

HISTORY OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN FEDERATION

The history of the South African Federation of the Order of Freemasonry for Men and Women *LE DROIT HUMAIN* cannot be told without the influence, connection and association with The Theosophical Society especially in its early days when it was known as Co Freemasonry.

When Annie Wood Besant atheist, socialist, activist for worker's rights, women's suffrage, nationalized education, trade unions and birth control first met Helena Blavatsky she turned from her atheist beliefs to the mysticism and spiritual beliefs she found when she joined the Theosophical Society started by Blavatsky. She found in its goals and principles that which strengthened her own endeavor to promote brotherhood and serve humanity. Continuing on this path and learning about Freemasonic lodges in France that admitted women and men, she and six friends travelled to Paris where they were initiated, passed and raised. For her this was a logical extension of her work to promote the rights of women and improve the brotherhood of all mankind. 1906 Besant founded the Lodge Human Duty No 6. The Order grew and thus it was, that wishing to spread it's ideals in 1913, Mr and Mrs. Yardley, Mr W Marsh, Mr C E Nelson and Miss C E Noble members of Emulation Lodge No 14, applied for a provincial charter and the first Triangle, The Star of Africa, was formed in Johannesburg. Regretfully nothing further was done and the charter was eventually surrendered to London.

It was also the more esoteric concepts and ideas that Besant found in Theosophy that influenced the development of the Dharma or Lauderdale ritual that was created for the English Lodges. In the French Lodges the principle of laicite influenced them to dispense with a specific religious element. This did not suit the new English brethren and the Besant Accord agreed to by the Supreme Council sanctioned the inclusion of the belief in a creative principle under the title of T G A O T U. This is reflected in our South African Lodges where we work to "The glory of TGAOTU and the progress of humanity"

But back to our history! It was shortly after the failure of the first Triangle The Star of Africa, that some time later three determined people Ethel Pullenbury, Janet Isobel Gillian (later Havik) and William Ernest Marsh boarded a mail steamer from Durban and travelled 5155.63 nautical miles to London to enquire about this new Order of Universal Co-Freemasonry. The three determined travelers were initiated, passed and raised in Lodge Human Duty, were then entrusted with a provincial charter, rituals and some rudimentary instruction.

They returned to Durban to start the order in South Africa with the formation of a second triangle to be consecrated on 31 July 1915 as Amity Lodge No. 220. This lodge has always been considered to be the Mother Lodge in South Africa. At the golden celebration of our Order in South Africa, The Illus..Sis Janet Havik described their first meeting as follows: *"My mind goes back to that Easter Sunday of 14 April 1914. There were three of us; Brn William Ernest Marsh, Ethel Pullenbury and myself. We had been given a charter to work as a Triangle from The V.: Ill.:Bro Annie Besant 33°. We had no money, no room, the money had to come from my own resources. Each of us had been initiated, passed and raised in London and put through the chair, and had no other Meetings, no other experience. I had the good fortune to be trained by the V.: Ill.: Bro Besant's daughter, The V.:Ill.:Bro Mabel Besant Scott 33°. She instructed me in the art of covering the temple; she instructed me in the art of writing the minutes and on that foundation the secretarial work was founded. We took a room in the St Georges building. It was a small room, quite*

bare. In it were four tables, no covers on them. Bro Pullenbury and I had brought what tools we needed, Bro Marsh had brought the gavels and T B S. In the center was a table with a bible on it. We tried each other and set to work to hold the first Co-Freemasonic meeting in South Africa. ... Inspiration driving me ... and this being the high noon of masonry.

I struck 3 quarters and then 12 strikes on the borrowed dinner gong. It was a quiet, grey day with no wind and we could hear going out of the window the sound of the noon day of masonry. It has since been struck at the beginning of each meeting."

The V..III..Bro A Banks on a later occasion commented on the tranquil setting the bells gave at the beginning of the meeting. Bro Marsh carved the pillars and columns for impromptu pedestals. He fashioned little gavels and the alter emblem out of tooth ivory collected from the whaling station in Durban and inserted with silver.

The first three initiates were teachers from Pietermaritzburg, Natal: Violet Estelle Puzey, Zoe Blunden and Muriel Ellen Goodwin (Later De Graaf). Sister Goodwin was the first initiate who had to wait until she was 21!

The first Theosophical Society lodge in South Africa had been established in 1899 in Johannesburg and spread to Pretoria, Durban and Cape Town. Without doubt many of the members, emulating Annie Besant, were interested in and probably instrumental in founding our early lodges in those cities. In 1976 in Cape Town there was still a strong presence of theosophical members in Lodge Dedication.

