

The Order of St John



St John

An Overview

The Order of St John

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem is a historic Order of Chivalry with roots in the medieval past. Its beginnings are to be found before the Crusades, which led to the development of the work of monastic knights known as the Knights Hospitallers. They provided hospitality and medical care to Holy Land pilgrims. In modern times, Florence Nightingale, Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela, and the late King Hussein of Jordan have all been active in the Order of St John. Its mission is to prevent and relieve sickness and injury, and to act to enhance the health and well-being of people all over the world regardless of race, creed, or ability to pay.



Today, the Order of St John, headquartered in London, England is a major international charity, accredited to the United Nations. The Order's organizations worldwide—together known as St John—carry on its work with the aid of over 350,000 volunteers and staff, who provide first aid, health care and support services in over 40 countries. Although not in the U.S., St John Ambulance organizations around the world provide vital services such as first aid care and training, ambulance and rescue services, disaster response, home-based health care and care homes for the elderly. True to the Order's origins in the Holy Land, St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group provides ophthalmic care through St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital in Jerusalem, the hospital in Hebron and Gaza, clinics in the Muristan section of the Old City, Anabta, and mobile eye clinics in the West Bank. Treatment is offered to men, women and children of all faiths.

There are over 20,000 Members of the Order worldwide. Membership is an honour bestowed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Sovereign Head of the Order. Membership is open to persons of all faiths or no faith who can support the Christian principles of the Order's work. For more information, please visit www.orderofstjohn.org.

The Priory in the USA



The Priory in the USA was formally established at a ceremony held in the National Cathedral on May 11, 1996, in Washington, DC. The new Priory included the members of the American Society of the Order of St John, the non-profit corporation founded in December 1957 in New York City to provide support for St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group. The Order's Grand Prior, HRH The Duke of Gloucester, presided. He formally handed the instruments of foundation to the Prior of the newly recognized Priory, John R. Drexel IV, GCStJ, who succeeded his late father John R. Drexel III as the leader of the organization.

In 2008 the Priory's headquarters moved from New York City to Washington, DC. A. Marshall Acuff Jr., GCStJ, succeeded John R. Drexel IV as Prior, followed by Palmer C. Hamilton, KStJ, who became Prior in 2014. In June 2012, the American Society merged with the Priory, resulting in one entity. The Priory now has over 1400 Order Members with strong, active groups throughout the United States. Each year there is a service of Rededication and Investiture, and during the year local fundraising events are held around the country.

The major work of the Priory is to raise funds in support of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group, comprised of the main Hospital in Jerusalem, the hospital in Hebron, clinics in Gaza and Anabta, and the mobile outreach program. In 2016, the Priory contributed over \$2,300,000 to the Hospital Group which treated over 128,000 patients in the region. The funds were raised through members' yearly Oblations, grants, legacy and memorial gifts, and fundraising events around the country. The Priory recruits volunteer medical personnel, many from within its ranks, who give their time and expertise to the Hospital Group. The Priory also donates and organizes medical supplies and equipment to benefit the Hospital Group and assists the Order of St John in other humanitarian projects.

St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group

St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) is a Foundation of the Order of St John and is a major provider of high-quality eye care in the Holy Land. SJEHG is a heavily subsidized, fee-based establishment. About 75% of its income is derived from donations and grants. The main facility is in East Jerusalem, with a satellite hospital in Hebron, permanent clinics in Gaza City and Anabta, and mobile outreach vans providing screening and treatment. Over three and a half million Palestinians live in the region, and the incidence of irreversible blindness there is 10 times higher than in the West. Eighty percent is preventable.



St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group, established in 1882, provides diagnosis and treatment to hundreds of thousands of the neediest people, without regard to race, religion, national origin, gender, age, creed or ability to pay. In 2016, 120,300 outpatients were treated, and 4,800 sight-saving operations were performed. The number of both continues to climb.

Training local doctors and nurses is also a key objective of the Hospital Group, which believes strongly in investing in the region and rebuilding its infrastructure. The focus is on eye care, screening, prevention, training, research and humanitarian cooperation with organizations like the world famous Hadassah University Medical Center in Israel.

A Link to the Past, Present and the Future

In medieval times, the Knights Hospitaller of the Order of St John provided hospitality and medical care to male and female visitors and pilgrims to the Holy Land, without regard to religion. The original hospital in Jerusalem, founded about 1080 by the brothers of the Benedictine Monastery of Saint Mary Latina, was already in operation when the First Crusade captured Jerusalem in 1099 and may have had as many as 2,000 beds at the peak of Christian rule. This early work of the Order of St John firmly established its mission, which continues to this day and is funded by all eleven Pories of the Order of St John. The medieval hospital was the precursor of St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital, now at a nearby location.

Why the Hospital is Critical to a Whole Generation



Serious eye disease is prevalent in the Holy Land; therefore, early accurate diagnosis and treatment are critical. Diabetes, corneal opacity, glaucoma and cataracts are rampant. In particular, children under 10 years of age, who suffer from developmental conditions such as congenital glaucoma, congenital cataracts, and severe allergic eye disease, represent 25% of the Hospital Group's patients in the West Bank, and 50% in Gaza. The Hospital Group seeks not only to treat men, women and children of all ages, but also to nurture the preventable health care programs for families that can change the lives of a generation, affecting their personal and financial future, and the region's peaceful development. Raising funds for the Hospital Group has always been the primary mission of the Priory in the USA of the Order of St John. Over the years, the Priory has raised millions of dollars and provided and facilitated substantial donations of medical supplies and equipment to support the work of the Hospital Group. It has also encouraged American doctors, specialist surgeons and nurses from all over the U.S. to volunteer their time and expertise to the Hospital Group.