CONCEPTS

NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA LTD AREA 20 SERVICE LETTER

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- **GSR Preamble**
 - We are the General Service Representatives.
 - We are the link in the communication chain for our groups with the General Service.
 - Conference and the world of A.A.
 - We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God expressed in our group's conscience.
 - As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups so that they can reach an informed group conscience.
 - As trusted servants, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength vital to our fellowship.

Therefore, let us have the patience and tolerance for listening while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our groups.

WALK THROUGH THE BIG BOOK

INTO ACTION

In the last installments we talked about the first Three Steps and completed an Inventory in Step Four. Now that we have completed an inventory, Bill moves us into Step Five as we move into Chapter 6 Into Action. "Having made our personal inventory, what shall we do about it? We have been trying to get a new attitude, a new relationship with our Creator, and to discover the obstacles in our path." It is important to remember that statement. Our purpose in all of this, to find a power greater than ourselves that can solve our problem. That HAS to stay in our minds as we progress through the Steps because the work is hard, and it is easy to get discouraged. But the rewards are amazing and worth every effort it takes to be connected to the Power.

During the work in Step Four, we "have admitted certain defects; we have ascertained roughly what the trouble is; we have put our finger on the weak items in our inventory." Step Five is all about casting out the trouble and weak items by getting them out of ourselves.

Yes, we are going to have to tell someone else about these. It was hard writing them down on paper and having to look them in the face, so to speak, but we HAVE to take the next action and verbalize them out loud to our Higher Power and ourselves, and then to another person. We MUST look them in the eye and own them, or they will always have power over us.

But then by talking to another person and going over our Fourth Step Lists with them, we are able to "cast them out" and remove the guilt that keeps us from the Power. "In actual practice, we usually find a solitary self-appraisal insufficient. Many of us thought it necessary to go much further. We will be more reconciled to discussing ourselves with another person when we see good reasons why we should do so. The best reason first: If we skip this vital step, we may not overcome drinking. Time after time, newcomers have tried to keep to themselves certain facts about their lives. Trying to avoid this humbling experience, they have turned to easier methods. Almost invariably, they got drunk."

"Returning home, we find a place where we can be quiet for an hour, carefully reviewing what we have done. We thank God from the bottom of our hearts that we know Him better. Taking this book down from our shelf, we turn to the page which contains the twelve steps. Carefully reading the first five proposals, we ask if we have omitted anything, for we are building an arch through which we shall finally walk a free man. Is our work solid so far? Are the stones properly in place? Have we skimped on the cement put into the foundation? Have we tried to make mortar without sand?"



Next, we step into Step Six, the first action step to removing our Character Defects. First, we must be willing: "We have emphasized willingness as being in dispensable. Are we now ready to let God remove from us all the things we have admitted are objectionable? Can He now take them all—everyone? If we still cling to something we will not let go, we ask God to help us be willing." We understand that these things have been keeping us from The Power, and although they have served us as coping mechanisms, they must go if we are to be Free.

The other part of this Step is the "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood him." we did this in Step Three. It is about surrender. Surrendering our thinking and actions over to The Power that can solve our problem. I realized that my life was a mess and unmanageable under my control. If that is my reality, I need someone else to manage my life, and as we learned before, it can't be a human power. So, I must surrender. Please let that sink in – surrender – placing myself under the control of another. So once willing or at least willing to be willing, we ask God to remove our defects: "My Creator, I am now willing that you should have all of me, good and bad. I pray that you now remove from me every single defect of character which stands in the way of my usefulness to you and my fellows. Grant me strength as I go out from here to do your bidding. Amen." "All of me," not those things I agree are objectionable but all of me. Even the things I like, even the things I need to survive, even the things that . . ., all of me! Nothing less than full surrender isn't to surrender; I am negotiating for some control.

If I believe that my life under my control is unmanageable, I must surrender ALL control, or I am still trying to manage. If you are not ready to surrender, then there is no point in going further. To be connected to The Power, I must move out of the driver's seat and give away control. If you can honestly and fully pray the Seventh Step Prayer, you are ready for Step 8.

