



2022 GRAND MASTER'S ALLOCUTION
The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Belize Central
America and It's Jurisdiction, Inc.
Prince Hall Affiliated

The Honorable Jeffery G. Jones
Most Worshipful Grand Master
April 23, 2022

Giving Honor to my Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. The One who has sustained us all through the trials and tribulations of this world, The One who loves us in spite of ourselves, the One who is our rock and our salvation.

To our 15th Most Worshipful Grand Master, Bishop Dr. Michael R. Moore

To the 17th Most Worshipful Grand Master, Dr. Anthony T. Stafford

To the 18th Most Worshipful Grand Master, The Honorable Walter Gulley, Jr.

To the Honorable Gardner M. Torrance, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Florida in his Abstention.

To the Honorable Timothy Seay, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Arizona

To the Honorable Corey Shackelford, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Georgia

To the Honorable Charles Norman, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of New Mexico

To the Honorable Jeffrey S. Foster, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Grand Lodge of Florida F&AM.

To the Honorable Victor Cherry, Most Worshipful Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of South Carolina

To the Honorable Terrence Jackson, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Colorado

To Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master Robert Glenn, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Alabama, Representing the Honorable Corey D. Hawkins, Most Worshipful Grand Master

To Right Worshipful Senior Grand Warden Brian Johnson, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of Arkansas Representing the Honorable Cleveland K. Wilson, Most Worshipful Grand Master

To the Honorable Samuel T. King, Most Worshipful Past Grand Master, Prince Hall Jurisdiction of California

To the greatest line of Elected Grand Lodge officers ever assembled.

RW Deputy Grand Master Gus Harris, Jr.

RW Senior Grand Warden Kendall T. Moore

RW Junior Grand Warden Dr. Marlon S. Honeywell

RW Grand Treasurer Melvin F. Wright

RW Grand Secretary Tommie Wright

To our elected board of Grand Trustees, most notable, RW Johnny McCray, Trustee Board President.

To the Grand Chaplains and Clergy of this Great Jurisdiction

To all of Visiting Guests Delegations in your respective places. To all other distinguished Dignitaries.

To all Appointed Grand Lodge officers

To each of our Department Heads in their respective places, To All Worshipful Masters, Past Masters, Wardens, Brothers all,

GOOD AFTERNOON!!!!

This is the day that the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. I stand before you for the second opportunity of my tenure as your 19th Most Worshipful Grand Master of this Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, Belize, Central America, and Its Jurisdiction to present to you the current status of Florida Prince Hall Masonry, the state of our nation, and its impacts on our organization as well as my stewardship over the last year since our last communication in April of 2021.

Over the last year we have faced many challenges. But through it all, we have risen to meet them on each occasion; we continue to grow stronger in spite of life's hurdles and obstacles.

I Corinthians 10:13 of the Holy writ reminds us that God will not allow us to be burdened with more than we can bear. This world has placed the burden of a global pandemic upon us. Consequently, sickness and death have taken their toll on every corner of this earth. But by His grace and His mercy, we still stand strong. Through our obedience to His will, Prince Hall Masonry remains a thriving and viable organization; we remain ready to do the work we were intended to do; making good men better thereby making the world a better place.

It is because of this, I am personally encouraged, I remain faithful to God, and I ask Him now, before each and every one of you assembled here today..... "Lord, whatever you are doing, please don't do it without us"

With that sentiment, I humbly ask Asst. Grand Chaplain Rev. Dr. Darrien K. Bolden to take us to the throne of grace as the Choir sings softly "Don't Do It Without Me" **(Song & Prayer)**

Brothers, I once again greet you in the matchless name of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. It is with great pride and privilege that I welcome you to this 152nd Grand Communication of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida.

As I begin this address, I pause just for a moment to reflect on all that I have learned since becoming the Grand Master of this great masonic jurisdiction. I've learned the value of trust. The trust of a Jurisdiction and the importance of never taking that trust for granted. Each of you have placed an enormous amount of your trust in me. I am thankful that God placed in my heart and my mind to work in a manner that maintains that trust and to never take that which you have afforded me for granted. I am equally grateful for the increased level of respect that has now been instilled in me for this organization. The manner in which the members of this jurisdiction have conducted themselves has truly led me to believe in the phrase that I coined immediately

after my election: “The Prince Hall Mason -Tried and True, other than God, there is none greater than you”. Additionally, the lessons I’ve learned from our Grand Historian Dr. Genero Urso, relative to the rich history of this Most Worshipful Grand Lodge and the number of American Heroes who once walked the hallowed halls of our esteemed Grand East has given me a sense of pride like I never felt since becoming a Prince Hall Mason some 37 years ago. Dr. Urso, I applaud you for your efforts and the work that you have done and are doing. You sir deserve a round of applause.

There are literally hundreds of individuals who laid the framework for the great success that this Jurisdiction has seen over the last 152 years of its existence. Men such as Leander J. Shaw, Florida’s first Black Justice of the Florida Supreme Court and Joseph E. Lee, One of Florida’s first black practicing attorneys and member of the Florida State of Representatives. But there are countless others, many of which have contributed to the success of this great state as well as these United States of America. Because of them, and the memory of our organization’s founder The Honorable Prince Hall, we honor those who have come before us and equally those who have gone on to be with our Lord and Savior.

NECROLOGY

And the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

~Ecclesiastes 12:7

This tells us from whence we come, we must all return. Life is simply a circle of events. Once we are born, we begin to die. From the dust we came and to the dust we must return. The Theory of Retrogenesis says: We are once a man, twice a child. The meaning of this? We start our life as children who develop into Men with certain skills and abilities. But as we age, we begin to lose these skills and abilities both physical and cognitive. In our later stage of life, we again become child-like. This only happens to those who live the life God intended. For the bible says; we are promised only 3 score and if by strength and God’s grace we are promised another 10 years. Organizations like ours depend on good men who desire to make the most of their lives while they are progressing through the circle of Life. As we transition from childhood into manhood, we should look to use our skills and abilities to help make the world a better place; not only for ourselves but for all mankind. Let us all work to make someone else’s life better tomorrow than it was today. This should be our goal; this should be our purpose. As you love God, you should equally love your neighbor. A man, that cannot find love in his heart for his fellow man can never truly love God if we are all made in his image. As I close this paragraph of my address, let us take a brief moment of silence for those who have already transitioned. Let us also pray that those of us left behind to bear the burdens of the world remain in God’s plan and that whatever He does, He doesn’t do it without us. Please bow your heads in silence.....AMEN

STATE OF THE NATION

While the country moves into its third (3rd) year of the coronavirus pandemic; coupled with an uncertain economy, its not hard to see why many Americans are dissatisfied with the direction in which the country appears to be going; as stated in an article from the Pew Research Center.

However, in this same article its reported that 61% of US adults are optimistic that this year will be better for Americans than the last. We are beginning to see some relief from the Coronavirus as more are starting to understand the importance of the vaccine and the protection it provides. Many have begun to go without masks in their daily lives. But make no mistake, the virus is still with us. The impacts are simply much less severe. We must remain vigilant and aware of the ebbs and flows of this virus and its variants. This is a must, if we are to keep each other safe and to keep our organization moving forward.

Last year the country experienced a level of racial divide unchallenged by any other time in history since the 1950's and the era of the 1960's civil rights movement. Yet today, even with the controversy around what has been termed critical race theory, Americans and the rest of the world are finding common ground as a result of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. There are still many battles to be fought here at home; but the situation in Ukraine is painting a clear picture to the world that we each have a right to live unhindered by another. Equally, the resolve shown by the Ukrainian people in the face of this major adversity; in many ways mirrors the actions of the many Black and White Americans who fought side by side together in the 60's for civil rights in America. The major point here is: only when good men come together to fight the wrongs of the world, regardless of race, color, or creed, only then can change truly be affected making the world a better place for all to live. I believe the stance taken against Russia by the allied countries around the world is an example for the Good Men and Good Women of America to follow. I also believe with all my heart that America can truly be great. But she must first acknowledge and learn from her past. All Americans of every race must find a way to come together on common ground to fight against the wrongs and the misdeeds of others; if America is to ever live up to her self-proclaimed title as the greatest country in the world. In my opinion, it is the Master Mason, living his oath and obligation, utilizing the tools of freemasonry who holds the key to us ever reaching this goal. We have the tools and the knowledge of them to set the example for others to follow. But we must live as upright men and masons. I pray that whatever the Lord has planned for this nation, He won't do it out the us.

STATE OF THE CRAFT

Prince Hall Freemasonry is alive and well in the Jurisdiction of Florida. Equally, our Jurisdictional territories in Belize, Central America, Germany, Cote d'Ivoire, St. John USVI, and Tortola BVI are all thriving. Despite the many challenges, we have continued to find ways to remain motivated, purpose driven, and maintain an overall excitement about Prince Hall Freemasonry. In 2020 during the early stages of the pandemic with many unknowns, we limited the number of members that were allowed to attend the Grand Session for social distancing purposes. In 2021, at the height of the pandemic with the Delta variant raging across the globe, nearly 800 members trusting in the protocols set forth by this executive leadership attended what was arguably one of our best Grand sessions held in Orlando Florida. Today, you have managed to sellout our hotel room block forcing us to consider overflow accommodations to be able to adequately house all who wish to attend these proceedings. Our total membership has risen nearly **20%** or **500** new members since April of 2021. This brings our current membership to **3200**. Currently across all Jurisdictional zones, we have **40** additional candidates for new membership

pending. These numbers are not staggering; but if we continue to work the membership program, with strong subordinate lodge and district leadership, I have no doubt that these numbers will increase as we work through the 2022 intake period which ends August 31st.

I am equally proud of the effort coming from both the men and women in support of our Grand Lodge Foundation. We are currently sponsoring nearly 1 dozen students with their educational pursuits through our C. H. Henry 4-year scholarship program. Through your efforts and support, all of our student scholarship funds have been paid out through the charitable arm of our organization, the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge Foundation. This is something we have sought to achieve for some time and with your continued support this will continue.

But as it is in most cases, the devil is always busy. When God showers His faithful with his blessings, those who dwell in the dark, begin to work. Prince Hall Masonry is under attack; and Florida is no exception. Sadly, the attack comes from within. Regular masons, from other Prince Hall Jurisdiction, with personal agendas have sought to form corporate entities designed to split our Jurisdiction and others for their own personal gain. They do so by making promises of position and authority overlooking what is traditional, what is custom, and what is best for Prince Hall Masonry. Right now, the threat is coming from the Scottish Rite side of our Masonic structure. If not stopped today, tomorrow it will be the York Rite branch of our organization. Let me be extremely clear, The Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, chooses which masonic bodies it recognizes. It determines with whom it holds fraternal relations. Any masonic organization not recognized by this Grand Lodge, has no fraternal relationship with Prince Hall Masonry within this Sovereign Jurisdiction. Affiliation with such entities is a violation of your Masonic oath and the 17th Landmark of Freemasonry. A violation of either, constitutes unmasonic conduct.

The strength of any organization can be found in its solidarity. Masonry teaches us to be on one accord. Even when we disagree, we must be able to find common ground. Common ground for every member of this Masonic Jurisdiction should be and must be the protection of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida. The needs of the many always outweigh the desires of the few. Personal achievement and positions of grandeur can never come before the survival of our organization. Together in unity we stand..... but if we allow ourselves to be divided by those who have no interest in the survival of the Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge of Florida, we will surely fall. We have met every challenge we have faced throughout our history. We have not yet failed. I have no doubt we will come through this without failure also.

FRATERNAL RELATIONS

Most of you are aware that upon my election, I appointed to the position of Grand Chancellor our very own HPGM Carl Finerson. Since that time, Brother Finerson along with his appointed committee, has worked tirelessly on several fronts. They have completed the research on multiple Jurisdictions seeking fraternal relations with our Most Worshipful Union Grand Lodge. Their report will reflect their findings. Equally, they have been meeting quarterly with our mainstream counterparts. Those meetings eventually led to a meeting of our two Grand Lodge executive

cabinets for the first time in our 152-year history on March 11, 2022 at the Jacksonville Doubletree Riverfront Hotel. We met; we spoke with all transparency. This was not a social gathering of appeasement. It was a meeting of two very capable executive cabinets showing true mutual respect for one another spoken in extreme candor. Today as a result of that meeting I am proud to say that the Grand Master of the MWGL of Florida, F&AM the Honorable Jeffrey S. Foster and his entire cabinet are here with us today. After 152 years gentlemen, working together as Men and Masons, Florida has shown the world that even in the south, this is what real brotherhood looks like. When true masonic principles are practiced, no lines of division can truly exist. There is still work to be done. But we have committed to each other, that we are open to building the foundational example of what Prince Hall & Mainstream Masonic relations can and should be.

THE GRAND EAST

Over 110 years ago, our forefathers debated the decision of our 6th MWGM the honorable John H. Dickerson to erect a 6-story edifice in downtown Jacksonville following the great fire that has become a significant part of this city's history. The debate among our members was so intense it created a separation in our ranks that still exist today. We will not make the same mistake. However, those of us who belong to this MWUGL now know that we are on the right side of history. We remain with the recognized legitimate Prince Hall Affiliated masonic entity and we still own that 6-story edifice we are so proud to call our Grand East. It is more than a century old now and holds historical landmark status. The building is steeped in masonic history, but more important it is steeped with the history of Florida. Much like most of the buildings here in Jacksonville built in the early 1900's, as proud as we are of her, she is in need of many repairs. Many of you have approached me on occasion since my election to office about what I plan to do about our building. I have simply responded I'm working on it and have repeatedly asked for your patience. On my last round of annual visitations to the zones, I posed the question to you all "do you love your building". Not surprisingly, the response was overwhelmingly 'yes'. But I also asked if you would be in agreement with me securing another million-dollar loan to renovate our building and you each resoundingly said 'no'. This too was no surprise have only just paid off the last loan two years ago. Truthfully, a single million-dollar loan will not meet our needs in today's economy and therefore not good business. I equally advised all of you during those same visitations that myself, along with select members of my executive team have been shaking hands and knocking on doors within the city of Jacksonville in an attempt to secure grants or forgivable loans through the several avenues afforded to organizations such as ours. While we have gotten many to listen to us, we have yet to secure the funds needed to adequately bring our building back to the original splendor she so well deserves.

