

THE ROAD BACK



includes Service News

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ISSUE NO. 442



HOPE

Editorial

Welcome to the Late Summer edition of The Road Back.

As the season begins to change from Summer to Autumn, it can be a nice time to reflect on how we are doing. We too must adjust as temperatures change, the daylight hours get shorter, car lights go on for longer, and we probably start to spend a little more time indoors than we would have a few weeks ago. This can be a good time to make an effort to get to extra meetings, after all, we always seem to feel better after them, but don't always make the effort. I often wonder is this laziness or just how we are sometimes. Have we become a little complacent? Why do we always seem to go to only our home group, why don't we visit other groups more frequently? Are we open to change or living in our comfort zones?

Thankfully, we have received a few more stories from our members for this edition, and hopefully after reading them, you will realise how simple some are. What about your experience, why not tell our readers your story – long or short. We don't have enough content to fill all of our pages, so you will find some stories other publications such as The News, Mainstay, AA Reviver, Share and from old Road Backs. In AA world, this is the second oldest publication. The Grapevine is the oldest.

Recently at a local meeting, I overheard a few members discussing, AA, its structure, how it came about and some other information. It stemmed from something that was circulating on social media. I was amazed how members were prepared to take an anonymous article and believe that it was based on facts, when the reality was it was mostly fiction. A former US president regularly used the phrase Fake News, and this is what came to mind when I heard it. How often is it that we hear information, or gossip, and take it as the truth without ever questioning its source or its motives? How would we react if the article was about us or our family or friends? Would it be as acceptable/believable?

On the AA website there is a "Lets stay in touch" section, where you can provide your email address, and we will send periodic updates. We hope to let this evolve into something that becomes more frequent. For now, if you want to get some Irish AA updates, feel free to subscribe. A link can be found on www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie near the bottom of the home page.

You might notice in this edition the centre pages which are normally "The News Sheet" has been renamed to "Service News" We felt it was important to give the section a name that better reflected its content and what you might expect to find there.

It's hard to believe that our next edition will be around Christmas time. This can be quite a challenging time for many members. If you have any tips or stories that helped you get through a previous Halloween or Christmas why not write them down, email, scan or use whatever means you normally use to get them to us at roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

I will finish on a lighter note. Let's all live one day at a time and continue to keep safe, sober and well.

The Editorial Team.

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Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any casues.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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CONCERTS

I found myself traveling alone in the USA after only a few years of sobriety. It was a new experience. To me, a disaster then struck - I had arranged tickets for a concert and my friend had to cancel. The dilemma was would I go alone or not at all. I really wanted to see the band, but had never gone to a concert without drinking. My sponsor told me I was more than ready. I didn't feel the same way.

I decided to go. It turned out to be an amazing experience. I'm not quite sure what I expected, but in the end the venue was similar in size to a school hall maybe a bit bigger. Scattered around the venue were many water fountains. Free water! To my surprise the focus at the concert was the band and music. There was a tiny bar, with almost nobody at it. People danced, and sang and had fun. There was almost no alcohol.

Somehow, although alone, I noticed my feet tapping, my legs were moving, and my shoulders were moving to the music. My version of dancing. Nobody noticed me. I fitted in just like everybody else. Imagine, alone in a foreign country, at a concert, no alcohol and I was actually dancing. I let myself. Wow - what an experience. I had convinced myself that that wasn't possible.

I listened to the music, absorbed the atmosphere, sweated a little, and finally went home delighted with myself that yet another huge challenge had been overcome on my road to recovery.

Aisling, Dublin

LIVE AND LET LIVE

One of the wonderful things about our Fellowship is that there is somebody for everybody and we usually seek out people who seem to be a good fit. All of us in AA have a right to our own opinion, even if that opinion is that somebody else's opinion is not as good as ours. There is not a society on earth that places greater emphasis on the individual's right to think, say, and do what he or she pleases than AA. The whole structure

of AA is based on a democratic spirit. There are no bosses or gurus. Nowhere on earth do we find such a wonderful society, extending so much freedom to so many people. If it works, don't fix it. We have grown from two people to two million, and we show no signs of getting smaller. We must be doing something right.

Jim N, Massachusetts

Not everything that is faced can be changed.
But nothing can be changed until it is faced.

Anon

THE AIRPORT

Recently I took a trip to London, when the penny finally dropped, that Dublin Airport was just that - an Airport - not a drinking emporium just waiting to be navigated by me.

When I thought about it I wasn't too surprised, as for many of the previous 20 years, every time I visited it, it involved quite a different experience. It didn't matter whether or not I was traveling. The bar was always nearby.

There were challenges too - for many of those trips I was trying to hide what I was drinking. I could drop off the kids and then go park the car - giving me some alone time to consume the wine I had hidden in the boot. I could then go and meet the others at check-in before taking a trip to the bathroom. When I did that I could pop to the bar and have a quick tippie out of sight from the top shelf. That would be enough to get me through security. Once through, I could relax, feeling a bit of a haze.

Much less seemed to bother me when I was like this. While waiting for departure, it was an ideal time to stock up on miniatures. They could be easily stored in my many pockets, and would keep me topped up during the flight. Many opportunities to consume them along the way.

Oddly, then I would find everything on the plane funny, I would get louder, even cheeky, more talkative. Then I'd probably fall asleep.

That was a regular experience.

Now though, all of that planning has been replaced with excitement. I love to travel. I love to get to the airport early, to go and people watch. Sometimes we go and have something to eat. We check in together, go to security together. We do things together. I'm no longer a nightmare to be with. We laugh and joke and talk to each other. We smile at people. We help people if they need help. I notice things. New memories are constantly created.

Finally, I once again have peace of mind, and yes, chuckle that smart me has just figured out that airports are a place where people travel, coming and going, non stop!

Sean, Galway



**For further information on forthcoming AA Events please
visit the events section of our website on:
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie/events**

FROM ONE ALCOHOLIC TO ANOTHER

My name is.....and I'm an alcoholic and today I have no fear. Well one part of that sentence is true, I am an alcoholic. But today, as with yesterday, fear is in my life. I was going to say I suffer fear but that's not true anymore. A look back over the last few years might help as an explanation. I came to AA this time around not understanding fear, I was too strong in character to be in fear after all. Back then, if things unsettled me, I drank it away, or so I thought. If things tried to keep me awake, I drank myself to sleep. We all know the story. But I didn't recognise fear as it was in my life, until I stopped drinking and started on the road of the Twelve Step Programme.

So, I started to see fear for what it was and how it was crippling much of my life. All well and good, but that didn't make it go away did it? No, I just knew something about myself that I didn't realise before, "Not a great improvement in my life" I thought, just something else to beat myself up about, scared of everything eh? So how on earth was knowing this about myself going to help? I had heard that I could, 'hand it over, but I didn't have that faith yet. Maybe share about it at a meeting? I hated doing that because I always said something stupid, forgot the protocol, went red in the face or just plain forgot names. I heard about looking for a sponsor but was afraid of rejection. No, it was all useless.

What I needed, I thought, was a way to make fear disappear from my life. After all there were many people in the rooms who were totally fearless, again so I thought. If they could do it then so could I. It didn't work. My alcoholic thought pattern made dead ends of out of each remedy I came up with.

