



# The Ashlar



January 2025

**Kempsville Lodge No. 196, A.F.&A.M.**  
**[www.kempsvillelodge.org](http://www.kempsvillelodge.org)**

Volume 70-01

## From The East



Welcome to 2025 brethren! I could not be more excited about the upcoming year. Thank you for placing your trust in me and electing me Worshipful Master this year. I am humbled and honored by the opportunity and will do everything possible to deliver the best year possible for all members.

As many of you know, I had a very abbreviated trip through the chairs, beginning at Senior Warden. However, I am not new to the lodge having been raised here in Kempsville Lodge in November of 2006. I love Kempsville and have spent countless hours here either doing degree work, serving as Chaplain and Lodge Education Officer or as an advisor for both Job's Daughters and DeMolay. This is truly my home away from home.

The theme I chose for this year is "Honor the Past, Be in the Present and Invest in the Future." The institution of Freemasonry, its rituals and tenants are some of the most tried and true foundations a man can build his life around. We must honor them and find ways to continue to integrate them into our daily lives. We must take the wisdom of the past and apply it to the present. This year I feel particularly connected to the past. My late father-in-law, Robert "Bob" Jones (an affiliated Past Master), served as Master of Belleville Lodge No. 108 in New Jersey exactly 50 years ago. Half a century later, I get the opportunity to continue the legacy he began.

However, dwelling in the past and longing for what has been or continuing to want for that intangible something that will be the magic cure all for membership or lodge participation is the enemy of current happiness. We live in this moment and must play the hand we are dealt. Masonry still has so much to offer men of all ages. I am absolutely convinced that it is one of the remedies to the depression epidemic being experienced by our younger generation. The genuine human connection with the brethren and ability to be part of something greater is something that is lacking in current society and we have it right here. We just

need to show it to them. That is investing in the future. Our youth groups and other young adults deserve our attention and outreach, not merely our toleration.

In support of these objectives, I plan to focus on the lodge not as simply a building but as the brothers and their families. Look for events external to meetings and annual events where we can come together in fellowship and get to know one another better, building a lodge not of brick and mortar but of friendship, respect and brotherly love which will enrich all our lives. I believe the best recruiting tool we have is to show the world a group of men that enjoy being part of masonry every day and hope that we can do that this year.

Please look for communication on multiple fronts this year. In addition to the Ashlar, you will receive routine emails informing you of upcoming events. You will also be able to find out what is going on from our website, [kempsvillelodge.org](http://kempsvillelodge.org). Hopefully, one of these vehicles will meet your need for information.

The January Stated meeting will be the District Deputy Grand Master's official visit to the lodge for the year. Please come out and show Right Worshipful Graham Edward Winston exactly what Kempsville Lodge is all about. I look forward to seeing full sidelines to hear his message from the Grand Master.

If you were at the lodge's installation, you likely noted at we are missing Stewards this year. I am still hoping that a worthy Brother will step up to fill the vacancy. In the interim, we are going to fill the void by asking members to volunteer to prepare a single meal. Look for an email for outlining how to sign up. We can either propose a menu for you to prepare or you can sign up and make something that you are comfortable with.

We have two Fellowcrafts working and one Entered Apprentice. Look for a Master Mason Degree before the end of January. This, combined with both Wardens working on their Warden's certificate, make the Monday ritual schools

extremely important. I hope to see many of you there learning as well as taking part in the degree work.

We are also welcoming several brothers into new positions this year as well as some continuing in their previous one. Worshipful Roger Taylor will be our Lodge Education Officer this year. Brother Gil Clyburn will be heading the Building and Grounds committee. Worshipful Rob Lockwood continues to be our Lodge Instructor of Work and Brother Mike Blankenship has asked to stay on as Lodge Blood Coordinator.

I hope that you are as excited about the opportunities that are available to us in 2025. I am excited to work on taking advantage of those opportunities with you!

Brother Justin Gray Worshipful Master

## From The West



Greetings, Brethren. I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season and are eager to see what this next year will look like. Allow me to introduce myself as your Senior Warden for this upcoming year. My trip to this point has certainly not been without its challenges and I expect this next year to be the same. From my perspective, it looks as if it is going to be an interesting time as I continue my journey toward the East for the next year. While I realize that this year will go by quickly, I also realize that I have much remaining to do. I am also learning that there is much more than ritual to learn - which I still have much remaining.

As we close out 2024 and move into 2025, I can envision 2025 will be coming to an end and just like that, 2026 will be here and pending a favorable ballot, I will be the one sitting in that hot seat in the East - a thought I eagerly look forward to, but at the same time, view with trepidation. Much of 2025 will be given to learning all of the ritual and planning for my year in the East. I have given thought to what I'd like my term in the East entail and will continue to clarify it as the year goes on. As a former history museum educator, I naturally first go to "how can I bring the past into the present?"

As our immediate Past Master, Worshipful Turner

gave out pennies so that we may relate "a penny for our thoughts," I eagerly wait for the brethren to offer me a penny for their thoughts.

Brother Howard Draper, Senior Warden

## From The South



Brethren, becoming a stationed officer of the Lodge, a Master Mason steps into his new chair. A step forward for him means many things. It is a new opportunity, a major achievement and comes with new challenges. As I step forward to the Junior Warden's chair, I want to take a moment and personally thank all of my brethren who have mentored me, kept me on my toes and encouraged me along the way. You all know who you are and there is plenty of room in the south for you all to join me. Alternatively, stay in the northeast corner with the new Senior Deacon, give him the same love you all showed me, he is a great brother, and will do great.

One of my primary responsibilities will be to gather teams for candidate's degree work. This year, I would like to ask any and all of our lodge members and particularly any newly raised Masons, to step up and experience the fun and fellowship of being part of a degree team. Another primary responsibility is that of calling the craft from labor to refreshment. In order to maintain and improve upon this great Kempsville tradition, it becomes necessary that you be requested to step up and offer to assist in the preparation of our delicious and outstanding meals. To this point, everyone is asked to help tend the pot or to be the keeper of the sink on at least one occasion during the coming year. Stepping up will be a challenge for all of us. Nevertheless, it will give us an opportunity to learn and it will be an opportunity for everyone to help our Lodge become better. Would also like to thank and congratulate our newly elected Worshipful Master Justin Gray, it will be a great year for him, Masonry and us in general. I am excited about 2025 at Kempsville Lodge.

Brother Chris Kammerer, Junior Warden

## 2025 Installation of Officers - An International Affair



*2025 Officers*

Kempsville Lodge held its annual installation of officers on December 14, 2024. We were honored to have Most Worshipful Donald Ellis Strehle preside as the Installing Officer. The event was exceptionally well attended by approximately 100 people including the Worthy Matron and Worthy Patron of Kempsville Chapter No. 173, Order of the Eastern Star, the Honored Queen from Bethel 42, the Master Counselor of Kempsville Chapter, Order of DeMolay, the State Master Counselor for the Order of DeMolay in Virginia, the Miss and Junior Miss Virginia Job's Daughter as well as numerous members, family and friends. It was an excellent beginning to the 2025 term.



*Presentations to the new Worshipful Master from his family*

Members of the Lodge of Unanimity and Sincerity No. 261 from Somerset, England who attended via Zoom and two visitors from Romania attended in person. Brother Jim Boone was also able to join virtually from his home in Tennessee.

Lodge No. 261's attendance is a continuation of a long-lasting friendship between the two Lodges that began when the pandemic hit, and virtual meetings were being held. Members of 261 were able to log in and attend, including sporting

Hawaiian shirts on the appropriate night. This has evolved into a virtual meeting every Sunday at 3:30 pm Eastern Time where brothers from both lodges log in and discuss some masonic topics and enjoy each other's company. Last year, several members of Lodge 261 visited Virginia Beach and presented the lovely apron displayed on the North wall of the Lodge room.



*Members of Lodge of Unanimity and Sincerity No. 261 from Somerset, England attending via Zoom*

Peter Bland, Past Master of Lodge No. 261, was particularly impressed by the installation ceremony and applauded the Grand Lodge of Virginia for having an event where the public could hear the charges to the Worshipful Master and to the Brethren. He stated that it great that people outside the fraternity could learn about ideals that Masons strive to live up to. Unfortunately, the Grand Lodge of England does not have a similar ceremony open to the public so we will not be able to attend virtually as they begin their term in January.

