

The United Supreme Council

Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry (Prince Hall Affiliation),
Northern Jurisdiction, U.S.A., Inc.

ALLOCUTION

141st Annual Session and 47th Triennial



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Sovereign Grand Commander**

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Introduction

To the Honorable Donald C. Jones, Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; the Honorable Sidney Broadnax, Jr., Lieutenant Grand Commander; the Honorable Dr. Corey Hawkins, Sr., Esq., Sovereign Grand Commander of the United Supreme Council, AASR, Southern Jurisdiction, PHA; the Honorable Richard Elliott Grand Minister of State representing Sovereign Grand Commander Peter Samiec, Supreme Council Northern Masonic Jurisdiction; the Honorable James D. Cole, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council Southern Jurisdiction; the Honorable Gaetan Mentor, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council of Haiti; the Honorable Sovereign Grand Inspector General Eugene Anderson, Vice President Conference of Grand Masters; visiting Grand Masters; the leaders in attendance from the Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles of the Mystic Shrine; the leaders of all York Rite bodies; other members of my cabinet; host Deputy Leonard A. Heard; Sovereign Grand Inspectors General; Grand Inspectors General; the Samuel J.D. Shook Class of 2022, other Sublime Princes; good morning.

Let me begin by acknowledging and thanking our invited guests for your attendance and I welcome all to the United Supreme Council's 141st Annual Session and 47th Triennial. Thanks to God, we are meeting in person for the first time in three years to conduct the constitutionally required business of the United Supreme Council, Northern Jurisdiction and give an update on our stewardship over the preceding year.

As custom requires before embarking upon any laudable undertaking, I ask the Illustrious Grand Prior to bring us boldly before the throne of grace that we might obtain mercy and receive His blessings.

Necrology

Since we last met, the grim reaper has called out to 79 fraters, including 12 Sovereign Grand Inspectors General. They have folded up their tents and have sought eternal rest. While we miss them, we are not saddened by their absence because we know that if this earthly house of this tabernacle be destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven. And we know that to be absent from the body is to be present with the lord. We paid tribute to them at our Sunday memorial service. We give thanks to them, their families and God for their service not only to Masonry, but to the communities where they lived and worked.

State of the Nation

While we continue to manage against the negative impacts of the coronavirus, the state of the nation, as it pertains to COVID-19, is markedly better than it has been over the previous 2 years. The rates of infections, hospitalizations and deaths are all trending downward. With that being said, we must remain diligent by getting vaccinated and boosted. This is the only safeguard against hospitalizations and deaths of not if, but when a new variant arrives.

I am also pleased to report that there has been a marked improvement in the negative economic impacts of the virus. Unemployment rates are at the lowest in years and jobs are plentiful. We are now beginning to socialize with families and friends and return to some sense of normalcy. However, everything is not good as inflation has begun to negatively impact the purchasing power of all Americans. Everything from food to gasoline has

increased thereby offsetting the marginal increases in wages. This impacts those least able to bear the burden, those living paycheck to paycheck.

While those living on the margins of society are suffering, politicians are once again championing the efficacy of balanced budgets now that tax breaks for the rich are firmly secured.

Therefore, we must remain steadfast in ensuring that no one is left behind as we continue our economic rebound. The ravages of homelessness, hunger and lack of proper healthcare are untenable in this, the richest country in the world.

Even more tragic is the recurring instances of men and women of color losing their lives over what seems to be senseless escalations of routine encounters with law enforcement officers. The latest incident being the shooting of Patrick Lyoya in Grand Rapids, Michigan. How can it be that a person loses their life because the plates on a vehicle don't match the registration? Is one man's life so devalued in the eyes of another that they can't see these men are human beings with hopes, dreams, and aspirations? I ask the question, where is the moral outrage over these killings?

Extremism in any form is antithetical to the very ethos and ideals upon which this nation was established. The recent senseless killing of 10 and wounding of 3 innocent people in Buffalo, New York by a demented individual adhering to an extremist ideology while live streaming his heinous actions is symptomatic of this.

In the political arena, there is still a political divide that threatens the very fabric of our democracy. Therefore, we must remain diligent in protecting the constitutional rights of citizens to vote against the forces of interposition and nullification that are hard at work to suppress our sacred franchise to participate in the democratic process. There is no better evidence of the corrosiveness impacting the political discourse than the recent attacks on the character of United States Circuit Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson during her Supreme Court confirmation hearings. On the other hand, the mere fact that she was nominated and confirmed as the first African-American female Associate Justice to the United States Supreme Court affirms the greatness of our nation. For Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminded us that "...the arch of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." Yes, change takes a long time, but it does happen.

