



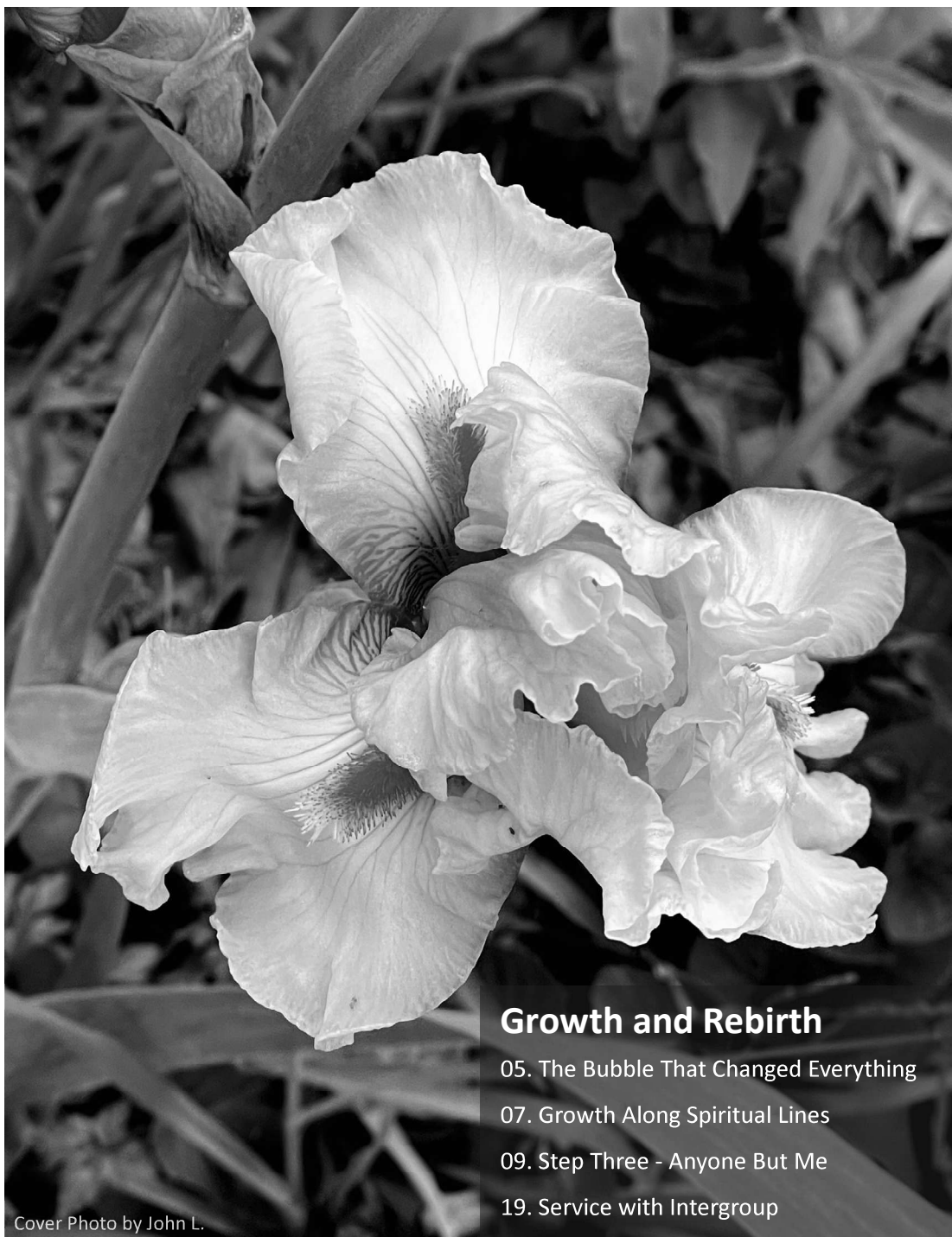
THE POINT IS

we are willing to grow along spiritual lines

2026

SPRING

A Publication of
San Francisco and
Marin Intergroup
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The Point is a newsletter for San Francisco and Marin members to share their experience, strength and hope. We welcome personal stories of recovery, letters, poems and artwork to carry the message. The committee reviews content in observance of the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions. Publication does not constitute endorsement by A.A., San Francisco and Marin Intergroup, or the Communications Committee.

Cover Photo by John L.

Growth and Rebirth

- 05. The Bubble That Changed Everything
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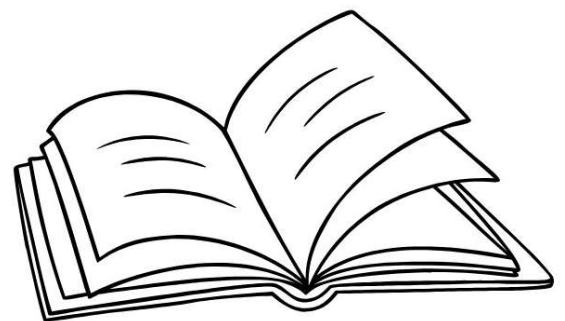
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Anyone

Christopher N.

Can water down the
brandy or rum so that
Nobody knows, or
Claim a sobriety standard by
Never having consumed
Listerine or
Act the foodie by
Downing the
Vanilla extract and cooking wine or
Claim an improvement is
Wine instead of beer or
Anyone can
Blame the day on
Their use of it and
Wonder why they're
Farther behind than
Before they passed out but
Today the hours fell
exactly where they have before
And tomorrow isn't
Anyone's to know for sure
But I know for sure that
Today anyone didn't
Pick up a drink.



From the Editor



Growth and Rebirth

“A.A. is no success story in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a story of suffering transmuted, under grace, into spiritual progress.” -Bill W.

Bill W. said that pain is the touchstone of all growth, and the stories in this issue reflect that truth and more. Margaret W. gave up self-destruction for kinship, laughter, and the joy of giving comfort; Kathleen C. traded the absolute minimum effort for new people, new ways of staying sober, and new roles in AA; Jillian E. found when she stopped fighting and started practicing, she went from miserable and consumed by fear to peaceful and joyful. Ramona S. shares how growth came through putting her program at the center of her life. At what she calls the “Rockbottom Amusement Park,” Diane C. found that everything changed when she got on the Reborn and Recycled Ride. Barbara L. finds in A.A. where she needed to be all along, while in working Step Three Jay F. finds in A.A. a power greater than himself. Caitlin T. and Kathleen W. reflect on their growth through service in Intergroup, and Ian M. shares how he has grown his conscious contact with his higher power through writing. Peter B. reflects on the utility of the Serenity Prayer under all conditions, showing a willingness to grow in the face of adversity.

Growth is reflected more subtly but just as beautifully in the poetry that appears in these pages: from Rubicon, where Radhika reflects on the boundaries we cross as we grow, to Anyone where Christopher reminds us of the growth that can happen in today, to I Must Let Go and Grounded Here where Dede shares of the growth that can come through trusting the program.

