

A.A.

is our

MAINSTAY



Vol.

No.

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MARCH

1965

AN A.A. MEETING IN PRINT

ADOPTED AS THE VOICE OF ALCOHOLICS

IN ANONYMOUS IN NEWZEALAND BY THE

New Zealand

GENERAL

SERVICE

CONFERENCE

of Alcoholics Anonymous

DEDICATED TO THE IRISH AMONGST US

(WHO MAY BE THE MAJORITY)

ALCOHOLICS **A**NONYMOUS 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, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

NOTES ON MENTAL HEALTH.

The Twelve 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.

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA 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 AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose . . . to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. AA, 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 AA 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.

Many people when they hear the term mental HEALTH think first of mental illness. But mental health is far more than merely the absence of mental illness.

Mental health is something all of us want for ourselves, whether we know it by name or not. When we speak of happiness, or peace of mind, or enjoyment, or satisfaction, we are usually talking about mental health.

Mental health has to do with everybody's everyday life. It means the over-all way people get along; in their families, at school, on the job, at play, with their associates in their communities. It has to do with the way that each person harmonizes his desires, ambition, abilities, ideals, feelings and his conscience in order to meet the demands of life as he has to face it. It has to do with;-

- 1 how you feel about yourself.
2. how you feel about other people
3. how you are able to meet the demands of life.

There is no line that neatly divides the mentally healthy from the unhealthy. No one characteristic by itself can be taken as evidence of good mental health, nor the lack of any one as evidence of mental illness. And nobody has all the traits of good mental health all the time.

One way of describing mental health is to describe mentally healthy people. Just KNOWING what mental health is does not mean that you can go out and be mentally healthy, but knowing can help you to think straight about things.

KNOWING OURSELVES HELPS US TO LIVE BETTER WITH OTHERS. from "Inventory".

REFLECTIONS OF A FRIEND ON THE SERENITY PRAYER

One of the particular difficulties a person has to face who is trying to come to grips with a problem is the recurrence of discouragement, whether at failure or at the very need of sustaining efforts. This holds whatever the nature of the problem is, whether a physical one such as an impediment of speech, or a psychological one as shyness ; or a moral one such as the habit of untruthfulness. The constant effort to school oneself along unfamiliar paths of re-orientation - the repeated failures of possibility of them, and above all, the knowledge that one has this incapacity as an obstacle to cope with for the rest of one's life: all this leads to discouragement.

It is easy to apply this to the case of the alcoholic who is endeavouring to regain, or retain sobriety but AA has its weapon to deal with this difficulty also ; the use of the Serenity Prayer :-

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

The sentiments expressed in this prayer are superbly and eminently practical. It is a prayer which can be fruitfully used in dealing with any human problem and is admirably suited for alcoholics who are trying to adjust themselves to living with their particular problem.

"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change" : so many of our frailties are beyond our healing, so many of the occurrences which fill our lives are beyond our comprehension, so

so many circumstances which constantly mould the pattern of our lives, are beyond our control. In the face of these we need a great spirit of abandonment, not just an inanimate futility leading to fatalism - but a positive acceptance of God's Will for us as it is manifested in the situations which surround the living of our lives, whether these are personal or come from other sources. God wills all men to be saved for eternity, this is the great plan of time; He disposes our lives with a view to that plan of His so that He wills all things to work together for that end, whether these things are agreeable to us or otherwise ; whether we see how they fit into this scheme or do not.

There is a road by which I must travel from time to eternity, there are lights along that road and refreshment for which I must be grateful, but there are also obstacles to be overcome and bridges to be crossed, for which I must likewise be grateful, for the actual working out of this itinerary has all these taken into account for the very purpose of helping me arrive happily at journey's end. So I will not be depressed at the hardships of the journey even if they are peculiar to me: instead I will bend my back to the burden and, with my eye on the end of the road, will smilingly battle on, keeping a healthy optimism all the way ; not looking for the removal of the hardships, or even longing for their absence, but serenely accepting these things which I cannot change.

Now we can understand and appreciate the statement of a person of international repute when he said ; "I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses because they mean a deeper experience of the power of God. I can even delight in weakness, suffering, privation and difficulty, because my very weakness makes me strong in the Lord". The person

who wrote that was the Apostle Paul.

