



# Conscious Contact

Prescott Area Intergroup: Serving Central Yavapai County

February 2017

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## The Man Who Wanted to Know 'Why?'

About half way to my "bottom" I found myself sitting in the front row of an "alcohol awareness" class that was a condition of the court. I was arrogant and ashamed, but by now I knew I drank abnormally and that my drinking days were numbered. Let's say I knew what road I was on; I just wanted to know what mile marker I was at. I was hoping that I could gauge how much "drinking time" I had left. I thought if I learned enough about alcoholism I would recognize when I was getting close to the edge and be able to stop before it got too ugly. If I only understood how the disease worked and why I did the things I did when drinking, then surely I could avoid the coming disaster or at least delay the inevitable.

What happened instead was that I failed completely to see the edge and blew by it into the abyss without even recognizing what was going on until far too late.

My life in shambles, I had nowhere to turn but to God and to the Alcoholics Anonymous program I had heard about in those "awareness" classes and court ordered meetings. So I did turn myself over to AA and found that it worked. But I was still terminally curious and started musing about why some people, but not all, were staying sober; why God seemed to answer some prayers, but not all; why exactly the AA way of life was better. Why? Why? Why? I could see the program working in my life and in the lives of others, but if I could only understand the "how" and "why" of it, then maybe I could have a better quality of sobriety; I could see why I drank and then perhaps even learn to drink normally! This search for "why?" became very important to me.

Then I heard a guy about my age share at a meeting about how curious he was as a child, and his story was an epiphany for me.

The man talked about how he was particularly curious about a tiny race car of a type popular at the time. The car was about the length of a man's thumb, made of metal and equipped with a magical motor. All you had to do was insert a key into its side, give a few twists and magically the car would race off under its own power. This fascinated him, and he wanted to know why it worked. Why did the tiny car leap forward, and

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## The Road to Freedom

"For most normal folks," our Big Book reminds us, "drinking means release from care, boredom, and worry. It means joyous intimacy with friends and a feeling that life is good."

Not being one of those "normal folks" when it comes to booze, drinking meant a whole lot more than that for me. It meant release from responsibility, for example. Release from the nagging of my bothersome conscience. Release from the social norms that allow regular folks to function in relative harmony with one another.

Drinking represented freedom, which, to me, meant doing what I wanted, when I wanted and with whom I wanted. In my mind, I was "spontaneous" when I drank and hopelessly dull when I didn't. Las Vegas on the spur of the moment one Friday night after a long afternoon of drinking? Seems like a terrific idea! Which way to the airport?

The spontaneous Dan, I convinced myself, was the REAL Dan – the one not held back by the crippling constraints of his job, his wife, his children, his upbringing, his bank account. This Dan could look with scorn at his next door neighbor who mowed the lawn or played with his kids on Saturday while "Mr. Spontaneity" headed off to the local bar, leaving his family to fend for themselves.

The only problem was that somehow, all this "freedom" felt increasingly like a strait jacket as I sank deeper into my alcoholism. I retreated from everything else in my life, including my own wife and children. I rationalized that being a family man, being a responsible employee, being the type of person you could count on, were all among the things that held back lesser men from their true potential. Mideast peace! Injustice in the world! Those were topics more worthy of my attention than the mundane concerns of most.

In reality, I slowly stopped trying to achieve anything out of unspoken fear that I would only fail, anyway. It was easier to attempt nothing while pontificating on the world's problems from my barstool. The deeper I sank into my active alcoholism, the more inadequate I got, of course. My love affair with booze took all my

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why did it stop when it did? Determined to answer the riddle, he dismantled the tiny toy to discover the coil tension spring that, when tightened with the key, was the source of its movement. When the car was set down on the floor, the spring released its stored energy to the axle, turning the rear wheels and sending the magical metal marvel lurching forward until the spring unwound to its relaxed state and the car stopped.

WOW! So that is why! Proud of his newfound understanding and anxious to watch the process unfold again, the man then methodically reassembled the racer. But what happened next was disappointing. Now the toy car moved forward only hesitantly and for a short distance. Despite the care he took in reassembling it, the tiny racer was never again the same.

Now when I look at my AA program and wonder why it works I think of that race car. Perhaps it is good enough to know that it *does* work and not worry so much about why.

Mark P.

### **Blasts from Prescott AA's Past**

Did you know that AA in Prescott just celebrated its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday? The Prescott Group, believed to be the oldest in the area, was started in the fall of 1946, according to an article in *Grapevine*, and though it's gone through many changes of meeting places, formats and schedules through the years, it continues to meet, now on Wednesday evenings at 5:30 at the Light & Life Church.

Some other nuggets of Prescott AA history: The 1951 AA World Directory lists Arizona as having 525 members including 15 in Prescott.

As late as 1983 there were only eight meetings a week in Prescott. But by 2001 there were more than 90, plus another 50 in surrounding communities. The current directory lists 111 Prescott meetings, 36 in Prescott Valley, 23 in Chino Valley, and 19 in nearby remote communities.

Another venerable bunch is the Whipple Group who listed with GSO November 15, 1966. It still meets on Saturday evenings, 6:30 p.m., at the VA Medical Center, Bldg #151, Room A123.

In February, 1996, the Rarely Group was said to be the largest in Prescott. Founded by the late Ken H., it still meets on Wednesday nights at Safe Harbor. The Sunday Night Roundtable group broke off from the Rarely Group.

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energy. There was little left for anything else – and therefore, less and less prospect of success at anything. Finally, even my cronies in the saloons got sick of me. I became the guy sitting by himself at the end of the bar, crippled with despair.

I am eternally grateful for that despair today. It was what finally led me to call the local office of AA from a bar and ask for help. I think I still felt somewhere down deep that I was a better man with alcohol than without, but the pain of living the way I was seemed more than I could take any longer.

I'm grateful to AA that I have not taken another drink since that day. And I'm grateful that the AA program has shown me that my sense of freedom comes not from avoiding responsibility, but from embracing it. I learned about taking responsibility for my actions in Steps 4 and 9. And I learned more about it from the late Chuck C., author of *A New Pair of Glasses*.

"People, places, events and circumstances have nothing to do with the way I feel," Chuck used to say. It's my reactions to those things that determined how I feel – and how I react is my responsibility.

As I tried to practice AA's principles in all my affairs, I grew less self-centered and less afraid. And that has enabled me to recognize and take advantage of opportunities in life despite what has sometimes seemed like associated risk. That was particularly true in my working life which, in sobriety, included many years living overseas and later, a career change at age 54 – things which benefited the whole family. The freedom to risk making a mistake, because I know that at worst I will learn from the experience, is one of the greatest gifts I've received from AA.

"We must never be blinded by the futile philosophy that we are just the hapless victims of our inheritance, of our life experience, and of our surroundings – that these are the sole forces that make our decisions for us," co-founder Bill W wrote in a 1960 *Grapevine* article quoted in *As Bill Sees It*. "This is not the road to freedom. We have to believe that we can really choose."

In a subsequent letter, also quoted in the book, he explained: "We chose to become willing (to practice AA's Twelve Steps) and no better choice did we ever make."

Dan F.

**Heard at a meeting:**

**AA alumni are either dead or drunk.**



**February AA Birthdays  
CONGRATULATIONS!**



**Working Girls**

Eileen E. 2/03/85

**Seniors in Sobriety**

Dan W. 2/06/03

**Sunday Round Table**

John M. 2/12/91

**PV Lushes T' Ladies**

Jill W. 2/11/08

**Wilhoit**

JoAnne B. 2/23/80

**PV Gut Rap Group**

Steve S. 2/07/11

**Tues. Nite Step Study**

Carrie L. 2/02/06

Gregg M. 2/24/82

**PV Friday Night Speakers**

Brad B. 2/21/11

Dan S. 2/16/81

**Sun Morn Men's Stag**

Ray K. 2/09/97

David K. 2/11/90

Jon H. 2/15/88

**PV Tues. Noon Group**

Donna 2/08/05

Uz J. 2/03/05

Bob H. 2/19/89

**PV Noon Group**

Lesli B. 2/07/14

Emily K. 2/05/14

Stan P. 2/04/04

**Serenity at Sunrise**

John M. 2/12/91

Charlie L. 2/04/89

Roger N. 2/23/87

Gregg M. 2/25/82

**PV Sun. No Name Group**

Scott G. 2/01/16

Pauly L. 2/12/14

Shari E. 2/06/09

Dusty S. 2/29/08

**Humboldt Men's Stag**

Robert B. 2/23/16

Daniel W. 2/02/13

Dominic B. 2/06/12

Justin G. 2/12/08

Dean B. 2/18/82

**Alternatives**

Mark K. 2/08/11

Lori 2/14/06

Ed M. 2/28/82

Bob Jr. 2/03/73

Luke 2/17/72

**Prescott Group**

Beth F. 2/24/10

Matt G. 2/13/09

Ira N. 2/19/08

Ryan H. 2/19/07

Justin B. 2/08/06

**Park Ave**

Blair H. 2/22/07

Justin G. 2/12/08

Matt K. 2/21/08

Becca S. 2/28/04

Carlos A. 2/14/97

**Girlye Birds**

Carlee P. 2/26/16

Ashley C. 2/23/16

Cindy G. 2/10/14

Dawn H. 2/07/15

Kate W. 2/20/08

Cathy N. 2/12/06

Kay B. 2/27/01

Mary B. 2/14/98

Maggie G. 2/15/87

Linnea T. 2/08/80

Susan C. 2/04/77

# Service Corner

**Look back and be grateful.**

**Look ahead and be hopeful.**

**Look around and be helpful.**

**Next Intergroup Meeting:**

6:30 pm, Wednesday, February 8, 2017  
(the second Wednesday of every month)  
at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Rd.

**Next District 14-140 GSR Meeting**

Wednesday, February 1, 2017  
(the first Wednesday of the month)  
at the First Christian Church, 1230 Willow Creek Rd.

**Next District 14-142 GSR Meeting**

6:30 pm, Tuesday, February 7, 2017  
(the first Tuesday of every month)  
Emmanuel Lutheran Church, 7763 E. Long Look, PV

**Prescott Shoestring Roundup Committee**

5:30 pm, Friday, February 17, 2017  
(the third Friday of the month)  
Unity Church, Corner of Arizona & Goodwin

**PI / CPC Committee Meetings**

Meetings scheduled as needed.  
The Public Information/  
Cooperation with the Professional Community  
Committee has many opportunities to be of service.  
For information about this committee call the  
Prescott Area Intergroup Office (928) 445-8691.

The Prescott Area Intergroup's  
**Treatment Facilities Committee**

For information on how you can be of service on this  
committee please call the Intergroup Office.

The Prescott Area Intergroup's  
**Correctional Facilities Committee**

For Yavapai County Juvenile Justice Center AA meeting  
information call Jerry D. 928 636-9343

**CELEBRATE SOBRIETY!**

**Please help update our AA birthday list!**

**Does your group have a birthday chairperson?  
It's a great service opportunity!**

**Email, mail, or bring in a copy of your group's  
updated birthday list to the Intergroup Office.**

**Sign up to receive a monthly birthday update email.**

**Thank You to everyone who helps!**



## Joan's Magnificent Seven

My drinking career was relatively short lived and not very exciting. I was afraid to drink in high school, and I married young. My husband was not a drinker, and that was fine with me because I didn't want the life of my alcoholic parents. Most especially, I wanted my daughters to have a better childhood.

I only began drinking in my twenties after the awareness struck that life was not my planned fantasy. When feelings surfaced that I had suppressed for so long, alcohol was my solution. It kept the feelings at bay, and life was much more fun for a time. And then it wasn't. Our problems worsened with my escalating drinking, and inappropriate behavior, and we were divorced in early 1978. I had returned to college as a mature student, but my behavior was anything but mature. By this time drinking was a part of daily life, and out of control.

Because I was going to school full time, working part time and single parenting my two daughters, I believed my life was in control. I knew something was wrong with me, but I had no clue it was related to my drinking. Mental illness was my guess, and all my energy was devoted to making sure no one found out. I was sure "they" would lock me up and throw away the key.

God has such a great sense of humor. He decided in His infinite wisdom to place me at an Alcohol Day Treatment Center for Women to complete an Internship for the Arizona State University School of Social Work. It was there that one of the Counselors confronted me about my drinking. I thought he was wrong – after all I wasn't that bad. My parents had been much worse! But the next thought was "if I am alcoholic, then there is hope for me." I had watched my mom's life get better after she began her journey in Alcoholics Anonymous. Along with the extreme emotional pain I was experiencing, this thought inspired me to attend an AA meeting. When called on at that meeting I said: "My name is Joan and I think, maybe, possibly, I might be a pre-alcoholic." I was still not convinced of my alcoholism until after months of meetings and hearing other people telling my story. My sobriety date is September 3rd 1979.

AA was a struggle for me, probably because I was so angry and defiant. The one thing I have done right in AA for 37 years is go to meetings. This is where I learned how to work the program, and become a very different person.

At some point I realized I had developed a 7 point plan for myself based on everything heard in AA. I now refer to this task list as my "Magnificent Seven:"

**1. Go to AA meetings:** There I have the opportunity to share my experience, strength, and hope, and to share the joy and pain of my life. Meetings are also opportunities to hear how others manage the daily ups and downs that used to drive me to drink, and to hear

newcomers share their experience of how drinking solves nothing. It took years in AA for me to improve my listening skills, and consequently my behavior.

**2. Don't Drink Between Meetings:** I was told early on that I never had to take another drink, and I believed it because I trusted AA. It wasn't always easy, but I found that if I went to a lot of meetings there was less time in between to think about drinking.

**3. Read the Book:** In early sobriety I skipped around and read what sounded like it applied to my life. The stories were great, because they helped me identify. Today I go to at least one Big Book Study each week. There is so much to be learned with every reading. I also take a pocket version of the Big Book with me when I travel.

**4. Work the Steps:** All of them! The first time around was difficult. I didn't really want to work the steps, but I knew that I must if my sobriety was to endure. Continuing to work them helps me grow and as I work with other women, I am encouraged to persist with my own program.

**5. Talk to My Sponsor:** I asked someone to be my sponsor right away. She said no, for very valid reasons, but given that rejection was always very hard for me, it took a year and the intervention of a friend before I asked anyone else. I don't recommend this method! It is nice to have people in meetings to help, but it is vitally important to have one person in AA that knows you like no other, and can call you on your inappropriate thinking and behavior. The women I have chosen for sponsors (more than one because of moves and deaths) were women that I was pretty sure I could not con with my sweet exterior and my inner deceit.

**6. Talk to God:** I was one of those people who came into the program spiritually bankrupt. I didn't believe in God, didn't want to, and prayer was the last thing on my mind. The best advice I heard in meetings was "listen with an open mind and "fake it 'til you make it." I applied that advice to developing a relationship with a God of my understanding, and today believe in God with every fiber of my being. I start my conversations with God before I get out of bed in the morning, and continue them throughout the day.

**7. Be of Service in AA:** This was essential to feeling as if I belonged in AA, and to getting out of my own way so that I could make progress. Taking the focus off me and attempting to help others has been crucial to my sobriety. I have had at least one AA service commitment, and usually more than one, for the last 37 years.

Life is a series of ups and downs, and that doesn't change with sobriety. What does change is my ability to manage those ups and downs. The Big Book says: "Love and tolerance is our code." I am very grateful that my AA family has loved and tolerated me throughout my sobriety, and given me the ability to treat other people with that same love and kindness. My AA life has been an amazing journey.

Joan C.

## The Best Gang in the World

There's nothing like a sober, 39 day cruise to the other side of the world to remind me that I belong to the biggest and best gang in the world! No matter where I go I can find a member of Alcoholics Anonymous. My last job before I got sober was as a dishwasher, and I lost that due to drinking. (Before that I had many good jobs but since I didn't seem able to show up for work I lost them and then could only get low-paying work.) Today I have 40 years of sobriety, and while getting a little slower at age 76, I'm enjoying life and looking forward to more travels and more meetings with fellow AAs around the world. I enjoy going to different meetings and learning a little more of the history of this fellowship.

My last trip this past fall was with my traveling buddy, the old dinosaur Henry W. aboard the MS Noordam from San Diego to Australia and New Zealand. As usual on cruises, we had a "Friends of Bill W." meeting every afternoon aboard ship. It was posted on the ship's calendar of daily events, and up to a dozen members from Canada, Scotland and the U.S. attended on any given day. We made a cabin phone list so we could contact each other any time we felt the need. That's important on a long cruise aboard a ship where it sometimes seems that "happy hour" never stops!

Our first stop was Hawaii, where I had been before, including attending an all-island AA convention in Honolulu in 1985. I made lots of meetings on that trip, including the famous "Twelve Coconuts" group on Waikiki Beach. During a stop at Lahaina on Maui this time I took the ship's tender from our anchorage offshore to the dock, which is within about two blocks from the Lahaina clubhouse. It was easy to find – there's a large sign with the circle and triangle pointing the way – and we made a 9 a.m. meeting there.

As we sailed on from Hawaii we stopped at several other South Pacific islands. I wrote about our visit to Pago Pago in American Samoa in the last issue of *Conscious Contact*. We also visited Fiji, New Caledonia and Vanuatu among others. I always check the web ahead of time to find AA meetings in places we're going to visit. But often meetings are at night, which doesn't work because the cruise ship typically sails around 5 or 6 p.m. And some of the islands we visited are little more than beaches – beautiful, but short on AA.

We had met Frank W. and his wife Margaret on two previous cruises, and they said to be sure and look them up if we ever got to Australia, which has a large AA community. I had emailed Frank ahead of time and told him the date our ship was due in Sydney. We arranged to meet at the ferry terminal in "The Rocks," the historic area of the city center near Sydney's famous Opera House, and home of a daily AA breakfast meeting that is Frank's home group and a magnet for AA tourists visiting town.

We had coffee with him, his wife, and a couple of

younger AA members, and later Frank drove Henry and me around Sydney to see some of the sights. We stopped at a restaurant on the beach for a lunch of real Australian fish and chips.

I had asked Frank if he could get me a copy of the Australian Big Book, which has the same first 164 pages as our version, but with several Australian stories mixed with American ones in the back. Also, the vocabulary is sometimes a little different. (I learned that on a previous visit to New Zealand, where everyone seemed friendly but kept talking about getting "pissed." What were they mad about? Turns out that "pissed" in Australia and New Zealand means "drunk.")

Anyway, I will always treasure the copy of the second edition of the Australian Big Book (the first edition is now a collector's item) which Frank got me and which he had signed by many members of "The Rocks" group. He also got one for Henry as well as an issue of the Australian version of Grapevine, called *AA Reviver*. Henry and I made a step meeting (on Step Three) that afternoon and we both had a chance to share.

I learned a bit of Australian AA history in the forward to that Big Book. The first copy of *Alcoholics Anonymous* to reach Australia arrived in 1943, four years after it was published here. It was delivered to one of the Australian program's pioneers, Dr. M., and is now safely archived. Times were very difficult for the fledgling fellowship with the war on, supply shortages, rationing, and the ongoing threat of Japanese invasion. Members tried to import more Big Books from America, but as AA literature was not classified as "medical," wartime currency exchange rules prohibited the members from getting the U.S. dollars they needed to buy them.

From Sydney, our cruise took us on to Melbourne, the Tasmanian capital of Hobart and eight different ports in New Zealand. I'm sorry to say I didn't get to any meetings in New Zealand because most were at night and often a long way away from where our ship docked. Henry and I did get to many meetings in that country in 2000, however, when we rented an RV and drove all over the country, sober, on the wrong side of the road!

Our sailing adventure ended in Auckland, from which we took an 11 hour flight to San Francisco and a short hop from there back to San Diego.

One thought that comes up for me out of all those AA meetings on the road is that I'd like to see us spend more time in our own meetings here talking about recovery – about getting our lives back and enjoying what we have – and less on "drunkalogs." Yes, those shares also serve a purpose, but I love to hear a recovering alcoholic talk about buying their first home, getting their drivers' license restored, going back to school, etc. Granted it's easier to share about the joys of recovery when you're on a 39-day cruise, but it seems to me that any one of us, if we think about it just a little, can find much to be grateful for in sobriety.

New York Jimmy

## Step of the Month – Step Two

Members share how they came to grips with our second step: *“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”*

“As I concluded my reading of Step Two in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* this morning, I reflected on my ‘continuing’ journey in coming to believe. I can look back and see the progression in three distinct phases -- before, during, and after sobriety/recovery. **Before:** I was awed and inspired by nature! I was also conflicted by religious instructions. **During:** My ‘H-O-W’ period. Alcoholics Anonymous suggested that I didn't have to believe in anything – I just had to be Honest, Open-Minded, and Willing to believe that there could be a power greater than myself. So stop debating. **After:** No matter how old I am or how long I've been in recovery, I must continually work on surrendering my thoughts, words and actions to my Higher Power; to cease fighting everyone and everything, trusting in that Great Source to guide me.”

Michelle H.

“Note that the step says ‘could,’ not ‘would’ restore us to sanity. I don't think that wording was arbitrary. I certainly was not restored to sanity quickly, nor all at once, nor without backsliding emotionally, nor, even after many years of sobriety, permanently. Maybe others have a Higher Power that works differently than mine, but this has been my experience. The good news is that as long as I stay involved with our AA program – going to meetings, talking to my sponsor, sponsoring others, keeping up with prayer and meditation, continuing to try and practice the principles in all my affairs – I get to stay sane a whole lot more of the time.”

Anonymous.

“My initial experience with step two was difficult. It seems so simple now – came, came to, came to believe. But then it all was going in one ear and out the other. I resisted the notion that it would require belief in my old idea of God. I knew my old ways didn't work anymore but feared that lightning bolt if I turned towards any God of my mis-understanding. My sponsor assured me that nowhere did it say I couldn't shake that old idea and let this 2nd step in. What really helped the most was staying long after the meeting ended one night, talking to a new guy who was stuck with a similar, skewed old idea of God. Being able to be honest with him about my old ideas and showing him that I had nevertheless somehow remained sober was the turning point for me and this step. We related to each other and most of all I felt my slate to be cleaner than it had been in a long time. I saw things and heard things with more soundness of

mind after that. I was hungry for more and with the youthful energy of a newcomer I kept trudging this road with just enough of a ray of light ahead. I had come, I had come to, and I had slowly come to believe that a power much greater than me could and WOULD restore me to sanity.”

Oscar O.

And finally, an oldie but a goodie from the archives:

Step 2: “I learned that a power greater than myself was not me, my boyfriend, girlfriends or sponsor. That power could be the group, however. It took 3 years just to ask what is ‘sanity.’ I learned to depend on the Spirit instead of the spirits.”

Lillian M. September, 2001

## Meeting of the Month

### Lazy Birds

Prescott AA is blessed with avian creatures! Rise with the sun and you can run into Crazy Birds or Girlie Birds. Or, if you need a bit more sleep, check out Lazy Birds, nesting at Safe Harbor Sundays at 10:30 a.m. That's where I went recently and was uplifted by the shares I heard.

Lazy Birds is a one-hour, open women's meeting with a very inclusive atmosphere. Attendance typically is in the 20-25 range, many from recovery homes. Tradition Three is followed, which means you only need to identify as someone who doesn't wish to drink. (Note: Children are not allowed due to the facility's operating agreement.) Coffee flows freely and the group celebrates monthly anniversaries, 1-11, as well as annual AA birthdays.

The group is looking for more women with time and solid sobriety to “carry the message” and help newly sober women in recovery to work the 12 Steps. The group does not sell literature currently due to inadequate 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition contributions.

Cathy N.

## Concept Two:

**“When, in 1955, the A.A. groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference—excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter—the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.”**

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## Confessions of an AA 'Non-Theist'

One of my primary struggles with the AA program is its reliance upon God. The knowledge that AA was a God-based program kept me from the program for a long time. I was raised in an atheist/agnostic household. My father worshipped the intellect, not a higher power. The only time I spent in church (or any house of religion) was for weddings and funerals. I was also raised with a love of history and can tell you a lot about the various wars fought in the name of assorted faiths. So, there was not much God or spirituality in my house.

I spent years vacillating between whether I was agnostic or atheist. I strongly doubted the existence of God but always came back to the idea that, as Socrates put it, "The only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing." Who am I to say there is no God? But I also will not flatly deny the existence of Vishnu, Nirvana, or Zeus. If one is possible all are possible. I lack proof either way.

I finally quit the debating society and came to the realization that I am a "non-theist." Let me explain. The basis of non-theism is the idea that the God question is insoluble. It cannot be proved one way or another, so I simply go on with life as best I can without worrying about it. At this point the existence or non-existence of a God or gods is irrelevant to me. I don't know and it's likely I will never know, so I don't really bother thinking about it.

The hitch is that I am in a program which has as one of its fundamental tenets reliance upon a higher power. So the question becomes how to reconcile two such contradictory positions.

I am extremely thankful to the AA program for making the God hoop really big, especially as it is spelled out in *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. The literature and my fellow members told me that all I needed was to find a belief in something more powerful than myself. Well, that's easy enough. The first two things that popped into my head were gravity and electricity. My father died from being electrocuted and falling out of a tree, so I knew these were powers greater than me. But I was unwilling to turn my will over to them.

I spent a fair amount of time pondering what power I *could* give myself to and ultimately chose the universe. This decision has worked out wonderfully for me. The beauty of the universe is that it encompasses everything without ascribing any sort of intelligence behind it. When I am a speaker at meetings I usually spend a little bit of time talking about this power greater than myself. First I look at the universe on the cosmic level. The Hubble Telescope was pointed at one square centimeter of dark night sky for two weeks, and the images it provided were amazing. In this tiny patch of dark (to the naked eye) sky there were over two dozen galaxies. Galaxies – like the Milky Way or Andromeda galaxy. Over two dozen in one tiny patch of dark night sky.

As someone with anxiety I can attest that realization takes the pressure off. My life matters not at all in the grand scheme of things, so it is okay if I mess up. However, as someone who also has depression, this idea is a bit disconcerting. If nothing matters, than what is the point of trying to stay sober, or even getting out of bed in the morning? This is where the other side of the universe comes in, and that is the atomic side. All the atoms of the universe – the atoms that make up you, me, my computer, the newsletter or device you are using to read this article, and the planets in those far distant galaxies – all of them come from the death of stars. We are literally made up of the universe. And that makes me feel so connected to everything and everyone. To quote Carl Sagan: "We are all star stuff."

Philosophically these two aspects of the universe mean (at least to me) that if nothing matters then everything matters. If all we have is the here and now – if there is no promise of an afterlife, if nothing truly matters – then all we have is the present. This one moment in time is everything, and what I choose to do with this moment in time is all that matters. I choose to write this article hoping it will be published and maybe help other people who struggle with the higher power concept.

Okay, so you have a philosophical sense of the importance of the moment. But what about giving your will over to it? How does that work? To this I respond with balance. The Universe exists in balance or seeks to exist in balance. It might be a cold and indifferent balance but there is balance and harmony to the Universe. And I can tell when I am trying to push against the balance. When I take my will back I am pushing against the balance that exists. It both causes me pain and is an act of futility. But when I remember to breathe in and out, accept the things I cannot change, and remember to go with the harmony instead of against it, I let go of my will and accept the situation the way it is. Only then can I move forward and do the next right thing.

There are some who say I am doomed to relapse because I do not have faith in a "real" higher power – a higher power that is backed by intelligence. To them I say, what I have is working for me today, and today is all we have. This is a 24 hour program. Maybe my lack of faith will hurt me in the end and maybe it won't. But there is no point in fretting about it right now, because that certainly would cause problems. Instead I choose to use the Universe as my higher power and accept the fact that I might have to expand at a later date. For now what I have is working very well for me, one day at a time.

In conclusion, what does a dyslexic, agnostic insomniac do? Stays up all night pondering the existence of Dog.

Colyn GN.

## **CHILI COOK OFF!!!**

**Saturday, February 4, 2017**

**1:30 to 3:00 pm**

**First Congregational Church  
216 E. Gurley St., Prescott**

**\$6 All you can eat**

**50/50 Raffle**

**Best chili gets a prize**

**All proceeds go towards the**

**“Spiritual Experience Prescott Convention”**

**More info: Corrine 928 266-8090**

## **District 14-142 is Hosting a St. Patrick’s Day Pancake Breakfast Saturday, March 18th, 8:00 am - 11:00 am**

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church  
7763 E. Long Look Dr., Prescott Valley**

**Speakers will be:**

**ASCYPAA at 9:00 am**

**AA at 9:45 am**

## **4th ANNUAL YUMA ROUNDUP**

**“There is a Solution”**

**February 17-19, 2017**

**Arizona Western College  
2020 S. Avenue 8E**

**Schoening Conference Center  
Yuma, AZ 85365**

**More info: [www.yumaroundup.org](http://www.yumaroundup.org)**

## **WICKENBURG ONE-DAY ROUNDUP**

**Sunday, March 5, 2017**

**10:00 am to 4:00 pm**

**Wickenburg Community Center  
160 North Valentine St.**

## **27th Annual West Valley Roundup**

**“Attitude of Gratitude”**

**March 10, 11 & 12, 2017**

**Lake Pleasant Regional Park, Peoria, AZ**

**More info: Barbara Z. 602 819-3148**

## **2017 AZ Area 03 Pre-Conference Assembly**

**March 31 - April 2, 2017**

**Double Tree by Hilton in Flagstaff  
1175 Historic Route 66**

**More details at [www.area03.org](http://www.area03.org)**

## **2017 Arizona AA Convention Update**

Planning continues apace for the first statewide AA convention to be held in Prescott since 1989. The dates are Sept. 29-Oct. 1, 2017, and the location is the Prescott Resort Center.

Some 40 area members were on hand for the organizing committee’s monthly meeting on Jan. 17, where the highlight was approval of a logo which will appear on registration forms, T-shirts and other materials promoting the convention all over the state. The logo consists of concentric circles around the AA triangle reminding us of our commitments to Unity, Service and Recovery. Another circle contains the words of the convention’s theme – “Mile High Spiritual Experience,” and the outer circle says “Arizona State Convention 2017” and “Yavapai County.”

In other business, program chairman Adam M. presented a tentative schedule of meetings and other activities during the three day event. Main speakers on the schedule include Bill N. from Atlanta, GA, Sheldon F. from Las Vegas, Sarah P. of Phoenix, and Chris W. from Gilbert, AZ. An AI-Anon speaker has yet to be announced. The tentative program also includes workshops on the Steps and Traditions, guided meditations, Spanish speaking, Native American and old-timers sessions.

Entertainment chairwoman DeAnn B. has already prepared extensive lists of Prescott points of Interest, campgrounds, hotels and restaurants ready to serve out-of-town visitors. At next month’s organizing committee meeting, proposals for a golf tournament and a “poker run” for both bikers and motorists are to be considered. Registration forms are expected to be ready by April.

There is still much work to be done and more volunteers are needed. Planning meetings are held at the Prescott Resort on the third Tuesday of every month at 6:30 p.m. The next one is Feb. 21.

**Be there or be square!**

For more information contact committee chairman Tom S. at 602-531-6706 or at [4thchapter@q.com](mailto:4thchapter@q.com).

## **Tradition Two:**

**“For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as he may express himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.”**

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## Prescott Area Intergroup's 2016 Year to Date Treasurer's Report

GROUP DONATIONS	YTD
164 Group	\$36.00
4 Directions Grp	\$400.00
Afterwards Group	\$1,800.00
Alternatives	\$130.00
AZ AA Women's Conference	\$500.00
Bradshaw Seniors Meeting	\$512.60
Carry This Message	\$977.46
Crazy Birds	\$800.00
Free Thinkers	\$300.00
Friday Big Book Solutions	\$100.00
Girlie Birds	\$1,654.00
God Sticks Group	\$440.00
Healing the Hole in the Soul	\$584.00
Humboldt Men's Stag Meeting	\$900.00
Intergroup Meeting	\$303.00
Mayer Higher Power Hour	\$100.00
Noon BB Discussion	\$387.00
Old Shoe (Skull Valley)	\$410.00
Open AA Meeting	\$790.00
Park Avenue Group	\$989.22
Prescott Group	\$262.00
Prescott Shoestring Roundup	\$2,317.31
Principles B4 Your Personality	\$868.00
PV As Bill Sees It	\$146.00
PV Diamonds in the Rough	\$150.00
PV Friday Night Speaker Mtg.	\$475.00
PV Gut Rap Group	\$187.88
PV Keep It Simple	\$901.00
PV Lushes t' Ladies	\$565.03
PV No Name Group	\$394.00
PV Noon Group	\$1,067.62
PV Reflections	\$120.00
PV Sat. Nite Live	\$20.00
PV Serenity Seekers	\$150.00
PV There Is a Solution	\$73.00
PV Wed Step Study	\$30.00
PV Welcome Valley	\$245.00
Round Table Meeting	\$686.25
Rush Hour	\$351.00
Seniors In Sobriety	\$400.30
Serenity At Sunrise	\$1,932.40
Sober Men's Stag	\$800.00
Step Stories	\$150.00
Sun. AM Men's Stag	\$1,465.45
Sunday Morning AA Solutions	\$220.00
Sunny Days	\$309.92
The Slice Of Life	\$1,250.00
Thurs Men's Stag	\$322.00

GROUP DONATIONS	YTD
Toolbox Group	\$970.00
Tuesday Night Step Study	\$50.00
Working Girls	\$115.00
Yarnell Women's Group	\$50.25
<b>November Gratitude</b>	
Afterwards Group	\$111.54
Alternatives Group	\$50.00
Anonymous	\$10.00
Carry This Message	\$94.25
Chino Group	\$66.00
Friday BB Solutions	\$32.00
Healing The Hole In The Soul	\$49.00
Humboldt Men's Stag	\$101.00
Lushes T' Ladies	\$63.00
Mayer Higher Power Hour	\$50.00
Park Ave.	\$82.10
Prescott Group	\$17.44
PV As Bill Sees It	\$56.00
PV Friday Night Speaker	\$64.00
PV Noon Group	\$98.00
PV Roadmap to Recovery	\$23.00
Round Table Meeting	\$56.66
Serenity At Sunrise	\$521.11
Step Stories	\$111.25
Sun Men's Stag	\$49.09
Sun. Morning AA Solutions	\$80.00
Sunny Days	\$103.85
Toolbox Group	\$156.20
Working Girls	\$11.00
<b>TOTAL November Gratitude</b>	<b>\$2,056.49</b>
<b>TOTAL GROUP DONATIONS</b>	<b>\$31,214.18</b>
<b>OTHER INCOME</b>	
AA Birthday Gratitude	\$128.00
Alcathon 7th Tradition	\$137.00
Anonymous IG Donations	\$3,360.50
Founders' Day Event	\$177.68
Literature Sales	\$17,459.74
Chips Etc.	\$4,109.10
Meeting Directory Sales	\$295.50
Newsletter Sales	\$270.00
Picnics	\$912.86
<b>TOTAL OTHER INCOME</b>	<b>\$26,850.38</b>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$58,064.56</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$59,597.33</b>
<b>INCOME LESS EXPENSES</b>	<b>-\$1,532.77</b>
<b>Total Monies 12/31/16</b>	<b>\$29,440.75</b>
<b>Literature &amp; Chips</b>	<b>\$9,943.00</b>



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