SERVICE IN ACTION

Having just returned from my last General Service Conference, I sit here with a sense of awe and humility at the opportunity to have been the representative from Area 20 these past two years in New York! The two conferences had a distinctly different feel to them; last year, both Panel 71 and Panel 72 Delegates participated in their first in-person conference. In contrast, the returning Panel 72's had that familiar "veteran" feel this year. We were at the same hotel as last year, so the "getting acquainted with your surroundings" period was unnecessary. I had already formed close relationships with other Delegates the previous year and knew many Board members. I knew exactly where to go to get my metro card and where the best food trucks were, and I could find the "Target" without having to map it. I traveled once again with the Delegate from Chicago (Tom F.), and overall the arrival was pretty smooth this time. I was the one acting as the "person in the know"!



The official conference sessions run Sunday – Friday, although that first Saturday also has some conference elements. I arrived early once again (on Thursday), so I had two and a half days to roam freely, meeting wonderful new friends, walking the streets of midtown Manhattan, and just "doing" New York! As I had done last year, I ate like a king and could once again sneak in a couple of Broadway shows (Moulin Rouge and Wicked).

On Thursday (my arrival day), I had just checked in and then went downstairs to "mingle" when I ran into a bunch of Panel 73 Delegates from the SW Region whom I did not know (except the squares). Introductions were made, and it turned out they were on their way into the city, and one of their party had taken ill, so the offer was made if I would like to join, and within an hour of checking in, I was on my way downtown for dinner and show with new friends! It is an evening I shall never forget.



SERVICE IN ACTION CON'T

On Sunday night, there is a large opening dinner with all the Delegates, Trustees, office personnel, and their spouses and ones. I was pleased to have with me as my guest Marilyn F. (Panel 70 Past Delegate). We sat right up front, and while not quite the same as attending the conference, it was pretty memorable to once again be serving Alcoholics Anonymous side by side as we've done for the last six years. There was also an opportunity during the week for her to pop into the meeting room, hoping to get a feel of the room. I want to take this opportunity to thank her and the other plus one's in that group (all from our region) for their willingness to help out during the week when we needed something but were unable to leave (like cheesecake)!



There is a tremendous amount of camaraderie that exists at the conference. While the seriousness of what we are doing is never lost on us, either is the fact that we have all been given a new life and are enjoying it to the utmost. Sure, the conference days are long, and the discussion can sometimes seem to go on forever (just like at Assemblies). Still, Service, as an action, is something we've all come to love and to depend on as a road to contented sobriety, and something I can only say I've been privileged to experience. So, if any of this "fun" sounds enticing to you, I want to let you know you, too, can have it! Become a GSR or DCM, serve the group and the District, and be a voice in the Area. Keep your hand in the air and participate, and before you know it, you too will see this thing we call a "Love for Service"!

There is much more to tell, but this is only the place for some details. In the coming weeks and months, I will be making my way around the Area, giving my report on the actions and discussions which occurred at the conference, of which there are many. I hope to see you all at the Assemblies and in the rooms. Ask questions and be engaged; if you do not know something, ask! I do it ALL THE TIME! Thank you once again for allowing me to serve Area 20.

In loving Service ~ Chris D. Area 20 P72 Delegate

FROM OUR MEMBERS

"The Wringer" What does it mean to you?

The B.B. concordance says wringer can be found on pages Roman Numeral Viii, 38, 43, 224, 382 and in the 12 & 12 on page 99 ref: St.Francis and the 11th step prayer. Defined as something that wrings or squeezes (of wringer rollers and wringer washers of the late 1800s to the mid-1900s) as in (to put someone through a wringer) to subject to a severe trial or ordeal.

Page 38, We who have been put through the wringer... Oh, the poor Jaywalker story! When I started A.A., I lived in the Sunset district of San Francisco, Ca. and worked downtown at 16th and Market near the Hyatt Regency. (for my friends in Ca, in the 1980s). So I was very familiar with jaywalkers and their trials and ordeals. Very often, their tragic stories were in the news.

The wringer, for me...was a lifelong trial! Long tedious, painful recoveries...The looks of shock, surprise, frowns, fingers pointing at me, Words like gross, ugly, what happened, horrible, awful, tsk tsk! Long periods in hospitals, Doctors cutting and sewing me back together again! Blackouts, hiding secrets. Yet even worse, I had scary recurring dreams, out-of-body experiences, comforting invisible friends, and messages. I was admonished for sharing these experiences. Never, not allowed, you're crazy, NADA!

