

Aotearoa New Zealand

February 2021 - March 2021

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are asked to include their first name, locality and a contact telephone number or email/physical address (not for publication).

© Copyright 2021 The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Inc.

CONTENTS

Editorial	2
Sharing	3
Conference chair report	11
Mainstay - will it stay or will it go?	12
Special feature - 12 Concepts	15
Mrs Marty Mann	16
Service in the fellowship	18
Book review	19
Items of interest	20
Events	27
Subscriptions	28

NZGSO, AA
Unit 2, 30 Downer Street, Hutt Central,
Lower Hutt 5010, Ph: 04 - 472 4250
Email: nzgso@aa.org.nz
Website - www.aa.org.nz
Mainstay email: mainstay@aa.org.nz
Subscriptions to:
mainstaysubscriptionsadmin@aa.org.nz

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

The 12 Concepts of Service – if you are doing service, the concepts apply to you. Our AA rights of participation; appeal; decision, and petition had quickly become part of AA and they became incorporated into the first of our 3rd legacy – Service (Concepts). The Concepts are for us all - from Group, Board, and World Service the group conscience is the most powerful part of our service structure.

Bill W, writing in the A.A. Grapevine (Nov. 1951) said, *“Services make A.A. tick: A coffee pot simmers on the kitchen stove, a hospital sobers the stricken sufferer, General Headquarters broadcasts the AA message; our Service lifelines span the Seven Seas. All these symbolize AA in action. For action is the magic word of Alcoholics Anonymous.”*

The 12 Concepts are a special set of principles that enable us, as trusted servants – whether in our homegroup or on the board - to reach the very best AA decisions and without discord. But they can only work if there is a general understanding of them and the principles that underline them.

The collective conscience is defined in Concept 1 and is how committees makes its decisions through the collective conscience of all the members or groups it serves. A group conscience works best through consensus. Being an ‘old timer’ is NOT a guarantee of being right or knowing the Traditions or Concepts so we all have a duty to know them.

We must not vote someone into a role because “it will be good for them” - it must be good for A.A. It's only when Tradition 9 is observed and our Concepts are fully applied that a loving God or Higher Power participates in decision-making. Tradition 2 talks of the ultimate authority as ‘a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience (my first sponsor told me, *“if he MAY, he also MAY NOT”*). Wisdom is knowledge applied, which explains why we can make decisions that are not good for A.A. – there was no wisdom.

Maori have a proverb - *Ka mua, Ka Muri* - Which basically means we walk backwards into the future – we need to keep an eye on the past to shape our future – to be the ‘active guardians’ that Bill W spoke about. ‘Therefore, it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experiences of the past clearly before us.’

Our 12th Concept has been called “The A.A. Service Bill of Rights”. It protects us from ourselves. It also helps me not to be so allergic to grown-up living, to know that unity is not when you agree with me, but that when we hear all our voices, we don't keep reinventing the wheel or making mistakes – and of course it's from my mistakes that I learn and grow.

Warm regards in our fellowship,

Heather H. Editor

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 ...

We shall not forget the past

Let me begin this with a little of my history/background with AA.

I got sober for what I thought would be the last time in Feb 2001, I did most of the things suggested. I had a sponsor, I worked through the steps, I held service positions, I went to meetings and I was sponsoring others.

At about 8yrs sober I entered an abusive relationship; this is relevant as it was his control that was a major contributing factor to me stopping meetings and isolating. The other was a resentment I got in a meeting when I had a baby.

At 14yrs sober I moved towns. By this time, I was single, not doing

meetings, didn't have a sponsor (the last one had fallen in love with me) and doing step work through counselling and therapy essentially.

At 16yrs sober, my life was amazing. I had a great part-time job, I had an amazing partner who loved me, my kids, and grandkids just as we all were. Life I believed at this time was 'beyond my wildest dreams.'

In my 16th year, November, I made a conscious and well thought over idea to drink again. I truly believed that with all the therapy and trauma healing I could drink again like other people. I was wrong, but it took a little while for the downward spiral and I wasn't too thrilled with having to accept this fact. I drank again for almost 2yrs, trying all the drinks that weren't available 20yrs ago but in the end, I was a garden variety beer drinker and I went back to just that. I got sober again October 13,

2019. I hadn't lost anything except my own serenity (I didn't fully appreciate this gift of sobriety until it was gone). My relapse was an integral part of my journey I believe. 'We shall not forget the past, nor do we wish to shut the door on it.'

13 months later I'm back at regular meetings and doing service work. Resentments are dangerous and 'resting on your laurels' is equally dangerous. Today I don't want to just survive, I want to be thriving and living the best life my Higher Power has for me. The last time I wrote to Mainstay was Dec 2001, back then I thought it was a wonderful piece of communication, today I still believe this and want it to continue in paper form. I urge you to put pen to paper, forget fingers to keyboards, and send in a story to support it.

Felicia

Sober Women's Group

Nelson

**We shall not forget
the past, nor wish to
shut a door on it**

I have a story to share about one of the 9th Step promises. It is a story that helped me keep faith I could get sober again. It is a promise that gave me hope and helped me stay the course in those first very dark nights of the soul.

My name is Grace, and I am an alcoholic. There are so many promises threaded throughout the Big Book. Some are hidden (for by this time sanity will have returned), a rare few are veiled warnings (It

is easy to rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do). And I especially love the ones that show me I am on my way (as soon as a man can say that he does believe or is willing to believe).

But the promise that I clung to in my darkest hours in

the beginning was that Ninth Step Promise: "*We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it.*" Mine is a story of relapse, and my regrets were not so much of what I had done, although that was there, my regret was what I had lost and could never regain...decades of sobriety.

