



NORTH CAROLINA DESERT CONFERENCE OF SHRINE TEMPLES
Ancient Egyptian Arabic Order Nobles Mystic Shrine
Of North and South America and its Jurisdictions, Inc., P.H.A.



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Greetings Nobles & Daughters,

I pray all are in good health and enjoying the bountiful blessings of our Creator. We have been closely monitoring the spread of COVID-19 novel Coronavirus as an emerging contagious respiratory disease.

Our 2020 Gala Day Convocation is about 75 days away and North Carolina has not been considered a hot spot however, the number of infections being reported is increasing daily. Health officials admit there is still a lot to learn about its transmission, and populations at increased risk of disease and complications. Therefore, health officials have warned that travelers are at high risk of contracting the illness in crowded places, including conferences and other public gatherings. Because of these concerns, we have been in ongoing discussions with the North Raleigh Hilton regarding Gala Day. Presently the hotel is conducting business as usual, with additional focus on cleaning and sanitation practices.

Of particular concern to me, many of our members slated to attend the conference are from counties where the virus has been spreading more rapidly and we have a number of members who are older and have health concerns, which puts them in high-risk categories based on the information known at this time. Also given the close proximity to others when riding the elevators it would be difficult to minimize exposure with the best disinfecting practices.

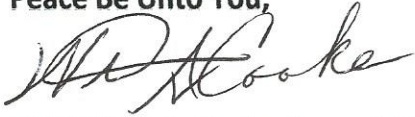
In light of these health concerns, growing uncertainty across the country and the President's declaration of this being a "National Emergency", our leadership team held a conference call this evening and we feel that it is best for our members and others staying in the hotel that we cancel the 2020 Gala Day. While we are extremely disappointed with this decision, we believe it is for the greater good of all as your health and safety are of paramount importance to us.

The hotel will be providing full refunds to anyone who has booked a room under our block through the Desert. The funds will be returned to the Desert within 30 days and we will be issuing the checks shortly thereafter. If you made your payments via PayPal, and have not done so, still submit your registration form to the registrar so that your refund can be properly processed. **YOU MADE YOUR PAYMENT TO THE DESERT PLEASE DO NOT CONTACT THE HOTEL.** If you have not received your refund check by April 30, 2020, please contact the Desert Registrar.

Whether you are at home or traveling, everyone can do their part to help respond to this emerging public health threat. The World Health Organization recommends practicing good hygiene to protect yourself against infection by washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. Cover your coughs and sneezes and maintain distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing. Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care. Frequently clean touched surfaces and objects daily. Lastly, stay informed by frequently going to the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the World Health Organization's websites for up to date information.

In closing, I leave you with these two verses of scripture: Luke 21:11 & Matthew 24:44, There will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences. And there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

Peace Be Unto You,



**PP William A. Cooke, Imperial Deputy
Desert of North Carolina**

