

Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Virginia



<https://vatemplars.org>

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Grand Commander's Welcome Message

Issued: May 7, 2023

To: All Sir Knights of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia
wheresoever dispersed

Christian Greetings and Salutations Sir Knights,

I want to thank you for giving me this opportunity to serve you as Grand Commander this chivalric year. Your elected Grand Line Officers and I have worked diligently over the past two years to bring a new level of energy, trust, and transparency to enhance all operations of the Grand Commandery. We have implemented new programs that provide Templar Leadership and Education to our members. Our **Regional Leadership Conferences (RLC's)** provide an opportunity for you to interact with your elected Grand Officers in a smaller setting and to learn about the goals and objectives outlined in our five-year Long-Range Plan. Our **Talent Development and Transformation Initiative** allows for the Grand Commandery to identify, develop, and mentor our Sir Knights, thus creating a cadre of future leaders to choose from. We have restructured the Grand Commandery to function as a business organization implementing many internal

controls, span of control, accountability standards, and best business practices. As a first step, we developed, defined, and implemented duties, responsibilities, oversight, and reporting requirements, similar to a job description for each office. We refer to this as ***“The Matrix.”*** Each of your elected Grand Officers now have direct oversight of specific Grand Commandery operations and committees. This will provide the necessary hands-on experience and gain the understanding of the many responsibilities they will inherit as they advance through the Grand Line. Becoming the Grand Commander comes with a great deal of responsibility. Operational, legal, and financial decisions are made every day that affect the Grand Commandery, our future leaders, and each of you. There is no substitute for education, training, and experience when it comes to running any organization. We now have a much clearer vision with a better-defined path forward.

We have created continuity in our advancing Grand Line that will allow us to achieve results by measuring the effectiveness of our actions. These goals can be found and described in our five year Long Range Plan. Please take time to read this plan in its entirety and become familiar with it. Our goals are:

- **Governance** – Enhance the Grand Commandery of Virginia’s operational effectiveness at all levels that promote accountability, participation, predictability, and transparency
- **Membership Enhancement** – The five “R’s” of an effective membership Program are; Recruitment, Retention, Restoration, Reactivation, and Recognition
- **Templar Leadership and Education** - Exemplifying the Servant Leadership model that promotes a sense of Christian dedication, a positive attitude, proper work ethic and being responsive to the needs of the Grand Commandery, and make the investment in developing our members
- **Ritualistic Improvement and Portrayal** – The Order of the Temple is said to be the most impressive and life changing experience in all of Masonry. We must understand the importance of “The Candidates Experience” and that first impressions leave a lasting memory

- **Chivalric Philanthropies** – Why are we Sir Knights? Our purpose is to feed the hungry, cloth the naked, and bind up the wounds of the inflicted. We do this by promoting and supporting our charities; The Knight Templar Eye Foundation, The Holy Land Pilgrimage Fund, The Educational Foundation, and the Baldwin Brown Fellowship Program
- **Religious Observances** – Being a Christian fraternity, we must pay special attention to defend, and give preference to, our Christian Religion. We vow to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and bind up the wounds of the afflicted. Religious Freedom Day, Good Friday, Easter Sunday, and Ascension Day are so very important to observe. We should all reflect on what these observances mean to us.
- **Masonic Youth** - Masonic Youth Organizations not only need our support but deserve it as well. DeMolay International, Job's Daughters International, and International Order of Rainbow for Girls have been instrumental in forming good character and instilling good citizenship in young people for many years. Our Masonic Youth Organizations serve a critical role but are all too often under supported
- **York Rite Unity** - How good and pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity! One of the enduring principal objectives of Grand Commandery is to bring about Virginia York Rite Unity. That goal requires more than mere lip service – if York Rite Masons are to not only survive but also to prosper, it is incumbent upon each of us to support each other
- **Information Technology (IT) Modernization** - –Develop, implement, and manage the delivery of quality IT services through Information Technology Service Management (ITSM) framework that meet the needs of the Grand Commandery and improve organizational performance through better IT delivery

Traditionally, General Order No. 1, has been posted on our website available for all public to see. It included a comprehensive list of our elected and appointed officers our Lady's name, home address, email, and phone contact information. It also included a detailed list of dates, times, and locations for official visits and other scheduled events. I have never been a proponent of this personal information being

available for public consumption. I congratulate our IT Committee for developing and launching our new website that contains a *“member only portal.”* All of the **traditional General Order No. 1** information is now contained in this secure member portal for Sir Knights to access. You will also be able to access all official documents, visits, and events posted on the website calendar. Our **new website** will serve as the portal for **official source authority** for all things approved and endorsed by the Grand Commandery. Individual Sir Knights that send emails and any other correspondences out on their own **are not to be considered** as “official, endorsed, or approved” “correspondences of the Grand Commandery.

Remember your obligations in the Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason. We took those obligations on the Volume of Sacred Law, sealed each one of them. Remember the lessons taught in the Royal Arch Chapter and Council degrees and how we should apply them to our daily life. Remember The Commandery Orders. The orders represent a new line of Masonic thought and experience, in that they no longer refer to Ancient Craft Masonry, but to ideals and practices of ancient Chivalry and Christianity. The first Commandery order, The Illustrious Order of The Red Cross, presents the story of the Jewish Prince, Zerubbabel, and his efforts to secure permission of the Persian King Darius to rebuild King Solomon’s Temple. The next order, Knight of Malta, is a departure from Masonry based on the Old Testament and is the first Christian Order. Here, the candidate represents a knightly warrior of the Crusades and is preparing for a trip to the Holy Land. The last order is that of *Order of The Temple or Knight Templar, the crowning glory of York Rite Masonry*. Again, in this totally Christian Order, the candidate represents a knightly warrior who desires to unite with a Commandery of Knights Templar during the era of the Crusades. After several trials to test his faith, courage, and humility, he is rewarded by achieving his desire.

I ask that you reflect on these. There should be no confusion or doubt of how we should conduct ourselves. Be the example of what our obligations teach. Keep in mind what is important and what really matters. Are you keeping your passions in due bounds? And what about those wages? Are you earning them? Don’t just go through the motions, if you want to be a part of the success story of the Grand Commandery, then walk the walk.

I look forward to serving with you this chivalric year. I encourage you to attend the *Regional Leadership Conferences*, and to get involved, this is not a spectator sport. Read and understand the Long-Range Plan; goals, objectives, and actionable items of the Grand Commandery. Get involved, be a good volunteer, and go the extra mile. Always remember, why you became a Freemason and where were you first made a Freemason?

Always strive to be the Best Mason in the Room!

Courteously,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "DM Haas". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Sir Knight Dennis Mark Haas, KCT

Grand Commander 2023-2024

Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia