

# Quarterly NEWS UPDATE

of Craft & Royal Arch Masonry in the District of South Africa, North



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## DGM's Welcome

### Warm and Fraternal Greetings, Brethren,

As our glorious Southern African summer fades and the welcome rains that have filled our essential water reservoirs give way to the dry and crisp approach of winter, many of us will be trading our sun hats and refreshing chilled drinks for steaming cups of warmth, hearty meals, and the comforting embrace of thick blankets and cozy attire.

This seasonal change also reminds us of the changing needs within our communities. Winter is a time when our acts of benevolence must take on a new form, one of tangible comfort, warmth, and security. There are many around us who face the biting cold without the basic essentials we so often take for granted.

I am therefore pleased to share that our annual **District Blanket Drive** is now in full swing and we have had to order more blankets. This initiative, led with dedication by our District Board of Benevolence, aims to bring warmth and dignity to those in need during the cold months ahead. I strongly encourage every Lodge and Brother across our District to take part, whether through the donation of blankets, financial support, or by helping to identify those in need within our communities. In the background the **Board of Benevolence** works with true diligence making sure that no stone is left unturned and through our **District Grand Almoner** and his network of lodge Almoners every brother in need is recognized, reported on and care is given.

Let us continue to live our principles not only in Lodge, but in action, by wrapping the less fortunate in the collective care and compassion of our Brotherhood. I thank each and every brother who has contributed, the community activities at lodge level and the coordination and diligence of the Board of Benevolence. Every act is gratefully received faithfully applied.

I am also delighted to see many lodges adopt **The District's Five Pillar Strategy** with excitement proving positive results, especially at the foundation where Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth prevails.

May the Great Architect of the Universe bless and guide us all.

Fraternally,

Your District Grand Master

*Christopher van Gaalen*



## FROM THE EDITOR

**WBro. Brett Theron PDistSGD:**

Brethren,

It is both fitting and essential that this edition of the District Grand Lodge's newsletter centres around charity and benevolence, after all, these are the true and longstanding distinguishing characteristics of a Freemason's heart. Here is an interesting piece that is part of my research collection. The Transvaal Masonic Benevolent Fund jewel which was awarded to WBro FH Ansell for his commendable services towards charity, 112 years ago in 1913.

I have been genuinely overwhelmed and deeply encouraged by the incredible feedback and contributions received from Lodges across our District. The breadth and sincerity of the charitable work being undertaken is nothing short of inspiring.

From hospital beds to imaginative and effective fundraising initiatives, and the unwavering dedication shown by our Almoners. There is much to report, and it is certainly heartfelt.

This issue aims to shine a light on these efforts and remind us all that the cement of Brotherly love and relief is what binds us. May the stories within these pages not only inform but inspire continued compassion and action as we journey through the colder months.

Enjoy & Warm Fraternal Greetings.

Ed.

## THE WARMTH OF A BLANKET

### - A MASONIC ACT OF CARE AND COMPASSION

**WBro. Brett Theron [Ed]:**

As Freemasons, our commitment to relief and charity is not only symbolic it is also practical, purposeful, and deeply human. This winter, the District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North once again demonstrates its commitment to the values that define us, through our annual Blanket Drive, one of our many initiatives rooted in compassion and dignity.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs reminds us that before any individual can realise their higher potential, certain foundational needs must first be met. Among these are physiological needs is warmth, shelter, rest, and safety, which encompass personal security and stability.



A blanket, to many of us, may seem a simple comfort. But to someone in need, it is much more: it is warmth on a chilly night, protection against the harsh elements, and a powerful message that they are not forgotten.

This year, our blankets come with an added layer of meaning. They have been lovingly labelled with our District insignia by the devoted ladies of the Merrow Down Country Club, a gesture that personalises every donation with the seal of Masonic care and community.

These high-quality blankets are available at a modest cost of R110 each and can be purchased directly from the District's Administration Office. Brethren, we encourage you not to delay. Collect your Lodge's blankets now and ensure they are distributed where they are most needed.

In doing so, you are not only offering physical warmth, but you are also upholding one of the most cherished values of our Craft. You are extending comfort, dignity, and hope. You are showing that in a world that often feels cold and indifferent, Freemasonry Cares.

Let us together make this winter warmer, kinder, and more secure for those in need. Let us live our principles in action.

## HEALTH UPDATE: FLU SEASON HITS EARLY IN SOUTH AFRICA

### - A CALL TO ACTION

**Ex Comp. Lawrence Atrash 3<sup>rd</sup>DistGPrincipal PGStB:**

As we embrace the cooler months, it's vital to bring to your attention a pressing health concern that has emerged earlier than expected this year. South Africa is experiencing an unusually early and active influenza season, with the first confirmed cases appearing in late March—marking the earliest onset in over a decade.

The primary strain currently affecting communities is influenza A(H3N2), followed by A(H1N1)pdm09. These strains are known for their ability to cause severe illness, especially in vulnerable groups.

The National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) strongly urges all South Africans, particularly those in high-risk categories such as pregnant women, the elderly, individuals with chronic illnesses, and those living with HIV, to get vaccinated as a preventative measure.

Unfortunately, many have encountered a significant hurdle: a shortage of flu vaccines across several regions. Discovery Health has confirmed that most pharmacies and general practitioners are currently not taking bookings due to limited vaccine supply. Members are encouraged to check directly with their local healthcare providers for updated availability.

For those insured with Discovery Health Medical Scheme, there is some relief. High-risk members are eligible for one flu vaccine per year at no additional cost under the Screening and Prevention Benefit. Others can use their available Medical Savings Account (MSA) to cover the expense. Furthermore, Discovery Vitality members can earn 1,000 Vitality points for receiving a flu vaccine between March and September, senior members aged 60 and above qualify for bonus points as well.



Brothers, I urge you to take this matter seriously. Let us lead by example and act swiftly to protect our families, lodges, and communities. Please consult your doctor or pharmacist as soon as possible to arrange for your vaccination and share this information widely.

### COMPASS SET TO COMPASSION:

#### - THE MARINERS IN NOOITGEDACHT

**[Ed]:** A **Maritime Lodge** which is 600+ kilometers from the nearest ocean, nestled in Johannesburg, one of the highest and driest cities in the world might sound like a contradiction. But make no mistake, these white naval-jacket-wearing Masons have their hearts in the right place - for shore!! (Pun proudly intended).

#### Bro. Jacques Theron:

Just 25 kilometers north of Johannesburg lies **Nooitgedacht** (Dutch for “never mind” or “never thought”), once a battlefield where Boers and British forces clashed violently on 13 December 1900 [Ed: FYI General De la Ray was victorious].

Today, this area is a blend of open veld, luxurious housing estates, mixed with modest smallholdings, and informal settlements. Amidst this eclectic landscape stands **Thuso Global Child Support**, a sanctuary for some of the most vulnerable young members of our society.



Operating out of converted shipping containers, Thuso cares for around 50 children each day. Here, children receive basic early education, much-needed mental stimulation, and, most critically, a nutritious meal, often the only one

they'll eat that day. Their parents, largely blue-collar workers, drop them off before sunrise as they begin long commutes on crowded buses into Johannesburg and its surrounds, only to return for them as the sun sets.

This is where **The Maritime Lodge** has truly charted a course for kindness. With warmth and generosity, they've delivered 25 winter blankets, fresh food, cooking gas and stovetops, as well as wheezy rubbish bins that were dearly needed, welcomed, and deeply appreciated. But their voyage of benevolence doesn't end there.



Plans are already underway to upgrade the ablution facilities, restore a 5,000-litre water tank, and ambitiously refurbish the extremely deep borehole to ensure access to clean, reliable water. Over R10,000 has already been raised, and the tide of support is rising.

**Maritime Lodge continues to appeal for additional funding support as the water project needs careful engineering together with a powerful pump since the water table is 120 meters below the surface through layers of tough quartzite.**



**[Ed]:** These Mariners may be far from the sea, but their moral compass is clearly set toward charity and care, proof that one doesn't need to be near water to make waves of change.

### WARM HEARTS AMID WINTER CHILL IN ESWATINI

**WBro. Nigel Taft** PDistJGD:

Although the Kingdom of Eswatini lies to the east of our country and enjoys the warmth and humidity brought by climatic thermals from the Indian Ocean, the winter season still brings with it cold nights and brisk mornings. In the true spirit of Masonic charity, the Brethren of Saint George's Lodge 8322 were among the first to collect blankets from the District Office and distribute them to children in need at the Cardo and Care Point charity organizations in Manzini.



### BLANKETS FOR MIRACLE BABY CARE & PRE-SCHOOL

**WBro. Jacques Fouché:**

Just around the corner from Freemasons' Hall Johannesburg lies Miracle Baby Care & Pre-School, a haven for young children in one of the city's most densely populated areas.



Recognising the bitter chill of downtown Johannesburg's winter where icy Highveld winds sweep through the city streets, the brethren of Johannesburg Lodge No. 2313 delivered a donation of warm blankets to the school. The blankets were gratefully received and will provide much-needed comfort to the children during the cold months ahead.

This simple yet meaningful gesture reflects the core Masonic values of compassion, care, and warmth, not just in word, but in action.

### WINTER RELIEF APPEAL

- A CALL TO MASONIC CHARITY

**WBro Paul Coventry** PDistSGD:

Brethren,

As the chill of winter takes hold, many less fortunate, particularly the homeless and those in

informal settlements are left vulnerable to the elements.

In the true spirit of Masonic charity, we invite you to support our **Winter Relief Drive** by donating items that can bring warmth and sustenance to those in need.

### Requested Donations:

- New or gently used **warm clothing**, with a special need for **men's shoes**
- **Non-perishable food items** to provide nourishment during the cold months

Donations may be dropped off at your local **Masonic Centre**, from where they will be collected and distributed with care.

Let us demonstrate our commitment to **relief and brotherly love** by extending warmth, both physical and fraternal to our community this winter.

## UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF THE BOARD OF BENEVOLENCE

- WHERE EVERY RAND REFLECTS THE PRINCIPLE THAT "FREEMASONRY CARES"

**WBro. Richard Woodward** AsstDistGM:

Have you ever paused to wonder what becomes of the generous contributions collected by our Lodges and deposited into the District Charity Account, entrusted to the discretion of the District Grand Master?

The answer is both simple and deeply reassuring: a dedicated group of District Officers, known collectively as the Board of Benevolence ensures that every contribution is overseen with integrity, oversight, and Masonic compassion.

This Board is comprised of senior and experienced Brethren including Assistant District Grand Masters, the District Grand Almoner, the District Grand Secretary, and other trusted officers. To preserve impartiality, our

District Grand Master, while not a voting member of the Board, is invited to attend meetings in a guiding and consultative capacity.

This robust and diligent team meets regularly to consider all matters that fall under the noble banner of our district-wide initiative: Freemasonry Cares.

### Supporting Brethren in Need

At the heart of the Board's work is the care of our own. Reports from Lodges on Brethren facing hardship particularly through the Almoner's network, are reviewed with sensitivity and urgency. Where

additional support is required, the Board takes swift action, offering tangible help in the form of medical assistance, financial aid, or emotional support. These interventions uphold the Masonic principle that no Brother should suffer in silence.

### Guardians of Charity Integrity

External charitable organisations seeking assistance from the District are subject to a thorough and extensive evaluation process. The Board exercises due diligence to ensure that each Rand donated is used effectively, ethically, and in alignment with the values of the Craft. This oversight ensures that the legacy of our charity is protected, and that no act of giving is ever wasted or misappropriated.

Over the years, millions of Rands have been channelled into worthy causes, from emergency relief to community upliftment projects. The details of these disbursements are shared transparently during the District's Annual General Meeting each October, reaffirming our



accountability to the Brethren and the public trust we honour.

### Investing in Education

The value of education is not merely symbolic in our Entered Apprentice ritual it is a lived priority. The Board of Benevolence also oversees several bursary programmes, helping students from underprivileged backgrounds to pursue their studies with dignity and support. In this way, Freemasonry actively helps build a better future for the generations to come.

### Caring for Our Own with Dignity

Perhaps the most touching aspect of the Board's work lies in its support for elder Brethren or their widows. Over twenty of these individuals receive monthly grants to ease the burden of day-to-day living, support which, while discreet, allows them to live with comfort and dignity. This is more than charity, it is brotherhood in action.

We must also highlight the ongoing support of The Masonic Haven, situated on the eastern outskirts of Pretoria. Here, our senior Brethren and widows receive the highest level of care, in a tranquil environment that reflects our values of respect, compassion, and fraternity.

Brethren, when you contribute to Masonic charity, know that your gift is more than a donation, it is part of a carefully stewarded mission of mercy, hope, and love. It is the embodiment of our commitment that **"Freemasonry Cares."**

Let us continue to give generously, confidently, and with the pride of knowing that we are building a legacy of light, one act of kindness at a time.

## FREEMASONRY CARES

**WBro. Deacon Dr. Vernon van Wyk**  
DistGChap, **PAGChap:**

One of the Core values of Freemasonry is to look after the welfare of Freemasons and their

family members. The Twenty-four inch Gauge in the First Degree clearly articulates this moral value:

*"The Twenty-four-inch Gauge represents the 24 hours of the day – part to be spent in prayer to the Almighty God, part in labour refreshment and sleep, and **part to serve a friend or brother in time of need, that not being detrimental to ourselves or our connections.**"*

One should take care of oneself and one's family before others. As the old proverb states: *"Charity begins at home"*. This proverb has its origin in Paul's advice to Timothy in the New Testament which in the King James version was translated as

*"But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God."* (1 Timothy 5:4),

The fourteenth-century English churchman John Wycliffe wrote in 1380 AD: *"Charity Schuld bigyne at hem-self,"* which soon became *"at home,"* not just in English but in numerous other languages. Later theologians suggested that charity should begin but not end at home, yet even in the twentieth century it continued to be pointed out that *"Charity often begins at home and usually stays there."* Freemasonry, however, does see its role as wider than the inner circle through Masonic Community Services Pillar, but if one does not take care of one's own, this is a worthless exercise!

Within the context of the Lodge, *"taking care of one's own"* first starts with the Lodge Almoner whose primary function is *"...maintaining support and contact with Brethren and their immediate family,* defined in the Almoner's Manuel of our District as *"Pastoral Care"*.

Typically, the Lodge Almoner's role (and at District level the District Grand Almoner's) will comprise of inter alia the following pastoral care functions:

- Maintaining the pastoral care of ill Brethren, Widows and their families by keeping in regular contact.
- Noting the non-attendance of Lodge members and following up, as necessary.
- Listening carefully to the needs of Brethren and their dependants whilst also managing their expectations.
- Recognising and fighting loneliness and depression of Brethren, Widows and their families and to resolve the problem before it gets out of control.
- Highlighting the support available from Freemasonry Cares, the state, charities and other organisations.
- Keeping the Lodge updated on a Brother or dependant's circumstances at frequent intervals.
- Keeping in touch with Brethren who have resigned or have been 'lost', whenever possible.
- Assisting family members at the passing of a Brother to the Grand Lodge above. *(A guide "What to do when someone dies" was compiled by the District Grand Chaplain)*
- *Assisting* family members in arranging a "Masonic" Funeral/ Memorial Service. *(A guide for this purpose was compiled by the District Grand Chaplain).*
- Encouraging other members of the Lodge to share the duties of the Almoner (e.g. assisting with visits to widowed partners).
- Making all new members welcome in conjunction with the Proposer, Seconder and Lodge Mentor.
- Initiating, investigating and renewing grants-in-aid to needy Brethren and Widows.

With regards to the last point, the District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North is currently able to assist Members where there is a demonstrable need through the Transvaal Inter-Constitutional Masonic Charity. (T.I.M.C.) This structure is constituted by the District Grand - and Provincial Grand Lodges of Sister Constitutions in the Northern part of South Africa. This fund supports two types of applications for those in need:

- Applications for the welfare of indigent Masons and their widows, in the form of a monthly Endowment or grant. A financial needs test is applicable for those applying.
- Applications for educational bursaries for children or grandchildren of Masons who are the primary caregivers/ legal guardians.

*(Note: The District Almoner's Manual sets out the procedures and conditions for applications.)*

The District also maintains a District Grand Samaritan Fund, which was established to be able to cover local costs incurred in medical examinations/ procedures for any member of the District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North, where there is a dire need and the member does not have the means to cover the costs of procedures adequately. Where costs are in excess of that which this District can handle (e.g. expensive Cancer treatment), the District Board of Benevolence can facilitate the application for funding from the health portal of UGLE's Freemasonry Cares - Masonic Charitable Foundation. The District's also has members who are in the health care professions who may be able to obtain the procedure, via their networks, at a Lower Cost. Where limits have been exceeded or the fund won't pay for elective surgery, the Healthcare specialists may be approached to try and obtain discounted rates. Final payment will, however, be for the Brother's own account.

(Note: Refer to the District Almoner's Manual sets out the procedures and conditions for applications.)

**Sources**

1. District Grand Lodge of South Africa – North: *The Almoner's Guide in Craft Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters.*
2. H. B. Thompson, *Body, Boots and Britches*, 1940
3. WBro Deacon Dr Vernon van Wyk, DG Chaplain; DG Almoner, PAG Chaplain; *Guidelines for arranging a Masonic Funeral Service.*

Useful and recommended downloads:

[Almoners Manual.pdf](#)

[Masonic Funeral Services.pdf](#)

[What to do when someone dies vers 2.pdf](#)

**BEDS OF COMPASSION:**

- ROYAL EDWARD LODGE'S GIFT TO HOSPICE HOUGHTON

**WBro. Matthew Hartdegen** DistGOrganist:

Freemasonry has long stood as a pillar of compassion and care, its charitable legacy felt especially in support of hospice care, where dignity is preserved and suffering eased in the final stages of life. In South Africa alone, hospices serve over 150,000 individuals each year, providing vital support to patients and their families facing terminal or life-limiting conditions.

In 2024, this spirit of Masonic benevolence was powerfully demonstrated by **Royal Edward Lodge No. 3070**, who pledged and delivered **nineteen hospital beds to Hospice Houghton** in Johannesburg. Spearheaded by the Immediate Past Master, the former Charity Steward, the Worshipful Master, and the Lodge Secretary, this initiative ensured that the Lodge's commitment would yield real and measurable impact.

One devoted Brother went beyond by underwriting the transportation coordination, supplying a heavy truck, workers to assist with packing and offloading, and overseeing the collection and delivery of the beds, each valued at R6,000, from Edenvale to the Orange Grove depot of Hospice Houghton.

Anthony Manion, Manager of Hospice Houghton, conveyed his deep gratitude for this compassionate gesture. He described the donation as a reflection of Freemasonry's calling: to uphold humane integrity and grant peace and comfort in life's last chapter. In a heartfelt note, he thanked Royal Edward Lodge, encouraged future collaboration, and extended his sincere appreciation to the District of South Africa, North, expressing hope that this partnership may continue to uplift lives throughout Johannesburg and beyond.



With over 90% of hospice care in South Africa delivered in patients' homes, the burden on hospitals is eased, while families remain at the heart of care. In this regard, the Lodge extends its deepest respect to the healthcare workers who embody the noblest ornaments of the Craft: Faith, Hope, and Charity.

As Masons, we proudly recommit ourselves to the enduring virtues of benevolence and brotherly love. May our principles continue to

inspire deeds of mercy, ensuring that Freemasonry not only speaks of care, but lives it.

## BRAAI TAX

- A PROUDLY SOUTH AFRICAN WAY TO  
MAKE A DIFFERENCE - ONE FIRE AT A  
TIME.

### WBro. Kevin Trollip:

In the face of rising electricity prices and the ever-present uncertainty of load shedding, South Africans have resorted to our most reliable and time-honoured method of preparing food: the Braai.

It is not only a culinary tradition but a symbol of resilience, unity, and national identity. Where the lights may flicker and fail, the coals burn strong, bringing warmth, nourishment, and togetherness. It's far more than a barbeque.

**Enter Braai Tax** – a charitable initiative that turns this ironic truth into an opportunity for positive change.

At its core, Braai Tax is a playful yet powerful idea: instead of taxing your income, we “tax” your braai, in the form of a R1000 certificate. This contribution is not enforced by SARS, but by the spirit of ubuntu and the love for a worthy cause (and a better boerewors). Each certificate sold proudly declares: ***“I’ve paid my Braai Tax – because I care.”***

To sweeten the deal, supporters can also purchase Braai Tax branded tools and apparel, from aprons to tongs, perfect for the patriot who likes to grill with purpose. Not only do these items raise awareness, but they also give supporters a tangible reminder of their impact, and a conversation starter around the fire.



Here is the clever bit: For every R1000 certificate sold, R250 goes directly to a participating Lodge, giving them the means to support their own charitable activities. The remaining funds are thankfully received and faithfully applied by Astrea Lodge, to a range of worthy causes across South Africa from food security and education to emergency relief and community upliftment.

In a country where load shedding has become a national joke and the cost of living continues to rise, Braai Tax turns frustration into fuel for hope. It is more than a gimmick – it is a uniquely South African way to do good.

Because when the lights go out, South Africans light the braai – and now, they can light the way. [Click here to the Facebook page for more details.](#)

## MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

- BREAKING THE SILENCE

**WBro. Deacon Dr Vernon van Wyk**  
DistGChap, **PAGChap:**

June is Men's Mental Health Awareness Month and is observed globally. It aims at raising awareness about mental health challenges facing men, breaking the stigma and

encouraging open discussions. The District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North is particularly concerned about the mental health of its members.

## A COMPREHENSIVE EXPLORATION OF CHALLENGES AND HOPE

Men's mental health is a critical yet often overlooked aspect of well-being in society. Despite significant strides in mental health awareness, numerous cultural, social, and personal barriers continue to prevent men from seeking help and talking openly about their struggles. Understanding these challenges and creating supportive spaces can pave the way for healthier outcomes across all demographics.

