

**Please direct all
communications to:**

P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
Fax: (212) 870-3003

March 13, 2020

Dear Conference Members,

The General Service Office (G.S.O.) and the General Service Board have been intently following developments of the spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and considering the impact it will have on our 70th General Service Conference. We have heard from many of you with questions and concerns.

Our General Service Board met Thursday, March 12, 2020 in a special board meeting (via Zoom). The following recommendations were discussed, voted on and approved:

1. Following a motion and second, the Board approved a recommendation that the onsite meeting of the 70th General Service Conference, scheduled at the Hilton Westchester in Rye Brook, New York (Westchester County) April 19-25, 2020, be canceled. Notice of this cancellation will be communicated to all Conference members as soon as possible.
2. Following a motion and second, the Board approved a recommendation that the 70th General Service Conference be conducted under a modified schedule during the week of April 19-25, 2020 via remote meeting technology, to include Conference committee meetings and reports, board reports, trustee elections, possibly some additional presentations, and debate and voting on Conference committee recommendations. In keeping with Tradition One and with similar safety protocols being implemented in outside organizations, we will begin plans to transition to a "virtual" 70th General Service Conference and conduct all sessions *via digital platform*.

We recognize that while this will not be the same person-to-person experience to which we are accustomed, we are fortunate to have a group of dedicated people working around the clock to respond to the challenges ahead. Our G.S.O. team is considering every contingency as we undertake this important work on your behalf. We know that in keeping with the spirit of A.A., we will rise to the occasion with the same openness, willingness, love, and understanding that has kept our Fellowship united throughout many different challenges.

The decision to move to a virtual Conference was considered seriously and with the maximum information and background that is available at this time. The goal of this change is to minimize the need to gather in large groups and spend prolonged time in close proximity, as well as to eliminate extended travel for the many Conference members coming from all areas and regions of the U.S. and Canada. (Even as we send this communication, there are federal, state and provincial rules being issued regarding travel restrictions.) So, in this spirit, we thank you for your patience and your resilience as we seek to balance increased distance with deeper care for one another. These past few weeks have been a powerful reminder of just how connected we are – and how our choices today determine our options tomorrow.

The virtual Conference meeting format will allow us to limit possible exposure to the disease among members of our community.

Below is a preliminary draft plan which may need adjustments as needed:

Immediate Goal

Our goal is to have the revised Conference week schedule complete by Friday, March 20, 2020. We will work closely with the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

Essential Conference sessions, as referenced in the G.S.B. recommendation, will still be conducted somewhere within the timeline of the week currently scheduled, April 19-25, 2020.

“How the Conference Operates”

It is noted that flexibility and understanding is requested of the Conference body in the efforts to implement workable arrangements and to amend “How the Conference Operates,” as necessary.

Time Zones

Noting the varied time zones of Conference members, start times will begin no earlier than Noon EDT. A modified schedule will be created to support these time zone considerations, since Conference membership is as far west as Alaska, Hawaii and British Columbia/Yukon – and everything in between!

Conference Planning, Updates and Notifications

In addition to email notifications, updates will be posted on the Conference Dashboard here: aaws.hyperoffice.com

Technology Requirements and Resources: TBA

We are seeking to partner with a contracted service provider who will support the project to transition our Conference to a digital platform. One of our goals is to communicate about any optimal technology requirements and training that will be helpful for you to participate effectively in a virtual conference. We encourage you to begin thinking about who are your local A.A. members with technical expertise who might provide support to you in the coming weeks with your individual technical needs.

We know this is unprecedented and also realize that you will have many questions – to which we hope to have definitive answers in the coming days and weeks. Because this is a new frontier with a short turnaround in planning, we ask for your cooperation and patience. We look forward to working together with you to have an equally meaningful and safe Conference as we give new meaning to “A.A. in the Digital Age.” We will facilitate training and testing of holding meetings on the electronic platform in order to ensure as much as humanly and technologically possible that every Conference member is able to participate in the important work of the Conference. We will probably err on the side of redundancy and frequency of training and testing opportunities in the days moving into Conference week.

Financial and other considerations for Conference members canceling travel

Much more information on this will follow as soon as possible. We already have received many questions and concerns regarding delegate fees and travel expenses; some reimbursements have already been issued and others are being held for the moment. We are working diligently on understanding the financial impacts of this decision and will share information with everyone when we’ve been able to work through it.

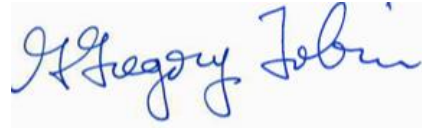
Please do not hesitate to continue to forward your questions and concerns to us. Please contact the Conference desk at Conference@aa.org and/or the office of the general manager at gmgso@aa.org. We will respond as quickly as we can. We have a task force/response team in place to facilitate further communications with the Conference body.

The first General Service Conference theme was “1951: Genuine Faith – It Begins as an Experiment and Ends as an Experience.” We are about ready to repeat history, 70 years later!

The General Service Office has developed an area on our website that provides information and updates specific to our response to virus concerns. It can be accessed from the link on the top of our home page as well as under the “What’s New” tab. I have included it here as well.

https://www.aa.org/pages/en_US/update-on-covid-19-coronavirus

Sincerely yours, in service to our Fellowship,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "G. Gregory Tobin". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed over a light gray rectangular background.

G. Gregory Tobin
General Manager