

REGMAKER

STORIES. STRENGTH. HOPE. TOGETHER WE GROW.

SPRING INTO *SPONSORSHIP*

New beginnings.
Fresh connections.
Stronger together.

IN THIS ISSUE

-  Voices of Experience
Real stories, real impact
-  Tools for the Journey
Practical wisdom for everyday life
-  Moments that Matter
Highlights from our fellowship

REGMAKER

Experience, strength and hope

Editor's Note



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.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS



In this edition:

- #AASATurns80
- The Gift of Sponsorship
- A story of hope and gratitude

SAVE THE DATE



AASA 80TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

TEAMS ONLINE MEETING

18 OCTOBER 2026 | 16H00

MEETING ID

372 037 493 472 510

PASSCODE

gw7B9T4S

JOIN THE MEETING

teams.microsoft.com/join/372037493472510
?p=plqkNykZvjnUtlUm1D

REGMAKER

Experience, strength and hope

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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Find a group near you

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

SHARE



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



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.

AA SA celebrates 80 years of hope, healing and recovery

Gavin C - National Secretary CPC/PI

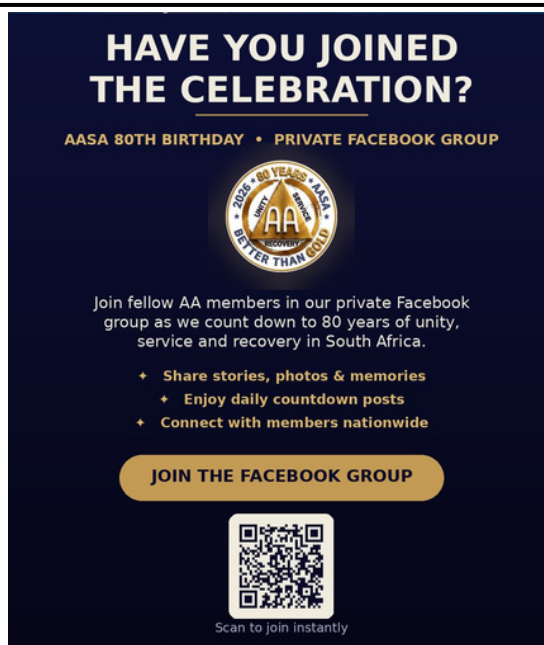
As Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) South Africa marks its 80th anniversary, the organisation is reflecting on the remarkable story of how the fellowship first took root in Johannesburg in 1946 – a journey that has since helped thousands of South Africans achieve lasting sobriety and rebuild their lives.

In 1946, two South Africans independently discovered AA through an article in Reader's Digest and wrote to the organisation's headquarters in New York.

Solomon M., a court interpreter from Alexandra, Johannesburg, found a discarded copy of Reader's Digest in a rubbish bin. Inspired by what he read, he wrote to AA in the United States. Although he is recognised as the first member of AA in South Africa, he did not establish a local group.

Shortly afterwards, Arthur S., a stockbroker from Parktown, Johannesburg, also contacted AA's headquarters in New York. After receiving extracts from the Alcoholics Anonymous ("Big Book"), he gathered six friends for what became South Africa's first AA group meeting on **18 October 1946**.

AA's headquarters later introduced Arthur and Solomon to one another, and they began attending meetings together. Their pioneering efforts, together with those of other early members such as Val D., laid the foundation for the nationwide fellowship that today supports thousands of South Africans on their journey to recovery.



"Our history has its roots in Egoli – the City of Gold," said Gavin Crewe National Secretary CPC/PI.

"For 80 years, our members have discovered something far more valuable than gold.

Through the AA programme and the strength of our fellowship, we have found sobriety, regained our sanity, and experienced the lasting gifts of serenity, joy and freedom from self-centred thinking."

"Today, thousands of South Africans continue to find hope and recovery through AA. Just as we did 80 years ago, our doors remain open to anyone, anywhere, who has a desire to stop drinking."

The year-long commemoration will begin from 18 October 2026. The highlight during the year will be the AA National Convention, scheduled for the Easter weekend from 27th to 29th March 2027 at the Deutsche Internationale Schule in Johannesburg.

The upcoming 80th anniversary year will focus heavily on public awareness of what Alcoholics Anonymous does and how people who have a desire to stop drinking may reach AA for help.

Individuals seeking support for themselves or loved ones may call the 24-hour AA South Africa **National Helpline at 0861 435 722**.

