



Absecon
Avalon
Atlantic City
Barnegat
Barnegat Light
Beach Haven
Brant Beach
Brigantine
Cape May
Cape May C. H.
Cape May Point
Dennisville
Egg Harbor City
Egg Harbor Twp.
Galloway
Linwood
Little Egg Harbor Twp.
Manahawkin
Margate
Marmora
Mays Landing
New Gretna
North Wildwood
Northfield
Ocean City
Palermo
Pleasantville
Pomona
Rio Grande
Sea Isle City
Ship Bottom
Somers Point
Stone Harbor
Surf City
Townbank
Tuckerton
Ventnor
Villas
Waretown
West Cape May
West Creek
Wildwood
Woodbine

A Letter From Bill Wilson About The Use Of The Lord's Prayer At A.A. Meetings

April 14, 1959

Dear Russ,

Am right sorry for my delay in answering. Lois and I were a long time out of the country and this was followed by an attack of the marathon type of flu that has been around here in New York. We are okay now, however, but I did want to explain my delay.

Now about the business of adding the Lord's Prayer to each A.A. meeting. This practice probably came from the Oxford Groups who were influential in the early days of A.A. You have probably noted in AA. Comes of Age what the connection of these people in A.A. really was. I think saying the Lord's Prayer was a custom of theirs following the close of each meeting. Therefore it quite easily got shifted into a general custom among us.

Of course there will always be those who seem to be offended by the introduction of any prayer whatever into an ordinary A.A. gathering. Also, it is sometimes complained that the Lord's Prayer is a Christian document. Nevertheless this Prayer is of such widespread use and recognition that the arguments of its Christian origin seems to be a little farfetched. It is also true that most A.A.s believe in some kind of God and that communication and strength is obtainable through His grace. Since this is the general consensus it seems only right that at least the Serenity Prayer and the Lord's Prayer be used in connection with our meetings. It does not seem necessary to defer to the feelings of our agnostic and atheist newcomers to the extent of completely hiding our light under a bushel.

However, around here, the leader of the meeting usually asks those to join him in the Lord's Prayer who feel that they would care to do so. The worst that happens to the objectors is that they have to listen to it. This is doubtless a salutary exercise in tolerance at their stage of progress.

So that's the sum of the Lord's Prayer business as I recall it. Your letter made me wonder in just what connection you raise the question. Meanwhile, please know just how much Lois and I treasure the friendship of you both.

May Providence let our paths presently cross one of these days.

Devotedly yours, Bill Wilson



The Washingtonian Movement

The Washingtonian movement (Washingtonians or Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society) was a 19th century fellowship founded on April 2, 1840 by six hard drinkers at Chase's Tavern on Liberty Street in Baltimore, Maryland. The idea was that by relying on each other, sharing their alcoholic experiences and relying upon divine help, they could keep each other sober. Total abstinence from alcohol was their goal. The group taught sobriety and preceded Alcoholics Anonymous by 100 years. The Washingtonians differed from the temperance movement in that they focused on the individual alcoholic rather than on society's greater relationship with liquor. In the mid-1800s a temperance movement was in full sway across the United States and temperance workers advanced their anti-alcohol views on every front. Public temperance meetings were frequent and the main thread was prohibition of alcohol and pledges of sobriety to be made by the individual. Concurrent with this movement, a loose network of facilities both public and private offered treatment to drunkards. Referred to as inebriate asylums and reformatory homes, they included the New York State Inebriate Asylum, The Inebriate Home of Long Island, N.Y., the Home for Incurables in San Francisco, the Franklin Reformatory Home in Philadelphia and the Washingtonian Homes which opened in Boston and Chicago in 1857.

Washingtonians at their peak numbered in the tens of thousands, possibly as high as 300,000. However, in the space of just a few years this society all but disappeared because they became fragmented in their primary purpose, becoming involved with all manner of controversial social reforms including prohibition, sectarian religion, politics and abolition of slavery. It is believed that Abraham Lincoln attended one of the great revivals, presumably not for treatment, but out of interest in various issues being discussed. The Washingtonians drifted away from their initial purpose of helping the individual alcoholic. Disagreements, controversies and infighting destroyed what was at one time a beneficial resource to the problem drinker, and their good work perished in the swirl of controversy over temperance and prohibition.

