



MINNEHAHA LODGE #5

Ancient Free & Accepted Masons

520 S. 1st Ave

Sioux Falls, SD 57104

sec@minnehaha5.com

(605) 351-5756

JULY 2, 2026

Opened in Due Form 7:00p.m.

Closed in Due Form 9:02p.m.

Attendance 31

Visitors 1

STATED MEETING ~ ENTERED APPRENTICE

WM	JAMES BYERS	SD	ANTHONY NEURTOTH
SW	ADDISON STUBBE	JD	JON WOODS*
JW	CODY CHRISTIANSEN	SS	KURT SWENDSON
TRES	CARLOS COBOS	JS	CONNOR PULLING*
SEC	AARON ZAHN	MAR	GREG WESCOTT
CHAP	RYAN HARRISON	TYLER	JERRY GROUZIS

*PRO-TEM

Worshipful Master James Byers opened a Stated Meeting in the Master Mason Degree at 7:00 pm and greeted the Brethren in attendance.

CORRESPONDENCE.

- ✦ Aaron presented a message from the El Riad Shrine Classie Autos thanking Minnehaha Lodge for all of their help during Hot Classics Night 2026. We had eight members help in which the Classie Autos contributed \$800 to Minnehaha Lodge for their help!

PETITIONS

- ✦ Petitions for Affiliation for John Griffith and Ryan Sommer were presented. Both petitions were read separately. One ballot box was prepared with clear labeling for each petitioner marked separately. The ballot was conducted in due form and John Griffith and Ryan Sommer were found favorable to join Minnehaha Lodge! Congratulations Brothers!
- ✦ First reading of a petition for Spencer Larson

NEW BUSINESS

- ✦ Worshipful Master James Byers asked all Past Masters in attendance to please rise and state the lodge and year they were Master
- ✦ Aaron Zahn reports that the lodge's audio setup has been overhauled: the backstage "mess" was cleaned up, all microphones are now working with fresh batteries, and in addition to the four pedestal mics in view, there are four stick mics and four lapel mics available. He urges brethren to use the mics not just for their own amplification but to ensure high-quality recordings of business meetings and for better audibility in the room. James Byers then thanks the IT committee and brothers who did the work, noting that as the lodge's overall experience improves, he hopes to see even more chairs filled in the future.
- ✦ Kurt Swendson presents an ashlar he made as a gift to the Worshipful Master and the lodge, using Sioux Falls pink quartzite. He explains that, though he is a speculative rather than operative mason, he set out to create a true working ashlar from a rough stone using diamond grinding wheels, very coarse sandpaper, and a jig system to achieve flat, parallel, and square faces. He describes the technical challenges—quartzite being extremely hard (around 7 on the Mohs scale), burning out several grinders, and producing huge amounts of silica dust—then moving through increasingly fine diamond grits up to 8000, finishing with cerium oxide to produce a polished, reflective surface. Kurt points out the visible geological layers and intentionally leaves one corner unfinished as a reminder of the stone's rough origin and, symbolically, "from whence we came." He offers the process and even tools to any brother who wishes to make his own ashlar, and Worshipful Master Byers highlights the ashlar as a daily reminder of the inner work Masons are called to do.
- ✦ Education Presentation by WB Carlos Cobos:

Betrayal, Courage, and Masonic Obligations

Presented by Worshipful Brother Carlos Cobos

Brethren, I want to talk tonight about a topic that sits at the very bottom of human behavior in many philosophical traditions: **betrayal**. To understand how serious it is, I'll start with the opposite virtue.

- **Courage and Steadfastness**



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In **Greek philosophy**, the highest form of human behavior—the virtue they prized above all—was **courage**. Their reasoning was simple: without courage, all the other virtues are **unattainable**. You cannot practice justice, temperance, or wisdom if you lack the courage to do what is right when it costs you something. But courage for them wasn't just boldness or flair; they had other words for that. One key idea tied to courage, especially in the Roman world, was **steadfastness**.

In **Roman thought**, to be steadfast meant:

- Doing what is right in the face of adversity,
- Remaining unmoved, **even unto death**.

Think about the image of the Roman legionary: shod with heavy-soled sandals with spikes, shield locked, spear set. Once they put that shield down and braced themselves, **they did not budge**. That steadfastness was the ideal.

