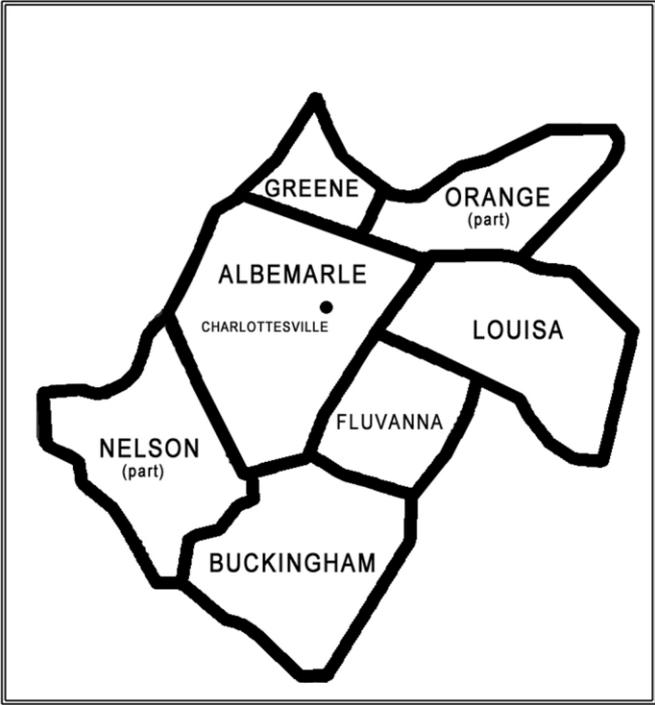


# Carrying the Message in Central Virginia

## History of AA in Jefferson District 9





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## PREFACE

*Carrying the Message in Central Virginia* is the history of Jefferson District 9 as we now understand it. This report is JD9's contribution to the Virginia Area AA history book now in the works. Our history will also be available online for our local Fellowship to access, and it is easy to update as time goes on. Send additions/corrections (including names) to [jdsc9archives@gmail.com](mailto:jdsc9archives@gmail.com).

"Face life on life's terms," we sometimes hear in the rooms. During this project, our little team has experienced grief at the loss of loved ones, and also joy at the birth of a grandchild. Sharing grief and joy makes a powerful bond, like sharing a common problem and a common solution.

The project has challenged us to practice the Twelve Steps - for example those having to do with acceptance, humility, and turning it over. We have felt our Higher Power at work in and around us, providing support and guidance. And we wasted no time fighting anything or anyone, including each other.

We are grateful for this opportunity to carry the message - the message that our Fellowship rests on the shoulders of those who have shown us the path of recovery. The program they started and nurtured and transmitted to us saved our lives. Their dedication, their "willingness to go to any lengths," may serve as inspiration to carry it on.

We are also grateful for this opportunity to grow together in AA. We are awed by the rich history and diversity of our JD Fellowship, and we thank all who contributed to *Carrying the Message*, especially Will B. who produced this booklet.

Special thanks to Sue S. for sharing so fully with us her vast knowledge of the District and our Fellowship, and for her enthusiastic support of this project.

blc, Sandy G., and our beloved Little Bird (d. August 4, 2014)  
Jefferson District 9 Archives Committee

# INTRODUCTION

Jefferson District 9 and Jefferson Intergroup were intertwined from birth, October 19, 1980, and both serve the same area. Curiously, although they were created as separate entities, they initially shared the same treasury. They have been closely interdependent over the past 35 years, even as each has defined its own identity. As their roles evolved, at various periods they have exchanged some Committees.

The roots of District 9 go back to the mid-1940s. Its official creation in 1980 marks the midway point of the 70-year span between the earliest days of our history and today's Fellowship.

In *Carrying the Message*, we tell both the before and after stories in the words of our forebears and current members, through their Group Histories. The colorful accounts in the first three chapters, Origins, 1960s and 1970s, were made possible by *Virginia's Path* (VP; VA Area Archives, 2001) - and especially by those who dedicated many hours collecting and transcribing Oral Histories from Jefferson District. See below for Summary of Chapters by Decade.

## Geography

Before 1980, what is now Jefferson District 9 was part of the huge territory of the original Staunton District, one of only eight Districts in Virginia when Districts were created in 1966. (Staunton District split again later, and was renamed Shenandoah Valley District.)

In this reorganization, JD9 assumed responsibility for Staunton territory east of the Blue Ridge. Charlottesville/Albemarle County is the District's population center, and nearly its geographic center as well. The surrounding counties that make up JD9 are largely rural, dotted with small towns. The majority of meetings are in Charlottesville, but AA is well-represented in all corners of the District. While the boundaries have changed somewhat over the years, in addition to Charlottesville/ Albemarle, the District now serves Greene, Louisa, Fluvanna, Buckingham, and parts of Orange and Nelson Counties.

## District and Intergroup

Lee J.\* was elected the first DCM of Jefferson District when JD9 was established in 1980, followed by Sandi M. Then it lapsed until Area representatives asked why Jefferson District was not involved in service at the Area level. At a meeting of GSRs, Jack L.\* was elected DCM; Jim M. was elected the following term and served for several years. Subsequent DCMs, in

chronological order, are: Emilie W., Carole E., Pat S., Joe K., Eric B., Danny B., Sandy G., John G., Chris S., John B., Jon C., Heather B., Glenna K., Sue S., W.T.

Over the years, District 9 has hosted numerous VAC Committee Workshops (e.g., the Corrections “Steps to Freedom,” October 2012), VAC Meetings (most recently the 2013 Summer Meeting at Zion Crossroads), and Virginia Area Conventions (most recently *Carrying the Message: Gratitude in Action*, August 2009).

We have also hosted many Assemblies over the years: Spring 1975; Spring 1989; Fall 1991; Spring 1994; Spring 1996; Spring 1997.

We are also pleased that two motions that changed AA literature originated in Jefferson District 9: inserting The Twelve Concepts in the back of *As Bill Sees It*; and the staple-free Grapevines that allow them to be distributed in prisons.

As a result of the creation of Jefferson Intergroup, the Valley Intergroup (est. 1975) “lost some key people like Jack L.,\* Earlene, Larry S. and Lou,” and Daniel T., Jane and Lee J.\* The first officers of our Intergroup were Beverly B., Chairperson; Alexis B., Alternate Chairperson; Sandi M., Secretary; and Fred S., Treasurer. Early efforts of Intergroup focused on the answering service, the “chip” system, and a Fall picnic. The story of the answering service began 10 years earlier, with George F.:

After the meeting got going at Saint Paul’s Church, I started attending, and I led the meeting in the church hall on Monday evenings. Around 1970, I offered the phone in my funeral home as the AA answering service, and we listed the number as Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book. Later, after people complained about the way the phone was answered, the AA group put in a separate phone.

As an indicator of the social change that took place here in about a decade-and-a-half, in the late 1940s George had been rejected by the Charlottesville/ Albemarle AA Group because he was black, despite the efforts of his white sponsor, Scott MacG. But that didn’t turn George away from AA; he persisted, and found a black group in Richmond. (See George’s story in Ch. 2, *The Pioneering Decade*.)

The latest chapter in the saga of the phone service occurred in 2005, along with a major step forward for the District. Here’s the story, told by an old-timer:

For many years it was widely felt in District 9 that, when someone calls for help, an alcoholic should be there to answer the phone rather than

the answering service. In March 2005 our prayers and hopes started to be manifested. Through lots of help from many people, the Jefferson District Intergroup Central Office was opened. Alcoholics started volunteering to come into the office and answer the phone.

Since the Office opened, Intergroup has been able to work more efficiently and effectively: Committees share one place to work. Literature is now stored and sold from the office. And our treasury has a home base from which to operate and securely back up information.

In early 2007, Intergroup started renting the room across the hall, which has become our beautiful library where people can buy literature, meet with sponsees, or hold meetings. A large closet was designated for District Archives plus Grapevine literature.

From the earliest days of Intergroup, meetings were taken to Blue Ridge Hospital and recovery workshops. In July 1981, "The Chronicle" newsletter began publication. The name was later changed to "The Flag", then "The Message", and most recently, "Crosstalk."

Over the years Jefferson Intergroup has provided many different services. Currently, in addition to the hotline and answering service, it publishes the local meeting lists, it created our local website - [jeffersonfob.wordpress.com](http://jeffersonfob.wordpress.com) - and it also sponsors the very popular annual Alkathon. Here's the story of how *that* came about, as told by its founder, Tom C.:

In 1983 we held our first Christmas Eve/New Year's Day Marathon. A couple of weeks before Christmas I picked up a yellow chip; among my other problems was the fact that I had become enamored of (actually, downright infatuated with) a lady in the program. As Christmas approached, I found out that she would be all alone because her parents lived too far to drive and she had a horrible fear of flying. She had nowhere to spend Christmas. Aha! Wouldn't a long Christmas Eve meeting and party be just the thing? And that's how the Marathon in Charlottesville got started.

At first, I just thought of it as another meeting, one where we could gather around the usual coffee pot after the meeting and hang out 'til midnight. Well, when we talked about it, folks said "in other places, there are Alkathons that last 24 hours." My imagination soared... I would surely be engaged by New Years!

The humbling fact is - she never showed up. Well, what the heck, they say you're not supposed to get into a relationship in your first year in the program anyway - and it sure beats sitting in a bar.

## **Home Group Histories**

The heart of the AA experience for many members lies in their Home Group - a haven for recovery, a common purpose for community, and home base for carrying the message. AA as a whole thrives when Home Groups, the basic unit of the Fellowship, are strong and healthy and active in serving others.

Our Home Group histories highlight the delightful diversity that springs from autonomy. The Groups have distinct stories to tell, just as our members do. Their personalities shine through, and they describe many inventive activities to foster recovery, unity and service.

We have Early Birds to Night Owls, and everything in between. All the standard formats are used, plus a few variations. We have not only Big Book and Step meetings, but meetings featuring *As Bill Sees It*, the *Grapevine*, *Daily Reflections*, and Big Book stories. There are Meditation and Qualifying meetings.

Most groups meet once a week, 90% in church basements, but some offer multiple meetings. There are several large meetings, with regular attendance of 30 or 40 or more, and several with average attendance of 6 or less.

A number of Home Groups serve particular populations, including Beginners, Women, Men, Spanish-Speakers, and Young People. (We are also working to insure full access to AA for those with special needs.) *Carrying the Message* reveals much about how these groups came into being and evolved.

Hospitals, Treatment and Homeless Facilities, Jails/Prisons, and Social Service Agencies all have an AA presence in District 9, either through meetings brought in or, in several cases, by Groups meeting in adjacent locations.

# Summary of Chapters by Decade

## 1. Origins - 1940s - 1960

The lineage of what we know as our Home District, Jefferson District 9, goes all the way back to Jack W. in Richmond, who founded a Group now thought to be the earliest durable group in Virginia. (For the whole story about that, see the AA Virginia History book now in the works!)

Jack, whom Bill W. dubbed “the Virginia squire” (AACOA 25), got Billy K. from Staunton sober over the Summer 1945. Billy K. and the emerging Staunton- Waynesboro Group, well-known for carrying the message over a wide territory, had success with our forebears, Rudy F.\*, Eddie A.\* and others, who in turn passed it on to Bruce B.\* and a tiny band in Charlottesville.

The Charlottesville/Albemarle meeting (1947-early 50s) came and went leaving little historical record. We learn from Eddie A.\* that it failed “because they lost sight of the primary purpose of AA.”

## 2. 1960s - The Pioneer Decade

More than a decade passed between the end of the Charlottesville/Albemarle Group and the creation of durable Groups in what is now Jefferson District 9.

The Louisa Group, first meeting in 1961 (reg. 1963), was founded by three people who had met up at the Northern Richmond Group. We feature a recent Oral History of a charter member of that Group, still a member after more than 50 years.

Two years later the New Life Group in Charlottesville was established. As Bruce B.\* said years later: “If it hadn’t been for Eddie A.\* and Rudy F.\* and a couple others from Waynesboro and Staunton, I don’t know if AA would even have gotten going here in Charlottesville.”

By all accounts, the most active sparkplug among our pioneers was Edna L.\*, who also started the Wednesday Morning Group and the After Lunch Bunch. All four of these Groups are still meeting today, and all have interesting stories to tell.

## 3. 1970s - AA Takes Root in Charlottesville

Strictly speaking, only two Groups were formed during the 1960s - Louisa, and New Life in Charlottesville. The other two were spin-off meetings from New Life - daytime meetings started by Edna L.\* - that weren’t registered as Groups until 1988. During the 1970s, Groups (mostly in Charlottesville) began to form in other ways, such as meeting the need in hospital and

treatment center settings.

The growth and resilience in the Fellowship during this decade certainly paved the way for the official creation of the District and Intergroup in 1980.

#### **4. 1980s - District 9 Formed; Rapid Growth**

The 1970s set the stage for the decision to co-create Jefferson District and Jefferson Intergroup, which occurred on October 19, 1980.

As the 1980s unfolded, the number of Groups across the whole District increased far more rapidly than in the 1970s. Perhaps this proliferation was due in part to enthusiasm generated by the formation of the District. As often happens during periods of growth and innovation, many of these Groups later ended. (See Appendix II). Our senior oldtimers remember the excitement of this period.

#### **5. 1990s - Growth in Surrounding Counties**

Most Fellowship growth during the 1990s occurred in smaller towns in more rural counties around Charlottesville. Far fewer groups were created during this decade than in the 1980s. But these groups have proven uncommonly resilient; almost all are still meeting.

During the 1990s and so far in the 21st Century, these far-flung new Groups have counterbalanced the growth in the Charlottesville hub. This has enriched our Fellowship and contributed to our District's "coming of age."

#### **6. 2000-2014 - Active Expansion**

In the 21st Century, the District Fellowship has seen steady growth and expansion in all corners of our service area, as well as in Charlottesville/Albemarle. We have markedly increased our diversity as well as our range. We serve more and different populations now, and our diversity has greatly strengthened our Fellowship.

## Chapter 1: Origins, 1940s - 1960

Under pressure from his wife, Billy K. of Staunton spent the Summer 1945 getting sober in Richmond, where he learned about AA from Jack W. (dubbed the “Virginia squire” by Bill Wilson, AACOA, 25), and attended the group at the Jefferson Street Clubhouse. [This group, arguably the first durable group in Virginia, was established by Summer 1943 - perhaps by Fall 1942 - and registered 1/11/44.]

In the Fall, Billy returned home and worked with others in the emerging Staunton-Waynesboro Group (registered 10/1/45; 113650), the first AA group in the region and an early group in the state. [According to Rudy F., there were 12 groups with 319 members in Virginia in 1946.] Over the next several years, the Staunton-Waynesboro Group was the sparkplug of groups in a wide surrounding area, including Lexington (1947?), Harrisonburg (1949) and Lovingson (1949) as well as Charlottesville.

In December 1945, Jack W. asked Billy to go see Rudy F.\* of Waynesboro, who had done everything he could to quit drinking and was about to go live at Western State Hospital, “the only hospital that would take a drunk.” Jack also sent a letter to Rudy telling him “about all the problems he once had with drinking, the sanatoriums he’d been in, and the things he had done. However, he had found a way of living happily for about seven years.”

In January 1946, Billy began taking Rudy, Charlie M. and Kinsley K. to meetings at the Jefferson Street Club in Richmond, and soon they started meeting occasionally at Kinsley’s office in Staunton. Also that winter, Billy contacted Scott MacG. and Sam M. of Charlottesville, who had recently been in treatment for alcoholism in Washington, D.C.

In Spring 1946, Scott and Sam took Rudy to a big AA meeting up in Washington, where they had coffee with Bill Wilson at the Willard Hotel. By November, Billy, Scott, Sam and Rudy, plus a new recruit, Curt P., were meeting regularly at Freed’s Garage in Waynesboro, between Staunton and Charlottesville.

Members of the Staunton-Waynesboro group helped organize and publicize a public meeting in Charlottesville in December 1946, and in early 1947 what became known as the Charlottesville/Albemarle Group started meeting regularly on Monday nights above the old Jefferson Theatre on Main Street.

Little is known about this group which, despite continued support from Staunton-Waynesboro members, died out probably by the early 1950s. As Eddie A.\* later put it, “They strayed from the main purpose of AA.”

This was the last known AA presence in the city until the 1960s, although some Charlottesville people continued to be active in Staunton-Waynesboro, and Scott MacG. became the Area Delegate in 1953-54.

## Chapter 2: 1960s - The Pioneering Decade

A decade passed between the end of the Charlottesville/Albemarle Group and the creation of durable Groups in what is now Jefferson District 9. By the end of the 1960s, there was at least one meeting every day in what is now Jefferson District.

[Oral Histories\* from our Pioneers, in *Virginia's Path* (VP), more-or-less in chronological order: Rudy F. (269), Eddie A. (240), Tucker B. (249), Bruce B. (248), George F. (267), Edna L. (286).]

### **Louisa Group** (reg. 7/18/63; 113565)

The first enduring group in what is now Jefferson District began to meet in 1961 in the small town of Louisa, about 25 miles east of Charlottesville. It was founded by Tucker B., Anna J. \*\* and Edgar T., who had met up at a Northside Richmond meeting. Tucker had gotten sober in AA in Staunton about 1957. Later, he “hopped a train and went to Fredericksburg, and helped start a meeting in the Episcopal Church” there. “One night, out of the clear blue sky, some of us decided we were going to Louisa and have a meeting.”

Tucker brought in two speakers in 1961, but nothing got off the ground. He and Anna and Ed began to meet regularly in 1962 at the Rescue Squad, and then, about 1969, at the Louisa Methodist Church [where the group still meets on Wednesday noon and Sunday evening]. Ed T. dropped out and Merritt B. joined from Fredericksburg, leaving a core group of three for several years, despite help from speakers from Fredericksburg, Staunton and Richmond. Anna J., still a member of the Louisa Group after more than 50 years, remembers the early days:

I was born and raised on a farm right here in Louisa County. I think I had the best parents in the world. And I had a good time through my childhood and all. No reason for me to drink. I don't have anything in my childhood that would say that I was, you know, injured in any way was the reason I became a drunk.

As far as I know nobody in the family had ever drank to excess except my grandfather that was my mother's father. And I honestly think she hated him. She didn't like the idea of anybody drinking. And she would say, Anna Jane, you are going to pay for this someday. You are sinning you know, and sins catch up with you. And I'd just laugh at Mama. But I found out she was right.

I started drinking about 15, 16, but all I did was just a drink once in a while. It wasn't alcoholic drinking. And I married at 20, and I was already I guess an alcoholic. I didn't know it, and it didn't get bad until my late 20s or early 30s.

I loved the darn stuff. I loved the taste of it. I liked to feel that warmth down my throat. And then it would hit the whole body you know, just a few minutes after it went down the throat. I still know exactly how I felt. But I also know how I felt when I was sick. And I was one sick cookie. No more.

But I was drunk as a monkey. And here I was with three little children, a job and everything. And I couldn't handle any of it. But I managed to some way. My kids didn't go hungry. And they were clean when they went to school. They weren't in the best of shape, but they were clean. And I loved them but I just, there was no way I could give them the emotional support that they needed cause I was too sick. And I've always been sorry of that. But they turned out real well, all three of them. And none of the children have drank to any extent.

The day I hit bottom was March 11, 1963. I got up that morning and I thought, my God, I've got to get help. So my daughter and her boyfriend took me down to Richmond to the old Tucker's Hospital that was specialized in sobering up drunks and drug addicts. I asked this psychiatrist, "Where can I get to a meeting?", cause I'd read about the meetings, I think in Reader's Digest.

They took me over to Northside Baptist Church. And it was a whole lot of them, you know. And they were all dressed nicely and everything. I felt like the scum of the earth. Cause I knew that I was – I just felt bad all over. I needed, I needed a thorough bath I reckon. I'd had a bath. I don't think I was dirty, but I felt dirty. When I got in there, well, I didn't get in there by myself. I couldn't go down the steps. So one man got hold of one side of me and one on the other. And they just kind of picked me up and took me in and put me in the chair.

I looked around and I saw all of these people sitting there, well dressed. Well, you know, clean and well dressed. And here I sat over there scrunched in the corner. I thought, oh my God, I don't belong here. These are real intelligent people and I don't need to be here with them. And then

they began talking. It rang a bell when they started talking. And I knew that was the place I should be. By the time the meeting was over with, I knew I'd gotten to the right place.

I was in the hospital for about two weeks and it gave me, you know, a kind of base to work from. We went to meetings in Richmond for about two years, my husband and I. There were also meetings in Staunton and in Fredericksburg when we started here, but in this little triangle in the middle, nothing was going on. So we started this meeting and, oh, it eventually just spread to surrounding counties.

Not everyone in town was happy with us starting a group. I think they thought we'd started a Devil's cult or something. The three or four of us were the devils, and new people didn't start to come for about four years. People here know what AA is now; they didn't know then. They began to learn about AA from the magazines and stuff like that, and some of the churches started listing AA meetings in their Bulletins.

As time went on, I think people more or less accepted me. Well, I've been born and raised here. Everybody knew who I was. They knew my family. Some people were really down on me, but most people just accepted me. And I just stayed sober, so they more or less forgot about it. My mother forgot I ever drank, I think.

Nowadays there's all sorts of formats like an open discussion or a Big Book study. We just met and talked and exchanged drunk stories and so forth. We got the book and began to learn a little bit about the steps, but honest, I had been in AA for eight years before I ever knew much about them. It says in the book that the 12 Steps are suggestions. Maybe we don't look at them as strictly as we should sometimes. But I don't know. We're real relaxed in the meetings here.

We just went to meetings, and it was supposed to be an hour, but sometimes we really went over time. It was what it was. It wasn't structured at all; we just met. And we kept in touch with each other. We just sponsored each other, I reckon; you'd say it was the only thing we could do. You pass it on; you pass on the program. But our main thing was not to drink. We sobered up, and we helped a whole lot of people get sober.

I think our Wednesday morning meeting is especially inviting. I just feel like we welcome people with love. That's all there is to it. Because we're not there to say you have to do this, you have to do the other to stay sober. We're just there because we're ex-drunks and we know you're suffering and we love you.

I just love drunks. I know what they've been through and I know what I've been through, and I just plain love drunks. And evidently it spreads out to them because they seem to gravitate towards me. Somebody asked me when my husband died, are you going to marry again? I said, no, I've had enough of drunks now. I'm not going to marry again cause I knew if I married again it would be another drunk. I'm only attracted to drunks.

When I first came into AA I was so sick and I felt so, so ashamed of myself, you know, to be there. Not because of AA, but I felt ashamed to be there with people like I was. And they just welcomed me you know, and I thought, well, thank God, I'm back with people again.

Cause I'd gotten to the point that nobody wanted to be around me. And I didn't blame them. And when I went there I was welcomed and hugged and all of that stuff. I just felt like a different person when I left that first meeting. And I figured, well, this is where I need to be. So that's where I stayed. And I've given my share of hugs, too.

**1963-1970. AA in Charlottesville.** In 1963, a small group including Bruce B.\* and his wife, David S., and two Staunton-Waynesboro members, started meeting occasionally at the Charlottesville home of Katie O'H. Bruce said years later, "If it hadn't been for Eddie A.\* and Rudy F.\*, and a few others in Waynesboro and Staunton, I don't know if AA would even have gotten going here in Charlottesville."

[Eddie A.\* of Waynesboro started in AA in 1944 or 1945, but didn't stay sober until 1964. He was admitted to the alcoholic ward of Western State Hospital, where he attended meetings brought in by the Staunton, Waynesboro and Harrisonburg groups. After he was discharged, he attended the two weekly meetings at the Staunton Clubhouse and the one in Waynesboro as well as supporting the meeting in Charlottesville.]

## **New Life Group** (2/17/65; 113505)

Early in 1965, an evangelist named Gertrude B. came to Charlottesville and spoke about her recovery from alcoholism. As Earlene, an early member, described it, “Gert came to Charlottesville - came to Saint Paul’s Church on a mission. She was quite concerned that there was not an active AA group in the community. She felt that before she left she would like to see a group, either the old group reactivated or a new group started” (VP pg 47). Eddie A. put it more bluntly: “Gert shamed the local people for not having an AA meeting at that time.”

So the small group, now including George F.\*, Bill P. and Rita as well as Bruce\*, David S. and Katie, decided to start a meeting at Saint Paul’s. (At the same time, Bruce’s wife, Carolyn S., started an Al-Anon group there.) In February 1965, the group was registered as the New Life Group. [It is still active, meeting on Monday and Thursday nights.] George F.\*, who chaired the Monday night meeting, was first exposed to AA in the late 1940s. Here is his account (VP pg 267-68):

I came to AA because I couldn’t control alcohol. When I told a psychiatrist my problem, he said, “You go home and I’ll have someone come and talk with you.” And he sent a man by the name of Scott MacG., who said he would take me down to the AA meeting over the old Jefferson Theatre. But he came back and told me that I wouldn’t be welcome at that meeting. For some reason, I was determined; I would say that God directed me. I knew there was a group of black people meeting in Richmond, and I had someone drive me there. (When I got my license back in 1951, I was able to drive to Richmond once a month for meetings.) Meanwhile, Scott questioned my wife about my minister and what church I attended. Reverend E. invited me to come talk to him about anything I wanted. Scott came once or twice a week; he brought me a Big Book and encouraged me to read it. I became very enthused about AA, and wrote GSO for more literature.

After the meeting got going at Saint Paul’s Church, I started attending and I led the meeting in the church hall on Monday evenings. Around 1970, I offered the phone in my funeral home as the AA answering service, and we listed the number as Alcoholics Anonymous in the phone book. Later, after people complained about the way the phone was answered, the AA group put in a separate phone.

Edna L.\* became a regular at the Monday night meeting soon after she arrived in Charlottesville; she was the sparkplug for other groups as well. Here is her account (VP pg 286-87):

I joined AA in Roanoke in 1958, after many miserable years of trying to stop drinking. When I moved to Charlottesville from Roanoke in 1965, I was quite upset emotionally, and I knew nothing about AA here. One day, one Monday morning, on the radio it said AA meets at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church tonight at 8 o'clock. And it was like a light to me. So I went and there at the first meeting there were four people. We met once a week for several months and then Daniel T. came in. [She also mentions Hattie, Jane, Rita, Dutch and Nancy, some of whom might have been Al-Anon members]

I went to the North Carolina State Convention in Durham and they said, "How is AA in Charlottesville?" and I said, "What AA? We don't even have a coffee pot." And they said, "Go back and buy one." Because at the first meeting we didn't have the Serenity Prayer. We didn't have anything. We were just there. So I came back and got with Bruce. We got the coffee pot and we started having the meeting with the Serenity Prayer and the Twelve Steps. And slowly, very slowly, it grew.

Soon, the members felt the need for more than one meeting a week, so David started a Friday night meeting at the Ridge Street firehouse. Edna started a Thursday night tape meeting in the church library, also attended by Al-Anon members, where tapes from conventions and retreats were played. Edna was involved in starting two more groups (see below) in the late 1960s.

### **Wednesday Morning Group** (1968; Registered 1988, Charlottesville)

Around 1968, along with Earlene and Nancy, Edna L. started a daytime Women's Discussion Group, rotating among members' houses. Later, it moved to the library at Saint Paul's, continuing as a Women's Group "until the men protested loudly," prompting them to open it to men as well. In 1988, it was registered as the Wednesday Morning Group.

Robert F. began attending the Saint Paul's meeting in 1994. He described the format as: an AA member would share their story for approximately thirty minutes and lead the discussion that followed. Today the format is: either someone qualifies or someone suggests a topic related to alcoholism.

Holly kept the meetings going, Robert remembered. One morning Holly tagged him and got him to tell his story for the first time. Robert liked the

Saint Paul meetings because he could identify with what other people talked about when they qualified. He remembered the attendance was 20-26 back then (a full room).

We started a Home Group about four years ago. Alex A. has been very instrumental in keeping us organized and on track. We have Home Group meetings on a regular basis, and a Summer and Winter activity each year.

The Group continues to meet at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church 10:30 a.m., as the Wednesday and Friday Discussion Group.

### **After Lunch Bunch** (1968; Registered 1988; Charlottesville)

Edna L. started this group as a meeting in 1968; it wasn't officially registered as a group until June 1988.

Today, the Group meets where it always has, at Church of Our Savior Episcopal Church on Rio Road on Tuesdays at 1:30 pm. Small group, usually ten present. Discussion meeting; one member proposes a topic and the group discusses.

One thing that is unique: the Resentment Chip. At the suggestion of a member who learned this from a group in New Jersey, this group offers a Resentment Chip - a black and white poker chip. The group does not give these away, as with the regular chips. Instead, a member who is suffering from a resentment severe enough to threaten sobriety may borrow a chip. The member can then carry the chip and do the things suggested on pp. 67-70 and 552 of the Big Book. When that resentment is removed by a higher power or otherwise goes away, the member is asked to return the chip and tell us their story.

This is often a repetitive process. One member of this group has borrowed and returned a chip three times over the same resentment. Since all of us carry small resentments most of the time, we suggest that the chip be borrowed only for sobriety-threatening resentments.

The membership is stable and consistent. Six or seven show up almost every week. There are also some who visit occasionally because they need to fit a meeting into their schedule.

## Chapter 3: 1970s - AA Takes Root in Charlottesville

Strictly speaking, only two Groups were formed during the 1960s - Louisa, and New Life in Charlottesville; the other two were spin-off meetings from New Life. During the 1970s, mostly in Charlottesville, groups began to form in other ways, such as meeting the need in hospitals and treatment centers. The growth and resilience in the Fellowship during this decade paved the way for the official creation of Jefferson District 9 and Jefferson Intergroup in 1980.

[Oral histories of some members who joined in the 1970s; roughly chronological, in *Virginia's Path* (VP): Betty R. (295), Lee J. (284), Doug G. (274), Marguerite H. (280), Jack L. (287), Ray N. (291), Maron B. (253), Rosser (Ross) E. (266).]

### **Primary Care Group** (11/15/72; 113382; Charlottesville)

The group began as “The Arlington Boulevard Group” and met at David C. Wilson Hospital. The group was started by Betty R.\* (who had come to Charlottesville from Greenwich CT in 1971), with the support of Dr. Phil Collins, a psychiatrist at the hospital. As Betty put it (VP pg 295):

People were getting treated for alcoholism, but they were being taught nothing about AA. I thought, what a wonderful place to have a meeting, so I opened a Beginners group there on Wednesday evenings. The meeting got so large we had to have it in three different rooms in the hospital - a Step meeting and a Speaker meeting in addition to the Beginners meeting. When Dr. Collins and I decided a mental institution was no place to treat alcoholics, we started Mountainwood treatment center. With so many patients, we started another AA meeting there.

The Arlington Boulevard Group moved briefly to Westminster Presbyterian Church and then in 1980-81 to the Primary Care Building at UVA Hospital [and changed its name], where it met [and still meets] at 8:00p.m. Wednesday.

In 1992, there were two meetings in one room divided by a partition. The first was a Step study meeting set up by Lee J. and Chris S. After Lee died in 1994, Chris continued to set up the Step meeting until 1997 when it closed down. The second was an open discussion meeting set up by Bill S. and Jerry

R. After Bill moved away, John Y. joined Jerry in setting up the open discussion meeting, which had very good attendance.

Today, John Y. and Steve P. set up the meeting, and the format has recently been changed to feature Big Book stories.

**Charlottesville/Albemarle Black AA Group** (1970s; Charlottesville) [No GSO record, inactive]

This group was started in the early 1970s by Henry, a former patient at David C. Wilson Hospital, after a meeting called by psychiatrist Dr. Phil Collins and AA member Betty R., who were concerned about the high relapse rate of black patients. Here is Henry's recollection of that time (VP pg 48-49):

I left the meeting feeling great with all types of ideas, and visualized a room full of people discussing their problems in an all-black AA group. I rushed home and sent out several letters; I waited one week, two weeks, no response. After calling former black patients, five agreed to show up. For seven weeks, I appeared at the hospital and waited alone. I was encouraged to keep on trying, and did for several more weeks, but after a while I gave up and did not go one night. Seven people showed up.

After the treatment program made attendance mandatory, things got better (although some resented having to attend). We had six regulars and we formed our own group, moving to a black church in town. The group fluctuated from 8 to 14, but attendance was sporadic, and once got down to two. This was one of the best periods in my sobriety. I was the chairperson for five years, but the meeting gradually became a counseling session with discussion on many topics outside of AA. I stopped working my own program. I saw myself as "Big Henry;" I treated the group as mine, and started assigning program chairpersons by selection rather than election. I soon dropped out and went back to drinking, and the group disbanded after a couple of months. I often think about forming another group to help black alcoholics learn the basics, and have been asked to do it, but I'm weighing the pros and cons of running such a group again.

**Oakridge Group** (2/12/74; 113606; Lovingson)

Open Discussion format. A core group of six regulars. Average meeting attendance, 10. Meets Wednesday night at Trinity Episcopal, Colleen VA.

**Big Book Group** (4/30/75; 1135040, Charlottesville) [renamed Rebellious Dogs in 2011; see pg 44]

Jack L. and Quincy founded this Saturday night group when they came to Charlottesville after treatment. The group met first at Church of Incarnation, and then in 1997 moved to St. Thomas Aquinas.

The group changed its format from a Big Book meeting to a Step meeting using the 12 & 12. Recognizing that this caused confusion, we considered renaming the group. At the same time, some challenges developed at our location, so we moved to St. Mark's Lutheran where we were welcomed with open arms; simultaneously we changed our name to Rebellious Dogs.

This name is a tongue in cheek reference to a line in the 12 & 12, "rebellion dogs our every step" (p. 73; Step 7). Since alcoholics like us tend to be stubborn and resist change, we think this is a fun name for a great old established group.

**Full Circle Group** (5/1/79; 118645; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members: Martha S. and her husband Eban; Rachel H., Ellen P., Sandy G., Michelle H.

The group began meeting in 1978, in a small Sunday School room at the Cherry Avenue Christian Church. There was a "full circle" of chairs, without a head or head table, signifying that we are all equal together. By 1999, the group moved to the larger Fellowship Hall, where it still meets on Sunday afternoons at 2:00 pm. Meetings were well attended and vibrant, with many active members. In the early years, the group was open to Al-Anon; Eban was the first. The format of meetings has always been open discussion, with topics raised by members.

In the past several years, the meetings became smaller and less energized. We no longer had an active home group, and the meetings were led and organized by a few dedicated members who kept the meeting going. Recently attendance has picked up again. The Full Circle Group, known as the Cherry Ave. Group, provides significant service in a rarely-used time slot, especially to newcomers and still suffering alcoholics.

**Rock Church Group** (11/6/79; 119640; Charlottesville)

Founders: Christine and Colter

This old, established group was originally an offshoot of the now defunct Tuesday night "Young Peoples" meeting at Christ Episcopal Church. Christine and Colter started the Saturday "As Bill Sees it" meeting in 1985.

Soon there were two meetings per week: Open Discussion on Tues. 7:30 pm, and "As Bill Sees It" on Sat. 10:00 am. Between 1994 and 2003, the

Tuesday meeting ended, the first Saturday featured Traditions meetings, and the group name was changed to "The Rock Church Group."

The first Saturday is still a Traditions meeting, and the rest of the Saturdays are still devoted to "As Bill Sees It." Members pick two topics, read from the book, and then open for discussion.

The meetings are well-attended, around 40, and we provide coffee and donuts. We offer some literature for sale and sometimes give a book to a newcomer. We've been collecting for "Change for Change" since that started in the District. We celebrate anniversaries with coins and medallions.

Rock Church has functioned as a group, as a plain meeting, and then as a group again. That matter is now under consideration for a group conscience in September.

Meets on Saturdays at 10 a.m. at Christ Episcopal Church, popularly called Rock Church.

## Chapter 4: 1980s - District 9 Formed; Rapid Growth

The 1970s set the stage for the decision to create Jefferson District and Jefferson Intergroup. They were both established on October 19, 1980. This apparently energized the local AA community, because a record 26 groups were formed during the 1980s. The number of Groups across the whole District increased much faster than in the 1970s. As often happens during periods of rapid growth and innovation, many of these Groups later folded (see Appendix II). Our senior old-timers remember the excitement of this period.

### **East Rio Road Group** (8/25/82; 126861; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members: Michele M.; Jim C., Mike C., Carol E., Emilie W., Lincoln D., Earlena D., Clarke T.

Our Group meets Sunday nights at 8:00 pm at Church of Our Savior, with a varied format. The first two meetings of the month are closed discussion meetings. The third Sunday of the month is a closed Step meeting, reading from the Twelve & Twelve. The fourth Sunday is an open speaker meeting. If there is a fifth Sunday in the month, it is a closed discussion meeting.

We have a small, stable Home Group of members with more than 12 years of sobriety, and one member with a year. Meetings are well attended, averaging 25 - 35 people, with a full range of ages from twenty to approximately seventy-five, and both genders. Many topics are discussed, always with the central theme of the Twelve Steps.

We never forget the basics of how to stay sober, and we enjoy our sobriety and our lives. We are here for all alcoholics!

### **Out to Lunch Bunch** (1/11/83; 128117; Orange)

This group was founded by Victoria Y., Mary M. and Henry C. Then came Bill J., Lila Y., and Peter S. The group, with 5-10 attendees, meets at St. Thomas Episcopal, Orange, Mon. 12:30 pm.

### **Charlottesville Albemarle Joint Complex Group** (3/23/83; 155071; jail) [inactive]

Founders: Martin L., Beverly B., Mark M., Buzz B., Luther C.

Intergroup members worked with prison staff beginning in 1982 to make this meeting possible. Many AA members volunteered time to carry the message to those inside.

**Living Sober** (7/12/84; 133378; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members. Leslie G., Pat P., Les B.; Milly L., Jim R., Alexis E., Mike C., Liz H.

Started in 1983 at Immanuel Lutheran Church, when the only other Tuesday night meeting, the Young People's Group, became too crowded. This was a non-smoking meeting, one of the first in Charlottesville, which caused much controversy. Noon meetings were started on other days, one of them by the pastor, Duane. Later an open speaker meeting was created Friday at 5:30. Today, JPA, as it is popularly called, is a large and active group with five meetings a week and attendance averaging around 30-40. Mon, Tues & Thurs. at noon, Tuesday, 7:30 pm and Friday at 5:30 pm.

**Belmont Heights Group** (7/12/84; 133375; Charlottesville)

Hinton Ave. Methodist. Fri. 8:00 pm

**Keep It Greene** (11/20/84; 134422; Stanardsville/Ruckersville)

Founder: Jim W.

This group began as a meeting in 1979 at Region Ten (Stanardsville). About 1981, it moved to Grace Episcopal Church. But local townsfolk would stand across the street to see who left the meeting and then gossip about them - which of course bothered members and discouraged newcomers. Perhaps partly for that reason, the group soon moved to Cedar Grove Church in Ruckersville. Now at Blue Ridge Presbyterian, Ruckersville. Tues/Fri. 7:30 pm.

**Blue Ridge Hospital** (1984) [not registered; inactive]

Local members carried the meeting into the facility, which has since closed.

**The DT's Group** (8/7/85; 136952; Charlottesville) [previously Downtowners]

Founders; Early Member: Jon D., Karen O.; Brenda.

Moved to First Step Outpatient Center on Spotnap Road (Pantops) and changed its name. Now meets Sunday at 6:30.

**Down Towners** (11/16/86; 159521; Charlottesville [VP mistakenly lists as 136952; also mistakenly lists 159521 as number for Bring Your Own Big Book - BYOBB Group which is now inactive])

Founders and Early Members: Gene K., Carole E., John, Katy, John. Nina, Jim, and Paul C. held the meetings together during the 1990's.

Down Towners originally met at The Worrell Building, where it held potlucks, dances, and hosted out-of-town speakers. Lots of newcomers and people from treatment centers attended. The Home Group now calls itself Hugs and Kisses, and always has candy kisses strewn on the tables.

Meetings: Wednesday Noon, Big Book Study; Friday Noon, Open Discussion, at Holy Comforter Catholic Church. These meetings are often a mix of long-timers to newcomers, and often people from the street. We're grateful to serve the population from the Haven and downtown Food Banks and Soup Kitchens.

### **Wednesday Morning Group** (1/12/88; 128150; Charlottesville)

This group, originally founded in 1968, registered with GSO in 1988. See Group's history pg 15.

### **After Lunch Bunch** (6/27/88; 148493; Charlottesville)

This group, originally founded in 1968, registered with GSO in 1988. See Group's history pg 16.

### **Honest Effort Group** (8/10/88; 148905; Palmyra)

Founders; Early Members: David R., Jim, Ray N., Carolyn E.; Reba W.

Effort Baptist Church, Palmyra. Only one other meeting in Fluvanna Co. when founded. Members felt the need for another meeting to avoid having to drive to Charlottesville after dark. Mon, 7:30 pm and Fri. 8:00 pm.

### **Serenity Through Sobriety** (12/12/88; 150280; Charlottesville) [inactive]

Founders; Early Members: Betty R., Nan B., Nan R.; Pat D., Sherry W., DeeDee L., Jean S.

Originally called the Wednesday Night Women's Group, it met at First United Methodist Church. Then, in mid-1988, it moved to Rugby Road Unitarian Church, changed its name, and added meetings on Mon and Fri. The group used various formats - Speaker, Discussion, Steps.

### **Greenwood Group** (2/16/89; 151095; Rockfish Gap)

The Greenwood Group is a successor to the Western Albemarle Group (5/17/82; 126126; inactive) which started meeting in 1981 at Tabor Presbyterian Church (Crozet) on Wednesday nights. The founders were Virginia C. and Michael U. By the end of 1982, attendance averaged 35-60.

Demand was so great that, in 1983, we started the Greenwood meetings on Mondays and Fridays, and then Bruce B. started a Thursday meeting at the Ivy Episcopal Church. In 1984, a Tuesday meeting was added at the Baptist

Church. So at that time, there were five meetings a week under the Western Albemarle Group, which now totaled over 100 members. For about 10 years, we also sponsored prison meetings (Charlie, Lud and Michael U.).

In the late 1990's, the various meetings declined, and have mostly been discontinued. But, thanks mainly to Bob and Kitty, the Greenwood Group is alive and well, meeting at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, 8:00 pm, Monday and Friday.

**Rugby Road Team** (11/16/89(?); 159517; Charlottesville)

The Rugby Road Meeting meets twice a week Mondays and Thursdays at 5:30 pm. This meeting has always been popular, and is well attended. The first Monday of every month is an Open Tradition meeting. The remaining Mondays are Open Step meetings. Thursday meetings are Open Discussion meetings, except for the last Thursday of the month, which is an Open Speaker meeting. The meetings are held in the library of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

## Chapter 5: 1990s - Growth in Surrounding Counties

Most Fellowship growth during the 1990s occurred in smaller towns in more rural counties around Charlottesville, as you can see below. Overall, unlike the 1980s, these Groups have been very durable; almost all are still meeting. They are vital to carrying the message throughout the District as a whole.

### **Bybee Sunset Group** (2/7/92; 170580; Troy)

Founders; Early Members: Dennis C., Luther C.; Gerald W., Dave F., John S., Ben K., Chuck W.

This group started as a discussion meeting in 1987. Dennis and Luther, who both worked in Charlottesville, started it because they wanted a meeting closer to home. The first two or three months, only the two of them attended. Each Thursday night we would meet for an hour, read a portion from the Big Book, and discuss it. At this time Luther had seven years of sobriety and Dennis was in his first year.

Eventually word got out about the Bybee Sunset Meeting, and other members of AA began to show up. Numbers went from two to four to six and soon to ten. After several years as our meeting began to really take root and grow, the Home Group members decided to register as a Group with Central Office in New York City.

Each Thursday night Luther arrives at 7:00 pm to make coffee and set up for the group meeting. This has been going on for the past 27-plus years. Gerald, the treasurer, takes care of sending monies to the Central Office and Jefferson District, and also pays the rent to the church.

The Bybee Sunset Group is much different today than in its beginning. It is an open discussion group, but on each month that has five Thursdays we bring in a local speaker. Each member who attends on a regular basis has the option to celebrate their anniversary by bringing in a speaker of their choice. Some of these anniversary meetings are followed by cake and homemade ice cream.

Sometimes, weather permitting, we circle chairs on the lawn behind the church to witness beautiful sunsets as we have our group discussion. Cattle from the neighboring farm gather along the fence close to our circle, as if they want to join in. Occasionally we see and hear flocks of Canada geese fly over or land in the nearby fields, where deer also feed.

Luther, Joe V., and a couple other church friends built a rock fire ring to

set the stage for a campfire meeting, with the sun setting to the west behind the first range of the Blue Ridge Mountains. This most assuredly can be a spiritual experience in itself.

We thank God for Alcoholics Anonymous and the opportunity to grow in sobriety together. (Bybee Road Baptist Church. Thurs., 8:00 pm.)

### **Earlsville Group** (7/22/92; 172912; Earlsville)

There were five original members when this group registered. Always a small meeting, currently averaging 5-12, its doors have remained open through need, and through the dedicated service through the years of Randi K., Debbie, David D., Jim S., among others.

Randi K.: My only memory of why we began this meeting was that I resented having to drive 30 minutes to a meeting and back when there were so many members in the local area. I think that was 1992. I got a service sponsor, Al J., and contacted my Episcopal church because they had a beautiful historic hall just sitting there. They were happy to open it up to us. We had child care and speaker cassettes available. Many times it was just three of us. We thought the meeting would close down when Suzanne and Nancy C. moved out of town and it was time for me to step away. However, people showed up and now Jeff C. and a handful of others are regular attendees. (Buck Mountain Episcopal. Thurs., 7:30 pm)

### **Meadows Meeting** (1/20/93; 654836; Crozet)

Meets Sun 4:30 pm, Meadows Community Center. [GSO lists as Inactive.]

### **11th Step Group** (3/26/93; 175483; Charlottesville)

With the cooperative efforts of Buddy S., V-Ann E., Robin J., Bob K., JDM, Kathleen, Sandra and Jim, the group then known as the 9:00 am Sunday Morning Open Discussion 11<sup>th</sup> Step Group began in the fall of 1991. The founders first met in a small space upstairs in the Worrell Building at 401 Market St. It became a meeting one year later, in the fall of 1992. In the mid-1990s, the meeting moved to the Better Living Building, and then to its current location, the Blue Ridge House, soon after it opened.

One of the founders (and current member), Buddy S., had gotten sober in Greenville, SC, where he attended an 11<sup>th</sup> Step meeting that was instrumental in his recovery. Upon moving to Charlottesville, he discovered that there were no Sunday meetings at the time, and no 11<sup>th</sup> Step meeting.

The group's focus from the outset was on practicing the 11<sup>th</sup> Step, and on providing a place for the newcomer to be introduced to spirituality and their own resistance to it. The Open Discussion format has been consistent

throughout the history of the meeting; the custom of the leader providing an opening reading from the literature was added later.

In the mid-1990s, group attendance grew to about 120 to 130 people, and as a result the Sunday morning “As You Like It” Group spun off and was formed. The 11<sup>th</sup> Step meeting has a current average attendance of approximately 40 people. Several current members are still supporting the meeting as they have since its early days.

The group hosted a meditation retreat in November 2011, at the Akasha Retreat Center near Free Union, VA. The retreat included a guided walking meditation, a teepee for silent meditation, an 11<sup>th</sup> Step meeting, food, fellowship and a bonfire. The group is hosting another retreat this November (2014) at Bridge Between the Worlds in Keswick, VA.

### **Zion Crossroads Group** (4/18/94; 179453; Troy)

Founders; Early Members: Doris R.; Steve B., Greg B., Dave F., Gibbs K. (whose father helped bring AA to Charlottesville), Diane W., Bobby G., Kim G., Carolyn B., Carol E., and Bill A.

The group still meets at Zion United Methodist Church where it has always met. (Tues eve, 7:30 pm) The (non-alcoholic) minister of the church was a great friend of AA, and was instrumental in taking AA to Russia.

### **Preamblers** (3/28/95; 605114; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members: Robert M., Tom K., Danny B.; Colter K., Abby S., Tracy C., Matt L., Lud C., Chris, Larry.

In January 1994, Robert, Tom and Danny started a Big Book meeting at Robert’s house. In Summer 1994, they moved to First United Methodist, the church of Colter’s youth. [The three founders moved out of town in the next two years; the group kept minutes, which allowed for a detailed early history in VP.] The group soon sponsored three weekly meetings and appointed coordinators for each: men’s meeting, Danny; women’s meeting, Abby S.; Salvation Army, Tracy C. They also provided Big Books and supported detox meetings at the Mohr Center.

The group felt strongly that everyone, newcomers especially, should get into service, whether voluntarily or volunteered by their sponsors. So there were always enough trusted servants, and the group had great participation. A “group conscience” was taken on many issues. They decided not to use chips, which were not conference-approved. They produced a phone list for newcomers and members.

After long discussion about who could attend and participate in closed meetings, the group decided that anyone was welcome who introduced

themselves as having a desire to stop drinking and discussed the solution. After considerable disagreement, the group decided not to pay for refreshments out of the 7th Tradition basket. They provided a coffee pot so anyone who wanted could make coffee; it sat in the corner unused for years.

Since the church charged only a small monthly rent, to be self-supporting the group decided to increase the payment, and to paint the meeting room. When members showed up to paint, they realized they weren't equipped to deal with the 18-foot ceiling!

Later, after moving downstairs to a larger, more accessible - non-air conditioned room, the group offered to buy furniture or a new rug. The church declined, and the group found out why: During the Christmas season, they shared the room with the live sheep and goats used in the Christmas pageant! "It's always nice to know where you stand!"

The group also had a playful side. Matt L., Lud C. and Chris appointed themselves the "nickname committee". Larry the Lobster started to bring pacifiers to toss at members when they whined during meetings.

Preamblers has maintained its vitality and traditions over its 20 year history. In June 1995 it expanded to meet on Sundays as well as Wednesdays. Sundays are speaker meetings, while on Wednesdays we study the first 164 pages of the Big Book as we have from the beginning. Each Fall we sponsor an all day workshop on a variety of topics. These have included sponsorship, Step 11 and the history of AA.

The meeting moved from the First United Methodist Church downtown to the Unitarian Church on Rugby Road in August 2001. In June 2003 we moved to the Wesley Memorial United Methodist Church, where we meet every Wednesday and Saturday at 8:00 pm.

### **New Pair of Glasses** (1/11/95; 603487; Gordonsville)

A New Pair of Glasses Group meets on Monday nights at 8:00 pm in Gordonsville. The Group has met continuously since June 4, 1994. It was first formed by Tim B., Sandy B., Craig J., and Bob L. Some of the first members were John S., Big Bob S. and Mike D.

We first met at the Catholic Church's community hall just off the traffic circle at 8:00 pm on Mondays. Gordonsville is a small community and we felt that we needed a second meeting in the town to help more local recovering alcoholics get to more meetings. (The only meeting at the time was a Wednesday night meeting, which still exists).

At the time, the numbers of smoking meetings were beginning to fade away, and since the Catholic Church did allow smoking in the community hall, attendance would average 20 to 30 people. After about three years, the hall

was sold to the Gordonsville Veterinarian Clinic, and the Group moved to the Gordonsville VFW Hall, to continue the smoking privileges. This was problematic; though the VFW welcomed the group initially, there eventually arose some conflict with the drinking members of the VFW, and the Group moved to the Gordonsville Christian Church, where smoking was not allowed. As a result, attendance dropped significantly.

After about 10 years in the Gordonsville Christian Church, the church was closed and was offered to be sold, and we needed to find a new location. The group then moved to the United Methodist Church on Main Street in Gordonsville, where we currently reside. However, the community hall is under renovation, and we are temporarily meeting at 107 S. Main St. in the basement in the back. We should be returning to the United Methodist Church by the end of 2014.

Our average attendance today is 4-8 people. These are open discussion meetings, beginning with the readings of the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Promises, followed by a reading of the Herbert Spencer quote at the end of “Spiritual Experience” (BB, Appendix II).

When contacted by the District for this information, we were referred to as “A New Pair of Slippers,” which I found to be extremely humorous. The name “A New Pair of Glasses” was taken from a book, a compilation of talks given by Chuck Chamberlain at a weekend retreat some 50 years ago. I was given a copy of the book early in my recovery and loaned it to Craig J., which is when we decided to name the new group “A New Pair of Glasses”. I guess if we were listed as “A New Pair of Slippers”, it might explain why we have remained such a small group. However, the small group size allows a very intimate meeting atmosphere and the regular members are very close to each other and supportive.

The meeting was originally set up to have a person assigned prior to each meeting to have a prepared topic, including a reading from the Big Book, other AA literature, or “A New Pair of Glasses”. That format lasted about a year and the tradition fell away to become a discussion meeting.

**One Day at a Time** (1/20/95; 603615; Orange)

Orange Baptist Church, Sunday, 8:00 pm.

**Men In Mind** (4/24/96; 645409; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members: Henry Clay S.; Steve C., Rod, Bob G., Buddy S.

Met first at the Seventh Day Adventist Church, and then moved to Immanuel Lutheran in 1999. Formed to provide a meeting sensitive to men's issues, but open to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking. Now meets Wednesday, 8:00 pm.

**Buckingham Court House Big Book Group** (2/5/98; 627417; Buckingham)

The Buckingham Group was founded by Al and Alicyn J. There was a need in the Dillwyn/Buckingham area for more meetings. People were driving 50 miles round trip to Farmville, Charlottesville, Lynchburg and even to Richmond to attend meetings because there weren't many in Dillwyn at the time.

The meeting was originally held in the Maysville Presbyterian Church on Tuesday, 8:00 pm; its original name was the Root and Branch Group. The founders and usually one or two others would listen to Joe and Charlie tapes and then discuss the topics. The meeting grew slowly but it did indeed grow. As more people attended, it evolved into a Step/Discussion meeting where one of the founders chose a topic from the Big Book and did a lead-in, and then the meeting was open for discussion.

The meeting grew into approximately 20-30 people attending each week so the Group moved to Maysville Baptist Church, where we currently meet. The format today is the first three Tuesdays of the month a home-group member is responsible for the lead-in on the Step being discussed, and the last Tuesday of the month a Home Group member is responsible for the lead-in on the Tradition being discussed. Members rotate this job each week, and they have the choice of asking a guest to do the lead-in or to do it themselves.

The Buckingham Group also has two satellite meetings, at two different churches - the Monday night beginners group and the Thursday night speakers meeting.

## Chapter 6: 2000-2014 - Active Expansion

In the 21st Century, the District Fellowship has seen steady growth and expansion in all corners of our service area, as well as in the Charlottesville/Albemarle hub. We have markedly increased our diversity as well as our range. Currently, there are 48 active, registered Groups in the District, and 98 meetings a week.

### **Language of the Heart Group** (4/22/03; 661048; Charlottesville)

When this group was established in the late 1990s, it was the only active Women's Group in Jefferson District. [Earlier Women's Groups were Serenity in Sobriety (1984) and Women in Reflection (8/30/95).] The group grew out of the Rock Church Group (reg. 11/6/79), and met initially at 9:00 am Saturday at what was the Region 10 Bldg on 4th Street. About 2006, the group added a Tuesday evening meeting at Belmont Baptist Church; soon the Saturday morning meeting was moved there as well. The new venue allows the group to offer child care, the only group in the District to do so. In the words of the earliest Home Group member (going back to 1998): "I have witnessed the strong support the women of this group provide to recovering alcoholics. Many view the group as a safe haven for women sharing their experience, strength and hope. We have frequent newcomers exploring AA as a resource."

Our meetings are open discussion with the inclusion of two speaker meetings per month; one Saturday and one Tuesday. The Home Group meets monthly, and has several service positions that rotate annually.

Child care is our contribution to the District. It is sometimes a challenge finding and keeping sitters, plus funding them! We've made it work out. There is a core group of about 25 women, and another 15 floaters. Occasionally a male comes, and is usually surprised that it's a women's meeting. They are greeted and encouraged to join us, and many stay. All are welcome.

### **Joy of Living** (5/14/03; 655456; Charlottesville)

Vonnie C.: I began attending the meeting in 1998. It was an open discussion beginners' meeting held on Saturday morning at 10:30 am and was well attended. At that time it was being held in the gymnasium of the Charter Hospital, a facility now entirely gone and replaced by apartment buildings. Charter was soon to undergo new management and become The Brown School, an inpatient facility for juveniles. The Brown School had serious management problems, including "99 human rights violations" according to a local newspaper.

