



THE UPDATE

Alcoholics Anonymous Sarnia/Lambton District 14

Issue 12 ~ WINTER 2025-26 ~ newsletter@aaasarnialambton.com

Welcome to the Winter Edition of The Update!

As we embrace the colder days and longer nights of winter, many of us find ourselves spending more time indoors—reflecting on the past year and preparing for the one ahead. The holiday season can bring both joy and challenge, with the celebrations of Christmas and New Year's serving as gentle reminders of the importance of staying connected to our recovery programs. In this edition, we focus on the heart of our journey: maintaining our commitment to the principles that guide our healing, even as the world outside slows down during the winter months.

We are wrapping up our exploration of the Principles of the Twelve Traditions by delving into Tradition Twelve, a powerful reminder of humility, unity, and placing principles before personalities. This will also be my final edition of The Update during my term as Newsletter Chair. I am deeply grateful for this experience and will carry it with me—it has enhanced my recovery, connected me with so many members, and given me yet another way to give back to the program that saved my life. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

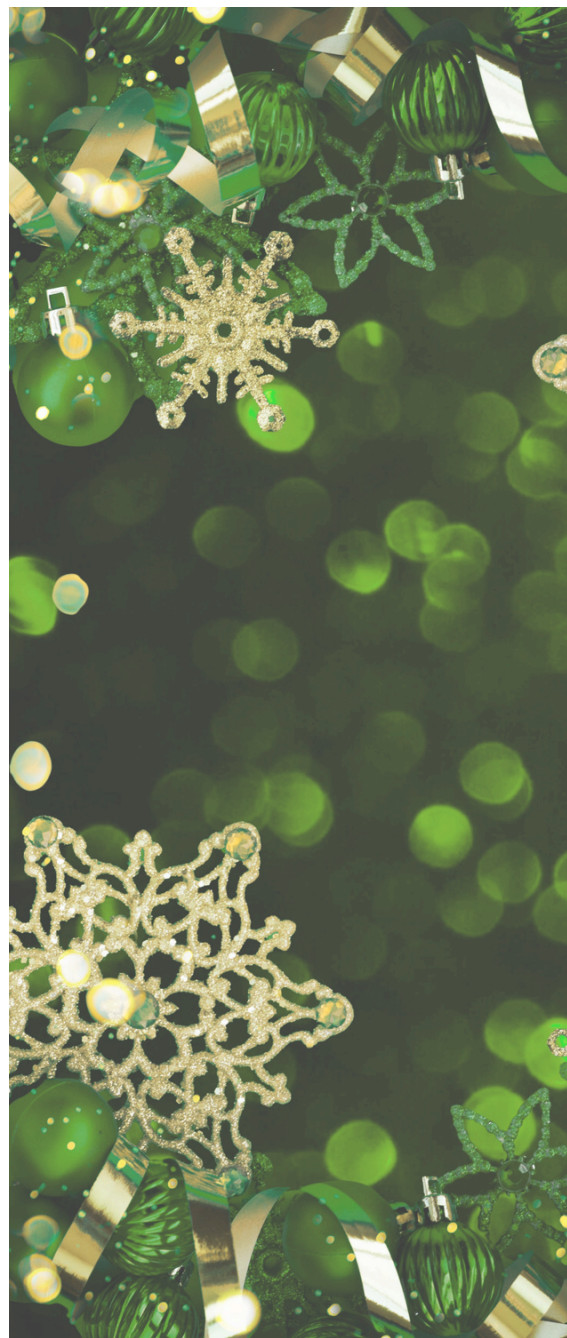
~ Jamie S., District 14, Panel 74

Upcoming Events

Spirit of Christmas Eve – All Saint's Anglican Church
December 24th 5pm-12am

Spirit of New Years Eve – All Saint's Anglican Church
December 31st 5pm-2am

Contact INFO:
spirits.committee@gmail.com



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THE TWELFTH TRADITION

TRADITION TWELVE DECEMBER

"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities"

ANONYMITY (a · nuh · ni · muh · tee)

At times, one of the hardest words to pronounce in the Twelve Steps.

Anonymity is the practice of remaining unnamed or unidentified.

In the context of recovery programs and the Twelve Traditions, anonymity has a deeper meaning: it is a spiritual principle that places principles before personalities, reminding us that no individual is more important than the message of recovery. It encourages humility, equality, and unity, helping ensure that personal recognition does not overshadow the collective purpose of the program.

When I was asked to write about what Tradition 12 means to me, 2 possible versions came to mind: one off the top of my head, and one if I were to read up on it. I've participated in discussions about the Traditions at meetings where we read the AA World Services' "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" book (12 and 12). I've also heard and shared opinions with other members about "anonymity", "spiritual foundation", and "principles before personalities". However, I can't seem to locate any helpful info in my brain's aging data-stick "off the top of my head" related to a specific definition of Tradition 12.

In my first decade in AA, I listened to old-timers like Joe and Charlie lead Big Book studies that explained the Steps and Traditions. I used to borrow or buy their cassette tapes (if you haven't figured out yet that I'm an "old-timer", now there's no doubt) and listened to them while walking or driving, identifying with and/or learning something from every single one of them. You can still access them online. In fact I listened to a Joe and Charlie talk about the Traditions to refresh my memory before I wrote this.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=10TOgLIUL08>

So what have I recalled and learned? AA doesn't have any rules. The 12 Steps were written for individuals seeking sobriety, and if Alcoholics want to stay sober, the steps provide a clear path for them to follow. The Twelve Traditions were written because Bill W. and Dr Bob were basically the "foundation" for AA and they were not going to live forever. Bill W. realized when they were no longer around, the fellowship of AA (which now included groups all over the world) needed to have some kind of service structure. Bill W. said the Twelve Traditions were written because "Our Traditions are a guide to better ways of working and living. And they are to group survival what AA's Twelve Steps are to each member's sobriety and peace of mind.... Most individuals cannot recover unless there is a group. The group must survive or the individual will not." (The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc, Copyright 1971, updated June 2023)



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Tradition 12 states: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities." I had to exercise my brain to really figure out why Anonymity is considered the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions. Here's my thoughts.

Together, all our traditions provide guidelines for AA groups and members to function within AA globally as well as within society in general. To me, as anonymous alcoholics, working our programs in our chosen groups, we rely on a Higher Power of our own understanding to keep us united and cooperating within those guidelines. It seems to me anonymity has been debated since AA began. When the Big Book came out in 1939, the foreward referred to the fact that AA members needed to be anonymous because their numbers were too few to handle the number of personal appeals for help which would occur once people read about how AA could help Alcoholics sober up. These appeals for help would primarily affect the professionals and business people (who made up the majority of members in the early days), as they tried to carry on their occupations. (Big Book, P xiii) But the 12 & 12 indicated that "reading between the lines" the real fear was being identified publicly as alcoholics. (12 & 12 p. 184)

Certain early alcoholics broke their own anonymity because they were happy to be sober. However at times they not only shared their own success, but recovery stories of others. These disclosures often had the effect of discouraging alcoholics from getting help because anonymity was not assured.

When I first joined AA, the public image of an alcoholic was based on portrayals shared through radio, TV, and films (basically 60's social media). In my hometown in those days alcoholics were considered derelicts who drank out of paper bags, might be found under a bridge, and were turfed from respectable establishments for their behaviour. Even cartoons I watched as a kid had staggering, obnoxious, alcoholics bothering other "good folk". In the early days of AA, according to the 12 & 12, and even now, based on sharing I have heard in meetings, some people haven't been or aren't concerned who knows that they are members of AA. My sponsor and long time members told me when I joined AA I might be the only Big Book that people outside of AA ever read.

Therefore if I shared that I was an alcoholic outside the rooms of AA, and I was not working my program as per the Steps and Traditions, my example would not have encouraged others to join the fellowship. Worse, if I had resumed drinking alcoholically, the people who I talked to would have figured the program doesn't work.

As my sobriety lengthened, I had good things happening in my life, better jobs, new friends. I didn't tell my employers right off the bat I was in AA, but on occasion revealed my alcoholism to help a "still suffering" alcoholic. Once, when on a community visit, my client was distraught because she was trying to find an AA meeting and someone to take her. It was obvious she needed help "now" so I took her to a meeting, explaining how it worked and that I was in the program. She was able to find the support she needed locally. I later explained to my manager what had happened. She was very supportive, and kept my anonymity. It's my belief that my Higher Power intervened when circumstances put me in the right place at the right time to help someone by breaking my anonymity.

On those occasions I learned humility, another aspect of the spiritual part of tradition 12. continued.....



Have immediate access to local meeting times and locations. Download the **Meeting Guide** app to keep you connected to the program.

Don't Drink & Go To Meetings





ANONYMITY

As situations that require me to break anonymity occur, I am not seeking attention or trying to save others. My HP shows me when and where I am needed. I don't know if anyone else has been praised for their sobriety or been given a big pat on the back by a supervisor or someone else who finds out you are in AA at an open meeting or an event. But that's when we need to show humility. As the 12 and 12 says, "moved by the spirit of anonymity, we try to give up our natural desire for personal distinction as AA members both among fellow alcoholics, and before the general public" (p. 187, 12 and 12)

In AA, I believe our unity is directly related to respect for anonymity and humility. Having humility means total reliance on a Power greater than ourselves, as per the 1st 3 steps: I can't: He can: let Him. I am free to choose my own concept of a Higher Power, but I need to believe I am powerless over alcohol, to be humble enough to believe a Power greater than myself can restore me to the sanity of sobriety and to make a decision to allow that Power to work for/within me.

