

# ANONYMOUS SOUTHJERSEY

**SOUTH JERSEY INTERGROUP**

**September 2016**

## What Can I Do Today to Keep the Light On?

While sitting in a step meeting the other day this visualization came to me. I have no idea if I heard this somewhere and just remembered it or what but I guess that doesn't really matter. Here it is:

When I was "out there" in active addiction it was like being in a dark room with a blind fold on. I had no idea I was even in a room because I couldn't see anything any way. I didn't know what was

out there because I couldn't see a foot in front of me. I had no idea what I was missing and frankly, I didn't even care.

Then when I put down the drink and the drug, it was like the blind-fold getting ripped off. It was terrifying because now I was aware of this dark space I was in. I had no idea how big the room was or if it was even a room at all. Are there walls? A window? A door? How

long is the room? How wide? Is it carpeted? Painted? All of these unknown questions racing through a frantic mind added to the anxiety of the fact that I now had no idea who or where I was.

*(Continued on page 5)*

### Exploring Pamphlets: Questions and Answers on Sponsorship

AA General Service Conference approved pamphlets have been part of the literature which helps to keep me sober and that I go to when seeking answers or trying to help others understand the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. One of the pamphlets I have come to love is "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship." When I was six years sober and looking for a new sponsor, the woman I asked suggested I find and read it. I was not thrilled with the idea of having to read something just to get her to sponsor me, but I also knew that up to that point in my sobriety, I had been following suggestions and life had been pretty good.

*(Continued on page 3)*



*If you have an app that reads QR codes, you can scan it and go right to the link.*



### The Fountain of Youth

As I celebrate an AA anniversary this month of July, I'd like to share a few things I've learned. Through the grace of God, and the fellowship of the program, I've learned to Trust God. I am faced with many challenges during my day to day routine. Whether it's an evaluation from my boss at work, interactions with my young adult children, or my car breaking down, I am faced with adversity. Through the program, I've been given the wisdom to

*(Continued on page 4)*

**Inside This Issue:** Help Wanted: Opportunities for Service ♦ Trivia Question of the Month ♦ New Meeting: The Experience ♦ Fellowship Announcements and Things To Do

## The Next Guy Up to Bat

It was a Sunday in March, and I'd gone to visit my son for his birthday at his mother's house. I was no longer allowed to have him for unsupervised visits and would not argue the point. By that time, I didn't trust myself either. It was a few days after his birthday, and I planned to spend some time with him and give him his birthday present. We were in the side yard of his mother's place. It was a beautiful morning, and I alternated between watching my son play with his gift and staring at the Shawangunk Mountains.

I had intended to spend most of the day with my son. But after a while, I noticed that it was quarter to 12:00. The stores started selling beer at noon on Sundays, and I really wanted a drink. It was a 15-minute drive down the mountain. The thought began to run a continuous loop in my mind. I truly wanted to stay and spend time with my son, but the thought of a drink blocked every other consideration. My son talked to me and smiled while I tried to come to terms with the compulsion that was pulling me away.

I thought that I tried to fight the impulse, but that wasn't really true. From the moment the idea of that drink came to mind, I had lost. I spent some energy rationalizing what I knew I was going to do. After a very short while, I told my ex-wife that I had to go because I had things to do. But before I left, I announced that there would be some changes soon. She gave me a disgusted look and a "Yeah, sure." I told my son I had to go.

His look was puzzled, but he gave me a kiss goodbye.

I really did have plans to do something about my drinking. I planned to go to the psychiatric emergency unit at the local hospital. But first I'd stop for one beer for the half-hour ride. By the time I got to the hospital, I had stopped for "one beer" seven times. More than half drunk, I walked up to the front desk and said that I needed help. The woman at the desk asked me how much I had had to drink that day. I was crestfallen; she didn't understand.

Well, I stayed at the hospital for the afternoon and talked to a few people. I was offered a bed on a locked ward or an outpatient appointment. By then, I had an afternoon hangover and was reconsidering the whole adventure. I said that I'd take outpatient, signed myself out and left. I fully intended to find a drink.

At the bottom of the drive to the hospital, I could make a left and go home, or I could make a right and go to the deli that was right there. I sat at the stop sign with my foot on the brake and couldn't move. It felt like I sat there for a lot longer than I did. Then I heard a voice that said, "Maybe your problem is alcohol." With that, I was freed up. I turned left and went home.

I paced my railroad apartment from one end to the other, many times. I wanted to drink, but didn't. After a while, I did something I had never done before: I called the local AA an-

swering service. I gave my number and was soon called back. A man introduced himself and asked if I really wanted to do something about my drinking. I said I did. He told me that he had planned to stay home with his family that night but if I was serious, he would meet me and we would go to an AA meeting. He gave me directions. I didn't have much time to think about it. I just put on my coat and took myself—and my hangover—to the meeting. I haven't had a drink since. And I'm sober a lot longer than I ever expected to be.

Years later, I found myself heading up our local AA answering service. It was only then that I began to think about that man who went out on that March night to meet me and start me on my path. He didn't put me off. He didn't say that he was too busy to talk to me or that Tuesday was a better day for him to meet me. He didn't say, "How about brunch on Wednesday?" What he said was that if I wanted to get sober, he would help me.

I don't remember the man's name, or what he looked like. What I do know about him was that he was the next guy up to bat on the answering service's call list, and he stepped up to the plate. I credit him with helping me save my life, and I think of him as my anonymous alcoholic. I think of him often.

—Jack M.  
Kingston, N.Y.

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## Pamphlets

From page 1

Now, when people ask me to sponsor them I make the same suggestion. Since not all groups carry the pamphlet, this gets the person going to some additional meetings or paying more attention to the literature rack (*reality check: it's online now so that might not happen*). Initially, I suggest they just read up to page 14 which includes "What is sponsorship," "For the person seeking a sponsor," and the beginning of "For a person wanting to be a sponsor," and while they're reading think of what questions they might have about sponsorship. This provides the opportunity to start building a relationship with them plus helps them develop a better understanding of what the often heard phrase "Get a sponsor" is all about.

Making a suggestion to someone to read the pamphlet gets me back to reading it too. When I reread it, I do an inventory of my sponsorship by using the *What does a sponsor do and not do?* on pages 13 and 14 to reflect on areas I might need to improve in relationships with current sponsees, as well as recognize what I may be doing well. Then I go beyond what I suggested the person read and continue to read the rest "For groups planning sponsorship activities," and "Service sponsor." There have been times when I have even suggested to friends who were dealing with struggles with their sponsees that they check out these latter sections of the pamphlet.

One of the things I love about reading this pamphlet is that it sometimes reminds me of statements that I've heard in meetings and brings me back to AA literature (*Yes, there's more than the Big Book and 12 & 12*) For example, I've heard "temporary sponsorship means temporary recovery" yet p. 20 expresses "the sponsor may offer to remain as a temporary sponsor until the newcomer can find a sponsor they feel more comfortable with." I've also heard "Why do people have a sponsor and a different service sponsor?" That's too long to answer in this write-up, but is clearly explained on page 25. Feel free to take a peak.

What's your favorite pamphlet? How has it helped your recovery or understanding of AA grow? I'm sure the newsletter committee would LOVE to hear from you.

Robin M.  
Hainesport Serenity

## South Jersey Intergroup is looking for volunteers



**Writers:** Stories are needed from young people for a new AA pamphlet. They need to be submitted to the General Service Office in by December 30, 2016. E-mail [info@aasj.org](mailto:info@aasj.org) for detailed instructions.

Please submit articles to [newsletter@aasj.org](mailto:newsletter@aasj.org) by September 14 for our October edition.

**Speakers:** H&I (Hospitals and Institutions) is looking for speakers to visit these facilities:

- Wednesday September 7 and 21 - Unity Place I Cherry Hill
- Wednesday September 19 - Northbrook - Blackwood
- Thursday September 1, 15, 29 - Unity II - Hammonton
- Thursday September 8, 15, 22 and 29 - Daybreak – Atco

Please contact Patti or Frank at [handi@aasj.org](mailto:handi@aasj.org) if you are able to take one of these commitments.

**Up for a Road Trip?** If you would like to visit a home group to share information on the benefits of being represented at Intergroup, please contact Clete at [unity@aasj.org](mailto:unity@aasj.org)

**Intergroup Reps wanted:** If your home group is not represented at Intergroup, please join us on September 21 at 8 pm at St Bartholomew's Episcopal Church (Rt 70 in Cherry Hill). Be sure to stop at the Unity table to learn more about being an Intergroup rep.

# Fountain

From page 1

manage things like this with dignity and grace. (Basically I don't whine as often and I've learned to ask for help.)

Through the program I have learned to make a habit of praying and meditating. The serenity prayer is excellent and comes

in handy under pressure. Two other prayers that help a whole lot are simply – "God, Help Me, Help Me, Help Me" and "God, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You".

Scoff if you will, but I appeal to you to make a habit of regular disciplined prayer. It helps with balance and poise, in an often topsy-turvy world. So I pray. In our literature somewhere, it says "pay attention to where the religious are right". I'm not saying you have to be religious, but it sure as heck helps if you work on some prayer and meditation.

I've learned to clean house. I've learned that I can sit down with my sponsor and share the good, the bad, and the ugly, openly and honestly. I don't have to hide anything, I don't have to explain anything, and I don't have to worry about being judged. My sponsor is such a great listener that she remembers stuff about me that I don't even remember! As an

outside objective person, she can also point out my patterns of "stinkin' thinkin'", and lend

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*AA has given me so much that I cannot possibly explain it all in this brief writing.*

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me some guidance on how to get back on track again. Bottom line, she's always supportive.

I've been working with a sponsor for a long time. I pick up the phone and call at least once a week, even if there's nothing more to discuss than the weather. I have found it to be a healthy practice. Attempting to figure everything out in my own head—alone—is usually not as productive as bouncing stuff off another person. A trusted sponsor helps a lot with daily living.

Help another Alcoholic. This is the key. Giving back to this AA program, by helping others, is awesome. It teaches me as much or more than it teaches the person I'm working with. I learn to listen, really truly listen, I mean actually and sincerely, shut up and LISTEN! I get to have an opportunity to have empathy and compassion and sometimes, I come up with helpful suggestions. I get an op-

portunity to share my experience, strength, and hope privately with someone. I get to

get out of myself and put the focus on someone else for a while, and stop isolating. I get to stretch and to learn and to grow.

I have found AA to be "The Fountain of Youth." I say that with complete sincerity. AA has given me so much that I cannot possibly explain it all in this brief writing. This summer I've gotten to ride in the waves "down the shore." I've gotten to walk to the top of the Cape May Lighthouse – twice! I taught my precious grandson how to swim on his own, without his floaties! And next week, I'll be hiking the Grand Canyon! I get to live my life free from alcohol and I get to live my life with enthusiasm, joy, and gratitude. Not too shabby when all I REALLY have to do is follow a simple program.

Trust God.

Clean House.

Help others.

Veronica G.  
Masonville (home group)  
Sobriety date 7/11/87

## 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.

### CONTACT INFORMATION FOR SJ INTERGROUP:

South Jersey Intergroup Association, Inc.  
PO Box 2514  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08035  
Office/Literature Sales: 1-856-486-4446  
Email: [Info@asj.org](mailto:Info@asj.org)  
Website: [www.asj.org](http://www.asj.org)  
24-Hour Hotline 1-856-486-4444

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

## AA Trivia

A new feature in Anonymous South Jersey—a monthly trivia question. We will present a question about being in A.A. every month, and the answer will appear the following month.



This month's trivia question:

**How does your group's contribution to Intergroup help the newcomer?**

Answer next month.

Answer to August trivia question: *What do you do when you can't make your H&I commitment?*

Answer: Find someone to cover the commitment for you and email [handi@asj.org](mailto:handi@asj.org) to let them know.

### Light

*From page 1*

For me, I spent a few months in early sobriety fumbling around this room bumping into things. I did not believe I was an alcoholic and therefore did not belong in this room. I was determined to find a way out.

Then as I acquired some time away from alcohol and did my best at trying to do the next right thing, I would have those moments of authenticity. I'd have a good belly laugh or find peace in playing the piano, or find some similarities between me and some girl at the diner after a meeting. These experiences were like a candle being lit in the room or a night light turning on for a few moments. These experiences were hope.

When I was finally able to be honest with myself I started doing the steps with my sponsor as outlined in the Big Book. As I continued working the steps it was like the dimmer switch in the room was *slowly* being turned on. One day I was able to see the shape of the room and some of the details. There was a painting on the wall or maybe it was a

*(Continued on next page)*

## Light

From page 5

window. I continued working the steps and every day I could start to see more and more details of the room. I could feel the carpet under my feet and the breeze from the ceiling fan above. The table in the corner with some sort of lamp. The piano against the wall, or maybe it was a couch.

I continued working the steps and practicing the principles I was learning in all my affairs to the best of my ability. Then the day came. I had a spiritual awakening as *the* result of the steps. Now, I could see the entire room and it was beautiful! I could see the details in the flower on the painting on the wall, and the grain in the wood of the table, and the retro style of the shade on the lamp, and the shine of the piano and the softness of the couch. I could appreciate the color of the paint on the walls and the texture of the carpet I was standing on which turned out to be an area rug. What a wonderful room I was in! And I was in it the whole time, I just needed the steps (and everything else the Big Book suggests) to turn the lights on.

Now the thing about this room is it requires some maintenance

to keep the lights on. When I start to take my will back in a certain area of my life, or start skipping meetings, or if I neglect to call my sponsor or start

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*The door to the room is connected to an infinite amount of space, and as I continue to keep my side of the street clean and do the next right thing, I am shown more and more of this richness.*

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acting out in character defects with no plans of changing my behavior the dimmer switch slowly starts to, well, dim. Suddenly the beautiful details of this room lose their clarity. The couch becomes a lump in the corner, the painting a square on the wall and it happens so slowly that I barely even notice. Then one day I'm in the dark again.

Sometimes (depending on my current level of stubbornness) I'll sit in the dark room for a while bumping around again trying to find the light switch. Determined I can remember where it was and how it worked. The funny part about this illusion is that I am not the controller of the light switch. My Higher Power is.

When I'm finally bruised up enough from plowing into things while living in my self-will-run-riot room, I get back to a place of willingness. And the

good news is it just takes a few simple steps to turn the lights back on. I'll start plugging in again. I'll call my sponsor more. I'll get back to meetings. I'll

reach out to the newcomers. Maybe I need to do some writing on a resentment I've been avoiding. I'll plug back into authentic prayer and intentioned meditation. Then suddenly (and usually, thankfully, a lot more quickly

than the first time around) one day the lights are back on and the details of the room are back in full view. All because of some willingness.

And the remarkable part about this room is that it is connected to a limitless source of abundance and love. The door to the room is connected to an infinite amount of space and as I continue to keep my side of the street clean and do the next right thing, I am shown more and more of this richness.

After having this visual play through my mind I decided to leave myself a note on the bathroom mirror (and one in my car and one on my computer at work) to remind me. It says, "What can I do today to keep the light on?"

Courtney K.

**NEW AA SPEAKER MEETING**

# THE EXPERIENCE

**SAINTS PETER & PAUL CHURCH  
362 GANTTOWN RD, SEWELL, NJ**

# JOIN US

**AIR CONDITIONED**

CONTACTS TED Y. (267)-307-0537, BILLY M. (609)-969-2000  
ALEX P. (856)-278-3330

# WED. 8-9PM

# Fellowship Announcements and Things to Do

September 2016

**Friday, August 19** – Steps thru the Book Group Celebration their 2nd anniversary. Trinity Episcopal Church 8th & Wood Street Vineland NJ 6:30 to 7:30 Pizza & Subs 7:30 to 8:30 Speaker Meeting Come out and join in for food, fun & fellowship!

**Sunday, Aug. 28** – District 14 12th annual FFF picnic at Parvin State Park, Thundergust Pavilion, from noon until 6 pm. Donation \$10 - bring chair. Sides and desserts welcomed. More info call Kenny at [856-297-8659](tel:856-297-8659).

**Sunday, August 28** – SJIG Social Events is hosting a day of canoeing. We are meeting at 9:45 am at *Micks Pine Barrens Canoe and Kayak Rental*. For rates call [\(609\) 726-1380](tel:609-726-1380). The address is 3107 County Rd 563, Chatsworth, NJ 08019

**Saturday, August 27** – District 13 is hosting their annual picnic. Burgers and hot dogs will be provided. Side dishes and desserts welcome. Food, fun and fellowship from 12 pm to 5 pm. Fort Mott State Park, 454 Fort Mott Rd, Pennsville.

**Monday, September 12** – Hainesport Serenity Group celebrates their 33rd anniversary with a desert meetin' St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 910 Marne Hwy., Hainesport.

**Monday, September 19** – Monday Night Ladies Step and Tradition meeting will be celebrating its anniversary. be starting at 7 pm with desserts followed by two speakers at 7:30. We will be meeting at Blackwood United Methodist Church at 35 East Church Street, Blackwood, 08012. All are welcome!

**Tuesday, September 20** – Mt. Ephraim Women's 8th anniversary at 201 New Jersey Ave. Mt. Ephraim starting at 6:30 pm with pizza and fellowship. All are welcome.

**Friday-Sunday, November 18-20** – 10th Annual Waves of Sobriety, Grand Hotel, Cape May. CapeAtlantic CAIG

*If you have any changes or any new items that you feel would benefit our fellowship, please let me know, so we can get it out to the people. Wayne: 856- 534-0104 or [wcp714@verizon.net](mailto:wcp714@verizon.net)*

