

THE ROAD BACK



JULY / AUGUST 2020
Issue No. 429



Rebirth after Lockdown

Editorial

We are very glad that the country appears to be in full recovery mode. Just like AA!! With the easing of restrictions, groups are getting back to holding physical meetings, albeit with limited numbers permitted to attend. Nevertheless, we in AA are always in 'Recovery Mode' and ready to accept and deal with every eventuality. It is a great time to be a member of AA (any time is a great time). We have risen to the challenges of Lockdown and we not only survived, we thrived. AA meetings are reopening all over the country. We all must now get used to the 'new normal.' We should be proud of our own individual and collective resilience. Together we have weathered this storm of COVID-19/Coronavirus. In unity and in service we recover.

We hope that in the coming months we will begin to see personal stories of how members coped during the lockdown. The Road Back needs your input. We need your stories, your anecdotes, your mistakes, your successes. You do not need a degree in creative writing to send in an article. Just tell us your story. Don't worry about the format. We will tidy it up if necessary and publish it. We just want to hear from you. We will take care of the rest. So, get busy at the keyboard, or get out the pen and paper. We are waiting!

On other fronts, we are informed that the General Service Office is again fully operational, and all enquiries and orders are being promptly dealt with. We are grateful to the staff at GSO for their hard work and dedication during the period of the Coronavirus, from the beginning in early March, adapting to working from home to returning to the office in June under changed circumstances. The real heroes in any crisis are unsung and unseen, quietly going about their day-to-day work, caring and considerate of others, without the applause or even the attention of others. Well done, whoever and wherever you may be.

Finally, welcome to the July/August edition of the Road Back, your magazine online and in print. If you can't print off a copy, just ask a friend or member of your group, many people now have home or office printing facilities or contact the General Service Office to do it for you.

Continue to keep safe, sober and well.

The Road Back Editorial Team

THE ROAD BACK

A meeting in print

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, 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.

The Road Back is published every two months by General Service Conference, Alcoholics Anonymous of Ireland. Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9, Ireland. Telephone: (01) 842 0700

Up to date information on forthcoming Conventions and One Day Events can be viewed on our website at www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

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Choices

When I first came to AA, I distinctly remember a woman talking about fear. I couldn't understand what she meant. I listened critically as she shared at a meeting, hearing only the differences in our experiences and decided she must be a weak person, unlike me. I wasn't fearful of people or situations, I had control of my life, I held down a job, looked after my family, had plenty of friends and I was a nice person. I just had a bit of a drinking problem and if I could get it sorted, I wouldn't have to see all these people because although they were nice, they were clearly losers with real problems. I took all suggestions as well-meaning but not really applicable to me.

A year later I picked up a drink, I had no defence against that first drink because I had continued in my self-absorbed way and had only seen the difference because I was not the same as everyone else. The second time I came into AA four years later, I was fearful and I knew it. This time I listened for the similarities and I did what was suggested.

As I went through the Steps and looked at my part in life experiences and situations, I realised that fear dominated everything. Fear of being wrong, of failure, of people not liking me, of inadequacy... and now of picking up another

drink. And fear of myself because I didn't know who I really was or what I was capable of when I had alcohol. Or rather I did know and that frightened me. I realised that I never took responsibility for my choices. People and situations 'made' me make choices, poor me always the victim, if things went wrong it was never my fault. And so, the resentments had grown as I nurtured them.

**The wonderful
community of AA is
there for all of us**

Thanks to the Programme, I can see that I am responsible for making my own choices in many different situations while accepting that things will not always go my way even if I believe I have done the right thing. That's liberating, though scary, as it means acknowledging the responsibility and I have never liked that. I believe it's called growing up. But I'm not doing it alone. The wonderful community of AA is there for all of us, we are it. If I go back to basics, stick to the simple Programme and don't try to over complicate things, it will work out ok. It's the Programme I didn't know I had been looking for all my life until I found it.