Our common welfare and unity also depend upon anonymity, that is, no one person standing in the spotlight, and being a spokesperson for AA. That anonymity represents humility as well: total reliance on a Higher Power. You may have attended groups where traditions did not appear to be followed. The ultimate authority is the Group Conscience, and there is no authority in AA that can disband or punish a group that doesn't follow traditions to the letter, but group conscience guides groups and ensures success or failure. Principles before personalities ensures there is a group to support many diverse members in our AA society. The only requirement for membership is, after all, a desire to quit drinking. We all share this common goal, sobriety. Humility in our financial affairs means we support ourselves: we don't accept outside contributions so we don't have to answer to anyone outside AA in seeking or accessing support. We do however pay special workers to do administrative work to keep AA literature and programs available internationally.

Our shared belief in a Higher Power is evident in all our traditions as they emphasize our unity, group conscience (based on belief in an ultimate authority), our primary purpose (12th step work) and the survival and dissemination of AA support. I feel like, as usual, I have over-complicated a basic idea.

To summarize:

Tradition 12 to me means as an AA member I remain anonymous. I do that because my primary purpose is to pay attention to where my Higher Power is leading me as He/She shows me how to live a sober life, and to help others who are put in my path to do so as well. I may not understand who an alcoholic is in their personal or professional life, but I understand how insanity and powerlessness brought me to the rooms of AA, and how I am free now to be the person I am meant to be. As long as I carry the message, and rely on a power greater than me, I will never walk alone in a hopeless state again.

~ Holly W.



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Don't Drink & Go To Meetings





DISTRICT 14, AREA 86 SERVICE POSITIONS

NEWSLETTER CHAIR

What Does the District 14 Newsletter Chair Do?

As the District 14 Newsletter Chair, my goal is to keep our A.A. community informed, connected, and inspired. Each month, I gather stories, announcements, and experiences from members across the district to help us celebrate our progress and support one another on the journey of recovery.

A big part of this service position is talking to others in recovery, getting to hear their experience, strength and hope. Asking G.S.R.'s, committee chairs, and district members—for sobriety birthday celebrations, group highlights, and meaningful experiences that can strengthen our fellowship. I also keep an eye out for A.A.-related comics and humour, adding moments of lightness that remind us recovery can be joyful, too.

To ensure our district stays in the loop, I regularly search the GSO website and other local A.A. resources for upcoming events and service opportunities. This helps us stay connected to A.A. as a whole and gives groups access to valuable tools and information.

Once all the content is gathered, I pull everything together through editing and layout—and lately, Canva has been my go-to tool for creating a clean, readable, and attractive newsletter. The goal is to present information in a way that's both helpful and enjoyable to read.

Being the Newsletter Chair is truly a team effort, and I'm grateful for everyone who contributes stories, announcements, and inspiration each month. Together, we help keep the spirit of service alive in District 14.

This has been a wonderful two year position on the 2024 District 14 Committee and I am beyond grateful for the experience. If you think you may be interested in taking over this position on the committee, please reach out to a District 14 Committee member. The Update needs an editor for the 2026 Panel to continue to serve the Sarnia - Lambton community and beyond.

Yours in Service,

~ Jamie S., Panel 74



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THE GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

Did you know that you can visit the General Service Office (GSO) in New York?

Visitors are welcome to GSO, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tours are scheduled at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 2 p.m., and last about 45 minutes. On Fridays, GSO hosts an open A.A. meeting at 11 a.m. There is also a guided tour offered after the meeting at 12:15 p.m.

SCHEDULE YOUR VISIT TO GSO

All visitors must register in advance to gain access to the building in accordance with the building policy. Accordingly, we strongly recommend that individuals contact us prior to their visit so that we can enter them into the building's security system.

Groups of 10 or more must contact us ahead of time to schedule their visit so that we can best prepare for your time at the General Service Office.

To schedule your visit, email gsotours@aa.org or call 212-870-3430. To learn more about visiting GSO, including location details, our health and safety policy, and information about purchasing literature, please visit <https://www.aa.org/visiting-the-gso>.

(Box 4-5-9, Spring 2024)



The General Service Office is located at 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY (building entrance at 61 Claremont Avenue).

The General Service Office serves as a hub of communication for A.A. groups in the U.S. and Canada and as an exchange point for A.A. experience accumulated over the years. GSO staff coordinate a wide array of activities and services. Also located at GSO is Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., which oversees the publication, translation and distribution of A.A. literature.

(<https://www.aa.org/aa-gso>)



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ANOTHER LOOK AT STEP ELEVEN

“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. ”

I cannot speak of Step 11 without first mentioning Step 2 and 3. Before I can reach out through prayer and meditation to improve my contact with my Higher Power, I must first have one. It took me a long time to find my own concept of a Higher Power, once I did, I did not always use prayer to make the contact that I needed to. With Step 3, even though I didn't always reach out to my HP I decided that I needed to move on and turn my life over to something, because I did not do a very good job up until that point, it could not have gotten any worse. I turned my will and life, my thoughts and actions over to my Higher Power and moved on with the program, continuing with the steps and learning to live one day a time in sobriety and recovery.

Now, Step 11, after continuing with the steps and reaching Step 11, I had become closer to my Higher Power, I had started using my HP more but still not daily as I needed to. I had to reach out and find the prayer that worked for me and the meditation that worked for me the best. I thought prayer had to be official, had to be full of “thy” s and “though” s but I found out that my prayer does not have to be that way. My prayers are me talking to a friend. I just must let my thoughts and feelings go beyond me, out to the universe, out to my HP and then wait for the answer. Many times, the answer being not what I wanted, but what I wanted is what got me to where I was when I came into the program and what has held me back when I am not moving forward in the program, pulling my will back and not listening to something that knows better than I do.

Meditation was another hurdle for me, I had this preconceived idea that I had to sit on the floor, crossed legged and “uhm” as my mantra. Just like our idea of our Higher Power is ours, so is how we pray and meditate. For my meditation, I just must be in a place where I can be quiet (which was something I really had to learn how to do) and listen to what my HP might say to me at that time. I also need to listen at meetings, this is also where my Higher Power talks to me and if I am always thinking of what I am going to say when asked to speak I do not hear what the person is sharing.

I am not an expert at prayer and meditation, I am not someone who does it every day and all day, I am a simple drunk who got sober and is trying to do this thing the best that can today.

And that is all that I have. ODAAT

~ Mary B.



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Don't Drink & Go To Meetings





CARRYING THE MESSAGE

**If you would like to share with
the fellowship of Alcoholics
Anonymous by submitting a
story, joke, cartoon, announcement,
event, or information,
please reach out to:**

**newsletter@aaarnialambton.com
Newsletter Chair 2026:
To Be Determined!**



OUR READERS THOUGHTS.....

“My name is TJ C and I come from District 20 of Area 27 (New Orleans, LA)! I just want to say I am very impressed with your quarterly newsletters.

I was simply Googling our AA morning/nightly prayers to help a sponsee, and your district's website came up. I am inspired and hope the district I am a part of also finds inspiration from the work you do.

Thank you for all that you do and carrying the message to other alcoholics! “

~TJ



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We celebrate our recovery milestones together in the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. It brings hope to the newcomers and builds unity in our A.A. community!

HAPPY
birthday

DECEMBER

Erica M. ~ Wednesday Night Group ~ December 1, 2018
Janine M. ~ Wednesday Night Group ~ December 1, 2023
Wayne D. ~ Bridgeview Group ~ December 2, 2001
Dustin L. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ December 2, 2023
Carla M. ~ Came to Believe ~ December 16, 1993
John B. ~ As Bill Sees It ~ December 25, 2017
John F. ~ As Bill Sees It ~ December 26, 1988
Irene P. ~ The Hub Group ~ December 31, 1999
Rachel B. ~ Murphy Road Group ~ December 31, 2016
Chad K. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ December 31, 2022

JANUARY

Darrel T. ~ The Hub Group ~ January 3, 2003
Dale E. ~ Thedford Workshop Group ~ January 3, 2003
Sandra P. ~ Sunday Morning Group ~ January 13, 1989
Terry R. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ January 16 2024
Kyle M. ~ Murphy Road Group ~ January 17, 2017
Jim B. ~ Thedford Workshop Group ~ January 23, 2018
Mary B. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ January 25, 1991
Jack M. ~ Wednesday Night Meeting ~ January 26, 1991

**** Please note: Birthday Announcements can only be included in the newsletter if each group's GSR submits an updated list to:
newsletter@aaarnialambton.com ****



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HAPPY
birthday

FEBRUARY

Angela P. ~ As Bill Sees It Group ~ February 1, 2019
Ken P. ~ Sunday Morning Group ~ February 2, 1989
Jan L. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ February 5, 1991
Simon T. ~ Forest Lakeside Group ~ February 6, 2020
Leo N. ~ Wednesday Night Group ~ February 6, 1983
Bart S. ~ Lambton Central ~ February 15, 1984
Sam M. ~ Murphy Road Group ~ February 22, 2013
Lance R. ~ Centennial Group ~ February 26, 2005
Bob C. ~ Hub Group ~ February 26, 2004
Kelly S. ~ Murphy Road Group ~ February 27, 2022

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