

December 2020—January 2021

Pass it on



From the Birmingham Intergroup Central Office of Alcoholics Anonymous

We are not a glum lot! (BB 132)

We Celebrate these Holidays AND we live on life's terms.



We have a NEW Website, same address!

Check it out: www.birminghamaa.org

It is linked to the ***Meeting Guide App***, which has up-to-date listings of in-person and Zoom meetings.

Plan for the Holiday Family Gathering

Anna H. Five Points AA

This will be my 33rd sober Christmas. I don't worry about spending time with the family like I did in the beginning. I have learned to have a plan when it comes to family events.

In the beginning of my sobriety I was single, and my only obligation was to show up at the appointed time. I knew to take my own car to family functions and to have an exit plan. We lived from meeting to meeting during the holidays when I got sober. We went to the noon meeting, to the family event, and back to the 8 pm meeting.

This year things are different. Thanks to the pandemic, my home group was not able to celebrate Thanksgiving together. Christmas plans are uncertain. If there is no family or group event to attend, or if you are not invited, have a plan!

Don't Pout!

Attend meetings

Gather your friends, if allowed.

Make tons of calls: Not Texts, Calls!

Offer to do service work for your home group.

Decide that drinking is not an option.

Make a plan and a list of things to do. In short, the holiday is what you make it. On the other hand, if you do have a family event to attend: Be Ready!

(Continues, page 2)

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

Tradition Twelve: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Here's My Survive-the-Family-Event Plan:

1. Make a meeting before you go. If there is not enough time, listen to a speaker tape.
2. Arrive and offer to help. Do some service just like you would at a meeting.
3. Bring enough of your favorite drink to share.
4. Keep the conversation light. This is not the time to make amends or your point., but it is a good day to make some living amends.
5. Play with any children present! Offer to help with them. Sit at the kids table so their parents can have a break. (They are more fun than adults.)
6. If you do not have to stay physically distant, love on your Grandparents and all your older relatives, no matter how grumpy they are. Take advantage of the time you have missed with them.
7. Take little breaks, walk outside, call a program friend, or call the relatives who are not there and let everyone speak to them etc.
8. Help clean up. Do the dishes, pick up all the wrapping paper, help the kids with new toys.
9. Be kind, gracious and polite. Thank everyone when you leave. Oh, and leave while you are having a good time.
10. If your family drinks and they get out of control, text a friend in recovery and ask them to call with an emergency. Make your apologies and bail.

Above all else remember God is in charge! There will be many more family events and holidays to practice your recovery.



Holy Fire
BY: FeniXpirit

Here it is another day
Protect me from the dark I pray
I do not want to take a drink
Help me shape the thoughts I think
If I get scared or stressed or stuck
and caught up in the mental muck
Remind me to turn my heart to You
and humbly ask You to carry me through
I can always start my day again
This disease I have is not a sin
Surrender to Your will I desire
Light within me your Holy Fire
Burn away my doubt and fears
Absorb the flood of unending tears
Alone I think and drink and fail
But with You as wind, I fill my sail
Thank You for fanning the Holy Flame
I know I will never be the same.

13 December 2020

“Wet your Tail”

BY: Sarah M.

Spiritual detours take me to swamps filled with quicksand. I whisper streams of nasty four-letter words even as I apologize for what is not my fault; send out waves of anger in the form of silent pouting; and drip with smelly brown “shoulds.” Eventually my heart races and my lungs shrink because I am afraid. Whenever I reach an arm out of the muck, my Higher Power pulls me up, sometimes slowly. Perhaps you have been there too. Perhaps the story of my latest side trip will help you avoid a similar disaster or recover from it quickly. This spiritual misadventure started with inattention and ended with acceptance.

Once upon a time, I wrote my Higher Power a two-page letter every morning, read AA and Bibley stuff, meditated for at least twenty minutes, and even practiced tai chi. Now? Not so much. Retirement has not provided leisure. Church projects, AA service work, caregiving, and the needs of my extended family keep me busy. Hours of luxurious solitude have disappeared, but that change is not fatal. I can write every other day or scribble a note instead of a mind dump. Writing less works, but only if I begin by saying “Thank you.” Giving up gratitude endangers me. Long meditations can be less frequent, but I must be still. The Big Book tells us to “ask God for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision” (86). Then we must listen, even if only for a few deep breaths. Not being quiet long enough to ask or listen endangers me. Distracted by busy-ness, I recently stopped paying attention and wound up in the swamp. This time, I reached for my Higher Power before drowning.

The Serenity Prayer became a rope, especially the part about accepting what we cannot change and having the wisdom to know the difference. This return also involved Steps two and three: believing that “a power greater than myself could restore me to sanity,” and turning myself over to its care. My return worked with AA because it is a spiritual program, but it really came through two other disciplines, meditation and tai chi.

The journey began with me writing a full journal in the morning. In the late afternoon, I knelt and repeated the “Let Go” prayer* maybe 12 times.

I let go my desire for **Security**

I let go my desire for **Acceptance**

I let go my desire for **Control**

I let go my desire for **Power**

I let go my desire for **Esteem**

I let go my desire to Change the Situation

I let go my **Desire**.

Next, I did a full sitting meditation without worrying about my wandering, dozing mind, for God can reprogram my brain in a nanosecond. That continued the return. My tai chi class met early the next morning, and I absolutely did not want to go. All that silence helped me hear that little voice, however, so I set an alarm, got up when it went off, and even took the shower I refused the night before. *(Continues on page 4)*

(“Wet,” continued.)

Still tired and anxious, I walked the dog while mentally repeating the verse about letting go of my desire to change the situation. (I do not remember exactly what upset me, but it surely involved relatives dying from Covid-19) Then that annoying voice told me that skipping class would just leave me staring into space while my coffee got cold and later feeling guilty about wasting time. I kept getting ready and even took two minutes to read that day’s verse in the *I-Ching*:

Fear abounds.

He reluctantly and slowly circles.

Embrace the situation as it is.

Enter deeply into the moment

Now is the time to wet your tail.

(Canto #63—John Bright-Fey, translator)

This instructs me not only to let go of my desire to change things, but to **embrace** the situation. Am I supposed to give my problems a big hug? The fear is flying in slow circles above me, and I should include that in the hug? If I am supposed to “wet my tail,” that suggests swimming around in my fear and frustration. Really? Guess again, Fu Xi, you dead Chinese king!

Since I hated them so much, those words stuck, and the quiet voice got me to class. We heard suggestions. We could stand for a while in the Mountain Posture—legs spread wide and knees bent into almost a half squat—it hurts. Then we could “breathe through our heels,” which requires advanced mental gymnastics. If all that was too complicated, we could count from one through ten while watching our breath and doing easier visualizations. It still meant standing still for an hour when I wanted to move. The four-letter words flooded my mind so strongly that I almost left in a huff, but the voice told me just to begin. I took ten or 20 breaths in the mountain pose before standing upright and trying to feel strength coming from the earth into my heels. Finally, I just stood.

For some reason, it worked. When the class was over, I could smile about “embracing the situation.” It had bright spots; I could change some things, and the hard parts could bring me closer to God. The cheerful, hopeful, renewed attitude lasted about two days, just long enough to help me start walking the walk again. That is just my story, however. People I love are suffering great pain, exhausting themselves caring for others, enduring terrible losses, and facing seemingly impossible challenges. No way would I tell them to “let go their desire to change the situation,” much less “embrace” it!

At the same time, **hardship looks one way when it belongs to others** and another way when it belongs to me. My life might look difficult to some, but I am often happy, usually see the bright spots, and find many reasons to say “Thank You.” With Higher Power’s help, I can embrace my whole life, sad and joyful—but only if stay in touch. I am back today. If (when!) I go back to the swamp, God will be there, calm and powerful, loving me as I stumble, and hugging me when I reach out.

* See box on page 8

Circling the Wagons

BY: Dan V

This time of year, more than any other, is when we alcoholics need to be most conscious of one another. Granted all alcoholics are not in AA, but even some that are will likely be finding themselves particularly vulnerable these days. It's time to circle the wagons. And by that, I mean that we need to be especially sensitive and available to anyone who may be calling out for help during this traditionally stressful time of year.

"Circling the wagons" is certainly nothing new to AA groups. It can be easy to tell when a member is struggling with a particular issue, event or circumstance in his or her life, especially when that person is totally new. That's when I see and hear – and feel – the group wrap its collective arms around the person by listening, empathizing, and sharing their own experiences. These folks then realize that they are not alone; that they are not the only ones that have ever felt that way, gone through such a situation, or had to deal with that particular problem. That's what I call "circling the wagons"! We protect our own, whether they are AA members or not, because the only real help for an alcoholic is with another alcoholic who can say, "I've been there, I've done that, I've felt the same way... and here's what helped me through it."

Maybe you haven't felt it from the struggling individual's side in a while – like I have. I've been on both sides recently enough to remember vividly the feelings: the humble yet awesome joy when I was part of the circling, and the calmness following the encouragement and camaraderie when I was the one being circled. Just being given the opportunity to talk; to unburden one's soul; to share intimately with other folks who understand – that's huge. That's really huge. That's circling the wagons. And that can be a literal lifesaver for people during this emotional tumult we call "The Holidays".

So what can we do to help each other, and ourselves, to "accept the things we cannot change" but "change the things we can?" We cannot change The Holidays, but we can change how we deal with them. And, we can help others deal with them – to survive them – as well. To explain how, I am going to borrow the four main points from a sermon I heard back in 1995 entitled "Why Does Trouble Come" by Dr. Jack LeGrand. I believe they speak well to the alcoholic to whom trouble is going to come – and to those than can help him or her – during these days of celebration, debauchery and depression.

One – *Trouble comes so that we can reach out and touch others.* Not just Step 12, but the whole AA program revolves around alcoholics reaching out and working with other alcoholics. Even before Step 12, we are already doing it: the minute we go into our first meeting and share. People with years of sobriety under their belts comment often that 'newcomers' bring an air of freshness, and a remembrance of their own early beginnings – and of the thankfulness that came with it. The Big Book says, "Frequent contact with newcomers and with each other is the bright spot of our lives (p. 89)... Practical experience shows that nothing will so much insure immunity from drinking as intensive work with other alcoholics (p. 89)... Helping others is the foundation stone of your (i.e., our) recovery" (p. 97, italics added).

These holiday months are going to be particularly troublesome to many, if not most of us. And it's safe to say that some will struggle mightily. So we need to be especially sensitive to the "silent" cries for help: a change in the tone of a voice, in the demeanor of a face; unusual absences from meetings, or changes in how someone normally participates; or a sudden difference in attitude or character, or in the way a person normally "carries" him - or herself. (*Continues, p. 7*)

(Circling the Wagons, Continued)

Many times, all it takes is a little prompting, an extra phone call or text, a “just checking on you” email... so many ways we can make ourselves available to others in need, if only we can see or hear or sense that they are in need. Because we are responsible: “When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there. And for that, I am responsible.” And circling our wagons around another alcoholic not only helps them, but it also helps we who are doing the circling!

Two – Trouble comes to give others an opportunity to reach out and touch us. So what is it about us alcoholics that we want to pull inside ourselves instead of reaching out at the very times we need help the most? Do we think it a sign of weakness, or loss of control? Is it pride, self-pity, anger, fear or embarrassment...? If we are comfortable sharing with our groups during “normal” times, why do we suddenly start feeling like we “can’t” share when we are being really troubled? We know that isolation is one of the worst things for us, and that there is great power and strength in the understanding, comfort and encouragement to be found in the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous. “A.A. Taught Him To Handle Sobriety” is the title of the last story in the back of the Big Book, where it tells us, “...the name of the game is not so much to stop drinking as to stay sober.”

So the focus now turns to the individual alcoholic – to the one who is struggling. He or she must take all of that pride or self-pity or embarrassment or whatever it is that is holding them back, lay it aside, and open their hearts. Our AA friends and sponsors have never been critical or judgmental before: why in the world would they suddenly become so now?! And to not allow them the opportunity to do now what they have been doing right along – well, that not only leaves me facing my troubles all alone, but it also robs others of the blessing of being helpful. Is it therefore not selfish of us to close ourselves off to the help we may so desperately need from our fellows right now? Have we not all been striving to remove all forms of self-centeredness, “the root of our troubles”? There is no shame in admitting one needs help: in fact, we’ve all already done that in Step 1. So each of us must keep that door open, and allow the wagons to be circled around ourselves when we need it. And I would implore you now, the reader, that if you are experiencing troubles, to give your AA fellowship the opportunity to help you today.

Three – Trouble comes so that we will reach out and touch God (as you understand Him). This is even easier than reaching out for help from other people: there are no time or travel restrictions! Yet this is so important that Bill W. not only put it at the forefront of the program in Steps 2 and 3, but also in 5, 6 and 7, all leading up to Step 11: making “conscious contact with God” an on-going daily thing. Having that constant connection helps keep everything in perspective, no matter what your circumstances. **But sometimes we just plain don’t talk to Him.** Or if we do, we don’t really give our troubles over: we hold onto them with the notion that we can still “fix” them ourselves. Well, “You have not because you ask not,” says the Bible. We forget that He wants us to bring Him our burdens, and to give them completely and totally over to Him. And why shouldn’t we? After all, we trusted Him with our very lives back in Step 3 when He gave us back our sanity!

It’s ironic to me that the time of year people tend to find so troubling is the very same time when we recognize that “a Power greater than ourselves” has, in fact, made Himself known to us; where we stop to express our gratitude to Him for all the good things in our lives; and when we look ahead in anticipation of the new blessings He has in store for us. Yet so many people seem to be reaching out for everything but their Higher Power at this time of year. *(Continues, page 8)*



(Circling, Continued)

A recent *Reflection* had this to say about that: “God does not grant me material possessions, take away my suffering, or spare me from disasters, but He does give me a good life, the ability to cope, and peace of mind. He answers [my prayers] with solutions to my problems, sustaining my ability to live through daily frustrations with a serenity I did not believe existed, and with the strength to practice the principles of A.A. in all of my everyday affairs.” What more could we ask? And Who better to reach out to when we feel our own wagon foundering? Our Higher Power is always there for us, and we can tell Him all about it – and receive the means to deal with it – the very minute we see trouble coming.

Four – Trouble comes so that God/our Higher Power can reach out and touch us. Finally, sometimes we just don’t let Him touch us. We don’t want to hear what He tells us, don’t want to see what He shows us, or don’t want to do His will for us. So the reason we don’t even ask is because we don’t want the answer. Or maybe we still think we can control it ourselves. But think about it: He is the Higher Power, after all. And so our troubles mean something. They get our attention when perhaps nothing else will. They can be His way of getting us to address something in ourselves, of giving us an opportunity to help someone else, or both. And yet, at the same time, He is reminding us that we are never in it alone.

So **what is in a touch from God**, from our Higher Power as we understand Him, that we would want to let Him touch us? I quoted above that he helps us cope with our adversities, but it’s far more than that. He offers strength and wisdom to do the right thing, even in trying times, and the ability to live day by day through all our earthly frustrations. Our “happiness” in and with the world around us will ebb and flow, but His provision for us remains constant. There is no pit too deep, no storm too big, no night too dark, no situation too hopeless, no sin too bad: He will “never leave or forsake” us. He brings contentment and serenity, a peace to our mind and soul: a “peace that surpasses all understanding” and brings tranquility in times of turmoil, calm in a world of chaos. And what could be better than a wagonload of peace and strength from our Higher Power to lift us up when we’re feeling at our most low? Let us always seek His touch, even – if not especially – now!

So those are my thoughts as I approach my first sober Christmas in a long, long time. And no, I’m not so naïve as to think that we can save everyone from depression, loneliness, isolation, or even relapse this holiday season. But even to help just one would make a world of difference, particularly for that one. For I, too, was just one: and I thank AA, my groups and my sponsor for being there and circling their wagons around me. And, of course, I’m especially grateful to my Higher Power for putting me in a place where they could!

The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Birmingham Intergroup Central Office Board of Directors.

We Want to Hear from You! Please send questions, poems, drawings, articles, experience, strength, and hope to :

passitonbirmingham@gmail.com

\$\$\$\$ Financials \$\$\$

Birmingham Central Office Financial Report: November 2020

	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov
Regions Checking		\$ 4,256.31	\$ 7,913.36		\$ 7,256.34	\$ 2,026.85
Cash on Hand	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 30.00
QB-Checking Account	\$ 3,738.47	\$ 3,003.52	\$ 7,301.66	\$ 2,730.00	\$ 3,628.84	\$ (671.84)
Saving Account	\$ 7,939.65	\$ 7,939.65	\$ 7,939.79	\$ 7,939.79	\$ 7,939.93	\$ 7,940.00
CD Account	\$ 4,845.85	\$ 4,872.56	\$ 4,878.85	\$ 4,845.85	\$ 4,875.01	\$ 4,875.01
Receivables					\$ 261.90	\$ 2,319.10
Outstanding Payables					\$ 6,705.23	\$ 7,275.36
Income						
Books & Literature	\$ 652.90	\$ 3,161.87	\$ 920.42	\$ 2,871.25	\$ 640.17	\$ 2,512.84
Chips & Medallions	\$ 120.00	\$ 874.80	\$ 95.50	\$ 611.50	\$ 366.00	\$ 367.65
Donations	\$ 610.25	\$ 1,317.22	\$ 1,241.34	\$ 800.85	\$ 1,510.56	\$ 1,580.37
Variety Items		\$ 337.90	\$ 7.00	\$ 11.18	\$ 5.20	\$ -
Interest	\$ 0.07	\$ 0.07	\$ 0.07	\$ -	\$ 29.23	\$ 0.07
Cost of goods Sold						
Books & Literature	\$ 554.22	\$ 2,540.94	\$ 753.24	\$ 2,272.48	\$ 571.32	\$ 1,916.82
Chips & Medallions	\$ 7.92	\$ 1,103.58	\$ 43.74	\$ 245.14	\$ 165.38	\$ 257.17
Variety Items	\$ 54.35	\$ 39.90	\$ 14.11	\$ 83.33	\$ 1.38	\$ 0.20
Gross Profit	\$ 766.73	\$ 1,707.44	\$ 1,453.17	\$ 1,693.83	\$ 1,813.08	\$ 2,286.46
Expenses						
Payroll Wages		\$ 410.51	\$ 763.04	\$ 771.49	\$ 774.56	\$ 767.08
Payroll Taxes		\$ 75.53	\$ 141.24	\$ 140.24	\$ 141.01	\$ 139.46
Payroll Services			\$ 50.00	\$ 50.00	\$ 75.00	\$ 50.00
Dues & Subscriptions	\$ 77.00	\$ 77.00	\$ 227.00	\$ 77.00	\$ 77.00	\$ 77.00
Insurance (annually)	\$ 1,400.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Legal & Accounting	\$ 45.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 50.00
Licenses & Taxes		\$ 124.72	\$ 380.67		\$ 402.61	\$ -
Office & Supplies	\$ 26.95	\$ 91.25	\$ -	\$ 735.93	\$ 52.99	\$ 188.46
Past Due -- Copier	\$ -	\$ 112.54	\$ -	\$ 316.48	\$ 371.38	\$ 581.97
Past Due -- AAWS					\$ 1,807.70	\$ 1,251.00
Rent	\$ 495.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 495.00	\$ 495.00	\$ 495.00
Telephone & Internet	\$ 133.60	\$ 188.10	\$ 146.44	\$ 145.65	\$ 145.01	\$ 145.01
Utilities	\$ 465.53	\$ 146.74	\$ 80.99	\$ 71.59	\$ 18.80	\$ 73.35
Total Expenses	\$ 2,643.08	\$ 1,226.39	\$ 1,789.38	\$ 2,803.38	\$ 4,361.06	\$ 3,818.33
Recon Discrepancies		\$ (684.10)		\$ (276.09)	\$ (901.19)	\$ (1,177.37)
Net Income	\$ (1,876.35)	\$ (203.12)	\$ (336.14)	\$ (949.48)	\$ (3,459.87)	\$ (2,709.17)
		Corrected				

[Follow this link to see the Donations report.](#)



(Source of the "Let Go" prayer in "Wet your Tail.")

The Welcoming Prayer

Welcome, welcome, welcome.

I welcome everything that comes to me in this moment because I know it is for my healing.

I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations and conditions.

I let go of my desire for security.

I let go of my desire for approval.

I let go of my desire for control.

I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person, or myself.

I open to the love and presence of God and the healing action and grace within. — Mary Mrozowski 1925-1993