

# T H E COURIER

Naples Area Intergroup  
1509 Pine Ridge Road, Unit B  
Naples, Florida 34109



239-262-6535  
naplesintergroup@yahoo.com  
www.aanaples.org

March 2024

## Why We Were Chosen

God in His wisdom selected this group of men and women to be purveyors of His goodness. In selecting them through whom to bring about this phenomenon He went not to the proud, the mighty, the famous or the brilliant. He went instead to the humble, to the sick, to the unfortunate. He went right to the drunkard, the so-called weakling of the world. Well might He have said the following words to us:

"Unto your weak and feeble hands I have entrusted a power beyond estimate. To you has been given that which has been denied the most learned of your fellows. Not to scientists or statesmen, not to wives or mothers, not even to my priests or ministers have I given this gift of healing other alcoholics which I entrust to you."

"It must be used unselfishly; it carries with it grave responsibility. No day can be too long; no demands upon your time can be too urgent; no case can be too pitiful; no task too hard; no effort too great. It must be used with tolerance for I have restricted its application to no race, no creed, and no denomination. Personal criticism you must expect; lack of appreciation will be common; ridicule will be your lot; your motives will be misjudged. You must be prepared for adversity, for what men call adversity is the ladder you must use to ascend the rungs toward spiritual perfection, and remember, in the exercise of this power I shall not exact from you beyond your capabilities."

"You are not selected because of exceptional talents, and be careful always, if success attends your efforts not to ascribe to personal superiority that to which you can lay claim only by virtue of my gift. If I had wanted learned men to accomplish this mission, this power would have been entrusted to the physician and scientist.

If I had wanted eloquent men, there would have been many anxious for the assignment, for talk is the easiest used of all talents with which I have endowed mankind. If I had wanted scholarly men, the world is filled with better qualified men than you who would be available.

You were selected because you have been the outcasts of the world and your long experience as drunkards has made or should make you humbly alert to the cries of distress that come from the lonely hearts of alcoholics everywhere."

"Keep ever in mind the admission you made on the day of your profession in AA -- namely that you are powerless and that it was only with your willingness to turn your life and will unto my keeping that relief came to you."

-- Speech given by Judge John T. on the 4th Anniversary of the Chicago Group in 1943.

## 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. (Copyright © The AA Grapevine, Inc., Reprinted with permission.)



## **MARCH: The THIRD ( 3rd ) Month Of Alcoholics Anonymous**

**STEP THREE:** “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him”

**TRADITION THREE:** “The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking”

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

**CONCEPT THREE:** “The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole society in its world affairs”

*3rd Step Prayer: God, I offer myself to Thee - to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!*

### **TRADITIONS—CHECKLIST**

This is a Checklist for Tradition Three  
Reprinted with permission from Service Material from the General Service

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as losers?
2. Is there some kind of alcoholic whom I privately do not want in my AA group?
3. Do I set myself up as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or phony?
4. Do I let language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I over impressed by a celebrity? By a doctor, a clergyman, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat this new member simply and naturally as one more sick human, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he can't ask for it aloud), does it really matter to me what he does for a living? Where he lives? What his domestic arrangements are? Whether he had been to AA before? What his other problems are?

“During his first AA years every AA has had plenty of the urge to revolt against authority. I know I did, and can’t claim to be over it yet. I’ve also served my time as a maker of rules, a regulator of other people’s conduct ... I can now look back upon such experiences with much amusement. And gratitude as well.”

AA Co-Founder, Bill W.,  
September 1945, From:  
“Rules’ Dangerous but Unity  
Vital”, The Language of the  
Heart



## THE LANGUAGE OF THE HEART

Bill W.'s  
Grapevine Writings

**Calling all AA**

**Authors !!!**

**Please submit  
an article to**

**The COURIER !!!**

**Email article to:**

**[naplesintergroup@yahoo.com](mailto:naplesintergroup@yahoo.com)**



**Your Home Group's  
Activities**

**Can Be Here  
Next Month.**

**To Highlight  
Your Group,  
Please Call Us:**

**Intergroup Office  
239/262-6535**

## MASQUERADE ... Continued from March 2024

Jerry E. ,Naples, Florida

Unable to be honest with myself, for fear of having to change, I could not be honest with others; even well meaning people who were trying to help me. I lied to them, and to myself, about the nature of my problem. I blamed circumstances and the people around me for my drinking. I minimized the effects of my drinking as being “not that bad,” I justified my behavior by saying that “you would drink too, if you had my problems,” never acknowledging for a moment that all of my problems were alcohol related, and I rationalized that “well, at least I’m not hurting anyone but (maybe) myself.” As a result, it was impossible for me to ask for help or, perhaps more importantly, to take any corrective measures.

