

The Knights Templar Christmas Observance



NORTH CAROLINA

**Grand Commandery of Knights
Templar of North Carolina**

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Introduction

The Christmas Observance is a traditional public ceremony held by Commanderies of Knights Templar in which traditional toasts are given, along with greetings from the Grand Commandery as well as other neighboring Commanderies and other Masonic bodies. In addition to this, the ceremony often includes scriptural readings and singing.

As Knights Templar, we are charged with celebrating important events in the life and Mission of our Savior. Among the most important is commemorating the Birth of Christ and the Christmas Season. Many of our Commanderies have annual Christmas Observances, of varying size and content. All should have some form of Observance.

The Christmas Observance is a Templar function that can be a wonderful Public Relations tool that not only emphasizes and advertises Templar Masonry among the Craft but can be a beacon to those who do not realize that there is a place in Masonry for Jesus Christ! Most Masonic detractors attack our Lodge system of Freemasonry on the grounds that, since we respect many religions, we are non-Christian or even anti-Christian. The Christmas Observance is a way to prove the lie of those detractors.

Some Commanderies also will have speakers and/or musical entertainment as part of the program. While it is acceptable to use the Observance Ceremony as the entirety of the program, Commanderies can include some additional ceremonial formalities to the program, such as the following:

1. **Welcome** – Typically the presiding Commander will begin the ceremony by welcoming guests, members, and dignitaries. This is typically a very brief initial greeting, followed by calling everyone to order for the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.
2. **Invocation** – The Prelate or Pastor / Minister will deliver the opening invocation.
3. **Pledge of Allegiance** – The Commander can lead this, but it is a great opportunity for a member of the National Sojourners to deliver the “Toast to the Flag” in conjunction with the Pledge.
4. **Introductions** – Officers and dignitaries in attendance are introduced. This is done either by the Commander or someone he appoints. See **Attachment A** for recommendations for precedence for representatives of various Masonic bodies.
5. **Christmas Observance Ceremony** (see below)
6. **Musical Program / Entertainment** (optional but highly recommended)
7. **Christmas Sermon or Message** (optional but highly recommended)
8. **Benediction** – Closing Prayer by Prelate or Pastor / Minister
9. **Dismissal** – Customarily delivered to the Sir Knights who have been called to attention by the Commander, followed by an invitation to all for refreshments (if served).

This handbook is intended to provide a framework for a service that Commanderies can both adopt and adapt to suit their needs and venues. The scripts and attachments can be used to create your own traditions; flexibility is built in to allow for individual situations and environments.

Each individual Commandery is free to determine how the celebration is to be observed. It can be as simple as holding a brief service during the December Assembly of your Commandery. It can be as elaborate as your resources of active Knights, funds, and facilities will permit.

If you are just beginning to plan your Commandery’s first Christmas Observance, start simple just to establish the tradition, then year after year, you can add components as you like to make it bigger or just keep it simple – it’s all up to you and your Sir Knights to decide what you’d like to establish and maintain as a tradition!

Best Practices for Preparation

1. Get the date set on the calendar as early as possible. The month of December tends to be a very busy month, and you will be competing with other events for everyone's time, no matter what date you pick. It is best to select a date and lock it in and get the word out early. A common conflicting date is the first Saturday in December which is when the Grand Master elect is officially installed by the Grand Lodge of North Carolina.
2. Regarding music: If you plan on having performing arts or musical entertainment, remember that these performers are always in high demand. Be sure to book them **before August, mid-September at the latest**.
 - a. Many local high schools and/or colleges have glee clubs, acapella groups, etc. that will LOVE to provide music for something like this. Usually a small honorarium, like \$100.00 or \$200.00 is adequate and appreciated to help their travel funds – especially if you feed them some decent refreshments! Anything that gets a Christian message into our local educational institutions is icing on the cake!
 - b. If you plan to provide music so all can sing, please, make certain that it is printed in a large enough format to be easily read without the need for a magnifying glass! Most of the more popular and traditional carols have tunes that are well known, so only the words without the musical score may be necessary for singing along if those are chosen. These can be printed as inserts into the bulletin (See **Attachment C** for a sample bulletin) to be handed out to guests.
 - c. If you plan to do a sing-along, please have some musical accompaniment or the results will be less than satisfactory.
3. If you plan on inviting a minister or pastor to deliver a Christmas message, also book this as early as possible same as with any performing artists.
4. Secure commitments from Sir Knights in your Commandery who have complete uniforms, as well as assigning roles for support, prep, and cleanup teams. Make sure everyone knows what to do and when to do it. Create a timeline with deadlines for each task to be completed and one person assigned to each task as the owner. That owner doesn't necessarily have to do that task all by himself, he's just the one who is held accountable for getting it done. See **Attachment B** for a sample timeline/task plan,
5. Send out invitations to Grand York Rite (particularly Grand Commandery) officers, as well as any other Masonic bodies, and other special guests early, **no later than mid-September**. Remember, their schedules are busy as well, so you may want to get them to RSVP as early as possible (**late October** is reasonable in most cases) to help with your presentation and arrangements for the event.
6. Consider invitations to city or municipal leaders, local civic organizations, local dignitaries, and church leaders. This is a great opportunity to put the best of York Rite on full display to the public and build goodwill in the community. Again, be sure to send these out early, **no later than mid-September** in most cases.
7. It's a good idea to invite the Widows of your departed Sir Knights. A nice small gift for each would be in order.

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8. Arrange for refreshments early as well. For the same reasons as given above, caterers are often very busy at this time of the year and can be almost impossible to schedule if you wait until too close to December. Light refreshments and hors d'oeuvres (finger foods and small desserts) are usually the best plan, as you will not need a headcount or RSVP for plated meals, and it minimizes cleanup and expenses. Potluck refreshments provided by members and their families are also popular, but it is highly recommended that you have a signup for specific types of dishes (to avoid having everyone only bringing green beans!). Again, early commitments and scheduling.
9. Send out Letters of Greetings to the other Commanderies by **mid-November**. This is a courtesy widely observed by Templar Commanderies. These are signed by the Commander and sometimes also by all three Dais Officers or the Recorder.
10. Some Commanderies will perform a public installation of officers in conjunction with the Christmas Observance. You may also want to consider presenting awards to members in from of their families if they are present.
11. Consider getting youth organizations such as local DeMolay chapters, or the Rainbow Girls or Job's Daughters involved. They can help with serving refreshments, ushering guests to their seats, handing out bulletins, and even providing performances as part of the event. Again, secure these early on and be specific about what roles you want them to fulfil as part of the observance.
12. Remind all participating Sir Knights in uniform that ***swords are not worn*** for this event. Sword belts may be worn at the discretion of the Commander, who needs to make this decision early and communicate it to the Commandery. For those who don't have enough Knights in uniform, ask that they wear dark suits, white shirt, black tie – or red, or green – it's Christmas, after all!
13. Send invitations to your Commandery members personally inviting them and their families to the Christmas Observance, by **late-October** or **early November** at the latest.

Recommended Timeline (High-Level)

The following timeline lists major tasks to be accomplished in the months leading up to the Christmas Observance. See **Attachment B** for a more detailed task list and timeline.

As early as possible – *set the date* for the event and make sure that it is announced on all local Masonic calendars.

August

- Contact and schedule musical or performing arts entertainment if so desired.
- Contact and schedule any special guest speakers such as Pastor / Minister for a Christmas Sermon or Message.
- Decide on what kind of refreshments will be served and appoint one person to coordinate with catering or potluck signups as needed.
- Create task list and timeline and assign owners to each task.

September

- Send out invitations to dignitaries (Grand York Rite officers, Grand Lodge officers, Masters of local lodges, etc.) and to any civic leaders and organizations you'd like to attend.

October

- Confirm that all props, materials, equipment, and furniture necessary to confer the ceremony (tables, tablecloths, candlesticks, goblets, flags, etc.) are available and in good condition. If not assign someone to coordinate repairs or acquisition of replacements.
- Confirm commitments from Sir Knights with uniforms who can attend and participate. Decide if sword belts are to be worn and communicate this to all Commandery members.

November

- Schedule at least one rehearsal with ceremonial team.
- Mail out Christmas greetings to neighboring Commanderies and the Grand Commander. You can also send greetings to local lodges or other Masonic organizations as well, if desired.
- Confirm Masonic dignitaries and special guests whom you plan to recognize. RSVPs from invitations are especially useful for this.

December

- Confirm that refreshments and entertainment bookings have been scheduled. This should be done at least 1 or 2 weeks in advance of the event. If your event is planned in the first or second week in December, then this will need to be completed by late November.
- Rehearse the ceremony prior to the event so that everyone knows their places, all processions and floor movements are smooth, and so any gaps or problems are detected in advance and can be corrected in time.
- Once all RSVPs are in and all scheduled performances confirmed, print out bulletins to hand out to guests with the program outlined, lyrics to selected hymns and carols, and other essential information. See **Attachment C** for a sample bulletin that can be modified to fit the occasion.
- After the event, consider sending thank you cards to any local non-Masonic dignitaries, performers, speakers, and guests for attending. This helps to build relationships in the community and reinforces positive impressions on the Order and the Lodge.

Equipment Recommended for the Christmas Observance

Depending on how you intend to arrange your event, these items are necessary for a full Christmas Observance ceremony:

**** The Triangle Table **MUST NOT BE USED FOR PUBLIC CEREMONY**. It is considered a part of Templar Ritual and is forbidden for public viewing under the Constitution of the Grand Encampment. If the Triangle Table is used it shall be for private/guarded ceremony only. All toasts can be given from the cross table for public ceremony. *****

- Triangle Table
- Black covering cloth for Triangle Table
- Rectangular tables that can be arranged into the shape of a cross
- White tablecloths to cover the Cross Table
- 12 Goblets and Decanter, silver or metal preferred
- Candles and Candlesticks, silver or metal preferred (and don't forget a lighter!)
- Wine for traditional toasts (if the Commandery so desires)
- Chairs for Sir Knights at the table – number will depend on the arrangement selected
- United States Flag
- Beauceant
- Grand Standard of the Commandery
- Holy Bible
- Wreaths, flowers, evergreen for decoration (optional)
- Podium for speakers
- Podium with Holy Bible for scriptural readings (optional)
- Pedestal with one Goblet, for Commander's toasts, situated near the apex of the Triangle

Notes on Table Arrangements

1. Fit the arrangement to the venue, so that it makes the best use of the space available for the ceremony.
2. Slight modifications may be made to accommodate special requirements or circumstances only.
3. If possible, use silver or metal goblets and decanter for the toasts. Do not use plastic cups.
4. For the Triangle Table arrangements, Sir Knights will either be seated on the sidelines and advance to the Triangle when ordered by the Commander, or they will be seated at the Cross Table and will advance to the Triangle when ordered.
5. If conducted in the Masonic lodge room, the Commander, Generalissimo, and Captain General can sit in the Master's station in the East, and all three can join the Sir Knights at the Triangle, if desired.
6. An assortment of festive decorations such as wreaths, poinsettias, evergreen boughs, etc. to decorate the Cross Table is encouraged.
7. A Holy Bible can be placed at the center of the Triangle, and if desired, another can be placed on a podium nearby for the scriptural readings. If a second Bible is used for readings, place bookmarks at the desired passages so they can be found easily by the readers (consider asking different people to read a passage).
8. All Sir Knights should keep their floor movements to and from their seats/stations as crisp and orderly as possible. Right-angle movements and sharp salutes are highly encouraged to maintain the dignity and military tradition of the Order.

