

INTO ACTION

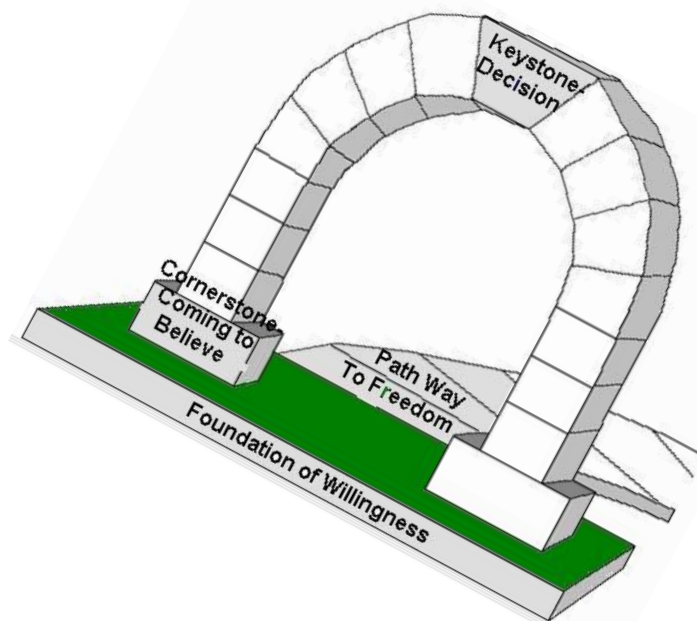
CONFIDENTIAL
February/March 2011

The Spiritual Angle

By The Reverend Samuel M. Shoemaker

The Episcopal clergyman who "passed on the spiritual keys by which we were liberated" speaks of the heart of our program - From the October 1955 Grapevine

IT WAS CLEAR to Bill from the first, I take it, that Dr. Jung's simple declaration that science knew no answer, Dr. Silkworth's incalculable help from the medical angle, and William James's great→



wisdom in Varieties of Religious Experience still left, the great need for a spiritual factor which would create a synthesis and offer a dynamic motive to sobriety. ↓

The problem was how to translate the spiritual experience into universal terms without letting it evaporate into mere ideals and generalities. And so, immediately after Step One, which concerned the unmanageableness of life as some of us had been living it, came Step Two: We "came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity." The basis of this belief was not theoretical, it was evidential. Before us were people in whose lives the beginnings of a transformation had taken place. You could question the interpretation of the experience, but you could not question the transformation itself....

You can fight a theory about an experience, but you have to acknowledge the experience itself.

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(Continued from the front page)

AA has been supremely wise to emphasize the reality of the experience, and to acknowledge that it came from a Higher Power than human, and then leave it at that.

It would have been easy, and must have been something of a temptation, to go into the theological business. Here the evidence was. It was evidence of a Power. All right--then let's define the Power! But this would have struck against several possible difficulties. If the early AAs had said more, some people would have wanted them to say much more, and define God in the way most acceptable to them. It would have taken only two or three groups like this, dissenting from one another, to wreck the whole thing.

Moreover, there were people with an unhappy association with religion--a dead church or parson, some churchgoing people whose weekday lives did not support their Sunday professions--and this would have meant a factor to be overcome, in addition to those already present. Also, there were the agnostics and atheists, who said they either did not know anything at all about ultimate realities in the universe, or else definitely disbelieved in any definable or reachable god. (There are a good many people who disbelieve in God for emotional reasons. As Unamuno says, "Those who deny God deny Him because of their despair at not finding Him.")

For an outfit like AA to have become dogmatic would have been fatal. So the founders stuck to the inescapable experience, and told people to "turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him." That, left the theory and the theology--very important as they are--to the churches to which people belonged. And if they belonged to no church and could as yet hold no theory, then they must give themselves to the God they saw in other people. This is not a bad way to set in motion a spiritual experiment and the beginnings of a spiritual experience. Maybe it is what we all do when we let religion change over from a mere tradition to a living power.

I want to emphasize the psychological soundness of all this. Do not think it applies to alcoholics alone; it applies to everyone who is seeking genuine spiritual faith and experience. **When one has done the best**

he can with intellectual reasoning, there yet comes a time for decision and action. It may be a relatively simple decision: really to enter wholly into the experiment. The approach is more like science than like philosophy.

