry Adams
Gateway 51
Semper Fi 95
Drexel P. Caldwell 108
Florida Caverns 110

Florida (South), James W. Hogg
Space Coast 32
Mystic Brotherhood 35
Solas O Rosslyn 84
Gold Coast 132
Porte Lucis 139

Georgia/South Carolina, James W. Tate
Samuel H.J. Womack 20
Carl F. Lester, Jr. 65
Joel W. Frampton 85
Crowned Martyrs 120
Cleburne 133
Great Plains, Lon W. Kvasager
Minnesota 35
North Dakota 90
Illinois (North), Earl F. Wys
St. Bridget 23
Earl of Torrell 24
Tracy O'Galway 40

Illinois (South), Bruce W. Rhinehart
Shamrock 43
Irish Sea 98

Indiana, Mike Doxsee
Indiana 15
Firinne 115
St. Columba 118
Prather 125

Iowa, Rick N. McCampbell
Kilpeck 64
Green Degrees 93

Kansas/Oklahoma, Robert G. Davis
Kansas 53
Joseph S. Lewis 66
Drogheda 68

Kentucky/West Virginia, Bufford Litteral
Kentucky 71
Highland 104
West Virginia 7
Tri-State 57
Lexington 137

Louisiana/Mississippi,
William Keith Powell, Sr.
Tara 29
T. Olin Gore, Jr. 86
Ray Wesley Burgess 103
Sauvolle 126

Midwest, Brandon Mullins
Trinity 36
Crown 'n' Cork 44
St Gobban Saer 130
Tully Cross 131

Missouri, Dr. Paul Lee Daniels
Tipperary 62
Cell Aime 76
Charlemagne 79
Gates of Derry 82
Limerick 88

New England, Kaleb Robert Brown
Colonial 19
Pine Cone 31
Scenic 37
Roisin Dubh 111
Tir na nÓg 135

New Jersey, William M. Krzewick III
North New Jersey 10
Southern New Jersey 11
Jersey Shore 107

New York/Connecticut, Richard Powell
Paumanok 4
Glencairn 14
Mohawk 28
Boudica 128
Cathair Salann 129

North Carolina (East), Patrick Terry
Shamrock, Thistle and Rose 2
Harp, Cross and Eagle 3
SENClaid 42
Tar River 123

North Carolina (West), W. Berry Rigdon
Saint Patrick's in America 1
Piedmont Celtic 99
Appalachian 121

Northwest Territory, Rabi K. Phifer
Clontarf 69
Knights of Tara 122

Ohio, Richard L. Ganion
Irish 67
St. Clair 75
Donegal 94
Killian 106
St. Brendan 113
Mohican 124
Michael Collins 138

Pennsylvania, Raymond G. Bagley
The Gateway to the West 5
Erin 6
Penn 13
Northeast 74
Erie 105

Rocky Mountains, Grover L. Sardeson
Kincora 8

Southwestern, Adam Hathaway
Enchantment 21
Realta Copar 112

Tennessee (East), Richard R. Petty, Jr.
Gaelic 60
William Benjamin Anderson 73
W.W. Cannon 96
Signet of Truth 140

Tennessee (West), Jared D. Karpel
Tralee 41
Ezra 89

Texas (Central), Jerry Kirby
Texas 45
Gen. Henry Bates Stoddard 87
Frank G. McDonald 97
Jewel P. Lightfoot 109

Texas (Northeast), Russell C. Brown
Rose of Sharon 49
Worth's Shamrock 54
Veritas 59

Texas (Southwest), Ralph Royal
Nat Peace 46
Anson Jones 47
Francis A. "Fritz" White 48
Wilbury Bethel Sirman 52

Texas (West), Jackie Matthews
Franklin 63
Libertas 83
James M. Wilson 92

Virginia, Pete Jensen
Virginia 12
King Carius 17
Emerald Isle 30
Fort Andrew Lewis 81
Rock of Cashel 100