I first got sober in 1984 in the US when I was 33 years old. It was wonderful being that age and getting sober. I had been through



University, had a professional job in my field, made good money. And, now I was sober. A few spiritual scrapes and bruises, an average amount of horrible relationship stories, a few bits and pieces of shame and Adult Children of Alcoholic stuff to wade through, but relatively unscathed, or so I thought. I remained sober and began to have a life. Ballet lessons, tennis, getting kudos in my field, and most of all, I was so proud to be a solid reflection of sobriety. I was not quiet about it. I loved sobriety. I loved being spiritual and explored many different flavours.

At year 9 I met and married my husband, and only a few months after that my beloved mother passed suddenly. I did not know it at the time, but I did not have the depth of recovery that got me through those inevitable low spots, and this was the emotional bottom of all bottoms. My mother was dead. My greatest fan. My program was spit and polish. I looked good. But now the cracks were showing. I still thought my happiness was 'out there', even though I meditated 30 minutes twice a day, was affiliated with a spiritual centre and participated in many retreats. It all looked like it should work.

I held on for dear life. I was in more

pain due to my mother's death and other circumstances, than I thought a single body could physically take. The emotional pain was too great, and instead of facing the pain and immersing myself into recovery, I began drifting away. My sponsor moved and I could not seem to find a good fit with anyone else. I wanted to cry. All the time. I wanted to wail, keen and scream. But I didn't. It wasn't a good look. I just couldn't admit to myself I couldn't be honest. I didn't see

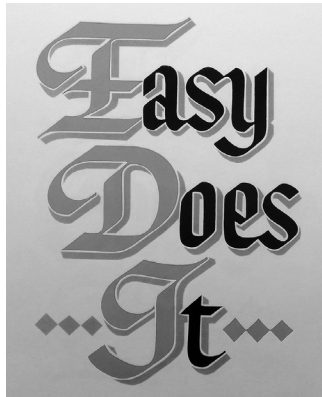
where I needed to go for help - to God and to A.A.

I eventually moved to another state - did a geographical with my husband and removed myself from anyone who cared about my sobriety. I surrounded myself with drinkers, and one fateful night,

2 weeks before my 20th year, I drank. As I put a swallow of wine into my mouth, my brain said, "*This tastes AWFUL*", and as I swallowed, every cell in my body said, "*Ahhhh, FINALLY*". Cunning baffling powerful!

I drank for 10 years. In that time, I moved with husband and two cats to New Zealand.

I finally stumbled back into the rooms in 2014, just weeks before what would have been 30 years!



And instead, I was 24 hours. The shame was enormous, but God got me there.

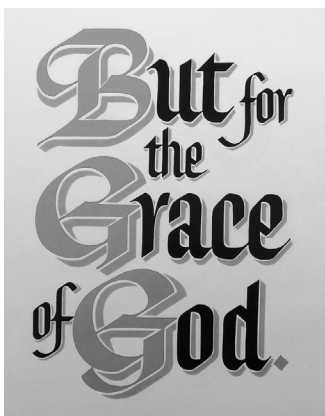
Getting sober in a small New Zealand village is quite different from a large metropolitan city. I had to prove that I wasn't REALLY new. But believe me, I was. At least I retained that Ninth Step promise. At least I had that. ***"You will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it".***

I would call a fellow member who had heaps and heaps of years and whinge and sob in self-pity about how I coulda shoulda woulda have thirty years! He would gently say to me, "Grace, you just don't know how your experience will help others." And I would repeat that 9th Step promise as my mantra. ***"I will not regret the past, nor wish to shut the door on it."***

I began to see truths about myself; how in my first sobriety I only did Steps One through Nine, and not very well at that. That I gave a quick nod to 10 and 11 and did a little 12. I saw where my 20 years was not at all 20 years. The 10 years after my mother died, I was a dry drunk. Abstinence without recovery is a frightening place to live. I was angry, judgemental, and scared all the time but didn't know it; that my relapse happened long before I picked up that first drink. That my

ego (can still) very cleverly disguise itself as my Higher Power. But most importantly, I began to not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it. I see where my experience of relapse helps others. I see, every day how to broaden and deepen the experience of living a sober life. And best of all, I am guided by my Higher Power and the amazing people of this fellowship to ***"Carry This Message"***. It is the bright spot of my day.

Grace



The door swings both ways

Just a quick share to let you know how it was for me (in my first year) when someone went out and did more research to see if they qualified for AA

– some of whom came back: most of whom didn't.

When I heard someone was drinking again, or came back and said they'd been drinking, it felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. It was so physical that I almost doubled over, and it really worried me.

I was concerned that I would drink too. There seemed to be no reason for their drinking, so I was sure I too would more-than-likely drink

too. That one day I would just find a drink in my hand for no reason.

Thank goodness I slowly found out it was not like that. I soon was able to see patterns in those who went out again. Some of the common ones were; no sponsor; no big book; no working the steps, and meetings often reduced in number.

Of course, our BB does not say don't drink. In fact, it tells us if we are not convinced to go and try again, to try some controlled drinking.

Another thing I thought (thinking was always my problem!) was that I had "to carry the message" to those people or, as the Toronto declaration says "when anyone anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA to be there" – but luckily I soon found more information that was helpful to me.

One, I couldn't give away what I hadn't got, (see page 164) and two, hanging out with those drinking or slipping, was dangerous to me. All I really had to do was stay sober myself, start, and keep working the steps, (so had something to give away) and therefore, carry the best message I could ... that I was sober through the AA programme. Showing, if I (we) can stay sober, so can you.

When AA talks about 'we' in the BB, it was saying - this is what we early

members did and we got well. So those actions (steps) is what I did and do, the same as those first 80 plus members did. (Or as Bill W said 'we are more than 100 men and women') .

So remember your best message to carry is proof our programme works by staying sober through the steps yourself.

Having just joined the group, I have no idea how long you have been sober, I just know that no matter how good, how bad, or even how

ordinary life has been, I have stayed sober one day at a time for many days now, and hope my experience, strength and hope is of use to you.

Luckily AA says our door swings both way so people can leave and come back. Some meetings chant a

treatment-centre (non-AA) saying at the end of meetings. 'Keep coming back it works if you work at it'. What AA says re the promises is – "they will always work if we work FOR them".

So I say, not to keep-coming-back, but don't leave! Especially don't leave before the miracle happens.

Anonymous



A time for reflection

January is a time of reflection for us all, and at my Sunday night home group meeting, we talk through the Steps and Traditions.

Step 1 is the step they say we need to get 100% right, and this was the step that caused me such consternation when I was desperately trying to figure out why I couldn't control my drinking.

My mum first suggested I go to A.A. when I was 20 or 21, and I completely scoffed at the idea. I didn't know much about A.A. at the time but had a perception in my mind that it was only where homeless losers who lived under a bridge went. I still hadn't had enough rock bottoms to go into the rooms to realise how big my misconception was. Needless to say, I went back out to drink - binge drinking as was the norm for me, never quite realising how my drunken escapades were far from normal, especially compared to my peers.

At 26, I went to my first women's meeting - I remember the ladies there being so kind to me, and I cried through that whole meeting. All I remember feeling was a complete sense of failure - how had I, a well-educated girl from a good family, ended up here? That pervasive feeling was enough

to keep me out of the rooms for several years to come, unable to accept that I had a problem, even though there was obviously a quiet inner voice that was telling me I needed help.

At 31, I found an addiction counsellor whose predominant method of treating alcoholics was encouraging them to attend A.A. meetings. I reluctantly gave them a go for a few months, even getting a sponsor, but I kept hearing all the differences in the room, rather than the similarities.

I wasn't an everyday drinker, often going weeks without touching a drop of alcohol, but when I did drink, my binge drinking sessions were out of control, leading me down paths that went completely against

my moral inner compass, whether I was in blackout or not.

I went back out of the rooms, tried "control drinking" again, realised that didn't work, then proceeded to try abstaining from alcohol on my own. I thought I knew better; that I didn't need a programme to help me. I became the cliched version of a dry drunk - angry, and bitter at the world that I couldn't drink normally. When I inevitably started thinking



that I could control my drinking again, without no support around me, I picked up again 6 months later.

Thus, began the worst 5 months of my life. Although the consequences of my drinking were no worse than they had been before (constant blackouts, waking up in strange places, feeling suicidal and depressed for days on end after a big binge), I'd all of a sudden realised how unmanageable my life was because of my drinking. I was often calling in sick to work because I was hungover, I was lying to everyone around me, including myself, that I was fine, my finances were out of control, my few so-called friends had the same problem with drinking as I had, my relationship with my boyfriend was dangling by a thread, and, although I didn't know it at the time, my whole family felt that they were treading on borrowed time with me.

I went back to the rooms in October 2018, hoping that somehow whatever the happy serene alcoholics had that I saw before me would rub off on me. I still kept drinking, but Tradition 3 kept me coming back to the rooms. I don't think I was ready to accept I had powerlessness over alcohol as yet, but I knew there was something in the rooms that I wanted, a feeling of hope and lightness, that kept me

coming back for more.

In mid December, in the week before I got sober, I told myself that if I binge drank one more time, I would accept defeat and admit A.A., and the abstinence message that it taught, was what I needed. That Saturday night, I drank again, and woke up on Sunday morning utterly depleted. As I was lying on the couch later that morning, I started crying, and prayed to God, "Please help me, I need help, I'm so done, please help me God". Intuitively I heard that I should get in touch with

**KEEP
IT
SIMPLE**

my old sponsor and ask her if she would sponsor me again. Luckily, she accepted, and suggested I go to a meeting as soon as I could.

On Monday 17 December, I took myself to a meeting, with my right hand in a cast (unbeknownst

to me the day before, I had broken my hand that Saturday night when I fell on a balcony). I was completely spent, my eyes on the floor, feeling like the scum of the earth. One of my sober friends was there, and her, along with my other sober friends in A.A., have been paramount in my recovery journey.

I'm 757 days sober today, and I wouldn't be here without A.A. Being part of this programme has given me a sense of well-being that I'd never had before. I'd always felt so

different from everyone else, but in the rooms, I was amongst those who had the same alcoholic thinking as I did, and it was such a relief to find the solution. In the last two years, everything has changed. I have authentic friendships, amazing relationships with my family, I live in a happy safe place, with a cat, a car, and a fulfilling career. Best of all, I have self-respect, and confidence. I always wanted those things but could never seem to get them while I was an active alcoholic.

Admitting I was powerless over alcohol was the best decision I'd ever made. To get there, I had to humble myself, and realise that when my ego was running the show, life wouldn't flow. To those who are struggling – every journey into the rooms is different, but we are all there for our common problem, and the solution works – if you work at it!

Sarah

10 Miracles

Hi, I'm Nicky and I'm an alcoholic. I thought I'd write about a few of the AA-induced Christmas miracles I've experienced this year.

On Christmas eve, my kids and I packed the car and drove up to Picton. Before we went, I checked the car had an up-to-date WOF and Reg, new tires and was filled with gas - it was!

(Miracle number 1 - legal car)

We had a fairly uneventful but pleasant trip. I did not stop at any pubs, just a couple of cafes and a supermarket to get food to take to the houses we were going to visit (miracle number 2 - not showing up empty handed, or drunk!)

