

Brethren I commence my address by thanking you for attending and especially for supporting those masons receiving Honours. This is a most important date in our Provincial Diary. Please enjoy it!

Last year, we tried something different, to include our Entered Apprentices and Fellow Craft Brethren. We Opened and Called Off in a separate room and called On and Off here in the Provincial Grand Lodge, before Closing in the Opening room. This enabled those newer masons to obtain the full PGL experience.

Last year was so successful, that we have repeated it again this season. Thank you to all of those Entered Apprentices and Fellow Crafts who are here today.

Brethren, please accept my sincere thanks for positively engaging to progress the Membership Challenge, launched by the Pro Grand Master in December 2022.

You have worked hard to bring quality men into our fine organisation. Multiple ceremonies are common. Our Membership Challenge is acknowledged by UGLE as being Green, Stabilised and Growing.

Thank you for all that you have done in bringing in new masons. Please keep up the good work and don't rely on Membership Officers and Social Media Membership Initiatives to bring in new members. Simply ask your family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues to join us.

I ask that all our initiating lodges have the ambition and forward planning to bring in at least two new candidates per season. It would also be very helpful to the Membership Challenge, if our Chapters could also seek to exalt at least two new candidates per season.

I thank our Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribes for your much improved administration of Member Registration Forms. Your timely submissions have greatly assisted in our task of addressing the Membership Challenge. Please keep up your good work in submitting Registration Forms to the Provincial Office within three days of an Initiation or Exaltation.

Brethren I commend the work being done across the Province in terms of our Light Blue Clubs. We now have one established in each of our Groups. I enjoy the Light Blue Seminars which we have held twice a season in recent years. The high attendance, enthusiasm, interest and engagement with myself and the other speakers, from those newer masons is outstanding. Keep on enjoying the numerous Light Blue Club Social Events that are taking place across the Province.

Membership of the Royal Arch continues to grow. Four years ago 36% of our Craft Masons were members of a Chapter. From there it rose to 41%, I'm pleased to report that RA membership currently stands at 42%. Thank you to those Craft Masons who have joined or returned to the Royal Arch.

I expect all our Mentors and Membership Officers to advise and assist our Fellowcrafts, to consider choosing a suitable Royal Arch Chapter as they approach the date of their Third Degree.

Brethren, recently I have become aware of Candidates who have been waiting a considerable amount of time to be initiated into a Lodge. When you are planning your ceremonies, please prioritise First Degrees, as we don't want to leave good men who are keen to join us, waiting or being held back.

The work completed by our Groups in organising White Table Events and Joint Convocations to publicise the Royal Arch has been exceptional.

That work has resulted in significant improvements in membership and an ever increasing number of multiple ceremonies. Don't forget that if you have Candidates waiting to join your chapters, you can hold additional meetings to avoid candidates having to wait unnecessarily. I thank my Cabinet who have given their time to attend Lodges to provide talks about membership of the Royal Arch.

If you would like such an occasion in your lodge, please contact Peter Taylor at the Provincial Office and he will arrange a speaker for you. I thank our Stewards Chapter Demonstration Team, for developing the Royal Arch Savage Club Ritual, and for being available to advise and assist our chapters in respect of multiple ceremonies. All of our Chapter Scribes have been contacted regarding this opportunity, please use it.

Brethren, Pure and Antient Freemasonry consists of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason including membership of the Royal Arch. To complete your masonic journey you need to take your Three Degrees and be Exalted into the Royal Arch. I also remind you that the Royal Arch is not a Companion Order. The Craft and the Royal Arch are one organisation.

Brethren, Community Engagement and Service are crucial aspects of Freemasonry. The number of volunteer hours of service that you give within our local communities is most impressive, please keep that up.

Many of our Masonic Buildings are used as community hubs. This is because the more we bring our local communities into our Halls, the more we enhance our reputation, attract new members and bring in revenue.

The upkeep and high standards of maintenance of our halls is so important, as it is often the first impression for new mason and visitors. Thank you to all of our Hall Chairmen and their Teams for the work that you do in looking after our masonic estates.

I heartily thank our Group Chairmen, Vice Chairmen and Secretaries for the exceptional work that you do in administrating and looking after our lodges and chapters.

Brethren it is important that you regularly visit and socialise with other lodges and chapters, most particularly our new Masters and First Principals. Keep the regular habit of holding lodge and chapter socials such as Ladies Evenings and Non-Masons to Dine Events.

Social occasions can significantly assist our Membership Challenge. I wouldn't ask you to do anything that I don't do myself. I'm currently the Worshipful Master of one of my own lodges and Debbie and I will be holding a Ladies Evening next month.

Brethren, Portal the new Membership App for the United Grand Lodge of England, was launched in March. You have already received access and use instructions from the Provincial Office. Please take the time to log on to this important app and see what it can do for you.

Access to the App is straight forward and only takes a couple of minutes, but should you have any problems in doing so, contact Mick Southern in the Provincial Office and he will assist you.

Please keep supporting our West Lancashire Freemasons Charity. If you are a tax payer you can utilise the yellow envelopes to obtain an extra 25% benefit.

Brethren it is your Charity, if you are in distress or know others who are in distress, please contact the Office at Huyton for confidential advice. Do not suffer in silence or allow others to suffer in silence.

Brethren I thank Peter Taylor, Mick Southern and Violet and all of the Provincial Office Volunteers for their work in organising today's event.

I also thank our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies and all of his Deputies for keeping us on track and ensuring that everything has run so smoothly.

I thank the Preston Group for providing our Stewards, who have marshalled the day so well and safely for us.

To those Brethren who are in receipt of Acting Offices, First Appointments and Promotions, I thank you for all of the work that you have done and for that which I know you will continue to perform in the future.

To those who are dining later, I look forward to your company at the Banquet. If you are leaving after this meeting, have a safe journey home.

In conclusion Brethren, you are aware that my primary objective is for you to enjoy your Craft and Royal Arch Freemasonry. Please ensure that you do that and.....May the Red Rose continue to bloom!



Mark Francis Matthews,
Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master