

# First Things First

Newsletter of the Western Maryland Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

## ‘Plain language’ Big Book translation moving forward

A new “Plain Language Big Book,” meant to make the life-saving message of Alcoholics Anonymous accessible to a broader audience, is in the editing phase and is expected to be presented to delegates at the 2024 General Service Conference for approval.

The new translation will not replace the traditional Big Book.

It is simply an additional tool to reach suffering alcoholics, said John W., a non-trustee director at A.A. World Services, who updated the progress of the project during a Zoom presentation Aug. 20.

Close to 500 people from across the U.S. and Canada attended.

“It’s about reaching out to people with low literacy,” he said.

The project began in 2016 when a committee began exploring ways to make the Big Book relatable to as many people as possible.

Since it was published in 1939, the Big Book has been translated into 72 languages.

“This is no ordinary translation,” John W. said, adding that the Fellowship has a “deep and wide interest in this project.”

“The enormity of the task, and the importance of getting it right was not lost on the sub-committee.”

The plain language translation is written at about a fifth-grade level, has a simplified layout, and includes subtitles and headers throughout, as well as definitions in the margins, John W. said.

*See **Plain** on next page*



## On the Road in Recovery

*By Carol C.*

Many of us admit to “needing a meeting” when the interactions we have with the world outside our safe halls baffle, befuddle and bemuse us. The A.A. program teaches us tolerance, but we still deal with drivers consumed by road rage nearly kissing our bumpers, threatening with words and gestures when we let them by. The Steps guide us toward forgiveness and kindness, yet we encounter short-tempered, bigoted employees and coworkers daily. We learn to cherish honesty and humility while governed by corrupt politicians and perverted policies.

How do you stay in recovery when dealing with the real world? What do you do to recenter yourself if you can’t get to a meeting or talk to another alcoholic?

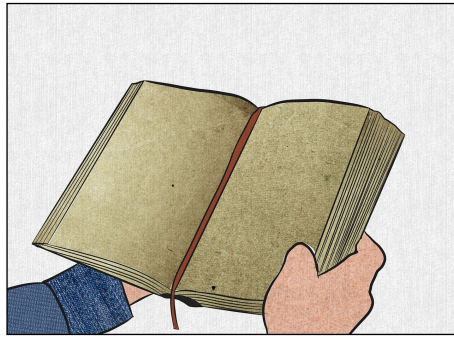
This was the topic of discussion at the Chapel Hill Hose House Group, which meets Thursdays at 11 a.m., off Oldtown Road in South Cumberland.

*see **Road** on next page*

*Plain continued from page 1*

Wording of the 12 Steps was not changed.

An accompanying table following the Steps uses simpler language.



Delegates from around the U.S. and Canada had an opportunity to review a draft of the project last April at the 73<sup>rd</sup> annual General Service Conference in New York City.

Organizers set up a “reading room” for individuals to spend an hour perusing the first six chapters.

Maryland’s Area 29 Delegate Kurt W. said he had some reservations about the new translation, but after spending an hour reading the draft, he was overall “pleasantly surprised.”

“I missed a lot of the rhetorical flourishes that are in our literature,” he said. “I thought, this reads like a fifth-grade text book. And then, yeah. That’s the idea.”

“Probably the biggest criticism was that the book needs to speak more clearly about the deadly aspect of our disease,” Kurt W. said.

The project is now in the editing phase.

Suzanne S., Delegate for Area 30 (Eastern Massachusetts), said she was moved by the translation.

“I cried the whole time I was reading it,” she said during the Zoom presentation. “It was the language of the heart...It might not be for an old fart like me, but some of these kids need this help.”

“We — the assembled here today — may not need a Plain Language Big Book to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic with a reading disability who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure recovery of a child being born tonight who, destined to alcoholism, may not understand the vernacular of a century-old book....

—John W., non-trustee director, A.A. World Services, at the 73<sup>rd</sup> annual General Service Conference in New York City, 2023

*Road continued from page 1*

“I guess I’m discontent because I still want to impose my will, to show you the light, the right way to do whatever you’re doing wrong,” chuckled one member. “I’ll keep coming back.”

“I struggle with that daily,” another said. “It boils down to my belief that I’m not good enough. I’m not a good enough driver, father, employee, etc. Once that thought sneaks in, I know I need a meeting!”

“I’ve often felt like an emotional misfit even with my own family. I know that I have no right to lessen my burden by increasing someone else’s. I just let their negativity flow around me,” shared an old-timer who wears serenity like a superhero cape.

“If I can’t open up and talk about what’s going on in my head and heart, it will take over. We gotta help each other.”

“The Lord gets rid of our problems when we ask,” the eldest person in the room said.

