

First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

As ‘spiritual timekeeper,’ he kept the meeting moving Service position taught him about A.A.’s ‘colorful mosaic’ of voices

Wendell F., Mustard Seed Group

My first home group was First Step Workshop in Brooklyn, New York. After I completed a term of service as coffeemaker, the group elected me secretary for my second service position. The secretary of that group made announcements at a break in the meeting and passed the Seventh Tradition basket. Since the meetings were getting larger, the group conscience decided to limit sharing to three minutes per person. It decided that the secretary would enforce the three minute limit.

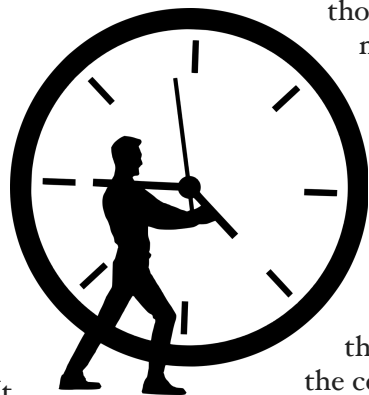
I didn’t appreciate this task at first. I rested my watch on my knee and flashed a “T” sign to the speaker who had reached three minutes. Not all alcoholic New Yorkers appreciated my gesture. I was told more than once that someone wasn’t finished, and

they’d let me know when they were.

The timekeeping job made me pay a different sort of attention to the meetings, though. I came to understand while listening with an eye on the time that many good A.A. meetings are a colorful mosaic of the contributions of each person who speaks, though no one member may say something especially profound or insightful.

Many years later I returned to Brooklyn for a visit. I went to a busy meeting and sat in the one empty seat in the center circle.

Someone tapped me on the shoulder. “You can’t sit there,” I was told, “that is the seat for the Spiritual Timekeeper.” The service position had received a new name. This group had recognized that the apparently thankless task of watching the clock while people shared serves the greater purpose of letting the message of recovery be carried by all in the meeting.



Get Into A.A. Service

Are you new to Alcoholics Anonymous?

Have you been here a while but are looking for ways to grow in sobriety and feel like you’re in the “middle of the herd”?

Try service! Opportunities to get involved abound in A.A.

Find a favorite group and make it your “home group.” Ask for a service position there. Some positions available at many groups include:

- * Coffee-maker
- * Clean-up person
- * Secretary
- * Treasurer
- * Chairperson
- * Intergroup Representative (IG)
- * General Services Representative (GSR)

Want to learn more? Read the pamphlet, “The A.A. Group... where it all begins,” or ask someone!



Hybrid Catonsville meeting hosts speakers, discussion

Kristin B., *Kindred Spirits Women's Group*

It takes about two hours to drive from Cumberland to Catonsville, just outside Baltimore, for the Saturday noon How It Works meeting.

But if you attend the meeting via Zoom, it takes about a minute to sign on. That's what I did when I visited this group for the first time in early February. (ID 627 530 3589; PW 514472)

Roving Recovery



Tell us about a meeting you attend either regularly, or as an out-of-town guest for our "Roving Recovery" feature. Send it to westernmarylandaa@gmail.com.

An open speaker meeting, the group is super-organized and friendly. Like most meetings in Western Maryland, it opens with the Serenity Prayer, but instead of "How It Works," the group reads "What Is A.A.?" from the Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office website (aa.org). The chair, who addresses the group from behind a lectern, recommends that newcomers get a sponsor, and asks anyone willing to be a sponsor to raise their

hand. The chair also encourages attendees to find a home group, and home group members are asked to raise their hands. In the online chat, a list of home group members and their phone numbers appears, as well as information for how to make a contribution via Venmo. An email address, Howitworks21228@gmail.com, is given for newcomer questions, including how to get slips signed.

There were around 20 people in the room at the Feb. 3 meeting, with an additional dozen or so online.

The speaker, Carl O., of Frederick, shared for about 20 minutes, then called on two or three

[See Catonsville on page 3](#)

What is A.A.?

Instead of reading "How It Works," the Catonsville How It Works group reads "What is A.A.?" at the start of the meeting.

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who come together to solve their drinking problem. It doesn't cost anything to attend A.A. meetings. There are no age or education requirements to participate. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about their drinking problem.

A.A.'s primary purpose is to help alcoholics to achieve sobriety. Members use the Twelve Steps to maintain sobriety. Groups use the Twelve Traditions to stay unified.

A.A.'s Twelve Steps are a set of spiritual principles. When practiced as a way of life, they can expel the obsession to drink and enable the sufferer to recover from alcoholism.

