



Address
of
THE MOST WORSHIPFUL
JEFFREY M. WILLIAMSON
GRAND MASTER
of
MASONS
in the
STATE OF NEW YORK

Saint John's Day
June 25, 2016



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Paul M. Rosen
Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge
of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York

**ADDRESS OF THE MOST WORSHIPFUL
JEFFREY M. WILLIAMSON, Grand Master of Masons
in the State of New York, to the District Deputy Grand
Masters and Grand Lodge Staff Officers for the years 2016
through 2018 in the Daniel D. Tompkins Memorial Chapel
on the Campus of the Masonic Care Community in Utica,
New York, on Saturday afternoon, June 25, 2016.**

*[*Portions of the printed address were not included in the oral address.]*

Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master, Most Worshipful Past Grand Masters, my colleagues of Grand Lodge, Brethren, Ladies and friends of New York Freemasonry:

We are pleased to welcome you to the annual Investiture Ceremony for the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York.

Each year, the Grand Lodge corporations and Symbolic Lodge leadership teams assemble at our Campus. We are accompanied by our families, Brothers and friends. Who come here to learn and train with our fellow colleagues. We rekindle old relationships and make new friendships that last a lifetime!

This weekend, we set in motion the designs laid down upon the trestle board by your Grand Master. Our Grand Lodge Officers have been duly Invested and it is our ardent desire that you will leave these solemn ceremonies energized, enthused and determined to execute the labors each of us have so sincerely pledged to undertake.

THE TRUSTEES OF THE MASONIC HALL AND HOME

This afternoon we gather in the Daniel D. Tompkins Memorial Chapel. This beautiful sanctuary was first dedicated 105 years ago. It was rededicated two short months ago after the steeple, roof and pillars were rebuilt. It is a shining example of the historic properties cared for by the Trustees of the Masonic Hall and Home which include the Masonic Hall in New York City and the 360 year-old DeWint House at the Washington Historical Site in Tappan.

The Trustees not only manage and maintain the real property of our Fraternity, but they are an important part of our efforts to help shape our youth in positive ways. Each summer the Trustees operate Camp Turk which provides a character-building Adirondack experience for 200 youth each week for six weeks at our magnificent property at Round Lake. The Trustees provide almost \$500,000 each year to help fund the Grand Lodge Educational Assistance grants to children and grandchildren of New York Masons.

The Trustees continue to improve the scope and quality of the healthcare and housing services provided to our Brothers, their families and members of the community right here in the Masonic Care Community. This morning some of you had a chance to see the recently opened cardiac rehabilitation unit. No program even comes close to the original mission set forth over 150 years ago than the assisted living care provided at Wiley Hall.

The Trustees recently received word from New York State-that Masonic Care Community has been approved for up to 60 Assisted Living Program beds. This program is designed to serve persons who are medically eligible for nursing home placement, but are better served in a less medically intensive and lower cost setting.

As Freemasons we should be proud of the quality of care provided to the more than 500 residents at the Masonic Care Community. During the coming year, the Trustees will be diligently working to bring some of the remarkable services offered here in Utica- to other areas of New York State.

We thank them for their outstanding dedication and assistance in helping us to fulfill our Masonic Obligations to our Brothers, ladies and the community in general.

MASONIC MEDICAL RESEARCH LABORATORY

Since 1958, the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory has been and continues to be a noble and charitable endeavor founded and supported by the Brethren of the Grand Lodge of New York. More recently, our sister grand jurisdictions and Freemasons from all over the world have also financially embraced their mission.

Every decade of the MMRL's history is peppered with scientific achievement that have saved lives and improved the quality of life for people all over the world. Those achievements have earned the MMRL an international reputation for scientific excellence and recognition as one of Freemasonry's Windows to the World.

As Grand Master, I encourage you to host a MMRL program to learn more about their heart research. Please contact the Laboratory to schedule a tour!

THE CHANCELLOR ROBERT R LIVINGSTON MASONIC LIBRARY OF GRAND LODGE

I am also very pleased with the activity of our Chancellor Robert R Livingston Masonic Library. Just prior to my election as your Grand Master, our new Librarian, Morgan Aronson, joined the existing Library staff. Morgan and our long time Curator, Catherine Walter, will be jointly sharing responsibility for the operation and oversight of the 60,000 volume Library and 50,000 artifact Museum under the overall governance of our Library Board of Trustees. (Morgan and Catherine are with us today and I ask them to stand up and be recognized).

Among existing Masonic Libraries, our collection is world class, and through our staff and Trustees, we are striving to make our service level world class, as well.

Although the main branch of the Library is in Manhattan it is a vibrant part of our Metropolitan Masonic Community, I cherish the idea that the Library will continue its efforts to reach out to every part of our State. We have, of course, a small branch located on our Masonic Campus in Utica maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers. I hope many of you had an opportunity to visit it today. Among their other activities, the Utica volunteers spend countless hours digitalizing Proceedings from New York State Masonic organizations.

We also have 3,000 New York State Masons enrolled in our reading program. Our Curator has over 700 items on-line in our virtual museum, and you will increasingly see extracts from this collection appearing in our on-line and paper publications as well as the Empire State Mason. In addition, we are exploring the possibility of local presentations of artifacts, perhaps in conjunction with our local Masonic historians. A refreshed website and increasing access to digital media are rising on the horizon, as well. These are exciting times for our Library!

SERVICE AWARDS AND MASONIC ANNIVERSARY APRONS*

Over the past few years the Directors of the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory have graciously furnished our Grand Lodge with the Fifty Year Service Award Aprons.

In addition, the Trustees of the Masonic Hall and Home have also kindheartedly provided our Grand Lodge with the Sixty and Seventy Year Service Award Aprons as well.

Speaking for the entire Grand Lodge of the State of New York, including the District Deputy Grand Masters-who take much pleasure in presenting these attractive Aprons to our most senior members, as well as the thousands of honorees who have faithfully maintained their membership, demonstrating their loyalty and support to their respective Lodges, we thank you for your corporate generosity! These Aprons enhance and dignify a Brother's Masonic experience and adds much luster to a Lodge's Service Awards programs.

SIXTY-FIVE YEAR AWARD RW JOHN LICASTRO

This afternoon, we are so pleased to have the privilege to recognize one of our esteemed Brothers who currently resides in Room 302 in Wiley Hall. R.:W.:John Licastro is a member of Bethpage Hicksville Lodge No. 975 located in the Nassau Masonic District. He was made a Master Mason October 19, 1952 in Stewart Manor Lodge No 1106. Brother Grand Marshal, please escort R.:W.:John Licastro, our distinguished Brother to the East. (*Presentation and Grand Honors given to Brother Licastro!*)

REQUIREMENTS FOR DSA AND NEW JEWEL*

Under the direction of R.:W.:George R. Wacob, we are pleased to announce a change in the requirements for the Dedicated Service Award. The Dedicated Service Award enables Lodges to obtain Grand Lodge recognition for Brothers and Past Masters who continue, year after year to support their Lodges in addition to their Districts with their presence, time, and talents by attending and supporting Lodge and District meetings, degrees, programs and functions.

Experience has revealed when a Past Master was awarded the prestigious Dedicated Service Award Apron, he almost immediately returned to wearing his Past Master Apron. Recognizing this concern, the Awards Committee has created a new distinctive DSA Pocket Jewel which the Grand Master has authorized to be worn by any DSA recipient. These wonderful new Pocket Jewels can be purchased separately and are available from Grand Lodge Sales for \$20.00 plus tax and shipping.

YOUTH GROUPS

The Grand Lodge of the State of New York and the related bodies are huge supporters of our Masonic Youth Groups. We are honored that they were able to participate in this year's St. Johns' Weekend festivities and to march in our Investiture Parade.

It is my honor to introduce three amazing Masonic youth group leaders at this time. Please rise when I call your name:

- The Organization of Triangles, Inc- Miss Alison Wright, State Representative
- International Order of Rainbow for Girls- Miss Samantha Miller, Grand Worthy Advisor
- New York DeMolay-Brother Zachary Williams, State Master Councilor

Speaking on behalf of all three organizations is Brother Zachary Williams, State Master Councilor. Brothers: It is also interesting to note that Brother Zack's Dad is also here. His name is Right Worshipful Brother William R. Williams Jr., of Rising Sun Lodge No. 103, who was Invested this afternoon as Grand Steward. Congratulations Brother Williams! Not only to you-but for your son as well!

MOTTO AND THEME

My motto for this term is a “Way of Life”. A Freemason practices courtesy and civility in society, honesty and fairness in business, kindness in the home, pity and concern for the unfortunate, resistance toward evil, help for the weak, forgiveness for those who transgress, love for one another, and above all- reverence and love for God. Freemasonry is all of these things, but most of all...it is a “Way of Life”.

