

## GATEWAY BIG BOOK OPEN DISCUSSION (Grimsby)

The Gateway Group first began just as a Big Book discussion meeting. The first meeting was held at the Trinity United Church of Grimsby on Monday, November 25, 2005. The name is in reference to Grimsby being known as the “gateway” to Niagara and the “Gateway Center” where the founders originally used to meet for coffee and prayer.

Joe E., the main founder of the group, along with Myra W. and Leo M., felt that the West Niagara area would benefit from having an “open” discussion meeting that focused on the Big Book. There was no AA meeting other than the Jordan Lookout speaker meeting in the area on a Monday night, and no meetings or groups dealt solely with the Big Book. Making it an “open” meeting would allow anyone to attend who wanted to learn more about The Big Book, or AA in general. Being an “open” meeting also meant a friend or family member could comfortably attend to support someone who was curious about AA or thought they might have a drinking problem.

The Big Book meeting grew in attendance the first couple of years, and it was decided that Joe E. would contact Central Office in New York to apply for group status. We officially became a “group” in early fall of 2008 and the first business meeting was held October 27, 2008. In attendance were the founding members: Joe E., Michael W., Leo M., Myra W. and Vince V.

Attention to the newcomer was very important to the original members. It was adopted early on as part of meeting format that anyone could bring forward any “burning issue” they might be dealing with prior to the study and discussion of the Big Book.

It was unanimously agreed that a candlelight gratitude meeting would take place December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2008. Every year since at the Gateway Group, many alcoholics gather before Christmas amid the candlelight in a large circle and share their gratitude.

In March of 2009 a “How It Works” separate breakout room was established focussing on the first three steps and sponsorship. In 2011 the Group agreed to offer out a Newcomers package and a Desire chip for those ready to try the AA way of life.

The group continues to grow and evolve. Over time we have adopted a ‘three room’ format to address the various needs and interests of people in recovery, concentrating on the study of various sections of the Big Book:

- “How it Works” Room: covers the first 63 pages (Steps 1,2,3)
- “Into Action” Room: covers from page 63 onward (Steps 4-12)
- “Big Book Discussion” Room: covers the entire Big Book alternating from front to back

Today, the Gateway Group is a healthy example of AA fellowship and recovery based in the teachings of the Big Book.

Stuart T., May 2016