The Twelve Traditions apply to A.A. as a whole. They outline how A.A. maintains its unity and relates itself to the world around it.

The book *Alcoholics Anonymous* describes the A.A. program of recovery. It also contains stories written by the co-founders and stories from a wide range of members who have found recovery in A.A.

We are people who have discovered and admitted that we cannot control alcohol. We have learned that we must live without it to live normal, happy lives.

We are not anti-alcohol and we have no wish to reform the world. We are not allied with any group, cause or religious denomination. We welcome new members, but we do not recruit them.

We do not impose our experience with problem drinking on others, but we do share it when we are asked to do so. We know our own sobriety depends on connecting with other alcoholics."

—From aa.org, "What is A.A.?"

A Hybrid Maryland Home Group
Area 29, District 18


Chapter 5
HOW IT WORKS

WE HAVE seen a person fall who has faithfully followed our path. Those who cannot or will not follow our path are who cannot or will not follow our path. This is a simple program. It is simple. It is functional. It is free.

How it Works 21228
Alcoholics Anonymous
6 Melvin Ave., Room 208, Catonsville, MD 21228
Fully Accessible
A Three Legacy HYBRID Home Group - Est. 5/8/1986
Saturdays @ 12 Noon EDT
Open Speaker Discussion
ID 627 530 3589; P/W 514472

(a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
(b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
(c) That God could and would if He were sought.

HowItWorks21228@gmail.com


 Western Maryland Intergroup
Gratitude Breakfast

Saturday, May 18, 2024

Cumberland Country Club

**Tickets \$20 – Ask an Intergroup rep, or
 email us at westernmarylandaa@gmail.com**

Catonsville continued from page 2

people before opening discussion to the group.

Carl, who got sober in 2014, qualified himself as an alcoholic by telling numerous stories about his drinking years, including an arrest that landed his name on the front page of the local paper.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, he’s worked the 12 steps, found a home group, utilized sponsorship, become a sponsor, and gotten involved in service work. Sobriety, a roller-coaster of ups and downs, has helped him rebuild trust with his family, especially his teenage son, he said.

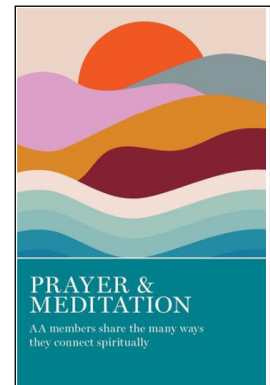
After finishing his talk, Carl called on two or three people to share, including those attending on Zoom. In-person attendees walked to the lectern and microphone to speak. A round-robin followed, with each person allowed up to three minutes to share.

A volunteer passed out anniversary medallions at the end of the meeting. Post-meeting readings included the Promises from page 84 of the Big Book and the Anonymity Statement. The meeting closed with the Responsibility Statement.

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

New audio book

A.A. Grapevine has a new audio book available called *Prayer and Meditation*, featuring stories by members of Alcoholics Anonymous about the many ways they pray and meditate in their daily lives.



Go to aagrapevine.org for more information or to order.

What We Do...

at Western Maryland Intergroup

- Maintain a website: westernmarylandaa.org and a hotline: 844-568-3422
- Create and distribute Where & When's
- Host workshops and activities, including the annual Gratitude Breakfast in the spring
- Provide literature to local treatment and detention centers
- Publish a monthly newsletter
- Cooperate with the professional community to increase awareness and understanding of Alcoholics Anonymous
- Provide a P.O. Box for correspondence (P.O. Box 3005, Lavale, Md., 21504).



We need you!

Every A.A. group in the area can elect a representative to Intergroup. Intergroup representatives attend monthly meetings, contribute ideas and skills, and shape the way that the A.A. message is carried into the Allegany and Garrett county communities.

Meetings are at **6 p.m.** the third Friday of each month at various locations in Allegany and Garrett counties. **The next meeting is Friday, March 15, 2024**, at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 16 Washington St., Cumberland, Md.

Thank you for your support!

February donations

- Frostburg Monday: \$54.00
- Frostburg Friday: \$29.00
- Lake Group: \$167.00
- Into Action Group: \$125.00
- Up the Creek: \$30.00
- Friendsville: \$49.75
- Sick and Tire: \$25.00
- Coffee Club: \$61.50

First Things First is published monthly by the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous.

P.O. Box 3005, Lavale, Md., 21504

Website: westernmarylandaa.org

Email: westernmarylandaa@gmail.com

24-hour Hotline: 844-568-3422, or 844-LOVE4AA

Submissions are welcome! If you have an idea or a story, send us an e-mail.