Editorial Policy

The Point publishes original feature articles submitted by local A.A. members that reflect the full diversity of experience and opinion found with the fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. No one viewpoint or philosophy dominates its pages, and in determining the editorial content, the editors rely on the principles of the Twelve Traditions.

This statement is a summary; for the full editorial policy, please go to News and Events on www.aasfmarin.org. To contact The Point committee directly, write to thepoint@aasfmarin.org



Thank you!

Intergroup is grateful for all the individual contributions, including memorial, honorary and anniversary contributions received in 2025. Individual contributions have been a consistent source of revenue these last few years.

In keeping with the Seventh Tradition, San Francisco and Marin Intergroup limits contributions to two sources: A.A. groups and individual A.A. members. While there is no limitation on the amount an A.A. group may contribute, we follow the limits established by the General Service Conference for individual contributions. A.A. members may contribute up to \$7,500 annually. Bequests in wills are acceptable on a one-time basis, and not in perpetuity. The limit is no more than \$12,500.



A special thanks to our current Grateful Givers. San Francisco and Marin Intergroup is grateful to our 354 Grateful Givers who contributed \$64,617 in 2025 with an average monthly contribution of \$14.40.

Sign up to become a Grateful Giver
Are you a Grateful Giver? If not, consider signing up for a monthly contribution to support your local Intergroup at the QR code below.



“What I know now is this: growth often looks like resistance before it becomes rebirth.”

A.A. Didn't Work for Me... Until It Did

Jillian E.

When I first walked into Alcoholics Anonymous, I would not have described myself as emotionally immature, or deeply unhappy. Now, with the clarity of growth, that is exactly who I was: miserable and consumed by fear. I didn't believe alcohol was my problem, yet I needed help. After reading a book about a struggling alcoholic and recognizing many symptoms in myself, I asked a friend to take me to a meeting.

I saw the Steps and Traditions, with God in the Third Step. AA would not work for me. That belief felt settled and non-negotiable. Still, the room filled with happy people, warmth, laughter, and a sense of ease felt foreign but deeply attractive. I felt safe and accepted. That mattered more than my certainty.

My resistance to the idea of God had deep roots. When I was twelve, at my parents' funeral, my grandmother told me there was no God. No God would have taken her daughter and my parents from us. I believed without question. Children absorb the beliefs of those we trust, which quietly shape our lives.

So I stayed in AA with one foot out the door. I went to meetings, made friends and followed along just enough. For two years, I didn't drink. Life improved in undeniable ways. Yet, inside repeated a quiet refrain: AA won't work for me.

That belief was self-fulfilling. Two years later, I drank and had proof.

The next eleven years were a slow unraveling. Outside, I appeared functional. Inside, I was deeply unhappy and increasingly hopeless. Life felt unbearable. I flirted with the idea of leaving the planet altogether. In those darkest moments, a voice repeated, “Go back to AA.” I ignored it until I could no longer stand myself. I returned to a women's meeting in Novato, my home group today.

This time, I made a simple but profound decision to do whatever was suggested. I got a sponsor. I took



commitments. I worked the steps. Slowly, the blessings I had experienced years earlier returned, this time with depth and durability.

Still, I didn't understand the “God thing.” One day, a quiet question made me pause: “Do you still crave alcohol?” The answer was no. The cravings that had haunted me were gone.

Something had shifted. A new idea took root. Maybe there was a Higher Power. Maybe it didn't need a name or a form. Maybe it could be a Great Universal Spirit, a Group Of Drunks, or simply a force greater than my own will. As the Twelve and Twelve says, belief doesn't arrive on a specific date. It grows when we stop fighting and start practicing.

From that moment of surrender, my life began to unfold in ways I could never have orchestrated – “god-shots.” Some are subtle: an underlying peace that colors my days. Others are dramatic: meeting the love of my life in the rooms of A.A. and building a joyful marriage that continues to grow.

Today, I make a daily effort to turn my will and my life over. Through the steps, I have learned willingness, openness, and honesty. Prayer, meditation, and exploration ground me in the belief that my life is unfolding in goodness and order, even when I don't understand the path.

I once believed A.A. would never work for me. What I know now is this: growth often looks like resistance before it becomes rebirth. If someone like me, who fiercely rejected the idea of a Higher Power, can soften, surrender, and be restored, then transformation is possible for anyone. It really is.

The Bubble That Changed Everything

Caitlin T.

Before I ever walked into my first A.A. meeting, I spent hours online looking for validation that I didn't, in fact, have a problem with alcohol. That I might have to consider tempering, or—God forbid—giving up drinking, was a terrifying thought.

One search landed me on the Intergroup website for San Francisco and Marin. I saw a blue bubble in the corner of the screen that said, "Need help?".

I clicked the bubble and started typing all my fears: I didn't know if I was an alcoholic, but scary things were happening when I drank. I was blacking out often and felt scattered and out of control. I had never tried to stop, but the idea that I might need to frightened me more than anything that had happened so far.

I hit send. To my shock, I saw a reply in the chat bubble minutes later, clearly from a real person. They said that what I had shared did sound scary, but also familiar - that others in A.A. would relate. They asked if I wanted to go to a meeting or take a phone call.

That was too far for me at the time. I closed my browser without replying.

Still, I felt a sense of relief and curiosity. That was my first encounter with A.A.

In the following months, I started going to meetings. I got a sponsor and worked the steps. One day at a time, I didn't drink.

When people asked what brought me to the rooms, I told them about the chat bubble. Most had never heard of it.

I became very curious. Who had responded to me? Who ran the website? I understood it wasn't any one A.A. group providing these services.

Then, I saw a flyer in The Buzz for a HelpChat volunteer orientation. I recognized the chat bubble immediately. That was it!

At the orientation, I learned what happens behind the scenes: when someone reaches out via the chat bubble, a volunteer gets a notification on their phone and responds. That's all. It wasn't anyone "in charge". Just a sober person making sure the hand of A.A. is there when someone asks for help.

"It wasn't anyone 'in charge'. Just a sober person making sure the hand of A.A. is there when someone asks for help."

I volunteered with HelpChat for a few years. Some chats felt similar to my own. When I answered those, I didn't worry about whether the person responded, remembering I hadn't been ready to respond either.

Eventually, I became chair of the committee. Through that role, I attended Intergroup meetings and learned more about A.A.'s service structure. I'd heard about Central Office during the Seventh Tradition, but now I saw what it actually does: support 12th Step work beyond the group level.

HelpChat is just one part of Intergroup. There are other committees that carry the message of recovery in other ways. Central Office supports all of this, guided by a board of directors made up of local A.A. members rotating in and out of service.

Three years ago, I was encouraged to stand for a board position. Since then, I've learned to apply the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts in our local community of recovery with my fellow board members. More than that, I've felt anchored in my own program: very much "in the middle of the boat."

Every Intergroup meeting closes with the Responsibility Statement. Each time, I think about how literally that played out for me: I reached out for help, and the hand of A.A. was there. Now, I understand how that happened, and am glad to be a part of it.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS ELECTION

Intergroup Is Now Accepting Nominations For The Board of Directors Elections To Be Held June 2026

The Intergroup Board oversees the operation of San Francisco and Marin Intergroup.

FOR MORE INFO: 415-674-1822 or nominating@aasfmarin.org



TO MAKE YOURSELF AVAILABLE FOR THE BOARD:

Submit your statement of interest no later than May 1

Serving on the Board is a three-year commitment. To be eligible, you must be 18+ years of age and an active member of A.A. with a minimum of two years sobriety.

The Only Way to Coast is Downhill

Kathleen C.

Every day I stand at turning points. My thoughts and actions can propel me toward growth or turn me down the road to old habits and to booze. Daily Reflections, page 15

During my first five years of not drinking, my program consisted of one meeting a week. Alcoholics Anonymous would receive only the absolute minimum I could spare from my busy life. Enough to keep me from drinking, no more.

The Hilldwellers Monday Night Big Book meeting featured weekly reading and discussion of Alcoholics Anonymous. There, I met Bonnie, with one year more than me. She agreed to sponsor me and helped me work the steps without scaring me away.

Of course I wasn't sponsoring anybody. No one wanted what I had.

Then one weekend my sister, who had 12th-stepped me in the first place, invited me to join her at an AA women's conference in L.A. In a small group I shared what my program looked like – a meeting, a sponsor, a commitment, but no other meetings and no sponsees. Afterwards, one of the women in the group stopped me in the hallway:

"You're going to drink!" she insisted.

"There is no standing still in this program. If you're not moving forward, you're sliding back. You're going to drink!"

She scared me.

I looked around for more meetings.

Not a difficult search in San Francisco.



There were noon meetings in Civic Center, where I worked.

There were weekend meetings in the Mission, where I lived.

There were even meetings out in West Marin County, where my family had a vacation home.

New meetings meant new people, new ways of staying sober, new ways of living life on life's terms, new commitments, new roles (being an Intergroup Rep, even writing for *The Point!*).

Eventually, a woman at a meeting asked me to sponsor her, showing me sobriety through the eyes of a newcomer. When stuff happened, as it does in sobriety – my new AA friends were there to support me.

When my daughters moved away and lived abroad for years, my fellow AAs listened to my whining about missing them. Before AA, I had driven drunk with my kids in car seats in the back of my car. Today I have car seats for my grandchildren, so I can drive them to school.

When my mother got sick and eventually died, my AA brothers and sisters helped me get through the experience without a drink. Her death brought my sisters and me closer together, a gift of sobriety.

"Of course I wasn't sponsoring anybody. No one wanted what I had."

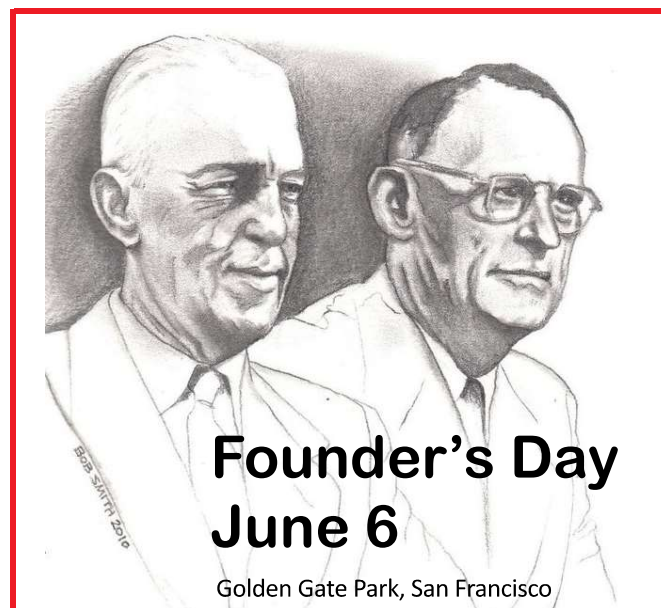
When I lost my husband, women who had lost their own partners told me that my feelings were real, and drinking wouldn't help. Thanks to the AA program, and a little bit of Alanon, he and I had a wonderful forty-one years together, with many adventures and few regrets.

AAs are not a glum lot. We joke, we party, we travel, we try new things.

Bonnie moved to San Jose, and we went to an AA event called Take Your Sponsor to Brunch. At the event raffle, she won tickets to a Sharks hockey game and invited me along for the high-energy experience.

Recently, my sister and I went to Vancouver, Canada, for the AA International Convention and had an absolute blast touring the city.

By letting go of my old minimum-program idea, I expanded my life beyond my wildest dreams. I can't wait to see what the future holds, in my 40th year in Alcoholics Anonymous.



Growth Along Spiritual Lines

Margaret W.

The word “growth” freaks me out. Growth = a biopsy, a grim basal cell furring under a microscope, so I try not to wince when I hear the phrase “spiritual growth.” In AA, I’m learning to drop my old snarky responses. My friends and my kids squint suspiciously when I say perky things like “Higher Power’s got this,” wondering if I’m pulling their leg. Who is this weird sober person, this person they can count on, who delights in life and innocent things? Where did Miss Jaundice go?

When I came into the rooms, my life was in bits. My husband -- my college sweetheart and handsome athlete party boy -- had just died, leaving me and our three kids devastated and adrift. In the years leading up to his death we had been living a lie. We passed as good parents, but I knew the truth: the

“Where did Miss Jaundice go?”

double life, the drinking and sometimes drugs. It was merciless when he got sick with cancer, and I’m embarrassed to say that even then, during chemo, radiation, all the pain, I didn’t stop drinking. I was too afraid.

It was only after my husband died that I finally realized I needed to get sober. My kids had no off-switch, no wine bottle for their grief, and so I’d better get clear-headed for them. I realized that being self-destructive was the absolute worst message for my now half-orphaned kids. I was sick and bored senseless with hating myself and with the miserable routine of drinking and deception.

And I was curious. My husband and I came from generational alcoholism on both sides, so we didn’t really know any other way of being. What was life like on the foreign planet of sobriety? I found oxygen there and advanced life forms! I came to AA for my kids, but I stayed for myself. I stayed because I felt better and started to “grow along spiritual lines” (grrr..).

In AA I discovered the kinship, laughter, shoulders to cry on, the joy of giving comfort and learning to listen better (learned in the very structure of the meetings). I have the compass of AA to navigate difficult times, the tools, the steps, a blueprint for improvement, the slogans—all ways I can live in faith, not fear. We are “not a glum lot” at all. It turns out rigorous honesty can also be rigorously funny, as when a crazy story or anecdote causes laughter and understanding nods.

In my sober life today, I work steadfastly to help my kids and their goslings, as a sort of joyful living amends. I am deeply grateful to AA for this restoration. We have fun out in nature, by the seaside, and cooking together; my husband’s boisterous spirit lives on.

Things aren’t always rosy of course: life gets lifey. I worry a lot, and I still make mistakes. I am now quicker to see when I’m in the wrong, and have tools to make amends. My sober biological sister always jokes that we are “at the slow table,” and how insane we would be if still drinking, if we’re this spacey sober! I cannot and I do not want to find out.

It has been such a relief to put down the heavy shell I developed as a kid in an alcoholic family, and hardened with my own alcoholism. Instead, I lean toward the warmth and sunlight and I let HP manage things, so I can be more honest, more helpful, and indeed grow.

 San Francisco and Marin Intergroup

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Rubicon

Radhika C.

Rubicon: noun: Ru/'rubɪ,kən/: a bounding or limiting line especially: one that when crossed commits a person irrevocably.

Enunciate it slowly: Rubicon
a river which is also a threshold,
a whisper that solidifies into decision.

Rubicon tastes of bronze and roses,
of maps unrolled at dusk,
of boots hesitating at the muddy water's edge.

When Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, romans inhaled
but the beauty of Rubicon is not a conquest,
but the tremble before it.

It's having the courage to cross a wooden rope bridge

knowing its collapse is inevitable

believing a path will be created anyhow

Rubicon is a word with a velocity and a pulse:
ru—like a rustle of courage,
bi—like a bit on a stallion,
con—like a vow sealed in a breath.

Rubicon sounds like no return,
and also the sound of becoming.

Rubicon, rubicon, rubicon
a reddish river ribboning through contours of lips, and mouth,
a boundary turns into a beginning.

Like having sent an amends letter to my ex-boyfriend, outlining my many
faults and disappointments

I'll never know if he opened it, or read it

but it was written with honesty and sent for me, unleashing me like an arrow.



Step Three—Anyone but Me

Jay F.

Like many newcomers, when I saw the word “God” in the third step I rolled my eyes and thought A.A. was some sort of religious cult. The money in the basket must go to the dear leader and spread the brainwashing message. Or it involves building a secret compound in the woods to build a spaceship to go to planet Zoldor. I really thought that at the time—ok, maybe not the spaceship, but still out there!

“I thought I had my drinking under control, but it almost killed me, so it was time to try something new.”

It took me a while to shake that conception, as there is so much mention of God all throughout the Big Book. I should clarify that I am agnostic with regards to religion and it turns out there is a whole chapter devoted to that, go figure! Of course, A.A. is not a religious cult, but rather a refuge and a design for living for those who want to stop drinking. Then I came across this passage on page 46:

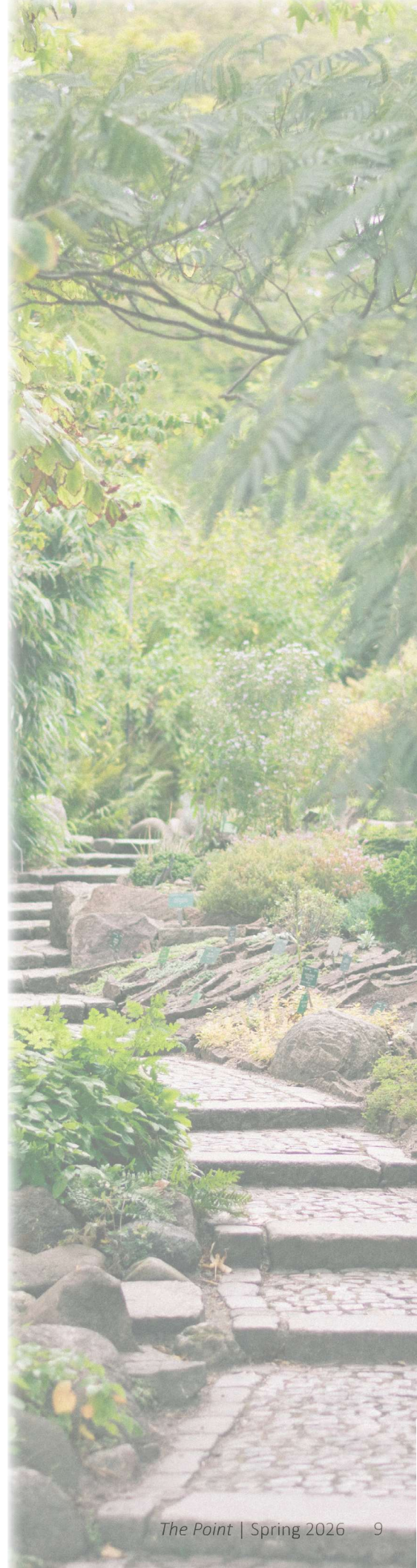
“Much to our relief, we discovered we did not need to consider another’s conception of God. Our own conception, however inadequate, was sufficient to make the approach and to effect a contact with Him.”

Wait. What?

It does say “...as we understood Him” in step three, but I must have glossed over that. I had a great first sponsor who walked me through this step and stressed that I should find my own higher power (HP). Also, it does not have to be God in the traditional sense of the word. My sponsor was a Buddhist himself, but did not try to convince me that was right for me or not. All he said was that this HP was to be anything but ME. At the time that statement seemed a bit presumptuous, especially from someone I barely knew.

For me, the third step was the realization that I cannot quit drinking on my own. I had to turn things over to an HP if I wanted to stay sober for any length of time. This HP can be of my own understanding, as long as it is not me trying to control things. I thought I had my drinking under control, but it almost killed me, so it was time to try something new. Over the years I have had different HPs, but eventually settled on the fellowship itself. The collective energy of all of us moving toward a common goal of staying sober, living honestly and humbly, and carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic is immensely powerful.

However, for me to tap into this power I must stay connected to it. That means going to my regular meetings, meeting with my sponsor/sponsees, and reaching out to the newcomer. If I do these things on a regular basis, I stay sober and my life keeps getting better. So, if you are reading this thank you for being part of the power of my recovery today.



J Must Let Go

Dede H.

I must let go
Cease to fight
Anyone or anything
Learn to live
In the moment
Take baby steps
Twelve of them
Along the path
Back home
Where we return
I can find my way
With your help too
So we don't drink

Grounded Here

Dede H.

In a good way I am grounded here

Landed hard but with familial support

Would have been homeless for years if not
for friends who cared about me

Had not burned all my bridges—yet

Fearful now as mental illness outcasts one
and is basically illegal these days

So is being homeless and friendless

I feel eviscerated tho never incarcerated
myself but relate to those less fortunate

Take care my sober brothers and sisters

Looming changes say we are not safe
except here with friends in these rooms
We pray and meditate together everyday
Holding each other up in love's shelter

AA is the Greatest Recycling Program on Earth

Diane C.

AA is the ultimate recycling center. We arrive as scrap—hopeless, helpless, and discarded. The program takes us “hopeless drunks,” washes us clean, and retools us into guides who can lead a newcomer straight out of hell.

Welcome to Rock Bottom Amusement

I suffered far longer than I had to. I only drank for twelve years, but the final stretch was pure perdition—doing the same miserable things and praying for a different miracle.

“I was always the last one there—the lonely woman at the end of the bar, waiting for the lights to come up.”

I spent my nights on a barstool at my “favorite” spot. In reality, “favorite” just meant the place that still tolerated me. Every night, I’d promise myself: *Just three drinks. Act like a lady. Go home with your dignity intact.*

It never happened. I was always the last one there—the lonely woman at the end of the bar, waiting for the lights to come up.

