

The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas
Office of the Grand Commander
Amarillo, Texas
November 27, 2020

GENERAL ORDER NO. 7, SERIES 2020-2021

Subject: Reopening the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas

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Templar of Texas, the following conditions will be observed during the rest of the 2020-2021 Templar year, or until rescinded or superseded. **This order supersedes the COVID Guidelines of Texas General Order #5 of September 21st, 2020. These conditions are subject to change contingent on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on public safety.**

Grand Encampment General Order #14, "Reopening Templary 2021", has prescribed certain Safety Protocols, meeting guidelines, and a template for the phased reopening of Grand Commanderies within its jurisdiction. Through this order, Grand Encampment has authorized the Grand Commanders to formulate and enact reopening guidelines for their jurisdictions. Guidelines for the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas follow, based on the template issued by Grand Encampment.

Current Conditions

Due to the uncontrolled spread of the coronavirus pandemic in the State of Texas and across the country, and to the uncertainty of how much worse it may get over the holiday season, all Texas commanderies will remain under Phase 0 restrictions, as set out in the accompanying reopening guidelines, at least through the end of 2020. This means that all commandery meetings will continue to be subject to being held in an online format only. Elections and installations of officers shall be held in an online format at least through end of 2020.

These restrictions will be re-evaluated near the end of 2020, and every two weeks subsequently, for each affected region in Texas, and adjustments made either up or down depending on the then current state of the pandemic in those regions.

The underlying statistics supporting this decision will not be reiterated here, other than to say that Texas now holds the distinction of having logged more cases of COVID-19 than other State in the Union, and is second in coronavirus-related deaths only to the State of New York. The ramifications of these facts speak for themselves.

Cautionary Guidelines

Every one of us is anxious to get past this pandemic, and to get back to our normal lives, including meeting with our brethren face-to-face. However, public health is at stake, and we will not rush into a premature reopening, as the entire country is already experiencing the results of that scenario. This Grand Commandery of Texas will, at a minimum, follow health and safety guidelines promulgated by federal, state and local public health authorities, as well as masonic restrictions imposed by the Grand Lodge of Texas and the Grand Encampment of the U.S.A.

Various references will be made to “vulnerable individuals”, whom Federal Guidelines have defined as follows:

1. Elderly Individuals (ages 65 and over); and
2. Individuals with serious, underlying health conditions, including high blood pressure, chronic lung disease, diabetes, obesity, asthma, and those whose immune system is compromised such as by chemotherapy for cancer and other conditions requiring such therapy.

Most masons are aware that the average age of Knights Templar and their ladies is in the high 60's, and includes many other vulnerable individuals as defined above. Our goal is not only to protect the health of these individuals, but also the health of our entire masonic family, and the public at-large. This goal will require some personal sacrifices, as well as accepting personal responsibility for our actions.

While some will rail against the use of masks and social distancing as an infringement on their personal rights, in the absence of a widely available vaccine and the acceptance of some simple social rules as the only viable and current way to slow the spread of the virus, the use of masks and social distancing are currently our only means to turn the tide. Most public health officials agree and recommend these measures, as well as simple hygiene such as regular hand-washing and sanitization of equipment.

All Sir Knights are expected to exercise personal responsibility, and to honestly assess the risk factors not only for themselves, but also of those around them. No one should be derided or ridiculed for not attending a function, especially if they feel sick, or that they may be at risk of contracting an infection, or spreading an infection to others. To the contrary, potentially vulnerable or at-risk individuals should avoid any activity that may compromise anyone's health, including their own.

For more information on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19, please refer to CDC guidelines as restated by the addendum to Grand Encampment General Order #14, “Reopening 2021 Safety Protocols”. These protocols include information on how the virus spreads, as well as detailed virus avoidance guidelines.

Virtual Meeting Criteria

The following criteria regarding the use of virtual\online meetings are taken directly from the addendum to General Order #14, and should be followed at all times during all virtual and hybrid meetings:

It is important that we keep in mind that while these are Virtual Conclaves, they are still official meetings of our Commanderies. These are not informal social gatherings; we should still strive to maintain the protocol and decorum that is expected at a Commandery conclave. We should remember that we are members of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America, and we owe it to our members to provide a quality experience that respects them and the COURTEOUS, chivalrous Order we represent.