By now, I'm sure you know what the B.B. and I are saying "Alcohol! Cunning. Baffling, powerful! YES! I came to the doors of A.A.pulled through the wringer. Now 33 years since my last drink, I've come through the wringer, a whole woman!..... And I have a secret..... A secret meaning for wringer.

First, a little history for those who were born after 1990! A Canadian, John Turnbull, added The first wringer to a wash bucket in 1843. You had to turn a crank manually. An improvement from hand squeezing!

They were electrified in 1907-1910. Hurley Electric Laundry built the "Thor" wringer in Chicagoland in 1908. (for the locals here). The last W.W., Maytag 1983. In Europe, they were called "the mangler" Quite apropos!

FROM OUR MEMBERS

As a young child, I loved to watch my Mom put the clothes through the wringer! It crushed, smashed, flattened, sucked the fabric into the wringer, then slowly spit them out stiff, like a board, then the material would slowly bend and flop into a bucket below. It was hypnotic, mesmerizing!

When I first read the word wringer, page 38, in the B.B., Whew, that's a word I don't have to define, I've lived it!

My secret occurs in Biloxi, Mississippi, Keesler A.F.B., in the late 1950s. "I caught my arm in a wringer washer." Period. Whenever I asked What happened to my arm? Those are the words told to me and what I was instructed to say to others. Period!

Years later, I put together a story from puzzle pieces here and there from distant relatives, Therapists, Doctors, and eventually, some hypnosis.

My experience with "The Mangler" in the late 1950s is ethereal (nde) except in two recurring dreams. I came back to life in the ambulance. For only moments, I could hear a loud siren, then blackout. (living on an A.F.B., everyone is quite familiar with horns and sirens) Then came awareness in the operating room, the huge overhead light, and people rushing and fussing around. Blackout again.

I underwent a second skin graft surgery when I was eight years old. Which I recall a 3-month hospital recovery before I went home on Christmas Eve. I remember hovering by the ceiling, looking down on my poor little body covered in bandages, pain-ridden, and unable to move. I slipped through the closed window to wave to my younger brothers and sisters 5 stories below on the grass in front of the parking lot! Eventually, I secretly went on a "night-seeking "adventure! I found the doll puppet cupboard! The next day I told a nurse I wanted a doll in every color, face, and clothes, boys and girls. I created a conundrum! The doll's clothes were blue or pink but had very different faces. Blue or brown eyes, some eyes were slanted! This hospital was in Boise, Idaho. Most of the nurses were nuns. I was told I could only have one that looked like me! They wondered how I knew about all the other dolls! Mom came to bat for me (this kid plays with every color in the rainbow!) I ended up with one of each color they had!! I have many painful and beautiful memories I've carried within my soul ever since!

FROM OUR MEMBERS

I will elaborate on the metaphor of my experience. My rapt attention for the wringer as a child, The obsession of the mind. Absolutely. My focus resulted in my leaving the babysitter's home unnoticed, walking home, emptying the drawer of clothes going outside to the washer, (all the wringer washers were on the back porches), pulling up my little stool, and trying to put clothes in the wringer, I was pulled in and hung there while the wringer ground away for 30 to 45 minutes. A neighbor thought my cries were just noisy kids in the playground behind his house. He finally looked out his window, the crying had stopped, I wasn't moving, He freaked out and called the ambulance.

From page 43 in the B.B. "He had only felt the first nip of the wringer" I imagine the nip as the first drink that activates the body's allergy. (when you still have a chance of getting away.) The wringer is the phenomenon of craving. That sucks you in, grinding away, ensuring your crushing demise of mind, body, and spirit, spent, bone dry. The whole cycle repeats again and again and again... ad infinitum!

Last year I made a decision. No more long sleeves or cover-ups in the summer!

I remember when my 2-year-old granddaughter asked while sharing a snack, what's all over your face? I wiped, No. I wiped again. No. I went to look in the mirror. It took a minute. Hmmm. What is it? She hollered. It's my story! Much to her delight, I demonstrated, seeing Gramma make all kinds of funny faces, how the lines and wrinkles of joy, pain, sorrow, and laughter are drawn on our faces over time. When I freed myself of my sleeves. No one gasped or pointed fingers. All of us in recovery are full of stories and scars!

p.s. to be honest, when I first went sleeveless, I noticed bat wings. Yikes!

Oh well! That's another story and song for another day.

(Do do do do do Bat wings!) coming to a women's meeting near you!

THE EVOLUTION OF BRIDGING THE GAP

"The times they are a changing..." By Jim T. NIA 20 BTG Chair

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the Area Chair for Bridging the Gap. I have completed my initial assessment of BTG activity within the NIA, and this is the short version of my observations.

BTG participation and interest are low within the NIA. I found 11 districts that have a total of 21 people active in BTG efforts Area-wide. Had there been more responses from all 26 districts those numbers might have been better. The average DCM response rate to BTG inquiries is 23%.

Findings to date:

- BTG may no longer be able to operate as it was originally conceived and intended.
- HIPAA Privacy Regulations, effective in 1996, changed AA's access to treatment patient contact information.
- Technological advancements in the last 30+ years have eliminated the need for 50% of BTG's original function: helping people find their way to AA meetings. The internet; smartphones; AA meeting apps; AA websites; QR codes leading to directories, AA answering services, and (411) all solve that problem.
- A database created for the NIA with 341 temporary contact volunteers for BTG is hopelessly out-of-date, and it has potentially fatal technical issues that need addressing. (The database may have been pronounced dead before you read this due to circumstances beyond our control).
- That database was supposed to be updated annually by each district. Today 66% of the names are between 4-7 years old. The communities will need to maintain it if it lives on.
- I agree with the General Service Conference (GSC) and believe the TF & CF committees could perform all BTG efforts because they are already in place at the facilities. The GSC has consistently not moved to establish a Service Manual for the BTG "committee."
- Trusted Servant rotation; lack of committee succession planning; facility shut-downs due to the pandemic; lack of maintenance; service work apathy, and technology advancements all contributed to today's BTG condition.

THE EVOLUTION OF BRIDING THE GAP

Questions for the members of the Bridging The Gap Committee to answer:

- 1. Is BTG necessary in today's technologically advanced world?
- 2. Should the NIA continue to pursue independent BTG efforts, or should those efforts be blended into the TF & CF committees already in place at the facilities?
- 3. How can the temporary contact idea continue without the NIA database, and/or, should it continue?
- 4. If you say "YES, it should continue," be prepared to stand up. Don't just say "YES" and expect someone else to do the work.
- 5. Are there any new methods to reach the target audience coming out of a facility?
- 6. How do we get more volunteers to sit at the table in those AA meetings?
- 7. How do we get different committees: TF, CF, CPC, PI, Accessibilities, and multiple districts, to cooperate to foster 12th Step efforts?
- 8. Do we need or want combined service opportunity workshops to create a coordinated, cooperative strategy for our Primary Purpose efforts?
- 9. If no one wants to do a particular job, should the (district/committee/group) consider the job unwanted and unnecessary?

As Area Chair, I serve the Districts. I don't get to make unilateral decisions.

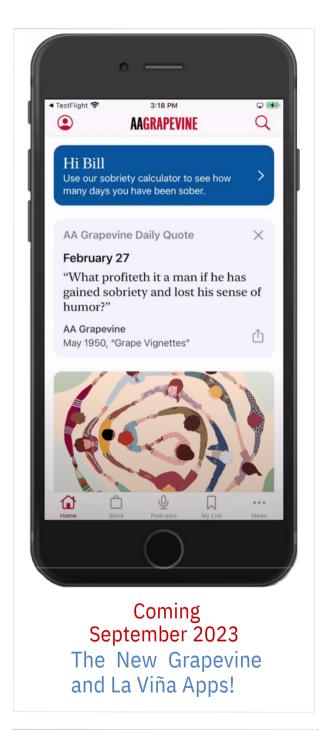
Please plan on attending the Summer Assembly on June 17, 2023, and be part of the discussion at the BTG Breakout Session on these and other questions.



GRAPEVINE News



What's New For June 2023



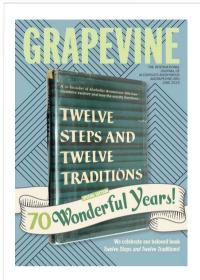








What's New in Print and Online



Grapevine Current Issue Spotlight:

To celebrate the 70th anniversary of our beloved book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, the June Grapevine features wonderful stories and experiences by AA members about this book they love

Submit Your Story for Upcoming Issues:

Remote Communities Stories — Is it difficult to reach AA meetings where you live? Do you have a language or cultural barrier? Are you homebound? Are you involved in Remote Community service? (stories due June 15, 2023) Sober Holidays! — What are the ways you stay sane and grateful during the holidays and New Year's? How do you navigate holiday parties and family gatherings? Share your best sober holiday stories! (stories due June 15, 2023) Emotional Sobriety — Over time, how have you learned to use the tools of AA to gain serenity and peace? How has your life changed because of sobriety? (stories due July 15, 2023)

More upcoming topics: Sponsorship!...Why I Love the Big Book...In 2024, GV turns 80! Send us your best Grapevine memories!

Important: We're looking for stories of experience with each Step and each Tradition! (Pick a particular Step or Tradition and share your experience!) We also need your jokes!



La Viña

Current Issue Spotlight:

This month's issue features "Relapse."

Submit Your Story for Upcoming Issues:

September/October— Hitting bottom / (Tocando fondo).

2023 Carry The Message Project

Get your group, district, area, or AA friends to join in. <u>Click here</u> to learn more. Share your ESH with La Viña

We need stories on Steps and Traditions. You can submit your stories by email, our website, mail or by audio recording.

La Viña Workshop

Join us the last Friday of each month at 12pmfor our La Viña informational workshowleeting ID: 815 9593 1777

Customer Service: USA (800) 640-8781. International: +1 (570) 567-0437.



AAGrapevine.org

Make your plans and add your events to our online calendar at www.aagrapevine.org/share.

Grapevine is always looking for stories, photographs, and illustrations. Please visit www.aagrapevine.org/share to learn more about how you can participate with Grapevine.

To listen to La Viña audio story (in Spanish), visit www.aalavina.org.

Area Chair / GVR Corner

Please let us know at EA@aagrapevine.org if your Area plans any virtual or face-to-face events.

To request Grapevine Complimentary materials, please download the request form www.aagrapevine.org/gvr-resources.



Grapevine Travel / Remote Events

June 2 — 4	Northeast Regional Forum	Boston,	MA
June 2 — 4	NC Spring Assembly	Raleigh,	NC
June 9 — 11	88th Founders Day	Akron, C	Ohio



If you attend area events we'd like to know!

Also, if you take anonymity-protected photos at events, we'd love to post them on the <u>GV Display Gallery.</u>

Please send the information and photos to EA@aagrapevine.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1979, the Grapevine Conference Committee recommended: "The Grapevine office make available Grapevine prepaid gift certificates."

Today we have Grapevine Gift Subscriptions that can be purchased through the Carry the Message Project for your AA friends or for those in need.

For more information, visit www.aagrapevine.org/carry-the-message

Need help with Customer Service?

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please email or call 1.800.631.6025 or 1.800.640.8781 (Spanish).
Email CustomerService@aagrapevine.org for English or
Preguntas@aagrapevine.org for Spanish.

We are pleased to be of assistance.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER



https://www.aagrapevine.org/share emails

Please let your friends know and pass it on. We also have options for weekly and monthly.

2023 ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE

"A.A.'s Three Legacies—Our Common Solution"

August 18th-20th

Hosted by Area 19

Speakers:

Friday Night AA Speaker

Laura Z., Wheeling

Saturday AA Speaker

Laura S, Austin TX

Alanon Speaker

Colleen D.

East Central Regional Trustee

Cathi C.

G.S.O. Speaker TBA

Speaker Sessions:

Literature Archives

Workshops

Alcathon **Panels**

Entertainment

Fellowship

Hospitality Room Fun

or call 847-605-1234

Hotel Info:

Hyatt Regency Schaumburg 1800 Fast Golf Rd. Schaumburg IL 60173

Near Woodfield Mall

Room rate \$119 plus tax Free Parking click here to book hotel

Group Code G-AAAA

Questions?

Tommy B.

Fmail:

ISC@chicagoaa.org

REGISTRATION One Person per Form

First Name	Last Name			
Home Group			_	
Address	City	State		
Email	Phone			
Please Specify: AA	Al-Anon Guest _			
Registration \$40	Banquet Dinner \$50	Total \$		

Mail to: CASO 180 N. Wabash, Rm. 305, Chicago 60601 (Attn. IL State Conf.) Make Checks Payable to: CASO (Mail-In must be received by 8/07/23)

to register online go to www.chicagoaa.org/isc2023/

While at Conference, check if needing: please let us know by August 7th Accessibilities **ASL** Interpretation Spanish Interpretation Polish Interpretation

GRAPEVINE EDITORIAL CALENDAR 2024

JAN Emotional Sobriety (stories due July 15, 2023)

> Over time, how have you learned to use the tools of AA to gain serenity and peace? How has vour life changed? Share some examples of emotional sobriety in your life today.

Getting Through Tough Times (stories due Aug 15, 2023) **FEB**

> A serious illness, divorce, the death of a loved one, a house fire, loss of a job, bankruptcy...How have you stayed sober through adversity? Tell us how the program and fellowship helped you.

Spanish-Speaking AA Members (stories due Sept. 15, 2023) MARCH

> This month we celebrate our Spanish-speaking AA members by translating and sharing some of the very best La Vina stories! We're also looking for stories of those doing service to reach out to our Spanish-speaking members in meetings, districts, areas or at events.

Favorite Big Book Stories (stories due Oct. 15, 2023)

APRII Grapevine celebrates 85 wonderful years of our beloved Big Book! What are your favorite Big Book stories or memories? What are your favorite chapters or passages and why? How did it

help you as a newcomer? Feel free to include a photo of your well-worn Big Book!

MAY How the Steps Change My Life (stories due Nov. 15, 2023)

> Tell us how the Steps have changed your life and enriched your sobriety. Give some examples. What is your favorite Step? Which one surprised you most? Share your stories.

Happy Birthday Grapevine! (80 Wonderful Years!) (stories due Dec. 15, 2023) JUNE

> This June, Grapevine turns the big 80! Help us celebrate by sharing your very best memories with Grapevine. Why do you love Grapevine? Was there a story that once helped you? How did being a GV Rep help your sobriety? What did you learn? Share your best Grapevine memories!

Annual Prison Issue (stories due Jan. 15, 2024)

JULY Looking for stories of hope about AA in prisons and jails by incarcerated members and by those who bring meetings to them. Did you find AA in prison? What is sobriety like inside? Are you involved in correspondence service or prison sponsorship? We would love to hear your stories.

Dating & Relationships (stories due Feb. 15, 2024)

Share your experiences learning to date in sobriety. How did it go? What were the challenges? AUG Any sober tips? (Believe me, we all want to know!). Share what you've learned about having sober relationships. How is your marriage different in sobriety than when you were drinking?

Young & Sober (Release of the New GV & LV Apps!) (stories due March 15, 2024)

Did you come into AA at an early age? What was that like? What were the challenges? Do you go **SEPT** to Young People's AA (YPAA) meetings, dances or conferences? How have they helped you?

Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) (stories due April 15, 2024)

Have you participated in CPC service (providing doctors, therapists, clergy, lawyers, teachers, OCT parole officers and other professionals information about AA)? Did a professional help you find your way to AA because of CPC service work? Are you a professional who found out about AA

from members doing CPC work?

Classic Grapevine

Our favorite stories from the AA Grapevine Story Archive. NOV

Remote Communities (stories due June 15, 2024)

Do you live far from AA meetings? Are you a loner? Stationed far away? Do you have a language or cultural barrier? Are you homebound? Do you use online meetings? Is it difficult to find AA meetings DEC where you live? Tell us how you stay sober. Are you involved in Remote Community service? Sober Holidays! (stories due June 15, 2024) December is a great time of year to reach out to alcoholics and help others. What are the ways you stay sane and grateful during the holidays and New Year's? How do you navigate holiday parties and family gatherings? Share your best sober holiday stories!

LEGACY OF SERVICE: CONCEPTS STUDY

Hosted by NIA 20 District 11

3rdThursday of Every Month 7:30pm via Zoom

Meeting ID: 970 0499 1067

Passcode: 639187

Contact dcm@aa-nia-dist11.org
with any questions



