

MAINSTAY

Carrying the message



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are asked to include their first name, locality and a contact telephone number or email/physical address (not for publication).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.

Editorial

A common phrase I rarely hear in meetings now is, *'Trust God, clean house, help others'* - our programme summed up in six words.

Dr Bob said it in a different way:

'I spend a great deal of time passing on what I learned to others who want and need it badly. I do it for four reasons:

- 1. Sense of duty.*
- 2. It is a pleasure.*
- 3. Because in doing so I am paying my debt the man who took time to pass it on to me.*
- 4. Because every time I do it I take out a little more insurance for myself against a possible slip.'*

Page 174/75 BB

Sharing, spoken or text, is the 12th Step. Those of us in towns or cities have been easily able to attend meetings to 'carry the message' but not everyone has had that privilege. However, no matter where you live, you too can carry the message to those in hospitals, treatment centres, prisons, or confined at home (members or newcomers) - when we share in Mainstay, its our chance to help *'pay the debt'* and *'take out a little more insurance'* just as Dr Bob did.

Covid-19 means we may be unable to attend our usual meetings for the foreseeable future so now, more than ever, the fellowship will value your Mainstay stories. This lack of meetings will be a worry for many - especially when so many hear the non-AA saying of "90 meetings in 90 days". Our Big Book says 'we meet frequently so that newcomers may find the fellowship they seek.' BB Page.15 para 2.

Our book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions tells us, on p.38, that men serving in the military during WW2 had fewer relapses than those who were not overseas. Proof that meetings did not keep them sober – their Steps, Traditions and Concepts did.

When you write to Mainstay you are carrying the message to many more people than we do face-to-face.

In fellowship,

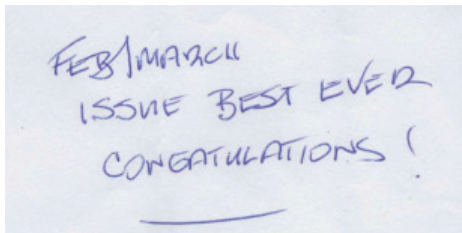
Heather H. Editor

Reader's feedback

NEW REGULAR FEATURE

Want to comment on Mainstay, in Mainstay?

Please send your thoughts to feedbackmainstay@aa.org.nz



“Our group is really small often only 3 -4 so we sometimes select and read letters from Mainstay as a way of having different sharing at our meeting.”

Marton group

Covid-19 message

With Covid – 19 measures making printing / distribution of printed issues of Mainstay impossible and causing closure of our regular AA Meetings the Board has decided to make Mainstay (our fellowships meeting in print) free online for all members as a way to support and carry the message. We at the Mainstay Team hope that you will like the free online issue enough to;

Share your story following the link on our website so we have good content for future Mainstay issues. Our theme for next issue is gratitude but that does not restrict you to sharing on other topics.

Decide to become a Mainstay supporter by taking out a subscription. Go to Literature Store or follow the link also on the website where you accessed your free issue.

To those who are current subscribers we want to acknowledge you have paid for an issue which we need to credit you. We will advise later this year how we will manage this.

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...

My name is Paul and I am an alcoholic

Recently our Mainstay Rep asked me if I would write a letter to Mainstay about something I had shared at our meeting when we were on Step 9. This is the story. It's not about my drinking it's about my alcoholism, my selfishness, my self-centeredness, and how the programme works for me.

When I married my widowed wife some 43 years ago, and adopted her 4 children, I was a drinking alcoholic and became Sergeant Major with a Platoon of 5. The family had two Corgi dogs who they adored, and because of my unwarranted fear of not getting all the love and attention they received, on top of my obsessive perfectionism, I made our family's life a misery. The dogs were not allowed

here, there, or practically anywhere! One afternoon I came home, and the dogs were gone. My wife told me she had cooked them each of pound of filet steak and then taken them to the Vets and had them put to sleep. She told the children that the dogs were sick, but they knew the truth.

When I got sober in AA and began our programme of recovery, and did my 4th and 5th Steps, I began to realise the harm I had done. Then, in doing Steps 8 and 9, with the help of a wonderful sponsor, it became clear what I had to do for my amends

In my sobriety we have always had a dog (33 years now). I grew to love God's creatures and have cared for and looked after all the dogs, again as my sponsor suggested. Earlier

this month we had to put our last little dog to sleep. Now, because of our circumstances, we sadly cannot have any more dogs.

This little dog (Mindy) was special. She loved every person she met. She woke me up every morning by licking my eyes, and I walked her 3 times a day as my wife was unable to.

Through these animals and the programme, I have learnt unconditional love. I happily cleaned up after Mindy and she went everywhere with us. I adored her and when she went to sleep for the last time, I held her and for the first time came to truly realise the harm and hurt I had caused. Bill wrote about the kinds of harm do people do one another (12 + 12 Step 8 p.80). I certainly know now.

I made my amends many years ago and my family forgave me - I have now been able to forgive myself and move on, being careful not to get into self-pity. Over the years when I have been upset with my wife it's always helped to think about the corgis!

God has a megaphone for the alcoholic – it's called pain. He certainly got my attention. I love my home group for many reasons. One is they talk more of God than alcohol. I have seen so many miracles happen in AA. If the things that take 3 or 5 or 10 years to happen, happened in a weekend, it would be on the front page of the paper! This miracle of

mine took a long time but it has taught me so much.

Thank you, God and AA,

Paul D.
City Steps, Christchurch

Right now, I'm working Steps Six and Seven

I can see how, even after 30 plus years in A.A., and sober since 19th April 1986, my character defects can still feel like the very essence of who I am. I can believe this wholeheartedly, when I don't rely on my God. When I pause, use the third step prayer, I become aware they are not me. They are one of many choices available. I just know them so well, that they are my go-to-choice.

When I stop for a moment, I see what's really happening, and that is that I just keep picking them up again and again. Like the first drink, I am learning that if I don't pick up the character defect that is calling me, I won't act on it. Something else other than that expected outcome is possible. In that, pause/ absence of engaging a character defect, I get to experience God. That's when there is the gap where the light gets in and where I get the gift of emotional sobriety. When I pick up one of my character defects, I get what I know. I get the same old. I get misery, undesirable drama, and I've hit a

**Live
and Let
Live..**

repeat button. Boring. It's a decision to not pick up a short-coming, and instead connect with God to intervene.

