

Grand Master Toby Fitch
Address to the Grand Session 2004

I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made Heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is thy keeper: The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil. He shall preserve thy soul. The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and for evermore (Psalm 121).

We are blessed!

Grand Master Milton F. Fitch, Sr., my mother, sister Cora Whitted Fitch, Past Grand Masters Parker, Dawson, Johnson, and Chambers; to my Deputy Grand Master, Robert M.L. Walker; Senior and Junior Grand Wardens Jackie Robinson and Franklin Brown; Special Advisors Lee Woods and Daniel Thompson; to the Grand Treasurer and Grand Secretary James A Mitchell, Sr. and Alvin L. Elliott, Sr.; to Grand Tiler, James H. Petty; to the Grand Trustees, Howard Pearce, Bennett Taylor, and Charles R. Smith; my Grand Lecturer Ray Charles Jones, my Grand Chaplin, James Harris, other Grand Lodge Officers whom I have appointed; to my District Deputies, Worshipful Masters, Past Masters, Past Grand Lodge Officers, Wardens, visiting Grand Lodge Officers; to the Heads of Masonic Houses of The Most Worshipful Prince Hall Grand Lodge; to the newly elected Grand Worthy Matron, Valeria S. Collins and Grand Worthy Patron, L. Waddell Alston; Brothers and Sisters; to the Grand Lodge Staff, I greet you in the name of Him that looks high and low, near and far, wide and narrow, our Lord and Savior, Jesus the Christ.

(Music to Be Played)

Before entering any great or important undertaking, one should always invoke the aid of Deity. Deacons, escort Deputy Chaplain Samuel J. Cornelius to the Altar.

Necrology

Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality. During our last fiscal year 201 Brothers have gone on to that Celestial Blue Lodge in the sky to receive their rewards for their labor and a proper Lodge of Sorrow having been conducted, Deputy Cornelius lead us again in prayer.

As Grand Master, I thank all Worshipful Masters and their Crafts for handling the Masonic Rites for our departed Brothers.

State of the Nation

Our nation is involved in a war that in my opinion we can't win. We didn't ask to go to Iraq but we are there so we need to support our troops and their families in every way we can. We must keep our troops and our members who are serving in our Armed Forces constantly in our prayers.

Those who control the Federal Government seem to think more of the folk living outside this country than they do of people and problems within the borders of the United States of America. Charity, I was taught, begins at home then spreads abroad, not abroad then spreading at home.

State of the State

Politics seems to control the day. This is an election year and in 2004 we still are not represented at all levels of our state government. Look at our Supreme Court: No one there looks like us. Well there is an open seat that is *Wynnable—James Wynn is a member of our Craft*. We must be more active in our government by making sure all we know are registered to vote and vote in every election. Jobs are leaving our state like water running downstream. So we must go back to the old way of depending on each other and practicing economic development, first with ourselves and then spreading outward. This Prince Hall Family must lead our community in civic, education, and financial self help.

Knights of Pythagoras

The Knights of Pythagoras program is under new direction and performing in an outstanding manner. One of the hardest decisions of appointments was that of the leadership of the Knights of Pythagoras program. Our youth are a vital part of our community. I wanted new leadership that would continue the legacy that has been produced by Alexander Graves, Jr.

I looked to the leadership of Elijah Bazemore and Ervin Farmer, Jr. After I appointed them in October of last year, I told them that I wanted them to carry the torch of Alexander Graves, Jr. With that simple directive, they took the ball and ran. They began by having 100 young men in the parade at Central Children's Home. They continued by having 174 youth and advisors registered for the 2004 Annual Assemblage. They continued on by organizing a successful Testimonial Banquet for Alexander Graves, Jr. and the establishment of a scholarship in his name.

In order to defray the cost encumbered upon the Grand Lodge by the Knights of Pythagoras organization, I am requesting that we institute an additional \$1.00 tax. This

will assist by providing additional funds to underwrite the cost of the Annual Assemblage.

The 2004-2005 Goals of the Knights of Pythagoras are as follows:

Increase the number of Lodges with active Knights of Pythagoras Councils.