On the other hand there are problems in our lives which we CAN overcome and are meant to overcome so that by the very effort to do so we become richer and better personalities. Having battled with these problems we are sensitive to the weakness of others and can more easily sympathise with them in their struggles. We are made better able to help them by our own experience. To successfully overcome these obstacles we need determination and constancy, two ingredients which go to make the virtue of courage; hence the second petition of our prayer "Courage to change the things I can".

To differentiate between the problems which can be eliminated and the ones we must learn to live with, we need light from on high, thus the third request of the prayer; "Wisdom to know the difference".

For alcoholics a good part of their programme is clear from the beginning - acceptance of a difficulty which cannot be changed or cured, at least at the present stage of medical science, the problem of alcohol; striving to change what can be changed - indulgence in alcohol - self pity and avoidance of dangerous circumstances which could lead to the former compulsive use of alcohol.

Thus we go through our lives, accepting what we cannot change and honestly striving to change the things that need changing and are subject to our control, seeing, in both our abandonment and our striving - the Will of God for us. And what reward shall be ours? We will not have to wait until eternity, where we shall experience the full reward; we will receive an invaluable reward in this life. To quote the great poet Dante "In His Will is our Peace". There is another prayer which has much for alcoholics - as it does for all people - the prayer of the poor man of

Assisi, Francis the humble, happy and human lover. It is his Prayer for Peace; and I would like to end this series of articles with it.

"Lord make me an instrument of Thy Peace; where there is hatred let me sow Love; where there is injury - pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness - joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console - to be understood, as to understand; to be loved, as to love; for it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; it is in dying that we are born to eternal life."

A Friend.

This is the conclusion of a series of reflections of a good friend and we sincerely thank him for them. The Peace Prayer of St. Francis is no stranger to many A.A.'s and is quoted by Bill W. in the book "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" (p. 101) as an example of a "Classic" prayer.

Editor.

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INDECISION.

There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is habitual but indecision. William James.

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A publican was awakened at midnight by heavy pounding on his front door. He shouted, "Go away, you can't get anything to drink at this hour".

"Who wants anything to drink?" was the response. "I left here at closing time without my crutches".

SEE YOU AT CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY :
PALMERSTON NORTH : SATURDAY 27 MARCH.

The 3rd Tradition

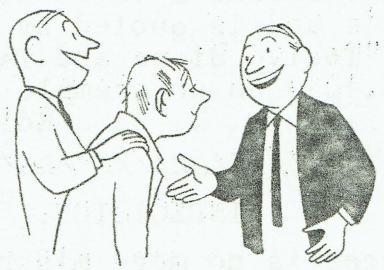
The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

"We aren't a bit afraid you'll harm us, never mind how twisted or violent you may be."

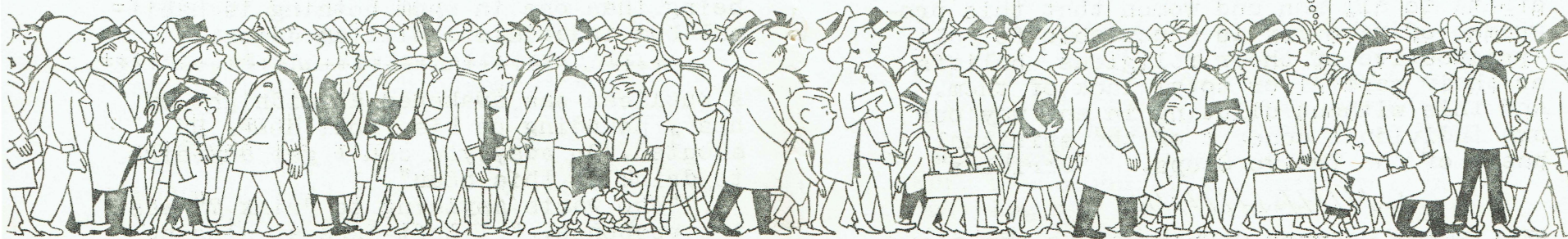
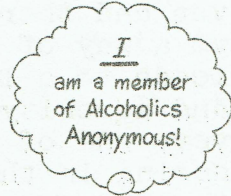
from Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions



We've thrown away all membership rules and regulations that might keep you out. All we want is that you should have the same chance for sobriety that we have had.