The views expressed in *First Things First* represent those of individuals and do not imply endorsement by Alcoholics Anonymous.



‘The Jay-walker’ Reimagined...

Her ’68 Firebird could well have become a coffin

Carol C., HOW Group

There have been times I have gone out deliberately to get drunk, feeling justified by boredom, irritability, loneliness, depression, jealousy, or the like. But even in this type of beginning, I am obliged to admit that my justification for a spree was insanely insufficient in the light of its consequences. In retrospect, I see that when I began to party, there was usually no planning involved at all — it was usually a spontaneous, impulsive compulsion to get away from myself, with no recollection at all of what the terrible consequences would always be.

My behavior is as absurd and incomprehensible with respect to the first drink as that of an individual with a passion, say, for speeding on back roads. I got a thrill out of skidding around corners. Once in a while, the road would rise beneath my ’68 Firebird — manual transmission, black leather interior; a beautiful machine! — and lift all four tires from the road. It was exhilaratingly dangerous. I would check constantly for cops, barely staying out of the thick woods on either side, never staying in my own lane. I told no one about my crazy habit. Not my family, not my employer. Up to this point you would label me as a foolish girl — a ridge-runner. Luck then deserts me, and I slide off the dirt berm into thick underbrush.

You would expect me, if I were normal, to cut it out. To stay away from those kinds of roads. To keep my speed down. But the ache is there again, and

I am speeding down Main Street. This time, I am t-boned by another car as I try to beat a light. The passenger door, twisted and crumpled, sits where a passenger would be, and I have a nasty bump on my head. I suddenly am overwhelmed with the realization that had a passenger been in the car, they would most likely be dead! That and the humiliation of ruining a magnificent car keep me at 55 mph for a while.

Within a week, I am back to my old tricks. I’m flying down Highway 24 near Middleboro, Mass., on my way to work, the Firebird’s window of plastic sheeting flapping wildly. A state trooper lights up behind me and flags me down. He issues me a \$200 speeding ticket — pretty much a

week’s wages at the time — and warns me to get the window fixed. I bitch to everyone about the expense and decide the thrill of high-speed driving is not worth the cost of tickets like that. I am done. I will drive the speed limit. Or maybe just 5 mph over it. Or maybe 9 — that can’t really trigger a cop’s radar....can it? But in a few weeks, I’m at it again. Flying in the Firebird down the back roads of rural Middlesex County, I misjudge a turn and skid off the road into a ditch. I have to call a tow-truck to get me out.

On through the years this conduct continues, accompanied by continual promises to be careful or to get rid of the Firebird altogether. Finally, the tickets and damages to the car are overwhelming and I can barely get the beat-up vehicle to work. I don’t realize what others see when they look at me — a girl bent on burying herself in a khaki green metal coffin.

“You may think our illustration is too ridiculous. But is it? We, who have been through the wringer, have to admit if we substituted alcoholism for jay-walking, the illustration would fit us exactly. However intelligent we may have been in other respects, where alcohol has been involved, we have been strangely insane. It’s strong language, but isn’t it true?”

—*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 38



What happened at the meeting?

Western Maryland Intergroup, Feb. 16, 2024 meeting minutes

Attendance

Cody, Kenny, Les, Farren, Erin

Call to Order at 6:08 pm
Adjourned at 6:50 pm
Serenity Prayer
Traditions - Kenny
January minutes approved.

Treasurer — Farren

Starting balance: +\$2636.39
Paper statement fee -\$1
Hotline Feb -\$36.78
NYE food -\$126.44
Rent collected and donated to Fort Cumberland - \$6/+6
Frostburg Monday +\$54
Frostburg Friday +\$29
Lake Group +\$167.00
Into Action Group +\$125
Up the Creek +\$30
Friendsville +\$49.75
Sick + Tire +\$25
Coffee Club +\$61.50
Ending balance: +\$2636.39
Savings Acct: \$23.02
Reserve fund: \$2190.08

Institutions: Chair — Les (Cody)

- Massie is open- limited to 3 people with masks
- Marvin and Cody still going in to jail
- Halfway house hasn't reached out regarding literature so they're good
- Still need to discuss literature on tablets

Activities: Chair: Kenny

- Kenny said nothing till spring - maybe bike ride?

Newsletter: Chair — Kristin B.

- Chair not in attendance

Website: Chairs — Erin and Wendell

- * 502 page views 241 site session 160 unique visitors
- App still not working - is an issue with Thursday still
 - Post them as a note?
- Email platform?

- Anniversaries are coming in - data on the google drive

CPC: Chair — Woody

Woody did not attend.

Where & When handouts: Chair — Open

- Wendall did not attend.
- All updates were sent to Kristin to test print - front page needs adjusted slightly
- Next printing will occur soon (Winter '24)

Literature: Chair — Les

- Subscription to Grapevine for Massie processed
- Will reach out to halfway house

Hotline: Chair — Dan

- Dan did not attend.

Old Business

- None

New Business

- Discussion on the change in wording of "group of people"
- Reimbursement of Farren for GB tickets \$16.59
- Massie will let us know about Grapevines.

Gratitude Breakfast:

- Free tickets for halfway house & Massie?
 - Ask Pam only round tables
 - \$20 ticket
 - Will print Save the date and tickets
 - Invite community - ask Kristin and Woody
 - Will be an "open" meeting - state on ticket
 - Give both speakers a \$200 gift card
 - Still need to figure out agenda
 - Erin will send save the date to Kristin to print
- Cody will not be attendance next meeting. Les will chair the meeting.

Our next meeting is at 6:30 p.m., March 15, 2024.

YOU'RE INVITED!!!

CARC IV

Conference Agenda Review Committee
Districts 7, 9, 17, 20, 40, 41

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Virtual Meeting
Saturday March 2, 2024
10 AM

ZOOM Meeting ID:
857 2203 5761
Passcode: 756953



Be part of AA's Group Conscience!

Join us to review and discuss 2024
General Service Conference Agenda items!

If you have questions, please contact Birk S. at 443-536-8243

Spring 2024 CONTRA Study

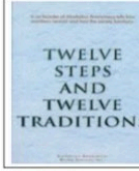

March 7, 2024 through June 20, 2024
Thursdays from 9:00 PM to 10:00 PM Eastern Time (US/Canada)
Moderated by Trusted Servants from Areas 13 (DC), 29 (Maryland) & 45 (Southern New Jersey)

Zoom Meeting ID: 881 6177 7393
Passcode: 330331
Dial-in number for phone callers: +1 (301) 715-8592

We invite all A.A. members to this virtual study of the **CONcepts, TRAditions & The A.A. Service Manual**

Mar 7, 2024 – Registration & Orientation
Mar 14, 2024 – Traditions 1, 2 & 3
Mar 21, 2024 – Traditions 4, 5 & 6
Mar 28, 2024 – Traditions 7, 8 & 9
Apr 4, 2024 – Traditions 10, 11 & 12
Apr 11, 2024 – Service Manual, pp. I-VIII, 1-6, 85-104
Apr 18, 2024 – Svc Man Ch 1 2 3 & pp 105-14, 160-2
Apr 25, 2024 – Svc Man, Chapters 4 5 6 & pp 164-8
May 2, 2024 – Svc Man, Chapters 7 8 9 & pp 169-73
May 9, 2024 – Svc Man Ch 10 11 12 & pp 155-9, 163
May 16, 2024 – Service Manual, pp. 115-154
May 23, 2024 – Concepts pp I-VIII, C1-C2, Con 1 2 3
May 30, 2024 – Concepts 4, 5 & 6
June 6, 2024 – Concepts 7, 8 & 9
June 13, 2024 – Concepts 10 & 11
June 20, 2024 – Concept 12

CONTRA Study Materials (provided via email following registration):
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, B-2 (free participant download at www.aa.org)
The A.A. Service Manual combined with *The Twelve Concepts for World Service*, BM-31, 2021-2023 edition
AA Grapevine Traditions Checklist, July 2018 revision
Spring 2024 Contra Study Service Manual Questions
A.A.W.S. Concepts Checklist, SMF-91, 08/18 edition

We will cover approximately three chapters of reading material per week, with associated questions. Only those who have read the assignment and have written answers to the weekly questions will be invited to read their answers to the group. All others are welcome to join the meeting and listen.

Presented by Trusted Servants from
Areas 13 (DC), 29 (Maryland) & 45 (Southern New Jersey)
For more information, contact:
2024contrastudy@gmail.com

Tradition Three: “The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.”

The Traditions Checklist is a tool for A.A. members and groups to take inventory of how well we know and follow A.A. Traditions. You can find it at aagrapevine.org/sites/default/files/2020-01/GV-Traditions-Checklist-2018.pdf.

Tradition 3, Question 1: *In my mind, do I prejudge some new A.A. members as those who likely will not make it?*

I think it's human nature to assess people based on superficial information – appearance, attitude, background. We all do it, to a greater or lesser degree, both out in the world and inside the walls of an A.A. meeting. It's how we make decisions about who our friends are, who our sponsor will be, who we'd rather keep at arm's length. “Stick

with the Winners” is one of our slogans, after all. The danger, I think, is drawing conclusions about a person's spiritual condition based on those superficial qualities – or trying to assess what kind of miracles a Higher Power might have in mind for an individual. I've seen so many miracles during the time that I've been in A.A. – my own sobriety and life included. I've been wrong so many times about who gets this program and stays sober and who doesn't. When it comes to measuring whether a person has the spiritual ingredients for getting sober, I'm not in a position to judge.

—Kristin B.

Traditions Checklist

AA GRAPEVINE
www.aa.org/gv/aa

These questions * were originally published in Grapevine in conjunction with a series of articles on the Twelve Traditions that ran from November 1969 to September 1971. While they were originally intended as suggestions for individual use, many AA groups have since adopted them and use them as a basis for wider discussion.

Tradition One
Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

1. Am I in my group a leading, meddling, interfering person? Am I someone's driver? Do I ever gossip or talk another member's inventory?
2. Am I a gossip? Do I do "finger pointing" with statements such as "just for the sake of discussion"?
3. Am I glibly with those who rub me the wrong way, or am I unrelentingly abstemious?
4. Do I make competitive AA remarks, such as comparing my group with another or comparing AA in one place with AA in another?
5. Do I ever put down some AA activities for not participating in this or that aspect of AA?
6. Am I interested about AA as a subject? Do I respect AA as a whole in every way, or do I just like the parts that I understand and approve of?
7. Am I an associate of AA members as I want them to be of me?
8. Do I report problems about new wine making in and severely judging behavior that differs with healthy?

Tradition Two
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.

1. Do I believe in or try to lead and support my group officers, AA committees and the service? Recovery? Do I resent?
2. Am I absolutely trustworthy, even in secret, with AA Twelve Step jobs or other AA responsibilities?
3. Do I look for credit in my AA life, either for my AA base?
4. Do I often feel the need to "save face" in group discussions, or can I yield in good spirit to the group conscience and work along with it?
5. Although I have been sober a few years, can I still belong to someone who isn't with AA, though?
6. Do I complain about the decisions that my group makes, even though I do not attend the business meetings where these decisions are made?

Tradition Three
The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

1. In my mind, do I prejudge some new AA members as those who likely will not make it?
2. Do I have some kind of attitude when I presently or possibly do not belong to my AA group?
3. Do I feel respect or as a judge of whether a newcomer is sincere or not?
4. Do I feel language, religion (or lack of it), race, education, age, sexual identity or other such things interfere with my carrying the message?
5. Am I disappointed by a celebrity, a doctor, a champion, an ex-convict? Or can I just treat the new member simply and naturally as one more sick horse, like the rest of us?
6. When someone turns up at AA needing information or help (even if he isn't asking for it), does it really matter to me what they do for a living? Does it matter what their past drinks, employment and whether they have been in Alcoholics Anonymous? What are their problems and?

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March anniversaries



Sheila C., Mustard Seed Group, 3-8-1993

Wendell F., Mustard Seed Group, 3-13-1986

Carol C., HOW Group, 3-18-2020

Erin B., Sunday Night Step Group, 3-20-2012

Western Maryland Intergroup believes that observing A.A. members' sober anniversaries shows that the program works and offers encouragement and inspiration for suffering alcoholics, inside and outside the rooms of A.A.

Add your anniversary to our new database at westernmarylandaa.org, or email us at westernmarylandaa@gmail.com.

Where to send 7th Tradition money

Western Maryland Intergroup has a new P.O. Box number. Send correspondence and contributions to:

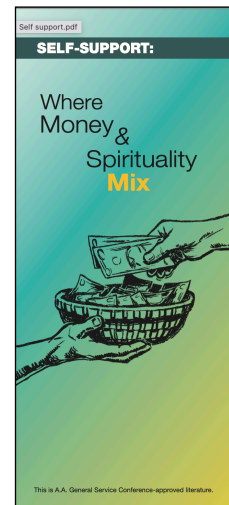
Western Maryland Intergroup
P.O. Box 3005
Lavale, Md., 21504

Maryland General Service also has a new mailing address. Send contributions to:

Maryland General Service
P.O. Box 1834
Frederick, Md., 21702

Send individual or group contributions to the **General Service Office** online at aa.org, or mail to:

P.O. Box 2407
James A. Farley Station
New York, N.Y 10116-2407



A Declaration of Unity

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

1970 International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous in Miami, Fla.