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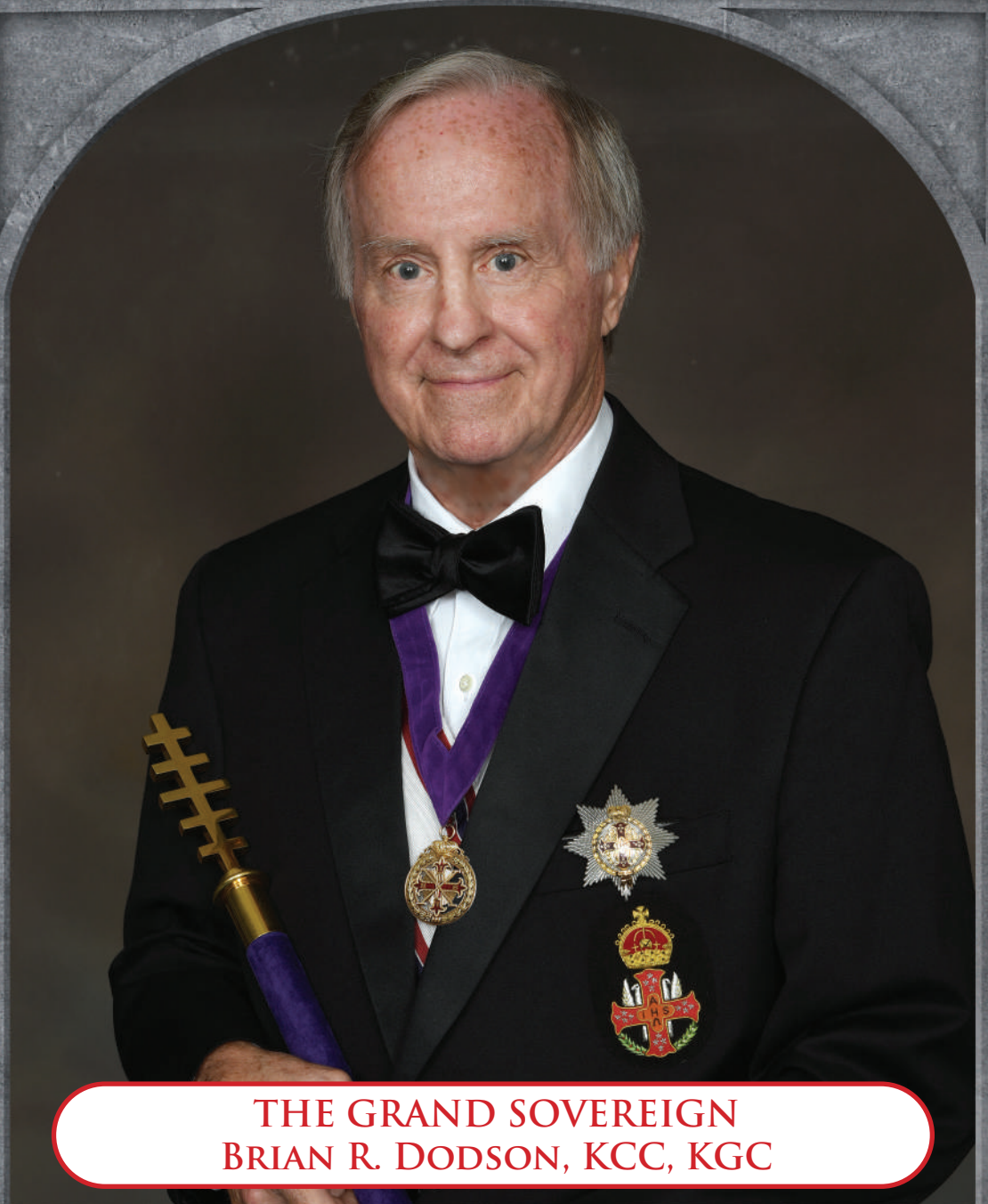
FALL 2025

ISSUE 1



THE BYZANTIUM

UNITED GRAND IMPERIAL COUNCIL · RED CROSS OF CONSTANTINE



THE GRAND SOVEREIGN
BRIAN R. DODSON, KCC, KGC

UNITED GRAND IMPERIAL COUNCIL

Brian R. Dodson, KCC, KGC,
Most Illustrious Grand Sovereign

Lloyd F. Christopher, KCC,
Most Eminent Grand Viceroy

Jeffrey N. Nelson, Very Illustrious
Grand Senior General

Bryce B. Hildreth, Very Illustrious
Grand Junior General

Joe R. Manning, Jr., KGC, KCC,
Right Illustrious Grand Treasurer

R. Stephen Doan, KGC,
Right Illustrious Grand Recorder

David W. Studley,
Illustrious Grand Trustee (2026)

John L. Logan,
Illustrious Grand Trustee (2027)

Glenn D. Woody,
Illustrious Grand Trustee (2028)

Glen A. Cook,
Illustrious Grand Chancellor

Victor K. Crooks, II,
Illustrious Grand Almoner

APPOINTED GRAND OFFICERS

Russell E. Bridges,
Illustrious Grand Chamberlain

Russell C. Brown,
Illustrious Grand Orator

Orville R. Armstrong,
Illustrious Grand Standard Bearer

H. Bart Henderson,
Illustrious Grand Marshal

Lawrence E. Tucker,
Illustrious Grand Herald

Paul E. Wunsche,
Illustrious Grand Sentinel

David J. Kussman, KCC,
Illustrious Grand High Prelate

Paul D. Erickson,
Illustrious Grand Chaplain

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Most Illustrious Grand Sovereign Brian R. Dodson, KCC, KGC

Brian R. Dodson was born in Bryan, Texas on March 3, 1951, to Carl Elton Dodson, Sr. and Frances Ellen Willis Dodson. Brian's young life was soon to be shattered by the death of his father when Brian was only ten years of age. His mother, however, remarried six years

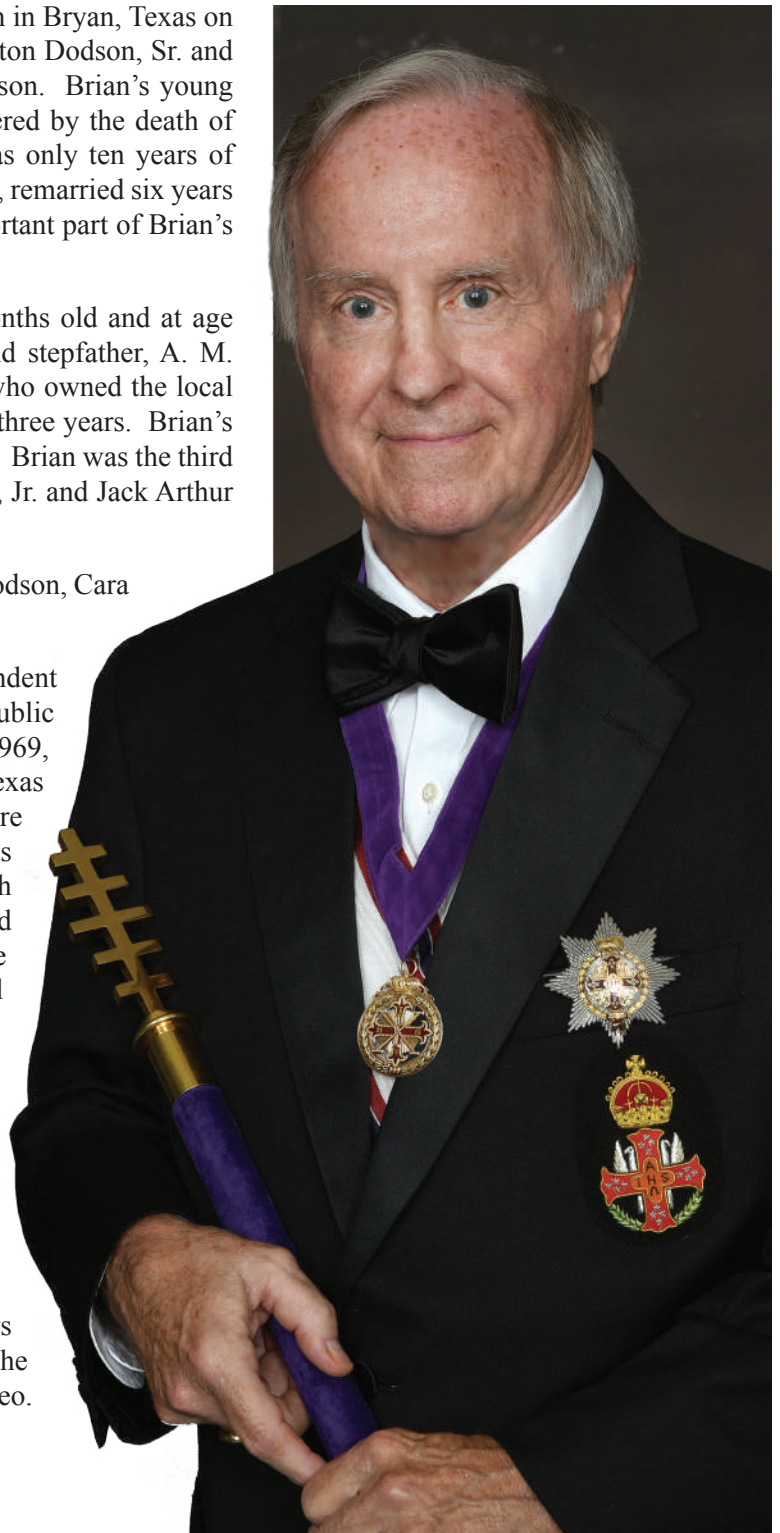
later to A. M. Anderson who would become a very important part of Brian's life.

He moved to Old Ocean, Texas when he was three months old and at age sixteen to Sweeny, Texas with his mother, Frances, and stepfather, A. M. Anderson. A. M. was a prominent person in Sweeny, who owned the local lumberyard and served as Mayor of Sweeny for twenty-three years. Brian's mother and his stepfather passed away several years ago. Brian was the third of three brothers; the other two were Carl Elton Dodson, Jr. and Jack Arthur Dodson, both now deceased.

Brian is the father of Kimberly Dodson, Mary Frances Dodson, Cara Slaybaugh and Rob Slaybaugh.

Brian's formal education began in the Sweeny Independent School District where he attended all twelve years of public school. He graduated from Sweeny High School in 1969, Summa Cum Laude. He later attended Southwest Texas University, now known as Texas State University, where he majored in math. He graduated from Southwest Texas University with a BS degree in 1973. He used his math background to go into the Information Technology field working in this area for 30 years, mostly in sales. He later changed professions to become a Certified Financial Planner.

He is very active in area organizations and church groups. He is a Life Member of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo where he annually spends his time helping the youth in the FFA and Four-H Clubs by volunteering his services as a committeeman. He has served on Corral Club Committee since 1985, serving as Captain, Assistant Club Chairman, Chairman and Division Chairman. He also served on the Speakers Committee, serving as Captain. He is also a member of the Cowboy Lodge at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.



Brian is a Life Member and Past President of the Alief Jaycees. He was also an Instructor for Dale Carnegie for twenty-four years. He is a Life Member of Theta Xi Fraternity.

Brian is a member of St. Catherine of Sienna Episcopal Church in Missouri City, Texas where he is very active. He has served as a Member of Bishops Committee, Junior Warden and Bishop's Warden, three times. He has been a member of the Episcopal religion all his life and was the Vice President of the Diocese of Texas Episcopal Young Churchmen in 1969. He was licensed as a Lay reader at the age of 17 years.

