

WORLD SERVICE BUSINESS CONFERENCE 2021 REPORT

Respectfully submitted by Leonie W. and Pat O. WSBC delegates for CNMI

INTRO: (PO)

Leonie and I had the privilege of representing CNMI at the first ever completely virtual WSBC in April. The following is a joint report from us about the business conducted during the week of April 17th to 24th, our committee experiences, as well as our personal reflections concerning this conference and the future of OA.

In order to try to accommodate the various time zones around the world and the ability of folks to sit in front of a Zoom screen, the conference was spread over a whole week from Saturday through Saturday rather than the 3 or 4 intense days of an in-person conference. That being said, it was still a very intense conference with something going on from early morning until near dinner time. The mandatory meetings for all delegates were from 10AM to 2PM MT every day, but there were many other sessions and events to attend. The office staff and the conference planning committee did an incredible job of setting up the virtual conference and they started us off with a 4-hour session called 'All About Conference'. This is a session they usually have for green dots (new delegates), but in this case we were all green dots learning how to navigate a virtual conference and there was sure a lot to learn about protocols, etiquette, and procedures for a conference on Zoom.

Sessions for delegates to help us gather all the background material we needed to begin the process of debating and voting on the issues included: 'Meet the Maker' where we could go into breakout rooms to question the makers of the motions being presented; a Literature Q&A process for asking questions about the new literature proposed; and a Trustee nominee Q&A where we could interact with and question our incoming trustees. There were OA recovery meetings most every morning sponsored by various regions and the ever-present reference committee meetings every afternoon.

Our chair, the parliamentarian, several WSO staff members, local volunteer timers, and three tech people were together at the Embassy Suites Hotel where we normally hold the conference. Sandy Zimmerman (from the WSO) sent us pictures of the big meeting room set up so we could see how they were all arranged – it was a nice touch to help us connect with them. On our screen we mostly only saw the table where the chair and parliamentarian were seated.

ELECTIONS & REPORTS: (LW)

Neva S. was reelected as Region 3 Trustee. Beth B. was reelected as Region 6 Trustee. Dora P. was reelected as Virtual Region Trustee. CJ M. was elected (She was appointed Trustee by the BOT in June 2020) as General Service Trustee. Judy H. was reelected as General Service Trustee. The BOT will appoint a Trustee for Region 9 (no person ran) at their meeting immediately following WSBC.

Chair's Report: Bonnie L. (the outgoing Chair of BOT) wrote about the challenges and the opportunities for growth the Pandemic brought. She said that contributions made in 2020 "have exceeded all previous history with the contributions received". She shared that back in 2018 Overeaters Anonymous was facing a two-year deficit budget. At that time, they started looking at different ways OA could save on expenditures. One of these ideas was to reduce the number of Trustees serving our Fellowship. This idea is presented in Bylaw Amendment Proposals 8-10 on our agenda for WSBC 2021. She reported that we are currently in good financial shape due to the generosity of the Fellowship and the fact that OA's investments also performed well. She reported that our newest book, *Body Image, Relationships and Sexuality* has been a strong seller. Also, in 2020, they increased the literature available as downloadable files.

Treasurer's Report: Tina C. (Treasurer, BOT) reported that General Contributions for Fiscal Year 2020 were the highest in the history of Overeaters Anonymous (US \$948,957)! She wrote that in years prior to this windfall, excesses in OA's annual budget had been removed making it "increasingly lean and mean". She said that hard book literature sales were down in 2020. A very full general contribution fund helped to supplement this large

decrease in sales. On the upside, there was an increase in digital book sales. This was aided by the creation of OA's very first digital pamphlets. The Delegate Support Fund is very robust (US \$36,154.84). Because of the Pandemic, there were very few opportunities to use this money. Because there are enough dollars to cover the near future, there is a temporary freeze in place on donating to this fund.