Anon
(Share Magazine April 2020)

Heard at Meetings

“ Make the most of yourself, for that is all there is of you! ”

“ Without sobriety I’m nothing, sober, I’m a person! ”

“ How we spend our day is, of course, how we spend our lives. ”

“ If pride can lead me out of AA, pain will bring me back. ”

“ An AA meeting puts the brakes on my head. ”

“ What’s facing me today will be behind me tomorrow. ”

“ However you do it – stay away from the first drink for today. ”

“ Alcoholism is a brain disease. ”

“ Our lives had become unmanageable, unliveable and unbearable. ”

“ There’s a drink out there with my name on it – I’ll leave it till tomorrow. ”

Accepting the Invitation

I was sitting in my usual spot when the call came in. My mind was drifting into those recesses where fear, anger, and frustration lurk.

When my sponsee asked me to go on a Twelfth Step call with her, I said “sure” at once, because that is what I had been taught and I wanted to make sure she got the same lesson: “When anyone, any-where reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

We were told the lady was in a local motel and that she had many years in the program. My mind jumped around to what could I possibly say to someone with that many years and me so few. What happened? Did she quit going to meetings? Did she not do inventories? Did she isolate? All those warnings I heard in meetings, came rolling over me.

My sponsee and I said our prayers and asked God to guide us and give us the words to help the poor, distressed lady. When she opened the door to the motel room, all I saw was an older lady who was in obvious emotional, spiritual pain, and my first reaction was, as it has always been: to put

my arms around her and give her a big hug.

She had recently lost a spouse and was coming through our state on her way back home after the burial. Her grief had reached a point at which she needed to talk to another AA woman to help her through her pain so that she could continue her journey.

My sponsee and I listened while she shared with us her experience, strength, and hope, and especially her pain. I was able to share with her the grief I felt (and still feel) for the loss of my father. Together our burdens were lifted. As we sat sharing, one alcoholic to another, we saw that beautiful transformation in our lady as strength and courage straightened her back and the smile slowly crept into her face.

Our lady had not had an alcohol relapse, but rather an emotional relapse. Fortunately, though, her time in the program gave her the sure knowledge of where to find help before she picked up a drink.

I knew I had been given a special gift. The lady is now a part of my life and it doesn't matter if our paths never cross again. In my

God's giant jigsaw puzzle, our pieces were fitted together just for that brief moment in time and my life was changed.

**Together our burdens
were lifted. As we
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alcoholic to another**

My sponsor told me early in sobriety, "Accept the invitation and you will grow." I accepted the invitation to go on a Twelfth Step call and I in turn was twelfth-stepped.

Anon
(*Grapevine I am Responsible*)

Life is meant to be lived

There are more amends to be made, letters to be sent, Twelfth Step work to be done, responsibilities to be assumed, and honest talks to be had with loved ones. Life is meant to be lived by facing the challenges it brings. Otherwise, I'm not living, just existing.

Grapevine Daily Quotes pg 318

Keep coming back – no matter what

I have no idea how I made it this long, or what has kept me sober. But if I were to guess, I'd say that it has something to do with the slogan, 'Keep coming back – no matter what.'

Grapevine Daily Quotes pg 315



Coronavirus: Where Meetings fit into the Scheme of Things

Alcoholics Anonymous is a matter of personal survival for me. If I don't stay sober then I will die. By putting staying sober ahead of everything else I have managed to get through the last 42 years without having to take a drink. Here I try to look at the significance of attending AA meetings and the place that AA meetings take in my approach to sobriety.

I was relatively young when I stopped drinking. However, I am now much older and have a number of additional conditions that go with that state: COPD, heart conditions etc. So I am among that group of people for whom Coronavirus is seriously life threatening. Expert advice is saying self-isolation. After 42 years, Alcoholics Anonymous and its meetings are a very deep habit. So the question I have to face is, "What happens when meetings are suspended because of Coronavirus?"

**It's clear that in order
for my sobriety to be**

**secure I need to put
staying sober ahead
of everything**

The matter of priorities is important. It's clear that in order for my sobriety to be secure I need to put staying sober ahead of everything. When AA started there were no AA meetings. People getting and staying sober preceded the formation of groups and meetings. There were and are many examples of what Bill W referred to as "loners": travelling salesmen, merchant seamen and servicemen away in foreign countries both during war and peacetime. Similarly attending AA meetings in no way guarantees sobriety. The kind of attendance at AA meetings that leads to sobriety is generally a reflection of an altered internal attitude. I've known plenty of people over the years stay sober without attending AA meetings. They do, however, usually have a way of living that is conducive to sobriety. I've also known plenty of people who go to many, many AA meetings and still end

up drunk. I've often thought that if an individual was isolated at the North Pole with no access to the internet or telephone then he could be capable of staying sober simply with a copy of the Big Book. AA would never have got off the ground if that were not the case. However, the minute you place a telephone just down the road from his igloo then our North Pole man would want to avail himself of the communication opportunity that it provided. We don't like change. That's all well and good, unfortunately change is inevitable. My current home group has been running for 20 years, it is in its third venue.

I have always been a great believer in using the telephone. A few months ago a younger member talked about the fact that I had sponsored her into using the telephone (not the telephone service, but the telephone). My approach to using the phone is fairly simple: I treat it much the same as sharing in a meeting. I dial if someone responds I ask them if they, "Have a few minutes." If they do then I simply start talking as if I was sharing in a meeting, and I continue till I have finished. I keep polite niceties to an absolute

minimum. If they want to share back I let them. I have a network of people who operate this way.

What else can I do? I have access to the internet. There are a number of video conferencing systems available now which can be set up at little or no cost. My Home Group is currently in the process of evaluating a couple of these. Attempting to set up these video meetings acts to reassure regardless of whether such meetings are needed or not.

I have never confused the Group Conscience with a "group conscience meeting". The Group Conscience is something that exists both inside and outside the meeting. It is the sum total of all the communication between the regular members of the group in regard to how the group conducts its affairs (both at the time of the meeting and between.) While I doubt that a meeting can survive long without a group, a group can quite happily survive without a meeting.

Anonymous
(Share Magazine May 2020)

Up to date information about Online meetings available on our website at **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie**

AA Humour

The Obsession of the Mind...

A drunk was stranded on a desert island with no food or 'drink', or way to escape. He found a bottle and dusted it off and a magic genie appeared.

"You have freed me!" exclaimed the genie, "I grant you three wishes!"

"Anything I want?" the drunk asked.

"Yes, any three things you want!" the genie replied.

"Oh WOW! I want a bottle of Rum that always stays full!" cried the drunk.

POOF! The bottle appeared. When a big drink was taken it was still full!

"Oh WOW Oh WOW!" the drunk exclaimed.

Still drinking the genie is looking at his watch... "You still have two more wishes!"

Holding the bottle high the drunk exclaimed "Oh WOW! I want two more of these!"

Did you know the game show JEOPARDY was invented by a newcomer?

Who else would start with all of the answers and none of the questions?

How many alcoholics does it take to change a light bulb?

Just one, he holds the bulb up and the whole world revolves around him!

I quickly learned that the difference between an Alcoholic and a Drunk, is one of them attends meetings.

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ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



64th All Ireland CONVENTION

“ A New Freedom ”

23rd - 25th April 2021
Friday, Saturday, Sunday

Venue: The Clayton Hotel, Sligo Tel: +353 71 911 9000

B&B - Sligo Tourist Board Tel: +353 71 9171905

For further information please contact:

General Service Office – Unit 2, Block C, Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin 9 – D09 H584

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Death Interrupted

"My name is Chris, and I'm an alcoholic." This was the first thing I learned how to say when I came here. Believing it, however, was an entirely different story.

**I first came to AA
the age of nineteen,
which is not unusual
by today's standards**

I first came to AA the age of nineteen, which is not unusual by today's standards. I chose to believe that it was, however, especially when so many people said how good it was to see the young people. Here was something that my alcoholic ego could delight in: the spotlight of terminal uniqueness. I basked in that rich glow, proud of the fact that I was my group's youngest member at the time. I had a good sponsor, I got active with my group, I did all the right things on the outside. But inside, I was never quite sure that I really fit in here. I was too young. I hadn't been through enough.

Many, many times I'd heard recited from the podium the prices other alcoholics had paid to be here: broken marriages,

car accidents, lost homes, prison sentences. None of these had happened to me. Even the stories of other young people in AA seemed to be worse than mine. I was told to identify and not compare. I learned to put the word "yet" into my speech. I knew that my drinking even then was "no mere habit," so I stayed here, but I didn't identify with most of the experience shared at meetings. I spent a number of years in AA trying to make my own story sound tougher and longer and as violent as I could without actually lying.

Two and a half years ago I became active in carrying the message behind the walls at a women's prison. I found even less identification there, but it kept me grateful that the doors were closing behind me, and not on me. Currently, I serve as the outside sponsor for this facility. Sadly enough, it isn't uncommon for the outside AA to fail to appear.

We've taken to occasionally having our own speaker meetings in the case of such an event, one inmate chairing and three others telling their stories. These meetings are incredibly powerful and moving experiences (the

kind that really keep you hooked on prison work).

On one recent Thursday night, it was my privilege to be at such a meeting. A young woman spoke, revealing a story that, as usual, was fifty million times worse than mine. Happily, enough for me, however, God caused my ears to hear her story a little differently that night. The first part of her story could have been my own. What I heard was that hers continued.

There is a well-loved AA speaker who visits this area from time to time, and she tells of our deaths having been interrupted by the priceless gift of sobriety,

alcoholism being a progressive, fatal disease. God allowed me to realise that night that my sobriety is only an interruption in the rest of that story that could well be my own.

So I no longer begrudge my young age at the time I got sober. I no longer need to creatively embellish my story to feel like I fit in here. Now I joyously celebrate the fact that God has given me nearly eight years in this program.

Anon
(*Grapevine in Your Own Words*
Page 122-123)

Slips and Human Nature

There is a tendency to label everything that an alcoholic may do as 'alcoholic behaviour.' The truth is, it is simply human nature. Emotional and mental quirks are classified as symptoms of alcoholism merely because alcoholics have them, yet those same quirks can be found in non-alcoholics, too. Actually they are symptoms of mankind.

Up to date information about Online meetings available on our website at **www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie**



Panic Not!

When my sponsor suggested to me that I started to go to intergroup meetings and do service, I replied that I would, when I had a better understanding of the Traditions. He said that I would learn about the Traditions by going to intergroup meetings and doing service.

So, my service at intergroup began. After I had been taken to a couple of intergroup business meetings, I found myself agreeing to be Probation Liaison Officer, I was friends with the previous member doing the job so being twelve stepped into the had been doing this service rather half-heartedly for six months or so, the intergroup realised that we had no Prison LO. After some discussion it was put forward to combine the Probation and Prison LO positions, a vote was taken and I found myself carrying the AA message into the one prison in our intergroup area.

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This was a category C prison, fortunately with a history of AA meetings. It was straightforward to get the meeting reinstated and I was able to make up a list of twenty local members who were willing and able to attend the prison meeting, so it was my job to pass on the individuals' details to the prison gate for identification and clearance for access. In those days we were allowed to take in cigarettes and sweets, which did encourage some attendees. Sometimes there was a bit of an exodus after the chair had finished and the fags and sweets had run out.

Even though the prison held over four hundred inmates the AA meetings rarely made it into double figures. One memory from that time I have is when the prison sponsor attending the meeting mistook the 'Panic Button' for the light switch, within seconds half a dozen burly prison guards burst into the room to find a very peaceful meeting going on. It was around this time that females were allowed to go into male prisons to attend the AA meeting. The elderly lady who came with me one evening was terrified, but she did the chair and the meeting was fine, she and I were equally relieved but

for different reasons. Then as we were walking out towards the main gate we received a tirade of abuse through a window, we were identified as AA members with abuse that was my only negative experience during my time as Prison LO. The elderly lady survived and died sober some years later.

There were rumours that the prison was going to close. I made enquiries with the prison but was unable to find out any information. Then one day my home phone rang and it was the prison chaplain, asking if I could give him a copy of 'As Bill Sees It' for an inmate, I was able to provide it for him. Sometime later I was informed that the prison was to close. After we held the last

meeting, I was asked to remove the AA literature. I arranged to visit on my own to do this, some was kept in the library and the rest was in the meeting room. I started to collect the books together for removal and I noticed that some of them had been written in, donated by old timers I had never met. I found it a spiritual experience to realise that any AA book purchased can be left available to be read by anyone. The person who paid for the book may never meet the reader but the message has been carried. In case you were wondering, I know of at least one inmate from that meeting who is still sober some thirty years later.

