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| **C:\Users\Alan\Pictures\SGRAC logo.jpg** | Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of New Zealand  Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of New Zealand  Grand Council of Cryptic Masonry of New Zealand |

31 March 2020

Companions,

The New Zealand situation with Covid-19 continues to evolve as does the Government response. While we are currently subject to a 4-week lockdown, it is possible that this may be extended. It is important for the health of our members that all companions continue to observe the Government’s rules and regulations during this health emergency.

Management Council met yesterday to review the situation and will meet monthly from hereon. The continued welfare of our companions is our primary concern.

It is pleasing to note that at this time we are not aware of any companion who has contracted the illness. So, follow the rules and stay safe!

Please make sure that you stay in touch with your companions and check that all is well with them.

Our Grand Lecturers will be emailing items of interest about Royal Arch Masonry to you during our enforced break, so keep an eye on your mailbox.

I will keep you informed on developments as and when they arise. I have also attached the speech I gave at Convocation for your information – how time flys!

Yours fraternally

A picture containing skiing, snow, photo, flying

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Graham Redman

First Grand Principal.

Companions,

Thank you for your attendance here in Nelson this weekend at a time when travel and gatherings are being curtailed to limit the spread of coronavirus. In Europe and North America the impact of this virus is very high. I’m sure you are all well aware of this.

Right now, it is good to be in a small country at the bottom of the South Pacific, away from the major population centres, where we can delay and hopefully then better manage the impact of this virus in our communities. We are some weeks behind the rest of the world and so far travel within New Zealand and to Australia has not yet been affected. So it’s a great pleasure that that we have had the opportunity to gather this weekend, and especially that our Companions in Australia are represented here today.

At this moment the incidence of Covid-19 in New Zealand is limited to 5 and there is no evidence of spread through New Zealand. We can hope, but we cannot assume that this will remain the case. So we need to be proactive.

We discussed this issue with the Grand Lodge of New Zealand last week. A memo has been issued to all Lodges from the ED of Freemasons NZ advising actions recommended within Lodges if a brother contracts Covid-19. Companions, these actions are also appropriate to Chapters.

• If you or a family member are showing signs of illness you do not attend your chapter and follow the guidelines given by the Ministry of Health

• Minimise mass shared transport to meetings

• Minimise physical contact within the ceremonies, before or after meetings.

• Wash hands thoroughly before and after meetings for 20 seconds with hot water and soap. Or use sanitizer if this is available.

Additionally. Companions be extra vigilant in making sure all companions sign the attendance register. If one of your companions does contract this illness you will then be able to confirm which other members may have been in contact with him.

Finally, companions. Keep in contact with your companions, especially those who you may not see regularly or those without close family support. Make sure they are well; if they are not, make sure that have everything they need. If you can help, help. This is the time to practice the basic tenet of our order – to take care of our Companions.

Companions, the ceremonies in our order teach valuable lessons by allegory and symbol. It is difficult, if not impossible, for new companions to understand these lessons if the ritual is performed poorly or the symbolism is not explained to them at some level.

We know from exit interviews in the Craft, that around half of all Masons who resign do so because they have lost interest. It’s up to us to ensure that Royal Arch Masons do not resign for the same reason. We do know, companions, that new Royal Arch Masons will remain Royal Arch Masons if they remain interested. They will remain interested if they progressively understand the lessons of the order. Ritual and learning.

The standard of ritual is up to you. Read ritual does not impress itself on the candidate. Well-performed ritual does. I urge you to spend time and effort as chapter teams to work on this. It will assist the understanding of your candidates and, as well, imbue the members of your chapter with the delight of working as a team and achieving success in combined effort.

On those occasions when you have no need for ceremonial work use the time to develop your companions understanding of ritual. What are the allegories teaching us? Why do we use these particular stories? Who were the people in the stories? What does Royal March Masonry mean to you?

Some time ago the ‘in’ concept was the elevator talk – that is, if you’re travelling in an elevator with another person you have 10 – 15 seconds during which you talk to them. How would you condense your understanding of Royal Arch Masonry into 15 seconds?

We know that discussion of these matters, rather than a prescribed lecture quickly increases interest in both new and experienced companions.

If you are not comfortable leading such discussions in you Chapter utilise your Grand Lecturers to facilitate them They are all experienced Royal Arch Masons and experienced presenters; use them. Learning about the meaning of our symbols and allegories is not an optional extra – it is a fundamental requirement for maintaining membership.

Let’s just do it!

Graham Redman, GZ 14/3/20