

Traditions can be Fuzzy

My homegroup faced some challenges this year. Even though I was glad that we had the opportunity to apply the traditions, they were really not all that clear.

In the fall, I filled in as chairperson. I hate chairing big discussion meetings because I feel, as the chair, it is my responsibility to keep the discussion on topic, and I hate confrontation. My fear materialized when someone's sharing was inappropriate and off topic, offended some members of the group. After a couple of minutes, I directed the person to talk to a sponsor and called on another person to share. The initial person sharing left the meeting and has not returned. I felt like I was practicing the first tradition, looking out for the welfare and the unity of the group. However, another homegroup member pointed out that by doing this, we were not fulfilling our primary purpose as an AA group, to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. The following week, the incident was brought up as a discussion topic. I love to see our traditions and principles discussed. My sponsor suggested that the group was autonomous about deciding what is allowable in our meeting (tradition 4). However, we never really came to a group consensus about how to handle the situation in the future. Some members felt that the chair should maintain boundaries for discussions while other members felt the floor should be open to whatever someone needs to discuss, especially in early sobriety.

About a month later, we were informed by the church that rents us the meeting space, that a person who often visited our group was banned from the church property. It seemed simple. They are the landlords and we are the tenants. If we wish to remain there, we need to follow their rules. Besides, this banned person said he doesn't have a problem with alcohol; he is just there for the coffee and a bagel. But it is not so simple for me. I remember seeing this person in my early sobriety at a clubhouse. Another homegroup member said this person is fine when he is sober, but is nasty when he is drunk. How does our primary purpose fit in now? His life seems unmanageable to me. How can I ask him not to come to my homegroup, even if it is only for coffee, a bagel and 15 minutes of vicarious serenity? Another opportunity for a group conscious emerged and again, opinions varied. Some members felt that this person needed consequences for his actions and has no business on the church property while other members felt we needed to keep the doors of AA open to this individual. My sponsor assured me that following the rules of the church was not shutting this person off from AA and that there are plenty of other meetings in Cincinnati for this person to go to. But I cannot shake the feeling that I am withdrawing the hand of AA from this person, which is just not acceptable to me.