

OHIO SUPPLEMENT



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Right Eminent Grand Commander
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Our lives continue to be impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our hope for some normalcy in December by resuming in-person meetings was thwarted by the incredible rise in virus cases, hospitalizations and deaths as we entered the holiday season. We can hope that by the time of this publication that our frontline healthcare workers and the most vulnerable members of our population have received the first doses of vaccines against the virus.

Many Commanderies planned to conduct Christmas Observances in their Asylums and celebrate service awards for their members. These observances would have meant even more this time of year considering we have missed visiting together since springtime.

Now as we move into the new year we look forward, conditions permitting, to holding stated Conclaves and preparing for the start of our annual inspection season.

Our Commandery inspections are going to be different in 2021. We are accustomed to gathering together as Sir Knights and Ladies, socializing before and after the Commandery confers one of our beautiful Orders, sharing the bounty of the table at our traditional banquet, and just generally enjoying each other's company. Our Phase One reopening was delayed beyond the anticipated December start.

Revised inspection guidelines have been issued conditions permitting reopening. However, additional changes are being considered including limiting attendance. At a minimum, all Commanderies must undergo an administrative review of their records, which will take place at an appropriate time. The safety of all Sir Knights and their families is priority one. General Order No. 15 declares that Ohio Commanderies will remain in Phase Zero (virtual conclaves only) until further notice. Continue to monitor ohioknightstemplar.com for updates.

During most inspection seasons, our only concern for postponing or canceling an inspection is a major snow or ice event. Now we not only need to pay attention to the weather map, but each week we must also look at the Risk Level Guidelines map released by the Ohio Department of Health. Each Thursday, the colors on the "COVID-19 Map" are updated for each county to show the level of virus exposure and spread. Even when in-person conclaves resume, decisions regarding those meetings may be made on a county-by-county basis depending on the risk levels and state and local governing authority.

Remember these important safety protocols should meetings resume: All Sir Knights attending Conclaves in person MUST wear a face covering inside the building where the Conclave is held unless he has a medical condition that prevents him from wearing one.

All Sir Knights attending Conclaves in person MUST observe the six-foot social distancing protocol at all times and SHOULD wash his hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after entering the building and before leaving, or use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content.

No Sir Knight who has any common symptoms of contagious illness, especially a fever, should attend a meeting in person. STAY HOME! Furthermore, any Sir Knight who feels unsafe attending a meeting in person should stay home. You have our blessing. No meeting is worth getting sick or making someone else sick. Let us all do our part to contain the spread!

Even in Phase One, a Commandery can exercise the option of a virtual or a "hybrid" meeting if your Asylum has wi-fi or teleconference capability. These meetings are great for Sir Knights who opt to shelter in place or who live away from the area. Only ritual work is prohibited from being broadcast during a hybrid meeting.

Our Grand Commandery website, ohioknightstemplar.com, will be updated with any changes to the inspection schedule and other news, or check your Division's Facebook page.

Courteously and fraternally,

R. Thomas Starr

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