Incoming Address of the Grand First Principal

Most Excellent Companions, Visitors and Companions all;

Some moments in life carry a weight that's both inspiring and humbling. Standing before you today as your Grand First Principal is one of those moments. To be entrusted with this role—by you, my Companions, Brothers, and Friends—is a privilege I don't take lightly. And I know full well I'm stepping into some very big shoes.

Let me begin by expressing heartfelt thanks to our now Immediate Past Grand First Principal, Most Excellent Companion Jaime Wong. From the moment I helped you learn the Three Times Three Sharing of the word closing—standing elbow to elbow at the front of a Chapter room as a new Royal Arch Mason—I knew you were going to make a tremendous impact. And you have. Jaime, your thoughtful leadership, steady presence, and unwavering dedication have set a high bar, and I'll do my best not to trip over it.

To Right Excellent Companion Brad Edstrom—working alongside you to plan this upcoming year has been a true pleasure. Your insight, commitment, and sense of humour have made every meeting productive and every challenge a little lighter.

To Right Excellent Companion Bob Cantwell, our Grand Scribe Ezra—thank you for your endless patience, guidance and tolerance of my many phone calls and messages. Honestly, without you, we'd probably still be staring at a blank page, scratching our heads, and wondering who's supposed to be doing what. You're the quiet engine behind the scenes, and we're lucky to have you.

Thank you Most Excellent Companions Gerald Waldern and Rod Ponech. Rod you were Grand Master when I joined Freemasonry and Gerald you were Grand Master when I was Worshipful Master of Lodge Renfrew! Thank you for all your assistance and leadership with the Grand Treasurer and Finance Committee Chair positions.

To all the Past Grand First Principals—thank you for your ongoing support, mentorship, and conversations over coffee, road trips, and quiet moments in Chapter rooms. A special thank you goes to MEC Duncan Strachan, who has supported and encouraged me from the very beginning, and who—despite knowing better—nominated me anyway. And of course to MEC Jerry Kopp, thank you for all your wise counsel, always there to help with our questions, keeping us moving forward.

To all our newly invested and installed Grand Chapter officers, thank you and I look forward to working with you!

My theme for this year is simple, but powerful: **"We're Better Together."**
As Companions. As Brothers. As Friends.

Together in celebration. Together during challenges. Together to grow and strengthen not only our Chapters—but our Lodges as well. Because we all know, without a strong Craft Lodge, there is no Royal Arch. Let's never forget that. Support your Lodges. Show up. Mentor.

How many of us have sponsored a new Companion this year? A new Brother? Membership isn't someone else's job—it's everyone's responsibility. Our Chapters don't grow by wishing. They grow by welcoming.

We also grow stronger when we take care of each other. Men's mental health is often the quietest thing in the room—but it shouldn't be. Let's check in on one another. Let's make time, not just for the work of the Chapter, but for the people in it. Sometimes the best thing we can do as Masons is simply ask, "How are you really doing?" And then listen. I encourage you to reach out to a Companion, brother, or friend each week, to strengthen our Chapters, Lodges and friendships!

Our **Youth Endowment Fund** team is getting a strong boost this year, with new members, support from our Grand District Superintendents and both scribes. Our goal is clear: that **every Companion in Alberta hears about the YEF multiple times a year**, not just at Grand Chapter or a District meeting. Let's make it part of our regular language and our everyday work.

We live in a time of quiet transformation, where technology has become not just useful, but essential. Rather than resist it, let's explore how it can support us—especially in our education and our ritual work. Tools like ChatGPT can help craft speeches, the framework for education pieces and reports, while PromptSmart offers a thoughtful way to guide us through ritual without distraction or stress. After all, being well-prepared and well-understood is far better than struggling to memorize without meaning. Because whether we read or memorize our work, the words mean little if we don't take the time to understand them. Let's create space for open discussion and real education—not just on the tools themselves, but on how to use them properly, respectfully, and with intention. Let's also look at shared drives, searchable records, and easy systems to help us stay connected across Alberta. The future isn't just coming—it's already here. Let's learn it, apply it with purpose, and share it freely.

To all of you who have attended this Annual Grand Convocation—thank you. Your presence and support mean more than I can say. Whether you came from across the city, across the province or across the country, your time and efforts are deeply appreciated.

One of the greatest joys of being part of Royal Arch is the incredible people I get to stand beside. This organization is filled with some of the finest Companions—and frankly, some of the best men—you'll find anywhere in the province. Motivated, kind, and just the right amount of quirky, this group has a heart as big as Alberta and a work ethic to match. Watching our Chapters grow, collaborate, and genuinely support one another has been nothing short of inspiring. It's that spirit—of unity, purpose, and a whole lot of laughter—that made me want to walk this path in the first place. Simply put: you make this journey worthwhile.

A special thank you to Most Worshipful Brother Will Leano for your support of Royal Arch Masonry, we appreciate you zeal and leadership! Than you for being here and I treasure our friendship!

And finally, if you forget everything I said today, please remember just this:

Look at the chair beside you.
If there's a Companion, Brother, or Friend missing—**call them**. Check in. Invite them out.
If *you* are struggling, **reach out**. If you feel alone and don't know who else to talk to—please **call me**. I'm easy to find and always happy to listen.
Why?

Because: **We're Better Together.**

Thank you, Companions.