

# The Square and Compasses.

A newsletter for the Grand Lodge of South Africa. No. 116 September 2021



Most Worshipful Brother John Smith OSM MSA.

## Heritage and Freemasonry

September is Heritage month in South Africa and we celebrate it by recognising and remembering the cultural wealth of our diverse population and admiring the natural beauty of our country. These celebrations highlight our values and priorities as our heritage provides clues to our past and how our society has evolved. It reminds us to examine our history and traditions and enables us to develop an awareness about ourselves. Our history is however not necessarily our heritage as the latter is what has survived from the historical past and includes our customs and beliefs. Our cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and the intangible attributes of society and includes the ideas, customs, beliefs and social behaviour which identifies us and the communities in which we live. A national heritage enhances our pride by promoting a sense of national identity and brings people from all walks of life together and helps us to understand our respective historical cultures and customs.

Our Masonic heritage in South Africa began in 1772 when the first Lodge was formed in Cape Town, being Lodge de Goede Hoop. The founder members had great hopes for the future of the Lodge as its motto is *Spes vincit omnia impedimenta*, which means *Hope overcomes all obstacles*. Notwithstanding this, Freemasonry is not seen as a national heritage as its stringent requirements for membership have in the past excluded and will in the present and the foreseeable future exclude a percentage of the male population. This however has not and must not stop us from

continuing to strive to make our fellow men better and our country a better home for all its people. Our Masonic heritage is as interesting and as colourful as the cultural heritage of our nation. Although we all adhere to the same rules and regulations and all follow the same ritual, there are marked differences in the way in which certain things are done in our ceremonies and at our festive boards in different parts of our country. These differences are unique and emanate from the rich heritage which has developed over the past almost 250 years of Masonic activity in South Africa.

In researching our Masonic history in order to collect and collate material for inclusion in our heritage book which is being produced and which will be printed and will be ready for distribution during 2022, we are in the process of assembling a treasure trove of artefacts, documents and photographs from Lodges, Chapters, Consistories and members in all parts of our country. We have discovered notes written by prominent Masonic politicians; charges presented by prominent Masonic jurists; letters written by Masonic soldiers, some who won the highest decoration for valour and some who sadly made the ultimate sacrifice. We have also discovered Masonic artefacts and books which may be classified as antiques and which, until they were recently replaced, were in regular use in certain Lodges.

All these historical items as well as the recent and present Masonic papers, addresses and written contributions which have been and still are being developed and produced by our present members, all form part of our Masonic heritage. The recent golden jubilee celebration of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of South Africa in the De Goede Hoop temple in Cape Town, the centenary celebration of Lodge Star of the East in the Central East Rand temple in Benoni and the imminent sesquicentennial celebration of Lodge De Morgenster in Kroonstad will long be remembered by the members who were and will be fortunate to attend these events. Their names are and will be inscribed in the respective registers for posterity and they do and will also form part of our Masonic heritage.

A people without knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots. We know and can appreciate that a knowledge of the past can and does equip us for the future. As for the future, Mahatma Gandhi said that the future will depend on what we do in the present. Let us thus continue to build a multi-cultural brotherhood of good men who practice brotherly love, charity and truth and who are united in the enhancement of wisdom, high moral standards and justice for all persons and let us thereby, continue to strive to make the World a better place for us all.

**MW Bro John Smith OSM MSA  
Grand Master**

## International Recognition for our SGC!

MP Bro Boet du Plessis MA, the Sovereign Grand Commander for the AASR for South Africa, has once again been internationally recognised for his efforts to further the best interests of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite around the world.

As an acknowledgement of MP Bro du Plessis' extensive work in the development of educational material and in his establishment of well-grounded relationships throughout the Masonic world, the American Northern Masonic Jurisdiction made him an Honorary member of their very prestigious Order. This was formally announced at their Cleveland Conference in August 2021.



MP Bro du Plessis has also been elected as a member of the "Places and Dates Committee" which will be responsible for organising the XX World Conference of Supreme Councils to take place in Asuncion, Paraguay in July 2022.

There is no question that MP Bro du Plessis is doing an outstanding job of promoting South Africa and our Supreme Council and that all of our local AASR members will benefit from his initiatives.

## A Brother looks back on 11 September 2001

Covid has been a disaster for the world - yet, even in this, there has been some good. It has promoted the concept of online meetings, such as Zoom, and as a result, we have developed firm friendships with Grand Lodges and Brethren we'd never really known before.

Wor Bro Arthur Myers (New York) is such a Brother. We met him on the Masonic Town Hall series driven by our Wor Bro Edgar Baron and Arthur is now joining Lodge Cape Town as a country member. He sent us his very moving, recollections of 9/11.



"We all know where we were, and what we were doing 20 years ago today. As we watched in horror, that turned to terror, that turned to anger as the news unfolded. As we saw the actions of the courageous first responders, NYPD, FDNY and strangers on the streets of New York do what they could to help.

I cannot believe 20 years have passed. I remember it like it was yesterday. 20 years later, and my heart still aches as it did while I watched the attacks unfold. There are no adequate words to convey how I felt - but I'm sure you all felt the same way - still feel the same way - on this anniversary.

We saw the worst in our enemies, and the best of our nation. We saw there is evil in the world, but also good in the heart of our country; remember those lost, as well as all those who became heroes. I will never forget the day we were attacked. But, I will try to focus on the aftermath; people coming together to help

friends, family, strangers. How everyone was a little bit nicer, more understanding, all sharing in the same unthinkable experience.

I will never forget how, we as a nation, came together to help however we could - and to help heal those wounds deep within our hearts and souls. Thank a serviceman, fireman, policeman, iron worker; or a family of those serving. Do a good deed today, in their honour. Spread some love. Hug someone; tell those around you that you love them. Never forget 9/11."

## Why are we Freemasons?

In this thought-provoking article, our Deputy Grand Master, RW Bro Brandon Topham advises us of the recent update to the GLSA strategy and notes that it answers this fundamental question. He continues:

It is important that our leaders, members and other stakeholders understand our strategy and our reason for existence. By embracing it we will be able to meet our objectives and have a greater impact in society. At the heart of our strategy is the answer to the following three questions: Why do we exist? How do we achieve our Why? What we do to execute our How?

To get started, click on the link and watch this YouTube clip [Simon Sinek video](#). It will change how you look at Freemasonry's reason for existence and we have adopted Sinek's simplistic but powerful approach to guide us. In short, every question or decision we must answer as Lodges or individuals should be guided by the answers to these questions. When deciding what projects to undertake or how to resolve a problem we are encountering, we should refer to these answers and our Masonic values. In considering possible outcomes we should assess whether the option answers or aligns to the Why, How and What which is addressed below.

**Why** does Freemasonry and the Grand Lodge exist and why are we all Freemasons? The simple answer is

**"To make the world a better place!"**

We must ignore the misleading slogans which have developed over the years. If we look at the core of why Freemasonry has existed through the ages, we realise that we have always endeavoured to make the world we live in a better place for current and future generations.

How we have affected this great aim changes from time to time and community to community. In short no Freemason and no one should join Freemasonry if he does not want to, in some way or other, make the world a better place. Individually we can do little but as a worldwide Brotherhood we can, we have, and we do make the world better. I'm reminded of the words of Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." The image of the individual squares on the floor of the Lodge reinforces this. Individually we all have a role to play but collectively we make an impact which is functional and pleasing to look at. In many ways over the centuries we have helped create Order from Chaos.

**How** do we make the world a better place?

1. By practicing charity and benevolence.
2. By encouraging members and the world to pursue light – (Knowledge, Wisdom and Truth).