That said, I have not given up. During this session, I plan to bring before you a plan for our building that I believe does several things that puts this organization into a far better position than it has ever experienced in its 152-year history.

- 1. It renovates our building top to bottom.**
- 2. The plan helps us to preserve the history of our building while creating revenue for the city of Jacksonville.**

3. **It increases the value of our property now valued at just over \$2.5 million according to the Duval County property appraiser.**
4. **It creates a revenue stream of income for our organization never before experienced.**
5. **It puts us into a position to eventually purchase a new property through our new revenue stream while maintaining ownership of our current property.**

While I do understand the sentimental attachment we hold to our current facility, our building is the greatest asset that we have at our disposal to aid this organization in its future advancement. I simply ask that you listen to the presenters with an open mind, weigh the pros and cons, and ask questions should you have any. Sometimes opportunities knock. But if you are afraid to open the door, opportunity moves on. I do not make light of the decision you will be faced with. It is a huge decision to be made by an organization with the history of ours. But I'm confident if we stand together, we will make the right decision for us all.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I have just 4 recommendations:

1. **That the Grand Lodge Vote on the proposed project from JWB Real Estate Capital for the renovation partnership of the Grand East.**
2. **Every Lodge will ensure the full submission of its membership into the Grand Lodge Database by June 1, 2022 to avoid penalties imposed by the MWGM.**
3. **Because of the superior masonic knowledge and masonic education required of the position and responsibility of training an entire Jurisdiction, the appointed position of the Grand Lecturer be now forever bestowed with the rank and title of Right Worshipful Grand Lecturer.**
4. **This Grand Lodge take masonic legislative action to protect itself and its membership from the actions of outside entities seeking to pillage the membership and disturb the peace, harmony and masonic business of the MWUGL of Florida.**

In conclusion, God has truly blessed our organization. We truly have a lot to be thankful for. Most importantly, I thank God for His grace and His mercy. Over this next year, let us be mindful that it is our Solidarity, our love for God and our love for each other that will sustain us. We have many important decisions to make. Let us make them with the understanding that these are decisions that will define our future. Let us move forward asking God..... Lord, whatever you are doing in this season, please don't do it without us!!!!

May God Bless each of you, and may God Save the Craft

I AM,

The Honorable Jeffery G. Jones
 19th Most Worshipful Grand Master, MWUGL of Florida

Attend the following from April 2021 – April 2022 (Some Virtual Items may have been omitted)

- HOJ - MAGM Zone 2 Visitation
- Most Excellent Union Grand Council HRAM, Most Ancient Union Grand Court HOJ, Zone 3 Visitation
- HOJ - MAGM Zone 1 Visitation
- St. John The Baptist Day (Virtual)
- July Department Heads Meeting
- Florida Council of Deliberation and Fred Alexander Grand State Assembly Annual Workshop, Jacksonville, FL
- Jerusalem Grand Chapter OES, Grand Worthy Matron's Visitation - Zone 3
- MWUGL Presents 2021 Leadership Lyceum - Orlando, FL
- Most Excellent Union Grand Chapter HRAM, Most Ancient Union Grand Court HOJ - Mid-Year Workshop
- Russell Alexander Earl, Sr. Grand Court - LOCOP - Royal Grand Perfect Matron Visitation - Zone 3
- PRINCE HALL DAY (Virtual)
- Jerusalem Grand Chapter OES, Mid-Year Workshop
- Most Worshipful Grand Master - Visitation - Zone 3 West Palm Beach, FL
- United Supreme Council Memphis, TN
- Most Worshipful Grand Master - Visitation - Zone 2 Melbourne, FL
- Florida Council of Deliberation / Fred Alexander Grand State Assembly, Annual Session Jacksonville, FL
- Most Worshipful Grand Master Visitation - Zone 1 Quincy, FL
- ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST FESTIVE DAY (Virtual)
- 2022 York Rite Session – Jacksonville
- MWUGL - Department Heads – Melbourne
- MWUGL / MWGL of Florida Historic Amity Meeting of Grand Lodge Officers

NOTES

