



Concepts

Northern IL Area Newsletter Summer of 2018



Feliz cumpleaños La Vina! 22 anos!



A.A. Technology: Where Innovation Meets the Traditions

Keith D., Northeast Texas (used with permission)

The title of this talk is interesting, “A.A. Technology: Where Innovation Meets the Traditions.” More specifically, I think the title speaks to a great misconception: how can technology meet a Tradition? A.A. members live by traditions (or not). Technology is just a tool, a means of communication for the most part. If we said, “A.A. Books: Where Paper Meets the Traditions,” I think we would all find that just ridiculous. But we have given computers, the Internet, and all the new gadgets a life of their own. What can cause inanimate objects to take on a life of their own? Fear of the unknown can have that effect – like the blanket in the corner of a dark room that slowly takes on form and becomes a monster that will destroy me. Another way we bring objects to life is by placing too much value on them. Hmmm, placing too much emphasis on an object, that seems oddly familiar . . . but I digress. Some of you may be expecting a talk about how the “Internet is evil” or how “not to break your anonymity on social media,” but I don’t give that kind of talk. I’m not saying that some of that dialogue does not have merit – there are surely pitfalls and concerns about how we use these new communication tools effectively – but there are plenty of you who can give that talk, and so my focus will be more on how best to use these tools.

I have taken all Twelve Steps, in order, with a sponsor who I didn’t fire, and I now do the same with other men. In doing so, I have learned to place the welfare of others ahead of my own . . . welfare. I spent 31 years putting my welfare ahead of yours, and so the fact that I believe there even is “our common welfare,” Tradition One, is a testament to the miracle of A.A. and God’s grace. I don’t know if I was born alcoholic (I’m of the belief you have to drink alcohol to be an alcoholic), but I know for certain that I was born a computer nerd, an aspect of my personality that caught me the wrong kind of attention constantly in high school. Yet, today that’s how I make a living. It’s my hobby. In fact, I really only do three things today: practice A.A., spend time with my family, and work on computers (they’re more than enough; I sleep as little as possible). I work for a healthcare company: I.T. Director by title, web developer by trade. I write computer code in my head while lying in bed at night. My smart phone is glued to my hand, and I’ll be the first to have one implanted in my head when that becomes an option. My four-year-old son spends a ton of time on a

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Editor's Corner

HELLO LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

THIS QUARTER'S ISSUE IS BASED ON THE INTERNET. ROBERT SUBMITTED AN ARTICLE BY AN ELOQUENT WRITER ON TECHNOLOGY. I FOUND AN ARTICLE ON AA.ORG ABOUT THE ONLINE INTERGROUP OF AA, (I CAN'T FIND IT TO GET THE PROPER CITATION, BUT IT'S IN BOX 459) AND I WROTE AN ARTICLE THAT IS EXCERPTS FROM AA GUIDELINES ON INTERNET WITH MY THOUGHTS.

THERE WERE TWO SUBMISSIONS!! I AM THRILLED. MY CHOICE WOULD BE THAT ALL OF CONCEPTS BE WRITTEN BY YOU, THE READER. I ENJOY WRITING AND IT IS ONE OF THE TOOLS I USE WHEN I AM IN A FUNK. BUT THIS IS THE AREA'S NEWSLETTER. NOT HEATHER S.'S NEWSLETTER. ☺ NEITHER PERSON SIGNED THEIR WORK. I DIDN'T FORGET TO PUT IN NAMES. I JUST CUT AND PASTE WHAT IS ON THE SHEET. IT'S A LITTLE MORE WORK GETTING IT ALL TO FIT PRETTY. BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO BE ABLE TO WRITE TO DO THIS JOB.

WHICH BRINGS ME TO THE FACT THAT I WILL BE RESIGNING FROM THE EDITOR POSITION AT THE END OF THIS YEAR. MY CURRENT CO-EDITOR WILL BE TAKING OVER. SO WE NEED A CO-EDITOR. THE CO-EDITOR OVERSEES AND DEVELOPS THE MAILING LIST. IT IS AN IMPORTANT POSITION. I COULD SPEND ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD PRODUCING THIS NEWSLETTER. BUT IT WOULD NOT REACH YOU IF SOMEONE DIDN'T DEVELOP THE MAILING LIST.

