

My deadline for this article is always the Friday after our Area Committee Meeting. But by the time you read this, it will be much later in the month. We will have held our Area Inventory Assembly, and we will be heading into the winter holidays. What to write about? What am I feeling? Oh, gratitude!

November is Gratitude Month in A.A. To learn a bit about the origins and ideas for celebrating, you might type "AA gratitude month" into your favorite internet search engine to find past Box 459 newsletters and more.

Rather than give you a history lesson here or remind you to put a little more in the basket, I decided to reflect a bit on my personal gratitude. Starting with the obvious: I'm grateful for the new chance I was given at life, instead of dying an alcoholic death like so many of my friends and family. My mother literally drank herself to death at 57. She didn't see a way out and couldn't accept help that was available to her.

I'm grateful for the new friends that I have met along the way, my family of choice. People who have been there for me through tragedy and triumph the last (almost) 19 years. People with whom I can be my authentic self. And all the laughter and adventures we have shared.

I'm grateful for a connection with a power greater than myself. I don't feel the need to define it, but I do know that it seems to get more powerful the bigger my group of drunks becomes. I no longer feel isolated and alone.

I'm grateful that through working the Steps with my sponsors, I learned to recognize my part in my suffering and how to form true partnerships with other human beings. I can be a trustworthy and reliable employee, volunteer, neighbor, friend, spouse, and family member.

I'm grateful to all those who have come before us, who passed on the life-saving message of recovery. And for all those who come after us who will do the same. "Gratitude should go forward, rather than backward. In other words, if you carry the message to still others, you will be making the best possible repayment for the help given to you." (*As Bill Sees It*, p. 29)

I'm grateful to be part of a society of alcoholics in action—in my home group, in our Area, and as a member of the General Service Conference. As we slowly transition back to more in-person events, it has been wonderful to meet some of you in person for the first time. But I'm also grateful for all the virtual connections I have made over the last two years.

I'm grateful for your service as we trudge this path during a global pandemic. I trust that we will meet the new challenges ahead with mutual respect and love. I look forward to whatever 2022 has in store for us.

With love and gratitude,
Jennifer B.
Panel 71 Delegate