

**32° Scottish Rite,
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction
Valley Talking Points
Handbook 2025-2026**

Ready-to-Present Short Talks

SCOTTISH RITE



To Valley Secretaries and Brethren of the 32° Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction

We are pleased to present to you a Talking Points Handbook. You may be wondering what it is, and why do you need it?

At Reunions there is often time to fill between degree presentations or other activities. The Talking Points handbook is designed to make it easy for you to present interesting and accurate information to candidates – all in the form of ready-to-read short talks.

Each section of this handbook is written as a ready-made talk you can present on topics related to Scottish Rite degrees, activities, awards, charities, and more. All you have to do is find a talk of interest and present! It's all done for you.

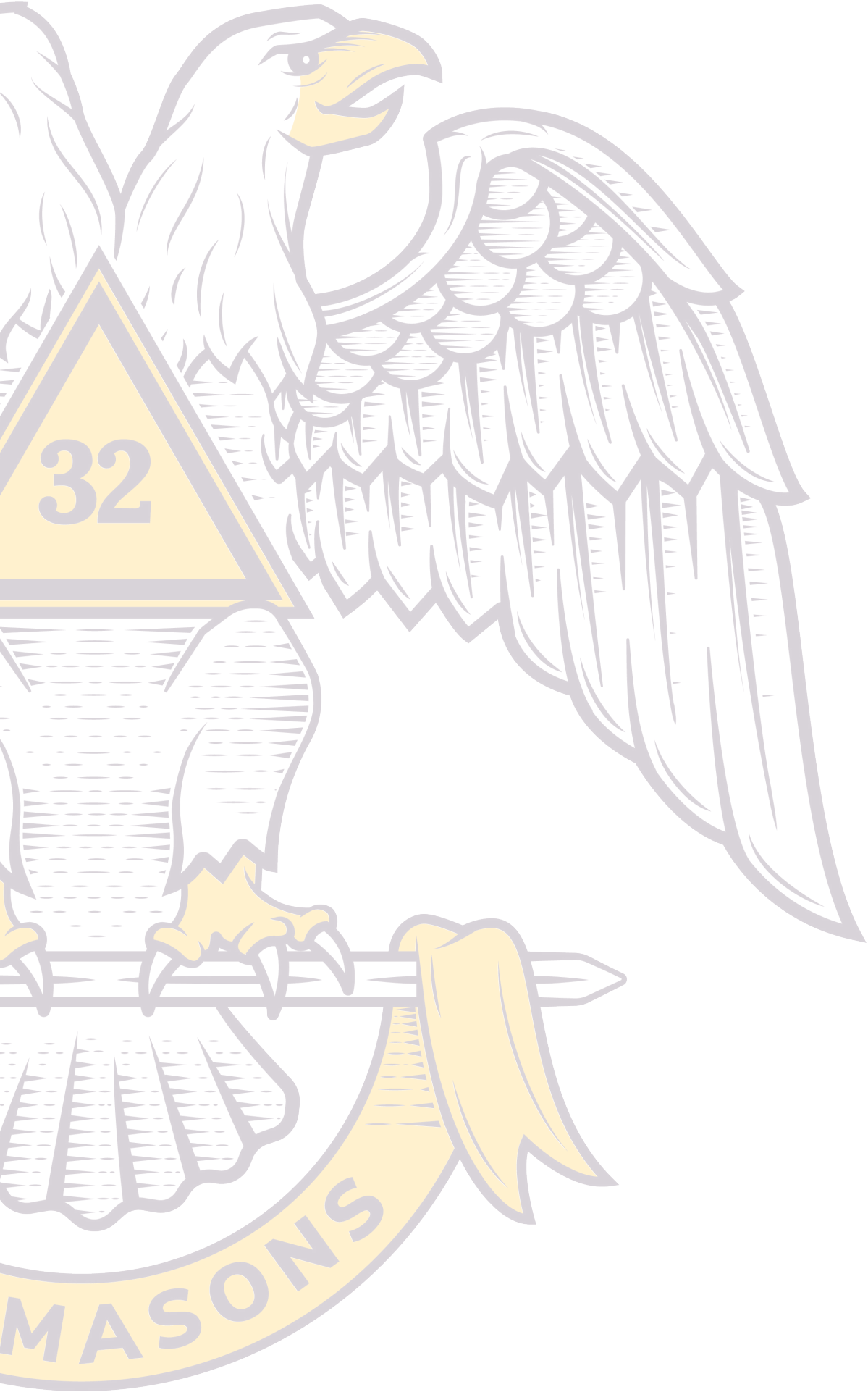
The handbook will be updated twice each year to be sure all information remains accurate. New versions will be distributed as needed.

