

# **SOUTHWEST VIRTUAL FORUM**

## **FINAL REPORT**

# **October 8-10, 2021**

**LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES  
AND NON-ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES ONLY APPEAR IN THIS REPORT**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The 2021 Southwest Virtual Regional Forum was held on October 8-10, 2021. Online registration for the Forum was **927**, including **484** members indicating attendance at their very first Forum.

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the upcoming 2022 Regional Forums:

**East Canada** - May 13-15

**West Canada** - June 3-5

**Pacific** - September 16-18

**Southeast** - December 2-4

## UNANSWERED ASK-IT BASKET QUESTIONS

**At the last General Service Conference, an action was passed to create a plain language version of the Big Book. What is the anticipated time frame this will be completed? Will the content of this book come back to the Conference for approval?**

A subcommittee of the trustees' Literature Committee has been formed to work directly with the Publishing Department in the development of this important project. It is still early in the organizational phase of this project, and no timeline for completion has yet been determined. There are several important initial stages that are currently underway and progress reports will be made through the trustees' Literature Committee. Ultimately, once the text has been fully developed it will be presented to the General Service Conference.

**I know that the fourth Edition Big Book personal stories were translated into French for the French language Big Book. Can the fourth edition personal stories be read in any other languages?**

The Big Book (fourth edition) has been translated into multiple different languages, many of which include the personal stories – or some selection of them – that appear in our English version. To date, there are over 100 translations of the Big Book. In terms of the selection of personal stories, each country by group conscience decides what is best for their Fellowship. They have choices:

- Abridged – just “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare” all the front matter... and a few appendices....
- Some stories they solicit that are original to the country and written in the language of the book -- from their Fellowship
- Translation of select stories from the English edition
- Translation of all stories of the English edition
- Any mix of stories

**On page 37 of the English version of the A.A. Service Manual, it states that a G.S.R. should serve only one group. This statement is not in the Spanish version. Will it be included in the new printing?**

The new 2021-2023 version of the A.A. Service Manual does not contain this statement in either version, in deference to local autonomy. The pamphlet “G.S.R.... Your Group’s Link to A.A. as a Whole” contains the following statement on the topic: “**Active membership** in a home group — yours — is also important, and your G.S.R. should **hold no other offices** in any group.” The new version of the Service Manual contains this wording (in the English, French and Spanish versions): “Can one G.S.R. represent two groups? (Preferably, each group should have its own G.S.R., who votes for one group only. While a G.S.R. can carry vital information to and from two groups, a single individual is allowed only one vote in any decision, thereby risking that the voice of one of the groups will not be included in the vote.)”

**Could you please explain The Warranties in Concept 12? Does it apply to all levels of the service structure? How do you apply these principles the group level?**

- Yes, the “Twelve Concepts for World Service” have applicable meaning at every level of A.A. Service.

- In the Introduction to the “Twelve Concepts for World Service”, Bill is clear that these Concepts relate to Groups and Individuals. Every Service Level endeavors to adhere to these Twelve Concepts. Generally, Groups, Districts, and Areas, adhere to these Concepts. The Six General Warranties are a part of the Twelfth Concept, and thereby are equally as applicable at every level of Service.
  - Introduction: Twelve Concepts for World Services:
 

*“Consequently ideas like the following pervade the Concepts: “No group or individual should be set in unqualified authority over another,” “Large, active and dissimilar operations should be separately incorporated and managed, each with its own staff, equipment and working capital,” “We ought to avoid undue concentration of money or personal influence in any service group or entity, ”At each level of service, authority should be equal to responsibility, ”Double-headed executive direction should be avoided. “These and other similar provisions define working relations that can be friendly and yet efficient. They would especially restrain our tendency to concentrate money and power, this being nearly always the underlying (though not always the conscious) motivation of our recurrent passion for the ‘consolidation’ of world service entities.”*
- With respect to How to apply these Warranties at the Group Level, here is an example of Group experiences that will exemplify how Groups utilize the Warranties.
  1. We see the Spirit of Rotation used to help keep positions like G.S.R. from becoming seats of perilous power.
  2. Groups very commonly adhere to maintaining a Prudent Reserve.
  3. Not placing anyone in unqualified authority over anyone is respected in Tradition nine and followed by many Groups. (Our Leaders are but Trusted Servants, they do not Govern.)
  4. Groups often adhere to a Group Conscience and try to get to substantial unanimity, when possible, although simple minority is also often used.
  5. Groups very frequently consider whether any action they may consider could be “Personally Punitive” against any member when addressing conflict resolution.
  6. Again, Rotation, Group Conscience activities, regular elections for service positions all represent a Group’s efforts to be a democratic in nature as they can.

**The principle of spiritual parity has transformed the notion of "accessibility" in A.A. society. The original language of the Big Book seems sacrosanct. How does the archaic, sexist language of the Big Book serve to achieve our primary purpose, and reflect our principle of spiritual parity?**

The 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference recently passed several recommendations that became Advisory Actions related to the Big Book: among them a plain and simple language version of the Fourth Edition book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This stemmed from proposed agenda items sent by the Fellowship dating back to 2019 and the development of a Fifth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, these Advisory Actions directly address the topic of accessibility and identification:

The committee recommended that a draft version of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition)*, be translated into plain and simple language, and be developed in a way that is accessible and relatable to as wide of an audience as possible and that a progress report or draft be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.

The committee recommended that a Fifth Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, be developed, including an update of stories to better reflect current membership, keeping in mind the 1995 Advisory Action that: “The first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forewords, ‘The Doctor’s Opinion,’ ‘Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,’ and the Appendices remain as is,” and that a progress report be brought back to the 2022 Conference Committee on Literature.

### **How is zoom changing the landscape of A.A.? How do you anticipate responding to the new majority-online dimensions over the next 5 years?**

- There have been various virtual platforms in A.A. over the years. There was a time when within service committees there was discussion of whether it was ok to have a conference call instead of meeting in person. There was the perspective in a larger geographic area, or remote community, of the fact you could use a conference call how useful that would be. There were the Ham Radio groups years ago, and then in the 1980s, email and online groups started, followed by the Online Intergroup of A.A. in the early 1990s. The Fourth Edition of the Big Book came out in 2001, and in the Foreword to the Fourth Edition it mentioned, “In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.’s share experience, strength and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics.” Between the Fourth Edition and now, there were virtual platforms and phone apps that A.A. groups and A.A. service committees utilized to stay connected. In our experience, based on our history, we find a way for the hand of A.A. to be there.
- In our Ninth Tradition, we consider being directly responsible to those we serve. How can we best do that, while keeping up with the world we live in and the world the alcoholic lives in? How do we meet the alcoholic where they are at? We are not sure there is a “new majority-online” culture currently. It is possible that many A.A. members may have not been aware of how many online groups existed and functioned long before the pandemic. The global pandemic certainly created an environment for new online groups to form, and those group that existed an opportunity to stay open, but again A.A. Groups that met online have been here for quite some time. The U.S. and Canada Structure is currently working with the guidance that the most recent General Service Conference has given us which is the following:
- The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group’s preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group’s primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as “International Correspondence Meetings.”

- The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.

### **Is placing group name along with time and date on a non-affiliated A.A. clubhouse website breaking tradition?**

- It is our experience that there is no such thing as an A.A. Clubhouse as A.A. and Clubhouses are entirely separate. This is also explained clearly in the Long Form of the Sixth Tradition and even mentioned in the Long Form of the Seventh Tradition. There is also a useful service piece called A.A. Guidelines Internet. Over the course of the years in A.A. we have published A.A. principles, meeting locations and how to get a hold of us in many mediums. Some of the mediums were billboards, church newsletters, on shopping carts, placemats at the diner and online there has been a similar consideration. A.A. Groups that rent space from a clubhouse have put their information on this site as the group wants to be able to be found. One possibility of making it clear that there is no affiliation is to state the meeting location only and that the A.A. group is a separate entity while embracing the anonymity traditions by not publishing any personal contact information.
- [Click Here](#) for the *A.A. Guidelines on Internet*
- [Click Here](#) for *the The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Long Form)

### **How do we encourage embracing technology?**

- In A.A., we share experience, strength, and hope. We carry the message and sometimes use words. We display leadership by asking questions, displaying humility, and asking others to participate. We seek an informed group conscience, and we consult others as our Fourth Tradition in the Long Form so clearly states.
- Our primary purpose that is clearly stated in A.A.'s Fifth Tradition may be a good guidepost for how we meet the alcoholic where they are at. Some A.A.'s think we need to move a little towards progress with respects to technology, some others think we need to be careful not to forget those who still do not have access to technology. We are aware of one A.A. member who shared while carrying the message to a member of A.A. who was homeless, and while trying to give the member a printed schedule book they were told they do not need it because the homeless member had a smart phone. We are also aware of members who, while many were able to turn to the virtual platforms during the pandemic, there were others who were sober in A.A. for a long time and never felt so alone.
- In A.A., it is our experience to meet the alcoholic where they are at, to have an informed group conscience and utilize the autonomy idea with respects to carrying the message. While one service committee is carrying the message to those in prison technology may not be a priority right now, or those on a reservation where there is no electricity in a remote area, however there may also be a large city where some members of A.A. wonder why all A.A. groups do not have their own website and areas are still writing checks and using paper at committee meetings.



