

“Recovery in a Changing World”
71st GSC Presentation

My name is Cynthia T. and I serve as the Panel 70 Delegate for Area 29, Maryland. Thank you for the loving invitation to share a few thoughts concerning “Recovery in a Changing World”. “Recovery” is a really broad topic, and I will be sharing with you specifically about recovery from *alcoholism*.

When I first considered this request, I was struck by the difference between the idea of a “changing world” prior to March 2020 and its meaning to us now specifically as members of Alcoholics Anonymous. We have experienced many changes and challenges in the past 12 months as the direct result of a global pandemic. AA has had to rise to the challenges to our “Primary Purpose” of carrying the AA message to those who are reaching out for a solution to their alcoholism. The members of our beloved fellowship quickly embraced virtual meetings and, within days of the beginning of the COVID impacts, AA meetings could be found online 24/7. Homegroups began to set up Zoom accounts, do check-ins on their non-tech savvy members and mentor them in the use of virtual platforms. AA service committees began to re-examine the approaches to their work in this unprecedented time. AA was thrust quickly into a service renaissance, finding new and different ways to connect with the alcoholic who needed our life saving program of recovery. We have made many of the adjustments necessary to meet the demands of a COVID impacted world. These changes have at times resulted in quick adjustments in policies and processes, and we all know that historically quick change is not a hallmark of AA.

I offer that Bill had the foresight to suggest: “A policy isn’t quite like a fixed truth. A policy is something which can change to meet variable conditions, even though the basic underlying truths upon which it is founded do not change at all. Our policy might, for example rest on our Twelve Steps for its underlying truths yet remain reasonably flexible so far as the means or method of its application are concerned.”¹

I believe that we have seen AA embrace the essence of this statement in response to the need for change this past year. I have heard it mentioned many times recently that we will welcome the return of “normal.” The question for us is this: Will the changes that we have made in the delivery of the message of AA as a result of the impact of COVID be temporary or will they be embraced as the new “normal” in the life saving work that we are all charged to do?

Our conference theme this year is “AA in a Time of Change.” The reality is the world around us has been in a constant state of lightning-fast change and growth for years. I am wondering, if possibly, our response to the pandemic has opened our eyes to changes that may have been needed pre-pandemic. Have we proved to ourselves that making changes faster than paint drying is not always to be feared as the sure road to AA’s demise? Has the necessity of quickly finding new ways to communicate with the newcomer allowed us to better meet them “where they are” and offer them our spiritual path to recovery? Will we embrace the lessons that we have learned during the pandemic and the innovative changes required to fulfill our primary purpose and still guarantee that the message remains faithful to the program of AA as presented in our literature?

I believe that we can find comfort in the knowledge that though the world changes, the catalysts for those changes change, the challenges for alcoholics seeking recovery change and the tools required to reach those in need change, but what remains absolutely constant, is the promise of recovery through the practice of the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which has been and will continue to be a source of hope for those searching for a solution to their alcoholism.

The ultimate goal of recovery through the AA program is to become physically, mentally and spiritually whole and then share the faith that recovery from alcoholism is possible for those who seek it. It is in the spirit of embracing change that I leave you with the words of our founder “faith is more than our greatest gift; its sharing with others is our greatest responsibility. So may we of AA continually seek the wisdom and the willingness by which we may well fulfill that immense trust which the giver of all perfect gifts has placed in our hands.”³ Thank you for the opportunity to share and most of all....thank you for your life.

References:

¹ GV September 1945

² Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions pg.15

³ Language of the Heart pg. 251