



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

VW Bro Jonathan Charles Whitaker PGSwdB
Deputy Provincial Grand Master in Charge

Hamble, 25th May 2020

Dear Brethren,

I write to you for the first time as the Deputy PGM in Charge and hope you and your loved ones are keeping well.

I assumed responsibility for our Craft Province last Friday. It was a day I will always remember, as it was not as I imagined it would be. Nonetheless, I am conscious of this important responsibility and pledge that I will give my very best for you all and the Province. I am deeply touched by the hundreds of supportive cards, phone calls and messages received since my appointment was announced and thank you.

I pay tribute to my predecessor, RW Bro Michael Wilks, for his unstinting ten years as our Provincial Grand Master. Throughout, his energy and enthusiasm never diminished. With the support of Kay and his family, he has been a superb ambassador for our Province during the twenty-two years that he has worn a chain of office. On behalf of us all, Lynn and I met with Mike and Kay last Thursday, socially distancing of course, presenting them with a cheque to acknowledge his years of leadership and to say thank you.

Brethren, who knows when we will resume our normal activities? Our Pro Grand Master, MW Bro Peter Lowndes in his recent address to us all, indicated that it would be unlikely that normal meetings will be held for some time - the nature of our ceremonies and vulnerable groupings being key factors. We are of course missing out on our special meetings including a consecration, centenaries and installations; these will be rescheduled when we resume. Our priority must remain the health and welfare of our members and their families. Meanwhile we will continue to take advice from United Grand Lodge working within Government guidelines.

During recent weeks, we have all had to adapt to changes and none more so than in the way we communicate. My IT skills have definitely improved with the daily use of Zoom, Business Teams and so on. Many lodges are holding these 'virtual' get-togethers so that they can 'see' one another. Other lodges using WhatsApp groups or similar. Whilst these get-togethers are proving very successful we must remember that for some of us the telephone is still the favoured means of communicating. I would hope that all brethren within our Province, as well as our widows and dependents would receive a regular phone call as a minimum.

The Provincial Cabinet, those in the Provincial Office and our Area Executives, are 'meeting' regularly via virtual platforms to ensure the day to day running of the Province. I have been hugely inspired by the Provincial Almoners team, Area and Lodge Almoners, working together with the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) where required, in responding to the needs of our members. Thank you all.

I am in touch with my friends, the Heads of the Progressive and Companion Orders who meet within the Province. We have a 'virtual' meeting planned in June to ensure that we are able to understand the impact on all Orders and learn from one another. We are, after all, all in this together.

I am conscious that in this challenging time, many of you and your families are working hard as key workers or volunteers, with more of you generously giving your time to supporting local communities or raising valuable funds. Thank you. Our thoughts are also with those who have lost loved ones and those who are recovering from illness.

The Provincial Grand Secretary's Bulletins will continue to keep you up to date with all the key information in a timely and effective manner. Please ensure that every brother has access to copies of the Bulletins by one means or other.

Brethren, I look forward to the day when we will meet again. Until that time, keep in touch and look after one another. Stay safe and well.

My very best wishes.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jon Whitaker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.