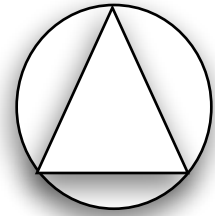


The Messenger



Our Journey Through Recovery . . .

Northeast Pennsylvania Intergroup On-Line Newsletter

February 2020

NEED HELP?



Alcoholics Anonymous Help Line

(570) 654-0488

(800) 640-7575 Land Line

NEPA Intergroup Central Office/Store

422 N. Main Street, Pittston, PA 18640

(570) 654-1226

Hours: 10am - 2pm Saturdays

5pm - 6:30pm 2nd Tuesday of the month

Winter Weather.... If the Pittston School District is closed or has an early dismissal, the NEPA Intergroup meeting will be canceled and will meet the following Tuesday.

Bill W.'s Last Message

My dear friends,

Recently an A.A. member sent me an unusual greeting which I would like to extend to you. He told me it was an ancient Arabian salutation. Perhaps we have no Arabic groups, but it still seems a fitting expression of how I feel for each of you. It says, "I salute you and thank you for your life."

My thoughts are much occupied these days with gratitude to our Fellowship and for the myriad blessings bestowed upon us by God's Grace.

If I were asked which of these blessings I felt was most responsible for our growth as a fellowship and most vital to our continuity, I would say, the "Concept of Anonymity."

Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical.

On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level, anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes.

A.A. must and will continue to change with the passing years. We cannot, nor should we turn back the clock. However, I deeply believe that the principle of anonymity must remain our primary and enduring safeguard. As long as we accept our sobriety in our traditional spirit of anonymity we will continue to receive God's Grace.

And so -- once more, I salute you in that spirit and again I thank you *for your lives*.

May God bless us all now, and forever.

Dr. Bob's Farewell Talk

My good friends in A.A. and of A.A.,

... I get a big thrill out of looking over a vast sea of faces like this with a feeling that possibly some small thing I did a number of years ago played an infinitely small part in making this meeting possible. I also get quite a thrill when I think that we all had the same problem. We all did the same things. We all get the same results in proportion to our zeal and enthusiasm and stick-to-itiveness. If you will pardon the injection of a personal note at this time, let me say that I have been in bed five of the last seven months and my strength hasn't returned as I would like, so my remarks of necessity will be very brief.

There are two or three things that flashed into my mind on which it would be fitting to lay a little emphasis. One is the simplicity of our program. Let's not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are interesting to the scientific mind, but have very little to do with our actual A.A. work. Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the words "love" and "service." We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So let's bear those two things in mind.

Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue, and if we must use it, let's use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.

And one more thing: None of us would be here today if somebody hadn't taken time to explain things to us, to give us a little pat on the back, to take us to a meeting or two, to do numerous little kind and thoughtful acts in our behalf. So let us never get such a degree of smug complacency that we're not willing to extend, or attempt to extend, to our less fortunate brothers that help which has been so beneficial to us.

Thank you very much.

The Messenger is written (except where noted) and published by Sharon M., Lake Ariel, Newsletter Chairperson for Northeast Pennsylvania Intergroup. Submissions can be sent to the Messenger at theaamessenger@gmail.com.



Upcoming A.A. Events . . .

Hosted by NEPA Intergroup
H to H Dinner Dance
Friday, March 27th, 7pm to Midnight
Holiday Inn East Ballroom, 600 Wildfire Drive, Wilkes Barre

February 9	NEPA Intergroup Committee Meeting. Planning H to H Dinner Dance. 7pm. Shavertown. Contact the committee for location; NEPAINTERGROUP@GMAIL.COM
March 26-28	18th Annual Eastern Area Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (EACYPAA XVIII). Westin Hotel, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.
April 6, 13, 20, 27	Here are the Steps We Took. Back to Basics. "Take" all 12 Steps in four one hour sessions. Meetings will take the Steps according to the instructions found the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. Sponsored by the Walk Softly and Carry a Big Book Group. All four meetings start at 7pm. Corpus Christi Church, 605 Luzerne Avenue, West Pittston, PA 18643.
July 2-5	International Convention. Love and Tolerance is our Code. Detroit Michigan.
August 21-23	PENNSCYPAA XXXII; Pennsylvania State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous. Lancaster, PA

Additional event information, events and fliers can be found at NEPAIG.ORG and AREA59.ORG

OPEN CALL
PENNSCYPAA; Pennsylvania State Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous. "Young" means anyone with room to grow. Bidding open to bring PENNSCYPAA to your city. PENNSCYPAA.ORG

Have your flyer posted on the NEPA Intergroup website, email it to NEPAINTERGROUP@GMAIL.COM or bring it to the Intergroup Meeting.



SAFETY CARD FOR A.A. GROUPS
(The General Service Office has made this optional statement available as an A.A. service piece for those groups who wish to use it.)

Suggested Statement on Safety

Our group endeavors to provide a safe meeting place for all attendees and encourages each person here to contribute to having a secure and welcoming environment in which our meetings can take place. As our Tradition remind us, the formation and operation of an A.A. group relies upon the group consensus. Therefore, we ask that group members and others refrain from any behavior which might compromise another person's safety.

Also, please take the precautions you feel are necessary to ensure your own personal safety, for example, walking to your car in a group after a meeting. If a situation should arise where someone feels their safety is in jeopardy, or the situation breaches the law, the individuals involved should take appropriate action. Calling the proper authorities does not go against any A.A. Tradition and is recommended when someone may have broken the law or endangered the safety of another person.

Service Provided from the General Service Office

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Service Provided from the General Service Office

Help spread the word . . .

Nuevas reuniones de habla hispana
New Spanish Speaking Meetings
Wednesday & Friday 7pm

Alcohólicos Anónimos
Grupo Queremos Es Poder
¿Quieres una NUEVA VIDA sin Alcohol?

Miércoles y Viernes 7 PM
 237 Allen Street
 West Hazleton, PA 18202
 Entra por el lado requerido

El Único Requisito Es Queremos Dejar De Beber

HAPPY AA-VERSARY



A Better Way of Life Group

Chad, 2 years

Bob B., 3 years

Larrissa, 5 years

John D., 34 years

Dave O., 37 years

Nancy U., 3 years, Nicholson Group

Ben S., 8 years, A Way of Life Group

Victor L., 28 years, Principles Not Personalities Group

Marie F., 29 years, Women of Wisdom Group

Susan K., 31 years, Sober Sisters Group

God's Grace Group

Janine, 6 years

Jessica T., 7 years

It works if you work it.

Anniversaries can be sent to the Messenger at theaamessenger@gmail.com or text your information to Sharon M.

In the spirit of rotation . . .

The Messenger Newsletter is looking for an Alternate Newsletter Chairperson to rotate in as chairperson.

It has been my honor to serve as NEPA Intergroup Newsletter Chairperson. I was so excited when this commitment became available at a time when I needed to add a new one. Funny thing is, I wanted the Archives Chair but this is where God put me and while there have been times I didn't think I could do it or get it out in a timely manner, I have always remained grateful that I have been given this opportunity to inform, share my love of A.A.'s history and my experience, strength and hope with my AA family.

Gratefully Yours, Sharon M.



How does bringing A.A. to alcoholics in treatment settings help to strengthen sobriety?

Many happy sober A.A. members have found that the best cure for a "dry drunk" or a self-pity binge is working with another still-suffering alcoholic. Seeing other alcoholics recover, whenever they do, is almost as great a reward as our own sobriety.

What better place to look for those still-suffering alcoholics than in a hospital or some other alcoholism treatment place? The idea is older than A.A. itself.

In 1934, a sober alcoholic named Bill W. kept trying to help drunks in Towns Hospital in New York City. None of them seemed interested at that time, but Bill stayed sober.

About six months later, Bill W. and another sober alcoholic, Dr. Bob S., visited alcoholics in a hospital in Akron, Ohio. Although at first rebuffed, they kept trying — in order to protect their own sobriety. It worked, and Bill and Dr. Bob thus became the co-founders of the "help one another" chain reaction now called Alcoholics Anonymous.

What qualifications should an A.A. member have to

carry the message to treatment settings?

1. Some good sobriety.
2. Personal experience of alcoholism and recovery.
3. A common-sense approach.
4. A cheerful humility.
5. Ability to follow directions.
6. Dependability.
7. Broad knowledge of A.A.
8. Ability to stick to our own business.

How do we make contact with treatment settings?

Your local central office (C.O.) or intergroup association. This is a good place to start inquiring. Many C.O.s have treatment committees or institutions committees. They arrange for meetings to be taken into these settings, arrange for A.A.s to visit the patients, make sure A.A. literature is always available, and may arrange sponsorship or temporary contacts for alcoholics upon release.

STEP 2

"Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity."

Excerpts from the Alcoholics Anonymous, the Big Book.

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, Pages 44-55, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

If, when you honestly want to, you find you cannot quit entirely drinking, you have little control over the amount you take, you are probably alcoholic. If that be the case, you be suffering from an illness which only a spiritual experience will conquer.

To be doomed to an alcoholic death or to live on a spiritual basis are not always easy alternatives to face.

But after a while we had to face the fact that we must find a spiritual basis of life - or else.

Lack of power, that was our dilemma. We had to find a power by which we could live, and it had to be a Power greater than ourselves.

Well, that's exactly what this book is about. Its main object is to enable you to find a Power greater than yourself which will solve your problem. That means we have written a

book which we believe to be spiritual as well as moral. And it means, of course, that we are going to talk about God.

Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another's conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him. As soon as we admitted the possible existence of a Creative Intelligence, a Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, we began to be possessed of a new sense of power and direction, provided we took other simple steps.

If our testimony helps sweep away prejudice, enables you to think honestly, encourages you to search diligently within yourself, then, if you wish, you can join us on the Broad Highway. With this attitude you cannot fail. The consciousness of your belief is sure to come to you.

Excerpts from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Step Two.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Pages 26-32, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

This is the beginning of the end. And so it is: the beginning of the end of his old life, and the beginning of his emergence into a new one.

First, Alcoholics Anonymous does not demand that you believe in anything ... Second, to get sober and to stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of Step Two right now Third, all you really need is a truly open mind.

When we encountered A.A., the fallacy of our defiance was revealed. At no time had we asked what God's will was for us; instead we had been telling Him what it ought to be. No man, we saw, could believe in God and defy Him, too. Belief meant reliance, not defiance ... We soon concluded that whatever price in humility we must pay, we would pay.

We had not even prayed rightly. We had always said, "Grant me my wishes" instead of "Thy will be done." The love of God and man we understood not at all. Therefore we remained self-deceived, and so incapable of receiving enough grace to restore us to sanity.

True humility and an open mind can lead us to faith, and every A.A. meeting is an assurance that God will restore us to sanity if we rightly relate ourselves to Him.

What can we believe in? A.A. does not demand belief; Twelve Steps are only suggestions. Importance of an open mind. Variety of ways to faith. Substitution of A.A. as Higher Power. Plight of Disillusioned. Roadblocks of indifference and prejudice. Lost faith found in A.A. Problems of intellectuality and self-sufficiency. Negative and positive thinking. Self-righteousness. Defiance is an outstanding characteristic of alcoholics. Step Two is a rallying point to sanity. Right relations to God.

Reprinted from The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Page 5, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

A.A. is both a democracy and, in Bill W.'s words, "a benign anarchy." A group elects its own officers—who have no power to order anybody to do anything. In most groups, most of the slate rotates out of office at the end of six months, and new officers are elected.

If a group wants to be a part of the whole A.A. service structure, it elects a G.S.R. (general service representative, with a two-year term). G.S.R.s elect area committee members and then join them in electing a delegate from their area to the annual General Service Conference. The

Conference is about the closest approximation of a government that A.A. has; it produces opinions on important matters of policy; it approves the choice of some trustee nominees for the General Service Board and directly elects others. But neither the Conference nor the board can give orders to any group or member.

Then who's in charge around here? A.A. is a spiritual movement, and so the "ultimate authority" is the spiritual concept of the "group conscience." Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers to arrive at a

decision. The result rests on more than arithmetic, a "yes" and "no" count. Minority ideas get thoughtful attention. What about that annoying character who's always sure she's right. If she's wrong, then she will—if she remembers the First Tradition as well as the Second—go along with the decision of the group conscience. Does this notion seem too cloudy? Let's think back to our first meetings. The presence we newcomers felt in those rooms was the same as the group conscience. And it was real—welcoming us in, setting up no barriers of rules....

Reprinted from The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, Pamphlet P-43, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

God, Grant me the serenity to accept the people I cannot change,
The courage to change the person that I can and,
The wisdom to know that it is me.

SHARON'S CORNER



I was almost a clean slate about my beliefs in a God when I got to the rooms. I was raised with very few religious beliefs and the only God I had come to believe in was a punishing one. Bad things were happening in my life and I believed that bad things were always going to happen to me. That was my fate. I didn't realize that I was creating my own misery and blaming it on God.

Before I came to A.A. I only used God in two ways. Either a foxhole prayer in an emergency or bad situation or to tell Him the list of what I wanted. I didn't realize I was giving him a list of my wants, not my needs. I was an alcoholic thinking she knew what was best for her and demanding it from God. When he didn't give me what I wanted, it confirmed my disillusioned belief that he didn't care about me. It never occurred to me that I was supposed to be asking him what I could do for him. I was so self-centered. Since I didn't have many prejudices to overcome, I didn't have a difficult time putting pen to paper to come up with my own conception of God.

My conception starting with simple characteristics my God would have such as being loving, loving me and watching over me, being a guiding force in my life, show me the direction I should go in, letting me feel peace, put people in my life to love and guide me, not punishing, always loving... My beginning was a simplistic approach. I would later learn that the feelings I thought I was getting from alcohol, God would provide for me in a better and more profound way. I no longer need to drink or have any desire to go back to my old way of life. I no longer need alcohol to live, laugh or love.

I can remember the first time I got down on my knees and asked for help. I was a few weeks old in the rooms and I was living in the consequences of my drinking and still living in the obsession everyday. I was feeling such desperation and despair. God was the only place I had left to turn. I dropped to my knees, cried and asked him to please help me. From that moment on I felt that He would and I was able to get through that day. This was my beginning. I was taught the second step would help me come up with own conception of a God and that perception and belief would grow as my relationship with Him grew, as I changed and grew as I went through the Steps, and as I grew up in A.A. Once the selfishness and self-centeredness were replaced with God-consciousness, life can only be described by me as freeing and amazing. "I was soon to be catapulted into what I like to call the fourth dimension of existence. I was to know happiness, peace, and usefulness, in a way of life that is incredibly more wonderful as time passes."

"...God is everything or else He is nothing. God either is, or He isn't." In the beginning I wanted to believe He was was everything but it took time to get to that place. I have grown my relationship with Him in my years and my choice is a firm, God is everything. I start everyday with prayer on my knees. I no longer give Him a laundry list of wants to fill, instead I ask Him how I can best serve Him and to use me how He sees fit.

I have been taught that God never says no. He says yes, not yet or I've got something better for you.

Stay up to date on meeting closures due to winter weather, NEPA Intergroup Committee announcements, events . . .

Signing up for NEPA Intergroup text blasts is fast and easy:

1. NUMBER TO TEXT: 85100
2. MESSAGE TO SEND: NEPAIG
3. YOU WILL RECEIVE A "DO YOU WANT TO JOIN" TEXT
4. TEXT BACK "YES"

YOU ARE NOW SET UP TO RECEIVE TEXT BLASTS FROM YOUR INTERGROUP

Need to request a blast? Text or Call Sharon M. (number is on the IG phone list).

FEAR

False Emotions Appearing Real

SLIP

Sobriety Loses Its Priority

HOPE

Happy Our Program Exists

EGO

Easing God Out

STEPS

Solutions To Every Problem In Sobriety

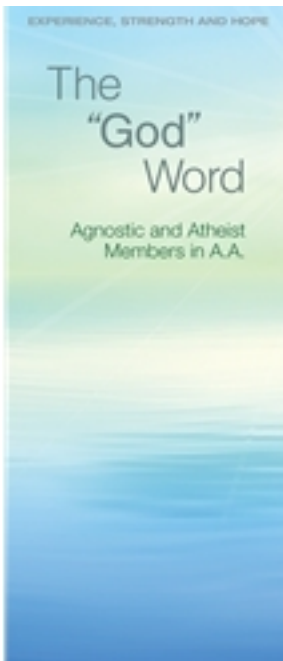


HELP CARRY THE MESSAGE
BECOME A HOTLINE VOLUNTEER

Big Book

Believing In God Beats Our Old Knowledge

TO SERVE IS TO LIVE . . . Bill W.



A.A. is not a religious organization. Alcoholics Anonymous has only one requirement for membership, and that is the desire to stop drinking. There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

Many members believe in some sort of god, and we have members who come from and practice all sorts of religions, but many are also atheist or agnostic. It's important to remember that A.A. is not a religious organization; we have a simple idea that there is a power greater than us as individuals.

What we all have in common is that the program helps us find an inner strength that we were previously unaware of — where we differ is in how we identify the source. Some people have thought of the word "God" as standing for "good orderly direction," or even "group of drunks," but many of us believe that there is something bigger than ourselves that is helping us today.

As A.A. co-founder Bill W. wrote in 1965:

We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In A.A. we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering. Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of A.A., so long as he or she declares.

Whatever you do, please don't let someone else's religious beliefs prevent you from finding the solution that is available to you through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Reprinted from Alcoholics Anonymous, The "God" Word, Pamphlet P-86, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

NORTHEAST PENNSYLVANIA INTERGROUP WEBSITE STATISTICS

January 1 through January 30, 2020

31 clicks to call to the AA Hot Line

12 emails sent to Intergroup

7448 Visitors to Website

Cleveland A.A.'s leave the Oxford Group

In some ways, it is possible to see early 1939 as a happier, simpler time as far as the A.A.'s of Akron were concerned, and many do remember it that way. The earliest struggles were over; there was a book; and the members, sticking closer together in warm love and comradeship than many families knew they could stay sober in the program.

There was only one meeting - the highlight of everybody's week. In between, there were coffee and conversation daily, a party on Saturday night, and a new drunk or two to visit the City Hospital. A.A. was growing, but not yet fast enough to make anyone uncomfortable.

Actually, the situation was not idyllic. There was a real problem with the Oxford Group.

As Bob E. put it, "We started with just a few fellows horning in on an Oxford Group meeting. We increased in numbers and noise until we took the place over. Instead of being the alcoholic squad of the Oxford Group, we were the main body, and we had the most to say, and we were kind of running the thing.

"But we were limited. We couldn't question the guidance. We used to sit around in a circle when we first started there, because there were so few of us."

"They had us in silence, listening for guidance, half the time. It made the drunks very restless. We couldn't stand that. We got they [the nonalcoholics] could see their fundamentals were not being adhered to."

"We were Oxford Groupers until we physically moved out. There was a lot of talk about wearing out."

Most alcoholics accepted some part of the Oxford Group program and rejected other parts. And the group's insistence that a member had to take the whole thing in a lump did not go down too well with the alcoholics.

Bill noted that the Oxford Group's practice of "checking" (one member's judging the authenticity of divine guidance that another claimed to have received) gave alcoholics the feeling that the O.G. leaders were ganging up on them. He also cited a technique of making people feel unwanted or uncomfortable until they agreed with some particular O.G. point of view.

A Bill put it, drunks "would not take pressure in any form, except from John Barleycorn himself. . . . They would not stand for the rather aggressive evangelism of the Oxford Group. And they would not accept the principle of 'team guidance' for their own personal lives."

Reprinted from Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, Pages 156-157, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

An AA Funny . . .

When I was helping someone clean up the unmanageability of her house when she got sober, and it needed to be cleaned, her husband had a suitcase in the middle of room and she opened it to see what was in it. No surprise to find a bottle of alcohol in it when the household was active but she was still stunned.

When she confronted him about it, his response was 'I'm not drinking it, the drug dealer left it in the car and I'm just holding it'.



Understanding Anonymity



"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

What is the purpose of anonymity in Alcoholics Anonymous? Why is it often referred to as the greatest single protection the Fellowship has to assure its continued existence and growth?

If we look at the history of A.A., from its beginning in 1935 until now, it is clear that anonymity serves two different yet equally vital functions:

- At the personal level, anonymity provides protection for all members from identification as alcoholics, a safeguard often of special importance to newcomers.
- At the public level of press, radio, TV, films and other media technologies such as the Internet, anonymity stresses the equality in the Fellowship of all members by putting the brake on those who might otherwise exploit their A.A. affiliation to achieve recognition, power, or personal gain.

When using digital media, A.A. members are responsible for their own anonymity and that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should assume that we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others. The word "anonymous" in our name is meant to provide as much privacy as an individual may desire regarding membership in A.A.

Reprinted from Understanding Anonymity, Pamphlet P-47, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.

[A bit of A.A. history from General Service Office History Archives...](#)

1940 - Rockefeller's dinner. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. hosts a dinner at the exclusive Union Club (right) to publicize Alcoholics Anonymous. Because Rockefeller believes that A.A. should be self-supporting, and this is understood by the guests, no money is solicited or raised. Nevertheless, Rockefeller sees to it that the event receives favorable and widespread publicity. Within a month, small donations trickle in from members, slightly easing the financial difficulty faced by A.A. during this early period.



Union Club, New York City



Flag of Ecuador

1966 - Three start-ups in Ecuador. After a group of physicians from the Ecuadorean city of Cuenca observe A.A. groups in neighboring Colombia, they are instrumental in getting a local group off the ground: Grupo Alianza Amiga, listed with G.S.O. New York in March 1966. The second known group takes shape when Eduardo A., who had achieved sobriety through A.A. in Washington, DC, returns home to Guayaquil and arranges with a local priest to hold meetings in his church. In the fall of 1971, the Guayaquil group helps Paulina M., who had gotten sober in Coral Gables, Florida, and Javier J., a businessman from Lima, Peru, to launch the first known group in the capital city of Quito.