

616 S. Pine Ave -- Ocala, FL 34471
352-867-0660
aaocalaintergroup@gmail.com

November 2026 issue of The Voice

Step 11 – "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

GRAPEVINE – Daily Quote

"It is our experience as alcoholics that makes us of unique value—We can approach sufferers as no one else can."

"A United Message of Recovery,"
Decatur, GA, May 1994, AA Grapevine

NOVEMBER 2026 – AA MEMBERS & MENTAL HEALTH – STEP 11

Me & Dude

BY: NOELLE D. – CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

After years if searching, she found a Higher Power with a twisted sense of humor, one that's always nearby

To me, God is a really big, scary word. I have been hearing it and learning about it my whole life. When I first got sober in 1986, I was in Los Angeles. It was the first time I saw the phrase, "God as we understood Him." Well, I did not understand. I was even more confused when I read the term "spiritual awakening." As a person who loved instant gratification, I was quite irritated when I was told to "keep coming back."

My first sponsor was Jewish, and my best friend was a Buddhist, so when I needed guidance on finding a power greater than myself, I had some great resources.

Searching for spirituality was not easy in the least, even though I had grown up going to church. Summers meant vacation bible school until I got old enough to go to Girl Scout camps. I found some great friends in youth fellowship and an excuse for not having to sit through long sermons. I needed to stop drinking, even then, and a head full of Bible verses did not help.

I did ask for help in AA, and I had enough willingness to not drink and take some suggestions, but only some. Many suggestions were debatable and debate I did. More like argued and resisted. It took me a very long time and lots of practice to get where I am today.

I knew I had to find something to believe in. I could believe in the people in my life who believed in me. My sponsor Susan told me I was a perfect child of God. I told her she was nuts, but she was not nuts. When she was young, her mother took her own life. Susan was the first to find her. And still, she could be sober and have faith.

My friend Janaki and I got sober around the same time. She was the first to tell me about spirituality without religion. She and I talked almost daily. I was freaked out one day and she got me to hide in a dark closet at work and just breathe. I was relieved and a little stunned when following her simple suggestion actually worked.

I didn't understand what a Higher Power was, and my friend Sharon asked if I understood electricity. Of course I did, I said. I was a theater electrician. She asked if I truly understood why a light bulb works. I said I did and proceeded to explain the order of troubleshooting a power source. I had even felt the power when I was knocked on my butt one day by a short in a 220 outlet. Damn, that hurt.

Sharon was a retired Marine who would get so frustrated with me that she wanted to grab me and shake some sense into me. Sharon was skinny as a rail and short. But everyone knew better than to mess with Sharon. I owe a lot to her and all she taught me. I get to pay that forward. *Continued on p. 2*

Important Dates

November 11th @ Noon
(always 2nd Sunday)
Intergroup/Central Office
Representatives meet
Lost & Found Club

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December 3rd @ 6:30 PM
District 17
monthly meeting
Lost & Found Club
616 S. Pine Ave

****

Every Thursday Area 14
Service Workshop, 6:00 PM
Hospitality, 5:45 PM
New Topic every Thursday
Zoom Meeting ID:
828 5682 4762; pw: service

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FAITHFUL FIVERS

Contribute $5/month or $60/year

Contributors:
Joe S, Phil H, Ralph W, Ginger H, Linda H, Stephanie D, Casey P

Your membership directly supports 12-Step work at District 17 Central Office

Grapevine

November 8, 2026

"Only mutual trust can be the foundation for great love – each of us for the other, and all of us for God."

AA Co-Founder, Bill W., November 1960, "Freedom Under God: The Choice is Ours",







Sharon was the reason I finally got professional help. She was also a retired recovery counselor and referred me to a place in L.A. in 1989. She told me quite bluntly that I could continue to lie about my sobriety or not, that it was up to me. She said, "I want to be a part of your life, not your death." I spent 12 weeks in a home for women in a very tough neighborhood. The woman in charge said, "This is not Betty Ford. If you don't like it here, there's the door." I was definitely in the right place.

I would argue with the counselors about their God and my understanding of science, and they were smart enough to know what to do. They had me sit under a tree every morning and verbally own my space in the universe. They said that I matter. I finally had something tangible I could do to understand that I mattered. This got me into my favorite activity—learning. Being in Southern California, I learned about Zen Buddhism, Taoism and Shamanism. My mind began to open a path to my heart, where my faith could grow.

The practices of Indigenous Americans also took hold with me. I attended my first sweat lodge in the late 1990s in South Carolina. I finally felt connected to something bigger than me—in pitch-black darkness. My last sweat was about 10 or 15 years ago with my adopted lodge on a Cherokee reservation in North Carolina.

Using Dude as my Higher Power happened around 2009, while I was working with someone who was extremely religious. He would never tell anyone what to believe, only what he believed. He told me that he believed God was his best friend and was always with him. He said he feels God is always sitting right next to him. When people are ugly, he can turn to his best

Whoa, Dude. I think that's when I found my definition of a power greater than myself. Dude has always been a term of affection and affirmation for me. It just fit for me. I could shorten any prayer or exclamation by saying, "Dude." The Panthers lost again, Dude. The sun is out, Dude! Get off your phone and drive, Dude! The trees are so pretty this time of year, Dude.

For many years, I recited all the prayers in my AA meetings. So much so that when attending an actual church service, I had to remember to listen to their version and not be disruptive. I learned the hard way one day when I accidentally started to chant "Keep coming back."

I learned that when you go somewhere new, AA meetings can be very different. Each group gets to decide their own format. I get to decide if I want to recite a prayer or say my own silent prayer. I like to use the quote about a daily reprieve based upon the maintenance of our spiritual condition. I have to remember that and talk to Dude every day. Dude has a twisted sense of humor and does not let me forget it.

We never know when, where or how we will get "it." It took me about 25 years and I'm still learning. Today I know for sure that there's a God and I'm not it. Only in the last few years have I stopped reciting written prayers because I did not feel the words; I was just repeating them. So I started really praying from my heart. I do not bow my head, and I stand now because I finally have new knees and enough leg strength to do so. I close my eyes to minimize the distractions. I look up or out to be humble under the sky. Today I say my own silent prayer. Dude.

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Grapevine - *November 5, 2026*

"Good things increase in direct proportion to my willingness to become teachable."

"Freedom Began in Prison," Universal City, California, February 1970, AA Grapevine






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.

NOVEMBER 2026 – AA MEMBERS & MENTAL HEALTH – TRADITION 11

To Break or Not to Break

BY: DAVID S. – NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Unsure about revealing the AA membership of a deceased person to his sister, he turned to our AA pamphlet

Recently a friend shared with me a letter from the central office files before the start of a neighborhood AA meeting. The letter was dated May 1971, the year of the group's founding, and it approved the request by the group for inclusion in the central office's meeting list. The welcome letter was of a kind that any new group in our county might expect to receive. What startled me was the name of the recipient who, as it turned out, was the father of my brother Paul's high school girlfriend. In addition, the girl's younger sister was friends with my one remaining sibling, Miriam, and very close with a girl I went out with in my college years and eventually married. Six degrees of separation and all of that.

The letter triggered memories of my brother sharing about his girlfriend and her family back when we were both in high school, a time of closeness before life and alcohol came to separate us. We were a family with our share of grief. Two of my older sisters took their own lives, and Paul was to die at age 56 in 2001 of heart failure, after battling the bottle for years.

Thinking Miriam would be interested in the letter, I sent a copy to her. "This doesn't surprise me. Their father was a terrible alcoholic," she wrote back, something I hadn't known.

I began to feel uncomfortable. My mind turned to Traditions Eleven and Twelve. How flooded with shame I had been coming upon an AA sign hanging from a fence outside the first AA meeting I ever attended. God forbid that anyone should notice me walking through the gate to attend such a gathering. An equal disturbance awaited me in the meeting itself, where who should I see but the biggest loudmouth in the company that employed me. Only when he assured me that my presence at the meeting would never be revealed by him and that he was there for the same reason as me could I calm down.

Right there a glimmer of understanding came to me as to why anonymity was fully half our Fellowship's name, providing assurance to those with a desire to stop drinking that they would feel safe in the rooms of AA; their identity as recovering alcoholics would be protected.

Subsequently I learned that I am free to break or not break my own anonymity to family and friends and whomever, but I'm not free to break yours—with one further exception: at the level of press, radio, films and social media. I must not provide my full name and/or a photo of myself.

But now, from the far reaches of memory, came the words "posthumous anonymity." Was it possible I had overlooked a fundamental AA principle? Long deceased though that man was, did posthumous anonymity not also lie within the scope of our anonymity Traditions?

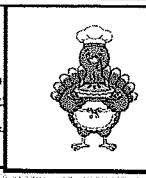
Blessed with long-term sobriety but hazy about this matter, I went to the AA Conference-approved pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity." It said, *"AA members generally think it unwise to break the anonymity of the member even after his or her death, but in each situation, the final decision must rest with the family. AA members, though, are in agreement that the anonymity of still living AA members should be respected in obituaries or in any type of printed remembrance or death notice."*

So there it was. Not a tragic blunder, but a mistake nonetheless. The path narrows as we stay sober. Emotional disturbance results when we stray beyond the guardrails our Traditions provide us.

It was for my sponsor to remind me that my Tenth Step amend was incomplete until I explained my mistake to my nonalcoholic sister, and so I did. The emotional disturbance gone, peace and serenity returned. I had been returned to the now, where I believe HP wants us to be. Together we can do what we can't do alone.

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Birthdays

November

Breakfast Club
John T -1
Jeff V – 17
Robert M – 28
Teri P – 34
Pat K – 35
Elliot T – 36
Max F – 38
Bruce C – 41

Headstart
Ethan M – 6
Shon B – 13
Joe C - 36

Living Sober
Steven S – 1
Matt W – 8
Wilson R – 31
Robert S – 32
Wayne C – 47
Bud – 54

Lunch Bunch
Faith – 4
Peter K – 5
Kim W – 6
Jamie P – 13
Nancy B – 34

We Give Up
Carol F -32

Congratulations!

Contributions

October

Alive & Well	$ 25.00
Anonymity	$ 33.00
Easy Does It	$135.00
Faithful Fivers	$ 50.00
Joe & Charlie	$ 39.00
Living Grace	$304.00
Living Sober	$300.00
Mano Abierta	$ 10.00
Ocala Group	$ 66.25
On Awakening	$480.53
Shores of Sobriety	$ 25.65
Sunday after Lunch Bunch	$150.00

Thank you for supporting your local Intergroup Office

From the GSO Pamphlet ----
Self-support: Where Money and Spiritually Mix (F-3)

10% to District 17
P.O. Box 3081
Ocala, FL 34478

10% to Area 14
NFAC Treasurer
P.O. Box 840066
St. Augustine, FL 32080
(Visit *www.aanorthflorida.org*)

30% to General Service Office
PO Box 459, Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

50% to Central Office/Intergroup 17
616 S. Pine Avenue
Ocala, FL