

The Alternative

Reading-Berks County Intergroup Newsletter September 2017

ReadingBerksIntergroup.org

The Alternative is published monthly by the Reading-Berks Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous. Serving Districts 33, 66, and 67 of Delegate Area 59—Eastern Pennsylvania. Reach us by mail at P.O. Box 12157, Reading, PA 19612, or you can email us at Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org

HELP IS AVAILABLE 24 HOURS A DAY, 7 DAYS A WEEK CALL 610-373-6500

INTERGROUP REPRESENTATIVE CONTACT INFORMATION

Mike M.	Intergroup Chairperson	Chairperson@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org
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Terry Mc F.	Bridging the Gap	BridgingGap@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org
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Pete R.	Public Information	PublicInfo@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org
(Open Position)	Visitation	Visitation@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org

The Reading Berks Intergroup meets on the 4th Tuesday of each month at the Calvary Baptist Church, 510 Park Ave., Reading, PA at 7:30 P.M. All members of Alcoholics Anonymous are welcome and encouraged to attend.

“Responsibility Declaration”

“I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that, I am responsible.”

Step Nine

“Made a direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.”

As soon as we begin to feel confident in our new way of life and have begun, by our behavior and example, to convince those about us that we are indeed changing for the better, it is usually safe to talk in complete frankness with those who have been seriously affected, even those who may be only a little or not at all aware of what we have done to them. The only exceptions we will make will be cases where our disclosure would cause actual harm. These conversations can begin in a casual or natural way. But if no such opportunity presents itself, at some point we will want to summon all our courage, head straight for the person concerned, and lay our cards on the table. We needn't wallow in excessive remorse before those we have harmed, but amends at this level should always be forthright and generous.

For the readiness to take the full consequences of our past acts, and to take responsibility for the well-being of others at the same time, is the very spirit of Step Nine.

(Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions pg. 85-87)

Tradition Nine

“A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

It is clear now that we ought never to name boards to govern us, but it is equally clear that we shall always need to authorize workers to serve us. It is the difference between the spirit of vested authority and the spirit of service, two concepts which are sometimes poles apart. It is in this spirit of service that we elect the A.A. group's informal rotating committee, the intergroup association for the area, and the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous for A.A. as a whole. Even our Foundation, once an independent board, is today directly accountable to our Fellowship. Its trustees are the caretakers and expeditors of our world services.

(Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions pg. 174-175)

Nineth Step Prayer

God, with regard to this amend, please remove my fear and give me strength, courage and direction to do the right thing, no matter what the personal consequences may be. Amen.

(Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book pg. 79)

Events

“Wilshire Fellowship Group - Pre-Labor Day Picnic”

August 26th, 2017

Food, Fun and Sober Fellowship from 12 PM to 7:30 PM

Open Meeting from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM

Mohnton Community Park, E. Wyomissing & Walnuts Streets, Mohnton, PA

*****There will NOT be a meeting at our normal gathering place*****

What's provided: Hamburgers, Hot Dogs and Drinks (Non-Alcoholic)

What to bring: Covered Dish and/or Your Favorite Dessert to Share

Bring A Chair and Stay a While!

“Frog Pond Group – 16th Year Anniversary Celebration”

Friday, September 8th, 2017

Food, Fun and Fellowship from 6:00 PM—?

Speaker Steve F. at 7:00 PM

Bern Evangelical Lutheran Church, 820 W. Leesport Rd, Leesport PA 19533

“Shillington Lifeline Group – 27th Anniversary Celebration”

Tuesday, September 12th, 2017

Food, Fun and Fellowship from 6:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Speaker Meeting (2 Speakers) from 7:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Shillington Church of Christ, 475 Philadelphia Ave, Shillington, PA 19608

“Please Bring Yourself & a Dish – Hawaiian Shirts Optional”

“32 Years of Women Living Sober”

September 21st, 2017

Guest Speaker Meeting 10:30 AM – 11:30 AM

Atonement Church, 5 Wyomissing Blvd, Wyomissing, PA 19610

Meeting followed by Light Fare & Fellowship – Refreshments & Cake Provided

*****Bring a Friend, Bring a Dish*****

“Area 59 Inventory – Supporting Our Future”

Sunday, October 15th, 2017

Registration at 8:00 AM, Subcommittee Inventories at 9:00 AM &

Area Committee Inventory at 1:00 PM

2710 Old Pricetown Rd., Temple, PA 19560

All Members are Welcome to Attend, No Fees & Lunch Served – DCMs' should attend

Questions Contact: chairperson@area59aa.org

Announcements

“Alternative Advertisements”

All A.A. Events, Notifications, and/or Announcements are Welcome!

Please email all requests to: Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org

“DID YOU KNOW?”

That your personal and group AA approved literature needs can be obtained thru Intergroup and or by contacting Literature@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org. Besides all the essential book titles being in stock we also carry a large variety of pamphlets, CD's and yes, Cassettes are in stock.

Working on a limited budget? Got a few empty slot in your pamphlet rack? No order is too small and there are free items available only thru Intergroup.

Best of all, speedy pickup or delivery saves shipping charges. If we don't have it and it is AA approved, we can get it. Reading is not a lost art; let's carry that message to that still suffering alcoholic.

“New AA Meeting Guide Mobile App”

Free mobile app for IOS and Android

Designed to be simple, fast, and help you find AA meetings

Google: <https://meetingguide.org/>

Meeting Needs Support:

Kutztown Beginner's Closed Meeting

Tuesday 8 - 9 PM

NEW LOCATION • NEW FORMAT

Kutztown University Room #323 McFarland Student Union

(Meeting is upstairs in conference room near Commuter Lounge)

Meets during Fall and Spring Semesters when students are on campus:

(Fall 2017) Tuesday August 28th - Tuesday December 8th

(Spring 2018) Tuesday January 23rd - Tuesday May 8th

Rotating Topics: 1st week Big Book, 2nd week Step, 3rd week Living Sober,

4th week Came to Believe & 5th week Speaker or Discussion

FREE PARKING - Student Union Building Parking lot (College Ave)

Questions email: nroma901@live.kutztown.edu

Announcements Continued

New Meeting:

Conscious Contact (11th Step Meditation Meeting)

Friday 6 - 7 PM

St. Peters UCC, Dwight St. & Curtis Rd., West Lawn, PA

Meeting Needs Support:

5th Street Recovery

Pennsylvania Counseling Building, 125 South 5th Street, Reading, PA , PA

Tuesday's at 6:30 PM

Meeting Needs Support:

A Fresh Start Meeting

Basement of Albright Church, Room 100, 13th & Union Sts., Reading, PA

Tuesday's at 7:00 PM

Meeting Needs Support:

Nolde Forest Group

1 United Church of Christ, 1730 New Holland Rd., Kenhorst, PA

Wednesday 7:30 PM (2 Meetings Upstairs and Downstairs)

Meeting Needs Support:

The Wires Meeting

(Now Open to Men & Women**)**

Zion U.C.C. Church, 2nd & High Sts., Womelsdorf, PA 19567

Closed Meeting (Step Discussion, Big Book, Speaker)

Sunday's, 6:45-8:00 PM

All are Invited to Attend:

District 66 Area 59 Meeting

2nd Thursday each month at 7 - 8 PM

St. Peters UCC, Dwight St. & Curtis Rd., West Lawn, PA

Service Commitments Available

Visitation Position is Available for Reading Berks Intergroup

Please Contact Mike M. Intergroup Chairperson
@ Chairperson@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org or
Attend the Intergroup Meeting held on the 4th Tuesday every month located at
Calvary Baptist Church, 510 Park Ave., Reading, PA at 7:30 PM

Male Volunteers are Needed for the Prison Commitment

Meetings are Monday Nights
Please Contact Terry C. at MensPrison@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org
Applications are available on the Reading Berks Intergroup Website @
<http://www.readingberksintergroup.org/Prison%20Volunteer%20App-2015.pdf>

Female Volunteers are Needed for Prison Commitment

Meetings are Tuesday Nights from 7-8 PM
Please Contact Susan W. at SanLee715@gmail.com
Applications are available on the Reading Berks Intergroup Website @
<http://www.readingberksintergroup.org/2015%20PrisonVolunteerApp%20Female.pdf>

PENNSCYPAA Service and Sub Commitments Needed

Meetings are Sundays at 11:15 AM
548 North View Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018

“Bridging The Gap” – Volunteers Needed

Contact Terry Mc F. at 610-944-3167, BridgingGap@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org or at
“Bridging the Gap”, P.O. Box 301, Blandon, Pa. 19510.

“HOTLINE” Volunteers Needed

AA members with some accumulated sobriety are always needed to join up to take calls from individuals who are reaching out for one reason or another... Contact the Intergroup Hotline Chairperson at Hotline@ReadingBerksIntergroup.Org and sign up sheets are available at http://www.readingberksintergroup.org/Getting_Involved.htm#HOTLINE_SIGN-UP_SHEET

A Special Thanks to the following groups for their contributions to support Reading-Berks

Intergroup: Books & People; Come As You Are; Just For Today; Great Fact Group; Advent Men’s Group; and Monday Thru Friday AM Group

Alcoholism Quotes

“Liquor is the chloroform which enables the poor man to endure the painful operation of living.”

George Bernard Shaw

“Alcohol ruined me financially and morally, broke my heart and the hearts of too many others. Even though it did this to me and it almost killed me and I haven't touched a drop of it in seventeen years, sometimes I wonder if I could get away with drinking some now. I totally subscribe to the notion that alcoholism is a mental illness because thinking like that is clearly insane.”

Craig Ferguson, The Improbable Adventures of an Unlikely Patriot

“The problem with the designated driver program, it's not a desirable job, but if you ever get sucked into doing it, have fun with it. At the end of the night, drop them off at the wrong house.”

Jeff Foxworthy

Drinking Facts

12 Myths about Alcohol, Busted

Myth 1: You can have one alcoholic drink an hour and still drive home.

Myth 2: You can sober up quickly if you have to.

Myth 3: “Break the seal” and you'll spend all night in line for the bathroom.

Myth 4: Beer before liquor, never been sicker.

Myth 5: Drinking beer gives you a beer belly.

Myth 6: A nightcap will help you sleep.

Myth 7: Those hangover prevention “shots” are the answer.

Myth 8: A bacon, egg and cheese the morning after will get you back to normal.

Myth 9: Passing out from drinking isn't that big of a deal.

Myth 10: Myth: Drinking caffeine with alcohol makes you less drunk.

Myth 11: Myth: Alcohol makes sex better.

Myth 12: Breath mints will help fool a breathalyzer test.

Important Dates in A.A. History

September 1, 1939 - 1st AA group founded in Chicago

September 5, 1907 - Nancy Flynn, author of "Independent Blond" born

September 11:

2001 - 30 Vesey St, New York, AA's first Office is damaged during the World Trade Center attack

2001 - Father Mychal J., September 15, 1979 Died sober in the World Trade Center attack

September 12, 1942 - U.S. Assist. Surgeon General Kolb speaks at dinner for Bill and Dr Bob

September 13, 1937 - Florence R, 1st female in AA in NY

September 13, 1941 - WHJP in Jacksonville, FL airs Spotlight on AA

September 17, 1954 - Bill D, AA #3 dies.

September 18, 1947 - Dallas Central Office opens its doors

September 19, 1965 - The Saturday Evening Post publishes article "Alcoholics Can Be Cured - Despite AA"

September 21, 1938 - Bill W & Hank P form Works Publishing Co

September 24, 1940 - Bill 12 steps Bobbie V who replaced Ruth Hock as his secretary in NY

September 30, 1939 - Morris Markey runs story on AA, Alcoholics and God in Liberty Magazine

September 30, 1975 - Bill W a biography by Robert T is published

September 30, 2003 - Searcy W. died today, sober 20,962 days in a row

Other significant events in September for which we have no specific date:

1930: Bill wrote 4th (last) promise in family Bible to quit drinking.

1939: Group started by Earl T in Chicago.

1940: Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases gives Big Book unfavorable review.

1946: Bill & Dr. Bob both publicly endorsed National Committee Education Alcoholism founded by Marty M.

1948: 1st issue of Grapevine published in "pocketbook" size

AA RAP

IT WAS DOWN IN THE ALLEY OF THE CITY ONE NIGHT,
I'D BEEN DRINKIN ALL DAY AND WAS REALLY TIGHT
I STAGGERED TO MY CAR AND OPENED THE DOOR
I'VE BEEN THROUGH THIS ROUTINE, MANY TIMES BEFORE

AS I SLUMPED TO THE SEAT AND INSERTED THE KEY,
A FUNNY REALIZATION CAME OVER ME,
I WAS SICK AND TIRED, and VERY MUCH ALONE
MY ONLY WAY OUT WAS TO GET TO A PHONE

I HEARD AA HAD A RECOVERY PLAN,
WHERE THOUSANDS LIKE ME WENT TO MAKE A STAND
SO I STAGGERED TO THE CORNER AND LINGERED AWHILE
AND WITH A SHAKING HAND I BEGAN TO DIAL

IN NO TIME AT ALL TWO PEOPLE WERE THERE
IT WAS HARD TO SEE THEIR FACES THRU A DRUNKIN STARE
TELL ME WHAT TO DO , I'LL GIVE IT A TRY
I'VE HAD ENOUGH AND I DON'T WANT TO DIE

WELL, THEY SMILED AND TOOK ME HOME IN STYLE
AND STAYED AND TALKED TO ME FOR AWHILE
IF YOU WANT TO STAY SOBER, THEY WOULD SAY,
COME TO THE MEETINGS, WE'LL SHOW YOU THE WAY

SO I WENT TO 90 MEETINGS IN 90 DAYS,
IT TOOK EVERY ONE TO CLEAR UP THE HAZE
ALL OF THE SLOGANS, AND ALL OF THE LOVE
PLUS A LOT OF HELP FROM H-P ABOVE.

I WORKED THE 12 STEPS, AS BEST AS I CAN
SOMETIMES, STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN
TO LEARN TO STAY SOBER IS NOT EASY TO DO
BUT IN TIME, THE REWARDS, THEY'LL COME TO YOU

MANY YEARS HAVE GONE BY & I'M GRATEFUL TODAY
FOR ALL I HAVE LEARNED IN THESE ROOMS OF AA
SO IF YOUR LIFE IS RUN BY ALCOHOL
PICK UP THE PHONE, I MIGHT ANSWER YOUR CALL

By: Bob M. – Birdsboro Group

The 5 Ms

Every spiritual institution starts with a man. That man could be Jesus or Buddha or Frank Buchman or Bill Wilson. That **MAN (the first M)** has a spiritual experience. It might be Jesus being baptized at the River Jordan, Buddha finding enlightenment under the banyan tree, Frank Buchman experiencing the power of the cross in a little church in England, or Wilson's white-light experience while detoxing at Towns Hospital. Each man has a direct encounter with the Divine, His consciousness is awakened to what the Big Book calls "the fourth dimension" of reality. It's the spiritual experience which is the goal of the 12 Steps. And what happens to each man, as a result of his encounter, is he comes back "changed." Each has a wholly new perspective on his relationship with God, himself, other human beings, and on his life work.

And so each "changed man" then tries to carry the **MESSAGE (the second M)** to those around him. He really has no choice but to do so as the message exerts such a powerful hold on him that he wouldn't be complete if he didn't share the good news, And it's important to understand that the message he carries isn't that the man who received it is so very special and unique - but only that he's awakened to a reality that's readily available to all who'll remove their blinders and come to see and experience it for themselves. Jesus called it the kingdom of God, Buddha termed it enlightenment or Nirvana, and Buchman called it being "rmaximai" or "fully surrendered," A.A. members call it serenity or recovery. For those who hear it, if they're ready for it, the message carried resonates deep inside those who hear it and they too are attracted to it. Often they know almost immediately that it is a message directed to them and their future path is clear. They must follow the same path as the man who carried the message to them.

And with this is born the **third M: the MOVEMENT**. Now we have Jesus with an ever-growing number of disciples, Buddha with his band of monks, Buchman with his dedicated Oxford Group followers and Wilson with the First One Hundred sober alcoholics. This is the glorious heyday of the movement as it tries to pass on the life-changing message of its founder's experience to an awaiting world. It's a critical time where the group is often viewed initially as a cult and a threat to the established order of things, but then finds greater respectability with increased numbers and leaders able to carry on the work of transformation even after the death of its founder. Before long, however, as the young movement grows, both in membership and in complexity, it is presented with an increasing number of issues that call for clarification and group conformity. The message must now be organized and codified so false prophets and false doctrines don't arise to lead the group astray. The message must also be written down and protected for future generations.

Enter the attorneys, the secretaries, and the theologians. They comprise **the fourth M: the MACHINE**. The job of the machine is to create traditions, and formulas, and rituals that capture the spirit of the founder. And so we have bishops and bibles and creeds in the church, abbots and monasteries among the Buddhists, foundations and a castle in Switzerland set up for the Oxford Group and the Big Book and the New York Central office for A.A. Now the machine is absolutely necessary for the continuation of the movement, but over time, what invariably happens through machines is **THE MACHINERY** replaces **THE MESSAGE** - the law replaces the spirit. People go through the motions, but the power and the mystery are diminished as the machine waters down the message.

I knew the machine was at work in a 12 Step meeting I attended in Tennessee. A woman was playing solitaire at the table where the 5:00PM meeting was about to start. When the time for the meeting arrived she opened the meeting with the Serenity Prayer while she continued to deal her cards. **THE MACHINE HAS ARRIVED!** She would go through the motions but there would be no real "meeting." I was also reminded of it when I visited Bill Wilson's birthplace in Vermont several years ago. Someone, I'm sure with good intentions, had placed a lamp over the spot where Bill had been born. Now we have a "perpetual light" shining there that will never go out. **GOOD WORK, MACHINE!** No doubt in a few hundred years the sacred coffee pot from the first AA group in Akron will be on display and maybe even the cigarette ashes from the first hundred alcoholics will be rubbed on the foreheads of chronic relapsers in search of a miracle cure!

The 5 Ms Continued

Rather than encouraging new members to go through the same transforming experience as the founder, the machine simply takes us through the motions. Left unchecked, the machine will grind on, spewing out new laws and literature, producing mindless but obedient adherents who follow the form but miss the message.

This, of course, leads invariably to the **Fifth M: the MAUSOLEUM**. The power of the movement is dead. It no longer has the spiritual energy to inspire and transform lives. When this happens - and it will, as it is the nature of institutions - then other men (**BACK TO THE FIRST M**) come along willing to challenge the lost vision of the group and willing to lead it through the 5 M's all over again. And when they do, they generally go back to the experience of the founder and ask the question,

“WHO WAS THAT MAN AND WHAT REALLY WAS HIS MESSAGE?”

This perhaps may be the time for each of us to look to the experience of Jesus and Buddha and Buchman and Bill and ask:

Have I experienced what they experienced and has it transformed me and carried me toward that fourth dimension, or have I just put those guys on a pedestal, read a quote or two from them now and then, and continued to deal the cards in a lonely game of solitaire?

It's your deal!

Anonymous Author (I got this from an American guy who owns his own oil company in Texas. He visits London most summer's. He looks and talks like your President Truman----even wears a bow-tie!! He helped me when I was struggling).