

## FOREWORD TO FOURTH EDITION

**T**HIS fourth edition of “Alcoholics Anonymous” came off press in November 2001, at the start of a new millennium. Since the third edition was published in 1976, worldwide membership of A.A. has just about doubled, to an estimated two million or more, with nearly 100,800 groups meeting in approximately 150 countries around the world.

Literature has played a major role in A.A.’s growth, and a striking phenomenon of the past quarter-century has been the explosion of translations of our basic literature into many languages and dialects. In country after country where the A.A. seed was planted, it has taken root, slowly at first, then growing by leaps and bounds when literature has become available. Currently, “Alcoholics Anonymous” has been translated into forty-three\* languages.

As the message of recovery has reached larger numbers of people, it has also touched the lives of a vastly greater variety of suffering alcoholics. When the phrase “We are people who normally would not mix” (page 17 of this book) was written in 1939, it referred to a Fellowship composed largely of men (and a few women) with quite similar social, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. Like so much of A.A.’s basic text, those words have proved to be far more visionary than the founding members could ever have imagined. The stories added to this edition represent a membership whose characteristics—of age, gender, race, and culture—have widened and have deepened to encompass

\*In 2013, *Alcoholics Anonymous* is in seventy languages.

virtually everyone the first 100 members could have hoped to reach.

While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.'s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.