

# BETTER TIMES

Produced for A.A. members, by A.A. members in the GTA



# The First 90

easy does it.

step by step, one day at a time...

**Alcoholics  
Anonymous**

DECEMBER 2021

# PHONE GREETERS NEEDED



**24/7**

**365 days a year the phones are answered!**

PLEASE, sign up for a shift

it doesn't take a lot

to get a lot

and to give a lot

to the still suffering alcoholic

Contact [12step@aatoronto.org](mailto:12step@aatoronto.org)

Visit [aatoronto.org](http://aatoronto.org)

Call 416-487-5591

202-234 Eglinton Avenue East  
Toronto, ON M4P 1K5  
416-487-5591  
[www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org)

**Alcoholics Anonymous**  
**Area 83 Eastern Ontario International**



## SERVICE COMMITTEES

### ACCESSIBILITY

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## SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

[Better Times Volunteers](#) **WE NEED WRITERS !**

[Phone Greeters](#)

[Bilingual Member Resource](#)

[IT Sub-Committee Members](#)

[Self-Support Chair](#)

[Finance Committee Member](#)



## MEETING CHANGES

This pandemic has brought about incredible changes and quickly; please don't forget that our website and meeting list updates are dependant on you letting us know [here](#):

(<https://www.aatoronto.org/update-or-change-a-meeting/>)



Opinions expressed in *BETTER TIMES* are those of the authors and don't necessarily reflect those of the GTA A.A. InterGroup. The Editor reserves the right to edit for length, content and grammar in accordance with layout and quality purposes. Submit group news, medallions, other event notices to:  
[communications@aatoronto.org](mailto:communications@aatoronto.org)  
Letters or articles to the Editor (200-500 words) for *BETTER TIMES* at [bettertimes@aatoronto.org](mailto:bettertimes@aatoronto.org)



