



A BITE OF RECOVERY

*Behaviour

*Information

*Thoughts

*Emotions

EMOTIONAL SOBRIETY



The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety (Synopsis of Bill W's Grapevine Article, 1958)

Emotional Sobriety was a concept that Bill W of Alcoholics Anonymous wrote about in The Grapevine in 1958. He described it as “real maturity and balance (which is to say, humility) in our relations with ourselves, with our fellows and with God.”

He felt that the foundational problem that caused his recurring depressions, despite being recovered through the 12 steps, was dependency. “My basic flaw had always been dependence - almost absolute dependence - on people or circumstances to supply me with prestige, security, and the like.

Failing to get these things according to my perfectionist dreams and specifications, I had fought for them. And when defeat came, so did my depression.” He goes on to say that dependency means a “demand for the possession and control of the people and the conditions surrounding me.”

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Welcome!

Thank you for picking up the Summer issue of **A Bite of Recovery Newsletter!** Issues will be released quarterly, each focusing on a small “B.I.T.E.” of recovery: Behaviour, Information, Thoughts, Emotions.

We hope to highlight upcoming events, supports for newcomers, member stories and program tools. 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.

- The Newsletter Committee

“We are in the business of right action, not results” is a message I have often heard in OA meetings. This seems to be foundational to understanding how to attain emotional sobriety.

Ultimately, only through the maintenance of our emotional and spiritual health and even keel can we maintain physical reprieve from compulsive overeating and food behaviours.

We hope this issue deepens your resolve to action and release of unrealistic demands, as we explore ideas about emotional sobriety!

Only when he could fully separate his positive actions from the expectation of getting something in return could he hope to achieve full emotional maturity.

“Reinforced by what Grace I could secure in prayer, I found I had to exert every ounce of will and action to cut off these faulty emotional dependencies upon people, upon AA, indeed, upon any set of circumstances whatsoever. Then only could I be free to love as [Saint] Francis had. Emotional and instinctual satisfactions, I saw, were really the extra dividends of having love, offering love, and expressing a love appropriate to each relation of life”

His prescription for achieving this was as follows:

“If we examine every disturbance we have, great or small, we will find at the root of it some unhealthy dependency and its consequent unhealthy demand. Let us, with God's help, continually surrender these hobbling demands. Then we can be set free to live and love; we may then be able to Twelfth Step ourselves and others into emotional sobriety.”

For the full text, see

<https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/the-next-frontier-emotional-sobriety/>

- Anonymous

What Emotional Sobriety Means For Me

I read that “Emotional Sobriety is about freeing yourself from being controlled by your emotional State.”

What this means to me is that no matter what state I might be in emotionally, I will be able to handle myself without abusing food, myself, or other people. I was guilty of all of those things while still in my addiction and during the early years of my recovery.

I became aware of the term “emotional sobriety” sometime during my first 10 years in OA. An AA speaker, Tom B, shared his story and how Bill W wrote about his ongoing challenges after he stopped drinking, specifically about his struggle with depression.

Acceptance Prayer

And acceptance is the answer to all my problems today. When I am disturbed, it is because I find some person, place, thing, or situation—some fact of my life—unacceptable to me, and I can find no serenity until I accept that person, place, thing, or situation as being exactly the way it is supposed to be at this moment.

Nothing, absolutely nothing happens in God's world by mistake. Until I could accept my compulsive overeating, I could not stay abstinent; unless I accept life completely on life's terms, I cannot be happy. I need to concentrate not so much on what needs to be changed in the world as on what needs to be changed in me and in my attitude.

- AA Big Book, 4th edition, page 417



Just because we stop acting out our addiction does not mean the mindsets and habits stop. I can be in a state of not abusing food but still acting out all my behaviours and still feeling awful about it ... eventually leading me back to food.

To explain what it looks like in my life, I would like to share an example of a day this past week.

A very good friend of mine is moving to another province. She asked me to help get some large items off to the recycling and landfill depot. Then

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we planned to meet in a restaurant in the mall for a good-bye lunch.

My son, who was recently diagnosed with ADHD, was awesome at helping with the moving, but had a hard time sitting in the restaurant. My son does not often feel hungry, but when he does, it has already become an extreme state. He also has sensory issues around food, so does not like many foods, and is very specific about how they are prepared.

When he saw that the food he ordered was not to his specification, he shutdown. He became nonverbal, unresponsive and made the decision to head straight back to the car. He is 10 years old, so I can't just pick him up and manage him like I did when he was a toddler.

Because of his abrupt response, I wasn't able to say a proper goodbye to my friend. I was so angry with him. Angry because of his atypical brain, his impulsive response, the fact that he could not register how important this was to me and the fact that this was the experience my friend was going to be left with (poorly behaved child and an abbreviated see-ya).

Despite my agitated state, I was able to respond in a calm voice. I was able to see that all the ruckus of the morning followed by an expectation to sit quietly in a restaurant was asking too much of him. I was able to hold him accountable for his actions, but not belittle him. I didn't shame

myself or him for what transpired. I didn't look for food to soothe me, I let myself have a good cry instead.

I wish I could say that I maintain emotional sobriety every day, but I don't. Sometimes I lash out in anger, drive too fast because I am running late, or shame myself when I make a mistake. The point is I am constantly working to improve.

My emotional sobriety plays a large part in my ability to abstain from compulsive eating. Page 52 of the Big Book talks about how we could not control our emotional natures, we were depressed, full of fear and felt useless. When I do the steps and use the tools I can clearly see how I am contributing to my own downfall. From there, I am brought to awareness that I can take opposite actions.

The first thing I had to do was accept that I was going to feel emotions. Next I had to be willing to put uncomfortable feelings, reactions and behaviours on inventories or into daily prayers so I could learn how to navigate them in a healthy way. I pray, meditate, discuss program and feelings with other recovery-minded people, write, listen to recovered OA and AA speakers and finally, I give myself a little bit of grace to be human.

I wish you the same grace and recovery.

Thank you.

- Christina H.

CONVERSATIONS WITH TWO MEMBERS

(Please enjoy our conversation with two of our members – first with a member who chooses to remain anonymous, and second with a newer member, AH – as they share how they use the program to deal with their emotional sobriety.)

1) Tell us a little bit about your OA journey.

Anonymous: I joined OA in April of 2020, one month after my mother passed away and after a week-long binge with no end in sight. I had always binged during periods of stress and as soon as circumstances settled down, I would go back to my usual eating habits...compulsively eating in addition to my regular meals but only

when travelling. I did not overeat when I was at home, primarily because I did not want to overeat in front of my mother and secondarily, living in a rural area with a long drive to the nearest store made impulsively buying snack food difficult.

AH: I started OA in November 2022 and have had a sponsor for one month now. I feel I am benefiting from both Zoom and in-person meetings and that using the Big Book, OA and AA 12 and 12 literature are all helpful. My whole life, my eating has been unmanageable in terms

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of no schedule or routine and no concept of a healthy plan of eating. My first eating changes have been having good portions and being mindful of what I am putting in my body. The magic of the program has been immediate with this and working the steps. Eating this way feels pleasant and like I have good momentum towards a healthy weight. I'm still obsessed with the scale and the fact that it isn't going down fast enough, but I know I'm in the right direction.

2) How has your emotional health (state) been changed since being in OA?

Anonymous: Two pivotal points in my life changed my emotional state: I had a happy childhood, was outgoing and full of adventure until my father tried to have a sexual relationship with me at the age of 11. From then on, I was afraid of people, not trusting anyone and as result told no one about it for 8 years. I no longer made friends easily and my withdrawn state made me a target for bullying. I spent my teens depressed, gaining weight not from overeating, but from inactivity.

One month before I completed university, my mother fell ill and was unable to manage living alone. Life was not turning out as I had hoped. I moved back home and started developing my own business while learning how to be a caregiver. Both were stressful and I had no time for socializing or pursuing any of my interests.

Resentment began to build. Occasional overeating would occur and dieting would ensue. Spare moments were filled with bad memories and I ate more and more. I became a control freak, trying to avoid problems that required time-consuming solutions. Although I didn't recognize it at the time, the disease of compulsive overeating was taking over.

With resentment and fear as my constant companions, the rest of my emotions (sadness, happiness, compassion, hope) rarely surfaced. Joining OA has not only changed my emotional health, but the 12 steps have become a lens through which I see myself and the world around

me. The first three were relatively easy. Step Four was daunting, but I took a leap of faith - knowing the program had helped many. As I worked through that step and the next, the constant plague of negative thoughts and bad memories dissolved. As I continued through to Step Twelve, I was experiencing the freedom and neutrality of the Promises.

I learned things about myself. I learned that there were instances in which I had not contributed to the bad things that happened to me, and other instances in which I did contribute. I was able to recognize that through my fearful state, I allowed problems to continue when addressing them would have nipped them in the bud. And I learned that the longer those problems continued, the resentments associated with them became more intense. Regarding instances in which I was blameless, the sense of injustice and righteous indignation fuelled a deep burning resentment. I learned that it was possible in both situations to separate the injustices from the past from the ensuing resentments by recognizing that in every case, there was some need of mine that was not being met.

This "aha" moment was very powerful. It allowed me to see that other people's behaviour was only a reflection of them and that I need only be concerned with working the program, relying on my Higher Power for guidance and intuition in my relationships with people, work and, of course, food.

AH: I was a bit edgy, for about a month when I first put down the food; I feel my emotions are good now. I realize that I don't have food neutrality, because recent family issues have caused fatigue which resulted in a lapse. But it lasted for less than a day.

I did meditation and attended a meeting, which allowed me to feel OK about myself and just get back on track the next day. I am familiar with the steps from another 12-step program and found they were steadying. Ultimately, I want to develop a good relationship with food.

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3) *When physically abstinent, and not numbing your emotions with excess food or food behaviours, what tools or techniques do you use to deal with those sometimes difficult or strong emotions?*

Anonymous: Physical abstinence gives me clarity and awareness regarding my state of mind. I have found that clearing away resentment has been a powerful tool and that now, older and what I would have called in the past, minor resentments will surface. Something will remind me of instances decades past that I still carried resentment about. I now know that there really is no such thing as a minor resentment.

It will affect me just as much as the sharper and more recent ones if I ignore it. And even with as much clarity and awareness that I feel, there will suddenly be moments of fear regarding things I have forgotten about, or perhaps in my new zest for living, I haven't figured out my limitations and find myself overwhelmed. I find the best way is to do a step 10 on it and turn fears and concerns over to my Higher Power.

This program is one day at a time. How I feel from one moment to the next can be either chaotic or peaceful, depending on how well I adhere to the steps on a daily basis. What I've learned is that the important thing is to let go of the idea that I can control everything. I must always remember that my freedom from compulsive overeating results from working the steps, relying on my Higher Power, sponsoring and meetings.

AH: As mentioned, meditation and meetings help me. Reaching out to other members through text messages has been helpful, too. It feels like putting down the food will help me be more in touch emotionally, because food does serve as a crutch. I'm looking forward to uncovering some of these emotions with my step 4, like the deeper issues are still buried. I feel confident that I can face them, and am looking forward to eventually passing on my recovery to other members. Ultimately, I want to develop a good relationship with food!

UP TO SPEED



I am a compulsive overeater. While not every day of my thirty-nine years in OA has been an abstinent day, for many years now, I've been gratefully recovering and maintaining a healthy weight.

Being a teacher by profession has led me to watch for ways to boil things down to their simplest form. I look for little tricks to help me remember what's most important. For example, I experimented with ways to use my action plan **Tool** early in the morning for success throughout the day. Success, for me, is thinking, speaking, and acting in ways that my Higher Power wills for me.

I use a steno notebook (the kind with a line down the middle of each page). I write the date at the top. On the right side, I write my to-do list; it might include a work schedule, errands, and plans for specific activities. At the bottom of my daily page, I usually include a quotation I like from one of my morning readings. And down the left margin, I write in capital letters **S, P, E, E, D**, which stands for Service, Prayer and meditation, Exercise, Emotional sobriety and Diet (as in "dietary wellness", my plan of eating). These are the basics of my daily recovery.

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Service means I'll look for ways to improve life, even in some small way, for someone else. It may be doing OA service or practicing a patient spirit toward loved ones or performing a random act of kindness toward a stranger. I try to use this idea from OA's *Just for Today* wallet card: "do somebody a good turn, and not get found out." That is a very gratifying form of service.

Prayer and meditation is starting my day with affirmative prayer, naming the qualities of my HP, and stating that these qualities are available for my use this day. For example, I say, "Wise Counselor, I am advised. Patient Teacher, I am learning. Faithful Sustainer, I am enthused."

Exercise is my first "E." When I first started using an abstinent food plan, I was afraid to exercise. I thought it would make me too hungry! Now, I take brisk walks with my dog about six days a week, practice yoga at home three days a week, and even do five days of weight training per week on my doctor's advice. I enjoy the walks and usually do some praying while out in nature. I find yoga relaxing and enjoyable. The weight work is a chore I do not enjoy, but doing it anyway provides an experience of trust. I realize that some effort is most likely good for me.

Emotional sobriety, the second "E," is something Bill W. wrote about regarding his struggle with depression. He wrote about his "faulty emotional dependencies" toward others, and even AA itself, that kept him from realizing full recovery. I practice emotional sobriety when I accept things I can't change, choosing instead to see challenges as medicinal exercises for my healing. I practice a similar idea from *Just for Today*: "I will do at least two things I don't want to do—just for exercise" (for me, that means there is no other payoff). So, I might choose to go to a restaurant my husband prefers and order a vegetable I don't much like. This is the best way I know to break my faulty dependency of trying to arrange reality for my own comfort and pleasure.

Diet, the last letter of SPEED, only means "what I'm planning to eat today." I was certainly on a different kind of diet before I found OA—a disastrous diet. Now, I eat for good health and positive energy. I think about what ingredients I have in the house, what I intend to make for dinner, and write my food plan for the day. There is something about writing down my plan for the day's food that creates in me a desire to eat that way. It also saves me from needing to make food decisions when I'm tired and hungry.

At first, SPEED seemed like an odd word for my recovery plan, but then I remembered the old-fashioned admonition that folks used to use when seeing each other off: "Go with Godspeed." These are my priorities and they allow me to proceed with my Higher Power, serenely through the day. I use this SPEED action plan imperfectly, but I have found it to be a big help. I encourage others to come up with techniques that work for them!

— Linda P., Kansas City, Kansas USA

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Looking for a way to do service? If so, please consider volunteering to be part of the Newsletter Committee or think about submitting an article about your journey of recovery, or artwork, photos, etc. The next issue of *A Bite of Recovery* will be released in the Fall around September 20th and the topic will be "One Day at a Time". Please contact us at: abiteofrecoverynewsletter@gmail.com to volunteer.



Decision Prayer

God, I am faced with indecision and I am unable to determine which course to take. I ask You for inspiration, an intuitive thought, or a decision. God, I pray to be shown what my next step should be. Give me whatever I need to take care of my problems. Especially free me from self-will so that I may be of help to others. What can I do today to help others?

- <https://oamig.org/resources/prayers/>



Items/Links That You May Find Helpful

1. **Emotional Sobriety: The Next Frontier (Workshop Handouts produced by the Sacramento Friends of Bill W)**
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ATzkLxnjNdfC4O6TpzQJiE1mbXvBokmORgi4d_wBh3A/edit
2. **OA World Service – Podcasts and Videos:**
<https://oa.org/podcasts/>
3. **Los Angeles Intergroup Virtual Speakers' Bureau** (Long-time members share their experience, strength and hope) <https://www.oalaig.org/laig-virtual-speakers-bureau/>
4. **YouTube: Lawrie C – Big Book Study, OA Special Focus Recovery From Relapse Meeting and more**
<https://www.youtube.com> (type in Lawrie C in the search field)
5. **Channel Islands Intergroup Podcasts**
<https://oaciig.wordpress.com/podcasts/>
6. **OA – A Vision For You Podcasts**
<https://player.fm/podcasts/overeaters-anonymous-a-vision-for-you>
7. **YouTube: Overeaters Anonymous: There Is A Solution**
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCagvQjq8_meKODNxBEg-UuQ/videos

ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Saturday Meetings are now hybrid. Please join us at John Black United Church at 898 Henderson Hwy & Roberta. Doors open at 10:15.

Thursday Meetings are now ZOOM meetings only.

INTERGROUP is looking for a volunteer to become Vice-Chair of the Executive Committee. Please contact your Intergroup meeting representative for more information.

Brenlee is now the new literature rep for our Intergroup. Thank you Lori for your years of service. Please contact Brenlee at brenlee@trepel.ca. An inventory of items available from intergroup can be found on the OA Heart of Canada web page at <https://oaheartofcanada.ca/current-stock/>

We still need a volunteer to man the OA Hotline for the month of November. Three months abstinence requirement. Please contact Gail at gcantor47@gmail.com to volunteer or if you need further information.

STEPPING TOWARDS RECOVERY

**HEART OF
CANADA
OVEREATERS
ANONYMOUS
2023
CONVENTION**



**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 20: REGISTRATION STARTING AT 6:30 PM,
GUEST SPEAKERS: 7 - 9 PM**
**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21: REGISTRATION STARTING AT 8:30 AM
GUEST SPEAKERS: 9 - 4:45,
FOLLOWED BY OPEN MEETING FROM
5 - 6:00 PM**

LOCATION:

**JOHN BLACK MEMORIAL UNITED CHURCH
898 HENDERSON HIGHWAY AT ROBERTA AVENUE.
WINNIPEG, MANITOBA**

COFFEE/TEA PROVIDED, PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN MUG/TRAVEL CUP

**PLEASE JOIN US TO HEAR OUR TWO GUEST SPEAKERS FROM ALBERTA AS
THEY SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCE, STRENGTH AND HOPE IN THE PROGRAM.**

EARLY REGISTRATION CLOSING OCTOBER 1, 2023.

COST: \$30.00

AFTER OCTOBER 1: COST: \$40.00

**CONTACT: HEARTOFCANADACONVENTION@GMAIL.COM FOR
INFORMATION AND/OR E-TRANSFER PAYMENTS**

**OR THE OA HOTLINE NUMBER FOR WINNIPEG (204-334-9008) AND
LEAVE YOUR CONTACT INFO.**

CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO "OA INTERGROUP".

Emotion Motion

I am a completely different person today than when I came into food recovery in 2011. I think I am different on a cellular level. Why? Because I am no longer absorbed in food thoughts.

My life for decades was directed by whether and what to eat. These thoughts occupied many hours each day! But until I came to OA and found the OA-HOW meeting format, I did not notice or see how much time I spent with food. After finding my OA-HOW meeting, I turned over food every morning, and there was no need to ponder the topic because my food was set for the day. My life opened up. Thank you, Higher Power!

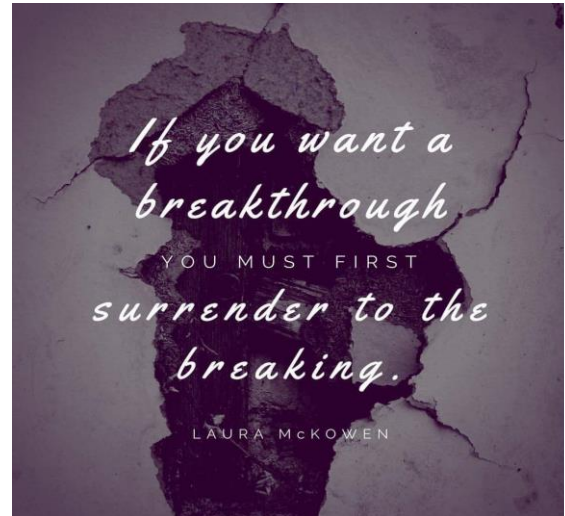
After a time, though, I noticed something: the space that had opened in the absence of food thoughts was becoming filled with negative emotions and thoughts. I was unprepared for this deluge, but my sponsor guided me through the Twelve Steps and the daily practice of emotional sobriety.

I had a solution, but to my dismay, my negative thinking persisted. I realized I must practice the **Tools** daily. I had always deluded myself into thinking I was clear-minded and even-tempered, but through OA and my OA-HOW meeting format, I am changed. I know now that I am very emotional. I see myself as I am, and I address it with God's help.

Today I know emotional sobriety is a gift from God; for me it is the clearest sign of my recovery. It is a state that comes only with persistent footwork and direction from God. My life in OA has made me deeply aware of this truth: when I am on my own I am flooded with spiritual and emotional drunkenness. It is the core of my addiction. I am no more a slave to my disease; God frees me to be clean and sober, spiritually and emotionally, if I take God's direction. It begins with my surrender of my emotions to him, just like my surrender of food. From there, the tools of emotional sobriety center on directions from *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous*, which guide my daily

practice, including self-awareness (Step Ten), prayer (speaking to God) and meditation (silent listening). This is a base that is not optional, so each day I pray for the willingness to do these things.

- Ingrid S., Bronx, New York USA
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Originally posted online, August 1, 2019



Emotional sobriety is not about being free of emotions.

It's about letting go of our need to control.

To accept our imperfections.

To be emotionally balanced.

To take full responsibility for our emotions.

To not blame our emotional responses on other people.

To learn to soothe ourselves rather than react when things don't go our way.

In short, it's about growing up.

And maturing.

Quick List of Meetings in our Intergroup

This list can also be found at the OA Heart of Canada webpage:

<https://www.oaheartofcanada.ca>

SUNDAY 11 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcE0rWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075/Password: WpgF2F

MONDAY 7:00 PM F2F Meeting on Zoom AND in-person

<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

TUESDAY, 7:30 – 8:30 pm on Zoom and in-person upon request

<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*

***** TO ATTEND IN PERSON, PLEASE CONTACT DEBBIE B (204-720-4053 OR DAVILYN (204-791-6419) TUESDAY MORNING OF THE DAY YOU ARE WANTING TO ATTEND TO ENSURE IN-PERSON MEETING IS OCCURING THAT DAY.*****

WEDNESDAY 7:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86213444550?pwd=UWhsRmZsVHF0d0dadkM0bXdaUGg2dz09>

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

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING HAS NOW RETURNED TO ONLY ZOOM FORMAT

SATURDAY 10:30 AM F2F Meeting on Zoom AND in-person

<https://zoom.us/j/8637723075?pwd=QXZ4KzRrcE0rWEEybFVmV0Z6azE4dz09>

Meeting ID: 863 772 3075 / Password: WpgF2F

ADDRESS: JOHN BLACK UNITED MEMORIAL CHURCH, 898 HENDERSON HWY AT ROBERTA
IN NORTH KILDONAN

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS MEETING HAS NOW RETURNED TO A HYBRID MEETING, INCLUDING BOTH ZOOM AND IN-PERSON FORMAT



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