WILEY HALL

Although Grand Lodge has many outstanding and worthwhile charities, Carla and I choose Wiley Hall to be our official charity for this term. Wiley Hall is located right here in the beautiful Masonic Care Community and is the very manifestation and embodiment of our Masonic Obligation. Here, we find a loving environment that takes care of our Brothers and Sisters. All proceeds for the Grand Master’s Lapel Pins and “Way of Life” wrist bands will benefit Wiley Hall. Please consider a generous donation that will enable us to uplift the spirits of our residents and add value to their stay.

I am requesting our District Deputies and Staff Officers to promote the wonderful services made available at Wiley Hall and encourage your local Brothers and their ladies, when appropriate to look into the opportunity of becoming a resident.

CONSOLIDATIONS REDISTRICTING AND RESHAPING*

Brothers, at the March training session, you were informed that all of the DDGMs were members of the Reshaping Committee. I am pleased to report that many of you have returned home to your respective Districts and have entered into serious and mature discussions with your Lodges. The information you have provided is of great importance and value for future planning.

It is also essential to remember that Lodges can “hop over” to an adjoining district if it makes sense for you and your members. For instance, we have discovered several Lodges that are perhaps six miles away from a neighboring district yet the closest Lodge in the original District may be over 25-30 miles away. Common sense should prevail in these situations.

As we consider Reshaping and Redistricting it is vital that civility must prevail. As Masons we need to consider the greater good of the Fraternity. Every Brother should keep their passions in due bounds and eliminate those personal piques and prejudices that hinder the real progress of Consolidations and District mergers. Let us all be positive and pace setters rather than tying us up in minutia and obstructionist activities.

AGE TO PETITION AND THE UNIVERSITY SCHEME*

At the Annual Communication this May, the Grand Lodge voted in favor of making membership available to 18 year old applicants. As Grand Master, I caution our Brotherhood to keep in mind that we still have a Masonic obligation to properly interview all prospects, regardless of age! The NorthStar Success Coaches should be an invaluable aide in determining the maturity and qualification levels required in order to receive the mysteries of Freemasonry.

Additionally, this change has also brought up a wonderful new concept called the “University Scheme” as practiced in the United Grand Lodge of England. This “University Scheme” has captured the imagination of a few namely, Brother Mischa Zabotin, Worshipful Brother Michael Livschitz, and Right Worshipful Brother Edmund Harrison.

The Grand Lodge of Massachusetts currently has Lodges in Harvard University, Boston University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology-MIT. The Grand Lodge of Maryland and the Grand Lodge of Virginia are also working to Charter some academic Lodges as well.

On October 1st 2016 a conference of like minded Grand Jurisdictions will be assembling in the District of Columbia and we will send a New York delegation to acquire additional knowledge and best practices on this exciting possibility.

THE NECESSITY TO SLOW DOWN THE ADVANCEMENT OF CANDIDATES

My Brothers, Thomas Paine, the famous Patriot and author of Common Sense once said:

“What We Obtain Too Cheap We Esteem Too Little; It Is Dearness Only That Gives Everything Its Value”.

In recent times, a petition for membership was eagerly and hastily presented to any man who showed even the slightest interest in our Fraternity. Prior to his acceptance, the prospect had little or no education as to what our expectations might be for him on his journey through Freemasonry, or what his expectations might be for us.

With the initiation fee and annual dues so low that they don't even equal a "dinner for two at a good restaurant" it was a rather painless financial commitment for the prospect to join our Fraternity.

This particular candidate of recent times was "Initiated an Entered Apprentice" the first month, "Passed to the Degree of Fellow Craft" the second month and "Raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on the third month. Training in the lectures, questions and answers, catechisms, L SOME and candidate proficiency were little or nonexistent and glossed over. There is also a likely chance that he was exposed to poor ritual and a non-inclusive environment.

Statistically, we raise on average 1000-1200 Master Masons per year and unfortunately we lose almost an identical amount to "Non Payment of Dues!" Further analysis reveals that those members dropped for "Non Payment of Dues" have only three to six years seniority in our Fraternity. Couple this with another 1500 Brothers passing to the "Celestial Lodge Above" per year, and we are on target to reduce our membership base by twenty percent to approximately 30,000 in the next four years!

Last year, at a Deputy Grand Master's Town Hall Meeting a Brother stood up and asked "What is Grand Lodge doing to bring in new members?" This question on the surface may seem peculiar to some, but let us explore this issue more thoroughly!

