

# Transcript of Oral History Interview with Interviewee

**Interviewee:** Interviewee

**Interviewer:** Interviewer

**Date:** Unknown

**Location (Interviewee):** Unknown

**Location (Interviewer):** Unknown

**Transcription Equipment:** Otter.ai

**Interview Technology:** Unknown

**Abstract:** The interviewee talks not only about how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their faith and beliefs but how those faith and beliefs influenced their view of the pandemic. They also talk about changes made to the communities they regular interact with: their church and their Alcoholics Anonymous group. There is also discussion what community service both groups due, how previous community service activities have changes to accommodate the pandemic, and what their personal community service efforts are.

**Interviewer 00:00**

The first question is: how is COVID-19 affected your faith or beliefs?

**Interviewee 00:16**

It's made me grateful, it's made me grateful to have a spiritual basis to live my life from, which is what I call [pause] I guess that would be related to my religious beliefs. I had a spiritual life prior to having a 'religious belief' and religious belief came up about 20 years ago in the form of another vital spiritual awakening, which led me to the Baptist Church. That faith led me through 9/11, which strengthened my faith, and gave me confidence that God, God could take care of things in the world that seemed to be catastrophic to me. This thing is, I just because I know the word, I know the root word of pandemic being pan means, means all. You know, where, I, I, I'm isolated in, I live alone. I'm living in a motorhome next to a house that I'm building. I can, I can get extremely isolated very, very quickly. My faith in God has carried me through this. I know that I am a single person, in a world full of people who are all suffering the same dilemma at the same moment all together right now and I'm only able to identify that through my belief in God and that we are all connected through spirit and soul. And that has, that is, that's gotten me to a point lately that I am just absolutely grateful that, that I have that. There's a world of people out there every day that are that are looking around and wonder what in the world they're going to do today and they are absolutely lost at how to take their next breath. And I'm seeing them I'm seeing them at the grocery store, I'm seeing them at the service station, I'm seeing them driving by me on a daily basis. And I have a life that was provided to me by, not primarily the church right now, but, but the community of Alcoholics Anonymous that I live in today that we have gotten stronger from a standpoint of faith and belief. And that is, that is I truly believe that today. I know that when, when, when our federal government came out and started telling us that they were going to shut things down and their expectation was that we restrict our travel and we, we hold ourselves to initially groups, of 15 and groups of 10 and then no groups as this if it's not essential, don't do it. And

everything about my life changed that day. And it scared me, it scared me. I've been sober for 32 years. Like, I just celebrated 32 years when that happened. And it for a moment took every bit of energy that I had to just breathe and know that I would be okay. And within a day the spiritual community that I live in and believe in and trust began to get together and be connected and we, we learn through the communication tool we're using right now, this Zoom communication tool, that, that we didn't have to be isolated. And we're able to share spiritual experiences, spiritual enlightenment, prayer, meditation, all of the things that that get us closer to the enlightenment and the connection to God on a daily basis. And I, to some degree, I believe that was only possible because of COVID-19. And, you know, I'm gonna try to be, I'm gonna try to be grateful for that. And I'm gonna try not to be I'm gonna try to be positive about that. And I'm gonna try my best to remove the negative behavior and attitude that I hear around me by overwhelming that of positive today. And I hope that answers your question.

**Interviewer 06:01**

It does, it kind of leads into the next question to which is: is your religious community still gathering currently? And how has COVID-19 affected your participation in your religious community?

**Interviewee 06:16**

So, I have two religious' communities, I will say. Well, I have one religious community and one deeply spiritual community. I'll talk about the, the religious community first. I, I, I participate and, and go regularly to a church. It's not the, it's not the Baptist Church that I'm a member of, it is a non-denominational, evangelic church. It's in the community that I've just moved to, it's Our Savior's Church. The effect of that church is that they are following the guidelines of the federal government, the state government, and they're not meeting but they are producing, on a weekly basis, a live sermon on Sundays, it is broadcast almost flawlessly, to the membership and anybody that wants to join and hear. That has been, that's, that's been, that's been available. I've only used it once, during this time, that was on Easter morning, which, which was absolutely vital to me. It was one of the best sermons delivered by a pastor that I've ever, ever experienced, I believe. I heard about rebirth, and I heard about living through challenges that day, with COVID-19. [Background noise] The other community being the Alcoholics Anonymous community. In a, a, a community of believers in the power of God, as it has affected their lives. Again, I believe that, that community, just like the church community, is, is stronger today than it was May the 5th or March the 15<sup>th</sup>, as an arbitrary date, a month ago. I believe that we are, we are learning more about our spiritual beliefs. I believe that everybody I know, my, my prayer life has gotten stronger. I know my, my reading and my quiet time with God in the morning, and my meditation time has gotten more powerful, it's gotten me more connected. What, what I have noticed also is, prior to this interview I sat in an AA meeting and gave a, a new guy that I'm sponsoring a one year chip. He is one of three guys that I've, I've met that have asked me to sponsor them during the isolation time of from COVID-19. And I have personally probably spent more time with the guys, and women in, in, in spiritual communications and communing with God. I've spent more time doing that in the last month than I have in any other month in my 32 years of sobriety. And I again, I'm grateful for that and I see that as a positive effect. I'm gonna go back to 9/11 one more time. We saw a great influx of God, awareness, and consciousness. And, and, and the need to believe after, after 9/11 that was extremely strong for a matter of weeks, after, after a few months it was almost entirely diminished. I truly believe that, that the world, our entire Earth, our community of humans inhabiting this earth by way of the grace of God, I believe we're understanding that better today. And I know, I got a lot of hope for

