

South Dakota



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Jon Gonsor
Grand Commander

Sir Knights;

Happy New Year! I trust that you all shared a blessed Holiday season with your loved ones. As we say fare-well to this past year, it gives us time to reflect upon the positive accomplishments and to say goodbye to those who have gone to that Great Architect of the Universe before us. Some of the things that I think of and am so grateful for in the South Dakota Grand Commandery would include the comradery and support of those Sir Knights that we have within the North Central York Rite Conference especially our own North Central Department Commander, Lon W. Kvasager. He has traveled here numerous times from North Dakota to stimulate, encourage, enlighten and assist the Sir Knights of South Dakota. As his term ends with the 67th Triennium, we are grateful for his three years of service to the Grand Encampment and wish him well on all his future endeavors.

The Programs the Grand Encampment brought to us this past Triennium also are reflected upon. The Holy Land Pilgrimage has been going on for 37 continuous years. It is one of the Grand Encampments most visible programs, and this year I know South Dakota gained a new Masonic Brother from it. The Knights Templar Eye Foundation which has spent over \$148 million on research, patient care and education is an excellent program. It includes 22 years of support for Eye Care America, Travel Grants for students to do research in Vision and Ophthalmology, endowments for professors at the Williams Eye Institute and John Hopkins University. Sir Knights had the opportunity to participate in one of the Grand Encampments three EASTER OBSERVANCES, the Annual East Coast Observance held at Washington Reagan National Airport, the Annual Western States Observance in Salt Lake City, Utah, and the Annual Mid-America Observance in Kansas City, MO. Also, the Knights Templar Education Foundation has changed its focus from loaning students money to providing scholarships.

The Grand Encampment has been promoting Masonic Unity with our brothers of the Blue Lodge and Scottish Rite. The Emerging Leaders Program is jointly sponsored by General Grand Chapter, General Grand Council and Grand Encampment. Sir Knight Ervin T. "Red" Alspaw, Grand Junior Warden of South Dakota Knight Templar, is a recent Certified Leader from that program. The YRIS (York Rite Information System) has been made available to other appendant bodies so secretaries and recorders have an easier time keeping track of their members. Soon South Dakota's Grand Chapter and Grand Council will participate in this program. Grand Commanderies may purchase a engraved broadsword from the Grand Encampment in order to promote participation of Demolay Chapters in their state. We could go on and on with our reflections.

The new-year brings a mindset of rejuvenation. As Templars, we look forward with renewed vigor to the challenges that face us. With the consistency of programs well established, the past Triennium ends. We thank all the Grand Encampment Officers for a job well done. The Grand Encampment of Knights Templar was well served under the guidance of Most Eminent Grand Master Sir Knight Duane L. Vaught. The 67th Triennial Conclave August 18 – 22, 2018 in Indianapolis, Indiana will give us the opportunity to elect a new Right Eminent Grand Captain General. All past Grand Commanders and Dias officers have a vote, I encourage them and any Sir Knight who is available to attend. We have four very qualified candidates running for this office: S.K. Jeffrey A. Bolstad, REPGC Montana, REDC Northwest; S.K. Eugene A Capobianco, REPGC Massachusetts and Rhode Island; S.K. Paul S. Newhall, REPGC District of Columbia, REDC Mid-Atlantic; and S.K. Tomas X. Tsirmokos, REGC New Hampshire, REDC Northeastern. Three of the four candidates attended the North Central York Rite Conference in Sioux Falls this past year. All were very capable. I have personally found S.K. Jeffery Bolstad to be a valuable resource and this fall South Dakota Grand Commandery voted to lend him our support. I am looking forward to visiting all the South Dakota Commanderies and the Grand Commandries of the North Central Conference in 2018.

Yours in Faith and Zeal

RE Jon Gonsor

Grand Commander

Knights Templar of South Dakota