

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 – 1 October 2016

Brethren welcome to this our 121ST 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 contingent from Mauritius comprising some 8 Brethren including the recently installed Master of Lodge of Friendship, No 1696, W Bro Rajeev Nathoo together with his Senior Warden, Bro Ashok Ramdenee, and the recently installed Master of Protea Lodge No. 6473, W Bro Mustapha Adamjee. They are accompanied by 4 Past Masters from one or more of our 3 Lodges in Mauritius, namely; Wor Bros Vij Mardemootoo, who is also a member of the Board of General Purposes, Shyam Mohadeb, James Ho Fong, Kailash Juddoo and Bro. Mooneram of the Lodge of Friendship. I hope you enjoy your stay in Johannesburg. I would ask the Brethren from Mauritius to 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 W Bro John Ebby from Gaborone Lodge in Botswana. and to Bro George Mavhunga, JW of Swaziland Lodge and Bro Paulo da Silva JW of St George's Lodge Swaziland. They are accompanied by W. Bro George Lutwama, Past Master of Swaziland Lodge and Wor Bros Gaz Barlow Past Masters of both Swaziland and St George's Lodge. I also extend a welcome to those who have travelled from the far reaches of the District.

Congratulations are extended to those Brethren who have received District Grand rank today and I look to you for continued support to your Lodges and to the District. Today, we welcome Kevin Hyde as the new District Grand Registrar and I thank Wor Bro Gordon Martin who is standing down after his 15

years of service as District Grand Registrar. We also thank Wor Bro Frans Visagie who at 92, retired as District Grand Tyler after 27 years of service. Sincere thanks are extended to those Lodges and individuals who contributed, many anonymously, towards a retirement gift for Frans which amounted to R 29, 204.00, to which the District will be making a further contribution. Bro Frans after his recent illness and brief hospitalization is now living at the Masonic Haven at The Willows, Pretoria. If you have the opportunity, I'm sure he would appreciate a visit. We welcome Jerry Davies as the new District Grand Tyler and wish him all the best with his new duties.

Wor Bro Cleve Wiehahn, PAGDC has asked to stand down as my representative on the Council of the Masonic Haven and I thank him for his services. The Assistant District Grand Master, Wor Bro Brian McDermott, PJGD has kindly agreed to serve as my representative on this Council and I thank him.

I also extend my sincere congratulations to those Brethren who received Grand Rank earlier this year. The Most Wor The Grand Master was pleased to appoint W Bros. **Dave Gurney** and **Dries Krause** to first appointments of PAGDC and Wor Bros. **Graeme MacKenzie** and **Bernie Krone** 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 31 March, we had an overall increase of 3 Members for 2015 – 2016. Whilst this is an extremely small increase in terms of our total membership, nevertheless, it is an important movement in the right direction. At the 31 March, we had a total of 1890 Members including 138 Initiates, or 2215 Memberships when counting multiple memberships in our 101 Lodges.

Whilst our numbers are looking healthy, we still have a number of ailing lodges. Brethren, a memo will shortly be sent out to all Masters and Secretary's of Lodges, pointing out that those Brethren who wish to close a Lodge must understand that a resolution placed on an agenda, without any consultation with District, is simply not acceptable. Just as there are protracted procedures to follow to form and consecrate a Lodge, there are set procedures to follow to close a Lodge. Before the closure of a Lodge can happen in this District, it is expected that the first step to follow is to set-up a meeting with the District Grand Secretary, the liaising Chain and the District Grand Master, to clearly discuss the status of the Lodge and its future, prior to any attempt being made to close the Lodge.

In April this year, I had the pleasure of attending the Annual Investitures of Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter in London. 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.

Whilst in London, I had the honour of being able to present the address to the late Rt Wor Bro Doug Kirton, DGM for KwaZulu-Natal at his installation as Wor Master of South Africa Lodge on the 25TH April, where several of us from South African Districts were present. We were all saddened to learn of Doug's untimely passing on the 11TH June, after a brave fight with cancer.

In August, my wife Helen and I were able to join the celebratory Tercentenary event hosted by the District of East Africa, at the Sands hotel and beach resort, some 30 km North of Dar es Salaam. The event was honoured with the presence of the Pro Grand Master, Most Wor Bro and Mrs Peter Lowndes, and the Past Grand Secretary Rt Wor Bro and Mrs Nigel Brown. Some 8 DGMs from West and southern Africa and DGMs from Jamaica and Bombay were present. Unfortunately, the event was overshadowed by the fact that the District Grand Master Rt Wor Bro Dr Virendra Talwar tragically lost his son a few days before the event. His Deputy, Very Wor Bro Kenneth Taylor ably stood-in and the hospitality and generosity of the East African hosts made this an extremely memorable occasion. Notably, we were able to visit a newly constructed medical centre planned by the Rt Wor DGM and funded by East African Masons. This brilliant example of Freemasonry at work was opened by the Pro Grand Master.