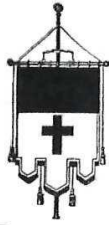
9. It is also highly encouraged for the entire ceremonial team to rehearse floor movements prior to the event.
Do not practice or rehearse in front of the guests.
10. The Goblets are filled with wine prior to the start of the program, and the candles lit at the Cross Table.
11. Each Sir Knight selected to assemble at the Triangle will select their station. The toasts that each Sir Knight will give shall be available on notecards at each station, and the assigned Sir Knight will familiarize himself with it. See **Attachment D** for additional and optional toasts that can be printed onto notecards.

Full Ceremonial Table Arrangements

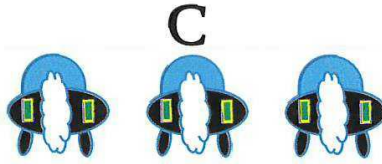
Larger Variations



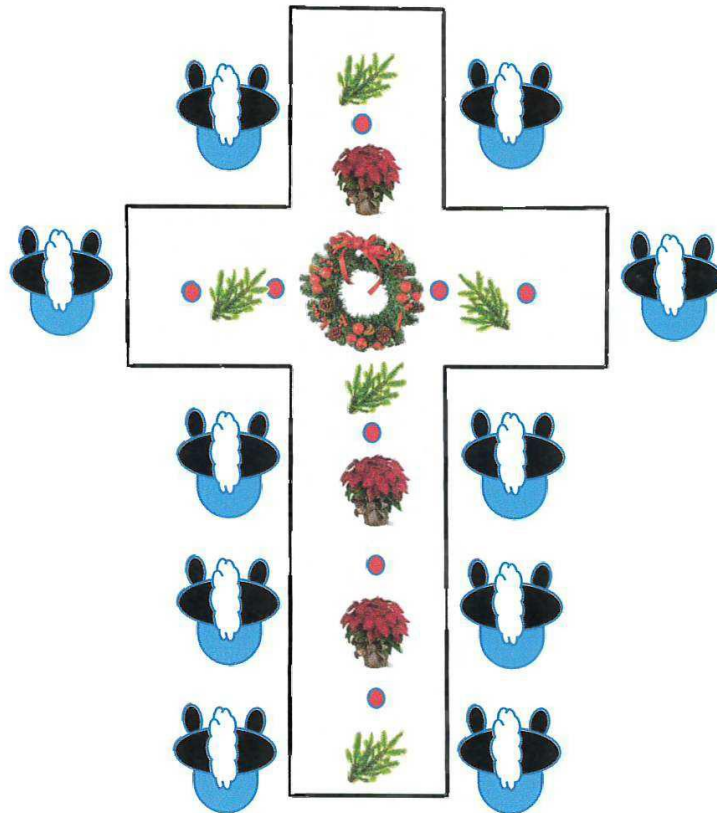
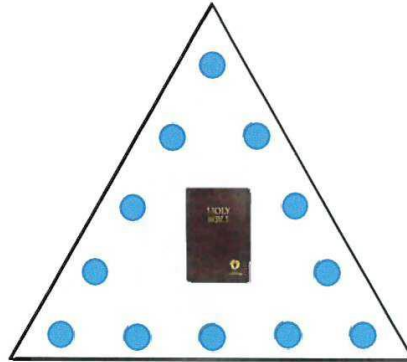
United States flag



Beauceant



Standard



Legend

- Candle
- Cup/Goblet



Script for the Full Ceremonial of the Knights Templar Christmas Observance

The following script was prepared based on several local Commanderies' past events. This script can be modified to replace certain parts; these will be marked in **red** to denote that while required as part of the ceremonial, their contents may be modified to better suit the location or audience. The toasts have placeholders in *purple* for the names of the individuals who hold those offices.

Ceremony organizers are encouraged to copy this text to another document to select from available options as well as to make any modifications necessary for the occasion or location. This will help provide the officers with a smooth script to help the event proceed uninterrupted.

Also please note that if other elements outside of the Christmas Observance are included, for example awards presentations or installation of officers, these are to be completed before the Christmas Observance is begun.

1. March in **(optionally to martial music)** (all rise) **Two Options:**
 - a. **Option 1:** To formally begin the event, Knights march into the lodge room in two columns, halt before the East on South and North Side of the lodge room. Knights of the Cross Table stand in front of their seats at attention, all other uniformed Sir Knights stay in line at attention. When all knights are in place, the Commander says, "Sir Knights and guests, be seated." Commander remains standing.
 - b. **Option 2:** If other elements of the event preclude marching in, Commander will announce that the Ceremony of the Knights Templar Christmas Observance is about to begin, and says, "Sir Knights, **assemble.**" Knights of the Cross Table stand in front of their seats at attention. When all knights are in place, the Commander says, "Sir Knights and guests, be seated." Commander remains standing.
2. Commander delivers short welcome address of his own composition. **(unless already delivered as part of a larger event using 1.b. above)**
3. Opening prayer **(unless performed earlier using option 1.b. above)**
4. Commander says, "Excellent Prelate, lead our devotions."