Learning how to say no and walk away from an old way of being requires faith in something greater than me... just like the First Step. And in Step Six I get to see these character defects for what they are - an option. I get to choose - shall I pick them up or see what God has on offer. I feel and get ready to let them go and give them to God. I ask for them to be removed. Pause. Ask to be shown how to be.

Pause. Geez, this can seem like smaller than baby steps at times!! Yet all the effort does accumulate-like counting days. Maybe I should do the same thing - every time I don't pick up a defect I've asked to have removed; I count that. That reminds me to the three A's, of Awareness, Acceptance and Action. I am often profoundly thrown off seeing what I keep doing. That my way of being can really be causing a lot of my own discomfort. And then I accept it, often with a sense of humour or exhaustion, seeing how futile what I was doing was. And then the action is to become entirely ready and to ask God to remove them. And then... believe there are many other options and to actively look for them. As well as to look for God's will.

The thing is, I have a cunning and baffling disease, which tells me that

at times I know better and it lands over there with the other person like a big stink. How does that happen I ask myself? How did what I felt was so right go so wrong? I sense the space around me is smaller. I'm backed into a corner of my own doing. If I had let sit, and not whipped out my sharp tongue, my know it all, my contempt, my control, I wouldn't be in that jam. The pause and asking God to remove my short comings can save me and others a great deal of grief. I would be free of the "bondage of self."

My way gets me in trouble. It's hard at times to discern if what is in front of me is my doing or the other person's, and then being willing to let God intervene. What if God doesn't get how important security is to me? What if? All those endless questions. That's when I know I need to give it to God.

So, what I am reflecting on, and open to, is what is mine and what is the other person's? What am I bringing to the present that is really old and not useful? Where I "have a perverse wish to hide a bad motive underneath a good one..., "[12&12 Step Ten, p.94] with my thinking that I know what's best for that person ... if only they would do what I suggest, they'd be happy.

I see this mostly with my family, as they matter the most to me. I want the most of our relationships. For me the solution is moment by moment,

Easy Does It...

like the early days. I trusted that by putting the Steps into action I would have a life beyond our wildest dreams. I just need to get out of my own way, be willing and believe God can and remove my character defects. Me believing that I am them, is like me believing I couldn't live without a drink. That just isn't so... and as a result of living sober these years, I have a life I pinch myself about. So, it's foolish, and from my ego and fear that I choose holding onto character defects, when I have a super wonderful loving God, who is able and can remove them.

That's it. That is what I do, a day at a time. And get on with living my life, being open to God's direction and discovering along the way the gifts I have received from God. I am very lucky to have A.A. and the Steps to work and have an amazing life.

So here you God - please take them now ... thank you!

Charrette
Christchurch

*“to thine own
self be true”*

My name is Trip and I'm an alcoholic.

As far back as I can remember I felt out of place on this planet. Clumsy, fearful, ill at ease. Unable to match my inner reality to what was happening around me. I learned early to manipulate and put up walls and masks to keep my alienation from showing but I never felt any feeling of authentic peace with myself until I found booze. That's when it all came together. I knew then what was wrong; I had an alcohol deficiency. I was born too sober. Solution; don't stay too sober. My life had been unmanageable but now I'd found a power/spirit greater than myself which could restore me to sanity. I made a decision to turn my will and life over to the care of that power. With my true friend, alcohol, I could do anything.

This love affair with booze was so strong and overwhelming that years later when my true friend had become my mortal enemy and was kicking me to death, I couldn't see it. What had turned me on had turned on me, yet I kept turning to it. So powerful was my addiction that I could not conceive of a life without alcohol. Let alone the good life AA spoke of. My thoughts were: "Life was impossible before I found alcohol, it will be a million times worse now that I've messed it up so badly."

I had one saving grace, my body was so ravaged by drinking that I couldn't ingest alcohol. At the time I thought that was the cruellest of many cruel tricks from some twisted, punishing deity; "Life left to live with no alcohol. I'd rather be dead." My mind said that but some other part of me wanted to live and begged for help. God only knows why, literally. So, I came into this Fellowship in chaos, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, with no hope for a future, let alone a bright one.

The saying "Don't change horses in the middle of a stream" seems like logical advice but that was exactly what I had to do. Except the stream was a raging torrent and the choice of horses were limited. My high stepping stallion 'Lord Booze' was now on its last legs and the only alternative willing to take me was an old nag called 'AA' (Out of 'Church Halls' and 'Luke Warm Tea.') I looked for something swifter but no; just this old draught horse. But there did seem to be something reassuring in its eyes: "Get on, hold tight and we'll get to shore." What followed were the most crucial and important decisions in my life.

1. To let go of Lord Booze absolutely.
2. To grab hold of AA with both hands.

I know now it would have been better - and easier - if I'd made

these decisions simultaneously but unfortunately, I went back and forth and nearly got swept away in the rapids. This is such a treacherous part of recovery which is why I understand the words from Chapter 5 in the Big Book; "We beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start." They didn't say "Ask" or "Suggest" They said "Beg" and as a word, "beg" doesn't mess around. It is powerful, emotive, and I know now why they used it.

The closest I come to unconditional love is how I feel when I see someone come into an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting or on a 12th Step call; unsure, frightened, and hurting as I was thirty odd years ago. Something in me wants to beg them; "please stay here and give this a go. You've got nothing to lose and so much to gain. I know it may not



look like it now but there is an answer for you here. Please don't turn your back on this. I beg you...stay." That's what I feel and what I want to say but usually I don't. If anyone had begged me to stay, I probably would have run a mile. I was suspicious of any signs of friendship. I didn't feel worthy of friends. Besides, what would they want from me? Now I realise that they didn't want anything from me. They wanted something for me. This incredible life of sobriety where I could feel connected and genuine and

free. And in their cunning, baffling, and powerful ways got through - bit by bit. So, though I don't go around begging people to stay in AA, the fact that I feel like doing it is huge proof to me of the healing power of Alcoholics Anonymous. I have hope that by a handshake or by sharing or listening over a lukewarm cup of tea, maybe some of that feeling may become known and someone else may stay. It works it really does. What I thought was my worst day turned out to be my best. I feel a part of creation not apart from it.

Trip S.

NZ

Hullo I'm Rodger

I'm a deactivated recovering alcoholic in my eighth year of sobriety after 40 years of experimenting with all sorts of alcohol and eventually succumbing to alcoholism after many years of social drinking where I was mostly in control and alcohol knew its place in my life with moderate usage.

