



D5 AA
FARGO

ONE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY

"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." This idea did not start with the adoption of the traditions, but like the others was an outcome of the trial and error of the first decade plus of our fellowship. The idea of the group conscience has been around since alcoholic number 2 was found after a 6-month search. You could say Lois represented the group conscience, even before this, when reminding Bill, he was still sober as he lamented the continuous failures. This tradition was formed from incidents such as Bill being informed by the group that being paid to work with alcoholics may not be the great idea he thought it was. It showed up in the early discussions of how the big book should be put together and more importantly, marketed. The debate between the more conservative members and the "promoters" has been characterized as spirited, to say the least. Our founders give example after example of ideas that the group conscience decided were not appropriate for the budding fellowship. The traditions and then the creation of the conference were efforts to codify the group conscience as AAs leadership, in effect, saving us from our own egos.

February 2025 DAKOTA LANTERN

District 5 Alcoholics Anonymous

Service Sunday

Institutions Committee

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

Public Information / CPC Committee

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

Group Activities Committee

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

District 5

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

This spirit of humility is the primary reason I love service work at the group, district, and area levels. It is the reason that sponsees are strongly urged to get involved in service as they start experiencing the promises coming true in their lives. There is no better reminder of the importance of humility than sitting in a-

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room and sharing opinions that you absolutely do not agree with and being ok with it. This is a way for my higher power to remind me that it is not all about me. We cannot be of maximum usefulness to God and our fellows if we ignore the group conscience and believe only we know best, not only for ourselves but for AA as a whole.

In the last few years, I have witnessed many apparent challenges to this spirit of humility. This shows up when we constantly try to re-legislate settled items, sometimes passed by a large majority. This is the very definition of the group conscience. More troubling is the emergence of the word "them." In this context it refers to the majority passing these decisions and sets them up as adversaries instead of what they are,



members of AA voting through their trusted servants, just as we are. It seems to be that when those votes do not align with our opinions, we are becoming quicker to suggest there is a conspiracy or at least a lack of understanding of what is "right". This becomes counterproductive as we spend significant time trying to "fix" these perceived indiscretions instead of conducting valid business.

What is more concerning is the broader implication of these trends. If God acts through the group conscience in AA and we decide the group conscience can't be trusted to act in our best interests, what are we really saying? Are we then indicating that we know better than God and his agents need to get in line? It seems I spent many wasted years living exactly that way. Utilizing my time letting anyone that would listen know exactly the circumstances and actions others needed to provide so I could be happy and successful.

Accepting the group conscience of AA and the principles of this program have provided me the freedom to be happy, regardless of the circumstances of my life at any given moment. This principle is intended to allow our service structure to function effectively and move on to the next right thing when our ultimate authority has spoken. My hope is we are vigilant and recognize the lack of spiritual principles involved in constantly questioning our ultimate authority and what the consequences could be for our fellowship.

-Terry P.

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FEBRUARY 2025

HOT POTATO ROUND-UP

Bethlehem Lutheran Church

613 16th St S. Fargo

4/26/2025

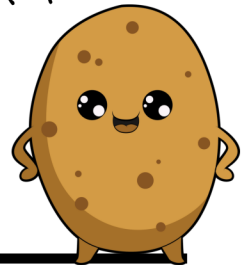
2:00-8:00pm

Workshops

Games

HOT POTATO BAR!

Al-Anon and
AA Speakers!



February reminds me of the

second step, "Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." I remember my old clubhouse days of doing 90 meetings in 90 days, always the 8 o'clock. I was as new as they get. Never been to treatment, never heard of the steps, and certainly never tried anything that worked before. I'd sit down in couch room #2 and just listen to the good old-timers tell me something about life. I was 24 at the time and had a lot of listening to do.

HELP WANTED

-Group Events/Calendar Team

WE'RE LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS TO KEEP OUR FELLOWSHIP CONNECTED AND THRIVING. IF YOU ENJOY ORGANIZING DETAILS OR BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER, WE HAVE A PLACE FOR YOU!

-Calendar Coordinator

LOVE KEEPING THINGS ORGANIZED? WE NEED SOMEONE TO HELP MAINTAIN THE DISTRICT 5 CALENDAR AND HELP COMMUNICATE WITH LOCAL GROUPS TO KEEP EVERYONE INFORMED ABOUT UPCOMING EVENTS. THIS ROLE ENSURES THAT MEETINGS, WORKSHOPS, AND GATHERINGS ARE WELL-COORDINATED AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.

-Event & Activities Volunteers

WANT TO BE PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER? HELP PLAN AND ORGANIZE DISTRICT 5 EVENTS!

- ANNUAL EVENTS: THE SOUP & SPEAKER WORKSHOP (WINTER) AND THE FELLOWSHIP HARVEST FESTIVAL (OCTOBER) ARE GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE.
- 2026 STATE ROUND-UP & FALL ASSEMBLY (FARGO): WE NEED A STRONG TEAM TO HELP HOST THIS MAJOR STATEWIDE EVENT!

No experience? No problem! If you're willing, we'll support you. Step into service and make a difference!



Interested? Reach out today! Events@ndd5aa.org

Step two nudged me in the direction of having faith. I had to have faith that AA could work for me. My biggest fear was that I would drink away the best years of my life without having fulfilled any of my outlandish goals. I wanted to be a hotshot scientist who traveled the world and worked for the CIA. I had to have faith that if I worked a program, I could hit the reset button on my life and finally make something out of myself. I heard the old-timers suggest making a doorknob my higher power or even the AA group itself. Anything would be better than grasping at straws day in and day out. It brought me back to an old atheist's quip, "If you believe in God, you might as well believe in a mythical flying spaghetti monster in the sky." As silly as it sounds, that was my first conception of God. I couldn't believe in the same God as everyone else because I resented the religious types. —→

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All I needed was that steppingstone to open my imagination. Later my ideas morphed into a Giant Eyeball in the center of the Earth watching over everyone calmly. I had another idea that all people were connected through an invisible string of webs, and we could send good vibrations through the imaginary silk. I loved my own conceptions of a higher power and that it could be whatever I needed it to be in that moment. No one tried to condemn or convert me for having my own ideas in AA. I just had to admit my life was unmanageable, that I was powerless over alcohol and that a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity.

If I am not the center of the universe, then it opens up the possibility that the world does not in fact revolve around me and my plans, desires, or opinions. Just because I imagine something ought to be a certain way does not make it so. Today I can take life as it comes one day at a time without the weight of the world on my shoulders and for that I am saner. The paralyzing expectation of perfection can go out the window because that's not my job anymore. My job is to stay sober and share my experience with other alcoholics. *—Jessica C.*



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

A PARENT IN THE PROGRAM

My journey with Alcoholics Anonymous started well before I ever took my first drink. My perspective on AA is a little unique as I grew up going to AA meetings sometimes with my dad as a kid. I used to dread meeting night because nothing is more boring than being taken away from Spongebob to go watch an old man talk about his life for an hour. Most of the meeting conversation went over my head but, the bits and pieces that I did pick up made me so confused as to why anyone would ever drink. "A drink that makes you act crazy and hurt people sounds terrible. Why would anyone ever drink this?" are some of the thoughts that would run through my head at these meetings.

When I was a teenager, my parents had conversations with me and my siblings about alcoholism and signs to look out for. It was not something that I really felt was necessary or something that I thought I would ever have to think about. I kept the information in the back of my mind though. When I started to drink in my later teens, it became obvious quickly that I had a problem. I found out that I was unable to stop drinking once I had started. A night that was meant to be a few glasses of wine turned into me blacked out every time. I frequently told myself "This is the last time that I will drink" only to get just as drunk the next day.

I found my mind drifting back to those conversations that I had with my parents years before and getting angry. It bothered me to know that I related to what my parents and the meetings had described as an alcoholic. It was—

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a scary reality. But I had seen my dad live a beautiful life without alcohol. I had heard his story of what his life used to be like and saw what it was like now. And I knew that AA was what made it possible. I spent months going back and forth on whether I was an alcoholic and if AA was right for me but, after a particularly bad night, I knew it was time. I called my dad the next day and asked him to take me to a meeting. He gladly did. I saw some of the same faces that I had seen at meetings growing up, now greeting me as a newcomer. Getting sober and starting to work the program was a scary, challenging time but it was much easier to trust God and the program when I had seen someone I love so much be so involved for my entire life. I sobered up on 4/23/23 at the age of 21. I do not think that I would have made it to the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous as young as I did if it was not for the example my father set for me of what recovering in AA looks like and how beautiful a sober life can be. *-Abby V.*

