

Motion: Remove the recitation of the “Lord’s Prayer” during Suffolk County General Service (SGS) assemblies, meetings, workshops and events.

This motion applies only to Suffolk County General Service. As part of the AA service structure we ought to model the principles embodied in our traditions, steps and concepts. We support AA principles and promote unity and inclusivity by reciting the Responsibility Statement and the Declaration of Unity at SGS events.

Discussion/Background

AA is a fellowship that includes people from a wide cross-section of society with unique spiritual practices and beliefs. We are making this motion to eliminate this custom and to promote the spiritual principle of unity in Suffolk County General Service for the following reasons:

- The *Big Book* warns us against forcing our brand of spirituality on anyone (128). In “*Appendix II: Spiritual Experience*” it states that our members “identify with their own conception of a Power greater than themselves” (568). This echoes Ebby’s suggestion to Bill in “*Bill’s Story:*” “Why don’t you choose your own conception of God?” (12). AA members are free to engage in any form of spiritual practice to support their individual sobriety. AA groups also have the freedom to choose how they conduct their meetings to fulfill their primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Since we are a service entity that represents all of Suffolk County, we ought to conduct our county assemblies and events in a manner that is in alignment to this open and inclusive approach to recovery from alcoholism.
- The First Tradition: “***Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity***”. The practice of reciting a sectarian prayer is inconsistent with the spirit of unity as embodied in our traditions. For example, some groups in Suffolk County, as well as individual trusted servants, may not hold to the belief in a “father in heaven.” The custom of reciting the Lord’s Prayer impairs our ability to promote unity among members of many faiths, as well as agnostics and atheists in accordance with the 36 principles which guide SGS.
- The Third Tradition says “***The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking***”. Reciting the Lord’s Prayers is specific and makes it seem that AA membership is exclusive to Christians. Reciting the Lord’s Prayer at SGS events runs contrary to the spirit of openness to all manners of belief and non-belief in AA. Membership in AA and participation in SGS does not depend upon conformity to any religious practice.
- Our Preamble clearly states that “***AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics or institution***”. The practice of reciting the Lord’s Prayer implies an alliance with Christianity.
- In *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, Bill writes that “We (the AA society) shall remember that we are laymen, holding ourselves in readiness to co-operate with all men of good will, whatever their creed or nationality.” He goes on to note that, “[n]othing, however, could be so unfortunate for A.A.’s future as an attempt to incorporate any of our personal theological views into A.A. teaching, practice, or tradition” (231-232). Reciting the Lord’s Prayer incorporates a specific religious view into SGS practice and custom. It suggests that we cooperate only with certain “[people] of good will.”

- In *Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.* under the heading “Is A.A. a religious society?” it states that “A.A. is not a religious society, since it requires no definite religious belief as a condition of membership” (19). The custom of reciting the Lord’s Prayer suggests that SGS holds a certain religious belief; and that reciting the prayer in unison exerts an unnecessary pressure on members to conform to this religious belief.
- In *Questions and Answers on Sponsorship*, it asserts that there is a difference between “spiritual” and “religious” (21). We believe that the distinction between “spiritual” and “religious” becomes hazy and confusing when we recite the Lord’s Prayer.