

**Tennessee Knight Templar News**

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

July AD 2024 / AO 906

Edited by: Jesse J. Harper, KYCH



Wreathes placed by the Sir Knights of Phillip Lacy Commandery #46 in observance of Memorial Day

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Sir Knights,

If you are aware of any members who are not currently receiving this monthly newsletter, then please have them send an email to Steve Guendert with their name, email address, and Commandery number: [sguendert@ieec.org](mailto:sguendert@ieec.org)

Currently only about half of our membership is receiving this newsletter on a monthly basis. Assist us in getting this newsletter distributed to every Sir Knight on our rolls.



**JOHN WISEMAN SIMMONS II**  
**RIGHT EMINENT GRAND COMMANDER**  
**Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Tennessee**



**July Message from the Grand Commander**

Sir Knights,

The month of July is, of course, the month we celebrate our country's independence. We should take the time to thank God for our free country. We should also thank and remember those who serve and have served to give us this freedom. During July, there will be opportunities to appear at patriotic events. If your area has a Fourth of July parade, consider marching in it as a Commandery in uniform, perhaps with a flag honor guard. Contact the Worshipful Masters of your local lodges and ask if they would like you to present the colors during their meetings or events. While the Templar Flag Talk is considered part of the ritual, and cannot be given in public, you could come up with your own talk to honor the flag. If you do, share it with us! If you have DeMolay chapters in your area, consider asking them to join you for these events. I am sure it would be a thrill for these young men.

I am pleased that our Southeast Battalion, consisting of Lookout #40, Athens #34, and Cyrene #42, now has a full complement of battalion officers. Way to go! I am looking forward to hearing about your accomplishments.

I represented you at the Grand York Rite of Florida on May 19-22 and at the Grand York Rite of Missouri on June 7. On June 8, I attended the final Town Hall Meeting in Jackson. I commend Tim Sutton and all who were involved in planning and putting on these meetings. Their purpose was to listen to the Sir Knights of our Commanderies, especially the newer Sir Knights, about what they are looking for and how the Commanderies can retain their interest and participation. Tim will be studying and organizing the information gathered at these meetings for our consideration. The Grand Line Officers continue to meet regularly by Zoom to plan our future progress.

On June 15, I attended the Grand Encampment Southeastern Department Conference in Alcoa. Our Southeastern Department Commander Robert Waldron did an excellent job organizing and hosting this conference. It was good to see our colleagues from other states in the region and to hear what their Grand Commanderies are doing. I was pleased at the number of Companions and Sir Knights from Tennessee who attended. Some took part in the final in-person training sessions of the York Rite Leadership Course. This course will still be available, but it is now moving to online training.

I shall also be representing you at the DeMolay State Conclave on July 5-6, and at the Grand Commandery of Illinois on July 26.

We are now in the season of the Chapter/Council Group Meetings. I cannot make all of these, but I intend to go to as many as I can. I encourage you to attend the ones in your area. All of our York Rite bodies need to support each other, and of course, do not forget your Blue Lodge. It is the foundation of the York Rite.

Sir Knights, if I or the other Grand Officers can be of assistance to your Commanderies, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Courteously,  
John Simmons

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## **From the Very Eminent Deputy Grand Commander John L. Palmer, KGC**

It is amazing how often we choose to do good things only to discover that after they are implemented, they have triggered unrelated results that are harmful to our mission. While studying Templary in Tennessee and trying to see how we can assist our Commanderies in making a comeback, we have discovered two instances of this phenomenon which have surprised and dismayed us.

The first observation was that there is one area of activity in which every one of our Commanderies is 100% effective. That activity is in providing candidates for the Knights of the York Cross of Honour. This institution was established for the purpose of acknowledging service to the fraternity of York Rite Masons by conferring an honor upon those who have faithfully served all four York Rite bodies. This is an admirable purpose. The second observation is that in many of our Commanderies, we have Commanders who are not taking the initiative to implement changes which will improve our ability to accomplish our mission of providing each Knight with the opportunity and resources to experience and improve his chivalric experience. The question is why, and are these two observations related? I believe that they are.

