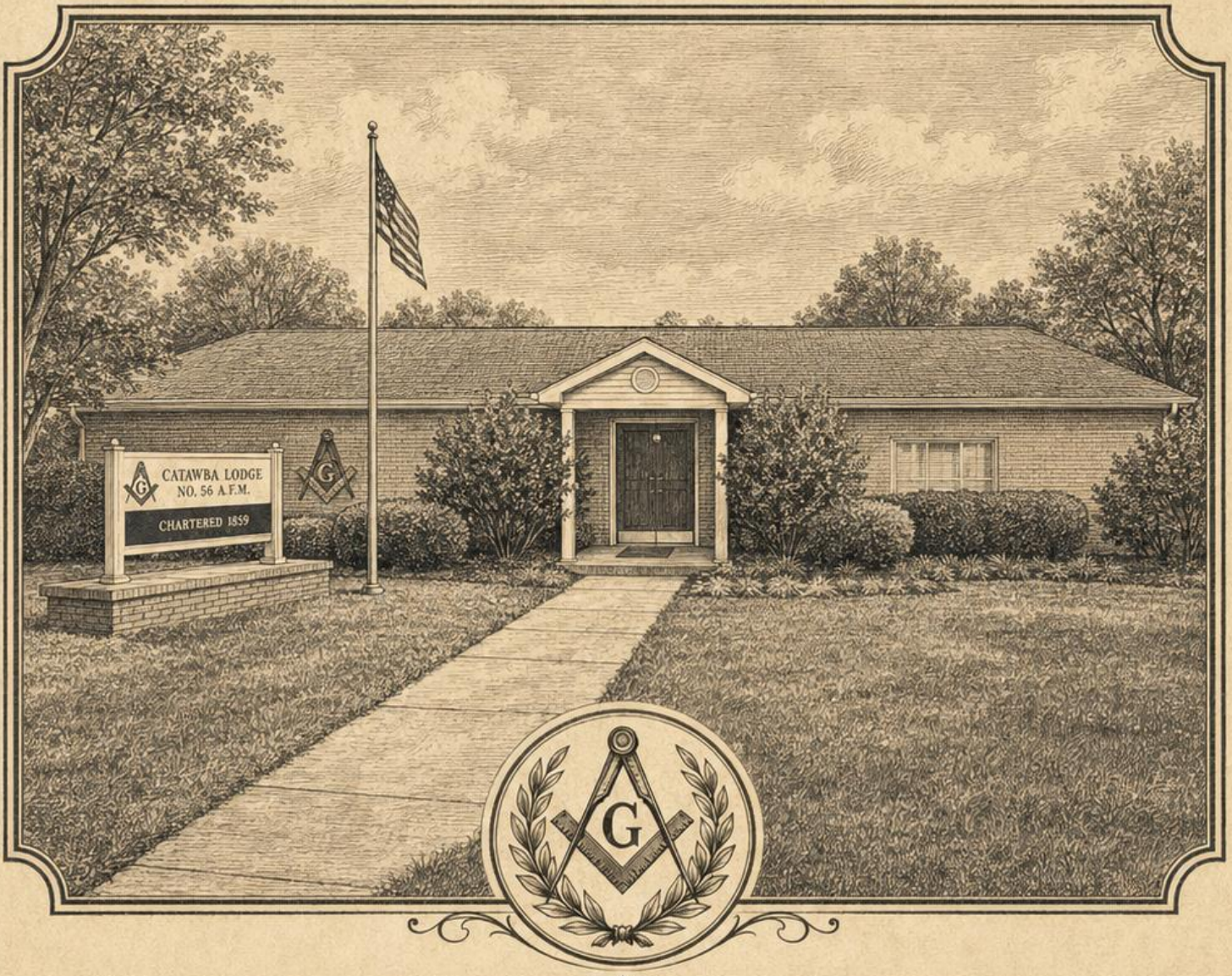


The CATAWBA JOURNAL

CATAWBA LODGE NO. 56 A.F.M.

VOLUME 1 • ISSUE 1

AUGUST 2026



BUILDING BETTER MEN, TOGETHER.

FORT MILL, SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THIS ISSUE

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❖══════ No. 56 ══════❖

23 Closing Reflection • The work continues

FROM THE EAST

Building Better Men, Together



WB Alex Harllee • Worshipful Master

Brethren,

On the Festival of St. John the Evangelist, when I was entrusted with the privilege of serving as Worshipful Master of Catawba Lodge No. 56, I spent a great deal of time reflecting on what I hoped to accomplish during my year in the East.

The answer I kept coming back to was not about programs, events, or numbers. It was about people.

My hope is that every brother, whether he has been a Mason for forty years or forty days, feels that Catawba Lodge is a place where he belongs—a place where friendships are formed, lessons are shared, and every man has the opportunity to continue growing in our Craft.

One of the reasons we are bringing back this newsletter is because staying connected matters. Many of you may remember when Catawba Lodge published a newsletter years ago, and I am excited to see that tradition return.

Life has a way of pulling us in many directions, and before we know it, weeks or even months have passed. My hope is that these pages serve as a reminder that your Lodge is always here and that your brothers are always glad to see you.

*“My hope is that
every brother feels
that Catawba
Lodge is a place
where he belongs.”*

FROM THE EAST

*A message from the Worshipful
Master on connection,
invitation, and the work of
building one another.*

FROM THE EAST

Building Better Men, Together

*Continued*

To our newer Masons, welcome. Your degrees were not the end of your journey. They were the beginning.

Get involved. Ask questions. Learn our ritual. Sit with a different brother at each meeting. The friendships you build and the experiences you share will become some of the most meaningful parts of your Masonic journey.

To those brothers we have not seen in some time, consider this your invitation. No explanations are necessary, no questions asked, and no apologies needed. We would simply be honored to welcome you back into Lodge.

As we continue through the year, I hope each of us will take the opportunity to encourage another brother, mentor someone new, or simply reach out to a friend we have not seen in a while.

It is these small acts of Brotherly Love that strengthen our Lodge and preserve the traditions we have inherited for future generations.

As Worshipful Master, I have chosen “Building Better Men, Together” as the theme of my year in the East.

To me, those four words capture the very heart of Freemasonry.

None of us has reached the end of our journey. We are all continuing to learn, grow, and improve ourselves. More importantly, we do not do it alone.

We challenge one another, support one another, and celebrate one another’s successes. Whether you are taking your first steps in Masonry or have dedicated decades to the Craft, each of us has something to teach and something to learn.

My hope is that this simple phrase serves as a reminder that our greatest work is not merely building our Lodge, but building each other.

Thank you for allowing me the honor of serving as your Worshipful Master. I truly believe the best days of Catawba Lodge are still ahead of us, and I look forward to continuing that journey with each of you.

Fraternally,

**WB Alex Harlee
Worshipful Master
Catawba Lodge No. 56**

LODGE NEWS

August Communication & Degree Work

Gathering for fellowship, Lodge business, and the work of the Craft

THURSDAY • AUGUST 13

6:30 / 7:30

Meal served at 6:30 p.m.
Stated Communication begins at 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY • AUGUST 22

6:30 / 7:30

Breakfast served at 6:30 a.m.
Master Mason Degree work begins at 7:30 a.m.

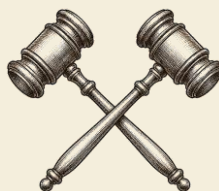
Catawba Lodge No. 56 will hold its August Stated Communication on Thursday, August 13, 2026. The evening meal will be served at 6:30 p.m., followed by the meeting at 7:30 p.m. We look forward to gathering for an evening of fellowship and Lodge business.

Catawba Lodge will also have the privilege of conferring the Master Mason Degree upon three brothers on Saturday, August 22, 2026. Breakfast will be served at 6:30 a.m., with the degree work beginning at 7:30 a.m.

Degree work is one of the most meaningful responsibilities entrusted to a Lodge, and it depends upon brothers willing to invest their time in learning the ritual and supporting those who follow behind them.

“Whether you have a speaking part or simply take your seat on the sidelines, we hope you will join us.”

Candidate names may be added following review by the Worshipful Master.



ALONG THE JOURNEY

Beginning to Understand

A newer Mason's reflection on learning, repetition, and discovery



When I first became interested in Freemasonry, I knew there would be history, tradition, ritual, and brotherhood.