Here, then, are the required practices:

- 1. Although we are doing no ritual, the Commander should declare the Conclave open, after a prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance;*
- 2. All participants should mute themselves during the Lord's Prayer; only the Prelate is unmuted. (All recite the Prayer.) Sound quality becomes very garbled and distorted when many are unmuted, making it difficult to recite the prayer in unison;*
- 3. The United States flag, or a representation of it, should be displayed for the Pledge of Allegiance. All participants except the Commander are muted during the Pledge, although all recite it;*
- 4. All participants except the speaker should be muted, unless called upon to speak. If you wish to speak, use the accepted method of being recognized, such as "raising hand" on Zoom;*
- 5. Behave as if you are in a guarded asylum; family members should not participate in the call;*
- 6. Presiding officer should sit up and not slouch in a chair – respect the Sir Knights who took time to attend YOUR meeting;*
- 7. Discretely sipping nonalcoholic beverages is permitted during the calls. No alcoholic beverages;*
- 8. By the same token, we do not want to see you eating your dinner on Zoom. Please eat your meal before or after the meeting;*
- 9. We are not wearing uniforms, but officers should dress appropriately – no T-shirts. Wear a button down shirt or polo shirt. This is for virtual or hybrid meetings only. If this is a Grand Conclave, uniforms should be worn as determined by the Grand Commandery; and*
- 10. Follow the agenda to respect everybody's time.*

Phased Reopening Criteria for Texas Commanderies

COMMON GUIDELINES for ALL Phases:

ALL Federal, State and Local laws and restrictions, as well as those of the Grand Lodge of Texas and the Grand Encampment of the United States of America shall be observed.

- Avoid Socializing in large groups;
- Maximize Social Distancing and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as masks when in proximity to others, and especially when indoors;
- Minimize Travel;
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place

The determination of which reopening phase a Texas Commandery will fall under is at the discretion of the Grand Commander, and is delineated in the Addendum to this General Order. These assignments are based on current conditions in the various hospital regions across the State.

Phase 0

Federal Recommendations:

- Avoid socializing in groups of more than 10 people;
- Maximize Social Distancing and PPE in public;
- Minimize Travel;
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place, or do their best to minimize contact with others as much as possible

Applications to the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas:

Stated or Special Conclaves: (To include elections and installation of officers)

- Limited to virtual conclaves;
- Conference calls;
- Video Conferencing (Zoom, etc.);
- In-person conclaves at any location are NOT PERMITTED

District, regional or state-wide activities:

- Limited to virtual meetings (to include elections and installation of officers);
- Conference calls;
- Video Conferencing (Zoom, etc.);
- In-person meetings at any location are NOT PERMITTED

Drill Team organizational or instructional meetings:

- Limited to virtual meetings;
- Conference calls;
- Video Conferencing (Zoom, etc.);
- In-person drill team meetings at any location are NOT PERMITTED.

Drill team practice:

- Due to the close physical contact requirements and the inability to maintain proper social distancing while drilling, drill practices are NOT PERMITTED

Other Division, Regional or State-Wide activities:

-In-person Grand Commandery Conclaves, Re-consecrations, Commandery Orders at York Rite Festivals, Receptions, Parades, In-person Commandery Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, social events and any similar related activities are NOT PERMITTED

Travel:

-All non-essential travel for Commandery purposes is NOT PERMITTED;
-Essential Travel as assigned by the Grand Commander is permitted, assuming Common Guidelines are observed

Ritual work:

-Any type of ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates is NOT PERMITTED

Phase 1A

Federal Recommendations:

-Avoid socializing in groups of more than 50 people;
-Maximize Social Distancing and PPE in public;
-Minimize Travel;
-All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place, or do their best to minimize contact with others as much as possible

Applications to the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas:**Stated or Special Conclaves:**