In the handbook you will find ready-to-read talks that include:

- General Address to the Valley
- What is 32° Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction?
- The Company You Keep
- The Scottish Rite System of Degrees
- The Passport Program
- Scottish Rite, NMJ Charities
- Educational Programs for Members
- What is The Path Forward?
- What is Journey On?
- Scottish Rite Awards & Medals

We hope you find the Talking Points Handbook makes your job a little easier. Reach out to the marketing team at communications@srmnj.org with suggestions for other topics we can include.

Thank you for all you do for the Scottish Rite.



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MASONS

Talk I

General Address to the Valley

Distinguished Brethren, Brethren all, welcome.

The Supreme Council and Sovereign Grand Commander Wheeler have been hard at work implementing a multiphase program to improve the membership experience for all our Scottish Rite Brothers, new and old alike.

Within that plan are a number of tools and programs to encourage engagement between members as well as educational resources to help us all journey deeper into the Craft. Armed with these new resources, we are excited to venture forth together and make the most of this year.

To our Brother Masons joining us for their first ever Reunion and for those who might be returning for their first Reunion in some time, we extend to you an especially warm welcome.

For those of you who are new to the fraternity of the Scottish Rite, we expect you may have many questions. Perhaps you are unsure what to expect from your experience as part of Scottish Rite Freemasonry. Maybe you are unsure of how to get involved or maybe you'd simply like to know more about our history.

While we will strive to answer some of those questions for you tonight, we encourage all our Brethren who recently joined to seek out and share in the insights of their peers. Your Scottish Rite Brothers are a fountain of knowledge about Scottish Rite history, decorum and philosophy. Opening yourself up to your Brothers, learning from them and sharing with them is the surest path to internalizing the teachings of our great fraternity and carrying them with you beyond these walls into your daily life.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk II - What is 32° Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction?***

Talk II

What is 32° Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction?

32° Scottish Rite Freemasonry is a fraternity which expands upon the fundamental principles of Freemasonry introduced to us in Blue Lodge. Building upon the ethical and philosophical teachings of the Blue Lodge, 32° Freemasonry reveals a wealth of knowledge about Masonry not found in the other degrees. Our mission is simple: **enrich the philosophy of the symbolic lodge to help good men become even better.**

Originally chartered in France during the mid-1700s, the Scottish Rite was brought to the United States during the 1760s. The Supreme Council, 33°, for the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction (NMJ) was formally established in 1813. Today, the NMJ includes fifteen states in New England, the Mid-Atlantic and the Midwest. As of 2024, the Scottish Rite, NMJ has approximately 100,000 members across nearly 100 Valleys.

Our Core Values & Fundamental Goals

Our fraternity is guided by six Core Values. They are:

- Reverence for God
- Devotion to Country
- Integrity
- Justice
- Tolerance
- Service to Humanity

A member of 32° Scottish Rite Freemasonry has three fundamental goals:

1. Aid mankind's search for identity and destiny in God's universe
2. Produce wiser men in a wiser world, happier men in a happier world, and therefore better men in a better world
3. Promote the dignity of every person and humanity in all activities

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk III - The Company You Keep***

Talk III

The Company You Keep

Since Freemasonry's beginnings, we've welcomed thousands of like-minded men, many of whom have left a lasting impact on not only Masonic but world history. As Masons, the company we keep not only allows us to stand together in shared values and principles but connects us to men who have done the same throughout our centuries-long history.

