

## *What is AOTS?*

AOTS is a men's service club that is affiliated with the United Church of Canada, but is open to all men on a broad ecumenical basis. AOTS aims to promote fellowship, deepen the spiritual life of men, and develop an effective program of Christian service. In fact, AOTS stands for "**As One That Serves**", which is taken from the statement by Christ: "I am among you as One that serves." (*Luke 22.27*).

Although the goals of AOTS are taken seriously, club members enjoy the camaraderie of sharing, supporting, searching, studying, and serving together. AOTS fosters a **good time for a good cause**, mixing the social with the spiritual, as men of the church.

## *Where Did AOTS Begin?*

AOTS was born in Vancouver in 1923. The first official club was formed that year by **Dr Herbert Riggs**, a physician at Kerrisdale Methodist (now Ryerson United Church). The concept spread quickly to other churches and communities on the West Coast, then steadily across the country. By the mid-fifties, there were close to 10,000 members in Canada and Bermuda. For more information of the history of the AOTS movement, contact the National Office.

## *Where is AOTS Today?*

In the early years of its existence, AOTS, although recognized and encouraged by the church, was an independent organization. Currently, the National Association of AOTS Men's Clubs is officially integrated into the structures of the United Church of Canada. **There are over 60 active clubs** meeting and serving in communities across the country from Vancouver Island to Newfoundland.

## *What Do AOTS Clubs Do?*

The format and style of an AOTS club varies with the size, location, and make up of the community and the home church. Each is geared to the interests, needs and concerns of its members. A typical club meets monthly for dinner or breakfast—this might include an interesting program or speaker, devotionals, and a discussion of on-going service projects. The club is likely to be involved with several community outreach and church-related programs. Some examples:

- Visiting shut-ins
- Supporting the local food bank or transitional housing organization.
- Providing leadership for youth activities in the church.
- Helping with the upkeep of local camps and sponsoring underprivileged campers.

While they may serve an obvious practical purpose, **AOTS projects promote fellowship** and this "hands-on" approach inspires laymen to become more involved in the church.

## *How Does a Club Operate?*

Some clubs have only a half-dozen members, while others have 100 or more. The average is about 20. Clubs usually have an elected executive consisting of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. However, some clubs operate effectively as a less-formal organization, headed by a single chairman or convenor. Nominal dues are assessed to finance club administration and to support the wider work of the **National Association**. While AOTS is primarily a United Church organization, it is open to the widest possible ecumenical cooperation. Some clubs are truly community organizations, with several members who are active in other denominations.

## *What is the National Association?*

The National Association of the AOTS represents the network of affiliated men's clubs and relates to the United Church at the national level through the Division of Mission in Canada. The AOTS National Council consists of a President, Treasurer, Secretary, Regional Vice-Presidents, Conference representatives, and the chairmen of various committees. These elected officers (and volunteers) are in regular contact with each other to discuss policy issues for the movement, to manage national and regional projects, to report regional activities, and to organize national events such as the **Biennial Convention**.

## *What are National Projects?*

Dr Riggs's AOTS was founded on the principle that clubs promote "better community life and better citizenship by the practical application of the teaching of Jesus". Today, AOTS clubs across Canada maintain these objectives by supporting church and community projects, as well as the following national initiatives:

<b>Hospital Project</b>	funding equipment, and the training of medical staff, in needy and remote areas of the country.
<b>Talking Magazine</b>	providing copies of the <i>United Church Observer</i> on tape for circulation to the sight impaired.
<b>Youth to Camp</b>	sponsoring youth to attend, and helping with the upkeep of, United Church camps across Canada.
<b>Harry Colnett Award</b>	providing scholarships for agriculture, fisheries, or food services students who are willing to spend time in an underprivileged country.

## *Why be Affiliated With AOTS?*

While any organized men's group can be an effective instrument of the church, the AOTS club expands this definition. Just as a church would be incomplete in its ministry if it functioned solely for itself and by itself, an individual men's group may not be rising to its true potential either. Through AOTS, clubs can join forces with other like-minded groups at the community, regional, and national level.

The National Association helps amplify the voice of the laity in the total life and work of the Church. It provides a regular exchange of information and ideas through its newsletter (The **Handshake**), website ([www.aots.ca](http://www.aots.ca)), and various other literature and resource materials. It encourages interaction between clubs through the "**Travelling Gavel/Cross**" programmes and through involvement in regional rallies and retreats.

## *How Does a Club Get Started?*

It begins with one man of faith recognizing the need, and then discussing his interests with others in his church. A group of like-minded individuals can gather in an informal way for dinner or breakfast, for spiritual fellowship, to work together on an outreach project, or conduct a lay ministry within the church. This is the foundation of an AOTS club.

Consider the benefits of becoming part of the National Association of AOTS Men's Clubs. Talk to your minister about it. Invite an AOTS representative to come and describe his involvement in the national association and discuss the operation and activities of his local club.

**Individuals can also join** the National Association without having to belong to a club. This category of membership allows men who live far away from the nearest active club to become involved in many regional and national activities of the AOTS.

# AS ONE THAT SERVES

For over 80 years, the AOTS has been involved in:

- introducing thousands of laymen to the spiritual fellowship of the church.
- helping give laymen practical training and experience in group leadership and volunteerism.
- spreading the good news of the gospel.
- providing lay ministry and support for ministerial staff.
- nurturing enthusiasm and goodwill within and between congregations.
- raising money and providing labour for church renovation projects.
- supporting countless local, national, and international outreach programs and missions.
- supporting ongoing national AOTS projects — Youth-to-Camp, Observer on Tape, Hospital Projects, and scholarships.



[WWW.AOTS.CA](http://WWW.AOTS.CA)

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*You were asking about*

# AOTS



National Association of  
United Church AOTS Men's Clubs