

Depending *on the* Grace of God

A Spiritual Journey
through the Twelve Steps

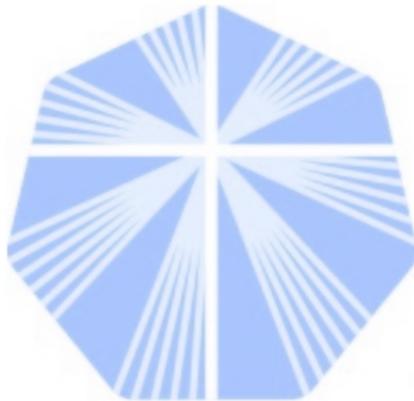


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Introduction

Having begun the spiritual journey of the Twelve Steps, we become aware that we do not turn back to find home. Home is, in fact somewhere ahead, approached step by step, through the years of recovery. The Twelve Step tradition reminds us that we see “progress, not perfection.”

This booklet reflects our journey in the Twelve Step program as we have practiced recovery and sobriety as committed Christians. Alcoholics Anonymous began with two people helping each other to stay sober, and in many ways, we have practiced this form of mutual support in our own recovery. Our journey also has been shaped by resources of our faith tradition, including the Ash Wednesday service, particularly the exhortation, and *The Book of Common Prayer*, especially the Litany of Penitence. The words of this litany remind us that our spiritual journey requires “self-examination and repentance; by prayer, fasting, and self-denial; and by reading and meditating on God’s holy Word” (p. 265).

As alcoholics in recovery and faithful Christians on a journey, we have taken the risk of working the steps we suggest in this booklet, all the while depending on the power and grace of God. Faith and the support of others have

provided us with direction in the journey. It hasn't always been a straight path: We have made detours and occasionally taken a wrong road; we've had a few fender-benders, and, from time to time, we wished we had walked instead of driven. But when we were willing to be changed, God stepped in to help with the hard work alongside us.

As our journey continues, we are led in a new and ever-deepening direction toward God, and we continue to discover new and wonderful aspects of God's creation. Our journey is blessed as we uncover all the ways in which the Twelve Steps and the Christian tradition weave together.

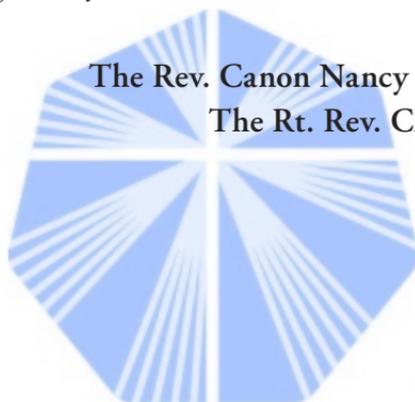
We welcome new travelers on our journey. Whether you have worked a Twelve Step program, know someone who is moving through recovery, are curious about the program, or wrestling with a decision to embark on this journey, looking at the Twelve Steps through a spiritual lens provides a road map and framework to guide us in growing up and finding home.

Make no mistake: the Twelve Steps are a challenging set of spiritual practices. That's why we say we "work" the steps. Setting foot on this path requires letting go of many familiar habits of mind and heart. We will have to tackle difficult emotions during our inventory and face uncertainty and fear as we make amends. But there also will be love and hope and

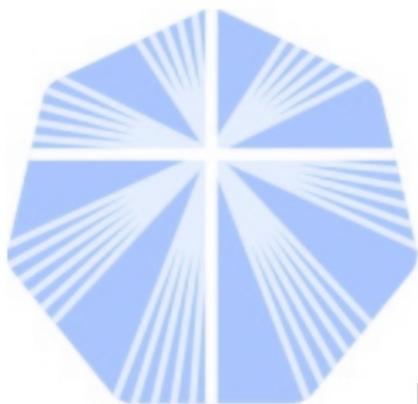
community whenever you stop in for coffee and a meeting, ready to turn one more aspect of life over to God, and to talk about how much better life is when we travel together.

Saint Augustine reminds us “our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God.” On the Christian journey toward Home—another name for God, we’d say—the Twelve Steps are chart and compass for us. We offer this booklet to invite you into this journey as well.

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Step 1

We admitted that we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.

Change is frightening to most of us. The fear of what might be is often much worse than the reality, but we let the unknown become our excuse for inertia and an unwillingness to change. When we imagine our lives without addiction, we begin to realize the things we feared most were actually part of life's journey.

Perhaps in the beginning, we were isolated by frequent moves or school bullying or abuse. Maybe we drank socially for a while, or we gambled for the high that left us feeling ecstatic for periods of time. This ecstasy gave us temporary relief from our fears and anxiety, so we continued to drink, or use drugs, or gamble, so we didn't have to face these deep-rooted worries.

Faith? Of course some of us had faith: We read the Bible, we went to church, and we even took communion. But a spirituality to relieve our fears and pain? Of that, we had little. Even though we thought we could control our addiction, something was always missing. We did service work, if we had time, but helping others interfered with our addiction and the rest of our lives. We often asked God to do

something so we could live like other people. When nothing changed, we gave up on prayer and on asking for help. We would rely on our own willpower.

Gradually family and friends became part of our problem, just as we became part of theirs. We did not see how our addiction created issues in their lives. We only saw the problems they created for us—complaints, nagging, begging—all done in an effort to keep us from what we enjoyed, from the ecstasy of our addiction.

The time has come for change. The time has come to grow in grace. To do that, we must, in all honesty, look at our addiction and admit the effect it has on our lives, our relationships with others, and our relationship with God. We stand at a crossroad: we need a direction and a map for our journey, steps to provide us a way forward.

God of tenderness and power, awaken in us the truth of our need for you. Shield us and heal us from arrogance and self-centeredness. Work in our hearts and minds so that we may come to know you as powerful and all-sufficient, and strengthen our trust in you, one day at a time. Amen.

Step 2

Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

We have been so isolated by our addiction that it hasn't occurred to us to try anything other than our own willpower. Asking God for help has been minimal—and when we have asked, it's been without real intention of giving up our addiction or accepting an answer different from what we want. But now things have become so unmanageable that we must have help.

We suspect that, just as our other friends and family have left us, God has left us too. But our willpower can't overcome the addiction and with nowhere else to turn, we ask for help from God. To our surprise and perhaps to our dismay, God is still with us, waiting for us and welcoming us, no matter how desolate we have become. We may be sleeping in a box on the street, we may have been reduced to begging for money to live, we may be stealing or embezzling from others, but God still loves us.

If we are honest, our present behavior is insanity. We tried to believe we were normal and living like other people, but the truth is that most other people don't want anything to do with us. They do not drink like us or gamble like us. Their

intimate relationships are different than ours. We may have convinced ourselves of our normalcy, but the world around us, the reality around us, contradicts that at every turn.

When we come to believe in a power greater than ourselves, when we believe and trust in God, grace enters our lives. Grace is God's gift to us, a companion as we uncover our relationship with God. This grace is with us, even as our relationship with God grows and changes us, step by step.

This is the beginning of our spiritual journey. We may not have anyone else who cares where we are going or what we will do. We may not have any bags to pack or a destination in mind. But we know intuitively that our lives cannot remain stuck in the miserable present, totally occupied by our addiction.

This step puts our life in perspective. We have two choices: God or insanity. In a spiritual life, God and honesty have priority. It may take years before we fully live out this belief. But today, we are finally willing to try anything that might move us out of this present pain and loneliness.

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O God of power and peace, I struggle to believe that you can indeed lift me from the chaos of my life into sanity and peace. Be near to me. Make your power known to me. Water and nurture the small kernel of my faith. Show me that I can hope in you, trust in you, believe in you. Be my help, for I cannot help myself. Seeking to trust in you, I pray. Amen.

Step 3

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God.

Surrender is a complex act. It requires a change in us and a change in our relationship with our addiction. No longer can our previous actions and behaviors take priority in our lives. We are beginning to trust that a new relationship and direction can make a difference. We trust that God cares, loves us, and is willing to help us find sobriety and recovery. We trust that at all times and in all places, we will be accompanied by a relationship with God that will sustain us.

We have made promises before. But we didn't give ourselves fully to them and fully to God. We know we might still have setbacks, days when we take a road not on our map or one that will lead us away from the destination of recovery. But grace and hope will prevent our traveling too far off the path. We will recognize when we are going astray.

We might fear surrender is more than we can manage—and more than we can sustain. Fear is part of our lives; it has been a constant companion for many years. We may believe that we used our addiction to relieve any number of personal problems but beneath them lay fear—fear of failing, fear of people.

We are, in the end, unable to care for ourselves. Until now, we have seen no reason to care for ourselves, to love ourselves. Our sense of worthlessness and unworthiness has been too strong. We may have felt that we didn't need to care for ourselves because of our addiction. We have become unable to help ourselves, despite our efforts. Physically, emotionally, and spiritually, we have become stranded beside the road, hoping and waiting for help to come along.

Now we must ask God for roadside assistance. Perhaps our understanding of God has gotten in the way of our efforts to free ourselves from addiction. Maybe we expected disappointment and judgment from God, or maybe we prayed for a miraculous rescue, in which God did all the work, and we were simply bystanders. The idea that God wants something better for us, created us for something good and free from addiction, has not occurred to us before. We will work with God to become who we are created to be, free from dependency and addiction.

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O gracious God, my life is in your hands. I yearn to place the tangled strands of my life into your care. I surrender all of my self to you: my broken spirit, my regrets, my futile attempts to be in control. As I come to you, letting go and trusting you, I ask you to take my life into your care. Bless me with the continued confidence that your everlasting arms are extended to me, today and every day. Amen.

Step 4

Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

We balk at this step, even years after we have made progress on our journey. Who wants to recall the behavior that caused so many problems in our lives and in the lives of others? We begin by thinking about the negatives, our character defects that we blame for leading us down the wrong road. But that's like blaming the car, bus, or plane, instead of the driver or pilot. For too long, we have believed that whenever there is a problem, someone or something else must have done something wrong. We have difficulty facing the fact that life has problems, that nothing is perfect.

This negativity comes from a lack of gratitude. Rarely do we say what a wonderful journey we are taking or how smoothly things are going, even when they are. We obsess about the roadblocks and speed bumps, seeing them as obstacles instead of natural occurrences, as an integral part of the journey.

Change requires that we look at challenges and see them as opportunities. Change also asks us to follow a plan of lightening our load. That means acknowledging our weaknesses and our strengths.

There are many phases in looking at the exact nature of our wrongs. In the beginning, we may avoid naming some of the most important defects, but over the years, we will recognize both our obvious and underlying behaviors. The fourth and fifth steps are often taken during those years, and we find hidden and covert acts that can and should be changed. Making lists and referring to them helps us remember from year to year what characteristics and behaviors we are working on—and the things we wish to do differently. Recognizing and changing our character defects is intentional. Our purpose is to undo the behaviors that have accompanied our addiction and sabotaged our relationships.

We need to find our strengths in our inventory as well. We are creative, bright, talented people. As those in recovery show us, we have gifts of service and compassion that others need. We have an abundance of God's grace to offer the world.

O God of truth, I come to you now, ready to look at my life with open eyes, and ask you to bless me with courage so that I might be fearless in my self-examination. Hold up a mirror for me so that I might see myself clearly. Free me from denial, self-delusion, and grandiosity. Liberate me from distortion. Show me to myself, O God, with the searching truth of your mercy. In your name, I pray. Amen.

Step 5

Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

We have made mistakes in our lives. Sometimes we have repeated them over and over. We have driven the wrong way, run red lights, and speeded, despite road signs and traffic laws. Boundaries and orders are alien to our journey. As a matter of fact, we thought we were happier without them. This step confronts us with our lack of direction. We realize our wrongs are more than bumps in the road—they are unmarked detours.

Acknowledging these wrongs and claiming responsibility for them is frightening. It is difficult to admit to ourselves these wrongs. We are thankful for grace and mercy when we admit them to God. Because of our addictions, our relationships have been so tenuous that saying anything straightforward and honestly to another person may be difficult. The companion we choose to share with in this step should be compassionate and caring. This step makes us feel vulnerable enough in admitting our mistakes, without inviting harsh judgment or condemnation from outside.

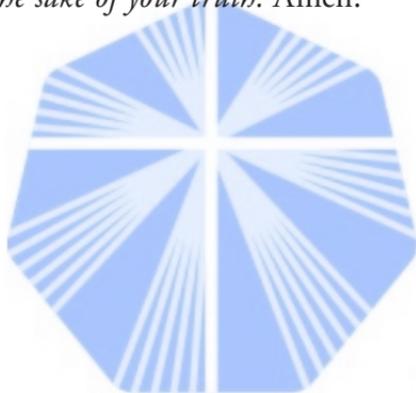
We may not enjoy this step, but it is necessary. If we have been honest in our fourth step and thoroughly examined our

personal and social relationships, we will find that honesty and willingness to change are the keys to acceptance and forgiveness in this step.

There are different ways of working the fifth step. The format is our choice. At first perhaps we make a list, but later we discover more issues and realize that discovery will continue through the years. The list reminds us that we have been anything but perfect. Often we wonder why we cannot just tell God what we have done instead of also having to tell another person. But if we think about it, we realize God already knows we have misused the gift of life. God also knows when we are trying to avoid acknowledging this fact to someone else.

We can find real relief and peace if we do the steps the way they have been laid out rather attempting to do them our way. In our lives of addiction, we have done too many things our way, and we have not turned out well. Following this step presents us with the opportunity to change our “self-will, run-riot” behavior and to avoid halfway measures. We have gifts from God that we have hidden or not recognized in our efforts to relieve our fears and pain. Our “do-it-myself” mode has created personal behaviors that are controlling and manipulative. Our fifth steps offer opportunities to truly let go and abandon those self-destructive behaviors in our efforts to become the people we are created to be.

O God, you have brought me into a new season of hope, surrender, and truth. Strengthen me now as I acknowledge the truth of my life to you, to myself, and to another human being. Help me to acknowledge my wrongs, specifically and exactly, to another person. Shield me against any temptation to minimize, rationalize, or deny my wrongs. Bless me, and the one who will hear me, with a hunger for the truth and a deep trust in your enduring mercy, and so I may open my life candidly, responsibly, and fully for the sake of your truth. Amen.



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Step 6

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

Letting go and letting God doesn't happen all at once or perfectly. Usually, we are ready to have God remove some defects right now. But we're not ready to discard other behaviors, ones that we like or enjoy. We haven't uncovered all of our destructive behaviors. But we are asking to be in recovery, and this step has a special meaning in terms of our behavior.

In recovery, there's no place for hedging or minimizing when we are asked to be honest. We can no longer continue our loud and cruel denunciations of another's behavior or ignore kindness and compassion. Reordering our priorities around our spiritual life, traveling the road as we are directed, will get us to a destination that we have hitherto not found, if indeed we recognized its existence at all.

The changes we propose will make our recovery permanent because we are talking about sobriety, not just abstinence from our addiction. Sobriety is the lifelong maintenance of recovery. We are on a road less traveled, on a journey few are privileged or want to take. Our changes are not easy, and our old behaviors will resurface from time to time. But we are able to give them up again by following the

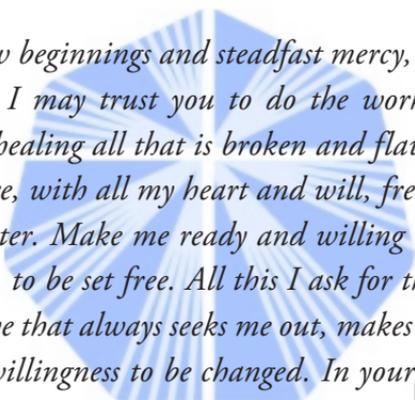
path that brought us to this new beginning. The emphasis on sobriety is an important part of our recovery...a step toward the reality and fullness of being human. We don't have to be perfect, but we do have to grow up and enter into functional adult relationships with people that God has given us. We cannot dominate, manipulate, or control people in these relationships. We must be honest and authentic, giving them the same freedom and respect as they give us.

We are asked to put away childish things, immature behaviors that have kept us from growing up. Our compulsive behavior has led us down roads that reinforced our character defects and problem behaviors. Some of these behaviors may stem from fear and from difficult experiences that we did not know how to manage as children or adults. But we must accept these experiences as a part of life. One way to manage the fear of these experiences is to share them with others, not weeping over a glass of wine or a roll of the dice, but in honest, face-to-face conversations. That's a rare experience for most of us, to be face-to-face with someone who really listens and at least tries to understand. It's a novel experience because what we have done for years is to blame others, claiming our problems stem from the way they treated us, created problems for us, and misled us. With this attitude, life's difficulties could be explained away as always someone else's fault.

We learned one more thing in asking to have our character defects removed: we are not in control of other

people, or, to some extent, of our own lives. Try and remove your character defects by yourself, and you'll quickly discover that nothing happens. We need a navigator, or even better yet, a driver to help us get to our destination. We need to be prepared for the changes that we must make to get there.

God is ready to move into the driver's seat. We must put aside our character defects, our desire to do it ourselves, and wholeheartedly surrender to God.



O God of new beginnings and steadfast mercy, grant me your grace that I may trust you to do the work of cleansing, liberating, and healing all that is broken and flawed in my life. Help me to desire, with all my heart and will, freedom from my defects of character. Make me ready and willing to be changed, to be made new, to be set free. All this I ask for the sake of your transforming love that always seeks me out, makes me ready, and stirs in me the willingness to be changed. In your name, I pray. Amen.

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Step 7

Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.

The most important aspect of our journey is humility. Arrogance and self-centeredness that accompanied our addiction have no place in our new lives.

Humility means we are willing to learn about God, about new and different ways of being with other people and about another direction for our lives. These changes are never too late, no matter how long it took us to try recovery. If we look at others who are in recovery, we can see them getting an education, finding a partner to share their lives, and finding joy at renewed family relationships. All of those things are unexpected, new directions that came after their behavior changed. Our condescension and criticism are the opposite of humility in our relationships with others. Their ideas are right for them and may offer to us ways of behaving that we have not thought possible for ourselves.

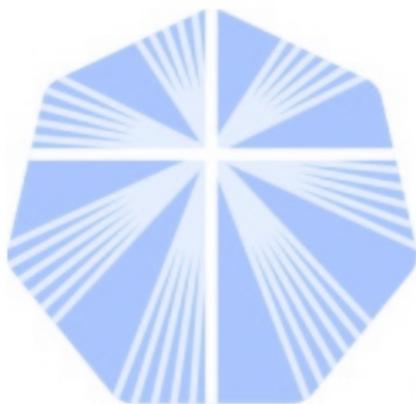
There is no question that we are bright and talented people who have traveled in the wrong direction. But to return to the right road requires a new and different lifestyle. In our lives, we've always done what we felt like, speeding up, slowing down, changing lanes, without regard for anyone

else. If others in our lives didn't like it, we made excuses or blamed them. We resisted admitting we were wrong or acknowledging that we didn't know it all. "I'm sorry" became a rote response rather than an authentic apology. Our efforts to control our addiction resulted in an attempt to control everything and everyone in our lives—including God. In our prayers (if we prayed at all), we told God what to do for us. Now we ask God to help us make the changes in our life so that we can become the person God created us to be. There is no question that we will not be comfortable with these changes for a while. Scripture talks about our being "born again," and in a way, we are undergoing a rebirth when we ask God to help us change. Gradually we will begin to understand what it means and how it feels to allow God to be in control of our lives.

We will practice letting God be in control throughout the Twelve Steps and throughout our lives. Much to our surprise, this will make our lives easier. Even when tragic events occur, we will discover that we are no longer alone.

Another gift we receive in this step is the practice of prayer. To fully embrace this step, we must make prayer a daily and sometimes hourly habit. Our former behavior will try to resurface, but prayer can help us recognize it and develop new, healthy habits.

God of our understanding, you alone can set us free from the burden of our failings and shortcomings. I come to you now, asking that you remove from me all that hinders the faithful expression of my full humanity. Take away the barriers that I have built between you and me and between others and me. Remove from me all my shortcomings. Make me new for the sake of your goodness, O Lord. Help me and heal me. Amen.



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Step 8

Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

This step focuses on people, particularly those whom we have manipulated, controlled, belittled, and abused. Our addiction left us no room for other relationships, except the relationship with our addiction. Everything, and everyone, was secondary.

This step presents an opportunity for reconciliation, for making things right again with those who love us, and perhaps even with those who don't want to be around us any more. We cannot undo the past, but we can change the present. However, simply saying "I'm sorry" isn't enough. Reconciliation requires more than just words. It demands that we try out new behaviors.

Making a list of people we have harmed is a good beginning. This gives us time to contemplate the real, authentic, and honest changes that we must now make instead of rushing into making amends. Our mistakes and our wrongdoings can provide a map for not only resolving the past but also for changing the future. This step and the next offer a new and different direction for our behavior and our lives.

We ought not to forget to include two names on the list. The first is God. What we have done to God's creation through our addiction must be considered and listed along with our other misdeeds. Our relationship with God was broken by our self-centered behavior. Since we now depend on God for the help we need to overcome our addiction, our amends and our future journey relies on a healthy relationship. As with any relationship, a conversation is necessary. We probably began that conversation with prayer. We made a simple request asking God to help us get through a day or even an hour without turning to our addiction. Then we began and ended each day with prayer, enclosing the hours in a request for God's presence and help on our journey. Now, we must be more specific and direct. We owe God an apology and a change in our lives.

We are the other person to whom we must make amends. We have trashed our lives and destroyed the person we were created to be. How different our lives would have been without our addiction. For a while, we will have some regrets, as we leave behind well-loved, comfortable, and familiar behaviors. But this new life without addiction holds great promise and joy too.

We are given a second chance to be the unique person God created us to be. Our relationships will be better, more intimate, and longer lasting. We will, perhaps for the first time in a long time, have companions on the way.

God of reconciliation and restoration, bring to my mind all those I have harmed through my disease: my family, my loved ones, my neighbors, and co-workers. And you, God, and myself. Bring to my mind all those whom I have injured, in whatever way, by what I have done and failed to do. Stir up in me a desire to be reconciled with them. May I be ready to see that reconciliation with them, and to be willing to make amends to them, even when it seems difficult and frightening. Bless me in this important preparation for reconciliation, O God; in you I trust. Amen.



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Step 9

Made direct amends to such people whenever possible, except when doing so would injure them or others.

We are not making amends so that everything is okay. We are making amends that go beyond a simple apology as part of a change in behavior. The word direct is deliberately used in this step. Sometimes it may seem impossible to make direct amends, but when we're serious about this step, we may find that people on our list suddenly appear back into our lives, sometimes when we haven't seen them in years. What has seemed impossible, suddenly and surprisingly, becomes possible.

We can practice what we would like to say and be very polished and professional at making our amends, but in many instances, blunt honesty and direct conversation is best. We may need to offer feelings of regret, feelings we have brushed aside until now. We may be required to repay our financial obligations as part of the amends. We may find that the response we expect and hope for is not the response we receive. Much to our amazement, others are not in our control—and making amends teaches us this. They can respond in any way they desire to our amends. They may dismiss things that mattered deeply to us. They may say

that they can't get past the bad behavior, despite our effort to make amends. We have to deal with their varied responses using behaviors that are foreign to us, to truly communicate and respond authentically to what they are telling us.

Amends are about re-establishing and maintaining relationships in ways that we have not practiced for years, if ever. Those relationships go beyond the surface conversations, the flip "how are you?" questions that we ask but don't really care to hear the answer.

There is no superficiality in authentically making amends. Only honesty will do, no matter what response you receive. This is difficult, probably as difficult as giving up our addiction. Honesty and vulnerability make us take a giant step into the reality of our journey and require surrender. Again.

We must surrender our old behaviors and our former ways of relating to others in favor of new, more collaborative relationships. In so doing, the power of God continues to guide us on our journey toward recovery. This step can be frightening because it moves us from isolation into community. It also requires a confession of sorts and an implication we are asking for forgiveness. Forgiveness from someone we have wronged is a gift, although we may not receive it or even consider it as such. It's important to recognize that this step is a risk for others as well: their willingness to forgive us, even

when we often have not forgiven ourselves, is a risk, not unlike the one God takes every day when we pray for forgiveness.

God of new life, I come before you, asking for wisdom and discernment as I seek to make amends with those whom I have harmed. Help me to know how to make direct amends and to be sensitive about who I should approach and how to make such direct amends. Guide me as I determine how to make amends in ways that are most faithful. I ask this, trusting in your guidance in all things. Amen.



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Step 10

Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Beginning the Twelve Steps is difficult; this tenth step is another beginning we might rather avoid. We have taken an inventory, but what we will find is that as we grow and change, new understandings of our behaviors come into view. Or we may come to realize we have ignored some of our old character defects, ones we really liked, and now we need to reassess our behavior. We might establish a nightly practice to think about the day and the ways in which we have handled our encounters with others. This self-examination may include our fears and the ways they have affected our behavior or caused us to avoid a relationship with someone.

It is not easy to admit we are frightened and that our addiction covered and obscured our fears. Without the cover of addiction, how do we handle being afraid and coping with these feelings? Personal inventories should include both our strengths and our weaknesses, and sometimes one may be the exact opposite of the other. Too often, we focus only on our weaknesses, and our self-esteem is so low that we only see character defects. But underneath our addictions, many of us

are kind, compassionate people. These strengths will emerge as we deal with and ask God to remove the character defects. The emergence of these strengths will come over time, with years of practice and a number of inventories.

On our journey, we will evolve into the person God hopes for us to become—if we make the effort to examine our behavior on a regular basis. Character defects re-emerge when we are put into new and different sober situations. We simply need to be aware when we are behaving in a manner that does not serve us or others well.