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We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny.



From AA Members:

My Name is Ron...and I'm an Alcoholic...

It seemed like just another day, same old hangover, same queasy feelingbut.....I felt a desperation like none other.

I didn't know how to stop drinking. My physical condition was rapidly deteriorating. Every day began and ended with thoughts of drinking, more often than not accompanied by such, frequently to excess. I had many thoughts of suicide, none of which I could carry out because of fear; fear of pain, fear of God, fear itself. My moral and spiritual condition was bankrupt. Alcohol allowed me to escape from my fear, from my paranoia, from my anger and hate. Most of all, alcohol allowed me to escape from God, thus allowing my troubled soul to be free. Or so I thought. I awoke the morning of Jan 17, 1976 fearful and shaking more than ever. The day before had ended a 3 day binge. I hadn't touched any alcohol yet and I was sick and haggard. I knew if I didn't do something about the drinking, I would begin another binge, perhaps one from which I might not recover.

I believe without a doubt that God watches over drunks. He had been sending me messages through another alcoholic, Clarence B., who happened to be the Command Master Chief of the ship I was on. Clarence wrote several articles about alcoholism for the ship's newspaper. I read those articles, at first because I was bored, but then because I began to recognize myself and my self-destructive behavior in them. I went to see Clarence that day and he recognized me as an alcoholic, even though he was kind enough not to call me one right out. We discussed my drinking, my feelings, and finally he offered a solution.

I went to my first AA meeting that night. A longtime friend of mine, Mike C., who had about 6 months sobriety at the time took me. I was so frightened that I almost backed out at the last minute. I didn't know what to expect. I was afraid I would have to quit drinking, but I was more afraid I'd never stop. During this meeting was the first time in many, many years that I became honest with myself. I finally admitted to God, to others, and most importantly to myself that I was indeed an alcoholic. I had known for a long time I was alcoholic, but there is a big difference between just knowing and accepting this fact. That night I found hope. Maybe I could really finally escape this monster that was determined to devour my soul and body.

The more I attended meetings and the more I read the Big Book and the more I learned about this disease, the more I became convinced that God had led me to recovery. I began to actually lose my fear of people, places, and things. I began to reconstruct my moral and spiritual being. The physical side pretty much took care of itself once I removed the substance that was poisoning my body. I started to become a whole human being again rather than a series of disjointed actions and emotions.

I had begun a journey of life. Emotionally repressed, I had to learn how to behave all over again. Alcohol has a very effective way of keeping our emotional development in check. I was a 31 year old teenager, perhaps even pre-teen. I wanted to continue to act like that, mainly irresponsibly, but knew I couldn't and remain sober. Amazingly, my "fear" of God began to disappear, replaced by respect.

There have been many twists and turns during my sober life, including a period of self-imposed exile from the program, which thankfully was brief since my insanity had begun to return. I lost my family due to divorce only to regain custody of my children later on. I lost both parents. I had many financial woes, but was slowly solving them. I lost jobs. I gained jobs. Many "learning experiences" were placed in my path. None of this made me drink. For every obstacle I encountered, a clear solution was provided; I only had to be receptive enough to see it. This came from complete acceptance that I was alcoholic and that I was willing to become more spiritual.

I cannot count the number of miracles that have occurred to me in sobriety. They continue to happen today. The very fact that I am sober today is a testament to that fact. I live today for today; meaning that yesterday is gone, tomorrow never comes, all I have is today because of the grace of God. I pray each morning (and frequently throughout the day) that I may do God's will, not mine. I end each day thanking God for another day of sobriety and of life. Yes, I've had a spiritual awakening. I've felt the burning bush, even though at the time it only felt lukewarm.

Today most of the time I am at peace, I know true serenity more often than not. I live my life based on the principles I have learned in the marvelous program of AA. I keep my life simple, uncluttered. It is what works best for me. I keep active in sobriety, attending meetings, doing service work, reading literature, and working with others.

Epilogue...or my search for spiritual life...

