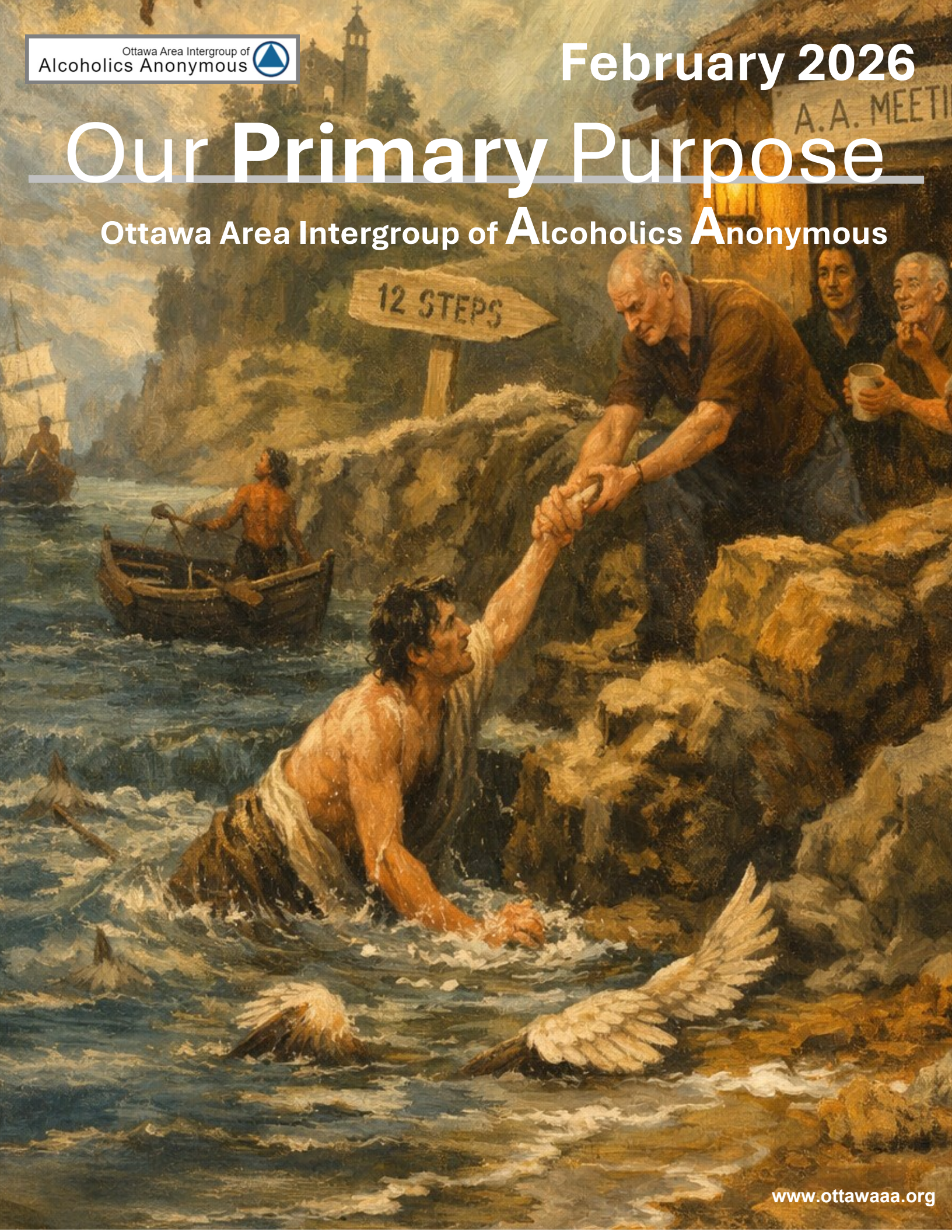


February 2026

Our Primary Purpose

Ottawa Area Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous



An Alcoholics Anonymous Event with Al-Anon Participation

TOGETHER WE GROW

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

Country Rocks

Live Band

Vicky C.

Portland, Oregon

Marty J.

Richmond, B.C.

Cam N.

Kingston, Ontario

May 9, 2026

Hellenic Event Centre
1315 Prince of Wales Drive

Registration and tickets:
spring.ottawaaa.org

**OTTAWA
SPRING
CONFERENCE**



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

OTTAWA SPRING CONFERENCE

May 9th, 2026 | Hellenic Banquet Centre | 1315 Prince of Wales Drive, Ottawa, Ontario

Doors open at 8:00 AM. Visit website for online registration, hotel details, schedule, and ways to be of service.

<https://spring.ottawaaa.org> | spring@ottawaaa.org | Call or text Lorrie at (519) 902-2691

\$75.00 Full Registration (Includes Banquet)

Payment by E-Transfer (preferred method): Email completed form to spring@ottawaaa.org or register online via conference website. Send Interac e-transfer to treasurer@ottawaaa.org (message: *Spring Conference*).

Payment by Credit/Debit: Register online and pay with card via conference website. Do not use this form.

Payment by Cheque (in person or by mail): Payable to Ottawa Area Intergroup (memo: *Spring Conference*). Submit printed form to a conference committee member or mail to Ottawa Area Intergroup, 211 Bronson Ave, Suite 108, Ottawa ON K1R 6H5. Do not drop off at Intergroup. Mail must be postmarked by May 1, 2026.

Advance Tickets (No Banquet): \$15 tickets include all other conference events and are available from committee members or Ottawa Area Intergroup / General Service Representatives (cash only). \$20 at the door.

Contact Name:

Phone Number:

Email Address:

Email Completed Form

	Attendee Full Name Badges only first name last initial	Phone	Affiliation AA/Al-Anon, Homegroup, City	Special**
e.g.	Johnny Appleseed	(613) XXX-XXXX	AA, Freedom Group, Ottawa	Wheelchair, Veg.
1				
2				
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10				

10 places per table. You may reserve up to one table per form. Collect badges at registration desk upon arrival.

**Indicates dietary or accessibility requirements.

CALCULATION: \$75.00 (INCL. TAX) x # ATTENDEES = \$

Help Others Attend Our Event

Your contribution will go towards purchasing advance tickets for those new or in need in our fellowship. Your support is greatly appreciated.

CONTRIBUTE: \$

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

By Stephan P.

This is the third installment in an ongoing series on the use of the Lord's Prayer in AA meetings. If you're just joining us, Parts 1 and 2 are available in the previous issues of the newsletter. Each entry stands on its own, but together they trace the conversation in full.

Part 3 – A Broader Path: From Christian Language to “God as We Understood Him”

In our last article, we explored how the Lord's Prayer became a common part of early AA meetings. For many early members, it was a spiritual practice rooted in their background and experience. But as AA grew, so did the diversity of belief among its members.

This led to one of the most important developments in AA's history — the shift from specific religious language to broader, more inclusive spiritual terms. This installment looks at how that shift happened, who helped bring it about, and how it shaped the AA program we know today.

The Language of the Steps

The phrase “God as we understood Him,” which appears in Steps Three and Eleven, reflects one of the most important decisions in the development of AA's spiritual foundation. As Bill W. later recounted in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, this wording was not simply poetic language. It was the result of serious and necessary discussion among the Fellowship's earliest members during the writing of the Big Book in 1938.

Two members in particular, Jim B. and Hank P., raised strong objections to the overtly religious language in the original drafts of the Twelve Steps. They expressed concern that references to “God” without qualification and religious phrases would make the program inaccessible to alcoholics who did not hold traditional, specifically Christian, religious beliefs. Some members who had found sobriety through AA had no belief in God at all, and they feared the program was on the verge of becoming another religious movement, too closely modeled on the Oxford Group.

In response, Bill and the others providing input into the creation of the Big Book sought a compromise. The Steps were reframed as suggestions rather than requirements. Language that implied religious ritual, like praying on one's knees, was removed. And most notably, phrases such as “a Power greater than ourselves” and “God as we understood Him” were introduced to give each member the freedom to define their own conception of a Higher Power.

Bill later described these revisions as “the great contribution of our atheists and agnostics.” He credited Jim B., Hank P., and others with helping to widen AA's gateway so that all who suffered could find a way in, regardless of religious belief or background. These changes helped shape AA not as a religious organization, but as a spiritual program open to anyone with a desire to stop drinking.

That foundation continues to influence how AA meetings are conducted today. It is part of the context for conversations about language, prayer, and accessibility. And it serves as a reminder that some of AA's most enduring strengths came from listening to voices that spoke up for inclusion.

Spiritual, Not Religious

From the beginning, AA has described itself as a spiritual program rather than a religious one. That distinction is especially important when it comes to language, ritual, and group practice.

In the chapter “We Agnostics,” the Big Book addresses readers who may struggle with the idea of a Higher Power. Rather than demand belief, it offers openness and flexibility:

“When, therefore, we speak to you of God, we mean your own conception of God. This applies, too, to other spiritual expressions which you find in this book.”

This approach has become a cornerstone of AA's inclusivity. It acknowledges that spiritual experiences vary and that no single definition should be required of

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

anyone. Members are encouraged to seek their own understanding, in their own time.

Bill W. echoed this view in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, where he confirmed that belief in God was not required to join AA. The only requirement was, and still is, a desire to stop drinking.

What This Means for Group Practice

This commitment to spiritual flexibility remains one of AA's enduring strengths. It allows the program to reach people from many walks of life, including those who have been or felt excluded by religion in the past.

For some groups, that means reexamining practices that reflect specific religious roots. Closing with the Lord's Prayer is one such practice. Many groups still use it, and nothing in AA forbids that. After all, we are not a prohibition movement. But groups are encouraged to reflect on how their meeting practices affect the newcomer and whether they support an atmosphere of openness and welcome.

As The A.A. Group...Where It All Begins pamphlet suggests in its group inventory section, members are

encouraged to reflect on how well the group welcomes and supports newcomers. One of the key questions asks whether the group is "mindful that a newcomer is the lifeblood of the group." While it does not offer rules, it invites each group to consider how its customs, including the use of prayer, may help or hinder someone's willingness to stay and recover.

AA's spiritual literature and group experience both remind us that our primary purpose is to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. That includes creating an environment where anyone, regardless of belief or background, feels welcome to stay, listen, and recover. Making space for spiritual difference is not just a courtesy. It is part of the spiritual responsibility we carry as a Fellowship.

Next Month: *After exploring how AA's spiritual language widened to include all alcoholics, we will now turn to the foundation that supports all group decision-making: the Twelve Traditions. In our next installment, we will reflect on Tradition One and Tradition Twelve and how unity and humility shape the conversations AA groups have about customs such as closing prayers.*

Evolve, Not Revolve to Resolve

By Lilly W.

That's a mouthful, isn't it?

But for me, it holds a great deal of truth.

When I first walked into the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous in 1991, my intention was simple: I wanted to stop drinking. I drank when I was having a bad day. Not for confidence—I had plenty of that—but because alcohol had become my solution to discomfort. The disease ran deep in my family, on both sides. It was in the blood. And at thirty-six years old, I wanted a solution.

The program worked.

I went to meetings.

I found a sponsor.

I stayed sober.

I worked the Steps, fell down emotional rabbit holes, and dug myself out, time and time again. For many years, that was enough. I was no longer revolving in the old way of thinking and feeling. I was evolving.

In 2004–2005, while remaining sober and connected to A.A., I began studying the work influenced by Carl Jung through teachings on *sacred contracts* in Chicago. This work helped me understand the repeating patterns in my life both light and shadow. It didn't replace the Twelve Steps; it deepened them. I began to see how self-

Evolve, Not Revolve to Resolve (cont'd)

sabotage, impulsivity, victimhood, and avoidance lived in me not as character defects to shame, but as patterns to become conscious of.

It was during this time that I came to understand what *universal truth* really means.

Universal truth is not dependent on individual opinion or fleeting moments.

It is universally applicable it resonates with all people, regardless of background.

It is foundational it forms the basis for morality, self-knowledge, and our understanding of human nature. And it manifests in experience through shared human stories, emotions, and the natural laws of life.

I realized that this universal truth is beautifully, and simply, written into the Serenity Prayer.

We don't just think the Serenity Prayer, we *feel* it. It lives in the body, not just the mind.

That understanding shifted my recovery in a profound way. I began to see that while the mind remembers one way, the body remembers another. Sometimes the urge to drink didn't arrive as a thought. It arrived as a sensation. A feeling. Even a taste. Drinking anniversaries would come and go, and suddenly my body would react long before my mind caught up.

I stayed on course. I continued to apply the Twelve Steps, and I began to know myself more deeply through the lens of my own patterns of behaviour, what I came to recognize as archetypes. The addict, of course but also the gambler (the risk taker). The thief (not stealing from others, but stealing from my future through debt, avoidance, or self-deception). The saboteur, victim, child and others.

As I learned the light and shadow of each pattern, I gained something invaluable: the ability to witness my thoughts and actions instead of automatically responding to them. I was growing. I was evolving with the evolution of our humanity rather than revolving in old cycles on repeat.

Then life happened.

Our daughter died by suicide. She did not drink until she was thirty-six years old. One year later, she was gone. I was thirty-six when I entered AA. Something symbolic was unfolding something I could not fully witness because we lived in different provinces.

A year later, I was at another family funeral. I watched people drink, grow louder, looser, drunker. Suddenly, I heard my inner saboteur shout, "*Get out. Now.*" I had heard that same voice years earlier at my brother's funeral.

This time, I spoke directly to the God of my understanding and to my self-sabotage. I said, "*Go away. I am in pain like I've never known, and I want to numb it.*"

By then, I had drifted away from regular meetings. After twenty-two years sober, I believed I was fine. And that's when I remembered something essential.

Evolution does not replace the revolving door it must stay in balance with it.

Meetings matter.

Sponsors matter.

The Steps matter.

And so does knowing ourselves deeply.

Whatever we learn when we first enter recovery, through meetings, sponsors, and the Steps, we can continue to build upon through reflection, shared experience, and honest self-examination. One does not cancel out the other. Together, they keep us balanced.

Recovery, like life, is not about perfection.

It is about attention.

And intention.

I like to think of it as a mantra:

Prayer attention, Prayer Intention.

As this Valentine month reminds us, loving ourselves begins with knowing ourselves.



God is in the Nod

By Jason M.

"Man wishes to be confirmed in his being by man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other. Secretly and bashfully he watches for a YES which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another."

— Martin Buber, *I and Thou* (1923)

It was a cold Sunday morning, and my friend and I were on one of our adventures. We had planned to hit our regular 7:30am meeting in the West End, but when we got there, a member was out front, sending people away. There was some kind of water issue and the church was closed. We decided to drive across town to the 8am meeting in Vanier instead.

Two others were already there when we arrived. A member I recognized and a newcomer. I had been to this location many times before. The space was located in what could be called a "recovery room." It was dedicated to hosting meetings. The chairs were already set up and the walls adorned with slogans. Today, however, it was empty of people. No one except us four had shown up.

None of us were regular attendees here. For a moment, we stood there staring at each other, not sure what to do. In my head I was debating, "Oh well, maybe time to go home!" But then instinct kicked in. My friend suggested what we were all thinking. We might as well just start. How many does it take? Two. At four, we were ahead of the game.

Three of us sat down in a haphazard circle while the newcomer fumbled with the coffee maker. I noticed his hands were shaking. The filter basket slipped, water and grounds spilling everywhere. We smiled at each other. Someone suggested he ask the community centre staff to help clean up. We grabbed some Twelve and Twelves off the front table and started reading Step One.

As we read, more people filtered in. A group member, apologizing for being late. Someone I hadn't seen in years, just coming back. Another fellow. And finally, a woman visiting from the U.S.. Seven of us now. An odd assortment of people who would never have crossed paths otherwise. The last words were read aloud, *"Then, and only then, do we become as open-minded to conviction and as willing to listen as the dying can be."*

A long silence followed. I stared at my feet, uncomfortable with the awkwardness of the ad-hoc gathering, a small group I mostly didn't know. But the silence was finally cut by one

willing voice, and momentum built as we slowly went around the room. With each share, I became more at ease. I understood the fear and hope of the newcomer. I felt the shame and humility of the one returning. I heard the hard-won wisdom of those who had come before me, and of those whose story somehow mirrored my own. After the first round, a pause. Then we went again, deeper this time. We met each other's eyes. We nodded.

I don't remember what anyone said that day except for one line. The woman was reflecting on her experience of arriving at the meeting that morning. She was describing the connection I felt. She looked around the circle and said an expression I had not heard before, *"God is in the nod."*

I'm not religious. I don't even use the word god to describe my higher power. But that line resonated. I knew instantly what it meant. We all did. It named what had just happened between us. The wordless recognition, the unearned belonging, the YES that Buber says can only come from one human person to another. We don't truly exist just by breathing or thinking—we come alive in relation to each other.

After the meeting, my friend spoke with the one who was just returning. The newcomer's sponsor offered to drive the woman to her hotel. I chatted with the group member about something he had shared. For someone who has long suffered from loneliness and terminal uniqueness, it's these unscripted, unremarkable, wonderfully ordinary moments of togetherness that keep me coming back. Spirituality, for me, has always meant connection. And connection often arrives in the simplest of gestures. Just a nod across the room that says *"I see you, you belong here too."*



A Very Grateful Member of Secular A.A.

By Michel D.

Forty years sober — those words still feel almost unreal to me. When I walked into my first AA meeting in Toronto on 16 January 1986, I did not know what to expect. My then girlfriend had given me an ultimatum after I came home that morning having drank my unemployment cheque while the rent was not paid and there was no food in the house. She told me that I was to go to an A.A. meeting or to get out of her life. For my part, I just wanted to have a place to sleep that night, so I went to A.A.!

I am not sure that I even wanted to stop drinking again. I had tried so many times and failed miserably. I had just about given up on the idea of being able to stay sober one day. But A.A. members did what they do best – they told me that I could indeed stop drinking, 24 hours at a time, and that my life would get better through the suggested 12 steps as a way of life. Did it ever, beyond anything I could have ever imagined.

I am extremely grateful to Alcoholics Anonymous and to the members I have met in the last forty years. It is because of the A.A. program and these individuals that I am sober today. Starting with Linus L., who was my sponsor for 34 years until he died of COVID in 2020. He was a father-like figure, mentor, and friend who showed me the ropes in terms of not only getting and staying sober, but to also enjoy sobriety and life in general.

He was the one who told me that it was through service - which is one of the three legacies of A.A. together with recovery and unity, that I could best show my gratitude. And I have always taken that advice to heart. I have done just about every job there is to do in A.A.: cleaning ashtrays (back in the days when there was smoking at meetings), making coffee and setting up the room, being GSR, Intergroup Rep and/or treasurer at my group at various times, being a sponsor, sitting on the CPC/PI committee and chairing of the CTF committee and the Eastern Ontario Fall Conference, being DCM and putting on meetings at the local Ottawa jail (OCDJ) for ten years as well as being volunteer coordinator for two years during that time, etc. It is fair to say that service has given me much more than what I contributed in terms of gaining a sense of self-worth, self-healing and getting to like myself over the years.

One of the contributions to A.A. I am most proud of is to have started the first secular meeting in Ottawa in 2016. I had become uneasy about some of the things that went on at my group for a decade or more but since I wanted to stay sober – and still do, I chose to ignore the religiosity present in my group. Thankfully, I discovered that there was a place in A.A. for people who were also concerned about the “God” thing me. And I looked to what was happening in Toronto for guidance since they had a few secular meetings there. I met some secular members twice a year at the Area Assembly in Kingston and decided to take the plunge and create one in Ottawa after registering it with A.A. World Services in New York and at the Ottawa Intergroup. I am happy to report that

this group – the Secular Sobriety group which meets in Sandy Hill on Tuesdays, is still going strong and will celebrate its 10-year anniversary on 3 March. Everyone is welcome to join the festivities.

I have found renewed enthusiasm for A.A. in secular meetings. I believe that it opens the doors of A.A. more widely to the newcomer who may have issues with having to recite the Lord’s prayer or having to meet in a Church for example. After all, it is hard to say to a newcomer that A.A. is a spiritual program rather than a religious one and recite a prayer that is in the Christian bible or to attract members from other religious backgrounds to enter a Christian Church to deal with their alcoholism.

By being neither religious nor irreligious, secular meetings focus on helping the newcomer get sober. And there seem to be a growing number of people in A.A. who support that idea. They are a very important part of my recovery. I am really impressed with the new generation of members who attend secular meetings. They are extremely thoughtful, intelligent and dedicated to their sobriety and secularism in A.A. I have a lot of respects for them. I think that the future of A.A. is in good hands.

There are now 3 secular meetings weekly in Ottawa – the aforementioned Secular Sobriety group, the Beyond Belief Secular group which also meets in person in Hintonburg on Thursdays, as well as the online meeting Secular Sundays. Secular members also organized the 4th biennial [Secular Ontario Alcoholic Anonymous Roundup](#) at the Lord Elgin Hotel in September 2025. It was a frank success.

I will be away the rest of this month and in February. My 40 year celebration will thus take place on 29 March at the Beyond Belief Secular group. I hope to see you there so that I can thank you in person for your help in keeping me sober.

In gratitude, Michel D.

Beyond Belief Secular group



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:
Intergroup Vice Chair	chair@ottawaaa.org	Please email the chair to learn about the role of the Vice Chair
Telephone Answering Service	tas@ottawaaa.org	Vacant shifts available—one time or monthly.
Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre (OWMC)	owmc@ottawaaa.org	Carry the message.
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!!



"PRESERVING OUR SHARED HISTORY"
Area 83 Eastern Ontario International & Ottawa Intergroup
ARCHIVES WORKSHOP

WHEN & WHERE
Date: Saturday, May 16, 2026
Time: 10:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Location: Bronson Centre,
211 Bronson Rd, Ottawa Ont.

HIGHLIGHTS
-Local AA history
-AA Displays
-Oral history sample
- Tour the City Of Ottawa Archives

ALL ARE WELCOME- HYBRID EVENT - for more information contact archives@area83aa.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 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

Ottawa Intergroup Office

211 Bronson Avenue, Suite 108 Ottawa, Ontario, K1R 6H5

Telephone: {613} 237-6000

Email: info@ottawaaa.org

Ottawa Area Intergroup

Chair	Kevin M.	chair@ottawaaa.org
Vice-Chair	Vacant	vicechair@ottawaaa.org
Secretary	Catherine B.	secretary@ottawaaa.org
Treasurer	George W.	treasurer@ottawaaa.org
Website	Karol G.	webmaster@ottawaaa.org
Telephone Answering Service	Kevin M.	tas@ottawaaa.org
Literature	Barry D.E	literature@ottawaaa.org
12-Step Coordinator	Vacant	12step@ottawaaa.org
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

District 48– Seaway Valley North	Sara M.	dcmdistrict48@gmail.com
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
Corrections Facilities & Treatment	Tim F.	cft@ottawaaa.org
Archives	Meaghan S.	archives@ottawaaa.org
Ottawa Withdrawal Management Centre (detox)	Paul D.	owmc@ottawaaa.org

Back Page

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.