



## District Grand Master Installation address

October the 2nd, 2021

### **Right Worshipful, Very Worshipful, Worshipful Brethren, Brethren all:**

I have deemed it appropriate to begin my address by acknowledging the Most High, in remembrance of departed merit, we pause and remember all who have passed away during this period or succumbed, untimely, to the Corona Virus.

Brethren, please rise - Let us pray:

*Most Glorious God! Author of all Good, and Giver of all Mercy, pour down Thy Blessing upon us and strengthen our solemn engagements with the ties of sincere affection. The Great Architect of the Universe, having been pleased in His Infinite Wisdom to remove our Worthy Brethren, Companions, Loved ones, friends, acquaintances; Grant unto them, O Lord, Eternal Rest, may Light Perpetual shine upon them, Now and for Ever. - SMIB*

Brethren, Thank You, you may now be seated

I take this opportunity to welcome the District Grand Masters and Deputy District Grand Master in Charge from the English Constitution together with District and Provincial Grand Masters of our Sister Constitutions, as well as heads of Progressive degrees and Independent orders, whom I will acknowledge at the end of my address and trust that you have all enjoyed the proceedings.

I would like to acknowledge the presence of RW Bro Gerald Fotinakis, Past District Grand Master, and thank him most sincerely for his attendance

Likewise, I welcome all Grand Officers, District Grand Officers, Worshipful Masters, Worshipful Brethren, Brethren all to this special occasion.

So too, I acknowledge all who were unable to attend due to restricted occupancy, travel restrictions, or health concerns. I recognise you in your absence.

RWBro Prof. Charlesworth, it now falls to my happy lot to convey to you the warmest thanks of the brethren for your services and leadership during your tenure as District Grand Master and my thanks for the impressive manner in which you installed me as the Royal Solomon. You can indeed look back with pride and satisfaction upon a task well performed.

I congratulate WBro Brian McDermott on his appointment to Deputy District Grand Master and WBro's Charles Burn, Simon Knutton, Christopher Adams and Leighton Shaw on their re-appointment to Assistant District Grand Master. In the past thirteen months, we have covered much ground yet have just begun to scratch the surface. I look forward to working with you in support of the 2022 and beyond strategy and everything else that requires our attention

Much can be said on an occasion such as today, and so the occasion ought to permit. Where do I begin? I have opted to summarise the past three years and expand upon the future.

June 2019. My heart missed a beat when the Most Worshipful the Grand Master, His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent, offered me the appointment of District Grand Master effective May the 1st, 2020, for a period not exceeding ten years.

With great humility, I acknowledge the trust reposed in me to uphold, maintain and discharge to the best of my ability the duties of District Grand Master.

2020; the year COVID-19 reshaped the norm. Masonry plunged into suspension, our meetings abandoned, social gatherings prohibited. Lockdown regulations and curfew, need I say anymore! Perhaps I should include (Social distancing, face masks and sanitising) Did I leave anything out? Ah! Yes, the Covid Exit Strategy developed and adapted rituals produced. Sadly August the 8th planned investiture was postponed. Now let me fast forward a little.

2021; the "Beta variant" abates, a brief reprieve, our lodges summonsed by dispensation. No sooner have we started administrative meetings, and again we are suspended due to the ravaging "Delta variant". Governments vaccination role out, almost stillborn, eventually gathers momentum, a partial sigh of relief, the third wave is over... Masonic suspension lifted albeit, with caution, Covid Exit policies and procedures firmly entrenched.

October the 2nd, 2021, almost nine months after the planned installation and five hundred and eighteen days in office, the day has finally arrived, not forgetting three successive waves of coronavirus. Upon reflection, we have survived. The entire District machine has ground its way through the most prolonged suspension in our one hundred and twenty-six-year history. Without a District Grand Master! I look across to the President of the Board of General Purposes and recall how often I remarked upon his most tricky questions, and I would answer, "no one has been down this road before Lance; the worst they can do is fire me. Trust me! we will survive."

Where too from here, you may ask? My answer, "Upward and onward, we will overcome!"

We have an exceptional team in place to support and navigate the District to greater heights. No, I'm not naive to the consequences of the pandemic, the hardship so many members have had to endure and continue to face. I do, however, believe nothing comes from negative thinking.

Yes, our membership and lodges will take a beating, and so, as never before, has there been a need for Solutionist thinking.

Yes, the Future of Freemasonry is evolutionary, Change is healthy, and our future is bright!

There is no doubt in my mind we will have to "Overcome", "Change", and apply "Solutionist thinking" to all challenges identified and those yet to present themselves. The situation is unprecedented, and every effort has been made to safeguard our members from the scourge, simultaneously creating an environment in which we can again make time to meet and socialise together.

Credit must be awarded where credit is due. The entire District secretariate have supported me tirelessly. Permit me to digress briefly;

Brethren, the regular functions of the District were ongoing throughout this Covid period. The District Grand Secretary, WBro Roland Dunstan, has gone above and beyond the call of duty working ridiculously long hours. Mrs Fern Rowles is ever on point and a massive pillar of support to our District. An addition to the Secretariate, without whom we would have achieved a fraction of our successes, WBro Richard Fahrenheit (PAGDC) is our Covid Exit Strategy implementation officer. Richard, without your perseverance, skill and assiduity, I shudder to consider how we would have navigated through the challenges presented. Roland, Fern, Richard, Thank you most sincerely.

We recognised significant incremental change brought about by the United Grand Lodge of England and its implemented strategies due to highly geared and successful working groups.

The first and most noticeable change was the new Square and Compass Logo launched before the tercentenary celebration, rebranding Grand Lodge if you will.

Working group successes include "The Members Pathway", a structured approach for masonic lodges to attract, introduce and retain members. The revised edition is due shortly, including "Solomon", the web portal geared towards learning and development and its associated modules.

Communication was significantly improved by introducing "The District bUGLE", a communication tool for District Grand Masters and Grand Superintendents, together with the official newsletter for members of the United Grand Lodge of England "First Rising".

Administrative improvements include; Adelphi2, an administration portal for the District Secretariate and the soon-to-be-launched Hermes portal for online management administrative processes. All beneficial and exciting innovations for the improvement of our order.

Why do I raise this in my address, you might wonder?

The short answer; Incremental changes brought about by Grand Lodge to pave the way the world at large views us and how we communicate with each other and improve learning and development amongst our members.

All the while celebrating our core values - integrity, respect, charity, friendship – in our private and public lives.

At the Pro Grand Master's Business Meeting on April the 30th, 2021, the Deputy Grand Master launched the new mission statement to help guide the 2022 strategy, and I draw your attention to the publication:

***What we are (Purpose)*** “We are a unique members’ organisation which has thrived for over 300 years. Having no political or religious affiliations, we comprise members of all ages, races, religions, cultures and backgrounds. We gather in our individual Lodges throughout the (world) where we have ceremonial traditions which encourage us both to be more tolerant and respectful and actively to fulfil our civic and charitable responsibilities; we also make time to eat, drink and meet together, and form lifelong friendships.”

***What we aim for (Vision)*** “To attract those of whatever background interested in “What we are”. To enable our members to develop into more thoughtful and confident people. To inspire and challenge them to practise the core values we celebrate - integrity, respect, charity, friendship – in their private and public lives. To cement our reputation as a force for good in our communities and society at large and as a thriving organisation that men aspire to join”

***How we will achieve this (Mission) Our Challenge: 2022 and beyond*** “Over the next seven years, we will enhance our reputation as a thriving organisation that (men) aspire to join and broaden our membership across all age groups”

From the mission statement, we have direction and a timeline; What we are, what we aim for and how we will achieve this.

To achieve this objective, many Lodges must take a long hard look at themselves before projecting an image of confidence. We, too, must recognise that pruning a fruit tree is imperative to producing healthy limbs and encourage blossoms for the new season. Likewise, we need to consider right-sizing our District and allow weak Lodges and Chapters, for that matter, to close. Members are encouraged to migrate and propagate the opportunity to grow

strong, stable and prosperous Lodges. In the fullness of time, Lodges again I pray, will be bursting at their seams and petition patents for consecration.

Just before you fall off your seat for what I have just stated, The Most Worshipful Pro Grand Master and Most Excellent Pro First Grand Principal, Peter Geoffrey Lowndes, in publication and again at a “Virtual Rulers Visit” via Zoom with District Grand Masters in Southern Africa, earlier this year reiterated the very same comment.

This process begins with a strategy consisting of a five-point plan. A plan, mind you, that I might not have had five hundred and eighteen days ago. Now, a little more seasoned as to the rigours of what is required, I redirect my attention to conform to the Deputy Grand Masters new mission statement. “2022 and beyond.”

The five working groups or pillars of our plan are as follows:

1. Administration
2. Communication
3. Learning and Development
4. Inspire and challenge members to practise our core values
5. Re-launch the Heritage appeal fund.

A senior district officer will chair each working group after establishing a committee or ad-hoc advisory panel or council as circumstances might dictate. So doing, more members of the Craft will be called upon to assist and bring about Change

In the face of adversity, we must overcome and take the chance, extrapolate the good and progress.

Quoting Dale Carnegie, an American writer and lecturer, “for all life is a chance. The man who goes furthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare. As the *sure-thing* boat never gets far from the shore.”

That “do and dare” attitude coupled with “Solutionist thinking” will bring about Change. Perhaps the most significant advantage derived from the suspension of masonic activity is a serious rethink of how we will proceed. Yes, we could continue as before, but would we then not simply yield the same results?

### ***It's time to put the Craft first***

Craft first, as it is the foundation of all other masonic opportunities. The success and improvement of Craft masons will deliver dividends on so many levels, innumerable to unpack at this time. After all, we ought to be here to contribute, have fun and enjoy our freemasonry.

## Distinguished Brethren:

The following distinguished brethren are in attendance:

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<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>David</b>	<b>van Vuuren</b>	<b>District Grand Master</b>
	District Grand Lodge of South Africa, Central Division		
<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>Ernest</b>	<b>Malherbe</b>	<b>District Grand Master</b>
	District Grand Lodge of South Africa, Western Division		
<b>W Bro Dr</b>	<b>Yaw N</b>	<b>Gyasi-Agye</b>	<b>Deputy District Grand Master in Charge</b>
	District Grand Lodge of South Africa, Orange Free State		
	Who is accompanied by:		
	<b>RW Bro James</b>	<b>van Zyl</b>	<b>Past District Grand Master</b>
<b>W Bro</b>	<b>Tony</b>	<b>Leeson</b>	<b>Past Senior Grand Deacon, representing</b>
	District Grand Lodge of South Africa, KwaZulu Natal		

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I would also like to acknowledge the presence from our own District  
The Past District Masters of South Africa,  
North

<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>Gerald</b>	<b>Fotinakis</b>
<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>Guy</b>	<b>Charlesworth</b>

From Sister Constitutions:

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<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>Nic</b>	<b>Benson</b>	<b>Provincial Grand Master</b>
	Provincial Grand Lodge of South Africa Northern, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland		
	Who is accompanied by:		
	<b>VW Bro Man</b>	<b>Jansen</b>	<b>Grand Superintendent of Works</b>
	Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland, District Grand Lodge of Central South Africa		
<b>Bro</b>	<b>James</b>	<b>Kerr</b>	<b>RW District Grand Master</b>
	District Grand Lodge of Central South Africa, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland		
<b>Bro</b>	<b>Ken</b>	<b>Tucker</b>	<b>RW District Grand Master</b>
	District Grand Lodge of KwaZulu Natal, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Scotland		
<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>Godfrey</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Provincial Grand Master</b>
	Provincial Grand Lodge Northern Division, Grand Lodge of South Africa		

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And Heads of Progressive Orders and Independent Degrees:

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<b>RW Bro</b>	<b>David</b>	<b>Gurney</b>	<b>District Grand Master</b>
	Mark Master Masons, District Grand Lodge of the Transvaal		
			<b>and District Grand Master</b>
	Royal Ark Mariner, District Grand Lodge of the Transvaal		
<b>V III Bro</b>	<b>Charles</b>	<b>Burn</b>	<b>Inspector General, 33 degree</b>
	The Ancient and Accepted Rite, District of South Africa, North East		
<b>V III Bro</b>	<b>David</b>	<b>van Vuuren</b>	<b>Inspector General Designate in Charge</b>
	The Ancient and Accepted Rite, District of South Africa, Central		
<b>RE Kt</b>	<b>Guy</b>	<b>Charlesworth</b>	<b>Provincial Prior</b>
	The United Orders of the Temple, Provincial Priory of the Transvaal		

**and R W Provincial Grand Master**

The Royal Order of Scotland,  
Transvaal

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<b>R III Kt</b>	<b>Marc</b>	<b>Burton</b>	<b>Intendent-General</b>
The Red Cross of Constantine, Divisional Conclave of the Transvaal, OFS and Northern Cape			
<b>R III Bro</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Knight</b>	<b>District Grand Master</b>
Royal and Select Masters, District Grand Council of South Africa			
<b>R Wy Bro</b>	<b>Brian</b>	<b>McDermott</b>	<b>District Grand Supreme Ruler</b>
The Order of the Secret Monitor, District of South Africa Northern			
<b>RE Kt</b>	<b>David</b>	<b>Gamble</b>	<b>Grand Superintendent</b>
The Holy Royal Arch Knights Templar Priests, District No 10 - Transvaal, South Africa			

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To my dear soulmate and confidante Ena, your support and tolerance of my journey in freemasonry is sincerely appreciated. The people we have met, the places we have visited, and the friends we have made are all more enjoyable when you are by my side, my dear we have many more miles to travel, Long may you continue to be my first lady; this is a big thank you in advance.

Last but not least, I thank Brother Dad, WBro Hans van Gaalen (PSGD), Past Assistant District Grand Master and Past Third Grand Principal for his support, guidance, mentorship, and all the pleasant hours we shared when traversing our District attending installations far and wide. I could never exact your high standards nor sing "Tulips from Amsterdam", let alone step out of a cold press every time you acted in an official capacity. I am, however, ecstatic you could witness this day. A special memory I'll cherish forever.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the District Grand Director of Ceremonies, WBro Guy Rae and his team for the excellent ceremony. The District Grand Secretary, WBro Roland Dunstan, and WBro Richard Fahrenheit who drafted and updated the DC guides in use today. Chairman of the Organising Committee, WBro Leighton Shaw, and committee members whom have all ensured that today's meeting has been a success.

Brethren, I thank you all for your attendance here today and for your support and good wishes. Celebration and jubilation, good news and laughter while we meet on the square, and part on the level; Happy have we met, Happy we have worked, Happy may we part and happy to meet again.

Christopher van Gaalen  
District Grand Master  
Grand Superintendent  
South Africa, North