But tonight, I want to explore something that is the **exact opposite** of steadfast courage.

➤ **The Lowest Form of Human Behavior: Betrayal**

In several **Eastern and Russian philosophical traditions**, and in **Dante's Inferno**, the lowest level of hell—the **ninth circle**—is reserved for one kind of person: the **betrayer**.

- Betrayal is seen as the **lowest form** of human behavior,
- Worse than many other sins, because it attacks trust at its root.

So what is betrayal?

Betrayal is the **violation of trust**:

- Between individuals,
- Within groups,
- Inside organizations and institutions.

It doesn't just wound a single person. It creates **trauma** in:

- Individuals,
- Associations,
- Fraternities.

Once betrayal happens, it damages our **sense of safety and reality**. Things no longer feel secure or predictable. I know of one large organization that was thriving in the 1970s until two individuals, from two competing companies within it, had a conflict. The organization **never fully recovered**. That is the power of betrayal.

➤ **"True and Trusty Friends" in Our Ritual**

What does **Freemasonry** have to do with this?

In the ritual, we hear these words:

"I will then leave you in the hands of **true and trusty friends**."

And, after devout prayer, the Worshipful Master says:

"Arise, follow your conductor, and **fear no danger**."

To me, these are some of the **most profound words** in our Craft. They are not implied; they are an **explicit promise**:

- You are in the hands of **true and trusty friends**.
- You are to **fear no danger**.

That means:

- No one is rifling through your belongings in the other room.



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- No one is secretly recording and posting you on social media.
- No one is endangering your person, reputation, or dignity.

Masonry explicitly promises: **you will not be betrayed here.**

➤ Common Forms of Betrayal

Let's look at a few familiar types of betrayal:

1. **Romantic / Relational Betrayal**
2. **Financial Betrayal**
3. **Institutional / Professional Betrayal**
4. **Betrayal within the Lodge: silence, gossip, refusal to reconcile**

❖ Romantic and Relational Betrayal

Our obligations state:

"I will not have **illicit carnal intercourse** with a Master Mason's **wife, sister, or daughter**, nor suffer the same to be done."

People make promises all the time—

They get married in church, before God, family, and friends. They make vows, and yet **affairs still happen.**

Now I'll ask a pointed question, the one that really defines brotherhood:

Who here would trust a fellow Mason with his wife?

That's a serious question. Because true brotherhood means:

- Not only "I won't betray you",
- But **"I will protect what is most precious to you."**

I once heard Navy SEALs describe their bond this way:

It's more than trusting a man with your money or your life; it's trusting him with **your family's life** if you die.

That is the level of trust our obligations aspire to.

❖ Financial Betrayal

Our obligation also says:

"Further, I will not **cheat, wrong, or defraud** a Lodge of Master Masons, or a brother of this degree..."

Yet we still have to do practical things like pre-paying for meals and tightening up procedures

because **numbers come up short**. That tells us some brothers have **not** honored that promise.

We also say:

"The Treasurer is to receive all moneys paid into the Lodge from the hand of the Secretary, keep a **just and true account** thereof, and pay them out by order of the Worshipful Master."

Think about what that means:

- Thousands of dollars pass through the hands of our **Secretaries** and **Treasurers**.
- We elect them because we believe they **will not betray us**.
- We rely on them to keep a **just and true account**.

If you really stop and think about the trust placed in those officers, it can be **humbling, even dizzying**.

Consider this:

If I came to Lodge **drunk or high**, would you still trust me to keep a just and true account of the Lodge's funds?

If the answer is "no," then we see how our conduct directly affects whether others can **safely trust** us.

❖ Institutional / Professional Betrayal

We also obligate ourselves:



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“Furthermore, I will conform to and abide by the laws, rules, and regulations of the Grand Lodge and of my Lodge, **provided the same shall come to my knowledge.**”

Many brethren haven’t even read the bylaws. If they truly haven’t “come to your knowledge,” it’s hard to break them—but it also means we’re walking close to the edge of **ignorant betrayal.**

❖ **Betrayal Inside the Lodge: Silence, Gossip, Refusal to Reconcile**

Some additional forms of betrayal (as summarized by modern writers) include:

- **Betrayal by silence** – seeing or hearing wrong and doing nothing.
- **Betrayal by gossip** – damaging a brother’s reputation behind his back.
- **Betrayal by broken confidence** – teaching men not to trust the fraternity.
- **Betrayal by refusing reconciliation** – choosing resentment instead of mending fences.

