

# MAINSTAY



Aotearoa New Zealand - February/March 2020

**New!**  
Book review  
Special feature  
Item of interest  
Service in the fellowship  
Vacancies

# The 12 Steps

1. *We admitted we were powerless over alcohol - that our lives had become unmanageable.*
2. *Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.*
3. *Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.*
4. *Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.*
5. *Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.*
6. *Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.*
7. *Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*
8. *Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.*
9. *Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.*
10. *Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.*
11. *Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.*
12. *Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.*

Mainstay is the magazine of Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand. It's our 'meeting in print' reflecting a broad spectrum of current AA experience in recovery, unity, and service. Mainstay only publishes letters and articles relating to AA and alcoholism and publication does not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous or Mainstay. Mainstay aims to be self-supporting and is not affiliated to any outside groups or interests and does not accept paid advertising. There is no payment for contributions and they cannot be returned. Anonymity will be protected, but contributions and correspondents are asked to include their first name, locality and a contact telephone number or email/physical address (not for publication).

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## AA Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

## Responsibility declaration

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that I am responsible.

PHOTO CREDITS Front and Back: Christchurch, both by Heather H. Wellington

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# Happy New Year

everyone. We have dedicated **2020** as the **Year of Mainstay** and hope you will be part of our new growth. As well as publishing all the wonderful 12th Step letters many of you continue to send us, we are adding some new features and look forward to your feedback about them (send this to GSO with **Mainstay feedback** in the subject line).

**12th step letters** *Of course, letters on your experience, strength and hope will always be the ‘mainstay’ of our meeting in print so please continue to share these with the fellowship.*

**Special features** *We are introducing topics that you can choose to write about – and will make those topics a special feature in each issue. The 2020 schedule is below so you can plan your next letter right now - you can send your letter into us at any time and it will be placed in the folder for that topic:*

**April/May      Spiritual awakenings**

**June/July      Gratitude**

**August/September      Our Slogans**

**October/November      Traditions**

**Book reviews** *One of our NZAA delegates is going to write book reviews about literature you may not know about - and would welcome others writing a review too. So, if thats the sort of thing you would like to do, please offer us a book review of your favourite AA book – or ask for a book to be assigned to you.*

**Service in the Fellowship** *Information about the various roles, written by people in the role (outside group service) will be featured in each edition and will discuss their experience of the role. This first one is about service as a World Service Delegate (WSD). It sounds glamorous but there is a lot of reading and writing to do!*

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**Items of interest** *This issue has an extract from the talk a non-alcoholic board member gave at the recent National Convention in Christchurch. Items of interest are exactly that, not AA-approved but items about alcoholism which we believe could be of interest to many of our readers. As always, we do not endorse outside issues and including such items does not imply that we do. We welcome members sending copies of articles about alcoholism they have found that the Mainstay committee can consider for inclusion in our magazine.*

So, please help us make 2020 the year of Mainstay – send us your suggestions too. Are there any topics you would like us to cover?

Will you make a commitment to write to Mainstay every year, on your anniversary, or founders' day, or Christmas? Will you put up your hand to be the Mainstay rep at your homegroup? Will you get all your sponsees to write too?

Sponsors, now that's another good topic – especially about service sponsors; having one, being one, or even how not having one, or being one, has worked. In this issue, two members share their experience of sponsorship which has been one of the keys to their recovery. Would this approach work for you?

Do you have a special photo you would like to see on the cover? Send it in. Please make sure it is in portrait, and clear (hi-res, no blurring), with no people and if possible, showing the various season or showing serenity.

A reminder: Mainstay comes out every even month and we need your submissions by the end of every odd numbered month.

*Enjoy the issue, and please send us your feedback,*

*In fellowship,*  
**The Mainstay Committee**

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# 12th Step Letters

***Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now.***

*Mainstay editorial policy is to accept and publish letters from members of AA who wish to share their experience, strength, and hope. The Editor reserves the right to edit submissions. Mainstay does not publish anything unrelated to AA or that violates the principles of AA. Sensitivity and discretion will be used to maintain the integrity of the original correspondence. Please submit your sharing in word-processed or email format, or **legible hand writing**. Digitally submitted sharing should be in Word .doc/.docx format or rich text only please. We accept graphics and photos in most standard formats (please use a high resolution for clarity).*

## Dear Mainstay...

### ***If I can do it, so can you***

Like many others I first started drinking in my teens - it gave me more confidence as I was quite a shy person. I loved the ability to talk to others that it gave me. The drinking accelerated while at I was at university and in my mid 20's. I've always had an addictive personality - anything offered was tried and if it wasn't alcohol it was something else. I never had thought this was abnormal and thought that this was just how people my age lived.

From the age of 25 onwards, this turned into drinking every day and then became every morning to get me through. Then lunchtime was added in and soon it was all day. I started sneaking it in at work and lying about it to my partner although it was blatantly obvious. I started hiding it too. I admitted I had a problem, but I didn't want to stop yet. Gradually

family and friends became concerned and I ended up leaving a job before I was fired due to being incapacitated at work. I moved cities, got my life back together and started again - still without really admitting to being an alcoholic or attempting to fix the real issue. I went to two different councillors and in the end just told them what they wanted to hear so I could try and make everyone feel better.

Things came to a head again a year or so later. This time I tried AA but I wasn't ready; half the time I'd have a drink before going to a meeting or as soon as I got home. I tried to tell myself it wasn't for me, that I could stop alone, and it would be fine. I'd give up for a short period of time, only to start again. My marriage ended, then I was kicked out of where I was living. Fortunately, friends took me in. In the depths of my drinking I tried to commit suicide. It was after this that I realised I couldn't go on and entered an outpatient programme

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at a nearby facility.

I spent the next 4.5yrs sober and most of it seemed happy and enjoyable but without the help of AA, I was still really struggling. It wasn't the not drinking that bothered me, it was the thoughts that filled my head constantly, the overthinking all the time, over-analysing every little issue. It would drive me crazy lying awake at night, getting stressed over things that had never (and never did) happen. I never stopped to think others were like me - it was just my problem to deal with. I was stressed and at the end of the 4.5 years, very unhappy and unwell. I hid it well and everyone thought I had everything together including myself. Then one day a few months after starting a new job, seemingly out of the blue, I found myself wishing for a drink and acted on it. I had not kept up with what I'd learnt in rehab and had no suitable programme to prevent myself from relapsing.

Six months of continuous drinking went on from there to my family's despair. I didn't even know why I was doing it myself. I tried counselling again to no avail. Finally, after one lot of binge drinking, I just begged for it all to end and to be locked away - I guess this was when I finally gave in to it and realised I needed real help. I booked into a rehab for a month.

I spent the next 18months sober,

doing well and again thinking I was fine. I happily admitted I was an alcoholic but again, I wasn't following the programme and still thought I could do it on my own. Being a very private person naturally, I attended AA meetings but dreaded sharing and opening up to others and that led to my downfall.

From September 2019 I spent another 6 weeks on a constant drinking session - no one could stop me. I didn't care about anything but my next drink, I didn't care about my

family, my partner, my support group or my own life. My rock bottom came when I woke up in a resuscitation unit in the local hospital with my father crying next to me; I had no recollection of how I got there.

After this, I realised I didn't want to die.

I wanted to live and if I kept drinking, I

was going to die. It was the hardest decision I've made as I was so scared to give up drinking as it was literally my life - but what was the point of drinking if it would kill me anyway? So, I started on Antabuse, and it felt a weight had been lifted off my shoulders. The power of choice had been taken away from me and the relief it gave me was so immense I cannot put it into words. Sure, I've had a few cravings but without alcohol I have my life back. I'm myself again, people like me again,

**Live  
and Let  
Live..**

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I can talk to others about my issues and I have never ever been happier. And this time, along with getting my fitness goals and meditation back on track, I'm actually working the AA programme.

Looking back its funny to see that drinking gave me no confidence during those middle years, it was a tiring chore but a necessity to living that I had to hide from everyone I knew. Outwardly I thought no one would suspect and I didn't want to share my thoughts with others as I thought I would be looked down on. I often think if only I had tried to give up earlier but at this moment in time, I know that my life is playing out as it should be - letting go is one of the things I have truly struggled with. I've found my head space a lot clearer though it does take a lot of work, and I'm learning to open up to others. As someone once said to me if you have any issues share them and if not read the big book - the answer will be in there. Even when things happen out of the blue, I know I'm dealing with these more effectively than I would have at any time in the past.

My best advice is don't give up, don't give in, ask for help no matter how hard it is, as people will go out of their way to help you as they have helped me. We can't do this alone, and although life isn't perfect it is easier

to deal with in the programme of AA. It has taken many a relapse to get this far but admitting that medication and talking is what I personally needed to stop drinking has literally been a lifesaver for me. I honestly feel if I can do this, so can you.

**Emma W.**

### ***The journey not the destination***

Recently I had the opportunity to combine attending the 2020

NZ convention in Christchurch with a road trip with my brother around the South Island. I love going to our National Convention. It is a really great way to hear some new shares and to feel part of something bigger than myself. We had been looking forward to the trip for months

and had meticulously planned every aspect of it. What I had not anticipated, however, was getting sick the day before we left and struggling with a cold all through convention and the first few days of the trip. This had the undesired effect of keeping me quarantined in my room at convention all Friday evening and Saturday morning. How disappointing! Here I was at convention surrounded by centuries of sobriety and I was feeling sorry for myself. Anyone who has struggled with the disease of alcoholism knows

**Easy Does It...**

that too much time alone with one's thoughts can be a very dangerous situation to be in. I was very fortunate that my roommate took care of me and made sure that I was well-hydrated and medicated. Her help and my resolve to make the most out of the situation helped me hand my will and life over to the care of God and get up and at least eat something on the Saturday. That did the trick. I ended up meeting lots of interesting people and making some new connections along the way. Success!

Feeling a bit better on the Sunday and on the road to recovery, my brother and I set off on our week-long road trip around the South Island. The last time we went on such a trip was 13 years ago and during that 2-week trip my brother drove our van the entire time while I got drunk via every Marlborough and Blenheim vineyard and wine-tasting. I even had miniature wine bottles in the glove compartment in case I got caught short. I was very selfish and self-seeking and only cared about my own enjoyment.

This time we took turns driving and shared all costs equally. It was very nostalgic for my brother to be back in NZ after more than a decade and for us to retrace the steps we took all those years ago. My brother is a big trumper and in my first year of recovery I'd visited him on Vancouver Island in Canada. He lived in a remote

community and I marvelled at his ability to make connections with the 98 people who lived there without needing to resort to alcohol or drugs to fit in.

On this trip, we decided to walk an 8-hour track around Lake Hauroko and stay overnight in a DoC hut. It was marked 'intermediate' on the map and looked like even terrain. The night before we started on the track we camped in a campsite where lots of loud people turned up and we started feeling fearful that there might not

be enough room in the hut when we got there. We got up early and set off on the track. It soon became apparent that the track was poorly maintained meaning that what should have been an 8-hour hike was more like 10. It was also a track for advanced hikers. My inexperience, coupled with not being 100% recovered from my cold

eventually saw me caving against a tree. I just couldn't go on.

My brother was still in a rush to get to the cabin before everyone else and walked fast and far ahead. So, I just let go and said whether we find a bed in the hut 'we cannot control that'. We were still being part of some rat race even though we were in the middle of nowhere! In an instant he relaxed too. We both understood in that moment that the adventure we were on was about the journey not the destination. So, we turned back and camped on

## But for the Grace of God.

a beach for the night. Despite the sand-flies and some nosey little birds from the forest, we had a memorable experience gazing at the stars - miles away from anybody or anything. It was magical. The little birds were fearless and took turns sitting on my backpack and playing with my hair.

We made our way out of the forest the next morning and moved on to Te Anau and eventually the Hollyford Track - which my brother is currently hiking. Despite all the other things we saw on our trip, that tramping experience (though unpleasant at times) was by far the most memorable. It showed me the importance of taking it easy, one step at a time and knowing when to let go. It also showed me that pain is the touchstone of spiritual progress. In our rush to get to what may be, we were missing out on what was. Letting go taught me that life can be beautiful if I stop trying to run the show and get ahead of everyone else.

**Grace L.**  
*Wellington*

## ***Grateful to Mainstay***

I am so grateful for the AA member who handed me some Mainstays and for those members that make Mainstay happen as well as the members who take the time to share

their experience, strength and hope in print. Thank you thank you thank you.

I've been around the rooms of AA for 12 or so years and I am a member of the type that has come to understand that addiction swaps around. So while I haven't taken a drink for 12 years I've had other addictions on the go, food - anorexia/bulimia, exercise and other destructive behaviours.

These past 12 years I've done service, gone to lots of meetings, have a sponsor, own the literature and

read it, worked the steps and honoured the traditions as best I knew how but still the insanity persisted. Then it got bad enough and I finally had to admit to my sponsor my life was unmanageable.

Since then I've felt very much like a newcomer and have been experiencing the

insanity of those first weeks/months that I hear members speak of when they get to the jumping off place and can't live with alcohol and can't live without it. I still have lots of irritable, restless and discontent moments and a few days ago I was desperate to get some relief from my head and I picked up a relatively old Mainstay Dec2013/Jan2014.

I've heard it said many times that Mainstay is a meeting in print but that day I experienced it. As I read



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the stories I began to feel encouraged, and identify and feel hope again and most of all relief from the negative, noisy, discouraging mess in my head. Thank you AA, other members and Mainstay for helping me that day. I'm grateful.

Members have shared that I get well and stay well when I think of others and practice gratitude so I wanted to thank and share how Mainstay relieved me of my obsession with self and provided relief from the insanity of the disease of addiction I suffer from.

**Kiley**  
*Hamilton*

### ***You're worth it***

I recently travelled solo from Darwin Australia to attend the 57th annual Alcoholics Anonymous convention in Christchurch. Since 5 months sober I have been travelling the country attending conventions to contribute to my sobriety and my 12th Step.

I was a black out binge drinker for over 30yrs and it took me 14 months, 3 sponsors, bucket loads of tears and putting pen to paper to get this programme. My first sponsor was very passionate in enforcing the fact that my sobriety should be my priority. I have to stay on top of my sickness of Alcoholism by continuing to work the 12 steps of this programme daily, even when on holidays. I pray to my higher

power each day and thank him for my life and the gifts of sobriety.

Today I like myself, I smile, I laugh and I'm comfortable being me, thanks to a God of my own understanding, a sponsor, the Big Book, the 12 Steps and you, I haven't had to pick up a drink for almost 4yrs, that's a miracle. This programme works if you work it and your worth it! God Bless,

**Sam H.**  
*N.T. Australia*



### ***Grateful to make an amends***

I recently celebrated my 6th sobriety birthday and was feeling pretty chuffed with myself. I love sobriety birthdays. They're a great opportunity to reflect on what things used to be like and what they're like now.

Each year on my AA birthday, I try to get to one or two meetings, talk with friends in the fellowship and make connections with newcomers wherever possible. I spend as much of the day doing service as I can, trying to give back to a programme that has literally saved my life.

On this particular birthday, after getting home from my homegroup meeting and feeling buoyed up from so much AA love, I sat down at my computer and started scrolling

through Facebook. My old best friend from high school was celebrating her 20-year wedding anniversary and had scanned her wedding album and posted the pictures. My feelings of contentment and pride at my six years of sobriety were immediately shattered. There I was, one of her bridesmaids, drunk as a skunk, with wine stains down the front of my dress, rheumy eyes, red nose, and my hair a mess. And that was before the ceremony even began! Everyone was looking happy and cheerful, but I looked sinister, creepy, and wasted.

I did the worst of my drinking before social media and smart phones existed, so mercifully, there's not much visual evidence of my alcoholism. Seeing actual photographs of me in the bad old days was incredibly disarming.

I gathered myself and messaged my friend.

I explained that I had just seen her wedding pictures on Facebook and I apologised to her profusely for having been a terrible bridesmaid and for having made such a mess of myself at her wedding. I worded my amends carefully, making sure that I took full responsibility for my actions, and didn't fob it off on being a stupid 20-something year old or some other excuse. I sent my message and immediately felt better. It was an amends that I didn't even realise I had to make, and, despite the discomfort, I was grateful that I'd had the opportunity to do it. A

couple of hours later she responded. She was gracious but reserved. She acknowledged my apology, but also told me about other things I did that I had no recollection of. Hurtful comments I'd made and offensive things I'd done. Her memory of the night was acute because, after all, it was her wedding! For me it had just been an excuse to get drunk, and I'd gone a long way towards almost ruining her big day for her.

I'm immensely grateful I no longer have the desire to drink, but I don't ever want to forget what I used to be

like. Perhaps in time my old friend will forgive me, perhaps she won't. It's hard for me to resist the temptation to meddle; I want to jump on a plane and go and visit her and explain myself and beg for her forgiveness until we are back to being the friends that we once were. But the programme of AA has taught me that

I can only be responsible for cleaning my side of the street. I can't force someone to forgive me, but I can be genuine in my apology. I can live each day with integrity and know that if I continue to practice the principles of AA in all my affairs and stay sober one day at a time, then who knows, perhaps one day I will regain my friend's respect and love. But for now, I am grateful and humbled by this mighty programme and all it has to teach me.

***Therese***

**KEEP  
IT  
SIMPLE**

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## ***Finding the real me***

‘Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly’ always makes me think, I’ve been in the ‘slow lane’ for most of my life but thanks to a loving God, AA, and the 12 Steps, at least I’m in a lane and now have some direction.

My journey in recovery is a work in progress. Although knowing within myself that I had an alcohol problem for many years, it took a very long time to reach admittance and even longer, acceptance. Before walking through the doors, I had already lost two members of my family to this disease and would lose another within ten years as a direct result of alcohol. But my denial told me I would be different. As my drinking continued, so did my shame, guilt, and anger that I, a woman in her mid-40s, wife, mother to 3 children, and a health-care professional of 23 years, could not stop on my own. What was wrong with me?

Along with a caring God who got me ready to hear, it was my eldest son who helped me reach my moment of clarity, by saying to me that I was nothing but a drunk. Though my insides wanted to deny that in every way possible, my body, mind, and soul knew otherwise.

Fear of what life would be without alcohol consumed me. I had very little faith, much less trust, that A.A. would work for me because I was different to you. Yet, the power of example that was (and continues to be) before me, gave birth to hope of a new way of life through God’s grace.

Initially, you helped me just get

sober by going to meetings. Then you suggested that I pick a woman who I felt had what I wanted and start following her lead. It was that exercise, getting honest with someone else, that allowed me to finally get honest with me. I saw how my disease had produced great self-deception and total misperception of who I really was. I was able to acknowledge that though my outsides showed me as functional in all those life roles of wife, mother, nurse, daughter, sister, friend, it was taking great effort to keep it together inside and the only one who couldn’t see that truth was me.

As you held me close, you helped me look at myself honestly for the first time ever. You helped me accept the things I cannot change and take responsibility for myself. By sharing the secrets of my soul, you helped me erase the things I hated about me and make room for the things that I always wanted to have and be. It was the going within that helped me acknowledge that many of my choices in life were about avoiding me. Had I chosen a nursing profession because that allowed me to take care of you, not me? Had I sought marriage and gone to any length to become a mother, so again as to spend less time with me? Even now, after a few twenty-four hours as a retired woman, do I keep volunteering to run away from me?

I do need to continue to ask myself these questions, yet I believe, because you have shown me the way, that my reasons for doing have different motives today. From the

very start, you gave to me without asking anything in return. You then taught me that it was in the giving that we get back. It is the sharing of experience, strength, and hope that ensures our continued sobriety. It is the changes that I am willing to make (again through God's grace and your example) that makes me a woman in recovery. Today, it is imperative that I look at me on the surface and in depth; it is imperative that I accept my disease and who I really am and that I continue to seek God's direction for me; and it is imperative that I be grateful for the miracle of a second chance at life to become the woman I believe my Creator intended me to be.

As a newcomer, and every day since, you suggested that on awakening, I ask for help, and on retiring, I remember to say, 'thank you'. The awareness's I am blessed to have today were not necessarily self-sought - they too were/are gifts that have been shared for open adoption if I so choose. I hope to spend as much time accepting as I did denying - and in so doing, I hope to keep staying sober and in recovery, a day at a time! Thank you for helping me find the real me!

