Master, Wardens, Visiting Masters, Ladies and Gentlemen

It is our pleasure to welcome to Trinity House our honoured guests for tonight's Annual Banquet.

First, we welcome our Master's Principal Guest and speaker **Sir Jan du Plessis.**

When you look at **Sir Jan's** career, "distinguished" almost feels like an understatement! He has chaired 5 FTSE companies across five completely different sectors - British American Tobacco, RHM (*Rank Hovis McDougall*), Rio Tinto, SABMiller and BT Group – encompassing food, mining, telecommunications, tobacco and beer – or put another way, everything you need for a reasonably successful life.

That is either remarkable versatility, or proof that Sir Jan simply cannot say no to a chairman's role!

Before that, he spent sixteen years as Chief Financial Officer of Richemont, the Swiss luxury goods group and, rather fittingly for this evening, was CFO of Rothmans International in the early 1990s — where he and our very own Master first worked together.

Sir Jan, you are very much among friends and former colleagues tonight.

Sir Jan has just retired after serving for four years as Chair of the Financial Reporting Council — the body that sets the UK's Corporate Governance and Stewardship Codes – and so he is probably still trying to work out what to do with his spare time!

For his services to telecommunications and business, he was knighted in 2022.

I should also warn you that Sir Jan remains an utterly unrepentant Springbok supporter. Given the Boks' persistent form, I imagine he'll find plenty of opportunities to remind us of that as the evening progresses!

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in giving a very warm welcome to Sir Jan du Plessis.

We also welcome **Colour Sergeant Wilson Ma**, formerly Company Quartermaster Sergeant of No. 15 (Loos) Company, London Guards, affiliated to our Company.

Wilson now oversees specialist training with the Fifth Fusiliers, having completed three operational tours in Iraq and Afghanistan as a mobilised reservist. In civilian life, he is a qualified Chartered Accountant.

Mr Philip Woodhouse, Chief Commoner of the City of London, one of the Square Mile's oldest and most distinguished civic appointments, sadly sent his apologies earlier today due to illness – we wish him well.

We welcome **Mr Henry Pollard**, Chief Commoner Locum Tenens (and former Chief Commoner) and now Deputy Chair of The Livery Committee, who is currently campaigning for election to the distinguished office of Non-Aldermanic Sheriff of the City of London in 2027 - here with his wife, **Michelle**.

And Deputy **Jaspreet Hodgson** of Vintry Ward, a distinguished professional in the wine trade and an active member of the City of London's livery community. She also serves as a Common Councillor in the City of London Corporation.

Philip, Henry and Jaspreet are all well rooted in serving the City.

From outside London come two visiting Companies' Masters who we are delighted to welcome.

From Sheffield, **Mr Ian Nicholls, Master of the Company of Cutlers in Hallamshire**, together with his Mistress, **Liz**, and their Learned Clerk, **Mr Martin van Kan**.

Ian has contributed hugely to the engineering sector in Sheffield and was installed as Master only two weeks ago. We wish Ian and his Mistress a happy and successful year.

And from Bristol, **Mr Jonathan Baker**, **Master of the Society of Merchant Venturers**, his Mistress, **Melinda**, and their Treasurer, **Mrs Caroline Duckworth.**

Jonathan is the fourth generation of his family in the Society, with his great-grandfather having been Master exactly 100 years ago!

From marine insurance to translation businesses to award-winning cider, Jonathan has never met an industry he didn't fancy having a go at. Incidentally, his award winning cider brand is called "UpToNoGood" — which perhaps tells us something about his entrepreneurial spirit!

And from the City Companies, we welcome:

Mr Duncan Lamb, **Deputy Master of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners**, together with his Clerk, **Mr Mike Jenkins***.*

Commodore Duncan spent 40 years successfully commanding Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships through the Falklands and the Northern Gulf — we may yet need him to come out of retirement! Rather fittingly for tonight's venue, he is also an Elder Brother of Trinity House.

And welcome also to **Mrs Elizabeth Walkinshaw**, **Master of the Honourable Company of Air Pilots**.

Elizabeth is only the second Lady Master of the Company and comes extremely well qualified, having flown helicopters for 40 years. She is also heavily involved with horse breeding and motor racing — so clearly a lady in the fast lane!

And **Mrs Jane Fishwick, Master of the Scientific Instrument Makers**, together with her Consort, **Brian***.*

Jane is the first Lady Master of the Scientific Instrument Makers and has had a fascinating career, from developing Cornetto ice cream in the laboratory to pioneering renal therapies, and in retirement to backpacking in some rather more exotic places. I note, too, that she is a keen golfer — so we hope to see her on that circuit with the Past Masters next year!

Finally, we are delighted to welcome another special guest this evening: **Mr Lukas Paravicini**, Chief Executive of Imperial Brands, who also happen to be based in Bristol … and his wife **Rosemarie***.* Imperial is one of our most valued Corporate Members, and Lukas is driving strong growth in its next-generation products.

It was also at Imperial that our very own Master spent the last decade of her long and somewhat distinguished career in tobacco!

Lukas, and indeed all our guests here tonight, you are most welcome.

May I now ask the **Liverymen and Freemen of our Company** to be upstanding for a toast, while our guests please remain seated.

"The toast is Our Guests."