

REGMAKER

Experience, strength and hope

Editor's Note

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



Known as "Our Meeting in Print," *The Regmaker* magazine, publishes articles that reflect the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The heart of this tri-annual publication is in the shared experience of individual AA members working in the AA programme and applying the spiritual principles of the Twelve Steps. Yet what works for one individual or AA group, may not work for another.

Because *The Regmaker* tries to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship, articles may sometimes be published that appear to contradict each other.

No one viewpoint or philosophy dominates its pages, and in determining editorial content, the editors rely on the principles of the Twelve Traditions.

We have therefore included - in what is our first edition of *The Regmaker* for 2026 - an illumination of the twelve principles that guide the everyday workings of alcoholics Anonymous. Published alongside two impactful shares and a report on the KZN Convention, we trust that the words in these pages will touch the hearts of all its readers.

If we have learnt anything on the road to recovery it is that life's challenges do not cease once we are sober. The publication of this volume has been a test of our collective resilience.



In this edition:

- An old timer shares his story and Stela tells us how she broke the cycle.
- An in-depth look at the Twelve Traditions
- A weekend of Transformation and Fellowship in KZN



Responsibility Declaration:

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that: I am responsible.

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AA Preamble



Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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Submit your story

The opinions expressed in *The Regmaker* are not necessarily those of the editorial team, the publishers or AA as a whole. They are the opinions of the individual, at the time of writing.

Please email your story to gso@aasouthafrica.org.za



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Stay connected to the Fellowship and get hold of all the AA Literature.

Share your experience, strength and hope by submitting your story of what you used to be like, what happened and what you are like now for publication in the SA version of the big book at: stories@aasouthafrica.org.za

KZN Convention: A Weekend of Transformation and Fellowship

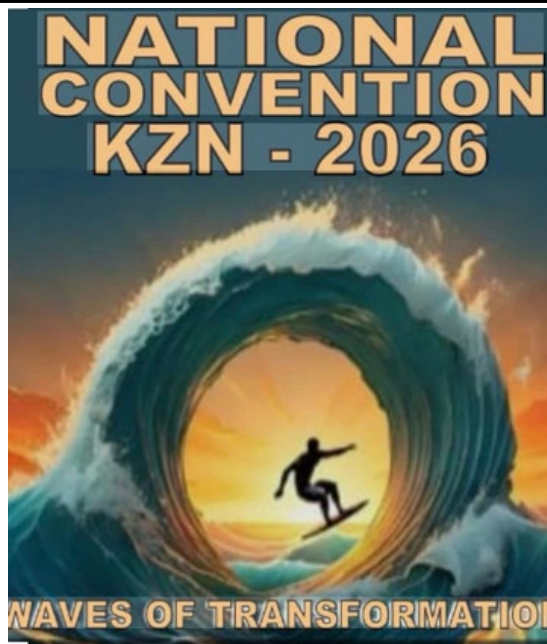
Jeff G - KZN Convention Chairperson

The KZN National Convention 2026 was a truly memorable and uplifting experience, bringing together members from across the country in a spirit of unity, service, and fellowship. Held under the powerful theme “Waves of Transformation,” the Convention created an environment that encouraged connection, reflection, and personal growth for all who attended.

With the support of GSO, KZN Intergroup, and the seven Districts, we were privileged to warmly welcome visitors to our Province. The collective effort of the Fellowship ensured that the Convention was not only a success in terms of participation and engagement but also delivered a meaningful financial contribution to both KZN and GSO reserves.

The success of the Convention was made possible by the dedication and commitment of the Convention Committee, Sub-Committees, and countless volunteers. From the early stages of planning through to execution, each portfolio contributed significantly to the overall experience.

Our Treasurer ensured sound financial stewardship with transparent reporting, while the Public Relations team kept the Fellowship informed and engaged through regular newsletters and media outreach. The Fundraising team generated enthusiasm and created accessible opportunities for members, including newcomers, to participate and experience the true spirit of AA.



Operationally, the Convention ran smoothly thanks to the efficiency of the Registration team, the well-managed logistics by the Venue Coordinator, and the seamless support provided through sound, recording, and technical setup. The enhanced décor, large screens, and strong audio quality elevated the overall experience, with the introduction of AI elements marking an innovative step forward for future conventions.