Also, I am equally proud of our great nation as the arsenal of democracy as we lead the coalition of countries in support of the Ukrainian government in its fight against the tyranny of Russian aggression.

As we enter the 47th Triennial of our Supreme Council, my hope is anchored in Romans 8: 38-39 which reads,

"...for I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

State of the Order

Thanks to you, our entire membership. As we enter the 141st Annual Session and 47th Triennial of the United Supreme Council AASR (PHA) NJ, the state of our order is strong. You and the leadership, both elected and appointed, have been working tirelessly on behalf of our organization to operationalize the USC Strategic Plan and carry on the day-to-day operations in this most difficult time.

In addition, I am encouraged by the continuing camaraderie found within the Masonic order. In fact, I submit that the country as a whole could learn tolerance by following our example. Recognition is continuing to be extended between AF&AM Grand Lodges and Prince Hall Grand Lodges. And as evidenced by their attendance at our Annual Session, the bond between the 4 legitimate Supreme Councils located in the United States is as strong as ever. An example of this bond was recently displayed in Washington, DC where at the invitation of Sovereign Grand Commander Hawkins, the 4 Sovereign Grand Commanders laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier. We also were invited by Sovereign Grand Commander Peter Samiec to the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction's opening of their Scottish Rite Hall of Fame Museum where prominent African American masons were inducted into their Hall of Fame. Lastly, at the direction of Sovereign Grand Commander James D. Cole, Southern Jurisdiction, the portraits of both Sovereign Grand Commander Hawkins and I are prominently displayed in the House of the Temple in Washington, DC. We are all scheduled to meet in June to discuss how we can partner together to enhance the Scottish Rite mission.

USC Elected Officers and Administrative Staff

I thank the elected officers for rallying around the USC banner during these unprecedented times. Each of you did an outstanding job in carrying out your assignments and responsibilities.

To Lieutenant Grand Commander Sidney Broadnax, Jr., thank you for your leadership in monitoring our corporate entities as Vice Chairman of the Board for the Fitzwater and Scottish Rite Development Corporations. Both the Scottish Rite House and Scottish Rite Tower are operating at full capacity. At our board of directors meeting on April 12, the board of directors remained the same as no 3 year terms expired. However, we did elect SGIG John M. Bettis to a 3-year term to both the Fitzwater and Scottish Rite Development boards as well as to the Supreme Council Benevolent Foundation Board. In addition, all officers were re-elected to succeed themselves.

To Illustrious Grand Minister of State, William Stark, thank you for leading our efforts to reimagine and reorganize our annual convention experience and for your service on our corporate boards.

Thanks to our fiscal officers, Treasurer General of the Holy Empire Roland K. Lee and Secretary General of the Holy Empire Edward M. Brooks II. Your outstanding stewardship of overseeing the day-to-day business of the Supreme Council is invaluable. Without your service, it would be practically impossible for me as chief executive to carry out my responsibilities.

Thanks to our Grand Recording Secretary Daniel Poole. Your significant role in leading our day-to-day implementation of the USC strategic planning committee initiatives is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your wise counsel.

To our Cathedral Secretary Raynard Hughes, thank you for being our liaison to both the Scottish Rite House, Scottish Rite Tower and the Human Good Organization, which is the

professional management team for both entities. Also, thank you for maintaining and overseeing our Cathedral headquarters building. The renovations and enhancements of our property is outstanding, and I encourage all who have not had the opportunity to visit your headquarters to do so.

Going into the new triennial, we will be naming the dining area located in the Cathedral, the Scottish Rite Legacy Room and providing individual classes an opportunity towards its upkeep. For a specific contribution to be determined, the class will be honored by having their names placed on a plaque to be permanently displayed in a prominent area of the Legacy Room as a contributing class. More information will be forthcoming on this initiative. This is in addition to the Scottish Rite Walk of Fame, which is an ongoing initiative for both individuals and classes who want to honor themselves and their loved ones.

