

The MESSSENGER

Middle Tennessee Central Office Intergroup

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Step 5: the Importance of Being Choosy

MAY 2022

One AA's search for the right person to listen

I did my last Fifth Step four years ago over the course of several afternoons with my sponsor. Not until then did I understand why the "Twelve and Twelve" makes such a big deal about who you choose to have listen to your Fifth Step.

When I was drinking, I wasn't too choosy about anything. When the courts got hold of me and suggested I might want to go to AA meetings instead of the county jail, I drank my way through meetings for the next year, sharing steadily about how I was drunk today but for the grace of God. Then I experienced the happy ending that all drunk-alogs in AA contain--the desperation to ask for help. I wasn't choosy then either--I picked the first person who seemed to be sober and happy. He told me exactly what he did every day to stay away from a drink and strongly suggested I do what he did if I wanted to stay away from a drink that day. I tried it and it worked.

After a year of not drinking and taking most of the suggestions, my sponsor sat me down and said, rather kindly, that I might get more benefit from working the Steps than calling him every day and complaining about every facet of my existence. Every day from then on when I called my sponsor, he asked if I had done my Fourth Step yet. After three months,

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TRADITION FIVE

Each group has but one primary purpose. to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

"SHOEMAKER, stick to thy last". . .better do one thing supremely well than many badly. That is the central theme of this tradition. Around it our society gathers in unity. The very life of our fellowship requires the preservation of this principle.

Alcoholics Anonymous can be likened to a group of physicians who might find a cure for cancer, and upon whose concerted work would depend the answer for sufferers of

this disease. True, each physician in such a group might have his own specialty. Every doctor concerned would at times wish he

Responsibility Statement

I am responsible, when anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of AA always to be there, and for that I am responsible.



could devote himself to his chosen field rather than work only with the group. But once these men had hit upon a cure, once it became apparent that only by their united effort could this be accomplished, then all

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Step 5: the Importance of Being Choosy

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I'd had enough and I sat down and wrote it out per his suggestion in one sitting. The next time I called with my complaints, he asked the same question and I gloated with the opportunity to ask, "When are you ready to listen?"

He called me over to his house on a snowy night and said, "So what's the most embarrassing thing you have on there?"

I told him the fifth most embarrassing item on my list and then I read along my Fourth Step columns, then on to my part in each resentment, then my fears, and finally we got to the sex. I hadn't done anything he hadn't done or, at least wished he'd done--or so he said to put me at more ease. All the while he took little notes, which were to be my helpful guide to my character defects.

When I was finished, he again asked what I had omitted. He didn't ask if there was something I had omitted, he simply said, "Now you can tell me what you left out." So I told him.

"Is that it?" he asked.

"Yes," I said.



"Congratulations, you just did your Fifth Step," he said. Then I went to throw the Fourth Step in the fire. He suggested I not do that because that was my Eighth Step list.

More years went by and I was floundering and stalled in sobriety. One night I met a man who was younger than I was and had less time sober than me but I liked his message and his approach to the Steps, so I asked him for help. He took me through the Steps yet again.

After weeks of scribbling, I had about sixty pages filled with resentments, fears, and sex issues. We met in his apartment at ten in the evening. There was no smoking in his home--a sign of how much time had passed between my first Fifth Step with my first sponsor and this one--and he offered me tea instead of coffee.

I raced through my resentments and he stopped me dead in my tracks on page two. "Could you say that again?" he asked. "Sure." I repeated the resentment name, why I was angry, what it affected, and then my part in it. "Do you really think that was your only part in it?" he asked. I could see this was going to be a very long evening. I was on page two of a sixty-page document, and he was already quibbling. "I think," he said, "that what you did was wrong, that she had no part in it, and that you should add this and this and this to your part in it." "Oh," I said.

We were stuck on this point for a long, long time. Three hours and no cigarettes later, I was at the boiling point, arguing at 2:00 A.M. on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. "Listen," I said, "we have fifty-eight more pages to get through."

(Continued on page 3)

GOD,
grant me the
Serenity
to accept the things
I cannot CHANGE;
Courage
to CHANGE
the things I can;
and
Wisdom
to know the DIFFERENCE.

Step 5: the Importance of Being Choosy

(Continued from page 2)

That's when the suggestion of picking the right person to hear your Fifth Step came loud and clear to me. He told me if I didn't agree with his perception, then I wasn't alcoholic--just a sociopath. He added that if we couldn't get past this one point then there was no point at all in reading the rest of the fifty-eight pages. Then he told me we were done with the Fifth Step, congratulated me on my work, and showed me the door.

This was a dispiriting experience. I had been in AA long enough to know that the young man didn't have enough experience to know what he was talking about, but I was thrown. The next afternoon I went to my regular AA meeting and shared my experience and after the meeting I met a man who said he would be happy to hear my Fifth Step and to help in any way possible. He was older than I and had more time in AA than I did and had a drinking history that made sense to me and a recovery that was attractive to me.

We met over the course of several afternoons in my apartment, and I read every word of the now sixty-two page document (making room for my fresh new resentment).

Over the course of this Fifth Step, I came again to the same resentment that had proved to be such a sticking point with the previous sponsor. The resentment was so strong that I had repeated it several times in the course of the sixty pages and by the third mention I saw that I put the name, and precisely, to the word, my part in it as the previous sponsor had suggested. If only we'd gone a little further on, the young sponsor would have been satisfied, at least with that detail.

When I was almost finished with this Step, I came to some last details. I mentioned them to the man who was listening to me and he started to have an emotional response. I was surprised because I had never mentioned this one fact of my life to anyone before. It certainly had nothing to do with drinking, at least not explicitly. I asked what was wrong and he thanked me for sharing that detail and said how much it touched him to be told such a thing.

It was at that moment that I really felt what the "Twelve and Twelve" promises us: that we will no longer feel alone. For an alcoholic, that is precisely like having a life for the first time

*ANONYMOUS | NEW YORK, NEW YORK
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An obnoxious drunk stumbles into the front door of a bar and orders a drink, the bartender says, "No way, buddy, you're too drunk."

A few minutes later, the drunk comes in through the bathroom. Again he slurs, "Give me a drink," and the bartender says, "No, man, I told you last time, you're too drunk"

Five minutes later the guy comes in through the back door and orders a drink, again the bartender says, "You're too drunk"

The drunk scratches his head and says "Dang, I must be. The last two places said the same thing."

*Addiction
changes you.
Recovery
makes you...
wiser and stronger.
You will love deeper and work
harder. You will smile at the
little things and laugh at the
chaos life brings.
Now you can say that you are a
Survivor.*

Tradition Five

(Continued from page 1)

of them would feel bound to devote themselves solely to the relief of cancer. In the radiance of such a miraculous discovery, any doctor would set his other ambitions aside, at whatever personal cost.

Just as firmly bound by obligation are the members of Alcoholics Anonymous, who have demonstrated that they can help problem drinkers as others seldom can. The unique ability of each AA to identify himself with and bring recovery to the newcomer in no way depends upon his learning, eloquence, or on any special individual skills. The only thing that matters is that he is an alcoholic who has found a key to sobriety. These legacies of suffering and of recovery are easily passed among alcoholics, one to the other. This is our gift from God, and its bestowal upon others like us is the one aim that today animates AAs

