

Companions may I thank you all for your attendance here this evening. It's great to see such a good turn out and the room so well filled.

Earlier we heard the nominations from the various Inspection Committees and subsequently the Election of Officers for District Chapter in 2025/26. As is customary, I have a number of personal appointments to make and they are as follows

- District Grand Kings Standard Bearer – E.Comp. David Waddell PK Mount Lebanon RAC No 503
- District Grand Sword Bearer – E.Comp. Gerry Anketell PK Loughbrickland RAC No 173
- District Grand Steward – E.Comp Hugh Jordan PK Saintfield RAC No 35
- District Grand Steward – E.Comp. Alan Kinghan PK Sharon RAC No 770

After the resignation of M. Ex Comp Desi McCormick from Director of Ceremonies, after many years of sterling service, I have asked Ex Comp. Genesis Nazereth of Ballynahinch RAC No 301 to fill the position of Director of Ceremonies, which he has graciously accepted.

I congratulate all those Companions who are going into Office and look forward to investing and installing them in December.

The Installation Convocation will take place in La Mon Hotel and Country Club on Saturday 7th December at 2:00pm. Prior to the Convocation there will be a Luncheon at 12 noon which is open to all Companions and I would encourage as many as possible to attend especially those going into office and those leaving office. Notification will be sent out to all Chapters in a timely manner. Book early to avoid disappointment.

The installation season is fast approaching and I would encourage everyone but especially those going into office to attend a class of instruction. We have classes in Banbridge, Belfast (Galwally) and N'Ards and they would appreciate some new members. We all benefit from attending classes, as do our Chapters. Not only do we learn the correct ritual, we also gain in confidence. When myself and the Senior Officers are out visiting various Chapters it quickly becomes evident who has attended a class. I would urge all Companions to support the Classes of Instruction for the benefit of us all. Details of when they meet can be found on the District website.

The District of Down will be hosting The Supreme Grand Chapter on Wednesday the 18th September at 2.00 pm in The Mourne Country Hotel Newry. For those who have never attended Grand Chapter before or for a number of years, it is a great opportunity to come along and enjoy the days proceedings. The District, at the invitation of Supreme Grand Chapter, will also be hosting a Health and Wellbeing event prior to the Convocation, also in The Mourne Country, from 11.00 am to 1.00 pm. Again, this is in association with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, whose help and assistance is invaluable in running these events. The main participants at this event will be Suicide prevention, carers support, health checks, Age NI, Cancer Awareness, Hearing checks and Mental Health Info. Please come along to both the Health awareness event and the convocation and if possible bring a friend or two.

Our District Chapter BBQ is fast approaching and will be held on Saturday 28th September in Newry Masonic Hall at 7pm. Cost £15.00pp or £30.00 per couple. This informal and purely social event should be an excellent evening. I'm looking forward to it and I look forward to your support. Tickets are available from Newry Hall Committee members, V. Ex. Com Adrian McQuillan and District Office and will be available here this evening after the Convocation. All contact details are on our website.

Future training and development courses are in the process of being finalised and all those involved will be notified in due course.

I would again remind every Chapter that if you are experiencing difficulties with numbers, administration etc please do not hesitate to contact the Office or your Inspector immediately. We are here to help and assist you to the best of our abilities

Again I would appeal to you all to make a special effort to attend the upcoming Church Service on the 8th September in Newcastle Methodist Church at 3.30 pm to celebrate the belated Anniversary of Dundrum ML 488. It is of the utmost importance to have a strong representation at all Church Services, not only to support the unit holding it, but also to show the greater public that we are part of the community, not apart from it.

We all have a busy few months ahead of us. So let us all support each other in whatever way we deem necessary or possible. Remember, A house divided against itself cannot stand.

Companions, I'll end with a few inspirational quotes:

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

“None of us is as smart as all of us.”

Companions, I thank you for your attention and when you leave here this evening, I wish you all a safe journey home.