



# The Grand Commandery

Knights Templar of Virginia

**PETER REGINALD SPRING**

*Knight Commander of the Temple*

100 Warehouse Course, Yorktown, VA 23692-2221

Phone: 757-274-7423 Email: prspring@me.com



Major G. Stephenson, Eminent Grand Recorder  
3701 Point Elizabeth Drive, Chesapeake, Virginia 23321-5754  
Phone: 757-515-6184; Email: major212@verizon.net

## GENERAL ORDER No. 2

May 11, 2021

WHEREAS, The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar U. S. A. General Order No. 14 dated November 1, 2020 authorizes a Grand Commander, according to the pandemic conditions that exist within the boundaries of his Grand Commandery, to determine which Phase his Grand Commandery may operate; and

WHEREAS, he, the Grand Commander, being confident that all the restrictions and safety protocols decreed by all Civil and Masonic authorities will be strictly followed; and

WHEREAS, the Governor of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Most Worshipful Grand Master of Masons in Virginia have authorized indoor gatherings of up to but no more than fifty persons effective April 1, 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Peter R. Spring, Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia, do hereby order effective May 11, 2021 that the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia and all Constituent Commanderies beholding to the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia are to operate under Phase One as stated in the Grand Encampment General Order No. 14 in its entirety with all the attachments that are incorporated into, and form an integral part of that General Order, and are attached to this General Order No. 2.

Courteously,

Peter R. Spring, KCT  
Grand Commander

*Major G. Stephenson III*

Attest: Major G. Stephenson, III  
Grand Recorder



## **GRAND ENCAMPMENT OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR**

Jeffrey N. Nelson, *Most Eminent Grand Master*  
3112 Tyler Parkway  
Bismarck, North Dakota 58503

Lawrence Eugene Tucker, *Right Eminent Grand Recorder*  
5909 West Loop South, Suite 495  
Bellaire, Texas 77401

### **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 black ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey N. Nelson".

Grand Master

Attest:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura E. Jackson".

Grand Recorder



## 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**