I was not until I was at a meeting where I heard someone say that they were living in fear of some issue. He was not sharing, just talking to a fellow member. Here he was, unashamedly. I think that was a turning point, I realised I was ashamed of myself for being, or letting people know I was afraid. Yep, afraid of people's opinion of me. Even in the very rooms of AA I carried my fears. I now realise that knowing my fears can be a great asset, for that meeting opened my eyes, not so much to the person I was, but to the person I wanted to be.

Today I'm writing this with a peaceful heart and a smile on my face. Not that I'm without fear, but I do recognise it. I have a Higher Power in my life that I can ask for help from. But before this I learned to not feel ashamed of fear, see it as a part of me and my ongoing recovery and most importantly to share it with fellow members when it tries to grind my down. For within the rooms of the Fellowship I found fear only governs those, who like me, kept it to themselves.

Share, May 2019

Terrible day?

Yep.

Still clean & sober?

Yep.

You win.



HEADING TO THE MEETING

When I go to a meeting, I normally bring a coffee. Funny, at collection time, I never have change and won't give paper money and they don't do tap and go, yet I am there because I need this meeting.

I heard someone suggest dropping the price of a drink into the basket, and I thought, that's too much! I almost never give even 2 euro. Like many others, I rely on the more generous

members to finance the Fellowship.

I forget that it takes money to rent the meeting room and buy milk, sugar, and cups. I will pay, without hesitation, 3 euro for a cup of coffee at a shop after the meeting; I always have money for that. So, how much exactly is my sobriety and my inner peace worth?

Donal

BE THOUGHTFUL OF OTHERS

As the evenings close in and it begins to get dark much earlier, some members, particularly older members are less keen to venture out at night and go to a physical meeting. Some of these are just as happy to go to an online meeting, but some don't have access to this facility.

If you know of any of these members, or notice that you haven't seen a member at meetings for a while, please pick up the phone. Something as simple as a call can make a huge

difference to someone's life. It can also make a huge difference to yours.

If you are in a position to give someone a lift, if you know that they may not like driving at night, or might even be lonely, then please do.

Anon, Dublin 2023



BEHIND PRISON WALLS

My name is Leslie, and I am an alcoholic. I am in prison doing a life sentence through alcohol. But please let me say that I do not blame alcohol altogether as do have a mind of my own. However, as you know, an alcoholic has a sick brain.

I started drinking alcohol at the age of nine and thought it was great fun. By the time I was fifteen I was powerless over alcohol. The silly thing is I carried on drinking.

Five months ago, a young man from the Leopard Group at Yatala Prison, asked me to give the AA program ago and I said I would think about it.

The following morning, I attended an AA meeting. I would not be honest if I said it was my first AA meeting as I have been to other AA meetings, but with a closed mind.

I knew I had a drinking problem eleven years ago and would not admit it, because I was having fun: how wrong I was.

I am now 26 years old and the past 5 months have been like paradise, even behind these four walls. In fact, they have been the best months of my life. At first I said I was too young to be an alcoholic and that alcohol was a disease to me. It was the hardest thing I ever had to do. Before coming to this wonderful program, I didn't believe in God but I do now accept my Higher Power as God in the way I understand him.

In September 1973, we had seven visitors with us and that meeting was the best I have ever attended.

One of the outside members came from Sydney and two from Melbourne, and, of course, four were on our prison panel. Believe me, they do a very good job in giving their time up to share with us.

We have one meeting a week and that is not enough for me, so I write to different AA members who are willing to share with me and to tell the truth.

This is how I receive 90 percent of my sobriety and strength as I am one who has to be reminded every day that I am an alcoholic. The most important change in my new life is sharing, as this was one of the hardest things in my life to do. Thanks to the fellowship of AA, I am getting over this problem.

If any members would like to write to me and the group, I will always be sincere in answering. Well, my friends, I will wish you all the very best and may God as you understand Him keep you in happiness.

I would like to you for sending the Leopard Group "The Reviver" as I am sure the lads do receive some strength from it.

Yours in wonderful fellowship, where those who care will always share.. Yours in Sobriety,

Reviver, October 2021

NO TIME FOR SECRETARY

I was at my local meeting and once again there was a plea for a secretary. Why doesn't anyone do it. They've been asking for weeks. Someone always steps in. Not me, I did it a while ago. It's someone else's turn. I wonder how long ago it really was - a few months ago probably. In my case it was nearly 4 years!

I had every excuse. I don't want to commit. I've something coming up. Other commitments. I'd even started to come to the meeting late so I couldn't be asked to do a chair. Was I actually on any program, or pretending I was? My sponsor asked my why I didn't do it. I told him I had a concert and was going away for a weekend so I couldn't. He laughed. Get up off your ass he said.

Someone will stand in if you can't make it once or twice. Get speakers from outside the group. Give back.

He annoyed me, but he was right. I knew it, again. I volunteered. I got people from outside the group to come and share their experiences. It helped make the meeting a little bit different because people were listening to different experiences. Not only that I loved doing secretary. It reminded me of how I can add to our fellowship. I felt better. I'd forgotten that service really does help me on my journey.

Tony, Kerry

AA OR NA

I was at a meeting a while ago and got irritated by people sharing about cross addiction. This is an AA meeting, not any other fellowship. Why can people not share purely about alcohol? I was so annoyed I didn't share. After the meeting I vented to a few other members.

My sponsor pulled me aside and asked my why did I not share. I told him it was because 'they' were taking over the meeting. He said to me, to remember that it's important that I

share about my alcoholism, and how I felt. It then struck me how important it was for me to share not just for me but for others too. I did at the next meeting, and so did others. That little thing was enough for me to change how I felt about that meeting. It was then I realised how important small changes are, and not just for me.

Ronan, Dublin

“You can't keep dancing with the devil and ask why you're still in hell”

THIRD STEP REFLECTION

Decision.... TURN my will and live.... To the CARE of God of my understanding...

This is my second attempt, with the first attempt, I just reread the 3rd step's literature, and I agreed with all of the ideas and writings. It was not my own ideas nor feelings. So I am going to give it another go.

English is my second language, and while studying the Big Book with my sponsor I have learned A LOT of new words. I am well educated, but there is definitely a lot of new words in the Big Book that I came across. One of the new words for me was "Agnostic"I consulted Mr Google on the word "agnostic" and below are some literature....

Agnostic - meaning

1. A person who believes that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God.

2. Do agnostics have faith? Agnosticism is not necessarily incompatible with religious faith. According to some, agnostics can have non-doxastic faith, ie. faith without theistic belief, with some other positive attitude (e.g., hope) at its core

3. A person who claims that they cannot have true knowledge about the existence of God (but does not deny that God might exist).

4. Agnostics believe that the existence or non-existence of God is logically and scientifically unknowable. Therefore, they leave open the possibility that God does exist as well as the possibility that God does not exist

I think I am one of them agnostic people.... according to Dr Google's diagnoses. (lol)

I was brought up in a religious conservative family....I am not resentful of that. BUT, (the but...I know...), but BUT,

When I fell pregnant out of wedlock, I was an active participant in our local protestant church. I was 20 years of age, in college and still living with my parents. When I was 4 months pregnant, my then college sweetheart, and fiancé (we were both in our final years of study), told me straight that he is not ready for the parent responsibilities and he broke up the engagement and relationship. So, I had to tell my parents. There also was an intense family situation, during that period, but that is a story for another time....