Our own obligation says:

“I will keep a Master Mason’s secrets **inviolable**, murder and treason alone excepted...”

Yet when we gossip, we:

- Reveal what should be private,
- Poison reputations,
- And **teach men not to trust the Lodge.**

We also promise:

“...nor **supplant him in any of his laudable undertakings**, but will give him due and timely notice, that he may **ward off approaching danger.**”

To **supplant** means:

- To supersede another, **especially by treachery.**

Treachery is:

- Breaking a promise,
- Turning against a friend, partner, or leader,
- Acting in a **false or unfaithful** way.

When we use **gossip or intrigue** to undermine a brother’s work or standing, we are committing **treachery** in direct violation of that promise.

➤ **How Betrayal Grows**

Betrayal is rarely a single sudden act. It follows a pattern:

1. **Justify the resentment**
2. **Nurse suspicion**
3. **Speak carelessly**
4. **Gather allies**
5. **Convince yourself your conduct is righteous**

You see this pattern when:

- A man has an affair with a married woman and tells himself,
“Her husband treated her badly; she deserves better.”
- A woman has an affair and tells herself,
“His wife never appreciated him; I’m rescuing him.”

They **reframe betrayal as virtue**, so they can live with what they’re doing.

Inside a Lodge, the pattern is the same:

- “I’m just telling the truth about him...”



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- “People need to know what he’s *really* like...”
- “I’m doing this for the good of the Lodge...”

But in reality, the Lodge becomes the **victim**:

- Good men become **quiet**.
- Officers **burn out**.
- New members, who started off excited, **drift away** after tasting the gossip and politics.
- People stop trusting leadership.
- The language of brotherly love and relief starts to feel **hollow**.

Older Masons begin to say:

“This is not the Lodge I joined 30, 40, 50 years ago.”

The **institution** pays the price of betrayal.

➤ The Greatest Betrayal: Betraying Oneself

There is an even deeper betrayal: **betraying yourself**.

In one of our lectures, the candidate is told:

“Of a former degree, you had someone to pray for you; **now you have not – you must pray for yourself**.

You will therefore suffer yourself to be hoodwinked, kneel, and pray—either mentally or orally as you please—but to signify when done, say ‘Amen’ aloud. **Arise and make your progress.**”

This is not a promise of safety. It is a call to **maturity**:

- The world you walk into is **not** completely safe,
- It is “full of danger, perhaps even murderers,”
- You must **stand on your own two feet**,
- And **make your progress** as a Master Mason.

We then meet the three ruffians, properly named:

- **Jubela**, who strikes across the throat –
Represents those who attempt to control your **freedom of speech**, and ask you to reveal what you should not.
- **Jubelo**, who strikes across the breast –
Represents those who try to control your **freedom of action**, asking you to do things against your will, or preventing you from acting as you know you should.
- **Jubelum**, who strikes upon the forehead with the setting maul –
Represents those who try to control your **freedom of thought**.

As Masons, we are taught:

- You are your **own man**.
- You know what you know.
- You have your values.
- You must have the **courage** to stand by them.

If you compromise those values for comfort, fear, or approval, you **betray yourself**.

➤ Our Obligations and Courage

One of the most powerful lines in our obligations says:

“All this I will **solemnly and sincerely promise and swear**, with a **firm and steadfast resolution** to keep and perform the same, **without any hesitation, mental reservation, or secret evasion of mind whatever**;



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binding myself...

So help me God, and keep me steadfast in due performance of the same.”

In other words:

- “So help me God, and give me **courage** so that I can do what is right when I face the person or situation that tempts me to betray my obligations.”

It takes **courage** to:

- Refuse to gossip,
- Call out wrongdoing kindly but firmly,
- Admit your own faults,
- Reconcile instead of nursing resentment.

➤ 8. Master’s Wages: A Change of Heart

Our Senior Warden explains what induced him to become a Master Mason:

“That I might travel in foreign countries, work and receive Master’s wages, be better enabled to support myself and family, and contribute to the relief of poor, distressed, worthy Master Masons, their widows and orphans.”

