



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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MESSAGE FROM THE PRIOR

Dear Confrères and colleagues,
Your Priory Chapter and Officers recently met at our national headquarters in Washington, DC, for its annual retreat. We welcomed new Chapter member Bill Stafford and returning members. While we discussed governance, finances, and

review of our strategic plan, the majority of our meeting was dedicated to brainstorming the evolution of the membership model mandated by St John International, as I previously reported in an earlier column.

Our membership model has always been focused on seeking outstanding individuals in our communities across the country, but going forward potential candidates may only be proposed after the individual has demonstrated service to St John, in keeping with the granting of this crown honor for “exceptional service to the Order of St John.” In addition, we will expand our volunteer program for individuals who wish to support our mission without the desire to become a Member of the Order.

While a difficult path to traverse, we are developing solutions that, once agreed by the Order’s Great Officers, will ensure that our Priory may continue to welcome new Members in a way that is more consistent with the rest of the St John family worldwide. I will, of course, share more details as they are approved.

I spoke to St. John Eye Hospital Group CEO Dr. Ahmad Ma’ali a few days ago and I paraphrase Ahmad’s comments:

“The war in Gaza has now entered its 22nd month, with hostilities again spreading across the entire Gaza Strip. An estimated 59,000 people have been killed, and over 155,000 have been injured. Since the collapse of the ceasefire in March, military operations have resumed at full intensity, with widespread fighting reported in all regions of Gaza.

The humanitarian crisis has further deepened, with alarming reports of widespread starvation. In recent days, following international political pressure, limited food trucks have been permitted entry into Gaza. However, our staff on the ground report that this is insufficient to address the scale of the crisis. It is hoped that continued advocacy and pressure will result in sustained and unrestricted access for food and humanitarian supplies.

The ceasefire negotiations have failed, and the situation remains highly volatile, with concerns over the potential expansion of Israeli ground operations into the remaining 30% of Gaza not yet under direct control.

Despite the conflict, our emergency medical intervention has continued at four locations, including the St. John Eye Hospital Group-Gaza Hospital (SJEHG-Gaza). **To date, over 60,000 patients have received eye care services from our committed teams. We have successfully completed the renovation of the outpatient department, allowing us to resume clinical services at the Gaza Hospital.**

Plans to renovate two operating rooms at the hospital are in place but have been postponed due to the ongoing hostilities. Unfortunately, we have been unable to secure any new medical supplies for the past four months, as all road crossings into Gaza remain closed.

We are relieved to report that all 28 staff members currently working in Gaza remain safe and unharmed.

To support our dedicated staff facing skyrocketing living costs, especially the soaring prices of food, the Chair and Board of Trustees have approved a one-time bonus for our Gaza-based team this month.

The security situation in the West Bank (WB) and East Jerusalem remains fragile, with sporadic incidents of violence occurring almost daily, particularly in the northern districts. Movement of people and goods within the WB continues to be severely restricted, making travel to Jerusalem extremely challenging and complex.

Despite these challenges, operations at the WB hospitals (Nablus and Hebron) and affiliated centers have continued at near-normal levels. Based on mid-year clinical statistics, we are on track to reach approximately 200,000 outpatient visits by year-end, presenting an almost 20% increase compared to last year. The Children’s Vision screening initiative conducted in refugee camps and sponsored by the St. John U.S. Priory, is also progressing well. To date, over 31,000 children have been screened, with more than 2,800 referred for further treatment, management, or surgery.”

I often find Ahmad’s reports heartbreaking and at the same time miraculous and inspiring. I have been blessed with opportunities to meet and talk with many of the doctors and nurses in person at our various hospital and clinic facilities. I can personally attest to the dedication and determination of the staff, and it is an honor and a privilege to support them. Please continue to pray for these brave women and men who continue to provide life-saving and life-changing services to the most vulnerable, despite the personal risk.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum.

Nigel G. Heath, KStJ
Prior

PRIORY STAFF

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OFFICE INFORMATION

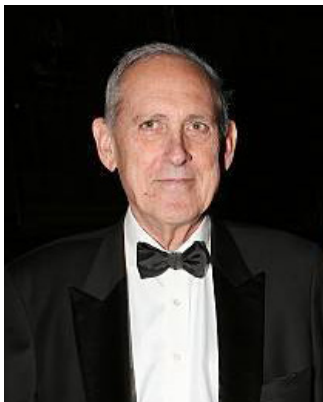
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A LOOK AT PAST AND FUTURE PRIORS

If you were unable to tune in to the Annual Meeting of the U.S. Priory earlier this year, you may have missed the news that the search for a new Prior is now underway. Unlike the Sovereign Head of The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, who serves as long as he or she reigns as monarch of the United Kingdom, the head of the Priory in the United States is appointed by the Grand Prior, HRH the Duke of Gloucester, and serves for up to two three-year terms. Prior Nigel Heath, KStJ, has held that position since 2020, and will turn the title over to the next Prior on St John's Day, June 24, 2026.



