

JIM B TO ZOOM ERA: AA'S ATHEISTS, AGNOSTICS & FREETHINKERS

“...this was the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics. They had widened our gateway so that all who suffer might pass through, regardless of their belief or lack of belief.” -- Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, p. 167

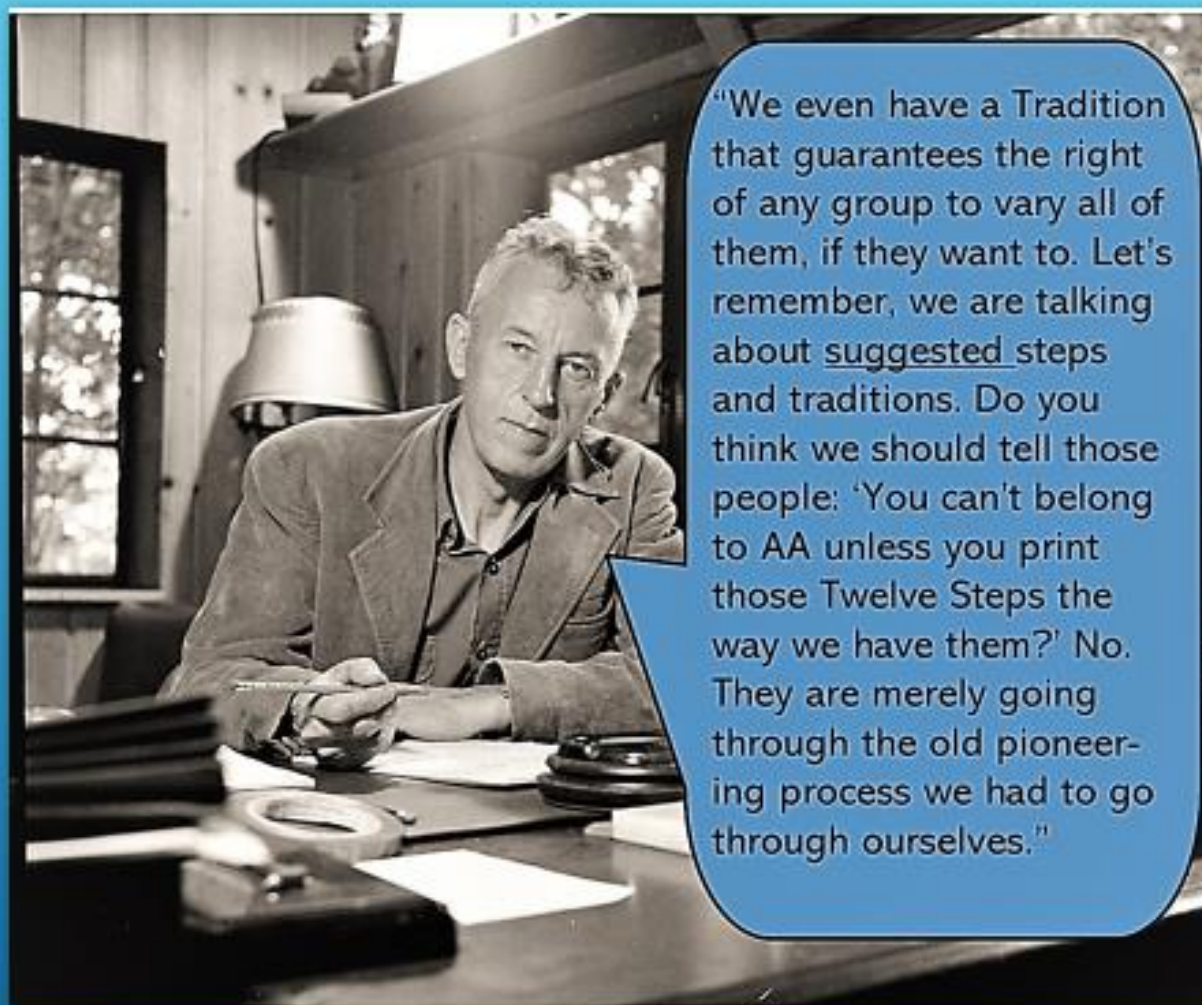
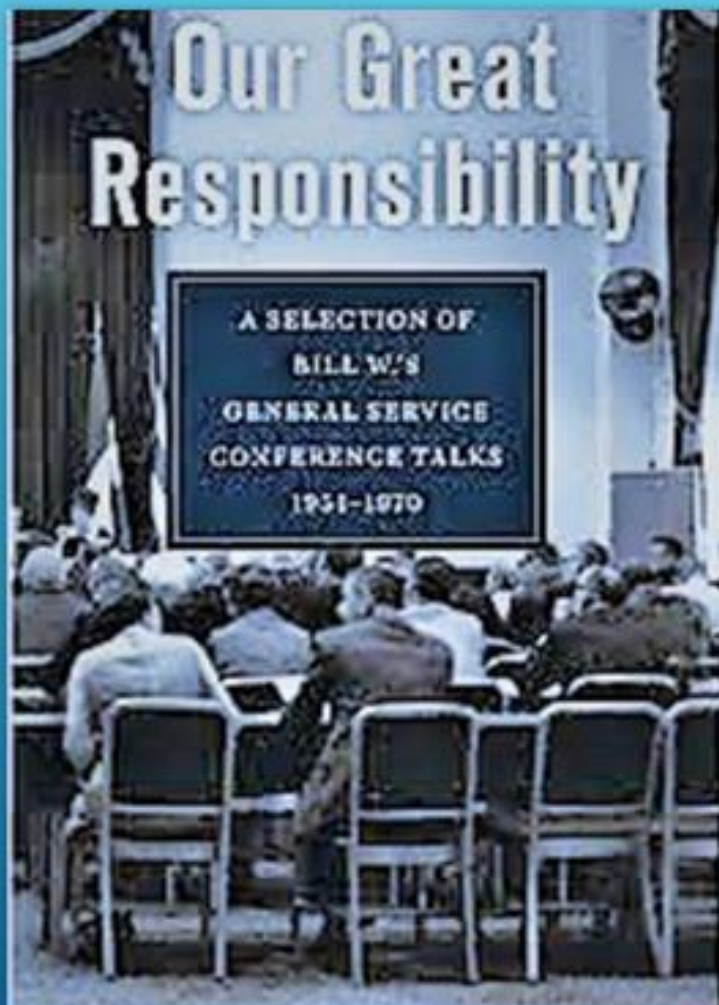
Three topics: Unbelievers in AA – our history

