

# DISTRICT GRAND LODGE OF SOUTH AFRICA, NORTH

Of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England



FREEMASON'S HALL, 8 PARK LANE, PARKTOWN, JOHANNESBURG, 2193. PO BOX 17037, HILLBROW, 2038. Tel: 011 643-3311/2. Fax: 011 643-2460. EMAIL: [district@freemason-jhb.org.za](mailto:district@freemason-jhb.org.za)

## **Annual Meeting, District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North**

### **DGM's Address – 4 October 2014**

Brethren welcome to this our 119<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of District Grand Lodge and thank you all for your attendance here today.

For the past few years we have held our Annual meeting at the Linder Auditorium, unfortunately this year the booking management at the Linder reneged and booked-over our booking. Despite various efforts we were unable to find a similar sized venue and decided to meet here at Park Lane, our Masonic headquarters. The meeting has been managed effectively through a booking system and no-one has been turned away.

I acknowledge the presence of RW Bro Gerald Fotinakis, Past District Grand Master and I thank him for his attendance. A warm welcome is extended to our distinguished guests and I will formally acknowledge them at the end of this address. I hope that you have enjoyed our ceremony and that you will join us at the Festive Board following the meeting.

I also welcome those Brethren who have travelled far to be with us. I welcome the contingent from Mauritius, the newly installed Master of Lodge of Friendship W Bro Dan Seewooruthum, and W Bros Randhir Ramloll, Ajay Nunkoo, Kailash Juddoo and Bro Dev Naeck. I also welcome the Brethren from Swaziland and 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. In particular, to W Bro Bernie Krone on his promotion to Assistant District Grand Master and we wish him well in his new appointment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Wor Bro Colin Robinson for his past services as Assistant District Grand Master over the past five years. He has served for the past 13 years as an active District Officer, including District Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies, District

Senior Grand Warden and as Assistant District Grand Master. Brethren, Bro Robinson will be taking up his duties as Assistant to the District Grand Principals in the Royal Arch.

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: Bros. Mike Edy, Bernie Krone and Ron Poole to PAGDC. Very Wor David Whitfield received a promotion to PGSwdB, Richard Moore to PSGD and Brian McDermott to PJGD. I look to them for ongoing commitment to the Order and to this District. The late Wor Bro Norman Hood received a promotion to PAGDC shortly before he passed away.

Brethren the District is progressing well. However, in contrast to the Royal Arch where there has been a fourth successive year of growth, membership in the Craft from 2010 to 2012 declined at a rate of about 2.5% per year. This past year, however, for the first time in many years, we report a small, but welcome increase in membership of approximately 0.5 %.

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 its Tri-Centenary. There will be a celebratory event in London in late 2017, but Provinces and Districts are being encouraged to hold their own celebrations. I have tasked Wor. Bros Chris van Gaalen and Graeme MacKenzie to investigate our options to celebrate this very important event.

In November, I had the pleasure of attending and assisting in the Installation of Wor Bro Jayant Patel as District Grand Master of Zambia and last month I travelled to Bloemfontein for the installation of Wor Bro James van Zyl as District Grand Master of the Orange Free State and I again welcome him here today.

Two weeks ago, I also had the pleasure of attending the 12<sup>th</sup> Freemasons Conference in East Africa, which is organized by the District of East Africa every second year. This year it was held at a resort 25 km north of Dar es Salaam. The Grand Secretary attended as the main guest speaker and during the Conference, a successful meeting was held between the Grand Secretary and the visiting District Grand Masters. The theme of the Conference was Freemasonry and Society - interesting papers were presented and useful audience participation made for a successful conference. I would like to place on record my

sincere thanks to Rt Wor Bro Viri Talwar, DGM of East Africa for his gracious hospitality and his District team for organizing a very successful event.

Strategies that I have previously put in place in the District are continuing to take shape. This afternoon I would briefly like to bring attention to two of them. First, addressing the caring and retention of Members under the Board of Benevolence and secondly, the Universities Scheme Lodges and their impact on the development of Freemasonry and its relationship with Society.

I congratulate W Bro Brian Kretzschmar, President of the Board of Benevolence and his Board for the work they have been carrying out during the year and thank them all most sincerely for their enthusiasm and effort.

The duties of the Board of Benevolence have been re-aligned to assist in vetting our major Charity donations, the implementation of the Freemasonry Cares programme and the oversight of applications and renewals to the Transvaal Inter-Constitutional Masonic Charity grants. Importantly, members of the Board have been directly responsible for the roll-out of the Almoners programme to every lodge in the District. The training of Lodge Almoners and the hand-out of upgraded Almoner's manuals and discs is making excellent progress. The training programme is being accomplished through power-point presentations by various members of the Board and I thank them all for their time and effort.

Brethren, 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.

There have been major changes in the composition of the Board of Benevolence and I would like to thank W Bros Eugene Bernhardt, Peter Ewen, Percy Green and Norman Woolf who have stood down from the Board after each had given several years of service. I am grateful and congratulate W Bro Norman Woolf for agreeing to take the position of Chairman of the Masonic Services Committee and commend the work they are doing in this Committee to help the needy in various Charitable Institutions.

I welcome Wor Bros Ron Poole, Bryan Price, Guss Southgate and Jeff Spiller to the Board of Benevolence and wish them well in their tasks ahead. I am also grateful for the hard work of Chris Adams, Howard Freeman, Jack Heymann and Dick Norton who have agreed to continue on that Board.

Our major charity donations this year amounted to some R 800,000. as follows:

- R 500,000 to Oliver's House in the Benoni area for the building of classrooms specializing in mathematics and science.
- R 154, 000 to the Grand Lodge Appeal for the Royal College of Surgeons for Surgical Research Fellowships to mark the Royal Arch Bicentenary Appeal.
- R 100, 000 to the District Samaritan Fund to assist potential applicants to the Freemasonry Cares programme.
- R 32,000 towards a disabled child's special wheelchair in Rustenburg.

A further R 50 000 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.

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.

Benevolent Grants were given to 26 recipients across the English Constitution, currently at R 1400.00 per month. In addition, a total of 8 students are being supported with educational grants from all Constitutions of which 2 students are 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.

Brethren, the concept of accepting University students into our Masonic Lodges is well established and indeed is not confined to our Constitution alone. In our Constitution, the first university lodge, Apollo Lodge No. 357 was founded at Oxford almost 200 years ago. This was followed later by the Isaac Newton University Lodge No. 859 at Cambridge. From the experience with these two lodges, Rt Wor Bro David Williamson, the then Assistant Grand Master, established the Universities Scheme in 2009, which takes the concept of University Lodges to a new dimension. It identifies certain Lodges who are prepared to receive student applicants and become members of the Scheme and follow the Scheme rules. These Lodges dove-tail their meetings to the Universities calendar, frequently carry-out multiple

workings by dispensation, and form a suitable venue for students. The scheme has some 58 lodges in England located in most of the University towns. However, to date, there are only two Districts participating in the Universities Scheme: the District of Jamaica and the Caiman Islands in the West Indies which has one Scheme Lodge and our own District, which now has two Scheme Lodges.

President Lodge, which meets here at Park Lane, serves the universities in Johannesburg and is making superb progress. I would like to thank the Past Masters for providing guidance and leadership. W Bro Bernie Krone, Assistant District Grand Master, was recently installed as Master two days ago and I extend my congratulations to him and look to him for further leadership of this important Lodge.

In November, 2013, W Bro Chris Adams gave a presentation at the Universities Scheme Conference held in Nottingham. This presentation was extremely well-received and I received several positive comments from Rt Wor Bro Williamson and others on my visit to Grand Lodge in April. I understand that W Bro Adams will again be attending the next Scheme Conference and we look forward to hearing from him on his return.

I am pleased to announce that Golden West Lodge has been transferred from Carletonville to Pretoria and following a successful application, I was delighted to receive notification recently, directly from RtWor Bro Williamson that Golden West has now been accepted by him as a Universities Scheme Lodge, to serve the Universities in Pretoria. In fact, Golden West already appears on the UGLE website as a Scheme Lodge. To give you all some idea of the power of social media, the acceptance of Golden West Lodge as a Scheme Lodge was kindly tweeted by W Bro Adams to the University Scheme and then it was re-tweeted by UGLE to thousands of followers throughout the Constitution.

Under Scheme rules, I have appointed W Bro Brian McDermott, Asst DistGM to act as liaison between the lodge and myself. I wish this Lodge every success with its future endeavours. W Bro McDermott has also taken on the office of Secretary of Golden West Lodge. The important concept of the Universities Scheme is that it attracts future young professionals into Freemasonry. Brethren, I think this has important implications for Freemasonry in our Society.

Surely one of our prime tasks as Freemasons is to develop individuals and it is individuals that must be involved in the upgrading and upliftment of Society. How do we develop these individuals ? In the first place, by attracting young men with potential. I submit Universities Scheme Lodges are one of the best

ways of attracting young men. That is not to say that all young men are confined to a Scheme Lodge – they can enter any regular Lodge. But I would submit that the Scheme Lodge has a great deal to offer the young Mason who is currently a University student.

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 DC, W Bros Richard Fahrenheim and his team, 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 with his computer skills undertook to manage the bookings for the meetings, the seat planning, the production of tickets and procession lists. His expertise contributed to the success of this meeting.

I wish you all a safe journey home

RW Bro Prof. E Guy Charlesworth  
District Grand Master  
4 October 2014,  
Johannesburg

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