The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2026/27

The Structure of AA in Great Britain

This Handbook was approved by the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain held in York on the 17th-19th April 2026. Future alterations or additions to this Handbook require a two-thirds majority of Conference.

Eleventh Edition 2026

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"Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities."

"When using digital media, AA members are responsible for their own anonymity and that of others. When we post, text or blog, we should assume that we are publishing at the public level. When we break our anonymity in these forums, we may inadvertently break the anonymity of others" (Understanding Anonymity leaflet).

The pictures of people contained within this handbook are stock images, and are not of alcoholics. No one's anonymity has been broken.

Alcoholics Anonymous – The Preamble

Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

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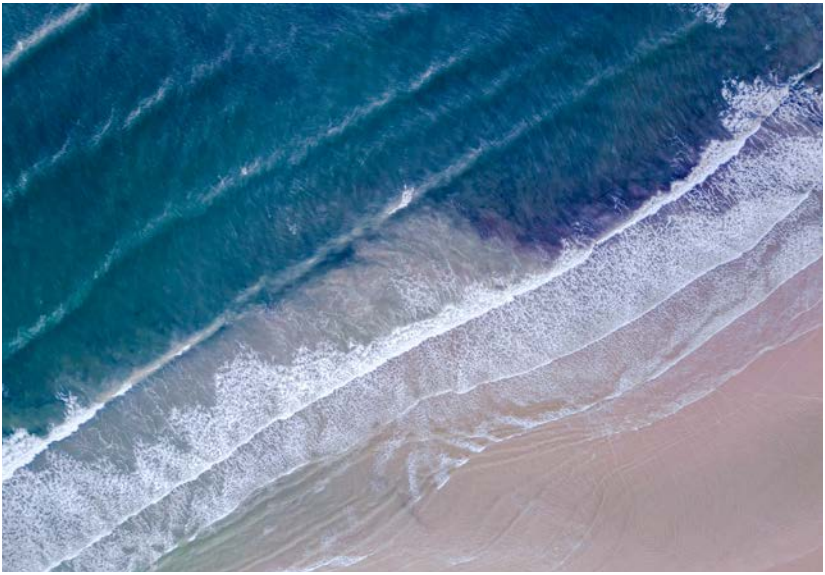
A Declaration of Unity
This we owe to AA's future:
to place our common welfare first
to keep our Fellowship united;
For on AA unity depend our lives,
and the lives of those to come.

I am Responsible…
When anyone, anywhere,
reaches out for help,
I want the hand of AA
always to be there.
And for that: I am responsible.



CONTENTS

Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain

1. Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) 10
2. A Brief History of AA in Great Britain 12
3. AA's Legacy of Service, by Bill W. (1951) 20
4. Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need, by Bill W.....23
5. The Twelve Traditions (long form).....28
6. The Twelve Concepts 30
7. AA Money.....100

The Group

1. Group Meetings 102
2. Group Officers.....107
3. Group Service Representatives.....111
4. Group Money 113
5. Safeguarding and Personal Conduct.....115
6. Addressing Safeguarding Issues 117
7. The New Member 120
8. About Behaviour 121

The Intergroup

1. The Intergroup 126
2. Intergroup Officer.....127
3. Regional Representatives 129
4. Intergroup Money.....131

The Region

1. The Region 132
2. Regional Assembly 134
3. Administrative Responsibilities 136
4. Conference Delegates/Alternates.....137
5. Region Money.....138
6. Regional Forums.....139
7. Maps of Regions of Great Britain 142

The General Service Conference

1. General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain 146
2. Conference Steering Committee.....150
3. The Conference Charter – Great Britain 152
4. Conference Report.....155

The General Service Board

1. The General Service Board 158
2. Executive Committee.....160
3. GSB Members 160
4. The AA Publications.....164
5. Governance 166

Trudging the Road

.....170

The General Service Office

1. The General Service Office.....172
2. European Service Meeting.....173
3. Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting.....175
4. World Service Meeting.....176
5. GSO Money 176

Conventions

1. Local 178
2. National.....180

The Relationship Between AA and Al-Anon.....184

AA Tomorrow by Bill W 188

The Twelve Steps.....192

The Twelve Traditions.....194

Structure Handbook Glossary 195

Annex C Safeguarding References.....196

Annex D Third Legacy Procedure.....197

Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain

AAGB

1. Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain)

2. A Brief History of AA in Great Britain

3. AA's Legacy of Service, by Bill W. (1951)

4. Leadership in AA: Ever a Vital Need, by Bill W.

5. The Twelve Traditions (long form)

6. Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

   6.1. Introduction to Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.

   6.2. Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

   6.3. Bill W.'s essays on The Twelve Concepts for World Service

7. AA Money

Introduction

This is a Handbook for members of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain who are interested in any of the services provided by the Fellowship. As the article by our Co- Founder, Bill W., reproduced in Section 3 of the Introduction suggests, an AA service is anything whatever that helps us to reach a fellow-sufferer.

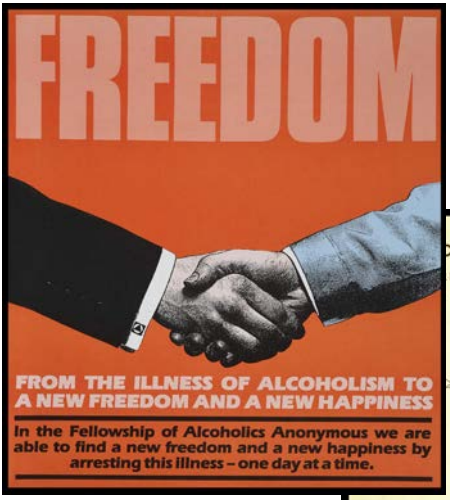
If the emphasis in later Sections is on the central services of AA, through which help is made available to ever-increasing numbers of alcoholics, this in no way diminishes the cardinal importance of the group and its members. The servants of the Fellowship are ultimately responsible to their fellow-members for what is done in their name; and it is from the groups, through the intergroups, regions and the General Service Conference, that AA as a whole gains the inspiration and drive to carry out the services that are vital to our existence.

The General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain and its related services in York are the means by which AA in this country functions nationally, and they are, therefore, at the heart of AA's Third Legacy of service. If Conference is to do its work effectively, it must operate according to acceptable and orderly procedures,

the aim of which is to involve the Fellowship as widely as possible. In the first eight years of its existence, those who guided the deliberations of Conference relied heavily on The AA Service Manual published by the General Service Conference of AA in the United States. AA in Great Britain continues to adhere firmly to the principles that underlie that Manual, the Twelve Concepts for World Service, the Twelve Traditions and Twelve Steps and to the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous. These are the yardsticks by which the activities of AA in Great Britain must be measured.

There are however some differences between Great Britain and the United States which made it desirable that we should have our own Structure Handbook. AA started later in this country, and our national institutions are not always comparable with those of the United States. Over the years since the first Conference we have developed procedures for Conference that are more appropriate to the needs of the Fellowship in this country.

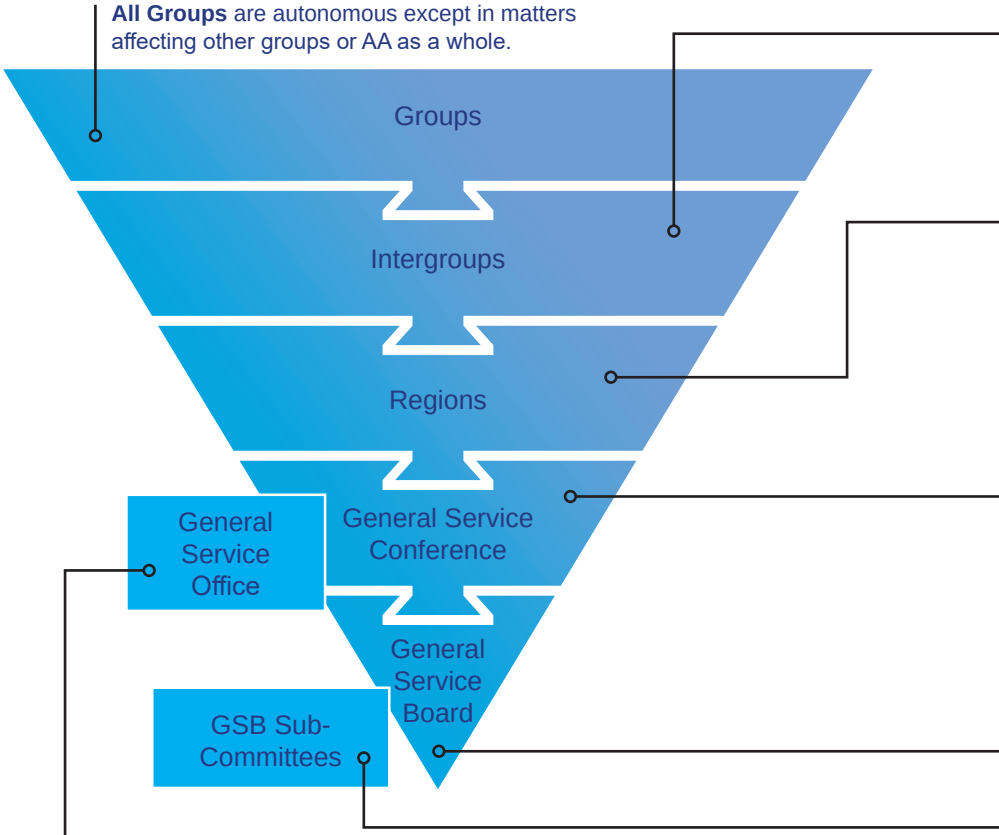
Additionally there have been legal requirements to ensure that the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain fully complies with the Regulations of the Charities Act (1960, 1992 and consolidated in 1993) and the Companies Act (1985 as amended in 1989). Appropriate changes and additions reflecting these requirements are included in this AA Structure Handbook. These are mainly contained in the Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain and the Conference Charter – Great Britain as adopted at Conference 1995.



1. The Service Structure of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain)

'Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern' - Tradition 2

AAGB



The General Service Office of AAGB supports the General Service Board and General Service Conference. GSO also provides central support for the Fellowship as a whole with such services as literature distribution and the answering of day-to-day enquiries from the membership, professions, media and the public. There are also two satellite offices; the Northern Service Office in Glasgow and the Southern Service Office In London.

'This we owe to AA's future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our Fellowship united. For on AA unity depend our lives and the lives of those to come'.

Intergroups. GSRs - Group Service Representatives - from all AA groups within specific areas meet together in order that they may co-ordinate local activities such as public information, telephone and prison services.

Regions. There are fifteen AAGB Regions. A maximum of three delegates from each Intergroup participating within a region meet to co-ordinate liaison activities and select six delegates to attend the annual AA General Service Conference: each delegate serves for a period of three years.

The General Service Conference acts as the conscience of AA in Great Britain. In addition to approving changes to literature the GSC addresses issues and concerns raised by the membership and may instruct the General Service Board to take action as a consequence. It is the Fellowship's ultimate service authority and is administered by a Steering Committee comprising the annually elected Conference Chairperson and six Conference Committee Chairpersons, two GSB Trustees, the General Secretary and the GSO Conference Co-ordinator.

The General Service Board executes the decisions of Conference and carries out those tasks necessary as a consequence of the Board's charitable status. The GSB consists of Board Trustees from each of the 15 Regions and non-alcoholic Trustees, all of whom go through a nominations process and are ratified by Conference.

A Sub-committee of the General Service Board comprises members of the Fellowship and is chaired by a GSB Trustee. Each of the sub-committees, reporting directly to the GSB, addresses a different service area, such as AA News, Archives, Armed Services, Electronic Communications, Employment, Health, Literature, Prisons, Probation / Criminal Justice Services, Public Information, Share, Roundabout and Telephone Service.

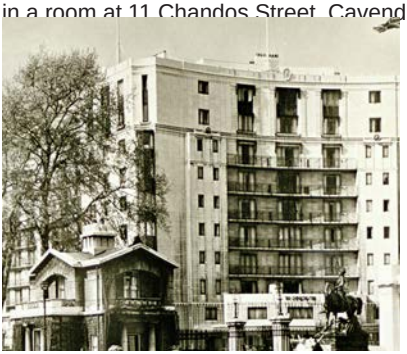
2. A Brief History of AA in Great Britain

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the Fellowship was established in Great Britain. During 1945 and 1946 a few individuals tried to achieve sobriety through correspondence with the Alcoholic Foundation in New York. There was also a lady AA contact living in London who gave her name and address to New York as a contact with her heart in the work. She certainly answered many letters of enquiry sent to her during the year she was in London, but they do not appear to have borne much fruit.

In March 1947, an American lady member, Grace O., who was visiting this country with her husband, wrote to the five members who were in contact with the Foundation and arranged a meeting which took place in her room at the Dorchester Hotel, London, on 31 March of that year. A Canadian member, Canadian Bob, whom she had met in a London restaurant on the previous Saturday and another lady member of the Hollywood Group, whom she met on the boat coming over, also attended. There were eight present at this meeting in the Dorchester, and it was probably the earliest AA meeting to take place in Great Britain.

From then on there were meetings, which were held in a variety of places: cinemas, cafes, restaurants and homes. After a time the members decided to advertise the existence of the Fellowship and an advert was produced which read “Alcoholism – a small body of anonymous ex-sufferers place themselves at the disposal of any requiring help; the offer is quite gratuitous.” Fifteen national newspapers either temporised or rejected the advertisement. One enquired how requests for help would be dealt with. The explanation resulted in a decision that the advertisement could not be accepted. Only one newspaper, the Financial Times, finally agreed to run the advertisement and “the few” braced themselves for the expected deluge of letters. To their bitter disappointment there were only two letters, one post-marked “Skegness” and the other “North Wales”. However meetings continued to take place more or less regularly in the homes of members and well-wishers and in other places.

In the autumn of 1948, the first London Group was formed and began meeting in a room at 11 Chandos Street, Cavendish Square. There were only about a



dozen members but in January 1949 they produced the first monthly Newsletter – 25 stencilled copies. This included a notice about an open meeting to be held in February, together with articles on Twelfth Step work and Sponsors, and it concluded: “Let’s stay sober. Just a reminder that we are alcoholics and that we should never be fooled by the thought that we can have just one for today.” Contact had by now been made with two or three loners outside London, and in December 1948 the first provincial group of about five members met in Manchester.

If the message was to be spread and new groups established, a bare minimum of organisation was required and so an Advisory Committee consisting of four members was formed early in 1948. This Committee’s terms of reference required it to maintain liaison between members and new groups, and to provide all possible assistance and experience to the new group leaders. It also gave guidance on matters of publicity, distributed literature and directed enquiries from potential members to the appropriate groups. In October 1949 it was recognised that the title “Advisory Committee” was inappropriate, and the Committee became known as the “Central Committee” with the same members serving.
The early days of the Fellowship in Scotland were somewhat similar to those in England. A lone member from Glasgow had registered with the Foundation in New York in 1946.

In 1947, however, a gentleman farmer living in Campbeltown in the West of Scotland with a history of problem drinking went to a Christian Association Conference in the United States in the hope of finding a solution to his problem.

At this Conference he met a lady who introduced him to AA and he attended a meeting. He was so deeply impressed that on his return he devoted all the time he could spare to carrying the message, visiting prisons and hospitals to seek out alcoholics who wanted help. A few of those he contacted started meetings in their homes in Glasgow and Edinburgh. However, these few knew little about the Fellowship and how it worked and were having difficulties when early in 1949 they had a visit from an American member. Between his experience and the undaunted enthusiasm of the farmer from Campbeltown, the first two groups in Scotland were established and registered in May 1949. These were Glasgow Central, meeting in the St Enoch’s Hotel, Glasgow, and First Edinburgh, meeting in Mackie’s Restaurant, Princes Street, Edinburgh.

Then, as in England, the message spread and groups were established at Perth, Ayr, Dundee and Larbert, Stirlingshire, leading in time to the formation of the Scottish Intergroup Committee.

The first known meeting of a group in Wales took place on 13 April 1951 in a room in Cathedral Road, Cardiff. Present were four alcoholics from South Wales and a member from Ireland. At this meeting it was decided to register with London and New York. At about the same time there were one or two alcoholics in North Wales struggling to achieve sobriety through correspondence. They were referred by London to the newly-formed Liverpool Group and, despite the difficulties of

travelling; they managed to get to some of the meetings in Liverpool. By 1954, there was the nucleus of a group in North Wales with meetings in members' houses at Corwen, Bangor and Llandudno. The original Cardiff Group did not last, but a new group was established in 1960. This was closely followed by the formation of a group at Caerleon.

In the summer of 1950, our Co-Founder Bill W. and his wife Lois came over from New York to visit groups in England and Scotland, and talked at several group meetings. At a specially -convened meeting of group representatives, Bill presented 1500 copies of the Big Book from the American Alcoholic Foundation, the sale of which was to assist in the growth of the Fellowship in Great Britain and promote the carrying of the message in Europe. To manage the distribution and income from the sale of these books, a separate Pre-Foundation Committee was formed, consisting of five of the very early members. By 1952, this Committee included well-established members from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Eire.

In 1953, this Committee was incorporated as the Publishing Company, and duly registered. It took over responsibility for the distribution, sale, and, subsequently, the printing of AA literature in Great Britain.

The steady growth of the Fellowship had been such that early in 1951 it was felt that the time had come to consider drawing up a constitution to provide for regular meetings of group representatives to deal with the various activities of the Fellowship.

At a meeting of group representatives held on 16 March 1951, the first Group Representative Committee was formed to be responsible for all matters relating to the growth, welfare and activities of the Fellowship in England and Wales. A Central Committee of five members with at least one year's sobriety was made responsible for safeguarding the Traditions and, so far as was in their power, the functioning of the London Service Office and liaison between the groups and the Foundation. The Central Committee was also required to take whatever steps it considered necessary for the welfare and development of the Fellowship both in Great Britain and overseas, as advised by the Group Representative Committee.

In February 1952, the London Service Office was opened at 11 Redcliffe Gardens, London SW10, having previously been run from the office of one of the early members at the London Fruit Exchange, London E1.

In 1953, a loner in Dumfries wanted to establish a group there, and at his request a number of Midlands and Manchester members decided to hold a meeting in the town. Invitations were sent out in the form of a challenge to the various groups in Scotland – the English were once more invading Scotland! The Scots rallied to the old Border war cry "Blue Bonnets over the Border!" and an amazing weekend of sharing took place, which has continued to be held each year ever since. The Blue Bonnets Gathering was the forerunner of the English and Scottish Conventions.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain and Ireland) Limited had its inaugural meeting on 29 June 1957 and was incorporated in

accordance with the Companies Act (1948) on 16 July 1957.

The Fellowship continued to grow and later in 1957 the first intergroup in England, the North- West, was formed. About the same time the Glasgow Central Group had to stop meeting in the St Enoch's Hotel, because of alterations taking place within the hotel. It was felt that the Fellowship in Glasgow should have its own premises, and in due course premises were obtained at 114 West Nile Street leading to the establishment of the Glasgow and District Intergroup. In a very short time the rooms were used every night of the week for group meetings and they also became the AA Central Office for Glasgow.