1. Secular AA: not a different program, it's AA spoken in a different language
2. We Agnostics, Humanists, Atheists, Freethinkers gatherings
(meetings/conferences/social media)
3. Barriers and Bridges: Secular AA an example of the role of special purpose group

“ TO SOME OF US, THE IDEA OF SUBSTITUTING ‘GOOD’ FOR ‘GOD’ IN THE TWELVE STEPS WILL SEEM LIKE A WATERING DOWN OF A.A.’S MESSAGE. BUT HERE WE MUST REMEMBER THAT A.A.’S STEPS ARE SUGGESTIONS ONLY. A BELIEF IN THEM, AS THEY STAND, IS NOT AT ALL A REQUIREMENT FOR MEMBERSHIP AMONG US. THIS LIBERTY HAS MADE A.A. AVAILABLE TO THOUSANDS WHO NEVER WOULD HAVE TRIED AT ALL HAD WE INSISTED ON THE TWELVE STEPS JUST AS WRITTEN. ”

FIRST AA ATHEIST (BUDDHIST) GROUP USED GODLESS
INTERPRETATION OF THE 12 STEPS TO CARRY THE MESSAGE

AA Comes of Age p. 81 from the Chapter “Unity.”



"We even have a Tradition that guarantees the right of any group to vary all of them, if they want to. Let's remember, we are talking about suggested steps and traditions. Do you think we should tell those people: 'You can't belong to AA unless you print those Twelve Steps the way we have them?' No. They are merely going through the old pioneering process we had to go through ourselves."

Page 89, Variations in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions (1953)

“ I HAD BEEN NEITHER HUMBLE NOR WISE. BOASTING OF MY FAITH, I HAD FORGOTTEN MY IDEALS. PRIDE AND IRRESPONSIBILITY HAD TAKEN THEIR PLACE. BY SO CUTTING OFF MY OWN LIGHT, I HAD LITTLE TO OFFER MY FELLOW ALCOHOLICS. AT LAST I SAW WHY MANY HAD GONE AWAY - SOME OF THEM FOREVER. ”

BILL W. “THE DILEMMA OF NO FAITH” **AA GRAPEVINE,**
APRIL 1961

FROM "A NEWCOMER ASKS..." (P-24)Q: "THERE IS A LOT OF TALK ABOUT GOD, THOUGH, ISN'T THERE?"

A: The majority of A.A. members believe that we have found the solution to our drinking problem not through individual willpower, but through a power greater than ourselves. However, everyone defines this power as he or she wishes.

