

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas
Office of the Grand Commander
Amarillo, Texas
September 21, 2020

GENERAL ORDER NO. 5, SERIES 2020-2021

Subject: COVID-19-Induced Modifications to Annual Visitations, Elections, Installations, and Blanket Dispensations.

To: The Grand Officers, Past Grand Commanders, Officers and Members of the Constituent Commanderies of Texas.

Greetings, Sir Knights:

In accordance with the provisions of the Statutes and Regulations of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas, the following conditions will be observed during the rest of the 2020-2021 Templar year, or until rescinded or superseded. **The corresponding sections of the Grand Commander's General Order #1 are hereby superseded by the following instructions. All other provisions of General Order #1 remain in effect as written. These conditions are subject to change contingent on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on public safety.**

***UPDATED COVID-19 NOTE:**

Until such time that the Grand Master of the Grand Encampment supersedes his edict as outlined in General Order #12, stating that in-person meetings of all commanderies are prohibited until further notice, and concurred with by the Grand Commander, Annual Inspections and Official Visitations shall be allowed either online, or in-person with ONLY the District Officer, and the Eminent Commander, Treasurer and Recorder of the visited commandery. Online visitations may be accomplished by using any available means of teleconferencing, such as Skype, GoToMeeting, and Zoom. All Grand Officers have access to Zoom web conferencing if required.

General Order #12 also prohibits the performance of ritual or conferral of Orders during any such webcast Conclave, hence, the Opening and Closing, and the Order of the Temple will not be performed this year for inspection and grading.

MASKS ARE REQUIRED for all in-person interaction, and all current social distancing standards and safety guidelines shall be strictly adhered to during these visitations. While contrary to our usual customs of fellowship, that acts of hand-shaking, hugging, and other close-contact social decorum are not condoned and highly discouraged until such time as they are once again deemed safe by reputable public health authorities, and affirmed by order of the Grand Encampment and the Grand Commander.

ANNUAL INSPECTION AND OFFICIAL VISITATION:

***Annual Inspections and Visitations are subject to the restrictions outlined in the COVID-19 NOTE above until further notice. It is expected that all constituent commanderies be prepared to provide the Inspecting Officer with the means to review all books and financials, as required by Grand Commandery law, and to provide the required forms and audits to the appropriate Grand Commandery officers in a timely manner following such visitation.**

The District Grand Officers will schedule the dates of their Official Visitations to be made in September, October, November and December of 2020. The *Grand Officer Visitation Guidelines 2020* documentation will be distributed to all District Grand Officers for use as a checklist for this year's annual visitations. District Officers will coordinate with constituent commandery Commanders and Recorders to facilitate visitations.

All Commanderies are subject to the following regulations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

Election of officers is required to be held at the last Stated Conclave before the end of November (Art. 223). While COVID-19 restrictions are in place, elections must be held in an online format, as were elections at the 2020 Grand Conclave. If only one name is placed in nomination for any elective office and a proper motion adopted, election may be made by acclamation (Art. 219).

In the event more than one name is placed in nomination for any elective office, an appropriately trained Sir Knight should be chosen as host to discreetly tabulate the votes through the web conferencing application, and report the results to the Commander, who shall announce the election. If no Sir Knight is available to perform this function, the District or other Grand Officer may assist using the Zoom web conferencing application.

If no Sir Knight is placed in nomination for an elective office, the currently installed officer shall hold over throughout the ensuing term of office (Art. 223).

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS:

Installation of Officers is required to be completed no later than January 15th (Art. 233). The Most Eminent Grand Master will revisit General Order No. 12 near the end of November, which if rescinded, may allow us to install in person. However, if restrictions remain in effect, installations must be held in an online format, as was the installation of Grand Officers at the 2020 Grand Conclave. Again, if assistance is required in hosting a web conference for the purpose of installation, the District or other Grand Officer may be asked to assist.

BLANKET DISPENSATIONS:

Where not prohibited by law, regulation or edict, and provided current social distancing and public safety guidelines are strictly adhered to, a Blanket Dispensation is granted highly encouraging Sir Knights in uniform to appear in public at:

I. Community events such as parades, dedications, leveling cornerstones, and ceremonies in connection with Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day and any dignified public function where Templar Masonry will be promoted.

II. Church services as a Commandery.

III. Flag presentation ceremonies for any Masonic-related organization or for public events to promote Masonry, the Eye Foundation, the Holy Land Pilgrimage, or the Educational Foundation.

COMMITTEES:

The Chairman of each Committee shall notify the Grand Officers of all meetings of their Committee as soon as they are scheduled, at least two weeks in advance. If possible, it is requested that any such meetings be held on a Saturday or Sunday, to facilitate the attendance of the Grand Officers at the Committee's meeting. Committees will submit their preliminary reports in writing to the Grand Recorder by March 1, 2021.

If appropriate services are not available to any Committee Chair or Member to conduct committee meetings online or by teleconference, any available Grand Officer may prepare and/or host such meetings using Zoom web conferencing.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

See Bulletin #1 for a complete listing of Grand Officer Contact Information.

The address, telephone numbers and email address of the Grand Recorder are:

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This General Order is to be read aloud at the next Stated Conclave following its receipt, and the action noted by the Recorder in the minutes with a copy attached thereto.

In the event no stated meeting is held due to pandemic restraints, this General Order will also be posted on the Grand Commandery website, and in an attempt to overcome constraints on communication due to the pandemic, constituent commandery Recorders and Commanders are instructed to disseminate this Order by email to the Sir Knights of their commanderies, or to notify them by phone call.

In His Name,

Gary H. Freedman

Gary H. Freedman
Grand Commander

Attest:

Jerry N. Kirby

Jerry N. Kirby
Grand Recorder

