

## NEWS & notes

### Nominations Accepted for RBI Chair Positions

Nominations were accepted to fill the various chair positions of the Reading Berks Intergroup. RBI Chair Kenny noted that further nominations will be accepted at the November RBI meeting prior to the elections.

Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Beth  
 Alt. Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Mick  
 Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ Mark S  
 Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ Steve W.  
 Hotline \_\_\_\_\_ Greg G.  
 Schedules \_\_\_\_\_ Danielle  
 The Alternative \_\_\_\_\_ Angelo  
 Literature \_\_\_\_\_ Steve L.  
 Corrections \_\_\_\_\_ Terry and Diane  
 Archives \_\_\_\_\_ Henry  
 Unity \_\_\_\_\_ Sharon  
 Bridging the Gap \_\_\_\_\_ Terry  
 Institutions \_\_\_\_\_ Dave  
 Website \_\_\_\_\_ Greg G.

### Washington St. Group Plans Fall Luncheon

Help usher in Fall with old friends anew at the 611 Washington St. Group Fall Luncheon on Thursday, Nov. 23.

The event will be held from 11:30 am to 1 pm at the First United Church of Christ, 611 Washington St., Reading. (Please use Reed St. entrance). Lots of food, fellowship and a speaker are on the menu for the day. Free-will donations will be accepted.

### Women Helping Women

Female volunteers are still needed to help fill various commitment slots throughout the month. If you can help contact Steve at 610-750-4010, or email [Institutions@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org](mailto:Institutions@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org).

## Holiday Gratitude Dinners Offer Tasty Preludes To Holiday Season

As we turn back the clocks we look ahead to the annual Intergroup Holiday Gratitude Dinners.

The Men's Gratitude Dinner is set for Friday, Dec. 17 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at St. Peter U.C.C Church, Dwight and Curtis Aves. in West Lawn (Wilshire), and will feature a scrumptious dinner, speakers and of course, fellowship. Cost is \$5 per person.

The Women's Third Annual Holiday Gratitude Dinner and White Elephant will be held on Sunday, Dec. 19 from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the same location. In addition to dinner and speakers, the women's evening will feature a White Elephant gift exchange. Please bring a wrapped "gift" – usually something silly. Price for the evening is also \$5.

Appetizers, salads and desserts are welcomed at both dinners.

For further info or directions, please call or email Carrie C. at 3476-891-2122 or 610-404-1518.



## New Year's Alcathon Planning Continues



An evening of speakers and open discussion is on the agenda for this years Alcathon, the Reading Berks Intergroup's annual New Year's Eve celebration.

Set for the Atonement Parish Center in Wyomissing, the Alcathon will begin at 3pm Friday, Dec. 31 and run until 3am Saturday, Jan. 1.

Simultaneous Speaker and Open discussion meetings will be held on the hour throughout the evening. Speakers Meetings will be held upstairs from 3pm to 10 pm, while the Open Discussion meetings will be held downstairs from 3pm to 2 am.

Food and beverages will be available, but edible contributions to the event will be greatly appreciated.

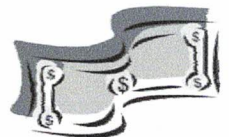
Organizers are currently lining up speakers for the event, and are still in need of person to chair a few of the open discussion meetings slated for later in the evening. Help is also needed for the clean up detail following the event

## Contributions Needed for RBI Efforts

The call was once again put out for area groups to make regular contributions to help fund the many service, outreach and unity programs.

"Please remind your groups we need regular contributions to help keep things going," said Greg, RBI Treasurer.

It was also noted that it is important to include your group's name on any contribution checks so that they make be properly documented. Also please note as to whether you wish your contribution to be allocated to the Activities or General Fund.



# READING-BERKS INTERGROUP

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# commitments

## INTERGROUP TWELFTH STEP

### Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Men Sundays 7 pm

Nov. 7 Caron Alumni  
Nov. 14 Shoey Group  
Nov. 21 Robesonia Group  
Nov. 28 Happy Hour  
Dec. 5 Caron Alumni

### Caron Adolescent Extended Care - Women Sundays 7 pm

Nov. 7 Caron Alumni  
Nov. 14 Boyertown Group  
Nov. 21 OPEN  
Nov. 28 Happy Hour  
Dec. 5 Caron Alumni

### Wernersville State Hosp. See Guard in Building 34 Mondays 7 pm

Nov. 1 Robesonia Group  
Nov. 8 Shoey Group  
Nov. 15 Shoey Group  
Nov. 22 OPEN  
Nov. 29 Alpha Group  
Dec. 6 Hilltop Group

### St. Joe's Hospital MH Unit 3rd Floor Reed & Walnut Sts. Mondays 7:30 pm\*

Nov. 1 Walnut St. Recovery Group  
Nov. 8 Hilltop Group  
Nov. 15 Alpha Group  
Nov. 22 Robesonia Group  
Nov. 29 611 Washington St. Group  
Dec. 6 Walnut St. Recovery Group

### Reading Detox Unit Every Other Tuesday 8 pm

Nov. 2 New Millennium  
Nov. 16 Shoey Group  
Nov. 30 Wyomissing Group  
Dec. 7 Leesport Group

### Caron Foundation Young Adult Female Fridays 8 pm

Nov. 5 Sober @ Six  
Nov. 12 Wilshire Group  
Nov. 19 Sober @ Six  
Nov. 26 New Millennium  
Dec. 3 Women Living Sober

### Reading Detox Unit Thursdays 8 pm

Nov. 4 Time To Start Living  
Nov. 11 Time To Start Living  
Nov. 18 Congo Big Book  
Nov. 25 Boyertown Group  
Dec. 2 Hilltop Group

*I am responsible, when any-  
one, anywhere reaches out  
for help I want the hand of  
AA always to be there, and  
for that...I am responsible!!*

\*Note New Time for St. Joe's Monday Meetings. Call 610-378-2000  
and ask for Berkshire Pavilion before going.

If you take a commitment for your group, make sure the person agreeing to go has a substitute if they can't make it. If you would like to go to the St. Joe's meeting, contact the hospital first to see if there are any alcoholics there: 610-378-2000. *When sending group members to commitments, it's great to double up! Send a newer and an older member, and everyone will benefit!! PLEASE make sure that someone honors the commitment that you take for your group.*

These may be the only meetings that the patients may have. Remember, "You Are Responsible", when you commit your time. PLEASE don't let these commitments go unattended. If you cannot make your commitment please notify Steve at 610-750-4019.

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](mailto:Alternative@ReadingBerksIntergroup.org)

# Keeping in Touch



*"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."*

Many A.A.s, including the writer, have found this one of the most difficult of the 12 Steps.

It is easy to believe in a Power greater than ourselves--we have only to think of the inexplicable marvels of the universe--but it is hard to believe that we can interest this Power in our own insignificant needs through the medium of prayer and meditation.

Many of us have heard a newcomer say, "I can believe in His existence all right, but I can't swallow the idea that He will bother with a worm like me, or that He should!"

There's nothing wrong with this attitude; it is the beginning of an arrested alcoholic's true humility, and it leads right into the 11th Step, which may be approached experimentally. It may be approached on the "try it and see" basis.

No one is going to jam prayer and meditation down anyone's throat. It is a job that must be undertaken by the individual from his own desire and his own need. Perhaps he will fumble a little at first. Like every other worthwhile activity in this life, it requires a technique.

One's own is the best. One shouldn't be

confused by the form of address or even the content of the prayers in church. They are designed to encompass the general congregation. One's own prayer will be his individual way of consulting God, of stating his simple desire and hope for a better life. And his thanks.

***No one is going to jam prayer and meditation down anyone's throat. It is a job that must be undertaken by the individual from his own desire and his own need.***

The clue to the whole thing is contained in the very wise phrasing of the Step itself--"Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God."

This implies that everyone, to a greater or less degree, has conscious contact with a Higher Power. That is exactly right. It could not be otherwise. All through our lives we have been more or less aware of a part of ourselves which was different from and superior to the obvious phenomena of nature.

Some people call it their better nature; others their will; still others call it that

spark of divinity in each one of us which unites us to the whole Divine Principle. Terms are not important so long as we recognize the fact of "our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him." The Step merely suggests that we improve that contact.

It is helpful to many to think of prayer and meditation as a consultation with the God within us. This makes it easy to reconcile prayer with the exercise of will power, a force which many A.A.s are reluctant to give up. Nor need they give it up. Will power is the motive force which is fueled by prayer and meditation. The Step expresses this idea clearly--"praying only for the knowledge of His will and the power to carry that out."

We must not be afraid to ask generously--pray fulsomely--for what we need. We shall be answered generously. It is not the amount of our demands on God that matters, but the love and sincerity and good will behind them.

Try it and see.

**C.B.**  
*Greenwich Village, New York City*  
Sept. 1947

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**the 11th Step...** "Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, as we understand Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out."

# CAUTION: Holidays Ahead!

*'Suffer this moment to be fair and clear.' It's the moment we can handle...'*

IT NEVER seems to fail that when November rolls around there's a struggling newcomer in our group who asks at a closed meeting: "But how am I to get through the holidays?"

The answer from old-timers present is, just as unfailingly, the same: "A holiday, like any other day, need not be coped with until it comes. And when it does come, it is only twenty-four hours long."

There are other answers, of course--to the effect that one mustn't get too tired, must remember to eat, and would do well to avoid the kind of festivities that present particularly difficult temptations. It may be suggested that the newcomer try to look beneath the tinsel commercialism for the deeper meanings of thanksgiving, peace, good will, and the dawning of a new year. All very helpful advice.

But, remembering how I had my own last drink one late October, and how near I came to panic at the thought of the meant-to-be-happy season ahead of me, I believe that the twenty-four-hour concept was the most immediately effective tool I was given.

As a beginner in AA, I was one of those who had to break the concept down into periods of thirty, twenty, or even ten minutes at a time. Often the lines of a favorite poem ran through my head as a kind of prayer: "Suffer this moment to be fair and clear." It is indeed only the moment we can hope to handle, whether or not that moment falls on a hectic holiday.

As it happens, I had then (as I have now) a home to manage, a family to feed, and an office job to do. Then (though to a much lesser degree now), I had hard-drinking friends who loved to party. So the holidays meant too many demands on my time, as well as on my emotional and physical strength. I have learned this is apt to be especially true of women, even if they are not alcoholics.

But the holidays may be just as hard in quite another way for the man or the woman who has lost home and family and job and friends, who lives quite alone, haunted at such a time by the rest of the



world's apparent gaiety. The desire to escape too many people and activities and the desire to blot out loneliness and boredom can lead equally fast to the bottle. This is a frightening truth for one still battling the physical compulsion to drink. But it need not be fatal.

What do I remember about those first holidays? We had a houseful of guests for Thanksgiving. I know this only because I find it noted in an old date book. The day is a blank in my mind. On Christmas we had more guests, people who enjoyed cocktails before the feast while I hid out in the kitchen fussing over the food. We were invited to "open houses," which I had to skip. On New Year's Eve I asked my husband to take me to a double feature at the local movie. I was thus removed from temptation all evening, and when we came out it was past midnight. A new year had begun.

I know that I cried some during those holidays. I was often tight-lipped. More than once, I flounced out of the house to

walk off a temper or a temptation. It was rough. And I was helped by remembering that, in a very different sense, it was rough for the Pilgrims on the first Thanksgiving, for the shepherds of Bethlehem on the first Christmas. Somehow, as I clung to the sobriety of the present moment, I felt closer than ever before to the long-ago origins of the holiday season. For all my shows of temperament, I believe I even made it a happier time for those around me than I had done in the past. Most importantly, I got through without a drink.

It was not until the evening of January first that I felt a full surge of thankfulness--blessed emotion--to my AA friends and to the Power beyond us all that had sustained me a few hours, a few minutes at a time. I had discovered that the program works, and I was far stronger within myself than I had been in mid-November.

If there is any message here for those coming to our Fellowship new and shaky in the late fall, it is this: Hang on; stick close; live for the day or the moment; don't let the mechanical reactions of the past sneak up on you; don't spoil the present, imperfect as it may seem, with a single shot, a single glass of enticingly sparkling wine. The sense of accomplishment and comfortableness that follows on making it through one's first sober holidays is beyond compare. There may be tensions in later years, but none quite so traumatic. And if ever the holiday blues do strike, call on your AA friends. They understand because they've been there, too. They have learned, as you will, the more than compensatory joys of gratitude, and giving, and beginning each day anew.

M. C.  
Pleasantville, New York  
Nov. 1967

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