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**District Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Jamaica and Cayman Islands**

**Remarks at Mark Masonry Seminar**

**Oct 31 2015**

Salutations!

Good morning Brethren and let me add my own quota of welcome and appreciation to you all for attending this morning. It is not easy to give up a Saturday for masonic activities when we all have our personal lives to attend to. I know the DGM appreciates your commitment and indeed we trust that you will have found the investment of your time this morning to be worthwhile.

I thought I would take a few moments to provide you with the context and background to this seminar and in doing so alert you to the directions in which we hope to move this District and to secure your commitment to this movement.

There is no question that the administration of lodges has been weak and that the District Grand Lodge itself has had its challenges. I think you will all agree that the success of any organisation is directly related to the efficiency and effectiveness of the administrative machinery, while in addition to this the success of a lodge will also have the quality of its ceremonials added as an essential ingredient.

I think we will also agree that in today's world all organisations must have a vision for itself, a vision which is embraced by and adopted by all its constituents. Now while the principles and tenets of freemasonry is our cement, we must have a vision for the future and roadmap as to how to get there. This consideration led the DGM in 2010 to commission the development of a strategic plan for our district. For a host of reasons this did not materialize and after a few stops and starts W Bro Frank Whyllie was commissioned to get it done.

It also became evident that our lodges were struggling administratively, financial obligations were not being met and quite frankly a number of lodges were under threat of losing their warrants and the very District itself was at risk.

Brethren, the critical situation in which this district was positioned was brought home very clearly to me when in a meeting with the then Dep Grand Secretary in London he pointed out Grand Lodge's frustration with our performance and quite frankly that Grand Lodge was not prepared any longer to ignore the fact that many of our lodges were in breach of the Rules and Regulations.

Brethren, I am sure you will appreciate how embarrassed I was, not just for the Mark District GL and our lodges but for freemasonry in Jamaica. Understand brethren, that the Grand Secretaries of all the orders meet regularly in London and I intuited that Jamaica was considered by some or being type cast even as freeloaders. Brethren we cannot allow the good name of the Jamaica brand and the diligence of the other orders to be tarnished by our lack of diligence.

So Brethren, it is with this background that the DGM has considered improvements in the administration of lodges as one of his priorities and his team has been directed to spare no effort to facilitate and secure improvements in these areas from the level of DGL to all lodges - Mark and RAM. So we had, in fact, started planning a leadership seminar from as far back as December 2014. Unfortunately our initially planned and rescheduled dates were usurped by other events but that being what it is here we are today at the first of what we anticipate will be an annual event held around sometime between August and October. The purpose of these annual meetings will be to:

- Ensure that our lodges are administratively efficient and cooperatively to support each other in this regard
- Consider and discuss the state and performance of our ceremonials, participation, etc., and again to identify areas where we can cooperatively assist each other
- Review and reset our strategic plan
- Get feedback from our lodges as to issues and problems that need DGL's attention or even where DGL may be seen to be falling short in support to our lodges.

All of this brethren being designed to promote the growth and facilitate the vibrancy of this beautiful and important order in the system of freemasonry in Jamaica.

Brethren, The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons is about 165 year since its formation. This District Grand Lodge is 140 years; the Sussex Mark Lodge #42 is one of the oldest lodges in the whole scheme of things. I say this to say that there is a long and strong tradition of Mark Masonry in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands - it is our duty, our obligation even, to preserve it and pass it to our successors intact.

So brethren, this is really intended to be a call to arms and to set the stage for today's proceedings.

I trust you will enjoy and find the discussions useful.

Thank you.