THANK YOU FOR LETTING ME BE OF SERVICE.
HEATHER S.

smart phone and on his computer, and I don't encourage him to do otherwise. I want him to have the best advantage possible, and I believe that is the way he will have it. So I probably see technology from a different angle than most of you – a different perspective than most people I know. Instead of talking about how social media is dangerous, I look to using Facebook, and text messaging, and email, and websites as the next phase of our development. How do we use technology to increase our unity? How do we use it to be more inclusive, to be more available, to have a stronger community, to be more effective, to reach more alcoholics? “How then shall we present that which has been so freely given us?”

Well, to start with, we need to gather the facts. Those of us who understand and practice the Traditions as a way of life need to be willing to be first, even if we don't know what we are doing. We've seen how waiting until we are good at using technology works . . . it doesn't. Who is going to set the example of how to use technology, specifically the Internet, appropriately if those who do know how to live the A.A. way of life refuse to use these new conduits of communication because they fear what might happen if they make a mistake? I learned a long time ago that mistakes won't get me drunk, but defending them, or not being willing to make them, just might.

An example of misinformation? Social media is not inherently the general public any more than my living room is. Every Thanksgiving many people in A.A. come to my house to celebrate with my family. We may talk about football, family, or A.A. I am not going to specifically “out” you, but I am also not going to pretend that A.A. is a secret society either – we must be known by our community to be effective. And just because my dad “comments” on an A.A. conversation, that does not make him an A.A. member. For that matter, sitting in A.A. meeting does not make you an A.A. member; any more than sitting in a garage makes you a car. Now, social media can be public, but so can my living room, if I choose to broadcast our gathering over a live feed on YouTube. There is a choice to be made, which means an opportunity to set an example. We have a perception problem (go-figure): we have a hard time matching our virtual life to our real life. I know the argument will still be, but we can't control what those companies do with our information. Right, our groups can't control what our landlord does with our information, either, but nobody is saying we should still meet only in homes. Besides, Tradition 11 is not designed to protect me from you – none of the Traditions are. They are designed to protect you from me and me for my own ego. Am I still talking about my living room – or Facebook?

To wait until we fully understand these new methods of communication is not just a bad idea, it's impossible, because technology is ever evolving and at an ever increasingly rapid pace. One day we will have communication tools that make the ones we are struggling with today look archaic, but these are not dangers – these are opportunities. I think the only real dangers are resistance to change, I mean using technology. As my first sponsor would say, pray about it, be as well-informed as possible, and feel free to go mess it up (inappropriate language replaced).

Thank you for allowing me to serve, and thank you for my life.

Everyday sobriety – what it means to me

I heard this topic on a telephone meeting, Sober Voices, the other day and I found it very interesting. So I thought I would apply it to Heather's request for articles.

I was one of those people going from crisis to crisis while I was drinking, thought I didn't realize it. Everything was urgent and controlled and had to be executed correctly or else it couldn't happen in my world. If it wasn't urgent, it didn't happen, or not until the last minute. Only important events occurred around me. And how could I possibly deal with all those important matters unless I relaxed a little with a drink? I set myself up for a vicious cycle.

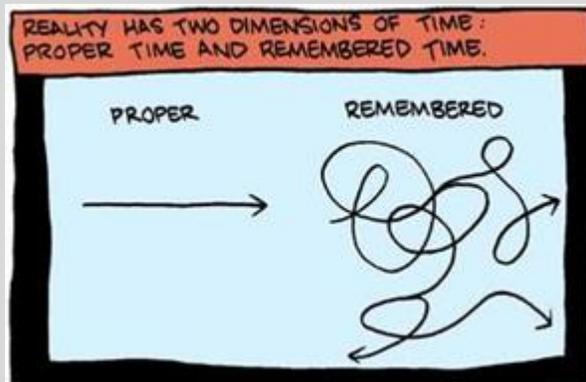
What a difference six sober years can make! At first, I didn't get that abstinence was the program. And when I did, I felt like the joke was on me. I couldn't imagine discussing how alcohol affected our lives, I thought we were just supposed to ignore it so we wouldn't be tempted, right? Wrong. I was ready to learn about the 'design for living'.

I eventually caught on that sobriety and my Higher Power had to be first on my list every day, one day at a time. I learned that if I wasn't sober, I wouldn't have anything, let alone anything urgent in my life. Early sobriety for me was physically challenging as well, as I recovered from dehydration and malnutrition. The basic activities of daily living were enough to tire me out requiring frequent rest periods. Once I came to the point where I could stay

awake all day, I could begin to address this sobriety thing.

I was pretty immersed in the learning curve, I felt like putty, and my fight with myself and everything else was over. For me, there was no turning back.

Today, everyday sobriety means turning my life over to the care of my Higher Power every morning and try to let myself be led throughout the day with gratitude. I appreciate prayer and meditation. I have learned to ask for help and to help others willingly. I truly believe in the Primary Purpose of Alcoholics Anonymous. That is what everyday sobriety means to me.



How many addicts does it take to change a light bulb? Just one. He holds the bulb and the world revolves around him!

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ALWAYS WE TRIED.....

...to struggle to the top of the heap or to hide beneath it. This self-centered behavior blocked a partnership relation with any one of those about us. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions p. 53

Today’s daily reflection really hit home. Before sobriety, I never saw myself as selfish or self-centered- I thought I put others first, but it was always as an end to my own means, though I didn’t realize it at the time. I was a team player as long as I could drive the team, since I knew best. There seem to be a lot of ‘I’ in those past few sentences. And that is what I learned in AA.

I certainly didn’t know anything about AA, therefore I couldn’t possibly need it. However, it was brought to my attention that I really needed to listen and learn and some useful information might come to light. AA was social and I wanted to make connections, but didn’t understand that meant sober connections. The primary purpose eluded me, until I heard it a few hundred times. Imagine, hearing the mission statement of a fellowship within the first fifteen minutes of my first meetings.

Along this path, I became more of a person among persons, looking to the similarities (our shared disease) instead of the differences encountered in alcoholism. Asking for help instead of providing help was foreign to me and since I was a blob of clay anyway at my bottom, I felt like a blank slate waiting for the right words, waiting for my higher power to guide me.

My Higher Power is thanked every day for my sobriety, for without it, I would not be writing this. And hopefully you will see some similarities too. And share those with the next person reaching out.

'The Man on the Web': Online Intergroup of A.A. Nears 20-Year Anniversary

"Today's counterpart to the 'man on the bed' is the trembling, sick alcoholic in cyberspace," writes Dennis M. of the Bronx, N.Y. in a Grapevine article titled AA in Cyberspace. "And we see a good number of them looking for help for the first time. We see them coming back from slips; we see them finding A.A. at a time and a place where we can feel their desperation and share our hope, just as we do in f2f (face-to-face) meetings." Excited about today's expanding ability to reach out to suffering alcoholics, A.A. members around the world continue finding new ways to carry A.A.'s message of hope. One helpful development in this effort has been the growth of the Online Intergroup of A.A. (O.I.A.A.), an organization nearing its 20th anniversary. First formed to help unify the growing number of online meetings that began to mushroom in the late 1980s, many starting as bulletin board meetings and email groups, the O.I.A.A. was legally incorporated in 1996, giving online groups a forum for exchanging information and ideas and for helping one another carry the message of A.A. online. Online meetings come in a variety of formats: real-time chat, email meetings, telephone chats, audio-visual meetings using video streaming applications, message boards/forums, and discussion board meetings. Some are targeted toward specific groups: women, military, deaf/hard-of-hearing, and there are meetings available in a number of languages. Many have regular schedules, and some are "catch-as-

catch-can," with members posting when there is time and a burning desire. Many A.A. members use the online medium to supplement their f2f meetings or vice-versa, depending on each member's own situation, and most online groups encourage attendance at f2f meetings. There are many A.A.s, however, who cannot attend f2f meetings (geographically isolated members, members with physical disabilities, members living in a foreign country, members in the military or at sea, older A.A.s, shift workers, parents with young children) and online A.A. may be the best or only resource available to allow these members to participate fully in the A.A. Fellowship. One of O.I.A.A.'s chief services is an online meeting directory posting an up-to-date list of online A.A. groups on its website (www.aa-intergroup.org). On average, the directory lists about 170 groups. It also directs an estimated 22,600 online visitors a month from more than 100 countries to meetings held in 14 languages and to meetings with formats that make A.A. accessible to people with vision, speech, or hearing problems. A little more than half of O.I.A.A.'s visitors access their information on mobile devices (phones or tablets), with others using desktop computers. O.I.A.A.'s directory does not include every A.A. group in cyberspace, however — only those that choose to be listed and subscribe to the Twelve Traditions of A.A. Keenly aware that "personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity," as the First Tradition says, O.I.A.A. also encourages communication among online groups as well as with local inter-

groups, areas, G.S.O., and other A.A. service bodies. This is done chiefly through the work of its committees. In addition to a Twelfth Step Committee, which is comprised of approximately 40 members worldwide, speaking multiple languages and fielding between 350-400 requests for help per month, O.I.A.A. has formed committees for: Public Information, Cooperation With the Professional Community, Unity and G.S.O. liaison, Conventions, Finance, Policy and Admissions, and World Wide Web — all of which are described on O.I.A.A.'s website. O.I.A.A.'s governing body, the Intergroup Assembly, is made up of an Intergroup Representative and alternate from each registered group, plus its committee chairs, their alternates, and five officers: a chair and co-chair, treasurer, historian, and secretary. With the lessons learned over nearly 20 years working together, they strive to practice the principles of A.A. in all web affairs, so that the hand of A.A. will always be there in cyberspace as well. *From Box 459.*



Following is excerpts from the Guidelines and my thoughts and commentary

A.A. TRADITIONS AND THE INTERNET

In 2013, the 63rd General Service Conference affirmed that “the Internet, social media, and all forms of public communications are implicit in the last phrase of the short form of Tradition Eleven, which reads: ‘...at the level of press, radio, and films.’

As Bill W. wrote: “At this altitude [public], anonymity — 100 percent anonymity — was the only possible answer. Here, principles would have to come before personalities without exception.” In simplest form, this means that A.A.s do not publicly identify themselves as A.A. members using their full names and/or full-face photos. For more information on anonymity online, see the section of this Guideline, “Guarding Anonymity Online.”

ATTRACTION NOT PROMOTION — As our co-founder, Bill W., wrote: “Public information takes many forms — the simple sign outside a meeting place that says ‘A.A. meeting tonight’; listing in local phone directories; distribution of A.A. literature; and radio and television shows using sophisticated media techniques. Whatever the form, it comes down to ‘one drunk carrying the message to another drunk,’ whether through personal contact or through the use of third parties and the media.”

The only rule for anonymity on the internet is the same rule for all of AA: Principles must come before personalities. Being active on-line brings challenges to the practice of anonymity. But only as challenging as maintaining anonymity in the F2F world. If I would not do it in person I probably shouldn't do it on the

internet. I wouldn't give a picture of myself to the paper and ask that the caption read "Member of AA" While that may seem like an outrageous comparison look at posting on a Facebook page.

Likely my picture, first, and last name are associated with my Facebook account. Possibly other pertinent information about my personal life is available. And then I post something seemingly innocuous, and I have broken anonymity. It's not hard to do, even if I am comfortable with my understanding of anonymity. For those who are new to concept of anonymity it happens as easily as scratching an itch.

GUARDING ANONYMITY ONLINE Modern communication in A.A. is flowing from one alcoholic to another in ways that are high-tech, relatively open-ended and evolving quickly. Protecting anonymity is a major concern for members, who are accessing the Internet in ever-growing numbers. As Bill W. noted, "Anonymity has two attributes essential to our individual and collective survival; the spiritual and the practical. On the spiritual level, anonymity demands the greatest discipline of which we are capable; on the practical level anonymity has brought protection for the newcomer, respect and support of the world outside, and security from those of us who would use A.A. for sick and selfish purposes."

When we use digital media, we are responsible for our own anonymity and for protecting that of others. When we post, text, or blog, we should consider whether we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others. For more information on anonymity online see the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" and the October 2010 issue of AA Grapevine on Anonymity on the Internet.

This excerpt says to me that I must think about who I am impacting with my use of technology. The book says our primary problem is self. So when I am posting I am often thinking only of the information I am giving out to others about myself. But what about the people associated with me? I need to ask myself if I am inadvertently giving the idea that another person is a member of AA. My internet footprint is relatively light. I do not have a Facebook account. I have a Twitter account that I rarely post on. I belong to an email group listed online, but it is a private list.

There is, of course, the question of email addresses that contain personal information in the email. An email address is more analogous to a mailing address than anything else. I don't receive much mail that doesn't have my last name and address on it. I believe we think too much of ourselves when we think someone on the other side of the country can tell who I am and with whom I associate by my email address. But many feel that an address with no personal indicators or tags is necessary to adhere to anonymity. The people who disagree with me on email addresses are living the Traditions to best of their ability as much as I am. As long as we are both putting principles before personalities we are meeting the requirement of the Tradition.

I think it depends on what I am doing with that email address that makes the difference. It is the principle. There is no set rule.

General Social Networking Websites: Facebook and other social networking websites are public in nature. Though users create accounts and utilize usernames and passwords, once on the site, it is a public medium where A.A. members and non-A.A.s mingle. The platforms in and of themselves do not infringe on our principles of anonymity or any other Traditions. It is the actions of the individual.

So what actions am I taking? Social networking sites are a public forum. There are some who say settings can be changed to make posts and/or participation in particular thread more private. But the information is there and will always be there once posted. So the impact I have, with repeated mistakes, will be a large one over time.

Having said all that I think AA, as a whole, is too dogmatic when it comes to using social media to reach out to the still suffering. We have an opportunity on Facebook to reach 90 million people. We say we are not utilizing that opportunity because it would break our Tradition of anonymity. We, AA as a whole, are afraid. And acting out of fear is not a healthy way to live. I sat in Pre-General Service Conference workshop and listened to people vote that there should be no discussion of different social networking platforms. If that is not contempt prior to investigation, I cannot think of a better example.

A.A. Guidelines are compiled from the shared experience of A.A. members in various service areas. They also reflect guidance given through the Twelve Traditions and the General Service Conference (U.S. and Canada). In keeping with our Tradition of autonomy, except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole, most decisions are made by the group conscience of the members involved. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist in reaching an informed group conscience.

The need to discuss the internet and social media frequently is adherent in the way AA works. We discuss things. Sometimes in measured tones with respect. Sometimes not. But the way AA works is we discuss and come a group conscience. Once that conscience is reached we inform the newcomer as he/she comes into AA about the way AA works.

I don't feel like AA, as a whole, has come to an agreement about the use and misuse of the internet. Technology is constantly changing, which makes the AA way of doing things difficult. As soon as we decide something it may no longer be relevant. Newcomers continue to come to AA. So because of the evolution of technology and the arrival of newcomers there is a continuing need to discuss anonymity and the internet.

....that may cause harm to themselves, to others, or to A.A. as a whole. For that we are, each of us, individually responsible to our fellowship, to ourselves and to our personal higher powers. Using these platforms to provide information about anonymity online may actually strengthen the principle of anonymity at the public level.

The lack of discussion about anonymity is more corrosive to the Fellowship and AA than the actual breaks in anonymity that occur because of the lack of discussion, in my opinion. AA keeps existing because we continue to discuss issues and come to some kind of agreement on how to handle present day challenges.

An AA Facebook site that doesn't allow posts would be very helpful in getting the information to those who are using the sites. I am a reader of books. If AA had not been in a book I may not have looked at it. Today I enjoy my speaker recordings. But I would not have learned to use the Steps if I had to use that form of media. The under 30 population lives in a digital world. It is not the paper and ink of my childhood. The Steps and Traditions require me to adapt the way I carry my message of recovery to the person I am carrying the message. Meet people where they are at. Not where I think they should be.

Individual members can take clear steps to safeguard their own anonymity. For example, an individual or group might create an entirely anonymous social media account without use

Rule 62

A Dying Man's Wish

A dying addict gathered his three best friends at his bedside and handed each of them an envelope containing \$25,000 in cash. He made them each promise that after his death and during his repose, they would place the three envelopes in his coffin. He told them that he wanted to have enough money to enjoy the next life.

A week later the man died. At the wake, the three friends, each concealed an envelope in the coffin and bid their old party friend farewell.

By chance, these three met several months later. Soon the first friend, feeling guilty, blurted out a confession saying that there was only \$10,000 in the envelope he placed in the coffin. He felt, rather than waste all the money, he would spend it on a trip to South America to get cocaine. He asked for their forgiveness.

The next friend, moved by the gentle sincerity of the first, confessed that he too had kept some of the money for a wild party. The envelope, he admitted, had only \$8000 in it. He said, he too could not bring himself to waste the money so frivolously when it could be used to have a great time.

By this time the last friend, a pot head, was seething with self-righteous outrage. He expressed his deep disappointment in the felonious behavior of two of his oldest and most trusted friends. "I am the only one who kept his promise to our dying friend. I want you both to know that the envelope I placed in the coffin contained the full amount. Indeed, my envelope contained my personal check for the entire \$25,000."

of their full name or face and for sharing about recovery only. Another may choose to use their name but not photographs of them self. Both the letter and the spirit of the Eleventh Tradition are clear guideposts for our fellowship in this respect. When it comes to the Twelfth Tradition this has proven to be something that only the individual can answer because of its foundation in humility.

The following questions have proven useful tools for evaluating if our actions may or may not be in conflict with the principle described in Tradition Twelve.

- *Is my posting about the message or the messenger?*
- *Am I carrying the A.A. message in the hopes of helping someone else, or simply "shouting from the rooftops"?*
- *Am I taking my story and affiliating it with political causes?*
- *Am I being extra cautious about not identifying other members as A.A. members in photographs or statements?*
- *Am I avoiding the temptation to incite controversy with caustic argument or bully others who disagree with me?*
- *Am I providing helpful links to my local A.A. website, aa.org, or the aagrapevine.org?*

Because we live by principles there is no set course of action. This can be confusing to the newcomer. There is no set rule. There are only principles and human beings trying to live by those principles. When dealing with the internet asking myself "what is my goal? What am I trying to accomplish? Will I hurt someone or AA?" And let those answers dictate my actions.

Heather S. Concepts editor.

Announcements

Jun 9 Summer Assembly @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church 40W605 IL38 Elburn, 60119. Hosted by d23. Registration 8:00 AM, Meetings begin at 9:00 AM. Spanish interpreter

Jun 23 @ 10:00 am – 12:00 pm Dist. 42 12th Step Workshop @ Christ Church of Oakbrook, 501 Oak Brook Rd, Oak Brook. SW Corner of 31st and York Rd. (enter Door 2 facing south parking lot)

Jul 28 @ 10:00 am – 12:00 pm. The Family Afterward Workshop @ Christ Church of Oakbrook, 501 Oak Brook Rd, Oak Brook. SW Corner of 31st and York Rd. (enter Door 2 facing south parking lot)

Aug 3-5 @ 11:39 pm – Aug 5 @ 12:00 pm Flying Geese Women's Retreat @ Lorado Taft NIU Campus, 1414 N. River Rd., Oregon IL. Contact: Erica T. 815-347-8434 ethomasbean@yahoo.com. Retreat Chair: Carrie W. 847-804-9411 cbw1144@gmail.com

Aug 4 Summer Committee Meeting @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church 40W605 IL38 Elburn, 60119. Hosted by the area officers. Registration 8:00 AM, Meetings begin at 9:00 AM. Spanish interpreter

Aug 10 – 12 Wolf River -Nicolet camping @ Bear Paw Campground N3494 Hwy 55 White Lake WI. Contact Justine B. 847 445 6195

Aug 17 – 19 44th Annual IL State Conference. Hosted by Area 21. Decatur Conference Center and Hotel 4191 US 36 West (Wyckles Rd.) – Decatur, IL (217) 422-8800 Rm rate \$102.00+ tax Conference Code AA18 – Valid through 07/18/2018 For More Details Visit www.area21aa.org Contact: Steve S. (217) 827-7952 Lisa C. (217) 412-2511 or Dick D. (217) 428-7344

Aug 24 – Aug 2 Regional Conference Kalamazoo, MI.

Sep 15 @ 8:00 am Fall Assembly @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church 40W605 IL-38 Elburn, IL

Oct 13 @ Fall Committee Meeting @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

