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2020-2021 TEXAS SUPPLEMENT

Greetings, Sir Knights! Here we are, another month into COVID-19 restrictions, and it seems that everyone is scrambling and standing still at the same time. As the Grand Encampment KT of USA Grand Master's General Order #12 is still in effect, no in-person meetings are authorized, which while necessary to protect the health and safety of our members, unfortunately throws a wrench into the gears of our standard operating procedures. While this does put a damper on what we can accomplish in our schools of instruction and annual visitations, there is still a lot we can do using modern technology. Following the example set by Grand Encampment, virtual district conclaves will be held in Texas this year in place of in-person conclaves and schools.

Your District's Grand Commandery officers have been provided with the means of holding online conclaves, much like our recent "Virtual Grand Conclave" in June. Per Article 113 of Grand Commandery law, it is the duty of all commandery officers to attend their district school of instruction, although all SKs are highly encouraged to attend. For this year's virtual schools of instruction, attendance can be accomplished using any computer, smart phone or iPad that has internet access.

At the time of this writing, it is still unknown as to whether in-person meetings will be authorized by inspection season, and if they are, what restrictions will be imposed. I believe it is safe to assume that regardless of whether we can meet in-person or not, that health and safety guidelines will likely prevent us from holding our Annual Visitations and Inspections in the usual format. If this turns out to be the case, the format will be modified as appropriate, but at the very least, Commanders and Records are still expected to maintain their books and paperwork as up to date and in order, and to transmit the appropriate forms to the Grand Commandery in a timely manner.

The Grand Encampment KT of USA has officially cancelled all in-person department conferences for this year, in favor of online virtual conferences. Our South-Central Department Conference will be held on Saturday, September 19th, 2020. Connection details will be provided on the Grand Encampment Website when they become available. I am looking forward to seeing everyone attend.

Sir Knights, this year I would like everyone to think back and reflect on why you became a freemason, and subsequently a Knight Templar. Was it a family tradition? A result of curiosity and research? Looking for the lost treasure? Whatever the reason, if you are still here, our fraternity has obviously made a lasting impression on you, which is enough to keep you coming back. I, myself, was looking to fill a hole in my soul left behind after separation from the military.

For many veterans, military service was our first real interaction with any kind of fraternal environment, and when it was gone, it just seemed like something necessary for my personal fulfillment was no longer there. The hard work, camaraderie and life-long relationships all became a part of who I was, but perhaps the most important thing I got out of it was the fulfillment of an innate need to serve my country, my fellow man, and God. I truly believe that, for me, a life of service is what fills that hole in my soul.

I lived with that hole for several years until I came to freemasonry, or rather freemasonry came to me. Our fraternity provided me with all I required to continue to develop those important tenets I learned earlier in life, and to really put them to use in the service of God and my fellow man. As a bonus, I no longer have mere friends, I now have brothers, companions and fellow sir knights, who mentor me and keep me on the right track.

There are many outlets our fraternity provides to us in order to fulfill our need to serve. The current circumstances of the world today throw hurdle after hurdle in the path of progress, but we persevere, and clear them as they come. As the new Templar year began to dawn, I had great plans for us to get out into the world and show them who we are and what we do in the service of God and Man. We were to present ourselves at churches, patriotic and veterans services, and inundate our lodges and appendant bodies with our presence to show them our support and offer them our services.

Although the changes the world has undergone this year have put a high hurdle in our path, for now, we can still serve, albeit not necessarily in the manner we are used to. We will do what we must to clear, go around, or go through this great obstacle, but together, we will put it behind us and continue our forward progress. We must use the tools we have at hand to continue our mission, whether it be virtual meetings, teleconferences, or social distancing that gets us there. We are a team – we are a family, and with God's help and through the guidance of our leaders, we will keep those souls filled to the brim through service!

In His Service,

Gary H. Freedman, Grand Commander 2020-2021