

ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP

April 2016

Accepting Different Paths to Spirituality

After sharing my experience, strength and hope at a local rehab, I asked the usual question, "How do you normally close"? I was told that they close with "the Lord's Prayer". I asked a young black male if he would close us out, reciting the prayer. He said that he could not due to his religious beliefs. No problem I just went to someone else and we closed the meeting in the usual manor.



After the meeting the young black male approached me and asked, Do all meetings close the same way, with the Lord's prayer? I responded by telling him that in this area, that is pretty standard. He said that he could not attend meetings because he was a Muslim and it was against his religion to participate in any

other sectarian religion or ritual. I was pleased to tell him that he did not need to participate. I said that he could stand outside of the circle, saying any prayer he chose. He looked disheartened and said, "I already feel like an outsider and that would make me feel more so."

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A Sponsee's Wedding Day

The day before I got sober, I was sure I'd never get married. All I wanted then was to isolate and be left alone to drink in peace. After I got sober--even that first day sober--I knew I had been wrong.

Sobriety had helped me grow and mature enough to have wanted to fall in love, wanted to be responsible to and for the well-being of another, and yes, even wanting to get married--something I eventually had the pleasure of experiencing about three years into sobriety.

Beyond your wildest dreams. Little did I know that new dreams awaited me. After another decade of sobriety, I was to experience the joy of helping another person get and stay sober. Now I was experiencing the brand new joy of watching that person fall in love and get married.

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Letting Go of Our Will

Step 3: Decided to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood God.

OK, so we've admitted defeat (powerlessness) in Step 1, we're working on coming to believe that something we can't see or touch (or feel) can solve our problem(s) in Step 2, and now you tell us that we have to turn our will and our lives over to this something in Step 3 that we can't even fathom the existence of.

I well remember the talk I had with Ed L. my sponsor, regarding this step. I must admit that, still being quite foggy, all that I could envision was me, in a pink cassock, with a ponytail, happily

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Step 3

(From page 1)

handing out little flowers to passersby at the airport, proclaiming that "Jesus Loves You!" Ed assured me that this was not our goal. (Whew!) After a short explanation that "my will" was in fact my thoughts and desires, and that "my life" was the sum of my actions thus far, it became apparent that I just had to let go of the my will part for the my life part to happen.

While simple in principle, practical application of this step requires much practice. For a long time, we've grown accustomed to spinning life to suit our own selfish wants. No, not our needs, just our wants. We're usually pretty successful for

quite some time until we "wear out our welcome" with friends at first, then with those closer and closer to us. Finally we arrive at that loneliest of places, where only we ourselves will put up with our BS. We continue, finally ending up in that place where even we won't put up with our BS anymore. Thank God we got there! (No, really, do it!)

It is only in that place that we can have someone (a Sponsor) explain us to us. Obviously we didn't understand why we behaved the way we did. We can then slowly begin to give up on our own wants and think of the other person. Once we do this

for a period of time (sometimes a long, long time), we can begin to "feel" the existence of that Higher Power working in our will and in our lives. Today, I seldom hesitate when an opportunity to be helpful to someone arrives in my path. I chalk it up to "His Will, not mine" and do what I can. The gratitude I garner in this endeavor is well worth the effort and becomes my reward. I'm blessed by the fact that I'm alive and sober today. Fact: If I had continued doing it "my way," I'd have been dead long ago.

Peace...

Andy... ;-)

Wedding

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It's rather like seeing one's own child get married (another of the joys I experienced in sobriety). As my sponsee walked down the aisle, I re-viewed all of our learning together and growing together. I re-viewed our journey together. Now, he was turning the corner, strong and independent, confident in his sobriety; ready for the wonderful journey of his own--a journey he would now take together with the woman he loves.

My friend confided in me before the wedding, how great it was to be sober and how none of this would



be happening but for his sobriety. I thought of the words of my sponsor when I got married. He reminded me that yes, sobriety got me here, but I was still responsible for nurturing and caring for my relationship with my new wife; that I was responsible for continuing to work the Steps in my life; and that I was now responsible for the trust

and faith my wife had found in me.

Congratulations to my sponsee and to his lovely bride and congratulations to all of us who, now sober, have found the courage to love.

Masonville Marty

**AREA 45 SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY
52nd ANNUAL GENERAL SERVICE
CONVENTION**

April 1st, 2nd & 3rd



Saturday Night Banquet

DJ & Karaoke on Friday & Saturday Nights

Any Musicians? Bring Your Instrument! Roving Musicians Wanted!!

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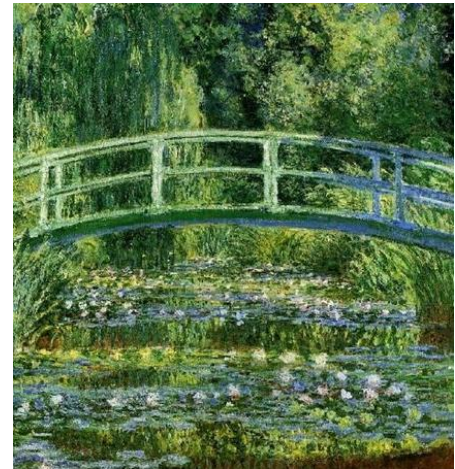
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phone: (856) 558-9255

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phone: (609) 326-3546

Hotel Packages and Meal Options
To Register online go to snjaaconvention.org

Show Me the Monet!

Consistent with the theme of this year's Area Convention, "We are not a glum lot," the Social Committee of South Jersey Intergroup organized a trip on March 6 to the Philadelphia Art Museum. I happily ventured forth with about a dozen other South Jersey ex-drunks to gaze upon works of art.



My favorite at the museum is always the Monet. Claude Monet was a French impressionist artist who seems to capture the beauty of parks, flowers and bridges and all the subtlety of light gradation, whether on a sunny day or (my favorite for Monet) when grey and overcast. Thanks to Sal and Dillon for organizing the trip. I think we all had a great time and look forward to future Social events for the fellowship in South Jersey.

Brett
Chair, SJIG

Spiritual Path

From page 1

I gave this a lot of thought. I also discussed my concerns with other members of the fellowship. Most all of them had the same opinion. They alluded to the fact, "perhaps he just didn't want to attend meetings and that was his excuse."



I didn't feel that way at all. I believed that he truly loved and respected his religion and wished to honor it. I also wondered what it might be like for me if I visited a Muslim country and they closed by prostrating themselves, facing Mecca. How comfortable would I feel laying on the floor for the closing prayer?

Our Tenth Tradition clearly states that "AA has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never to be drawn into public controversy." It continues to say that we should never discuss politics or sectarian religion. Yet at most every meeting, Christian prayers are at the core of our discussion. The Third and Eleventh Step prayers are often the topic of discussion. The prayer to St Francis is given as a guide for meditation. The Seventh Step prayer, the Tenth Step prayer, and the serenity prayer. All of them allude to God, Father, and Creator, which are predominantly Christian-based terms. In a letter to his friends,

Rockefeller described us as "a very Christian organization."

At this juncture, I want to be very clear, I am not anti-Christian. I am not a Christian, but I practice a belief that all religions are good. I have no problem reciting prayers of any kind. Although they have no real meaning for me, I do participate. I don't want to feel like an outsider (smile).

What is my point?

Our founding members had the foresight to include these four simple words, "as you understand him."

I was still feeling a little bit like an outsider, so I spoke to several other members of AA who I knew were not Christians. We shared the same feelings. None of us felt comfortable discussing the fact that we did not believe in god. Or that god was a female. Or that prayers were not part of my recovery. One of us has 108 gods, he is from India. Another fellow practices Native American beliefs. I spoke with a woman who identifies herself as a pagan, a Wiccan. We learned that if we dare mention this at a meeting it was met



with sighs or grunts that indicated disapproval from most people in attendance. One person said she felt completely left out when someone started by saying "who keeps us sober, our father." This is not what she believes. When we say these prayers, are we being all inclusive? Does our closing ritual exclude anyone? Are we not breaching the 10th Tradition in a very subtle or unconscious way? Is this worth a discussion at your next group conscience meeting?

Here Is the Good News

In late January, this little group got together and had a meeting. There were only five of us. We decided to meet once a week and called ourselves "A Different Understanding." We discussed if we could actually become an AA group since we openly discussed our spiritual path. One of the members stated that "since we included all the great religions and excluded none, we could call ourselves an AA group and still honor the spirit of Tradition 10." It didn't take long and we found an AA conference approved pamphlet called "Many Paths to Spirituality" printed in 2014. We quickly changed our name and have grown to a group of 25-30 at each meeting.

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Editorial Policy

Anonymous South Jersey is a monthly newsletter published by and for members of South Jersey. Opinions expressed herein are NOT to be attributed to AA as a whole, nor does publication of information imply any endorsement by either AA or South Jersey Intergroup. Quotations and artwork from AA literature are printed with permission from AA World Services, Inc., and/or the AA Grapevine, Inc.

Contributions from readers are encouraged—you can write about your experience, strength and hope in general, or you can focus on one of the steps or traditions. You can also write about something that touched you at a meeting, something that bothered you at a meeting, or some service commitment you especially enjoy. Submissions are edited for space and clarity. Contact information is required and anonymity is respected.

Due to space limitations, we are unable to publish flyers for events in this newsletter. However, we are happy to include your gathering in the general list of fellowship announcements.

Please send your submissions to newsletter@asj.org.

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24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444
Toll Free Hotline: 1-866-920-1212

SJIG holds its monthly meetings on the third Wednesday of the month at 8 pm at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 1989 Route 70 East, Cherry Hill, NJ

Spiritual Path

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It is attended by Buddhist, Wiccans, Muslims, Christians and Jews. We have followers of the Native American traditions, atheist and agnostics. Each of which shares openly and freely about their beliefs. And best of all, we open with reading page 567, (Spiritual Experience) and we close by standing in place and say the "I am responsible Pledge." It has turned into one of the most spiritual meetings that I have ever attended in my 33 years of sobriety. We do not judge or criticize any else's beliefs and have learned to embrace them all.

If you are struggling at all with the concept of a higher power and wish to learn of other spiritual paths, please feel free to come and join us. We are an open AA meeting that gets together on Tuesday from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the New Beginnings Club.

Yours in Fellowship,

Eddie "J"

As Bill Sees It



A.A. is no success story in the ordinary sense of the word. It is a story of suffering transmuted, under grace, into spiritual progress.

AS BILL SEES IT, p. 35

Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

April 2016

Friday April 15 – Bellmawr Group will celebrate its 51st Anniversary. Doors open 7:45 p.m. with coffee and deserts followed by speakers at 8:30 p.m. Location: Holy Spirit Church, 20 E Browning Rd, Bellmawr 08031

Friday-Sunday, June 24-26 – Fifth Liberty Bell Roundup, Philadelphia Woodstock of AA. Registration is \$40.

AA Into Action

Experience, Strength, and Hope

Hosted by: Happy Destiny Group

Chris B. Riverton, NJ - AA History
Keith L. Bowie, MD - Steps 1,2,& 3
Dave P. Westfield, NJ - Steps 4&5
Corrina D. Queens, NY - Steps 6&7
Amber A. Perkasio, PA - Steps 8&9
Robbie W. Wildwood, NJ - Steps 10, 11, & 12

Saturday, May 7th. 2016
Starting at 10:30AM

There is NO registration for this!!
It's for fun and for free!!
Light lunch will be served

Good Shepard Church
877 Street Road
Southampton, PA 18966

Contact Mike C. for more information
215-528-0251