We might struggle with this step, indeed all of the steps. Sobriety is not what we would have called fun. But if we are honest, our addiction was not fun either. God's grace allows us to enjoy in recovery the aspects of life that give us a sense of satisfaction, to laugh and to find pleasure in our journey. Yes, we will encounter temptations, but with a solid foundation of recovery, we will be able to avoid a return to our addiction.

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O *God of each moment, give me the gift of an attentive heart so that I may always examine myself honestly and discover my wrongs as they emerge. Strengthen me that I may acknowledge each wrong and promptly admit it and make amends where appropriate. Make in each day a time to examine my life and admit my wrongs promptly, so I may live each day in the light of your truth; in your Name, I pray. Amen.*

Step 11

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, praying only for knowledge of God's will and the power to carry that out.

We have prayed, probably a lot. But the temptation is still to ask God to do *for* us, instead of asking what we should do *with* God. God does not work outside of our desire and behavior. We might ask God to keep us from pouring a drink or stop us from placing a bet, but that's not how God works. Rather God provides power and strength so that we can stop drinking. God sustains us when we are tempted to pick up and practice our addiction again, because God knows that temptation, to some degree, is always present and often appears at the most unlikely of moments.

This step encourages us to use prayer and meditation so that we might still our hearts and minds and listen for God. Meditation is a time and place where God can communicate with us. We often have been either silent during our addiction or so focused on it that we have never really listened to anyone, much less God. We have not been willing to hear what God wants of us or to do God's will. Our relationship with God has pretty much been like our relationship with

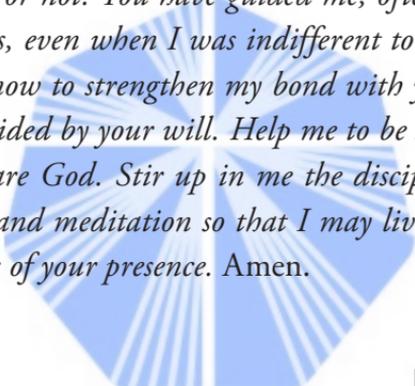
others. We have tried to manipulate God in our prayers and our requests—so we can have our own way. Even though we have been in recovery for a while, we still see some of the self-centered behaviors of our addiction emerge from time to time, particularly issues of power and control.

Prayer can take many forms. Many of us start our day with a simple prayer to be free from our addictions and end the day with thanks for one more day in recovery. Prayer evolves throughout our recovery. We often begin with requests. We may ask for more faith, without realizing that we have already been given more than we need or use. We may expect perfect prayer, without recognizing the progress we have made in our spiritual journey. The idea of praying for God's will and the power to carry that out is certainly a new idea for most of us. We are giving up, surrendering, changing our direction, and asking for God's care. We also shape our prayer around gratitude, giving thanks and making known to God and to others our appreciation for recovery and all its facets. Gratitude is certainly the best basis for all of our prayers.

We tend to make this step too complex. God wants for us to stay in recovery and to practice principles of honesty and fairness in all, and that means *all*, of our affairs. Rigorous honesty in our inventories and in our relationship with God is paramount to our recovery. God does not make puppets of us. If we look and listen and are willing to learn, all with a

gracious amount of humility, we may change completely our journey's direction as it relates to vocation, relationships, and other aspects of our lives. What we should not and cannot want to change is our recovery—or trying, just once more, our addiction.

O God, you have reached out to me even when I did not know or care. You have watched over me and loved me whether I felt it or not. You have guided me, often through the wisdom of others, even when I was indifferent to your will and purpose. I seek now to strengthen my bond with you. I want to know and be guided by your will. Help me to be still and know that you alone are God. Stir up in me the discipline of taking time for prayer and meditation so that I may live in your light and be conscious of your presence. Amen.



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Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other addicts and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

We have the opportunity to share in recovery and to care for others on the journey. We may offer tangible or spiritual support, if they need it. We will be sponsors of people who are new in recovery and arrange meetings for those who want recovery. Our spiritual awakening calls us to compassionate service in working together with others. This service may be as simple as making coffee for a meeting or accompanying someone in the Twelve Step work. In our addiction, we would have ignored anyone who needed help, as readily as most people would pass by someone who had broken down on the highway. But in our recovery, we have a message to share, a plan and program for recovery from our addiction, a path to new life in Christ.

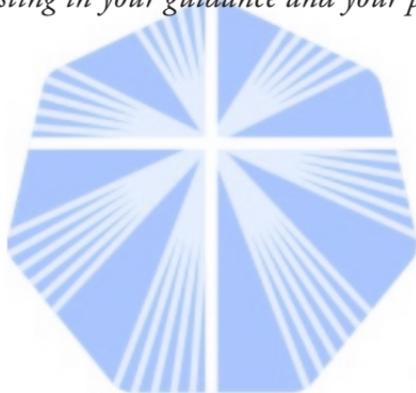
Our spiritual awakening may take different forms. It usually includes a certainty that life as we now know it is better, full of serenity, honesty, hope, faith, and compassion for others. Before we started the Twelve Steps, we would not have believed these and other spiritual gifts would make our

lives better. It is unlikely that we saw honesty and hope as virtues we needed or even wanted. Equally unlikely was the desire to do anyone else's will. Now, our inventories and our amends have shown us a new way of making and keeping relationships, even and especially with God. We value others, we value intimacy, and we value God's power that frees us from our addiction. These new values will make changes in our behavior and our life. Love that is asked of us is only love when it is given to others. Compassion helps us understand the pain and struggles of others. Service shows love to others in ways we have been reluctant to give in the past.

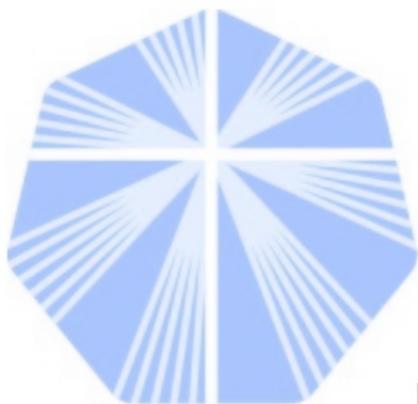
Reaching the end of the Twelve Steps gives us an opportunity to begin them again and find ever-deeper meaning and purpose in them. It also gives us the opportunity to help others find the road to recovery. We will share this path with them, offering insights and new understandings that can help and support our own journey. We will learn and remember what addiction can and will continue to do if we try to resume our past life.

We could not control that past, and only by living in the present, can we be assured of a future that is full of the gifts God has given us. We have a mission to share the message of God's grace in giving recovery to those who sincerely desire it and to ask for help through this Twelve Step journey to recovery.

Dear God of my awakening, you have brought me into a new life, which continues to develop one day at a time. Help me to share the message of sobriety with other addicts who still suffer. Give me the words to carry this message in ways that are clear and inviting. Remind me always that messages are carried not only in words, but also in actions, decisions, and attitudes. In all that I do, keep me rooted in the spiritual wisdom of the Twelve Steps, so that I may practice these principles, consistently and gratefully, trusting in your guidance and your power. Amen.



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About the Authors

The Rev. Canon Nancy Van Dyke Platt has written numerous articles on alcoholism, addiction, and spirituality since 1978, when she studied for the priesthood at Seabury Western Seminary. Other areas of interest include Episcopal clergy families and the impact of addiction on congregational development. She is an addictions counselor and chair of the Committee on Substance Abuse in the Diocese of Maine. She has led programs and retreats on addiction in Maine, Chicago, and Florida.

The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen served as the eighth Bishop of Maine from 1998 to 2008, when she retired to do short-term missionary work in Haiti and England. She served as the interim bishop in the Diocese of Lexington and currently serves as assistant bishop in the Diocese of New York. She has done extensive consultation in The Episcopal Church and in ecumenical settings with congregations, dioceses, and organizations around issues of addiction recovery, conflict resolution, organizational development, and trauma-debriefing. Bishop Knudsen lives in Bath, Maine, and commutes to locations to which the Spirit calls her. She is also a well-known retreat leader and spiritual director.



ABOUT THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Episcopal Church has long been a supporter of recovery through Twelve Step programs. In the 1930s-40s, an Episcopal priest, the Rev. Samuel Shoemaker, played a central role in the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous and is regarded as a spiritual mentor of the movement. Many churches host meetings or provide space for Twelve Step meetings, and The Episcopal Church encourages congregations to hold an annual Recovery Sunday worship service to support and celebrate the work of recovery.

The Episcopal Church is part of the wider Anglican Communion, with around eighty million members worldwide. While the authors of this booklet are both ordained in The Episcopal Church, the spiritual journey through the Twelve Steps is open to anyone seeking recovery.