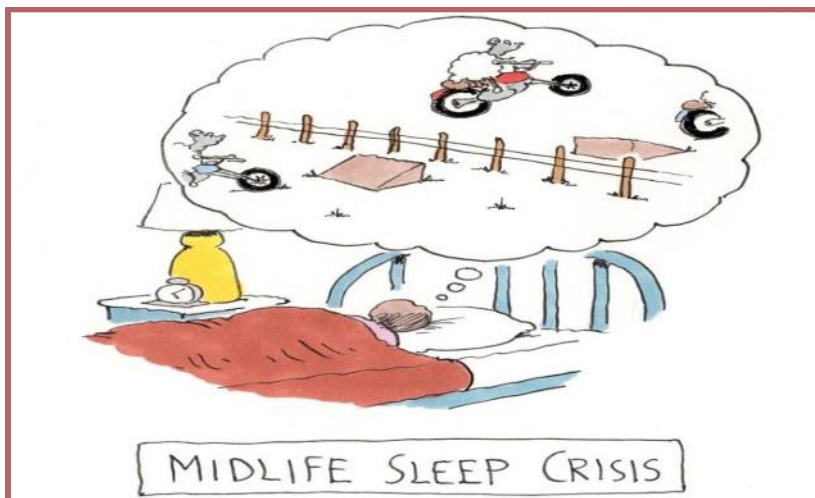
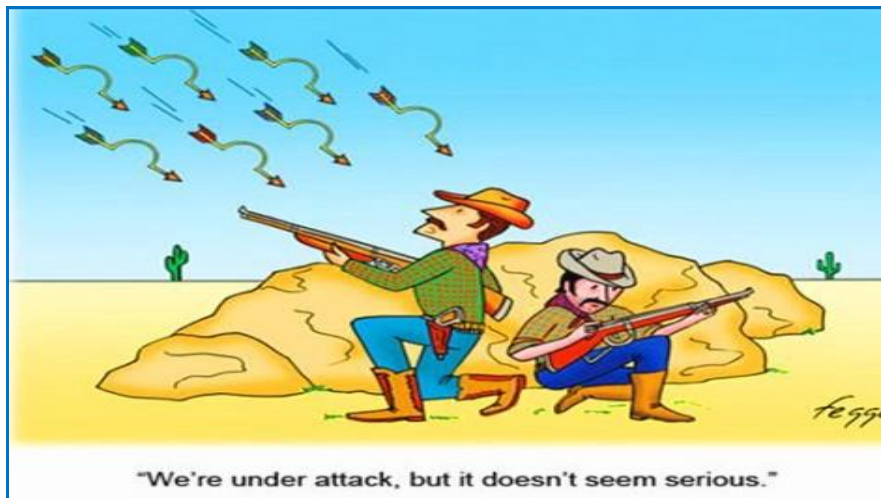
all around the globe.

There is another reason for this singleness of purpose. We know that we can seldom keep the precious gift of sobriety unless we give it away. If a group of doctors possessed a cancer cure they might be conscience-stricken if they failed their mission through self-seeking. Yet such a failure wouldn't jeopardize their personal survival. For us, if we neglect those who are still sick, there is unremitting danger to our own lives and sanity. Under these compulsions of self-preservation, duty, and love, it is not strange that our society has concluded that it has but one high mission. . .to carry the AA message to those who don't know there's a way out.

Highlighting the wisdom of AA's single purpose, a member tells this story:

"Restless one day, I felt I'd better do some

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FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH:
District 30 Meeting
When: 6:30pm – 7:30pm
Where: 5925 O'Brien

SECOND MONDAY OF EVERY MONTH:
Intergroup Meeting
When: 5:45pm – 6:45pm
Where: Central Office
417 Welshwood

STEERING COMMITTEE
When: Monday Jul 25th
5:45pm – 6:45pm
Where: Central Office
417 Welshwood

FIRST TUESDAY OF EVERY MONTH:
District 32 Meeting
When: 6:30pm
Where: Last Stop Club
2122 Utopia

SECOND SATURDAY OF EVERY MONTH
District 34 Meeting
When: 10am
Where: 200 E. Cedar St
Goodlettsville

Acceptance

In AA we are taught, acceptance is the key
That opens up the door, to our sobriety
Accept that we have lost control, not sure if we can mend
But who wants to admit the fact, we fight it to the end?

As we approach our bottom, still holding on to hope
Tomorrow will be different, no more booze, no pills no dope
Then tomorrow comes, nothing has changed, it's still the same old script
We're high again, we know despair, it's got us in its grip

Some of us hard drinkers had a moment when we knew
The gig was up, our cupboard bare, we were the lucky few
Who found the rooms with folks like us, to show what we could be?
If we would just accept this fact, a chance to set us free

Accept we did, we could not keep pretending any more
All hope was gone, we cried out for the life we had before
We made a firm commitment to regain what we had lost
From years of alcohol abuse, 'twas time to pay the cost

But there were times at meeting when we struggled to accept
What other members had to say, we wanted to protest
Yet, we knew the meeting's not the place to voice our disapproval
Or try to see them chastised or suggesting their removal

Tolerance for others does not have to mean acceptance
We have the right to disagree, no need for acquiescence
When offended by their actions or the thing they chose to share
Call them aside at meetings end and get your feelings aired

A member called another out for what was on his shirt
A slogan that he did not like, his feelings to exert
A hush descended on the room, most members were unsure
If they should tell this fellow he was acting like a boor

At meetings end a member did approach this other speaker
Explained the meetings not the place to vent like he's a preacher
Suggested that when he's upset by someone's words or actions
Once the meetings done there's time to convey your reaction

That member in the corner adds his atheistic views
And most the others members feel his thinking is confused
But because he's staying sober and he keeps on coming back
We tolerate his opinion, just not accept it as a fact

We're not required to accept all other members say
Yet, we need to practice tolerance, keep our animus at bay
After all we're only human, with our assets and our flaws
And when someone irritates us, that's the time to take a pause

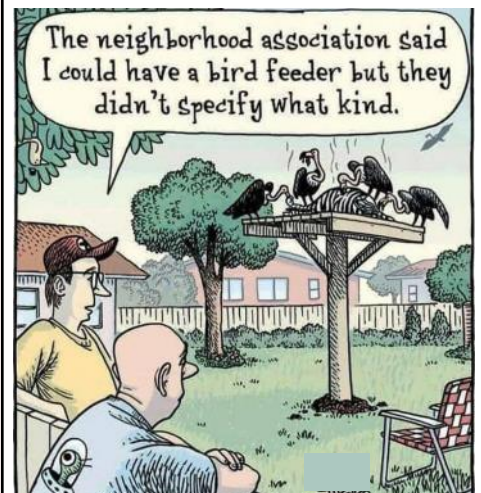
Larry R.



The cost of gas in Boston

I visited Boston last week and learned a new term that is apparently local to them. When referring the cost of gas, they said it was a "nominal egg". How quirky.

I asked an old timer about its origins and he looked at me funny and said slowly, "An arm and a leg"!



I remember having these little plastic cut out shapes to help with drawing when I was little.

I used to be really obsessive about them actually, I'd spend hours. Drawing. There would always be more to draw around.

Then I had this realization, that I'd never be done. I'd never run out before I could finish. It was weirdly horrifying and morbid.

But anyway that's the story of my first extra stencil crisis.

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Twelfth Step work. Maybe I should take out some insurance against a slip. But first I'd have to find a drunk to work on.

"So I hopped the subway to Town's Hospital where I asked Dr. Silkworth if he had a prospect. "Nothing too promising,' the little doc said, 'There's just one chap on the third floor who might be a possibility. But he's an awfully tough Irishman. I never saw a man so obstinate. He shouts that if his partner would treat him better, and his wife would leave him alone, he'd soon solve his alcohol problem. He's had a bad case of d.t.'s, he's pretty foggy, and he's very suspicious of everybody. Doesn't sound too good, does it? But working with him may do something for you, so why don't you have a go at it?'

"I was soon sitting beside a big hulk of a man. Decidedly unfriendly, he stared at me out of eyes which were slits in his red and swollen face. I had to agree with the doctor. . .he certainly didn't look good. But I told him my own story, I explained what a wonderful fellowship we had, how well we understood each other. I bore down hard on the hopelessness of the drunk's dilemma. I insisted that few drunks could ever get well on their own steam, but that in our groups we could do together what we could not do separately. He interrupted to scoff at this and asserted he'd fix his wife, his partner, and his alcoholism by himself. Sarcastically he asked, 'How much does your scheme cost?' I was thankful I could tell him 'Nothing at all.' His next question: 'What are *you* getting out of it?' Of course my answer was, 'My own sobriety and a mighty happy life. Still dubious, he demanded, 'Do you really mean the only reason you are here is to try and help me and to help yourself?' 'Yes,' I said, 'That's absolutely all there is to it. There's no angle.'