3. By practicing fellowship and promoting Brotherhood and fraternity amongst all mankind.
4. By sharing, teaching, and mentoring moral, virtuous, ethical principles and values (honesty and integrity at the core). We do this through our meetings and association with likeminded people.
5. Supporting members in the practice and implementation of our values. As Masons we share these values and debate with each other using these values as the core of how we lead and encourage each other to live our lives.
6. Our fraternity aids in developing reconciliation and tolerance in our country and the world.

In short, we make and inspire people to be better and to do things in their own lives and in the lives of others to make the world a better place.

**What** do we do to make the How happen?

1. We initiate, pass and raise by ritual, thus teaching and reminding members of our spiritual, moral, virtuous, ethical principles which we apply to our lives. This builds fellowship and belonging.
2. We organise charitable / benevolent events. To do charity we must also do fundraising projects. These projects help develop leadership skills and further build bonds of fellowship.
3. We encourage members to conduct charity and benevolence in their daily lives and to lead lives based on the principles and values adopted.
4. We organise such educational events as Masonic lectures, workshops and Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to enable members to delve deeper into the teachings of Masonry and the Craft.
5. We practice fellowship when visiting each other and attending international events, at festive boards, social gatherings, SIGs, family inclusive functions, participation in projects and regular meeting interactions. All help create a sense of belonging and sharing with likeminded people.
6. We develop members values and their leadership and management skills through participation and education events and mentorship programs.
7. We operate Networks and SIGs where members can gain assistance, knowledge and camaraderie.

Having answered these three simple questions the Grand Lodge plans to develop and roll out a program to help Lodges to ensure that they can effectively provide the What to their members. This will be the Balanced Lodge Program and it will create clear measurements as to how a Lodge is performing as it strives to retain and stimulate membership and ensure that, collectively, we are making the world a better place.

Top performing Lodges will be recognised annually. We will also look to include a couple of "Colossal" Grand Master projects each year in which successful Lodge projects will be considered by the Grand Master as "Colossal" projects for the year ahead. These projects will then be rolled out across the country to increase their impact and to help the GLSA in its efforts to make South Africa a better place.

One vital way to impact and improve our world, especially South Africa, is to create entrepreneurial opportunities to reduce unemployment. We encourage

each member to embrace this and project and strive to organise charitable and developmental projects which will help achieve this ambitious objective. Each small individual action, each small Lodge project conducted can, collectively, exponentially impact on our efforts.

Brethren, embrace Why we exist into your life. Make sure that you play a part in making the world a better place and that what we do in our Lodges furthers our Great Aim. Strive to make every meeting "perfect" and do everything that you personally can to assist us in our efforts **"To make the world a better place!"**

### The Heritage Book - an unparalleled Initiative

When the Grand Master, as part of our 250 years of South African Freemasonry celebrations, decided to ask RW Bro Brian Rossouw OSM to compile a book on the History of Freemasonry in South Africa, I suspect that neither of them fully realised just how big a project this would become. Brian, assisted by various Brethren from our own and our Sister Constitutions, has set about gathering articles from all over South Africa and the collection is substantial. It encompasses stories about Districts, Lodges and individual Brethren and the final result really is going to be very special.

Some of the material has been recovered from almost abandoned archives which have revealed some extraordinary information. Also included are more recent articles, as well as messages from the overseas Grand Masters of our Sister Constitutions.

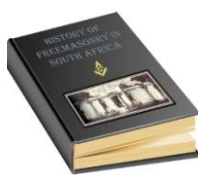


*MWBro Peter Lowndes MW Bro Douglas Grey Bro Ramsey McGhee  
United GL of England GL of Ireland GL of Scotland*

The support of the Home Grand Lodges is much appreciated - but it simply highlights the close fraternal relationships that have been built up over 250 years and which we are so privileged to enjoy in South Africa.

The Heritage Book is, of course, about the history of all Freemasonry in South Africa and includes a good selection of articles related to our Sister Constitutions, Royal Arch and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, as well as the Grand Lodge of South Africa. Our rich Heritage is founded on all of these parts!