My experience with grog started from an early age when I remember Daddy bringing me a glass of stout when home from school with flu aged 6. Then Dad died from cancer a few months later and a few years after this I was poking around in the old workshop/forge on our farm and found 2 crates of beer. I didn't tell anyone and drank them by myself - the start of being a lifelong, lone drinker.

At 14 most country boys already knew how to drive so I dressed in disguise and stole the new farm Ute and drove to the local bottle store. Tall for my age, this was the first time I was served. After getting my driver's licence at 15 this was the start of drinking and driving – I was even served in the Naesby pub while on a Bible class ice skating trip.

By early teens I was a beer drinking boozier with loutish behaviour and got a hiding at the stock cars off a tougher guy than me - I couldn't fight to save myself when drunk.

First Things First.

At 18 I started boxing and took it seriously and gave up drinking booze for a couple of years. Then aged 21 the family farm was sold, and I headed up to Auckland and then overseas to USA for 15 months where I started drinking again.

Then back to Auckland at 22 with my first woman partner. We started playing squash and became regular club drinkers as well as going out to restaurants and dinners where I picked up a wine habit that lasted until I dried out.

Thru my twenties I was a responsible moderate drinker and marijuana smoker; but got into trouble for growing marijuana and did a year's jail 1984. I split-up with Missus of 5 years, sold my house, moved back to my hometown in 1986 and started going to a local pub, 'The Snake Pit'.

With being a competitive athlete in boxing/squash clubs I became one of those very physical sports playing, hardworking type of alcoholics who drank a lot of booze after exertion then sweated it out the next day. This went on for 30 years.

When I got married for the first and so far, only time aged 30, my wife was a light drinker but had a real mad streak as I gradually found out which started me drinking more frequently away from home. After 5 years we divorced, and I drifted around different drinking scenes for several years while becoming a successful home brewer of copious quantities of beer which lifted me to a higher degree of alcoholism. Being a regular marijuana grower/smoker helped keep my alcohol consumption in check. I reckon, after a few beers, a joint would overpower the alcohol effect and one could work and do creative things.

But the fickle finger of fate once again pointed in my direction and in 2000 got busted for growing a few extra plants. So back to jail for a second time of eight months which also dried me out from the booze. Out of jail and once again, drinking beer and wine mostly. I was paranoid about getting busted for marijuana again, so because alcohol is a legal drug, from this point on whenever I smoked; the nice, positive effect of marijuana (my drug of choice) was countered by excessive alcohol consumption

and the many negative aspects associated with this grew.

In early 2006 I somehow teamed up with a newcomer to town who was real hard-core boozing whisky baron who coerced me into becoming a frequent spirit drinker.

Next, I had a nasty turn of events with an assassination attempt to take over my house by my schizophrenic brother who is an active alcoholic gangster from Sydney. During a terrible fight in my kitchen I suffered 4 stab wounds which has given me Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The next 5 years were effected by chronic drinking at home, often alone, after being barred from several bars round town for getting into fights and trouble with some local criminals and from the law. ; I was heading down the highway to hell into active daily alcoholism along

with a growing bad reputation, by a grown man and property owner in his early fifties. All this rotten boozing happening while trying to setup and run my small business from home.

I estimate my active alcohol drinking years commencing age 14 to 54 – 40 years of which I reckon to have had 20 years of successful social drinking; 10 years of problem drinking; 10 years of hardcore boozing; of which the last 5 years became uncontrollable chronic alcoholism.

Facing borderline doom, with near

**KEEP
IT
SIMPLE**

financial ruin, and constantly effected by grog, I was blessed to gain entry to Hillmorton Hospital Kennedy Unit on August 17th, 2012. This is where my life started to change with introduction to compulsory AA meetings as part of rehab. My initial intention was to be off the booze for 1 year and then start light-drinking and once again be a responsible social drinker.

I'm very glad this did not happen because upon release from rehab I started going to the Tuesday night meetings of the Oamaru Recovery Group and started the program. I listened to the good advice of old timers (Ivan & Eric) and others, who helped me with the spiritual awakening I received by gaining a source of higher power from my AA home group.

I keep going to meetings - first and foremost for me - and a deep sense of obligation to help pass on to the still suffering newcomer holding onto old ideas; the principles of this life-changing, lifesaving worldwide organisation of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I meditate and pray that long may my sobriety last for the rest of my natural life, because I'd hate to take that first glass of grog that reactivates a compulsion to become an Active Alcoholic again.

Rodger M.
Oamaru

Heard in meetings

"The truth will set you free but first it'll piss you off."

"The answer to life is learning to live."

"Don't believe everything you think."

"Once you're a pickle you'll never be a cucumber again."

"It's ok to visit the past. Just don't bring a suitcase."

"Sobriety delivers what alcohol promised."

"Learn to change; change to learn."

"My daily sobriety is contingent upon my spiritual condition."

"The flip side to forgiveness is resentment."

"If you don't take a 4th, you'll soon pick up a 5th."

"Nothing happens in God's world by mistake."

"When you dance with a gorilla, it's the gorilla who decides when to stop"

"Some of us go to meetings and continue drinking. Eventually we stop drinking or we stop going to meetings."

"Getting better doesn't always feel better."

"Alcoholic drinking -- impulsive, compulsive, repulsive."

Special feature - Spiritual

Awakenings

A member shares their journey to Spiritual Awakening, as a result of the Steps

Dear Mainstay

I've been thinking about one of the spiritual awakenings that made me realise I was an alcoholic and it made me think more about my other spiritual awakenings.

I guess I have very much 'come' to believe, and I'm still coming to believe, in a power greater than myself rather than any overwhelming god-experience such as Bill W and others have had. I'm like the appendix at the back of the Big Book, which talks about the slow educational variety of Spiritual Experience of CHANGE - and it's well worth reading, so much so that the big book directs us 3 times to read Appendix 2 [BB pages 25, 27, 47]

So, what were some of my awakenings? Well, first of all, I thought Al-Anon Family Groups would restore me to sanity by helping me get my gang-member, defacto-husband, sober.

They didn't, so I went to a counsellor, then a hypnotherapist who I also thought would restore me to sanity: not that I used that word! I just thought they would fix the mess my life was in – but they didn't either. In fact, the counsellor suggested I go to the treatment centre some 100 miles from home – which I did, but I knew when I got there, the experts there would apologise for her very mistaken belief that I was an alcoholic.

They didn't apologise: in fact they confirmed the A&D counsellor's diagnosis, and I came to believe the treatment centre would restore me to sanity. They didn't either, in fact they said "treatment is for discovery and AA is for recovery" and prescribed attendance if I wanted to stay sober. That I only had to go to AA for as long as I wanted to stay sober! Well I didn't want to stay sober; I just wanted my life to be better.

Anyway, over the next few weeks, months, and then years, I have come to believe in a higher power: one of my most powerful awakenings was on a beach near Kaikoura. The waves were crashing on the rocks, bull kelp was washing in and out, I was lying on the sand, the sun was shining, and only a few metres from me were sea lions – very smelly sea-lions.

As I lay there watching wispy clouds float by, being seduced by the sound of

the waves I suddenly realised that all the pieces of this picture were complete. That each element, me, the rocks, the sea, sand, sun and sea-lions were all as important as each other, that not one of us more important than the next.

And somehow, that all translated in my mind that there was a higher power, manifested in the form of nature before me. That AA was a huge part of my higher power and was restoring me to sanity with the steps, but that nature too was part of the whole - smelly sea-lions included.

Most importantly I eventually learnt I would have a spiritual awakening as the RESULT of the steps – not in those first few steps where I was expecting it – in fact I thought AA was insisting on it in steps 2 and 3!

And what's even better is, I continue to have aha moments, spiritual awakenings and experiences all thanks to this fabulous programme of Alcoholics Anonymous' 12 steps.

Thank you for helping me be a 'recovered alcoholic' as promised in the big book, not cured, but a 'daily reprieve'.

Heather H.

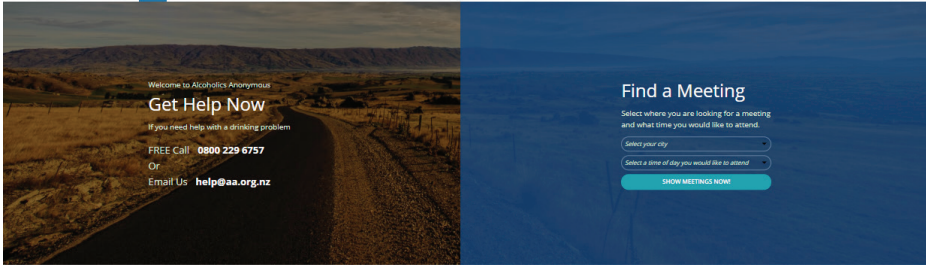


*Have something to say on this or other key topics we often discuss in AA, at meetings and with each other? Please send in your story, with the topic in the heading as; 'Special feature - *topic*'*

Topics for next 18 months - for the special feature are listed below.

<i>June/July</i>	Gratitude
<i>August/September</i>	Our slogans
<i>October/November</i>	Traditions
<i>December/January</i>	Sober Travel/Holidays
<i>February/March</i>	Concepts
<i>April/May</i>	Steps
<i>June/July</i>	Sponsorship
<i>August/September</i>	Service and Me
<i>October/November</i>	Traditions
<i>December/January</i>	Trudging the Road

A new website



On 20 November 2019, after months of hard work by many people in many different locations, the new AA website at aa.org.nz went live online.

While in today's modern life, most of us are familiar with how websites work and how to use them, we don't always understand or appreciate the work involved behind-the-scenes to make a good, user-friendly website, such as the one we have now.

Martin was the project manager for the new website, and we've asked him a few questions about how our new website was formed and the work that went into it.

Q. Why did we need a new website?

Martin - The old website was over ten years old. Over that time, it had grown organically until it was so large, complex and slow that it needed at least a full-time resource to manage it properly. In addition, the language

and platform that the website used was not particularly common or well-used, so despite advertising for specialists to do site refinement, we had no offers.

After the previous website manager left the GSO in early 2019, we were then faced with many intermittent faults and changes that could not be easily or efficiently managed. To get over this, we made the decisions to move to the new WordPress platform used by 70% of the worlds websites and to have this supported by the development company, Meta Digital in Christchurch, to keep it efficient, modern and sleek.

Q. How did we select Meta?

Martin – We ran two public invitations for proposals. The first was in late 2018 after the previous website manager and I meet with a friend of mine at Cluster Creative in Wellington to seek advice about what the market trends were and what our options could be. From there we advertised via LinkedIn, Dev Academy and developer networks for proposals

to create a website. There were a few light discussions, but nothing that amounted to action. It was clear that we needed to fully develop a requirements document and a small group of five dedicated folk from within AA developed a detailed set of points for what the website must do, must contain, must behave like and must achieve as a product.

After our group researched some development companies, we had several likely companies to approach. We sent the document to five companies in early February 2019. By early April we had all proposals in, and then started a rigorous evaluation and weighting process, which included past work for the not-for-profit sector, technical skills, cost, alignment and understanding of our requirements, ongoing support cost and options, hosting options and a number of others.

At the end of that process we had three very good proposals, but one clear winner with Meta Digital.

Q. How was the website designed and built?

Martin - From this point we set up a delivery contract starting in May and got into the design detail using an online tool to review and discuss details and progress at each step. The AA development group meet weekly around our day jobs and spent many hours each week discussing details with Meta. Over the period from March to go-live in November 2019, the team members each spent an average of 10 hours per week,

depending on their availability. Most of our meetings were online and in the evenings.

Q. Was the website finished when it was launched in November?

Martin – No, we launched the new website at about 70% functionality. As predicted, the old website was getting to the point where we couldn't guarantee it would stay up and running. It frequently had to be rebooted by the host and we were spending more and more hours each week – up to 20 – just to keep it going.

The large database of meeting information behind the website was also failing, and there would be random changes to meeting information, such as duplicate meetings appearing overnight, which was continually frustrating groups, myself and GSO. We had to find a solution quickly, so I presented the risks and benefits for going live early to the board, and they made the decision to cut over to the new website at 70% and to complete the further 30% functionality while it was live.

At this point I downloaded all information, pages and documents from the three existing websites (public, members and convention) and stored it for future reference.

Q. So is the new site better?

Martin – Yes. Even at first glance users could see that the intent and functionality of the new website was

better by design, and many people let us know. We designed the website based on the known key priorities of newcomer help via 0800, email and meetings, and I'm pleased to say it is now much easier for a user to find their way around.

Feedback from users in both NZ and abroad has been very positive. The statistics behind the website certainly show that people using the site are getting to the pages they are looking for without getting lost and are doing so much faster than before. I'm not receiving large numbers of requests for corrections that I used to get.

Q. Why is there no members login now?

Martin – At the time we went live, setting up a member's database with the patchy information we had was going to be a project all on its own. We also noted that many sites overseas have now moved away from having membership sections on their websites as the information usually stored there was of little or no interest to people not within AA. In the four months the website has been up, I have yet to have a request to create a member-only section of the website, but we are ready to do so should the need become apparent in future.

Q. What is the next stage for the website?

Martin - A great website evolves over time to better meet and communicate with newcomers and its community. We have formed a Digital Communications Sub-Committee

(DCSC) and already there are several improvements and enhancements that we are looking to develop.

The COVID-19 situation in New Zealand means we've had to move quickly to explore other ways for people to communicate and support one another without meeting face-to-face. For example, through our <https://aa.org.nz/aa-meetings/online-meetings/> page, we are now hosting over 150 online Zoom meeting links and information.

Another example of a new approach to website use is trialing the Pure Chat program within our test website (a website copy held at Meta) and seeing if this can be a supported new way for people in need to get help.

At the end of the day, we want to keep getting better at what we do and to keep making it easier for people to access the information, advice and support they need.

We're always open to new suggestions and ideas and ways to keep improving, so please let us know what you like, what you want to see improved, and how we can keep making the website and our other services better.

Email us at website@aa.org.nz.



Films about Alcoholic Anonymous

My Name Is Bill W. – dramatized biography of co-founder Bill Wilson.

When Love Is Not Enough: The Lois Wilson Story – a 2010 film about the wife of founder Bill Wilson, and the beginnings of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon.

Bill W. – a 2011 biographical documentary film that tells the story of Bill Wilson using interviews, recreations, and rare archival material.[97][98]

Films where primary plot line includes AA

When a Man Loves a Woman – an airline pilot's wife attends AA meetings in a residential treatment facility

Clean and Sober – a cocaine addict visits an AA meeting to get a sponsor

Days of Wine and Roses – a 1962 film about a married couple struggling with alcoholism. Jack Lemmon's character attends an AA meeting in the film.

Drunks – a 1995 film starring Richard Lewis as an alcoholic who leaves an AA meeting and relapses. The film cuts back and forth between his eventual relapse and the other meeting attendants.

Come Back, Little Sheba – A 1952 film based on a play of the same title about a loveless marriage where the husband played by Burt Lancaster is an alcoholic who gets help from 2 members of the local AA chapter. A 1977 TV drama was also based on the play.

I'll Cry Tomorrow – A 1955 film about singer Lillian Roth played by Susan Hayward who goes to AA to help her stop drinking.

You Kill Me - a 2007 crime-comedy film starring Ben Kingsley as a mob hit man with a drinking problem who is forced to accept a job at a mortuary and go to AA meetings, where he explains he wants to be free of his drinking problem because it is affecting his ability to kill effectively.

Minor references to AA within film

The Simpsons Movie - Barney and a few other people were drinking coffee at the local AA when a book is thrown in from the book club.

The Answer Man – AA meeting at 0:59 (“burning desire”, “newcomer”)

Mr. Brooks - Mr. Brooks, the main character, goes to AA meetings to help with his homicide addiction.

Still Crazy - An aging rock star, on a catastrophic tour, asks his tour manager to find him an AA meeting to attend in a non-English speaking country. She accidentally sends him to an Overeaters Anonymous group.

Service in the Fellowship



AA's Declaration on Unity

This we owe to AA's future, to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come.

Hi, I'm Cate, I'm an alcoholic and Western Canada Regional Trustee. I would like to thank Richard for giving me the opportunity to share with you on the topic of fostering unity in AA.

I chose to start by stating the Unity declaration, not because I think you don't know it or haven't heard it repeatedly, but because it serves as a constant reminder of the importance of why we are here.

Interestingly, when writing out my presentation, when I wanted to say, "to keep our fellowship united", either spellcheck or my clumsy fingers determined that what I was really trying to say was "to keep our fellowship undead". It seems quite appropriate as we certainly need to be "undead" before we can be united, so I hope to bring to

life some thoughts on this topic of fostering unity.

I would like to share with you some of the many, many gifts that I have been blessed with since I walked through the doors of AA, beginning with the steps.

After attending many AA meetings, I came to understand that there was something wrong with the way I was living, in addition to the little problem I was having with alcohol. I didn't like myself; I didn't seem to be able to get along with others and I was not comfortable in my own skin. The 12 and 12 says that whenever I am disturbed there is something wrong with me and I was disturbed a lot. With the help of the big book and other alcoholics sharing their own experiences, I was able to look at myself and see how my behaviors affected others. I was able, finally, to see that being stubborn, opinionated and judgemental did not endear me to my friends, family and coworkers. But by practising the steps in my life I was eventually able to change my behaviors and beliefs. And over time my relationships with others improved. The steps really taught

me how to live at peace with myself and others.

I would like to also talk about the traditions. When I became active in service in my home group it was suggested that I study the traditions; that from the steps I had learned to live with myself, with the traditions I would learn to live with others in AA. I learned that the answers to so many of the issues we discussed over and over in our home group were laid out in the traditions. I learned how the traditions were developed building on the mistakes of our forefathers, so we didn't have to start from scratch every time. Even though we often did! The traditions tell me who can belong to AA, what the purpose of our AA group is, how we should handle the groups finances, the importance of keeping outside issues outside. Most importantly they stress the importance of anonymity as a tool to ensure we put principles before personalities, and the importance of accepting a group conscience decision, the only authority we have in AA. I learned and came to believe that the traditions would keep my group united and strong.

And so, I also believed that constant enforcement of the traditions was necessary. Unfortunately, I learned also that there are no AA police. And after more involvement in service I discovered that tradition violations in our area were rampant and for a time I believed that AA in our little corner of the world would be torn apart as a result. That hasn't

happened and we still have tradition violations. However now I see that most of these are the result of just not knowing and understanding the traditions. And once learned, a stronger understanding and belief in their importance generally results, thus enhancing unity.

Finally, I would like to talk about the concepts. Throughout my time in service I attended many assemblies. At every assembly we read the twelve concepts. At every assembly we had a presentation of one or two concepts on the Sunday morning. Eventually I became one of the people invited to present the concepts and I've also had the opportunity to facilitate concept studies. So, I've had lots of opportunity to study the concepts. And the more I've studied and learned, the more I have come to respect the power within those concepts. I learned that there are two types of concepts, those dealing with the various entities of the AA service structure and how they all interrelate. And those concepts containing the spiritual principles that offer guidance on how we can effectively work together within that structure.

