

DECEMBER 2024 SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE MONTH

“Spiritual Experience” or “Spiritual Awakening” is a personal journey. Keeping an open mind, working the program, wanting to recover from alcoholic thinking, comes from the power within ourselves. For some it’s a defining moment, others work through a God of their understanding. Spirituality is unique, precious and individual to the recovering alcoholic.

SHARE YOUR STORY



Please scan the QR Code or tap this box and you will be directed to our anonymous content submission page.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- **The Moment of Clarity Was the First of Many Gifts**
- **History of Winter Season Open House**
- **Chatters Wanted!**
- **Grapevine Book of the Month**
- **... And More!**

BETTER TIMES is published monthly for AA members in the Greater Toronto Area.

234 Eglinton Ave East, Suite #202,
Toronto M4P 1K5

Telephone Number – Literature
Department 416-487-9865

Email bettertimes@aatoronto.org
Editorial Committee

Ted D. Communications Chair
Lori C. Better Times Editor
Ann Marie B. Coordinator
Ken M. BT Writer
Latifa A Graphics & Layout
Ky T Graphics & Layout
Imran R. Distributions

Opinions expressed in Better Times are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of Greater Toronto Area Intergroup
How To Reach Us

Submit Group News, medallions, event notices, letters to the editor and articles to Better Times, before the 10th of the month prior to month of issue by email to bettertimes@aatoronto.org or contact Alex at 416-487-8110

THE MOMENT OF CLARITY WAS THE FIRST OF MANY GIFTS

It took a long time for the fog to lift, well over a decade in the rooms. I studied the words and attended the meetings, but I did not accept the gift that was so freely offered to me.

I couldn’t stop drinking or changing the way I felt. I was always looking for the easier, softer way, or so I thought through assistance via the bottle. I gave no effort, I saw no action, I got no results, I didn’t understand my disease, and I did not “get it”. My attitude toward life was negative, reserved, isolated and selfish. I got what I was given, nothing. Then it happened, just over six years ago, I had the only moment of clarity I’ve ever experienced. I hold on to it today very tightly.

The moment of clarity was the first of many Gifts to come, clarity came in the form of a voice in my head. I was on my way to the liquor store for “just one more bottle”, the last one before I quit, (for good this time). The voice in my head asked, “Are you sure you want to go?” I paused - for the first time in over a decade - I answered the voice; I didn’t want to go, I had to go. Wow, powerlessness, I finally understood that this is what it felt like, and wanted change. There I had step one, thirteen years into the program and I had step one. Slow learner, my timing, no, my higher power’s timing, that’s when I was ready to receive The Gift.

With the help of sponsorship and working the steps out of the book, I trudged through the work. Accepting my insanity, and deciding to turn it over to my higher power, inventory, vulnerability, willingness, humility and a spiritual perspective of this program of action, led me to an understanding that the spiritual experience to me is just a different way of thinking.



Today, I understand Step 12 as “action is the key to good living”. Twenty years into AA and six years sober, I try to practice all of the steps daily. In my life today service and working Step 12 is having a commitment to my higher power, to others, and myself.

Spending twenty years in and out of the rooms, I’ve had some dry time. However, I’ve only ever experienced sobriety when I have been in the middle of service. Six years ago, I found that there were no midday meetings on a day when I had my afternoons free. Being newly sober I needed one. With some guidance and direction from trusted AA members, we got one up and running. I still attend that meeting to this day. The service meeting will also be turning six this January.

Another joy I experience from The Gift of Step 12 is hosting a weekly women’s big book study online. I have always been most comfortable at the door of any meeting, greeting and welcoming members and new people coming in. Balance is important in my recovery with a weekly routine and allowing room for whatever my higher power has to come my way via, experiences unknown. Sponsorship, wow what a blessing to have and to be.

My life is full of women today who enrich my sobriety, by sharing their journey with me and being able to share mine with them. Another Gift I have received is forging friendships that surpass any bonds I’ve felt before, and my relations with my family and spouse are stronger than ever.

When I finally gave up fighting and surrendered to the program, many doors started to open. Step 12 allows me to graciously accept The Gift that was always so freely being offered. My recovery today is dependent on my higher power, and a reliance on the knowledge that I have never had it so good.

-Angela S. - Start Today

HISTORY OF THE WINTER SEASON OPEN HOUSE (WSOH) – 80TH YEAR

January 20, 1944: AA Central Office opened at 1170 Yonge St.

December 25, 1944 - December 25, 1959: Open House at 1170 Yonge St.

January 15, 1960: 1170 closed and 2 Gerrard St. West opened.

December 25, 1960 - December 25, 1970: Open House at Columbus Hall on Sherbourne St.

December 25, 1971 – December 25, 1979: Open House at Metropolitan United Church.

The reason the Open House left the Metropolitan U.C. was “rowdyism and drinking at the Church. The Church would not tolerate what was taking place. The Intergroup did not feel it was in a position to police the gathering. Various elements in the Fellowship used the Steps and Traditions to prevent the necessary controls.”

December 25, 1980 – December 25, 1988: Open House at North Toronto Memorial Gardens.

Intergroup chose this site for the Open House because it wanted to remove it from the downtown problem areas." At this time the Xmas Open Houses were the responsibility of the elected representatives of the Fellowship in Toronto. An element in the Fellowship did not feel the proper way of treating the downtown alcoholics was being followed by moving up to Eglinton West (the area where North Toronto Memorial was located) where the drinking drunks would not go. At this point, the minority took it into their own hands and the result was the start in 1981 of the dinner at St. Bartholomew's which has continued. It has unquestionably been successful, but it was not fulfilling the wishes of the majority. It is a controversial issue. The elements who have put it on have shown that it is useful."

Accordingly, "a number of members of AA who felt that AA should be helping drunks at Xmas time in the downtown area" started dinner at St. Bartholomew's, Dundas St. East, beginning December 25, 1981, and continuing to today and probably into the future. "In 1989, they were requested to consider realigning themselves, but they chose not to (do so)."

December 25, 1989 – 2014: Open House at Emmanuel Howard Park United Church, 214 Wright Ave.

A Xmas Open House was started in the West end and handled again by Intergroup. "It was felt by Intergroup that the group involved at St. Bartholomew's was in effect dealing with the East end", while Intergroup's Open House took care of the West end... One other note: a few years ago, the assembled representatives at Intergroup decided to change the official name from "Christmas Open House" to "Winter Season Open House" to avoid the Christian bias of the traditional name. The assembly acted in response to the challenge that, as a worldwide institution now seeking to help alcoholics of all stripes, regardless of religion or irreligion, AA should avoid officially associating itself with any particular form of religion, as declared in the "Preamble".

December 25, 2015 - 2017: Open House at St. James Cathedral's Snell Hall.

(Southeast corner of Church St. & Adelaide St. E.) Moved to this location because the hall is fully accessible, and it is in a central location.

December 25, 2018 – 2019: College Street United Church, 452 College St. (College & Bathurst).

December 25, 2020 - 2021: Did not take place because of the COVID pandemic.

December 25, 2022 – 2023: Roncesvalles United Church, 240 Roncesvalles Ave. (front entrance) (formerly the Emmanuel Howard Park United Church, 214 Wright Ave. side entrance)

December 25, 2024: Timothy Eaton Memorial Church, 230 St. Clair Ave. W. (Dunvegan Rd. entrance)

Moved to this location because the hall is fully accessible, central location & TTC accessible.

The above summary, written in 1991, is based on a memo from Tommy H. Archives Records. Updated October 2024 by Eddy G. GTA Archivist.

GRAPEVINE BOOK OF THE MONTH



HAPPY, JOYOUS & FREE

The Lighter Side of Sobriety

Getting sober can be painful and amazing, but it also can be pretty darn amusing. This collection of stories from the Grapevine shows how, in recovery, AAs have learned to laugh. It's full of light and humorous stories about our early mistakes, navigating drinking events, funny things sponsor's say, interesting Twelve-Step calls, holiday adventures and more. They remind us to not take ourselves so seriously and to always strive to be "happy, joyous and free."

<https://www.aagrapevine.org/store/happy-joyous-free-lighter-side-sobriety-softcover>

-Imran R. Grapevine



Groups in the GTA have some wonderful holiday traditions. Informing our membership is important. Could you please let your Intergroup Liaison, share in your plans to gather in and promote.

Here's the first one,
Thursday December 19,
8:30pm

Timothy Eaton Memorial
Church
230 St. Clair West, Toronto
Holiday meeting followed
by Potluck Holiday Party





**GREATERTORONTOAREA
INTERGROUP**

ONLINE HELP CHAT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



✦ **ONLINE HELP FOR ALCOHOLICS** ✦
GTA Intergroup is looking for members to operate our new online website help chat tool.



All Training Provided. Training Starts Soon!



Winter Season Open House

~ FREE Event ~

Wed., December 25, 2024

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
New Location:

Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
230 St. Clair Ave W. Toronto M4V 1R5 *Fully Accessible*

Turkey, Ham, Stuffing, Vegetarian & Vegan Sides, Salads, Desserts, Coffee & Pop



If anyone is interested in **SETTING UP** for the event, We would love your service!

Come on Tues. Dec. 24th 8 a.m.
To decorate and/or slice, dice, chop, and peel veggies at
Timothy Eaton Memorial Church
230 St. Clair W., Toronto
Dunvegan Rd. Entrance

Looking For Donations:
Turkeys*Hams*Desserts*Pop
Please contact us (see contact info below) if you can help

For More Information, Please Contact.
Zobie, Winter Season Open House 2024 Event Chairperson
416-709-0178
wsoh@aatontario.org

Ross, Winter Season Open House Volunteer Coordinator
WinterSeasonOpenHouse@outlook.com

GTAI/DISTRICT - DECEMBER SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Accessibilities - Sun. Dec. 21 – 11 a.m.

ID: 824 8962 1874 - PW: 799763

Archives - Fri. Dec. 12 – 7 p.m.

ID: 841 5376 9412 - PW: 018851

Communications - Tues. Dec. 16 – 8 p.m.

ID: 850 5256 7237 - PW: 984555

CPC/PI - Mon. Dec. 15 – 7 p.m.

ID: 854 7547 0291 - PW: 002060

Correctional Facilities - Dec. 02 – 7 p.m.

ID: 883 8002 9737 - PW: 950392

Self-Support - Meets every other month.

Next Meeting: Dec. 30 - 6:30 pm

ID: 820 9238 0206 - PW: 319853

Treatment - Dec. 21 - 4pm

ID: 868 2207 4860 - PW: 787289

Twelfth Step - Wed. Dec. 10 – 7 p.m.

ID: 813 0646 6967 - PW: 572531

IT Subcommittee - Tues. Dec. 09 - 7 p.m.

ID: 814 0942 9019 - PW: 379691

Information AA Day - Mon. Dec. . 22 - 7 p.m.

ID: 811 8277 5978 - PW: 587553

DECEMBER MEDALLIONS

Max B., Friendly Group, 1 yr, Dec. 2nd

Eddy F., Erin Mills Group, 20 yrs, Dec. 2nd

Tristan J., Keep it Simple Group, 15 yrs, Dec. 8th

Dorothy A., Erin Mills Group, 15 yrs, Dec. 16th

Mary M., Black River Group, 35 yrs, Dec. 20th

GROUP CELEBRATION:

The High Park Group is celebrating 50 Years this upcoming Saturday, December 22, 2024. (Actual birthday of High Park Group is December 22nd, 1974). In conjunction with this anniversary we are hosting our annual candlelight/Gratitude meeting, with a dinner. All are welcome.

The meeting starts at 7pm, followed by dinner at 8pm.

IS THERE AN UPCOMING MEDALLION?

Please send your medallion details to

bettertimes@aatontario.org

in the format of:

name - homegroup - year(s) of sobriety - medallion date

Kindly note that Better Times only publishes the first year of continuous sobriety birthday celebrations or every subsequent 5th year of continuous sobriety (i.e. 1, 5, 10, 15, 20...)

ARCHIVES CORNER

Did you Know ?

In Dec. 1931, Russell (Bud) Firestone, the alcoholic son of Akron business magnate Harvey Firestone Sr. was introduced to Sam Shoemaker by James Newton while returning from an Episcopal conference in Denver. Newton was a prominent Oxford Group (OG) member and an executive at Firestone. Bud, drinking a fifth or more of whiskey a day, spiritually surrendered with Shoemaker and was released from his alcoholic obsession. He joined the Oxford Group and became an active member (but later returned to drinking).

In January 1933, Harvey Firestone Sr. grateful for the help given to his son Bud, sponsored an Oxford Group conference weekend (10-day house party) at the Mayflower Hotel in Akron. Frank Buchman & 30 members of his team were met at the train station by the Firestones & Rev Walter Tunks (Firestone's minister & rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church). The event included 300 overseas Oxford Group members & received much news coverage. Attendees included Henrietta Seiberling, T Henry & Clarace Williams & Dr. Bob's Wife Anne.

In early 1933, Anne attended Oxford Group meetings with her friend Henrietta Seiberling (whose marriage to J Frederick Seiberling was crumbling). Anne later persuaded Dr. Bob to attend. Meetings were on Thursday nights at the West Hill group.

On Dec 8, 1941, after an attack on Pearl Harbor, HI the US entered World War II. With the prospect of being recalled to active Army duty, Bill W requested he be granted a royalty on book sales to provide financial support for his wife Lois. The board approved a 10% royalty (35 cents). Prior to this, Dr. Bob was voluntarily giving Bill half the 10% royalty he & Anne were infrequently receiving. Bill's royalty became his sole source of income. An exception occurred in the mid-1940s when his income averaged \$1,700 over seven years. The board made a grant to Bill of \$1,500 for each of the seven years for a total of \$10,500 out of which Bill purchased his Bedford Hills house Stepping Stones.

On Dec. 20, 1945 Rowland Hazard died at age 64. In 1931 Rowland (age 50) was concerned about his drinking & saw Dr. Carl Jung psychoanalyst in Switzerland. He was treated for about one year, got drunk again & returned for more treatment.

Treated a 2nd time by Jung, Rowland was told that there was no medical or psychological hope for an alcoholic of his type; that his only hope was a vital spiritual or religious experience - in short a genuine conversion experience. Bill W. wrote that this was "the first chain of events that led to the founding of AA." Rowland sobered up in the Oxford Group in 1931 & was a prominent member of Calvary Episcopal Church in NYC (the Oxford Group US HQ).

Rowland & Cebra G. interceded with judge to accept responsibility for Ebby T. in August 1934. He helped Ebby find sobriety. Rowland remained a member of the Oxford Group (Moral Re-Armament). It is unclear whether he stayed sober or not. There is no evidence that he ever joined AA. Bill W. later wrote to Dr. Carl Jung on January 23, 1961, acknowledging his contribution to the AA movement. The letters Bill & Dr. Jung exchanged were printed in the Grapevine & are preserved in the book "Language of the Heart."

On Dec. 7, 1934 Bill W. decided to investigate the Calvary Mission at 246 E. 23rd St., NY. He showed up drunk with a drinking companion he found along the way (Alec the Finn). Bill kept interrupting the service wanting to speak. On the verge of being ejected, Ebby T. came by & fed Bill a plate of beans. Bill later joined the penitents & drunkenly "testified" at the meeting.

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.

In Dec. 1950 Paramount changed title of its movie "Mr. & Mrs. Anonymous" to "Something to Live For" at AA's request. Released in 1952, it dealt with the wonderful work being done by AA.

In Dec. 1982 Nell Wing, Bill's secretary and GSO Founding Archivist (worked at GSO from March 3, 1947-1982) "retires" but continues to be an ambassador-at-large for AA and a passionate advocate for AA archival history. Nell died on February 14, 2007 at the age of 89. In 1992, Nell's story of her years with AA, "Grateful to Have Been There" was published.

On Dec. 16, 1943, 80 people attended the first AA Banquet at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto. Today this event is called the Ontario Regional Conference (ORC). On March 14-16, 2025 the ORC will celebrate 82 years. The theme is "A NEW HAPPINESS."

Greater Toronto Area Groups That Started in December

- Dec. 7, 1947 - Beaches Group
- Dec. 7, 1956 - Islington Group
- Dec. 21, 1973 - Twelfth Tradition Group
- Dec. 22, 1974 - High Park Group
- Dec. 7, 1982 - Last Chance Group
- Dec 6, 2013 - Whitby Freethinkers Group



Scan this QR code to access [more](#) "Better Times" issues!

SHARE YOUR STORY

**CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
FOR BETTER TIMES'
SUMMER ISSUES**

Summer is just around the corner. Do you have any tips for staying sober in the summer?



Please scan the QR Code or tap this box and you will be directed to our [anonymous content submission page](#).

TO DONATE AA/GTA ARCHIVAL ITEMS TO ARCHIVES PLEASE CONTACT
ARCHIVIST EDDY G. 416-536-7536 or archives@aatoronto.org
OLD GTA MEETING BOOKS ARE NEEDED FOR THE ARCHIVES.