

“We Will Not Regret the Past nor Wish to Shut the Door on It... “: A Promise to You

When I was drinking, I made a lot of bad decisions. My entire life was based on self: self-preservation, self-loathing and lack of self-esteem. As it states in our literature, I had stepped on the toes of my fellows and they retaliated, seemingly without provocation.

There were times, based on fear, I shut everyone out. I belittled my family, friends and loved ones. Everyone got in my way and I just didn't want to be bothered about anything, especially my drinking. Throughout all this, I didn't want to be alone. Some of my decisions landed me in the drunk-tank; others got me kicked out of bars, barbecues and bar mitzvahs. Everywhere I went, there I was and I hated it. I hated me and I *especially* hated you.

When first getting sober, I would get inside my own head about the bad things I have done to many great people. The regret, guilt and remorse took over my soul and made me ill. I hated myself when I was drinking, but hated myself even more when I first got sober. Luckily, there is this great fellowship of people who told me to keep coming back and not leave before the miracle happened. A sponsor and a lot of loving and tolerant people took me through the steps, drove me to meetings, told me to give back what was so freely given to me, and I would be all right. I thought they were crazy.

How was I to stop feeling this horrible guilt and emptiness? How could I NOT drink? How would my life get better like they kept telling me?

When I sit in regret, self-pity or remorse, there can be no spiritual growth and no REAL sobriety. Working with a sponsor and going through the steps in order, I found that these regrets started falling away. Once I was able to see my part in situations and to have the willingness to make things right, I started getting better. I wanted to stay sober more than I wanted to drink. My first sponsor asked me if I were willing to go to any lengths to achieve sobriety, and I said I was...and I still am today.

The biggest thing I had to do was to find a concept of God that I could understand. I have to rely on this God or Spirit of the Universe to get me through my day TODAY. If I'm stuck in the past, wishing I could change it, I'm not working on the now and setting myself up for a sober future. That promise in the Big Book that “We will not regret the past nor wish to shut the door on it” is exactly the mantra I need to live by. No, I should NOT regret the past, it got me into AA! I should never forget where I came from and how I got to where I am today. Every past mistake and regret is a tool for me that I can freely give away today.

To quote a spiritual daily devotional book*, “You ran a race, you stumbled and fell, you have risen again and now you press on toward the goal of a better life. Do not stay to examine the spot you fell, only feel sorry for the delay, the shortsightedness that prevented you from seeing the real goal sooner.”

Peace to you and to this fellowship.

Bradley L,
Manchester, NH
Sobriety Date 10/20/95

**Twenty Four Hours a Day Book by Hazelden Foundation*



SAVE THE DATE!

**April 11-13, 2014: 48TH ANNUAL NH AA
AREA 43 CONVENTION: Sobriety Rocks!
Courtyard Marriott, Nashua, NH.**



The Voice Within

NHAA District 12 Newsletter

AUGUST 2013



Why Doesn't the District Donate to the Area and GSO?

The Home Group and the Power of the Purse

This is an update of an article published in April of 2006. This subject was brought up again at the June, 2013 District 12 Assembly, and so I thought it would be helpful to update and publish this information again so that AA's in District 12 could review the A.A. material on this subject, and understand District 12 Assembly group conscience decisions on this issue.

The question that was raised at the assembly was "Why does District 12 not make donations to New Hampshire A.A. (NHAA) Area 43 and the General Services Office"? Other districts in NHAA Area 43 make such donations, so this is certainly a good question.

In 2006 the District 12 Assembly made a group conscience decision on this issue. That decision was based on information found in A.A. Conference approved literature, the A.A. Service Manual, the A.A. 12 Traditions, and the 12 Concepts for A.A. Service.

The first point to be made is that each Service Assembly (District, Area and GSO) is an autonomous entity (Tradition 4) and just because one, or even several other districts do something, that does not mean that all districts should follow. Each district has the right (one might say the obligation) to review the relevant material, examine their own local situations,

and reach a group conscience on the matter. The fact that other districts are doing something may be one point to consider, but it is only one point and in fact not the most important one. As our mothers probably said to us "*just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't mean that you should.*"

The primary thing to consider in this question is the A.A. service structure. A.A.'s organization is described in Chapter 1 of the A.A. Service Manual as an "*Upside-Down Organization*". In this chapter, Bill is quoted as saying "*The A.A. groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services...*" Many AAs have a tendency to think of the A.A. structure as being like a representative democracy such as the United States, where power increases the further "up" you go in the government structure. As it turns out, the A.A. organization is exactly the opposite.

Each A.A. group represents the ultimate authority. They are autonomous (Tradition 4) and have their own group conscience made up of the members of that group (Tradition 2). When considering the question of donations from the district treasury to the area and GSO, this was a primary consideration.

The ultimate authority of the A.A. groups and A.A. members, through their group conscience, is clearly stated in the first paragraph of Concept 2, which reads in part "*The group conscience is out there among them, and so are the needed funds. The power of the groups and members to alter their world service structure and to criticize its operation is virtually supreme. They have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they really own it. This has been true ever since the groups took over from the founders and old-timers at St. Louis in 1955.*"

First and foremost, we understand that the ultimate source of most money in A.A. is the A.A. member putting his or her contribution into the hat at an A.A. meeting. This money becomes part of the treasury of each A.A. group. It is the group conscience of the group that decides how their treasury is to be used. This is a critical concept behind A.A.'s "upside down" organization and the power described by Bill on Concept 2. How a group donates their funds is one of the ways that the Groups can "alter their world service structure and to

criticize its operation.”

This power and responsibility is further clarified in the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix.” The following is found in the question and answer section of that pamphlet:

Q. Doesn't all A.A. money go into one pot? In other words, when our group contributes to central office (intergroup), isn't our money distributed to the area, district and G.S.O., as well?
A. No. Each A.A. Entity – group, district, area, central office and G.S.O. – provides a specific service and is autonomous. Each is separate from the other. (12)

This Q&A supports Tradition 4, which states that “Each Group should be autonomous, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

Because they are autonomous, each A.A. group has the authority to disperse money as their group conscience sees fit. Usually money is used first to support the group's efforts to carry the message, and after that is done, money is sent to service entities that provide services which are shared amongst several groups such as districts, areas, intergroups, and G.S.O.

Groups send specific funds to a specific service entity to be used by that service entity. If a group wants money to be spent to provide services by another entity (area instead of district for instance) then they must direct their donations that way. Donations of money and the votes of their GSRs, are how the groups exercise their authority over the service structure.

The donation of money between service entities (District to Area or G.S.O. or Area to G.S.O.) comes into conflict with the power that groups exercise over the service structure. By donating money to a particular service entity, the conscience of the group has decided that the donated money should be used to provide the services which are provided by that entity. For a service entity (District or Area) to pass that same money on to another service entity is to fly in the face of the idea that the groups are in charge. If tradition 7, Self-Support, is to be taken seriously, it is up to each service entity to responsibly manage that money which has been donated

by the groups, ensuring that the money is spent for the purpose intended by the conscience of the groups.

This reasoning becomes especially compelling if we consider this case. Imagine, for instance, that the Area does something that your group's conscience strongly objects to and your group decides to try to influence the Area to change by withholding your donations. This is known as the “power of the purse” and it is a legitimate last resort of each A.A. group. If that group sends money to their district, and the District just turns around and sends some of that money to the Area, isn't the District overriding the group conscience of the ultimate authority? Is that not a gross violation of A.A.'s service structure and traditions? We certainly thought so.

Considering all of the above points, it may be possible for district to donate certain funds to the area or GSO, but this must be done with care.

District 12 receives its own money through 7th tradition donations at our assembly and district committee meetings, through excess funds earned by the functions that are put on by the district, and through special fund raisers that are approved by the assembly. Since this money was not donated by groups based on their group conscience, it seemed to us that this money would be available to be donated to other A.A. service entities (e.g. Area and GSO) if the conscience of the District Assembly determines that that would be a good way to disperse these funds. It would be very important, therefore, for the District 12 Treasurer to be able to specifically identify those funds that are available for this purpose as opposed to funds that are received from group donations to the district.

For example, if the treasury holds \$300.00, of which \$250.00 was donated by groups and \$50.00 was earned through ticket sales to an event put on by the district, then only \$50.00 would be available for donation by the district to the area or GSO.

If after reading this, you or your group still have questions, I would encourage you to contact your LCM or the District Treasurer.

Yours in Recovery,

Dave H, District 12 Webmaster

The Voice Within is NH AA District 12's newsletter in print. Its purpose is to carry the message of recovery to alcoholics, inform members of district and group events, and publish original writing about recovery. Send your opinions, articles, announcements, and fliers to voicewithinnews@gmail.com. Deadline for the next issue is October 5th.

District 12 is searching for a new candidate for editor/newsletter chair, since the current editor's term will expire after the December 2013 issue. Candidates must have 3 years of continuous sobriety, a solid command of English grammar and syntax, the willingness to learn, and a sense of humor. If you're interested, contact your GSR or send your questions to the current editor at voicewithinnews@gmail.com.

Group Announcements

August 27th- The **Heard It Through the Grapevine Group** celebrates its annual Remembrance of Billy L at St. Andrew's Church on South Main St. in Manchester.
6:45-7:30 pm: food and desserts 7:30-8:30 pm: meeting

September 17th- The **Manchester Original Group** celebrates its 67th Anniversary 6:00-8:30 pm at Brookside Congregational Church Fellowship Hall, 2013 Elm Street.

October 12th- The **Keep It Simple Group** celebrates its 38th Anniversary at St. Raphael's Church, corner of 3rd and Ferry Streets, Manchester's West Side.
6-7 pm: coffee and fellowship 7-8 pm: speakers, countdown, and raffles 8-9 pm: potluck

NEW GROUPS: Friday Night Live, will be meeting at St. Raphael's church, 3rd and Ferry Streets on Manchester's west side. The group meets on Friday nights from 7:15 to 8:30 pm and is a speaker/discussion format.

The DWI Group, a new Big Book Study group, is meeting at Grace Episcopal Church on the corner of Lowell and Pine Streets in Manchester. The group meets on Saturday morning from 8AM to 9:15 am.

UPCOMING DISTRICT 12 EVENTS

Sunday, September 15th- District Assembly at St. Raphael's Church, corner of 3rd and Ferry Streets, Manchester. 6:00 to 8:00 pm, open to any member of the district.

Saturday, September 28th- **UNITY ROUND-UP:** A day of fun, food, and fellowship at St. Raphael's Church! 9:00 – 3:30 pm. **Coffee, snacks, and lunch provided- Potluck Dishes Very Welcome!** Three hour-long sessions of breakout workshops, including "Safety in AA," a young people's meeting, a mock district meeting, skit "Snow White and the Seven Character Defects," and a Relationships workshop. All are Welcome! *Presented by the District 12 Workshops and Forums Committee.*

Saturday, October 19th- **FALL DINNER DANCE: Honoring Our Old Timers.** 5:00 pm to 11:00 pm at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church, 111 Island Pond Road, Manchester, NH. Tickets \$20, \$10 after 7 pm. Contact Bob L @ 603.370.1282 or Roger D @ 603.540.5720 for advance tickets. DJ and Dancing by RCS Entertainment, Two Guest Speakers, Outrageous Raffles!

2013 Christmas Alcathon: 24 Hours of Nonstop Meetings, Fellowship, and Refreshments in the planning stages now! The 2013 Alcathon Committee is now recruiting members. Meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday of each month at Grace Episcopal Church, 106 Lowell Street, Manchester, from 7-9 pm. Contact Terry F @ 603.851.3505 for more information.

Visit the District 12 website at: www.aadistrict12.org.