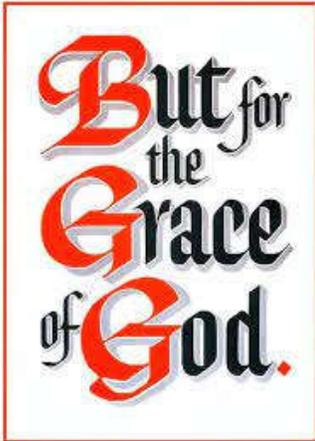


Our Primary Purpose

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

www.ottawaaa.org



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A new normal – what is that?

AA just keeps adapting, to help those who suffer

Elizabeth M approached a recent business meeting with a proposal she thought would satisfy most of her fellow group members... wouldn't you know it; she got a surprise.

The proposal was to replace three of the group's five weekday zoom calls with in-person meetings. But in the end, it was decided that all five – Monday to Friday – online gatherings would continue as well.

So, for the time being, the Lunch with Bill (LWB) bricks and mortar rooms will reopen on Thursday, Friday and Monday, while the entire slate of noon-hour, virtual meetings, will co-exist alongside.

"It's really quite a bold statement about caring for each other, and wanting to provide as much support as we can for our fellow suffering alcoholic. Moving from the current five meetings a week up to eight is going to require a huge service commitment from our members, and yet they were more than ready to step up," said Elizabeth, chair of the LWB business meeting.

What is our new normal?

AA home groups and meetings, throughout the National Capital Region, continue to grapple with the best way forward. Coping with a pandemic has made it clear to AAs that innovation trumps the desire to simply clamor for the perceived comforts of the good old days.

"I could hardly have predicted that it would

be zoom meetings keeping me sober over this past year and a half. But did any of us really know where this was all going, last March, when we made the quick pivot to a virtual fellowship?"

With all of the COVID-19 "waves" we've been through it's become a bit of a blur, but it seemingly wasn't that long ago when groups across the region were trying to come up with sensible "re-opening" guidelines. How to remain physically distant? How to sanitize? How to contact trace? How to police the correct number of people in the room?

Funny how these once odious tasks now seem so straight forward and common sense. It's also ironic we are not, or may never be, in a rush to unplug our computers and abandon online meetings.

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preceding publication date

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Vice-Chair – Mary K
Secretary – Charlene R
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Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

District 54 – Ottawa East – Kevin O district54@ottawaaa.org
District 58* – (See note below)
District 62 – Ottawa West – Trevor F district62@ottawaaa.org
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Corrections Facilities & Treatment cft@ottawaaa.org
Archives – Sue B archives@ottawaaa.org

*District 58 is no longer meeting. Please contact District 54 or District 62.

Editorial: there is NO finish line

We've talked a fair bit on this page about how COVID-19 has given us pause to look at our recovery journey through a different lens. Our Step 3 perspective has helped us discover that when it comes to COVID, we can't control the outcome. We've had to 'turn it over, and over, and over.'

At some point we will stop measuring everything we do against a pandemic yardstick. But for now, it seems as though we still have lessons to learn.

One of them centers around what we might call the "finish line." Or, more truthfully, the fact that there is NO finish line. Not for the pandemic, and definitely not for recovery.

In March 2020, when our world changed, we tried to hold onto the belief that fairly benign public health measures could quickly solve all our problems and we would get our lives back...surely, after a few weeks, or at worst a few months, things would be back to normal.

But normal got away from us.

Vaccines then arrived, and we foolishly jumped to the conclusion that once everyone got the jab, we would soon be enjoying herd immunity.

With over half the world's population still without even a first needle, and no clear timeline for that to happen, it's now becoming painfully clear...*THERE IS NO FINISH LINE.*

Don't worry, we're not about to dive into some conspiracy theory here. But the reality is we are going to be living with COVID-19, and its latest variants, for years to come. Like the flu, we will learn to get an annual booster shot. And we will survive. In fact, given what we've learned about pandemics, our public health measures will only get better.

So, what lessons can our current experience with COVID help to teach us about recovery?

Some of us, after years of sobriety, have begun to think we've crossed the finish line...that our recovery is on autopilot, and there's really nothing more to do.

We need to remember that when it comes to addiction there is no finish line. Our recovery is something we will always have to work at.

But, like COVID, we will keep finding silver linings. When we help others to get and stay sober, we help ourselves enjoy much richer and more fulfilling lives.

Let's stop looking for the checkered flag. There isn't one!

Jeff F





From the AA Archives...

Fellowship Group

Founded: October 1961

The Fellowship Group is a Saturday night 8:00, open speaker meeting. Its location is at 429 Parkdale Avenue (Parkdale United Church) at the corner of Parkdale and Gladstone.

The meeting began in October of 1961. The founding members were Alex MacKenzie and Greg Carty. The first meeting was held over the bowling alley on the corner of Wellington and Merton Street and then moved to our present location in 1963.

The group has the old fashion AA feel to it with a lot of long-term sobriety and everyone is welcomed at the door or soon after you enter the meeting. Every Saturday night there are snacks provided in way of sandwiches or donuts or cookies.

We always begin the meeting with a moment of silence followed by the serenity prayer; the secretary reads the preamble; How it Works, Steps, Traditions are read; a member's interpretation of

one or more of the slogans is given; then the speaker; after the speaker, the secretary takes over and passes out the baskets for the 7th tradition, announces flyers, asks for announcements and any out of town guests, announces free literature and books for sale; invites anyone who wants to join to sign our book, mentions the travel directories; then the chips are explained; we close the meeting in a circle by reciting the Responsibility Pledge and the Lord's Prayer.

We set up each night with 50 chairs and a lot of Saturday nights we can fill those chairs. Our group has a few active members and it is these members who keep the group alive.



Footnote: this meeting is currently online only.



Pearls of Wisdom

From my Sponsor

This column features simple pearls of wisdom which have been imparted to me and others over the years by our respective Sponsors. These statements are in no particular order in our recovery or of importance:

Self-seeking is an action I take to get what I want.

Self-centered – all I think about is me.

It's hard to be considerate of others when we're thinking about ourselves.

We try to control what others think about us.

We create a mess we call life that we can't live in.

Empty yourself of self and you will be filled with God.

How we show up for our family, is how we show up for God.

Resentment is not getting my way in the past.

Fear is not getting my way in the future.

We can be under the influence of resentment, just as we can be under the influence of alcohol.

It's okay for fear to scare us; it's not okay for fear to run us.

We need to give permission for change to happen.

Get your body going in the right direction and your head will follow.

AA not being a big part of my life, doesn't work for me.

Living life in harmony with God's will is living in the 4th dimension.

If we're not forgiving ourselves, we're playing God, because God forgives.



Please submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: newsletter@ottawaaa.org.

Thank you for this service!

A MEMBER SHARES...

BUT FOR THE GRACE OF GOD

What is grace? The Oxford Dictionary gives many meanings of grace from courteous good will to elegance of manner but the meaning that applies to the word grace as it is used in the AA slogan “But for the grace of God” is “unmerited favour” or “unearned gift.”

So I always say I am sober “by grace” and that’s because I went in and out of AA for so long to no avail, until one day, for no reason at all, not only did I get sober, but I became willing to do all the things that were suggested to me but that I would not do before. So I have no difficulty saying that I am sober by the grace of God.

The slogan “But for the grace of God” is often misinterpreted because the “but for” actually means “except for” so I say “But for the grace of God, I would be dead!” It’s an old English expression, not used much in every day North American English.

So, “but for the grace of God, I would be dead!” And I have had a lot of grace in my life, that is, a lot of unearned gifts, like getting through university and law school

despite my drinking, and not dying during one of many awful episodes while I was drinking: that grace truly consisted of a lot of unearned gifts! So next time, remember,

“I am sober by the grace of God.”

“But for the grace of God, I would be dead.”

And why do some people get grace and others not? The AA literature does state that in order to get the gift, we have to be in some measure ready to receive it. So some are more ready than others. I think that’s called hitting bottom: I recall that I had absolutely had it! I think I had sunk to the lowest possible place my spirit could sink to. So, then I got grace. I was more than ready to receive it. I’ve been sober ever since.

Nadia S. of Oasis

Help the
Fellowship be
strong!

Service Opportunities

Ottawa AA Intergroup needs you more than ever!!!
This is your opportunity to do service outside the
group level. Intergroup elections are coming up in December.
You can serve or you can encourage someone to serve. No
prior Board experience is required. You will receive support.

Intergroup positions up for election/re-election:

1. Vice-Chair
2. Secretary
3. Newsletter Coordinator
4. 12-Step Coordinator
5. Vice-Chair 2022 Spring Conference
6. Chair Eastern Ontario 2022 Conference
7. Vice-Chair Eastern Ontario 2022 Conference

For more information go to:
www.ottawaaa.org or send an
email to: info@ottawaaa.org

I am responsible...

When anyone, anywhere, reaches out
for help, I want the hand of A.A.
always to be there.

And for that:
I Am Responsible.



AA just keeps adapting, to help those who suffer (continued)

Our tent just gets bigger

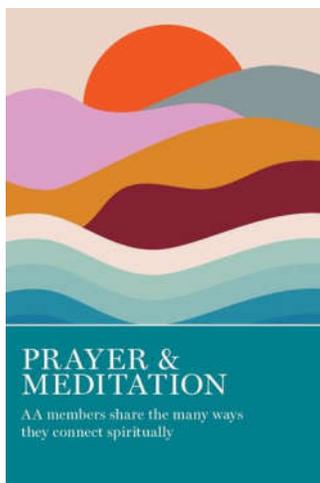
At LWB there will be a 20-seat capacity for an in-person meeting. But contingency plans are in place to make sure that if one or two extra people show up, and really need help on that particular day, they will get more than adequate support.

“It’s very important for us to uphold certain principles. No one, especially the newcomer, will be turned away. We will either ask one or two of our longtime members to give up their seats, or a couple of our people will go outside into the parking lot and hold an impromptu mini meeting. We need to be there for those who are suffering.”

LWB, like many virtual meetings, has had much success over the past 18 months attracting a wide range of alcoholics from many different geographical locations and time zones. That may indeed be the biggest and most lasting COVID silver lining. AA is more accessible, the tent is much bigger, and is protecting more of us from life’s foul weather.

“Those people in Perth, or Almonte or Carleton Place...wherever they’ve been joining us from...still need us. But with vaccine passports in hand, we can now think about reclaiming some of the hallowed physical spaces we used to gather in.”

We move forward, leaving no one behind.



New publication from AA Grapevine: Prayer and Meditation

[https://store.aagrapevine.org/prayer-and-meditation?
pk=M19PAG3](https://store.aagrapevine.org/prayer-and-meditation?pk=M19PAG3)

Prayer & Meditation features powerful stories by members of Alcoholics Anonymous about the many ways they pray and meditate in their daily lives.



\$17



October 22-23, 2021—Area 83 Service Information Day with many Speakers & Workshops. For agenda, Meeting ID & Passcodes go to area83aa.org

October 24, 2021 9am—
Area 83 Eastern Ontario International Virtual Assembly
For agenda go to: area83aa.org

Join on Zoom: Meeting ID 824 3648 3082 Passcode 465 575

Weekly Intergroup sharing sessions:

Various topics

Weekly on Fridays 1pm Eastern Time (US & Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/309810035?pwd=cVVxRHIUa3g2bURoUXNlc1U1WXJndz09>

Meeting ID: 309 810 035 Passcode: 064365

The CFT (Corrections Facilities & Treatment) Committee will be having their election at their Zoom meeting on October 26, 2021 at 6:30pm. Join on Zoom:
Meeting ID 815 5183 4935 Passcode 521429
Email: cft@ottawaaa.org

■ The ICOAA Seminar: Communicating a Shared Purpose

The very first Intergroup/Central Office/A.A.W.S./AAGV Seminar was held in September 1986 — with 98 representatives from 82 intergroups attending, plus three trustees from the General Service Board and 13 employees of G.S.O. and Grapevine. From the very beginning, the stated purpose of the seminars has been to provide a forum, through workshops, discussions, and the exchange of ideas and shared experience, for those who labor on A.A.'s front lines.

In the ensuing three and a half decades of ICOAA seminars, that purpose has remained constant, though the seminars — like the rest of A.A. — have not been without their share of debate. The seminar has always been a weekend of sharing and learning about problems and solutions common to most central offices/intergroups and how these interests intersect with the services provided to the Fellowship by A.A.W.S., Grapevine and the General Service Board. Structurally, the appearance of the first intergroups/central offices (IGCOs) in the 1940s predates the creation of the General Service Conference and the A.A. service structure and, while both service entities fulfill the same mission — aiding suffering alcoholics — there are times when different perspectives and opinions have seemed at odds.

And, while communication (or the lack of it) is an ongoing issue between intergroups/central offices and G.S.O., the 35th annual ICOAA Seminar — the first ever virtual one — hosted September 17–20 by the Des Moines, Iowa, central office, went a long way toward broadening and deepening the channels of understanding and shared purpose. “We really should be partners,” says Brook W., Des Moines central office manager. “We have way more things in common than we do differences. But we need to tell G.S.O. what we are doing and G.S.O. needs to tell us. It’s a two-way street. Lack of communication isn’t uncommon in A.A. Alcoholics often don’t communicate well — in groups, areas, districts. The microphone is on, but somehow the transmitter isn’t always working as well as it could.”

Maury P., with 18 years as office manager of the San Francisco/Marin Intergroup, agrees. “One of the pain points we’ve experienced for years is one-way communication with New York. We might get a heads-up about something happening in the A.A.W.S. Highlights, but it

might be more helpful to find out about conversations being had at the New York level that might result in some potential decision that impacts our offices,” particularly in regard to areas like discounting of literature.

Starting over a year ago, Brook formed a committee to prepare for physically hosting the seminar “getting city tours and hotels lined up and so forth,” but the pandemic put a stop to that. So, as Brook puts it, “We retooled. We have a very capable webmaster and she and I got to work on planning a virtual seminar, with the help of volunteers. In some ways, while everyone missed the physical interaction, it worked out better. We had more than 200 attendees, because intergroups/central offices could send more than one member, without the expense of travel and lodging.” (The 200 attendees included 14 from A.A.W.S./AAGV, including four board members.)

The Seminar centered around three workshops, held from 3 to 5:30 on Friday, in which a Board member or G.S.O. staffer paired with an office manager. Beau B., chair of the A.A.W.S. Board and Maury P. spoke on “Business Model Changes”; Kathi F. and Pauline D., Northern Virginia office manager, shared on “Self-Support and Tradition Seven”; and Jeff W. and Jen G., Baltimore office manager, chaired a discussion on “Improving Communication Between All.”

Although Maury missed the “person-to-person connection” that took place at previous ICOAA Seminars, she also felt there were pluses to holding the seminar online. “Having Zoom record the information is a game changer,” she says. Usually someone has to be hired to create transcripts, but now it will be much easier to disseminate information to those central offices unable to attend. And, importantly, the seminar worked better than it had in the past as a shared experience.

“The ICOAA Communications Committee asked us to spend less time presenting with slides and more time interacting and listening,” Jeff W., Group Services staff member at G.S.O., says. “We all tried to focus on our primary purpose, and I think that it did work to a great extent, in terms of good information being shared.”

Workshops and breakout room discussions focused on many of the issues facing intergroups/central offices, particularly during the COVID-19 era.

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* Discontinued. Please contact District 54 or District 62.

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)

(ZOOM Meeting ID 638 562 068 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.

Do you have a question for the Intergroup board? Please email us with your questions and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly virtual board meeting. Send your email to chair@ottawaaa.org.

If your group needs insurance, please contact Ottawa Intergroup at 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 newsletter coordinator 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. It neither seeks 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 newsletter coordinator 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!