

GROUP STORIES OF LOCKDOWN



From the
Edinburgh and Midlothian
AA Convention 2021



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Preface

Welcome to a collection of writings which document the experience, strength and hope of AA groups and members from the Edinburgh and MidLothian InterGroup in the time of COVID-19: "Group Stories of Lockdown".

The stories contained here highlight the fantastic local response of AA in meeting the challenge of continuing to carry this message to the still suffering alcoholic, and to fulfil our primary purpose "to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety."

Our AA groups and InterGroup responded quickly, and thoughtfully, to lockdown. Multiple Group Consciences determined to set up online meetings and these were opened and running rapidly. More and more have appeared over time. InterGroup has shown open mindedness and willingness in the active support it has given. The IT team deserve particular mention for their responsiveness to change and in adapting the website and keeping it up to date. This acknowledgment is particularly appropriate as face to face meetings have re-opened, and more and more are restarting almost every day. Some entirely new meetings, both face to face and online, have been established adding to the opportunities for members to fulfil their primary purpose.

We hope that you enjoy this celebration of the Unity, Service and Recovery which AA worldwide has exhibited during the global crisis, as seen through the lens of our own experience.

The Edinburgh and Midlothian Inter Group.

This collection is a live document to which we intend to add as our stories continue.

We welcome new entries from groups or members who have not yet contributed.

We also look forward to receiving updates to the existing stories in the weeks and months to come.

Please send any contributions to rsgray34@gmail.com



1st Edinburgh

When lockdown was first imposed in Scotland, with an immediate ban on public gatherings of more than two people, AA Meetings at 7-9 Blackfriars Street, the home of 1st Edinburgh since February 2016, came to an abrupt end. Before 2016, meetings had, of course, been held at 38 Cockburn Street since 1962.

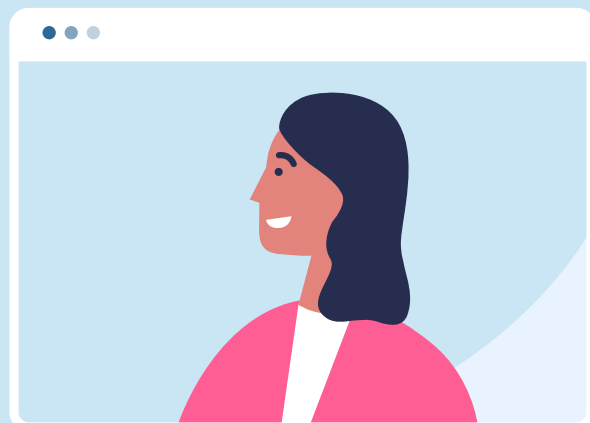
It was not long before AA online meetings were established and all of us quickly became familiar with Zoom. This was a concept which the vast majority of us hadn't even heard of before!

The first Zoom meeting of 1st Edinburgh took place on Thursday 9 April at 12.30pm. Initially there were four meetings each week: Tuesday and Thursday lunchtime; Saturday and Sunday evening. As time went on, and lockdown tightened its grip, six 1st Edinburgh meetings were set up. These meetings continue today and are regularly attended by 15 – 30 members, not just from Edinburgh, but from other parts of the UK, from Europe, USA, and Canada.

After Zoom meetings were established, Group Conscience Meetings moved on to consider the future of the premises at Blackfriars Street. The landlords offered a rent holiday for the course of the lockdown. But they made it clear that the rent would have to be paid at some point.

Of course, we were mindful of Tradition 7 and the need to remain self supporting. The vast majority of members began to make their contributions online, and the Group's balance remained fairly healthy. However, after a great deal of debate and soul searching, it became clear that the responsible way forward was to end the lease, which is the present position.

Fourteen months later, it is clear that this decision was correct, and Zoom meetings continue to thrive.





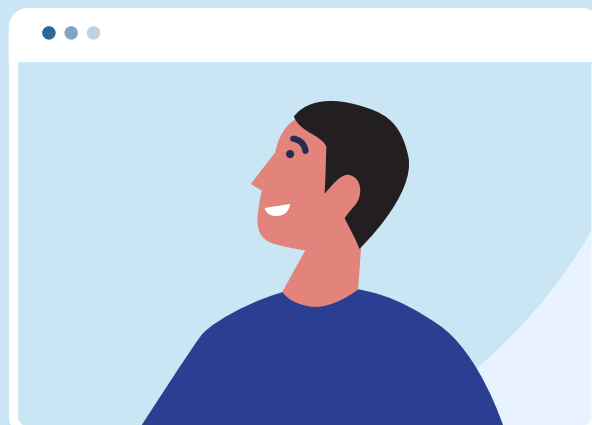
Happy Wednesday

My first meeting on coming out of treatment was Wednesday night at St Johns (“Happy Wednesday”), and it’s now become my home group. I was a bit apprehensive about sharing, particularly on Zoom so I just listened and what I heard was real honesty, love and compassion – with no judgement and, really importantly, no fear of being judged. I immediately felt welcomed and accepted and it’s probably the first place I’ve felt able to let my guard down and talk truthfully about my journey into alcoholism and in early recovery. I can’t stress enough how important that acceptance was for me to allow me to open up in what feels like a very safe and caring environment.

I realised that Zoom was just a means – a means of connecting into this world, of people similar to me. It’s opened up the world of AA and the fellowship on offer here. And to feel part of the community.

And that to me is what AA has become – a community, with different people of different backgrounds with very diverse stories. But so many common thoughts, feelings and behaviours that I can strongly identify with. Having spent most of my life looking at the differences between myself and other people and judging my own life and others based on those, I now feel part of something where I can accept that but look for the similarities. And there are so many! The main thing I have experienced is being part of something where people want to get better, be better and help others on their own journey, without looking for anything in return.

AA, my home group and the fellows I’ve met early in recovery have helped me to rebuild my life. To be able to love my family and friends and to feel love in return. And that’s simply the best gift in the world.





Palmy Zoom

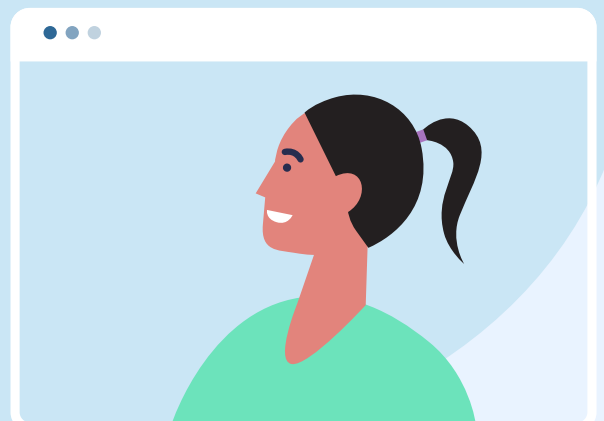
Palmerston held a Group Conscience on ZOOM on 22nd March 2020 where it was agreed to close all live meetings and move to ZOOM. We purchased a licence for the group the following day. We then very quickly registered all the ZOOM meetings at Intergroup and York. The GC was very well attended although the decision was bittersweet. There was some anxiety at how we would adjust to this new process! But also, a sense of relief and comfort seeing the faces on the screen and the openers and co-openers of the live meetings willing to go to an online platform that a lot of us hadn't even heard of before.

The first Palmy ZOOM meeting was held on Tuesday 24th March 2020, 6-7pm. Maria hosted using Steve's personal account, Gerry chaired. Lesley Leith read from the Big Book and Nic shared. The meeting was attended by 55 people, mostly local members.

Peter and Steve arranged training sessions so that people could learn how ZOOM worked and old timers and newcomers alike volunteered their services to host, co-host, chair, read, share, sponsor and sometimes to just attend.

All meetings that were held in the church were now online at the same time as they would be face to face. Some had the same openers and co-openers. All kept their format; mostly main share meeting but the Tuesday 8pm Step Meeting, Thursday 6pm Big Book meeting and Fridays 6pm women's meeting also continued with their formats. Palmerston expanded through lockdown as many members expressed concern that there was no Sunday meeting, a lot of people were at home all day every day and it was agreed that a new meeting would be started 2-3.30pm. Two morning meetings also joined the West End Group that had previously been with the East End Group.

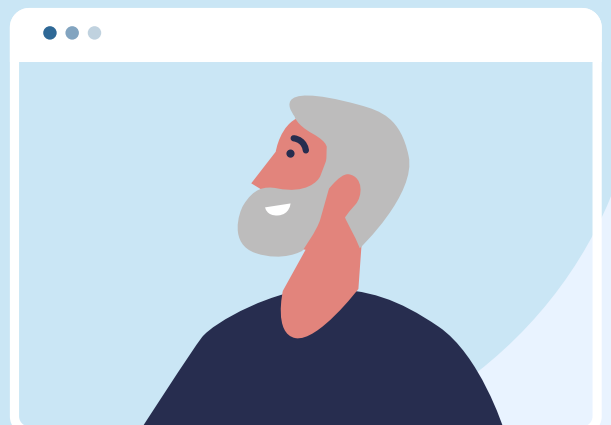
These meetings are all still running online.



14 months later and Palmerston still has online meetings every day, several a day sometimes. There were meetings all through the festive period, in fact a meeting has never not opened! The group conscience has been held every month and members have joined from all over the world. We have many fellows who have got sober during the pandemic and have never been inside Palmerston Place but have made it their home (from home). People have continued to give generously to the 7th Tradition using bank transfer and PayPal, another tradition that technology has allowed us to continue. I certainly never expected the intimacy of sharing through a screen, but ZOOM has been a lifeline to me and many others through the most extraordinary experience of my sobriety.

This experience has shown me yet again that when one alcoholic helps another, whether online or face to face, we can stay sober one day at a time.

Nicola
West End Group GSR, in love and service.



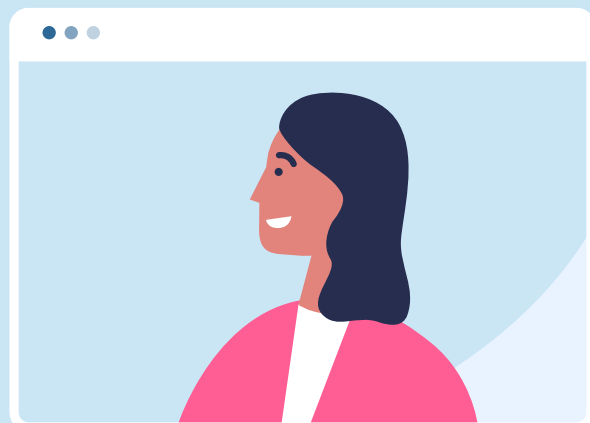


Zoom Room Saviours

I'm a lock down clean timer - sobriety date 25 March 2020. AA has been a bedrock, and a glimpse into a sober life in the last four years. Something's changed with lockdown and the restrictions of pandemic. I learned about the pace of life and the pace of nature. I learned that sitting in rooms is not enough. I found time to ask why I had relapsed yet again. I found time to find a sponsor and start working the steps. I found time to Zoom into meetings daily and sit with myself afterwards. I found time to talk with fellows and my sponsor with no appointments looming to take away my attention. I found time to mind my feelings rather than bury them in drink or other distractions. I found time to begin to appreciate the higher power in my life and that life is much much bigger than me.

As I re-emerge into life, face to face and on the ground, however slowly, I'm more grateful than ever for the global fellowship of AA and this recovery journey into a nourishing and connected way of living.

From a grateful alcoholic.





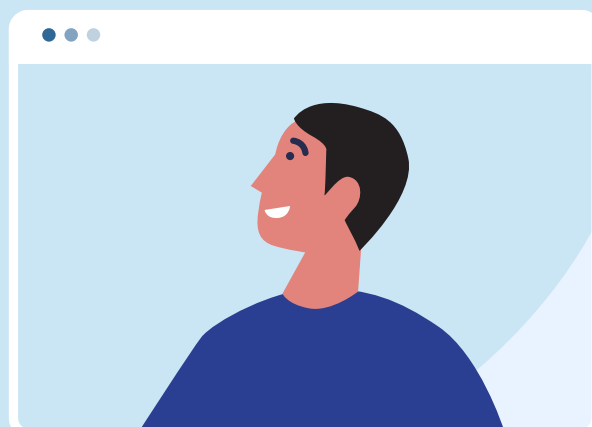
Coronavirus brought challenges and rewards

As the pandemic loomed large across the UK, the Portobello Saturday Express and Seaside Sunday groups began to see creeping changes to the way we ran our meetings. First, it was providing wrapped biscuits to avoid cross contamination, then avoiding handshakes and hugs, through to eventually moving our well-loved meetings online when Scotland went into lockdown.

One of the first challenges was getting used to new technology, as no one had used Zoom before – but this lack of knowledge ended up becoming a real leveller within our groups, as we were all learning together. Advice and guidance on how to replicate physical groups online was soon passed on from other meetings, as the Edinburgh AA community is small, tight knit and immensely supportive.

Zoom bombers intent on disrupting meetings were a concern for our groups, as we wanted to ensure that we replicated the sense of safety and peace found in our physical meetings. An extremely wise member of the group reminded us that we must try and avoid operating on fear, and balance the risk of Zoom bombers with the potential risk of a fellow in need of a meeting not being able to attend. This has been a guiding principle over these last 14 months, and what we applied when creating privacy settings and guidelines. We decided in order to keep the meeting running smoothly to mute participants once the meeting starts, and then have raised hand sharing and call people in turn to share. This method has worked well and hasn't been changed since the start of running online meetings. We decided not to lock the meeting once it started, to avoid any potential latecomers missing out on what could be a vital meeting for them.

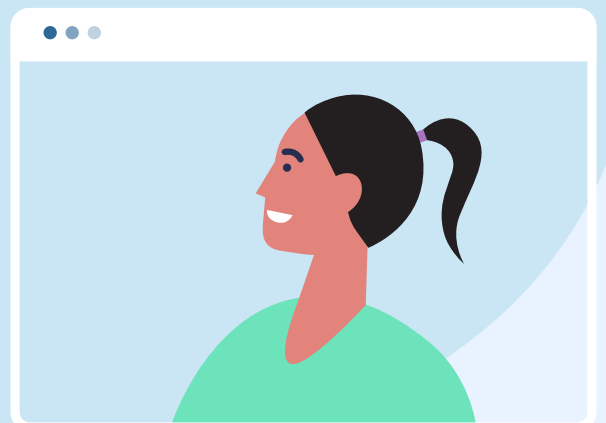
As group members doing service, we both felt a real sense of responsibility for the people attending our meetings, and approached the first few meetings with nervousness.



What if the internet failed? What if someone couldn't be unmuted? What if someone tried to disrupt the meeting? We needn't have worried, as any hiccups or challenges were greeted not with impatience, but with sympathy and understanding by our fellows. Love and tolerance are our code, and this has been exemplified by the support those doing service have been shown by meeting attendees.

One of the real pleasures of holding meetings on Zoom has been hosting visitors from around the world. Our meetings have been blessed to have participants from England, Australia, America and Germany, with many becoming regular attendees. One AA member is even pondering a move from England to Edinburgh as a result of attending Edinburgh meetings regularly! We've been delighted that our group which usually has between 20 – 30 attendees regularly had up to 60 people attending. Another real positive has been bringing AA into the homes of those people who might struggle to get out of the house – whether that's due to a physical disability or caring responsibilities. The pandemic has shown how much more can be done to help such members – and long may AA continue to support that.

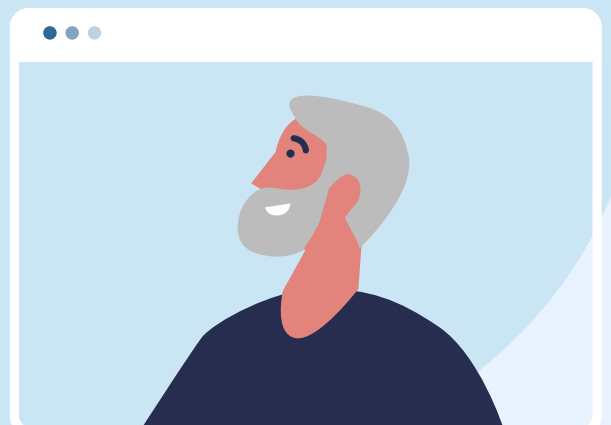
It has been astonishing to see so many newcomers come in to AA during the pandemic, with the open mindedness and willingness to put in the work at this most challenging of times. Our meetings have always extended an open hand to newcomers, but this effort has been redoubled, with newcomers being offered phone numbers through the chat function, and encouraged to stay on after the meeting finishes to have an informal chat with people afterwards. One of the things that it has sadly been difficult to replicate is the mingling and mixing before and after the meeting, where contacts are made and stories shared, but we have done whatever we can to replicate this.



We have been far more fortunate than other groups, as our venue is a council building, and as it has been shut for over a year, no costs were incurred. We still face challenges as we look towards moving back to our physical meetings. The room where we hold our meetings is small, and was regularly packed to the gunnels with AA members. How we accommodate as many people as possible within the spaces available to us is an ongoing concern, and something we are actively planning for.

If anything, AA's singleness of purpose has been more pronounced as we have supported each other through the pandemic, as we have lived Step 12 - we have practised AA's principles in all our affairs. This experience has shown that no matter what life throws at us members of AA, as long as we have the fellowship to turn to and we live life on life's terms - we need never drink again.

Courtney and Vanessa
Portobello Saturday Express and Seaside Sunday meetings



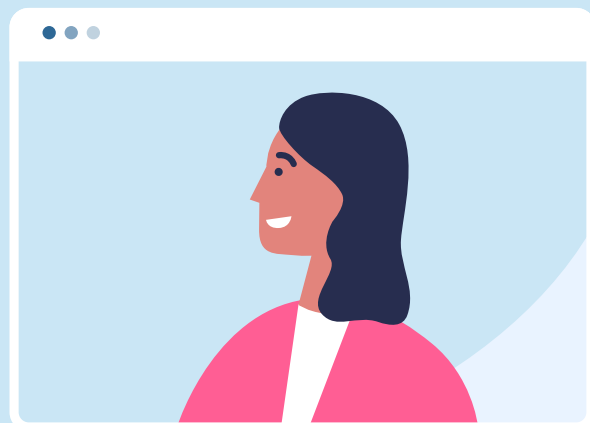
Journeys through the Big Book at Stockbridge

On Monday 4th December 2017 I attended my first 'proper' AA meeting. I had just spent five weeks in a rehab centre where we'd been introduced to AA, the 12 Steps, and the Big Book. The centre had bused us to several meetings where we arrived on time, and left promptly – efficient, but a bit clinical. I didn't get what AA was about then and it took me some months of 'keeping coming back' for things to work for me. The seeds were sown at that first meeting of the Stockbridge Big Book Study Group where I was asked if I would like to come early the following week to help set things up. Thus began my AA 'life in service'. Each of us have a different balance of the three AA legacies of Unity, Service and Recovery, but doing service was what eased me into both the practice and the understanding of AA.

During my three and half years of sobriety I have gone through the Big Book several times with my ever changing group of friends and fellows at Stockbridge. Each time new sentences or paragraphs in my Big Book get underlined or highlighted as my recovery consolidates and my spiritual understanding grows. I think I now have more highlighted than not in my copy!

Last year in March as Covid descended we transferred our meeting from the cosy Prayer Room in the Church to one of the halls, where each of us sat two meters apart in a circle. However, that only lasted one week and we haven't been able to meet in-person since.

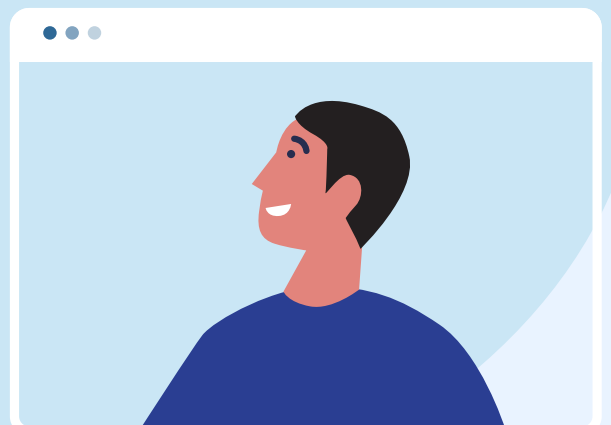
The following week we set up a Zoom meeting, with some degree of scepticism. A dozen came and we stumbled through what in the end turned out to be an OK meeting. Over the next few weeks we 'Zoomed in' on better ways of doing things and have since developed a new wider membership circle including some regular overseas attendees. The meeting is different, but just as vibrant as the old 'live' meeting. We have also been a route for some newcomers to find their way into the Fellowship.



We've been debating returning to live meetings at Group Conscience, with mixed feelings. Do we go back to the 'old' format? What about Hybrid meetings (with all their technical and social issues) to accommodate our new remote attendees? Do we have separate live and Zoom version? We've gained much in the Zoom era; how do we retain that moving forward?

Perhaps fortunately, our decision has been shelved for a little while. Stockbridge Church (St Stephen's Comely Bank to give it its full title) is just embarking on a major refurbishment and will not open again until September. And with some marvellous new facilities. (Perhaps this is the Group's Higher Power in action!) So this gives us time to plan, to work out what the new rules allow, and to look forward to welcoming friends and fellows back to the 'new look' Stockbridge Big Book Study Group in the near future. I do look forward to seeing you there.

George C





The Church of the Good Shepherd and Alcoholics Anonymous in the time of COVID-19 – A Photo Story

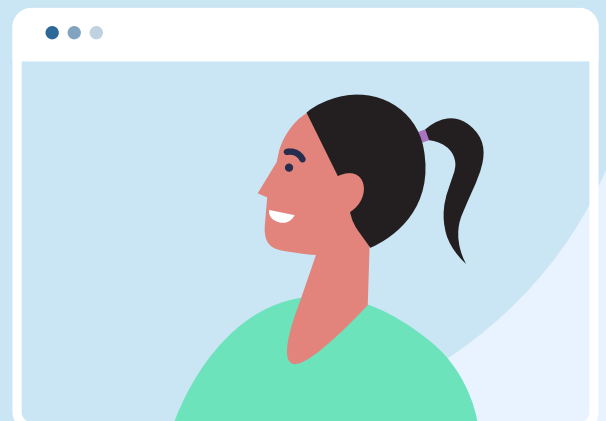


Hello and Welcome to the Church of the Good Shepherd, Murrayfield Avenue, Edinburgh.

This beautiful place plays host to our face to face Alcoholics Anonymous Meetings: the Murrayfield Step Meeting at 8pm on Wednesday Evening and the Step Eleven Prayer and Meditation Meeting on Friday evening at 7pm.

Since March we have hosted both meetings in an online format and these can be accessed here:

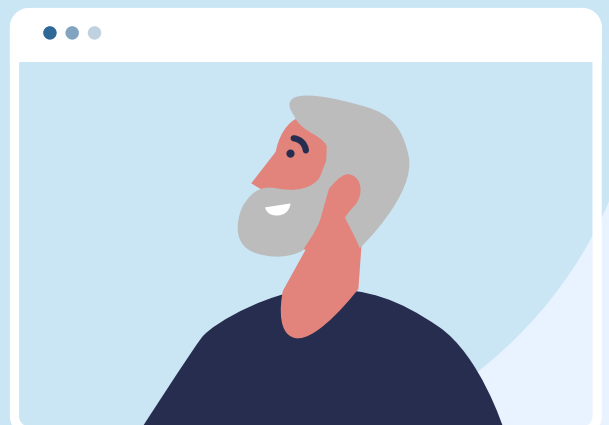
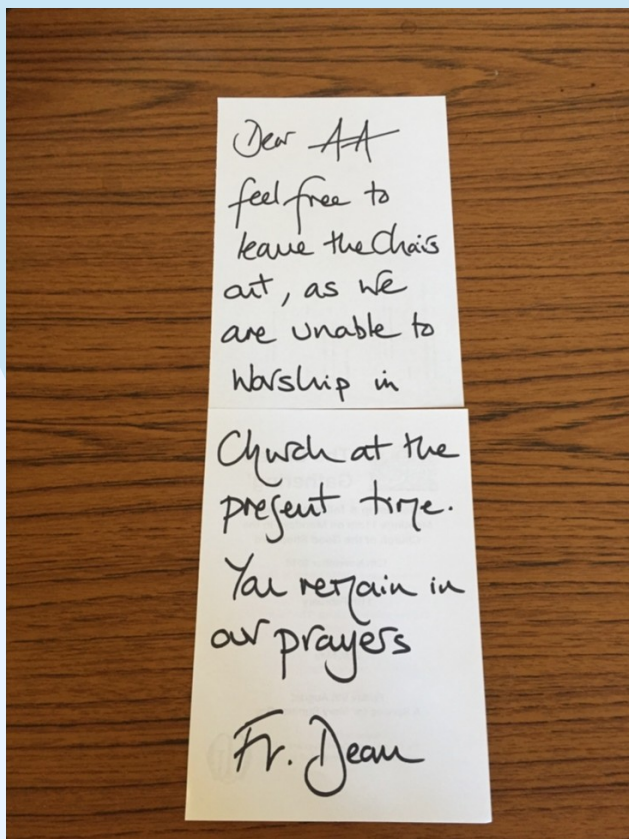
<https://aa-edinburgh.org.uk/online-meetings/>





We had to discontinue our face to face meetings in March as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I made a final visit to the Church on March 20th to pick up some literature.

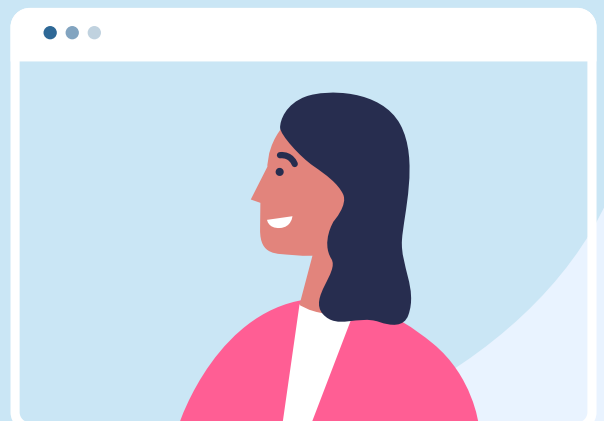
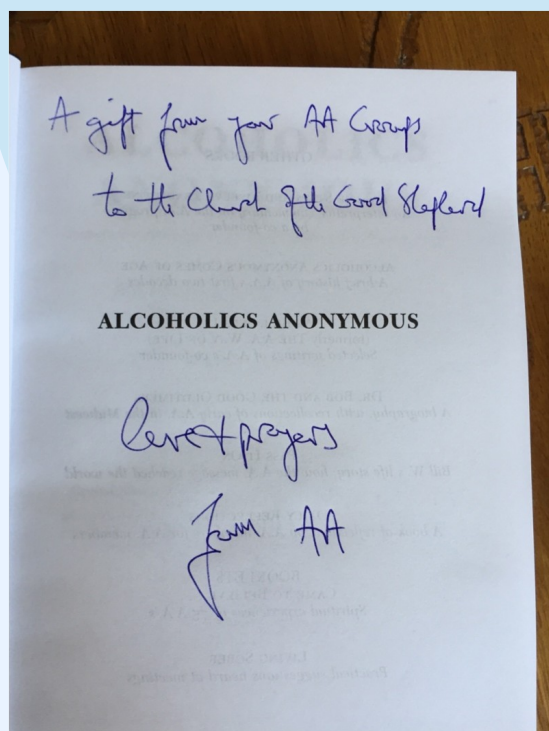
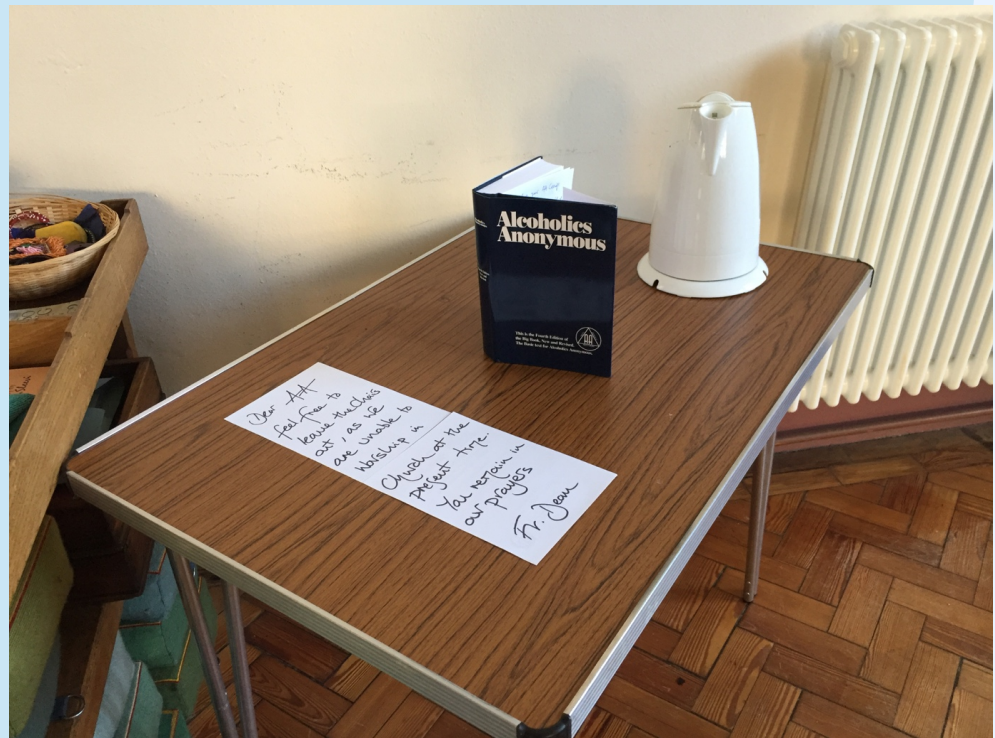
I was surprised by the joy of finding that the Reverend Canon Fr Dean Fostekew had set up the Church as for a meeting in case we were allowed to visit. The chairs and kettle were in place and he had left us this message:



I wondered what we could do to respond. I sat quietly with the candle lit and an intuitive thought came.

I inscribed a copy of our Big Book and left it on the table alongside his note.

Graham N





Pass It On – St John's Church (Friday)

All over Britain utterance of disbelief rang around the rooms of alcoholics anonymous. Something unimaginable had come to challenge us! Lockdown was declared on Monday 23/03/20

Church basements, community rooms, hospital chapels and prison halls locked their doors! In accordance with government guidelines.

Alcoholics swung into action, phone calls, twitter, emails up and down the country. A new word became the norm; zoom! Some were keen! Others not so. How to carry the message? As in tradition five.

Within hours the wheels began turning, Links sent out to members; hosts were born.

Screens lit up in houses, flats, prison cells, bedsits. Virtual meetings had come to life; our fellowship is safe!

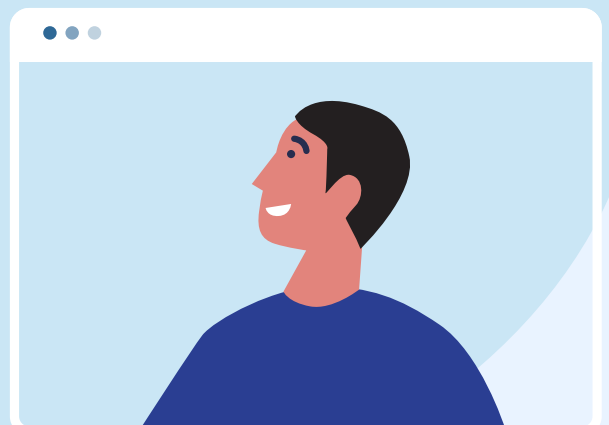
Not every alcoholic joined the growing trend, some without access to internet, or maybe lack of technology, or worse still homeless!

Holding their breath! Sharing on the phone, walking in the park, two-meters apart.

March pushed into April... May, June!

Late July AA received the call from Scottish government. It's official live meetings are deemed essential and can reopen

Guidelines put in place, masks, sanitizer, track and trace -- limited numbers!



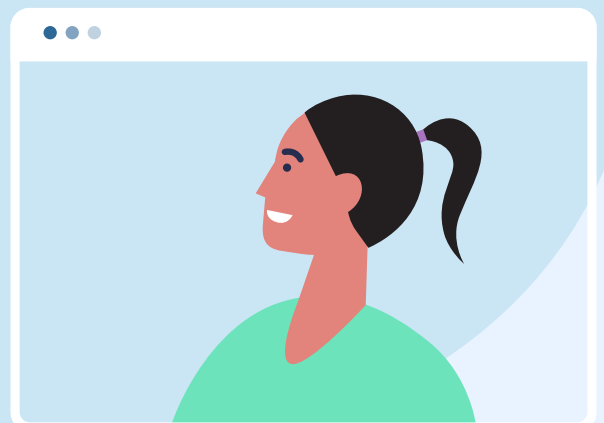
Conversation from Edinburgh to York. Looking for guidance what should we do. Tradition four came into play! Group members rallied -- cobbled together risk assessment to keep everyone safe.

Church doors opened on 21/08/21 after five long months of lockdown.

They came young and old, some to their first ever meeting! One celebrating fifty-years continuous sobriety. A few fell silent, some laughed with glee.

No handshakes -- their eyes said it all.

Sober and grateful ADAAT!





East End Group

All Gayfield meetings were online in the first week of lockdown. The Tuesday morning daily reflections meeting started on the 14th of April 2020. These meetings were a critical lifeline for our dispersed community & were popular even when live meetings became available. Alcoholics attended their first meetings online.

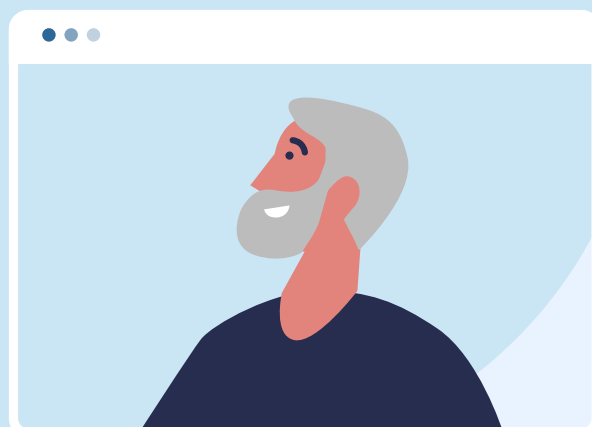
Live meetings started September 2020, when government eased lockdown restrictions. Government policy recognised that it was a good idea for alcoholics to continue to do live recovery through further lockdowns. Gayfield members contacted/lobbied 15 MSP's on a few occasions to get an informed position of our best interpretation of the latest government guidelines. The Christadelphian Church said they were happy for AA to use the room, as they were not going to be using it. Gayfield AA wrote a letter of thanks to Christadelphians in December 2020, as we were very aware that the majority of churches had closed their doors to the public. We were very grateful.

Members at the start of live meetings organised the room to meet government covid protocols - chairs set out at 2m distance, with a capacity of 11 members, track & trace, and members wore masks. There were many newcomers received at the meetings and they were 12 stepped in the usual way.

Meetings ran under capacity for many months, but started to reach capacity in approx February 2021 at some of the meetings. At times members were turned away at the door. Attendance continued to grow at meetings. In May 2021 government policy allowed social distancing to reduce to 1 meter (in counselling/ recovery settings) which enabled room capacity to increase to 22 members in the room.

Broadly throughout the period there was an attitude of co-operation and compliance to the government protocols by the members, with a few exceptions. There were no incidents of transmission of infection throughout as far as we are aware (by 30 05 2021).

Helen





East End Group – Member Comments

It's remarkable how many folks have gotten sober via zoom and not stepped into a physical meeting. It astonishes me that the message can be carried in this way, praise God! It might also be worth noting that the East End zoom meetings have group members who are far afield. This morning we had a member share from Sydney, Australia who is there every week, found a sponsor via that meeting and has now completed the steps and is sponsoring herself a girl in the group. All via zoom!

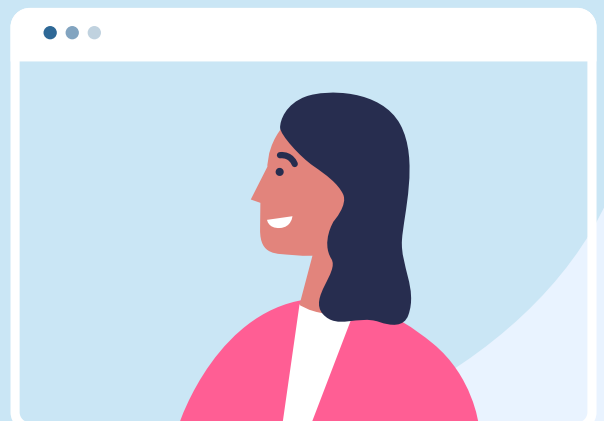
Suzie

We have group members doing service on zoom who don't live in Edinburgh and that we've seen the return of a few faces who used to attend the meeting but moved away.

Jems

I personally do half live, half zoom. I cannot believe the new AA friends and connections I have made through zoom meetings. I personally am still a bit wary of being in a room without ventilation, with a number of people but the 7.15am meetings are small and so I am very grateful to do the smaller meetings live and the others on zoom. It is incredible to have both options available and to meet AA fellows and newcomers from out of town and indeed around the world.

Jan





A Member of 1st Edinburgh

My name's Eileen and I'm an alcoholic, a very grateful member of Edinburgh First zoom Thursday lunchtime meeting.

"May you live in interesting times" is allegedly a Chinese curse. We are certainly living in "interesting times."

However Alcoholics Anonymous has taught me to see my glass as half full rather than half empty (it's a disease of perception) so I will concentrate on the positivity of 2020-21 and say - thank God for AA and for zoom meetings!

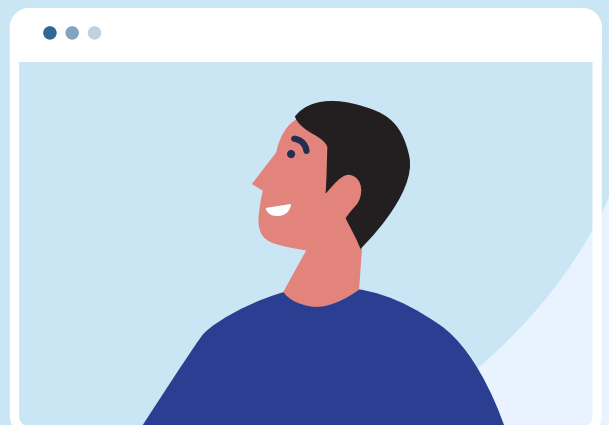
Way back, before the first lockdown, I heard a newscaster stating that Covid 19 would change all our lives beyond recognition... and then I heard AA meetings were closing! Unbelievable!!!

????????????????????... But quick as a flash - our technically talented members provided us with online meetings and patiently demonstrated to the rest of us, how to access them. Zoom meetings sprang up 24/7 all over the planet and for that I am very grateful.

Although initially I was a reluctant participant in what was originally a mystery to me (prior to 2020 I had never heard of zoom), I was persuaded by Mary to co-host Edinburgh 1st zoom. Along with Maggie, then later Avril we had the privilege of opening the virtual doors to members world wide. We have made new AA friends from all over the globe and it has been truly amazing!

Anyone wishing to join us is very, very welcome. Best wishes to you all on the road of happy destiny.

Take care and God bless.

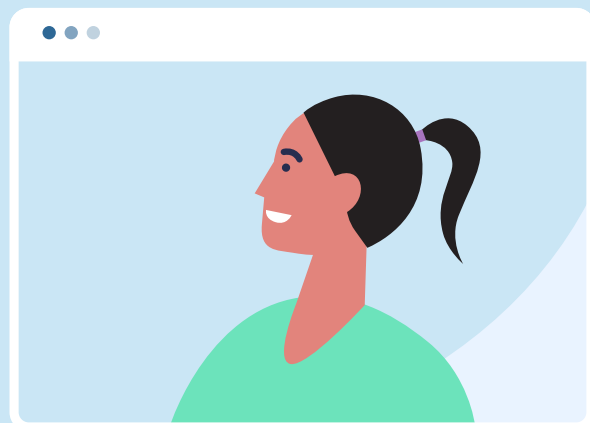


Murrayfield Wednesday Step Meeting

The Murrayfield Step meeting was opened in October 2019. When the pandemic struck the UK we had been going for less than six months. It became clear in early March that the Church was going to be forced to close. We consulted with our sister Murrayfield 11th Step Prayer and Meditation group. Both Group Consciences realised the critical need for continuing access to the meetings. Almost none of us had heard of Zoom but we took a leap of faith and got ourselves a Zoom account, shared by both groups, and subsequently by our new Murrayfield Church of the Good Shepherd Big Book at Bedtime group.

Through good fellowship, active service and our innate unity we were able to host our first online meeting within days of lockdown. We managed to get this up and running such that we didn't miss a meeting. In doing this the GC's were quite clear that we would run our online meetings as near to the format of our face to face meetings as possible. We have kept the traditions and our primary purpose in the forefront of our planning and delivery of the meetings throughout. We have had to make one major practical change. Very early on it was clear that a fifteen minute silent meditation was far too long and we have curtailed this to 5 minutes.

In the almost fifteen months we have run the meeting online our group has grown in numbers, in strength and spiritually. We have seen many newcomers come and, crucially, stay. Our GC now numbers 17 fellows ranging from several days to months, to many years. We have a steady attendance of around 30 folk every week and both home group members and regular visitors from around Scotland, the UK and across the world. Those of us accustomed to the physical meetings have missed many things: the standing at the door to welcome folk; the tea and coffee and biscuits and cakes; the hugs; the banners (squint or straight lol); the changing light (and temperature) through the seasons; the group meditation with the lights dimmed and the wee candle flickering in the midst of the circle.



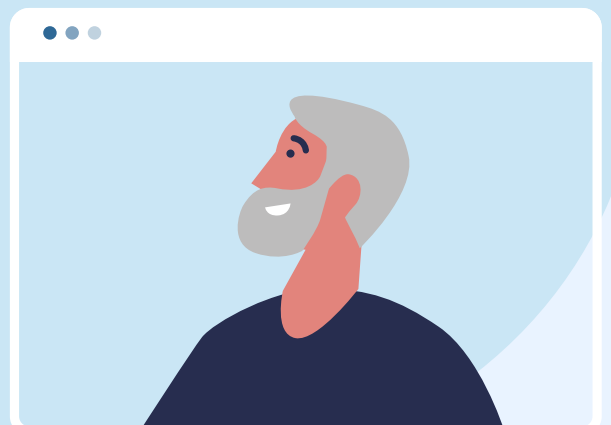
Those of us who have joined the group in lockdown still have these wonderful experiences in store when we return to the Church.

Yet we have all continued to experience the unconditional love which we knew in the physical setting of the meeting in the Church and have seen and felt the Twelve Step programme of Alcoholics Anonymous working through the meetings, through the home group WhatsApp group, and through sponsorship conducted, by necessity, online and with relatively limited face to face contact. We have seen many alcoholics get sober, stay sober and get well online.

We have yet to decide the exact nature of our future face to face meetings. We do know that for many of us attendance at some online meetings will continue. Our sister Big Book at Bedtime meeting was started online with the aim of staying online long term, and that is great to know. It has been a most interesting and challenging year and none of us could have envisaged where we would be today. Or maybe our fellow AA's did just that when they wrote this in 2001!

"While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.'s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."

Alcoholics Anonymous
Foreword to 4th Edition page xxiv





Friday Night Recovery Group St Catherine's Convent

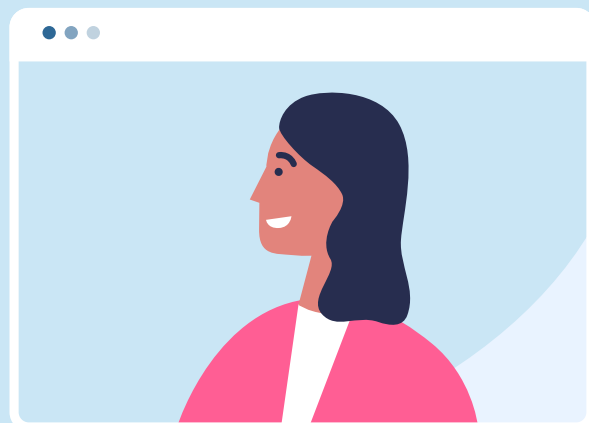
The writing was on the wall, society was going to change and probably not for the better. Covid 19 was spreading like wildfire, taking many lives in its wake. Since it first started in 1935 Alcoholics Anonymous has seen many unimaginable societal and technological changes in its time, including a world war, but AA has survived and grown stronger throughout the years. And it would survive this.

Lock down hit Scotland and on 20 March 2020 St Catherine's Convent Friday Night Recovery Group held its last in-person meeting for that year. Recovery makes us resilient and resourceful and so it was, with that can do spirit, that the group held its first Zoom meeting on 3rd April 2020, having missed only one meeting in the interim.

Incredibly, our group was up and running again in such a short timescale, ready to help the still suffering alcoholic. As word spread that Zoom meetings were being held all over the world, we had members joining us from the USA, Ireland, Iceland, Spain and England! Quite a few members who regularly attended our meetings but who had moved away were able to come back and be a part of our group again. We had some wonderful shares from former members who now attended regularly from across the world. It is an ill wind.....

Time passed and the vaccines worked. Many lives were saved and throughout this crisis AA was there for those of us who needed it. On Friday 18th June 2021 was an historical day when in-person meetings resumed for the first time in 18 months. We also decided to keep the Zoom meetings going separately until the Convent could get us access to the Internet when we will have hybrid meetings. Something to look forward to, one day at a time.

Philip Secretary





Reflection

Meetings survived the move online intact. The power, when I'm present in the moment, remains.

As one alcoholic tells their story the screen melts away. The distractions of home - let's be honest: there are distractions - are muffled. The language of the heart draws my focus like nothing else. We listen. We respond. Honesty always resonates. Zoom arranges the faces of friends and fellows as a gallery of experience, strength and hope. Identification undiminished.

All meetings come to an end. Initially, the anarchy of the serenity prayer - where everyone seemed to use their own idiosyncratic rhythm - got on my nerves. Can we not all do it perfectly, please? Of course we can't.

I've grown to love it.

As I unmute, I'm preparing to put something into the meeting - my voice. Shaped by my past and informed by my present. I wait for the prayer to start; as the word 'God...' ripples across my eardrum I raise my voice. I catch up in the pause before 'grant...'. I add my voice, with my cadence and pronunciation and emphasis.

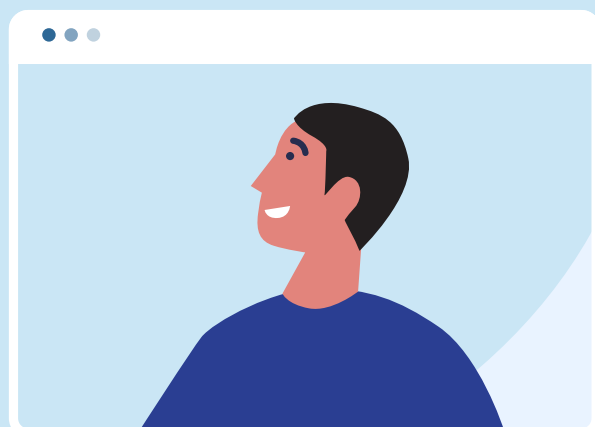
And so does everyone else. The same but different. Our words overlap and tumble into one another. Our voices blend; fellowship manifested in sound.

It turns out it is the perfect way to end a meeting.

A few seconds that capture the essence of recovery in AA. A few seconds that show we all come together to make the whole; that we use the same words as the thousands who came before us but we each bring our own experiences to bear on them - and that makes these words live; powerful and life-changing.

It shows we cannot do it alone.

Steve





A Message From Spain

Here in Nerja, Spain, we have 4 meetings a week. These are usually attended by lots of visitors which is a pleasure having new faces or visitors who come year after year. When the pandemic struck apart from the country disallowing travellers, residents were to experience very strict lockdown measures. We were not allowed to leave our homes except for essentials. The police patrols were evident and we were stopped by them asking where we were going and even on the way home, folks were asked to show their receipts or proof of doctor visits etc. That was bad enough, but what to do about meetings for alcoholics - our lifeline?

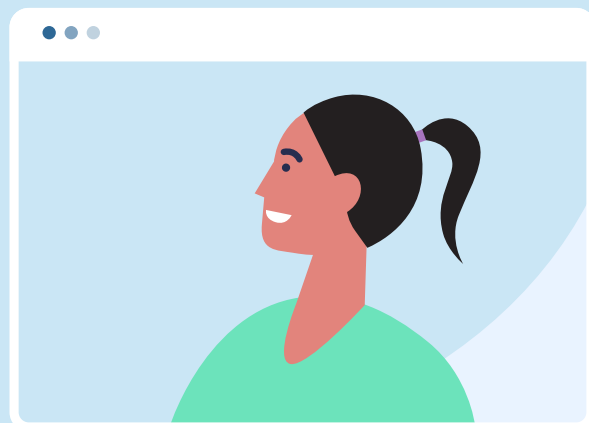
Our phones buzzed, rang, played tunes till eventually one of our members suggested setting up Zoom meetings. Some of us had used zoom before or at least had heard of it. So with Nick's technical wizardry, we opened up online! I was the guinea pig and was pretty stressed out, however, Nick was there as back-up. The first one went fairly smoothly, much to our surprise, a year and a bit later we still have zoom but now we have face to face meetings though, of course, we miss our visitors very much(I believe they miss us too).

Personally, I enjoy Zoom as much as face to face meetings. Friends from all over the world meet up online and new friends and relationships have begun.

I particularly love being part of the Friday night group at St Catherine's. It used to be my home group and I opened up there for a while. Zoom has allowed us to come together, meet new and old friends and hey! My computer skills have improved, I've learned more about AA by zooming in to meetings all over the world and have been welcomed and greeted as an old friend.

I feel sad for those who haven't got to grips with the online meetings for one reason or another but face to face is opening up. St Catherine's Gp Con agreed to try hybrid meetings, for that I am very grateful, the best of both worlds in my humble opinion!

Happy Zooming! Anna



EDINBURGH AND MIDLOTHIAN INTERGROUP

For further AA Edinburgh information:
aa-edinburgh.org.uk

