



# **Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem**

## **Priory of St. James**

### **PRIOR'S REPORT**

**December 2007**

The Fourth Investiture on September 22 of our Order was a great success. There are now 52 dames and knights. About 60 people attended the follow-up dinner at the RCMI. We were particularly honoured and gratified that HE Grand Master Rear Admiral James Carey, Grand Prior of Canada HE Cdr Sir Ronald Matthewman and Prior Cdr Sir Fred Knight were able to attend.

In my inaugural address as your new prior, on your behalf, tribute was paid to the wonderful job that HE Chev George McNeillie, did in developing our Order to its present position. Few people could have done the job he did. Bravo Zulu, George!

During this period a great deal of thought was invested as in to what kind of charitable work our Priory should specialize.

Some of us attended the 2007 Convent of the Order in Williamsburg, Virginia. At one of their sessions for priors, the Grand Prior of the United States, Major General Robert Disney proposed a wonderful concept to the Priors and Chancellors present.

The General suggested that besides supporting the Churches in Jerusalem, the other international and local projects each priory has, the Order as a whole should support one major, long term initiative. This would be in line with most other recognized orders, which, besides many local initiatives, all have one overriding cause they support over the years. For example, the Order of St. John has the St. John Ambulance and an eye hospital in Jerusalem, the Order of St. Lazarus supports hospices for “end of life issues”, and so on.

And Gen. Disney’s proposal is a simple one.

Dysentery and amoebal disease are the second largest killers of children in the Third World. Yet, it is a simple and inexpensive disease to cure. The cause is always the same. Dirty, contaminated water.

The General proposed that our Order should take on this cause as a major long term objective.

Dirty water is a worldwide tragedy.

Half of all hospital beds in the world are occupied by someone suffering from a water-related illness. In the developing nations, 80% of all diseases stem from consumption of and exposure to unsafe water.

Contaminated water is deadlier than any other evil on earth; deadlier than AIDS; deadlier than cancer, deadlier than contagious diseases; deadlier even than World Wars. During the Second World War, one soldier died every 5 seconds. Today, one human being dies every 3.5 seconds from drinking contaminated water. The basic, underlying reasons for this appalling situation are poverty, over population and lack of education which has led to centuries of environmental degradation of the lands, the water sheds, rivers and lakes, abetted by the wholesale destruction of the world’s forests during the past 3000 years.

The UN predicts that by 2050 35% of the human race will experience serious water shortages and problems.

Upon our return from Virginia it was discussed at length among some of our members and the chairs of our various committees. Much to my delight there was great support. In my dinner remarks following our Investiture, the subject of clean water was introduced and that this is perhaps a cause our Priory should take on. The reaction to this proposal was overwhelmingly positive.

Since that dinner a great deal of work was done. Chev Alastair McIntyre used his special skills and made us aware of several organizations now active in the field. One was “Living Water International Canada”, ([www.livingwatercanada.org](http://www.livingwatercanada.org) and [www.water.cc](http://www.water.cc) ) which is a Canadian offshoot of a large U.S. Christian organization which was formed in 1991. This organization now has drilled 4100 wells in 21 countries, serving more than 6 million people daily. The Canadian operation is run by Barrie Hart, a retired high school teacher and his wife Heather, who have personally drilled 25 wells in Nicaragua, El Salvador and

Guatemala. At our request he made a presentation to those members of our Priory who could be in attendance, which was outstanding and convinced all of us of the worthiness of this cause, his ability and his organization.

Then at our recent Christmas Party at the Badminton and Racquet Club, Mr. and Mrs. Hart were invited as our guests to make a similar presentation. As a result, the Charitable Committee, chaired by Dame Joan Peters, has met and will be recommending that at least for the next few years our Priory adopt Living Water Canada as our agent to participate in this great cause.

At an earlier Executive Meeting it was decided that our Priory would have the following three major areas of concentration in our charitable work:

1. **Canada:** In Canada we would concentrate our work strictly in concert with the Cathedral of St. James, helping them in their community outreach activities to the homeless and disadvantaged. It is our spiritual home; they are wonderful people, have gone out of their way to support the Order and they do
2. **Churches in Jerusalem:** The Order as a whole is supporting these churches in the Holy Land – many of which are in crisis. This is where our Order's historical roots are and it was therefore decided to support these churches financially, albeit on a modest basis and continue an ancient tradition.
3. **Water:** This would become our major area of concentration internationally.

To provide clean water is totally without political implications and could not possibly be objected to by any one. From that wonderful point of entry, more difficult matters such as education or schooling would be much easier to implement.

It is also most important that our first efforts should be successful and we should therefore start where our chances of success are the greatest.

Central and South America would provide the greatest chances for early success. The reasons are:

1. These are Christian countries. The cultural differences, though substantial, are less than in any other region.
2. They are in our time zones, and one can visit them relatively easily and quickly. They are also our nearest neighbour in great need.
3. And perhaps most importantly, Living Water is here in Toronto and Halliburton, have a record of success and are wonderful people. There is also the opportunity for Knights and Dames to actually join them on their drilling expeditions and participate!

This turned out to be a long report. Those of us who have been working on this project are fully committed and hope that all the knights and dames will support this noble effort.

On January 21, 7:30 p.m., RCMI – Kay Christie Room, there will be a meeting of the officers and chairs of the various committees. At that meeting Chairperson Dame Joan Peters of the Charitable Activities Committee will formally propose that the Priory of St. James will support Living Water International Canada in their fine work in Central and South America. These meetings are always open to all Dames and Knights, and since this one is going to be both important and informative, every one is urged to make an effort to attend.

We hope to see as many of you as possible there!

With Best Wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Very Happy and Prosperous New Year.

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***Matthew Gaasenbeek, III GOTJ***

Prior, St. James