So after telling my mother of my pregnancy, it was not a good time. I was relieved of my church duties (I was a deacon at the time), and I was advised that I am not allowed to participate in the Holy Communion. My mother, also kind off, let me know that I was a shame on the family. Still I do not have a resentment. My mother cared for me during my pregnancy and also helped out the first 4 years of my twin boy's lives. She was also there in the room when the boys were born. I started working when I was 5 months pregnant (straight after college), so I contributed to the family income and expenses. I am just telling this story about my pregnancy, to let the reader know, I felt so hurt, when the church treated me, the way they did when I fell pregnant.

Back to step 3 - When I was drinking so bad, I did not care or thought about a God. I just drank to not to think about anything. When I joined AA and started to listen, and appreciate people's faith in God, I was sober enough to start thinking again.... About life, about love, about "what if"?

What if, there was a God that I can call on and trust in with me, and my sobriety? I found my own God, not in a church, not in a religion, just MY God. The God of mine, that is compassionate, that is caring and forgiving, that is understanding, that is looking after me

in so many ways. It is the God that comforts me, when the people I love are not very nice to me. It is the God that keeps the nightmares away at night, when I feel lonely. It is the God that helps me to laugh at funny situations, the God that smiles at me when I look in the mirror in the morning, and tells me that THIS is going to be a good day.

I take my God from all of life.

I had a work friend that is a Hindu from India. I was always amazed at how serene she was. She was never selfish, she was honest and diligent, a radiant light shone out of her. I wanted to be a Hindu, to have that peace in life.

I see Muslim girls and woman on the street. I see their head coverings and their burkas. I can only see their eyes. Underneath all of that clothing, they believe in something that I do not understand. But they believe and their faith is so strong that they do not care to stand out in a crowd. I want to be a Muslim, to have that strong believe in a faith, that I don't care what the Western world thinks of me.

When I was very bad in my drinking, my mother started a prayer group from around the world. People I do not know prayed for me. Their prayers gave me the courage to walk into an AA room on a dark, wet and cold November night. That was the start of my sobriety journey. They are born-again, charismatic Christian church people. When the born-again speak of their love of Jesus, I see and feel the love, the Godly love. I like that love and I want to be part of that.

My favourite place for peace is a Catholic graveyard. And the inside of a Catholic church.... I do not know anything about the Saints or the Patrons, it is all very mysterious to me. I very much like the idea of a rosary, I like the prayers they have, I like the symbols and colours and gold. It is such a strong visual and strong believe in a God with all the

traditions. And so many Saints and Patrons to call onto!? I have to ask Mr Google to teach me more about that. I might be a bit Catholic myself.

I come from Africa. There you will find a religion based on ancestral spirits and a very close relationship with nature and community. I have a strong believe that my dead grandmother plays a significant role in my sobriety. I see the ocean and the waves, and they give me courage. I feel the rain and see the rainbow, and that gives me hope. I feel the cold and the wind and is then grateful for shelter against the storm. I hear the birds now in the morning, instead of the sound of a can or the clink of empty wine bottles under my bed.

Of all the religions, of all the Gods, the Saints, the Patrons, I choose the God of my understanding. I cannot explain that. I respect my believe to be my own. I call on my God, when sad.... When I am happy and having a laugh, I invite my God to share in my happy moment. When I am anxious, I ask my God to keep me calm.

My sobriety depends on my God. I have given up on my drinking miserable life, which I almost took, twice, last year.... My chance to have a new life without alcohol, has been given to me, and are protected, by a God, of my understanding.

My God is the master of my ship, forever sailing the sobriety waves of life.

I am Chantelle, an alcoholic, agnostic keeping it in the day.

Chantelle, Dublin, July 2023

THE MEANING OF SOBRIETY

It's a Saturday afternoon, and I was sitting here feeling very sorry for myself because of the emotions evoked when a marriage breaks up. I picked up *The News* and started reading. In a matter of minutes through reading the stories of people getting well, stories of recovery from alcoholism, of taking their place in the world again, I changed my selfish thoughts into positive thoughts. Gratitude to my creator, and to his instrument, AA, for giving me back my life, for giving me another chance.

Even the simple act of composing an article containing some positive thoughts was completely and utterly beyond me. It seems such a short time ago since I found my way into the Unity AA Group and discovered my "impossible dream".

My untrusting and untrusted alcoholic mind was questioning, "what do they want in return?" I was so used to existing in a condition of kill or be killed, that it was an incredible feeling to find that they asked nothing in return. Their concern was only for the welfare of a fellow human being, the alcoholic.

What does sobriety mean to me today? It means that I can be comfortable being me, the ability to live with myself; that is a major achievement. It means growth towards becoming a better person, recognising my shortcomings and faults and working to change them.

It means not allowing myself to wallow in self pity, anger, fear, frustration, anxiety, resentments, and impatience. These things can only affect me if I allow them to. If I want to be happy it's up to me, no-one can make me unhappy, except me. By trying to cultivate gratitude, love, patience, communication with a Higher Power and fellow alcoholics. By supporting one another, we help ourselves.

A quote from Morris West is one of my favourites: "If a man is centred upon himself, the smallest risk is too great for him, because both success and failure can destroy him. If he is centred upon God, then no risk is too great, because success is already guaranteed, the successful union of Creator and creature beside which everything else is meaningless. Back to what sobriety means to me. It also means that I can live life to the fullest, that I appreciate the simple good things that life offers. This appreciation is more keenly felt because I have been in the pit of alcoholic despair for so long.

It is only lately that I realise just how big a part fear played in my life, and it still can if I allow it to go unchecked. Fear of the future, of failure, of rejection, that someone will not like this article and will heap the proverbial one on me, of financial insecurity, of despair. The list is almost endless.

The way "I stop the rot" is by referring to statements such as the one quoted above, by recognising the fear for what it is: not some Everest, but a mere molehill, by telling my sponsor what I am having trouble with. By asking my creator to help me "accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference". By trying to live one day at a time, and by giving away, by sharing the precious gift that was given with no question of payment.

The promises as stated on page 83-84 of the Big Book sum it all up superbly for me. Thank you, the alcoholics of AA, for giving me another chance.

The News, December 2020



THE WAY BACK

The days that passed were like an ugly dream
With no end to the misery it would seem
Then one day something happened in my life
To bring an end to all that awful strife

It was when I was willing to accept that I was beat
And in order to gain victory I had to retreat
To gain the strength to have another go
This time approach my destination slow

I had to do this for myself and myself alone
And first and foremost to myself atone
For past mistakes in order to survive
this must be done for me to stay alive

Now I know that I was blind and could not see
That I could not face up to reality
That is why I locked myself away
I thank my God as I understand him
I found myself today

Tom K

Heard at Meetings

What you are
looking for is
not out there.
It's in you.

If you don't
believe in
miracles?
Perhaps you
forgot you are
one!

I've never
met a strong
person with
an easy past.

God has
never given
up on you.
Never forget
that.

The world is
changed by
your example.
Not by your
opinion.