-See Common Guidelines;
-In-person conclaves (stated or special) may resume, provided they are conducted utilizing STRICT social distancing and PPE protocols. (IE. Six feet physical separation, face coverings worn by EVERY Sir Knight in the room, and gloves or hand sanitizer, or washing of hands with soap and water utilized by every Sir Knight in the room);
-During Phase 1A, no more than ten (10) Sir Knights may be in physical attendance;
-Virtual conclaves by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc.). Video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined above under "Virtual Meeting Criteria" from General Order #14;
-Hybrid conclaves will also be permitted. The video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined under "Virtual Meeting Criteria" as above. A Hybrid conclave is one where some Sir Knights are in the tiled asylum, and others are joining virtually. All virtual conclave policies will apply;
-Hybrid Conclaves shall be opened by declaration

If a Commandery chooses to resume in-person conclaves, the following additional protocols must also be observed:

-No meals or snacks may be served before or after the conclave;
-Ladies may not attend for any type of formal or informal socialization;
-Only the Sir Knights are permitted to be in attendance during any in-person conclave;

-All Sir Knights, with the exception of any who may be needed to assist with “set up” for the stated conclave (this should require minimal set-up) should arrive no earlier than ten (10) minutes prior to the meeting start time, and depart no later than ten (10) minutes after the conclusion of the meeting. This is intended to limit unnecessary congestion in common areas

District, regional or state-wide activities:

- See Common Guidelines;
- The application of the Phase 1A “Stated or Special Conclaves” section above shall be observed

Drill Team organizational or instructional meetings:

- See Common Guidelines;
- In-person drill team meetings are permitted, provided the application of the Phase 1A “Stated or Special Conclaves” section above is observed

Drill team practice and other activities:

- Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing while drilling, drill practices are NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1A;

Other Division, Regional or State-Wide activities:

- In-person Participation in Grand Commandery Conclaves, Re-consecrations, Commandery Orders at York Rite Festivals, Receptions, Parades, Commandery in-person Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, social events and any similar related activities is NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1A

Travel:

- All non-essential travel for Commandery purposes is NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1A;
- Essential Travel as assigned by the Grand Commander is permitted, assuming Common Guidelines are observed

Ritual work:

- Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing, ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates is NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1A

Phase 1B

Federal Recommendations:

- Avoid socializing in groups of more than 50 people;
- Maximize Social Distancing and PPE in public;
- Minimize Travel;
- All Vulnerable Individuals should continue to shelter in place, or do their best to minimize contact with others as much as possible

Applications to the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas:

Stated or Special Conclaves:

- See Common Guidelines;
- In-person conclaves (stated or special) may resume, provided they are conducted utilizing STRICT social distancing and PPE protocols. (IE. Six feet physical separation, face coverings worn by EVERY Sir Knight in the room, and gloves or hand sanitizer, or washing of hands with soap and water utilized by every Sir Knight in the room);
- During Phase 1B, no more than fifty (50) Sir Knights may be in physical attendance, providing adequate space is available to maintain the recommended social distancing measures;
- Virtual conclaves by means of conference call and/or video conferencing (Zoom, etc.). Video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined above under "Virtual Meeting Criteria" from General Order #14;
- Hybrid conclaves will also be permitted. The video will only show the dais officers, and must conform to the criteria outlined under "Virtual Meeting Criteria" as above. A Hybrid conclave is one where some Sir Knights are in the tiled asylum, and others are joining virtually. All virtual conclave policies will apply;
- Hybrid Conclaves shall be opened by declaration

If a Commandery chooses to resume in-person conclaves the following additional protocols must also be observed:

- No meals or snacks may be served before, or after the conclave;
- Ladies may not attend for any type of formal or informal socialization;
- Only the Sir Knights are permitted to be in attendance during any in-person conclave;
- All Sir Knights, with the exception of any who may be needed to assist with "set up" for the stated conclave (this should require minimal set-up) should arrive no earlier than ten (10) minutes prior to the meeting start time, and depart no later than ten (10) minutes after the conclusion of the meeting. This is intended to limit unnecessary congestion in common areas

District, regional or state-wide activities:

- See Common Guidelines;
- The application of the Phase 1B "Stated or Special Conclaves" section above shall be observed

Drill Team organizational or instructional meetings:

- See Common Guidelines;
- In-person drill team meetings are permitted, provided the application of the Phase 1B "Stated or Special Conclaves" section above is observed

Drill team practice and other activities:

- Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing while drilling, drill practices are NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1B;

Other Division, Regional or State-Wide activities:

-In-person Participation Grand Commandery Conclaves, Re-consecrations, Commandery Orders at York Rite Festivals, Receptions, Parades, Commandery in-person Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, social events and any similar related activities IS PERMITTED in Phase 1B, provided the Common Guidelines are observed

Travel:

-All non-essential travel for Commandery purposes is NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1B;
-Essential Travel as assigned by the Grand Commander is permitted, provided the Common Guidelines are observed

Ritual work:

-Due to the close physical contact required and the inability to maintain proper social distancing, ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates is NOT PERMITTED in Phase 1B, with the exception of the temporary short form of the Illustrious Order of the Red Cross and the temporary short form of the Order of Malta, as provided by Grand Encampment. These temporary scripts are available from the Grand Recorder. There is, as of yet, no temporary form for the Order of the Temple, and thus it is not yet authorized by the Grand Encampment in this or any more restrictive phase of reopening (Phase 0, Phase 1A)

Phase 2

Federal Recommendations:

-No restrictions on number of people, as long as Federal, State and Local restrictions are satisfied;
-Large venues can operate under limited, physical distancing protocols;
-No Travel restrictions;
-Vulnerable persons may resume social interactions but should observe precautionary measures

Applications to the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas:**Stated or Special Conclaves:**

-All In-person conclaves (stated or special) may resume;
-Social distancing and PPE are not required, but are highly recommended, especially for those individuals who consider themselves to be "vulnerable";
-Meals or snacks may be served either before or after conclaves;
-Lady's programs are permitted and encouraged to resume;
-Any lady who considers herself to be "vulnerable" should observe social distancing and PPE protocols;
-No restrictions on arrival or departure times

District, regional or state-wide activities:

-Meetings may resume, including meals and lady's programs;
-Any Sir Knight or lady who considers themselves to be "vulnerable" should continue to follow Social Distancing and PPE protocols

Drill Team meetings and practices:

- All drill team meetings and practices may resume.;
- Grand Commandery Conclaves, Re-consecrations, York Rite Festivals, Receptions, Parades, Commandery in-person Religious Observances, Posting of Colors, Casket Honor Guards, Military Balls, social events and any similar related activities may resume;
- Any Sir Knight or lady who considers themselves to be “vulnerable” should continue to follow Social Distancing and PPE protocols

Travel:

- All travel for Commandery purposes may resume with no restrictions, assuming that this travel is not into a more restrictive Texas COVID region as defined in the Addendum to this General Order

Ritual work:

- Ritual work associated with the conferral of any of the Commandery orders on candidates may resume;
- Some modifications to procedures will no doubt have to be observed. Further recommendations will be provided at a later date;
- Any Sir Knight who considers himself to be “vulnerable” should continue to observe Social Distancing and PPE protocols

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



The Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas
Office of the Grand Commander
Amarillo, Texas
November 27, 2020

ADDENDUM to GENERAL ORDER NO. 7, SERIES 2020-2021

Subject: Reopening Schedule for Constituent Commanderies of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas

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

Greetings, Sir Knights:

In accordance with the provisions delineated in Texas General Order #7, "Reopening the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Texas," following is the Phased Reopening Schedule for Texas Commanderies.

This schedule will be revisited, and potentially revised, at the end of December, 2020, and every two weeks subsequent. Depending on the current state of the pandemic in the various hospital regions across Texas, as well as other Federal, State, Local, and masonic factors, Commanderies may be moved up or down on the schedule, relative to risk. This schedule will remain in effect until superseded.

PHASE 0

All Commanderies

PHASE 1A

None

PHASE 1B

None

PHASE 2

None