THE PURPOSE
OF OUR SERVICE:

SOBRIETY
within Everyone's Reach

Final Report

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS
26TH WORLD SERVICE MEETING

A Virtual Event | November 28-30, 2020

THE PURPOSE OF OUR SERVICE:

Sobriety within Everyone's Reach

26th World Service Meeting 2020

A Virtual Event

Final Report

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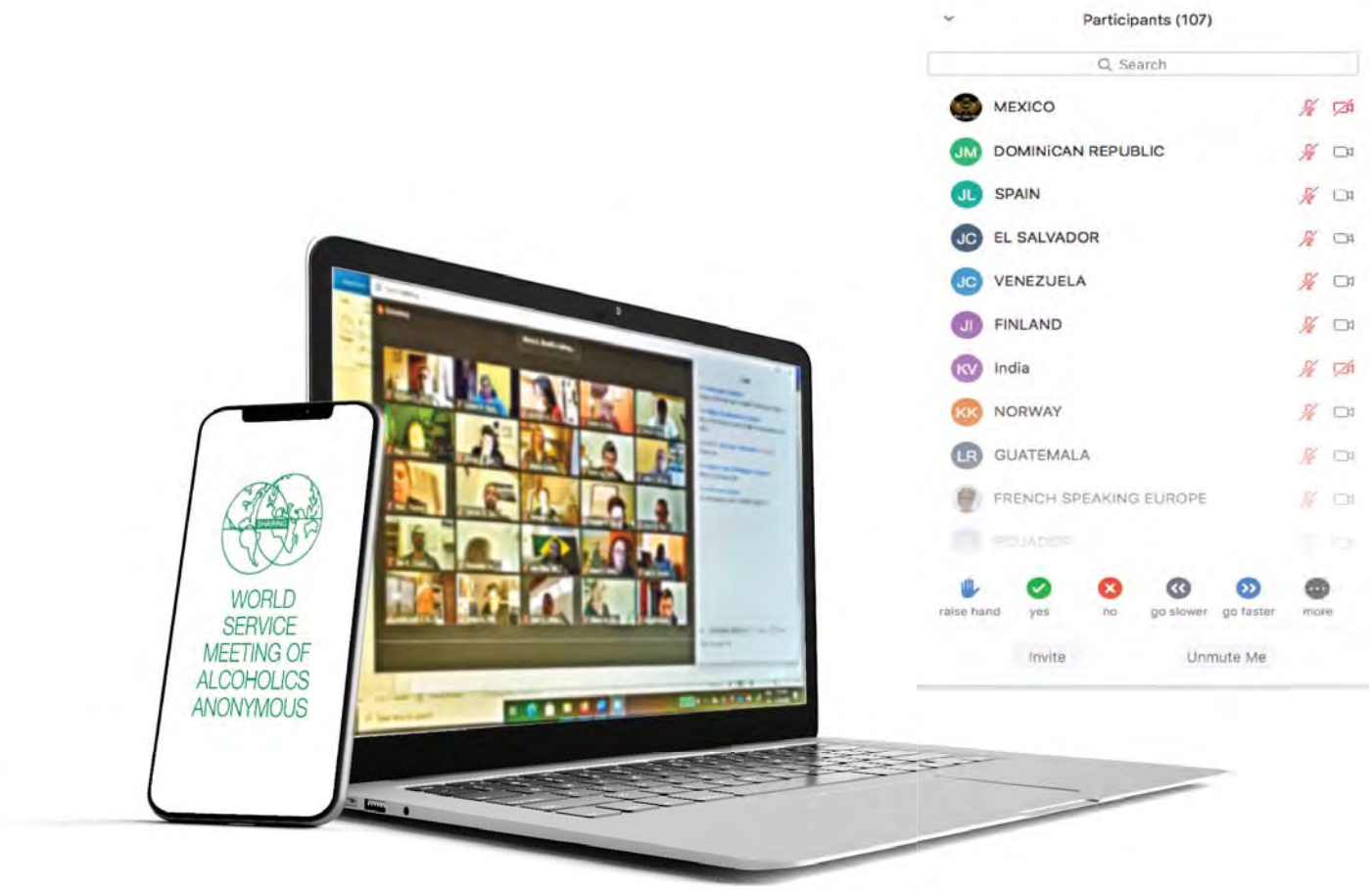
Anonymity-Protected Digital Edition

This edition of the 26th World Service Meeting Final Report has been formatted to protect the anonymity of A.A. members (who are represented by first name and last initial only). Our many nonalcoholic friends, trustees and employees are noted by their full names.

About the Artwork: The artwork used to illustrate this report was provided by individual members of the World Service Meeting, showing photos of their workspaces and the areas around them. Delegates and support staff were asked to provide photos that could be used to illustrate the report and many complied.



The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety within Everyone's Reach

Delegates representing 44 countries, zones or service structures gathered via videoconference November 28-30th for the 26th World Service Meeting (WSM), focused on the theme "The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety within Everyone's Reach." Originally scheduled as a face-to-face event, because of the Coronavirus pandemic, the three-day event was held virtually for the first time in its history.

Traditionally alternating on a bi-yearly basis between New York and locations around the world, circumstances this year ushered in a historic opportunity to connect and despite being multiple time zones apart delegates gathered with dedication and purpose to address issues and solutions facing our worldwide Fellowship.

Since its inauguration in 1969, the WSM has provided a continuing international forum for sharing experience and ideas on carrying the Alcoholics Anonymous message of recovery around the globe. Its success in bringing together A.A.'s far-flung service centers reflects a final vision of A.A. co-founder Bill W., who believed that there could be "one world for A.A." to assure that help would be available to suffering alcoholics, no matter where they are or what language they speak.

And so, these critical service meetings have taken place every other year since their inauguration, slowly expanding the reach of the Fellowship around the globe. Yet, as the 25th World Service Meeting came to a close in Durban, South Africa, in October 2018, no one could have predicted the turn of events that would lead to the historic 26th WSM in 2020, a year overtaken with global concerns about COVID-19.

Hosted by the trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in the U.S. and Canada, numerous logistical and technical challenges had to be overcome once the shift to a virtual meeting had been determined in response to the global pandemic. "This has been such a challenging year for everyone," said Mary C., acting International desk coordinator at the A.A. General Service Office in New York, who led the team which put together the virtual WSM. Nevertheless, she noted, "It's especially important to communicate openly with each other and to share ways in which we can keep A.A. sustainable and available to everyone."

Echoing that sentiment was Toby D., a first-term delegate from Denmark: "We are not alone with the problems of the pandemic. You see that the feelings of the Fellowship in each particular country are felt all over the world, and it's good to know we are trying to figure things out together."

Noting the historic nature of the meeting, the chair of the A.A. General Service Board (U.S./Canada), Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, Michele Grinberg, warmly welcomed all delegates and support staff at the opening session, expressing gratitude for the sacrifice each one had to make to participate in this truly global event. "I am so grateful for all of you, for your carrying the message around the world... This is clearly Bill's vision — and we're living it." Noting the unusual circumstances presented by the pandemic and the technology used to address it, Michele added, "I didn't know that my house was big enough to hold all of you, but apparently it is, and you're all welcome to crowd into my house anytime!

"I am so grateful for this World Service Meeting on the digital platform. Why? Because we are demonstrating for all of A.A. how we communicate despite this pandemic… We are carrying the message that A.A. is strong and alive."

Referencing a passage written by Bill W. in 1969 at the time of the first World Service Meeting, Michele shared this quote from *Language of the Heart,* "We welcome our delegate friends from around the world as we join together to assure that help will always be available for sick alcoholics wherever they are or whatever language they speak."

In closing, she added, "Thank you. I know I am going to learn a lot and I look forward to seeing some of you face to face on the road to happy destiny."

While many countries with long-established A.A. structures have been participating in the WSM for many years, attendance varies with each meeting. Bolivia and Turkey attended their first WSM in 2018, for example, and this year, two new countries participated (Bulgaria and Greece) and two countries (El Salvador and Guatemala) previously attending as part of the Central America Northern Zone participated with their own individual delegates.

Simultaneously translated in Spanish and Japanese, workshops, presentations and general sharing sessions addressed such issues as developing A.A. literature in multiple languages; the importance of women's participation in A.A.'s service structure; and maintaining A.A.'s traditional anonymity in an age of social media. A strong focus of delegates was on the effect the pandemic has had on Alcoholics Anonymous in terms of members' ability to meet face-to-face as well as the ability of newcomers to find and connect with A.A. In some countries, the virtual meetings that have become a staple of pandemic era A.A. are not possible due to lack of consistent Internet connectivity, creating new challenges for A.A.'s existing structures to reach those who are still suffering.

In large measure, however, the rise of virtual meetings has allowed thousands of people to find help from Alcoholics Anonymous during the current crisis and many of these virtual meetings are expected to continue when the pandemic is over.

Delegates heard reports from the Zonal Service Meetings, gatherings of the general service structures of whole sections of the globe held in off-years when there is not a World Service Meeting. Zonal meetings have proven to be particularly helpful for emerging countries beginning to get involved in A.A. beyond their own borders, and countries are encouraged to participate in zonal meetings before applying to participate in the World Service Meeting. Additionally, given the reduced schedule brought about by the pandemic, some information had to be relocated electronically on the WSM dashboard. This information, usually delivered in person, included brief A.A. histories and highlights from each country or zone and information on current structures and activities.

The four World Service Meeting committees (Agenda; Literature/Publishing; Policy/Admissions/Finance and Working with Others) met during the week, and their conclusions were reported to the body, which deliberated and voted on their recommendations. World Service Meeting recommendations set policy for the WSM itself, and are not binding on any participating country.

Additionally, as it does every other year, the Site Selection Committee met to determine the location for the next WSM — a meeting it was hoped would be taking place in person. After deliberation and the consideration of a number of bids from different countries and service structures, it was decided

that the 27th WSM would take place in Japan (with Iceland as the alternate site), focused on the theme: "Carrying the Message of A.A. in the Digital Age."

Greg T., general manager of the General Service Office U.S./Canada, reported on the International Literature Fund, which was established at the 11th World Service Meeting to provide start-up literature for those countries unable to finance their own translations and acquisitions. "Contributions to the International Literature Fund have been provided by a large number of participating service structures around the world. Many established a set amount that they contributed on an annual basis over a period of years, while others have contributed as they can, when they can, based on the individual financial circumstances of those countries' service structures," said Greg. "In years of international financial difficulties or crises (such as 2008-09 and this year, 2020) contributions have not always been as great, but A.A.W.S. has continued to apply such funds as are available to support translation, production and distribution of literature upon documented request.

"In the most recent two years," shared Greg, "requests have focused on supporting translation efforts, manufacturing costs for new books or reprints, literature shipping costs, including AA Grapevine titles."

Adding to the discussion on the publishing of international literature, David R., A.A.W.S. publishing director, provided an overview of the many translation and licensing projects underway in different countries and highlighted a number of improvements in implementing some of the policies and procedures involved in licensing and publishing A.A. materials around the world.

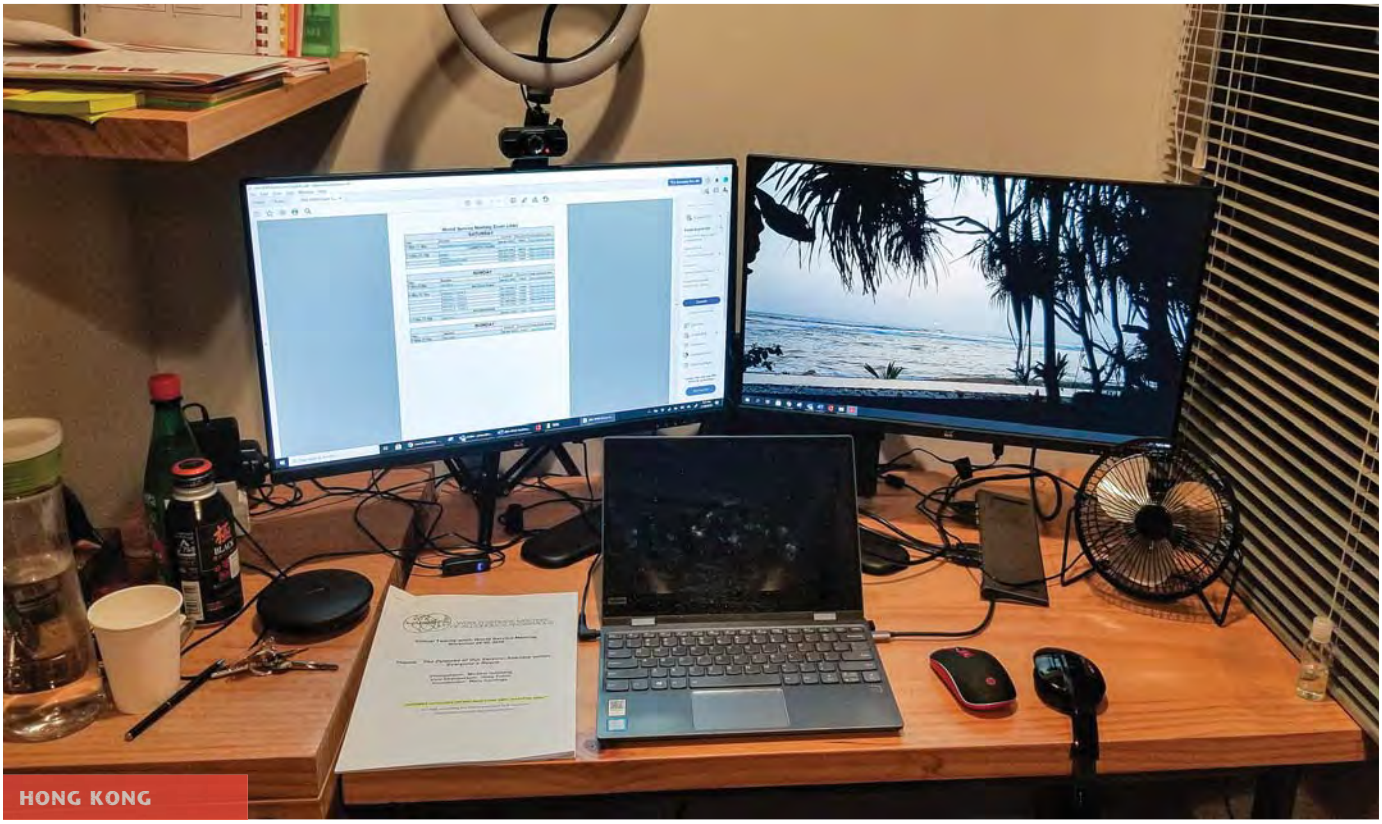
Delegates also met in three designated workshops, discussing the topics: "Communication — A Key to Unity," "The Use and Value of Our A.A. Literature in Sponsorship" and "The Importance of Our Nonalcoholic Friends in Our Structure."

Bolstered by lively music in between sessions, as provided by the Zoom operator providing tech support throughout the event, delegates relaxed, ate, danced, and shared with each other through the chat function — with many delegates noting that this informal, offline sharing was as vital to their WSM experience as the formal sessions were.

As the meeting neared its end, delegates shared freely in general sessions, expressing their gratitude for the entire experience of the World Service Meeting, with many remarking on how important it is to work with other countries in developing service structures and practices that work, while at the same time continuing to carry the message in their own countries.

Providing some closing thoughts for the proceedings, Michele Grinberg noted, "I started the weekend, as I told you, filled with gratitude, and that gratitude — I didn't think it was possible — but it has increased as we have shared the language of the heart… You have participated to the greatest extent that is possible in this technology, with substance, with good humor, with love for each other and obvious love for A.A. I am very, very honored to have served as your chair."

The meeting officially came to a close with delegates reciting the Serenity Prayer, one by one in each of the languages spoken in participating countries — a moving display of A.A.'s global reach. And, while delegates could still look forward to coming together informally at two scheduled addendums to the agenda taking place later in the month, a Gratitude in Action sharing session and a virtual visit to Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois W., delegates waved digitally one final time and, reluctantly, pressed "Leave Meeting."



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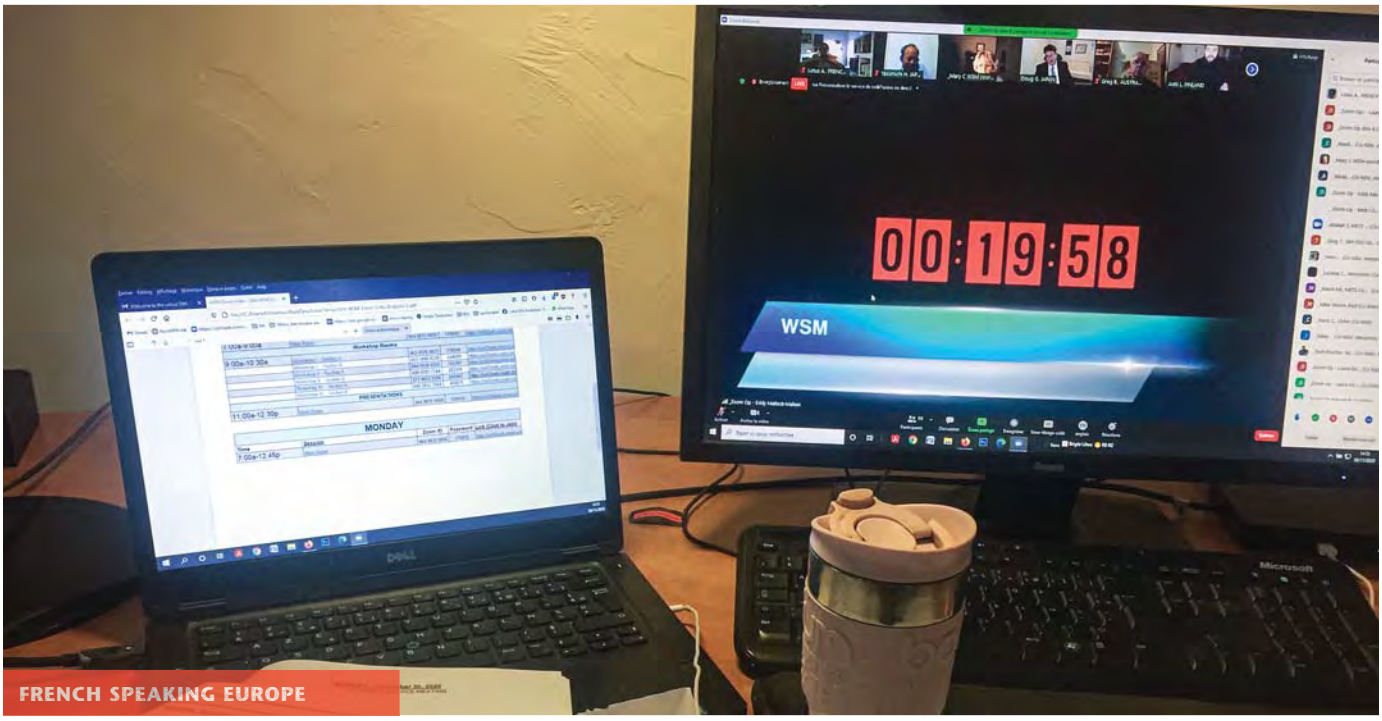
Presentations



FRENCH SPEAKING EUROPE

International Literature Fund

As the A.A. message has spread around the world over the Fellowship's first 85 years — sometimes slowly, sometimes quickly — the need for A.A. literature in scores of languages has steadily increased. In the face of this growing need, in 1990, the 11th World Service Meeting (WSM) recommended the practice of collecting funds to address the challenge of "providing start-up literature for those countries unable to finance their own translations and acquisitions."

Out of this effort, an international fund was established, to be managed by A.A. World Services, Inc. (A.A.W.S.), the publishing company of the United States and Canada General Service Board, whereby those countries who were interested and able could make monetary contributions to help defray the costs of translating, producing and distributing literature aimed specifically at carrying the message around the world. This fund is known as the International Literature Fund.

In the 30 intervening years, contributions to the International Literature Fund have been provided by a large number of participating service structures around the world. Many established a set amount that they contributed on an annual basis over a period of years, while others have contributed as they can, when they can, based on the individual financial circumstances of those countries' service structures. In years of international financial difficulties or crises (such as 2008-09 and this year, 2020) contributions have not been as great, but A.A.W.S. has continued to apply such funds as are available to support translation, production and distribution of literature upon documented request.

In the most recent two years requests have focused on supporting translation efforts, manufacturing costs for new books or reprints, literature shipping costs, including AA Grapevine titles.

The 25th WSM requested that AA Grapevine items be included in literature available for support for these funds.

International service structures are invited to continue to contribute to the fund, as they can, and to continue to request access to ILF for the vitally important work of making life-saving literature available. A.A.W.S. will continue to administer the funds and seek ways of preparing and distributing literature globally in service to the entire A.A. Fellowship.

Greg T., General Manager
of General Service Office U.S./Canada

Licensing and Translation

What's new in A.A.'s global publishing efforts: The ongoing surge of international translations activity

My name is David and I am an alcoholic. I currently serve in a professional capacity as the publishing director of A.A. World Services, Inc. and some folks call me "the publishing guy." I bring you greetings from our virtual offices in and around New York City, and I am delighted to be together with you today and to share with you a brief overview and update on our current efforts extending the hand of A.A. around the world to the next sick and suffering alcoholic, and helping those who help alcoholics — via our literature.

What stands out to me today, what is so noteworthy in our current work: together we are making great strides forward in the significant areas of *accessibility, inclusion* and *attraction.*

Just think….

All of us together from all around the world, despite every obstacle we are facing in these challenging times, are working together, diligently, painstakingly, passionately. A.A.'s trusted servants, translation working groups, literature and translations committee members, editors, designers, production professionals and more are immersed in dozens and dozens and dozens of projects moving forward in efforts to ensure that the message of hope that all that our program of A.A. offers can be most effectively shared.

Our co-founder Bill W. called our literature "our greatest asset."

Let us look at the Big Book. From its humble beginnings, the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous,* published in English in the United States in 1939, now with more than 40 million English-language copies distributed to date, and now translated into 70 languages worldwide and counting, and with more than 25 new and revised translations in process.

Here are just a few highlights of recent activity in international translation:

"How It Works" — from the start of Chapter 5 in the Big Book, "through the A. B, Cs," — item P-10 in our Catalog, has been translated for the first time in the Nicaraguan language of **Miskito**, in the Sub-Saharan language of **Shona**, which A.A. in Zimbabwe completed; as well as in the **Quechua** language (in its Peru dialect), and all have been approved for use in local A.A. meetings.

Other highlights: The new re-translation of the Ukrainian Big Book has been printed in a beautiful edition locally in Ukraine for the first time.

The revision of the Russian Big Book is moving forward in its local workgroup in Russia and the first-ever Tatar translation of the Big Book has just been approved and licensed to print

INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE FUND RECEIPTS

COUNTRY	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2001-2010	1991-2000
Argentina	200		200									
Australia	2,940		2,688		3,390		6,384			6,132	24,751	24,253
Belgium (Dutch-speaking)		2,250	(3,697)	6,414	1,748	212	266	269			-	
Belgium (Flemish-speaking)		2,061				2,800		2,464	3,998	2,797	19,276	17,520
Brazil		2,000	2,000	1,954	1,958	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,965	2,000	12,797	
Central America Northern Zone (ELS,GTML & HNDS)							300		300		1,100	200
Chile		200									-	
Colombia		880			862		1,018		1,405		818	
Czech Republic	200	1,000	1,000			1,000				550	9,950	
Denmark			10,603		12,937	7,169	27,759	1,832	7,119		-	
Ecuador				200		100					-	
Finland		1,680	3,420		1,583					1,302	13,731	12,141
French-speaking Europe (France)	678	550	467	1,949	559	1,060	324				4,470	6,891
German-speaking Europe (Austria)	6,482	6,742	7,034	6,093	8,679	6,615	7,468	7,828		8,479	5,418	3,929
Great Britain			20,457	12,200	6,869	7,547	8,124	7,579			62,635	20,503
Hungary	9,976										-	
Iceland				1,020		1,010		1,010		980	11,000	5,150
India		300									-	
Ireland		3,277								27,913	848,379	25,554
Italy		1,648		2,209	2,108		1,220	2,583			5,704	2,761
Japan	2,983	1,983	2,983	3,000	2,984	389	826	2,380	2,936	1,908	11,967	18,543
Latvia	116	(214)		208	165			100			6,425	10,638
Lithuania			1,107	1,140	2,078	876	388	778	100		1,700	
Mexico		(1,606)	2,095	7,551		215	1,332	282	1,000	1,000	5,000	4,000
Netherlands					712						8,800	
New Zealand			2,643	1,541	4,532		649	777	367		-	1,532
Norway	1,100	1,810	2,178						6,841	6,879	34,813	500
Paraguay			50								-	
Peru	405		345	360							200	
Poland	1,000	2,000		1,000	1,000	2,014	1,000		750	1,500	1,500	
Portugal	155	108		114							-	
Romania					200			300			1,035	
Russia	124					20		150	84		-	
Slovenia	1,070		550								-	
Spain		2,169	2,219	2,262	3,745		4,262	2,027		2,160	30,339	7,000
Sweden		11,583	11,775	13,906	6,533	2,847	3,740	3,676		10,989	24,917	3,427
Switzerland	1,935	6,280	5,575	6,936	242	8,835	4,217		7,601		1,773	
Turkey											75	
Ukraine							200		200		400	
Uruguay						100	100	100	200		-	
A.A. Online								95			968	5,507
ANNUAL TOTAL	$29,364	$46,699	$75,691	$70,055	$62,885	$44,808	$71,578	$36,229	$34,865	$74,588	$1,149,941	$170,050
ROLLING TOTAL	$1,866,753	$1,837,389	$1,790,690	$1,714,999	$1,644,944	$1,582,059	$1,537,251	$1,465,673	$1,429,444	$1,394,579	$1,319,991	

and distribute. The Lesotho language Big Book translation has been approved by our independent translation-evaluation service; and the first-ever Oriya language Big Book has most recently been approved and licensed to be printed and distributed in India. India is also moving forward translations in several other of the many languages read and spoken there, Khasi, and Konkani, among them.

Moving our projects forward, together

You will find our processes and policies outlined in English, French and Spanish on aa.org in the Terms of Use section, and we are happy to provide them to all who request them.

Over the years, in face-to-face meetings at these international gatherings, I have shared with delegates the information form we usually fill out together in person. This is available here and I look forward to receiving these updates from you. You may fill out a form out and attach it to an email to me: rosend@aa.org. Please include an email address for our responses.

Also of note: This year we have implemented the electronic exchange and signing of licenses. No more faxing. No more reliance on snail mail. Licenses can be exchanged now via email.

Speaking of licenses, licenses to reproduce and distribute A.A.W.S., Inc.-copyrighted items reached a record-breaking 300 new and renewal licenses across 17 countries in 2019. Argentina, Chile, Finland, Iceland, India, Iran, Great Britain, Lithuania, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine, among others, showed high volumes of activity. In 2020 this uptick continues, with Bolivia, Czech Republic, Demark, Guatemala, Iceland, India, Poland, Portugal and Russia showing activity, among others.

A word about attraction and inclusion

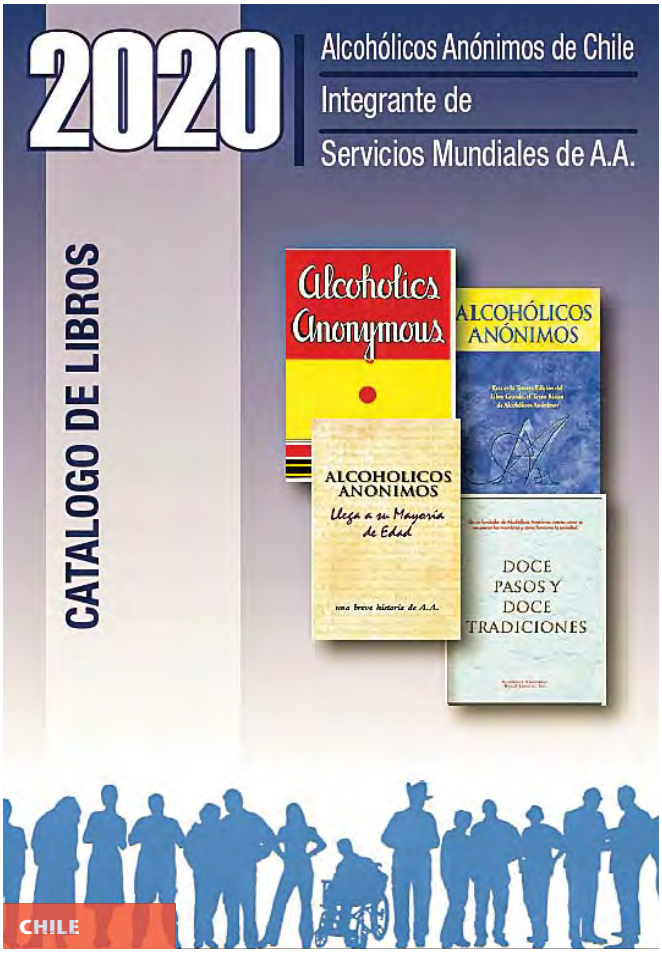
Several new and revised Conference-approved pamphlets have recently undergone "make-overs" — so that their cover images are contemporary and colorful and inviting, and attractive; and so that their texts inside reflect the widest range of experience that is shared by a diversity of A.A. members. These include: "Women in A.A." *(now: with an image of women on the cover!);* "A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues — and their sponsors"; "The 'God' Word: Agnostic and Atheist Members in A.A."; "LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A."; and "Access to A.A.: Members share on overcoming barriers." And in the works moving forward are draft pamphlets in progress that include shared experience by Spanish-speaking women, by contemporary young people in A.A., and more… Stay tuned.

Some other innovations in the works are in the areas of formats and distribution channels: we are preparing audiobook formats for our most popular pamphlets, new PSAs, and short videos and podcasts are also in development.

Our newest book, *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970,* was published in May 2019 in English, French and Spanish. Several countries have already translated or are currently in process of translating it into their local languages — and others have licensed to print this book and distribute it locally in English, French and Spanish.

I will close with excerpts from Bill W.'s 1955 talk, "Holding Us in Unity":

Dr. Bob and I began to see that a literature would be required for a whole movement… And in order for A.A. to function there had to be a certain amount of services provided.… And luckily we have now come [in 1955] to the point where we can function. . . no matter what the crisis. And these insights have not come from me, they have come from you.



For me, as we work so meaningfully together, no matter what challenges we face, the learning never ends. Thank you very much.

David R. — Publishing Director, A.A. World Services

The Importance of the Group Conscience Process

Reaching an Informed Group Conscience

Greetings, everyone! I am Aliaksei, an alcoholic from Belarus. And today I would like to share on the topic "Reaching an Informed Group Conscience."

So who's in charge in A.A.? Alcoholics Anonymous is a spiritual community, and therefore, such a spiritual concept as "Group Conscience" acts as the "Highest Authority" here. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group gathers together to make a decision. This decision-making relies on something

more than simple arithmetic, or a simple calculation of all the pros and cons. Group conscience is the collective consciousness of group members. Before taking concrete action on any problem, the group needs a fairly unanimous opinion of the collective consciousness on that issue. Members of the group achieve this by studying all available information and considering all personal points of view, as well as by applying the principles of A.A. To be well-informed, you need to be prepared to meet the opinion of a minority with an open mind.

Each of us learns to accept and recognize the fact that group conscience is the voice of the Higher Power. That is, I personally perceive the voice of the group as the voice of God. I often wonder when a group or a committee makes the wrong decision; does it mean that God makes the wrong decision? No, we don't think so. We've got used to thinking that God is never mistaken; it is us who are mistaken. And if we made a mistake, it means that God wants to teach us something, teach us a lesson. That is why I learn to be humble about the decisions made by the group.

We know from our own experience and A.A. literature that group conscience can make the wrong decision when group members are emotionally aroused or when they do not have sufficient information. While considering particularly sensitive issues, the group works slowly trying to avoid formal decisions, unless there is a clear collective view on the issue. Putting principles above personalities, members of the group treat dominant views with caution. The words "well-informed group conscience" mean that before the group vote, the relevant information must be studied and all opinions must be heard. It seems to me that during the voting I should ask myself two questions:

- If I vote for or against, will it help improve the Fifth Tradition?
- If I vote for or against, will it endanger the overall well-being of the group or the Fellowship as a whole?

I always criticized myself for mistakes when I drank. I've done this even in sobriety. But today I have to understand that like any normal person, I have the right to make mistakes and this does not make me a bad person. God allows me as well as my group to be mistaken. These days, though, I don't need to drink to avoid the shame of having made the wrong decision. Now in sobriety we have the power that helps us learn to admit our mistakes and correct them bravely. In the same way, a group or conference, having made a wrong decision, can study all the necessary information, consult with others, and thus having gained their unique experience, come to a more rational and sensible decision.

You know, I've read out about some perfect picture of a group conscience that you might have come across in our A.A. literature, and it all sounds very inspiring. It's like an ideal that we all should probably be aiming for.

But now I would like to share a couple of lines about the situation with group conscience in my country. We have a service structure, committees, a board of trustees, and international delegates. We hold an annual national conference. We try to develop in accordance with the Traditions and principles of A.A. But over the past few years, we've had misunderstandings between the board of trustees and the committees, between the office and the groups.

I personally have repeatedly heard some members briskly declare that they were against their home group's Seventh Tradition contributions to the office. They are eager to make donations to committees, but not to the office or the board. And their argument is that people simply do not know where and how their personal donations are spent. And it is quite understandable and fair. The members of the Fellowship know what the various committees are doing, but they have only a vague idea of what the board and the office are doing.

When I suggested that some members of the board of trustees go to groups and make presentations about the board's activities, I heard something like the following in response: "If the groups don't know what we are doing, then let them come to our next meeting, ask questions, and find it out for themselves. After all, all initiative should come from groups. We serve them." So, these misunderstandings, as I personally think, are the result of low group awareness about the activities of the board and the office.

Today, during the pandemic, many groups switched to an online format, and some groups went into quarantine altogether. The board of trustees and committee meetings are also held online. The records of these meetings are then shared with the groups. But this does not always happen, which, of course, irritates some part of the Fellowship. Great outrage was provoked by the decision taken by the board of trustees to postpone the Conference by six months due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Our documents did not specify who was responsible for such decisions. And when many expressed their indignation, the board sent an email to the groups and offered to vote on either the Conference being held as planned or it being postponed. And, thus, we came to a consensus. I hope that only by trial and error through the experience of the past and the use of prayer, we can hear the right direction from God.

Aliaksei Y. — Belarus

Sharing the Group Conscience Throughout the A.A. Structure: A Two-Way Process

Hello, everyone. My name is Daniel and I'm a recovering alcoholic. I am the first-term World Service Meeting delegate representing the Peruvian structure.

When we hear the phrase *group conscience* we quickly link it with our Second Tradition that says: "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authoity — a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

The strength of our entire A.A. service structure begins with the group and the general sevice representative (G.S.R.) that the group elects. Representing the group, communicating information, ideas and opinions; adding your group conscience to the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship as expressed by the General Service Conference.

Our Conference was going to take place in-person onsite April 16-19, 2020, but because of the global health emergency caused by COVID-19, our government adopted the necessary preventive measures which included periods of isolation, social distancing and the prohibition of social gatherings.

The annual meeting of our Conference is a high point of

the year's activities, at which the collective group conscience of Peru assembles to enact measures that will serve as guidelines in the coming years, in the form of advisory actions, suggestions or reminders that constitute A.A. policy.

Given the global and national crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and in accord with the decision of the General Service Board, taking into account the opinions of the delegates, representatives of the group conscience of our country, it was decided to hold the Conference virtually making use of the Zoom platform. We had a pre-Conference training meeting to make paricipants comfortable with that platform and our annual Conference was held virtually September 5 through September 13. We were able to address the entire agenda and complete our several assignments during a number of intensely busy workdays — and a few exahusting moments — but, in the end, with a good result overall. During the Conference several trusted servants fell ill with COVID-19.

This health emergency has served to make us seek out and find new ways to get together virtually in order to be able to continue and to inform the collective conscience of our country about general service activities, making use of all the elements of our structure in a collective and integrated way.

Groups are the voice of the Conference, they have the authority and likewise the final responsibility that make it possible for our society as a whole to function.

In these difficult times, we have been able to demonstrate in our fundamental principle of Self-Support that good two-way communication translates into individual and collective responsibility. In my country, indiividual contributions increased substantially while group contributions have remained stable. Other parts of the structure also have kept the doors of our GSO open during this health emergency, considering the restrictions that have been imposed by government authorities.

It is true that we still have many weaknesses and defects as a structure, but we try to maintain at all times this spirit of Love and Service that is our co-founders' legacy to us, that first exchange of experience, information and the offer of a new way of life.

Thank you for the privilege and opportunity to share our experience. Happy twenty-four hours.

Daniel G. — Peru

AMSTERDAM

Encouraging Women into General Service

Sharing the Joy and Benefits of General Service

My name is Helen and I'm an alcoholic. My presentation is on "Sharing the joy and benefits of general service" as it relates to the topic "Encouraging Women into General Service."

After I had been in A.A. for a while I began to read some of the books on A.A. history which were passed on to me by friends in the Fellowship, such as *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* and *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*. I remember being very moved by the stories of the early days and the dedication shown by everyone involved and, as a woman, being especially interested to read about the role that women had in the early days. I remember reading about Ruth Hock, the first national secretary. As Bill says in *A.A. Comes of Age*, "I recall with deep gratitude how often her wise advice and her good humor and patience helped to settle endless squabbles about the book's content. Many an oldtimer at St. Louis also remembered with gratitude those warm letters Ruth had written to him when he was a loner struggling to stay sober out there in the grass roots."

And then there was Sister Ignatia who worked with Dr. Bob to help admit alcoholics into St. Thomas Hospital in Akron, Ohio, starting in 1939 and personally cared for thousands of alcoholics over the next decades. Women feature very strongly in the history of A.A., from Henrietta Seiberling to Lois Wilson and Anne Smith and without them it is hard to imagine that A.A. would have developed and grown the way that it has.

When the first women began to attend A.A. meetings they had to face many obstacles, as described in *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*: "Women alcoholics had to overcome a double standard that was even more rigid in the 1930s than it is today — the notion that nice women don't drink to excess. This made it difficult for a woman to admit to the problem in the first place, to say nothing of being accepted in A.A."

Thankfully we have moved on from those times and this is no longer the case for most women alcoholics; but there are still some countries worldwide where these difficulties prevail and the aim of our services is to bring sobriety within reach of all those who want it.

As Bill W. says, "An A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer…ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step call itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service."

My own journey in service began, like most members, in my own group and, af-

ter some time, taking the big step to go as a G.S.R. to Area. One of the great benefits of this was meeting people from different groups and broadening my horizons in A.A., learning about the structure and the different services involved and the commitment necessary to keep these services going, like the telephone service, public information and prison service. Over the years I have been involved in Intergroup, Conference and, most recently, as a World Service delegate, which would have been completely beyond my wildest dreams.

Being involved in service helped me to learn not to take things personally, learning by example that I could disagree with someone in a meeting and immediately after shake hands and let go and allow the group conscience to prevail. It taught me that it was okay to make a mistake and that everyone was doing their best — that feeling of love and tolerance, sometimes learned the hard way.

I began to understand the importance of the Traditions, "placing principles before personalities," "our common welfare should come first," "one ultimate authority." In the literature, A.A.'s first legacy of Recovery is described as the base of the triangle on which everything rests and depends. The more experienced members of my group always stressed the importance of going to closed meetings of A.A. alongside any service commitments and I remember being advised to go to my home group after a weekend of service or an A.A. convention to keep my feet on the ground and to be reminded of my primary purpose.

How can I share the joy and benefits of service and encourage newcomers to get involved? I feel that joy and gratitude go hand in hand. I can share at a closed meeting how being in service has helped me to become responsible and accountable, to show up and do the best I can. I have often felt fearful of taking on certain positions but there has always been someone there at the end of the phone to share with. I can share how service has made me feel involved "in the middle of the bed" rather than on the periphery of A.A. One of the oldtimers in my group used to say, "Why should the door always be open for me?" That simple statement made me reflect on my responsibility to give back what I have been so freely given.

One of the duties of our Intergroup delegates is to visit the groups in their area to talk about the benefits of service and being part of the A.A. structure. This is an opportunity for women delegates to encourage other women to get involved. As with all service it is important that this is done with humility and gratitude and not in a dogmatic way. Again our own personal sobriety is at the core of this. As it says in the Big Book "The answers will come, if your own house is in order. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got." Our national magazine *The Road Back* and our *Newsletter* are also excellent ways of passing on the message of service. We have an annual All-Ireland Convention, plus many regional Conventions and, wherever possible, women and men are equally represented both on the committees that organize the events and as speakers at the various convention meetings.

We are fortunate to have two female non-A.A. member trustees (Class A trustees) at present who bring their individual skills and experience to the board and make their expertise available to the Fellowship as a whole. This helps the gender balance on our Board of Trustees which tends to be traditionally very male-oriented.

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented huge challenges for the continuation of our A.A. services. Areas and Intergroups and the General Service Board have been rising to this challenge by setting up online service meetings and keeping the vital services running. The feedback from the women that I have spoken to has been that they have enjoyed the flexibility and convenience of the online meetings. However, not every member is in a position to avail themselves of this online platform and it makes the theme of our World Service Meeting, "The purpose of our services — sobriety within everyone's reach," even more relevant. I look forward to hearing the experiences of other countries on how we have adapted to this new challenge for Alcoholics Anonymous.

The theme of women in service is one that continues to be raised as women are still under-represented in service compared to the ratio of women to men who attend A.A. There are many possible reasons for this and one of my fellow presenters will be sharing on overcoming barriers that prevent women from participating in service. As in all areas of recovery "it begins with me" and I need to be always willing to share with other women the great rewards that are possible through getting involved in general service and to support them on their journey. I am very grateful to A.A. and to my higher power for giving me the opportunity to serve as a World Service delegate and for the joy and freedom which I have in my life today, one day at a time.

Helen H. — Ireland

Sponsorship in the Service Structure

I never thought we would have long and difficult days in our humanity and even more so in how we would survive in Alcoholics Anonymous, how we would solve our existence in the program of mutual aid. I was very scared, I think we all were. It is perceived that, from time to time, the world faces a great crisis which, if properly used, is capable of changing the trajectory of humanity for the better. As an optimist, I think we are facing one of these opportunities. The reasons are many and I would like to share them. The first and most obvious is that the current crisis appears following a period of reasonable equilibrium. We are not crossing a bed of roses in search of sobriety to start with, but if we compare it to the current scenario we realize how lucky we are.

The current crisis made the first explosion of the search for the means of technology within the acceptable limits of our Traditions, the member who never dreamed of working at a distance, who clung to tradition out of sheer inertia, was "forced" to learn how to conduct video and audio conferences, using the structure's approved platform, sharing experiences through Google Meet, recovery meetings, use of institutional email and site searches. Since everyone is connected, but distant, geography loses relevance to the detriment of the knowledge and strength of our UNITY.

In short, we form a rare contrast to the world around us and we fervently hope to continue. In these dangerous times, we will be in constant need of this kind of collective wisdom. More than anything, this prudence will ensure our efficiency, our safety and our survival.

Our leaders, at all levels of our structure, observed this moment in time. At the same time, our Fellowship completed 85

years of existence and can do something new: virtual rooms through video calls, where he or she who has been suffering has been allowed to find a way out by clicking and could be in an Alcoholics Anonymous room. Although we are looking for a new adaptation to this reality, which has only one requirement for participation, which is the desire to stop drinking, I see that it has been working, reaching out to more and more people who are looking for help. And it continues.

The new ones that are coming in this period of pandemic could not do their program without help, even the more experienced members could not continue the program. Without help, sponsorship has no oxygen.

Alcoholics like me, who are recovering in A.A., want to share what we have learned with other alcoholics. We know from experience that our own sobriety is greatly strengthened when we share it with others.

Both the sponsor and the sponsee are on an equal footing, as were our first sponsors: Bill and Bob. Sponsorship is essential for everyone. Can you imagine for the newcomers what it would be without them? It is essential also for those who have been around a while, those who are mostly new to service. Sponsoring women in the Third Legacy is like planting a rare seed: once it has sprouted, it must be replanted!

Sponsorship can also mean the responsibility of the group as a whole to help the newcomer. Currently, an increasing number of alcoholics arrive at their first meeting via email, without having had any previous contact with A.A. We in the structure are very attentive to these daily arrivals, attentive to this situation; we have strengthened a network of communication integrated with all our structure, and we offer society both outside and inside our community through the remote meetings that take place every day. Tolerance and hope are qualities and foundations of a sponsor's character. With that, we find respect through true sponsorship. Every woman and man in A.A. is a sponsor who, through example, exercises leadership, and whose effectiveness relies on the Twelve Steps which will support the new way of life in the daily and necessary services of our survival. Altruism is indeed a solid condition for this sponsorship. The woman who recovers delights, but the woman who serves grows in sobriety.

Honesty is the profile of every woman who wants and lives this way of life that we only find in our community, among other things because it is related to the trust of Women for Women and Women for Men, respecting here all the existing diversity. Every relationship between adult men and women should be in a character of partnership, without competition, where each partner completes the other, in the practice of spiritual virtues, in all our affairs. We need never be afraid of the future as far as our harmony is concerned. What we notice is the great involvement that comes through service, from G.S.R. to trustee. To contribute, to generate more sponsorship every day in itself facilitates the emergence of new and great leaders, many of whom are women.

Some relevant data that are part of our structure today: 281 daily meetings were held. Total participation was 14,944 of which 3,888 are women and 11,032 were men. Total entries of new 306 people: 123 women and 183 men.

Meetings for newcomers during this pandemic period and meetings for women are also taking place — 22 meetings during this period. At our email address we still have other suggestions for online meetings on our website that were created during this pandemic period to meet the needs of our entire structure in a total of 382 meetings per day.

This period has allowed me to reinvent myself. I have gained several godchildren in such a short time, people that I could only meet through these videoconferences and receive them with love and affection. Everything comes from God's goodness that gives me several moments of spirituality that I would not find anywhere else but here.

The feeling of belonging to Alcoholics Anonymous gives me possibilities to seek my sponsorship. Alcoholics Anonymous has made sure that we do not stop our primary purpose: we cannot and should not. Because of God's goodness to us and His daily blessings, we survive even stronger than before. Nothing, absolutely nothing, will destroy us. God's hand is powerful and gentle!

GrAAtitude.

Maria do C.I.Z. — Brazil

Overcoming Barriers that Prevent Women from Participating in Service

My name is Esmeralda, and I am an alcoholic.

I am profoundly grateful to all those who have made possible my participation and sharing on the subject of "Overcoming barriers that prevent women from participating in service."

A lot of times, we women in A.A. are not taken seriously in terms of giving service. When I first started in A.A., all my attention was on my own recovery. But it was really hard because I didn't see any other women in any group until a year after I came in. We got to be four women in an area that had 150 male members.

Our fellow males had forgotten what our calling card says: that A.A. is a community of men and women who share strength, experience and hope in order to solve a problem we all have in common. They would receive us well and then they'd become the ones responsible for us leaving the group because of their attitudes of machismo, harassment and fake sponsorship.

An alcoholic woman comes to the group like she is a worthless human being, not just because of the drinking but also because she's the victim of prejudices and taboos that this society we live in holds. They strip us of all human worth and, even after we stop drinking, they leave us with very low self-esteem, because we've been labeled as lost women, lacking in morals, worthless… Even our families are afraid of people knowing that we have a drinking problem because it brings shame.

When our fellow women members go to a group looking for help, it's because they have no other recourse and their disease has turned into chaos for them and all those around them.

Those of us less in value are not less in numbers. We should focus on the solution, not the problem.

We have the responsibility of receiving our fellow women well and treating them with respect and consideration so they can enjoy a new life and the spiritual benefits that are available through the practice of our legacy of service.

In our groups, we should suggest having more frequent discussions of subjects that are relevant to women in which the principles, benefits and satisfaction of helping others are taken up.

Women should be made to feel like participants and to see

service as going beyond the group. Yes, sponsor us in service but, above all, make us aware that women in A.A. now play an important part and are not here to do a group's housework and serve coffee. Women should be made to feel confident, and the more trust that is put in them the more the chances of their lending service with greater commitment and love.

Suggest that women who are past trusted servants be invited to group meetings to speak about their service experience.

We should stop judging women and seeing them as the vulnerable or weak members, because it's not true. They need help and support and guidance within the group so they can become a part of it and not a loss for the group.

We should be broad-minded, open to initiating changes to false steps taken in the past that lead to the loss of many members in our ranks, instead of attracting new ones.

Another way of motivating women to serve is creating boards made up only of women, with a special purpose in mind: to help them to talk about their experiences in an open way, without fear. Sponsorship would then open up more, allowing them to let go of the fear and distrust that is still prevalent in many fellow women members.

I was taking inventory of my first years and came to the conclusion that I had been a little afraid of sharing all the benefits I had received throughout the years with A.A. I was afraid to be judged of having a false humility and being boastful and encouraging other members who would not be able to do as much, as God has a different plan for each one of us.

Now I see things in a different light. The new women who join will always have my support and understanding, and I share with them to do the same.

I feel a responsibility, which is simply to answer to something or someone…

To serve is a privilege. It doesn't matter at what level of the structure it is carried out as long as it's done with love, dedication and gratitude.

Esmeralda F. — Cuba

Young People in A.A.

How Can We Improve Digital Communication Between Newcomers and Oldtimers?

Welcome to every country represented here, to those who could not participate and to those who will hopefully be present in the future.

When I was invited for this presentation I thought we had only the bad experience of the last months that changed our lives in the world and in our Fellowship. How we suffered at the beginning because our home group closed, our General Service Conference was canceled and our National Convention also. Now a few months later, new solutions appear on how to meet, how to go on sponsoring or being sponsored, how to collect and send the Seventh Tradition, how to keep passing on the message.

Hopefully, we will again be able to meet in person, but at the moment, all this is possible with the use of the new digital technologies. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, some of us were familiar with digital communication and some others were not. The gap seemed to depend on the generation, the age and the skills of each one. In face-to-face meetings the most important and recommended issue was "presence" and the digital communication could be considered as an optional. Today we can't leave new technologies out of consideration; they are a must and if we want to think of ourselves as the custodians of our Fellowship, our duty is to be updated.

Now a consideration I should have used as an introduction to this presentation, before coming to the point: the newcomer is not necessarily a young person and an oldtimer is not necessarily someone who refuses the progress.

If the newcomers are young they belong to the digital generation and they are familiar with the new technologies of communication, they were born with it. Maybe the younger ones do not even know what a telephone booth is and most probably they have never used their fingers to dial a phone number on an old style telephone. A letter written with a pen, a fax or a telegram is probably something prehistoric to them and that they see only in old movies.

On the other side, oldtimers might find the approach to the new technologies very difficult. It is hard to learn the use of new devices, new procedures and sometimes new vocabulary. It is hard to memorize. If retired and not needing to use this kind of progress every day on their job, maybe they are just not interested in it. Last but not least, fear might be behind all this. Fear for the change, fear for everything new, fear to be inadequate, fear that can drive to a total refusal to participate.

Now, no matter if young or old, the important question is: who uses the digital communication and who doesn't? Who wants to learn and who wants to teach? Many courses are available for beginners or advanced learners, but they are expensive. Our sons or nephews are real experts but often they don't have time or they don't have enough patience or they lack the method to teach.

Have we ever thought of our friends in the group?

Asking for help might be something hard to do, we experienced it when we first entered a room of A.A. but now our program is there for us. If I am an oldtimer and don't know much about digital technology I should try to be humble enough and ask a friend or a young newcomer to teach me something about it. If I am an oldtimer or a newcomer using digital technology very easily, am I humble enough to offer my ability and my time to teach without feeling superior or let my friend feel inferior?

Humility is part of our program, helping each other is part of the program. Let's enjoy A.A.'s program and take advantage from it in this very crucial moment.

We will Recover from isolation or refusal of the present; we will Serve by making our knowledge available to the others; and with our good will to keep updated we will keep Alcoholics Anonymous United.

Massimo F. — Italy

What Are We Doing to Attract Young People in A.A.?

For me it was cool to hold a drink in my hand since I was 15. Drinking gradually affected my life, so much so that few months before my 30th birthday I was running out of energy, went bankrupt and was forced to visit a psychotherapist who

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directed me to my first A.A. meeting. But I felt I was not like my father — alcoholic at the most advanced stage. So, it was not easy to identify myself as an alcoholic. However, I was completely sure about one thing: if I continued drinking, my life would be one great misery. Surrender was my only option.

In my first A.A. meeting I realized that this was the right place for me and if I could stick to it, I would be saved. So, I am really glad there is the Third Tradition: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking." Anyone old enough to have a problem is old enough to seek help from A.A. Alcoholism is an illness. It really can hit anyone. Alcoholics are not just those old guys sitting on park benches. Young, successful people can ruin their lives with alcohol, too. It does not matter how long you have been drinking, what you have been drinking or even how much. It is what drinking does to you that counts — this I heard very often.

The first question that came to my mind when I got deeper into this topic was: "Where is the boundary that determines who is considered young?" I searched on the Internet and came across information in some A.A. materials that approximately 10% of A.A. members are under the age of 30. I somehow deduced from this that it could be just this limit of 30 years. Of course, we have teenagers who still go to school. Then there are young students in universities, young employees and those who just wander aimlessly. Young people are in prisons, shelter houses and treatment centers. All these groups need to be addressed, which we do in some cases, in some less so.

Attracting young people to A.A. is vital. These people have their lives ahead of them, and there is a huge difference when you get into A.A. at 20 than after a ruined life and a broken family at 50. The higher percentage of young people we reach in A.A., the lower the percentage of older people in the future. We can help to avoid lots of troubles in their lives.

If we can attract these young people in time, then there is another important point to think about, and that is how to keep them, how not to discourage them from staying in A.A. Therefore, I have divided the following text into these main topics.

How to attract? Our Tradition says: "Attraction rather than promotion." It has also been said that we should be anonymous but not hidden. Therefore, certain activities which help us to be seen by young people are necessary.

The first option is to have attractive websites on the Internet where almost everybody has access. It is not possible to cover and reach all young people in person. But Smartphones are widely used among youngsters and the Internet covers virtually the whole country. Currently we have new modern web design, so all information is well-arranged. There is no problem to find meetings based on location including map and contact details.

There was only one online Skype meeting before the COVID-19 crisis, used mainly by young people and this platform was not accepted by many longtime members who either underestimated it or did not accept it at all. The fact is, however, that times have changed and this crisis has also shown the usefulness and many benefits of this technology. Another popular virtual site full of young members is Facebook, full of non-public closed groups, where they can find acceptance, networking and inspiration. Nevertheless, even if these groups are hidden, keeping anonymity within the group is challenging due to full name profiles. WhatsApp is also widely used among the young. Those are the first communication channels when a young person wants to contact a fellow in A.A. when they face problems.

Some countries where A.A. is more developed publish videos on their websites where young people share what their first perception of A.A. was and how it has changed over time and what the recovery in A.A. brought to them. This is not available in our country now. It might be worth contacting the authors about the possibility of translation and copyright issues.

In the meeting list we have had at least two groups named "Young & Sober" a few years ago. These members felt the need to have their own meetings, however, over time, this has stopped working and those young members eventually joined standard meetings. I tried to dig deeper for the reason and found out that in our small country there are not so many young people in A.A., those groups are thus small and it is problematic to keep regular rotation and willingness to participate in service; moreover, the level of inspiration in such small groups was not enough. We also need wisdom and experience of those oldtimers, so naturally, the smaller meetings disappeared and the larger ones became even stronger, and that I personally like.

Another way young people can learn about A.A. is from a school counselor, doctor, relative or friend. Cooperation with elementary schools and high schools in our country started by a few bigger groups in larger cities just as their local activity.

Based on experience, the first positive contact and presentation of A.A. members at these meetings or discussions is crucial. If the experience is good, school counselors recommend A.A. introduction meetings to other schools. This recommendation by school counselors has proved to be more effective for establishing cooperation with schools than direct contact by A.A. members.

Recently, the Public Information Committee has been involved more and more in this field, mainly by sharing our message in colleges or universities, providing a short introduction of A.A. followed by personal stories of A.A. members with Q & A sessions at the end. This helps to raise awareness about what the A.A. Fellowship offers and how it affects our lives. Even if there is no problematic drinker in the audience (which I personally doubt), these young people can forward information to their friends and family members.

A young A.A. member does not necessarily have to be part of such an introduction meeting. If there are members older than 30, it is perfectly okay. They usually share their stories how alcohol started to affect their lives in adolescence and continued to ruin everything before reaching 30. So, youngsters can identify with them. Many young people like fun and colorful life and might have prejudices that a recovering alcoholic lives a boring life in abstinence. Therefore, very important within this introduction meetings is that A.A. members in their shared stories prove that their life is better and more fun without alcohol.

We need to attract young people, and honestly it is enough to be true and authentic. Young people take it very well, as it is often the first time that someone speaks to them so openly.

When it comes to pamphlets, we hand out only those standard ones at schools as we until now do not have pamphlets targeted for young people. The pamphlet "Young People and A.A." has been recently translated and is waiting for independent review in the U.S. This one will certainly help someone to identify much more. Personally, I like the pamphlet "Too Young?" which is cartoon style, so potentially more attractive for teenagers, but it is not on the current priority list of the Literature Committee. I hope this will change soon and I will remind them of this one regularly.

Regarding treatment centers and prisons, there are also a lot of young people and these places are one of the biggest sources of potential new young A.A. members.

Mainly in larger cities we have A.A. groups directly located in treatment centers, where young, addicted people are encouraged by doctors to attend. To develop cooperation with doctors and treatment centers we must build trust in A.A. and dispel prejudices. Until recently, doctors perceived us as a certain competitor, or some did not take us seriously and had a distorted opinion based on scenes in various movies and mediated information without any direct experience. To change this, we have been participating annually in an addictology conference for several years, where we present A.A. and do A.A. meetings just to show them in practice how such meetings are run, and we distribute leaflets and the like. The feedback is now positive and we are perceived as equal partners. Also, we have one Class A trustee in our GSB who is a professional psychiatrist. She helps us to improve the awareness and image of A.A. among professionals. Also, we are in contact with non-profit organizations that provide support to alcoholics and regularly send us young people to meetings. These relationships are crucial to increase the number of young people in our groups.

Another place where young people can contact A.A. are prisons. We cooperate with at least three prisons, having regular meetings there. Young people may perceive us as one of the few hopes out there after their release. Now, in the time of the COVID-19 crisis, when live meetings are not possible at prisons, we are considering the introduction of a correspondence service.

When it comes to the presence of A.A. on the level of radio and TV, we are just at the very beginning and we would welcome any experience. The main channels where the A.A. hand can reach new young members are the Internet, schools, treatment centers and correctional facilities.

How to attract young people in A.A. is one thing, but how to keep them long term is another challenge. I am 39 now and I realize how important A.A. is for me and it is easier to live with the thought that I will have (and want) to go to A.A. meetings and do service for the rest of my life. But for those who are only 20 now, it might be difficult to identify with the idea that they should be in touch with A.A. for the rest of their lives. A lot of young people can leave A.A., that is the fact. It depends on how the A.A. program helps them, how the foundations are laid and whether or not the Traditions are followed in groups. It is important not to discourage them with our fanaticism, by putting across our "guaranteed truths," but to listen to them and take them seriously. To show them an example of behavior that is appealing but sincere; to be equal, not to be arrogant; to have fun — to show them that we absolutely insist on enjoying life.

Many young people can be discouraged by words like *God* or *Higher Power*, the same as adults. It is particularly important to emphasize to them that this Fellowship is for everyone, atheists and agnostics as well. In this case, I would appreciate to have the pamphlet "The 'God word'" translated, as it is full of stories of people who are sober and happy in A.A. without any religious or spiritual concept of higher power. So, do not push and let everyone have their own way.

It also depends what conditions we give young people with special needs. We have experience with a meeting for women, where especially young mothers who do not have anyone to

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help them to look after their children meet on a weekly basis. Currently there is only one such meeting in Prague, but the experience is positive. There is more understanding and tolerance at such meetings, and young children are not perceived as a disruptive element.

Also, numbers of Czech young A.A.s traveling across Europe are increasing year to year. They participate in conventions such as EURYPAA or SCANCYPAA, which shows a positive trend. Young people in Czech A.A. organized EURYPAA in Prague in 2014, which was my first YPAA convention and I was amazed how young people have fun without alcohol. I also had the opportunity to network with other young members from different countries, which at the time made me feel like Alice in Wonderland. Until then I had been isolated and suddenly I had dozens of new friends around me. This experience had a big impact on my perception of A.A. and staying in it.

Many activities related to reaching out to young people are still just beginning in our country. We think we are on the right track. It is improving, although now at the time of the COVID-19 crisis most of these activities are on hold. Schools are closed and contact is limited. We are not allowed to go to prisons, treatment centers, etc. The main way to reach young people is the Internet and treatment centers, which can still direct young people to A.A., even if it's just online meetings. Each form of contact with other recovering alcoholics is vital these days and I am grateful to have this possibility of having virtual rooms where we can meet not only locally but also globally like we are meeting right now.

In today's world, where there is a hunger for spirituality, growing mistrust and a lot of fake news, many young people feel insecure with a future full of pitfalls and uncertainty, so let's provide them with a safe haven where hopefully all their needs will be met and they will find strength, trust, acceptance, serenity and a lot of fun.

Jan K. — Czech Republic

Anonymity

Anonymity and the Internet

We all had severe times all over the world due to the pandemic of COVID-19. In Japan, we could not gather up in face-to-face inside meetings. It seemed to us the only solution was to have meetings online, although almost no members had such experiences and abilities for that. We had a lot of struggles starting online meetings, but many members succeeded to open online meetings, and we are having online events in addition to that.

However, we had a concern: Can we be sure to keep our anonymity on the Internet? The question has some basis. We have been looking at the Internet as a similar thing to mass media. Thus, we were generally keeping basic rules of not exposing our full names or pictures as A.A. members on the Internet (personal SNS and such can be an exception). Our new worries were:

1. Nonalcoholics can attend online meetings, and
2. We are unable to identify whether they are members or not.

This issue has been shared with all the members who plan to open online meetings and it seems that it has been virtually solved at this point. We tried to keep information about online meetings among the A.A. members only. In regard to the online meetings I have attended, this issue is decreased in mostly unnoticeable ways. Furthermore, some of the information about online meetings has been shared openly online, but there are systems that require any person who wishes to attend the meeting to contact the chairperson to obtain necessary information.

On the other hand, this solution has aroused another serious problem. The hurdle becomes very high for newcomers who want to join A.A. to find online meetings. Let's remember how high our mental barrier was when we decided to go into the meeting room for the first time. In addition to that newcomers today in Japan are facing another difficulty! Often, the only thing they can do is to pop up into the online meetings and listen, and finally vanish. Our hands to draw them into A.A. are limited and some simply slip away. This problem is a new one which is still waiting for its solution.

We also found out one more problem. I heard that an A.A. group was asked to open an online model-meeting in a forum outside A.A. Everyone agreed that no pictures of the participants' face were to be taken or no full names were needed. However, because of the concerns from members' side who were not able to trust those assurances about

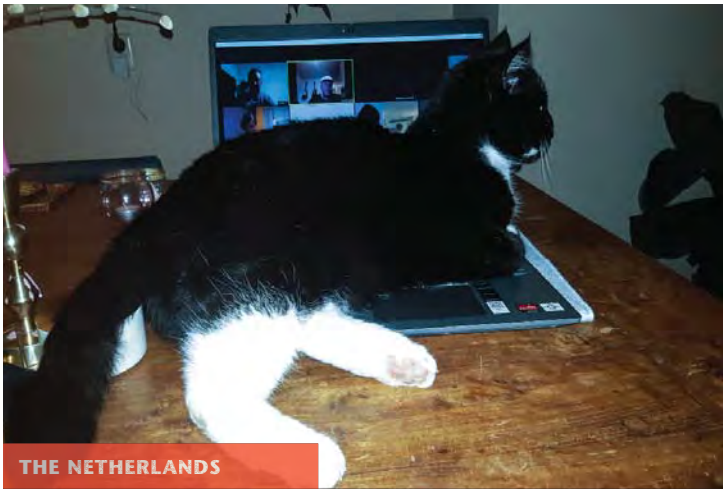
anonymity or technical aspects of it, they couldn't have a model-meeting. It is probably the miscommunication about information, but it might be that Japanese members are not understanding well that protecting one's anonymity too much can go against the spirit of anonymity itself.

I have been thinking that anonymity in using the Internet has already been established at certain levels. But COVID-19 is making us face and re-examine Internet technology and our own anonymity by somehow forcing us to change face-to-face meetings we had before into online meetings.

Other than anonymity issues, we can say that COVID-19 opened a new field to us. Nowadays, online meetings are open nearly all around the world. Members who need meetings in the same language can gather through online and share their experiences, strength and hope. That is a new advantage beyond our imagination. We can and are inviting speakers from the opposite side of the country to events. As long as we can be moderately cautious about the anonymity, there seems to be not much of a problem but more advantages, and some groups are considering continuing their online meetings even after COVID-19 goes away. In addition to that, there are groups planning to open an event as a hybrid of online and offline meetings.

I assume that there will be an attempt to create a guideline to hold online meetings and events among each G.S.C. after this pandemic. Opening online meetings and events beyond country borderlines and sharing information about that will become necessary. There is a real possibility that issues like anonymity or things we have not yet seriously considered will come up. I think one of those things we need to consider is how we can share those experiences internationally and construct an information center.

Yasumichi H. — Japan



Anonymity in the Home Group

Hello everyone. I'm known as Pichi and I belong to A.A. This sense of belonging I felt from the very first time I performed an A.A. service, opening up the group meeting room and serving coffee. This is the way I introduce myself in closed meetings. Not to preserve my anonymity, since early childhood I've been called Pichi. My name is Cipriano.

In public information and open meetings I introduce myself as Pichi, a sick alcoholic, to emphasize the fact that alcoholism is a disease.

There are many references to anonymity in our literature.

"At the personal level, anonymity protects all members from being identified as alcoholics, a safeguard often especially important for the newcomer." It also serves as a check against seeking, among other things, power, personal prestige, public honors and money. In this way we can achieve humility and realize that if we are sober, we are sober by the grace of God and through practicing the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

At the public level and before the media, anonymity is our greatest protection against ourselves, guardian of all our Traditions and the finest symbol of self-sacrifice that we know.

"Then there is the problem of group anonymity. Like the individual, it is probable that the group ought to feel its way along cautiously until it gains strength and experience. There should not be too much haste to bring in outsiders or to set up public meetings. Yet this early conservatism can be overdone. Some groups go on, year after year, shunning all publicity or any meetings except those for alcoholics only. Such groups are apt to grow slowly. They become stale because they are not taking in fresh blood fast enough. In their anxiety to maintain secrecy, they forget their obligation to other alcoholics in their communities who have not heard that A.A. has come to town. But this unreasonable caution eventually breaks down. Little by little some meetings are opened to families and close friends. Clergy and doctors may now and then be invited. Finally the group enlists the aid of the local newspaper."

"In some A.A. groups, members have taken anonymity to absurd extremes. These members have such a poor communications base that they don't even know what their fellow members' last names are or where they live. The group resembles the cell of some clandestine movement.

"In both personal and group activities we should remember what the name of our Fellowship means: it does not represent an established religion or a new religion. We are not prophets or gurus who are going to save all of humanity. We are simply anonymous alcoholics who are trying to help other alcoholics (Fifth Tradition)."

Taking all these things into account, the home group I am recovering in does not have anonymity problems. Following a suggestion from Conference, before our meetings we place a sign in the hall at the entrance to the meeting room with group information and meeting times. At the end of the meeting we remove the sign. Thanks to the sign, several members had their first contact with the Fellowship and a few of them are now wonderful trusted servants. We meet in a local parish house.

We also occasionally invite family members, clergy, health workers and people from the media. When we do we let the group know ahead of time that it will be an open meeting so that any members who have anonymity issues can take appropriate measures. If anyone needs to share about something that is troubling him or her and does not want to do so in public, he or she has their sponsor with whom to speak before or after the meeting.

The most effective way of avoiding group anonymity problems is by practicing our Fifth Tradition: "Every group has but

one primary purpose: to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers." We regularly make rounds of the neighborhood carrying the message along with pamphlets to leave with pharmacies, neighborhood associations, health centers, churches, police stations, social workers, schools, insurance agencies for occupational hazards and diseases. It is an extremely effective way of helping the newcomer overcome fears related to personal anonymity, inviting them to accompany us on these visits and to see how we are received and respected in all these institutions. We also have subscribers to our magazine "Akron-1935" among non-A.A. individuals and institutions.

We in the group have to keep this in mind: "Since we advertise anonymity to every newcomer, we ought, of course, to preserve a new member's anonymity so long as he wishes it preserved. Because, when he read our publicity and came to us, we contracted to do exactly that. And even if he wants to come in under an assumed name, we should assure him he can. If he wishes us to refrain from discussing his case with anyone, even other A.A. members, we ought to respect that wish too. While most newcomers do not care a rap who knows about their alcoholism, there are others who care very much. Let us guard them in every way until they get over that feeling."

"A.A. members understand that any information revealed in an A.A. meeting should be considered confidential. For example, if your friends who are not members of A.A. know some of your friends who are A.A. members, and are aware that these friends are members, you should be careful not to reveal any information obtained in a meeting, as insignificant as it might appear." This warning is what makes me act cautiously after a meeting, talking over coffee with other members of the group; not to comment on or gossip about the sharing of a fellow member.

Twelfth Tradition: "Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

May personal and group anonymity never prevent or hinder us from carrying the message of hope to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Cipriano C. — Spain

Personal Anonymity

First of all, personal anonymity is for me a personal protection. Unfortunately, in Ukraine there still is a biased attitude toward alcoholics. Alcoholism is considered a problem of the marginalized, people with weak willpower, such that they themselves do not want to quit drinking.

Only some doctors, psychotherapists and social workers understand the true nature of the disease. We invite some of them to be our Class A trustees so that they can inform the public on behalf of A.A. about the problem of alcoholism and ways to solve it in the Alcoholics Anonymous community.

For the most part, I want to talk about my understanding of personal anonymity today. If my company's security service found out when I was hired that I was an alcoholic with alcohol problems and was treated at a drug treatment clinic, I don't think I would have gotten the job.

At Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, I began to say things I hadn't been able to tell anyone before. These were mostly stories of my "falling" and the problems caused by alcohol use.

Therefore, it was important for me that A.A. does not have any lists, registers, membership cards. And the A.A. meeting secretary reminds those in attendance each time that what is heard at the meeting should remain within the walls of the room where the meeting took place!

Over time, after a period of sobriety, another problem may lie in wait: journalists, correspondents, TV stations and other media become interested in A.A.'s way of life. They interview and film or photograph (with our permission) A.A. members. And here some members may want to break their anonymity in order to show off their sobriety, or the "position" they hold in the A.A. structure, or their achievements in carrying the A.A. message to prisons and detention centers. All of this could jeopardize the A.A. Fellowship because these members (who have disclosed their personal anonymity) can create a negative view of the entire A.A. Fellowship if they were to relapse or be involved in unlawful activity.

With that in mind, I once spoke on the radio, where I introduced myself as a member of the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship named Andrew. (Although my real name is Alex). I did this because there was a small chance that someone would recognize my voice and by also recognizing my voice be able to identify me.

Taking a fictitious name, I can always tell someone who recognized me, and is not a member of A.A., that he was wrong.

However, on the other hand, our society cannot be a secretive one. Because by remaining hidden we could prevent alcoholics who are still suffering from finding us and getting to our meetings.

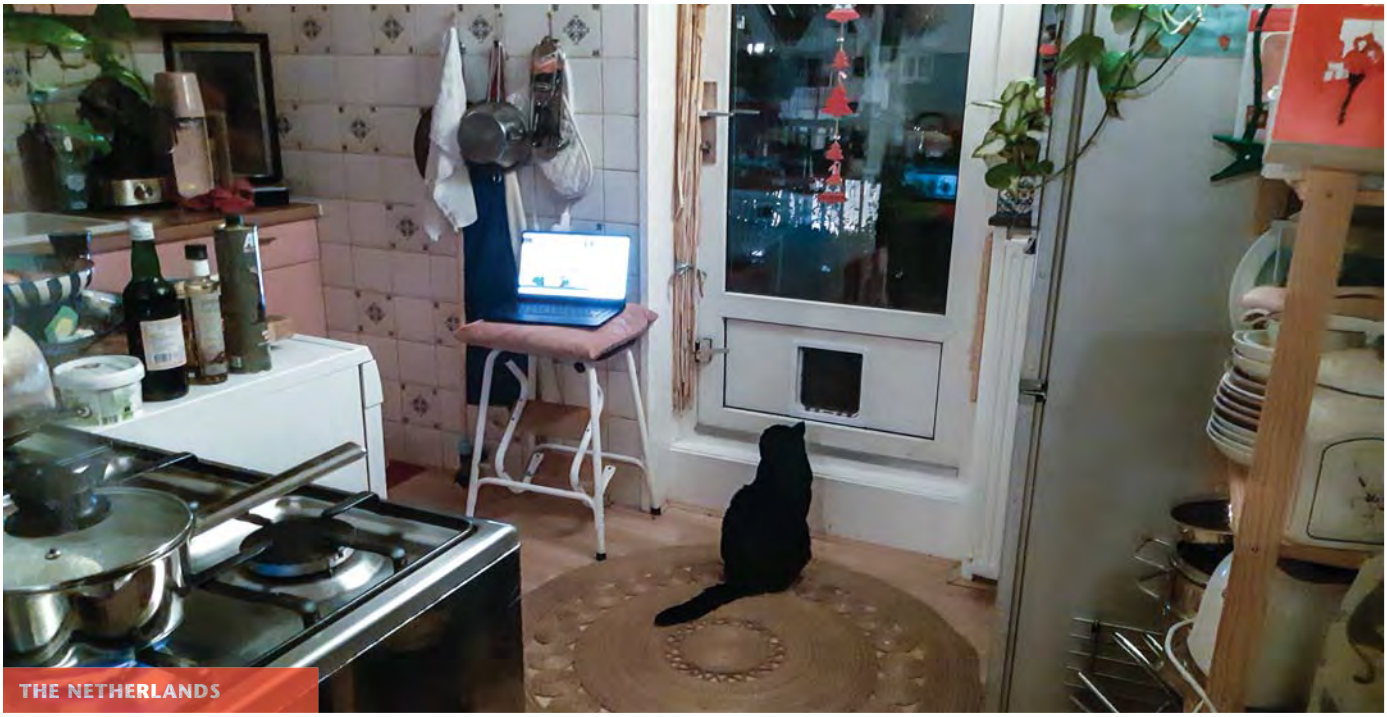
Recently, members of our group and I visited a rehabilitation center and shared our experience there. Suddenly in the yard I met a colleague from work. I asked him what he was doing there. He replied that he had come to see his son, who was once again undergoing rehabilitation. And although he knew my full name and position, I broke my anonymity and I told him that I was a member of the Alcoholics Anonymous community and came to share my experience of recovery and 13 years of sobriety. I was honest with him because I thought he was unlikely to discuss my alcoholism with anyone at work, because he had the same problems in his family.

Here is another example of disclosure of anonymity. During the quarantine (lockdown), I found a passenger through a local carpooling service and drove him in my car. During the trip we talked and he spoke about the three books he recommends to read in the life of each person. One of these books was the Big Book.

I took my book *Alcoholics Anonymous* out of my bag and told him that I had read it and was constantly rereading, without exaggeration, this "Big Book" that changed my life. We spent the rest of our trip talking about A.A. and the recovery program and the time flew by very quickly.

So, as our Traditions Eleven and Twelve say, we must always keep anonymity in all our contacts with the press, radio and cinema, and the main ones are the principles of A.A., not any personalities. However, anonymity should not be an obstacle in those situations where it's necessary to provide information about A.A. to those who need it outside of the group.

Oleksandr S. — Ukraine



Safety in A.A.

The Role of Sponsorship and Our Literature in Regard to Safety

The primary purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous — carrying the message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic — is important, but what is equally important for us is to provide a safe and emotionally comfortable environment for the newcomer to recover in.

For this, we need to utilize our sponsorship as well as the literature, in order to ensure members are not only fully aware of their responsibility to make it safe for the newcomer, as detailed by A.A.'s Twelve Traditions and suggested measures, but also to stay alert to any potential compromise of their safety (in all its aspects).

First and foremost, as soon as the newcomer comes to the meetings the Preamble should be clearly explained — what A.A. does and does not do, the uniform membership, non-governance, no dues or fees or membership requirements, etc. Immediately after this the primary literature — the Big Book — and introduction should be made as the program of recovery through the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Through the sponsorship chain, we must ensure that by both walking as well as talking, enough space is given for the alcoholic to recover without having to worry about his or her anonymity being broken in the initial days. Initial sponsorship should be offered to newcomers.

Anonymity is ensured by the experienced members by ensuring they have comfortable space without being pressed for personal details such as profession, full name, contact numbers, residential address, associations with other organizations, etc.

At the same time it is also essential that the members do not hit upon newcomers sexually, which certainly can happen. It is imperative to prevent the "13th stepping" from happening whether it is from the newer members or the older members. Though sexual attraction is something which cannot be wished away, we cannot use A.A. meeting rooms for sexual opportunities.

Sponsees should also be made aware of techniques to deal with the instances where a new member is being hit on and to ensure they are protected, from either sex, by either having a quiet word with the member concerned or bringing it to the notice of another member within the group. It is always suggested for the sake of both sponsor and the sponsee to stick to same gender sponsorship. The various literatures that are available, such as "This is A.A." or "A Newcomer Asks" mention what A.A. does or does not do.

Good twelfth stepping can be achieved by the sponsor, by practicing and preaching the newcomers' safety; by appropriate intervention in matters of anonymity and sexual relationships; or in any undue use of the relationship for career advancement and financial gains.

We need to make it very clear to the newcomer what the Fellowship does and does not do, what is the spiritual relation between two members, how far they can or cannot go in having other kinds of relationships apart from the pure spiritual relationship of learning from each other and teaching each other the Twelve Step program of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Whether it is joint business ventures, borrowing of money, giving and taking of jobs, the best possible weapon in your hands is your own sponsorship chain and your willingness to sponsor members properly into the Twelve Step program. We have also learned that sponsorship can be a key complement to our literature in making a better environment for all of us to stay sober and become members once again in our communities.

In our cups, we are not a pretty lot. We cause problems in our families and in our communities. We oftentimes arrive in trouble and no longer welcome in places we used to belong. In A.A. all who suffer from alcoholism are welcome. We bear

no judgement for those who have other afflictions or sordid pasts. We lovingly embrace and patiently share with even the sickest alcoholics because we know that if they do as we do, they too will learn how to once again or for the first time become a member in good standing in their community.

Our sponsors help us learn the practical application of our principles. For some it starts with learning that we need to bathe at least a couple of times a week; for others it is to stop starting fights; while for others it's to focus on recovery and not the next sweetheart. The good news is that these behavior problems tend to get better in a short period of time.

Once we have a little time under our belts and have cleaned up some of worst faults, our work is not done. Our literature reminds us that we must continue to be willing and honest on all our faults and continue our growth for greater humility. Unfortunately this is where members oftentimes start to rest on their laurels; they don't drink and continue to allow their faults to harm others. We must all be watchful to ensure that all A.A. members have a safe place to meet and stay sober. I know this because my sponsor opened my eyes to it, and I open the eyes of the men I sponsor.

It starts with the Preamble and the Big Book, followed by "Is A.A. for You?" and "A.A. at a Glance," which give complete clarity on the membership requirement as well as what can be expected from A.A.

"Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" gives a clear view on what one can expect from a sponsor and what one needs to give back to the sponsor. This pamphlet provides answers to all possible doubts that may arise in sponsees. It is through proper display of all the literature in the meetings and personal sharing that awareness of instances of any untoward happenings can be brought out as well as the measures to be taken in the event of any such things happening.

The group must make the following points a part of their group inventory:

1. How safe is their group for the newcomer?
2. Are they practicing sexual safety, financial safety, anonymity safety?
3. Are they providing a safe atmosphere to the newcomer immaterial of whatever gender and other parameters to recover freely without any apprehensions or looking over the shoulders?

This would be our endeavor and toward this we need to extensively use not only our sponsorship chain but also the literature that is available. Whenever and wherever necessary, pamphlets on safety, the Seventh Tradition, and "A.A. Group" can be used to give an overall understanding on who does what within the group.

Even in challenging times like these, the safety precautions to be taken like wearing masks, social distancing, frequent washing or sanitizing hands, self-checking for signs of fever and other symptoms, and thinking about the safety of loved ones at home, are the things that need to be discussed, shared and displayed so that the health of members attending physical meetings is taken as a collective responsibility.

Krishnamurthy V. — India

Safety for the Newcomer — Our Personal Responsibility

Hello friends, my name is Trish and I am an alcoholic, serving as a trustee-at-large (Canada) and World Service Meeting delegate. It is truly an honor to be here with you today.

I've been asked to talk about "our personal responsibility" in relation to the broader issue of Safety in A.A. I appreciate that safety is a topic that comes up repeatedly in our sharing sessions and workshops throughout the US and Canada, as well as at our home zone REDELA (Meeting of the Americas) and, as I see from the report on the 25th WSM, at the World Service Meeting.

Tradition One — our common welfare — I think is an underpinning spiritual principle of our personal responsibility to newcomers, as initially contradictory as that may seem. If we do not do our personal best to make sure that the newcomers' experience in A.A. is a safe one, then people will stop coming to A.A. And then we have no common welfare. It's that simple.

The idea of personal responsibility to all newcomers to our life-changing, life-giving program of course intersects with other elements that will and have been touched on by others — sponsorship/literature/groups — and I will do my best to stay in my lane. But I might wander a bit.

There are, of course, many aspects to the question of safety and what is meant by it. And safety concerns can vary

group to group, district to district, area to area and country to country. In the context of the newcomer, though, and for the purpose of this presentation, it's framed as the ability to allow the newcomer to connect to A.A. in a respectful and helpful manner.

This global pandemic has complicated many things in our A.A. lives, and newcomers' experience is certainly one of them. While we might have an individual and group understanding of how we can best protect the safety of our newcomers (and other vulnerable members) in our more traditional face-to-face settings, having had the benefit of time and experience, we are facing new challenges with many meetings moving to teleconferencing. So, in the past, while I might have had very good knowledge about my home group and our agreed-upon group conscience around safety issues, as well as the meetings I attend regularly (in terms of who else might be regular attendees) and even some idea of what to expect at meetings that I might attend infrequently, that has all changed in our "new" normal here in Canada and the U.S.

In the "old" normal, chances are that I would have been able to spot a newcomer pretty quickly, whether or not they introduced themselves as such. Familiarity with those meetings would give me a head start in terms of exercising personal responsibility by reaching out with that hand of A.A. to them. That's the beginning of my personal responsibility. First, I have to go to where the newcomer might be (in this case a meeting) and, then, I need to be able to find them. And having found them, I can start to try and make sure that they are going to get the best A.A. there is to offer, in terms of our program and in terms of safety. And to me, that means following up with phone calls and (in the days when it was possible) coffee and just offering whatever help and guidance I can. I don't mean formal sponsorship necessarily but I think I can and do owe it to the newcomer to make sure they are "landing" safely in A.A. and to share my experience, strength and hope in that regard.

Which leads me to the present reality. While teleconferencing has given us all the ability to go to meetings any place, anywhere, anytime around the world, it also raises new questions in terms of how people come into our rooms, and what happens from there — including issues of safety. That's where the familiarity of knowing the people in the rooms is also extremely important. For instance, at my home group, when we have an identified newcomer, we make sure that in the "meeting after the meeting" (we keep our Zoom room open for at least fifteen minutes after the meeting has ended) the chat function is enabled so that we can offer phone numbers privately to the new person. Just as we would in a live meeting, we offer to take the newcomer to other meetings, so that they are not alone when they enter new rooms. While the group structure is set up to do that, it is our individual responsibility to follow through with it.

A different complexity enters when someone from another community enters the room as a newcomer, but the same principles still apply. It's my personal belief that I need to make sure the newcomer has a sense of A.A. in their own, physical community as well as the cyber community. So again, perhaps my personal responsibility extends to taking that person to a virtual meeting that is based in their own community, to start a connection for them that will be continued when the ability to meet face-to-face opens up. I go with that newcomer to that

meeting, so they are not alone, and also to be there for any questions or issues that may arise.

Again, I haven't gone into many specifics around what safety actually means in this presentation — as noted there are many factors and aspects to consider. Do we mean safety in terms of predation, or of economic exploitation, or physical well-being (to name a few)? Those I think are better addressed in some of the more structural conversations. And in a sense that doesn't matter for the purposes of personal responsibility in relation to newcomers. They'll let us know their concerns. It's our duty to help guide them through that and to share our own experience, strength and hope in that regard.

I have to let you know that this presentation has been influenced by those truly wonderful A.A. members who quietly kept an eye on me when I came in as a messed-up, vulnerable, much younger than I am now woman who could barely string a sentence together. There were people who stayed in the background, but kept me safe. They intervened when I didn't even know they were intervening. They did it anonymously and with great love for the newcomer and for A.A. And I will be forever grateful to them. That is the hand of A.A.

Trish L. — Canada

What Are Groups Doing to Maintain a Welcoming and Safe Meeting Environment?

Tradition One tell us that "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity," reminding us that all members and groups have a responsibility for the common welfare and safeguarding of the individual member.

Every A.A. group makes an open invitation to its meetings to any member of the public having a desire to stop drinking. In terms of A.A. Traditions, it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the carrying of the message to all prospective, new or established members is done honestly and decently. We also understand that our Twelve Traditions, including that of group autonomy, do not place groups or members above the law, and that when individuals act injuriously to others they are legally accountable. Our First Tradition reminds us that all members and groups have a responsibility for the common welfare and safeguarding of the individual member.

Every A.A. group should recognize and accept responsibility for dealing with unacceptable behavior and thereby protect the Fellowship and the overall good name of A.A.

Critical in any shared responsibility is a common understanding of what the problems are and what solutions are available to us. Groups should discuss possible problems surrounding safety and behavior before they occur so that there is an agreed-upon process for dealing with them. Ensure that whoever is running the meeting is clear about what to do in the event of unacceptable behavior. For this, the group's business and conscience meetings are vital, ensuring that all members of the group know what part they must play.

The starting point is the connection with the rest of A.A. so that the group can benefit from the experience of other groups and share its own experience so that others might learn from it. Bringing this shared experience back to the group is critical in preparing the group for any difficulties it might encounter before they happen.

Whilst a great deal of experience is already documented and available, in this time of change, we are witnessing new problems, and with them, new shared solutions to overcome them.

The recent pandemic has shown some genuine examples of this. Online meetings have been a reality for some time, but when large numbers of meetings started moving online a new problem arose. Sadly, some troubled souls saw this as an opportunity to make mischief and would join meetings, sometimes in groups, with the only intention to disrupt the meetings and upset members.

Fortunately, we have some members with sufficient experience of working with online systems to come up with solutions. Sharing these solutions enabled us to overcome these attacks and protect our meetings, and consequently, our members.

These methods were shared not just locally within each country's service structure, but often across country borders, and soon became pretty much standard practice around the world.

Crucial in this was the group's business and conscience meetings to discuss and decide the way forward. New service positions were developed and old ones redefined. For example, the building keyholder became the meeting host. Some new roles were created, "bouncers" for instance, who were given sufficiently high access to the systems to "bounce" troublemakers out of the meeting as soon as they started to try and cause disruption. The role of greeter continued, often in the form of a private text chat in the background. Should the greeter discover the visitor was new to A.A., many systems provided the facility of a breakout room, where they could take the newcomer to one side for some Twelfth Step work (still following the principle of men for men and women for women).

This level of planning and preparedness, sometimes not just talked about but even rehearsed by the groups, enabled them to quickly resolve the problems that were affecting the online safety of the group.

As virus risk levels change, country by country and area by area, the rules by which we can meet are also evolving, enabling some groups to meet face-to-face again. Sadly, however, this is not available to all of us. Some, due to age or health, are at greater risk than others and cannot attend as others might, and we have a duty to them to enable them to continue to safely take part in A.A. To accommodate this, some groups, where they can provide the facilities, have started hybrid meetings enabling members sitting in their homes to join the rest of the group who are meeting face-to-face.

All of this has been made possible by the groups not just taking an active part in the service structure, but by discussing the problems and how they are going to deal with them so that when problems arise, they are ready.

All the old problems of members' safety still exist and will continue to exist when we get back to some level of normality. Our Fellowship welcomes all, so among them there are bound to be those that would seek to do harm. There are those, too, whose background and upbringing might not enable them to fit easily into our society. In seeking to protect ourselves we also do them a kindness by protecting them from the possible consequences of their actions.

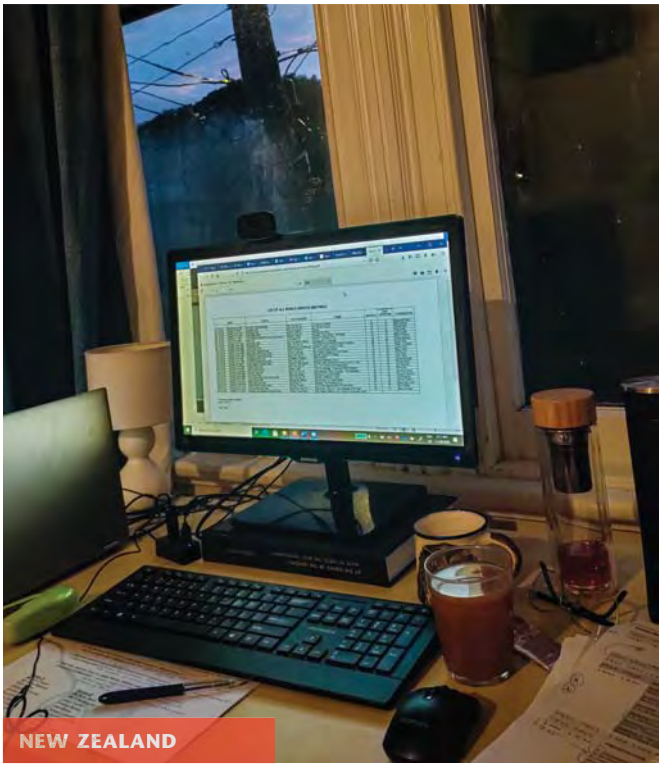
How best can we deal with them then? Just as we did with the problems that arose from COVID-19. By groups talking about the problems, reading what information is already available, creating a plan for action should a problem arise that the whole group is in agreement with, and perhaps even rehearsing the response in advance of the need to implement it.

Those groups that make personal safety a standard item at their regular group business and conscience meetings, and make clear in their normal meetings that bad behavior is not acceptable and will not be tolerated (an example of this can be found by searching online for "Safety Card for A.A. Groups"), are much less likely to run into problems than those that wait until there is a problem and then try to deal with it.

There will always be those who argue that no member should be asked to leave a meeting that might save their lives. These can be pointed to a quote from Bill W.:

> This amount of charity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb meetings in progress or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere, or, to come back when they are better able to participate. *(Letter 1969.)*

Nigel P. — Great Britain



NEW ZEALAND

The International Literature Fund

Encouraging Country Participation

My name is Brian and I am an alcoholic. My home group is the Brisbane Traditions Group in Brisbane, Australia. I am the second-term World Service Meeting delegate for Australia. My sobriety date is June 20, 1977.

When I attended my first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous I had no idea of why I was going but knew it was not to get sober. I believed that I was one of those people who drank and always would. The meeting was a Step meeting on Step Two. I sat at the very back, as close to the door as I could get. Little did I know how that meeting would change my life.

After the meeting, like any newcomer, all I wanted to do was to get out of there. Unfortunately for me the man who brought me to the meeting had a responsibility in the group and therefore as he was doing his service for the group, I was listening. He was talking to a guy called Bob J. and Bob was telling him about the International Literature Fund topic that Australia's World Service delegate had been talking about at Conference. I did not know what they were talking about. So I said nothing but wondered why we would need foreign literature as everybody at the meeting spoke English. I came to realize later just how wrong that thinking was.

The next time the topic of International Literature crossed my path was in 1992. When working in a large correctional center in New South Wales we had a prisoner who was from Japan. He had been attending the A.A. group that met in the center. I was asked if I knew of any literature that could help him because he could not speak English. I knew enough to call the General Service Office (GSO) of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia and enquired where I could get some literature written in Japanese. The office manager at the time told a staff member to send me a copy of the Big Book that was printed in Japanese. I was amazed at this. The GSO sent the book directly to the facility which was paid for by the corrections management. The book was then passed on to the Japanese inmate. He was very enthusiastic about being able to read the Big Book in his native language. He continued to attend meetings at the facility right up to the time of his deportation back to Japan. He was also supplied by the group with some A.A. contacts in Japan. I have not heard from him since, but I hope that one day I will run into him and be inspired by a story of how A.A. made a difference in encouraging his participation in his country.

The next time I heard of the International Literature Fund was in 1995 when the World Service delegate, Tom the Finn, presented at the Australian Conference the idea of Australia needing to establish a fund to contribute to the International Literature Fund. He showed us a paper that had been presented to the World Service Meeting in 1994 where it showed the contributions of all countries such as England, Ireland, Spain, Australia and Japan. What startled me was that Australia's contribution was $60 over a period of 20 years, despite being the country that had recommended the setting up of this fund some years before.

Sponsorship in Other Countries

In 1995, the World Service delegate for Australia addressed the Manning Lakes District in Area A of the Eastern Region sug-

gesting that a collection should be held in the first two weeks of June annually. The outcome of this meeting was that such a collection be conducted on or about Founders' Day.

Sitting in this meeting, taking notes and making history was Australia's current first-term delegate, Greg B. I don't know if he knew of the significance of this event but I do think that he had the idea that great things were happening in the Australian Fellowship at that time. In November 1995, Tom took the proposal to the General Service Conference and the scheme was adopted for all A.A. groups in Australia. The plan was called the Founders' Day Brown Paper Bag Appeal.

In 1995, I was a delegate to the General Service Conference when this was discussed. There was a great deal of discussion about the benefits of this fund and how it could be used to carry the message to alcoholics around the world. As it became apparent that Australia had only contributed A$60 to the fund there was an air of embarrassment in the Conference Forum. Over the years since then this fund has supplied a great deal of support across the region. In early 2000, Australia changed the name of the International Literature Fund to the International Literature and Sponsorship Fund. This was done so that Australia could legally use the funds collected to support literature and sponsorship of countries in the Asia Pacific Region. Some of the countries being helped are Samoa and the Solomon Islands. For Samoa we translated the following three pamphlets: "How It Works," "Information on A.A." and "Is A.A. for You?"

In addition to the pamphlets, two banners were produced including the Serenity Prayer and the Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous Banner. A website was also created for the Samoan area.

The Solomon Islands were next, where we had translated into Pidgin the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, "How It Works" and the Serenity Prayer. This work was undertaken by Debra Cornwell of SITAG, an American Christian Group working in the Solomons. The copyright for this work was transferred to A.A. World Services, Inc. In 2014, I was asked to go to the Solomon Islands to do some Twelfth Step work in a prison. I was able to take this literature and banners with me to help start a group within that country. This is an example of country-to-country Twelfth Step work being made possible by the International Literature and Sponsorship Fund. These groups are still functioning today.

Encouraging Country Participation — Fiji

In 2016, Australia was asked to help carry the message in Fiji. This was done by Australia hosting a Public Information Convention in Suva in 2018. This was a great success, as there are now a number of groups established within the country. In 2019, Australia sponsored a Fijian delegate to the AOSM Meeting in Hong Kong. Since then, the Fijian members have established Zoom and Skype meetings across the Fijian Islands, as well as New Guinea and the Solomons, with participation from Australia and Japan. Australia will be sponsoring two delegates in 2021 to India for the next AOSM. This service is made possible by the Founders' Day Appeal.

Brian S. — Australia

Raising Awareness of the Importance of the International Literature Fund

My dear friends, my name is Michal. I am an alcoholic and a second-term delegate from Poland. Warm greetings from all the fellow members in my country. It is a great privilege to give today my presentation on the topic, "Raising awareness of the importance of the International Literature Fund."

When I received an invitation from Mary to prepare my talk on this topic, it automatically came to my mind how comprehensive and interesting was the report on the International Literature Fund presented by Greg T. at the 25th WSM in Durban and how enthusiastic and empathetic was David R.'s address given with a specific sense of humor on the publication of international literature. It was only then that I understood how challenging it would be for me to give a deep insight into the topic. But, I said to myself, "If there is a will, there is a way."

First of all, let me remind all of us of the history, aim, purpose and task of the International Literature Fund.

This World Service Meeting marks 30 years since the 11th World Service Meeting in 1990 recommended that all coun-

tries participating at the WSM seek cooperation in the task of raising funds for the current problem of providing start-up literature for those countries that are unable to finance their own translations and acquisitions. Thus the international fund known now as the International Literature Fund was established and managed by A.A. World Services, Inc., whereby those countries who were interested and able could make monetary contributions to help defray the costs of producing literature aimed specifically at carrying the message around the world. At the 45th WSM an additional task was added to the activities of the International Literature Fund — to offset administrative costs associated with translation review and registration of A.A. Grapevine, Inc. books.

So, in brief, the International Literature Fund has been providing new translations of A.A. literature and support to emerging A.A. service structures for thirty years.

We can proudly and joyfully celebrate the fund's thirtieth anniversary.

When the secretary of the World Service Meeting wrote to each General Service Office and World Service delegate requesting sharing on what their countries were doing in carrying the message to neighboring countries and what literature translations had been done within and outside their countries, the A.A. Fellowship in Poland could willingly answer that we were recipients of help from other countries.

After World War II, Europe was so effectively divided that the A.A. Fellowship reached Poland 20 years later than other countries in the western part of the continent. Together with the foundation of the first A.A. group in 1974, the first single members of A.A. arrived in Poland from behind the Iron Curtain. They crossed the borders protected by the army, smuggling A.A. literature in their personal luggage. They were our friends from Germany, who brought the books, smuggled the paper necessary for printing the A.A. literature across two borders, and talked for hours about the program, the Traditions, and A.A. structure. The first to provide some money for printing brochures were A.A.s from Finland who showed alcoholics in Poland how to carry the A.A. message.

Having in mind that A.A. literature carries the A.A. message, we have been following for years the principle "Give back what you've been given or you won't make it." In this way we were taught by more mature A.A. structures the contents of the Twelfth Step and the Fifth Tradition and in this way we pass on this principle to less developed A.A. structures.

Are we in Poland aware of the importance of the International Literature Fund? Of course we are. We — I mean the A.A. Fellowship in Poland as a whole — are familiar with the concept of literature funds in general, and of the International Literature Fund in particular.

Since the appearance of A.A. literature in Poland, A.A. groups have allocated a part of their donations for literature. Similar actions were taken at the intergroup level, etc. My personal experience as an intergroup treasurer was that I reported at A.A. meetings how much money we had in cash and how much in A.A. literature.

Nowadays the topic of literature is also present at our General Service Conferences and at the annual national workshops on literature, when every year we make decisions on translation and publishing new A.A.W.S. items. So, an average A.A. in Poland is aware or should be aware, if he or she places principles above personalities, that literature reviews are funded by international funds.

We are very grateful for that. If we add widely read pamphlets "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix" and "Your Seventh Tradition Contribution. Carrying Our Message Beyond Your Home Group" that help raise awareness of self-support and financial support for A.A. structures beyond our borders, then we will have a full picture of how contributions made by individual A.A.s, groups, intergroups and other levels make up our financial contribution to the International Literature Fund. If we look at a chart that is distributed to WSM participants to show the contributions to the ILF, we will see Poland as one of 23 countries that has been for at least twelve years (2008-2019) extending its selfless contribution, the total being US$10,750.

It is nice to read thank you letters from GSO for the generosity of spirit of the A.A. Fellowship in Poland but what matters more for us is our awareness that this contribution extends to an ever growing A.A. Fellowship worldwide and other A.A. structures can be real beneficiaries.

Unfortunately the global pandemic heavily hit the income from literature sales (making up 62%) and made it impossible nowadays to support financially other A.A. structures by providing A.A. literature. Only some years ago we were able to provide the Eastern Ukraine A.A. region suffering from prolonged conflict and hostilities with a low four-figure cash grant to be allocated also for A.A. literature whereas now we can only give a promise to a newly registered A.A. Fellowship in Kazakhstan that their request for financial support to edit and distribute *Alcoholics Anonymous* in the Kazakh language will be thoroughly addressed by our Board of Trustees.

With consistent and clear literature as the basis for A.A. members and meetings around the world, our country has often worked effectively in carrying the message internationally through country-to-country sponsorship. A standard behavior of Polish A.A.s is to take with them literature in the language of the hosts when invited to attend General Service Conferences, workshops and A.A. meetings or visiting individuals abroad.

The literature fund is of great importance from the perspective of Poland that itself received enormous aid from Western countries and today is repaying that support. It is not necessary to convince anyone in our country of the importance of such actions, the obstacle may be the limitation of funds due to a pandemic situation. Sorry to say that lower income will result in delayed payment of our contribution to the ILF in 2020, but it will be definitely effected by the end of this year.

My dear friends, let me at the end refer to a small passage from the service piece from the General Service Office U.S./Canada:

Just as a sponsee one day becomes a sponsor, so countries that have benefited from country-to-country sponsorship will be able to pass on the message of recovery to other countries. Poland, for example, which welcomed A.A.s from outside the country in the 1980s, is now in a position to help jumpstart A.A. in other Eastern European countries.

I do hope that someday in the future those of you who have so far benefited from the International Literature Fund, as we did in the past, will be able to show your selfless generosity and make financial contributions. Try to remember and never forget: "Give back what you've been given."

Michał F. — Poland

Sharing Experience on How Countries Support the International Literature Fund

My name is Ray and I am an alcoholic who is recovering from this deadly disease.

A.A. has three legs or pillars, and it is important that they are solid: Unity, Recovery and Service. And they will be, if we all contribute to that. It is an obligation.

A.A. as an organization is 85 this year. And that tells me that this is a strong Fellowship. Thanks to everybody's effort.

I also will add "Literature" as an important part of our Fellowship. Especially now since we have been hit by this pandemic situation. It may be that the only help a newcomer can get is reading the message from literature.

A long time ago, when A.A. Sweden was in the beginning, we were getting help from the International Literature Fund. We were getting books and pamphlet from this Fund. And it was a great help for us. And we are thankful for that.

Today 60% of our income comes from the sale of literature. And for us it is a big part of our budget.

A.A.'s most important Tradition (number five) is to spread the message further on to those alcoholics who are still suffering from this disease.

When people cannot attend meetings, it is important to have some literature. This need has increased. It is probably a lifeline we should not underestimate.

Since Sweden in the early beginnings was getting help from this Literature Fund, we decided early on to contribute with some money to this fund so other countries could get the same opportunity as we got in our beginning in Sweden.

Therefore, we send in yearly 65,000 Swedish crowns to the Literature Fund, to show our gratitude. And we also take part in this important work to spread the message further on to other countries that may need some support in printing new books which can be sent over, translating books to their native spoken language, getting licences, etc.

It will almost be as circles on the water when Sweden contributes to this Literature Fund. Then, hopefully, we can encourage other countries to do the same. It is, so to say, to Lead By Example.

Besides that: A.A. in Sweden has decided to pay the full fee for two delegates to the World Service Meeting, hoping that by doing so it will make it possible for new countries in A.A. to participate in this very important event. We also gave a gift of 50,000 Swedish crowns to this fund.

The theme for this Conference is: "The Purpose of Our Sobriety: Sobriety within Everyone's Reach."

As I have described above, the importance of a Literature Fund is so we can help those guys that are in the beginning to start up, somewhere out there in this world. Especially when we have this pandemic situation.

2020 has been a very peculiar year. In the beginning of the year, groups were working with a document for educating groups in the structure of A.A. As the material was ready, the Coronavirus came. In Sweden we did not have a lockdown, but still a lot of restrictions. We learned to wash our hands, keep distance to each other, to stay outdoors if we could, and not to travel if we didn't have to. And of course this affected A.A. Many people didn't attend meetings because they were afraid. So many online meetings started. Conventions and bigger meeting were cancelled. GSO didn't meet physically, they had Zoom meetings. Our office in Stockholm closed down for visitors and the two employees worked from home most of the time. Members could order literature from our website, and orders could be sent by mail.

Our service conference was set. But to make some voting and some important decisions they had a Zoom meeting in the autumn. Everything else will be taken care of on the next conference in 2021. The Swedish national meeting was also cancelled.

Many members connect with A.A. friends who felt bad in this peculiar situation. They often meet outside, for an A.A. meeting while walking in nature.

Members in groups who meet physically keep distance, wash their hands or use hand-sanitizer, give no hugs and pray the Serenity Prayer sitting down without holding hands.

And of course, no physical WSM!

Let us all continue to keep this movement strong and healthy. And one way of doing this will be to contribute to the International Literature Fund so that further on we hopefully can have a strong and healthy A.A. all over the world. In Sweden we have a saying and I hope you will understand the meaning: Many small streams together will make a big ocean in the end.

And that applies to every country that has the possibility to take part in this contribution to the Literature Fund. So we can spread the message, even better.

So, thank all you guys from the whole world (almost), for taking part of my humble presentation. Don't forget to wash your hands and stay healthy.

Ray L. — Sweden

Country Service Highlights

BRAZIL

Aotearoa New Zealand: Aotearoa New Zealand is an island country in the southwestern Pacific Ocean, with a population of about 4.7 million people, comprised of two main landmasses — Te Ika-a-Māui the North Island, and Te Waipounamu the South Island — and around 600 smaller islands. Every January we hold an annual A.A. Convention (usually attended by over 300 members, plus Al-Anon) that rotates between the North and South Islands in our summer. International visitors are always welcomed!

The Conference Public Information Committee (PIC) coordinates the Public Awareness week which is traditionally held in October.

In an effort to create message longevity, NZGSO Service Conference has approved a proposal put forward by the PI Committee to implement a rolling bimonthly awareness campaign for 2021.

The campaign will be a combination of media platforms such as hardcopy newspaper print, online Facebook, YouTube and back of bus advertising. Consideration has been given to targeting specific age groups and communities with imaging and targeted messaging.

Since 2014, the Conference CPC Committee has facilitated A.A. participation in the Cutting Edge addictions annual conference; due to COVID-19 the 2020 Cutting Edge conference was cancelled.

The New Zealand Government's Department of Ministry of Health recognizes the positive impact Alcoholics Anonymous has in the community. With this they are actively seeking consultation with Alcoholics Anonymous New Zealand on how they can engage with us within the boundaries of our Traditions and Guidelines.

A targeted program outreach to clergy has been tabled; there was full support from NZ conference regarding this initiative.

There are regular A.A. meetings in 8 of the 19 prisons in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The TCF committee has created a specific publication that captures New Zealand prison inmate stories around alcohol use. The current version will be reprinted, with a new version to be compiled over the next 12 months.

With a new website in place for almost a full year and a series of changes such as COVID-19 there have been significant demands placed on the site.

Traffic to the website started off modestly for the first quarter of 2020, but increased significantly in April and has then steadily declined to a current position of approximately 2,500 users per week, or around 86,000 for the 11 months of operation.

Of these numbers approximately 99% are new users and overall 643,000 of our pages have been viewed with the average number of pages per viewer being almost three (2.78).

Access to the NZ A.A. website by overseas visitors has increased approximately 50% for the top three visiting countries and this can be accounted for in the reported numbers of visitors attending NZ group zoom meetings: New Zealand, 66,575 (77.32%); United States, 9,881 (11.48%); Australia, 3,413 (3.96%); United Kingdom, 1,773 (2.06%).

Steve K.

Argentina: There were a number of Highlights for our Fellowship during the past few years:

- For the first time in Argentina, a woman is president of the GSB. She is the attorney Corina Carbajal, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, and she is the third straight nonalcoholic president of the board, by rotation.
- Establishment of two Boards, the GSB and that of the *El Sendero National Journal*
- Greater use of the means of communication among servants (mail, WhatsApp, the internet, Zoom)
- 57th GSC held 100% virtually
- Agreements to collaborate free of affiliation with different sectors of society, in the areas of health, the church, correctional facilities, cultural institutions, and others
- Active participation in international service, with attendance at the WSM, REDELA (Americas Service Meeting), conferences, and other structures' meetings
- Argentina, host country of the 21st REDELA meeting held from September 29th to October 3rd of 2019, with the theme of "Serving Together towards the Goal"
- Joining borders with neighboring countries and collaborating to carry the message to others
- The first national journal, approved in the 57th Conference
- A.A. Argentina's special 70th edition project of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, for the X National Convention 2022
- Full participation of all the trustees from every part of the country via videoconference
- Greater communication and participation of regional trustees in the committees of the Board
- Sponsorship between areas and within the entire structure
- Sponsoring activities for neighboring structures
- Crucial support from the tech desk in Conference, Board, and GSO service activities
- Making it easier to contribute online
- Carrying out regional forums, three per year
- X National Conference 2022 in the centrally-located province of Cordoba
- 68th Anniversary of the message reaching Argentina, celebrated virtually in 2020
- Inclusion for the first time of Cass A (nonalcoholic) trustees from all parts of the country
- Carrying out activities remotely for nine days for our 57th Conference
- Development of the YouTube Channel project
- Ongoing communication with the entire Fellowship through our web page, aa.org.ar
- Promoting the development of new leaders, sponsorship, and general service
- Directory of Virtual Meetings on the web page, 3,100 a month
- Telephone directory for the whole country on the web page

These are some of the highlights of activities that A.A. Argentina is carrying out with one sole objective in mind: that in every city, town, locality or corner of our country there be meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, today and in the future, to carry the message of experience, strength, and hope to the alcoholic in need.

Alberto C.

Australia: Alcoholics Anonymous came to the shores of Australia in 1945 thanks to a couple of our nonalcoholic friends acquiring copies of the Big Book from the Office in New York. In March 1945 Rex A. from Sydney first wrote to the A.A. General Service Office in New York to introduce his new group as the first in Australia. Thus, this year we are celebrating our 75th Anniversary!!!!

The Coronavirus has made 2020 a challenging time for our entire world but our Fellowship in Australia, as in most other countries, has embraced the technology which has enabled the message of hope and recovery to continue to be spread.

Following our National Convention in Fiji in 2016 we continue to offer financial assistance to allow the locals to reach out to many of the islands within Fiji.

Our 55th National Convention was scheduled to be held in Toowoomba in rural Queensland. Due to Coronavirus the Convention was held as a virtual function and was a very successful venture. As part of the Convention a memorial booklet, was produced to commemorate our 75th Birthday.

The 62nd Australian General Service Conference in November this year will be conducted via the Internet. This has meant a serious reduction to our normal Conference agenda and to the number of topics for discussion. We have invited a delegate from Fiji to attend our Conference this year as an observer.

We held a National PI/CPC Forum in 2019 and the National Treatment and Correctional Facilities Forum in 2020. Due to COVID-19 the 2020 Forum was held online and was very successful, allowing for members and guest speakers to attend who might have otherwise not been able. From 2021 The National PI/CPC Forum and the Treatment and Correctional Facilities Forum will be combined on the one weekend and held every second year.

Australia publishes most of its own literature, importing from the U.S. only those items for which there is little demand. In 2014 we published "One To Another," a 450 page book outlining the beginnings of A.A. in Australia. We also publish our own Big Book. We have an online bookshop attached to our website and literature sales are open to all.

Greg B.

Belarus: The situation with literature has changed over the past year. Purchases are less frequent, and, unfortunately, not all of the literature is available. There are no problems with the Big Book, but the assortment of A.A. literature has sharply decreased. For example, it has been impossible to purchase the book "A.A. Service Manual" in Belarus for, at least, half a year already. One of the main reasons is that it is not available in Russia (RSO), where we still buy books. Another reason is that the purchase of a decent batch of A.A. main literature is not possible, while the leftovers have not yet been fully sold out. Also, due to the epidemiological situation in the world and the political situation in our country, trips outside Belarus have decreased.

Maintenance costs are covered by group contributions and

profits from A.A. literature sales. Donations from the groups are not steady, as some groups do not make contributions to the office at all and some contribute only at irregular intervals. Fortunately, the number of groups understanding the necessity and importance of the office is growing. At the moment, half of the groups listed with the office make contributions. Unfortunately, sometimes the rent and maintenance costs are so high that group contributions are not enough to cover them all. But we are constantly looking for ways to reduce costs. So, a few years ago, our office was transferred to a room with a lower rent; mobile service costs were optimized and a cheaper option for hosting the website of the Fellowship was found. We also try to increase the sales of A.A. literature and commemorative products with A.A. symbols. A year and a half of long hard work of the Literature Committee enabled us to pay off the debts and the Fellowship budget has begun to increase gradually. This will allow us to implement new projects of carrying the A.A. message further — the projects we previously had no funds for and no place in the annual budget.

Unfortunately, at the moment not all A.A. members realize the importance of the office and service structure. We must acknowledge that most alcoholics come to A.A. primarily for their own recovery and are poorly informed about the need and benefits of the A.A. office and service committees. In order to change this situation, we have started some additional activities to raise awareness of Service in A.A. at the Fellowship level. These meetings do not gather meeting rooms full of people yet, but there are changes for the better. More people have become interested in serving. Committees have begun to collaborate, and more and more members have grown interested in A.A. Traditions. I believe that if we go ahead and continue to gently inform groups, many "indifferent" A.A. members will eventually change their minds about service structures.

An important factor that influenced not only literature, but all other issues is, in our opinion, friction and disagreements between the Board of Trustees and the committees. Unfortunately, since last year, instead of unity there has been an internal confrontation within the service structure, which has led to the actual disintegration of the literature committee. Nominally, such a committee exists, but all issues related to literature at the moment are dealt with by the chairperson of the Board of Trustees and the director of the office. The initiative with the work of the Finance Committee froze. At the end of October, the Conference Committee decided to dissolve itself. Currently, it has suspended its work. On November 14-15, the annual Conference was to be held, which, by the decision of the Board of Trustees, was postponed till spring/summer 2021 due to an unfavorable epidemiological situation. Among other issues, the matter of expressing no confidence in the current composition of the Board of Trustees and the re-election of trustees is being considered. At the moment, the Public Information, Corrections, Treatment Facilities, International and Statutory Committees continue their work. The issue of involving members of the Fellowship to serve on committees is still acute; for many years the same people have been serving there.

Much work is being done in prisons. Members of the Fellowship not only visit penitentiary institutions to carry the A.A. message, but also become sponsors for people serving sentences, who in turn become sponsors for their cellmates. A.A. meetings take place in several penitentiary institutions. Meetings are also held in some rehabilitation centers. We have established close and strong contacts with medical institutions.

For the last conference, a video and a presentation about A.A. Belarus were created, which are now posted on the website and are used to educate the public. Cooperation with the media has increased. Articles are published, stories are broadcast on state and regional channels, and seminars, in particular on international experience, are held.

This year, the frequency of carrying the A.A. message face-to-face has decreased, but online work has been on the rise. Groups have begun to create Internet platforms for meetings. A.A. speakers are now able to share their experience online with rehabilitation center patients. Online seminars have been held. In addition to internal online meetings, we take part in world meetings. In this sense, the Coronavirus has expanded our boundaries. Our national delegates took part in the International Convention of Russian-Speaking A.A.s, in the speakers' online marathon in honor of the 85th A.A. anniversary, in the formation of the regional committee of the CIS and Baltic countries and its subsequent work.

The Coronavirus forced most of the groups into self-isolation. This resulted in the significant decrease of a number of operating groups. Since no one informed the office about the termination of the work of some groups, their number nominally has not changed, but the actual figure has dropped. To date, only 78 out of 107 registered groups continue to meet in Belarus.

Ekaterina G.

Bolivia: Because of the global pandemic, our XXIX Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, whose theme was: "Good knowledge of the structure enables good service," which was supposed to take place in April of this year, was postponed with the purpose of safeguarding the health of our trusted servants as well as complying with the health and legal regulations of the Bolivian authorities. The Conference was finally held virtually in the month of September.

Eleven delegates from eight areas, six trustees, one GSO member, two trustees from Colombia (as guests), one support volunteer and one technical virtual platform operator participated at the 2020 virtual Conference.

We worked on the development of the first General Service Manual of A.A. of Bolivia, which is based on that of the U.S. and Canada, and was approved together with the new bylaws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Bolivia (JUSGAAB) at the V Extraordinary Conference, which met on December 1, 2018. During 2019, the Report and Charter Committee made some corrections to the manual, and the latter was approved for printing at the XXVII Conference, whose theme was: "The Manual for Service in Bolivia." This manual is still valid. Our vision is that by studying and following the manual we will be able to understand and know our Fellowship and its service structure better, and we will be able to motivate our members into service and develop greater ability and commitment among our trusted servants to the Fellowship at large. We have started the paperwork needed to update our current bylaws and our legal personhood to the new laws of the Plurinational State of Bolivia.

With regard to the participation of our Conference delegates, our Manual says that in order to reach 2/3 of the del-

egates at the fully body of the Conference, because of trusted servant rotation, and in order to provide continuity to the Fellowship's plans and policies, Area Assemblies are supposed to elect a first-term delegate and a second-term delegate to represent the Area at the annual meeting of the Conference.

Conference Committees are set up as per our Manual and we are working toward developing greater awareness and understanding of the responsibilities and duties of these committees during and after the annual meeting of the Conference, so as to fulfill the mission that the areas, regions and the Fellowship as a whole have entrusted us with.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Bolivia (JUSGAAB) is made up of seven trustees: three Class A trustees and three class B trustees, representing each region, plus one general service Class B trustee. We currently have six trustees, three Class B and 3 Class A. Because of the pandemic, the Board of Trustees is meeting virtually.

The Board's Standing Committees have been set up in accordance with the Service Manual and there is more coordination with Conference committees.

The Colombian service structure has been fulfilling its commitment and is always available to provide guidance, orientation and assistance in times of need. In that same spirit, two trustees from Colombia participated at Bolivia's virtual Conference. Likewise, two delegates from Bolivia attended the Colombian Conference. We are most grateful for this most valuable help.

Because of social upheaval in our country in 2019, followed by a long lockdown during the pandemic, low sales and the dearth of trusted servants and specialized workers, our magazine is currently not being printed. The 2020 Conference voted in favor of its continuity and, to this end, the General Service Corporate Board will be set up with appointed committee members in Finance, Literature and Publications and Public Relations, who will be responsible for the magazine and other tasks, in coordination with the Board of Trustees and our GSO.

We currently have a paid full-time manager, who has worked throughout the entire pandemic, providing information to A.A. members and A.A. groups regarding worldwide A.A. activities during the pandemic, as well as information regarding legal and health regulations. GSO is in constant contact with the Board of Trustees as well as with trusted servants from the different areas and regions, fostering and coordinating virtual activities.

The drop in contributions, the lack of literature sales over five months, the postponement of events and the lack of a prudent reserve have put our GSO in serious financial difficulties. We are having a hard time meeting our monthly operating expenses and printing or purchasing literature for distribution and sale in our country. We hope that with the help of God and the willingness of our members, we will be able to overcome these times of adversity so that we can keep our doors open, meet our financial obligations and continue in our mission to help groups meet their primary purpose of carrying the message to alcoholics who still suffer, wherever they may be.

Our most sincere gratitude to the trusted servants who have made it possible for the World Service Meeting Fund to finance Bolivia's presence at this 26th WSM, and pay for our full $500 delegate fee.

Delegates from Bolivia participated at the Meetings of the Americas in Brazil in 2007; El Salvador in 2011; Salinas, Ecuador in 2013; Mexico in 2015; Costa Rica in 2017; Argentina in 2019; and for the first time at the 25th WSM in 2018.

We currently have a simple web page that has become a valuable tool for providing information and carrying the A.A. message in our country, especially during this pandemic. We need to improve its capabilities in order to enhance our service and information options inside and outside our Fellowship.

Milton H.

Brazil: The Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship was officially founded in Brazil on September 5, 1947 when the Rio de Janeiro Group (in the city of the same name and, at the time, the capital of the country) registered formally with the unanimous consent of the first A.A. Group. However, the formal structure itself was started in 1969, following the guidelines of the global A.A. structure. It was given the go ahead to translate, publish, and distribute the text *Alcoholics Anonymous* and to create a service agency modeled on structures with the A.A.W.S., or A.A. World Services, approach.

Our Board of Trustees is made up of 14 members (4 Class A and 10 Class B). We now have 45 areas, two of which are approved by the Board not the General Service Conference. Today, we also have 12 committees that form part of our structure. In addition, we have an executive committee composed of the administrative manager and the 12 committees working with the Board of Trustees. They meet once a month. At our last Conference, the 44th GSC, held by videoconference from October 26 – 30, the following recommendations were approved:

1. The theme for the 46th GSC, to take place in 2022, will be "Practicing Our Principles in a New Digital Era."
2. That the cost of the Annual Conference Report be reduced, given that the 2020 Conference has already made several payments ahead of schedule, including for the hotel.
3. That the book *Our Great Responsibility* be translated and marketed.

Before implementing the new concept of "area" here in Brazil, the decrease in the number of groups in our structure was a cause for concern. It should be kept in mind that in 2000 there were 5,411 groups in our structure and that 12 years later, in 2012, there were 4,408, giving us the shocking result of a decrease of 1,003 groups. From 2010, the year when the new concept of area was adopted, to 2013, we had an increase of 359 groups. From 2013 to 2019, we have been seeing stagnation in the increase of groups. Regionalization has as its goal enhancing the steady growth of our community, identifying places where the A.A. message has not yet reached and where there are groups. Our first actions consisted of making a record of groups, districts, areas and the ESL (GSO). That was followed by the approval of the concept of area, which was reached at the 34th GSC in 2010. As can be seen, regionalization is not just about organizing new areas. This is only one of the fruits of its application.

JUNAAB — General Services Board of Alcoholics Anonymous of Brazil National Meeting: We have been holding virtual meetings since the beginning of the pandemic in March. We have participation every night of many people and areas. We are also holding study meetings and offering

daily services. Mondays to Sundays from 10 pm to 12 am: www.gotomeet.me/JUNAAB.

In our ESG (GSO) we now have ten paid employees and 70 voluntary workers serving A.A. Our manager and the other employees and personnel are nonalcoholic, while our committee coordinators are alcoholics who receive no pay. Three of the trustees were rotated: the general administrative services trustee and two trustees from the south and southeast regions. We released the book *Haciendo Reparaciones* (*Making Amends*).

Ana Elisa L.

Bulgaria: We, from A.A. in Bulgaria, are grateful for the support of GSO U.S./Canada and countries that have contributed to the World Service Meeting Fund by ensuring our presence for the first time at the World Service Meeting.

The first meeting was held on December 5, 1989 in the capital Sofia in one of the halls of the Psychiatric Clinic. The A.A. message was carried by a psychiatrist after a a business trip to the United States. The second A.A. group appeared four years later in the city of Burgas. With the mass penetration of the Internet, the groups in Bulgaria were increasing relatively quickly, and since 2006 groups have appeared in another 15 cities in the country.

Bulgaria has 32 A.A. groups in three regions. Meetings are held in 17 cities. There are two English-speaking meetings, nine online meetings and one Bulgarian-speaking meeting in London.

Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, face-to-face meetings were completely suspended from March to June 2020. Most of the meetings were held online during this period.

The first A.A. Conference took place in 2017. This year, due to the pandemic, the Fourth Conference was postponed to March 2021, but it is not yet known whether it will be held live or online.

The General Service Board consists of five alcoholic trustees, one nonalcoholic trustee, a treasurer and an international delegate.

We do not as yet have a General Service Office, but we do have a postal address where all mail communications can be sent.

Thanks to the financial assistance of the A.A. Great Britain Development Fund the 4th edition of the Big Book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Living Sober* and the brochure "This is A.A." were printed.

In the last two years there has been a growing wave of young people joining A.A. in Bulgaria. This gave rise to the idea of translating the brochure "Young People and A.A." This translation has been sent for approval to GSO New York.

We are currently working on the translations of *Beginner's Book*, *Daily Reflections*, *Came to Believe*, *As Bill Sees It* and *A.A. Comes of Age*.

The committee recognizes that our structure is very young and needs assistance in matters related to the media, medical establishments, universities, social services, employers. For this reason, in October 2019, the first public information seminar was organized and held together with friends from the A.A. Fellowship in Poland.

In general, it can be said that the percentage ratio of income is as follows: 53% from the Seventh Tradition from the groups in the country, 25% from literature and 22% from the National Convention.

The text of the A.A. Bulgaria Handbook will be an adaptation of the A.A. Service Handbook of Slovakia and A.A. Service Handbook of Great Britain to meet Bulgarian needs. The aim is that by the end of the mandate of Service Handbook Committee in 2022, the final version will be completed and adopted by the Conference.

Carrying the message in prisons began in May 2014 when first meeting was held in Stara Zagora prison. In 2018 and 2019, the First and Second International Seminars on Prison Service were held in cooperation with the General Directorate of Prisons in Bulgaria, with the participation of liaison officers with experience from A.A. Great Britain and A.A. Poland, attended by board members of several prisons in Bulgaria.

Thanks to the enthusiasm and perseverance in service of the members of the Prison Liaison Committee, by February 2020, A.A. Bulgaria held meetings in four prisons and four prison hostels. On March 13, 2020 a state of emergency had been declared in Bulgaria. All gatherings were banned. Then the Prisons Committee decided to send letters to express the will of being useful in this difficult time. All 13 prisons in the territory of Bulgaria were offered sponsorship through letters. The administration of one of the prisons responded to this proposal.

The site http://www.aa-bg.info was born ten years ago. Since March 2016 the domain of the site has been owned by the nonprofit association "A.A. Bulgaria." The contact form of the site is linked to the email of the association: aabulgaria@abv.bg. At our Third General Services Conference in 2019, it was decided to update the system that supports our site, thereby engaging a professional member of the Fellowship.

In December 2014 the first edition of the newspaper "Grozdov sok" (Grape Juice) was published. Its 12th issue came out at the end of 2019. There have been no further publications primarily because of the pandemic.

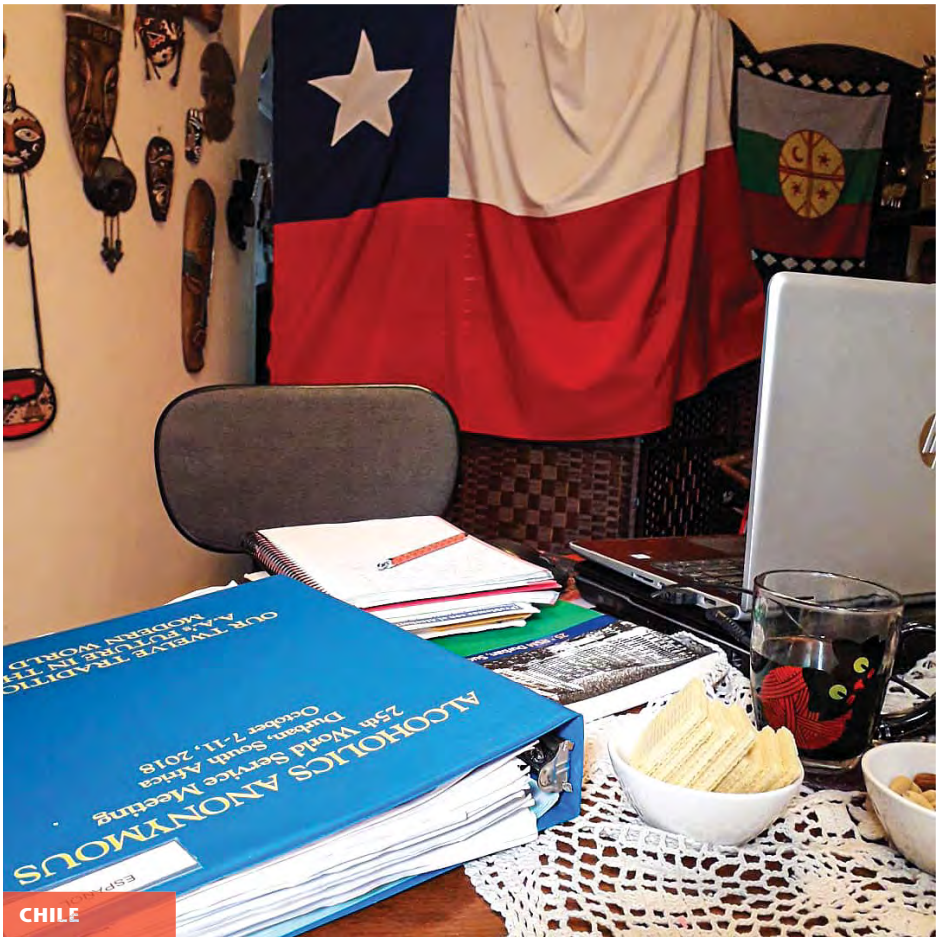
This year the 13th National Convention was to be held, but due to COVID-19 the convention committee decided to postpone it for the next year.

Close relationships and experience sharing are gained from Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom. In 2010, for the first time we invited guests from A.A. in Slovakia and Poland to a service workshop to share their experience. Since then, A.A. Bulgaria has participated annually in the Polish Conference. Two observers from Poland shared their experience and took part in the working seminar in preparation for our First Conference in 2017. The GSO in York responded to our request and sent two observers who shared invaluable experience and gave their support during our First Conference. A.A. Bulgaria has participated with observers in A.A. Great Britain Conferences since 2016. Thanks to this participation and the shared experience of these developed structures, many Bulgarian observers have taken an active part in service to build the structure of A.A. Bulgaria. We are grateful for the financial support of A.A. GB for the opportunity to attend conferences in Poland and Great Britain, as well as European Service Meetings since 2017.

Iliana T.

Chile: As of October of 2019, the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship of Chile had 106 groups registered with the GSO and an estimated 1,300 members. However, the social upheaval that broke out that month, profoundly shaking up the country, had a direct impact and hampered the functioning of our groups. Later on, beginning in March of 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the GSO was forced to strongly urge groups to shut their doors so as not to become hot spots of contagion with the virus. The groups stopped all in-person activity for seven months.

The groups and our entire service structure went through a period of uncertainty in our operations. Even so, our LIM meetings had been taking place via Zoom for two years prior to these events, and that experience gave the committees and groups that were in a position to act the ability to adapt their operations and keep functioning through the use of this technology. The period of indecision gave way to continuing the work through electronic means. At present, there are three groups set up to operate exclusively online; 22 groups that used to have their meetings in person have switched to online get-togethers; and the LIM meeting increased its number of sessions, which allowed it to refer people looking for help to regular online meetings. We celebrated the XXXI General Services Conference on Zoom, and the GSO committees, the boards of General Services and the *National Journal Rebirth*, as well as some areas, have carried out a series of events online, such as the ceremony commemorating the National Anniversary Celebration of A.A., presided by the Region C Areas of Southern Chile.



CHILE

There was a huge drop in groups' financial contributions to the GSO. Two-thirds of all the groups that had been contributing regularly stopped donating. However, up to now, we have not had to tap into the Reserve Fund, although we will eventually have to. Some groups have started up again, working in person but holding fewer meetings than normal. The GSO has strongly recommended that officially sanctioned health policies for the prevention of infection be followed. We do not know how many groups will go back to functioning normally, that is, as they used to up to October 2019. When the health situation returns to normal, we will be able to gauge the consequences of the external factors of social unrest and COVID-19 for our Fellowship.

Our structure is currently made up of two Territories (North and South)

covering the entire country, with no trustee representation; three Service Regions (A, B, and C) with one regional trustee (representing Region C) active; and two General Services trustees assigned by the GSO president to coordinate meetings with the areas within the regions. We have 10 service areas and 19 districts in place, and there are nine area central offices operational.

For the first time in our history, we conducted our General Services Conference through the Zoom platform. Held in August of 2020, it was well attended and it covered the whole agenda, giving us overwhelmingly the impression that the event was enormously positive in spite of what is inevitably lost with the absence of a physical presence. Our Mexican sponsors and an international delegate from Peru participated in the Conference. Also, again via Zoom, our international delegates and members of the GSO attended the General Services Conference of Argentina, at the invitation of that fraternal structure.

The General Service Board is composed of eight trustees, two of whom are Class A, one regional trustee, and five general service trustees. Meetings take place once a month in which Fellowship business as a whole is attended to, as well as progress reports, projects, and policies to be carried out.

There are also three Joint Meetings per year to evaluate and/or correct course on items related to the implementation of Advisory Actions approved in the annual Conference. Delegates from all over the country assigned to the various Conference committees and the trustees representing the GSO standing committees take part in these collective meetings.

Sandra Huenumán León, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee

Colombia: Considering the possibility that our annual Conference might have to meet virtually, all our trusted servants (delegates, trustees, nontrustee directors and staff members) were given training in the use of virtual platforms. In the end it was decided to hold the Conference in hybrid form.

Our structure held the 56th annual Conference meeting, October 9–12 of the current year. We know of no other Conference similarly held: 48 persons attended in person, and 10 virtually: one trustee, five delegates, four international guests (two per country).

For reference, we have uploaded in our website, www.cnaa.org, a digital directory of virtual meetings and the groups that have been formed during the pandemic. There are a total of 102 meetings and groups.

During this period of home confinement, the editorial committee of the News and Service Bulletin of the GSO published a special electronic edition consisting of 12 issues. They are available for reading to anyone accessing our website.

- All the meetings that have been held since the start of the home confinement period in March have been celebrated virtually. And they have all been successful.
- In Region A of the Northern Territory, they were able to celebrate a Roundup of Professionals Friends of A.A. remotely. It was held last August 7. The other areas and regions will also meet virtually, as their situations allow.
- The Board's CPC and TI committees agreed to put their efforts into delegating the creation of a CPC focused on treatment centers around the country to a trusted servant now staying at the Capital District of Bogota. He was given literature and a letter of introduction for this purpose.
- In March, the new manager of the General Services Office took up his duties. The assistant manager also began to undertake her tasks.
- Our website has a new video section containing five videos of public interest.
- We have published an electronic catalogue including the titles of all of our current literature. It is also available in our website.
- Our CTO (Committee for Work with Outsiders) book, which actually consists of three books, is available for consultation, in edited form, in our website.
- The invitation that we extended to Bolivia and Peru to join us at the 56th Annual Conference Meeting, carried out remotely, gave us the opportunity to take on their sponsorship. They were present in most of the meetings that took place, including the inaugural session, floor actions, and the close of the conference.
- The section "What's New!" is a virtual site that we designed for our web page to keep the national membership on top of the latest news about A.A. Colombia.
- In order to keep the Tradition of Self-support going, we have made contributing easier for our members everywhere by adding a button in our web page for electronic donations called "My Friendly Pay."
- The sponsorship of the Bolivia and Peru structures was done through the participation of the two Colombian trustees-at-large in the Conferences of those two countries, celebrated remotely.
- By way of conclusion: reality asserts itself. All the events of our national structure, including anniversaries, forums, roundups, and so on, have moved to a virtual platform, due to these times of the pandemic. This has not at all meant that we have stopped fulfilling our Fifth Tradition, Our Primary Purpose.

Harold B.

Cuba: The highlights for A.A. in our country in recent years are the following:

- We have celebrated four Conventions, with the participation of A.A. in Cuba and invited guests from other countries.
- We printed the 2018 edition of the Service Manual, following the model of the U.S. and Canada, but taking into consideration the particulars of our own country.
- After 25 years of carrying the message of love and hope in the service of recuperation from alcoholism and having seen significant results, thanks due to the unwavering efforts of those who came before us, the official recognition of our Association has been achieved, as it was legally constituted in our country on June 20 of 2019.
- For the first time ever, the General Services Board was invited to the 3rd International Congregation of the Ministry of Public Health, under the banner of "Toxic Habits, Styles of Life." There were in attendance health specialists, representatives from the GSO of the United States and Canada, the President of our GSB, staff members and trustees, Class B, among other invited guests. For A.A.

in Cuba, it turned out to be an event of great scientific, professional, and historical relevance.

- Preparations are underway for the printing of the book *The History of A.A. in Cuba*. We continue to put out our journal, *Sobriety Always*, publishing four editions a year.
- There is an ongoing effort of collaboration with the professional community, and we are developing public information activities about our recuperation program.
- The structure of Mexico continues to sponsor our Conference, and we maintain a space for holding workshops, as the need arises.
- Our country participated in the 25th WSM taking place in Durban, South Africa, with the representation of two delegates.
- A member of our GSB participated in the 12th Convention held in Puebla, Mexico.
- We are currently undertaking an administrative reorganization of our GSO as well as a review and study of the Basic Guidelines.
- We have had an exchange of experiences and come to several collaboration agreements with the Ministry of Public Health with the sole objective of helping those who are still suffering.
- It is important to emphasize that in difficult times such as these that the world is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our A.A. community in Cuba has kept the A.A. message alive. It has had to adapt, readjust methods, and adopt new strategies during this period of contingencies, just as other structures throughout the world have had to.
- In spite of the steps taken of isolation and social distancing that have forced us to postpone events and meetings, we have shared through remote meetings and exchanged experiences that had never been gone through before in A.A., but that we have faced with the faith and spirituality of our Traditions. Even given the lack of resources, most of the time we get up each morning to take one day at a time, keeping the light of hope shining for ourselves and our fraternal brothers and sisters.
- At present, we continue to work in different regions concentrating on communication, sponsorship, responsibility, the role of the groups in the self-maintenance of the structure, doing workshops, and inspiring members to have love for service.

Esmeralda F.

Czech Republic: Due to the political situation that came of World War II, the first official A.A. group was founded in December 1989. Though A.A. foundations were laid before — there were a few people, both in Czech and in America, willing to do more for Czech A.A.

There are currently 69 active A.A. groups in 47 cities in the Czech Republic, altogether counting approximately 700 members. There are also several online groups in bigger cities mostly using a Skype platform, which started to be active as a result of the COVID-19 crisis in the Spring of 2020 and become part of the A.A. meeting structure; another one registered Czech & Slovak Skype A.A. group called *"WeirdConnection"* and one Czech & Slovak online meeting called *"SoberSpace,"* running via group email correspondence.

Intergroup level is missing, but some local groups cooperate closely. At the beginning of 2019 a new effective cooperation between Czech, English and Russian-speaking Prague groups arose.

Our GSC is held annually, in January. Not all the groups are represented so far, but attendance is growing steadily every year. In 2020 we hosted foreign observers from Slovakia, Poland, Portugal, UK and Russia and we were greatly honored to host Eva S. from GSB NY. We strive to develop country-to-country sponsorship continuously.

GSC 2021 is under preparation now, but as we are in the middle of a pandemic we are not sure if GSC 2021 will take place. We are looking into the feasibility of holding it online.

In the last year, the General Service Board had a lot to do with the Articles of Association that have to be in accordance with both Czech law and A.A. Traditions at the same time.

This year, A.A. activities were significantly hit by the pandemic, resulting in a state of emergency and lockdown declared by Czech Government in Spring and again during Autumn 2020. It's being estimated that this situation will last at least till Christmas 2020, if not longer. The GSB is under pressure to make quick decisions due to the pandemic, in order to protect A.A.'s reputation and comply with all government regulations. The GSB tried to get an exemption from the Government for live meetings through a Class A trustee, arguing that in A.A. activities are saving lives. Since we are in a state of emergency, this was not allowed.

Next to it, as meetings in person were banned, these restrictions resulted in a difficult GSB decision to cancel the annual A.A. Convention. Many other smaller events (weekend reunions, workshops, Twelve Step studies, etc.) had to be cancelled or postponed indefinitely, and the cooperation with institutions was suspended, interrupted or even called off, such as the Annual Addictology Conference. This decision was based on a PI Committee proposal and agreed to by the Board of Trustees, reflecting previous experiences that online events are not suitable for introduction of A.A. to professionals.

Our GSB is located in Hradec Králové, where the premises also serve as a warehouse of A.A. literature, together with two new interim storages — in Prague and in Brno. In 2019, GSC approved the very first paid employee of Czech A.A., a member responsible for the office work and accountancy that must be kept. As of 2019 A.A. began to submit a tax return and intends to continue on yearly basis.

The Czech A.A. official Handbook, approved by GSC, became intensively used for service purposes already. Meanwhile, as additional topics arose, the Handbook Committee is continuously working on updates and revisions in order to keep the Handbook current and useful, for instance to add the newly-formed Prisons Committee activities.

This year also proved the need to clarify the procedure of election of international delegates, their alternates and the procedure of joining the service and taking over responsibility during the service period of delegate, when necessary. These adjustments are submitted to be discussed at the Board of Trustees and approved at GSB (in between GSCs) or GSC level.

New websites were made two years ago and are being kept up to date, newly including the link to COVID-19 Government restrictions and an appeal to groups to keep it in order to protect A.A.'s reputation.

Also, an information channel via group email is available to any member interested in A.A. affairs and a Google disc document storage system was finally created for A.A. use this year.

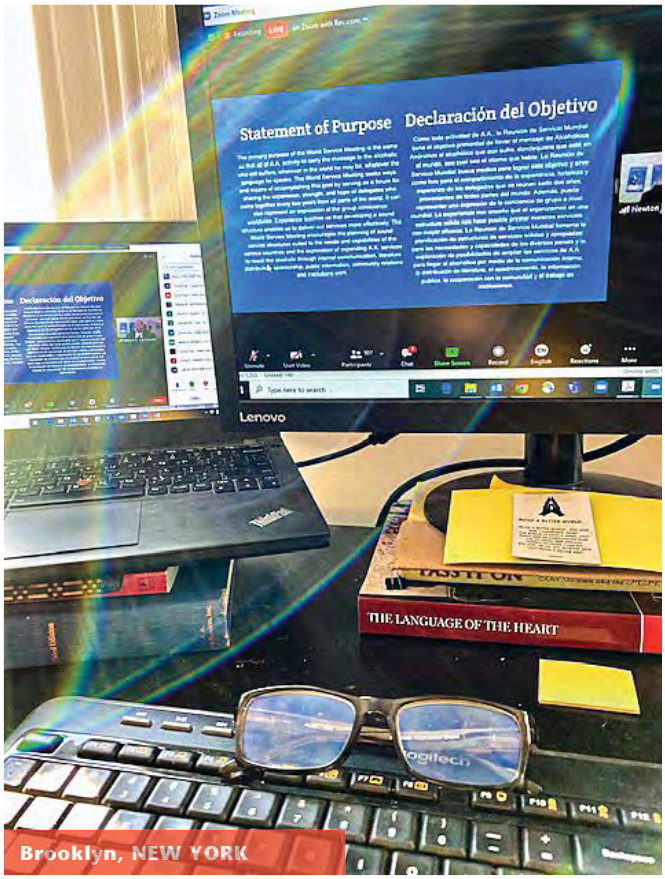
Despite cancelled attendance at the Czech Addictology Conference, long-term cooperation with hospitals, rehabs, schools, clergies, prisons and probation service continues, aiming at carrying the message at the regional levels. Local manuals such as *"Service on the phone," "Creating a new group," "Holding info meetings in professional facilities,"* etc., were prepared and shared with A.A. members thanks to the Literature Committee. Also, the P.I. Handbook was translated from English version to Czech. Our aim is also to extend the availability of A.A. literature (primarily Big Book) in public libraries. We also began to cooperate with the media, contributing to a Czech radio program and sharing a TV spot on A.A. (Christian TV).

The Committee for Prisons emerged out of the PI Committee, as a result of a growing effort to work in this area. In this matter, great help came from A.A. Poland. A.A. meetings are regularly held in four prisons, though the beginning of cooperation in other two facilities was stopped by pandemic restrictions. Other possibilities are in the process of assessment of needs and/or negotiation. Last year, for the first time in Czech A.A., a psychologist from one prison took part in the annual A.A. Convention. A special issue of the A.A. magazine "The Road" is being prepared, consisting of the stories of prisoners and will be distributed to prisons. Unfortunately, access to prisons is currently banned due to pandemic and planned events are postponed. Other options to ensure the sponsorship of imprisoned A.A. members in the twelve-step program during the pandemic (for instance by correspondence) are being sought.

The main purpose of the Finance Committee, established in 2017, is to create a financial budget for the following fiscal year, and to support the Board of Trustees in making decisions related to unexpected expenses. The very first official budget was created for the fiscal year February 2018 till January 2019. The budget is regularly approved in January at the national GSC. So far, income is still higher due to the benefit of the literature. Suspension of group meetings has a significant impact on member contribution income from the Seventh Tradition, which will surely influence the financial situation of Czech A.A. Despite the pandemic crisis, we are grateful that our finances are rather stable. In 2020 we were able to donate contributions to the European Fund (amount of 500,– EUR) and to the Literature Fund in NY (at least modest amount of 200,– USD).

Another positive impact of restrictions is cost saving, which enabled Czech A.A. to become self-sufficient for the very first time in our A.A. history, and to afford to cover the delegate fees of both international delegates at our own expense (as they are significantly lower for online conference meetings and without travel expenses).

An audio version of the Big Book was recorded and the tender was conducted among renowned distributors of audio books. The contract and technical details are currently being negotiated. Regarding sale of books and publication of brochures on the website, tender for distributor is running. Recently published: *Living Sober, Women in A.A., Understanding Anonymity, A Member's Eye View.* Folded brochures, in prepara-



Brooklyn, NEW YORK

tion for print, *Young people and A.A., the Twelve Concepts Illustrated, This is A.A., Frequently asked questions.* Unfortunately, indeed the Literature Committee's activities have been hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and a communication with the GSB in New York seems to be stalled again.

Last but not least, please let me express our huge gratitude for the opportunity to be part of A.A. worldwide. We are very happy to be able to participate the WSM meeting, which definitely would not be possible without previous continuous support from A.A. Great Britain and GSB New York, enabling Czech A.A. to develop the A.A. Fellowship in our country and participate both at the ESM and WSM.

Tamara L.

Denmark: We have a new translation of the 4th edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The 3rd edition was translated in the 1990s and as it has been so many years in between, some members swear to the old translation and vice versa. With this situation, I am curious to gather experience of how Fellowships around the world handle having a new translation applied to the Twelve Steps or other central areas of the book.

We have a rotation policy in national committees of six years. The issue is when there is no one to rotate in and old members must rotate out. Currently we have had to close two national committees and convert them into a work-in-progress as a group working under the GSB. I am curious also to gather experience of how Fellowships around the world encounter this contradiction of having a rotation principle but not enough willing new members to make voluntary service work.

We have a structure based geographically, but an elected GSR for an online meeting could in principle be living in a foreign country. When they rotate out the next elected GSR could be based at another point geographically. This causes an issue when we only have regions based geographically around the country. A quick solution of the issue could be to form a new region to consist of all the digital meetings; but to create a new region, they would need experience with service and how the structure of A.A. in Denmark works. This is an almost impossible task to ask of people who have never worked in the service structure. These people formed the online meetings as a direct result of the pandemic and have had growth because of the assembly restrictions of ten people currently in our country. They did a service to the Fellowship and we want to incorporate them in our structure as to give them a democratic voice and influence as they rightly should have. I am curious for input, as we cannot be the only country around the world to have experienced growth in the online meetings as a result of the pandemic, and if so how do we give them the right to participate in our service structure?

Tobias D.

Dominican Republic: In the Dominican Republic, we have some 85 groups in total in operation. We are active in three areas, and, looking to implement our plans and to grow our Fellowship, we have already set in motion the establishment of the Greater Santo Domingo District. At this time, it will cover the four provinces of Greater Santo Domingo and serve to motivate and inspire the other three provinces that do not yet have a district set up. We are aware that we are lagging behind, and we know that, on a global scale, in the vast majority of the countries where the Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship exists and has an active presence, the pandemic has forced its groups to literally close their doors. Thanks to our Higher Power, we have been slowly opening them up again, and, at this moment, we have about 25% of our groups meeting in person. Of course, they have been rigorously following all the necessary safety protocols.

In the Dominican Republic, we have been able to establish a presence in the mass media. Our Public Information Committee has made connections at a national level with almost all of the television channels, radio stations, newspapers, magazines, and the electronic media. his has been a way of keeping fluid communication going and using the media to carry the message to those still suffering and who are unaware that alcoholism is a disease.

We are feeling happy and grateful knowing that our sponsors from Mexico will be arriving to the Dominican Republic on the fourth of December of 2020 to take part in the 26th World Service Conference 2020, hosted by the Dominican Republic. The Conference will be taking place from Saturday, December 5 — Sunday, December 6. The lessons we have learned from our sponsors have put our beloved Alcoholics Anonymous Fellowship on a level of development and preparation that we could not have achieved on our own. Our Mexican sponsors have turned our structure into a central locus from which the message of recovery is being widely spread.

We wish to express our gratitude to the organizers of this World Service Meeting for always keeping our structure in mind and in that way sharing experience, strength, and hope. We are very excited about this opportunity to meet so many brothers and sisters from different countries. In spite of our different languages, we end up understanding each other because we all speak the common language of the heart of Alcoholics Anonymous.

José M.

Ecuador: We have been a part of the world structure of A.A. since 2001, but our delegates only began to regularly attend REDELA and World Service Meetings in 2009. José C., our delegate, attended the last WSM, held in South Africa, and we were represented by our delegate Luis S. at the REDELA meeting held in Argentina in September of 2019. Information shared through the useful and pertinent recommendations made at those meetings has helped us to improve our service areas.

Hardly had he returned to our country when our delegate, who had represented us at the WSM in South Africa, delivered to the Board not only his report, but all documents related to the work carried out by the several committees, all of which after review, were forwarded to all the areas of our strcture so that our trusted serants could review and study the recommended items and later send in their comments.

In August of 2020, at a regular meeting of the General Service Board of Trustees, it was resolved to thank Colombia for the sponsorship provided to date, a decision made for reasons beyond our control which were explained at the recent REDELA, and starting in November of this year, in accordance with a recommendation of the XXXII General Service Conference, we are requesting the sponsorship of Mexico, which structure has been providing us in a committed and systematic way

with advice and sponsorship in several workshops focused on the strengthening of Unity; the general service trustees of the Mexican structure also attended our last Conference as observers.

In August of 2019, the First Bi-National Ecuador-Peru Meeting was held in the host city of Huaquillas (Ecuador), and was attended by a large number of members from both countries who shared their mutually enriching experiences. The next meeting will be held in the sister structure of Peru.

Despite the difficult situation presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the III Regional Conference of Area 3 Pichincha-Region B took place in November of this year.

Taking full advantage of the technology available, training workshops are being held virtually on important topics, such as Integral Leadership, the Basic Text, the Traditions and the Concepts.

In March of 2020, a virtual national survey of the A.A. Fellowship of Ecuador was conducted, with the aim of arriving at an approximate count of current members. A notable decrease in membership was observed.

Although our most recent Conference was held in November this year, not all the regional delegates were present because of a breakdown in unity among a number of members; nonetheless the results of the meeting were most gratifying because for the first time we held a Conference that rigorously followed Third Legacy procedures. We had moreover the counsel and guidance of two general service trustees from the structure of Mexico. We were able to create the standing committees of the Conference.

After many years our Fellowship now has the required number of trustees, both Class A and Class B. The board is currently composed of 13 members, six regional trustees; one trustee from the Northern Territory and one from the Southern Territory; two general service trustees; and three Class A trustees. It should be noted that for the first time in many years we have three Class A trustees, an extremely gratifying development since they contribute so importantly to the growth of our Fellowship. Furthermore, we have been able to establish 11 standing trustees' committees, a historical moment since never before have we had this number of committees.

We are waiting for A.A. World Services to approve our request for the authorization required to print a number of books, with the objective of printing A.A. materials here in our country.

Luis S.

El Salvador: As of May 2018 the structure of El Salvador became independent from the Northern Zone and, starting in 2020, will participate with our own World Service delegate. The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous of El Salvador supports our participation in the World Service Meeting through contributions received by the General Service Office of El Salvador and by purchasing copies of REDELA and WSM reports which are sold and distributed to the groups. The new REDELA and World Service Meeting report subscription project is being implemented and what happens at the World Service Meeting is being disseminated to our 14 areas. Additionally, space is reserved in our conference agenda to report highlights of the World Service Meeting and the General Service Board of El Salvador is willing to participate in the bidding process to host the 27th World Service Meeting. According to the last survey conducted at the end of 2019, there are approximately 1,500 groups (15 in prisons and 5 in hospitals) in El Salvador and 20,000 members, including 600 women.

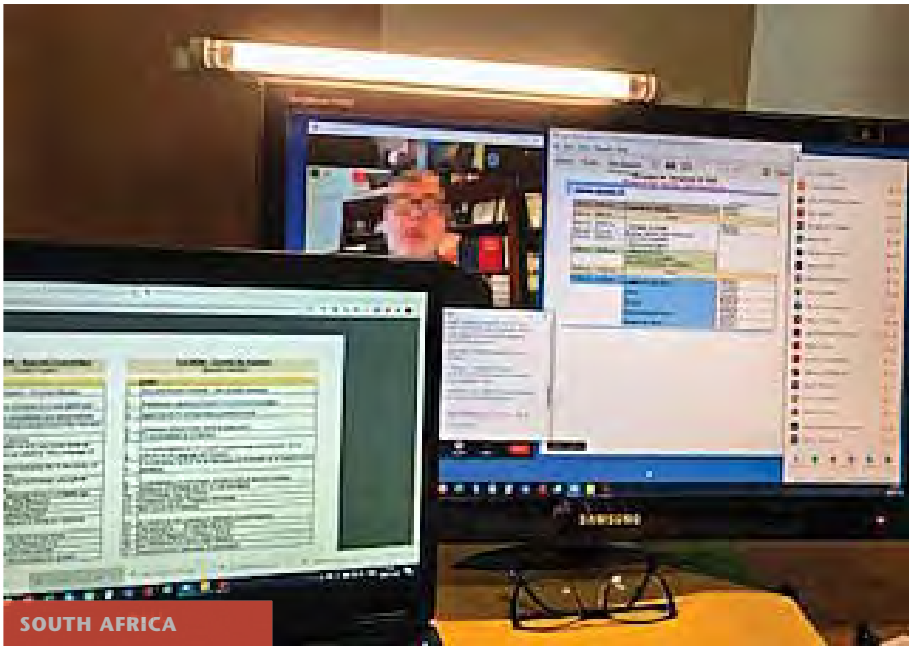
Juan C.

Finland: We have about 650 A.A. groups with almost 10,000 members in a country of 5.5 million inhabitants. The COVID-19 epidemic forced the vast majority of A.A. groups to stop their face-to-face meetings in March 2020 and with short notice many groups started web-meetings. Many face-to-face meetings restarted in June, but web-meetings are still widely used as parallel options. A list of these web-meetings can be found in our website: aa.fi.

In 2019 we had two national conventions (spring and summer convention). Each year between 900 and 1,500 members gather at these meetings, but this year due to the pandemic national conventions were cancelled.

In 2019 we printed a new edition of *Daily Reflections* with a new appearance and some fine tunings in the text. *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* was retranslated to modernize the text and it got a new appearance as well. This year we published a special edition of our monthly bulletin "Ratkaisu" ("Solution") dealing with our 70-year history and stories of the Finnish A.A. carrying the message in prisons.

The groups do active Twelfth Step work through A.A. Help line, receiving about 6,000 calls every year. This year due to the pandemic, the number of calls has increased almost 50%. Groups and A.A. regions are carrying the message to still-suffering alcoholics by sharing experiences and A.A. information at municipal detoxification centers and learning institutions. This year A.A. information has been provided through webi-



nars to professional audiences and students. A local monthly A.A. radio program in Helsinki — a direct one-hour broadcast — can also be listened through our website.

Our website was updated in 2019 (lighter structure/platform) to make mobile use easier. The website will show among others your nearest A.A. meetings and upcoming A.A. events. Orders for literature, payments and contributions can be managed through the website. Payments with credit card or mobile payments are available on the website and at national conventions, also some groups have started to collect Seventh Tradition contributions by mobile apps.

The financial situation in our Fellowship has been stable and good for many years, allowing us to stay calm, while the COVID-19 break in A.A. meetings has dropped the Seventh Tradition income 13% as compared to last year.

Our General Service Office moved to new locations, which provide lower costs, more efficient use of space and a closer location to downtown Helsinki.

The theme for 2019 was "A.A. Joy for Life" and for 2020 it was "Love and Service."

Antti L.

French-speaking Europe: French-speaking Europe consists of: *Switzerland* (AASRI — Alcoholics Anonymous of French– and Italian-speaking Switzerland) counting 52 groups and remains constant. *French– and German-speaking Belgium* (CSGAA —– Council of the General Services of Alcoholics Anonymous) counting 202 groups, which is a concerning decrease in physical groups over the last years. *France* (UAA — Union of Alcoholics Anonymous) is counting 557 groups. We observe as in Belgium a worrisome decrease of the number of groups at almost 10% over the last 8 years.

Our three General Service Boards consist of two Class A Trustees in Switzerland, none in Belgium and four in France; nine Class B Trustees in Switzerland, nine in Belgium and eight in France. Finances are healthy for the three countries.

We have very close and privileged relations between our three countries. CEFE (French-speaking European Crossroad of Exchange) is an entity of close collaboration. We meet at each of our conferences and are currently in the process of extending our service meetings online between our service conferences. We have discussed the following topics since last WSM:

A joint project for a European French-speaking Service Forum is postponed to 2022 due to the pandemic. This forum was planned for 2020.

The internal rules concerning the alternation of a first and second term delegate between the three countries to the WSM and their financing has been revised in order to strengthen our French-speaking European harmonization. A first and second term delegate from two of the three countries in permanent rotation will assure a stronger unity in French-speaking Europe.

Our three countries manage together a joint company for the edition of publications of A.A. literature, copyright granted by A.A.W.S.

We have adopted the name "French-speaking European A.A. Publishers" in order to underline more clearly the fact that this tool, which is responsible for managing the purchase, printing and distribution of A.A. literature, belongs to the three countries, with a view to achieving economies.

We have obtained the permission to sell our literature at a much lower price than if bought in the U.S., as transports and custom fees are significantly reduced.

The future concerns in terms of French-speaking cooperation will focus on social networks and the use of online conferences. Our way to navigate in A.A. has changed in 2020; the online meetings are now an integrated part of our structures.

During the pandemic in 2020 our three countries have carried the message online and have created various online recovery groups as well as service meetings across the borders. This practice has been extended to the regions and adopted by the entity of French-speaking Europe during the pandemic and is here to stay.

A.A. France is celebrating its 60-year anniversary in the beginning of November with an online national convention. Switzerland and Belgium have postponed their national conventions to 2021.

To conclude, we are one entity with common goals in A.A., and also three separate, autonomous structures with our similarities and differences. The main issue we are facing in French-speaking Europe is the difficulty in finding trusted servants for service positions and the worrisome decrease in the number of physical groups in France.

Lotus A.

Great Britain: The Great Britain service structure has approximately 4,000 groups within its 16 regions and covers Great Britain and English-speaking meetings in Continental Europe. One trustee from each region represents the General Service Board (GSB) at regional meetings, and each region sends six delegates to the Great Britain national General Service Conference. The GSB has at present five nonalcoholic trustees (NAT) who represent A.A. at a public level, and the Fellowship is supported by the General Service Office (GSO) in York as well as satellite offices in Glasgow and London.

This year's General Service Conference was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A.A. Great Britain hosts the European Service Center, and the 20th European Service Meeting (ESM), held in York in 2019, was a success with 32 countries represented with the theme: "An Unchanged Message in a Changing World."

Having set our financial policy in line with Concept Twelve/Warranty Two and thanks to the generosity of groups and individuals in this uncertain time, we are in the fortunate financial position of having reserves above our prudent reserve. This surplus has created some different challenges for the GSB in continuing to carry A.A.'s message of recovery on a national and international basis.

Many newcomers get in touch with A.A. through our website, and those who have further questions use either the email helpline or our Chat Now where our online response teams will answer their queries.

There are a number of online meetings that in line with the decision of the 2016 Conference, are now a part of the service structure. This includes an intergroup for online meetings which is part of the Continental European Regional Assembly.

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic most meetings moved online to be able to continue, in some areas face-to-face meetings have reopened with 15 participants as per Government guidelines, but the majority are online.

A project by the Young People's Subcommittee to produce a video for younger alcoholics to identify with was a great success and the video is now available on the A.A. G.B. website.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we have been inundated with calls from the media to see how A.A. is coping, our NATs have been able to speak for us to ensure that we are anonymous, not invisible, and to reinforce the message that A.A. is still here.

Throughout continuing government changes in the organizations responsible for the treatment of addiction and the judicial system, our trustees have worked very hard in establishing A.A. as a cooperating agency within the national government strategy of "Mutual Aid."

Two monthly magazines, *Share* (England & Wales) and *Roundabout* (Scotland) continue to provide a "meeting between meetings," and during the pandemic these have been available free of charge online. Our quarterly *A.A. Service News,* which is circulated to all groups from GSO, offers the opportunity for members to share service experience.

A.A. G.B. will celebrate its 75th anniversary in 2022 and a national celebration is planned at Leeds Direct Arena from 10 to 12 June.

Trusted servants across the service structure have worked tirelessly on behalf of all groups to ensure that the message of recovery is available to all who seek it, and to raise awareness of Alcoholics Anonymous and the promise of recovery in the eyes of professionals and the general public. This year has been particularly challenging but trusted servants have continued to work despite the uncertainty and to pass on the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Amanda S.

Greece: The first groups in Greece started in the middle of 1970s, taking place in the American bases, especially for the American soldiers and all English-speaking alcoholics. The Greek-speaking groups started in 1981 in Athens, which in time spread all around the country

Currently in Greece there are 21 Greek-speaking and 19 English-speaking groups running. In Athens, there are nine Greek–, three English–, two Russian– and one Polish-speaking groups, most of them online since March due to COVID-19.

A.A. groups in Greece take part in the Greek Intergroup with representatives they elect themselves. Intergroup consists of five members of the Greek GSO and the group representatives. It holds meetings six times a year, every two months.

Every year the five-member Board of Trustees is elected and holds separate online meetings six times a year, every two months, open to all members.

Regularly and repeatedly both Public Information Committee and groups in Athens and all over Greece hold local activities for the service of our primary purpose. Some of these activities are:

- Presentation and informing about the A.A. program to radio, TV programs and institutions, such as hospitals, prisons, schools, authorities, etc.; publications and interviews in press, radio, TV and the internet.
- As a result new groups have been created and the authorities are starting to consider alcoholism and the help provided by A.A. in the application of the legislation.
- Thanks to online groups a large variety of workshops and marathon meetings (all day sharing) have been held.

Every group has its own treasury, supported by the contributions of the members who can afford a small amount of money. Every group spends its money on activities supporting its primary purpose, as well as on the running needs of each group.

For almost 15 years we have had a registered website page with all the relevant information under the address www.aa-greece.gr, which has been included in the list of the municipality of Athens.

The committees of the Central Office inform the groups and members through email after each meeting of the Greek GSO and its committees.

The recovery guides of A.A. available in Greek are: *Alcoholics Anonymous*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, *Living Sober*, *As Bill Sees It*, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, "Forming True Partnerships," "12 Concepts" and several leaflets, as well.

Nana K.

Guatemala: At present, there is only one salaried staff member working in the office, the secretary. This is due to the pandemic which forced us to let go of the second secretary and the custodian. Class B trustees, coordinators and secretaries are already going to the GSO during the week, Mondays to Fridays, from 6pm to 8pm. Our office is carrying out business from 8am to 5pm. We take Twelfth Step calls, referring people looking for help to groups holding meetings virtually. This is proving helpful for the task of carrying the message.

We conducted our 50th Conference virtually, and we postponed our 50th National Convention without having yet set a new date. For the first time, we participated in the World Service Meeting (WSM) on our own, sending a representative.

We do not currently have information regarding the number of active groups and members we have since only recently have members started to meet.

There has been a decrease in contributions, and there were cuts to our budget expenditures this year.

There was a decrease in the literature in stock. The CIL committee (or Committee for Literature Publication) has been formed. Two committees collaborate to oversee revisions of the literature to be published. The second revised edition of the history of A.A. in Guatemala will be printed by January 6th of 2021. Most of the literature is printed in Guatemala, while some of the larger texts are acquired from the structure of the sister republic of El Salvador. We are currently waiting for the new licenses for printing that were requested from the New York office in 2018.

At the present time, the board has all of its 21 trustees in place. Five members are Class A and 16 are Class B.

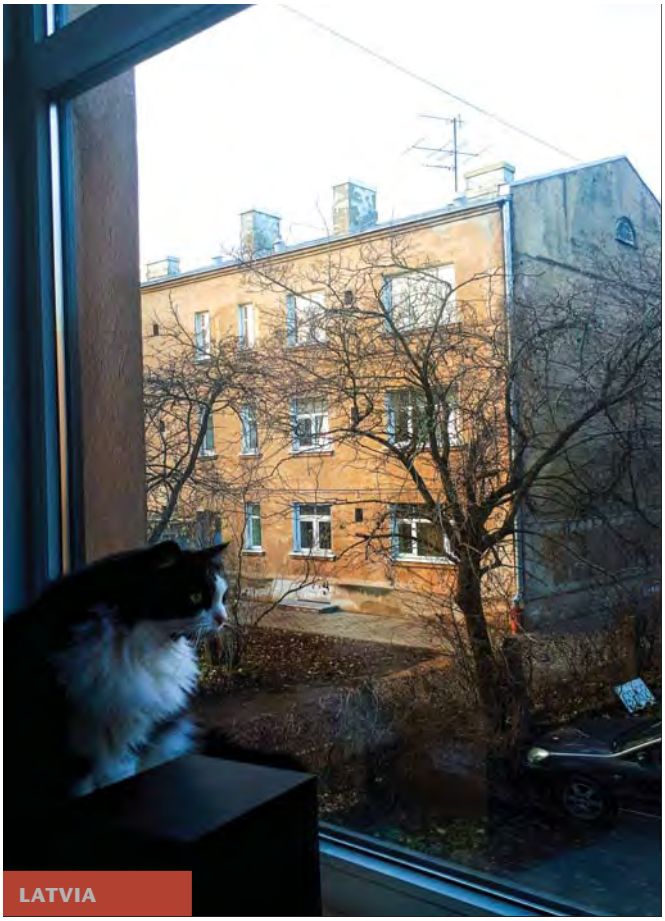
We are working on getting access to detox centers in order to carry the message there. We have not been able to go to the prisons since the outbreak of the pandemic.

We have had talks and interviews with organizations and television news programs via Zoom. In 2021 we will begin to incorporate in our efforts the PI workbook and other A.A. World Services literature.

Work on our journal "Sharing" has been on hold since April of 2020. We will begin to print 5,000 copies bimonthly beginning in April of 2021.

A Gratitude Week will be observed in November in which we share the Twelve Traditions and members of the Fellowship send in their group and individual donations to the GSO.

Lionel R.



Hong Kong: In 1969, two expatriates held the first meeting in the Mariner's Club near the harbor side in Kowloon. Before long, local English-speaking members had joined. In 1985, the Hongkong–Kowloon group moved into our beloved venue in an old school building in Borrett Road, although meetings continued in the Mariner's Club until the building was demolished in 2018. In 1991, we established a Cantonese fellowship and by 2020, we've grown to several hundred members. We attract a lot of visitors from overseas. We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 2019.

Hong Kong has 16 A.A. groups and more than 40 meetings a week. We have English-speaking groups, Cantonese-speaking groups, men's groups, women's groups, and an LGBT+ group. We hold an annual Unity Day during which all groups, including Al-Anon, CODA and OEA invite others to their meetings.

As of December 2020, all face-to-face meetings have been suspended. Groups use Zoom and report growing attendance as members get used to using the software. In November 2020, groups reported an average of 15 attendees at over 80 Zoom meetings.

Our annual conference attracts visitors from around the globe, including a lot of visitors from Mainland China. In 2019, we hosted our 50th Anniversary convention, but in 2020 we have postponed due to the pandemic. The convention committee remains intact and will plan the 2021 convention.

Hong Kong does not have a General Service Board or an office. Intergroup employs a part time manager and meets once a month.

The fellowship orders English-language literature from GSO New York. With the generous assistance from the Indian fellowship, we have provided literature to the Gujarati–, Punjabi–, Urdu- and Nepalese-speaking communities. We've placed the Big Book into public libraries throughout the territory.

Our Hospitals, Institutions, and Public Information (HIPI) committee works with treatment centers, hospitals, professional associations, the clergy, schools and universities to carry the message in both English and Cantonese. Both fellowships welcome medical students, psychology students and social workers to our open meetings. We regularly talk at schools (as independent alcoholics, not as an organization).

We operate two 24-hour hotlines: one in English and one in Cantonese. Messaging apps are active. We are currently seeking charitable status from the Hong Kong government, which will allow us reduced rates for advertising space etc. In Hong Kong, we are not allowed access to prisons.

About 60% of income is from Seventh Tradition contributions and 40% is from literature sales. Both sources of income have been affected significantly by the pandemic. Groups are setting up online Seventh Tradition facilities. We currently hold in cash just a little over our prudent reserve.

Our website is at: https://www.aa-hk.org/. It includes pages in Cantonese. The site lists the contact details of fellowships throughout China as well as links to local meetings.

Hong Kong is an active member of the Asia-Oceania Zonal Region (AOSM) and of the World Service Structure. We hosted the 13th AOSM in 2019. Our closest relationships are with the growing fellowships in Mainland China and with the fellowship in India. Members in Hong Kong have assisted with Mainland China conventions and have delivered workshops and presentations within the AOSM region; most recently in Beirut, Lebanon and Vladivostok, Russia.

Simon M.

Iceland: These are strange times in Iceland as elsewhere in the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In Iceland more than 300 A.A. meetings are held every week and around 80 Zoom meetings because of COVID-19, a country with a population of approximately 340,000.

The General Service Board in Iceland is responsible for an Open Meeting on Good Friday each year to commemorate the arrival of A.A. in Iceland on that day in 1954. This year, however, we had to cancel the meeting due to limits on how many participants were allowed to come together.

Work on the Icelandic version of the Big Book is ongoing. The revised edition will contain several hundred changes, hence the delay in re-publishing the book, which we hope to be able to publish in 2021.

Our most recent publication is "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix." It has been translated to Icelandic and is going to be distributed to every A.A. group in Iceland later this year.

The General Service Conference in Iceland, held in May every year, was postponed until June and went well. Most notably this proposal was approved by the Conference: "We propose that the General Service Committee recommend to all A.A. departments in Iceland that they do not offer, distribute, or sell literature other than that published by A.A."

Snorri S.

India: India is a unique country, with 1.3 billion population and a considerable presence of A.A. With 29 states and 7 union territories, 22 major spoken and written languages, more than 20 minor languages and countless more dialects, India in itself is a mini United Nations. Thus A.A. India not only has the challenge but also opportunity to carry the lifesaving message of A.A. in maximum number of languages to a highly and densely populated audience.

Consequently A.A. India, as a Fellowship is not only one of the largest outside the U.S. and Canada (with more than 2,250 groups and estimated 50,000 members) but is also one of the most diverse, with literature in 14 languages. The Indian GSO publishes the Big Book in ten languages, pamphlets in 14 languages (excluding English) and, going forward, the number of languages is bound to increase.

We have a healthy and robust service structure with the General Service Board comprised of 18 Class B Trustees and 9 Class A trustees. Though this may seem large, it was necessary in view of diversities of the country where the dialect changes every 50 miles and the language changes every 100 miles.

In the last five or six years after achieving reasonable reach in terms of number of groups as well as numbers to do the service, it is being concentrated to carry the message of A.A. as a resource to relieve alcoholism.

Toward this end, concerted efforts are being made at the local, state and national levels creating helplines in multiple languages so that the suffering alcoholic of any state, any language and any ethnic group gets the message of A.A.'s availability. Working with professionals in medicine, public life, administration and law enforcement, we are trying to reach out through various media, be it press radio, television and outdoor media.

The recent airing of the program "SATYAMEVA JAYATHE" on the popular TV channel simultaneously aired in 10 channels and the resulting media blitz made A.A. and its helplines reach many homes in urban India. Likewise the other regional language programs like THAMASOMA JYOTHIRGAMAYA in the regional Telugu channels and similar programs are working at the state level.

The APSRTC sticker campaigning involving 2,5000 buses, 100,000 stickers, six helplines and 10 million passengers' exposure every day, totaling an annual exposure of 3.65 billion people, was a real step forward in awareness creation.

Likewise, possibly for the first time in the world, our state Civil Supplies Fair Price Shops poster campaign has enabled us to reach 17,000 fair price shops in 10,500 villages, towns, municipalities and cities across the State of Telangana without any exception. This state of India is now having 100% coverage of the A.A. message right up to village level. We can humbly say that we have achieved carrying out the message of A.A.'s availability in each and every village of the state, perhaps, for the first time in the world.

In the state of AP the chief of state police gave us permission to display pamphlets, posters and stickers in all public places both Government and private (a total of 100,000 posters/stickers across the state) so that the message of A.A. and helpline numbers reach maximum people. All cities, towns, and municipalities of this state are being inundated with messages now. Display of A.A. posters in Army Cantonment area of Secunderabad has also been permitted by the Indian Army wing in Hyderabad city. One of the largest Army cantonments in the country, it is now not only having regular meetings of A.A. as a resource for relief from alcoholism, but also having the A.A. helpline posters across the entire cantonment.

A recent article "CHEERS - KALISI MANEDDAM" (which means "Cheers — Let's stop it together") in a leading regional newspaper named "Andhra Jyothi" ("Light of Andhra" has opened the door to reach out to many thousands of people. Families of alcoholics and alcoholics are calling help lines and we are also able to carry the message to the suffering alcoholics through friends of A.A.

A recent mass PI effort to over 20 million people gathered at a Hindu Tribal Goddess festival happened from the first week of February 2020. We had an opportunity to display A.A. information banners, posters, kiosks and distributed A.A. information pamphlets.

Every citizen of India should be able to define and describe Alcoholics Anonymous and every problem drinker who wants to should be able to find the hand of A.A. within reach. We also want to offer services to neighboring countries in Asia, the way the U.S./Canada Fellowship is catering to the need of world.

The road ahead is tough and our tasks often seem difficult. A.A. in India has only few carriers of the message and many a suffering alcoholic waiting for the lifesaving message. Our 50th GSC theme was "Live and Let Live," and was attended by David R., Publishing Director A.A.W.S., Newton P., trustee-at-large/U.S. and Eva S., International Desk, as observers.

We are working on "Each One Reach One," our 48th GSC theme. As part of this initiative, we have started to reach out to nearby Andaman and Nicobar Islands by starting A.A. groups in the Islands and are able to support them by sending sufficient literature.

Krishna V.

Iran: The message of A.A. arrived in Iran nearly 49 years ago, more or less during May 1971, yet there was no active group to be known. After years, the first meeting was started in 1994 in the house of some fellow Iranians who used to live in the U.S.

Today, the A.A. program is very active in Iran. About 220 in-person and online groups in 16 areas are allied to the service structure of Iran Alcoholics Anonymous. Before the health situation there were more in-person meetings and just one online Skype meeting. But now we have more than 20 online meetings on Skype and FCC (Free Conference Call) which hold more than 50 meetings a week. We estimate our membership to be over 4,000 members. Groups include men stags and women stags, some of which are both men and women together meetings. The meetings are held in different formats and times. The community's efforts to build service structure have had positive outcomes — we now have a well-established Public Information Committee, Translation and Website Committee, Hospital & Institutions Committee, Treasury, Literature, Workshop and an International Service Committee as part of the Iran service structure. In this framework, we have nine trustees, seven of which are alcoholic members plus two nonalcoholics. In some areas we hold meetings in prisons, clinics and rehabs, however after COVID-19 we faced a lot of challenges and limitations about these meetings.

Some A.A. approved literature other than the Big Book and "Twelve and Twelve" are translated into Persian. About this

matter we would like to mention a beautiful letter we received last year from David R. at A.A.W.S. which was very supportive and inspiring.

By the grace of God, we were able to participate in the 13th AOSM with one delegate in Hong Kong and one of the gifts our delegate Ali H. brought for us from these meetings was the book *Our Great Responsibility*, so we started to translate it to Persian and now we have the honor to say that we have also a license for publishing *Our Great Responsibility* and are so thankful that our dear fellows have this new A.A. book in Persian.

Iran A.A. continues to foster friendship and welcome members from all around the world. One of the greatest achievements of the 25th WSM in Durban, South Africa was inviting Lotus (the French-speaking Europe delegate) to Iran by Iran Alcoholics Anonymous. Her trip to Iran made some of the most memorable moments for Iran A.A. — days full of experience and joy, along with recovery meetings and workshops. She also patiently accompanied us in a long 5-hour meeting between two boards of trustees on the subject and goal of unity. We are still perceiving the positive effects of her trip on our fellows when they share in meetings. We need more intercommunications with A.A.W.S. or AOSM providing a healthy atmosphere to carry A.A. message to those who still suffer.

As you may know there is another A.A. structure with a central office in Mashhad which still continues to publish A.A. literature, without license; however we are friends personally but unfortunately separated in structure. Although we really hope someday that is not too far off to have one allied A.A. in Iran which respects all A.A. principles, now we prefer to focus on our own job.

Our trustees decided to mention that our last A.A. statistics in South Africa were based on both structures but this time it was just about this structure that is connected to the A.A. world community.

All in all, our knowledge and connection with the greater A.A. community needs to be reinforced, strengthened and to grow, to a much greater extent as we better comprehend the Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts of A.A. and transfer it to others. Meanwhile we should mention that although we really miss the opportunity to visit and support each other with warm hugs, we thought it is a good opportunity to have a new experience, so our new Online Intergroup Committee decided to make an effort for a new unimaginable action. By the grace of God we were successful and recently we had our First Transnational Convention. It was on a virtual platform and we had speakers from GSO N.Y., delegates and members all over the world. It was a brilliant experience. We are really grateful for this chance and many thanks to all who supported us in this our first experience.

Gholam V.

Ireland: A.A. in Ireland is now in its 74th year and continues to grow and carry the message of hope to alcoholics with an estimated membership of approximately 15,000. There are about 900 groups and meetings which can be found in most towns and villages throughout the country.

In March 2020 with the arrival of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown, physical meetings were temporarily suspended in Ireland. Groups from all over the county responded quickly and set up phone and online meetings which are a vital lifeline for members of A.A. and newcomers. The General Service Office of Ireland responded to these changes and physical as well as online meeting details are now available on our official A.A. website. The Department of Health has clarified to the General Service Board that alcohol support groups are an essential service which can remain open during lockdown. Hence, physical meetings that can adhere to government public health guidance are opening up again. Whilst there are limits on the numbers that can attend physical meetings right now, for many who did not adapt to the online environment, they are crucial.

In meetings, physical and online, members are encouraged to get involved in the service structure, firstly in their own group and then by attending Area meetings. Each group appoints two General Service Representatives to attend Area which, in turn, appoints four delegates to attend the Intergroup Meeting and from Intergroup four delegates are appointed to attend Conference. Minutes from Area, Intergroup and Conference meetings are made available on the website, thus ensuring that there is transparency at all levels of service in the Fellowship. Group information can also be updated online, which has been very useful during the evolving and everchanging situation of the pandemic. Due to the COVID-19 regulations, Area, Intergroup and Conference meetings are also currently being held online. It is hoped that a return to physical meetings will take place soon.

Until March 2020, all the services such as Telephone, Public Information, Hospital and Prison were functioning well. The telephone service has continued throughout COVID-19, but visits to prisons and hospitals by members are currently not allowed. Hopefully these will resume soon. A public information kit was assembled by a Conference sub-committee and is now available to PI committees throughout the country. It is proving to be a valuable resource in providing information about A.A. to areas such as Social Services, Police, Education, Hospitals and Company Human Resource Departments.

The recent Audited Accounts up to 2019 show that the ongoing concerted efforts to reduce expenses, as well as the generosity of the members of the Fellowship, have resulted in contributions to GSO being healthy. COVID-19, however, has had a massive impact on contributions in 2020 and we may soon need to dip into our prudent reserve if this continues.

There has been much discussion about encouraging members into service, the importance of member-to-member sponsorship and the benefits of service. To address this, at the 2019 Conference, service workshops were held exploring these themes: How can we improve Service? How can Conference members lead by example? What action can we as Conference take to encourage Service? How can we implement changes and in what timeline?

In conclusion, the Fellowship in Ireland is continuing to grow, and the message of recovery is being carried to anyone who reaches out for help in these challenging times. The General Service Board has produced a Strategic Plan for 2020–2023 with a vision of providing clear and effective guidance to the Fellowship.

Moira S.

Italy: It was in January 2020 that we started receiving bad news from China about a virus called "COVID-19." That country seemed to be so far away from us, but in March, three months later, Italy was in a total lockdown and the World

Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. I guess every country represented in this WSM today knows that the whole world started suffering and our Fellowship also.

We could not go to our home groups, no conventions, conferences, seminars and we all know the rest of this terrible story. But let's jump to nowadays and I'll tell you what is going on in my country today.

Many groups that closed during the lockdown meet today by Zoom or other platforms. If I go back to the first attempts I must say that most of the time was spent saying "I can't join the meeting" or "I can hear you but I can't see you" and similar problems, but things have rapidly turned better with experience, necessity and good will.

Of course, meeting online will never be the same as meeting in-person, but this is what we can do at the moment. Many of us are getting more and more familiar with new technologies and the help of younger friends is fundamental. As a matter of fact, our National Conference next year in April will be dedicated to A.A. online and the use of new technologies.

Contributions diminished dramatically during the first months of the year, but new channels are used today to send the Seventh Tradition, like PayPal or similar, and groups have done great work to help. For this reason our Administration and Finance Trustee and the whole General Service Board of Trustees sent a letter to all groups in Italy thanking them for the big effort they have done.

Literature sales and subscriptions to our magazine, *Insieme,* also suffered but are starting again to stabilize. The Literature Committee is working to publish a new edition of the Big Book with the last Preface and with the original cover used for the first edition.

Projects are going on for the next months or years to come to meet in-person when possible and, if not, online. One of these projects is to host the 27th WSM in 2022 which will be also the fiftieth anniversary of A.A. Italy, and we have entered a bid to the WSM.

The first months of this year brought us fear, insecurity for ourselves our beloved and our neighbors; we were paralyzed at the beginning, but A.A. Italy never gave up on carrying the message and will go on doing it for those who still suffer.

Massimo F.

Japan: Alcoholics Anonymous Japan was scheduled to hold its 45th Anniversary Convention in May 2020 near Osaka, with the theme of "What We Pass on to the Future," and we were looking forward to welcoming guests from around the world. However, when COVID-19 hit, the GSB reluctantly canceled the convention. Our 50th Anniversary Convention will be held in Tokyo in 2025 — the committee is just taking shape, and the dates and locations are to be announced.

The pandemic hit our Fellowship very quickly. Most meeting locations were closed, and the JSO (Japan GSO) staff were working remotely. Many groups struggled to move to online platforms because of a lack of experience and technology proficiency. Gradually, some meetings moved online, and the GSB Technology Committee created a page where they could be listed. Without groups gathering, literature sales dropped, as well as group contributions. After a call out to the Fellowship, and efforts by the Technology Committee to enable online contributions, we saw individual contributions skyrocket to unprecedented levels for several months; birthday contributions also more than quadrupled. By July 2020, some face-to-face meetings could start up again, with health precautions and contact tracing methods required for all attendees. The 26th General Service Conference will be held online for the first time in February 2021; the GSB meetings have been online since the start of the pandemic.

As for recent developments, we are presently updating our Big Book with new Japanese A.A. member stories. It is currently scheduled for GSC review in 2021 and publication in 2022; it will also contain some translation refinements. Conference also approved forming a new Archives committee to catalog and preserve our 45-year history for future generations.

Japan's Public Information Committees continue to reach out to professionals, and committees are presenting at more and more online conferences for medical and corrections personnel. CPC activities are combined with PI. Numerous translation projects and other literature update projects are ongoing, and we hope to be publishing our first eBook, *Living Sober*, soon.

The Kantõ-Kõshin'etsu Area, encompassing the greater Tokyo metropolitan area and neighboring prefectures, is planning to split in 2022; this will be the first significant change to our structure since its formation. Having two smaller Areas is hoped to make the service more attractive.

With the explosion of online meetings, conventions, and other gatherings, A.A. members from around the country are finding great strength and unity by interacting with other members not only around Japan but also from around the world. Born from a devastating pandemic, this change is also evolving to be an incredible turning point for A.A.'s future.

Doug G.

Latvia: In 2018, A.A. in Latvia reached the 30-year milestone. We celebrated this event feeling strong and growing as a Fellowship. Friends from abroad attended the event, too, including representatives from New York. It was a moment of pure joy and unity. But what of the everyday life of Latvian A.A.?

The important improvement in the last years is that the Service Office is open on an everyday basis with a paid employee. Groups feel more supported in the situation when a professional manager helps them with literature distribution, information circulation, support for new groups and other tasks. In the last two years, more and more requested service is sending literature to groups via parcel post. Once a month the Service Office manager puts together an information list ("A.A. Messenger") and sends it to groups via email. This way we stay informed about A.A. news, events and contributions. Service committees, too, can rely on the office support, for example, in correspondence with outside entities, the organization of literature printing and so on.

We have printed one new book, *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers* and one has been completely reviewed, *Daily Reflections*. New or reviewed pamphlets have been published: *Young People and A.A., Memo to an Inmate Who May Be an Alcoholic, This is A.A., Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.* One part of our Literature Committee work is called "Literature Workgroup." A group of A.A. members, professional or skilled in translating/editing, comes together every two weeks and work together as collective editor of translations. Now work goes on with the Grapevine book *Young and Sober*. In our plans, we see the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic — Never Too Late" and the book *As Bill Sees It*. For the last few years, we have had progress in translation and printing quality (new books and pamphlets in Latvian look excellent). Now we must meet other challenges: 1) to resolve all licensing related issues; 2) to plan how to popularize literature in groups and outside A.A.

Our Public Information Committee and Cooperation with Professionals Committee have worked actively, contacting social departments, state police, municipal police, and probation service. The Cooperation with Correctional Facilities Committee has helped to organize regular meetings in four of the correctional facilities in Latvia. Also person-to-person sponsoring has started in prison groups. And I have one special question from the chair of this committee: please, share your experience on contacting A.A. members in prisons in the time of the restrictions. Is it allowed in your country to do this online? If yes, how did you come to agreement about this issue with the administration of the prison? How did you speak with them, how did you explain the situation?

Some of the problems and challenges we have met in this year are connected with the structure of our Service Board. Only two persons of the Board are officially registered, revealing their personal information to the State Register. Thus, these two people sometimes feel too much responsibility and pressure, whereas other Board members and A.A. participants sometimes feel like too much authority and power is concentrated in the hands of these two people. To resolve the situation, we are working on a new structure with more shared responsibility. Another issue is the occasionally weak link between the Service Board and groups. Regional meetings are being held and intergroups have started to meet. The best thing is that these are initiatives "from the bottom" (or in the case of A.A. structure — from the top), from the groups, and we hope this process could lead to strengthening the bond between the board and groups. To improve and clarify general service work, two documents are being developed: Service Manual and Conference Charter.

In total, we have 67 A.A. groups in Latvia, in addition to four groups in prisons, and two groups online. Most groups communicate in Latvian, but there is also a solid number of Russian-speaking groups, and one English-speaking. In the last years two "special interest" groups were created: "Young People A.A. Group" and "A.A. Women's Group." Both are ac-

tive participants of A.A. Latvia, carrying the message to their specific audience.

Some participants of "Young People A.A. Group" took part in establishing a new international tradition: BALTYPAA (Baltic States Young People in A.A.) Convention. The first Convention took place in Vilnius (Lithuania), 2018; the second in Riga (Latvia), 2019; the third was an online Convention, this year on October 31st.

Yes, online… We all met this "brave, new world" this year. Previously, there was only one Latvian online group, and it didn't enjoy great popularity. Now, with the beginning of the pandemic, lockdown, etc., some groups closed their meetings for a time, but most groups went online. Our digital skills grew very fast; we started almost immediately after the lockdown. First on Skype, then we needed more participants and migrated to Zoom and Google Meet. Very many online meetings were held starting from spring! In summer, in Latvia there were almost no COVID-19 cases and almost no restrictions, so groups went back to face-to-face meetings. But in the meantime, two new, stable groups continued to meet online. So, now, when the second wave of the pandemic has hit Latvia, we have experience, skills and a developed A.A. online environment.

What we are lacking now: we need to hold our Service Conference 2020, which was planned this spring, but hasn't happened yet! We hope the experience of taking part in the World Service Meeting will stimulate the process, and the Latvian online Service Meeting will happen as soon as possible. Also, we are seeking experience regarding carrying the message in these circumstances.

Ilze K.

Mexico: Alcoholics Anonymous in Mexico is considered to be the largest non-governmental organization in the country with about 14,500 groups, over 121,000 members, 83 areas, six regions, two territories, and two corporations: the General Services Office and the Plenitud A.A. Office. There are 18 members serving on the General Services Board.

We are able to be self-supporting through the sale of literature (75%), the contributions of members and groups (20%), and returns on interest (5%). After the 50th Conference of Mexico, we're looking to better balance the sources of income of the association, that is to say, to obtain 60% of our revenue through the sale of literature and 40% from the donations of members and groups.

With this in mind, we invite and recommend that the areas and groups throughout the country donate somewhat more, to the best of their abilities, by raising their share of the revenue to 40% of the costs of operations of the General Services Office (GSO) through the contribution of $100 (Mexican pesos) a year per member. This would be a separate donation from the one that the friend or member of the Fellowship makes to the GSO through anniversaries, voluntary contributions, the Hormiga Plan, and other efforts.

There is no doubt that by more closely balancing our income (with 40% contributions, 55% literature sales, 5% returns), we will once again reaffirm our principle of self-support based on voluntary contributions and by doing so we would have to rely less, financially speaking, on literature sales.

Our Prudent Reserve: During fiscal year 2019, the prudent reserve totaled $24,078,590.

The celebration of the opening and closing ceremonies of the 13th National Convention will take place on March 3rd and 5th, respectively, of 2023. There will be sharing sessions held on the 4th of March at the Benito Juarez Auditorium in Jalisco Stadium. We are expecting 60,000 people to participate in the convention.

The *Central Mexicana de Servicios Generales de Alcohólicos Anónimos AC* (A.A. Mexico) turned to its social networks (Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) in order to carry the A.A. message on the massive scale provided by digital media. The results have been the following: Facebook, with 1,935 followers, has reached 156,304 people from July 2019 to November 2020; Twitter has 6,024 followers; and YouTube has 1,200 followers as well as 3,745 views of the video from September to November of 2020.

REDELA Information Center: The redelaweb.org site was launched to facilitate the sharing of information among the structures within the service zone.

The 21st REDELA meeting was held in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There were 21 delegates representing 16 structures and 17 countries from the Americas, two of them being women representing the United States/Canada and Brazil. The structures from Cuba, Uruguay, Panama, Belize, Honduras, and Trinidad and Tobago were not able to attend. In all, 17 countries from the hemisphere were represented and six countries were unable to be present out of the total of 23 countries (of the hemisphere's 35 nations) that currently have a service structure.

From the GSO of New York, Ms. Eva S. of the International desk and Mr. David R., the director of publications of A.A.W.S., took part in the 21st REDELA meeting.

The accumulated A.A. experience is shared through the sponsorship of the structures of Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Argentina and Nicaragua. This sponsorship of countries involves regionalization, setting up districts, and strengthening a country's General Services Board, coordinating bodies and Conference. We participated in the 57th Conference of Argentina, carried out virtually from September 26 to October 4, and the 31st Conference of Peru, celebrated from September 5 – 13, also virtually. There was a meeting held with the General Services Board of Ecuador, with the participation of the International Committee, the board president, and the coordinators of the Agenda and Finances Committees of the General Services Board of the Mexican structure.

The International Committee has designated the amount of two thousand dollars for the International Literature Fund.

We continue to lend support to the country's 83 areas.

Gonzalo M.

The Netherlands: A.A. was introduced in The Netherlands in 1948. At present it is hard to say how many groups there are. We're dealing with an immense growth of online meetings (groups) in the Netherlands due to the Coronavirus outbreak. There used to be approximately 203 groups, with 2,000 members. We believe we currently have around 350 groups and we suspect that at least 80 of these groups exist with only a Zoom address. The number of active members is unknown. There are also over 50 English-speaking groups. Our capitals Amsterdam and The Hague also have Polish-speaking and Spanish-speaking groups. The English-speaking groups are affiliated

with York, England. Interaction between these communities is very positive.

Dutch A.A. is based on the Three Legacies. We have six A.A. regions, each with five delegates for the General Service Conference, and one delegate for the General Service Board.

Our General Service Board schedules quarterly meetings to carry out the decisions of the General Service Conference. Daily operations are carried out by an Executive Committee with full support of the General Service Conference, thus ensuring the legal continuity of A.A. Netherlands.

Our General Service Office is a hub for all the services and information within Dutch A.A. Our service volunteers are available all week for the Dutch A.A. groups.

The Finance Committee reviews the proposed budgets of all committees and services. Furthermore, it advises the General Service Board on all financial matters. Financially we are doing better than before as a result of reviewing the national Prudent Reserve.

The Literature Committee is responsible for translating, developing, and updating all A.A. literature, such as books and pamphlets. A new brochure, "Where Money and Spirituality Mix," has been translated and edited and is available free of charge for all group treasurers in the Netherlands.

The National Committee for Public Information oversees all requests for assistance and information from organizations outside A.A. and offers information for the public media. I have to say, that we are very grateful for the relentless dedication of our PI people and their efforts to reach out to the press, other media, healthcare institutions and correctional facilities.

Dutch A.A. cooperates with a growing number of professional organizations concerned with alcohol abuse. Many such organizations have based their programs on A.A.'s Twelve Steps. However, negative experiences have also occurred as the commercial interests of treatment facilities sometimes conflict with A.A. interests. This is one of the reasons why we are developing an Image plan. This plan is needed since the current reputation of A.A. in the Netherlands is not powerful enough to reach more suffering alcoholics. Especially in professional health care where they are not familiar with A.A.

Broader support in the community should create better access for the suffering alcoholics. It is estimated that our country harbours approximately 800,000 alcohol dependants. The main objective of A.A. is to reach the still-suffering alcoholics and to help them. We believe that greater familiarity with A.A. is necessary for the still-suffering alcoholics to find us.

At the same time schools, universities and clinics are inviting A.A. speakers more often. Contacts that A.A. has established to reach the suffering alcoholic within correctional facilities are very promising. We also established a close cooperation with the English-speaking Public Information.

English-speaking A.A. flourishes in The Netherlands. It affiliates with York and conducts its own conventions. The Dutch A.A. Convention is held each year around the beginning of October and has been reduced to only one day (because of budget cuts). Both conventions attract a large number of visitors from abroad.

Unfortunately, last year Flemish A.A. (the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium) was not able to send a representative, so I was in South Africa by myself. This year I am happy to say we're here with 2 delegates.

Tatjana R.

Norway: The COVID-19 pandemic has made a great impact on our A.A. life in Norway since the month of March 2020 when the country was shut down. Schools, kindergartens, theaters, cinemas, public transport, etc. — whole communities were out of function. Those who had the opportunity worked from home, and they are still in the same situation. Most A.A.

groups had to cancel their meetings, and A.A. members got worried for the days to come.

As a miracle, all of a sudden, digital groups on Zoom, Skype, etc., popped up all over the country; all initiated by personal engagement, inviting A.A. members to join.

Some small groups have reopened, but the situation is unsecure and difficult to predict. All meetings on the national, regional and district level are digital meetings.

Norway currently has about 2,000 A.A. members, which is a small increase. Most members are living in the largest cities in the southern part of the country, but there are a lot of groups scattered in more rural districts with approximately 5-10 members.

In the northern part of the country, with low population density and long distances between groups, district meetings are held via Skype.

We have some A.A. groups within correctional facilities as well.

YPAA is "back on the track" and growing.

The annual National Service Conference choose a topic to be a leading thread between the conferences. The 2019 conference chose "The Third Legacy — How to keep it relevant in today's society" as its theme. The 2020 conference, held on Zoom, chose the theme "The Group representative: the Key to Unity." Our wish and hope is that the district representative will bring this item back to the groups for further reflection.

The chosen theme is also the main topic at our annual Autumn Seminar. The Autumn Seminar, which has been held since 1986, attracts many A.A. members. Many of our eldest members look forward to this event, and many groups pay for the cost of one member who shows interest in the A.A. Fellowship. Unfortunately, this year seminar was cancelled, due to COVID-19.

Other seminars are held throughout the country, mainly focused on the Big Book. Regional conventions take place regularly, mostly in the southern part of the country.

The pandemic has perhaps contributed to other habits, and the digital meetings have turned out to be a cheap and convenient way to arrange meetings.

We are well provided with literature, and Conference-approved books and relevant pamphlets from U.S./Canada are translated. Books are printed "outside" while pamphlets are printed at our service office. We also have a website which was launched in 2019 and is currently being redesigned.

Most groups are active in PI work. Our main challenge is to make A.A. better known and accepted among the treatment centers and professionals.

We also have a national phone service for A.A. members, members to be, and the general public. This service is covered by the groups nationwide and is a very popular service for many members. A new way of organizing the phone service will be launched in 2021 in order to improve the quality of this very important service to reach out to another alcoholic who suffers.

Kristine K.

Paraguay: In the early part of 1976 the message of Alcoholics Anonymous arrived in our country thanks to the intervention of an Argentinean nun, Sister Regina Sian. On Thursday, January 22, in a radio broadcast, Sister Regina announced that there would be a talk given, that same day, in the auditorium of the Banco Nación Argentina, in the city of Asunción. A number of families attended the event and several persons who had suffered the effects of alcohol spoke about their experiences. The following day, the people who had attended Thursday's talk took part in a meeting that was held at the Luis Bolaños School in Asunción, and thus the first A.A. group in Paraguay, the "Happy Sobriety Group," was born on January 23, 1976.

The General Service Board is the legal representative of Alcoholics Anonymous of Paraguay (JUNSGAAP). It is made up of 11 trustees: Three Class A National Trustees: the chairperson, vice-chairperson and treasurer; eight Class B National Trustees: Literature, Vya'pave Magazine, General Services — GSO, three regional trustees and two at-large trustees.

We have been experiencing positive changes in Fellowship activities both internal and external, taking actions that strengthen the whole Fellowship. Interactions with various state and local agencies now facilitate the transmission of our message through A.A. cooperation with these agencies.

For 2019 our structure accepted a great challenge: the development and organization of the First South American Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous — an event of great importance for the worldwide Fellowship of A.A. We are aware that we allowed ourselves to be carried away by enthusiasm and this led us to make hasty and even mistaken decisions with regard to processes and procedures, and we again apologize for this. From the start our only objective has been to carry the message to anyone who might be interested in the A.A. program, and to experience this festive occasion invoking our First Tradition, communicating a single and unified message which from the very beginning was the foundation of our growth.

An essential tool for communications today, our website (www.alcoholicosanonimo.org.py) has more than 5,000 visits a month. Literature is available on the site which is linked, with authorization, to the website of A.A.W.S. We believe that the social networks and other digital communications have great significance for the new generation, communication flowing, as it does, much more swiftly and dynamically; for example, the web page makes it much easier to do group searches via the various applications that have been integrated in the system.

In accordance with the collective conscience of our last Conference in March 2019, the adoption of the A.A. Service Manual of the USA and Canada was approved for our structure, with revisions necessary and appropriate to fit the circumstances of our country. The changes, proposed by the revision committee, made up of district representatives and members of JUNSGAAP, were approved in an extraordinary session held on August 10, 2019 in the city of Encarnación, Paraguay.

Our magazine, *Vya'pave* (Infinite Happiness), which since its re-launch has had a complete make-over, has been an extremely useful tool because of its several features and sections, including Literature, Sharings, Welcoming Materials, 12 Question Test, Calendar of Activities, and a Group Directory.

The following entities and government agencies have entered into the framework of cooperation with Alcoholics Anonymous in Paraguay: the National Senate, the Capital City Municipality, the Office of the Ombudsman and the Office of the Governor. These cooperative arrangements are established on the basis of recognition by the agencies of the positive contributions made by the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous. This was a most welcome development since the

question had been pending for several years. Now, seizing the opportunity presented by the First South American Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous, we will be able to progress and grow as a Fellowship whose primary purpose is always to carry the message of recovery to all who may be interested.

Luis B.

Peru: Our 30th General Service Conference was held from April 19-21, 2019 with the theme "Service: An Act of Love and Humility to Carry the Message," and the 31st General Services Conference was carried out from the September 5-13, 2020 under the theme "Recovery and Unity for a Good Service Structure." The 30th Conference took place in the Casa de Retiro San Jose de Cluny, located in the Magdalena del Mar district of Lima, while the 31st Conference was held virtually due to the current pandemic.

As of now, following a lengthy process with the public registry office, the amended statutes of the Association of the General Services Board of Alcoholics Anonymous have been registered. Legal representation has been updated and the name of Antonio Lara Ponce, the current chairman of the Board of General Services, has been entered into the public record. We were also able to register our name, Alcoholics Anonymous of Peru, and the denomination of A.A. Unity, Service, Recovery, along with the circle and triangle trademark, with INDECOPI (National Institute for the Defense of Free Competition and the Protection of Intellectual Property).

Up to the present time, our structure has not fully complied with the spirit of the Seventh Tradition. The areas and/or regions partially cover the travel costs and registration fees of delegates and trustees attending General Services conferences, events, and meetings. In other words, we are not yet financially taking on the service responsibilities. This is slowly changing with respect to activities within the country, as the areas are underwriting part of their delegates' expenses when they are invited to these events. In a majority of cases, the trustees bear all the costs incurred on their service trips, both within the country and outside (REDELA, WSM, other structures' invitations).

In Peru, there are 234 active groups. Their number has not grown much in recent years. Almost 50% of the groups are in Lima, the capital of Peru, while the rest are spread out throughout the country's different departments.

There are 14 districts operating in the whole of Peru, with ten of them carrying out services in Lima's two A.A. areas.

Public Information is expanding. Members are reading more, especially the newcomers. Delegates are going to the General Services Conference better prepared. It is important to emphasize that there has been a welcome increase in recent years in participation in regional events, conventions and forums.

More work is needed in the area of Cooperation with the Professional Community. This is made evident in the very few nonalcoholic friends we have and reflected in the composition of the General Services Board on which only one Class A trustee sits.

During this year, we have focused efforts on networking through social media. This has allowed us to reach more parts of our country with the resulting increase in calls for help to our General Services Office.

Our structure has continued to participate regularly in the WSM and REDELA events in recent years, as well as in the General Service Conferences of Mexico and Colombia, to which we were invited. It is very important to keep the global perspective that Alcoholics Anonymous has through the sharing of experience.

The General Service Office continues carrying out its administrative reorganization. The current manager took up his duties on January 15 of 2020.

The GSO has two employees: the manager and a nonalcoholic administrative secretary. Our GSO is basically subsidized through the sale of literature. The GSO is working on broadening and improving services to groups and members.

Efforts are underway to have the areas take on the responsibility for the mailing of recommendation proposals prior to the Conference. The goal is for the groups to get a greater sense of their own participation in the General Service Conference. Recommendations were received from all the areas for the most recent Conference.

More work has to be done in firmly establishing the authority and responsibility of the Conference committees.

Daniel G.

Poland: The Poland A.A. service structure has approximately 3,000 groups within its 14 regions, and covers the territory of Poland and includes Polish-speaking meetings in Europe. Our Board of Trustees consists of 14 alcoholic trustees, one from each region, five nonalcoholic Class A trustees and two national delegates. Each of the regions sends four delegates to our yearly General Service Conference. Because of COVID-19, the 2020 conference was postponed until April 2021. Our Fellowship is supported by the General Service Office in Warsaw.

The A.A. structure in Poland is self-supporting with 39% of the costs of the GSO activities coming from members' contribution and the remaining 61% covered from literature sales.

Since the last WSM, the main event in Polish-speaking A.A. was the National Convention to celebrate the 45th anniversary of A.A. in our country. It took place in Katowice, with over 6,000 participants from Poland and many guests all over the world.

Our GSO general manager, being a member of the Penitentiary Policy Council at the Ministry of Justice in Poland, took part in February 2020 in the Council's Inaugural meeting of the third term. GSO's active participation in the Council aiming to support scientific research on the tasks of the Prison Service helps the council's members focus also on A.A. as a resource for inmates struggling with alcoholism.

Our Fellowship received an invitation to participate in Congress Society of Polish Psychiatry. It will be a great opportunity to spread the word about A.A. to our current and future friends in this field.

For over 30 years we have been carrying the A.A. message into correctional facilities. Currently 147 A.A. groups are present in 146 jails and prisons.

The upheaval brought on by the pandemic has brought almost to standstill our extensive activities in country-to-country sponsorship activities planned for this year. However, our A.A. structure has been blessed this year —— with thanks from the A.A. structure in Kazakhstan (a former republic in the Soviet Union) — to finalize the registration procedure to set up the foundation, a legal representative of A.A. in this country.

New forms of electronic communication between GSO,

GSB and the Fellowship have been established. The "Freshmail" newsletter is getting more subscribers every day.

In regard to our literature, *The Language of the Heart* was finally published in 2019. Our next project is to translate *Our Great Responsibility*.

In the difficult days of the pandemic, A.A. groups moved their meetings to the Internet, using many existing platforms. Our GSO is helping to organize workshops and service meetings (including GSB) in electronic form.

Inmates in correctional facilities have been provided this year with outside A.A. meeting talks through inside advisors and their responses were emailed back to A.A.s outside the walls.

Due to the same reason, only one workshop for Internet and online duty service officers was held in-person in September whereas two workshops on Juvenile Detention Centres and Public Information were organized online in October. The national convention and other national service workshops were postponed to 2021.

Tadeusz C.

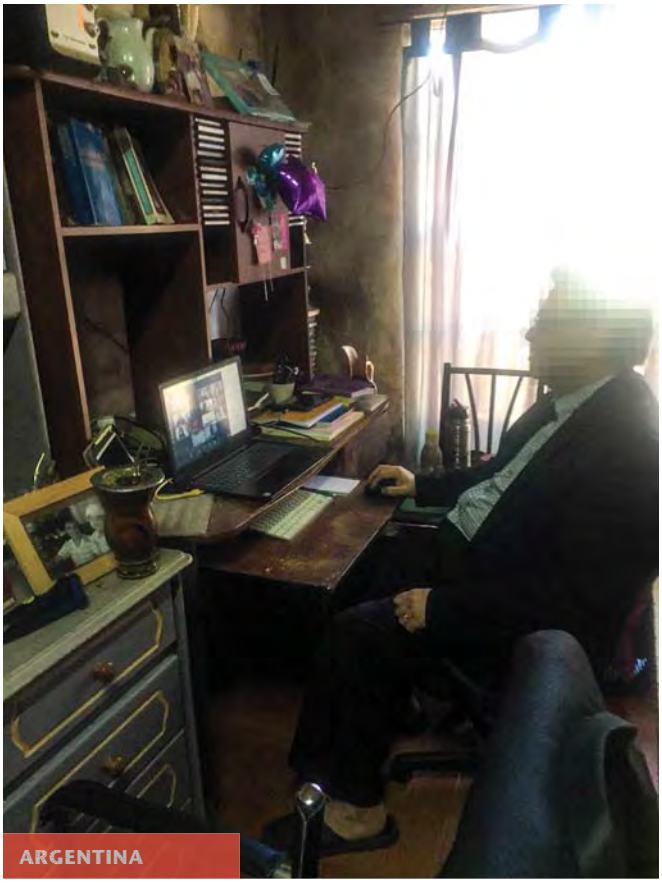
Portugal: Currently there are 88 A.A. groups in Portugal. Those include four online groups, being 72 Portuguese-speaking, 14 English-speaking, and one German-speaking. We estimate that 600 A.A. members attend the meetings regularly. Due to the pandemic situation, several groups suspended their regular meetings.

- Portuguese groups that have online meetings have grown to 34.
- Half of groups use internet for communicating with the GSO.
- The new Service Handbook was published and new pamphlets have been translated.
- General Service Conference process has recently changed, and the Conference Charter was revised.
- Country-to-country sponsorship:
  > closer bonds to A.A.W.S., Great Britain, Italy, Brazil, Czech Republic and Slovenia;
  > took actions to sponsor Angola and Mozambique.
- Accounting is now transparent according to Portuguese law. By the end of 2020, application for public utility status will be submitted.

Ivo C.

Russia: Officially, there is one Russian A.A. General Service Conference, one General Service Board and one General Service Office (Foundation of Alcoholics Anonymous called "Unity"), which can be confirmed by the presence of over 3/4 of the Russian A.A. groups represented by delegates. In April 2018, the 30th Russian A.A. General Service Conference was held. In accordance with the Russian GSB decision the 31st Russian A.A. General Service Conference was postponed to April 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are 670 groups registered in Russia. Basically, groups exist in big cities but A.A. groups have expanded in small towns and countryside as well. Some of them hold their meetings every day. For the last year, online A.A. groups have grown considerably; around 300 group have online meetings. We have a single service district for online groups so that they



ARGENTINA

can take part and vote in the Russian A.A.

A.A. Service Conference of Russia was deprived of its National Office in 2011 — the Service Foundation of Russian A.A. and its archives, contact details of the groups, etc. In 2012 under the resolution of the Conference a new national service was established — Unity Foundation (GSO) that managed to recover group data, facilitate group services of A.A. in Russia within a short period of time, providing them with published literature and necessary information. Today, GSO keeps in touch with A.A. in Belarus, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, Moldova and the UK. GSO also maintains Russian-speaking groups in Ulan-Bator (Mongolia), Mogilev, Leda (Belarus), Haifa (Israel), Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), New York (USA), London (UK).

The Donetsk and Luhansk Republics became an area in the Russian A.A. Conference.

Since 2008 we have been working on clarifying the translation of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, preparing separate chapters of the updated translation. At present, the translators are working in close cooperation with GSO in New York.

Unfortunately, currently publishing and distribution of non-licensed A.A. literature by an unofficial service structure called FOAA continues (this unofficial entity was established in 2011).

Within the last several years delegates have been starting to participate more actively in committee meetings of GSO. Also, delegates initiate informal meetings between them and those interested in service through online meetings (chat, voice messaging meetings) where veterans are invited to inform and share experience.

Over the last two years contributions from A.A. groups, ar-

eas and district committees have been about the same level. It is important to notice although that through the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown, contributions did not decrease.

During the last two years workshops, seminars and speaker meetings became popular where our trustees, delegates, former trustees, former and current WSM and AOSM delegates, general manager GSO Russia were guest speakers. Also, we had guest speakers from overseas who shared with us their experience, strength and hope. We had face-to-face workshops and online as well. Seminars and workshops focus on the Twelve Steps, working on the program of recovery in daily life, the Twelve Traditions for unity, and some of the Twelve Concepts for service in A.A.

Lots of work was undertaken by the PI/CPC committee and Treatment and Correction Committee. We obtained many agreements with correctional and treatment facilities.

In connection with the regime of self-isolation, we were blocked by all kinds of contacts and visits to Institutions were suspended because of COVID-19. But A.A. members continue to replenish stands and A.A. cards where there is an agreement. Also we continue to carry the message in treatment and correction facilities via teleconference and providing A.A. literature.

Uliana M.

South Africa: A.A. South Africa proudly celebrates 74 years since its initiation in 1946. There has been a steady growth of A.A. in South Africa with 330 meetings held nationally. In 2020, the greatest impact on A.A. meetings has notably been the regulations imposed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media platforms have created opportunities for online meetings; however, this has affected our membership as well as our revenue.

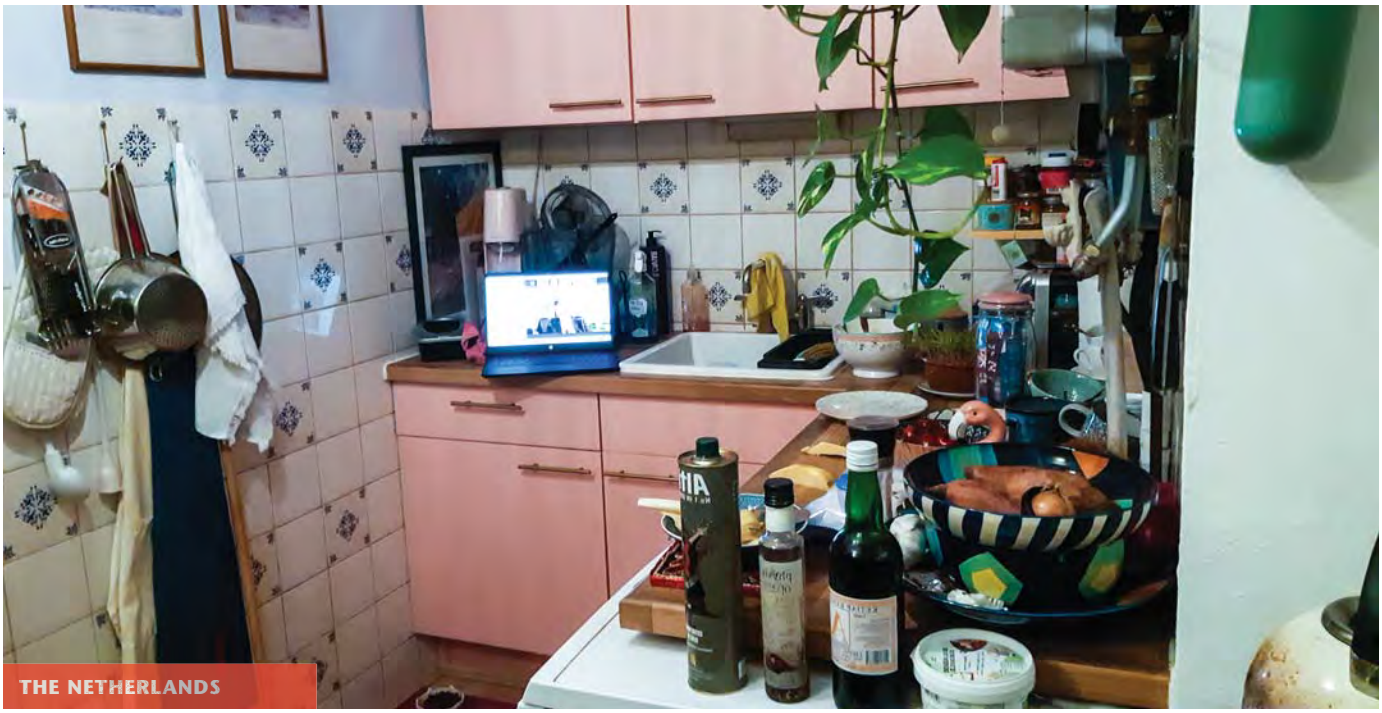
To understand the context of South Africa, the geographical spread, as well as poor access by its population to basic amenities, means that many areas face electricity blackouts and poor internet connectivity. Thus initiatives to take A.A. into previously disadvantaged areas were affected as many members in these areas do not have access to electricity or online platforms. One of the planned projects of WSD is to pursue outreach programs to the previously disadvantaged areas of South Africa, to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. Timing of meetings is always the issue, particularly as these areas are poorly resourced. However, despite these challenges, some Areas have made great strides in holding A.A. meetings in these areas. One also has to understand the cultural values, issues of diversity and indigenous practices as help-seeking is sometimes seen as taboo, as alcohol abuse or misuse is considered a western concept.

To address the diversity of South African culture and its 11 official languages, A.A. S.A. has attempted to translate the Big Book into isiXhosa, isiZulu and Afrikaans as a start. The original English version is, however, still the most popular and is used at most A.A meetings. In 2016, for the very first time the English version of the Big Book was printed in South Africa.

Our 69th National General Service Conference was held in May 2020, online for the first time. This online conference was very successful and proved to be cost-effective as well. The Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM) was held in 2019, and the next is planned for 2021, with acknowledgement to the Boards of Great Britain and U.S.A./Canada for their financial support.

A.A. South Africa has, at its 2020 conference, adopted a national project called Vision 2020. This is a regional initiative and is an outreach program designed to promote A.A. in formerly disadvantaged communities with a view to support the opening of more meetings and attract new members. This project also aims to standardize the message we send out across the country.

The Covid pandemic and lockdown restrictions on face-to-face meetings has affected our ability to actively operate in



THE NETHERLANDS

the CF,TF, CPC, PI spheres; this will improve with the easing of lockdown conditions and remains dependent on the status of COVID-19. However, we have a dedicated team of CPC/PI and Class A trustees who have held very successful webinars reaching out to over 800 professionals during the lockdown. Information sessions and structured presentations were held, cooperating with social workers, psychologists, lawyers and doctors on topics such as The Psychological Effects of Alcoholism; Reducing the Stigma of Alcoholism; Alcoholism and the Higher Power; The Sense of Agency of the Alcoholic, etc. These topics formed part of two-part sessions with breakaway sessions where participants could gain information on A.A. directly from members of A.A. and Al-Anon Family Groups. These webinars are part of a program of action initiated by the Class A trustees six years ago as workshops to recruit friends of A.A. as Nonalcoholic Community members and to create ambassadors to spread the message of A.A. in urban, township and rural communities in S.A. We have networked with the Commissioners of the Department of Correctional Services in each province of South Africa, to empower inmates, parolees and social workers at these facilities with information and access to A.A. services.

The Board and GSO has initiated online meetings with Area Assembly Chairpersons (called the Chair of Chairs Meetings); thus far three meetings have also been held with the delegate chair, GSO and Board chairs. For the first time ever in S.A., the Annual National Delegates Conference was held via an online platform. This conference went off very successfully.

Our 2019 the annual A.A. Convention (held over the Easter long weekend) was held in Johannesburg. The 2020 Convention scheduled for Durban was cancelled due to lockdown regulations. The 2021 Convention (known as the Jozi Convention) is on track and will be held in Johannesburg under the theme "The Three Pertinent Ideas." Finally, A.A. S.A. is planning for its Platinum celebration in 2021 with a focus on service and improving communications within the Fellowship.

We have gone digital in many ways. In 2018, we launched the A.A. S.A. App to allow members to *Find a meeting*, *Find an event,* ask *Frequently asked questions*, *Link to AASA website*, access *the Regmaker online*, read *A.A. shares*, and receive notifications for events, updates and important news. Two other successful projects were implemented via Soundcloud and YouTube: https://soundcloud.com/aasafrica/sets/2019-jozi-jwra-forum and https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHeACJvQm9x63DWwoa0PuKQ.

The soundcloud.com initiative was initially to convert audio cassettes of meeting shares dating back from 1964 into an electronic format and uploaded onto the cloud. It has become so popular that we now upload national convention talks as well as workshop talks onto the cloud. The YouTube channel has been set up to cater mainly to the millennials and is yet to take off.

Varoshini Nadesan, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee

Southern Zone of Central America: The Southern Zone of Central America comprises the structures of Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and Panama. Delegate representation to the WSM during this period falls to Costa Rica. This responsibility rotates every four years, following the guidelines set by the Southern Zone conscience.

Costa Rica

- ***Makeup of the GSB:*** At the 42nd RNC (National Conference Meeting), it was agreed to increase the number of trustees on the board from 15 to 16, with the new member being a Class B (alcoholic) from the Northern Zone Region.
- ***Web page:*** www.aacostarica.org. An Editorial Board was established, made up of Class A and Class B trustees and the GSB administrator.
- ***43rd RNC:*** The 43rd RNC took place on Saturday, October 31st beginning at the Salón Multiuso in the El Bambú district of San Rafael Arriba de los Desamparados, situated in the city of San José.
- ***Historical Archives:*** The archives are still being updated.
- ***Commission for the National Action Journal:*** The Commission is composed of the following standing committees and officers: Literature, Policy and Admissions, PI-CPC, Finances, the Coordinator of Content and Organization, and the Manager of the GSO. At the meeting of the Commission and the Editorial Board, it was agreed to publish in virtual form the 19th edition of the Journal, corresponding to the period of July and August of 2020, and to continue to publish the journal virtually until the administrative tasks of the GSO can be normalized and the national crisis is stabilized and returns to normal.
- ***2015-2020 Edition of the Service Manual:*** The new Service Manual was edited and printed.
- ***Number of groups:*** According to the information compiled by the areas, there are a total of 701 groups registered with the GSO.
- It was resolved to have an Independent Audit of the GSO carried out every three years.

Website: www.aacostarica.org

Nicaragua

- Throughout 2019, Public Information regarding the recovery program was provided to the general public through outreach via radio and the distribution free of charge of the journal *Nuestra Voz* (*Our Voice*).
- The Facilities Committee coordinates the provision of informational services to facilities (prisons and hospitals), a task directly undertaken by Area Committees and Intergroup and Central Offices. This work has been suspended for the remainder of the current year due to the pandemic.
- There are at least 22 groups active in facilities.
- The coordination of activities carried out by the Cooperation with the Courts and State Institutions Committee has improved. This work involves having these institutions refer those citizens who break the law under the influence of alcohol to A.A. groups.
- The opposition of the members of some groups to accepting individuals referred to them by the courts has been reduced.
- We are acquiring A.A.W.S. literature from New York for distribution within the A.A. community throughout the country.
- At present, we are making use of technology (Internet) allowing us to have a website that gives access to everyone in the general population interested in A.A.

- Communication with A.A members, the GSO and different Areas dispersed throughout the country is done through email and WhatsApp.
- We have started to work with the professional community through the recently formed Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee. It has been well received in colleges and by professionals all over the country.
- We were able to update and produce a new edition of the Guide for Cooperation with State Facilities.
- We were also able to obtain a new layout and design for our webpage.
- Following the social upheaval of 2018 that led to whole areas closing their doors to A.A. groups, which in turn had a devastating impact on implementing the budget approved by the Conference, we were able to once again activate the service structure and group activities.
- In the face of the economic crisis set off in our country by the COVID-19 pandemic, the GSB agreed to cancel the celebration of the 39th Convention. This decision provoked dissent in five areas of the country, making it necessary to convene the General Services Conference to render a conclusion on the issue. The results were that two-thirds of the Conference approved the resolution of the GSB with respect to cancelling this event and pertaining to the distribution of funds raised for it. Subsequently, this Conference resolution also caused certain unrest among a minority of A.A. members, who, in certain sectors of the A.A. Fellowship, are now advocating that contributions not be sent to the GSO, and that some members of the service structure no longer be recognized.

Website: www.aaosgnicaragua.wix.com/inicio

Panama

Public Information Committee:

- We started by holding many public meetings in different corners of the country, such as Area C 1, with very positive results. In each of these sessions, the delegate brings well prepared reports of meetings with diverse entities, for instance, businesses, schools, and other places to which the message has been carried. In the month of November, we visited the fraternal country of Peru, at the invitation of their Fellowship. There, we were able to share the experience of Public Information, learning quite a lot from the process.
- We are working with the different Area committees and the Alcoholics Anonymous office on roundups, forums, and other activities, including the upcoming celebration of the 84th anniversary of the founding of A.A.
- Several Public Information activities were carried out in health clinics, hospitals, radio stations, and businesses within Area B 4, as well as in some regions where, as a result, new groups were formed.
- We have a reliable and well-organized committee consisting of a number of members of good will at the Center for the Treatment and Study of Addiction. Those suffering from substance abuse have to attend every Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday from 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm. The visitations timetable for the year 2020 has already been submitted to the groups.

Correctional Facilities Committee:

- In Area A 3, we have a correctional facilities committee at the Juvenile Detention Facility carrying the message to those deprived of their liberty two Saturdays of every month. On December 19, 2019, in collaboration with the staff of the facility and AN personnel, a Christmas party was organized for the detainees.

Literature Committee:

- The committee always encourages members to buy literature for their own benefit.
- We have taken literature to sell at different service events, and we always sell it to the community at large and, in particular, to the National Mental Health Institute and its CETA program.

Emails:
aadepanama@hotmail.com
aasecretariapanama@hotmail.com
aainformacionpublicapanama@hotmail.com

Miguel R.

Spain: Currently the Spanish service structure is made up of 25 areas divided among four regional zones with 612 groups of which 27 are in correctional institutions. There are 9,792 members, nine Loners and nine Spanish-speaking groups in other countries. The General Service Board is composed of two Class A trustees and eight Class B trustees, one from each of the regional zones and four from the headquarters city.

We are in contact with non-Spanish speaking groups in an effort to work together and draw them closer, and if they so wish, to integrate them into the structure in Spain.

Because of COVID-19 it has not been possible to hold our service Conference or any other of the scheduled activities; nor has it been possible for the several Spanish Areas to hold any of the service events and forums that they had planned.

Two Spanish delegates participated in the XX European Service Meeting which was held in York, England, October 18-20, 2019, with the theme "An Unchanging Message in a Changing World." Fifty-six delegates, representing 28 countries, attended the meeting.

The operation of our office is made possible by the excellent work and dedication of the two hired staff members.

We continue to see a great increase in the number of visits to our web page, which allows us to readily and in a personal manner address the inquiries made by people interested in our program of recovery and/or family members, referring those asking for our help to the areas or groups.

The GSO publishes bimonthly issues of "Akron-1935" and "Sharing," the first available through subscriptions to anyone interested (professionals and institutions) and the latter exclusively for Fellowship members. At present, subscriptions stand at over 1,850 copies, of which 435 are of "Akron-1935," the newsletter aimed at nonalcoholics. We send a free copy of each of the two publications to groups and a copy of "Akron-1935" to 135 professionals with a connection to the board.

We continue to contribute to the International Literature Fund.

José F.

Sweden: The year 2020 was a very peculiar and strange year in Sweden. When the Coronavirus pandemic came, nobody knew what would happen. We did what the Public Health Authority and the government told us to do. And so also did A.A.

Many groups closed down because people got afraid. Instead many virtual groups started on the Internet. Some groups started with Skype meetings.

A.A.'s Swedish Service Office closed down, with employees working from their homes. We couldn't visit the Service Office and had to order books through email, not pick them up in person at the Service Office. And different service meetings that would normally be attended at the office had to be closed down as well.

The telephone call service never shut down, and they were really needed. When people began to work at home, many developed a drinking problem. Also the loneliness. And the number of telephone calls decreased.

The General Service Board in Sweden had also to go online, holding Zoom meetings, initially, while able to meet face-to-face in September.

Our Swedish national meeting was cancelled, but it will be held at the same location next year (Luleå, in the north of Sweden).

While our contributions have decreased, our finances are still good.

Our service conference was divided into two parts. One part was a Zoom meeting to accommodate some voting and important decisions that had to be made, and the second part was postponed until April 2021.

A.A. Sweden has gotten all the necessary licenses for literature from GSO and also from Grapevine. We have translated *The Language of the Heart*.

This is the practical advice that was shared with groups that were meeting physically:

- Wash your hands
- No hugs
- Don't shake hands
- Stay home if you are sick
- Keep the distance
- Sit down without holding hands at the Serenity prayer.
- To carry the message, a few groups visited sick members in their homes.

Ewa B.

Turkey: A.A. Turkey has been active in Turkey since 1988, with alcoholics in recovery applying the Twelve Step recovery program, with groups protecting the Twelve Traditions and GSO following the Twelve Concepts in Service. A.A. has existed and has tried to help alcoholics recover for 30 years without a legally recognized identity.

The main current highlight of A.A. Turkey has been the recent acquisition of a legally recognized identity. ADSIZ ALKOLİKLER YARDIMLAŞMA VE DAYANIŞMA DERNEĞİ — ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT ASSOCIATION, has been formed on 7 of February 2018 with all necessary legal approval and authority taken from government offices. The official address has been changed and registered as: KOCAREİS MAH.İLKİZ SOKAK 22/8 ÇANKAYA ANKARA.

The Association now, with its legally recognized identity, joins and organizes panels, conferences in hospitals, prisons or other governmental associations and supports the A.A. groups' activities with the necessary literature.

Bronx, NEW YORK

The main purposes of foundation of A.A. Turkey Association:

1. Cooperation with government agencies.
2. To base donation income and literature sales income on a legal basis.
3. To use a legally recognized identity to help A.A. grow in Turkey and reach more alcoholics.

Another highlight after forming the association has been the recent cooperation with governorships. In 81 cities, in the governorships, Addiction City Council Units have been formed. We have applied for membership in these councils, while protecting our Sixth, Seventh and Tenth Traditions. In these councils, the Assistant Governor of each city, surgeon generals of hospitals, Chief Constables, non-profit organizations take place. These members work in the field of "Addiction."

The Annual Conference that will be held in October, we will be inviting our A.A. fellows from all around the world and will be holding official English-speaking meetings. So far the English-speaking groups and fellows have been joining our conventions and have been holding meetings. Our English-speaking A.A. members have been helping with translation in Turkish meetings. This time, there will be official English-speaking meetings both for English-speaking fellows who live in Turkey and our guests from all around the world.

Also, we started to renew all the Turkish translated A.A. books in 2019 and we finished it by 2020. Today, all of them are ready to be published. We started to renew our website to make it more user friendly for members, newcomers and, most importantly, health care workers. Also, we plan to form a committee for addicted juvenile delinquents and juveniles with criminal intention. On the other hand, also in 2021 it is planned to make a questionnaire among A.A. members which has never been done before.

Apart from all this good news, we have a constant issue. Our Fellowship has very limited funds today. Unfortunately Tradition Seven does not work as well as it should and most of our members pay most service out of their own pockets. In meetings, the money put in the basket is sometimes less than the price of a cup of tea. Since we cannot force anyone to contribute, this topic remains unsolved and the activities or projects we can realize stay limited.

We are grateful to be attending this meeting through the funds given to us by A.A. Great Britain and the World Service Meeting Fund for the second time. We are hoping to do this with our own funds one day and even funding some other Fellowship. One day at a time…

Emre A.

Ukraine: Alcoholics Anonymous in Ukraine is celebrating its 31st anniversary. In 2019 more than 300 A.A. members from all parts of Ukraine as well as guests from neighboring countries including Poland, Belarus and Lithuania gathered for a three-day 30-year anniversary convention in the Western Ukraine city of Ivano-Frankivsk on July 5-7. The theme of our anniversary celebration was "A.A. as a Way of Life."

February 21, 1989 is recognized as the day A.A. was born in Ukraine. On that day Leo K., an A.A. member from the U.S. met with four patients undergoing treatment at a psychiatric hospital in Kyiv. By May the number of A.A.s in Kyiv grew to 20. Later that year, A.A. meetings were also held in Lutsk and Odessa.

Buenos Aires, ARGENTINA

A.A. in Ukraine continues to grow at a steady pace, with 135 groups and about 1,500 members. There seems to be a parallel growth in consciousness, experience, and responsibility as well. For the time being some groups are conducting their meetings online on Zoom, Skype, Viber, etc.

Our 22nd General Service Conference was held on Zoom in August 2020. Participants in the Conference included five trustees representing five A.A. regions, our Class A trustee, the international delegate to the World and European Service Meetings, delegates to each of the four Conference committees, the chairman of the "Pravlinnia" (the committee overseeing the General Service Office), the office worker at the General Service Office and the temporary editor of A.A. Ukraine's publication, *Dzherelo*.

Certainly, a one-day Conference held online does not allow for personal and up close contact among the Conference participants, but a lot of important questions were dealt with and resolved and newly elected trustees and delegates assumed their service positions, while those whose terms were up rotated out. International delegates from Poland and Lithuania, Tadeusz C. and Marius L., respectively, attended the Conference as a guest observers. They were with us throughout the Conference adding to the positive A.A. spirit and sharing their experience with us.

The 22nd Conference held on Zoom voted to accept an updated version of the bylaws pertaining to our General Service Conference and A.A. Ukraine's service structure. Our Class A trustee, Nadiya Pyrkalo, a psychiatrist from Poltava, who was elected to the General Service Board in 2019 to help the Board with its service work, was reconfirmed.

The Literature Committee continued to translate brochures into the Ukrainian language in 2018 and 2019. Three brochures were translated and printed in Ukrainian — "If You Are a Professional," "The Twelve Concepts Illustrated" and "Is There an Alcoholic in the Workplace." "This is A.A." was re-edited and reprinted. "Understanding Anonymity" and "A Newcomer Asks" were printed in 2018 after being approved in 2017. In 2018, a Ukraine A.A. specific version of "A.A. and the Armed Services" was printed. It was put together with material translated from the brochure by the same name published by A.A. World Services as well as the version published by UK's General Service Office. In 2020 the Committee translated "Alcoholics Anonymous as a Resource for the Health Care Professional" and is finalizing the translation of the book *Daily Reflections*.

In 2020 we printed an updated translation of the Big Book in the Ukrainian language. We received editorial approval for it from A.A.W.S.

We also continue to organize service workshops to share, learn and carry the message within our own A.A. community. Seminars on Steps, Traditions, Concepts, Carrying the Message, Sponsorship, Home Group and other topics have been organized by regions.

In March 2020, the General Service Board's organizing committee held a seminar on carrying the message into correctional institutions in Stryy. The seminar was attended by A.A. members from throughout the country. Our A.A. friends from Poland assisted us with the seminar, that was also attended by corrections workers, with their participation and as guest speakers. In February 2019, our first seminar on corrections service work was held in Kyiv.

We interact with the A.A. service structures in Poland, the European office in the UK and the GSO in New York. Members of our national and regional service structures regularly take part in service conferences and conventions in neighboring countries.

Oleksandr S.

U.S./Canada: In our service structure there are more than 67,000 listed A.A. groups with nearly 1.4 million members. Our structure is divided into eight regions, six in the United States and two in Canada. Within these regions are a total of 93 delegate areas, with each area electing a delegate for a two-year term.

It has been an extraordinary time for Alcoholics Anonymous in the U.S. and Canada. When the pandemic forced shut down of face-to-face meetings in March of 2020, the Fellowship responded with the resiliency and courage that shows we truly are, world-wide, a "society of alcoholics in action." While there have been and continue to be concerns as literature revenue has dropped in 2020, the Fellowship has responded with a surge of increased group and individual contributions. Our General Service Office moved from one day being "live" to the next day being a completely virtual work force, with our employees and staff continuing to provide almost seamless continuity of services.

Each year in the spring, we hold our General Service Conference in New York, with approximately 137 voting members, at least two-thirds of which are delegates. The balance is made up of: 21 trustees; six nontrustee directors of the corporate boards; and management and selected staff members of our General Service Office and the Grapevine. In an historic first, the 2020 General Service Conference was held using teleconferencing technology, due to the inability to meet face-to-face. A shortened schedule was adapted to cover essential business such as elections. The truncated time frame also meant shortened committee deliberations and floor discussions. The 2021 General Service Conference will also be virtual, but the time frame has been expanded to a full Conference schedule, which will allow for more robust discussions.

Our General Service Board is made up of 21 trustees, fourteen of whom are classified as Class B (alcoholic) and seven Class A (nonalcoholic). They serve staggered terms and are elected by the General Service Conference. The General Service Board is the principal service provider of the Conference and has freedom of action in the routine conduct of policy and business of its two service corporations, A.A. World Services, Inc., and AA Grapevine.

A.A.W.S. is responsible for group services, which include the operations of the General Service Office, and the publication and distribution of A.A. literature. Grapevine publishes and distributes the monthly Grapevine magazine. It also publishes La Viña, a bimonthly publication for Spanish-speaking A.A. members, along with other related materials.

In 2019, we published over 2 million books and booklets in English, French and Spanish. We also published over 2.9 million pamphlets. Our net literature sales were nearly $14.2 million, an increase of 1.4% over 2018. The Big Book is currently available in 71 languages. Other literature is translated into over 102 languages.

Contributions from groups and members in 2019 exceeded $8.86 million, the highest ever and 5.7% greater than 2018. The figures for 2020 will likely exceed even these.

In 2019, our website, aa.org, was visited nearly 16.5 million times, an increase of 24% over 2018. The site is currently undergoing a major redesign with a relaunch scheduled for mid-2021.

Unfortunately, the 15th International Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. A "virtual" International was featured on our website, with videos of speakers and special presentations available for the month of July. We now enthusiastically turn our sights to 2025, to Vancouver, BC Canada for our 16th International Convention.

Our U.S./Canada Class A trustees have started a communications initiative for increased sharing for nonalcoholic trustees internationally. It is a private Facebook Group, "Alcoholics Anonymous International Community of Non-Alcoholic Trustees," and they are seeking to increase participation in it, so please contact international@aa.org for further information.

We also look forward to continued and more frequent sharing of experience, strength and hope with our REDELA home zone, which has been holding regular teleconference sharing sessions throughout the pandemic. It has been inspiring to watch us all come together in this unprecedented time.

Trish L.

Committee Reports

CZECH REPUBLIC

Agenda

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

The committee recommended the following theme for the Twenty-seventh World Service Meeting: "Carrying the Message of A.A. in the Digital Age."

The committee recommended that the following presentation/discussion topics be included on the agenda for the Twenty-seventh World Service Meeting:

1. A.A. and New Technologies
2. What is our attraction? Recovery, Unity, Service
3. The Seventh Tradition: Fully self-supporting in the Digital Age
4. Our nonalcoholic friends
5. Alcoholics Anonymous has already come of age. Is there any danger that it may get too old?
6. How to invest in the future of A.A.

Note: Due to the reduced time schedule the committee suggested that a meeting be held between meetings to discuss possible sub-topics for each presentation / discussion, to provide more specific sharing from multiple presenters.

The committee recommended that the following workshop topics be included on the agenda for the Twenty-seventh World Service Meeting:

1. How to encourage the Seventh Tradition in the time of a Pandemic/Social Isolation at each level of the structure.
2. Virtual Groups: How can they be integrated into the General Service Conference structure?
3. A.A. in Society: Relationship with networks and social media

The committee elected Tobias D. of Denmark as chairperson and Amanda S. of Great Britain as alternate chairperson.

Literature/Publishing

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

The committee accepted the A.A.W.S. Report on the International Literature Fund. It was discussed that the report substantiates the continued need to provide literature that is accessible to all (e.g., indigenous cultures, young people) and available in varying formats (e.g., digital, large print).

The committee addressed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as it relates to A.A. literature as follows:

1. ***Accessibility***

   A couple of structures experienced little to no impact in their ability to translate and/or print literature.

   Conversely, many countries reported that the pandemic lockdowns adversely affected the availability of print

literature. It was discussed that there is a critical need to provide not only downloadable literature from websites but to also provide digital literature available for purchase.

The committee suggested that A.A.W.S. gather shared experience on creating eBooks and making literature available online with proper copyright protections in place. The committee discussed that it would be helpful to develop a service piece that would provide this shared experience.

2. ***Financial impact***

Although one structure reported an increase in the demand for literature because of Cooperation with the Professional Community and Public Information outreach efforts, many structures reported a severe drop in literature sales as a result of the pandemic.

The shared experience of decreased literature sales initiated a wider discussion on the tradition of self-support versus the reliance upon literature sale profits. It was agreed that this is a critical topic that would benefit discussion by the World Service Meeting body.

The committee reaffirmed the spirit of the Seventh Tradition wherein the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous would be fully self-supporting without the reliance upon literature sales.

The committee elected Doug G. of Japan as chairperson and Uliana M. of Russia as alternate chairperson.

Policy/Admissions/Finance

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

The committee reviewed requests for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting:

Bulgaria:

The committee approved Bulgaria's request to participate at the 26th World Service Meeting.

China:

The committee discussed China's request for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting. The committee appreciated China's desire to be a part of the WSM but agreed that it did not currently meet the qualifications based on the information received. The committee noted the benefits of greater participation at zonal meetings for emerging structures.

El Salvador:

The committee approved El Salvador's request for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting.

Greece:

The committee approved Greece's request for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting.

Guatemala:

The committee approved Guatemala's request for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting.

Moldova:

The committee discussed Moldova's request for participation at the 26th World Service Meeting. The committee appreciated Moldova's desire to be a part of the WSM but agreed that it did not currently meet the qualifications based on the information received. The committee noted the benefits of greater participation at zonal meetings for emerging structures.

The committee reviewed the qualifications for countries participating in the World Service Meeting and recognized the need to establish a deadline for countries applying for admission to the WSM. The committee requested the WSM Coordinator bring back draft deadline policy language for the committee to consider at its meeting in 2022.

The committee reviewed the qualifications for World Service Meeting Delegates and after thoughtful discussion regarding the importance of rotation, made no changes.

The committee reviewed World Service Meeting finances and delegates' fees. The committee affirmed that the $1,500/USD delegate fee will be restored for the 27th World Service Meeting.

The committee recommended that the 27th World Service Meeting be held October 1-6, 2022.

The committee discussed a request to hold the 27th World Service Meeting in New York and took no action. The committee noted efforts of several countries to prepare bids for the 27th World Service Meeting and the current rotation of WSM alternating between New York and other locations.

The committee elected Trish L. of U.S./Canada as chairperson and Moira S. of Ireland as alternate chairperson.

Working with Others

The chairperson began the meeting by welcoming all the delegates. She shared that for her the word "together" is the key — we can do *together* what we cannot do by ourselves.

The chair asked a committee member to read the first two paragraphs from the Big Book chapter "Working With Others." It fit well with the focus of the committee, and phrases like "Life will take on new meaning" and "This is an experience you must not miss" resonated with many.

Given the time restrictions, the committee dove right into its two topics, with each member sharing for up to four minutes on the questions:

- How has your structure been able to carry the message during the pandemic?
- What have you been able to do in terms of public information and cooperation with the professional community?

Nearly every country found itself, sometime in March, moving abruptly from face-to-face A.A. meetings to online meetings (one exception was a country where the pandemic hit later and they were very grateful for the experience shared by other structures). Many countries struggled early on with maintaining an accurate database of groups. One delegate ex-

plained what they tried hardest to avoid: sending a newcomer to a group and having them find no one there and losing hope that A.A. can help them.

For several countries the shift to online meetings was led by their board or General Service Office; however, others observed that the local groups were actually way ahead of the structure when it came to adapting to the new reality and moving meetings online.

Some delegates reported a digital divide in their countries. Members without laptops or smart phones struggled. Often those living in cities transitioned more easily to online meetings than members living in the country. Familiarity with technology was also cited as a factor, with younger members adapting more easily than older ones. Countries addressed this in a variety of ways:

- Many increased the availability of hotlines and expanded their hours to 24/7 coverage. Several reported a large increase in phone calls.
- Some structures created guidelines to help members learn to navigate video-conferencing platforms, address anonymity concerns, and deal with "zoom bombers."
- Many offered newcomers individualized help, enlisting volunteers to accompany them to their first online meeting or offering break-out rooms for one-on-one contact.
- One delegate helped start more "hybrid" meetings and found they encouraged unity.

Delegates reported that unfortunately there are still populations that are simply not able to access online A.A., often communities hardest hit by the pandemic.

Many countries were able to resume face-to-face meetings over the summer. In general, members followed guidelines related to social distancing, hygiene, and face-coverings, but there were also "COVID-deniers" and recently there has been "pandemic fatigue" affecting members' compliance. Many countries have experienced a second wave of the virus and have had to return to predominantly online meetings. Some did report that the digital skills developed in the first wave made the return much easier.

Other "positives" during these challenging times were also reported. For example:

- Members who could only attend one meeting a week because of the travel distance now find themselves attending several online meetings a week, all over the world.
- Many newcomers find it easier and less embarrassing to try A.A. when it is online.
- Young people feel safer in a virtual group and navigate meetings with less apprehension.
- The pandemic has brought more media awareness to problem drinking.
- A.A. service meetings are easier to attend. This has led to more interaction and cooperation between countries as well as service boards meeting more frequently.
- Attendance at some conventions and other A.A. events has actually increased.
- More professionals are attending panels and forums.

That is a good segue to the second question addressed by the committee: public information and cooperation with the professional community during the pandemic.

Several delegates shared about the cooperation between A.A. and their country's Ministry of Health, especially in the area of information-sharing. One delegate brought up that there are still situations where the government will request a kind of cooperation that A.A. is not able to offer (for example reporting on members' attending meetings) but members continue to communicate to resolve these situations.

At the beginning of the pandemic, many service committees reported less contact and cooperation with hospitals and treatment centers. Also, perhaps due to the global health crisis, professionals seemed less focused on alcoholism as an issue. However, several countries reported increasing contact with treatment centers and their patients, including requests for online meetings. There have also been several articles published about A.A. recently as well as recordings shared on WhatsApp and other platforms.

With many professionals working remotely, one Class A trustee has been using webinars to reach out with more information about alcoholism and A.A. Other countries reported their Class A trustees are actively sharing the A.A. message during the pandemic.

The one area where there was not much success to report was in reaching members who are incarcerated. Many prisons are now in lockdown and not allowing meetings or even visitors. One structure was able to send in issues of the magazine they publish, while another reported success with a prison correspondence program. However, how to keep in touch with A.A. members and groups inside prisons is still an outstanding question.

The committee elected Emre A. of Turkey as chairperson, and Nana K. of Greece as alternate chairperson.

Site Selection

The three delegates selected to serve on the Site Selection Committee: Hernán L. (Chile) for the Americas Zone; Pip A. (New Zealand) for the Asia-Oceania Zone; Jan K. (Czech Republic) for the European Zone; along with Greg T. and Racy J., GSO New York and secretary Mary C., met on November 29, 2020 to review Bids for the 27th World Service Meeting in 2022. Paul Konigstein (nonalcoholic), chief financial officer for GSO U.S./Canada, Stephanie L., senior director of administration and strategy, and Wendy Stevens (nonalcoholic), meeting planner/consultant also attended the meeting to provide valuable experience. Four interpreters were also present.

The committee considered a request that site selection for the 27th WSM be deferred to a future date, so that bids could be prepared in a post-COVID era and took no action.

Committee members had received copies of each country's bid in advance. Additionally, the committee heard verbal presentations by the delegates from the following bidding countries: Argentina, Finland, French-speaking Europe, Iceland, Japan, Portugal and Sweden. No verbal presentation was received from German-speaking Europe.

After a thorough review of the specifications of each bid, the committee recommended to the 26th WSM that the site of the 27th World Service Meeting (2022) be Japan and that the alternate site be Iceland.

Workshop Reports

JAPAN

Workshop I

Communication — A Key to Unity

1. ***What communication methods are being used?***

   a) *To reach those who do not yet know about Alcoholics Anonymous:*

   Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many countries have had to adapt to carrying the message, trying new things to reach those who do not yet know about A.A. Some common themes were expressed among all delegates and many countries are:

   - Carrying the message to professionals and the still-suffering alcoholic through A.A. websites, A.A. helplines or other online services so that people looking for help can speak to an A.A. member or have access to pertinent information about A.A.;
   - Presenting interviews with Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees and members (respecting Traditions) in the media: TV, radio, newspapers and online (Facebook, YouTube);
   - Providing public information and cooperating with professional communities, giving presentations to medical specialists/clergy/schools/universities;
   - Providing poster advertising for public transport systems and literature drops to medical facilities;
   - Developing video resources to address special population groups and providing information in formats for those with accessibility issues;
   - Educating government agencies about alcoholism;
   - Going into jails, prisons, hospitals and institutions, when possible and where allowed;
   - Collaborating with writers/producers on media portrayals addressing A.A. and alcoholism.

   b) *To communicate with the members of the Fellowship in our country:*

   There were some common themes among delegates regarding communication with members. These included conveying information via A.A. websites — which is particularly important during the pandemic, as well as:

   - Via local A.A. publications;
   - Via board members;
   - Via general service offices;
   - Via general service conferences;
   - Via multiple new technology forums, online platforms, email and phone systems.

Additionally, one structure described engaging experienced marketing/public relations experts to ensure that all appropriate channels are being used to effectively communicate with members and the suffering alcoholic.

c) *Among members of the service structure:*
- Via service structure pages on local A.A. websites;
- Via online service meetings and Q&A sessions;
- Via seminars, roadshows, regional forums, national conventions, general service board meetings (both in person and online);
- Via email, WhatsApp;
- Through visits from other service structures, country-to-country sponsorship.

d) *Among members and service entities at the local level:*
- Via Group Service Representatives;
- Via group conscience meetings (boosted in some areas during the pandemic);
- Via online service meetings (area assemblies, intergroup and general service committees);
- Via digital online forums;
- Through contacts with members when they are released from hospitals, prisons, treatment facilities.

2. ***How effective is this communication? How could it be improved?***

It was discussed that when it comes to communicating with those who do not yet know about A.A., countries are generally doing a good job. But the key is personal willingness and the skills to do the job. The pandemic has meant adapting to new modes of communication with those who don't yet know about us, with much more now being done using the media and online resources. Many members, particularly senior members, have had to come to terms with the digital environment. On a positive note, even in the pandemic and across many different digital platforms, A.A. groups are still meeting, service structure events are still happening and newcomers are still arriving at A.A.

A common theme was that personalities sometimes get in the way of principles and that this affects communication with A.A. members and those in the service structure. The effectiveness of our communication is driven by the members in A.A. and the number of people driving this varies from country to country. It was noted that we can always do with more people in service, and, with more money and time, communication could always be better, of course. One delegate mentioned a case of good communication in his country with the judicial system where judges have started sending offenders to A.A. instead of prisons. Another spoke about the wish to get more women into the service structure, noting that sending women to future WSMs was a positive goal for the future.

The next step for A.A.'s service structure is taking the existing tools that are meeting the needs of today and evaluating and updating them to meet the needs of tomorrow. One country's example of improving communication was their decision to do a complete rebuild of its A.A. website rather than trying to update and add on to an existing platform that was already dated.

Workshop II

The Use and Value of Our A.A. Literature in Sponsorship

1. ***What literature is most helpful in sponsorship?***

Most of the delegates felt that the basic text, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Big Book), was the most important piece of literature to be used in sponsorship. Some reported that they don't rush into using *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, while one delegate said that some members use *only* the "Twelve and Twelve." The general sense was that usage of our literature keeps our message consistent, and can be utilized in combination with each person's individual experience. There was general agreement that the following three requests should be fulfilled in order to adhere to healthy sponsorship: 1) do the Steps, 2) go to meetings, and 3) do service.

After the newcomer has been sober a bit, many delegates suggest reading *A.A. Comes of Age*, although there is no specific order for which literature is recommended. Many commented that newcomers aren't reading literature as much as in the past and look to the oldtimers as their example. One country has challenges with the cost and availability of literature, so often sharing at meetings can deviate from the A.A. message. Pamphlets like "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" have a healthy experience and *Living Sober* is good for what to do in various scenarios, though some felt it isn't a book that teaches how to recover. A number of delegates also felt that the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" needs to be improved. Many countries use non-Conference-approved literature instead as a "go to" on the question of sponsorship because they feel the available A.A. material lacks enough guidance.

It was generally agreed that there is no one way to use our literature, but each item can be valuable to answer a variety of questions newcomers might have. In service sponsorship, most suggest reading the *Service Manual*, although for some countries, it is a translation of the U.S./Canada version and, while the principles might be the same, the application might vary from local experience.

2. ***How are sponsors using literature to share all Three Legacies of A.A. — Recovery, Unity and Service?***

One country reported that literature is rarely read and members rely on word-of-mouth, so many aren't aware of the Three Legacies. Several countries emphasize using the pamphlet "The A.A. Group" or the *Service Manual* for explaining service. One delegate talked about how there were no Big Books at meetings, but through active sponsorship, there has been a renaissance. The same thing is now happening regarding the Traditions. The service manuals for different countries change frequently, but the principles in them don't. In sponsorship, it is important to use phrases that people can relate to, not just what is printed, and an example was provided where the word *sanity* does not exist in a particular language and the words *healthy thinking* are used in its place. One delegate reported that their country used to bring in speakers from the USA, but now they are

trying to rely more on local experience. It was generally felt that we lead by example, starting with washing the cups, to show the rewards of service. Holding literature workshops is most helpful, too, especially regarding the Traditions.

3. ***Would changes to current literature or additional pieces of literature be useful to sponsors in reaching or helping newcomers? If so, what would these be?***

   Many felt our literature is fine as is, while several delegates mentioned that literature should be updated to reflect the growth of online meetings and how the Traditions and Concepts still apply. One delegate reported their members are always hungry for new literature and they are working on translating *Our Great Responsibility*. Another reported that they struggle just to get the members to read the literature that already exists and a lack of storage space at meeting places discourages groups from maintaining an inventory of books/pamphlets. Several countries reported how grateful they were for "The 'God' Word," published in the U.K. and U.S.

   Although A.A. has a singleness of purpose, more information about cross-addicted members would be helpful, noted one delegate. It was noted that "Problems Other than Alcohol" covers the subject fairly well, and one delegate reported his group maintains a list of other Fellowships as information so the newcomer can find a solution that best suits them if it's not A.A.

   In terms of carrying the message, a "how to sponsor" volume might help by providing clear instructions. It was also emphasized that members who do Public Information or Corrections work should understand the difference in types of pamphlets for that kind of service work versus literature for the recovering alcoholic. It was expressed that country-to-country sponsorship is very important and some written guidance would be helpful in that regard.

Workshop III

The Importance of Our Nonalcoholic Friends in Our Structure

1. ***In your country, what role do nonalcoholic professionals currently play in the service structure?***

   In many countries, nonalcoholic friends are part of the A.A. structure (Class A trustees) and, as such, often coordinate GSB committees, help A.A. manage finances, provide legal advice, and carry the message about A.A. to other professionals (doctors, nurses, lawyers) through the press, media, religious organizations, prisons and schools. Nonalcoholic professionals give general advice and feedback to A.A. on a wide range of issues and help us contact other people in their respective fields. Professionals often recommend A.A. due to the changes they see in the current members and the spirit of A.A. is very important for these people.

   A number of countries do not have Class A trustees and are working to establish ties with professional communities to help spread information about A.A. to the general public. One delegate noted that his country structure does not contain Class A trustees, but that Al-Anon helps a lot with the work done on their helpline. In some countries there is a great difficulty in working with nonalcoholic friends because the country does not recognize the work of Alcoholics Anonymous, making it difficult to work in hospitals and other institutions.

   For some countries the impact of nonalcoholics is felt quite strongly, as the message originally arrived in their country through such friends of the Fellowship who often provided the early introduction and support that allowed the Fellowship to take hold and grow.

2. ***How are these nonalcoholic friends helped to grow in understanding of the A.A. program and Fellowship?***

   Nonalcoholic trustees often learn about A.A. by attending open A.A. meetings, general service conferences, and A.A. conventions. Sometimes, nonalcoholic friends may establish A.A. meetings themselves to help their clients or patients and often learn more about A.A. through this process. One delegate described how his country had set up a national registry of A.A. friends who receive emails with information about the Fellowship. Another delegate shared that one of the main concerns of its structure is to train nonalcoholics in the principles of A.A., mainly the Twelve Concepts of World Service and the service board's statutes. Another shared about the importance of Tradition Six in working with nonalcoholics and introducing them to A.A.

3. ***What new avenues might nonalcoholic friends pursue to introduce A.A. to other professionals?***
   - Participate in professional conferences either online or in person (mental health workers, nurses, social workers) focused on alcoholism and spread the A.A. message there.
   - Organize information sessions for new doctors and other professionals.
   - Organize information sessions for students who will be future teachers, doctors, lawyers, clergy.
   - Create websites that share informational videos about A.A.
   - Utilize social media platforms such as Facebook to share information about A.A.

4. ***What else could be done to create friendly relations with additional nonalcoholic professionals?***
   - Educate A.A. members on how to communicate with professionals (workshops for A.A. members).
   - Build ongoing personal relationships with professionals and introduce them to how the Fellowship works.
   - Provide attractive presentations about A.A. for doctors, prison officials, etc.
   - Wherever possible, involve nonalcoholic professionals in A.A. conventions and forums.
   - Some A.A.s created a Facebook book page on behalf of a nonalcoholic trustee to introduce that person to the community on social networks.

Reports of Interim and Zonal Service Meetings

The 13th Asia Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM)

The theme of the meeting was: "Improving Links with all Communities." It was held at the Regal Hotel, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong from July 11-14, 2019.

Participants

Countries/regions attending the 13th AOSM: Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, China, South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Mongolia, Japan, Thailand, India, Iran, Russia (East), MERCAA (Middle East Regional Committee of A.A.). In addition, there were observers from United States, New Zealand, China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, along with a translator from Japan.

AOSM Chairperson: Heather H.
— New Zealand
AOSM Secretary: James N.
— New Zealand
AOSM Treasurer David G.
— New Zealand
General Service Office Staff (New York)
— Eva S. (GSO NY — International Desk)
— David R. (GSO NY — Publishing)

Language and Translation

The AOSM was conducted in English with simultaneous translations into Mongolian (by one Mongolian delegate to another) and Japanese (by invited nondelegates). Some auto-translation into Korean and Chinese was provided by an observer who used translating apps.

Finances (Treasurer's report)

Opening Bank Balance: NZ$5,839.74
Total Income: NZ$13,116.27
(Subtotal): NZ$18,956.01
Total Expenses: NZ$(9,070.64)
Account Balance: NZ$9,885.37

General Business

Elections for 14th AOSM:
Chair: Roger S. (New Zealand)
Secretary: Masayo S. (Japan)
Treasurer: Morita Y. (Japan)

(**Note**: The elected persons will serve for the next two years, until the final day of the 14th AOSM.)

Opening Session: The chair explained the minority voice, the Third Legacy procedure for voting, and the roles and responsibilities of officers, delegates, translators and observers.

Keynote Address: "Improving Links with All Our Communities" — Judy S. (California): Judy's address centered on the concept of inclusivity and how she could put that into action. She concluded that she could put it into action by practicing honesty, open-mindedness and willingness.

General Service Office Staff Presentations: Eva S. shared on the role of the International Assignment at GSO, and on Cooperation with the Professional Community and Public Information. David R. shared on the role of publishing in CPC and PI work.

25th World Service Meeting Report — Durban, 2018: The WSM delegate from Japan (Morita Y.) shared his report on the 25th WSM 2018 held in Durban, South Africa.

Committees for yhe 13th AOSM

1. **Policy/Admissions/Finance**
   Chairperson: Japan
   Members: MERCAA, South Korea, Australia, Japan, Hong Kong

Recommendations Adopted:

- To provide clarification regarding specific AOSM delegates terms of service, the following text to be added to the *Guidelines for the conduct of the Asia Oceania Service Meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous*, item 3: "In accordance with Tradition Nine, the AOSM delegates shall observe the spirit of rotation. It is preferred that delegates attend only two AOSMs (one 4-year term), but this guideline is not binding on any structure within the AOSM zone. If a structure appoints an individual to stand in for their delegate (such as an alternate delegate) who cannot attend, this would be endorsed by the Policy, Admissions and Finance (PAF) committee prior to the start of the AOSM."
- To adopt a table for use by countries requesting financial support to attend the AOSM.
- To ask AOSM secretary to coordinate all requests for financial support by distributing detailed requests to all AOSM country's GSO's or local structures (where a GSO does not exist).
- To ask that New Zealand General Service Board consider maintaining the Archives for the AOSM. In the event that New Zealand is unavailable, the request will be sent to the Australian General Service Board.

Subcommittee Discussion Outcomes:

Agreed to:

- not pursue a plan to change the boundaries of the AOSM region.
- create a flowchart for countries wishing to bid for the opportunity to host the AOSM.
- discuss the creation of a role for a Chinese-speaking representative to AOSM, aligning with an ongoing discussion between Hong Kong, China and GSO NY.
- encourage the development and integration of the English-speaking Intergroup and Korean-speaking Intergroup in South Korea.
- recommend guidelines for AOSM delegates' terms of appointment and service which respect each country's procedures for electing a delegate.
- recommend a procedure and produce a table for countries requesting support to attend the AOSM.

- request that New Zealand GSB consider maintaining the archives of the AOSM.
- discuss how English-speaking fellowships can reach out to local, non-English speaking communities.

2. **Website/Literature/Publishing**
   Chairperson: New Zealand
   Members: New Zealand, Russia, Mongolia, Hong Kong

Recommendations Adopted:

- To ask the committee chairperson to communicate updates (pending AOSM approval) to the webmaster within 30 days following each AOSM. Note this includes all website recommendations presented at each AOSM as well as agreed content between AOSMs.
- To ask each AOSM Standing Committee to have available to them the appropriate app (phone or appropriate device) to translate into the languages of the committee members.

Subcommittee Discussion Outcomes:

Agreed to:

- enhance the website so that it becomes the main source of AOSM information and interaction e.g. by establishing (possibly) a member's section, GSO links, country reports, events page.
- create a protocol for requesting updates to the website so that the webmaster has time to do them.
- communicate outcomes of the AOSM to the webmaster within 30 days of the AOSM.

3. **Working with Others**
   Chairperson: Thailand
   Members: Thailand, Singapore, Iran, Australia, New Zealand

Subcommittee Discussion Outcomes:

Agreed to:

- delegate small projects to individual members and report via a WhatsApp group.
- find out how countries can ask for and provide country-to-country and financial sponsorship (contact Germany, Mexico, Colombia).
- maintain an accurate list of AOSM contacts.
- share guidelines on how to establish contact with professionals.
- initiate discussions between countries which share similar challenges, e.g., attracting more women, young people, non-English speakers.
- recommend more time be spent at the next AOSM on workshops.

4. **Site Selection/Agenda**
   Chairperson: Mongolia
   Members: Fiji, Thailand, Mongolia, China, India

Subcommittee Discussion Outcomes:

The subcommittee did not decide on a site for the next AOSM because no country had bid for the opportunity.

Agreed to:

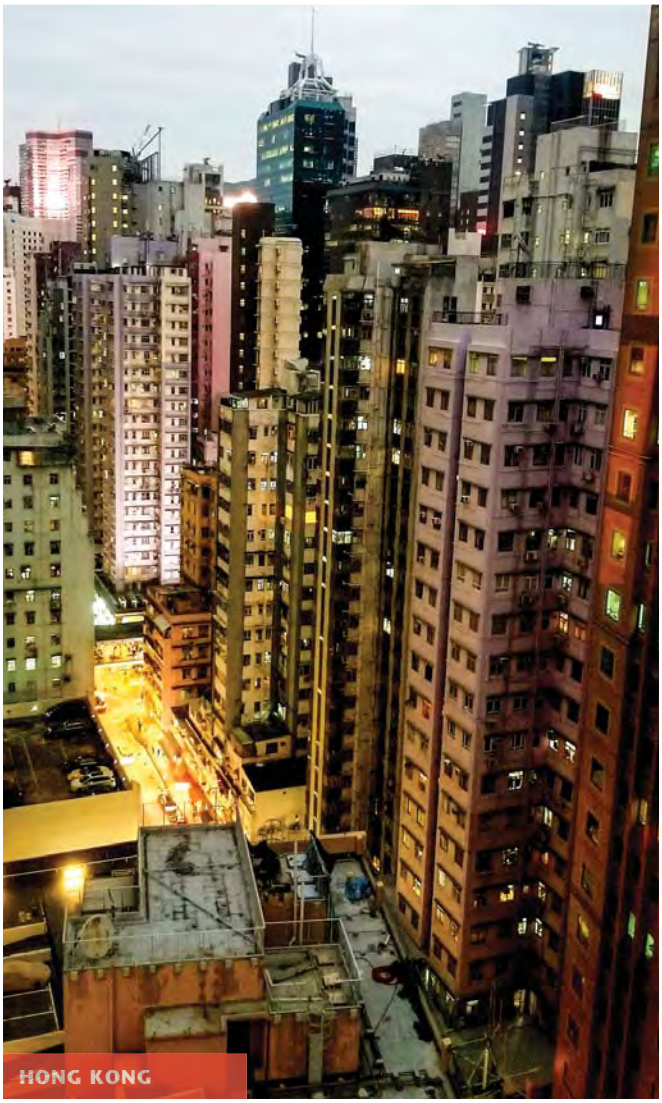
- set topics for the next AOSM on: setting up a GSO, developing guidelines for first-term delegates, establishing country-to-country sponsorship, PI and CPC.

Workshop Outcomes

Breakout sessions suggested, among other things, that we should:

- encourage well-established fellowships and individual fellows to carry the message to less established fellowships through country-to-country sponsorship, an online resource of materials and recordings, invitations to conventions.
- refine and adhere more closely to our Statement of Purpose.
- communicate more with each other in between AOSMs using messaging and conferencing apps.
- make it easier for delegates from less established fellowships to attend the AOSM and other meetings through financial sponsorship.
- maintain a prudent reserve equivalent to the cost of one AOSM.

Breakout sessions also discussed topics for the next AOSM.



Reflection

It's often said by our fellows that service is a privilege. In fact, it's so often said that I hesitated to repeat it here for fear of appearing unoriginal. However, the truth is that I felt an overwhelming sense of privilege *and* purpose. As a first-term delegate, I expected to be lost and overlooked. As someone with a life-long fear of people and conflict, I expected to be extremely uncomfortable. However, from the opening comments onwards, I was incredibly impressed by the way the meeting was conducted and by how new delegates were empowered to contribute. Participating in this AOSM was the highlight of my recovery journey. It propelled my recovery to a new level, and that helped me realize that I do have the courage to carry the message to others in less developed fellowships within our region. In addition to presenting the AOSM outcomes to various meetings within our own fellowship in Hong Kong, within a year for the AOSM, I'd presented to fellowships in Beirut, Lebanon, and Vladivostok, Russia. Seven years ago, I could barely hold my head up in the street.

Simon M., Hong Kong

The 20th European Service Meeting

The 20th European Service Meeting (ESM) was held on October 18-20, 2019 in York, Great Britain, with the theme "An Unchanged Message in a Changing World." Forty-seven delegates from 29 European countries gathered together to exchange their experience and make new friendships.

On Friday evening the meeting was opened by our chair Rita M. (from Italy) with a moment of silence. She then gave a warm welcome to all the delegates, pointing out the importance of our literature and how the errors of the past teach us today to keep on the right track. She ended her presentation with a quote from Bill W.: "As we continue in the language of the heart to carry A.A.'s message across all distances and all barriers, may God bless us."

Presentations followed by the staff of the ESM including Ranjan B., General Secretary of the European Information Centre (EIC), and also the special guests from GSO New York: General Manager Greg T., International Desk Coordinator Eva S. and A.A.W.S. Publishing Director David R.

Following the Welcome and Opening Address, a presentation on the 25th World Service Meeting (WSM) was given by Lotus A. (France) in a really heartfelt manner depicting the atmosphere of South Africa. This was followed by the Keynote Address which was presented by Greg T., who made clear the importance of keeping alive our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service by spreading the message through the use of our literature and our experience. David R. gave a brief overview of A.A. literature translation and licensing and Ranjan B., General Secretary, European Information Centre, gave a short talk on the Financial Report.

Then followed individual presentations of country highlights. It was really amazing for me to realize the large number of groups some countries have and their stable and well working service structure, whereas Greece is among the countries with the least groups and structure in growth. The evening ended with enthusiastic sharing on the importance of service, especially for the newcomers and the young people; in some countries the young have their own meetings and even conventions are held.

On Saturday the work began in earnest with the committees and workshops taking place throughout the day.

Service Committee

1. **The first question concerned the effective use of new communication technologies to spread the A.A. message.** Most countries spoke about technology being used widely to carry A.A.'s message and to conduct A.A.'s business. While many spoke about multiple uses of technology it was agreed that caution, adherence to A.A. principles and Traditions was of paramount importance.
2. **Countries' experience regarding operating the A.A. telephone helpline was shared.** Most countries follow the principle of rotation, where possible men with men and women with women.
3. **The interest of countries in organizing a European A.A. convention was discussed.** The need for more information concerning the lead and the financial implications was pointed out**.**
4. **Communication and cooperation between B and its committees, collective responsibility and individuals' participation despite having rotated out of their service was debated.** It was agreed that there is such communication and cooperation. Concerning the exertion of influence, this was solved with face-to-face conversation sensitively and the suggestion to share their experience and be a coffeemaker at one's home group.

Recovery Committee

1. **The use, the sales and the attraction of A.A. literature as well as the attention to the spiritual nature of contributing to the International Literature Fund were discussed.** Most countries had an increase in sales, translations and new publications, despite the threat from Amazon. Help to their sobriety and the encouragement to the newcomer to purchase it, as well as the spirituality of contribution were highlighted**.**
2. **The question of the publication and distribution of A.A. Conference-Approved literature was discussed.** Disunity caused by the use of non-Conference-approved literature, publication of specific literature reflecting cultural needs and examples of pamphlets were shared.
3. **Meetings on Steps, Traditions and Concepts. Change of meeting format if a newcomer shows up.** Most countries had Step and Tradition meetings but rarely meetings on Concepts. Some countries would change their meeting, others wouldn't, while some others had specific newcomers' meetings, but all shared the importance of the newcomer in the room.
4. **The emphasis placed on sponsorship and working the Steps was discussed.** It was highlighted how imperative to recovery and sobriety it is; although in some countries there is lack of sponsorship, with the new generation this is changing.

Unity Committee

1. **Seeking for an informed group conscience, communication and contributions toward unity were discussed.** Information is passed electronically and through personal visits by delegates; inspiring groups to get involved in service as well as asking and using feedback was suggested.
2. **Dealing with individuals with other addictions and their involvement in service were debated.** They are welcomed as long as they focus on their experience with alcoholism. Starting the meeting with the primary purpose statement card and speaking about the solution was felt to be crucial.
3. **Being "too anonymous" or "not anonymous enough" and making the public aware of A.A. through Public Information work were the topics discussed.**
4. **Self-supporting countries and income from contributions and sales of literature as well as the spiritual nature of contributions were the questions discussed.**

Workshops

1. **Benefit from the experience of rotated trusted servants.** Experience and the importance of sponsoring into service by those leaving the role.
2. **"Back to Basics"** was the term debated, referring to the book with this title, while others defined it as getting back to the primary purpose working the program with the Big Book. It was also stated that the program was "suggested."
3. **Understanding and Application of the 12 Concepts.** Some hadn't even translated them, while others had workshops on them. The use of the Concepts make the group and member feel safe and the experience of the whole of the Fellowship applies to our services today.

During the evening the atmosphere took on a more relaxing pace with the Sharing Meeting which saw presentations from Amanda S., Great Britain, and Michal F. on the theme: "Country-to-Country Cooperation — 40 years of the ESM." This was followed by sharing around the room.

On Sunday morning, elections were held to determine who would become chair of the 21st European Service Meeting and we were pleased to welcome Yury T. (Ukraine) to take up the position.

Nana K. (Greece) was elected to prepare and present a report on this 20th European Service Meeting to the 26th World Service Meeting which will take place in 2020. She will then report back on the 26th WSM to the 21st ESM in 2021.

To finalize the weekend, closing addresses on the theme of the ESM, "An Unchanged Message in a Changing World," were given by Ewa B. (Sweden), Jon Oli O. (Iceland), Nur I. (Turkey) and Werner F. (Austria). These were all heartfelt and moving shares of their experiences and thoughts on the European Service Meeting.

Rita M., our chair, closed the 20th ESM with a warm and sincere closing address and to finish the ESM all delegates formed a circle around the room and took turns to share the Serenity Prayer in their native language, ending with all delegates speaking the Serenity Prayer in English as one.

Nana K., Greece

21st Meeting of the Americas (REDELA)

The work of the 21st REDELA took place from September 29 to October 3, 2019 at Hotel Abasto in Buenos Aires, Argentina, with the following theme: "Serving Together to Reach Our Goal."

The meeting started with an ice-breaker, the red ball A.A. meeting. All meeting delegates participated and Guatemala was in charge of chairing the meeting. At 5:00 p.m., the 21st Meeting of the Americas, REDELA, was called to order and the chair of the GSB of A.A. of Argentina, Lic. [licenciado = a person who has a university title] said some words of welcome. After that, participating countries were introduced and their flags were displayed on the screen, while snippets of their national anthems were played. There was a roll call. A total of 21 delegates, representing 16 structures in 17 countries of the Americas, were present, including two female delegates (U.S./Canada and Brazil). Cuba, Uruguay, Panama, Belize, Honduras and Trinidad and Tobago did not attend. There are a total of 35 countries in the Americas, and 23 of them have a service structure. Out of those 23 countries, 17 attended and 6 did not.

Prior to the start of the REDELA, on Saturday, September 28, beginning at 5:00 p.m., at the Auditorium of the Catholic Worker Federation in downtown Buenos Aires, Lic. Carlos M. inaugurated a "Pre-REDELA Forum," with words of welcome and gratitude for the presence of all the countries attending the REDELA. Members from A.A. groups in Argentina took part as well, and a moving video was shown, with the participation of the delegates from the Americas.

Mexico was invited to share about its experience at the last REDELA (the 20th), in Costa Rica. Colombia spoke about spirituality in world services. Both U.S./Canada and Brazil, which had sent women delegates, shared on the topic: women in world services. Chile shared about young people and how to attract them and keep them in the Fellowship. Costa Rica shared on problems other than alcohol. Paraguay shared on group conscience in world services. Venezuela's topic was: "I am responsible." El Salvador shared about social media as a potential tool for carrying the message. David R., Publishing Director from A.A. World Services, Inc. shared about gratitude as a basis for the growth of Alcoholics Anonymous around the world. The "Pre-REDELA Forum" ended with the Responsibility Statement and Declaration of Unity. Overall, it was a gratifying experience to have all these participants from many countries.

At the REDELA, the keynote speech was given by Newton P., WSM delegate from the US, on the theme of the meeting: "REDELA: Serving Together to Reach Our Goal."

Jorge T., WSM delegate from Mexico, followed with a history of the Meeting of the Americas.

David R., from the U.S./Canada, shared on the results and importance of the International Literature Fund. David reported that the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is currently available in 71 languages, with 23 languages pending and 16 new translations in process, together with 5 revisions and re-translations. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is available in 48 languages, with a pending Arabic translation and a revision of the Czech translation underway. *Daily Reflections* is available in 34 languages. Over the past year, A.A. brochures have been published in a variety of languages, including Thai, Polish, Twi

(from Ghana), Rarotongan Maori (Cook Islands) and Ukrainian. The Big Book was recently translated and distributed as an audio book in Navajo, the language of the North American native people of the same name.

He reported that, as of the end of 2018, a total of 23 countries have contributed to the International Literature Fund. From the time of its creation over 35 countries have participated in the Fund.

Since 1991, A.A.W.S.' expenses for providing help with international literature in emerging countries in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Oceania and the Americas have amounted to over 2.7 million dollars. Out of this total, the International Literature Fund has contributed US $1,790,689. In 2018, a total of US $75,690.63 was contributed to the ILF, an increase of US $5,635.40 compared to the US $70,055.23 that was contributed in 2017.

Over the past few years A.A.W.S. has provided free copies of books and other A.A. literature to countries such as Albania, Bolivia, Cuba, Macedonia, Mongolia, Nicaragua, Sri Lanka, Trinidad, Uganda, Uruguay and Zimbabwe.

Committee Meetings

Agenda Committee

The theme selected for the 22nd REDELA was: "The Americas United Under the Three Legacies."

Presentation topics:

1. Sponsorship: Vital for the development of our general services.
2. Participation in service beyond the group.
3. Communication in the digital era: threats and opportunities.
4. Groups: the fundamental responsibility of our structure.
5. Sponsorship throughout the structure, including country-to-country.
6. The need to know the structure in order to perform good service.
7. Opening the doors of service to women.
8. The importance of the district in the growth of the Fellowship.

Workshops:

I. Women's participation in general service.
II. The importance of the spirit of rotation for the work of A.A.
III. How to make people aware of how the service structure works.
   a. Active trusted servants.
   b. Group members.
IV. Seventh Tradition: how are we practicing it?
V. A.A. inroads into social media.
VI. A.A. literature and its place on the Internet.

Policy and Admissions Committee

REDELA finances and delegate fees were reviewed. It was recommended that the current fee of US $800 be kept unchanged.

A letter from Guatemala asking to be host of the 22nd REDELA in 2021 was read. The proposal was voted on and unanimously approved. Colombia was designated as the alternate host. The committee approved that the dates should fall within the first 15 days of October 2021.

As new business, the committee encouraged countries participating at the REDELA to develop self-support plans in order to cover the expenses for delegate participation.

Literature and Publications Committee

There was sharing on the following literature-related topics:

1. **The effectiveness of the A.A. literature available in your country to carry the message.** Each REDELA delegate shared on their point of view and experience.
2. **Production costs and price setting policies in your country.** A.A.W.S. Publishing Director David R. recommended providing information on customs, transportation expenses, etc. David explained that extra costs may be included in the credit application to A.A.W.S. or with literature orders covered by the International Literature Fund. In Guatemala, they print the most popular titles. The titles that do not sell as well are purchased abroad. Colombia relies on selling literature at forums and events throughout the Fellowship.
3. **Online A.A. literature in your country: policy, benefits and risks.** The Brazilian structure does sell literature online and has good results. U.S./Canada report that print literature sales decreased once digital versions became available.
4. **Digital magazines: policy, benefits and risks.** U.S./Canada report that the Grapevine magazine has a digital version and is seeking to adapt to new technologies.

Working with Others (WWO) Committee

Public Information

1. **How can we communicate the A.A. message more effectively and reinforce unity by using current media and broadcast resources?** We need to adapt to technological changes and harness them in the best possible way without affecting our Fellowship.
2. **How do local A.A. groups collaborate with A.A. groups in other countries? What is the role of online meetings?** New WhatsApp meetings were discussed and a member expressed that he feels they are not personal enough and that the spirituality is lost. Three countries shared that there are well-structured online groups, with GSRs, and that they contribute to GSO and meet our primary purpose.
3. **Sharing strategies to keep members active in service.** It is important to pass on the spirituality that we get from service and to delegate responsibilities, participate in different meetings, sponsor people into service and respect the rotation of trusted servants. Gratitude toward a service motivates people to keep doing it.
4. **Accessibility of the A.A. message for underserved communities.** Various shortfalls were discussed in connection with carrying the message to seniors and people with various disabilities. There are countries that have

begun to distribute available materials in Braille, audio, video and other formats that enable access to the message. We also should not overlook communities that speak other languages. Structures should consider how to cover all these needs.

5. **Are all alcoholics safe in A.A.?** It was suggested that the new A.A.W.S. brochure entitled *Safety in A.A.: our common welfare* should be used to make our members aware about possible situations that pose a threat to safety. We should ensure that our meetings are safe spaces, especially for vulnerable members. It is important to inform people that we are not above the law. The chair may stop someone from speaking if necessary. If internal conflicts come up, it is useful to do inventory meetings.

Cooperation with the Professional Community

1. **A.A. CPC as a resource for alcoholics through private and public health care facilities.**
2. **How A.A. cooperates with professionals.**
3. **How to keep meeting the primary purpose of A.A. in treatment settings.** We need to motivate members to carry the message to institutions. It was reported that, in one country, approximately 65% of arrests have a connection to alcoholism. There are countries that cooperate with the authorities to let them know they can refer alcoholics to A.A. meetings. It was mentioned also that doctors can refer patients to meetings. It is useful to inform professionals who work with the homeless about A.A. In some countries, people who are indicted and have alcoholism problems are sent to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings. CPC work flourishes when Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees are involved. Do not limit yourself to doctors and nurses. It is important to carry the message to social workers and other professionals as well.

Carrying the A.A. Message to Institutions

1. **A.A. as a resource for alcoholics in the legal system and for legal professionals.**
2. **What are we doing to carry the message to correctional facilities?** We cooperate with judges, provide them with literature, and in some places, people who are sent to Alcoholics Anonymous have to carry attendance cards that the group either signs or stamps — provided their group conscience agrees to do so. In many structures, it has been difficult to get access to institutions, especially at the managerial level.
3. **How to keep meeting the primary purpose of A.A. in correctional facilities.** We try to provide correctional facilities with good information. There are countries where access to prisons is made difficult by safety problems. In order to carry out this work, it is advisable to start by identifying existing institutions and then figuring out how to contact them. There are places that organize workshops to train our trusted servants. A country pointed out that the work of carrying the message into prisons has two sides: inmates and corrections personnel.

General topics:

1. This section started with a presentation on the topic: *What are we doing to attract young people and make them stay in A.A.?*, by Gonzalo M., first-term delegate to the 26th WSM from Mexico.
2. *How are we practicing the principle of rotation?,* by Rodrigo B., 26th WSM delegate from Paraguay.
3. *How do we motivate women to participate in service?*, by Hernán L., 26th WSM delegate from Chile.
4. *How can we improve digital communications between young people and oldtimers?,* Nivaldo G., 26th WSM delegate from Brazil.
5. *How are we providing a safe meeting place?,* Pedro J., 26th WSM delegate from Nicaragua.

There was general sharing by all delegates on the topic "What's on your mind?"

At this meeting, the spirit of unity and gratitude toward service prevailed and was expressed by each one of us through the *language of the heart.*

The meeting ended with some closing words by second-term delegates; a closing speech by the vice-chair of the GSB of Argentina, Dr. José Luis S., who gave an interesting and heartfelt talk about the importance of the Alcoholics Anonymous program. Lastly, both the Argentine Scientific Society and the Legislature of the City of Buenos Aires declared the 21st REDELA meeting as "a meeting of interest."

Lic. Corina Carabajal, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee and chair of the Correctional Facilities and Institutions Committee gave a heartfelt speech, full of love for every country that makes up the Meeting of the Americas. The closing ceremony ended with the Serenity Prayer recited in five languages. Rodrigo B. from Paraguay said it in Guarani, the Brazilian delegates said it in Portuguese, Trish L., from Canada said it in French, Newton P. from the U.S./Canada said it in English and lastly, everybody held hands and said the prayer in Spanish, with much emotion and gratitude among all participants.

Gonzalo T., Mexico

The 9th Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM)

The Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM) is comprised of World Service delegates from Botswana, Eswatini (Swaziland), Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Meetings are held every alternate year. Thus far meetings have been held in Johannesburg, South Africa. SSASM meetings are made possible with funding from Great Britain and USA/Canada, both of whom are also in attendance at the meetings. The chair is rotated amongst the countries in attendance. As of 2019, there were nine SSASM meetings held thus far. The format of the meetings follows a set agenda and is usually held during June, over three days.

SSASM Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the Sub-Saharan African Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever he or she may be, whatever language he or she speaks. The Sub-Saharan

Africa Service Meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates who come together from all parts of the Sub-Saharan Africa region. It can also represent an expression of the Group Conscience throughout the region. Experience teaches us that developing a sound structure enables us to deliver our services more effectively. The Sub-Saharan Service Meeting encourages the planning of the sound structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries and the exploration of expanding A.A.'s services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, community relations and working in institutions.

The 2019 SSAS Meeting

The ninth SSASM meeting was held in June 2019 and was attended by delegates in all member countries. We were fortunate to also have Denise H. (Trustee, GSB, Great Britain), Ranjan B. (Secretary, GSB, Great Britain), David R. (Publications Director, GSO, USA/Canada) and Greg T. (General Manager, GSO, USA/Canada) in attendance. The outgoing chair for 2019 was Joseph N. from Kenya. Masooane T. of Lesotho was duly elected as chairperson for the 2021 SSASM meeting, with Dean from Zimbabwe as the alternate.

The theme for 2019 was "Our Twelve Traditions — A.A.'s Future in the Modern World."

Highlights from the country reports are tabled below:

The incoming secretary for SSASM is Nomsa from South Africa. Subsequent to the last biennial meeting, an informal online meeting was held amongst SSASM members on June 10, 2020 as a means of commemorating A.A. Founders' Day. SSASM members also are invited to, attend and participate in CPC/PI webinars on alcoholism and related topics, hosted by South Africa.

The theme for SSASM 2021 is: "The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety Within Everyone's Reach."

Helga V.L., South Africa

Highlights from the country reports are tabled below *(presented alphabetically):*

Member Countries	Represented by	HIGHLIGHTS
Botswana	Nigel S. and Tuduetso T.	Reported on two groups, namely the Gaborone Angels Group and the Keep it Simple (Francistown) group. The 4th Botswana Rally was held in November 2018. Conventions were held annually from 2015-2018. The Francistown meeting is an open meeting and is therefore attended by friends of A.A. Intergroup structure and female sponsorship need to be revived. Newcomer-reluctance to work the Steps. Require a member who is fluent in Setswana. To consider online presence (updated website, social media, WhatsApp). Al-Anon Botswana started in October 2018.
Eswatini (Swaziland)	Victor K. and Beketele G.	Four meetings are held weekly, namely in Mbabane, Big Bend, Manzini and Simunye. To address declining membership in some groups. Good networking with Royal Eswatini Sugar to assist their employees, however A.A. members would not get involved with employees who use the A.A. name in mitigation at disciplinary hearings where alcohol is involved.
Ghana	Yaw O.-N. and Mike B.	A.A. started in Ghana in the late 2000s. A.A. meetings in place on a weekly basis in the Accra metro area. Ghana Intergroup inactive, but resuscitated due to an informal group conscience. Websites include: http://aaghana.atspace.org and http://www.oocities.org/ghana_aa/ghana_aa.html.
Kenya	Daniel N. and Moses O.W.	A.A. started in Kenya 49 years ago. 24+ weekly meetings are held in the capital of Nairobi alone, with groups also prevalent in other cities and towns. Kenya Intergroup is active and meets monthly. Hosted the 2nd East-African A.A. Convention at the end of 2017, drawing participants from East Africa, Southern Africa and North America, providing a platform for members to share their experience, strength and hope.
Lesotho	Masooane T. and Mothusi M.	There is one A.A. group in Lesotho, namely the Maseru Legacy Group established in 1987. Meetings are held twice weekly. Holds the annual Lesotho rally. Also hosts the A.A. Maseru Sobriety Awards in order to encourage members on their achievements. To address the slow growth in main Maseru Legacy Group, relapses, resources (manpower, transport, time and money), and Big Book translation into Sesotho. Groups are self-supporting through own voluntary contributions; old-timers supporting newcomers; literature starter-packs given to newcomers.

Malawi	Mary T. and Edward M.	To work with appropriate supporting activities for the recovering alcoholic. Hampered by difficulties in travelling, to visit and commune with other recovering alcoholics due to poor economy. Poverty affects member contributions.
Namibia	Delia V. and Pumna M.	Regular meetings are held in Windhoek (3 meetings per week), and Swakopmund (one meeting per week). Weekly Step meetings held on Wednesday evenings in Windhoek. Open group meetings are held once a quarter for doctors, social workers and other professionals to attend. Information about meetings is contained in the South African National Directory of A.A. meetings as Namibia falls within the A.A. Western Cape Area Office. The 2nd Annual Winter Rally was held in Keetmanshoop in June 2019, attracting attendance from Western Cape and KwaZulu/Natal in South Africa. Need to address poor growth of groups outside of Windhoek and Swakopmund due to stigma; noted that the government supports responsible drinking programs as this is income-generating for the government itself.
South Africa	John L. and Rajeev S.	Annual conferences, rallies and annual conventions are in place and functioning optimally. Namibia and Zimbabwe are part of the SA structure and conference. Website has been updated (www.aasouthafrica.org). 330 groups in place country-wide, with meetings being available daily.
Tanzania	Modest N.T. and Innocent I.	Interim intergroup forum in place. The 4th East African Convention was held in Arusha in Oct. 2019, under the theme Road of Happy Destiny. The A.A. meetings list in Tanzania provides an indication of all meetings held.
Uganda	Sarah N. and Paul O.A.	There has been an increase in the distribution of A.A. meetings though most are still centered in Kampala and few in the other districts. A women's meeting emerged but discontinued. With the development of technology, a number of members have joined Skype meetings. There are six groups with meetings at least once a week in Kampala at: ARC bukoto, Butabika hospital; Nacare nabbingo; Entebbe; Makerer, Nsambya; Rubaga and Christ the King. Those upcountry are in Mbarara, Masaka at Kimaanya Catholic seminary, Kabale, Bushenyi, Kitabi seminary, the group at Rushooka, Ntugamo is yet to be revived [all in western Uganda] Jinja , Moroto, [Eastern Uganda], Ediofe in Arua [West Nile], Gulu [Northern Uganda], and another in Kalangala, one of the islands on Lake Victoria. Uganda hosted its first International A.A. convention in November 2018. Another mini convention dubbed the Kalangala A.A. Retreat also took place in October 2018 (Kalangala is an island with an extremely high alcoholism rate). A.A. brochures are being translated in Lugbara and Acholic. Al-Anon is still struggling to meet. Need to also address irregular attendance at A.A. meetings.
Zambia	Joseph B. and Franciska S.	Has groups in Lusaka and Livingstone, with new groups emerging in Lusaka, with 11 meetings a week nationally. Facebook page has Daily Reflections in English and Ntanya. Increase in Facebook logins noted. Intergroup WhatsApp group has been set up. First Zambia rally was held in June 2018 in Livingstone (21 in attendance, including participants from South Africa).
Zimbabwe	DeanT. and Jacob S.	Intergroup Committee meets once a month. Two new groups set up in Harare (in Mandara and Marlborough). There are 130 members in the Harare group and 10 members in the Bulawayo group. The website falls under the South African website with own web page as a province. Delegates are sent to the SA Annual Conference. Mini-convention held in May and National Convention held in October. Service meetings have increased to 3 per week. CPC/PI Committee is quite active with outreach programs. Al-Anon and Alateen groups are active and meet weekly.

SUMMARY: 26TH WORLD SERVICE MEETING EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Forty-three delegates attending the 26th World Service Meeting completed their evaluation questionnaires to help with planning for the 27th World Service Meeting. A summary of their responses follows:

Q. ***What presentations did you find most valuable?***

A. The presentations that delegates found extremely valuable were "Safety in A.A." (27); "Encouraging Women into General Service" (26); "Anonymity" (25); "Licensing and Translation" (25); "Importance of the Group Conscience Process" (23); "International Literature Fund" (23); "Young People in A.A." (21). Respondents also noted that the General Sharing Sessions (39), Committee Reports (32), Country Highlights (22) and Zonal Meeting Reports (14) were extremely important.

Q. ***What workshops did you find most valuable?***

A. The workshops that delegates found to be extremely valuable were: "Communication — A Key to Unity" (22); "The Use and Value of Our A.A. Literature in Sponsorship" (21); and "The Importance of Our Nonalcoholic Friends in Our Structure" (21).

Q. ***Do you think we should continue Country Highlights and/or Country Reports?***

A. Overall, respondents were in favor of continuing Country Highlights and/or Country Reports, noting that they are a good point of reference to see what other countries are doing to carry the message. Said one delegate, "They are an important tool for sharing experiences of each country and we can get ideas for challenges we may find in our own path." There were, however, a number of qualifications. Delegates commented: perhaps just Country Highlights and delegates could enlarge on these if requested; country reports should be updated every time prior to WSM as an archive to consult for each country but not necessarily be presented verbally; it's important to have reports so that we can share information, but it does take a lot of time to present them verbally; no real need for both.

Q. ***Do you think there is enough delegate participation?***

A. Most respondents felt that there was sufficient delegate participation, with some suggesting more participation could be encouraged, while recognizing the challenges presented with the virtual platform. For those noting that there was sufficient time for delegate participation, others felt that some delegates take up too much time and balance has to be encouraged, with one delegate noting, "it would have been helpful to have a countdown timer on the delegate participation portion." One comment that was repeated a number of times indicated that delegates valued the more interpersonal sharing that often occurs informally between delegates in a face-to-face setting. Said one delegate, "Like at a break if I found myself sitting next to someone I didn't know I could say, 'Oh, are you from Sweden? That was interesting in your report…'"

Q. ***Was the communication and information you received prior to the meeting adequate?***

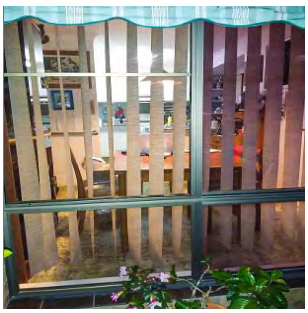
A. Most answered in the affirmative to this question, noting that there were some difficulties early on that were brought about by the uncertainty of the pandemic. Said one delegate, "Once the decision was made to move forward with a virtual WSM, the communication was very good." Regarding preparations prior to the meeting, one delegate said, "Holding mock sessions was brilliant. People have a wide variety of experience, and in spite of that, there were some delegates who still had problems, but they would have been much more had the mock sessions not occurred." Said another, "It certainly made the meeting run more smoothly." For the future, one delegate suggested that with a virtual platform committee meetings could occur more frequently, perhaps six months before the WSM and then again six months after. A few delegates had trouble either accessing or receiving responses to various communications, though the majority were in agreement with the comment, "It is a hard work to communicate and inform about so many subjects and procedures. I can't really complain about anything."

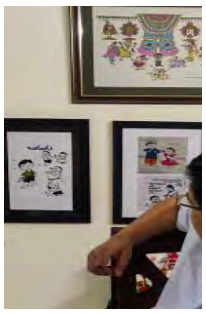
Q. ***How can the World Service Meeting be improved?***

A. Said one delegate, "I believe if we had more time for discussions we would have been able to listen to what each other said. Some discussions were shut down because of lack of time. I do understand that we have different levels of IT knowledge, so under the circumstances, I understand why it had to be like this." There were some who felt that encouragement needed to be given to "shyer" delegates to encourage broader sharing, with the suggestion, "Perhaps a limit on how many times a delegate can share in a session to allow others or shyer delegates more input. Perhaps encourage very quiet delegates into the main forum with questions like: Is there anyone who has not shared yet in this World Service Meeting who would like to contribute?" Added another, "I'd just wish we could talk more about solutions instead telling the same stories over and over again."

Comments or suggestions:

Taking into consideration the pandemic and how it inevitably changed the nature of the meeting, many of the comments were focused on carving out more time, both formally and informally, to allow greater interaction and communication between delegates. One comprehensive response captured the feelings of many: "In 2022, it would be nice to have a broader discussion (such as an inventory) to discuss the function and the future of the WSM. The sharing is very important, as are the presentations. But with the world having changed so abruptly, we might need to look at spending some time to discuss issues like literature distribution across borders, virtual groups and how they fit into the service structure, expanding the role of the World Service Meeting to have a bit more oversight of A.A. as a whole (presently nothing is binding on any country), and look to see if there are other NGOs who are faced with similar issues and how they are handling it. The length of the WSM is just right when we are F2F, but virtual was too short to get to discuss things, and really get to know the other delegates."





Delegates to the 26th World Service Meeting

Argentina
Alberto C. (2nd Term)

Australia
Gregory B. (1st Term)
Brian S. (2nd Term)

Belarus
Ekaterina, G. (1st Term)
Aliaksei Y. (2nd Term)

Bolivia
Milton H. (1st Term)

Brazil
Maria Z. (2nd Term)
Ana Elisa L. (1st Term)

Bulgaria
Iliana T. (1st Term)

Central America/ Southern Zone
Miguel M. (2nd Term)

Chile
Hernán L. (2nd Term)
Sandra Huenumán (2nd Term)

Colombia
Harold B. (1st Term)
Reinaldo M. (2nd Term)

Cuba
Esmeralda F. (2nd Term)

Czech Republic
Tamara L. (1st Term)
Jan K. (2nd Term)

Denmark
Tobias D. (1st Term)

Dominican Republic
José M. (1st Term)

Ecuador
Luis S. (1st Term)
Wilson C. (1st Term)

El Salvador
Juan C. (1st Term)

Finland
Antti L. (1st Term)
Juha I. (2nd Term)

French-Speaking Europe
Lotus A. (2nd Term)

Great Britain
Amanda S. (1st Term)
Nigel P. (2nd Term)

Greece
Nana K. (1st Term)

Guatemala
Lionel R. (1st Term)

Hong Kong
Simon M. (1st Term)

Iceland
Snorri S. (1st Term)
Agust A. (2nd Term)

India
Sukhdev S. (1st Term)
Krishna V. (2nd Term)

Iran
Gholamreza V. (1st Term)
Ali H. (2nd Term)

Ireland
Moira S. (1st Term)
Helen H. (2nd Term)

Italy
Massimo F. (2nd Term)

Japan
Doublas G. (1st Term)
Yasumichi H. (2nd Term)

Latvia
Ilse K. (1st Term)

Mexico
Gonzalo M. (1st Term)
Jorge T. (2nd Term)

Netherlands
Magdalena O. (1st Term)
Tatjana R. (2nd Term)

New Zealand
Adam P. (1st Term)
Steven R.-K. (2nd Term)

Norway
Kristine K. (1st Term)
Terje O. (2nd Term)

Paraguay
Luis B. (1st Term)

Peru
Daniel G. (1st Term)

Poland
Tadeusz, C. (1st Term)
Michal F. (2nd Term)

Portugal
Ivo C. (1st Term)
Porfirio S. (2nd Term)

Russia
Uliana M. (1st Term)

South Africa
Varoshini Nadesan (1st Term)
Helga Van L. (2nd Term)

Spain
José F. (1st Term)
Cipriano C. (2nd Term)

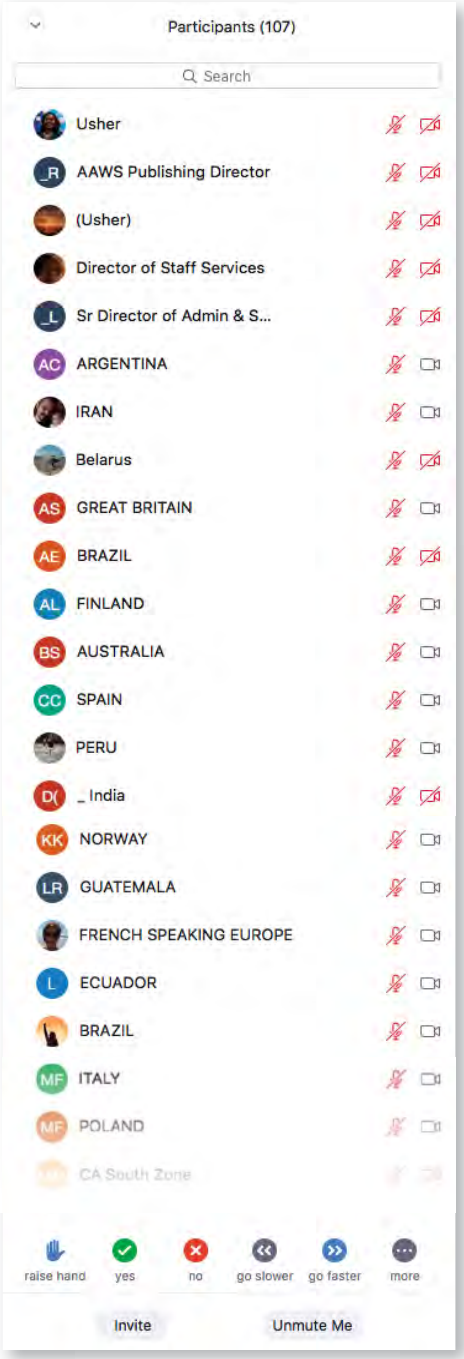
Sweden
Ray L. (1st Term)
Ewa B. (2nd Term)

Turkey
Emre A. (1st Term)
Fatma Nur Z. (2nd Term)

U.S./Canada
Trish L.N. (1st Term)
Newton P. (2nd Term)

Ukraine
Oleksandr S. (1st Term)

Venezuela
Juan C. (1st Term)



GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers

Argentina
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Aranguren 728
1405 Ciudad de Buenos Aires, Argentina
Service Office: (54) 11-43251813
Email: osg@aa.org.ar
Website: www.aa.org.ar

Australia
General Service Office Of Alcoholics Anonymous Australia
48 Firth Street
Arncliffe NSW 2205, Australia
Service Office: (61) 2-9599-8866
Service Office: gso@aa.org.au
Website: www.aa.org.au

Austria
Anonyme Alkoholiker
Barthgasse 5
Vienna , Austria 1030
Service Office: (43) 1-7995599
Service Office: info@anonyme-alkoholiker.at
Website: www.anonyme-alkoholiker.at

Belarus
Belarusian Alcoholics Anonymous Service Centre
Kalinovsky str. 6-19
220103 Minsk, Belarus
Phone/FAX: (375) 17-395 83 50
Email: oo_csaa@tut.by
Website: www.aabelarus.org

Belgium
Conseils des Services Generaux des Alcooliques Anonymes/ CSGAA (French Speaking)
Rue des Pieds D'alouette 42-B
5100 Naninne (Namur), Belgium
Phone: (32) 2-5114030
Helpline: (32) 7-8152556
Email: bsg@alcooliquesanonymes.be
Website: www.alcooliquesanonymes.be

Belgium
Algemeen Dienstbureau A.A. (Dutch Speaking)
Grote Steenweg 149
Antwerp, Belgium 2600
Service Office: (32) 3-2391415
Service Office: info@aavlaanderen.org
Website: www.aavlaanderen.org

Bolivia
Junta De Servicios Generales de A.A. de Bolivia
Barrio Gualberto Villarroel
Calle Las Petas, Edificio Olga
2330, 1er Piso, Dpto. No. 5
Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia
Service Office: (591) 3-3329720
Email: osgbolivia@yahoo.com
Website: www.alcoholicosanonimosbolivia.org

Brazil
Junta de Serviços Gerais de Alcoólicos Anônimos do Brasil (JUNAAB)
Rua Padre Antonio de Sa
116-Tatuape
Sao Paulo SP, Brazil 03066-010
Phone/FAX: (55) 11-32293611
Service Office: gerencia@esg.aa.org.br
Website: aa@aa.org.br

Chile
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Bellavista No. 0330
Providencia
Santiago, Chile
24 Hr Phone: (98) 260-10-46
FAX: (56) 22-7779013, Service Office: (56) 22-7771010
Email: gerencia@ alcoholicosanonimos.cl
Website: www.alcoholicosanonimoschile.cl

Colombia
Oficina De Servicio General
Calle 50 #46-36
Oficina 310
Edificio Furatena
Medellin, Colombia
Service Office: (57) 4-2517887
FAX: (57) 4-2316458
Service Office: corporacionaa@une.net.co
Website: www.cnaa.org.co

Costa Rica
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Paseo Colon
Avenidas 1 y 3,Calle 22
Costado Este Esc. Juan Rafael-Mora Porras
San José, Costa Rica
Service Office: (506) 2222-52-24
Email: aaosgcr@gmail.com
Website: www.aacostarica.org

Cuba
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Calle 27 #156 (Interior)
entre L y M Vedado
Habana, Cuba 10400
Cell: (53) 533-98629
Service Office: aacubaosg@gmail.com

Czech Republic
Sdružení pro služby Anonymním alkoholikum v CR
Kancelar Anonymnich alkoholiku
Ambrozova 729
Hradec Kralove,
Czech Republic 500 02
Phone: (420) 773-138-303
Service Office: international@aamail.cz
Website: www.anonymnialkoholici.cz

Denmark
A. A. Hovedservicekontor
Thorsgade 59, 3.tv.
2200 Kobenhavn N, Denmark
National Number: (45) 7010-1224
Phone/FAX: (45) 3581-8531
Email: aa@anonyme-alkoholikere.dk
Website: www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk

Dominican Republic
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Calle Beller
Esquina Sully Bonelly
Santiago, Dominican Republic
Phone: (809) 583-0351
Email: osgparard@gmail.com

Ecuador
Oficina De Servicios Generales
Lorenzo de Garaicoa 821
2do Piso Oficina 208
9 de Octubre y Victor Manuel Rendo
Guayaquil, Ecuador 090150
Service Office: (593) 4-2309023
Phone/FAX: (593) 4-2312882
Email: osg@alcoholicosanonimos.org.ec
Website: www.aae.org.ec

El Salvador
Oficina De Servicios Generales
16 Av Norte, 25 Calle Oriente
Casa No. 10
Colonia Magaña
San Salvador, El Salvador
Phone: (503) 2225-9526
(503) 2225-1430
Service Office: osgdeelsalvador@hotmail.com
Website: aaelsalvador.org

Estonia
Eesti AA Teenindusburoo (General Service Office A.A. of Estonia)
Lastekodu 6 A
Tallinn, Estonia 10115
Phone: (372) 529-9955
Email: teenindus@aaestonia.com
Website: www.aaestonia.com

Faroe Islands
A.A. Resources In The Faroe Islands (GSO)
AA i Foroyum
Postsmoga 10
FO-110 Torshavn, Faroe Islands
Email: taenasturad@aa.fo
Website: www.aa.fo

Finland
Suomen A.A. Toimisto
Kylänevantie 2
00320 Helsinki, Finland
Phone: (358) 9-8387040
Email: aa@aa.fi
Website: www.aa.fi

France
Services Generaux A.A.
29 Rue Campo Formio
75013 Paris, France
Helpline: (33) 9-69-394020
Service Office: (33) 1-48-064368
Email: bsg@aafrance.fr
Website: www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr

Germany
Anonyme Alkoholiker Interessengemeinschaft e.V.
Waldweg 6
Gottfrieding Unterweilnbach, Germany D 84177
Phone: (49) 8731-325730
FAX: (49) 8731-3257320
Email: sekretariat@anonyme-alkoholiker.de
Website: www.anonyme-alkoholiker.de

Guatemala
Oficina De Servicios Generales
11 Ave No. 12-48, Zona 2
Colonia Ciudad Nueva
Guatemala, Guatemala 1002
Service Office: (502) 2254-6565
Business: (502) 2288-5139
Email: osg@aaguatemala.org
Website: www.aaguatemala.org

Honduras
Oficina De Servicios Generales de A.A.
Barrio La Hoya,Casa 901
Primera Calle,una cuadra abajo
De Funeraria La Auxiliadora
Tegucigalpa MDC, Honduras
Phone/FAX: (504) 2238-7930
Email: osgdehonduras@yahoo.es

GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers *(cont'd)*

Hungary

Felepulok Egeszsegugyi Anonim Egyesulete
PF 258
Budapest, Hungary H-1536
Phone: (36) 1-2510051
Email: info@anonimalkoholistak.hu
Website: www.anonimalkoholistak.hu

Iceland

National Service Office Of A. A.
Tjarnargata 20
Reykjavik, Iceland 101
Service Office: (354) 551-2010
Business: (354) 562-8812,
FAX: (354)562- 8814
Email: aa@aa.is
Website: www.aa.is

India

India General Service Office
Bharat Shatrughna Com. Complex
Office 116 ABC above hotel
Sector-18 Sanpada
Navi Mumbai, India 400 703
Service Office: (91) 86550-55134
Phone: (91) 80970-55134,
Helpline: (91) 90227-71071
Service Office: info@aagsoindia.org
Website: www.aagsoindia.org

Iran

General Service Office Of Iran Alcoholics Anonymous
Shahid Fahmideh Blvd
106 Shalchi St.
Karaj, Iran 3135694915
Phone: (98)2 63-273-3069
FAX: (98) 263-273-1137
Email: iranaa0@gmail.com
Website: www.iranaa.org

Ireland

General Service Office Of Alcoholics Anonymous
Unit 2, Block C
Santry Business Park
Swords Rd
Dublin, Ireland D09 H584
Service Office: (00353) 1-8420700
FAX: (00353) 1-8420703
Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie
Website: www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie

Italy

A.A. Alcolisti Anonimi Servizi Generali
Via Di Torre Rossa 35
Scala B Int. 1B
Rome, Italy 00165
Phone: (39) 06-6636629
FAX: (39) 06-6628334,
Toll Free: (39) 800-411-406
Email: aaitaly@tin.it
Website: www.alcolistianonimiitalia.it

Japan

Japan General Service Office
Tsuchiya Building 3-F
4-17-10 Ikebukuro
Toshima-ku
Tokyo, Japan 171-0014
Phone: (81) 3-35905377
FAX: (81) 3-35905419
Service Office: gsoj-int@ric.hi-ho.ne.jp
Website: www.aajapan.org

Latvia

Biedriba Anonimo Alkoholiku Sadraudziba
Balta Iela 7
Riga, Latvia LV-1055
Phone: (371) 2-733-3523
Email: aa@aa.org.lv
Website: www.aa.org.lv

Lithuania

Lithuania A.A. Service Office
J. Basanaviciaus a. 16
Birstonas, Lithuania LT-59211
Helpline: (370) 685-05191
Service Office: (370) 3-1945141
Service Office: info@aalietuvoje.org
Website: www.aalietuvoje.org

Malta

General Service Committee A.A. Malta
66 Archbishop Street
Valletta, Malta
Hotline: (356) 79-239264
Phone: (356) 21-239264
Service Office: info@aamalta.org.mt
Website: www.aamalta.org.mt

Mexico

Central Mexicana de Servicios Generales de A.A.
Huatabampo No. 18
Colonia Roma Sur
CDMEX-Ciudad de Mexico, Mexico C.P.06760
Phone: (52) 55-52642588
FAX: (52) 55-52642166
Service Office: cinternacional@aamexico.org.mx
Website: www.aamexico.org.mx

Mongolia

GSO Mongolia
M.Oyundelger, Bayangol District
Peace Avenue-115
Nomuun Center, 2nd Fl
Room No 208
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
Phone: (976) 11-351-056
Email: gso@aa.org.mn
Website: www.aa.org.mn

Netherlands

Algemeen Diensten Bureau A.A. Nederland
Statenweg 20
Rotterdam, Netherlands 3039 HP
24 Hr Hotline: (31) 851-045-390
Phone: (31) 10-243-0175
Email: adb@aa-nederland.nl
Website: www.aa-nederland.nl

New Zealand/Aotearoa

A.A. NZGSO Office
Unit 2, 30 Downer St
Lower Hutt, New Zealand 5010
Phone/FAX: (64) 4-4724250
FAX: (64) 4-4724251,
24 Hr Hotline: (64) 800-229-6757
Service Office: nzgso@aa.org.nz
Website: www.aa.org.nz

Nicaragua

Oficina De Servicios Generales
Costado Sur del Colegio Maria Mazzarello
Barrio Altagracia Casa #8
Managua, Nicaragua
Service Office: (505) 2266-2022
Cell: (505) 7869-3517
Email: aaosgdenicaragua@hotmail.com
Website: www.aaosgnicaragua.wix.com/inicio

Norway

Stiftelsen Anonyme Alkoholikere I Norge Servicekontoret
Hammersborggata 20
0181 Oslo, Norway
Phone: (47) 22-46-89-65
Answering Service: (47) 911-77-770
Email: servicekontoret@anonymealkoholikere.no
Website: www.anonymealkoholikere.no

Panama

Oficina De Servicios Generales
Avenida Central-Espana Perejil
Edificio Rafael
1er Piso, Officina 103
Panama City, Panama
Service Office: (507) 225-3585
Service Office: aadepanama@hotmail.com
Website: www.aapanama.org

Paraguay

Oficina De Servicios Generales de Alcoholicos Anonimos del Paraguay
Carmelo Figueredo y
Juan A. Rodas
Barrio Mbachio-Villa Policial
Ciudad de Lambare , Paraguay
24 Hr Phone: (595) 098-3847093
Phone/FAX: (595) 21-907805
Service Office: osg-alcoholicosanonimosparaguay@hotmail.com
Website: www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.py

Peru

Asociación Junta de Servicios Generales de Alcoholicos Anonimos del Peru
Av. Mariscal Caceres 295A
Oficina 201, 2 piso
Surquillo
Lima, Peru
Service Office: (51) 1-447-8666
Service Office: gerenteaa.osgperu@gmail.com
Website: www.aajunta.org.pe

Poland

Fundacja Biuro Sluzby Krajowej A.A. W Polsce
Ul. Chmielna 20
Warszawa, Poland 00-020
Phone/FAX: (48) 22-828-04-94
Service Office: aa@aa.org.pl
Website: www.aa.org.pl

Portugal

Associação de Serviços Gerais de Alcoólicos Anónimos de Portugal
Praca D Miquel l, 3-C
Sto Antonio dos Cavaleiros, Portugal 2660-310
Service Office: (351) 21-7167840
Helpline: (351) 21-7162969
Email: info@aaportugal.org
Website: www.aaportugal.org

Romania

Asociatia Biroul De Servicii Generale Ale Alcoolicilor Anonimi Din Romania
str 1 Decembrie nr 1,jud Timis
300231 Timisoara , Romania
Hotline: (40) 770-225522
FAX: (40) 364-780214,
Service Office: (40) 731-114440
Email: gsoromania@alcooliciianonimi.ro
Website: www.alcooliciianonimi.ro

GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers *(cont'd)*

Russia

Russian Service Office of A.A. (RSO)
Semenovskaya Lane House 15
Room 218
Moscow, Russia 107023
Service Office: (7985) 448-29-80
Service Office: rsoaa@rsoaa.ru
Website: www.rsoaa.ru

Russia

General Service Office of A.A. (FOAA)
Tayninskaya Street
House 8, Premise #2
Room 5,6,7
Moscow, Russia 129345
Phone: (499) 185-40-00
Email: office@aarus.ru
Website: www.aarus.ru

Slovakia

Zdruzenie Pre Sluzby Anonymnym Alkomolikom
Misijny Dom
Kalvaria 3
Nitra, Slovakia 949 01
Service Office: (421) 37-6516235
Service Office: alkoholici-anonymni@alkoholici-anonymni.sk
Website: www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk

Slovenia

Drustrvo AA Slovenia
Linhartova cesta 13
Ljubljana, Slovenia 1000
Answering Service: (386) 1-4338225
Service Office: info@aa-slovenia.si
Website: www.aa-slovenia.si

South Africa

General Service Office
28 Hennie Alberts Street
Brackenhurst
Alberton, South Africa 1448
Service Office: 27 (011) 867-5950
FAX: 27 (088) 011-867-5950
Service Office: gso@aasouthafrica.org.za
Website: www.aasouthafrica.org.za

South Korea

Korea A.A. Office
5F, Jung Woo Bldg
Yeongsin-ro 20-gil 6
Yeongdeungpo-gu
Seoul, Republic of Korea
Service Office: (82) 2-833-0311
Phone: (82) 2-774-3797,
FAX: (82) 2-833-0422
Service Office: aakoreagso@gmail.com
Website: www.aakorea.org

Spain

Oficina De Servicios Generales de A.A.
Avda Alemania 9-3 Izda
Aviles -Principado de Asturias
Asturias, Spain 33400
Service Office: (34) 629-317-868
Phone/FAX: (34) 985-566 345
Email: aa@alcoholicos-anonimos.org
Website: www.alcoholicos-anonimos.org

Sweden

A.A. Servicekontor
Bolidenvagen 20
121-63 Johanneshov, Sweden
Service Office: (46) 8-6422609
National Number: (46) 8-720-38-42
Service Office: service@aa.se
Website: www.aa.se

Switzerland

Anonyme Alkoholiker Schweiz
Grebelackerstrasse 32
Zurich, Switzerland CH-8057
24 Hr Hotline: (41) 848-848-885
Service Office: (41) 44-3701383
Email: info@anonyme-alkoholiker.ch
Website: www.anonyme-alkoholiker.ch

Switzerland

A.A. Suisse Romande Et Italienne
Route des Arsenaux 3C
Fribourg, Switzerland CH-1700
Phone: (41) 22-344-33-22
24 Hr Hotline: (41) 848-848-846
Service Office: aasri-litterature@hotmail.com
Website: www.aasri.org

Taiwan

GSO Taiwan
8F-6 #189 Sec2 RD
Keelung
Taipei City, Taiwan 11054
Phone: (886) 2-2377-7791
FAX: (886) 2-2377-4638
Email: aataiwangso@gmail.com
Website: www.aataiwan.org

Trinidad and Tobago

General Service Office
L.P. #52 Rivulet Rd
Brechin Castle
Couva, Trinidad and Tobago
Phone: (868) 679-0066
Email: aagsott@gmail.com

Turkey

Turkey General Service Office
Korut Reis Mahallesi
Llkiz Sokak No 22/8
Çankaya
Ankara, Turkey
Service Office: (90) 532 341 00 99
Service Office: ghosekreter@adsizalkolikler.com
Website: www.adsizalkolikler.com

Ukraine

Ukrainian Service Centre of A.A.
8A Meterorytny Lane
Poltava, Ukraine 36042
Service Office: (380) 99-928-9378
Service Office: aa.ua.gso@gmail.com
Website: www.aa.org.ua

United Kingdom

General Service Office Of A.A.
P O Box 1
10 Toft Green
York, United Kingdom YO1 7NJ
National Number: (44)800-9177-650
Phone: (44) 1904-644026,
FAX: (44) 1904-629091
Service Office: gso@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
Website: www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Uruguay

Fundacion A.A. Del Uruguay
Calle Coronel Brandzem
1956 piso 1, oficina 104
Barrio Cordón
Montevideo, Uruguay 11200
Service Office: (598) 2-400-3501
Service Office: osg@alcoholicosanonimos.org.uy
Website: www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.uy

Venezuela

Oficina De Servicios Generales
Avenida Universidad
Esq Coliseo a Corazon de Jesus
Edificio J.A. 4to Piso,Ofc. 42
Caracas, Venezuela 1010
Service Office: (58) 212-543-2286
Phone: (58) 212-541-8894
Service Office: osg.aadevenezuela@gmail.com
Website: www.aanonimos.org.ve

FINANCIAL REPORT
(unaudited)

26th World Service Meeting
Virtual — December 2020

Income		
Delegate Fees		$ 25,621
WSM Fund		$ 8,878
	Total income	$ 34,500
Expenses		
Technical Assistance		$ 14,958
Gratitude In Action		$ 4,485
Interpretation (Spanish)		$ 4,380
Binder		$ 17,088
Digital Report		$ 1,950
	Total expenses	$ 42,861
	Shortfall	(8,361)
	Transfer from WSM Fund to Cover Shortfall	$ 8,361

This report is unaudited. Some expenses have been estimated as all costs are not currently available.

2020 WSM COMMITTEES

Agenda

First Term
Gregory B. (Australia)
Juan C. Venezuela)
Tobias D. (Denmark)
Daniel G. (Peru)
José M. (Dominican Republic)
Magdalena O. (Netherlands)
Lionel R. (Guatemala)
Amanda S. (Great Britain)
Iliana T. (Bulgaria)

Second Term
Ewa B.* (Sweden)
Helen H. (Ireland)
Yasumichi H. (Japan)
Sandra H. (Chile)
Jan K. (Czech Republic)
Porfirio S. (Portugal)
Jorge T.** (Mexico)
Krishna V. (India)

Literature/Publishing

First Term
Juan C. (El Salvador)
Douglas G. (Japan)
Kristine K. (Norway)
Ana Elisa L. (Brazil)
Uliana M. (Russia)
Varoshini N. (South Africa)
Steven R.-K. (New Zealand)
Oleksandr S. (Ukraine)
Snorri S. (Iceland)

Second Term
Cipriano C. (Spain)
Michal F. (Poland)
Ali H. (Iran)
Fatma N. I. Z.* Turkey)
Reinaldo M. (Colombia)
Newton P.** (U.S./Canada)
Tatjana R. (Netherlands)
Aliaksei Y. (Belarus)

Policy/Admissions/Finance

First Term
Ivo C. (Portugal)
José F. (Spain)
Trish L. (U.S./Canada)
Antti L. (Finland)
Tamara L. (Czech Republic)
Ray L. (Sweden)
Luis S. (Ecuador)
Sukhdev S. (India)
Moira S. (Ireland)
Simon M. (Hong Kong)

Second Term
Agust A.* (Iceland)
Alberto C.** (Argentina)
Massimo F. (Italy)
Miguel M.
(Central America/Southern Zone, Costa Rica, Nicaragua,Panama)
Terje O. (Norway)
Brian S. (Australia)
Maria Z. (Brasil)

Working With Others

First Term
Emre A. (Turkey)
Luis B. (Paraguay)
Harold B. (Colombia)
Wilson C. (Ecuador)
Tadeusz C. (Poland)
Ekaterina G. (Belarus)
Milton H. (Bolivia)
Nana K. (Greece)
Ilze K. (Latvia)
Gonzalo M. (Mexico)
Gholamreza V. (Iran)

Second Term
Lotus A.* (French-Speaking Europe)
Esmeralda F. (Cuba)
Juha I. (Finland)
Hernán L. (Chile)
Nigel P. (Great Britain)
Adam P. (New Zealand)
Helga V. L. (South Africa)

*Indicates Committee Chair **Indicates Committee Alternate

The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.

2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.

3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.

5. Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

AMSTERDAM

The Twelve Concepts for World Service

I. Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

II. The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society in its world affairs.

III. To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. — the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives — with a traditional "Right of Decision."

IV. At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional "Right of Participation," allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

V. Throughout our structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

VI. The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

VII. The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

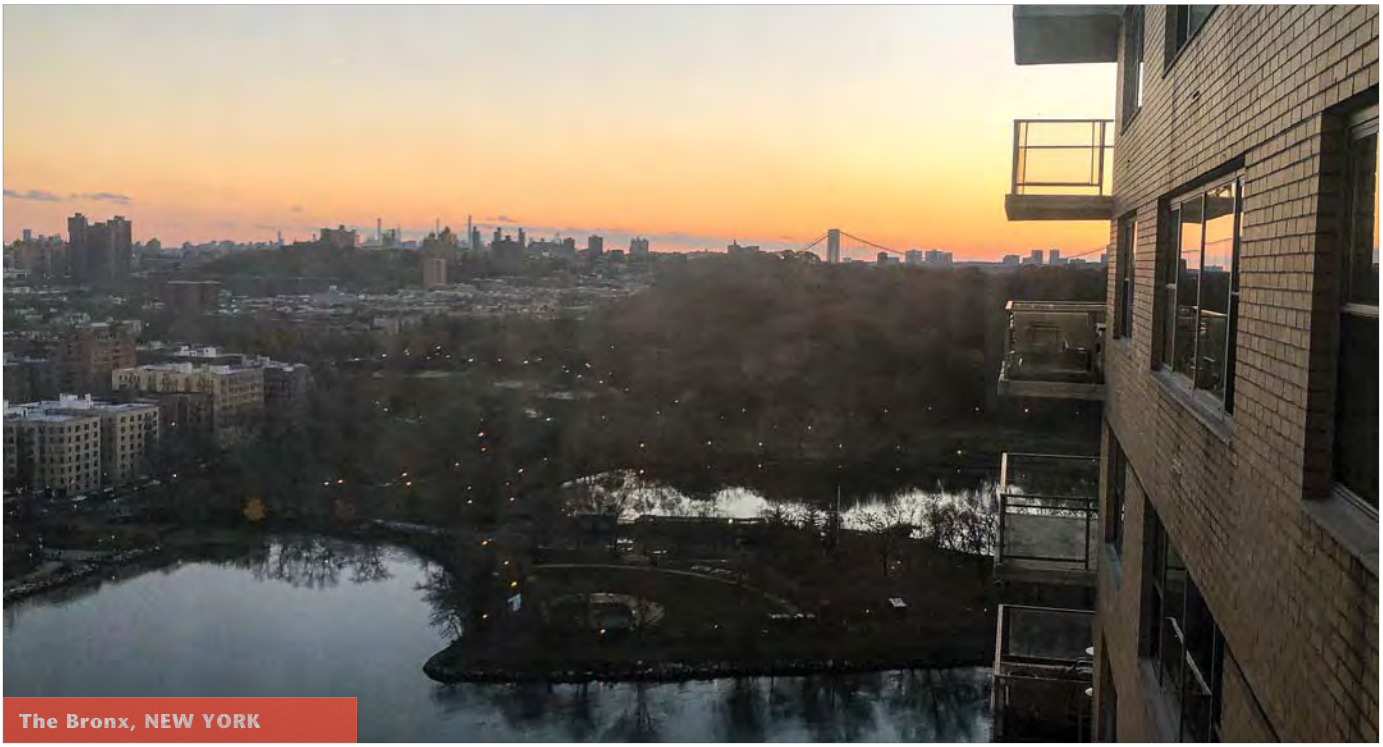
VIII. The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

IX. Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

X. Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

XI. The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

XII. The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.



The Bronx, NEW YORK

Front Cover (from left to right): Navi Mumbai, India; Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Buenos Aires, Argentina; Hong Kong.

Page 71 (from left to right, top to bottom): Great Britain; New York City; Czech Republic; Finland; Sweden; New York City; Sweden (center); North Carolina; Russia; Latvia; India.

"Above all, let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found — a new life of freedom under God."

— Bill W., "The Shape of Things to Come," *Language of the Heart*

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New York, NY 10163
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