The first thing we need to do is get past our past! Henry Ford once said *"If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always got!"*

Every New York State Masonic Leader should put emphasis on membership acquisition, development and retention. Every Lodge should implement the NorthStar Project. Take your time and make the new prospect a friend first, and a Mason second! Studies have proven if you make him a true friend, he will never leave our Fraternity!

The first step in successfully rebuilding our membership base is to realize that our Lodges need to slow down the degree cycle. As the Candidate advances, lower the Lodge to the Entered Apprentice or Fellow Craft Degree as required. As the Candidate progresses through the degree cycle - invite an interesting guest speaker or conduct a special program. He certainly will see the value of his advancement!

Most importantly, be sure your Candidate is *proficient* in the “Question and Answer” lectures, ensure the Lodge Success Coaches utilize LSOME (Lodge System of Masonic Education) and accompany him to visit other Lodges in the area so he can recognize that Freemasonry is much bigger than the local Masonic Lodge. Integrate him in Lodge life, give him a job and challenge him! I guarantee that you will have an active and dedicated Mason for life!

The second part of the issue is membership acquisition. The Grand Lodge State of New York website is currently receiving approximately 150 membership information requests on its site per month. R.:W.:Joseph Passaretti II Chair of the Membership Development Committee has diligently forwarded these prospective members to the neighboring District Deputy Grand Master for further processing.

The District Deputy has been charged with placing the prospect in a vibrant and active Lodge in his District. A Lodge that has adopted the NorthStar Project will statistically have a higher success rate for acquisition than those who are not participating in the program.

The third part of this issue is addressed to the individual Lodge and its members. What are you doing for membership acquisition? What is the condition of your Lodge exterior? Can it use a coat of paint? Is the lawn mowed and hedges trimmed? Is the interior of your Lodge clean and attractive? Does it smell like mildew? Is it decorated with cobwebs and loaded with dust? Why would anyone want to join a Lodge that is in such condition? Remember: *“You never get a second chance to make a first impression!”*

BACK GROUND CHECK

One of the biggest revelations and personal disappointments for me as a Grand Lodge Officer was to discover those unworthy and unqualified men who have gained admittance into our fraternity.

Ineffective and incompetent Investigating teams, have compromised our high standards for admission, and have weakened the very foundation of our Craft! These men, now disguised as Master Masons have slowly infiltrated into our beloved Institution. They have inflicted their reprehensible and law-breaking misconduct on innocent and trusting Brothers and their families. The Proctor's Docket is full of troublemakers, mischief makers, and criminals. Brothers! We should never forget that we are a "*League of Extraordinary Gentlemen!*"

My Brothers, no Petitioner is so important, and no increase in numbers is so urgent, that we cannot take time to thoroughly investigate all who knock upon our doors. It is crucial that we "*Guard well the West Gate!*"

Investigation Committees are designed to protect the threshold of our Lodges and the fraternity in general. You as a Master Mason and a member of the Investigation Committee are fully responsible for your actions! When a prospect for Freemasonry is identified, start a search on social media utilizing such tools such as Face Book, and Google.

Check references and ask questions. Many potential job applicants have been eliminated from employment opportunities due to undesirable Face Book postings and pictures. Much can be learned about a person on social media.

Grand Lodges from across North America have also experienced this lowering of our "standard of excellence" and are adopting and integrating back ground checks in their respective membership petition process.

In today's society, background checks are required for all of our national and local Masonic Youth Groups as well as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Church Sunday School teachers and aides, health care workers, a multitude of occupations, and many senior citizen institutions. Is it not logical, that we should apply the same level of protection for our fraternity that includes our wives, widows, children, aged and vulnerable Brothers as well?

The Grand Lodge of the State of New York is now making a new tool available for this important screening and vetting process. Going forward, I am asking that all of our subordinate Lodges utilize a new background check for its prospective members.

The prospect himself signs into the special website and personally applies for the \$15.00 background check. The background check will be furnished to the prospect and he will include the background check with his petition. In conjunction with this request, the NorthStar Success Coaches should alert the prospect that a background check will be required prior to their acceptance as a member of the Lodge.

It is my fervent desire that this new procedure will protect our gentle Fraternity and enable us to regain with confidence *“that pure warm and holy love that our ritual enjoins”*. Nurtured and renewed by the rays of true Brotherly Love and Affection.

