



OSMTH

Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem

**Non-Governmental Organization in Special Consultative Status
with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)
Member of the International Peace Bureau**

OVERVIEW OF THE ORDER'S PURPOSE & ACTIVITIES

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Origins

OSMTH (Sovereign Military Order of the Temple of Jerusalem) is a successor organization to the nineteenth century Order of the Temple. This Order was established in Paris in 1804 under the patronage of Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte.

Like its nineteenth century predecessor, OSMTH takes inspiration from the traditions and highest ideals of the medieval Christian military and monastic order, the Knights Templar, who were founded by Hugh de Payens around 1118, to protect and support pilgrims, and dissolved by Pope Clement V in 1312.

OSMTH does not, however, claim any direct organizational descent from the medieval Templars; nor is OSMTH part of Freemasonry.

OSMTH was restructured in its present form pursuant to a decision adopted by its Member Grand Priorities in 1995 at a meeting in Salzburg.

Today, OSMTH is an international, chivalric, confraternal and inter-denominational/ecumenical Christian Order.

Current International Status

OSMTH operates as a non-political, not-for-profit and tax-exempt NGO (non-governmental organization) registered in Geneva, Switzerland, under Swiss Federal Registry Number CH-660.197299-4 and Swiss Business Identification Number CHE-101.134.939.

Since 2002, OSMTH holds accreditation as a Non-Governmental Organization in Special Consultative Status (Number: 19885) with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Accordingly, OSMTH maintains permanent missions accredited to the UN offices in Geneva, New York and Vienna.

The Order is an active partner, and since 2014 a Board Member, of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO).

OSMTH is a member of the International Peace Bureau, through which OSMTH can serve as a nominating body to the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. OSMTH also supports the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), founded by one of our members. The ICRD analyzes the impact of religion on conflicts and identifies opportunities for religion to play a part in conflict transformation, diplomacy and peace-making.

Purpose

The purposes of OSMTH, as set out in its Statutes, are:

- a) To provide an opportunity for the practice of ecumenical Christianity.
- b) To encourage and promote Christian humanitarian work and charity generally, but especially in support of people in the Middle East.
- c) To encourage all that makes for the spiritual and moral strengthening of mankind in accordance with the first great principle of the Order embodied in the motto: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."
- d) To support the precepts of Christian chivalry.
- e) To investigate and emulate the historical ideals of the ancient Order.
- f) To admit associations as Members and to form and to administer establishments, councils, associations, centers or other subordinate bodies to facilitate the work of the Order in all geographical areas.
- g) To maintain contact and develop collaboration with kindred Orders and bodies.

The overall vision and mission of today's OSMTH are set out in the 2007 Brussels Declaration.

In a spirit of Christian compassion, OSMTH directs its humanitarian work towards all peoples afflicted by poverty, injustice, conflict and disaster, regardless of their creed or ethnic background. The Order seeks to combat greed, selfishness, intolerance, injustice and cruelty, which are the ageless enemies of both Christianity and other great faiths.

Approach

As an inter-denominational/ecumenical Christian Order, OSMTH is composed of men and women of faith and good will. The Order aspires to a cosmopolitan society in which the differences in the many strands of humankind are respected and valued.

OSMTH is not a church, nor an esoteric society, and does not undertake missionary work.

We are not "modern day Crusaders"; and OSMTH strictly rejects those individuals and organizations which use Templar symbols and heritage to promote extreme views and actions.

The word, not the sword, is the weapon of modern Templars in OSMTH. We express, defend and spread our values with spoken and written words, as well as through our behavior and our voluntary work.

The Order undertakes work, both locally and nationally, in the fields of charity, volunteering and humanitarian relief, through its national Member Grand Priorities.