- We continue to share experience strength and hope and evolve with the needs of the alcoholic we are trying to help and if helping the alcoholic in a certain community requires embracing technology to be of maximum usefulness then we share our experience with that and help the group conscience to become as informed as possible.

**In light of the financial saving available by holding virtual service/business meetings, how do we reconcile our goal of corporate poverty with paying thousands of dollars for travel, hotel and such? If our little group supports our G.S.R. to all area business meetings, nothing would be left over to support G.S.O., Area and District services.**

In the long form of the Seventh Tradition, it suggests that the A.A. groups ought to be fully self-supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. It is our experience that the A.A. group themselves with cooperation with their local district and area, A.A. conference approved literature, and asking for experience outside their respective areas can gather information to have a fully informed group conscience with respects to this question. Our 2008 General Service Conference theme was “Communication and Participation - The Key to Unity and Self-Support.” Some groups feel through participation in the service structure this will inspire participation and in turn self-support. Other groups have a hard time keeping a G.S.R. regardless of self-support. One A.A. member expresses that learning and experiencing the true benefit of the service structure and why having a G.S.R. is important is what inspired his group. But this member also expressed this took time. Even our Seventh Tradition Long Form states after mentioning the A.A. groups ought to be fully self-supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members, that We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal

**Is the opening video available to share at my home group?**

Yes. The opening video, “Regional Forums Video from A.A.” is available on the aa.org website. You can find it at [this link](#).

**What is the cost difference between this virtual forum and a face-to-face forum?**

The cost for face-to-face forums will vary by location. Generally speaking, virtual forums cost roughly half of the cost of in-person events.

**Would it be possible to enact timers in the breakout workshops?**

The technical support team for virtual events is amazing. We will pass along your suggestion. Thank you.

**I am interested in discussions about the increase of all addicts being included in registered A.A. meetings and how A.A. is addressing this change.**

Whether or not there has been an increase lately, it is an issue we’ve heard about from groups for decades. Some groups keep meeting lists for other 12 Step Fellowships handy, and take the time to explain to non-alcoholics that they will be helped more by attending a fellowship where they can identify and where others can identify with them. The pamphlet “Problems Other Than Alcohol” can be a helpful tool as well. And Bill W. reminds us in that pamphlet that there are drug addicts who also have a genuine alcoholic history. We want to make sure they know they are welcome in A.A.

### **Have you ever left a service position and regretted it?**

I've often heard members say, "I was just starting to get the hang of this service position and now it's time to rotate!" In the 2022-2023 service manual, Appendix E, page 107 is all about the spirit of rotation. It acknowledges that it can be hard to step out of an A.A. service position. "But it can be a real step forward in growth – a step into the humility that is, for some people, the spiritual essence of anonymity." It goes on to say that sharing your experience with the incoming person can be very rewarding. The joy of watching an alternate assume a position you've helped prepare them for can often balance out any regret you may feel.

### **What, if anything, is NOT happening at board meetings, G.S.C., or regional forums that would require face to face meetings return?**

From the inception of our Fellowship, we have depended on physical human interaction in order to carry A.A.'s message. In every A.A.'s experience (up to the point of the pandemic), Tradition 2 in practical application entirely rested in the 'meeting before the meeting' and the 'meeting after the meeting' and that of course includes the G.S.B. and corporate board meetings, the annual Conference meeting, Regional Forums, and any other Service meeting where members gather to develop a group conscience. We are in our own flying blind period in the process of emulating these experiences in the virtual space so what is not happening consistently is that feeling of Unity and spirit of trust. It will take time.

### **If a submitted story is selected ... how long does it take to publish it? I have sent about 5 or 6 stories.**

It depends. If your story is selected, it could be several months. Some stories may not appear for a year or so. Not all stories get selected. Feel free to send in as many as you wish. We will definitely contact you if your story is selected for publication. We will also send you a complimentary issue.

### **With Individual Donations accounting for over 40% of contributions, isn't that taking away the power of the Groups, there by upsetting the spiritual integrity of our Fellowship?**

Ultimately that is not a financial question but a spiritual one. From a practical perspective, the Pandemic has made it easier for individuals to contribute (expansion of online contributions) and harder for groups (no virtual basket being passed, difficulty setting up group accounts to pay bills). I would expect some of this imbalance to correct as we head to a more normal time. At the end of the day, all of the money to groups comes from its members, so the ultimate power of the purse and the ultimate top of the upside-down service triangle rests with each member of the fellowship. Also, we limit the amount an individual member can contribute each year; we do not limit contributions from any Group, District or Area.

### **In the Treasurer's report, on the slide "Outreach Services Provided to Fellowship 2020", what is included in the Overseas Services? Overseas services was \$791,000, which was the second highest amount. Is that number usually higher in non-covid years?**

Of the \$792k for 2020 Overseas Services, 93% is payroll/benefits related and the remaining 7% is everything else. 2020 is distorted from a normal year because:

1. Greater than expected utilization of the VRIP (Voluntary Retirement) which created a one-time surge in payroll and benefits expenses (the VRIP costs are front loaded, with savings in pension and other costs over time)
2. Cancellation of almost all travel-related expenses.

A normal year would have much lower salary and benefits costs and substantial international travel-related costs. In short, Overseas Expenses for 2020 is unusually high due to VRIP, partially offset by LOWER other costs due to Covid.

### **Is the chair of the General Service Board always a non-alcoholic?**

Historically, the chair has been non-alcoholic. However, the By-Laws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc. do not exclude an alcoholic from consideration and election if that person meets the other qualifications for service as chair of the General Service Board. In 2007, the General Service Conference stated in an advisory action that " In accordance with the Bylaws of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Inc., the General Service Board consider all eligible Class A (nonalcoholic) and Class B (alcoholic) trustees when selecting the chairperson of the General Service Board. "

### **Question RE: Fellowship Connection: In Margaret M.'s Training Area example, it showed three active groups, four inactive groups (that's seven groups) but nine total groups. So, what is the status of those other two groups?**

The examples were shown in a sandbox environment. Therefore, the information is not accurate. It was only to show them what information will be visible.

### **Do G.S.R.s have access to Fellowship Connection?**

No, unfortunately G.S.R. do not have access to Fellowship Connection. Only Area Registrar's, Alt. Registrar's (Full access after training) and D.C.M. and Delegates "Read Only" access.

### **What prompted the creation of the Member & Customer Service department?**

It was a discussion for many years within the Senior Management Team. We wanted to create a department that would function as a "one shop stop". Instead of the members contacting four different departments to inquire about Contributions, place and order, order issues, or Group information, the members can speak with one Member and Customer Service Associate and complete all of their requests in on shot.

### **Will a selection for Virtual Group vs In Person Group be added to Fellowship Connection?**

Yes, the Fellowship Connection dashboard has been enhanced to provide a more user-friendly site, which includes Virtual Groups as a tab.

### **Subsequent to a 5th Step, should we utilize the 12/12 for Steps 6 and 7, or follow the Big Book, two simple paragraphs?**

- My experience is that I use the 12/12 for Steps 6 and 7 as a companion to the Big Book, and it goes into greater detail giving me a better understanding of the readiness to have my defects of character removed and the action to take to have that accomplished. I find that the Big Book gives the simple and straightforward foundation to these Steps, but the 12/12 enhances my understanding and adds a great depth of meaning to them.

- My experience further is that I would not have made the progress of being able to identify certain character defects without Bill's writings in the 12/12 on Steps 6&7. Especially his thoughts on self-centered fear being the primary culprit.

**Are the number of delegates that each state has based solely on population? In other words, is it a consistent and fair representation based solely on population, or are there other factors that contribute to the determination of how many delegates a state has?**

- In recorded notes from an internal G.S.O. Staff meeting dated September 1974, Staff shared that they were working on the A.A. directory and reviewing the pages, particularly in states where there was more than one delegate and “overlapping areas.” To help alleviate any confusion amongst states with more than one “Area,” numbers were assigned to each delegate area. They shared that “each area will now have a number and the contribution statement and group card will carry this same number.”
- Therefore, Area numbers were assigned circa 1974 to help identify, and to affect an efficient system of attributing information applicable to each respective “Area.”
- In years to follow, as new Areas were added to the Conference Structure, (e.g. Central California, Area 93), the next number in the series was assigned. Therefore, if in the future a new Area is to be added to the Conference structure, then that Area would be assigned the number 94, regardless of location.
- The first time this “numbering system” appeared in the General Service Conference Manual was 1977.
- This “Manual” is distributed to all Conference members during the start of the event and includes, for example, the Conference Week Schedule, Reports, Presentations, Agendas of the various Conference Committees and other resources.
- However, the numbering system was not reflected in the 1977 Final Conference Report; the Areas in the 1977 Report were listed in alphabetical order as they had been for decades. In the 1978 Final Conference Report, we found that Areas were listed in numerical order; therefore, 1978 marked the start of listing Areas in numerical order in the Final Conference Report.

**How were the geographic area numbers determined? They are literally all over the map!**

Please refer to Chapter 4 in the Service Manual, section entitled “Forming a New Delegate Area.” It begins with, “If the A.A. population seems to have grown to the point where the current delegate and other trusted servants can no longer provide service and communication, there may be local interest in forming a new area.” The rest of the section contains information about the application process for an additional delegate area, as well as sharing from Bill W. on this subject.

**My homegroup disagrees with the agenda items that were passed at the past General Service Conference, such as a plain language Big Book and changing the Grapevine preamble with gender neutral language. It's our understanding these changes were voted on by a floor action that overrode the committee consensus decision. What's a better way to handle floor action items that override the committee decisions?**

- Generally speaking, the General Service Conference follows Robert's Rules of Order, and proceeds on as informal a basis as possible consistent with the rights of all concerned. It is important to remember that the purpose of rules of order is to make it easier for the Conference to conduct its business; rules exist to allow the Conference to do what it needs to do to carry out the will of the Fellowship by reaching an informed group conscience. Over the years the Conference has adopted some exceptions to Robert's Rules, which help it to proceed more closely in accord with the spirit of A.A. Tradition.
- Floor Actions:
  - It is possible for a Conference action to come from the floor, but any matter which falls within the scope of a Conference committee ought first to go through that Conference committee, so that the topic may receive due consideration. Floor actions may be introduced at any time during the Conference except at the Sharing Sessions. Any floor action regarding a piece of committee business that has not yet been concluded will be considered out of order. When a floor action is to be heard, its maker will be given two (2) minutes to state the rationale behind the action, after which the chair shall ask if there is a motion that the Conference decline to consider the floor action.
- This process occurred for all Floor Actions submitted at the 71<sup>st</sup> G.S.C. The full Conference body listened to the submitter, and then voted on whether they wanted to open the Floor Action for discussion. The motion to decline to consider failed, which means the Conference members voted to discuss it.
- Full debated occurred and then a vote. The Floor Action passed with substantial unanimity (2/3rds majority).
- If there is to be a "better way" to handle Floor Actions, then this needs to be a proposed agenda item with any new process suggested.

### ***Sources of Agenda Items***

The final agenda for any Conference consists of items suggested by individual A.A. members, groups, delegates, trustees, area assemblies, area committee members, and directors and staff members of A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine.

### **Do you know if any of the Trustees on Agenda Items contacted members/groups regarding their agenda submissions, and have they asked them to reconsider their submissions? This is the rumor.**

No. There have been over 170+ proposed agenda item submissions for the 72<sup>nd</sup> General Service Conference that have been received and processed by the Conference Assignment. During the process, the G.S.O. Conference Assignment does reach out to submitters if there is a need for a clarification to understand what is being submitted. The purpose of the outreach is for clarification only, and that sometimes leads to the submitters asking for a motion to be withdrawn or agreeing to modify the submission language for clarity. These actions are up to the submitters.

### **How much of the "discontent" with the communication of the 71st GSC advisory actions has to do with the nations' digital divide that became so apparent during the pandemic? How can we best reach the non-digital members of the fellowship?**

- The same (and the results of the GSC post Conference) as before the 71<sup>st</sup> G.S.C. Throughout the pandemic, G.S.O. still connected to all 93 delegates who serve as the bridge to their area and groups.
- G.S.O. encourages members to communicate with their G.S.R., district and area to provide their delegate with suggestions on how to best provide communications with their area and information in how to participate.
- [https://www.aa.org/pages/en\\_us/list-of-general-service-conference-area-web-sites-uscanada](https://www.aa.org/pages/en_us/list-of-general-service-conference-area-web-sites-uscanada)

**What is a MET team (some members are referred to as members of the METS team...)  
I get that it's not about baseball even though some of y'all are from New York...**

The METS department stands for meeting, events, and travel services. Our department focuses on the planning and logistics of GSO events. We oversee events such as regional forums, board weekends and conference from inception to completion. METS is present during all events to ensure that everything runs smoothly and according to plan.

**Warranty Five: "That no Conference action shall ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy." Given the political climate in which we find ourselves in North America, how can we ensure it does not creep into Alcoholics Anonymous? In other words, how do we keep the focus on our primary purpose and NOT focus on the "culture of the day"?**

Following the principles of this program is the key to how we remain focused on our primary purpose. The Traditions help us avoid unnecessary conflicts, and the Concepts help us resolve issues that need to be addressed. Bill wrote: "Of all societies ours can least afford to risk the resentments and conflicts which would result were we ever to yield to the temptation to punish in anger." We must avoid weaponizing our principals and find ways to be more creative in our responses to others' differences. By finding love and tolerance and being willing to listen, we are more apt to reach a more democratic dialogue with others in the fellowship. By practicing our principals in all our affairs, we are able to keep outside issues from creeping into the fellowship.

**With the immediate attention of the Office to implement the advisory actions, isn't there a risk that some of these efforts are in vain if a future conference reverses these advisory actions that initiated the implementation efforts? Would it better serve our staff resources for the implementation efforts of some advisory actions to be suspended until the conclusion of the following general service conference? Per the 1990 Conference advisory action, "The General Service Office delay processing new A.A. group information forms for 30 days in order to allow the local A.A. structure to participate in the process," I understand that such an action would need to follow the conference process.**

- Thank you for the questions and the thoughtful considerations of the conference process and staff resources.
- The Conference process does allow for a 'change of mind' and the conclusions of one group conscience can be the complete opposite of another when it comes to Advisory Actions. The spiritual underpinnings of the process suggest that rather than being in vain, such changes are all a part of our democratic process for finding the

best ways to support services which make A.A.'s message available to the still suffering alcoholic.

- The current practice of immediate attention in terms of implementation of Advisory Actions is based in the fact that the collective group conscience, as voiced through the Conference, has determined a service is needed. Typically, that decision is the result of a long process designed to build consensus based on as diverse and fully participating collection of voices and perspectives as possible. This democratic participation affording members a voice and a vote all along at different points in the decision-making is said to move at the speed of trust and helps us arrive at the best decisions possible, at that time.
- The suggestion to add to the Conference process a one-year suspension of implementation for Advisory Actions until the conclusion of the following Conference amounts to a policy-level decision best left to the Conference process. This idea might be introduced at the group level for discussion, and whether or not to move the idea forward for additional discussion at the District and Area level. It's worth noting, at any time, any member of A.A., or service entity expressing a collective voice, can submit a proposed agenda item to the General Service Conference for possible consideration throughout the U.S./Canada A.A. Fellowship.
- The risk you describe is at play with the current approach for Advisory Actions of the General Service Conference to be implemented by the General Service Office. Whether or not a different approach, such as the one you describe, might be better would be a matter for members to discuss and decide through the Conference process. We encourage discussion of the topic at the local level within your group and Area, including with your Area Delegate's participation, for perspective and consideration of a possible change.

### **How does the G.S.O. vet which contributions they receive from conventions and round ups are actually A.A.?**

The General Service Office usually receives these types of contributions with an attached flyer or letter letting us know about the event. We rely on the Area organizing the event to ensure that the contributions made to the GSO are coming from A.A. members. We suggest asking your local Area how they ensure and come to a group conscience on handing such contributions.

**I remember that around 1984, A.A.W.S. was fully self-supporting through contributions. In today's dollars, how does that compare to the 2020 contributions and expenses?**

The following table shows 1984 revenue and expense in 1984 dollars, 1984 revenue and expense in 2020 dollars, and 2020 revenue and expense in 2020 dollars.

| (1)                                   | (2) 1984<br>revenue<br>and<br>expense<br>in 1984<br>dollars | (3) 1984<br>revenue<br>and<br>expense<br>in 2020<br>dollars | (4) 2020<br>revenue<br>and<br>expense<br>in 2020<br>dollars | Difference<br>between<br>Column (4)<br>and<br>Column (3) |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Contributions from groups and members | 1,928,824   | 4,804,628   | 10,256,687  | 5,452,059  |
| Gross profit from literature          | 3,081,095   | 7,674,892   | 6,582,266   | (1,092,626)  |
| Investment income                     | 377,560   | 940,488   | 1,156,623   | 216,135  |
| Other Income                          | 5,760   | 14,348  | 950,969   | 936,621  |
| Total Revenue                         | 5,393,239   | 13,434,356  | 18,946,545  | 5,512,189  |
|                                       |   |   |   |  |
| Expenses                              | 4,423,686   | 11,019,236  | 21,025,469  | 10,006,233   |
|                                       |   |   |   |  |
| Surplus/(Deficit)                     | 969,553   | 2,415,120   | (2,078,924)   | (4,494,044)  |

NOTE: 2020 expenses include 4,030,700 in one time pension expenses.



# WORKSHOP REPORTS

Session A: 11:55 AM-12:45 AM EST

## How Long-Timers can make Meetings Safe

Moderator: Pamela K. Reporter: Leslie H.

How can long timers improve the feeling of safety of newcomers in the rooms?

Points made during the discussion:

- Make a group decision on meeting formats. There is a difference between open/closed meeting formats. Address the common issues in format.
- Don't confront issues during meetings. Take the Chairperson aside afterwards and explain expectations. Show them our literature. Use language like "Did you know?" or "Would you like to know?"
- We should be inclusive during open meetings. Remain on topic, and refrain from being self-righteous.
- Talk to newcomers about their concerns and try to make them feel welcome. Open communication with them.
- In open meetings, keep in mind that this is how others find us. We are the examples. Smile, have a thick skin, a big heart, and a sense of humor.
- It's important to have informed individual/group conscience. Common courtesy.
- Sponsorship - make sure sponsees know what is/is not safe. If someone says, "Don't tell your sponsor", **it is not safe**. Be open to newcomers talking about things that make them uncomfortable. Respect that they may not want to hug. Sit with newcomers, get them coffee, get them appropriate phone numbers. Listen to what they may need. Give them literature on The A.A. Home Group. Let our service be a resource to the newcomer.
- Talk about safety in newcomers' meetings; address all aspects of safety.
- Stop focusing meetings on newcomers. Makes them feel conspicuous.
- Have A.A. literature as meeting topics.
- Create an environment that is safe. Mention trusted servants and A.A. literature.
- Zoom meeting hosts/moderators can assist with safety. It's OK to have the camera off, and to mute/unmute.

## La Vina (Spanish)

Moderator: Cesar F.

*The Report for this workshop is unavailable.*

## The Warranties: Our Promise to the Fellowship and the World

Moderator: Jim F. Reporter: Becca H.

*Question 1) How can we use the Warranties and effectively communicate them to trusted servants at the area, district, and group levels so that it makes sense?*

- We need more articles in the Grapevine about the Concepts, and how they are relevant in our lives, these articles should be simple
- We can work with a sponsor/service sponsor on all 36 principles of the A.A. program
- Workshops, service manual, concept studies

*Question 2) Do we place people in the agenda committee or trustees in a place of unqualified authority and stay democratic in action?*

- A lot was said about the draft agenda items that didn't make it on the conference agenda, and how they are not made available to everyone
- If we didn't have the committees on which everyone has the right of decision, the conference would go on for months
- The process with agenda items could be done better, members want transparency and longer/better access to background material

### **Session B: 2:30 PM-3:30 PM CST**

#### **Who's Missing from Our Rooms?**

**Moderator: Mark B. Reporter: Trey G.**

Questions posed were along the lines of dealing with issues surrounding Inclusivity and Accessibility. Are there unreached segments? Are there solutions for broadening our perspective to overcome these issues? We need to identify where the real solution lies - close to home by individuals, groups, districts, and Areas. Implement real "boots on the ground" activity to overcome the issues. The sharing highlighted how vital Committee work is to solving these issues. Bring awareness to the problem, then take direct action in the identified areas of concern. Leverage real grassroots work to solve the problems. Make sure to simply ask the underserved what they need/want to be reached and included. Implement strong processes for gathering and sharing information. Develop and utilize tools for effective communication, and ALL levels of the service structure. Remember, it always takes a Village. Be sure to take all measures to include EVERYONE in the work involved to solve the issues.

#### **Warranty #5**

**Moderator: Sheri P., Reporter: Jon R.**

Sheri opened the workshop with a discussion of Warranty 5, and the idea that Conference action should not be punitive, nor an incitement to public controversy. Sheri discussed how this principle can play out in a home group setting by using an example of members using a private social media group to criticize what other members share in a meeting. Questions from the attendees centered on issues relating to how to address gossip in groups, and how to address individual members who may be participating in gossip or otherwise punitive and controversial behaviors.

The overriding response was that the best thing we can do is be the example, and that attempts to police the behavior of others in A.A. is largely unsuccessful. Several members discussed the importance of disengaging when approached with those types of discussions

or behaviors, as well as the responsibility to speak up when gossip or outside issues find their way into the meetings. At the same time, it is important to have compassion for those who might act in less-principled ways because we all need the freedom to grow and to recover in A.A., and most of us needed time to start acting better when we first got sober.

Members also discussed the importance of talking about these issues with a sponsor who can help us figure out how to respond appropriately. Members also discussed the idea of seeking out groups that model the behaviors that we find attractive--groups that tolerate unprincipled behavior tend to suffer. Some members expressed concern that non-political issues that A.A. is currently dealing with are sometimes attacked as political, and hoped that A.A. as a whole could overcome that.

### **Working Your Way Up Through Service**

**Moderator: Sharon S., Reporter: Michelle S.**

*Question 1: Why do we do service and how has it affected our lives?*

We learn a little more each time we are in service. "If I had not gotten into service, I wouldn't be sober". We educate, encourage, and teach our mentees, sponsees, and alternates. There is a self-leveling that occurs. It is humbling to sign up to do a job, do it and be satisfied. Learning that the "highest" we get in service is being sober. It helped to teach me to accept and be accountable to responsibility. Service work helps me stay sober, instead of just alive.

*Question 2: What makes service work fun?*

Not calling it work and not using the word job. We are getting to participate and help. Be willing to take any position, not just the one you "want". Put your name in the hat and let your Higher Power choose for you. Have the expectation that you are there for them and to help if they need you. Not to police. Rotate in and rotate on. Keep "boots on the ground" and be willing to help no matter what service position you have.

Keep grounded by remembering our Primary Purpose. Do fun events that have skits and have current service position participants share their experience. Do an inventory on your service work to ensure your motivations are staying true to our Primary Purpose. Work with others as a service sponsor. Share your experience with them.

# PRESENTATIONS

## Presentation Reports 8:15-8:30 PM CST Session A Presentations

### **You Too Can Serve: Concept 4--- Cathy H., Area 63, Southwest Texas**

As my journey of recovery began, I was very affectionately known as the “wild child”. I didn’t really want to be a part of any social activities; I was a real mess. Some of you might relate! I began attending A.A. meetings and the fellowship began serving me, the newcomer, by giving of themselves. By sharing their experience, strength, and hope with me, which allowed me to experience recovery.

Soon, my sponsor had me making coffee, cleaning bathrooms, *hint- don’t ever complain about them being dirty*, and greeting people. These actions began to make me feel like I was a part of the group. Soon, I was invited to participate in a business meeting, the group conscience. Wow did that open my eyes to how the group ran. I wasn’t sure what I was getting myself into, but they told me I needed to show up and be willing to be a part of the group, that was it. Dr. Bob states in *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*, “I think the kind of service that really counts is giving of yourself, and that almost invariably requires effort and time.” *Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers*, (His Spiritual Quest, page 307) I began to be of service to the Fellowship without really knowing that was what I was doing. I became a part of Alcoholics Anonymous and my life was about to change forever.

My next adventure was getting involved in the general service structure. I was the only woman at my home group that had a car, so I became a chauffeur for our G.S.R. I have been a treasurer and secretary of my home group, then eventually a G.S.R., and on down through the service structure to where I am today. At each position, I learned a little more about the Third Legacy of our fellowship. One of my favorite resources is *Our Great Responsibility, A selection of Bill W.’s General Service Talks, 1951-1970*. In the 1956 conference talk, Bill mentions four (4) principles to think about that are essential to the service structure: petition, appeal, participation, and decision.

Petition: “It is for the redress of grievances. Every A.A. member, inside and outside our services, should have the right to petition their fellows without fear of repercussions.”

Appeal: Bill’s idea was to ensure that the minority voice be heard “loud and clear” to ensure that “majorities are careful of acting in haste or with too much cocksureness.”

Participation: “Basically we are all partners in a common enterprise of world service.” Bill understood that there would be power struggles between the delegates, the trustees, the boards, the staff, all wanting to rule each other. In the Twelfth (12th) concept Bill writes “No Conference member shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over another.” All conference members are voting equals.

Decision: The final principle of decision came from knowing that leaders must be able to lead. “We shall have to trust our executives to decide when they shall act on their own and when they should consult their respective committees or boards.”

These principles are still vital today, Agenda items, minority opinion, fellowship engagement; right of decisions are still viable in our service structure.

We participate in Alcoholics Anonymous by discussion and sharing of the agenda items that will be discussed at the General Service Conference. In this way, our Delegate can carry the conscience of the Area to the General Service Conference. At the Conference, the Delegates, board, and staff members carry out the Group Conscience of A.A. They do so through their committee work, discussion and eventual voting on agenda items. The agenda items are determined through Advisory Actions, which is how our General Service Office supports vital 12 step work. Bill's idea was that the single purpose of our Conference is to serve A.A. throughout the world.

Our fellowship is designed to serve. Bill sums it up like this: "Our Twelfth Step - carrying the message is the basic service that A.A.'s fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and main reason for our existence. Therefore, A.A. is more than a set of principles; it is a Society of alcoholics in action. We must carry the message, else we ourselves can wither and those who haven't been given the truth will die. Hence, an A.A. service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow sufferer--ranging all the way from the Twelfth Step itself to a ten-cent phone call and a cup of coffee, and to A.A.'s General Service Headquarters for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy." (From *Services Make A.A. Tick*, "Language of the Heart" November 1956, page 134)

Concept 4, the Right of Participation, gave me a seat on this service train that I will forever be grateful. I hope you will jump on and experience the joy of participation through service! Thank you for the opportunity to serve and the service you extend to the still suffering alcoholic.

### **Enhancing Service with Internet Tools --- Kris H., Area 67, Southeast Texas**

Remember when the discussions surrounding technology in A.A. service circles was all about email anonymity and the use of the bcc feature? That's about where I came in. People were just learning how to use email, and pagers were still a thing, or at least my sponsor still had one. In service circles, secretaries, and treasures with access to word processors and spreadsheets were more the exception than the rule. When I was a D.C.M., I turned in a handwritten, two-minute report, and our poor Area Secretary transcribed it. Multiply that by about forty each quarter, and you can begin to see how daunting the responsibilities of some service positions can be. A quick look at our website, which began posting Minutes in 2006, has large voids in our Area's fundamental documents. On occasion, the Area's integrity and lack of transparency has been questioned due to these reporting gaps. The reasons for the voids vary from instance to instance, but at least some of them can be attributed to a breakdown in communication, and lack of collaboration tools. From another perspective, as technology has progressed and become more commonplace, we have sometimes flirted with making access to and knowledge of certain software a requirement to serve without offering to provide potential servants the resources they need which otherwise might cause them undue and often extraordinary personal financial burdens. Both of these considerations are benefited by adoption of standard internet tools.

Our IT Committee has evolved over the years to provide services related to three major functional areas: email, web page and hardware/software licensing and maintenance. They've done a magnificent job providing these basic services while going to any lengths to remain transparent, and educate the Area technologically enough to make informed decisions. Several years ago, the need for more current tech solutions was identified and a multiphase implementation program was launched. Given the fact that our critical IT roles such as webmaster, postmaster and chair rotate every two years and are of course exclusively volunteer, it's extraordinary that the implementation process is nearly complete, and with minimal expense. Time will tell how much maintenance will be required, but it is currently projected to be very manageable. This is not meant as an endorsement of any particular vendor, but the initial research phase identified two primary vendors that could provide solutions to most, if not all of the Area's developing technical needs.

These basic requirements include:

1. Video conferencing
2. Cloud storage
3. Document creation including word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, etc.
4. Email
5. Scalability
6. Cost effectiveness
7. Ease of use

Potential for Website integration was identified as an added benefit with the chosen vendor. Because of who we are, and how we are (our Traditions), security concerns and anonymity maintenance was considered as a top priority. The licensing also ensures that ownership of all materials stored in the Cloud is maintained by the Area.

Basic benefits of web-based software applications include seamless document collaboration between committee members, intuitive user interfaces and easy to understand online documentation including "how to" videos. Whole committees can work collaboratively on a workshop presentation, with every member allowed to make changes, or if the committee so chooses, they can limit editing to a limited number of individuals. The vendor also provides enough individual email addresses for all G.S.R.s and Service Committee members, which include 30Gb of cloud storage per account which can be retained in perpetuity. Over time, much of the functionality of these web applications will be translated into the ability of individual web-page owners (such as D.C.M.s, Committee Chairs and Area Officers) to have shared direct control over updates and content of their respective webpages.

Even prior to Covid, our Area had adopted the use of a single Zoom account for the various Service Committees to use for monthly meetings. This required coordination with a single IT gatekeeper and could be cumbersome. The new system allows any Area servant the ability to set up a web conference at any time without IT coordination. Have you ever had the feeling that we needlessly recreate the wheel with some frequency in Area service? Because all new documents exist in the cloud, file transfer at the time of rotation should be greatly simplified.

With our non-profit status, we qualified for an unlimited number of "volunteer" accounts with full access to a very robust suite of software solutions including: word processing,

spreadsheets, slide presentations, calendar, texting, cloud storage and email, all at no cost. The various interfaces are easily set for language preference allowing equal accessibility for Spanish speaking members. No special hardware is required, just a specific web-browser and internet connection. In fact, this whole presentation was compiled on my cell phone.

We are still working on collaborative inboxes, and confusion about the implementation of this feature has caused some major frustrations and even some resentments across our Area. Our IT team would be happy to share experience on that.

Initial response to the actual internet tool suite itself has been very positive. Many of us have our experience-based biases for and against certain word processors, spreadsheets and email software, but the great thing is that people can continue to work in their pet software and can then very easily transfer into the adopted software suite with just a click or two. Again, this is not meant as an endorsement, but just so you know, the vendor selected contains that other G word that has recently been making A.A. headlines...

### **The Six Warranties --- Bill L., Area 46, New Mexico**

Let me start by welcoming everyone to the Virtual Southwest Regional Forum. I hope that you are enjoying everything that has been presented so far. I would also like to thank the Regional Forum Desk (James) for the loving invitation to participate today. Additionally, many thanks go out to all who worked behind the scenes to create this wonderful Forum.

I chose to share a little background about the Six Warranties that are contained in Concept 12. I have always loved the rich history of our Fellowship, and from my time as an Area Archives Chair, I have learned that there is much deep personal understanding of our program that can be obtained by knowing and understanding our history and where things came from and why they are there. And so it is with the Six Warranties.

We commonly associate the Six Warranties with Concept Twelve which shows up in the Twelve Concepts for World Services, published in 1962. But did you know that Bill started on work which developed into the Six Warranties almost fifteen years before around 1947?

When you look at the history of A.A. around that time, late 1940's, Bill was still proposing the Traditions to the Fellowship, the Twelve and Twelve was not yet in publication, and Dr Bob was not yet known to be gravely ill. Even then, Bill had the idea for a Conference of Delegates to be the successors to himself and Dr Bob. At that time, he began working on what was to become the Third Legacy Structure of the Conference and the "Temporary Charter" for the first ever General Service Conference held in 1951 with Panel 1 Delegates. Panel 2 Delegates were seated in 1952.

Bill did not want a traditional right-side-up triangle to be our structure. He was adamant that A.A. not be structured with the Trustees at the top and the Groups at the bottom and operate in the traditional "Corporate" or "Governmental" hierarchy. He worked closely with Bernard Smith to create our Service Structure, our beloved Upside-Down Triangle – Our Third Legacy.

Near the end of his life in 1950, Dr Bob had agreed to go along with Bill's idea of a Conference. Dr Bob passed away on November 16, 1950, and in that same month, a pamphlet titled "Your Third Legacy, Will you accept it?" by Dr Bob and Bill was released. This pamphlet contained the basic structure of the General Service Conference and contained Section V "Temporary Charter for the General Service Conference". The Temporary Charter contained 12 Suggested Principles, the twelfth of which were the "General Warranties". Changed only by a few words, the Original Conference Charter which was adopted in 1955 is for all practical purposes the same document.

As you read through our history, it was clear that Bill received a lot of push back on his Conference idea. Back in a time when the Traditions were just newly introduced, and here comes Bill with yet another idea of his. This Conference idea. You might well be able to imagine the types of objections that Bill faced from the Fellowship. It would be easy to estimate that Bill heard things like:

- i. If you centralize this thing, all the power will end up in NY.
- ii. New York (Headquarters) will end up with all the money.
- iii. This Conference will become a bunch of bosses calling all the shots around here.
- iv. The power drivers will take over.
- v. Folks will be afraid to disagree with Headquarters.
- vi. Headquarters will end up telling us all what to do and how we should carry the message.

"Naw Bill, we just can't go along with this Conference idea of yours."

Bill endeavored to re-assure the Fellowship that their concerns would not come to pass. The Fellowship had agreed to a trial period for the Conference, starting in 1951 for a duration of 5 years. Bill had been working on the initial framework for the trial conferences, and a "Temporary Charter" to have it ready before the 1950 Conference. Bill seemed to intuitively know that he would need to address the Fellowship's concerns if this trial period of having a Conference of Delegates was ever to get off the ground.

It seems as if Bill wanted to add weight and depth to his reassurances, because when you read the Article XII of the Temporary Conference Charter, Bill literally put in writing that A.A. would never engage in the actions reflected by the major concerns expressed by the Fellowship.

The Original Temporary Charter reads:

*General Warranties of the Conference: In all its proceedings, the General Service Conference ought to observe the spirit of A.A. Tradition, taking great care: that the conference never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve, be its prudent financial principal; that none of the Conference Members ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion and vote; that no Conference resolution ever be punitive in character or an incitement to public controversy; that the Conference never attempts to govern Alcoholics Anonymous, and, that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference ought always remain democratic in thought and action.*



When Bill wrote the Twelve Concepts for World Service years later (Adopted at the 12<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference, April 1962), where he elaborated upon the Original Conference Charter, numbered them, and expanded upon each warranty individually as they were written in the “Resolution” offered on the Floor of the 1955 General Service Conference.

Concept 12, Long form is nothing more than the “General Warranties” as written in the Original Conference Charter in 1955, which as mentioned earlier, was, except for just a few word changes, the Original Temporary Charter offered in 1950 as part of initiating the first General Service Conference in 1951.

Let’s look at how these warranties addressed the concerns:

- i. If you centralize this thing, all the power will end up in New York.  
Warranty One: “The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power.”
- ii. New York will end up with all the money.  
Warranty Two: “Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.”
- iii. This Conference will become a bunch of big-shots and will end up calling all the shots around here.  
Warranty Three: “None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.”
- iv. The power drives will take over.  
Warranty Four: “That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity.”
- v. Folks will be afraid to disagree with Headquarters.  
Warranty Five: “That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.”
- vi. Headquarters will end up telling us all what to do and how we should carry the message.  
Warranty Six: “That though the Conference may act for the service of Alcoholics Anonymous, it shall never perform any acts of government; and that, like the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous which it serves, the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit.”

So, what does all of this have to do with me and my time in Service in A.A.? Well, think about this for a moment, when you agree to become a Trusted Servant of A.A., you agree to uphold and honor the precepts included in the Conference Charter of A.A. It is our responsibility as servant leaders to know these warranties, understand them, and for so long as we serve AA, we are to never violate them. They have been put in writing as Warranties to the Fellowship that we as subsequent leaders to Bill and Dr Bob, serving on behalf of A.A., will never engage in actions that are not consistent with these written promises. So, immediately, these warranties offer me any number of very quick personal “Service” inventory questions to consider.

1. Do I fully understand that as a servant leader in A.A., I am the bearer of these written Warranties, and that I am to keep these solemn promises to the Fellowship of A.A.?

2. Do I act as if my service role carries the weight or power to influence others?
3. Am I prudent with A.A. funds, and do I support prudent spending policies? Or do I campaign for funding for pet projects that I care about – that I believe are “In the best interest of A.A.”
4. Do I behave as if I have authority over others? Do I act like a boss or a Servant?
5. Am I authoritarian or collaborative when I perform the duties of my service role?
  - a. Does it have to be “My Way”, or do I yield to the Group Conscience?
6. Have I ever retaliated or engaged in any personally punitive actions (this could easily include gossip) while in my service role?
7. Have I created policies in my service role that obligate others to do things my way – acts of Government, or do I honor the second Tradition?

These warranties were a direct response by Bill to genuine and legitimate concerns of our Fellowship. Concerns that are equally as valid today as they were then. Concerns that Bill went so far as to put in writing that we would never do! I invite each of you who are in service to spend some time with these Warranties, develop for yourself what they mean to you, and ask yourself “How well do I, as a Trusted Servant, adhere to the promises that A.A. has made to the Fellowship? Promises that I have accepted a role to uphold. Do I uphold the Six General Warranties?

I hope that everyone here is enjoying your day so far, and I hope that you get a lot out of all the information that is being provided this weekend. Thank you, and again thank you to the Forum Desk for the loving invitation to share with you a little about our General Warranties.

### **Presentation Reports 9:00-9:20 PM CST Session B Presentations**

#### **Communication: Informed Group Conscience --- Beth P., Area 10, Colorado**

Tradition 2 states, “For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.” I thought I had a clear idea of what this means, however while preparing for this report, I realized that have more questions than answers as to what a truly informed group conscience is.

I remember, in my early years of sobriety, sitting in my home group’s conscience and feeling so frustrated with the process. I couldn’t even begin to count the number of group conscience meetings where I just wanted to hurry up and vote so we could get on with the meeting or fellowship. I honestly didn’t care about what was happening with the group. Around 10 years sober, it was brought to my attention that if I didn’t make some changes I would likely drink. And with that, I turned my back on Alcoholics Anonymous and quit attending meetings for approximately 5 years.

When I returned to A.A, I surrendered to the entire program of Alcoholics Anonymous and became a student of our traditions and took a few service positions at the group level. I

grew to love and understand that without the group, I have no chance of staying sober at all, and to have a healthy group there must be a regular group conscience. During one business meeting, I was nominated to be a G.S.R. for my home group. Another gentleman in our group volunteered - we each shared about ourselves then stepped out of the room to let the group make the decision. This was the point where I truly understood and trusted the group conscience more than I trusted my own thoughts or decisions. When we walked back into the room, I learned that I was the group's new G.S.R. I was relieved to learn that the position came with a service sponsor and was voluntold to participate in a Concepts study.

Attending area assemblies watching the Traditions and Concepts come to life was amazing, and I had no idea the incredible experience I would have served my group at that capacity. Nor did I expect to have a spiritual experience as a result of our Third Legacy. By the end of my rotation as G.S.R., I had fallen in love with Alcoholics Anonymous in a completely new capacity.

In the years since, I have gone through the traditions and concepts repeatedly and have been challenged to grow through them while serving down the triangle. These principles have taught me that to be unified and for us to survive as a fellowship, we must be willing to have the difficult discussions that a true group conscience requires. We need to talk; we need to be willing to listen (and consider) all perspectives especially the minority opinion. It is the minority opinion that helps us get to a truly informed group conscience. We need to continue to talk until God's voice rises.

During one of my service terms, someone took money from the treasury. There was tremendous disunity as some members wanted to file a police report while others felt we needed to just not say anything. We took time to talk through the situation repeatedly ensuring we looked at it from all angles. Our group conscience was to share the facts of the situation with those impacted and not the focus on the individual. Afterall, we don't shoot our wounded. The time, honesty and care taken to be fully informed allowed us to grow in unity as a district.

The pandemic challenged our members, groups, districts, and our areas to stay connected in a time when we had to be physically disconnected. The 70<sup>th</sup> General Service Conference (G.S.C.) was forced to be held in a virtual format with focus on business-critical items only. All remaining agenda items were moved to the 71<sup>st</sup> G.S.C. which was our first full virtual conference held in April of this year. The conference was packed with a high volume of agenda items and background material. The recommendations brought forward from the conference committees resulted in emotionally dynamic discussions throughout the conference. One of the things I appreciated most about the experience was the great care that was taken by the chairpersons to ensure every voice was heard. It was a beautiful, intense, and powerful experience.

I have spent a lot of time in reflection since the conference particularly with regards to the feedback from my area regarding many of the changes that occurred. And my heart has been a bit heavy with the separation that I see within our fellowship at this current time.

One of the most common things I have heard from groups in my area is that they had no idea that some of these things could or would have changed. And while it is fact that the

agenda items and background material for this year's conference was available to the fellowship for the last 1-2 years (or more), it is also true that we were in the thralls of the pandemic with our members trying to figure out how to survive individually and collectively within their groups. As I have reflected, I have found myself asking some questions: As delegates, are we ensuring our districts and area committees are fully informed? As D.C.M.s, are we ensuring the groups are receiving information whether they have a G.S.R. or not? Did we, as a conference, expect too much from our members and groups to keep up with what was being communicated virtually regarding the agenda and background for this year's conference given the desperate times of the pandemic? While we had substantial unanimity at this year's conference, did we ensure we had substantial unanimity within the fellowship? And are we, regardless of our role in Alcoholics Anonymous, listening?

Alcoholics Anonymous saved my life, my daughter's life and today I think about the future of our fellowship and my 7-month-old granddaughter. I would like us all to consider what we can do better to communicate and listen as members and trusted servants of our precious fellowship. As Bill W. stated in his 1960 talk to the 25<sup>th</sup> G.S.C. "We live in an era of change. Our Twelve Steps probably won't change; the Traditions, not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service – let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever.

### **Singleness of Purpose --- Wayne H., Area 65, Northeast Texas**

The Traditions of A.A. are a package of spiritual principles that ensure our survival centered, I believe, around central themes arrived at through SACRIFICE by all members at all levels. Of those themes, Singleness of Purpose requires our unyielding focus, for on it rest the continuation of our individual and societal welfare and existence. Bill W. describes the Traditions as "the vital Principles upon which the survival of Alcoholics Anonymous so heavily depends" (A.A.C.O.A. p-96). Our Unity Statement (Paraphrased) Our lives and the lives of the still suffering depend on us staying unified on the sole purpose that ensures our future.

Bill W. also, in a 1958 article Problems other than alcohol (A.A. Pamphlet P-35) addresses Singleness of Purpose in the following ways, "Our first duty, as a society, is to ensure our own survival. Therefore, we have to avoid distractions and multipurpose activity." He also states, "Sobriety-- freedom from alcohol—through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an A.A. group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities, and they have always failed." Again, Bill reiterates this point (A.A.C.O.A. p-124) "We conceive the survival and spread of Alcoholics Anonymous to be something of greater importance than any weight we could collectively throw back of other causes. Recovery from alcoholism is life itself to us, and we wish to preserve in full strength our means of survival." These are but a few of the expressions of our founder regarding our focus and attention to one thing. On this point Bill W. reminds us (A.A. 12 & 12 p-150) "better to do one thing supremely well than many badly This is the central theme of this Tradition. Around it our society gathers in unity. The very life of our Fellowship requires the preservation of this principle."

Everything we do, every dollar we spend, our service efforts both individually and as a society are indelibly linked towards this focused goal. It fuels our endeavors that make "More and better 12 Step work possible". That 12 Step, giving it away to keep it, and all our services

keeps us linked, in action, for each other as we actively prepare for the arrival of that next person with an uncontrollable alcohol problem and that key ingredient of “a desire to stop drinking”. In addition, our efforts at ensuring the A.A. message are passed through cooperation to enable all who may discover or encounter our prospects before their introduction to us is but another lane on our single purposed path.

Clearly, Singleness of Purpose is the powerful glue that binds our Fellowship in unity. In Bill’s words, we “will make lifelong friends. We will be bound to them with new and wonderful ties, for you escape disaster together and you will commence shoulder to shoulder your common journey.” He continues, “Then you will know what it means to give of yourself that others may survive and rediscover life.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, pages 152-153). These unified and concerted efforts establish the essence of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is truly a miraculous feat that, by Grace our trust in a Higher Power allows us to rally around our solution and purpose. Only through Divine providence do we move into the future with focus on the ideal that some of us will be there when “anyone, anywhere reaches out for help”, and that a “hand of A.A.” will reach back!

Only in A.A., with Singleness of Purpose, is it possible that we can function in harmony. Clearly, we are “people who normally would not mix” (Big Book, page 17). We represent every varying culture, social, political, religious, occupational, and other unmentioned segment of society. Our success and existence, as a society, is dependent on our unified participation and Spirit of Service. Our willingness to listen, consider other points of view, honor minority opinion, and place the common welfare ahead of preference, want, desire, and personal comfort is of utmost importance. These principles represented by A.A. Tradition, our most sacred gift to each other, must be guarded with every grain of honesty, consideration, and understanding that we can bring to bear. We cannot allow differences to induce conflict or disagreement over social, political, and reform issues of the day. We, perhaps, can seriously contemplate the very clear and applicable lessons and history we have on these matters.

Bill W. cautions us on this in his 1955 Forward to A.A. Pamphlet P-17 [A.A. Tradition How It Developed --- A tour of the historical events that led to our unique Twelve Traditions](#). Bill says, “But A.A. unity cannot automatically preserve itself.” He continues, “We would like each A.A. to become just as much aware of those disturbing tendencies which endanger us as a whole as he is conscious of those personal defects which threaten his own sobriety and peace of mind. For whole movements have, before now, gone on benders, too.” (A.A. Pamphlet P-17 page 5) Later on Page 50, Bill writes under the heading, “Out of these experiences and realizations” --- “In our Twelve Traditions we have set our faces against nearly every trend in the outside world. We abstain from public controversy and will not quarrel among ourselves about those things that so rip society asunder—religion, politics, and reform. We have but one purpose: to carry the A.A. message to the sick alcoholic who wants it.”

This brings us to the Washingtonians, who also had a primary purpose of helping alcoholics recover, and had seemingly solved the riddle of alcoholism in the 1800’s. The Washingtonians membership of 5 to 6 hundred thousand members was, as a percentage of population, 4 times the size of A.A. today. They all but disappeared in a few years, becoming disengaged from their primary purpose, and sliding into controversy over reforms, social, political, and religious issues. Eventually descending into irreversible disagreements over [abolition of slavery](#) and temperance.

So, I conclude with questions. Perhaps our Fellowship can earnestly reflect upon them! In substance and divisiveness do our present social and political issues parallel those of the Washingtonians? Are they a source of disagreement and controversy among A.A. members, groups, districts, and areas? Is A.A. immune to topics that rip our society apart? How do we avoid the disastrous consequences of the Washingtonians?

Our Fellowship, Graced by God, is our greatest asset. Worth every sacrifice required to keep it.

### **Unity – Why it Matters --- Sarah M., Area 10, Colorado**

The short form of our first tradition reads “Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity”. In essence, we need one another to survive. I arrived at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous out of ideas. I had run my life, and the lives of those around me, into the ground. I could not get out from under. It was soon clear to me that you all had a collective solution. And that, whether I liked it or not, I needed you all.

So why does unity matter? As time went on, I came to learn that the answer to this question is in the long form of our first tradition. “Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. A.A. must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward”.

Our twelve traditions are simply lessons from our shared experience and history around how best to stick together. I was taught that traditions 2 – 12 build out from, and tie back to, our first tradition. For example, our second tradition emphasizes that we have a group conscience. We need all our voices to survive. The most tangible experience of unity I’ve ever experienced was being part of the Area 10 translation standing committee in Colorado. This committee of A.A. members provide verbal interpreting and written translation (English/Spanish). It is service work at its best with a lot of heart. But why do we have translation in Alcoholics Anonymous? Because we need all of our voices. We need access to one another to have a true collective group conscience. It would be short sighted to see translation as just a service being provided, when really, it’s the reverse. We need one another. It brings unity. Today our Big Book is available in 73 languages with many translations in progress.

There are many other examples of how traditions 2 - 12 tie back to unity. In tradition two, our leaders serve the whole, they don’t govern. In our seventh tradition, we all take care of A.A., financially and otherwise. We stay collectively poor beyond a prudent reserve, so that we can focus on carrying our message of recovery from alcoholism. In our twelfth tradition, we learn about the spiritual significance of anonymity, that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. I love that the word “actually” is thrown in there, it’s a very needed reminder for an alcoholic of my variety. I had to learn that the collective was most important, and that my individual welfare came afterwards, but not first. This was news to me. Especially when my sponsor suggested this same principal could apply in my family life, or at work. Who knew?

Now, all of this said, having unity does not mean we always agree. In fact, it's often the opposite. Anyone who has attended business meetings at the group, district, area, or conference level can attest to this. Our principles, like substantial unanimity or minority opinion to name a few, ensure we have a process by which to come to decisions in Alcoholics Anonymous. I believe how we conduct business is as important as what we decide on any given matter at hand. The times when I've seen the most contention or disunity in Alcoholics Anonymous is when business goes off course from the tried-and-true usual track. For example, when decisions are rushed and don't come from a fully vetted group conscience, or minority opinion is inadvertently overlooked. Inevitably, turbulence and some upset occur, and we must course correct to get back on track.

As we come out of a pandemic and time of resulting upheaval in Alcoholics Anonymous, and in society as a whole, we all know discussion about change is afoot throughout our service structure and at the Conference. Opinions vary among members about the best course forward. Regardless of where we stand on any given issue, our shared experience and history suggest that continuing to live by our principals and following tried and true ways of conducting business will serve us well. How we do things will be as important as what gets decided to maintain unity.

These days I sometimes find myself considering questions like, am I really listening? Do I truly believe God speaks through a group conscience? Am I coming from a spirit of divisiveness or am I trying to be helpful? Am I an active participant in the care and well-being of Alcoholics Anonymous? These sorts of spiritual questions can, of course, be just as relevant to groups, districts, areas, and the conference itself.

In the end, I believe it comes back to the premise of our first tradition. We all need to take care of A.A. And we need one another to survive.

Unity matters.

To end, a quote from Bill W.'s talk at the 1960 General Service Conference, "I have a profound confidence in the future of this Conference as an instrument guaranteeing our unity and our functioning... Most of my life in the last fifteen or twenty years has been an effort to figure out – God knows, with plenty of help – how this top functioning can be anchored to this movement, how to keep the cupola on the old A.A. barn so she just can't blow off. So, I'm looking to you with utter confidence – you and your successors – to keep that old cupola on there... My friends, the future belongs to you." -*Reprinted from Our Great Responsibility, pages 112-113, with permission of A.A. World Services, Inc.*

# PAST TRUSTEES SHARING

**Conley B.**, past Southwest Regional trustee, 2007-2011

We heard this weekend about Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. I am one of these people who likes to connect all of them. For instance, in Step One, I am definitely an alcoholic. My life became unmanageable. In Tradition One, in a real sense, I don't know how to work well, play well, or live with others. Therefore, I have to learn from you. Concept One indicates that the answers are in the Fellowship. That is our ultimate authority and final responsibility. If we don't pay attention to that, we don't know how to access them. That's what the "Twos" are about. I came, I came to, and I came to believe a Power greater than myself could restore me to sanity; for our group purpose we have one ultimate authority, a loving God as he may express himself in the group conscience and what we strive for in the Concepts is that effective consciousness and actual voice. We heard that we are most likely to hear the voice of God when we have an informed group conscience.

Yesterday, *A.A. Comes of Age* was referenced when it was mentioned that Bill said that there are three important ingredients. One is all the facts, the second is all the issues, and the third is a thorough discussion of our principles. This leads us to the "Threes," where I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood him. In the Third Tradition, it ultimately comes that I made the decision to trust God, and to trust you to make the decision of whether or not you want to be a member. The Third Tradition is the great equalizer. As alcoholics, we are in a sense, color blind and politically blind. The only thing I want to know is: Are you an alcoholic and do you want help? Do you want to be a part of this deal? Because I don't know who it is that I need to hear from, what I need to learn and who I need to learn it from. That brings us to Four — inventory and participation. Five, staying on the message, and ultimately Ten, on those outside issues and the continuation of everything that we've learned.

I say all this because I'm going to, maybe, make some pointed remarks here. It's important for us to be aware of our history. And in 1985, the Twelve Concepts for World Service were restored to their original format because there had been so many changes to the original document that it was no longer discernible what the essays originally meant. The 66th General Service Conference removed, by Advisory Action, two paragraphs because they were deemed politically incorrect in today's world. And to be able to read them, you are directed, by footnote, to write to the G.S.O. Archives to request a copy of it. At the 71st General Service Conference, two sentences were changed by Advisory Action because they were deemed offensive to the majority. However, the 71st Conference did not suggest a change to the introduction to the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions which still reads:

"In recent years some members and friends of A.A. have asked if it would be wise to update the language, idioms, and historical references to present a more contemporary image for the Fellowship. However, because the book has helped so many alcoholics find recovery, there exists strong sentiment within the Fellowship against any change to it. In fact, the 2002 General Service Conference discussed this issue and "it was unanimously recommended that the text in the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, written by Bill W., remain as is, recognizing the Fellowship's feeling that Bill's writing be retained as originally published."



The 71st General Service Conference, in a floor action, actually three of them, also passed an Advisory Action, stating that the Preamble should read “a Fellowship of people” changed from a “Fellowship of men and women” that has been in the Preamble since it was written in the Grapevine in January of 1947. The editor adapted that Preamble directly to the Forward to the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, printed in 1939. It would seem, by extension, that the 71st Conference has objected to the wording of the Big Book, as well. In six Conferences, from the 66th to the 71st, we’ve now changed the Concepts of the World Services, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, and objected to the language of the Big Book by extension. I find myself wondering how many other changes we will be making to these foundational documents? And how many of these changes will occur before we are not able to recognize what Bill’s writings convey? Or which writings will future Conferences object to at some later time in search of political correctness? Where will it stop? Will there be a future General Service Conference to restore original writings because the text has become unintelligible to future members?

When we ignore the lessons of our history, we are doomed to repeat the failings of our history. It is my hope that we will allow each future member of Alcoholics Anonymous the same privilege and opportunity that I had when I came to A.A. The privilege and opportunity to read Bill’s original language and interpret for themselves regarding how to apply it in their lives when they finally arrive at the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous. I love you and I look forward to our future. Thank you very much.

### **Don M.**, past General Service Trustee, 2009-2013

I am so happy to see so much emphasis on the Concepts. I bring that up because when I sobered up, my world was getting smaller as my fear was getting bigger. I was pulling myself away from the world I needed to live in. One of things I picked up in my early service career — in one of the pamphlets — struck me; it was how we live in a world of institutions. One quarter of my inventory was against institutions. I was scared to death; I didn’t know how to operate. But my world got bigger, and my fear got smaller the more I showed up and learned how to serve a little bit.

The last three or four years have been eye-opening for me. When I showed up in A.A., I was unconscious. I was the guy who woke up in trouble, got out of trouble, and patted myself on the back. The process of being in our service structure made me realize that democracy is hard, but it is worth it. One of the things that we get to do in A.A. is exhibit true citizenry and participate. Of course, it’s inconvenient. But where did I ever get the idea that my life should be convenient? I get to expose myself to some discomfort so that people who aren’t even here yet can wander in and get a shot at recovery. Sometimes I think we forget that a big chunk of what we do in the service structure is just the “plumbing.” We do this part, and that means everyone else in A.A. is free. Spiritual entities called groups carry the message of A.A. to alcoholics still suffering.

I think it is easy for me to become self-centered in my own recovery. I read a great quote that said, “Even though I fear change, I ought to be fearing complacency even more.” For me, fearing change is convenient. But fearing complacency requires work. If I want to get over my fear of complacency, I have to do work. I have to make myself available to people

who aren't even here yet, who maybe aren't even born yet. I get to be a part of a very small portion of a very cool thing, and I am not a cool person.

Since I've rotated, due to my institutional resentments and being involved in the service structure, I've started to realize and discover that the Traditions are sets of goals that help us avoid unnecessary conflict. The Concepts are there to help us deal with the necessary conflict. We don't get to harmony by avoiding or wishing things away. We get to unity by fully addressing and dealing with conflicts. It is very convenient for me to think that the world thinks like I do when I don't listen to any other opinions. But what I've learned here, whether I like it or not, is to sit down and go, "Oh, maybe I am wrong." I have an opportunity to practice real democracy and my biggest conflict was the conflict between who I am as a person and belonging to something larger than myself. That's why I drank. My brain goes 100 miles an hour, I have a drink of gin and tonic, and for a few minutes I have a spiritual experience that makes me feel like I fit in and I belong. Then I chase it, it turns to poison, and it destroys my life. What I really love about service is that I have a chance to participate in something larger than myself — but it's a process. I wanted to pass that on.

The questions I ask myself today are: "Am I here to serve or am I here to win?" and "Am I here to serve or am I here to be approved of?" It's inconvenient and not always pleasant, but you've allowed me to realize that my fears are meant to keep me from taking action and meant to keep me in a safe position. You've allowed me to experience giving up some of my unnecessary fear.

I am glad to see that we are talking about Warranties and Concepts, but I would also encourage us to spend our time, within our Fellowship, creating and finding friends of A.A. That's how most of our members get here. A lot of our history is based on recommendations — there is a reason why the long form of Tradition 11 says "We think it best if our friends recommend us." When I am recommending myself, there is always a plug in there. Go out and make some mistakes! Let's get to a place where we can lead with vision. I am looking forward to seeing everyone in person.

## **Yoli F.**, Southwest Regional Trustee, 2015-2019

Thank you to the newcomers. I noticed that so many talked about communication and about how they finally understood the program. It's what we try to do, especially at the Board level, to understand and know the Fellowship, as well. What concerns me is the communication conversation. We have these forums every two years, and we have a wonderful trusted servant we should lean on a little more, and that is the delegate. The delegates are an important part of this process. Without their service, there is no Conference. We need to be able to trust our Conference. Sometimes Conferences do a few things that are questionable to members. I think there needs to be a sense of trust between the members and the Conference, not a whole dependency on just the Board or the G.S.O. We need to find where resources are at. Listening to the delegates is the first step to understanding what the Fellowship is about, and what it needs to do. For instance, in the part of our text where it states, 'what I saw, what I heard, and what I felt.' It is very important, to me, that the delegate relates that message to the Fellowship.

Communication has long been a problem in our structure. In A.A., the structure is built with a million people at the top, and, for instance, 21 people at the Board level, the bottom. All this information has to go up. So, it's important that the delegates play this role — and we only have around 90 of them. It's a very difficult thing to do. However, one of the things the delegates have, that the Board doesn't have, is the closeness to membership. We need to be listening and more aware of where these newcomers are and what their needs are. I find it strange that some are just learning these things — when we had an assembly that could have been helpful. I am wondering where and when we start to listen and develop the trust that is so meaningful for group conscience. Trust is the word that needs to be more visible to us, and we are losing that trust of what we are doing.

We've got several resources to go to and find out what is best for A.A., but our main resource should be the Fellowship. I believe some of these changes we've made are necessary. The problem has been the way we have gotten from how we've worked the process to how we've made those physical changes. How did we get from point A to point B? How did we do that? I think that is the uneasiness of the Fellowship. The feeling of: "Where am I part of this process that goes from point A to point B?" The Conference is the piece that allows the membership to send its voice. And I am not sure they are receiving the voice, or if the Conference is listening to the voices anymore. So, there is a lot of work to do, but I do think it is possible to get back on the road to the process that we have always trusted.

There was one Class A trustee who always used to bring this to our attention, saying, "Beware of Floor Actions." We need reminding, because a lot of our big conversations are about Floor Actions. This seems to be a problem, maybe, because members feel that that is where the 'Point A' begins. As a member, where do I fit before you get to 'Point B?' I think we need to start developing this trust, again. And be reminded about Floor Actions. If we are not happy with the way the Conference voted on something, instead of placing a Floor Action, perhaps take it home. Then build something with your area, so we can come back and everyone can be part of an essential conversation. If this takes place, maybe we can have more unanimity, especially in our committees, because if the committees are broken, so is the Conference. Because even though the committee may achieve substantial unanimity, if it is not unanimous, it is still going to be broken and looked at that way on the floor. We need to ask those delegates who are not in the committee, and ask those that are opposing, "Why, what do you see?" Maybe we can discuss it and get to be one. We shouldn't be fearful. We are sent there to do something, and that is what we do. I look forward to seeing everyone, knowing everyone, and meeting everyone in person. Thank you.

# CLOSING REMARKS

The current Southwest regional trustee, Jimmy, contributed to the closing remarks and shared the final registration count of the virtual Southwest Regional Forum at 927 registered attendees, and 484 first time Regional Forum attendees. Among other comments, Jimmy observed that the Ask-It-Basket questions revealed that attendees were really plugged in, and for that he was grateful.

**Bob W.**, A.A.W.S. General Service Manager, 2021 - present

My heart is full. It connects me to my experience and the wonders of Alcoholics Anonymous and being so grateful to be sober, myself, and for all that I've shared and connected with all of you. I am also grateful for a habit that I've acquired; some service leaders I follow do the same: When I open my eyes and look at my phone, the first thing I open is the Grapevine's quote of the day. In my years of service, I have been in a lot of different places, even sordid places being of service, and it amazes me how the Grapevine quote of the day really ties in and hits home. So, I have to read today's: "One night, in a moment of desperation, I got down on my knees and remembered a prayer an old sponsor had given me. It said, 'God, help me to be of service for something or someone.'"

I knew intuitively it was the answer. I knew it was the answer to my sobriety. My service, I believe, has been the lasting ingredient to being sober the amount of time that I have. It also reminds me of Dr. Bob. I think he refers to it as the best insurance policy we have for our sobriety. For me, it's a great pun because I spent thirty years in the insurance industry. I sold a lot of insurance policies. But service really is the best insurance policy for me.

I was thinking about my opening comments on Friday night. I talked about the Second Tradition in our group conscience process and, in particular, a lot about the importance of why we should participate. This forum, with its diversity and the many questions we've had, lived up to that.

*Further Comments Unrecorded*

**Linda Chezem**, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, General Service Board Chair, 2021 - present

*Comments Not Available*