

BETTER TIMES

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



TRADITION FOUR

Alcoholics Anonymous



Our A.A. experience has taught us that:

Tradition Four

“Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.”

Page 562, Alcoholics Anonymous

APRIL 2021

Virtual Information A.A. Day Saturday, May 15, 2021



Key Note Presentation: General Service Conference Report by Area 83 Delegate

Special Guest Speaker: A Member of the General Service Office Staff

Presentations:

Your GTA Sub-Committee 2021 Initiatives:

Accessibility	Grapevine
Archives	Public Information
Better Times AA Newsletter	Self-Support
Communication	Spanish Speaking District (District 16)
Corrections	12th Step Committee
Treatment	Cooperation with the Professional Community

Workshops:

Staying Connected in This Time of Isolation

Unity of Purpose - Intergroup and Districts

Working Together in Support of Our Community

How do we Get Active in Service? The Importance of 12th Step Work

The Home Group - Review of Our Pamphlets and other GSO Literature

When: 9:00 am - 3:00 pm

with additional time for Fellowship at 8:30 am and at 3:00 pm

Where: Zoom Meeting ID: 891 7009 5334 Passcode: 899415

Who: All members of A.A. are welcome to attend this event!

My name is Kevin and I am an alcoholic. I am a grateful alcoholic. My sobriety date is June 15, 1992. I have been going to almost every ORC since I got sober in 1992. My first ORC was in 1993 at the Sheraton Centre in downtown Toronto. When I heard that 2021's ORC was going to be virtual, I was doubtful that this would fly.

However, all my doubts were put to shame. The virtual conference was awesome. From the very first speaker on Friday night all the way to the last speaker on Sunday including the Sobriety Countdown, it was incredible.

My thanks go out to the ORC committee for making this yet again a tremendous conference. Can't wait 'till next years! Thanks again. Kevin T., [1AA Canada Online Group](#)



Virtual 16th ANNUAL EAST TORONTO ARCHIVES BREAKFAST

Sunday May 2, 2021
9:00 am - 12:00 noon EDT

Meeting ID: 268 768 0432
 Passcode: district18
 Passcode(tel): 855768

[Link to local telephone number](#)

9:30 am Tour
Stepping Stones
 Followed by a short Q & A session

10:30 am Guest Speaker
Dorothy C of the Danforth Group in Toronto
 August 3, 1961 - 59 years!

Home with History:
 A Virtual Exploration of the Lives, Home and Archives of the Wilsons

An event brought to you by **District 18 and District 22**

Members are encouraged to send contributions by e-transfer to EastTorontoArchivesBreakfast@gmail.com in support of the Archives in Districts 18 & 22.

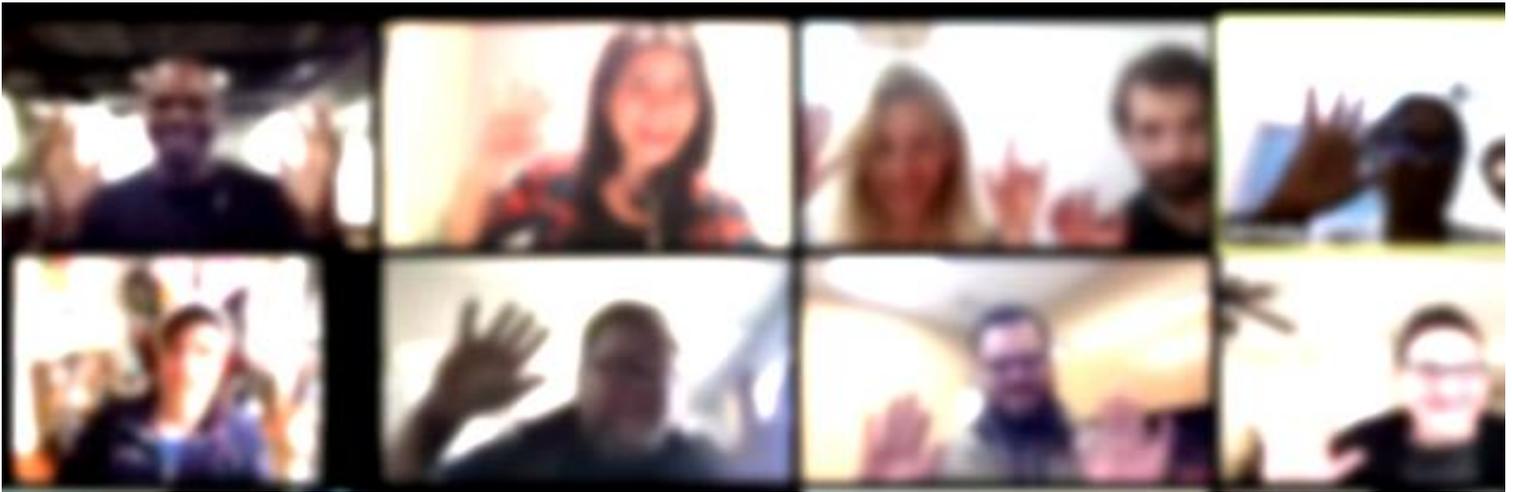
It's that time of year again when the East Toronto Archives Breakfast Committee is planning and organizing another annual Archives Breakfast. Last year's event got cancelled due to the lockdown, but after the overwhelming success of the virtual GTA Archives Breakfast last November, the Committee decided to likewise adopt the new online format and go ahead for this year. All are invited to attend this joint venture hosted by Toronto City East District 18 and Scarborough District 22.

It will be held on Sunday, May 2nd, with doors opening at 9 am. At 9:30 we will begin the formal program with a live virtual tour of Stepping Stones, just north of New York City, where Bill and Lois W. retired in order to enjoy a more secluded natural setting. Much of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as well as the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions were written there. The famous table where Ebby admitted to Bill that he had "got religion" is on display. Lois was a cofounder of Al-Anon for families and friends of alcoholics.

After the tour is completed, we will have an open speaker meeting at 10:30 am featuring a long-time member sharing their experience, strength and hope. I like that. Nobody tells anybody what to do in A.A. Personal experience is one's personal experience, and so is non-negotiable. Strength is empowerment, and hope is the opposite of despair. What a wonderful gift of recovery to share!

The event is free, as obviously there will not be an actual physical breakfast served. Also, at least for this year, we will be spared the need to consider rental costs for a facility. An e-transfer account link will be made available for a 7th, with contributions gratefully going towards helping cover District 18 and 22 Archives Committees' expenses. Sounds like it could be a couple of hours well spent from the comfort of one's home!

Tom S. on behalf of the ETAB 16 Committee.



MASSIVE CHANGE – THE NEW A.A.

In March of 2020 and practically overnight, A.A. experienced a seismic change. The vast majority of meetings stopped happening. I'm interested in scratching below the surface to reveal some of what I see in today's New A.A.

We are now, almost exclusively an online delivery service. There are some obvious benefits attached to the New A.A. I have been able to attend meetings in far away places and at all times of the day. My group recently held a workshop featuring members from distant locations – that is something that would have been otherwise impossible. These are obviously positive results. But there are other changes with less favorable outcomes.

I know long-standing, regular members who no longer attend meetings because they are online. The connection these members have to our program is now tenuous, at best. Their non-attendance is a loss for those of us who remain and more importantly it's a threat to the health of the wanderer. Prior to the pandemic, there were approx. 500 meetings per week vs. approx. 170 online and approx. 12 in-person meetings now.

I have the privilege of participating as a group treasurer and I know others who hold the same position. When we met in-person there was an element of accountability (or peer pressure) when the hat for the 7th tradition was passed. Now, contributions to the 7th are anonymous (although not to those of us who are the treasurers) and you know what...not as many members contribute. Does that say something about a new and lowered feeling of accountability, member to member?

I have noticed fewer familiar faces at local meetings. Many local members attend meetings outside of Toronto. Is the local membership (and the local fellowship) beginning to fracture as more people disperse to meetings around the world? I have depended upon a strong local fellowship and would be concerned if it were to diminish.

I am extremely curious about the ways in which our new, mediated mode of communication affects the way we interact with others: what we share, how we share it and how we do or don't listen and not just in meetings. The heart of our program is one-on-one sharing. This too is now an online experience.

My relations with sponsees are less intimate now. There is distraction and ultimately, less accountability. I cannot look you in the eye and feel what you are saying. Something has been lost.

And then there is the issue of newcomers. My group has far fewer new people than we once did. That's our group; not sure about yours.

Don't get me wrong, I am grateful for today's technology. I also know many people who aren't very concerned with what's happening now because they prefer to imagine a future when "things will return to normal". I take a different view. I could not get sober until I took a hard look at where I was at. Until I forgot about dreaming of a magical tomorrow. I had to learn: the here and now is where it's at. The questions I have for myself today are: am I awake to the New A.A. and am I behaving responsibly based upon what is?

Tim O'B – [Men's Tuesday Solution](#)



OPPORTUNITIES

[2 Operating Committee Members](#)

[Self-Support Chair](#)

[IT Sub-Committee Members](#)

[Finance Committee Member](#)

[Communications Committee Secretary](#)

[Better Times Editor](#)



**GREATERTORONTOAREA
INTERGROUP**



GTA GROUPS THAT STARTED IN APRIL:

April 24, 1949
Toronto [Sunday Morning Men's Meeting](#) turns 72

April 9, 1956
[Pine Hills Group](#) started with founders: Harry H. & Doug H. from Agincourt-Unionville group turns 65

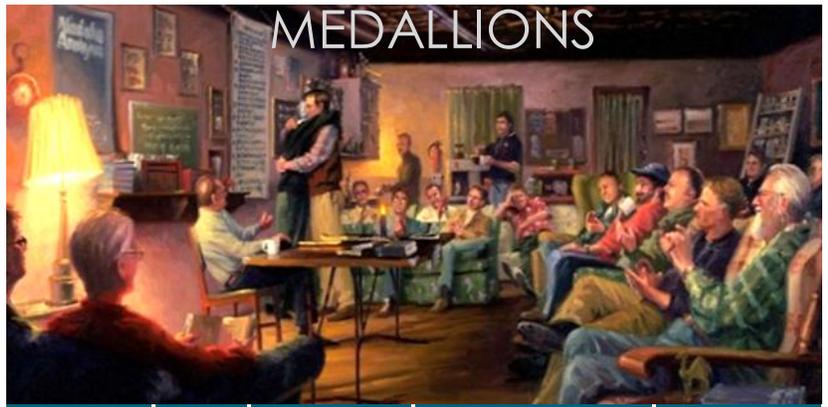
April 21, 1957
[Welcome Group](#) turns 64 years.

April 12, 1992
[Back to Basics Group](#) in Richmond Hill turns 29

April 10, 1997
[12 Tradition Group](#) in Pickering turns 24 years.

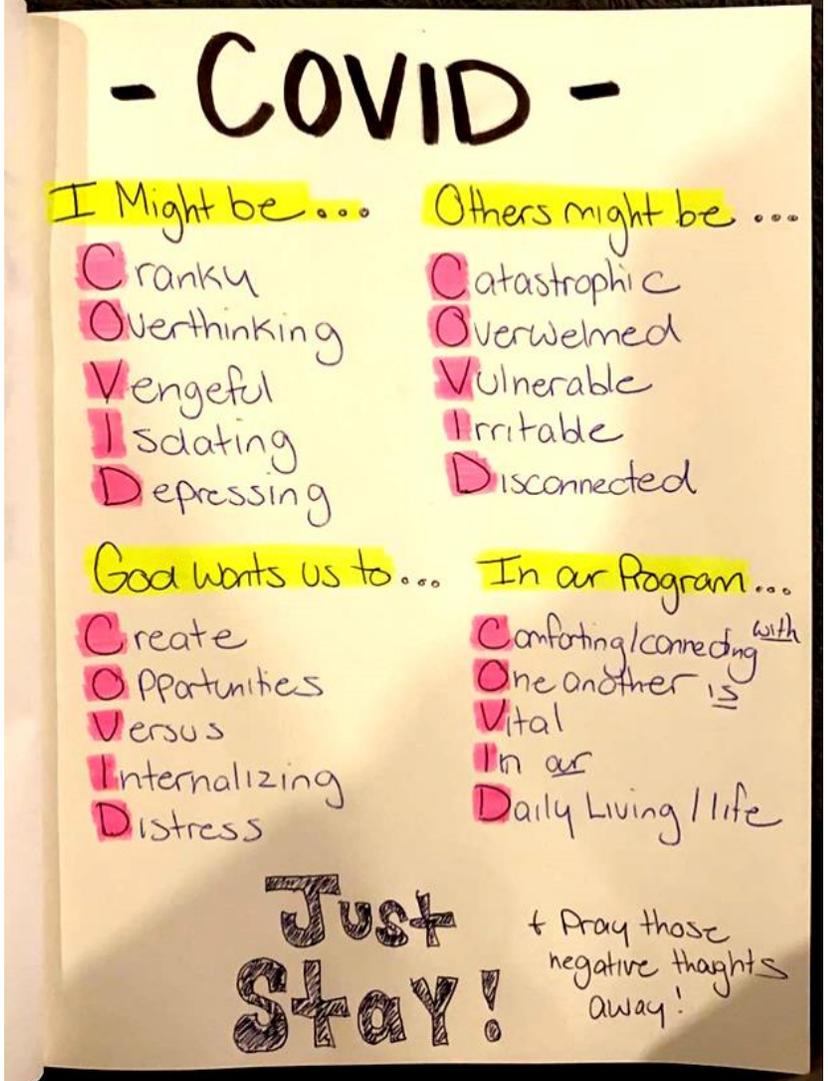
TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO THE GTA ARCHIVES, PLEASE CONTACT THE GTA ARCHIVIST EDDY G. at 416-536-7536.

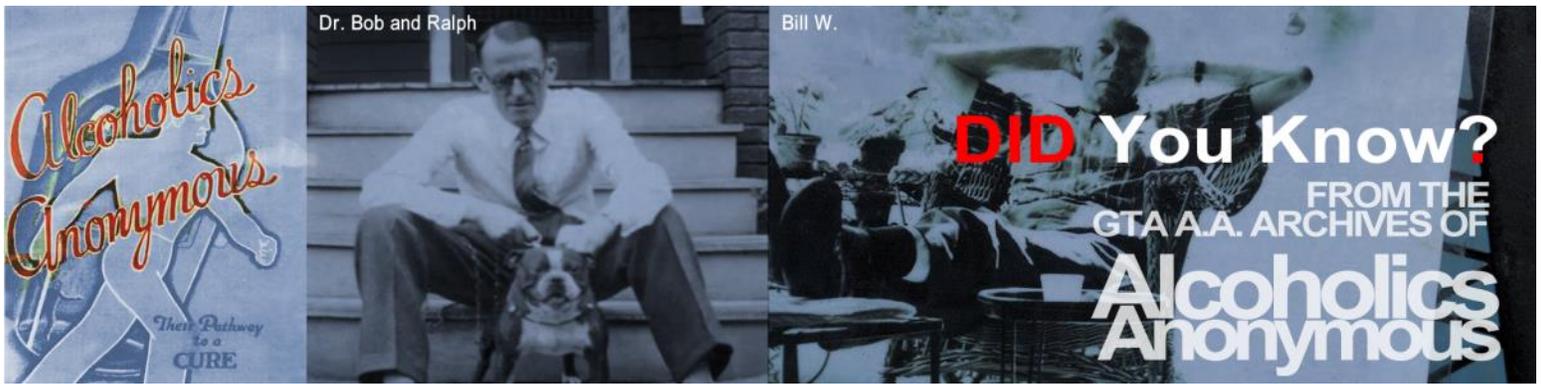
OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE GTA ARCHIVES.



NAME	YEARS	DRY DATE	GROUP	Celebration
Clayton M.	15	Apr 2 2006	Mississauga Group	Apr 4
Anna O.	30	Apr 8 1991	Mississauga Group	Apr 11
Jeff M.	15	Apr 15 2006	Markland Wood	Apr 15
De R.	10	Apr 24 2011	K.F. Group	Apr 24

By Victoria P [Oshawa Friendship Group](#)





1. In April 1933, beer became legal and Dr. Bob went through a "beer experiment." Soon he was drinking over a case a day fortified with liquor. In his Big Book story, Dr. Bob says that this was when he began in the Oxford Group participating in it for over two years before meeting Bill W.
2. On April 4, 1939, the first edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* was first published. 4,730 copies were published at \$3.50 a copy. The printer, Edward Blackwell of Cornwall Press, was told to use the thickest paper in his shop. The large, bulky volume became known as the Big Book. Bill W. later wrote that the idea was to convince the alcoholic he was getting his money's worth. Ray C. (whose Big Book story is *An Artist's Concept*, designed the "circus color" dust jacket. The book had 8 Roman & 400 Arabic numbered pages. *The Doctor's Opinion* started as page 1 and the basic text ended at page 179 and not 164.
3. On April 11, 1939, at age 35, Marty M. whose Big Book story is *Women Suffer Too* attended her first meeting at 182 Clinton St. in New York. During the prior 15 months, she was a charity patient at Bellevue Hospital in New York and the Blythewood Sanitarium in Greenwich Connecticut under the care of Dr. Harry Tiebout. Tiebout gave Marty a copy of the Big Book manuscript and arranged for her to attend the meeting. Upon returning to Blythewood, Marty told fellow patient Gennie C., "**We are not alone.**" Marty later established an A.A. Group in the Sanitarium, relapsed early on and again in 1959. She is sometimes called the first female A.A. member. She is not. There was Florence R. whose story is in the 1st Edition Big Book *A Feminine Victory*. She was 12th Stepped by Lois Wilson, and relapsed and died in 1943. Sylvia K. whose story in the 2nd Edition Big Book: *The Keys to the Kingdom*, arrived in Akron Ohio A.A. in 1939. She returned to Chicago and got sober on September 13, 1939, died in 1974 with 35 years and is credited with having the longest uninterrupted sobriety of any woman in A.A. Ethel M. whose story is in the 2nd Edition Big Book: *From Farm to City*, was the first female A.A. in Akron, Ohio. Her sobriety date was May 8, 1941, and she stayed sober her entire life.
4. On April 25, 1939, Morgan R. a former advertising man, asylum patient and friend of radio-man Gabriel Heatter, appeared on Heatter's 9 pm program *We the People*. Morgan told his story and made a pitch for the Big Book. Prior to the broadcast, Bill W. and others raised \$500 to mail 20,000 post cards to physicians about the broadcast but there were only twelve replies.
5. On April 11, 1941, after 23 years of marriage, Bill and Lois moved into their own home in Bedford Hills, New York. It was first named *Bill-Lo's Break* and later renamed *Stepping Stones*. Lois said: "To get to the house from the garage, we used a shortcut of rugged stone steps down the steep hill. Because of the constant climbing up and down, we changed the name of the house to *Stepping Stones*. This also implied a connection with the Twelve Steps". The 7-room house was on 1.7 acres and financed at \$6,500. The mortgage payment was \$40 a month.
6. In April 1946, the Grapevine was legally incorporated as the second publishing arm of the Alcoholic Foundation (today General Service Board). Nine months after his first Traditions essay, the April Grapevine carried Bill's essay entitled *Twelve Suggested Points for AA Tradition*. They later came to be called *The Long Form of the Traditions*. Bill wrote Grapevine essays up to November 1949 ending with an essay on the short form of the Traditions (in preparation for the 1950 International Convention in Cleveland). The essays are preserved in the *Language of the Heart* book and were used in writing the *12&12* and *A.A. Comes of Age* books.
7. In April 1967, the copyright to the 1st edition Big Book expired and was not renewed. The oversight was not discovered until 1985. It was also discovered that the copyright to new material in the 2nd edition had lapsed in 1983. Both A.A.W.S. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Service) and the Wilson estate shared responsibility for copyright renewal. The copyright is still in force overseas by treaty agreement.
8. On April 26-27, 1958, the first International Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (ICYPAA) then defined as those under age 40, was held at the Hotel Niagara in Niagara Falls New York. ICYPAA is held annually.

WORD search

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Please send us in your own words, your ideas, your journey, your experience, strength and hope in 200-500 words to bettertimes@aatoronto.org*

TRADITION FOUR

Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting others groups or A.A. as a whole.

Z	T	C	P	K	L	L	I	Y	C	P	O	Z	L	R	O	E	R	A	E	TRADITIONS
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E	P	W	H	T	Q	J	A	M	D	V	M	Q	T	C	N	C	N	U	Y	GROUP
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R	R	C	Z	T	K	I	R	S	U	P	O	L	B	G	Z	S	A	R	X	GATHERED
B	O	J	K	C	C	G	R	D	T	X	N	I	W	X	I	T	M	E	F	TOGETHER
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S	R	I	N	O	A	S	C	O	N	N	T	S	U	R	T	N	E	G	L	COURAGE
E	A	M	U	F	H	C	M	V	O	T	I	C	I	L	X	C	Q	E	A	ATTITUDE
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C	T	S	E	R	V	I	C	E	W	S	D	L	X	T	M	F	Q	H	I	PRIMARY
F	V	A	W	U	M	J	W	N	N	E	E	T	T	I	M	M	O	C	O	PRIVILEGE
A	M	R	C	O	U	R	A	G	E	O	C	X	N	C	C	H	Z	H	P	SERVICE
																				PROGRAMME

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ALL MEDIA INQUIRIES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE OPERATING COMMITTEE CHAIR oc.chair@aatoronto.org

ZOOM MEETINGS

Zoom meetings have become the new church basements and community halls for many Alcoholics Anonymous groups. Organized by alcoholics for alcoholics. Zoom and other virtual based services (Google Meets, WebEx, etc.) have provided digital platforms that the founders of A.A. would never have imagined possible. Conferencing platforms are widely used in business and personal life so it has been an easy transition for many. Though that connection to live, in-person meetings is a struggle for some, particularly those who came to A.A. through the traditional format of in-person meetings.

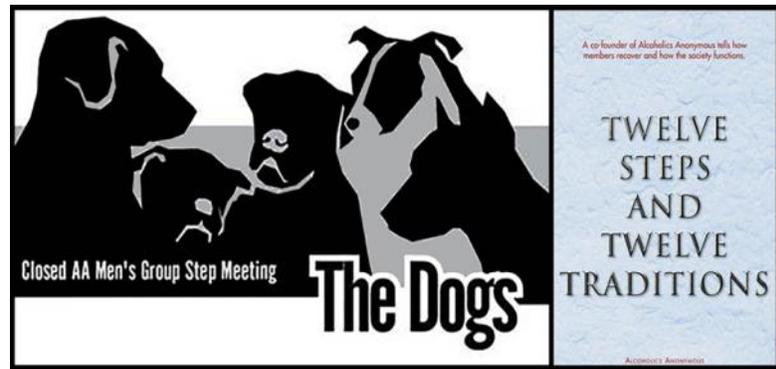
I have personally struggled with alcoholism my entire adult life and after finally admitting and believing I had a problem and my life was unmanageable, the only option I could find in my area was to join a Zoom meeting which I found on the [GTA Intergroup website meeting list](#). For me, the only A.A. meeting I have come to know is in the virtual world and I have since found a home group through the [OIAA Restoring Life and Sunrise group](#). I start my day with an online A.A. meeting at 7 am and end my day with an online A.A. meeting at 7 pm, both of which have been a blessing in my recovery. The pandemic has been both a curse and a blessing to me personally. A curse in that I escalated my drinking out of the comfort of my home to a level I never thought imaginable and a blessing that this escalation and my personal bottom prompted me to make a change, a serious change. Without the pandemic and the available platform of virtual meetings I am not sure I would have made the step of reaching out to A.A. and seeing first-hand what the power of fellowship and the 12 Steps and Traditions brings.

The spirit and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous have been alive and well throughout the pandemic due to the virtual platforms we have available today. Countless groups have shifted to online format and new groups have been organized to continue the A.A. program of spirit, hope and recovery.

While the pandemic has been a terrible global health crisis, it also prompted thousands of alcoholics like myself to reach out for help in an easily accessible way, and to find progress in their recovery.

Virtual A.A. meetings may be here to stay and will continue to offer the recovering alcoholic a safe place to seek help, find a sponsor and work the steps in the same way the founders of the program envisioned. For that, this recovering alcoholic is grateful.

Patrick W., [Restoring Life](#)



The founder of the Dogs Men's online group is John D, whose original home group was in Indiana, USA. Later he belonged to a men's group in Guelph, Ontario. Moving to Toronto, he saw a familiar niche that wasn't being serviced in the west end of the city. His idea was beginning to flourish in early 2020, when John had secured a home for the Dogs in a church on Burnhamthorpe Road. Then the pandemic hit, and those plans were stopped dead in their tracks. With the help of a tech-savvy sponsee, Jamie L., the meeting went digital. The first Dogs Men's meeting was Monday March 30th 2020, and they haven't looked back since. At one of the group's recent business meetings, the group conscience was to continue an online presence.

The group is well suited to newcomers in a variety of ways. This is a small meeting with several members and roughly the same amount of visitors. There is a personal and relaxed atmosphere, with an eclectic mix of long and short-term sobriety. With such a small membership, there are unfilled service positions, meaning there are opportunities to grow in sobriety and be of service. The meeting room is open for 15 minutes of fellowship before and after the meeting, so there is lots of time to ask questions. There are a number of members and visitors who are willing to be temporary sponsors to anyone who may want to give their early sobriety a boost. The group also has [big books of Alcoholics Anonymous](#), and the [Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions books](#) available at no cost for anyone in need.

Each Monday the Zoom meeting will be open from 12 noon until 1:30 pm, with the A.A. meeting starting at 12:15 pm and ending at 1:15 pm. The format of the meeting is pretty consistent each week; there are the normal readings, followed by a partial reading of one of the steps, and then the attendees share. If there are any newcomers in the room, the group reverts back to [Step One](#). With the one-year anniversary passing, Dogs seems to substantiate the founder's idea of a niche needing to be filled. In such a short time the Dogs has become an important part of my sobriety. I guess you could say "I have literally gone to the dogs!" Dave R, [The Dogs, Men Online](#)