

# BETTER TIMES

December 2011

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Sunday December 25th, 2011, 9:30 AM to 4:00 PM

Emmanuel-Howard Park United Church, Roncesvalles & Wright Avenue  
 (214 Wright Ave., Northwest Corner of Roncesvalles and Wright Ave.)

**BETTER TIMES** is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

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Opinions expressed in **BETTER TIMES** are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup.  
**How To Reach Us:** Submit group news, medallions, other event notices, letters to the editor or articles to **BETTER TIMES** (before the 10th of the month prior to the month of issue), by mail, fax or email. Only signed submissions with a means of contact will be accepted. For subscriptions call Alexx at 416-487-8110.

**T**his year, like every year since 1944, hundreds of AA people gather to attend meetings, greet newcomers, listen to music, and enjoy a seasonal dinner. In recent years members of Al-anon and Alateen have joined us in celebration of the season.

During this time of the year we try to enhance our winter sobriety with an open fellowship with family and friends: to provide an atmosphere of gratitude and responsibility creating a positive "remember when" for the holiday season.

The day is filled with Meetings (Open and Closed) starting at 10:30am, which includes a Keynote Speaker Meeting at 1:00 pm in the main room, and Gratitude

Open Meeting at 3 pm. Lots of music: both live and recorded. A Holiday meal with turkey, ham, and all the trimmings will be served starting at 11:00am. Coffee, tea and sweets throughout the day, and don't miss the prize drawings.

Directions to the Winter Season Open house are: Take the Subway to Dundas West Station, then take 504 Streetcar to Roncesvalles & Wright Ave or take the 501 Queen Streetcar to Roncesvalles, transfer to the 504 Streetcar to Roncesvalles & Wright Ave, walk west to 214 Wright Ave.

Volunteers are needed for various positions such as cooking, greeting, setting-up, and car pool drivers, musical talent and many more.

Please contact the WSOH Chair at 647-333-6415 or Secretary at 647-348-1282 or you can send an email to [winter@aatoronto.org](mailto:winter@aatoronto.org).

The Winter Season Open House Committee will be meeting on Saturday, December 17th, 2011 at 1:30 pm at 234 Eglinton Ave. East, Suite 202. All AA Members are invited to attend.

If you wish to make a donation, please make a cheque payable to the "Greater Toronto Intergroup" with WSOH on the memo line and mail it to 234 Eglinton Ave E., Suite 202, Toronto, ON M4P 1K5, or bring to the 2011 Open House. **Hope to see you there!**



## 34th ANNUAL SPIRITUAL NEW YEAR'S EVE DANCE AND POT-LUCK BUFFET

**Saturday, December 31, 2011**  
**Holy Rosary Parish Hall**  
**356 St. Clair Ave. W.**  
**Toronto, Ontario**

Saturday December 31, 2011. East of Bathurst (St. Clair West subway station). Open AA & Al-Anon meetings at 8:30 pm. Dance and Pot Luck Buffet in the hall at 10 pm. Gratitude Service at 11:15 pm. Admission \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door. Pot Luck! Please bring food to share. Anyone interested in volunteering or in just getting active should attend. Inquiries? Call John P. 416-460-7956.

# CHRISTMAS PAST AND PRESENT

The Christmas season can be a difficult time of year for many alcoholics, whether we are sober or still practicing. Better Times asked two members to share their experience with the hope that the stories may lighten this time of year and perhaps even inspire our readers.

Ted D. – RG Traditional

## Christmases Past

There's probably no time of year as meaningful to me in sobriety as Christmas. Christmas, after all, is the story of birth, redemption, the ultimate second chance. And what is AA if not a story of rebirth and second chances. Even so, it can be an extraordinarily difficult time of year for recovering alcoholics, especially those of us in early sobriety. Two "Remember Whens" of Christmases past always help me be grateful for, and safely survive, the holiday season. Over the Christmas of 1990, I was in a treatment centre. On Christmas Eve that year, I sat in a gym with four other clients. There was a professional baseball player from the U.S., an Inuit soapstone carver from Iqaluit, a former ballerina, the wealthy son of a business family, and me. For the first time, I understood this disease of addiction for its totally democratic nature. There was almost nothing other than addiction that could have brought the five of us together in one room on a Christmas Eve. Whatever it was that differentiated us, and there was lots, it was the one thing we had in common, addiction that had become the defining feature and life and death challenge of our lives. That night, I began to identify, rather than compare. It was the start of getting better. Years later, at my home group of North Toronto, the minister of the church in which our meetings were held brought Christmas greetings. He told us about Lessons from Geese. He told us that geese flying together in the vee formation can fly farther and faster than any one goose flying alone. He told us that the geese take turns in the lead, rotating back when they tire so they can ride on the group's updraft. He told us the geese honk to encourage the leader. He said that if any goose goes to ground, others leave the flock and stay with it until it's able to rejoin the group. To him, the minister told us that sounded a lot like AA. And sometimes, he admitted a little ruefully, the most spiritual thing in his church was what rose up through the air vents from our meetings in the basement. At Christmas, I remember those fellow travellers of 20 years ago from all around the country and beyond. I remember that minister and those geese. Those thoughts remind me who I am, what I need to do, who I need to be with. And they remind me how my sober Christmases are the greatest gift I could receive. Cheers,

Jim O. – North Toronto



## Christmas Present

Normally this time of year there is always a family event. We go to Ottawa. But two years ago my mom passed away, so now it's only the family event with just myself, my father and my brother. It's a lot more somber, introspective thing. We have a quiet dinner. There was some talking. We sort of just get together and be a family. For the longest time there was a lot of trouble, I was an alcoholic, my mother was an alcoholic as well. My father had to deal with the whole thing. So now it's just trying to be a family.

This is going to be my first Christmas completely sober. It's going to be interesting. I'm a little concerned. Last Christmas my father, brother and I got together and there was no drinking, but this year there's a company party and I'm expected to be there so I might just do the obligatory show up, say hi and then quietly leave. The good thing about this is it's going to be held at a restaurant just across the street from our office. So I can just walk in and "do the do", say hello to everyone, the whole thing. It's not going to be a sit down dinner so it'll be much easier for me to just disappear once the president has given his little speech, I can simply go.

I talk to my sponsor at least twice a day and I just started to sponsor someone myself.

Alvero F. – RoxGlen Traditional

## Gratitude and Service

Thanks to all those who have provided service in AA and made financial donations, particularly at GTA Intergroup.

If you are wondering about service or would like to make a contribution please contact us.

We are your organization!

Please consider your support of both service and funds.



# haveyouheard

## Recent Medallions

Allan D.	East York Group	1 Year	Nov. 1
Bob K.	Twelve Traditions Group	20 Years	Nov. 2
Ed L.	Prince Edward Group	5 Years	Nov. 7
Sylvie C.	King City Group	5 Years	Nov. 7
Rod N.	East York Group	25 Years	Nov. 8
Gord R.	Islington Group	25 Years	Nov. 11
Terry J.	Restoration & Recovery Group	20 Years	Nov. 11
Agata B.	Mississauga Group	1 Year	Nov. 13
Ken K.	Prince Edward Group	20 Years	Nov. 14
John A.	East York Group	1 Year	Nov. 15
Neil M.	Unionville Group	5 Years	Nov. 16
Mark S.	Roxglen Group	1 Year	Nov. 17
Fred B.	K.F. Group	25 Years	Nov. 19
Claudio M.	Half Century Group	1 Year	Nov. 20
Kerrye G.	King City Group	1 Year	Nov. 21
Lindsay S.	Prince Edward Group	1 Year	Nov. 21
Dana H.	Bathurst Group	10 Years	Nov. 22
Richard G.	East York Group	25 Years	Nov. 22
Christine P.	New Anchor Group	1 Year	Nov. 24
Kelly B.	Danforth Group	5 Years	Nov. 24
Sam I.	Rexdale United Group	5 Years	Nov. 24
Dave K.	Saturday Morning Discussion Group	30 Years	Nov. 26
Sean B.	Stepping Stones	1 Year	Nov. 26
Dean H.	Half Century Group	1 Year	Nov. 27
Helen C.	Mississauga Group	10 Years	Nov. 27
Peter C.	Prince Edward Group	1 Year	Nov. 28
Emma F.	Credit Valley Group	20 Years	Nov. 28
Shane H.	Brampton Recovery Group	5 Years	Nov. 30

## Upcoming Medallions

Don R.	Hill Group	1 Year	Dec. 1
Jim M.	Hill Group	10 Years	Dec. 1

Wayne M.	Hill Group	1 Year	Dec. 1
Lorraine M.	Stepping Stones Group	1 Year	Dec. 3
Marj W.	Credit Valley Group	20 Years	Dec. 4
Joe C.	District 10, PI chair	35 Years	Dec. 11
Marc G.	Stepping Stones	1 Year	Dec. 10
Gary O.	Living Sober Group	25 Years	Dec. 13
Elise Z.	Unionville Group	1 Year	Dec. 14
Mike M.	Rexdale United Group	25 Years	Dec. 15
Charlie A.	Scarborough Group	1 Year	Dec. 16
Ivan Z.	Unionville Group	1 Year	Dec. 21
Colleen B.	New Anchor Group	5 Years	Dec. 29
Heather M.	Prince Edward Group	20 Years	Jan. 2
Joan (The Hat)	Chartwell Group	35 Years	Jan. 12
Basil C.	Stepping Stones Group	1 Year	Jan. 14
Mary S.	High Park Group	20 Years	Jan. 15
Nino D.	Stepping Stones	20 Years	Jan. 28

## Holiday Cancellations

**CREDIT VALLEY GROUP** Sunday 2:30 PM. Open Sunday meeting scheduled for Sunday December 25th, 2011 and Sunday January 1, 2012 will be cancelled.

## Holiday Office Hours

**Office closed** Friday Dec. 23rd and Monday Dec. 26th.

**Reduced Hours** from the 27th to the 29th of December.

The office will **re-open** on Tuesday January 3rd, 2012.

## Meeting Changes

**NEW FREEDOM DISCUSSION** Saturday 2:00 PM. Meeting is cancelled until the Summer of 2012.

## Things We Cannot Change

Toronto's Amazing Grace group at Blessed Sacrament Church was co-founded by **David D.** in 1992/93. Sadly, he died November, 19, 2010. David D. was in the program for 39 years, a humble leader and inspiration and sponsor to so many over the years.

We sadly have two names to include from Credit Valley. **Gilbert H.** with 38 years and **Bill M.** with 22 years both passed away this year. They were both true pillars of the program and have been sadly missed.

On August 28th the Credit Valley Group lost one of its long time members, and beloved "chipmiester", **Bill M.** Bill was easily recognized by his thick silvery locks, and revered and loved for his ever outstretched hand, his willing hugs, the mischievous twinkle in his eye, and his non-judgemental engaging manner. During his 22 plus years in the fellowship he contributed immeasurably to the sobriety of a countless number of recovered alcoholics. He showed us all AA at its best. We miss him dearly.

The Rexdale United Group, sadly wishes to announce the passing of the last of the groups original founding members. **Jimmy O'F.** who along with Vic A. and Paul P., were considered to be the founding members of the Fellowship, who established the Rexdale United Group on September 13, 1972, Jimmy passed away on October 17, 2011 with 38 years of sobriety. Jimmy was a tireless worker for the Rexdale United Group and AA as a whole, Jimmy continued to sponsor many members up until his passing. He will be sadly missed by all that knew him, and his legacy in AA will continue for years to come.

## MISSISSAUGA FALL ROUNDUP 2011

# A Great Success!

Although the day started off gray and with a drizzle, nothing dampened the spirits of the attendees of the Mississauga Fall Roundup on Oct. 1st. The theme of Courage to Change was woven throughout the speaker presentations, starting with Butch M. from Barrie and finishing with Mildred F. from Toronto.

Our attendees included long-timers, newcomers and also AA's from treatment facilities in our area – Credit Valley, Halton Recovery House, Hope Place and Jean Tweed. At last count, we had 248 people, a MFR record!

Comment forms were distributed at the end of the event. What follows are some of the comments that were made in response to the question, "What did you particularly like?"

"I liked how you had AA, AI-Anon and Alateen. Loved it!"

### Cam H. – Erin Mills

"All the speakers. Food was delicious."

### Annick K. – Bolton AI-Anon/SAM

"Seeing friends." **Robbie H. – Streetsville St. Andrew**

"Great Roundup! Learning much I was denying...Sobriety count-down." **Sharon W. – Courage to Change AI-Anon**

"...it was an amazing day, great speakers and I was very happy that Alanon and Alateen were involved. I am very grateful and was encouraged to continue on my journey." **Elizabeth H.**

Thank you to those who took the time to complete the comments form! Next year's committee will definitely take into consideration all the suggestions made, including changes so that the food lineups are shorter and move more quickly!

Thank you to all of those who volunteered to help in advance – to set up, to provide the lovely linens, and on the spot with whatever was asked. We couldn't have done it without you! Thank you also to those who moved their cars to facilitate wedding parking.

It was the best MFR ever but make sure you come back on Oct. 13th, 2012 so that you can compare!

Yours in love and service,

**The Mississauga Fall Roundup Committee**

# October '11: Intergroup Report

## GENERAL MEETING – TUESDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2011

**ADOPTION OF MINUTES – September 2011: MOTION to adopt Minutes as presented** moved by **Jim O.** (Markland Wood) and seconded by **Joan K.** (North Toronto). **MOTION CARRIED.**

**CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING REMARKS: Barbara H.** (Rox Glen Traditional),

**Chairperson:** Barbara announced that the new **Twelfth Step Chair** is **Rick B.** (Erin Mills).

There was a **collection of the 7th Tradition**, which totaled **\$153.01**.

**Finance Report: Harold Y.** (Port Credit), **Finance Chairperson:** The following report was presented to Floor members: GTA Intergroup Alcoholics Anonymous Finance Report for the month of September 2011.

	Income	Expenses	Net Ordinary Income
September	\$17,251	\$16,885	\$366
Comp. to Budget	\$28,553	\$23,030	\$5,523
Sept. Year to Date	\$267,061	\$273,728	\$(6,667)
Sept. Year to Date Budget	\$251,486	\$287,392	\$(35,906)

Literature and Medallion Sales in September are 23% over the budgeted amount. Total Income for September 2011 is much less than Sept 2010 due to the late gratitude mailing. We are at 28% of the budgeted Gratitude Income for September 2011. The income from Gratitude will be reflected in the Oct 2011 statements. Year-to-date literature sales are right on the budgeted expectation.

Total Income before Operating Expenses for September is at 60% of the budgeted amount; mostly due to the lower amount received this month from Group Donations and Gratitude.

Total expenses for the month of September are 73% of budget. Year-to-date total expenses are 95% of budget.

	Actual Sept.	% of Budget	Actual YTD	% of YTD Budget	Actual Sept. 2010	% Comp. Sept. 2011 to Sept. 2010
Group Donations	\$5914	70%	\$49,709	103%	\$9195	Down 36%
Gratitude	\$3877	28%	\$15,089	56%	\$11,008	Down 65%

Gratitude donations to date are down due to the late Gratitude mailing. Group donations are down by 30%, and down 36% from last year. **Two new Finance Committee members are needed for January (to serve a two-year term).** Five years of continuous sobriety and some business/accounting background is helpful for these service positions. Please send resumes to the Executive Committee c/o 234.

**MOTION to Suspend Regular Business to facilitate an Executive Committee election** moved by **Wes B.** (Long Branch) and seconded by **Dave** (Lakeshore). **MOTION CARRIED.**

Due to a vacancy on the Executive Committee, an Election needed to be held this evening. **Craig** (Back to Basics/Richmond Hill) will serve as the new Executive Committee member (by acclamation).

## SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

**ACCESS ABILITY: Cathy Z., Chairperson:** We will be participating at the Area assembly in Kingston which will give us an opportunity to connect with AA's from areas that do not have an Access Ability Committee. We still have too many closed meetings in the GTA that are not listed as open to sign language interpreters. Please discuss this with your home group and notify Intergroup if your group allows ASL interpreters and if your meeting is wheelchair accessible. We cannot designate a meeting as accessible without accessible washrooms. **Next meeting:** November 20th, 11:00 am at 234. We will not be meeting in December.

**ARCHIVES: Gord H. (Bloordale), Chairperson:** A request for archival equipment acquisitions was approved. **A volunteer is needed** to assist Archives with their display at 234 (a background in interior design would be helpful). **Next meeting:** Fri. Nov. 11 at 7 p.m. at 234.

**CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES:** No meeting held this month, therefore no report was given. **Next meeting:** Mon. Nov. 7 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

**COOPERATION with the PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY (CPC):** No report was given. **Next meeting:** Mon. Nov. 14 at 7 p.m. at 234.

**INFORMATION AA DAY 2012: Dan G. (K.F.), Chairperson:** The theme will be "Let It Begin with Us". The day [to be held in May] will begin with a presentation that explains the AA service structure. **Murray O.** will be Greeter Captain. **Rodney** is handling the audio, and **Woody** will handle the printing and graphics. It was agreed to send a donation of \$200 to Area 83 and send our budget request of \$1500 to Intergroup. **Next meeting:** Mon. Nov. 28 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

**ONTARIO REGIONAL CONFERENCE 2012 – Margaret T. (Bayview), 2012 Event Chairperson:** Meeting held on Oct. 4 at the Harbour Castle. We are now up and running on the website and you can go online and register for the Conference. Registration forms, volunteer forms and placards are ready which can be picked up by group reps. Main speakers have been confirmed, and 90% of the panels are also chosen. **We'll need plenty of volunteers**, so please stress this back at your home group.

**PUBLIC INFORMATION – Vivien C. (Twelve Steps), Chairperson:** Dave B. from District 6 chaired. Districts active: 2, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18, 22 (new P.I. Rep for 22). District 10 participated in the Gratitude Roundup during the Thanksgiving Weekend with the CPC/PI booth and pamphlets. We have been invited to participate in a Health Fair at a Toronto Catholic District School Board school in Etobicoke to be held in May 2012. Our request to distribute Big Books, Young People's Pamphlets and Young Peoples Poster to all high schools in the Toronto District School Board has been rejected. P.I. is in the process of appointing a new chair for 2012. **Next meeting:** Mon. Nov. 21 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

**TREATMENT FACILITIES – Daniel U. (Welcome), Chairperson:** Vote to have a quorum of four members (down from five). Brainstorming sessions for Treatment initiatives will continue next month, and committee has invited both the CPC and Public Information committees to aid in this process. **Next meeting:** Thurs. Nov. 17 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

**TWELFTH STEP – Rick B. (Erin Mills), Chairperson:** Rick announced there will be changes in the future (i.e. overnight phone shifts, workshops, etc.) and will inform the Floor later as these are moved forward. Next Phone Training Sessions: Sat. Nov. 12 at 2:30 p.m., and Sun. Nov. 20 at 1:30 p.m. (both at 234). **Next meeting:** Fri. Nov. 25 at 7:30 p.m. at 234.

**WEBSITE/BETTER TIMES – Aaron K. (Yorkville), Chairperson:** Please have submissions in by the 10th of the month. The December edition will have a special "Things We Cannot Change" memorial for our fellows who have passed away in the last year. If you have note of a member to be included, please send it on to us. Many groups will be planning Gratitude/Candlelight Meetings for December. Please let us know of your event so we can participate! **Next meeting:** Sat. Nov. 12 at 1 p.m. at 234.

## WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE 2011 – Eddie A. (Lakeshore), 2011 Event

**Chairperson:** The annual event will be held on Sun. Dec. 25 from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Emmanuel Howard Park United Church at 214 Wright Ave. (Roncesvalles and Wright Ave.). A free day of fellowship, meetings, music, and a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. All AA and AI Anon members welcome. **Volunteers are needed for Christmas Eve veggie peeling** (Dec. 24). Please e-mail [winter@aatontario.org](mailto:winter@aatontario.org) to volunteer. **Next meeting:** Sat. Nov. 19 at 1:30 p.m. at 234.

**RECEPTION – John C. (Half Century), Executive Committee Past Chairperson:** 68 members were present this evening, with 54 groups reps acknowledged.

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**MOTION** made by **Nicholas** (Responsibility) that the Self-Support, Grapevine and Cooperation with the Professional Community representatives from the 9 Districts be invited to meet at Intergroup and the chairs of these groups report to the Intergroup General Meeting. This Notice of Motion was seconded by **Joe K** (Golden Mile). This Motion was made at the May 31, 2011 General Meeting.

## NEW BUSINESS

**MOTION** to have the Executive Committee Members at the head table be introduced at each monthly General Meeting moved by Vivien C. (Twelve Steps) and seconded by Allison B. (Responsibility).

**CHAIRPERSON'S CLOSING REMARKS:** Regarding the upcoming Traditions Workshop, Barbara announced that they are having difficulty finding a location on a Saturday. For now, announcement of a location and date is on hold. Reps will be e-mailed the information once it is available. She also reminded reps to announce at their groups about Gratitude Month: Intergroup would appreciate Reps to encourage their group members to contribute; any amount, no matter how small, is welcome. There is also an option for members to donate monthly towards Gratitude.

**NEXT GENERAL MEETING: Tuesday, November 29 at 8 p.m. at Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. West** (west from St. Clair subway station on the Yonge line). The meeting will be held in the Flora McCrae auditorium.

# *Candlelight / Gratitude Holiday Meetings and Cancellations*

**Twelve Steps Group** will hold a Candlelight Meeting  
**Wednesday, December 7th at 8pm.** Fallingbrook Presbyterian Church,  
Kingston Road & Woodglen.

