

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS
POLICY AND ADVISORY MANUAL

Copyright 2012 – Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services –

www.homosexuals-anonymous.com

“The issue of homosexual recovery today is at the same place the issue of alcoholic recovery was before 1935. Nobody thought it was possible short of creating a ‘dry drunk’ and policing him for the rest of his life. But then Alcoholics Anonymous came along, and the bubble burst. Recovery was possible! It is the same in the homosexual area. There’s a new groundswell that is leading thousands to believe in the possibility of recovery. I believe God will yet surprise us all with His mercy and grace, and if the world is still around in another thirty years, the question whether a homosexual person can become heterosexual in his responses will sound like a discussion of nineteenth-century medicine.”

--Colin C., co-founder of Homosexuals Anonymous

CONTENTS

I. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Statement on the Healing of Homosexuality	page 4
Statement of Philosophy	page 5
Statement of Purpose	page 5
History of Homosexuals Anonymous	page 6
The 14 Steps of H.A.	page 6
The 12 Traditions of H.A.	page 7
Starting a Local H.A. Chapter	page 8
Anonymity, Autonomy, Accountability	page 12

II. MEETINGS AND ORGANIZATION

H.A. Meeting Format	page 16
How to Make a Step Talk Real	page 19
H.A. Business Meeting	page 23
Local Chapter Officers	page 24
Leadership Qualities	page 25
H.A. Chapter Dynamics	page 26
Auxiliary Group Support	page 28

III. RELATIONSHIPS OF A LOCAL CHAPTER

The Local H.A. Chapter and the Local Church or Counseling Center	page 29
The Local H.A. Chapter and H.A. Fellowship Services	page 30
H.A.F.S. Services to Local Chapters	page 31

IV. BUSINESS, PUBLICITY, AND ADVERTISING

Opening and H.A. Bank Account	page 33
Installing and Listing of the H.A. Telephone	page 34
Advertising and the Local H.A. Chapter	page 35

STATEMENT ON THE HEALING OF HOMOSEXUALITY

The basic premise of H.A. is that the root causes of homosexuality are spiritual, intra-psychic and relational. There is no proven, conclusive evidence that homosexuality is biologically caused. H.A. philosophy maintains that the grace of God through Christ brings freedom and recovery from the spiritual, psychological and relational distortions of homosexuality.

The following are ways in which the framework of recovery, as proposed by H.A., is different in comparison to the framework of much secular psychology and psychiatry.

1. Often, secular psychology and psychiatry tends to define the person's sexuality in terms of physical and emotional responses (i.e., if you have homosexual desires, you are "a homosexual"). H.A. does not. Sexuality is determined by a much wider set of values, those of the person's relation to God, self, and the world.
2. Much secular psychology and psychiatry sees homosexuality as a fixed condition ("once a homosexual, always a homosexual"). H.A. does not. Because of our wider definition of sexuality, we see homosexuality as a symptom of a confused identity in relation to God, self, and the world.
3. Cure, or recovery, to many secular psychologists and psychiatrists, means a shift on the Kinsey scale from 6 to 0 (i.e., you are cured if your desires change totally from those for the same sex to those for the opposite sex). H.A. sees that recovery involves a much wider set of values: for example, the ending of anger and resentment toward God and parents, , an acceptance of self in relation to God, and a feeling of safety in a world that, though seemingly alien, is nevertheless under God's loving control.

The changing of these perceptions both cognitively and affectively (by thinking and feeling) gradually modifies the person's sexual identity and compulsive drives, bringing a healing repentance of destructive behavior and introducing more positive attitudes toward the opposite sex and the possibility of choice.

Inclination-shift (change of sexual feelings) is, therefore, gradual and dependent on the above altered perceptions, many of which are ignored by secular psychology and psychiatry.

4. Secular psychology and psychiatry is often limited in its ability to motivate a client and therefore frequently encourages the person struggling with homosexuality to accept himself as "gay" and learn to live with it. The Christian therapist or counselor has more with which to inspire motivation: the love and acceptance of God, bringing with it freedom from guilt and the renewed will to emotional growth.
5. Secular psychology and psychiatry generally have failed to see the marvelous resources for emotional growth available within the Christian community, H.A. draws heavily upon those resources and the results leave no doubt that people can recover from homosexuality.

STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

Homosexuals Anonymous, a Christian fellowship, holds the view that homosexual activity is not in harmony with the will of God and that the universal creation-norm is heterosexuality. Nevertheless, the great message of righteousness by faith in Christ brings mercy and hope to all people in homosexuality.

Christ, the Imago Dei (Image of God), is the restoration of the creation image, in whom all men and women find their identity by faith. The search for wholeness and heterosexuality within ourselves thus comes to an end. Men and women receive Christ as their image of God, in whom is their wholeness and heterosexuality. As trained faith grasps this awareness, there is a breaking of the power of the homosexual inclination so that freedom from homosexual drive and activity is a real possibility.

H.A., however, does not believe that a change in homosexual inclination is a requirement for acceptance with God or entrance into the fellowship of the church. Although deliverance from homosexual activity is the call of God, the healing of the homosexual inclination will vary according to growth and is a result of our faith-identity with Christ rather than a way to it. Nevertheless, H.A. holds that the homosexual inclination may be healed and that all who desire it may realize their inborn, though fallen, heterosexuality, thus opening the way to heterosexual marriage and family.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Homosexuals Anonymous is a Christian fellowship of men and women who have chosen to help each other live in freedom from homosexuality. The purpose of H.A. is to be a resource and support for individuals seeking that freedom. Group support is available through weekly H.A. meetings. Guidance is received through the shared experiences and growth of others. Strength is acquired by training the faith response through the 14 steps of H.A.

The only requirement for membership in an H.A. group is a desire to be and remain free from homosexuality.

Homosexuals Anonymous members learn to see themselves not as another homosexual subculture but as God's children, created heterosexual, who are experiencing struggles with feelings of attraction towards the same sex, and who, by faith in God, may learn to experience freedom from those feelings as their identity is established in Him through Jesus Christ, and their needs are fulfilled in Him and in the community of believers that He has created.

H.A. is decidedly Christian but non-denominational. It does not endorse or oppose political causes, is not a crusade against "gay" organizations or movements, nor does it wish to engage in any controversial issue that would draw members' energies away from the stated goal: to mature in relationships with others and to rediscover the true identity that can be found only in the person of Jesus Christ, as faith perceives Him.

HISTORY OF HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS

Homosexuals Anonymous began in November 1980 as a result of two men, Colin, a former minister, and Doug, a former school principal, pooling their ideas on how to pass on to others what they had experienced in recovery from homosexuality. Colin, who had kept a five-year journal of his growth, analyzed the principles of that growth with helpful evaluation from Doug. From this analysis, the 14 Steps of H.A. were born. Nine of the steps came from Colin's journals, the other five are modified from Alcoholics Anonymous.

THE FOURTEEN STEPS OF HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS

1. We admitted that we were powerless over our homosexuality and that our emotional lives were unmanageable.
2. We came to believe the love of God, who forgave us and accepted us in spite of all that we are and have done.
3. We learned to see purpose in our suffering, that our failed lives were under God's control, who is able to bring good out of trouble.
4. We came to believe that God had already broken the power of homosexuality and that He could therefore restore our true personhood.
5. We came to perceive that we had accepted a lie about ourselves, an illusion that had trapped us in a false identity.
6. We learned to claim our true reality that as humankind, we are part of God's heterosexual creation and that God calls us to rediscover that identity in Him through Jesus Christ, as our faith perceives Him.
7. We resolved to entrust our lives to our loving God and to live by faith, praising Him for our new unseen identity, confident that it would become visible to us in God's good time.
8. As forgiven people free from condemnation, we made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, determined to root out fear, hidden hostility, and contempt for the world.
9. We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs and humbly asked God to remove our defects of character.
10. We willingly made direct amends wherever wise and possible to all people we had harmed.
11. We determined to live no longer in fear of the world, believing that God's victorious control turns all that is against us into our favor, bringing advantage out of sorrow and order from disaster.
12. We determined to mature in our relationships with men and women, learning the meaning of a partnership of equals, seeking neither dominance over people nor servile dependency on them.

13. We sought through confident praying, and the wisdom of Scripture for an ongoing growth in our relationship with God and a humble acceptance of His guidance for our lives.

14. Having had a spiritual awakening, we tried to carry this message to homosexual people with a love that demands nothing and to practice these steps in all our lives' activities, as far as lies within us.

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A. A. unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He expresses Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.
3. The only requirement of A. A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A. A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A. A. group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the A. A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A. A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. A. A., as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues: hence the A. A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

(used and adapted by permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.)

THE TWELVE TRADITIONS OF HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon H.A. unity.
2. H.A. Fellowship recognizes the final authority of the loving Creator-God as He expresses Himself in Jesus Christ through the Word of God to our group consciousness. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement of H.A. membership is a desire to be free and remain free from homosexuality.
4. Each chapter should be autonomous (electing officers from its own local membership) except in matters affecting other chapters or H.A. as a whole.

5. Each chapter has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the person struggling with homosexuality.
6. An H.A. chapter ought never endorse, finance, or lend the H.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, prestige, or religious controversy divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every H.A. chapter ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Homosexuals Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Homosexuals Anonymous, as such, ought never to be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Homosexuals Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues: hence the H.A. name ought never to be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, and television.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

STARTING A LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER

A local H.A. chapter may be started by:

1. Anyone who has attended an H.A. Training Seminar and who is in harmony with the philosophy and principles of H.A.

OR

2. Anyone who is experiencing continued growth towards God and away from homosexuality through regular attendance over many months at an H.A. chapter and who is in harmony with its philosophy and principles.
3. Anyone who has made a thorough study of H.A. books, tapes and other materials and is in harmony with the philosophy and principles of H.A.

Edward Madara, executive director of the New Jersey Self-Help Clearinghouse has said, "A self-help group can be started by anyone with a bit of courage, a sense of commitment, and a good dose of caring." [Joal Fischer, *Power Tools: Ways To Build a Self-Help Group*, (Charlotte, NC: SupportWorks, 1992), p. 8] Here are 14 steps to show you how to start an H.A. Chapter. Don't try to take them all at once. One step at a time! You'll be amazed how easy it can be.

1. **GATHER BASIC INFORMATION:** Order the H.A. video, the H.A. workbook, *Lord, Set Me Free; Experience, Strength and Hope, a Policy and Advisory Manual*; and *Power Tools: Ways To Build a Self-Help Group*. These will give you a good introduction to the philosophy and principles of H.A. **WE STRONGLY URGE** you to attend the first possible H.A. Training seminar and to encourage those in your chapter who have leadership potential to attend with you. It will make a tremendous difference in your chapter.

2. **SEEK GOD'S GUIDANCE.** Begin to seriously ask God, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6b). If you come to believe God would have you start an H.A. chapter, commit yourself to faithfully fulfill this calling. Scripture says, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). You will face times of discouragement, so promise God that by His grace nothing will stop you till the job is done! "...The Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you... But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing" (II Thessalonians 3:3,13).
3. **BUILD A SUPPORT SYSTEM:** Newcomers in an H.A. chapter are usually unable to give others support. They're looking for help. What about your needs? Seek out a pastor, counselor, or friends with whom you can share your struggles. Tell them your plans and ask if they will be available to you. Assure them you are not expecting them to solve your problems but are simply looking for good friends who can listen, give practical feedback, and pray. Remember, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1). Meet with your support people regularly, share your problems honestly (remembering to protect others' anonymity), and pray much. When the people in your chapter begin to grow, they will be there for you also.
4. **ESTABLISH LINES OF COMMUNICATION:** Rent a post office box under the name "H.A. Fellowship" at a post office convenient to your work or home where you can send chapter materials and people can contact you by mail. Decide whether you want to put an unlisted phone in your own name (which is less expensive) or a listed phone with no address given under the name **Homosexuals Anonymous** (which is more expensive but makes it easy for people seeking help to find you and allows you to be listed in the "Guide To Human Services" section of the phone book, usually through the United Way). Have the phone line installed. Purchase an inexpensive answering machine or use voice mail through the phone company for this line so that people who call when you are not there can leave a message for you, if they wish. A suggested message might be: "Thank you for calling Homosexuals Anonymous, a fellowship of men and women seeking freedom from homosexuality. We cannot answer the phone now, but please leave your first name and telephone number at the sound of the tone and we will call back to you. We will be discreet and your confidentiality will be respected. If you cannot leave your name and number, someone will be here to speak to you in person on (day) between (time) and (time). God bless you in your struggles." Give H.A.F.S. your chapter's mailing address. Be sure H.A.F.S. has your personal address and phone number in case we need to contact you directly.
5. **FIND A MEETING PLACE:** Your pastor or someone in your support system may be able to contact local churches, hospitals, YMCA's, and YWCA's as possibilities. Where do Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, Sex Addicts Anonymous, Al-Anon, or Adult Children of Alcoholics groups meet in your area? These places may be open to you also. When you have found a suitable place, determine the rent (if any) and set a time and date for your first meeting.
6. **ORDER GROUP MATERIALS**
7. **REQUEST H.A. NEWSLETTER COVERAGE:** Ask H.A.F.S. to run a story in the *H.A. News* to inform people in your area that a chapter is starting and urge them to contact you if they need help or can give assistance. We will also ask our readers from other areas to contact people they think might be interested and urge them to contact you.

8. **ADVERTISE:** While we believe in attraction rather than promotion, we also know we will not be able to attract people to a program of which they've never heard. We must get the word out in every proper way possible that there is hope and help in the struggle against homosexuality. Some forms of advertising cost little or nothing. You will find sample news releases for your local paper and sample public service announcements for radio and television in the section of this manual entitled "Advertising and the local H.A. Chapter". Your newspaper may also list support group meetings periodically. Ask to be included. Bulletin boards in churches, Christian bookstores, and colleges and universities are good places to use posters someone with artistic gifts in your group can make. If you have the funds, advertise in the classified section of the newspaper with something like this: "*HELP FOR HOMOSEXUALS:* The (name) Chapter of Homosexuals Anonymous, a support group for those who wish to find freedom from homosexuality, holds weekly meetings in the (city name) area. Call (phone number)." To be effective, these ads should run on a continuous basis (daily, if a daily paper).
9. **HOLD YOUR FIRST MEETING:** Follow the format explained in the section of this manual entitled "H.A. Meeting Format". Give an H.A. brochure and explain the New Members Card to all who attend. Urge all who come to commit themselves to attend for six weeks without missing so they can get to know the program and people and make an intelligent decision as to whether or not the group might be helpful for them. Show them your copies of the materials they can receive from us as well as the books they can purchase. Again, urge them to get the newsletter and to order their own workbook, copy of *Experience, Strength and Hope*, and the HA daily devotional. Don't expect everyone to keep coming. Every anonymous group of whatever kind has its drop outs. Don't hold yourself responsible for anyone else's decision. If you feel discouraged should only a few come, remember God's rebuke to Israel for despising "the day of small things" (Zechariah 4:10). If no one else comes at first, hold the meeting every week even if you have to work the steps alone! "And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Galatians 6:9. Be patient! You can expect more people and better meetings as the group matures.
10. **SEEK REFERRALS:** Contact people who might know men and women who want help. Send letters (samples are given in this manual in the section entitled "Advertising and the Local H.A. Chapter") to local churches, counseling ministries, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, social service agencies, and hospitals. Include an H.A. brochure. Do not try to contact everyone in one week by yourself. Concentrate on Christian organizations first, then move to secular ones. Get other members to help. Send out five or ten letters per person each week using the phone book and other lists available to you. Contact the United Way's Information and Referral Service and ask to be registered with them. Also contact the national Self-Help Clearing House, CUNY, 33 West 42nd Street, New York, New York 10036, telephone (212) 642-2944 and the American Self-Help Clearing House, St. Clares-Riverside Medical Center, Denville, NJ 07834, telephone (201) 625-7101, to get the address of any local self-help organizations with which you should register for referrals [*please check if the addresses and phone numbers are still up-to-date*].
11. **ORGANIZE THE CHAPTER'S FINANCES:** Money can be a source of dissension so great care and wisdom should be exercised in this area. Keep good records of your expenses and the amount collected at the H.A. meetings. As soon as possible, elect a treasurer and assistant treasurer (see the section in this manual entitled "Local Chapter Officers") and have them set up a bank account for the chapter (see the section in the manual entitled "Opening an H.A.

Bank Account”). Some chapters use the name “He’s Alive Fellowship” to protect their anonymity. Explain the importance of supporting H.A.F.S. and begin doing so regularly as soon as possible (see the section in this manual entitled “The Local H.A. Chapter and H.A. Fellowship services”).

12. **HELP CHAPTER MEMBERS UNDERSTAND THEIR PROGRAM:** Order enough *Policy and Advisory Manuals* so that each regular attender may get one. Have an extra meeting to which all members are invited to read and discuss the manual. Evaluate your group in the light of your study. What changes might you want to consider? How can you better get the word out that there is hope and help for the homosexual? What can be done to promote healthy friendships within your chapter? Are people who miss a meeting being contacted and patiently encouraged to return? Are people seeking step coaching and are qualified people willing to serve in that capacity? Are new members made to feel a part of the chapter by being offered responsibilities they can manage (set up refreshments, clean up, etc.)? Selfishness is part of our sickness. If we want our members to recover, they must learn to reach out to others. Without new information and responsibilities, old members grow restless. Be sure to provide challenges for old timers and help for new comers. Consider groups for Bible study, growth classes, and social activities as outlined in the section of this manual entitled “Auxiliary Group Support”.
13. **ELECT OFFICERS:** When group members begin to show that they are working the steps, making progress in recovery, maturing in their lives, and reaching out to others, elect officers (see the section in this manual entitled “Local Chapter Officers” and “Leadership Qualities”).
14. **START NEW CHAPTERS:** Experts suggest that “fewer than four members restrict active, variegated group development and interaction; more than eight members create overcrowding on the one hand and too diffuse an emotional atmosphere on the other.” [Toby B. Bieber, “Group Therapy with Homosexuals”, *Comprehensive Group Therapy* edited by Harold I. Kaplan and Benjamin J. Saddock, (Baltimore: The Williams and Watkins Company, 1971), p- 524]. To maintain a vibrant work, plan for the day when your chapter becomes two groups. Urge your members to attend an **H.A. Recovery Seminar** and an **H.A. Training Seminar** to develop the leadership both groups will need. Then people who need extra support will have two meetings they can attend. The fact that each group meets at different times makes it possible for some to attend who could not do so at the time the original meeting was held. H.A. multiplies by dividing and thus can offer more help to more people!

Please remember, you are not alone in this undertaking unless you choose to be! H.A.F.S. is here to help you at every step of the way. We care about you personally and want to help you when you face difficulties. We are not sinless and we do not expect you to be perfect. Keep open and honest. Stay in close touch with us. Let us know how you are doing as well as how the group is progressing. Share questions, problems, ideas, and testimonies. Let us help each other to find ever increasing freedom in Christ!

ANONYMITY, AUTONOMY, ACCOUNTABILITY

There are certain basic principles which all of us must follow if H.A. is to do its job of helping people find freedom from homosexuality. Three important ones begin with the letter A.

Anonymity: Our twelfth tradition reminds us: “Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.” There are two levels at which anonymity must function.

On the **personal** level: We know that the social stigma of homosexuality is often a factor in a person’s decision whether or not to seek help. Therefore, H.A. members recognize that a firm assurance of confidentiality is imperative if we wish to succeed in attracting and helping other people wishing to find freedom from homosexuality. H.A. promises personal anonymity to all who attend its meetings. First names only are used. If a new person wishes to give out personal information, he or she is free to do so, but should not feel pressured to give it. Personal information shared during any meeting is treated as confidential. Some people experiencing freedom from homosexuality are eager to share the good news of their H.A. affiliation with family, friends and other support groups. Such disclosure is their own choice.

On the **public** level: Anonymity does not prevent H.A. members from following the biblical call to testify from their own experience. We can speak of our recovering experience in Jesus and our association with H.A. to family, to church, to a university audience, or at any gathering where the press, radio, or television are not present. But when the media are present, or where we choose to go to print, H.A.F.S. urges that we **either** use only first names and last initial and allow no photographs, **or** testify under full personal identity without referring to our association with H.A. Fellowship. When H.A. is covered in the media, it is the Christ-centered principles of the Fellowship by which men and women are finding freedom from homosexuality that should be referred to. The principles rather than the individual personalities are the key when it comes to H.A. media coverage.

Adhering to the principle of anonymity protects both the individual and the Fellowship.

The individual is protected from identification as a homosexual and, should he or she have a setback in the recovery process, from being held up to public ridicule by those who seem to desperately eager to prove that freedom from homosexuality is impossible. The Fellowship is protected from anyone who might otherwise exploit their H.A. affiliation for personal gain or glory.

Autonomy: Those of us who have experienced homosexuality have known powerlessness. That often creates an unhealthy desire for control in one or two ways.

In some, being out of control has created a terrible thirst for power and an inability to distinguish between pulling one’s own weight and throwing one’s weight around. Because we have been unable to manage our own lives, we may think we must dominate others.

Fearful of others, we seek to dominate them; or, frightened of our own weakness, we seek someone else to control us. Either way we perpetuate the forces which feed addiction. We are caught in that “dominance over people” or that “servile dependency” from which we have pledged to break free in Step 12. If we are ever to become mature, we must cast off our longings to be the tyrannical child or irresponsible infant!

To help us in this process, our Tradition Two, Four, and Seven state: “H.A. Fellowship recognizes the final authority of the loving Creator-God as He expresses Himself in Jesus Christ through the Word of God to our group consciousness. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” “Each chapter should be autonomous (electing officers from its own local membership), except in members affecting other chapters or H.A. as a whole.” “Every H.A. chapter ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

Not only are these principles psychologically sound, they are eminently practical. They allow men and women seeking freedom from homosexuality to help start new groups and help build better ones.

Alcoholics Anonymous would not exist today had it waited for approval from others to begin its work. H.A. is where A.A. was in the 1930’s. Some churches’ faith in the Gospel as “the power of God unto salvation to **everyone** that believes” (Romans 1:16) has been dimmed by the pronouncements of some psychologists and the propaganda of the militant gays who say it is futile to look for change in people with a homosexual struggle. Weak faith hobbles rather than helps those who would reach out to the sufferer. A counseling ministry, though it names the name of Him who “made Himself of no reputation” (Philippians 2:7), can be more concerned to protect its reputation than to set captives free. When this is the case, it too will hinder. At H.A. we thank God for the churches and counseling ministries who have stood with us, strong in faith. We desperately need, earnestly seek, and deeply appreciate the prayers, counsel, and support of all God’s people. Since not all have strong faith, we maintain the principle of autonomy lest anyone strangle us in the sea of red tape and many who might otherwise be saved perish!

The principle of autonomy not only protects us, it protects our friends. H.A. is a pioneer ministry, and the history of A.A. (not to mention the book of First Corinthians) shows that the early days of such a work can be difficult. Sometimes people who would not think of closing a church where the choir director ran away with the first soprano are all too ready to disband an H.A. chapter where there have been relapses. Some who can be patient with a struggling alcoholic can be very harsh with those who are struggling with homosexuality. We do not want pastors to lose church members or counselors to lose supporters because of us. We maintain the principle of autonomy so that our friends will never be forced to choose between hurting their ministry and injuring us. If need be, they can quietly hold us up in prayer while they wait for the proper time to be more open in their support. Meanwhile, we can go about our business of personal recovery and helping others find freedom from homosexuality. Thus, in maintaining the principle of autonomy, we are saying, “We need help, but we do not want to cause anyone harm.”

We who are in H.A. also know that people in Reading [*the city where the previous headquarters of H.A. were at who were now moved to Houston, Texas*] or on the Board do not have all the answers either. The principle of autonomy allows each H.A. chapter the freedom to experiment. If something you try fails, we trust that you will have the humility to admit it so we can all learn from your mistake. If something works, we urge you to let us know so that we can pass it on to others and all of us can improve. Healthy trial and error should always have a place in H.A.

Not only is the principle of autonomy psychologically sound and eminently practical, most important of all, it is thoroughly biblical. It is based on the teaching of Scripture concerning the priesthood of every believer (I Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6), the responsibility of each to bear his own burden (Galatians 6:5), that we are all brothers under one Master, Christ (Matthew 23:9-12), and the godly leaders are servants (Mark 10:42-45) who guide by example rather than by force (I Peter 5:3).

Please understand what autonomy is not! It is not the illusion of infallibility. We recognize that we will make mistakes and need God's grace (Psalm 19:12). It is not pride. We know that we must seek counsel and do need help (Proverbs 11:14). It is not an uncooperative spirit. We understand that we are to work with others "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3). It is not a call for individuals to sever relationships with other groups or ministries. We thank God when someone gets help from counseling. We rejoice in what the Spirit gives others (Romans 12:3-5). H.A. autonomy must never be used to subvert personal accountability. It is not rebellion. We recognize the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Word of God (Romans 10:9,10; II Timothy 3:16,17) and seek to follow the Bible as God enables us to understand it (Psalm 119:18).

Autonomy is simply taking proper responsibility for ourselves and for each other. By it we say that we need and welcome advice and assistance, but we decline control. We will be responsible to start our groups, elect our officers, solve our problems, and keep our group well and strong so that we may grow well and strong. No one must be allowed to take this from us. Scary? Yes! Necessary? Absolutely!

Accountability: Accountability cannot be demanded but must be given by every person if he or she hopes to find freedom from homosexuality. There are many levels of accountability. All of us are accountable to God. Every H.A. member is urged to be accountable to his or her church, to family and friends, and to others in his or her support system. Every member should be accountable to the local H.A. chapter.

We owe our H.A. chapter openness and honesty about where we are and how we are doing. Our H.A. chapter owes us concern enough to encourage, challenge, and, when necessary, confront us with the truth. That kind of "tough love" will help us follow after freedom or cause us to choose to leave if we are not really serious about finding it. It is the duty of the group itself and cannot be pushed off on any leader, board, or ministry.

Of course it takes time, patience, wisdom, and prayer for this to develop. It is frightening at times and it takes faith in God's almighty grace. But we are called to live a life of faith and must do so or we are doomed to fail in whatever we seek to do for Christ.

To encourage accountability, we urge each chapter to give every member the **New Member's Card** and explain it to them. We suggest that each group discuss the matter of boundaries. Encourage each member to talk about areas of struggle which are contrary to the will of God. Urge them to renounce such practices in faith, reaching out to others in time of temptation and reporting back to the group regularly on how the battle is going. The group must teach that support, not condemnation, will help win the victory. Correct the behavior; affirm the person.

Celebrate anniversaries! Applaud the person who can say, "It has been ten months since I have acted out!" Cheer the one who reports, "It has been ten weeks since I have been to a porn shop." Encourage the individual who says, "I am struggling with masturbation and I fell this week. It has only been three days since I slipped." Give group recognition to those who are trying. God rejoices and so should we! Thus many who have utterly despised themselves can recover a proper self-respect.

Someone may ask, "What if a chapter fails?" God lives! Each chapter is accountable to and dependent on Him. If it is not faithful, He may withhold His blessing and the group will sicken and may die. If the members repent, He will restore them. If not, He will replace them. Our faith must be in our heavenly Father who knows all things and who alone has the wisdom to know what should be done in every case. Can we not look to Him?

And there is another safeguard in this manner of accountability. We who were once trapped in homosexuality know that our H.A. group is one of the strongest means preventing us from going back into bondage in a time of discouragement, stress, or loneliness. Here are men and women who understand what we are going through and can help us. We are not fools! We want to safeguard, not undermine, that which safeguards us. We know that homosexuality is not a way of life but a way that leads to death—emotional, spiritual, and often physical.

God has said, "I call heaven and earth to record this day...that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: choose life..." (Deuteronomy 30:19), We want to choose life but know we cannot do it alone. We need the grace of God and the help of our fellow sufferers. Therefore we stand by these principles of **anonymity**, **autonomy** and **accountability** and pledge to do all in our power to make H.A. strong that it may help us and any others who want freedom!

H.A. MEETING FORMAT

Normally an H.A. meeting is limited to those who are seeking freedom from homosexuality. If a pastor, counselor, family member, etc. wishes to visit, a meeting may be open to them by a vote of the chapter at a business meeting held **at least one week prior** to the visit. Members who object may voice their feelings and the group may then vote on whether to have the open meeting. A member who feels uncomfortable about an open meeting thus decided on has the option to absent himself or herself from the meeting. Anonymity is thus fully protected.

The following is a suggested format for an H.A. meeting:

Welcome

“Welcome to Homosexuals Anonymous. We will be meeting every **(day)** unless notice is given a week beforehand. Meetings will be given at **(starting time)** and end at **(ending time)**.”

“Homosexuals Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women who, through their common emotional experience, have chosen to help each other live in FREEDOM FROM HOMOSEXUALITY.”

“The only requirement for H.A. membership is a desire to be free from homosexuality. New members are welcome at any meeting. All persons present are members and can participate as much or as little as personally desired. Please do not ask questions that would force an individual to reveal any personal information such as full name, address, occupation, or church affiliation.”

“Because of the solemnity of our mission we as H.A. Fellowship choose to become engaged in no controversial issues that would draw our energy away from the staged goal, desiring only to mature in our relationships with those around us and rediscover the true identity that can be found only in the person of Jesus Christ as our faith perceives Him.”

“H.A. is funded solely by contributions from its members.”

“Confidentiality is very important. Information shared within the group is not to be shared with others outside the group.”

How It Works

“Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living that demands rigorous honesty. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders, but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest.”

“Our stories disclose in a general way what we used to be like, what happened, and what we are like now. If you have decided you want freedom from homosexuality and are willing to go to any length to get it—then you are ready to take certain steps.”

“At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely.”

“Remember that we deal with homosexuality—cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power—that One is God. May you find God now!

“Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked God’s protection and care with complete abandon.

“Here are the steps we took, which are suggested as a program of recovery:” [Each member reads one of the steps from the H.A. step card, going around the circle until all steps are read, or the steps may be read in unison.]

“Many of us exclaimed, ‘What an order! I can’t go through with it.’ Do not be discouraged. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to these principles. We are not sinless. The point is that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines. The principles we have set down are guides to progress. We claim spiritual progress rather than spiritual perfection.

“Our understanding of homosexuality and our personal experiences make clear three pertinent ideas:

- 1) That we were powerless over our homosexuality and could not manage our own lives.
- 2) That probably no human power could have given us freedom from homosexuality.
- 3) That God could and would if God were sought.”

[Material from **How It Works** to this point adapted from the third edition of Alcoholics Anonymous, (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., 1976), pp. 58-60. Used and adapted with permission.]

Opening Prayer

Either the moderator or one of the group members (asked ahead of time) leads the group in opening prayer.

Introductions

Each member is asked to introduce himself/herself using first name only. An icebreaker may be involved in the introduction. For example: “Give your first name and what quality you most treasure in a friend.” Let the icebreaker be one that does not require a lengthy answer.

History

If new members are present, senior members may tell of what led them to face their homosexuality, how God led them to H.A., how they have grown so far or what qualities they wish to develop. Make the new members aware that they may share some of their own “history”, too, but only if they choose to do so.

If no new members are present, proceed into the step material.

Step Material

This portion of the meeting should last approximately 20 minutes. The moderator introduces the step guide (very informally..."And now George is going to lead a discussion on Step 10") and the step guide leads this portion of the meeting in one of several ways.

- 1) **Using the H.A. workbook, Lord, Set Me Free:** Each person is encouraged to get their own book [you can download it for free from our homepage www.homosexuals-anonymous.com] and work on it during the week. Those who do not have books are given a Bible, can hear what is said, look up the Scriptures, and take their turn sharing. The step guide reads the written material while the other members read the Scriptures given in turn. People share their thoughts and feelings when the personal response section is reached.
- 2) **Using the H.A. book, Experience, Strength and Hope:** Each person is encouraged to get their own book [you can download it for free from our homepage www.homosexuals-anonymous.com], read the assigned material (usually an entire step) during the week, and answer the questions at the end of each section. The step guide shares his own answers to these questions and asks others who want to share theirs to do so. People share their thoughts and feelings as the discussion proceeds.
- 3) **Using helpful resources** (tapes, books, articles, audio-CD's, DVD's etc.). The step guide brings the tape and tape recorder (or the book, laptop, TV set or whatever else is needed), plays one message per week, and people share their thoughts and feelings during the discussion time.
- 4) **Having the step guide give a short step talk:** We recommend this only after using the suggestions given above so that the step talks will be given by people with some experience in working the program. See [How to Make a Step Talk Real](#) below.

Discussion

The step guide might open this discussion by asking, "How did this teaching affect you?" This leads to a discussion of the step. It is not always necessary to focus on the step. In addition, there may be discussion on growth and struggle, on any other step, or attention may be turned to a hurting individual, allowing the group to minister to and support that individual. **Remember, we cannot "fix" another person and it is impossible to meet all the needs of everyone at every meeting!**

Announcements

The step guide gives the meeting back to the moderator. Announcements regarding H.A. activities (socials, special meetings, Bible studies, updates, etc.) can now be made.

Offering

Each Homosexuals Anonymous chapter is funded solely by contributions from members. A collection plate can be placed in the middle of the circle or passed around the circle to allow members to contribute.

Closing Prayer

Variations of prayer are encouraged: group prayer, sentence prayer, selected individuals, or only one person praying. The moderator, when requesting someone to pray, should do so before the meeting starts. Not all persons feel comfortable with public prayer and may be embarrassed if asked without foreknowledge.

Song

A spiritual song is a good, positive way to end the meeting. The song should be one everyone knows or can easily learn. Examples: "He Is Lord," the "Doxology", "Amazing Grace," or Scripture songs/choruses.

An H.A. meeting should last no longer than one and one-half hours.

HOW TO MAKE A STEP TALK REAL

If someone could show you how to help a struggling person snatch victory from the jaws of defeat, would you be interested? If someone could tell you how to help a despairing person find real comfort and new hope, would you be interested? If so, read on!

England's most powerful weapon during World War II was Winston Churchill. When he spoke, men and women took heart and fought on to victory. In like manner, a step talk that is real encourages people to continue their struggle until they find freedom in Christ. But how does one make a step talk real?

1. Make It Biblical.

Prepare a step talk like you would build a house. Without a good foundation, all is vain. The foundation of a good step talk is the written Word of God (the Bible) and the living Word of God (the Savior)--the book from God, who cannot lie, and the Son of God, who is truth incarnate (II Timothy 3:16,17; Titus 1:2; John 14:6). Christ and the Bible will never deceive us or cause us to deceive others.

People can misunderstand and misinterpret experiences. What we think or believe may be an illusion. It is only as we are true to Christ and the Bible that we are in touch with true reality. Our Lord Himself prayed to His Father on the night before He was crucified: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

So, see that your step talk is true to the Bible. If you are unsure whether what you are preparing is in accord with Scripture, ask help from someone who really knows God's Word. A step talk that is real is not based on "I think" or "I feel" but "thus saith the Lord!"

The Bible not only grounds a step talk in reality, it gives it power. The Word of God "is full of living power: it is sharper than the sharpest dagger, cutting swift and deep into our innermost thoughts and desires with all their parts, exposing us for what we really are" (Hebrews 4:12 The Living Bible).

Once you develop a step talk, **show** that it is true to the Bible. Every man and woman who listens will face painful struggles. Put the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, into their hands that they may resist the devil so he will flee from them as he fled from Christ (Ephesians 6:17, James 4:7, Matthew 4:1-11).

This does not mean a step talk should be a chain of Bible verses. Use enough verses to show that what you are saying is biblical, but no more. Try to leave hearers with one key verse on which to stand in the coming week. If you do not know where to find verses on the step, refer to the H.A. workbook, Lord, Set Me Free or look up the step's key words in a concordance or use a topical Bible which arranges key verses by themes. Both can be purchased from H.A.F.S. or your local Christian book store. Even better, start a notebook listing the Fourteen Steps and put key verses you have found in your Bible study under the appropriate step. Then note the step number next to the verse in the margin of your Bible.

2. Make It Personal.

Ralph Waldo Emerson complained, "I once heard a preacher who sorely tempted me to say I would go to church no more.... A snow storm was falling around us. The snow storm was real, but the preacher merely spectral, and the eye felt that sad contrast in looking at him, and then out of the window behind him into the beautiful meteor of the snow. He had lived in vain. He had not one word intimating that he had laughed or wept, was married or in love, had been commended, or cheated, or chagrined. If he had ever lived and acted, we were none the wiser for it.... The true preacher can be known by this, that he deals out to the people his life—life passed through the fire of thought." (Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Divinity School Address," (1838), The Heart of Emerson's Essays: Selections from His Complete Works edited by Bliss Perry, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933), p. 87]

To open one's life to others can be difficult because often we are not used to being open. We fear being vulnerable, or we are ashamed and afraid. We must display our wounds if we would heal others. We must choose others' welfare over our comfort.

Share victories! They give hope and show how we win. To avoid giving way to pride or letting false modesty silence us, give God the glory (John 15:5).

Share defeats! They help the one who has fallen see God's mercy and show others what to avoid. Reject the excuse that others won't understand or will be hurt. They understand all too well and can be helped. Be honest.

Share what the group needs! What others need to hear, not what we want to say, determines the message. If a group is discouraged, share things that will lift it up. If people are complacent, share things that will warn of danger (I Corinthians 10:12,13).

Share yourself!

3. Make It Simple.

It is easier to be complex than to be clear. To be clear: Have an outline, gather your material, prepare your conclusion, and write your introduction.

Always have an outline! It keeps you on track and helps your hearers follow you. Scripture is the foundation of your step talk “house” and an outline is its frame.

Let the step determine the outline. For example, Step 6 might be outlined as follows:

- I. What We Are – heterosexual.
- II. What We Need – to rediscover it; it has been lost.
- III. How We Do That
 - A. Through Christ
 - B. By Faith

Sometimes one must go beyond the step. Never leave your hearers in despair when you expound their powerlessness in Step 1. Always point to the help available through God and His people. The lie renounced in Step 5 should never be considered apart from the truth embraced in Step 6. At times, motivation to work the step should be included. Thus, Step 8 might be outlined as follows:

- I. Who Can Do It – those who are forgiven, free from condemnation.
- II. What Must Be Done – root out:
 - A. Fear
 - B. Hidden hostility
 - C. Contempt for the world
- III. How We Do It – searching and fearless moral inventory – journal.
- IV. Why We Must Do It – for God, family, job, respect, sanity

Once you have written an outline, gather materials—an explanation of the step and your illustrations.

The Bible is the foundation of your step talk “house” and the outline is the framing. The walls are our explanation and the illustrations are the windows which let in the light.

You can get material for your step talk from many sources. The H.A. workbook, Lord, Set Me Free, and Experience, Strength and Hope contain a wealth of material. Save your copies of the H.A. News and make a list of material on each step and keep it in your workbook.

The Bible is full of helpful material. Consider the life of Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-22:18; Romans 4:18-25; Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19) as an example of the faith life. Abraham believed what God said even though it was contrary to all human expectation. He demonstrated his faith by doing what God told him to do. He had to wait twenty-five years before the promise of a son was fulfilled. His faith sometimes wavered during that period, but he always got back up and kept on walking with God. God’s promise was fulfilled. Abraham’s faith was further tested when he was told to sacrifice Isaac. He was strong in faith and God kept His Word! Isaac lived!

Your own journals are a rich vein to mine. Use the experiences of others with their permission and in a way which will not embarrass. Keep a step file and note helpful material from your own reading. I've noted this under Step 1: Michael Jeter, a character actor best known for his role on the TV show Evening Shade, has always been open in discussing his years of drug and alcohol abuse. He says, "I didn't cure myself,... God did. The only thing I ever did was get deeper into it, and when I finally decided to accept that I could do nothing on my own, I found my way out. I did become active with a recovery program. With the help of the group, I put one foot in from of the other and, well, it's been 12 years now..." [TV Host Weekly, (August 7-13, 1993), p.47]

Having prepared the body of the talk, turn to its conclusion. Be sure to reach it quickly! Franklin D. Roosevelt suggested three rules for speechmaking: "Be sincere, be brief, be seated." [Reader's Digest (June 1986), p. 148] A good step talk is no longer than twenty minutes!

A conclusion can summarize your message. You might conclude Step 4 like this: "Thus we can see WHAT HAS HAPPENED: the power of homosexuality has been broken at the cross; WHAT MUST HAPPEN: we must believe that; and WHAT WILL HAPPEN: our true personhood will be restored.

A conclusion can also crystalize your talk. Step 5 might be concluded with this quotation from psychoanalysts Mildred Newman and Bernard Berkowitz: "Analysts once thought they had little chance of changing homosexuals' preferences and had little success in that direction. But some refused to accept that and kept working with them, and we've found that a homosexual who really wants to change has a good chance of doing so. Now we're hearing all kinds of success stories." [Mildred Newman, Bernard Berkowitz and Jean Owen, How To Be Your Own Best Friend. (New York: Lark Publishing Company, 1971), p. 22-23]

You can also use a conclusion to activate your hearers by clearly telling them what to do and how to do it and/or to motivate them to work the step.

Finally, prepare the introduction. The first reaction of an audience to a speaker is "Ho Hum!" The introduction must awaken them or they will not hear anything you have to say.

One way to get your listeners' attention is to shock them! You might say, "Some of us are going to die of AIDS...unless..." Another approach is to show them how important this step can be in their daily lives and search for freedom. If it has been especially meaningful to you, tell them how it has helped. Let them know this is not dull theory but life-changing truth.

4. Make It Practical.

Picture the people in your H.A. chapter. There's Fred. His family just found out about his struggle and are rejecting him. How can you comfort him? And Bill just had a fall. What will encourage him to get back up and fight on? There's Tom. He's so lonely. How can you show him how to develop friendships that will safeguard him from seeking destructive companionship? Joe is really depressed. What will lift his spirits and help him banish self-pity? And Sue is the only woman in the group. What will help her feel at ease?

With these folk in your mind and heart, find God's medicine for their hurts. Give them a clear method by which to attack their struggles. Give suggestions about what to do and instruction on how to do it. Don't promise it will be easy but show that it is possible. Instruct minds, lift spirits, and strengthen wills.

5. Make It Vital.

A circuit rider of the last century was asked the secret of his power. He replied: "It's simple. I read myself full. I think myself clear. I pray myself hot. And then I let go." [William Norwood, Speech: It's Techniques and Disciplines in a Free Society second edition, (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1961), p. 38]

Prayer makes a step talk live! "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6b). "...Without me ye can do nothing" but "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (John 15:5b; Philippians 4:13). "Call unto me," says the Lord, "and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not" (Jeremiah 33:3).

God never regards work without prayer and He never rewards a faith that will not work! Sloth is sin (Proverbs 6:6-9) and we cannot expect God to bless laziness. Prayer must be joined by preparation and practice.

Practice in front of a mirror with a tape recorder. Watch how you look and listen to how you sound. Speak as if talking to a few friends. Be sure there is variety in your pitch, volume, and speed. Do not read or try to memorize your talk. Use only a few notes. Practice until you know and can deliver your talk comfortably. Then practice with a sympathetic friend and ask for suggestions. When you have done all this, pray more!

As you think about your step talk, keep these words of Marlele LeFever in mind: "Becoming an effective teacher is simple. You just prepare and prepare until drops of blood appear on your forehead." [Leadership, (Summer 1987, p. 19)]

H.A. Business Meeting

The business meeting is a gathering of H.A. members, separate from the regular H.A. meeting, which allows for the discussion of business necessary for the management and operation of the chapter (format of chapter meetings, methods of advertising, plans for special events, treasurer's report, the nomination and election of officers, etc.). It is best scheduled immediately following the adjournment of a regular H.A. meeting, convening once a month if needed. The business meeting need not be formal or lengthy. Most business can be taken care of in one-half hour.

Any H.A. member can call for a business meeting. However, the coordinator is responsible for scheduling regular business meetings (in conjunction with the wishes of the group as a whole) and acts as the chairperson of the meeting. If the coordinator cannot attend the business meeting, an alternate chairperson should be selected by the chairperson or the members. While the business meeting is separate from the regular H.A. meeting, the principles of the 14 Steps and the 12 Traditions still apply.

LOCAL CHAPTER OFFICERS

The local H.A. chapters are autonomous and all officers are chosen from the membership of the local chapter. Offices are open to all members. All persons holding offices may be re-elected to positions already held or elected to new offices. However rotation of the officers allows for growth in both individual members as well as the group as a whole. Should vacancies occur, the open position should be filled as soon as possible by election at the next scheduled business meeting or, if needed, at a special business meeting called for this purpose. Until the vacant office is filled permanently, a temporary replacement may be chosen by consensus of the other officers. The offices to be filled are:

Coordinator

Elected by the group at a business meeting for a quarter or a 14-week period. Moderates the weekly meetings, working through the format outline, oversees the quarter's H.A. meeting's, ensures presence of step guide, chairs the business meeting, unlocks building, makes sure the person appointed for refreshments is at hand, etc. Several coordinators (co-coordinators) may be elected which would allow for alternating coordinators from week to week—example: two coordinators could alternate responsibilities every other week.

Step Guide

Elected by the group at a business meeting or chosen by the coordinator or coordinating board (consisting of the coordinator and two other elected officers) to serve weekly, monthly, quarterly, or for a 14-week period. Guides the discussion of the step material using the H.A. workbook Lord, Set Me Free; Experience, Strength and Hope; or the H.A. step tapes. As the group develops in maturity, the step guide may be asked to speak on the step, explaining how he or she has used the step, what it means for him or her, rather than lecturing on it.

Treasurer

Elected by the group at a business meeting, preferably for one year. Opens a bank account, counts and records money in account book in presence of an assistant treasurer, deposits money, etc. The treasurer updates the group regarding the balance on a monthly basis. The treasurer is responsible for sending contributions to H.A. Fellowship Services.

Assistant Treasurer

Elected by the group in a business meeting, preferably for one year. Assists treasurer in duties and fills in when treasurer is not present (collecting money, etc.). The bank account is arranged so that the money may be withdrawn only with two signatures, those of the treasurer and assistant treasurer.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

In order for the local H.A. chapter to maintain a healthy atmosphere which will allow for the mature growth of its individual members, the leadership should strive to maintain certain qualities in themselves. These qualities are:

Spirituality:

Finding fellowship with God a pleasure.

Sobriety:

Striving for ever-increasing purity of life.

Sensitivity:

Sensing people's needs and being patient with their slowness of growth.

Strength:

Being honest enough to confront and challenge without desiring to control.

Gentleness:

Not needing to control others because of a fear that their failure will be construed of the leader's failure—"If the group falls apart, it's my fault." The leader should not become nervously controlling when situations arise that may seem threatening. The leader does not make statements like, "We cannot allow this to happen" or "You'd better decide whether you really want to be in this group". Rather he lays the situation before the group and says, "How do you think we should handle this?" or "Could we discuss the possible approach that we, as a group, want to take in this situation?".

Love:

Being able to consider the other person's best interest.

Vulnerability:

Being open enough to let others know that the leader is imperfect and still growing. This ability to be vulnerable comes from the understanding that we are righteous only in the righteousness of Christ. In ourselves we are imperfect and incomplete.

H.A. CHAPTER DYNAMICS

The following are some dynamics that may be expected from a healthy H.A. chapter:

Honesty:

Honesty of the individuals with the group to allow for expression of struggles, failures, anger, etc.

Confidence that one can entrust private knowledge of oneself to others in the group without its being misused.

Confidentiality:

Information never passes outside the group to others. When anyone asks, "Does (Tony) attend your group?" a useful reply is, "I'm sorry but we are not allowed to say who attends the group."

Hopefulness:

There should **not** be an overemphasis on failures. An acknowledgement and encouragement should be given when a member brings to the group an experience worked through. Example: "Joe, I see that as a step taken to heart" or "That certainly was a growth experience, wasn't it?" or "Your experience helps me in dealing with my own struggle because..."

Communication:

Members should be free to work through troublesome feelings that arise in them during a meeting by expressing them within the group. Someone may feel offended by what another member said in the meeting or someone else may feel irritated by the lengthy or angry way another member expresses himself. It is perfectly proper to express these feelings in appropriate ways within the group. This can lead to bringing the feelings under control and to development of maturity in communication.

Relating growth experiences:

Struggle is expressed, but the discovery of strength finally emerges.

Acceptance:

Acceptance of different levels (stages) of growth, different life-styles, different denominational affiliations, and of possibly irritating personal peculiarities (for example: mode of dress).

Expectations:

At first new members may expect more support than they receive. They may experience disappointment and a certain amount of emotional withdrawal. Once they have learned to express to the group their disappointment, they begin to grow and the group gives more care. Eventually, the person becomes aware that it is just as important to give support as to receive it. At that point, deeper growth begins. As the group matures, though there may be some turnover, a regular number of people will stay with the group even after their own need of it has ended. These will become the “givers” and will be able to head off some of the early disappointment experienced by the new members.

Friendship in the group:

Generally, mature friendships cannot be expected in H.A. chapters because most members are not appropriately sensitive to the needs of others since they are in too much emotional conflict themselves. Paradoxically, group members develop limited friendships within the group when they become mature enough to **give** care and love rather than just demand and seek friendship.

Sexual experience within the group:

The reality of this possibility must be faced. Distributing and explaining the **New Member's Card** will discourage sexual involvement within the group and sets up ways to deal with it should it occur. One might say, “All of us are committed to finding freedom from homosexuality but still struggle with it. We are responsible to strengthen each other in times of weakness. Thus, if you ever feel uncomfortable about anything in your relationship with a group member, please bring that matter to them directly. You may be helping them avoid a fall. If you are ever asked to engage in improper behavior or are inappropriately touched, please discuss the problem with senior members of your H.A. group. We do not believe in blame or condemnation nor in casting anyone out of our group who desires to be free. All that we ask is that you join with us in helping each other confront our problems and learn to live in freedom from homosexuality together.” If problems develop, the natural inclination might be to exclude those involved sexually from the group. In our opinion, this reaction might stem from a fear that the group is losing control. Remember that the only requirement for H.A. membership is a desire to be free from homosexuality. It is possible to desire freedom while being sexually involved. Loving confrontation by senior members of the group followed by the progressive dynamics of reconciliation is better than exclusion. It has been our experience that either the persons involved finally exclude themselves from the group because they become aware that freedom from homosexuality is not, after all, their priority, or they finally break the sexual involvement. Great patience is needed for true growth to emerge.

AUXILIARY GROUP SUPPORT

The support that chapter members receive can continue through the week by means of other group meetings and by the interaction of individual members. The following are some auxiliary forms:

Step Coach

A step coach is a mature, senior member of the group (one who has been in the group for a while and has shown evidence of knowledge and application of the 14 steps) who helps a member who has attended H.A. for only a short time to understand the steps and work on them. The step coach can meet with the newer members weekly for an hour to discuss the steps and their application in life using practical experiences. A step coach should not work with more than three persons. If the relationship is not helpful to the new member, he or she should decide on another step coach. For more details see the brochure [The Step Coach](#). Both the step coach and the new member should read this brochure carefully.

Telephone Communication

Members who are experienced may be willing to share their telephone numbers with those who might need to call for help during a time of depression or temptation. Members should be made aware that they need not feel a long conversation is necessary. In most cases it is not necessary to spend more than 15 minutes on the phone. If the person being called is in the middle of another activity, it would be good to talk just a few minutes, then ask to call back at a later time when more attention could be given to the difficulty. Example: "Joe, I really want to talk to you about this, but I've just started fixing supper and I need to get back to the stove. If you'll give me your number, I'll call you back in about 20 minutes and then we can talk about what you're going through." **NOTE:** Make sure you do call back as promised. If you are not able to return a call, it is best to tell the caller that.

Prayer Partners

Two or more people commit themselves to pray for each other during the week. This can be done as individual prayer and/or can be a time when the committed persons get together for a short time of group prayer once a week.

Social Activities

Organized social events such as pot-luck meals, songfests, games, picnics and other outings allow group members to meet in a less intense, more socially orientated environment than the H.A. meeting, and encourage the development of social skills that may be lacking in some members.

Bible Study

Quite often a Bible class or study will develop as a spin-off from H.A. It would be wise to keep it non-denominational, to keep off the topic of homosexuality, and to make it open to others who have not experienced homosexuality. This encourages growth in personality development and a closer fellowship with members of the wider Christian community.

Growth Class

Growth classes may also be a spin-off from the H.A. group meeting. Explore other subjects pertaining to development and growth that may be only lightly touched on in H.A. meetings. Examples of subjects are: the art of friendship, how to reconcile with parents, coming to grips with hidden anger, the devotional life, learning financial responsibility through advanced planning and budgeting of money, etc. These subjects can be studied in conjunction with books. They are best applied when studied over a predetermined period of time (6 weeks to 2 months).

THE LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER AND THE LOCAL CHURCH OR COUNSELING CENTER

The goal of all H.A. chapters is the restoration of its members to the Christian community as redeemed and dignified people. The following principles are designed to help achieve that goal:

The Welfare of the Group Is Primary

The welfare of the group always comes first. If a church or counseling center becomes controlling, the group should take steps to locate elsewhere. The group's responsibility is first to people struggling with homosexuality, to lead them to freedom in Christ, and to the gospel truth outlined in the 14 Steps. The group should be autonomous in organization.

Church Guidance and Endorsement

If a church is in harmony with H.A. philosophy, a representative of that church, perhaps an elder or a deacon, could be present at an H.A. meeting as a special guest or advisor, but only at the request of or permission by the group as a whole. If the group feels inhibited by a pastor's presence, the pastor should be asked kindly to not attend.

Autonomous Leadership of H.A.

If a counseling director or church officer has set up an H.A. chapter, he or she should be prepared to rotate that leadership and let the group elect officers when experience and maturity develops in individuals within the group.

Financial Independence

H.A. chapters should be financially and organizationally separate from a church or counseling center while, at the same time, working in close relationship and co-operation with them. The H.A. chapter organizes its own socials, but may also work in conjunction with the church or counseling center and its' programs.

THE LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER AND H.A. FELLOWSHIP SERVICES

What is a local H.A. chapter's relationship to Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services?

Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services

Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services (H.A.F.S.) is the headquarters of Homosexuals Anonymous chapters all over the world. H.A.F.S. is not a controlling organization. It is rather a service center that gives guidance in H.A. chapter development, provides for network communication through the H.A. Newsletter, and supplies materials used within the H.A. network. We recognize that H.A. chapters, while all following the basic policy of the 14 Steps, the 12 Traditions, and the organizational relationships outlined in this manual, will nevertheless develop with varying procedures according to the religious and social backgrounds from which the groups spring. It is for this reason that we stress that the rest of the input through this manual is mostly advisory. It is a message that says, "This is what we advise. This is how it has worked best. It may be different for you, however. Let us know if you come up with something better so that we can put it in the H.A. Newsletter and all can learn from it."

Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services Board

The H.A.F.S. Board is a group of dedicated men and women who provide guidance on how the message can best be proclaimed that there is hope and help in Christ for the person in conflict with his or her homosexuality.

Homosexuals Anonymous Approved Literature

H.A.F.S. requests that you send a copy of any materials identified as H.A. material (brochures, pamphlets, etc.) to H.A.F.S. for approval before printing. This does not mean that H.A.F.S. controls what you print. But when the name of "Homosexuals Anonymous" or "H.A." is used in connection with any printed material, we reserve the right of approval since this gives the public assurance that your chapter is truly bona fide and represents the philosophy upon which H.A. is founded. When your copy has been approved by H.A.F.S., you should have printed on it, "H.A. Fellowship Services Approved Literature."

Local Chapter Contributions to H.A.F.S.

H.A.F.S. suggests that at least 10% of your weekly collections be sent to H.A.F.S. on a monthly or quarterly basis. The remainder is used for 1) rent of the meeting room, 2) refreshments, 3) literature, and 4) any other expenses encountered (advertising costs, telephone bill, etc.). No large funds should accumulate at the local chapter level. This prevents being sidetracked by financial interests and precludes misuse of financial influence. From local chapter contributions, H.A.F.S. is able to provide all chapters with supportive services which include consultation and printed materials. Annual statements will be provided to local H.A. chapters upon request. Contributions sent to H.A.F.S. will be acknowledged and are tax deductible. No H.A. chapter should own real estate.

H.A.F.S. SERVICES TO LOCAL CHAPTERS

H.A.F.S. provides among others the following:

The H.A. Workbook

The H.A. workbook, *Lord, Set Me Free*, is H.A.'s basic tool for the man or woman seeking freedom from homosexuality and for anyone who wants to work with them toward that goal. Here is more than 350 pages of material explaining each of the 14 Steps, showing how they are drawn from Scripture, setting forth the difficulties which may be encountered in trying to put them into practice, and giving practical instructions as to how they may become a part of the struggler's life. One man wrote, "This is a most **amazing** book! I marveled as I read it.... I was almost overwhelmed by the **mountains** of research and study that went into it! It is nothing short of a **monumental** work!"

The H.A. Daily Devotional

The H.A. devotional book, *Daily Steps to Freedom*, offers a tremendous help in keeping those seeking freedom from homosexuality focused on putting the steps in practice every day. A number of days are given to each step with a quote to provoke thought, a devotion to give inspiration, encouragement, and instruction, and a Bible reading to bring these truths home to each heart. This will be a tremendous help to those who use it.

Experience, Strength, and Hope

The bulk of Experience, Strength and Hope is drawn from writings from the *H.A. News* giving the experiences of members of our fellowship as they struggled to work the Steps and find freedom from homosexuality. Here is a wealth of practical experience and encouragement which is invaluable! In addition there are numerous quotations drawn from well-known believers and/or people in the mental health field which illustrate and explain recovery.

H.A. Brochure

This brochure gives general information on Homosexuals Anonymous and how it can help individuals in their struggle. It can be used to make people aware of the H.A. program and what to expect at a local H.A. chapter meeting. The brochure is designed so that you can type, stamp, or write your chapter's local mailing address and telephone number on the brochure itself.

H.A. Newsletter

The H.A. Newsletter is a vital link in the H.A. network since it allows for communication between all H.A. members as well as news and updates from H.A.F.S. To make it as informative and helpful as possible, it is important that every member share testimonies, Step talk material, poetry, and any other information they think might help others in their struggle. We urge each chapter to encourage their members to be certain they are receiving this great encouragement.

Step Cards

These cards contain the 14 Steps of H.A. as well as the philosophy and purpose of H.A.

Policy and Advisory Manual

The H.A. *Policy and Advisory Manual* gives insight into the basic philosophy, organizational structure, and policies of H.A. and gives H.A. chapter guidelines from which to develop effective groups. H.A.F.S. recommends that every H.A. member obtain a copy of this manual in order to develop personal responsibility for the group.

Advertising and Public Relations Materials

H.A.F.S. advertises the ministry of H.A. in various places and makes available other materials to the chapters to help them let people in their local area know that there is hope and help for the homosexual in Christ. See the section “**ADVERTISING AND THE LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER**” later in the manual for additional ideas.

H.A. Seminars

The H.A. Seminars are given by H.A.F.S. staff at various locations to prepare people to take an active role in finding freedom from homosexuality and in helping others through the Christ-centered ministry of Homosexuals Anonymous. By attending, a person receives a solid, layman’s foundation for personal recovery and for helping those who wish to find freedom from homosexuality.

The H.A. Recovery Seminar is for men and women who struggle with homosexuality and wish to understand the recovery process as well as for pastors, counselors, and any others who wish to know how to help such folk. There will be much opportunity for questions and discussion. If you are seeking freedom for yourself or are trying to help someone who is, THIS is the seminar for you.

The H.A. Training Seminar is for people who want to start or strengthen an H.A. chapter. This will be a nuts-and-bolts seminar dealing with the practical problems of starting and maintaining a chapter that will really help struggling people. If you wish to start an H.A. chapter in your area or to strengthen the chapter you attend, THIS is the seminar for you.

The H.A. Seminar for Families and Friends. This seminar will show what to do for someone who does not want recovery as well as how to help someone in recovery and what to avoid as to not make recovery more difficult. If you are a family member or friend of someone with a homosexual problem or are a struggling person who wants to be involved with his or her family and/or friends in the recovery process, THIS is the seminar for you.

H.A. Conferences

H.A. conferences are held whenever and wherever it is helpful for H.A. members only, offering fellowship, inspiration, guidance, and planning for future Christian growth.

H.A. Translation Work

We are working on making all our literature available in other languages.

H.A. Website

H.A.F.S. has a website. The current address is: www.homosexuals-anonymous.com

H.A. Online Chapter

The Jason ministry which is affiliated to H.A. runs an online chapter that works with the 14 Steps for adult men who do not have an H.A. chapter nearby but who do have access to the internet. Anyone interested in participating in this chapter can find the information they need at the H.A. website. You can also send an email to free32@gmx.de and request more information about the online chapter.

OPENING AN H.A. BANK ACCOUNT

Each local H.A. chapter should have its own bank account, enabling the chapter to establish a financial independence from any other organization. The bank account should require the signatures of both the treasurer and the assistant treasurer on checks.

All money is to be collected, receipted, deposited, and withdrawn by the treasurer and/or assistant treasurer. It is suggested that the group purchase a ledger book to record money collected at each chapter meeting, a running record of money in the checking account, expenditures, and contributions to H.A.F.S.

To open an H.A. bank (checking) account, go to the selected bank and speak to the customer service representative. The representative will not (should not) ask about the specific nature of the group other than asking if it is a non-profit organization—Homosexuals Anonymous is a non-profit organization. **It is not necessary to tell the representative any specific details about the group.** If any questions are asked by the representative as to the nature of the group, an appropriate reply is, “We are a study group” ...or “a support group.”

In order to best preserve the anonymity of all persons involved in the financial business of the local H.A. chapter (opening the bank account, writing checks, etc.), H.A.F.S. suggests adopting a more general, non-descriptive name for legal business. The chapter may be named “The Chicago Chapter” or “The Portland Fellowship” or something similar. We do ask, however, that the name under which the bank account is opened be a name that identifies that specific H.A. group and no other group or organization. It is important to remember that the name chosen is for legal purposes only. For group purposes “Homosexuals Anonymous” or “H.A.” is the applicable name. For example: it is the “Homosexuals Anonymous” chapter of Columbus (Ohio) also known, for legal purposes, as the “Columbus Fellowship”.

The Bank Representative will ask you to fill out an application form. It is on this form that you will be asked the type of account you want (non-profit) and the deposit plan you wish (checking).

INSTALLATION AND LISTING OF THE H.A. TELEPHONE

For the public to make contact with local chapters in each city, every H.A. group should have its own telephone. It is suggested that the service be private and that the phone be in a private location, inaccessible to anyone but a designed H.A. member. The chapter should decide at a business meeting whether they want an individual to get the phone in his or her own name (as an unlisted number), or whether they want to get the phone in the name of Homosexuals Anonymous (which means they will be charged the business rate).

If the chapter decides to take a number in the name of H.A., one of the officers, most likely the treasurer, should call the telephone company and talk with a service representative. It is very important to tell them that you wish to have the telephone number listed in the telephone book **but you do not want the address listed**. Explain that this is a support group for individuals who need the assurance of anonymity and that publishing the location of the telephone is a breach of one of the guidelines of H.A. You may give Alcoholics Anonymous as an example—A.A. does not have any location published in the telephone directory.

Is there any hesitation on the part of the telephone company to give service to your chapter, contact H.A.F.S. and an official letter acknowledging both the chapter and the person(s) organizing it will be sent to the telephone company.

It is best to have the telephone in a location where it can be 1) personally answered at any time or 2) automatically answered by having a telephone answering machine connected to the phone line or using voice mail. **Daily checking of these messages is imperative**, since it may take a great deal of courage for a potential H.A. member to make such a call. When calls go unanswered, we do a disservice to ourselves, to the caller, and to Christ, whose name is central to our 14 Step program.

It is most important to determine that no matter how you do it, you will do it right! These calls represent a sacred trust. It is vital that you make your chapter as accessible as possible to the people who need H.A.'s help. Here are some suggestions:

Choose some with a friendly, pleasing voice to record the message for your answering machine. Some voices sound too high-pitched, too businesslike, or indistinct on tape.

Plan the message carefully and prayerfully. That 30 seconds could make the difference for someone's whole future. A suggested message might be: "Thank you for calling Homosexuals Anonymous, a fellowship of men and women seeking freedom from homosexuality. There is no one here to answer the phone at present but someone will be here to speak to you in person on (day) between (time) and (time). If that is not possible for you, please leave your first name and telephone number at the sound of the tone. We will help you in any way we can. We will be discreet and your confidentiality will be respected. God bless you in your struggles."

Check daily for calls. Return those calls promptly, but only after prayer and thoughtful reflection on your part. Unanswered calls days on end are discouraging for someone taking that first courageous step. Prepare for crank calls. When they come, thank the Lord that He counts you worthy to suffer for Him (Philippians 1:29). If you hear other voices and laughter in the background, you know the call is a joke and need not be answered.

Be willing to listen if the other person seems to need to talk, but don't err in the other direction by having a long conversation that gets nowhere. Don't get caught up in controversy. It's not your place to convince someone he or she needs help. Going over the same ground more than once is not helpful and may become counterproductive.

Normally, it is best not to offer to meet people before they have attended at least one H.A. meeting. The meeting has the safety of numbers and the wisdom of multiple counselors.

At the meeting it is helpful to introduce yourself as the one who talked with him or her on the phone. That gives assurance that confidences are kept within the group.

ADVERTISING AND THE LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER

Public Service Announcements

Information about your local H.A. chapter can be broadcast free of charge, through use of public service announcements (PSA) that are usually 20 or 60 seconds in length. H.A.F.S. already has several PSAs included in this manual to which you can affix your chapter's telephone number or you may develop some PSAs on your own. (Please remember that they must be H.A.F.S. approved.)

Brochures

Through the use of brochures that are given to ministers, counselors, doctors, and other helping organizations (some could be placed in waiting rooms, Christian bookstores, and church literature racks), word of H.A. is getting out. You may wish to develop a flyer or brochure of your own (please see that it is H.A.F.S. approved) or you may wish to use the one developed by H.A.F.S. which has space in which to imprint your local H.A. telephone number. Remember not to advertise the address of your meeting place. Just give the phone number.

ADVERTISING AND THE LOCAL H.A. CHAPTER

Public Service Announcements

Information about your local H.A. chapter can be broadcast free of charge, through use of public service announcements (PSA) that are usually 30 or 60 seconds in length. H.A.F.S. already has several PSAs included in this manual to which you can affix your chapter's telephone number or you may develop some PSAs on your own. (Please remember that they must be H.A.F.S. approved.)

Brochures

Through the use of brochures that are given to ministers, counselors, doctors, and other helping organizations (some could be placed in waiting rooms, Christian bookstores, and church literature racks), word of H.A. is getting out. You may wish to develop a flyer or brochure of your own (please see that it is H.A.F.S. approved) or you may wish to use the one developed by H.A.F.S. which has space in which to imprint your local H.A. telephone number. Remember not to advertise the address of your meeting place. Just give the phone number.

Classified Ad in the Newspaper

Advertisements may be placed in the classified section of the local paper. The wording used may be similar to the public service announcements prepared by H.A.F.S. To be effective these ad should run on a continuous basis (daily, if a daily paper). Remember to give telephone number only.

News Releases

Newspapers sometimes print news releases from local organizations explaining their purpose and informing the public of when they meet. H.A.F.S. has developed samples included in this manual that you can use as guides to prepare a news release for your local paper.

Letters to Ministers and Counselors

Ministers, counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, doctors, and social service agencies may know men and women who want help in their struggle with homosexuality. H.A.F.S. has developed sample letters included in this manual that you can adapt to introduce your chapter to these people.

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

PSA #1:

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS STRUGGLING WITH HOMOSEXUAL FEELINGS, THEN YOU
MAY BE EXPERIENCING HEARTACHES AND LONELINESS.

THERE ARE OTHERS WHO CAN IDENTIFY WITH YOUR NEEDS.

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS IS A CHRISTIAN SUPPORT GROUP DEDICATED TO RECOVERY
FROM HOMOSEXUALITY.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL _____.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED. THAT NUMBER, AGAIN, IS

_____.

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

PSA #2:

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING HOMOSEXUAL FEELINGS? ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THEM?

IF NOT, THERE IS AN ALTERNATIVE:

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS IS A CHRISTIAN SUPPORT GROUP DEDICATED TO RECOVERY FROM HOMOSEXUALITY.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL _____.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED. THAT NUMBER, AGAIN, IS

_____.

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

PSA #3:

ONCE GAY ALWAYS GAY. THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE HAVE BEEN SAYING FOR YEARS.

BUT NOT ANYMORE. THERE IS A PROVEN ALTERNATIVE FOR THOSE WHO WANT HELP IN
FINDING FREEDOM FROM HOMOSEXUALITY.

IT'S A CHRISTIAN SUPPORT GROUP CALLED HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL _____.

CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED. THAT NUMBER, AGAIN, IS

_____.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS CHAPTER OPENS

Homosexuals Anonymous, a national support group for men and women who desire freedom from homosexuality, is opening a local chapter for the (city/county) area. Homosexuals Anonymous, also known as H.A., serves Christians and would-be Christians who find homosexual desires in conflict with their faith. The program has been successful in bringing many out of a homosexual orientation and, because of that success, is gaining acceptance by Christian psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and clergy of many denominations throughout the United States and Canada.

Homosexuals Anonymous lists its only requirement for membership as "a desire to be free from homosexuality." The local H.A. chapter will start meeting next week (or whenever). For further information call (or write)...(telephone number or P.O. Box address).

NOTE: We recommend not advertising the meeting place or the exact date. We also do not recommend using a personal telephone number for interested persons to call. It is best to have a special phone number installed and listed under the name "Homosexuals Anonymous". A post office box is a very good idea, too, but many potential H.A. members prefer the anonymity of a phone call.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS CHAPTER OPENS

Homosexuals Anonymous, a support group for men and women who desire freedom from homosexuality, is opening a local chapter for the (city/county) area. Homosexuals Anonymous (H.A.) has a Christian basis and states that its cornerstone is the conviction that faith in God is the most effective way to be free from addictive sexual behavior. "There are many people finding freedom from homosexual feelings and desires through the Homosexuals Anonymous program," said the local H.A. coordinator, who asked not to be identified. "While the program is new in this area, there are chapters in other cities and countries that have proven very successful."

Homosexuals Anonymous was founded by two Christian men who had come out of a personal homosexual struggle. In their desire to reach out to others who wanted to find the same freedom, a support group was formed. As the program grew in numbers, a formal organization and structure developed including "The Fourteen Steps", which help a person to mature in relationships with others and to rediscover his or her God-given heterosexual identity.

One of the H.A. co-founders has said, "People who say that homosexuality is unchangeable are following a dying cause. The issue of homosexual recovery today is at the same place the issue of alcoholic recovery was before 1935. Nobody thought it was possible, short of creating a 'dry drunk' and policing him for the rest of his life. But then Alcoholics Anonymous came along and the bubble burst. Recovery was possible. The same is true in the homosexual area."

He adds, "While there are a number of persons who say they are satisfied with a homosexual lifestyle, a vast majority of people who experience homosexual desires are unhappy and willing to explore a way out." Homosexuals Anonymous offers to help. H.A. leaders are quick to point out that the H.A. program is not anti-gay or out to enforce its ideals on everyone. One of the basic H.A. principles is choosing not to become engaged in controversial issues that would draw energies away from the personal goal of freedom from homosexuality.

Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services provides local chapters with program designs, information, and guidance. It provides, among other things, a free bi-monthly newsletter on request with information on chapters around the world and a self-help workbook.

Homosexuals Anonymous lists its only requirement for membership as "a desire to be free from homosexuality." The local H.A. chapter will start meeting next week (or whenever). For further information call (or write)...(telephone number or P.O. box number).

NOTE: We recommend not advertising the meeting place, the exact date, or using a personal telephone number for interested persons to call. It is best to have a special phone installed and listed under the name "Homosexuals Anonymous." A post office box is also a good idea.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

HOMOSEXUALS ANONYMOUS OFFERS ANOTHER OPTION

Homosexuals Anonymous is a national support group for the many thousands of men and women who desire freedom from homosexuality. Tired of being told that their only option is to surrender to homosexual desire despite their own wishes, people have banded together to help each other live in the way *they* wish because of religious convictions, marriage commitments, health concerns, or personal preference.

Much research seriously questions the view that homosexuality is biologically determined, Dr. William Byne and Dr. Bruce Parsons of the department of Psychiatry of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons have stated, "Recent studies postulate biological factors as the primary basis for sexual orientation. However, there is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory.... Critical review shows the evidence favoring a biologic theory to be lacking." [William Byne, M.D., Ph.D., Bruce Parson, M.D., Ph.D., "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised," *Archives of General Psychiatry*, (March 1993), p. 228]

Homosexuals Anonymous offers hope of recovery through group support and a 14 #Step program patterned after the A.A. model, but with a distinctly Christian, though non-denominational approach. The new identity in Christ is the goal for each member.

The program has been successful in bringing many out of homosexuality and, because of that success, is gaining acceptance by Christian psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and clergy of many denominations. Homosexuals Anonymous lists its only requirement for membership as "a desire to be free from homosexuality." Anyone wishing further information may go to our website: www.homosexuals-anonymous.com.

(SAMPLE LETTER FOR PASTORS)

(Date) *(Be certain to send H.A. Brochure with this letter)*

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear _____,

Have you been approached by someone with a homosexual struggle seeking to be free? This is an increasingly common experience for pastors of all denominations as people feel more free to mention what was once a hushed word. The AIDS crisis and disappointment with the gay lifestyle in addition to Christian convictions and marriage vows have caused many to seek help.

Counseling helps, especially if the pastor has some familiarity with the deeply seated roots of homosexuality. There is also additional assistance available in your area. A distinctly Christian support group has been formed called Homosexuals Anonymous. It is based on a 14 Step program which, unlike A.A., is decidedly Christian in its approach. Its goal is to present every man "faultless and mature" before the Lord.

Homosexuals Anonymous has been the instrumentality for healing in many lives. Testimonies received in the Homosexuals Anonymous Fellowship Services (H.A.F.S.) office bear witness to its effect across the nation and in several foreign countries.

If you know someone who might find help in such a group, please ask them to call (local number) for information on the time and place of meetings. I will be calling you in the next few weeks to see if you would like to meet with me personally so I can answer any questions you may have about our group.

If you would like to receive our free monthly newsletter and information concerning materials and seminars on helping those who struggle with homosexuality, please contact our service center (www.homosexuals-anonymous.com).

Thank you for your interest and may God bless you in your work.

Sincerely,

(Your first name and last name initial)

HA Chapter Coordinator

(SAMPLE LETTER FOR COUNSELORS)

(Date) *(Be certain to send H.A. Brochure with this letter)*

(Name)

(Address)

(City, State, Zip)

Dear _____,

A new support group has been formed in your area which may be of interest to some of your clients. Homosexuals Anonymous seeks to give support to the many thousands of men and women who want freedom from homosexual behavior and identity.

Much research seriously questions the view that homosexuality is biologically determined. Dr. William Byne and Dr. Bruce Parsons of the Department of Psychiatry of the Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons have stated, "Recent studies postulate biologic factors as the primary basis for sexual orientation. However, there is no evidence at present to substantiate a biologic theory.... Critical review shows the evidence favoring a biologic theory to be lacking." [William Byne, M.D., Ph.D., Bruce Parsons, M.D., Ph.D., "Human Sexual Orientation: The Biologic Theories Reappraised," Archives of General Psychiatry, (March 1993), p.228]

Homosexuals Anonymous offers hope of recovery through group support and a 14 Step program patterned after the A.A. model, but with a distinctly Christian, though non-denominational approach. The new identity in Christ is the goal for each member.

We hope that the enclosed information will excite your interest in a program which has already been of help to many and offers hope to those who for reason of religious conviction, marriage vows, or personal decision, do not choose a gay lifestyle. If you know someone who might find help in such a group, please ask them to call (local number) for information on the time and place of meetings.

If you have any questions or would like to receive our free monthly newsletter and information on materials and seminars on helping those who struggle with homosexuality, please contact H.A.F.S., www.homosexuals-anonymous.com.

Thanks you for your interest and may God bless you in your work.

Sincerely,

(Your first name and last name initial)

HA Chapter Coordinator

HOW TO GROW A CHAPTER

Many who think about starting a chapter get discouraged because they have unrealistic expectations. They believe that people will flock to the chapter as soon as they get a phone number and meeting place.

This is unrealistic. Chapters are not like weeds! They do not grow themselves. They require careful cultivation and much work if they are to grow and not die!

Why so much work?

A chapter must let struggling people know they're there. Once people come, they must replace drop outs. AA gives terrific help to alcoholics, but "AA's own surveys suggest that about half of those who come to the program are gone within three months." ["Does Therapy Help?", *Customer Reports*, (November 1995), p. 738]

Others who minister to those who struggle with homosexuality say it's tough work. Mary Heathman, Director of "Where Grace Abounds" in Denver writes, we "often find ourselves grieving together over the fact of so many dropouts and so few overcomers. In ministering, we sometimes expend what seems like five hundred pounds of effort for an ounce of result. The temptation to give up is familiar to us." [*Where Grace Abounds Newsletter*, (December 1994), p. 1]

When you face that temptation, remember, "Faith is worth nothing until it disregards the Failure around us and rejoices in the Faithfulness above us." [Vance Havner, *Day By Day*, (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1953), p. 150]

That brings us to the main reason for difficulties. They are part of our recovery process. Many of us are weak in faith and easily discouraged. "Our Lord did not rebuke His disciples for making mistakes, but for not having faith." [Oswald Chambers, *The Love of God*, (Grand Rapids: Discovery House Publishers, 1985), p. 116] God lets us face difficulties so we may see where faith is weak and have it strengthened.

Further, some of us are downright lazy! And sloth is serious sin (see Proverbs 6:9; 15:19; 20:4; 26:16; Matthew 25:26; Romans 12:11; Hebrews 6:12)! God allows difficulties to produce endurance and character in our lives so we may grow up into Christ (see Romans 5:3,4; 8:29). "He who serves God with what costs him nothing will do very little service, you may depend on it." [Susan Warner in *The New Quotable Woman* edited by Elaine Partnow, (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1992), p. 189]

What should I do?

Provide a balanced program. Allow 20-30 minutes for instruction from the HA workbook, *Lord, Set Me Free!*, and 45+ minutes for sharing. Too much sharing leaves folks without the truth they need to recover; too much instruction leaves them feeling not understood and lacking the opportunity to profit from the experience, strength and hope of others.

Use the HA workbook! Urge folk to work through several questions during the week, review what they have learned and discuss how to put it into practice. Consider this order we recently received. "Our group is growing ever so fast. Thanks to your book, *Lord, Set Me Free!*, we are advancing and expanding at an unexpected, yet glorious rate. We need a.s.a.p. six more *Lord, Set Me Free!*, four of which we have already promised to new people."

Provide challenges for those who have worked the workbook (filled in all the blanks *and* completed the assignments). Urge those who have made progress to serve as people newcomers can call when their struggles are difficult and as step coaches. [The HA Brochure *The Step Coach* and directions in the workbook give them the instruction they need.] Provide auxiliary meetings (see the *Policy and Advisory Manual*) where they can focus on problem areas in their life and continue growing while coming to the step meetings to help newcomers. Remind them that they can still profit from the support they get from the chapter and its members.

Show that you care about each member. Call those who miss a meeting as long as such calls seem welcome. Try to send birthday and Christmas cards to your members at appropriate times.

Get the word out that your chapter is there to help men and women seeking freedom from homosexuality. Write letters every other year to churches and counselors in your area who can refer hurting people to you. They need to be reminded that you are still available. Place an inexpensive classified ad in your local newspaper on a regular basis. Urge members to think of folk they know who are struggling, to pray for them and to invite them to come for help. Approach local radio stations with public service announcements and ask if they will run them. [Sample letters, newspaper stories and public service announcements are found in the *Policy and Advisory Manual*]

Anything else?

Pray and wait! “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2b). Remember that it is faithful, persevering prayer that God has promised to answer (see James 1:6-8; Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8). Beware of despising “the day of small things” (Zechariah 4:10), and hang in there (claim Galatians 6:9)!

Consider these experiences. “I began a meeting (for heterosexual sex addicts) in my city. For the first year, I often sat alone in a church meeting room waiting for another person to show up. Many came and went, but eventually one other person stayed and the meeting grew.” [Burt Schneider in Jennifer P. Schneider and Burt Schneider, *Sex, Lies, and Forgiveness: Couples Speaking Out On Healing From Sex Addiction*, (New York:HarperCollins Publishers, 1990).

A couple starting a Christian group for people who struggle with addictions of all kinds “announced the O. O. group in their church, and just the two of them showed up every week for *seven months* before God rewarded their diligent efforts. Now tjej sometimes have as many as 40 attenders!” [Bob and Pauline Bartosch, “On the Road Again,” *The Bridge: The Newsletter for Overcomers Outreach*, (Spring 1995). p. 2]

“The American Board established a mission among one of the many tribes of India. And for years and years the missionaries labored without result. Ten, twenty years passed, and no convert was made, and by and by this mission came to be known throughout the States as the Lone Star Mission. The Board at home took the case of the mission into consideration. Many thought it ought to be abandoned. They determined at last to write, and ask the missionaries in this trying field what they thought ought to be done. This was the reply that came back to the Board: ‘We are going on. With God nothing is impossible.’ Not long after their faith was abundantly justified. The blessing came. Thousands upon thousands accepted Christ; five thousand were baptized in one year, and the Lone Star Mission is quoted now, not as an example of missionary failure, but as a shining illustration of the triumph of faith.” [J. D. Jones, *Commentary on Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1914), p. 232]

And then remember this. George Morrison says the praise of Christ goes “to those who, through headache and through heartache, quietly and doggedly do their appointed bit.... It is not, ‘Well done, thou good and *brilliant* servant,’ else there would be little hope for millions. It is, ‘Well done, thou good and *faithful* servant.” [*The Gateways of the Stars*, (New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p. 43] “The world crowns success; God crowns faithfulness.”

--John J.