

# **EASTERN CANADA REGIONAL FORUM**

## **FINAL REPORT**

**May 13-15, 2022**

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES  
AND NON-ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2022 Eastern Canada Regional Forum was held on May 13-25, 2022. Registration for the Forum was **319**. This included **219** members attending their very first Forum.

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the upcoming 2022 Regional  
Forums:

Pacific: September 16-18, 2022

Southeast: December 2-4, 2022

## UNANSWERED ASK-IT BASKET QUESTIONS

### **The Blue people. Why are they blue? And why are there 16 people?**

On the previous G.S.O. A.A. website, the “Blue People” graphic appeared on the top of the homepage, on other pages, and on A.A. “e-banners” linking to other sites. The “Blue People” - the silhouetted figures - is associated as representing the A.A. Fellowship (and at the time, the A.A..org website). The color was selected as it was synonymous with A.A. – “Big Book blue” if you will. The number “16” has no special meaning. The “People” though, is a representation of the Fellowship – it speaks to, among other qualities, the inclusiveness of the A.A. Fellowship

### **100 people will say this... we need translations in the breakout rooms! Thanks**

Thank you for the feedback. Agreed, to provide adequate service for the strong turnout of French speaking members, additional interpreters were needed. We have noted this condition in our records in planning for the 2024 Eastern Canada Regional Forum.

### **In the era of social media and Zoom, do we need at least 2 staff (maybe a trustee also) who is 25 years or younger? Who is a native (not an adopter) to virtual life?**

Thank you for the suggestion. This was the first live regional forum in three years and we realize improvements are needed.

### **How do you handle someone breaking their anonymity at the public level?**

Here is a description of the procedure we follow when G.S.O. is notified of an anonymity break:

When G.S.O. receives information regarding an anonymity break, we send a notification email to the delegate of the area where the break occurred, along with copies of the article (or links to the online content) and sample response letters. It is suggested that each anonymity break be considered by the delegate on a case-by-case basis. Usually, the delegate will write to the A.A. member or ask another trusted servant to make contact with the member.

We generally do not contact media professionals regarding anonymity breaks when they are reporting on information given to them by an A.A. member. It is the responsibility of the individual A.A. member and not the media professional to observe our Tradition of anonymity.

You may be interested to know that we write to media professionals on an annual basis reminding them of our Anonymity Tradition, its importance to our Fellowship and thanking them for their past cooperation. [Anonymity Letter to Media | Alcoholics Anonymous \(A.A..org\)](#)

### **Will the Public Information Video be able to play to TV someday?**

Traditionally, when the General Service Conference approves a new video Public Service Announcement (PSA), they also approve “centralized distribution and tracking for a one-year period.” This means the PSA is sent to major TV stations

across the U.S. and Canada, along with an information packet requesting that they consider airing our PSA.

With our two most recently produced and distributed PSAs we are currently tracking the number of times they have been aired on many TV stations for the remainder of 2022.

To access reports for information on the airing of the new PSAs on U.S. and Canada stations use the following link:

<http://reportcenter.c360m.com/>

**Username:** A.A.2021

**Inclusivity: I saw 2 dogs in the room. Why no cat? When I see so many cats in recovery on zoom. The ala-cats and ala-dogs are my friends**

Have you ever seen a cat on a leash? Not a pretty sight.

**I was wondering if the district, DCM, District officers and committee chair. When I was a GSR I always felt that the district could be bypassed and the GSR could do directly to the area assembly and represent his/her group. I am not suggesting that GSR bypass the district but just wondering if the district and all its components were added later to the service structure.**

As you may know, the first General Service Conference with Area Delegates was held in 1951. The terms, District and District Committee Members, were introduced to the Fellowship informally in the early 1950's. Records in the G.S.O. Archives indicate that both terms continued to be used informally through the mid-1960s. The earliest document found to use the term "District" was the 1955 draft of *The Third Legacy Manual of World Service*. This draft used the term Districts to refer to the geographic origin of the term "Committeemen." Although a formal definition of the term, "District" was introduced between 1967 and 1969, as a result of a 1966 Conference Action, the term "District Committee Member" did not receive such formalization until 1975.

**My question was related to a proposed Structure and Operating Procedures (SOP):**

**Moncton and Surrounding Area District 11  
New Brunswick and P.E.I. Area 81  
Structure and Operating Procedures (SOP)**

**It states in the opening remarks the following;**

**Purpose: This draft is being presented for consideration by District 11 only. An Ad Hoc Committee is recommended to review, revise and present a final draft for approval by the District (DCM,Alt,Treasurer,Secretary, Committee Chairs {PI,Treatment}and all GSRs). It is hoped these guidelines will allow District 11 to function more efficiently, increase accountability to the groups it represents and**

minimize/resolve disputes between members. Where possible/necessary the A.A.W.S. Publication "The A.A. Service Manual Combined With Twelve Concepts for World Service" will be noted and referenced (referred to by SM and corresponding page number).

There is one area in particular that has our group, New Bridge Group (NBG) concerned that I've outlined below;

#### **Section 6 – Dispute Resolution**

Upon a request being made by any group for help from the District Committee the following shall

apply:

a) The current DCM would meet with the Group members to discuss and resolve the issue(s).

b) If still unresolved, the DCM should appoint 3 current District Committee Members to meet

with the group(s) involved in the dispute and resolve the issue at the group level.

c) If no satisfactory resolution is reached after exercising a) and b) the group of three members

and the group(s) in question may bring the matter to the next District Meeting for input from all

District Committee Members.

In order for our group to accept the proposed policy related to Section 6 – Dispute Resolution, we made amendments to the proposal that would impact the GSO office if accepted, as outlined below;

#### **Section 6 – Dispute Resolution**

Upon a request being made by any group for help from the District Committee the following shall apply providing, that the group(s) in question have attempted to resolve the dispute through their group conscience:

a) The current DCM would meet with the Group members to discuss and resolve the issue(s).

b) If still unresolved, each side would select a District Committee Member and the third member from Area to meet

with the group(s) involved in the dispute and resolve the issue at the group level.

c) If no satisfactory resolution is reached after exercising a) and b)

the matter would be referred to the GSO by the chairperson of the committee.