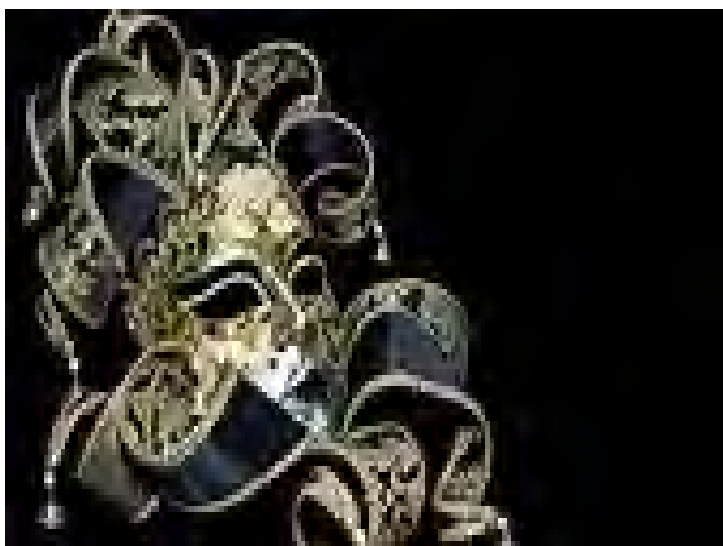
Similarly, I think that it is the delusional thinking of the drug addict (and in many cases the misguided efforts of treatment centers) that brings him into Alcoholics Anonymous. In fact, the idea that “a drug is a drug is a drug” was probably started by a treatment center with only one van. The clients of these centers are taught that abstinence equals recovery and that if they can stay chemically free from all substances they can recover through a single therapy. Nonsense. Remember the guy with the back injury?

I have seen many people come to AA because of their problems with alcohol and yet never recover from the “seemingly hopeless state of mind and body” because of their problems with other substances. The so-called “marijuana maintenance” plan doesn’t work. And, as a result of increased referrals from the court system, usually by way of treatment centers and probation officers, we see many people (particularly younger people) being introduced to AA who simply are not yet ready to seek help for their most serious problems. Many of these people are willing to try to forego the use of one substance as long as they can maintain their primary addiction. These people, and many others who are less dramatically affected with other “issues,” seem content to just come to AA to recuperate somewhat and “hide out” until the current “heat” is off.

In a bizarre twist, I once listened to a young man, who identified himself simply as an addict, share in an AA meeting about his troubles with alcohol and he became visibly upset when I suggested that he might be, after all, in the right place. It later occurred to me why. He had entered treatment for his drug addiction and had hoped to continue his use of alcohol when released from treatment. The idea that maybe he shouldn’t drink either was unacceptable to him.

It saddens me to consider that we have all become unwitting accomplices to the masquerade. The treatment centers, who send people diagnosed with multiple disorders to AA in the fanciful hope that recovery from alcoholism will result in abstinence from all substances; the addict, who does not truly want to be completely honest about his condition; and the open-hearted members of Alcoholics Anonymous, who sincerely desire to be there when “anyone, anywhere reaches out for help,” have all unwittingly colluded to enable the addict to die from his untreated addiction.

And, for those who insist on identifying themselves in AA meetings as alcoholic/addicts, I remind you that what you are really saying is that you are “different” than a garden variety drunk; your problems are more complex and therefore more difficult to resolve. The chances of you achieving long term continuous sobriety are slim because you still suffer from “terminal uniqueness.” I suggest you try to identify in instead of insisting on comparing yourself out.



To be continued in the  
April 2024 COURIER.

# 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

## Step Three: God as He May Express Himself

God of Our Own Understanding

Rick R. – Miami, Florida

Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) came into existence in 1935 when much of our society was centered around the churches in the communities where we lived. As a child in my hometown, on Sunday morning I could look out the window and see a vast majority of my neighbors walking to church. That was the way it was in the early 1940's.

The book, Alcoholics Anonymous was published in 1939, and it was highly influenced by many early members of the program at that time. A.A. could have, very easily become a religious program, but fortunately, the elders of that time realized, by the mistakes of the Oxford Group, and the Washingtonians, that they had to make it clear that, *a desire to stop drinking was the only requirement for membership*, and that the individual members could choose their own concept of a power greater than themselves, i.e. God as we understand him.

In Tradition Two it says, "As He may express Himself in our group conscience" When the word God is used in the remainder of the book, it is not always followed by the "as we understand him" qualifier, and I believe that many members get the idea that somehow, they are trying to push religion on them.

That is understandable. When I was faced with that possibility, I personally found it easy enough to read the black part of the pages in the book and to not let myself become distracted by what I now recognized as a cultural norm at the time. I had no problem setting aside my religious bias and recognizing the parts of the Big Book and the 12&12 that clearly state all the options available when it comes to finding a "Power Greater Than Myself". I can name three ( 3 ) right off top of my head: 1) Alcohol itself was my higher power for a long time and still would be if had not gotten into the program; 2) My EGO ran my life for quite a while until I got serious about Real life Issues; and 3) The A.A. program itself.

I found myself spiritually lost when I entered the program and when faced with the need to come to terms with the Higher Power issue. I now realize why it took so long to settle this subject. After years of drinking and an underdeveloped thinking process, it was hard to get up to speed right away.

As I got more familiar with the Big Book, and the 12&12, I started to uncover all the evidence that debunked the idea that I had to conform to any religious doctrine. In the 12&12 I read on page 26: *"alcoholics anonymous does not demand that you to believe anything."* On belief, *"to acquire it, I had only to stop fighting and practice the rest of A.A.'s program as enthusiastically as I could."* (Pg.27)

Also, on page 26, it states: "Take it easy. The hoop you have to jump through is a lot wider than you think... A one-time vice-president of the American Atheist Society ... got through with room to spare." Then on page 33 of the 12&12 it says: "Therefore, Step Two is the rallying point for all of us. Whether agnostic, atheist, or former believer, we can stand together on this step."

## Dr. Bob Explains His Understanding of AA Anonymity



“As far as [anonymity](#) was concerned we knew who we were. It wasn’t only AA, but our social life. All of our lives seemed to be spent together. We took people home with us to dry out. The Cleveland group had the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all the members,” said Warren. “In fact, I remember Dr. Bob saying, .....

“If I got up and gave my name as Dr. Bob S., people who needed help would have a hard time getting in touch with me.”

Warren recalled, “He [Dr. Bob] said there were two ways to break the Anonymity Tradition: (1) by giving your name at the public level of press or radio; (2) by being so anonymous that you can’t be reached by other drunks.”

In an article in the February 1969 Grapevine: “Dr. Bob on Tradition Eleven,” Volume 25, Issue 9, D. S. Of San Mateo, California, wrote that Dr. Bob commented on the Eleventh Tradition, “We need always maintain personal anonymity At the level of press, radio and films,” as follows:

“Since our Tradition of Anonymity designates the exact level where the line should be held, it must be obvious to everyone who can read and understand the English Language that to maintain Anonymity at any other level is definitely a Violation of this Tradition.”

“The AA who hides his identity from his fellow AAs by using only a given name Violates The Tradition just as much as the AA who permits his name to appear in the press in connection with matter pertaining to AA.”

“The former is maintaining his anonymity ABOVE the level of press, radio and films, and the latter is maintaining his anonymity BELOW the level of press, radio and films—whereas the [tradition states](#) that we should maintain our anonymity ‘AT’ the level of press, radio and films.”

Ernie G. of Toledo, commenting on what he saw to be an increase of anonymity within AA today as compared with the old days, said, “I made a lead [trip to bring message] over to Jackson [Michigan] one night, and everybody’s coming up to me and saying, ‘I’m Joe; ‘I’m Pete.’ Then one of the guys said, ‘Safe journey home. If you get into any trouble, give me a buzz.’

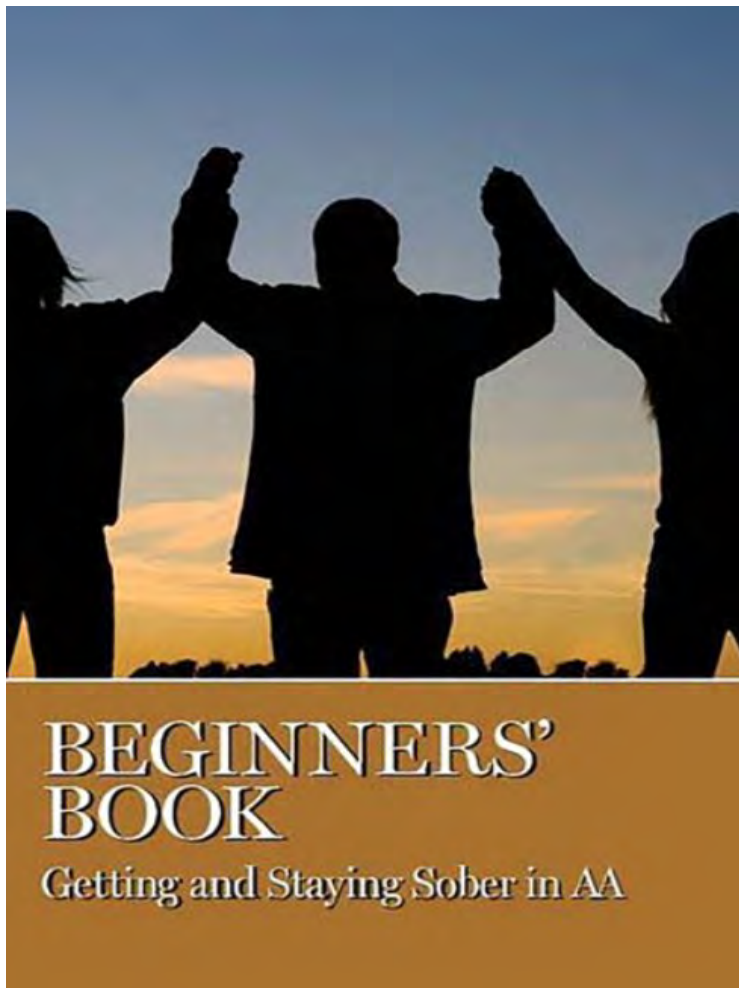
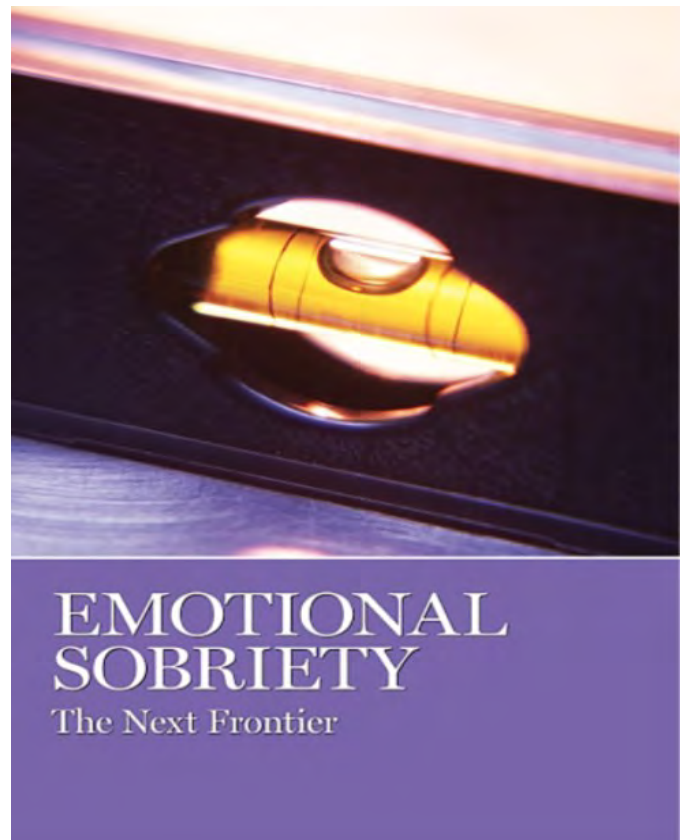
Later, I said to the fellow who was with me, ‘You now, suppose we did get into trouble on the way home. How would we tell anyone in AA? We don’t know anyone’s last name.’ They get so doggone carried away with this anonymity that it gets to be a joke.” I had a book [evidently one of the small address books compiled by early members or their wives] with the first hundred names—first and last—telephone numbers, and where they lived.

Dr. Bob’s views on anonymity remained clear in the recollections of Akron’s Joe P. [The Dartmouth grad]. Though it was not the custom in the mid-1940’s to give AA talks to anyone except drunks, Joe noted, a few members formed an unofficial public information committee that started to speak to Rotary and Kiwanis Clubs throughout the state.

*Excerpt from Dr. Bob and The Good Oldtimers, p 264-265*

**“There are winners and whiners, and sometimes I seem to embody both. I am, as my friends remind me, a human being.”**

**Port Townsend, Wash., October 1994, From: “Winners and Whiners”, Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier**



**“I was so busy juggling the regrets of the past with the expectations of tomorrow I had no time for living in the present.”**

**Atlanta, Ga., August 2001, From: “How Is My Now?”, Beginner’s Book**



**“Spiritual growth and experiences are not limited to orthodox believers in a deity, any more than the disease of alcoholism is limited to skid-row bums.”**

**Casper, Wyo., September 1969, From: “Is ‘Agnostic’ a Nasty Word?”, AA Grapevine**



## **SPIRITUAL AWAKENINGS**

*Journeys of the Spirit*

**“I politely invited God to spend the day with me (like a visiting relative or friend), and instantly began a mental dialogue with God ... I realized that in the process of introducing myself to God, I was getting a good look at who I really was.”**

**Houston, Texas, October 1985, From: “Okay, God...”, Spiritual Awakenings**

### Why We Call It "The Big Book"

A printer in Cornwall, NY, named Edward Blackwell, had been highly recommended to Bill Wilson. Blackwell was the President of Cornwall Press. So Bill and Hank Parkhurst (author of the personal story "The Unbeliever" in the first edition of the Big Book) went to Cornwall to see Blackwell. There they were told that the book would probably be only about four hundred pages when printed. That seemed a bit skimpy. They wanted to sell the book for \$3.50 per copy. That was a very large sum in those days; probably the equivalent of about \$50 today, and people might not think they were getting their money's worth.

They picked the cheapest, thickest paper the printer had, and requested that each page be printed with unusually large margins surrounding the text. This made for an unusually large book. Thus, the book came to be nicknamed the "Big Book."

A reproduction of the first printing can be purchased today and it is much taller and thicker than our current Big Book, although it has fewer pages.

Blackwell had an excess of red material for the bindings, so he offered them a special deal. Eager to save costs, Bill and Hank agreed. They also thought, according to some reports, that the color red would make the book more attractive and marketable.

The first printing was the only one on which a red binding was used. All the other printings of the first edition, except for the fourth printing, were in various shades of blue. The fourth printing, due to another overstock of binding material and thus, lower cost, was bound in blue as well as in green.

Despite all their efforts at proofreading, there was a typographical error in the first printing. On page 234, the second and third line from the bottom was printed twice. This was corrected in subsequent editions.

A New York AA member named Ray Campbell, a recognized artist, was asked to design the dust jacket. His story, "An Artist's Concept", appears in the Big Book's first edition. He submitted various designs for consideration including one which was blue and in an Art Deco style. The one which was chosen was red, and yellow, with a little black, and a little white. The words Alcoholics Anonymous were printed across the top in large white script. It became known as the circus jacket because of its loud circus colors. The unused blue jacket is today in the Archives at the Stepping Stones Foundation.



**FINANCES****Feb 24** **YTD 24****Income**

Literature/Merchandise	\$4,963	\$9,928
Group Contributions	1,847	4,317
AA Birthdays	-	-
Faithful Five	20	30
Individual/Anonymous	169	1,169
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>8,505</b>	<b>15,444</b>

**Expenses**

Bank/Credit Card Fees	170	647
Licenses/Permits	-	-
Office Supplies	191	189
Office Improve/Repair	-	-
www Hosting	-	-
Payroll	2,240	4,481
Payroll Tax	-	-
Postage	39	68
Printing	-	187
Purchases/Lit./Merch.	2,369	6,839
Insurance	-	-
Rent	500	500
Sales Tax	275	380
Telephone/www	426	842
Utilities	100	200
Computer Equipment	-	142
Computer Software	257	647
Computer/Maintain	-	-
Quarterlies / Travel/	-	150
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>6,298</b>	<b>8,820</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>\$641</b>	<b>-\$315</b>
Gratitude Dinner Tickets	-	-
Gratitude Expenses	-	-
<b>NET OTHER INCOME</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>\$641</b>	<b>-\$243</b>

**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-B 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. Farley Station  
P. O. Box 2407  
New York, N. Y. 10116  
(New Address) ( 30% )

**Area 15**

**Treasurer Area 15**  
**PO Box 590835**  
**Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33359**  
**(New Address) (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*



# The Birthday Club

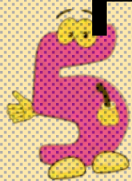
Did you know you can share your sobriety and gratitude in a practical way by joining the AA Birthday Club? Sign up today and be featured in the *Courier*. Show your support for your Central Office. A donation of only one dollar for every year of your sobriety will help carry the message to alcoholics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



Paul B.	51 years
Ron P.	51 years
Ron L.	42 years
Don M.	43 years
Jim B.	41 years
Jackie T. F.	39 years
Bill D.	36 years
Dennis F.	35 years
Rad W.	35 years
Judy W.	35 years
Janice R.	35 years
Steve K.	31 years
Peter F.	27 years
Eileen D.	22 years
Bill S.	22 years
Ken H.	21 years
Laura T. F.	7 years
Tina S	2 years



# Faithful Fivers Needed



## 2023 Faithful Fiver Club

***April O., Bill D., Bill S., Eric S., James B., Jeanette H., Jim B., Jim H., Judy W., 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.

***\$5.00 per month or \$60.00 per year!***

Your membership directly supports 12-Step work in District 20 and the Central Office Operations.

**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:****Chair:**

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

**Alt. Chair:**

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

**Registrar:**

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

**Treasurer**

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

**Secretary:**

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

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

Susan H., 280-7093  
Business meeting 3rd Saturday @ 24 Hour Club at 11am

**Current Practices**

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

**Grapevine**

Andrea C., 908/347-0494  
4chellana@gmail.com  
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**

Ronnie P., 269-8251  
Business meeting the second Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m., 24 Hour Club

**Technology 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  
mmetchear@aol.com

**WILLOUGH**

Sunday, Monday and Thursday  
7:30pm  
Peggy E., 269-7651  
marcoangel2000@gmail.com

**HAZELDEN**

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

**BRIDGING THE GAP**

Maria M.  
370-2034  
mmetchear@aol.com

**NAPLES AREA INTERGROUP MEETING**

Central Office

1509-2 Pine Ridge Rd.  
(next to 24 Hour Club)

SECOND Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm

**Area 15; Panel 69**

(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.  
PO Box 590835  
Ft Lauderdale, FL  
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treasurer@area15aa.org

**Registrar:** Robin P.  
registrar@area15aa.org

**Secretary:** Bronwyn F.  
secretary@area15aa.org

**Naples Area Intergroup****Trusted Servants****Chair:**

Robert C. 784-8514  
bcrowe616@aol.com

**Vice Chair:**

**Service Opportunity**

**Treasurer:**

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

**Secretary:**

Tiana B. 818/918-1173  
tsbrancato@gmail.com

**Members at Large:**

Tim A., 571-5440  
timallencmb@gmail.com  
**Service Opportunity**

**Office Manager:**

Ken Helton  
Naples Area Intergroup  
1509-2 Pine Ridge Road  
Naples, Florida 34109-2198  
naplesintergroup@yahoo.com  
Phone: 239-262-6535  
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**

Annamarie T., Becky S., Bill C., Bill D., Bill S., Bonnie B., Caroline H., Chrissie F., Eric S., Faye B., Kathleen M., MariAnn Z., Nikki E., Peggy E., Steve K. ... and loyal substitutes.

**Service Opportunities**

**After-Hours Phone Volunteers**  
Geoff E., Heather B., Ken H. Lauren F., Libby S., Steve K., Tim A. and Tina S.  
**Service Opportunity**

## THE A.A. SERVICE MANUAL

Important pages from the AA Service Manual written by Bill W., our co-founder of AA.

A.A.'s Legacy of Service

Welcome to General Service!

How General Service is organized.

How General Service Functions.

The Group

The District

The Area

The Delegate & The Conference.

The Trustees

Need more info on the AA Service Manual?

Pick up a copy of the AA Service Manual at the Intergroup Office for a minimal amount of \$\$.

2021-2023 Edition  
REVISED AND UPDATED

**▼ FOREWORD****A.A.'S LEGACY OF SERVICE**

by BILL W.

Our Twelfth Step — carrying the message — is the basic service that the A.A. Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer — ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A.A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A.A.

The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that A.A. has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, A.A. World Services, Inc., AA Grapevine, Inc., and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities.

Until 1950, these overall services were the sole function of a few oldtime A.A.'s, several nonalcoholic friends, Doctor Bob, and me. For all the years of A.A.'s infancy, we oldtimers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous.

At this time, we realized that A.A. had grown up, that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for change. Since we oldtimers couldn't live on forever, newer trustees would be virtually unknown to the A.A. groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without direct linkage to A.A., future trustees couldn't possibly function alone.

This meant that we had to form a conference representing our membership which could meet yearly with our board of trustees in New York, and thus assume direct responsibility for the guardianship of A.A. tradition and the direction of our principal service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown board of trustees and our too little understood service headquarters operations would someday be bound to face collapse.

Suppose that future trustees, acting quite on their own, were to make a serious blunder. Suppose that with no linkage to A.A., they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or crisis. With no direct guidance from A.A. as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top services would then be inevitable. And if, under such conditions, our world services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed?

These, briefly, were the conclusions that led to the formation of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Later, I will outline in more detail the events that have now become A.A. history. (See Appendix A for the full text of this article.)



# WELCOME TO GENERAL SERVICE!

## THE MEANING OF "GENERAL SERVICE"

Today, there are approximately 2 million members of Alcoholics Anonymous, represented in 125,000 groups spread across approximately 180 countries. More than 40 million copies of our basic text *Alcoholics Anonymous* have been distributed in over 70 languages. Indeed, A.A. has come a long way since the May day in 1935 when our co-founders, Dr. Bob and Bill W., met for the very first time.

So how is it that Alcoholics Anonymous has grown into the worldwide Fellowship that we see today? The obvious answer is that many people have found sobriety through A.A.'s program of recovery.

But there's another reason, too: general service.

To those serving the Fellowship for the first time, the term "general service" may be unfamiliar.

From the earliest days of A.A., Bill W. envisioned our message of hope and recovery reaching sick and suffering alcoholics around the world. After all, alcoholism is a respecter of nothing—least of all the borders between nations. And yet, A.A. groups and intergroup/central offices were not well equipped to reach beyond their respective communities. Their focus, and rightly so, was—and is—local. So in A.A.'s early years, Bill and Dr. Bob assumed the overall leadership role. Yet, it didn't take long for them to start to wonder: who will take over for *us*?

Bill came up with a bold solution. The early leadership of A.A. would be succeeded not by new *people*, but by the collective conscience of the groups in A.A.

Bill proposed a plan to create a "service structure" to facilitate Twelfth Step work across the country and around the world. This structure would bring to bear the collective conscience of the groups on matters affecting "A.A. as a whole." At the heart of this structure would be the A.A. groups themselves, providing both the conscience and financial support for A.A. services throughout the Fellowship. It would be a structure to take the place of government in A.A., ensuring that the full voice of A.A. would be heard. Today, we call the service structure that developed from Bill's plan the General Service Conference structure, or simply, general service<sup>1</sup>.

This manual is an outgrowth of Bill W.'s "Third Legacy Manual," which served the movement so well beginning with Bill's first draft in 1951. It explores the general service structure that has grown up around us in the U.S. and Canada, and explains the roles and responsibilities of the trusted servants that make it work.

All of the basic service principles and procedures outlined in that earlier document have been retained. An overall revision was approved by the 2018 General Service Conference and the material has been edited and rearranged. It is, by its nature, a changing and evolving document—it will always be a "work in progress" as it reflects the way our "unorganized" Fellowship organizes itself around the ever-changing methods and processes of our vital Twelfth Step work. We are never done finding new and more effective ways of reaching out to newcomers looking for help.

And so, as you embark on your own journey in general service, know that the Fellowship as a whole works because of the time and effort you give it. Many who have come before you will say it is the

1 Bill envisioned one General Service Conference serving the entire Fellowship worldwide. Instead, a joint U.S./Canada Conference emerged first. As A.A. continued to grow, other conferences formed, such as the General Service Conference of Great Britain and the General Service Conference of India. Each is autonomous and no Conference answers to another, although there exists a spirit of cooperation.

most rewarding service they've done. Given the worldwide Fellowship that A.A. has become, due in no small part to those efforts, it's easy to see why.

### HOW GENERAL SERVICE IS ORGANIZED

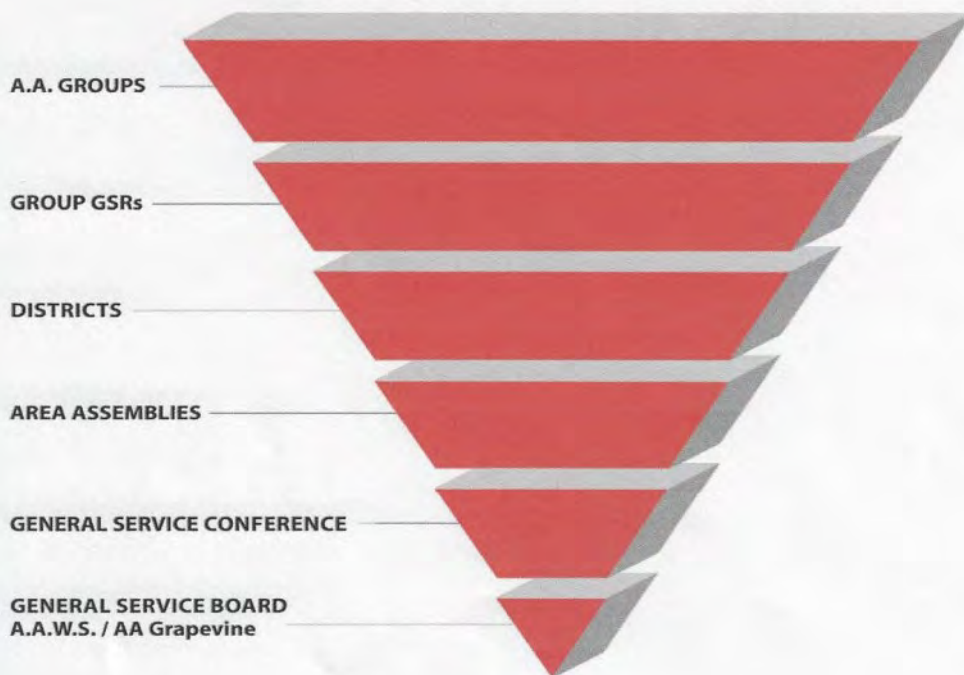
The typical structure of many organizations in the world today can be visualized as a triangle. The triangle narrows to a point at the top, where a very few people hold "final authority" over everyone else in the organization. They decide what it will and will not do. The rest of the triangle — the broad foundation upon which the organization rests — often has little or no say.

General service in A.A. flips this triangle on its head. The top of the triangle is now on the bottom — and the bottom is now on top. Final authority now resides in the foundation of the triangle. In general service, this means the groups of A.A.

This type of organization is often referred to as the "upside-down triangle." (The chart below illustrates this idea.)

In this structure, the groups have final authority. But how do the groups make their thoughts and wishes — their group conscience — known to the rest of the triangle? General service is organized to do exactly this. Each section of the triangle has a role to play.

**Structure of the Conference** *U.S. and Canada*



## HOW GENERAL SERVICE FUNCTIONS

The upside-down triangle is divided into six sections; each represents a trusted servant tasked with helping to make the conscience of the groups known. Known to whom? Known to the entities that occupy the rest of the triangle that are charged with managing the affairs of "A.A. as a whole."

It might be helpful to think of general service as a kind of dialogue or communication between the groups, the trusted servants working on their behalf, and the General Service Office and General Service Board as they all manage the Fellowship's affairs. Questions, concerns, viewpoints and proposals travel from the groups "down the triangle"—and information and proposals head back "up the triangle" to the groups. And the communication continues.

How this works is illustrated below.



*Anytown Group*

### THE GROUP

The group meets to form a group conscience on proposed changes or actions on matters relating to A.A. as a whole. The group's elected general service representative, or GSR, is tasked with: 1) making sure the group's conscience is heard and fully considered at the district and the area and 2) becoming part of the delegate's thinking at the Conference.

*Chapter 1 addresses the GSR position in more detail.*



*Countywide Districts*

### THE DISTRICT

Groups are organized into districts, generally collections of groups located near one another. The GSRs in each district elect the district committee Member (DCM), who becomes part of the area committee.

*Chapter 2 addresses the DCM in more detail.*



*Your Area*

### THE AREA

The area holds periodic assemblies that include GSRs and DCMs as voting members. Assembly schedules and agendas are based on local autonomy and group conscience. Information about them can often be obtained from DCMs or other area trusted servants. The area handles a wide range of concerns, and one of the most important functions is electing the delegate to represent the area at the annual General Service Conference.

*Chapters 3 and 4 provide more information on the area and its activities. (See Map A for a map of the 93 areas in the U.S. and Canada.)*



General Service Conference  
U.S./Canada

### THE DELEGATE & THE CONFERENCE

Area delegates make up at least two-thirds of the Conference body. Other members making up the General Service Conference are 21 trustees, both nonalcoholic (Class A) and alcoholic (Class B); directors of A.A. World Services and Grapevine; and A.A. staff at G.S.O., Grapevine and La Viña, bringing the total number of Conference members to approximately 135.

At the annual Conference, matters of importance to A.A. as a whole are considered and discussed. Items approved by a two-thirds majority of Conference members become *Conference Advisory Actions*; they are referred to the trustees of the General Service Board for disposition.

After the Conference meeting: Each delegate reports back to their area on Conference proceedings and the approved Conference Advisory Actions and additional committee considerations. Each GSR, having had the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of their delegate, is responsible for informing their group on the Conference outcome.

*Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the Conference in greater detail.*



Trustees

### THE TRUSTEES

Twenty-one trustees of the General Service Board, both nonalcoholic (Class A) and alcoholic (Class B), have custodial oversight of A.A.'s two operating corporations:

- *A.A.W.S., Inc.*, which employs G.S.O. personnel, directs G.S.O. services, and is responsible for A.A.'s website (aa.org) and broad publishing efforts.
- *AA Grapevine, Inc.*, which employs editorial and business personnel and publishes A.A.'s magazines, Grapevine and La Viña, and other related items across its digital platforms (aagrapevine.org).

After the Conference meeting, the trustees review the Conference Advisory Actions and refer them to the appropriate trustees' committees, G.S.O. or AA Grapevine for implementation. The trustees report back through their quarterly reports on what steps they have taken.

*See Chapter 8 for more information on the trustees and the General Service Board.*