Application for Grand Council of Knight Masons Honor Council Award

Reporting Period January 1 through December 31

(Application due to Grand Scribe no later than December 31 of the current year)

90 points minimum required for Council of Distinction Award

120 minimum points required for Honor Council Award



Council Name: _____ **No.:** _____ **Points Awarded**

1	In the past year, how many additional meetings of your Council (above the two (2) minimum required by code) were held? (5 points for each additional meeting)	☐	☐
2	In the past year, did your Council host at least one event which included ladies? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
3	In the past year, how many additional special meeting events were held such as Donnybrooks, Educational, Special Speakers, Dinner or special event recognizing special accomplishments (i.e. recognizing 25/50 year members, or council anniversary)? (5 points for each event up to 4 events)	☐	☐
4	Does your Council have a mentorship program to explain what Knight Masonry is to new members? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
5	Does your Council have a newsletter which is sent out at least twice a year? (Meeting notifications do not count as a newsletter) (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
6	In the past year, did your Council send the Grand Council <i>Knightly News</i> Newsletter to your membership? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
7	In the past year, did your Council confer in full form: (5 points for each degree)	☐	☐
	a. Knight of the Sword, Mandatory Item	☐	☐
	b. Knight of the East, Mandatory Item	☐	☐
	c. Knight of the East and West, Mandatory Item	☐	☐
8	In the past year, did your Council have a Ritual School? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
9	In the past year, what percentage of your total membership attended at least one (1) meeting? (Select only one - register or sign in sheet should be used and kept to verify the percentage for reporting purposes)	☐	☐
	a. 50% or more (5 points)	☐	☐
	b. 75% or more (10 points)	☐	☐
	c. 90% or more (15 points)	☐	☐
10	In the past year, did you notify your Grand Superintendent of all of your meetings? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
11	Is the Council's Initiation Fee set high enough to make sure all new Sir Knights receive an Apron, Sash, Member Jewel and Ritual? (5 points if Yes)	☐	☐
12	In the past year, were your Council's Financial Records audited/reviewed by a Committee for that purpose, recorded in the minutes, and approved by your Council? (5 points if all three requirements are answered Yes, Mandatory Item)	☐	☐
13	Are there at least two signatories on all financial accounts of the Council? (5 points if Yes, Mandatory Item)	☐	☐
14	In the past year, how many new members did you confer all three degrees on as reported on your Annual Return? (5 points for each new member)	☐	☐

15	In the past year, how many of the five (5) Elected Officers of your Council attended your Council's Annual Meeting? (5 points for each officer):		
	a. Excellent Chief		
	b. Senor Knight		
	c. Junior Knight		
	d. Treasurer (if not combined with Scribe)		
	e. Scribe		
16	Was your current year's Annual Return submitted to the Grand Scribe by deadline. (5 points if Yes, Mandatory Item)		
17	In the past year, at all of your meetings, were you officers appropriately dressed for meetings? (Suits for Daytime Meetings and Tux for Nighttime Meetings) (5 points if Yes)		
18	In the past year, did your Council submit an article/picture for the <i>Knightly News</i> ? (5 points if Yes)		
19	In the past year, did your Council reward your Past Excellent Chief with the Past Excellent Chief's Jewel? (5 points if Yes)		
20	In the past year, did your Council award your 25 and 50 year members with a 25 or 50 year membership jewel? (5 points if Yes)		

Total Points from Council:

21	In the past year, did your Council contribute any money to any charity? If so, to whom and how much? (Up to 10 points at discretion of Great Chief or committee)		
	a. Charity:		
	b. How much?		
	c. Description:		
	Discretionary points given (line 21) by committee or Great Chief (max 10 points)		

Grand Total to be calculated after report is submitted:

Awarded: _____

Date Submitted: _____

Scribe Printed Name

Scribe Signature

Excellent Chief Printed Name

Excellent Chief Signature

Clear Form

Print

Save As

Submit