



Grand Commandery of Virginia - Attention To Orders!¹



¹ When I was at West Point, each day we had unofficial communications from the leadership at meals that began with "Attention To Orders". I stole the title for this unofficial communications channel.



From the Apartment of the Grand Commander –
June 2025

Sir Knights,

Warm and fraternal greetings to each of you, wheresoever dispersed. Welcome to the second of what we intend to be a monthly communication from me to the Sir Knights of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar in Virginia. I pray that this message is finding each of you and your families and loved ones well and blessed.

This message comes to you at the conclusion of a very busy and eventful month of May. Having been installed as your REGC at the start of the month, we began almost immediately making visits to the various constituent Commanderies. Turner Ashby was first where we installed SK Paul Lockhart as the DDGC for District 9 as he had to leave the Grand Commandery early due to a family emergency. Soon after that, we kicked off the Official Visits for the year with District 6, followed by District 7 a week later. More to follow on that. I was also privileged to visit with the Sir Knights of Old Dominion Number 11 where we celebrated Ascension Day together in the George Washington National Masonic Memorial. Frankly, I just about cannot think of a better location for such an important event. I hope that all of you had the chance to gather and recall the events around our Savior leaving Earth for the last time, having it proclaimed that in like manner He would return.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about our Official Visits so far. District 6 was first up and was assigned to confer the Order of the Red Cross. I will state without equivocation that this was an outstanding visit and conferral. SK Mark Day, the DDGC and the Sir Knights of District 6 went out of their way to make this a memorable visit and put on a good, full form

conferral of the Order for 3 candidates. I learned from one of the members that it had been over 30 years since they had done a full form conferral and, frankly, I could not have been more proud of their efforts. When it was over, one of the cast members said to me “That was great! We have to do it again!” To which I could only respond and say amen brother. Much to my delight, we will be awarding a Ritualistic Proficiency Ribbon at Grand Commandery as a result of this visit.

We followed that up with a visit to District 7 the next weekend where we conferred the Order of Malta on 7 candidates. SK William Crosscup, the DDGC and the Sir Knights of District 7 went completely over the top. SK Jeff Hedges provided suggested musical accompaniments for various parts of the order which D7 incorporated in the Order. There is no doubt for me but that the 7 candidates had a very moving experience as they prepare for the next step of their Templar journey, the Order of the Temple at District 8. Incidentally, District 7 advised that it had been some time since they conferred the Order of Malta in full form as well. Also, we will be awarding two additional Ritualistic Proficiency Ribbons as a result of this visit.

This, of course, brings me to a bit of an explanation for why I have requested that each District confer a specific Order during my visits. I personally love our ritual, our ceremonies, and believe that the more we see them the more we each grow and develop in our love for our fraternity as well. It seems to me that there has been a growing intimidation or hesitance to confer the Orders in full form, relying instead on the more expedient short form versions. While the short form satisfies the requirement, I think it’s a poor substitute for the beauty and meaning of a full form conferral. All three Orders are just a little bit different, all three teach a different moral lesson, and all three lessons are necessary for a fully equipped Sir Knight. By asking each District in a region to confer a different Order, we will have Regional Orders Committees (ROCs) and we will not have candidates having to wait long periods of time to receive the Orders. Further, familiarity will remove the intimidation factor and just as the SKs of

the two districts said, we will enjoy doing conferrals and look forward to doing them more often. Hearing my fraters express those opinions was worth two days in the saddle to be there. I hope you feel the same.

Another goal is to give the candidates an experience they will not soon forget. All of us remember the Order of the Temple. It is designed to be a very moving experience for you as you once again express your commitment to our faith. Think back on your first two orders...I lay better than average odds that those of us who received them in short form did not have the same reaction. I believe that we can make the first two orders meaningful and memorable when we confer them in full form. Hopefully, we will endue the candidates with such a commitment that we do not suffer the issue of the proverbial “trap door” syndrome, where our fraters seem to just drift away after receiving their Orders.

At the risk of beating a dead horse, I’ll close it down by saying that it is not lost on me that the efforts put into conferring the Orders in full form are significant, and as stated, I really appreciate it. One of my favorite quotes comes from Teddy Roosevelt, who said “Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs, even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy much nor suffer much, because they live in the gray twilight that knows not victory nor defeat.” Districts 6 and 7, well done! Thank you! District 8, I doubt not that you will rise to the occasion. I’m looking forward to seeing you on 12 July. And, for the record, I have every confidence that the rest of the Districts will likewise acquit themselves well as the year progresses.

June finds us in the middle of St. John the Baptist season. I’ve been asked to deliver some appropriate remarks at one of our local lodges. What a great opportunity for each of us to have a stronger connection with our Blue Lodges. I know that we do not discuss “religion” in Lodge, but in talking about John the Baptist, we cannot help but talk about his importance as the forerunner of Jesus, and who better to talk about that than the men who

have sworn to serve under the banner of our Lord and Savior? It gives us a chance to be seen in the Lodges and maybe, just maybe, we will generate some interest for some of them to become members of our body as well. I personally always carry electronic petitions just in case. If your Blue Lodge has not asked you to speak yet, perhaps volunteering to deliver a talk about St. John the Baptist will give you and our fraternity a bit of exposure that you had not previously considered. Also, it's not too early to start campaigning to give the program for St. John the Evangelist Day in December. Just a thought...

I'll mention again, in case you haven't seen it, our video introduced towards the end of our Grand Conclave, "Who Are The Knights Templar – Faithful To Our Vows". I commissioned this video to highlight who we are and what we do, with the underlying theme for the year, Faithful To Our Vows. We have it on our YouTube channel now and I encourage you to take a look. You can find it here: <https://youtu.be/pGB4PBXVJLY>. How about having our brothers from the Blue Lodge or Companions of the Royal Arch take a look as well? We just might encourage some of them to join our ranks. Few things would make me happier than having to ask our Awards Committee to order more membership awards. 😊 Let me know what you think.

Yours In Christian and Knightly Courtesy,

Bill



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Grand Commander 2025-2026



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Grand Commandery of Virginia 2025 - 2026 Leadership Team



From L to R:

SK William Jonathan Sirman, DDGC, District 1
SK Brian Dean Joos, DDGC, District 2
SK Timothy Anderson Dahlman, DDGC, District 3
SK Daniel James Carter, DDGC, District 4
SK William (Bill) Searcy, REGC
SK Eric Dale Swortzel, DDGC, District 5
SK Mark Ronald Day, DDGC, District 6
SK William Arthur Crosscup, V, DDGC, District 7
SK Joseph Brandon Hale, DDGC, District 8
SK Paul William Lockhart, DDGC, District 9

Proverbs 16:9 - A man's heart plans his way, But the LORD directs his steps.



UPCOMING EVENTS² – June 2025

- 7 – Grand Masters DeMolay Class – Luray Caverns
- 21 – PHA Coordination Meeting – MAHOVA
- 23 – St. John The Baptist Day – Spotsylvania Lodge
- 27 – Rainbow Girls Grand Session – Harrisonburg

² Note: This is the “Official” schedule of events. It does not include unofficial events and Commandery visits.