You're IN if YOU SAY you're IN!



TOLERANCE

Since all Twelfth Step work either at the individual or public level involves an excursion into all strata of society, races, colours and creeds, the serious problem arises of carrying our message in a spirit of truth and charity.

But there is a true and false tolerance. The latter can involve a tendency to "water down" the spiritual basis of A.A. until its values are made relative- at the cost of truth.

On the other hand, we should avoid an intolerance which can turn to fanaticism. After all, the atheist, the agnostic or the pagan is as much entitled to their sobriety as is the most devout Christian of whatever creed.

The best way to allay misunderstanding and distrust is for each and every one of us to "live" our programme to the fullest possible extent in our public and private lives and thereby bear witness that we have a way of life that not only works but leads to a life of peace and happiness and serenity. Let us show that each and every one of us can do this without surrendering in the slightest degree what beliefs, values and talents we have.

Thus we will, I believe, arrive at a form of tolerance wherein we can demonstrate to all men and women that this programme of recovery is acceptable to all irrespective of their religious beliefs or their partial or total lack of them. And this without diluting in any way our own individual concept of the spiritual basis of the Twelve Steps. "Scriblex"

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WELLINGTON SERVICE COMMITTEE HAS NEW ROOMS

1 2 3 WILLIS STREET

PHONE 46633 ALSO 24 HOUR PHONE 57399

Just above Perrett's Corner 11a.m./ 3 p.m.
week days also 5-6 p.m..

SECOND N.Z.ASSEMBLY

Lincoln College was the scene of this Assembly on 20th. and 21 February 1965. It was thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended. Some may not perhaps realise the unique nature of these gatherings. Never before in N.Z. had 250 A.A.'s and their families and friends gathered together to "share their experience strength and hope" so that they might better carry their message to the alcoholics who still don't know what is wrong with them or where help lies, until the gathering at Massey College last year. At Lincoln there were 150 A.A.'s, 75 Alanons and 25 Alateens. The total attendance at Lincoln was higher than at Massey; and we are confident that these gatherings will grow in size from year to year. The amount paid to the College indicates the growth. In 1963 we paid Lincoln £254 for board and meals and in 1965 £433.

The A.A. meetings took the form of discussion meetings on subjects selected at the first meeting and these proved most interesting and informative. The thirteen delegates to the General Service Conference met during the 2nd session on Saturday morning and then reported to all A.A.'s present at a General Assembly at 2 p.m. The Public Meeting at night was attended by about 350 people and was chaired by Ian (A.A.) Heather (Alanon) and Rowan (Alateen). Don (Ak) and Frances (Ch.) spoke for A.A.: Kay (Rotorua) and Mavis (Tauranga for Alanon and Susan (Wn.) and Huon (now Wn.) for Alateen. Dr. T. Maling Queen Mary Hospital, Hanmer Springs was the Guest Speaker. He needed little introduction to the audience who found his talk enlightening, thought provoking and encouraging. A supper was served to this big crowd with the efficiency that was so apparent in all the arrangements for the smooth running of

the gathering. Our thanks go to the willing workers amongst the Christchurch people-the Lincoln Committee and specially those Alanons who did the book keeping and collection of accounts that worked so smoothly from the visitors point of view. Did you know that they worked to 5 a.m. Monday morning to clear the decks ? As these gatherings grow we will need more helpers so that the work can be subdivided into reasonable amounts.

Dr.G.Wall, of Blenheim was the Guest Speaker at a Combined Closed Meeting of A.A. and Alanon on Sunday morning. He presented his conception of the exact similarity between the order of the 12 steps of the A.A. programme and the steps taken by a doctor in treating any disease.

A.A. and Alanon is most grateful to these busy men for giving so generously of their time to share their experience with us. The non alcoholics present must have been most impressed by the fact that the medical profession were taking such a deep interest in this problem and spoke so encouragingly of the efforts of A.A.

More stayed for Sunday afternoon and Sunday evening than have before. An audience of about 50 attended a film showing on Sunday evening. On Sunday afternoon we asked the meeting for suggestions for improvement for future Assemblies but all seemed well pleased with the programme arranged and there were no complaints.

