



## AA CONNECTIONS AROUND THE WORLD

MANY COUNTRIES-MANY LANGUAGES-ONE ROAD

### Articles that appeared in the quarterly news bulletin from the U.S./Canada General Service Office of AA (Box 459)



News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.<sup>®</sup>

[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

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#### **A Twelfth-Step Call on Fiji**

What do you do when you want to start a national A.A. convention, but no one offers to be the host? Well, if you're the Australian General Service Conference, you select a tiny island in the South Pacific Ocean and hold the convention there. Makes sense? In a typically A.A., twelfth-step way it certainly does.

In 2013, with no bids submitted to host the inaugural National Australia Convention, the Australian General Service Conference decided to take the opportunity to hold the 2016 Convention in a country within the Asia/Oceania zone where there is little or no A.A. It was seen as a way of fulfilling Australia's responsibility to carry the message to developing countries and to encourage the development of service structures in nearby countries. So, a venue selection committee was formed, several countries were considered – and the country chosen was Fiji!

Beside its natural beauty, perched in an archipelago 1,700 miles east of Australia, there were a number of compelling reasons for the committee's choice. While Alcoholics Anonymous had been in Fiji in some form or another since the early 1950s – usually members from Australia and New Zealand who had been posted to Fiji who held meetings. However, when their postings finished, so usually did the meetings. Now, with a small but committed A.A. presence on the island who had been placing notices of A.A. meetings in local newspapers and providing a helpline for alcoholics, there was an expressed need for A.A. assistance to help extend the Fellowship's reach more broadly to the Fijian community. Recognizing that the Convention, with Al-Anon participation, would bring vital A.A. energy and resources together for the small country and would be welcomed and supported by local professionals and organizations, the decision was made.

To make the proposed twelfth-step call complete, however, registration fees for all regular sessions and meetings of the four-day event were waived for all Fijians. Many of the locals who attended were able to do so as the result of the "Sponsor a Fijian" drive held in the months leading up to the convention and generously supported by A.A. members and groups in Australia who paid the travel costs for Fijians from outlying villages and islands to attend. Scheduled in March, a Public Information Day was also organized, which attracted over 170 visitors, many of whom were members of the Fijian professional community, including the Minister of Health, a representative from the Fiji Society of Medical Practitioners, the Director of the National Substance Abuse Advisory Council, and a doctor from the World Health Organization, along with representatives from the correctional services and other local government agencies. The day's program offered formal presentations about A.A. and allowed plenty of time for A.A. members to interact with professionals and members of the general public.

The success of the Public Information Day was evidenced in the fact that many of those who attended returned for subsequent sessions of the Convention, and a lot of Twelfth Step work was done in corridors and hotel rooms over coffee. The Al-Anon message was also well received, and a group of Fijian family members committed to starting that program locally.

For most attendees, much of the weekend was spent in meetings and fellowship, made all the more enjoyable by the knowledge that the Responsibility Declaration was being fulfilled by the Convention's very presence: "When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help..."

On a personal note, Steve N., an A.A. member from the Bronx, New York, who had spent time in Fiji, both as an active drunk and later as a sober A.A. and a member of the Peace Corps, came across an announcement about the Convention in Fiji at the International Convention in Atlanta last July. "I took the flyer and told my wife we were going to Fiji in 2016," said Steve, who had done considerable outreach in the Fijian community during his two years there. And, in typical A.A. fashion, "When I contacted Australia's G.S.O.," said Steve, "and told them my connection to Fiji and offered to do any service I could, they asked me to be one of the two opening speakers."

Carrying the message in a small community with limited A.A. resources can be challenging, notes Steve, and “my two years living in Fiji taught me what A.A. is at its core. I had joined the Loners/Internationalists Meeting before going to Fiji and I had been in contact with a Loner in Suva. At the time there was a small group of ex-pats, two or three who came and went.

“There was a rehab run by a Fijian priest, who also happened to be a member of A.A. He would suggest that folks go to the meeting, but they didn’t like coming into the meeting room. So, I had some of my greatest A.A. moments speaking with these prospective A.A.s in a cassava patch outside the meeting. Unfortunately, most of them didn’t stay, but over the next two years I met with a hospital administrator, the head of the counselling centre at the University, World Health Organization executives, etc., trying to carry the message of A.A. No one else showed up, but the good news is I stayed sober.”

The decision to hold the Convention in Fiji was “brilliant,” according to Steve. “Watching twelfth-step work at this level was impressive to see,” and an effort such as this on a national level required plenty of coordination and commitment.

In his closing talk to the Convention, the chairperson of Australia’s General Service Board summed up the experience in Fiji saying, “We came to give, and give we did!” For those involved in this effort, there is no greater privilege.

Said Phyllis G., an A.A. who has been living in Fiji for over twenty years, “I watched small groups sharing, individual members pairing off to talk, with the result that the whole Convention took on the feeling of recovery, hope and gratitude for what we sober members have.

“I was touched, moved and felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude that my A.A. family from Australia had indeed carried the message of recovery to my island home of Fiji.”

### **A.A. in Africa**

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, has a new A.A. group – the first Amharic-speaking group in the African nation. Like most A.A. groups, it was founded out of desperation – and nurtured on hope.

Evolving out of a hospital program – a specialized mental hospital, and the only hospital in the country addressing alcoholism, a number of patients clung together trying to stay sober. In correspondence with G.S.O., Mekonnen Y. tells their story:

“Ever since we were discharged from the hospital, we have been sober for periods ranging from one month to fifteen months. During all this time we have been meeting frequently – some of us daily and others two to three days a week – and we have been trying to form a group, meeting informally at different places including the hospital compound and at different members’ homes for more than a year.

“In January 2016 we were able to get a meeting place outside the compound with the help of a doctor and a psychologist we know at the addiction department of the hospital.

“Now, with a permanent meeting place, we are on a good start with not less than fifteen regularly attending members. We continue to get together outside meeting hours and above all we are ready to provide Twelfth Step help for the still-suffering alcoholic.

“Among the challenges we have faced are the lack of a meeting place (which is now solved), and the fact that most of the alcoholics we could reach till now were those admitted to the hospital, most of whom had little resources to rent a place with members’ contributions. The other challenge we faced was lack of available A.A. literature in Amharic (our local language). Most of our members do not fully understand English. We conduct meetings in Amharic and needed to provide literature for newcomers.

“This is now solved after our coordinator who took the initiative to form the group (and is now sober fifteen months), was able to translate to Amharic the pamphlet ‘Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.,’ which we downloaded from the website. We now use it as starting material for group discussion and give it out to newcomers.

### **Greetings from Craig**

The Tanzanian conference was really amazing! My friend John K from Nairobi and I arrived in Tanzania last Wednesday. On Thursday the day before the conference we went and visited to really remarkable rehabilitation centers. On Friday and Saturday there were many Great speakers and many groups of AA's from all over the African continent. It was decided at the closing of the conference there in Tanzania that the torch would be passed to Nairobi Kenya for 2017 and in 2018 hopefully the conference will be in Uganda

## **AA Round Up / Retreat in Samoa**

Friday to Sunday 18th to 20th November  
Vaiala Beach Cottages, Beach Rd, Apia, Samoa  
The Weekend registration is 325 Tala (about US\$138)  
Phone Samoa AA cell phone at +685 758-9689

[www.samoan-aa.org](http://www.samoan-aa.org)

## **Malta 17 "United We Recover" Malta 11th International Convention** 24-26 March

2017 Seashells Resort at Suncrest, Qawra Rd, Qawra, Malta

Meetings in English, Maltese & Italian

[www.aa.org.au/members/documents/AA-Malta-2017-Convention-Flyer](http://www.aa.org.au/members/documents/AA-Malta-2017-Convention-Flyer)

**SAVE the DATE!**

**FREEDOM THROUGH SURRENDER**  
THE 8th Annual Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous Hong Kong

**Victory Over Alcoholism Starts With Surrender**

Friday Workshop on Spirituality  
Great International Speakers  
Huge Fun, Boat Trip & Awesome Door Prizes  
AA, Alanon, Chinese, LGBT, Youth Meetings  
Main Meetings Will Have Simultaneous Chinese Translation  
Everyone is Welcome! PLEASE Come!

NOVEMBER 11-13, 2016  
MARINERS' CLUB, 11 MIDDLE ROAD, KOWLOON HONG KONG SAR  
[www.hkconvention.org](http://www.hkconvention.org)



**The 54th National Convention**  
**Will be held at St Andrews College, Christchurch**  
**Friday 20 January through to Sunday 22 January 2017**

The theme "A Program of Recovery" reflects the journey we undertake through the twelve steps of AA to rebuild our lives as described on page 59 of the Big Book, 4th edition:

"Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery".

Set on the Canterbury Plains, Christchurch is New Zealand's garden city on the east coast of the South Island. Flat-bottomed punts glide on the Avon River, running through the city centre. On its banks are cycling paths, the green expanse of Hagley Park and the Christchurch Botanic Gardens. In 2010 and 2011, two major earthquakes destroyed many city-centre buildings, and, although restoration work continues, we look forward to welcoming you.

St Andrews College is a thriving, bustling school located in suburban Merivale, just five minutes by car from the centre of Christchurch. They are celebrating their centenary in 2017 and are one of the largest school campuses in Christchurch, with an extensive range of buildings and grounds stretching across 13 hectares.

St Andrews College has boarding facilities located right in the heart of the college campus. Accommodation for the convention is available across its three boarding houses.

Christchurch has a great selection of meetings running every day. If you would like more information, to find out where they are, or would like a lift to get to one during your stay in Christchurch please ask. Meetings are also listed at [www.aa.org.nz](http://www.aa.org.nz).



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## **EURYPAA VIII**

**8TH EUROPEAN CONVENTION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN AA  
 (AND FOR THOSE YOUNG AT HEART)**

**SUMMER OF 2017  
 HELSINKI, FINLAND**



**CHECK FOR DATES AND MORE @  
[WWW.EURYPAA2017.ORG](http://WWW.EURYPAA2017.ORG)  
[WWW.EURYPAA.ORG](http://WWW.EURYPAA.ORG)**





**2017**  
July 7-10

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL CONVENTION**  
with Al-Anon and Alateen participation

**Pullman Cairns International  
Cairns QLD**

**[www.aanatcon2017.com.au](http://www.aanatcon2017.com.au)**  
Pullman Cairns International | 17 Abbott St | Cairns | QLD 4870 Australia

## MAP OF AA'S ASIA-OCEANIA ZONE

