

Friday 17th October 2025

Brother Royal Ark Mariners,

I am delighted to welcome you to our 12th Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Assembly and let me start by thanking the Friendship and Care Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners for allowing us to take over part of their meeting this evening. I also thank them for the very warm welcome that has been extended to me (though it is my own lodge!) and, more importantly, to the rest of the Provincial team and the other visitors attending this evening. I must say it has been an absolute pleasure to Bro. Mickey Labana Elevated this evening. Mickey – I hope you thoroughly enjoy your Royal Ark Mariner Masonry and I look forward to your company for many years to come.

You have heard the Provincial Scribe report on the state of the Province overall and I must say that, in general, I am very pleased with our progress and with the current health of the Province. There has again been a growth this year in both memberships and, much more importantly, individual members. The fourth consecutive year that we have managed to achieve that and it is fantastic news! To have achieved 12 Elevations across just 8 lodges, with only one of those 8 lodges that is able to carry out Elevations unable to do so, is very heartwarming and I do not under-estimate the effort that has gone into finding those candidates and carrying out the ceremonies. Thank you to all of you for making that happen. It was also extremely pleasing to hear how many of our Commanders were Installed in the RAM Chair for the first time. I think this shows that we have worked through the Covid backlog and the normal progression is being restored – yet another positive sign.

Of course, we cannot afford to be complacent. When I was Installed as Provincial Grand Master, I did say that I wanted to improve our conversion rate from Mark to RAM. You have heard the Provincial Grand Scribe say that we are currently at around 38% which, despite those 12 Elevations is the same as it was last year, but it is certainly a significant improvement on the 32% we were at just four years ago. The best way of viewing this, brethren, is that there are a lot of potential Royal Ark Mariner candidates in Berkshire! At the Festive Boards of Mark Installations the official visitor now joins the newly Installed Master in taking wine with members of the Royal Ark Mariner degree. This is not to embarrass those who are not yet members but to show them how many of us have made that next step in the hope that it will encourage them to find out more about it. All I ask is that you continue to talk to your Mark brethren who

are not yet in RAM and encourage them to come and join us. Don't forget, brethren, that we do also have a daylight Royal Ark Mariner lodge which should appeal to those brethren who prefer not to drive at night.

As you have just seen I have been able to reward a number of brethren with Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank and I congratulate all those recipients. Your appointments have been well earned and you should wear your Provincial collarettes with great pride.

Moving on to Grand ranks brethren, you have indeed heard from the Provincial Grand Scribe that The Grand Assembly at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street will be on **Monday** December 8th and that we dining **out**. As I have said previously, it is a well-known fact that Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank is one of the scarcest of all grand ranks in Freemasonry and we are generally allocated just one a year. I am delighted to tell you that this year's recipient is W.Bro. Kevin Dodd, and I think we should congratulate him. Do please come along in December and support Kevin's investiture with his Grand Rank collarette and, as W.Bro. Ted Lewis will be in Australia at the time, I thank W.Bro. Alan Spearman for agreeing to arrange the dining at Hercules Pillars once again. Brethren, I am aware, that the quality of the food and service at the Pillars is, to say the least, rather unreliable. Given the short time available we staying with the Pillars this time, but we have already started looking for alternative venues. Given that we always dine **IN** at the March meeting of Mark Grand Lodge, if we are still unhappy with the Pillars then we have until June to select an alternative venue, or decide to dine in at future meetings.

Brethren, it's a great pleasure to see so many of you here this evening but meetings like this don't 'just happen' and take a great deal of organising. I thank the Provincial Grand Scribe, WBro Huw Hopkin, for his usual flawless organization and clear communication to me and to us all. I also thank the ProvGDC, Bro Tim Spriggs for taking care of the ceremonial aspects of today's Assembly.

Finally and most importantly brethren, please continue to enjoy your Royal Ark Mariner Masonry and may the Supreme Commander of the Universe grant you health and happiness and keep us all safe within the Ark, that Haven of Rest.

Brethren, thank you for your kind attention.