



GRAND COMMANDERY KNIGHTS TEMPLARS DISTRICT OF DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA MARCH NEWS

SK Douglas N. Cohen, Grand Commander; SK Carter L. Diggs Jr. Editor

Sir Knights of the Grand Commandery of the District of Columbia, all

We are rapidly approaching the end of my tenure as your Grand Commander. it has been some ride - chaotic yet, like a roller-coaster, you have to hold on!

Almost 3 years ago, the Grand Commandery Officers met informally to discuss the current state and future of Templary in general and our Grand Commandery in the District of Columbia.

We were deep in the miasma of the Chinese Covid-19 virus pandemic panic and lockdown. ritual was severely degraded. attendance was down, retention was failing. new Sir Knights were sporadic, and we needed to decide how to address these issues or face the dissolution of a DC Grand Commandery.

As many of you well know, there is a requirement to maintain a minimum of three Commanderies in order to support a Grand Commandery. We had three regular Commanderies and a fourth that was to be a Commandery dedicated to providing a place for Sir Knights to meet during Masonic Week when that event was held in the District of Columbia. Over time, that Commandery, Robert V Hines Commandery #7 became unnecessary as Masonic Week activities were no longer held in the District but moved to Virginia. The Grand Commandery seized the basically unused charter and that left us with three viable and healthy Commanderies.

The Grand Commandery then set down a multi-year plan to rebuild DC Templar Masonry. We were to meet 1 or 2 times per year, or as necessary, to assess and "fine tune" the overall plan. In addition, each Grand Commander had their special "pet project". Mine was the full correct uniform. The Knight Templar uniform is nothing more than the standard US Navy CPO uniform, with Knight Templar buttons, patches, pins, and bars instead of US Military hardware. While it was possible to pay as much as \$500.00 (or more) to reputable vendors, I determined and suggested that one only had to go to a military surplus store, purchase new or even used uniforms for between \$75.00 - \$100.00. all that remained was to purchase the hardware, patches, and insignias. We even found the shoes for free and gave them out as was needed.

if you are in the progressive line, patches and insignia change and become obsolete. passing on that regalia further saves expense and waste. we implemented that practice, further saving unnecessary costs for New Sir Knights and displaying continuity. We are in the process of setting a Quartermaster to codify this practice. a little Velcro and/or a few magnets simplifies the process.

I have found that used swords - nice ones - were abundantly available online for next to nothing. I personally was able to purchase three "named" swords in excellent condition, for less than \$80.00, INCLUDING shipping. we even found used and new swords in bulk, for as little as \$25.00 each. the same was true of Chapeaux, though I chose to purchase mine new. in principle, one could purchase a full uniform, over a year (monthly purchases?) for less than \$250.00 - well within the capabilities of MOST Sir Knights in this jurisdiction.

Stealing from GySgt Tom "Gunny" Highway, "when you look like Sir Knights, pretty soon you will start to feel like Sir Knights. when you feel like Sir Knights, pretty soon you will start to act like Sir Knights. and when you act like Sir Knights, pretty soon you will be Sir Knights.

Eventually, when you feel and act like Sir Knights, you project an image that others around you will notice and ask you "how do i become one?" and THAT is the opening key - to BE one, ASK one. and their journey begins, and our ranks fill. but it takes time, persistence, and encouragement. I try to encourage mentoring. and you should help to guide them to our ranks. doesn't happen overnight and it does take persistence and time.

Commandery has only three obligatory attendances outside of the regularly stated Conclaves. Ascension Day, the Christmas Libation, and the Easter Sunrise Service. The dates are well known and set, so there is absolutely no reason (with very rare exceptions) not to fulfill these obligations. It is incumbent on you to fulfill these obligations. While we can still do better, we were pleased that we were able to fulfill these three obligations with a reasonable attendance including Grand Encampment Officers who we were pleased to share fellowship with, on these very special occasions. (we are delighted whenever Grand Encampment Officers join us, and it seems that many of them have a fondness for DC Commandery, and they are ALWAYS most welcome!.

