

Roundabout

June 2020 £1

Your meeting in print



Special Themed Issue:
Gratitude

THE TWELVE STEPS

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were *wrong promptly admitted it*.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organisation or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Cover picture: courtesy of an AA member.

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email: roundabout@aamail.org

visit: www.aa-roundabout.org.uk

SUB-COMMITTEE NOTICE BOARD

ROUNABOUT SUB-COMMITTEE – VACANCIES

The Roundabout Sub-Committee of the Roundabout magazine invites applicants from all Regions of Scotland to join the Editorial Team as Proof Readers for a service period of four years. There are currently two vacancies.

Role Responsibilities

As a Proof Reader your primary duties will be to read the articles sent to Roundabout magazine by the Fellowship to ensure that they meet the criteria for publication. Duties include: An ability to read with scrutiny each article submitted, to ascertain that it is appropriate and relevant and interesting to the Fellowship. Have an ability to amend any grammatical or spelling errors. Edit the articles to a manageable length for publication. Have an understanding of the AA Steps, Traditions, Concepts and Guidelines along with an awareness of Conference approved literature.

Role Requirements

A minimum of five years continuous sobriety. A high standard of English literacy. A proficiency in computer technology. A desire and ability to work as part of a team. Service as a Roundabout Liaison Officer at group, intergroup or regional level would be advantageous. Flexibility to adapt and assist with other roles within the Editorial Team, as appropriate, and delegated by the Editor.

Applications should be endorsed by intergroup or region and accompanied by a letter of support. Current application forms can be accessed and downloaded from the Roundabout vacancy page or document library of the AA website or by contacting admin.nothernserviceoffice@gsogb.org.uk or phone 041 226 2214.

Applications should be forwarded by email to Jenny.Pryke@gsogb.org.uk or posted to Jenny Pryke at The General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous, (Great Britain) Limited, PO Box 1, 10 Toft Green, York, YO1 7NJ.

The closing date for applications is 18th July 2020.

If you are interested in becoming a proof reader and joining the Editorial team and would like to discuss it further, in the first instance, please contact the Roundabout Trustee at trustee.highlandsregion@gsogb.org.uk

Terri S

Board Trustee for Roundabout

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The Editor invites the submission of articles and letters which should be sent to:

ROUNDABOUT

**Northern Service Office
Alcoholics Anonymous
50 Wellington Street
Glasgow G2 6HJ
Tel: 0141 226 2214
or by e-mail to:
roundabout@aamail.org**

Articles and letters will be attributed to 'Anonymous' if the writer wishes, but the original submission to the Editor should include name, address and telephone number (these details will not be published).

The Editor cannot guarantee to publish all materials submitted or return contributed matter. Payment for any submissions cannot be made. **Roundabout does not publish poetry or obituaries.** Contributors are asked to accept these conditions.

Payments and administrative enquiries should be sent to:

**AA ROUNDABOUT
Alcoholics Anonymous
P.O. Box 1
10 Toft Green
York YO1 7NJ**

Telephone enquiries can be made between 10am and 2pm
Monday to Friday on 01904 644026

Editorial

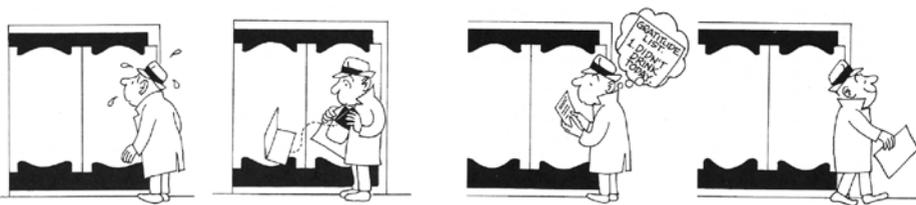
Gratitude is the theme this month which is fitting as the Fellowship annually holds a Gratitude Week during the month of June. The Roundabout Sub-Committee extends our thanks to the AA members across Scotland who responded when asked to write in on this topic. The response was such that some of those articles will appear next month.

In the magazine AA members describe how grateful they are for the 'tools' they have been given by AA. Tools, which if used, will help us live life on life's terms; something which in these most uncertain of times has become especially important.

One member describes how she is coping with the global pandemic by relying on the 'Just For Today' card again, just as she did when she was a newcomer, whilst others mention the importance of 'Keeping it in the day' whilst remembering the AA Slogan 'This too shall pass'.

Many of the articles share their appreciation of the new online meetings that have sprung up in the last few weeks. It is amazing how this Fellowship responded when the doors to all our meeting rooms shut, yet there is one tool which is mentioned time and time again by everyone this month – the telephone. One of the first things we heard when we made it through the doors of this wonderful Fellowship was "Get phone numbers and use them." Perhaps of all the tools on offer to us, this is the most important one right now.

As well as expressing our gratitude, we are also invited this month to contribute what we would have spent on one day's drinking but at today's prices. Financial independence as part of our Traditions, puts responsibility in the hands of the Fellowship. Even though the meeting rooms are shut, the flow of AA money through the service structure remains essential to further our primary purpose of helping the still suffering alcoholic. We neglect this at our peril.



Editor's note: extract from *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, Step Twelve, pg 128.

But today, in well-matured A.A.'s, these distorted drives have been restored to something like their true purpose and direction. We no longer strive to dominate or rule those about us in order to gain self-importance. We no longer seek fame or honor in order to be praised. When by devoted service to family, friends, business, or community we attract wide-spread affection and are sometimes singled out for posts of greater responsibility and trust, we try to be humbly grateful and exert ourselves the more in a spirit of love and service. True leadership, we find, depends upon able example and not upon vain displays of power or glory.

Still more wonderful is the feeling that we do not have to be specially distinguished among our fellows in order to be useful and profoundly happy. Not many of us can be leaders of prominence, nor do we wish to be. Service, gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with God's help, the knowledge that at home or in the world outside we are partners in a common effort, the well-understood fact that in God's sight all human beings are important, the proof that love freely given surely brings a full return, the certainty that we are no longer isolated and alone in self-constructed prisons, the surety that we need no longer be square pegs in round holes but can fit and belong in God's scheme of things—these are the permanent and legitimate satisfactions of right living for which no amount of pomp and circumstance, no heap of material possessions, could possibly be substitutes. True ambition is not what we thought it was. True ambition is the deep desire to live usefully and walk humbly under the grace of God.



**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 article reprinted from Roundabout: June 2010

This Simple Programme

It has become a tradition with me to write to Roundabout on my AA birthday and, in gratitude and humility, I am grateful that I am able to do that today. It's a glorious morning. The sun is shining, the birds are singing and the dark days of winter are sloping off slowly but surely. Any time is a good time to discover this wonderful Fellowship with its healing Programme but April, with its promise of good things to come, is especially significant for me.

I had no idea what to expect when I was introduced to AA in the Barn Church, Culloden all those years ago. I was elated to find that I was not the only one to binge drink, I was not alone in hiding drink and certainly not the only person on the planet who could not say what may happen after the first drink. I was also worried that life without alcohol would become boring and dull. I was so used to the drama of bingeing, recovering, 100% on or off, drinking, recovering from or thinking about it.

I could not believe how simple this Programme was. I had spent years reading books, exploring alternative faiths, trying to find the magic drink that wouldn't result in another humiliating experience. All I was asked to do in the beginning was to stay away from the first drink and live my life in the day. The first was comparatively easy as the compulsion was removed almost immediately. The latter was more difficult since my head was complete mince and the learned behaviour over many years was to plan ahead and project, usually negatively.

With time and the patience of many people I began to get better very slowly. I got better and so did everyone in my close family. I have two wonderful daughters, two brilliant sons-in law and five beautiful grandchildren and I thank my Higher Power every day for giving me the chance to mend those broken fences and become a part of their lives. They give me so much joy and happiness. It is very humbling to see my daughters as upstanding, responsible, functioning adults in society and it's all down to following the guidance of the Programme of Recovery.

I am very grateful to those who were around at the beginning of this remarkable process of change, to those who have come into my life since and to those who are around today. I have made many mistakes in recovery and I have had some ups and some serious downs, but there has always been someone I could share it with. I have been to many meetings in many parts of the world but the AA message is constant and its teachings are universal. Yours in fellowship,

Christina

Aberdeen Beechgrove Group

This Too Shall Pass

For the last two years of my alcoholic drinking I was isolated – through choice. I couldn't let people see the scale of my drinking or the states that I got into. It was the loneliest period in my life.

When I came into the Fellowship I was oblivious to the love and friendship that was shown to me. However, I soon became aware of the support around me. I was no longer alone and looked forward to my daily meetings. I knew I was in the right place. I had found the solution.

Someone else said connection is the opposite of addiction so I make use of the forms of connection that are available to me at this time: telephone and online meetings.

I try to call one of my group members every day just to say hello. There seems to be an abundance of online meetings and you don't have to be a computer whizz to join in.

Since I've been in the Fellowship I've heard the advice 'get 'phone numbers and use them'. Never has that suggestion been more necessary.

So there's no need to feel lonely or isolated during this phase. 'This too shall pass'.

Colin

Troon Sunday

Submit your article to roundabout@aamail.org

In order to help members at this time all the earlier issues from 2020 will be shared with the whole of the Fellowship on our AA national website.

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/Members/Coronavirus-News>

AA In Lockdown

In lockdown the days can seem long but my sponsor told me from the off it's one day at a time. That advice wasn't just for my drinking but for life in general. For my drinking he'd say one hour or even 10 minutes at a time. In my early days in AA that is what I needed to do to get over the compulsion to drink. He told me to go for a walk, have a bath, take out a drawer and tidy it, lift the phone instead of the drink and go to meetings regularly; 90 in 90 days and when I'd done that do another 90 days.