For instance, concept 3, the right of decision, basically says to each trusted servant in our service structure that it's up to you how you do your job. We will trust you. And concept 4, the right of participation, says that since you now have a certain responsibility within the service structure, you have a say, as

much as anyone else, in decisions made that affect that responsibility. We will include you.

Concept 5 provides a right of appeal and the right to provide a minority opinion. I have been privileged to observe the effect of this concept in action on the floor of the conference, when a decision that was made changed as a result of hearing a minority opinion expressed, of having discussion reopened. Although a new group conscience decision resulted, it was a far more well informed one as a result of the further discussions held. So, concept 5 says we will listen to you. We will respect your opinion.

Like the traditions, and because we're human, sometimes the principles and the processes within the concepts don't appear to work. And distrust, hurt, lack of respect and therefore disunity can be the results. When things don't appear to be working, we usually find it is because in some way we are not using the tools of AA appropriately. Those tools ensure we are self correcting and get back on track if we are willing to communicate, learn and accept.

So, I have chosen to share with you on topics that I know you are all already very familiar with. The reason I have done that is because I have no better tools to offer than those embodied within our steps, our traditions and our concepts; tools that have served us so well for so long, tools that have allowed us

to survive and thrive in the face of a changing world.

So back to the topic: How can we foster Unity today and for our future? It's simple. Experience has shown me that if I work the steps of my program, if I support the spirit of our traditions and if I practise the principles of our spiritual concepts both within and outside my AA life I will be doing my part to foster unity and so help ensure the future of AA.

Simple.

But not easy.

Random bits

Articles of interest online:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/03/11/alcoholics-anonymous-aa-helps-people-stay-sober-longer-study-finds/5008835002/>

<https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/news/national/why-does-booze-do-this-to-me-jordan-luck-tells-of-battle-with-the-booze-as-alcoholics-anonymous-celebrates-70th-anniversary-in-nz/>

Grapevine's YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCI9uFLJ__aXT3-At0PIPWUQ

It is expected that the 40 millionth copy of the Big Book will be sold in 2020!

Book review - Doctor Bob and The Good Old Timers

Reviewed by Randal P.

Following the review of AA New Zealand's own history since 1947-1981,

in the last edition of Mainstay, it seemed logical to expand on, and segue this theme and look to this detailed and informed and very human account of AA's establishment in America.

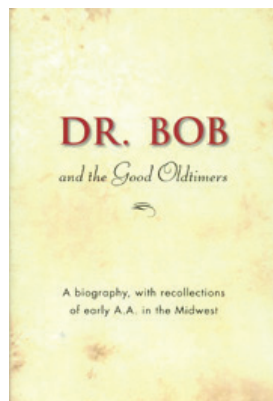
Much of course, has been documented about Bill W's important role in writing the 12 Steps of AA and their original reduced format adopted as used by 'The Oxford Group'.

It was short but significant association which this spiritually based group that the fledgling AA members in Akron joined, and from that Bill W found he was able to expand on what he and his fellow recovering alcoholics were seeking, by way of the basis of not only the steps as we know them today, but also the genesis of what is now known and accepted as the original text of AA's Big Book. Later this would include the Traditions and Concepts.

Not long after, Bill suggested to The Oxford Group that much of what they were telling Bill's group to do, did not sit well, with, as Bill was discovering alcoholics who bridled and bristled at being 'told what to do'. This was the first of many lessons learned in early proto AA and brought about the defining idea that in order for this fledgling group of drunks to survive as a body of people it must 'place principles before personalities' a point which would continue to be an on-going litmus test and a guiding and abiding idea along with unity within AA in its early relationships, internally and externally. Ironically, the Oxford group would ultimately morph into another organisation and lose its way, in a mire of dissent, despite wide endorsement of its original aims and aspirations.

Thousands of us who have sought recovery from the disease of alcoholism through AA, can thank not only Bill W for this, but equally Dr Bob.

Less is written about Dr Bob, other than the timely meeting between Bill and Bob, where they recognised in one-another and what they were to discover in the simple and effective idea of 'one alcoholic talking to another'. From that



original meeting they were able to stop the man in front of him each, from drinking that day and beyond, although it took Bob a little longer.

Both men had the timely and practical actions of two Akron identities to thank; J Walter Tunks, who fielded a call from Bill W from outside the bar of The Mayflower Hotel, where he was just a step away from picking up a drink, and Henrietta Seiberling who was a friend of Dr Bob's of longstanding. It was she, who suggested that Bill accompany her to meet her friend who had struggled to get sober. In Bill W, she saw the exact same dilemma, and presciently thought that there could be benefit in the two men meeting on that Sunday morning.

Seiberling's good intentions were very nearly sabotaged, as Bill was reluctant to meet a stranger in a strange town, allowing himself a mere half an hour out of courtesy to honour Henrietta Seiberling's request. Bob was severely hampered by a hangover, the shakes following his own Saturday bender, Bob too, proved to be equally reticent to meet a stranger, much less welcome him into his home on a Sunday!

Documented here are the simple ideas from a conversation between the two men which was to last all day and well into the night. What became evident to both protagonists was that their experiences with the disease of alcoholism were identical, and if they could keep each-other sober, then why surely, wouldn't this idea work for other men?

Bob's reputation locally as a man of medicine gave both men an opportunity to put what they had discussed that night into action, and it was Bob who was at the forefront of an initiative to hospitalise drunks and dry them out with the help of the hospital and its senior staff, of whom Bob was one.

Bob was level-headed and calm, and this disposition was to act as a foil to Bill's forthright manner, Bob being a steady hand on the tiller, reining in Bill's enthusiasm. Neither men could have accomplished individually what they achieved together in helping the first 100 men in Akron and Ohio get sober.

Clearly Bill W's and ultimately AA's imprimatur* was to be very present in large tracts of AA's original defining literature, that remains one of Bill's many lasting legacies to AA and the world. None of that, and or the process of the AA fellowship forming around these two, could or would have occurred, without equal input from both men.

Bob's legacy was one of being a steadying and wise influence on Bill, and AA as a whole, quietly channelling Bill's talents as a communicator but having a long lasting influence on AA's conduct, its' primary purpose, suggesting that whatever he Bob, would be leaving behind and Bill 20 years hence, to let AA's

Conscience decide on the eve of its first international convention in 1950.

In any context, this book is a fascinating testament and social history of a society of people whose common welfare and unity always came first in the actions and legacy of its' two co-founders. It has all the elements of a good novel, tension, discord, it is equally a biography, a history lesson, documented as it was in the impoverished, perilous and uncertain times of a nation beset by a depression, and beyond.

The two friends' final conversation concerned the forthcoming convention, and AA world affairs, Bob's comment was "it has to be AA's decision". This was likely to be the last decision they ever made jointly by calling the conference and leaving any other decisions thereafter or results in the hands of AA itself.

Bill went on to conclude....

"I went down the steps and then turned to look back. Bob stood in the doorway, tall and upright as ever. Some colour had come back into his cheeks and he was carefully dressed in a light grey suit. This was my partner, the man with whom I had never had a hard word. The wonderful old broad smile was on his face as he said almost jokingly,

"Remember, Bill, let's not louse this thing up. Let's keep it simple!

I turned away, unable to say a word. That was the last time I ever saw him."

End Note:

As an historical account and a social biography of AA as a "society in action" this book would be an invaluable addition to libraries and other institutions, and could do much to dispel the myriad of misconceptions in the public mind, about AA, and be a companion book to The Big Book, amply illustrating how AA functions as a society, within yet paradoxically, independent of society.

In a Panglossian** world, imagine if every statesman, politician and leader were to read this as a training manual, how different the actions and functions of leaders, institutions academies and democracies might be!

Within AA and in this book are the sketches, the blueprints, rewrites, reversals and revisions and a tooth and claw account and lasting framework of virtually every existing element of how AA works as an organisation-a real and frequently painful account of the trials and tribulations, growing pains and continued growth of AA 76 years on.

* An official sanction to print

** Excessively optimistic

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.

“Play the tape all the way through.”

Page 24, paragraph 3: *“The almost certain consequences that follow taking even a glass of beer do not crowd into the mind to deter us. If these thoughts do occur, they are hazy and readily supplanted with the old threadbare idea that this time we shall handle ourselves like other people. There is a complete failure of the kind of defense that keeps one from putting his hand on a hot stove.”*

“I will always be recovering, never recovered.”

Title Page: *“ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS. The Story of How Many Thousands of Men and Women Have Recovered from Alcoholism”*

Page 20, paragraph 2: *“Doubtless you are curious to discover how and why, in face of expert opinion to the contrary, we have recovered from a hopeless condition of mind and body.”*

Foreword to the First Edition: *“We, of Alcoholics Anonymous, are more than one hundred men and women who have recovered from a seemingly hopeless state of mind and body.”*

Page 29, paragraph 2: *“Further on, clear-cut directions are given showing how we recovered.”*

Page 132, paragraph 3: *“We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.”*

“I don't have an alcohol problem, I have a living problem.”

Page xxiv, paragraph 2: *“In our belief, any picture of the alcoholic which leaves out this physical factor is incomplete.”*

“I'm powerless over people, places and things.”

Page 132, paragraph 3: *“We have recovered, and have been given the power to help others.”*

Page 122, paragraph 3: *“Years of living with an alcoholic is almost sure to make any wife or child neurotic.”*

Page 82, paragraph 4: “The alcoholic is like a tornado roaring his way through the lives of others. Hearts are broken. Sweet relationships are dead. Affections have been uprooted. Selfish and inconsiderate habits have kept the home in turmoil. We feel a man is unthinking when he says that sobriety is enough.”

Page 89, paragraph 2: “You can help when no one else can. You can secure their confidence when others fail.”

“You’re in the right place.”

Page 20-21: “Then we have a certain type of hard drinker. He may have the habit badly enough to gradually impair him physically and mentally. It may cause him to die a few years before his time. If a sufficiently strong reason - ill health, falling in love, change of environment, or the warning of a doctor - becomes operative, this man can also stop or moderate, although he may find it difficult and troublesome and may even need medical attention.”

Page 31, paragraph 2: “If anyone who is showing inability to control his drinking can do the right- about-face and drink like a gentleman, our hats are off to him.”

Page 31-32: “We do not like to pronounce any individual as alcoholic, but you can quickly diagnose yourself. Step over to the nearest barroom and try some controlled drinking. Try to drink and stop abruptly. Try it more than once. It will not take long for you to decide, if you are honest with yourself about it. It may be worth a bad case of jitters if you get a full knowledge of your condition.”

Page 108-109: “Your husband may be only a heavy drinker. His drinking may be constant or it may be heavy only on certain occasions. Perhaps he spends too much money for liquor. It may be slowing him up mentally and physically, but he does not see it. Sometimes he is a source of embarrassment to you and his friends. He is positive he can handle his liquor, that it does him no harm, that drinking is necessary in his business. He would probably be insulted if he were called an alcoholic. This world is full of people like him. Some will moderate or stop altogether, and some will not. Of those who keep on, a good number will become true alcoholics after a while.”

Page 92, paragraph 2: “If you are satisfied that he is a real alcoholic, ...”

Page 95, paragraph 4: “If he thinks he can do the job in some other way, or prefers some other spiritual approach, encourage him to follow his own conscience.”

... to be continued.
From the London Primary Purpose Group

Item of interest - What is the history behind AA's Responsibility Statement?

The Responsibility Statement reads:

“I am Responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.”

It was written for the 1965 A.A. International Convention in Toronto. I have enclosed an article titled, 'How I am Responsible became a part of A.A.', from the GSO newsletter, Box 4-5-9. The article identifies former AA trustee, Al S. as the author of the Responsibility Statement. In the souvenir book for the 1965 Convention, Dr. Jack Norris writes: “..We must remember that AA will continue strong only so long as each of us freely and happily gives it away to another person, only as each of us takes our fair share of responsibility for sponsorship of those who still suffer, for the growth and integrity of our Group, for our Intergroup activities, and for AA as a whole. It is in taking responsibility that real freedom and the enduring satisfactions of life are found. AA has given us the power to choose – to drink or not to drink – and in doing so has given us the freedom to be responsible for ourselves. As we become responsible for ourselves, we are free to be responsible for our share in AA, and unless we happily accept this responsibility, we lose AA. Strange, isn't it?”