This is not just about **earning a little coin**. That last part describes a **change of heart**:

- To see the world differently,
- To notice a brother in need,
- And to **act** to relieve that distress.

Traveling in “foreign countries” is not just literal travel. It also means moving in unfamiliar environments where **betrayal and danger** may be present. If you are not prepared to recognize both, foreign places—and even other jurisdictions—can be dangerous.

Our hope is that our **Masonic relationships** teach us to recognize:

- Men we want to associate with,
- Men we want to do business with,
- Men who **will not betray us**.

9. Displaying the Beauties of Love, Relief, and Truth

In the Entered Apprentice prayer, the Worshipful Master prays that the candidate:

“...may be better enabled to **display the beauties of virtue, brotherly love, and truth**, to the honor and glory of Thy holy name. Amen.”

We devote a great deal of attention to:

- Learning to **identify** betrayal,
- Promising **not to betray one another**,
- Promising **not to betray ourselves**.

Why?

So that we may **better display** the beauty of:

- **Love**,
- **Relief**,
- **Truth**,

to the honor and glory of God’s holy and matchless name.

Brethren, that is a beautiful calling—and it is utterly incompatible with betrayal in any form.



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- ✧ Worshipful Master James Byers speaks about how deeply important Masonry is in his life—placed just after his faith and family—and how nearly all of his closest friends are Masons because the Craft truly means something to them. He reflects on his 18 years in Masonry, his commitment to doing ritual correctly, and his belief that our system, rooted in the time of Solomon, is designed to improve good men daily. He then explains that he wants to continue “pushing the agenda” of strong Masonry into the next generation and across South Dakota, and therefore formally asks Minnehaha Lodge No. 5 to support him in running for the office of Junior Grand Warden in the Grand Line for the ensuing year.
 - Jon Woods makes a motion nominating Worshipful Master James Byers for the office of Junior Grand Warden. He notes Minnehaha Lodge’s proud history of producing distinguished Grand Masters and states that, of all the men he knows, he considers James Byers the finest choice to continue that tradition, thereby formally moving that the lodge support Brother Byers as their candidate for Junior Grand Warden. Brian Pulling seconds the motion. No discussion. Motion carried!
- ✧ Jim Block shares a story illustrating real-life Masonic relief. While traveling near Waldron, Arkansas, he discovered the rear bearings on his trailer were failing and he was effectively stranded. A local brother, who turned out to be a Mason, helped him get to town, arranged for discounted parts and repairs, and personally assisted with replacing and fitting the bearings until Jim was safely back on the road—refusing full payment and accepting far less than his work was worth. Jim explains that, moved by this help, he contacted appropriate Masonic authorities and wrote letters to the lodges in Oklahoma and Arkansas to recognize and thank those brethren for their brotherly assistance.
- ✧ Most Worshipful Brother Brian Pulling describes his recent trip to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. for events celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States and the global fraternity of Freemasonry. He recounts meeting Grand Masters and brethren from across the U.S. and abroad—including the Grand Master of Ukraine, who shared how lodges there relocate due to nightly bombings and how Ukrainian Masons house in hospital basements and support brothers whose homes were destroyed. Brian also visited historic Masonic sites such as Carpenters’ Hall and the George Washington National Masonic Memorial, attended lodges with very different rituals (Pennsylvania, D.C., and UK “10K Lodge”), and emphasized how, despite differences, the cement of brotherly love unites Masons worldwide.
- ✧ Senior Warden Addison thanked everyone that help with the water distribution during the Independence Day parade.
- ✧ Junior Warden Cody thanks all the evening’s speakers for sharpening his Masonic “tools” and helping him feel recentered, enthusiastically endorses the Fourth of July parade water-bottle project as one of the most enjoyable lodge events he’s done—highlighting how grateful the public were and how many tried to give them money—and then announces an MBA town hall on August 18 at 7:00 p.m. in the lodge room to discuss a purchase offer on the building and possible future plans if the sale goes through.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING





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MEAL

⚡ \$160 in cash received from the meal. \$150 in online payments



Respectfully Submitted,

AARON ZAHN—SECRETARY

