



FOR THE FAITH AND
IN THE SERVICE OF HUMANITY



St John

Eyes on the Future

THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

PRIORY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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PRIOR'S MESSAGE

Thank you to many of you for your words of wisdom and support during my first month as Prior. While our physical offices are currently closed and travel is curtailed, the work of the Order of St John continues around the world. During this first month I have rarely left my desk, and yet thanks to

the dedication of our Confrères and staff and with assistance of various modes of technology, I have 'traveled' to all corners of our nation, and across the seas to London, Jerusalem, Kenya and Australia. So life has been neither dull nor unproductive.

It is wonderful to have so many positive conversations and engage in such passionate discussions with you to bring hope to the world, and most especially to our lords the sick and the poor. For those who were unable to attend the Annual Meeting, [here is a link to a video](#) in which I share my vision and goals for the Priory.

Since the middle of March, instead of traveling down the hill to attend my parish church each Sunday, I have sat in my living room with my wife, Jane, and together we have sung, prayed and listened to a live feed from our parish church. A skeleton team of clergy, organist and cantor bring an unseen community together. Many of the essential elements of church are missing, and yet our community has adapted and is as active and generous as ever. *And so I have found it also within our Priory.*

Being part of these two communities I am reminded each day that it is in our willingness to adapt, make additional sacrifices and be creative that we ensure that we continue to work towards a better, brighter future. In the sermon of this past Sunday I was reminded that hope is unseen, it is about what has yet to come. That it is more than a feeling, in fact we may well not feel it at all; hope is a daily practice, it is laboring for the future.

So despite the constraints and dangers of the COVID-19 pandemic, I start my term as Prior full of hope. The Confrères of our U.S. Priory have already shown that they will not let the difficulties and the frustrations dull the light of our mission. In fact some forced adaptations are already revealing unexpected benefits, such as the greater 'attendance' at the annual meeting and various committee meetings, and Members feeling more able to participate without the hindrance of travel arrangements.

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While I was sad to have to postpone this year's Service of Investiture and Rededication Weekend in Boston, I have been delighted with the immediate response of a number of Confrères to my appeal to donate what they would have spent on this weekend directly to the Hospital. To date we have raised \$140,000 from 58 generous individuals, so we still have a way to go, but it is a hope-filled start. I look forward to many more of you helping us to reach our \$250,000-\$300,000 goal.

While on the subject of good news I am very pleased to announce that we have just received a \$50,000 contribution from the The Ben May Charitable Trust, a non-profit based in Mobile, Alabama. Many thanks to Confrère John Peebles, Board member of the trust, who has assisted the Priory with previous grant proposals over the past six years. This year we focused our request on the work of the St John Ophthalmic Association (SOA) in respect to training in the Hadassah Hospital. I am grateful also to Executive Director, Michele Blair, who requested, given the challenging times, an increase of their grant from \$35K to \$50K, which was generously approved. Blessings, John and Michele.

We are an ancient Order with a long and intricate history, but it has always been our practice to ensure that our outlook is modern and state-of-the-art. With that in mind the Priory is currently in the process of creating a strategic plan, with committees looking at the many aspects of our Order. If you have any thoughts that you would like to be considered, please email me directly at prior@saintjohn.org.

So as Confrères of our most Venerable Order, I thank you all for all that you have done these past few months, and encourage you to continue to labor with your time, talent and treasure to bring hope to our lords the sick and the poor even, or rather most especially, when unexpected circumstances make it even more challenging.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior

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VIDEO



SILA *Doctors told Sila's parents she needed surgery immediately, but Sila's father had recently lost his construction job and had no income. Click the link to watch her story.*

NEW WEBSITE

Our newly designed website is officially up and running. Visit us at www.saintjohn.org. Launched May 21, the new site is faster and more user-friendly, and is easily accessed from a desktop, laptop, Android, iPhone or iPad.

Our goal is to provide visitors an easier way to learn about the Order and the Priory, make donations and browse information based on their interests. The new site provides better information about who we are and what we do, and features case studies, Member information and more. We will continually update our content with helpful information about the Order and the Priory.

