

# The Road Back

March • April 2018 - Issue 415

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS**  
**61<sup>st</sup> ALL IRELAND**  
**CONVENTION**

## **Singleness of Purpose**

**Friday 20th, Saturday 21st  
& Sunday 22nd April 2018**

**CLONMEL PARK HOTEL**  
**Co. TIPPERARY**

**Ph: +353 (0)52 6188700 for reservations**



Victor E



# A word from the Editor

## Singleness of Purpose

“AA's Twelve Steps are a group of principles, spiritual in their nature, which, if practised as a way of life, can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to become happily and usefully whole.”

*- From The Foreword to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*

It is a matter of pride that AA's Twelve Step Programme has been adopted by numerous Twelve Step Fellowships and that our program can be used for so many obsessive and addictive problems right across the spectrum of life. We have always been happy to co-operate but we have been very careful not to compromise our Tradition of non-affiliation.

AA's Traditions have been hammered out on the anvil of experience. From the unfortunate experience of the Washingtonians who were a very successful movement in the 19th century.

*“Total abstinence from alcohol was their goal. The group taught sobriety and preceded Alcoholics Anonymous by almost a century. Members sought out other “drunkards” (the term alcoholic had not yet been created), told them their experiences with alcohol abuse and how the Society had helped them achieve sobriety. With the passage of time the Society became a prohibitionist organization in that it promoted the legal and mandatory prohibition of alcoholic beverages.*

*Washingtonians at their peak numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly as high*

*as 600,000. However, in the space of just a few years, this society all but disappeared because they became fragmented in their primary purpose, becoming involved with all manner of controversial social reforms including prohibition, sectarian religion, politics and abolition of slavery.”*  
(Wikipedia)

AA saw that fragmentation would, as in the experience of the Washingtonians, be its downfall. Our Traditions safeguard us from a similar fate only if we remain vigilant and faithful to the principles they espouse.

AA has kept the balance by being helpful and non-threatening. We are friendly with our friends. We are the first to know and accept that we don't have a panacea to all of the ills of the world nor do we have a monopoly on cure when it comes to alcoholism. Our Big Book is quick to point out to us that we know but a little. However, we have been entrusted with a set of spiritual principles in our Steps and Traditions and with this goes the responsibility of guardianship of a recovery programme for alcoholics yet unborn.

Anyone who has a drink problem is welcome among us, however we ‘stick to our knitting’. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help others to achieve sobriety, with the only requirement for membership being a desire to stop drinking.

Our Fellowship has produced numerous pieces of literature for those suffering from problems other than alcoholism.

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# The Road Back

# A meeting in print

**A**lcoholics 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, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

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

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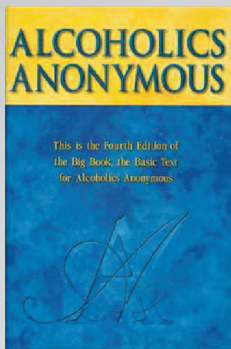
## Singleness of Purpose

### Contents

A Word from the Editor	P.2
Index	P.3
From "The Big Book"	P.4
Singleness of Purpose - Bill, Bristol	P.5
To Whom It May Concern - Anon.	P.7
Dreadful Dawn (poem)	P.8
Subscription Form -The Road Back	P.9
"Singleness of Purpose" statement	P.10
All-Ireland Convention	P.11
4 Page Pull-Out Programme	
Poems	P.15
Singleness of Purpose - Cornerstone of AA	P.16
Acceptance	P.18
The Serenity Prayer etc	P.19
AA Acronyms, Trad.Five etc.	P.20
Forthcoming Events	P.21
Crossword and Funnies	P.22
Twelve and Twelve	P.23
Next Issue and Requests for	P.24

Photos courtesy of Ken O'S

The Views and opinions expressed in The Road Back are not necessarily the views and opinions of the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.



# From "The Big Book"

## Tradition Three - The long form

*Our A.A.  
experience has  
taught us that:*

### Tradition Three

Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought A.A. membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an A.A. group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

### Some highlighted lines from Tradition Three in the Twelve and Twelve

*"The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking"*

THIS Tradition is packed with meaning. For A.A. is really saying to every serious drinker, "You are an A.A. member if you say so. You can declare yourself in; nobody can keep you out. No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out. We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be. We just want to be sure that you get the same great chance for sobriety that we've had. So you're an A.A. member the minute you declare yourself."

**To establish this principle of membership took years of harrowing experience.**

Could any then imagine a society which would include every conceivable kind of character, and cut across every barrier of race, creed, politics, and language with ease?

