

Installation Address
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Grand First Principal 2019-2020

**“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”** Matthew 5:16

What a glorious day this has been, and what an incredible honor and responsibility you have bestowed upon your newly installed and invested Grand Chapter Officers. On behalf of all the Companions who have so willingly and eagerly assumed this responsibility, let me offer our pledge to you that we will devote our utmost endeavors to fulfilling our responsibilities.

Of equal importance is the need to recognize those Companions who have charted the course which we now follow. To Most Excellent Companion Keng-Wei Chew, and to each of the Grand Chapter Officers who have completed his year of service to the Royal Craft, on behalf of all of the Companions in this Jurisdiction, thank you. Somehow that simple phrase seems far too inadequate to express the feelings we all share as we look back on the thousands of hours, not to mention the tens of thousands of kilometers of travel you have undertaken to shepherd our Royal and Ancient Craft during the past twelve months.

Capitular Masonry in Alberta remains a strong, relevant, and dynamic force in the lives of our membership, and this is as a result of your dedication and devoted service. Each of you have let your light shine before all of us, you have let us see your good works, and for that we must also give thanks to our Creator for guiding you in your efforts.

We need to pause also to thank the Companions from our visiting Jurisdictions for taking the time and making the effort to be with us over the past several days. The demands placed on Grand Chapter Officers and Jurisdictional Representatives are extremely onerous and we all realize that an inter-jurisdictional visit requires a personal sacrifice on your part. Your attendance here means much to us, and your presence signifies your dedication to our Fraternity as one which transcends man-made borders. To each of you, we offer another inadequate thank you.

On a personal note, let me begin by thanking the Companions of my Mother Chapter. The basic element of The Holy Royal Arch is the Chapter and I want to publicly thank the members of North Star #2 for their support here this afternoon and for all of the encouragement and assistance they have afforded me in the past. I know I can count on their continued support this year.

No married man can ever deny that his achievements and success are shared with, if not attributable to his wife. The emotions I feel and the deep gratitude I owe to my wife and family, are impossible to put into words. I will try to express them in some way to my dear wife Marilyn, my daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren. Their support and encouragement make anything possible.

To the Royal Arch Masons of Alberta, we must all recognize that during the many years that we have devoted our time, talent, and efforts to Masonry, each of us in this room and throughout

Freemasonry have come to the realization that without the love and support of those nearest and dearest to us, such service would be impossible. To my family in particular, who have sacrificed much to make this day possible for me, and to the families of each Companion in this Jurisdiction, I can only relate how much your support has meant to us, and assure you that our appreciation is sincerely felt.

As I think of family and in general, Freemasonry, my thoughts turn not only to my brothers-in-law Bob and Tom Taylor who signed my petition 51 years ago when I was engaged to their sister, but also to my father-in-law, Bruce Taylor. Companion Taylor welcomed me into his family and into his world of Masonry. Bruce personally raised me to the sublime degree of a Master Mason. The symbolism of that event and his impact on my life will stay with me forever. To Bruce Taylor, I know you are listening, and I promise I will do all in my power to not fail your spirit this year.

Now, let me take a moment and combine all of these personal observations with some other Masonic related factors. My wife and I met through Job's Daughters and DeMolay. She is a Past Honored Queen and I am a Past Master Councilor. Marilyn went on into Eastern Star and served as Worthy Matron of Allenby # 38 in the same year that I was Master of Acacia #11. Now that was a busy year!

From the concordant body side, I have served as Commander in Chief of the Alberta Consistory of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Masons and am a Shriner. I am also a member of the Cryptic Rite, the Red Cross of Constantine and currently am honored to serve as the Presiding Preceptor of Edmonton #46, Knights Templar. I also served the Grand Lodge of Alberta as Grand Master.

“So what?” you may ask. What does this personal history have to do with my role as the Grand First Principal of Royal Arch Masons in the Grand Jurisdiction of Alberta? What it means, and what I want everyone to fully understand, is that I wholeheartedly support the family of Masonic organizations. I strongly believe in the importance of cordial relationships with concordant bodies, and I place a very high emphasis on the need for cooperation and coordination among all of the groups which contribute to the extended family of Freemasonry.

The story of Royal Arch Masonry would be incomplete without including the stories of the DeMolay, the Job's Daughters, the Eastern Star, the various York Rite Bodies, the Scottish Rite, the Shrine, as well as the Ladies' and Auxiliary Groups. And overriding the family of Masonic organizations is our allegiance to the Grand Lodge of Alberta and to the Grand Master, my good friend, Most Worshipful Brother Kenn Culbertson.

So thinking now of the whole of the Masonic Fraternity, and in particular Royal Arch Masons, I ponder what story do we want to tell? Not one of Secrecy and Suspicion! We want to convey to all Albertans, to our friends, our neighbors, and our co-workers, the contributions which our Fraternity, in its many forms, have made and are continuing to make to society in general and to this Province in particular.

Royal Arch Masonry in this Grand Jurisdiction is a unique and diverse organization. The geographical differences, not to mention the distance between Medicine Hat in the southeast

and Grand Prairie in the northwest, between Frank in the southwest and Cold Lake in the northeast, and from Ft. McMurray in the north to the deep south of our Province, dictate that Masonry will vary in form though not in substance. Rural, urban, and even isolated community factors affect, and in many ways, determine, the activities of, and the possibilities for, our many Chapters.

Economic differences on a regional basis bring certain sectors of our Jurisdiction into prominence and diminish the prosperity in others. Population and economic activity is constantly shifting in Alberta. As Westerners and as Royal Arch Masons, we have observed and adapted to the ebbs and flows of our region. However, throughout this Jurisdiction, our Companions remain optimistic and will continue to carry that positive “western attitude” forward.

The history of our Craft for the last 140 years in Alberta has been one of facing, then conquering, frontiers. Our first Craft Lodges arrived in this region with the early Northwest Mounted Police Detachments as they brought law and order, civilization, and moral truths to a previously lawless area of the Dominion of Canada. As the Canadian Pacific Railroad and the Canadian National Railroad brought settlers, agricultural market penetration, and small settlements to the west, they also brought the spread of Freemasonry across vast regions of previously isolated landscape.

Masonry, and very quickly Capitular Masonry, grew and prospered in our urban centers and continued to spread west, then north, as the Peace River region was opened to development and settlement. Most recently, we have seen rapid and significant developments in the North and our Chapters have followed and provided leadership in communities such as Fort McMurray. Our history is one of reaching into the uncharted frontiers of our nation and assisting, if not leading, communities and people in the spread of good-will and brotherhood as the need arises.

We, in today’s Royal Arch Chapters, must ever remain cognizant of this rich history. We must constantly recall the contributions of those who have gone before us, and must work diligently to carry the lessons and teachings of our venerable science into each corner of our ever widening realm of influence. We have recognized needs over the decades, and have performed our “good works” to the benefit of all mankind. Opportunities for service and moral influence exist today as they have in the past, and it is incumbent on every Companion to continue this historic tradition of leadership and service, making the future as bright and promising as our past has been.

Yes, we want to let our light so shine before men, that they may see our good works. And no, we do not want to stay in the limelight and become known only for our good works. We are not, and must never become, “just another service club.” Our Fraternity is based on personal development, morality, truth, cooperation, and good-will among all mankind. This has been our purpose throughout the ages and must remain our focus into the future. Today I challenge each of you to answer the question – am I doing my part in Royal Arch Masonry’s noble purpose?

I will however suggest this. We have often been told that the way to increase our profile or expand our membership is to live our individual lives in such an exemplary fashion that others

will observe us and attempt to emulate what we do and who we are. It is imperative that others know and recognize us as Royal Arch Masons if they are to realize that the individual whom they observe, the one whom they admire or strive to emulate, is a better person for his membership in a Chapter.

