



SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163

Winter 2014

Dear A.A. Friends,

May you enjoy this Holiday Season in love and service. Your friends at the General Service Office wish you sobriety, peace and good will.

Now, let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble: "Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

"The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership, we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."*

A PERSONAL BIG BOOK MEETING

"I'm looking forward to the Corrections Correspondence Service to share my experience, strength and hope. And when I'm finally released I would like to give back and be involved in the program to help others like me. For my first time ever I've now read my A.A. Big Book, cover-to-cover, and it has opened my eyes to my alcoholism. I'm locked down 24 hours a day in my cell so I don't get to go to any inside meetings, but every day I open my Big Book and have my own personal A.A. meeting. I read the forty-two personal stories of the alcoholics in the book, a few each day, like I was in a meeting and the authors were sharing. It's helped me a lot since I can't go to inside meetings. I also enjoy *Sharing From Behind The Walls*." — **Brandon E., East Central Region**

'A PRISON INSIDE OF ME'

"My name is Ernest, I am indeed an alcoholic. I have been struggling with alcoholism for many years. I've been in and out of jails and hospitals and was accessed for the asylum but, I did not make the cut. I look for freedom, not from where I am, but from the prison inside of me. I started off with pot at 14 and then met my 'Master' at 15, alcohol. I am 44-years-old. I remember my very first A.A. meeting. I felt loved and at home. I believe that since then, 23 years ago, all my slips and relapses are like a little merry-go-round that I call hell. I've experienced being in a coma, being left for

dead, being revived back to life by my younger brother, hearing my mother's words — 'I wish you were dead!,' pancreatitis, losing my wife, children, and home, being homeless and still not caring. I had nothing to lose but my life. I had no faith, no reason to believe. I fought this to the bitter end, only to discover that I could get sober in jail, of all places! I found what has been within all this time. This hope is for me to give to you! I have come to believe in a power greater than myself. At times I pinch myself 'is this really happening?' It is! Just keep coming back." — **Ernest C., Western Canada**

PASSING IT ON

"I will not be incarcerated when you receive this letter. I will be sharing with my home group about the Corrections Correspondence Service. Thank you for letting me know about this need and explaining to me why the process can be slow. I have the form you sent and the information needed to participate in this service. This service has worked great for me and I will be sharing my experience with other A.A.s at the group level and I will make a few copies of the form, so others can be of service for the still-suffering alcoholic behind the walls." — **Evan M. S., Pacific Region**

"I am writing to let you folks know that our group is going better than ever. We have recently listed and named the group.

Things are going well for us and we continue to grow and be of service to newcomers who are looking for a solution. We are all very grateful for the opportunities that are afforded us by the administration here at the facility. Periodically we receive books that are donated from groups in our surrounding area." — **Mark S. B., East Central Region**

"I am 59-years-old and have been around the program for years and finally have, by God's grace, reached the jumping-off point from my alcoholism. Even at 59 I can be of service and help others to recover from our common disease. I only pray that more of my fellow inmates can find their way to where I am. But with people like our corrections volunteers and many others in A.A. around the world we can make sure this great message will continue, one day at a time." — **Phil K., North East Region**

'NEVER TAKE SOBRIETY FOR GRANTED'

"It was eleven years ago that I found sobriety in Alcoholics Anonymous. In late March of this year, with one hundred and



thirty-five months of sobriety, I took a drink. Within seventy days I was arrested, or 'rescued' rather. It is my humble opinion, and experience that I would have had a reprieve from the first drink had I stayed spiritually fit and continued to help other alcoholics in need. It was here at this prison, that I found sobriety again, renewing my commitment to a life worth living. The point of this letter is, never take your sobriety for granted. After all, I used to share, 'relapse doesn't have to be part of recovery.' My mission while incarcerated is to work with any alcoholics who have a desire to stop drinking and to continue to remain sober when I am released." — **James A., Pacific Region**

"I finally was incarcerated for alcohol related charges after many failed attempts by my grandfather to try and reach me. He was an active A.A. member for over 40 years and other family and friends also tried to help me. Everybody is on their own timer with their sobriety and it's hard to help someone if they're not ready! I've been to some A.A. meetings recently and I'm at the point of taking my sobriety seriously. My late grandfather would be happy that I'm finally taking initiative towards walking the Steps in A.A." — **Douglas E., Pacific Region**

"I had close to five years sobriety when I drank again. My new sobriety date is in June. I feel great. I found the books *Living Sober* and *Came to Believe* in the jail library. I am so blessed that, even though I drank again a few months ago, I still see the truth about my alcoholism. Well, I see some of it. I'm sure there is much more to be revealed. I hear many women blame everything on anything but their drinking. I know that going to jail was a result of my actions. I would never have seen this if it were not for the program of A.A., and working the Steps." — **Elizabeth B., East Central Region**

'UP AND OUT, THE A.A. WAY'

"About a year and a half ago, I went back out and ended up — as I was told I would — back in prison. Right back where I left off before recovery. I stopped attending meetings daily, talking to and seeing my sponsor and working the Steps for almost two years. A.A. has brought it all back to me, and I don't mean the monetary stuff. I have my family, new friends, and an OK life, with God in the driver's seat. I have been incarcerated for about one month now. Last night I was able to attend my first A.A. meeting in prison. Thank God! I'm back! I attended a *Came to Believe* reading meeting and I left there feeling great and content. I picked up a Twelve & Twelve, *Came to Believe*, and a Big Book. Early the next morning I experienced a block shake-down. My cell turned upside down, all my A.A. materials taken and then I was put in lockdown for the entire day. It is now 8:00 p.m. and my cellmate and I are about to get out for a few minutes. I grounded myself, reminded myself why and how I got here, I truly believe God is testing my faith right now. My cellmate is a 20-year-old kid! My oldest daughter is 22. I ended up in prison at age 45. I am more serious than ever about my recovery as I look at my time here. I just hit my bottom, and the only way is up and out, the A.A. way! Keep your program, sponsor and the God of your choice close to heart and don't go back out as I did." — **Joseph M., Northeast Region**

'LIVE HAS NEVER BEEN BETTER.'

"At the age of 14 I took my first drink of alcohol. The downward spiral I lived through from then on was something like a long drunken nightmare that I couldn't wake up from. The ripple effects of what I have done are unimaginable. At the age of 16 I was sentenced to life in prison and even while I sat in a cold isolated prison cell I couldn't and wouldn't admit to the facts of my alcoholism. Having been in A.A. since 2009 I have learned to accept my life-long battle to cope with my insanity. And yes, I have

maintained my sobriety since 2010 and, through the A.A. program, life has never been better. I am now 37-years-old with goals I want to pursue." — **Ung B., Pacific Region**

"I'm 46 years of age; I started drinking at the age of 14, around the time my parents separated. Alcohol made me forget about my feelings and I loved it. It also gave me a false sense of confidence. I got into A.A. when a friend asked me to come along with him to a meeting. I am so glad that I attended; there was an outside speaker there and I felt like I belonged. They gave me the contact information for the General Service Office, so I could correspond with a fellow alcoholic on the outside. I am hopeful that A.A. is just what I need. I pray that this letter gets in the right hands. I know that God has a plan for me and this is a part of it." — **Victor C., East Central Region**

"I am currently in prison, due to receiving my fourth D.U.I. in October 2013. I had been sober for two years and relapsed in February of 2013. I went to A.A. when I first got out of jail for two months, got a sponsor, and was working on my Fourth Step. Two or three months after that I started drinking, I started hiding it from my fiancé and family. I was a functioning drunk and it all caught up with me when I crashed my car in October. I was never willing to get help. I always knew I had a problem but wasn't 'ready.' At that moment I became willing. I knew I was powerless over alcohol and my life was unmanageable, but I did not think anyone, especially a power greater than myself, could restore me to sanity. I believe now that my sanity can be restored by a Power Greater than me, and I made that decision to turn my will and life over into God's hands. Ever since I have done this my life has become much easier. While I was in the rehab I was able to attend a lot of A.A. meetings and I enjoyed them more and more each time I went. They have helped me so much up to this point. I have consistently gone to meetings in the past nine months. A.A. is going great for me. I never did any service work before and I went to my first meeting in prison last Saturday and became the group secretary. It felt great to volunteer. A.A. has helped me to stay sober, plus it helps me not to even think about alcohol. A.A. has saved my life in many ways." — **Joseph McD., Northeast Region**

WITH APPRECIATION

"Thank you to all in A.A. for the Grapevine. It has been very enlightening for me as well as others in here who are suffering from our common peril. As I gradually learn how A.A. works I am now able to share with others the new-found hope I have of a better life without a crutch!" — **David S. L., Southeast Region**

CORRECTIONS CORRESPONDENCE SERVICE (CCS)

If you will be incarcerated for at least six more months, and are interested in corresponding with an outside A.A. member with whom you can share your experience as it relates to your problems with alcohol, please write to A.A.'s General Service Office to request a correspondence form. This is a random match with men writing to men and women writing to women. We appreciate your patience if you do not hear from us in a timely manner. Obtaining outside contacts often takes time.

PRERELEASE CONTACT

If you write to G.S.O. within three to six months of your release date and give us your destination (city and state) and approximate release date, we can try to arrange for someone to write to you just prior to your release. This would give you a chance to have an A.A. contact in your home community to help with your transition from A.A. on the "inside" to A.A. on the "outside."

We look forward to hearing from you.