Media enquires should be directed to Gavin C -

gso.cpcpi@aasouthafrica.org.za; +27 81 4540825; <https://aasouthafrica.org.za/>

A story of hope and gratitude

The role of gratitude in maintaining sobriety and enhancing one's quality of life

My name is Steve, I entered the doors off AA 19 December 2015. After a couple months of sobriety, I started my journey in finding a connection to my higher power. I was raised Catholic, but I honestly never believed in God. I was involved in the church for around 10 years starting with Catechism when I was about 6yrs old all the way to being confirmed at the age of 16. I honestly just got confirmed because I was keeping my mom happy but deep down I didn't believe, and I had a bad experience in my last camp just prior to confirmation which pushed me even further away from God. I had also started drinking about a year prior to being confirmed.

I think back to when my drinking started getting heavier and remember that I believed that I could feel and get closer to God by drinking. How wrong I was. By the age of 19 my mom was already calling me an alcoholic and I was blackout drinking. I had already realised by this time that God was not in my best friend the bottle, but by then I was hooked.

It took me 18yrs of trying to cope with life as an alcoholic by myself. In that time, I had multiple car crashes, many hospital visits and a number of failed relationships. My body even gave up but none of this compares to the two occasions I experienced total spiritual collapse.

The first was around 2006 when I lived in the UK. It was a very dark and lonely time. When it happened again, I decided no more, and for the second time I entered the doors of AA on the 19th December 2015. I was completely broken. I was a hollow, shell of a human and I did not see the point of living. I was convinced I would not see 40 - I was 37 at the time. Without AA I'm almost certain that I would have ended up killing someone in a driving drunk accident, died from organs failure or ended up in jail.



A story of hope and gratitude

The role of gratitude in maintaining sobriety and enhancing one's quality of life

Thanks to my best friend entering recovery about a month earlier, I had someone I could reach out to when I decided to sober up. He took me to my first meeting on the 19th which was very weird at first. It took a bit of getting used to but I stuck with it and threw myself into the 12-step programme.

- I attended as many meetings as I could
- I found a sponsor who I still have to this day
- I found a home group and started doing service
- I worked the steps
- Through the steps I started forming a relationship with my Higher Power

I learnt to understand *the power of now* through the teachings of sages like Eckhart Tolle and Allan Watts. I also started meditating in that first year of recovery. Meditation reminded of doing the programme just for today, just for this hour or just for this minute. This combined with the steps, meetings and service started me on the journey of gratitude.

A decade later, not much has changed. I still practice the program, still speak to alcoholics and I am just as thankful if not more today than I was back then. I have so much to be grateful for since I gave myself completely to this simple programme:

- A roof over my head
- A warm bed
- Warm food every day
- A loving family who trusts me now
- An amazing best friend and wife
- Our amazing furbaby kids

I even started to excel at work. After entering recovery I grew in my role and was lucky enough to get two great jobs since then. Although I am not yet financial free, I cannot even compare my financial situation back in 2015 to what it is now - I have done a total 180. It took hard work, dedication and sacrifice but we are getting there, and it is amazing.

My gratitude comes from the relationship I have cultivated with my higher power. I came to believe not in the God I was raised to believe in but in a Universal Power greater than me. This power is in everything and when I am connected to it, I know everything is as it should be. If I maintain this connection, I know everything will work out. It may not be the way I want it, but it always works for me.

I have also realised that the more grateful I am, the more life just seems to flow. I find it easier to get through difficult situations and I come out on the other side even more grateful, especially when the pain passes and my good health returns. It's all about being grateful and thankful every morning and throughout the day. Then when I go to bed I realise how completely my life has changed. I know life is full of challenges but if I keep an attitude of gratitude, I will see the change as positive and, my life will keep flourishing.

Steve
Midrand Group

The Gift of Sponsorship

My journey into Alcoholics Anonymous was scary and overwhelming. I didn't know where to begin or what was expected of me. When I was introduced to my sponsor, I immediately felt a sense of security and safety. She gave me direction when I felt lost and helped me find my place in A.A.

Our journey together included a weekly meeting, reading the Big Book and regular catch-ups. She was strict, and at the time I didn't always appreciate her discipline or the structure she expected from me. Looking back, I can honestly say I needed to shut up, listen and do what I was told. In time, I came to understand the "why" behind her guidance.

With her in my life, I didn't get lost in the crowd. I belonged. Her guidance gave me a safe place to learn how to live differently. She was simply passing on what her sponsor had given her. She was paying it forward. A.A. describes sponsorship as one alcoholic sharing their experience, strength and hope with another.

One quote that particularly resonates with me is: "You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you" Those words have taken on an entirely new meaning now that I am a sponsor myself. Today, my love, respect and understanding for my sponsor have grown tremendously. I appreciate the time, patience and effort she invested in me. I also understand more clearly why she sometimes seemed so hard on me. Being a sponsor has given me a completely different perspective.



