

Outside the Bottle

District 16 Newsletter

MARCH 2023



Waking Up Sober

Mary J.



Hi, I'm Mary, and I'm an alcoholic. My sobriety date is Aug 18, 2022. I'd like to share how I got here, and what I'm learning.

My father was an alcoholic, I knew what that looked like, and I wasn't going to be him. Fast forward to 28 years old, I'm divorcing my partner of 12 years; I was codependent, and defined my entire self-worth on how well I took care of other people's needs. At that point I'm living with a mostly self-sufficient teenage brother and no longer have a spouse to care for. I felt lost. Restless. Irritable. Discontent. I start going out almost every night. I'm drinking one or two or four to fit in, to loosen up, to see everything as beautiful, to love everyone, to do anything. I found relief and comfort in the bottle. It becomes a constant companion. Bad day, drink. Good day, drink. Bad traffic, bored watching tv, putting together furniture – drink.

I spent the next 11 years drinking and searching for my value in how desirable I was to people. Men, friends, family. I knew if I was "earning the love" of others, then I'd have purpose and joy. I lived in this mentality that if I could just find a partner, find a new job, lose weight, get out of debt, buy a house, move out of state, I would be happy. However, I grew hopeless and depressed, and I drank to cope. That was my solution. It was numbing all the thoughts that it was also fueling – anxiety, depression, self-pity.

June 2021 was my first meeting. I'm not sold right away that I'm really that bad. I wasn't ready to give up my coping mechanism. I wasn't ready to feel the discomfort of the unknown and potential change. I binge drank from Jan-Apr 2022, and when I hurt myself enough, it was a handful of guys from these tables that saved my life by accepting me when I felt shameful and couldn't accept myself. I got to work with a sponsor, and after 4 months when life started to feel easier, I began toying with the thought that I could drink like a "normal" person. So, I drank. I got back that familiar feeling of hopelessness in myself. Reassurance that I'm a failure. There is a sick comfort in despair for an alcoholic like me. The next day I knew where I needed to be and I was back to a meeting, back to seeking God, and back to work.

To admit I'm powerless over ANYthing, when I think I control EVERYthing? To admit my life was unmanageable when I was seemingly managing everything and everyone around me? To admit I was powerless over alcohol meant to be honest with myself about my thoughts, my actions, and the effect it had on me. My faith in God was weak and now I work on my relationship with Him daily. I trust Him. I know to turn to Him before I act. To pause, pray, then proceed. And when my thoughts are running 1000 miles a minute it brings me peace to drop to my knees and say I cannot do this alone, your will not mine, please guide me through this. At a minimum I'm given peace where I would have gone to the bottle before.

It's been six months since my last drink and drug. I know I've only breached the surface. For the first time in my life, I'm happy to wake up. I know God is guiding me as long as I'm open and willing. I trust this A.A. process because I've already witnessed so many of the promises coming true. I've made friends as close as family in these rooms, and it's an incredible thing to be surrounded by people with a similar mission, who genuinely care about you and want nothing but the best for you. To see you succeed. And with God's help, I plan to.

20th Anniversary Celebration!

◆◆Sobriety First◆◆

**Church of Christ – April 21st
115 S. Campbell Road, Royal Oak**

**Doors Open at 6:00 a.m./Breakfast at 6:30 a.m.
Speakers at 7:00 a.m. / Willy M. & Anita B.**

●●NEW MEETING●●

Principles Before Personalities

**A.A. 12 & 12 LITERATURE STUDY
TUESDAY EVENINGS AT 6:00 P.M.**

Berkley First

**A United Methodist Church
2820 12 Mile Road, Berkley**

The Gift of Sobriety

Paul F.



Five years ago, I was in the midst of a search that, predictably (at least to those around me), would not end well. I was lost and I was exhausted - physically and emotionally. Daily living was unmanageable. I was looking for answers and relying upon alcohol to give them to me. And...why not? After all, alcohol had always been there for me - at least I thought it had. But now I knew it was making everything worse. And yet, I could not live without it - physically or emotionally. I had become an around the clock drinker, living from moment to moment in a constant state of turmoil. I honestly believed that alcohol was sustaining my life.

My name is Paul, and I am an alcoholic. I first said those words back on August 28, 2003...over 14 years earlier. I had attended my first Alcoholics Anonymous meeting mid-day after a night of heavy drinking. I knew I wanted to stop drinking, but I'm quite sure I didn't want to change anything else. I proceeded to grace A.A. with my presence for a few months, and then decided I didn't need "your" program to stay "sober." I managed not to drink for a few years. And then, one evening (it was my birthday), I made the decision that I could have a drink...like a normal person. In my mind, my life hadn't gotten any better without alcohol, so... why not? That one drink - that "first drink" - led to another 10 years of drinking.

Alcohol came into my life in my early teens and from that moment became an ever-present force that (I believed) was the source of my happiness. Alcohol filled a hole that was within me. Looking back this hole was always there - even as a very young boy. There was something missing in me - in my life - and I didn't know what it was. But I found I could fill this hole with alcohol. When I drank, I became the person I thought I wanted to be - the person I thought you would find attractive. Alcohol gave me courage and the ability to feel as if I "belonged," as I was certain I never had.

Life with alcohol wasn't always unpleasant. The thing is it could get there. And this was true from my first experiences. Yes...regret and remorse always followed - from my very first taste. But the sense of belonging - that powerful force - would draw me back every time.

Why don't I "fit in?" Why can't I manage to be at ease in any situation? What is wrong with me? Without alcohol, these were difficult questions to process. So, I drank. I never found the answers, but alcohol numbed the pain...at least temporarily.

Forty plus years of searching at the bottom of a bottle with no success. I guess you could say I wasn't a "quitter." But finally...a stay in a rehabilitation facility, prescribing the program of Alcoholics Anonymous and the fellowship it fosters, opened my eyes, and gave me the hope that I could live life on life's terms - without alcohol - one day at a time.

That was over four years ago. To this day I don't know why I'm an alcoholic. It doesn't much matter to me now. I understand why I drank. Outwardly, I don't believe it looked to be so, but I had been terrified most of my life...of so many things. Ultimately, it took a total surrender, the willingness to ask for help, and listening to (and acting upon) the suggestions of others to begin to calm the fears...to ease the pain. It was not easy, but it was also not complicated.

I still feel fearful at times...honestly, more frequently than I had hoped. But I have found a place where I "fit in," where I am at ease and where I see that there is nothing "wrong" with me. The hole I once felt has been filled with the love of a God of my understanding and of those in the fellowship around me. Yes, there is more work to be done - there will always be more work to be done. This idea of progress, not perfection gives me hope.

I am thankful to be on this journey - this journey that would have likely ended long before now without this *gift of sobriety*. This gift that was not deserved but was received and is treasured. Having spent a lifetime with expectations of what should be mine or what I "deserved," I now recognize that my entire life depends upon my placing this gift ahead of everything else and offering it freely to the fellowship and the still suffering men and women I encounter along the way.

I am an alcoholic, and my name is Paul...and I am so thankful to be here.



STEPS, TRADITIONS & CONCEPTS

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

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

Concept Three: To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. – the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives – with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

CHECK OUT THE UPCOMING EVENTS!!

AREA 33 ASSEMBLY – SUNDAY, MARCH 19TH

12:00 to 3:00 p.m. with GSR Orientation & Service Manual Study at 11:00 a.m.
VFW Hall, 24222 W. Nine Mile in Southfield / Lunch will be provided at 11:30!

MARCH ROUNDUP 2023 – March 3rd, 4th & 5th

Motor City Hotel / 2901 Grand River Avenue / Detroit / 48201 / 313-237-7711

Registration Fee: \$30.00 / Saturday Night Banquet: \$75.00

REGISTER & VOLUNTEER AT: AA-SEMI.ORG/MRU2023

Back To Basics – A.A. Beginner's Meeting

SPONSORED BY: THE SOUTHFIELD GROUP

Tuesdays 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. – March 7th, 14th, 21st & 28th

St. David's Episcopal Church: 16200 W. 12 Mile Road, Southfield

MICHIGAN MOCK CONFERENCE – MARCH 25TH

AA's Three Legacies – Our Common Solution

First United Methodist Church: 400 S. Main Street, Mount Pleasant, 48858

Pre-register at: <http://www.michiganmockconference.com> or 810-407-1687

District 16 meets at 7:00 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of every month at:

1st United Methodist Church of Madison Heights - 246 E. 11 Mile Road, Madison Heights, MI 48071

If groups would like to donate funds to District 16, please mail a check or money order:

Payable to: District 16 of Area 33 AA, PO Box 725362, Berkley, MI 48072

Outside the Bottle is the newsletter of District 16. The newsletter contains announcements, meeting changes, events, news & information around the district, and stories about sobriety and recovery.

Any AA member is invited to submit material to the newsletter. Please send

questions/comments/contributions to: district16news@gmail.com



Thank you to all newsletter contributors and to the many people that distribute the newsletter throughout our district. We are truly grateful for your service!

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“Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. 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.”

-Alcoholics Anonymous, p. 164