

Back to Basics in Templar Masonry

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Grand Commander, Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of Virginia 2020*

Greeting Fratres,

As my precursors, it is my most ardent desire to revitalize, reinvigorate, and move Chivalric Masonry forward in a positive way. And after several years of observing templar activities and events throughout Virginia, I came to the realization we must be imbued with the spirit of Freemasonry, especially Christian Freemasonry, if we are to keep the Order strong and active. Templar Masonry in Virginia must change and I found inspiration in the words from Socrates: *“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”*

I began to plan the 2019-2020 Chivalric Year when I was elected Grand Warder in 2012. There were two Masonic Books, a Masonic Pamphlet, and a Masonic Poem on my thoughts as I progressed throughout the Grand Line:

- *Back to Basics* by Michael Retziaff, a collection of talks taken from years of study and reflection on the concepts of Freemasonry and their application toward the individual Mason.
- *Let Your Work Become Your Mark* by Stewart Miner, a collection of short talks given by the Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons of Virginia.
- *Charting the Course* by Wilber Brucker, Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment Knights Templar 1964-1967, a collection of talks on the purpose and objective of Templary.
- *Worthy the Name of Sir Knight* by Ella Wheeler Wilcox, the only Knights Templar poem she wrote and has been used by Masonic Orders all over the World at many distinguished gatherings.

My Pin, Theme, Coin, and *Grand Commander's Guidebook for District Deputy Grand Commanders and Constituent Officers* are all linked to those works—I call them “***Back to Basics in Templar Masonry.***”

First, leadership in Virginia’s Constituent Commanderies turns over in March while it occurs in May for Grand Commandery. It is hard to lead when Constituent Commanders have their programs established before the Grand Commander takes office. This Conference and the *Grand Commander's Guidebook* are the first steps to prepare to lead Virginia’s Templar Masonry.

Second, today’s Templary consists of men from all walks of life, but many do not know the Knights Templar purpose nor what they do? Masons are busy people and need to be convinced that committing their time and talent to a Knights Templar Commandery has

value. The *Grand Commander's Guidebook* has thirteen small papers relevant to our purpose and values that can be used as Commandery Programs.

Third, to revitalize, reinvigorate, and move Chivalric Masonry forward we, ourselves, must be completely "sold" on "our product." Templary stands for the highest ideas of Christianity—it represents the noblest in humanity; it reveals Christianity in action! The *2019-2020 Program and Schedule* includes Official District Visits as well as visits to every Virginia Commandery and visits to several Symbolic Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters selling our "product" – the movement of Christian Templar Masonry forward in a positive way.

In developing tomorrow's Grand Commander's Guidebook, the materials from previous District Deputy Grand Commander Manuals have been updated, expanded, and intended to assist the District Deputy Grand Commanders **AND** Constituent Officers in promoting our Long-Range Goals and improving the state of Templar Masonry in Virginia. Please, feel free to share it with your Sir Knights.

This Guidebook has been separated into five (5) areas. Part I **Sets the Course** for the 2019-2020 Chivalric Year; Part II applies to **District Deputy Grand Commanders**; Part III applies to **Constituent Commandery Officers**; Part IV provides information relevant to **Chivalric Masonry**; and Part V is the **Epilogue**, a concluding area of general information of interest to Knights Templar.

To revitalize, reinvigorate, and move Chivalric Masonry forward we must implement a team-oriented approach to the business environment and processes used by Grand Commandery and our Constituent Commanderies that provides a broad base of information and communication to spread the workload and set goals for a successful year, achieving a positive impact on the future of our Commanderies and Chivalric Masonry in Virginia.

If I am elected and installed, it my intention to lead the revitalizing and reinvigoration of Virginia's Templar Craft. I believe an effective offense begins with solid preparation and, over the last five years, I have been preparing for the 2019-2020 Chivalric Year. The Grand Commander's Guidebook is focused on opportunities for successes; the 2019-2020 program and schedule were developed on the need for self-discipline and visibility; and the Virginia Knight Templar constituency must be satisfied. You should plan on having more active Committeemen, especially in the planning and execution, communication, and membership areas.

As District Deputy Grand Commanders, you are on the tip of the spear within your District. It is important to lead in revitalizing and reinvigorating Templary in your District. You must be visible throughout your District, not only in the Commanderies but also the Symbolic Lodges and Royal Arch Chapters; be available to your District Team, the Eminent Commanders, Recorders, and the Sir Knights. You must be knowledgeable of the Constitution and Statutes of the Grand Commandery Knights Templar of Virginia

and the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America. Remember, you are the Commander's eyes and ears of your District – visit each Commandery in your District as often as possible, but at least once per quarter

Leadership is at the heart of success, a well-balanced team, with differing opinions, experiences, knowledge, and dreams for the future. Inspiration will allow Grand Commandery and Constituent Commanderies to move forward in a dynamic way. Reliable and timely communications must be embodied in an accurate implementation of our actions to revitalize, reinvigorate, and move Chivalric Masonry forward in a positive way.

We can achieve success: in retaining our membership and growing; improving the state of the ritual and tactics, particularly with respect to the Orders and Asylum Ceremonies; increasing attendance at all our functions both within and without the Asylum; increasing support of Knight Templar philanthropic endeavors; continuing to promote the cause of our Masonic youth; and strive for unity within the York Rite. I am confident that by working together, we can and will prevail!

In His service and yours; Fraternal regards; and Courteously,

Benjamin F. Hill

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