Brother Dodson's Masonic Career began at Bellaire No. 1336. He was Raised a Master Mason in April 1981. He worked hard and served Bellaire Lodge in the following offices: Tiler, Senior Steward, Junior Deacon, Senior Deacon, Junior Warden, Senior Warden and Worshipful Master 1987-1988. The Lodge honored him with a Life Membership in 1988 when he went out as Worshipful Master. He later purchased an Endowed Membership in Bellaire Lodge. Brother Dodson has since served on several committees at Bellaire Lodge, and they further honored him in 1998 by giving him the Golden Trowel Award.

Brother Dodson has also expanded his Blue Lodge affiliations and is currently an Endowed Member of Gray No. 329, Post Oak Island No. 181, Sugar Land No. 1141, Milam No. 11, Eagle Lake No. 366, Temple No. 4, Park Place No. 1172, Tomball No. 1096, Lone Star Lodge No. 660 and (Charter Member) Tranquility Lodge No. 2000. In addition to Bellaire Lodge No. 1336, he has served as Worshipful Master of Gray Lodge No. 328, Temple Lodge No. 4, Eagle Lake Lodge No. 366, Lone Star Lodge No. 660 and the Texas Lodge of Research as well as Coronado Lodge No. 56, under the Grand Lodge of Oklahoma.

Brother Dodson's service to Grand Lodge began in 1992, when he served as the District Educations Officer of Masonic District 30-B. He was later appointed District Deputy Grand Master, Masonic District 30-B, for 1993 by Grand Master Schnell. He also served Grand Lodge as District Masonic Relations Officer in 1998, as State Coordinator in 2000 for Grand Master Burke, as Regional Coordinator Grand Masters Conference 1995, a member of the Memorials Committee, the Grand Officers Report Committee, and its Chairman, on the Masonic Education and Service Committee and Warden Retreat Team, Chairman, Special Project Comm. -'Take

Time to Read' 1999-2001, and a member of the Grand Masters Conference Teams - 1996, 1999, 2000.

He served on Grand Master Planning Committees for Grand Master's Walker, Regian, Gower, Burke, Dibrell and Patterson. He became a member of the Sam Houston Hall of Fame and is a Ruby Level Patron. He was appointed as the Grand Representative to the Grand Lodge of Indiana and a member of the Board of Directors of the Masonic Home and School for 2004 and 2005. He was one of the founding Trustees of the Texas Masonic Charities Foundation. He is a member of the Square and Compasses Foundation, serves as President of the Texas Youth Foundation, and 1st Vice President of the Grand Lodge of Texas Library and Museum Foundation.

Brian has further served the Grand Lodge of Texas as its Grand Junior Deacon in 1997, Grand Orator in 2000, Grand Pursuivant in 2002, Grand Junior Warden in 2003, Grand Senior Warden in 2004, Deputy Grand Master in 2005 and was installed as Grand Master of Masons in Texas on December 3, 2005.

Companion Dodson is also an active York Rite Mason. He is a Past High Priest and an Endowed Member of Washington Chapter No. 2, RAM in 1992-1993. He served as District Deputy Grand High Priest in 2004. He has also served the Grand Royal Arch Chapter as Grand Senior Steward 1995, Grand Orator 2001 and Grand Royal Arch Captain in 2005. He has further distinguished himself by serving on the New Chapters Committee as Chairman, and as a member 1999, 2000, 2001 and 2002, member of the Fraternal Relations Committee, appointed as Grand Representative to the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Massachusetts in 2005. He is currently serving the Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Texas as the Grand Chaplain in 2025.

He served as the State Coordinator in 2001 for Most Excellent Robert P. Walker and Most Illustrious Mark Meyer.

He is a Past Thrice Illustrious Master and Endowed Member of Houston Council No. 1, R.&S.M., 1992- 1993. He served as District Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Council in 1996. He has served as a member of the New Council Committee, Director of the York Rite Development Fund 1996- 2001, and as its Secretary in 1999 and as President in 2001. He also served as Thrice Illustrious Master of Robert Morris Elgin Council No. 415.

He also served as Treasurer of Houston Chapter (merged with Washington Chapter) and Sam Houston Council (merged with Houston Council.) He is a member of the Order of the Silver Trowel and served as Thrice Illustrious Master. He is a member of the Order of High Priesthood and served as Grand High Priest of the Order.

Sir Knight Dodson is a Past Commander and Endowed Member of Houston Commandery No. 95 and Ft. Bend Commandery No. 74. He also holds memberships with Ruthven Commandery No. 2, Park Place Commandery No. 109 and Melrose Commandery No. 106. Houston Commandery honored him in 2003 by presenting him with the Excalibur Award. He served the Grand Commander of Texas as Grand Prelate. He serves Ft. Bend Commandery as the Prelate. He was awarded the Knight Templar Cross of Honor by the Grand Commandery of Texas.

Sir Knight Dodson has also served Templar Masonry as an Aid to the Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America in 2000 and 2003. He was awarded the Knight Companion of the Temple, 2004.

Sir Knight and Driller Dodson has been a Drill Team Member for several Commanderies over the past several years. He has participated with the Drill Teams for Ruthven Commandery No. 2, Melrose Commandery No. 109, Park Place Commandery No. 106 and Houston Commandery No. 95. He served as President of Ruthven's Drill Team and Captain for Houston Drill Team.

He is a member and Past Prior of Thomas H. Ridout, Jr. Priory No. 75, Knight York Cross of Honour, and received the Knight York Grand Cross of Honor with the Blue Quadrant. A member Texas Chapter of the Order of Knights Preceptors, a Member and Past Preceptor of Resurrection Temple No. XXI, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priest, an Endowed Member and Past Pre-Eminent Governor (1998-1999) of Gulf Coast York Rite College No. 106. The York Rite Sovereign College of North America honored him with the Order of the Purple Cross in 2001. He is currently serving the York Rite Sovereign College as the Grand Governor for Texas.

