

THE COURIER

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BILL W's HOLIDAY GIFT by Bob S., A.A CLEVELAND

On a bleak November day in 1934, Bill W. was in the process of receiving—albeit unknowingly—a Christmas present beyond his belief. During a visit, an old schoolmate, Ebby T., explained how he had found sobriety via religious ideas of the Oxford Group. Bill was amazed, yet unimpressed. He thought: *“My gin would last longer than his preaching.”* (p. 9 BB.) But it did not! Bill’s curiosity with his friend’s success eventually led Bill to the doors of the alcoholic ward of Towns Hospital a few weeks later. He was released with a full week of sobriety on December 18, just one week before Christmas. He never drank again!



But that was only a beginning! While in the hospital, he had a personality change that altered his *modus operandi*! He previously had never wanted anything more than to be a rich member of the Wall street crowd, as he was before drinking ruined that high point of his life. However, before leaving the hospital the thought came to him: *“There were thousands of hopeless alcoholics who might be glad to have what had been so freely given to me. Perhaps I could help some of them. They in turn might work with others.”* (p. 14 BB.)

Bill’s real Christmas present was a complete personality change as described by Dr. Carl Jung: *“Ideas, emotions, and attitudes which were once the guiding forces of the lives of these men are suddenly cast to one side, and a completely new set of conceptions and motives begin to dominate the-.”* (p. 27 BB.) Well, did Bill go back to Wall Street? No, he did not! He went down to Calvary mission and brought home a disheveled, and perhaps not-so-well-smelling, wino to his fancy Brooklyn Heights home and fed him and prayed with him. But the drunk got drunk, again. So, Bill went back, and the same thing happened. Did he give up and go back to Wall Street? No, he did not! He went back to that mission again and again through January, February and March of 1935 and guess what? They all got drunk!

What a personality change! What a wonderful Christmas present! Not just getting sober, but a strong desire to help others. We call this Step Twelve today, but this personality change was not only Bill’s exciting Christmas Present—it is certainly ours, as well!

By Bob S., Alcoholics Anonymous—Cleveland, Ohio

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS PREAMBLE:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The 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 achieve sobriety. (AA Grape-



STEP TWELVE: “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.”

TRADITION TWELVE: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.”

TRADITION TWELVE: (Long Form) “And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.”

CONCEPT TWELVE: “The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government; that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.”

12th Step Prayer: My spiritual awakening continues to unfold. The help I have received I shall pass on and give to others, Both in and out of the Fellowship. For this opportunity I am grateful. I pray most humbly to continue walking day by day on the road of spiritual progress. I pray for the inner strength and wisdom to practice the principles of this way of life in all I do and say. I need You, my friends, and the program every hour of every day. This is a better way to live.

TRADITIONS—CHECKLIST

This is a Checklist for Tradition Twelve:
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1. Why is it a good idea for me to place the common welfare of all AA members before individual welfare? What would happen to me if AA as a whole disappeared?
2. When I do not trust AA's current servants, who do I wish had the authority to straighten them out?
3. In my opinions of and remarks about other AAs, am I implying membership requirements other than a desire to stay sober?
4. Do I ever try to get a certain AA group to conform to my standards, not its own?
5. Have I a personal responsibility in helping an AA group fulfill its primary purpose? What is my part?
6. Does my personal behavior reflect the Sixth Tradition—or belie it?
7. Do I do all I can do to support AA financially? When is the last time I anonymously gave away a Grapevine subscription?
8. Do I complain about certain AAs' behavior—especially if they are paid to work for AA? Who made me so smart?
9. Do I fulfill all AA responsibilities in such a way as to please privately even my own conscience? Really?
10. Do my utterances always reflect the Tenth Tradition, or do I give AA critics real ammunition?
11. Should I keep my AA membership a secret, or reveal it in private conversation when that may help an other alcoholic (and therefore me)? Is my brand of AA so attractive that other drunks want it?
12. What is the real importance of me among more than a million AAs?

“The only way I ever found to displace a thought was to put another thought in its stead.”

**“We Must Banish Fear!”
Alexandria, Virginia, August 1950, AA Grapevine**



The 12 Days of Christmas

With the first step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
A day of sobriety.

With the second step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
A wee bit of faith and...

With the third step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Will-ing-ness...

With the fourth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Pencil, pen and pad...

With the fifth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Another human being

With the sixth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Lots of options

With the eighth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Too good a mem'ry...

With the ninth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Shatterproof glasses...

With the tenth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Spot checks a plenty...

With the eleventh step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
The Prayer of St. Francis

With the twelfth step of A.A.
My HP gave to me
Calls on the hotline...

The First Noel

**The first little drink my sponsor did say would
take my 3-year chip away.**

Be it whiskey or beer—be it red wine or white.

I'll end with me puking all through the night.

Little drink, little drink, the first little drink -

It's an idea that really stinks!

Deck the Halls

Deck the dash with beer and wine
D-D-D-D-D-D-W-I

Wreck the car with bongos and line
D-D-D-D-D-D-W-I

Officer, I hear you sing
D-D-D-D-D-D-W-I

Breathe into this little thing
D-D-D-D-D-D-W-I

God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen

**A.A. is where you ought to go
While drinking is in your way
It tells you what you need to know
To get you through the day
It leads you to your Higher Power
When you have gone astray
O come now and join us at A.A.
Come to A.A.
O come now and join us in A.A.**

Jingle Bells

Jingling keys, Jingling keys,
That is what you'll hear
When you get to rehab
The end of your career
Of alcohol, self-abuse,
Life in disarray
Then you can discover
The healing of A.A.

Anonymity: The Spiritual Foundation

We Failed: Idealists Need Attention

Rick R. - Miami, Florida

I came from a family that was riddled with alcoholic drinkers and many of them had the problem as bad as I did.

I recall the first month, or so, when I got sober, still hanging out with them at our favorite watering hole, drinking ginger ale. I would slip out every night at 8:00pm and go to the A.A. meeting at 8:30 and return at 10:30 pm without telling anyone where I was going. I didn't want anybody to know that I was checking out the Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) program.

I didn't want to face the ridicule at the time, and I wasn't sure it was going to work for me. If it didn't work, I wouldn't have put up with their mocking me. You might say that I was protecting my anonymity at the time and didn't even know it. After thirty days of that, I didn't care who knew about it because I believed I had found the answer, and I did.

Soon after that I was one of those guys that wanted to shout it from the rooftops and try to sober up everyone around me and you know how that turned out. As I dragged each or my five brothers to A.A. meetings, it seems that they each learned just enough to be able to rationalize exactly why they were not alcoholics, and they ridiculed me any way. Two later died of alcohol related symptoms and a third committed suicide. That was among the experiences that gave me hard earned lessons on the respect for the principle of anonymity.

Of the rest of my immediate family of ten, only one sister saw something in me that she liked, and she got sober in the program and hasn't had a drink in over forty-eight years. We are exposed to the discussions in A.A. meeting as the newer members complain about someone breaking their anonymity, or the ones that want to shout it from the rooftops, like my former self, and that will always be the case in A.A. ... as *that* is one of the symptoms of alcoholism. We are failed idealists that need attention.

But as we get more experience, we learn the true value of the spirit of anonymity. We can always come up with some noble reason for tooting our own horn and we can dress it up in the altruistic motive of sacrificing one's own anonymity to save someone's life and that, sometimes, in the long run, destroys the chance of being a good example and often turns out doing just the opposite ... and, I have personally witnessed that.

In Tradition Twelve it talks of Anonymity as "The spiritual foundation of all of our Traditions ... ever reminding us to place principles before personalities". There is a difference in the "Spirit of the law", and the "Letter of the law". We who have been diligent with the program have been highly influenced by the Spirit of what the founders learned and introduced us to in the form of the 12 steps and the 12 traditions. They all come in the form of unselfishness of the spirit.

I have yet to find one prayer or principle in the two books that we use as reference guides, that are of a *material nature or of selfish motives*. This tells me that the things I do, that are as the result of practicing the principles of the program, should be done unselfishly and *without fanfare*. So long as I needed the attention that I was always seeking when I was looking for the photo opportunity; I was still only following the letter of the law, so to speak.

When I came to understand the Spirit of Anonymity, I was able to rein in my EGO and my selfish motives. I try to be a good role model and do it quietly. It seems to work better that way.

BENEFITS of RECOVERY

There are two benefits from recovery: we have short-term gains and long-term gains.

The short-term gains are the things we can do today that help us feel better immediately.

We can wake up in the morning, read for a few minutes in our meditation book, and feel lifted. We can work a Step and often notice an immediate difference in the way we feel and function. We can go to a meeting and feel refreshed, talk to a friend and feel comforted, or practice a new recovery behavior, such as dealing with *our* feelings or doing something good for ourselves, and feel relieved.

There are other benefits from recovery, though, that we don't see immediately on a daily or even a monthly basis. These are the long-term gains, the larger progress we make in our life.

Over the years, we can see tremendous rewards. We can watch ourselves grow strong in faith, until we have a daily personal relationship with a Higher Power that is as real to us as a relationship with a best friend.

We can watch ourselves grow beautiful as we shed shame, guilt, resentments, self-hatred, and other negative buildups from our past.

We can watch the quality of our relationships improve with family, friends, and spouses. We find ourselves growing steadily and gradually in our capacity to be intimate and close, to give and receive.

We can watch ourselves grow in our careers, in our ability to be creative, powerful, productive people, using our gifts and talents in a way that feels good and benefits others.

We discover the joy and beauty in ourselves, others, and life.

The long-term progress is steady, but sometimes slow; happening in increments and often with much forward and backward movement. Enough days at a time of practicing recovery behaviors and piling up short-term gains lead to long-term rewards.



Gratitude is a verb not a noun. A quote from Bill W., says: “Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward. In other words, if you carry the message to still others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given you.” This sounds like the alcoholic version of “Pay It Forward.” It makes perfect sense when you think about it. I like to do quick Gratitude Lists in my head when I am feeling stressed, and it is usually pretty easy to think of ten things I am grateful for. But even though this mental exercise of making a Gratitude List usually calms me down and refocuses me, it is not very productive in terms of helping others. Having me recite in my own mind that I am grateful for having my health, my freedom, my family and friends, etc., isn’t very useful to my brothers and sisters who are still sick and suffering. As important as it is for me to feel grateful, and to have an attitude of gratitude, Bill W. reminds me how important it is to show my gratitude by carrying the message to others. There are so many opportunities to be of service in the Program, and you never know when just being present at a meeting might help save the life of someone in trouble. It’s great to be grateful, but it’s better to be helpful.

What Do Those Mottos Mean? – From Twenty-Four Hours a Day

First Things First

We should always keep in mind that alcohol is our number one problem. We must not ever let any other problem, whether of family, business, friends or anything else, take precedence in our minds over our alcohol problem. As we go along in AA, we learn to recognize the things that may upset us emotionally. When we find ourselves getting upset over something, we must realize that it's a luxury we alcoholics can't afford. Anything that makes us forget our number one problem is dangerous to us.

Live and Let Live

Tolerance of other people who think differently than we do, whether they are in AA, or outside of AA. We cannot afford the luxury of being intolerant or critical of other people. We do not try to impose our wills on those who differ from us. We are not "holier than thou". We do not have all the answers. We are not better than other good people. We live the best way we can and allow others to do likewise.

Easy Does It

We just go along in life doing the best we can and not getting steamed up over problems that arise in AA or outside of it. We alcoholics are emotional people and have gone to excess in almost everything we have done. We have not been moderate in many things. We have not known how to relax. Faith in a Higher Power can help us to learn to take it easy. We are not running the world. I am only one among many. We are resolved to live normal, regular lives.

But for the Grace of God

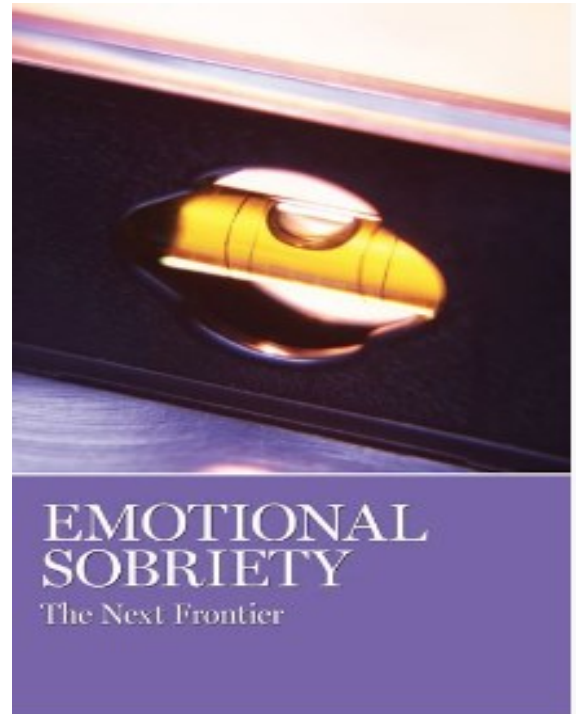
Once we have fully accepted the AA program, we become humble about our achievement. We do not take too much credit for our sobriety. When we see another suffering alcoholic in the throes of alcoholism, we say to ourselves: "But for the grace of god, there go I". We do not forget the kind of people we once were. We remember those we have left behind us. And we are very grateful to the grace of god which has given us another chance.



**Naples Area Intergroup
BOOKSTORE and GIFT SHOP
HOLIDAY SHOPPING
9 to 4 / Monday - Saturday**

“Today’s sobriety cannot be chugalugged ... It has to be sipped, one taste at a time, so that each drop of serenity can be fully savored.”

North Hollywood, California, August 1982, “Savoring Our Sobriety,” , Emotional Sobriety



AA Volunteer Opportunities



*Naples Area
Intergroup*

Mornings: 9:00 to 12:30

Afternoon: 12:30 to 4:00

(One morning or afternoon each week.)

and, Telephone Helpline

After-hours, various days.

1-year continuous sobriety.

For information: 239/262-6535

Gifts of the Program

Courage *not* Fear

Faith *not* Despair

Hope *not* Desperation

Peace Of Mind *not* Confusion

Self-Respect *not* Self-Contempt

Real Friendships *not* Loneliness

Self-Confidence *not* Helpfulness

Clean Conscience *not* Guilt

Respect *not* Contempt

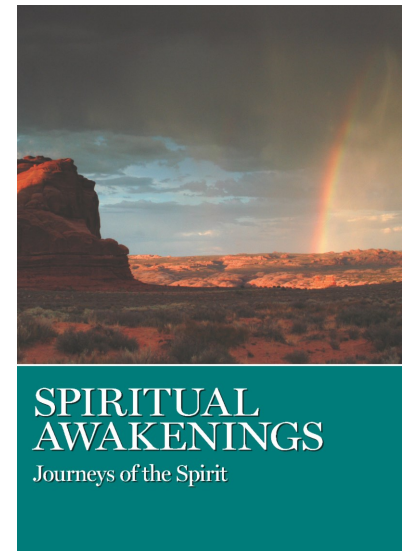
Direction *not* Purposeless

Love and Understanding *not* Doubts

Freedom *not* Bondage

“The first 100 members of this Fellowship, who hammered out the Twelve Steps, knew what they were doing. They could have made it two steps or ten steps or twenty-five steps, but they didn't. I don't think they put anything in they didn't think they needed. They were working the whole program, not because they were saints, but because they were drunks who wanted to get well. I have no reason to suppose I'm any less sick than they were; I have no reason to suppose I need any less of the program than they did.”

Hankins, New York, May 1967, “AA's Steps Lead to -- Spiritual Awakening,” Spiritual Awakenings



Calling all AA

Authors !!!

**Please submit
an article to**

The COURIER !!!

Email article to:

naplesintergroup@yahoo.com

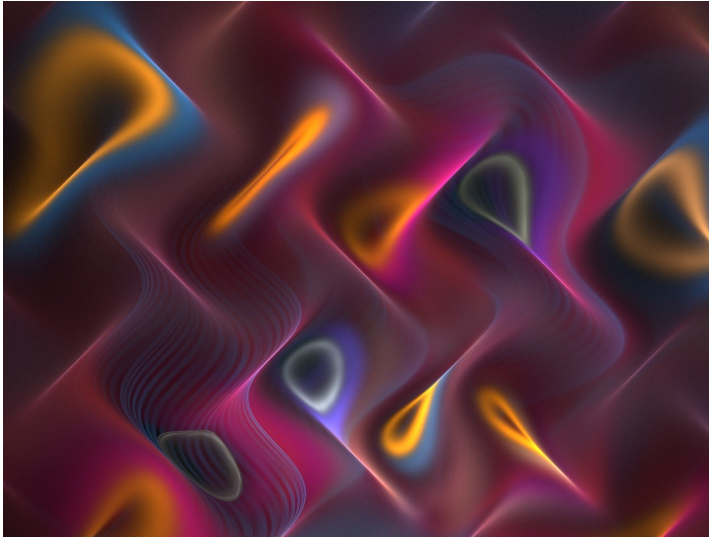


**Your Groups'
Activities
Can Be Here
Next Month.
To Highlight**

**Your Group,
Please Call Us:
Intergroup Office**

Tradition Twelve

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



Tradition Twelve states with unforgettable clarity the importance of placing “principles above personalities.” In practice, this Tradition affirms the importance of humility. When applying this Tradition in our personal lives, we look for the fundamental spiritual qualities that we have in common with other people, rather than focusing on differences of personality and personal preference. As we look beyond our own likes and desires, we develop trust that our Higher Power will lead us to solutions that we might never have considered.

In the past, we may have allowed personalities to have too much influence on our decisions. Discounting the ideas of those whom we dislike may not have served us well. On the other hand, it was equally shortsighted to follow ideas only because they were from those we liked. By practicing the principle expressed in this Tradition, we learn that good ideas or insights can come from anyone, anytime.

As we learn to detach from the conflicts and issues related to personalities, we can find greater peace of mind. Listening more intently to the will of a Higher Power helps us open ourselves to higher levels of serenity and personal fulfillment.

Before A.A., much of how I thought about myself was shaped by how I thought others saw me. I was constantly telling everyone everything that I was doing, and gauging my self-worth through their responses. I used my achievements to garner praise and admiration, and my troubles to solicit sympathy and concern.

Today, my concept of anonymity not only contains the traditional ideas of keeping our rooms a safe place to share and grow in the program, but also reminds me that I do not need external validation for my actions so that I can feel worthy.

By working the Steps, sharing at meetings, working with a Sponsor, and sponsoring others, I am able to validate myself through a relationship with my Higher Power. Through the conscious contact with the God of my understanding, I can allow the principles of the program to enhance my sense of self. While I still have the occasion to share my joys and sorrows with others, it is in the true spirit of sharing myself, rather than seeking to fill an empty hole. I can be anonymous, but not invisible.

It’s important for me to understand that the practice of anonymity is primarily a spiritual principle, not a way for me to hide who and what I am. When I am compelled to put up a front to appear “normal” on the outside, I am only hurting myself, and those I love. Honesty is the best policy.

Spiritual anonymity. Spiritual principles. There’s that word again: spiritual. I needed to figure out what this means for me. Spirituality is an inside job, having to do with how I think and behave, not who I say I am. Merely not using my name cannot make me equal, humble, or spiritual. This Tradition shows me it’s more productive to focus on what it truly means to understand that all of us actually are equal in the eyes of God, no matter what.

Specifically, this Tradition encourages me to figure out how to live a principled life in a million different ways. Paying attention to principles allows me spiritual growth. Directing my attention toward personalities does not.

The AA program shows me how to find myself. I am free to adhere to spiritual principles that allow me to live a life of serenity and happiness, if that’s what I choose. Nobody forces me to do any of this. It’s just me and my Higher Power, improving me, “One Day at a Time.”

Principles above personalities. Each time I am uncomfortable because things don’t turn out my way, I accept the situation and take care of myself. This tradition motivates me to be more honest with myself. It helps me to enlarge my spiritual warehouse, so that everything I hear in meetings will be guarded in the private places of my mind and spirit. I have learned to have more respect for myself, and to share my experience, strength and hope with others. When spiritual principles govern my life, the result will be to my benefit.

A Spiritual Overhaul – *It Is a Wonderful Life!* ... continued From the November 2022 COURIER**Donald W. – Ft Myers, Florida**

My dog Fiona was settled in the chair opposite from me on our lanai when the doorbell rang. As usual, that meant that Fiona would leap out of the chair and race to the front door to confront the outsider who dared to disrupt our leisurely Saturday morning. As I opened the door, I smiled to see my friend sporting a red Santa Claus hat, obviously, someone was caught up in the Christmas spirit, and not surprisingly he belted out a hearty “Ho, ho, ho, Merry Christmas!”

I smiled and waved my friend in; Fiona gave him a couple of requisite sniffs to confirm his credentials and certify his safe entrance. I smiled, “Looking good, Santa!” I said as we headed into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee and then back out to the lanai. Fiona gave me that look that says, “I get a treat for that, right?” Hard to argue with Fiona so I acquiesced to her request and my friend and I settled into our chairs on the lanai.

“A perfect 7 for 7 since last week,” I said approvingly. Each morning in the past week I had received a simple one-word text message from my friend, “Done” indicating that he had completed his simplified version of the morning routine outlined in the Big Book for Step Eleven. After many of us have struggled with the flood of information around Steps One and Two and the ambiguity of the housecleaning steps, the directions for our morning devotion, are laid out clearly and concisely on two pages (86 & 87) of the Big Book. How is it that so many alcoholics drop the ball on this critical practice? In my own experience, by the time I got to Step Eleven, I had been sober for a while, so I was good to go, right? The only “daily routine” I heard being talked about in meetings was to go to as many meetings as possible. “Ninety meetings in ninety days,” was the battle cry I heard in my discussion groups, and I embraced that mantra like a guy racking up frequent flyer points for a vacation in Hawaii.

“So, tell me, how is the morning devotion going so far?” “Well, as we talked about, it was a lot harder than it sounds, I mean just committing to set aside time in the morning to contact my Higher Power and sitting down to do it. But the past week was better, I am now starting to get into a routine and once I got comfortable with that it seemed like the reading made more sense to me. At first, I was just reading the directions, as you like to call them but this past week especially, I began to, I don’t know the right word, maybe *absorb* them?”

My friend reached for his Big Book and continued, “For example, that first paragraph, right at the beginning, ‘... *let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day.*’ I think everybody does that when they wake up already, right? I mean, what do I have going on at work, and family stuff I have to attend to, those things are part of a normal day, right?” “Yeah, so what is different?” I asked my friend. “That next line, ‘...*we ask God to direct our thinking...*’” my friend responded animatedly. “We are asking God for help and not just because we have got ourselves in a jam and we are looking for a way out! And then it says ‘...*especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives.*’ And then the paragraph closes with ‘*Our thought life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives.*’ Dishonesty and self-seeking showed up regularly in my Fifth Step inventory that I did with my sponsor, Jim, so I guess it is pretty reasonable to think that they can rear their heads again, especially if I am not spiritually fit.”

“You got that right, my friend,” I shot back. “Dishonesty, self-seeking, and quite often, self-pity were the default settings in my world before I came to A.A. I asked God to remove them, and He did but that doesn’t mean they can’t come back if I am not attentive to regular inventory. They may not look the same as they did back then but that is one of the challenges with identifying character defects, they are like a shapeshifter in a sci-fi movie - the same nemesis just dressed up differently. Subtle but deadly to the alcoholic. So, it sounds like good advice, right? Ask God every day to direct our thinking, and not allow our character defects to run the show.”

My friend was on a roll now as he declared, “And what about that next paragraph where it goes on to talk about possible indecision facing us that day? Asking God for help with that?” Again, I laughed, “I know, right? What a novel idea - asking God for ‘... *inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision*’ instead of self-reliance, the way most of us have been doing it our whole lives.” My friend said, “Yes, that part seemed a little bit out there for me, I haven’t experienced anything like that yet.” “Understood,” I replied, “but it also says in that paragraph ‘*We are often surprised how the right answers come after we have tried this for a while.*’ They are preaching patience here, right? I don’t know many alcoholics that are first-team all-stars in that department either. I know I wasn’t! As you can see, there is a lot packed into those two paragraphs, but it is not just about the directions, it is loaded with new promises as well.”

A SPIRITUAL OVERHAUL - It's A Wonderful Life ! ... continued from page 10.

"But before we go there did you notice the 'time stamp' they put on the action at the beginning of the first paragraph, it says 'Upon awakening' did you notice that?" My friend checked his book and looked back up at me, "No, I guess I didn't but why is that noteworthy?" I answered, "Well, think about it. Bill Wilson could have said something like 'as we start our day' or 'in the morning' but instead he says 'Upon awakening'. I don't have to tell you that I am something of a crackpot when it comes to Big Book puzzles, and for a long time, I wondered if that had any significance. I haven't found anything specifically talking about that point but I did come up with something interesting from Emmet Fox's writings that may have been influential in how Bill Wilson may have laid out these 'Morning Devotion' directions."

"Yeah, I have heard you guys talk about Emmet Fox before but I have never read any of his stuff," my friend offered. I responded, "In expectation of our conversation this morning, I grabbed my copy of *Around the Year with Emmet Fox: A Book of Daily Readings* and some notes that I had about Emmet's writings. We are not quite there yet but one of the suggestions in the book is that you supplement your morning quiet time with some reading material. Again, this is one of those areas where each person discovers what works best for them but I have a couple of books that I favor, and this daily reader by Emmet has been a mainstay of my morning reading for many years."

"In returning to what we were talking about, the relevance of the phrase 'Upon awakening', I found this to be interesting, what Emmet called 'Five Simple Rules for Your Life'.

***Devote at least a quarter of an hour a day to prayer and meditation.
Train yourself to give the first thought on awakening to God.
Resolutely turn your back on the past, good, or bad, and live only in the present.
Forgive everybody without exception, no matter what they may have done,
and then forgive yourself wholeheartedly.
Endeavor to make your life of as much service to others as possible.***

"Whoa," my friend roared, "This guy must have read the Big Book!" "No", I responded with a laugh, "Emmet Fox was a big influence on Bill Wilson and other New York members. The mother of one of the early New York members was Emmet Fox's secretary and it was through this connection that the AA members were able to secure tickets to Fox's lectures at Steinway Hall in New York City. So my point here is, although there is no record of this being verified by Bill Wilson, is that this idea 'to give the first thought on awakening to God.' may have been a result of the influence of Emmet Fox. It is an interesting suggestion, why don't you try it out?"

"Wait, what do you mean?" my friend said. I replied "It's simple. See how long it takes you to think about God when you wake up. Another homework assignment for you before we meet next week." "OK, I can do that," my friend responded. "Good, keep doing what you are doing with the morning routine, and we can talk next Saturday if you are available." My friend responded, "Yes, we can do that, especially for the first time in a long time, I have actually finished my Christmas shopping early. I have some cool gifts for my wife and the kids, so I am excited about Christmas this year. What about you?"

"My wife gets back from visiting her family up north later tonight" I replied. "For the rest of today, I plan to kick back and watch some Christmas movies." My friend laughed, "Really? I never took you for a movie guy. I know I don't usually have the patience to sit through a two-hour movie especially if it is an old one."

"Well, the two I have ready to go are 'It's a Wonderful Life' and 'A Christmas Carol'. The parallels between those movies and the journey of an alcoholic are surprisingly similar." "What?" my friend said quizzically. "Think about it," I responded. "Almost all of the classic Christmas movies are about someone who has lost their faith in humankind, the will to live, and then regaining it by being saved by the kindness of others. Isn't that what is happening to us when we arrive in the rooms of A.A.? We have lost all faith in our ability to resurrect ourselves from our alcoholism and we are saved by a renewal of faith in a Higher Power and the kindness of others. These two movies in particular are powerful stories about regeneration, rehabilitation, and the change in the main character's attitude and outlook on life. They are both morality plays and redemption stories. You can relate to that, right?" My friend nodded in agreement.

"Just like Scrooge and George Bailey, we have been given a second chance. We came to that fork in the road, we were forced to look at our lives, our past, our present, and where we were headed if we did not change our ways. For many of us, alcoholism had robbed us of our family and friends, and Christmas time, more than any other time of the year is when loneliness surrounds

A Spiritual Overhaul – It Is a Wonderful Life! ... continued from page 11.

“Just like Scrooge and George Bailey, we have been given a second chance. We came to that fork in the road, we were forced to look at our lives, our past, our present, and where we were headed if we did not change our ways. For many of us, alcoholism had robbed us of our family and friends, and Christmas time, more than any other time of the year is when loneliness surrounds us. *‘Some day he will be unable to imagine life either with alcohol or without it. Then he will know loneliness such as few do. He will be at the jumping-off place. He will wish for the end.’* Isn’t that where both George Bailey and Scrooge were just before they found salvation?”

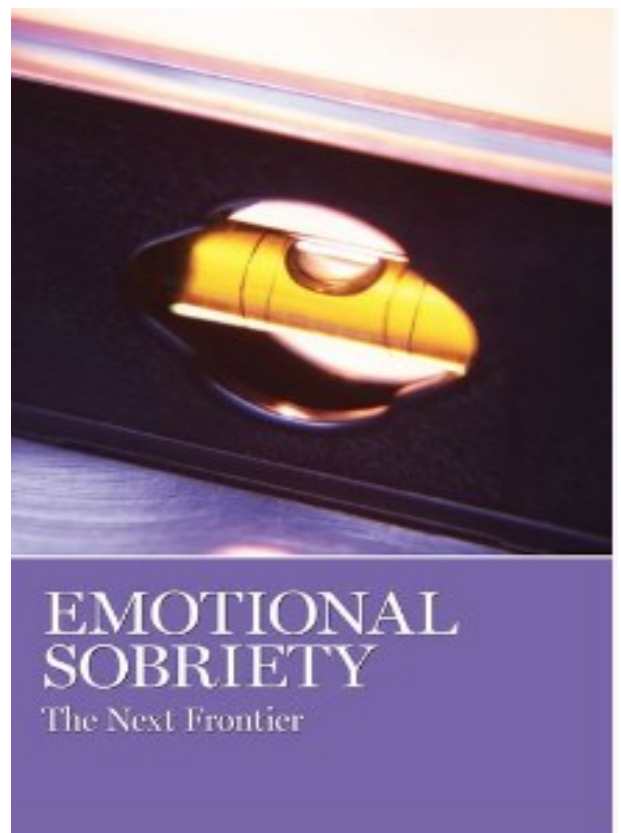
“Wow, I guess you are right. I never thought of that,” my friend responded. “When I was drinking, I hated Christmastime and I thought that drinking would make things better, but it just made it worse. When I got sober and looked around and saw how blessed I was with my family, and the excitement of my kids on Christmas morning. Those things had been there all along, I just never realized how important, how special those things are. But by not ‘doing the deal’, as you often say, I have lost sight of those blessings, too much negative thinking, and not enough gratitude for the gifts that I do have.”

I smiled again at my friend. “Christmas evokes memories of days past, our childhood, and sometimes a painful reminder of those who are no longer here. The season, the lights, and the music, I think almost force us to revisit those memories and for an alcoholic, not all of those memories are treasured. Perhaps it was the grief of what you didn't have that everyone else had at Christmas, whether it be a loved one or a place to go where you felt wanted. But those are the painful memories that can motivate us to reach out and help people struggling at Christmas so that something good can come out of our experience. It doesn't have to happen in a church basement, or a meeting room, it can be in our families too.

An awakening, a reclamation, a redemption – call it what you will. *‘We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.’* I am sure George Bailey would agree, *it IS a wonderful life.*

“It doesn’t do too much good to carry the Big Book on your arm all day if you don’t open it up and read it.”

Oceanside, California, June 2000, “As Unique as Ham and Eggs,” Emotional Sobriety



The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

Step Study Meetings

Rick R. - Miami, Florida

I consider myself to be one of the fortunate ones that came to Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) in 1969, at the age of 28, desperately looking for answers. The Rehabilitation programs had not gotten off the ground yet, and Drug Addicts did not begin to show up until the mid-1970s. A considerable number of the members of A.A. came there of their own free will, wanting to get sober. The elders of my first group suggest that, if you plan to attend so many meetings a week, one of them should be a Step Study Meeting, and I have been doing that ever since. As we do that, we go through the steps 4 times a year as we split step 12 into two parts due to the number of pages it entails. As new members come into the group they bring with them, their own variety of alcoholic symptoms and it takes time to abandon the things that they feel threatens their own identity. It was not uncommon to see them in the parking lot after the meeting gossiping and bad-mouthing other members that they disagree with, and I was no different than them in my early days of recovery.

About 20 years ago a local group in our community was uprooted from their location and ended up in a new Alano Club at the time and they settled into the Monday through Friday 7 AM slots. The Thursday meeting became a Big Book Study, and the Friday meeting was a Step Study. I was happy to have them so convenient for me. I was much happier when, after we completed Step Twelve, we did not go back to Step One. We went straight into Tradition One and in a short time I noticed how the traditions shined a new light on what Alcoholics Anonymous was all about. On the first page in Tradition One it states "*We believe there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No A.A. can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled. Our 12 steps to recovery are suggestions; the 12 traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single Don't. They repeatedly say, "We ought..." but never "You must."*" WE don't normally hear these things in the everyday meetings.

Each of the Traditions have their own variety of suggestions that, in the interest of unity, add a mature understanding to those that study them and share them with those that have not studied the Traditions.

When I share at a meeting I try to explain, in a way that does not reflect *being in judgement* about any individual. I may discuss Character Defects or Shortcomings and explain the idea that we all have them and for me to point out the faults of others is a *shortcoming, itself*. The person that gets off the beaten path is the person I care about the most. These are all symptoms of Alcoholism, and I am no better than anyone in the program. I may be farther down the path, but No Better. We may hear the term "Love and Tolerance" and try to explain how I include it in my approach to these two words. Scott Peck was influential in the spiritual approach in the program and in his book "The Road Less Traveled" he defines Love, as "Caring for and nurturing another person's soul, and not the version we see up on the movie screen." It is an action word, and I can Love everyone even if they do not love me back.

As for the word "Tolerance," I would change that word to "Acceptance," as they suffer from the same disease that I once suffered from, and I am not superior to anyone in the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

How do I know if I'm doing God's will?

I don't ... but, I know when I'm not.

- GRAPEVINE, February 2002.

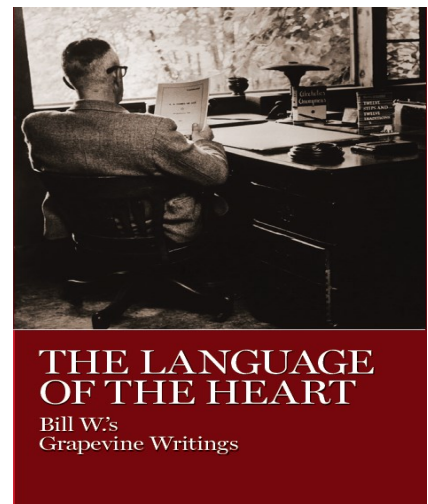
Twelve Tips for a Sober Joyous Holiday Season

Holiday parties without alcohol may still be a dreary prospect for new AAs. But many of us have enjoyed the happiest holidays of our lives sober. **Here are some tips:**

1. Line up extra AA activities—meetings, speaking, phone answering, other AA service.
2. Entertain AA friends, especially newcomers.
3. Keep AA phone numbers with you at all times—and use them.
4. Find out about special holiday parties, meetings, or other events at groups in our area, and go. If you're shy, take a newer member.
5. Skip drinking occasions you're nervous about. Remember your drinking talent for making excuses? Put it to work for you in sobriety.
6. If you must attend a drinking party, and can't find a fellow AA to come with you, keep some candy handy.
7. You don't have to stay late. Plan for an "important date."
8. Go to church. Any church.
9. Don't sit around brooding. Catch up on reading, letters, walks.
10. Remember, one day at a time. Don't start now to worry about all those silly parties and "holiday temptations."
11. **And, lastly ... if you can't give material gifts this year, you can give love !!!**

"In despair, I had cried out, 'Now I am willing to do anything. If there is a God, will he show himself?' And he did. This was my first conscious contact, my first awakening. I asked from the heart, and I received."

*AA Co-Founder, Bill W., July 1960,
"The Language of the Heart", The
Language of the Heart*





“**THE BRIGHT SPOT
OF OUR LIVES**”

**NEW YEARS EVE
NEW YOU CELEBRATION**
1 2 • 3 1 • 2 2



DOORS OPEN AT 8 PM
24 HOUR CLUB OF NAPLES - 1509 PINE RIDGE RD NAPLES, FL 34109

**ATTIRE: ALL WHITE REPRESENTING
THE BRAZILIAN TRADITION OF NEW BEGINNINGS**

TAROT CARDS READERS
DINNER/DRINKS & DESSERT

SOBRIETY COUNTDOWN
“A VISION FOR YOU” BOARD

\$15 | \$20
PRESALE | AT THE DOOR
SUGGESTED DONATION

DJ DR. BOP -BOILER ROOM EDITION-
SPEAKERS:
SHANE M. ORLANDO
KATIE B. MIAMI

ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND * SPONSORSHIP TICKETS AVAILABLE



New Year's Eve
Dinner & Dance
at The Serenity Club!

Only \$10

7pm Speakers Meeting

8:30pm Potluck Dinner

10pm Dancing until Midnight!

Call 776-6767 for tickets or information



Announcing the First SWFL

Meeting Exchange!! (AKA- "Booking meeting")

(Some AA's know these as "Commitments", "Outgoings & Incomings" or "Swaps")

Saturday February 4, 2023 7:00 – 9:00am

St. Mary's Episcopal Church

9801 Bonita Beach Rd SE, Bonita Springs

ALL GROUPS MAY PARTICIPATE!

THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT FOR HOW MANY EXCHANGES A GROUP MAKES...

JUST AS LONG AS THERE IS AN EXCHANGE.

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

- **Carrying the message to groups we would not normally attend.**
- **Expand our connections in our recovery with other meetings in a post-pandemic world.**
- **Bring newcomers to more meetings and recovering alcoholics outside their group.**
- **Learn how to have a "meeting before the meeting and the meeting after the meeting."**
- **Typically, two and three speakers, plus a meeting leader, for introductions, are exchanged between groups. Other meeting types, such as big book, step, discussion, beginner leads, or others, may also be exchanged for speaking or other commitments as some groups do not have speaker meetings.**
- **Increased service opportunities for your group members.**
- **Intergroup and District Committees, plus Corrections; Institutions; PI/CPC; & Intergroup Offices, FCYPAA, Grapevine, and other AA-related service committees are invited to attend to get volunteers too!**

"To keep this, we have to give it away!"

*For more detailed information on how you and your groups can participate,
email Tom B @ tcb4457@gmail.com*

The fine print»»»»»»»»

FINANCES**Nov****YTD****Income**

Literature/Merchandise \$3,434 \$37,472

Group Contributions 791 26,667

AA Birthdays 759

Faithful Five 45 409

Individual/Anonymous 800 7,654

Total Income 5,070 72,961**Expenses**

Bank/Credit Card Fees 186 704

Travel/Licenses/Permits 86

Office Supplies 812 4,843

Office Improve/Repair 433

www Hosting 570

Payroll 1,958 21,543

Payroll Tax 4,455

Postage 175 338

Printing

Purchases/Lit./Merch. 2,463 27,948

Insurance 568

Rent 500 5,500

Sales Tax 262 2,948

Telephone/www 429 2,388

Utilities 100 1,100

Computer Equipment

Computer Software 105 2,368

Computer/Maintain

Total Expenses 6,931 73,572**Net Ordinary Income** (1,861) (611)

Gratitude Dinner 4,790 7,770

Other Expenses 5,529 5,798

NET OTHER INCOME (739) 1,972**NET INCOME** (\$2,600) \$1,972**Thank You to all who contributed to
Naples Intergroup / Central Office.****Spirituality and Money**

"While the work of the group treasurer often involves many details, it is important to remember that the money the treasurer oversees serves a spiritual purpose: it enables each group to fulfill its primary purpose of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. This is the fundamental work of A.A. and to continue it the group must keep its doors open. The group treasurer is an important part of this Twelfth Step work."

SELF-SUPPORT:**Where Money and Spirituality Mix****Naples Area Intergroup**

1509-2 Pine Ridge Road
Naples, FL 34109
(50%)

District 20

District 20 Treasurer
P.O. Box 2896
Naples, FL 34106
(10%)

General Service Office

James A. Fraley Station
P.O. Box 2407
New York, N.Y. 10116
(New Address) (30%)

Area 15

Wayne H.
P.O. Box 311
Safety Harbor, FL 34695
(10%)

Disbursement of a Group's Funds

"After the group's basic needs are met, such as providing for rent, literature, refreshments, and insurance, the group can participate in the financial support of the Fellowship as a whole by sending money to various A.A. service entities: 1) their local Intergroup or Central Office, 2) Area 15 and District 20; and 3) the General Service Office in New York. Many groups provide financial support for their G.S.R.s attending service functions. These entities use contributions in a number of ways, always with the aim of carrying the A.A. message to the alcoholic who still suffers. *The A.A. Group Treasurer, F-96,*

*Service material prepared by the
General Service Office*

GROUP*/MEETING CONTRIBUTIONS

The six digit number next to the meeting name is their unique AA Registration Number assigned by the General Service Office in New York. This number signifies they are a "Registered Group"...Those meetings listed without a six digit number are **NOT registered with G.S.O.** and therefore not a "Group" (by AA definition), but is a "meeting". **Please see A.A. pamphlet: "The A.A. Group...where it all begins" P-16*

<u>Group/Meeting</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>YTD22</u>
11th Step Prayer & Med., 715482.....	42.....	149
24 Hour Solution.....	0.....	462
After and Before.....	0.....	50
Beach Bums 641645.....	0.....	600
Big Book Comes Alive.....	0.....	416
Big Book Steppers, Bonita, 698101.....	31.....	161
Big Book Steppers, Naples, 654630.....	0.....	142
Bonita Banyan, 176463.....	0.....	393
Bonita Happy Hour, 670997.....	0.....	1,544
Bonita Ladies Night.....	0.....	150
Bonita Morning.....	0.....	683
Bonita Saturday Night.....	0.....	803
Bonita Springs Morning, 678493.....	0.....	591
Bonita Springs Step,134588.....	0.....	83
Bonita Wed Beginners.....	0.....	50
Bonita Women's Step.....	0.....	750
Bring Your Own Big Book.....	0.....	100
Brown Bag, 163924.....	0.....	909
Cake Group.....	0.....	40
Common Solutions, 179613.....	100.....	2,839
Daily Reflections ZOOM.....	289.....	1,370
Early Risers, 161795.....	0.....	1,445
Easy Does It, 156979.....	0.....	500
Girlfriends.....	0.....	300
Gratitude Hour, 134223.....	0.....	330
Happy Healers.....	0.....	500
Keep It Simple, 651598.....	0.....	1,074
Ladies Night, Bonita, 672950.....	0.....	100
Men Of Naples, 634030.....	0.....	225
Monday Noon Daily Reflections.....	0.....	87
Morning Reflections, 660700.....	0.....	642
Naples Group, 103609.....	0.....	1,546

<u>Group/ Meeting</u>	<u>OCT</u>	<u>YTD22</u>
Naples Living Sober.....	0.....	400
Naples South, 130210.....	235.....	485
Naples Young People699130.....	0.....	0
New Dawn, 632504.....	0.....	622
One Day At A Time.....	0.....	150
Park Shore Women.....	0.....	400
Pay It Forward.....	0.....	1,200
Primary Purpose Marco, 146715.....	0.....	2,035
Spiritual Solutions.....	0.....	168
Step By Step.....	0.....	32
Sunday Night Speakers, 665079.....	0.....	53
Swamp Group, 672733.....	0.....	50
Tables Of Naples.....	0.....	164
Tuesday Women's Step.....	0.....	80
Veranda.....	3.....	779
Wanderers, Ave Maria.....	50.....	160
We Care, Bonita, 617011.....	45.....	265
Where Are We.....	0.....	250

AA Groups/Meetings listed here are those which are either registered as a Group at the AA General Service Office in New York, or, have contributed financially to the Naples Area Intergroup.



The Birthday Club

Did you know you can share your sobriety and gratitude in a practical way by joining the AA Birthday Club? Sign up today and be featured in the *Courier*. Show your support for your Central Office. A donation of only one dollar for every year of your sobriety will help carry the message to alcoholics who still suffer.



Paul B.	50 years
Ron P.	50 years
Ron L.	42 years
Don M.	42 years
Jim B.	39 years
Dennis F.	35 years
Jackie T. F.	36 years
Judy W.	34 years
Steve K.	28 years
Peter F.	25 years
Eileen D.	22 years
Bill S.	20 years
Ken H.	20 years
Karen B.	
Laura T. F.	4 years
Bree F.	3 years



Faithful Fivers Needed

2022 Faithful Fiver Club

*April O, Bill S, James B, Jeanette H, Jim B, Jim H,
Judy W, Karen B, Kathryn Mc, Ken H, Ralph W, Ron L, Theresa R,
Tim A.*

We are members of A.A. who want the hand of A.A. always to be there in the Naples, Florida area.

It's easy to join!

Use a Check or Credit Card to contribute monthly, or one time.

Stop by the Central Office for a one time Credit Card charge.

District 20

(Collier County, the portion of Monroe County bordered by Collier and Miami-Dade Counties, and the portion of Hendry County below the northernmost boundary of Collier County.)

District 20 Officers:**Chairman:**

Pete C., 784-7725
pete.curtner@yaoo.com

Alt. Chair:

Joe S., 845/554-8721
joeascaliala@icloud.com

Registrar:

Maria M., 370-2034
mmetchear@aol.com

Secretary:

Tom D., 206-6780
tomadavision@yahoo.com

Treasurer

George A., 276-4024
george.arminio1@gmail.com

Service Committees:**Archives****Service Opportunity**

Business meeting 3rd Saturday
@ 24 Hour Club at 11am

Current Practices

Jerry E., 776-6767
jerryeddleman@gmail.com

Grapevine/Literature

Peter C., 784-7725
Business meeting the third
Tuesday of each month at
5:30 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Institutions

Joe S., 845/554-8721
joeascaliala@icloud.com
1st Thursday of each month at
7:00 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Public Information/CPC**Service Opportunity**

Business meeting the second
Wednesday of each month at
7:00 p.m., 24 Hour Club

Technology**Service Opportunity**

The Courier is published monthly by the *Naples Area Intergroup of Alcoholic Anonymous* with an office located at 1509-2 Pine Ridge Road, Naples, FL 34109-2198. This publication is by, for, and about the Fellowship of AA. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or The *Naples Area Intergroup*. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are reprinted with permission from AA World Service, Inc., and/or The AA Grapevine, Inc..

Contributions from our readers are encouraged.

Submissions are edited for space and clarity only.

District 20**Business Meeting:**

Fourth Thursday of the
Month, 7:00 pm
New Attitudes Club
4133 Tamiami Trail E.
(Lakewood & E 41)
Behind Speedway Gas

Treatment Commitments**DAVID LAWRENCE CENTER**

Every day except
Wednesday
7:00 p.m.
Maria M., 370-2034

WILLOUGH
Sunday, Monday and
Thursday
7:30pm
George A., 276-4024

HAZELDEN
Monday, 7:00pm
Tom H., 777-1430
tomhigh@me.com

BRIDGING THE GAP
Maria M.
239-206-3284

NAPLES AREA INTERGROUP MEETING

Central Office
1509-2 Pine Ridge Rd.
(next to 24 Hour Club)
Second Wednesday of
month at 7:00pm

Area 15; Panel 71

(South Florida, Bahamas, US and British Virgin Islands, Antigua, St. Maarten, and Cayman Islands)

Delegate: Cary W.
delegate@area15aa.org

Alternate: Lisa D.
altdelegate@area15aa.org

Chair: Donna W.
chair@area15aa.org

Treasurer: Karen V.
P.O. Box 590835
Ft Lauderdale, FL
33359-0835
treasurer@area15aa.org

Registrar: Robin P.
registrar@area15aa.org

Secretary: Bronwyn F.
secretary@area15aa.org

Naples Area Intergroup**Steering Committee****Chair:**

Robery C., 784-8514
bcrwoe616@aol.com

Vice Chair:

Service Opportunity

Secretary:

Tiana B., 337/283-12018
tsbrancato@gmail.com

Treasurer:

Spence G., 207-7534
spenceg123@gmail.com

Members at Large:

Tim A., 571-5440
timallencmb@gmail.com
Service Opportunity
(3 positions)

Office Manager:

Ken Helton
1509-2 Pine Ridge Road
Naples, Florida 34109-2198
naplesintergroup@yahoo.com
Phone: 262-6535 O
963-7820 C
www.aanaples.org

Office Hours:

Monday 9am to 4pm
Tuesday 9am to 4pm
Wednesday 9am to 4pm
Thursday 9am to 4pm
Friday 9am to 4pm
Saturday 9am to 4pm
Sunday CLOSED

Office Volunteers

Bill C., Bill D., Bill S.,
Bonnie B., Carrie W., Chrissie
F., Fay B., Gay S., Jerry M.,
Lauren F., Nikki E., Rob O.,
Sue S., ... and loyal
substitutes.

Service Opportunity