

Hello, my name is Rainer and I am your alcoholic Delegate. I want to start off with a little reflection, because I feel that this is an especially special occasion. We're here at lovely Lake Junaluska at the first in-person Assembly in two years. It's been a long time coming. We hadn't even been here for SSAASA the last time we had an in-person Assembly. So please, take a moment while I make some opening comments and reflect on where we have been, since we have last been together. We have done the scary things that AA asks us to do. We have changed, we have adapted. We went virtual, we embraced technology in a completely new way. Meeting guides and district websites were redesigned to link directly to virtual meetings. We participated in the worldwide fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, experiencing the breadth of our fellowship without worry about distance or travel. We embraced a virtual 7th Tradition and supported our World Services in record level. We have figured out virtual Assemblies, elections, and even General Service Conferences. We have moved our meetings to picnic tables and church parking lots. We have maintained unity in parallel groups, we have figured out how to offer hybrid meetings. We gave away Grapevines to anyone interested. We successfully matched every request for Corrections correspondence with a sober AA member. We have made sure that AA was there for the alcoholic in need. I am tremendously grateful for everyone's efforts. Once again, you have saved my life.

There are three things which I keep coming back to, which show up as highlights whenever I engage in General Service. The first is opening the door for other people, to extend service opportunities. We invite people into General Service with our enthusiasm in reporting, with the information we share. This is how we share the experience and opportunity that we have found rewarding. The second is the importance of discussion rather than debate. Debate is fractious while discussion is unifying. Open-mindedness is one of AAs indispensables, but it is all too easy and too prideful for this alcoholic to think that I know what's best. When I share, I need to share experience strength and hope, rather than advocating for an agenda or outcome. I need to listen like I have no opinion, like I want my mind to change. And I need the exposure to perspectives I don't share. And the third is the necessity of keeping AA safe from the tribalism and division of our world. Everything we do in AA, we do for a reason. We are here, having but one primary purpose, and we act for one primary reason: the continuation and growing effectiveness of the AA program. We cannot afford to politicize the application of AA principle, we cannot afford to allow the polarization of our cultural climate to bleed over into AA activity. For on AA unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.

On November 22nd the 13 Delegates in the Southeast Region will be meeting with Tom H., our Regional Trustee, a guest from AAWS, and a guest from GSO. I'm reporting all of the information that I have, and will provide additional details after that meeting. My intentions are better than my actions, and I am truly planning on providing regular updates in the Delegates' Corner of our Area's website. Please look online after Thanksgiving for additional updates.

Staff is returning to the General Service Office in phases. For the last 6 weeks, the office has been partially staffed, with a rotating schedule to minimize the number of people in the office at the same time. This hybrid schedule with a mixture of in-person and work from home staffing is expected to continue until January 1st, when we should see a full return to the office. This staffing is the reason why we are not allowing visitors to the office at this time.

GSO response time to phone calls has been slow, largely because of the rotating in-person staff schedule. There may continue to be some delays prior to the January 1st full reopening. But GSO has also begun a process of replacing their current phone system with a new cloud-based system which will allow calls to proceed directly to the appropriate staff cell phone, and will give them a chance to return calls with their GSO caller ID remotely. Currently voicemails are transcribed and forwarded, which is a large part of the delay in response. Swift response is a point of emphasis, and 80% of daily inquiries are receiving responses within 24 hours.

If you see possible tradition violations or copyright infringements online or on apps, please let me know. There have been a few recent reports of unauthorized apps. This is a complicated issue because of the lapsed copyrights on the first and second editions of the Big Book. This has moved some AA material, including the Twelve Steps, into the public domain. The Intellectual Property administration team has requested the removal of trademarked material and aspects of the apps which imply affiliation. AAWS will not search the web or app stores for copyright and infringement issues. But they will look into any reported material. Both apps questioned agreed to remove AA from their app titles and removed copywritten materials like the Daily Reflections.

I want to provide an update on Conference costs. In 2017, the GSC established the current fee of \$1,800 per Area. The costs of the 70th and 71st Conferences was dramatically lower because they were virtual events. The 70th Conference cost \$291,000, which was \$2,200 per Conference member, and was fully supported by Area contributions. In Area 51, we send an annual contribution of \$5,000. The 72nd Conference will be in person, and costs should mirror the 2019 costs for the 69th Conference. In 2019, the Conference cost \$8,300

per Conference member, and GSO received an average contribution of \$3,700 per Area. Costs were 1.1 million, and they received \$346,000 in Area Contributions.

Fellowship Connection launched an update on October 14th, which has improved several Registrar functions. Through an improved dashboard, Registrars can see when service kits were ordered, and now have the ability to specify whether an update would prefer to opt out of receiving a kit, or to receive a digital kit. Previously all updates automatically triggered the order for a physical kit, which created a lot of duplicate expense. Registrars also have a bulk upload option, which should ease the time demands in keeping up to date records.

Area Delegates are now being given an opportunity to provide feedback on Class A Trustee nominees who reside in their Area. This will be occurring prior to inviting candidates to a Board weekend. Molly Anderson has been invited to serve on the AA Grapevine Board as a Class A (nonalcoholic) Trustee following the 72nd Conference.

The use of videoconferencing and technology has increased the time commitments needed for the completion of agendas. The Trustees' Nominating Committee is discussing the time commitments and demand needed to meet the responsibilities of serving on the Board, looking for ways to improve and balance these commitments.

The AA Grapevine began its podcasts on October 4th, with weekly episodes being available every Monday. Don and Sam are interviewing a different member each week about their experience, strength and hope, in a casual "meeting after the meeting" manner. I'll be including a link in my report on our Area website. The podcasts are available at aagrapevine.org/podcasts.

Upcoming issues of the Grapevine will focus on Prayer and Meditation, Remote Communities and the Holidays, Day Counters and early sobriety, getting through tough times, and emotional sobriety. There is not a release date, but work is taking place on a 2022 Grapevine Book titled "Fun in Sobriety." Upcoming La Vina magazines will focus on Family Matters, Acceptance, and Newcomers.

Grapevine and La Vina are working with two new vendors to increase their availability to incarcerated members. American Prison Data Systems and Edovo both have extended networks within correctional facilities and have helped to ease members' access to magazines and materials. And the gift subscription program is functioning effectively to match gifted subscriptions with members in custody who request magazines.

The Instagram followers for the Grapevine and La Vina pages continues to grow. They are experimenting with different kinds of posts. I don't have an Instagram account, but if you do, I would strongly encourage you to visit their page. The Grapevine would appreciate any feedback or thoughts for improvement, and can be reached at www.aagrapevine.org/contact-us.

There are updates to the Safety Service Card, Flyer and Service Material sheets. I will be emailing these out to Committee members, and ask that you share these with the GSRs in your District. They are looking for feedback on the updates, and our first Action item request is for you to include some time in an upcoming District or group conscience meeting for feedback and sharing. Please email me the observations from these sharing sessions, so that I can pass that information along. If you are a GSR and would like me to send you the updated material, please send me an email at delegate@aanorthcarolina.org. If not, please be on the lookout for this information coming soon from your DCM.

The Publishing Department continues to under-promise and over-deliver. The digital version of the updated Service Manual is available, and the print version is scheduled to ship from the printer by November 17th, ahead of schedule. There has not been an official call for stories, but I have heard from several people that it might be a good idea to start drafting your personal story for possible inclusion in the 5th Edition of the Big Book. Similar suggestion for Spanish speaking members looking to submit their story for possible inclusion in the 4th edition of Alcoholicos Anonimos.

Videos of the Big Book and the Twelve and Twelve in American Sign Language are now live on the AAWS YouTube Channel. That's an exciting new way that our AA literature is now available.

The new pamphlet "Hispanic Women in AA" is now available. This pamphlet contains 15 stories sharing the experience, strength and hope of a wide variety of Hispanic women, who have found sobriety and a new way of life within AA. The new pamphlet "Experience Has Taught Us: An Introduction to Our Twelve Traditions" is also available. This pamphlet is the revision of the Twelve Traditions Illustrated pamphlet. Please remember that the original pamphlet will continue to be available. The pamphlet "Faith Healers Ask about Alcoholics Anonymous (Formerly members of the clergy ask about AA) is also available now.

"Our Great Responsibility" is newly available as an e-book, in English and in Spanish. And in December, Experiencia, Fortaleza y Esperanza will be available. This is the newly completed translation of the Experience, Strength, and Hope book.

I shared this in August, but to me its an exciting update worth repeating. The number of international licensing and translations shows just how wide-reaching our Fellowship has become. The Big Book has been translated 72 times, with 27 additional translations in process. 19 of these are new translations and 8 are revisions and re-translations. The 12 & 12 has 52 approved translations, with 3 more in process. Daily Reflections has 38 approved translations with 2 in process. Living Sober has 37 approved translations with 5 in process. And AA Comes of Age has 19 approved translations with 2 pending.

The Publishing Department has been working closely with the subcommittee of Trustees' Literature towards the development of the plain and simple language translation of the Big Book. A request for information was distributed in mid-September to different potential translators. 18 candidates responded, demonstrating a professional experience in fields ranging from health and wellness, to education and policy making. Comparisons and deliberations are taking place, and hopefully we will have a translator soon. More information to follow.

This will be my main focus during the Q&A session with Tom and our AAWS guest on 11/22. I'm hoping that our guest will be Carolyn W. Carolyn was our guest at the Spring Assembly, is an AAWS Non-Trustee Director, and is chairing the subcommittee charged with this project. If there are other things which you want me to question specifically, please let me know.

I don't have any new information at this time about the Trustees Literature Committee discussions on the Committee Consideration to bring a feasibility report to the 72nd GSC on the development of workbooks to help study the program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Early discussions were focused upon the possible creation of an individualized workbook to accompany the Big Book. There were also discussions about developing a contemporary and comprehensive new workbook to study the 12 Steps, 12 Traditions, and 12 Concepts.

The Remote Communities Committee assists AA members who live in underserved or remote communities, communities that are difficult to reach because of geography, language, or culture. And there is a new Remote Communities portal. The portal is available in English and Spanish. Both have long web addresses, which will be available in my report online.

There are continued conversations towards coming up with an improved and more complete way to encourage General Service participation in online-only group. The Group

Services Coordinator and the International Coordinator have been meeting with the Online Intergroup of Alcoholics Anonymous (OIAA). The vision moving forward is continued support with each other in making Twelfth Step work possible. As previously reported, a number of online-only groups have expressed some ambivalence about how they would participate within the traditional districts. We as an Area did not submit an Agenda Item to the 72nd GSC, but I feel that our earlier submission to create a virtual Area 94 has merits. And it may be, depending upon the 72nd GSC agenda and with an experienced understanding of the new EDW timeline, that this could be something to consider as a renewed submission in the future.

Group Services is also discussing how to use our NetSuite platform to create a unified directory. There continue to be issues with members and groups receiving multiple copies of the AA Group handbook and literature catalogs. The ambition is to have a more unified and comprehensive directory for contact and communication, and to have less duplicate expense. To that end, the Group Services desk is also trying to verify the contact information for the 483 English, Spanish, and French IGCO.

The equitable distribution of workload changes to the Conference timeline has created a lot of difficulty for the Conference Assignment. Steve S. is our new Conference Coordinator, you might remember Steve as the guest from our Spring Assembly in 2020. Moving the deadline to submit Agenda items will offer benefits in the clear and concise development of background, but it has created a lot of short-term work in designing, planning, and implementing the new timeline. At the deadline, there were over 175 proposed agenda items, all of which were processed and forwarded to the appropriate Committee or Board. Part of the EDW design is that agenda items may be placed outside of their traditional Committee, to prevent some Conference Committees from dealing with 31 items, while others deal with 5. Setting the Agenda is a painstaking development, and no one wants to say much about it before we are halfway through. It has been said that literature will have plenty to discuss at Conference. And that the single most recurring theme among the 175+ proposed agenda items was to rescind the actions taken at the 71st General Service Conference.

In the Communciations Kit, which will be distributed in December, there will be a list of all proposed items, along with a determination of whether an item was forwarded or if no action was taken. I'm going to read a brief section of an email to the Southeast Regional Delegates from Tom.

"If you have seen such a list on social media, it is not an official list. I've been in a few joint meetings with delegates/trustees reviewing proposed agenda items though there

isn't anything that should be shared beyond that level at this time. I know a few of you have been in such meetings already. I would like to ask you not post any of these proposed agenda items on social media. There will be plenty of time to discuss the actual agenda items and the ones that did not make the agenda when this list is available."

I have my personal opinions about Facebook AA and the "by invitation only" nature of these groups. And I remember well the experience of calling a service sponsee, 7 hours removed from Conference, and being told over and over again "Yeah I know, I saw that on Facebook." If Facebooks groups are your thing, I guess that it what it is. I see it as a dangerous place for the maintenance of our principles. Final responsibility and ultimate authority should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole fellowship. That's a hard principle to follow in an invitation only group. We come here to Assemblies to form a group conscience, we hold PreConference events and send our Delegate to Conference to form a group conscience. But if we start forming a group conscience within a private echo chamber of participants, we have a politicized caucus with an agenda beyond doing the best for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Diversity of opinion within the singular ambition of serving Alcoholics Anonymous is the spiritual substance of a group conscience. Those opinions are blended together in a discussion of principle through a willingness to consider that contrasting opinions could perhaps be correct. I was at an event several months ago and when I started talking about the revision to the Preamble, a member got upset and stormed out. He was upset because we're changing everything, changing the preamble, taking down the statues, changing the signs on restroom doors. I needed to hear what he had to say, and I think he needed to hear what I had to say. That's the only way to move forward, to make sure this is the General Service Assembly of Alcoholics Anonymous, and not a microcosm of the General Assembly. We don't have rallies for our Agenda Items, we don't need the amplification of a sounding board on Facebook. This is the place we have been given, for the spiritual and representational formation of a group conscience. Concept 4 gives us our Right of Participation, but our rights come with responsibilities as our Right of Decision comes with the responsibility of full reporting. I hope you'll view your right of participation as a responsibility and obligation that you have to Alcoholics Anonymous. And I do want to apologize for the personal soapbox. But I also wrote this yesterday and it's still in the report, so take that with a grain of salt.

I am happy to report that the 3 audio interviews from AA members in the Armed forces have been posted at www.aa.org/pages/en_US/videos-and-audios. As with the

other new material, it might be easier to connect through a hyperlink from my report on the Area website.

With the return on in-person events, the CPC desk is putting together a list of past events, to see if a presence is viable. The CPC desk is reaching out to local committees for participation.

The CPC Committee has reviewed a report on the LinkedIn site, and has asked staff members to develop a policy of how to address issues of anonymity, AA principle, and our Traditions that may arise with the use of hashtags.

And the Accessibilities Committee is continuing to work on the revision to the pamphlet "AA for the Older Alcoholic." 42 submitted stories have been reviewed and agreed on a first round selection of at least seven stories to be considered for the updated version of the pamphlet. I'll let you know more when there's more to know.

The new Corrections Correspondence System launched on September 27th. The new system provides an expedient process for matching volunteers and members in custody, either automatically or manually. 267 members were matched in October.

I want to reiterate a few of the financial details that Julie provided. Participation in our collective responsibility for our Office and our services has been fantastic, surpassing original hopes and matching the mid-year reforecast. Electronic contributions comprising nearly 25% of the total shows how we are growing and changing. Partial repayment of the draw down from the reserve fund has happened, and current surplus projections suggest that more may be forthcoming. And at this point, Grapevine is \$280,000 in the black and subscriptions are currently 92,000 over budget. Can anyone remember when they heard some grapevine news like that?!? It could be Brooks, it could be Josh, or it could be you. Either way, fantastic news.

The AAWS Board, in coordination with the ICRF Committee is tentatively moving forward into the 2022 Regional forward with either inclusive or hybrid formats. Essentially tis would be an online broadcasting to maintain the newly discovered accessibility to members who would not normally be able to attend in-person.) Our next Southeast Regional Forum is scheduled for December 2-4, 2022 to be held in New Orleans.

Near and dear to Newton's heart, since August, the International Desk has attended four zonal meetings including our home zone's REDELA (meeting of the Americas). All zonal meetings have been virtual, except for the REDELA. GSO hasn't resumed international

travel, but was able to arrange for its hybrid attendance. Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and Panama also attended virtually, with the in-person event happening in Guatemala.

The Trustees' Public Information Committee discussed the "request for AA to develop an online membership survey" and took no action. The committee is focused on a project where a professional survey methodologist would conduct a focused review and analysis of the survey questionnaire content as well as the method of performing the triennial membership survey. Feels a little weird to talk about a triennial membership survey, as our last one was either 2013 or 2014.

The PI Committee also discussed our presence on public information media platforms. AA podcasts, AAWS and Grapevine YouTube Channels, Google Ads, the Meeting Guide App, GSO, Grapevine and La Vina websites. We're starting to sound pretty modern!

Which takes us to the Archives. 223 new items have been accessioned and filed into the repository this year. These are mostly AA printed materials such as service pieces, pamphlets and books. The Archives staff has responded to 605 inquiries this year, and is currently aiding two International AA entities with research inquiries. Italy has reached out for information about the start of AA in Milan. And Japan has contacted us for material on the history of AA in their country.

20 cubic feet of unprocessed material from past International Conventions has been brought into the Archives for future processing.

I'm not quite wrapped up, but getting close. Relief is in sight. First a bit of my report to the Committee from August. I feel like this is important enough to say twice, and to deliver directly to the GSRs. As of July 1st, the letters received by the AA Grapevine were 3 to 1 against the change to the AA Preamble. Correspondence to the General Service Board and AAWS similarly oppose the change. Some of the negative reaction is a reaction to change, an attachment to history. Some of it fear about where things will go from here. What changes will follow these changes? Are we greasing the skids into a degree of political correctness which will compromise the depth and weight of our message?

Personally, I believe that the biggest reason that so many members are having a bad reaction is because of what a poor job we have done communicating about the change. The message is not that we have a revised Preamble. The message is that there was change needed, and action was taken. The message is that there were alcoholics in need of help, arriving in AA and being made to feel excluded and unwelcomed by the language of our Preamble. And so we removed the issue. There are no greased skids. We are not going to

move through 20 years of agenda items to become a Fellowship of Men and Women and Boys and Girls and transgender people and sis-gender folks and non-binary individuals and non-gendered persons. Alcoholics Anonymous is not a political organization, has no opinion on outside issues, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Gender identity is just another outside issue. You are a member of Alcoholics Anonymous when you say that you are. If you are an alcoholic, regardless of any other issues that you might have, regardless of any identity you might possess, the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous should be open and welcoming. This is the communication that needs to happen around the Preamble revision. There is but one requirement for membership. Gender identity has nothing to do with it.

To groups wanting to know if they need to read the revised Preamble, the answer is clearly no. Groups are autonomous, and for their purpose there is but one Ultimate Authority. If they want to be an AA group that doesn't read the AA Preamble, that is their right. But my encouragement would be for that group to let our Traditions be their guide. To have a full and informed discussion about the issue, and to consider the principles, the things which really matter, which our Traditions are designed to protect.

At the beginning of every Assembly, we read Bernard Smith's address "Why we need a Conference." Usually, this is a reading reserved for Past Delegates, but I'll take the liberty to quote a bit of it. "We need [a conference] to ensure that the doors of the halls of AA never have locks on them, so that all people for all time who have an alcoholic problem may enter these halls unasked and feel welcome. We need it to ensure that Alcoholics Anonymous never asks of anyone who needs us what his or her race is, what his or her creed is, what his or her social position is." That is also the reason why we needed a revision to the Preamble.

The theme for next year's Conference is AA Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service. This is just a bit of personal perspective, but I often feel when I leave my home that I was walking out into a splintering world. Public opinions are divided, people are polarized, driven by selfish pursuits, and dominated by a proud assumption that they know what's best for others. Alcoholics Anonymous is my safe haven, and I have received great gifts from my membership. Beyond my sobriety, which will always be my first gratitude, the great gift has been purpose. Half a step further, it is a primary purpose. Alcoholics Anonymous is the place where I can be free of my own proud assumptions, where I can act as a member in good standing. We are all familiar with our words. "Ask each day in your morning meditation what you can do for the man who still suffers." If the Alcoholics Anonymous I live in is to escape the politicizing and splintering that I see in the world I live in, then I think we need to go further. Because it's not always the man who still suffers.

Sometimes she's a woman, and sometimes they are non-binary. If we are to be unified in love and service, we need to unify on our common problem and on our common solution.

To start, I tried to say a bunch of nice things about our Pandemic experience. The last two years has also been a kick in the pants. We can redeem the pain, suffering and loss that we have known by staying mindful of the lessons we learned. We went through a Pre-Conference season where we had more events than ever, where attending those events was easier than ever. But we struggled with participation, and a large portion of our fellowship was unaware. We say "Lord, make me a channel of Thy peace," but I would say Lord make me a channel of Thy communication. We have an opportunity to have the best of both worlds, our traditional events and a virtual ease of access. We will be having our 4 in-person PreConferences. But I will also be holding virtual sessions for member sharing on the Agenda Items.

Which brings me to our second action item. Attend a PreConference. Participate actively in this process, so that I can carry your thoughts to the Conference rather than being confined to my own. And when you attend a PreConference, don't come alone. Bring someone with you. Someone new, someone uninvolved in our work. Someone who doesn't understand how the Conference process works. Open the door for someone, invite and encourage someone. I wasn't capable of standing for service. I wasn't capable of expressing my interest by attending an Assembly. I'm here because of the invitations and opportunities that others gave me. Because of a group that elected me GSR when I thought myself incapable. Because of an Area that elected me Registrar and gave me the gift of General Service. PreConference season is a season of giving, and I hope you'll give someone the gift of that experience.

When I first got sober, I thought I wanted a life of joy. But I found a life of service, until one day I realized that service is joy. Thank you for allowing me to serve.

In Love and Service,

Rainer

Area 51 Delegate