We do not so much try to reason it out in abstract logic; we choose a hypothesis, act as if it were true, and see whether it is. If it's not, we can discard it. If it is, we are free to call the experiment a success.

You can sit about in a vacuum--whether this be the privacy of your room, or an academic classroom, or a pulpit--and discuss the truth of a theory forever, and it may do you no good. It is when you let truth go into action, and hurl your life after your held conception of truth, that things start to happen. If it is genuine truth, it will accomplish things on the plane of actual living.

When we open the door on a spiritual search, with our whole lives thrown into it, we shall find Him always there, ready to receive our feeblest approaches, our most selfish and childish prayers, our always entirely unworthy selves, and ready to get down to business with us.

The experimental approach seems to me to be of the essence in finding the help of the Higher Power. We first lean on another human being who seems to be finding the answer. Then we come to lean on the Higher Power who stands behind him. William James, in the famous passage from *Varieties of Religious Experience*, says, "The crisis [of self-surrender] is the throwing of our conscious selves on the mercy of powers which, whatever they may be, are more ideal than we are actually, and make for our redemption. . . . Self-surrender has been and always must be regarded as the vital turning point of the religious life."

This, of course, becomes the heart of all religion. Most of us come to God in the first instance from a need. If you want to say so, we come selfishly; but I would point out that, before we can be of any use to anybody else, **we must find the beginnings of the answer for ourselves**, so that this may represent a necessary step in progress.

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INTO ACTION Editorial Policy

INTO ACTION News is a bimonthly newsletter of District 11; NIA 20 of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is about, by and for the Members of the Fellowship of AA. Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by AA. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are reprinted with permission from AA World Service, Inc. and/or The AA Grapevine; Inc. Submissions are edited for space and clarity ONLY. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

The Balloonist

A man in a hot air balloon realizes he is lost. He reduces height and spots a man below. He goes closer and yells out, "Excuse me, can you help me? I promised a friend I'd meet him half an hour ago, but I don't know where I am!" The man below says, "Yes. You are in a hot air balloon, hovering about thirty feet above the ground. You are at latitude forty-two degrees north and longitude eighty degrees west." "You must be a Sponsor," says the balloonist. "I am", replies the man. "How did you know?" "Well" says the lost man "Everything you told me is technically correct, but I have no idea what to make of your information, and the fact is I am still lost." The ground-man says, "You must be a sponsee fresh out of the bars," His reply: "Why, yes I am, how did you know?" "Well," replies the man on the ground, "You don't know where you are or where you are going. You have made promises which you have no idea how to keep, and you expect me to solve your problem. The fact is that you are in the same position you were in before we met, but now it is somehow my fault !

**THE DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF IA IS
March 25, 2011.
THE THEME FOR THE
APRIL/MAY 2011 ISSUE OF
INTO ACTION IS: STEP 4/5; or anything you
wish to submit.**
INTOAction: District 11's Newsletter
Editor: David Gilbert 815-344-6523
E-mail: Soulsurgery@comcast.net

District 11 G.S.R.
Meetings Are Held
On 1st Thursday of
the Month at the
McHenry Alano Club;
409 Front Street-Unit D
(route 31) McHenry, IL
District Meeting 7:30 PM



DISTRICT 11's WEB SITE:
<http://www.aa-nia-dist11.org>

District 11 Secretary
aadistrict11sec@yahoo.com

SOBERFEST WEB SITE
<http://www.soberfest.org/>

NIA 20 EVENTS WEB SITE:
<http://www.aa-nia.org/events.html>

Live Links

****SCHEDULE INFO CHANGES:**
PLEASE E-MAIL Bill J. ~ ~ EMAIL AT:
schedulemaker@ymail.com

CONTRIBUTIONS

From Group (Name) _____
Group #: _____
Dist. #: _____
Meeting City: _____

Northern Illinois District Eleven
P.O. Box 846
McHenry, IL 60051-0846

N.I.A. Treasurer
Northern Illinois Area, Ltd.
P.O. Box 3926
St. Charles, IL 60174

The General Service Office
AAWS
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163-0459

Mail Contributions To:

Monthly Meeting Minutes for District 11 January 6th, 2011

(Editor's Note: Dates and times contained in the following minutes are a reflection from the minutes taken on JANUARY 6TH, 2011 not the date of this publication.)

Meeting Time: 7:30 PM
Attendance: 30
Committee Members 10
Groups Represented: 21

Anniversaries Steve 11 years
Congratulation on all anniversaries

Secretary's Report: Glen R (alt Mary F)

Written committee report forms must be submitted to the secretary to be included in the minutes. The new E-Mail for the secretary is aadistrict11sec@yahoo.com.

Treasurer's Report: Mark J

Amendments to October report

Starting Balance	\$3939.44
Expenses	\$ 302, 63
Income	\$ 2049.78
Ending Balance	\$5386.59

From the DCM

If you would like something on the agenda for the district meetings please call or e-mail me at 815-219-1667 or psychicchange@gmail.com

Public Information Report Nick (alt Brian B)

Attended Area 20 winter assembly and participated in the P.I. breakout. P.I. is doing a panel at the spring conference on 4/02/2011 we are looking into P.S.A. through GSO to get out to local agencies. We represented at the McHenry county substance abuse coalition, and they expressed appreciation to A.A. district 11.

Hospital & Treatment Report Mike R (alt Dave R)

No report

Corrections Report: Chuck L, (alt Bob M)

Met with McHenry county Sherriff to go over new procedure for the upcoming year. Set up new format for being certified to attend meeting at the jail.

Worked with the Sherriff to have a better re-entry program for the newly released inmate

CPC Report: John S: (alt Nate P)

No report

Answering service Fred G chair (alt Mitch P)

Total calls 83 62 meeting info, 2 open meetings
1 out of district, 6 wanted to talk to AA, 1- 12 step
call 4 Al-anon, 2 NA/CA, , , 1 Spanish info, 1
treatment 2 needed ride
0-10 min 68, 11-20 min 12, 21-30 min 2, over 30 min 1

Archives Report: Clarence J, (alt open)

Old timer's brunch will be February 13th at the American legion hall in Wauconda, Flier are out so bring one to your meeting and let your group know.

Old Timers Brunch
Food And Fellowship
SUNDAY

FEBRUARY 13TH
American Legion
Wauconda

(On Main Street, 2 Blocks South of Rte. 176)

Doors open at: 9:00AM

Brunch: 9:30-11:00AM

SPEACKERS At: 11:00AM

Contribution: \$6:00

THIS YEARS SPEACKERS:

DAN R. & SUE C. →

Grapevine Report: Steve L, (alt Brad B)

No Report

Special Needs Report: Pat C, (alt chuck d)

District 11 was asked by Area special needs chair to serve on a panel to be presented at the Spring Conference. Working with the elderly and have set up a meeting in March at the senior Center.

LCM Report: Steve S, (alt Justin K)

No report

Workshop Report: Sue C.

Winner and beginners group in Wauconda will have a workshop on meditation, Jan 29th, 9 am to 11 am. At the Messiah Lutheran Church in Wauconda. Doors open at 8:30

UPDATED BY EDITOR:

Newsletter Report: Dave G,

Dead line for the April/May **INTO ACTION** newsletter is March 25, 2011 Theme is on steps 4/5. Share your groups and/or your Experience. Strength and Hope on these steps. COMMITTEE MEMBERS MAY POST INFORMATION TOO.

Webmaster Report: Chuck T

No report

Schedule Maker Report: Bill J.

New printing of both open meeting and closed meetings will be out in February

Old Business:

Still looking for an alternate DCM, alternate Treasure, Co-editor for **INTO ACTION** newsletter, so go to your groups to see if anyone would like to step up.

New Business:

Motion was made and accepted to add a tab on the District 11 web site to link corrections for re-entry program and the AA post office box and hot line for the answering service.