Prelate says, "Please stand." (All rise)

Commander says, "Sir Knights **un-cover.**"

Prelate delivers prayer:

- a. "Almighty, everlasting, and ever-loving God our Father, who has visited Your people by coming to Earth in the manger of Bethlehem; We, Your humble servants, confess our need for the presence of the Christ and open our hearts to receive the blessing of His birth into our lives. We thank you, Eternal Father, for investing in us the great love that caused You to give Yourself to the world. Bless the worship, and bless those who worship, that we may experience anew the presence of the Christ Child of Bethlehem. In His name we pray. Amen."
- b. **Optionally, substitute an appropriately themed Christian prayer of your own composition or that of your local Prelate or guest Pastor / Minister.**

Commander says, “Sir Knights re-**cover**.”

5. Pledge of Allegiance

- a. Commander says, “Join me in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our country.” (Unless performed earlier using option 1.b. above)

(NOTE: All uniformed Sir Knights use hand salute, all others not in uniform place right hand over heart)

- b. **Option:** Ask the National Sojourners to attend and present A Toast to the Flag

- c. Commander says, “Sir Knights and guests, be seated.”

6. Introduction of Dignitaries – See **Attachment A** for recommendations for precedence for representatives of various Masonic bodies. (Commander or Secretary)

7. First Hymn or Carol: “*Hark the Herald Angels Sing*”

8. Call to Worship – Commander says,

“We have gathered here as knights, with our families and friends, to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, whom we call Christ. As we share together in this service, let us remember that God has shared Himself with us by coming into the world as man. We celebrate today and during this Christmas season God’s giving Himself to us.”

9. First Scriptural Reading – Commander says, “Excellent Prelate, please read the old, old story.”

Prelate reads **Isaiah 11:1-5**

10. Second Hymn or Carol: “*O Come All Ye Faithful*”

11. Second Scriptural Reading – Commander says, “Excellent Prelate, please read our second scriptural devotion.”

Prelate reads **Luke 2:1-14**

12. Third Hymnal or Carol: “*Silent Night*”

13. Delivery of the Christmas Message. **Two Options:**

- a. **Option 1:** Prelate, Commander, or guest Pastor / Minister delivers a sermon or message of their own composition, maximum 15 minutes of oration.
- b. **Option 2:** If necessary or desired, the following can be used by the Prelate:

“Read anywhere in the Christmas story and you are struck with the presence of evil in the midst of the beauty of the birth of this child. “He will save the people from their sins.” There was no place for him at the inn. Herod sought to kill the young child. Mary was told that the sword would

pierce through her side, also. Read anywhere in the story and the evil intentions of human beings toward God and toward each other come into view. And yet, it is this evil that Jesus came to overcome. Joseph was told that Jesus would save the people from their sins.

We gather in a variety of forms, fraternities, families, and fellowships to celebrate the event of Christmas, the remembering of Jesus, the son of God coming into the world. But look anywhere in any assembled group; in church, in fraternity, or among friends gathered informally; and we are also struck with the immediate presence of sin. We look into our own hearts and know there lies within, from the world but not from God, the angry attitudes we have toward others and toward members of our families. There reside within those hidden recesses of love the feelings of pain and despair that prevent the joy of our lives. We look at the world and see humans destroying one another. Jesus came into the world to “save people from their sins.”

To a people symbolically wandering in the wilderness Jesus was sent. He came to them and revealed to them the perfect love of God the Father. He walked among them and healed their sick. He raised their sons and daughters and brothers from the dead. He cast evil from their lives. He taught them a more perfect manner of loving. He encouraged them to imitate God the Father. And finally, when the very people to whom He was sent turned against Him, He willingly went to the cross because he knew that the people whom God loved needed the forgiveness and cleansing that only the sacrifice of the cross could provide for them.

In like manner, Jesus comes today to a people symbolically wandering in the wilderness of modern technology and dehumanization. He reminds us that the soul of every individual is of infinite worth. He instills in the human heart, when the heart is receptive, both the love of God and the love for fellow human beings. He replaces despair with hope. He gives to each individual a feeling of worth and dignity that imparts courage to live with purpose and prestige in a world which still has “no room for Him at the inn,” still seeks to crucify Him on the crosses of indifference, blind ambition, and selfish greed. Yet the man of Galilee who came into the world as the infant of Bethlehem still loves a suffering and selfish humankind. He still loves all humankind.

Today in this service, we remember the event of Bethlehem so many centuries ago. And yet, it is not for us just an ancient event that happened one time. Although we do not recreate that event, we do recreate the coming of the Son of God to the earth when we open our hearts and lives to him. We can know the infant of the manger as the hope and redemption of our lives. We can experience the love of the Christ Child in our celebrations and in our leisure. We can experience the presence of the Master in our hearts. We can know the hope for eternity as the Christ comes to us. He comes unexpectedly. He comes unannounced. He comes unheralded; but never unheard when the heart is open to receive Him. When He comes, He changes us and the world in which we live. He replaces despair with hope. He erases anger and hostility and instills peace in the heart. He forgives sin and grants the gift of salvation, of help and guidance, to those who call his name, who visit the manger during this season of celebration. Today, we come to remember, to celebrate, but also to change. That single event has the power to transform both human lives and the world.

As you celebrate today, as you celebrate during the days approaching and following Christmas, in your home or church, remember to open your heart to the infant of the manger and receive the transforming power of the blessings of hope and heaven that the infant came to bring to the world and to the people of the world.

Let us pray.

O infant of the manger, come into my heart and life this day. Bless me with the peace that you came to give. Enable me to celebrate with the angels of the plain and the saints of the ages that joyous event of your being born in Bethlehem and your being born in my heart and life. In Your name I pray. **Amen.**”

14. Commander rises and says, “Sir Knights, **attention!**”

(All Sir Knights arise)

Commander continues and says:

“Sir Knights, on this glorious day we commemorate the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, Emmanuel, author of our salvation, and the Great Captain under whose banner we are all enlisted. Two thousand years ago, there was born in Bethlehem of Judea one who laid aside the God-head, and assumed mortal flesh; one whose glory, worth, and grace no language can express; one who was born that our lives might be purified, and who died that our souls might be redeemed from the penalty of sin.

Let us, as true soldiers of the cross, strive to profit by the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of that Divine Master, and remain His faithful soldiers unto death. Seeking strength to continue that struggle, let us now accompany our Excellent Prelate to the throne of heavenly grace.

Excellent Prelate, lead our devotions. Sir Knights **un-cover**, kneel on left knee and bow heads.”

15. Prelate leads prayer, all Sir Knights respond in unison:

“Almighty and most merciful Father, remember us with grace, we beseech thee, and blot out the multitude of our transgressions for Thy beloved Son’s sake. And may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in Thy sight, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Sir Knights: Amen.

“Father in heaven, command Thy blessings to rest upon all true Knights of the Temple wherever dispersed; bestow upon them a spirit of truth, justice, courage, constancy, faith, and humility, and make of them valiant defenders of Thy holy religion. Teach them to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and bind up the wounds of the afflicted, for Jesus’ sake.”

Sir Knights: Amen.

“O Lord command Thy benediction to rest upon our Grand Master. Help him to rule over us in love, and with an eye single to Thy glory. Save him from error, prejudice, and pride; and while giving him firmness of purpose to do right, help him to know the right, for Christ’s sake.”

Sir Knights: Amen.

“Father let Thy choicest blessings be with the President of the United States, with the Congress and Senate of our Republic, with the General Assembly of our State, and upon all authority over us. Endue each of them with wisdom from on high, and may it be their chiefest joy to labor in humility, and for the good of all the people whom they represent, by whom they are selected, and for whom they labor. We ask this in the name of Jesus, Emmanuel.”

Sir Knights: Amen.

16. Commander says, “Sir Knights **arise**, re-**cover**.”
17. At this point in the ceremony the “Grandmaster’s message” and the “Grand Commander’s message” will be read. This message is sent out to subordinate Commanderies via the Grand Recorder near the end of each year.
18. Commander says, “Let the chosen twelve assemble at the Triangle.”

(Twelve Sir Knights assume their selected stations around the Triangle Table.)
19. Commander advances to the pedestal near the apex of the Triangle. The Generalissimo and Captain General advance to the Triangle, taking stations 1 and 2 at the head. The other ten Sir Knights assemble around the Triangle to their selected stations.
20. Commander says, “Sir Knights, take **cups**.” (Sir Knights and Commander hold cups in front of them at eye level.)
21. Traditional toasts – Starting with the Generalissimo at the apex of the Triangle and working clockwise around the table (to the Captain General and then leftward) each Sir Knight delivers his selected toast, and after each one the Commander will say “**Participate**” and the Sir Knights raise their Goblets slightly then sip lightly. (*Tips: If you run out, pretend you still have some in your cup, and don’t chug at the last toast – it doesn’t look good!*)

The traditional toasts are performed in this order:

- a. To Most Excellent Companion [*name*], Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of North Carolina.
- b. To Most Illustrious Companion [*name*], Illustrious Grand Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina.
- c. To Sir Knight [*name*], Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of North Carolina.
- d. To Sir Knight [*name*], Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States of America.
- e. To Most Worshipful [*name*], Grand Master of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of North Carolina.
- f. To all Knights Templar, wherever dispersed.
- g. To all Knights Templar who have shed their blood in defense of Liberty and Christianity.

NOTE: See **Attachment D** for optional toasts which can be used in place of or in addition to these toasts.

22. Commander says, “Let us recall the hallowed memories of the Fratres of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of North Carolina who have joined the silent majority. **Participate**.”
23. Captain General turns to Commander and gives hand salute, and says, “Eminent Commander, the traditional toasts required for this occasion have been delivered.”
24. Commander returns salute and says, “Sir Knights, return **cups**.”
25. (Knights of the Triangle replace cups at the table and stand at attention.)

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26. Commander says, “In memory of the dead of this jurisdiction during this year. Sir Knights **un-cover**, kneel on right knee and bow heads.”
27. Fourth Hymnal or Carol: “*Nearer My God to Thee*”
28. (Sir Knights remain kneeling until end of hymn.)
29. Commander rises, and says, “Sir Knights **arise**. **Re-cover**. We have been refreshed by these hallowed memories; now let us receive the benediction of our Excellent Prelate. All rise.”
30. Prelate says,
- “May the Lord bless thee and keep thee; may the Lord make his face shine upon thee; May the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.
- May the love of the infant of Bethlehem, the grace of God the Father, and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit bless you during the season of Christmas and give you the peace that the Master in the manger came to give.
- In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, go in peace and live in peace. Amen.”
31. Commander says, “Sir Knights, **dis-missed**.”