As the GSR for the NBG, I brought this matter to our group conscience for discussion, amendments and voting to accept the new policy, prior to the next District meeting on May 26, 2022

Our group would appreciate GSO's opinion on the, "Proposed draft of Structure and Operating Procedures "specifically related to Section 6 – Dispute Resolution. I can

**forward a complete copy of the proposed document if required.**

As far as the members question at the forum...First things first I would like whoever responds directly to mention that just the topic being discussed it great to hear and see. Wherever the group/district decides to go is on them but always great to be a part of the local structure looking at how we can communicate better.

Now more directly to the question. As we all know, G.S.O. is a repository of shared experience and we do not tell any member, group or other A.A. entity how to interpret the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions or Twelve Concepts, but we do share experience and occasionally make a suggestion especially when it involves our office directly. One point I want to make clear is we are NOT suggesting either guideline is better than the other, we trust through informed discussion you all will figure that out for yourself, however we are sharing our experience with the GSO line as we have been asked and it does affect us directly.

With that spirit in mind, it may be worth considering that G.S.O. cannot get involved in local matters in this way. Even if we could, and even if we wanted to, the suggestion of doing so does circumvent the General Service Structure. G.S.O. takes direction from the General Service Conference, gathers shared experience from all the members, groups, districts, areas, Intergroup and Central Offices and we make that experience accessible for those within the service structure to utilize so they in turn can have further discussions locally and thus become stronger, more unified and more effectively carry A.A.'s message. G.S.O. would risk damaging that very important process of local communication by taking on this role.

As the group services coordinator at the G.S.O. I would suggest replacing "referred to the G.S.O." with "Regional Trustee". In our current edition of the A.A. Service Manual there is a great quote regarding the Regional Trustee, "Having leadership experience enables a member to deal with A.A. growth and affairs with grace and a minimum of friction." In our experience most districts can handle schisms with open and honest communication, especially guided discussion such as having a district inventory facilitated by someone outside of the district. In the few cases where that has not been able to happen to our knowledge there is help from the area. The logical next pick from the upside down triangle some may say is the Regional Trustee.

We all here at the G.S.O. hope you will always stay in touch and give us the opportunity to share the experience that others in your service structure have shared with us, in hopes that A.A.'s spiritual aim to share experience strength and hope with each other with not only be useful but have strong wisdom and purpose.



# WORKSHOP REPORTS

Session A: 10:40 AM-11:15 AM EST

## **Newcomers in a Virtual World**

**Moderator: Kimberley F. Reporter: James O.**

Good morning, I'm an alcoholic, currently serving as Panel 71 delegate for Area 83: Eastern Ontario, and my name is Kimberley.

When Bill W. introduced the Responsibility Declaration in 1965, I wonder if he envisioned that A.A. would be reaching its virtual hand into kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms all over the world to connect with the still suffering alcoholic.

Most of us know members that have never been to an in-person A.A. meeting. They have sobered up or are striving to sober up behind a screen. Their connection to others is either through their computer or their cell phone. If they have a sponsor, they may never have met them in the flesh.

And yet, some are getting their one or two year medallions!

What does A.A. look like for these newcomers? How does A.A. fellowship before and after the meetings feel for them? How do they participate in our 7th tradition? What does sponsorship look like? How are they learning about the steps, traditions, and concepts? How will the voices of these newcomers be heard in our General Service Structure? Can virtual groups be incorporated into our service structure, or should they branch out and create a structure of their own?

Newcomers in a virtual age – let's identify two questions we would like to discuss further:

### **How do we encourage those virtual “babies” pivot into regular in-person A.A.?**

- We need to invite them to come with us
- Have a short period at the end of the meeting to invite newcomers to ask questions
- Meet newcomers for coffee in person – at home, at a café, at a park, etc.
- Instruct members on the Traditions – and how to use the virtual platform for workshops
- It is up to the members (long-time and not so long-time members) who have in person to share it actively with the newcomers who don't
- Bring back the FELLOWSHIP to our fellowship
- Create a session for newcomers at the end of virtual meetings for questions, sponsorship and fellowship
- What are we native to? This will often be “the only way” to get sober

- Offer other fellowship offerings for members to experience fellowship (virtual coffee shop, etc.)
- Find out what helped the newcomer to come to the second meeting? What worked? Ask them!
- Let's not go back to what we think worked in the past– let's move forward with what works now
- Encourage “zoom babies” to share with others about their experience with in-person A.A.
- How do we adapt to the newcomers? That is the real question.
- The newcomers are chomping at the bit to serve – Let's show them how!
- Nothing is in writing to guide virtual newcomers. Why not?
- The Service Structure is not readily available for new virtual service people. How can we get this message of service back to the in-person AND virtual platforms?
- We need to support Zoom meetings as they continue to save lives and are available 24 hours a day. They are here, not going away, and need support and guidance
- Stop differentiating between in-person and zoom meetings as we share the same primary purpose
- Focus on barriers keeping newcomers from coming to the rooms, and how we can overcome those barriers. Be it mobility, hearing, etc.

## **LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Diversity**

### **Moderator: Mario L.**

Is our association inclusive?

- One member said it took her a long time to come forward about her homosexuality.
- LGBTQ+ meetings are not "dating" meetings
- LGBTQ+ meetings, in addition to using A.A. language, also use gay-lesbian language.
- A non-binary member discovered themselves at A.A.
- Meetings have a social dimension. One member met her partner there
- One member was able to identify with A.A. by attending gay meetings. She found people like her. She is doing well with the A.A. program
- There are no "specialized" groups but groups with an additional dimension
- Discover the Movement with its diversity
- A 71-year-old member, a lesbian, went for years without talking about her homosexuality. She was stigmatized in society and, when she joined the movement, she kept her condition a secret. She also regrets that sometimes in meetings, people make inappropriate jokes. She is now more comfortable talking about it and says there are changes
- A gay member says he has never been prejudiced at A.A and feels totally accepted. “We have to stick to the common goal”
- A gay member attended LGBTQ+ meetings in her early days in A.A. and it helped her to better identify with her alcoholism, to feel better about herself.
- LGBTQ+ meetings welcome all members, all can attend, which helps break down prejudices.

- Two members took the floor to say that regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, etc., they welcome newcomers with the same enthusiasm and that this aspect is not taken into account.
- Unconditional welcome at LGBTQ+ meetings

### **How do we move forward with Contemporary Literature?**

**Moderator: Bill F.**

*This workshop report is unavailable.*

### **How to Encourage Service Work**

**Moderator: Fred A.**

*This workshop report is unavailable.*

## **Session B: 7:20 PM-8:05 PM EST**

### **Who's not in our rooms?**

**Moderator: Sandra W.**

Bon jour mes amis/Good afternoon my friends,

My name is Sandra W., and I am an alcoholic. I currently serve as the Director of Staff Services at your General Service Office.

One afternoon during a regional forum – like this one – a member came to the open mic sharing and asked, “What is the GSB doing to attract more Blacks/African Americans?” It should be noted that the gentleman was one of two African Americans in attendance at that forum (I was the second attendee). His simple question led to a series of Board encouraged discussions and actions including adding to all Regional Forum schedules this workshop: “Who’s Not in the Room – Fostering Participation in A.A.” – hoping to foster discussions at the local level on how we can ensure that A.A. is accessible to all who want it – the essence of Tradition Three. And I am sure you will not be surprised to hear that --- sometimes depending upon the region – members from various segments of our population are underrepresented in the rooms of A.A.. As we heard here last night, our younger members are not staying; another member shared this morning the challenge of making sure the A.A. message reaches those inside the walls; and this morning Anne shared about the ever-present barrier of language experienced by those for whom English is not their first language. What about members with accessibility or mobility challenges...the list goes on.

In 1965, in honor of A.A.’s thirtieth year, Bill W. wrote an article entitled “Responsibility Is Our Theme. In it, he states, in part:

“Newcomers are approaching A.A. at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have

people of nearly every race, culture, and religion. In A.A. we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering. Consequently, **the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all.** Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of A.A. so long as he or she so declares.”

A.A.’s Third Tradition states that the only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. Many of us like to recite the origin story behind the development of the Third Tradition. The so-called “double stigma” member who declared “I am the victim of another addiction even worse stigmatized than alcoholism.” After let’s say spirited discussions as to whether the members should allow this person to be among them, it was posed to the group “What would the Master do.” The person was allowed membership into A.A..

I often wonder what happened to this member. Was the member welcomed to do service in the group? Or outside the group level? I have my own assumptions of course. It is something to think about when we go into discussions on Who’s Not in the Room – fostering full participation in A.A.

Which brings me to our discussion questions. First let me go over the format. I am going to provide the question, give you a minute to reflect and then ask that you pair up and discuss the question for five minutes (we will provide the timer); after the five minutes, invite 2 more people to your group of two and continue to discuss for an additional five minutes. We will end with an open mic session and invite all to share what you heard (not necessarily what you came to say).

#### Questions:

What is your concept of inclusivity, acceptance, and participation, as it relates to Tradition Three?

At the group Level?

Within the service Structure?

Are we reaching out to all who want it, and if not, what more can we do?

# PRESENTATIONS

## Presentation Reports 9 AM – 9:30 AM EST Session A Presentations

### **The Language Barrier in Parts of North America--- Anne S., Area 89**

Hello, my name is Anne S. I am the Panel 71 Delegate from Region 89, Northeastern Quebec. Region 89 is 99% French-speaking. I felt challenged by this subject. It allowed me to do a nice introspection on the situation of members and regions who live the language barrier. It is estimated that about 1,000 languages are spoken in North America, which represents 15% of the approximately 6,700 modern languages of the planet.

I give you a portrait of the linguistic situation in our structure of the General Services Office at the level of the delegation to the Conference: 93 Delegates: 89 Anglophones – 4 Francophones – 0 Spanish speakers – 0 Indigenous.

60,562 groups: 57,188 Anglophones – 1,013 Francophones – 2,261 Spanish. I know there are Aboriginal groups, but they register at G.S.O. in a language different from either English or French.

Canada is officially bilingual with English and French. Of the 34 million inhabitants, about 22.1% are native French speakers and 57.8% English speakers. The United States has no official languages, but it de facto has English. The 50 states are predominantly English-speaking. But some are also bilingual: Louisiana has French, New Mexico has Spanish and the Hawaiian Islands have Hawaiian.

Quebec is officially francophone. New Brunswick is bilingual, while the other provinces are only anglophone, with a strong francophone minority in northern Ontario and southern Manitoba. In the territories, the official languages are English, French and a variety of First Nations languages such as Inuit.

In my province, Quebec, it is 93.32% francophone. In my region (Region 89: Northeast Quebec, 98% of people use the language of Molière as a priority.

I am one of four French-speaking delegates. For a long time, I knew that I would have to put double effort to be able to accomplish the task of delegate effectively. How many times have I heard members in my region say that they will have to register for English courses as soon as they are appointed to the delegation to be able to keep up and feel up to the task? I suspect that the experience of service at G.S.O. and the Conference is different for us.

Even today the power of attraction is present with English, the service path has more pitfalls for us French, Spanish, and Indigenous in the current service structure within Alcoholics Anonymous. Inevitably, if our first and second language is not English, we will be slowed down in our journey of service. English is the first language in the U.S./Canada A.A. Structure. A great deal of effort is being made by G.S.O. to ensure that other languages are served equally well.

This language difference creates a lot of anxiety in many good unilingual servants and many of them when they feel it take a step back and give up. This should never happen. Every servant has a place regardless of his language.

Certainly, I was touched by this language barrier, and all the people who speak to me in a different language are also affected and feel it. The most laborious for me is when it comes to dialogue from person to person, corridor exchanges, or near the coffee maker there is a significant obstacle, to make understand what I feel in a language other than mine. Fortunately, we are in a fraternity where unity is omnipresent every member, alcoholics anonymous whether English, French, Spanish or indigenous should feel included regardless of their language.

I think it is possible to predict that in the near future it will be easier regardless of the language used. Translation tools are improving at high speed, and access to them is becoming easier to use.

We are all brothers and sisters with the same common goal. In a spiritual association like ours, the language of the heart often becomes sufficient. In closing, I thank you all for your presence and for your involvement and commitment to Alcoholics Anonymous.

Good Forum to all of you –  
 Good Forum to you all –  
 Good Forum to all –  
 Tshima mishta melaush umue and mamuitiak.

### **Unity: The Reason Why it's Important --- Normand P., Area 90**

Hello everyone,

My name is Normand P., and I have the pleasure and privilege to serve as a Panel 72 delegate for Area 90, North-West Québec.

It was with enthusiasm that I accepted the invitation from the organizing committee of the Regional Forum and that I prepared this presentation on one of the proposed topics:

#### **Unity – Why is it important?**

That would be an easy topic, I thought, but the more I read about it, the more I researched in our literature, the more I understood its complexity.

The word *unity* is found in many places in our literature: 32 times in *The A.A. Service Manual*, 12 times among General Service Conferences themes, and 11 times in the index of *Daily Reflections*. We found 21 pages about it in *As Bill Sees It*; and several texts and chapters are written about it, since it is our Second Legacy. The First Legacy is our Recovery; the Second is Unity (the one we are talking about now); and the Third is Service.

Let's take a look together at unity as it is proposed in our First Tradition, which says, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity."

Let's take apart the text that follows — with descriptions of the First Tradition in our literature — in the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. The text reads:

"The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come, depend squarely upon it. We stay whole, or A.A. dies." Already, in this short segment, we come to realize that our most precious quality is unity, and that without it, we risk our lives and the lives of those to come. And without this unity, the heart of our Fellowship would stop beating.

Already in 1937, as we can read in *A.A. Comes of Age*, Bill and Bob asked themselves how a group of alcoholics could stay united! A psychiatrist friend had warned our predecessors at the time:

"This fellowship of alcoholics is emotional dynamite. Its neurotic content can blow it to bits.' When drinking we were certainly explosive enough. Now that we were sober, would dry benders and emotional jags blow us up?"

See the paradox here: nothing is prohibited by our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions; they are only suggestions. So, how will a group of individuals — who all have in common a strong ego and a tendency to selfishness and self-centeredness — be able to stay united? How can we set aside our egos in the name of unity? How can we collaborate toward a common goal? Later in the text, it is said that pride, fear and anger are the main enemies of our common welfare.

So, what are some good elements that could help us sustain solid unity? Our literature is full of clues and solutions to keep us on the path toward unity.

In 1947, Bill told us that to be able to apply the First Tradition, our program as a whole must solidly lean on the principle of humility, meaning the capacity to see the things as they are. He said that real fellowship, harmony, and love are the keys; that it is good to stop rebelling, that it is better to cooperate, that it is good to be disciplined; that it is important to set aside our personal ambitions, and to recognize that we are only a small part of a whole. Interesting. We have seen with the First Tradition what in the experience of our predecessors puts unity in peril, and we have identified how action can solidify unity. We remember our Three Legacies... Recovery, Unity and Service. And now, let's look at unity in the light of our Second Legacy — not just with the First Tradition, but with all Twelve Traditions together.

It is said that we should be able to see at a glance that our Twelve Traditions are based on “giving up” — that each of them asks the individual or the group to give up something for the common welfare.

The series of principles that we call the Twelve Traditions comes from the experience of the past; these principles were constructed under the menace of collapse and the destruction of unity. That it is not about a simple story of success, but about how unity and fellowship were born from an unsuspected strength.

It is on the solid base of experience that the structure of our fellowship was founded. That faith and action allowed us to unfold from our past experience. These lessons from the past are alive in our Twelve Traditions and if God wants it, we will maintain unity as long as he needs us to. So if we apply the principles described in our Twelve Traditions to our relationships between each other and with society in general, we are on the right path toward unity.

To remind you of these spiritual principles, I would like to finish with this beautiful text from the *Language of the Heart*, read by Bill at the 1950 Conference in Cleveland, where he presented the Traditions as follow:

*“That, touching all matters affecting A.A. unity, our common welfare should come first; that A.A. has no human authority—only God as he may speak in our group conscience; that our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern; that any alcoholic may become an A.A. member if he says so—we exclude no one; that every A.A. group may manage its own affairs as it likes, provided surrounding groups are not harmed thereby; that we A.A.s have but a single aim, the carrying of our message to the alcoholic who still suffers; that in consequence we cannot finance, endorse, or otherwise lend the name ‘Alcoholics Anonymous’ to any other enterprise, however worthy; that A.A., as such, ought to remain poor, lest problems of property, management, and money divert us from our sole aim; that we ought to be self-supporting, gladly paying our small expenses ourselves; that A.A. should remain forever nonprofessional, ordinary Twelfth Step work never to be paid for; that, as a Fellowship, we should never be organized but may nevertheless create responsible service boards or committees to insure us better propagation and sponsorship and that these agencies may engage full-time workers for special tasks; that our public relations ought to proceed upon the principle of attraction rather than promotion, it being better to let our friends recommend us; that personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and pictures ought to be strictly maintained as our best protection against the temptations of power or personal ambition; and finally, that anonymity before the general public is the spiritual key to all our Traditions, ever reminding us we are always to place principles before personalities, that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of him who presides over us all.”*

So, unity is not only important because our lives depend on it, but it is important because it represents all the spiritual values that are precious to us.



## Going Beyond Fear --- Trudy D., Area 82

The word "Fear" is written 113 times in the Big Book. When I first got sober, agitation, anxiety, and apprehension had taken over my life in ways that I had never noticed. The "One hundred forms of fear, self-delusion, self-seeking, and self-pity" described on page 62 had me feeling like I didn't want to drink, but I didn't know how to stop drinking. I didn't have custody of my kids, couldn't hold down a responsible job, didn't know who I was going to wake up next to each morning and couldn't pay my rent on time most months. But, I told myself I was living the dream...if I could stay drinking. When I had to be sober, I just wanted to stop the voices in my head that told me I was useless, worthless, a disappointment. I was so afraid the voices were right, but I refused to show it from the outside.

When my first A.A. Sponsor told me about doing the Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, we got to Step 3 before Fear crept in. By the end of Step 3, I was ready to run. I changed sponsors, provinces, husbands, jobs, and A.A. Service positions so many times in those first few years, it made people in the Program just sigh whenever I shared my "infinite wisdom" at meetings. Eight years, and numerous good Sponsors later, I came to the jumping off point that people in A.A. talk about. I was miserable and so riddled with self-loathing that when a "Recovered" Alcoholic posed the question "How's that working out for you?" I heard myself cockily chirp, "Fine! You take me through the book then." I immediately regretted that sentence. The Fear was so overwhelming I tried to get out of it. Thankfully, my Higher Power was looking out for me again. We started three days later, and I began to learn so much about myself.

Fear is described on page 67 in "How it Works" as, "That short word somehow touches about every aspect of our lives. It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it." I didn't realize how true those words were. So much of my life before, during, and after Alcohol was driven by the fear I felt around school, friends, life in general. Every thought I had, and everything I did, centered in that overwhelming feeling of fear. My new Sponsor told me that I could not do this the "easier, softer way" and I had to be "fearless and thorough from the very start." They also told me that the inventory in the 4th Step could be fearless because I had turned my will over to a Higher Power that wouldn't hurt me. I had now agreed to try a form of Faith instead of Fear. Within a few months there had been a change in me that was so profound even "Recovered" Alcoholics were remarking on it.

I was doing things that I never imagined, such as the rest of the Steps. I got involved in A.A. Service the right way after finishing the Steps. I began to see the Promises come to life for me in a way that was beyond my dreams. I started working with others, something that I had always feared. I became the Treasurer for my Homegroup, something that I had always feared. I continued to District and Area Service, something that I had always feared. I got married and divorced after working the 12 Steps. Fear didn't stop me from taking that chance and going through both the joys and pains sober. I learned that I could make mistakes and be human enough to say, "I don't know what is going to happen next."

dBefore I became a Recovered Alcoholic, I was too fearful to admit mistakes or the fact that I did not know the answers to everything. I was so afraid of the word "Recovered". That description seemed beyond my ability to achieve. I never understood fully what the word "Recovered" meant. I used to make fun of the people who used it. I used to put them down or say they were full of themselves. When I finally realized that I had gone days without feeling that "hopeless state of mind and body" I knew that this was what being "Recovered" felt like, and that IF I kept in fit Spiritual condition every day, then I too could really say I had "Recovered". Going beyond fear today has many different meanings. I lost my sister to Ovarian Cancer last year. I went to her home and took care of her until we made the journey to Palliative Care, then spent the last month of her life with her in Palliative Care. I woke up every day praying for the strength to be of real help to her, went through each day with as much Grace as I was willing to accept from my Higher Power and then went to bed each night thanking that Higher Power for allowing me to be the best sister I could be. Every moment I had some fear, but was granted more Grace than I needed. I learned that the Faith I had in what Alcoholics Anonymous could do for me far outweighed the fear I had. I learned to put the Fear Prayer into action many times a day, and I commenced to outgrow fear. Going beyond fear is not something I can do alone. I had vital Spiritual experiences that showed me along the way that my Higher Power had me when I didn't have the strength to have myself.

The good things in my life were a direct result of walking through some form of fear and coming out the other side; usually with a stronger understanding that it was my Higher Power working through me. One of my many amazing Sponsors told me that I have to go through fear to get through fear. Today I understand what that means for me. Going beyond fear means growth, and even more ability to help other Alcoholics go beyond what their fears may be and grow. Today, I am so thankful that people took the time to go beyond their fear, and by doing that simple (but oh so difficult) action, helped me go beyond fear in all aspects of my life.

### **Can We Accept Virtual Groups into our Service Structure? --- Jeff S., Area 96**

Hello friends. I am an alcoholic member of the Prince George Group, District 21, Hamilton Mountain. I currently have the honor and privilege of serving as your Area 86 Panel 72 Delegate for Western Ontario, and my name is Jeff S. As a Panel 72 Delegate, I have been assigned to the conference finance committee. It is nice to be here and be among some old friends and also some new friends. Greetings and salutations to all! Thank you to our gracious hosts from Area 81 and Prince Edward Island.

The task I have been assigned with for this forum is the question, Can we accept virtual groups meetings into our service structure? It immediately brings me to a story I read early on in my sobriety, and have read and referred to many times since. The story is in the volume Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, in the essay on Tradition Three, on pages 141 and 142. A newcomer appeared at one of these groups, knocked on the door and asked to be let in. He talked frankly with that group's oldest member. He soon proved that his was a desperate case, and that above all he wanted to get well. "But," he asked, "will you let me join your group? Since I am the victim of another addiction even worse stigmatized than alcoholism, you may not want me among you. Or will you? There was the dilemma. What

should the group do? If you consider this question in relation to the events that have taken place in the world recently, I believe there are many similarities.

At first, the elders could look only at the objections. "What we are really afraid of?" he said. To paraphrase the question, what we are afraid of now and what do we find objectionable? The answer to come from our co-founder became a moment ingrained in A.A. history. As we've been talking, five short words have been running through my mind. Something keeps repeating to me, "What would the Master do?" We may not share the same vision or foresight of our founders, but we do understand that things evolve.

I read the report from last year's conference and came across this quote from the presentation **Recovery in a Changing World:**

Our Conference theme this year is "A.A. in a Time of Change."(2021) The reality is the world around us has been in a constant state of lightning-fast change and growth for years. I am wondering if, possibly, our response to the pandemic has opened our eyes to changes that may have been needed pre-pandemic. Have we proved to ourselves that making changes faster than paint drying is not always to be feared as the sure road to A.A.'s demise? Has the necessity of quickly finding new ways to communicate with the newcomer allowed us to better meet them "where they are" and offer them our spiritual path to recovery? Will we embrace the lessons that we have learned during the pandemic and the innovative changes required to fulfill our primary purpose and still guarantee that the message remains faithful to the program of A.A. as presented in our literature? - Cynthia T., Area 29 Maryland.

At the 71<sup>st</sup> general service conference, the following was advisory action number 32: "The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings." To me, this already answers the question put forward, the caveat being, is that truly the question being asked? I was told by my Nana (Grandmother) many years ago not to answer a question with a question, or I would suffer the repercussions meted out by her for being a smart Alec. On a side note, she was French Canadian and made fantastic desserts. So, if you wanted dessert, you paid attention to rule number one: do not mess with Nana. I digress, the point that I am attempting to make is do we afford these virtual groups a legitimate place in our service structure are we welcoming, respectful, and accepting? A recent mantra adopted by A.A.W.S. (Alcoholics Anonymous World Service) is Engage, Inform, and Educate have we taken this opportunity to expand on the ability to carry this life saving message in a different and somewhat unique way I think it was Warren Buffet who said, "Someone is sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree long time ago".

Autonomy is a long-standing principle in A.A., and we are privileged to be able to practice it. While being anonymous and autonomous, are we also being accepting and sharing in all aspects of the fellowship if not did we come to this determination knowing that all important decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.

As a Delegate, I was recently given access to the fellowship connection. I logged in and noticed a menu titled “virtual groups”. Being curious, I clicked on the four virtual groups. A couple of weeks later, I received an email from Group Services stating that a new virtual group was looking to join. I contacted the DCM (District Committee Member), and she was going to look into it. When I was researching this presentation, I logged into Fellowship Connection again. I noticed there were twelve new virtual groups, with one pending. I do not believe this answers the question, but I do believe these new groups are already here. If I have learned one thing in my time in general service, it’s that there are only two things alcoholics do not like: **change** and **things staying the same**.