For example, we can look to Brother Harry Truman, 33°, whose steady leadership and dedication as president during World War II remind us of the power of conviction in moments of crisis. Our nation's first president, Brother George Washington, set a timeless example of character and service, joining Freemasonry at just 20 years old and later guiding Alexandria Lodge No. 22 in Virginia. And consider Brother Davy Crockett, the legendary frontiersman and hero of the Battle of the Alamo, whose courage and resilience left a lasting imprint on American culture.

These men lived in very different times, but their examples speak directly to us today: commitment in the face of challenge, integrity in leadership, and courage when the path ahead is uncertain. The modern man, balancing personal responsibility with a desire for purpose and belonging, can still draw inspiration from their lives—and carry forward those same values in our own time.

Among our ranks you'll also find Illustrious Brother Thomas Moe, who kept his incredible faith throughout his five years as a prisoner of war at the infamous Hanoi Hilton.

Another outstanding Brother is Enoch O' Dell Woodhouse II, who enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corps when he was 17 and is one of the last surviving members of the brave Tuskegee Airmen.

The fact that we can call these men our Brothers exemplifies the high caliber of men who make up our fraternity. They were once just like us, sitting alongside Brothers learning, growing, and contributing to something greater than themselves. It's a powerful reminder that the impact they made was in part due to the same commitments and values we as Masons uphold today.

If you want to know more about the company we keep, check out the Scottish Rite, NMJ website's blog.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk IV - The Scottish Rite System of Degrees***

Talk IV

The Scottish Rite System of Degrees

The System of Degrees

As we all know, the Blue Lodge consists of the first three degrees of Freemasonry: Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. Scottish Rite Freemasonry continues these degrees, from the 4° to the 32°. All who wish to become a Scottish Rite Mason must first witness the 4°. To become a 32° Scottish Rite Mason, you must witness the 4°, the 32° and three other degrees of your choosing, in any order.

The Four Degree Bodies

Each Valley has up to four Scottish Rite bodies, each of which confers a set of degrees. In the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, these bodies are as follows:

The Lodge of Perfection (4° - 14°)

Commonly referred to as the “Ineffable Degrees,” the Lodge of Perfection involves the investigation and contemplation of the ineffable name of the Deity. The degrees amplify the legend of the Master Mason degree, and stories of the biblical era, leading up to the building of King Solomon’s Temple. These degrees impress more forcefully the teachings of the first three degrees.

Council of Princes of Jerusalem (15° - 16°)

Known as the historical degrees, the second degree body is known as the Council of Princes of Jerusalem. The two degrees in the Council examine the individuals and events related to the end of the Babylonian captivity of Israel and the rebuilding of Jerusalem by Zerubbabel follow the release of the Israelites from Babylon.

Chapter of Rose Croix (17° - 18°)

This third body, also known as the “Philosophical and Doctrinal Degrees” are among the most important in the whole body of Freemasonry. As the spiritual center of the Craft, they attempt to provide the candidate with a deeper understanding of religion, philosophy, ethics, and history through a variety of complex historical degrees.

Consistory (19° - 32°)

The fourth and final degree body of the Scottish Rite is comprised of fourteen traditional, chivalric and modern degrees. Each degree in this body depicts a unique message and applies to a familiar life situation. Certain degrees teach the victory of good over evil, the dignity of labor and the sacredness of duty. They teach tolerance for the opinions and religious convictions of others while maintaining faith in himself, his fellow man, and in God.

***Talk can stop here or continue to Talk V - The Passport Program*

Talk V

The Passport Program

The passport program is a popular feature of membership. When you earn the 4°, you will be issued a degree passport. The passport is stamped when you witness a degree in any one of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction Valleys. When a member has witnessed all 29 NMJ degrees, the Valley Secretary certifies the completion of the passport.

The secretary then submits it to the Supreme Council. A “Gold” passport is then issued to the member as recognition that he has completed the degree cycle at least once.

