

GRAND ENCAMPMENT OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR

Jeffrey N. Nelson, *Most Eminent Grand Master*
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GENERAL ORDER NO. 14

REOPENING TEMPLARY 2021

November 1, 2020

To all Grand Commanderies and Subordinate Commanderies within the Jurisdiction of, and holding Allegiance to, the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar.

GREETINGS:

Your Grand Encampment Officers acted early and decisively to address the COVID 19 pandemic. However, with the passage of time, it is now evident that the pandemic is not subsiding. We have met regularly to reassess the situation and have made the decision to commence the process of reopening our Asylums utilizing virtual meeting technology, implementing phased opening criteria, and adhering to strict safety protocols. Sir Knights, as we begin the process of reopening our Asylums, we face many unique challenges. Most significant of these is the demographic make-up of our membership. "Vulnerable Individuals" is a key concept in the Federal Guidelines and the term is referenced many times when implementing the different phases of the recovery process. The criteria that are used when determining a Vulnerable Individual include:

1. Elderly individuals (age 65 and over); and
2. Individuals with serious, underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.

As you are doubtless aware, we have a very significant number of Sir Knights and our Ladies who fall into either or both categories. In the Grand Encampment, the average age of our members is 67.4 years. Many of our Sir Knights and Ladies are considered extremely vulnerable.

Each of our Sir Knights is asked to honestly assess his individual risk factors and make an informed decision about his participation in upcoming Commandery events. There are a number of options that will be implemented as we resume our activities, including social distancing, sanitizing, and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protocols. We will, at all times, comply with applicable recommendations and requirements from public health authorities. How and under what conditions your Sir Knights participate in our activities will be entirely up to each individual.

Under no circumstances should a Sir Knight feel pressured to participate in any Commandery activity at any level. On the contrary, he is urged to not participate in any activity which he feels may compromise his health OR that of a family member or anyone else with whom he may come into regular contact. If a Sir Knight does not feel comfortable attending a Commandery function, he is requested to stay home with our complete understanding.

We all look forward to getting back together and resuming the practice of Christian Knighthood. The reopening process will no doubt be fraught, and I fully expect that, due to changing conditions in your State or locality, it may be necessary to pause reopening or even to close down again. Thus, we have designed our reopening plans in such a way that, as long as you comply with Federal, State, Masonic, and local protocols, you will be able to proceed as prudence dictates. Honestly assess your risks and vulnerabilities and then make your own determination as to how your Commanderies participate in each phase of the reopening process. A return to "normalcy" may take us into the next Triennium; we will not rush this process, as health and safety must always be paramount in our decisions.

The attached *Reopening Templary 2021 Safety Protocols, Virtual Meeting Guidelines, and Phased-Opening Criteria* are incorporated into, and form an integral part of, this General Order as if fully set forth herein.

This supersedes General Order No. 12 of the fourth day of May, last, in its entirety. The preceding sentence notwithstanding, I authorize the Grand Commander or his designee to convene the Stated and any Special Conclave of his Grand Commandery by means of teleconference or webcast, provided that the necessary facilities are widely available to the members of the Grand Commandery and the Stated or Special Conclave be conducted in full compliance with the requirements of Sections 37 through 39 of the Grand Encampment Constitution. If the Conclave is convened in person, facilities shall be available to accommodate remote attendance by teleconference or webcast.

In addition, I do hereby waive the requirement of Section 65 (a) of the Constitution, and authorize the Commander of a Constituent Commandery within each Grand Commandery to convene a Stated or Special Conclave by means of teleconference or webcast, provided that the necessary facilities are widely available to the members of the Constituent Commandery and the Stated or Special Conclave be conducted in full compliance with the requirements of Sections 65 and 66 of the Grand Encampment Constitution. Commanders of Subordinate Commanderies enjoy the same discretion.

No ritual shall be performed and no Orders be conferred during any such telephonic or webcast Conclave.

This General Order shall be read at the first Conclave of each Constituent or Subordinate Commandery following its receipt.

Given under my hand and seal of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America at Bismarck, North Dakota, this first day of November 2020, A.O. 902.



Courteously,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeffrey N. Nelson".

Grand Master

Attest:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Laura E. Jackson".

Grand Recorder