

# Our Primary Purpose

[www.ottawaaa.org](http://www.ottawaaa.org)

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



**“WE ARE GOING TO KNOW A NEW FREEDOM...”**

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**Area 83**

# A meeting is a meeting is a meeting

Just when we thought we might be able, wearing masks and vaccine passports in hand, to get back “into” our old rooms where we used to gather...well, you guessed it, the pandemic takes another turn. The Ottawa “meeting” landscape is mixed. Some groups have gone to, and stayed, on Zoom. Some have tried to have in-person meetings. Some are attempting hybrid meetings. Some are doing all of the above. No matter what the format, meetings will always be the lifeblood of our Fellowship. The following is a report written, at the request of an AA group’s landlord, to describe how meaningful it was to return to the church. If only for a few weeks.

Since 2007, the *Lunch with Bill* (LWB)\* group of Alcoholics Anonymous has met five days a week in the assembly hall at Westminster Church. A physical connection to others recovering from alcoholism is the primary way that members achieve lasting sobriety and live more fulfilling lives. Not surprisingly we develop a strong attachment to the location where this life-changing activity takes place. This is especially true for us given the bright, comfortable and spacious room we have at the Church. So when COVID forced the rapid shutdown of our meetings, we were devastated. Many wondered if they could maintain their sobriety without the daily support of meetings, especially during a pandemic.

Although we quickly migrated our meetings to ZOOM, most everyone agreed that the loss of the in-person

connection made it less than ideal. Although many made the adjustment to on-line meetings, there were far too many that we lost contact with; and we worried about



them.

As we gradually and tentatively reopened our physical meetings, the ‘missing’ members began to straggle in. Some had managed to stay sober but suffered greatly from the loss of connection. And sadly others, overwhelmed by the stresses of the pandemic, relapsed. But they are coming back; to try again. All have expressed their great relief

to be attending physical meetings once more. Day by day we are regaining our pre-pandemic momentum. Treasured connections are being re-established. New members are being welcomed. The comforting routines and rhythms are present. Our daily meetings are once more the ‘inoculation’ that keeps our addictions at bay. We are very grateful that the *magic of our meeting* still works and for the steady support of the Westminster Church congregation.

If someone you know has a problem with alcohol they are welcome to attend our meeting. The only requirement is a desire to stop drinking.

\*Full disclosure: We don’t provide lunch and Bill W, our co-founder, passed away in 1971!

John M.

**\*Check the website ([ottawaaa.org](http://ottawaaa.org)) for current status of in-person/online meetings.**

# EDITORIAL: A CLEAN SLATE

No matter what happened in 2021...

Maybe we re-lapsed, maybe we burned a few bridges, maybe we just didn't live up to the standard we have come to expect for ourselves.

## LET IT GO!

The truly wonderful thing about January...we get to begin again. That doesn't mean we shouldn't try to learn from some of the moments that went sideways over the past twelve months.

But what it does mean...our recovery journey is EVERgreen. It's always fresh, it's always new.

Start with the calendar, and break it down from months, to weeks, to days, to hours to minutes, to seconds.

With every breath we take, we get the chance, or should we say opportunity, to have a moment of clarity, a moment of contentment, a moment when we can pause to reflect on how magical this life can be...how blessed we are to be part of a fellowship like AA.

We cannot MAKE time. There are a finite number of months in the year, days in the week, hours in the day.

But we can FIND time.

We can go to bed a few minutes earlier. We can get up a few minutes earlier. We can use that extra time, in the wee hours of the morning, to reflect or to meditate. We can begin each and every day by being more IN THE MOMENT.

Who knows what 2022 is going to bring? We can allow ourselves to get sucked into the vortex of a social media circus, only a click away...climate change, the pandemic, the high cost of vegetables.

OR, we can accept the gifts we have been given. We can "want" what we have, instead of constantly trying to "have" what we want.

Sure, it's important to know how we

got here...but what's more important is the fact that we ARE here.

No one can know how many more Januaries we will see in our lives. Let's rejoice in the fact that we've lived to see another year come and go. Let's make the best of 2022, whatever that might be.

Let's stay sober and help others to do the same.

Happy NEW YEAR everyone!

Jeff F.



Intergroup is currently looking for contacts to take referral calls from the Telephone Answering Service (TAS) for people looking for meetings for Police Officers or Firefighters (**Badge of Courage**) or for Lawyers or other Officers of the Court (**Nomads**). Contacts working in these areas should ideally have 2 years of sobriety. If interested, please contact [tas@ottawaaa.org](mailto:tas@ottawaaa.org) and [btg@ottawaaa.org](mailto:btg@ottawaaa.org)

# Service

## TAS (Telephone Answering Service)

**You are needed!**

Help maintain the 24/7 phone lines for the next suffering alcoholic.

Intergroup is currently looking for a TAS coordinator & volunteers to take shifts.

Contact: [TAS@ottawaaa.org](mailto:TAS@ottawaaa.org)

Intergroup Service:

### Secretary

Take minutes

Maintain group rep lists

Support provided!



### Other Service Opportunities:

Chair Eastern Conference 2022

Vice-Chair Eastern Conference 2022

Vice-Chair Spring Conference 2022

## Results from the Ottawa Intergroup 2021 Elections

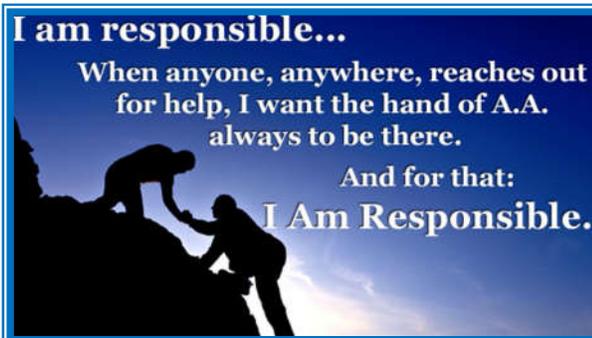
Mary K. Chairperson

John D. Vice-Chair

Dawn-Marie M. Newsletter Coordinator

Adele M. 12th Step Coordinator

If you are interested in standing for any of these positions, please attend the next Intergroup Membership meeting on January 12, 2022 7:00 PM on Zoom. Please visit: <https://ottawaaa.org/ottawa-intergroup> for the Zoom Meeting ID and password.



# From the AA Archives...Westboro Big Book Study Group

The idea of an Ottawa meeting based on the Joe and Charlie Big Book tapes came from Mary-Anne B. She thought the format would work as well in Ottawa as it did in London, Ont., where she first heard the folksy and traditional lectures by the two famous Americans. So in the fall of 2001 she approached All Saints Church and arranged to rent a room on Saturday morning.

The first meeting of the Westboro Big Book Study Meeting was held at 9 a.m. on Jan. 5, 2002. Six people attended: Mary-Anne, who chaired; Ginny, who made coffee; Dave B., Brian L., Ed W. and Sharon W. (Sharon passed away at age 40 on Jan. 8, 2005).

The initial meeting opened with the Serenity Prayer, the Preamble and the reading of the Twelve Steps, a format that is still followed. After that, the group listened to the opening segment of tape (about 20 minutes long) from an 11-hour series of lectures recorded by Joe McQuany and Charlie Parnham at Laughlin, Nevada, in August 1998.

It was just one of many weekend presentations by the two men during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s to AA audiences across North American and beyond – but a memorable one. The weekend was taped and their message has been heard since that time by thousands of AA members around the world. In essence, Joe and Charlie teach the 12 Steps of recovery the old fashioned way, exactly as outlined in the Big Book by AA's founders, Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith. They also do it with such an easy and

humorous way that they demystify the Big Book in the process and make it easy for everyone to understand.

At the Westboro meeting, the message becomes even easier to absorb because the group also provides a written transcript each week, allowing members to see the words – and make notes if they wish – while listening to the tapes. Anyone who wants can take the transcripts home for personal use. Some group members have collected the entire set.

The Laughlin weekend was broken down initially into 39 sessions, lasting 15 to 20 minutes each. Each segment was played in sequence, taking about nine months of meetings to complete. The laborious job of producing transcripts was undertaken by Mary-Anne and Gabriela B., who also became an early member of the group. It took them several months. Later, some of the longer weekly sessions were divided again, expanding the total number of sessions to 47 – and extending the cycle of meetings needed to hear them all to almost 11 months.

The group attracted a small but loyal initial following of five to 10 members. After it being listed in the Ottawa Area Meeting Directory, attendance rose to a dozen or more each week, with 15 present at the first anniversary in January 2003. Over the second year attendance doubled again to about 30 members a week, sometimes more. Thirty-five members were on hand for the second anniversary in

January 2004, and attendance stabilized in the range of 30 to 40 over the next 18 months. Then, in the last half of 2005, it swung upward again. Approximately 60 members celebrated the fourth in 2006. Since that time attendance has topped 70 members on occasion, filling the meeting room to virtual capacity.

A discussion period follows the playing of each weekly tape. Initially, there was only one discussion group but as attendance increased members divided into two, three and then four separate groups. Discussion continues until approximately 9:50 a.m. when members reconvene for announcements and a circle of hands – for those who wish. The meeting closes with the Responsibility Pledge and Lord's Prayer.

All members are welcome to celebrate birthdays at the group. Initially, the group maintained its normal format even when birthdays were celebrated, varying the routine only to allow for special readings and the presentation of cards and medallions at the conclusion of the meeting. More recently, it has decided to give members the option of celebrating birthdays with a speaker meeting if they wish.

In 2008, thanks to Harry B., the group established its own website and is in the process of making all the tapes and transcripts available as an online resource to the AA community at large. The address is: <http://www.westborobigbook.com/>

# 2022 SPRING CONFERENCE “TOGETHER WE CAN”

## CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Hello friends, I'm an alcoholic named Dick. I have the honour and privilege of being your Chair for the 2022 Spring Conference.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, it has been decided that the 2022 Spring Conference will be an online event.

Reflecting on the past few years, wondering what to choose as a theme for the 2022 Conference, it came to me that I could not have done any of the things I've done in sobriety without all of you: the Fellowship of AA. Speaking with other members, the

impact of the Fellowship is not unique to me. Together, I can do things, I never thought possible.

I need your help! I need people to help me put together the 2022 Spring Conference program: coordinate workshops, find speakers, help on the day of the event. If you would like to help, please send an email to [spring@ottawaaa.org](mailto:spring@ottawaaa.org).

I can't do this on my own; together, we can put on a successful online event!



The Ottawa Spring Conference has been an annual tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous in the National Capital Region since at least 1979. The event is hosted by the Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous with the gracious support of A.A. groups and members across our region.

This year's Spring Conference will be held on Saturday, April 30, 2022.

And as much as we would all love to blossom forth that day—like daffodils in the sun—and join together in person...alas, Covid-19 is still dictating our plans. And so, as mentioned, our Spring Conference will, once again, be a virtual event.

With your input and enthusiasm, we can and *will* come together in fellowship. With any luck we'll be able to bring back the cutlery and dancing shoes for Spring 2023.

# **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:

**We have a disease.**

**Another layer of the onion.**

**Be discreet.**

**Helping yourself, helps them.**

**Tell yourself a different story.**

**Change the perspective – for a more positive perspective.**

**You've come a long way.**

**Don't jump in all at once.**

**They tried the best they could.**

**They have issues.**

**First things first.**

**You can't let go on your own.**

**Let God do it.**

**Make time for meditation.**

**God speaks through others.**

**Try to be yourself.**

**Be grateful.**

**We all make mistakes.**



**Please submit your Pearls of Wisdom to: [newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)  
Thank you for your service!**

**D**id you know...that Alcoholics Anonymous in Canada and the U.S. is divided into 93 Areas? Ottawa District Inter-group is part of Area 83 which ranges from Oakville to the Quebec border and from Algonquin Park down into Upper New York State. Ontario is made up of 4 areas circling counter clockwise around the province. So Eastern Ontario is us, Area 83, Northeast is Area 84, Northwest is Area 85 and Western Ontario is Area 86.

In the states, the area numbers, for the most part, match up with the alphabetical sequence of the state. For example, Area 1 is Alabama, Area 2 is Alaska and Area 3 is Arizona finishing up with Wyoming as Area 76. Then we have Puerto Rico which is Area 77. We then jump up to Canada where they are numbered by alphabetical order as well. So Alberta/NWT is Area 78. British Columbia is Area 79 through to Saskatchewan which is Area 91. Quebec, like Ontario is made up of 4 areas

numbered counter clockwise around the province. You may notice that we have only accounted for 91 Areas. What about the last 2 areas? Well, 2 of the states grew in population so much that they each added an Area. So now we have Area 92 in Washington and Area 93 in California.

You may be wondering, what is the purpose of having these Areas?

**Why is A.A. divided into Areas?**

In order for you, the members, to be represented at the annual business meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous, each Area elects a Delegate. This Delegate goes to New York to participate on our behalf in the 6 day long annual business meeting. This business meeting is called the General Service Conference. While the General

Service Conference operates all year round, the annual meeting, held usually in April, is the culmination of the year's activities. It is a time when the collective conscience of A.A. in the U.S. and Canada comes together to take actions that will guide the groups in the years to come.



Area 83 Assembly -  
 March 25-27, 2022  
 Pre-Conference Agenda  
 Sharing - March/April 2022  
 (dates to be announced)  
 72nd General Service  
 Conference - April 23-30, 2022



News and Notes from the General Service Office of A.A.<sup>®</sup>

[www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)

**AA GRAPEVINE**

The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous



## About Ottawa Area Intergroup

Ottawa Area Intergroup had humble beginnings in the basement of a local member, Jimmy T., the Pool Hall Guru. His wife Ruby answered the phone installed in their basement. A sales guy from North Bay (friends with Jimmy and another AA guy) was instrumental in getting Intergroup started in Ottawa, in the early 70s.

Intergroup was first named the Central Office, maybe because of location. The first employee's name was Patricia, who ran the office at the corner of Charlotte St. and Rideau St. – it was a hole-in-the-wall room on the 5th floor above the drugstore. Later, the office moved to Bank St. near Heron Rd. in a set-back strip mall. Pat was revered. Nothing moved without her say so, *so to speak*.

She was replaced in 1984 by another employee. Since then, the office has operated on and off with

an employee and has always been supported by a large number of member volunteers.

There is one member who remembers that the office was once at the corner of Carling Ave. and Bronson Ave. It is not known when Intergroup was first moved to the Bronson Centre, but it has had an established presence there for at least 20 years. We maintain an office, staffed by volunteers, who answer the phone and sell litera-



ture.

In 1992, Intergroup was incorporated as a non-profit organization in the Province of Ontario. It is the primary point of contact in Ottawa (other than individual meetings) for those seeking help with the problem of alcoholism.

**Send your updated group/meeting information to: [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org)**

**District 62  
Annual GSR  
Workshop**

**ALL MEMBERS  
WELCOME!**

**January 10, 2022 7:30pm**

Meeting ID 638 562 068

Password 016224

Overview of the General Service Structure of AA

Roles and Responsibilities of a group's General Service Representative

The Roles of AA Service Committees

The Roles of Ottawa Area Intergroup

Workshop Facilitator—Sue L.

For more information contact:  
[trevordistrict62@gmail.com](mailto:trevordistrict62@gmail.com)

## Ottawa Intergroup Office

211 Bronson Avenue, Suite 108  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 6H5  
Office Hours: 10 am – 4 pm,  
Monday-Friday and  
1 pm – 4 pm Saturday  
Telephone: (613) 237-6000  
Email: [info@ottawaaa.org](mailto:info@ottawaaa.org)

Newsletter Coordinator  
[newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)  
Article submission deadline is  
the 20th day of the month  
preceding publication date

## Ottawa Area Intergroup

Chair – Mary K.  
Vice-Chair – John D.  
Secretary – Vacant  
Treasurer – Tim W.  
Website – Carolyn O.  
Telephone Answering– Eric S.  
Literature – Al L.  
12-Step Coordinator-Adele M.  
Spring Conference – Dick G.  
Eastern Ontario Conference– vacant  
Newsletter – Dawn-Marie M.

[chair@ottawaaa.org](mailto:chair@ottawaaa.org)  
[vice@ottawaaa.org](mailto:vice@ottawaaa.org)  
[secretary@ottawaaa.org](mailto:secretary@ottawaaa.org)  
[treasurer@ottawaaa.org](mailto:treasurer@ottawaaa.org)  
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[literature@ottawaaa.org](mailto:literature@ottawaaa.org)  
[12step@ottawaaa.org](mailto:12step@ottawaaa.org)  
[spring@ottawaaa.org](mailto:spring@ottawaaa.org)  
[eoc@ottawaaa.org](mailto:eoc@ottawaaa.org)  
[newsletter@ottawaaa.org](mailto:newsletter@ottawaaa.org)

## Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

District 54 – Ottawa East – Kevin O.      [district54@ottawaaa.org](mailto:district54@ottawaaa.org)  
District 62 – Ottawa West – Trevor F.      [district62@ottawaaa.org](mailto:district62@ottawaaa.org)  
Cooperation with Professionals - Jo D.      [cpc@ottawaaa.org](mailto:cpc@ottawaaa.org)  
Public Information/Media Contact - Jo D.      [pi@ottawaaa.org](mailto:pi@ottawaaa.org)  
Corrections Facilities & Treatment - Elaine H.      [cft@ottawaaa.org](mailto:cft@ottawaaa.org)  
Archives – Sue L.      [archives@ottawaaa.org](mailto:archives@ottawaaa.org)

# 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](mailto: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](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 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!*