Upcoming Events

- ❖ February 11-13 Heart To Heart Women's Retreat with Sandy H. (AA) – Albuquerque, NM & Kathy H. (AFG) – Cincinnati, OH. Info Call – Debbi H. 815-728-1281 or Cheryl M. 815-344-5167
- ❖ Usual Suspects Men's Retreat – Feb. 4-6 with

Keith D. – Yorba Linda, CA & Steve L. – Brentwood, TN – Info. Joe H. 815-728-1281

- ❖ Old Timers Brunch, Feb. 13, American Legion in Wauconda.
- ❖ ISCYPAA conference February 25- 27, 2011 Schaumburg Hyatt, 1800 golf rd, Schaumburg
- ❖ 37th NIA Spring Conference, April 1-3, 2011 Westin North Shore, Wheeling
- ❖ Spring Assembly April 2 2011, Westin North Shore, Wheeling
- ❖ Pre-General Service conference workshop, April 23, 2011-Location TB, hosted by District 21
- ❖ Summer Assembly/ post GSC panel 60 delegate report, June 18, 2011- Boylan High School, Rockford. District 20 70 hosting
- ❖ Summer committee meeting August 13 2011 hosted by district 11

Open Mic

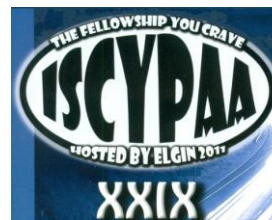
Dave G- Soberfest election will be held Wednesday, Jan 12th, 2011 at the senior center at 7pm .If you're looking to get involved in Soberfest your welcome to attend.

Nick- ISCYPAA will be raffling of a 1st edition Big Book Jan 29th. So see Nick for raffles

Delores – Pointed out that local churches are requesting that the group carry some type of Liability insurance for their meetings.

UPDATED BY EDITOR:

**** The next district meeting will be held on Thursday MARCH 3rd, 2011
Respectfully Submitted, Glen Reid, Secretary, Mary F alternate secretary



**February 25-27
Hyatt Regency
(Woodfield)
1800 Golf Rd.
Schaumburg, IL
847 605 1234**

Questions-Info:

Chair: Brady C. 815-245-5395
Reg. Cat H. 224-622-2898
Outreach: Mark J. 630-742-5424
Reservations: 888-421-1442

www.iscypaa.org - [e-mail:iscypaa2011@gmail.com](mailto:iscypaa2011@gmail.com)

- Keynote Speakers
*Fri. Night Dance
Panels Banquet
*Bid Sessions
*Fellowship
*Fun*Hosp. Rms.

Voices of District 11

Some shares on Step 3 from District 11

I Was Finally Convinced

I use to wonder how I enter the rooms in 2007 and have nowhere near three years. Well, today I know...I was never convinced. In our Big Book on page 60 it ends the meeting reading of "How it Works". At the end of the reading it states the abc's of our program...

- (a) That we were alcoholic and could not manage our own lives.
- (b) That probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism.
- (c) That God could and would if He were sought.

If you read on directly after the abc's you will read "Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him". What that means to me if I am not convinced of the abc's of this program I will never work nor get past step three. No wonder I could not stay sober. I was always unconvinced of at least one of the three. Through a lot of pain and dishonesty for the first couple of years in the rooms I finally was thoroughly convinced of the abc's. Thus I had arrived at step three and with a whole new level of honesty and willingness I dove. I would love to tell you that since that day everything has been rainbows and butterflies, but it has not. However, I can honesty tell you that I have not drank or drugged since that day and have a life filled with quality people I could never have dreamed of. I get on my knees every morning and turn my will and life over to the care of God as I understand Him and it is the biggest buzz I have ever found. But for the Grace of God and you people I continue to stick and stay one day at a time with a level of gratitude that is indescribable.

Submitted by: Jessica W.

Voices continued

Who's Will?

Kneeling in front of a couch, Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous in front of me. I've opened the book to page 63. I've got my eyes closed, and I'm trying to act like I'm not too nervous. I look over to my right. There's my sponsor kneeling next to me, my right hand is in his left hand. I look back to the book and close my eyes, breathing deep. He says in a soft voice, "Whenever you're ready".

I open my eye's, I look down, take in a breath and say, "GOD, I offer myself to Thee, To build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt, Relieve me of the bondage of self that I may better do Thy will, Take away my difficulties, That victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love and Thy way of life. May I do Thy will always. Amen.

It felt at that very moment like a warm blanket had been wrapped around me, like to say "welcome, I've been waiting". I was overwhelmed with emotion and tears were running down my face. I couldn't seem to move except to lean forward and let the tears of surrender run down my face. After some time my sponsor gently released my hand and told me I was going to be all right. We stood up and hugged like I had never hugged another man before in my life.

I had begun a journey which included, hopefully the remaining 12 steps of the program. In time it was pointed out by my sponsor that I'm not doing what suggested. That I had better get on the ball, or fall. A week later, I'm told, "look I've ask you to do a few things, repeatedly, that would help you help yourself and it seems that your not as willing as you once were. I going to have to let you go as a spondee." "WHAT, REALY, ARE YOU KIDDING?" "Don't you know I'm on step 6", are things that ran through my mind. But what came out of my mouth was "OK Cool, see ya later".

Some time goes by and I find myself in the situation, kneeling in front of a couch, Big book in front of me.

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It's open to page 63. I look to my right and there's a new sponsor kneeling next to me. My hand in his. And he tells me "Whenever your ready" Once again I say the prayer, Once again the warm blanket with the feeling of "welcome" comes. Tears running down my face.

This time we get through all 12 steps, withholding nothing. I've been rocketed into the 4th dimension of existence.

Being the mental giant that I am, I start backing off on calling my sponsor, being accountable to him and not always doing the next right thing. Next thing I know is I'm having the same conversation again. "Look, I've asked you repeatedly to do things that are only going to help you help yourself, and you don't seem to have the willingness that you once had, So I'm going to have to let you go". "WHAT, REALLY, ARE YOU KIDDING ME"? Is what went through my mind. But what came out was "ya that's cool I saw it coming". MAN, WHAT THE, (new me) HECK is going on?? Then like a thunder bolt, a couple of weeks/months later, BAM! Even though I gave my will up in the 3rd step, doesn't mean that I can rest on my laurels. I have to be willing, all the time and in every situation, to do Gods will and not mine. Clearly every time that I started to fall back on being accountable, I had taken my will back.

I had got to where I had gotten by doing Gods Will, by turning my life and will over to a God of my understanding. Doing things under his guidance. Clearly I was back where I had been before by not doing that.

I have a sponsor today that has taken me through all of and including the 3rd step. Funny how this is, I found myself kneeling in front a couch. Big Book in front of me open to page 63. Well you know the rest of the story. And yes it's identical including the warm blanket and "welcome, I've been waiting". Why is it I was one of the lucky ones? Why is it I didn't stumble and fall? Maybe it was Gods will for me.

Anonymous

"The Monkey is off my Back but the Circus is Still in Town."



(Continued from page 2)

There is a great hue and cry today about people seeking benefits from God. I'd like to know where, in Heaven's name, a bewildered and defeated person is to go for the help he desperately needs, if he doesn't go to God! Of course he is concerned about himself. He ought to be, he must be, if he is ever to be made useful to others.

But later on, he must also grow up, stop just using God, and ask God to use him.

One begins a mature religion at the point where he stops trying to get God to do what he wants, and begins asking God to show him what He wants.

Many people will tell you they have given up faith. They prayed for something they wanted, and it did not come--so either there is no God, or else He is not interested in them.

What childish nonsense! How can you expect God to listen to every selfish, half-baked prayer we send up to Him? In five minutes, He'd have the world in worse chaos than it is! Prayer is not telling God what we want; it is putting ourselves at His disposal so that He can tell us what He wants. Prayer is not meant to try to change the will of God; it is meant to find the will of God, to align or realign ourselves with His purposes for His world and for us. That is why it is at least as important for us to listen as to speak in prayer.

Oftentimes, we come to Him feverishly and willfully, and we just have to quiet down before He can do anything for us. **When our voices are clamorous and demanding, there is no place for His voice. When we let the willfulness cool out of us, He can begin to get His will across to us.** And as Dante said, "In His will is our peace."

There are many people who do not like the implication of weakness in the word "surrender." They like to think they are strong characters who can take care of their own destinies. This is fictitious thinking. Everyone in this world is some kind of weakling; if he thinks he is not, then pride is his weakness, and it is the greatest weakness of all. People may think they avoid the overtly disreputable sins; none of us avoids the folly of selfishness, of self-centeredness, of pride. That man is fortunate whose problems are of such a kind that they get him into trouble, and he has to do something about them. Would that temper and pride and laziness and scornfulness and irritability and greed brought people to the same state of conscious need as alcoholism does! No one is strong, and the people who think they are, are only self-deceived. We act as if character and reasonably good behavior were the end and aim of existence.