Managing Director's Report: Sarah Armstrong (Managing Director) wrote about how recovery in OA flourished as the world quarantined. Our virtual meetings continued "business as usual" and our face-to-face meetings quickly adapted to alternate ways of meeting. Three new publications arrived at the warehouse just as a majority of WSO staff was sent to work from home. The *Twelve Step Workshop and Study Guide, Second Edition* and its accompanying *Participant Guide* became available in April. *Body Image, Relationships, and Sexuality* waited until July, when their staff coverage was better able to meet the sudden influx of orders. The final issue of *Lifeline* was mailed in November. They are currently investigating alternative methods for sharing our members' experiences working the Twelve Steps. The WSO applied for funds through a Payroll Protection Program loan administered by the US Small Business Administration under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act. The loan of approximately \$134,800 was received in April 2020. This allowed them to maintain their staff during the various quarantines of 2020. The loan was formally forgiven in January 2021. (Note: A delegate expressed concern that it was a violation of our Traditions to not return this money to the US government. She presented this idea as an Emergency New Business Motion toward the end of WSBC, but it was not deemed an emergency by the Reference Committee. We may hear more about this next year ?!! WSO also benefited from a program administered by their local electric utility that allowed them to replace every light with LED lights for a fraction of the cost. They will save money on every electric bill going forward. While the number of OA meetings worldwide saw a little spike in 2020, the numbers are still trending down. The *WSO News Bulletin* continues to be a useful way for members to receive monthly OA news (sign up at oa.org). OA literature has been translated or is in the process of being translated into more than twenty-nine languages. More than thirty digital documents of translated OA literature were added to the WSO archives in 2020, with the greatest number of contributions being in the French (Quebec), Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Persian and Portuguese (Brazil) languages. In 2020, there were 5,443 updates to the Find a Meeting database on the OA website. Still there was difficulty finding meetings, especially hybrid meetings. WSO is working on this and they appreciate our patience.

Region 3 Report: Neva S., our Region 3 Trustee served on the Conference Planning Committee for WSBC 2021. The Committee worked very hard in a short amount of time to accomplish this task. They did an AWESOME job, thank you Neva and all! Twelfth Step Within plans to recommence efforts to contact unaffiliated meetings in early 2021. They updated the Region Three speakers list. They are creating and distributing monthly e-blasts to inspire OA members in Region Three. Ways and Means/Finance encourages intergroups without representation at recent assemblies to apply for funding if they need it, as well as to apply to the Delegate Support Fund (through the WSO) in order to send a representative to WSBC.

REFERENCE COMMITTEE: (PO)

The reference committee is a subcommittee of the conference bylaws committee. It is composed of 2 members from each region and its task is to deal with motions when more than one motion addresses the same policy or bylaw; when there is confusion or serious questions about a motion; or when the chair requests the committee to look into a motion for one reason or another. That happens before the motion comes to the floor. The committee also addresses any motion that gets more than 2 amendments to it when it is brought before the delegation. This is where all the action happens. The reference committee tries to combine motions, clarify motions, and/or make recommendations about the passage of motions. All delegates are welcome to observe the whole process and there is a review period for input from the makers of the motions and from the delegates. Reference had its work cut out for it with the 2021 agenda.

FYI: (PO) The 'consent agenda' referred to below is the name given to a list of motions selected by the chair of the board that are deemed to be so obvious and non-controversial that no debate or question period is needed

to deal with them. If we all agree, we may pass the whole lot of them by one vote 'to adopt'. Any delegate may voice an opposition to an item being on the consent agenda and it is pulled off and put back in the regular rotation of items to be dealt with one at a time. Some items are always objected to.

THE MOTIONS:

Literature: (these items need a 2/3rds vote) (LW)

Motion A-a revised the pamphlet *The Tools of Recovery*. The main objective was to improve readability. There was very little controversy and this motion passed with a 95% vote.

Motion A-b merged the pamphlets *A Plan of Eating and Dignity of Choice*. The name for this pamphlet is *A New Plan of Eating: A Physical, Emotional and Spiritual Journey*. The goal was to combine two similar pamphlets. They revamped the suggested food plans after consulting with a well-respected dietician. There were some objections to new definitions for "serving". Also, some objected to the layout of the pamphlet. The motion was passed with 73% in favor and 27% against.

Motion A-c presented a revised *Voices of Recovery*. The Conference-Approved Literature Committee goal was to edit the passages referenced by member writers to ensure that they were accurate. Some of the text and most page numbers referenced in the first edition of *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* were changed in the second edition. This was a massive undertaking and they did an awesome job. They did not edit members' writing. However, there were many objections to the decapitalization (by WSO editors) of reverential pronouns that member writers used in referring to their Higher Power. This occurred throughout the entire book. The explanation given by Dede (WSO editor) was that it is being done in all OA literature since around 2013. She referred to it as the current editing "style" WSO is using. This motion was adopted by a SLIM margin! 142 for and 71 against. (67% yes)

Policy Motions: (these items need a majority vote) (LW)

Proposal A wanted to revert to the earlier version of the Statement on Abstinence and Recovery (WSBC Policy). Basically, they wanted to remove the definition of Recovery entirely from our current version.

Proposal C made changes in the wording of the definition for Recovery to make its meaning more accurate. It also made the sentence following the recovery definition grammatically correct without changing the meaning. The maker of this motion was Kathy M. from our CNMI. Both these proposals (along with *Proposal C*) were sent to Reference Committee. They spent many hours hashing A and C out (See Pat's sharing below *The Proposal We Submitted*). The Reference Committee made a substitute motion combining A and C. This motion went back to the original definition of Abstinence with a few additional changes. They dropped the definition of Recovery altogether. One of the objections to this motion was the expense created for all the groups needing literature in different languages. Another objection was the lack of stability in the program caused by frequent changes to our literature. This motion passed 162 Yes and 58 No.

Proposal B wanted to allow changes to our definitions of Abstinence and Recovery only in years ending in 1. So, basically every ten years. There were a lot of passionate Pros and Cons but it was defeated 68 Yes and 153 No.

Proposal D moved to change the wording of the WSBC Policy that sets the dates for OA Birthday, Sponsorship Day and International Day of Experiencing Abstinence (IDEA). This proposal changed "the third weekend" to "the third two-day weekend". This was to avoid confusion and clarify when the first of the month fell on a Sunday. It seemed like this would be a no-brainer, but it created unforeseen problems. In some parts of the world Friday is considered part of the weekend. An amendment was submitted to change the wording to "the third full weekend". The Amendment was voted in. The Amended Motion passed with a 70% vote. 148 Yes and 61 No.

Proposal E amended our Preamble in WSBC Policy. It changed “compulsive overeating” to “compulsive eating and food behaviors.” This was sent to the Reference Committee where it was voted to present an amendment (after a lot of passionate opinions were expressed). Substitute Motion E retained the word “compulsive overeating” in the first section of our Preamble and left “compulsive eating and other compulsive behaviors” later in the paragraph. The Substitute Motion failed at the Business Meeting 93 Yes and 125 No.

Proposal F was submitted by the Unity with Diversity Committee. It moved to adopt as policy “when Literature Committee is developing new literature or updating current literature, that they make a concerted effort to include stories and/or quotes from members of diverse populations that are underrepresented in OA (i.e. reflect a variety of compulsive food behaviors, belief systems, nationalities, genders, sexual orientations, indigenous peoples, and peoples of color, etc.)” There was a lot of passion for this proposal as well. One Con expressed that this is already the current practice. Others expressed that it is good to get this in writing and OA does want to increase diversity in our membership. This motion passed 138 Yes, 78 No.

Proposal G moved to change in WSBC Policy *OA Young Persons’ Conference Committee* to *OA Young Peoples’ Conference Committee*. There was no objection to this and it was passed on the Consent Agenda.

Proposal H wanted to change the word “trait” to “attribute” in our Unity with Diversity Policy. It also added the phrase “Everyone with a desire to stop eating compulsively is welcome in Overeaters Anonymous”. It made a couple other minor changes. An Amendment to this motion was presented to qualify “all are welcome...” to specify including anorexia, bulimia, over-exercising, etc. The amendment failed to pass. The Motion PASSED 69% in favor 142 Yes and 71 No.

Proposal I stated the definition of a Hybrid meeting and that it would only be registered once but will be listed under both Face-to-Face meetings and Virtual meetings. An amendment was proposed I-1 that called for the addition of “one or more physical locations”. This amendment failed. A second amendment I-2 added that all listings under F2F and Virtual for the same meeting will specify “hybrid” next to each of them. This amendment passed. The Amended Motion was adopted with 193 yes and 9 no votes.