End of Full Ceremonial

Attachment A: Recommendations for Precedence Used in Introducing Representatives of Various Masonic Bodies and other Distinguished Guests

Distinguished guests can be received in many ways, formally, informally, escorted in by a designated Marshall, or simply recognized at their seat. This can be as simple or as complicated as you wish to make it; however, it is very important that you ensure an appropriate amount of courtesy is given to each distinguished guest.

Some important notes:

1. As a rule of thumb, if you sent a personal invitation to someone, whether it be of state Masonic rank or a civil dignitary, you should recognize them at the Christmas Observance and personally thank them for coming.
2. The order in which Masonic Dignitaries are received matter a lot. Pay attention to the list below and make sure to confirm their title – if they have more than one, ask them which one to use for their introduction.
3. Keep the reception and recognition as simple as possible if you're just starting out building a new tradition at your Commandery; you can get more elaborate as your Sir Knights learn what works locally and what doesn't.
4. If a distinguished guest from the community arrives, it is a good idea to ask them how they would like to be introduced, and also if their spouse should be recognized as well, if they're attending as well. Get enough information about their office, rank, business/charity, etc. to make a well-polished introduction without overdoing it. Keep it brief, otherwise you risk putting people off and making the guest look bad in other peoples' eyes.

Recommended order of reception:

1. Civil Dignitaries (Municipal/Local Leaders, Business Leaders, Church Leaders, Local/State/Federal Representatives and Elected Officials) and anyone personally invited as a distinguished guest. Confirm their preferred titles, pronouns, etc.
2. Masonic Order of Precedence for Introductions:
 - a. Grand Chapter RAM, ascending order
 - b. Grand Council R&SM, ascending order
 - c. Grand Commandery KT, ascending order
 - d. Appendant York Rite Bodies as follows:
 - i. York Rite College
 - ii. Red Cross of Constantine
 - iii. HRAKTP
 - iv. KYCH
 - v. DeMolay
 - e. General Grand Chapter RAM, ascending order
 - f. General Grand Council R&SM, ascending order
 - g. Grand Encampment KT, ascending order
 - h. Scottish Rite, ascending order
 - i. AASR Supreme Council, ascending order
 - j. Grand Lodge officers, ascending order
 - k. Visiting Grand Masters
 - l. Grand Master of North Carolina, presented by himself (or with spouse) last.

The Commander should introduce each guest in the proper order, asking the audience to refrain from applause until after the last guest is introduced. Public Grand Honors are not recommended, especially if civil dignitaries

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are presented along with Masonic dignitaries. It should also go without saying that since swords are not to be worn, an Arch of Steel is not appropriate for the occasion.

Attachment B: Sample Event Timeline and Task Plan

The following task list was adapted from a project plan created for Ivanhoe #8 by Commander Alexander Aydlett. This is intended to be just a basic guide of common tasks that may be required to plan and execute a simple and straightforward Christmas Observance. Of these tasks, the one most commonly left out is the post-event cleanup. Make sure to secure commitments from some helpers or you WILL find yourself cleaning up alone!

Task/Activity	✓	Owner	Participants / Operations
Schedule Christmas observance, begin planning the event		Commander	Incoming Commander is responsible for ensuring the event is scheduled, speakers and entertainment is secured, and the event is announced well in advance
Begin Roles assignments		Commander	Throughout the year, clarify roles and responsibilities and schedule deadlines, milestones and resources required, assist in managing blockages and changes to the plan, communicate changes to team regularly
Supplies inventory			Take inventory of the YR Supplies locker to see if any need to be purchased for event.
Props Inventory			Verify the banners, candles, table pieces, etc. are present and in good condition.
Schedule catering (if necessary)			If using catering, confirm menu, price and availability and get YR Body approval for expenses
Schedule/confirm speakers and/or special guests, and send out invitations and announcements		Commander	Confirm minister for Christmas message and any Grand Officers or other dignitaries who would be speaking Recommended Specific Invitations: Grand Lodge GM and officers, PH Grand Lodge GM and officers, GYRNC Grands and officers, PH GYR Grands and officers, Local YR and PHA bodies/lodges, and any local community dignitaries (ask if they want to be recognized or introduced during event)
Schedule/confirm musical group			Secure commitment from musical group to appear, confirm costs, and see if a practice/walk-thru is desired
Finalize event budget/estimates			All estimates need to be reconciled to expenses and delivered to Secretary for approval at meeting.
Procure refreshments and supplies			See supplies list and any other essentials that are needed as a result of supplies/props inventory
Complete all table/chair arrangements in dining hall			Arrange tables and chairs and any set pieces for tables
Secure refreshments and supplies in lockers/fridge			Locker and fridge as needed, LABEL EVERYTHING
Arrive at Temple to begin preps		Commander	Plan ahead on who needs to arrive early to assist in setting up. Split into two groups: one for refreshments in dining hall and another to set up the main room
Food preparation			Any food/drinks that need to be prepared on-site
Arrange drinks, snack trays, utensils, and cups in dining hall			Includes any catering deliveries – assign someone to help or at least be present to open the door
Set up cross & triangle tables in lodge room			Set up Triangle and Cross Tables