In no time further triangles were formed and Lodges consecrated in the Transvaal (Now Gauteng) and in Cape Town, but it is useful to follow the developments in Durban in the twenties and thirties before moving to the other centres.

Pietermaritzburg became another co-masonic centre in Natal with the consecration of a third Triangle called Amethyst Lodge No 222 on 21 October 1916. And Isis Hathor No 228 being consecrated on Sunday 23 September with 9 Founding brethren meeting at 228 Church Street

Sis Elizabeth Bronner, the first R.W. Master, recalls that as a young mason in Isis Hathor Lodge *there was companionship in dragging out the furniture and setting up the Lodge in the Odd Fellows Hall. Even the Ill.. Sis Laura Ford 32° then in her 80's assisted. Afterwards the furniture had to be put away. Even the cups had to be washed, packed into boxes for RW Bro Ensle Syphus to take to her home. I also recall the cold winter meetings sitting quite literally as the Outer Guard. Bro Ensle being the mother of Sis Bronner*

A similar process had to be followed in Durban where meetings were held in St Georges Building, Park Street and in St Mary's Anglican Church Hall. An un named Sister recalls some of the incidents of those early meetings: *"It was a hall with a platform at one end. All the furniture, platforms, pedestals etc. were stored in a cavern under the platform. These had to be dragged out and stored back with each meeting. The door opened onto the street so the OG had to sit behind the IG. The switchboard controlling the lights was in the kitchen and high up. The OG had to stand halfway in the doorway and at the signal of the RWM had to dash 8 – 10 feet to switch on or off."*

The carpet was a 12 foot square painted canvas which was made by Sister Havik. The first wooden cupboard bought cost £12 which set the brethren back for quite some time. Refreshment was

standing around a small kitchen table with coffee essence, sugar, milk and biscuits. For Installations the hall was rented for the whole day and great effort was made to make the ceremony a special occasion. It was during the installation of R.W. Bro McNeilly that the brass candle holders (still in existence) were acquired. Much emphasis was made on precision and officers had to meet and practice in various brethren's homes.

The problem of using public halls was highlighted when on an occasion the JD turning the SE corner saw a strange man standing with hat in hand in the west. He had slipped into the hall, but was smartly escorted out and the door securely locked.

And then with the establishment of the three established craft lodges it was possible to consecrate in 1921 Mark Lodge No 5 as well as the Sovereign Chapter No 31.

And then all this dragging and setting up of furniture came to an end in 1936 when a property No 23 Galloway Place in Durban came on the market. The property was bought for £1350, the money having to be borrowed, but there was also a generous donation of £ 750 from Ill..Bro Percy Peal 30°. Soon a beautiful Temple was developed and the house rented out as a source of income. The Temple was consecrated on 17 July by Ill..Sis J Havik 30° and the Foundation Stone laid by Ill..Bro Peal.

In 1948 further additions included a large supper room, more dressing rooms, an extra garage and a large luxury flat for Bro Rowe

With Freemasonry being considered a purely male organisation, the establishment of this new masonic order admitting women and men was noticed and was cause for concern and opposition as early as 1915 leading to a letter dated 3 November 1919 by the Provincial Grand Lodge in South Africa sent to all South African lodges warning them against joining Universal Co-Freemasonry. An extract of the letter reads "...not being recognized by the Grand East of the Netherlands, it is hereby denounced as an irregular Masonic Body and all Brethren of this jurisdiction in its operations under pain of forfeiture of membership of the Order."

But development had continued at a pace in Cape Town where soon after the establishment of Amity in Durban another Triangle was formed - this being Lodge Sothis No 221 which was consecrated in December 1915. To establish this lodge, brethren travelled by ship from England and the first meeting was held at the Martin Melck House in Strand Street. Again, public transport provided by trams enabled the members to carry all the required masonic furniture- including the wands. Three times the brethren travelled the 2000 miles from England to Cape Town to assist. Then there was Lodge Hermes Trismegistus No 223 in 1918 and Dawn Lodge in 1922. Unfortunately, Lodge Sothis had to surrender its charter in 1920 and combined with Dawn Lodge. Also, in Cape Town, the venue moved from the Quaker Meeting House in Green Street, then to the Old Fellows Hall and for quite a long period to the Theosophical Society hall off Orange Street. Further development occurred in Cape Town with the formation of Unity Mark Lodge in 1924 and the Triangle of Sovereign Good Hope in 1937. Sadly as we move into the next period the 1940-60's we will see that Cape Town suffered a turbulent period that brought this promising development to an end.