I didn’t have an intervention or a fancy rehab. I finally got sober by dragging my shadow into the Alamo Club in Tucson. But it made me wonder: What if we had a Rock Bottom Amusement Park to show people the truth before they lost it all?

The Attractions

We’d take the newcomers through the gates and let them experience the “thrills” of the disease:

- The “Just One More” Merry-Go-Round: A circular nightmare where the music never stops and you can’t jump off.
- The 3:00 AM Text-Your-Ex Tilt-A-Whirl: A dizzying spin that leaves a permanent digital trail of shame.
- The Blackout: You’re strapped to a barstool and hurled into pitch-black space. You’re spun around, strangers grope you. You lose your phone, wallet, keys, money, and self-respect. You throw up on your pitiful self.

For The Grand Finale: You are shot out of the darkness into blinding, unforgiving sunlight. A gauntlet of friends and relatives stands there, singing to the tune of *It’s a Small World*: “You’re a loser after all...”

That “ride” was my daily reality. Every morning was a hangover, a heartbreak, and a headline of regrets.

My personal Rock Bottom Amusement Park was a one-room wooden shack in the Shady Lane Trailer Park on Miracle Mile. One morning, in that shack, I finally called AA. Everything changed.

I walked into my first meeting and traded in my ticket for a permanent pass on the Reborn and Recycled Ride. Thank God for AA.



An Undercover Alcoholic

Barbara L.

My entry into A.A. was clandestine. I arrived at age fifty, in the guise of someone in full denial who looked like me, was educated, lived in a nice section of town, had never been arrested, never drank before five pm, and had never had an intervention. I certainly didn't belong in such a lowlife place as A.A. I found a seat in the back of the A.A. shoe department, with the slippers and sneakers, ready to make my quick getaway should anyone see me as one of them. Horrors.

I sat down because the 3rd Tradition said the only criterion was the desire not to drink. Luckily, there was no clip-board at the door, no admission process, no entry fees, no bouncer, no breathalyzer, and no greeter to check me in. A few tried to give me their numbers. Poor souls; I shut them down fast.

My entrance came after 30 years of failure at controlled alcohol management. My twenties included lots of late-night drinking without knowing how I'd get home. It ended with an unplanned pregnancy and a college eviction. A kind man said he'd marry me, and I gave the baby up for adoption. Neither of us were in any position to raise a child. In my thirties, life progressed: a growing family of five children. I worked on establishing a *Father Knows Best* ambiance, still drinking, but mostly limited to out-of-town conferences or vacations. On those occasions, all bets were off. My husband and I closed bars, woke up with killer hangovers and unspoken apologies. Luckily my husband also drank so I was never, "as bad as he was."

In my forties, I divorced my drinking-buddy-husband, who had rescued me but now asked for an open marriage. I tried to establish a way-of-drinking lifestyle, graduating from scotch to name cocktails (Brandy Alexander, Black Russians), to Southern Comfort, then finally wines. All the time I was gauging how much I was drinking, I used my own scientific approach, measuring when the effects became apparent and timing that effect before stopping. However, sometimes stopping

didn't work, so I'd drink a bit more. This was my "scientific approach" to not being an alcoholic. It was all very time consuming and didn't work.

Meanwhile, my life was less than charming. I married a wonderful, non-alcoholic ex-priest, but kept my old ways of trying-not-to-drink. The children from that first marriage now were struggling as adults, while I tried to "find myself," never thinking alcoholism might be the culprit as my drinking appeared to be fully under control: my control.

"I found a seat in the back of the A.A. shoe department, with the slippers and sneakers, ready to make my quick getaway."

I want to think I came in like everyone else, but that's not the case. I had not had a drink for five years. I had sobriety, but I would easily fly off the handle and loudly express all my displeasures. As I look around, I see folks coming in the doors from other 12-step programs, rehabs and various walks of life much like me, and I don't feel so unique. It took a few meetings for me to realize A.A. was where I needed to be all along. People spoke my language, and they talked, even laughed, about those deep-down secrets—which I'd been hiding for so many years. I wasn't the first person to give a child up for adoption, or to have a failed marriage with estranged kids seeking their own troubles. Saying out loud that I was an alcoholic at first caught in my throat, but today I say it proudly. Working the twelve steps saved my life.



Morning Practice

Ian M.

I have an 11th-step activity that I do in the morning, as well as a couple of ways I do step-11 during the day when the opportunity arises. The one I do in the morning is called morning pages, and I got it from “Artists’ Way,” by Julia Cameron. Julia Cameron is a 12-stepper who wrote a book for people to get together in small groups and reincarnate their inner artists, sort of. The Morning Pages form a key part of the experience, which spreads out over a period of a few months. I did the whole experience a couple of times in a group about 10 or 15 years ago, and I have kept doing the morning pages as a type of meditation. It is a few pages of stream of consciousness writing, expository writing more than journaling, and it is done first thing in the morning.

“The effect I feel is increased conscious contact with my higher power throughout the day”



The idea is to keep writing for three pages long-hand, every day, first thing. And my experience is it lets my thoughts flow straight out-- and clears out the impulses to edit and make stuff sound good. The writing itself is not supposed to be anything great, and in fact Julia Cameron suggests we don't look back at it at all, at least for a while. The reality is a bunch of bad writing, if you are judging it. Also, look elsewhere for something with complete sentences; it is not for that. Many things get blurted out in the effort to just get these three pages finished. Not looking back over it is a key component of the exercise.

The effect I feel is increased conscious contact with my higher power throughout the day, and in a circular way; that's how I know it's prayer and meditation. I find it a great transition from sleeping to waking. Some mornings, my mind will gravitate toward a certain turn of phrase, or toward rhymes, or toward a fragmentary or jagged style of writing. The specific descriptions don't matter though. It just shows me that there are seasons or weather in my unconscious mind. The real result shows itself throughout my day: I feel closer to the truth, less swayed by my mind, which otherwise offers disparaging narratives in which I play the main character and am “right,” etc.

Graveside Amends

Anonymous

This writing occurs on the memorial of my dad's passing 43 years ago. For decades after his unexpected, tragic death when just turning 61, I thought the best way to honor this man was to go out and get hammered. In my delusional alcoholism, somehow getting drunk seemed a proper and fitting way to pay my respects to my dead dad.

This program gave me a chance, finally, to grow, to be reborn and to address that wreckage and to clear it away. My sponsor's guidance on preparing my Ninth Step amends was the beginning. He helped me to look at the shame of nearly killing myself in a car wreck, during a blackout, after getting my first car upon college graduation. He could see, when I could not, that my father had responded with unconditional love, accepting the shortcomings of his wayward son. My father had shown compassion and understanding, and had demonstrated those traits openly to his son. As that item on my Eighth Step list became more sharply defined, my task of making amends also became clearer.

"As I watched the smoke rise on that clear and windless Colma afternoon, I knew my dad had heard me."

