

## 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference

### 2020: A Clear Vision for You

Before I begin this report I would like to thank everyone of you for attending and for your support. I would especially like to thank Bob. D former Area 85 Delegate Panel 67 Literature Committee for organizing and hosting our area's history making first ever zoom GSC report. I also thank him for his enthusiasm for this event and for paving the way through his years of service to make my path smoother in these unprecedented times.

With deep gratitude I thank our hard working and dedicated executive of Area 85: Rene our Treasurer, Melissa our Secretary, Stacy our webmaster, Rod our registrar, Bob our Chair and Leeanna our Alternate Delegate. I thank you my friends for your dedication to AA and the encouragement and hope I have received from you as we carry on the legacy of service from the generations before. It is an honour to serve with you all. I hope Leeanna that I will make your path as Delegate a little smoother too. I would like to make a special thank you to Duncan and Murray, our mentors and all the trail blazers of service in our area... and this is sounding like a drawn out Oscar acceptance speech so I will move on to the business at hand...

At the ODC in February of this year a former Delegate told me that his second Conference was not the same as the first. He seemed disappointed and couldn't elaborate other than to reiterate that, "it wasn't the same"

I told myself at that time that yes this year was going to be different; the Conference was to be at Rye Brook for the last time as Times Square the previous year was also the last time. Panel 69 seemed to be one of endings..At least this year I felt more comfortable in my 'Delegate Shoes'; they were beginning to fit. I felt more prepared.

Little did we know what was to transpire within the next two and half weeks. On March 20 an email from Greg T. GSO General Manager stated how New York had shut down, GSO included and quote, " We will not be able to conduct any further planning work even for a scaled-back remote or virtual Conference." The future of the 70<sup>th</sup> GSC seemed very uncertain.

March 25 we received an email from Greg stating , “ The office (GSO) working closely with the Trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference will put forward for discussion a new proposed schedule for the 70<sup>th</sup> GSC . Most of it will be pushed out a couple of months (into early June) from the current start date of April 19 and we will incorporate in the proposed plan the two- session approach and an abbreviated schedule to accomplish all the necessary business of our Conference” \*end quote\*

Numerous Doodle Polls were sent out, progress was made on the Zoom technology By mid April, the date of May 16 -19 was set for AA’s first ever Virtual Reality GSC. We were venturing out into uncharted territory, digital reality... I felt strongly the sense of being part of making history in AA as every AA member will be. Do we not now have a sense of how Bill, Dr. Bob and the first 100 felt putting the program together facing the same unknowns...Truly we understand the depth of experience, strength and hope. And faith with hard work.

The Conference came to fruition in a mere 8 weeks. As Patrick C. the Conference Coordinator stated , “We went from nothing to putting on this Virtual Reality Conference in 8 weeks.”

The Conference was literally dead in the water and yet it happened. I cannot imagine all the blood sweat tears by everyone at GSO, the trustees and GSB getting this to happen but I was moved by Kate W. Class B Trustee from Western Canada Region when she stated in her farewell video, “AA moves slowly, but when we have to we can move fast.” The 70<sup>th</sup> GSC is ample evidence of that.

Prior to the Covid-19 shutdown of New York, on February 19, I received an email from Patrick C. the conference coordinator quote, “ Dear Lorraine, I am delighted to send you this loving invitation to participate at the 70<sup>th</sup> GSC. It is customary to ask some Conference members to lead us in opening a session.

You will open the session on Sunday April 19 at 10:30 am. Open the session by introducing yourself by name, area and panel. Next call for a moment of silence followed by reading a short passage from AA literature that will be at the podium for you use. Please note that you will not need to select the reading. We will provide you with the selected reading as we get closer to the Conference.

*Please be at the dais five(5) minutes before the time for you to participate.*

Unless you let me know right away that you feel you cannot participate, I will count on you.”

Wow I was pretty shocked. It’s hard to describe the emotions I felt as I read that. The first was shock like seriously me? The next was pure joy to be replaced with self centred- fear, envisioning ahead, seeing myself standing up on that dais in front of everyone and totally flubbing it up. Once that all subsided, I thanked Patrick and accepted with deep gratitude.

I felt so honoured that I would be up on that dais representing all you wonderful members of the Fellowship from Northwestern Ontario Area 85. I cannot tell you how much it means to me to let all the rest of AA know about us. But I still had some nervousness. But according to the email all I had to do was read what was prepared. Patrick told me I would be sent the reading in advance of the conference. No worries right?

Remember about plans? Well that all went out the window. From being nervous about opening the Conference I went to sad that it wasn’t happening, my moment on the dais was gone, wiped out by an invisible marauder...God had other plans

Once the date for the Virtual Reality Version was set, we delegates, then had our work cut out for us. Many Zoom meetings transpired with Regional Trustees and their delegates. We had 3 three with Jan L our Eastern Canada Trustee. She kept us up to date and we had a zoom training session as a region. These Zoom meetings really brought all the Eastern Delegates into a deeper relationship. We began to function as a team. I believe I spent more time with my fellow Eastern Delegates on Zoom than in person the previous year. They are all like home group members to me now. AA family.

The committees also had preconference zoom meetings. One meeting was with the Trustees Committee on the General Service Conference with all 8 trustees present as well all 8 of the Agenda Committee I have served on. The purpose was to explain the work we Delegates had to do to reduce the agenda workload of our committee. They also explained some of what was to happen at the Conference We were informed that the committees had only 3 hours instead of 6 to discuss the agenda items. Only 45 minutes was allowed for presentation and discussion

of Committee reports! The Chairperson would not read the report in full but only the recommendations and statement of previous meetings with Trustees. We had a short question period with the Trustees Committee then they signed off leaving the 8 members of the Agenda committee logged on.

We had two hours of Zoom time to deliberate reductions to our Agenda workload. We worked it down to what we felt we could reasonably accomplish based on our experience from the previous year. We had a good plan. Well we know what happens to plans don't we? That's how we make God laugh.

We 69"ers felt bad for the Panel 70"s. We had all met at our January Zoom preconference meeting and they were pretty excited and curious about experiencing the Conference. At that time we all looked forward to seeing each other in person. The panel 70's felt bad for us 69s because we couldn't do our farewells. And of course we all were going to miss the food!

We meshed together so well our chairman Steve S. from Oklahoma suggested we get together the next week just before the start of the conference and have a social get together via Zoom. Colleen A from Hawaii said, "Let's make it an AA meeting" We were able despite great differences in time zones have our AA sharing a week later on Wednesday May 13 just before the start of the Conference on Saturday the 16<sup>th</sup>. It was great to get to know my fellow committee members on the deeper level of sharing experience, strength and hope.

On Thursday May 7<sup>th</sup> I received an email from Patrick C. the conference coordinator that I was still on to open up the conference but could I put together the reading, submit it with the source etc. He attached a document showing a history of previous readings to give me a reference for length. He also wanted it submitted ASAP with a deadline for Monday the 11<sup>th</sup>.

Talk about cutting it fine. I was like the proverbial kid in the Candy Store. I could actually pick the opening reading for this history making conference. Man I was excited and thanking God and asking him to find the right words from Bill to open the Conference, words that would reflect either the theme "2020 A Clear Vision For You" or just the stuff of what was happening. AA rising to the challenge of Covid-19.

I needed my Higher Power's help because Bill wrote so much, so many excellent writings which one to choose? Also another difficulty was that Bill was verbose – he liked to go on in his writings. It was difficult to find a piece short enough as I was looking at his writings in Language of the Heart and the latest book Our Great Responsibility Bill W.s General Service Conference Talks 1951-1970.

I ended up using Language of the Heart as I couldn't condense some of Bill's excellent writings from Our Great Responsibility without losing the context. I felt strongly directed to Language of the Heart using excerpts from it. I am a lot like Bill W. I also am verbose....it was no surprise when Patrick asked me to shorten it. I thought I had.

Let's switch to the actual Conference. On opening- day we got down to business right after the opening. The Conference did not begin until 12:15 Eastern Daylight Time in order to accommodate delegates from different time zones like the west coast and Hawaii. Michele G. Chair of the GSB made her opening remarks. I could see the toll Covid had taken on her. She was not the confident spiritual speaker of last year. She seemed tired, distracted and tense.

Last year she spoke movingly of trusting in the process and feeling a Higher power working through group conscience. This year it was of course focused more on Covid and getting the conference happening. I followed with my opening reading and the rest of the hour was condensed into Zoom instructions and an address by Greg T. General Service Manager of GSO.

Covid had exacted its toll on him also. He looked and sounded tired. The focus of both Greg & Michele was to not waste time at the virtual microphone and be conscious of time and we ran out of time for the rest of the opening items. It was off to our committee rooms for the allotted 3 hours for deliberation and discussion.

The 3 hours proved to be inadequate. Our Agenda Committee barely made it through the 3 crucial items which were 1) the theme for the 71<sup>st</sup> GSC which is "AA in a Time of Change" 2) Presentation/Discussion Topics : "Practicing AA's Spiritual Principles in a Changing World, with Recovery in a Changing World, Unity in a Changing World, Service in a Changing World and 3) The Workshop topic: Inform-Communicate, Involve-Act, Inspire-Attract.

When Steve S. our chair read our workshop topic- Inform, Involve, Inspire a Delegate quipped that's a lot of I's. I think either I was only one who got it or maybe I was the only one who laughed and said good one (we were muted). I think our Agenda Committee chair Steve got it because he suddenly looked a bit disconcerted. Do you all get it? In our steps, tradition and literature it's 'we' not I. We are a we program of action. I wish I could recall which Delegate it was who said that. It was a foreshadowing of the rest of the Conference. It was funny but there was a truth in it.

All the other committees had the same problem 3 hours is not enough time. Even more so the 45 minutes allotted for the reports was a failure. Very few recommendations could be properly discussed as too many opinions were at the microphone and our chairs Michele & Greg were not as quick to cut off people who were repeating others or coming up to the microphone twice.

There certainly wasn't enough time for the the Literature Committee presentation. It had 3 recommendations, 11 committee considerations and 11 items forwarded to the 71<sup>st</sup> GSC. In our 45 minutes 2 of the recommendations became Advisory Actions. These were a) the updated draft video of Your General Service Office, the Grapevine and General Service Structure be approved, and b) The AAWS Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other AA Materials, approved by the AA World Services Inc. Board of Directors in January 2020 be acknowledged and accepted by the General Service Conference.

Everything bogged down on the 3<sup>rd</sup> recommendation, "Consider updating the pamphlet AA for the Black and African-American Alcoholic. The committee recommended that it be updated to include fresh stories and a new title that is respectful and inclusive. I kept waiting for our chair use those Robertson Rules of order. Time was running out and a floor action ensued..

Remember a while back I mentioned the lot of I's remark as a foreshadowing? I saw a lot of eager delegates wanting to be heard over and over again. Really important considerations didn't even have a chance to be looked at let alone discussed. Pretty much all the reports bogged down because of everyone having to go to the mike. A lot of people were saying the same thing. And never have I seen so many interruptions with points of information, some timely some not.

The final confusion and time consumer happened with the Trustees report's recommendation for the election for accepting the slate of directors for AAWS Board. Michele G as chair opposed the recommendation! Chaos and confusion reigned after that. A special time on Day 4 the last day of the conference was set aside before floor motions to hash out the issue. It was agreed to drop the Robertson Rules for order and just have a free for all discussion.

A former panel 67 Delegate John W had submitted his application for the position on the AAWS Board, Of all candidates he was the best qualified and optimal choice. Confusion came in the wording of qualifications specifically *Past Delegate -not eligible until one year after rotation*. It wasn't clarified that it means not eligible to apply or serve until one year after end of rotation as delegate.

We took votes and it was discussed and in the end two floor actions cancelled each other out and AAWS had no approval on its slate of directors. What an incredible schmozzle and waste of time. Everyone end up confused. Many people felt there was a personality issue happening with members of the boards of GSB and AAWS, strong opposing factions regarding the candidate. There was mention of letters sent out to we delegate prior to the conference concerning this slate but I received nothing. It was brought up that in Box 459 the opening was mentioned and did not mention the criteria of 1 year after rotation,

On and on it went. People were really confused with the floor motion process so Michele and Greg changed the wording so people could vote on them properly. There were some problems with translations for our French Canadian Delegates and when Franz Panel 70 Delegate from Area 90 Northwest Quebec mentioned her difficulty with translation Michele G. snapped, " I am not God" She was having trouble with her bandwidth for Zoom and I could see her frustration with her tech problems. But I was surprised at Michele's loss of control.

We're switching back to the week before the Conference now. I felt chained to my computer to keep up on all the information coming in, especially reports on the Dashboard. Because the of the workload reduction and the Conference being 4 days instead of 6, presentations, the Key Note address and other Conference materials had to be covered prior to the Conference instead at the Conference. Videos were done of 2 Class B Trustee Farewells -Tom A Western Canada Central Region and Kate W. Western Canada as well as Carole B. General Service Trustee.

Video presentations of reports were also done Michele G. for GSB, Cathy B. for AAWS and Ginger R. for AAGV. Cathy's Report for AAWS was very powerful as well as informative. She spoke of her dread of doing the report at the Conference in front of everyone and now alone at home in front of a camera stated, "in true alcoholic fashion I would rather be up there in front of everyone".

She said it was a year of disappointments, especially the cancellation of the International Convention, no panel 69 farewells the glitches with ERP and My Portal. She described The Budget of 2020 before Covid and after. The 2020 Budget was as follows:

Gross Literature Sales	\$14,750,000
Gross Profit	\$9,800
Contributions	\$9,000
Expenses Budgeted	\$18,798,860
Bottom Line	1,140

After Covid-19 (First three weeks of April) Literature Sales just under 150,000

Contributions -Just under \$500,000. AAWS is now in the process of creating a new budget for this year and the next. Now will be the test of the Prudent Reserve which is set at 9 months, so essential services can continue.

GSO had achieved an almost 100% funded Pension Plan which will now have to be re-evaluated.

She also spoke of Opportunities, specifically the Fellowship stepping up immediately to online meetings, workshops and intergroups getting meeting info listed. Also came guidelines for making contributions, and privacy while meeting in the digital world.

She applauded the new Communications Department which collaborates with GSO, AAGV and staff to assist in the development of Digital resources to reach the Fellowship and others interested in the program of recovery. The new website is in its final phase, the meeting guide app has a quarter million users and the department has input on Youtube, Google non profits and video product planning

Publishing activities saw the release of the 12 & 12 and Big Book in ASL. They were vetted and approved by deaf members. Our Great Responsibility the History of Bill W.'s GSC talks was published, 3 new audiobooks in 3 languages Big Book, 12&12 and Living Sober

-new Video "Young and Sober in AA-From drinking to Recovery" watch on aa.org

Large print releases, As Bill Sees it, Came to Believe, AA in Prison-Inmate to Inmate

Pamphlets in Large Print – The AA Group, Questions & Answers on Sponsorship and Access to AA

The 2020 Literature Catalogue which normalized prices and simplifies access to AA Literature

Progress is being made in digital distribution. Staple-free pamphlets are available in correctional and treatment facilities. Digital distribution is difficult in changing prison landscapes but slow and steady progress is being made in trying to find the best way to reach alcoholics in correctional facilities.

The new video, "Our General Service Office" presents a wonderful picture of what our GSO looks like, the people and what they do for AA and the Fellowship. It will be available soon. (It was posted on the Dashboard for our perusal and it was really well done. I enjoyed it.)

Another positive is AA's presence on Linked-In, the listing of upcoming professional events in which AA will have a display and/or presence. It has been popular with our friends who come into contact with alcoholics through their jobs. The CPC desk is asking for input on how to enhance and better reach those working in fields of social services, medical or legal – to reach out and let them know what AA is and isn't.

The ERP system while painful and slow in its implementation was thankfully at a point where employees could use this cloud-based system to work from home. Without access to the necessary data the transition to telework would have been impossible. Once fully up and running this system will allow departments to access information from other departments, will allow the flow of information

thus streamlining and making GSO more effective in responding to the requests of the Fellowship

(This paragraph is for Rod our registrar) My Portal is the tech department's highest priority. AAWS appreciates the patience of area registrars. The final product will be worth the wait. (On May 29 an update by email from Greg T. of GSO highlighted the progress of My Portal that it is still a work in progress and he thanked us for our patience.) Hmm it pays to be slow in doing my report because I have these updates for you.

Despite Covid-19 GSO continues answering calls and carrying on the business of AA. The international Conference was cancelled, but all the lessons learned in planning for it will be brought to Canada in 2025 The Conference desk was crazy busy preparing the Virtual Reality 70<sup>th</sup> GSC.

Cathy spent some time on Safety in AA. In 2017 the service piece "Safety in AA Our Common Welfare" (smf-209) led to a request for a safety card to be read at meetings that would have suggested language to deal with disruptive situations, the initial rollout of the card was messy but the demand for it was high. Conversation and request for feedback has continued since that time, In fact it was discussed at the 69<sup>th</sup> GCS.

From the safety card has come a request for a Safety and AA flyer. An exploration into the safety card has evolved into a service piece. There will be more to come on that.

The GSO staff sub committee using input from the fellowship and AAWS has drafted an update to the yellow Safety card and the initial service piece smf-209. Now optional statements inspired by fellowship sharing allow groups to choose options to read or not. There is an understanding that there may be nuances in language and challenges that the group might be facing. The flip side of the card contains some 'Keep in Mind' suggestions relating to the twelve traditions and shared experience.

Cathy ended her report reiterating that it has been a year of disappointments but also of great successes, quote, " Ours is a society based on service and dependent on action." End quote

All the video reports were really well done . The outgoing Western Canada Trustee Cate W. shared her experience as a Class B Trustee, her initial shock at being selected and subsequent feelings of fear and uncertainty. She was on three different committees with many personalities, yet all that was swept aside in the power of the process, group conscience and respect. Her mentor a former trustee told her that she was exactly where she was supposed to be and to stick close to the program.

Her favorite time was after the meetings, going out for supper and getting to know everyone at a personal level and becoming friends. There were the challenges of the 6 year time commitment as well as travel, airports, lost luggage and delays. But she had no regrets.

Tom A. of Western Canada Central was equally moving. He has 30 years of service and he spoke about the spirituality of rotation how it curbs the ego. Interestingly he mentioned the apathy in the Fellowship of members not stepping up for service, of problems in groups yet he said that it was unrecovered alcoholism rather than apathy. the solution is spiritual and many alcoholics are just staying sober rather than being recovered.

GSB, he said is the custodian of AA but it does not solve problems, the difference is in the home group, that's where it all begins. He strongly recommended we all read Bernard Smith's writing 'instruments of group conscience, on page 280 of AA Comes of Age. As I watched the video I thought of Kevin H of Area 1 Alabama/Northwest Florida.

Kevin is the nickname guy from last year's conference. He dubbed me Mrs. Doubtfire and Tom A as Richard Dreyfuss. And I had to laugh because Tom A not only looks like the actor he also sounds like him. I did track Kevin down during our zoom conference and said, "It's Mrs. Doubtfire have you come up with any new nicknames? He laughed and said he was working on it and would send them to me. I still haven't heard from him.

But all jocular and colour commentary aside let's get down to some more business of the Conference.

Finance Report by Leslie B. General Service Board Treasurer was presented in Sunday's session. The report is unaudited due of course to Covid-19. Leslie

expected an audit done in the near future and would call for a Zoom presentation of it for the Conference members. A recent email from our Eastern Regional Trustee Jan states it could be early July. Here you go Rene and all our AA treasurers...

The 2019 proposed budget approved at the 69<sup>th</sup> GSC anticipated a net profit of \$501,221 but the actual as of December 31 2019 was loss of \$379,655. Income was down by 62,512 and expenses were \$943,388 more than budgeted.

Professional Fees were \$317,653 over budget due to contract reviews. AAWS is implementing new ways to review contracts in cost effective and less time consuming ways

Contracted Services \$831,948 over budget due in large part to the Netsuite -ERP System.

7<sup>th</sup> Tradition was \$8.86 million up \$478,471 from the \$8.38 million of 2018 of this amount \$6.9 million came from 28,180 groups representing 40.6 % of all groups.

\$1.3 million came from individuals and special meetings

Some financial 'fun' facts:

Steady growth of online contributions 2010- \$86,718 which is 1.38% of contributions to 2019- \$1,006,083 11.29% of contributions

Largest 7<sup>th</sup> tradition contributor is the Pacific U at \$2.2 million 12.48% online

Smallest Western Canada at \$300,000 -7.5% online

(Us) - Eastern Canada \$450,000 – 4.42% online

Literature Sales Projected \$14,775 Actual \$ \$14,259

Big Books 888 vs 902 in 2018

The AA Grape Vine had a net loss of 44,000 due mostly to accounting for LaVina expenses a change in accounting for expenses for the publications

Average GV circulation -66,376

Online/APP 4,806

The Reserve Fund the news you're all waiting for. Will it last? Will we survive?

First of all the Reserve Fund is different from our group or area reserve funds. While the ratio is number of months to cover recurring expenses the Reserve Fund covers much more:

-Operating shortfalls between revenues & expenses

\_Capital Construction Projects

-Lease Guarantees

-Pension Obligations

-Retirement Medical Obligations

-Litigations & Legal Liabilities

-Any Other Unknowns

As of December 31, 2019 the Reserve Fund Balance was \$16,202,404 with earnings of \$283, 402

December 31, 2018 \$15,935,331 with earnings of \$226,713

December 31, 2017 \$ 14,352,618 with earnings of \$153,884

I have included the Investment Guidelines for the Reserve Fund. I think it good information for our Fellowship to be aware of especially as the Reserve Fund is doing now what it was set up to do.

Minimum Requirement: to ensure liquidity the Reserve Fund must contain investment instruments with a maturity of 1 year or less to the sum of

- a) Unearned GV subscription liability
- b) Operating cash requirement of the Service Entities

This amount is reviewed annually by the Trustees Finance & Budgetary Committee

No More Than: The balance of the Reserve Fund shall be invested in instruments with a maturity between 0 -10 years provided that at no time shall more than 50% of the principal amount of such balance consist of investment instruments having maturity dates of 5 or more years.

Reserve Fund Policy Investment Review: At the October 31, 2016 meeting, the GSB accepted the recommendation that no change in the investment philosophy be undertaken based on the Report of a Subcommittee of Trustees Finance & Budgetary Committee

Our Reserve Fund has a ratio of 9.4 months to recurring expenses. A \$3.m withdrawal was made in April due to the fall out from Covid-19 Our 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition for April was 540k vs the monthly average 670k Literature Sales were 145K vs a monthly average 730K .Our monthly expenses are \$1.4m, we are not self supporting with the 7<sup>th</sup> so literature sales cover the shortfall,

With the closure of GSO literature sales plummeted and 7<sup>th</sup> tradition dropped also. A monthly shortfall of 700K is predicted for the next 3-4 months hence the withdrawal. Monthly costs will increase pending International Convention Costs as well Capital Expenses from ERP and 8<sup>th</sup> floor renovations.Detroit International Conference: We have a \$5.8 million Insurance Policy. To date I have no information on what is covered. It was discussed thoroughly at the conference and we were left with the sense that pretty much everything would be covered.

How about a brief financial history of our Conventions?

2005 Toronto 42,000 attendees Adm \$85 <\$39,040>

2010 San Antonio 52, 383 Adm \$95 profit \$844,545

2015 Atlanta 56,900 Adm \$100 >\$210,431>

2020 Detroit 47,500 Adm \$115 \$64, 698

Busing Cost Toronto \$820,115

San Antonio \$939,693

Atlanta \$1.548,869

Detroit 0

The Reserve Fund covers the Convention Since 1955 there has been a net of \$1,349,944 and the biggest loss on an International Convention happened in San Diego in 1995 brace yourself \$632,027!

The expenses for Detroit are \$5,518,520. As mentioned earlier it remains to see what settles out with the Insurance coverage.

Since Covid shutdown of GSO

125,00 free digital GV subscriptions

475 pieces of international correspondence

364 members behind the walls connected to members outside

More than 15,000 emails & calls for help or info from GSO.

Since March 20<sup>th</sup> GSO staff have been working from kitchen tables, living rooms and home offices all over the US & Canada Over 5500 pieces of mail have been delivered to box 452 and 475 Riverside Drive, been collected, disinfected and distributed to the homes of service assignments of records and contributions. We saw a picture of Aubrey's home AKA Mail sorting room.

90 responses were made to the media/public outlets about how AA has adapted to virtual meeting spaces and 5<sup>th</sup> tradition online efforts

150 AA related articles published around the world during Covid-19 One article was from Nfld/Labrador about a person got sober and has never been to an in person meeting.

### The Plan Ahead:

Help the membership to be self supporting

Getting out the facts

Add more channels for contributions PayPal and Venmo

Release a video to on line meetings with this info

Regular updates from GSO

Leslie finished with "AA is still here! We are thriving, the message is being carried. The Prudent Reserve is designed precisely for this situation and will carry us through until the membership can get us back on our feet.

This is an unprecedented time in the world and a pivotal moment for AA. Now is the time for this generation of our membership to demonstrate what self support means. End of quote

I am happy to say that I received an email from Jan L. our Eastern Regional Trustee yesterday she wrote, “ ..a huge thank you to the fellowship... we had a record contribution total for May of \$838,555.86! “ Looks like a good demonstration of self support to me.

One more financial fun fact. In the same email Jan gave us the cost of the Virtual Reality Conference stands at \$185,066. Delegate fees paid \$137,290. As of the end of May there is a surplus of \$56,880. But this is not a final figure. And so concludes the financial part of the report.

The tech side of the Conference was fantastic. I had no difficulties at all finding virtual way to all events. Our Zoom operators all sounded like radio personalities. One was a very familiar face Kimberly the Alternate Delegate from Area 83 Eastern Ontario. She first trained the Eastern Canada Delegates and alternates for our bimonthly Zoom CERAASA meetings. What an experience for her and she had a sneak preview of what a General Service Conference is like.

The only tech problems were with Michele G. due to her location and the translation difficulties happened when we were all muted, the translators ended up muted also. The problem was resolved by letting the translators cohost. We had no zoom bombers or equipment failures other than delegates with poor bandwidths. I found it more tiring to be in front of a screen all day than being present physically at the Conference.

Zoom could be incorporated to reduce number of days needed for a physical conference. The Conference was successful technically and the panel 70's enjoyed it. They dubbed themselves the Pandemic Panel. Many of them had been told that this conference would not be as good an experience and in true alcoholic fashion they said, “The hell with that, this is our virtual reality and so far it is a great experience.”

Was there a false bravado there. No they have no reference point to compare to and hey we identify not compare right? Expectations vs Serenity levels Right? The Pandemic Panel 70's were awesome. They danced to the music in the waiting

rooms. I stodgy old panel 69 didn't, cause it was all Motown and hey I got no rhythm, so I just came in later. If they would've played some rock or blue grass I would've been in there.

Some alcoholics monopolized the conversations when the music wasn't playing so I learned patience and to let others talk. It would always be the same group so I tuned in later. With virtual reality I could not sit with everyone and meet everyone as last year. Indeed I could hardly visit with my friends of last year. That would be my disappointment of this conference. I was glad to see the Pandemics loving every minute of it. And I will treasure every memory of it.

I attended the General Service Conference Serenity AA meeting every morning at 10 am as I did last year at 8am. Attendance was opposite, last year the meeting started off sparsely attended and by the end of the Conference it was full! This Year we had 87 attendees at the first meeting, which meant a lot of people couldn't share so the next day there were 57 or so and by the last day when I expected a crowd like last year only 40 or so.

We panel 69's got to do our farewells on video. All conference members were encouraged to book a spot for a two minute video recording. I booked mine for Sunday morning of the conference at 9am. I went a bit over (no surprise) but they allowed it, it was only a few seconds. We still haven't been told how we can see them. I would love to watch them all.

It truly was a miracle that they pulled off this conference, and that it went so well technically. Despite the relief of our conference organizers and praise for the fellowship rising to the challenge with the proliferation of online meetings and workshops there was an undercurrent of uncertainty, maybe even fear. All I know is what I saw heard and experienced. As a panel 69 I have the reference point of last year. And this conference was different in more than that it was virtual reality.

It seemed God or a higher power was not as prevalent this year. The Responsibility Pledge was used more than the Serenity Prayer. Secular winds of change are blowing harder than ever in our culture and they are prevalent in AA also.

There is a constant barrage of requests to change the Big Book and 12 and 12. To be more inclusive or diverse in particular with gender ideology; in particular our AA preamble from a society of men and women to a society of people. A request has been made to remove the chapters "To Wives" and "To Employers" from the next edition of the Big Book. Gender neutral language is requested. We never got a chance to discuss these topics because of our condensed Conference. In the next several years gender ideology adaptations for our literature will be a recurring hot topic. I am disappointed that we didn't get to any of that.

Our common problem is alcoholism, we have a solution on which we can absolutely agree. Our primary purpose is to carry the message which hasn't changed. Alcoholism hasn't changed but it appears that a portion of the membership wants AA to change. Will the message be distorted by changing the text of our Big Book.

For 85 years we have kept the text intact yet Cathy B, General Service trustee in her farewell speech spoke openly how she disagrees with a lot of things in the Big Book and that we as the Fellowship could write our own. She cited the example of Noah Lavigne who wrote a recovery book for 2 different problems, in his book he had a brilliant chapter on sex but when he failed to apply the principles in his life the Board let him go but asked for the rights to his book. He refused so they wrote their own which in Cathy's opinion is better than the original of Noah's. Cathy thinks we idolize the Big Book.

What do you all think my friends? Ultimately it is up to us to speak up and step up in service. When I first came to AA in 1988 I wanted to rewrite the Big Book and 12 and 12, pretty much most of us do. And obviously that hasn't changed.

Well I've gone on long enough. I felt bad that my work obligations caused me to delay my presentation but I can see God's hand in it because I was able to give updates I wouldn't have had 2 weeks ago.

In closing I would like to read you my opening reading of the 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference 2020: A Clear Vision For You