1. Many people call it God,
2. others think it is the A.A. group,
3. still others don't believe in it at all.

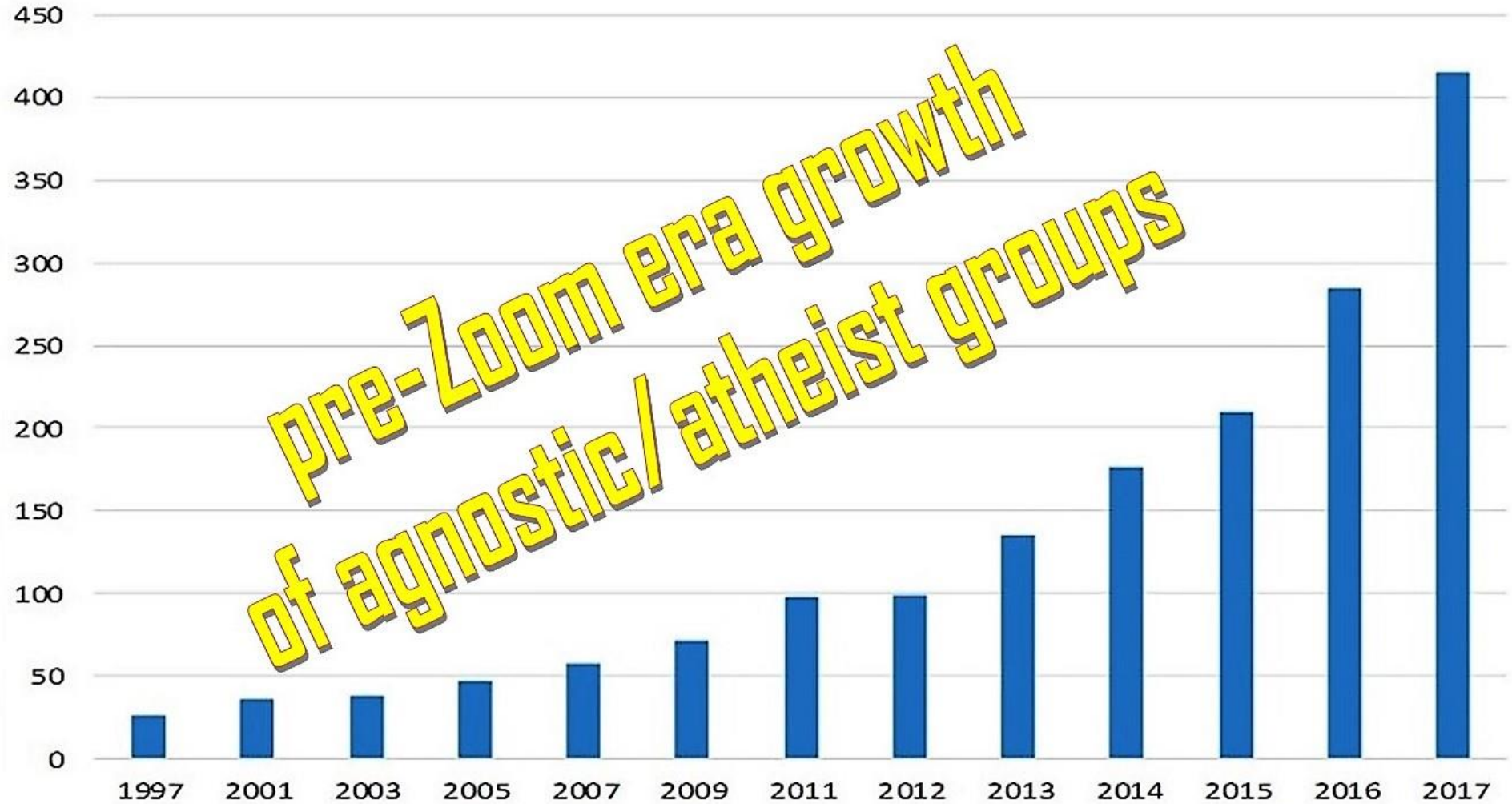
There is room in A.A. for people of all shades of belief and non-belief.

(is "love & tolerance of others" an AA liberal fiction of fact? Results may vary...



Pg 248, “For a long time the only Higher Power I could concede was the power of the group ... I don’t think the boys were completely convinced of my personality change, for they fought shy of including my story in the book, so my only contribution to their literary efforts was my firm conviction, being still a theological rebel, that the word God should be qualified with the phrase ‘as we understand him’—for that was the only way I could accept spirituality.”

Secular AA Groups www.secularaa.org



From 2012, doubling the number of meetings every three years-doubled to 800 in 2020

<http://aaagnostica.org/2016/01/26/a-history-of-secularism-in-aa>
Roger C.,

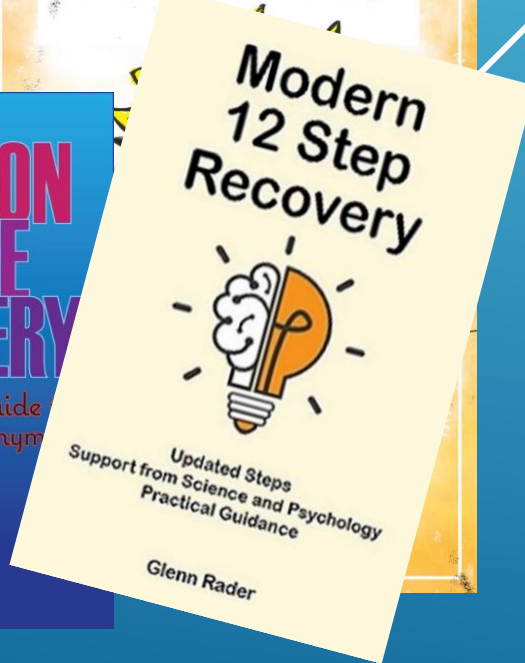
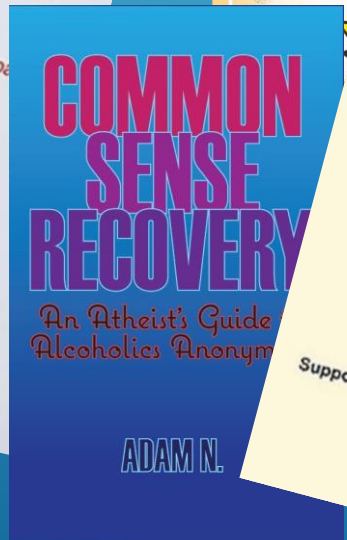
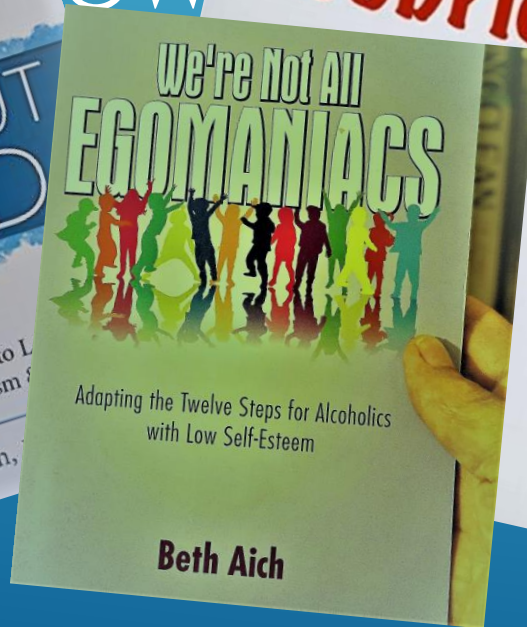
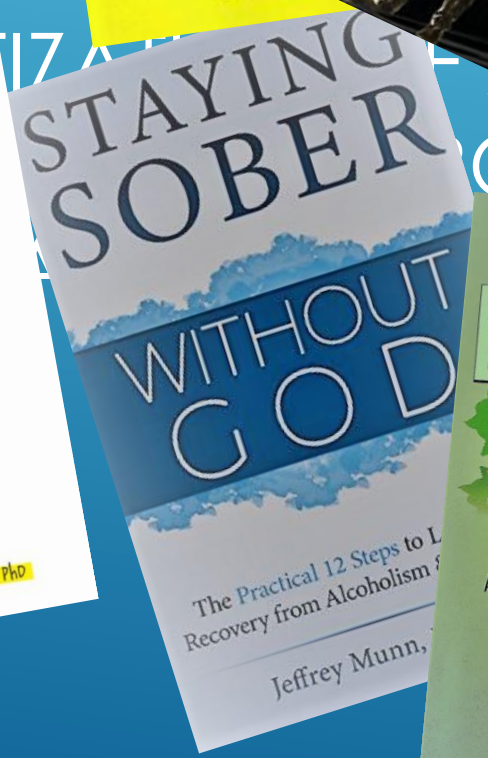
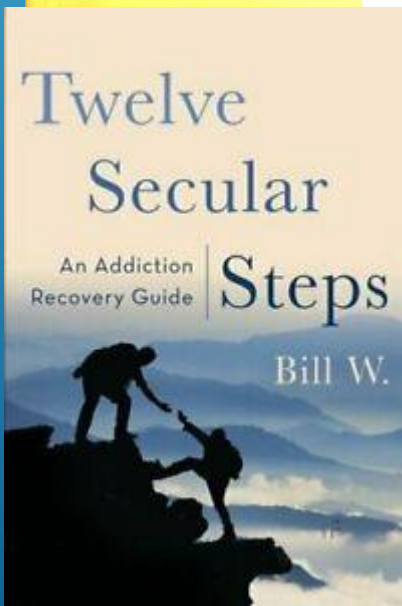
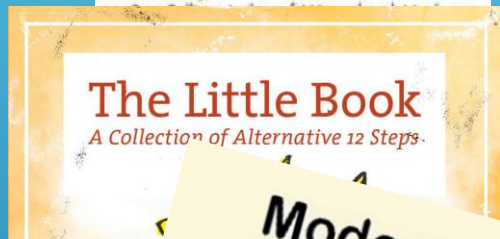
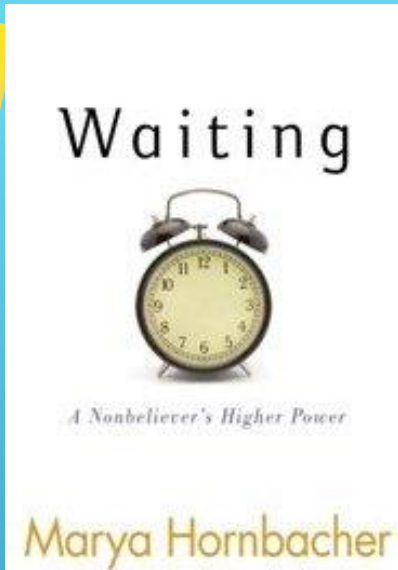
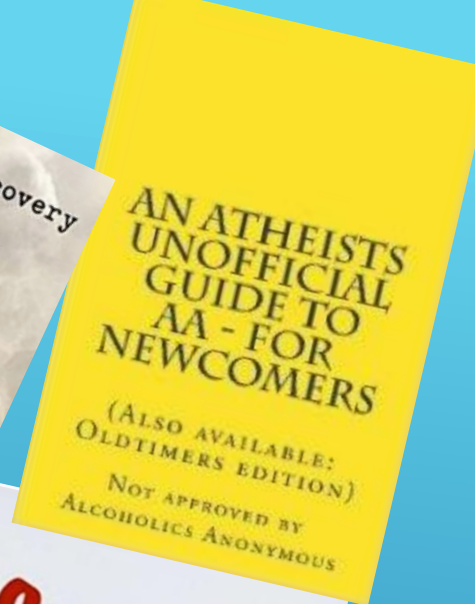
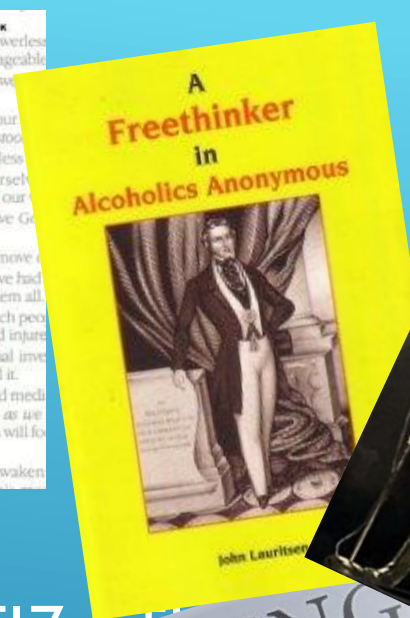
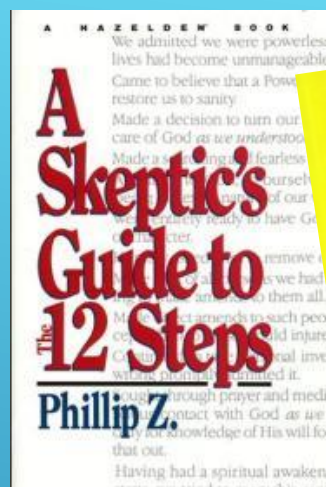
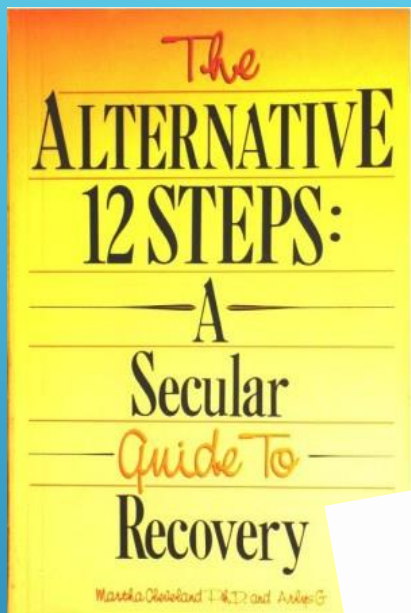
- 1975: Chicago, first Alcoholics Anonymous for Atheists and Agnostics (Quad A) Don W. was giving a talk to the congregation of local Unitarian Universalists about AA as an atheist in 1974. Don was invited to start a meeting for nonbelievers. In January of 1975, the first known North American “no prayer” meeting. Currently 12 meetings a week for QuadA (AA for atheists and agnostics).
- 1980: Hollywood, home to We Agnostics, started by Charlie P, who attended an AA meeting “without a prayer” in Austin and asked to copy their meeting script to start an agnostic group in LA.
- 1986: New York City, Ada H., John Y. and David L. start We Atheists (now called We Humanists) There are now over 20 New York secular groups.
- 1992: <http://agnosticaanyc.org/worldwide.html>
- 2020: <https://bit.ly/secularmeetings>
- 2021: <https://www.worldwidesecularmeetings.com/meetings>

We Agnostics on the world stage: 30 YEARS of AA World Convention

- 1990 We Agnostics panel, Seattle: Bruce and Sarah from Seattle Wa Chairing: Charlie P, LA / Phyllis M, NYC / Mary N, Port Salerno Fa.
- 1995 We Agnostics panel, San Diego (Audio #80) Chaired by Jacques F. AAWS Director (Montreal): Merl E. CA, 19 years / Mel D., NY, 5 years / Linda F. AZ, 8 years
- 2000 We Agnostics panel, Minneapolis(Audio #248) Chair Bob F., NY: Gwen G., FL, 27 yrs / Fred C., B.C. 48 yrs / Richard B., OH 28 yrs.
- 2005 We Agnostics panel, Toronto AA (Audio 05 – 171, Thank you Fred I, GA) Chaired by Naomi D. NY, 21 yrs: Caroline K., NY 17 yrs / Thomas M., OH / Joe L. FL 54 Yrs
- 2010 We Agnostics panel, San Antonio* Gale P., AZ chair: James S., DE / Mike O. UT / Melissa D., OK
- 2015 We Agnostics panel, Atlanta: Diggins / Mike K. Long Island NY, 32 yrs / Jeff Y. 30 yrs, past delegate
- 2020 Detroit (Cancelled) ICSAA recognized as a special purpose group in AA with hospitality suite and input into We Agnostics panel

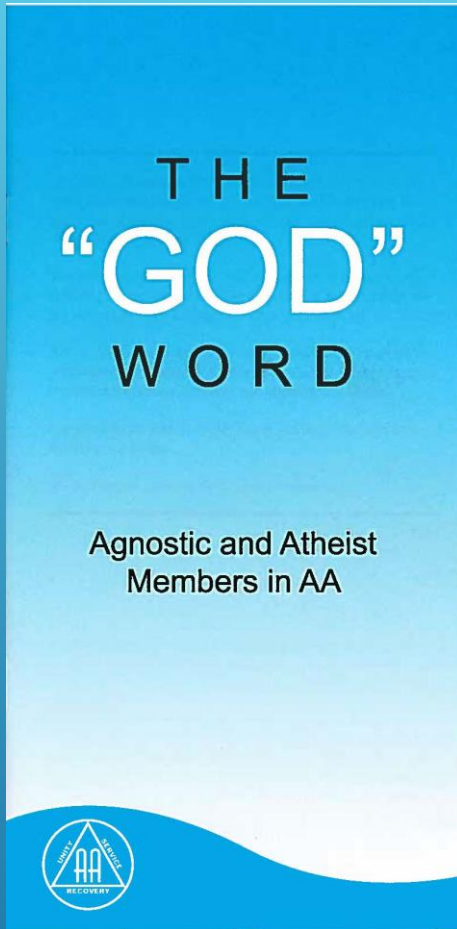


ce and the
(COVID)



10+ PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED IN THE LAST 40 YEARS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PAMPHLET DIRECTED TO THE UNBELIEVER ALCOHOLIC (USA/CANADA).

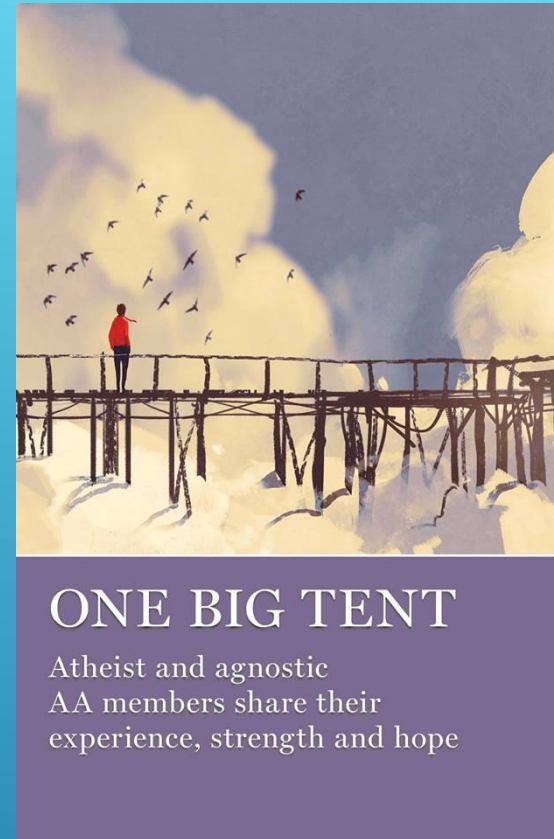
Year	outcomes
1975-76	Subcommittee said, "this pamphlet vitally needed" not sent to Conference Committee (CLC)
1981-82	Like Al L, in '76, Ed H wrote GSO. Trustees' committee declined to recommend.
1988-89	Area 59 asks GSO to meet the requests of non-believer members. Wouldn't this help our efforts to expand AA in secular Eastern Europe? CLC said, "no need for atheist/agnostic literature."
1995-96	Area 49 voted with substantial unanimity for non-believers' pamphlet. Passed on to CLC who declined.
1997	We Agnostics NYC wrote to TLC who declined to make forward out of respect of '96 decision of CLC.
2000-01	5 member letters "Spiritual Variety" idea passed to CLC + 2 letters of opposition. CLC: no action
2002, 03 and 06	Lengthy discussions, no action, TLC made a recommendation to the 2006 CLC. "Already numerous references. Took no action.
2008	Area 17, with substantial unanimity asked GSO to create a pamphlet about working the program without a spiritual conversion (belief in prayer answering, sobriety granting higher power).
2010-14	2011 advisory action directed TLC to solicit stories for a pamphlet on spirituality including successful atheists and agnostics. 200 stories collected. The conference sent it back in 2012, 2013 and replaced it with <i>Many Paths to Spirituality</i> .
2016 October	Grapevine to devote a month to humanists, unbelievers etc. Discuss a Grapevine book of stories through the years.



THE "GOD" WORD

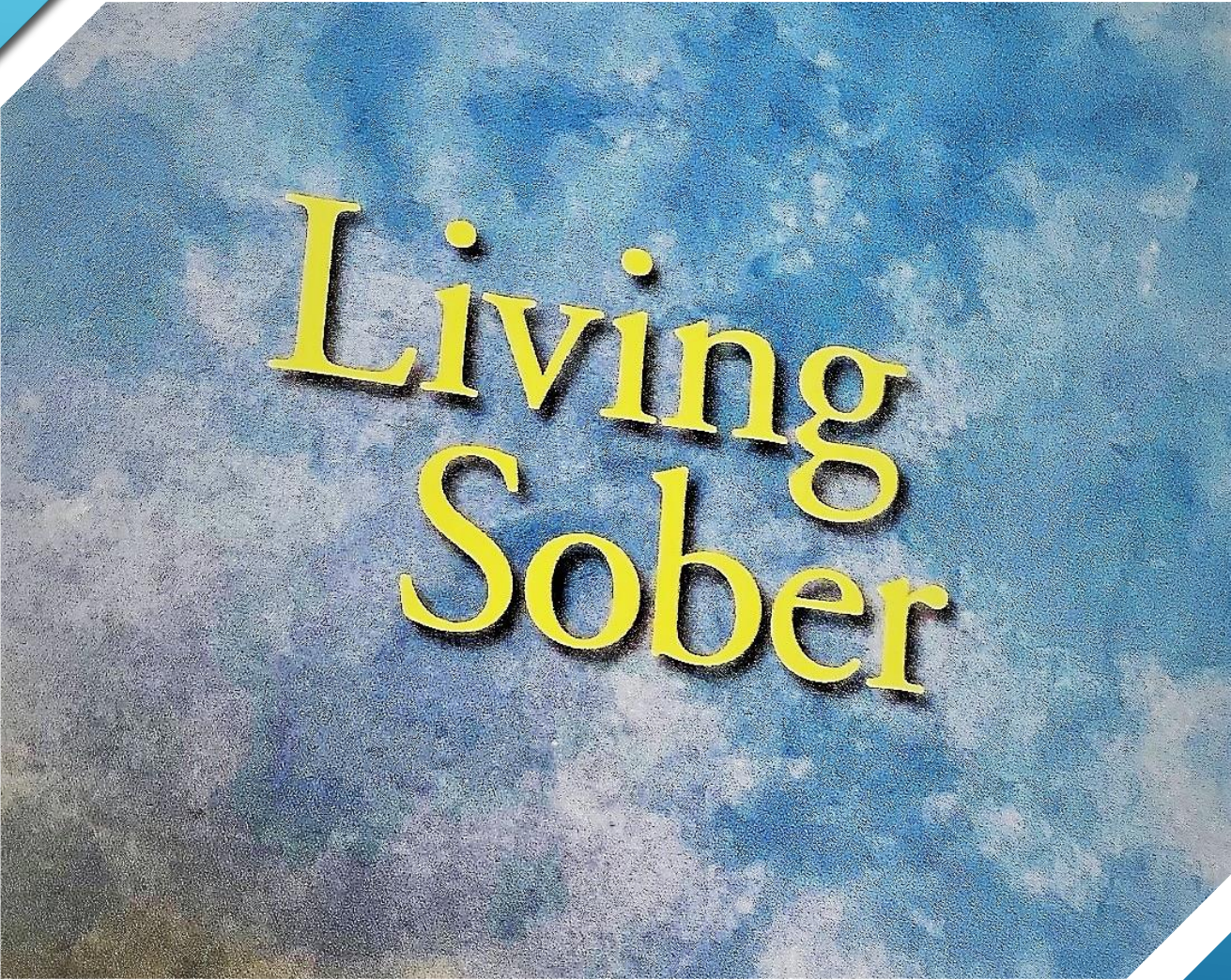
Published by the UK
General Service
Conference 2014

Approved by USA
& Canada
Conference 2018
English
Spanish
French



After the 2018
special issue of
Atheists/Agnostics
the Grapevine
collected 43
stories from 1964 to
2016.
Of all Grapevine
collections, ONE
BIG TENT had the
most pre-sales of
all.

AA: LITERATURE FOR & BY ATHEISTS/AGNOSTICS

The image shows the front cover of the book 'Living Sober'. The title is written in a large, yellow, serif font with a slight 3D effect. The background of the cover is a textured, mottled blue and grey, resembling a cloudy sky or a close-up of a stone surface. The book is set against a solid blue background.

Living Sober

- ▶ Since 1975
- ▶ The practical AA way
- ▶ Over 7 Million sold
- ▶ A staple for irreligious AA's for going on 5 decades

International Conference of Secular AA
aasecular.org

international secular meeting

International
Conference of
Secular AA



First Sunday
Speaker Meeting
and Roadshow

JOIN US FOR DEB
KATHLEEN F & M

Join us at ICSAA 2021
9 AM Pacific, Noon East, 5 PM UTC
Get the lowdown from recovery
doctors on the latest on alcohol
use disorder and recovery
Zoom ID 833 1887 1409
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83318871409>

Also:

Safety in AA, family stories
workshops, AA History
and more.

2021
"Hats Off To Spring"
theme with Izzy D.,
Robert B. & Bianca
2 PM East,

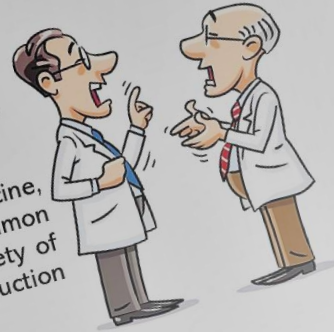
Speaker Meeting
from Australia's capital

THANKS TO ALL WHOVE RECOVERED
FOR LETTING US SEE THAT WE CAN
LIVE AN A PART OF OUR LIVES
TO ALL OF YOU WHOVE RECOVERED

The Doctors Opinion 2021 w/ 2 Dr Pauls:
Addiction + Recovery today

Dr Paul F has worked with 1000s of individuals with addiction disorders over 25+ years in addition and occupational medicine, recovery science and treatment.

Dr Paul S is Clinical Instructor, with the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Department of Family Practice and an Adjunct Professor at Simon Fraser University and is past President of the Canadian Society of Addiction Medicine, working extensively in both harm reduction and in abstinence-based care models.



QUAD A CANBERRA



[7] The respondent, GTAI, submits that the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) recovery program follows 12 steps and that these steps involve a belief in God. GTAI submits that evidence indicates that its purpose is to practice the 12 steps and practice a belief in God. In order to be part of GTAI, a group must be prepared to practice the 12 steps and thus the members of the group must have a belief in God. GTAI submits that it is not denying the applicant's group the right to form its own intergroup and follow its own process.

[8] GTAI submits that is a special interest group that is protected, by section 18 of the Code, from a finding that it has breached the applicant's Code rights. Section 18 of the Code, states,

Rights ... are not infringed where membership or participation in a religious, philanthropic, educational, fraternal or social institution or organization that is primarily engaged in serving the interests of persons identified by a prohibited ground of discrimination is restricted to persons who are similarly identified.

[9] GTAI also submits that it is a bona fide requirement that groups that wish to be part of this intergroup must have a belief in the higher power of God.

Indy We Agnostics A.A.

Saturday, June 11, 2011

Intergroup Intelligentsia - The Thought Police

Many local AA members have heard by now that the "We Agnostics" group has been forever excommunicated from the Indianapolis Intergroup meeting directory. Some have heard of this author's rather dramatic exit from the charade that they chose to call a "Service Committee Meeting." While I'm not particularly proud of my behavior, I can assure you that the entire group in attendance knows where I stand on this issue, and the chairperson of the "committee" specifically knows my feelings.

It became abundantly clear very early in the evening that the committee had already made up its mind about what the outcome would be. It was not interested in Traditions or Concepts or Unity or Service. It was a war of opinions and anecdotes and popularity. One attendee of that "Service Committee" meeting even went so far as to suggest that the "We Agnostics" meeting was godless and therefore couldn't have a group conscience...violating the Second Tradition. Yet another attendee compared me to a mass murderer because I was passionately defending my right to be there.

The Indianapolis Intergroup Service Committee Meeting of June 9, 2011 was a Kangaroo Court if there ever were one. ...

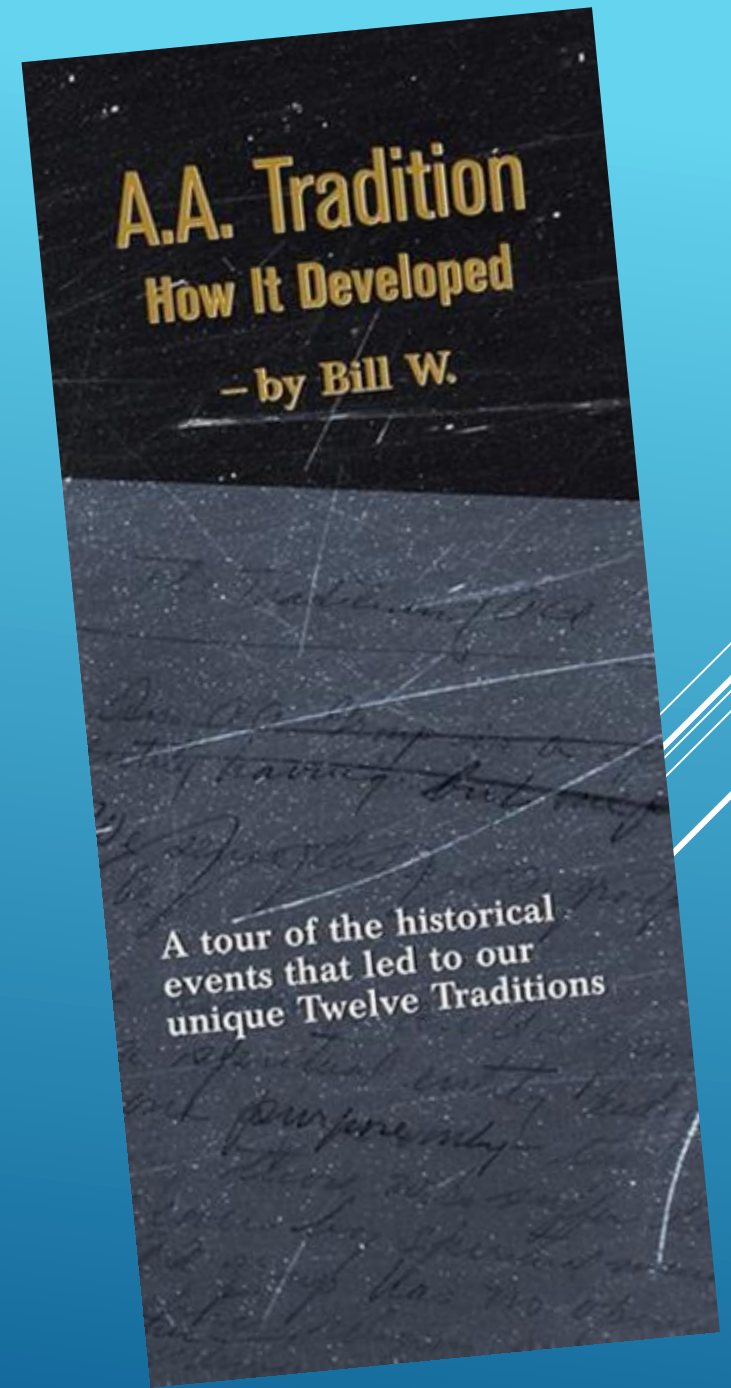
<http://www.indyweagnostics.com/>

“All truth passes through three stages: first it is ridiculed; second, it is violently opposed; third, it is accepted as being self-evident.”

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

While this broad concept of A.A. membership is not yet unanimous, it does represent the main current of A.A. thought today. We do not wish to deny anyone his chance to recover from alcoholism. We wish to be just as inclusive as we can, never exclusive.

Perhaps this trend signifies something much deeper than a mere change of attitude on the question of membership. Perhaps it means that we are losing all fear of those violent emotional storms which sometimes cross our alcoholic world; perhaps it bespeaks our confidence that every storm will be followed by a calm; a calm which is more understanding, more compassionate, more tolerant than any we ever knew before.



- ▶ Higher power (HP);
- ▶ ➤ In GB samples 91% viewed themselves as being spiritual and
- ▶ 95% had a higher power
- ▶ ➤ 35% in GB cited a religious foundation to their HP
- ▶ ➤ 65% in GB cited a secular foundation to their HP
- ▶ ➤ 6% said that their HP is both secular and religious
- ▶ ➤ 88% of those who had been sober 12 months had a HP compared to 96% for those who were sober > 10 years
- ▶ ➤ 89% of those who had joined AA in the last 12 months described themselves as spiritual compared 96% for those who joined > 10 years ago

WE AGNOSTICS? WHO'S AGNOSTIC?

In UK in the 2020 Quintennial membership survey AAs in Britain were asked:

Do you have a higher power?

If you do, Is it religious or secular?

What did AA members say?



SECULAR AA
ICSAA

► PODCASTS, search Secular AA on Spotify, Apple Music or wherever you stream podcasts or visit us @

<https://www.secularaa.buzzsprout.com>

► Visit a humanist, freethinkers, OMAGOD, Beyond Belief, We Agnostics AA meeting @

<https://bit.ly/secularmeetings> or @

<https://www.worldwidesecularmeetings.com/meetings>

► <https://www.facebook.com/SecularAA>

► <https://twitter.com/ICSAA2021>

► SecularAA@gmail.com

► Joe C 416-239-8737

STAY IN TOUCH...