



UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

May 2020 Message to Brethren

Brethren, for some years now, as part of our campaign to make Freemasonry more open and understandable for the general public, we have been stressing that we must be able to show its relevance in modern society. This argument has largely been based on the way we are expected to behave morally, our voluntary contribution to society and our colossal involvement to all aspects of charity.

These last few terrible weeks have shown all these in abundance and if anyone doubted our relevance, they have only got to look at what has been going on around this country and in our Districts overseas. If I tried to outline how brethren have been getting involved, this message would go on for page after page and would, therefore become counterproductive. Suffice it to say that from Northumberland to Cornwall, from Cumberland to Kent and from Wales to East Anglia in this country and all around the Globe through our Districts, Freemasons have been taking part in almost everything.

This has involved the manufacture of PPE, provision of meals, home visits and endless other things. Brethren through all this, I have been told to stay at home. Apparently, I am considered to be "at risk". I have to say that I have not felt comfortable with this, but ever since I retired as Grand Director of Ceremonies, I have learned to do what I am told!! Nonetheless, it doesn't stop me keeping in touch with what is going on and I have an enormous sense of pride in what is being done. What comes over loud and clear is that our brethren are doing all this work because they WANT to do it not just because they think that they should. In the past some of our detractors have accused us of only getting involved in something that will make us look good. The past few weeks have proved what a monstrous slur that is.

It has been said so many times that actions speak louder than words. Was this ever truer?

It is quite clear that for all this to have happened, good organisation must be involved and there is no doubt that this has been magnificently carried out at local level, and, indeed, considerable funding has been made available locally. However, to give this added impetus, it was only right for the Masonic Charity Foundation (MCF) to become fully involved and they have responded splendidly as one would expect. To assist this, we formed the Covid-19 Group and asked one Provincial Grand Master from each Regional Communications Group to join the Grand Secretary and the CEO of the MCF in biweekly meetings – virtually, of course. Their main task is to decide on where the greatest emphasis should be placed and to make sure that the money given goes to the right place and as quickly as possible. Over the years, the MCF has rightly been praised for the speed with which it is able to react to disaster situations and this has again been amply illustrated.

I hope that many of you will have read about many of our activities in the press and, in a large part thanks to our hard working Communications Department, much of this comment has been positive, as it most certainly deserves to be, although, as we know only too well, it

has not always been so in the past. Just this last weekend The Sunday Telegraph carried a small piece regarding the 1000 Tablets that have been donated to Care Homes and Hospitals to enable patients to stay in touch with their families and friends.

Brethren, what of the future. Did the Prime Minister give us hope for a quick resumption? I fear not, but, realistically, we couldn't have expected it. The suspension imposed lasts until the end of July, but it is hard to imagine that it would be sensible, even if legal, for Lodges and Chapters to consider meeting shortly after that date.

I know that many Lodges and Chapters have been meeting socially by means of Zoom and other similar sites. I have been involved in some myself and thoroughly enjoyable they were. I believe we all know how important it is to stay in touch with each other and, by so doing, we will be able to check on the wellbeing of all, particularly those who live alone.

We will be keeping a very close watch on events and will endeavour to consider ways that Lodges and Chapters can meet, even if we have to adapt some of our usual customs to fit the situation. Clearly, we must abide by the advice given by the Government, but, in addition, we will be very conscious of what it is sensible for our membership to be involved in. It is possible that, in some of our Districts, a resumption could be considered before it can in this Country, and we will need to rely on our Brethren in those Districts to consult with us.

In the meantime, Brethren keep proving to the world at large what a wonderful organisation we are and what a terrific membership we have. What we have contributed over the last few weeks goes so far beyond just money and I know that will continue for as long as is necessary.

Lastly Brethren, thank you all you are doing, you are a wonderful advertisement for the Institution we hold so dear.



MW Bro Peter Lowndes
Pro Grand Master