***PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE of MARK MASTER MASONS* of WORCESTERSHIRE**

**Provincial Grand Master R W Bro Eric John Rymer**

**MINUTES of the COMMITTEE of GENERAL PURPOSE MEETING**

held on Wednesday 18th January 2023 at 19.30hrs by Zoom Conference

***The NEXT MEETING of the GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE is arranged for 24th January 2024***

*Those eligible to attend the meeting are all Past Masters and the following Lodge Officers : -*

* *WM/WCN, Treasurer, Secretary/Scribe, Almoner, Charity Steward*

***The Provincial Grand Master is anxious that as many Members of the Province attend and contribute to the meeting as possible and you are therefore encouraged to put this date in your Diary for January 2024 now.***

1. **ATTENDANCE & APOLOGIES** *(see separate sheet)*

The Provincial Grand Master, R W Bro Eric John Rymer opened the meeting and welcomed the Brethren present, thanking them for their support.

Apologies were recorded on behalf of 14 Brethren unavoidably absent.

**2.00 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of the GPC Meeting held by Zoom Conference on the Wednesday 26th January 2022 having been previously circulated, and approved by the Executive Meeting, were submitted, duly proposed by the Provincial Grand Master, and approved by the Brethren.

**3.00 MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge held by Zoom Conference on Saturday 12th June 2021 having been circulated, were submitted, and after a small amendment highlighted by W.Bro Derek Owen, duly proposed for acceptance by the Provincial Grand Master and approved by the Brethren.

**4.00 CORRESPONDENCE**

The Provincial Grand Secretary had received no correspondence to be brought before the GPC meeting.

**5.00 PROVINCIAL FINANCES**

The Provincial Grand Treasurer reported that the finances of the Province were in good order.

The Treasurer had sent card readers to all Mark and RAM Lodges as another method of collecting payments at Lodge meetings. There was a discussion about the cost of collecting the payments via these card readers, but the PGM reminded brethren that as cash was on the decline and payments of cash and cheques, that are also being phased out in many other countries, into Lodge accounts attract fees, the use of these readers may become necessary but reiterated that they are not mandatory but just another method of payment for brethren.

The Treasurer championed their use as a convenience for brethren, though not mandatory.

The Treasurer reported that Provincial Annual Dues were outstanding from 8 Lodges but dues were expected from 6 other Lodges before the end of the financial year.

Charitable Donations have been received from 20 Mark/RAM Lodges amounting £4,406.00 and donations totalling £8,683.00 have been made to 3 Charities –Behind the Smile (£1,087), Ukraine Appeal (£620) and The Emily Jordan Foundation (£2976.00). Payments to other Provinces Festivals totalled £4,000

The PGL General Fund is anticipated to return a surplus (£3,000.00) and the Benevolent Fund is currently projected to show a loss (£3,500) because of increased donations made this year compared with usual.

To date, £478.00 has been deposited in respect of merchandising so far in this financial year.

He reminded Lodges of the requirements of PGL Bylaw 5 and GL Regulation 132 regarding the provision of copies of audited annual accounts. Attention to these requirements was somewhat sporadic and he requested those present to encourage their respective Lodges to be more proactive in providing the information required. This message was strongly reinforced by the Provincial Grand Master. Profit & Loss accounts are preferable, but Balance Sheets are acceptable.

**6.00 ANNUAL DUES**

In his report the Provincial Grand Treasurer confirmed that there would be no increase for the ensuing year, remaining at £3.75.

This, however prompted lively discussion on the cost of yearbooks for each Lodge and how they should be paid for, either directly from the Lodges or by the Province via Annual dues.

The PGM extolled the virtues of the yearbooks as a valuable source of information, it was therefore proposed by W Bro. George Simpson and seconded by V W Bro. Tim Morris that Lodges should pay for their own books. This was passed unanimously.

**7.00 FEES OF HONOUR**

In his report the Provincial Grand Treasurer did not propose any increase in Fees of Honour for the forthcoming year.

**8.00 PROVINCIAL RAM ASSEMBLY**

The Provincial Grand Master stated that there would not be any RAM Grand Ranks allocated this year due to the Covid hiatus, but RAM badges will be presented to this year’s Elevatees. The Assembly will take place at Rainbow Hill.

**9.00 MEETING OF PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE**

The P.G.M. confirmed the appointment of the Wardens for 2023/24, W.Bro. Mervyn Cummins as S.W. and W.Bro. Mark Wainwright as J.W. to be Invested at the PGL meeting on 10th June 2023 at Kings Heath.

The Summons & Dining Form will be circulated by e mail as usual; it was confirmed, however that we can have a maximum of 163 to dine.

A full Summons will be on the reserved seat of all those attending.