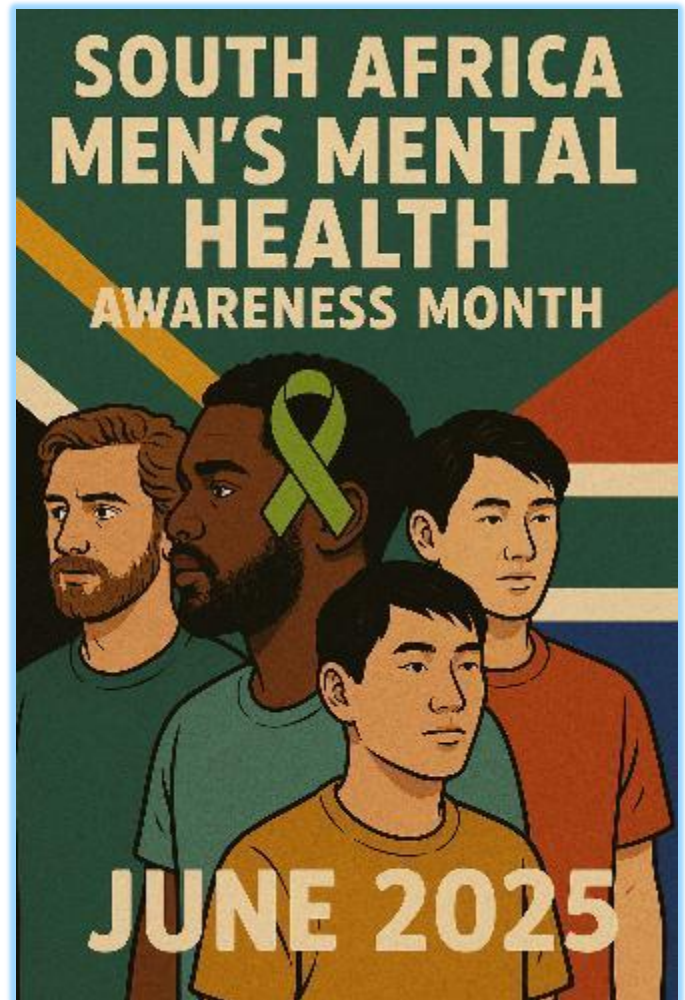
## UNDERSTANDING MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health is the cornerstone of overall health, influencing thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. For men, societal expectations and stereotypes often shape how they handle mental health challenges. Traditionally, men have been encouraged to embody strength, stoicism, and self-reliance, leaving little room to express vulnerability or seek help. This cultural narrative can lead to suppression of emotions, isolation, and ultimately poor mental health outcomes.

## STATISTICS AND FACTS

Men's mental health in South Africa is a growing concern, with statistics highlighting the severity of the issue. Here are some key findings:

- **Suicide Rates:** Men account for 75% of suicides in South Africa, with an estimated 23 suicides daily. The South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC) reported a suicide rate of 11.5 per 100,000 people in 2020/21.



- **Depression & Mental Health Conditions:** Around 9.7% of South Africans (approximately 4.5 million people) experience depression in their lifetime. Many cases go untreated due to stigma and lack of access to mental health care.
- **Economic & Social Pressures:** South Africa's 32.9% unemployment rate in 2024 has intensified financial stress, particularly for men expected to be providers. Poverty and exposure to violence further contribute to mental health struggles.
- **Mental Health & Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Unchecked mental health issues among men have been linked to South Africa's high femicide rates, with 5.5 women killed per 100,000

by intimate partners in 2020/21. Studies show that 19.4% of intimate femicide perpetrators died by suicide within a week of committing the crime.

- **Access to Care:** The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 75% of South Africans with mental illnesses lack access to adequate care due to an underfunded health system and stigma.

These figures highlight the urgent need for conversations and interventions tailored to men's mental health.

## BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

- **Stigma and Stereotypes**

Stigma surrounding mental health is a significant deterrent, compounded by stereotypes that equate masculinity with emotional resilience. Men may fear being judged as weak or incapable if they admit to struggling.

- **Lack of Awareness**

Many men lack adequate education on mental health, often misinterpreting symptoms of depression or anxiety as physical ailments or normal stress. This lack of awareness prevents timely intervention.

- **Accessibility**

Structural barriers such as financial constraints and limited access to mental health services can also discourage men from seeking help. Rural and low-income areas are particularly affected by a dearth of qualified professionals and resources.

## COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

- **Depression**

Depression in men often manifests differently than in women, with symptoms such as

irritability, anger, and reckless behaviour often taking precedence over sadness or hopelessness. These differences can lead to misdiagnosis or untreated conditions.

- **Anxiety**

Anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety and social anxiety, are prevalent among men. The pressure to meet societal expectations or financial responsibilities can exacerbate these conditions.

- **Substance Abuse**

Many men turn to substances like alcohol or drugs as coping mechanisms, which can lead to addiction and further mental health deterioration.

## BREAKING THE CYCLE

Improving men's mental well-being involves a combination of lifestyle changes, emotional support, and professional guidance. Here are some effective strategies:

- **Encouraging Open Conversations**

Creating safe spaces where men feel comfortable discussing their emotions and struggles is vital. Initiatives such as mental health workshops, peer support groups, and educational campaigns can foster open dialogue. The Lodge Almoner is a vital link in this regard listening carefully to the needs of Brethren whilst also managing their expectations.

- **Promoting Education**

Raising awareness about mental health and its symptoms can empower men to recognize when they need help. Schools, workplaces, and community organizations are ideal platforms for disseminating information. Lodges can invite a health professional to present a lecture in the Lodge.

- **Accessible and Tailored Therapy**

Mental health services should be designed with men in mind, offering therapy modalities such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, group counselling, or even activity-based interventions like sports therapy. This is probably Freemasonry's greatest challenge. Immediate short-term Counselling can be accessed through **South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) [0800 21 22 23] or Lifeline [0861 322 322]**. Where a Brother needs longer term counselling and therapy he should see a Clinical Psychologist or Psychiatrist. If his Medical Aid does not cover this type of counselling or if he has no medical aid, the District Grand Samaritan Fund should be tailored to assist. The District also has members who are in the health care professions who may be able to obtain counselling, via their networks, at a Lower Cost.

## SUPPORT NETWORKS

- **Role of Family and Friends**

A strong support system can make a significant difference. Family and friends should be educated on how to recognize mental health struggles and provide non-judgmental support. The Lodge Almoner should be able to assist with practical advice and referrals.

- **Workplace Wellness**

Employers can play a crucial role in men's mental health by offering wellness programs, flexible working hours, and access to counselling services.

- **Community and Societal Change**

Communities should work to dismantle stigma and promote mental health as a priority. Public figures, campaigns, and media can help normalize seeking help and highlighting vulnerability as a strength. Freemasonry invests in people and not the institution, and should be a vital link for a Brother and his family/ friends in this regard.

## INDIVIDUAL STRATEGIES

The individual Brother also has a responsibility for his own mental health. Some effective strategies in this regard are:

- **Exercise Regularly:** Physical activity boosts endorphins, reduces stress, and improves overall mental health.
- **Create a Support Network:** Talking to trusted friends, family members or brethren in the Lodge provides emotional outlets and increases resilience.
- **Practice Mindfulness:** Techniques like meditation and deep breathing improve self-awareness, reduce anxiety, and promote relaxation.
- **Seek Professional Help:** Therapy offers a safe space to explore emotions and develop coping skills tailored to individual needs.
- **Set Realistic Goals:** Focusing on achievable goals builds confidence and reduces the chance of burnout.
- **Express Emotions Honestly:** Allowing yourself to feel and communicate emotions supports emotional release and mental clarity. The old saying, "Cowboys don't cry" does not apply when it comes to your health.
- **Engage in Hobbies:** Creative or recreational activities provide enjoyable stress relief and boost confidence.
- **Limit Alcohol and Substance Use:** Reducing consumption promotes emotional stability and lowers the risk of dependency.
- **Prioritize Sleep:** Good sleep enhances emotional regulation, reduces irritability, and improves mental clarity.
- **Take Regular Breaks:** Stepping away from stressful tasks prevents burnout and refreshes mental focus.

- **Practice Gratitude:** Shifting focus from challenges to positives boosts mood and overall satisfaction.
- **Use Relaxation Techniques:** Activities like yoga or breathing exercises reduce muscle tension and stress.
- **Build a Balanced Routine:** A structured daily schedule provides stability and reduces anxiety.
- **Educate Yourself About Mental Health:** Learning about mental health normalizes help-seeking behaviours and reduces stigma.
- **Spend Time Outdoors:** Exposure to nature lowers stress hormones and enhances mood.

## Conclusion

Men's mental health deserves the same attention and care as any other aspect of health. By acknowledging the unique challenges men face and addressing them through education, support, and accessible interventions, Freemasonry and society can foster a culture where asking for help is seen as a courageous step toward healing. Breaking the silence around men's mental health is not just a necessity, it is a call to action for a healthier, more inclusive world.

## UPLIFITNG COMUNITIES

### - THROUGH CAREFUL CHARITY:

#### WBro. Paul Coventry PDistSGD:

The District Board of Benevolence continues to receive numerous appeals for financial and material assistance from a wide range of charitable organisations. In keeping with our principles of integrity and stewardship, each request undergoes a thorough due diligence process. This ensures that any funds disbursed by the District Grand Charity will be responsibly managed and faithfully applied to projects that

make a meaningful and measurable difference in the lives of those in need.

#### Recent Donations:

- **Food Parcels:** R25,000 donated in partnership with Rosepark Chapter for monthly food parcels to support elderly residents at Tarentaal Village and Rose Village Methodist Home.
- **Blankets Drive:** Branded blankets distributed to those in need, highlighting Freemasonry's care and outreach.

#### Current Proposals Under Review:

- **Stepping Stone Hospice (Alberton):** Funding sought for an essential 80kVA generator to support a frail care unit. While District and Grand Conclave contributions total R50,000, an additional R110,000 is requested from the District Grand Charity. Awaiting documentation and project details.
- **ATKV Support (Alberton):** A call for men's shoes and second-hand clothing. Proposed initiative to place donation bins at Masonic venues.

#### Ongoing Investigations:

Multiple organisations have approached the District for support:

- **Action for Blind and Disabled:** Requesting R1.26 million; application in process.
- **Woodside Sanctuary:** Solar energy project costing R1.6 million under consideration; support would be ringfenced.
- **Eventide Old Age Home:** Request for R100,000 for kitchen upgrades; concerns remain about long-term viability.
- **CHOC, Johannesburg Children's Home, Johannesburg Care**

**Foundation:** Awaiting completed grant applications.

- **Abraham Kriel Bambanani NPC:** Request for winter support; further engagement recommended.
- **Jicama 89:** Previously supported; request for further general assistance.
- **Wings of Inspiration (Randfontein):** Support sought for elderly care, including infrastructure and transport needs; awaiting documentation.
- **Meals on Wheels:** R100,000 request accepted in part; service provider payments preferred. Due to recent leadership loss, future funding will require thorough reassessment.
- **ATKV Benoni:** Engaged in community upliftment projects. Awaiting confirmation of willingness to publicly acknowledge and align with Masonic support.

## MASONIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

- STRENGTHENING CHARITY  
THROUGH UNITY AND ACTION

**WBro. Warren Flynn** PDistAGDC:

The *Masonic Services Committee (MSC)* of the District Grand Lodge of South Africa, North is a vital initiative aimed at enhancing the charitable footprint of Freemasonry throughout the region. Endorsed by the District Grand Master's Board of Benevolence, this committee provides essential guidance and support to Lodge Charity Stewards and encourages impactful charitable engagement across communities.

### Purpose and Vision

Fully funded by the generosity of Freemasons and their families, the MSC is one of the largest Masonic charitable initiatives in South Africa. It supports vulnerable individuals and key causes, ranging from medical care to early childhood

development; by partnering with national and local charities and awarding strategic grants.

The committee not only distributes funds but also promotes giving of time, skills, and resources. It encourages Lodges to uphold the "Sunday Times Test", a standard of transparency and integrity in all charitable actions.