Brian joined the Houston Valley of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in 1982 and is an Endowed Member of that body. He has served the Houston Valley as Venerable Master of the San Jacinto Lodge of Perfection, Wise Master of the

Houston Chapter of Knight Rose Croix 1996, Master of Kadosh of Houston Consistory and Commander of Houston Council of Kadosh. He also served on the 33rd Degree Team, the Renewal and Remembrance Degree Teams and was Reunion Director 1997-2006. He is currently serving as the Chairman of the Advisory Conference for the Valley of Houston and is the Personal Representative of the Sovereign Grand Inspector General in the Valley of Houston.

The Scottish Rite honored him by conferring him with the distinction of Knight Commander Cross of Honor (KCCH) in 1987 and coroneted him with the 33rd Degree Honorary Inspector General in 1997. He is a member of the Royal Order of the Ducks, the Scottish Rite Speakers Bureau, a Trustee on the Scottish Rite Benevolent Association (2003-2009) and the Scottish Rite Foundation of Texas (2005-2007). He is also an Endowed Member of the Scottish Rite Research Society.

Noble Dodson is a member of El Mina Shrine Temple, at Galveston, Texas, an Associate Member of Arabia Shrine Temple in Houston, Texas, and an Honorary Life Member of Joppa Shrine Temple at Biloxi, Mississippi.

Brian is Past Sovereign Master (1995) of Sam Houston Council No. 275, Allied Masonic Degrees and has received the Order of the Red Branch of Eri and is a fourth degree in the Scalet Cord. He is a Past Excellent Chief (1997) of Anson Jones Council No. 47, Knight Masons of the United States of America. He served as Sovereign of San Jacinto Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine. He served as Worthy Patron (1999-2000) of Blue Bell Chapter No. 856, Order of the Eastern Star and served as Chaplain in 2000-2001.

He is a member of Texas College, Masonic Societas Rosicruciana In Civitatibus Foederatis, Chinar Grotto, Amaranth, Royal Order of Scotland (Life Member) and The Masonic Order of the Bath (2003). He served as Chaplain of the 30th Masonic Districts Masters, Wardens and Secretaries Association for 2001-2001. He is also a member of the Institute on Masonic Proficiency (2001-2006). He is a member of the CBCS and the Philalethias Society. He has served as Deputy Master Mason in Damon Quarry Assemblage of the Operatives. He has served as Worthy Master of Lone Star Chapter No. 5, Commemorative Order of Saint Thomas of Acon. He was a Founding member of Tejas Conclave No. 44, Masonic Order of Pilgrim Preceptors, and is currently serving as the Worthy Preceptor.

Dad Dodson served as a member of the Advisory Council of Sam B. Cantey, Jr, DeMolay Chapter No. 89 and received the Honorary Legion of Honor in 1998. He served on the Staff of the Executive Officer of Texas, Order of DeMolay 2001-2005 and was the District Governor in the Houston area in 2002. He is an Honorary Member of the International Supreme Council of DeMolay.

In 2003, Dad Dodson was selected Charter Treasurer and a Member of the Board of Trustees of the newly formed Texas Masonic Youth Foundation. He is currently serving as President of the DeMolay Foundation.

Brother Dodson joined Greater Houston Lodge No. 6, Independent Order of Odd Fellows and has served as Noble Grand. He is a member of Lone Star Encampment No. 1 and San Jacinto Canton No. 11, Patriarch's Militant. He has served the Grand Lodge IOOF of Texas as Grand Herald and District Deputy Grand Master. Brian joined Texas Lodge No. 1, Order of Knights of Pythias and is currently serving as Chancellor-Commander.

Brian Dodson brings to the table with him, as head of the United Grand Imperial Council of the Red Cross of Constantine, a well-rounded personal life with a multitude of civic and church experiences to enhance his abilities to lead this great Fraternity. His Masonic knowledge is very versatile and includes detailed experiences in all facets of Masonry. His ability to make sound and sensible decisions is based upon his vast background, and he is not hesitant to offer good counsel wherever and whenever he can.

Most Illustrious Dodson is a true believer and practitioner of the five points of Fellowship, which were the main focus of his year as Grand Master of Masons. He sincerely believes that, if all Masons follow the precepts of the Five Points of Fellowship, we will have a more harmonious and prosperous fraternity.





Report on the 153rd Annual Assembly of the United Grand Imperial Council

This is a preliminary report on the 153rd Annual Assembly of the United Grand Imperial Council, held at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Kansas City Int. Airport, 7640 N. W. Tiffany Springs Parkway, Kansas City, Missouri, on June 5-7, 2025. A complete report on the 153rd Annual Assembly will be included in the *Transactions* for the just completed Constantinian year.

The officers installed for the 2025 – 2026 Constantinian year were:

- Grand Sovereign..... Brian R. Dodson, KGC, KCC
- Grand Viceroy Lloyd F. Christopher, KCC
- Grand Senior General.....Jeffrey N. Nelson
- Grand Junior General Bryce B. Hildreth
- Grand Treasurer.. Joe R. Manning, Jr., KGC, KCC
- Grand Recorder R. Stephen Doan, KGC
- Grand Trustee (2026)David W. Studley
- Grand Trustee (2027)John L. Logan
- Grand Trustee (2028) Glenn D. Woody
- Grand Chancellor Glen A. Cook
- Grand Almoner Victor K. Crooks, II
- Grand Chamberlain Russell E. Bridges

- Grand OratorRussell C. Brown
- Grand Standard BearerOrville R. Armstrong
- Grand Marshal.....H. Bart Henderson
- Grand Herald.....Lawrence E. Tucker
- Grand Sentinel.....Paul E. Wunsche
- Grand High Prelate..... David J. Kussman, KCC

New Intendants General:

- Georgia Southern..... Donald C. Combs
- Washington..... Rabi K. Peifer

Committees were appointed for the 2025 – 2026 Constantinian year. A complete listing of these appointments may be found on the UGIC website: <https://redcrossconstantine.org/committees/>.

In accordance with §402.020 of the *Constitution and Statutes and Regulations*, the Grand Sovereign with the concurrence of the Grand Viceroy conferred the Order of Knight Commander of Constantine on two Knights Companions: Knight Companion Wayne H. Roll of

UNITED GRAND IMPERIAL COUNCIL

Kansas and Knight Companion Evaristo A. Leviste of The Philippines. Each conferral was recognized warmly by the Knights Companions present.

The UGIC budgets for the current Constantinian year were adopted as presented and will be included in the *Transactions* for the just completed Constantinian year.

No amendments were made to the *Constitution and Statutes and Regulations* of the United Grand Imperial Council.

The Grand Treasurer and Grand Recorder delivered their reports. The Board of Control's account of its receipts and disbursements, together with an inventory covering all of its investments and funds, was also delivered. These reports will be included in the *Transactions* for the just completed Constantinian year.

The 154th Annual Assembly of the United Grand Imperial Council will be held on June 4-6, 2026 in the Embassy Suites by Hilton Grapevine DFW North, 2401 Bass Pro Drive, Grapevine, Texas.. Registration forms will be available on the UGIC website in early 2026.



Tentative Calendar of Upcoming Events in 2025/26

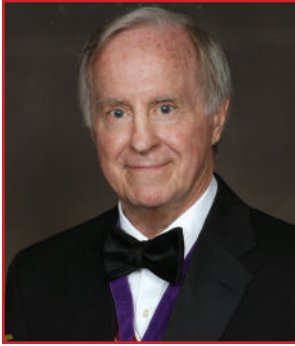
2025

- 7-8 November..... 66th Annual Eastern Regional Assembly,
Red Lion Hotel, 4751 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA
- 7-8 November..... North Carolina Divisional Assembly, Hibriten Lodge No. 262, Lenoir, NC
- 15 November..... Georgia Statewide Assembly, Warner Robins, Georgia

2026

- 10 January Tennessee Divisional Assembly, Nashville, TN
- 4-8 February AMD Masonic Week, DoubleTree by Hilton Washington DC
Crystal City, 300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA
- 21-25 February Conference of Grand Masters, Rosemont, Illinois
- 20-21 March..... 40th Annual Northwest Regional Assembly, Kennewick, WA
- 3 April..... Good Friday Breakfast, St. Simeon Stylites Conclave, Washington, DC
- 4-5 April Grand Encampment Easter Observance
- 4-6 June 154th UGIC Annual Assembly
Embassy Suites by Hilton Grapevine DFW Airport North,
2401 Bass Pro Drive, Grapevine, TX 76051





Brian R. Dodson, KCC, KGC
Most Illustrious
Grand Sovereign



Elected Officers of the United Grand Imperial Council



Lloyd F. Christopher, KCC
Most Eminent
Grand Viceroy



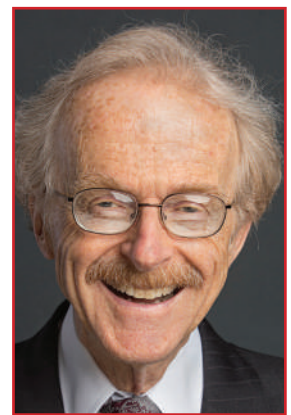
Jeffrey N. Nelson
Very Illustrious Grand
Senior General



Bryce B. Hildreth
Very Illustrious Grand
Junior General



Joe R. Manning, Jr. KGC, KCC
Right Illustrious
Grand Treasurer



R. Stephen Doan, KGC
Right Illustrious
Grand Recorder



David W. Studley
Illustrious Grand Trustee
(2026)



John L. Logan
Illustrious Grand Trustee
(2027)



Glenn D. Woody
Illustrious Grand Trustee
(2028)



Glen A. Cook
Illustrious Grand
Chancellor



Victor K. Crooks, II
Illustrious Grand
Almoner

Appointed Officers of the United Grand Imperial Council



Russell E. Bridges
Illustrious Grand
Chamberlain



Russell C. Brown
Illustrious Grand
Orator



Orville R. Armstrong
Illustrious Grand
Standard Bearer



H. Bart Henderson
Illustrious Grand
Marshal



Lawrence E. Tucker
Illustrious Grand
Herald



Paul E. Wunsche
Illustrious Grand
Sentinel



David J. Kussman, KCC
Illustrious Grand
High Prelate



Paul D. Erickson
Illustrious Grand
Chaplain

Julian the Apostate: The Emperor Who Defied Christ

By, C. Craig Frazier - Sovereign, Labarum Conclave in Orlando, Florida

“YOU HAVE CONQUERED, GALILEAN.” TRADITIONAL LAST WORDS OF JULIAN THE APOSTATE

INTRODUCTION

In the decades following the death of our Royal Founder, Constantine the Great, Christianity was spreading apace as it was endorsed by emperors, empowered by councils and woven into the life of empire. But, not everyone welcomed this new order. In AD 361, a brilliant, charismatic and deeply philosophical young emperor named Julian rose to power. Baptized as a Christian in childhood but a committed Neoplatonic pagan in adulthood, Julian sought to reverse Constantine’s revolution—to restore the old gods, marginalize Christianity and reestablish a religiously plural but fundamentally pagan empire. Julian is the villain, if you will, in our Order of Knights of St. John the Evangelist.

This article explores the fascinating, short-lived reign of Julian the Apostate, the emperor who tried to turn back the cross.

JULIAN’S EARLY LIFE: A CHRISTIAN PRINCE WITH A PAGAN HEART

Julian was born in AD 331 or 332, a nephew of Constantine the Great. After Constantine’s death in AD 337, the empire was divided among his sons—who massacred many of their cousins, including most of Julian’s immediate family. Julian and his half-brother Gallus were spared but raised under strict Christian tutelage, likely by Arian sympathizers. He studied in Constantinople, Nicomedia and Athens, where he encountered Neoplatonism, classical philosophy and traditional Roman religion. Privately, Julian became enamored with Hellenism and its gods. In secret, he renounced Christianity but carefully concealed this until he was strong enough to act openly.



RISE TO POWER: SOLDIER, PHILOSOPHER AND CAESAR

Julian proved an effective general. In AD 355, his cousin Constantius II (Constantine’s son) appointed him Caesar and sent him to defend Gaul. Despite his youth and inexperience, Julian repelled barbarian invasions, reformed provincial administration and won the loyalty of his troops. In AD 361, after rising tensions with Constantius, Julian was proclaimed Augustus by his army. Before civil war broke out, Constantius died, and Julian became sole emperor.

THE PAGAN RESTORATION: A VISION OF ROME REBORN

As emperor, Julian openly declared his paganism and began what he called “the restoration” (restauratio): a reversal of the Christian revolution under Constantine. He rebuilt pagan temples and priesthoods, especially in cities where Christian emperors had allowed their decline. He restored animal sacrifices and revived ancient rituals. He patronized Neoplatonic philosophers and classic Hellenic literature. He marginalized Christianity without outright persecution.

Julian’s religion was not mere superstition. He envisioned a moral, ascetic, philosophical paganism, modeled on Plato, Homer and the Stoics, infused with mysticism from the East.

THE WRITINGS OF JULIAN: AGAINST THE GALILEANS

Julian wrote extensively, including his polemic “Against the Galileans,” a sharp critique of Christianity. In it, he ar-

gued that Christianity had no cultural depth: no poets, philosophers or tradition like the Greeks. The Gospels were incoherent and the Scriptures stolen from the Jews. Jesus was not divine, but a minor moral teacher. Julian praised Judaism for its antiquity and rituals, but saw Christianity as a bastard religion, tearing down both Jewish law and Greek thought.

CHURCH UNDER PRESSURE: PERSECUTION BY SUBTRACTION

Julian did not execute Christians en-masse, but he used bureaucracy, economics and policy to attack the Church. He banned Christians from teaching classical literature, cutting them off from cultural influence. He reinstated pagan rituals in public life, forcing Christians to the margins. He removed imperial funding for bishops and clergy. He allowed pagan mobs to harass churches with little consequence. Despite this, Christianity had already taken root in the cities and the army. Julian's efforts, though bold, were too short-lived to succeed.

FINAL CAMPAIGN AND MYSTERIOUS DEATH

In AD 363, Julian launched a major campaign against the Sassanid Persians. Initially successful, the army was eventually trapped, and Julian was mortally wounded in battle, allegedly by a spear. Christian sources say he cried out: "You have conquered, Galilean." Whether fact or literary flourish, the phrase captured the symbolic defeat of his pagan revival. Julian died without an heir. His successor, Jovian, was a Christian, and the empire returned quickly to its pro-Christian path.

LEGACY: THE LAST PAGAN EMPEROR

Julian was the last non-Christian ruler of the Roman Empire. He remains a paradox. He was a man of great intellect, discipline and courage, but politically naïve, a sincere philosopher-priest-emperor, but unable to overcome a deeply Christianized empire in the short interval of his reign. While revered during his reign by contemporary classicists, he is a villain in Christian memory. In Eastern Orthodox and Western tradition, Julian is remembered not just as apostate, but as a warning: that no matter how powerful, human strength cannot undo what God has established.



154th Annual Assembly in Grapevine Texas June 4-6, 2026

San Jacinto Conclave and the thirteen other conclaves in Texas invite you to the 154th Annual Assembly of our United Grand Imperial Council, to be held on June 4-6, 2026 at the Embassy Suites by Hilton Grapevine DFW Airport North. An all-suite hotel with separate sleeping and living/sitting area, it offers made-to-order breakfasts daily. The complimentary hotel shuttle service to and from nearby DFW airport operates twice an hour every day from 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. DFW is one of the top U.S. airports in terms of domestic connectivity with over 190 nonstop domestic destinations, more than many other large hubs.

Our hosts have planned Friday tours to the National Medal of Honor Museum in Arlington and to The

Cowgirl: National Cowgirl Museum & Hall of Fame in Ft. Worth. These two museums transform history into personal inspiration. The National Medal of Honor Museum offers immersive galleries and living stories of Medal of Honor recipients, showing how ordinary people made extraordinary choices under fire. The Cowgirl celebrates the pioneering spirit of women of the West through artifacts, interactive exhibits and Hall of Fame narratives that reframe American identity. Both museums pair high-quality design with thoughtful education, making them meaningful visits for anyone seeking courage, resilience and unexpected cultural perspectives.

Grand Sovereign Brian Dodson looks forward to welcoming you to Grapevine in June of 2026.





Freemasonry and the Equinoxes and Solstices

Early speculative Freemasons in England held quarterly meetings around the times of the equinoxes and solstices, a practice that reveals how the fraternity blended the practical traditions of the medieval craft guilds with Christian liturgy and older cosmological symbolism. What began as pragmatic assemblies of working masons gradually became highly ritualized occasions of speculative Masonry.

In the Middle Ages, operative masons held assemblies to regulate their trade, admit apprentices and settle disputes. These gatherings usually occurred on the “quarter days” of the English civil calendar, which were tied to both the rhythms of the Church year and the economic cycle. Lady Day on March 25, near the spring equinox, marked the beginning of the new year and the renewal of contracts. (Lady Day in the Christian calendar celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, when the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive Jesus.) Midsummer Day on June 24, the feast of St. John the Baptist, corresponded to the summer solstice. Michaelmas on September 29, near the autumn equinox, closed out the harvest season. (Michaelmas honored St. Michael the Archangel, the leader of the heavenly host, protector against the powers of evil and champion of justice). Christmas on December 25, later associated with St. John the Evangelist, stood just after the winter solstice. These days were practical points of reckoning: rents came due, labor was hired and accounts were settled. Lady Day, Midsummer, Michaelmas and Christmas were also the dates around which medieval fairs were held. These fairs were some of the most important economic, social and even cultural events of the Middle Ages, which could last from a few days to several weeks.

As the stonemasons’ guilds transformed into a speculative and philosophical fraternity in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries, the quarterly gatherings persisted but gained symbolic meaning. The equinoxes and solstices were natural markers of the balance and extremes of light and darkness, fitting allegories for Masonic ideals of harmony, moderation and progress. Christian tradition reinforced this symbolism, especially through the solstitial feasts of the two Saints John. The Baptist, honored in June, and the Evangelist, honored in December, became

emblematic pillars of Masonry, representing both continuity with Christian piety and the dual balance of zeal and contemplation. To early speculative Masons, trained to see geometry and astronomy as divine sciences, aligning their assemblies with the turning points of the heavens underscored their fraternity’s claim to reflect cosmic and moral order.

When the Premier Grand Lodge of England was founded in 1717, it codified this tradition by establishing quarterly communications, usually at or near the solstices and equinoxes.

This mirrored older craft practice but also proclaimed Masonry’s dedication to regularity, order and universality. Just as the heavens turn in perfect measure, so too should the fraternity conduct its affairs with balance and proportion.

The choice of the equinoxes and solstices was therefore both practical and profound. Practically, these were the traditional quarter days when people gathered, debts were paid and new work began. Symbolically, they marked the balance of light and darkness, the rhythms of nature and the spiritual journey of humanity. Esoterically, they resonated with Hermetic, Rosicrucian and Cabalistic traditions, all of which associated cosmic cycles with renewal and transformation. For the early speculative Freemasons, the heavens themselves offered a model of order, harmony and eternal return, and their quarterly meetings echoed that divine rhythm.



The Nativity of Our Lord: Restoration of All Things in the Incarnation

Each Christian holiday is a time of thanksgiving, when in gratitude we recall God's actions and favors throughout salvation history. At the Nativity of Our Lord, we recall that

*On the feast of this awe-filled mystery,
though invisible in His own divine nature,
He has appeared visibly in ours;
and begotten before all ages,
He has begun to exist in time;
so that, raising up in Himself all that was cast down,
He might restore unity to all creation
and call straying humanity back to the heavenly
Kingdom.*

On this great feast of the Incarnation, we again experience this awe-filled mystery: the eternal Son of God, invisible in His divine nature, has chosen to appear visibly in ours. This is not simply a beautiful idea but the heart of our faith. God, who is without beginning and without end, who dwells in unapproachable light, has stepped into time and history. He who was begotten before all ages has taken on flesh, born of a woman, to live among us.

Why would He do this? The text tells us: so that all that was cast down might be raised up in Him, so that creation might be restored to unity, and so that humanity, wandering far from God, might be called back to the heavenly Kingdom. The Incarnation is not a divine experiment; it is God's definitive act of love and rescue.

Consider the contrast: the Creator of the universe lying as an infant in a manger; the Word who spoke the galaxies into being now crying with the voice of a child; the Lord of heaven and earth dependent on Mary and Joseph for food, shelter, and care. It is the paradox of divine humility. God did not remain at a distance, waiting for us to climb up to

Him by our efforts. He came down, stooping low, entering into the fullness of our condition so that nothing human would be beyond His redeeming touch.

This mystery has a purpose. Humanity was broken by sin, scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Our relationships—with God, with one another, even with creation itself—were disordered. Christ comes to gather, to reconcile, to restore unity. In His own Person, He bridges heaven and earth. He unites divinity and humanity without confusion, division or loss. He is the mediator, the one in whom God and humanity are perfectly joined.

But the Incarnation is not only a past event. Its effects continue in us today. When we are baptized into Christ, we are joined to His Body, the Church, and His life becomes our life. What He assumed, He redeemed. Every aspect of our humanity—our joys and our sorrows, our work and our rest, even our suffering and death—has been touched by His presence. In Him, nothing is wasted, and all can be transformed.

The mystery also sets before us a calling. If Christ humbled Himself to share in our humanity, then we must humble ourselves to share in the lives of others. If He came to gather and reconcile, then we, as His disciples, must be agents of unity and reconciliation. The Incarnation challenges us to see every person as bearing the dignity of one for whom Christ came, lived and died.

As we contemplate the child of Bethlehem, we remember that His mission does not end in the manger but leads to the cross and the resurrection. From His birth to His death and beyond, His purpose is clear: to raise up what was fallen, to restore what was broken, to call us home to the Father's house.

Let us, then, rejoice in this awe-filled mystery. God is with us—Emmanuel. And because He is with us, we need never be afraid.

39th Annual Southwest Regional Assembly

Organized and conducted by Knight Companion Richard W. Bullard, Intendant General of California Southern, the 39th Annual Southwest Regional Assembly was held on July 11 and 12, 2025 at East San Diego Lodge in San Diego. The Southwest Regional is composed of the Divisions of California Northern, California Southern, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico.

The work began on Saturday morning with the conferral of the Degree of Eusebius in a College of Viceroys on nine candidates, followed by the conferral of the Degree of Sovereign in a Senate of Sovereigns on eight candidates. The Orders of Knights of the Red Cross of Constantine, the Holy Sepulcher and St. John the Evangelist were conferred on twenty-three candidates. There were eighty Knights Companions and twenty-four ladies in attendance.

The assembly closed Saturday evening with an elegant dinner. The Grand Sovereign delivered welcomed remarks and installed into office Knight Companion Paul D. Erickson as Illustrious Grand Chaplain of the United Grand Imperial Council. Four other grand officers were in attendance.



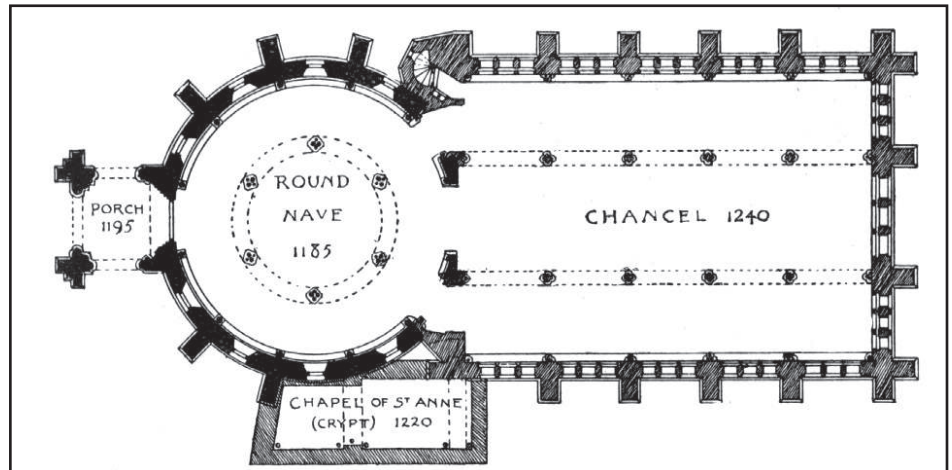


Templary in Medieval England, Scotland and Ireland

There is abundant documentary and archaeological evidence for the presence of the Knights Templar in medieval England, Scotland, and Ireland, beginning in the early 12th century when the Order was founded in France and lasting until its suppression between 1307 and 1312. This evidence spans foundations and landholdings, religious and architectural remains, economic and legal records, military and political activities, and the eventual transfer of Templar property.

In England, the Templars established their first house at Temple Cowley, Oxford, around 1128, later moving to the New Temple in London, consecrated in 1185 and still known today as Temple Church. By the early 14th century, they controlled more than 500 properties across counties including Lincolnshire, Warwickshire, Yorkshire, and Somerset. These holdings encompassed preceptories, farms, and administrative centers. In Scotland, charters record lands at Balantrodoch—now Temple, Midlothian—their principal preceptory, along with estates in Aberdeen, Ayrshire, and Argyll. In Ireland, the Order was established by the mid-12th century, with its chief house at Clontarf near Dublin and additional preceptories at Kilclogan in Wexford, Kilsaran in Louth, and Templehouse in Sligo.

The Templars' religious and architectural legacy remains visible. London's Temple Church, with its round nave modeled on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, contains effigies of Templar knights. In Lincolnshire, Temple Bruer preserves substantial remains, including a distinctive tower. Scottish place names such as Temple in Midlothian and the ruins at Balantrodoch, together with Irish sites like Templehouse, testify to their enduring presence.



Economically, the Templars became bankers to kings, nobles, and merchants. English monarchs deposited treasure at the Temple in London: King John relied on their services during the negotiations of Magna Carta in 1215, and Henry III stored the crown jewels there. Surviving records include pipe rolls, charters, and inquisitions records documenting donations, rents, and disputes involving Templar lands. After the Order's suppression, inquisitorial proceedings in England, Scotland, and Ireland recorded their possessions and interrogated brethren, offering further insight into their financial operations.

The Templars also played military and political roles. English members participated in the Crusades and defended Angevin holdings in France. In Scotland, they supported local lords, although their political influence was less pronounced than in England. In Ireland, they served both as landholders and protectors of settlements during the Anglo-Norman expansion, combining martial and administrative functions.

Suppression began in 1307 when King Edward II, under pressure from Pope Clement V, ordered their arrest. English trials held in London, York, and Lincoln produced detailed interrogation records, many still surviving in Latin. In Scotland, the process was less



aggressive, partly due to political instability and Robert the Bruce's excommunication, though their lands were ultimately transferred to the Knights Hospitaller. In Ireland, inquisitorial records from Dublin describe their possessions and trials, reflecting a similar pattern of seizure and redistribution.

Major Templar sites illustrate the breadth of their activities. In England, Temple Church in London served as headquarters, uniting religious, administrative, and banking functions. Temple Bruer in Lincolnshire operated as both a preceptory and training site, while Temple Cowley in Oxford began as a residential and administrative house. Other important preceptories, such as Cressing Temple in Essex, Willoughton in Lincolnshire, and Rothley in Leicestershire, managed agricultural estates, oversaw local communities, and provided support for the Order's wider mission. In Scotland, Balantrodoch was the principal center, supported by smaller holdings across the country. In Ireland, preceptories at Clontarf, Kilclogan, Kilsaran, and Templehouse combined farmland, religious buildings, and administrative functions.

These sites performed multiple roles. They were religious, with chapels and churches; economic,

managing farms, mills, and markets; military, serving as training and muster points; and administrative, overseeing rents and estates. Many survive as ruins, functioning churches, or place names retaining the "Temple" designation. Following suppression, most properties were transferred to the Hospitallers, though some passed into secular ownership.

The Templars were thus deeply woven into the religious, economic, and political life of the British Isles. Their estates, churches, and financial operations formed a network spanning England, Scotland, and Ireland, reflecting their identity as monks, warriors, and administrators. The surviving documentary, legal, and archaeological record demonstrates that until their dissolution in the early 14th century, the Knights Templar shaped the medieval landscape in lasting ways. Their legacy endures in architecture, place names, and historical memory.

St. Christopher Conclave Centenary

St. Christopher Conclave of Springfield, Missouri celebrated its 100th anniversary on Saturday, May 17, 2025. The Conclave received its charter on May 28, 1925. A dinner was held, preceded by a social hour. Every Knight Companion attending received a commemorative set of glasses and beautiful display case. There were forty-two people in attendance including members and their wives and guests. St. Christopher had the pleasure and privilege of hosting Most Illustrious Stanton T. Brown II, Grand Sovereign, as well as Illustrious John W. Siscell III, Grand Herald and Intendant General Missouri Southern, and Illustrious Bobbie E. White, Intendant General Missouri Northern.

Pictured left to right:

Ill. Bobbie E. White; Most Ill. Stanton T. Brown II; Greg Walker, Sovereign; Ill. John W. Siscell.



May Assembly of St. Gabriel Conclave

St. Gabriel Conclave of Los Angeles, California held a Regular Assembly in the Beaumont Room at the Jonathan Club in Downtown Los Angeles on May 8, 2025. The conclave has met at this location since the current club facilities opened in December of 1925. Only two Knights Companions of the conclave missed the May Assembly, both of whom were out of state on the assembly date.





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