Remember,
When you
focus on your
problems, they
grow. End result
is you don't.
So live in the
solution!

Service News

JUL - SEPT 2023

Service News? Where's The News Sheet?

You may have noticed that this section has a new title. We decided that it was time to change from the "News Sheet" to "Service News". This is something that we have been looking at for a while. We hope it better reflects the type of content you will find here.

For anyone who has been involved in Service, the most common statement heard at a business meeting of the Fellowship is "It's very hard to get anyone to do Service". A number of steps have been taken in recent years to encourage members into Service. A new position of Young Person's Liaison Officer has been introduced – simply - to encourage younger people to get involved in service. We just have to look at the excitement and enthusiasm that is emanating from the YPLO team. It demonstrates how badly needed this service position was, and how finally AA in Ireland is starting to look at younger members and what can be done to help encourage them into Service and their journey with AA.

There have been many discussions at Conference and at Provincial Intergroup meetings about "Encouraging Members into Service".

The last line of our preamble says that "Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to achieve sobriety". Sobriety is a team effort where we need to work together, as a team. The following is taken from the pamphlet 'Growing into Service';

Alcoholics Anonymous is more than a set of principles; it is a Fellowship of alcoholics in action. Service is at the centre of every AA concept and activity. It is as fundamental to AA as abstinence is to sobriety. Without this giving of oneself to another, there would be

no Fellowship. This desire to serve improves recovery. As newcomers, we see people giving time, energy and love in the service of the Fellowship, and it is suggested that we too should become involved. Those of us who have done this will tell you of the enormous benefits we have received by willingly stepping into service. A great paradox of AA is that rewards come when we begin to forget ourselves

New Directory of AA Groups in Ireland

As promised in the last edition of this publication, the new meeting directory is available to purchase from the General Service Office. It is also available to purchase on the AA website, www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie. Again we would like to thank all groups for updating their information over recent months, and remind you that if any details of your meeting or group contacts change, please let us know so that we can let all of our members know.

It is worth remembering that the Directory will never reflect the most up to date meeting information available at any given time. Essentially the Directory is a meeting guide for AA members. Changes to group/meeting information are received every week at the General Service Office. The website Meeting Finder section is a useful tool to locate the most up to date meeting information.

The new Directory also includes a section on 'Confidentiality & Protection of Personal Data'. Members that use the directory should be mindful of how personal data is protected within the Fellowship, not only to protect the anonymity of members but also for Data Protection regulations too.



Updated Literature prices

Due to some increases from AA World Services, & VAT changes, we have now incorporated updated prices of our literature. In some cases items have been reduced, but in all cases we kept increases to an absolute minimum.

AA Events

Some Groups, Areas, or even Intergroup committees are holding, or will be holding, events over the coming months. Often times these committees would like to put notice of these events on the AA website but aren't sure how to go about that.

These events can be a Day of Gratitude, an Open Public Meeting, a Service Workshop, a Mini-Convention, etc.

Here are a few helpful tips on what you can do to help make this :

Most committees usually put together a flyer, although this isn't essential. If you wish to use the AA logo, the correct logo should be used, and permission should be sought as the logo is copyrighted and is the property of the General Service Board. Getting permission is usually just a formality, but needs to be done in order to protect the logo. If you wish to use the logo, then you should seek permission (in plenty of time), through your area secretary, who will forward it to the Intergroup Secretary who will forward it to the Provincial Trustee who can authorise permission on behalf of GSBAA. Sometimes, this request is made at an Intergroup, when the Area gives its report.

Some tips for producing leaflets:

- Do not include links to other websites or organisations – we neither endorse nor oppose any causes.
- Please don't include personal names, phone numbers or personal email addresses, instead use your area or groups alcoholicsanonymous.ie email address (This avoids privacy & GDPR concerns)

- We will not be able to publish leaflets/documents that do not adhere with our General Service Conference Decisions / Service Handbook

- If you are using the AA logo, make sure to use the logo that is available on our website with permission. There are many variations, but only one that we use in Ireland. A quick check should show that the triangle does not touch the edges.

- A PDF is the preferred document type – it is small and generally scales well when reading on different devices.

Once this is done, you can send the details, or the flyer, through the Structure.

The Intergroup Secretary will then forward it to GSO where it will be posted to the website.

Conference 2024

Next year's Annual General Conference meeting will be held in early March. If your group has a motion for this Conference meeting, now is the time to start the process for submitting it. Remember that a motion to Conference should come from a Group. It should be brought to the local Area meeting by the group's GSRs. It then goes through the Structure and must be with the Board Secretary 6 weeks before the Conference meeting for inclusion on the agenda. However, this process can take time so please get your motion(s) in early.

Conference 2023 Subcommittees

It was agreed to set up 2 subcommittees of Conference who will return to a full meeting of Conference with recommendations.

A. One subcommittee will look at the entire process around for Motions to Conference.

- They will also evaluate the 'question' system & process that is used at Conference in GB.
- They will evaluate our process and if necessary bring recommendations back to conference on how things could be improved.



B. The second subcommittee will look more closely at two separate, but similar, motions received by Conference. This subcommittee will examine questions such as:

- Should we be a charity?
- Should members of Conference be obliged to be members of the company?
- Is there a conflict of interest by Conference members also being company members?
- Do we need to change the company constitution?

If you have views on any of the above topics, please feel free to discuss them at your group conscience meeting. Then, be sure to send someone to your next local area meeting. This is how your voice will get heard when decisions are being taken. Decisions are made by those who show up. So, if you want your voice to be heard, please make sure that you, or someone from your group makes it to the area meeting.

What is an AA Group?

The primary unit of AA is the Group. Traditionally any two or more alcoholics meeting together for the purpose of sobriety many consider themselves an AA Group provided that, as a Group, they are self-supporting and have no outside affiliation.

The Group Conscience of AA has agreed the following points to define an AA Group: An AA Group is a group of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The primary purpose [of the members] is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety (from Preamble).

New Groups applying for a starter kit do so through the Intergroup Secretary via the Area Secretary.

What makes up a group?

1. All members of a Group are alcoholics, and all alcoholics are eligible for membership.
2. As a Group they are fully self-supporting.
3. A Group's primary purpose is to help alcoholics recover through the Twelve Steps.
4. As a Group they have no outside affiliation.
5. As a Group, they have no opinion on outside issues.
6. As a Group, their public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion and they maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, T.V. and films.

Regularly scheduled meetings are the chief activity of any AA Group. Some degree of structure is needed to ensure continuity and effectiveness. The members of the Group usually elect officers and members are delegated to housekeeping tasks and refreshments. Outside meeting hours, the Group continues to exist, ready to offer help when needed. Other activities may include 12th Step calls, institution work and public information work.

How to become a Group member

We usually say that anyone is a member of AA if he or she says so. Tradition Three says "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking". None of us can pretend to judge the desire in another's heart. To join a Group is usually a simple process of attending its meetings regularly, becoming actively involved in the Group activities and being available for service in the Group. Most members feel more at home in one particular Group than in others and consider it their "Home Group," where they accept service responsibility. They do not participate in the business or policy of Groups other than their "Home Group."

How does the Group function?

