

97TH MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST
KEVIN L. ALEEM
ANNUAL ADDRESS 2022-2023



2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS
KEVIN L. ALEEM

Greetings My Companions!

First, giving thanks to the Omnipotent Love and Guidance of God the Father; He who has been the leading force of all efforts presented by this administration! Before undertaking any great task, we should first invoke the aid of deity. Chaplains, please go before the throne of grace and lead us in an opening prayer!

If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn't do it, it is sin for them. **James 4:17** (NIV)

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. **Galatians 6:9** (NIV)

Holiness to the Lord

Holiness to the Lord

Holiness to the Lord

To: The Most Worshipful Grand Master the Honorable Paul A Hibner, Right Excellent Deputy Grand High Priest Warren S. Montague, Right Excellent Grand King, Leroy T. Bunyon, Right Excellent Grand Scribe, Agoi Ombima, Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest, Right Excellent Elected and Appointed Grand Chapter Officers, Most Excellent High Priest, Excellent Kings, Excellent Scribes, Past Most Excellent High Priest and My Beloved Companions All! I again greet you!

I remain humble and grateful for the trust you reposed in me as the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons of Pennsylvania PHA! As your Grand High Priest, I come before you today with the purpose of reviewing all actions, accomplishments, services, heartbreaks, and setbacks that affect the state of Holy Royal Arch Masonry in Pennsylvania and show all business that has come before this Grand Chapter.

This Capitular year we started with a theme of the 3R'S. Renew our Spirit-Restore our Purpose & Reclaim the Grandeur of being a Holy Royal Arch Mason. That theme continues to be the ultimate focus, yet it took the 3A'S, Assessment, Adjustment & Achievement to pursue those lofty goals.

Therefore, pursuant to The Constitution (latest revision dated October 27, 2002) and The Ritual (latest revision dated 2002) the governing documents for all functions within this Most Excellent Grand Chapter, let us begin!

Necrology

They have left us now and ventured to God's place! We keep their words love and affection and will never forget their face! From the poem Libations, Through a Blackmans Eyes.

Last evening, we paid our last respects to those Companions who have been touched by that dread messenger. This brings to mind the many travels, side by side, the love, the stories told, and labors shared while they were here! I will now speak the names of our departed one last time-

- a) Clyde Gainey SR. #1 b) John Smith #4 c) Thomas Robinson # 9 d) Anthony Robinson #9
e) James Middlebrook #12 f) Larry Clinkscale #15 g) Clyde Johnson #26 h) David Myers #26
i) Dotson Carter #45 j) Charles Washington #45 k) Howard Fleming #46 l) Clarence Martin #46
m) Ronald Cage #49 n) Jacob Alston Jr.

May God Bless their souls and may the remembrance we now hold of them strengthen us as we continue our travels through life's rough and rugged road! Amen! Amen! Amen!

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

State of the Nation

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **Philippians 2:3-4**

Our current society seems to have reverted to that old mindset of rugged individualism. A mindset that supports the power of one over the needs of the many! Our politicians are clearly selfish and all about themselves while constant shootings, wars in Israel and Ukraine, children killing children, economical strife (inflation), recovery from a pandemic while facing new infections like RSV taking our breath away, have left many tired of a day-by-day grind that may seem endless. While politics will always be politics, the decorum of many of our leaders leads one to believe that internal strife within our government is on the precipice of civil war or with a focus on one individual, a potential dictatorship! Our society seems to tolerate bad behavior and in some cases revel and find enjoyment within it. Yet, I see hope if those that are truly servants of the people can fend off the megaphone of those who are self-servant, and spew hate and rhetoric! In a simple sense we need leadership that can be guided by God and the tenants of Masonry with the spiritual re-enforcement of the devotions of the Holy Royal Arch! I see opportunities for change as we pay attention at the ballot box, not only at the Federal level but at our state and local levels particularly. It is time for all of us to remain focused on our communities and look to build a future! If the mindset can be restored to "united we stand!" then the future will be a better place. Let us now look at ourselves!