What happens if you complete the gold passport? There is a special Scottish Rite medal issued by the Supreme Council in recognition of that accomplishment. Contact your Valley Secretary if you would like to learn more.

If you see a gold passport, congratulate your Brother on his impressive achievement.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk VI - Auto-Pay Your Scottish Rite Dues***

Talk VI

Auto-Pay Your Scottish Rite Dues

Brothers, the Supreme Council recently introduced automatic payments to make paying our dues that much easier. You'll never forget to pay them again!

Once you enter your secure payment information within the Member Center to pay your dues, you now have the option to enroll in automatic payments. When you opt for auto-pay, your preferred payment information is stored with the highest level of security and protection. Your dues are automatically paid each month and you no longer have to remember to do it yourself.

However, if you prefer to pay manually each month, enrolling in autopay is optional. The next time you pay your dues, all you need to do is select the "No, I decline" button before hitting "Submit Payment."

If auto-pay is the right fit for you, update your profile today! Simply log into the Member Center, and in just two minutes, you'll be all set. Enjoy the ease and peace of mind that comes with automatic, hassle-free payments!

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk VII - A Talk About Scottish Rite NMJ Charities***

Talk VII

A Talk About Scottish Rite NMJ Charities

Nothing embodies our commitment to caring for one another more than the work of the Scottish Rite, NMJ charities. Since 1913, the Scottish Rite charities and the Scottish Rite Benevolent Foundation have been doing remarkable things to make a difference in the lives of our Brother Masons, their families, and in our communities.

During the 2024 fiscal year, over \$7 million was raised for our Scottish Rite charities.

These figures reflect a sustained donor base dedicated to:

- Taking care of members and their families in need through our Grand Almoner's Fund
- Helping children overcome a devastating learning issue through our Children's Dyslexia Centers
- Aiding college students across our 15 states with financial support through our Abbott Scholarships.
- And, preserving Masonic history through the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library

As Masons, we take seriously our oath that we made at the altar when we took our degrees: Brotherly love, RELIEF, and truth.

To that end, we would like to share a bit more about the inspiring work coming out of our individual charitable endeavors.

The Grand Almoner's Fund – As Freemasons, helping others is in our DNA. The Grand Almoner's Fund fulfills the Scottish Rite mission to care for members and their families. Every dollar donated goes towards helping those who have faced incredible hardships. During our last fiscal year, The Grand Almoner's Fund assisted nearly 100 Masons, their families, and widows. Whether it be a natural disaster or personal tragedy, the fund exists to make certain a helping hand is there in times of crisis.

Membership Education Fund – The Membership Education Fund provides Brothers with the tools needed to continue building a better tomorrow through programs like Thursday Night at the Rite, Hauts Grades Academy, and the Pathfinder Program.

Children’s Dyslexia Centers – Our flagship charity, the Children’s Dyslexia Centers (CDC) have been providing tutoring for over 30 years to children with dyslexia, helping them not only learn to read but regain confidence in their academic abilities and self-worth. The Centers also train tutors in the Orton-Gillingham method, giving them tools to take back to their community and help thousands more for years to come.

In our 47 Children’s Dyslexia Center locations in 13 states, we helped more than **1,400** children this past fiscal year.

Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library – The home of the Scottish Rite Supreme Council, the Scottish Rite Masonic Museum & Library serves as both the headquarters of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction and as the premier “historical society” of American Freemasonry. It collects, preserves, interprets and celebrates the history of fraternalism. A leader in Masonic research, the Museum & Library tells the story of Freemasonry in the context of American history.

Leon M. Abbott Scholarships – One of Freemasonry’s fundamental principles is a belief in the importance of the educated mind. The Scottish Rite is committed to fostering the value of education and helping deserving students. The Abbott Scholarship Program provides financial support for the continuing undergraduate and graduate education of Scottish Rite Masons, young men and women from Scottish Rite families and Masonic-related youth groups. This past year, we awarded scholarships to **339** undergraduate and graduate students.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk VIII - Scottish Rite, NMJ Educational Programs for Members***

Talk VIII

Educational Programs for Members

One of Sovereign Grand Commander Wheeler’s goals for the fraternity is to become more member-focused. He wants us all to know that he and the Supreme Council take the concerns and needs of all brethren seriously. As a result, he and the team at the Supreme Council have been working hard to implement programs that bring us all together between Reunions and maintain our connection to the fraternity.

Here are a few member educational programs available to us:

Hauts Grades Academy (pronounced “Hoh Grod”)

The Scottish Rite’s *Hauts Grades Academy* (HGA) is a program designed to promote the education, knowledge, and engagement of members in the Scottish Rite, NMJ. The name is fitting as the Scottish Rite was known as the “higher grades” in its early beginnings.

Through three levels of in-depth study and reflection on our 29 degrees, you’ll deepen your connection to our beloved Craft and continue to perfect your rough ashlar. At each level, you’ll have the help of your fellow classmates and HGA mentor as you delve deeper into the philosophies and history of our fraternity.

At full completion, you will earn the honor of becoming a Scottish Rite *Hauts Grades* academic and will be entitled to include the letters HGA after your name. You’ll also receive a certificate and a HGA jewel. If you’re interested in participating, add your name to the waitlist for the next class on the NMJ website.

Pathfinder: The Journey of a Lifetime

To help Brethren continue their quest for more light and self-improvement, the Supreme Council offers you the Pathfinder Program, an interactive quest through our fraternity.

The program was carefully curated by long-time Scottish Rite Masons to help you discover the most fulfilling membership experience by leading you to new experiences, knowledge, and friendships.

To get started, download the Guide Book at the NMJ website or by scanning the QR code found on the inside cover of your Field Book. When you are initiated, you’ll receive a Pathfinder Field Book but you may also download your own, or an additional, copy online. Upon completion, you’ll receive an awards box from the Supreme Council to celebrate your continued Scottish Rite Journey.

Thursday Night at the Rite and Join the Rite Night

Originally created to address the loss of Valley events during the COVID-19 pandemic, Thursday Night at the Rite and Join the Rite Night have since become beloved online programs from the Supreme Council.

Held seasonally, Thursday Night at the Rite is a digital, members-only event where you can join thousands of Brothers online to witness degrees exemplified by Valleys throughout the NMJ. Not only that, but it also offers a way to connect with these Brothers and discuss each night's presentation.

Preceding Thursday Night at the Rite is Join the Rite Night, a virtual joining opportunity for Scottish Rite candidates. Candidates witness the 4th degree and officially become a Scottish Rite Mason. A number of you may have joined this way!

You can find details about the current or upcoming season of Thursday Night at the Rite at the Scottish Rite website.

Masters of the Rite

Masters of the Rite is our newest online degree exploration program that serves as a supplement to our Thursday Night at the Rite programming to help our Brothers gain deeper understanding of the Craft's symbolic lessons and teachings. Led by Ill. Brother Sandy Karstens, 33°, the program offers monthly, interactive discussions and reflections on the degrees and themes of the Scottish Rite, NMJ.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk IX - What Is The Path Forward?***

Talk IX

What Is The Path Forward?

If you've been on the Scottish Rite, NMJ website or seen our social media pages, you've likely heard of a program called The Path Forward.

The Path Forward is the NMJ's official, strategic marketing and outreach initiative with two objectives:

1. Improve the overall Scottish Rite experience for Brothers across the Jurisdiction.
2. Help grow Blue Lodge Masonry.

The program began in 2016, rooted in the most comprehensive research study on Freemasonry in more than two decades. That study revealed something powerful: the values and messages of Freemasonry resonate deeply with men across the country.

But as the world around us continues to change, the Supreme Council returned to the research in 2023. The result was an updated analysis, published in *The Path Forward: Empowering the Future of Freemasonry*.

The findings confirmed what we already know in our hearts—that the values of Freemasonry—fraternity, integrity, compassion, and self-improvement—remain as relevant today as ever. In fact, 77% of Millennials surveyed said they would consider joining once they learned more about the Craft. That's an extraordinary sign of potential growth.

Even more importantly, the reassessment made clear that Freemasonry is not just relevant—it is necessary. At a time when one in four men in America report feeling lonely or disconnected, our fraternity stands as an antidote to isolation, offering Brotherhood, purpose, and community.

So, what exactly does The Path Forward aim to accomplish?

The first goal is to increase engagement with members by embracing technology

The research showed that our Brothers value the use of technology to augment, not replace, in-person interaction. Technology helps us stay connected in the long gaps between Reunions. It allows us to remain engaged as one Brotherhood, no matter where we live.

That's why initiatives like Thursday Night at the Rite, Join the Rite Nights, Masters of the Rite, and our digital platforms have been created—to keep us connected and learning together.

For those of you on social media, we encourage you to follow us on your preferred social channels if you haven't already.

Secondly, make the Scottish Rite, NMJ and its members a strong, clear voice of Freemasonry

We, as members, are the best advocates for relaying the benefits of the Craft. Each of us has a role to play in attracting good men to Freemasonry and advancing the Scottish Rite.

You may have seen the tagline: **“Not Just A Man. A Mason.”** These six words, created by the Supreme Council, are more than just a slogan. They are a rallying cry that speaks to the pride we share as Masons and the call we extend to others.

This campaign has grown far beyond our Jurisdiction. It has appeared across the United States and around the world—in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, and throughout Canada. It has been translated into Spanish, Portuguese, and French. Truly, it is a revolution in six words.

Building on that momentum, in 2023 we released new videos and imagery that remind us of the obligations we have taken and inspire good men of character to join us. Campaigns like “The Call” and “Timeless Connection” are available right now on our website and YouTube channel.

And the work hasn't stopped. In 2021, The Path Forward introduced the "Journey On" campaign for the Scottish Rite, which continues to inspire pride and unity among Scottish Rite Brothers while speaking to our Core Values.

Best of all, these resources are available to you—free of charge. You can download the images and videos, and even customize them with your Valley's website or a specific call to action at the Scottish Rite's website.

Finally, if you'd like to go deeper, I encourage you to read *The Path Forward: Empowering the Future of Freemasonry*. Copies are available on Amazon, and the insights within will inspire you just as they inspired this initiative.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk X - What is Journey On?***

Talk X

What Is Journey On?

Several years ago, the Supreme Council set to work to help revitalize Freemasonry through The Path Forward program and the “Not Just A Man. A Mason.” campaign.

The time came to bring this same energy and creativity to work for the Scottish Rite, Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. Thus, the “Journey On” Campaign was born.

So, what does it mean to “Journey On”? It is about continuing one’s growth as a man and as a Mason. In the Blue Lodge, we learn the profound secrets and lessons of Freemasonry. For most, it is a life-changing experience driven by self-realization, self-improvement, and spiritual awakening. As men of the Scottish Rite, we journey on through 29 degrees – degrees that expand Masonic teachings in order to help us become the most noble versions of ourselves. “Journey On” is designed to accomplish two objectives:

1. Introduce Blue Lodge Masons to the Scottish Rite. We hope to inspire more men to continue their journey in Freemasonry through our degrees, Core Values, and sharing our Scottish Rite Brotherhood with them so that they may expand their fraternal bonds.

2. Inspire current members to reconnect with what it means to be a Scottish Rite Mason, and to reaffirm the power and fulfillment that comes with seeking more light. Scottish Rite Masons will reawaken to their singularity as men committed to journeying deeper into the highest principles and ideals of our Craft, while bound in Brotherhood to other worthy, like-minded men.

You might be wondering what’s the difference between “Not Just A Man. A Mason.” and “Journey On”? “Not Just A Man. A Mason.” focuses on helping men take the first step to becoming a Freemason. “Journey On” reminds Master Masons that there is always more to answering the call; there is no last step in our journey through the Craft.

Today, Journey On continues to evolve as a creative ecosystem that presents new stories, resources, and experiences to enhance membership. One of the newest pieces in this evolution is the video “Crafting Our Story,” which celebrates the timeless values and enduring Brotherhood of the Scottish Rite — a continuation of the spirit that first inspired Journey On.

The Journey On campaign currently includes:

- **Journey On** (anthem video) – an introduction to the Scottish Rite journey beyond the Blue Lodge.
- **Hourglass** – inspired by the Blue Lodge lecture, reminding us to make the most of our time as men and Masons.
- **Crafting Our Story** – a new extension celebrating how the lessons of Freemasonry live on through our Core Values and shared Brotherhood.
- **Six Core Values videos** – each illustrating how our Scottish Rite Core Values come to life in everyday moments.
- **Supporting materials** – including print ads, banners, and social media graphics designed to help Valleys share these messages locally.

To watch and share our Journey On videos, please visit srnmj.us/journey-on-campaign-videos. To find our supporting materials, please visit srnmj.us/journey-on-resources.

All campaign assets can be found on the Scottish Rite website under the “Resources for Members” dropdown. You can download materials for personal use, and Valleys can request custom assets with their own URL or call-to-action through the form on the Journey On assets page.

The Journey On campaign touches every part of the Scottish Rite experience — one we hope to make richer, more connected, and more meaningful for every Brother.

*****Talk can stop here or continue to Talk XI - Scottish Rite Awards & Medals***

Talk XI

Scottish Rite Awards & Medals

The common thread connecting each of the Scottish Rite Medals and Awards is “Service.” Distinguished service to Freemasonry, Country, and Humanity are the hallmarks of each medal. For those wondering, we will discuss the respective medals to help you learn more about their significance and help gain a deeper understanding of the individuals to which these have been awarded.

Gourgas Medal

This medal is named in honor of Ill. John James Joseph Gourgas, 33°, the founder of the Supreme Council, of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. He is rightly remembered as the “Conservator of Scottish Rite Freemasonry,” reviving the Scottish Rite after the great anti-Masonic agitation of the 1820s–1830s.

The Gourgas Medal is the most distinguished honor conferred by the Supreme Council (or by the Sovereign Grand Commander) to members of the NMJ or any other Jurisdiction with which we are in amity. Forty Gourgas Medals have been awarded since 1938.

Supreme Council Medal of Honor

The Medal of Honor is the NMJ's second highest award. It may be conferred by the Supreme Council or by the Sovereign Grand Commander upon any person, Freemason or not, in recognition of distinguished service to Freemasonry, country, or humanity.

Daniel D. Tompkins Award for Distinguished Service

The Daniel Tompkins Medal is named for Daniel D. Tompkins, first Sovereign Grand Commander of the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. He also served our great nation as vice president, under President James Monroe.

The Daniel D. Tompkins Award may be conferred by the Supreme Council or by the Sovereign Grand Commander upon a deserving Masonic or Scottish Rite Brother who has rendered exemplary service to his country, or the Masonic fraternity at large.

Sovereign Grand Commander's Medal for Distinguished Service

The Sovereign Grand Commander may, at his discretion, bestow this award upon a deserving Masonic or Scottish Rite Brother whom he considers having rendered outstanding distinguished and exemplary service to the Masonic fraternity at large. The recipient of this prestigious award must have demonstrated exceptional service to the Scottish Rite not often witnessed among the general membership.

Medal for Masonic Service

The Medal for Masonic Service may be conferred by the Supreme Council or by the Sovereign Grand Commander upon any Master Mason (from any jurisdiction) who fully embodies the tenets of the Masonic fraternity, based on recommendations from three of his peers in his region.

Meritorious Service Award

The Meritorious Service Award may be conferred upon members of the Scottish Rite, NMJ, who have attained the 32° and who, because of meritorious service of a Masonic character, are deemed worthy of such recognition.

Harry S. Truman Medal for Outstanding Citizenship

The Illustrious Harry S. Truman Award for outstanding citizenship may be conferred by the Supreme Council or by the Sovereign Grand Commander upon any person, male or female, for outstanding leadership and citizenship in the recipient's community, state, or country. It may also be conferred upon a person rendering exemplary service to the Scottish Rite or Freemasonry at large.

