

Service in a Changing World

Hello Everyone,

My name is Neil, I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is Sept 11, 2011, I currently serve as Idaho Area 18 Chairperson. I would like to thank the PNC Committee for asking me to participate in this service event.

The topic "Service in a Changing World", immediately brought to mind thoughts of current changes brought about by the COVID pandemic but were quickly replaced with the simple reality that the world around us has, is and will always be changing and that AA has continued to change and grow since 2 alcoholics sat together and shared with one another.

The exercise of preparing for today has been like taking a personal service inventory. Nothing counted but thoroughness and honesty. To conclude that others were wrong was as far as most of us ever got. Where had we been selfish, dishonest, self-seeking and frightened?

Imagine this email correspondence....

Hey Bill, What's up man?

Shoot me a text when you're available to join me on a quick Zoom meeting to chat about some suggestions for Chapter 5 in the new book.

Have a good one! oh say hi to Lois. Bob.

Many think of the changes we face as inconveniences and work being pushed upon us by others, the outside world, new technology & political correctness which brings back that old familiar character defect of FEAR... Diminishing my effectiveness, thinking aimlessly, wandering in the vastness of uncertainty & indecision. Instead of looking at and evaluating the changes as possible new tools and opportunities through which we might better carry the AA message.

We have each recovered from the demises of Alcohol (Recovery). We settled into familiarity and reliance upon those who were present and helped us in our recovery (Unity) We became familiar with general service through the groups whom we call our own and began sharing our experience, strength & hope, accepting the responsibility to help others recover through sponsorship (Service)

We became comfortable and I for one thought I had this figured out. Ohhh,, This is mentioned in the Big Book

"It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels." Taking that one step further... on the laurels of others.

We have a book outlining 12 steps to recovery. We have 12 spiritual Traditions to foster and ensure Unity. And I don't know if you are aware but there is a cool manual on Service.....

How many of you have read the Service Manual?

How many times have you considered this as a resource when presented with change that might affect "The way we've always done it" ?

This manual has been updated, revised and lest I say the word CHANGED more times than probably any other approved literature?

That brings to mind the saying ... Laid at our feet Only had to pick it up

Here is what you find on the first pages of the manual.

Our Twelfth Step – Carrying the message – is the basic service that the A. A. Fellowship gives: this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA. Is more than a set of principles; it is a society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth may die.

Hence, an **AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer** – ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten – cent phone call & 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.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation and intergroup offices: they mean **good publicity of almost every description**. They call for committees, delegates, trustee, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the fellowship.

VITAL TO A.A.'s Growth

These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or A.A. as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make A. A. more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "is this service really needed?" if it is, then maintain it we must or fail in our mission to those who need and seek A. A.

While suffering from the effects of alcohol and character defects run amuck. I tirelessly tried to change everything and everyone around me to conform to my way. When exhausted and beaten to a level of desperate willingness. I was blessed to find the rooms of Alcoholics Anonymous, unaware that I had not only conceded to my innermost self that I was an alcoholic but that I was, without recognizing it, willing to change.

By working 12 simple steps I learned how to change my thinking, my reactions & how to deal with Fear. Through the 12 Traditions & general service I changed how I work with others, to accept ideas other than my own, to be a part of the changing society & world around me. I changed in the first years of sobriety only to be presented with more changes on the plane of spirituality which usually came in the form of a new service position.... For me Change and growth have been synonymous with Service. Is that not what I was really looking for when I walked through the doors of AA?

The current pandemic has from its arrival shone the spotlight on where the most important work is really done and carried out and where we find examples of how to deal with change. That is at the Group Level. **Fear of change for many had to be set aside for the greater good of all, myself included, and as always with a grain of faith and the help of others found that on the other side of that fear are amazing new opportunities.**

The definition of the Verb. **change**, alter, vary, modify, mean to make or become different. **change** implies making an essential difference often amounting to a substitution of one thing for another.

As Bill Sees it pg 76

Change is the Characteristic of all growth. From drinking to sobriety, from dishonesty to honesty, from conflict to serenity, from hate to love, from childish dependence to adult responsibility – all this and infinitely more represent change for the better

"Such changes are accomplished by a belief in and a practice of sound principles. Here we must needs discard bad or ineffective principles in favor of good ones that work. Even good principles can sometimes be displaced by the discovery of still better ones.

Only God is unchanging: only He has all the truth there is."

Our fellowship is like a dbl decker bus maneuvering through the cobblestone streets and alleys inviting all who have lost

there way to climb aboard. If we focus only on how quickly we can get somewhere we will not only pass many by, but many will be thrown off when we hit the curves or abruptly change course.

(12x12 step 2)

We saw that we had to reconsider or die. We found many in A.A. who once thought as we did. They helped us to get down to our right size. By their example they showed us that humility and intellect could be compatible, provided we placed humility first. When we began to do that, we received the gift of faith, a faith which works.

The sword of service can be double sided in seeking out the best way to carry our message

We need be careful not to complicate what has proven so effective thus far but to diligently work to apply what the changing world has to offer to improve on the simplicity and accesibility. Ensuring the broad highway does not narrow and our focus become obscure when it comes to our primary purpose of Love & Service.

Caution should also be lent to “adding on” without “letting go”. Cluttering and complicating our message and services with every “new shinny penney” we risk encumbering and complicating our ability to change and adapt for the better.

*Don't let yourself be overwhelmed.” The KEEP IT SIMPLE slogan has become closely associated with the A.A. fellowship that has saved countless lives. KEEP IT SIMPLE was the **last thing Dr. Bob**, co-founder of A.A., said to **Bill**.*

Today more than ever the sound advice of Dr. Bob to keep it simple is vital. Demands on our time continue to increase. It is not only an alcoholic who seeks immediate gratification but Society as well. Technology is here to stay and changing at a rapid pace. Should not our efforts and resources be more focused on how our message applies to the world as it is and how it can be placed in front of as many suffering alcoholics, professionals and institutions as possible in the most simple & widely accessible format.

When beginning as DCM I learned the importance of simplicity. Attendance at District Meetings was waning to almost no one. The bank account was empty. Like many others, I asked the question at a DCM Roundtable, “how to get people excited and participate in service.” (By the way This is a topic covered in that cool Service Manual) A wise Delegate in the room suggested that I simply suit up and show up at the different group meetings. Still fairly new to sobriety I thought to myself... I can do that. Within 3 short months of simply showing up at group meetings talking about service and the districts financial situation, attendance at district meetings increased, 2 groups elected GSRs to participate and donations came in to fill the account.

The power in the rooms is greater than the sum total of those of us present. We simply have to tap into it with willingness, void of fear.

Pg 52 BB “Is not our age characterized by the ease with which we discard old ideas for new, by the complete readiness with which we throw away the theory or gadget which does not work, for something new, which does?”

In the Chapter to the Agnostic... We beg of you to set aside prejudice.

In the Chapter Working with others... Our behavior will convince them more than our words

The world is changed by your example. Not by your opinion ..Paulo Coelho

The hardest part of recovery and service is how simple it is.

The World is changing, are we?