**Mallory B.**  
Florida/Christchurch

## Laughing more

I am always intending to write sharing letters more often to mainstay. The reason I do not get around to it is because I sometimes feel that I do not have much to share that could be of benefit to anyone else. However,

when I do write, I always feel glad afterwards and feel good about having given something back. As it says somewhere in our literature, 'gratitude without action is just a pleasant emotion'. This morning's reading from Daily Reflections gives me something to share on.

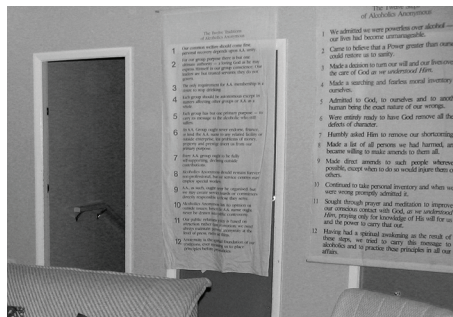
At my first meeting I met people whose past lives and rock bottoms, resulting from their alcoholic living, were far worse than mine. Some of those people were laughing and happy after many years of living without consuming alcohol which was beyond my comprehension at the time. I then thought of my last twelve years as a daily drunk, during which time there had been little happiness or laughter. I wondered how they did it.

By the grace of God whom at that time I had no acceptance of, and many lovely people in our fellowship who led me gently into our programme, I have not needed or wanted to drink alcohol since.

I now laugh more and am happier than I have ever been in my life before AA became such a big part of it.

Love to you all,

**George**  
Thames



# Here sleeps a Hampshire Grenadier

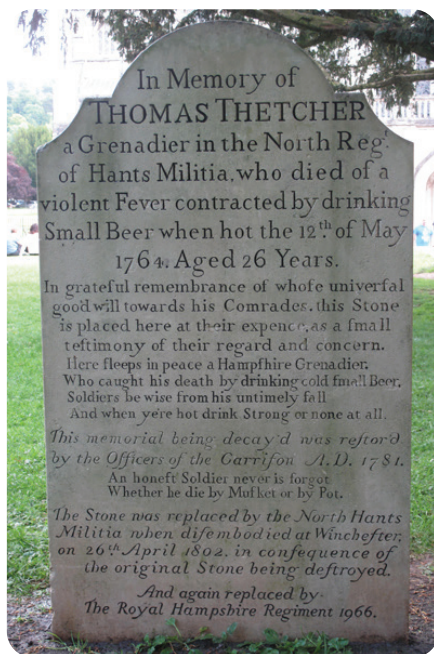
To members of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) the name Thomas Thetcher, a grenadier in the North Regiment of the Hants Militia, is synonymous with the foundation of their organisation.

Thetcher died aged 26 on May 12, 1764 after drinking contaminated 'small' beer and was buried in Winchester Cathedral churchyard. In 1918, a young American soldier named Bill Wilson, who was encamped near Winchester with his US Army unit while en route to the Western Front, visited the city's cathedral and chanced upon Thomas Thetcher's grave. Wilson was struck by the inscription. After the war, Wilson became a successful businessman, but heavy drinking marred his career and he was eventually told that he would either die from his alcoholism or have to be locked up permanently.

Remarkably, however, Wilson and a handful of fellow alcoholics discovered a way to achieve sobriety. He became a founding member of Alcoholics Anonymous and wrote a book about his battle with drink in the hope of inspiring other alcoholics. In it he recalled his visit to Winchester Cathedral and how the gravestone had caught his eye, describing it as an 'ominous warning which I failed to heed'.

There is no evidence that Thomas Thetcher was an alcoholic. In the mid-18th Century most people drank small beer – a weak brew – rather than water which carried cholera, typhoid and other diseases. It is likely that the 'violent fever' which killed Thetcher was caused by one of these diseases which had not been killed off in the making of that particular batch of beer. Ironically, had Thetcher drunk 'strong' beer, which had a higher alcohol content, he would probably have survived.

The tombstone that Bill Wilson saw in 1918 was the copy of the 1764 original erected in 1802. In 1966 it was moved for safekeeping to the Royal Hampshire Regimental Museum at Serle's House in Winchester where visitors can still see it. It was replaced in the cathedral grounds by the present updated copy, which is also based on the 1764 original.



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# Special feature - Sponsorship

*Two members share how a daily check-in with their sponsor worked for them.*

## **A key ingredient**

I have been sober now for 20 years and I think sponsorship is more important to me today than it was when I first came into AA. I used to think that perhaps after a period of long sobriety sponsorship became less important, and that you would reach a level where day to day contact with a sponsor would no longer be as critical. What a blessing to realise that the day to day proposition of the AA programme applies today and every other day I want to remain sober, happy, joyous and free, regardless of 'time up'.

I still struggle with my defects of character. Yes, they have been reduced and for periods of time have been supposedly eliminated but really, all of my defects of character are not that far under the surface. Whilst in NZ I have been calling my sponsor every day at 12:30 for 20 years. There are often times where we don't talk about much and the conversation can be over in 20 seconds or we might not talk at all but it is very rare that I will not make the attempt to call my sponsor at that time EVERY DAY. As a result, all sorts of miracles have transpired in my life. Now I'm not suggesting that simple phone calls will revolutionise your life, keep you sober and happy

for ever and ever, but the discipline of doing this from my first weeks in sobriety built momentum for me which only with the fullness of time was I able to look back and see how important it was in my story.

In the beginning I found it hard, I didn't like the idea of having to talk to someone every day at the same time thinking "what on earth am I going to talk about today" But my sponsor, ever patient, just encouraged me to keep going, to remember that the program was a day by day application and that my phone calls were just a nod to the fact that I was alcoholic and that I needed the constant companionship of one alcoholic talking to another.

I have sponsored lots of people since, and have encouraged, if not insisted,



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that all of them do the same thing, committing to a certain time of the day to pick the phone up and give me a call. The reality is that we might only have one or two really good conversations a week, but I always tell them that if they were just calling as and when they pleased, we might be lucky to get one good conversation in a month!

My sponsor knows more about me than any other human on this earth including my wonderful wife. It is so comforting to know that there is another human being out there who cares for me and who knows my deepest darkest thoughts, fears and triumphs. Sponsorship is as important as any other component of the AA program. The program, the meetings, the steps, the traditions and a sponsor are all the key ingredients to the main event, which is having a spiritual awakening and finding a God of your understanding.