The Members Section includes information on upcoming events, officer bios, and regular messages from Prior Nigel Heath and others. Your first visit to the Members Section will require you to create a new password. Prompts will guide you through the process.

We hope you enjoy the new website, and we welcome your feedback. Meanwhile, happy browsing! ✨



ENGLAND IN THE TIME OF COVID: ST JOHN AMBULANCE'S LARGEST OPERATION SINCE WWII

by Prior Lionel Jarvis, CBE, KStJ, DL
Prior of England and the Islands

We observed the virus strike and then emerge from south-east Asia; it soon attacked Europe, with Northern Italy hit in dramatic fashion. Few people could really say that they were prepared for forthcoming events, but St John England responded in a fashion that makes me so immensely proud.

Lockdown was initiated by our government on 16 March 2020. Within 48 hours we had turned our entire operation to support the country in the fight against this pandemic disease. An operation cell was established, with regional control centres managing vehicles and personnel in support of the National Health Service, in every part of our diverse society. Thousands of staff and volunteers were deployed providing ambulance services, support in hospitals, in communities, in homes and in logistics; we staffed the emergency Nightingale Hospitals, and swiftly became the lead UK voluntary service in support of this fight. With weekly operational data bulletins, the size of our task was seen to be ever more demanding – we were deploying the largest ever peacetime operation for St John Ambulance, and our largest operation since World War II. As I write, the number of recorded volunteer hours approaches



Prior Lionel Jarvis with a St John Ambulance cadet on the steps of St Paul's Cathedral



Within 48 hours we had turned our entire operation to support the country in the fight against this pandemic disease.

150,000, and excludes the vast effort by senior volunteers up and down the country. The formal operation stands down this week, but we are ready for resurgence. Our people can be justifiably content with a job very well done, a job of which our forefathers would be proud, and our successors should wish to emulate.

We deliver our charitable output from the income received from training and events activity – this dried up totally and immediately, and we were losing millions of pounds per month whilst we could make no savings on activity. We have received some government income, and we have had some success in our fundraising, and this letter allows another opportunity to thank those generous members of the US Priory who responded to our appeal. We have considerable assets, and are in a solid state, but will face a substantial 8 figure operational deficit within this year, for which we are seeking bank support, and have had to seek hundreds of redundancies amongst our staff – a consequence of sad but necessary reaction to the fiduciary responsibility of charity directors. It remains a most challenging time.

St John's Gate estate has been closed, as have the vast majority of our buildings. The Gate will reopen for business in September, but the museum will remain closed to visitors until a time that the streets of London are re-energised with the vibrancy that we so enjoy – hopefully early in 2021. However, time to care for our collections, protect from the outside world, and to continue to plan the essential major refurbishment project that is only temporarily paused.

We are part of a global charity, and but one piece of a worldwide effort that characterizes the values on which we have thrived for centuries – *Pro Fide Pro Utilitate Hominum.* ✱



VIDEO



UPDATE

A video update on the St. John Eye Hospital's response to Covid-19, from CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma'ali.



CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE

When our Prior, Nigel Heath, asked me to serve as Chancellor of the U.S. Priory, I was deeply honored, and am proud and pleased to accept the appointment. Doug Paul, KStJ, our former Chancellor, did an outstanding job serving the Order with tremendous ingenuity and integrity for six years.

He set the bar high, and I can only promise you that I will do my best to follow in his footsteps to fulfill this role as overseer of our Priory headquarters and development efforts. I am grateful that Ellen LeCompte has agreed to help me in these efforts by serving as Executive Vice Chancellor.

About ten years ago I was invited by a dear friend and longtime Confrère, Will Matthews, KStJ, to join the Priory's Pilgrimage to Israel. While I had visited Israel many times before, this journey, led by Canon Nicholas Porter, turned out to be the most profound trip ever to the Holy Land. The high point of the trip was touring the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital. What I saw and experienced that day changed my life forever. Watching the expert medical eye care given by dedicated and sensitive doctors and nurses was awe-inspiring. Seeing children returning from surgery, eyes bandaged, with their grateful families surrounding their beds was unbelievably moving. Knowing that the young and old being treated that day would not have to suffer from preventable

blindness and would have the blessing of sight was what made this journey so profound.

Support of the St John Eye Hospital is the primary mission of the U.S. Priory. As Vic Brandt, KStJ, Regional Committee Coordinator, often says, "Being part of the Order is a privilege as well as an obligation." Our obligation as Confrères is to do our best in whatever way we can to fulfill this mission.

Unfortunately, with this year's Investiture postponed, we will not have the benefit of coming together for our major annual fundraiser to raise the \$250,000-\$300,000 we usually raise to support the work of the Hospital. The most straightforward way to make up this deficit and honor our mission is to support our new Prior's request to donate what we would have spent had we attended this year's Investiture in Boston.

I ask that you join me in supporting our Prior's request by sending your donation today directly to our National office, contacting them by phone or logging in to the Member Dashboard on the Priory's website with your gift.

Together we can meet our commitment to the St John Eye Hospital!

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate,
Susan K. Wright, OstJ
Chancellor

UNEXPECTED STOP FOR SURGERY

by Daniel P. Reany, MStJ
Communications Committee Chairman

Shortly before the coronavirus pandemic shut down international travel, Guy Farmer of Tallahassee, FL, was visiting Israel with his wife, Mary, and a small tour group. When they planned the trip, he had no idea that surgery at St John Eye Hospital was part of the itinerary.

"The day we left for Israel I got a number of floaters in my eye," Guy said. "It didn't last long, but then a while later, every morning and every evening, when I was lying down or getting up, there seemed to be a kind of film moving across my eye. It was bad enough I decided to get it checked out. Someone I befriended at our hotel suggested your St John hospital."

"Once I got to the hospital, they got me in, quickly checked me out, and Dr. Mohammed Abu Safieh explained I had to go into surgery." The filmy blur in Guy's vision was caused by a detaching retina. Guy wanted to wait and have the operation performed by his eye doctor back in the States. "But I called my wife in to talk about it. She's a retired nurse, and she agreed with Dr. Mohammed that I had to get it done immediately, so it was two against one."

Guy's surgery was performed by Dr. Omar Abdel Dayem the same day, Feb. 10, 2020. "The hospital outside isn't as extravagant as some in the States. I mean, in Boca Raton, you drive up to the hospital and there's valet parking. But the care I got in Jerusalem was as good or better than American medical services. Inside, the hospital was modern, clean, and nice. I don't have the best eyes, so I'm pretty familiar with all the latest equipment. Everything in Jerusalem was state of the art."

Guy admitted that as an American he had some reservations about getting treated at the hospital in Jerusalem. "It was a



Guy and Mary Farmer at Caesarea Amphitheater in Israel.

little bit of a struggle at first, because they were all Palestinians. I thought of everything you see on the news about this ongoing conflict, vest bombs, and such. Before I made this visit to the hospital, I didn't appreciate what most Palestinians were like as people. Everyone was kind, and professional and caring."

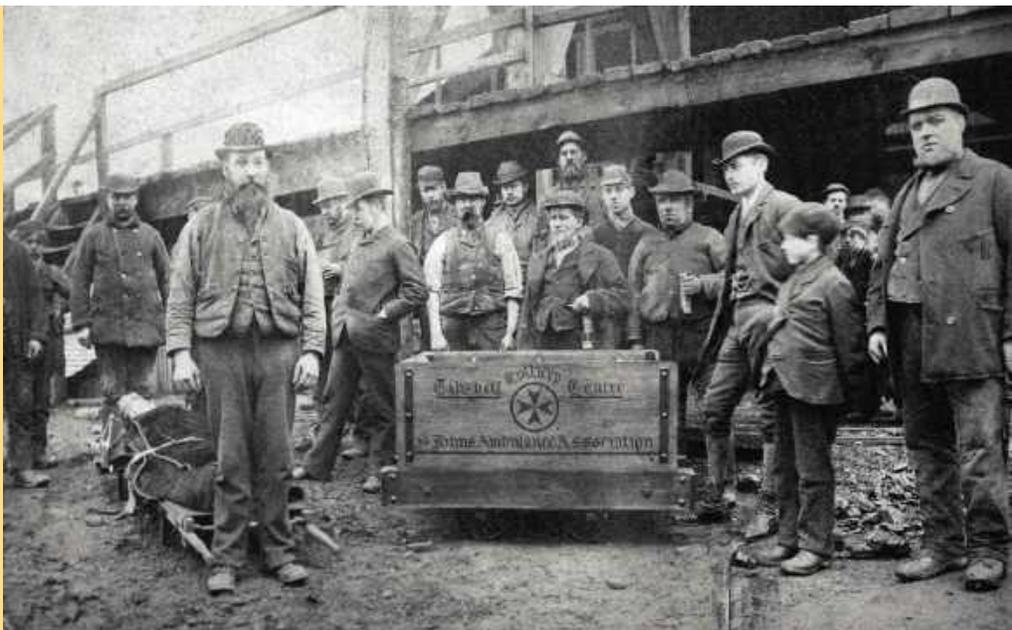
After an overnight stay, and a post-op check in the morning, Guy paid his fees, "which were fairly nominal," and went back to the hotel for a week of recuperation. While his fees were paid in full, his care from and interaction with the staff lead Guy to make a sizable donation to the Jerusalem hospital through the U.S. Priory.

"Everyone was great, and I was impressed by the detailed work the doctors did themselves. In the States doctors have two or three assistants running around doing paperwork or taking care of patients. In Israel they did a lot of that themselves. After meeting all of them, I had a soft spot for them, and wanted to reward them for the incredible work they do." ❄️

TREASURES

Many early St John Ambulance groups were established in centers of industry including Tibshelf, in Derbyshire, England. In a time before England's National Health Service existed, St John's promotion of first aid training was all the more vital.

This is one of many historic images presented in the book *Treasures*. With the US Priory office and its gift shop currently closed, we're currently unable to take orders. In upcoming newsletters, we will continue to show you highlights from *Treasures*, and we will announce when we are able to process orders of *Treasures* and other gift shop items.



MYSTERY OF A CRUSADER CROSS IN AN ANCIENT SCOTTISH WALL

by Daniel P. Reany, MStJ
Communications Committee Chairman

John Macaskill, OStJ, Priory Treasurer, remembers the old cross, carved in stone, from his childhood in Scotland.

“The history of that cross has remained a mystery for so long, but now it’s become quite clear.”

The cross is carved on a seemingly random block within a long field wall on his property in Scotland. That property includes the ancient Fenton Tower. “I’d always seen this 8-pointed cross cut into a block of stone in the wall. I thought it had been stolen from the tower, but now I know it couldn’t have been that.”

Fenton Tower was in ruins when John was growing up. It stood on a farm of a best friend, Ian Simpson, whose family owned the tower and surrounding property for roughly 150 years. “He and I restored the tower together about 20 years ago, and now I own the property.”

The tower house was originally wooden, having been built c. 1089 by the Devereux family, William Devereux having ridden with William the Conqueror during the Norman Invasion of 1066.

The stone **Fenton Tower** was constructed c. 1550, generations after the last Crusade, making it unlikely the carved Crusader-era cross has any association with the tower. The tower eventually fell into ruin, was restored 20 years ago, and now operates as a small hotel.

“During the restoration, we were laying water lines over a little hill behind the tower,” John said. “The excavator told us,



Crusader Cross

‘It’s all done and everything’s working, but we hit a few bones along the way.’ Of course we called the National Museum of Scotland immediately.”

A museum team surveyed the site, and discovered early Christian burials dating to 300 AD. The team also discovered much older graves dating to 3,000 to 5,000 BP (before present). “All in all they identified 300 to 400 burials,” John said. “There were clearly signs of there having been a small wooden church of some variety there, very early on,” one of the earliest Christian chapels in Scotland.

The Crusader cross from the field wall indicates the site had been used as a burial ground at least until the Middle Ages. “It would seem a Crusader had returned home, died locally, and been buried there. The stone was probably a grave marker removed to build the field wall. I can imagine a son of the laird coming back from the Holy Land, dying soon afterwards, and his father erecting a gravestone for him.” ✨

Fenton Tower

