



Grand Encampment of Knights Templar Reopening 2021 Safety Protocols

Over the past several months, our federal, state, and local leaders have worked diligently to develop the safest methods for preventing the public spread of Covid 19. The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar will begin cautiously reopening, but it will be the responsibility of the Grand and Subordinate Commanderies to make sure that they are accomplished according to local guidelines. Each jurisdiction will have to follow its state and local health guidelines as well as any requirement from its Grand Lodge in reference to numbers allowed in public or in Masonic buildings. It will be a requirement prior to returning to in-person meetings that ALL Grand Commanders and Subordinate Commanders understand that they will be held responsible by the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar for ensuring that their Constituent and/or Subordinate Commandery is following ALL federal, state, and local health laws, policies, and guidelines at ALL times. Each Department Commander will be working with the Grand Commanders and Subordinate Commanders to see if any assistance or guidance is needed.

Most states and countries have a “Health Advisory System” in place and a Grand or Subordinate Commandery may want to introduce its own set of guidelines, taking into account various local guidelines. Here are just two of the many sites from which States can gather information:

<https://covidtracking.com/>

<https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/us-map>

We ask that guidelines (other than those here outlined) be sent to the Department Commander who will send them on for approval by the Most Eminent Grand Master. The following information is from the CDC:

How to Protect Yourself & Others

Older adults and persons who have certain underlying conditions like heart or lung disease or diabetes are at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19 illness.

Know how it spreads

- There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).
- **The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus.**
- The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.
 - Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
 - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
 - These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
 - Some recent studies have suggested that COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

Everyone Should:

Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- It's especially important to wash:
 - Before eating or preparing food;
 - Before touching your face;
 - After using the restroom;
 - After leaving a public place;
 - After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing;
 - After handling your mask;
 - After changing a diaper;
 - After caring for someone who is sick; and
 - After touching animals or pets.
- If soap and water are not readily available, **use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.

Avoid close contact

- **Inside your home:** Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - If possible, maintain 6 feet between the person who is sick and other household members.
- **Outside your home:** Put 6 feet of distance between yourself and people who don't live in your household.
 - Remember that some people without symptoms may be able to spread virus.
 - Stay at least 6 feet (about 2 arms' length) from other people.
 - Keeping distance from others is especially important for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick.

Cover your mouth and nose with a mask when around others

- You could spread COVID-19 to others even if you do not feel sick.
- The mask is meant to protect other people in case you are infected.
- Everyone should wear a mask in public settings and when around people who don't live in your household, especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
 - Masks should not be placed on young children under age 2 or on anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, incapacitated, or is otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.
- Do NOT use a mask meant for a healthcare worker. Currently, surgical masks and N95 respirators are critical supplies that should be reserved for healthcare workers and other first responders.
- Continue to keep about 6 feet between yourself and others. The mask is not a substitute for social distancing.

Cover coughs and sneezes

- **Always cover your mouth and nose** with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or use the inside of your elbow and do not spit.
- **Throw used tissues** in the trash.
- Immediately **wash your hands** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, clean your hands with a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

Clean and disinfect

- **Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- **If surfaces are dirty, clean them.** Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- **Then, use a household disinfectant.** Most common EPA registered household disinfectants will work.

Monitor Your Health Daily

- **Be alert for symptoms.** Watch for fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other symptoms of **COVID-19**.
 - Especially important if you are running essential errands, going into the office or workplace, and in settings where it may be difficult to keep a physical distance of 6 feet.
- **Take your temperature** if symptoms develop.
 - Don't take your temperature within 30 minutes of exercising or after taking medications that could lower your temperature, like acetaminophen.
- Follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop.

Protect Your Health This Flu Season

It's likely that flu viruses and the virus that causes COVID-19 will **both** spread this fall and winter. Healthcare systems could be overwhelmed treating both patients with flu and patients with COVID-19. This means getting a flu vaccine during 2020-2021 is more important than ever. While getting a flu vaccine will not protect against COVID-19 there are many important benefits, such as:

1. Flu vaccines have been shown to reduce the risk of flu illness, hospitalization, and death.
2. Getting a flu vaccine can also save healthcare resources for the care of patients with COVID-19.



