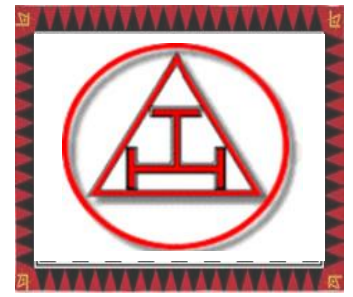




West Lancs Nuggets

“PROVINCIAL NEWS DIGEST”



Welcome to the second edition of the Provincial News Digest. In this issue our Third Provincial Grand Principal shares his Palm Sunday thoughts, Chris Maloney highlights the support available for Masonic halls, a ‘Solomon User Guide’ is provided by Stewart Cranage and the Provincial Grand Secretary shares his latest tips, requests and reminders.

Issue 2: 15 April 2020

SUNDAY MORNING THOUGHTS:

The Rev Canon Godfrey Ian Hirst

It is a very different Palm Sunday morning. Churches are closed: there are no processions of people waving palm branches led by the prerequisite donkey, recalling Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. In some parishes the traditional services are being streamed to people’s homes but, of necessity, without the customary congregation. An hour ago, I received one such service whilst sitting at the computer with the text and palm cross in front of me. Though isolated I still felt being ‘at one’ with the 1,000,000s participating in like manner.

After the service I looked out of the window to be reminded that we were experiencing a situation that we have never faced before. The golf course was deserted, no flag on the eighth green, the hourly train, (now two hourly), empty and very few cars passing by. Yet, in the foreground there is a massive swathe of forsythia bushes, 100 metres of yellow blossom, reflecting a pale sun emphatically announcing spring with its new life and hope.

That picture prompted a further reflection on Jesus’ final journey to Jerusalem, firstly receiving the adulation of the crowd but a few days later being denied and deserted by his closest disciples and friends, suffering the agony of isolation and death on the cross. It was not the end though.

Still musing, the Royal Arch principal’s song came into my head. I began to sing to myself: “They travelled along without mirth or song as their hearts were filled with fear – for Jerusalem beloved of them lay in ruin and decay... “. For 70 years many of the Jewish people were in captivity in Babylon, isolated from their beloved homeland and Temple which they knew had been destroyed. They were given hope when Cyrus, King of Persia, in his first year of rule he decreed that the Jews could return home. What a wonderful exit strategy! It was Zerubbabel, the Prince of the People, who led the first group back and soon afterwards laid the foundation stone of the second Temple. Although at times wavering in their belief, in the end the freed people realised that it was the True and Living God Most High who had delivered them from captivity. At last they were able to rejoice and be glad.



Some words of Psalm 26 link then and now: “I am sure I will see the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living. Hope in Him, hold firm and take heart. Hope in the Lord.”

Those words are indeed so relevant today. We have been bombarded with interpretations, warnings, rules, advice, and encouragement with reference to COVID-19 from many sources. There have been many brilliant individual and communal responses to the plight and needs of others. Freemasons have been at the forefront of delivery. May I hope and pray that we continue to set the example and be true to our Masonic calling. May I also suggest that we take to heart and live out some words from the working tools of an entered apprentice which for me sum up concisely how to behave, not only now but always.

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in labour and refreshment, and part in serving a friend or brother in time of need, without detriment to ourselves or connections.

Prayer is key! We cannot for the time being share corporate prayer but we can have our own daily routine and, if every individual set aside a time to pray, what a powerful force that would be! There are so many for whom we must pray especially those on the front line and those most vulnerable. You will have your own list. Pope Francis in his latest Urbi et Orbi wrote: "Prayer and quiet service: these are our victorious weapons."

'Quiet service' is indeed the charitable care of our neighbour and those in need: the very foundation of our Masonic being. In the face of so much suffering in all sectors of our communities, (life will never be the same again for so many), we have to find new ways of offering, adopting new routines, inspiring fresh initiatives and somehow giving strength, support, comfort and hope to those in desperate situations. We can do it! We have a tremendous network. Mobilise and stick together. Never forget the unifying act of daily prayer which includes one for each other.

Whatever we attempt to do we must continue to set the example by conforming to the given sound advice which has to be without 'detriment to ourselves or connections' whether in labour or refreshment. I know it will be frustrating and irritating at times, and our patience and tolerance will be exercised, but in our stoicism let us rise above the blame culture and foster good will and shared responsibility.

Let us be exemplary. Let us try to celebrate Easter as best we can, knowing that the Lord of all, who is risen and living by our side, will sustain us in future endeavours and kindle in us much hope and the fire of his love.

