

# Sobriety Sentinel

MARCH 2021 - SERVING DISTRICTS 14, 19 and 20 of AREA 38 - TRICOUNTYAA.ORG

## Step Three

I'm in space, amongst the calmness of the night sky. So why am I so restless, irritable and discontent?

My body is free-falling, arms wildly trying to grasp something.

*Is that Pluto?*

*Grab it, hold it, it's slipping!*

*Help. Save me.*

Yes, this is my alcoholism when I'm not working the Twelve Steps.

I attempt to grasp relief through external control: my woman-made daily checklist of "to dos." They provide some temporary relief but become burdensome on my spirit and relationships.

At some point, I turn into a raging fire. My tank is empty. I'm not drinking, but I'm certainly not living!

So here I am, after a relapse, approaching 90 days newly sober. Admitted I was powerless? Yes! Came to believe that there was a power greater than me that would restore me to sanity? Yes!

Now, it's time to take action with Step Three.

Unless I let go absolutely, come to believe, and abandon myself to God, I am certain to be an on-fire comet, rocketing amok through space-chaos.

I am learning to reframe my old way of thinking. Instead of, *What do I want and need?* I ask God to take care of it all. I live in this 24 hours.

When I get overwhelmed and am grasping for the control I so desperately think I need, I practice letting my Higher Power take care of it for me.

If I do the next right thing, let go absolutely, and let God's will be done—God's, not mine—I can finally find moments of peace in my solar system.

I can float, wrap my arms around myself, and slowly breathe in the beauty around me.

I can once again live amongst the calmness of the night sky.

As time goes on, and I work this step and listen to the wisdom of others in the program, I will finally comprehend the word "serenity" and know peace that my Higher Power is doing for me what I could not do for myself.

Today, I turn my will and my life over to Your care to do with me what You shall.

Jackie H  
Group 632

*"We no longer dreaded change..."*

*-12+12, Step Twelve*

# ADAPTATION



Kathleen W/Group 1023

The entrance atrium at O'Fallon Christian Church, 9380 Veterans Memorial Parkway, allows easier access and more space for social distancing than did Group 1023's previous meeting room.

## Group 1023 goes hybrid, moves to larger space

by ANDREW H  
Group 968

In *Days of Wine and Roses*, the classic Hollywood movie about alcoholism, AA speakers are shown standing behind a podium, addressing the room head-on. Now, almost 50 years later, the Tuesday night 7 pm hybrid meeting of Group 1023 has a similar requirement, adapted for the Covid reality of the new millennium:

"If you're talking, reading or sharing, you get up out of your seat, go to the computer and talk directly into it, so that everyone on Zoom can see you and hear you," explained Dan, a homegroup member since 2019. "And if you're on Zoom, you're on a big-screen TV so everyone in the room can see and hear you."

These days, Zoom attendees to Group 1023 typically outnumber the in-person folks by double. Sometimes, as many as 30 people show up to the meeting's virtual component.

"We're getting people that weren't normally at our meetings, even though they might have been in the program with regular attendance," Dan said. "We have nurses just getting off work who Zoom from their cars."

But that's not all.

Group 1023's in-person meeting space at O'Fallon Christian Church has also changed drastically in the past couple months. The meeting has moved from an upstairs room—smaller, oddly shaped, sometimes difficult for newcomers to find—to the ground-floor entrance atrium. Spacious. Inviting.

"It feels right," said homegroup member Kathleen, who celebrated 15 years sober in December. "We are able to socially distance and still meet in person."

Kathleen said Group 1023's adaptation process has gone through several iterations since Covid struck a year ago. At first, they went Zoom-only. ("I really missed hugging my friends!") Then, as in-person meetings slowly and cautiously began to reopen, the group split off into two separate meetings, one at the church and one on Zoom. The group conscience kept each meeting synced to identical topic matter, so if an attendee hit the Zoom version one week and the in-person one the next, or vice versa, the switch would be seamless. Meanwhile, the separation of the homegroup took a toll.

"It just was not the same," Kathleen told us. "We all wanted to keep the meeting together, yet we wanted to make it easy for people who are uncomfortable meeting in person to still meet."

Homegroup members reported back on other hybrid meetings they'd attended. Disjointed, they said. Muffled speech, they said. Too easy to get distracted, they said.

"After much discussion and a really brave motion to 'just do it' by a homegroup member, we tried it, and it worked!" Kathleen said.

Now, with a combined 40 people or more joining each week, the Zoom option for Group 1023's meeting will not go away anytime soon, homegroup members say.

"Do we wanna cut that off?" Dan asked us, and we didn't answer because we assumed it was a rhetorical question. "Right now, the answer is no."

## AA member returns to in-person meeting

by LISA S  
Group 672

It's a Tuesday night in January. I haven't been to an in-person meeting since March, when Covid closed all my restaurants, my nail salons—stuff I could do without—and my physical AA meetings. I panicked at first. AA doesn't shut down! I told myself. And it didn't. My homegroup quickly got a Zoom meeting up and running, with zero interruption. What a relief!

But 10 months later, on this Tuesday night in January, I have a sponsee I've never met face to face. She's never been to an in-person meeting. I haven't been to an in-person meeting since March. And I just found out one of my favorite meetings has gone hybrid: Group 1023 at O'Fallon Christian Church.

I cannot describe to you the buildup of anticipation as I'm finally walking through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous for the first time after meeting virtually for almost a year.

I quickly look around the room and see five to eight small tables strategically placed around the room to allow for social distancing. Maybe 10 members are already there, everyone wearing masks. I find my sponsee and have to stop myself short from hugging her. This is awkward. Should we rub elbows? Not sure on the protocol here.

As I sit down, I again look at my fellow AA members. Some, I recognize. Some, hard to tell due to masks. How strange this all is, yet all so familiar. Kind of like visiting your favorite grandma once per summer—slightly awkward for a moment, then that warm, familiar feeling comes, the one you get when you have finally made it back home after a long journey.

I can feel their smiles radiating from beneath their masks. Then, from within, I can the unmistakable wave of gratitude I have for these people. People who are just like me, who love me unconditionally, whether through a computer screen or in person.

Finally, the birthday people get to share. Their joy is almost palpable. And I just revel in the miracle that is AA. All of us are in the room again, sharing the basics. Our experience, strength and hope. It reminds me that it is just that way with us—really, literally, just one day at a time.

Tuesdays, 7 pm  
Zoom ID: 827 461 194

### RESPONSIBILITY STATEMENT

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

### BIRTHDAYS

Nick P	3 years	1/5	<b>GROUP 124</b>		
Jerry C	21 years	1/5	Pete R	1 year	1/22
Dan F	12 years	1/14	Denny C	30 years	1/29
Barry W	33 years	1/17	Art S	39 years	2/3
Larry B	15 years	1/24	Bart O	7 years	2/13
Dan S	1 year	2/7	<b>GROUP 130</b>		
Mike D	39 years	3/6	Zac H	2 years	
<b>GROUP 164</b>			<b>GROUP 4094</b>		
Amy B	23 years	2/15	Randy P	15 years	
Brenda D	1 year	2/17	<b>GROUP 484</b>		
Steve C	27 years	3/7	Dave C	6 years	3/3
<b>GROUP 1023</b>			Amy S	37 years	3/5
Colleen S	21 years	2/20			
Patsy H	23 years	2/26			

### DECLARATION OF UNITY

This we owe to AA's future: to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on AA unity depends our lives, and the lives of those to come.

## Pray for Kristina M!



# Tradition Three

The first St. Louis AA homegroup issued ID cards. It had a discipline board. Expelled habitual relapsers. If you missed too many meetings, they'd banish you to non-voting status.

The Group of Perfection, they called it. They could shut you out of St. Louis AA. Luckily, along came Tradition Three: "The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking."

When I got to AA, the voices in my head were suspicious and self-condemning, a snarling internal Group of Perfection. They tried to convince me that I was going to get kicked out of AA for not having a sponsor yet. Tradition Three silenced those voices, after I repeated it to myself over and over.

The voices came back, after I'd asked a man to sponsor me and had begun my Fourth Step inventory. *When he hears your Fifth Step and you tell him every awful, sick thing you've ever done, he's gonna tell other people, and they're gonna kick you out of AA.* Again, I had to shout Tradition Three in my head, over and over.

Two other newcomers had gotten to my homegroup a little bit ahead of me, and every week they'd check in with us and report their progress. I was convinced that they were doing AA better than I was. They were moving through the steps more quickly, they were getting the spiritual awakening more intensely, and they really belonged here. That's what the voices were telling me. This time, I didn't have to shout Tradition Three to myself, though, because there was a new voice in there, cutting through the negative self-talk, telling me, *You belong here too.* And I believed it.

When newcomers show up now, and we read the traditions aloud at the start of the meeting, I always try to sneak a glance at them when the third Tradition is read. I want them to know, when they first hear it, that it's up to them—not us—to decide whether or not they belong here in Alcoholics Anonymous.

We don't get to judge newcomers for erratic early behavior, for relapses, for spotty attendance. If they want a life free from alcohol, they're already just as much a member of this life-saving fellowship as any of us is. And they don't need an ID card to prove it.

**Andrew H  
Group 968**



The Fix

# Always Materializing

by **MISSY R  
Group 632**

When I first came to AA, I didn't hear or comprehend much of what was said. My brain was mushy for quite a while. I really didn't want to be there, and that made me a stubborn, hyper-sensitive, resentful, know-it-all newcomer with a bad attitude. I'm sure I was just charming.

But when the Promises were read, I would perk up. For some reason, I believed they could happen for me. Don't get me wrong, I was very self-centered. I didn't care about all of the Promises, but there were a few that I knew I wanted.

To begin with, I wanted to be amazed before I was halfway through, because I thought that meant there was a shortcut. I wanted to blast

through this process and be better, right now.

Also, I wanted a new freedom and happiness. I wanted to comprehend serenity and know peace. I wanted to know how to handle baffling situations.

The Promises gave me hope that I could be peaceful and content.

The word "promise" was not lost on me. These are not things that might happen if I work for them, they are guaranteed! Yours and mine for the taking! Yes, there is some work involved but in my experience the payoff has far outweighed the cost.

For me, The Promises were the lure. They grabbed my attention and persuaded me to do something I normally wouldn't do.

Have you ever watched a cat chase after a red laser dot for hours without getting discouraged, even though they can never catch it? I wonder

## The Promises are much more than just words we read aloud at every meeting

why they want that dot so badly. Well, that's how I go after the Promises. I don't know why they draw me in the way they do. Sometimes, I can't catch them. Most of the time, I can. And it is well worth the effort. I will never *not* love the Promises!

My life is different in sobriety. Sure, I still live in the same house, have the same boyfriend, same daughter, same brothers and sisters, same job, boss and coworkers. I have the same three pet lizards who basically loathe my existence.

That stuff is all the same. None of it needed to change. What's different is me. I needed to change, and now that I have, all those same old people, places and things—even those adorable, jerk-face lizards—look different to me now. They look beautiful. Sparkly. New. This is serenity. This is peace, freedom and happiness.

# Intergroup offers valuable services

by **ANDREW H  
Group 968**

When I took over as treasurer for my homegroup, the donation formula was already set. We'd send money to AA in New York, to Area 38 in Eastern Missouri, to Central Services in St. Louis and to Tri-County Intergroup. And at the time, with less than two years' sobriety, I didn't really know what any of those organizations did or how they used our money. I just knew where to mail the checks.

I don't know much more now than I did then, but thanks to my current post as chairperson of the Sobriety Sentinel, I attend Intergroup meetings monthly, and now I vote in the quorum as Intergroup Representative for

Group 968. Along with increased understanding of what Tri-County offers to groups in 443its member districts, I have a little more appreciation for the volunteer work my fellow committee members perform.

There's the Technology Chair, who maintains the website, the online meeting guide and the resulting print Where and When directory, all provided free of charge.

There's the 12th Step Call hotline, a phone service that provides a living, breathing human alcoholic on the other end, 24 hours a day. This could mean the difference between life and death for someone in the grips of active alcoholism, and it is provided free of charge.

There's the Literature Chair, who or-

ganizes, orders and sells AA Conference-approved literature to homegroups, individuals and to the 212 Club, at no profit. This service is provided free of charge.

In years that don't include deadly, highly contagious pandemics, Tri-County puts on a widely attended annual picnic at Old Town Park and the Alcolthon on New Year's Eve, free of charge.

And there's the Sobriety Sentinel, which as we know, has won seven Pulitzer Prizes this week alone. It's available in print or online in PDF form, provided free of charge.

So mail those checks, folks.

**Bob M of Group 340 contributed to this article**

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM FEBRUARY INTERGROUP MEETING

- Ken K stood for open position of secretary and will serve his term through 2021
- Activities Committee Chair position remains open, with a requirement of 2 years continuous sobriety and a 2-year service commitment. Email [chairman@tricityaa.org](mailto:chairman@tricityaa.org) for details.
- Survey of homegroups suggested future activities to possibly include trivia, golf tournament, scavenger hunt, dog hunt and workshop of Intergroup Representative 101. Survey result also suggested increased transparency of intergroup board.
- Next IR meeting is Sun Mar 21 at noon at 2021 Campus Drive and will include reading and updating of bylaws.

# Featured Birthday: We must stay vigilant

## 46 YEARS

My first recollection of drinking was when I was about 15, being with a couple of other guys. We had a six-pack. We each had two. I'll never forget the feeling it gave me. I chased that feeling for the next 14 years. I remember getting very upset when they said they weren't getting any more liquor. Big red flag.

In the beginning, my drinking wasn't causing me many problems. I was never arrested, fired from a job or got a DWI. Those thoughts kept me from thinking I didn't have a drinking problem, much less alcoholism.

After high school, I joined the Marine Corps in 1963 and went to Vietnam. When I came home I married a girl I probably shouldn't have had a second date with. We stayed married for about three years;

we got divorced because of my drinking. We had a daughter, and she grew up with me and my wife constantly fighting. She never knew if I was gonna be home or not.

It wasn't long before my drinking became worse—spending money we didn't have, being with people I shouldn't have been with. I remember stealing money out of my daughter's piggy bank to drink with, and also checks out of the back of my wife's checkbook.

Finally, after years of denying my alcoholism, on Valentine's Day, 1975, I came home that following Sunday morning and went over to see my dad. He had been in Alcoholics Anonymous for about six years at that time, and I didn't know that he was going to lead me to the wonderful life I have today.

I started going through the steps with

him, and everything was going fine. For the first seven years, I went to meetings pretty regularly. After that seventh year, slowly but surely, I quit going to meetings.

I hit them pretty sporadically for about the next 10 years. I never did drink. That personality that I once had, that I didn't like, came back. I was constantly negative and full of the same fear and everything like that.

I came back to Alcoholics Anonymous and started going to meetings, getting a sponsor, working the steps, and to fast-forward, I've met so many people that I would not have met and heard stories that have really helped me over the years and so proud that maybe my sharing could help someone else.

**Rick K  
Group 228**

*Share your homegroup's birthdays with us by emailing [bday@tricityaa.org](mailto:bday@tricityaa.org)*

# Concept Three

Our third Concept for World Service is closely related to Tradition Two, which states, "Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

The basic idea of a "trusted servant" is—the group carefully selects its service worker with confidence that the servant will follow and work within the dictates of the service position.

Concept Three then gives that trusted servant the right to decide which actions the servant will take care of alone and which actions he or she will bring to the group for report, consultation, or for a vote.

This idea may bring resentment to those who read it, so let's look at this a bit deeper. Each member—as well as each group, each service entity, and the Conference itself—is but a small part of the great whole. If the vote of a group conscience alone were the alpha and the omega of all issues, then the trusted servant would no longer be "trusted." To paraphrase the AA Service Manual, any service appointee who cannot act on their own conscience is not a trusted servant at all but simply a messenger.

Concept Three emphatically reminds us that full facts, a full consultation, and debate for guidance are necessary to ensure that no one has full authority over another or A.A. as the whole.

As Bill Wilson states: "Some traditional and practical principle has to be devised which at all levels will continuously balance the right relation between ultimate authority and delegated responsibility."

Concept Three warns us to "always give charity for occasional mistakes" made by our leaders who stay within the limits of their positions, and to be watchful of those who exceed the limitations or who "persistently fail to consult those who are entitled to be consulted before an important decision or action is taken."

For this reason, the study and knowledge of AA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts are important to the individual AA member as well as when choosing our Trusted leaders to lead effectively.

**Julie S  
Group 1118**

*All opinions expressed are those of individuals and do not necessarily reflect the views of AA as a whole. To report Tri-County AA news or events, submit articles, recommend your homegroup for a feature piece, or just to share your experience, strength and hope with us, please email [sentinel@tricityaa.org](mailto:sentinel@tricityaa.org)*