

# About A.A.

A NEWSLETTER FOR PROFESSIONALS

SPRING  
2023

## Helping Alcoholics Help Each Other

ALSO INSIDE:

Why  
Have an  
AA  
Meeting?

**T**he **General Service Office (GSO) of Alcoholics Anonymous** often receives inquiries from members of the community about AA meetings and resources. Recent examples include:

- “I am a pastoral counselor and would like to start an AA/12-Step program at my church. How do I get started?”
- From a recreation assistant at an assisted living facility in New Jersey: “Our residents do drink in their suites and when out for lunch. I am inquiring if you may offer your services to come in person and speak on safe drinking among senior citizens.”

- “I’m a volunteer with a women’s shelter in Brooklyn serving mostly women of color. Many struggle with alcohol, but there is no AA program offering on site. I am working with the staff to potentially coordinate a visit or ongoing meeting offering on site. If there is a directory or any personnel resources I could potentially use to help source someone for this sensitive, paid opportunity, I would be very grateful.”

The Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) coordinator at GSO responds to these questions and provides guidance in keeping with AA’s Traditions.

**GET IN TOUCH:** [cpc@aa.org](mailto:cpc@aa.org) • 212-870-3400 • Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 • [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

---

“while we are tremendously grateful for this outreach and interest, and for the many types of facilities that have offered space for rent, our Traditions hold that AA meetings are put on by AAs, for AAs, and about AA.”

---

In regard to the pastoral counselor, the CPC coordinator reached out to a local AA contact who could provide the counselor with information on starting a meeting, adding that “We at AA are nonprofessional and are unpaid for helping others recover from alcoholism so there would be no opportunity for any paid service.”

Churches, community centers, civic organizations, hospitals, jails, treatment centers, and other locations have opened their doors to Alcoholics Anonymous groups over the years. Serving as a location for AA groups and meetings can provide a means for these organizations to fulfill what may be their broader purpose as helping institutions — offering access to information, healing, and support for members of the communities they serve who may have problems with alcohol. With pandemic-related public health restrictions easing in many areas, some AA groups and members are looking to get those in-person meetings back in place or start new groups.

AA has long sought to cooperate with such efforts as groups and members carry the message to those suffering with a drinking problem. Often approached by AA members interested in holding local meetings, many of these institutions and organizations have provided space for AA groups to rent simply

as landlords, unaffiliated with AA, yet vital friends in the establishment of meetings and groups to further extend the hand of the Fellowship.

There are also those within the helping professions who wish to start AA meetings themselves and ask how they might go about that. While we are tremendously grateful for this outreach and interest, and for the many types of facilities that have offered space for rent, our Traditions hold that AA meetings are put on by AAs, for AAs, and about AA. The group pays rent for the meeting space and there is no official affiliation between the AA group and the institution or organization renting the space.

To our friends in the community who reach out to GSO on this topic, the CPC coordinator provides pertinent resource material and referrals to local service committees that can introduce in person what AA does and does not provide, and they outline important information about AA and meetings. This includes the following guidance:

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide fellowship of people who have found a solution to their drinking problem, one day at a time. The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking; there are no dues or fees for AA membership; AA is self-sup-

ported through the contributions of its members. AA does not provide any housing, food, clothing, jobs, money, or any other welfare or social services. Sobriety — freedom from alcohol — through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, is the sole purpose of AA

AA members attend meetings where ways and means of staying sober a day at a time are shared with other alcoholics. Our website [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) can link you to local AA service offices. On the home page is a box “Find AA Near You.” Type in your town or city and a list of nearby service offices will appear.

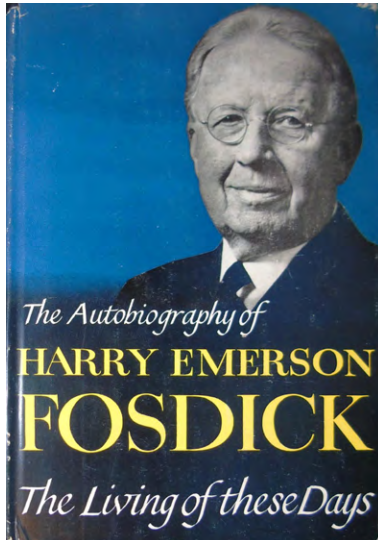
Many AA groups list meetings as “Open” as opposed to “Closed.” An open meeting is one where someone such as a student or professional is welcome to observe a meeting. For information about online meetings/online groups you can click this link and search for “open” <https://aa-intergroup.org/meetings/>. Many AA communities list online meetings through their local central or intergroup office <https://www.aa.org/find-aa>. The pamphlet, “The AA Group... Where It All Begins” offers more on open and closed meetings.

You may find these pamphlets helpful in explaining what AA is and what it is not:

- “AA in Your Community” <https://www.aa.org/aa-your-community>
- “Frequently Asked Questions About AA” [http://www.aa.org/assets/en\\_US/what-is-aa/p-2-frequently-asked-questions-about-aa](http://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/what-is-aa/p-2-frequently-asked-questions-about-aa) ■

## Why Have an AA Meeting?

One of AA's early supporters, the minister Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, related this recommendation of AA



meetings for those trying to help alcoholics in their communities. In his autobiography, *The Living of These Days* (Harper, 1956), Dr. Fosdick wrote:

Alcoholics Anonymous, grown to its present astonishing strength, is a godsend to us ministers. How can we understand an alcoholic — his compulsive desire for liquor, the hopeless captivity against which he futilely contends, one determined decision after another to stop drinking ending in collapse? When we talk to an alcoholic, he knows that never having been in his place we cannot understand his plight. But when an ex-alcoholic, who has been in the depths himself and has taken the Twelve Steps to freedom, talks to an alcoholic, amazing results can follow and have followed in countless thousands of lives.

The meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous are the only place, so far

as I know, where Roman Catholics, Jews, all kinds of Protestants, and even agnostics get together harmoniously... They do not talk theology. Many of them would say that they know nothing about it. What they do know is that in their utter helplessness they were introduced to a Power, greater than themselves, in contact with whom they found a strong resource which made possible a victory that had seemed incredible. I have listened to many learned arguments about God, but for honest-to-goodness experiential evidence of God ... give me a good meeting of AA!

As noted by Dr. Fosdick, the connection of one alcoholic with another "who has been in the depths himself and has taken the Twelve Steps to freedom," can help to forge a healing bond. Attendance at AA meetings, whether they be in church basements, community centers, prisons, treatment centers, or online, is how AA members most frequently share the experience, strength, and hope that connects

one with another in recovery.

AA is a program for a new way of life without alcohol — a program that is working successfully for millions of people throughout the world, and in all walks of life. Most AA members understand alcoholism to be a progressive illness, which can never be cured, but which, like some other illnesses, can be arrested — by learning to stay away from the first drink, one day at a time.

The first and most important step in the AA program of recovery is an admission by the individual with a drinking problem that they are powerless over alcohol, and that life has become unmanageable. It is often helpful for them to talk with an AA member because it may make it easier to understand the nature of the illness, and to accept help.

If you are interested in finding resources for those in your community who may have a problem with alcohol, AA is here to help. For more information about AA or about AA in your community, visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) or contact the CPC coordinator at [cpc@aa.org](mailto:cpc@aa.org). ■

---

“attendance at AA meetings,  
whether they be in church  
basements, community centers,  
prisons, treatment centers, or online,  
is how AA members most frequently  
share the experience, strength,  
and hope that connects one with  
another in recovery.”

---



## HIGHLIGHT

## 27th World Service Meeting Features AA Internationally

In 1969, AA co-founder Bill W. proposed establishing what came to be known as the World Service Meeting (WSM) — an ongoing international forum for shared experience and ideas on carrying the AA message of recovery from alcoholism. Held biennially, this closed service event alternates between New York and other locations around the globe. The meeting has convened in such diverse cities as Cartagena, Colombia; Auckland, New Zealand; Oviedo, Spain; Malahide, Ireland; Mexico City, Mexico; Warsaw, Poland; and Durban, South Africa.

The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all AA activity: to carry the message of recovery to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever language they may speak. The World Service Meeting seeks to accomplish this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of WSM delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world.

Described as a living and growing exchange of experience responding to the needs of AA worldwide, WSM sessions cover a broad range of issues pertinent to the development of AA in participating countries.

With the theme *“Carrying the Message of AA in the Digital Age,”* the meeting drew together representatives from AA service offic-

es from more than 50 countries. Originally scheduled to be held in Japan, the week-long event was held virtually due to ongoing pandemic restrictions.

As one delegate from Denmark noted, “We are not alone with the problems of the pandemic. You see that the feelings of the Fellowship in each particular country are felt all over the world, and it’s good to know we are trying to figure things out together.”

“This has been such a challenging year for everyone,” said Racy J., International desk coordinator at the General Service Office. Nevertheless, she noted, “It’s especially important to communicate openly with each other and to share ways in which we can keep AA sustainable and available to everyone.”

Simultaneously translated in Spanish, the workshops, presentations, and general sharing sessions addressed such issues as developing AA literature in multiple

languages; A.A and new technologies; the importance of the participation of young people in AA’s service structure; and maintaining AA’s traditional anonymity in an age of social media. A strong focus of delegates was on the effect the pandemic has had on Alcoholics Anonymous in terms of members’ ability to meet face-to-face as well as the ability of newcomers to find and connect with AA.

AA is present today in approximately 181 countries, with about 66 General Service Offices around the world. The principal text of the Fellowship, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is available in 71 languages, including the original English, and other AA literature is available in 102 languages worldwide.

For more information about the international activities of the General Service Board and GSO, please visit our [AA Around the World](#) page. The GSO International desk can be contacted at [international@aa.org](mailto:international@aa.org), or 212-870-3021. ■

