



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

VOLUME 1, NUMBER 3

OCTOBER 2020

Sumoud's Story

PAGE 3

HIGHLIGHTS

Watch the *Treasures*
Video Conference

PAGE 7

Introducing U.S. Liaisons
to Alliance Orders

PAGE 5

St John Ophthalmic
Association

PAGE 2



PRIOR'S MESSAGE

Welcome to our third edition of *Eyes on the Future*. The story of Sumoud, in the article that follows, says it all—a blind child given new life at the St John Eye Hospital. Due to the generous support of U.S. Priory Confrères, the family paid only for eye drops. Imagine how many lives

will be truly changed by the \$425,000 raised for the Hospital appeal in lieu of our Investiture this year. My deep, heartfelt thanks to all who donated, and to our National Development Committee—Susan Wright, Chair, Charles Carroll, Tom Cerruti, John Macaskill, Will Matthews, Tim Pidgeon, Victoria Sheffield and Al Williams, who through their dedicated work helped us achieve this exemplary level of generosity.

We have a strategy! Sincere thanks to our Strategic Planning Committee—Dennis Hensley, Chair, Tom Cerruti, Paul Coombs, Sharon Moore, Bruce Spivey, David Trebing and Linda Ziglar, for their many, many hours of hard work and research, and to the nearly 600 Confrères who participated in interviews or completed questionnaires. On October 16, 2020, our Chapter voted to accept the strategic plan as presented, and is now

working on the implementation plan based on the wealth of data received.

I encourage you to register for our virtual service of Welcome and Dedication on Saturday November 7, 2020, at 2:00pm EST (in lieu of our annual Investiture). We will welcome new Confrères, and recognize Confrères promoted, Volunteer Corps service award recipients and our Confrères who have sadly departed.

Following the service, new Members are invited to an orientation and question session, which will include a welcome from both our Grand Prior and Lord Prior. On Sunday, November 8th, everyone is invited to our virtual Chivalry Brunch, when we will welcome the Chancellor of the Order of St John, Gillian Boughton-Willmore, who will speak live from the UK.

As always, I welcome your suggestions, comments or critique at: prior@saintjohn.org

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



ST JOHN: AN EYE TO THE FUTURE

For almost 140 years, St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem has treated patients in one of the most geopolitically unstable regions in the world. Her ethos of care irrespective of race, religion or ability to pay reflects that of the preceding Persian *Bimeristans* in the 7th century AD,

and continues until this present day. Successive challenges to her ability to serve patients have been met with characteristic courage, the current COVID-19 threat being the most recent. That the St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) steadfastly continues as a Beacon of Hope is testament to the individual and collective commitment of her staff, her Priors and supporters across the world, and Hospital Trustees.

Despite St John's longevity, the future of the Group should not be taken for granted, and past successes do not guarantee our future in a rapidly evolving world. Our mission is to end preventable blindness in this population; to meet this goal we require sustained investment both in service delivery

and, of greater importance in the longer term, our teaching and training programs. Hospitals with vibrant postgraduate departments and a research-orientated culture attract the best medical and nursing applicants and tend to flourish as a result. They encompass clinical and laboratory research programs, international professional networks, advanced IT systems, and, increasingly, virtual educational activities. As a consequence, better trained staff are in a stronger position to deliver ophthalmic care. In this regard, we continue the ancient tradition of the Hospitallers who employed the most experienced physicians and techniques of the day. For their time, they were widely recognized as 'state-of-the-art' in their field, as we should be today.

The pressures of COVID-19 and service delivery notwithstanding, our future requires a funded, internationally-networked, postgraduate body. Put simply, SJEHG should be the best place for a professional to train in the region. This may seem aspirational, but given the enviable expertise across the

continued on page 6

PRIORY STAFF

Michele Blair
Executive Director

Diana McCormick
Director, Membership
and Events

Fendey Jean-Baptiste
Director, Technology

Celyna Jackson
Administrative Assistant

OFFICE INFORMATION

1850 M Street, NW, Suite 1070
Washington DC 20036-5856
Tel: 202-510-9691
Fax: 202-822-0040
ID#: 13-6161455
E-mail: prioryUSA@saintjohn.org

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Daniel P. Reany, MStJ, Chairman
Timothy Blair, MStJ
David Bowen, PhD, OS
Bita Esmaeli, M.D., MStJ
Sandy Knox-Johnston, OStJ
Charles Mosteller, M.D., CStJ

SUMOUD'S STORY

Not long after Sumoud was born in 2014, her grandmother, Fadiyah, was the first to notice her baby granddaughter was blind.

"I raised four children myself, so I could tell something was different with Sumoud," Fadiyah said. "She did not focus her gaze on any one thing. Her eyes just moved in circles. When we played with her, she would not make eye contact. She only turned her head toward sounds, or toward a touch on her cheek."

The family knew of St John Eye Hospital Group, and took Sumoud to the Al Nasser Ophthalmic Hospital in Gaza. She was diagnosed with bilateral cataracts. Doctors discovered she was completely blind in both eyes.

"We were all worried about her future," Fadiyah said. "She has brothers who have no eye problems. They are fine, but what would become of her? Her life would be miserable. We were so sad.

"In our culture we are more concerned about the social status of girls. She has to have a chance to get married, and she would not have that if she grew up blind. Her mother cried all the time. I did, too."

Sumoud's father only earned 1,000 NIS (\$254) per month as a day laborer. So there was no way the family could afford surgery, which would have cost 6,320 NIS (\$1,606).

Sumoud was referred to the East Jerusalem Eye Hospital, the flagship of SJEHG.

Photo: Daniel P. Reany



Sumoud and her grandmother, Fadiya in 2015. Sumoud was blind when she was diagnosed with bilateral cataracts.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic began, the Israeli government took numerous security precautions with families entering Jerusalem from the West Bank. While SJEHG is well known to both Palestinians and Israelis, the screening process can still take a considerable amount of time and be rather restrictive.

As an older, Palestinian woman, Fadiyah had an easier time passing the screening process, and acted as Sumoud's

continued on page 4



Photo: Daniel P. Reany

Sumoud, one lensectomy surgery done, one to go.



VIDEO



A live event held virtually earlier in October was a discussion about the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, with Sir Andrew Cash, Chairman of St John Eye Hospital Group, and U.S. Priory Hospitaller David Pyott. You can check out the recording [here](#).

SUMOUD'S STORY *continued from page 3*

guardian during her multiple trips to Jerusalem. "I made it my job to get her to the hospital in Jerusalem."

Sumoud underwent bilateral lens replacement surgeries. Doctors used artificial lenses, slightly oversized for her eyes. As even a young child's eyes are almost the size of an adult's, she easily grew into the lenses, which will serve her well for the rest of her life. The family only paid for Sumoud's postoperative eye drops. Thanks to St John Members and other donors, the surgeries were provided free charge.

Just a few hours after the first of two surgeries, Sumoud could see out of one eye. Her



Sumoud in 2020

grandmother was thrilled. "Already I can see a difference in her. She seems healthier, and she is definitely happier. She looked at me, and saw me for the first time."



Sumoud with her new glasses, 2020. Seeing better than ever!

UPDATE

We recently reconnected with Sumoud and her family. In February 2020, Sumoud was poked in the eye and suffered a blunt trauma injury that required medical treatment. Her artificial lenses are functioning well, and with a prescription for little pink rimmed glasses, she's seeing better than ever. ✨

PRIOR APPOINTS LIAISONS TO ALLIANCE ORDERS IN THE U.S.

If you have attended a Priory investiture, you may have been struck by the timelessness of the ceremony. While our Order of St John was formally established in the nineteenth century, it shares heritage and traditions that go back to the Middle Ages. Recently, our Prior Nigel Heath appointed two Liaison Officers to build connections and partnerships with two other Orders whose roots can be found in the Hospitaller tradition of the medieval crusades to the Holy Land. Of the five members of the Alliance Orders three, including our own, have a presence in the United States.

The newly-appointed liaison to the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta (universally known as the “Order of Malta” or the “SMOM”) is Paul Martin, OStJ. He was appointed to the Order of St John in 2002, and as a Roman Catholic he has long been familiar with the Order of Malta’s history, governance and charitable works throughout the world. The SMOM is the direct successor of the medieval Hospitallers who established the original medical mission in Jerusalem. The Knights and Dames who comprise the Order of Malta are Roman Catholics who are active in their parishes, dioceses and in many other areas of service and philanthropy—just as our members are. Having attended his first SMOM investiture as a guest in 1976, Paul has made many connections through friends and clergy who are members and chaplains of the SMOM. For the past several years, members of the Order of St John’s San Francisco Region have joined members of the SMOM across the Bay Area for prayer and worship and to discuss shared commitments to the service of humanity and the defense of the faith. These are the efforts he would like to develop and cultivate as the liaison to the Order of Malta. As he tries to coordinate efforts to provide medical care in the Holy Land and service with the VA here in the United States, he has also discussed possible collaboration with the SMOM Western Association in their Malta Clinic in Oakland. Like the Order of Malta, our work is deeply rooted in faith and Paul feels strongly that this is “the most organic alliance we have and we should engage with it!”



Leaders of all five of the Mutually-Recognized Orders of St John, in Potsdam, German. The lineup includes our own Grand Prior, HRH Prince Richard, Duke of Gloucester (front row, second from right).

Bailiwick of Brandenburg of the Chivalric Order of Saint John of the Hospital at Jerusalem (usually simply referred to as the Johanniterorden). While the Order of Malta in the USA boasts thousands of members in the Federal, Western, and American Associations, the Johanniterorden has only about 4,200 members worldwide. Of those, only about 50 live in the United States. The newly-appointed liaison to the Johanniterorden is Julian “Vic” Brandt, KStJ. Vic’s connection to the Johanniters is also very deep and centuries old. Members of both sides of his family were members and he still has cousins in Germany who are active in the Johanniters’ work. Vic has already spearheaded great initiatives with the Johanniters—from toy and clothes drives for Caribbean hurricane victims, to a coat drive for Americans dealing with homelessness to assisting VA hospital patients with legal issues. Vic is hoping to continue these and other initiatives in cooperation with the Johanniterorden in clusters around Charleston, Dallas and Washington, DC.

It is sometimes easy to forget that The Most Venerable Order of St John is part of something so much larger than the work we do here in the United States. There is great potential in partnering with the Mutually-Recognized Orders of St John like the SMOM and the Johanniterorden. We can use new and existing connections with these Orders to multiply our own efforts to work for the faith and in the service of humanity. The work that Paul and Vic do is certainly an important part of that service!

If you have any ideas for regional collaboration with the Order of Malta or the Johanniters, please contact Paul at menlo1987@gmail.com, or Vic at brandtvic@gmail.com. ✨

It is sometimes easy to forget that The Most Venerable Order of St John is part of something so much larger than the work we do here in the United States.

Of course, these two Orders are not the only groups to develop from the medieval Hospitallers. As the Protestant Reformation tore Europe apart in the 16th century, a number of German knights of the Order of Malta drifted away from Roman Catholicism. This drift eventually solidified into the



Working with our talented surgeons and anesthetic staff in our Gaza hospital immediately before lock-down in March 2020: (L to R) Dr. Hisham (one of our trainee doctors in Gaza), Professor Richard Collin from London, Dr. Maged Abu Ramadan (Trustee of SJEHG, and consultant surgeon), Dr. David Verity (Hospitaller), and Dr. Deab (Consultant anesthesiologist, SJEHG).

Priorities, and our developing international partnerships, the goal is achievable. In this regard, the Priory in the USA has been exemplary, sponsoring medical observerships and congresses for our staff, for which we are all sincerely grateful.

The Hospital Board has defined four operational goals for SJEHG: accessibility, quality eye care, training and research; and three strategic objectives: partnerships, reputation and sustainability. All but the first of these objectives are directly or indirectly supported by investment in our postgraduate profile, both in the OPT, and across the world. Our medical residency programme in Jerusalem is the only one available for Palestinian doctors specializing in ophthalmology, and we also train ophthalmic nurses at the prestigious Sir Stephen Miller School of Nursing, accredited by the University of West London. Historically, hands-on surgical training depended on visiting external surgeons, external Fellowships being both expensive and limited by travel constraints. This has gradually changed over the years, and we now send some of our young doctors to Israeli units, many of which have a long history of training colleagues from around the world.

Clinical networks are therefore vital to our future. They build trust between units, without which research and training become difficult. In this regard, again, our thanks to the Priory in the USA and your immediate past and present Hospitaliers. Their support for the evolving international St John Ophthalmic Association (SOA) has played a pivotal role as we work to establish a credible and productive postgraduate organization for the Order. The SOA (www.SOA.global) was formed in 2015 by Hospitaliers of the Order to prepare for the challenges alluded to above, and is formed of five hubs across the world.

In 2020 it became a formal part of the SJEHG with a board of directors which includes the Hospitaller of the Priory in the USA. Historically, despite the extensive nursing and medical expertise across the Priorities, it has proven impossible to galvanise a single professional organization to draw on that collective expertise and broaden our professional base. That has now changed following a series of 16 meetings across the SOA hubs in the past 5 years. In 2018 **SOA-Americas** held its **inaugural meeting** in Chicago alongside the American Academy of Ophthalmology, this followed by its **second meeting** in San Francisco a year later, with the Association's first virtual meeting hosted by SOA-USA in November 2020. Furthermore, in November 2019, US physicians from Harvard partnered with the SOA to create the first on-line educational

MasterClass series in NeuroOrbital disease, hosted by the head of the ceremonial division of St John England at the Cavalry and Guards Club in London. These and other educational resources can be previewed on the Association's evolving **educational page**, with scientific articles and SJEHG research available on the **research page**. Access-by-donation to parts of the educational material (before becoming open-access after a year), and SOA membership options to be rolled out in 2021 will, together, help to fund more vital Fellowship training programs in Jerusalem, and, we hope, allow us to start an ambitious training program for colleagues in Gaza, whose options are so limited.

As we build this new arm for SJEHG, the value of your support for your Hospitaller, your SOA-USA executive committee, and for your Priory, cannot be overstated. The forefathers of St John pursued the highest standards in medicine, with the most advanced techniques available in the ancient world. In our modern world, one of networked organizations, internet connectivity, gene therapy and virtual learning, we must reflect on our past as we prepare for the future. I am confident that if our Priorities, and their supporters, stand shoulder to shoulder as we build our postgraduate profile and reputation, we shall be prepared for that future, with challenges yet unknown.

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
David H Verity, M.D., MA, FRCOphth
Hospitaller, Order of St John

Editor's Note: please direct all financial support for the SOA to the U.S. Priory office to ensure the contributions are properly allocated.

Treasures

If you missed the live event, or want to watch it again, check out the recording of the presentation by *Treasures* author Tom Foakes, MStJ, and photographer Julian Calder.



VIDEO



The Priory Gift Shop has reopened.

If you are looking for gift ideas for those on your Christmas list, visit the shop at www.saintjohn.org for all your shopping needs!

The Priory's new National Development Committee seeks your help.

We are increasing our appeals to charitable foundations and corporations that have supported in the past, or could support in the future, the sight-saving work of the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. If you or someone you know serves on the board of trustees/directors of a charitable foundation that might support the Hospital, we would love to speak with you. Please contact the Priory's Executive Director Michele Blair at mblair@saintjohn.org. Thank you so very much from the entire Committee.





PRO FIDE

Only days before I wrote these words, one of my predecessors, and a long-time mentor and friend, The Right Reverend Charles F. Duvall left this life for the next. Bishop Duvall died on October 8th, leaving behind a rich legacy of leadership in the Church, for untold numbers of clergy who served

under his Episcopate and strong leadership as member of the Order.

Whenever someone close to us dies, it gives us pause, (or should) to think about the direction of our own lives. Bishop Duvall was serving as Sub-Prelate when I was invested in 2015. I still recall his clarion call in his homily to stay firmly committed to our enduring motto, *Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum*. He meant what he said and his life, and his death, have given me pause to think, and pray, on how I am living into that motto.

**Whenever
someone close
to us dies, it
gives us pause,
(or should) to
think about
the direction of
our own lives.**

The English Biblical Commentator, Matthew Henry (d. 1714) wrote *"It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our last day."* For members of the Order, under the banner of our patron Saint John, this invites us to do all we can to, in John's words, to prepare the way of the Lord, (John 1:23). This means, as long as we have breath in our lungs and life on this earth, we are invited to live into the ground zero principles of our beloved Order—to work for the spiritual and moral strengthening of our fellow humans, and work to relieve the sickness and suffering of the world around us. Truly, what better call is there?

There are many blessings of being a member of the Order, but there are obligations as well. Beyond our annual oblation, and regular gatherings for meetings, and various services; we are called upon to act squarely in response to the needs that are all around us.

One of the greatest theologians in my own life, was my great grandmother, Rosa Swann. She lived just shy of her 100th

***...as a member of this Venerable Order, I am
part of something that is making it possible
for others to see—truly see.***

birthday. As I think on her today, one of the things that strikes me is her consistent life—she loved our Lord and felt obliged to serve Him; she loved others, and felt obliged to serve them as well, (she would have made a great member!).

Toward the end of her life, though she retained her mind, her eyes began to give way. Once, when visiting her with my toddler daughter who had a head full of curly hair, my "Mama Hayes," whispered, "Bring her here, so I can feel those curls." She smiled as she ran her fingers through my daughter's hair.

To this day, if for just a moment, I wish I could have given her eyes to see.

Though I could not do that for her; like many of you, as a member of this Venerable Order, I am part of something that is making it possible for others to see—truly see. As well, through our ongoing work with veterans, and our legions of members and volunteers throughout the world, we are in fact caring for the sick and suffering.

As I think, today, on Bishop Duval, and the dear saint who was my great-grandmother—well, frankly, it makes me want to be a better person, a better Christian, a better servant—loving not only our Lord, but as our Lord would have us, all those who he sends our way. Thank God, the Order enables us to do just that.

Jesus' brother James, reminded the early Christians, *"But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds,"* (James 2:18). Charles Duvall did that. Rosa Swann did that. Countless numbers of our Order have been doing that for over 900 years. So friends, I invite you to join me. Let's roll up our sleeves, there is much to do. Indeed;

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate Hominum,
The Rev. Dr. Russell J. Levenson, Jr., MStJ
Sub-Prelate