What I did not understand was how much there would be to learn.

During my degrees, I tried to take in everything happening around me. I listened carefully, followed the guidance I was given, and understood that each moment carried meaning. Still, there was so much to absorb that parts of the experience passed quickly.

I remembered certain words, images, and lessons, but I did not yet understand how they all fit together.

Perhaps that is part of the journey.

Freemasonry does not reveal itself all at once. Its lessons seem to unfold slowly through repetition, study, conversation, and experience. A phrase heard during a degree may take on new meaning months later. A symbol that initially seemed simple may become more significant after hearing another brother explain how he understands it.

“What I did not understand was how much there would be to learn.”

The more time I spend in the Lodge, the more I realize how much is contained within our ritual and traditions.

ALONG THE JOURNEY

Beginning to Understand

Continued

Serving as Steward and attending degree practices have given me the opportunity to experience the work from a different perspective. During my own degrees, I was focused on what was happening to me. At practice, I am able to slow down, listen more carefully, and begin noticing details I missed the first time.

Words that once passed quickly now stand out.

Lessons that seemed distant begin to feel practical.

Connections slowly begin to form.

I have also gained a greater appreciation for the men who preserve and teach the work.

Behind every degree are brothers who have spent countless hours studying ritual, learning lectures, rehearsing movements, correcting one another, and preparing to give a candidate an experience worthy of the Craft.

Much of that preparation happens quietly.

A candidate may never see the practices, missed dinners, repeated lines, and patient instruction that made his degree possible. He simply experiences the finished work.

Being present during the preparation has changed the way I view it.

What once appeared effortless now looks like devotion.

I have watched experienced Masons patiently help newer brothers learn their parts. I have seen men repeat a passage again and again, not because they were seeking recognition, but because they wanted to perform the work well.

That commitment has made me more curious.

It has made me want to understand not only what we do, but why we do it.

Why are certain words used?

Why are lessons presented in a particular order?

How have brothers before us understood these teachings?

How should those lessons influence the way we live outside the Lodge?

ALONG THE JOURNEY

Beginning to Understand

Continued



I am learning that questions are not a sign that we have failed to understand Freemasonry. Questions may be one of the ways we begin to understand it.

Every answer seems to open the door to another lesson.

Every conversation leads to another perspective.

Every practice reveals something I did not notice before.

That is one of the things I have come to appreciate most about the Craft. There is always more to learn.

A longtime Mason can hear familiar words and discover new meaning because of something he has recently experienced. A newer Mason can ask a question that causes others to consider a lesson differently. We may encounter the same ritual, but each of us brings a different life to it.

I am still at the beginning of that process.

I do not yet know all the history, symbolism, lessons, or traditions that shape Freemasonry. I am still learning how the different parts connect. I am still discovering what it means to carry these principles into daily life.

But rather than feeling overwhelmed by how much I do not know, I find myself excited by it.

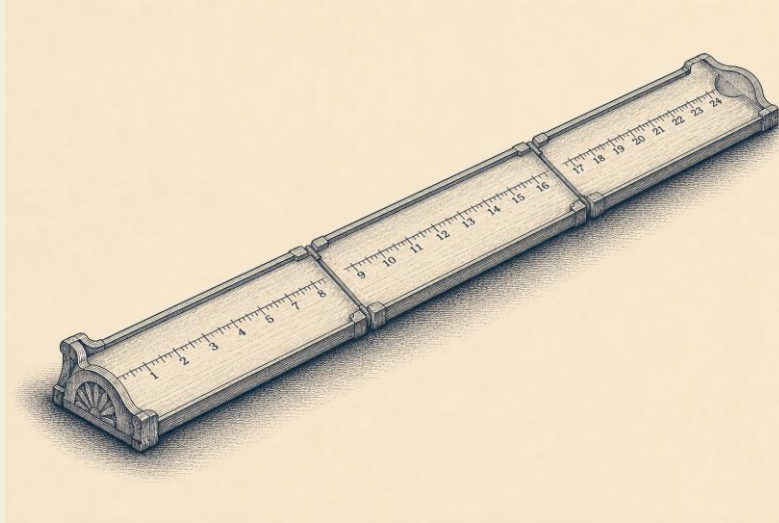
There are books I have not read. Lectures I have not yet heard. Conversations I have not had. Brothers whose experiences I have not learned from. Lessons within our ritual that I may have heard, but have not yet fully understood.

“We are not handed a completed understanding. We are invited into a lifetime of learning.”

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge

A lesson in how we divide our days



The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge is the first working tool presented to an Entered Apprentice Mason.

Operatively, it is a simple instrument used by craftsmen to measure and divide their work accurately.

Speculatively, it teaches us to wisely divide the twenty-four hours of each day among our service to God, our vocation, helping a worthy brother, and the refreshment and rest necessary to live balanced lives.

At first glance, it sounds like a lesson about managing time.

But I wonder if it is really a lesson about something deeper.

*“Every one of us is
given the same
twenty-four hours.”*

*What separates one life from
another is not how much time
we have, but what we choose
to do with it.*

THE WORKING TOOLS

The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge

Continued

The Twenty-Four Inch Gauge reminds us that the things we value most rarely happen by accident.

Strong families require time.

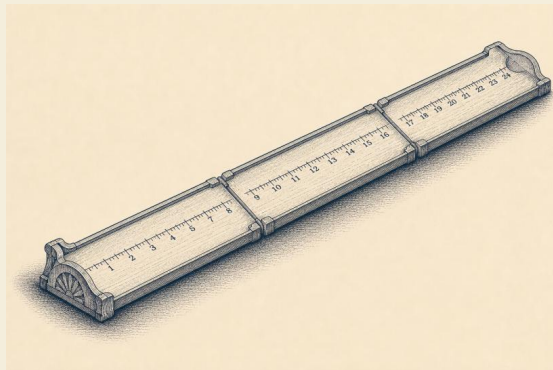
Lifelong friendships require time.

Service requires time.

Learning requires time.

Even becoming a better Mason requires time.

None of those things simply appear on our calendars. We choose them.



As I think about the message from our Worshipful Master this month, I cannot help but see the connection.

If we hope to build better men together, we have to spend time together.

Those moments may seem ordinary at the time. Years from now, they will likely be the moments we remember most.

This month, perhaps the Twenty-Four Inch Gauge offers each of us a simple question:

What am I making time for?

Because the way we divide our days ultimately shapes the men we become.

“What am I making time for?”

MASONIC EDUCATION

Why We Meet: Better Men, Together

Self-improvement may be personal, but it is never solitary

Freemasonry is often described as a fraternity that makes good men better.

That phrase naturally invites us to think about personal growth: becoming more patient, more disciplined, more charitable, more thoughtful, and more faithful in the way we live. Each Mason is responsible for his own character and for the work he does upon himself.

But that work was never meant to be done alone.

One of the greatest strengths of Freemasonry is that we are surrounded by men whose lives, experiences, and examples can help shape our own. We learn not only through instruction, ritual, and study, but also by observing how other brothers conduct themselves.

One brother may demonstrate patience during a difficult conversation. Another may show courage in the face of hardship. One may teach with remarkable care, while another quietly models faithfulness by continuing to serve year after year.

“Each brother has something to teach, whether he realizes it or not.”

A younger Mason may bring new energy and curiosity, while a longtime member may offer wisdom earned through decades of experience.



MASONIC EDUCATION

Why We Meet: Better Men, Together

Continued

The challenge is that we cannot learn from the example of a man we do not know.

Catawba Lodge has more than 140 members. Since joining, I have personally met perhaps thirty of them.

That means there are more than one hundred brothers whose stories I have not heard, whose experiences I do not know, and whose examples I have not yet had the opportunity to witness.

That thought is not discouraging.

It is exciting.

Among those brothers may be men who have endured challenges similar to our own. There may be mentors we have not yet met, friendships we have not yet formed, and lessons we have not yet received.

There may also be a brother who could benefit from something we have learned along our own journey.

Brotherhood, however, does not happen simply because our names appear on the same membership roll.

It grows through time spent together.

It grows during meals before Lodge, conversations after meetings, degree practices, committee work, community service, visits with a brother who is struggling, and the simple act of sitting beside someone we have not met before.

These moments may seem ordinary, but they are often where the deepest lessons are found.