Grand Encampment of Knights Templar Reopening Templary 2021 Virtual Meeting Criteria

It is important that we keep in mind that while these are Virtual Conclaves, they are still official meetings of our Commanderies. These are not informal social gatherings; we should still strive to maintain the protocol and decorum that is expected at a Commandery conclave. We should remember that we are members of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America, and we owe it to our members to provide a quality experience that respects them and the COURTEOUS, Chivalrous Order we represent.

Here, then, are the required practices:

1. Although we are doing no ritual, the Commander should declare the Conclave open, after a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance;
2. All participants should mute themselves during the Lord's Prayer; only the Prelate is unmuted. (All recite the Prayer.) Sound quality becomes very garbled and distorted when many are unmuted, making it difficult to recite the prayer in unison;
3. The United States flag, or a representation of it, should be displayed for the Pledge of Allegiance. All participants except the Commander are muted during the Pledge, although all recite it;
4. All participants except the speaker should be muted, unless called upon to speak. If you wish to speak, use the accepted method of being recognized, such as "raising hand" on Zoom;.
5. Behave as if you are in a guarded asylum; family members should not participate in the call;
6. Presiding officer should sit up and not slouch in a chair – respect the Sir Knights who took time to attend YOUR meeting;
7. Discretely sipping nonalcoholic beverages is permitted during the calls. No alcoholic beverages;
8. By the same token, we do not want to see you eating your dinner on Zoom. Please eat your meal before or after the meeting;
9. We are not wearing uniforms, but officers should dress appropriately – no T-shirts. Wear a button down shirt or polo shirt. This is for virtual or hybrid meetings only. If this is a Grand Conclave, uniforms should be worn as determined by the Grand Commandery; and
10. Follow the agenda to respect everybody's time.



Grand Encampment of Knights Templar Reopening Templary 2021 Phased Opening Criteria

Common Guidelines for ALL Phases:

ALL Federal, State and Local restrictions to be observed.

- Avoid socializing in large groups
- Maximize Social Distancing and Personal Protective Equipment in public
- Minimize Travel
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place

Phase Zero (Current State):

Federal Recommendations (state and local restrictions may be different)

- Avoid socializing in groups of more than 10 people
- Maximize Social Distancing and Personal Protective Equipment in public
- Minimize Travel
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place

Applications to a Grand or Subordinate Commandery:

1. Stated or Special Conclaves: (To include elections and installations)

- Limited to virtual conclaves and conference calls only. Virtual conclaves by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc). Video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined in General Order No. 12 as to what is allowed.
- In-person conclaves at any location are PROHIBITED.

2. Battalion, District, Division, etc. meetings for regional or state wide activities:

- Limited to virtual meetings and conference calls only. Virtual meetings by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc). Video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined in General Order No. 12 as to what is allowed.
- In-person meetings at any location are PROHIBITED.

Drill Team organizational or instructional meetings:

- Limited to virtual meetings and conference calls only. Virtual meetings by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc).
- In-person drill team meetings at any location are PROHIBITED.
- Drill team practice: Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing while drilling, drill practices are PROHIBITED.

Other Division, Regional or State-Wide activities:

Grand Commandery Conclaves, Reconsecrations, York Rite Festivals, Receptions, Parades, In-person Commandery Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, Christmas Observances, social events and any similar activities are PROHIBITED.

3. Travel:

All travel for Commandery purposes is PROHIBITED.

4. Ritual work:

Any type of ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates is PROHIBITED.

Phase One:

Federal Recommendations (state restrictions may be different).

- Avoid socializing in groups of more than 50 people.
- Maximize Social Distancing and Personal Protective Equipment in public.
- Minimize Travel.
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place.

Applications to a Grand or Subordinate Commandery:

1. Stated or Special Conclaves:

- See Common Guidelines
- In-person conclaves (stated or special) may resume, provided they are conducted utilizing strict, social-distancing and Personal Protective-Equipment (PPE hereafter) protocols. (*i.e.* six-feet physical separation, face coverings worn by every Sir Knight in the room and hand sanitizer or washing of hands with soap and water utilized by every Sir Knight in the room.
- Virtual conclaves by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc). Video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined in General Order No. 12 as to what is allowed.
- Hybrid conclaves will also be permitted. The video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined in General Order No. 12 as to what is allowed. A Hybrid conclave is one where some Sir Knights are in the tiled asylum, and others are joining virtually. All virtual conclave policies will apply. The Grand Commander will determine whether to allow the Hybrid conclave to be opened by declaration, or according to the Short Form Opening found on pages 98-99 of the Ritual.

If a Commandery chooses to resume in-person conclaves, the following additional protocols must also be observed:

- No meals or snacks may be served before or after the conclave;
- Ladies may not attend for any type of formal or informal socialization;
- Only Sir Knights are permitted to be in attendance during any in-person conclave; and
- All Sir Knights, with the exception of any who may be needed to assist with “set up” for the stated conclave (this should require minimal set-up) should arrive no earlier than ten (10) minutes prior to the meeting start time and depart no later than ten (10) minutes after the conclusion of the meeting. This is intended to limit unnecessary congestion in common areas.

2. Statewide activities:

Many of the states divide themselves into sections for administrative purposes (Battalions, Districts, Divisions, etc.). For those who do, the following provisions apply:

Battalion, District, Division, etc. meetings:

- See Common Guidelines; and
- The applications of the “stated or special conclaves” will be observed.

Drill Team organizational or instructional meetings:

- See Common Guidelines;
- In-person drill team meetings at any location are PERMITTED; and
- Virtual meetings by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc).

Drill team practice:

Due to the close, physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing while drilling, drill practices are PROHIBITED.

Grand Commandery Conclaves, Reconsecrations, Receptions, Parades, Commandery in-person Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, Cornerstone Ceremonies, Christmas Observances, social events, and any similar activities are PERMITTED, observing the Common Guidelines.

3. Travel:

All travel for Commandery purposes is LIMITED. The Grand Commander will determine.

4. Ritual work:

Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing, ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates is PROHIBITED in Phase One, *with the exception of the temporary*, short form of the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross and short form of the Order of Malta. (ask your Grand Recorder for the Temporary Script). *NOTE: We are fully aware that the candidate does not receive the full initiatory experience by use of this temporary, revised ritual, but it does give the commanderies an opportunity to impart the essential lessons these two Orders convey. Thus, we strongly urge the commanderies to make arrangements with the candidates to return and experience the full form Orders when they become available.*

Phase Two:

Federal Recommendations (state restrictions may be different)

- No restrictions on number of people, as long as Federal, State and Local restrictions are satisfied.
- Large venues can operate under limited, physical-distancing protocols.
- No Travel restrictions
- Vulnerable persons may resume social interactions, but should observe precautionary measures

Applications to a Grand or Subordinate Commandery:

1. Stated or Special Conclaves:

All in-person conclaves (stated or special) may resume;

Social distancing and PPE are not required but are recommended, especially for those individuals who consider themselves to be “vulnerable”;

Meals or snacks may be served either before or after conclaves;

Ladies programs are permitted and encouraged to resume. Any lady who considers herself to be “vulnerable” should observe social-distancing and PPE protocols; and

No restrictions on arrival or departure times.

2. Statewide activities:

Battalion, District, Division, etc. meetings may resume, including meals and ladies programs; and Any Sir Knight or lady who considers himself or herself to be “vulnerable” should continue to follow social-distancing and PPE protocols.

Drill Team meetings and practices:

All drill team meetings and practices may resume. Any Sir Knight who considers himself to be “vulnerable” should continue to employ PPE protocols.

3. Travel:

All travel for Commandery purposes may resume with no restrictions.

4. Ritual work:

Ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery Orders on candidates may resume. Some modifications to procedures will doubtless have to be observed. Further recommendations will be forthcoming. Any Sir Knight who considers himself to be “vulnerable” should continue to observe PPE protocols.

Note: We would like to thank the Grand Commandery of Ohio and Texas for use of some of the verbiage in this correspondence