CHANGING PLAYMATES AND PLAYGROUNDS

WHEN I WAS A BOY, MOST OF MY FRIENDS WERE THE KIDS WHO BROKE THE RULES. WE WERE SMOKING AND SHOPLIFTING IN GRADE SCHOOL AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL. WE WERE THE ONES SKIPPING CLASSES AND CHEATING ON TESTS. I CAME FROM A FAMILY WHERE THIS SORT OF THING WAS NOT TOLERATED, SO I WAS GOOD AT NOT GETTING CAUGHT AND LYING PRETTY CONVINCINGLY WHEN I DID. I RARELY SUCCEEDED AT ANYTHING, I QUIT ANYTHING THAT TOOK EFFORT ON MY PART TO GET GOOD AT, AND I MADE FUN OF THOSE PEOPLE THAT DID TRY. I SURROUNDED MYSELF WITH LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE SO I WASN'T ALONE. I REALIZE I DID NOT MAKE THESE CHOICES PURPOSELY. I WANTED TO BE GOOD AT THINGS. I JUST WANTED IT TO COME NATURALLY, LIKE IT SEEMED TO FOR OTHER PEOPLE, AND WHEN I DID NOT GET INSTANTLY GOOD AT SOMETHING, I QUIT.

THE FIRST 2 TIMES I STOPPED DRINKING; I DID MUCH THE SAME THING. AT TREATMENT I HUNG OUT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO MADE FUN OF THE STAFF, WHO GOOFED OFF DURING LECTURES, WHO COMPLAINED ABOUT EVERYTHING FROM THE FOOD TO THE WEATHER. I FELT FOOLISH

TRYING TO UNDERSTAND UNDERSTAND THE 12 STEPS AND, REALLY, I FELT FOOLISH AT EVERYTHING. I HAD PRIDED MYSELF ON BEING INTELLIGENT, BUT THE TRUTH WAS I DIDN'T KNOW MUCH OF ANYTHING OTHER THAN HOW TO BLAME, COMPLAIN AND QUIT. WHEN I ATTENDED AA, I HUNG OUT WITH THE PEOPLE WHO SAT IN THE BACK GOOFING OFF, NOT LISTENING AND NOT PARTICIPATING. I WAS WITH THE CHRONIC RELAPSE-ERS. THE PERPETUAL "NEWCOMERS" ALWAYS GETTING ANOTHER 30-DAY CHIP. I WANTED WHAT YOU HAD, I JUST WAS NOT WILLING TO DO WHAT YOU DID TO GET IT. SO INSTEAD OF PUTTING IN THE EFFORT TO LEARN HOW, I SETTLED FOR NOT SUCCEEDING AND WENT BACK TO THE BAR AND HANGING OUT WITH MY FRIENDS WHO COULDN'T HOLD JOBS OR RELATIONSHIPS, WHO LIVED THE LIFESTYLE THAT COMES WITH SPENDING 8-10 HOURS A DAY SITTING ON A BAR STOOL.

ONCE, DURING TREATMENT, I HEARD SOMEONE SAY IF I WANTED TO SUCCEED, I NEEDED TO CHANGE MY PLAYGROUND AND MY PLAYMATES. I COULD NOT IMAGINE WHAT LIFE WOULD BE LIKE IF I WASN'T AT THE BAR EVERY NIGHT. I FELT LIKE I WAS GOING TO MISS OUT ON SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT AND→

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WHAT WOULD THOSE POOR PEOPLE DO IF I WASN'T THERE TO ADD MY OPINION TO THE CONVERSATION? I HAD BLINDERS ON AND DIDN'T KNOW IT. I THOUGHT ALL THE OTHER PEOPLE WHO WEREN'T SITTING IN BARS WERE SOME SORT OF SUCKERS FOR LIVING LIVES THAT DIDN'T INCLUDE ALL THE EXCITEMENT WE HAD WHEN WE WERE AT THE BAR GETTING BOOZED UP EVERY NIGHT OF THE WEEK. WHY WOULD I WANT TO CHANGE MY PLAYGROUND AND MY PLAYMATES? IT FRIGHTENED ME BECAUSE IT HAD BECOME ALL I KNEW. I COULD DEPEND ON COMING INTO A STRANGE TOWN AND FINDING LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE SITTING ON BAR STOOLS ALL OVER MINNESOTA. THIS FEAR ALLOWED ME TO PUT UP WITH PEOPLE I WOULDN'T HAVE NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH. IT DEFINED WHO I WAS TO MYSELF. I COULD STAND AT ANY BAR AND DRINK WITH THE BEST OF THEM. I COULD FIND ACCEPTANCE AFTER A COUPLE OF DRINKS, AND I DIDN'T HAVE TO PUT MUCH EFFORT INTO IT. IT SEEMED LIKE A WORTHWHILE TALENT. AFTER 30 YEARS OF HONING THIS SKILL, I WANTED TO KILL MYSELF. JAILS AND INSTITUTIONS WERE NOT GOING TO DO IT FOR ME ANYMORE. IT WAS EITHER FIND A WAY TO CHANGE OR DIE.


THE LAST TIME I WENT TO TREATMENT, I DETOURED THROUGH THE EMERGENCY ROOM, THE ICU AND THE PSYCH-WARD BEFORE MAKING IT TO THE TREATMENT UNIT. I'LL SAVE YOU THE DETAILS OF THAT PART OF MY JOURNEY. WHEN I WAS DROPPED OFF IN FRONT A TINY LITTLE WOMAN SITTING AT A VERY LARGE DESK, SHE SIMPLY ASKED ME WHAT I WAS DOING THERE. THEY TALK ABOUT THAT MOMENT OF CLARITY WHERE YOU CAN SEE BEYOND YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES AND HONESTLY ASK SOMEONE FOR HELP, AND THAT IS WHAT I DID. I TOLD THAT TINY WOMAN I WOULD DO WHATEVER SHE SAID I HAD TO DO BECAUSE, CLEARLY, MY WAY WASN'T WORKING OUT. IN-

THAT MOMENT, I UNDERSTOOD, AND I KNEW WITHOUT A DOUBT, WHAT IT MEANT TO CHANGE MY PLAYGROUND AND MY PLAYMATES. I DIDN'T HAVE TO RETURN TO THAT LIFE, AND I DIDN'T OWE ANYONE AN EXPLANATION AS TO WHY I WASN'T GOING BACK. I KNEW THEY WOULD BE FINE WITHOUT ME. THE BAR WASN'T GOING TO COLLAPSE IF THE OWNERS DIDN'T HAVE ME CONTRIBUTING EACH NIGHT AND NO ONE'S LIFE WAS GOING TO CHANGE BECAUSE I WASN'T THERE TO TELL THEM WHAT TO DO. WHAT WAS GOING TO CHANGE WAS ME. I WAS GOING TO LISTEN, AND I WAS GOING TO LEARN. I WAS GOING TO FOLLOW THE ADVICE AND TEACHINGS OF SOMEONE WHO LIVED THE KIND OF LIFE I WANTED TO LIVE. I KNEW I COULD DO IT. IN THAT MOMENT, I KNEW THE PEOPLE AND PLACES, MY NEW PLAYGROUND AND PLAYMATES, WERE GOING TO BE DIFFERENT.

AFTER TREATMENT I WAS SENT TO A MEN'S HALFWAY HOUSE. IT SEEMED LIKE I WAS THE ONLY ONE THERE IN FEBRUARY WHO WAS LOOKING TO STAY SOBER. THERE WERE PLENTY OF GUYS THERE, BUT THEY WERE ONLY GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS. THEY WERE HOMELESS AND WERE LOOKING FOR A BED, HOT MEALS AND A WARM SPACE TO SPEND THEIR WINTER. THESE WERE THE SAME TYPE OF PEOPLE I HAD SPENT MY LIFE HANGING OUT WITH AND I KNEW THAT WASN'T WHAT I WANTED. I WENT TO AA EVERY CHANCE I COULD. I BEGGED FOR RIDES, AND I WALKED. MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO SHOWED UP TO THOSE MEETINGS WERE THERE TO HOOK UP WITH THE WOMEN FROM THAT HALFWAY HOUSE. AT THE TOP OF THE HOUR THERE WAS A CROWD. BY THE TIME THE MEETING STARTED THERE WERE GENERALLY ABOUT HALF THAT MANY PEOPLE SITTING AT THOSE TABLES. IT DIDN'T MATTER TO ME. I WASN'T THERE TO SAVE-

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

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THE MIRACLE OF A.A.

ANYONE ELSE: I WAS THERE TO SAVE MYSELF. I WAS TOO NEW TO BE DOING ANYTHING ELSE. I LISTENED. I RARELY SHARED BECAUSE I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO SAY WASN'T NEARLY AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT I NEEDED TO HEAR FROM THE PEOPLE WHO WERE WORKING THE PROGRAM.

MY NEW PLAYMATES WERE THE PEOPLE WHO HAD MANAGED TO LIVE BY CHANGING THEIR THINKING AND I WANTED TO KNOW HOW TO DO THAT. I LEARNED THAT CHANGING THE PLACES I HUNG OUT AT WAS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS CHANGING WHO I HUNG OUT WITH.

I WAS A BAR DRINKER. THE SMALLER, THE DINGIER, THE BETTER I LIKED IT. AFTER THE FIRST TIME I WENT TO TREATMENT, I STOPPED DRINKING, BUT I KEPT HANGING OUT IN THE BARS. I ELIMINATED THE ALCOHOL, BUT I DIDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING ELSE AND WHEN ALCOHOL CAME KNOCKING, I DIDN'T HAVE FAR TO GO BECAUSE I WAS ALREADY THERE. I SIMPLY ORDERED A BEER INSTEAD OF ORDERING POP.

I KNOW THE BIG BOOK SAYS WE CAN GO TO BARS IF WE HAVE A GOOD PURPOSE. I OCCASIONALLY GO OUT WITH FRIENDS FOR A MEAL, BUT YOU WON'T FIND ME JUST SITTING THERE AND YOU WON'T FIND ME THERE FOR HOURS AS I HAD IN THE PAST. THOSE DAYS ARE OVER, AND I HAVE MOVED ON. TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW I HAD ALL THAT TIME JUST TO SIT AND DRINK TO BEGIN WITH.

I HAVE NOTHING AGAINST PEOPLE WHO DRINK OR WHERE THEY DO THEIR DRINKING. THEIR CHOICES ARE THEIRS ALONE. FOR ME, I LIKE MY NEW PLAYGROUND AND MY NEW PLAYMATES. I THINK I'LL STAY HERE SOME MORE. —Paul B.

I DRANK UP MY FRIENDS, AND FELT SO BLUE
I HATED MYSELF AND KNEW NOT WHAT TO DO.
I DREADED TO FACE THE LIGHT OF EACH DAY,
NOT WANTING TO HEAR WHAT PEOPLE WOULD SAY.

LIKE: WHERE IS YOUR WILL-POWER AND PRIDE?
THEY DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT DEEP DOWN INSIDE
I WISHED I HAD THE ANSWERS TO GIVE.
AND HOW TO FIND THE COURAGE TO LIVE.

I SAW THE DOCTORS: THEY TOLD ME I SHOULD
AND TRIED ALL THE CURES, BUT THEY DID NO GOOD!
MADE MANY PROMISES, AND MEANT NOT TO LIE,
BUT THE COMPULSION TO DRINK WAS STRONGER THAN I.

ONE DAY A FRIEND HAPPENED TO SAY:
"I KNOW THE ANSWER. I'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY."
"ALL IT TAKES IS AN OPEN MIND."
"BELIEVE WHAT YOU HEAR FROM ONE OF YOUR KIND."

I WENT TO A MEETING, THEY READ CHAPTER FIVE.
THE STEPS MADE SENSE, AND HOPE WAS REVIVED.
I SAW LIVING PROOF THAT FAITH WAS THE KEY.
IT WORKED FOR THEM, WHY NOT FOR ME?

ONE DAY AT A TIME, THEY TOLD ME TO LIVE,
THEY SAID: "EASY DOES IT" AND "LEARN TO FORGIVE"
"BE HUMBLE", "BE HONEST", AND "HELP WHEN YOU CAN".

"PASS ON WHAT YOU LEARN- TO A NEW MAN."

I HEARD THEM REPEAT THE "SERENITY PRAYER",
AND SOON REALIZED ALL MY ANSWERS WERE THERE.
NOW WHEN SOMEONE ASKS, "CAN MIRACLES BE?"
MAY I ALWAYS REPLY: "TAKE A LOOK AT ME!"

Sobriety Birthday 11/25/1981
Celebrating 45 Years of Continuous Sobriety
Donna M.

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Concept 2

"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."

In 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference. The Charter provides the Conference, as Bill W. wrote, "complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby makes the Conference—excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter—the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society."

The General Service Conference is held annually in April. There are approximately 135 voting members in attendance each year. Of that number there are 93 Delegates elected within service Areas across the US & Canada. The 21 General Service Board of Trustees attend and vote. In addition, 6 non-trustee directors from AAWS & the Grapevine along with 15 AA staff members from the General Service Office finish out the voting members. It is important, in this members opinion, to recognize that only 2/3 of the eligible voters are Delegates. The Delegates have been chosen by the groups in the areas they represent, to speak and act for them. They provide the vehicle by which the informed group conscience to be heard. It is the job, for all dedicated and grateful members of our fellowship, that we participate in developing that informed group conscience.

Prior to developing the Conference Charter, Dr. Bob transferred his immediate responsibility for the creation of world service to Bill. With the understanding that as Bill put it "in New York we stood a better chance of finding friends and funds, and we saw that our world service center consequently would have to be-

FEBRUARY 2025

located in that city." A question I would ask all dedicated AA members who may find themselves involved in general service today is that still the case? With all the technological and communication advances of today should we seriously consider moving the General Service Office to a more centrally located city in the US? More bang for the AA contributed buck!

None the less, in 1938 Bill started the process of developing the Alcoholic Foundation which later became the Board of Trustees. He set to work finding trusted nonalcoholic friends who were willing to freely donate time and expertise to help our fledgling society survive some of the pitfalls we were to encounter. Highly respected corporate attorney Bernard Smith, who helped Bill write the Conference Charter, was one of those friends. Smith went on to become the first Chairman of the AA Foundation Board. Another little-known fact is as the conference charter was being developed in Smiths office, the most junior lawyer in the firm assigned to the rudimentary tasks helping Bernard Smith and Bill, was Michael Alexander. He was so impressed with AA that he became a great nonalcoholic friend of AA dedicating years of service to the fellowship later serving as the Chairman of the Board in 1992 -1996. We do not have those connections today and they are sorely missed. Class "A" (The Nonalcoholic) Trustees have been (and still are) an indispensable blessing in the development and maintenance of our General Service structure. "In making this momentous transfer, we old-timers deeply hope that we have avoided those pitfalls into which societies have so often fallen because their originators have failed, during their lifetimes, to properly delegate and distribute their own authority, responsibility and leadership" – Bill W.

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When coming to AA they always encourage getting a sponsor right away. For me it took a month before getting the courage to ask my sponsor if she would be willing to be mine. It can be difficult because you don't really know the person's personality, how they sponsor, or if you're going to click with that person. Also let's be honest you never want to be turned down by someone either because that's embarrassing. Taking the first step to ask someone to sponsor you is scary but trust me it will help with your sobriety.

Building a relationship with your sponsor is very important for many reasons. They can offer you the support you need and can help you problem-solve any situation. Also, by building that relationship you can build trust with them, making it easier to open up. When you gain that person's trust you are able to break down those walls and you are able to dig deeper to the root of the issue. Having my sponsor has been a true blessing because no matter what time of the day, she is always there for me. The best part of building the relationship is they aren't only your sponsor, your guider, your sounding board but also become family. They are the person you always want to go to first about everything.

Having a sponsor has helped my sobriety in multiple ways. When I first became sober, I thought it was only going to be temporarily until I got my mental health under control. When I was nine months sober, I started going to AA meetings and got my sponsor at ten months. To be honest I wish I had asked her sooner because at our first meeting she dived in, finding out the root of where it all started. There was no judgement, and she just wanted to know me. The good, the bad, and the ugly. When I'm having a bad day, she tells me to reach out to three of my other fellow AA females and ask them "how is your day?" without talking about your day. I thought it was crazy at first, but it made me feel better. Also encouraging me to reach out to other females to build relationships was something that was very uncomfortable at first.

Honestly, the fellowship of the women has been a true blessing. Having someone that pushes you out of your comfort zone by speaking at a meeting or doing commitments has also been very uncomfortable but fun part of my sobriety. When you have a sponsor who keeps you accountable on your twelve steps, check ins, meetings, commitments, fellowship and being a hundred percent accountable with yourself is what keeps me sober and wanting to be a better person. –*Sara P.*

SCAN ME



**LINK TO LOCAL
FARGO AA WEBSITE
(DISTRICT 5)**

SCAN ME



**LINK TO STATE OF
NORTH DAKOTA AA
WEBSITE
(AREA 52)**

SCAN ME



**LINK TO NATIONAL
AA WEBSITE
(AA.ORG)**

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TRADITION 2: (LONG FORM)

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg 189). Having established the principle of Unity as being the lynchpin for our society in the First Tradition, we begin to see the manner with which members and groups ought to function in our Second Tradition; the group conscience and the recognition of this entity as the expression of our respective Higher Power(s). This is the vital beginning of temperance to our society's radical level of personal autonomy. Remember, AA is suggestive only, there are no rules nor requirements! Anyone can be a member as soon as they declare they are one of us!! However, if we are to recover from alcoholism, from the hopeless state of mind and body, we must abolish our self-centered ways. For a group of ego-centric individuals, establishing a group conscience affords opportunities to practice self-sacrifice by means of conformity. For newcomers, this feat of self-sacrifice may seemingly come natural; they may recognize they know little of how AA and its groups function. On the other hand they, or those who have been around for a time, may believe they know what is best for AA and its future. How often have we, as individuals, been so deeply convinced that our present truth shall hold for eternity, only to find that as time passes, so too does the validity of such steadfast perspectives. This, generally speaking, is the safeguard Tradition 2 offers; it grants opportunities for the group, and AA as a whole, to be protected from our individual defects and personalities. Our individual input is equitable; each holds the same allotment for an opinion. But the group conscience, and decisions thereof, grants the space for divine intervention. Does this mean there is NO leadership in AA?? Surely it does not. Our most trusted and valued leaders are our elders; those who have come before us. These elder statesmen "see the wisdom of the group's decision, who hold no resentment over their reduced status, whose judgement, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the sidelines patiently awaiting developments... They do not drive by mandate; they lead by example. This is the experience which has led us to the conclusion that our group conscience, well-advised by its elders, will be in the long run wiser than any single leader." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg 135).

TRADITION 1: (LONG FORM)

"Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg 189). It has been said, the first Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most crucial and that all other Traditions are extensions of the first; A.A. Unity is our most vital tradition and the other eleven Traditions further describe ways for us to stay united. Personal autonomy, freedom in A.A. is as close to pure or absolute as one may find within any organization. Consider, no one can demand or dictate to another, our program is suggestive only, anyone who declares they belong gets to belong, and there are no rules or grounds for revocation of membership. This is the profound paradox of A.A. as a whole; an organization of individuals with total and complete liberty. "How... can such a crowd of anarchists function?" (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg 130). When we say we are alcoholic, and declare our A.A. membership by attending meetings, or joining groups, we are committing to be a part of 'the great whole' that is A.A. Although there is no strict governance for membership, it could be stated we are consenting to sacrifice. Individually we must conform if we wish to become well; self-centeredness and various manifestations of ego are described as the root of our trouble. By making our declaration on membership, we begin the process of recovery with an initial and critical sacrifice of ourselves. The whole of A.A. does not impose this upon us, the individual must consent of their own volition. If the individual exercises their liberty, and strays too far, they suffer the penalty of alcoholic sickness and death. The individual must learn that personal desires and ambition cannot damage the group; "the group must survive, or the individual will not." (Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, pg 130). The trouble then becomes, how does one go about practicing 'A.A. Unity'? Generally speaking, we are people who normally would not mix. And this Tradition reminds us that if we are to continually grow, stay on the path of recovery, and be a part of the miraculous 'great whole' of A.A., we must do our best to check ourselves at the door. When we encounter problems with one another, whether we are brand new or have been going at this a while, what is our response to be? It is not about us and our selfish ends, but rather a pursuit of maximizing our usefulness to our fellows.