

The Oconee County Group

The founders of AA in Watkinsville were Grady G. and Floyd B. Grady had had some quality sobriety in New York but lost it after coming home to the unfamiliar brand of AA he found in Georgia. Floyd, too, had had several years of good sobriety in Athens, Georgia, but, like the AA group in Athens, he fell on hard times and lost it somewhere along the way. Just as both of these men were struggling to find sobriety again, they met each other and decided to start an AA group in Oconee County that they might stay sober in. The Oconee County AA had its first meeting on September 19, 1970, in the basement of the Methodist Church on Main Street in Watkinsville.

From the beginning, the Oconee County Group had a strong sense of single purpose. The founders wanted to recreate the best AA they had known. They wanted a fundamental, basic, Big Book-oriented group. They always resisted the addition of unnecessary rituals, new fads, and accretions. Around 1974, when hand-holding for the Lord's Prayer became customary in Georgia AA, Oconee County didn't take it up. Nor did they ever start using the chip system. Around 1980 when the Promises began to be regularly read at many Georgia AA meetings, Oconee never started that either. There was an effort to stick to the bare-boned essentials, and at every meeting a Big Book was always open in front of the chairman. Grady did preserve a custom from his New York AA experience-- he would always end the meeting on time and on a light note by announcing that "there are no souls saved after 9 o'clock!"

Around 1975, the group left its original place in the church basement and moved to a store building on South Main Street at a house near the intersection of Highway 441 and Highway 15. Around 1980, it moved to a house near Butler's Crossroads near the Oconee High School. In 1985, the group moved again to a meeting room upstairs over the Wells Building on Main Street in downtown Watkinsville. The meeting place was for several years the Chamber of Commerce building on the corner of Highway 53 and Nancy Dr.

In August 1997, the group moved to Watkinsville First United Methodist Church. Real changes started in 2008 when the group was small and "acceptance" took hold. The meetings now start with the Readings of AA, we hold hands, and give out the Chips designating our time in sobriety. In 2010 the group made a big decision. The Oconee County Group suffered through years of "frustration and resentment" for being excluded from the Athens AA community due to historic rules, regulations, and district boundaries imposed us by our "trusted servants". (It all goes back to the movement of the County seat from Watkinsville to Athens in 1872-- but that's another story). The Oconee County Group finally found the "courage" to exert the effort necessary "to change". We studied the Georgia AA Service manual, the history and precedents, then authored and submitted a detailed proposal to change district lines, moving Oconee County to District 16B. We solicited and won the necessary votes from the donor and recipient Districts. The resulting proposal was presented to the Georgia State Assembly resulting in the September 2011 redistricting of Oconee County-- including it in the Athens AA Community....at last.