

MEGS Address - 4 June 2010

Companions I welcome you all here this afternoon as we celebrate another happy and successful year for the Royal Arch in West Kent.

This is the first time that our Provincial Convocation has been held here in the Grand Temple. We meet in a place of great splendour and magnificence and it is right that we do so as this Supreme Degree completes our knowledge of Pure Ancient Freemasonry and we are now in a suitable place to celebrate that. Companions you will not be asked to clear away the furniture before going home!

Today is a celebration of the achievements of those who I have had the pleasure of appointing or promoting. You all are sufficiently aware, sufficiently committed to freemasonry, to know that your preferment today points out the duties and effort that is expected of you tomorrow and in the years ahead as we all progress along that curious road of self discovery that is our Masonic life.

That life is enriched by the support we give to our communities. We have completed our first year of the 2015 Festival for the Masonic Samaritan Fund and I am so proud of all of the members of the Province for the progress made to date. Over £450,000 has already been raised and of that over £26,000 has come from the Chapters. That is over £350 per Chapter and of course Companions you are already giving via your Lodges. I really do thank you all for that. So much achieved whilst we continue our support of our local charities. I proudly display the Trophy awarded to the Province by Demelza Children's Hospice who recently awarded us the title Group of the Year.

Companions we are on a journey and sometimes we need some guidance as to the way ahead and to better understand our surroundings. In the Craft the Provincial Grand Orator – V W Graham Higgs and his team are available to give a selection of Orations. I think there is a confusion which I hasten to correct and that is that they are also able to deliver Orations or talks in your Chapters. I encourage you to invite E Comp Graham and his team to one of your meetings in the coming year. Their talks are excellent and I am very grateful to Graham and all his team for their magnificent contribution to the life of the Province and assisting us all to make a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge.

The Royal Arch Representative makes an important contribution to the expansion of membership in this Supreme Degree. In Craft our membership has declined but those who have been exalted into the Royal Arch are, by definition, more committed to their Masonic journey and the fallout rate much less. We need to do all we can to encourage our Brethren to join us and share in the special atmosphere of our Chapters.

The Representative should be aware of which Chapter the Brethren of his Lodge hold membership. He should be aware of the intentions of all Craft only members with respect to the Royal Arch and be gently encouraging them to join always remembering that business and family must at all times come first.

Companions the Royal Arch can only exist if there is a strong and vibrant Craft Province to generate new members. A new recruitment initiative is being launched across the Province which is led by W Bro Mark Estaugh and a small and motivated team. I urge you all as committed and keen members of the Province to play your part in that initiative and seek out new members for the Craft. Do not be shy or restrained in discussing your freemasonry with your friends. We need to seek out the good men in our community many of whom are perhaps uncertain as to their way ahead in life.

Companions there is still some confusion as the role of the Almoner in a Chapter and I want to spell out what is expected. The role is now seen as somewhat different and arguably more complex than in the Craft. He must still be aware and alert to any medical or other problems of a companion but he must make sure that the Craft Almoner for that Brother is also aware and taking any necessary action. It is the Craft Almoner who should deal with any applications to the central charities. In the Royal Arch the role is much more proactive. It is common to hear an Almoner to say you must tell me of problems. In the Chapter he should go looking. If a companion does not come to a meeting he should get a phone call to ascertain the reason. Let him know he has been missed. Does he need assistance to attend? Is there anything the Chapter can do to help? Importantly is there anything that needs the attention of the Craft Almoner. It can be put this way- A Chapter Almoner should be aware of the circumstances of all the members. However, he has another role and that is to act as the informal mentor of new exaltees. They may have questions, need some support and gentle encouragement as they find their feet. This all lies within the challenging and fulfilling role of the Chapter Almoner.

In 2013 Supreme Grand Chapter will be marking 200 years of the Royal Arch. There will be a special Convocation here in London and to mark the bicentenary it is proposed to endow research bursaries with the Royal College of Surgeons. Every Companion is asked to donate £10- just £10 – to support this cause. We will give guidance shortly as to how this should be done but it is important that every Companion supports this financially modest call on our wallets. Companions it may be financially modest but it is so important. Reflect for a moment on the medical research your contribution will make possible.

Companions Supreme Grand Chapter has introduced a new tie which may be worn at any Craft or Royal Arch meeting. However, in the Province I expect you to continue to wear the Provincial tie but remind you it is not to be worn outside the Province. Part of the proceeds of the sale of the Provincial tie goes to our 2015 Festival and the wearing of it marks your support for the Province and the Festival. I make an exception to that guidance for the Royal Arch representative in each Lodge. I think it would help highlight his role if he would wear the new Royal Arch tie particularly at the Installation meeting when he is received by the newly installed Worshipful Master.

I am immensely grateful to the immense contribution made to the Province by my Deputy, E Comp Bob King and that has been done with his usual good humour despite the ongoing health problems for his daughter Katie. Bob we extend our best wishes to you and your wife Gina. I also acknowledge the contribution made by the Second and Third Principals and the Assistants to the Principals who have taken on the consequent increased work load arising from the need for Bob to give his family the required attention. Their effort for the Royal Arch has been noticed by all the Companions and I fully recognise that.

Today being the first time that we have met in London has laid greater stresses and strains on the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and his team in arranging the proceedings here and the Provincial Grand Scribe E and his team have also had to adjust a well tried format. Their efforts have been most successful and congratulate all those involved with the proceedings today.

I thought the meal in the Grand Connaught Rooms was well up to the much higher standard they have set and I trust Companions you will return to your chapters happy, feeling that your time has been well spent and determined to encourage more of your Companions to attend here next year.

God bless you all.