A brother may never formally tell us how to become a better husband, father, leader, friend, or Mason. Instead, we may learn by watching how he treats people, how he carries responsibility, how he responds when things do not go his way, or how he offers support when someone else is in need.



MASONIC EDUCATION

Why We Meet: Better Men, Together

Continued



Character is often taught through example long before it is explained in words.

This is one reason our presence matters.

Showing up is not only about what we receive from Lodge. It is also about what our presence may offer to someone else.

We may come believing that we have little to contribute, yet a kind word, a shared experience, or a quiet example may be exactly what another brother needs.

We may not always see the impact we have, but that does not mean the impact is absent.

There is also something important that happens when generations and experiences meet.

The newer Mason brings questions, enthusiasm, and a fresh appreciation for the Craft. The experienced Mason brings perspective, stability, and lessons shaped over time.

Both have something to give.

Both have something to receive.

When those brothers remain strangers, that exchange never takes place.

Freemasonry calls each of us to improve ourselves, but it also places us within a community of men committed to the same work.

We meet to conduct the business of the Lodge, preserve our traditions, support our officers, and continue the work of the Craft.

But brotherhood requires more than membership.

There may be a brother in this Lodge whose example could change the way we live, lead, serve, or face difficulty. There may also be someone who could benefit from our example, even if we never realize it.

Self-improvement may be personal, but it is never solitary.

We become better men together.

“We cannot make one another better while remaining strangers.”

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

Five Days in November

The beginning of Catawba Lodge No. 56



Before Fort Mill was incorporated as a town, before textile mills transformed the community, and before any of the Lodge buildings remembered by later generations had been constructed, a small group of Freemasons living near Fort Mill decided that their community should have a Lodge of its own.

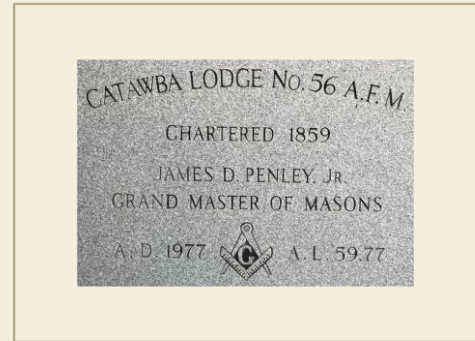
On November 15, 1858, those men presented a petition to the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free Masons of South Carolina seeking permission to establish a Lodge near Fort Mill.

They also requested the support of Philanthropic Lodge in Yorkville, whose sanction was required before the new Lodge could begin.

That sanction was granted.

Five days later, on November 20, 1858, Grand Master Henry Buist issued a dispensation authorizing the new Lodge to begin its work.

“A small group of Freemasons decided that their community should have a Lodge of its own.”



Brother Isaac Spencer was appointed to serve as Worshipful Master while the Lodge operated under dispensation. B. M. Cobb served as Senior Warden, and B. Frank Powell served as Junior Warden.

The Lodge would continue under dispensation for approximately one year before receiving its formal charter on November 18, 1859.

The new Lodge was assigned the number 56, which had previously belonged to Fellowship Lodge in St. George's Parish in the Colleton District.

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

Five Days in November

Continued



Brother Isaac Spencer, the first Master of Catawba Lodge under dispensation, offers an especially fitting connection between the operative and speculative traditions of Masonry.

Spencer had come to the area from Connecticut and lived on a farm approximately two miles east of Fort Mill. He worked as a cabinetmaker and wheelwright and was remembered as an excellent craftsman.

Lodge tradition holds that he may have made the original altar and other Lodge furniture from solid walnut.

Those pieces reportedly served Catawba Lodge for nearly ninety years before being lost in the devastating fire of February 1947.

There is something meaningful in that image.

The man entrusted to lead the Lodge during its first year may also have helped build the physical furnishings around which its earliest members gathered.

His contribution was not merely administrative. He gave his leadership, his craftsmanship, and perhaps the labor of his own hands to help establish something intended to endure.

Catawba Lodge first met in a one-story frame school building near the corner of Monroe White Street and Tom Hall Street. The Lodge later added a second story to the building for its meetings.

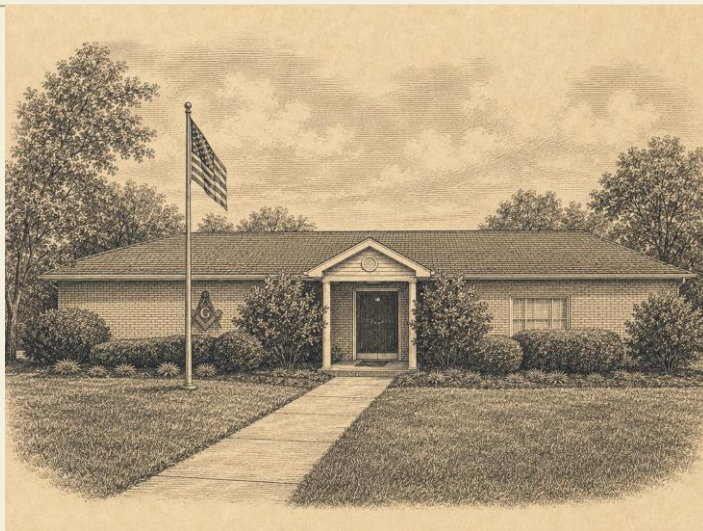
The brothers who gathered there could not have known everything that would follow. They could not have imagined the different halls the Lodge would occupy, the wars and fires it would survive, the generations of officers who would lead it, or the hundreds of men who would eventually call Catawba Lodge their Masonic home.

They simply recognized that something worth establishing was needed in their community.

CATAWBA LODGE HISTORY

Five Days in November

Continued



The Lodge's history would soon become closely connected with the history of Fort Mill itself. Members of Catawba Lodge helped support public education, community institutions, charitable efforts, and the civic development of the town.

When Fort Mill was incorporated in 1873, its first mayor and four wardens were all members of Catawba Lodge.

What began with a petition on November 15 and a dispensation five days later became one of Fort Mill's oldest continuing institutions.

More than a century and a half later, the names of those early brothers remain part of our story.

They remind us that institutions do not simply appear. They begin when people decide that something meaningful should exist—and are willing to give their time, labor, and commitment to build it.

*“The surroundings
have changed. The
work continues.”*

*Historical information drawn from
Lodge history prepared from earlier
writings by C. S. Link, W. B. Ardrey Jr.,
Dr. J. Lee Spratt, and notes presented by
F. M. Mack for the Lodge's centennial.*

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

Edward T. Currie

A Generous Spirit • Senior Deacon • Raised November 16, 2024

Many people know Brother Ed Currie for his work with peppers.

As the creator of the Carolina Reaper and Pepper X, Ed has earned recognition far beyond Fort Mill. Yet those who know him personally often speak first about something that has little to do with records, business, or public attention.

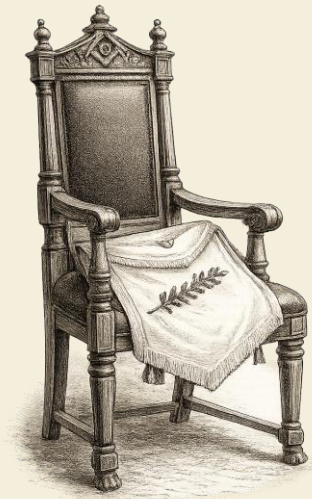
They speak about his generosity.

One brother recalled a time when he was beginning a new chapter of his life and needed help getting established. Ed did more than offer words of encouragement. He opened his home, shared what he had, and continued supporting him until he was able to find his footing.

That kind of generosity is difficult to measure because much of it happens quietly.

GENEROSITY MADE PRACTICAL

It may involve money or resources, but often it is something more personal: making room in one's life, creating an opportunity, giving someone time, or standing beside him until he is ready to stand on his own.

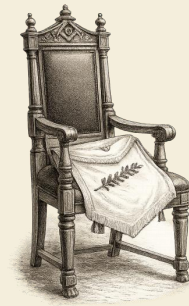


The stories told about Ed carry a common theme: when he sees someone who needs encouragement, assistance, or simply a brother standing beside him, he steps forward.

BROTHER SPOTLIGHT

Edward T. Currie

Continued



During my own relatively short time at Catawba Lodge, I have seen that same spirit in Ed.

He is generous with his time and resources, quick to encourage others, and willing to help wherever help is needed. His positivity is difficult to miss. He brings energy into a room and has a way of making others feel welcome.

Although still relatively new to the Craft, Ed has already accepted meaningful responsibility within the Lodge and currently serves as Senior Deacon. That willingness to serve says something important about him.

Freemasonry teaches us that generosity is not limited to what we possess. We may give our time, attention, labor, patience, experience, and encouragement. The value of a gift is not always determined by its size, but by what it means to the person receiving it.

Ed seems to understand that naturally.

His public accomplishments may be what first make his name familiar, but they are not the whole story. Behind them is a man known by his brothers for his optimism, loyalty, and willingness to give freely of himself.

Catawba Lodge is fortunate to have Brother Ed Currie serving among us—not because of how many people recognize his name, but because of the kind of brother he chooses to be.

“There are men whose character is best understood by the stories others tell about how they were treated when they needed help.”

AUGUST CALENDAR



Important Dates

Degree practices, stated communication, degree work, and district meetings

MONDAYS

7:00 p.m.

Degree practices
At the Worshipful Master's
discretion

THURSDAY • AUG 13

6:30 / 7:30

Meal at 6:30 p.m.
Meeting at 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY • AUG 22

6:30 / 7:30

Breakfast at 6:30 a.m.
Degree work at 7:30 a.m.

Degree practices are generally held on Monday evenings at 7:00 p.m., at the discretion of the Worshipful Master.

Additional August meetings:

Monday, August 24, 2026 — Masters and Wardens, hosted by Rock Hill Lodge No. 111

Tuesday, August 25, 2026 — Scottish Rite meeting at Rock Hill Lodge No. 111

*Please watch for any
additional updates
from the Worshipful
Master or Lodge
officers.*

BIRTHDAYS & MASONIC MILESTONES

Brothers We Recognize

August birthdays and significant 2026 anniversaries

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

August 1 — Michael Paul Manno

August 2 — Adam Clark Lynch

August 3 — Brandon Eugene Van Cise

August 3 — David Mitchell Combs

August 6 — Danny Arthur Rollins

August 6 — Shane Hugh Whitman

August 10 — James Steven Wright

August 10 — Joseph Rogers Cantrell

August 10 — Martin Leslie Smith

August 14 — Willis Elmo Flowers

August 15 — Lloyd Dunlap Riley

August 15 — Louis Linwood Riley

August 15 — Thomas Weldon Blankenship

August 17 — Edward T. Currie

August 18 — Clarence William Collins

August 19 — Eric Mitchell Williams

August 20 — David Allen Coltharp

August 20 — Robert James Carter

August 30 — Ronald Winchester Edwards

2026 MASONIC MILESTONES

As we begin publication of The Catawba Journal, we also recognize brothers who have reached or will reach significant Masonic milestones during the first eight months of 2026.

50 YEARS AS MASTER MASONS

Roger Edward Allen — March 3, 2026

Robert Carol Pierce — April 27, 2026

Edward Lee Potts — June 17, 2026

40 YEARS AS MASTER MASONS

John Lafitte Warren — April 5, 2026

Harold Alan Barfield — August 16, 2026

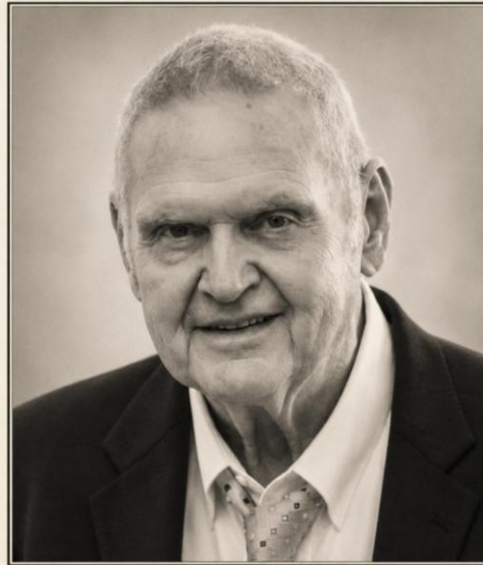
William Ray Crawford — August 16, 2026

In Memoriam

Honoring the Life of a Brother

Brother James Paul "Buddy" Becknell

June 1, 1939 – July 24, 2026



It is with great sorrow that the Brethren of Catawba Lodge No. 56 announce the passing of Brother James Paul “Buddy” Becknell, who has laid down the working tools of this life and entered into eternal rest.

Brother Buddy’s life reflected the virtues to which every Mason aspires: faith in God, devotion to family, service to his community, and a steadfast commitment to helping others. While we mourn his passing, we also give thanks for a life well lived and for the lasting example he leaves to all who had the privilege of calling him Brother.

Born and raised in Fort Mill, Brother Buddy proudly served his country in the United States Navy before returning home to build a distinguished fifty-five-year career with Trane Technologies.

Respected as a technician, mentor, and teacher, he continued sharing his knowledge with future generations through Central Piedmont Community College. His commitment to service extended far beyond his profession. As a proud Hejaz Shriner, Scottish Rite Mason, Eagle Scout, and faithful servant of his church, he quietly demonstrated that a man's legacy is measured not by the recognition he receives, but by the lives he touches.

Those who knew Brother Buddy will remember his warmth, generosity, unmistakable sense of humor, and his familiar farewell, “Don’t take any wooden nickels.” More importantly, they will remember a man whose character reflected the timeless principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

As we reflect upon his life, may we be reminded that while a Mason may lay down the working tools of this earthly life, the influence of a good man endures in the hearts of those he served, the family he cherished, and the Brethren who were honored to labor beside him.

May the Grand Architect of the Universe grant our departed Brother eternal rest, and may He bring comfort and peace to all who mourn his passing.

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Coming This Fall

Important Lodge traditions to keep on your calendar

Lodge Banquet

First Saturday in November 2026

Plans are underway for the annual Lodge Banquet. Additional details will be shared as they are finalized.

Watch future issues of The Catawba Journal for the date, time, location, and any information brothers should know as the event approaches.

Annual Butt Sale

Saturday, December 12, 2026

The Annual Butt Sale will be held on the second Saturday in December. This year's date avoids a conflict with the Fort Mill Christmas Parade, scheduled for the first Saturday of the month.

Ordering information, pickup details, and additional instructions will be shared as plans are finalized.

The Work Continues

Receiving what has been entrusted to us with gratitude



A Lodge is built over generations.

It is built by men who establish it, men who preserve it, men who teach its lessons, and men who step forward when their time comes to carry the work a little farther.

Some have served for decades.

Others are only beginning to understand what has been placed before them.

Each stands at a different point along the journey, but all share in the same inheritance.

The history of Catawba Lodge did not end with the brothers who petitioned for its creation in 1858. It has continued through every meeting, every degree, every lesson taught, every friendship formed, and every act of quiet service that followed.

Today, that history belongs to us.

There is still more to learn.

There are still brothers to know.

There is still work worthy of our time.

The next chapter of Catawba Lodge is already being written—not only in minutes and records, but in the way we live, serve, and labor beside one another.

May we receive what has been entrusted to us with gratitude and pass it forward with care.

“The surroundings have changed. The work continues.”

— No. 56 —

COLOPHON

The Catawba Journal

Volume 1 • Issue 1 • August 2026

Published monthly for the Brethren of Catawba Lodge No. 56 A.F.M.
Founded 1858 • Fort Mill, South Carolina



— No. 56 —

WORSHIPFUL MASTER**WB Alex Harlee**

Provides the vision and final approval for each issue.

EDITOR**Brad Curtis**

Responsible for editorial planning, writing, design, and publication.

LODGE SECRETARY**WB Marty Monahan**

Provided official Lodge records, membership information, birthdays, Masonic milestones, and calendar information for this issue.

PHOTOGRAPHY**Catawba Lodge Media Team**

Photography and visual documentation of Lodge activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS**Members of Catawba Lodge No. 56**

This issue includes contributions from the Worshipful Master and members of Catawba Lodge No. 56.

EDITORIAL PURPOSE

The Catawba Journal exists to preserve the history of Catawba Lodge No. 56, strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, and encourage thoughtful reflection upon the principles of Freemasonry.

— No. 56 —

Articles may be edited for clarity, length, and consistency while preserving the author's intent.