**Willowdale Group** will hold an Annual Holiday Meeting/Party  
**Thursday, December 8th at 8pm.** Pot-luck feast & great fellowship follows  
the traditional open speaker meeting. Come One, Come All!

**Bayview Group** will hold a Christmas Dinner/Meeting  
**Sunday, December 11th at 8pm.** All welcome!

**King City Group** will hold a Holiday Meeting **Monday, December 12th  
at 8pm.** All welcome!

**Amazing Grace Group** will hold a Candlelight Gratitude Meeting  
**Tuesday, December 13th at 8pm.** Fellowship and food follow the open  
meeting on this occasion only. Come One, Come All!

**Streetsville Group** will hold a Christmas Gratitude Meeting  
**Tuesday, December 13th at 8:30pm.** All welcome!

**Rox Glen Group** will hold a Holiday Meeting **Thursday, December 15th.**  
Everyone is welcome.

**Yorkville Group** will hold a Holiday Candlelight Meeting **Saturday, December 17th at 8pm.** Please attend and have  
some great fellowship along with a great meal! Everyone is welcome.

**High Park Group** will hold a Seasonal Candlelight Meeting **Sunday, December 18th at 7pm** and will be followed by  
a pot-luck seasonal buffet.

**East York Group** will hold a Candlelight Gratitude Meeting **Tuesday, December 20th at 8pm.** All welcome!

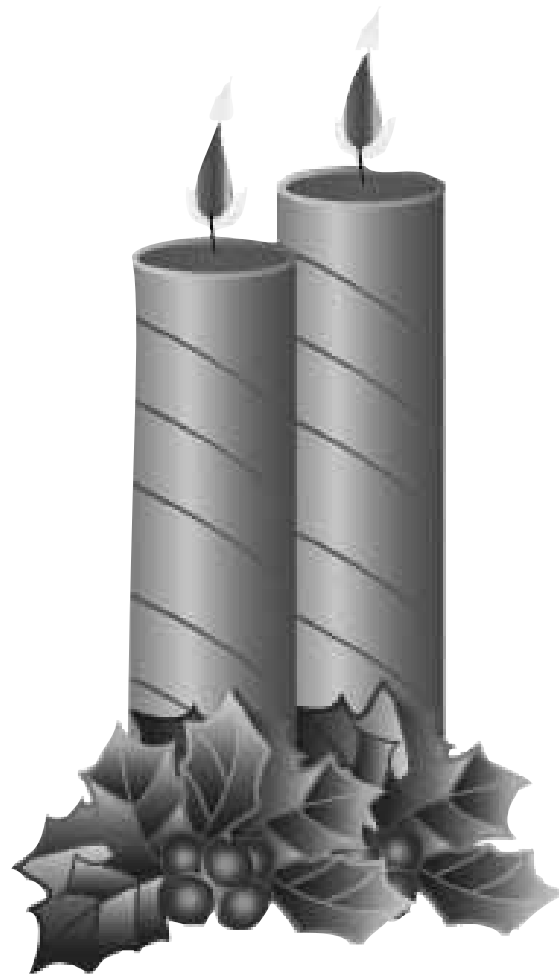
**Mount Albert Group** will hold a Candlelight Meeting **Tuesday, December 20th at 8pm.** Cookie countdown!

**Mount Royal Group** will hold a Holiday Candlelight Meeting **Tuesday, December 20th at 6pm.** All welcome!

**Rexdale United Group** will hold a Christmas Meeting **Thursday, December 22th at 8pm.** Food following the meeting.

**Shepherd Group** will hold a Christmas Meeting **Tuesday, December 22th at 8pm.** All welcome!

**Silverbirch Group** will hold a Candlelight Meeting **Friday, December 23th at 6:30pm.** Pot Luck Sharing and music.  
Bring your instrument.



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## **Credit Valley Group – Holiday Cancellations Sunday 2:30 PM**

Credit Valley's open Sunday meeting scheduled for Sunday December 25th, 2011 and Sunday January 1, 2012 will be cancelled. The Wednesday meetings will continue at Valley House, Credit Valley Hospital during the holidays.

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**PLEASE NOTE: If your meeting is not listed please call/email us and let us know about cancellations, Candlelight / Gratitude / Holiday meetings, or to confirm that you will be hosting a meeting. We will post the info on the website.**