

“Good afternoon, Brethren,

It’s very nice to see so many of you here today in the Grand Temple for our AGM, the highlight of our Provincial calendar.

Firstly, I would like to congratulate all those who have received preferment from our Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro HRH Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO on their appointment to or promotion in Provincial Grand rank. It has been a pleasure to invest you all with your new ranks.

Provincial honours are not just a thank you for past service in the Province or within your Lodges, but also they are an encouragement to carry on your efforts, or even expand them.

I would like to thank Daniel Graham and his team on the PCC for the annual review booklet, which I think amply illustrates the wide range of activities and fun that is currently being enjoyed within the Province. Do take a look to see what’s been going on around the Province – you may see something you want to get involved in, the various groups and functions are always looking for more volunteers.

Two weeks ago I attended the Pro Grand Master’s Business Meeting where we learnt that our strategies are working, and that overall, membership in 2025, within the constitution, was for the first time in many years, up on the previous year. I am pleased to say that the Province’s membership is also growing, albeit, slowly. However, we are now able to make more sense of our membership through Adelphi and Portal with an App developed by W. Bro Ian Ferguson which enables us to identify where our members live, and which Centres they meet at.

The surprising thing is that when this information is illustrated on a map, it identifies immediately two things. Firstly, that the membership of Middlesex is literally nationwide and that many of our members live nowhere near the Centres their lodges meet at. Development of this very useful tool is in hand to help us understand how best to strengthen and retain our membership, although I am also happy to report that retention of new candidates appears to be higher than the average. Please keep up the great work supporting our newest members learn and grow as Freemasons.

I would also like to thank Ian and the Middlesex Cares team for their ongoing activities. They are providing meaningful and practical support for our members especially those who are experiencing health and financial difficulties.

Perhaps the most high-profile activity they organise is the PSA testing which has already potentially saved lives of some and changed the lives of others by early

warning of Prostate cancer. I do urge you, Brethren, to take advantage of this service that Middlesex Care provides through the good auspices of Ivan Chu our Provincial Almoner.

I am also pleased to report that our Centres are now looking to the public for business and our Masonic centres are now, not only open for business, but have made great progress in becoming part of the community, something that Freemasons, nationwide, have embraced, and has seen an improvement in our image to the public. We now need to continue the process of explaining what we are, what we stand for, and what we are not, and the message of Masonic charity not being a charity for Masons only, but a force for the good in the community needs to be highlighted.

We will shortly be hearing from Grand Lodge the detail behind Contemporary Freemasonry which will not be a dilution of tradition, but a reinforcement of our relevance in today's society. We have had two successful Building Together presentations at Twickenham and Harrow and I do encourage you all to try and attend one of the next sessions. These morning seminars provide ideas and inspiration to attract and retain our members in the Craft as well as encouraging members to complete their journey in pure and antient freemasonry by joining the Royal Arch.

I would like to thank all those Royal Arch reps who have helped in encouraging our members to join the Royal Arch and, for the first time in many, many years, we have over 42% of our Craft members who are members of the Royal Arch as well.

I am also pleased to report that the national average for members who have signed up for Portal is 42%. In Middlesex we are 54.4%. Please encourage those that haven't signed up yet to do so, especially Lodge Secretaries and Treasurers. For those not yet signed up, Portal is a way of connecting our units and our members. It also shows your upcoming meetings – particularly useful if you hold multiple memberships.

During the year, and having listened to feedback from members, we decided not to continue with the 1870 Club, despite much hard work and effort by WBros Nigel Codron, Rob McClintock and Brian Fisher, and have reinstated the PGO Club, membership of which is now automatic to all Provincial Officers within the Province on their appointment. There will be no subscription, and guests are very welcome at PGO events. The first such event was the launch of the Festival in March which was extremely successful, and which has led to a very promising start, raising over £700,000 in the first six weeks. Brethren, there is a further

£400,000 in Lodge relief chests and I would be grateful if that money could be released to the Festival in due course to take our total to above £1 million.

I can see that many of you are already wearing your Festival Jewel but for those that are yet to sign up, I'm sure that the Festival Team will be happy to guide you through the process.

Finally, Brethren, I would like to thank all Provincial officers of this year for their enthusiastic support during their time in office and a special thank you to those who are continuing in office. A particular thank you to Michael Lavender, the Provincial Grand Secretary and his team for pulling the arrangements for this meeting together, and also to the support and assistance we have all received from the Past ProvGDC Mark Millard, his successor Frankie Wheelan-Mellor, and the team of Deputies for making sure the meeting ran smoothly as well as my thanks to our Provincial Grand Stewards who, have as always, been there in the background to ensure that everyone is in the right place at the right time.

And, in closing, my thanks to you all for your support of our events and activities and for attending today. I look forward to speaking with as many of you as I can before and during dinner.

Thank you brethren.