

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

Annual Meeting, District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North

DGM's Address – 6 October 2018

Brethren, welcome to this our 123RD Annual Meeting of District Grand Lodge and thank you all for your attendance here today. Welcome 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. First, I would like to acknowledge and welcome Wor Bro James Dow, a member of our District and Secretary of South Africa Lodge in London. South Africa Lodge is a home away from home for many of us when visiting London. - Not only from this District, but from all Districts in South Africa. Thank you James, for looking after us. I also acknowledge and welcome Wor Bro Dave Kitchen of Kosmos Lodge from the Isle of Wight. I am delighted to see the contingent from Mauritius comprising some 10 Brethren including the Master of Lodge of Friendship, W Bro Lee Onsiong and the Master of Phoenix, W Bro Sanjay Ramgutty. They are accompanied by 6 Past Masters from one or more of our three Lodges in Mauritius, namely; Wor Bros Wilfrid Koon Kam King, PAGDC, Mahindra Bheekee, Kailash Juddoo, Ajay Nunkoo, Farojdeo Hemraj and Rajah Bhagerutty, and also Bros Ramanuj Nathoo SW of Lodge of Friendship and Ashok Ramgutty, Secretary of Phoenix. I do hope you all enjoy your stay in 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 11 Brethren from Swaziland. These include the Master of Swaziland Lodge, W Bro Keiren Thurgood and the Master of St George's Lodge, W Bro Paulo da Silva. They are accompanied by Past Masters from one or both of the Lodges; W Bros Nigel Fenwick, Marcus Zbinden, George Lutwama, Gaz Barlow and Antonio Capucho-Paulo and Nigel Taft, and Bros Brett Hutton, Phesheya Malaza, Sabelo Mdziniso and Riccardo Nyoni. I also welcome all others 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. In particular, congratulations are extended to Wor Bro Timothy Smith whom I have appointed as Assistant District Grand Master. Tim will also continue, at least for this year, as my Deputy in the Royal Arch and I thank him for agreeing to this arrangement. Wor Bernie Krone asked to stand down as Assistant District Grand Master for personal reasons and I thank him most sincerely for his sterling service to the District.

Likewise, Wor Bro Richard Hawthorne asked to stand down as Deputy District Grand Director of Ceremonies because of business commitments. I thank him for his service to the District and I welcome Guy Rae who has joined the DC team.

I also extend my sincere congratulations to those Brethren who received Grand Rank earlier this year. To mark the Tercentenary last year, the Most Wor Grand Master was pleased to appoint at the March Regular Communication of Grand Lodge, **Wor Bros John Ebdy and Vijayen Mardemootoo** to first appointments of **PGStB** and to promote **Wor Bro Dick Glanville** to **PJGD**. Then, at the Grand Investiture in April, the Most Wor Grand Master was pleased to appoint **Wor Bros. Paul Knight and Geoff Williams** to first appointments of **PAGDC** and **Wor Bro. Steve Hansen** to **PGStB**. **Christopher van Gaalen** received a promotion to **Very Wor PGSwdB** and **Joe Moore** received a promotion 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 **81** Members for 2017 – 2018 - Another year of overall growth. As at the 31 March, we had a total of **1946** Members or **2328** Memberships when counting multiple memberships in our **101** Lodges. Whilst our numbers are looking healthy, we still have a number of ailing lodges of which two are in imminent danger of closing. The total number of Royal Arch Members constitutes some **41%** of the total Members in the District, similar to last year. I am still looking for further growth in the Royal Arch.

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, emphasis was placed on what we had learned from the Tercentenary year and the work of the Membership Focus Group (MFG) commissioned by the Board of General Purposes, to look into the future of the Craft. In particular, the MFG have introduced the concept of the “Members’ Pathway”. The Member’s Pathway is a series of steps for a Lodge to follow, to help it attract, select, introduce and retain good quality candidates to the Craft, extending from Initiation to Exaltation to the Royal Arch. The MFG has collated

existing best practices from a set of Provinces in England and other sources and compiled a set of tools to help Lodges. The MFG has already test-run the programme in several Provinces in England and now the programme is being rolled out into Districts. Indeed last weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the UGLE Membership Conference hosted by the District of East Africa in Nairobi where we had presentations from Wor Bro Mike Baker the Director of Communications at Grand Lodge and from Wor Bro Lister Park, who has the responsibility of administering all Districts outside England.

We are all aware of the introduction of the Lodge Mentor and his role in preparing the candidate for initiation, supporting the new Mason, and educating and retaining our members. The MFG is now promoting the position of a Lodge Membership Officer. This is not a formal Masonic office, but is seen as being important to those lodges who wish to give attention to attracting quality new members. Please be aware that the Membership Officer does not replace the Lodge Mentor, but is an important component in the pathway process. I would suggest that the Lodge Membership Officer is particularly important to those Lodges who are using a Lodge website together with social media in attracting potential members, and or in those Lodges that have a medium to large membership. In fact, I am aware of a couple of our Lodges that already have a senior brother who gives oversight to prospective members, to ensure that they attend social events of the Lodge, and are vetted before becoming members. The Lodge Membership Officer, Mentor, the Candidate's Proposer and Seconder, Almoner, Secretary, Master and others will all work as a team in the Member's Pathway from Initiation to Exaltation.

The Pathway will of course, be most successful if Freemasonry enjoys a positive public image and good reputation. For example, the Teddy Bear initiative was first established in England and has been highly successful. In this initiative, branded Teddy Bears have been distributed by Masons to children undergoing treatment in hospitals. Not only has this been highly receptive by the children, but it has created an extremely positive image for Freemasonry with the public. With this in mind, Wor Bro Simon Knutton has been tasked to investigate the possibility of introducing the teddy bear project locally. This has led Wor Bro Knutton to initiate a project that would best be achieved if it was supported by all the English Constitution Districts in the country. I thank Wor Bro Knutton for leading the discussions between the Districts and for the agreement with the various District Grand Masters.

In addition, Wor Bro Knutton has set-up a website which will act not only as a portal for all Districts in the country, but will also lead to better co-operation between the Districts. This site will be used for prospective candidates who can be channeled to the District which best suits their respective geographical location. It can also be used to share and implement best Mentorship methods and documents created by

various Districts or by United Grand Lodge of England. In addition, a consolidated profile will allow National level sponsorship for benevolent activities, e.g. the Teddy Bear initiative. Finally, a combined exposure of the 6 English Constitution Districts on this website will allow us to access the national press to enhance the public perception of Freemasonry. I sincerely thank Wor Bro Simon Knutton for the success he has achieved and look forward to the launch of the Teddy Bear project on National Children's Day on Saturday 3 November.

Let me introduce the Teddy Bear to you all. Simon has prepared packages of Teddy Bears for distribution from each Masonic Centre in the District and asks for representatives from each Centre to collect them in the foyer after the meeting. We also have packages for collection for Districts of KwaZulu-Natal, Free State, South Africa Central, Eastern and Western Divisions. Simon will be available at the Festive Board for questions, and instructions concerning the bears will follow.

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. A regular newsletter has been introduced by the President and a dedicated email address is available. In addition, I have encouraged report-backs of the work being carried out by the Board at Installation meetings. Also information seminars of the Almoners work is planned to be taken to Masonic Centres in the District.

Wor Bro Mike Armour has stepped down as the District Grand Almoner and I do thank him for his commitment to his duties over the past 5 years. I welcome Wor Bro Woody Woodward and thank him for taking on the duties of District Grand Almoner. The Almoner's programme is doing well and the Almoner's manuals are currently being revised. Progress is being made by Wor Bro Norton and his team in developing the reporting system from Lodge Almoners to the Board of Benevolence.

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. Donations to both Non-Masonic and Masonic Charities reported by our Lodges this year amounted to a total of R 1,80 M. Of this amount, some R 1,14 M was made available to District for disbursement and the balance of some R663 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 Downs Syndrome, Tshwane – A building construction project
- R 252,000.00 to Cotlands – To provide a car for use by the home.
- R 100,000.00 to Read to Rise – To provide a car for children's literacy and play therapy.

