SHARING FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

A.A. General Service Office, Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163 Summer 2026

Dear A.A. Friends,

Let's open our meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the A.A. Preamble:

"Alcoholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of people 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 New Meeting on the Inside

"I am so grateful to have you and A.A. by my side. I have really good news to share with y'all: I have started the "Homegroup A.A. Meeting" in this detention center. It will be available for all insiders to attend and be a part of — and it will be run by the insiders, too. I'm going to be learning as much as I'm teaching, so I'm very excited to get started. My resources are very limited. The only literature I have is what you sent me a couple of weeks ago, which is a lot and I'm grateful for it. By the way, I love the *Plain Language Big Book* you sent me, and it will be of paramount importance helping me in my new 'Hope Dealer' role." — Robert C., Southeast Region

The Faith and Hope to Change

"The Twelve Steps have allowed me to leave my addiction behind, removed my desire to drink and given me a new way of life. Every day, I do an honest personal examination, writing about what I have done and how I felt. Because of my mental illness and being an alcoholic addict, my entire personality was centered on getting alcohol, drinking and trying to find ways of getting more. I was so self-centered that I tried to manage my life by manipulating people and circumstances to work in my favor. In A.A., I found the faith and hope I needed to start to change my messy life around. Today, this acceptance of my condition, my powerlessness over addiction and my unmanageable life is the key to my recovery. My self-will was not able to change my sick body, which craved drinking alcohol. To be able to heal, I had to make a full commitment to the spiritual principles of the A.A. program. With the help of all of you, I live my life and turn my will over to the care of God as I understand him in my life." — Jose Luis B., Pacific Region

Asking for Help

"A little about me: I turned 25 on January 3, 2026. I served four years in the army and spent a year working and trying to live and enjoy life, but I couldn't. I self-medicate with anything I can get my hands on. Drinking was a big part of life in the army, so it felt normal. I didn't understand it was a problem until I came home and was a functioning alcoholic. Then, I committed my first crime drunk — and I never want to be that person again. It's hard because I love to drink, it just doesn't love me back. It's taken me two years and my wife leaving me for me to understand I simply cannot drink. Any resources you have would help. I have an open mind about anything at this point. Thank you for your time." —Tyler M., East Central Region

On an Island

"Thanks to a God I ran from and refused to believe in, I have eight years of sobriety. I was transferred here in 2022, and I haven't had the opportunity to sit in an A.A. meeting since. I was feeling like I was all alone on an island, all alone in my head. I was on shaky knees. I am a member of A.A. I know how to work the Steps, I have a Big Book and, most importantly, I have all of the memories of other alcoholics — how they made it through where I was then. I've seen the island differently. Each grain of sand was an alcoholic story supporting me. The rocks were our founders and the oldtimers, whose experience, strength and hope are still passed down,

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giving us hope and strength today. The trees are our speakers, giving us their time and comfort to all of us. They show us how to look out over a crowd of sick people and be of service to them. They are all examples of the strength and will of their Higher Power. So yes, I may be away from my home group, I may be on an island, but in my head I have the members, speakers, oldtimers and our founders. I am strong in my sobriety, living the promises and being the hand of A.A. From a grateful alcoholic." — Michael N., Pacific Region

Seeking Correspondence

"Hi, my name is James. I've just recently been given a copy of the Big Book. There is an outpatient treatment center in one of the small towns in our county and they've placed a lady from there in our jail to help some of us. She's the one who gave me the book. I have admitted I am powerless when it comes to alcohol and drugs. I'm 46 years old and I always knew I was different, but I never believed I had a problem. In all the time I've spent locked up, I never tried to find an answer to my problems; I just assumed I was dealt a bad hand. I didn't know that the problem was staring at me when I looked in the mirror. I read in the back of the Big Book that I could reach out to this office to find out how to get into an A.A. meeting and find someone who would correspond with me. I don't know if that's the case, but I was hoping so. Thank you for taking a few minutes to read this letter and possibly help me, because I don't want to go backwards anymore."— James D., Southeast Region

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Looking for a Sober Friend

"I have been receiving *Grapevine* magazines monthly, which I like a lot. Thank you for those — they're great! I look forward to them, and I appreciate the fact that they're free. On November 22, 2025, I had six years clean and sober. What a blessing and a miracle! I have worked really hard to get where I am today. I would love to have a sober friend write me back in the Corrections Correspondence Service; I will be waiting patiently." — Stephanie D., Pacific Region

One Alcoholic Talking to Another

"I am happy to let you know that I recently received a letter from John I., an alcoholic from the West Coast, and I'm currently working on my reply to him. I want to thank you very much for finally setting me up with a correspondence partner. I have been sober since January 24, 1989, and I've found that both of my arrests were due to an incomplete Fourth Step. I am now going back to work on some character defects that I was not ready to work on in the past. Through the Corrections Correspondence Service, I'll be able to have a meeting with another alcoholic." — Kyle B., Northeast Region