"Then, hesitantly, I ventured to talk about the spiritual side of our program. What a freeze that drunk gave me! I'd no sooner got

the word 'spiritual' out of my mouth than he pounced. 'Oh!' he said. 'Now I get it! You're proselyting for some damn religious sect or other. Where do you get that 'no angle' stuff? I belong to a great church that means everything to me. You've got a nerve to come in here talking religion!'

"Thank heaven I came up with the right answer for that one. It was based foursquare on the single purpose of AA. 'You have faith,' I said 'Perhaps far deeper faith than mine, No doubt you're better taught in religious matters than I. So I can't tell you anything about religion. I don't even want to try. I'll bet, too, that you could give me a letter-perfect definition of humility. But from what you've told me about yourself and your problems and how you propose to lick them, I think I know what's wrong.' 'Okay,' he said. 'Give me the business.' 'Well," said I. 'I think you're just a conceited Irishman who thinks he can run the whole show.'

"This really rocked him. But as he calmed down he began to listen while I tried to show him that humility was the main key to sobriety. Finally he saw that I wasn't attempting to change his religious views, that I wanted him to find the grace in his own religion that would aid his recovery. From there on we got along fine.

"Now," concludes the old timer, "Suppose I'd been obliged to talk to this man on religious grounds. Suppose my answer had to be that AA needed a lot of money: that AA went in for education, hospitals, and rehabilitation? Suppose I'd suggested that I'd take a hand in his domestic and business affairs? Where would we have wound up? No place, of course."

Years later this tough Irish customer liked to say, "My sponsor sold me one idea, and that was sobriety. At the time, I couldn't have bought anything else."

Bill W. – September 1952

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I STAND BY THE DOOR

An Apologia for my Life (apologia means “a formal defense of opinions or conduct”)

I stand by the door. I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out. The door is the most important door in the world - it is the door through which men and women walk when they find God (Higher Power).

There is no use my going way inside and staying there, when so many are still outside and they, as much as I, crave to know where the door is. And all that so many ever find is only the wall where the door ought to be. They creep along the wall like blind men and women, with outstretched; groping hands, feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door, yet they never find it. So, **I stand by the door.**

The most tremendous thing in the world is for men and women to find that door - the door to God (Higher Power). The most important thing that any man or woman can do is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands and put it on the latch - the latch that only clicks and opens to the man or woman's own touch.

Men and women die outside the door, as alcoholics die on cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter. Die for want of what is within their grasp. They live on the other side of it - live because they have not found it. Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it, and open it, and walk in, and find Him. So, **I stand by the door.**

Go in great saints; go all the way in - go way down into the cavernous cellars, and way up into the spacious attics. It is a vast, roomy house, this house where God (Higher Power) is. Go into the deepest of hidden casements, of withdrawal, of silence, of

sainthood. Some must inhabit those inner rooms and know the depths and heights of God (Higher Power), and call outside to the rest of us how wonderful it is. Sometimes I take a deeper look in. Sometimes venture in a little farther, but my place seems closer to the opening. So, **I stand by the door.**

There is another reason why I stand there. Some people get part way in and become afraid lest God (Higher Power) and the zeal of His house devour them; for God (Higher Power) is so very great and asks all of us. And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia and want to get out. 'Let me out!' they cry. And the people way inside only terrify them more. Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are spoiled. For the old life, they have seen too much: One taste of God (Higher Power) and nothing but God (Higher Power) will do any more. Somebody must be watching for the frightened who seek to sneak out just where they came in, to tell them how much better it is inside. The people too far in do not see how near these are to leaving - preoccupied with the wonder of it all. Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door but would like to run away. So, for them too, **I stand by the door.**

I admire the people who go way in. But I wish they would not forget how it was before they got in. Then they would be able to help the people who have not yet even found the door. Or the people who want to run away again from God (Higher Power). You can go in too deeply and stay in too long and forget the people outside the door. As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place, near enough to God (Higher Power) to hear Him and know He is there, but not

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I STAND BY THE DOOR

(Continued from page 8)

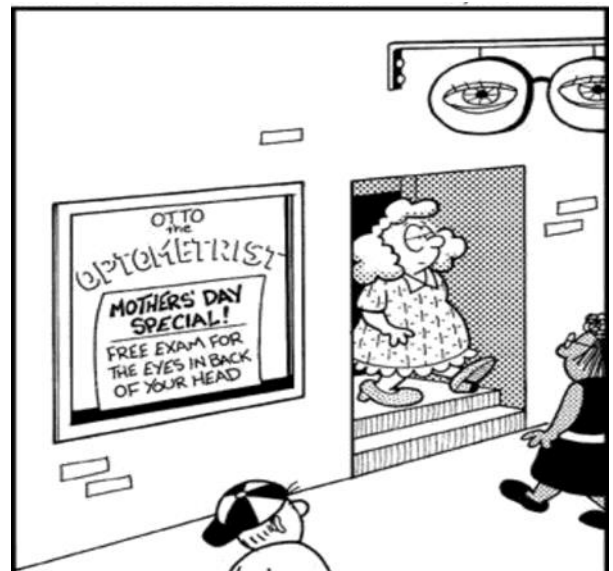
so far from men as not to hear them, and remember they are there too. Where? Outside the door - thousands of them. Millions of them. But - more important for me - one of them, two of them, ten of them. Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch. So, **I shall stand by the door** and wait for those who seek it.

I had rather be a doorkeeper, so **I stand by the door.**

By Sam Shoemaker
(from the Oxford Group)



Happy Mother's Day!



Middle Tennessee Intergroup Association
Statement of Activities - Actual and Budgeted - Schedule 1
For the Three Month and Year Ended March 31, 2022

	March 2022			YTD 2022		
	Actual	Budget	Budget Variance	Actual	Budget	Budget Variance
Income						
Net Literature Sales	3,607.78	2,500.00	1,107.78	9,529.60	7,500.00	2,029.60
Group Donations	8,296.58	6,153.00	2,143.58	20,697.54	18,459.00	2,238.54
Individual Donations	374.91	1,489.33	(1,114.42)	2,943.92	4,467.99	(1,524.07)
Messenger Donations	-	-	-	32.00	-	32.00
Website Donations	-	-	-	-	-	-
Special Events	-	416.67	(416.67)	-	1,250.01	(1,250.01)
Interest	2.32	94.17	(91.85)	7.69	282.51	(274.82)
Total Income	12,281.59	10,653.17	1,628.42	33,210.75	31,959.51	1,251.24
Expenses						
Casual Labor	250.00	250.00	-	750.00	750.00	-
Payroll	6,271.00	6,271.00	-	18,813.00	18,813.00	-
Legal & Professional	350.00	350.00	-	1,050.00	1,050.00	-
Rent	1,046.00	1,100.00	(54.00)	2,938.00	3,300.00	(362.00)
Printing	-	33.33	(33.33)	-	99.99	(99.99)
Payroll Taxes	480.00	483.33	(3.33)	1,440.00	1,449.99	(9.99)
Repairs & Maintenance	50.00	29.18	20.82	150.00	87.54	62.46
Equipment Rental	141.99	100.00	41.99	347.47	300.00	47.47
Telephone & Fax	601.35	515.00	86.35	1,854.97	1,545.00	309.97
Answering Service	173.10	250.00	(76.90)	556.95	750.00	(193.05)
Postage	298.52	113.00	185.52	672.66	339.00	333.66
Office Supplies	27.85	183.33	(155.48)	40.34	549.99	(509.65)
Bank Service Charges	50.00	40.00	10.00	152.00	120.00	32.00
Computer & Technology	87.40	208.33	(120.93)	284.06	624.99	(340.93)
Credit Card Service Fees	114.95	85.00	29.95	415.74	255.00	160.74
Intergroup Expense	250.81	100.00	150.81	268.81	300.00	(31.19)
Insurance	-	166.67	(166.67)	1,525.00	500.01	1,024.99
Special Events	-	125.00	(125.00)	-	375.00	(375.00)
Travel	-	250.00	(250.00)	(125.00)	750.00	(875.00)
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	-	-	-
Depreciation	-	-	-	-	-	-
Over/Under	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Expenses	10,192.97	10,653.17	(460.20)	31,134.00	31,959.51	(825.51)
Net Income	2,088.62	-	2,088.62	2,076.75	-	2,076.75

GROUP / MEETING	MAR 2022	YTD	GROUP / MEETING	MAR 2022	YTD
86'ers		138	MEN'S LOG CABIN	289	289
AWOL		77	MONTEREY FRIDAY NIGHT		100
BACKROOM	514	1,826	MURFREESBORO	15	45
BY THE BOOK, DICKSON		100	MUSIC ROW		25
BY THE BOOK, LEBANON		40	MUSTARD SEED	300	300
CELEBRATE SERENITY		548	NIPPER'S CORNER		100
CENTERVILLE		9	N.O.W.		236
COLUMBIA		90	ONE PURPOSE	25	75
COMFORT ZONE		250	ONE STEP CLOSER		164
CROSSVILLE NONSMKIN' STEP		42	OPEN DOOR		132
CROSSVILLE NOONERS		135	OUT TO BREAKFAST		250
CROSSVILLE SERENITY	100	100	PAGE 112		100
DAVIDSON RD	1,500	1,500	PORTLAND UNITY	25	50
DESIGN FOR LIVING		511	PRIMARY PURPOSE MURF'		49
DOUBLE DIPPERS		140	PULASKI	15	45
EAST SIDE MEN'S STAGE		750	RECOVERY ON THE ROW		300
EAST SIDE SATURDAY		323	ROBERTSON COUNTY	11	41
EASTSIDE SUNLIGHTERS	302	302	SAFE HARBOR	100	100
FAIRVIEW		250	SAFE PLACE	160	160
FAYETTEVILLE	25	50	SANGO SOLUTIONS		120
FIRST THINGS FIRST		699	SATURDAY NIGHT ALIVE		60
FRANKLIN	1,000	1,000	SHADE TREE	24	1,303
FRANKLIN MEN'S	500	500	SMYRNA GRATITUDE	198	801
FREE TO BE		139	SOBRIETY FIRST LEBANON		100
FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE	25	25	SPRING HILL		39
G.A.A. GALLATIN	25	25	SPIRITUAL WARFARE	500	500
GIFT OF DESPERATION		625	STRAGGLERS		75
HAPPY HOUR		30	THERE IS A SOLUTION		210
HERMITAGE WOMEN'S		571	WAKE UP		26
INTERGROUP		4	WANGL	19	19
KEEP IT SIMPLE		19	WEST NASHVILLE		40
KEY TO SOBRIETY		100	WEST MEADE	200	200
LAST HOUSE ON THE BLOCK		20	WOMAN'S WAY		150
LATE LUNCH BUNCH	2,000	2,000	WOMEN IN THE SOLUTION		100
LAWRENCEBURG	100	100	WOMEN'S FREEDOM		600
LIVE AND LET LIVE		100	GROUP MONTHLY TOTALS	8,297	20,698
LIVE AND LET LIVE, COOKEVILLE		6	INDIVIDUALS	375	2,944
LIVING THE PRINCIPLES	235	235	MESSENGER	-	32
LIVING BY THE PRINT		300	COMBINED TOTALS TO DATE	8,671	23,673
LIVINGSTON 12x12		25			

**Middle Tennessee
Central Intergroup
Association**

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fax. 615.834.5982
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