Bylaws Amendment Motions: (these items need a 2/3rds vote) (PO)

Proposal 1 wanted to change the voting procedure for taking a counted vote at conference (that is: when the voice vote is unclear and we are asked to stand to be counted one by one). Currently, we all stand at once. This proposal wanted the board of trustees to vote last, after all the delegates are standing. This item was sent to the reference committee before it made it to the floor. The committee had to pull in our parliamentarian for this one. She said that according to parliamentary procedure (which we follow) the board of trustee members are just voting delegates like the rest of us, there is nothing special about them and therefore it is unheard of for us to separate them out and make them vote last (or first). The concern of the maker was that delegates watch what the trustees do and then vote accordingly. The parliamentarian said there are ways to address that issue, if it is an issue, like having electronic voting or not having them up on the dais when voting, etc. With this information, the maker of the motion agreed to withdraw her motion and therefore it never made it to the floor to be debated. I suspect something will be coming back next year regarding this issue.

Proposal 2 asked that the term of office for trustees be limited to 8 total years of service. It is currently 8 consecutive years which means that after a layoff of some time a person may continue to serve over and over again. Delegates were amenable to limiting the total time a member may serve as a trustee, but felt that 8 was not a good number since the trustee terms are 3 years each so that, in fact, a person could only serve 6 years practically, unless they fulfilled partial terms. Unfortunately, the way this motion was written, the number of years could not be amended therefore the motion was defeated by 120 no votes to 101 yes votes. I feel sure this one will be back in another form next year.

Proposal 3 was very interesting. This motion merely wanted to allow snowbirds to go to AZ or FL for the winter and the way our bylaws are written they demand residence in the home region for region trustees for the six months previous to WSBC (the winter basically). It was actually on the consent agenda which means it was considered a non-controversial, no brainer type motion but it was pulled by a delegate who saw the problems inherent in it. While the motion just asked for a region trustee to be a 'permanent resident' of their region, it turns out that phrase has enormous legal consequences and implications not only for the USA but even more so for our international members. After much work in reference trying to find an alternate phrase and a lot of discussion of the implications of all the phrases we tried, the motion was withdrawn by the maker. If restructuring happens, this will be a moot point anyway as there will be no 'strictly' region trustees anymore – meaning that to serve as *a trustee* one wouldn't have to be from the region they might serve.

Proposal 4 was simply a restating of how our regions are defined. It clarified our addition of a virtual region two years ago. Our chair placed this item on the consent agenda and it was passed there.

Proposal 5 was submitted by and withdrawn by the bylaws committee because another later motion dealt with the same article of the bylaws and included the strike out of an unnecessary, fragmented sentence which this motion addressed. It was merely a 'housekeeping' motion and easily handled in the later motion.

Proposal 6 is the key motion we need in order to hold a conference virtually in an emergency. In January, the delegates met to vote on holding this year's conference virtually, but we need this motion in our bylaws to allow future conferences to be held virtually. This item was on the consent agenda and was passed there.

Proposal 7 was also on the consent agenda and passed. It merely clarified a sentence in the bylaws referring to who it is that selects region delegates (the region, obviously – but it didn't read that way).

Proposal 8, 9, and 10 were all the restructuring motions brought forth from the agenda last year which never got addressed because of the pandemic. If you recall, we talked about restructuring for two years before these motions were put on the agenda last year. I and others were disappointed when it was announced that if there were no objections, they would be withdrawn from the agenda. I and others DID object. However, when a vote was taken whether or not to debate them, we were out voted and the motions were withdrawn. The board asked that they be withdrawn and that is because there were so many new delegates and the issue of restructuring hasn't been talked about to the general fellowship since the 2019 WSBC. On second thought, the board decided it was unfair to throw such a complicated move at delegates who might not be well versed in the 'back story'. Those of us who objected were those who have been invested in this move and wanted to get to the completion of it. The plan is to have another round of educating the fellowship about restructuring like they did in 2018 and 2019 and then bring it all back for a vote next year.

