

January 2026

Our Primary Purpose

Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous



We
stand
ready.

Alkathon—Kudos

By Darlene B.

I'm Darlene and I'm an alcoholic and I had the privilege to be your Chair of Ottawa's 2025 Alkathon. I have so much gratitude for the hard working committee this year. This event was not possible without a full on team effort and every member did their part. I am further grateful to all the members and groups who volunteered their time and money over the holidays. We, hence, provided a safe and

sober place for the alcoholic to go. No one should ever be alone or hungry over Christmas and the Alkathon successfully made sure that did not happen. Thank you!

Yours in service,

Darlene B.



Reflections on Alkathon from an Al-Anoner's Perspective

By Shelley M.

Alkathon: A Place of Welcome, Recovery, and Celebration

The annual Alkathon is one of the best holiday gatherings around, and I am deeply grateful to be involved. Alkathon is an AA event with Al-Anon participation—a welcoming space where everyone belongs.

The holidays, however they are observed, can be especially challenging for those who have stopped drinking and for those affected by another person's drinking. Alkathon offers a safe, alcohol-free environment where people can find food and drink, fellowship, meetings, music, and inspiration.

“Alkathon offers a safe, alcohol-free space filled with comfort, camaraderie, and shared experience—especially when the holidays are hardest.”

My involvement with Alkathon began with a chance conversation. An OC Transpo bus driver once shared that every Christmas Eve he drove a bus transporting mothers and children fleeing abuse to a hidden location for a

special holiday celebration. He spoke of his gratitude for family and friends and his desire to give back. I carried that story with me, hoping one day to find my own way to volunteer during the festive season.

I joined Al-Anon in 2022, and members of my home group spoke enthusiastically about Alkathon, held at the Bronson Centre—my former high school, Immaculata. I never imagined returning there as an Alkathon participant. Though the building has changed over time, its familiar structure still sparks fond memories.

Months of planning go into Alkathon, which runs from noon to noon on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day and New Year's Eve/New Year's Day. Volunteers, donors, AA and Al-Anon members, and supporters contribute time, energy, resources, and talents—setting up, preparing food, providing security, registering participants, organizing and chairing meetings, and much more.

Alkathon offers comfort, camaraderie, anonymity, and shared experience. Seventh Tradition boxes are available

Reflections on Alkathon from an Al-Anoner's Perspective Cont'd

for cash donations, and e-transfers are also accepted. Many AA and Al-Anon groups support Alkathon with donations of food, coffee, and volunteer service, along with generous contributions from local businesses and community organizations.

Walking into my first Alkathon, I was immediately greeted by the sound of positivity—music, laughter, coffee brewing, and the hum of organized chaos. A powerful moment in my own recovery was witnessing the New Year's Eve countdown, when years, months, weeks, and days of continuous sobriety were celebrated with cheers and applause. Big Books were presented both to those with long-term sobriety and those just beginning their journey. It was deeply moving and inspiring.

Throughout the event, laughter fills the hallways:

“Can I get you a coffee?”

“How many alcoholics does it take to change a lightbulb?”

“Can you bring those sandwiches into the big room?”

Chairing an Al-Anon meeting at Alkathon is a true honour. Familiar faces mix with newcomers. Some attendees are celebrating; others are navigating very difficult moments. There is laughter, there are tears, and there is deep, meaningful sharing among people touched by another's drinking.

AA members and Al-Anoners are welcome to attend any meeting, offering opportunities to learn from one another. In 2025, many alcoholics attended Al-Anon meetings. As is often said, alcoholics more than qualify for Al-Anon, as we have yet to meet one who has not been affected by others' drinking. After several Al-Anon meetings, parents and grandparents stayed behind to gather information and discuss their concerns one-to-one.

Panel discussions highlighted the many faces of alcoholism. Long-time members shared stories of destruction and recovery, reminding us that alcoholism's harm is cunning, baffling, and powerful—and that it does not discriminate. A panel of young people spoke candidly

about how substance use changed their lives and how the program helped them not only survive, but thrive.

Above all, Alkathon is a place of kindness. I have low vision, and without exception, people readily offered assistance—helping me navigate the space, get coffee, and manage the buffet. Alkathon is held in a wheelchair-accessible venue, reinforcing its commitment to inclusion and accessibility for all.

Alkathon truly embodies the spirit of recovery, community, and hope—especially when it is needed most.



Tradition and Tolerance: Reflections on Closing with the Lord's Prayer—Part II

By Stephan P.

This is the second entry in a multi-article series exploring the use of the Lord's Prayer in AA meetings. If you missed Part 1, you'll find it in last month's newsletter. Each piece builds on the last to support thoughtful reflection and group conscience.

Part 2 – A Longstanding Custom: The Lord's Prayer in Early AA

In last month's introduction, we reflected on the longstanding custom of using the Lord's Prayer to close AA meetings. We noted that while many groups still use it today, others have moved away from the practice, and that both approaches are rooted in group conscience and AA's spiritual principles.

In this installment, we turn to the early days of the Fellowship to explore where the prayer came from, how it became common in meetings, and what it meant to the alcoholics who helped shape AA's foundation.

From the Oxford Group to Akron AA

Before AA existed, both Bill W. and Dr. Bob found help through the Oxford Group, a Christian spiritual movement active in the 1930s. Its practices included prayer, confession, fellowship, and guidance from God. Many Oxford Group meetings ended with the Lord's Prayer.

When AA broke away from the Oxford Group, it left behind much of the doctrine but kept some of the practices. In a 1959 letter on the topic, Bill W. acknowledged that the prayer likely entered AA meetings by way of this influence. He wrote:

"This practice probably came from the Oxford Groups who were influential in the early days of A.A. I think saying the Lord's Prayer was a custom of theirs following the close of each meeting. Therefore it quite easily got shifted into a general custom among us."

This helps explain how the prayer found its way into AA's

earliest formats. It was a spiritual habit that felt familiar and unifying to those early members.

Early Meeting Formats: Akron and Cleveland

Historical sources confirm that by the late 1930s and early 1940s, AA meetings in places like Akron and Cleveland regularly closed with the Lord's Prayer.

In Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, one Akron member recalled:

"After the meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer, all the men beat it to the kitchen for coffee..."

In Cleveland, Clarence S., who helped build up the Fellowship there in 1939, described their format:

"We opened with an audible prayer... and we closed with the Lord's Prayer."

These were not one-time choices. They became standard parts of the early AA meeting structure. The 1940 Akron AA Manual even outlined a format where the meeting leader closed by asking everyone to stand and say the Lord's Prayer together. This was not mandated by AA as a whole, since there was no central authority, but it became a widespread practice adopted by many groups.

A Spiritual Gesture in a Christian Culture

To understand why the Lord's Prayer became so widely used in early AA, it helps to consider the social and cultural setting of the time. In the 1930s and 1940s, public expressions of Christian prayer were common in American life. Most AA members came from Christian backgrounds, or were at least familiar with Christian language and customs.

In Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers, one section notes:

"Some alcoholics... considered themselves members of the Oxford Group... Others might have considered themselves Baptists, Christian Scientists, or Roman

Tradition and Tolerance: Reflections on Closing with the Lord's Prayer (cont'd)

Catholics..."

In that environment, reciting the Lord's Prayer together was not viewed as exclusive. It was a familiar, shared spiritual gesture that helped close the meeting in a humble, hopeful way.

That sense of shared humility mattered. Many early members believed prayer, especially prayer spoken together, helped build unity and reinforce their dependence on a Higher Power. The Lord's Prayer offered a structure for that, one they did not have to create from scratch or argue over.

A Practice Passed On

For groups today that still use the Lord's Prayer, one of the most common reasons is continuity. It is often expressed this way: "It worked for them, so we kept doing it."

In many ways, this reflects the spirit of AA's growth through shared experience. Much of what AA became was not planned or enforced. It developed through group practices that proved useful and were passed along.

While the Lord's Prayer does not appear in the Big Book or Twelve and Twelve, it remained a familiar custom in many early groups. In a 1959 letter, Bill W. acknowledged that it likely entered AA through the Oxford Group and noted that in meetings where the prayer was used, participation was voluntary.

That same principle appears in more recent AA service material. A 2003 General Service Office newsletter explained that while the Lord's Prayer is still common in many meetings, members are

typically invited to join in only if they choose to. This approach reflects the Fellowship's emphasis on personal freedom, group conscience, and spiritual unity.

For some, that gentle invitation continues to offer a shared moment of humility and connection. For others, it may be a moment of quiet reflection rather than spoken prayer. In either case, the focus remains on what AA has always tried to do—carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and make space for every person seeking recovery.

Next Month: Having reflected on the roots of the Lord's Prayer in early AA meeting customs, we will turn to how the Fellowship's spiritual language began to broaden. In our next piece, we will explore how the phrase "God as we understood Him" came into the Steps, and how members like Jim B. helped shape AA as a program that remains open to all alcoholics, regardless of belief or background.



The Language of the Heart

By Jason M.

Because of our kinship in suffering, and because our common means of deliverance are effective for ourselves only when constantly carried to others, our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart.

— Bill W., *"The Language of the Heart," AA Grapevine, July 1960*

Last night I sat in a room packed with people who came to celebrate a friend's thirty-five years of recovery. Our normally spacious meeting space was so full that members sat on the floor. As she often says, it wasn't a celebration about her—it was a celebration of the program that saved us, and brought us all together.

There were laughs, and there were tears. There were moments that gave me goosebumps—and times where I made eye contact knowingly with the person beside me because the speaker's words landed in a place we both recognized. But one phrase stayed with me: "I didn't get better on my own First Step; I got better on someone else's Twelfth Step."

That's the language we speak. It's the invisible current that moves between people who share a common suffering and a common solution. When I first came in, I didn't understand it. I heard the clichés—One Day at a Time, Keep Coming Back, You Are Not Alone—and they sounded worn out, almost childish. But the power of a cliché in a meeting isn't in the phrase. It's in the lives of

the people saying it. These aren't philosophical statements. They're survival instructions, what you grab onto when you're drowning. Over time I saw that these sayings get repeated because they work. They hold up under pressure. They're what remains after everything else collapses.

We all come through those doors broken and alone—lost, frightened, and without purpose. We sit down and hear others share words we don't yet understand. We nod politely, or stare blankly, or fight tears we don't want to feel. And somehow, even in that confusion, something begins to hold us. We stumble, but we're carried. We lean on borrowed hope until we discover a little of our own.

And then, one day—not always suddenly, but unmistakably—we find our voice again. We join the chorus of those who speak this language, the language of the heart. It's communicated not only through words, but through concrete actions, new attitudes, and the small movements of people who show up for each other. It's a way of connecting that lets us recognize ourselves in one another, long before we know how to put our own stories into words.

Last night's celebration wasn't just about thirty-five years. It was about the miracle of sitting in a crowded room knowing that none of us has to walk this path alone. We are part of something larger, steadier, and more loving than anything we could have built on our own. We have found a new way of living.



From Resolutions to Readiness: A New Year's Reflection on Step Six

By Stephan P.

Every January, I feel the familiar pull toward self-improvement. A new calendar invites new promises: better habits, better health, better discipline, a better version of myself. For years, I made resolution after resolution, believing that this time I would finally change through determination and willpower alone. But the truth is that my resolve never held. As an alcoholic, mine couldn't hold because I had not yet experienced the willingness that Step Six opens in me. Before recovery, and even early in it, I simply did not have access to the spiritual posture that real change requires.

This is why sponsorship and the orderly progression of the Steps matter so much. Step Six is not something I can jump to on my own. It is offered to me only after someone has guided me through the work that comes before it. The willingness of Step Six is not self-generated. It is something that grows naturally after the ego has been deflated, the truth has been told, and the heart has been opened. In a sense, Step Six is a spiritual readiness that I cannot manufacture, but I can prepare for.

Reaching Step Six

The Big Book describes Steps One through Five as the foundation of an arch "through which we shall walk a free man at last." Only after confirming that this foundation is solid do we "then look at Step Six," where willingness becomes indispensable. Step Six is not an isolated idea. It is the natural next movement after admitting my defeat, finding hope, making a decision, searching my heart, and telling the truth.

The Big Book outlines this journey:

- **Step One** showed me that I could not overcome alcoholism by my own power.
- **Step Two** helped me believe that a Higher Power could restore me.
- **Step Three** invited me to turn my will and life over to

God's care, a Higher Power of my own understanding.

- **Step Four** asked me to search out the causes and conditions of my troubles.
- **Step Five** helped me end the deadly habit of facing those conflicts alone, bringing them into the light with God and another human being.

This is the spiritual housecleaning that prepared me for Step Six. Until I had walked this path with the guidance of a sponsor, I was not ready for the question Step Six poses: Am I willing to be changed?

What Step Six Asks of Me

The June 4th Daily Reflections calls Step Six "the last preparation step," noting that after identifying the problem, coming to believe in a solution, making a decision, and cleaning house, I must now ask whether I am willing to let go of my old self. Step Six is not about achieving spiritual perfection but about becoming ready for transformation. It asks whether the work I have done so far has prepared me to loosen my grip, even slightly, on the traits that block me from God.

And this is where many of us balk. The 12 & 12 says that we hesitate because we "still loved some of our defects too much." The question isn't, "Can God remove them?" but rather, "Am I willing to stop protecting them?" The Big Book tells me that if I am still clinging to something, the task is simple: ask God for willingness. Step Six is the moment where my self-directed improvement gives way to God-directed transformation.

What Were My "Limited Objectives"?

Step Six asks me to become entirely ready to have a God of my understanding remove my defects of character. But my first instinct, even in early recovery, was often to set the terms of this removal myself rather than align with my Higher Power.

Bill calls these "self-determined objectives," and today I understand them as "limited objectives," spiritually small

From Resolutions to Readiness: A New Year's Reflection on Step Six—Cont'd

goals that do not align with God's will for me. They were the goals I designed myself, without returning to my Higher Power for direction. Some looked like this:

- **"I'm trying to be more patient,** but losing my temper is just part of my wiring. I can only change so much."
- **"I want to grow spiritually,** but I can't deal with too much upheaval in my schedule. Maybe there's a different path for me that better fits my calendar."
- **"I'm committed to progress,** but some areas feel too tender right now. I'll wait and see if those will shift on their own with time and come back to them later."

These were not malicious attitudes. They reflected where I was spiritually. But if I am honest with myself, I was still trying to be the director, arranging spiritual growth according to my comfort rather than God's direction. Step Six is where I begin to recognize that my small objectives are probably not aligned with the larger life my Higher Power is leading me toward.

Did I Really "Enjoy" My Defects?

Bill W's use of the word "enjoy" in Step 6 of the 12 & 12 can sound strange today, but in his time it simply meant "derive comfort from" or "feel attached to." When I look at my past honestly, I can see how some of my defects gave me short-term relief or emotional safety:

- **Anger** made me feel less powerless.
- **Resentment** helped me make sense of hurt.
- **Envy** gave me a way to explain why I felt left behind.
- **Self-pity** allowed me to retreat when life felt overwhelming.
- **Fear** sheltered me from risks I did not feel ready to take.
- **Procrastination** softened the pressure of expectations, including my own.

These patterns were familiar. They offered immediate comfort, even if they created long-term pain. In many ways, my defects functioned like emotional substitutes for alcohol. They soothed, they numbed, and they protected me

from discomfort. They worked, until they did not.

When Pain Meets Surrender

The 12 & 12 tells us that most of us will not let go of a defect until it has created "excessive misery." That has been my experience. I released anger only when it isolated me. I released self-pity only when it shrank my world. I released resentment only when it broke relationships I cared about. Pain did not change me by itself, but it made me willing enough to consider a different way.

Even so, letting go does not come naturally. I notice how often I still try to negotiate with the process, shaping my spiritual growth around what feels safe or familiar. I let go of the sharpest edges of my defects while quietly holding on to the parts that still seem to serve me. This is where Step Six becomes essential. It asks me to move from self-directed management to God-directed willingness.

Step Six reminds me that true willingness is about opening myself to God's care and direction, even when I do not know what that direction will look like. When I loosen my grip on negotiation, I step away from my limited objectives and toward God's will. In that movement, I experience humility and deepen my relationship with my Higher Power.

What I Now Understand: A New Year's Closing

When I ask myself, "Why did I enjoy my defects?" the answer is simple: Because they were the blunt tools I used before I had a spiritual solution.

They helped me cope, protect myself, and navigate the world on self will. Letting them go felt risky. Keeping them felt safe. Step Six is where I can relinquish that grip and allow God to reshape me.

As I step into a new year, I do not make resolutions anymore. I practice willingness. Step Six reminds me that real change comes not from determination but from spiritual readiness, and that readiness grows through the Steps, through sponsorship, and through a relationship with a Power greater than myself. Today, I can walk into a new year not with resolve, but with openness, trusting that God's direction is far better than my limited objectives.

Tickets on sale at spring.ottawaaa.org in February

TOGETHER WE GROW

...‘a design for living’ that really works.

Save the date!

May 9, 2026

Hellenic Event Centre
1315 Prince of Wales Drive

**OTTAWA
SPRING
CONFERENCE**



Contact spring@ottawaaa.org or Lorrie at (519) 902-2691

OTTAWA SPRING CONFERENCE

TOGETHER WE GROW

“A design for living ... that really works.”

On Saturday May 9th, we gather at the Hellenic Event Centre,
1315 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa, ON K2C 1N2,
to celebrate recovery, fellowship, and spiritual growth.

The Big Book describes how we once reached for help “with all the desperation of drowning men,” never imagining that what first appeared fragile would become a lifeline — a loving and powerful hand pulling us into a new way of life. Many of us arrived in A.A. simply looking for relief, but what we found was far deeper: a design for living that truly works.

TOGETHER WE GROW speaks to what recovery makes possible when we do it side by side:

- We grow in honesty when we tell the truth about ourselves.
- We grow in connection when we stop trying to recover alone.
- We grow in freedom when we discover purpose through service.
- We grow in gratitude when we see transformation in each other.

This conference is an invitation to deepen that growth:

a day of shared experience, strength, and hope — of unity, laughter, storytelling, fellowship, and spiritual renewal.

Whether you are new to A.A., returning after time away, or long-established in sobriety, you belong here. Bring your curiosity, your willingness, your open heart. Come as you are — because none of us grows alone.

We look forward to welcoming you in Ottawa on May9 2026



TAS NEEDS YOU!

Our Primary Purpose is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

Intergroup is actively seeking new groups or members wanting to extend the hand of AA to take on this rewarding service commitment on a monthly rotation. We would like to invite any experienced member to pick up an open shift or begin a new monthly commitment. Most of the open shifts are during the day. Look over the [calendar](#) to see what works for you.

TAS can be contacted at:
tas@ottawaaa.org.



Also available:

- In office, TAS is still available for Sponsor/Sponsee, review the calendar to find an opening and schedule a time. There is an NDA form for security reasons. The access code will be provided.
- The Sobriety requirement is 1 year. Take advantage of the online tutorial on the Unite telephone answering service. Coaching throughout the process can be done by any TAS volunteer, or an experienced member or Sponsor.

Thank you in advance for your service.

Service Opportunities

Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous

Service Opportunity	Contact Info	Notes:
Telephone Answering Service	tas@ottawaaa.org	Vacant shifts available—one time or monthly.
Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre (OWMC),	owmc@ottawaaa.org	Carry the message.
TAS Coordinator	chair@ottawaaa.org	Please email the chair to learn about the role of the Telephone Answering Service Coordinator
12-Step Coordinator	chair@ottawaaa.org	Please email the chair to learn about the role of 12-step coordinator.
Treasurer of the CFT Committee	cft@ottawaaa.org	Please email if interested!!

MEETING UPDATES

Podium Hill: Effective December 3, Podium Hill's Wednesday 12.15 pm online meeting will be held at 7 pm. It will continue to be an open speaker meeting. This does not affect the in-person meeting on Tuesdays at 12.15 at St. Andrews Church (closed discussion) or the online meeting on Fridays at 12.15 (closed Big Book study).

Freedom Group: Effective January 6th, 2026, Freedom Group will have a new start time of 7:30 pm.

Lunch with Bill: Monday–Friday: 12:00 p.m., via Zoom

Sunday: Meeting is now cancelled

In-person BWB meetings: Continue at the Presbyterian Church, 470 Roosevelt Avenue, Ottawa, on Monday and Friday at noon

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 A.A. 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](#))

DISTRICT 48 MEETING..... First Tuesday (7:00 pm)
(in-person: [Winchester United Church 519 St. Lawrence St, Winchester](#))

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

DISTRICT 62 MEETING..... Second Monday (7:30 pm)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 638 562 068 Passcode 016224](#))

CORRECTIONS FACILITIES AND TREATMENT..... **Fourth Tuesday (6:00 pm)**
([ZOOM Meeting ID 815 5183 4935 Passcode 521429](#))

PUBLIC INFORMATION/ COOPERATION WITH PROFESSIONALS Third Thursday (7pm)
([ZOOM Meeting ID 815 4385 6025 Passcode PICPC](#))

OTTAWA ARCHIVES..... Third Wednesday (6:30pm)
Bronson Centre, 211 Bronson Avenue-Room 108 in-person meeting

Contact Information

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Ottawa Area Intergroup

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Spring Conference	Lorrie W.	spring@ottawaaa.org
Eastern Ontario Conference	Geraldine H.	eoc@ottawaaa.org
Summerathon	Vacant	summerathon@ottawaaa.org
Newsletter	George H.	newsletter@ottawaaa.org

Ottawa General Service Districts and Committees

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District 54- Ottawa East	Karen A.	district54@ottawaaa.org
District 62- Ottawa West	Steve B.	district62@ottawaaa.org
Cooperation with Professionals	Chris M.	cpc@ottawaaa.org
Public Information/Media Contact	Chris M.	pi@ottawaaa.org
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Archives	Meaghan S.	archives@ottawaaa.org
Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre (detox)	Paul D.	owmc@ottawaaa.org

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General Notes

- **Is your A.A. 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 question and you can also request an invitation to meet with us at our monthly 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 editor relies on the principles of the Twelve Traditions. "Our Primary Purpose" values the shared experience of individual A.A. members working the A.A. 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 A.A. Fellowship.
- The editor of "Our Primary Purpose" reserves the right to accept or reject material for publication, based on the A.A. traditions. Note: this policy is consistent with that of the A.A. Grapevine. Articles are not intended to be statements of A.A. policy, nor does publication of any article constitute endorsement by either Alcoholics Anonymous or Ottawa Area Intergroup. Submissions are always welcome. For Newsletter Submissions, send to: newsletter@ottawaaa.org
- Article submissions are greatly appreciated by the end of the month preceding publication date.