

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 – 5 October 2019

Brethren, welcome to this our 124TH Annual Meeting of District Grand Lodge and thank you all for your attendance here today. I welcome 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. First, I would like to acknowledge and welcome the contingent from Mauritius comprising some **12** Brethren including the Master of Lodge of Friendship, W Bro Sudhir Nathoo accompanied by Wor Bro Wilfrid Koon Kam King, PAGDC, and **7** other Past Masters from Friendship, 1696, Phoenix 3602 and Protea 6471 Lodges and also Bros Ashvin Mooneeram SW of Lodge of Friendship and Navindranath Hoolooman SW of Phoenix and Bro Michael Jackson. I hope you all have an enjoyable visit to Johannesburg. I would ask the Brethren from Mauritius to stand and Brethren please extend a warm welcome to our Brethren in the usual manner.

I would also like to extend a sincere welcome to some **7** Brethren from Swaziland. These include the Master of St George's Lodge, W Bro Elton Smoor accompanied by the Senior and Junior Wardens and the Senior Warden of Swaziland Lodge. They are accompanied by **3** Past Masters from one or both of the Lodges.

From Gaborone Lodge, Botswana I welcome the Master, Wor Bro Tipesk Kumar accompanied by the Senior and Junior Wardens.

I also welcome a notable contingent from the far north with Brandon Carelse, Master of Messina Lodge, Richard Ball, Master of Lion of the North Lodge at Louis Trichardt, Tony Zerf Master of Doric at Polokwane and Rudolph van der Watt Master of Pyramid Lodge at Mokaphong together with **19** Past Masters and **6** Master Masons from these Lodges including Pietersburg United and Phalaborwa.

It's good to be able to welcome 7 Brethren from Vereeniging Peace Lodge in the south, including the Master, Jay Hira, the Junior Warden, 4 Past Masters and a Master Mason.

Finally, I would like to welcome all others who have travelled from the far reaches of the District.

Brethren, as pointed out by the President of the Board of General Purposes in his Report, my patent of appointment as District Grand Master expires on the 30TH April next year, when I will have served 10 years as District Grand Master. I have indicated to the Grand Secretary that I will be standing-down, so this is my last Annual District Meeting that I will preside as District Grand Master. The Most Wor The Grand Master, has appointed Very Wor Bro Chris van Gaalen as Deputy District Grand Master-in-charge effective from 1ST May 2020. I extend my sincere congratulations to Very Wor Bro Chris van Gaalen. His installation as RW District Grand Master and also as ME Grand Superintendent in the Royal Arch will be on Saturday 8TH August, but this date, venue and investiture programme are still subject to confirmation.

This Installation will be a significant event for the District and to assist with the planning, I would like to appeal to the Brethren to assist by indicating their intention to attend. A preliminary note with details will be sent out to all members in the District. Your reply will assist us in planning a venue of suitable size, bearing in mind that the Pro Grand Master will be presiding with a contingent from London, the District Grand Masters from Southern, West and East Africa will most likely be in attendance and possible also from Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Caribbean and elsewhere. Grand Officers will be expected to attend on the Pro Grand Master, and the Master and Wardens from each Lodge will also be expected to attend together with District Grand Officers. .

In April this year, I had the pleasure of attending the Annual Investitures of Grand Lodge and Supreme Grand Chapter in London. In briefing meetings to Provincial and District Grand Masters and Grand Superintendents, emphasis was placed on the role of Districts in our Constitution and we were made welcome by the High Rulers and the Provinces. The Investiture week ended with District Grand Masters, and other Chains and their wives and partners being invited to a cocktail party hosted by the Grand Secretary on the Thursday evening, following the Royal Arch meeting and lunch where we were able to meet various people from the Grand Lodge secretariat that we have regular telephonic dealings.

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. In particular, congratulations are extended to **Wor Bro Graeme Mackenzie** whom I have appointed as Assistant District Grand Master. Graeme served

previously as an AsstDistGM and has returned to the District after working in London. I wish him well with his appointment. Wor Bro Tim Smith has stood down as Assistant District Grand Master and I wish him well for the future.

Today, there has been a major change in the administration and governance of the District with the retirement of Wor Bro Mike Edy, the President of the District Board of General Purposes. I do thank Wor Bro Edy for his service during the last **7** years to the District. I welcome and congratulate **Wor Bro Lance Epstein** as President and I wish him well in this senior appointment, which in effect can be likened to being the “General Manager” of the District. Lance has already been busy at District and has already got his feet wet.

Wor Bro Andre Ferreira has stood down as District Grand Director of Ceremonies. I thank him for his service to the District and I congratulate Wor Bro Leighton Shaw the incoming District Grand Director of Ceremonies. I also welcome and congratulate Wor Bro Roland Dunstan who has joined the DC team as District Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies.

I also extend my sincere congratulations to those Brethren who received Grand Rank earlier this year. At the Grand Investiture in April, the Most Wor The Grand Master was pleased to appoint **Wor Bros. Eugene Bernhardt, Simon Knutton and Dave McNally** to first appointments of **PAGDC**. **Brian McDermott** received a promotion to **PSGD** and **Charles Burn** and **Tim Smith** 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 **112** Members for 2018 – 2019 - Another year of overall growth. As at the 31 March, we had a total of **2058** Members or **2106** Memberships when counting multiple memberships in our **100** Lodges. Whilst our numbers are looking healthy, we still have a number of ailing lodges and this year we had to close Edenvale Lodge.

The total number of Royal Arch Members constitutes some **40%** of the total Members in the District, similar to last year. I am still looking for further growth in the Royal Arch.

Brethren the ongoing District projects and portfolios have been reported at District Board meetings during the year. A succinct summary is included in the Report of the President of the District Board of General Purposes and the President of the Board of Benevolence and I urge you all to take your copies provided on your seats.

An important development from the Tercentenary Celebrations in 2017 was the idea that Provinces

and Districts in our Constitution should make contact with the general public to improve their awareness of Freemasonry. Two ways were identified for our District and have been championed by Wor Bro Simon Knutton, Assistant District Grand Master.

First, Wor Bro Simon Knutton launched the Teddy Bear initiative on a national basis, involving all of our Districts in South Africa. The response has been most gratifying and will again be repeated this year. Its success was largely dependent on those Brethren and Lodges who collected and distributed the Teddy Bears to children in various Institutions. W Bro Simon Knutton will shortly be sending out details to Brethren and Lodges in the District regarding the event this year.

Secondly, was the establishment of a website to showcase English Freemasonry in South Africa and to have a contact site for those members of the general public interested in Freemasonry and to direct enquiries to Lodges in their area. This has been enormously successful, potential applicants being screened and handed over to various Lodges – with over 50 Applications in the last 6 Months. I understand from Simon that Netflix, in fact, is having a positive effect on the number of applications through the screening of videos on Freemasonry. My grateful thanks are extended to Simon for the work he continues to do.

I am delighted to report that the Connaught Club for Masons under 35, has had another busy and productive year. I thank VW Bro Chris van Gaalen who acts as liaison between myself and the Club for his work and I am grateful to the Chairman, Bro Benjie Krone, the Secretary, Wor Bro Wesley Finn and their committee for the work that they are doing for the younger Mason.

I am extremely grateful to Wor Bro Chris Adams, President of the Board of Benevolence and members of that Board for the work they have carried out during the past year. Wor Bro Adams has made it his responsibility to visit all Lodges in the District, a task he has almost completed. In addition, he regularly gives report-backs of the work being carried out by the Board at Installation meetings. I invite you to refer to the report of the President of the Board of Benevolence provided on your seats, for further activities of the Board of Benevolence. I would like to take this opportunity of thanking Wor Bro Woody Woodward for his superb work as District Grand Almoner. Likewise for the important work carried out by Wor Bro Carl de Montille and other members of the Board of Benevolence in assisting with Samaritan Fund applicants, especially for urgent applications.

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

Donations to both Non-Masonic and Masonic Charities reported by our Lodges this year amounted to a total of **R 1,55M**. Of this amount, some **R771 K** was made available to District for disbursement and the balance of some **R784 K** was disbursed directly from Lodges to various Charities. Our major Non-Masonic charity donations this year were announced at the District Charity Banquet in July, as follows:

- **R 300,000.00** to Stepping Stones Hospice, Alberton to equip a palliative care teaching centre.
- **R 180,000.00** to the Moth's Shellhole, Parkhurst for the construction of an exterior entertainment area.

A number of minor donations have also been made to a range of organizations including:

- **R 50K** to the Alzheimer's Association, Gauteng for training equipment to equip officials.
- **R 50K** to the Shalom Respite Centre, Magaliesburg – For specialized playground equipment for severely disabled adults and children.
- **R 50K** to the Tarentaal Elderly Support Programme organised by Emrys Lodge for The Tarentaal Village Feeding Scheme, Gauteng.
- **R 40K** to the Topsy Foundation – To provide resources for an early infant development programme.

A further **R 73 500** 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 270,970.00** to the **TIMC** charity fund during the year, which covers Benevolent and Education grants.

Benevolent grants were given to **24** recipients in our District from a total of **53** recipients assisted by the **TIMC**, currently at **R 2 075.00** per month. In addition, an educational grant was given to **2** students in the District from a total of **6** educational recipients funded by the **TIMC**, enabling them to complete their tertiary education. A maximum of **R 40 000** per annum is allocated to each applicant depending, on the actual costs at the Institution involved. I am delighted to be able to share with you all, that our 2 University students are both doing extremely well and have both obtained first class passes to date.

Our District Samaritan Fund, increased by **R 172,534.00** during the year and now stands at just over **R 1,89M**. During the year **4 claims** were to be made, but unfortunately the Brethren passed away before the claims were finalized.

The President of the Board of Benevolence, W Bro Chris Adams, together with other senior members in the District are currently setting up criteria for the management of applications. This Fund was established for the potential use of our Brethren and their Families in the District, primarily to assist in applications from Brethren to the Grand Charity in London, now called the Masonic Charity Fund (MCF). In particular, applications to the MCF will increasingly be made for all medical cases. The potential applications for the MCF will be handled by a Board of Trustees and a Board of Management currently being set-up. Applications to the District Grand Samaritan Fund can also be made where Masons and their families are in non-medical distress and require assistance.

We are profoundly concerned that there are an increasing number of Brethren who have neither a Medical Aid, Medical Insurance or even a Hospital Plan. The Samaritan Fund is not and cannot be expected to be a substitute for medical planning. In addition, it is becoming evident to the Managers of the Samaritan Fund, that applicants will have to show that they and/or the family are making an effort to assist, and also that the Lodge concerned and Lodge members are also making an effort to assist the applicant. It is increasingly becoming evident that all applications for medical assistance will have to be handled by the MCF in London and the Samaritan Fund is there to assist in local transport, initial medical examination and initial medical tests for the medical procedure required and to assist in the application.

I am grateful to the out-going President, W Bro Mike Edy and the Board of General Purposes' foresight in continuing with renovations at Park Lane. This year we received a donation of R150 000.00 from Highveld Lodge towards the upkeep and renovation of the Hall here at Park Lane. I would like to thank the Wor Master and Brethren of Highveld Lodge for their generosity, which has come at a very opportune time, to address the maintenance of a service lift.

Brethren, this District was inaugurated on April 30TH 1895, 125 years ago.

Today, there are 9 Lodges in existence from the original 12 that were involved with the foundation of the District.

I would like to challenge these Lodges: Transvaal, Johannesburg, Royal Albert, Gold Fields, Boksborg, Jeppestown, Pietersburg United, Germiston and Roodepoort to drive the Celebrations of our 125 anniversary. Wor Bro Simon Knutton, Asst DistGM has agreed to give oversight to organizing this event.

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 Guss Southgate and Mrs

Fern Rowles and the staff at Freemasons' Hall who are involved in the administration of our District. They, together with VW Bro Chris van Gaalen, Chairman of the Organising Committee and members of his committee, and the outgoing DC, W Bro Andre Ferreira and the incoming DC, W Bro Leighton Shaw and the DC team, have all contributed to the success of this Annual meeting. In particular, I would like to thank Very Wor Bro David Whitfield and WBro Stanley Elms who have again skillfully managed the bookings for the meetings, the seating, the production of tickets and procession lists. Kind assistance has also been given by W Bro David Johnston and the 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

5 October 2019,
Johannesburg