Johannesburg in the Transvaal did not lag behind and the first meeting of what was the tenth triangle was held on 14 June 1916 in the upstairs art studio of R W M, Sis Allerly GLossop. They received their charter on 15 May 1922 and the Triangle was consecrated to a full lodge on 29 March 1923. The name of the lodge being Lodge Sphynx, its name was chosen primarily as a compliment to the first RWM who was an

artist of some repute in South Africa and whose studio was named "Sphynx". Sis Glossop presented a ring containing a scarab to be worn by all R W Masters of Sphynx Lodge. The two ivory gavels were presented by Ill. Bro Marsh.

The dedication of Ill. Sis Glossop was such that she was also a founding member of Theano Lodge in Pretoria. Transvaal. There were five founding members and the lodge was consecrated on 25 May 1925. Early meetings were held at 701 Government Avenue, Arcadia, Pretoria. The original carpet was donated by Bro R Rowe. The survival to this day of the lodge has been due to unselfish service of its members. Lodge Light of Osiris No 232 was established in 1929 in Germiston, Johannesburg. Ill. Bro P A Peal 32° had motivated for this lodge and provided the furniture and loaned money for its foundation. The first meeting was held in 1929 and consecrated as a lodge with 8 founding members on 3 May 1930.

With three craft Lodges established, Transvaal Mark Lodge was formed receiving its charter on 26 March 1932. In fact, of all the Lodges mentioned thus far it is only Sphynx, Theano and the Transvaal Mark Lodge that are still active.

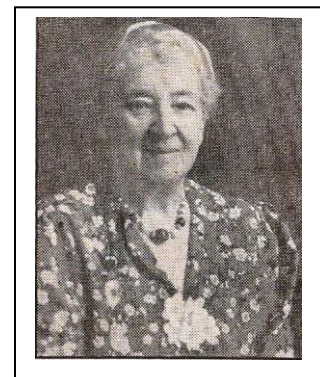
THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF CO-FREEMASONRY
Le Droit Humain

WHAT TO TEACH IN FREEMASONRY

COMPILED BY ANNIE M. GOWLAND 32°
OF DAWN LODGE NO224 CAPETOWN Circa 1937



Circa 1922



1943

Annie Mennie Gowland (nee Wells) was a remarkable woman, married in England in 1893 to George Walton Gowland. She was the General Secretary of the Theosophical Society in Argentina from 1922 and travelled in Tibet in 1925. Annie settled in South Africa in 1927 after a lecture tour of South Africa, and joined Cape Town's Dawn Lodge and worked hard to produce a manual to be used as a teaching aid. This is a typed copy of one that was given to Bro Tom Davis when he was in Cape Town. However apart from the typed copies that all our lodges have, there are many she made for her masonic pupils - all in beautiful copper plate handwriting. With copies of this manual and other of her teachings finding their way to all the lodges the influence of the esoteric aspect of theosophy was further entrenched in co-freemasonry

But all this must be seen against the background of what was happening politically in this country which meant that in none of the existing Lodges was a person of colour likely to become a member – a likelihood that became an impossibility with the much greater restrictions of apartheid after 1948.

1910 had seen the formation of the Union of South Africa. In the first two decades thereafter, segregation became a distinctive feature of political social and economic life in this country. New statutes provided for racial separation in industrial, territorial, administrative and residential spheres. This barrage of legislation was an attempt to regulate class and race relations during a period of rapid industrialization and growth of the black population. Segregation meant restricted mobility and diminished economic opportunities.

[The only say in government for black people was to vote on a separate roll to elect three white representatives to the House of Assembly. Education was largely through Christian missionaries that reached only a small proportion of the black population. However, some good high schools were established that took blacks to university level such as the Fort Hare college and enabled them to secure some teaching posts and lower level positions in the civil service. Even Coloured members of the population who during the 19th century had similar rights to the Whites in the Cape, were elected to Cape Town's municipal authority, had the franchise until 1930 when they too were restricted to voting for White representatives.]

In South Africa the **1940-50s** saw the development of organisations that were finding their voice and protesting and calling for black majority rule. In 1948 it was the National Party that won the election. While campaigning they produced a statement that used the word *apartheid* to describe a programme of tightened segregation and discrimination.

The 1929 collapse of the New York Stock Exchange resulted in the great depression. Socially and economically this had a profound effect on South Africans and a significant loss of development in Freemasonry. But this was not the only thing that impacted on a slowing of the growth of freemasonry- there was the World War II which had a devastating effect on communities all over the world. In October 1944 there was an appeal from the Red Cross on behalf of the United Nations refugees and their rehabilitation for Europe. In March 1945 Amity Lodge in Durban requested permission from the Administrator General The V.·Ill.·Bro Millar 33° to form a Charity Guild within the Order. All the craft lodges approved the Guild. A working group was formed with Bro Webb as convener and Bro Beck Rose the buyer. Cartons of warm clothing were distributed to the Royal College of Nursing in London for distressed nurses. By July 1946 members of the Guild decided to give attention to the needs nearer home and through the Child Welfare Society, the Edith Benson Babies Home and African homes benefitted. Parcels were still being sent overseas. From about 1956 other brethren assisted as conveners and the work expanded to include both white and coloured homes working to assist societies for the prevention of Tuberculosis, to assist the Blind and the Lepers. In 1964 Bro E Weichardt 18° took over as convener, but resigned from charity work in 1986 with no one else taking over.

However, 1948 was also when the first convention of co-freemasonry in South Africa was held from 27 April to 3 May that year. It showed the growth of masonry from an idea to a reality. The convention reminded our masons to realise their responsibility as masons. There was also a period of increased Catholic opposition to freemasonry. And the 1950s was also a period of suspicion with the government looking into all organizations and determining whether they were anti-government.

It was however against this background that the Johannesburg Orient realized they needed a home of their own. The present Temple at 47 Rutland Avenue / 1 Buccleuch Avenue in Craighall Park was purchased in November 1954 with additions and alterations being completed in 1955. Lodge Athena No 236 received its Charter in 1952 and the inaugural meeting was under that charter of Athena with the V..III..Bro S Bischoff 33° in the chair. The following impressions were given by Bro G le Roy: *We worked with love and like the wise men of the east we brought gifts....Darkness and a Star, It beckoned us to the East and we offered in spirit not gold and myrrh but the work of our hands. Before the renovations, the building looked like an old and weary toil-worn man. Windows were covered in dust and no light entered, the path was covered in weeds, the floors warped and worn the building was cold. But the vision changed as we saw the lifeless windows shining light outward to illumine the profane world...From these humble beginnings Rutland Hall rose literally from the dust*" The V..III..Bro S Bischoff commented that "A dream has come true. We remember with gratitude all those brethren who laid the foundations of our Order. The brethren present felt it was a privilege to take part and that was the spirit in which the work was done."

Other Lodges were formed- Lodge Harmonia No 239 in 1956, Khurum Mark No 43 in 1957 and the Royal Ark Mariner moored there to in 1963. Durban showed growth with the establishment of Lodge Light of Africa No 23 in April 1949, and Masonic Light No 236 in 1952, Lodge Fraternity No 240 in 1960 and the Royal Ark Mariner moored to Natal Mark in 1952, as well as the Mystic Arch No 42 in 1957.

Co-Freemasonry in Cape Town was not in a happy stage. It went through a turbulent period which saw the closure of Lodge Hermes Trismegistus, Dawn and Renaissance Lodges. The V..III.. Bro Margaret Seal 33° HC was a Fellowcraft in Lodge Renaissance at the time of its closure. But with no one in authority to write a letter of introduction she was unable when in England to join a lodge and further her masonic career. However, despite a discordant element that had crept into Dawn Lodge there was an extensive group that still met in study and discussion groups. Against all odds, these brethren, despite physical handicaps and lengthy inactivity were stirred again by The V..III..Bro Arnold Banks 33°, which resulted in the brethren meeting on 25 October 1955 at the Rondebosch home of Bro Armstrong where the historic decision was made to apply to the Consistory Council for a warrant to establish a provisional lodge. Thus were the seeds of Lodge Dedication sown. On April 1956 the MPGC consecrated the Lodge Dedication No 238 under a full charter. Dedication rose like a phoenix from the ashes. The motto of the Lodge- "Watch and Pray" was suggested by Bro Banks. It is in this lodge that today our current MPGC The V..III..Sis Cathy Quickfall 33° works to continue the growth and development of the Order in South Africa. Brethren were tired of not having their own premises and a move was made to assist in this vision. A property with two semi-detached houses in Observatory were bought. Rental from sitting tenants were to be collected by Bro Seal and Bro Elliot until eventually the bond could be repaid.

And now we approached the 1960's – a time when the struggle for an equal, free and open South Africa intensified. This period marked an important watershed in the struggle against Apartheid.