Why did A.A. finally drop all its membership regulations? Why did we leave it to each newcomer to decide himself whether he was an alcoholic and whether he should join us? Why did we dare to say, contrary to the experience of society and government everywhere, that we would neither punish nor deprive any A.A. of membership, that we must never compel anyone to pay anything, believe anything, or conform to anything?

The answer, now seen in Tradition Three, was simplicity itself. At last experience taught us that to take away any alcoholic's full chance was sometimes to pronounce his death sentence, and often to condemn him to endless misery. Who dared to be judge, jury, and executioner of his own sick brother? As group after group saw these possibilities, they finally abandoned all membership regulations.

"So the hand of Providence early gave us a sign that any alcoholic is a member of our Society when *he* says so."

oooooooo



# Singleness of Purpose

Hi my names Bill and I'm an alcoholic. My home group is Hanham Hall, Bristol, U.K.

My sobriety date is 6th October 1997. When I was quite new to the fellowship I heard a share that talked about "our singleness of purpose" I read the article "our singleness of purpose" by Bill W. and realised the importance of this single piece of writing both to A.A. and my sobriety. Nothing has created more controversy or debate in my 20 years of sobriety than this article. In short, Bill W's article, says that A.A. is for alcoholics to deal with their problems associated with their alcoholism. And in reality that's exactly what it's done for me. I haven't had a drink since my first meeting.

I went to A.A. to sort out my drinking and in order to sort my drinking out, I had to sort out a catalogue of other issues and addictions. And this is really where "our singleness of purpose" causes problems. The title of the article implies that A.A. has one purpose only, to help the still suffering alcoholic achieve sobriety.

As I understand it, the reason Bill W. wrote the article was that he felt that A.A. would not survive without it. Its history goes back to April 2nd 1840 in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A., where the Washingtonian movement was founded. The Washingtonians were founded by six drunks who realised whenever they drank; somehow they ended up in prison. Sound familiar?

They started the Washingtonians as an organisation to help people stay sober. The Washingtonians grew and grew and grew. Estimates of the numbers that joined vary wildly, however over the first few years, up to 600,000 joined. An impressive number in a time where communication and transport were not what they are today. However, to all intents and purposes, within six years the organisation had ceased. In effect, the Washingtonians forgot its "singleness of purpose". It got involved in various other worthy causes that included the abolition of slavery, prohibition, and religion. Infighting, personality clashes, leaders, property, money and disagreements eventually led to the end of this once great movement.

In short it had forgotten where it had come from and what its original objectives were.

Early members of A.A. wrote to Bill W and said that A.A. was going the same way as the Washingtonians. Bill W. had never heard of the Washingtonians, but having read up on them realised in the early days of A.A. that we had a lot to learn from them if we were to survive ourselves. We were as an organisation, in danger of replicating the problems that caused the Washingtonians to eventually cease to exist. Bill W. saw that if A.A. tried to expand into other areas, become involved in internal arguments, owned property or money, had leaders and big personalities it wouldn't survive. It would in effect, implode, trying to help too many people and causes. His urgency in trying to save A.A. from itself, resulted in

him writing "our singleness of purpose".

He realised A.A. was doing exactly what the Washingtonians did. In short, he proposed that A.A. was not to move away from alcoholism, it was to only deal with and help alcoholics and their problems associated with their alcoholism. And that's where problems started in A.A. Where do we cross the line from helping alcoholics without moving into other areas? Alcoholics Anonymous works on the basis that one alcoholic relating to another alcoholic helps them to achieve sobriety. In my time in A.A. my primary purpose has been to stay sober and that's exactly what A.A. has achieved in me. However, in order to deal with my drinking, I've had to sort out other issues in my life that include resentments, work, money, smoking, my all or nothingness in everything I do, and a long list of other addictions that I had to resolve, overcome, or at least face in order to stay sober.

Solving these problems in my life were rooted in my ability to accept Step One. Because most of my "other" issues, addictions or problems were making my life unmanageable. And until I made my life a little more manageable, I wasn't going to stay sober. I've talked in the rooms about my issues with smoking; I've now stopped for 16 years. I've dealt with my addictions around perfectionism, criticism, making money and work all part of my sobriety. If I hadn't had dealt with these other issues I know I would not be sober today. However smoking, money and work are problems other than alcoholism.

Should I have gone to Smokers Anonymous? After all, smoking is another addiction, just as strong, if not more addictive than many drugs. But no one has ever said not to deal with these other addictions in the rooms of A.A.. Where would I stand if I had a heroin or cocaine addiction? What should I do if I was addicted to prescription drugs, to painkillers, sleeping pills, or antidepressants? What if I had a food allergy? What if I was addicted to sugar? After all sugar is one of the main ingredients in alcohol. I hear many people say that drugs shouldn't be dealt with or talked about in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. That if you are addicted to other substances, to go to the relevant 12 Step Fellowship. After all, doesn't each 12 Step Fellowship rely on each member relating to another's experience? I was in a meeting recently where two people talked about their respective addictions to sugar. I related to them as I do to smokers issues with their addictions to nicotine.