Another opened his Big Book to page 417 and read,

*“And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life —unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment. Nothing, absolutely nothing, happens in God’s world by mistake. Until I could accept my alcoholism, I could not stay sober; unless I accept life completely on life’s terms, I cannot be happy....”*

This meeting always starts on time and ends on time, but nobody usually leaves until everyone has had a chance to voice their heart.

“Live and let live,” said a frequent attendee. “Do whatever it takes to stay calm. Don’t let anyone steal your peace. As you get older, you start to see how stupid the things people fight over are.”

Check out the Chapel Hill/Hose group at 11 a.m. Thursdays in the lower level of First Church of God, corner of Delaware and Edgevale, off Oldtown Road, Cumberland.

Tell us about a meeting you attend – either regularly, or as an out-of-town guest while traveling “On the Road in Recovery.” Send it to [westernmarylandaa@gmail.com](mailto:westernmarylandaa@gmail.com)

# Fall 2023 CONTRA Study

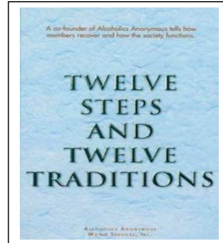
September 14, 2023 through December 28, 2023  
Thursdays from 9:00 PM to 10:00 PM Eastern Time (US/Canada)  
Moderated by Trusted Servants from Area 29 (Maryland) & Area 13 (DC)



Zoom Meeting ID: 814 7038 7175  
Passcode: 195173

Dial-in number for phone callers: +1 (301) 715-8592

We invite all A.A. members to this virtual study of the **CON**cepts, **TRA**ditions & *The A.A. Service Manual*



Sep 14, 2023 – Registration & Orientation  
Sep 21, 2023 – Traditions 1, 2 & 3  
Sep 28, 2023 – Traditions 4, 5 & 6  
Oct 5, 2023 – Traditions 7, 8 & 9  
Oct 12, 2023 – Traditions 10, 11 & 12

Oct 19, 2023 – Service Manual, pp. I-VIII, 1-6, 85-104  
Oct 26, 2023 – Svc Man Ch 1 2 3 & pp 105-14, 160-2  
Nov 2, 2023 – Svc Man, Chapters 4 5 6 & pp 164-8  
Nov 9, 2023 – Svc Man, Chapters 7 8 9 & pp 169-73  
Nov 16, 2023 – Svc Man Ch 10 11 12 & pp 155-9, 163  
Nov 23, 2023 – Service Manual, pp. 115-154  
Nov 30, 2023 – Concepts pp I-VIII, C1-C2, Con 1 2 3  
Dec 7, 2023 – Concepts 4, 5 & 6  
Dec 14, 2023 – Concepts 7, 8 & 9  
Dec 21, 2023 – Concepts 10 & 11  
Dec 28, 2023 – Concept 12



Service Manual from the Governance office  
CONCEPTS CHECKLIST  
A group of people who are united by a common purpose, mission, vision, and values...  
Some of these discussion points were originally developed by A.A. groups and further developed by the original authors...  
1. How do you think a group can best represent A.A.?

**CONTRA Study Materials (provided via email following registration):**  
*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, B-2 (free participant download at [www.aa.org](http://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  
*Fall 2023 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 Districts 10 & 17, Area 29 (MD) and District 2, Area 13 (DC)  
For more information, contact:  
2023contrastudy@gmail.com

## What is a CONTRA Study?

(See flyer next door)

**CON** - Stands for A.A. Concepts, the 12 principles that outline how the Fellowship can provide services to suffering alcoholics around the world.

**TRA** - Stands for Traditions, the 12 principles that early A.A.'s developed after trial and error for how A.A. groups can survive and thrive.

The study also covers the **A.A. Service Manual**, a 200-page description of how A.A.'s General Service Structure works.

This 16-week study is sure to grow your understanding of A.A. and enhance your appreciation for the spiritual principles at its core. There are many options for how to join in!

1. Do all the reading and homework, attend each week and participate in discussion.
2. Do none of the homework and simply show up when you can and listen.
3. Some combination of the above.

Hosted by Area 29 Districts 10 and 17 (that's us!) and Area 13 District 20. See you on Zoom!

## Tradition Nine: "A.A., as such, ought never be organized, but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve."

### (From Traditions Checklist)

#### #6 Why doesn't every group need a constitution and bylaws?

"They already tried having rules in the early years. Turns out, alcoholics don't like to be told what to do. Surprise, surprise! Wait, I already knew that....It is amazing that A.A. works so well without a "government" — no dues or fees, no penal system or ways to kick people out, no membership requirements beyond a desire to stop drinking. But it does work, and that's because of the spiritual foundation it is built upon — the Steps and the Traditions — which alcoholics in recovery discover they must stay close to if they are to survive. As human beings and as A.A. groups we sometimes stray, but the Steps and Traditions tend to pull us back toward a midline that keeps us unified and sober. A democratic almost-anarchy. Beautiful.

—Kristin B.

# AA Basics: A Workshop

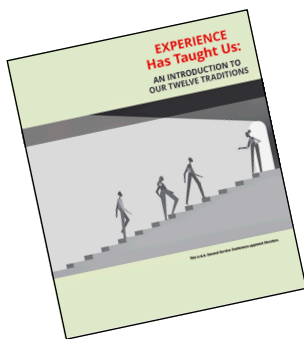
Hosted by Western Maryland Intergroup

**Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023**  
**1:30-3:30 p.m.**

Join us for a conversation about why we do some of the things we do in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Panelists will share their experience, strength and hope about Sponsorship, Home Groups, the Traditions, and more.

**Food! Fellowship! Fun!**



## Panelists include:

Wendell F.	Tyler C.
Kristin B.	Jimmy Jack
Louise L.	Bob R.

**St. Patrick Catholic Church**  
**201 N. Centre St.**  
**Cumberland, MD**  
(take the elevator to the basement)

## Carrying the A.A. message in Western Maryland



Western Maryland Intergroup is made up of representatives from Alcoholics Anonymous groups in the area and strives to help those groups carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics. We do this by:

- Creating and distributing Where & When meeting lists;
- Maintaining a web site ([www.westernmarylandaa.org](http://www.westernmarylandaa.org));
- Creating and distributing a monthly newsletter;
- Answering a hotline (844-568-3422);
- Hosting workshops and activities, as well as the annual Gratitude Breakfast (129 attended last month!);
- Providing A.A. literature to local treatment and detention centers;

In July, Western Maryland Intergroup received donations from the following groups:

<b>Fort Cumberland</b>	\$200.00
<b>Friendsville Step</b>	\$105.48
<b>Accident</b>	\$114.27
<b>Frostburg Monday Night</b>	\$30.68

Thank you for your support!

—Cooperating with the professional community to increase awareness and understanding of Alcoholics Anonymous;

—Providing a P.O. Box for correspondence.

Contributions and other correspondence may be sent to P.O. Box 403, Cumberland, MD, 21501-0403.

### Join us, won't you?

Every A.A. group in the area can elect a representative to Intergroup. Intergroup representatives attend monthly meetings, contributing ideas and skills, and help to form the collective group conscience for A.A. in the area.

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, Sept. 15,** at First Presbyterian Church, 33 S. Broadway St., Frostburg, MD.

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

P.O. Box 403, Cumberland, MD 21501-0403

**Website:** <https://westernmarylandaa.org>

**Email:** [westernmarylandaa@gmail.com](mailto: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.



# What happened at the meeting?

## Western Maryland Intergroup, July 21, 2023 meeting minutes

### Western Maryland Intergroup

#### July 21, 2023

Attendance  
 Call to Order at 6:05 pm  
 Adjourned at 7:02 pm  
 Serenity Prayer  
 Traditions read  
 June 16, 2023 minutes approved.

**Chair:** Cody B.  
**Co-Chair:** Les W.  
**Secretary:** Lora B.  
**Treasurer:** Farren S.

Erin said maybe we should change the way the anniversary list works, but not today.

#### Website

Erin paid \$213 for the Wix domain, which amounts to \$16.00 per month. Erin has all the login information for the domain provider.

#### Treasurer

Starting balance	3630.28
Literature purchase	-97.41
Member donation (Farren)	19.00
Wix acct. 7/24/2023-24	203.52
Ft. Cumberland Donation	200.00
Friendsville Step Donation	105.48
Accident Grp Donation	114.27
Frostburg Mon Donation	30.68
Ending balance	3798.78

Erin doesn't know what to do with the Where and When handouts. Farren volunteered to make the Where and When handouts using a better format since it's stuck in some difficult, expensive software right now. An AA member has been paying for the domain. Farren will call and see if she wants to continue donating.

Erin wants to add a button to gather anniversaries, and remove the checkbox for answering the hotline to be separated.

#### CPC

Focusing on finding case managers to give the Where and When handouts so the people who need them will get them. Gave a stack of Where and When handouts to a therapist who gave them to IOP.

#### Institutions

Lora said that you can get speakers for jail by filling out a form.

#### Where & When handouts

Farren is going to redo the Where and When handouts into a Google Sheet, so everyone can use it. Add month and year to the handouts. Kristin to print 400 before the next Intergroup meeting.