Group Conscience – Sole Authority in AA
Tradition Two states: "For our Group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God, as He may express Himself in our Group

Conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern." The voice of Group Conscience is heard when a well-informed Group gathers together to arrive at its decision. Therefore, the authority and responsibility for making all decisions affecting the Group rests solely with Group Conscience. It elects all Group officers, always bearing in mind that our common welfare comes first, and all Group officers are held strictly accountable to Group Conscience for their stewardship. It is suggested that Group Conscience meets regularly. In most Groups today, these meetings are held once a month. In order to ensure the smooth functioning of Group Conscience, AA experience has shown that these meetings, conducted by an appointed Chairperson, having an agreed agenda (see Appendix 1 for sample template) open to motions from each member, with advance notice of the date and time of meeting, is the most effective way to hold a meeting. Only members of the Group should participate in Group Conscience.

Steering Committee

Questions about what a Group should do, and how, sometimes arise. The Steering Committee (some Groups call it the Group Service Committee) is one way of getting those questions handled for the Group.

As an experienced cross section of the Group membership, the Steering Committee can handle day-to-day operations for the Group. Anywhere from three to five members may be the right size Steering Committee for a small Group. For larger ones, twelve or so members provide a better cross-section and share the workload in a fairer way.

In many Groups, the Steering Committee consists of the Group officers. Sometimes, former officers make good committee members because of their experience.

Group Officers

Each Group decides how its services are carried out. Being autonomous, the Group selects the officers it feels are necessary for the smooth running of the Group. Group officers usually serve three months, six months or one year or as Group Conscience may decide. Each nominee is usually approached by other members of the Group, and if the person agrees, the name is put forward at the Group Conscience meeting, so letting the Group Conscience decide his/her election.

For example, a Group ought to have chairperson, secretary, treasurer, literature secretary and two Group Service Representatives (GSRs).

Importance of Rotation

Traditionally, rotation keeps AA volunteers from becoming fixed in their offices. Jobs, like almost everything else in AA, get passed around for all to share. After one term in any office, most members move on to other kinds of AA service. This way, problems based on personalities are prevented; no power or prestige gets built up; no individual 16 gets taken advantage of or imposed upon; and the benefits of giving service are shared by more and more members.

Qualifications

1. The Group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers, and a review of Traditions 1 and 2 is helpful at election times.
2. When an officers term is completed a Group Conscience should be held and new officers elected.

What's Next?

Is there something to do with service that you are unsure about? Is there something that you think we could add to this section? Something that might be beneficial to others that's unclear? If you believe so, why not let us know. You don't have to write it, just let us know and we can do the rest.



THE L-PLATES OF MIDDLE AGES

My story must start from my first AA meeting. It was there that I learned that I had a problem which I could not handle alone and basically, I was the centre of the problem. It wouldn't go away by wishing – and unless I was prepared to make the effort of keeping away from the first drink, a day at a time, I would remain feeling as miserable as I was that night – or even worse.

I did not think it was possible to feel worse! The memory of that night is still with me. I was cold, frightened, confused, humiliated and ashamed; but how thankful I am today I made the effort to attend the meeting. This was how my association with the fellowship began.

There was, and is so much to learn and it's only by listening at meetings I realise how wrong were my attitudes to life and living. Change is necessary but it must come from within me – not other people, as once I thought. My progress depends on myself, "with a little help from my friends".

AA has asked very little of me – only that I try; and even then, it is for my benefit. It has required effort, the effort of going to meetings,

staying on for coffee, speaking from the floor, even writing this. They told me, and found this difficult to believe, it gets easier with practice. It seems strange to arrive at middle age before learning how to live; to realise that society owes me nothing and if I'm looking for a peaceful life, then I must be the one who makes that life possible.

How the thinking changes! Prior to AA I had no capacity for thought. My life comprised of going from one day to the next, always in a haze wondering how much longer I could remain on my feet, hold down a job and keep up the pretence of being normal.

Now I know I am not normal, and that's a colossal relief. I'm a middle aged recovering alcoholic woman who knows very little but I'm willing to learn.

Not much progress? You should have seen me four years ago.

The News, December 2020

MY NAME IS JANENE

My name is Janene and I am an alcoholic.

I grew up in an alcoholic home with both parents afflicted with this rapacious disease. It was "once were warriors, but with all the frills" My darling mother, bless her soul, sobered up at a time when really there were only the 'down and out's' in AA and having come from a privileged background she really had to swallow her pride. She had 30 wonderful years before she died too early. My father never sobered up.

I was so lucky to experience her recovery and all the wonderful work she did. I even assisted her sometimes on a call out. Sadly, I was not to know of my own demise. I drank until I was 40 years of age through a 16 year marriage and two children.

As the marriage disintegrated, I went on to have geographical moves and searching for love in all the wrong places. I attempted suicide but was too gutless and the thought of my children (not living with me at the time) saved my life. I was bereft, I had a hole in myself that the wind blew through but still I continued to drink. After many moves and lost relationships, I finally asked myself the question "maybe, just maybe it's me and not them?". It was the catalyst for the Journey I was about to embark on.

I called my mother (who I really had been avoiding....denial!) and we met the next day and talked at depth, she asked me "where I would be in the next 5 years ? "This shocked and frightened me. She went on to explain that it was the behaviour and wonky thinking that made up an alcoholic. I was shocked and said to her "but I thought it was the alcohol". She said "no, it's both". I said "so I must be an

alcoholic!". She said, "you have no idea how long I have waited to hear you say this. I couldn't intervene, I had to let you go and let it run its course".

Lucky for me I had the grounding with her earlier so I know she could help me one way or the other.

I took to AA like a fox terrier with a bone. I threw myself into my Sobriety like nothing I had done before, and I had 5 precious years with her before she died I owe my life to her. I owe AA my life.

I have nearly 28 years sober. It has not always been easy, but I would never go back (God willing) I know too much to ever want to go back.

The peace and serenity I have as a result are priceless I am blessed.

Janene, Mainstay July 2020



THANK YOU, EVERYONE

Hello, my name is Dale, and I'm an alcoholic. I am sober today. Lucky for me I have been saying that for a few sleeps and, and God willing, I will be saying for a few more.

I did not come into AA because of a bad day; I'd had at least 10 bad years in a row but I can only remember around five of them courtesy of blackouts. Lucky for me the good people of Queenstown could see that I was really just a scared little boy who did not know how to ask for help or, for that matter, did not think I needed it either – stupid ego. To Al, Errol, Don, JK, Allan, Peter and the rest: Thanks, an awful lot from the bottom of my heart for the time and love you have all bestowed on me.

The first couple of years of sobriety I just sat on the first half of Step 1 because I was stoked to be off the sauce. Then reality kicked in and the pain came back, but I did not want to drink. I remember talking (moaning) to my sponsor in Queenstown and him telling me that I had to go back to Christchurch and start working the steps with my sponsor there. I hear in meetings people say that meetings keep you dry but working the Steps keeps you sober and give you a means to a good life instead of just an existence. Yes, those people in the meetings were right again.

I did what my mate said and set forth to start the Steps. Life got better the more work I did including helping others. As we all know, life is not a fairy tale and there has been lots of ups and downs along the way. I was very lucky to meet Sandy L in Dunedin some time ago. Sandy had a lot of sleeps in AA and was very grounded. He taught me to live in balance of work and AA, a day at a time. I found it hard, but kept trying.