Proposals 11 and 16 dealt with the same articles of the bylaws. There were three separate articles that dealt with intergroups, Regions, and Service Boards and it was very confusing to compare how these various service bodies were defined and how they interacted with each other. A group of trustees took on the Herculean task of combining the three articles to make a cohesive explanation of how our service structure functions. The only difference between the two motions was that motion 16 added a new service body to the structure. It is called a Special Focus Service Board and it would function much the way a Language Service Board does (Language being basically a 'special focus'). These two proposals were sent to reference before they reached the floor and after much input and dispute, it was decided to deal with 16 first and if it failed, we would deal with 11. That, so that we wouldn't lose the good work of uniting the three articles of the bylaws if the fellowship just didn't want to adopt the special focus service board idea. After much debate and many questions, 16 passed with an 83% approval (175 votes to 35), so proposal 11 was dropped from the agenda. This special focus issue is something that has been promoted by and needed by 'special focus' groups. It's complicated, but the basic idea is that this will allow for small, defined special focus groups like 'people of color', 'LGBTQ', 'agnostics', etc. to reach out to other small special focus groups across the world and form connections to hold events like conventions and other events of interest to their special concerns.

Proposal 12 is an extension and clarification of what a 'group' is. It passed as submitted with 91% in favor of it.

Proposal 15 clarifies how many WSBC delegates intergroups, national, and language service boards are entitled to send. This passed with 96% in favor.

Proposal 17 dealt with special focus groups and was withdrawn by the maker since it was no longer pertinent after proposal 16 passed.

FYI: Bylaw *proposals 13 and 14* (dealing with changing the 12 steps and traditions) were not dealt with since they did not make the final agenda. A motion needs a majority vote from the worldwide fellowship to make the final agenda and these items each received only 46% of the votes cast.

RE: THE PROPOSAL WE SUBMITTED: (PO)

Because I was the more experienced delegate from CNMI, I was asked by the trustee responsible for lining up the makers of the motions to be the 'maker' of motion C since Kathy was listed as submitting the proposal, but wasn't there as a delegate to speak to her motion. That was an interesting experience for me. I had to attend the 'meet the maker' session as a maker which meant I had to go to a Zoom breakout room and be available for the whole session to any delegate who had questions for me concerning our motion. Kathy and I talked the week before conference so that I could be prepared to represent her. I had a lot of good conversations with folks but a few people were almost attacking me because of the definition of recovery included in our motion. Our motion was sent automatically to reference along with the other two motions dealing with the definition of abstinence. As you can imagine, it was a hot button issue! I happen to be on the reference committee and so since I was a maker of a motion under consideration, I had to step down from the committee to represent our motion to the reference committee. Motion A's maker was also on reference so the two of us had to switch hats for the discussions on the abstinence motions. I tried to emphasize that our concern was for the grammar of the motion, that we weren't invested in the definition of recovery, only that the body of delegates in 2019 passed the motion to define both recovery and abstinence and we were trying to improve and clarify its meaning. This subject was so controversial that it took two full sessions of the reference committee (that's 4 hours!) of argument, input, discussion and rearranging of the definition of recovery only to end in the decision to scrape the whole idea of a recovery definition and go with motion A (with a few minor word changes) which reverts back to our earlier statement on abstinence and no recovery definition at all. Unfortunately, Kathy's great reworking of the last sentence got lost in the process. A few members of the reference committee pointed out the active voice and the improved grammar of it, but that nuance was lost on the group who were just anxious to return to the original. Unfortunately, I couldn't add my voice to the few who were pointing out the grammar issues since I wasn't allowed to speak or vote as a reference committee member for this issue.

FYI: Here is the new wording for the abstinence policy -

WSBC 2021 accepts the following:

Abstinence is the action of refraining from compulsive eating and compulsive food behaviors while working towards or maintaining a healthy body weight.

Spiritual, emotional, and physical recovery is the result of working and living the Overeaters Anonymous Twelve Step program on a daily basis.

BY THE NUMBERS: (LW)

There were 248 eligible voters for WSBC 2021. Of these, there were 95 green dots (first WSBC). There were twenty countries represented: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Iran, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Mexico, New Zealand, Poland, Russia, South Africa, Spain, United Kingdom (England and Scotland), and the USA. A Trustee position that was open was filled at the post Conference Board of Trustee Meeting (See Pat's note). There are three Trustee positions open currently. Region 2 Trustee and 2 General Service Trustees. These positions will be filled by the BOT to serve until next year's elections.

BOARD OF TRUSTEE FINAL MEETING: (PO)

On Sunday after the close of conference, the BOT met to elect new officers and to assign committees to the trustees. Delegates were welcome to attend. In this case, they also had to appoint a trustee for a one-year term. It seems that the serving region 9 trustee from Greece was up for reelection and she planned to run, however, due to some miscommunication, her region neglected to send in her paperwork by the deadline and so she could not be officially elected by the delegates when we voted for trustees. Consequently, she was appointed by the board to a one-year term and then she can run next year to fill the remaining 2 years of the term. It is the standard procedure that the board appoint a person to an open trustee position until the following conference where someone can stand for election by the whole delegation. (See 'by the numbers' for other open trustee positions)

Our new officers are as follows: GST Judy H. was elected chair of the board, region 7 trustee Karen B. was elected to be the first vice chair, GST CJ M. was elected to serve as second vice chair, and region 4 trustee Meg M.

Leonie's committee work:

I have been assigned to Twelfth Step Within Committee. Unfortunately, I have no report because we have not met yet. Our first meeting was scheduled for the day after Conference, but had to be rescheduled due to timing problems. I guess people in Russia didn't want to get up at 2 AM to join a Zoom meeting 😊. Our first meeting will be May 8. I am sure I will have more to report at a later date. I am happy to be on this Committee. Doing the Twelfth Step Within workshops have always helped my own recovery. Years ago, I was Chair of Twelfth Step Within Committee at CNMI. It will be exciting to be a part of all the positive things that are currently happening in this group.

Leonie's personal reflections:

I have been in program since 1988 and always wanted to be a delegate at WSBC one day. I found myself feeling grateful that I had accepted this position this year. Especially since I had felt reluctant to do it last summer. I had spent the previous four years caring for my mother in our home. It was a profound and wonderful experience; one I will always treasure. My mother was bedbound and required 24/7 care. She died in June 2020 at age 100. A couple months later, I was asked to do service at the Intergroup level. I honestly didn't want to do anything. I wanted no commitments at all. After praying about this, I felt God's call to give back to the Fellowship that has saved my life and given me so much. I remembered that I didn't have to want to do service, I just had to be willing.

My first introduction to what would be expected of me and what the experience would be like was from my partner in crime Pat O. Her enthusiasm for OA and the WSBC was very inspiring to me. I have marveled at her dedication and commitment to doing her best job and giving it her all. She has been a wonderful source of encouragement and information for me. I thank her for all she has done for OA/WSBC the last 3-4 years. Being a green dot, she has been a role model for me. I will surely miss her presence at next years Conference! Our Region 3 Chair Elaine L. held some very nice virtual meetings for all Region delegates. It allowed all of us to meet one another, ask questions or voice concerns. If we were in person, we would all have been getting to know one another in a deeper way. I appreciated Elaine's efforts. I also appreciated meeting our Region 3 Trustee Neva at these meetings.

I really loved being a part of the Virtual Conference this year. Yes, I did miss the "being there in person" factor, but video was the next best thing. The Conference opened my eyes to the international presence within OA. I appreciated seeing and hearing people from all over the world. I gained an appreciation for all the members living in other countries where English is not their first language. It was humbling to see how hard they work to simply understand what is being said at the Conference. Transcribing OA literature to their native language is essential and very important to them. In the mornings, I went to the OA meeting hosted by different Regions in

OA. Some members required interpreters. I was touched to hear from many who were so thrilled to feel a part of OA via the video Conference. Some cried tears of joy.

The other big issue that stood out to me was diversity within OA (or the lack thereof). Many of the motions made this year spoke to this issue. I heard passionate sharing from those who have not always felt comfortable or welcome in OA. This saddens me for I know that my disease affects people from all backgrounds, all ethnicities and all life experiences. The Conference reaffirmed to me that I would love to see more diversity in our rooms, to hear everyone's story. I want all who need OA to find OA, feel welcome in OA, stay in OA and find recovery in OA! I also heard the fear of losing unity within OA from others. I have to believe that it is our weakness that binds us to each other and that we have a common solution. I need everyone in these rooms.