Both cars have suitable signage on their bodywork to show the support given by the District and English Freemasonry in South Africa to these charities.

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

- SA Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG), (R 50 K)
- Teddy Bear Initiative, (R 50 K)
- A Feeding tunnel project, Doric Lodge Polokwane, (R 40 K)
- Epilepsy Mpumalanga, at Dulstroom, (R 30 K)
- Meals on Wheels, Johannesburg inner city, (R 30 K)
- Kwakha Indodza (tr. Building a Man), an NGO community initiative in Swaziland, (R 30 K)
- San Salvador (R 10 K)

A further **R 67 500** 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 196,000.00** to this 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 1 920.00** per month. In addition, an educational grant was given to **4** students in the District from a total of **8** educational recipients funded by the TIMC, enabling them to complete their tertiary education. The actual costs incurred at each Institute by the student concerned are covered by a grant up to a maximum of **R 38 000** per annum.

I am pleased to announce that for the first time, the District has used its **Section 18a Certificate** to facilitate a corporate donation to a needy organization whose profile matched that of the Corporate Social Investment (CSI) donation. This resulted in the Home of Hope (Johannesburg) receiving **R58, 000** from the corporate concerned. I do thank Wor Bro Chris Adams for his lead in this process.

Our District Samaritan Fund, increased by **R 183,764** during the year and now stands at just over **R1,5 M**. Brethren this Fund was established for the potential use of our Brethren and their Families in the District. Please remind your Lodge Almoner that the Fund is there in cases of need. Brethren, there is an increasing number of families, whose wage-earner has been retrenched or is out of work. Also there is an increasing number of Brethren that either have no Medical Benefit or they no longer have funds available. We can assist with minor medical cases, but more serious medical cases are best handled with

applications to the Grand Charity in London. Applications to either the District Samaritan Fund or the Grand Charity should be made by Lodge Almoners directly to Wor Bro Chris Adams, the President of the Board of Benevolence or through Members of the Board of Benevolence.

I am delighted to report that the Connaught Club for Masons under 35, has had another busy and productive year. I am grateful to VW Bro Chris van Gaalen who acts as liaison between myself and the Club for his work. I thank the Chairman and the Committee for the invitation to join the Connaught Brethren at their Annual Meeting recently. It was a pleasure to be included with enthusiastic, young Masons. Membership of the Connaught Club is currently about 52 and expanding, and a full social programme is in place.

I would like to express my thanks to the outgoing Chairman, Bro Chris Mudditt, the outgoing Treasurer W Bro Verge Das Neves and their committee for the work they have done in re-vitalising the Club. Sincere congratulations are extended to Bro Benjie Krone the incoming Chairman and the Committee of the Connaught Club and I look forward to their plans for the year.

Whilst the Club is made up of Members from a number of Lodges in the District, the Connaught Club Committee felt that they would like to adopt a Lodge and make it their own. Fortunately, they accepted my own lodge, which was on the point of collapse and over the past 18 months have turned Denver Lodge around. Recently, Wor Bro Verge Das Neves and members of the Club introduced a very exciting concept of the Travelling Gavel to those lodges that have a member of the Connaught Club. The concept is designed to encourage visiting of a Lodge to the Lodge holding the gavel. The visiting Lodge with the greatest number of visitors, including the Wor Master, Wardens and a Member of the Connaught Club claims the gavel and holds it until challenged by a visiting Lodge. The result is a significant number of visitors enhancing the entire evening. I wish to extend best wishes to Wor Bro Das Neves and his family as they will be emigrating to Australia in the new year.

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 the projects. I also extend my thanks to Wor Bro Tim Smith for his work in reorganizing and renovating the Library. We look forward to the completion of this project which contains much of our history and memorabilia.

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 DC, W Bro Andre Ferreira and his 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

6 October 2018,
Johannesburg

-oOo-