The details for how the amends would be delivered came to me, aided by my mother who was just turning 80. I was at the cemetery and I explained my plan to my mom. I told her that I was hoping I could make the verbal amends to my dad directly to her. I had made amends to her some months before, so she knew what to expect and readily agreed. I could then make amends to my dead dad into the eyes of a person who was alive, next to me, prepared to receive the amends, and willing to receive those amends right then and there. Into the eyes of the living, I could make amends to the dead in a meaningful way. It then seemed appropriate to take those amends and burn them at my father's gravesite a few feet away. As I watched the smoke rise on that clear and windless Colma afternoon, I knew my dad had heard me. I knew somehow, somehow, my Higher Power was getting my words to my dad. As I watched the smoke slowly disperse and vanish, it seemed to take with it all of my regret, remorse, embarrassment and shame. These hurts, which I carried for so long while drinking, were somehow being lifted and removed. I was experiencing a whole new attitude and outlook upon life; I was being reborn.

Over the years since my last drink, those folks, who greeted, welcomed me, and who had what I wanted, taught me by example. I have heard the stories of others who made graveside amends. I learned from them that my experience was neither isolated nor unusual. I know now that what my experience brought me was a true sense of peace, a sense of being reborn, without the weight of the past dragging me down. Making the amends in this way was a suggestion of someone with more time in this program than I. That person shared her experience, which also brought with it the hope that I too could experience the growth, rebirth, serenity, and peace she achieved through the practice.

I can hear her suggestion echoing within the walls of A.A. meetings, joining "More Will Be Revealed," "Keep Coming Back," "It Works When You Work It," and my two favorites: "One Day At A Time," and "Don't Drink Go To Meetings."



Relapse and Rebirth in Alcoholics Anonymous

Ramona S.

First of all, let me qualify: I'm a born drunk, a pure lush from the age of 13 when I mixed my parents' gin from the freezer with grape juice, and immediately knew. I saw alcoholism in my family and I thought I had a little time before things became dire.

It turned out, it was not that long. I quit drinking the first time in my early twenties with a string of "bad luck" behind me: three arrests, one DUI, four wrecked vehicles, ruined friendships, and little hope of ever having a relationship. I couldn't even imagine being honest with another person. I wanted a normal life, with actual activities and interests, to be able to get up in the morning and go to work, take a bus, ride a bicycle...

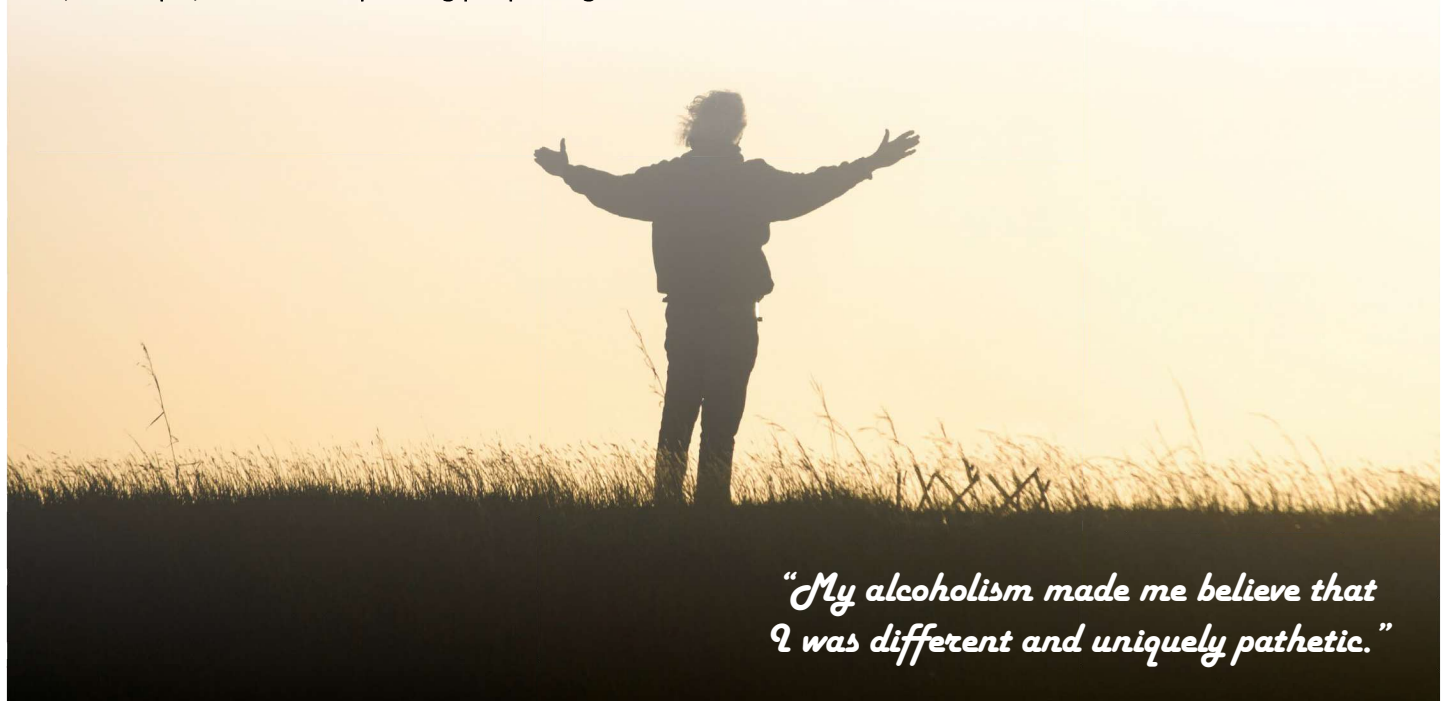
As far as I was concerned, none of that was for me. My alcoholism made me believe that I was different and uniquely pathetic. I stopped the drinking, but I didn't change my life, I didn't stop lying, I didn't stop trying to manage myself and everyone else into being the way I thought they should be. I lived for a lot of years without drinking alcohol, but I replaced it with willpower and self reliance.

Of course, I drank again. I had that moment when I believed the crazy lie that I can ever have just one and be okay. Within three months, I had made a wreck of all the things I cared about. I had endangered my kids and my marriage. I wanted to crawl into a dark hole.

I wanted something different, so I started to listen to (some of) the suggestions, and worked the steps (most of them), and got a sponsor. Actually, a string of sponsors. Some of the steps seemed unmanageable—of course they were, on my own. It took some slipping and falling and my hand up in the air as a newcomer for way longer than I would've liked. The last time I "went out," coming back in was painful. There was no lack of meetings, no lack of knowing people in AA, no lack of owning all of the literature. I wanted to pick and choose for myself what I did in my own program, and I didn't want to make any big changes. At a certain point, though, I really did want to live my life and feel joy.

Finally I began to experience joy, knowing what joy is and being a part of a community—a group of friends, a family, or a work group. Being comfortable with my role as one-of-many has been an eye-opening aspect of my recovery.

I finally started following suggestions, going to the same meetings every week, even calling people, and putting my program at the center of my life. I gave my will up to the universe, to dive in and see what would happen by leading with truth, and taking it day by day. I'm so grateful for my relapses, which I never thought I'd say. I'm also thankful now for my years of sobriety—I just celebrated 17 years in this program—and all of my mistakes are a part of that. I can't feel joy without pain, I can't feel love without fear, and I get to feel everything in sobriety. Progress in this program can be gradual, but it is sudden also: the realization that I can be content and not want to change the way I feel with a glass of wine, with a pill, or with manipulating people to get what I want. Just to be me.



"My alcoholism made me believe that I was different and uniquely pathetic."

And the wisdom to know the difference...

Peter B

As a young boy I lived in the multi-layered chaos of my parents' drinking. I didn't realize it was chaos; it manifested itself in failed promises, anger, a little family violence, some sexual abuse and a carelessness that was both hurtful and liberating. To deal with the chaos I wandered as much as I could around the neighborhoods we lived in – I think there were 8 houses in 4 cities on 2 continents before I was ten. We never really had time for our family to make friends with other families, and if I did connect with someone it ended prematurely when we moved on.

When I was fifteen, I had my first taste of alcohol. I drank a small glass of gin and tonic and thought, "Wow, there's never going to be enough of this!" As I drank more over the next few years, I began to experience a huge, defining paradox: the pleasure was all in the anticipation; afterwards, fear that there wouldn't be enough and loss of control of myself and the world, was followed by shame and ultimately despair. Instead of wandering out and about to deal with the external chaos of my family life, I took the chaos inside. I drank because I was an alcoholic, not because I'd had a bad childhood, and I became my own chaos. I dealt with it by drinking more, which wasn't dealing with it at all. I knew that I was powerless to change my addiction to alcohol, that it would always be there. I remember my secretary, who was so concerned, finally sat down with me and said, "Peter, I don't think there's anything more I can do for you." One day when I was scheduled to stand up at a concert hall and talk to the audience about the music they were about to hear, one of my colleagues took my arm and said, "You're not getting up on that stage. No one knows what you're likely to say."

So I stopped drinking. I settled into AA meetings in London and then San Francisco. The internal chaos began to seep out. Later I was talking to a friend, and the subject of my sobriety came up. When I asked her how I had changed, she laughed and said, "Every time you came into the room, I would look over your shoulder at whatever chaos you brought with you." Now, not so much.

As the internal chaos diminished, I became more sensitive to the chaos of a changing world, to the ruptures in the outer fabric of that world: inequality, misogyny, racism, the abject failures of government that we all deal with. Just as I had sought tools to deal with my internal chaos – ultimately, to stop drinking and equally importantly to stay sober – I now had to find tools to deal with this external chaos. What I learned, listening to other sober people talk, reading the literature, and doing the steps, was that the answer lay in my humility, in my discovering a true estimate of what I could do and what I could not. I returned to a simple tool that Bill had first read on the front page of a newspaper at the end of WWII, an old piece of advice which in AA we call the Serenity Prayer: accept what we can't change, change what we can, and most importantly develop the wisdom to know the difference. I thank the Serenity Prayer every day.

"I thank the Serenity Prayer every day."



The Point Honors

Individual contributions to San Francisco and Marin Intergroup made between November 2025 and March 15, 2026, acknowledging the following A.A. members:

Anniversaries

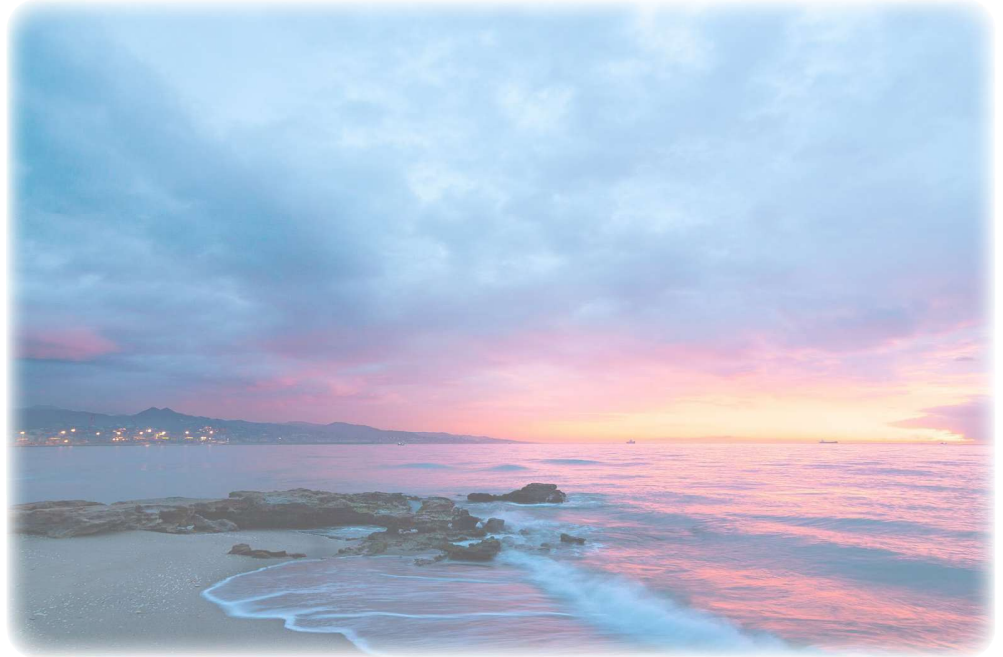
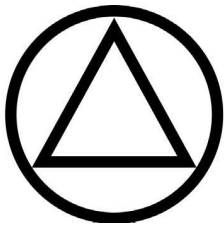
Anne C. (37 years)
Cathy P. (20 years)
Gordon G. (37 years)
Laura B. (40 years)
Linda L. (42 years)
Luke B. (36 years)
Paul H. (43 years)
Scott C. (37 years)
Sean C. (48 years)

Honorary

Martha S. (44 years)
Rene P. (45 years)
Thomas M.

In Memoriam

Robert A. (38 years)
Carolyn F. (40 years)



COMMITTEE CONTACTS

The following is a list of names and email addresses for our San Francisco and Marin Intergroup Board Officers and Intergroup committees. Please email the committees at the address below if you are interested in serving on a committee or would like more information.

CHAIR: Denis O.
chair@aasfmarin.org

VICE CHAIR: Caitlin T.
vicechair@aasfmarin.org

TREASURER: Pam C.
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SECRETARY: Claire A.
secretary@aasfmarin.org

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SF PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE
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TELESERVICE COMMITTEE
Brian B. | teleservice@aasfmarin.org

SUNSHINE CLUB
Anne O. and Jared W. | sunshineclub@
aasfmarin.org



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COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE
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THE BUZZ SUB-COMMITTEE
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THE POINT SUB-COMMITTEE
Claire A. | thepoint@aasfmarin.org

Intergroup Committees

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|--|---|--|--|
| <p>Communications Committee</p> <p>Provides communications support to Intergroup and its publications, including The Point and The Buzz.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 4th Tuesday of the month @5pm</p> <p>communications@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>Fellowship Committee</p> <p>Organizes and hosts A.A. events to promote fellowship in SF and Marin.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 4th Thursday of the month @5pm</p> <p>fellowship@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>HelpChat</p> <p>Connects sober members of A.A. via text chat with individuals seeking help with their alcohol problem.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members</p> <p>Meets as needed</p> <p>helpchat@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>Outreach Committee</p> <p>Raises awareness of SF and Marin Intergroup and our 12th Step services.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online 1st Wednesday of the month @6pm</p> <p>outreach@aasfmarin.org</p> |
| <p>SF and Marin Archives</p> <p>Collects and preserves historical A.A. materials, including objects, recordings, photographs, prints, documents and interviews.</p> <p>Service Opps: Seeking committee members</p> <p>Meets in-person at Central Office 2nd Sunday of the month @12pm</p> <p>archives@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>SF Public Relations Committee</p> <p>Provides information about A.A. to the general public and community members whose professions bring them in contact with individuals suffering from alcoholism.</p> <p>Service Opps: Volunteers to assist with tabling at events; committee members</p> <p>Meets online 2nd Monday of the month @6pm</p> <p>sfpr@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>Teleservice Committee</p> <p>A 24-hour helpline for alcoholics in need.</p> <p>Service Opps: Sunday Daily Coordinator; Teleservice volunteers</p> <p>Meets online 3rd Monday of the month. Orientation @ 6pm, followed by business meeting @ 6:45pm</p> <p>teleservice@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>Sunshine Club</p> <p>Brings meetings to A.A. members in Marin and SF who cannot attend regularly scheduled meetings, and are seeking an in-person connection to A.A.</p> <p>Service Opps: Volunteers to help bring meetings to A.A. members</p> <p>Meets as needed</p> <p>sunshineclub@aasfmarin.org</p> |
| <p>Technology Committee</p> <p>Identifies, researches, recommends and implements ways to use technology in A.A. service for meetings and SF and Marin Intergroup.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee Chair</p> <p>Meets online 1st Monday of the month @5pm</p> <p>tech@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>The Point Sub-Committee</p> <p>The Point quarterly journal features personal stories of recovery from members of the SF and Marin A.A. Fellowship.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members; artists; writers</p> <p>Meets online 2nd Monday of the month @ 5pm</p> <p>thepoint@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>The Buzz Sub-Committee</p> <p>The Buzz weekly digital newsletter features news, timely events and service opportunities in SF and Marin.</p> <p>Service Opps: Committee members</p> <p>Meets online as part of Communications Committee 4th Tuesday of the month @5pm</p> <p>thebuzz@aasfmarin.org</p> | <p>Need Help? Questions?</p> <p>Contact aa@aasfmarin.org</p> |

Service in Intergroup

Kathleen W.

Service has always been the be-all and end-all of my recovery. It's one of the three legacies; the other two are Unity and Recovery. Service is where I practice love and tolerance for my fellows. It is a training ground for learning social skills and honing inherent aptitudes while we keep A.A. going. Service is a place for growth and self-discovery.

“Service is where I practice love and tolerance for my fellows.”

I remember my first AA meeting commitment: it was to do literature. I took the N-Judah out to Irving Street. I met the secretary at the then Central Office where I purchased Big Books, 12&12s, Living Sober, and many pamphlets and brochures. I brought them back to my meeting and lined them up nicely on a display table. My co-literature partner remarked on my fastidiousness. I took it as a compliment, a behavior I learned in AA.

So began my journey. Now, thirty-eight years later, I have always had at least one service commitment at meeting level. The meeting level is different from the broader scope of service, such as Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) or General Service. The General Service Office in New York City serves the U.S. and Canada; Alcoholics Anonymous World Services (AAWS), oversees the publication, translation and distribution of AA literature. These national and global entities work alongside each other in unity.

They are separate from San Francisco and Marin Intergroup. As stated on the website, “San Francisco and Marin Intergroup provides important services for local 12th Step work, such as running Central Office, selling AA literature, publishing a local meeting directory and website and operating a 24-hour telephone hotline. Intergroup also connects the local Fellowship to serve opportunities, informs the public and professional community about AA and acts as an information exchange for announcements and events.”

The services provided by Intergroup are largely run by volunteers, alcoholics who are doing 12th-Step work because “Service Keeps You Sober!” Anyone can participate in service and it can be as simple as raising your hand to volunteer. Familiarize yourself with the many committees at the aasmarin.org website. You don't have to be an Intergroup Representative to join a committee: they all need volunteers to keep the hand of A.A. outstretched for the next alcoholic.

There are 262 groups in San Francisco and Marin, and of those, 85 are represented by an Intergroup Representative (IGR). In October 2025, Intergroup held a drive to encourage more A.A. members to become IGRs and represent their meetings. We welcomed twenty-one new IGRs as a result, and we'd like to have every group in the area represented! IGRs can spread the news of what's happening in our area and let people know what's going on as far as events that are happening, in addition to being the voice of their meeting at Intergroup's monthly meetings.

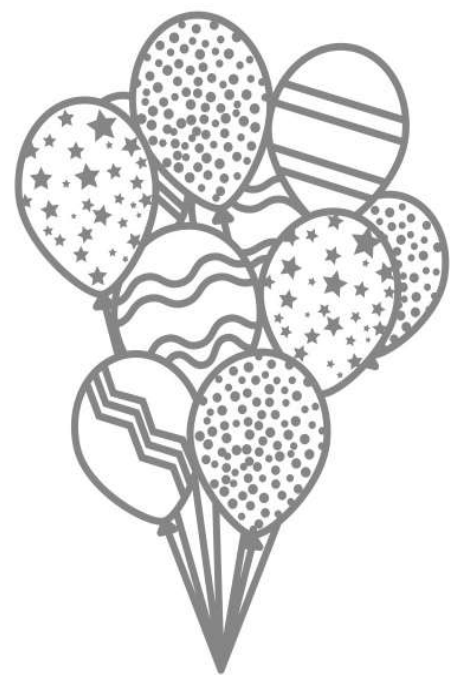
As time passed and I grew spiritually, I served in not only meeting level service commitments but in the larger arenas of General Service, H&I, Teleservice, and lately I've settled into service at the Intergroup arena. I'm an IGR for the Bernal New Day Online meeting, and I've newly joined the Communications committee.

In conclusion we recovered alcoholics can replace our drinking chant of MORE, MORE, MORE with the recovery chant for SERVICE, SERVICE, SERVICE.



Contribute to Intergroup's BIRTHDAY PLAN!

It's a way for A.A. members to show appreciation for their sobriety in A.A. and their commitment to helping others by contributing to SF and Marin Intergroup on their anniversary. The suggested contribution is \$1 or more for each year of sobriety.





San Francisco and Marin Intergroup
1821 Sacramento Street
San Francisco, CA 94109

THE POINT NEEDS YOUR VOICE!!

SUMMER THEME:
LIVING SOBER

Deadline: June 1
thepoint@aasfmarin.org



Share your experience,
strength and hope. Follow the
QR code for more information