If you think you can identify with any of this, please call the hotline and ask for help. We do so willingly.

"WE HAVE GOOD NEWS, AND WE HAVE BAD NEWS. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE STEPS ARE ONLY SUGGESTIONS. THE BAD NEWS IS THAT WE DON'T HAVE ANY OTHER SUGGESTIONS."

To start a group without all this *rigmarole* that's offensive to other people. We have a book now, the Steps, the absolutes. Anyone can live by that program. We can start our own meetings.
(from Dr. Bob ...)

The Circle and Triangle symbol has long been connected with the AA Fellowship. It was adopted as an official symbol at the International Convention in St. Louis in 1955, and from that point on was widely used in the Fellowship.

In AA, the equilateral triangle represents the three-part answer (Unity, Recovery, and Service) to a three-part disease (Physical, Mental, and Spiritual) while the circle represents AA as a whole. The body should be triangular, stable, and the mind circular and open. The circle symbolizes serenity and perfection, and the source of unlimited potential. Together they represent the perfect union of mind and body.

Although in the early 1990s AA began to phase out the use of the circle and triangle on all conference-approved literature it is still widely regarded as the "unofficial" logo of the fellowship. It is used to identify AA meeting places and on AA coins to recognize sobriety time.

With Gratitude, Mark K



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Their successes, which might have been advanced to treat untold thousands of alcoholics, perished along with them.

The Washingtonians became so thoroughly extinct that, some 50 years later in 1935 when William Griffith Wilson and Dr. Robert Smith joined together in forming Alcoholics Anonymous, neither of them had ever heard of the Washingtonians. In the late 1940s through 1950, AA formed and enacted its Twelve Traditions, principles which guide the AA groups from such pitfalls as befell the Washingtonians. The lesson learned from the demise of the Washingtonians was that AA needed to avoid outside, controversial, non-AA issues, thus establishing a tradition of "singleness of purpose."

Seemingly Responsible

I was wrong. Period. I cannot justify it, nor dare I rationalize it. I could use softer words to describe it, but then I wouldn't be true to myself, my Higher Power, or what He is doing in my life today. My understanding of what responsibility is has been flawed for most of my life. Through attending AA and working the Steps, I have been blessed with a moment of clarity.

I was the firstborn of two, and my younger sister was my charge. My mother was young, only 17, and my dad was murdered before I was born. My sister's father didn't want anything to do with her or my mom, so my mother struggled to survive and provide for us. All the while, she was going back to school to become a nurse. We were the only Blacks in a town of 3500 people, and my mom always seemed to impress upon me the importance of being responsible. To help my mom out, I was "the man of the house," even though I was very young. At ten years old, I could cook, clean, sew, take care of my sister, do my schoolwork... all with very little input from my mother. It seemed like the older I got, the more I got made responsible for. Although I was a good kid and not ever in much trouble, being so responsible left me longing to just be a kid. I grew up way too fast, though I shunned alcohol and drugs, even cigarettes.

That is, until I moved out on my own at the age of 16. Being very independent and thinking I was grown, I wanted to do what grown people did – drink! It was glamorized in the media and society, and I couldn't wait.

Somewhere, my drinking became an obsession, and this once seemingly responsible young man turned into someone I didn't like. But I didn't know how to change back, and was powerless to do so. I played the blame game, held on to resentments, and just made a mess of my life.

I'm in my forties now, and after two long prison terms, I'm just now beginning to understand what it means to be truly responsible. People have tried to get me sober to no avail; when I first got to the rooms, I thought just being there would clean me up. I thank the God of my understanding for enlightening me. Today, I see that my most important responsibility is working the Steps, and allowing my God to do for me what I couldn't do for myself.

No one else can keep me sober.

Sean R

right places.

i believe that everyone is sent into our path for a reason. even the ones who cross it only for a fraction of time. even the ones who break us. and leave us. or make us question everything we ever thought we knew. keep your head up, as tired as you are. love is not supposed to hurt, sweet soul. but growing does. and i know this beyond a shadow of a doubt. even the wrong people and the wrong choices can bring us to the right places.



Submitted by Linda R



