

District 48

Monthly Newsletter

February 2016

Greater Williamsport Area Alcoholics Anonymous

Welcome to the February issue of the District 48 monthly newsletter! Each month's newsletter is posted on the district website, district48aa.org, where it can be read or printed out to share. As each new issue appears, the old issue will be archived on the site.

Hard copies of the newsletter will be made available to all GSRs at the monthly district meeting for distribution to individual meetings throughout the district.

Unlike gossip, some things need repeating:

In order for this newsletter to become a viable and relevant communication vehicle that shares positive news of Recovery among us – you need to be an active participant. Share the news of what's working in your meeting, home group and life by sending it in to newsletter@district48aa.org (see the **Important Announcements** section on this page for ideas and monthly deadline – yes, they are also repeated this month – just for good measure!

Answers to Burning AA Questions

Q. Who wrote AA's Preamble? And when was the word "honest" dropped from it (i.e. "honest desire to stop drinking"), and why?

A. The Preamble first appeared in the Grapevine in June 1947, and was written by Tom Y., the Grapevine Editor serving at that time. Its intent was to inform the public as to what A.A. is and what it is not. Shortly thereafter, the Preamble began appearing in each monthly issue of the Grapevine, and later on in much of our A.A. Conference-approved literature. In 1992 the Grapevine published a short history of the Preamble.

In the 1947 version of the Preamble, it contained the wording, "...an honest desire to stop drinking..." as printed in the foreword to the first edition of the Big Book. However, since the adoption of the short form of the Traditions in 1950, the Third Tradition has always read, "*The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking*" and this form was used by Bill in writing the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.

In 1958 the expression "honest desire" was discussed at great length at the General Service Conference. It was felt that it was impossible to determine what constitutes an "honest" desire to stop drinking, thus the word was dropped. The "new" version of the Preamble, without the word "honest," first appeared in the September 1958 issue of the Grapevine.

(FAQ's About AA History/aa.org)

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Upcoming Events

February 26

Northeast Regional AA Service
Assembly – Springfield, MA

March 26

Lancaster PA Conference

April 1

The Big Book Comes Alive Weekend –
Bethlehem, PA

Important Announcements

- Is your meeting in need of fresh faces or dwindling in attendance?
- Are you celebrating an anniversary next month and would like to share the news?
 - Is there a special event your group is working on and you want to spread the word?

If you answered yes to any of the above or think you have a news item for consideration for upcoming issues, please submit the information to:

newsletter@district48aa.org

Submission deadline is the 15th of each month prior to publication.

Second Month – Step 2

The elevator is broken, use the Steps...

With a new month many meetings are focusing on a new step and this being the second month, you may hear a lot about Step 2: *“Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”* Many of us had or have difficulty with the whole idea of an HP, much less, the notion of that three-letter word, God. Here’s something from an old Grapevine where one person grasped the meaning of the first three words of Step 2, *Came to believe...*

My Empathetic God

...and the Word was God” proved a stumbling block for this “scientifically oriented rationalist. The terms “God” and “Power Greater Than Ourselves” irked and bewildered me when I came to AA. Yet I quickly got sober and have increasingly enjoyed sobriety ever since. I believe now that, although rejecting the words, I was accepting and acting on the conception almost from the start. If you are a scientifically oriented rationalist (pronounced “intellectual snob”) like me, you may be interested in how a resolution of this apparent paradox came about.

The story can be told in terms of my experience with the first three of our Twelve Steps, for this was one of the places I initially encountered those irritating words.

I had probably taken Step One (that I was powerless over alcohol and my life unmanageable), before ever attending an AA meeting. Thirty-five years of gradually less controllable drinking had taught me that. The diagnosis of “chronic alcoholic” by a highly qualified psychiatrist who knew me well merely gave me a label I could not evade.

But I was so drunk at my first few meetings that it was not until the third that I knew there was a step-by-step program of recovery. Nevertheless, the compulsion to drink was already relaxing. By the time I had read the Big Book it had evaporated almost completely, leaving me with a mere desire to drink, controllable in the same way as other inappropriate desires.

It dissolved in the warm, acceptant cheerfulness of the meetings. The loneliness, guilt, shame and anxiety were loved and laughed off my shoulders, and with them went the compulsion.

But in terms of “God,” and a “Power Greater Than Ourselves,” what happened?

Well, just as it had been obvious to me before coming to AA that I was beaten, so it had also been obvious that only some power other than myself could restore me to some inner order and peace. Whatever this power, it had to be greater than I, greater than anything I had been able to call on so far. I had rejected religion; medicine and psychiatry had failed me, and my own powers had got me nowhere.

But in the very first meetings I began to sense that, collectively, either the members of AA were such a power or they had access to it. For their stories convinced me that in their experience with alcohol they were like me. And they were sober, enjoyably sober. Whatever this power was, then, I knew where it was, or at least one place where it was. It was in the groups. Perhaps it could do for me what it was doing for the others.

Thus I came to believe that a power greater than myself could--perhaps--restore me to sanity. With that belief, I had unwittingly taken the Second Step. It took no effort of will, no decision--as with the First Step, it was merely a matter of admitting and accepting what had long been obvious to everyone who knew me.

But now I made a decision, not all at once and not entirely consciously. It was that whatever AA collectively told me to do, I would do to the best of my ability, private doubts and reservations notwithstanding. And I had many doubts. Some things seemed a little ridiculous, some frankly repugnant. I had no very high opinion of some of the individuals I met.

By and large, however, they were enjoying sobriety and I was not. In this one matter, they were the authorities, I the neophyte. I decided to comply, at least until I knew enough to differ on constructive grounds. Proceeding accordingly, I was able to stay sober, at first with difficulty, later with some enjoyment.

What I had done unknowingly was to take the Third Step, “Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.” For I had given my will and my life over to the care of AA but not to God as I conceived Him. For the terms “God” and “Higher Power” still irked me.

(continued on next page)



In the Community...

Meetings in Need of Support:

Fantastic Meeting

Wednesdays/10:00 AM

Our Lady of Lourdes Church
100 Walnut St./Montoursville

Jersey Shore Step Meeting

Thursdays/7:00 PM

Trinity UMC
1407 Allegheny Street

Gratitude in Action

Wednesdays/7:00 PM

TLC
309 Maynard St./W'port

Boomerang

Wednesdays/1:15 PM

New Covenant Church of Christ
202 E. Third St./W'port
(Academy St. Entrance)

District 48 Hotline:

866-671-6130

24 Hours

(My Empathetic God, cont.)

To me, God was either the over-simple God of my childhood, or the unjust vengeful God of some theologies, or that remote, impersonal First Cause which created the universe and the very laws of logic by which we reason about it. Such a God I could not comprehend, justify or accept in the sense of depending on it.

But then, in a year or so, I began to see that this God-as-I-could-not-accept-Him was not necessarily the same as a God-I-could-not-comprehend-but-could-depend-on. I could have an understanding of what I meant by "God" without comprehending Him--or It.

In short, I could use the word God in my own personal way, fashioned to my own need. This set me thinking of the importance of the reality behind the word and the unimportance of the word. For God has many names--Allah, Jehovah, Zeus and Jupiter, to name only a few. The importance lay in the power, and my relationship to it. And this power, for me, was obviously in the meetings, in the groups. I felt this power as acceptance, inner security, freedom from anxiety, and hence sobriety.



Then it occurred to me that perhaps I could add still one more name to the many names of a Power Greater Than Myself.

There is a relationship between individuals which some psychiatrists, the late and distinguished Harry Stack Sullivan for one, seem to think of as an actual force or power. He pointed out that most of the discomforts which arouse tension and anxiety in very young infants, such as hunger, thirst, lack of oxygen, tight swaddling, and being too cold or warm, can be relieved by changing the physical condition.

But, said Sullivan, there is one form of anxiety, or painful tension, which is neither aroused nor relieved by any such physical means. This anxiety occurs when the "mothering one" (which doesn't necessarily mean the biological mother, or even a woman) is anxious herself. She doesn't need to touch the infant. Her anxious presence will do it. Sullivan called this type of anxiety "induced anxiety." And he called the force, power, relationship--or whatever-it-is between the two individuals which does the inducing--"empathy."

To me, the remarkable thing is the way in which induced anxiety can be relieved. When the mothering one feels secure, no longer anxious, the infant's anxiety goes away--by empathy. Perhaps something like this happened to me in AA. I came full of anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, loneliness. I found myself in the presence of people like me, so far as alcohol was concerned, but generally secure themselves, free from anxiety themselves. Perhaps their security transmitted itself to me by something like Sullivan's "induction."

So, if you want another word to add to those for a power greater than yourself, you can add this one, with a capital letter--Empathy. Now you have quite a range: God, Allah, Jupiter, Jehovah, Our Heavenly Father and Empathy.

I happen to use the word God myself. It's a convenient sound which has a more or less common denominator of understanding among English-speaking people. Actually, I consider empathy, if it is a force or power, a manifestation of a God I can't understand to which I can surrender.

To me, the word doesn't matter. The reality is what matters and less what it is than where it can be found. Perhaps our Second Tradition tells us something about that: "For our *group* purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our *group* conscience." The italics are mine, because that is where I found a Power greater than myself. As for what it is, there's still one word I haven't used: Love.

C.A. Los Angeles

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Step 2

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Tradition 2

For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscious. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.



Live one day at a time emphasizing ethics rather than rules.

Wayne Dyer