Sandy was a very positive guy who said I could achieve anything I wanted – all I had to was

give life 100%. He was right because I have given life my best shot and it is OK today. When Sandy passed away, my life, program, faith went with him for a few months. Yet again the good people of AA kept a close eye on me and kept the positive messages coming my way. For that I am truly grateful because, left to my own devices, I mess life up big time. My best thinking got me into AA. I came right again by working the Steps, talking to my sponsor and helping others.

In writing this, there is a common thread; doing the Steps, talking to a sponsor and trying to help others. For a selfish alcoholic like myself, these instructions are foreign concepts to apply.

This year has been a real mixed bag for me. My partner and her daughter moved in. It is easy to be spiritual while living on my own but I have taken longer to adjust than I thought I would. Yet, once again by working the Steps, talking to my sponsor and trying to help others, I am getting through it and growing.

On a daily basis I count my blessings:

1. I have a job
2. No bailiff knocking at the door
3. Food in the cupboards
4. A dry bed
5. Real friends

As Al says, once you get to number 5, stop complaining and get on with life. That's way more than most. To all those with whom I have been blessed to rub shoulders over the years. Thank you. I am in here for the long haul, one day at a time.

God Bless

The News, January 2020

I RANG THE AA PHONE NUMBER

I called at around 2.00am. The woman who answered the phone told me to ring back in the morning when I was sober. What an outfit I thought!

The next morning, terribly dry, stinking and with a throbbing headache I rang the woman back, to this day I am grateful that for once my stubbornness served me. God was already working his magic in my life, before I even knew him.

After she checked if I meant business, she told me to catch a bus to the Christchurch Square. There I met an old lady (probably about my age now) in one of those tiny cars whose doors open the wrong way. she took me to around half a dozen AA member's homes. Each one shared their experience strength and hope with me at their kitchen table. I was just wondering why these people were telling me their problems, couldn't they see I was the one who needed help! Through the fog one man my age reached me in my alcoholic uniqueness. He was from a farm and I related to his loneliness. He was a new member in the fellowship.

The woman then said "we are off to a meeting", I think it was in Riccarton. She stopped off at the TAB on the way. I was very judgemental! At the meeting I could not hear anyone and people seemed to be grey. I felt very sorry for you all. This is not for me I thought, I'm not that bad 'yet'.

After the meeting some people approached me which surprised me no end. They spoke kindly and put a cup of coffee and a sweet biscuit into my shaking hands. when the woman dropped me home she said "I will help you in any way I can, but you need to reach out to me, here is my number.

I never called the woman back. In fact sadly I do not even recall her name, but I will never forget her. Through her selfless service she planted a seed in this hopeless alcoholic which would later flower into a contented sobriety and a feeling that life had purpose and meaning.

I try to repay this woman my gratitude by never being too busy to go to a 12 step call. I try to follow the guidelines of taking another female member with me as my sponsor took me in the early days. This is for safety but also to pass on what I was given. We say a prayer in the car beforehand, which reminds me who the healer is – not me.

When the person we have tried to help does not respond and I do not see them again, I try to remember that God moves in mysterious ways and leave it at that. I need to hear myself share my story for the newcomer, it works when other things fail.

Meetings give me the opportunity to share my hope with the same shivering person I was. I pray that I am as welcoming and kind as the members at my first meeting.

Rose, Mainstay, July 2020



WHEN SOMEONE LEAVES AA

Just a quick share to let you know how it was for me (in my first year) When someone went out and Did more research to see if they qualified for AA – some of whom came back: most of whom didn't.

When I heard someone was drinking again, or came back and said they'd been drinking, it felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. It was so physical that I almost doubled over and it really worried me.

I was concerned that I would drink too. There seemed to be no reason for their drinking, so I was sure I would more-than-likely drink too. That one day I would just find a drink in my hand for no reason. Thank goodness I slowly found out it was not like that. I soon was able to see patterns in those who went out again. Some of the common ones were no sponsor; no Big Book; no working the steps, no helping others and meetings attendance was often reduced.

Of course, to my surprise, our BB does not say don't drink! In fact, it tells us if we are not convinced to go and try again, to try some controlled Drinking. (BB p.31/32)

Another thing I thought (thinking was always my problem!!!) was that I had "to carry the message" to those people or, as the Toronto Declaration says "when anyone anywhere reaches out for help I want the hand of AA to be there" but luckily I soon found more information that was helpful to me.

One, I couldn't give away what I hadn't got, (see page 164) and two, hanging out with those drinking or slipping, was dangerous to me. All I really had to do was stay sober myself, start, and keep working the steps, (So I had something to give away) and therefore carry the best message I could ... that I was

sober through the AA programme. Showing, if I (we) can stay sober, so can you.

When AA talks about 'we' in the BB It was saying – this is what we early members did and how we got well. So those actions (steps) is what I did and do, the same as those first 80 plus members did. (Or as Bill W said 'we are more than 100 men and women)

So, remember our best message to carry is proof that our Alcoholics Anonymous programme works by staying sober through doing the steps ourselves.

I have stayed sober one day at a time for many days now, and hope my experience, strength and hope on this topic of slips is of use to you.

Luckily AA says our door swings both way so people can leave and come back. Some meetings chant a treatment-centre (non-AA) saying at the end of their meetings, 'keep coming back it works if you work at it'. However, what AA says is (another promise) 'they will always materialize if we work for them" P.84 BB

So, I say, not to keep-coming-back but don't leave! Especially don't leave before the miracle happens.

I'm really grateful the miracle happened for me.

Anon, Mainstay, July 2020



STEPPING OUT OF A DRY DRUNK

I'm in the process of recovering from almost four weeks of a type of behavioural hell, or dry drunk, or SOL, or whatever anyone like to call it. I've just finished reading *The News*, which helped me a lot.

When things are difficult and my life seems hard to live, the spiritual principles of AA philosophy, I have so far learned, have their best chance to succeed. When things are too comfortable and I give way to complacency with all it's attendant bedevilmments, there's little chance of me establishing any of these principles.

Yet I have found that when I am confronted with emergencies and difficult problems, the application, the living, of these spiritual principles has almost miraculous results.

I have seen in other AA members' experiences the results that can be achieved when a sincere and dedicated appeal is made to a Higher Power and it gives me confidence that the God of my understanding is willing to work on my behalf, providing I continue to follow the suggested Twelve Steps.

"Being on the program" to me is more that meditating for a few minutes each day, reading AA literature, going to meetings. It means trying to live each minute the AA way and all the disciplines it requires of me and that I will fail miserably many times. It means I must try to become as tolerant, open minded, as universal and loving as the God of my understanding.

Even if only occasionally feel biased, selfish, angry, envious, or hateful, no harmony can exist between me and the God of my understanding and I am not "on the program".

I must accept that there are spiritual forces

within me and in the universe and try daily to attune myself to them. If I have truly understood and "taken" the third step, then the Eleventh Step must be lived by me.