I have just returned from Mauritius, where I officiated at the installations of Lodge of Friendship and Phoenix Lodges and Friendship Royal Arch Chapter and importantly at the first installation of Protea Lodge in Mauritius. Protea Lodge will meet in the late morning, mainly for businessmen, followed by a luncheon. We wish them well with their new endeavours. I would like to express my thanks, on behalf of the District delegation, for the hospitality and generosity of all our Mauritian brethren.

President Lodge, the Universities Scheme Lodge in Johannesburg and Golden West Lodge, the Universities Scheme Lodge in Pretoria are both making good progress. I do thank the senior members in both lodges for all their hard work and I am grateful to the Assistant District Grand Masters, Wor Bros Chris van Gaalen of President Lodge and Brian McDermott of Golden West Lodge who under Scheme rules, act as a liaison between these scheme lodges and myself and together with the Assistant District Grand Master, Wor Bro Bernie Krone of President Lodge, I thank them for their guidance in these lodges.

Recently, we have learnt that the two scheme lodges in the District and Universitas, the new scheme lodge in Cape Town will be visited in April next year by the President of the Universities Scheme, RW Bro Sir David Wooton, Assistant Grand Master. He will be accompanied by the Scheme Chairman, W Bro Edward Lord, the Deputy Chairman, W Bro Mark Greenburgh, the Scheme's new Regional Co-ordinator for Africa, W Bro Gregory Jones. The Past Assistant Grand Master, RW Bro David Williamson who is the Past President and founder of the Universities Scheme and up to 3 other members of the Scheme will also form part of this visiting group.

I have asked W Bro Chris Adams, Past Master of President Lodge to co-ordinate a programme which will include workings of both President and Golden West Lodges, to which the distinguished visitors will be attending. Details of the programme will be released once there is confirmation from the Universities Scheme committee. I am hopeful that details of the programme will also be sent to our sister Districts as some of their Brethren might be interested in joining us to learn more about the Universities Scheme.

I am delighted to report that the Connaught Club for Masons under 35, which has been through a period of inactivity, is now fully up and running. Membership is currently about 45 and expanding, and a full social programme is in place. I would like to express my thanks to the Chairman, Bro Chris Mudditt, the Secretary W Bro Verge Das Neves and their committee for the work they are doing. W Bro Colin Robinson has kindly agreed to continue to act as liaison between myself and the Club.

A group of members of the Connaught Club have expressed a wish to adopt a lodge which will act as a base from which club members can interact, similar to their London counterparts. On Monday, a group of Connaught Club members will be joining my own lodge, Denver Lodge No 3167, which was facing closure and at the Installation on Monday, will be taking-up offices. Whilst they face a challenge to grow the Lodge and make it a viable home for Connaught Club members, I have no doubt that with their enthusiasm and commitment, including I might add, a Group WhatsApp ! it will be highly successful.

I am extremely grateful to Wor Bro Brian Kretzschmar, President of the Board of Benevolence and members of that Board, 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. The Almoner's programme is going well and 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.

I am glad to see that Installing Masters are reverting back to the address that was originally used in the District to invest an Almoner, which I think clearly points out and emphasises the duties of an Almoner. I do thank the Board of Benevolence for the suggested change and the District Grand Director of Ceremonies and his DC team for implementing this ritual change.

Our major charity donations this year amounted to some R 827,000, which were announced at the District Charity Banquet in April, as follows:

- R 500,000 to Headway, for recuperation following serious head trauma.
- R 100,000 to Amazing Grace for abused, orphaned and HIV/AIDS Children
- R 200,000 to the District Samaritan Fund to assist potential applicants to the Freemasonry Cares programme.
- R 9,000 to the Feeding Schemes and Shelters at St Josephs, St Georges and St Nicholas' Churches.
- R 7,000 to The Gordon Foundation, Swaziland, towards building a school classroom.
- R 7,500 equally distributed between Hero Burns Unit, Horison-West Rand Elderly Drive and Impilo Homes for Aids Orphans, and
- R 3, 500 to Green Beings for Solar Lighting.

A further R 181 505 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 again 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. However, I do ask that the Master of those Lodges concerned record the amounts raised during the year and state where they have applied the Charity monies, in their valedictory 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 27 recipients in our District from a total of 54 recipients assisted by the TIMC, currently at R1 540.00 per month. In addition, educational grants were given to 2 students from our District from a total of 5 recipients funded by the TIMC, enabling them to complete their University

education. A maximum of R 31,300 per annum is allocated to each applicant depending, on the actual University costs involved.

Earlier in the meeting, we changed the District Bylaws at the request of the tax authorities (SARS) so that we could comply for tax exemption for both District Grand Lodge and the District Grand Charity. 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.

Bequests form an important component in the management of both our Heritage Fund and the District Grand Charities and I would ask those of you who are undertaking Estate Planning to consider supporting the District. This year we have been extremely fortunate to receive a bequest from the estate of the late Ernest Droste in memory of his brother, George Droste to the value of R 400,000, specifically donated towards benevolence. This bequest has been allocated by the Board of General Purposes to the District Tercentenary Benevolent Fund. Those of you who remember George Droste will recall the tremendous amount of benevolent work that he undertook in his capacity as President of the Board of Benevolence, and also the work which he carried out in a private capacity, mainly in southern Johannesburg.

Secondly, we also received a bequest of R 474,261 for general use, from the estate of the late Bennie J La Grange a former member of New Horizons Lodge, now closed, which has been allocated to the Heritage Fund for the renovations of our headquarters here at Park Lane and other Masonic buildings. Brethren, I refer you to the District Grand Treasurer's report for further details of the Heritage and Charity Funds.

I am grateful to the President, W Bro Mike Edy and the Board of General Purposes foresight in continuing with renovations at Park Lane and I thank W Bro Chris Reynolds, Dist G Supt of Works for his management of these projects. I also extend my thanks to Wor Bro Tim Smith for his work in reorganizing and renovating the Library. He has been assisted by Wor Bro Graham Bendell and Wor Bro Eugene Bernhardt to whom I also extend my thanks. We look forward to the completion of this project which contains much of our history and memorabilia.

Recently, we have received a donation from Wor Bro Howard Freeman and the Freeman Family of a large wall clock in the memory of the late Rt Wor Bro Merton Freeman, Past DGM. I have had it placed on the far west wall of this main Lodge room, and I do thank the Freeman Family for their generosity.

In 2017, the celebration of 300 years of English Freemasonry will be a significant event, celebrated world-wide. Grand Lodge is encouraging their Provinces and Districts and Lodges or groups of Lodges to organize their own celebrations, leading up to the Grand Lodge event in October 2017. Grand Lodge has announced that on 31ST October 2017, the official Tercentenary celebration will take place at the Albert Hall in London. Based on the District membership, the District has been allocated for distribution, 31 seats at the Albert Hall at no cost, and 11 for the Banquet to follow, at the Battersea Evolution at a cost of £ 135 per head. We are required to report back to London in January 2017 with our confirmed, named attendees. If you are seriously interested in attending, please e-mail Graeme MacKenzie. If there is an excess number of applicants, names will be chosen by a draw. All unused tickets must be returned.

Details for tickets to the London events and details of local forthcoming Tercentenary events will be found on the specific website created to support the Tercentenary activities at www.thisisfreemasonry.org I encourage you all to visit this site. There are several events which have been held recently, including the first major Tercentenary initiative comprising participation in a Bed Race at Swartkop racetrack. More events are planned, including a Lodge open day in Polokwane and a Mountain Bike Challenge as part of the 94.7 cycle event in Johannesburg. Please use the website to track the activities.

Our local signature event will be a concert held at the Linder Auditorium on Saturday 15 July 2017 conducted by the well-known musician Richard Cock. This event entitled “300 Years of Harmony” will showcase music composed by Freemasons worldwide over the last 300 years. I am grateful for the work of Wor Bro Philip Heydenrych for his assistance in setting- up this event. Further details will be announced shortly.

I would also like to take this opportunity of thanking Wor Bro Graeme MacKenzie, Asst DGM for chairing the Tercentenary Planning Committee, together with members of this Committee including Tyrann Burger (District PRO and Marketing portfolio), Vic Pugh (Masonic Events- Local and London), Rory Jones (Other Mainly Non-Masonic Events), Lance Epstein and Chris Adams (Digital and Social Media portfolio) together with Chris van Gaalen, AsstDGM, Graham Bendell, Richard Fahrenheit and Simon Knutton.

Grand Lodge has become aware that social media platforms such as Facebook, twitter and WhatsApp Groups have become an increasing popular channel for communication. They have recently released policy documents outlining best practices for Freemasons and guidelines as to what a Freemason must *Not* do when posting on social media platforms. I think it’s becoming increasingly important that every

member of our District should be made aware of the UGLE Social Media Policy and Guidelines. To this end, the UGLE policy documents will be e-mailed to each member in the District and will be placed on our District website for further access. Certain Lodges are already using this form of communication and I urge those Lodges to set-up their own Web Master or Platform Manager to give oversight.

Finally Brethren, I would also like to place on record my thanks to Rt Wor Bro Neil Molver, Past District Grand Master of Zambia, also a member of our District, who has kindly stood in as the Immediate Past DGM. 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 and the DC, W Bro Simon Knutton and his team, have all contributed to the success of this Annual meeting. In particular, I would like to specifically thank my Deputy, Very Wor Bro David Whitfield who has again skillfully managed the bookings for the meetings, the seating, the production of tickets and procession lists, despite some late changes. Kind assistance has also been given by W Bros David Johnston and Stanley Elms and our new District Grand Tyler, Wor Bro Jerry Davies who have been working behind scenes.

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
1 October 2016,
Johannesburg

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