I dealt with my addiction to nicotine; work etc. in the rooms of A.A., as well as alcohol. Where do we draw the line? I love A.A., I'm so pleased we have "our singleness of purpose" Without which A.A. may not be around today and I wouldn't be sober. But my ability to deal with all those other addictions in life has meant I've stayed sober. Thank God for A.A. and for our singleness of purpose, and my ability to deal with all my problems associated with my alcoholism in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous.

*Bill The Shirt. Bristol.UK*

## To whom it may concern,

Thanks for your time, support and service.

I was born a long time ago, I got drunk and fell down and got lost, just like I was told to do, so many times. Then, with the help of those who cared for sick suffering human beings, I find myself again and again and every day since, waking up, a good bit older than I expected, and a lot older than I ever hoped for, and every single day since beginning to wake up has been a huge unexpected bonus, that really I could do more with.

I don't get bored anymore, well not really unless I'm missing the steps I need in order to get where I'm meant to be, but I do still get halt times and then I remember the promises, and I'm on the way again, waddling along, hearing music inside me, seeing, feeling and being a part of real Life. Every day that I wake up, I thank the Lord I'm me.

Forgive me if I've repeated anything you've already heard before, but some things are worth repeating. Over and Over and Over again. I get confused and scared and angry and sad and lonely and disappointed, but so many reminders with every heartbeat that we are not alone, even if we wanted to be, there's so much work to be done and we do it together. The Steps and Traditions I have some experience of working, but the Concepts for Service seem to go right over my head a lot of the time. Like anything, it's open to interpretation, right?

I've been called many things by my fellow members, but I reckon what feels nicest to be called, is trusted and a servant though most of the time I am not keen to serve in official service roles too much, probably due to the nature of my disease, but I get help more often now and get grounded when I'm ready to fly away from situations I find stressful, such as dealing with newcomers and others outside the fellowship.

I do worry I am not worth enough or rich enough or tough enough to stand up alongside some of the other people in the fellowship, but that's just my know-it-all head telling me lies again, we are all great in different areas, just have to keep coming back and checking in, and sharing until we find those areas.

I've heard it said before there's sobriety under every teacup and under the mop and bucket, and under the bin that needs emptying, and I've found recovery in many places I didn't expect to find it, like in hospitals, prisons, shops, offices or anywhere there is an atmosphere of peace and welcome. That no matter where or how you got here, you're welcome and appreciated for your input.

AA gave me back my voice, (and though there are times when taking a deep breath and a smile would've been better), I am welcomed with a smile when I make the effort to step up to the little challenges thrown in my path, to become human again and for not being written off when I had given up on myself so many times. Somehow I

get shown another way to look at my life, a simple adjustment of the lens I look at life through and how I need glasses. I have so much more than I need, and when that happens, I find where to pass on what I can. It brings so much more joy to see someone else enjoying what I no longer need and even more joy to be able to share honestly and be understood, though it doesn't always have to be fully explained verbally. Words cannot express how grateful I am.

*A grateful member*

∞∞∞∞∞

## DREADFUL DAWN

( shattered )

In the falling snow and sleet, the people that I meet;  
They walk on by, they do not see.  
My ragged, dirty clothes, and a smell assails their nose,  
They can't see me, as I used to be.

I had a family and a home, a place to call my own,  
And we laughed and played on the garden lawn.  
I thought that I was cool, but I was the blindest fool,  
'Til my eyes were opened on that dreadful morn.

With a parting kiss, she said we can't go on like this;  
They drove away and left me here.  
And in my fuddled mind, I thought she was unkind;  
I went back inside and had another beer.

Her mother took them in and I wallowed in more gin,

And in my cups I could cry and smile.  
I was called in by my boss, and my cushy job I lost,  
And I knew I had to change my style.

While driving from a bar in my lonely family car,  
I was pulled in by the traffic police,  
I had taken quite a load and I soon was off the road,  
And I knew my drinking had to cease.

But instead I drank some more, 'til a banging on my door,  
And my home was gone, I had to leave.  
I moved in with a friend, but that came to an end,  
And out on the street, I cry and grieve.

Now I have no life, no children and no wife;  
My whole world is split along it's seams.  
I have lost my job and home, I now walk the streets alone,  
I have shattered all my hopes and dreams.

I wish this tale had a happy end, but that is not to be my friend,  
I have lost it all, it is too late.  
But if you read my story, in all its cruellest glory,  
I hope you can be spared my fate.

If you take a drink, and you teeter on the brink,  
Don't let this demon drag you down.  
All for one and one for all, you'll be welcomed when you call;  
You will find AA in every town.

*Ambrose Mullingar.*





## ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A GIFT IDEA FOR AN A.A. MEMBER??

From only €11.00 you can send the gift of a subscription to 'The Road Back' to someone else. They will receive a magazine bi-monthly for one year. All magazines are posted in a plain sealed envelope.

GSO will send the Road Back magazine for you, just complete this form and we'll do the rest!! Should you wish to include a special message, use the space provided at the bottom of the page and we will send it with the first gift issue. Post to the General Service Office, Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9. Please make cheques & postal orders payable to GSO, if paying by Credit Card or Debit Card, contact GSO with your card details.

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### Recipient of Road Back & Gift Message:

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_



## *'The Road Back' Subscription Gift Message*

*'The Road Back' is Ireland's only AA Sharing magazine. A subscription to 'The Road Back' is being sent as a gift to you. You will receive 'The Road Back' magazine bi-monthly for one year. May it provide you with good inspiration toward a peaceful and sober way of life - One Day at a Time.*

Message: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Our Singleness of Purpose

This is a closed meeting of  
Alcoholics Anonymous.

In support of A.A.'s singleness of  
purpose, attendance at  
closed meetings is limited to  
persons who have a desire  
to stop drinking.

If you think you have a problem with  
alcohol, you are welcome to attend  
this meeting.

We ask that when discussing our  
problems, we confine ourselves  
to those problems as they relate to  
alcoholism.

*(The 1987 General Service Conference  
made this statement available as an A.A.  
service piece for those groups  
who wish to use it.)*

# **ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS** **61<sup>st</sup> ALL IRELAND** **CONVENTION**

***AA Singleness of Purpose***

**CLONMEL PARK HOTEL**  
**Co. Tipperary**

**Friday 20th, Saturday 21st**  
**& Sunday 22nd April 2018**



## **The Serenity Prayer**

**God grant me the serenity  
To accept the things I cannot change;  
Courage to change the things I can;  
And wisdom to know the difference.**

**MUNSTER INTERGROUP ON BEHALF  
OF THE GENERAL SERVICE  
CONFERENCE OF IRELAND**

would like to welcome all our friends to the 61<sup>st</sup> All Ireland Convention. We hope you have an enjoyable weekend.

**The Convention Committee**

is available at all times to help and assist you.

AA Conference approved literature is on sale.

Road Back Stand.

**AA Singleness of Purpose**

This is why sobriety-freedom from alcohol-through the teaching and practice of A.A.'s twelve steps, is the sole purpose of the group. If we don't stick to this cardinal principle, we shall almost certainly collapse. And if we collapse we cannot help anyone.

Full AI Anon Participation throughout the weekend.

*Boze, uzycz mi pogody ducha,  
abym godził się z tym,  
czego nie mogę zmienić,  
odwagi, abym zmieniał to,  
co mogę zmienić, I mądrości,  
abym odróżniał jedno od drugiego*



## THURSDAY 19th APRIL

8.30 pm Early Bird Meeting

10.00 pm Night Owls

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2.00 pm - 3.15pm Traditions Check List  
- Main Ballroom

3.30 pm - 4.45 pm Service Workshop  
- Main Ballroom

## FRIDAY 20th APRIL

2.00 pm Registration - Hotel Foyer

4.00 pm - 2.00 am Marathon Meetings  
- Rooms 4 & 5

8.30 pm Formal Opening of  
Convention

5.00 pm Meet the Board  
- Main Ballroom

8.30 pm Main Meeting and Countdown  
Theme: **Young in AA**

10.30 pm

## CONVENTION DANCE

Music By: **The Unusual Suspects**  
(Munsters Best Dance Band)

Followed By: **Disco & Karaoke (1:00-Till Late)**

**ADMISSION: €10**

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**10:30-Till Late** **GET TOGETHER  
DANCE**  
**ADMISSION: €5**

Music By:

(Amazing Dance Band) **Carrick Brog**

**Come and join us for the craic!!**

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## SATURDAY 21st APRIL

10.30 am - 11.30 pm Registration - Hotel Foyer

10.00 am - 2.00 am Marathon Meetings  
- Rooms 4 & 5

11.00 am Around Ireland Meeting  
- Main Ballroom

12.00 noon - 1.00 pm International Forum  
- Main Ballroom

## SUNDAY 22nd APRIL

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Registration - Hotel Foyer

10.00 am - 12.00 noon Marathon Meetings  
- Rooms 4 & 5

12.00 noon Open Public Meeting  
Formal Closing of  
2018 All Ireland Convention

*An Phaidir Suaimhneas  
A Dhia, deonaigh dom an suaimeas  
chun glacadh le rudaí nach féidir liom a athrú,  
misneach chun rudaí a athrú nuair is féidir,  
agus gaois chun an difríocht a aithint.*

## MARATHON MEETINGS

### Room 5

#### FRIDAY 20TH APRIL:

4 pm - 5 pm	ONE DAY AT A TIME
5 pm - 6 pm	ACCEPTANCE
6 pm - 7 pm	THINK THINK THINK
7 pm - 8 pm	HOW IT WORKS
8 pm - 9 pm	SINGLENES OF PURPOSE
9 pm - 10 pm	EASY DOES IT
10 pm - 11 pm	RIGOROUS HONESTY
11 pm - 12 pm	FIRST THINGS FIRST
12 pm - 1 am	THREE PERTINENT IDEAS
1 am - 2 am	THIS TOO SHALL PASS

#### SATURDAY 21ST APRIL:

10 am - 11 am	JUST FOR TODAY
11 am - 12 am	LOVE AND TOLERANCE
12 am - 1 pm	SERENITY
1 pm - 2 pm	LET GO LET GOD
2 pm - 3 pm	RECOVERY UNITY SERVICE
3 pm - 4 pm	COURAGE TO CHANGE
4 pm - 5 pm	LIVE AND LET LIVE
5 pm - 6 pm	SPONSORSHIP
6 pm - 7 pm	I AM RESPONSIBLE
7 pm - 8 pm	KEEP IT SIMPLE
8 pm - 9 pm	FEAR
9 pm - 10 pm	EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY
10 pm - 11 pm	THE FAMILY AFTERWARD
11 pm - 12 pm	BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD
12 pm - 1 am	MY HOME GROUP
1 am - 2 am	THE PROMISES

#### SUNDAY 22ND APRIL:

10 am - 11 am	A VISION FOR YOU
11 am - 12 am	CARRYING THE MESSAGE

## MARATHON MEETINGS

### Room 4

#### FRIDAY 20TH APRIL:

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	Step One
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Tradition One
6:30 pm - 7:30 pm	Step Two
7:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Tradition Two
8:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Step Three
9:30 pm - 10:30 pm	Tradition Three
10:30 pm - 11:30 pm	Step Four
11:30 pm - 12:30 pm	Tradition Four
12:30 pm - 1:30 am	Step Five
1:30 am - 2:30 am	Tradition Five

#### SATURDAY 21ST APRIL:

10:30 am - 11:30 am	Step Six
11:30 am - 12:30 am	Tradition Six
12:30 pm - 1:30 pm	Irish Speaking Meeting
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm	Step Seven

4:30 pm - 5:30 pm	Polish Speaking Meeting
5:30 pm - 6:30 pm	Tradition Seven
6:30 pm - 7:30 pm	Step Eight
7:30 pm - 8:30 pm	Tradition Eight
8:30 pm - 9:30 pm	Step Nine
9:30 pm - 10:30 pm	Tradition Nine
10:30 pm - 11:30 pm	Step Ten
11:30 pm - 12:30 pm	Tradition Ten
12:30 pm - 1:30 am	Step Eleven
1:30 am - 2:30 am	Tradition Eleven

#### SUNDAY 22ND APRIL:

9:30 am - 10:30 am	Step Twelve
10:30 am - 11:30 am	Tradition Twelve



## Put of the Darkness

Out of the darkness  
Into the light  
Out of restlessness into rest  
Out from disorder into order  
Out from despair into ecstasy  
From faults and failures to sobriety.

## Fear

Why was I afraid of fear?  
Unknown, foolish, frightening fears  
No fear of hell  
Or the Higher Power  
Or dying death  
Or atom ash  
Of Devil deft  
Or sentenced cell  
But fear of fear of fear of fear  
Anxiety

## Sobriety

Man conquers man.  
Great kings  
The conquerors  
Of wealth  
And  
Majesty  
And  
Fame

But the one  
Who conquers  
Self  
Far greater  
Him  
Than he  
Who conquers  
A city.

## The Simple Things

Is not all life  
A quick sand  
Swamp  
When things of  
Complicated  
Difficulties  
Come crowing in.

But the  
Simple things  
Are the noble things  
More noble  
Than the ways  
Of wealth  
Superiority –  
Of famousness  
Or beat of Drum.

*Vincent Raheny*



## **“Our Singleness of Purpose – The Cornerstone of A.A.”**

Our singleness of purpose is undoubtedly one of the principal reasons the Fellowship has endured as a safe haven for the suffering alcoholic.

Since that afternoon in 1935 when Bill W. and Dr. Bob first met and talked for hours, drunks have been sharing their experience, strength and hope with one purpose alone: to help themselves and other alcoholics recover through A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

On the face of it, the idea is simplicity itself. Traditions Three and Five state it clearly: “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

“Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

A.A. is for alcoholics and people who think they might have a drinking problem, and as a Fellowship we do one thing only – share our program of recovery. Yet time and again, members, groups, and A.A. as a whole have encountered roadblocks as they sought to live out these most basic and essential of our traditional principles.

All Twelve Traditions were hammered out over years of trial and error, and for the most part, they were shaped less by the founders' inherent wisdom than by the recognition that they, as well as future generations, needed safeguards against their own character defects. In the formative years, power drivers among the early members would have diverted A.A.'s energies into hospitals, alcohol education, and other grandiose projects. Yet in tandem with their grandiosity ran a constant fear of losing their newfound sobriety.

In Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Bill wrote that the early members, “scared witless that something or somebody would capsize the boat and dump us all back into the drink,” devised membership rules to protect themselves. “Our Foundation office asked each group to send in its list of ‘protective’ regulations. The total list was a mile long. If all those rules had been in effect everywhere, nobody could have possibly joined A.A. at all, so great was the sum of our anxiety and fear. “We were resolved to admit nobody to A.A. but that hypothetical class of people we termed ‘pure alcoholics.’  
... Maybe this sounds comical now. . . . Well, we were frightened. . . . After all, isn't fear the true basis of intolerance? How could we then guess that all those fears were to prove groundless?”

More than half a century later, those words still do not sound comical. With the influx of prospective members who suffer from other problems, our faith that those fears are groundless is tested daily.

As A.A. has become increasingly well known and respected in the eyes of the public, many other organizations have adapted our Twelve Steps to recovery for a wide variety of addictions and problems. One result has been a blurring of the distinction between A.A. and other fellowships – “a drug is a drug,” we hear from newcomers who are not alcoholics but believe (often because well-meaning friends of A.A. have told them so) that A.A. meetings are the place for those with any addiction.

The guidelines for that situation are clear. In a 1958 Grapevine article, “Problems Other Than Alcohol,” Bill W. wrote: “Our first duty, as a Society, is to insure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activities. . . . Sobriety – freedom from alcohol – through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps, is the sole purpose of an A.A.

## **Declaration of Unity**

*This we owe to A.A.'s future:  
To place our common welfare first;  
To keep our fellowship united.  
For on A.A. unity depend our lives;  
and the lives of those to come.*

## **Responsibility Declaration**

*I am responsible.  
When anyone, anywhere,  
reaches out for help,  
I want the hand of AA always to be there.  
And for that: I am responsible.*



group. . . . We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our A.A. groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse. And if we collapse, we cannot help anyone."

How to handle dually addicted alcoholics who persist in talking about other problems in meetings is a murkier issue. In that same article, Bill writes about "one of the best A.A.s I know" – a man who had been doing drugs for years before joining A.A., "but prior to that he had been a terrific alcoholic. . . . Therefore he could qualify for A.A. and this he certainly did." Should groups today insist that dually addicted newcomers confine their discussion to alcoholism alone? Should we require prospective members to identify their "primary addiction" before participating in a group? Or can we simply welcome these men and women and trust that they will come, listen, and find their own way?

In a presentation at the 1983 Conference entitled "Are we helping the dually addicted?" delegate Dyanne G. described the way her group welcomed her. "I will continue to thank God that I came into an A.A. group spiritually fit enough that its members did not find it necessary to censor my conversation or actions in order to protect themselves. I did talk about drugs, and I used a lot of four-letter words to do it!

My group allowed me the dignity to choose to change these things and the freedom to do it when I could, not when they thought I should. . . .

My group seems to have no trouble sticking to our single purpose, which is to carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics, however damaged and confused they are in the beginning . . . . There is a fine line between upholding our singleness-of-purpose Tradition and limiting or restricting our membership."

*"The day A.A. appears to be rejecting people who may be alcoholic, we will begin to die. What good will it do us if, while we are defending our 'rights,' A.A. is destroyed?"*

The "druggies" and other disruptive influences will not go away – they are one of the consequences of our own success. Ironically, some of our good friends in the field of alcoholism compound the problem because they believe our program works better than anything else for a variety of addictions.

Good Public Information work and cooperation with professionals is part of the answer, but ultimately we cannot control what others do – only how we ourselves react. If we respond with a defensive flurry of restrictions, will we actually depart from our singleness of purpose by turning away alcoholics who have not yet recognized their problem?

In 1986, retiring G.S.O. general manager Bob P. gave the Conference closing talk. He said in part: "I echo those who feel that if this Fellowship ever falters or fails, it will not be because of any outside cause. . . . it will be simply because of us . . . . it will be because we have too much fear and rigidity and not enough trust and common sense. . . ."

"If you were to ask me what is the greatest danger facing Alcoholics Anonymous today, I would have to answer: the growing rigidity that is so apparent to me and many others. The increasing demand for absolute answers to nit-picking questions. Pressure for G.S.O. to 'enforce' our Traditions. Screening alcoholics at closed meetings. . . . And in this trend toward rigidity, we are drifting further and further away from our co-founders. Bill, in particular, must be spinning in his grave, for I remind you that he was perhaps the most permissive person I ever met. One of his favorite sayings was, 'Every group has the right to be wrong;' he was maddeningly tolerant of his critics; and he had absolute faith that faults in A.A. were self-correcting."

*Compilation of extracts from Box 459, Vol. 50, No.2 / April-May 2004*

*(Reprinted from The News Sheet Dec 2016)*



Each  
day, somewhere in the  
world, recovery begins when one  
alcoholic talks with another alcoholic,  
sharing experience, strength and  
hope'

# Acceptance

Acceptance is the answer to All of my problems today.

When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing or situation- some fact of my life- unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God's world by mistake.

Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept my life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitudes.

*Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 417, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc*

Keep Coming Back It Works



**Prescription for Sobriety Smith & Wilson A.A.**

**12 Steps practised in all our affairs - Pages 59-60 (Big Book)**

**Trust Higher Power and Clean House - Page 98 (Big Book)**

**Share Experience, Strength & Hope**

**Stay Active in Service**

**One Day At A Time for the rest of your life.**

**A Handshake, a smile and hug as often as possible.**

**Recovery Guaranteed**

*Dr. Bob. S*

*Bill W.*

*From the late "Barefoot"*

God grant me the  
Serenity  
to accept the things I  
cannot change...  
Courage to  
change the things I can  
and Wisdom to  
know the difference...

# Tradition Five

(long form)

**Each Alcoholics Anonymous Group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose - that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.**

## Text Service for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

*A text-messaging service for the Deaf and  
Hard of Hearing is now available at GSO.*

**Contact, by text only,  
087 1460387**

## Some More A.A. Acronyms

DETACH = Don't Even Think  
About Changing  
Him/Her

HELP = His Ever Loving  
Presence

## ALCOHOLICS

= A Life Centered  
On Helping Others  
Live In Complete  
Sobriety





## APPROVED FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS AND ONE DAY EVENTS



### ALL IRELAND CONVENTION 2018

<b>20th-22nd April 2018</b>	61st All Ireland Convention	The Clonmel Park Hotel, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary. Tel: 052 6188700 <b>Theme: AA Singleness of Purpose</b>
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### FORTHCOMING MINI CONVENTIONS IN IRELAND

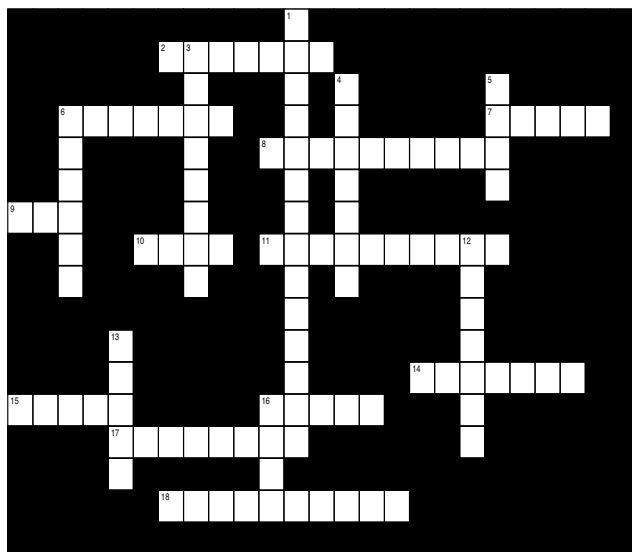
DATES	AREA	VENUE/THEME
18th-20th May 2018	Galway East Area Convention	Raheen Woods Hotel, Athenry, Co. Galway. <b>Theme: Experience, Strength and Hope</b>
1st-3rd June 2018	Antrim Area Convention	Drummond Hotel, 2 Main Street, Ballykelly, BT49 9HP. Phone: 028 7722121, Website: <a href="http://www.drummondhotel.com">www.drummondhotel.com</a>
12th-14th October 2018	Donegal Area Convention	Mount Errigal Hotel, Ramelton Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal. Phone: 074 22700. Website: <a href="http://www.mounterrighal.com">www.mounterrighal.com</a>

### FORTHCOMING CONVENTIONS ABROAD

DATES	COUNTRY	VENUE/THEME
16th-18th March 2018	Highland Gathering Convention Scotland	Jury's Inn Hotel, Millburn Road, Inverness, IV2 3TR. <b>Theme: Sobriety is Freedom</b>
23rd-25th March 2018	Malta AA Convention	Seashells Resort, Suncrest Hotel, Qwara, Malta. <b>Theme: One Day At A Time.</b> Website: <a href="http://www.aamalta.org/convention/">www.aamalta.org/convention/</a>
27th-29th April 2018	6th International Convention. Area 21 - Alicante (Spain)	Hotel Kaktus Albir, Paseo de las Estrellas, 11, El Albir, 03581 - Alfaz del Pi, Alicante (Spain). Tel: + (34) 96 6864830. <a href="http://www.kaktusgrup.com">www.kaktusgrup.com</a>
17th-20th May 2018	24th AA Convention in Greece	Grand Bleu Sea Resort Hotel, Eretria Evia, Greece. <b>Theme: HOPE (Happy Our Programme Exists)</b>
12th-14th October 2018	2nd Biarritz AA Convention in France	Radisson Blu Hotel, Cote des Basques, 64200 Biarritz, France. <b>Theme: A Vision For You</b>

# The Big Challenge Crossword 415 The Funny Side

Test your AA knowledge



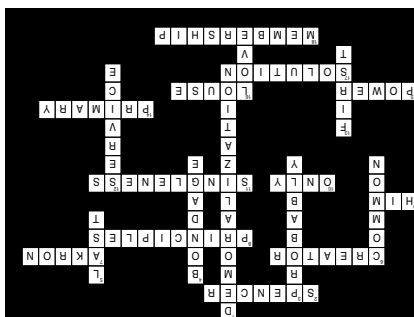
## Across

2. Quotation by Herbert .....
6. Seventh Step prayer: "My ..... , I am now willing that you should have all of me, good & bad."
7. The city where it all began for AA
8. "reminding us to place AA ..... before personalities"
9. "may you find ... now"
10. praying .... for knowledgeof His will for us...
11. In support of A.A.'s..... of purpose, attendance at closed meetings is limited to persons who have a desire to stop drinking.
14. "Our ..... purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety"
15. This had to be greater than ourselves
16. Dr. Bob's last words "Remember Bill, let's not ..... this thing up. Let's keep it simple".
17. The title of Chapter Two "There is a ....."
18. The only requirement for AA ..... is a desire to stop drinking

## Down

1. "pitiful and incomprehensible ....."
3. Pertinent idea "(b) that ..... no human power could have relieved our alcoholism"
4. "Relieve me of the ..... of self"
5. "shoemaker stick to thy ...."
6. - that they may solve their ..... problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.
12. AA's Third Legacy
13. First things .....
16. The essentials according to Dr. Bob ".... and service"

## Answers



## Donkey!

Pat and Mick are taking a drink at the bar when this lad passes in behind them and says to Pat "how're you donkey?"

Mick inquires from Pat "why does he call you donkey?"

Pat stutters out the reply "He he - he all - always calls me that!"

oooooooo

## The Donkey's new home...

Timmy is in the process of adapting a house for his donkey and he is hammering away at a concrete lintel with a sledge hammer when Paddy passes by.

"What are you at Timmy?" inquires Paddy. "I'm making a house for my donkey. I have to make the door bigger to get him in."

"But why can't you scoop a few shovelfuls away at the bottom?" says Paddy.

"Will you go away now" says Tim "and don't be annoying me. Can't you bloody well see that it's his ears are getting caught - not his feet!"

oooooooo



## THE TWELVE STEPS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 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.

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## THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

- 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 nonprofessional, 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.

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# Next issue:

## Step Five

May/June 2018 – Issue 416

Your invitation to share at our meeting between meetings.

Just like membership of our Fellowship, you don't have to be a special type of alcoholic to write for The Road Back. Whether you are a newcomer or an old timer we need to hear your experience strength and hope.

Putting pen to paper (or by email) can enhance your sobriety and that of the whole Fellowship. You don't need to be a polished writer either, spelling and grammar can be amended if necessary. You can write a few lines or a few pages.

Remember The Road Back is your magazine.

Looking forward to hearing from you!



Please share your experience strength and hope with us on the following topics:

### Step Five

May/June 2018

Articles should be submitted by April 6th 2018 for issue 416

### Step Six

July/August 2018

Articles should be submitted by June 8th 2018 for issue 417

Please mark your mail with the relevant Issue and email to –

[roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie](mailto:roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie)

or post to:

Alcoholics Anonymous

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