THE NECESSITY FOR AUDIT*

I am entirely saddened to learn of the serious lack of fiscal controls employed by a fair amount of our Lodges and Temple Associations. Trusting and inexperienced Brothers have passively given access to our monies and investments by deceitful Lodge Secretaries, Treasurers, Trustees, and Fellow Craft Club Officers. This lack of fiscal control has resulted in embezzlement and theft of Masonic funds.

Many of you have worked countless hours laboring in our Lodge kitchens raising funds in order to support our utility or tax bills. Our ancestors have provided us with a legacy of beautiful Lodge Buildings and left your organization with a financial nest egg for the future welfare of your Lodge. The preservation of these resources is everyone’s responsibility and it only makes sense to apply good fiscal management policies and procedures to ensure that your assets are safe and secure.

The new Grand Master’s edict also requires that going forward all of our organizations perform an annual qualified audit of the books. Proof of the audit will be captured and recorded on the DDGM annual report forms.

MORI*

The District Deputy Grand Masters and Grand Lodge Staff Officers have been given access to our Membership Online Registry Interface program (MORI). In addition, we are pressing forward to ensure that all Lodges implement MORI within this term.

IRS 990*

We recognize that certain Districts, Lodges, and Associated Corporate Entities and Foundations within our Grand Jurisdiction have neglected to file their respective IRS Form 990's annually with the Internal Revenue Service. On May 11, 2016, your Grand Master issued an Edict that all of these entities submit to the Office of the Grand Secretary satisfactory proof that your IRS 990 Form was properly filed as required. This information is being collected by the District Deputy Grand Masters for each Lodge within their respective Districts. The deadline for the submission is July 1, 2016.

All must comply with this Edict. Once we determine the quantity of Lodges that have lost their status, we will appoint a special sub-committee to work to regain a Lodge's IRS 990 proper status. Please be forthcoming in reporting your status. We are not looking to punish or blame anyone! We simply must adhere to proper business practice.

My Brothers, Lodges are actually corporations that are organized under the umbrella of the Grand Lodge of the State of New York. It is imperative that we comply with all Local, State, and National laws especially the Benevolent Orders Law of New York. The IRS has already audited a sister jurisdiction, and we have heard the legal ramifications of that audit. I am confident that you would not want your Lodge to be subject to an audit by the IRS. Let's get our fiscal house in order.

CERTIFICATION OPEN/CLOSE

Brothers, it is an indisputable fact that a Masonic Lodge chartered within this jurisdiction has among its duties and obligations this important prime dictate: "To confer the three Degrees of Masonry". In addition, it is universally agreed that a Lodge should... "Look like a Lodge, and act like a Lodge".

A healthy Lodge should be able to open and close competently- with its installed Officers- proficiently, from memory... and without books. If a Lodge can achieve a skillful and proficient opening and closing, combined with a good educational Masonic or topical program, the new initiate to Freemasonry will certainly see the benefit of his continued membership.

I am directing the District Deputy Grand Master, together with the Grand Lodge Staff Officer or Assistant Grand Lecturer to observe that each Lodge can competently open and close the Lodge with its own elected and appointed members. This certification will also be recorded on the DDGM Inspection form. In anticipation of this requirement the Grand Lecturer has instructed the AGL's to conduct ritual practices with each Lodge before the DDGM can officially observe the work.

DISPENSATIONS

Until May of 2017, your Grand Master has again extended authority to the District Deputy Grand Masters to grant dispensations for a number of rather routine situations, among which is to allow dispensations to confer a Degree within his District upon up to 10 candidates for any of the three degrees; and for this Masonic year only- to confer the Entered Apprentice degree upon a candidate from a Lodge in his District by another Lodge in his District. Fair notice is hereby given that next year... the First Degree will be conferred in a Candidate's home Lodge.

Lodge Secretaries should continue to request these dispensations directly from the District Deputy Grand Master. The District Deputy is not required to grant such dispensations. He should use his knowledge of the Lodge, the Officers and his District before granting the dispensation. When there are concerns, the District Deputy must consult with the Grand Master.

NON PAYMENT OF DUES "NPD"*

Brothers, in an effort to retain those existing members who are in real danger of losing their membership due to "Non Payment of Dues" we are asking each Lodge Secretary to furnish a list of potential unaffiliated members to the Office of the Grand Secretary. The Grand Master will personally send a letter to these Brothers and ask them to consider reinvesting in his Masonic affiliation. With your help and support, we may be able to rehabilitate their attitudes and rekindle their previous affection to the Craft.

