

# Our Primary Purpose

Stories, news and information from our fellowship in the National Capital Region

Spring Conference 2021



Page 5 & 6

Spring Assembly 2021



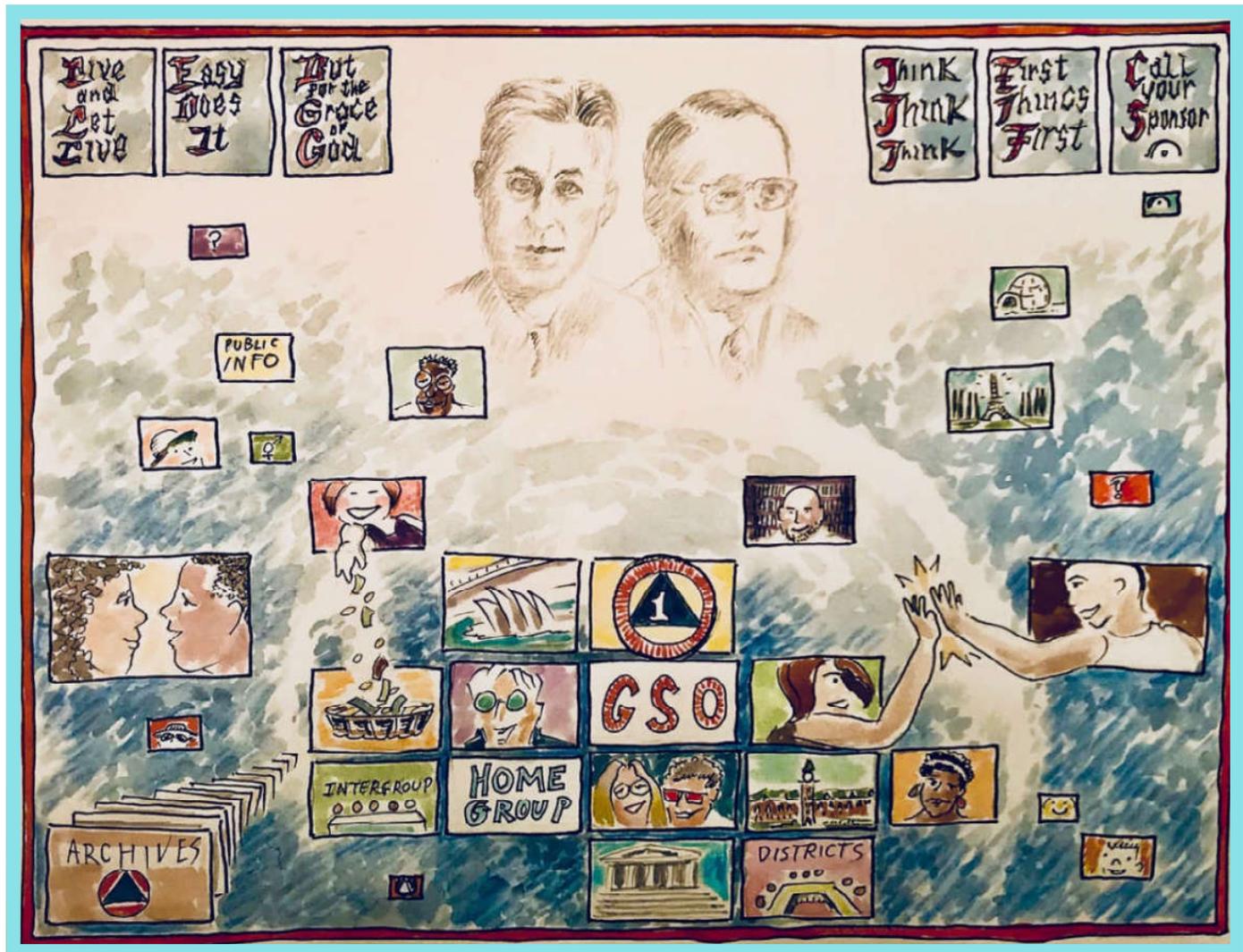
Page 9

What is Intergroup?



Page 10

## We can't hear you; you're on MUTE! Hard to believe it's been a year since the world changed!



Bill W and Dr Bob would no doubt be pleased at how AA has responded to the challenges presented by Covid-19 over these past 12 months.

Illustration by Ron M

See **Surviving a year of Covid**, page 4

## Ottawa Intergroup Office

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Article submission deadline is  
the 20th day of the month  
preceding publication date

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Secretary – Charlene R  
Treasurer – Vacant  
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12-Step Coordinator-Natalie L  
Spring Conference – Cindy E-M  
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District 58 – Ottawa Centre – Kim B  
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## Editorial: Having had a Spiritual Awakening

How do you know when you've had a spiritual awakening?

Some might argue that as we mark a rather dubious milestone – the one-year anniversary of Covid-19 – our global society has, in many ways, had a spiritual awakening, of sorts. And maybe we should ponder how this has unfolded, asking ourselves what lessons we have learned that can help us in recovery.

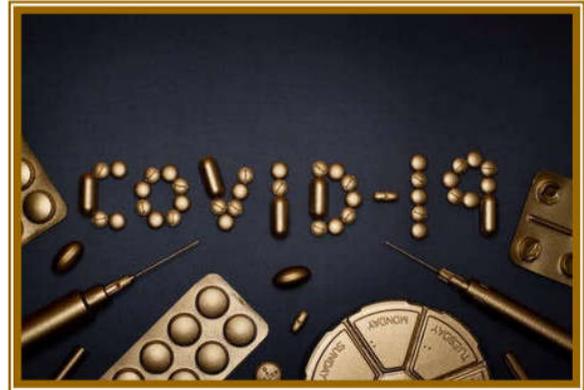
Our world community has dodged lots of bullets when it comes to containing the spread of infectious disease. Think of SARS, Ebola, or swine-flu. Experts have been warning for decades that, with more and more of us traveling for work and pleasure, a pandemic was inevitable. The question was not if, but when.

Sound familiar? For many of us, in the midst of our alcoholic haze, the warning signs were everywhere; a tipping point was coming. Like governments and public health authorities, we spent many years in denial about the powerlessness and unmanageability of our lives.

Then it happened. The virus started to spread, like wildfire. At first, denial. We can contain this. Once again, we alcoholics can relate. We thought we could drink and still function at a high level.

Some of us questioned the need for physical distancing or masks. Just like many of us question the need to get a sponsor and work the Steps.

Finally, we got the message, and began to believe the science. We stayed home, and isolated. Just like the alcoholic who makes a decision and turns it over.



We eventually realized that much of the community spread of Covid-19 was coming from those who were asymptomatic; that we were wearing a mask to help others. Similarly, the program of AA has helped many of us to see that by taking a shift with our Telephone Answering Service, or making a 12-Step call, we can stay sober by helping others.

All of a sudden, some good news started to arrive. Vaccines, which we were told could take years to develop and test, began to show early signs of effectiveness. Ring a bell? What about waking up clear-headed, without a hangover, or fears of who we offended in a blackout? What about the Promises...comprehending the word serenity, feelings of uselessness and self-pity now disappearing?

With vaccination centers beginning to open we can see a return to normal life on the horizon. By clearing away the wreckage of our past and making amends, we alcoholics can also see a much smoother road ahead.

Will there be another pandemic? Is there a relapse in our future?

Having had a spiritual awakening, we're much more ready than we were before.

Jeff F

# Surviving a year of Covid-19, sober from page 1

Retiree, Jackie W, was still wintering in South Carolina last March when she started to hear rumblings about a virus.

“We didn’t really know much about what was going on. I just remember being told to stop holding hands and hugging at our local AA meetings.”

She quickly started to realize that this was not just ‘any’ virus when her brother, back in Stittsville, told her to come home early before ‘they close the border.’

“I couldn’t begin to understand why I had to isolate for 14 days when I arrived in Ottawa. And then it hit me when my brother dropped off groceries at my door. Here was a member of my own family wearing a mask. He wouldn’t even let me pay him because he didn’t want to handle my money.”

## What is Zoom?

Jackie, now quarantining alone in her condo, with only her cat to keep her company, was hearing from friends that all of the AA meetings were closing down.

“I couldn’t go to a meeting anyway, but then I started hearing about Zoom. What could that be? *I thought the word ‘zoom’ was like the noise a car makes.*”

The real question for Jackie was: how does this technology work? Who you gonna call? Geek Squad to the rescue!

With remote access to Jackie’s computer, the popular IT support team set her up on the Zoom platform. But it wouldn’t be smooth sailing by any means.

“Just trying to coordinate the Zoom account number and the password was too much. Finally, a breakthrough...I could see faces, but I couldn’t hear anyone, and they couldn’t hear me. I started banging on my keyboard, threw up my hands, and then closed it down.”

Even that now infamous refrain, “*we can’t hear you; you’re still on mute*” was lost on Jackie, until she sought out additional support from a friend, and was able to get her audio working.

“When it finally all came together, I was so happy you’d think I’d invented it!”

## Zoom becomes lifeline

Jackie had always been getting to five or six AA groups per week. But as concerns grew about the spread of Covid-19, the Zoom meeting, by default, became her main source of AA programming. Without an alternative, the online world would become the focal point of her sobriety.



In fact, over the entire year of the pandemic, she made it to every single Lunch With Bill online meeting, except two.

“Only a telephone consult with my family doctor, and a visit to the vet for my cat, stopped me from a perfect record of attendance.”

Without friends or loved ones coming directly into her living space, the faces on Zoom became like family as weeks turned into months.

## A special connection

Many of us have complained about Zoom fatigue and lamented not being able to enjoy true face to face fellowship. But for Jackie, a professed ‘non-techie’, her excitement for the virtual rooms has only intensified and helped her to feel an even deeper sense of connection.

“Maybe it’s because I’ve been to so many Zoom meetings. But I’ve learned to pick up on those subtle cues. I can really see the suffering when I look into people’s faces on my screen. In fact, I feel like I’m seeing more now than I did before. At in-person meetings we often sit in circles or in rows. I can’t always see faces. Now I can, and it’s wonderful.”

**“I thought the word ‘zoom’ was like the noise a car makes!”**

# Spring Conference 2021 Update

The 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Ottawa Spring Conference committee has been working hard to put together our first virtual conference on **April 17, 2021**. We are excited to share the schedule for the day and hope you will join us for a packed day of recovery.

Al-Anon and Al-Ateen have joined with us and are working hard on their schedule and we will share it shortly. We have joined together to support and promote one another. I truly believe that our Al-Anon family groups are a beautiful demonstration of how to love an alcoholic. A sneak peak: Heather W from Texas, Neil S from Ontario and Chuck K from Michigan.

We will post their zoom link with our Spring Conference flyer on the Ottawa Area Intergroup website. There is a password within the zoom link so that it protects their younger members anonymity. It is a separate link than our AA link.

A few things to note about the event is that we will have a breakout room twice during the day for 30 minutes for the newcomers to go and ask any questions they may have. In regards to the speakers who will be sharing their experience on the steps - they will share for anywhere between 30—35 minutes and we will then open it up for people who would like to briefly share. We have a time keeper to help us stay on schedule and other

“When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God’s hands were better than anything we could have planned.”

BIG BOOK PG 100



volunteers to help with all the virtual aspects of the meeting. We are look-

ing for volunteers to help out on the day of the event.

The volunteer positions are: *spiritual bouncers* - this is necessary to keep our members safe. Their role is to monitor the participants in the meeting to make sure their screens are appropriate. We will be looking for *greeters* to help welcome members as they enter the meeting. We will need people to help with the *chat window* - to put in announcements and 7<sup>th</sup> tradition link. The committee would love for you to help out in any capacity you can. If interested you can email me: [spring@ottawaaa.org](mailto:spring@ottawaaa.org) email address and I will pass your information to the Volunteer Coordinator.

As we move closer to the event, we will hold a training session or two – doing a quick run through so that the volunteers feel more comfortable in their role. This will happen on possibly the last two Saturdays before the event at 1:30pm.

I am looking forward to this event and I am filled with gratitude for the committee of volunteers who are working hard by sacrificing their time to make this event a success. I could not do it without them or my Vice Chair Dick. As Dr. Bob would to say – “Love and Service”.

Your trusted servant, Cindy E-M  
(Spring Conference Chair)

# “WHEN WE LOOK BACK”

## 42nd Annual Ottawa Spring Conference - Sponsored by Ottawa Area Intergroup

### 2021 Virtual Spring Conference – Saturday April 17, 2021

(All times are in Eastern Time)

Zoom Meeting ID: 823 0064 2904 Password: 20210417

Conference room opens at 8:00 am (Fellowship)

Opening Remarks : Cindy E-M (Chair) 8:25am

Therese D. (New Jersey, New York) Steps 1&2: 9:00 am - 10:00 am  
Saturday Beginners, NY

Marti R. (Buda, Texas) Step 3: 10:15 am -11:15 am  
Buda Big Book Group, TX

Erik B. (Austin, Texas) Steps 4&5: 11:30 am -12:30 pm  
Reading Rainbow , TX

Newcomer Breakout Room 12:30 pm - 1:00 pm

Stacy S. (San Antonio, Texas) Speaker: Experience, Strength & Hope  
(Virtual) Bronx Big Book Study, NYC (1:00 pm - 2:00pm)

Laurel T. (Austin, Texas) Steps 6&7: 2:15 pm - 3:15 pm  
Some are Sicker Than Others, TX

Brandon P. (Dallas, Texas) Steps 8&9: 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm  
The Chicago Group, TX

Anastacio A. (New York City, New York) Steps 10&11: 4:45 pm - 5:45 pm  
High Noon, NYC

Colleen K. ( Naremburn, Australia ) Step 12: 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm  
Sunday Naremburn Group, Australia

Newcomer Breakout Room 7:00 pm - 7:30 pm

Message from Ottawa Intergroup Chair - Harry B. 7:15 pm - 7:30 pm

Polly P. (Jacksonville, Florida) Speaker: Experience, Strength & Hope  
Westconnett Group, FL. (7:30 pm - 8:30 pm)

Conference Closing Remarks: - Cindy E-M (Chair) & Dick G. (Vice-Chair) 8:35pm

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“When we look back, we realize that the things which came to us when we put ourselves in God's hands were better than anything we could have planned.”

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**With AIAnon and Alateen participation.**

Contact them for zoom information:  
[www.al-anon-Ottawa.ca](http://www.al-anon-Ottawa.ca)

Any questions for AA  
please contact:

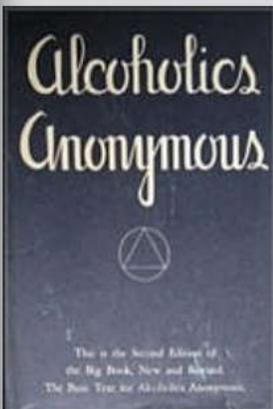
Cindy spring@ottawaaa.org  
or [www.ottawaaa.org](http://www.ottawaaa.org)



## A Longtimer Shares...

Tradition 3 (long form)  
 "Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation."

**Tradition 3**  
 "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking".



### Let Go...Let God

It is always instructive to refer back to the long forms of our Traditions. Whereas the qualifications for membership in most organizations are specifically defined and prospective members must satisfy these qualifying criteria, in AA **it is the individuals themselves who decide if they "belong" to the fellowship or not.** Basically, those who attend these twelve-steps meetings either feel a sense of "belonging" or they do not and move on.

The main reason that Tradition 3 was emphasized by our founders was to protect AA from outside influences; to ensure that the meetings would maintain their primary focus and not be adulterated by the influx of other issues or considerations. Some members today believe that AA has been "diluted" by the inclusion into its meetings of those who are primarily dealing with issues other than problems with alcohol, such as drug abuse. They feel that the program has gotten away from its spiritual foundations and primary purpose and may become watered down to the point of ineffectiveness. But there are always two sides to every issue...and I offer my own take on

this...some of you may disagree, and that is perfectly OK.

I feel that the principles are the same whether the user is abusing alcohol or drugs. Technically, **alcohol is a drug.** I have yet to meet a "druggie" who, when being brutally self-honest, didn't have a drinking problem also. I myself would never turn away a so-called "druggie", for we are one and the same in my book. In my experience, if a person doesn't belong in A.A., he/she tends to weed themselves out (no pun intended!).

It's all pretty simple to me. I believe Tradition 3 is just what it says: "The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking". Some may not know or believe they are alcoholics but still wish to live a life free of alcohol. I have no quarrel with this. I would certainly hope that anyone who wishes to stop drinking will have the freedom to choose AA as their means of support. Perhaps the word "membership" is the catch. One does not "have" to become a member of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Continued on page 8

**☰ Longtimer shares...continued from page 7**

We still have freedom of choice. So we honor the "closed meeting" format to protect the spiritual foundation of anonymity.

Remember that the founding fathers of AA learned through trial and error. I am a traditionalist at heart. I want AA to be here whenever someone reaches out for help...just as it was for me. This is why the Traditions were founded. I will protect them to the best of my ability.

AA has given me the tools to help people in life, not just if they are an alcoholic or a "druggie", but people in all walks of life. Simply read and parse our Responsibility Pledge and you will see what I mean: "...whenever anyone anywhere reaches out for help...".

I am no judge to turn anybody away at any time.

**Let's let our Higher Power do the judging!**

Guy B.

**SAVE THE DATES**

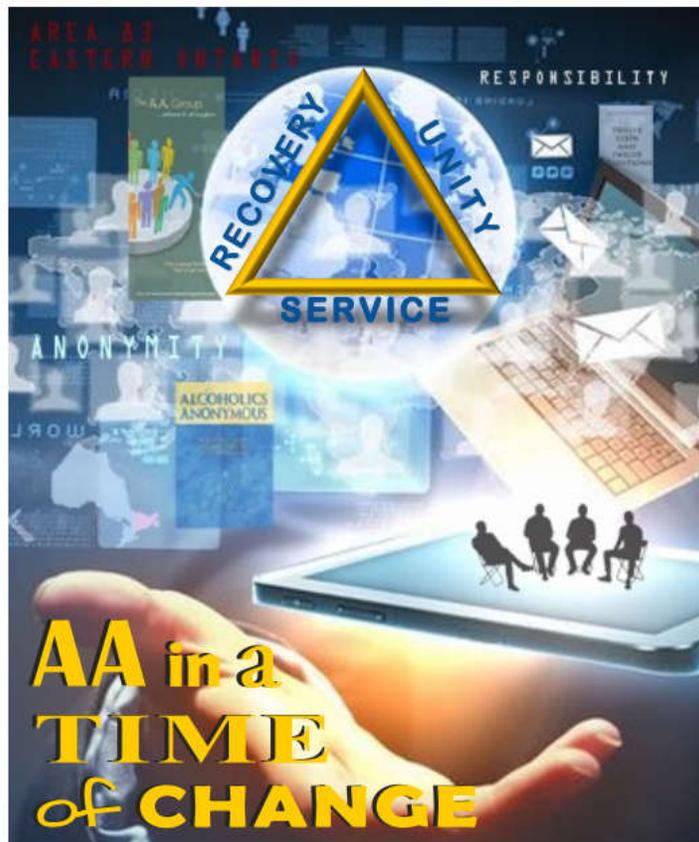
**Preconference Agenda Sharing Sessions**  
7-9 pm on the following dates

Date	General Service Conference Agenda Committee
March 21, Sunday	Grapevine
March 22, Monday	Literature Pt 1
March 30, Tuesday	Literature Pt 2
March 31, Wednesday	Accessibility/Treatment
April 6, Tuesday	Corrections
April 7, Wednesday	Cooperation with the Professional Community
April 8, Thursday	Finance
April 11, Sunday	Public Information
April 12, Monday	Archives Agenda Trustees International Conventions/Regional Forums Policy and Admissions Report and Charter



Click on the above logo for more information

All members of Area 83 are welcome and invited to participate in any one or all sharing sessions.



**AA in a TIME of CHANGE**

Meeting ID: 844 5600 2519  
Passcode: 838383

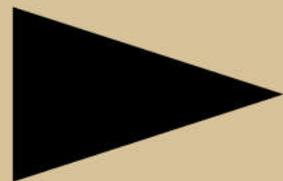
**71ST GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE**

# 2021 Virtual Spring Assembly for Eastern Ontario International Area 83

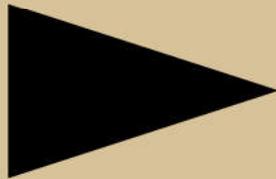
March 26-28, 2021



## A Virtual General Service Event on Zoom!



Speakers



Workshops



Area 83 Business Meeting

**Meeting ID: 824 3648 3082**

**Password: 465575**

**All members welcome!**

For more details go to: [area83aa.org/events/Kingston-2](https://area83aa.org/events/Kingston-2)

Or contact Amy L.:  
[chairperson@area83aa.org](mailto:chairperson@area83aa.org)

## Intergroup in Virtual times

When the pandemic hit in March of 2020, we were required to close access to the office, but that didn't stop us from fulfilling our duties to AA Groups!

- We moved quickly to assist groups with setting up virtually.
- Meeting lists were revised constantly in the first few weeks.
- We helped groups with the process of setting up Virtual 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition baskets.
- Intergroup Meetings are held on Zoom the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month
- In August we started curbside pickup of literature
- When it looked like we were going to open up again, we assisted groups with some of the safety protocols provided by other groups. As groups had to shut down again, that work will still be available when we need it in the future.

Ottawa Area Intergroup of  
Alcoholics Anonymous



## Your role as an Intergroup Rep

### What is the general role of the Intergroup Representative?

- Representatives attend monthly Intergroup meetings (2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month!) and participate in discussion and votes on matters on behalf of their home group;
- They try to obtain advance guidance from their home group about matters to be considered at Intergroup meetings (this is not followed slavishly – new information may arise at the meeting, and you are allowed to vote your own conscience as a trusted servant);
- They report back to their home group about the meetings and upcoming Intergroup events and activities; and,
- They participate in Intergroup committees and activities.

## The OPP Creative Corner

Covid-19 is giving us gifts. We have more time to reflect and to create. Our new "Creative Corner" is a place where we can share what AA members are doing with extra time on their hands during the pandemic. *Send us your poetry, or your paintings, or your photographs.* You can reach us at: [newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)

### Robin and the June Bug

Under the sun, one fine day,  
Fortune came Robin's way.

She snatched up June Bug in her beak.  
June Bug struggled but could not speak.

For nestlings maybe lunch to give.  
Yet June Bug had a will to live.

Did Robin know she'd find this prey?  
Did June Bug know this'd be her day?

June Bug fluttered and flapped her wing.  
Robin silenced her. Did not sing.

So took she flight to her nest.  
Victorious in the contest.

Joy for one. Both did their best.  
The other done. And now both rest.

August 24, 2020

### Alcohol stole what was dear

I loved and lost and was sincere  
I grasped at courage, battled  
fear  
But alcohol stole what was so  
dear  
So to God again I draw near

December 1, 2020

### Just because I wear a mask

Just because I wear a mask  
I will not be thrown off my task.  
Seeing as we all need space  
Maybe we'll see a bit of Grace.

Just because my hands scrub clean  
No matter where it is I've been,  
I still need scrubbing in my soul.  
Pandemic call to become whole.

Just because things are tough  
Doesn't mean there's not enough  
To go around if we share  
And spread some love and show we  
care.

Just because you aren't so strong  
Needn't stop you from your song.  
And just because you have to fight  
Doesn't mean dark beats out light.

Just because you need to cry  
Because a loved one is going to die  
And you won't see them till another  
day  
Do not fear. It will be okay.

December 2, 2020

Poetry  
Moment

by John C



## From the AA Archives...

# The Parkwood Hills Group founded: March 1974

The first meeting of the Parkwood Hills Group was held March 12, 1974.

At that time there was only one meeting in the west end of Ottawa. Archie M, along with Jim S, Norm S and Gerry D, started the Parkwood Hills Group.

The meetings were held in the lower level hall of the Parkwood Presbyterian Church, located at the corner of Meadowlands and Chesterton Dr., on Wednesday evenings.

It started as, and still is, an open speaker meeting. The first speaker was Bud K. At the second meeting it was Big Ernie who spoke.

The meeting changed to Thursday evenings

after September 23, 1999 as the church required the hall for one of its own functions on Wednesdays.

When walking into the Parkwood Hills meeting, one is greeted with a warm, engaging feeling. The group has a solid base of members who are active in AA's local and Area 83 Service Structure. The membership has a broad range of ages, with a good mix of both women and men. The group averages approximately 30-50 people at its meetings.

As the Parkwood Hill members say:

"My Home Group is the best Group in Ottawa!"

The Parkwood Hills Group



# SERVICE CALENDAR

*Online meeting logistics are shown for committees that have provided it.*

No matter how much sobriety you have, you can help and be part of the greater whole. All AA members are welcome to attend any of the following committees:

**OTTAWA INTERGROUP MONTHLY MEETING**..... Second Wednesday (7:00 pm)  
([ZOOM Meeting ID 824 3878 6359 Passcode OAIG2020](#))

**DISTRICT 54 MEETING**..... First Thursday (6:30 pm)  
([ZOOM Meeting ID 834 9953 9650 Passcode 141892](#))

**DISTRICT 58 MEETING**..... First Monday (7:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 213-in-person meetings suspended)

**DISTRICT 62 MEETING**..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)  
([ZOOM Meeting ID 638 5623 068 Passcode 016224](#))

**CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT**..... Fourth Tuesday (6:30 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 108-in-person meetings suspended)

**PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS**.....Third Monday (6:30 pm)  
([ZOOM Meeting ID 815 4385 6025 Passcode PICPC](#))

**OTTAWA ARCHIVES**..... Third Wednesday (7:00 pm)  
(Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 108-in-person meetings suspended)

**Is your AA Group’s meeting information correct on ottawaaa.org?** Please send all updates as well as temporary closures to Ottawa Intergroup at [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org).

**Do you have a question for the Intergroup board?** Please email us with your question and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly board meeting. Send your email to [chair@ottawaaa.org](mailto:chair@ottawaaa.org).

**If your group needs insurance,** please contact Ottawa Intergroup at [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org) to discuss.

“Our Primary Purpose” publishes articles reflecting the full diversity of experience and opinion found within the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. In determining content, the editor relies on the principles of the Twelve Traditions. “Our Primary Purpose” values the shared experience of individual AA members working the AA program and applying the principles of the Twelve Steps. Seeking neither to gloss over difficult issues, nor to present such issues in a harmful or contentious manner, “Our Primary Purpose” tries to embody the widest possible view of the AA Fellowship.

*The editor of “Our Primary Purpose” reserves the right to accept or reject material for publication, based on the AA traditions. Note: this policy is consistent with that of the AA Grapevine.*

*Articles are not intended to be statements of AA policy, nor does publication of any article constitute endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or Ottawa Area Intergroup. Submissions are always welcome.*