SUPPORT FOR HALLS: Chris Maloney and Barry Jameson Halls Support Group



Many of our Masonic halls are no doubt feeling the effect of the current constraints on our activities. The Halls Support Group has issued a number of advice and information notes, intended to assist those who manage our halls in dealing with this. The documents and further updates can be found on the Halls Support webpage, in the Coronavirus Toolbox. [Click here for link to website](#)

Two recent items are of particular relevance. Local Councils have started to release cash due under the Small Business Rates Relief scheme and a similar scheme for the retail, leisure and hospitality sector. The small business one is the simplest, in that any business that qualified for small business rate relief in 2019/20 is eligible for a grant of £10,000. In the retail, hospitality and leisure business sector, this grant is replaced with a grant of up to £25,000 based on the rateable value of the business. For businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or less there is a similar cash grant of £10,000. The process is straightforward if the hall has a rates profile with the local authority.

The Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works has also contacted the Provinces with an initiative driven by the Masonic Halls Advisory Group. The specific focus is 'NHS CAR Parking Support' organised by a network of contacts working for CBRE, an estates services company. There are practical difficulties with this however, and it could well be that your Masonic hall is already providing a service to the community or considering it, as part of

the response to the current pandemic. If so, we would be delighted to hear from you and promote what you are doing through the website. Freemasonry has much to offer to our local communities.

Finally, the Chancellor has extended Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS). The government has extended the CBILS so that all viable small businesses affected by COVID-19, and not just those unable to secure regular commercial financing, will now be eligible should they need finance to keep operating during this difficult time. The government is also stopping lenders from requesting personal guarantees for loans under £250,000 and making operational changes to speed up lending approvals. The government will continue to cover the first 12 months of interest and fees.

We sincerely hope that those who manage our halls are able to do so under these challenging circumstances. If there are any special measures that you are implementing, which would be useful to others, we would certainly be interested in hearing about them.

We wish you all well with your considerable endeavours and if we can be of any assistance please get in touch.



The Halls Support Group mission statement is: *Promoting Sustainable Development*



Solomon: User Guide

Our Provincial Grand Mentor, Stewart Cranage, has produced a helpful 'user guide' to Solomon. An abridged version is now provided to prompt brethren and companions to engage in Masonic education during the period of 'suspension' from Masonic activities

Introduction

Surveys carried out by the United Grand Lodge of England confirm that most members seek a greater understanding of the ritual, symbolism, history and traditions of Freemasonry. Solomon is UGLE's online, searchable repository of nuggets, papers, presentations, demonstrations, Q&As and quizzes. These can be used for personal study or shared in lodge, chapter, or a lodge/chapter of instruction.

It is free and open to anyone, accessed via your laptop, tablet or smartphone. Simply register, enrol on relevant modules and then browse, search and download any material you need. If you change your mind you can easily un-enrol from modules.

You can register by scanning the QR code on the front page with your mobile phone or copying the hyperlink shown into the address line of your browser. You will NOT be able to find Solomon by searching for it on Google or the search line of your browser. Solomon is not registered on search engines and is only accessible directly from the address:

<https://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

If you are using a smartphone, you might want to download the free Adobe Acrobat Reader app first, this will ensure that the PDFs used on Solomon retain their format.

On the front page you will see a three-minute video

'Register your account on the system' which will take you through the following steps:

Select 'Login' at the top right-hand of the screen and then on the next page 'Create new account'. You will be taken to a form to complete with; a user name you select, your chosen password, email address, first name and surname.

The system will then send an email to the account specified. Before you can proceed you must confirm by clicking the hyperlink sent in the email. *If you do not receive this email, check in your junk folder.*

Press 'Continue' and you are now ready to enrol on the modules by selecting from three categories; Seek and Learn, Share and Encourage and Support and Promote.

There are a series of features to help you get the best out of Solomon, accessed directly from About Solomon and located at the top and bottom of every page. Either by pressing the button located near the search bar, found at the top of each page, or by selecting About Solomon found below the UGLE logo at the bottom of each page. Then 'tap' into Learn about this site. There you will find a site-map followed by a whole series of helpful videos and FAQs.

If you have any problems - use 'Feedback', located next to Learn about this site, to contact the helpdesk.

Start your journey!

Modules and subject areas:

ENTRY MODULES

SEEK & LEARN:

Nuggets, papers, Q&As and quizzes - For personal study, or sharing in your lodge, chapter, lodge of instruction, or discussion group.

SHARE & ENCOURAGE:

Presentations, demonstrations,

Q&As

Quizzes

(above are for use in Lodges & Chapters)

SUPPORT & PROMOTE:

Provinces/districts - to plan, promote, support and deliver learning and development.

SUBJECT AREAS

First Degree

Second Degree

Third Degree

Royal Arch

Installed Masters

Lodge Matters

About Freemasonry

Masonic History

You can navigate by simply browsing within a subject-area, or using the Home Page

You can search by using the tags provided, or by entering a word or phrase into the search bar.

PROVINCIAL OFFICE NEWS



Updates from the Provincial Grand Secretary / **Provincial Grand Scribe Ezra**

Just a few tips, requests and reminders:

1. Did you know there's no need to stand in a queue at a Post Office for stamps? Postage can be paid for online at <https://parcel.royalmail.com/> even single letters. These can then be posted at a regular post box whilst out on your daily exercise.
2. For Annual Returns (ARI) please pay by BACS wherever possible. However, if you prefer to pay by cheque and are sending the ARI and payment under separate cover, please make it clear with a covering note/letter, in each case. This will ensure we can easily match the correct cheque and AR1.
3. If your lodge or chapter held the installation prior to the suspension of meetings on 17 March, please submit the Installation Return, as there are quite a few outstanding.
4. The introduction of Q&A webinars for secretaries and scribes is proving to be very popular, so my deputy, Andrew Ridal, will be holding a Q&A webinar every Tuesday afternoon at 3pm. These webinars are not just for the secretariat, they are open to everyone, so if you have a question why not login. It's far more interactive than tapping out a soulless email and you can actually have a conversation with your fellow Masons..... and it's fun!

If this appeals to you, please login as follows: To join on your computer, smartphone or tablet, please click the following link: <https://zoom.us/j/158041692> Meeting ID: 158 041 692

If you don't have a camera, you can join using audio only. It's handy if you have a pair of headphones, but this is not essential. To join by telephone, call 0203 481 5237, Meeting ID: 683 764 7952

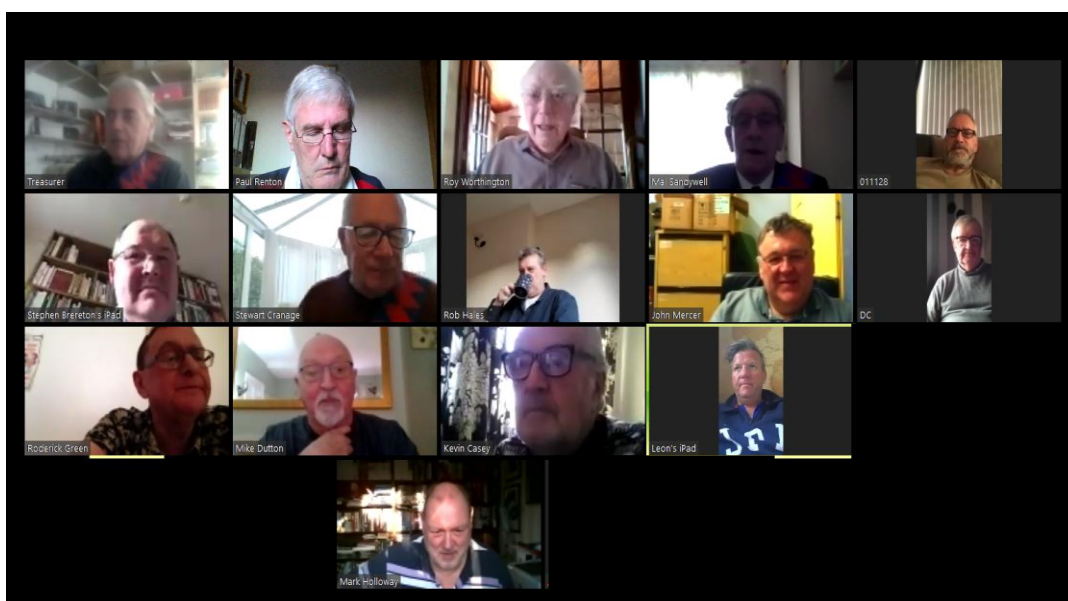
And finally, my thanks to the 160 of you (and counting) for the phenomenal response to the request for volunteers for the Provincial Welfare Plan, which is working!

Stay healthy guys.

Peter

STOP PRESS:

Peter highlights above the use of Zoom for webinars. We are aware that a number of lodges and chapters are also using this facility to keep in touch with their members during the lockdown. Here's an example from Unity and Perseverance Chapter No 580:



If anyone has any suggestions for items to be covered in future issues, please email Stewart Crange, Provincial Grand Mentor: mentor@provinceofwestlancs.org