Members were also able to enjoy a vibrant and well-rounded programme. The Speaker Committee introduced a unique and bold approach by selecting first-time Convention speakers, creating fresh and inspiring perspectives. The entertainment programme, refreshments, and hospitality further contributed to a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere throughout the weekend.

Importantly, the Convention was delivered in a safe environment, with dedicated teams ensuring that all aspects of parking, security, and medical support were managed professionally. The presence of first aid services and an on-site ambulance provided additional assurance for all attendees. Valuable learnings were also identified—particularly around catering demand planning—which will guide improvements for future events.

In closing, Convention 2026 stands as a significant milestone for KZN. It demonstrated what can be achieved through unity, shared purpose, and commitment to service. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to every individual who contributed to making this Convention a success.

How I apply AA's Twelve Traditions in our home

AA was founded in 1935 by Bill Wilson (Bill W.) and Dr. Bob Smith (Dr. Bob) in Akron, Ohio. Initially, the focus was on helping individuals achieve sobriety through the 12 Steps, emphasizing spiritual and practical approaches to overcoming alcoholism. As AA grew, tensions arose concerning the interaction of the group with outside entities, leadership roles, and the risk of individual members' personalities overshadowing the primary purpose of helping alcoholics maintain sobriety.

The traditions were designed to resolve recurring conflicts, including:

- Relations with society and outside organizations
- Group autonomy versus collective identity
- Anonymity and public perception
- Finance and self-support

Deliberately modelled after the 12 Steps which guide individual recovery, the Traditions guide the collective behaviour of AA groups, ensuring that the fellowship remains a safe, nonhierarchical, and unified community.

The success of these set of guiding principles in AA has led many to adopt them in their daily lives. Long timer Andre P uses them as the foundation for harmonious interaction in his family.



Tradition 1: *Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.*

With our family, my opinion counts but as one of many. My wife and three sons all have a say, especially when they disagree with me.

Tradition 2: *For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.*

At home it is no longer about I say goes. This is self-centredness, ego driven, an old idea. In a family meeting a loving God guides our decision. My wife and I guide our sons, they make their own decision/s.

Tradition 3: *The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.*

Our group is inclusive of all who has this desire, we bar no one no matter what s/he has done. So too at home the only requirement for membership is a desire to belong to the family.

Tradition 4: *Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.*

In our family, we deal with our own challenges and do not prescribe to in-laws unless we are asked for help. We then share our experience, strength and hope, not our knowledge, the AA way.

How I apply AA's Twelve Traditions in our home

Tradition 5: *Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.*

In our family we carry the message of love and tolerance, tough as it is at times. We realize we are all sick, that we all have character defects, when a Step 4 inventory or a Step 10 apology is needed.

Tradition 6: *An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.*

We mind our own business. As a family, we focus on what we need, not what we want. We no longer suffer from the "I want more" disease.

Tradition 7: *Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.*

At home we strive to be as self-supporting as possible. When times were difficult, we borrowed where necessary and repaid every cent. When our sons started university, we arranged payment plans with their institutions to settle the fees.

Tradition 8: *Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.*

At home we needed to consult with an AA friend who is also a qualified counsellor to help with a concern we had. We paid him for his service because he does this as his profession. He was not doing a twelfth step call.

Tradition 9: *A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.*

At home my wife and I run the home in the best interest of all. When our sons were still living with us, it was our responsibility to give them an education and see to their needs. Even now it is still our responsibility to give guidance where needed. We do this with love not from an attitude of being in charge.

Tradition 10: *Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.*

At home we do not allow disagreements to lead us to isolate someone in the family. We respect that each family member has an opinion. But we do not allow this opinion to divide our family.

Tradition 11: *Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.*

In the workplace, and when I do CPC/PIC work, when the moment arises, I break my anonymity when I am guided to help someone as our responsibility pledge dictates. I tell the person that my new way of life is because of what I have learnt in AA. He doeth the work. I gave our doctor a copy of our big book and permission to give any patient who reaches out my number.

Tradition 12: *Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.*

At home we do attack the person but instead address the concern. Everyone speaks, at times we disagree, but we strive not to be personal. Let the person without sin cast the first stone. This practice continues to guide my recovery and help me build healthier relationships with those around me.

How Stela got her life back

**A design for living -
How the 12 Step
Programme allowed
Stela to tap into a
Higher Power**

I come from a very small family. My parents immigrated to South Africa from Germany and I'm an only child. My mom was diagnosed with schizophrenia when I was still quite young. Not much was known about the disease at the time. For example, I can remember throwing a temper tantrum when I was about six years old and my mom gave me a half of one of her pills. So even at the age of six, I needed to work through the 12 steps.

After my father passed away in 2011, my life became a train wreck of one thing followed by the next. My mom had to be booked into an old age facility, and was then diagnosed with stage four cancer three months after I got out of rehab.

I had no clue how to deal with that news just three months after sobering up and trying to focus on my recovery. So the fellowship became my safety net. For everything that happened in my life, I could reach out for help. And that's the key; the realisation that I was not going to make it. It's that brutal honesty, that step one, that admission.

So I reached out to my sponsor at the time who guided me through a step by step plan to simply get through the day. I would have to call after putting on the coffee, taking a shower and arriving at the office. That process is exactly like The Twelve Step programme. It's a design for living that puts you in touch with a power greater than yourself. That power will show you what to do because I don't know what to do.

I don't. I frequently get myself into self-imposed sticky situations. For example, I recently got into this relationship. Our relationship lasted for about for three years before the jealousy got really hectic and then he was accusing me of having a relationships at the office. I didn't know how to get him out of my life.



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But then a fellow said something which changed my outlook; "all you need to know is how to count." Step one - admit that you can't. Step two - come to believe. Step three, - make a decision. Do you want to live in the problem or do you want to live in the solution? So I made a decision. I did the entire programme and although it took thirteen visits to various rehabilitation centres, I'm here. I'm sober.

Although I've been in recovery for a couple of years now, it doesn't mean I'm cured from this disease. Sure, I haven't picked up in a long time, but I'm not cured. All I need to do is stub my toe against something, and then my whole world falls apart. Then the one solution that I will gravitate towards that always worked for me is the bottle.

But after having my spiritual experience as a result of these twelve steps, I found another solution which helps me to deal with whatever life throws at me. As a case in point, I finally found the strength to follow through with the legal process required to get a court interdict and resolve that relationship which was slowly taking me back to living in fear. That is not my doing. That is how God orchestrated everything in my life.

I remember one incident that happened right at the beginning of my recovery. I was having a moment of panic after learning that my mom had to visit another specialist, which meant that I would have to get her out of the old age home. I didn't know which doctors to approach for the written consent that I needed. I was going from one doctor to another but none of them would give me the letter.

And then I went to the bathroom, and had this moment of intuition. A thought flashed across my mind which asked: "Why don't you go to your current doctor?" The solution had been right in front of me but I couldn't see it until I was open and aware. My experience tells me that I have only been able to see these moments by doing this twelve step programme.

Sometimes I still need to check in with my fellows and my sponsor, especially when I'm faced with a difficult problem. They help me to distinguish the truth from my ego.

More importantly, I have come to know silence. I can now be still. I'm okay sitting alone in my house with no music. I couldn't do that before. I always had to have the TV on, or the phone ringing, or a video playing, or something. But now, I can be alone.

My advice to the newcomer is to simply complete this whole process. The twelve steps helped me to get in touch with that power. And if I get lost or confused, there's always that gentle reminder to simply count. Count from Step one through to Step Twelve.



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Service in AA – What it means to me

During my early years in AA, my sponsor always gave me a stock response whenever I approached him with a personal problem - "do service!" He'd say. I often doubted his virtue as a sponsor because of this 'one size fits all' type of advice. But I soon discovered that these old timers have earned their stripes in the fellowship and that's why they are still sober. This was good, solid, unambiguous guidance which was to provide me with many years of solid, happy sobriety in AA.

As I grew in the fellowship, I began to attend workshop meetings, that discussed Steps, Traditions and Concepts. I learned about our three legacies (Recovery, Unity and Service) and began to see how service fitted into this whole picture and what an integral part of the triumvirate it formed.

Applying my mind further to this idea of service, I began to trawl my past for any remnant of religious creed that I still had intact. Lo and behold, the idea of service came up there as well. Phrases such as "service unto others; selfless service; and service to humanity is service to God," began to pop up as I started to see the parallels. I realized there was no real distinction between what my religion was asking of me and what AA was talking about. This was a universal concept that had its origins in divinity. I then came to believe I was in a God-given fellowship.

This concept of Service was not the sole preserve of religion, or even A.A.- it has broad applications and a long history. If one has to trace it to its roots, it goes back to primeval times and beyond, to the time of Creation. It is based on the laws of physics - the law of action and reaction, the law of Cause and Effect. As the Bible tells us, "As you sow, so shall you reap," ad infinitum.

I realised that to be blessed, or more specifically, to stay sober, I need to help others. It was a secular epiphany! Everything just fell into place from then on. My sponsor was right after all. This is not to say that we should engage in service to the exclusion of everything else. We still need to be mindful of other "oughts" in A.A. like attending meetings and contributing to the kitty, etc. But this revelation changed my outlook and thus began my service sojourn in A.A. and I've never looked back.

Starting off from the setting out of chairs and ash trays (when those were allowed), to making the tea at meetings. To being group secretary, treasurer, chairman, GSR, delegate, chairman of PIC KZN, chairman of the rally committee, secretary of convention 2002, and a host of other sundry duties. I am currently national archivist at GSO and there is still a lot more to be done.

I have realised that it doesn't matter at what level (group, district, area, province) you serve, just serve. Something happens to a person when he or she serves the fellowship. It's difficult to pinpoint what it is, but there is a general feeling of strength, serenity and accomplishment that permeates one's entire being.

This is what the elders of my religion and old timers in A.A. spoke about all those years ago. They had the 'elixir of life' and it was the simple act of helping others, of serving. Selfless service implies anonymity; anonymity implies humility; humility is the absence of pride; pride is the leader of the pack of our seven deadly sins; what is left is pure love, peace and happiness-the very essence of life. Isn't that what life is about?

When there is no stress or restlessness, there is no reason to pick up that first drink (hopefully). Getting involved in service in A.A. has helped me remain happily sober, peaceful, content and productive at work, home and in society. Now why would I want to go and change that winning formula?

From Alco Solo - A Decision and a Prayer

For some years I assumed the decision to turn my will and life over to "God as I understood Him" took place when I prayed the well-known prayer on page 63 of the Big Book. But in retrospect, I discovered that my decision had already been made! The last paragraph on page 62 reminded me of this:

"Next we decided that hereafter in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director." The decision was made before the prayer! AA's Big Book states that the astounding promises on page 63 begin to happen right away - which suggests that it all starts before the prayer.

I especially appreciate the promise of being reborn. "As we felt new power flow in, as we enjoyed peace of mind, as we discovered we could face life successfully, as we became conscious of His presence, we began to lose our fear of today, tomorrow or the hereafter. We were reborn." To me, this means that empowered by God, I can now see and act on the truth as explained by the saying: "I can't. God can! I'll ask Him to help me." And I would like to add the word: NOW.

Recognizing the ultimate source of our power, my sponsor took almost no time at all between my decision to accept a new Employer and the prayer to offer myself unreservedly to God. Immediately after completing Step Two, we prayed the Third Step prayer together. I have not had to drink alcohol ever since and those promises began to manifest shortly thereafter and have continued to this day!

Yet the Third Step decision followed by a prayer-of-askance alone, does not provide comprehensive assurance of continued sobriety because a decision without action is just an intention. Our decision, the Big Book reminds us, "...was only a beginning."

Someone once said: "God will help you with the steps, but He won't do them for you." It means that if we are to build an everlasting defence against drink then we must do as we are told and immediately launch into a course of vigorous action. That action is simple. We must follow the clear-cut Twelve Step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous as detailed in our basic text - The Big Book.



My sponsor was just as unyielding about following the Big Book's suggested timetable for the nine remaining steps. I was so lucky to find a Big Book sponsor. Thank you, God!

Bob S