The gymnasium had its quirks. It was a huge space with a very high ceiling. The roof was leaky so when it rained there were buckets to catch the water and sometimes there weren't, so there were puddles. There were usually a few basketballs around, so meeting members or their kids might play a little ball before or after the meetings. From time to time the "students" of the school would wander in, looking disgruntled. We knew this also by the copious graffiti inside the gym and bathrooms, which often did not work due to malicious tampering.

I joined the home group in 1999. Our meeting had a little cart for our books and supplies, and we made coffee. Cathy P. and Charlie W. were in the home group at that time. It was at this time that we renamed the meeting "Joy of Living," a name I had heard and liked at a young people's meeting in New York City, where I lived before moving to Charlottesville. I remember helping to draft the new format, a task I have done on and off over the past 15 years.

Current home-group member Michael C. often attended the meeting, as well as old timers Bim W. (RIP), Forrest C., Sarah G., Danny B., Randi H., and Wayne K. (RIP). The meeting was well attended, maybe 25-40 members each week. Chairs were set up in a huge circle in the middle of the gym, and the format alternated between a topic discussion started by the chair or a short lead from the chair followed by discussion. We also started a custom of taking beginners' questions using what we called the "Ask-It Basket," which was really just a big coffee can with some index cards and pencils in it so newcomers could ask a question anonymously.

At some point in 2000, the Brown School closed and we lost our access to the site. Our home group searched for a new home and landed at the Fourth Street Station building of Region Ten, also now defunct.

Jon C. joined the group at that time, and can tell more about the history from that point. He writes:

I first attended the Joy of Living Group in January 2001 – I was 4 months sober at the time. My sponsor attended the meeting, so I attended the meeting. He suggested I join the home group, so I did.

At that time the group met at Fourth Street Station, which was owned by Region Ten. My first service position was setting up the chairs. My recollection is that average attendance at the meeting was about 20. As it is today, the meeting format was open discussion with an emphasis on reaching out to newcomers.

In 2001 the home group was small, about five active members, but we had a monthly business meeting and most of the time we had an Intergroup representative and a GSR. Once I had a year of sobriety, I became the group's treasurer and later served as GSR.

At some point, I believe it was 2002 or 2003, Region Ten announced that Fourth Street Station would no longer be available for meetings, and in fact Region Ten eventually sold the property, now the site of low-income apartments.

It must have been Vonnie who suggested moving the meeting *back* to the gymnasium behind what was once Charter hospital, Brown School, and now Whisper Ridge, another facility for troubled juveniles. After the move, attendance at our meeting slowly declined and some of our home group members drifted away. Eventually Vonnie and I were the only members of the home group. The facility was as dreary as ever, and as time passed the residents of Whisper Ridge did their best to make it even less ideal. They managed to break the bulbs in some of the light fixtures hanging from the ceiling, making the room even darker, and truly destroyed the plumbing fixtures in the bathrooms, rendering them unusable.

Although we were reluctant to move again, we decided we had no choice. In 2004 or 2005 we moved to Blue Ridge First Step on Pantops Mountain. First Step was a fairly new treatment center at that time, and they were eager to host an AA meeting in their facility, as their clients were required to attend AA. We felt it would be a good choice because the First Step members already knew the site, were newcomers, and they would likely feel comfortable attending their first AA meeting there.

We started as a relatively small meeting (10-15 attendees), but attendance increased steadily during our first year. At the start Vonnie C. and I *were* the home group so we did everything, but as attendance grew, so did the home group. By year two at First Step we were able to fill the available chairs and we talked about acquiring folding chairs to accommodate the overflow. Just when members of our tiny home group were feeling burdened by having to “carry” the home group, new home group members appeared to take some of the load. Before too long we had a dozen home group members and a full slate of service positions. As the meeting grew, the home group expanded to carry it.

Our meeting now hosts about 60 sober alcoholics every Saturday at 10:00 am, and is a thriving and beloved meeting for many – even those not in our home group. We remain an open discussion meeting with a focus on topics related to early recovery, in an effort to appeal to newcomers and those early in sobriety. We describe some basic concepts in our opening statement, such as what a sponsor is and what a home group is. We have a space in our meeting for willing sponsors to raise their hands and be seen by newcomers. We also do a nice reading from *The Family Afterward* that explains why we “are not a glum lot.”

We offer a “Beginners Bag” to people at their first meeting complete with

a *Big Book*, *Living Sober*, relevant pamphlets, and a meeting list, and we send the Big Book around for members to write down their phone numbers. Our home group is actively involved with Intergroup and the District service organizations, hosting workshops and picnics. We are fortunate enough to be able to pay our rent and other expenses, and also contribute to our local, state and national service offices.

Because we are the only Beginners Group listed in Charlottesville, we started a second meeting using the same format on Thursdays at 6:00 pm. We are eager to continue to offer friendship and the message of AA's 12 Steps to all who seek it out.

**Common Solution Group** (2004; 672778; Charlottesville) [No History Date Listed, GSO]

Founders; Early Members: Merv L., Travis M.; James B., Brian S., Andy L.  
Meets at Hinton Ave United Methodist Church, Thursday, 7:30 pm.

The Common Solution Group was formed in October 2004 to bring a new style of meeting to Charlottesville. Designed to focus on the solution as put forth in the Big Book, it is a speaker/topic meeting where a speaker discusses his/her experience on a topic followed by group participation. Usually, the speaker reads a passage or two from the Big Book to get things started.

No hands are raised as the chairperson of the meeting calls on people to share from the podium after the topic speaker is finished. Our group is unique in the area in using this format. We do our best to stick to The Solution, Higher Power, Big Book, Traditions, Steps, Sponsorship, Service, and Home Group as a means to Recovery.

We held our first meeting on October 21, 2004. We believe in the power of Recovery, Service and Unity, as well as in the primary purpose and singleness of purpose of AA. We feel strongly that all members of AA should have a Home Group and a job in that Home Group; have commitments in AA and keep them; have a sponsor and be willing to sponsor people.

We believe in courtesy, manners, and respect, and expect home group members to get to all meetings at least 15 minutes early for fellowship, and to stay in their seats and pay attention once the meeting has begun. Our coffee maker is expected to arrive at 6:30 pm so the coffee is ready at 7:00 pm (30 minutes prior to the meeting). We have greeters, coffee, and snacks at our group, as well as literature and a speaker disc lending library.

Our group has many service positions so that all Home Group members may have one. Some examples are floor sweeper, outdoor litter control, literature set-up and breakdown, coffee maker and clean-up, extra chairs set out, GSR, Intergroup Rep, and many more.

The money we take in from voluntary contributions of AA members helps buy coffee and literature, pay rent, and support day conferences and Intergroup, District, VAC, and GSO.

The original two founding members of our group had previously been members of the Buckingham Group. We are still closely related to that group, as some of our home group members regularly travel to that county for their Tuesday night (8:00 pm) meeting. Thoughts and ideas for the founding of our meeting were bounced off members of the Buckingham Group, especially Al J., who still sponsors both of our founding members.

The very first speaker at our group was Charlie M., who later moved to Boston. Charlie discussed "The Doctor's Opinion" that night. Our group started small, but attendance began to grow. As the years passed, we felt it necessary to change rooms in the church to better accommodate our growing attendance. We now meet in the downstairs Fellowship Hall which provides ample space for our meetings. Though attendance does spike, dip, and fluctuate, the average attendance is about 45 people.

In February 2006, our group decided to host its first day conference. Calling it the *No One Among Us* conference, three AA speakers spoke and we provided free lunch. The event was so successful that it has become an annual event, held the last Saturday of every February at Hinton Ave United Methodist Church; 2015 will mark our tenth free annual event.

In 2007, our Group decided that on the last Thursday of every month we would alter our format and allow a speaker to have the entire meeting to share experience, strength, and hope. The speaker shares how their life was, what happened, and how it is now. This tradition continues; the last Thursday of every month is still a speaker meeting.

Also in 2007 our group decided to celebrate our third anniversary with a free dinner provided by the group, followed by an AA speaker. On November 1, 2007, we enjoyed a fried chicken dinner, and then Al J. of Buckingham shared his experience, strength, and hope. We continue to celebrate the founding of our group with dinner and an AA speaker.

In 2010, we changed our Home Group Anniversary dinner from fried chicken to chili. Home Group members brought batches of chili. In 2011, this evolved into a Chili Cook-off in conjunction with the Anniversary Celebration. Long-time Home Group member John C. took home the Best Chili honors - and the golf tournament trophy we created. This requires further explanation.

Earlier in 2011, we held the first ever Common Solution Open Golf Tournament. Since none of us are all that good, we played at the McIntire Park beginner's course. Men and women, as well as non-home-group

members, joined in the play. “Moustache Jim”, a non-home group member, had the winning low round, so we presented him a trophy at the next Home Group meeting. This was a home-made job, reconfiguring an old ballet trophy with duct tape and magic markers to commemorate the golf championship. So we reconfigured it again as the Best Chili trophy.

As 2011 progressed, we were overjoyed at the beginnings of the female contingent in our home group. We currently have 4 female members. We have gained and lost Home Group members over the years, climbing as high as 31 at one point; we now have 27 members.

In 2013 our group decided it would benefit us and our fellows if we could carry a meeting into the local jail. We do this as a Home Group with the willing and available members taking two-month rotations to host and chair the jail meeting. Often we stay on for longer than our two-month rotation but always rotate back around in about ten months. At least two Home Group members attend our jail meeting which is on Monday nights at 7:00 pm in the local county jail. There are frequently between three and five of us there each week.

Our group celebrates the AA anniversary of members by presenting them with a bronze medallion corresponding to their sobriety date. We provide a dessert after these anniversary meetings to continue the celebration and fellowship.

We have had minor issues over the years, usually revolving around money or how our group operates. Some examples are how much money to spend on anniversary cakes, whether to have cookies, how much to spend on a coffee pot, and whether we should use email as a means of discussing Home Group business. None of these issues have led to splits or major disagreements, as we always strive to solve issues using the Traditions and substantial unanimity in our votes.

We do allow for someone to speak to the minority opinion before final voting takes place. It is comical that the one pervasive issue was whether or not to provide cookies before the meeting. It seems like this was brought up for a vote numerous times before finally passing, and is still the subject of much humor. It is good that we can laugh at our growing pains as we all strive to live this way of life.

Another part of our history that shows our growth was the dissolution of our Steering Committee. Early in our history, we wanted to protect the format of our meetings by having any proposed change go through the steering committee members prior to being brought to the Group for a vote. As our Group grew in size and we individually grew in sobriety, it became clear that the Group would do just fine without this protection. However, we added a clause that any proposed changes to the meeting format have a three-month

discussion period prior to a vote, to ensure that all Home Group members are well aware of the issues at hand and have an opportunity to attend the meeting on the voting night.

As we look to the future, we hope to continue to carry the message of hope and recovery via AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to alcoholics for many years to come. One future plan we are discussing is whether or not to start hosting a Saturday night speaker meeting. We have already discussed potential formats for this meeting.

Whatever we decide, it seems that our group is vibrant and healthy as of August 2014, and we look forward to staying sober, living in the Steps, and continuing to carry a message of hope and recovery to those who still suffer.

**Grupo Hay Una Solucion** (3/24/04; 659763; Charlottesville) [There Is a Solution Group]

Our group was formed in February 2003 at the initiative of an individual who came to Charlottesville in 2002, knowing the necessity of an alcoholic who can only stay sober by being in touch with another alcoholic.

In his search for another AA group he came upon the Church of Incarnation. There he met a social worker who worked with cases of domestic violence and knew about the consequences of alcoholism inside a family, which was the reason the social worker gave him her support.

During this period the group reached a membership of 12 people, but they still lacked communication with other groups. As a consequence the group remained isolated due to lack of integration with our local Intergroup office.

A few years ago the group became integrated with Jefferson District 9. Through the office in Northern Virginia, they came into contact with other groups in the Virginia Area; one of these groups was Faith and Hope, based in Richmond offered invaluable support. Another support group, Third of May, was in the city of Fredericksburg. It is worth mentioning the visit of a fellow member of more than forty years, who was an inspiration to keep moving forward. Members used to travel up to two hours every day to attend meetings, which gave reason to create another group in the Harrisonburg area.

After seven years of invaluable support from the Church of Incarnation, the group relocated themselves on November 1, 2010 to McIntire Plaza where we continue meeting to this day on Mon/Weds at 8:00 pm.

Today the There Is a Solution Group serves the community by carrying the message of lasting sobriety. That is why we thank our higher power for the AA program because it was and still is the light of many lives who are still in the darkness of alcoholism.

The group There Is a Solution thanks those who by their presence made

this humble, but significant reunion, possible.

**As You Like It Group** (8/3/04; 661718; Charlottesville)  
Spotnap Rd, Sunday 10:00 am, Saturday.

**Happy Destiny Group** (3/23/05; 665027; Charlottesville)

In 2002, The Happy Destiny Group was meeting in a house associated with the Unitarian Church on Rugby Road. The format was to listen to a speaker tape for twenty minutes, then open the floor for discussion about what we heard on the tape or anything related to alcoholism. After the Unitarian Church house was closed, we moved to Sojourners Church on Monticello Avenue, where we continue with the same format, except we listen to speaker CDs instead of cassettes.

Sojourners Church, Wed, 5:30 pm.

**Early Bird Group** (5/13/05; 676785; Charlottesville)

Founders; Early Members. Rachel H., Ellen P.; Sandy G., Michelle H. Other early members are fondly remembered, including Big Art F., “the kindest man you’ll ever meet.”

The group began in January 2005 at Holy Comforter Church, meeting one morning a week at 7:00a.m.; soon a second meeting was added. As the group expanded to a dozen or so, a third meeting was started at Belmont Baptist Church in 2006.

The group continued to meet in both locations until Spring 2008, when it decided to move all meetings to Belmont Baptist. The group had been moved to a small basement room at Holy Comforter; one rainy morning, the group convened as usual when suddenly a torrent of water rushed down the stairs, quickly covering the floor. As it accumulated to more than an inch, three or four members quietly got up and began to mop. The meeting continued without interruption. Come the deluge, there will still be AA meetings!

By June 2008, there were five meetings a week, Monday through Friday. A Saturday meeting was added in July 2009, and a Sunday meeting in October 2010. It is the only group in Jefferson District that meets seven days a week.

From the beginning, the meetings were largely literature-based. Currently, each week features readings from the Big Book, the Twelve and Twelve, and Big Book stories, and also readings from the Grapevine, As Bill Sees It, and Daily Reflections. The seventh day is a speaker/discussion meeting.

Home Group (25 members) meets on Third Mondays after the regular meeting; we have lively discussions about the Traditions and how best to serve and carry the message. We are active in the District with a GSR and Intergroup

Rep, and also members and chairs of District Committees.

On four holidays - Memorial Day, July 4, Labor Day and Thanksgiving - the group has well-attended open meetings with coffee and breakfast goods.

We draw quite a few out-of-town visitors who are grateful for an early morning meeting. And we have a great cross-section of newcomers and old-timers and everything in between.

**Keswick AA Group** (5/29/05; 700933; Keswick)

Grace Episcopal, Mon., 7:30 pm

**A Vision For You Group** (1/2/06; 669806; Charlottesville)

A Vision For You Group was created on December 21, 2005. A small band of AA members merged two meetings, both spin-offs of the (now inactive) group NUTS (Not Using the Steps). On this date founding members Josh W., Bart S., and Mike G. initiated discussion of the merger that was to become our home group, and Josh proposed what was to become our name, A Vision For You, taken from Chapter 11 of the Big Book. Through compiling this group history we're learning that past experience grants us vision for tomorrow and that the time we give to AA is an investment in our sobriety.

AV4U (as the group is affectionately called by its members) decided to host two meetings, one at the Hinton Avenue United Methodist Church in the Belmont area of town on Saturdays at noon, and the other at the Salvation Army on Ridge Street on Wednesday nights at 7:30 pm. Keeping within the spirit of AA Traditions, our group is separate from the shelter, but the location of the meeting there gives us a special opportunity to cooperate without affiliating, and to carry the message to alcoholics just starting to get sober. From shared experience we know that alcoholics at one time or another may be temporarily homeless or newly out of jail, feeling alone; but they have available a new way of sober living through AA.

The eight founding members of A Vision For You were Bart S., Erik S., James W., Josh W., Linda O., Mike G., Sue S., and Tim M. Our group registered with GSO and got into service right away; original service positions were filled by our second meeting in January 2006. On our last group anniversary, December 21, 2013, two original members were still an active part of the group - Michael G. and Sue S.

Although our founding members all had less than two years of sobriety, we were blessed with sponsors who helped us along the way. To those who went before us and showed us by their example, we remain grateful for their rich heritage, making the day possible when we opened the doors of our Home Group.

Our purpose as we came together was to be helpful and useful to fellow members of Alcoholics Anonymous by practicing the basic principles of the program through our Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.

Our meeting formats have remained fairly unchanged over the years: both meetings are open literature-based discussions. The Wednesday night Salvation Army meeting is a Big Book discussion, and the Saturday Hinton Avenue meeting at 11:00 am (the original time was changed from noon by group vote) remains a Step discussion based on readings from the 12&12. Beginning in January 2008, the last Saturday of every month we focus on the Tradition of the month.

We welcome newcomers, surround them with caring AA members, give warm handshakes and hugs with a “Welcome home,” along with a meeting list, AA literature specific to the newcomer, and a Big Book with either men’s or women’s telephone numbers.

We celebrate a Home Group member’s sobriety birthday with a medallion and a cake. When times were less lean we also gave the gift of a *Grapevine* subscription. The celebrant has the option of telling his or her story at the meeting or inviting someone else to tell theirs.

A Vision For You holds group inventories. At our first, in the summer of 2006, the question that came to the forefront was, “Are we being of service?” The idea of our first mini-conference was born, as well as a deepened personal commitment to the Home Group. As a result, we sponsored our first mini-conference, The Sober Life, on December 9, 2006. Speakers included Jen E., Bob F. from Richmond, and Paul B. from Newport News. More mini-conferences followed over the years. We also support many other local home groups’ events, and we love to cook, especially for the District’s annual holiday Alcahons. We also support Jefferson District Intergroup, Jefferson District, Virginia Area 71, Southeast Regional, and local AA events.

We put forth a motion to have the *Grapevine* become staple-free. Effectively, we were the voice for those of us without one in facilities prohibiting literature with staples, which included the *Grapevine*. Through the general service process, lo and behold, the motion was eventually approved, and the *Grapevine* is now staple-free and allowed in our jails and institutions.

Several home group members take meetings to treatment centers and the Albemarle County Regional Jail. We are involved in sponsorship, answering phones at our local central office, old fashioned 12<sup>th</sup> Step calls, and being active in service with the Jefferson District Intergroup, Jefferson District Service Committee, and Virginia Area Committee. We have a past Intergroup Chairman and two past DCMs. (By quirk of fate, both chaired the Virginia Area Archives Committee.) Home Group members also participate in VAC

assemblies and conventions, Southeast regional forums, SSAASA, conferences as far away as Alaska and when possible international AA conventions. (Did we mention we love road trips?)

The meetings have changed from our humble beginnings with just a few of us in attendance (like two or three), to today's meetings where we commonly host 20-30 alcoholics. Our Home Group membership has always been active and strong, although in 2012, we did experience an inexplicable decline in Home Group members. At one point there were only two members, but they hung in, refusing to let their beloved Group fail. Before long more and more new members joined the Home Group, attracted by the friendliness, laid-back manner, and adherence to the spirit of AA's principles. We now have more new members and an energetic group of alcoholics again who are always ready to walk with a fellow alcoholic in the solution.

Today our home group members include Alan C., Anne C., Beth H., Billy W., Cindy N., Eileen T., Emilie W., Grif N., Harvey B., Jane W., Kevin M., Liz B., Marty R., Michael G., Ralph W., Richard P., Sue S., and Victoria T. We continue celebrating our group anniversary every December with a special eating meeting with a guest speaker. We've experienced weddings, divorces, graduations, illnesses and, tragically, the recent and unexpected deaths of two of our members. One death was directly related to our shared foe, the disease of alcoholism, a stark reminder that all we have is a daily reprieve contingent on what we do each and every day.

We have had our share of calamities. We once had a flooded meeting room at the Hinton Avenue church due to a leaking roof. Two members found mops, went to work, and called the pastor to let him know of the situation while the meeting went on. At the Salvation Army the infamously loud and rattling washer above the dining hall where we meet flooded over numerous times, with water leaking (pouring) through the ceiling on us. We drunks didn't miss a beat and kept the meeting going while we grabbed trash cans to catch the water. We also keep the meeting going through the occasional fire engine sirens next door heading out on a call. Our doors are open no matter what, through snowstorms, hurricanes and the 5.8 earthquake in Summer 2011.

Two members recall setting up the Salvation Army meeting while the Charlottesville City PD dragged a drunk out of the shelter's dinner service. Unable to walk under his own steam, he was escorted off by officers to a waiting paddy wagon for being drunk and a danger to himself and others. The two members knew that but for the grace of God, there go I. We hope he found his way to the rooms. In this spirit, active alcoholics who may still be shaking and reeking of King Alcohol are welcomed and given a hot cup of coffee, while seeds are planted waiting to be cultivated.

We do just what the Big Book suggests on page 132 - “We absolutely insist on enjoying life!” - by mixing Recovery, Unity and Service and practicing Rule #62 - not taking ourselves too seriously. Our Home Group founded the Jefferson District's “Not Yet Ready For Recovery Players,” performing zany skits relating to various aspects of the AA way of life, including the 5th Step Comedy Night, *Grapevine's* Madge and Sylvia, and the Anonymity Police.

Another example of not taking ourselves too seriously and our code of love and tolerance was during heated debates at several recent Home Group business meetings. The topic was the sudden increase of profanity at our Saturday morning meetings, which was offensive to some people, chasing a few newcomers and old-timers away and troubling the church's community. Not a new problem in AA, but new to AV4U and a cause of much group distress. After several months of disagreement on how to address this issue, an old-timer suggested we simply quote Bill W. who once wrote, “Profanity, even when mild, rarely contributes as much as it detracts. It should be avoided.” That simply, we took our personalities out of the issue and turned to our Fellowship's co-founder to find the solution.

A rich diversity of the AA Fellowship is represented in our meetings, from the newest newcomers with their hands still shaking to old-timers with forty-plus years of sobriety, from bleeding deacons to elder statesmen, and alcoholics with a variety of special needs and accessibility challenges. (We're happy to bring meetings to those who are homebound or in the hospital.) Our vocations, and whatever our drinking, social, educational, or religious backgrounds may be, are not important. We welcome visiting family members, clergy, and UVA nursing and medical school students who come to learn more about AA. We've been blessed with a number of students over the years who have joined our group after realizing their own powerlessness over alcohol, and who have gone on to become nurses and doctors while maintaining their sobriety.