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Arrange Banners, podiums, and any other props, equipment, etc. needed by event participants including musicians and speakers.			Note that if any Sir Knight who will participate in the toasts has an objection to alcohol, fill their designated goblet with water or grape juice, if using wine for event – FIND OUT AHEAD OF TIME!
Triangle Knights arrive at Temple		Commander	Double check uniforms, confirm stations and places, do a practice run before guests arrive
Practice run in lodge (closed door), final logistics worked out		Commander	
Musicians / Entertainers arrive			Have seats reserved in lodge room. Assign someone to greet and brief the group
Lodge room opened for guests			Greet and welcome guests, visitors, family – Assign 1 or more uniformed Knights (preferred) to greet visitors and hand out bulletins.
Confirm arrival of Dignitaries / Distinguished Guests		Commander	Personally greet, welcome, and thank each for coming, confirm titles and details for introductions.
Final prep meeting (closed door in another room if possible)		Commander	If on Stated Communication, present a very brief agenda, present receipts for food, wreaths, etc. for approval & reimbursement, make sure checks ready, final logistics walk-thru
Light candles			5 minutes prior to start, light candles on the table
If marching in, all uniformed members assemble outside main hall in 1 or more lines			Commander stands in the East to bring the room to order, ask all to stand.
Lines proceed into lodge room as a body, along outside edge of floor.			All uniformed members and dais dignitaries
Dais officers proceed to East			
Knights dismissed to seats		Commander	
Opening Prayer		Prelate / Minister	All uniformed members uncover
Pledge of Allegiance		Commander	
Welcome Address and Introductions		Commander	Keep it brief!
Grand Master's Address		Grand Master of NC	If desired and in attendance
Grand Commander's Address		Grand Commander of NC	If desired and in attendance
Announcements		Secretary	Acknowledge receipt of letters, etc.
Music, Scriptural Readings		Musicians, Prelate	
Christmas Message		Prelate or Minister	
Send messenger to kitchen signaling 15 minutes till end of event			Make sure someone is in the reception / dining hall to get all refreshments in final order before guests arrive

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Knights of the Triangle assemble			Knights in uniform selected for toasts
Intro and Traditional Toasts			Knights in uniform selected for toasts
Benediction		Prelate	
Dismissal to Refreshment		Commander	
Refreshments			Mingle, and enjoy the moment
Clear-down of Lodge Room			Make sure all props, equipment, tables, chairs, etc. returned to their proper storage location.
Final Clean-Up			Clean up tables and chairs, close down kitchen, sweep floor, take out garbage, make sure all is in proper order, turn off lights, lock doors

Attachment C: Sample Program or Bulletin for the Christmas Observance

The following Word document has been included as an embedded file due to the changes in formatting. To open and edit, double click the icon below and the document will open into a new window for editing.



This file is also available for download as a separate document from the Grand Commandery.

The contents of the file are illustrated on the next two pages.

