

Companions, as we approach the end of the Installation season, I would like to personally thank all those who were involved in the organizing and degree giving at these Convocations. Their time, effort and skills need to be recognised and hence praised for their endeavours. Most of us, turn up, to enjoy the ritual and festivities afterwards, not realizing or forgetting, the amount of work that has gone into the preparations. So, to all, Registrars, Installing Officers, Ex Kings and not forgetting the Class leaders, thank you for your tireless work, commitment and dedication to your Chapters and R. A Masonry in general. Also, may I on behalf of the senior officers of District Chapter thank every Chapter we have visited so far this season, for their hospitality and the manner in the way we have been received. Exemplary would be the word I would use. Companions it is greatly appreciated.

As part of the Health and Wellbeing of Companions within District Chapter we have adopted a healthy eating campaign in conjunction with the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust and their professional dietitian. It is a known fact as we age, we change, and so do our nutritional needs therefore eating a balanced diet is essential. One example is that eating large meals late in the evening has been linked to weight gain and blood sugar levels. Additionally, it can incur a financial burden.

District Chapter has organised a Health and Wellbeing event on Tuesday 10th April 2025, at Galwally House from 11.00 to 15.00hrs, concentrating on Cancer Focus, incorporating healthy eating and offering health and hearing checks. Under the guidance of the dietitian one of the key items will be eating late at night and how this can disrupt digestion, create blood sugar spikes and affect quality of sleep. It will also explore why some older adults may be at risk of not eating enough.

District Chapter are also in the process of organising three roadshow presentations on healthy eating which will be presented by the dietitian. These will be held in Galwally House,

Newtownards Masonic Centre and Banbridge Masonic Centre, during March and April with dates and times to be agreed. This information will be circulated to all Chapters and Companions in advance of the roadshows.

As you are all aware, we have been meeting regularly with the five Inspection Committees to work on an improved, more efficient and co-ordinated way in running the committees. Changes have already been made regarding the use of media outlets to enable committees to move on single candidates and a one-off payment to replace the charges associated with the relevant candidate forms. Open and constructive discussions have been ongoing regarding the move to three regional Inspection committees, which in turn, will reduce the workload of the committees, streamline the processes and ultimately make the committees more efficient. The three regional Inspection committees will be known as North Down, Mid Down and South Down. We will be shortly reading a Notice of Motion to this effect. Work is currently being finalized for the new By-Laws regarding these committees, with further meetings to be held with the relevant parties.

I am glad to report that the vast majority of Chapters, 50 to be precise, attained the full attendance for last year. A marked improvement from the previous year. Well done to those Chapters. As you are all well aware, attending District Chapter is part of the duties of the Excellent King and Council, so it shouldn't be a shock to learn that attending District Chapter is part of your remit. The District Inspectors will be shortly advised of those Chapters, who sadly, have been fined. By not affixing your signature to the signing in sheets, renders you as a non-attendance. This sadly effects all within the Chapter for elective Offices.

We will be arranging after the summer recess, Director of Ceremonies seminars, to be held in Newry, Newtownards and

Galwally House. This being at the request of all those present at the last seminars. Again, I would encourage all our Director of Ceremonies and those interested in ritual to attend one or more of these, as I can assure you, they will be very informative and enjoyable. Our 4 Director of Ceremonies and Representatives of the Supreme Grand Chapter of Instruction will be in attendance, to demonstrate, guide and answer all questions regarding Royal Arch Ritual. So please let as many as possible avail of this opportunity to brush up on our ritual.

The Continuous Improvement Team have been busy and as I'm sure you have noticed on the way in have designed and purchased a welcome banner which will be used at all our District convocations from now on. They have also designed another banner for the propose of encouraging recruitment. This banner along with appropriate flyers will be on display at the next Provincial Grand Lodge stated communication. Permission being kindly granted by the R.W. Provincial Grand Master. This once again proves the close working relationship between Provincial Grand Lodge and ourselves. After all we are all part of the same order. Working together for the betterment of all our members.

We are delighted to have been invited to host District Chapter here this afternoon to help Cottown RAC 430 celebrate their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. We are also open for invitations from any Chapter who are celebrating an anniversary or other special event, and would like to host District, please do not hesitate to contact the office regarding arranging the same.

Once again, a big thank you to all who attended the Carol Service in Bannside Presbyterian Church. What a wonderful afternoon and a truly outstanding charity collection. Congratulations to Banbridge District Charity Committee for a great afternoon.

Due warning Companions that there will be a church service in September this year in Hillsborough Presbyterian Church, to celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Maze M.L.356. When details are published later on in the year, please make a special effort to attend.

It has been previously mentioned that we are on the outlook for volunteers to help operate the sound system. At present one Companion has come forward offering his services, to which we are greatly thankful. I again appeal for any Companion who wishes to take a more practical part in District Chapter to speak to one of the Senior Officers or sound engineers who will only be too glad to explain what is required. Our current sound engineer, Ex Comp Michael Clarke does an absolutely tremendous job and has done so for the last six plus years. As a way of saying thank you for his tireless efforts and expertise, I would like to bestow on him the Honour of Past District Grand Steward at our June Convocation in Lisburn.

Regarding the District website, if any Chapter or Companion has any photos or news items, regarding Installations, presentations etc, we would encourage you to send them into the office so we can input them onto the site. As I have said before, “Yesterday’s news is history” So we need to keep one step ahead in the game.

Thank you once again for your attendance here this afternoon.

In closing I leave you with another quote from Helen Keller.

“Instead of comparing our lot with that of those who are more fortunate than we are, we should compare it with the lot of the great majority of our fellow men. It then appears that we are among the privileged.”

I wish each one of you and your families, God’s Richest Blessings, health and happiness and have a safe journey home.