How can one effectively report such a gathering ? It seems that a brief report such as this is quite inadequate. Two letters received immediately after the Assembly suggest that short reports from those who were there on some feature that impressed you might give your less fortunate friends in A.A. and Alanon a clear picture. Will you send one ?

REPORTS ON THE LINCOLN GATHERING.

ON BEHALF OF ALATEEN

"I want to write a message of appreciation on behalf of the Alateen members at the Lincoln College Conference, and I hope that you will pass this message of thanks on to the organisers of all that we enjoyed.

It may have seemed a trifle vexing that the teenagers came in late at the public meetings and made a noise at night but the investment of goodwill that has been made in these young people is beyond all reckoning. At their meetings they showed the true quality of themselves and of their friendship ; so much so that I treasure the friendliness shown by the boys towards me.

When I think that one boy made arrangements to come to Lincoln College immediately after the Conference at Massey -and goes away just as eager again, I cannot thank you enough in their name for all that was done to make the Alateen meetings possible."Reg.Alateen Sponsor

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From an A.A.

" Over the past six years I have attended many gatherings of A.A.'s at group, Inter-Group, Area Assembly and New Zealand Assembly levels as well as public meetings organised by Groups throughout the Dominion but never before have I experienced the 'uplif' spiritual and otherwise, that I got at Lincoln.

As always I was struck by the spontaneous help that is always so readily forthcoming from our non-alcoholic friends. Perhaps because of my own "Hammer" background the highlight of Lincoln for me was the inspiring address given to the enthralled packed house on Saturday evening by Dr.T.C.Maling. Our N.Z.

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Conference Secretary and Bill L-S. did a real service to the cause of A.A. when they invited this great friend of A.A. to the gathering. Of equal interest and inspiration was the presence of that other great friend of ours Mr.G.Wall of Wairau Hospital,Blenheim.

I sometimes despair at the thought that A.A. is not sweeping through the country like a prairie fire but progress is sure even if not so fast as we would like it. With such wonderful friends as these good doctors who not only talk to us and the public but are actively responsible for the recovery of so many of us,this sure progress is not surprising. It is a constant source of wonder to me that our good friends in medicine and religion give up their time and at their own expense travel hundreds of miles to talk to a bunch of ex-drunks and their interested friends. I have found the same spirit of help wherever I go.

Reference to the Public Meeting would not be complete without mention of that power-packed talk by Frances which concluded the meeting. This was,I think, the finest address by a member of AA I have ever heard,and it was,indeed "carrying the message" with telling effect. I would hazard a guess that Christchurch A.A. is going to get the benefit of that talk and indeed of the whole weekend before very long." "SCRIBLEX".

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FROM A READER :-"Another year has passed in the life of "Mainstay". It would be right to say a year of progress. I wish to thank you for your efforts. "Mainstay" has been a great help to me personally. It is a helping hand in the maintenance of this precious sobriety. May it help us to grow in unity and strength."-Max J.Ak.

SEE YER AT PALMERSTON NORTH NEXT SAT ?

ONE DAY
AT A
TIME

COMING EVENTS :

CENTRAL AREA ASSEMBLY
PALMERSTON NORTH SAT. 27th. MARCH
AT THE ROOMS : MANSON & BARR'S
BUILDING RANGITIKIE ST.

Light lunch from noon.

2 p.m. ASSEMBLY MEETING

ALANON MEETING

5-30 p.m. BUFFET TEA.

8 P.M. OPEN MEETING WITH FILMS &
SPEAKERS.

ALL WELCOME FOR ALL SESSIONS.

BOX 398 Phone 86532.

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AUCKLAND KNOCK-NA-GREE CAMP

3rd. 4th. April 1965

Full board or meals available at this
attractive camp 15 miles from Auckland.
Details from A.A. Service Centre 78 Albert
St. phone 44294 or Lewis G. ph 10415(home)

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SATURDAY 15 May. TE PUKE.

WAIKATO/BAY OF PLENTY
AREA ASSEMBLY

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST HALL, JOCELYN STREET.

2 p.m. Area Assembly

3-30 p.m. Combined A.A. & Alanon
Meeting

8 P.M. FIRST PUBLIC MEETING IN TE PUKE

Phone contact Doug. 1113Z Te Puke.

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29 MAY 1965 at ASHBURTON

SOUTHERN AREA ASSEMBLY.