INITIATION FEES

My Brothers, it is also a distressing reality that the Grand Lodge and local Lodge Initiation fees are very much undervalued! At a recent seminar conducted by the Conference of Grand Masters of North America held in Madison, Wisconsin, we learned that the higher the initiation fee charged to join a Masonic Lodge- the more men willingly lined up to join our Fraternity! The average Initiation Fees from around the country for progressive and healthy Lodges on average is \$400.00 to \$500.00, with Traditional Observant Lodges topping out at a \$1,200.00 Initiation Fee, which also included collations after their meetings.

Grand Lodge currently collects a one-time initiation fee of only \$31.00 which is distributed as follows:

\$23.00 benchmarked for the Masonic Hall and Home and is deposited into the General Fund and Endowment of the Trustees.

\$5.00 Dollars is benchmarked for The George Washington Masonic National Memorial Landmark located in Alexandria, Virginia.

And a diminutive \$3.00 is left for Grand Lodge for operations.

My Brothers, with our membership base quickly shrinking by 20% over the next 4 years and realizing the loss of revenues to both your Lodge and the Grand Lodge, I am asking for your careful consideration to raise the Initiation fee, not only for your Lodge, but Grand Lodge as well. I have assigned R.:W.:Charles Catapano, Deputy Grand Master, to conduct a detailed financial evaluation of its potential, and propose a recommendation for a revised Grand Lodge Initiation Fee. Please remember, an increase in Initiation Fees do not affect the cost of operations for your Lodge, it is simply a “pass through” expense.

INCOME STREAM*

Brethren, as we evaluate the future effect of our declining membership, the Grand Lodge team is also diligently seeking new opportunities to develop a long range plan for a dependable income stream that will not only provide the expert and professional level of services anticipated by the Brethren of this Grand Lodge, but to provide the assurance of the long term solvency of your Grand Lodge operations.

CATEGORY 3 RAFFLES 50-50 DRAWINGS

As you are aware, at this past Annual Communication of your Grand Lodge, Masonic Law was modified to allow, where permitted by law, Category 3 Raffles and 50-50 drawings.

It cannot be stressed enough, however, that while the Masonic prohibition against certain limited forms of gaming have been removed, and there are State, County and Municipal laws that limit and or continue to prohibit any and all forms of gaming.

It will be the duty and responsibility of the Lodge to ensure proper compliance with all civil as well as Masonic laws; and it will be the duty of all District Deputy Grand Masters to ensure proper compliance by the Lodges.

With the assistance of the Judge Advocate and the Law Enforcement Committee, an information sheet has been compiled that provides the Edict, which outlines our Masonic Law on this subject, an outline of Category 3 Raffles requirements; as well as a compilation of each and every municipality and its local rules with respect to Games of Chance. These items can be faxed or emailed to you by contacting the Grand Secretary's Office.

In the end, however, it is up to the Lodges to be vigilant to ensure proper compliance with our civil and Masonic Law. Violations will simply not be tolerated.

MASONIC SAFETY ID PROGRAM*

We must recognize that the Masonic Brotherhood Fund contributions for this program have substantially dwindled over time. While the program has not been wholly eliminated, we must downsize the expenditures. We encourage Districts to continue their work on a voluntary basis. In addition, we are directing the Masonic Brotherhood Fund to transmit all donations collected and earmarked for the Masonic Safety ID Program to the State Committee for the purchase of supplies and equipment.

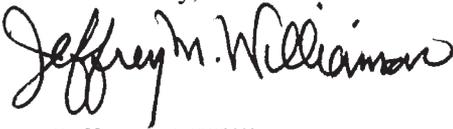
CLOSING REMARKS

My Brothers, I wish to thank each of you, your ladies and families for taking time from your private lives over the next two years by serving and promoting our beloved Fraternity. These truly are exciting times to be a Free and Accepted Mason. A whole new generation of young enthusiastic men are joining our ranks and looking for those special qualities and values that only our gentle Craft can offer.

The world desperately needs what Freemasonry has to offer! Our very existence on this planet would be more pleasant and uplifting, if the world would simply embrace our “*Way of Life*” and the resulting actions which emanates “*As a force for good*” from our gentle Fraternity.

May God Bless America, pray for our men and women serving in our Armed Forces, and “*May God’s Richest Blessings be Yours*”!

Fraternally,



Jeffrey M. Williamson
Grand Master of Masons
in the State of New York