My Companions, yours is in fact, the face of the Royal Arch – please put a smile on that face, let the world observe that ours is a harmonious and fraternal order. I am further charging each Chapter in this Jurisdiction to assume its most handsome face. Let us make this the year when our Lodge buildings and Temples look their very best. Spruce up the paint, tidy up the grounds, brighten up the signs and symbols on your Chapter homes, and the entrances to our communities.

In your community, if there is a sign at the entrance to the town or village announcing the existence of a service club or a restaurant, ensure that there is an even more impressive sign identifying your community as one which is blessed with a Royal Arch Chapter. If the sign on main-street identifies the fact that there is a Church of a given denomination three blocks west, be sure that there is a sign also indicating that there is a Masonic Lodge Hall one block east.

I am excited about the prospects of this year; I am encouraged by the pockets of high energy and activity and by the influx of young men into a number of our Chapters; and I am confident that our successes and growth patterns can be replicated in many more locations in the Jurisdiction. The enthusiasm is there, it is just below the surface in many cases, and by working together and sharing our successes, we can, and will, accomplish much this year.

On a cautionary note, while we are encouraged by the number of younger men who are petitioning and being accepted into our Chapters, we must also recognize the challenges which these Companions represent. They are young, they are enthusiastic, and they are well educated and very knowledgeable about their place in an ever expanding world of technology and information.

These “new” Companions must be encouraged and involved in our Chapters. It is imperative that they be led into active roles in our Royal Craft as they are our future, and therefore must play an expanded role of influence and participation in the shaping of Capitular Masonry for the decades ahead. Mentorship and guidance is needed – and that is your responsibility. Their involvement and commitment will ultimately depend on your example.

I believe that we have moved towards this goal with the selection of this year’s Grand Chapter Officers. The men chosen represent a balance between those with outstanding Royal Arch Experience and dedication to our principles, sitting alongside younger men who have a great Capitular future.

The pockets of vital enthusiasm and growth which we see in our Jurisdiction must be encouraged and emulated as models for other sectors; however, we must also be realistic and recognize that there are also areas where Chapters are just barely hanging on. While our utmost energy must be devoted to assisting and supporting these Chapters, efforts must also continue in the various Districts to ensure that in the unfortunate circumstance where a Chapter chooses to

go dark, amalgamations and the accommodation of members are undertaken in an orderly fashion to avoid its members effectively being orphaned.

Royal Arch Masonry is not a static institution. It grows and declines in predictable cycles. Changes occur, Chapters come into being, and Chapters depart into our history, some to eventually re-emerge. The Holy Royal Arch however does not change; it remains as the messenger of goodness, kindness, morality and generosity. Its place in our society remains vital and society's need for us remains constant. How about taking the time to help someone less fortunate than ourselves, or calling a lonely member, or visiting our ill and aged members?

Let's make this the year that our Youth Endowment Fund takes the next steps in its development and structures its operations in a way that donations from groups and individuals are qualified for Casino approval and charitable receipts. I sincerely trust that this will become a priority for the Fund and for our Finance Committee.

Companions, for the past few years we have been encouraged, and have been reminded that "the key to success lies within us." We have been admonished to study, and to participate. Well we have done it, we are a success, and we have been approved, so now, let our good works be seen. We are Royal Arch Masons and Royal Arch Masonry is a strong and vibrant institution of moral and dedicated men. We have much to celebrate and to share.

Let's celebrate this year. No more doom and gloom, no more lamenting on "how it was." No negativity at all. Ours is a wonderful Fraternity, one which so many could greatly benefit from, one which contributes to the very thread of society, and one which brings each one of us great personal joy and peace. It is time to share all of this and our optimism for the future.

I look forward to visiting your Chapters and invite you to join us as the Officers travel throughout the Province. I will endeavor to keep an updated schedule on our website.

Once again, I thank-you for placing your confidence in me as your Grand First Principal. Now let's get on with the practice of our gentle art in Capitular Masonry, and as you will often be reminded this year:

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."