

GUIDELINES
f o r
RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

*“Faith without works
is dead!”*



*“Be not weary
in well-doing.”*

Committee on Religious Activities
Grand Encampment of Knights Templar
of the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

Today one cannot read, hear or see any news medium without encountering the word "militant." We are all familiar with the activities characteristic of some of those who seek, by almost any means, revolutionary changes in the political, economic and social life of our nation. Even our established religious institutions are under pressure from within by groups of such "militant" nature.

But long before this contemporary phenomenon Templary itself was a *militant* organization. It remains militant, and must continue to be so if it is to be true to its historic heritage. Otherwise there is nothing more than an archaic quaintness to the declaration of its own members, each of whom has vowed to "wield my sword" in defense of certain individuals as well as in defense of one specific institution — the Church of Jesus Christ!

There is a difference in being militant for destruction and a militancy dedicated to preservation. The Knight Templar is militant in defense of the Church as the body of which "the Great Captain of our Salvation," our Lord Jesus Christ, is the head.

Thus Templary and the Church are inseparable, the former supporting, supplementing, implementing the latter, never being a substitute for or in competition with the one institution which gives Templary its meaning and reason for existence. Templary can no more separate itself from the defense of the Church and yet remain Templary, than the individual Knight Templar can abandon his Christian faith and yet remain a member of our Valiant and Magnanimous Order!

But faith is not mere belief! *Faith is action, acting* on the basis of what one believes. Thus the Biblical warning that "faith without works is dead."

It is hoped that this brochure may be helpful in suggestions it makes for Commanderies of Knights Templar to act out the faith they profess. The ideas herein may well engender others, wherever there is imagination and creativity.

But let one question continue to gnaw at every body of Templary — how Christian, and how *militant* can it be, unless there is within every Grand Commandery, and in every Constituent and Subordinate Commandery as well, a Committee on Religious Activities?

SOME BASIC "DO'S" AND "DON'TS"

1. DO give thought, imagination, time and ingenuity to planning and executing new, creative religious activities in the Commandery. DON'T neglect Templary's traditional observances at Christmastide, Eastertide, Ascension-tide, but remember always that "new occasions teach new duties."
2. This is "the ecumenical age." When inviting clergymen to attend social affairs or other open activities of Commanderies, DO show an awareness of the ecumenical progress of our generation by avoiding any denomination emphasis.
3. DO publicize religious activities *before and after* they occur. Follow the suggestions in the Grand Encampment Guidelines for Publicity and Public Relations.
4. DO consult the clergy of your locality as to what the Commandery may do to assist them and their Churches. DON'T try to "use" the clergy to promote the Commandery.
5. When a frater has departed this life, unless the family has requested otherwise and the clergyman agrees, DO have *separate services*. Remember Templary provides for two services: a memorial service and a burial service. Because many clergymen are hypersensitive in such matters, even those who are Masons and Knights Templar, DO try to have the Templar Memorial Service the evening prior to the religious rites of the Church, preferable at the funeral home.
6. If both Templar and ecclesiastical services are to be held, with one following the other immediately, DO let the Church service be last. This is especially important if the Templar service is the one to be used at the grave. At the very least, have the clergyman give the final benediction.
7. If there is a choice, let the Commandery give the Templar Memorial Service at the funeral home the night before the funeral, and let the committal at the grave be handled by the representative of the church.
8. In a formal, structured Church Service where Templars and their families are invited guests, if there are to be any introductions DO give the presiding clergyman well in advance the correct names and proper titles of Templary personnel. DON'T assume the clergyman knows all about Templary – DO put brief, clear information in writing in his hands well before such occasions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES COMMITTEES IN GRAND COMMANDERIES