In a Grapevine article in October

1965, the Responsibility Statement is discussed, and Bill W. expresses his views: Two major thoughts stood out in the remarks of the many speakers, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, at AA's July Toronto Convention. The first was admiration and gratitude for AA's startling success in sobering up hundreds of thousands of lost-cause drunks. The other was concern that the success which has come to AA over the thirty years since its start in Akron, Ohio in 1935 would not lead us to any complacency about the size of the job still to be done. The theme of the Convention was: Responsibility. “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.” AA's co-founder, Bill, in his talk to over 10,000 attending the major sessions of the Convention, stressed the need for cooperation with all who work on the problem of alcoholism, the more than 100 agencies in the United States and Canada alone now engaged in research, alcohol education and rehabilitation. “Too often, we have deprecated and even derided these projects of our friends just because we do not always see

eye to eye with them,” Bill said. “We should very seriously ask ourselves how many alcoholics have gone on drinking simply because we have failed to cooperate in good spirit with these many agencies. No alcoholic should go mad or die merely because he did not come straight to AA in the beginning.” “The first concern of AA members should be with problem drinkers the movement is still unable to reach,” Bill said. He estimated that there are 20 million alcoholics in the world today, five million in the U.S. alone. “Some cannot be reached because they are not hurt enough, others because they are hurt too much,” he declared. “Many sufferers have mental and emotional complications that seem to foreclose their chances. Yet it would be conservative to estimate that at any particular time there are four million alcoholics in the world who are able, ready and willing to get well if only they knew how. When we remember that in the 30 years of AA’s existence we have reached less than ten per cent of those who might have been willing to approach us, we begin to get an idea of the immensity of our task and of the responsibilities with which we will always be confronted.”

There have been two Advisory Actions from the General Service Conference regarding the Declaration of Responsibility since it was introduced. In 1971, the Conference recommended that: The Literature Committee, following the general feeling of the Conference, reaffirm both the spirit and the wording of the “I am Responsible” Declaration from

the International Convention held in Toronto in 1965. And in 1977, the Conference recommended that: The Responsibility Declaration not be changed, as it was made at the 1965 International Convention in Toronto.

G.S.O. Archives

Principles vs Steps vs “lousing it all up”

Reinterpreting the steps is one way we are in danger of ‘lousing it all up’

Bill W wrote the steps and refers to these steps as principals. He doesn’t say that there are principles behind these steps, but simply states both ‘steps’ and ‘principles’, in the same context. In other words, as far as our programme of recovery is concerned, ‘steps’ and ‘principles’ mean the same thing.

Here are some examples from Chapter 5 – How it works.

- 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.
- No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these *principles*.
- The *principles* we have set down are guides to progress.

Interestingly, there is a movement out

there whereby the word 'principles' has been used to re-interpret the steps.

For example, the following was found after a simple search online.

"The Big Book also outlines the 12 AA principles, which are single words encompassing the virtues needed to pass each step. Because these 12 principles are single words, they can be interpreted in a much broader sense, which can be useful for those in recovery who don't feel like the steps are speaking to them directly, for example, those who aren't religious. Step 1 – Honesty, Step 2 – Hope, Step 3 – Faith, Step 4 – Courage, Step 5 – Integrity, Step 6 – Willingness, Step 7 – Humility, Step 8 - Brotherly Love, Step 9 – Justice, Step 10 – Perseverance, Step 11 – Spirituality, Step 12 – Service."

In fact, there is nowhere in the big book where the principles are outlined as single words. Stating it as such is one way where we are in danger of 'lousing things up'. Here's what Dr. Bob said in his last/farewell talk on Sunday, July 30, 1950, at the First International A.A. Convention in Cleveland, Ohio:

"There are two or three things that flashed into my mind on which it would be fitting to lay a little emphasis. One is the simplicity

of our program. Let's not louse it all up with Freudian complexes and things that are interesting to the scientific mind but have very little to do with our actual A.A. work. Our Twelve Steps, when simmered down to the last, resolve themselves into the word's love and service. We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So, let's bear those two things in mind."

We may individually choose to attribute a value or a word to a step to help us with its meaning, or, as some others have done, align words and passages from the bible to our Steps of recovery, but these are personal choices and are not the Steps/Principles of the AA programme.

These 12 steps of recovery have helped thousands of alcoholics achieve sobriety. It's essential we pass them on as the principles of recovery that they are rather than try to reinterpret them, regardless of our good intentions.

Let's not 'louse it all up'.



A vibrant background featuring a variety of tropical leaves in shades of green, yellow, and blue. The leaves are stylized and layered, creating a dense, lush pattern. A large, dark green circle is centered on the page, containing the main text.

An opportunity for Twelfth Step work

**Share your experience, strength & hope
with people who can't get to meetings**

Topics can include spirituality – steps – traditions
– concepts – service – sponsorship – carrying the
message.

Send to GSO with *Mainstay*
in the subject line.

mainstay@aa.org.nz

Subscribe to
Mainstay,
New Zealand's
magazine.

Service vacancies

ANZGSO 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 ANZGSO 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 Subject: Archivists Position

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

NEAR TO ANYONE... I
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An opportunity for Twelfth Step work

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

Topics can include spirituality – steps – traditions – concepts – service – sponsorship – carrying the message.

Send to GSO (see page 1) or mainstay@aa.org.nz

AT MY FIRST MEETING I CAME INTO CONTACT WITH... RESULTS

Events

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

At the time of publishing, COVID-19 Alert Level 4 Means all events have been cancelled until at least the end of April. The following events are subject to change accordingly. Please refer to the AA website, or contact the organisers directly, for confirmation.

6 June 2020

Founders Day CANCELLED

26-28 June 2020

218th Southern Area Assembly – Marlborough

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS AGM With AI-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, Andre 027 282 5057,
Rose 021 62 0030

25-27 July 2020

Whangarei Women's Group 18th AA Women's Retreat 2020

Campbell Park Christian Camp, 280 Molesworth Drive,
Mangawhai Heads

Contacts for enquiries: Karen 027 2002250 or Kathryn 021 438217

<https://aa.org.nz/aa-meetings/online-meetings/>

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.

# Ordered	Type of Subscription	Start period	Price \$ <i>(inc GST & PP)</i>
	Printed	April/May	36.00
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	Printed	August/September	24.00
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	Printed	December/January	12.00
	Printed	February/March	6.00
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Subscriber and renewal details

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Contact phone number and/or email address:	
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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 https://aa.org.nz/members/mainstay/mainstay-registration-form/	

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.*

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.

