

Queens Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous Newsletter

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Queens Gratitude Day 2022

I would be very remiss to not mention “The Shot Heard Around Alley Pond Park,” aka Queens Intergroup of AA’s Gratitude Day. The event was held at Alley Pond Park on June 25, 2022. To say it was a success would be the understatement of the century! Our trusted Advisor, John Francis, kicked off the event by welcoming all AA members in attendance.

Many topics were covered during the festivities. The first topic was Sobriety During Covid, in which various members shared how they got sober and/or stayed sober during that time. Amongst them were Gina (Bowne Park), Dennis (Come As You Are), Terrie (Juniper Park), and 3 Zoom babies, Amy, Erica, and Damon from my homegroup Elm Heights.

This was followed by Gratitude in Sobriety After Lengthy Incarceration presented by Claude J. (Principles Before Personalities) and Neil B. (Stick with the Winners). Next up was Carrying the Message into Hospitals/Institutions led by Michael L. (QIAA Institutions Chair). LBGTQIA+ was represented by Elena W. (Jamaica Presentation) and Chaim M. (3 in 1 Group). Next up was Phone Volunteer Presentation by Alex T. (QIAA Daytime Phone Chair). This was followed up by the 7th Tradition announcement by Nick T. (Elm Heights). Next was the “I Am Grateful” sound-off by Adina C. (Jamaica Presentation). The last two presentations were “Drop The Rock” workshop by Cathy A. (Gift of Sobriety) and Al-Anon Presentation by Maureen P. (Suffolk County Al-Anon).

It was really exciting to see people in three dimensions that I had met on Zoom. For example, it was a real blast to see Damon, my homegroup’s Zoom Baby, in person. I would personally like to thank the planning committee for organizing the entire event and the members that did service with setup and cleanup after the event. And kudos to the food preparers, Steve and Queen Mary, who served up delicious food in the sizzling heat.

H & I Update

As of September 10th, according to Darren S., Hospitals & Institutions Literature Coordinator, here is the most recent update. Creedmoor is to open on Mondays through

Wednesdays; Faith Mission is open on Sundays and Wednesdays; Cornerstone remains open; and The Ed Thompson Center for Vets in Jamaica is open on Mondays through Saturdays; Flushing Detox opened on Mondays & Wednesdays, 6 pm. Please bear in mind, this is all subject to change. If interested in doing service, please contact Darren S. at 516-592-9517 or Mike L. at 718-757-9317 or email Secretary@queensaa.org.

Bridging the Gap

During our monthly QIAA Steering Committee meetings, I heard the term “Bridging the Gap” and I wanted to know more about this program. What is it and what is it all about? That’s when it was suggested to me to reach out to Maura Z. - NY Intergroup - BTG. I contacted Maura and asked if she would be so kind as to write an article about the BTG program, which I was grateful she agreed to. The following is the article written by Maura:

I am so happy to tell you about the Alcoholic Anonymous Bridging the Gap Program (AA BTG) and how we provide this service in Queens County. Bridging the Gap is a temporary contact program. We connect a person coming from a correction or treatment facility to an AA member, who meets them at a meeting, as soon as possible after release. The very same day of release is suggested and most beneficial. The person requesting to be met at an AA meeting will be contacted by an AA member, who we call a Gapper. The Gapper connects the newcomer to meetings and AA members in their neighborhood. It is suggested the newcomer is introduced to meeting formats, AA literature and the idea of sponsorship. The Gapper decides when this temporary commitment is completed, usually by attending six meetings together.

In AA, each service entity is autonomous and yet cooperation with other AA entities is common. I love the spirit of cooperation between our groups and service entities. The BTG program in Queens County is one example of love, service, and cooperation.

Queens County General Service Assembly (QCGSA) coordinates the BTG program in Queens. The Correction and Treatment Chairs co-chair the Queens BTG Committee and support Queens Intergroup in their “boots on the ground” outreach services. Queens Intergroup Hospitals and Institutions (QIH&I) includes BTG literature and contact information in the literature packets they bring into facility meetings. The QIH&I folks bring the AA message and BTG information directly to people in institutions. The possibility of a newly-released person being met at an AA meeting by a Gapper is our goal. As we have learned, there is a “slippery slope” between release from an institution and the doors of an AA meeting. AA BTG is ready, willing, and able to connect with those who reach out to us. This is our responsibility.

Queens County BTG cooperates with NY Intergroup BTG Program (NYI-BTG) to facilitate the process of connecting a newly released Queens resident to AA. When a person in an institution wants a BTG contact they call a NYI-BTG Google Voice number and an email is sent to

Gappers in the borough where the potential AA member will be living. The NYI-BTG Committee also reaches out to institutional staff to provide information about the BTG program.

Being a Gapper is a very rewarding service. We introduce a person who has reached out to AA to our wonderful lifesaving and life-giving program. I am so grateful for this service opportunity. It certainly helps me to stay sober and share all that has been given to me. I am responsible.

There are several ways to learn more about the BTG Program. Attached is a link to the pamphlet Bridging the Gap – Between treatment and AA through contact programs [P-49 - Bridging the Gap Between treatment and A.A. through contact programs \(aa.org\)](#), which provides an overview of the program. You can contact the Queens Intergroup H&I Committee at [queensaa.org](#) to carry the AA message of recovery into an institution meeting. Or you can contact Queens County Treatment or Correction Chairs at [Serving AA Groups in Queens County \(qcgasa.org\)](#) for BTG information. Maybe you would like to be a Gapper and connect a newcomer to AA. If you are interested in this service email NY Intergroup BTG at [CTFCBTG@nyintergroup.org](#). Another resource would be to check out the monthly virtual NY Intergroup BTG Committee meeting. We meet on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 6:30pm, meeting login information is on the NY Intergroup website, [Bridging the Gap Committee – New York Inter-Group \(nyintergroup.org\)](#), all are welcome!

There have been times in my sobriety, I have thought “I can’t possibly take a particular commitment because I don’t know anything about it.” The fabulous thing about AA service is when we rotate into a commitment, none of us know what we are doing. We all learn together, and we have the folks who have served before us to help. It is simple, one AA member helping another to achieve sobriety, to be a useful member of AA, and to know we are responsible.

Grateful to Serve,
Maura Z.
Secretary, NY Intergroup - BTG

The Oxford Group

I have always been interested in the early history of AA and in particular the Oxford Group. My curiosity was piqued while listening to several AA speakers make reference to the Oxford Group. The following pages give a brief historical synopsis of the Oxford Group. It enhanced my appreciation of the miracle otherwise known as Alcoholics Anonymous.

The **Oxford Group** was a **Christian** organization (first known as *First Century Christian Fellowship*) founded by the American **Lutheran** minister **Frank Buchman** in 1921. Buchman

believed that fear and selfishness were the root of all problems. Further, Buchman believed that the solution to living with fear and selfishness was to “surrender one’s life over to God’s plan”.

Buchman had had a conversion experience in an evangelical chapel in [Keswick, England](#), when he attended a decisive sermon by [Jessie Penn-Lewis](#) in the course of the 1908 [Keswick Convention](#).^[1] Later, but to him as result of that experience, he would, when resigning a part-time post at [Hartford Seminary](#) in 1921, found a movement called *First Century Christian Fellowship*. By 1928 the Fellowship had become to be known as *The Oxford Group* or *Oxford Groups*.^{[2]:11–12,52}

The Oxford Group enjoyed wide popularity and success in the 1930s. In 1932 the [Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang](#), in summing up a discussion of *The Oxford Groups* with his Diocesan Bishops, said, “There is a gift here of which the church is manifestly in need.”^[3]

Two years later the [Archbishop of York, William Temple](#) paid tribute to *The Oxford Groups* “which are being used to demonstrate the power of God to change lives and give to personal witness its place in true discipleship”.^[1] In 1938, the *Oxford Group* proclaimed a need for “moral re-armament” and that expression became the movement's new name. Buchman headed the [Moral Re-Armament](#) for 23 years until his retirement in 1961. In 2001 the movement was renamed [Initiatives of Change](#).^[1]

The tenets and practices of an American *Oxford Group* greatly influenced the steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. While not the only alcoholic to get sober with an Oxford Group, [Ebby Thacher](#)’s sobriety led to [Bill Wilson](#)’s. Eventually, Bill Wilson’s efforts to carry the spiritual solution to suffering alcoholics led to [Dr. Bob](#)’s sobriety in 1935. Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob are considered the founders of AA.

In Akron, Ohio, Jim Newton, an Oxford Group member, knew that one of [Harvey S. Firestone](#)’s sons, Russell, was a serious alcoholic. He took him first to a drying-out clinic and then on to an Oxford Group conference in Denver. The young man “gave his life to God”, and thereafter enjoyed extended periods of sobriety. The family doctor called it a “medical miracle”. Harvey Firestone Senior was so grateful that, in January 1933, he invited Buchman and a team of sixty to conduct a ten-day campaign in Akron. They left behind them a strong functioning group which met each week in the house of T. Henry Williams, amongst whom were an Akron surgeon, [Bob Smith](#), and his wife Anne. Bob was a secret drinker.^{[1]:151–152}

[Rowland Hazard](#), claimed that it was [Carl Jung](#) who caused him to seek a “spiritual solution” to his alcoholism, which led to Rowland joining the Oxford group. He was introduced by Shep Cornell to Cornell's friend [Ebby Thacher](#). Ebby had a serious drinking problem. Hazard introduced Ebby to Jung's theory and then to the Oxford Group. For a time Ebby took up residence at [Sam Shoemaker](#)’s Calvary Rescue Mission^{[19]:381–386} that catered mainly to saving down-and-outs and drunks. Shoemaker taught inductees the concept of God being that of one’s understanding.^[53]

Ebby Thacher, in keeping with the Oxford Teachings, needed to keep his own conversion experience real by carrying the Oxford message of salvation to others. Ebby had heard that his old drinking buddy [Bill Wilson](#) was again drinking heavily. Thacher and Cornell visited Wilson at

his home and introduced him to the Oxford Group's religious conversion cure. Wilson, who was then an agnostic, was "aghast" when Thacher told him he had "got religion".^{[19]:131-139}

A few days later, in a drunken state, Wilson went to the Calvary Rescue Mission in search of Ebby Thacher. It was there that he attended his first Oxford Group meeting and would later describe the experience: "Penitents started marching forward to the rail. Unaccountably impelled, I started too... Soon, I knelt among the sweating, stinking penitents ... Afterward, Ebby ... told me with relief that I had done all right and had given my life to God."^[19] The Call to the Altar did little to curb Wilson's drinking. A couple of days later, he re-admitted himself to [Charles B. Towns Hospital](#). Wilson had been admitted to Towns hospital three times earlier between 1933 and 1934. This would be his fourth and last stay.^{[17]:150}

Bill Wilson obtained his "spiritual awakening" going through the steps with Ebby in Towns Hospital where he had his conversion. Wilson claimed to have seen a "white light", and when he told his attending physician, [William Silkworth](#) about his experience, he was advised not to discount it. After Wilson left the hospital, he never drank again.^{[17]:83-87,165-167}

After his release from the hospital, Wilson attended Oxford Group meetings and went on a mission to save other alcoholics. His prospects came through Towns Hospital and the Calvary Mission. Though he was not able to keep one alcoholic sober, he found that by engaging in the activity of trying to convert others he was able to keep himself sober. It was this realization, that he needed another alcoholic to work with, that brought him into contact with Bob Smith while on a business trip in Akron, Ohio.

Earlier Bill Wilson had been advised by Dr Silkworth to change his approach and tell the alcoholics they suffered from an illness, one that could kill them, and afterward apply the Oxford Practices. The idea that alcoholism was an illness, not a moral failing, was different from the Oxford concept that drinking was a sin. This is what he brought to Bob Smith on their first meeting. Smith was the first alcoholic Wilson helped to sobriety. Dr. Bob and [Bill W.](#), as they were later called, went on to found [Alcoholics Anonymous](#).

Wilson later acknowledged in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*.^[54] "The early AA got its ideas of self-examination, acknowledgement of character defects, restitution for harm done, and working with others straight from the Oxford Group and directly from Sam Shoemaker, their former leader in America, and from nowhere else."

In 1934 James Houck joined the Oxford Group and became sober on December 12, one day after Wilson did.^[citation needed] AA was founded on June 10, 1935. In September 2004, Houck was the last surviving person to have attended Oxford Group meetings with Wilson, who died in 1971. At the age of 98, Houck was still active in the group, now renamed Moral Re-armament, and it was his mission to restore the Oxford Group's spiritual methods through the "Back to Basics program", a twelve step program similar to AA. Houck believed the old Oxford Group spiritual methods were stronger and more effective than the ones currently practiced in A.A. Houck was trying to introduce the program into the prison systems.^[55]

Special thanks to Chelsea M., John Francis B. for edits, Gretchen for the graphic design, my sponsee Atif C., and the entire QIAA Steering Committee. If you have any articles that you would like to submit, you may email me at shearseddie@gmail.com. Please limit articles to 1-2 pages and a maximum of 2,000 words. Lastly, I would like to personally thank Chelsea for emailing the 2nd Quarter 2022 Newsletter to all the Group Representatives.

In Love & Service,
Eddie Fee
Newsletter Coordinator