[The Rivonia Trial took place in South Africa between 9 October 1963 and 12 June 1964, leading to the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela and the others among the accused who were convicted of sabotage and sentenced to life at the Palace of Justice. The aftermath of Sharpeville signaled the beginning of a more brutal and intensive phase of state repression that would crush internal resistance in the space of a few years. Government's policy of recreating ethnically defined homelands (Bantustans) out of the Reserves carved out by the 1913 Land Act resulted in millions of Africans being forcibly removed to these "Homelands"]

In 1964 the government set up a commission under Judge Botha to investigate the activities of secret societies such as the Broederbond, the freemasonic orders and the Sons of England. Our Administrator General, The V.·III.·Bro Membrey 33° responded to an advertisement calling for “secretive” societies to be investigated. Rituals, constitutions, copies of minutes of the Advisory Council were called for and many questions were asked. The Botha commission was able to deem Freemasonry as “clean” and free of any subversive activities. The significance of this commission was that it gave us and others the freedom to operate freely.

But for our co-masonic lodges this period was one of celebration. Lodges Amity, Amethyst, Sphinx, Theano and Osiris celebrated their golden anniversaries – fifty years since they were consecrated and, despite the ups and downs were still going strong.

Lodge Dedication, born in 1956, had something else to celebrate. The bond on the Observatory houses had been paid off. In their 107th meeting it is recorded that the visiting Administrator General- The V.·III.·Sis Membrey 33° suggested that it was time the Cape Town Orient found its new home. Lodge Dedication was then meeting at the St Thomas Church in Rondebosch having found it inconvenient to continue meeting at The Theosophical Society. Little time was lost in agreeing to this suggestion. The drawback was that The Observatory property was no longer considered an appropriate venue and the hunt was on for something more substantial and in a better area. Bro Mary Steens was to be their fairy godmother who suggested they find a piece of ground and build their own temple for which she would assist with financing. Eventually after looking at many properties, the plot on which Temple Dedication now stands was found.

The V.·III.·Sis M Raymond 33° described the energy with which every member approached the project. *“The ground had to be blessed, and Bro de Graaf wrote a beautiful little ceremony for this purpose. Everybody’s input and suggestions were taken into consideration. Those of us who were there at this exciting time can today look around the Lodge rooms and refectory and remember past (as well as present) members by the chairs, the tables, the light fittings, the carpets, the urn, the crockery etc that were donated. Our beautiful hand carved Master’s chair was originally made for Lodge Hermes Trismegistus. At the time that plans were afoot to start Lodge Dedication, Bro Hope Denoon a collector of antiques – found it at a country furniture sale –it had to be ours! And so it was. Eventually in April 1977 our dream came true – the work was complete! Our Temple made with the caring hands of so many interested people could be consecrated. Not only did we have The V Illus Bro Tom Watson, our own Administrator General to perform the ceremony, but the MPGC The V.·III.·Bro Nash-Wortham came from England for the occasion together with 27 visitors from other Orients around South Africa!”*

With all these dignitaries present at the time it was possible for Good Hope Mark Lodge No 46 to be consecrated on 29 October 1978 with Bro David Smith in the Chair and the MPGC d’honneur Bro Nash-Wortham as Installing Master. The V.·III.·Bro Tom Watson 33° gave the Oration. Members of the Triangle of the Chapter Good Hope had been meeting in the home of Sis Muriel De Graaf (nee Goodwin) and discussing and collecting money and material to resuscitate the Chapter. The underlying inspiration of the brethren was to have a place of their own where they would not be disturbed by other events in rented halls and where each person could grow in awareness and ultimately spread the Light. And now it could become real. With all the dignitaries and visitors present, Good Hope Chapter was consecrated as a full Sovereign Chapter Good Hope No 98. And two days later Sis M Raymond was the first to be perfected with The V Ill Brn Lily Membrey 33° and Maureen Goulding 32° assisting in the ceremony.

But Durban was having problems of their own. New phenomena started in the early 1970's – that was the time we saw the growth of large shopping centres being created in suburban areas. In Durban the developers of a large shopping centre wanted to expand and the Temple at 23 Galloway Place was in the way. After several offers the brethren accepted the offer of the property at 124 Essenwood Road, Durban. 23 Galloway Road was demolished.

For Johannesburg this was also a period of stability and growth. The Rutland Temple benefitted from legacies of brethren and major additions and alterations were made to the building. A modified plan was approved on 31 May 1980 and the bond of R20 000 took 10 years to repay. Brethren were now enjoying the labour and legacy of those early brethren. The Temple was consecrated by the British Federation's MPGC, The V. .III. .Sis Gladys Nash Wortham 33°

In 1992 the centenary of Le Droit Humain was celebrated in all co-masonic lodges worldwide. In South Africa an Occasional Lodge meeting was held under the banner of Sphynx Lodge to celebrate this achievement. First day covers and beautiful centenary coins bearing the head of Maria Deraismes were bought by many of the brethren.

