



Greetings Sir Knights,

I trust this finds you and your loved ones safe and sound! To say that we are living in unprecedented times is an understatement. Not only has this COVID-19 pandemic led to a sad loss of life and the destruction of economies, it has also resulted in a huge change in the way we live our daily lives, especially our Masonic activities.

Regretfully, and for the first time in our history, the Annual Conclave of the Grand Commandery held on Saturday 1 August 2020 had to be conducted via video conference to ensure the safety of our attendees.

As many States begin to win their battle against the COVID-19 virus and start lifting lockdown measures, we can see hope for return to some form of normal routine. However, the threat of the virus is still with us and the health professionals and governments of our various counties and municipalities have not given the all clear to return to the way of life we enjoyed at the beginning of 2020.

While I appreciate and respect the policies of our Grand Master of Masons in Illinois and other Masonic Orders who have authorized limited gatherings with protective measures, our Conclaves must not occur in-person until authorized by Grand Master Nelson. The Eminent Commander of each Commandery should have a copy of our Grand Master's General Order #12 and ensure full compliance. Also, monitor the Grand Encampment website for publication of General Order #13 in the near future.

In last month's article about "me" I rambled through my early childhood dreams of Knights Templar and my goal of becoming one! This month I want to talk about "you" and how you can help me create a 5-Year Plan for our Grand Commandery! Specifically, what do you like about your local Commandery and how can we improve the experience for new members, so they keep coming back.

SURVEY:

I hope you will respond to my survey questions below. You may email your responses to me at: austonsmith@mchsi.com. If you do not use computers or email, please just hand-write your answers and mail them to me at 5205 Live Oak Dr., Smithton, IL 62285. The answers you provide will allow me to develop programs that meet your desires and hopefully spark renewed interest in Templary.

1. What was the initial reason you wanted to become a Knight Templar; for example, history, uniform, desire to be helpful in your local community, family tradition, or other reasons?
2. Did you find members in your local Commandery to be friendly, helpful, and actively meeting and conducting activities that met your requirements of a group to which you wanted to belong?
3. Did you have a mentor who was helpful in your understanding of Templary?
4. If you are still actively participating in your Commandery but "the fire is gone," what would be the first thing you would change to bring back the enjoyment?
5. If you are no longer actively participating in your Commandery (still a member but don't attend meetings), did someone at the Commandery ever contact you to ask if all was okay and why you missed the last meeting?
6. Is your Commandery actively involved in local community affairs, fulfilling our mission of "feed the hungry, clothe the naked, bind up the wounds of the afflicted" or marching in local parades, etc.?
7. Does your Commandery have a 5-year Plan (or any plan)? Planning is key to survival!
8. Do you participate in your local Chapter of Royal Arch Masons? Remember, our members come from the R.A.M and if they are not successful, we will not be successful.
9. Do you or anyone in your Commandery talk about York Rite in your local Blue Lodges, specifically the Knights Templar?

With your assistance we can make your local Knights Templar Commandery a place where all can enjoy fraternal Brotherhood, where we can work to make our local communities better places to live and we can bring other worthy Masons into our fold!

Auston Eugene Smith
Grand Commander