I have discovered that I benefit from sponsorship just as much as my sponsees do. I truly need them as much as they need me. Sponsorship is not about one person having all the answers; it is about walking together, sharing experience, and carrying the message forward.

As a woman working with other women, I am privileged to be part of a strong network of courageous, generous and remarkable women. What a gift this has been.

My responsibility as a sponsor is to take my sponsee through the Twelve Steps and guide her in applying them to her life. Ultimately, however, she is responsible for implementing the programme—and I am responsible for doing the same in my own life.

Sponsorship has taught me that recovery is not something we keep for ourselves. We receive it, we live it, and then we pay it forward.

“Alcohol had me beat” - My story

Alcohol had me beat. It had me up against the wall and was choking the life out of me. Alcohol, my friend, my ally, my solution, wanted me dead. I'd lost the will to live. I could not live with it & I could not live without it. I was utterly powerless and had no idea how to get myself out of the hell I was living in.

I drank alcoholically from the first sip I had at 13 years old. One night I snuck into my mother's liquor cabinet which was hardly ever opened & thought that drinking rum straight out of the bottle was a good idea. I woke up the next afternoon with zero recollection of the night before other than dancing in the lounge & knocking into a cupboard, which I suspect woke up my mother & stepfather who must have found me horrifically drunk.

I never saw my mother again after that day. That is something I had to deal with & suffered massive shame from. In recovery, I only realised while doing the inner healing work in recovery, that I had struggled with shame and rejection; something I'd never fully accepted before I quit drinking. While doing Step 4 with my sponsor, I was able to let go of the heavy burden of resentment that I carried against my mother for many years.

I was a good, well-behaved kid that turned into a rebellious teenager. I lived with my father who provided well materially & financially but was emotionally unavailable. I had to sort myself out & learned quickly that there was no one to ask for help or to share my feelings with. I drank as a typical teenager would, well at least that's what I thought. I never got into any serious trouble and it was fun. However, in my late teens I became a drug addict & almost died. I got into university after matric & got involved with the wrong party crowd. I never thought I'd end up a drug addict, but I did. At 20 years old I was a drop out & addict.

I got cleaned up, yet I still drank - ignoring warnings that I couldn't use any substances whatsoever including alcohol. I thought I could never be an alcoholic. It is only alcohol, not hard drugs. I drank every day, initially for the fun of it but it progressed from the odd glass to drinking bottles. I told myself that I was stressed & needed an outlet “to relax”. The weekends started to become a blur. The blackouts became frequent occurrences, waking up not remembering what I had said or done the night before. That feeling of absolute horror of yet another evening being ruined due to my drinking became the heavy, daily burden I carried. I would wake up in the morning wishing I had died in my sleep. Surely that would be better than this hell of an existence I was living.

I started drinking in the mornings from early on, as that was the best ‘cure’ for a hangover. Friends & family warned me that, “That is how you become an alcoholic.” I laughed at them. Then I started drinking at work & had to drink even before driving to work. Many mornings I cannot even recall how I got to work. I would pour my wine into a plastic water bottle & sip it throughout the day to “take the edge off” & just function normally. I could not function without alcohol. I lost my appetite & I could only drink. I was underweight, malnourished, sleep deprived & falling part, mentally, emotionally & physically. I literally felt like I was dying and I didn't know what to do.

Then I had a nervous breakdown in June 2019 which forced me to book myself into a psychiatric hospital under the dual diagnosis of addiction and mental health. Yes, I was depressed and anxious but that was due to my heavy drinking. I didn't bother to hide my drinking when I was booked in because I knew I had a serious problem. Deep down, I knew I was an alcoholic. I was just too ashamed to let my colleagues know how I had landed up in a mental health facility, so the mental health excuse was given.

“Alcohol had me beat” - My story

There was a NHI meeting on my last evening at the facility, an NA meeting. They told me that as soon as I was discharged, I needed to get to an AA meeting. I followed their advice, found a meeting and attended. I was initially petrified but was welcomed with hugs and smiles. The format of the meeting saw one speaker share on one of the 12 Steps. On that day, the speaker dealt with Step 4. That speaker became my sponsor.

I saw these people at the meetings. I saw them laughing, joking and genuinely happy. How? I had no clue what they were talking about, but I kept coming back. I wish I could say I remained sober, but I did not. Two relapses later & a 28-day stint at a rehab facility, I can say that my last drink was on 22 September 2019.

I knew what it was to be powerless over alcohol. I understood when they spoke about the mental obsession and physical allergy. My mind always tells me that it is a good idea to drink, while my body always assures me that I cannot, because once I start drinking, I cannot stop. I knew I had to absolutely surrender to this program and the 12 steps, follow the suggestions and do the work. It works IF you work it; a very important IF there. Nothing else had worked to keep me sober. AA was my last option. I had tried all man-made methods and they had all failed.

But after admitting my powerlessness and working the programme, the obsession to drink has left me and I have no desire to drink no matter how bad the days get or what life throws at me. I have had the physic change sufficient to overcome alcoholism - my spiritual awakening. I have realised that life carries on whether I am sober or not and it is much better handled and lived with a sober mind, free from shame, remorse and self-hate. I can look back at my life and start healing. This program doesn't just keep me sober; it also helped me heal and learn to love and understand myself. My self-awareness has grown since walking through the doors of AA.

I have a relationship and connection with a Higher Power/God of my understanding that has opened a whole new world for me. Even though I still struggle a bit with financial security, AA's 9th Step Promises have come true for me. I am of use to God and to others. I sponsor ladies and do 12-step calls on our helpline. I am of service at my GSO office, humbly serving wherever I am needed and if I'm asked to share, I do so gratefully & willingly. I have learned that I cannot keep my sobriety without giving it away. It was so freely given to me and I freely give it to those who have come into the programme after me.

I thank God for AA and thank AA for helping me find God 😊

Claire E-(Ladies Big Book Meeting Garsfontein- NPAA)
Sobriety Date: 23 September 2019



Sponsorship and Sisterhood

For my first three years in AA I didn't sponsor a single woman. I had a sponsor but I wasn't honest with her. I didn't trust her. Somehow I still did what she suggested: found a home group, picked up a service position, read the big book and worked the steps, prayed on my knees...When we started working together I kept it a secret that I wasn't sober but, by some miracle that happened because I was doing these things, my life started feeling safe enough to stop.

In my fourth year of recovery we stopped working together, those things started to fall away and my life felt darker and harder than ever before. I knew what I had to do and, though it took a few months, I finally found my next sponsor. She had something I wanted, and I was desperate so I trusted her. I was honest with her.

She told me that I was to be available for sponsorship immediately (I was almost four years sober at the time) and that my sobriety was at risk if I didn't make a proper effort to help other women. So, I did. I got my first sponsee and four years later we are still working together.



I have watched her work the steps and then take other women through them. I have sat in rooms with her and those women, and the women who they went on to do the same with and felt a level of love, peace and connection that I didn't think would ever be accessible to me.

In the beginning it didn't feel like I thought it was supposed to. Sometimes it was awkward, I felt disconnected, I didn't feel like I was helping, I struggled to find the right words to say. My sponsor told me to give it time, "It will come," she said.

As always, she was right. The relationships I have with my sponsor and my sponsees are the most precious I have in my life. They are holy. The Big Book says, "To watch people recover, to see them help others, to watch loneliness vanish, to see a fellowship grow up about you; to have a host of friends - this is an experience you must not miss. We know you will not want to miss it."

My sponsor always says that we are all just walking each other home in the dark, and the hope is that some women out in front of us have just enough light to lead the way. To be guided in that way, to be a part of that sisterhood, to have a hand that is willing to hold mine whenever I reach out, and enough support to reach my own hand out to the woman just behind me. This used to feel impossible but somehow it is the thing that shapes how I live my life today. This is the thing that gives me purpose.



THE POWER OF 7TH TRADITION

*Self-support
is freedom.
Our gratitude
in action.*

“ Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions. ”



The 7th Tradition reminds us that our groups remain strong and free when we rely on **our own members for support**, not on outside sources.

It keeps A.A. autonomous, protects our primary purpose, and ensures we are accountable to no one outside the Fellowship.

WHY IT MATTERS



Preserves Our Freedom – We remain free from outside control and influence.



Ensures Our Survival – Our groups and services can carry the message of recovery to those who still suffer.



An Act of Gratitude – We give back a small part of what was so freely given to us.



Supports the Whole Fellowship – Contributions help carry the A.A. message locally, nationally and worldwide.



Strengthens Unity – When we support A.A. together, we stay focused on what truly matters: carrying the message.

When we give...



We keep A.A. strong and self-reliant.



We ensure the message reaches the still suffering alcoholic.



We honor the help we received with a spirit of gratitude.



We help A.A. carry the message worldwide – one group at a time.



TOGETHER WE MAKE A.A. POSSIBLE



Our responsibility. Our privilege. Our Fellowship.

ONE DAY AT A TIME



EVERY CONTRIBUTION, NO MATTER THE SIZE, MAKES A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE.