

Evolution of Saint David's by Eleanor P
Submitted by Steve G

September 1, 2020

Eleanor P. a group member, was asked to do some back-ground writing about the Saturday morning A.A. meeting at St. David's here in Salem, New Hampshire and how it started...

At this point I would like to say it was started by a loving god, or our higher power as we call him in AA. the instruments used were Fred and Kathy W and myself. In his wisdom he knew way back in February 1963 that his power was need as many alcoholics were having a hard time combating their disease of alcoholism. There were originally three members Fred and Kathy W. and myself. Kathy was my sponsor whom I met in al-a-non. Fred and Kathy did the actual foot work in contacting Father Dearman. I was more or less here in body only being new to the program. As I felt my higher power had prepared Kathy to be my sponsor, I also believed he prepared father Dearman to be open to this great work of his.

As the doors open to thousands of alcoholics who would walk through these doors of sobriety, we met in a room about the size of a pantry which was located upstairs in the back of the church. At that time there was no paved parking lot, there was no downstairs. At the first meeting our first speaker was Fred W.; who passed from sobriety into eternal rest with his higher power last year. What a power of example he was. I always enjoyed listening to the part of his story when he told of drinking rubbing alcohol when he worked at Danvers State Hospital. Kathy was an inspiration to me, a fine sponsor who was there just for me. I find it mind boggling how she could stand up there and tell her story. She and her husband Fred were drinking partners. Kathy becoming sober first. When it was my turn to speak, all I could do was get up and say my name is Eleanor and I am an alcoholic, which was enough for me at that time. Our first meeting had then taken place!!!

The second meeting was somewhat different. We had a few more alcoholics perhaps five or six which was exciting as we knew the roots were planted. Each week a few more would show up, which shows what it means when Bill W. wrote "pass it on". By word of mouth the group was growing just as it does today. It did not take many meetings before we were going to need a larger room. Fr. Dearmon came to our rescue and provided the larger room. Needless to say, we did have our problems. At one point some of the sacristy wine was missing. Not all alcoholics get sober at their first meeting. Fr. Dearmon, a dedicated and compassionate man simply said – "*do not tempt them, lock it up*". so, the sacristy wine was put under lock and key. A minor problem solved. Another problem was some of the ladies of the church would like to try to listen in while straightening up the church I'm sure just out of curiosity, but again Fr. Dearmon came to our rescue, he explained that this was an anonymous program and we were entitled to our privacy. We stayed in this room for quite a while. Each week a few more would show up, we were growing. There was Tim D. with his great story of the mince pie which always brought the house down. There was Myron G. from Manchester, NH, Pat C. from Lawrence, Fred S. from Lawrence, all who have mostly passed away. I remember Fred S. coming to his first meeting at saint David's', he was sober, but he was a very hurting puppy. One of his character defects was his loudmouth and no one wanted to tolerate him, and he had no group. Through the love, our higher power had blessed us with, we told him not to worry about that he could join our group,

for you see this is what saint David's' is all about. It is what AA meetings are all about. The love and acceptance of all alcoholics, Fred S. stayed an active member of the group and finally felt accepted by his higher power. Regardless of race, color, or creed, no matter what our standards of life be lawyer or thief, we have one thing in common we are all alcoholics. We have no president, we just have trusted servants, we all have, what is without a doubt, a disease an obsession to drink.

As time went on more and more started to come to our meeting. We learn more about the disease of alcoholism. We learn more about *blue lighting and bathtub gin*. We also learned about the problem's groups have. Treasurers would take off with the treasury money, coffee makers did not show up, group did not show up, telephones were used without permission (before cell phones) and confrontations took place between members. This is all part of AA and should remain minor. Our primary purpose is to help others recover from alcoholism. Every problem can be solved as they arise at the business meetings. Salem Saturday morning meeting has managed to do this since 1963. These problems still exist today, and they will always exist. We should not judge when someone fails, but for the grace of god, go I. Pray for them as someone prayed for you.

One of my first experiences was my first-time making coffee. We were about five months old. We had grown to about twenty-five to thirty members I was left in charge of the group while Kathy and Fred went on vacation. The coffee was so weak it was more like water splashed with a little coffee. Yet no one walked out of the meeting. Love and tolerance was shown.

Saint David's began to grow. Commitments started, groups started to come in, and alcoholics were coming from all directions. A rosy glow took over as we would greet each other with another day of sobriety. Slowly but surely, we needed yet another hall. An addition had been built on the other end of the building and we were allowed to use this. We had grown to perhaps fifty. It was our task to break down the chairs and carry them to another building for storing until our next meeting. Donuts started to appear, laughter of indentation rang to the ceiling, newcomers were made welcome. Our higher power was watering his flock. For he and he alone can release us from the obsession to drink.

Little did we know there were plans to build a nursery in the downstairs basement. We did not know we would yet be needing still a larger hall. We were overflowing, gods' *wisdom* knows no end. Here we meet every Saturday morning. The rosy glow is still there. The laughter still rings to the ceiling, the handshakes and the problems are still there. More and more alcoholics and addicts are coming into AA from all walks of life. The handshake is there for everyone. Everyone is welcome like a long-lost friend, for so we are until the gift of sobriety is given to us from a tender loving god. We all suffered the torture and lonesome of alcohol.

I would like to add at this time we did have one eavesdropper Bobbie F. the advocate of saint David's church who none of us knew, she listened in and was fascinated by the stories she heard. she is now a solid member of saint David's group.

A proper closing would be to say the power of god runs deep. He alone performed the miracles you see at saint David's thousands have come through these doors to recover from the disease of

alcoholism. Let us not judge our brothers and sisters, some come some go. None of us have the insight to see into another heart. Let us carry the message of AA which is a brotherhood of love, tolerance, and patience for each other. The star spangle banner says, *"he crowned thy good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea"*. For there is good in all of us. Saint David's AA group remains the same, the handshake, the coffee, the problems. But like our first meeting the welcome mat is there and will remain there for all who come through the door. This group was built on love and acceptance and the compassion one alcoholic shows for another. Simplicity never fails.

Eleanor P

Saint David's Saturday morning Group celebrated 57 years June 1st, 2020 and continues to welcome the newcomer as described by Eleanor P., Time has passed, and St David's still supports AA meetings. Although we are experiencing changes in our society due to COVID-19, we no longer meet in person, but we now meet in a social platform called ZOOM. Many of the same members join us every Saturday.

Many people have passed on through the years which all were a big part of this great group. Sad for us all. People like Sandy Mac, a greeter of all greeters. Shaking hands at the bottom of the stairs, big hand, big smile we will always remember. He would always take time to comfort one, by speaking with them or by inviting them to breakfast before the meeting. Yes, we would meet every Saturday with a group reflecting on the weeks activity's and just chat sharing stories, enjoying the fellowship which is a big part of AA. Sandy would have a pocket full of Gold Dollar coins which he'd pass out to the children along the way. It wasn't hard to see the family man he had become, when he'd say did I ever show you my Grandchildren? The roll of photos would hit the floor. He'd have such a proud smile; he loved his sobriety and family. *Sandy MacDonald Passed February 9th, 2016, after 54 years of continuous sobriety...*

"Try to improve the quality of your life every day"

"Pretty good advice" he would say...

We Thought of you today, but that is nothing new.

We thought of you yesterday and days before that too.

We think of you in Silence, and often speak your name.

All we have are memories and your pitcher in a frame.

Your memory is a keepsake from which we'll never part.

God has you in His arms, we have you in my hearts.

—Author unknown

Then there was Bobby F. she was another member of St David's which was mentioned by Eleanor P. always helping the newcomers, comforting the women as they arrived. She had a way

of making people comfortable, with her very straight forward way. Bobby F. Passed on 12/16/2018 She will be forever missed but not forgotten.

There were and still are so many people that have given themselves to this God given program, by sharing their Experience Strength and Hope with one another.

Steve G