**Rob F**

*City Steps Thursday Christchurch*

### ***I did as she suggested***

I loved alcohol. I was an anxious kid and when I started drinking aged 14 it took all the fear away. I always drank too much. We didn't have mobile phones back then and the word used to go around at high school where the hall party was going to be that weekend. I'd get this feeling in my stomach, like butterflies. I used to think I was excited about the party, but I know now that I was gearing up to drink. Mates used to say 'don't drink so much tonight. You always

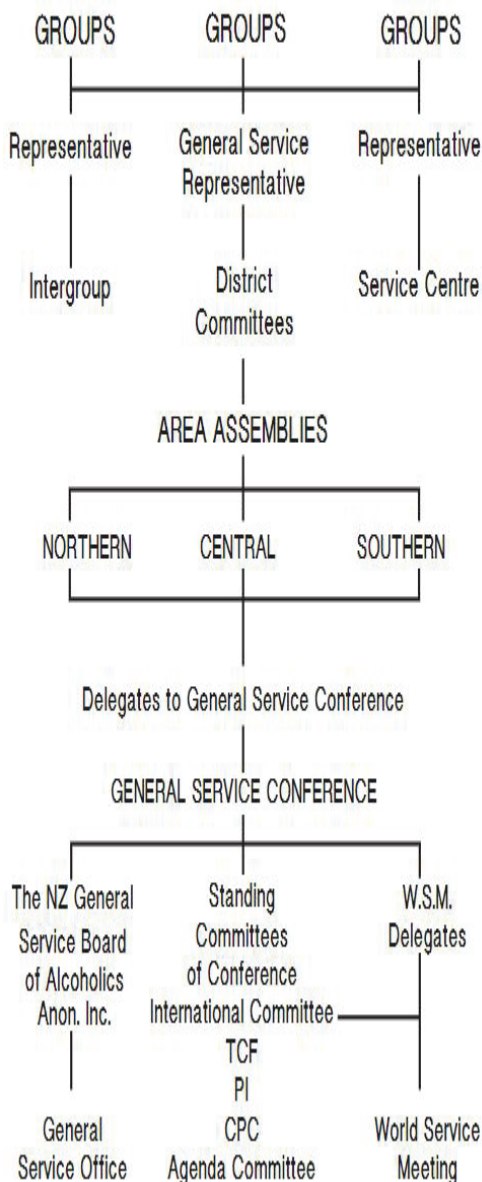
miss the party' and inevitably I'd end up passed out in someone's car or in a paddock next to where the party was.

I was 36 when I came to Alcoholics Anonymous. By then, I was drinking in the mornings and slept with booze beside the bed. I would set up dates with guys on the internet and get drunk before I went to meet them. Sometimes I'd wake up at their place in a part of London I didn't recognise, sometimes I'd come to in a doorway or on the tube. I only knew about AA from American programmes on the TV. I found the first few meetings I went to very strange and though it might be a cult. I used to go late and leave early and not talk to anyone. Eventually I got a sponsor and she suggested I call her at the same time every day. Calling was hard. I wasn't used to asking for help. But I was staying sober, so I kept doing it. I went to lots of meetings, two a day for the first year or so and this helped me so much. My sponsor took me through the steps, and I did everything she suggested, even when I didn't totally understand things. I'm grateful she emphasised it's a spiritual programme not a religious one because I am deeply suspicious of lot of organised religion. My life got better.

It's twelve years now and my life doesn't resemble the one I had back then. I still go to meetings, sponsor other women, help where I can. There's more I could do. I've been given so much. Now I can see the insanity of how I used to live but at the time I couldn't. I was just in it.

**Emma**

## NEW ZEALAND SERVICE STRUCTURE



# Service in the Fellowship

**Tena koe** and thank for taking the time to read this World Service Column. We wanted our first column to outline what World Service is and how it works in Aotearoa New Zealand. Most of the following comes from our New Zealand Service Manual (p.81). This is available on our website as a living document.

The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all AA activity – to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever the language they speak. The World Service Meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates from all corners of the world. At the last World Service Meeting, held in 2018 in Durban 72 delegates representing 45 countries or zones attended. The meeting officially came to a close with delegates reciting the Serenity Prayer one by one in each of the languages spoken in participating countries — a moving display of

A.A.'s global reach.

Two delegates are elected every two years for a four-year term to represent Aotearoa New Zealand at World Service Meetings which are held bi-annually alternating between USA and another country in even years. The World Service delegates also attend the Asia Oceania Service Meeting which is held every alternate year in odd years. Past Conference delegates who wish to become a World Service delegate will put their name forward to Conference for ratification via the Area Assembly. At the moment your World Service Delegates are: Pip (Second Term), Steve (First Term) and Kathleen (Alternate). You can get hold of Pip by email at pipwsd@gmail.com, Steve at \*\*\*\* and Kathleen at kathleenpwsd@gmail.com. We are always happy to hear from you, especially if you are travelling - we are always grateful to hear stories of AA meetings overseas and you may be travelling to a place that needs literature or other support.

The World Service delegates liaise with members from other countries in order to fulfil the purpose of finding ways and means of carrying the AA message to those parts of the world that require assistance. This support includes helping countries plan sound service structures and expanding AA services with internal communications, literature distribution, sponsorship, public information, community relations and institutions work. Asia Oceania

Service Meeting (AOSM) AOSM is a zonal meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous. The AOSM meeting was created to share experience, strength and hope among the participating countries, by helping them to establish, grow and unify AA in the Asia and Pacific area. Sponsorship of developing countries by more established countries helps AA to reach out to help others to achieve sobriety.

Like everything else in AA, World Service is self-supporting through the voluntary contributions of the fellowship. Last year, AA Aotearoa/ New Zealand was able to offer financial support toward a delegate from Iran attending the AOSM in Hong Kong. This meant a great deal to the fellowship in Iran and was only possible because individual members contribute to our seventh tradition and groups are part of the service structure. AA Aotearoa/New Zealand also makes a contribution to the International Translation Fund which facilitates translation of AA literature into languages other than English.

AA is full of astounding things and the fact that putting money in a basket in Ōtautahi or Uawa or Rakiura might bring sobriety to a suffering alcoholic in Kerman or Jaya Pura or Guangzhou seems a beautiful example of our 12th Step in action.

***Pip WSD***

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# Book review - **A Society of alcoholics in Action**

*Reviewed by Randal P.*

## ***Alcoholics Anonymous in New Zealand***

owes its inception in 1947 to one man, Ian McE. In his desperation to find a long lasting practical solution to his own drinking problem, he wrote to the General Service Office, PO Box 459 Grand Central Annexe, New York, (this is still the postal address for AA in New York to this day).

This was merely a decade after the original founding of AA in America, so they were still establishing themselves and had significantly fewer resources and manpower, than is available to us today. Despite this, all enquiries to AA New York were responded to, irrespective of their origin, and a reply was forthcoming from Bobbie B in New York, who was to be Ian's sponsor from that great distance. Bobbie was encouraging, suggesting that AA was already in existence in Australia, and she couldn't see any reason why the AA programme wouldn't work equally as well, even further south in New Zealand. She forwarded by surface mail, lists of all the groups in the world and suggested that Ian write to Bill O'. In Sydney, the AA secretary there. When writing again to Bobbie later, (17 August 1946) Ian reported the receipt of a long letter from Bill.

Thus, began Ian's wide correspondence with AA's in New Zealand and many parts of the world. Sometimes he was given the address of a new group in another country and was encouraged to share with them his own experience in starting out alone. Bobbie also wrote, "we are putting a star on our map today for New Zealand and you are 'it'. This simply means we consider you our AA representative for Richmond, New Zealand and when we get any enquiries from people in your vicinity, we will ask you to follow them up". Ian felt very good about this.

Money was short and many times Ian spoke of the difficulty he had in getting enough cash together to make an important trip. The solution was to make and maintain links by letter. One member, writing in 1977, recalled his first letter from Ian, who was his sponsor, which he had received in 1952:

*"In reply to your inquiry- I enclose some literature on our approach to the problem. AA is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help each other to recover from alcoholism. AA believes that no one can stop a man drinking if he does not want to - our*

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experience is that no matter how bad a man has become, if he will admit he is an alcoholic, and is up against a problem that he cannot solve on his own, then there is every chance that he can recover. We have all been through the 'wringer' - hundreds of times we have said "never again", and tried hard too, only to find that within weeks or months we were in the middle of another bender before we quite realised, we had started. If you feel all alone and burdened down with problems like no one else had to deal with or carry, then you can be sure that there are many others in New Zealand who were in just that position, and have found a way to live reasonably happy and useful lives without alcohol. My wife had left me and taken the children - I had lost my job and was in a serious financial jamb. I had been to many doctors and was in many institutions- there seemed to be no answer. Unfortunately, we have no active AA member in your town, but there is one thirty miles away and he is sure to call when he knows of your plight. I will come up at the first opportunity. If you admit you are an alcoholic and want to do something about it write again and tell me a bit about yourself. We have no medication or pills or anything of that nature, and I know of no effective treatment by that method. Strange as it may seem, recovery starts from admission of defeat and then facing one's problems in the light of AA experience. There are no fees or charges of any sort in AA - helping others has been found the best possible therapy for keeping

we older ones on the beam and we always welcome an opportunity to help another who wants help. But we will not try and convince you that you need help or that we have the answer - you must decide that, and with our help try to apply the AA programme and find out what we now enjoy. If you are an alcoholic, sobriety is the most important thing in the world to you. We attained it - maybe you can too. Let's hear more from you. Yours sincerely, Ian, 6 Sept. 1952".

The AA member who forwarded me this letter, went on to say:

"The above letter has remained close by me for the past 25 years and has been of great comfort when I needed it most. It has served me well many times as a private AA meeting. The importance of this letter is that AA really works, as Bill W. would say, 'by one alcoholic talking or writing to another' Yours sincerely, 'Grateful', 6 September".

We owe much to Ian and the very many alcoholics he assisted nationally from simple beginnings in Nelson.

A full transcript of A Society of alcoholics in action is available to read in full on The AA Website; <https://aa.org.nz/archives/>

Conference and Board is considering a reprint of this book, subject to interest from the fellowship at large, but cost will be commensurate to expressions of interest from groups and individuals accordingly.

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# **That Ain't in the Book!**

***We hear a lot of stuff said in meetings that can't be reconciled with the program as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. What follows are some of the things we often hear, along with what the 1st Edition of our basic text, the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, has to say on the subject.***

## ***Don't drink and go to meetings***

Page 59, paragraph 3: "Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery: ..."

## ***Just do the next right thing***

Page 86, paragraph 4: "We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought or a decision."

Page 87, paragraph 1: "Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired at all times. We might pay for this presumption in all sorts of absurd actions and ideas."

## ***Remember your last drunk***

Page 24, Paragraph 2: "We are unable, at times, to bring into our consciousness with sufficient force the memory of the suffering and humiliation of even a week or a month ago. We are without defense against the first drink."

## ***I haven't had a drink today, so I'm a complete success today***

Page 19, paragraph 1: "The elimination of drinking is but a beginning. A much more important demonstration of our principles lies before us in our respective homes, occupations and affairs."

## ***This is a selfish program***

Page 14-15: "For if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead."

Page 20, paragraph 1: "Our very lives, as ex-problem drinkers depend upon our constant thought of others and how we may help meet their needs."

Page 62, paragraph 2: "Selfishness, self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles."

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Page 62, paragraph 3: "So our troubles, we think, are basically of our own making. They arise out of ourselves, and the alcoholic is an extreme example of self-will run riot, though he usually doesn't think so. Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kill us!"

Page 97, paragraph 2: "Helping others is the foundation stone of your recovery. A kindly act once in a while isn't enough. You have to act the Good Samaritan every day, if need be. It may mean the loss of many nights' sleep, great interference with your pleasures, interruptions to your business. It may mean sharing your money and your home, counseling frantic wives and relatives, innumerable trips to police courts, sanitariums, hospitals, jails and asylums. Your telephone may jangle at any time of the day or night."

***Don't drink, even if your ass falls off.***

Page 34, paragraph 2: "Many of us felt we had plenty of character. There was a tremendous urge to cease forever. Yet we found it impossible. This is the baffling feature of alcoholism as we know it—this utter inability to leave it alone, no matter how great the necessity or the wish."

***If an alcoholic wants to get sober, nothing you say can make him drink.***

Page 103, paragraph 2: "A spirit of intolerance might repel alcoholics whose lives could have been saved, had it not been for such stupidity. We would not even do the cause of temperate drinking any good, for not one drinker in a thousand likes to be told anything about alcohol by one who hates it."

***We are all just an arms length away from a drink***

Page 84, paragraph 4: "And we have ceased fighting anything or anyone - even alcohol. For by this time sanity will have returned. We will seldom be interested in liquor. If tempted, we recoil from it as from a hot flame. We react sanely and normally, and we will find that this has happened automatically. We will see that our new attitude toward liquor has been given us without any thought or effort on our part. It just comes! That is the miracle of it. We are not fighting it, neither are we avoiding temptation. We feel as though we had been placed in a position of neutrality - safe and protected. We have not even sworn off. Instead, the problem has been removed. It does not exist for us."

***I choose not to drink today***

Page 24 Paragraph 2: "The fact is that most alcoholics, for reasons yet obscure, have lost the power of choice in drink."

*... to be continued.*

*From the London Primary Purpose Group*

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# Item of interest -

## AA means better abstinence rates

Involvement in peer support groups, including AA, alongside and following formal treatment has been shown to ensure stronger and longer abstinence. Linkage studies from the US and from Australia show that people linked from detox services to 12-step groups have better recovery outcomes than those not linked to such groups.

The world's largest research trial in alcoholism treatment, Project MATCH, together with the much-respected treatment outcome studies of American and UK experts, particularly, but not only, George Vaillant, Mark Galanter and David Best have shown clearly that alcoholics do much better if they become seriously involved in the following:

- Peer support meetings (like AA)
- Non-drinking groups (the more the better)
- Non-drinking friends.

While there is a range of peer support groups, AA is by far the largest and most widespread and accessible. Committing to AA during and after treatment works in getting abstinent and staying abstinent.

Joining clubs, associations, groups whose activities do not include drinking is a proven major contributor to supporting abstinence. It helps the rewiring of the brain away from the apparent rewards of alcohol to the real rewards of distracting activities with people who are not drinking while doing them.