Increase participation on the regional levels.

Increase attendance at Annual Assemblage

Increase attendance for both Grand Session and Grand Lodge.

Raise \$10,000.00 to support KOP program and scholarship fund:

- a. Raffle tickets / All District Deputy Grand Masters will be asked to sell 200 tickets
- b. 50/50 Raffle at Grand Lodge
- c. Ads for Annual Assemblage Brochure
- d. Ads for T-shirts for Assemblage
- e. Motorcycle Poker run in early June
- f. Annual KOP Banquet in August of each year

Bestow the title of Grand Knight Director Emeritus on Brother Alexander Graves, Jr.

State of the Craft

Rumors are running wild—so and so is Grand Master. Well, let me set the record straight. Milton F. Fitch, Jr. is the Grand Master of North Carolina and has been since October 2, 2003, when the Craft of this Jurisdiction elected him. Do you now HEAR what I said and do you understand it?

September of 2003 this Craft was slipping away, brotherly love was not prevailing, the Craft was not informed, men were being treated like boys, and our Sisters were being treated like women outside of the family. In October, we changed the head and on November 22, 2003, practice ended and our Team was assembled. All of the FIRST (1ST) string has been working together except one. Well, we have played hurt and we have bent, but we didn't break, and we are getting stronger!!!

We now are getting our yearly reports faster than ever. We have a web page that is second to none. We had a great Founder's Day at NCCU. We had a great Founder's Day at Central Children's Home. We enjoyed a great visit to the George Washington Masonic Memorial. We had a great Grand Session for the Order of the Eastern Star.

We are a jurisdiction on the move and nothing can stop us now. Just look at how we worked together in 5 months for the common good of this jurisdiction (with less than 100% participation). It is time for the division to stop, for divided we cannot stand, and if we do stand, for sure we won't be strong.

Our communities need men who will help form values and shape character. Prince Hall Masons are these men. Aren't they? If Prince Hall Masons don't save our communities, then they won't be saved. Since we are the last institution Black folks have, we must teach our children by taking them by the hand and educating them of our past so that they can envision the future as leaders.

We cannot grow unless we first stop the decline. We cannot grow unless we bring our light out of the shadows and let our children and our communities see what beneficial accomplishments, we, as Prince Hall Masons can do. With unity, we can build. We must start taking care of our physical buildings throughout this jurisdiction.

The standards have now been set. I understand that meetings have taken place for the purpose of garnering support for election of Grand Master. Well, that is freedom of speech and freedom of assembly. Prince Hall would understand that. So for those who have asked me why I'm not doing something about that, I say, let the craft speak and let their will be done.

We all by now have heard of the vote at the AF & AM Grand Lodge last week at this very hotel, where the Tenets of Free Masonary were not upheld. Simply put, two wrongs don't make a right. We should pass our own resolution on recognition and make it effective when our AF & AM brothers pass the same.

Having shared what has transpired during my year as Grand Master, I now offer you my recommendations for continuing to make the Craft go forward and stronger.

1. The Grand Master can't spend more than \$50,000 without the vote of the Craft.
2. Tenure for the Grand Master – he shall not succeed himself but twice, starting 2006.
3. Have a major fundraiser yearly.
4. Benevolent Benefits Secretary separate from the Grand Secretary.
5. Joint Public Installation with OES in November 2004.
6. Prince Hall Day to be done by Regions with parade and full program.
7. Competition on Ritual Work by Districts with the best going to the Region.
8. Golf Tournament
9. Two Disaster Relief Banquets with the Western/Piedmont areas together and the Coastal/Eastern areas together.
10. Masonic Bowl with college teams competing.
11. Train ride to Boston to visit the Mother Jurisdiction.
12. Renovation Brigade--lists of Brothers with Skills and Trades,
13. Youth Tax of \$1.00 per person for the Knights of Pythagoras Program
14. Revise the NC Code.

We will go from this place with the Resolve to love one another more and with the will to allow the Tenets of Prince Hall Freemasonry to prevail. God Bless!!!