#### Activities

- No one showed up for the bike ride. Bought \$100 worth of food for the BBQ. Will use it for the next activity.
- Kenny is in charge of the workshop. Farren bought some pamphlets and books for the workshops. Erin suggested a cheese plate, fruit tray, water, coffee, and tea.
  - Program for the workshop - We'll have four speakers.
  - Created a committee to prepare the workshop: Erin, Kenny, Farren, and Kristin.

#### Hotline

Nine people called. One guy called ten times in one night. One lady was in Youngstown and finished the last of her drugs and booze. Dan sent her to Youngstown recovery.

#### Newsletter

Published a July/August newsletter. Kristin wants to send the newsletter using the email addresses she's collected. Send any ideas for the newsletter to Kristin.

#### Old Business

No old business.

#### New business

Farren will take notes for Lora, who will be on vacation.



## Get into Service

*Most A.A. home groups offer members an opportunity to become involved through various service positions, such as secretary, treasurer, literature rep, and General Service rep, to name a few. First Things First highlights a different service position each month.*

### Service position: **Coffee-maker**

Who is the hero at every A.A. meeting? The newcomer, or course. But a close second goes to....the coffee-maker!

This is the perfect service position for a newcomer trying to get to know A.A. and start getting comfortable in sobriety. Perfect, too, for a member who knows the ropes and wants to tap back into service and stay involved at the ground level.

The role requires: Ability to measure out coffee grounds, add water to a pot, turn button to “on.” Put out cups, creamer, sugar, cookies, napkins, etc.

Also must show up early and (optional) chat with folks as they arrive.

Perks: Feel a part of the group. Get dibs on the first and freshest cup.

*Ask a home group member how to get involved.*

## You heard it here first

A new audiobook edition of *Daily Reflections* is available for purchase from Apple, Audio Google Play, Audio Kobo, Audible, and other audiobook vendors. Cost is \$11.99.

Soon, the audio version of each day’s reflection will be available for free on aa.org, in addition to the text, the G.S.O. announced in July.

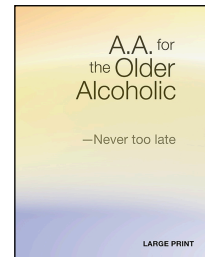
For more information, go to <https://onlineliterature.aa.org>.

## Pamphlet more accessible

A newly revised and version of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never Too Late,” is now available as a large print booklet.

The expanded and redesigned pamphlet features eight new stories by A.A. members.

The change came after widespread member feedback requested that the format be made more accessible. The pamphlet has been approved by the General Service Conference.



## No affiliation or alliance

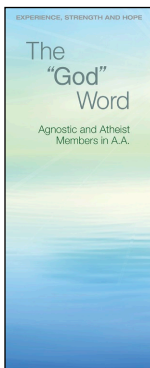
The General Service Office sent out a press release in August to address a “common misconception” in the public that Alcoholics Anonymous is a religious-based or Christian organization. It is not, says the release, which reads, in part:

“In fact, a fundamental principle of A.A. is that the Fellowship is not affiliated with any religion, nor is it allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution.”

A.A. members “need not hold any sort of religious or A.A.-defined spiritual beliefs to find help for their drinking. Each person determines their own pathway in their recovery from alcoholism,” the Aug. 15 press release says.

Though there may be references to “God” and “Higher Power” in A.A. literature and at meetings, the “essence of the A.A. program is one alcoholic helping another.”

For more information about A.A. and Spirituality, go to aa.org. The pamphlets *The ‘God’ Word*, and *Many Paths to Spirituality*, also address the issue, as does the chapter, “We Agnostics” in the Big Book.



# September anniversaries

- Brian T., Keyser, Sept. 1, 2009
- Drew H., Sunday Night Step, Sept. 4, 2021
- Bill W., Lake Group, Sept. 7, 1980
- Cat G., Sept. 7, 2009
- Bob H., Sunday Night Step, Sept. 10, 2022
- Sandy B., Into Action, Grantsville, Sept. 23, 1991
- Dave O., New Life, Sept. 24, 1989
- Linda, Lake Group, Sept. 26, 2014
- Kristin B., Kindred Spirits Women, Sept. 27, 1992
- Rich G., Keyser, Sept. 29, 2002



To include your anniversary in *First Things First*, email [westernmarylandaa@gmail.com](mailto:westernmarylandaa@gmail.com), or enter your information on the website, [www.westernmarylandaa.org](http://www.westernmarylandaa.org).



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**Check out** the new *Grapevine* app, which debuts this month!  
 Allows you to read or listen to every issue, search the vast archives,  
 share your thoughts on articles, and more. [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org).