Searching out non-drinking friends and reducing or terminating (at least temporarily) the company of friends when they are drinking is important, the research consistently finds. The single best predictor for men recovering from alcoholism is moving away from a network supportive of drinking to a network supportive of recovery. The single best predictor for women sustaining abstinence is with the aid of a recovery group.

While little of this may be new to most and common sense to many, it is good to know that the research backs this all the way.

The reverse is equally true. People who do not put energy into these three strategies are more likely to relapse with shorter periods of abstinence and longer periods of post-relapse drinking.

58 per cent of alcoholics will eventually achieve sobriety. (ref. Best, D. What Is Recovery. 2013)

The power of collective recovery is a game changer. To see the pride, the unity and the transformation of people is a massive inspiration. Every single alcoholism recovery story has a turning point inspired by connection. The only common characteristic of recovery is that nobody does it alone. People serious about their own recovery need connection to a community of recovering people. Recovery does not happen in isolation. It is learned from others in recovery.

**Ian MacE.**  
Class A Board Member



## ***Heard in meetings***

*Dating is like pouring Miracle  
Grow on my character defects.*

*Push denial out the door, and it'll  
come back in the window.*

*Prayer -- the pause that refreshes.*

*We all have appointments with our  
lives and some of us don't show up.*

*The road to resentment is paved  
with expectation.*

*Keep coming back. It works if you  
work it. Work it you're worth it*

*AA is a "we" program. I get drunk,  
"we" stay sober.*

*Your worth should never depend  
on another person's opinion.*

*Even a really, really bad day only  
has twenty-four hours.*

*The minute you know you have  
humility, it is vanity.*

*I don't come to AA because I can't  
drink ... I come to AA because I can  
drink.*

*Allergic to alcohol! I break out in  
handcuffs.*

*Life on Life's Terms.*

*Can't give away what you don't  
have.*

*Don't quit five minutes before the  
miracle happens.*

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# A room full of smoke and grace

## *Sober many years, a woman recalls her first meeting*

The day of Sept. 5, 1975, started like most of my days. The first thing I did after waking was to see where I was sleeping--the couch or the bed. That might give me a clue about the night before. Then I would look at my husband and try to read his expression. If he was pleasant, I tried to piece the evening together from clues he might drop during conversation. If he looked disgusted, there was a good chance I had done some of my drunken behavior, i.e., calling people in a blackout, bringing people home for a party or having a fight with him. If he told me in detail, my shame and remorse would overwhelm me, and I would once more promise to never drink again.

That morning seemed okay. I almost always managed to be on time for work. Looking back, I wonder how I ever managed. The job it took to present as normal to my coworkers was a supreme effort. I was once asked what the bruises on my leg were. Since it was too embarrassing to say I was falling down in blackouts, I said I had a rare blood disease! Another time someone asked me why I had called them on the phone. I had no recollection! What a lie I was living. Many days I was too hungover to think of drinking, but often around 3 o'clock I would think about stopping for a bottle of scotch for cocktail hour or in case someone dropped by for a drink.

This particular day my husband was not coming home right away, and I had a bottle of scotch--ideal conditions for my cocktail hour. I put on some music, took out my cigarettes and prepared for another "fun evening." The next thing I remember was two policemen at the door (a first for me). There was blood coming out of my forehead and the policemen wanted to take me to the hospital. Neighbors had called to complain about the music. I had evidently fallen. I came out of a blackout in the hospital to hear the nurse say to the doctor, "She doesn't need anesthesia; she's drunk!" I never want to hear those words spoken with such contempt again.

The next morning I had 14 stitches and two black eyes. I pulled my hair over the stitches and hoped no one would notice. Such denial. It was a Friday, and my coworkers went for a lobster roll, my favorite food. When the order came and I lifted the food to my mouth, I found I was

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shaking so badly I could not eat. Again, I hoped no one noticed.

I went home sick to lie down for some relief. Just as I was dozing off, the landlord called to say they would have to evict us for being so loud. Then my husband came home and announced he was leaving. Somehow, I knew that he was serious this time. I then said something that I did not even plan to say: "You can't leave me. I am sick, and I will go to AA." I was 33 years old.

I am now 67 years old and sober longer than the age of many of the newer members coming into our Fellowship. Looking back to that first meeting I attended with my husband, I feel God's grace was in that room filled with smoke, and every other meeting I have attended since. Much of what I have learned in life has been in the halls of AA. I arrived there broken and confused about life. I learned, much to my surprise, that I have alcoholism. I found out that it is a three-fold disease, and much of my confusion has been cleared up by listening to the experience, strength and hope of other recovering people. People there loved me until I could love myself. A most wonderful sponsor (now deceased) took me under her wing and showed me how to be a woman of dignity. Through the Twelve Steps of recovery I was given the gift of a meaningful and sober life.

Admitting that I was powerless over alcohol and that my life was unmanageable was not difficult. By listening to others share, I realized the life I was living was not sane. I remember one day toward the end of my drinking, my husband asked me why we never rode our bikes anymore or walked the beach. Looking back, I know that alcohol had made me settle for less in life. Step Three was the answer to my plight. Turning my life over to God on a daily basis for the past 33 years has given me the direction and guidance and power to live a life that is meaningful and rich. I have come to rely on him for every challenge that I face. I was told that I never needed to be alone again. When relationships become difficult, help is a prayer away, as long as I ask, "Your will not mine be done."

I have been working in the field of alcoholism for 25 years. This keeps the message of where active alcoholism can take me up front. My husband and I will celebrate 45 years of marriage in October, God willing. The tools are there for the asking. All I have to do is use them.

***JOAN N.L. Gloucester, Mass. Grapevine January 2010***

# Service vacancies

## AANZGSO Archivist

*Do you have an interest in the history of A.A New Zealand?*

*Are you self-motivated and don't mind working alone?*

*Do you live in Auckland?*

*Have you a minimum of 3 years continuous sobriety?*

If this sounds like you, please consider a role as the ANSGSO archivist.

The role Includes:

- Supplying material of interest to the Mainstay Editor for inclusion in each publication.
- Providing relevant chronological material for the Archives section of the member's website, as it becomes available.
- Provide half yearly reports to the Board Chair.

Skills required:

- Be able to follow basic archiving and conservation practises (there are a couple of books in the archives that provide the guidelines.)
- Be highly organised and able to discern what's relevant, and what's not.
- Have careful filing and basic computer skills

The Archivist's office is on the same floor as the Auckland Service Centre.

How to apply:

Please apply to: [nzgso@aa.org.nz](mailto:nzgso@aa.org.nz) Subject: Archivists Position

Include your A.A service CV and any other supporting information.

DO NOT HAVE MUCH TO SHARE ...  
ENACT TO ANYONE ELSE, HOWEVER, I ALWAYS

## LA: An opportunity for Twelfth Step work 15

BO: Share your experience, strength, and hope with people who can't 2  
get to meetings.