### The Heritage Book - place your Order now!



In 2022, South African Freemasonry celebrates its 250th birthday. To mark this event, we are publishing a Heritage Book summarising our history across all Constitutions and Divisions. The A4 book will be published in hard cover and leather bound versions and only pre-ordered and paid for books will be printed. To reserve your Collector's Item, click on:

[Purchase the Heritage Book](#)

## Almoner's Report

It is with sadness that we must report the passing of Bro Willie Spies (Senekal) from the side effects of diabetes. Our thoughts are with his family at this time.

We were also saddened to hear of the sudden passing of Gail, the beloved wife of Bro Angus Venter (Tolerance). While everything feels so hopeless at times like these, please know that your Brethren are thinking of you and are there for you in this awful time.

During the past month we have had 3 updates of now inactive Brethren who have passed away. Wor Bro Panayiotis "Peter" Papavarnavas (Parys) was 93 while Wor Bro Albert Sadie (de Goede Trouw) lost his battle with cancer. Bro Jakes Labuschagne (Dagbreek) has also been taken. In all cases our sincere condolences go to those that loved them and have been left behind.

Our Covid afflicted Brethren are all making positive progress and I am pleased to report that RW Bro Alf and Thora Rhodie (de Goede Hoop), Wor Bro Lucas and Henda van der Schyff (Johan van Riebeeck) and Wor Bro Andre, Linzee and Desiree Germishuys (de Goede Hoop) are all on the mend. While they are all suffering from the usual Covid after-effects, thank Heavens that they are all home and past the worst.

Wor Bro Jan Coetzee (Central Free State) had a light stroke but has apparently made a full recovery. Great news - the Free Staters are hardy men!

While reports of new Covid cases are, thank heavens, well down, this pandemic is not over yet, Brethren, so please continue to take all the necessary precautions. Above all, get vaccinated, for your sake and that of all the people that you come into contact with and care about. It's the only known solution!

If anything is known about a Brother in distress, please share it with your Divisional Almoner.

Southern Wor Bro Cobis Wilson	083 2844684
Northern Wor Bro Paul Nash	083 3774843
Central Wor Bro Johnny Cambanis	083 9865397
Eastern Wor Bro Marais Viljoen	083 4413670
E Cape Wor Bro Ian Hetherington	082 9545297

## Eastern Division's new PGM to be installed

On Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2021, the Grand Master will be installing VW Bro Johan van der Merwe as the new Provincial Grand Master of Eastern Division. The ceremony will take place in Richard's Bay and will be followed by the Meerensee Installation.



## Getting back to real Work!

Over the past weeks most of our Divisions have tentatively started working again, often executing several degrees in a single day to try and catch up on the backlog. While most of these have been 1<sup>st</sup> degrees, there have also been 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> degrees as well as Installations. In all cases, strict Covid protocols have been observed.



**Central Free State** set a fine example to the rest of our Grand Lodge when, on Saturday 18 September, they initiated 4 new Brothers, being Armand Laermans, Liau Ramateletse, Jaundre van Vuuren and Reuben Janse van Rensburg, all in one long day.



Having initiated 3 Brethren in August, **Hiram** added another new Brother on Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September with the initiation of Bro Martin Carstens. All 3 of the new Apprentices from the previous month's working attended and played an active part in the ceremony.



On Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> September, **de Broederband** raised 3 Brethren to Master Mason. Due to Covid, Bros Jacques Coetzer, Dean Liversage and Fritz Ganz had been waiting for over 18 months and the day was therefore of special importance to them.

Bro Jacques Coetzer commented "I believe that what I have experienced in the raising ritual will guide me to help others reach their goals and become better men, but will also let me stop to think before I act.

Bro Dean Liversage noted the "commitment, perseverance and brotherly love shown to make this extraordinary day happen" and saw himself as "blessed to be part of an Order with exemplary brothers that go above and beyond the norm for others".

Bro Fritz Ganz commented "What a profound experience" and "this is merely the beginning, and the labour has but only started. What a privilege to be recognised as a Master! I will endeavour to always stay worthy and true of such honour."