strengths of Freemasonry and ***this Lodge in particular*** is the support and understanding that we extend to one another during such periods, and I hope that every member knows that their Lodge remains a place of friendship, encouragement and support. We are, after all, a family; we stick together.

Looking beyond our own Lodge, it would be impossible to reflect on the past year without acknowledging the growing sense of uncertainty that many brethren feel regarding the future direction of Freemasonry at both Provincial and Scottish levels. Such periods are not unique in history but they do present a challenge to all who have the privilege of leading and serving the Craft. Our members deserve confidence that their voices are heard, that their concerns are valued and that the principles which have sustained Freemasonry for generations remain at the heart of decision making.

The future of Freemasonry will not be secured through tradition alone, nor by assuming that future generations will automatically inherit the enthusiasm and commitment that many of us have shown throughout our Masonic journeys. It must be earned through leadership that inspires confidence, engagement that encourages participation and a willingness to honestly confront the challenges facing our Order. The decisions taken today and those yet to come, will shape not only the experience of the current membership but the appeal and relevance of Freemasonry to those who will follow us.

It is my sincere hope that whatever the future may hold, those entrusted with positions of responsibility throughout our Constitution will have the courage to listen, the wisdom to reflect and the determination to act in the best interests of The Craft. Freemasonry has weathered many storms throughout its history and I remain confident that it can continue to do so, provided we never lose sight of the *brethren* whom we are privileged to serve. It is therefore incumbent upon all who hold positions of responsibility to ensure that the values, traditions and interests of the Craft remain at the forefront of those decisions. Future generations will judge us not by the challenges we faced, but how we responded to them.

On a personal note, I would like to express my sincere thanks to every member of Lodge St Ayles for the trust, confidence and friendship that you have shown me throughout my tenure. TO have served as Master for the past seven years has been a priviledge that I could never imagined when I first took the Chair. No Master succeeds alone and any achievements during my time in office have only been possible because of the support, guidance and commitment of the brethren around me. For that, I am (as always) truly grateful.

As we look ahead, I believe there is every reason to be optimistic. We have a proud history, a dedicated membership, growing visibility within our community, and the opportunity to build upon the successes of the past year. Challenges will undoubtedly arise, as they always do, but I have every confidence that the brethren of Lodge St Ayles will continue to meet them with the same determination, fellowship and good humour that have characterised us for generations.

May we continue to grow in strength, friendship and purpose and may the future prove bright for our Lodge, Our Province and Scottish Freemasonry as a whole.

John B Ogilvie
Master, Lodge St Ayles No.95 SC