

ECR Zoom Meeting March 29, 2020 Report

The delegates from the 14 areas in the East Central Region met with Mark E., the ECR Trustee, via Zoom on Saturday, March 28. Mark provided additional details on the status of the International Convention, the General Service Conference, and the General Service Office. We also shared experience on ways AA is coping with carrying the message during the pandemic.

The **International Convention** has been canceled, not postponed. The General Service Board considered rescheduling it but the earliest date that Detroit had available was a non-holiday weekend in August 2021. The Board projected that this would cut attendance from 50,000 to 20,000 and the costs would have been prohibitive. The next International will be in 2025 in Vancouver.

A few interesting tidbits. The General Service Board has insurance that will likely cover our losses. Refunds for registration, hotels, and premiums such as the souvenir book will be processed by the General Service staff. Please allow six weeks for processing. Some of the delegates expressed an interest in purchasing the souvenir book as a keepsake. Mark said the book had already been sent out for printing and there is a chance that it could be made available later.

There is an **FAQ** on the refund process at aa.org. Select the International Convention “Important Notice” link and “Frequently Asked Questions About the 2020 International Convention registration cancellation process.”

The **General Service Conference** is postponed, not cancelled. The physical Conference was cancelled in March. It will be replaced by a “virtual” Conference. The office was closed March 20 by New York’s directive to shut down all “non-essential” business/organizations. This postponed the planning of the alternative program and selecting a vendor to handle the electronic processing. Replacement dates have not yet been decided. There will be some form of Conference; there are some legal requirements that have to take place such as the nomination of two regional trustees. The Conference will be modified and it may be truncated, but something will take place. I will communicate plans as they are announced.

While the **General Service Office** is closed, much of the work is still being done remotely. The reopening date will depend upon government and health guidelines. They estimate that ninety percent of the office work is getting done. They have limited ability to process the mail, so they ask that we communicate through email or aa.org/contactus. For the same reason, they ask that contributions be made on line.

Literature orders can be placed at aa.org. The orders ship from warehouses that have not been ordered closed. For now, you can still purchase literature from COGF by calling the office to place the order. You will have to pay shipping from either order source.

The use of **digital meetings** is “zooming.” All of the areas reported that groups were converting their meetings to a video chat format, usually Zoom. Most, like Area 53 and COGF, are creating online meeting directories on their websites. There is a “Zoom Best Practices” video on the AA Grapevine YouTube page. It was produced by the Austin ICYPAA bid committee and provides information on how to schedule a meeting, how to conduct a meeting, and the Zoom basic functions and controls. It also includes a tutorial on how to conduct a Third Legacy Vote in a Zoom meeting.

ECR Zoom Meeting March 29, 2020 Report

Some of the Zoom default settings may be in conflict with our Traditions. The Austin ICYPAA Bid Committee has also created an “Anonymity Best Practices on Zoom” document that I am distributing with this communication. And be aware that everything takes longer on Zoom.

None of the delegates were pleased that we are almost exclusively online right now, but all agreed that the virus is forcing us to address the issue of the impact of digital communications on our fellowship and that there are many positive side effects of this process. For example, we can employ the technology to conduct meetings that include folks with accessibility issues. We might also add a Zoom connection to our committee meetings so those who are limited by travel or other needs can participate.

The **Seventh Tradition** is a concern throughout the region. A common question is how can we digitally pass the basket at a Zoom meeting? There are several mobile payment apps that groups can set up. They all have anonymity and confidentiality issues that should be addressed. USA Today had a recent article describing and comparing the different apps. To see it, copy and past this link: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/tech/2020/03/25/rating-paypal-venmo-apple-cash-facebook-google-zelle/5005537002/>.

A suggested non-digital solution is to get an envelope for each Zoom meeting you attend and put the amount that you would have contributed into the envelope every time you go to the meeting. When the physical meetings re-start, donate what is in the envelope.

We can continue to make contributions to our service entities through the three websites, aa.org, area53aa.org, and aacentralohio.org. Individual AA members can also make online contributions directly to these three entities, at least until their groups are meeting again.

Please pass this information along to any and all interested AA members. If anyone has questions, have them contact me at “delegate@area53aa.org”.