

Chair Preview: February 2020

As many of you know, the Area is in the midst of financial difficulties. This is not a crisis, just a temporary setback, and the Area has always recovered from similar financial challenges in the past. When I was a GSR, the Area dipped into its prudent reserve (something we have now also done), and the Area Officers then reduced the number of District visits (which we now have done as well).

Over the course of the next decade, finances improved. By 2018, the Area had recovered fully, to the point that excess funds were distributed to GSO. Now, we tighten our expenses once again.

I expect more discussion, starting with a proposed 2020 budget being presented in February, a new financial plan that will better reflect our current financial health. A large part of our budget is the projection of all the expenses that have been approved by Area motions (that includes interpretation at assemblies and at the Area Committee meetings, translation of all of our written communication, insurance, and different software and hardware subscriptions). Also included in our budget are discretionary expenses (like District visits by Area officers). Our budget also includes projected costs for facility rental for the ACM and assemblies, and projected expenses associated with the printing and distribution of our Area newsletters.

It is important to remember that the Area does not exist to simply deal with money; we exist to help facilitate Twelfth Step work. So while we will talk about money— we will focus on how that money (from the Seventh Tradition contributions and distributions from members and groups) helps fund services to help save peoples lives.

The highlight of the January Area Committee meeting was, for me, a report from our Bridging the Gap committee, who described how a soon-to-be-released inmate reached out for help and will now be connected to his first meeting out of prison because of the committee's efforts. Our Area funded travel to the BTG Workshop Weekend, where the idea of pre-release contact service originated. And our Area then funded the service, paying for the pamphlets that allowed this inmate to ask for help and then receive it.

I enjoy General Service because of these stories of redemptive power and joy. When I got sober, the Ninth Step promises that we read in meetings seemed fantastical and impossible. Yet they came true for me then, and they remain true for me today. I am no longer afraid of you, and I am no longer afraid of financial challenges. Let's keep having fun and keep helping others. Recovery is not just possible, it is what we do.

Eric L.
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