



District Grand Master's address to the Companions. November 2020.

Companions of Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire

I am delighted to welcome you in such numbers to this historic meeting; our first ever Virtual District Business Meeting.

This meeting has had a chequered history. The due date in July fell just inside the first period of suspension of masonic activity. We then planned to hold the District Meeting at Slough alongside the meeting of Bearwood Council scheduled for Saturday two days ago. Then along came the Rule of Six, then Slough went into Tier 2 and the Centre closed, and now we are in the second period of suspension.

However, due to the marvels of technology, and some very deft footwork by Mark Masons' Hall in pioneering these meetings, here we are.

This gives me the opportunity, on your behalf Companions to welcome the Most Illustrious Grand Master, M. Ill. Comp. Kessick Jones to the meeting - a delight to have you with us Grand Master. Also, the Grand Recorder, R. Ill. Comp. Ryan Williams. A pleasure to welcome you R. Ill. Comp. Ryan. We thank you and your staff for the forward looking manner in which you and the staff at MMH have responded to a fast moving situation. In particular, the provision for Virtual Meetings online has allowed for essential business to continue.

Companions, we are also pleased to welcome so many of the Heads of other Orders meeting in our patch across Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. We appreciate that you have made the time in your busy schedules to join us today, and we value, and will support, the interconnection between the various branches of freemasonry.

I thank the District Officers for the year 2019-20 for your commitment and enthusiasm. We had a full programme until brought to a juddering halt by the pandemic and I trust that you enjoyed your year of office. In particular I should like to thank V.Ill. Comp. Peter Hughes for his service as District PCW for three years. Having previously served under R.Ill. Comp. Nick Murzell, he was a stalwart in supporting me as your new DGM.

I congratulate those officers appointed for the current year 2020-21 and am sorry that I have not had the opportunity to invest you in person. I do hope that you will be able to take a full part in the District across this masonic year and next.

Likewise I congratulate those of our companions who received first appointment or promotion from Grand Council in April. It was unfortunate that circumstances prevented you from attending to receive your honour in person from the Grand Master.

Companions this last week brought a bright beam of hope with the very promising news concerning a vaccine. It holds out the prospect that at some point next year we may be able to return to our

masonic meetings with full attendance, ceremonial, and dining. However, we mustn't get ahead of ourselves and there will continue to be difficult times for some of our friends and brethren.

Companions, those of you who feel able, particularly if you have today saved the cost of a return journey to Sindlesham, and a meal, and a drink (or two), might like to support the District 100 Club. I know that our District Treasurer, Comp Raymond Head, will be pleased to hear from you. We continue to plan ahead for better times.

However, some of our members will not be in such a strong position. Please remember those of our companions who may be ill, isolated, or in hardship, in these troubling times and reach out to them with encouragement and solace. Do stay in touch with your companions; and I ask you, within the next 24 hours, to telephone one of those who would appreciate hearing a friendly voice.

Most importantly, Companions, I wish you and your families good health, and the fortitude and wherewithal to get through this difficult period. Thank you for your attendance today, and I very much look forward to seeing you in person when circumstances permit.

May the Supreme Master of the Universe aid you with His Grace, and have you in his Holy Keeping now and evermore.