Frankly, most of us love and respect our brother Knights and want the best for them. We like to see them receive honors and accolades. This tends to inspire us to encourage each and every one of our Brother Knights who shows any interest in the Order at all to seek the honor of KYCH which, in turn, requires that he serve at least a full year term as Commander of his Commandery.

Our Commanderies are unbelievably dependent upon our leadership. The Commander can make or break a Commandery. We elect our Commanders. The Grand officers have nothing to do with this election process. I have made a lifetime study of leadership and have taught the subject in both the corporate and fraternal world for many years. I have spent most of my life in one leadership role or another. What I have learned is that placing a person in a leadership position has little to no effect on how well he can lead. We do a great injustice, and even harm, to both the person and the organization by placing a person who is not already an effective leader in a position of leadership.

Leaders are not born. They learn to become effective leaders. They can do this through experience by observing effective leaders or by a study of leadership principles. If you do not have the desire and the skills to be a good leader, your organization fails. The Eminent Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Encampment observed in a speech that he made in one of our Grand Commandery sessions that "We do not have a membership problem. We have a leadership problem."

For the last three years, your Grand officers have been fully focused on what we can do to bring back Templary in Tennessee, and that effort continues. We have developed resources for the Commanderies to use in recruiting, initiating, assimilating, and engaging our Commandery members and have made those resources available to the Commanderies. We have studied why we are not retaining and engaging our Knights and have offered numerous suggestions to our Commanderies about what they should be doing to engage their Knights, grow their active, participating membership, and attract the bright new men that are interested in Christian Masonic knighthood.

Although some progress has been made, the results are not as positive as we had hoped, not because the ideas and resources are bad, but because our Commanderies are not using them. Many, if not most, of our Commanderies give lip service to the idea of change, but are not executing any positive change. This boils down to ineffective leadership at the local level. We should be electing the very best leaders we have to positions of leadership in our Commanderies. If you elect an outstanding and effective leader, leave him in that position for a few years. The only reason to change Commanders every year is to qualify folks to obtain the KYCH. Is that really more important than saving the Templar institution?

I have found that some folks really do not want to be leaders. Others do not really understand how to lead effectively yet. Did you ever notice that many of our Commanders disappear after they have served their term? Maybe that is because all they wanted was the KYCH. Maybe it is because they got poor results in their year because of their inadequate leadership skills and were disillusioned. We can offer leadership training from our Grand Commandery, but our experience has been that those who need it most do not attend and that many who attend do not apply what they have learned.

The bottom line is that if we are to succeed, there can be no more "business as usual." You, as individual Knights, are ultimately responsible for the success or failure of your Commandery. Be careful who you encourage to serve as Commander. Make sure he has the right skills and that he acknowledges the awesome responsibilities he assumes in that role. Elect men who will take the initiative and keep trying new things until your Commandery is successful. Or – be prepared to become a member of the Commandery that your Commandery will eventually consolidate with.

I will share next month the other instance we have discovered of unintended consequences.

John L. Palmer, KGC, VEDGC  
Grand Commandery of Knights Templar, Tennessee

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# **From the Eminent Grand Prelate**

## **Sir Knight James O. Weir II**

In Judges chapters 6 and 7, we read the story of a mighty warrior named Gideon. He was a mighty warrior, not because he trained or excelled at boot camp, but because God told him he was. Reality does not dictate what God's plan is, God's plan dictates what reality is.

God called Gideon to be Israel's next judge and deliverer, God greeted Gideon as a "mighty man of valor." Yet again, in scripture, we see someone to whom the world would not give a second thought, be called by God to do great things. Gideon was the complete opposite of what God had named him. Gideon's first words after this greeting from God was to question God. He doubted God's plans and believed God had forsaken him and his people. Yet, God continued to speak of Gideon's might when he responded, "Go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian."

Gideon then made excuses for why he could not save Israel and even though God answered, "I'll be with you," Gideon asked for a sign. Gideon finally believed, but then responded in fear. It seems we have another Moses on our hands. Fear and unbelief seemed to be driving Gideon. He did not act like a mighty man of valor. In verses 25-27, God told Gideon to destroy his family's altars and idols. Gideon was obedient, but he was afraid, so he did it at night so no one saw him. Gideon was still found out nonetheless, and his father came to his rescue. Then, in verses 36-40, Gideon asked for two signs from God, Gideon was still not confident that God would use him to save Israel from the Midianites, so he needed tangible signs to prove that God would do what he said.

Many times, in Scripture, we see God rebuke his children for the fear that comes through lack of faith (as in Matthew 8:26), but in Gideon's story, we never see this. God never called out Gideon and said, "What? You need another sign? What is wrong with you? Have you not learned anything yet? Do you not know who I am? Do you not remember all that I have done?" God never directly spoke to Gideon about his failures. Instead, He used Gideon's weaknesses and doubt to help shape him into the mighty man of valor that He had declared him to be.

God did not call Gideon a mighty man of valor because he saw that character trait in him. Gideon was called a mighty man of valor because of the plan God had for his life. Reality does not dictate what God's plan is, God's plan dictates what reality is. Gideon is proven to be a man of weak faith who did not believe in God's power, so, how did God deal with his unbelief? How does God deal with our unbelief?

God called Gideon to deliver his people, but more importantly, he called Gideon to be different from what he was at the moment of his calling. In the mighty hands of God, Gideon became a mighty

man of valor. Once again, as many times in scripture, God used the insignificant to accomplish great things. We see God do this in Judges 7:1–8, when he intentionally whittles down Gideon’s army from thirty-two thousand to just three hundred. We can assume, based on Gideon’s track record, that God was also dealing personally with Gideon’s own weakness.

God knows that we are only made from dust. He knows that we are human, weak, and full of sin. He is intimately acquainted with our personal flaws and weaknesses. We see this clearly in how God interacted with Gideon. God is patient with him, because he knew what he was.

Yes, Gideon should have had faith and not needed signs, and God did not have to give Gideon a sign to comfort him. He could have just required Gideon’s obedience, and given him rebuke, but God did not do that here. God was patient with Gideon’s failures and weaknesses, God shows Himself here as the comforter of the fearful and the uplifter of the weak.

No matter how lacking your faith, how heavy the shame of your sin, or how little you measure up, God’s plan for you is sure and firm in the Lord. It will not change, no matter how great the army or how large the trial, no matter how grave the sickness, or how many demons come against you. You are a mighty child of God. We are like Gideon in our weak faith, but thankfully, God does not depend on our level of faith to act on our behalf.

The gospel spells it out, Jesus became dust like us, but he never failed. Instead, he perfectly accomplished all that the Father asked him to do on our behalf. Because of Him, we are saved from our enemies, and because of Him, we are being transformed into mighty men of valor. He was born in a shack, never gained wealth, never hung a degree on his wall, never had an award for the most talented person, never was given a medal of valor. Regardless, with a single word, He could send demons away trembling, He could with writing in the sand heal a nation, He could with a mere thought heal the sick and raise the dead.

In reality, not just could, but does, He has never stopped working miracles, He has never stopped calling the weak to do great things, He has never stopped working in your life. You are mighty men of valor, warriors of the kingdom. We need to live as God has made us to be, not as who we think we are.

## **Monetary Based Merit**

By: Jesse J. Harper, KYCH

Grand Commandery Membership Committee and *Tennessee Knight Templar News* Editor

\*\*\*Preface to this article: There are many feasible and alternative options to what I am proposing in this article. The one I am suggesting below is, probably, one of the more progressive and unconventional methods. If nothing else, it should provoke thoughts of what could be done.\*\*\*

How many times have you attended a meeting, whether locally or on the grand level, where the topic of a dues or per capita increase was brought up? I would venture to say that if it is not brought up yearly, then there is an ever-present discussion that an increase is on the horizon in the coming years. Realistically, in my eyes, these conversations should not be necessary. The fees, dues, and other monies we pay on a yearly basis should be enough that our Masonic bodies should never have to decide which bill to pay first or which charity, if any, we are able to assist. While some local bodies may have a dues structure that provides adequate support for their needs, quite a few bodies do not have that structure and have to make hard decisions on a monthly basis.

In my humble opinion, I think across the board, our yearly dues and fees should be drastically higher than what they are currently, with one major caveat. I think our dues and fees should be based on a merit system. The dues we pay should be based on your participation and activity level. This system is not to be confused with the participation trophies that the last couple of generations have been accustomed to receiving. I truly mean a merit based system, you get what you earn. You get out what you put in. You reap what you sow.

Here is an explanation of what I mean by a merit based system. I will relate it to a program we have in the Knoxville Valley of the Scottish Rite. Here in Knoxville we have a program called Knights of the Double Eagle, which other Valleys in Tennessee may have, or they have something similar. In the program you receive points for completing specific tasks; like attending a meeting, participating in a degree, volunteering in the Valley, or numerous other tasks. None of the tasks are overly difficult or even required. You participate to the extent you are able to or that you are comfortable with. The point system in the Scottish Rite is there to provide examples of ways to be more active and elicit greater participation in all areas of the Valley. This type of system could easily be adapted to fit nearly any Masonic body in the state, and is naturally a great system that could be used to track everyone's engagement.

As I stated last month, our fraternity is composed of brothers with different temperaments, talents, and convictions, therefore; the way I would implement this program is to have as many options as possible to earn points. We have many brothers who shine the brightest in the spotlight, and just as many, if not more, who have no desire to be recognized. If you are not a strong ritualist, then be the brother who shows up early to put on the pot of coffee, be the brother who greets everyone who enters the building, be the brother who mentors a newer member, or it can be as simple as being the brother who cuts the grass. There is a place and a task for everyone to complete. This type of system allows each brother to shine where they feel the most comfortable, without forcing anyone to participate in areas they are weaker in.

Each body could determine their own points or merit system, but my thought would be that once you reach certain thresholds, then a certain percentage of your dues are discounted. The actual percentage discount would have to be determined by each body. For years, we have been told that we have a membership problem, but I honestly think we have a participation problem. We have far too many members who are Freemasons in name only, without ever contributing anything of substance to the fraternity. If all a brother wants to be is a card-carrying member without actually contributing to the success of the body, then he is going to pay the full price of membership. On the other hand, if a brother is actively contributing and supporting his body on a regular basis, then his efforts and time should be rewarded. The amount of dues a brother pays on a yearly basis could drastically change depending on his activity level. His activity level last year will have determined this year's dues, his activity level this year will determine next year's dues, and so on.

Another caveat to this would be that the sick and afflicted among us would not be held to the same standard as those of us who are capable of working, but choose to remain inactive. Naturally, there will be active brothers who do not want to receive a discount because they want to fully support their body, but that will be everyone's decision to make should a system like this be implemented. A merit based system might drive brothers away, but it could just as easily cause members to reengage once they see what is expected of them and what tasks there are to be completed. This system could give brothers a purpose. In the end, a system like this may cause our fraternity to lose members, but as any butcher will tell you, even after you have trimmed the fat off of the cow, you still have an outstanding steak left over.

Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns with the idea I proposed here:  
[jesssharp@comcast.net](mailto:jesssharp@comcast.net)



# Wisdom and Prudence: Leadership in the Fraternity

by Ian GM Kirkpatrick  
Generalissimo, Cyprus Commandery #23

In my last submission, I started a series on wine, the king, women, and truth in the Order of the Red Cross. I would like to resume that discussion here and consider the answer of the king. Again, we have a poorly misguided brother who appears to believe that the king is the strongest. Why do you think that is?

Interestingly enough, the patron of the Blue Lodge is not King Solomon or Hiram King of Tyre. Hiram Abiff is, in fact, not a king at all: we are told he is a humble architect. The two kings are scarcely mentioned until the Fellowcraft degree, where we enter the middle chamber of King Solomon for the first time. This chamber eventually becomes the secret vault and the chamber of reflection and may even be compared to Hiram Abiff's most private apartment. In the third degree, the ruffians are described as Tyrians, perhaps implying that Hiram of Tyre was behind the original murder plans. The Grand Council is severed, and we conclude by prompting the candidate to imitate Hiram Abiff, not King Solomon or Hiram of Tyre.

As we enter the Chapter, we are told that the king is second in command, representing Zerubbabel. It is Zerubbabel who is charged by Cyrus of Persia to rebuild the temple. The Cryptic Council further clarifies the story, and it most notably explains why the True Word cannot be given by the two Kings alone. Hiram Abiff cannot be absent, nor can either Jeshua, Zerubbabel, or Haggai be absent in the second Council.

So how does this brother come to the conclusion that the king is the strongest, and which king is he referring to? By the time we get to the Order of the Red Cross, this brother has seen the reign of Cyrus, Cambyses, Smerdis the Magian, and now Darius. Two agreed to rebuild the temple, but the third said no, and the fourth was not on the throne long enough to make a decision. Is it any wonder that in this tumultuous time in history that this brother believes we are at the whim of the king?

In this order, we represent "King" Zerubbabel and all members of the Order are referred to as princes and rulers. So is this brother referring to the actual king, or is he referring to all members of the human race who hold dominion over the earth? How do our decisions and actions in everyday life affect others? What unforeseen domino effect can you have by making such a decision? Moving further into the Commandery, the Order of Malta explains in great detail how multiple kingdoms and rulers influenced the Order. In the Order of the Temple, we are taught to emulate Simon of Cyrene and Matthias, who each took their individual small part in the creation of a much

grander project. We are the kings of our own story, for "many are called, but few are chosen." Are you the called, or are you the chosen?

In our Lodges today, we speak of guarding the west gate. Who is guarding the east gate? Will you comply with putting a man in charge just because he is present? There are many active Freemasons who cannot make the meeting night due to work or other activities. Perhaps they might be a good leader if you speak to them and make arrangements to meet on a night that works for everyone. We have met on the same night for 100 years, but the modern schedule simply does not account for how life worked in the 1920s.

Is there any reason that we have to have progressive lines? Just like the succession of kings in the Order of the Red Cross, this can cause some confusion among the ranks. I find it problematic that we habitually raise new candidates and feed them into the officer line. What is that saying about our motivations, and how is this helping the new members? Why not keep a member in charge for several years if he has experience in management and organizational processes? Give the new members an opportunity to soak in what they joined, and allow them to just do Masonry in the world for a bit before you put them in charge of the whole organization. What can their small part be that will keep them invested other than Junior Deacon?

Is the ability to memorize long paragraphs useful to running a non-profit business? Surely there are many more qualifications to being a leader. What might they be? Let us separate those ideas: allow those who memorize to be a degree team, and allow those who have leadership skills to run the body. I charge each and every one of you going into the election of officers this year to ask yourself these questions and know that you are putting the right man in charge when the time comes!

# Southeastern York Rite Conference



Photos courtesy of Douglas Hunter, Grand Photographer

# Grand Conclave Revisited

Appalachia Commandery #45  
receiving their charter from  
Right Eminent Grand  
Commander Robert Beam



Phillip Lacy Commandery #46  
receiving their charter from  
Right Eminent Grand  
Commander Robert Beam

## Inspection Top Officers:

- Commander- Collier Hopson (#10)
- Generalissimo- Hayden Bilyeu (#7)
- Junior Warden- Chris Espitia (#13)
- Prelate- Dickie Johnson (#1)
- Warder- Burks Taylor (#1)



## Membership Awards:

- Smallest Commandery-  
Campbell County #44
- Largest Number Knighted-  
Coeur de Lion #9
- Largest Commandery-  
Nashville #1



# MMS Profile Update

Sir Knights, I encourage you to log into the MMS system to update your profile. It is especially important to keep your information up to date, because this is the information that the Grand York Rite of Tennessee and the Grand Encampment uses to stay in contact with you.

You will either need to have your dues card or know your Membership # to log into the system.

The web address to access your secure verification site is:

<https://www.masonic-web.com/mms/memberbio/default.aspx>

masonic-web.com/mms/memberbio/default.aspx ☆

## Masonic Membership Solutions

LIVE

**Personal Identification Verification - Required for Secure Entrance**

First Name:  Membership#:

Last Name:

Birth Date:  mm/dd/yyyy

All fields are required.  
Membership# is obtained from your dues card.

### IMPORTANT MESSAGES TO USERS — please read:

MMS as of 01/26/2021 has MOVED to CHROME  
For the best performance and ALL functionality along with MMS technical support this Application must be used in CHROME.

You will see the below information once you have logged into the site. I have highlighted some of the more important fields, but fill in and update as many of the fields as possible.

## Masonic Membership Solutions

**Member Information**

Prefix  Name

Preferred First Name  Birthday

**Contact Information**

Home Phone   Intl Home Email

Work Phone   Intl Work Email

Cell Phone   Intl

**Personal Information**

Employer  Job Status

Job Title

Spouse's Name

Spouse's Birth Date    CT (Companion of the Temple)  
 SA (Sweetheart Award)  
 LC (Lady of the Council)

Children's Names  Like: Billy, Sally, Megan

**Home/Primary address**

Address is **Certified**

\*Country

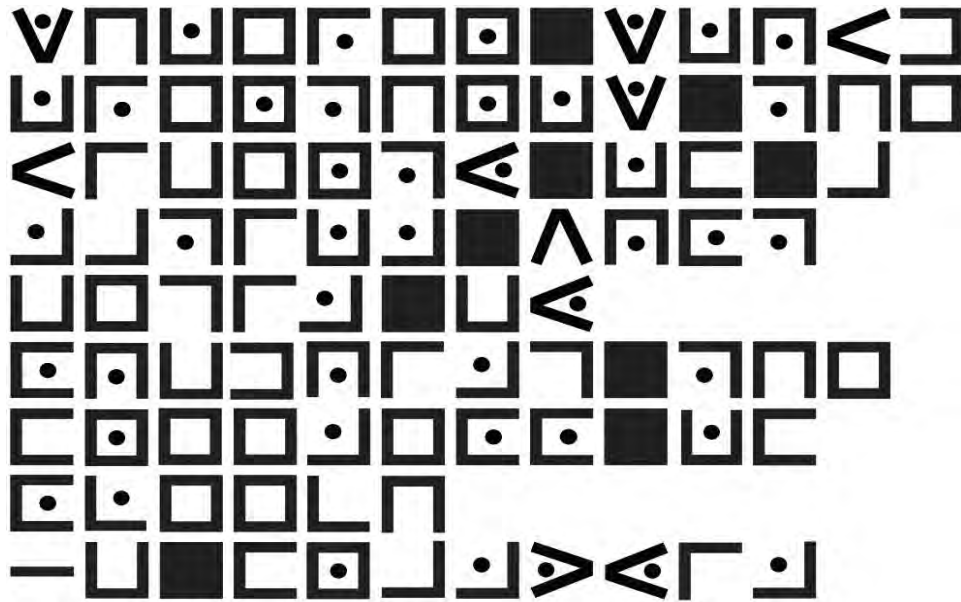
Type

\*Address

\*City

\*State

\*Zip



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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**