

## WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO PAY ATTENTION TO OUR MEMBERSHIP ISSUES?

I fear that too many of us would answer that it is our Recorder who looks after our membership numbers, to know who has or hasn't paid their dues yet this year. But there is so much more than simply calling our fraters who may remain delinquent with their current year dues, let alone the dues notice they just received for 2019. I put it before you that membership is everyone's responsibility. It is up to each and every one of us to look out for the welfare of our fellow Sir Knights.

The message from Sir Knight Jeff Nelson, our Most Eminent Grand Master, is very clear: "Membership is the #1 highest priority for this 68<sup>th</sup> Triennium. It is also the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> highest priority." Soon MEGM Nelson will be issuing a General Order, directing every Grand Commandery to establish a Membership Committee, made up of qualified Sir Knights who have proven to be dedicated to the issue of our membership, who will be given certain goals as to our membership and held accountable to meet those goals. To this end, SK Nelson has laid upon his Grand Encampment Membership team the responsibility to develop a full blown program that will assist all others in achieving this all important goal of reversing the downward trend in our numbers that has plagued us for too many years now.

The Grand Encampment Membership Team is made up of SK Henry Adams of Florida, SK Carson Smith of Indiana and SK Bill Garrard of Arizona. They are working with SK Jeff Bolstad, REGCG to create a "tool box" of programs that can be utilized by all of the constituent membership teams. Think of this program in terms of 4 major categories:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Restoration and
- Masonic and Public Awareness

Recruitment should be fairly obvious to everyone.....bringing in new Knights. As you think more on it, you realize that this means working more closely with our Chapters and Council and especially our Blue Lodges. But it goes beyond that. Each and every one of us is first a Master Mason who belongs to at least one Blue Lodge. It is equally our responsibility to our home lodge to bring in new candidates, good men and true, to become Masons who may (should) eventually become York Rite Masons and Knight Templars.

Retention, as the word implies, is keeping those members we already have. First and foremost we should concentrate on all of those new Sir Knights to see that they become quickly involved in our Commanderies. This doesn't mean that we put them into an officer's seat right away, but that we "mentor" them at first by teaching them more about what it is to be a Knight Templar. Retention also means that we should always strive to conduct our stated meetings in a way that holds the interest of our fraters, leaving them wanting to keep coming back. We should always check on our fellow Sir Knights who may have missed several meetings in a row, and to invite them to come back soon.....we miss them. Such a call will also let you know if there is a deeper problem, such as their losing interest in being a Sir Knight or Masonry as a whole or if

there may be a family problem or sickness that might be holding them back. Perhaps there is a financial problem, job loss or something that you could help them with. Knowing what has caused their continued absence will go a long way in helping you formulate a plan to get them back. If our Sir Knight has indicated that he is “done with” the fraternity and intends to demit or allow himself to be suspended for NPD, we should always ask where we failed to meet his expectations and if there is anything that we can do to keep him. And in these cases, your final response should be that we wish he would reconsider and that we will make every effort to resolve whatever it is that caused him to lose interest. Let him know that we wish him the best and that we will stay in touch should he ever reconsider his decision.

**Over the past decade, the number of demits and suspensions has been the overriding cause of our losses in membership across the board in all jurisdictions.** This is the one area that we need to put forth our best efforts to resolve.

Restoration seems to be a case of “out of sight, out of mind” in that the number of restorations throughout the entire Grand Encampment over the past decade has been abysmally small, less than 3/10<sup>th</sup> of 1 percent. How can we totally ignore those of our members who we worked so diligently to recruit and allow them simply to fade away and never ask them to come back? And finally, Masonic and Public Awareness: Develop a “lodge ambassador” program whereby you have one of your Sir Knights who is active in his Blue Lodge, Scottish Rite or Shrine there to represent what is going on with your local Commandery. This ambassador should also urge the Worshipful Master of his lodge to allow him to put on brief educational presentations on what it is to be a Knight Templar. Put a team of honor guards together that might do flag presentations or welcoming lines/escorts at officer installations or other important events. It is always advisable to make a public appearance as Sir Knights dressed in our full Class A uniforms at parades and other public events to make the general public more aware of our existence. Every Sir Knight should have his “elevator speech” ready to answer anyone who asks what we are about. What is our “relevance” in today’s world.

Over the next several weeks and months look to the Membership portion of the Grand Encampment website for more information on our “tool box” of programs and “how to” articles on putting together a successful membership team in your Commandery. We wish everyone of you good luck with your efforts to increase and improve our membership in this fraternity we cherish so much.