

Chair Preview: April 2020

In 1935, Bill W. – desperate for human connection so that he could preserve his five months of sobriety – called random church ministers from a payphone of a hotel lobby, just steps away from a bar, until he found a man... who knew a woman... who knew the man that would cofound Alcoholics Anonymous.

We have always been a fellowship of one alcoholic helping another. And for 85 years, we have, for the most part, met together in churches fellowship halls, storefronts, backyards, beaches, campgrounds, and living rooms. When the Coronavirus pandemic started and social distancing became a part of our daily vocabulary, I was nervous about what it would mean to my recovery. For me, the human connection Bill craved in 1935 forms the basis of my Higher Power. The space between you and me is where my Higher Power resides, and he expresses himself to me through our connection. To lose that connection would mean to lose my connection to God as I understand God – and it was terrifying.

I once again underestimated the magic that happens in these rooms. Within days, online meetings sprung up around the world. I found myself going to multiple meetings a day, participating more, and having new opportunities for Twelfth Step work. Despite the uncertainty of the past month – and it only has been a month – AA continues to thrive.

Newcomers continue to attend our meetings. We continue to have a primary purpose of helping anyone wanting to get sober, and despite the numerous new obstacles we encounter (disruptions from “zoom-bombers”, people who don’t mute themselves, mistyped Meeting ID numbers), we are still here and we are still able to be helpful. Our hope and our recovery remains intact, and we have been given a new opportunity to share our message with the world. Part of our responsibility in General Service is to ensure that everything we do in AA reflects the group conscience, because that is how our many Higher Powers communicate to us. So we continue to make progress.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Area Officers appointed an ad hoc committee to prepare our virtual presence. We moved the Pre-Conference Assembly to a digital platform. We held our first-ever virtual Area Committee meeting at the end of March; minutes from that ACM are in this issue of the Comments. And we started planning a virtual Pre-Conference Assembly, which will be held May 2 and 3. At this Assembly, multiple opportunities for training will be provided, and we will be sharing group consciences with our Delegate, who will attend the Conference later in the month.

Please remember that sharing at the virtual microphone will be limited to 75 seconds (a warning will be given at 60 seconds). Planning for the Post-Conference Assembly – postponed to a yet not-be-determined date – continues. And our next virtual Area Committee meeting will be this month, where more information will be provided.

I am profoundly grateful to be a member of AA in the midst of all of this. Loneliness was killing me before I got sober, and social distancing – at least for someone like me – can be lonely. AA gave me my life back, a fellowship grew up around me, and, while I can’t see you face-to-face right now, you are still with me. I look forward to seeing everyone together again soon.

Eric L.
CNCA Chair Panel 69