OSMTH undertakes international advocacy, diplomacy and bridge-building, through three key networks, namely:

- OSMTH international Officeholders;
- OSMTH international Chaplains and Legates; and
- OSMTH individual members, who are able to provide professional and vocational skills, knowledge and experience

Current Policies

The current international policies of the Order are:

- To support "Christians at Risk" in the Middle East, by aiding the Christian diaspora and other threatened faith groups, which find themselves in hostile environments, and by building bridges of understanding and mutual support between Eastern and Western Churches.
- To encourage and facilitate dialogue among religious leaders, particularly those of the great Abrahamic faiths, in conflict zones; and to promote their participation in conflict resolution.
- To support religious and educational institutions, which seek to sustain a diverse Christian presence in the Holy Land.
- To promote the preservation and restoration of historic buildings, particularly those associated with sites of Christian pilgrimage.
- To advocate, through United Nations' and other civil society forums, for human rights, with an emphasis on:
 - the status of women,
 - religious freedom,
 - peacebuilding, and
 - the provision of clean water, at an affordable price, for all.

Values

The Order's individual members are men and women of faith who accept a Modern Rule of Christian Life, the "Regula Moderna", which has been inspired by the precepts of St Bernard of Clairvaux, the great Cistercian churchman and spiritual father of the medieval Templars.

The Order's individual members also follow a modern Code of Chivalry, which is centered on ethical ideals of the highest standards.

In accordance with the modern Rule of Christian Life and the Code of Chivalry, individual members of the Order are expected to practice and demonstrate:

- honesty and integrity;
- civility, consideration and respect for all;
- courage, self-control and commitment;
- faith in the dignity of Man and in the holiness of his Creator; and
- trust in the Grace of God to sustain people of good will.

These are challenging values and expectations for individual members to live up to, but ideals can help people of good will to find meaning in their lives; and individual members can look to their sisters and brothers in the Order for fellowship and mutual support.

Activities

Every OSMTH entity is expected to pursue activities within the framework of the Order's underlying purpose and its current international policies.

At the international level, OSMTH maintains a modern and informative website (www.osmth.org) which provides information on the Order for members and non-members alike. Examples of our international advocacy and bridge-building work include:

- assistance to religious leaders to reach conflict zones in order to start mediation efforts or witnessing programmes;
- action taken under OSMTH auspices to prevent human rights abuses in conflict zones; and
- facilitation of, and participation in, inter-faith conferences to address issues of refugees and inter-community solidarity in the Middle East.

At national level, all Grand Priorities, Priorities, Commanderies and Preceptories engage in a wide range of charitable activities according to their capacity and capabilities. Examples of typical local and national charitable efforts include:

- the support of youth groups to prevent criminalization of inner city children;
- projects, such as peace education lectures highlighting the work of the United Nations; and
- donations to local programmes to alleviate homelessness.

Where they share common interests, Member Grand Priorities may choose to collaborate in international charitable projects. Examples of such cooperative efforts include:

- provision of grants for young and disabled people to undertake pilgrimages to major Christian shrines;
- support of schools, hospitals, churches, pilgrims' hostels and other institutions of public interest in the Middle East, frequently through established channels of the Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran or Anglican Churches; and
- development of innovative engineering solutions to the provision of clean drinking water in under-developed countries or after natural disasters.

OSMTH also operates a limited program of international charitable donations from the Order's central reserve funds, focused in support of the Order's international policies and advocacy work in the Holy Land and the wider Middle East, in the fields of:

- peacebuilding and leadership programs for young people;
- administration of the Christian baptismal site at Bethany-beyond-Jordan;
- education and training for Christians and other faith minorities;
- preservation of Christian heritage sites; and
- mine and war debris clearance and injury prevention.

Involvement of Individual Members

The Order does not underestimate the power of the individual. In practical terms, the Order expects individual members to demonstrate a substantive and sustained commitment to voluntary service; and also to support the Order's activities, according to their talents and financial means.

There are many ways in which members can serve the Order creatively. Personal initiatives, within the overall framework of the Order's vision, mission, and values, are encouraged and supported. In fact, they are an abiding characteristic of the Templar spirit. Many individual members choose to undertake acts of local charity and philanthropy quietly and without fanfare, in the spirit of the Order's motto: "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory."

The Order is not elitist; nor is an aristocratic title a requirement for membership. OSMTH draws its individual membership from a wide spectrum of human society, ranging from care-workers to bishops, from nobles to home-makers, from police officers to university professors, from engineers to generals and admirals, from laboratory technicians to artists. What all members of the Order have in common, as decent and law-abiding citizens of their various countries, is a dedication to serve their fellow men and women and a belief in the ideals and values of the Order.

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