1. Every Grand Commandery should have a Committee on Religious Activities which is not at all the same as a Committee on Necrology, etc. This Committee, in consultation with the minister of the host Church, should plan well in advance the Church Service at every Grand Commandery Conclave. If the Eminent Grand Prelate is not a member of the Committee (as he should be), consult him as an advisor.
2. The Grand Commandery Committee on Religious Activities should pay careful attention to every issue of the *Knight Templar Magazine* selecting from each issue examples of religious activities successfully promulgated through Templary, and *at least quarterly* call these to the attention of Commanderies within its jurisdiction.
3. The Grand Commandery Committee on Religious Activities should receive monthly, or at least quarterly, reports of activities of a religious nature which have been sponsored by or have taken place in the Constituent Commanderies. The Grand Commandery Committee should *not* assume that the local Commandery has reported these to the editor of the *Knight Templar Magazine* but should itself report them. It is better for the national news organ to have duplicate reports than none at all.
4. To further York Rite Unity, the Grand Commandery Committee on Religious Activities should attempt cooperative endeavors with comparable groups in other York Rite bodies, on the state or district level. There are some occasions, such as St. John's Day, when Commanderies and Symbolic Lodges can together sponsor and participate in meaningful religious activities. Another example would be on Reformation Sunday, the last Sunday in October, when Commanderies and Royal Arch Chapters can combine for a relevant observance.
5. The Grand Commandery Committee should arrange for and execute a fitting Memorial Service for departed fraters at every Grand Commandery Conclave. But let it be positive in tone, *celebrating* life's final accomplishment — the achievement of immortality. Use a choir from a local church, if possible, to provide music which is a ringing affirmation of our belief in eternal life.
6. The Grand Commandery Committee, or the Grand Prelate, should send a card of sympathy to the surviving family of a deceased frater, the Recorder or Prelate of the Constituent Commandery sending AT ONCE the proper information such as name of the frater, name and address of the next of kin, etc. (Appropriate cards may be procured at nominal cost from Church supply houses, but better to print one's own.)

SUGGESTIONS FOR RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES COMMITTEES IN CONSTITUENT COMMANDERIES

1. If local conditions make it difficult or impossible to meet on Christmas day for the traditional observance in the Asylum, schedule such a service as close as possible to Christmas Day, but such a service may appropriately be held at any time during the Christian season of Advent. Invite clergy.
2. Consider, as a variation, the scheduling of a suitable activity for Epiphany, or "Twelfth Night." This commemorates the arrival of the Wise Men, and is an excellent opportunity for special programming, perhaps in cooperation with other Masonic bodies.
3. In January each year there is an Octave (or Week) of Prayers for Christian Unity sponsored by interdenominational agencies. Contact your local or area Ministerial Association or Council of Churches and ascertain if one or more of these services can be sponsored by the Commandery, perhaps even held in the Asylum. The Commandery could well precede the service with a dinner, to which local clergy and their wives could be invited.
4. Contact your local Ministerial Association or Council of Churches and determine if the Commandery can participate in some significant way in one or more of a series of special Lenten services. Perhaps one of these could be held in the Asylum. Again, here is an opportunity to invite local clergy and their wives.
5. Encourage attendance at the Grand Encampment Easter Sunrise Service at Arlington, Virginia, by publicity well in advance. For those unable to go, consider one of two things: (A) Hold the traditional Easter Service in the Asylum followed by breakfast; (B) approach well in advance of the date your local Ministerial Association or Council of Churches and determine if the Commandery can participate in a Union Sunrise Service in some significant way. If (B) is chosen, the traditional Templar Easter Service in the Asylum could be scheduled at another time during Eastertide — perhaps at the Vesper Hour on Easter Sunday late afternoon.
6. Sponsor an Ascension Day Service under Commandery auspices, inviting local clergymen to participate. The service may be held in the Asylum, in a local Church, in a local park, etc.
7. Remembering that the Christian Church was born at Pentecost, sponsor a Pentecost service in the Asylum, inviting the community and asking local clergy to participate. Or, as a variant, conduct such a service in local or area institutions such as nursing homes, orphanages, jails, etc.

8. Contact local or area patriotic organizations and arrange for Commandery participation in Memorial Day Services late in May. Conduct such a service at a Veterans Hospital, if there is one in your community.
9. Using the theme, "One Nation Under God" or "In God We Trust," sponsor or participate in an outdoor religious service in conjunction with the observance of Independence Day. Encourage participation by local clergy or area churches.
10. Most communities have union services for the observance of Thanksgiving. Ascertain through your local Ministerial Association or Council of Churches what opportunity there can be for Commandery participation. Such public exposure always helps the image of Templary.
11. Conduct a campaign in the community and especially among the membership to participate in charitable activities following the admonition of the Lord to feed the hungry and cloth the naked.
12. Consider sponsoring Sunday afternoon Vesper Services in the following:
 - A. Hospital chapels.
 - B. Convalescent Homes.
 - C. Veterans Hospitals
 - D. Jails.
 - E. Homes for Unwed Mothers and similar institutions.
13. Conduct annually an impressive Memorial Service for departed fraters of your Commandery. Consider joining with other local Masonic groups for a combined Memorial Service. Rotate the address, if any, among the clergy of the community, or the music among the church choirs in the community.
14. If it is not in competition with a local Church's Maundy Thursday celebration, consider holding a service of The Feast of the Paschal Lamb, especially if there is no Scottish Rite observance in the area.
15. Consider having the Commandery participate in some meaningful way in a community's Union Good Friday Tre Ore (Three Hour) Service. For a variation, perhaps such a service could be held in the Asylum. Invite local clergy to conduct the various portions of the service, if it is held in the Asylum. If in a local church, ask for ways the Commandery can assist.
16. If a Union Good Friday Service is scheduled in a community at the traditional hours from noon until three o'clock, the Commandery can take the lead in asking merchants to close for those three hours.

17. Sponsor a luncheon or dinner once each year for the local or area clergy and their wives and children. Present a program which does not involve the ministers in having to speak. They will be glad to be relieved!
18. Supply for all Masonic bodies place mats or napkins with a variety of "table graces" imprinted thereon.
19. Celebrate the Commandery's birthday each year, or especially significant anniversaries of the Commandery, by asking each frater to bring his clergyman with him as a special or honored guest.
20. Attend each year in a body the church of the Eminent Commander as an expression of the fraternal regard for him.
21. Constantly encourage at every Conclave of the Commandery the necessity of every able-bodied frater's being in his proper place at his own Church each Sunday morning.
22. At meetings when no Degree work is involved, a Meditation can be given on some aspect of the Birth, Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord. The Prelate can be in charge, but many laymen are quite capable of presenting such meditations since they have insights unique and different from those of the ordained clergy. The Book of Acts and the New Testament Epistles can be used productively in addition to the Gospels.
23. Sponsor a forum or panel discussion of local or area clergymen on some such topic as "The Mission of The Church Today."
24. Consider providing Hymnals or other needed items for new or impoverished Churches in the community. A bookplate showing presentation by the Commandery can be placed in each Hymnal.
25. Just as the Christian may be "the only Bible someone will ever read," so the Commandery at its Conclaves should frequently remind each frater that the individual Knight Templar, not only when he is seen in public as such, but in the organizations to which he belongs and at all other times, he is "the walking bill-board of Templary." His ethics should be unimpeachable; his conduct always exemplary.
26. Once annually schedule an "Early Morning Praise Service and Breakfast," perhaps on a Saturday or Sunday morning. (Annual Praise Services have been conducted for several decades by Dieu le Veut Commandery No. 45, Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania.)

27. When any frater is elected to a Church office of importance, or is chosen to head a Church project in the community, hold a special "Appreciation Night" in his honor, inviting his own clergyman to participate.
28. Consider making available to the community appropriate Easter cards of greeting, perhaps giving samples to the local clergy with the suggestion that if they think them worthy they may announce their availability in local church publications.
29. Through releases to area newspapers, radio stations, etc. sponsor a "Keep Christ in Christmas" emphasis.
30. Ascertain what can be done to support the needs of young people's groups in local Churches, or such movements as Youth for Christ, etc.
31. Give to each newly-created Knight Templar a New Testament.
32. Ascertain from local clergy or the Council of Churches the possibility of the Commandery's sponsoring a joint observance of World Wide Communion Sunday (the first Sunday in October), the service to be conducted by ordained clergy and perhaps using the liturgy of The Church of South India.
33. On Universal Bible Sunday (the second Sunday in December), the Commandery can sponsor an observance and collect contributions to the work of The American Bible Society.
34. Follow your own ideas! Be creative! "Write your own ticket!" This list is intended to be merely suggestive, not comprehensive or exclusive. But **DO SOMETHING!**
35. Suggested Scripts for Religious Services, another Grand Encampment Guideline, contains suggested services for Christmas, Easter and Ascension. It is available from the office of the Grand Recorder.