Today, we're learning more and more with and from each other. By no means do we claim to be saints or to speak for AA as a whole. We are a part of the worldwide fellowship linking one group to another. We contribute in a team effort to ensure the smooth running of our meetings. We're gaining familiarity as symbolized by the triangle in the circle of fellowship - the gifts bestowed on us recovering alcoholics known as the three Legacies: the Steps of Recovery, the Traditions of Unity, and the Concepts of Service. Our unity ensures recovery through service.

From the beginning, AV4U has been all about carrying our group's message, which is the AA message, to the best of our ability. As we read at the end of every meeting: Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be

with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then.” (BB 164)

**Mineral Big Book Study Group (1/5/06; 668964; Mineral)**

Mineral Baptist Church. Mineral Baptist Church, Thurs, 7:00 pm.

**Ever Green Group (1/19/08; 680706; Charlottesville)**

Founders; Early Members: Charley B., Joan G., Louise M.; Jane, Matt, Gloria.

Charley B. was very instrumental in starting this group so there would be an AA meeting in an African-American Church. Evergreen lost its building, so in 2010 we found a new location that has a large African-American contingent, keeping the spirit of this meeting. Ever Green currently meets at Word of Faith Church, Lambs Road, Sat., 2:00 pm. All meetings are open discussion.

**Young and Sober Group (4/29/09; 688950; Charlottesville) (aka Young Peoples Group)**

Founders: Tom B., Liz H., Tristan S. - with loving, helpful support of many others.

The first meeting of the Young Peoples Group was held on Saturday, March 29, 2008. Mission Statement: "This is a meeting that is targeted at young people, those who got sober young and the young at heart. Many of us thought that when we came into the rooms we had been sentenced to lifelong boredom, and that this was the end of fun. We did not get sober to drop out of life, but to get back into life."

With that in mind, we close each meeting with a passage from a Vision for You (BB 152):

We have shown how we got out from under. You say, "Yes, I'm willing. But am I to be consigned to a life where I shall be stupid, boring and glum, like righteous people I see? I know I must get along without liquor, but how can I? Have you a sufficient substitute?"

Yes, there is a substitute and it is vastly more than that. It is a fellowship in Alcoholics Anonymous. There you will find release from care, boredom and worry. Your imagination will be fired. Life will mean something at last. The most satisfactory years of your existence lie ahead. Thus we find the fellowship, and so will you.

Since its inception, the meeting has opened with a speaker who addresses a topic of his/her choice for 5-15 minutes, followed by discussion. However, now, every third Saturday of the month, the meeting starts with a 5 minute meditation followed by open discussion. The meeting always has been and continues to be an open meeting. Wesley Memorial, Sat. 7:30 pm.

**522 Park St. Meeting** (9/1/09; 695233; Charlottesville)

Founders, Early Members: Colter K., Carol T., D.S., Dennis H. (and others).

We started this Group in July 2003. It grew out of a group of us who worked the Twelve Steps together. We based our Group on the study of any of the conference-approved literature.

Meets at First Presbyterian Church, Tues. 7:30 pm.

**Rule # 62 Crew** (2/1/10; 704006; Charlottesville)

Crescent Hall, Tues., 6:00 pm

**Old Blue Ridge Meeting of AA** (10/30/10(?); 698728; Charlottesville)

Friends Quaker Meeting Room. Sat., 8:00 pm

**Peace in Recovery** (7/30/11; 701526; Charlottesville)

Peace Lutheran Church. Noon, M-F

**Hilltop Group** (9/1/11; 703141; North Garden)

Mt. Olivet United Methodist. Thurs. 6:00 pm

**Rebellious Dogs** (10/31/11; 702981; Charlottesville) [Founded as the Big Book Group in 1975, see pg 19.]

Jack L. and Quincy founded this Saturday night group when they came to Charlottesville after treatment. The group met first at Church of Incarnation, and then in 1997 moved to St. Thomas Aquinas.

The group changed its format from a Big Book meeting to a Step meeting using the 12&12. Recognizing that this caused confusion, we considered renaming the group. At the same time, some challenges developed at our location, so in 2011 we moved to St. Mark's Lutheran where we were welcomed with open arms. Simultaneously, we changed our name to Rebellious Dogs.

This name is a tongue in cheek reference to a line in the 12&12, "rebellion dogs our every step" (p. 73; Step 7). Since alcoholics like us tend to be stubborn and resist change, we think this is a fun name for a great old established group.

## **Joy at the James** (6/15/12; 705262; Scottsville)

Founders: Joey S., Dale S.

Our first meeting was held on June 26, 2012, in a small meeting room at the United Methodist Church. We were thrilled when 10 people showed up, overflowing the room. The pastor of the church was as enthusiastic about starting an AA meeting as we were. He always mentions it at the church service, and he puts it in the bulletin as a regular announcement. With his blessing, within a month we moved into the large Fellowship Hall in the back of the church.

We have grown to 10-20, and sometimes 30. We have a good number of oldtimers and often new folks coming to their first meeting. We usually have homemade cookies and coffee or tea. We use chips to celebrate our time in sobriety.

In January 2014, we started having a Step Meeting the last Tuesday of the month, corresponding to the month number. We have a Home Group meeting on the first Tuesday of the month. We have a report from the Treasurer; we pay rent and contribute to District, Intergroup, Virginia Area 71, and GSO.

An Al-Anon group has formed, and meets at the same time as ours in a separate part of the church.

We had a Speaker/Eating Meeting on our one-year anniversary in June 2013. We were delighted that nearly 100 people attended that meeting and celebration.

## **Serenity Speakers Group** (6/15/12; 705295; Charlottesville)

On July 1, 2012, with a passion for being that reaching hand of AA, the Serenity Speakers Group began welcoming a rich diversity of fellow alcoholics into the warmth of their first open speaker meeting at 10:00 am on Sunday mornings. We met, and still meet, at The Haven located near the historic Vinegar Hill section of downtown Charlottesville. Next to The Haven's community center where meetings are held (with rows of wood pews, stained glass windows and wooden stage) is a day shelter for homeless people. In keeping with the spirit of our Traditions, our group is separate from the shelter. But being located close by gives the group a special opportunity to carry the message to alcoholics just starting to get sober. We attract alcoholics who are new in sobriety from nearby treatment centers as well. From shared experiences, we know alcoholics at one time or another may be homeless or in a treatment center. However, we aren't helpless thanks to living the AA way of life.

The meeting was started by Ronnie H. and Carl H. as a spin-off from the Rule #62 Group. Emilie W. was the group's first speaker. Early active members include Ronnie H., Carl H., Chuck W., Ken D., Sue S., and Emilie W.

The group registered with GSO promptly. We believe it takes an alcoholic to help an alcoholic, and we believe in practicing all our spiritual principles. We all have service jobs in and outside of the group, and make contributions to all A.A. service entities. We encourage newcomers and oldtimers to get involved. We readily participate in any and all local Jefferson District or Virginia Area activities. We're blessed to attract speakers locally and from around Virginia willing to share experience, strength and hope with us all.

Over our young history, meeting attendance has ebbed and flowed. Recently, both attendance and Home Group membership have flourished. At a tender age of just over 2 years, our current Home Group membership includes Ken D., Griff N., Greg P., Liz W., Brian R., Carl H., Matthew R., Sue S.

## APPENDIX I: Inactive Groups

*Inactive Groups* have a story just as active groups do, and contributed to our history in their time. In most cases, these stories are irretrievable now. For the record, these groups are listed below. Where substantive information is available, we have kept the summaries in the text.

- Charlottesville Black AA Group (Early 1970s; Not registered)
- Thursday Discussion Group (6/1/79; 118844)
- Western Albemarle Group (5/17/82; 126126; Crozet) See Greenwood pg 23.
- Palmyra Group (2/9/83; 128493) Founders: Ruth M., Howard T., Doris R. [VP, Formed 1980]
- Charlottesville/Albemarle Joint Complex Group (3/23/83; 155071; prison)
- Candlelight Group (10/3/83; 130545)
- Blue Ridge Hospital. (1984; not registered)
- Scottsville (1985(?); not registered) Founded by Doug G.
- Tuesday Night Big Book Group (2/1/85; 135232) First Baptist Church
- Bring Your Own Big Book, BYOBB (1980s)
- Shot in the Dark Honesty Group (8/10/88; 148903)
- Gettin' Together Group (p) (9/15/88; 155804)
- Serenity Group (11/7/88; 149847; Louisa) [Inactive 2/24/07]
- Serenity Through Sobriety (12/12/88; 150280)
- Ivy Group (2/16/89; 151096)
- Saturday Night Live Group (6/13/90; 162747)
- Gay and Lesbian Group (4/2/92; 171499)
- No Expectations Group (5/2/95; 605811)
- Women in Reflection Group (8/30/95; 607653)
- Newcomers (8/24/96; 614523; Lousia) Memorial Baptist Church
- Faber Group (8/6/98; 629851)
- Friends of Bill W. Group (8/28/99; 638689) [Inactive 11/5/06]
- There is a Solution Group (4/10/01; 652720) [Inactive 1/24/11]

- First 100 Group (1/4/03; 655584) [Inactive 2/24/07]
- N.U.T.S. Group (5/8/03; 655838) ["Not Using The Steps"]
- Room to Grow Group (2/13/04; 552463) [Inactive 6/26/06]
- Grupo Nuevo Comienzo (10/11/04; 657905) [Inactive 6/30/09]
- Antioch Meeting of AA (12/5/09; 702247; Scottsville) Antioch Baptist Church

## APPENDIX II: Non-Registered Groups

*Active, Non-Registered Groups/Meetings* are contributing to making our history today, although they generally fly under the radar of the District. Except for ACORN, almost nothing is recorded about these groups at present. Some may not be registered because they are too small, or because there are too few Home Group members, or for other reasons. The ones listed are in Charlottesville/ Albemarle only; JD9 serves groups outside the District in contiguous counties for which we don't have GSO numbers, so we can't tell which are registered.

- A Part of, Th. 7:00 pm, The Crossings
- Basket Cases, 5:30 pm, AIDS Services Group
- Fellowship of the Spirit, M/Th 7:00 pm, Charlottesville Vineyard Church
- Go to Meetin' Meeting, Sun. 3:00 pm, New Bethel United Methodist
- Grapenutts, Sun 12:30 pm, Common Grounds Building. Grapevine Meeting.
- Growth in Recovery, Th. 10:00 am, Senior Center
- Mindful Steps, 11:30 am Sunday, St. Paul's Episcopal. Meditation Meeting.
- Nightowls, Fri 11:00 pm, Park Street Christian Church
- Primary Purpose, M/W/Sun, 8:00 pm, Mohr Center
- There is a Solution, Fri. 7:00 pm. Calvary Baptist. (Group by same name listed as inactive)
- ACORN ("Alcoholics Can Only Recover Now"). GSO reg. pending. Meets Wednesday, 7:00 pm, TJ Unitarian Church. ACORN was started Summer 2012 by Kathleen S., Meredith W., Charlie, and Cullen (all in their first year of sobriety), when a group meeting at the same time and place had stopped meeting but was still on the schedule. Every week a few people would show up, but there was no one there to lead or set up. A few people decided to reignite the abandoned meeting, and changed the name. Every week the group asks attendees for a volunteer to lead the next week's meeting. ACORN is for those new and old in sobriety, and it welcomes all types of recovering alcoholics.



