

Connecting with A.A. as a Whole: Understanding Self Support

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Aloha Kakou. This translates to 'May there be friendship or love between us.' My name is Cheryl and I am an alcoholic. I am truly honored to be serving as the Panel 65 Delegate for Area 17, Hawaii. I serve on the Corrections committee and the committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums. I received a loving invitation to present on the topic 'Connecting with A.A. as a Whole: Understanding Self Support.' Upon receiving the email, I was immediately overcome with a great deal of angst. After consulting with my service sponsor, past delegates and my Higher Power, it all seemed a bit more manageable. I remembered what a friend of mine told me years ago when I was to give a presentation to a large group. She said, 'Take God with you when you go to the podium.' And, I'm following her advice, I brought my God with me, to stand right here beside me.

There are doubtless many aspects to this topic. Two stood out. First, there was the experience of the early A.A.s. As A.A. grew, the need for funds to support an office, and enable the word of A.A. to spread became apparent. Bill W. and some of the early members felt the only way for the Fellowship to survive was to approach philanthropic institutions or individuals for funds. Fortunately for A.A., one individual approached, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., replied 'I am afraid that money will spoil this thing' at the same time as he endorsed the Fellowship. Early A.A. members began to see the concern presented by accepting outside contributions described in the cliché, 'He who pays the piper calls the tune.' Thus began our policy of self-support.

My loving invitation suggested the possibility of incorporating the Conference Theme, 'Our Spiritual Way of Life: Steps, Traditions and Concepts. This got me thinking about the spiritual side of the Seventh Tradition, the second aspect I'll address. When I got to these rooms, I didn't know anything about spirituality. I was a very concrete thinker, always trying to figure things out. And, I didn't understand words like trust, faith, humility, willingness and acceptance. It took me a long time to see the spiritual aspect of contributing to the Seventh Tradition. So, what does our Seventh Tradition make possible?

- It keeps the doors of A.A. meetings open for all of us. By doing that, it saves lives. I would not be here today were it not for A.A. and I have heard this sentiment expressed over and over again in meetings.
- It supports Intergroup/Central offices where our phones are answered and A.A. literature is available.
- It funds G.S.R.s to area assemblies connecting A.A. group members to A.A. as a whole.
- It supports districts, D.C.M.s, area committees, officers and the area delegate so they can meet and discuss local issues.
- Alcoholic inmates get Big Books.
- Professionals get correct information about A.A.
- It funds the area delegate's yearly attendance at the General Service Conference where the voices of the home groups in the area are carried and shared with 92 other delegates from the US, Canada and Puerto Rico.
- It supports the General Service Office. What if there were no G.S.O.?

- There would be no Big Book, Twelve and Twelve, Grapevine or any of the 68 translations of the Big Book (with 13 new translations pending), or other literature which has been published in over 87 languages worldwide. Looking at the display of foreign language Big Books always touches my heart. Our contributions to the seventh tradition have made it possible for A.A. to spread throughout the world and offer a solution to suffering alcoholics from Nunavut near the North Pole to Iran and China. Talk about going to any length to carry the message!!
- G.S.O. helps maintain unity and effectiveness of our Twelfth Step work. Without G.S.O., the groups would not be connected to each other through the general service structure. There would be wide variation in A.A. in different geographic areas.
- A.A. Loners wouldn't receive the letters from other A.A.s, a service G.S.O. facilitates.

If it were not for these entities, many new people would never discover the miracles of A.A.

Our contributions to the 7th tradition are a material expression of our commitment to A.A. as a whole. The amount of our contribution is secondary to the spiritual connection that unites all groups around the world. (F – 42, Self-Support card)

In closing, I want to refer to an article in the October, 1967 Grapevine. Bill W. answers the question of why should we support all these services financially. He said "The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office . . . or the world service Headquarters... Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion — to our survival as a Fellowship."

This is as true today in 2016 as it was when Bill said it in 1967. Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Mahalo palena 'ole (gratitude beyond measure) to you and Alcoholics Anonymous for my life today filled with light, love and laughter.