



Sovereign Order Of
ST. JOHN OF JERUSALEM
Knights Hospitaller c.1048
Victoria Commandery



VICTORIA COMMANDERY NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2025 EDITION

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MEET OUR VICE-COMMANDER

Vice-Commander Dr. Richard Crow is a distinguished physician, health care leader, and devoted member of the Sovereign Order, whose career has been marked by unwavering dedication to healing, advocacy, and service to others.

Richard earned his Doctor of Medicine from the University of British Columbia in 1983 and completed his Family Practice Residency at the University of Western Ontario in 1985. His early career saw him practicing medicine in both rural and urban Ontario before relocating back to Victoria in 1990, where he co-owned and practiced in a thriving family practice and Treatment Centre. Over the course of three decades, Richard held progressively senior leadership roles within Island Health and its predecessor organizations, serving as Executive Medical Director across several portfolios and twice as Acting Vice President of Medicine. From 2010 to 2012, he was Executive Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, and was Island Health's longest-serving Executive Medical Director.

An educator as well as a clinician, Richard long championed the next generation of physicians. He has served as Clinical Assistant Professor at UBC's Faculty of Medicine, Family Medicine Residency Lead Faculty for Curriculum across six sites, and was recognized in 2000 as a Fellow of the College of Family Physicians of Canada. His contributions extended provincially through his involvement in all three key Joint Committees: Specialist Services, Shared Care, and General Practice Services.

Throughout his career, Richard has been a staunch advocate for comprehensive primary care and equitable access to mental health and substance use services. He was instrumental in shaping addiction medicine as a program and expanding services to address the toxic drug supply crisis. His leadership was defined by compassion, courage, and an unwavering stand against stigma.

Since joining the Sovereign Order in 2016, Chevalier Crow has contributed extensively to the Victoria Commandery. He has served on the Fundraising, Hospitaller, Membership, and Almoner Committees, organized successful Investiture Auctions, hosted numerous committee meetings, and lent his voice and expertise to initiatives supporting marginalized populations. Recently re-elected to Council, he continues to contribute as our Vice Commander.



Chevalier Richard T. Crow, KJSJ

OUR MISSION IN ACTION

COMMUNITY GRANTS

Grants Committee members are busy receiving and reviewing final reports for 2024 grants and the 2025 Community Grants applications received on the online portal, which closed Sept 12th.

Final Reports contain a wealth of information, including the number and demographics of those served and how successful the grant was improving the lives of those underserved. They also contain testimonials and photos of the good work being done. We will work to collate this information and share it with you over the next few weeks.

We have 91 applications and 84 qualifying for Assessment. Requests are reflective of what our environmental scan reveals: help with food insecurity takes the lion's share of the requests, followed by assistance for youth & seniors in crisis, mental health supports, programs for underhoused populations, support for those with brain injuries, and women with children fleeing violence.

Thanks to our partnership with the Times Colonist Christmas Fund, we are pleased to be helping those charities serving vulnerable populations as far north as Campbell River on Vancouver Island for the first time this year.

Our timeline is to complete the application reviews before October 21st with a final approval by the Times Colonist and our Council/Board by October 27th.

We expect to deliver cheques starting the second week of November so that charities can be well prepared for Christmas needs and in time for the Times Colonist Christmas Fund kick off.

Feature: Cowichan Valley Basket Society: operating a food bank and lunch kitchen

2024 Grant received for \$30,000 to help provide food hampers to 3206 children, youth, adults, and seniors in need, living in the Cowichan area.



We look forward to Christine Ryan, Fundraising Chair and her team to roll out the fundraising for all grant initiatives at our upcoming Investiture in October.

SENIORS CHRISTMAS SUPPORT PROGRAM

(A PARTNERSHIP WITH SAINT VINCENT DE PAUL)

Our team of Bernie Beck, Marty Schubert, and Donna Davidson is gearing up to launch this year's Christmas Senior's Support Program (thank you!). For the 6th year, we aim to serve over 400 seniors relying on food banks year-round, with a grocery gift card to enrich their food intake at this special time of year. This popular initiative draws over 20 Sovereign Order members to deliver to those seniors who have difficulty accessing the pick-up location. A recent meeting of senior leadership with Sovereign Order and SVdP, was very successful, resulting in further strengthening our relationship with additional recognition and support committed from SVdP. This is viewed by SVdP as a critical program to support seniors going forward.



Testimonial from a client:

"Walking into the Cowichan Valley Basket Society, for the first time was difficult. I had always managed to get by, but after losing work and facing unexpected bills, I found myself struggling to put food on the table. What I didn't expect was the kindness I was met with. Volunteers welcomed me warmly and treated me with dignity. Instead of feeling judged, I felt supported and cared for.

The food hamper I received made an immediate difference—it eased my worries and allowed me to prepare healthy meals for my family. But even more powerful was the reminder that I wasn't alone, that my community was there for me.

Thanks to the Cowichan Valley Basket Society, I left not just with food, but with hope."

REMEMBERING OUR FALLEN SOLDIERS

For the last number of years, the order has honoured November 11th by laying wreaths at the various Cenotaphs/Memorials in South Vancouver Island. We are looking for volunteers who are interested in participating this year.

If you volunteer to lay a wreath you will be responsible to confirm with the community organizing the ceremony on how the wreath laying is to occur. If you want to be called forward to lay your wreath you need to ensure you are included on their list, to do so. In addition, we would appreciate you sending a photograph of your wreath once it is placed.

We will provide you with the wreath for your location. Volunteer selection is based on a first come first serve basis. Please contact Chevalier Ian Batey, Chair, Hospitaller Committee, ipb@shaw.ca, if you are interested in participating this year. The available locations are:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) Afghanistan Memorial-(Quadra Street) | 5) Duncan Cenotaph- (Charles Hoy Park) |
| 2) Oak Bay Cenotaph- (Uplands Park) | 6) Central Saanich Cenotaph- (Pioneer Park) |
| 3) Sooke Cenotaph-(Shields Road) | 7) Langford - (Veteran's Memorial Park) |
| 4) Cobble Hill Cenotaph-(Fisher Road) | |

BACKPACK BUDDIES

Every Friday, Backpack Buddies delivers bags of food to hundreds of the island's most vulnerable children. They ensure the children have the meals and snacks they need to last the weekend.

Pleased to announce, similar to last year, members of the SOSJ Victoria Commandery will have the opportunity to volunteer with Backpack Buddies for the 2025/26 School Year. Last year our volunteer packing teams set a record number of bags we packed - 1048 bags total, to be surpassed this coming year.

This year's schedule includes a total of 9 dates, starting this September and concluding in May 2026. Packing teams will alternate each month, with groups of 4 on Tuesday afternoons from 1:00 - 3:00 pm and groups of 8 on Friday afternoons from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. The specific schedule is as follows:

Date:	Time:	Number of Volunteers
Tues, September 23rd	1:00 - 3:00	4
Friday, October 3rd	1:00 - 4:00	8
Tues, November 18th	1:00 - 3:00	4
Friday, December 5th	1:00 - 4:00	8
Tues, January 27th	1:00 - 3:00	4
Friday, February 6th	1:00 - 4:00	8
Tues, March 24th	1:00 - 3:00	4
Friday, April 10th	1:00 - 4:00	8
Tues, May 19th	1:00 - 3:00	4

Specific information regarding the Location, Waiver and Release requirements, and packing process details will be circulated by mid-September.

After checking your calendars, please contact Ian Batey by email at ipb@shaw.ca with the dates you wish to volunteer.

Thank you for your continued support of all of our volunteer programs and your commitment to helping those in need of our help.



MEMBER NEWS

2025 INVESTITURE

The events of the October 17th -18th, Victoria Commandery 2025 Investiture are fast approaching. This is always a highlight for the Victoria Commandery and provides an opportunity for our members to meet other Commandery members from across North America, including members of the La Petit Conseil who will be joining us.

We are welcoming the Okanagan Commandery again this year to join us in the Investiture.

We have 6 Aspirants being invested; 3 from the Okanagan Commandery and 3 from the Victoria Commandery. There will be 13 member promotions acknowledged including 4 promotions to Knights/Dames of Justice which will be highlighted in the service, 2 new Commanders being inducted, 2 new Baliffs being elevated and one new Senator being honoured.

The colourful and historic Investiture Service takes place at Christ Church Cathedral in Victoria at 4:00 pm, followed by the Gala at the Marriott Hotel at 6:00 pm. At the Gala there will be a live and silent auction to raise funds for the various charities which we support.

All members of the Victoria Commandery are strongly encouraged to don their regalia and formally participate in the Investiture Service. Friends and Family are also encouraged to attend.

The Investiture Service will be Livestreamed at: <https://www.christchurchcathedral.bc.ca/live>

Please make sure you are registered for the Gala (contact Hazel Braithwaite).

October 17th -18th , 2025 promises to be an outstanding weekend for our Victoria Commandery.



REGALIA

A few friendly reminders regarding our upcoming Investiture celebrations from your Mistress of Regalia.

If you have had a promotion in the last one or two years, please make sure you have had your braid sewn on to your collar. If you have not had them sewn on yet, please visit Mia's Taylor Shop at 1343 Woodway Rd, Victoria BC. Please review your Regalia to be sure you have your white gloves, neck Regalia (plus name tags for Friday night). If you have questions, please call, text, or email Penny Johnston at 250.216.0202 or pennyje@icloud.com.

PROMOTIONS

BAILIFF

H.E. Bailiff Prior Maria Dominelli, GCSJ, MMSJ

The Victoria Commandery is so proud that our own Maria Dominelli is being formally commended at our October Investiture with two separate and very prestigious Sovereign Order distinctions.

First, in recognition of her exceptional leadership, remarkable contributions, and unwavering commitment, the Victoria Commandery is awarding Maria the Medal of Merit.

Second, in recognition of her leadership, and particularly her exceptional service as the Prior of Cascadia, it has just been announced that she is elevated to the high rank and prestigious position of a Bailiff of our Sovereign Order.

Maria Dominelli is a highly esteemed and dedicated leader of the Victoria Commandery. She is known and recognized for her outstanding service, leadership, and community outreach over the past six years. Her contributions include serving Victoria as Commander, Prior, and Chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, mentoring successors, and actively participating in numerous community initiatives.

In her present role as our Commandery's Almoner, she has been the driving force and led the transformation of the Commandery's charitable efforts over the past four years. Under her guidance, our Commandery has expanded its community charitable grants from a small number, in a relatively modest amount of \$80,000, to an impressive 69 grants amounting to \$847,860 in 2024.

She and her Committee have achieved this by establishing the means to identify community needs, establishing partnerships—including one with the Times Colonist Christmas Fund—and developing rigorous analytical processes to identify and support a large number of community organizations that are providing programs that address food insecurity and other important social needs.

As a Commandery, we are so fortunate to have been one of the prime beneficiaries of Maria's exceptional service and commitment to the values and mission of the Sovereign Order.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

POOLSIDE BBQ

Members of the Victoria Commandery gathered for an afternoon of socializing with a poolside BBQ at Chevalier Marty Schubert and Dame Donna Davidson's homes. The afternoon was full of food, laughter, and the occasional cannonball.

"Donna and Marty's amazing pool party, atmosphere, food, drinks, laughter, and everyone enjoying the moment made such a lasting impact on making memories with friends."

Deedrie and Jim



TEA IN THE GARDEN AND EXCLUSIVE READING IN BEAUTIFUL COWICHAN VALLEY

Victoria Commandery members enjoyed a summer social at the home of Dame Susan Scott Gabe, DCJSJ, MMSJ and Chevalier Tim Wyman, KSJ. Their home is a beautiful classic farmhouse on landscaped acreage overlooking Somenos Lake in Duncan BC. This was the second social gathering sponsored by the Victoria Commandery – a new initiative affording members an opportunity to simply visit and socialize free of business and fundraising opportunities. (The first social was hosted by Dame Donna Davidson, DCSJ and Chevalier Marty Schubert, KCSJ).

The event took place on a hot, sunny July afternoon, was well-attended and provided great camaraderie. Guests enjoyed scrumptious appetizers served under a shady canopy as well as local beers and wines.

The entertainment was quite a unique experience. Carol Matthews provided a reading from her book, *Minerva's Owl – The Bereavement Phase Of My Marriage*, followed by a poignant, thought-provoking Q and A session. Carol made clear that loss of a spouse is just as much a phase of a long-term relationship as are courtship, marriage ceremony and building a life together. Rather than being a downer, this discussion reflected the work being done by our Sovereign Order in the realm of hospice and aiding humanity.

Our hosts very generously provided copies of Carol's book which Carol signed upon request.

All in all, the social was a real success and set a fine example for future socials.

Stewart and Penny Johnston



COMMANDERY NOTICES

OUTSTANDING MEMBER

Pictured left to right are H.E. Conventual Bailiff Grand Commander Stewart Johnston, GCSJ, H.E. Bailiff Prior Emeritus Deedrie Ballard, GCSJ, MMSJ and Senator Gordon A.C. Denford, KCJSJ enjoying a visit over tea in the pub at the Berwick Royal Oak Community. Deedrie and Stewart had a very pleasant visit with Gordon (now 97) reminiscing over his successful career in land development, chairing Tourism Victoria, and membership in the Sovereign Order.



Gordon smiled as they chatted about his successes in business — notably the eight Berwick Community residences in the province (six on Vancouver Island) that he and his son, Chevalier Chris Denford, KGSJ developed. Gordon now resides in the penthouse suite at Berwick Royal Oak.

Gordon joined the Vancouver Commandery of the Sovereign Order in 1993 and later played a key role in the formation of the Victoria Commandery in 1996 alongside John Williams. He served as Commander from 1999 to 2000. In 2018, Gordon achieved the status of Senator. Throughout Gordon's many years as a Knight Hospitaller, he has been most supportive and benevolent towards our projects and charitable efforts. In fact, he still has a collection of programs from all the investiture services he attended over the years.

THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMANDERY

Congratulations to Bob Plecas and Pauline Rafferty as they become great-grandparents for the first time!

UPCOMING EVENTS

VICTORIA COMMANDERY INVESTITURE – OCTOBER 17 - 18, 2025

Investiture Welcome Reception: Friday, October 17th, 2024, at the Oak Bay Beach Hotel, 5:30-7:00 pm.

Investiture Service Rehearsal: Saturday, October 18th, 2024, at Christ Church Cathedral, 10:00-11:00 am.

Investiture Service: Saturday, October 18th, 2024, at Christ Church Cathedral, 4:00 pm (arrive at 3:15 pm).

Investiture Reception and Gala Dinner: Saturday, October 18th, 2024, at Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour, 6:00 pm.

Breakfast for New Members: Sunday, October 19th, 2024, at Victoria Marriott Inner Harbour, 9:15 am.

SOVEREIGN COUNCIL MEETING – JULY 11 – 13, 2026

Hosted by: The Palm Beach Commander

Location: West Palm Beach, Florida USA

CALL FOR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We're inviting passionate and engaged individuals to contribute their time and expertise by joining one of our internal committees. Whether your strengths lie in fundraising, event planning, granting, communications, or governance, your perspective and voice are essential to our continued success.

INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED?

Please contact Commander **J. Parker MacCarthy** - jpmacCarthy@shaw.ca.

Help shape the future of our organization from within.

FROM THE HERALD

CHEVALIER KELLY SOMOGYI, KSJ

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to our second edition of the SOSJ Victoria Commandery Newsletter. Your stories, photos, and insights helped bring this publication to life. We're excited to announce that this will now be a quarterly newsletter, and we welcome your continued involvement. If you have a story idea, article, photo, or update you'd like to share in a future issue, please don't hesitate to reach out. Submissions can be sent to sosjherald@gmail.com, or feel free to call me directly at 250.884.7984. We are always seeking meaningful content to inform, engage, and inspire our members, your voice matters.

STAY CONNECTED

Follow us on social media for updates, events, and stories from the Commandery:

Facebook: Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller – Victoria

Instagram: @sosj.victoria

Yours in St. John,

Chevalier Kelly Somogyi, KSJ, Herald and Editor of the Victoria Commandery Newsletter

Pro Fide, Pro Utilitate, Pro Minum
For Faith, For Service to Humanity

Editor: Chevalier Kelly Somogyi, KSJ

This newsletter is a publication of the Sovereign Order of St. John of Jerusalem, Knights Hospitaller

VICTORIA OFFICE

www.sosjinternational.org

Thank you to all who have contributed to this newsletter.