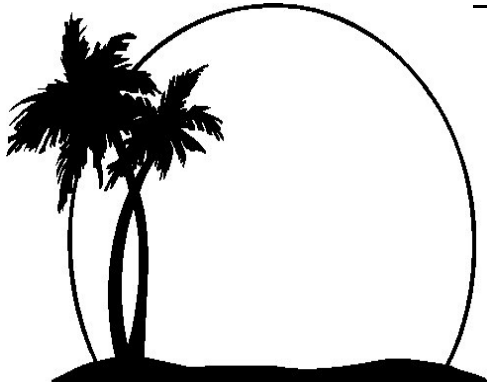


March, 2021



Your Santa Barbara Central Office

Presents

The Messenger

14 W. Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93101
(805) 962-3332 www.santabarbaraaa.com

Donation to Your Central Office's Lending Library

Do you have extra Big Books, Twelve & Twelves, or other A.A. literature? Donate these to Central Office's lending library!



The Manager's Corner

BY TIM W.

As I approached the 3rd Step for the first time, I was told by my sponsor to think carefully before I made the decision. He said that once I made that decision my life would no longer be my own. It would now be God's life. That my job now would be to begin cleaning it up, because I had made an awful mess out of God's life. He then handed me a tablet and a pencil and began showing me how to write inventory.

As I have continued my life in sobriety, I have had to return over and over again to the understanding that, if I wish to live happy, joyous and free, I need to remember that it is God's life. That my job is to not mess it up. Of course, sometimes I do this adequately, and sometimes I don't. That's because I'm a spiritual being having a human experience. My own will comes to the

forefront on a regular basis. I want what I want when I want it. Things should go the way I think they should go. Not to mention the terrific sense of entitlement I seem to have been born with.

Of course, things don't always go the way I think they should go, and I am once again put in the position of having to face the fact that I've (one more time) been operating of self-will. Then I get to remember that I am trying to live God's life and that I have a design for living that helps me in this pursuit. So once again I say "Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will." I am grateful for all of you that are sharing God's life with me.

Tim W.

[illegible]

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Your Central Office is now accepting Venmo donations. Scan the QR code below
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IMPORTANT: Please indicate what Group is making the donation or what individual member is making the donation



Scan QR Code for payment

On the Third Step

"Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him."

THE SPECTRUM OF BELIEF

The freedom of belief the program embraces has kept this agnostic sober for over three decades

BY ANONYMOUS

My wife came with me to my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous and thought I'd get up and walk out when she heard the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions read with their references to God. I was a cynical agnostic and she thought: "This won't work, it's too religious." But after my last binge a week before the meeting I'd tried to kill myself, so I was in no state to argue about "theological abstractions." I'd escaped death by a hair's breadth and that made me as "open-minded as only the dying can be." I listened with laser-like attention to what would keep me alive and filtered out things I heard that made no sense to me or with which I disagreed; I listened for the similarities, not the differences.

I took AA's first Step the morning I tried to commit suicide. I'd known for years that I had a serious drinking problem, but wouldn't admit I was powerless over alcohol. I'd tried every way I knew to bring my drinking under control; there was always "one more attempt—and one more failure," as the Big Book says. Finally, absolutely defeated, I knew I couldn't go on and decided to end it all. In a perverse way I thought it would also be best for my family; at least they wouldn't have to deal with a chaotic drunk in their lives any more. But they didn't want me to die – they just wanted me to get well, and I didn't know how to do that.

We're told that willingness, honesty and open-mindedness are the essentials of recovery, and I made a start on Steps Two and Three by going to my first AA meeting. I came to believe that AA (a power greater than myself) could restore me to the sanity of not drinking, though at that stage it was more a desperate hope than a belief. In my own way I also decided to turn over my will and life to AA's care because I clearly couldn't care for myself when it came to stopping drinking. I'm glad that in his essay on Step Two in AA's book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Bill W. assures the newcomer: "AA does not demand that you believe anything ... to get sober and stay sober, you don't have to swallow all of Step Two right now." I'm also grateful that in my early days I did not meet members with a dogmatic approach to the Steps. Bill W. said each member

has the privilege of interpreting the program according to his or her own outlook and experience (As Bill Sees It). Even the pioneers who wrote the Big Book knew that none of them could 'maintain anything like perfect adherence' to the principles outlined in the Steps; they claimed progress, not perfection.

Bill W. paid tribute to atheists and agnostics in the early Fellowship who insisted on adding the crucial phrase, as we understood Him after the word God in the Third and Eleventh Steps. That ensured that all who wish to stop drinking may enter, regardless of their belief or lack of belief. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking (or, as in my case, to stay stopped); AA membership does not demand conformity to any idea, philosophy or religious faith. Certainly it does not require finding a personal God or I would have been smoke and ashes a long time ago.

After 31 continuously sober years in AA, I am still an agnostic. Whether or not a God exists is to me irrelevant; my primary purpose is to stay sober and, as far as I can, help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

So when I shared my Fifth Step with my first sponsor (a lapsed Catholic!) I did not believe God was in the room, and I did not ask God to remove my shortcomings in Step Seven. My defects of character keep me grounded. When I get the grandiose idea that I've become "Mr AA," they right-size me. I am their disciple. It is unrealistic to expect that I will ever be defect-free. In the 12 & 12 Bill W. speaking on character defects, says: "with most of them we shall have to be content with patient improvement." That has been my experience. Through constant attendance over thousands of AA meetings I've found "the evil in me weakening, and the good raised up," as Quakers say.

I lack the certainty to say there is no God and my non-theism is not atheism or anti-God. I pray and meditate, but I doubt very much that there is a supernatural ear listening. To me prayer is an act of humility. When I pray, I am saying I don't know all the answers and I need help.

My personal 'creed' encompasses the spectrum of belief and non-belief. I've found that the realm of the Spirit is indeed "broad, roomy and all-inclusive, never exclusive." For a one-time supercilious agnostic like me, that's good enough!

—From the 2019 Grapevine

Central Office Hours & Updates

Your Central Office is currently open from **10-2 Monday through Friday**. To limit the number of people in the office at any given time, we do keep the front door locked. So, please just knock and we will let you in. We are also happy to make arrangements to meet people outside of our normal hours. All you need to do is call and make an appointment in advance.

Despite more limited hours, we still have our 24/7 phone line, so newcomers, old-timers, and everyone in between can always find someone to talk to.

Call us at: (805) 962-3332

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South Western Area Conference for Young People in AA SWACYPAA 7

Established as an annual gathering to promote participation, unity, and enthusiasm about recovery among young AAs in the region. We welcome all to help plan and prepare for a wonderful conference experience for AAs of all ages!



Regular Committee Meetings

Join us-everyone is welcome to attend!

- 2nd Thursday every month @6pm
- 4th Sunday every month @1pm

Zoom ID: 411 164 2021
PW: Whiskymilk

**An
Experience
You Must
Not Miss....**

Find us on Facebook to stay updated on events and meetings happening in or community leading up to the conference.

For further details or to register, visit us at www.swacypaa7.org



February Birthdays

<u>Member</u>	<u>Years</u>
<u>Lindsay</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Alison B.</u>	<u>1</u>
<u>Todd G.</u>	<u>2</u>
<u>Brett M.</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Thomas M.</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>Lou W.</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>Bob G.</u>	<u>5</u>
<u>Sonja G.</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Bob M.</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>Hope Z.</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>Brent L.</u>	<u>14</u>
<u>Ned N.</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Jason D.</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>Stephanie J.</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Kevin P.</u>	<u>33</u>
<u>Sara O.</u>	<u>37</u>
<u>Mary M.</u>	<u>50</u>

The Messenger is published by
YOUR Central Office.

Please send submissions to:
manager@santabarbaraAA.com

***Have an AA birthday? Please let
your Central Office know so that we
can print it in The Messenger.***

Central Office Statistics

During February, your Central Office had:

AA Info Calls	79
Alanon Referrals	2
Other Referrals	0
12 Step Calls	0
12 Step Office	3
Out of Town Visitors	0
Office Walk Ins	81
Website Pageviews	5,531

"Practicing Step Three is like the opening of a door which to all appearances is still closed and locked. All we need is a key, and the decision to swing the door open."

Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions, page 34

On the Third Tradition

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

BILL W. ON THE THIRD TRADITION

BY BILL W.

"Our membership ought to include all who suffer 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."

This is a sweeping statement indeed; it takes in a lot of territory. Some people might think it too idealistic to be practical. It tells every alcoholic in the world that he may become, and remain, a member of Alcoholics Anonymous so long as he says so. In short, Alcoholics Anonymous has no membership rule.

Why is this so? Our answer is simple and practical. Even in self protection, we do not wish to erect the slightest barrier between ourselves and the brother alcoholic who still suffers. We know that society has been demanding that he conform to its laws and conventions. But the essence of his alcoholic malady is the fact that he has been unable or unwilling to conform either to the laws of man or God. If he is anything, the sick alcoholic is a rebellious nonconformist. How well we understand that; every member of Alcoholics Anonymous was once a rebel himself. Hence we cannot offer to meet him at any half-way mark. We must enter the dark cave where he is and show him that we understand. We realize that he is altogether too weak and confused to jump hurdles. If we raise obstacles, he might stay away and perish. He might be denied his priceless opportunity.

So when he asks, "Are there any conditions?" we joyfully reply, "No, not a one." When skeptically he comes back saying, "But certainly there must be things that I have to do and believe," we quickly answer, "In

"We shall always be inclusive, and never exclusive, offering all we have to all men save our title."

Alcoholics Anonymous there are no musts." Cynically, perhaps, he then inquires, "What is this all going to cost me?" We are able to laugh and say, "Nothing at all, there are no fees and dues." Thus, in a brief hour, is our friend disarmed of his suspicion and rebellion. His eyes begin to open on a new world of friendship and understanding. Bankrupt idealist that he has been, his ideal is no longer a dream. After years of lonely search it now stands revealed. The reality of Alcoholics Anonymous bursts upon him. For Alcoholics Anonymous is saying, "We have something priceless to give, if only you will receive." That is all. But to our new friend, it is everything. Without more ado, he becomes one of us.

Our membership tradition does contain, however, one vitally important qualification. That qualification relates to the use of our name, Alcoholics Anonymous. We believe that 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. Here our purpose is clear and unequivocal. For obvious reasons we wish the name Alcoholics Anonymous to be used only in connection with straight A.A. activities. One can think of no A.A. member who would like, for example, to see the formation of "dry" A.A. groups, "wet" A.A. groups, Republican A.A. groups, Communist A.A. groups. Few, if any, would wish our groups to be designated by religious denominations. We cannot lend the A.A. name, even indirectly to other activities, however worthy. If we do so we shall become hopelessly compromised and divided. We think that A.A. should offer its experience to the whole world for whatever use can be made of it. But not its name. Nothing could be more certain.

Let us of A.A. therefore resolve that we shall always be inclusive, and never exclusive, offering all we have to all men save our title. May all barriers be thus leveled, may our unity thus be preserved. And may God grant us a long life --and a useful one!

"No matter who you are, no matter how low you've gone, no matter how grave your emotional complications—even your crimes—we still can't deny you A.A. We don't want to keep you out."

A.A. Tradition Checklist

These questions were originally published in the A.A. Grapevine in conjunction with a series on the Twelve Traditions that began in November 1969 and ran through September 1971. While they were originally intended primarily for individual use, many A.A. groups have since used them as a basis for wider discussion.

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new A.A. 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 overimpressed 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 A.A. 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 A.A. before? What his other problems are?

CENTRAL OFFICE

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