### A Regional Approach for Greater Impact

In an exciting new development, regional MSC Committees have been established to broaden geographic reach and decentralize charitable activities. Each region is led by a dedicated Champion who coordinates efforts locally and liaises with the District Board. Current regional areas include Central East Rand, Highveld, North, Far North, Pretoria, and even extend to Mauritius, Swaziland, and Botswana.



These committees:

- Initiate and support local charity projects
- Coordinate district-wide efforts like Operation Brightsight
- Foster deeper engagement with communities

- Report regularly to ensure transparency and progress

### Charity through Action and Innovation

From organizing food drives and school refurbishments to visiting the elderly and donating essential items, the MSC promotes a hands-on approach to charity. Lodges are encouraged to work under broader, neutral charity banners to enhance public trust and involvement, especially in rural areas.

The document highlights how ongoing relationships with the public can lead not just to greater impact, but to friendships, and sometimes even new members.

### Communication: A Cornerstone of Success

Effective communication is essential. The MSC encourages the use of WhatsApp, email, physical pamphlets, and social media to promote initiatives and keep members engaged. Charity Stewards are reminded that communication should be strategic, respectful, and aligned with the core values of Freemasonry.

### Conclusion

The MSC continues to build on a legacy of over 50 years, revitalizing its mission through regional representation, modern communication strategies, and strong values. It is a testament to the Masonic principles of kindness, integrity, and service.

For more information or to get involved, contact the Board of Benevolence at:

[benevolence@freemason-jhb.org.za](mailto:benevolence@freemason-jhb.org.za)

## THE MASONIC CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

**WBro. Brett Theron** [Ed]:

The **Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF)** [circa 2016] is the central charitable arm of the



### United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE).

Funded primarily by Freemasons, their families, and public donations, the MCF aims to build better lives by providing wide-ranging support to individuals and communities across England, Wales, and beyond.

### Key Functions and Support:

- **Individual Support:** Offers financial assistance, health support, and education grants to Freemasons and their families facing hardship.
- **Community Grants:** Funds registered charities supporting disadvantaged and vulnerable people across a wide range of causes, including mental health, education, and social inclusion.
- **Medical Research and Hospices:** Provides significant funding to UK medical research charities and hospice services to improve health outcomes.
- **Disaster Relief:** Responds to global emergencies and natural disasters by supporting humanitarian aid efforts through relief partners.

The MCF operates on principles of compassion, integrity, and accountability, ensuring that funds are distributed with care, transparency, and measurable impact. It is one of the largest grant-making charities in the UK.

Whilst the Board of Benevolence does its utmost to support those in need, there are often requests which are beyond our ability to manage, at these moments we assist the applicant by applying on his behalf to The Masonic Charitable Foundation for assistance.

The Board of Benevolence having followed the MCF's stringent application process our application was approved and a staggering £8000 (over R200,000) was donated. A massive relieve to our worthy brother who is about to be admitted to hospital with a massive financial burden lifted off not only his but his family's shoulders.

**Should any brother find themselves in a similar situation of need, they are urged to submit their case directly to the District Grand Secretary only.**

### A LEGACY OF CARE:

- THE ROYAL MASONIC HOSPITAL AND FREEMASONRY'S HEALING HAND

**WBro. Brett Theron [Ed]**

It would be remiss of me not to include a touch of Masonic history and research in this newsletter, especially while reflecting on our collective charitable endeavours.

Two poignant reminders come to mind: a **Patron Jewel** from the **Royal Masonic Hospital Fund**, graciously gifted to me some years ago, and a **photograph of the late Queen Elizabeth II**, in which she is accompanied by a nurse whose uniform proudly displayed a silver belt buckle bearing the **Square and Compasses** and a medal (jewel) of a particular hospital.

These small emblems quietly signified that the nurse had served at the **Royal Masonic Hospital**, a place where Freemasonry's values of compassion and care found daily expression. It is a subtle, yet powerful symbol of the sincere dedication Freemasonry has shown in providing the highest standard of healthcare to all who needed it, even Her Majesty the Queen.

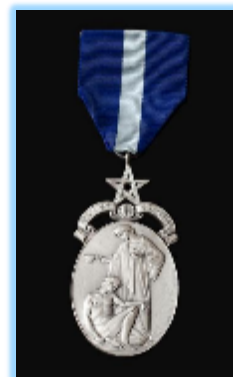
The Royal Masonic Hospital in London is a historic example of Freemasonry's commitment to healthcare and charitable service, originally founded and funded by the United Grand Lodge of England and its members.

### Origins and Founding

The origins of the Royal Masonic Hospital date back to 1911, when the **Masonic Samaritan Fund**, an early Masonic charitable initiative which helped establish a small hospital for the treatment of Freemasons and their families. However, it was during the First World War that the Freemasons' commitment to medical care was fully demonstrated. In 1916, the Freemasons' War Hospital was established in Fulham Road, London, treating over 4,000 wounded soldiers. Its success and popularity led to widespread support within the Craft for the establishment of a permanent institution.



Above Image: Freemasonry Today



Above images: Museum of Freemasonry

In 1920, following a nationwide appeal led by UGLE, the Freemasons acquired a site in Ravenscourt Park, Hammersmith. After a major fundraising campaign, the Masonic Hospital officially opened in 1933. It was entirely financed by the donations of Freemasons and was considered a gift to the nation.

### Development and Royal Patronage

The hospital quickly earned a reputation for excellence in medical care, becoming a modern, state-of-the-art facility for its time. In 1958, in recognition of its exceptional service and the scale of its operations, **Queen Elizabeth II granted it the title "Royal Masonic Hospital."**

While originally intended to serve Freemasons and their dependents, the hospital gradually opened its doors to the general public, becoming a respected private institution. Throughout its life, it continued to be heavily supported by Freemasons across England and Wales, with UGLE playing a central role in both its governance and funding.

### Transition and Legacy

Despite its legacy and achievements, financial pressures in the later 20th century made it difficult to sustain the hospital. In 1994, the Royal Masonic Hospital ceased operating as a Masonic institution and was later sold. However, the values of compassionate medical support and charitable health provision remain deeply embedded in modern Masonic charitable work, particularly through the **Masonic Charitable Foundation** and its health grants.

The **legacy of the Royal Masonic Hospital** lives on through:

- Ongoing health-related grants by the MCF.
- The continuation of Masonic support for hospices and medical research.
- The symbol of Freemasonry's long-standing dedication to public welfare, especially in the realm of healthcare.

In summary, the Royal Masonic Hospital stands as a testament to the generosity and civic-mindedness of Freemasons under UGLE, embodying the principle that **relief and compassion are cornerstones of the Craft.**

### LEST WE FORGET TO PLANT OUR POPPY SEEDS

#### - POPPIES OF REMEMBRANCE AND RENEWAL

#### Bro. Egbert Harmse:

Having recently seen stirring images commemorating VE Day and ANZAC Day; fields, memorials, and uniforms adorned with bright red Flanders poppies. I was struck anew by their powerful symbolism: sacrifice, remembrance, and enduring hope.

So imagine my delight when, while shopping for winter flowers, I discovered poppy seeds among the seasonal offerings. It felt



serendipitous, an opportunity not only to plant for beauty but to honour memory.

I purchased a few packets (around R30 each), both for myself and for the District. They'll soon be sown around the fountain at Freemasons' Hall, Johannesburg. With care and patience, they should bloom, just in time for us to pause and reflect on the 11th of November, in remembrance of those who gave their all.

The Flanders poppy, long a symbol of those lost in service, also speaks of renewal. From bloodied soil, these fragile blooms rise reminding us that even in sorrow, life and hope return.

As Freemasons, we are called to remember, reflect, and rebuild. This season, as we tend our gardens or window boxes, let us also plant seeds of gratitude and remembrance. A small

act, deeply rooted in the values we hold dear: honour, memory, and fraternity.

Go on and buy a packet and scatter them in your garden this winter. Let them bloom as both tribute and testament to enduring Masonic remembrance.

## AVIATORS SOARING WITH THE DISTRICT GRAND MASTER'S VISION

### FREINDSHIP AND VISITATION TAKES FLIGHT AT AVIATION LODGE NO. 8471

Aviation Lodge No. 8471, one of the District's vibrant special interest lodges, continues to take the District Grand Master's Five Pillar Programme to



new heights, particularly in the realm of **Friendship**, a cornerstone of his vision. With an enthusiastic and well-supported visitation calendar, the lodge has become a hub of fraternal fellowship, regularly drawing Masonic friends from across the District. In a wonderful turn of full-circle camaraderie, many of those who once visited as guests are now returning as regular attendees a true testament to the welcoming spirit that Aviation Lodge is known for.

On 27th May, the lodge was honoured to initiate Bro Boyd Fichardt, with 54 brethren in the meeting and what a privilege to have the Grand Master of the GLSA, the MWBro Godfrey Place who visited in his capacity as a Past Master of Lodge Prins Frederik who was accompanied by distinguished brethren from the GLSA RWBros Rex Ingle and Reuven Coenen.



As one of the District's unique lodges, Aviation Lodge maintains a delightful tradition during dinner; their "**Propeller Obligation**", adding a light-hearted and memorable touch that reflects the lodge's aviation roots; where the candidate takes the Lodge's obligation on a historical copy of the Aeronautical Information Publication and the propeller replaces the S&Cs. The candidate undertakes to comply with "traditional" pilot pastimes.



**[Ed:]** *Onwards and upwards, Aviators! Congratulations to the Worshipful Master, your dedication and leadership are truly a flying testimony.*

## GERMISTON CHARITY LODGE

### - "WE ARE CHARITY"

#### **Bro. Eric Cleaver:**

Germiston Charity Lodge is a Speciality Lodge with a distinct and noble mission: *to be a partner in charity*. As our name proudly proclaims, **We Are Charity**.

Our purpose, as set out in our Lodge's mission statement, is to support Lodges that are struggling to raise funds for charitable causes. We aim to be a *trusted partner*—a Lodge that others can turn to when good ideas exist but funding or reach is limited.

We provide a platform and practical assistance to Lodges in several ways:

- **Financial Support**, where initiatives are viable but lack immediate funding.
- **Marketing and Promotion**, to ensure greater exposure and participation by reaching a broader Masonic audience.

Let us be clear: **it is not our aim to take charity away from any Lodge**. The spirit of charity is at the heart of every Mason, and we uphold and respect the charitable efforts of all. Our role is to *assist, amplify, and enable* Lodges to achieve their charitable goals—for their own causes and in service to the greater good of the Craft.

#### **Charity Events Open to All Brethren:**

##### **Charity Fishing**

Held on the *last weekend of each month*.  
Contact: WBro. Willie van der Walt – 082 304 3872

##### **Charity Football**

Held on the *first Friday of every month*, resuming in *July*.

Contact: Bro. Eric Cleaver – 063 805 6899

##### **TIMC Race**

Support the **Transvaal Interconstitutional Masonic Charity**, which provides vital assistance to brethren in need and their children's education.

## **How to Partner with Germiston Charity Lodge**

If your Lodge has a charitable project and needs assistance, reach out to any of the following Brethren:

- WBro. Fernando Barradas
- WBro. Willie van der Walt
- WBro. Neil Ristow
- Bro. Eric Cleaver (Acting Secretary)

They will bring your proposal forward at our next meeting. If the project is feasible, **we will gladly support you and help set your plan in motion**.

Let us continue to *serve the Craft with compassion and uplift one another through brotherly support and charity*.



[ENDS]