Clarity Through Plain Language

"The reason I'm writing this letter is because I'm incarcerated in a correctional facility in Ontario and was given the *Plain Language Big Book.* Reading this book actually makes the program easier to understand, especially since I'm not that bright on reading. Thank you!" — Kyle P., Eastern Canada Region

Finding Inspiration in the Big Book

"Here, confined by the will of my Creator, I was given this book from A.A., third edition. I found it interesting because it is helping me a lot both psychologically and spiritually. I am just another sick alcoholic who lost my beloved family, but I haven't lost the faith that I'll recover them someday. Honestly, your book has made me reflect, and I believe I still have time to turn my life around. I would like to keep reading your books. The truth is, as soon as I start reading, I begin to reflect on all the wrong I've done in my life and all the good I've missed out on. Today, I'm reading the chapter 'To Wives.' I only hope to be released from prison soon so I can personally attend an A.A. meeting. I do accept that I'm an alcoholic, and I also want to go of my own free will. I want a radical change. I want to change for myself, not for anyone else. The stories from your members inspire me to change and fight my illness."
— Gustavo A., East Central Region

A Note of Gratitude

"My best wishes go out to all of you. This letter is mainly to thank you for your letters and magazines where I am incarcerated. In the year and a half I have been here, yours is the only correspondence I have received. Thank you, and may God bless you. I'll be released at the end of June, and I hope in God never to return here and never to be in prison again — unless it's to share about the program. If you send something soon, I can still receive one last letter and a magazine, okay? I await your reply, and when I'm in Mexico, I'll try to get in touch

with you somehow. See you soon — and if not, we'll see each other at a meeting with Bill and Bob." — Elena P., Pacific Region

Serious About Service

"Warm greetings from the Knucklehead group of Alcoholics Anonymous here on the Wallace Unit. Thank you so much for all of the literature in the previous correspondence. As I stated previously, I have the privilege of serving as our group's GSR, but no one could tell me what that meant. But, thanks to the reading material you sent, especially *The A.A. Service Manual*, I'm now aware of my position's duties and expectations. I also passed out the forms for the Corrections Pre-release Contact Information and the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS). Since I'll be incarcerated for a bit longer, I submitted a CCS form myself. Our outside volunteers brag on us and about us in regard to how our meetings are run. The first Thursday of the month we do Birthday Night and, if time allows, we do an Ask-It-Basket. The second Thursday of the month we do a Big Book read, and at the end of the meeting there's a group conscience discussion. The third Thursday is Speaker Night (sometimes a person speaks, or a volunteer will bring a speaker tape), and the fourth Thursday is another book read. If there's a fifth Thursday, we do an extra book read. We currently have the positions of chairman, co-chairman, secretary, co-secretary, GSR and co-GSR filled by our resident Knuckleheads. The co-positions are just in case the main position can't attend. Our treasurer is one of the volunteers. We have another conference planned for early October and are working everything out with our unit's chaplain and administration; it will be the second conference we've had here at the Wallace Unit. In fellowship." — Jeremiah G., Southwest Region

Searching for a Sponsor

"I recently received a package from you that contained an A.A. Big Book and various pamphlets. First off, thank you from the bottom of my heart! I've been reading every piece of literature I can get my hands on. One of the pamphlets talked about the A.A. Corrections Correspondence Service. I am currently serving a six-year sentence for my seventh DUI. I believe I've hit my rock bottom; I will do anything to stop drinking. I've accepted the first three Steps and believe them wholeheartedly. Now, as I move on to the next Step, and all the others, I need someone's help. I'd like to sign up for the correspondence services and hope to be paired with someone to help me through the Steps and be my sponsor."
— Thomas H., Northeast Region

Getting Off the Roller Coaster

"My name is Eddie L., and I'm an alcoholic. I am 31 years old and live in California, currently in a correctional institution (for the first time) due to my problem with alcohol. I struggle with this illness. I fall under category four in the Big Book, which I'm reading for the first time with wholehearted honesty and willingness to follow its contents. I should tell you a bit about my alcoholic career. I started drinking when I was 14. I instantly knew I was destined for alcoholism, as I saw my father suffer from the disease while I was growing up. At first it was a casual, 'fun' thing I did to celebrate accomplishments after skateboarding, as I was once sponsored and very much on my way to bigger things in the sport. Alcoholism came over me slowly, like when you're going up the climb of a huge roller coaster. Then, it took me on an incredibly horrible ride, twisting and flipping me around until I vomited. But I couldn't get off the roller coaster, no matter how hard I tried. This year has been the roughest, considering where I'm writing from. I lost my job, then my house, my car and my wife of 16 years. I haven't given up hope that I can recover, although I made a horrible mistake that landed me in jail. I have been aware of my problem for years and truly want to overcome this addiction. I don't believe I'm unsavable, I just need reassurance that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I want off the roller coaster for good. I will continue to read the Big Book and practice what it says to do. I plan to join the Fellowship once I'm out of this place. I currently have 43 days sober and I hope to keep growing that number, one day at a time."
— Edward L., Pacific Region

Giving Myself to God and A.A.

"Hi, my name is Edgar R., I'm 58 years old and writing this letter from prison. I thought I'd never experience this. However, today I am so grateful for being in prison, for the God of my understanding has my attention and he has given me another chance at sobriety. I finally have the willingness to establish a relationship with this God and to do the work required to stay sober. I had been sober so many times in my life, but I had no knowledge or insight as to how to stay sober. A.A. offers me the solution, however, I need to be ready and willing to do the real work required and to do the Steps. The Big Book of A.A. says that "God could and would if He were sought" — how profound, that statement. My friends, I am finally and thoroughly convinced that I have this disease called alcoholism. When I drink, I cannot stop. The physical craving, followed by the mental compulsion, has caused me to do things I thought I would never do and to have regrets and resentments that I don't know how to take care of. I

understand now why the Steps are in the order that they are in, and how imperative it is to take action and work with a sponsor. I also understand that it is my responsibility to help others and give freely what has been so lovingly given to me. This process reminds me that I'm an alcoholic and how I must not forget where I came from and the pain associated with this disease. In all the years coming to A.A. (the last house on the block for a guy like me), I was always welcomed with love, and the hope that I found there was unexplainable. So many times, when I came back to A.A. with even more shame, guilt, depression, loneliness, regret and resentment, walking around feeling stained and tainted, A.A. always said to me, 'Welcome back. We have been waiting for you.' I have read the Big Book cover to cover two times, and now I have knowledge on why I do what I do. However, knowledge alone will not keep me sober; the work has to be done. I must work the Steps so I can learn how to stay sober. I want this life, and divine providence has always used what I thought were bad circumstances in my life for my own good. Wow. I am in prison, and it is here that God has gotten my attention and given me the courage to read this wonderful and awesome Big Book. I am writing because I so desperately need a sponsor, someone who can get me through the Steps and help me trudge down the new road of happy destiny. I am ready and willing and have wholeheartedly given my life over to the God of my understanding and to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you, A.A., for planting those seeds into my life, as those seeds are now bearing fruit. I am, to the best of my ability, trying to remain honest with myself and keeping hope alive with all the willingness I can muster. I can't even describe what an open mind I have today! The grace and mercy of God is so faithful and I know deep down in my heart that he is not done with me yet! Attached is the Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) form given to me by one of the A.A. speakers that comes to this correctional facility. He told me to mail it to A.A. Please continue to help me, Alcoholics Anonymous. I have lost everything in my life. All I have left is God and A.A."

— Edgar R., East Central Region

Digital Literature Behind the Walls

AAWS and AA Grapevine literature and content are available on tablets and library computer desktops in correctional facilities across the United States and Canada. This is a service made possible on tablets through non-royalty agreements with various vendors including Combined Public Communications (CPC), Edovo, Ingram/CoreSource, JPay, OverDrive, Securus Technologies, Smart Communications, Trainlogix and ViaPath Technologies (formerly GTL). Starting in 2026, content will be available in many Canadian correctional facilities using D2L Brightspace on library computers. The available content on tablets and computers includes newsletters, pamphlets, both seasons of the *Our Primary Purpose* podcast and core books like *Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, Daily Reflections* and the *Plain Language Big Book*. Most, but not all, content is available in English, French and Spanish. The Tablet Literature List is available upon request and is sent with most correspondent responses from the Corrections desk.

Electronic Correspondence

The Corrections desk is able to communicate with members behind the walls through the secure communication platforms Getting Out/Viapath, Securus, JPay and JailATM. If you have access to these platforms and would like to reach out to the Corrections desk to request literature, meeting support, information on Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS) or Prerelease Contact information, please direct your message to corrections@aa.org. Additionally, if you have access to another tablet or telecom provider, the Corrections desk can respond to inquiries by phone at (212) 870-3085. When calling, please include your name, location of facility, DOC number and any other details specific to you that will allow the Corrections desk to support your request for any of the services we provide.

Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

This service is for incarcerated alcoholics who have at least six more months to serve. We randomly match an outside A.A. from another region with members of the same gender identity. We do not provide letters of reference to parole boards, lawyers or court officials. We do not assign sponsors; however, once you make contact, an outside A.A. member may be willing to sponsor you. If you have an interest in sharing about your experiences as they relate to sobriety and problems with alcohol, then please write and request a form. We appreciate your patience.

Prerelease Contact

This service is for incarcerated alcoholics who have a release date scheduled for three to six months away. We do not assign sponsors; however, once you have transitioned from "inside" A.A. to "outside" A.A., someone may be willing to sponsor you. We try to arrange for an outside A.A. in your home community to temporarily write to you just prior to your release. You can request a form, or write to us, providing your release date and destination (address, city, state and phone number.)