

Allocution

Honorable Chester C. Christie
64th Most Worshipful Grand Master

171st Grand Communication
of the

**Most Worshipful Prince Hall
Grand Lodge of Ohio
Free and Accepted Masons**



**Building on the Firm Foundation
of our
Historic legacy**

Saturday, August 29, 2020





The Most Worshipful

PRINCE HALL GRAND LODGE OF OHIO

.....Free and Accepted Masons.....

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“Building on The Firm Foundation of Our Historic Legacy

Grand Master’s Allocution, 171st Annual Communication

August 29, 2020

To: RW Deputy Grand Master Jerry R. Ellerson, RW SGW Robert M. Estelle, Jr. RWJGW Maurio D. Powell, RWGT Charles V. Williams, III, RWGS Melvin L. Russell, RWGTAL Robert H. Carpenter, RWGT, MWPGM Kelvin J. Davis, RW Grand Attorney Alvertis W. Bishop, GLDF Committee Members, MWPGMs PGMs, Appointed Grand Lodge Officers, Worshipful Masters, Past Masters, Wardens, and Members of the MWPHGL of Ohio, GWP Bro. Gregory Allen, and all of the Prince Hall Family of Appendant, Concordant, and affiliated Bodies; Good Morning.

Proverbs Chapter 3, v 5-6 says “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to thine own understanding, in all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy path”. This is one of my favorite passages of scripture and it has been the rule and guide for all of my undertakings. Therefore let us do as all Masons should do before entering upon any great or important undertaking. Let us invoke the blessings of the Great Architect of the Universe. MW Brother Rev. Dr. James H. Willis, Sr please lead us in prayer.

Once Again, Fraternal greetings to all assembled. It is with a deep sense of humility, honor, pride, and privilege that I come before you this morning to provide a report of my stewardship.

State of the Nation and World

Beginning in early 2020 the world was exposed to the ravages of what has proven to be one of the most devastatingly deadly pandemics, the likes of which none of us has seen in our lifetime and the world has not seen in over a Century.

The Novel Coronavirus COVID-19 has plagued our nation. Unfortunately, the lack of focus on science, and the lack of Federal leadership in designing a robust, centralized national plan to contain the spread of the virus has been physically, economically, and emotionally devastating for our state and nation and has negatively impacted our education system at all levels. Many of our members and their loved ones have been directly impacted by loss of employment, illness, hospitalization, and unfortunately, in some cases, loss of life. Due to the total ineptitude, incompetence, and utter lack of concern for the welfare, safety, and well-being of anyone other than himself, the occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. and those who do his bidding, have been responsible for the most ineffective and disastrous response to the Pandemic resulting in the horrific loss of upwards of 200,000 lives in the United States of America. (let us pause for a brief moment of silence in honor of those whom we have lost due to complications from COVID-19)

Unfortunately, our nation has faced a period of double-jeopardy. We thought we were only battling the novel COVID-19 Coronavirus that has ravaged the nation and world, especially African Americans and other people of color. But, if that wasn't enough, at the same time we found ourselves again facing the not so novel social Pandemic of Systemic and Institutional racism, discrimination, bigotry and hatred that we as a people have fought for centuries. It was vividly brought back to our collective conscience by the senseless and horrific murder of George Floyd at the hands of Law Enforcement in Minneapolis, MN.

But we as a People and as a Masonic Family know that through God all things are possible and that he has promised in his word that he will never leave us or forsake us. We trusted God, sought his direction, and had the faith to be obedient to his will and allow him to direct our path. As a result, I believe that we will not just survive the Coronavirus but will be better for having gone through this experience. I also firmly believe that God is leading us to a breakthrough regarding the other Pandemic of Systemic racism.

I could not be prouder of the Ohio Prince Hall Masonic Family and our response, by the Grace of God, to all that both Pandemics have presented us (This will be addressed in more detail under state of the Order)

I thank God for his many blessings and I thank our Grand Chaplain, the Associate Grand Chaplains, and our Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance for their prayers, their spiritual guidance and encouragement, and for reminding us of God's promise and for equipping us for the challenges ahead.

We have a phenomenal opportunity in less than 90 days to address the incompetence previously referenced in this section. We face the most consequential election in our lifetime on November 3, 2020.

On July 17, 2020 we lost two "Founding Fathers" and "Icons" of the Civil Rights Movement; Hon. Bro. John R. Lewis and Rev. Dr. C.T. Vivian, who fought and often times bled to secure so many of the rights and privileges that we as a people have acquired as a result of the movement. We also lost another "Icon", Hon. Bro. Elijah Cummings On October 17, 2019.

These men spoke out and often times risked their lives in order that America might live up to the promises guaranteed to All Men that are embedded in its Constitution.

We mourn their passing, but we will never forget their leadership, their contributions, and the extraordinary Legacies they have left for us to build upon.

If we are to truly honor the lives of these Men, it is imperative that we fulfill that which they fought on our behalf to obtain:

We must ensure that every member of every Lodge and Chapter in our Jurisdiction is registered to vote.

We must then Exercise that Right to Vote!

We must fight to ensure the full restoration of the Voting Rights Act.

We must advocate for and support measures to combat Voter Suppression.

We must consistently speak out against and fight institutional racism

State of the Order

In response to the “shelter in place mandates and other social distancing protocols established by Governor Michael DeWine and State and Local Health Agencies in order to contain the spread of the COVID-19 Coronavirus, subordinate Lodges of the MWPHGL of Ohio were closed and in-person meetings were suspended effective March 24, 2020.

As a result of the suspension of in-person meetings and in order to ensure that the transaction of lodge business and communications among the craft continued, I authorized the implementation of virtual meetings via conference-call, Zoom, or other available remote platforms beginning in April 2020. A set of guidelines were developed as well as a meeting agenda and protocol template. I want to thank the Trustees, Grand Lecturer, Deputy Grand Lecturers, Chief Administrative Officer and District Administrative Officers, particularly RW Tony J. Dye for all their creative input into the development of this template that has been utilized effectively by the Lodges.

I have had the honor and privilege of being on virtual meeting calls or Zoom conferences with 43 of our 47 Lodges. (the specific dates are enumerated in my list of activities) The Communication has been extraordinary under the circumstances, in spite of the restraints and limitations imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Most Lodges reported that the participation of the Brothers has increased since a number of members who had been unable to attend in-person meetings due to restricted driving, physical immobility, or various other reasons were able to participate by conference-call and once again felt that they were active participants in the Lodge.

I want to applaud the Worshipful Masters for your Leadership and for your open-mindedness and flexibility to quickly adapt to a new way of doing business temporarily (we pray!) I also want to thank the Craft for your steadfast commitment and your support of the

Worshipful Masters and line Officers. Virtual communication has enabled us to stay connected, to handle the business of the Lodge to the best of our ability, and has facilitated our ability to reach out to our elderly and vulnerable members and our widows.

It has also enabled us to continue to communicate, plan, and find creative ways to reach out to our communities safely while observing social distancing protocols and wearing face coverings. We have continued to let our light to shine in the community through “Acts of Kindness” to those in need and to first responders and front line service providers.

I thank and commend the Brethren for their tangible demonstration of one of the fundamental tenets of Freemasonry; Charity and Benevolence, through the many “Acts of Kindness” throughout the Jurisdiction. In particular I want to commend Dr. Keith Melvin for developing and operating a free COVID-19 drive thru testing site in collaboration with Rev. Damon Lynch, III and Mercy Hospital, serving just under 5,000 patients. I also want to thank and commend RWSGW Robert M. Estelle, Jr. for his enthusiastic promotion of this outreach and his coordination of the effort to capture and chronicle these activities.

Even though many Lodges have enjoyed some level of success as described in the preceding paragraphs, the suspension of in-person meetings and limitations on mass gatherings significantly impacted the ability of most Lodges to generate revenue through fundraisers or otherwise. In light of these considerations, the Grand Lodge Trustees elected to authorize each Lodge to waive one quarter of per-capita tax payments to the Grand Lodge. It is our prayer that this decision aided the fiscal solvency of the Lodges during the past year.

In addition to the Virtual meetings of Subordinate Lodges, our Annual Observance of St. John the Baptist Day was held virtually in each District on June 28, 2020. The Annual meeting of the Prince Hall Scholarship Foundation Selection Committee and the Annual meeting of the Scholarship Foundation Board were conducted via Zoom Conference on June 20th and August 15th respectively. The Trustees of the MWPHGL of Ohio and several Brothers were able to join the GW Matron, the Trustees and Grand Deputies of Amaranth Grand Chapter in the celebration of Esther Day on June 14, 2020.

I want to commend and congratulate MEGHP Darryl R. Smith and the Trustees of the MEPHGC, RAM on their historic and very successful virtual Grand Convocation which was convened on July 25, 2020. I also congratulate MICIC, SGIG Carl A. Williams on his virtual meetings with the SGIGs and GIGs throughout the Orient. Kudos to all on a job very well done.

These are just a few examples of how we have utilized available technology to enable us to continue the business of our Lodges and other Houses in Masonry while also fulfilling many of our sacred and time-honored observances. I truly believe that even after returning to in-person meetings, we will continue to utilize available technology to facilitate the efficient operation of our Order. If we fail to do so we will be missing the boat on a tremendous opportunity that God has opened to us.

Actions in Support of Racial Justice and Equity

Communities across Ohio and throughout the U S were united in outrage at the horrific and senseless killing of George Floyd at the hands of Law Enforcement in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This and similar acts of brutality continually inflicted upon Black Men with impunity are a reflection of the abject racism that has infested and ravaged our communities for centuries.

The protests we have seen throughout Ohio over the past several months are a manifestation of our anger, sadness and frustration stemming from the oppression and injustices systematically imposed upon us as a people and the total disregard for the sanctity of Black Lives.

In the wake of the murder of George Floyd, I issued a statement condemning the acts of brutality that led to his death. **As the Conservator of Prince Hall Freemasonry in this Jurisdiction, and out of respect for the principles upon which Prince Hall Founded our Beloved Order, I further pledged to consistently speak out against and fight institutional racism with whatever resources we have at our disposal.**

In furtherance of this pledge, Master Masons in virtually every District throughout this Jurisdiction engaged in peaceful protests, marches and assemblies (in Masonic Dress) in support of Racial Justice and Equity and against discriminatory Policing practices and other racial disparities. All was done decently and in order consistent with Directive CCC 2020-3.

I was also afforded the opportunity to present Proponent Testimony before the Ohio Senate in support of Senate Resolution 14 declaring Racism a Public Health Crisis and mandating remedial action by the Governor and Legislature. This Resolution was sponsored by Senators Hearcel Craig (St. Mark's #7), Cecil Thomas (Gothic #122) and Vernon Sykes (Mount Calvary #76).

I am proud of the actions taken by the Craft consistent with, and out of respect for, the principles upon which Prince Hall founded our beloved order. While we continue to pray for the Floyd family and pray that Justice prevails, it is also my fervent prayer that God will keep us steadfast in our efforts to do our part to eradicate injustice and discrimination.

Voter Awareness/Voter Education

The Voter Awareness/ Voter education Committee has been one of the most active and engaged Committees during the past year. They have done an extraordinary job of ensuring that both the Craft and the communities we serve were provided valuable and timely information on absentee voting and all other aspects of exercising the sacred right to vote. Their efforts were especially commendable in light of social distancing and other requirements imposed by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The fruits of their labor were harvested when PM Fanon Rucker and Sis. Alecia Reese won primary victories in their races for Hamilton County Prosecutor and Hamilton County Commissioner respectively.

This Committee continues to work diligently to ensure that we honor the legacy of the Hon. Bro. John R. Lewis by having an historic turnout in the most consequential election of our lifetime and by fighting continuing efforts to suppress our votes. Let us fervently heed their call and support their efforts. Hats off to Brothers Joseph Clark, Harold Wilson and David Whitehead and the entire Committee.

Scholarship Foundation Fundraiser

This year's Scholarship Foundation Fundraiser was a tremendous success. The Fundraiser Committee, ably chaired by RW Gary Hairston and supported by the RW District Deputies and Administrative Officers, did an extraordinary job under some of the most challenging circumstances. The campaign successfully raised in excess of \$44,000.00 during a time when the need of our recipients and their families was at its greatest. I thank the Craft for your untiring and laudable efforts in support of the Prince Hall Scholarship Foundation.

Pandemic Cancellations

Regrettably, the COVID-19 Coronavirus Pandemic resulted in the cancellation of most of our traditional State, Regional, and National Masonic meetings. These cancellations included: the Midwest Regional Conference of Grand Masters, U S Conference of Grand Masters, United Supreme Council, AASR, NJ, USA, Inc., Imperial Council, AEAONMS, and the Annual Grand Communication of several Jurisdictions.

I commend GIG Robert M. Estelle, Jr. and the Ohio Council of Deliberation Degree Team for all their hard work in planning and preparing for the United Supreme Council session that was scheduled to convene in the Orient of Ohio, Valley of Cincinnati.

The virus also resulted in the cancellation of the Mid-Year Grand Lodge Workshop, all District Meetings, and the Grand Session of the Order of Pythagorans and Girls Assembly. Unfortunately these events were just not in God's plan. It is our prayer that his grace and mercy and his divine providence will permit our resumption of these visitations and meetings in the not too distant future.

Worshipful Masters' Conference Calls

In light of the many cancellations of Statewide and Regional meetings as well as the absence of District meetings and workshops, I felt it was imperative that I convene Conference calls with the Worshipful Masters of all the Subordinate Lodges and the RW Deputy Grand Lecturers and Administrative Officers. Three such calls were held. This helped to ensure consistency and clarity of the designs upon the Grand Lodge Trestle Board and provided a forum for Worshipful Masters to address issues and concerns.

Resolution

A Resolution to amend Article 5 Section 3 of the Grand Lodge Constitution, in the manner prescribed in Chapter 15, Section 15.08 of the Masonic Code will be introduced during this Grand Communication. This Resolution will provide the necessary Constitutional Authority to convene future virtual Grand Communications should the necessity dictate. As stated in the Resolution, "We have the opportunity and we must seize it, to prepare for those situations we have the ability to prepare for."

Recommendations

My recommendations are as follows:

1. Retain membership in the Midwest Conference of Grand Masters
2. Retain membership in the U S Conference of Grand Masters
3. Adopt the Resolution to amend Article 5 Section 3 of the Grand Lodge Constitution in the manner prescribed in Chapter, Section 15.08 of the Masonic Code.

Closing Remarks

In closing, I thank the Trustees for their support and assistance during the past Masonic year. The Trustees have done an exemplary job in the performance of their duties under some of the most challenging circumstances imaginable. I also commend the GLDF Committee for their outstanding stewardship of the Grand Lodge Real Estate and Investment resources. I thank the MWPGMs for their support and their wise Counsel throughout the year. Each of our District Deputy Grand Lecturers has done an extraordinary job of managing the activities of their districts and the many challenges presented during the Pandemic with the able assistance of the Administrative Officers. And, I thank each of you my Brothers for your ingenuity, fidelity, fervency and zeal as you endeavor to fulfill the designs upon the Trestleboard of this MWPHGL of Ohio. I thank my Family for their continued love and support. I thank God for his grace and

mercy and for the privilege of serving this Grand Lodge as we endeavor together to Build Upon the Firm Foundation of our Historic Legacy. A summary of my activities and visitations is attached.

God Bless each of you and your families and this Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge of Ohio

Respectfully and Fraternally,

Chester C. Christie

Chester C. Christie, PM #7

64th Most Worshipful Grand Master

Summary of Activities and Visitations

AUGUST:

4th thru 7th Annual Communication of the MWPHGL of Ohio
18th thru 22nd, Imperial Council, Baltimore, MD.
24th Grand Lodge Calendar Planning Meeting, Columbus, OH
24th Deputy Grand Lecturers' Meeting, Columbus, OH

SEPTEMBER:

8th Prince Hall and Americanism Day, Columbus, OH
9th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
14th King David Lodge #116 BBQ Fundraiser
15th L D Easton Commanders of the Rite Meeting
19th Ionic Lodge #6, Lodge Hall dedication, Chillicothe, OH
23rd GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
25th Midwest Conference of Grand Masters Conference call
27th Gothic Lodge #122 Annual Master's Banquet, Cincinnati
30th Deputy Grand Lecturers' Conference Call

OCTOBER:

5th Mirage Club Masquerade Ball, Mansfield, OH

7th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
12th William T. Boyd #79, Awards Dinner Dance, Cleveland
13th thru 15th MWPHGL of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia
17th thru 19th Grand Lodge of Ohio, Annual Communication
19th St. Mark's Lodge #7, Fish Fry, Columbus
21st ^{GL} Trustees Conference Call Meeting
25th thru 27th Ohio Council of Deliberation, Cincinnati
26th State Grand Loyal Lady Ruler's Banquet, Cincinnati, OH

NOVEMBER: 4th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
15th thru 17th MWGM Chester C. Christie Recognition Banquet
18th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
27th Midwest Conference of Grand Masters Conference Call 24th 27th
Deputy Grand Lecturers' Conference Call
29th thru 30th Amer Temple/Court Joint Ball, Dayton, OH

DECEMBER: 2nd GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
3rd St. Mark's Lodge #7 Stated Meeting, Columbus, OH
6th thru 7th MWPHGL of Massachusetts Annual Comm., Boston 10th thru
11th MWPHGL Dist. of Columbia Annual Communication
14th 3rd Masonic District Holiday Food Basket Program
14th Alla Baba Temple Children's Christmas Party
15th St. John the Evangelist Day, Columbus, OH
15th 3rd Masonic District Past Master's Degree
15th Newly Elected Masters' Public Installation
16th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting

JANUARY: 4th Pythagorans' Advisors Workshop, Columbus, OH
6th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
11th Russell W. Pace P M Luncheon, Columbus, OH
12 Worshipful Masters Conference Call
15th Midwest Conference of Grand Masters Conference Call
17th P M John R. Smith Masonic Funeral Services, Dayton, OH
18th Deputies and Admin Officers Planning Meeting, Columbus
18th Pythagorans & Girls Assembly MLK Dinner Dance, Cincinnati
18th MWPGM Chester C. Pryor Birthday Celebration, Cincinnati

FEBRUARY: 3rd GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
8th Fourth Masonic District Black History Program, Dayton, OH
8th ^{Equity} Lodge # 121 Sweetheart Dance, Dayton, OH
13th Mentoring & Reintegration Program Committee Meeting
14th thru 16th Sinai Temple Potentate Ball Weekend, Cincinnati 17th GL
Trustees Conference Call Meeting

19th Congressional and House Candidates Forum, Columbus, OH 20th P M
Gayle Reed Masonic Funeral Services, Dayton,
22nd PM Edward Abercrombie Masonic Funeral Service
22nd Alla Baba Temple Potentate's Breakfast, Columbus
22nd thru 23rd Wilberforce Lodge #21 Anniversary Banquet, Xenia
23rd Black History Month Program, Cols. OH

MARCH:

2nd GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
16th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
24th Deputy Grand Lecturers' Conference Call
25th Midwest Conference of Grand Masters Conference Call
29th Worshipful Masters' Conference call

APRIL:

2nd Equity Lodge #121 Virtual Stated Meeting
2nd Phoenix Lodge #112 Virtual stated Meeting
2nd Pride of Ohio Lodge #80 Virtual Stated Meeting
6th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
6th Excelsior Lodge #11 Virtual Stated Meeting
7th St. Mark's Lodge #7 Virtual Stated Meeting
7th William T. Boyd Lodge #79 Virtual Stated Meeting
8th Elisha Lodge # 106 Virtual Stated Meeting
9th Mt. Calvary Lodge #76 Virtual Stated Meeting
11th Pride of the Valley Lodge #95 Virtual Meeting
11th Unity Lodge #115 Virtual Meeting
13th Wesley Smith Lodge #107 Virtual Meeting
16th Ionic Lodge #6 Virtual Meeting
17th Eureka Lodge # 52 Virtual Meeting
20th True American Lodge #2 Virtual Meeting
20th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
21st Edward Duggar Lodge #123 Virtual Meeting
22nd Hiram Abif Lodge #72 Virtual Meeting
24th Corinthian Lodge #1 Virtual Meeting
30th Grand Inspectors General Virtual Meeting

MAY:

1st St. John's Lodge #3 Virtual Stated Meeting

4th Champion Lodge # 15 Virtual Stated Meeting
4th Ancient York Lodge #33 Virtual Stated Meeting
4th Gothic Lodge #122 Virtual Stated Meeting
4th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
5th Trinity Lodge #9 Virtual stated Meeting
5th Menelik Lodge #74 Virtual Stated
5th Amazon Lodge # 4 Virtual Stated Meeting
6th Gloria Lodge #89 Virtual Stated Meeting
7th Prince Hall Lodge #42 Virtual Stated Meeting
7th King David Lodge #116 Virtual Stated Meeting
7th Euclid Lodge #97 Virtual Stated Meeting
10th Sidonia Lodge #93 Virtual Meeting
11th Grand Chaplain and IMA Conference Call
12th Mount Olive Lodge #66 Virtual Meeting
12th Union Lodge #18 Virtual Meeting
12th Ancient Square #40 Virtual Meeting
18th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
21st Samaritan Lodge #117 Virtual Meeting
21st Triedstone Lodge #83 Virtual Meeting

JUNE:

1st GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
2nd Grand Chaplain and IMA Conference Call
7th Men in Suits Racial Justice Protest March
14th O.E.S. Esther Day Virtual Observance
15st GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
16th Grand Chaplain and Associate Chaplains Prayer Session
17th Midwest Conference of Grand Masters Zoom Meeting
20th Prince Hall Scholarship Foundation Selection Meeting
20th Prince Hall Scholarship Foundation Board Meeting
24th Proponent Testimony before the Ohio Senate
28th MWPHGL of Ohio St. John's Day Virtual Observance

JULY:

6th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
13th Toussaint Lodge #19 Conference Call
16th Ecclesiastes Lodge #120 Virtual Meeting
16th Harmony Lodge #77 Virtual Meeting
16th Wilberforce Lodge # 21 Virtual Meeting
19th Progress Lodge #85 Virtual Meeting

20th GL Trustees Conference Call Meeting
20th Composite Lodge #108 Virtual Meeting
23rd Samuel W. Clark Lodge #67 Conference Call
25th Virtual Grand Convocation MEPHGC, HRAM
29th Grand Inspectors General Virtual Meeting