

DISTRICT GRAND LODGE OF SOUTH AFRICA, NORTH

Of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England



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Annual Meeting, District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North

DGM's Address – 3 October 2015

Brethren welcome to this our 120th Annual Meeting of District Grand Lodge and thank you all for your attendance here today.

A warm welcome is extended to our distinguished guests and I will formally acknowledge you all at the end of this address. I do hope that you have enjoyed our Ceremony and that you will join us at the Festive Board following this meeting.

I also welcome those Brethren who have travelled far to be with us today. I am delighted to see the large contingent from Mauritius comprising some 15 Brethren including the recently installed Master of Lodge of Friendship, No 1696 W Bro Dev Naeck and the recently installed Master of Phoenix Lodge No. 3602, W Bro Rajah Bhagareuty, together with Wor Bro Koon Kam King, PAGDC, Past Masters and Master Masons. I would ask the Brethren from Mauritius to please rise and Brethren please extend a warm welcome to our Brethren in the usual manner. I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to the Brethren from Gaborone Lodge in Botswana and to W Bro de Silva, Master of Swaziland Lodge and W Bro Taft, Master of St George's Lodge together with Brethren from Swaziland. Also to those who have travelled from Polokwane, Nelspruit and other far reaches of the District.

Congratulations are extended to those Brethren who have received District Grand rank today and I look to them for continued support and guidance in their Lodges.

I also extend my sincere congratulations to those Brethren who received Grand Rank earlier this year. The Most Wor The Grand Master gave first appointments to the following brethren: W Bros. Frank Bender, Richard Fahrenheit and David Gamble who received first appointments to PAGDC and

Gordon Martin and Ivor Sander received promotions to PJGD. I look to them for ongoing commitment to the Order and to this District.

Brethren our District is progressing well. As at 1 September, we had an increase of approx. 1% in Members for 2014 -2015. We don't seem to have a problem attracting candidates into Freemasonry, but we do lose Brethren who retire to the coast or overseas.

In April this year, I had the pleasure of attending the Annual Investitures of Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter. Emphasis was again made of the fact that in 2017, United Grand Lodge will be celebrating 300 years of English Freemasonry. I will have more to say on the Tercentenary celebrations later.

In August, I attended the investiture of Rt Wor Bro Doug Kirton as the new District Grand Master for KwaZulu-Natal in Durban. My grateful thanks are extended to my Deputy V Wor Bro David Whitfield and the District Grand Secretary, Wor Bro David Pickard who also attended. The Investiture was a marvelous occasion, carried out by Rt Wor David Williamson, Past AsstGM, assisted by the Grand Secretary Rt Wor Bro Nigel Brown and the Grand DC, Rt Wor Bro Oliver Lodge. We wish Rt Wor Bro Doug Kirton every success with his new appointment and wish him good health in the future. Following the Investiture, the Grand Secretary held a meeting with the District Grand Masters. All nine District Grand Masters of Southern Africa were present (From Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi, Namibia and the 6 Districts within South Africa), making this a rather unique occasion with all of us being present.

Prior to arriving in Natal, the Past AsstGM consecrated Universitas Lodge, a new Universities Scheme lodge in Cape Town. This was particularly appropriate as R Wor Bro Williamson is the Chairman of the Universities Scheme. I am extremely grateful to W Bro Chris van Gaalen, Asst DGM who represented me and the two Scheme Lodges in Johannesburg and Pretoria, at the consecration. We do wish Universitas Lodge all the best and hope that our Scheme lodges will keep in communication with Universitas Lodge in Cape Town.

President Lodge, the Universities Scheme Lodge in Johannesburg, is making excellent progress and I had the pleasure on Thursday to officiate at the installation of Bro Reneoue Kortjaas into the Master's Chair. Bro Kortjaas is the first student initiate to make the Master's Chair and we extend our best wishes to him. Golden West Lodge, the Scheme Lodge in Pretoria is slowly finding its feet and making progress. We wish them well with their student intake. My executive and I recognize the strategic

importance that these two lodges can play in introducing young University students into Freemasonry. These are the leaders of the future, both in Freemasonry and within our local communities. I am grateful to the President of the Board of General Purposes, WBro Mike Edy and the Board members for their assistance with the Scheme Lodges.

I am delighted to learn that W Bro Chris Adams who two years ago gave a very successful presentation at the Universities Scheme Conference held in Nottingham, England, will be attending the next Scheme Conference to be held in November at Leicester, England. At the Conference, Bro Chris plans to present an overview of both our Scheme Lodges in the District. I do thank him for his continued interest and support of President Lodge and we look forward to hearing from him on his return from the Conference.

In addition to the Universities Scheme Lodges, there are two other strategic thrusts that are continuing. The first is the Almoners training Programme and the concept Freemasonry Cares under the direction of the Board of Benevolence and secondly, the Mentorship Programme.

Within the District, this past year has been termed the “Year of the Almoner”. I am firmly of the opinion that the Almoner’s duties of addressing welfare and caring are extremely important for our Brethren and their families and form a spear-head of one of my main strategies of retaining Lodge membership. The Almoner is one of the most important officers in the Lodge and he is also an important link in the submission of any application for grants-in-need to the Board of Benevolence whether it be for cases of Medical assistance under the umbrella of Freemasonry Cares and the Grand Samaritan Fund, or for general Samaritan care.

I am extremely grateful to Wor Bro Brian Kretzschmar, President of the Board of Benevolence and members of that Board, Bros Chris Adams, David Baker, Howard Freeman, Dirk Norton, Dr Ron Poole, Bryan Price, Gus Southgate and Jeff Spiller for the incredible amount of work that they have carried out during the year and thank them all most sincerely for their enthusiasm and effort. They have almost completed the roll-out of the Almoner’s programme to all 101 lodges in the District, involving the briefing of Lodge Almoners and the hand-out of the upgraded Almoner’s manual and discs. They are now looking to implement the report-back stage, to enable Lodge Almoners to communicate back to the Board.

To emphasize the importance of the role of Almoner, I have asked the District Director of Ceremonies and his team to instruct Installing Masters to revert back to the investiture that was originally used to invest an Almoner, which I think clearly points out the duties of an Almoner.

Our major charity donations this year amounted to some R 893,000, which were announced at the District Charity Banquet in May, as follows:

- R 250,000 to Hospice Witwatersrand.
- R 250,000 to Woodside Sanctuary for disabled Children
- R 250,000 to Gateway Society
- R 100, 000 to the District Samaritan Fund to assist potential applicants to the Freemasonry Cares programme.
- R 30,000 towards CHOC
- R 13,000 to St John's Ambulance.

A further R 74 400 was distributed at my discretion to various Lodges in the country areas as small donations to compliment various charity projects being carried out by Lodges in their areas. Likewise I have directed that Charity monies raised in those territories outside South Africa, namely Botswana, Mauritius and Swaziland should be used for Charity projects in those Countries. I do ask that those Lodges concerned, report on the amounts raised and where they have applied the Charity monies, in the Master's annual report.

Our assistance to Brethren and their families has not been neglected and is mainly carried out through the Transvaal Inter-Constitutional Masonic Charity (TIMC). The District is a major contributor and donated some R 192,000.00 to this Charity Fund during the year, which covers Benevolent and Education grants.

Benevolent Grants were given to 25 recipients in our District, currently at R1 540.00 per month. In addition, educational grants were given to 2 students from applicants from our District enabling them to complete their University education. A maximum of R 26 000 per annum is allocated to each applicant depending on the actual University costs involved.

I am grateful for the oversight and scrutiny of applicants' needs given by the Board of Benevolence in all grant applications, where importantly a financial need must be demonstrated by the applicant.

The District Grand Charity and more recently the District Grand Lodge has been registered as a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO). My sincere thanks are extended to W Bro Charles Burn, DG Treasurer who has successfully managed the application to SARS for Tax Exemption for both District Grand Lodge and the District Grand Charity. In addition, in August this year, a successful application was approved under Section 18A under the Tax Act that donations to District Grand Lodge are now tax deductible. The implication is that District can now issue tax deductible receipts for *bone fide* donations to the District Grand Charity. This is important for potential Corporate and Company donors who wish to participate with the District in charitable work, with tax relief. Grateful thanks are extended to W Bro Charles Burn for his competent work in this matter. During the next few months, discussions will be held on the best way to manage this process between potential donors and charity projects.

The Mentorship programme is making good progress. Since his appointment last year, W Bro Philip Heydenrych, Dist G Mentor is making great strides to ensure that all Lodges have a Lodge Mentor in place and who are aware of their duties. Direct contact is being made by the DG Mentor to Lodges. In particular, assistance is being given to weak lodges. Workshops for Lodge Mentors are being planned by the Dist G Mentor under the auspices of Lyceum Lodge, who also continue with the workshops of Masters in the Making, the New-Made Mason and Prospective Masons. In respect of this last presentation, I am delighted to hear that this last group attracts gentlemen and ladies, who are also given a guided tour through Freemasons' Hall. The ladies are usually the ones to ask the most interesting questions! I thank the DG Mentor, Philip Heydenrych together with W Bro Dick Glanville, Dist Grand Orator, Geoff Spiller and Chris Adams for this initiative.