Keeping this in mind, as well as my Nana’s rule, can we accept Virtual Groups Meetings into our Service Structure? I think we can tap into a resource that already exists in A.A. Can zoom babies’ virtual workshops coincide with A.A. shut-ins and loners? Can we Engage, Inform and Educate? We have witnessed Assemblies, Forums, and General Service Conferences on these virtual platforms we have had a North/South connection. More will be revealed, I will leave you with this to ponder, can we now join in brotherly and harmonious action for a new adventure in the Circles of Love and Service? I thank you for this opportunity, I thank you for your time and I thank you for my Sobriety.

### **Presentation Reports 2:45 PM-3:30 PM EST Session B Presentations**

#### **Diversity: Becoming a Place Where We Are All Welcome --- Claude G., Area 87**

I was asked to make a presentation and I chose the theme of diversity. Why this theme rather than any other? Well, you see, I realize that our society is becoming much more diverse than ever before. You only have to walk down the streets of our cities to see all kinds of nations walking around. This phenomenon is also beginning to manifest itself in our countryside. What was once seen as a curiosity has now become commonplace. All this has happened in less than 30 years. This paradigm shift confronts us.

Each of the nations that have settled in our midst brings a cultural richness, a spiritual side and a different set of customs than we were used to. In truth, we are all immigrants, from the first nations to those who are joining us now. Is A.A. still relevant? Are we joining all the alcoholics who are still suffering? I have some doubt when I look at the composition of the membership in the groups. The diversity is not there. So, what do we do with our Fellowship now? Where do we go from here? What adaptations do we need to make to accommodate the still-suffering alcoholic? How can we remain relevant?

If Christianity used to be the norm, we have to admit that now it is not the same. Not only because of immigration, but also because the younger generations are much less religiously observant than was once the norm. That doesn't mean they are agnostic or atheist, but their spirituality doesn't necessarily come from any religion.

This year I was assigned to the CPC committee at the conference. I would like to provide you a piece of information that was revealed to us in preparation for the 2022 conference. At the 2021 conference, the CPC conference committee requested that the CPC committee trustees look into the development of a brochure for mental health professionals. The trustees decided, as a first step, to convene a focus group of former Class A trustees and mental health professionals to determine what these mental health professionals need when talking to an active alcoholic. The first finding of the consultation was that *there is often confusion between spiritual and religious organizations. When you look at the literature, it is heavily laden with religious texts.* This is a disturbing observation.

Taking into account this comment from professionals, one might be tempted to deduce that we need to change our literature. I don't like the word "change" because it has disruptive meaning to me, which is far from what I believe is necessary to maintain the relevance of Alcoholics Anonymous. No, I think we need to adapt our literature to keep our message relevant.

I know, I know, it's not popular to say that. I remind you that all institutions, all languages, all societies that have stopped adapting have declined and died. On the contrary, those that have adapted have progressed and maintained a vitality. Take the example of Latin: it never adapted and became a dead language.

I also want to remind you that I am not talking about A.A. principles. These principles, all of them unchanging, should not be touched. This is not to say that the words that describe them cannot be modernized to make them understandable and acceptable to any alcoholic who still suffers. For all of us recovered alcoholics, this should not be a barrier to maintaining our sobriety. But how much could it help the still-suffering alcoholic?

That's all well and good, but what to do? I'd like to challenge you. Let's hold focus groups in our groups, districts and areas with a mandate to see how we can adapt A.A. language to make it most accessible to all suffering alcoholics. This exercise would not change our main principles. Let's see how we can make this exercise a civilized and informative dialogue that will result in literature that is accessible to every alcoholic.

I know, I know, I may sound disruptive, but rest assured, I have a great love, a great respect for A.A.; I also have a sense of responsibility to all the alcoholics who do not know us and who are still suffering. I also have confidence that we will rise to the challenge of keeping A.A. relevant. It is not a discounted movement that I want to leave to the younger generations, but a spiritual movement that looks to the future and is equally respectful of the old and the new members. Are we ready for this challenge?

# PAST TRUSTEES SHARING

**Jan L.**, past Eastern Canada Regional Trustee, Class B, 2018-2022

I remember the call I received in 2018 to say that I had been elected as regional trustee. I thought, *What have I gotten myself into?* I have worked with marvelous delegates. We have come together as a region. For some people, the pandemic has a lot of negative tones. But for our region there were a lot of positives because it brought us together through virtual meetings. Using simultaneous interpretation, we were able to get together as a region and then we were able to meet at the Conference — and we knew each other before we went. I am a Panel 54 delegate; I served in 2004 and 2005. At the time, I didn't know any of the delegates from Quebec or the Maritimes. We didn't have a SARA.A.SA and we didn't meet as a region, like other regions did. Today, we have a means to meet, and we are unified and I am proud of that. I know, out there, there are future delegates.

As I look back through service work and this program, I know I was just a hopeless drunk, a garden variety alcoholic, and I didn't have anywhere left to go, except for Alcoholics Anonymous. I had an honest desire to stop drinking. My story isn't any different than a lot of stories in A.A. In my group, there was a man who said, "It will get better than beyond your wildest dreams." I thought, *You are an idiot. Beyond my wildest dreams? I am in Alcoholics Anonymous, it is the end of the road, I am never going to be happy again, I am never going to be able to party again, but it is going to get better beyond my wildest dreams? What a goof.*

But it does. It just gets better and better and better. That man isn't alive anymore, but one day, he said to me, "Jan, we need a secretary for our district." I didn't have a clue what he was talking about. He said, "It is only one night a month. That is all you have to do." I thought, *I can do that. What could that hurt?* So I went to my first district meeting. I was about a year sober and I had the love, camaraderie and hugs of recovery.

In our district, we had meeting books where we included Al-Anon in the back. Well, our Literature chairperson, at the time, decided he didn't want Al-Anon in our meeting books, so he took a marker and blacked out all the Al-Anon meetings. You can imagine the shouting match that began: "You can't do that!", "Yes, I can!", "It shouldn't be in there!", "It's an outside issue!" And on and on and on. And I thought, *Where's the love?*

He took some books, threw them on the middle of the table, said some nasty things and stormed out of the room. I thought, *I think I am going to like this.* So, I stayed. That was my first introduction into service work.

My service journey continued, my name came out of the hat, and I became the secretary for my area. My "one night a month" was turning into a bit more than that, but I was loving it. It was fulfilling my triangle in the circle. I live just north of Lake Huron, and I would take my service manual to the beach and read it. I get annoyed at people who say "if you want to go to sleep, read the Service Manual." I love reading about service and about how Bill started the Conference, and then I became involved in it. Then someone said, "Let your name stand

for alternate delegate.” I said no, but then my hand went up. Eventually I was elected to delegate.

I will never forget my first trip to New York. But I did not get outside the hotel until Wednesday. I met Murray M., the trustee-at-large/Canada and he asked me to coffee. I felt so flattered. We forget that we are just all alcoholics. Later that night, I was counting my blessings and I looked up and saw the moon. I said to myself, “Oh wow, the moon over Manhattan, how about that?” And then I looked up again, and realized, nope, that’s the light on the building next door. I was a fish out of water, but I felt comfortable with my fellow A.A.s.

When I rotated out of being delegate, I thought I would go back to basics and my home group and just help other women alcoholics. But God has other plans. Someone suggested that I stand for regional trustee, so my hand went up again. I got the nomination.

I didn’t realize how much work was involved in being a trustee and I didn’t realize how hard trustees’ work. I am here to tell you they work very hard! My four years were intense. And it’s all good. We are not a glum lot. We may not always agree, just like at our meetings, assemblies, and the Conference, but we always come out loving each other. When the pandemic hit, I was on the Regional Forums Committee, and it was heartbreaking to have to cancel our International Convention. A lot of tears were shed and we had a lot of meetings online—we started with conference calls and then went to virtual meetings. But then Alcoholics Anonymous went into gear, and we got virtual meetings going. Bob pointed it out yesterday (and that is when I started to cry), because we put things in motion; we didn’t skip a beat. We kept things running. People sent messages and inquiries to the G.S.O. and the office was answering. They were working from home. We had a lot of Zoom meetings, maybe more virtually than if we were in person, but we had a lot of issues to look after. But we also knew the Fellowship would step up and you did.

Panel 69 and 72 were live Conferences and the middle two were virtual. But I wouldn’t change a thing because everything happens for a reason. Anyone out there can become a delegate. It’s a lot of work, I will not lie to you. Let your name stand and I know I will see some of you at forums and I will see some of you up on-stage giving reports as alternate delegates, delegates or trustees. I hope that you continue on your service journey, because mine has gotten better than my wildest dreams and it will continue to do so. It has been a pleasure serving you on the General Service Board.

**Jo-Ann L.**, past trustee-at-large/Canada, 2007-2011 and past A.A.W.S. director 2009-2010

I’ve been a member of my home group since 1979 and my sobriety date is 1984. I was so glad they were doing service work while I was apprenticing because when I finally decided to show up again in 1984, the door was still open. I surrendered and brought Twelve Steps and A.A. into my life and started changing. That’s where we all start.

I was looking around this room on Friday and thinking how wonderful it is to see so many members of A.A. supporting the office. Listening to the chatter and feeling the camaraderie. To actually look into someone’s eyes, know they were right there, and couldn’t turn off their

camera? I hope you came here, and you met someone you haven't met yet. Because now that you've been here, you will go to another forum where you might see that person again. That's how it started for me.

Last night, a woman brought her child into the room, and they sat on the floor in the corner. I thought it was wonderful. I am a mother, and as a mother I had a lot of shame, a lot of pain, and a lot of guilt. I didn't think my voice was worth listening to. I used to think that I could be screaming at the top of my lungs, and no one would hear me. I never said what I wanted to say. But service helped me to do that.

I was the 37th woman on the General Service Board. Since then, as I look around the General Service Board, I think, *Wow. Isn't it wonderful?* Not that I don't like you men — but I remember how when I first started going to A.A. there weren't as many women here as there are now. Our voice is now heard.

One of my first International Conventions was in Minneapolis and I remember a line the speaker said at this big women's meeting. I even spoke to her afterward. I remember thinking, *I have to have this.* I asked her, "Can I please use that?" Because it summed up my story: What it was like, what happened, and what I was wearing. Or not.

I kept putting up my hand and I got involved. I loved it. I loved the Twelve Steps and I got to know about the Traditions, and I started learning about the Concepts because every service meeting we would talk about them. I served as a Panel 52 delegate, 2002-2003, Area 80, Manitoba. My name came out of the hat, and I remember getting a letter from the G.S.O. saying that it doesn't matter how you became delegate. It doesn't matter if you had the substantial unanimity of two-thirds, it doesn't matter if it was the third ballot or the fifth ballot or if your name came out of the hat. You are now representing your area in Alcoholics Anonymous.

In 2006, I became the nominee for my area as trustee-at-large/Canada. Becoming a nominee is an honor. It is an honor to let your name stand in A.A. Every job, every position I have ever held in Alcoholics Anonymous has been a privilege and someone was always there to greet me and lead me. When I was elected as trustee in 2007, I got a telephone call from the office telling me that I was going to be coming to New York for an orientation in June. They told me not to make any bookings for September because I was going to Mongolia, Sao Paulo in December, and a Southwest Regional Forum in Denver, CO. I lived in Winnipeg, in a little house on a little street and I still live there. When the Eastern Canada trustee that had been elected passed away, you needed representation but chose not to elect a new trustee during that four-year term, so you were served two years by other trustees and then two by myself. It was an extra privilege to serve you. I got to know your areas and watch A.A. in action, so I come here out of gratitude. We don't know what is in store for us.

There is something special about being able to talk about meeting alcoholics in other parts of the world. Our Bill and Bob are gone, but we go to other countries where their Bill and Bob are still alive and struggling to do the things they need to do to bring A.A. there. Here, everything is done for us. We have a wonderful G.S.O. in New York. They don't do our



Twelve Step work, but they have the ability to help us do it. Everything we need is there — if we ask for it. Minus the supply chain issue.

As trustee-at-large/Canada, I went to Lithuania. They were celebrating 20 years of A.A., and I went with Julio from G.S.O. We met this beautiful man named Romas who helped found A.A. in Lithuania. Romas had tried to get sober, just as we have tried to get sober, and he had gone to his doctor, and his doctor had some names of some men in America that knew about a program that maybe Romas could find out about, and maybe get sober. Romas went home and kept those numbers in his back pocket. He lived in Vilnius. Romas was a writer, he wrote books and he was a talented man, but I guess he was at the end, because he was wandering around one day and ended up at a church in Vilnius, a city where there was a church on every corner. He sat there with his head down. I know that feeling, towards the end of our drinking. I didn't know who to turn to or who to talk to. There were a lot of people helping me and I wanted to stay sober, I just couldn't do it yet; I wasn't ready. As we know, people can want my sobriety, but if I don't want to stay sober, I won't. It has to come from within. So, Romas was sitting in that church and I guess he was willing. The priest came and sat beside him and asked him what was wrong. So Romas told him, "I am a terrible alcoholic and I know I need help, I don't know what else to do, so I came here for a rest." The priest went away, came back, and he had the Big Book in Lithuanian. He said that a man had come in and asked him if he would translate some of this book for him because he couldn't understand it. The priest had done it, but the man had never come back. I always think God sees further ahead than we do because Romas showed up at that particular church ready to get that book — and remember, there was a church on every corner. In the meantime, Romas had already called those men in America. That was in 1988, and those men flew to Lithuania, got off the plane, and helped Romas start A.A. In 1990, in Seattle, Romas carried the first Lithuanian flag at the International Convention. I can talk all morning about these miracles, and others can, too.

I will finish with this: In 2007, when I was in Mongolia, we were in a beautiful yurt. People did Tai Chi in the morning and we had a meeting in a huge roundhouse. It was a beautiful experience because I could tell the members of A.A. were new. The Big Book had only arrived in 2003. The ink was still wet on their literature. They didn't have very much. When the meeting started, they talked about a necessary contribution amount. One fellow put up his hand, and said, "If we do that, we can't participate, because we don't have that kind of money." The G.S.O. staff member and I went back to our yurt. We could not say anything or help unless we are asked — although we know that Tradition Seven is about a voluntary contribution, not a set amount. So we sat there. All of a sudden there was a knock on the yurt and the man who was running the meeting came in with his translator. He said, "I think we did something wrong today. We need to make it right." We sat down and went over Tradition Seven and a few other things. The next morning, he told everyone, "We made a mistake. We must start over. If we are going to lay the foundation stones for Alcoholics Anonymous in Mongolia, we have to do this properly. We need to use the experience of others and follow the Traditions. We can be well."

Today, Mongolia is still going and growing. Thank you all for my life.

# CLOSING REMARKS

The final count at this Eastern Canada Regional Forum was 319, including 219 first-time attendees.

**Bob W.**, G.S.O. General Manager, 2021-present

As I was sitting here and listening, I started thinking about how I mentioned being rocketed into the 4th Dimension, and I meant that. That equates to what I meant about this weekend and weekends like this; how blessed those of us are who afford ourselves being involved in events like this. We all have different niches in service and for me, this is a special one. These are meant to be a renewal of our A.A. spirit and our A.A. programs. Those of us who are involved in this get to do this all the time. I have heard the excitement and enthusiasm to carry the message, the message that was carried to us and how simple and absolutely incredible that was.

I love to have fun and I think humor is so special and important to us; it gives us an attraction and that is important to reach out to others. But A.A. is serious business too, and we talked about that. I am reminded of something in our literature, where Bill W. talks about leadership, and more than in any other place it's in our work with other alcoholics, their families, in carrying the message. That is what we learn here. It boils down to that simplicity that our other co-founder, Dr. Bob, talked about. We sum it up in "love and service." Weekends like this have always given me a yearning — I am a student of life, Alcoholics Anonymous, our Steps, Traditions and Concepts. I never have it figured out — I am constantly learning more about how to apply it and how, in A.A., we need to look at how we need to adjust and change as the world changes, although our Traditions are constant. Our principles are constant. They were here on the earth before any of us even got here. I think it is important that we trust that. Our answers always lie within our structures — our Traditions, Steps, Concepts and principles. We have a Conference and a mechanism within our structure to be able to find the collective conscience of our Fellowship. The Founders turned it over to us and we continue to do that. One of the all-encompassing principles throughout all 36 of them is trust, and how important it is that we trust the process. We say it all the time, but what does that mean? Because when we say that, we don't just want to say it and then not do it. We want to question ourselves, take our inventories. Are we doing that? Are we trusting the process, our leaders, and those who we delegate it to rather than micro-managing them?

Service is a lifeblood to Alcoholics Anonymous. Many have said that there are future delegates and trustees in this room, and we need folks to be able to continue to raise their hand. So I would like to leave you with this: Keep your hand in the air. If you think you are not the right person coming up for the job at your next assembly or home group, you are probably the exact right person.

I am going to close in a way I sometimes close at meetings. It seems fitting, although it is an outside quote. It means a lot to me in the work that we do in A.A. You all know now I love music. And socks. And a lot of other things. The wonderful Tim McGraw who sung this song "Humble and Kind" closes out the lyrics of that song with "Don't take for granted the love this life gives you. When you get where you're going, don't forget to turn back around and help the next one in line, always stay humble and kind." Thanks.

**Linda Chezem**, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, General Service Board Chair, 2021 - present

I thank you for an incredible weekend of sharing and caring. I knew we were making history coming out of Covid and being here face-to-face. I can't tell you how much I've appreciated so many of you talking to me, eating beside me, and putting up with me as I've said something that will probably test your patience and tolerance a little bit. One of my favorite descriptions of A.A. is from a Grapevine article from May 1966. It says, "A.A. is not a place, it is an attitude of mind. A warmth of heart, a spiritual fourth dimension where material things can't get the upper hand." We were in the fourth dimension this weekend. Thank you for letting me watch recovery in action. That's what I saw here all weekend long. I also want to share a comment from Bill W. in Traditions 6. He wrote, "The core of our A.A. procedure is one alcoholic talking to another, whether that be sitting on a curbstone, in a home, or at a meeting. It's the message, not the place; it's the talk, not the alms." I secretly suspect that we can talk both electronically and face-to-face. We are going to find ways to meet in the middle. In fact, there is a country-western song about meeting in the middle and I won't sing it to you. I was a song leader in 4H and one of my favorite songs, and I am sure you know it, we always sang it in rounds. "Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver, the other gold." You, my friends, are gold and silver. This weekend you have all brought such a sense of unity that I would like for us all to recite our unity statement.

*"This we owe to A.A.'s future: To place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come."*