We were on time for the ferry, and no-one got drunk or threw up.

(Miracle number 3 - prior to AA, I never got off the ferry sober. I usually threw up as well.)

When we got to Wellington we stayed at my ex-husband and his now-not-so-new wife's house. I didn't make a scene, fight, or flirt with my ex, or otherwise behave like an asshole. He didn't either. His wife welcomed me with a hug and a Christmas stocking. In the morning I had breakfast with my kids, my ex and his new-er family and it was nice. (Miracles number 4-8: I get along well with my ex. I get along well with his wife, in fact she is one of my favourite people. I get along with her brother. I'm invited to their house. I left at the appropriate time, on good terms.)

I spent the rest of Christmas day with my sister, who I am staying with now. (Miracle number 9: Near the end of my drinking, my sister told me she couldn't see me anymore, couldn't be around me - it hurt too much).

Tonight, I went to an AA meeting just down the road. I didn't know anyone there, yet I felt as at-home

as I do in my regular meetings. AA is for all of us, anywhere. (Miracle number 10: AA)

If ten Christmas miracles isn't enough, there's always this: I am sober today and I am so darn grateful to be part of this great big freaking miracle fellowship!

In fellowship and gratitude.

Nicky T
Christchurch

"I have found that the process of discovering who I really am begins with knowing who I really don't want to be."

A reminder:

There is no 'THE' courage or 'The' Wisdom in AA's version of the serenity prayer – it's just COURAGE and WISDOM (read our banners)

Adding 'the' not only changes the meaning but diminishes our prayer too.

Questions I need to ask often especially at a group conscience; Am I (are we) informed, mis-informed or un-informed?

How to become an old timer. Don't drink and don't die. Suit up, show up, sit up, shut up and listen.

'Sober and Clean' is sometimes used by Narcotics Anonymous members. The 'clean' means drug-free and came about by urine tests being described as 'clean' i.e. no drugs detected.

In Alcoholics Anonymous we talk of being 'sober' i.e. no alcohol since our sobriety date – which is the date of our last drink. Sometimes AA members use the term clean and sober without realising it's not an AA saying.

Those of us who identify as both Alcoholics and Addicts identify as being 'sober' only in our AA meetings and as 'clean' in our NA meetings - out of respect to each fellowship's primary purpose.

Mainstay

Will It Stay Or Will It Go?

Mainstay printed its first edition in June 1955 with it being held in trust by its two editors until handed over to the membership in 1964.

For many years it has been our meeting in print and the voice of A.A. in NZ. There were periods in the 70s and 80s where over 1,000 copies per edition were printed. By the late 90s early 2000s that subscriber base had dropped to 650. By 2010 the subscriber base was down to 345 and as I write this it sits at 246 subscribers.

At the October Conference as Chair of the Mainstay Committee I reported with pleasure the improvements we have made in modernising the look and improving the content of Mainstay along with adding the option of a digital subscription. The feedback from Conference and from our readers has been very positive about the magazine with a motion passed from Conference to thank Heather and Toni who put the magazine together. Alas the quality has not made a difference to the support for the magazine which we measure in the number of subscribers so we can pay the bills and the number of letters, so we have local content to publish. Lack of letters is like a meeting with no members showing up!

My reluctant recommendation to Conference was that without an increase in subscriber numbers we should consider that Mainstay has run its course and is no longer required by the membership. Like a meeting which can not attract enough members to support itself it might be time to cease publication of Mainstay.

The current decision passed by motion at Conference is that if the subscription base does not grow to 500 Mainstay will cease to be printed from April issue 2021. Delegates will be taking this back to Area Assemblies.

I preach to the converted as those of you reading this support Mainstay but you are less the 5% of our membership. Added to this over the last year meeting subscriptions have dropped from 95 to 87 and we have over 480 registered meetings in NZ. It is not just about being self - supporting. I have the privilege of working with a dedicated group of A.A. members producing each issue of Mainstay but it is hard to stay enthused when you see the subscriber base drop and you struggle to get content from members to put an issue together.

Unless we see an increase in subscriptions for Feb and April Mainstay our future has been set. You can help by letting your meetings and friends know we need letters and we need subscribers if we are to remain254 new subscribers to bring us to 500 is the measure set in the motion passed at Conference.

Yours in service

Russell B, Chair of Mainstay Sub Committee

Our Thanks To The Meetings Who Have Supported Mainstay in 2020:

Wellington Saturday Early Birds	Oxford Group	Christchurch Big Book Study Tuesday
Wellington Came to Believe	Kaipoi Monday	Christchurch City Steps
Wellington Wednesday Night Steps and Traditions	Ashburton Monday Night Steps Group	Dunedin AA on Cumberland
Wellington Living Sober	Ashburton Friday Lunchtime Group	Mosgiel Tuesday AA
Wellington Beginners Group	Ashburton Friday Night Group	Balclutha Group
Wellington Kilbirnie Group	Runanga AA Monday Night	Cromwell Thursday Group
Wellington Sunday Spiritual Concepts	Hokitika Sunday Morning	Wanaka Monday Group
Nelson Wednesday Night Big Book	Came to Believe	Alexandra Tuesday Night
Richmond Monday	Hokitika Thursday Night	Oamaru Tuesday Recovery Group
Richmond Sunday Morning As Bill Sees It	Waikiki South	Gore Sunday Group
Nelson Thursday Night Serenity Group	Christchurch Saturday	Edendale Group
Havelock Thursday 12 Steps & 12 Traditions	Fendalton Just for Today	Invercargill Sunday Night
Blenheim Sunday Renwick	Christchurch Service Centre	Invercargill Monday Jenkin St Group
Picton Marina Group	Christchurch Mahu Sunday	Bluff Sunday Night
Wednesday	Christchurch Wednesday	Ashburton Saturday Night
Christchurch Fendalton	Came to Believe	Methven
Wednesday Night	Christchurch Sunday Steps St Barnabus	Rangiora Serenity Lunch Meeting
	Christchurch Redwood	Gisborne Monday Night Country
	Thursday Group	
	Christchurch Womens Steps and Traditions	

Special feature - 12 concepts

Sadly, we received no letters on our special topic section this issue so here is a summary of them.

