

Tradition Two: When They Kept It Simple

Serenity was restored

I belonged to an Eleventh Step group in a small village out in the country during my first year of sobriety. We met on Sunday mornings in the village grange, and the meeting was quite popular. We regularly drew about sixty people who came for our ten-minute meditation, followed by a speaker/discussion meeting.

The village was small and parking was tight, especially during the summer when tourists came to visit the surrounding countryside.

Occasionally, the town's police officer would come in during the meeting to say we had to move such-and-such car away from a driveway, or that we were blocking some important access. The group realized that we had outgrown our space and discussions began on finding a larger space with better parking accommodations. This may sound like a simple proposition, but it became a volatile issue.

Many people loved the grange, and felt threatened by the prospect of moving. The meeting had been there for many years and some of us believed the spirituality of the meeting had infused the cinder block walls with a special feeling.

Our business meetings became difficult and more emotional as we discussed whether or not we should move. People interrupted one another to get their point across, and some ill will developed. I started to dread business meetings because I felt confused. The meeting itself could be so spiritual, nurturing, and loving, but the business meeting was governed more by insecurity, fear, and hurt feelings.

Then a member of the group with more than ten years of sobriety suggested that we begin our business meetings by reading the Second Tradition: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority--a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

The group chairperson followed the Second Tradition reading with a short statement that said, "We are holding this group conscience to discover our Higher Powers will about moving the meeting. We ask each member who participates in these discussions to do their best to leave their personal opinions out of their comments, to respect the comments of others, and to sincerely try to consider what's best for our group." This statement brought calm to our business meetings and returned civility and respect to our group conscience process.

Ultimately, the group conscience decided that we move the meeting to the local fire station where there was more parking and where our presence was less of a burden to the village. We got used to sitting among the fire trucks and now those walls, too, have been infused with the spirituality of our meditations, prayers, and discussions. I learned a valuable personal lesson during this process. The principles of our program can bring me back from my self-centered opinions to a sincere consideration of what is best for AA, and therefore what is best for me.

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