In the background to this masonic growth, in the country there was increased protest with the resultant clamp down and increased repressive actions.

[The 1975 decision to introduce Afrikaans as a teaching medium for mathematics, arithmetic and social studies led to rioting in Soweto. If carried out this would deny black pupils their understanding of these subjects and have a negative effect on their future.]

In 1985 a state of emergency was declared. This proved a focal moment in the struggle against apartheid as the international condemnation contributed to rejuvenation of grass roots resistance. This affected the country socially, culturally and economically. It became a time of isolation and sanctions with many of the world's largest companies withdrawing from South Africa.

Despite all these apartheid challenges in the country, the first member of "colour" was initiated in October 1990 into Durban's Lodge Fraternity No 240. The story behind this could well have been the agreement by the government in 1977 to allow members of the coloured Prince Hall lodges to be admitted to visit those of the South African constitution or any of its sister constitution lodges. What happened was that members of these Prince Hall lodges all applied to be admitted as "fully fledged" members.

There were there negotiations going on between ANC and government towards a process that would lead eventually to the first general election 27 April 1994 in which all South Africans would vote. At the same time the South African Administration was seeking independence from the British Federation. It was felt that the time had come for us to 'stand on our own feet'. Previous applications for this had been made, but the second application made in 1981 by The V. .III. .Bro T Watson 33° was denied on the grounds that he had made this application without consulting the lodges. There was much dissatisfaction arising from the proper procedures not having been followed. A third attempt via a letter written to The V. .III. .Sis H Boutall 33° finally resulted in a Charter being granted to us in 1993.

And so it was that the International Convention held in Paris in 1997 was attended by the then MPGC Lorna Sutherland 33°, Marcia Raymond 32° together with Bro Yvonne Dyson MM a member of one of the subsequent breakaway Durban lodges. At the convention we were proudly able to announce that the birth of the South African Federation had coincided with the birth of a new democratic South Africa with

its new constitution in which was enshrined those values that co-freemasons have worked always to uphold; that we had a role to play in this society. Bro Raymond in her report on this convention writes of her excitement: *"Finally everyone was seated...only then was I able to look about and take stock of our surroundings...550 people were present- a truly impressive sight. As I sat among the babble of tongues and warm brotherly greetings, I was able to feel the full strength and power of this truly international brotherhood of which we in South Africa are a small segment. Around us were a variety of regalia...craft and higher degrees, men and women from over 68 nations, of all walks of life- all come together for a common purpose- the perfection of humanity and the glory of TGAOTU. What a powerhouse of intellect was being brought to bear in that convention room that day."*

1999 saw the initiation of the first black brother into Sphynx Lodge No 225, and today in 2019 all our Lodges reflect a truly diverse membership.

But the years 2001-2002 were a sad time in our history as some of the brethren governed by emotion, rather than by reason, decided to break away from le droit humain. Several factors led to this happening on top of which subsequent actions by some members of the Johannesburg Lodge brought the Order into disrepute, and secondly a false rumour that Le Droit Humain was becoming an atheistic order was started, there was also dissent concerning the Verulam ritual in Durban.

A letter dated 15 March 2002 from the MPSGC The V.·III.·Bro Njordur Njardvik 33° wrote and confirmed to the MPGC that *"there are no plans to change the Lauderdale ritual....Le Droit Humain is not being turned into an atheist Order. It stresses freedom of thought, and thereby, of course, individual religious commitment. Le Droit Humain will continue as always with respect for all beliefs concerning survival or non- survival after death...to realise (on earth) (omitted in the English translation) the greatest possible degree of moral, intellectual and spiritual development for all people"*.

Sadly this letter came too late for the damage had been caused. The general dissent led to the breakdown of 3 out of 5 craft lodges in Durban.

Despite this drawback in numbers, we were still the South African Federation and were committed to hold a National Convention every three years.

The first was held in Durban in May 2005. This became an all-African event with visitors from the West African Federation, The British Federation and honoured by the attendance of the V.·III.·Bro N Njarvik 33° MPSGC. It was at this convention that Brn Tom Davis, Marcia Raymond and Elizabeth Bronner (all 32°) were quietly interviewed by the MPSGC on their suitability to be raised to the 33° and to enable a decision as to who would be the next South African MPGC. All three brethren then travelled to Paris to be consecrated as 33° with the announcement that Sis Elizabeth (Liz) Bronner was to be the new South African MPGC.

The Second National Convention was held in 2006 in Johannesburg, but regrettably Bro Tom Davis resigned shortly after to join the Eastern Order taking with him a number of other members.

The Third National Convention took place in 2011 in Cape Town at which a demonstration of the Continental Ritual Opening and Closing Ceremonies was given, as well as the celebration of the Winter St John's. The theme for this convention was Human Rights / Human Duty. The responsibilities of the administrative structures were emphasized. There was an appeal again for brethren to become more involved in the administrative aspects of the Lodge and Federation.

Concern was expressed about the decrease in membership. Many brethren were being lapsed due to non-payment of annual subs. Freemasonry for Men and Women in South Africa has been influenced and shaped by the history of the country.

2014 marked the centenary of the arrival of Le Droit Humain on the shores of South Africa and the occasion was well marked and celebrated with the Fourth National Convention held in Johannesburg in May that year. This ceremonial gathering was a celebration of those 100 years. The highlight of the convention was the visit of the MPSGC The V.·.III.·.Sis Yvette Ramond 33° from Paris. This was her very first visit to South Africa.

Also attending the convention were the head of the Order from Paris together with other international visitors - the V.·.III.·.Bro Brian Roberts 33° from Britain, The V.·.III.·.Bro Klaus Frozen 33° from Finland, The III.·.Sis Judy Schuler 32° from Australia. We also had a delegation of brethren from the West African Federation. Brethren from the Orients of Cape Town, Durban and Pretoria joined the Johannesburg brethren in achieving several aims of the convention.

With the assistance of visiting Sublime Princes, the Consistory was able to elevate three brethren to the 32°. A sense of nurturing was achieved as this was the first time this ceremony had been held in South Africa.

The following new structures were voted in: - Administrative Council, Federal Areopagus, Federal Treasurer and assistant and Federal Almoner.

To ensure that senior brethren were developing in the higher degrees, application was made for the Consistory and for the Triangle of G I G's. By this means the higher degrees need no longer be conferred, but received ceremonially.

The brethren were encouraged to be part of the change both in the Federation as well as in their lodges and communities.

At the closing there was a well-received positive energy from the Chain of Union that could be taken back to the Orients.

The V.·.III.·. Sis Liz Bronner said *"Our challenges are not so different a hundred years later, but the population has evolved. The problems of a disillusioned youth, unemployment, struggling economy, the need to belong, are still there. The South African Federation has the responsibility and privilege to ensure that the gate does not close on Le Droit Humain. We must make things happen."*

Perhaps it is at this point where we look back on the past 100 years that we must show our appreciation to all the brethren that have worked hard to maintain our position – from 11 triangles that were created many have survived and exist as Lodges that are committed and bring stability to our new Federation. But amongst them are some who deserve special recognition.

We can look back to two in particular- the V.·.III.·.**Sis Janet Havick (1913-1970)** who, as Janet Isobel Gillian was one of the three who first went to London to get universal co freemasonry started in south Africa. Not resting on her laurels, the V.·.III.·.**Sis Havik 33°** was responsible for the formation of 10 new lodges. She stood for justice, integrity and her loyalty never wavered. She was mentally alert to the end of her days and was keenly interested in the welfare of the brethren and the expansion of the masonic work.

The other is the V.·.III.·.**Sis S J Bischoff 33°** who was initiated into Amethyst Lodge in 1919 and was a founder member of 6 lodges. In 1949 she became Administer General, a position she held for 12 years. She spared neither time nor energy in travelling around and did an enormous amount of clerical work herself before the advisory council became operative.

Other V.·.III.·. brethren whom many of us will have met and worked with are: -

The V.·.III.·.Sis Phil Wilkin 33°. who was initiated in 1964. She was so proud of her masonic regalia. She was a hard working dedicated ritualist who did not demand more of anyone than of herself. Behind the stern exterior she was a gentle, loving, encouraging person. She always gave a willing ear and responded with wisdom and assisted those in distress. In her last years she was laid low with a stroke.

The V.·.III.·.Sis Eileen Sandeman 33°. She was always referred to as an angel of mercy. In the outer world she administered to the needs of inmates of an old age home. Masonically she served and ruled in all the lodges from the craft to the encampment and as administrative secretary to the advisory council. She was described as a conscientious and efficient support that made the wheels of the Lodge and administration work smoothly and effortlessly.

The V.·.III.·.Sis L M Membrey 33°. In the early 20's she was initiated, passed and raised in Vasanta Lodge in London, England. She joined Amethyst Lodge in 1932. She was a retired art teacher whose art is perpetuated in Lodge tracing boards. In 1992 she celebrated 60 years in Amethyst Lodge and 70 years in Freemasonry. She was Administrator-General for two spells of 13 and 8 years.

The V.·.III.·.Sis Lorna Sutherland 33°. Behind the quiet dignified reserved exterior was a character of strength, perseverance, compassion and love. Her library was evidence of her search for the deeper meaning of life. As Administrator-General and as the first MPGC of the South African Federation she was able to display tolerance and the patience of a philosopher. She was an accurate administrator as seen in the archives and minutes she kept.

The V.·.III.·.Sis Margaret Seal 33°HC. Bro Seal was a warm, caring person who had a thirst for knowledge which led her to a life of research and learning which she shared with others. Her many pieces of architecture are proof of this. Bro Seal was deeply concerned with the equality of women and was very active during the apartheid years. She carried her views of non-discrimination on race, religion or gender into her masonic life as well. She turned down the offer of being MPGC and accepted the 33° HC.

The V.·.III.·.Sis Sheila Brewis 33°HC. She was initiated in 1952. Bro Brewis served the Lodges wherever she lived and kept up all her subscriptions. She was always known for her ready smile, caring ways, always doing it right, ready laugh but also serious about matters that mattered. She was a creative and talented needle woman. Evidence of this is found in her regalia, kneeling stools and mosaic carpet. She will be remembered amongst others for her meticulous book keeping.

The V.·.III.·.Sis Cooper 33°. Bro Cooper, the perfect lady, was the undisputed mother of the Johannesburg and Pretoria Orients, being the pillar of wisdom, strength and beauty. She had the perfect balance of tolerance, humility, loyalty and empathy. She was the mentor, teacher, sounding board and friend. How grateful we were to celebrate her 80th birthday before she passed to the GLE.

The Federation has been blessed with these dedicated, loyal and spiritual members. Our past history is testimony to their labours - we trust that by their examples other brethren will be encouraged to carry on their good work

Evidence of new energy was obvious at the **next convention in 2017** held again in Johannesburg. This was one in which we welcomed our new MPGC the V.·.III.·.Sis Cathy Quickfall and senior brethren thanked the outgoing V.·.III.·.Sis Liz (Elizabeth) Bronner. Sis Liz must be commended for not only her time as MPGC, but for also maintaining the interests of the Side Degrees and also being President of the National Council 2017 – 2019.

In her keynote our new MPGC focused on the value of mindfulness, she transmitted new energy, encouraging us and emphasizing the value of using our 1° tools in our work.

In the following three years the Federation showed wonderful growth. Financial systems and banking were streamlined. This was done with the invaluable assistance of the Federal Treasurer, V.·.III.·.Sister Marcia Raymond.

The Triangle of the South African Federation welcomed the V.·III.·Bro John Fowkes 33° of Cape Town (the compiler and author of our secular Constitution – and many other official documents- as submitted to the Receiver of Revenue), followed by V.·III.·Sis Linda Lewies 33° of Johannesburg (who is the anchor for all matters of the Orient of Johannesburg), V.·III.·Sis Sandra Fowkes 33° (President of the National Council 2019 – 2021) of Cape Town and V.·III.·Bro Phillip Ferreira 33° (Federal Almoner 2019 – 2021) of Pretoria. Remarkable growth between 2017 and 2021 National Convention (The National Convention should have been held in 2020 but was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic) was due to new energy and the hard work of the senior brethren in concentrated efforts to grow the Federation. There are still 5 Lodges to be found in Cape Town, Pretoria, Durban and two Lodges in Johannesburg.

Where all achieved growth it was the surge of excitement that arose with the new initiations for Athena Lodge No 236 in 2019. This lodge had been sustained by dedicated members of other Lodges. And then there was a new RWM and new growth and initiations that were the real signs of blossoming.

Sphynx Lodge had so many Entered Apprentices at one point that the NE column was full! And of course all the craft degrees require instruction and there followed a flurry of activity.

The South African Federation looks forward with anticipation to the visit by the MPSGC The V.·III.·Bro Daniel Bolens 33°. He is to visit Cape Town and Johannesburg and we hope will be able to meet as many of the brethren as possible.

Our National Convention, now planned for March 2021, is to be held in Johannesburg and elections will be taking place with a fresh itinerary and insights to our International Question.
