

BETTER TIMES



Produced for A.A. members, by A.A. members in the Greater Toronto Area
AUGUST 2020

A time that could have torn us apart ... we were spurred by a will to survive.
We used technology to connect us, and a program that has saved millions before us.
By the grace of something greater than ourselves, many more will be saved after us!

How was this time for you?

How did you connect to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous ?

Please share your experience with your fellows at bettertimes@aatoronto.org

TORONTO INTERGROUP OFFICE SUPPORTS US ALL AND NEEDS OUR SUPPORT;

please consider the 7th www.aatoronto.org/about/7th-tradition





VIRTUAL INFO A.A. DAY

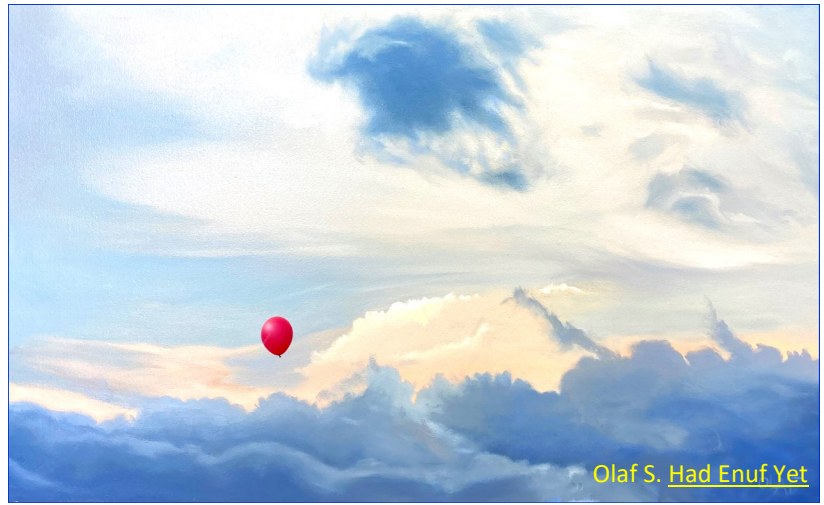
I was impressed at how well this event was put together; it has to be the best INFO A.A. Day I have ever attended, probably because the committee presentations were the main focus, compared to being in a large room with 70 or so people, and all the distractions that brings.

Typically I would attend this event to find out what areas of service are in need of volunteers. However this year I got way more than that, I got inspired! I heard how the GTAI committees implemented changes to ensure that the still suffering alcoholic would get the help they needed, even although everything else was starting to shut down because of COVID-19.

Some of the committee reports were quite heartfelt as they recounted the early days of the pandemic. Woody the 12-step chair reported how he was only given two days' notice of the closure of 234 and the need for phone greeters to operate remotely. He went on to say that as the churches starting to close the calls into intergroup became overwhelming, the fellowship needed answers. The alternate webmaster Aaron M. spoke on how the communications committee responded to the pandemic. Aaron said there were 6 to 8 intense weeks as they became inundated with calls and the need to make timely changes to the website to keep current information available.

I left the event with a feeling of pride, knowing that Alcoholics Anonymous will always adapt to whatever challenges are put in its path. That brought me back to "What am I prepared to do? I'm grateful for my sobriety ... right?"

Dave R, [Long Branch Group](#)



Letting Go...

What and how do I do that? Leading up to my deepest and darkest drinking days, I still had illusions or delusions of grandeur. I wanted to be on top, top of the invite list, top of my job, top accolades and attention on me please. I wanted all that and some more if you don't mind please!

Upon reflection, I never was all that, and my sick little mind couldn't handle that. It couldn't reconcile to the fact that if anything, the attention I got was for being a bit of a loser and a loner. I didn't show up when I said I'd show up, that's when the invites dwindled. Accolades were non-existent, in fact the opposite, criticism and deadlines and agreements to get it done on time by the boss!

The attention I got was not admiring glances or comments, they were whispers behind my back, judgement and looks of pity, dismay and disgust. But I wasn't me, not my truest me.

What did I need to do to stop this torment the chasm between what I wanted to be and what I was? Yes I hit my rock bottom, went to rehab, found the rooms of A.A., a sponsor, did and continue to do the steps. I sponsor, I do workshops and study groups and loads of service and it's led me down a path of sobriety and freedom, from me.

The freedom comes from knowing I'm not in charge and don't need to be, it's all going to work out without my interference thank you very much.

The freedom comes from not inching my car up to the next guy so the guy next to me whose lane is closing can't get in front of me. I let him in and don't expect the wave!

Letting go of the false idea that I'm a control freak! What a falacy. The reality is, I was so obsessed with myself, there was no room for grace or peace to enter my life. With a little thought and service to another, open-mindedness and willingness, I've learned to LET GO! Mary M. [Erin Mills Group](#)



"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".

AN ALCOHOLIC'S MISCELLANEOUS RAMBLINGS DURING A PANDEMIC; Keeping a Safe and Sober Anti-Social Distance While Walking a Tightrope

November 28 – Day 1

Our protagonist finds himself seated at the end of the bar at his local pub just as he does most days and every night. The time is 2:15 p.m. It's just another Thursday. "DR" let's call him, has been up drinking vodka, his drink of choice, and has been hitting it hard since 6 p.m. the night before.

He is exhausted, drunk, broke and as of this morning homeless and without hope. He finds himself precariously teetering near desperation as he peers intently trying to focus upon the abyss that awaits at the bottom of the glass. The glass that can and has always been refilled, only to be emptied time and again to further obscure his dreadful reality.

Is it the bottom of the glass he fears or finally hitting bottom, the true hard bottom that he has heard about but never experienced, the bottom where you are left with only two options and one decision? Is today the day that bottom becomes his last? He steadies himself enough to make it to the other side where the safety he yearns for, but is afraid to head toward, lays.

His phone rings incessantly but while he notices, he chooses not to pick up because to do so would be to reach out and take that last sip and first step. Instead, perhaps just one more for the road. Where that road leads, he is too afraid to ask and terrified to face.

Finally, as the anxiety peaks and realization of his situation becomes crystal clear, DR reaches for the phone if for no other reason than to stop the noise and the pounding in his head.

"Hello? What do you want? Why do you keep calling? Why can't you and everyone leave me to my own personal bedlam where I can remain safe and comfortable within my dream turned nightmare?"

"DR, it's RC. We can't leave you alone. We care, and it is well past time you started to care as well. Where are you?" Defeated, he replies, "The pub."

"I am coming to get you and take you somewhere truly safe where you can get well. I will be there in 15 minutes. Meet me outside. Bring a bag. You will need some things. This is your last chance. We can no longer stand by and watch you destroy what is left of what was once a gifted life, much less be part of your self-destruction. Don't disappoint us again. I am on my way."

May 21 – Day 174 Not just another Thursday, as we check in on our friend DR. We find him packing his few meagre belongings, making ready for the next step on what so far has been quite an eventful journey. Almost six months ago our friend was on his way from oblivion to, let's call it, resurrection, or perhaps more appropriately, reclamation. These past months have been a whirlwind of changes, changes in residences, four to date, changes in behaviors, thinking and perspective. He finds the balance he so seeks seems to be finding its way to him, exactly from where he is not sure but he has decided to accept this gift since his own attempts proved to be less than fruitful and did not provide the calm he now feels on an almost daily basis.

Things seem to be going well for our friend despite the fact that, three months ago his and everyone's worlds took an unexpected detour in the form of a pandemic. One that the world has not seen since the Spanish Flu of 1918. At first DR finds all the fuss a little much and even amusing but as the bell tolls and the streets lay barren, he begins to think perhaps this is the beginning of a cataclysmic cull, one only the strong will survive.

How quickly negative self-defeating thoughts try to take hold, to make returning to the chaos he has worked so hard to escape seem like a possibility. Fortunately, he now has the weapons and armor to beat back this false perception. He wants, even needs to run to the safety of the fellowship that has brought him thus far but can't. He is told to isolate, hide and mask himself from the world. These are old easy behaviors to return to, but at what cost?

He searches the many texts by his bedside table for answers or at least reassurance that all will be fine, believing that the other side of the tightrope he is treading is still within reach, but in order to arrive he must remain calm and balanced as he takes each tentative step forward, pandemic be damned.

As we take our leave of our protagonist, we find him sitting contently on a hillside enjoying the warmth of the setting sun whilst recalling what a dear friend said to him in what seems a lifetime ago: "Breathe in, breathe out, repeat. All will be fine, beautiful," as she slipped her hand into his and whispered, "Hold tight love, it gets better." Now, six months gone he is starting to believe that and so much more. David R., [Hill Group](#)

Thoughts of the day: "Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass. It's about learning how to dance in the rain." and "Just because it's 5 o'clock somewhere doesn't mean I have to join the dance. Hell, I don't even have a partner anymore. I left her and all my stuff FINALLY, and am just content to sit this one out." Vivian Greene

SERVICE SAVES

When I started down my road of recovery I was given the tremendous gift of desperation. I was terrified and, as such, my out-of-control ego and self-will finally took a backseat and opened my mind up enough to take suggestions. An old-timer took me aside and spent a lot of time talking to me at one of my first meetings and suggested I come with him to Markland Wood the following Tuesday. It's been my home group ever since. That old-timer, who quickly became and remains my sponsor, didn't explicitly give me advice but instead freely shared what his experience had been and what had and hadn't worked for him. "All I did was take up a seat for the first five years" he said, "it wasn't until I started doing service that things really started to get better fast for me". He suggested that he'd seen a lot of people come and go but the ones that stayed tended to get in the middle of the program, otherwise when things got rough, if you were on the edge, you risked falling off.



With all the vigour of a desperate man, I tried to get in the middle as best I could. I started attending business meetings and getting involved with my home group. Later, I started attending Intergroup as a visitor along with my sponsor who was the Intergroup rep. Once I had enough sobriety, I became the Intergroup rep. Then I joined the Communications Committee where I became a Web Associate and later the Alternate Webmaster.

SERVICE SAVES *cont'd.*

It was busy and sometimes overwhelming to balance everything but I quickly discovered that doing service got me out of myself and kept me anchored to the fellowship apart from my regular meeting attendance. I had seen a lot of things getting better in my life as a result of service but it wasn't until the COVID-19 pandemic that I really saw the degree to which service was saving my life. While a lot of members encountered a feeling of disconnection from the program after the pandemic hit, I was fortunate enough to be drawn in closer. The pandemic increased the number of updates and modifications required for the website exponentially as groups moved online and worked to master new platforms, meeting IDs, passwords...etc. As in-person meetings dried up and some members were left without much connection to the fellowship I was getting to communicate with groups, members, and other trusted servants multiple times a day.

Certainly the pandemic has still had an impact on my recovery and experience with the fellowship - and it hasn't all been positive - but thanks to the experience of members that came before me and the fellowship's service structure, I'm still here, doing my best to stay in the middle and holding onto the fear that keeps me from drifting to the edge.

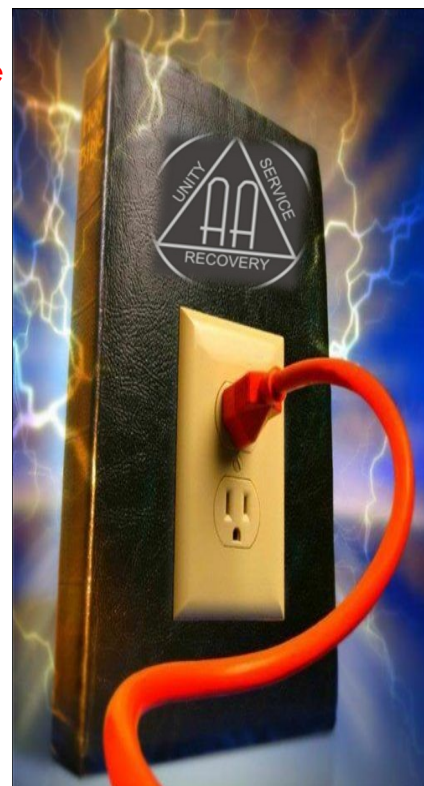
Aaron M., [Markland Wood](#)

My son had me laughing to myself the other day.

I came home from an A.A. meeting and my son asked; "Dad, are those A.A.'s rechargeable?"

I replied, "**Son I'm not sure about your batteries ,but my A.A.'s definitely recharge my spiritual batteries!**"

Donny M.,
[Strength in Recovery](#)



PRAYER FOR PEOPLE WHO DON'T PRAY

Not too long ago, a fellow member came to A.A., got sober and maintained his sobriety for about three years. He then decided he could start drinking again, because he knew how to stop with A.A. The resumption of his drinking career wasn't everything he had hoped, so he decided to do what he had planned and came back to A.A.

Although being very diligent and doing many "do" things, he was now unable to stay sober at all. He went for a year, coming to meetings, working with a sponsor, doing service, etc. By the end of the year, he could not stay sober for even a single day. He was utterly miserable. He went to his sponsor for help.

His sponsor said he was out of ideas, and went to his sponsor. The two sponsors met with our fellow. They said the only thing they could think of that he wasn't doing was praying. Our fellow responded that now he believed his situation was totally hopeless, because he was an atheist and didn't believe in God. Our fellow says that may have been the loneliest, most desperate place he has ever been in his life.

Realizing he had to do something, or probably die, his thought was the only time he didn't obsess about drinking was when he was thinking about others. He lived near a hospital. In complete desperation one morning he decided each time he heard an ambulance go by, he would stop and think about the person inside the ambulance, and just hope that person would be OK. He tried that for one day.

Being near the hospital, there were many ambulances. Towards the end of the day he realized he had spent far less time thinking about himself, much more time thinking about others, and his desire to drink had been lessened to the point he remained sober that evening. The next morning, he tried the same thing again. It worked. After a few days, he was still sober. That's when he realized that by "putting it out to the universe," someone he would never meet might just be alright.

In his own way, he sort of, kind of, might have, started to say what he thought was a prayer. No one told him what to do. This was his thought, his own decision. Today, several years later, he still thinks about people he will never know in ambulances, and he is still sober.
Eric G., [Morning Discussion Group](#)



TWO YEARS: A TODDLER IN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

My last drink was two years ago. I am officially a toddler in A.A. Today was a day like any other day in my fledgling sobriety, inasmuch as alcohol did not present itself to me as a solution to anything. Today, that is. I did the "do" things today, the things that have kept me sober these hundred-odd weeks. I got up and went to a meeting, one of the same meetings that has helped keep me sober. For me, it is one of those not-my-home-group but kinda-like-my-home-group meetings because I have gone to it so long and so often that it is a real home for me in A.A. I felt a new gratitude and a growing humility by truly accepting "congratulations" without feeling self-seeking or selfish. Because this alcoholic, me, has thrived on attention and lusted for your praise for the better part of five decades. To feel different today, to feel that "perpetual quietness of heart" which adorned the desk of Dr. Bob, is part of my growth in A.A. Even by saying that I feel slightly less-than-humble, but by doing an inventory to check my motives I can find peace in just trying to be a little less self-seeking today and be helpful.

I didn't want to share on my A.A. birthday. I thought it might be inauthentic. But then I remembered the fundamental principles outlined in our traditions: "our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety." That and "the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." I listened to the woman three days sober. The friend with less than three months despite a year of trying. The member celebrating 17 days and yet another approaching 31 years. My friend who recalled her first meeting many months ago when I was the first person she spoke with and said "you are no longer alone." And so I was reminded of my duty to A.A.: to share my experience, strength and hope with the still-suffering alcoholic. That is not me today, by the grace of my Higher Power whom I choose to call God and fundamentally because of the strength of the fellowship I have found in A.A. Yet tomorrow is a new day and if I can share one thing today about how 730 days came together for me, maybe one thing will make sense to one person who may one day get 730 days. There is no VIP pass to years of recovery; we all get sober one day at a time and I stay sober by staying close to A.A. fellowship.

Two years and now a toddler. I have two extra seconds of pause to try the next right thing. I have a chance to help others. And I have a beautiful opportunity for another new twenty-four hours if I just do the "do" things. Trust God, clean house, help others. Thank you A.A. and thank all of you for my sobriety today.

Jeremy A., [Steps to Serenity Group](#)

that on Aug. 8, 1879 AA's Cofounder Dr. Bob (Robert Holbrook Smith) is born in St. Johnsbury, Vermont?

that in Aug. 1934 Bill's third admission to Towns Hospital in NYC (again paid by Dr. Leonard Strong who was married to Bill's sister Dorothy)?

that in Aug. 1934 Ebby T. Bill W.'s school friend & sponsor, sobers up for 2 years?

that in Aug. 1935 Bill W. returns to NYC from Akron and meetings were held at his house at 182 Clinton St. on Tuesday nights? Over time Bill was criticized by the NY Oxford Group members for working only with alcoholics. In Akron, T Henry & Clarace Williams were also criticized by Oxford Group members who did not support their efforts with alcoholics. The Oxford Group was out to save the world & sought out famous public figures to join their ranks for the publicity it would generate. Bill simply was out to save some nameless drunks.

that in Aug. 1937 Bill & Lois stopped attending Oxford Group meetings & the NY AA's separated from the oxford Group?

that in Aug. 1938 the Alcoholic Foundation was created as a charitable trust with a board of 5 Trustees (3 non-alcoholics & 2 alcoholics)? The board composition began a long (and later troublesome) tradition of making non-alcoholics a majority.

that on Aug. 2, 1939 Dr. Bob & Sister Ignatia start work at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron? Dr. Bob & Sister Ignatia treat 5,000 cases in the next 10 years.

that in Aug. 1942 the A.A. office in New York granted distribution rights for the Big Book to Dr. George Little? Dr. Little formally transferred these rights to the Toronto A.A. Club on Sept. 22, 1944.

that in Aug. 1945 the Grapevine carried Bill W.'s first article titled "Modesty One Plank for Good Public Relations"? It set the groundwork for Bill's 5-year campaign for the Traditions.

that on Aug. 16, 1948 a permanent secretary, Marg Meek was hired for the Central Committee (today GTA Intergroup) in Toronto? The office was at 331 Bay St. Marg held the position for 25 years.

that in Aug. 1950 Dr. Bob gave Bill W. his endorsement of the idea for the General Service Conference?

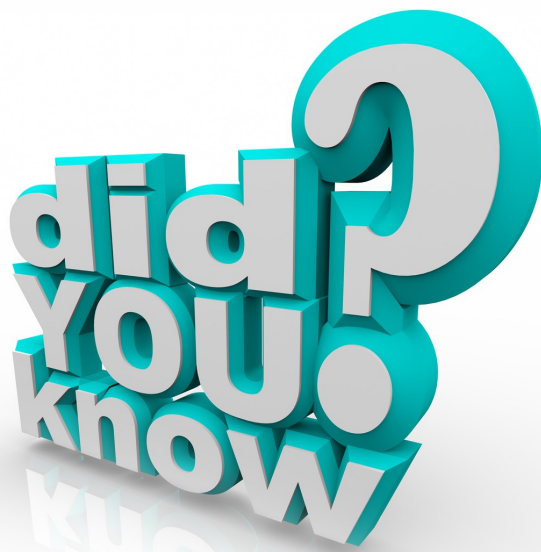
that on Aug. 2-4, 1968 the 11th International Conference of Young People in A.A. (ICYPAA) was held at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto?

that on Aug. 6, 1981 the 1st meeting of the Archives Committee was set up by representatives from Ontario Provincial Committee (OPC) the four Areas in Ontario & Toronto Intergroup? In 1991 Toronto Intergroup becomes the sole sponsor of the Archives Committee.

that on Aug. 18-21, 1988 the 1st Canadian National A.A. Convention was held in Halifax in an attempt to make it a regular 5 year Canadian event? Did not work out too well. Two 7th Traditions had to be requested in order to make it pay for itself.

that on Aug. 3, 1993 Toronto Intergroup Offices at 234 Eglinton Ave. E. moved down from 502 to 202? Done for financial reasons. Money was short at Intergroup & the smaller space lowered the rent substantially.

that in Aug. 1981 distribution of Alcoholics Anonymous (Big Book) passes the 3 million mark?



CONTACT ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 TO DONATE A.A. ITEMS & OLD MEETING BOOKS.

WORD search



SUBMIT A BETTER TIMES ARTICLE!!

Please send us in your own words, your ideas, your journey, your experience, strength and hope in 200-500 words to bettertimes@A.A.toronto.org*

GREATER TORONTO AREA INTERGROUP

234 Eglinton Ave. E. # 202
Toronto, ON M4P 1K5
416-487-5591
www.aatoronto.org

A.A. COMMITTEES

Accessibility:
accessibility@aatoronto.org

Archives:
archives@aatoronto.org

Correctional Facilities:
corrections@aatoronto.org

Cooperation with the Professional Community:
cpc@aatoronto.org

Finance:
finance@aatoronto.org

Operating Committee:
oc.chair@aatoronto.org

Ontario Regional Conf.:
orc@aatoronto.org

Public Information:
pi@aatoronto.org

12th Step:
12step@aatoronto.org

Communications Comm.:
Dave P. Chair
Marvyn W. Liaison OC
Randy C. Secretary
David C. Webmaster
Aaron M. Alt. Webmaster
Chris Z. Writer/Reporter
TBA Assistant Editor
Mary M. Editor
bettertimes@aatoronto.org
communications@aatoronto.org

STEP EIGHT

P X C L Q H P M G B T J E P I E C K T L
R U I C M B H I F V E O D G F U E Y D X
E T G Q Q R A F H J J C T G A X M G M V
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Admitted
Aggravated
Amends
Attempt
Attitude
Backtrack
Bedeviled
Brotherhood
Bygones
Conduct
Damage
Debris
Defects
Embarrassed
Emotional
Fault
Forgiveness
Harmed
Human
Inventory
List
Moral
Partnership
Past
Peace
Personal
Relations
Repair
Suffer
Survey
Vigorous
Willing
Wounds
Wreckage
Wretched

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ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE OPERATING COMMITTEE CHAIR oc.chair@A.A.toronto.org

GROUP SPOTLIGHT 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts

Bert J. is the founder of this group, but it is a team effort to put it on each week. Bert J. went on to say “the thought was in my head for a couple of years, seeing a lack of information about the Traditions and the Concepts.

The main theme is: “IS MY TRIANGLE BALANCED?” I need to ask myself how can I apply the [Traditions](#) and the [Concepts](#) into my life? The 3 legacies of the fellowship teach me to live a balanced life; I still have to learn to do that.

The group came into existence during the COVID-19 pandemic. We had a test run on June 3rd, and officially went on-line June 10th 2020. We reach members across the country and the world, so it will continue to be a virtual meeting for now.

I like the diversity of the people attending the group, including their different knowledge levels of the Traditions and Concepts. Everyone is welcome to say a word about their feeling on the subject.

The fact we have some seasoned members who are willing to give their interpretation, makes for a good mix, and a lot of experience is passed on.

The format is simple, we read the Tradition or the Concept of the week, and then discuss/interpret our thoughts about it.

We do the Twelve Traditions first, and then it will be the concepts, after that, return to the Traditions and so on.

Can this help newcomers? Anything can help the newcomer; some will understand the Fellowship more by the Traditions.

They say the Traditions and the Concepts are for those who are interested in SERVICE, I don't think so, it's a way of life to understand the Spirituality path. Bert J. [Silverbirch Group](#) , Dave R, [Long Branch Group](#)

Wednesday's 6 pm

ZOOM ID 895 1713 3702 PW: 831305

This meeting is for persons who are looking to discuss the Traditions and Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous. The readings are from 12 Steps & 12 Traditions as well as the 12 Concepts from the Service Manual.

Some of the material we are going to use is found in the Service Manual, 12&12, A.A. Comes of Age, Language of the Heart, 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts Illustrated, Tradition and Concept checklist.

We suggest that you read the Tradition or the Concept ahead of time.

MEETING FORMAT

Open with the Serenity Prayer.

Safety Card.

Primary Purpose card open meeting.

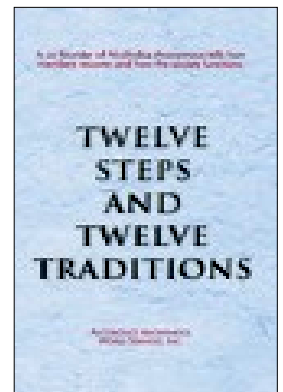
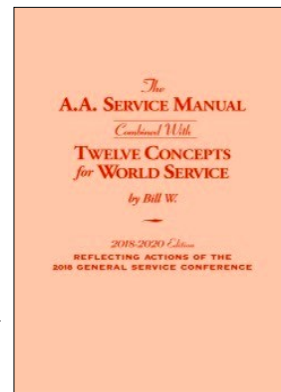
Read the 12 Traditions.

Read the Tradition of the day or Concept.

Open the discussion.

Thank everyone for their participation.

Close with the Responsibility Declaration.



NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	CELEBRATION	GROUP
Armando B.	1	Jul 17 2019	Aug 1 2020	Start Today