The real questions in life, which underlie matters of behavior, have an answer that comes only from God. Whence came I? What am I meant to be doing here? Whither am I going? These are the questions that, unanswered, leave us without direction or moorings. But science has no answer to them; philosophy, only the answers of a human guess. Faith is the one candle in the darkness of life's mystery.

(Continued on page 8)

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When we get through to God, by whatever name we call Him, or rather when we let Him get through to us, then we begin finding light and the answer.

There are four factors, it seems to me, in all genuine spiritual awakening: conversion, prayer, fellowship, and witness.

By conversion, I mean the place where one turns toward God, where one begins to want to be honest about oneself in the light of one's faith. I do not mean perfection; I mean the search for it and the start toward it. It is within the reach of all, and it is the beginning. A lot of religious people are like a crowd sitting in a railway station, thinking they are traveling. They hear the names of trains and stations; there is the smell of luggage and the stir of travel. But they have never gotten on the train. **Conversion is where you get on the train.** You leave St. Louis for Chicago, and you are not in Chicago right away; but you are soon out of St. Louis for Chicago, and you are really on the train. **Conversion is getting on the train and beginning to move away from where you were.**

Prayer--private, group, or public--is the place where we get in touch anew with God and His power. God's power is always there, as there is always potential electricity in a wire plugged into a socket that is in touch with a dynamo. But you do not get the power till you close the circuit by turning the switch. Prayer, in ways unfathomable to us theoretically, but always open to us actually, turns on the switch, opens up the power by closing the circuit. We do not so much "get what we want" as find out what we should do. Awakening, in the individual or in companies or in nations, always includes discovering the power that is in prayer.

[[*Inserted by editor:* (We commenced to make many fast friends and a **fellowship** has grown up among us of which it is a wonderful thing to feel a part. Big Book, Page 15) (But there exists among us a **fellowship**, a friendliness, and an understanding which is indescribably wonderful. Big Book, page 17)]

Witness comes by life and by word. A lot of average and self-righteous people think they are "witnessing" every day, but there is not enough difference between them and the rest of the world for it to make any real difference. It is when a spiritual experience has begun--one that changes us deeply on the inside--that it begins to show on the outside. This intrigues people. **They wonder what has happened to us.** They begin asking questions. And then is the time to open up and witness by words. We do not preach to others; we do not talk down to them; we do not point to ourselves as the answer. But we do share those beginnings of victory that we know. Every real believer must engage in Twelfth Step work if he is to keep spiritually alive.

The parallels between these four points and AA's Twelve Steps must be obvious to anybody. To me, AA is one of the great signs of spiritual awakening in our time.

It is experimental and experiential in nature, not dogmatic; but none can doubt that God is what has made AA and today inspires it and keeps it growing.

I believe that AA will go on serving men and women as long as it may be needed, if it keeps open to God for inspiration, and open to people for service. I believe that AA has been wise to confine its organized activity to alcoholics. But I hope and I think we may see an effect of AA on medicine, on psychiatry, on correction, on the ever-present problem of human nature itself and what we can do about it, and--not least--on the church. The Reverend Samuel M. Shoemaker

Antioch Recovery Club

Antioch Recovery Club is hosting open speaker meeting the 2nd and 4th Saturdays of every month. Speaker at 7pm with dinner to follow at 8pm. Dinner is \$5 for non-members and \$4 for members. Dance with DJ at 9 pm on 2nd Saturdays. Located at 311 Depot St., Antioch (just west of train station). For meeting schedules and more info contact us at

antiochrecoveryclub.org -847-838-1882 *

Thanks and God bless you. David Wennstrom



**NIA 20
SPRING
Conference**

**April 1-3, 2011 at the
Westin North Shore**

601 North Milwaukee Ave., Wheeling, IL 60090

(847) 777-6500

Special room rate: \$90 per night

REGISTER TOGETHER

ONLINE REGISTRATION*:

www.niaspringconference.com

For more information:

Alan S. (224) 280-5786

Nate M. (224) 558-9865

****NIA Spring Assembly (During the
Conference) Wheeling, IL April 2, 2011**