GREATER TORONTO AREA  
INTERGROUP

# GTA INTERGROUP WINTER SEASON VIRTUAL ALKATHON

DECEMBER 24<sup>th</sup>

MEETING ID: 824 3377 2610

PASSWORD: 332283

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82433772610>

NOON

1:00 pm

2:00 pm

3:00 pm

4:00 pm

5:00 pm

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

8:00 pm

9:00 pm

10:00 pm

11:00 pm

GTA Intergroup

Sobriety Thru Literature

Mississauga

The Hill

Al-Anon Family

Port Credit

Erin Mills

Streetsville St. Andrew

Love and Tolerance

Church Street

DECEMBER 25<sup>th</sup>

MEETING ID: 821 7848 4584

PASSWORD: 204776

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82178484584>

4:00 pm

5:00 pm

6:00 pm

7:00 pm

8:00 pm

9:00 pm

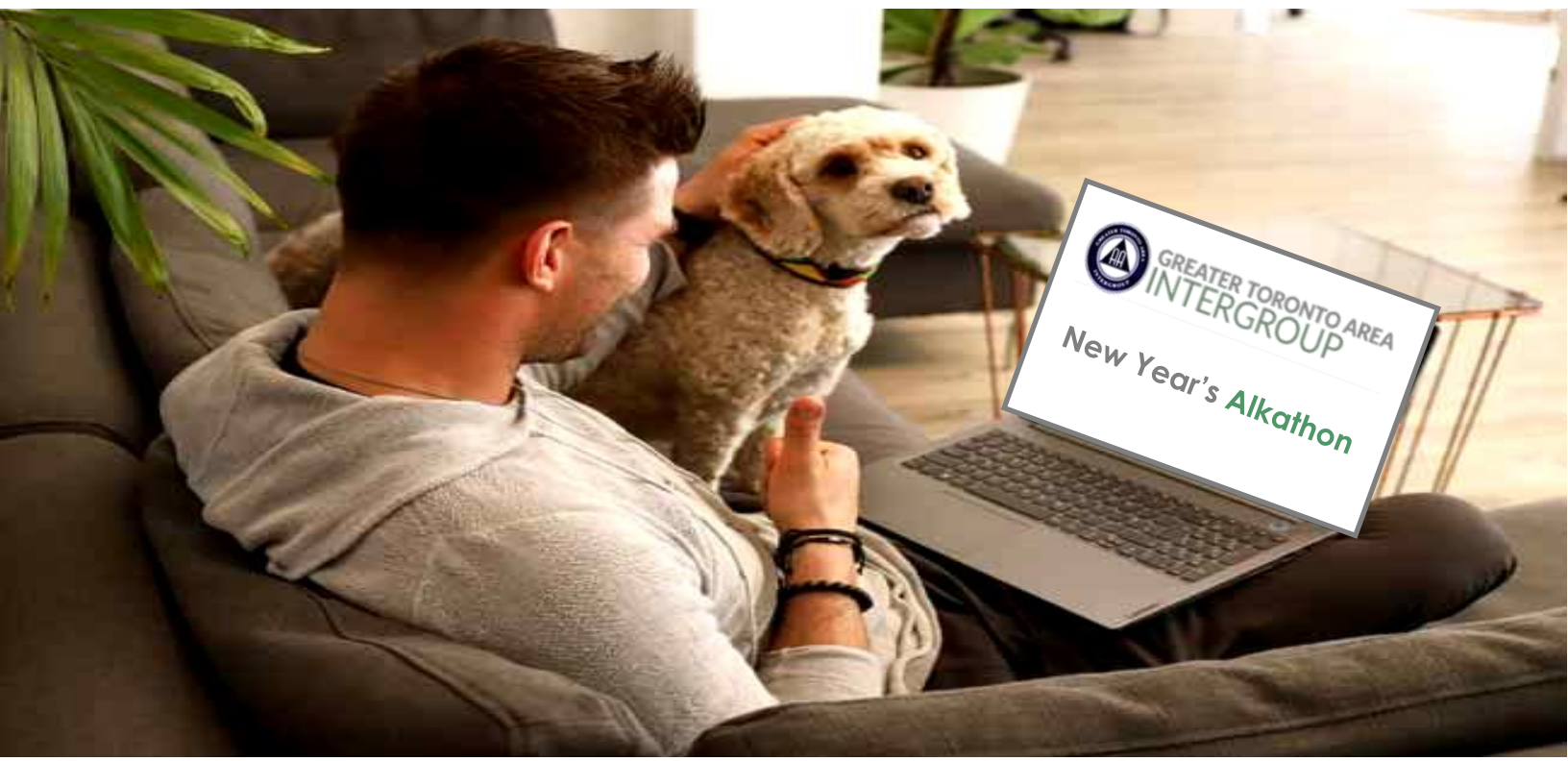
10:00 pm

11:00 pm

Al-Anon Family

Friendly  
St. Clements  
Welcome





# NEW YEAR'S VIRTUAL ALKATHON

MEETING ID 875 5329 9815

ZOOM LINK <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87553299815>

PASSWORD 645915

## DECEMBER 31<sup>st</sup> GROUP

NOON [Anchor of Hope](#)  
1:00 pm [Tradition & Concept](#)  
2:00 pm [The Dogs](#)  
3:00 pm [Markland Wood](#)  
4:00 pm Al-Anon Family  
5:00 pm [One Paragraph At A Time](#)  
6:00 pm [Credit Valley](#)  
7:00 pm [Newmarket](#)  
8:00 pm [Anniversary](#)  
9:00 pm [Open Hands](#)  
10:00 pm [Mount Royal - York](#)  
11:00 pm [Midtown](#)  
12:00 am

## JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup> GROUP

1:00 am [Beaches](#)  
2:00 am  
3:00 am  
4:00 am  
5:00 am  
6:00 am [Tuesday Afternoon](#)  
[Big Book Discussion](#)  
[Morning Discussion](#)  
Al-Anon Family  
[King City](#)  
[Hadenuffet](#)  
[GTA Intergroup](#)  
11:00 am





# Winter Season Open House

Fellowship,  
food, fun!

Open & Closed AA  
and Al Anon meetings!

Open and Closed AA Meetings 10:30, 1:00, 2:15  
Open and Closed Alanon Meetings 11:45

**Saturday, December 25, 2021 - 10:30 AM - 3:30 PM**

## **College Street United Church**

452 College Street, Toronto

Transit 511 Bathurst Streetcars (from Bathurst subway station)

506 College St. Streetcars (Queen's Park Subway station)

Paid parking on the south west corner of College and Bathurst



For more information go to [www.aatoronto.org](http://www.aatoronto.org) or email: [wsoh@aatoronto.org](mailto:wsoh@aatoronto.org)

Contact Event Chair: Edward A. 647-333-6415

## We are Self-Supporting

Together we will make the 77th Annual Winter Season Open House a success.

Use your talent as service to the AA fellowship

Arrange to contribute or cook a turkey or ham

Contribute baked sweets or desserts

Contact us: [wsoh@aatoronto.org](mailto:wsoh@aatoronto.org)

Or volunteer time as part of the WSOH committee

**Friday, December 24th, 2021 - 9:00 - 3:00** (set-up, kitchen food prep)

**Saturday, December 25th, 2021 - 9:00 - 4:00** (greeters, meetings support, buffet servers,  
clear tables, sanitation detail, clean-up and closing crew)

Contact Volunteer Coordinator

[wsoh@aatoronto.org](mailto:wsoh@aatoronto.org)



## **Mandatory COVID-19 Vaccination Requirements**

Proof of full vaccination is required to enter premises.



**GREATER TORONTO AREA  
INTERGROUP**



## NO LONGER ALONE

I was approaching my second sober Christmas. And I found myself alone. Still estranged from my family, I was seriously afraid that I would drink. The cravings wouldn't let up. As a relative newcomer, I was trying to manage my crazy emotions. There were so many ups and downs. One moment I felt okay, the next I was paralyzed with fear. And then the next minute I was sobbing, grieving my lost family relationships and the unknown future I had in front of me. The miserable life I left behind was the only one I knew. I didn't quite trust [A.A.](#) and the people in it. I had no idea how I would make it through Christmas, a time of the year when people are annoyingly happy and surrounded by family. I didn't have that. But I did discover that I had this new, slightly twisted group of people in A.A.. Suddenly, there were friends who I actually wanted to be honest with. I finally wanted to let people in .

At the business meeting for my home group I was "voluntold" to organize a Christmas open house. The plan was to keep the doors of my home group open most of Christmas eve and all of Christmas day. We planned around-the-clock meetings. I had to find volunteers, and organize food donations. I made phone calls, and spread the word at meetings. It kept me busy. It gave me something to look forward to. But most importantly, I was not thinking about myself and my problems. Throughout Christmas that year, I stayed close to my home group, my sponsor and the people who made me feel safe. I went to several meetings on Christmas eve. On Christmas morning, I was there, chairing a meeting and A.A. members showed up. They weren't homeless. They weren't even alone. They simply wanted to be some place where they could talk and stay sober and be around friends.

That tiny bit of service kept me sober that year. And I believe it saved my life. That was over thirty years ago. Every year I try to remember that early sober Christmas and how much it meant to me and my sobriety. And that I'm still responsible for giving back and keeping the doors open, year round. From the beginning, A.A. told me I would no longer be alone. And it has kept that promise.

—Carla T [Welcome Group](#)

## THE SLOGANS ARE THE HANDRAILS TO THE STEPS

I was only a few weeks into my recovery, when somebody gave me a [Big Book](#). That book sat on my coffee table for months, until one day I had absolutely nothing else to do. I read a page or two and couldn't comprehend what I had just read; I couldn't remember any of it. I reread a paragraph, same thing. I then read a sentence, and ended up with the same blank memory. It was pointless reading, my mind was not grasping or at least retaining what I had read.

When I recounted that experience to my sponsor, he smiled and told me not to worry about it. He suggested that before we do the steps, we work on the slogans first. I thought the slogans were pretty childish and stupid, but I went along with it anyway. With my sponsors help, over time the slogans began to form a program that I could incorporate into my life. The simplicity of these is probably why they are so effective. By reciting a slogan in my mind, it's preventing a knee jerk reaction escalating into something far worse. I can remember walking away from many a situation, saying to myself, boy did I handle that differently. When I put the slogans into my daily living, I am grounding myself into the fellowship and spirit of A.A.. The best part is that they are dynamic and flexible, as I learn and grow, so does my interpretation.

These days I work the steps, but the slogans are still a big part of my recovery. They are a springboard to sound advice, which is just as valuable

—Dave R [Long Branch Group](#)

### GROUPS BEGUN IN DECEMBER

December 7, 1947

[Beaches Group](#)

December 22nd, 1874

[High Park Group](#)

(original name Etobicoke Group till 1989)

December 7th, 1982

[Last Chance Group](#)



**7th Tradition**  
"Every A.A. group ought to be fully  
self-supporting, declining outside contributions."



**Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous**  
Building Fellowship: Anytime, Anywhere - For Everyone

# I CAME CRAWLING BACK

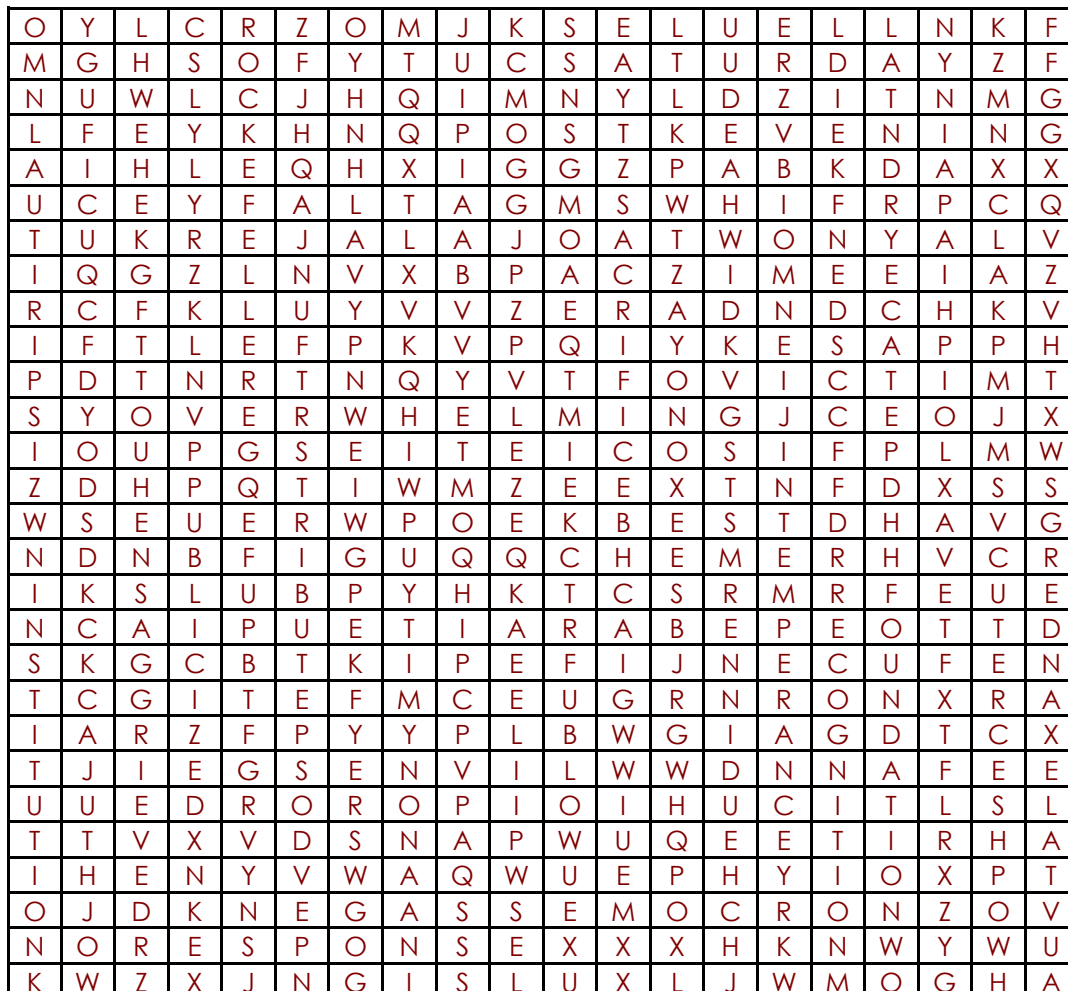
I was born and raised in a small town called St. Mary's. I started drinking when I was 13 years old. The spiritual malady had a grip on me long before that. I was bullied from a very young age, and never felt "a part of". I always felt separate from. When I started drinking, I felt as though "I had arrived". I first came into the rooms on September 2, 2018, but never worked the program as described in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous. I had managed to stay dry, and insane for 16 months, and in January 2020 the pain and suffering in my mind was unbearable, which led me to do the insane thing, pick up a drink, trying to prove that "it would be different this time". Fast forward to March 17, 2020, I came crawling back to a church basement to a meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous in my hometown, broken internally. Regardless of my slip, everyone welcomed me back with kindness and love. By this time zoom meetings were thriving, and I found a woman on a zoom meeting who spoke my language and had what I wanted. She was armed with the facts about herself, The Big Book, and the

program of action our big book talks about. To say I came back in with an attitude of open mindedness, willingness and honesty and things got better right away would be an absolute lie. However, I persevered and things got better, "sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly". If you would have told me 4 years ago that I would be an enthusiastic member of Alcoholics Anonymous I would have laughed in your face. A.A. has given me a full life, I can truly say I love the person I am becoming; I have a full-time job, I have people who truly love me and I them. I am about to be a college graduate. I am a productive member of society, and as a result of doing what our program suggests, I have had a complete alteration in my reaction to life, and no longer obsess about how I can get my next drink, or what I need next to feel better, but rather how I can be helpful to others! What an absolute miracle, that a low-bottom, type 3 alcoholic of 15 years, could have never accomplished on their own. I AM BLESSED.

—Kayla B [Last Stop: Freedom](#)

## WORD SEARCH

**TRADITION TWELVE: Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.**



ANONYMITY

SPIRITUAL

FOUNDATION

SACRIFICE

SECRET

SOCIETIES

AGGRIEVED

VICTIM

INTEMPERANCE

SECRECY

SAFE

PATH

SYMPATHETIC

MESSAGE

OVERWHELMING

RESPONSE

ROCKEFELLER

DINNER

PUBLICIZED

JACK

ALEXANDER

SATURDAY

EVENING

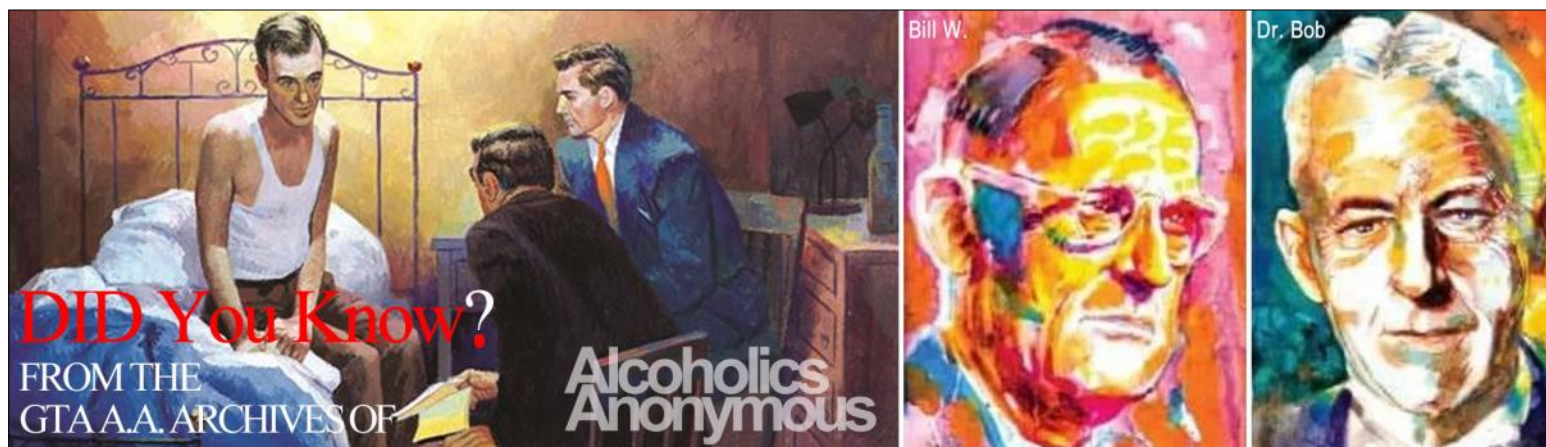
POST

NATIONAL

INSTITUTION

TRIBUTE

RECOGNITION



On Dec. 11, 1934 Bill W., 39 years old, decided to go back to Towns Hospital in NY and had his last drink (4 bottles of beer purchased on the way). He received financial help from his mother, Emily, for the hospital bill.

On Dec 14, 1934 Ebby T. visited Bill W. at Towns Hospital in NY and told him about the Oxford Group principles. After Ebby left, Bill fell into a deep depression (his "deflation at depth") and had a profound spiritual experience after crying out "If there is a God, will he show himself." Fearing that he had gone crazy, Bill called for Dr. Silkworth who told him to hang on to what he had experienced because it seemed so much better than what he came into the hospital with. In a lighter vein, Bill and others would later refer to this as his "white flash" or "hot flash" experience.

On Dec. 15, 1934 Ebby T. (possibly Rowland H.) brought Bill a copy of William James book "The Varieties of Religious Experience." Bill found the book inspiring by revealing three key points for recovery:

- A need for a complete defeat in a vital area of life (or what we today call "hitting bottom")
- An admission of defeat (or what we today call "acceptance") and
- An appeal to a higher power for help (or what we today call "surrender").

These spiritual principles later formed the basis for Steps 1, 2, and 3. The book strongly influenced early AA and is cited in the Big Book. Note: William James was no stranger to alcoholism. His brother Robertson (Bob) was in and out of asylums for his alcoholism and spent his final years with James.



In Dec. 1939 Rockland State Hospital near Monsey, NY became the first mental hospital to have an AA Group (started by Bob V.). Dr. Russell E. Biasdell, Superintendent of the hospital, allowed busloads of patients to attend meetings in NY and NJ.

In Dec. 1940 Bill W. met Father Ed Dowling SJ, at the 24<sup>th</sup> St. Clubhouse in New York. Tom M. the club caretaker told Bill he was being visited by "some bum from St. Louis." Father Ed (nickname "Puggy") became Bill's spiritual sponsor and helped start AA in St. Louis, MO.

On Dec. 25, 1949 Dr. Bob pays what was probably his last visit to the Alcoholic Ward at St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, where he has treated 1,000s of drunks.

The December 1955 Grapevine carried a painting by volunteer illustrator Robert M. of a man on a bed being 12th Stepped by two members. The painting's title was "Came to Believe." In 1973, when the book "Came To Believe" was published, Grapevine editors changed the painting's name to "The Man On The Bed" to avoid confusion. Over the years, "The Man On The Bed" has become one of the most popular images in the AA Fellowship.

On Dec. 1, 1985 the first Annual Archives Breakfast in Toronto was held at the Howard Johnson Motel at Hwy 427 and Dixon Rd. This event was started by the Toronto Intergroup Archives Committee (today the GTA Archives Committee) to raise money and be self-supporting. Also the event brings the good Old Timers and other members together and awareness on the importance of archives.

**OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE GTA ARCHIVES**

TO DONATE A.A./GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO THE GTA ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT  
THE GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. at 416-536-7536.

## A TOTALLY DIFFERENT SPACE

When I first came to [A.A.](#), I was scared, and almost paralyzed with anxiety. My life was out of control, and it slowly—and then acutely—became apparent to me I was more than just a years-long “problem drinker”. I found a group that was doing online zoom meetings in Toronto through a web search, as I knew I needed help. Immediately, and as soon as I landed there, I felt welcomed, and safe. I could breathe. I kept my camera off for the first few meetings, but listening to people's stories. I knew I was in exactly the right place I needed to be. Slowly, I participated more, and was welcomed with open arms, and was shown kindness and understanding, in a way that I have not experienced before. Of course: they had all been there too! I got a great, kind, and very knowledgeable sponsor, and am working the steps, and am seeing my perceptions—and my life—change for the better, a little more each day. One day—and one step—at a time. Two months in, I am in a totally different space, and hope to be able to help others as I continue in this journey. I am very thankful for all the people that have helped me get to this point. There are angels everywhere if you know how to look.

—Martin E [Last Stop: Freedom](#)

# AA GRAPEVINE

The International Journal of Alcoholics Anonymous

## THE GIFT OF DESPERATION

A parasite of the mind  
Warped, twisted and so unkind  
Preying on pride  
and such matters inside

To know this is beginning to grow  
Sometimes quickly, sometimes slow  
Simple  
But not easy

Faith is fear's solution  
Take that beyond grave  
One chance is all there may be  
to comprehend the word serenity

But there is One who has all power  
Present every moment in every hour  
Willingness is the key  
to twelve steps that leadeth thee

Through a door many have passed  
It's our time now, but we won't be the last  
Many more are certain to follow  
Desperate, alone and deeply in sorrow

Remember when  
you had not a friend  
Keep coming back  
to show *them* the Path

—Jamie R [East York Group](#)

The image shows a Zoom meeting grid. The central tile features the text "ZOOM INTO RECOVERY" in large, bold, black letters, with "Celebrating Recovery Through the 12 Steps" in smaller text below it. Surrounding this central tile are several smaller tiles, each containing a stylized illustration of a person's head and shoulders. The tiles are arranged in a grid pattern. In the top right corner, there is a red tile with white text that reads "Day of Recovery with 12 speakers AA with Al-Anon and Alateen". In the bottom left corner, there is a yellow tile with black text that reads "For further information or 7th Tradition please email: crtts17@gmail.com". In the bottom right corner, there is a dark blue tile with white text that reads "Saturday, February 5, 2022 9:00 am to 3:00 pm EST Meeting room opens at 8:30 am". At the bottom of the grid, there is a white tile with black text that reads "Zoom meeting ID: 895 8791 7142 Zoom meeting Passcode: 938285".