

GRAND MASTER'S INSTALLATION ADDRESS

MW Bro. Mark G. Forster

Brethren,

Today marks a significant moment in my journey and in the life of our beloved fraternity. With profound gratitude and humility, I stand before you as your newly installed grand master. It is a privilege to address you for the first time in this capacity, and I do so with a heart full of reverence for the traditions and principles that define Freemasonry.

I would like to express my thanks to all of the brethren who have planned, organized and assisted with this annual communication. You have made this an extraordinary event.

I would also like to express my gratitude to our past grand masters for their assistance in this year's installation. You have all been great supporters and I hope to meet your expectations in the coming year.

I would also like at this time to remember my father, Dennis Charles Forster who raised me in lodge in 1995. The gavel presented to me today was presented to my father at his installation as worshipful master in 1971.

My theme for the coming year, "the magic is you!" resonates deeply with me as I reflect on the essence of our craft. Freemasonry is indeed a remarkable journey—a journey of self-discovery, enlightenment, and service. Each of us brings a unique blend of talents, experiences, and perspectives that enrich our lodges and communities. The magic of Freemasonry lies not in mysticism but in the transformative power that each of us holds within ourselves.

As grand master, I am committed to nurturing and celebrating this inherent magic within each member of our fraternity. It is through our collective efforts and individual contributions that we uphold the timeless values of brotherly love, relief, and truth. Together, we will continue to be beacons of light in our communities, promoting harmony, compassion, and understanding.

I am deeply aware of the responsibilities entrusted to me and the challenges that lie ahead. With your steadfast support and dedication, I am confident that we will navigate these challenges with grace and fortitude. Let us embrace the opportunities before us to strengthen our bonds of brotherhood, to inspire one another to greater heights of excellence, and to extend our hand in friendship to those who seek the light of Freemasonry.

In the spirit of unity and solidarity, let us reaffirm our commitment to Freemasonry's noble ideals. Let us uphold the integrity of our rituals and teachings while embracing innovation and inclusivity. Together, we will write the next chapter of our fraternity's legacy, ensuring that Freemasonry remains a guiding force for good in a world that often yearns for moral guidance and compassion.

KEY INITIATIVES

Your current grand line officers have been working together over the past few years to bring together ideas and to create a vision that aligns with the needs of our grand lodge.

FIVE PILLAR PLAN

Over the past few years, we have re-established the Five Pillar Plan that was neglected during the covid pandemic. Many of the previously outstanding items have been completed and we will strive to continue the progress made.

DDGM DESIGNATE PROGRAMME

During the past few years, we reinstated the DDGM Designate Programme on a trial basis. This last year we made a concerted effort to involve the designates early and started training. I expect that process to continue in the current year. This initiative will be assessed and reported on for your consideration at our next annual communication. Your input and feedback to the deputy grand master and the senior grand warden is encouraged.

LODGE BUILDINGS

Building a better future for the sustainability of our lodge buildings has been a topic of discussion for many years. Grand lodge has a duty to its membership to protect the interests of the beneficial owners of our buildings and to provide guidance and direction to lodge building societies. The value of our properties has increased many times as has the cost to own and maintain these facilities. We must, as a fraternity, develop strategies to guide our lodge building managers when assistance is requested. Your grand line officers and the Lodge Buildings Committee are committed to finding ways to assist our lodges and we will endeavor to develop these strategies.

COMMITTEES

The grand line officers have reviewed the composition of committees and fund trustees. Currently there are in excess of two hundred members sitting as grand lodge officers, committee members, and trustees. Many members have served in these capacities for 10-15 years or more with no reprieve. These members deserve our greatest appreciation. Brethren, your commitment to our craft is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

I encourage interested brethren to reach out to committee chairmen and let them know of your interest and the skills you may bring to the team. Our more experienced brethren can take on a mentorship rôle to assist our new members.

This year, I amalgamated the standing committees of Constitutions and Jurisprudence under one chairman for a one-year trial period. At our next annual communication, the joint committee will make a recommendation on the viability of this initiative.

MASONIC CIVILITY

As freemasons, we are all on the level. No member should ever feel ridiculed or belittled. We are taught to respect each other and to listen and understand each others' position. We do not need to agree on everything; however, we must listen and respect the opinions of others. Remember always, we meet on the level, act by the plumb and part on the square.

