

THREE COUNTIES MEETING 22nd May 2023

Provincial Promotions Meeting.

P.G.M.'s Address

Brethren, it is now my great pleasure to address this 3 counties Lodge Meeting, my very first Promotions Meeting.

May I start by congratulating all the Brethren promoted today and to welcome them and their guests to this very special meeting.

This Lodge can be said to be the Executive Lodge of the Province, it doesn't make Masons and membership is only by invitation by the current Provincial Grand Master. With the exception of the Provincial Grand Treasurer, Secretary and Director of Ceremonies, all other members are either Heads, Deputies, or past Heads and Deputies of Orders which meet and operate within this Province. The purpose of this Lodge is to strengthen the bonds and spirit of friendship and support across the Masonic Family and neighbouring Provinces.

Holding our Promotions meeting within this special Lodge each year has three great advantages.

Firstly we are not rushed through the investing section of the meeting, meaning I can say a few words to those being promoted.

Secondly you can invite more friends as guests to support you and share the day, as the capacity limits at PGL would limit guest numbers.

And thirdly the atmosphere within a Lodge is a little less formal than at Provincial Grand Lodge, and we can relax and enjoy each other's company more as experienced senior members of the Province.

Indeed, these promotions do now mean you are senior members of the Province and within your Lodge and it is you the junior brethren will look to for support and encouragement. Now more than ever this is vital to our future.

At Provincial Grand Lodge we conduct the business of the year in a rather speedy manner adopting reports submitted. These are on the Provincial Webb Site and will also be printed in this years year book, and I would encourage you to review them at your leisure.

At this meeting and most enjoyably, we celebrate the commitment and achievements of senior members over many years, from across the province, by conferring Provincial Past Rank Promotions.

These promotions mark a significant milestone in the Masonic journey of all receiving preferment today, and I not only congratulate you, I thank you on behalf of the Province for all you have done within your individual Lodges.

These appointments are only conferred after careful consideration of a Brother's service to his Lodge over a number of years. There is nothing automatic about these promotions.

They are however, and no doubt you have heard this said before, in recognition not only of what you have done, but in anticipation of your future commitment, particularly as I have said in the support and encouragement of our younger Brethren.

We are now moving towards the end of another Masonic season, which for me of course has been a most memorable year, having had the privilege of being installed as your Provincial Grand Master in July.

Since then, we have been extremely busy across the province, most notably with the consecration of our 97th Lodge, another special interest Lodge the CERVISIA Lodge.

Centenary celebrations, banner dedications and re dedications.

Our Light Blues Club, so important to our long-term future, continues to flourish.

We have updated our Webb Site and Social Media Comms activities to ensure consistent messaging from both Provincial and Grand Lodge.

We have implemented Hermes across the Province and I thank all the Secretaries for their commitment in working with this new system.

We move our relationship with the Holy Royal Arch ever closer and are strengthening that indissoluble link, and I thank the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent and his team for their support of the Craft.

Our Three Pillars Feeding the Homeless Charity, has expanded this season from St Neots and Peterborough, into Rushden and Northampton, and I thank WBro Ged and his team for continuing this important work.

We held a superb Family Fun Day in Silverstone, and many thanks to my APGM WBro Tim Almond for his hard work in making this, the first I hope of many events, such a success.

We have finished the season off with an extremely well attended and successful Provincial Grand Lodge meeting last week and of course our Promotions meeting here today.

Brethren from September to now we have initiated some 125 new members and are plus 5 on our membership numbers. But in the last 12 months we have initiated some 136 new members, a superb number, 109 joiners and 20 re-joiners, which is a particularly pleasing number, however we have had a larger than average number of deaths, 79, 164 resignations plus cessations and exclusions, so we are unfortunately -2.

A very small even tiny percentage drop, but not a trend we can afford to continue. Brethren this is where our membership challenge lies, if we are to continue to enjoy our Freemasonry and ensure its future for those who come after us, we must address this gap and ensure whilst we continue to initiate large numbers, we put the same energy into retaining our existing members. Especially as we move into the closed season.

I therefore urge all our Lodge membership Officers, our Almoners, and Mentors, together with the responsible Group Officers to attend one of the two membership roadshows taking place in July.

If we work together and focus our efforts, I have no doubt we will see Our Lodges, Our Province and Our Fraternity thrive.

There will be innovations and strategies being proposed, all I ask is these are listened to with an open mind, an attitude of Yes if and a we can do this, rather than a No because mindset.

Our future is in our hands, and I have every confidence in the brethren I appointed at Provincial Grand Lodge to make the necessary changes and impact required not only to maintain our numbers, but to achieve our target growth of 2% per annum. Even maybe a stretch target of 5%.

Brethren I am very Proud to be your Provincial Grand Master and I am sure if we keep enjoying our Freemasonry, and keep showing people how much we enjoy it, how proud we are of it and keep talking about it, we will encourage many others to join in the fellowship of our fine organisation.

I do not propose today to say much about our 2024 festival, we are moving steadily towards our target, and I would encourage our Lodges to see what they may have in their relief chests and release what they can to the festival to get us over the line.

We have the announcement of the winner of the PGM's F1 DRAW taking place at the festive board tonight. I thank all those who have supported that initiative. There are still a few tickets available.

We will be holding a Charity Ball in November this year and one or two other events, which I hope you will engage with. We will be announcing the total raised at Provincial Grand Lodge next year. Please continue to support the festival.

Brethren we have a wonderful and happy Province, and I would like to conclude my address by thanking you all for your support and commitment to Freemasonry in general and this fine Province of ours in particular.

To all of you who are Almoners, Mentors and Membership Officers and to our Group Officers, you are a crucial link in the success and future development of this Province, and I look forward to working with you and seeing you all at the membership roadshows in July.

Brethren, I thank you all for your attention and attendance this evening and for the kindness and support you have shown to me over many years but especially in this my first year in this new role.

I wish you all a relaxing summer break, stay in touch with each other and your fellow Lodge members and I look forward to being back together again with renewed vigour in September to take on our Membership Challenge.

May the Great Architect of the Universe Guide and Guard you and your families until we meet again.

Thank you, Brethren.