Anon

Why Alcoholics Anonymous is Anonymous

At the beginning we sacrificed alcohol. We had to, or it would have killed us. But we couldn't get rid of alcohol unless we made other sacrifices. Big shot-ism and phony thinking had to go. We had to toss self-justification, self-pity, and anger right out the window. We had to quit the crazy contest for personal prestige and big bank balances.

We had to take personal responsibility for our sorry state and quit blaming others for it.

Staying Sober in the Pandemic

Have been reflecting on this. I asked myself what am I doing now that is different to what I did a few months ago before I became aware of the Covid-19? Surprisingly I am not doing things that differently. I still do meetings (online of course), but I have attended more meetings in the past few weeks than I did before. I keep in touch with people in recovery but more than I did before. I have been praying to my Higher Power as I have always done, morning and night, but this has more depth and urgency about it now.

I have dipped into the AA literature more than I used to, particularly relating to emotional sobriety. So, all in all I think I am engaging in my Programme in a more meaningful way than I used to. So why is that? Again, if I look back over my 18 years of being in the Programme and living life without alcohol, I have in challenging times or in anticipation of difficulty, upped my meetings and prayer.

I am grateful that I had support to set up our online meeting and chair that meeting, which has helped me to continue serving original format of the meeting and this helps some of those at the meeting to do service

by reading from various cards and books. The five minutes of meditation during the meeting works as well online as it did face to face.

So, whilst living in a pandemic is a novel experience for me, and I feel I am doing things differently, I'm not really

So, whilst living in a pandemic is a novel experience for me, and I feel I am doing things differently, I'm not really. It just feels like that because all of the above are done without any face to face contact with my recovery Fellowship. Instead I make do with seeing their dear familiar faces on a screen. Occasionally, I see people that I used to know when I attended meetings in other parts of the UK and the world. In fact, that has been a real positive, as I have reconnected with old friends in the Programme, and in doing so made new friends. So, all in all I guess I just have to keep doing what I have always done (knowing this has kept me away from that first drink), that is go to meetings, keep in touch with the Fellowship and converse with my Higher Power.

Anon

Taking my Medicine

Coming into the rooms of AA was possibly the most difficult thing I've ever done. I was completely beaten having battled against this addiction for over twenty years. I felt like an utter failure. I simply could not believe that someone like me -happy childhood, nice family, fairly intelligent, outgoing, good job could not find the inner resources to beat this addiction.

But of course, therein lay my wrong thinking; for so long, I had assumed that beating alcoholism was a question of will power. If only I could summon up enough will power not to drink, I'd have it licked. I'd successfully mastered some pretty tough things in my personal and professional life, why couldn't I apply the same tenacity to this? Still I kept failing, over and over. I would wake up every day and resolve not to drink but by evening I'd be uncorking the bottle.

My final drunk was a real wakeup call and I took myself into the Rooms. There, I learned that I have a three-fold illness of the body, mind and soul. This knowledge and the love shown to me by my fellow AAs have allowed me to make peace with my alcoholism and to accept it finally as part of me. The Rooms of AA are now

my medicine and there I have found a sense of belonging and inner peace that I never knew was possible. I have been able to become the real me, the best version of me though always a work in progress. I use the Twelve Steps in every aspect of my daily life and, in so doing, I have largely removed the triggers that made me want to drink.

**The Rooms of AA are
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Bad days, bad weeks certainly happen but I no longer seek to temporarily obliterate them through alcohol. My gratitude to this wonderful Fellowship is beyond words. It took me half my life to get here but I plan to enjoy the next half sober, one day at a time.

Anon
(Share Magazine May 2020
Page 31)



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. 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.

**I have finally
understood that I am
allergic to alcohol.
I attend meetings
regularly, am
involved in service**

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.

*A GRATEFUL ALCOHOLIC,
North Wales
(Share Magazine April 2020)*

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 practice these principles in all our affairs.

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 centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organised; 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.



We, *The Road Back* Editorial Team, look forward to hearing from you with your stories, snippets of amusing things overheard at meetings, indeed anything that carries a message of sobriety to our readership.

Your contributions can be emailed to:
roadback@alcoholicsanonymous.ie

or posted to:
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Santry Business Park
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Up to date information on forthcoming Conventions and One Day Events can be viewed on our website at
www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie