



D5 AA  
FARGO

JANUARY 2025

# DAKOTA LANTERN

## District 5 Alcoholics Anonymous

### MY FIRST CHRISTMAS SOBER

I was 14 and in the unfamiliar city of Spokane Washington. The local AAs had an Alkathon, and I was able to attend a couple of meetings. More importantly for me at the time, I found some alcoholics to hang out with. I don't really know what would have happened because we had just moved across the nation to a new city, I hadn't gotten a newsponsor yet and in 1984 the phone availability wasn't what it is today. I never saw any of the people I hung out with that Christmas again since we moved again shortly after, and I was able to make it back to my home group,

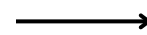
**AM I PERFECT? NO.** but they saved my sobriety so please support your local

**AM I ALWAYS WORKING TO BETTER MYSELF?** Alkathons this year!

**ALSO NO.** \_\_\_\_\_

I have been free of alcohol and drugs for 27 years and have proven to myself that without active participation in AA, my alcoholism continues to try to kill me. Ironically, my alcoholism has very little to do with Alcohol and Drugs. Those chemicals were the temporary and lethal "medicine" that allowed me a break from the real problem, my perception. Alcoholism is the warped filter I see the world through. When untreated I am unable to deal with life on life's terms. If I am sober and not active in my recovery, I am leaving my alcoholism untreated. My untreated alcoholism takes everything personal and can suddenly read minds (I know everyone hates me). It makes all my problems someone else's fault, leaving me the "too nice" victim of circumstance.

When I first began my recovery, I felt beat down and hopeless, making the hope of AA very inviting. It did not hurt that I found a group of young, impulsive, single felons with a lot of potential. Those are still my favorite guys. Luckily for me, they were active members of AA. I learned the "Basics," 1. Get a sponsor and use that sponsor, 2. Get a homegroup that meets at the same time and the same place 3. Help others (sponsor, rides, service position, etc...) I heard that if I do those 3 things I'd enjoy life again. They didn't say my problems would go away because MY PROBLEMS ARE NEVER WHY I AM UNHAPPY. My alcoholic perception is the filter that causes me to perceive my life's inconveniences as problems that seem too-



**RULE 62 RENDEZVOUS**  
 10TH ANNUAL AA WOODSTOCK OF NORTH DAKOTA  
 JANUARY 17, 18,19, 2025  
 BAYMONT INN MANDAN, NORTH DAKOTA

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FRIDAY JAN 17TH	APPITIZERS
SATURDAY JAN 18TH	BANQUET
SUNDAY JAN 19TH	BREAKFAST BUFFET

# Service Sunday

## Institutions Committee

3rd Sunday of the Month at 2:00pm  
 SDSOS Clubhouse  
 (2nd Floor)

## Public Information / CPC Committee

3rd Sunday of the Month at 2:00pm  
 SDSOS Clubhouse  
 (2nd Floor)

If you are looking to be of service there are plenty of opportunities at District, so come join us on the 3rd Sunday of the month at 2pm for committee meetings and 3pm for the district meeting at the SDSOS clubhouse or contact the District chair, Fred W. at [district5@aanorthdakota.org](mailto:district5@aanorthdakota.org).

-huge to ever solve. My alcoholic perception is the filter that causes me to perceive my life's inconveniences as problems that seem too huge to ever solve.

At that time, I was willing to be uncomfortable and inconvenienced by AA. I got busy and did the Basics, and the filter of alcoholism started to lift allowing me to be a helpful, more confident person who enjoys my life, even the "problems." It is the action part that is critical to my success. I've never heard "think your way to better living."

Seventeen years later, my AA resume was impeccable, and I felt like a beacon of hope (gag). The high horse that I rode, up and died. I became unable to admit problems or even sadness because I "knew everything." So, I slowly quit calling my sponsor, and my alcoholic filter started to slip over my eyes. I didn't even notice it happening because I had new "adult" problems that AA couldn't solve or so I thought. Meetings became an inconvenience to my very busy life. It was my alcoholism that told me my career and my kids were more important than AA.

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S A.A. FARGO PRESENTS

### YPAA PIZZA PARTY



**JANUARY 25TH**  
**LIGHTHOUSE CHURCH**  
**21 9TH ST S. FARGO**

**5:00-6:00PM PIZZA/FELLOWSHIP**  
**6:00-7:00PM SPEAKERS**

"YOUNG AND YOUNG AT HEART!"

Have an article you would like to submit?



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Fast-forward a few years and I was at Mayo Clinic convinced I had MS. It was stress or my inability to deal with life on life's terms. I thought my crushing unhappiness and irritability could not be alcoholism because I was sober.

I am motivated by pain, and I can take a lot of pain. I wish I could say that I choose healthy outlets to relieve stress like exercise or meditation. I am more of a Netflix and self-pity kinda gal. At 20 years sober I was as desperate to feel better as I was when I first came to AA. I had made peace with the fact that there was not fix for me, so I planned to end my life. It would allow my kids to have a fun mom, and my husband could share the rest of his life with someone that is much less work.

My husband, who was working a healthy recovery program at the time, thought I needed to be committed or return to meetings. As I am naturally drawn to the easier softer way, I chose to go to AA. I was desperate enough to, once again, take suggestions I didn't believe would work for me. It was very humbling to be the "new girl" at a meeting I helped start 20 years ago. I hated going but always left with a little hope.

It worked, as I knew deep down that it would, and that pissed me off. I wanted to see a shrink, get some meds and be great. Conventional therapy or counseling that helps many is not the appropriate treatment for my alcoholism. In fact, it makes it worse. Talking "ad nauseam" about myself only makes my alcoholic filter

stronger and that will eventually kill me. I fear nothing in this world more than I fear myself and what I can convince myself of. I need to take action and do the Basics. I felt like that answer to my unique problems could not possibly work; it was too simple.

I absolutely need to, 1) Have a local sponsor that I am accountable to 2) have a homegroup that meets at the same time and the same place every week and 3) help others in whatever way I can. When I take these actions, the filter that is my alcoholism begins to be lifted, and I can experience the freedom from self that is so wonderful.

It's been 7 years since that dark time, and I am grateful for life again. That suffocating sadness was a gift and a catapult in the right direction, to a life I never knew was possible. Am I perfect? NO. Do I always love taking the actions that make me better? Also No. I still have my pouty fits and snits. I am learning to love the parts of me that are messy. I am transparent about my struggles, and that sets me free from them. I am willing to be uncomfortable because if you are not uncomfortable, you are not getting better. I don't know what I am doing most of the time, but I know my problems are not why I am unhappy. It is never my "unique" situation that is to blame. It's me and my alcoholism. And the answer to my alcoholism is the Basics. 1, 2 and 3.

## HOW DARE YOU CALL ME SELF-CENTERED

My entire life I have been uncomfortable, insecure, and anxious. I desperately craved acceptance and inclusion. I always felt like I was "on the outside of the crowd" even if I

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were in the middle of it. I found alcohol, it soothed that discomfort, and I quickly became unable to live without it. I absolutely could not stop. I had run my life, and my family's lives, into the ground.

I had been using alcohol as my solution for 16 years, which was more years drinking than not in my lifetime. I had nowhere to live, I lost all hope, and the life inside me was gone. I was so internally broken I gave up fighting and went to a sober living home. I was terrified. I did not want people to see me without my armor of alcohol, or they would surely hate me. Being forced to be sober, I had to actually feel all the stuff I had been hiding from for so long.

While still feeling the effects of withdrawal, I was crawling out of my skin at a house meeting. I was convinced every person there was disgusted by me, judging me, and wanted me gone. I

panicked and attempted to run, but the gate in the backyard I was stuck, and I could not get it open. To digress, I now believe this was my Higher Power stepping in.

A woman there asked me to sit down. I was angry that my impulsive, and poorly executed, plan did not work; but still I sat. Between sobs, I tried explaining to her why I tried to go, and why I was convinced everyone there wanted me to leave. I never voiced it, but I really wanted to go and rid myself of all the feelings, aka get drunk. I fully expected this AA member to show me pity and shower me in reassurance in my time of weakness.

Instead, she informed me that I was being selfish and self-centered. How dare she call me self-centered! I was appalled and felt she was uninformed, so I quickly corrected her that there is no way I could be selfish and self-centered because I loathed myself. I despised myself and how much I had hurt the ones I loved. I did not care if I lived or died. I just wanted to leave and shield the others there from the agony of my presence. I was mortified and deeply offended, so I felt it necessary to prove that I was not those things for which I judged others. I felt attacked and was shocked that she was kicking me when I was down. Over the years, I guess I developed a knack for melodramatic tendencies while also playing the victim card. She made me do breathing techniques and a mindfulness exercise. I both hated her and sought her approval. Her stupid meditation practice actually helped me calm down, and I was able to hear her out.

She explained that being self-centered and selfish does not mean I am conceited, think I am better than others, or expect people to praise me. It meant I was absorbed with my own self and feelings even if it was in a negative light. I was so focused on hating myself and my fear of what other people thought of me, that I was not considering anyone else's needs. My self-delusion, self-pity, and self-seeking were running rampant. I was "an extreme example of self-will run riot" like the Big Book explains. →

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## WINTER THAW

SATURDAY FEBRUARY  
22nd

OLIVET LUTHERAN  
CHURCH 1330 SOUTH  
UNIVERSITY DR

3:00PM Registration  
opens

3:30pm Workshop

5:00pm Dinner

6:00pm Traditions skit

7:00pm Speakers

It was the first time someone was so blunt with me. She was not afraid of shattering the fragile shell of a human that I was, because at this point in my alcoholism, it really was life or death. She knew that I had had to be cracked open to the painful fact of selfishness and self-centeredness being a ruling factor in my life. This woman I barely knew in AA, loved me enough to tell me this; more than she cared if I liked her or not. And just to be clear, my resentment for her was glaring at this point, and yes, I made sure to put her on my 4th step. Today, we remain in touch, and I consider her an instrumental part of my recovery journey.

That day was a significant turning point for my recovery. It was the first time I heard the truth about myself and somehow was able to appreciate the weight of it. From then on, I attended a lot of meetings, started to truly do the step work with a sponsor, and surrounded myself with the fellowship. Without realizing it, my mind began to embrace some of the principals of the program, and I even began to accept the idea that a God or Higher Power was maybe not so unattainable after all. As the Big Book states, "Selfishness – self-centeredness! That, we think, is the root of our troubles." It was, and still is at times, something that I need to rid myself of, with the guidance of my Higher Power.

I am so grateful that the hand of AA was truly loving and honest with me. It gave me a solution for my selfishness and self-centeredness, for which I had been so oblivious. I love how a fellow member of AA describes where to find this solution; "it's all in the black print on the white pages of the blue book."

### **SERENITY NOW**

**WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I ALWAYS FELT DIFFERENT. I HAD VALUES AND BELIEFS THAT I DID NOT KNOW WERE REAL. I WAS RAISED IN THE CHURCH, BUT DID NOT GET OVERLY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT IT NOR DID I KNOW IT IS VALID. I WAS A GOOD KID BUT HUNG AROUND LIKE MINDED TROUBLEMAKERS. THE OLD SONG IS, "IF YOU HANG AROUND THE BARBER SHOP LONG ENOUGH, YOU'RE GOING TO GET A HAIRCUT." THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED WITH DRUGS AND ALCOHOL.**

**ALCOHOL WAS A SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE FOR ME. ALL MY TEPID VALUES WENT OUT THE WINDOW WHEN I GOT DRUNK. I THOUGHT IT WAS AWESOME. I HAD THE THOUGHT IN MY MIND THAT I AM GOING TO DO THIS AS MUCH AS I CAN THROUGHOUT HIGH**

**SCHOOL. I WILL BE KNOWN AS A STONER AND DRINKER. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY DEFENSE AGAINST TURNING OUT THIS WAY BECAUSE I WASN'T GROUNDED IN MY GOD. DRINKING AND USING GAVE ME SOME TEMPORARY SERENITY.**

**EVENTUALLY THE ALCOHOL QUIT WORKING, AND I STAYED UNDER THE INFLUENCE WAY TOO LONG. MY BOTTOM GOT LOWER AND LOWER. THIS INVOLVED A SUICIDE ATTEMPT, PSYCH WARDS, DEPRESSION, FIGHTS, JAILS, AND MUCH SHAME. I WANTED TO FEEL SOME SERENITY. I HAD BEEN INTRODUCED TO AA IN HIGH SCHOOL, AND I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE A GOOD THING IF MY LIFE GOT BAD ENOUGH. IT WAS WAY PAST BAD ENOUGH, BUT I WANTED SOMETHING REAL. ———→**

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I GOT A SPONSOR THAT I KNEW WAS A BIG BOOK STICKLER. THE GUY KEPT ME HONEST, AND I DID NOT PICK HIM TO BE MY FRIEND. I THOUGHT HE WAS SUPER SMART, BUT I DID NOT LIKE HIM AT FIRST. SOMEHOW WITH PRAYER, I ENDED UP USING MY SPONSOR. I GOT BUSY IN AA, WORKED THE STEPS, AND ENDED UP STAYING SOBER. THE OBSESSION TO DRINK LEFT AS DID MY SHAME. THE SIMPLE SUGGESTIONS OF MY SPONSOR AND BIG BOOK SAVED MY LIFE. I GO TO MEETINGS REGULARLY AND TRY TO INCREASE MY SPIRITUAL LIFE.

AA HAS GIVEN ME THE LONG-LASTING SERENITY I ALWAYS DESIRED BUT COULD NEVER GET. I DON'T KNOW WHY I WAS NOT BORN WITH IT OUT OF THE GATE, BUT IT HAS BEEN WORTH THE WAIT. MY SPIRITUAL LIFE HAS GIVEN ME THE SERENITY I ALWAYS WANTED. I TRIED TO GET THIS WITH DRUGS AND ALCOHOL, BUT IT WAS FLEETING AND FAKE. PRAYER AND MEDITATION HELP ME REALIZE TRUTH. IT CONSTANTLY REMINDS ME THAT I AM NOT THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE. I REMEMBER TO PRAY FOR OTHER PEOPLE, WHO TEND TO BE FACING A PROBLEM THAT IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN SOMETHING I DEAL WITH. THE NEWCOMERS IN AA SEEM TO BE IN ROUGH SITUATIONS. I THINK THEY NEED PRAYERS AND 12 STEP WORK TO HELP THEM GET SOBER.

SOBRIETY IS THE BEST PART OF MY LIFE. I KNOW I CAN ACCOMPLISH GREAT THINGS WITH MY SOBRIETY AND FAITH. SOME OF MY BIGGEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN SOBRIETY ARE: HAVING A REGULAR HOME GROUP, WORKING WITH A SPONSOR CONTINUOUSLY, GOING THROUGH THE STEPS 3 TIMES (1 WITH EACH SPONSOR), ATTENDING A BIBLE STUDY REGULARLY, FORMING A LOVING RELATIONSHIP WITH A WOMAN, GETTING MARRIED, HAVING A JOB LONG-TERM, VOLUNTEERING

REGULARLY. THESE MAY SEEM LIKE SIMPLE THINGS THAT CAN BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED, BUT I HAVE WORKED TO ACHIEVE THEM.

I HOPE TO CONTINUE GETTING OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE THROUGHOUT MY LIFE BY GROWING MY FAITH. MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD HELPS ME STAY GROUNDED. IT HAS CHANGED OVER THE YEARS, BUT I KNOW I STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO. THE SERENITY I HAVE NOW IS A BLESSING. TAKE CARE!

## ATTEMPTING PRAYER IS PRAYER


The holiday season reminds me of the many gift's recovery has given me. The greatest of which is Spiritual growth through prayer. Before sobriety I knew the words to some childhood prayers, but how to pray? These days prayer is like the air I breath: an essential part of life.

The Big Book of AA has taught me, showed me, how to pray. I freely admit that before recovery I only prayed to get out of trouble. And, because of fear. Always seeing myself as victim and sorely misunderstood! To me the great secret of living with all life's troubles and pain is through prayer. Physical pain? Anxiety? Money troubles? Health issues? Trouble sleeping? Bad drivers? Family?

And my old favorite- trying to control everything? I always go to the "3rd step" prayer as my personal favorite. For the newcomers remember: "attempting to pray IS prayer". I owe my life to recovery and all the amazing and wonderful people who came before us and made it all possible. May a "God of your understanding " bless you all! -Rocco. D

**CAMPAARAMA!!!**   
**MAY 23-26 LAKE BRONSON STATE PARK**  
**GALILEE BIBLE CAMP-NO REGISTRATION**  
**7TH TRADITION FIRST COME FIRST SERVE**

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**CONCEPT 1** “The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.”

As Bill wrote in his book entitled Twelve Concepts for World Service, A.A. groups hold the ultimate responsibility and the final authority for all our world service. These are the “elements” that surely make it possible for our Society to function successfully both domestically and internationally. The groups assumed that responsibility at the St. Louis International Convention of 1955. There, Dr. Bob, Bill, the Trustees and A.A.’s old-timers, made a transfer of world service responsibility’s to our entire Fellowship. The question I would ask all dedicated AA members who may find themselves involved in general service today is, are the groups and its members still in charge?

Concept 1 was born out of necessity. The AA fellowship in its early years naturally had a heavy reliance upon both Bill and Dr Bob’s experience as the dedicated co-founders they were. The mortality of our founders hit us hard when in 1948 Dr Bob developed a fatal illness. Today’s Board of Trustees, originally called the Alcoholic Foundation, had been formed in 1938. The early Trustees instinctively turned to our co-founders when the need to answer AA policy type questions arose. History shows us that the co-founders, guided by a power greater than themselves, never let us down! The immense growing pains our fellowship experienced and endured is a testament to that fact. That said, they both knew if AA was to survive it had to be turned over to the AA members themselves and their “collective group conscience”.

Tradition 2 states that “For our group purpose,

there is 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.” As an alcoholic I find it very beneficial to always remember As Bill stated in his writings “Our leaders do not drive by mandate: they lead by example.” That statement (when I adhere to it!), tends to keep me in my place so I can operate with both Concept 1 and Tradition 2 utmost in mind as I try to carry the AA message.

In society today we see many areas, organizations, and countries where the principle of an informed group conscience as a guiding and ultimate force would be beneficial. We as a fellowship have the map for continued success in following our quest to live and implement tradition 5 “Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.”

We will ensure the preservation and growth of the AA fellowship by becoming involved in not only providing services at the group level but also within the general service structure. You may feel inadequate for the various service jobs you are asked or elected to fulfill. As my old sponsor told me much of the learning is in the doing! I encourage any AA member reading this member’s view on Concept 1, to become involved in the AA General Service Structure. In addition, as you contemplate my original question, are the groups and it’s members still in charge? Please give it thought and take the action to find where you can be of maximum service to your higher power and members of this fellowship.

“A Declaration of Unity This we owe to A.A.’s future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.”

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