

Report to the Area Committee Meeting - Area 8

January 19, 2017

Nothing much to report since our Assembly on Saturday. At least little feedback has come my way so far. But what continues are issues affecting our safety and AA as a whole.

As a recovering alcoholic, group member, and Area Officer committed to service: "I want the hand of AA always to be there." And to me Inclusion is a very important principle that guides our ability to reach more alcoholics both outside and inside the rooms. Those wanting to stop drinking who haven't yet found the rooms need to enter AA as an inviting and safe haven, not an exclusive club dominated by a social or religious group or community service. Or a place where their presenting problems will be misunderstood, unfairly judged, or confronted unreasonably because of another issue that many bring with them into the rooms. And those coming into the rooms for the first time- whether court referred or treatment program delivered - need to know soon after getting here that they will be welcome regardless of these other issues as long as they express their desire to stop drinking. And many will also say "using" because of the high incidence of cross addiction these days. But making these things clear in the group meeting format and during the meeting after the meeting are an essential part of sending the right message.

Neither of the words inclusion or diversity are used much if at all in AA literature. The Big Book does say: To us, the realm of the Spirit is broad, roomy, all inclusive; NEVER exclusive or forbidding to those who earnestly seek. on p.46 We Agnostics.

Tradition 3 reminds us that the ONLY requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.

Our "Keep Coming Back" mantra usually offered at the end of meetings continues to provide encouragement to all who show up regardless and helps them to know that we're serious and inclusive. Lovingly seeing beyond newcomers' outside issues at first will make time for knowledgeable group members to explain our singleness of purpose without sending the wrong message initially.

Yet we hear more and more reports about threats to the future of our program from Religious Groups with their own notions of recovery, a Justice System that seems uninformed about our requirement for membership, treatment programs using us as their outpatient component, and disruptive attendees who just don't know, yet. All misunderstand or ignore our principles and traditions and certainly need our compassion, more information, and acceptance. But its hard and requires action and communication.

I suspect that many of us have not experienced diagnosed mental illness or gender questioning personally – or much of the other personal baggage that many newcomers drag into the rooms behind them, white powder, prescription drugs, mind altering substances, or even prescribed medication.

For any of you who may also find yourselves bluntly affirming our singleness of purpose on the one hand or criticizing meetings that seem to have become “anything anonymous” on the other, I strongly suggest that you speak with your Districts and Committees about engaging this topic. It seems that it may be one of the themes for the coming year as long as we bring it into the open and get the conversation going at the levels already suggested above.

Thank you for letting me be of service.

Colin M. - Chair