



## **PROVINCIAL GRAND CHAPTER OF BERKSHIRE**

### ***Festive Message from the Grand Superintendent***

***23rd December 2020***



Greetings Companions at this festive time of year! As we approach the Christmas holidays and this challenging year draws near to a close, a time to reflect as Grand Superintendent!

Whilst 2020 has predominantly been a year of Masonic suspension due to the COVID-19 Coronavirus, I am delighted to report that the Holy Royal Arch and indeed the Craft in Berkshire have experienced minimal serious impact. Like all objects of perpetual motion, the Companions across the Province have adapted well to meet the challenges head-on. The 4 month suspension directed by our Grand Master in March was a bold new step for Masonry but I'm sure you will agree, a wise decision to protect ourselves and fellow Companions. Like you, I did not anticipate the disruption would last so long but Companions, we are here today as testimony to our flexibility and resilience.

Companions, I remain extremely proud of our wonderful Province and, of you as individuals, for embracing new ways to engage with your fellow Brethren and Companions. Only a handful of Convocations have been held since March but the void we all feel from being unable to meet personally has been filled with Zoom video calls, telephone contact, emails and even letters and postcards. Whilst our Royal Arch ritual has been curtailed, that important aspect of social interaction has been maintained, and it has been fabulous to see so many Companions take part in our Provincial Zoom calls to Chapters over the last 9 months.

Another aspect of great pride for me, is the continuous support from Berkshire Royal Arch Masons towards charity. Your generous contributions have enabled the Royal Arch to make a significant donation to the Berkshire Masonic COVID fund which is currently supporting our Companions and Brethren in the Province who have been impacted by the Coronavirus. Furthermore, our contributions towards the RW PGM's 2023 Festival are helping to fund the fantastic work of the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) who, on your behalf, are easing the plight of many distress cases on a national scale. On top of their normal activities, phase 1 of MCF additional funding saw £1million distributed to worthy causes in the Provinces plus £850,000 to help the homeless community. The next phase of funding for desperate causes will be announced early in 2021. Your donations Companions DO make a significant difference. Thank you!

Naturally, the annual convocation of Berkshire Provincial Grand Chapter was postponed from the first Thursday in June which was a great shame because it was my birthday, and I was looking forward to spending it with you all. However, we were able to convene on 28th September with a quorum of 6 to carry out the administrative items of the Province and confirm the active officers for the year and we look forward to some team visits with those active officers later in 2021.

With our Masonic Province of Berkshire now in Tier 4, our Royal Arch Masonry remains suspended for the foreseeable future but there is a glimmer of the 'rays of meridian splendour' in the not too distant future. The rollout of the Coronavirus vaccine is gathering pace and hopefully, approval of the other vaccines will speed up this process to allow a safe and gradual relaxation of the current restrictions for us all.

Companions, I am extremely excited at the prospect of meeting you all in person and resuming the full enjoyment of our Royal Arch Masonry. And I have no doubt the pent-up Masonic energy stored in you all over the past 9 months will be a fabulous springboard to help rebuild our Royal Arch Province of Berkshire!

In closing this message, I send to you and your close circle of family and friends, from Jane and myself, very best wishes for a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. And may the TALGMH keep you safe and well – Cheers  
Companions!

***J. R. G. Hopgood***

**Most Excellent Grand Superintendent**