

I'm writing this at the Marriott Hotel in Brooklyn, NY, where I have had the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to attend the January General Service Board (GSB) weekend as a Conference committee chair. My head is swirling with information and ideas, and my heart is bursting with gratitude and joy. I will share some of what I saw, heard, and felt here, and more when I see you in the days to come... either in person or in the virtual squares. You will also get to hear a detailed report from our Pacific Regional Trustee, Kathi F., at PRAASA. Don't miss that! It will be her last one.

I shared this experience with 13 other delegates (plus one who attended remotely). The purpose of having the delegate chairs at this quarterly GSB weekend is to prepare us for our role at the Conference, get our input on the agenda items for our respective Conference committees, and to build trust. We are all working together for the good of A.A., and being able to ask each other questions, share information, and report out to the fellowship accurately is a group effort. We are all responsible. I attended the trustees' Nominating committee with a voice but no vote. I was prepared and fully present and I felt encouraged to participate. I was also able to attend some of the other trustees' committees as an observer. There are two options in each time slot, and I chose Public Information, Finance and Budgetary, International, and the committee on the General Service Conference. On Monday morning, we all could observe the official Board meeting where all the committee reports were accepted and recommendations were voted on. It was fascinating.

We had the added adventure of travel in a pandemic and a Nor'easter that dumped 8 inches of snow on Saturday. I had some extra time for fun with friends from the Pacific Region, including shopping, visiting a museum, and seeing a Broadway show. At meals and breaks during the weekend, I tried to sit with different people and get to know them, taking the opportunity to thank them for whatever it is they do. Or in the case of the Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee candidates who were being interviewed, for making themselves available to be of service to us alcoholics. All the delegates went out for dinner as a group Sunday night and we had a blast. I know I have made lifelong friends. Everyone in attendance this weekend is an incredible human being. They take the work seriously, but themselves lightly.

I surprised myself a bit when I spoke up in the General Sharing Session and made myself vulnerable. One of the gifts I have found in A.A. is letting others get to know me. Several people spoke to how there can be a separation of "us" and "them" when we are serving at different levels in the structure. These past two years have been tough. How we communicate is so important. People often ask for more transparency, when I think what they really want is to feel part of the decisions. When we don't feel heard, or don't feel trusted, we might start to question other people's motives or build resentments. I feel that our Area has a long history of trust in the Board and the Conference process. But I think we can do better to foster that trust and unity within our own Area structure. Recognizing that we all have passion and love for our fellowship and concern for the future, what am I not understanding in someone else's experience? What part of self is standing in the way of my usefulness? I intend to keep taking my own inventory in this regard.

Jennifer B., Panel 71 Delegate