The virtual broadcast of the installation ceremony was made possible by Right Worshipful Robert Stanek. He seldom misses a Sunday Zoom meeting and has developed deep and lasting bonds with the members "across the pond."

The fellowship with our UK brothers is particularly special it was great to have them in attendance at the installation. We look forward to a continued deepening of the masonic bonds between our two lodges. If you are interested in joining the weekly Zoom meeting, please reach out ot Right Worshipful Stanek for information. Thank you to all who attended the installation and your continued support of the lodge.

## Trestle Board

January 14 ..... Stated Communication  
 Official Visit of the  
 District Deputy Grand Grand Master  
 Dinner 6PM, Lodge 7PM  
 January 25 ..... Lodge Breakfast, 8-10AM  
 January 27 ..... Fellowcraft Examination, 6:30PM  
 January 28 ..... Master Mason Degree, 6:30PM  
 February 11 ..... Stated Communication  
 Dinner 6PM, Lodge 7PM  
 February 22 ..... Lodge Breakfast, 8-10AM

## Meet Your New Junior Deacon

Brother John Donahue grew up in Northwest Indiana. After high school he enlisted into the World's Greatest Navy. He served on four ships, various shore duty activities, and deployed to Afghanistan. While stationed in Naples, Italy, he met two future Brothers who provided him the path to Masonry. In October 2010, at Harry S. Truman Lodge, No. 649, he was raised to the sublime degree of Master Mason. He affiliated with Kempsville Lodge in 2018 and has assisted with many events, including the monthly breakfasts and the annual Bull Roast. He retired from the Navy in 2023 and has continued to serve the warfighters as a government contractor. He also serves the youth as an advisor for the Kempsville Chapter of the Order of Demolay. He has been married for 19 years and together with his wife, Kathy, has 3 children. His son Tristan currently serves as the Senior Deacon in his Demolay Chapter and his daughter Bella serves as the Chaplain in her Bethel. In 2024 he was honored with the title of Mason of the Year. He is looking forward to his year as Junior Deacon and beginning his journey through the line here at Kempsville Lodge No. 196.



## Masonic Birthdays for January

Jose Camacho, 01/24	Matthew Pilgrim, 01/11
Onrubio Florendo, 01/10	David Poirier, 01/18
Eric Hallal, 01/17	John Preddy, 01/07
Robert Hughes, 01/18	Bill Rensko, 01/96
Chris Kammerer, 01/22	Scott Vaughn, 01/15
Ronald Melton, 01/04	Yancy Woodard, 01/20
James Pearsall, 01/79	

## To Our Masonic Widows

Happy Birthday to our special ladies in January.

Shirley Salt	1/6
Kathy Hallal	1/7
Donna Andrews	1/14
Ruth Hodges-Fraser	1/15
Barbara Cole	1/16
Carol Barber	1/20
Bonnie Jordan	1/22
Doris Flannigan	1/28
Dorothy Sykes	1/28
Teresa Spruill	1/29
Deborah Foxwell	1/31

If any of our ladies are in need of assistance from the Lodge, please don't hesitate to contact Right Worshipful Bill Knowles or the Secretary.

## Lodge Officers

Worshipful Master	Justin Gray	338-7218
Senior Warden	Howard Draper	515-3540
Junior Warden	Chris Kammerer	348-9822
Treasurer	Chris Anders	635-7617
Secretary	Emmett Pate	404-8594
Senior Deacon	Jay Keplinger	615-9240
Junior Deacon	John Donahue	685-5686
Chaplain	Karl Wesseler	439-1858
Musician	R. Scott Foxwell	536-1659
Marshal	Dickie Cooper	971-7347
Tiler	Tom Melling, Sr.	403-8881
Instructor of Work	Rob Lockwood	617-2166
Education Officer	William Rawson	724-4867
MAHOVA Ambassador	Ray Connard	630-5797
Blood Coordinator	Michael Blankenship	438-2862
Youth Advisor	John Donahue	685-5686