DOM: Topics can include spirituality – steps – traditions – concepts – 10  
service – sponsorship – carrying the message. 11

TI: Send to GSO (see page 1) or [mainstay@aa.org.nz](mailto:mainstay@aa.org.nz) 6

ME SOMETHING TO SHARE ...  
AT MY FIRST MEETING I CAME INTO CONTACT WITH

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# Events

*Events for promotion in Mainstay must be received by GSO (events@aa.org.nz) by 30th March to ensure inclusion in the next issue of Mainstay.*

**7 March 2020**

## ***Central Area Assembly***

8.45am, Mamaku Centre, Mamaku Street, Inglewood. Contact Sheryl (027) 243-1718, CAA poster link: <https://aa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/AA-CAA-Poster-March-2020.pdf>

**27-29 March 2020**

## ***NZYPAA How it Works Convention 2020***

Kiwanis lodge, 1331 Huia Rd, Huia, Auckland 0604. Full convention: \$95, includes registration, accomodation, meals and activities. Saturday only, \$40. Contact: [www.nzypaa.co.nz](http://www.nzypaa.co.nz), Sarah 021723435, Matt 0221088018

**6 June 2020**

## ***Founders Day***

9.30am - 3:15pm. Godonton Hall, 1024 State Highway 1B, Gordonton, 3281, Contact: [foundersday2020@12n12.net](mailto:foundersday2020@12n12.net), Paul 0212952814, Chris 0221084190

**26-28 June 2020**

## ***218th Southern Area Assembly – Marlborough***

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AGM With Al-anon Participation

THEME: The spiritual life is not a theory. We have to live it. Pg 83.

Redwoodtown, Blenheim. \$25 Pre-register by direct debit to 03-0599-0431156-00 (name and group in the reference)

Contacts: [MarlboroughSAA@gmail.com](mailto:MarlboroughSAA@gmail.com), Andre 027 282 5057,

Rose 021 62 0030

# Subscriptions

Mainstay subscriptions fall on a fixed date of 1st April for a 12 month period (six issues) to 31st March the following year. New subscribers will pay a pro rata amount from when they join in the year. In February's issue each year renewal notices will go out with Mainstay for the following year.

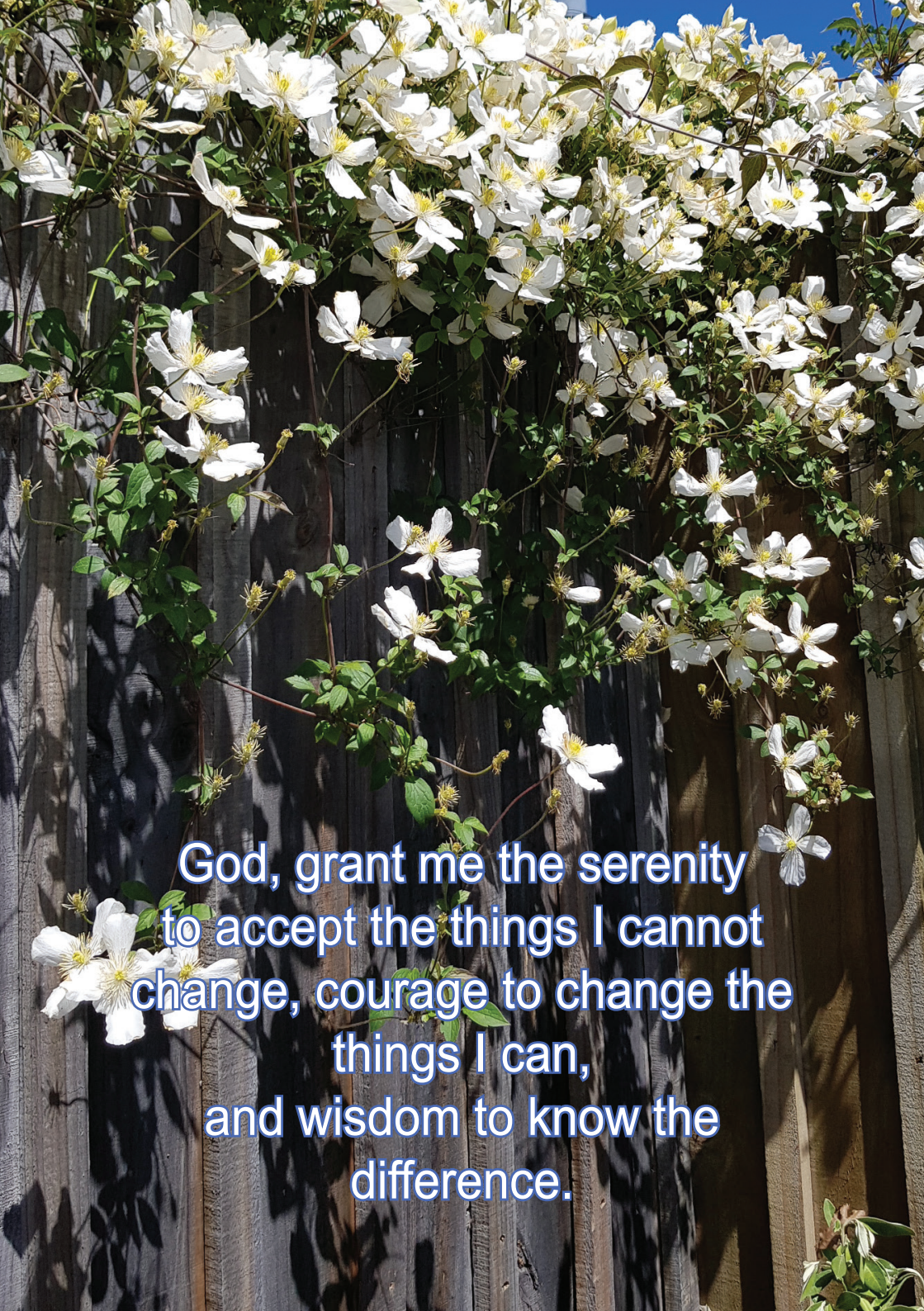
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	Digital	December/January	8.00
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*In all cases, subscription will not start until payment is received by GSO. Renewal notices for the new subscription year will go out with the February/March issue of Mainstay each year.*

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Bank Account Details: NZGSO, 06-0501-0236572-00, Ref: Name and Mainstay Post completed order and/or cheques to: Mainstay, 2/30 Downer Street, Hutt Central, Lower Hutt 5010 or complete the registration form at <a href="https://aa.org.nz/members/mainstay/mainstay-registration-form/">https://aa.org.nz/members/mainstay/mainstay-registration-form/</a>	

# The 12 Traditions

1. *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.*
2. *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*
3. *The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*
4. *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.*
5. *Each group has but one primary purpose-to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*
6. *An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*
7. *Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*
8. *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*
9. *A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*
10. *Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*
11. *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.*
12. *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*



God, grant me the serenity  
to accept the things I cannot  
change, courage to change the  
things I can,  
and wisdom to know the  
difference.