In my mind and consciousness, my head and heart, are uplifted and charged with the spiritual principles, my thinking will be broader, my sympathies and feelings of compassion will grow stronger. Life will bring greater joy and happiness and I will sense the divine purpose for me, which will bring the greatest gift of all – serenity.

So why, I ask myself, knowing this, do I let the devilish imp of my acholic personality perch upon my shoulders and take over completely, so that I am on a mental drunk? So that I hurt myself and those close to me? So that I'm all at sixes and sevens and my head is in a mess and I can't make any decisions and I don't know what to do or say or which way to turn or go? Stop! Be still! Back to the beginning.

The beginning is the First Step. There are twelve. AA is to me, a spiritual program for living a sober life. My rock bottom was spiritual desolation and destruction helped along by alcohol. Therefore back to the beginning, back to AA.

"For yesterday is but a dream, and tomorrow is just a vision; but today well lived makes every yesterday a dream of happiness. And every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well therefore to this day!"

The News January 2020

Humour



I'm not an alcoholic,
alcoholics go
to meetings.

I'm a drunk,
we go to
parties.



" YOU DON'T WANT TO GO TO THE PICTURES, YOU DON'T
WANT TO GO TO THE WHISTDRNE — WHAT DO
YOU WANT TO DO? "

"I was a light drinker
As soon as it was
light...
I Drank!"

An alcoholic is driving home from the bar at 3am totally annihilated. He's swerving between lanes and gets spotted by a patrol officer who then pulls him over. The cop asks the inebriated man where he's headed at such a late hour. The drunk replies "I'm just going to a lecture, officer." In disbelief the officer asks "Who would be giving a lecture this late?" The alcoholic replies, "My wife."

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
**67th All Ireland
Convention**
SERVICE WITH A SMILE 😊

19th – 21st April 2024

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For more information, please email:
allirelandconvention@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
Updates will be made available on
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie nearer the event
Hosted by Leinster Intergroup on behalf of the General Service Conference of AA in Ireland



HOLY SMOKE, WHAT NOW!

In 1968, a well meaning AA wrote to Bill, in deep concern about an influx of youthful young hippies or flower children to local AA groups, along with their distinctive manner of dress, sexual mores, and other unorthodox behaviour, including the use of drugs. The writer feared that this particular invasion might be “a very real threat to our wonderful God given program”.

Bill’s reply was typical of his use of AA principles to meet new challenges.

Your letter about the hippie problem, so called, was mighty interesting to me. I doubt that we need to be alarmed about this situation, because there have been precedents out of the past. All sorts of outfits have tried to move in on us, including communists and heroin addicts, prohibitionists and do-gooders of other persuasions.

Nearly all of these people, who happen to have an individual problem with alcohol, not only failed to change AA, but, in the long run, AA changed them. I have a number of them among my closest friends today, and they are among the best AAs I know.

You also have some people who are not alcoholics, but are addicts of other kinds. A great many AAs have taken pity on these people, and have actually tried to make them full-fledged AAs. Of course, their identification with alcoholics is no good at all, and the groups themselves easily stop this practice in the normal course of AA affairs.

Thoughtful AAs, however, encourage these sponsors to bring addicts to open meetings, just as they would any other interested people. In the end, these addicts usually gravitate to other forms of therapy. They are not received

on the platform in open meetings unless they have an alcohol problem, and closed meetings, are of course, denied them. We know that we cannot do everything for everybody with an addiction problem.

There has also occurred lately a new development centring upon hippies who have LSD or marijuana troubles – not so much stronger stuff. Many of these kids appear to be alcoholics also, and they are flocking into AA, often with excellent results.

Some weeks ago, there was a young peoples convention of AAs. Shortly thereafter, four of these kids visited the office. I saw one young gal prancing down the hall, hair flying in a miniskirt, wearing love beads and the works, I thought, Holy smoke, what now!

She told me she was the oldest member of the young peoples group in her area – age 22! They had kids as young as 16. I was curious and took the whole party out to lunch.

Well, they were absolutely wonderful. They talked (and acted) just about as good a kind of AA as I’ve seen anywhere. I think all of them said they had had some kind of drug problem, but had kicked that, too. When they first came around, they had insisted on their own ideas of AA, but in the end they found AA plenty good enough as it was. Though they needed their own meetings, they found interest and inspiration in the meetings of much older folk as well.

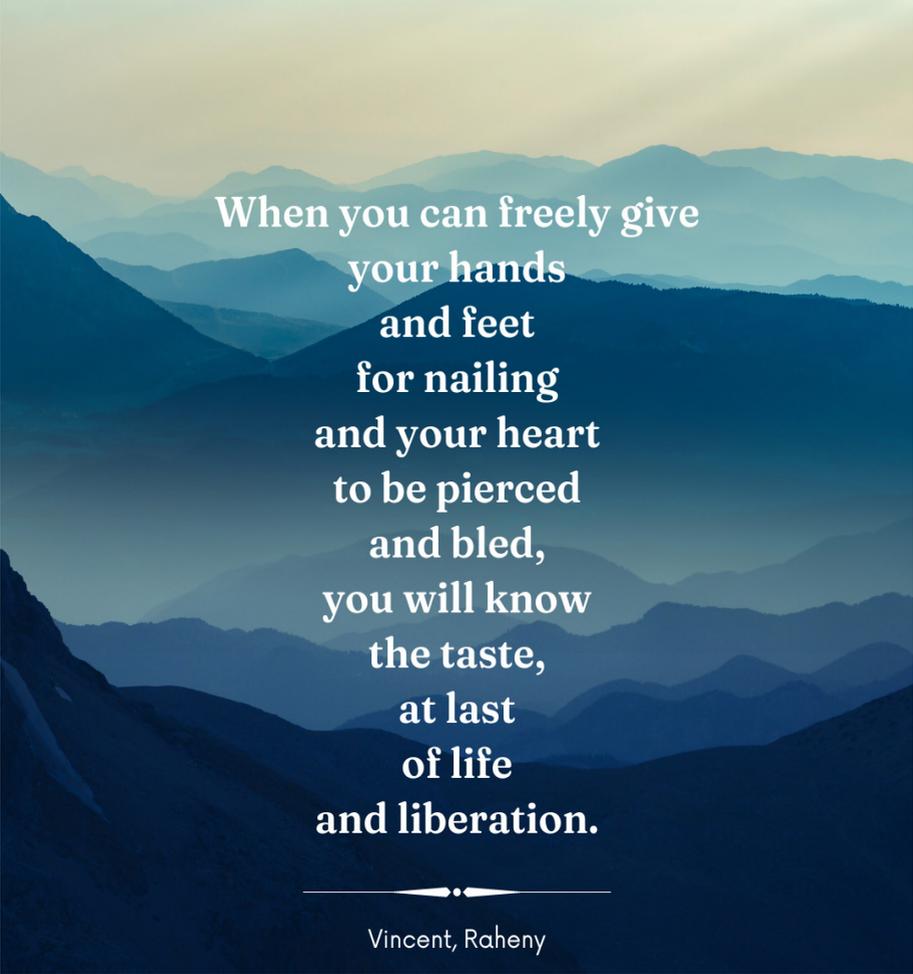
Perhaps as younger people come into AA, we shall have to put up with some unconventional nonsense – but with patience and good humour, lets hope. But it should be well worth the attempt. And also, if various hippie addicts want to form their own sort of fellowship along AA lines, by all means let us encourage them. We

need deny them only the AA name, and assure them that the rest of our program is theirs for the taking and using – any part or all of it.