In these changed times those suggestions still hold true – apart perhaps from going for a walk. As for the 90 meetings well that's now easy peasy with the blossoming of online meetings. With a bit of planning that could be accomplished in well under 30 days by attending an online meeting morning, noon and night. Back in the day I could spend all day drinking. Now I could spend all day at meetings but I don't. Likewise, during the night when I'm troubled and can't sleep I can read from the Big Book or a copy of Roundabout but I could also find a meeting somewhere around the world. What a blessing we have with this worldwide Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

I've travelled a lot since getting sober in AA and have been able to attend meetings in places as far away as Hawaii and New Zealand. I can do that now but without the expense of air travel as I don't need to leave home. I'm looking forward to meetings in Dunedin, Nelson or Napier as well as Duncan and Tofino in British Columbia. A wonderful opportunity has opened up for us all in these days of lockdown when we can't leave our homes. My sponsor's suggestions still stand though, especially picking up the phone rather than a drink. Remember, if the compulsion to drink strikes; go and phone a friend.

Jan
The Highlands



Changes

Along with many others there's a fair amount of change to my daily routine just now. To be under virtual 'house arrest' is not a routine with which I have been familiar in sobriety. Trying to devise a schedule of daily activities which avoids leaving the house is not the simplest of exercises. Rising early, planning to do so many things and then heading to bed long after midnight with only a fraction having been accomplished seems to be a recurring theme! It's just as well that my waking and sleeping states differ very little from each other!

It's helpful for me to share this because it leads me to reflect on those grim days when my 'house arrest' had been caused by my own behavior. Those were times when I was afraid of my own shadow and did not want any company. "Just leave me alone to suffer – that is until I can replenish my supply of booze and find a fleeting relief," was my thought pattern back then. How one dreary day merged into the next, each one commencing with the morning realisation that what I had hoped had only been a nightmare that would soon fade away was anything but. Now I would have to face the repercussions of the trail of devastation I'd caused the previous night.

These are not things on which I want to dwell too long but they do help to put into perspective the vast change that's happened. How thankful I am that the bitter torment and the overwhelming fear have been replaced with the sheer, exquisite joy of just being sober.

**Donald
Skye**

IT'S EASIER THAN EVER NOW TO SEND US AN ARTICLE

Visit our national website at:

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

and navigate through AA Members Area > Fellowship Magazines >
Roundabout Magazine > Roundabout Flyer > this link.

Type your
article directly into the blank field then click 'Submit Article'.

PHOTOGRAPHS WANTED 2021 Calendar

The format must be **A4 Landscape** and be free from any possible identification of persons, implied endorsement or affiliation with any specific organisation, political, cultural, ethnic or denominational identity. Photos should not include identifiable public buildings, properties, notices or similar content. Only photos taken in Great Britain or Central European Region can be considered for inclusion and must be taken by you, personally.

Set cameras or Smartphones to High Definition, Highest or Ultra Quality. **The MINIMUM picture file size is 2MB, but bigger is ok too!**

Please email to Julie Fox at GSO, with your name and address for acknowledgement (if published): **AAShare@gsogb.org.uk**

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in writing, in advance.*

DEADLINE: 14 June 2020



Points To Ponder

“Wouldn't it be more intelligent to seek out and tap a strength greater than our own than to persist in our futile, solo efforts, after they had time and again proved ineffective?”

(Living Sober, pg 73)



Staying Sober Without The ‘Live Show’

Hello! My name's Gerry, I'm an alcoholic and I'm a member of the Anniesland Wednesday group in Glasgow. It's quite a small group with only eight members but it's a solid, steady group with good, contented sobriety and the Traditions are cherished absolutely. Of our number, only one counts years of sobriety in single figures. One member is 36 years sober while another has 35 years of sobriety all of which have been chalked up within our group. If our meeting exceeds 20 souls of a Wednesday, we consider that a busy night. All of us are active in AA and circulate around meetings within and outwith our own area.

Our group started over 42 years ago in the Methodist Church near Anniesland Cross and stayed at that location until 2011 when the building was to be demolished pending a rebuild on the same site. We had been assured by our long time hosts we would be welcomed back to the new church upon its completion. Little did we know just how long that rebuild would take!

During those years at the original premises the group never failed to open on a Wednesday, regardless of date or occasion. On 6 July 2011 we moved to a church in Broomhill, thinking it would be a short, temporary stay and we still called the group Anniesland Wednesday. In the event we were there for three years. During that spell our temporary hosts informed us, with little advance notice, that a major national youth event they were participating in meant the premises would be unavailable to us on one particular Wednesday night. We didn't have time to search for an alternative venue for that one-off so the group members met at a restaurant at 8pm that evening for a meal. Until March of this year that is the only occasion our group has been closed to others.

Our nomadic period took another turn after those three years at Broomhill when our temporary hosts started to let out other rooms on Wednesday nights to various clubs or organisations and maintaining privacy let alone anonymity became impossible. We moved once again, this time to a church in Bearsden, and still we called ourselves Anniesland Wednesday. We had a good two years there before we

were welcomed back, as promised, to the brand-new Methodist Worship Centre on the very site of our original premises. It was a joy shared by us all to return to our 'spiritual home' on 26 March 2016.

We thereafter enjoyed meeting each Wednesday to warmly welcome regular and non-regular visitors right up to the turn of the year. Last Christmas Day was a Wednesday and we were 'open as usual' but only had a few visitors. A week later, on New Year's night, we entertained a sizeable crowd of visitors. Little did we know that enjoyable New Year's night – little did anyone know – of the deadly Coronavirus virus that was spreading across a different continent at an alarming rate, wreaking havoc and taking lives in brutal numbers.