AA adopted the Twelve Concepts in 1962 'so that our Fellowship never forgets the experience or loses the lessons learnt during its first quarter century of creating the General Service Structure.'

Thus, the purpose of the Twelve Concepts is to:

- ensure AA's survival for the alcoholic who still suffers
- sustain the spiritual nature of our Fellowship
- confirm the primacy of Groups
- remind alcoholics to follow a pattern of unity and harmony
- install consensus as the way we make decisions
- prudently protect member contributions
- allow for leadership but avoid domination
- permit effective and practical functioning of the Fellowship
- align AA with society's laws for governing organisations
- contain the powers of Conference and the Board
- guarantee fairness for all members and paid staff
- keep our Fellowship democratic.

The Twelve Concepts (Short Form)

I. Final Responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship.

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

III. To ensure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. – the conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives – with a traditional "Right of Decision".

IV. At all reasonable levels, we ought to maintain traditional "Right of Participation", allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

V. Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference

acting as the General Service Board.

VII. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

VIII. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

X. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

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

Special Section topics in Mainstay - 2021 .

- April/May: **Steps** - needed by 10th March
- June/July: **Sponsorship** - needed by 10th May
- August/September: **Service and me** - needed by 10th July
- October/November: **Traditions** - needed by 10th September
- December/January: **Trudging the road** - needed by 10th November

Marty Mann (1904-1980) an Alcoholism Pioneer

After reading the manuscript of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* while a sanatorium patient in Greenwich, Connecticut, Marty Mann started attending meetings at 182 Clinton Street and became the first woman in *Alcoholics Anonymous* to achieve lasting sobriety.

Bill W. was her sponsor and she's the author of the chapter "Women Suffer Too" (2nd – 4th editions) of the Big Book. In part because of her life's work, alcoholism became seen as less of a moral issue and more a health issue.

It's a common error that Marty Mann was the first woman in A.A. The first woman to seek help from *Alcoholics Anonymous* was "Lil", who relapsed and later got sober outside A.A. The first woman who attained any length of sobriety (although she later relapsed) was Florence R., author of the chapter "A Feminine Victory". (1st edition BB) Ms. Mann was, however, the first lesbian member of *Alcoholics Anonymous* at a time when gay and lesbians were not accepted by society, and the first woman who attained long term sobriety in A.A.

Marty Mann came from an upper middle-class family in Chicago,

attended private schools and travelled extensively. She was known for her capacity to drink without apparent effect (often a sign of alcoholism). Her drinking, however, grew to the point where it endangered not only her business but her life, including at least one suicide attempt. In 1939, a hopeless alcoholic, her psychiatrist Dr. Harry Tiebout who was familiar with the work of A.A., gave her a manuscript of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and arranged for her to attend her first meeting at 182 Clinton Street, the old brownstone building where Bill & Lois Wilson lived. Bill later became Marty's A.A. sponsor and she went on to sponsor many women who followed. (at the time there were only two A.A. groups). Despite several relapses during her first 18 months, Mann succeeded in becoming sober by 1940 and, apart from a brief relapse nearly 20 years later, remained so for the rest of her life.

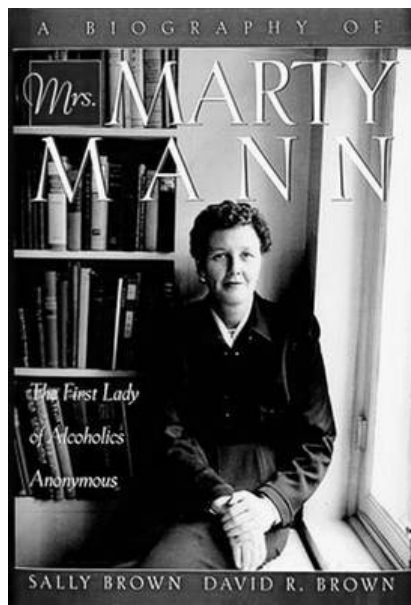
In 1944 Mann became inspired to eliminate the stigma and ignorance regarding alcoholism, and to encourage the "disease model" which viewed it as a medical/psychological problem, not a moral failing. She helped start the Yale School of Alcohol Studies (now at Rutgers), and organized the National Committee for Education on Alcoholism (NCEA), now the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence or NCADD.

Three ideas formed the basis of her message:

1. Alcoholism is a disease and the alcoholic a sick person.
2. The alcoholic can be helped and is worth helping.
3. Alcoholism is a public health problem and therefore a public responsibility.

In the 1950s Edward R. Murrow included her in his list of the 10 greatest living Americans. Her book *New Primer on Alcoholism* was published in 1958 and for many years was given to all patients at Queen Mary Hospital (Hanmer Springs) to read along with AA's big book.

(There's an interesting biography about her - "Mrs Marty Mann").



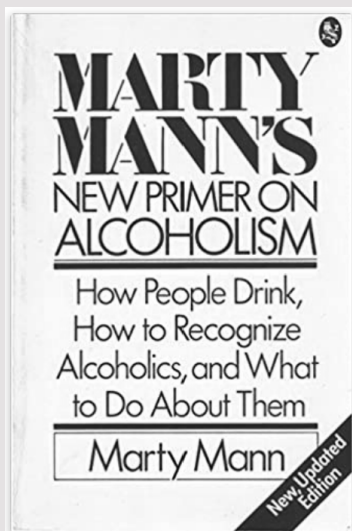
Marty Mann's New Primer on Alcoholism: How People Drink, How to Recognize Alcoholics, and What to Do About Them

***New, Updated Edition
Paperback – April 1, 1981***

Recommended by the National Council on Alcoholism, this book will show you how to tell if someone is an alcoholic and how to get them the help they need. Written by a former alcoholic who has tirelessly worked to educate the public on the subject of alcoholism.

(as shown on Amazon.com)

This was given to all residents of at least one treatment centre in NZ!



Service in the Fellowship

Both Bill and Bob often said and wrote - “the good is the enemy of the best’. So . . .

- ***It’s good to have a GSR, but not if they can’t do the job and don’t keep you linked in with the worldwide fellowship;***
- ***It’s good to have a group conscience meeting, but not if its hurried, uninformed, and majority rules;***
- ***It’s good to have an intergroup rep – but not if they don’t attend the meetings and /or are not capable of representing your group and reporting back to you on decisions made and why they voted yes or no to a motion.***
- ***It’s good to be in service but not if you don’t learn about our Concepts and Traditions quickly (not just immediately/ instantly but constantly).***

Tradition One: Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. *Am I in my group a healing, mending, integrating person, or am I divisive? What about gossip and taking other members’ inventories?*
2. *Am I a peacemaker? Or do I, with pious preludes such as “just for the sake of discussion,” plunge into argument?*
3. *Am I gentle with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I abrasive?*
4. *Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing one group with another or contrasting AA in one place with AA in another?*
5. *Do I put down some AA activities as if I were superior for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?*
6. *Am I informed about AA as a whole? Do I support, in every way I can, AA as a whole, or just the parts I understand and approve of?*
7. *Am I as considerate of AA members as I want them to be of me?*
8. *Do I spout platitudes about love while indulging in and secretly justifying behavior that bristles with hostility?*
9. *Do I go to enough AA meetings or read enough AA literature to really keep in touch?*
10. *Do I share with AA all of me, the bad and the good, accepting as well as giving the help of fellowship?*

Book review

Our Twelve Traditions: AA A Review

GV20 \$25.00

Continuing reviews of a Series of Volumes - Our Twelve Traditions, AA members share their own stories of experience of The Traditions.

As was explained to me in my early sobriety, the Steps showed (and continue) to show and demonstrate how to deal with and live with me.

The Traditions show me and demonstrate how to live in and with the world.

As a continuation of my understanding and practice of the Twelve Steps, the gradual integration of the equally valuable and necessary guidance of the traditions have given me a template underpinning and buttressing the frequent opportunities to be of service in AA, but the ramifications application and value are equal to in my 'affairs' and interaction in a wider worldly context as well, as I seek to be the best walking example of the Big book... God willing!

As in previous reviews of volumes where AA members have contributed their experience and strength just how themes so well loved and demonstrate that they work in being applied in our daily lives, (to the best of our knowledge, willingness -our ability to grasp what is "suggested" to each of us as a wider idea of unity, which is pivotal to AAs being bound by a broader "manner of living"

Bill outlines the growing pains in AA, all of which is well documented in Volumes AA comes of Age, and Doctor Bob and the good old timers in more detail.

Based on immutable values such as humility, responsibilities, sacrifice and love, The Twelve Traditions provide the spiritual-and practical - underpinning for AAs ongoing task of living and working together.

By ***Randal P.***

Items of interest

Whatever Happened to the Circle and Triangle?

***AA Grapevine.org - The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous
December 1993 Vol. 50 No. 7
Around AA***

Have you noticed that the circle and triangle symbol no longer appears at the top of the Grapevine's Table of Contents? The decision to remove it has its roots in recent events: actions of the 1993

General Service Conference, and subsequent actions by the Board of Trustees and the directors of AA World Services.

Adopted at the 20th Anniversary International Convention in St. Louis, the circle and triangle symbol was registered as an official AA mark in 1955, and has been widely used by various AA entities. By the mid-1980s, however, it had also begun to be used by outside organizations, such as novelty manufacturers, publishers, and occasionally treatment facilities. There was growing concern in the membership of AA about this situation. Some AA members were saying *"we don't want our circle and triangle aligned with non-AA purposes."* In keeping with the Sixth Tradition, that AA *"...ought never endorse, finance, or lend the AA name to any related facility or*

outside enterprise...", the AA World Services board began in 1986 to contact outside entities that were using the circle and triangle in an unauthorized manner, and to take action to prevent such use of the symbol. AAWS implemented this policy with restraint, and did not resort to legal remedies until all attempts at persuasion and conciliation had been unsuccessful. Of about 170 unauthorized users contacted, two suits were filed, and both were settled in the very early stages.

Denying the use of the symbol to outside entities raised other problems, however. By early 1990, it was clear that some AA members very much wanted to be able to obtain medallions with "our" circle and triangle. Both the AAWS and Grapevine Corporate boards began receiving requests to produce sobriety chips and medallions, and the matter was discussed at a joint meeting of the two boards in October 1990. Their consensus was that production of tokens and medallions was unrelated to our primary purpose of carrying the AA message, and they suggested that the matter be given a thorough airing at the General Service Conference in order to seek a group conscience from the Fellowship.

At the 1992 Conference, there were presentations on why we should or should not produce

medallions, and on the responsibility of AAWS to protect our trademarks and copyrights. The result was a Conference Advisory Action asking the General Service Board of trustees to undertake a feasibility study on the possible methods by which sobriety chips and medallions might be made available to the Fellowship, and to report its findings to an ad hoc committee of delegates.

The ad hoc committee met prior to the 1993 Conference, for several full days of discussion and deliberation, and in turn presented its report and recommendations on the Conference floor. After discussion, the Conference approved two of five recommendations:

1. that the use of sobriety chips/ medallions is a matter of local autonomy and not one on which the Conference should record a definite position; and
2. that it is not appropriate for AA World Services or the Grapevine to produce or license the production of sobriety chips/ medallions.

In substance, the ad hoc committee report said:

We began to see that the issue is 'What is best for AA as a whole' and not 'Does the Fellowship want AA sobriety chips/medallions?' or 'Can AA produce sobriety chips/ medallions?'

The committee did not focus on the use of sobriety chips/medallions-- groups and individuals are free to use them if they wish. The question

is whether it is best for AA as a whole to have a sobriety chip/ medallion with the AA name on it authorized and/or issued by an AA entity.

Some of the comments made during the Traditions part of the discussion included:

The First Tradition - At the heart of the matter is unity.

The Second Tradition - Therein lies our solution. Where is our ultimate authority and where is our centre? Is it internal or external--principles arising from a power greater than people, or values of the world? We must keep in mind that this is also the place where Bill W. points out that '...the good is sometimes the enemy of the best.'

The Third Tradition - We were reminded that we are a self-correcting Fellowship. . . We felt that it is time for the whole Fellowship to get back to the simplicity and basis of our message.

The Fourth Tradition - makes it clear that we must separate the spiritual from the material. Keeping in mind that any action we take could affect AA as a whole.

The fifth Tradition - The Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, and 'The Twelve Concepts for World Service'-- are the basic message, the core message of AA. Everything else is commentary on the basic message: all literature published, comments and sharing at meetings, even the Grapevine, is a sort of

national commentary. Could chips/ medallions be another form of commentary, another form of a pamphlet?

The Sixth Tradition - calls on us to 'divide the spiritual from the material.' Money is not a valid consideration in the question of whether or not litigation should be brought against misusers of our logo since AA is not in the business of making money. Similarly, the fear that others would be making money off our logo does not hurt the Fellowship on a fundamental level. How do we let go of this tiger we have by the tail? We are at the tip of the iceberg of litigation right now... We went many, many years without lawsuits. To continue on this path threatens to keep our focus on money and property instead of allowing our view to widen spiritually.

The Seventh Tradition - reminds us 'Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money and authority.'

The Eleventh Tradition - explicitly warns against the sensationalism that follows litigation. It is essentially negative attention and puts the Fellowship at risk.

The Twelfth Tradition - Humility is the key, working from the internal to the external, from the smaller to the larger, from 'I' to 'We,' in a spirit of humility and trust. What course of action will keep us on the path of spirituality?

The committee spent a great length of time in the discussion of the Warranties.

Warranty Five states:

'Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishment upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of AA fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore, no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to the methods of personal attack and punishment.'

'In case the AA name should be misapplied. . . it would of course be the duty of our General Service Conference to press for the discontinuance of such a practice-always short, however of public quarreling about the matter. . . . It was recognized that a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage.'

The chips/medallions and trademark questions were dealt with as separately as possible. The committee felt that a distinction could be drawn between the two in terms of their respective significance to AA. The trademark (logo) is the embodiment of the AA name. The significance of its shape is described in AA Comes of Age,

page 139:

'The circle stands for the whole world of AA, and the triangle stands for AA's Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity, and Service. . . The priests and seers of antiquity regarded the circle enclosing the triangle as a means of warding off spirits of evil, and AA's circle and triangle of Recovery, Unity, and Service has certainly meant all of that to us and much more.'

Medallions, on the other hand, are not universally considered an embodiment of the Fellowship as such. Many stories are told about the role that the coins play in an individual's continuing sobriety: the coins act as symbolic recognition of the length of sobriety. They are not the sobriety itself and any attempt to make medallions more than a symbol may lead perilously towards ego-inflation, self-glorification, rather than ego-deflation (see Tradition Twelve).

The committee felt that the desire to protect the unique meaning of AA's symbol is at the foundation of litigation, as well as the fear of the trivialization of the mark. But despite the vehemence with which we feel 'ownership' of the symbol, we suspect that the belief that we (or anyone) can 'possess' the symbol is a fallacy.

It actually works against the foundation of the Steps that lead us to sobriety. Ownership necessarily involves control and to argue over that control through litigation takes the focus away from the fact that we are ultimately powerless. We

can own the meaning of the symbol, and if someone uses the graphic, our meaning will not be diminished, as long as we keep the principles it represents in sight.

The committee finally questioned the goals of litigation, what would actually be gained from a lawsuit. We suspect that the harm done internally as a result of litigation would be far worse than the harm others could do to our 'property' from the outside. At the base of this approach is the trust that is the foundation of AA. It is our trust that AA principles will work to protect our name, just as our trust in God is the foundation of our program and of our lives. Warranty Five says that we can *'confidently trust AA opinion, public opinion, and God Himself to take care of Alcoholics Anonymous.'*

Concept Seven states *'The Conference] Charter itself is not a legal document. . . it relies instead upon the force of tradition. . . for its final effectiveness.'*

To us, the fear that the incorporation of the symbol by others outside the Fellowship would somehow detract from the significance of the symbol is really unfounded. No one outside the Fellowship can detract from AA's strength if we stick to the Steps, Traditions and Concepts, which unite us.

The registered trademarks, service marks and logos are symbols of our spiritual Fellowship, Alcoholics Anonymous, and should be treated as such.

The General Service Conference

is a living entity. From the group conscience will eventually emerge an expression of the will of a loving Power greater than ourselves proven to be firmly linked to the Traditions and Warranties, keeping us safe for as long as we are needed.

The ad hoc committee report was debated on Tuesday and Thursday of Conference week, and the subject of chips and medallions came up again during a final sharing session on Friday. The chairperson of the AAWS Board made the following statement at that time: *“The AAWS Board will immediately begin a thorough review of us policies regarding our marks, will do everything possible to avoid initialing litigation, and will prepare a revised policy statement to be ready for next year’s Conference.”*

Immediately after the Conference, the General Service Board accepted AAWS’s recommendation to discontinue protecting the circle and triangle symbol as one of AA’s registered marks. And by early June, the trustees reached substantial unanimity in support of AAWS’s statement that, to avoid the suggestion of association or affiliation with outside goods and services, AA World Services, Inc. would phase out the “official” or “legal” use of the circle and triangle.

If you’re wondering how to identify Conference-approved literature in the future, it will carry the words *“This is AA General Service Conference-approved literature.”* As pieces of literature are due

for reprinting, the symbol will be deleted; and new materials will carry only the Conference-approved wording.

Like the Serenity Prayer and the slogans, which have never had official recognition, the circle and triangle will most likely continue to be used widely for many AA purposes. The difference from earlier practice is that its official use to denote Alcoholics Anonymous materials will be phased out.

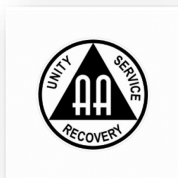
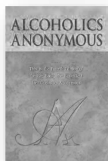
(This material is adapted from the August-September issue of the GSO newsletter Box 4-5-9; portions of the ad hoc committee report are taken from the Final Report of the 1993 General Service Conference.)

Just for Today card

The wallets and purses of many AA members, whether newcomer or old-timer, will often contain a copy of the ‘Just for Today card. Often handed to newcomers, this little scrap of text provides inspiration for all.

A handful of versions of the text exist and attribution is usually ascribed to either Frank Crane (Boston Globe, 1921) or Sybil F. Partridge (1925) and was approved for AA publication in 1978. Regardless who wrote it, it’s another great example of the debt of gratitude owed to those non-alcoholics whose wisdom has contributed so much to our movement.

**220th Southern Area Assembly of Alcoholics Anonymous
with AI – Anon participation
5th , 6th & 7th March 2021**



Here are the Steps we took

"Which are suggested as a program of recovery."

How It Works, Big Book page 59

**Central Baptist Community Centre
Corner of Devron & Esk Streets
Invercargill**

Registration \$25 which includes morning | afternoon teas & Saturday lunch.

*Please note there is no meal provided on Saturday evening, but a list of options
will be available at the assembly.*

For further assembly or accommodation information, please contact;

Donald: 027 265 1881

James: 027 494 7393

or email centralgroupaa@gmail.com

Alcoholics Anonymous

Northern Area Assembly Saturday March 13th

**Fickling Convention Centre
(546 Mt Albert Road, Three Kings)**

"Keep Coming Back!"

10.00 am Registration \$20

11.00 am Business AA/Al-Anon/Al-Ateen

12.30 pm Lunch

1.30 pm Business AA/Al-Anon/ Al-Ateen meetings

3.00 pm Afternoon Tea

3.30 pm Business AA (if necessary) / Combined Sharing Session

7.00 pm Public meeting with fantastic guest speakers

Supper

Contact

Alisdair 021 1001 172

Denis 027 7769 320

Email:

memg10am@gmail.com

Registration \$20 cash per person
on the day or electronic transfer
in advance, by March 12, 2021.
USE A REFERENCE: FIRST NAME, LAST
INITIAL & PHONE NUMBER

12-3048-0464377-02



Events

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

6TH FEBRUARY 2021

32nd AA Triborders Intergroup North Sea Convention

Time: 10.00AM CET - 6.00PM CET

With AI-Anon participation

Free registration <https://ncs2021.online>

5TH MARCH - 7TH MARCH

220th Southern Area Assembly

Time: 6.30 pm

Where: Central Baptist Community Centre, Invercargill

(see flyer previous pages)

13 MARCH 2021

Northern Area Assembly

Time: 10.00 am

Where: Fickling Convention Centre, Auckland

(see flyer previous pages)

April 10th 2021

“Christchurch City Steps” and “Tuesday night Big Book Study” invite you to join them for a **Big Book Study Workshop**: 1pm-5pm, followed by a Public meeting: “**An Insight into alcoholism**” with invited speakers, 7pm - 9pm.

Where: Heaton Street Intermediate School 125 Heaton Street, Merivale, Christchurch.

“Bring a plate finger food supper” will be shared after the workshop.

Please contact: Paul 027 437 2789 or Elissa 021 023 65910 if you require further information.

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 \$ (inc GST & PP)
	Printed	December/January	18.00
	Printed	February/March	12.00
	Printed	April/May	6.00
	Digital	December/January	12.00
	Digital	February/March	8.00
	Digital	April/May	4.00
	Note: Annual renewal notices will go out with April/May issues if Mainstay continues.		

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.

Subscriber and renewal details	
Name of person placing the order:	
Post Mainstay to: (name and address)	
Email Mainstay to: (name and e-mail)	
How would you like to receive invoices?	<input type="radio"/> E-mailed <input type="radio"/> Posted
Groups name: (if order is for a group)	
Contact phone number and/or email address:	
Payment method:	<input type="radio"/> Bank transfer <input type="radio"/> Cheque payment
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.