Greensboro York Rite Bodies

Christmas Observance

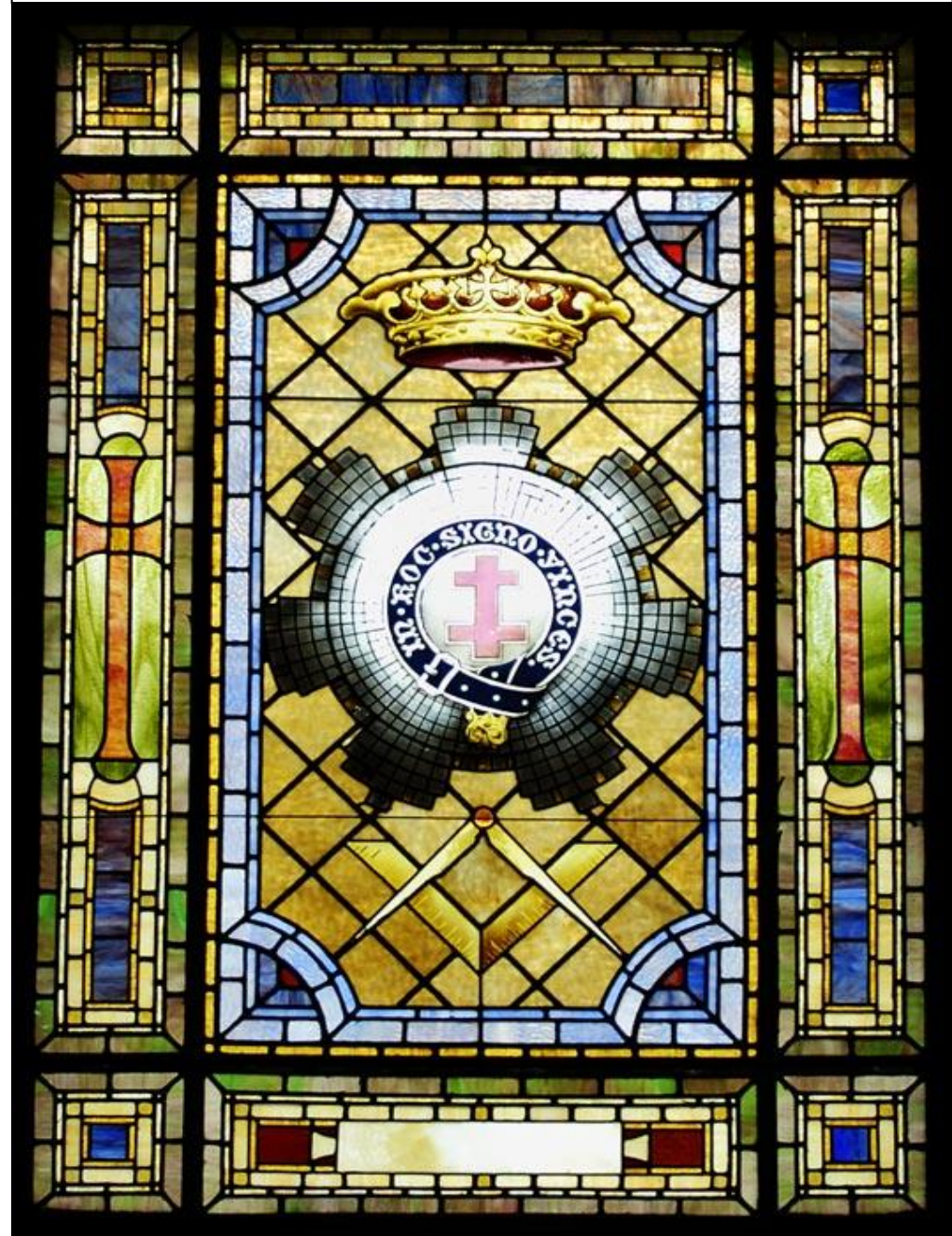
2018

The Commandery of Knights Templar, part of the **York Rite**, is the Christian appendant body of Freemasonry that a Master Mason may join to further his knowledge of Freemasonry, learn more lessons of character, and provide more opportunities for friendships and participation outside the lodge. The Rite's name is derived from the city of York, where, according to legend, the first organized meetings of Masons took place in England in 926 A.D.

Thank you for joining us on this special evening. May God bless you and keep you this Christmas Season.

Greensboro Masonic Temple
426 West Market Street
Greensboro, North Carolina

December 5, 2018



Franklin Commandery No. 8, Knights Templar

Program

Welcome	Commander (name)
Opening Prayer	Reverend (Name) / Exc. Prelate (name)
Pledge of Allegiance	Commander (name)
Introduction of Guests	Commander (name)
Carol: Hark the Herald Angels Sing	
Scriptural Reading: Isaiah 11:1-5	
Carol: O Come All Ye Faithful	
Scriptural Reading: Luke 2:1-14	
Carol: Silent Night	
Christmas Message	Reverend (name)
Traditional Toasts	Knights of the Triangle
Hymn: Nearer My God to Thee	
Benediction	Reverend (name)

Please join us for refreshments in the dining room.

The officers of the Greensboro York Rite Bodies thank each of you for joining our celebration, and wish for each of you a joyous, Merry Christmas.

Scripture Reading

- 1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.
- 2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)
- 3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.
- 4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)
- 5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.
- 6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.
- 7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.
- 8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- 9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.
- 10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
- 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
- 12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
- 13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
- 14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

St. Luke 2:1-20

Attachment D: Additional and Optional Toasts

The traditional toasts can be performed in many ways. Commanderies can modify or embellish the toasts as they wish. Although the script suggested in this handbook lists seven, these are the minimum; others can be added so that each Sir Knight at the Triangle can deliver a toast. Prior to commencing the event, it is important for each participating Sir Knight to identify the position at the table where they will stand and the toast they will deliver, to eliminate any confusion during the assembly at the table during the event.

The following alternate Toasts can be used to augment or replace the ones given in the script. If desired, names or a personal addition for any toast can be added. These can be printed out onto note cards in large print so they can be easily read. This is especially important if the lights are dimmed to accentuate the candlelight arrangements.

<p>¹ To the Most Eminent Grand Master of the Grand Encampment of Knights Templar of the United States.</p> <p>May he govern the Grand Encampment with enlightenment and magnanimity!</p>	<p>² To the Right Eminent Grand Commander of the Grand Commandery of Knights Templar of North Carolina.</p> <p>May he lead with Zeal, admonish with Reason, and praise with Joy!</p>
<p>³ To the Most Illustrious Grand Master of the Grand Council of Royal and Select Masters in North Carolina.</p> <p>May his term of office meet with success and his leadership be strong in spreading the Cryptic principles of the Secret Vault.</p>	<p>⁴ To the Most Excellent Grand High Priest of the Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of North Carolina.</p> <p>May his term of office be marked with strength in leadership, proficiency in the work, and prosperity in the Capitular Craft.</p>
<p>⁵ To the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons Of North Carolina.</p> <p>May his term be marked with success, growth, and increased strength via quality of the Brethren and in their work.</p>	<p>⁶ To our Brethren of the Scottish Rite and all other Appendant Bodies of the Craft.</p> <p>May all, in harmony, spread the Light of Freemasonry wherever they may travel!</p>

<p>⁷ To the memory of our Ancient Grand Master, Jacques De Molay, the Martyr, for whom the Order of De Molay is named.</p> <p>May his example of fortitude and self-sacrifice in the name of his Christian Faith serve as an example to be emulated.</p>	<p>⁸ To the memory of our Departed Sir Knights, who have made the ultimate journey to that undiscovered country, from whose bourne no traveler returns.</p> <p>We celebrate the memory of their lives among us and give thanks for the friendship that we shared.</p>
<p>⁹ To our Honored Guests, who join with us to celebrate the ultimate Joy of the Birth of the Savior of the world.</p> <p>May they and their loved ones receive all of the joys and blessings of the Season and the Comfort brought by Faith in the Lord.</p>	<p>¹⁰ To the Ladies present: Wives, Daughters, Sisters, Mothers; who bring beauty and gentleness into our lives and make us all complete.</p>
<p>¹¹ To the Knights of today, the men and women of our Armed Forces, who stand guard around the world in defense of our Liberty and the American Way of Life. May our Savior be their Shield, and the Light of Truth be their sword.</p>	<p>¹² To our Supreme Commander, the LIVING CHRIST, in whose honor we gather, that HIS Peace may reign Supreme over All, forever and ever!</p>