



Companions,

I begin my address by thanking you all for attending today and for supporting our Royal Arch Masons, who are in receipt of Honours. On many occasions you will have heard me say that my number one priority is for you to enjoy your Craft and Royal Arch Freemasonry. Please enjoy your day!

The Grand Masters Membership Challenge remains our key focus. The work that you have done in the last 3 years in bringing new members into the Craft has been exceptional. Please keep up that good work.

Yes, we have marketing campaigns and publicity through our website and social media outlets which are brilliant. That said, don't forget to simply 'just ask' your friends, neighbours, work colleagues, family and associates to join the Craft.

You will be aware that each of our two most recent Provincial Grand Lodge Meetings have been attended by over 1200 masons. Please attend our next Meeting, and encourage others to come with you to this venue on Friday 8th May 2026. Please put this date in your diaries now and let's see if we can accomplish an even larger attendance next May.

In terms of Royal Arch Membership, we remain at 42% of our Craft Masons being members of the Royal Arch. This is slightly above the national average. I'm sure that you will agree with me that for a large province such as West Lancashire we should be over 50% Royal Arch Membership.

Please speak to the masons in your lodges who have never joined or who are unattached from the Royal Arch to come and join or re-join us and to complete their journey in pure ancient freemasonry. Explain to them that the Royal Arch is not a Companion Order, the Craft and the Royal Arch are one organisation. Also remind them that there is now no registration fee to Supreme Grand Chapter. The only cost is chapter subscriptions which are substantially lower than in your lodges.

I thank the Stewards Chapter for their application in demonstrating and supporting the workings of the Savage Club Ritual. They will continue to do that in this new season. I also congratulate those chapters who have adopted the Savage Club Ritual. If you want more detail about the Ritual please contact the Provincial Office or the Stewards Chapter.

Many of our Groups have been holding Royal Arch White Table Events, which continue to attract more Members. I thank you for your hard work and application.

I commend those chapters who are regularly conducting multiple candidate ceremonies. Companions such ceremonies are greatly assisting our Royal Arch Membership Challenge. Please give serious consideration within your chapters regarding performing multiple candidates ceremonies.

Please also give consideration to holding additional meetings to exalt Master Masons into the Royal Arch. In essence, we don't want potential Royal Arch or indeed Craft candidates to be left for long periods of time waiting to join us. If good men have committed to join us let's exalt or initiate them as soon as possible.

I am aware that some candidates are being left waiting for long periods of time. This is not acceptable and we owe it to them to admit them as soon as we can.

Our Membership Challenge would be substantially assisted if each of our chapters and lodges could plan to bring in a minimum of two new candidates per season. Please consider this most important issue, when you are completing your chapter and lodge planning.

I thank all of our Scribes and Secretaries for your embracement of my request to submit Registration Forms to the Provincial Office within three days of an Exaltation or an Initiation. This is crucial to our accurate recording of our membership numbers. I don't apologise for raising this again, as the Provincial Office is still receiving some Registration Forms many months after the event. You are doing fantastic work to attract, initiate and exalt new Craft and Royal Arch masons. Don't undersell your work and efforts by not registering those candidates in good time.

Companions, I am delighted to report, that we now have a Light Blue Club established in each of our Groups. Thank you to all of those involved in managing those clubs and in supporting and encouraging our newer companions and brethren.

For the last three years we have held two Light Blue Seminars per season. They have been well attended and several of our Light Blues members have presented their masonic progress and experience to their colleagues.

Companions I now announce that on Saturday 22nd November 2025, I will be holding a Special Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge at Westhoughton Masonic Hall. This event is predominantly for Light Blue Club Brethren and Companions.

Companions another priority for ourselves and freemasonry in general is Community Engagement. Thank you for the work that you do within our local communities in helping other people and in utilising our masonic buildings for community events and interaction.

Your work enhances our reputation within our local communities, has a high potential to attract new members and in terms of our Halls provides an avenue of income generation.

I thank our Group Chairmen and their Executives for all of their support in managing this Province, which is large not only in terms of the number of masons but also geographically. Your hard work is magnificent.

Companions I'm now into the fourth year of my tenure. I often say that the social aspect of freemasonry is very important. Since my appointment Debbie and myself have attended a large number of social events around the Province. Please keep your social events going. If your chapter or lodge has stopped or reduced doing events such as ladies evenings, barbecues and quiz nights please look at resurrecting them. Social events not only assist in retaining membership but also in attracting new prospects.

Companions I thank Peter Taylor, Mick Southern, Violet, Shona and all of the provincial volunteers for their work in organising today's meeting.

I also thank our Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies Ian Halsall and all of his Deputies for keeping us on track and for ensuring that everything has run so smoothly.

Thank you to the Southport Group for providing our Stewards, who have marshalled the day so well for us.

To those Companions who are in receipt of Acting Offices, First Appointments and Promotions, I thank you for all of the work that you have done and for that which I know you will continue to perform in the future.

If you are dining later, I look forward to your company at the Banquet. If you are leaving after this meeting have a safe journey home.

To conclude Companions, you know that my primary objective is for you to enjoy your Royal Arch and Craft Freemasonry. Please ensure that you do that and.....May the Red Rose continue to bloom!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark F Matthews', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mark Francis Matthews,
Most Excellent Grand Superintendent