I attended all the Reference Committee meetings as an observer. These meetings were always very lively and interesting. I have a new respect for the Parliamentary process. I actually did not say one word at this conference. I found that any question I had or comment I wanted to make was expressed by someone else. I was not totally happy with one of the votes but I am now feeling more open-minded and accepting of it. I realized that I feel fear/concern that OA is becoming more and more secular. I keep coming back to OA because I have a spiritual problem that requires a spiritual solution. For me, it has been difficult to find this solution in the world but I do find it in the 12 Steps of OA.

I am looking forward to working with Pat this year even as we are on separate Committees. I want to encourage everyone to think about joining me next year as a co-delegate for WSBC 2022. Yes, it has been many hours of preparation and attending the Conference. More time will be required of me throughout the coming year. I can guarantee you though that those hours will not be spent with me eating compulsively 😊. It is a joy and an honor to serve as a WSBC delegate, please consider joining me next year as we "trudge the Road of Happy Destiny".

Pat's committee work:

My bylaws committee met on Zoom the week before conference started. We discerned work for 4 subcommittees to process over the next year and were given the opportunity to sign up for the subcommittee of our choice. We also met the week after conference to elect our new delegate co-chair and secretary and to meet in breakout rooms with our subcommittees to spell out our goals, take on initial assignments, and set up a schedule for meeting through the year. We have a European member and working members so we had to pick the day and time carefully. We will meet on Zoom once a month and communicate via email in between meetings. My subcommittee will be working on preparing a sample policy manual, a standing rules sample, and reviewing the sample bylaws (already available) for intergroups and other service bodies (to be approved by the BOT and posted on the OA.org website).

During the conference I served on the reference committee. We met from Saturday through Friday from 2:30 to 4:30PM. At the Friday meeting we were the 'emergency new business committee'. There were 7 emergency new business motions proposed but 2 of them were ruled out of order by the chair. So, we had 5 items to discuss. The committee's task regarding emergency new business is only to determine if it is an emergency. If we deem it to be, it goes to the floor for delegates to debate the value of the motion and either adopt or fail to adopt it. Only one item was deemed an emergency and that motion was defeated at the final business session on Saturday. It had to do with providing interpreters at WSBC for non-English speaking delegates. In fact, the BOT had already formed an ad hoc committee to look into this issue for future conferences, but the emotions were so high that there was a push to make it an emergency. Unfortunately (to my mind) our reference committee deemed it a viable emergency motion (by a slim margin) – it only took a majority vote to call it an emergency. When it got to the floor on Saturday it was amended to make it a mandate that must be carried out by the WSO for the conference next year. That killed it for most of us – with no information of how much it would cost and how it could be implemented, we delegates voted the motion down. There was only a 40% yes vote and it needed 2/3rds to pass. (see personal reflections for more on this subject of interpreters)

Pat's personal reflections:

It's hard to know what to say at this point. There was so much going on and I had several roles to play and this conference was different from any I have attended (and I have been to most all of them in my 27 years in program either as a delegate or as a volunteer). I admire our process and am so grateful to be a member of OA and so proud of our organization. We don't do 'politics' we work for consensus and for the good of the whole. We respect each other and try very hard to understand the needs of all. Those of us in CNMI are extremely lucky to live in (or near) the city that hosts the WSBC every year and therefore, easily able to volunteer and witness the history of our fellowship being made year after year.

I was struck once again by the real excellence of the WSO staff. They are so dedicated. They take their 'orders' from the BOT and the fellowship at large and strive to meet even our most outrageous needs and demands. They truly serve us. Except for a very few technical glitches, the conference went off without a hitch. Our process of debate, question/answer sessions, our various breakout sessions, and other features of the conference are very complex and demanded a high level of planning and tech skill, and we got it.

One of the main features about this conference was the fact that we had delegates from service bodies who could never have sent an in-person delegate due to costs. We also had non-English speaking delegates. The Brazil delegation with 3 non-English speakers and 2 English as a second language speakers to interpret for them stole the hearts of all the delegates. They went to every event and were so delighted to share at the morning recovery meetings. Their gratitude for OA and their desire to serve and to participate at all levels of the conference was manifest in everything they said and did. I believe it was they who inspired the urgency to get interpreters for future conferences. By the end of the week, delegates were saying 'forget the cost and the practicalities we NEED non-English speaking delegates at conference!!!' We fell in love with their love for us and our fellowship. Another delegation I admired were the delegates from places like Sydney, Australia. These people were showing up at 2AM tomorrow (their time) to attend a 'day' at conference. International delegates were staying up very late and getting up very early just so they could serve our fellowship and grow in OA. Doing a Zoom conference all day long in the normal day hours was grueling enough, the 2AM folks inspired me completely!!

Another related issue that was very prevalent at this conference was the emphasis on and the desire for 'unity' and 'inclusivity'. Many motions addressed those issues and the words were heard over and over again throughout the week. The desire for unity fueled the debate on allowing 'special focus' service bodies – would that separate us more? Perhaps it is a sign of the political times or maybe just a universal realization of how no matter how different we are on the surface; we are all so alike in our hearts and souls – where it really matters and where we all can connect.

There was an awful lot of tension at this conference. The various motions that needed to go to reference because they were so confusing or so imprecise or seemed to promote exclusivity caused a lot of extended debate at the reference committee level and on the floor, the Serenity Prayer was called for over and over again. There was a lot of emotion tied up with much of the business and the fear was sometimes palpable in the 'rooms'.

While I was sorry the restructuring motions were pulled from the agenda, I see the wisdom of the BOT in doing so. We had plenty to deal with without adding the confusion and fear and ignorance of the whole restructuring issue. The re-education process will be interesting to see this coming year.

There seems to be a movement building to make our conference hybrid in the future. Certainly, more delegates could attend if it were to go hybrid, but I wonder about the quality of the business if we do so. I believe the BOT is investigating the possibilities with an eye towards the 2023 conference. That might be a reasonable goal for making arrangements for interpreters also. My concern with a hybrid delegation is a lack of commitment to the process. We had 248 duly registered voting delegates this year. That is at least 50 (+or-) more than usual. However, it is also true that the total votes cast on any one item ranged from 195 to 221 votes on any issue through the week, with most of the votes averaging around 210 votes cast. Where were all the other delegates? Of course, delegates may abstain from voting and it might have been different delegates who were missing at the

various business sessions, but 20+ to 48+ delegates missing each time? I know for a fact that a delegate from region 3 only spent one total hour at the conference! Many of the delegates were zooming in from work. That is no way to attend WSBC. That cheats the workplace as well as OA. And, the five business meetings where we conduct the debate and vote are only a small part of being informed and prepared to vote on the important business of our organization. At some of the other sessions like All About Conference and other background info session there were only 150 to 170 participants and that included the tech people, the WSO staff, and the parliamentarian. Frankly, I was rather horrified at the lack of commitment and preparation by so many 'casual' delegates. Being a WSBC delegate is a serious committee of time and energy, it is not to be taken lightly. The international delegates who attended seemed to be at everything. They so appreciated being able to be part of the process, they couldn't get enough of conference. Perhaps only people from very far away should be allowed to come virtually in a future scenario of a hybrid WSBC?

As an aside, I heard the phrase 'old white women' in a negative context several times during the conference. Being an old white woman myself, I get a little offended at those references (I've heard them all before) as if our service is not appreciated. However, I also know there is a need for diverse voices and new young blood in our fellowship and in our service positions. The thing is, service takes a lot of time and energy and it is mostly older women and men who have that kind of time to devote to it. I'm afraid many will be disappointed to find that our younger members are just too darn busy with careers and young families to be able to take on the very time-consuming service positions like trustees and region chairs and even delegates. So that it will 'look as if' old white women are running the show, but the 'trusted servants' of OA try very hard to represent the best interest of the whole fellowship and are very open to input and the concerns of every member. Evidence of that, for me, is the great response at this conference to the need for interpreters and for hybrid access to the WSBC. The 'powers that be' no matter what gender, age, or color they are, are listening.

Whatever transpires in the conferences of the future, I am grateful that I will be able to witness the developments as a volunteer. This is my last year as a delegate for this 'go round'. I'll be sorry to be leaving this position next spring when the new conference begins as it has been one of my favorite service positions, but I plan to have a good time 'witnessing' as a volunteer next year. I'm happy that we have Leonie representing us for the next few years and I hope another will step up to take my place this October. Leonie has been a joy to work with and we are lucky to have such a dedicated delegate working for us.

Feel free to call or write either or both of us for more details, explanations, or concerns of any sort.

In service, Leonie W. and Pat O. your WSBC delegates