

Grand Chapter of Alberta, Royal Arch Masons  
Closing Remarks from the Grand First Principal  
**Most Excellent Companion Rod Ponech**  
“Virtual” Executive Meeting October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2020

My Companions of the Holy Royal Arch in Alberta,

I must begin by saying how humbled I am (I know many of you may find that hard to fathom) to have remained your Grand First Principal for nearly 18 months. One of the Landmarks of Freemasonry is the annual selection of leaders to serve their craft in its many forms, yet, here I am, privileged to serve you for two full years.

When we began this journey together in May of 2019, we all had a twelve month horizon entrenched in our rhythm of life and faith in the natural progression of events. All of us have received a harsh reminder that no one should take the future for granted.

The decisions made last spring to extend the Grand Chapter Officers, Committee members, and Executive Committee terms for a further twelve months, as well as having to cancel the 2020 Grand Communication, were not easy and not without controversy. However, it is painfully obvious that those were the proper actions given the nature and effect of this global pandemic.

I have been very pleased, and relieved, to receive confirmations of our Chapters, by and large maintaining their slates of officers in a similar fashion. I applaud all of the Capitular Masons in this Jurisdiction who have “stepped-up” and continue to serve the Royal Craft and their Companions for extended periods of time.

I know we share the disappointments of the Companions who had looked forward to progressing through offices in both Grand Chapter and their own Chapters. However we are also gratified to know that their experiences, once receiving their preferment, will be more meaningful with an expected return to something which, we pray, will be near-normal or at minimum, a “good” new-normal.

I must recognize the incredible effort, dedication, and commitment exhibited by the membership of the Grand Council to our Companions.

I extend my personal gratitude for their wise council, their cheerful assumption of additional tasks and responsibilities, and the warm companionship we share.

When next you have the opportunity, please say thanks to:

R. Ex. Comp. Gerald Waldern, Grand Second Principal and Grand First Principal-elect  
R. Ex. Comp. Jeff Knight, Grand Third Principal and Grand Second Principal-elect  
M. Ex, Comp. Jerry Kopp, Grand Scribe Ezra and Grand Scribe Ezra-elect  
R. Ex. Comp. Don Murray, Grand Treasurer and Grand Treasurer-elect  
and Ex. Comp. James Carswell, Grand Third Principal-elect

The six of us have spent many hours in Zoom meetings, phone calls, and reviewing numerous reports and documents via e-mail correspondence. Harmony and brotherly love have prevailed and we all share a dedication to a single purpose – the health of our Companions and the preservation of the Holy Royal Arch in this Jurisdiction,

In addition to these six members of the Grand Council, we have been supported by an incredibly talented and equally devoted group of spouses and partners who have been by our sides and shared with each of us the anguish and weight of the decisions required. Ladies, there is a special place in Heaven for angels such as you.

A second, and less heralded, group of mentors is the combined wisdom of the ages held by our Past Grand First Principals. This group of highly esteemed gentlemen have never failed to offer assistance and advice when requested, nor have they intruded or interfered of their own accord. I commend them for their past service, their ongoing support and I recommend them to my successors.

In fear of turning this into a full hour dissertation, I am going to simply thank each of the Grand Officers, Members of the Executive, and Committee members for their dedication to our cause. I would however like to recognize the four District Superintendents for their work which is so far beyond what they initially believed their call of duty invoked.

Let me turn for a moment to the leadership and general membership in our many Chapters. You also have undertaken much more than expected. In my phone calls to many of you, I set out to thank you for your continued service, yet, inevitably, we spoke about your members, their individual welfare and needs as well as the efforts of your Companions to keep in touch with one another. You continually monitor our elderly, infirm, and disadvantaged Companions, ensuring that anything that could be done to assist them is never overlooked.

Being a Companion is so much more than simply being a brother and recent experiences have convinced me that we all understand what being a Companion demands.

So . . . to everyone here assembled, and to our Companions throughout the province, I once more say thank-you.

I have every confidence that when we resume meeting in person (hopefully not too far into the New Year) we will see the resurgence of our Chapters' activities and I am given to understand, another large influx of petitioners to our Royal Craft.

With each of you, I eagerly look forward to our Grand Chapter Communication in Red Deer next May.

And . . . to put everyone's mind at ease . . . we are developing contingency plans for the Installation and Investiture of new slates of officers for both the Grand Chapter and individual Chapters, if large assemblies remain prohibited.

The Holy Royal Arch in Alberta is strong - let us all:

***“Let our lights so shine before men that they may see our good works  
and glorify our father in Heaven”***

*Rod Ponech*

M. Ex. Comp. Rod Ponech  
Grand First Principal