All will be encouraged to pay Dining Fees electronically (BACS). The Provincial Grand Master will be continuing his practice of presenting Tokens to all Advancees of the Year, to mark their first attendance at the AGM .

**9.00 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The PGM congratulated W.Bro Paul Wong and W.Bro Justin Parker on their being appointed as an Assistant Provincial Grand Masters and W.Br Derek Owen as Warden, W.Bro Jim Mulligan as Provincial Secretary and those other brethren who have received appointments from the Craft Province of Worcestershire recently, W.Bro Wong replied on behalf of the brethren appointed.

W. Bro George Simpson enquired as to how the brother carrying out the Charity walk announced at the Provincial Almoners and Charity Stewards Lodge had fared, nothing was known at the moment so W. Bro George would make further enquiries.

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**: Wednesday 24th January 2024 at 19:30hrs by Zoom Conference

There being no further business the Provincial Grand Master closed the Meeting at 20.15 hrs.

**MINUTES of the MARK BENEVOLENT FUND MEETING**

Held on Wednesday 26th January 2022 at 20.00hrs by Zoom Conference.

1. **REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND CHARITY STEWARD**

The Provincial Charity Steward referred to the Emily Jordan Foundation where we contributed around £3.500.00 this year.

He had a very pleasant follow-up conversation with Ms Ruth Krivosic (CEO of EJF) just before Christmas at which time she thanked him sincerely for the generosity of our members in the recent months. He has sent her contact details of the various Lodge Secretaries from which contributions have been made and she will send written thanks in early 2023.

**Fund raising**

**Bonus Ball Lottery:**

This continues to function as before and continues to generate a gross income of £ 275 per month into the Provincial Charity accounts with the current membership.

The current balance in the Charity Steward’s account is £3,824.00

The ProvGChStwd stated that under the Church Award Scheme that £1750.00, (£250.00 each) will be shared by 7 nominations as follows:-

St John in Bedwardine, Worcester.

St. Peter’s Church, Lapal, Halesowen.

St Mary’s, Stone, Nr. Kidderminster.

St George’s Church Kidderminster.

St. Saviour’s Church Hagley.

Holy Trinity Church Wordsley.

Upton Parish Church.

Thanks to those brethren who made those nominations, they will be contacted shortly by the ProvGChStwd.

**2.00 REPORT OF THE PROVINCIAL GRAND ALMONER**

The Provincial Grand Almoner, W.Bro. James Mulligan was not present due to his wife Elaine’s illness, the Provincial Grand Master sent our best wishes on behalf of all brethren to Jim and Elaine.

The Provincial Grand Secretary, W. Bro Adrian Hutt then read out Jim’s report as follows:-

As Provincial Almoner, I attended by zoom an almoner’s seminar in March 2022 from MMH. This included a presentation by different speakers covering various topics regarding almoner’s duties and responsibilities. This is proving invaluable to the discharge of my duties as Almoner.

I have continued to remain in close contact with members of executive, provincial officers and almoners across the province to identify those may be ill or in need of help and support.

I have subsequently submitted one petition to MMH for assistance for a member of the Worcestershire Mark which was successful.

I have been in personal contact with 14 members, who have been suffering from various illness. I have sent out cards and cheques to assist with their wellbeing.

In October I attended the Almoners and Charity Stewards Lodge meeting where I was invited to address the meeting on my role of Provincial Almoner. I informed the meeting of the following: -

I intended to implement an induction programme for newly appointed almoners within the Province which will involve shadowing of experienced lodge almoners, (being prepared).

I would organise training seminars to educate almoners, to Identify ways to share best practice and enable 360-degree feedback. To educate and provide wrap around support for each another.

One of the main topics in the education programme is data protection and focuses on the recording and use of members information. This is an area of responsibility that is not well understood and is critical to the recording and sharing of information. This will equip our almoners with the knowledge which will enable them to be able to identify people in need, sooner and sign post them to the most appropriate services quicker.

Following consultation with the PGM RW Bro Eric Rymer, we are actively proposing that we utilise the lodge overseers to assist the almoner’s role in identifying vulnerable members and to assist in contacting and supporting them where necessary.

Since the meeting I have been contacted by some of the other Provincial Almoners across the country with their ideas and procedures which has been very encouraging.

End of Report

For Information, he was in the process of setting up a new Almoner’s bank account with 3 signatories - himself, the ProvGChStwd. and the ProvGSec designate.

**3.00 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

W.Bro Charles Henderson stated that a donation was in the pipeline for The Emily Jordan Foundation from The Malvern Priory Lodge.

There being no further business the Provincial Grand Master thanked the brethren for their attendance and closed the meeting 21.05hrs.

Signed …………………………………………………………………………………… Dated : 24th January 2024

Provincial Grand Master