mankind, I, I'm getting some, I'm getting some really good messages, I guess that that we're becoming aware of just how fragile we are as an entire human race, but you know, only time will tell. I have a lot of hope, and I'm gonna be okay one way or another, but I really have a lot of hope that as a nation, we're going to come together. As seven continents, that we're gonna come together, and as the nations around the world we're gonna come together, because we're frankly, as far as I'm concerned, broken as a, as a human race right now. And I think we're getting some messages. That's, that's how deeply I believe in, in the spiritual realm that's surrounding COVID-19 right now. I believe this is his message. And I hope we eat it and I hope it lasts.

**Interviewer 12:04**

Awesome. I think you kind of answered this one a little bit but the, the third and, and final question is: is your religious community supplying or engaged in any kind of community service in attempt to help alleviate the issues caused by the pandemic? And if so, what are those efforts?

**Interviewee 12:30**

So first, the church effort. They are out in the community, and they are manning some, some areas of, around homelessness and trying to make sure that the guys and ladies that are living on the street are not having to do this alone. That is, that's been pretty big. That's been an effort that you know, they do they do a lot of as a church community in the Opelousas St. Landry parish area, and they do that you're around but this right now they're doing that they're stepped up even more. I believe from a community of Alcoholics Anonymous we have, we have some guys that and ladies that have, have stepped up to do what we refer to as just service work. Making sure that we, we have. For example, we have a, we have a lot of groups and a lot of AA groups, that, that on a weekly basis take, take meetings into treatment centers and the hospitals and into jails, into numerous kinds of facilities where people, patients, clients don't necessarily have the freedom to go to meetings on their own. So, so, they have meetings taken to them. That all stopped with COVID-19 with the isolation with the orders of shutdown by states and federal governments. There, there are, there are members that are going out and doing whatever they have to do to help these institutions, and governments, help them understand that we will do whatever we need to to accommodate their needs to be able to get meetings and get, get some form of spiritual life and spiritual basis into patients, inmates, clients, whoever they may have that may or may not be able to see a meeting any other way. And that [sound cuts out]

**Interviewer 15:14**

Oh, no.

**Interviewee 15:21**

I'm sorry. Yeah.

**Interviewer 15:22**

Yeah, I lost you for a second.

**Interviewee 15:25**

Yeah, it's taken a lot of effort to make sure that continues to happen. And, you know, I just, again, I am just absolutely grateful and will remain extremely positive and try to wash out any negative around this,

this entire situation, I believe it is an exemplary path that we all had to trying, trying to understand how communing with God directly in a way of prayer can, can lead us all to whatever, whatever services necessary. So that, so there's, you know, just a small thing [phone noise], my, my attitude around the guys that are needing help with their jobs. For example, I belong to a CrossFit gym. I heard, I heard members around me, when we couldn't go to the gym anymore, everybody's wondering how long it will be before the gym quits charging us for a monthly or a per visit kind of deal. I called the gym and said, "Here's my deal. I've been using your gym twice a week and I do it on a punch card basis. I would appreciate it if you'd continue punching my card twice a week. And-" [phone rings] I'm getting busy.

**Interviewer 17:24**

Yeah.

**Interviewee 17:25**

So, so I feel, I feel, I feel better. Not having not, not having to have that gym asked me or put me in a position or putting them in a position where they gotta wonder. So I'm trying to go out front and say you go ahead and continue charging me as if I'm there. When, when I'm when I'm buying a \$5 hamburger I don't ask for change from a \$20 bill. These, these, there are guys and ladies that are that are out there working every day at the grocery stores, and, and the hamburger joints and the pizza joints where nobody's tipping them anymore. And you know, that's I think, I think there's a lot of is trying to do that part and stay positive and not be negative about it. And if I can afford to pay \$20 for a hamburger, I'm gonna do it. And I think a lot of people are doing it, I think, I think it's gonna all be to our benefit when this is over with. I just, I feel that. So I that's, that's some of what I'm trying to get back to the community in an effort to make this a better place for them.

**Interviewer 18:50**

That's awesome. Well, thanks for, for answering my questions. Appreciate it. I'm gonna stop the recording.