

# District 12 Newsletter

December 2016

## *Step Twelve*

*“Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.”*

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# 12th Step

FOR THIS ARTICLE, my AA library remains untouched. It would be an easy matter to refresh my mind with the writings of other members, to freshly assimilate their thoughts and present a rich pudding packed with stolen plums. That's called research. But the Twelfth Step is too important a part of my life for me to let this article contain any thoughts except my own. That means, of course, that it will carry the thoughts of others, but only those thoughts and ideas that have become a part of me and my way of sobriety.

The Twelfth Step is the capstone of the AA program. It announces itself as being such with its opening phrases, "Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps. . ." Whatever is to follow those words is the result of all that went before. But first let's examine the opening words.

Few of us experience the "wind. . .of spirit" described by Bill W. Indeed, very few of us experience a sudden, startling spiritual experience of any kind. Usually, the change is gradual. Yet it is no less a spiritual awakening. Whether we awaken with a bound or after much stretching, we awaken. When there is a spiritual awakening, self-centeredness, fear, and frustration are supplanted by helpful friendliness, happiness (perhaps even a touch of serenity), and fulfillment.

I joined AA a few weeks before Vinny F. did, and it was remarkable to me to watch the changes that transformed him within a few months. Why couldn't it be happening to me? I said as much to an old-timer. "Oh, you've changed just as much as Vinny," he told me with a broad smile. I couldn't believe it!

But indeed I had changed, and if my search for spiritual guidance was unsuccessful in its church-oriented aspect, the search itself continued. It went on and on, at regular meetings and at one-to-one meetings with individual members.

Incidentally, during those first, wonder-filled months, I concocted a description of my feeling about most open and closed meetings. I said that the total effect was greater than the sum of its individual parts. To put it another way, a list of the people at a given meeting and a recap of everything said were not enough to account for the height of my elation. The human element alone could not have lifted me so high. There was a mysterious, indefinable "x" factor, which I choose to call spiritual.

That there was nothing sudden about this, no bolt of lightning, no rumble of thunder, is evident from the fact that for several years I could not bring myself to go and speak in a prison. One day, as though a veil were torn away, I realized that I could speak in jails and prisons. I would not be going beyond the locked gates in order to identify with the men as prisoners. Perhaps some of them would consider me an amateur for not having lost my liberty, but that would be their hang-up, not mine. Since then, I've had good AA conversations with a number of prisoners--as fellow alcoholics.

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That leads right into the next phase of the capstone Step: ". . .we tried to carry this message to alcoholics." What message? Hope. Example. The way out. The way back. A handful of simple principles to unravel most of our snarled-up problems. A touch of humor--not taking ourselves so damned seriously. Meetings. Availability. Talk, talk, talk. The willingness to listen with understanding as the still-suffering alcoholic thrashes his way out of his mental mire. Tolerance. Guilelessness. The honesty to face situations and people, not go around them by the old, familiar route of sneakiness and subverted honesty. "Carrying the message" is all these things.

And the list could go on and on. There are the specifics of baby-sitting, housecleaning, and other chores that so many AA women have performed for shaky newcomers. There are the specifics of slogging through a snowstorm to answer a call for help, or driving a guy to a state hospital to keep him from winding up in jail. Practicing the Twelfth Step does not allow for questioning the merits of, or probable "returns" on, these actions. They are the philosophy of the Twelfth Step made manifest. When we do these things, we are carrying the message with a sense of responsibility.

It is precisely at this point in the AA program that a member's depth of understanding is plumbed. "We tried to carry the message" is a saying so battered out of shape by steady use that the deep humility of its intent is frequently lost from sight. This single saying is the basis for calling a visit to an active alcoholic a "Twelfth Step call." We know that speaking at meetings is a form of Twelfth Step work. Occasionally, we learn that we have fortuitously performed a Twelfth Step activity--helped someone without being aware of it at the time. It is the Twelfth Step in action which, to a large degree, keeps AA self-regenerative. Every meeting is an experience in sharing, but Twelfth Step activity is a more personal--and can therefore be a more deeply felt--form of sharing.

Being more personal, Twelfth Step work can become ego-oriented. Like the missionary who believes he is saving the pagans rather than himself, the egocentric member believes he is saving the other person rather than fortifying his own sobriety. Nonsense! The member is merely being given an opportunity to exercise his grasp of the program. Anyone who would take the credit for sobering up another person must also take the blame for failing to salvage those who don't sober up promptly, by the numbers and according to the book. Bunk! Let's remember that a Twelfth Step call is a visit, not a visitation.

Speaking of calling on the suffering alcoholic, it is frequently stated that "When a person wants sobriety badly enough, he'll come to AA." (The statement is often fortified with the remark "That's what I did," which makes it the word of God, of course.) That is carrying the message? I don't believe it. I didn't know enough to look for AA. Someone brought the message to me. Over seventeen years ago.

You and I know members who, having "caught" the program themselves, find the repeating drunk someone to avoid. I have heard from more than one repeater that some member has told him he cannot return to AA. Imagine one lush excommunicating another! That is carrying the message?

You and I have called on drunks whose remorse and frustration were founded principally on their not having done what the self-righteous member had told them to do. They felt beyond the pale.

The last two examples are spoiled fruit of the ego tree. The poor drunk who can't immediately catch fire from Ardent Member's magic words is discarded as unworthy. "He isn't trying," says Ardent Member. On what profound knowledge does he base his opinion? So far as I know, there was only One with the power to say, "Go and sin no more."

We have seen old-timers founder. And we have seen old experimenters finally succeed--because someone held the door open. When we close the door, we are really saying, "You have tested my tolerance and won. Your ability to go on drinking and living threatens my sobriety." So, if we can't give someone the hope implicit in the capstone Step, let's not blame the sick alcoholic. Let's admit that the case is beyond our personal ability to translate the message of AA into terms he can understand. Trying to find new translations is a great way to strengthen our own sobriety. Closing the door to the

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constant repeater, on the other hand, is an admission of our own lack of tolerance or self-belief.

The last clause of the last Step advises us "to practice these principles in all our affairs." What "these principles" are is contained in the eleven Step articles that preceded this one and in numerous other AA sources.

To me, the last four words have shed one of the most penetrating lights of all AA's illuminating suggestions and ideas for living. I interpret "in all our affairs" to mean that we can have a sane, sober, rewarding life outside our AA meetings. We do not have to be introverted AAs, safe from the lurking horrors only when among fellow alcoholics.

AA is our serum, our antitoxin. The last part of our last suggested Step tells us that AA will guard us through meetingless days. It even tells us that sobriety, like all good news, is communicable.

W. S. R. — South Norwalk, Connecticut

*This article runs a little longer than what we usually have; but I felt it really got to the heart of Step Twelve. It's reprinted from the October 1971 Grapevine. After I went to my first meeting, but before I went to my second. If I saw the article then it would have gone right over my head. If that happens to you, put it aside and read it again in a year.*

*Next year, I'll be headlining the newsletter with articles about the Twelve Traditions. So if you have an article you like or want to write one about a particular tradition. Forward it to me by email, and I'll try to get you published. Dist12.Newsletter@gmail.com*

Mike H.

## CALENDAR IN A NUT SHELL!

Date	Event
<b>Saturday Dec. 10th</b>	Winter Assembly at the Lord of Life Church, La Fox, IL Registration 8:00 a.m., Meeting 9:00 a.m., Lunch will be available All GSR's should attend; All A.A. Members are welcome
<b>Sunday Dec. 11th</b>	Annual District 12 Christmas Party Gurnee Community Church, 4555 Old Grand Avenue, Gurnee Coffee @ 2:00pm, Speaker @ 3:00pm, Dinner @ 4:00pm Children under 10 years of age will receive a present from Santa. Please bring a desert to pass.
<b>Saturday Jan. 14th</b>	Winter Committee Meeting at the Lord of Life Church, La Fox, IL Registration 8:00 a.m., Meeting 9:00 a.m., Lunch will be available All A.A. Members are welcome
<b>Saturday Jan. 28th</b>	20th Annual Hinckley Big Book Study Group Pork Chop Dinner Hinckley First United Methodist Church, 801 N Sycamore St, Hinckley, IL 60520 Fellowship 4:00 p.m., Dinner 4:30 p.m., Speaker 6:00 p.m. This year's speaker is Beth H., whose story is in the Big Book This is a free event that is run entirely on donations!

## New Meeting Tools of Recovery

A closed men's beginners meeting  
Monday @ 7:00 pm  
Libertyville Covenant Church  
250 South St. Mary's Road  
Libertyville, IL 60048

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED 12 STEP WORK

**Sponsor Panel:** ATP 1 st & 3rd Saturday 12:45-2pm  
**Back to Basics:** ATP 2nd & 4th Saturday 12:45-2pm  
**Drug Court:** 1:30pm Wednesday Court 204  
**Mental Health Court:** 9:00am Monday Court 220  
**Veterans Court:** 9:00am Friday Court 201  
**Detox:** ATP 7:30pm Wednesday, 2:00pm & 7:00pm Sunday  
**For Info Contact:** Frank M. @ 224-730-3045

### **VOLUNTEERS WE NEED A COMMITMENT!!!**

**Lake County Work Release**  
Tuesday and/or Thursday  
Once or twice a month 7:15 pm  
**Both men and women needed**  
**For more info contact: Les 847-336-3275**  
**Email copy of forms to: paulperini@att.net**

### **Help Needed at Vista West Psyc Ward Meeting**

Meetings are Tuesday Evening & Sunday Morning  
  
Come to the Vista West Cafeteria at 7:00pm on Tuesday to find out the times and procedures for the Sunday meeting

### A.A. Contacts

General Service Office: <http://www.aa.org>  
Northern Illinois Area 20: <http://www.aa-nia.org>  
District 12 Website: <http://www.dist12.aa-nia.org>  
District 12 Answering Service: 847-623-9660  
Northern Illinois Area 20 - District 12: P.O. Box 8882 - Waukegan, IL 60079-8882  
**Newsletter Submissions should be sent to Dist12.Newsletter@gmail.com**  
**District 12 Officers (Confidential – this information is for A.A. Use only)**  
If you are interested in one of the positions listed as OPEN, please contact an officer.

Position	Chair	Phone	Email	Alter-nate	Phone	Email
DCM	Ken C..	847-693-0970	kenc693@yahoo.com	Paul P.	847-849-3928	paulperini@att.net
Secretary	Kris M.	224-627-9768	kris.miller30@yahoo.com	Tracie J.	847-847-9201	tracie_jahnke@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Dave H.	224-627-5153	dhall711@att.net	<b>OPEN</b>		
Answering Service	Steve N	847-623-5076	stephenrordstrom@gmail.com	Byron W.	847-744-2325	
Archive	Tom B.	847-363-4363	tomhat609@gmail.com	Roy K.	847-293-4616	
Bridging the Gap	Ray L.	847-917-6442	r.leeper@sbcglobal.net	<b>OPEN</b>		
Corrections	Frank M.	224-730-3045	aboutme615@gmail.com	Les M.	847-336-3275	
CPC / Treatment	Bill W.	224-456-9455	whwoolridge@msn.com	Dick M.	847-404-3713	dick71308@ameritech.net
Directory	Karen F.	847-609-7354	k.finkel@comcast.net	<b>OPEN</b>		
Grapevine	Jackie S	224-247-8963	spencerjackie61@yahoo.com	Pete O.	224-381-9992	peter.ochoa73@yahoo.com
Literature	John M..	Contact thru District 12 Website		<b>OPEN</b>		
Newsletter	Mike H.	847-848-4855	dist12.newsletter@gmail.com	Jackie R.	224-610-6646	jacquelinea1241@gmail.com
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