John R. Drexel, IV

Heath's successor will be only the fifth to lead the U.S. Priory since its official establishment in 1996, when John R. Drexel, IV was inaugurated in Washington National Cathedral. As the first Prior in the U.S., Drexel, (1996-2008) focused on carrying out the wishes of HM Queen Elizabeth II as they related to the growth of the Order in the U.S. and to further establishing the Order as a broker of peace throughout the world. One of Drexel's early actions was

moving the headquarters of the U.S. Priory from an office at St. John the Devine to a pair of buildings in Midtown Manhattan. The move would pave the way for a later pivotal move to the nation's capital.



Marshall Acuff

Marshall Acuff (2008-14) would take over from Drexel as Prior in 2008. He quickly established three goals: reorganization, expansion, and fundraising. His first major act was relocating the Priory's headquarters from New York to Washington, D.C. He believed proximity to the center of political power was essential to the Order's ability to influence policy while also making it easier to recruit new Members from across the country. There was, at the time,

a sense that the Priory was too New York-centric, with little regard for the rest of the nation. Relocating the headquarters changed that perception, and Acuff set out to visit all of the fledgling regions throughout the U.S. At least once a year, he and the Priory Hospitaller would visit a new area to generate interest and recruit members.

The move to D.C. proved to be critical in the early 2000s, when Acuff, working with Drexel and future Prior Palmer Hamilton, was able to secure passage of a bill that established U.S. government support for the Jerusalem Eye Hospital. This stable source of funding has proven invaluable to the facility's ability to expand services in the Holy Land.

Even before Palmer Hamilton became the third Prior (2014-20), he was deeply involved in the Order's international mission. As a D.C. attorney representing banking and financial interests on Capitol Hill, Hamilton was in a prime position to promote federal support for the St. John Eye Hospital Group, making a case that funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) would have an enormous impact on the development of the Palestinian areas of the Middle East. This reliable U.S. Government support ensured the Order's medical facilities could deliver world-class eye care and groundbreaking ophthalmic research.

Hamilton was also deeply committed to the Order's centuries-old mandate to care for *our Lords, the sick and the poor*. At the prompting of the Duke of Gloucester to directly involve the U.S. Priory's Members in hands-on volunteer work, Hamilton founded the St John Volunteer Corps (SJVC). He effectively created a small army of volunteers to use whatever skills they possessed to assist agencies providing support for veterans.

One of the first orders of business for the Priory's fourth Prior, Nigel Heath (2020-present), was the creation of a strategic plan, a first for the U.S. Priory, and a solid road map for all levels of the organization: Priory, Chapter, Region, Members. He also laid out an ambitious goal of doubling financial support for the Eye Hospital Group, from \$2 million annually to \$4 million. This increase is on target thanks to growth in membership numbers, but also through strategic grants from national foundations.



Palmer Hamilton



Nigel Heath

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Our next Prior will have this tradition of servant leadership to build upon and will shape the Priory in the U.S. in new and exciting ways.

Building on the work of Hamilton, Heath grew the SJVC service opportunities, expanding approved projects from the initial focus on veterans agencies to include more than 140 organizations serving the nation's neediest citizens. He also instituted a National Day of Service in 2023, a single day in May when hundreds of Members volunteer in communities across the country. Not only does this effort supply much-needed human resources, but it also provides an opportunity for Members to become better acquainted with each other through a shared experience.

Though not originally a part of the U.S. Priory's mission, first aid training and emergency medical services have been a core part of the Order's work in Commonwealth nations for many years. Heath saw an opportunity to broaden the Order's presence by creating first aid training for public school students. A trial program was established in New York with help from St John New Zealand and the Order of Malta. This first step brought traditional St John services directly to the U.S. and underscored the intra-Order collaborations Heath sought to establish.

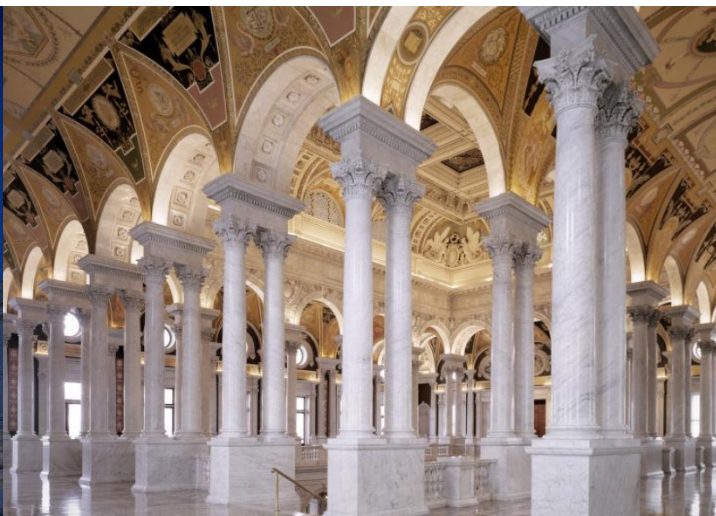
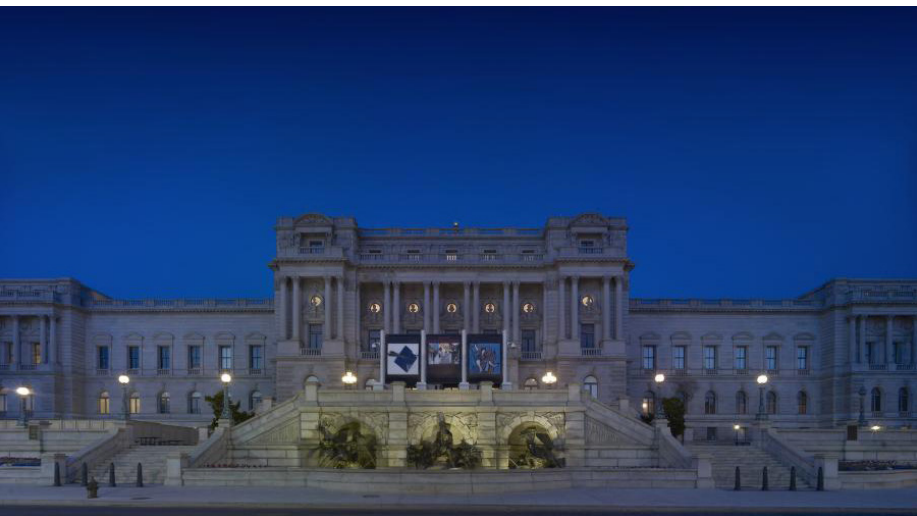
Our next Prior will have this tradition of servant leadership to build upon and will shape the Priory in the U.S. in new and exciting ways. The position requires a major commitment of time and resources, however few roles will prove as consequential or satisfying. The principal expectations and responsibilities of a candidate may be found [here](#) on the Priory's website. Nominations for the position are now open and will close September 12. ✱

YOUSEF'S STORY

We first met Yousef, who is now 9, during his initial visit to St. John Eye Hospital in Nablus in 2021, and we kept up with him as he visited our clinic in Anabta. At the Nablus Hospital, he was diagnosed with myopia (nearsightedness), and since 2021 has been getting regular eye checkups and updated prescription eyeglasses roughly every six months.

Yousef's family expressed their gratitude for having a comprehensive eye hospital in Nabulus that provides integrated eye care services, including prescription eyeglasses and surgeries, to the families of the northern West Bank. ✱





IN FINE PRINT

INVESTITURE GALA AT THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

Exhibitions of particular interest to U.S. Priory Members will be The Two Georges: Parallel Lives in an Age of Revolution, a joint exhibition with the Royal Archives in the United Kingdom.

are encouraged to explore several of the library's current exhibitions. After dinner, the celebration returns to the lower level, where music and dancing carry the night to its festive close.

In a setting as storied as the occasion it honors, the Priory in the USA of the Order of St John will gather on Saturday, October 25, for a black-tie gala with dinner and dancing at the Library of Congress. The evening celebration follows a day of solemn purpose that begins with the Service of Investiture and Rededication at the Washington National Cathedral.

The evening begins with a reception on the lower level of the library's Great Hall. Surrounded by soaring Corinthian columns, marble balustrades, and gorgeously patterned mosaic floors, guests will enjoy cocktails and conversation in one of the building's most visually arresting spaces. Dinner follows on the upper level beneath coffered barrel vaults and gilded ornamentation that echo the grandeur of the Gilded Age.

Throughout the evening, guests

Exhibitions of particular interest to U.S. Priory Members will be **The Two Georges: Parallel Lives in an Age of Revolution**, a joint exhibition with the Royal Archives in the United Kingdom. This display contrasts the leadership of George Washington and King George III through their correspondence, maps, and personal effects. Presented in adjacent cases, their stories invite reflection on both conflict and character during a pivotal moment in world history.

Also on view is **Collecting Memories: Treasures from the Library of Congress**, a wide-ranging exhibit in the David M. Rubenstein Gallery that brings together more than 120 artifacts from the library's vast holdings. Items include Abraham Lincoln's pocket contents from the night of his assassination, early Spider-Man artwork, sacred manuscripts, and audio recordings from the civil rights era.

The gala benefits the work of the St. John Eye Hospital Group, the leading provider of expert eye care in East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. Proceeds from the evening will fund surgeries, treatment for childhood blindness, and community outreach programs that restore sight and improve quality of life.

This year's extraordinary setting offers a rare opportunity to gather within the oldest federal cultural institution in the United States. For Members of the U.S. Priory, the evening promises meaningful fellowship in one of Washington's most beautiful and historic landmarks, a chance to welcome our newest Confrères, and an opportunity to support the Order's life-changing work. ❄️

A LOOK AT THE AMERICAS REGION

As an organization with military origins, the Order of St John maintains vestiges of that history, with Officers, Commanders, Knights, etc.. And while we no longer have an army with divisions, brigades and battalions, the International Order of St John is structured with 11 Priories worldwide, along with five Commanderies and 26 Associations. These 42 Establishments are divided into one of three large geographic Regions: the Americas; Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA); and Asia Pacific.

As the name would suggest, the Americas Region encompasses St John Establishments in North, Central and South America, and includes Antigua, Barbados, Bermuda, Canada, , Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States. The United States and Canada each operate under a Priory, the other Establishments are all Associations.

U.S. Prior Nigel Heath was asked by the Lord Prior in 2021 to take on the position of chair of the Americas Region, and was tasked with working with our colleagues in Canada to stand up the region, develop an action plan for moving forward, and facilitate collaboration. The Americas Region became the first of the three regions to host an in-person meeting of all Americas associations to establish an overview of the work of each association and how best to collaborate in the spirit of “One St John.” In December 2024 Sub-Prior Steve Evans and Prior Nigel Heath visited each association where they learned first-hand the strengths—and the needs—of each. With the U.S. Prior’s term as Americas Region chair ending on St John’s Day 2025, the torch was passed to Laurie Anderson, Chancellor of the Priory of Canada, who is supported by Jason Nurse, Americas Regional Coordinator.

This Regional structure was created to foster collaboration amongst St John Establishments that share similar opportunities and challenges, based on their geography and location. Regionalization is a core part of the **Order of St John’s Global Strategy**, which brings together all our Establishments with a shared set of values, vision, and mission, representing the Order as an international order of global significance centered around first aid and medical responses to community healthcare.

According to Jason, “to achieve this, we all have to work together—every part of St John has an important role to play, from the smallest Commandery and Association to the biggest Priory, from volunteers in a remote village to staff, members and Great Officers—only a collaborative effort will bring our strategy to life.”

Grouping these entities together in Regions creates a peer group for all St John Establishments, an opportunity to build cohesion and shared direction amongst entities within a geographical area. Jason explained, “as each Region will focus on the issues of most importance in their own context, it embeds our operations as a local service for local communities by local people, not just into the delivery of our services, but into our own leadership.”

The Establishments in the Americas Region have a strong volunteer community that is engaged in various types of medical responses to their local community’s healthcare needs. The vast majority of the Americas Establishments focus on first aid training and first aid support at events. Our colleagues in Antigua run the only hospice facility in the Eastern Caribbean. Some of our St John Establishments also offer a patient transfer service for local residents to attend their medical appointments. The Priory of Canada, through its St John Ambulance programs, also offers specialized courses which include topics such as occupational health and safety, mental health, opioid response, pet first aid and more. They also provide emergency response during local disasters, therapy dog programs in hospitals and care homes, and youth programming.

With thousands of Members spread out in countries around the globe, regionalization offers a sharper focus, and according to Jason, “creates a vehicle to increase the impact and quality of what we do, everywhere. By aligning priorities across Establishments with shared circumstances, we can foster stronger peer support, greater cohesion, and more resilient programs and operations—which can then empower our oversight and understanding of the Order’s global status.” Those of us in the U.S. Priory might certainly consider visiting our peer Establishments in the Caribbean once the chill of winter arrives! ❄️



St John Ambulance in St. Lucia



PRO FIDE

This summer, I returned to one of my hometowns; we moved a lot. I spent a few golden years of my life between 10 and 13 there. I visited the church where, in 1978, I was confirmed. I stood at the place where I knelt before God and was blessed by the bishop as he asked for the Holy Spirit to continue

to enliven my faith. I stood there and thought of my journey and my life in ministry, my faithfulness and my faithlessness.

It's common knowledge that to feel at home somewhere takes time. We think about home in terms of addresses, and an address is something you don't change every year. But we change where we live, work, love, or call home. When the news cycle, job market, and romantic prospects churn our life it's easy to pray: I would like to feel at home again. I felt at home for a moment as I stood there in 1978 and 2025.

In recent years, in my experience, this longing has less to do with houses and more to do with what I call spiritual homelessness. Saint Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in You," and, ever since the fourth century, restless pilgrims have been trying to work out what the phrase "rest in You" means in concrete, quotidian terms.

The restless heart wants a home that will recognize, nourish, and value it. I have been to many churches over my life, and I have discovered that at least this much is required for a spiritual home: a community where you are known, where people learn your name and remember it. Where your story matters, and you're not a nameless face in the crowd. A place where scripture, song, and sacrament fill you with courage for the week ahead. A community where your gifts, whether organizing a pantry or leading a quiet prayer, help determine its future. All of this together makes it feel like walking into a room already warmed for you.

This is the holy grail of spiritual homes. Maybe you have felt a trace of it once or twice in the places you've tried. A brief Sunday when the call of Luke's gospel to the "little flock" recognizes the prayer you and God have been whispering in the dark. Or when Oscar Romero's repeated statement that "the Kingdom of God is within you" clicks with the journey of discipleship you and God have been whispering in the dark. These sparks are clues that home is near: an audible click between what's happening inside a sanctuary and what's already afoot in your heart; a sudden facility with volunteering when the joy outweighs the hesitation; a shared ability to lament and laugh out loud, free from pretense.

Standing there on that day in July, I also knew that we wander for many reasons. Fear of being seen, heard, and known keeps

us hesitant, but an honest community, one that welcomes imperfections into the light, not to shame, but to heal.

Spiritual consumerism means we never have to commit to the work of any one community before someone else's pastor's voice and lighting scheme pulls us out of the room. We carry past pains and disappointments with us; for some of us, counselors or trusted friends are needed as we walk the path of healing while pain is converted into wisdom instead of a chain.

God's urgent vision was of all people of all faiths or none joining together to construct a public which belongs to all and which we all have an obligation to build through stewardship. To my mind, this invitation comes to life when a few coins in the offering plate are signs of neighbors greeting each other in the doors; when shared tables of food and conversation help dismantle loneliness; when courageous conversations about money, race, or justice signal that Christ is welcome in every room of the house.

As we gather our coins for the work of the Order through the St John Eye Hospital ministry in the Holy Land, and as we gather together to retreat, do good through service ministry, or to break bread and share wine. We, in order, seek to build a small piece of the kingdom with our own lives shared. We create a kind of spiritual home together.

With our Order and our lives, we should always be asking three simple questions, then listening for three simple assurances. First, is God honored here—does our belief ring true? Second, do the vulnerable find welcome through our work—children, elders, immigrants, folks navigating life in the Holy Land? If not all, then home for me cannot be home for all. Third, can I imagine growing old here and trusting the community to hold my life with me? Answering "yes" to all three may not feel like fireworks. It may feel more like a kind of gentle, abiding peace.

Linger when you sense it. I linger when I feel it; as I lingered for a moment, my heart drank it all in: the past and present, and imagined the future in that tiny church.

A spiritual home is where our restlessness finds its rhythm in God's extravagant generosity; where we learn to keep our lamps lit, ready to break bread that smells like justice and pour cups that taste like mercy. It's where we practice the only reality that can transform the world, love. May your search bring you not just a doorway you cross on a sabbath day but a communion of people who will remind you, again and again, that the Kingdom is already within you, ready to be shared, and by sharing changes the world.

The Rt. Rev. C Andrew Doyle, D.D., OSTJ
Sub Prelate