We have been extremely fortunate this year to receive a bequest from the estate of the late Bro Looney to the value of R 450, 000, specifically donated towards the beautification of our headquarters here at Park Lane. I am grateful to the President, W Bro Mike Edy and the Board of General Purposes foresight in continuing with renovations, which has included re-decorating the upper Lodge rooms, fitting dropped ceilings and new lighting. In addition, a ladies toilet has been refurbished. I thank W Bro Chris Reynolds, Dist G Supt of Works for his management of these projects. Likewise, I am grateful to our Dist G Organist, W Bro Pieter Wessels for his motivation and guidance in procuring a new organ for this room. I think you will agree that today's ceremony has been enhanced by Bro Pieter Wessels playing the new organ and the marvelous sound produced. It is my intention to place a plaque on the organ, recording that the source of funding is from the Looney Bequest.

Bequests like this are most welcome either to the District Grand Charities or the District Grand Lodge Heritage Funds. Brethren who are undertaking estate planning with tax implications might like to consider such bequests.

Grand Lodge has announced that on 17th October 2017, the official Tercentenary celebration will take place at the Albert Hall in London. Grand Lodge is encouraging their Provinces and Districts and Lodges or groups of Lodges to organize their own celebrations during 2017 leading up to the Grand Lodge event in October 2017. The celebration of 300 years of English Freemasonry will be a significant event, celebrated world-wide.

In this District, the Tercentenary Committee under W Bros Graham MacKenzie and Chris van Gaalen is making excellent progress in planning District events. Forthcoming events will be announced during 2016 and 2017 by e-mail. A second web site is also being planned to host the Tercentenary events and the social media of tweeting and facebook is already being utilized. To assist the Tercentenary Committee, I have appointed Bro Tyrann Burger of Kosmos Lodge as a Public Relations Officer who brings to the Committee extensive personal skills in Publicity management and together with W Bros Chris Adams and Lance Epstein they will control the social media.

Individual Lodges or Groups of Lodges are also encouraged to celebrate this significant event themselves. For example, I look to the Lodges in the North centred at Polokwane, the Pretoria area, Swaziland, Mauritius, Botswana, The East Rand, Central Rand and elsewhere. If you have plans for various events do let W Bro MacKenzie know so we can construct a calendar of events for all in the District.

In consultation with the Tercentenary Committee, it gives me great pleasure to launch the Tercentenary District Samaritan Fund, which will run from January 2016 to October 2017. This fund will be marked by striking a breast jewel of a design to be approved by Grand Lodge and with permission, to be worn by subscribing Brethren. It is proposed to raise a minimum amount of R 1 M, by individual subscriptions by our Members at R 1 500 per member during the period January 2016 to October 2017. It is also envisaged that double, tertiary and even quaternary quotas will be recognized by adding bars to the ribbon of the jewel. The collection of subscriptions by electronic payment and other details will be circulated to all members in the District before the end of the year.

Importantly, the new Tercentenary District Samaritan Fund will be a fund raised by Masons for Brethren, Wives or Partners and their Families. It will allow the existing Samaritan Fund to be expanded to also include applications for grants-in-need to a family where the wage-earner has been made redundant, to give support for hearing aids, dental and optical work and other minor medical procedures and to assist with funeral costs, where necessary. It will address a gap between the TIMC grants-in-aid for widows and pensioners and education grants on the one hand and grants from the Grand Lodge Samaritan Fund to cover major medical operations, on the other.

Finally Brethren, I would like to express my thanks to the District Grand Secretary, W Bro David Pickard and Mrs Fern Rowles and the staff at Freemasons' Hall who are involved in the administration of our District. They together with W Bro Graeme MacKenzie, Chairman of the Organising Committee and members of his committee together with the DCs, W Bros Richard Fahrenheit and Simon Knutton and their teams, have all contributed to the success of this Annual meeting. Kind assistance has also been given by W Bros Stanley Elms and David Johnston who have been working behind scenes. In particular, I would like to specifically thank my Deputy, Very Wor Bro David Whitfield who despite sleepless nights, has skillfully managed the bookings for the meetings, the seating, the production of tickets and procession lists.

I look forward to the opportunity of meeting those who will be attending the Festive Board.

I wish you all a safe journey home

RW Bro Prof. E Guy Charlesworth
District Grand Master
3 October 2015,
Johannesburg

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