One of our tenets is charity, with the Knights Templar Eye Foundation being our main focus. I am pleased to report that, once again, we are at 100% participation, with many working towards that 2nd level of donations. WELL, DONE! it is our goal to continue to help set an example for all Sir Knights by continued support for the foundation's work.

Another of our continuing efforts is the Holy Land Pilgrimage, where a few worthy sojourners are able to walk in the steps of the Redeemer. While we have not yet had any of our Sir Knights participate in the pilgrimage, it is a wonderful opportunity that we are working to encourage our Sir Knights to engage in and look for worthy clergy that we can sponsor.

Ritual is an important function, and I am pleased to report that we are regaining our proficiency at an accelerated rate, under the strict supervision of our Grand Instructor of the Work, Sir Knight Elijah Mills. We insisted on at least one full form opening in each of our Commanderies, including the recitation of duties. We practiced the reception of officers, including guests and dignitaries of other bodies. And, while we are making excellent progress in our proficiency, there is ALWAYS room for improvement. To that end, this year, I directed each Commandery to hold at least one School of Instruction session in addition to their regularly stated Conclaves, in which to work specifically on tactics and ritual. We were able to complete two of those sessions with solid attendance by our Sir Knights.

Also important is the Conferral of the Orders. We are a small district. As such, we have found that by combining the resources and manpower of our three Commanderies, we can put together some very good degree teams and casts to confer the Knight Templar Orders. We have also enjoyed fellowship with other Commanderies in our Multi-jurisdictional conferrals. These help to cement the bonds of our Knights from all jurisdictions.

An important aspect is attendance and participation. We have improved upon this enormously, and I am happy with the progress. however, I am hoping to see this improve even more under Grand Commander (elect) Annas Kamara. I hope that I have encouraged greater participation, and I KNOW that it will continue under my successor.

As Grand Commander, I was asked to attend and represent the Grand Commandery of the District of Columbia at the annual Maryland DeMolay event in Salisbury, Maryland, where the new slate of Senior Officers were installed. I was happy to attend and was well received, and I found them to be an excellent representation of our future Masons. This is yet another link in our chain of comradery. These young men are potential future Masons and Sir Knights, and they should be encouraged and supported.

Our Grand Commandery were asked by the Grand Master of Masons of the District of Columbia, Most Worshipful Brother Annas Kamara, to provide escort and various other duties in the march for the rededication of the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, in Virginia. A significant contingent of Sir Knights attended in full dress uniform, providing several support functions, including a public salute to the Grand Master. There were 13,000 people in attendance, and the 1 mile march had Masons from all over the US and a few countries, as well. It WAS mildly controlled chaos, and confusion was the word of the day. Nonetheless, we got the job done and survived the process. The event was filmed and televised live, giving excellent public exposure. Many asked me and others about Templary and how to become one. Mission accomplished.

As this is my final message as Grand Commander, I wish to acknowledge and thank EVERYONE who supported me and our programs, did the "work" and continue to do it, and hold to our precepts, especially with regard to DEITY and to each other.

However, while the list is long and Distinguished, there are two Sir Knights I wish to single out for my special thanks for their unrelenting help, guidance and friendship, with who I would never have made it through.

One is REPGC Robb Mitchell, KCT, my immediate predecessor. He and I have come up the ranks of most of the Masonic Organizations together, and his friendship and skills are rare enough anywhere.

The other is REPGC Jerry Peeters, KCT, who I doubt that NO ONE in ANY Masonic or York Rite body does not know him. He is the heart and soul of too many groups to list in one presentation. On top of that, as is Robb, he is a genuine friend and truly embodies the TRUE Christian spirit and ethics of Templar Masonry.

Both of these Sir Knights, in equal measure, guided, taught, and occasionally booted my posterior, but with patience, respect, and brotherly love, across the finish line. For all that and more, I thank them and am grateful to have Companions such as them. They ARE exemplars of Sir Knights and Brothers.

Thank you all for your trust in me, your continued support and all the work that so many of you did "behind the scenes" as well as in the light. NO organization can long survive without the support and work of its members (and to use the phrase) especially this of ours.

Douglas. N. Cohen Grand Commander,
Knights Templar of the District of Columbia, CY 2022
+++++ Fraternally, zealously and with all Knightly courtesy,
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