



A BITE OF RECOVERY

*Behaviour

*Information

*Thoughts

*Emotions

POWER OF THE PAUSE

Learning How To Say No

From my earliest memories, I don't ever remember being able to, or wanting to say no to anyone - always feeling this need to make everyone feel good. Looking back, I was a happy child who got confused or worried if I sensed someone wasn't feeling the same. Since it's impossible to make everyone happy, I realize now that I built in myself a perceived unworthiness or failure to succeed at a very early age.

As a child, young adult, and on into later years, I have always felt invisible unless I fortified my belief of being worthy by doing for others. My hand would shoot up like a rocket whenever anyone asked for volunteers. Pick me, Pick me!! And once again, I would have a reason to exist.

At one of my jobs working in a school in Saskatoon in the 80's, I was being teased at a staff meeting that I didn't know how to say "no". My brand new school principal of two months said, "Sure she does. She just always adds the word "problem" right after it!"

I am an extreme extrovert who has always hidden her insecurities behind an air of false confidence and a smile. It was only when I was alone that I acknowledged my insecurity and dealt with it by stuffing it down with food. I thank God every day for finding the fellowship and support of OA when I first walked through the doors in May of 1995.

I came in looking for a solution to stop eating compulsively and discovered, over these last few years, so many gifts I never envisioned - the greatest one being - that I am not junk or invisible. A loving member gently told me, "If you believe God does not make junk, how can you think you are since you're one of his?" That was my first step to learning to see myself as worthy.

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Welcome to the Winter 2022 issue!

Thank you for picking up the winter issue of A B.I.T.E. of Recovery Newsletter! This issue, we had a number of entries from the Fellowship, which we are grateful for and excited to share!

As we head into the season of celebration, we wanted to highlight the power of the pause. You will find articles discussing personal experiences with setting boundaries, saying no and deciphering what is ours to control and what we must let go of. We hope you find them useful during this season of recovery and take pause often during your recovery journey.

"As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and ask for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day 'Thy will be done.'" (AA Big Book, 4th Edition, p. 87).

If you have any suggestions for upcoming topics, articles, or would like to join the newsletter working group, please email us at: abiteofrecoverynewsletter@gmail.com

One of the things being in program has taught me is that it's necessary to allow everyone to have a voice – and that included in volunteering to serve. My first sponsor laid the groundwork for me to learn to have some boundaries by reminding me to always take a breath and pause before reacting or responding. This allowed others the opportunity to share the load by having time to volunteer instead of being cut off at the pass by my instant response.

Over the last few years, as I've continued to grow spiritually in this program, I have also had to learn to recognize my own boundaries and limitations - and that included learning how to say "no" in a way that I could be comfortable with, without wanting to eat over it afterwards. Now when asked to take on a task, I remember my first sponsor and take a breath, pause for a moment, and then respond with other words such as:

- Thank you for thinking of me. Please let me get back to you after I've had time to think about whether I have enough time available to do the job you deserve.
- I'm sorry, I have too much on my plate and don't think I can do the best job for you as I don't have enough time.

I've found the key to success for me in finding my boundaries is to first appreciate that the person has seen something in me that they find positive by asking for my help and then acknowledging that by thanking them. I have also found it helpful to say, "I can't help you right now because of my schedule, but please don't stop asking me in the future."

I am so grateful to this OA program and the Fellowship who have taught me to honour my feelings, personal needs and time in order to live my life in the healthiest way I can, spiritually, physically and mentally.

- Pauline K., a grateful member of OA

A Prayer To Keep God First This New Year

Dear God, Thank you that you make all things new.

Thank you for all that you've allowed into our lives this past year, the good along with the hard things, which have reminded us how much we need you and rely on your presence filling us every single day.

We pray for your Spirit to lead us each step of this New Year. We ask that you will guide our decisions and turn our hearts to deeply desire you above all else.

We ask that you will open doors needing to be opened and close the ones needing to be shut tight. We ask that you would help us release our grip on the things to which you've said "no," "not yet," or "wait."

We ask for help to pursue you first, above every dream and desire you've put within our hearts.



To my Disease:

You slam me to the ground when I am just standing there.
You come up from behind me, grab me by the neck,
Start strangling me and throw me with absolutely no effort,
No remorse, no thought of me.....to the ground.
And here I look up surprised and questioning,
Questioning this entity that I cannot beat....Cannot beat.
But...my God can. So today, I will ask my God, my
Higher Power, to help me truly surrender my will so that
He can beat you. And, I will give you to my God.

Caroline S. (North Carolina)

Tools of the Program – Anonymity

Somehow, although it is listed, I found it difficult to understand how anonymity was a tool of recovery in the OA program. It was clear to me that it was a principle and I was very familiar with this principle from my work, where confidentiality is important and constantly stressed. *Of course*, I would not discuss what others had said, never mind put a name to those words! However, with more thought I see anonymity as a way of practising healthy humility.

Confidentiality not only respects other peoples' privacy but it also discourages gossip. For me, gossip starts with the urge to mentally judge and compare how "well" others are living their lives compared to me. By working my Steps 4 and 5, I had to recognize this self-seeking behaviour inside of me. Even if I don't use specific names or if I use a preamble like "I don't mean to criticize...." or "she can't help it, but....", sharing these thoughts is a way that I am comparing and ranking people. I know that I have been guilty of observing something negative about someone else to falsely bolster my own sense of worth. ("I may have problems but they aren't as bad as so and so's!") Likewise, I can couch feelings of envy about others' intelligence, talents, clothes, jobs, homes and looks in words of admiration. Practising anonymity helps me examine my motives when I discuss others as well as to embrace the humility that I am neither better nor worse than anyone else.

Anonymity ensures that nobody is a leader or on a higher level than anyone else in the organization. Because of this, my experience in recovery is as

valid as all other members and vice versa. That fact encourages me to listen to all members without judgement nor the need to "fix" them when they tell their story. By practising this in meetings, where no cross talk is allowed, I am learning a valuable skill that can be applied to all the difficulties that I may have with any of the relationships in my life. No longer do I need to be the "know-it-all" nor the follower of some charismatic leader. I am opening my mind and heart to my true values and higher power and accepting that others have the freedom and right to do the same, even if they are very different from mine. This openness is what allows all of us to grow and learn from each others' journeys.

Because there are no leaders, I have learned to take some of the share of responsibility for the health of OA as a whole. I cannot expect someone else to do all the service, or make all of the suggestions. But I need to balance this with not being power hungry and controlling. I also must be responsible for allowing other, differing opinions to be voiced and considered and accepting that sometimes things won't go my way.

The tool of anonymity constantly reminds me to practise non-judgemental respect for all other members, which in turn, can be generalized to myself and all the other people in my life. It is only through this clarity in my relationships with others that I can still the desire to numb myself with excess food.

- With gratitude, Cristabel



P A U S E

Postpone

Action

Until

Serenity

Emerges



Pause and Rewind

Recently, my brother asked if I could help trigger memories of our difficult childhood, so I repeated some phrases that were used derisively toward us. It made me think about how far I've come with those same words—some I even use now when talking to myself, but in a supportive tone instead of a mean one.

I thought about the other triggers I've had to work through. It wasn't until I'd been in OA for a while that I realized I had never talked to my mom without eating bread afterward to soothe me. I'd have the bread bag out with my hand in it, anticipating the end of the conversation so there'd be no delay between the last word and me stuffing down the hurts that she'd just handed out. Mom could trigger me into addictive behavior faster than any other human being.

I asked the Spirit and my sponsor for help. First, I had to recognize and own my response. Then, I questioned why I kept talking every week to someone who was so mean. Finally, I realized that I deserved not to eat over her. Over time, I observed that when I was abstinent and had made a spiritual connection that day, I was much more likely to not be triggered. Eureka! I began to see I had a choice about how I responded to Mom chats and realized that I could call less often and call or answer only when I felt spiritually fit. I also started saying "Ouch!" when she was mean, which shortened our conversations considerably since she didn't like me pointing that out.

Some triggers are much more subtle, but when I hear my head starting to fantasize about food, I pause and rewind to see what just happened that made me think I'd need food for comfort. My husband's swearing throws me into fight or flight, even when it has nothing to do with me. Having my voice ignored in a decision that impacts me is a big trigger. And sometimes, it's as simple as hearing or reading a phrase from my abusive childhood. It's getting an email from my sister who has a hard time "seeing" me and makes up what she doesn't know. Or, it's one of the mean faces my brother wears when he's about to pick on a child the way he used to pick on me. (Now, I tell him I see it and that he doesn't need to act out, which usually stops him.)

Being able to pause and rewind has saved my abstinence. Asking the Spirit for help in that pause has given me the space to investigate what is going on. It's not that I haven't made questionable food choices at times or overfilled my one-plate meal; it is that I continue to improve and amend to the fullest degree the life I am living by continually working the Steps, Traditions, Principles, and Tools. I'm so grateful for my recovery and the sanity it has brought to my life!

— *Anonymous*

© Overeaters Anonymous, Lifeline Article, Originally posted online, October 1, 2020

Conversations with two members

(Please enjoy our conversation with two of our members, Cheryl D. and Emmett R., as they share their recovery journey.)

Cheryl: I joined OA on Monday of the May long weekend, 2013. I count my abstinence from June 3 of that year, so I have now been abstinent for 9 years and 6 months.

Shortly after walking into the rooms, I found a sponsor and began working the Steps with her. I worked them steadily but became stuck at Steps 8/9. We then reviewed what I had done so far, and I revealed I had been holding something back. I had not been searching and fearless in my Step 4 inventory. Once I finally was honest and gave away what I had been holding on to, I completed the next Steps and discovered that the promises really do come true before we are halfway through Step 9!

OA is an important aspect of my life now and I cannot imagine not attending meetings, working Steps 10-12 daily, or maintaining a close relationship with my Higher Power (who I choose to call God). That relationship is the most important thing in my life and from that connection flows all the other important relationships God has given to me, as well as my abstinence and recovery.

Emmett: Boundaries were not modelled in my alcoholic home with my codependent family members, not around consumption of substances or within relationships with one another. I come from a history of childhood sexual abuse that taught me that my body was not mine. The food was always there as something safe.

The butter I would sneak from the fridge and eat in sticks was boundless because no one was there to stop me from my hidden joy. The cycle of abuse continued until my 30th birthday, in part because I did not know I could set limits to keep myself safe. Trauma increased the binges, pizza and beer in attempts to numb out the pain I

couldn't face. The starving would then commence as a form of sick balance. I did not take care of my body because I resented it for bringing me the negative attention of men. I hid my feelings and myself away in isolation with the safety net of food among other things.

Now in OA, I'm on Step 6 and 44 days abstinent from certain foods and food behaviours. I pray to my God to remove the obsession I'm having around trigger foods and ask for rigorous honesty around my behaviours when it comes to food.

1. How are you learning to set boundaries? And what challenges are you having?

Cheryl: I am learning to set boundaries but very slowly! I struggle with this a great deal. I strive to be honest with people about what I am able to do, what I would like to do (or not!), what I can reasonably do in the time given, and what I cannot do at this point at all.

I have learnt through program that I am a people-pleaser and my main defect of character is self-seeking behaviour. I need to discern when approached to do something whether it is something I feel I am being called to do by my Higher Power, or if I simply want to do something so others will like or affirm me.

I constantly need the guidance of not only God, but those I love as they are often able to recognize when I am taking on too much and they help me to see what I can let go and what is important for me to do, as service to others.

Emmett: I pray to make amends to my body every morning through positive thoughts, nutrition, movement, boundaries and rest. A food plan, weighing and measuring foods are helpful boundaries that can keep me honest. I know even though it is still hard, I do not need to explain my NO to anyone because I know it's what's best between me and my God. When my character defects pop up when dealing with those around

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me, I keep my mouth shut and pray. I try my best not to make the situation worse by slipping or stepping on the toes of others.

2. How do you take a pause?

Cheryl: I pray and I breathe.

Program has taught me the importance of prayer and it has now replaced eating and food thoughts as my first go-to when stressed - for the most part! I still sometimes get food thoughts when I am very overwhelmed and this is an indication to me that I am not in fit spiritual condition and have let slide that part of my program.

I sometimes, too, take a pause by spending time with those I love or chatting with those closest to me or doing something silly like a snowball fight or listening to some comedy. I have to be careful, though, because some things that I used to consider relaxing can be rabbit holes of compulsion - like Internet usage, television programs, computer games. They begin as relaxing but then become compulsive and obsessive.

Lately, I have been taking part in a spiritual program based in my faith tradition and this has greatly allowed me to deepen my spiritual aspect of my OA program.

Emmett: The line I find myself repeating throughout the day is from the St. Francis prayer - God may I seek to understand than to be understood, to love than to be loved. This can get me to pause long enough to get out of self pity and hopefully away from the food or having to make amends.

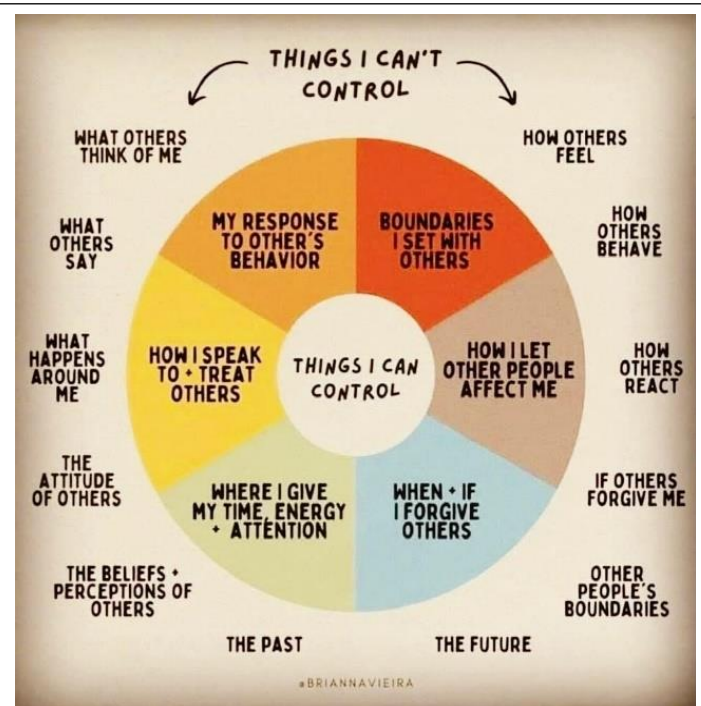


3. How do you discern what is in your control/how do you let go?

Cheryl: *How do you let go* - When I begin to feel overwhelmed on a daily basis, I know I need to look at what I am spending my time on, and what changes I can make. As I stated above, sometimes I do not recognize this myself, and rely on God and others who love me to point this out. Sometimes, I need to let go of commitments I thought I needed to continue; other times I need to let go of my unrealistic expectations as to HOW I carry out commitments or obligations. I do NOT need to be perfect or do things in a perfect way - no matter what the disease tells me!

What is in my control - I have learnt in program that everything outside of me is out of my control. I can only control things like my own actions and reactions.

Emmett: A prayer I use for releasing my desire to control others is this version of the serenity prayer - God grant me the serenity to accept the people, places and things I cannot control. The courage to change the one I can and the wisdom to know that one is me.





The Power of Pause

When someone says, “Hey how’s it going?” in passing, do you take a moment to think about your response? Or by way of verbal muscle memory do you reply, “Good and you?” Often, you probably respond and keep walking, not even stopping to hear what the person has to say. What if today you took a quick moment to **pause** your life, and to *genuinely respond and actively listen*?

In this new age of fast food, fast cash, social media, and constant connection, humans have certainly become accustomed to instant gratification, and rapid reaction. When something in your life happens that is beyond your control, it can be tempting to react **immediately** because that’s what you’ve become used to. It can become a habit or a pattern to say “yes” to an email quickly to get it out of your inbox, to be snappy with a loved one when they say something you don’t agree with, or even to get angry at yourself quickly when you do something wrong. These immediate reactions separate you from your ability to think ahead, to “*play the full tape through,*” and they don’t account for what may happen as a result of your response.

Your immediate emotions are almost always rooted in frustration, anger, anxiety, sadness, and fear—because these are the emotions that are familiar to those who have suffered from substance use disorder, the ones that the disease feeds on. These are emotions that don’t require much thought or patience, they’re instant, and they’re what you might know best.

In all the moments of your daily life that you spend rushing through, reacting quickly, what if you took just a few of them to pause? What if you

recognized a situation, and took a few seconds to breathe before responding?

Step three offers some of this wisdom

...Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of our higher power as we understood it.

As you turn your life over to something bigger than yourself, your higher power as you understand it, you can accept your inability to control your problems or situations in your life. The only thing you can control in your life is how you react to things. Step three says:

In all times of emotional disturbance or indecision, we can pause, ask for quiet, and in the stillness simply say: “Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.”

Infinite power and spiritual energy lie within the moment between something happening in your life and your active response to it. This includes how you treat others, *and* how you treat yourself. *There* are very few things in your life that require immediate action, and it is healthy and productive to take some time to think about what you might say or do before pressing “play” again.

In recovery, this is how you can work to prevent a return to use. When a problem arises in your life, take your moment of pause and ask your higher power for quiet and understanding, or seek counsel from a sponsor or the collective wisdom of a homegroup. In your life, the power of your pauses protects you from returning to use, from hurting others, and from harming yourself.

As you pause, you are able to step aside and react to things from a place of empowerment, steadiness, and serenity. You’re able to provide thoughtful responses, exercise your personal boundaries, make the best decisions for your recovery, and meet others with understanding and love.

<https://www.fellowshiphall.com/2020/10/the-power-of-pause>

Recovery

I've been recently thinking to write about the positives and negatives of my OA life, since I think local people contributing to this newsletter is a great thing. So here goes and I hope it will help someone and save them a lot of time in receiving their recovery.

Negative Things in my OA Life

It took me years to understand that the bedrock of the 12 steps is actually working the 12 steps! Not rocket science, but I was in OA for many years in two other cities where working the steps wasn't emphasized. A lot of emphasis was on sharing your story in meetings and that was so interesting, but it didn't help me in giving up the compulsive overeating. I did do some step work, but I don't remember getting past Step five. I was not able to give up the food. Moving to Winnipeg, I learned the need to work the steps and one of the greatest things I learned was that after Step 9 the obsession and compulsion would lift.

I was in OA for 11 years and then I left for 12 years and returned seven years ago. Unfortunately, abstinence has taken me a long, long time to receive. I hope this doesn't discourage you, but instead encourages you that the solution is in the steps and not much else.

I had many areas in my life where I needed growth and emotional health and these things perhaps needed to be dealt with before I could give up the food. I was totally emotionally undeveloped before I came into OA and then developed to become an age-appropriate woman and learned so much. Also, I shockingly learned in an OA meeting that I was controlling! From that time on, I've tried with God's help in all things, to give this up and it has been very successful, though it rears its ugly head occasionally.

Perhaps I wasn't understanding or willing to work the steps yet. I didn't have a sponsor and wasn't

ready to deal with my monumental cravings, especially to sugar. Thankfully, my sugar cravings reduced when I stopped drinking drink diet pop on the advice of my doctor and instead had healthy snacks available in the car (for lots of time spent in the car during my sales job.) This is something that was really helpful for me and I hadn't really listened to people talking about the need to give up diet pop before - not good, but that was the way it was. I have a stubborn streak but that has also kept me coming to OA and knowing that I will never leave because I need to be here and working the steps for abstinence from compulsive overeating.

I truly didn't believe I ever could be abstinent for more than a week. I tried and tried and tried, many different things and worked hard but the steps are really the only/main thing that was needed. During the abstinence that I later received I always thought I could go back to eating what I wanted when I got to my goal weight and always thought when we go away for the winters I could eat whatever I wanted because we walk frequently for many kilometres and this had worked in the past. Talk about having a disease!

This year, my disease was worse than ever. We are told that this is a progressive disease and that was very scary and unbelievable, but it is true. I had thought my disease couldn't get any worse.

Positive Things in my OA Life

A huge help was Lawrie C's book on how to work the 12 steps (available at <https://www.oabigbook.info/Big%20Book%20Study%20PPX9%202018.pdf>). it is very clear and easy to understand and tells you exactly what to do. (I truly like to be told what to do, seriously. A character defect of mine has been telling others what to do. I work hard, with God's help, not to do this!) I encourage you to use your sponsor to

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help you work the steps. I have done this and if you are in meetings with me, I would love it if you would email me if you need any help.

Another great thing about OA is that, the first night when I came back 7 years ago, I was determined to get a sponsor because for years I hadn't had one, though they were available. My sponsor is a terrific person and has had a long recovery from compulsive overeating. She has been unbelievably patient with me and I am totally amazed that she didn't fire me long ago.

I love OA meetings and get a lot out of them but mostly being with people who are very like me and understand me and I understand them. I've made really good friends in OA and have met many wonderful people.

Abstinence eluded me much longer than I hope it will ever be for you. That is partially why I am writing this, to save anyone years like I had, struggling hard. Last year for the first time, I received glorious, not difficult at all, abstinence for 3 1/2 months. This was unbelievable, as I had tried and tried for so very long. I knew after Step 9 there is a definite promise that the obsession and compulsion will lift if we continue to work the program, but I truly didn't think it would happen to me - but it did and it will happen to you too!

Now I have been abstinent for 5 weeks and it has mostly not been difficult except a couple of times. I am diligently working the program and have an OA accountability partner too! I praise God for the steps, all the OA people who have been a great help to me and for recovery! One day at a time.

- Jacqueline H.

What is BOUNDARY

Be aware

Of what is

Unacceptable and

Normalize saying no.

Do what is best for you

And know that it's not your

Responsibility to sacrifice

Yourself for others.

- <https://www.ourmindfullife.com/>



Would you like to contribute service to the newsletter?

If you would like to include an article, assist in creating, or give service in another way to our newsletter, please reach out to abiteofrecoverynewsletter@gmail.com.

Any service is appreciated!

The first meeting in OA was held on January 19th, 1960, by founder, Rozanne S.

Help Us Celebrate The 63rd Birthday of Overeaters Anonymous!!

“Remembering Our Beginning”

<https://cii.oaregion4.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Help-us-Celebrate-63-years-of-Overeaters-Anonymous-final-Flyer-3.pdf>

Click the link below to Join Birthday Party via zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86194491813?pwd=U0RhNnViTUxYFb003dzVBandTN2tWUT09>

Meeting ID: 861 9449 1813 Passcode: 422930

January 21, 2023, 10:30 am – 1:00 pm CST

SUNDAY 11 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcEOrWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075

Password: WpgF2F

MONDAY 7:00 PM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVIJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338 / Password: recover

ADDRESS: GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 891 ST. MARY'S RD., NEAR FERMOR

HYBRID MEETING, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT

TUESDAY, 7:30 – 8:30 pm

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86586967187?pwd=Q0pkRjZobzFGay9PQnhGbytsbXNDQT09>

Meeting ID: 865 8696 7187 / Password: Freedom

ADDRESS: PRAIRIE UNITED CHURCH – 207 THOMPSON DRIVE IN ST. JAMES JUST OFF PORTAGE AVENUE
BEHIND UNDERDOGS RESTAURANT

HYBRID MEETING, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT

WEDNESDAY 7:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86213444550?pwd=UWWhRmZsVHF0d0dadkM0bXdaUGg2dz09>

Meeting ID: 862 1344 4550 / Password: 279813

THURSDAY 7:00 PM F2F Meeting on Zoom

Topic: Thursday, 7:00 pm - Heart of Canada Zoom Meeting's Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82629926338?pwd=LzcrSzk0U05jT0o2MW1CL3pKVIJ3UT09>

Meeting ID: 826 2992 6338 / Password: recover

ADDRESS: GOOD NEWS FELLOWSHIP CHURCH, 891 ST. MARY'S RD., NEAR FERMOR

HYBRID MEETING, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT

SATURDAY 10:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcEOrWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075 / Password: WpgF2F

ADDRESS: JOHN BLACK MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH, 898 HENDERSON HIGHWAY AT ROBERTA.

(PLEASE NOTE THAT ON THE FIRST SATURDAY ONLY OF EVERY MONTH, THIS MEETING WILL RESUME AS A HYBRID MEETING, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT.

THE OTHER WEEKS of the month, IT WILL ONLY BE A ZOOM MEETING.