For these reasons, I feel hopeful and not a bit scared by this trend. Of course I'm no prophet. I may be mistaken, so please keep me posted. This is a highly interesting and

perhaps significant development. I certainly do not think it ought to be fought. Instead, it ought to be encouraged in what we already know to be workable channels.

In affection Bill W, USA



When you can freely give
your hands
and feet
for nailing
and your heart
to be pierced
and bled,
you will know
the taste,
at last
of life
and liberation.

Vincent, Raheny

FAMILY ILLNESS FAMILY RECOVERY

I am a 41-year-old mother of two children and have lived in a small village in North Wales all of my life. I did not drink alcoholically during the first period of my life but after suffering a traumatic experience my alcoholism took off.

Once this started to occur it took over my life. Then the losses began - my professional employment went, including my certificate to practise, followed by my driving licence. I was also in danger of losing my children. There was also a noticeable decline in my mental health. Even though I was unaware at the time that I was powerless, I could not get sober even though I was well aware that I was damaging my children.

I was constantly at Accident and Emergency following accidents such as falling downstairs when drunk. I was assessed by psychiatrists and engaged in cognitive behaviour therapy. I was also attending the substance misuse team - all in an attempt to reduce my alcohol intake. As a last resort I went to a rehab hoping this

might cure me but I still continued to drink. This intervention helped me to stop drinking at times but I still could not stay stopped.

Today, thankfully, I am just over a year sober. I have achieved this by becoming a committed member of AA. By meeting with other alcoholics and bringing the Twelve Step Programme into my everyday life.

I have finally understood that I am allergic to alcohol. I attend meetings regularly, am involved in service. My children are able to join me in activities such as walks with other alcoholics and attending an open meeting. We are truly now an AA family, because I am able to stay away from a drink a day at a time.

I am indeed blessed.

Share Magazine April 2020



THE OUTDOOR INN



Eight of us sat in a field near where we lived on the north side of Dublin. The laughs and jokes were endless, and none of us were concerned about anything but these moments in time.

We had our flagons of cider. That was what we did. Sometimes snakebites. They were cheap, we were underage. None of us really gave it too much thought. Deep down inside we all thought the same thing: this is just a phase and someday, soon enough, we would grow out of it. We'd be old enough in a few years to be in the pub.

It's heartbreaking to look back at those moments with the understanding that we were not going to grow out of it - we were growing into it. We were growing into poor results, lost friends, and abandoned sports & hobbies.

We were growing into family fights, restless nights, and a deterioration of general health. We were growing into trouble with the cops, drink driving, being arrested, and psych wards. We were starting to abuse our families and friends.

Some of us were growing into our coffins.

Of the eight of us that started off, only six are alive.

Two didn't make it.

Eventually, I made it into AA and somehow found a new life.

All I had to do was not have the first drink...

For this I am so grateful.

Trev, Dublin 2023

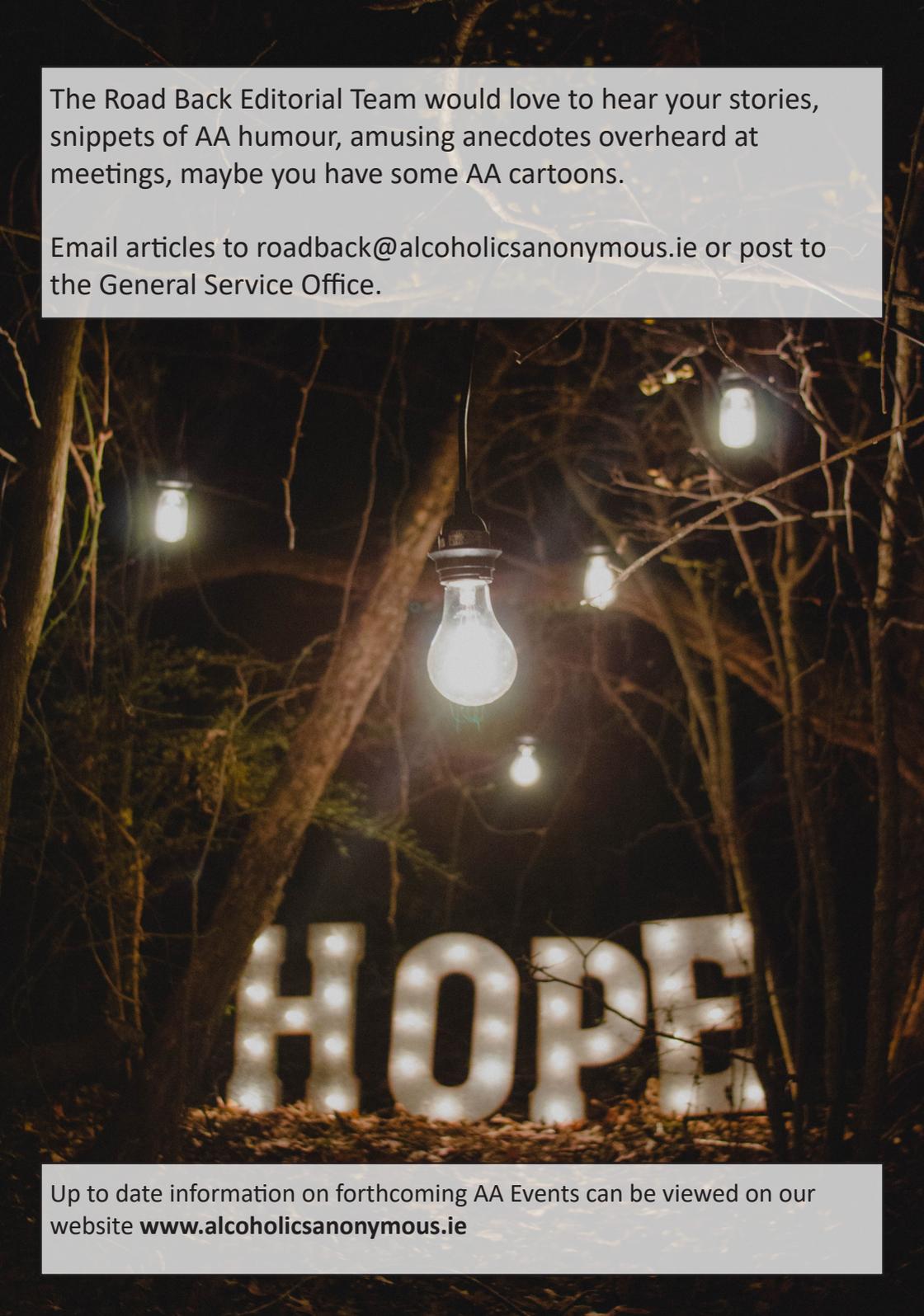
The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol — that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.





The Road Back Editorial Team would love to hear your stories, snippets of AA humour, amusing anecdotes overheard at meetings, maybe you have some AA cartoons.

Email articles to roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie or post to the General Service Office.

Up to date information on forthcoming AA Events can be viewed on our website www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie