

Clintonville
Big Book
Group

37th

Anniversary Program

Schedule

Fellowship	6:30
Dinner	7:00
Open Meeting	8:00
Reading	
Group History	
Speaker: Melvin F.	

Each Alcoholics Anonymous Group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose—that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Group History

Getting Started

The Clintonville Big Book Group of Alcoholics Anonymous held its first meeting on November 17, 1987.

The inspiration for that first meeting came from three AA members, young in sobriety, who had attended a Joe and Charlie Big Book Workshop in Akron. They came back from the workshop with a deeper appreciation for, and understanding of, the Book and a desire to share it with others.

At the time, there were few Big Book study meetings in Central Ohio. The three members all attended meetings at the St. James Episcopal Church, which was the hub of AA activity in the area at the time. The church hosted four AA groups, which met six nights a week (one group held three meetings a week).

The only night the church didn't host a meeting was Tuesday, so the three had the idea to start a Big Book study meeting on Tuesday night. They discussed the idea with their sponsor, a man who went by the name Thor, who agreed there was a need for the meeting in the community. (He used to joke that if you want

to hide money from an alcoholic, put it in his Big Book.) He also agreed to host the meeting in his home until the group could accumulate enough funds to pay rent at the church.

The name Clintonville Big Book Group was chosen without a lot of discussion. The group would be based in Clintonville and the format was modeled after the Clintonville Step Group, which read the Twelve and Twelve at meetings, so Clintonville Big Book was the easy choice.

At the first meeting, approximately 18 AAs showed up at Thor's house. There had been some forethought given to the format—during the meeting attendees would take turns reading and anyone could ask questions or share their experience between the readings—but maybe not enough. There had been no thought given to where to start the reading. The first instinct was to start on page 1, and we were about to do that when a more experienced member interrupted and said, "we should start at the Preface." And that's what we did.

There was an intimacy to those early meetings that was memorable and exciting. Part of

Group History (cont'd)

it came from the informality of meeting in a member's home. It felt a little like the earliest AA meetings must have felt. But there was also the genuine excitement felt in hearing the Big Book read aloud in a room full of alcoholics.

The meeting was attractive from the beginning and after about six weeks had outgrown Thor's house and had the money to approach St. James about renting out their basement on Tuesday night. The church did not object and the group had its first home.

That meeting place had its pros and cons. Because the church had meetings every night of the week, many AAs just showed up at the church every night, so meeting attendance grew. But there was also a tendency to see all the meetings at the church as one group that met every night, rather than five distinct groups. So, while the meetings were vibrant and well attended, the size of the group remained small.

The group held its first anniversary celebration in 1992—five years. It was a modest celebration in which five members who were at the first meeting shared their memories.

But it was an acknowledgement that we were no longer a new meeting hoping to survive, but an established group.

Becoming Autonomous

Around 1993, St. James Church was probably feeling a little overrun by AA, what with meetings at the church every night and members often fellowshiping in the small parking lot until 10pm. They asked several groups to find a new meeting place and raised the rent from \$40 to \$75 a month for the groups that remained.

Our group decided it could not be self supporting at the new higher rent and set out to find a new meeting place.

The group ended up moving to the First Universal Unitarian Church further north in Clintonville. There, the group met in a back classroom, which was used during the day as a preschool playroom. Before we could set up tables and chairs for the meeting, we had to put away all the toys the kids had left out during the day. Because storage at the church was limited, someone had to keep the Big Books for the meeting in the trunk of their car all week.

If you got to the meeting late you might end up sitting in a chair designed for a toddler as we only had about 30 "grownup" seats. In other words, the accommodations were not ideal. But the church was supportive, and the move forced the group to become more autonomous than it had been. Attendance dipped a bit with the move because we were in a smaller space and no longer benefitted from "spillover" from the other groups at St. James Church, but the group started attracting more home group members.

After a while, however, it became clear the group needed to find a new facility if it was going to continue to grow.

Moving to Maple Grove

One of the group's members approached Maple Grove United Methodist, which was already hosting a Sunday night AA meeting, to see if the group could move there and the church agreed to let us do so.

The new facility worked out better than anyone could have hoped. The meetings stayed focused and vibrant, and the group began to really grow. New members attracted more new members, and the group got

more active in the District, Area and Intergroup.

With the improved facilities, including access to a kitchen, the group started holding regular anniversary celebrations with food in 1996. The group also began holding monthly rather than quarterly group conscience meetings.

In 2001, the group received its first shipment of fourth edition Big Books and retired the third edition books that had been used since the first meeting. It was a real treat to discover the new stories in the 4th Edition together as a group.

As the group grew, our anniversary celebrations got bigger and more elaborate. At one point, 8-10 group members were spending most of the day of the anniversary in the church's kitchen, peeling and cooking up mashed potatoes, making stuffing and gravy, carving the eight full size turkeys members would roast in their homes, and setting up and decorating the room. Meals were served on ceramic plates with metal silverware and the expanded format featured two ten-minute talks from group members as

Group History (cont'd)

well as a main speaker. The event regularly attracted 80 to more than 100 AAs from across the city.

But the group was about more than the annual celebration. Group members looked for opportunities to carry the message to treatment facilities, prisons, halfway houses and other places where alcoholics could be found.

With more AA members early in sobriety attending the meeting, the group decided to start hosting a beginner's meeting at the same time as the regular meeting. After the readings, newer people, along with some of the group's more experienced members, would break off into another room for a meeting that focused on the first three steps of the AA program.

The Lockdown

Until 2020, the group had met every Tuesday night without interruption since its founding. But when the setup crew arrived at Maple Grove on March 17, 2020, the church was locked due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no meeting that night.

The following week, on March 24, 2020, the group held its first online meeting and would

continue to meet online while the church was locked down. Some members got comfortable with online meetings and were grateful to have them, but others were unable to attend due to lack of technology or just couldn't get comfortable with the online format.

When the church re-opened in June 2021, the group resumed in-person meetings, but the size of the meetings and the group was smaller than it had been before the pandemic. To accommodate AAs unable to attend in person, we adopted a hybrid meeting format in which the in-person meeting was made available to members who joined online.

In the three years since 2021, attendance at meetings has gradually increased but has not reached the level it was before the lockdown. A strong core group remains, however, that is committed to sharing the program of recovery outlined in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* with other alcoholics.


NEW MEETING NEW MEETING NEW

How many times have you been told to read the big book-go-to-meetings-and-pray?

Now, you can do all three at the NEW Clintonville Big Book Meeting.

The Facts:

Who: Alcoholics.
What: Big Book Discussion Meeting.
When: Tuesday 8:00 PM, beginning November 17, 1987
Where: 261 Northmoor (Thor's house. This is a temporary location. We'd like to move to St. James Episcopal Church on Calumet and Oakland Park in time.)
Why: Why not.



261 Northmoor

Shared Experience

Two days after my sobriety date, I attended my first Clintonville Big Book meeting. I found an immediate affinity with the people in the group, and I really enjoyed the format of the meeting.

After attending the meeting for a few months, I found my sponsor in the meeting, and I adopted the meeting as my home group.

I was told that it was important to get a sponsor and a home group, as these two things provide anchors for your “boat of sobriety.” I found this advice to ring true and now have been sober for over 7 years.

My sponsor suggested that I take the position of literature chairperson in the meeting, which I gladly accepted. Soon after that, I took on the position of Grapevine representative as well. This ensures that I get to every CBB meeting early enough to fellowship with other home group members and makes sure that I attend the group conscience. Having responsibility for literature also meant that I had to go downtown to Central Office to buy literature that we needed to replace for the meeting. Doing this encouraged me to ask for a volunteer position there.

At this time, I volunteer at COFG every Thursday in order to lend a hand to the staff at Central Office. Joining the CBB has been integral in keeping me sober, and for this I am eternally grateful.

Joel D.

Shared Experience

In the beginning, I came to AA because I did not want to drink any more. Members told me that I needed to grow spiritually if I were going to maintain sobriety. “The point is, that we are willing to grow along spiritual lines.” (p 60)

Regular attendance as a member of this group has provided me a forum for consistent review of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. As we read, we share our experience as it relates to the text. I receive a regular refresher on the principles of the Twelve Steps. I am continually challenged to ask myself whether I am indeed living the AA program, a life based on spiritual principles?

One definition of the word home is “a place where one lives permanently, especially as a member of a family or household.” I have attended Clintonville Big Book Group for more than 29 years. It has been my home group for about 28 years. I doubt that will ever change. I enjoy the sense of stability and kinship I have with my home group member friends.

In *There is a Solution* we read, “We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join together in brotherly and harmonious action” (p 17). As a member of this home group, I am given the opportunity to live out this statement as we welcome newcomers seeking the same thing I did: the ability not to pick up the next drink. I am grateful to be a part of such a caring group of people.

Chris J

About the Group

The Clintonville Big Book Group meets Tuesday night at 8:00 at Maple Grove United Methodist Church, on the corner of Henderson Road and High St.

In our meetings, we read from the book Alcoholics Anonymous. The reading goes around the room, alternating between those in the room and those online, with each reader reading a paragraph or two. Any member can comment whenever there is a break in the reading.

We start at the Preface and read through Dr. Bob's Story and then alternate reading once section of stories each time we go through the first part of the book.

We hold our Group Conscience meeting the first Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 7:30 in our meeting room at Maple Grove.

We have established a prudent reserve and each quarter distribute any surplus funds to the District, Area, COGF and AA General Services. Anniversary costs are paid by direct contributions from group members. No money put in the basket at our meetings is used for the anniversary.

We also have a jug for contributions to support purchase of literature by the Area 53 Correctional Facilities Committee. The jug is available at all meeting and passed around the room, after the 7th Tradition basket, once a month.