Little did we know that within a few short weeks it would be classified as an epidemic and then a pandemic as it rapidly spread from continent to continent, country to country, eventually wreaking the same havoc and taking lives in our own cities, towns and local communities.

By February we were all very much aware of COVID-19 as it became known and by March we were constantly receiving vitally important health warnings and safety precautions from the National Health Service and both the UK and Scottish Governments. Life, as we enjoyed it, was to drastically change. By March we could all feel the tension in the air. Every single soul was being told what they must do to stay safe. We were to maintain 'social distance' in public... if we had a need to be out at all.

Anniesland Wednesday group opened for business as usual on 11 March this year but few, apart from group members, were at it. In the two or three days that followed, phone calls were made between group members and we had to ask ourselves if we should continue to open. We were in total agreement that 'suspending the meeting until further notice' would be the responsible thing to do. If the group had waited just another week, that decision would have been taken from us and we would have been required to close.

The group members agreed at this time to maintain frequent telephone contact with each other during the group's closure and that has been happening. We have been speaking with each other regularly. It has not been a case of telephoning every other group member every single day. Rather, for example, I would call 'A' for a chat and 'A' may tell me that he or she has already called 'B' who reported that 'C' had already called that day and was intending to call 'D' 'later. After speaking with 'A' I would then phone 'E' and so it carried on.

We also keep in touch with those members of other groups who regularly visited us, and members of groups we frequented too. Simple and frequent text messages are fired back and forward too, usually with some comical and current attachment.

Two or three members of the group have been taking part in 'online AA' but the remainder are content enough to settle with telephone contact for the time being.

AA is often called a 'talking illness'. In recent weeks and months there has been a huge increase in the number of online meetings. Everything you could want to know about participating in online meetings is available on our national AA website. Provided we all keep talking with each other, whether through online meetings, phone calls, emails or text messages, we will stay safe from alcohol. If we keep in touch with other alcoholics we are reminding ourselves we are alcoholics.

The true value of Roundabout, our 'meeting in print' has really been appreciated too during this 'lockdown'. Our group maintains a subscription. When our Roundabout rep receives our monthly allocation, a magazine is immediately mailed to each group member.

None of us has a clue when this surreal situation will end but we all look forward to reopening our premises and resuming the 'live show'. Our group have decided we will open as soon as is possible but have pledged, if spared, to meet somewhere, some night, for a nice meal first. It certainly won't be a Wednesday though. Stay safe and stay well.

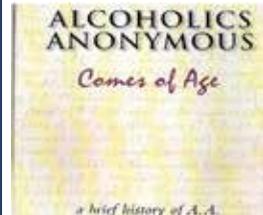
Gerry Mac
Anniesland Wednesday Glasgow



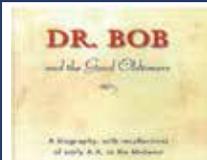
AA Conference Approved Books

New Items and Revised Prices

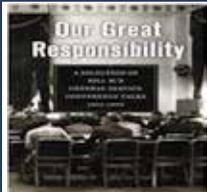
AA Comes of Age Soft Back

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|  | <p>AA Comes Of Age: a brief history of A.A. Written when nearly half a century had gone by since AA's historic 1955 Convention in St. Louis, when the founding members passed on to the entire Fellowship the responsibility for the Three Legacies</p> |
| Item code 2121 | Price £6.00 |

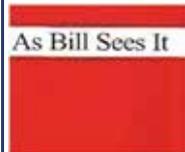
Dr Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Back

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|  | <p>Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers Soft Cover A biography, with recollections of early A.A. in the Midwest</p> |
| Item Code 2181 | Price £6.00 |

Our Great Responsibility Soft Back

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|  | <p>Our Great Responsibility A selection of Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951 - 1970. 270 pages, softcover with over 60 black & white and colour images. Derived from original audio recordings.</p> |
| Item Code 6070 | Price £6.00 |

As Bill Sees It

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|  | <p>As Bill Sees It The A.A. Way of Life (selected writings of A.A.'s co-founder).</p> |
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Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions Pocket Size

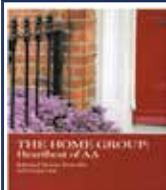


Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

How members of Alcoholics Anonymous recover and how the society functions.

Item code 2250 Price £5.00

The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA



The Home Group: Heartbeat of AA

Selected Stories from the AA Grapevine.

Item Code 2230 Price £5.00

Alcoholics Anonymous Fourth Edition (2001) Hard Back



This is the Big Book

Rumour has it that at Bill's suggestion the first edition was printed on very heavy paper to make it look bigger, thicker and therefore seem to be better value for money! Hence the 'Big Book' nickname.

Often described as the basic textbook of our Fellowship the first 164 pages describe our recovery program and have hardly changed since that first edition. The personal stories contained at the back of the book are changed from one edition to the next to reflect changing social situations.

Item Code 2020 Price £8.00

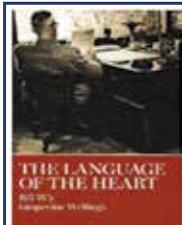
Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back



Soft Back 4th Edition of The Big Book

Item Code 2040 Price £7.00

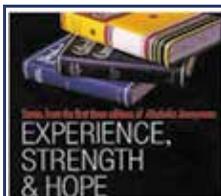
The Language of the Heart



The Language of the Heart
Bill W's Grapevine writings.

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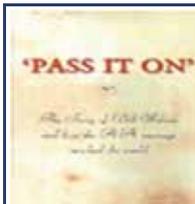
Experience, Strength & Hope



Experience, Strength & Hope
Stories from the first three editions of Alcoholics Anonymous

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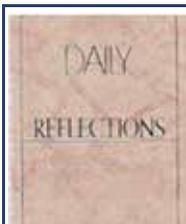
Pass It On



Pass It On
The Story of Bill Wilson and how the A.A. message reached the world.

Item Code 2200 Price £8.00

Daily Reflections



Daily Reflections
This is a book of reflections by A.A. members for A.A. members.

Item Code 2260 Price £5.00

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| Our Great Responsibility | 6070 | | 6.00 | |
| As Bill Sees It | 2100 | | 5.00 | |
| Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions Pocket Size | 2250 | | 5.00 | |
| The Home Group | 2230 | | 5.00 | |
| Alcoholics Anonymous Hard Back | 2020 | | 8.00 | |
| Alcoholics Anonymous Soft Back | 2040 | | 7.00 | |
| Language of the Heart | 2220 | | 7.00 | |
| Experience, Strength & Hope | 2210 | | 7.00 | |
| Pass It On | 2200 | | 8.00 | |
| Daily Reflections | 2260 | | 5.00 | |

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Shop | Alcoholics Anonymous - Great Britain

Using the camera on your smart phone, point the lens at this QR code and it will show you a link to the website.

How to Shop with AA. Use the category links to find the various sections from our literature order form. Use the link and buttons to view the item or to add purchases to your shopping cart.

The Roundabout Interview

Many thanks to Michele, Monday 6.45 am Daily Reflections Glasgow Royal Infirmary

What brought you to AA?

Despair. The awful realisation that when I wanted to, when I really tried, I couldn't stop drinking. The phrase in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous 'incomprehensible demoralisation' describes how I was. Sat on my sofa, broken and crying, I suddenly knew, like an epiphany, an inner acknowledgement that I couldn't do it on my own. I desperately needed help and if I didn't get it I'd die. I was a daily drinker and for at least two years before coming to AA every single day I tried not to drink and every single day I failed. I couldn't even manage to cut it down. Many times I would be in a blind panic running to the off-sales 10 minutes before it shut to get another bottle of wine.

Was there one thing that made you realise you had a problem with drink?

Not one single thing. For a long time I knew my drinking was causing me trouble but I chose to ignore it. I thought "I'll chuck it at some point in the future, for example, when I have children or when I'm in my twenties". That didn't happen. Eventually my body was no longer able to sustain the punishment I was putting it through with painful kidneys, projectile vomiting and uncontrollable diarrhoea. Only then did I try to control my drinking and only then did I find out about being powerless. I was terrified. I couldn't see a way out. I didn't want to die a horrible, alcoholic death and I was worn out trying to keep everything together: family, home and work. I could see it was all going to go. People I'd blamed before for my drinking were no longer around yet my drinking was still as bad.

How did you contact AA?

A friend was sober five years in AA and I phoned him. We'd drunk together and we still hung out after he got sober. He would have a soft drink and me a pint which I would deliberately not quite finish, just to prove a point. It was so hard for me to make that phone call; it was so very hard for me to ask for help. All that time the help had been there in front of me and it took me five years to make the call. I'd seen the change in him; I knew exactly what he had been like when he was drinking and he was a different person now he was sober in AA.

What do you remember about your first meeting?

I went to a meeting aged 14 when a pal asked me to go with her (she knew about AA as her mum went to meetings) and I just said "Aye". It was in Airdrie and was a

woman's first AA birthday. She'd had a tragic life that including sleeping on a park bench, her jaw was wired up and yet she was so happy. She was sitting at the top table over the moon with a birthday cake. It was weird. Twenty years later I went to my second meeting and was immediately deeply offended by a woman who said I should have a biscuit. "She knows nothing about me" I thought "... and she's telling me to eat a biscuit!" But she knew me better than I knew myself and knew also that when coming off alcohol it's good to get some sugar into your body. And there was a grumpy old man or so I thought until I heard him speak and saw how lovely he was. I felt small and child-like, not knowing what was going to become of me.

What was your initial impression of AA?

I thought "This is nice." Even though I wasn't a people person and was super suspicious I felt the good feeling that was in this room full of strangers. I was a bit in awe of it all. At my second meeting the speaker was sharing her own experience but she was talking about my life and although I was crying and confused I felt comforted.

Was there anything you didn't like about AA at first?

All the hugging and shaking hands.

What helped you most in AA?

Good people telling me what to do and being so done in by the drink and petrified of drinking again that I was prepared to do it. I was lucky right from the start I had the best of the best round about me. I got a sponsor within days of coming to AA, the speaker at my second meeting. My friend who took me to meetings nudged me on the arm and said "Ask her to be your sponsor." I didn't even know what it was I was asking for but I did it and so started to work AA's 12 Step Programme of Recovery straight away. That was what happened to me, it was all I knew and later when I saw people faffing about with what AA has to offer I was perplexed. She gave me so much of her time, love and affection but she didn't mess about. I knew I had to do it to the best of my ability. I didn't want to be sacked.

Was there anything you found hard to do in AA?

Accepting that I'm powerless over people, places and things.

How do you feel you have changed?

I didn't understand anything about myself. Now I can see the truth about me, who I am. I'd cultivated a 'Mad Michele' persona and liked being thought of as a bit scary. I pretended that I didn't care what you thought of me but I did. I was volatile, couldn't control my emotions and didn't have much of a conscience. I'm not like that now. If I say an unkind word to my mother, I hurt myself. I try to be

the best person I can be and the more I practise doing that the better I get at it. I became honest, punctual and reliable. I am more considerate, patient and compassionate towards other people who are unwell in the same way that I was before AA. I might find someone hard to handle because of how they live their lives and how that impacts on me and my children but I can pray for help and guidance, keep my mouth shut and not react the way I used to.

What has AA done for your family?

The change in me is due to AA and my children's lives and the lives of other relatives have improved because I've changed. My children may or may not recognise that it's AA that's responsible for me being able to be a proper mother who is there for them but I know for sure that's the case.

Do you have a favourite AA slogan or phrase, and why?

The slogans 'This too shall pass' and 'Let go and let God' helped me a lot recently during a difficult time when I became homeless in sobriety. I love the line in one of the personal stories at the back of the Big Book that says 'Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake.'

What does 'putting back into AA' mean to you?

I will do whatever I can, whenever I can to help in AA. I was introduced to intergroup very quickly and got involved in organising the Hogmanay Place of Safety event at about a year sober. I did the Courts and Social Services Liaison Officer post in Glasgow North West Intergroup for two years but left early to look after my grandson so that he didn't go into care. That decision reflects my belief that AA is to be worked from the fireside out and that service should not be to the detriment of my family. I also chaired my local intergroup and by learning from others I knew it wasn't about being in a position of power, it was about doing the right thing for the right reason. I know that when I've done my best I have faith that it will help and don't worry about the outcome as that's in God's hands.

Anything else you'd like to add?

The pain of my drinking brought me to a point of surrender and that made me willing. Open-mindedness and honesty came in time. I didn't like who I was. I thought I was stuck with my life, that it was my lot and that change or a new way of life wasn't possible. I found out differently in AA.

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I'm Counting My Blessings

Two weeks into 'lockdown' I celebrated 27 years of sobriety. How grateful I am, looking back, that when I came through the doors 27 years ago, there was a cup of tea, a handshake and a hug. I pray for alcoholics trying to deal with this illness and pray that they get help today. As I count my blessings, I add that to my gratitude list. When I got sober, particularly in the early days, I lived in the Just for Today card. It made so much sense to me and helped me build structure into my day when my head was still racing. In these uncertain times when it would be so easy to give in to anxiety, what a help it's been to me again, giving me structure and focus for each precious day. I've said to a few folk recently while in 'nickel therapy' "Dig out your Just for Today card or look it up online" because it feels to me that it was written for just such a time as this.

My gratitude for AA and the life it has given me knows no bounds. Yes, of course I miss my wee grandson. My arms just ache to hug him but I'm choosing to focus on the blessings of technology which allow me to send and receive videos and enjoy 'face to face' time. I'm enjoying my daily walk in my neighbourhood, passing some time at a safe distance with neighbours. I'm thankful for the cleaner smell of the air as I take my walk, for the glorious display of daffodils on the central reservation on the main road nearby and I'm indebted to my group members who are supporting me and each other at our wee online closed group meetings.



As I write this, there's an illness called Covid 19 'out there doing press-ups' and it seems our only defence against it is to stay indoors. We alcoholics live, on a daily basis, with a potentially fatal illness called alcoholism. Thankfully, we have many ways to treat it. We have each other, our Fellowship, our Programme, our Higher Power, our Big Book – including the page on acceptance, our Just for Today Card, our Serenity Prayer, our online meetings and of course our Roundabout, which we can find online too. I have so much at my disposal to help me protect my sobriety. I need only lift these tools and be grateful for what I have. So as the Just for Today card concludes, 'Just for today I will be unafraid, especially I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe that as I give to the world the world will give to me.'

Anne B

Knightswood Tuesday

The Telephone – The Lifeline For Alcoholics Anonymous

Telephones have been the backbone for AA ever since Bill W picked up the receiver in Akron and changed his life forever; this remains true to this day and especially so during the trials and tribulations of lockdown.

For the past three weeks I have been stuck in the house, only allowed out for the occasional walk and/or visit to the shops, just like most members. I am missing my meetings in a way that I would never have believed. The old adage 'A week away from AA makes one weak' is still as true as it was a month ago.

Many people are using new technology to go online and have meetings through Zoom and Skype but not everyone has access to the internet or even knows how to use it. This leaves us with that original and lifesaving instrument – the telephone.

For me this has been absolutely vital and I have been using it to get support and to offer support – phone calls are mutual support systems! I am now using my phone more than ever and have been in touch with members. I'm having a chat, reaching out and drawing in. I have also spent more time speaking to my family, spread from France to Fife, all of which has helped me stay in a sober frame of mind.

And that is the important bit – staying in a sober frame of mind. Pubs and clubs may be closed for the duration but off licences are still open so the 'devil' of temptation is not far away. Keeping the mind in the right place and calm is not something that goes well with isolation and many members are struggling with this.

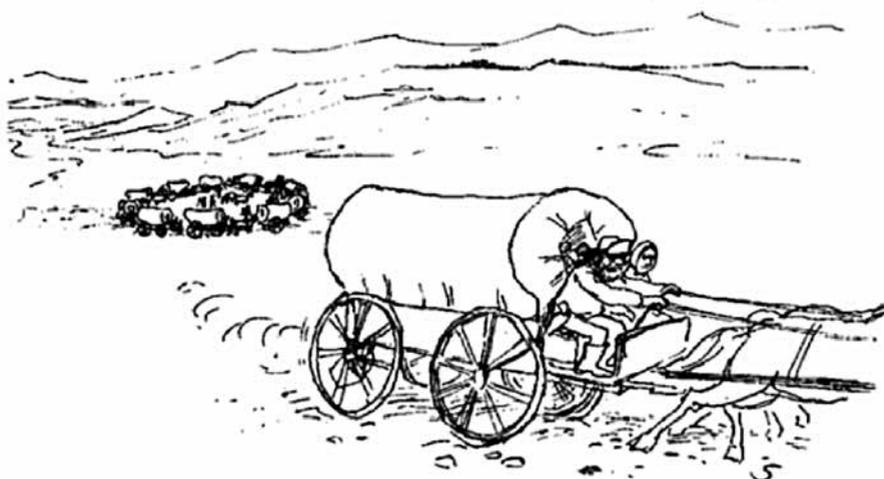
My plea therefore is for members to rethink their use of the phone. You may be using online meetings and getting support from there but are all your friends from meetings able to do the same? A phone call is a quick, intimate and nice way to stay in touch with your friends that you have not seen for a month or so and possibly for some time to come. I let people that I speak to know that it is okay to give my phone number to members they know as I don't have everyone's number in my phonebook so I'm helping to extend my phone network.

People are often wary or reluctant to call someone as they think they are intruding – far from it. In my case a phone call from a member is always welcome and a quick chat (sometimes longer) always leaves me feeling so much better.

An old advert for telephones used to say 'Phone a Friend' – this applies today more than ever. Phones may be the only outlet to the outside world some members have so please use your phone and spread the message of love, companionship and fellowship.

Andy
Port Seton Tuesday

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“Who does he think he is, telling me to put my wagon in a circle?!”

National Helpline Number

0800 9177 650

email

help@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

AA website

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

AA service website

<https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/members>

Below, an article first published in The Grapevine magazine

Letter from Scotland

A man reflects on a lesson he learned at a meeting in America

In August 2006, I made a trip with my family to Huntington Beach (and also Encinitas), my first time in America. It wasn't a holiday I would have chosen and I had no intention of liking either the people or the country. I was still very resentful of everything and though I hadn't drank for 18 months, I had neither sobriety nor God in my life. My family were still very angry at my virtually destroying their lives over a period of 14 years of increasing alcoholic drinking and it was their idea for this holiday. I had no say in the matter and I behaved like a child full of resentment.

Some four weeks before my last drink, I was literally on my hands and knees in despair. I had lost my job and any feeling of self-worth some years back. My life was desolate and I was an empty shell, no emotion, no spirituality. In all sense and purpose, I was dead and I could see no way out of the alcoholic mess I was in. It was then that I told God to screw off and I shouted at him, that I rejected him. I wasn't to know that he would never reject me. I went into the local alcohol unit for a sixth time and on coming out, in desperation, I went to AA.

For 18 months, I put on a mask, not allowing my true feelings to emerge. Shortly after arriving at Huntington Beach there was a huge row in the family, mainly due to my petulance and primarily focusing on me. With a huge resentment, I set off at four in the morning, seeking a meeting, though I had no idea where it was. I found it at 5:30 and was greeted by a member. It was the biggest meeting I'd ever been to and I was overwhelmed by the incredible reception of warmth and love from the people there. I ended in tears when asked to share and even more so, when a man crossed the room and gave me his 18-month chip, telling me that to keep it he needed to give it away. I understand the meaning of his words now.

Over the next couple of weeks, I listened and understood that I needed to learn to surrender to God and to accept whatever comes along while handing my will over to God. This made me feel better and what I learned there has indeed stayed with me to this day. However, on my return to the UK, I soon reverted back to wearing a mask to hide my true feelings. I couldn't understand why others at the meetings had contentment whilst I didn't. My good intentions faded. I was increasingly frustrated that though I hadn't drank in over two years,

my family was still no nearer to allowing me to be the dad/husband that I used to be before drinking took control of my life. I felt frustrated and resentful once more. My self-centredness also blinded me to the fact that my family suffered as much as I did.

And then for whatever reason, in the next 18 months, my family's lives turned very difficult. Whether God was testing me, I don't know. But out of the blue one day, I received a phone call from my son, he had never phoned me for years, to tell me that his wife was in the process of losing her baby and for me to tell his mum and sister what was happening, but he wanted no more contact.

It was at that moment then that I was filled with a renewed spirituality, and God whom I had rejected, was once more in my life. I travelled seven hours to be with my son and stayed two weeks. I helped him with work on an old house he and his wife had just moved into. There was little talk, just the opportunity for me to help build a new relationship. I subsequently made 12 trips to his home in the next 15 months and we worked quietly together.

And then my daughter had a very difficult pregnancy and birth and suffered from post partum depression. We spent a lot of time supporting her. My son's wife then had a baby who then at five days old developed septicemia and only just survived after two weeks in hospital. And then my wife's mum who had lived with us for 13 years, had a massive heart attack at home and died. Finally, four days before Christmas, I was diagnosed with bowel cancer, however, after two big operations in January and mid March respectively, I have just been declared cancer free. My family are overjoyed.

At all times, I have never asked God to solve things, only to guide me in my new found spirituality and to be a good husband/dad. That things have worked out well is not my doing, but I have been able to be there for my family, finding an inner strength I didn't realize I had. We are now closer than ever before thanks to God and my willingness to accept whatever happens and to surrender my will to God.

This is of course exactly what I learned at Huntington Beach (and Encinitas) only I wasn't listening properly and was unwilling to surrender to God's will. I will always remember, especially, Huntington Beach 6:00 a.m. meetings, they were so special.

Dennis G
Brechin Group, Scotland

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That Was The Week That Was

Monday: 'This Too Shall Pass' was the line my sponsor would encourage me with when I struggled in early sobriety. It's a well-known AA slogan. Like many sayings in the Fellowship it possesses that universal ring of truth. It applies equally to the present pandemic with its distressing consequences and exacting restrictions. Let's stay sober and get through it. ODAAT.

Tuesday: Words can barely express my gratitude for AA! Such a real privilege to be a member of this remarkable collective of like-minded people. There are no 'live shows' just now, of course. But with phone, text, social media, email and an array of online gatherings it couldn't be easier to stick with the winners! Tonight my home group is having an intimate, virtual catch-up. It's really energising to touch base with my special AA buddies!

Wednesday: I find myself 'zooming' all over the place to meetings. Today, I fancy the east coast of Scotland. So I log into the very welcoming 11am Dunfermline group. There are visitors from across the globe. I'm a little envious of the sun-tanned Australians, chilling in their t-shirts and shorts! Yet the AA message is the same for everyone. Keep away from that first drink!

Thursday: A regular fixture in my week is the 'Clap For Carers' applause at 8pm. Such a wonderful community spirit on the doorsteps! Bagpipes, bugles, the banging of pots and pans. It's a heartfelt, though scarcely adequate, appreciation of the courageous health workers battling the virus on our behalf. Straight afterwards, to the animated Glasgow South group meeting.

Friday: A daily routine is invaluable during the lockdown. I rise early-ish and get spiritually grounded with a guided internet meditation. Then various household chores. I'm on the computer till lunchtime. Next comes exercise (a brisk walk or gardening). In the evening I watch telly with my wife, then off to bed with a book. Oh, most importantly: at some point I catch an AA meeting!

Saturday: I'm an old-fashioned fellow. And I'm still getting used to this new cyber environment. When I was a wee boy I had a favourite ice-lolly, shaped like a space rocket. It comprised three zappily coloured sections, in red, yellow and blue. It was called a 'Zoom'. So sometimes when I join an online meeting I start reminiscing about childhood!

Sunday: A gorgeous day. Alas, the hedge needed cutting. Quite a task, and I'd been putting it off. But if a job needs doing then I like to get on with it. Into action! That's the AA way. My wife suggested I should relax on the patio instead. "Procrastination is the thief of time," I pompously declared. She demolished me with her witty reply "And so are other ridiculously long words!"

Take care

GL

AN INVITATION TO YOUNG MEMBERS and MEMBERS YOUNG IN SOBRIETY

Roundabout would like to hear from young people who are living sober thanks to AA. What are the challenges? What are the benefits? Send your experiences to the email address below so that other young people who may have a problem can benefit from your experience.

Roundabout would also like to remind Fellowship members that they should never consider themselves 'not long enough sober' to contribute to our magazine. If you are sober today and grateful for that then please write and share.

roundabout@aamail.org

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**Sobriety is the most important thing in your life without exception. You may believe that your job or your home life or some other things come first but consider:
if you do not get sober and stay sober, the chances are you won't have a job, a family, sanity or even life.
If you are convinced that everything in life depends on your sobriety, you have just so much more chance of getting sober and staying sober. If you put other things first, you are only hurting your chances.**

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THE TWELVE CONCEPTS OF WORLD SERVICE

1. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.
2. The General Service Conference of AA has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.
3. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of AA – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”
4. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation”, allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.
5. Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.
6. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.
7. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the AA purse for final effectiveness.
8. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.
9. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.
10. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.
11. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.
12. The Conference shall observe the spirit of AA tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote and, wherever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

GOD
grant me the
SERENITY
to accept the things
I cannot change,
COURAGE
to change the things I can
and
WISDOM
to know the difference

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