State of the Craft

I am proud to state that the state of Capitular Masonry in our Commonwealth has begun to move in a positive productive direction. This is not to be taken as good or bad but as an honest assessment of an organization that suffered the ravages of a Pandemic for over 2 ½ years and already suffering from a stifling sense of apathy well before then. This year has been the vital first steps of a multiyear process that ultimately will restore the greatness our fine organization seeks. The 3A'S I previously alluded to, Assessment, Adjustment & Achievement, have been pivotal to us moving forward again. The following is a review of the Capitular year of 2022-2023:

Within my acceptance speech, I outlined 8 goals for the year 2022-2023.

- 1) Ensure a safe environment to conduct our business and Ritualistic activities.
- 2) Be accountable to our membership. Communication will be a primary focus! This Grand Body will be responsive and proactive to support Companions. Please note that all communications will be in the best interest of Holy Royal Arch Masonry, its sustainability and longevity
- 3) Help aid and assist Chapters with maintaining or restoring their Ritualistic responsibilities. It is the responsibility of every Chapter to properly complete their Ritualistic responsibilities, and we will support all efforts to ensure this happens.
- 4) Help aid and assist Chapters with maintaining or restoring their fiscal stability. We will work hand in hand with each Chapter to ensure fiscal stability is established and maintained.
- 5) Continue to improve and expand our technological opportunities.
- 6) Continue with our statewide charitable efforts.
- 7) Provide clarity to approved updates of our Ritual and Constitution.
- 8) Plan a major celebration for our 203rd Birthday in May 2023.

I am proud to stand before you today and state that all have been initiated, and many have been successfully completed! The major highlights noted are the upgrade in communications through our new email/website initiative, the return to good ritualistic work within our Chapters, the review of

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

outdated by-laws and dues (fiscal) responsibilities, and the return of enjoyment to the Holy Royal Arch through our visitations with Chapters and HOJ Courts, our re-dedication celebrating our 203rd birthday, and our inaugural Military Appreciation Service in collaboration with Mu Beta Phi military fraternity and a loving vibrant Zerubbabel Day service!

In addition to working on those 8 areas, the Most excellent Grand Chapter experienced other great and not so great things. Please note the following:

- 1) Meetings- Through a concerted effort of our Deputies and Lecturers, we went from 30% of our Chapters being able to open properly to 100% being able to open at the end of this Capitular year. This is not to say they all were able to open on their own, but many Chapters worked well together to support each other with this improvement.
- 2) Membership- We started this Capitular year with 727 taxable and 43 exempt members (770 Total). As of 9/30/2023 we have 695 taxable and 46 exempt members (741). This represents a 1% decrease from last year and shows a major slowing of the hemorrhaging of members that has been occurring for greater than the last decade! Additionally, this decrease can be directly related to the fact that we merged Chapters and lost 14 or the listed 18 members due to the closure of Chapter #49. Your Grand Council is working diligently to continue correcting this trend! We are clearly providing opportunities to enter Holy Royal Arch Masonry through our upgraded technological opportunities, amnesty/reclamation opportunities and enhanced awareness of the beauty and serenity this house presents. The results of these efforts should begin to be seen within the next year. Also, in a recent meeting, I heard PMWGM Leonard Heard state that he would like to set a goal for fully 1/3 of all Pennsylvania Masons to become involved with the Consistory. I support that effort and feel it is a noble goal to strive for within Holy Royal Arch Masonry. Therefore, we will be focusing on the leadership of each Chapter to implement opportunities for this lofty goal to be obtained within the next 5-8 years. Please note this will require attentiveness because it was noted that we only reclaimed 5 members through last year's amnesty month but received 75 inquiries after the opportunity expired, even with the fiscal opportunity provided to the Chapters.
- 3) Charity- Through the outstanding efforts of the Right Excellent Grand King and Scribe, along with the leadership of many Chapters, we were able to provide upwards of 3000 toys through the George Ravenel Program during the 2022 holiday season. This was truly a statewide effort as toys were distributed throughout the West, East and Central portions of the state. Please note that our sisters within the Heroines of Jericho also fully supported these efforts. We also provided tickets to the November premier of Black Panther Wakanda to the Ruth Mitchell-Tucker and Knights of Pythagoras youth groups and made a \$500 donation to each of those youth groups. We supported the MWGL Childrens Festival with a \$500 donation and many members' physical support! We also sent 3 youths to Camp Sankanac basketball camp this year, one of whom swept the MVP trophies for the second straight year. This and other charitable efforts will continue to be a focal point during the upcoming year. However, Companions there is an area of concern I must state. If you declare that you are willing to support our charitable efforts, it is important that you follow through with your commitment. We had several pledges of financial support this year, but none to a few were received. We as Holy Royal Arch Masons should be following up more diligently with our responsibilities.

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS
KEVIN L. ALEEM

- 4) Mergers and Closures of Chapters- We experienced one Chapter closure and four Chapters mergers into two new Chapters during this year. Additional clarity in this area will be provided within my recommendations.
- 5) Benevolence- It was clearly documented through Proclamations and several communications that we need to be more benevolent with each other and that it was vital that Companions who were experiencing difficulties be reported to the Grand Chapter. This was not done during this Capitular year. We will be relying on the leadership of each Chapter to ensure this is completed.
- 6) Fiscal stability- We have maintained and may have even improved our fiscal status this year. This should be seen through the fiscal reports and audit. This improvement was due to the diligent work of all your fine officers. Your Right Excellent Grand Secretary and Right Excellent Grand Statistician especially deserve significant credit for this!
- 7) Area Councils- Due to the pandemic, scheduling conflicts, and numerous other situations that affect their ability to meet, we will be looking at the continuation of these Councils during this Capitular year. In the meantime, there will be a minimum of 4 Statewide Schools of Instruction, and this will be further discussed at the Seminar in January 2024
- 8) Triple Tau- We have a vehicle to communicate our successes, opportunities, and difficulties that would be of great support to those who cannot get to their meetings regularly, yet we do not use it! The Triple Tau is the place where all successes can be documented, and great feelings invoked repeatedly for our accomplishments. Remember if you do it and don't tell the story, it will never have existed. Support the Triple Tau by sending information monthly.
- 9) Holy Order of The High Priesthood- The Holy Order of High Priesthood, as with all parts of our organization, went through a period of adjustment and reorganization. We congratulate Most Excellent President Mark Wilson and his dedicated corps of officers for doing a fine job of keeping the priesthood stable. The priesthood performed an excellent job with the anointment of our new Most Excellent High Priest and went above and beyond to ensure that no new Most Excellent High Priest would be left behind. They will need to continue to be supported by all Past High Priest to maintain their budget and this will be enforced by the continuation of Executive orders within the Proclamation. We will continue to support the Holy Order of The High Priesthood!
- 10) Computer/Technology- In February 2023 we launched a new website to support the Most Excellent Grand Chapter. This new website has exceptional support capabilities, most of which we will be expounding on this year. With this new website we were able to upgrade statewide communication by providing individual email addresses for executive officers and each individual Chapter. These new email addresses will provide communication and far greater opportunities for recruitment and retention as we continue to introduce Holy Royal Arch Masonry to all blue house masons. The next steps will be to connect payment options for Chapters and Companions for various events that support the Grand Chapter. Pay close attention because this area will be accelerating quickly.
- 11) Leadership- We took a focused response to what leadership and sustainability within our organization should look like. This was initiated with a statewide seminar in January 2023 and will continue with another statewide seminar in January 2024. It is vital that we continue to provide guidance, consistency, and support to the leadership of each Chapter to support the longevity and sustainability of our organization.
- 12) Grand Chapter Office- The Most Excellent Grand Chapter has 4 offices and 2 storage closets at 4301 and all are archaic, dysfunctional, and downright ugly! Therefore, your Council will

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

begin the process of revitalization and reorganization. To do this we will need your help! It is your offices and to continue functioning this effort must be initiated!

Grand Chapter Officers

I must first commend all the Companions of this fine state for your choices of elected officers to lead this wonderful organization! The Council you selected is balanced communicative and supportive of all efforts that support the leadership, sustainability, and longevity of our organization. Your **Right Excellent Deputy Grand High Priest Warren S. Montague No. 15** is quite simply outstanding! He serves his office with a quiet excellence that is reassuring as he provides guidance and support to this Most Excellent Grand High Priest. He is a leader that solidifies the progression of our organization as he supports our current circumstances. Thank you, Warren. **Right Excellent Grand King Leroy T. Bunyon No. 28** is a knowledge juggernaut! He brings a unique ritualistic skill set to this Grand Body and a deep commitment to Holy Royal Arch Masonry. He performed all tasks I assigned him, initiated projects in support of this Grand Chapter and honorably represented me both in and out of the jurisdiction. Thank you, Leroy. **Right Excellent Grand Scribe Agoi V. Ombima No. 53** is a stabilizing force of nature! He brings an excellent level of analytical intelligence to all tasks presented to him and will make you laugh as he presents it! As the fourth constitutional officer of this Grand Chapter, his presence raises confidence that this Grand Body is in good hands for the next 6-8 years. Thank you Agoi! **Right Excellent Grand Secretary/PMWGM Charles A. Bishop No. 6** continues to stabilize the office of Right Excellent Grand Secretary to the point that it seems that he is sometimes taken for granted. This administration will not make that mistake! *** Thank you Charlie, for your service is truly appreciated and we Love you Sir! **Right Excellent Grand Treasurer Wayne V. Lamb No. 15** has done a fine job after assuming the position from the emeritus/retired **Hubert L. Braxton No. 39**. He has been effective as we work to upgrade our banking relationships. He is doing a great job keeping watch over our treasury. He has been timely and supportive with payments or acquisitions needed for the Grand Chapter. He is a pleasure to work with. Thank you, Wayne! **Right Excellent Assistant Grand Secretary Ernie Ball No. 6** and **Right Excellent Assistant Grand Treasurer John Graham No. 53**. Thank you, Ernie and John, for your dedicated service and commitment to the positions you hold. As we have discussed, the perimeters of your positions will be expanding during this year in support of our growth. **Right Excellent Grand Trustees, Jacob Howard No. 53, Dennis Gore No 8, and Arthur Chapman No. 8** Thank you for completing task that many times are thankless! You are appreciated and will be a vital cog in the revitalization of our office and closet spaces. Thanks in advance as you continue to monitor and dispense the real property of this Grand Chapter. Thank you, Companions. **Right Excellent Grand Statistician Walter Samuels No. 1** Thank you, Thank you, & Thank you! For working tirelessly in support of this Grand Body. Your connection and collaboration with the Office of the Right Excellent Grand Secretary has streamlined many processes and provided us with greater financial stability and awareness. You really are the linchpin for our continued success! Thank you again Walt!

To all the Excellent appointed Grand Chapter Officers, Thank you! The Deputy at Large Micheal Stewart No 1 and Grand Lecturer (GL) Eddie Williams No 15 have reported that most of the Grand Chapter Officers have carried out the duties of their respective offices as reflected in their reports. I thank both DAL and GL for your responsiveness during this Capitular year and for the leadership shown with your respective staffs. It is a pleasure not to need to micromanage when you have excellent personnel supporting our efforts. We are aware that there are some needed changes in

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

your ranks, and we will support you, in an expedited manner, with those changes. Again, Thank you to All!!!

Finally, I would like to thank the "Elite Eleven," Past Most Excellent Grand High Priests! I have been blessed to speak/interact with 10 out of 11 of you this year and kept tabs and prayers for the 11th. I found each interaction supportive, and informative and I appreciate all the advice and assistance rendered to this office. My prayers are with each and every one of you.

Heroines of Jericho

Companions our adopted sisters under the leadership of Heroine Adriane Christmas, Most Ancient Grand Matron with the support of Worthy Grand Joshua Earl Johnson are working extremely hard to bring excellence to the Heroines of Jericho. They have had exceptional Schools of Instruction, leadership mentoring from the Past Most Ancient Grand Matrons, and a good buy-in to the efforts to progress that fine organization. This is not to say all is perfect and there were a series of situations that resulted in the suspension of Worthy Grand Joshua Gary Shepperd, but the leadership of Most Ancient Grand Matron Christmas guided them through. The Most Ancient Grand Matron and I have a great relationship that was initiated 6 years ago when we both started on our progression to our positions today. I know her plan and she knows mine. Additionally, the Council of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter visited several Courts and were very well received. The Heroines participated with our George Ravenell toys for children program, and we are thankful for the support. They provided active participation in our Military Appreciation service with Senior Matron Valerie Hand (Us Army) providing part of the dissertation. We supported the installation of Grand Senior Attendant Pam Costen after she recovered from injuries sustained at the 2022 Convocation, preventing her from being installed. This gave the Most Ancient Grand Matron a full slate of executive officers and allowed her to continue implementing her plans. Companions, during the upcoming year, we will be providing plans to support, and strengthen the ties that bind us to our sisters.

Finally, my beloved Companions, I stated in my acceptance address, "with all that will be attempted in this administration, there will be tough/rough times as we take on this very ambitious plan. Some will disagree with our efforts, yet, I promise you here today that all decisions, no matter how difficult they may be, will be made with the best interest of Holy Royal Masonry and its future as the crux." This has been followed and will continue to be the foundation of all decisions going forward!

In conclusion, Be Happy! For I am happy within the Love I hold for Holy Royal Arch Masonry and each and every one of my Companions! This concludes my address except for my recommendations.

Given this day 21 October, The Year of our Lord 2023 AD, 21 October, The year of Light 6023 AL



Kevin L. Aleem, No 6
97th Most Excellent Grand High Priest

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS
KEVIN L. ALEEM

Most Excellent Grand High Priest

Kevin L. Aleem

Recommendations 2022-2023

Part I - Recommendations for Statewide Actions

“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. **Matthew 6:24**”

It is a circumstance within our beloved organization that many individuals serve vital functions within numerous houses within Masonry however, due to the Constitutional link between The Heroines of Jericho and The Holy Royal Arch a clear delineation of service as elected officers must be stated and enacted. I am, therefore, recommending that under the Constitution of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons - PHA of Pennsylvania Incorporated Article 4- Officers, that a Section 5 be added and clearly state:

“No Companion who holds an elected position within the Grand Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons may hold an elected position within the Grand Court of Heroines of Jericho during the same time period!”

Part II - Recommendations for Chapter Actions

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, ²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. **Hebrews 10:24-25**

- 1) On February 14th 2023 a letter was forwarded to all Chapters within the Commonwealth identifying that Chapter Steward H, McCard #49 has not been able to function for over 2 ½ years with regard to meeting and handling their financial obligations. Therefore, pursuant to the Constitution and General Regulations of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons - PHA of Pennsylvania Incorporated (specifically, Constitutional Revision Article 7- Powers and Duties of Officers & General Regulations Article 11- Fees and Dues), by my Directive and effective 2/1/2023, I declared that the Charter and activities of Chapter Steward H. McCard #49 (Established 1955) are hereby suspend indefinitely. This action was not taken without due diligence and efforts to support this Chapter with returning to Constitutional compliance within the guidelines of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter. This action is by no means intended to disparage or insinuate any fault to the fine Companions of this Chapter. All Companions of Steward H. McCard #49 were provided the opportunity to demit to the Chapter of their choice by The Most Excellent Grand High Priest, and the criteria was outlined in Proclamation #1, Addendum 2. Provisions were also presented for the grandfathering of titles (PHP), status (exempt), and the continued usage of Steward H. McCard #49 aprons for any Companion who chose to demit. I, therefore, request that this action be sustained by the Companions and this Chapter, Steward H. McCard #49, be permanently closed.
- 2) On March 18th 2023 a letter was forwarded to all Chapters within the Commonwealth identifying a request from Chapters Friendship #4 and Sesqui -Centennial #54 to merge into a singular Chapter. This letter contained clear instructions and guidance to complete this process. As of this date, the Companions of Friendship #4 and Sesqui -Centennial #54 , have met together, completed all outlined responsibilities, elected a Council, and ensured the anointment of a new Most Excellent High Priest for the newly formed Chapter Friendship/Sesqui -Centennial UD, It is, therefore, recommended that the newly formed Chapter Friendship/Sesqui -Centennial UD be approved by the companions and established as Chapter Friendship/Sesqui -Centennial #58. The new numbering of this Chapter is not

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

traditional; however, it is a reflection of the fact that two Chapters with fine histories merged into one. Additionally, the newly developed Charters will have historical information from the prior two Chapters as a part of its development.

- 3) On May 15th, 2023, a letter was forwarded to all Chapters within the Commonwealth identifying a request from Paxton-Macey #45 and Montgomery #44 to merge into a singular Chapter. This letter contained clear instructions and guidance to complete this process. As of this date the Companions of Paxton-Macey #45 and Montgomery #44, have met together, completed all outlined responsibilities, elected a Council, and ensured the anointment of a new Most Excellent High Priest for the newly formed Chapter Paxton-Macey/Montgomery UD. It is, therefore, recommended that the newly formed Chapter Paxton-Macey/Montgomery UD be approved by the companions and established as Chapter Paxton-Macey/Montgomery #89. The new numbering of this Chapter is not traditional; however, it is a reflection of the fact that two Chapters with fine histories merged into one. Additionally, the newly developed Charters will have historical information from the prior two Chapters as a part of its development.

Part III - Recommendations for Individual Companion Actions

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. **Philippians 2:3-4**

- 1) By Proclamation #1, Addendum #1, Directive No. 7- Emeritus Status, I declared that Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest John White #8 and Past Right Excellent Grand Treasurer Hubert Braxton #39 be styled and recognized as emeritus. This action was taken due to the following facts-
 - a) Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest John White #8, served for 24 years as the Committee Chairman on Foreign Correspondence (CC on FC)
 - b) Past Right Excellent Grand Treasurer Hubert Braxton #39, served for 18 years as Right Excellent Grand Treasurer

A recommendation to make this honor permanent for these two servants of the Most Excellent Grand Chapter, was presented to Chapters #8 (for Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest John White) and #39 (Past Right Excellent Grand Treasurer Hubert Braxton) for their submission. If this was not completed, I present this request to the Companions, for these two to be granted permanent emeritus status.

- 2) Pursuant to the Constitution (latest revision dated October 27, 2002) of The Most Excellent Grand Chapter Constitution Article 2, Proclamation #1 Executive orders #1 and 2, I am charged with the responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interest of The Most Excellent Grand Chapter Constitution HRAM. Therefore, after careful consideration and consultation, a difficult decision affecting the Worthy Grand Joshua of the HOJ was made. The decision was to remove (hereafter known as Companion) Gary Sheppard from his elected leadership position within the HOJ and suspend him for one year from York Rite Masonry. This action was taken due to the totality of Companion Sheppard's actions and the clear indicators that his behaviors would continue if action was not taken. The following are the major areas that Companion Sheppard violated that warranted the actions taken.

- 1) He placed the Most Excellent Grand Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons (HRA) and the Most Ancient Grand Court of Heroines of Jericho (HOJ) in business liability risk and stated an intent that all funds received were to belong to an organization headed by him outside the purview of the HOJ and HRA. Then after corrections and directives to address this issue, he continued to defy the direct orders of the Most Excellent Grand High Priest and Most Ancient Grand Matron
- 2) Repeated and continued defiance of directives from the Most Ancient Grand Matron and Most Excellent Grand High Priest
- 3) Subversive, inappropriate communications with intent to injure the workings of the HOJ

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS
KEVIN L. ALEEM

and HRA.

4) Violations of the tenants of Masonry

The following are the occurrences that led to my decision, and verbatim excerpts from correspondences that support the warranted actions taken based on Companion Sheppard's behaviors:

Exhibit A- 2/24/23- Received a phone call from then Worthy Grand Joshua Sheppard asking if I would attend an event Saturday 3/11/2023, titled "The Men of Jericho" Luncheon. He further stated that one of the honorees would be Past Most Excellent Grand High Priest K. Benson among others. I informed him that I had no information about this event, and that he would need to send me additional information. Later that day, I received an email with an attached document on HOJ letterhead inviting me to the HOJ school of instruction on 2/26/23 where he was presenting this event, a new bank account for the men of the Grand Court of Heroines and other information. I was unable to attend the 2/26 school. I met with then Worthy Grand Joshua Sheppard, in the presence of REDGHP Montague, and he stated the purpose for the event was to obtain funds for regalia updates for the officers of the HOJ. We agreed that this was a noble intent but we would check with the Most Ancient Grand Matron for the procedure to obtain regalia for the Companions serving in the Grand Court. We further discussed his planned/advertised event on 3/11/23 and asked who are the Men of Jericho? He stated that the Men of Jericho are the men serving in the Grand Court and they wanted to set up a separate bank account to support their needs outside of the HOJ. At this time it was clearly explained that when you use clear descriptive titles held by the HOJ and HRA along with clear solicitation that identifies affiliation within the HOJ and HRA, you are to be guided by the rules of the HOJ and HRA and are not a separate outside entity. I conferred with MAGM Christmas who concurred with my analysis and informed me that all regalia for the males in the HOJ are obtained by the Grand Trustees of the HOJ. Additionally, she stated that all events or financial transactions where the HOJ holds the liability must be approved and all funds are to be submitted to the Grand Secretary. This information and update was provided during the meeting with then Worthy Grand Joshua Sheppard, and he agreed to comply with the instructions given. It was further determined by the MAGM that the event on 3/11/23 would be able to proceed, but all funds and a full accounting report must be submitted directly afterwards. MAGM further stated that no additional bank account is to be opened by the Worthy Grand Joshua or by any person whereby the HOJ is the liable party. This also was conveyed during this meeting and Worthy Grand Joshua Shepherd verbalized understanding.

Exhibit B- I received an email with an attached letter on HOJ letterhead, dated 4/24/23 which contained disagreements with issues and directives presented at the March meeting. The following are verbatim excerpts from this email letter-

- 1) "It has been explained to the Most Ancient Grand Matron that the Men of Jericho are an entirely separate group with no ties to any Masonic organization."
- 2) "The Most Ancient Grand Matron expressed that all monies from the luncheon be turned over to the Grand Court because the Men of Jericho are under the jurisdiction of the Grand Court. The Most Ancient Matron also expressed that the Men of Jericho could not have a bank account. All of this is incorrect."
- 3) "To keep the peace, the Men of Jericho reluctantly turned money over to the Grand Court and offered no more resistance."
- 4) "As a courtesy the Men of Jericho also gave a preliminary report with the intent on sharing the final report of the luncheon with the Grand Matron not the Grand Court just to keep the Grand Matron abreast of what we are doing."
- 5) "I would like to meet with you as soon as possible so I can develop a strategy to clear the up any misconceptions about the Men of Jericho being an independent body. I do not know what makes the Grand Court think they have an exclusive right to an independent body."

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS

KEVIN L. ALEEM

Exhibit C- I was carbon copied on an email to the MAGM, with an attached letter on HOJ letterhead, dated 4/26/23, stating that he cannot follow a directive from the MAGM to install the Grand Senior Attendant after she had recovered from an extended illness. This was a directive from the MAGM to complete her leadership court and progress the efforts of the HOJ. The following are verbatim excerpts from this email letter-

- 1) "As far as installing Pam Costin in her home that is something my office cannot approve or have performed at this time because of the health concerns of my officers, constitution issues and past and future precedence."

Note I met briefly with then Worthy Grand Joshua Sheppard, outside of the Holy Royal Arch room, where he wanted to discuss the installation of the Grand Senior Attendant because he did not want to do it. I informed him that I had conferred with the MAGM and she needed the Grand Senior Attendant installed so that she could perform the duties required from the MAGM. I further stated that the installation could not be completed via Zoom due to the Grand Master's guidelines. I placed no other restrictions upon the installation.

Exhibit D- I was carbon copied on another email that was sent on 5/4/23 to the MAGM & Past Worthy Grand Joshua E. Johnson. This email contained information that was neither Constitutional nor correct.

The following is a verbatim excerpt from this email letter-

- 1) "I just want to cover a few very important points for the installation of Pam Costin. In order for this I installation to be valid the following minimal procedures must be fulfilled; A picture of Pam Costin and Pwgj Earl Johnson together at Pam Costin home. Also a picture of all others present for the installation at Pam Costin home. The installation cannot be performed on zoom. Please send that info to me in an email."(sic)

After reading this I summoned both the MAGM and WGJ Shepherd to meet with me. After scheduling conflicts were resolved, this was scheduled for Monday 5/15/2023.

Exhibit E- Prior to the meeting date, I received another email on 5/10/23 from WGJ Shepherd with the subject line of, "Pam Coston installation." However, the attached letter contained the same information noted within the 4/26/23 email. This was clarified during the 5/15/23 meeting to have been a mistake and that the attached letter should have been to inform me that the installation of the Grand Senior Attendant had been completed. This was verified by the MAGM Christmas

Exhibit F- A meeting was held 5/15/23 with the MAGM and WGJ in the Grand Chapter office, at which time the clarity of the inadvertent 5/10/23 email was presented. It was also presented that the MAGM needed a clear commitment from the WGJ that directives given to him would be followed and fundraisers would be handled following proper protocols because the report from the 3/11/23 event had not been submitted and only \$36 had been turned over the Secretary. The WGJ agreed and clearly stated he would set up a fish fry for the MAGC and provide the requested information to the MAGM as soon as possible.

After those discussions, I brought to the attention of WGJ Shepard, that the MAGM had been to 3 events that I was aware of, without being escorted by the WGJ or any representative. I further stated that this should not continue in the future and if he needed assistance to contact me. The WGJ acknowledged the facts presented and stated it (the MAGM not being properly escorted) would not continue. This meeting ended in peace and agreement.

Exhibit G- On 5/17/23, WGJ Shepard entered the HRA Grand Chapter office, during a practice session with Grand Senior Matron V. Hand, for the 5/21/23 Military Appreciation Service and handed me a box with a letter attached and stated, "this is a present for you," and left. The box was set aside, and the practice continued. The box was left within the Grand Chapter office and not opened until Monday 5/22/23. On 5/21/23 at our inaugural Military Appreciation Service, I was informed by the MAGM that Companion G.

2022-2023 MOST EXCELLENT GRAND HIGH PRIEST ADDRESS
KEVIN L. ALEEM

Sheppard has resigned as Worthy Grand Joshua. She asked if I received the WGJ letter or spoke with him because she was notified via email on 5/20/23. She further informed me that he had made no arrangements for her to be escorted at that day's event.

Exhibit H- Upon opening the letter and box on 5/22/23, it was noted that the WGJ regalia was enclosed, along with a letter stating the following verbatim excerpt-

- 1) "Unfortunately I cannot at this time perform my duties as Grand High Priest of the Most Ancient Court Heroines of Jericho Incorporated" (sic)

Not once did Companion Sheppard give any indication that he was resigning on 5/15 or when he presented the box ("present") on 5/17, nor that he would be renegeing on his responsibilities at a service four days later. Please note, he is not the "Grand High Priest of the Most Ancient Court Heroines of Jericho Incorporated!"

Exhibit I- An email was received on 5/23/23 attempting to correct the verbiage and titles of the letter included with his regalia on 5/17/23. This letter stated once again that he, "cannot at this time perform my duties as Worthy Grand Joshua of the Most Ancient Court Heroines of Jericho Incorporated."

The continued pattern of violations including defiance of directives, and instructions, along with an attempt to resign in such a manner that violates numerous Masonic tenants, traditions and protocols, would not be acceptable from any Companion. Yet, coupled with the fact they were done by a Companion who held an elected statewide leadership position cannot be condoned. His own documentation and identified behaviors clearly identify a pattern of instability and subversiveness that had to be addressed and ceased! Additionally, as of this writing the full report and reconciliation/recapitulation from the 3/11/23 event has not been submitted.

Therefore, the following actions were taken:

On June 1, 2023, I met with former Worthy Grand Joshua/Companion Gary Shepard and provided him with a letter of suspension. This letter outlined his options for appeal and the fact that he was hereby suspended from all activities pertaining to Capitular Masonry for one year, beginning on May 17th, 2023, through May 16th, 2024. This suspension also precludes him from all activities within York Rite Masonry and extends to all bodies affiliated, concordant, or adopted within the York Rite. He was also offered a list of "findings of fact," that explained all the items that led to this suspension. He took the letter but not the findings of facts and left the office. We pray that Companion Sheppard uses this time to reflect upon his actions and potentially return the Holy Royal Arch Masonry with a renewed focus.

I, your grateful servant, respectfully request that my actions, as stated, supported by Constitutional responsibilities, be sustained by my beloved Companions.

God Bless My Companions!



Kevin L. Aleem, No 6
Most Excellent Grand High Priest