To the Illustrious Deputy-at-Large, Sovereign Grand Inspector General Edward B. Darnell, your service to the United Supreme Council, generally, and to me, personally, has been second to none. You have stood in the gap and provided valuable counsel and advice on a myriad of issues and for this I am eternally grateful. Thanks to both you and Sovereign Grand Inspector General Adam C. Jones for filling in for me as we officially separated the Errol Walton Barrow Consistory #109, the Rising Sun House of Rose Croix #109 and the St. John Lodge of Perfection #109 from the Orient of New York and established the Orient for the Caribbean in Bridgetown, Barbados on April 26, 2022. Further on April 26, 2022, 46 master masons were initiated into the Errol Walton Barrow Consistory #109 bringing the total membership to 70. To Most Worshipful Brother Claude Jackman, thanks to you and the fraters of Barbados for your petition and welcome to Scottish Rite Masonry. We look forward to working with you and the fraters of the Orient for the Caribbean.

As a matter of fact, the email I received from Deputy-at-Large Darnell immediately following the formation is "...you have opened a can of worms. These brothers are so overjoyed, excited, and whatever adjectives you can think of over what you just did. They are already plotting on St. Lucia, Antigua, and some adjoining islands of creating another two consistories to serve their area. Furthermore, the Grand Master is inquiring on how they can have a Golden Circle". These are the types of problems I don't mind having. Once again, great job!

To Illustrious Deputy Grady Edge, Deputy for the Orient of New York, thank you and the fraters of New York for the service and guidance you have provided to Errol W. Barrow Consistory over the years, without which, they may not have sustained the ability for their ultimate separation and independence.

Lastly, to the dedicated staff of the United Supreme Council, without whose help we could not be successful in conducting the administrative business of our organization. Thanks to Mrs. Renee Issac, Ms. Deborah Miles and Mr. Trevor Young for a job well done. Your untiring efforts on behalf of the United Supreme Council is greatly appreciated and unmatched.

Acknowledgement of Deputies

I applaud the outstanding job done by our Deputies for the Orients owing their allegiance to the USC, NJ. As you did last year, you have been diligent in focusing your energy and attention on those things within your control while trying to mitigate against those things beyond your control.

During the national suspension of in-person meetings, you maintained open lines of communication with the membership. Kudos to all of you for a job well done! Your reports on the quarterly zoom meetings with the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General and Grand Inspectors General and successful Council of Deliberation meetings is evidence of your successful efforts.

In addition, the quarterly reports and other required communications with headquarters were timely received. Also, for the most part, you enthusiastically supported your membership in joining the different strategic planning committees.

Also, I want to thank all the corporate board members, standing committee chairmen and the Sovereign Grand Inspectors General and Grand Inspectors General who serve on those committees for your dedication in reporting on the constitutionally required work of the United Supreme Council. All of you have done an outstanding job of unselfish service in fulfilling your reporting responsibilities on the activities of the Rite.

To our Convention Director, Sovereign Grand Inspector General Carl Williams and the entire team who have managed to pull off another successful annual session, thank you.

Finally, to the person I spend more time with than my family, my Aide-de-Camp and Chief of Security, Sovereign Grand Inspector General Roy Mays, thank you for all you do.

Strategic Plan

In 2019, I asked you to support our vision to become the premiere Supreme Council in Scottish Rite Masonry by joining me in taking a journey on USC Flight #2019. At that time, we had no idea of the turbulence we would encounter with the headwinds of COVID-19.

But, thanks to you, the fraters and loyal ladies of the United Supreme Council Northern Jurisdiction, we have been successful in implementing the vision of securing the future by enhancing the Scottish Rite experience, by being United in Service and Commitment through Action, Accountability and Sustainable Results.

Despite those unforeseen obstacles, thanks to you, much has been accomplished during the 46th Triennial. There are far too many successes to speak on all of them, but I will mention just a few.

- **Lifetime Membership Initiative:** The initial phase of the Lifetime Membership Program resulted in 224 charter lifetime members and raised \$560,000.00. In fact, the program was so successful, I am pleased to announce based upon the many requests from many of you for an opportunity to become lifetime members, that Phase 2 of the Lifetime Membership Program will be reopened. The next window for joining the lifetime membership will open January 1, 2023 and will remain open until September 2023. The cost will be \$2,800.00. The pandemic and supply chain effects on goods has forced us to increase the cost of membership. Thank you Sovereign Grand Inspector General Wayne Phillips and the lifetime membership committee for the work they have done in leading this initiative. I look forward to

welcoming many more of you into the ranks of lifetime membership during our next annual session.

- **United Supreme Council Fundraisers:** Once again we were successful in conducting the USC Annual Raffle that raised over \$65,000.00 and gave away \$20,000.00 worth of prizes. Thank you to all who participated and know that the revenue generated by this initiative are used to support United Supreme Council facility operations and other strategic initiatives. Thank you Sovereign Grand Inspector General Johnny Cummings and your team for all your fundraising activities.
- **United Supreme Council Walk of Fame Paver Project:** Congratulations and thanks to all who purchased a paver in the United Supreme Council Walk of Fame. The new pavers have been installed at the Cathedral and are available for your viewing. Your contributions to this initiative allowed us to make extensive renovations to our bathrooms, dining area and outside landscaping at the Cathedral.
- **United Supreme Council Cradle to College Initiative:** While COVID-19 has curtailed our ability to expand this program, the Cradle to College Mentoring Program remains one of our signature initiatives. With the loosening of COVID restrictions we will once again reach out to our youth and prepare them for future opportunities. Thank you Sovereign Grand Inspector General Horace Jackson for leading this initiative and the Deputies for your participation.
- **USC Order of the Golden Circle Working Group:** The Golden Circle Working Group was successful in fulfilling several action items, including revisions to the constitution, rituals and by-laws for the Order of the Golden Circle. In addition, several fundraising actions were developed. We now have a beautiful Order of the Golden Circle tee shirt designed specifically by the ladies of the Golden Circle available for purchase. Thanks to the ladies who serve on this committee and to Sovereign Grand Inspector General Darnell, and Sovereign Grand Inspector General Webb, chairman of the Committee on Golden Circle as well as the Deputies for the Orients who make up this team for leading this effort.
- **United Supreme Council Veterans Committee:** Last year, the United Supreme Council entered into a partnership with the nonprofit Operation: Job Ready Veterans and yielded immediate success by bringing services to 138 of our members in need. Realizing that more could be done for our members and families with military service backgrounds in our diverse communities, a Veteran's Resource Committee was established. This committee has been constructed from numerous Orients and comprised of various ranks from both men and women that represent the Scottish Rite family. The subject matter experts that make up the Veteran's Resource Committee continue to aid and offer advice in areas such as Veterans Administration claims, legislation, benefits, women veterans and employment. The United Supreme Council remains committed to serve hundreds of more individuals and families in the upcoming year. Thank you, committee chair Sovereign Grand Inspector General Eugene Anderson and your entire team for a job well done.
- **United Supreme Council Scottish Rite Reflections Project:** We are pleased to announce that the second edition of *Scottish Rite Reflections* is now available for sale. Volume 2 is an outstanding compilation of very informative essays and interviews that will definitely enhance the libraries of any person who purchases it.

Thanks to Sovereign Grand Inspector General Daryl Andrews and his editorial team, Sovereign Grand Inspectors General Reginald Stewart, James Mitchell, Grand Inspectors General Charles Holiday Jr., Demetrius Williams, Reiss Byrd and Sublime Prince Stephen Barrett. This volume is dedicated in honor of Sovereign Grand Inspector General Charles Hales who served our USC for many years and contains many interesting articles by many contributors.

- **Street Renaming:** On Saturday, May 28, 2022, during our Community Relations Health Fair event, we were honored by the city of Philadelphia to have the street located in front of our headquarters and the Scottish Rite House/Scottish Rite Tower, renamed “United Supreme Council Way”. This honor was bestowed in recognition of the significant contributions of the United Supreme Council, AASR, PHA, NJ to the nation, as a whole, and Philadelphia, specifically. We are thankful to the city of Philadelphia for this honor. Thank you to community relations chair Sovereign Grand Inspector General Charles Ayler, Grand Inspector General Kenyatta D. Donley and the entire community outreach team for leading this activity.

Building Upon the Vision - 2022 and Beyond

While much was accomplished during the 46th Triennial, we are not resting on our laurels, but instead shall continue to build upon our successes.

We shall continue to focus, both externally and internally, on remaining relevant to both our membership and the communities in which we operate.

Externally, we will educate our communities via Scottish Rite Policy Symposia on the importance and significance of understanding and preparing for the new public policy realities. This includes identifying and partnering with other social justice and public policy organizations. It also means developing relationships with public policy officials at the local, state and national level.

For as Scottish Rite masons, one of our obligations is uniting all masons of all Rites and degrees together over the face of the earth for the purpose of producing peace, harmony, and concert of action against the enemies of superstition, fanaticism, sectarianism and bigotry.

Internally, we will continue to enhance the Scottish Rite experience by aligning our organizational structure to match our strategic plan. The key component will be identifying the people who can best work and agree. Matching skill sets with the strategic objectives is critical to obtaining success. Included in this process will be:

- Evaluating team member effectiveness in implementing the vision;
- Preparing for a transitional period and making changes in personnel where appropriate;
- Requiring appointed officers to identify and prepare future leaders;
- Developing an inclusive communication cadence that encourages all members to participate;
- Refreshing of our website and communications vehicles to continue to align with our 2022 vision of enhancing the Scottish Rite experience;
- Reinvesting in our Cradle to College programs by endowing Historically Black Colleges and Universities, and continuing our local scholarship efforts;

- Establishing a social justice and civic action committee to support efforts within the communities that we serve;
- Creating a national health initiative to support the physical and mental wellness of the members within our communities; and
- Establishing and codifying universal administrative best practices across the USC Northern Jurisdiction.

As part of this strategic shift, I am recommending to the Active membership that Active members who have served for 3 consecutive triennials be allowed to wear a gold ribbon instead of red when reclassified to Active Emeritus. This will acknowledge the significant contributions of our Active team members and distinguish those who actually served from those who are immediately reclassified to emeritus status once coronated. The distinction will be retroactive to include those active members who served 3 consecutive triennial and are currently Active Emeritus.

Another significant change will be the opportunity for Sublime Princes to officially attend United Supreme Council sessions. This will enable them to understand and experience to a greater extent what Scottish Rite Masonry is about. I believe that the greatest recruiters of Sublime Princes are other Sublime Princes. Let's equip them with the tools to operate. Outside of activities related to the 33rd Degree, and the official opening of session; all other activities such as non-33rd Degree symposia, community activities, lunches, dinners, church and memorial services will be open for their active participation.

Another significant action item for the 47th Triennial is the establishment of the United Supreme Council Education and Development Department. The vision is to be recognized as a premier service department of the USC providing meaningful education and the promotion of lifelong learning. It will be responsible to the Dean of Instructions for:

- Developing all class lectures, poems, prose and other educational materials;
- Standardizing all lectures that includes text, graphics and presentations;
- Developing a logical education plan that guides the candidates through the necessary knowledge to become effective Grand Inspectors General;
- Creating and developing quality learning content;
- Ensuring all training lectures follow design and development standards set by the Dean of Instruction; and
- Ensuring the accurate translation of learning objectives into teaching materials.

The department will also provide operations support as follows:

- Being responsible to the Dean of Instruction for the overall operations of the orientation class;
- Establishing metrics and guidelines by which the department's efficiency and effectiveness can be evaluated;
- Reviewing, analyzing, and evaluating the department's policies and procedures;
- Communicating and explaining new directives, policies, or procedures to team members; and
- Leading coordination and integration of efforts among operations, logistics and content development.

The creation of this department is already in process led by Sovereign Grand Inspector General Dwayne Thomas and the Dean of Instruction, Sovereign Grand Inspector General Robert Meekins.

These are just a few of the new initiatives along with those already in process, that will be continued and implemented going into the new triennial.

Initiatives that were conceptualized, but not implemented in the last triennium due to a full trestle board, will be actualized beginning this year.

In fact, symposia on two of those carryover programs, the Planned Giving/Financial Planning and Share the Love Initiatives, were held during this Annual Session. If you were unable to attend those symposia, I encourage you to learn more about these two very important programs which are key to our financial sustainability.

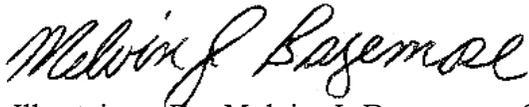
So, as you can see, there is plenty of work for those who want to continue to enhance the Scottish Rite experience.

Closing Remarks

Let me end by congratulating the Samuel J.D. Shook Class of 2022 on your elevation to the 33rd Degree. In being elevated, your journey is not over, but has only began. I encourage you to roll up your sleeves and help make this United Supreme Council the organization of which we can all be proud.

“Let’s go to work!”

Fraternally Yours in the Rite,



Illustrious Dr. Melvin J. Bazemore, 33^o
Sovereign Grand Commander