The Masonic Civility Initiative introduced to our jurisdiction by MW Bro. Donald E. Stutt was recently adopted as an initiative of the Conference of Grand Masters of North America. The mission of the programme is to promote masonic values to restore civility in society.

If you are interested to participate in the programme, please see the following link: masoniccivility.org.

EDUCATION

One of the basic tenets of our craft is to improve ourselves in Freemasonry. Our primary objective is to create new freemasons. This is not accomplished merely by conferring the three degrees. We must provide an environment whereby our new and existing members can improve themselves and learn more about our way of life.

Check out the *New Member Pathway* on the grand lodge website.

I encourage members to have open discussions in lodge and consider the following topics:

September to December—The Entered Apprentice

Have an open discussion in lodge in an interactive manner where brethren discuss and share their interpretations of the lectures, charges, and lessons of the first degree.

December to March—Charity and Community Awareness

Is your community aware of your lodge or freemasons in general? What has your lodge or members done to gain awareness in the community? Is there an opportunity to participate in community projects or charitable events? What does charity mean to your lodge?

March to June—Men's Health

There are many health concerns for our brethren as we age. Discussing some of these in lodge or bringing in a guest speaker to discuss some of these topics may provide opportunities for us to help each other. Consider prostate cancer, dementia, Alzheimer's disease, skin cancer and other health issues that may impact our brethren. How can we recognize and help?

RUSTY SQUARES

Rusty Squares are those brethren who have not been attending lodges for some time. I would like to encourage the lodges to hold a special event at least once a year where absent brethren are invited to the meetings. I strongly encourage our lodges to consider demitted brethren. When a brother demits, he is in good standing with the lodge and the craft and is permitted to visit any lodge twice per year and more with the permission of the lodge.

I encourage lodges to create an annual newsletter for both current and demitted brethren to provide an update on the activities of the lodge, introduce new members, and promote upcoming events. Use this opportunity to invite brethren to a *Rusty Square* evening.

BENEVOLENCE

This year, I have requested the trustees of the Benevolence Fund to review the requirements to support a brother in need of financial assistance. Currently the requirements to obtain funding may be overwhelming to a distressed brother. A lodge is in the best position to make a determination of need and there should be a less obtrusive way to access the funding.

GRAND MASTER'S CHARITY

For this year, I would like to put charity in the hands of the lodges and districts. Charity can be in the form of both time spent and dollars contributed. Instead of presenting funds to the grand master on official visits, I request a written presentation be made and summarized at the grand master's official visit, identifying the charities that your lodges have selected to support. Provide a brief explanation of what services each charity provides and describe what your members are doing to support that charity.

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Our youth organizations have been struggling for membership for quite a few years. Although there are several active Job's Daughters bethels in the province, recently there were no active DeMolay chapters. This last year, at my suggestion, our grand master formed a youth committee to work directly with the youth organizations to see how we could help. With the support of our Youth Committee a new DeMolay chapter was formed this year in New Westminster (Excalibur Chapter.)

This year, I am asking you to ensure our younger members with children of the appropriate ages for these organizations be informed of their existence. I encourage you all to visit bethels or chapters that meet in or around your area and bring other brethren with you so they can see the amazing work these young men and ladies are doing.

GRAND MASTER'S THEME

My theme, "*the magic is you!*" may sound like I am encouraging magic shows for the grand master's official visits. Far from that, my theme is all about Freemasonry and what we get from it, what it teaches us, how others perceive us.

The magic is you is both collective and individual as we move from the rough ashlar to the smooth ashlar. We can only do it through individual effort and the assistance of our brethren.

It covers how we act in our daily lives, in our masonic relationships, in the virtues we believe, teach and practice, in our meetings, at home, at work, and in public.

It is up to each one of us to practice and demonstrate the many virtues we teach.

Together, we will continue to be beacons of light in our communities, promoting harmony, compassion, and understanding. I am honored to serve as your grand master, and I look forward to the journey ahead with optimism and enthusiasm. May the Great Architect of the Universe bless our endeavours and illuminate our path as we continue to discover the magic within ourselves and share it with the world. Thank you, my brothers. *The Magic is You!*

MW Bro. Mark G. Forster
Grand Master, 2024-2025