

GRAND COMMANDERY KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF TENNESSEE



Tennessee Knight Templar News

SIR KNIGHT JOHN W. SIMMONS II, RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER

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Edited by: Jesse J. Harper, KYCH



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Pictured Above:

This photo was taken by one of our Sir Knights before the start of the 2023 Grand Conclave of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Tennessee.

We appreciate all photos and article submissions. If you are interested in submitting something then send it to: TNKTNewsEditor@gmail.com

Help Wanted!

We are looking for some technically astute Sir Knight to assume responsibility for sending this newsletter out each month and maintaining the e-mail list for the *Tennessee Knight Templar News*. This will allow our Grand Generalissimo to devote more time to other Templar projects.

Potential volunteers should contact John L. Palmer at: john.pgm97@gmail.com



JOHN WISEMAN SIMMONS II
RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER
GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF TENNESSEE



General Order No. 1

March 27, 2024

Memphis, Tennessee

To the Officers and Knights of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Tennessee, and to the Officers and Knights of the Constituent Commanderies thereof, wheresoever dispersed:

Sir Knights,

I am greatly humbled and honored by the confidence you have placed in me by electing me as your Grand Commander for the year 2024-2025. This is a great responsibility, and I shall do my best to serve you well. We have an excellent Grand Officer corps, and I am sure they will uphold the ideals of Templary and make you proud. If there is anything the Grand Officers and I can do to assist you, please let us know.

My themes for this year are “Let your light shine so as to bring glory to God” and “Chivalry is a lifestyle of active service.” Each of us is a Knight, and that involves living a Christian chivalric lifestyle. Templary gives us ways to show our faith by our works. When the world sees our good works, it will be a witness that brings glory to God.

Membership, of course, continues to be an important issue. Each Commandery should have a membership committee. The Grand Commandery Membership Committee, headed by Sir Knight Matt Liotta, is doing a fantastic job of providing materials to help the local Commanderies with recruitment and engagement.

We shall continue the Templar Revitalization Effort. Part of this is our new Battalion structure, ably administered by VESK John Palmer. Each battalion has a battalion commander, instructor, and team lead. Their job is to assist the Commanderies in their area with ritual and other instruction. Please call on them and make use of their expertise.

We encourage all Commanderies to move toward conferring the orders locally. The ritual is our opportunity to impress the candidate and make him want to come back. Ritual excellence involves both precision and a bearing that shows the candidate that what we are doing is important to us and to him.

Stated meetings can be varied to keep them interesting. We are only required to have four business meetings a year. You can have Knight School or a family fellowship night as your stated meeting.

Let us continue to support our youth organizations, DeMolay and Rainbow, and our ladies in the Social Order of the Beauceant. Let us participate in public religious, civic, and patriotic events as appropriate. This is a great way to make a positive image of Templary in our communities.

Continue to support our charities, the Knights Templar Eye Foundation and Holy Land Pilgrimage, individually and by Commandery fundraisers. Seek a minister to go to the Holy Land. If you can sponsor a minister, that would be even better.

Please feel free to contact our chairmen, ESK Tim Sutton (KTEF) and ESK Bobby Blankenship (HLP), or any of the Grand Dais Officers with questions.

Sir Knights, again I thank you for the privilege of serving as your Grand Commander and look forward to meeting and serving you this year.

Courteously,

John Wiseman Simmons II
RE Grand Commander

215 GARLAND STREET, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38104-7133

DRJWSIMMONS@YAHOO.COM



JOHN WISEMAN SIMMONS II
RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER
GRAND COMMANDERY OF KNIGHTS TEMPLAR OF TENNESSEE



General Order No. 2

March 27, 2024

Memphis, Tennessee

To the Officers and Knights of the Grand Commandery, Knights Templar of Tennessee, and to the Officers and Knights of the Constituent Commanderies thereof, wheresoever dispersed:

Sir Knights,

“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:16-22, ESV)

This year, we hold our Grand Conclave during Holy Week. We remember the crucifixion of Jesus, which paid the price for our sins, so that we can be set free. We prepare for Easter, the celebration of the greatest event in the history of the world: the resurrection of our Lord and Savior. As J. R. R. Tolkien said, it is the event that turns the world upside down for the good. It is the foundation of our faith, the basis of our hope. As the Apostle Paul points out, for those who are in Christ, it is the guarantee of our resurrection. Death is not the end. We shall rise with him and live with him forever!

I call on each Sir Knight to rejoice in this marvelous truth. I ask each Commandery to gather to celebrate the resurrection. You could attend church as a group. You could hold a special service at the asylum, perhaps inviting a minister to speak who has been on the Holy Land Pilgrimage.

Christ is risen! Indeed, he is risen! This changes everything. Go, and live in the power of his resurrection!

Courteously,

John Wiseman Simmons II

RE Grand Commander

215 GARLAND STREET, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38104-7133

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John Wiseman Simmons II

John Wiseman Simmons II was born on September 16, 1952, in Birmingham, Alabama. He is the son of the late Johnnie Wiseman Simmons and Zelpha Parsons Simmons. He attended school in the Jefferson County public school system and graduated from Hueytown High School. He attended Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama, and graduated with a degree in mathematics. He attended graduate school at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana, where he received masters and doctoral degrees in mathematics and computer science.

Brother Simmons taught mathematics at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana, and mathematics and computer science at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He also taught computer science at the University of Memphis, while working as a software developer for FedEx, from which he retired in 2015. He then taught computer science for one year at Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee. He also was music director for thirteen years at McLean Baptist Church in Memphis.

He is married to Linda Marie Simmons. They are members of Ellendale Baptist Church in Bartlett, Tennessee. He teaches Sunday School there occasionally as needed.

Brother Simmons was raised a Master Mason on January 2, 1975, in Hueytown Lodge 843 in Hueytown, Alabama. He is now a member of Oakville Lodge 599 in Memphis, where he served as Worshipful Master in 2000 and 2016. He served the Grand Lodge of Tennessee as Right Worshipful Grand Chaplain in 2021.

Companion Simmons was exalted a Royal Arch Mason in Bloomington Chapter 127, Bloomington, Indiana, on March 22, 1975, and served as Excellent High Priest in 1990. He is currently a member of Park Avenue Chapter 204 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he served as Excellent High Priest in 2019. He served the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of Tennessee as Right Excellent Grand Chaplain in 2016. He received the Grand Chapter Distinguished Service Medal in 2020.

Companion Simmons was greeted a Select Master in Bloomington Council 87, Bloomington, Indiana, on March 22, 1975, and served as Illustrious Master in 1992. He is currently a member of Park Avenue Chapter 108 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he served as Illustrious Master in 2020. He received the Ish Sodi award in 2018.

Sir Knight Simmons was knighted in Bloomington Commandery 63, Bloomington, Indiana, on November 15, 1975, and served as Eminent Commander in 1992. He is currently a member of Park Avenue Commandery 31 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he served as Eminent Commander in 2018.

Sir Knight Simmons was elected Eminent Grand Captain General of the Grand Commandery of Tennessee on March 23, 2021, and has advanced each year, being elected Right Eminent Grand Commander on March 26, 2024.

Brother Simmons received the Scottish Rite degrees in Birmingham Consistory on May 12, 1976, and transferred to Memphis Consistory in 1994. He received the Knight Commander of the Court of Honor in Memphis on October 18, 2003. He was coroneted a 33rd Degree Inspector General Honorary in Nashville on December 10, 2011.

Brother Simmons joined Hueytown Chapter 353, Order of the Eastern Star, in 1975. He is a member of Heritage Chapter 62, OES, in Memphis.

Brother Simmons is a member of several appendant bodies:

St. Stephen's Conclave, Red Cross of Constantine, Tennessee College, Societas Rosicruciana in Civitatibus Foederatis, West Tennessee York Rite College 141, Emerald Isle Council 346, Allied Masonic Degrees, Tralee Council 41, Knight Masons, Rosslyn Chapel, Commemorative Order of St. Thomas of Acon, Filius Dei Tabernacle, Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests, Andrew Jackson Chapter, Order of DeMolay, Order of High Priesthood, Order of the Silver Trowel, Knight Crusaders of the Cross, Tennessee Priory 15, Knights of the York Cross of Honor, Indiana Past Commanders Association, Sovereign Order of Knights Preceptor, West Tennessee Forest 213, Tall Cedars of Lebanon, Masonic Order of the Four Black Llamas, Yellow Dogs.





2024 Grand Commandery Officers



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From the Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander John L. Palmer, GCT

Christian Chivalric Values Part 7

Last year, we began a series of articles on the "**Christian Chivalric Values**" as set forth by Sir Knight Richard Van Dorn, the first of which is, "*A firm belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.*" The seventh and last value is "*The imperative to fight the good fight, no matter how small or how large the battlefield.*"

Sometimes as modern, Masonic Knights Templar, we may be tempted to believe that there are no real battles left for us to fight. After all, are not our religious rights and our right to free speech protected under the *Constitution of the United States of America*? The reality is that this world, and even our own country, is filled with evil. That seems a harsh thing to say in these modern times, but we are continually reminded in the degrees of the Lodge as well as in the Orders of the Commandery that Truth is a Divine attribute and the foundation of every virtue, and that Truth is great and that it will prevail. Some in our time are offended even to hear the opinion that evil exists in our world while others believe that there is nothing that we can do to effectively combat it.

I am reminded of a statement adapted from the writings of H. L. Haywood in *Symbolical Masonry* and used by Shawn Eyer in "The Virtue of Temperance."

"The Chivalric Lifestyle is more than a passive *not-doing* of evil; it is the courageous *doing* of something right. The man of conventional morality is content not to steal, drink to excess, gamble, swear, etc., but often, it does not enter his head that there is an active, aggressive work to be done in cleaning up the world. Conventional morality is neuter; virtue is masculine; and Templary, in order to build the temple of humanity, needs in its votaries something more than passive morality. A Knight must actively cultivate a positive way of living, to take upon himself true moral agency in his lifelong pursuit of virtue."

The small battles we encounter seem almost too trivial to be involved in, such a picking up a piece of trash from a neighbor's yard or holding a door open for someone we encounter at a restaurant, but each act of chivalry we perform is an important part of the chivalric lifestyle and a contribution in the war against the evils that target mankind. Each small act sets an example for our fellow man that there are such things as right and wrong and that how we conduct our lives either contributes to or detracts from human civilization.

The large battles we face sometimes seem insurmountable and overwhelming. What can we do, as individuals against tyranny and moral decay? I would remind you that there is strength in numbers, there is strength in being righteous, and there is strength promised to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. We can vote. We can speak out about the evils and wrongs we encounter. We can daily do small kindnesses for others without the hope of fee or reward. We can sacrifice for others and always put the welfare of others before our own. These seem like small things, but they are cumulative.

Our mission as Templars is to provide the opportunity to Christian Masonic Brethren to truly experience a chivalric lifestyle and chivalric brotherhood. We cannot make them experience these things, even after we confer the orders upon them, but we can, and should, offer the experience.

What is your role in this great quest?

As always, if I can assist you in any way, I can be contacted at:
john.pgm97@gmail.com or (615) 504-3355 Cell

From the Eminent Grand Prelate

Sir Knight James O. Weir II

As Freemasons and Templars, we love symbols and things of symbolic nature. In an effort to share the Easter message differently, I thought it may be good to look deeper into the Easter events and study the symbolism of a few of them. Symbolism is such an important part of the Bible from the covenant made with Abraham in Genesis 15 to the fig tree in the gospels. The last supper is no different. The thing about these symbols in the Bible is they are so easy to look over, but once we understand what these things symbolize, we never forget them. According to the covenant, all we needed to be saved was a blood sacrifice. All we needed was Jesus' blood spilt on an altar. Could have been quick and much less painful. Have you ever looked deeper at these events? Have you ever questioned why? Why the torture? Why the beatings? Why the thorns? Why the spit?

We know the bread is symbolic of Jesus' body but look closer at this event. Matthew 26:26- Jesus himself broke the bread and gave it out to his disciples, do you see it now? The bread represents Jesus and Jesus himself intentionally broke his body for us, so that we may be full. This is way more than just passing some bread around. Even the bread itself was unleavened as this was the time of Passover in which the Jews celebrated the escape from Egypt. You remember the story: God commanded them in the book of Numbers to eat unleavened bread to symbolize the hasty retreat from Egypt. The body of Christ was broken, it was sour and flat, the taste of death. A clear picture of the life of slavery and salvation. See where this is going now? From slavery to salvation. This is not coincidence, God himself ordained this down to the smallest detail. Even the room itself was prepared beforehand. What does this harken to? Perhaps John 14:2 - "*In my father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.*" A place at the table with Jesus himself, all his disciples gathered around him for a feast. Does the beauty of this not just hit you in the soul?

Mark 14:23-24 - "*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.'*" He does not even call it wine. Even the description Mark uses is the cup. We do not talk like that at the dinner table, do we? Pass the cup? No. We say, "Pass the wine." This is intentional, it is written so that there is no confusion that this represents the lifesaving blood of Jesus. Even Jesus' words, "*this is my blood*" then he drops the bomb. We read right over it; it is the blood of the new covenant. The old covenant of sacrificing animals, going to the temple, and the priest being involved

was old. The new covenant was about to be shed for many; key word here, not all but many. The next time Christ refers to a cup is in the Garden while he is praying and asks God three times to take this cup from him. The cup throughout scripture represents a measuring of either God's blessings or God's curses, and it is never described as half full. It is always described as overflowing. Psalm 23 "*my cup overflows*" we receive that overflowing cup of blessing because Jesus drank from the overflowing cup of God's wrath, to seal the new covenant with blood. This new covenant is what our faith hinges on, like the old covenant between God and Abraham it is dependent on God and not man. Man's plight remains the same, still imperfect and wicked, but now the new covenant is not us taking a lamb to be sacrificed. It is God taking the lamb to be sacrificed. And that is what this meal is about, it is the last meal before an execution.

The symbolism as we read in Luke flows through the next three days like a river over stones. These strong well rested soldiers encircled an exhausted tired carpenter and beat him. As God ordained in Deuteronomy 25:3 the punishment of no more than 40 lashes. The weapon of choice was a whip with long leather straps and in those straps were woven glass and rocks. The scourging was ordered, the execution was ordered, but the spit? Spitting does not hurt but it is the act of placing someone below and someone above. It is the degradation of it, not meant to inflict pain but meant to degrade and bring someone down to the class of an animal. Although Jesus is the King of Kings and savior of the world; in this moment he was not sitting on a throne. He was dirty, tired, and bloody. Jesus looked up with his beard half torn out and spit dripping from cheeks at a face that was made in His image. Spit symbolized pride in the ancient world. When someone spits in someone's face it was a nonverbal and clear sign of complete rejection. Recall Jesus spitting and then healing a blind man, three times Jesus used saliva specifically with the blind to show that he was above ailments and rejecting what being blind meant. He came so that we may see! Let the scales fall from your eyes that you blind may see the glory of God! When has your pride spit in your savior's face?

The thorns deep in scripture symbolize the consequence of sin. Being stuck in something not able to get out. It was Adam's curse after being expelled from the garden. The crown meant to mock Jesus and there on his head sat thorns piercing his scalp and sending blood dripping from the consequences of sin. The wages of sin is death, and so it was that Jesus never knowing the result of one sin, suddenly felt the weight of all his follower's sin heavy on his head. Every sin will be punished, and they were punished this day. John 19:13 Jesus sits down in the judgment seat; our judgment seat, for the consequences of our sin on his head. The never-ending ring of thorns

symbolizing the wages of sin, placed on a sinless head. What never ending ring of addictions in your life keep you trapped in thorns?

John 19:19-22 - *"Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.' Many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and it was written in Aramaic, in Latin, and in Greek. So, the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but rather, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'"* Pilate answered, *"What I have written I have written."* Pilate was trying to mock and in doing so presented the gospel for the first time. Jesus' sign written high for all to see. It was meant to mock, but what it really did was to proclaim the gospel. Jesus, King of the Jews. Written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The glory of God here is that every nationality present knew who Jesus was. The upmost glory in this sign is not to be overlooked. For it is by that sign that we know who the King really is. The Hebrew language is the language of religion, Latin the language of the Romans, and Greek was the language of the culture. This is very significant. No matter who you are, what your economic background is, what nationality you are, or what language you speak, you can clearly read the sign. Whether you are religious, a culture lover, or in power you know what the sign says. That is the gospel, the sign represents the identity of Christ and our identity in him, for we have been adopted into the kingdom. What ways have you ignored the sign? What ways have you rejected it?

John 19:23 - *"When the soldiers had crucified Jesus, they took his garments and divided them into four parts, one part for each soldier; also, his tunic. But the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom."* The robe is very noteworthy. It was seamlessly woven from top to bottom, so instead of tearing it up, they gambled for it below his feet. This was quite possibly Jesus' finest possession. In the Jewish tradition, the mother sewed this type of robe and gave it as a gift as the son was leaving home. This robe was most likely given to Jesus when he turned 30 and left home to start his ministry. That means that this robe was with Jesus when he was tempted in the desert, when he healed the bleeding woman, when he raised people from the dead, and cast out demons. The Bible uses clothes as character traits, Peter tells us to be clothed in humility. In Psalms evil people are clothed in curses. Jesus' robe was seamless, from top to bottom. Pure, whole, sinless, and spotless. Jesus' robe was taken from him and left him naked, the robe of righteousness now drapes over our souls. His mother watching this, the robe she toiled over, her son she worried over, before her eyes both being trampled in dirt. The robe symbolic of a purity we will never know, and the nakedness a symbol for humiliation and vulnerability. Our nakedness in the garden and our

nakedness in sin, both clothed by God himself, by a sacrifice by God himself. Our nakedness and humiliation imputed on Christ; his robe of righteousness imputed on us. The white robe of righteousness covers our nakedness. Guilt and shame, the symbol of our vulnerability and infamy is traded for the symbol of seamless purity, and wholeness of Christ. What shame and guilt do you carry?

The powerful gospel is on every page of the Holy Bible. How can you not see it? How can you not believe it? Do you believe it?

Psalms 41:9 – Betrayal of a friend,

Psalms 31:11 – The disciples fleeing and being ashamed,

Psalms 35:11 – False accusation,

Isaiah 53:7 – Remaining silent before the judges,

Isaiah 53:9 – Being proved innocent,

Isaiah 53:12 – Included with sinners,

Psalms 22:16 – Being crucified,

Psalms 109:25 – Spectators mocking him

Psalms 22:7 – Being taunted and not being delivered from it

Psalms 22:18 – Gambling for clothes

Isaiah 53:12 – Prayer for enemies

Psalms 22:1 – Being forsaken by God

Psalms 31:5 – Yielding his spirit into fathers' hands

Psalms 31:5 – Bones not being broken

Isaiah 53:9 – Burial in a rich man's tomb

So why the torment? Why the cross? Why the thorns? Why the nakedness? Why the spit? Why the beatings? All we needed was a cut throat, perfect blood to spill and we would receive forgiveness. We needed far less, so why go so far and beyond? Perhaps God wanted to show us how deep, how much, and how far he was willing to go to save his children. To show his love and grace and glory he gave us far more than what we needed. He gave us himself. The answer to why is because you are loved far beyond your feeble mind can fathom. His glory is far brighter than we can behold, and His grace is beyond all measure.

Consecration Ceremonies

Sir Knights, there are a couple rare events taking place this month. For the first time in nearly eleven years two new Commanderies are being constituted in Tennessee. Appalachia Commandery #45 and Phillip Lacy Commandery #46 received their charters from Right Eminent Grand Commander Robert B. Beam during the Grand Conclave on March 26th, and newly elected Right Eminent Grand Commander Dr. John W. Simmons will take the opportunity this month to duly constitute both Commanderies. Details are listed as follows:

April 6th:

Phillip Lacy Commandery #46
Selmer Lodge #338
157 S 4th St.
Selmer, TN 38375

Constitution Ceremony at 4pm
Officer Installation and Dinner to follow

April 13th:

Appalachia Commandery #45
Bright Hope Lodge #557
5400 N Broadway St.
Knoxville, TN 37918

Lunch at 1pm
Constitution Ceremony to follow

Commandery Town Halls

April 13th – Upper East Tennessee (19, 25, 33, 37, 43)

Kingsport Commandery No. 33
Lunch at 11am and Meeting at Noon

April 20th – Knoxville Area (9, 21, 44, 45)

Appalachia Commandery No. 45
Lunch at Noon and Meeting at 1pm

April 27th – Lower East Tennessee (14, 23, 34, 42)

Athens Commandery No. 34
Lunch at 11 am and Meeting at Noon

June 1st – Middle Tennessee (1, 7, 8, 10, 11, 26, 38, 40, 41)

Murfreesboro Commandery No. 10
Lunch at 11am and Meeting at Noon

June 8th – West Tennessee (13, 16, 29, 31, 36, 39)

Jackson Commandery No. 13
Lunch at 11am and Meeting at Noon



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Request for Submissions!

Sir Knights – We need submissions for the *Tennessee Knight Templar News*. Is your Commandery going to confer any of the orders soon? Did you have some sort of unusual or fun event? Send us an article to share with the other Tennessee Knights and include photos if you have them.

We would also like to have your thoughts and ideas about how we can make Tennessee Templary more fun and exciting. Send us an article! Please send news and events going on in your Commandery to:

TNKTNewsEditor@gmail.com