By the late 1950s there were about 100 groups in England and Wales and about 30 in Scotland. Intergroups like those in Manchester and Glasgow were being formed in other parts of the country. In England and Wales the group Representative Committee was extended to become the Area and Group Representative Committee, and the first meeting of this new Committee took place in London in June 1958. This Committee met three times a year, once in London, and usually once each in Birmingham and Manchester. One of the sub-committees of the Area and Group Representative Committee, called the General Purposes Committee, was given responsibility for the Central Service Office at 1 Redcliffe Gardens and its services.

In 1951, Roundabout Magazine appeared in print, the primary purpose of Roundabout, the fellowship's Scottish Magazine, is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous in print.

As early as 1952, Scottish Intergroup was formed in the realisation that there was a need for an adaptation of the service structure in Scotland because of the marked differences from England and Wales in culture, education, law and government systems. By 1972, the Scottish Intergroup had evolved into the Scottish Service Committee. With regionalisation in 1977 the Scottish Service Committee continued to serve the Fellowship in Great Britain and helped establish the regions in Scotland. The committee was disbanded in 1999 when it was felt that there was no longer a requirement.

The growth continued. New groups continued to be formed and by 1964 there were nearly 200 in England and Wales. The General Service Board considered that the Fellowship had, by then, grown to a size which justified the convening of a General Service Conference. In May 1964 a suggestion to move towards the formation of such a Conference was put to the Area and Group Representative Committee by the Board. At the end of October 1965 an exploratory Conference took place in Manchester to consider the formation of a General Service Conference Great Britain. In January 1966 the decision was taken to proceed and Conference was born.

The first Conference was held in Manchester in October 1966. Over 100

delegates from throughout Britain attended this first Conference, the theme of which was “Working with Others”. It was held to be most successful – to such an extent that it has become an annual event and indeed the Fellowship in Great Britain celebrated its 40th Annual Conference in 2005.

In 1969 the Fellowship’s first World Service Meeting was held in New York and two delegates from AA Great Britain attended. Three years later in 1972 AA’s monthly magazine “Newsletter”, which had been going for twenty-five years, changed its name to Share and this in turn has continued as a monthly publication ever since. At that time the monthly circulation was about 2,500 copies. In 1982, Share celebrated its 10th anniversary by which time its monthly circulation had risen to over 5,000 copies. In 2007 Share celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with an Anniversary Journal.

In 1974 the Fellowship in Great Britain was awarded the privilege of hosting, in London, the first AA World Service Meeting to be held outside of the United States.

The first AA handbook ‘The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain’ was published

in 1974 and reviewed annually until 1998. It was then superseded by the ‘Group Handbook’, renamed ‘The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain’’ which was in use until 2012. This was then divided into two books ‘The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain’ approved 2012, and ‘The AA Service Handbook for Great Britain’ approved 2013. These are used today and are updated annually.

AA’s growth in Great Britain continued rapidly and in 1977 the 1000th group was registered. This was followed in the next year by the establishment of the European Information Centre at the General Service Office in Redcliffe Gardens, London in response to the increasing demand for information from English-speaking members in mainland Europe.

In 1980 it became apparent that some change in the structure of the Fellowship in Great Britain was required and to this end the format of regionalisation was adopted. Ireland had formed its own service structure and Board of Trustees in 1978. In 1981 the registration of the 1500th group in Great Britain was recorded and this growth was mirrored by the ongoing development of English-speaking AA in Europe culminating in the first European Service Meeting (ESM) held in Frankfurt in October 1981 and the second ESM held early in 1983.

In order to keep abreast of modern methods of communication and to assist in passing the message of sobriety through AA, the annual Conference in 1983 recommended that an AA video be produced. This was filmed early in 1984 and approved by Conference 1984. The video was entitled “One Day at a Time” and to date well over 2000 copies* have been sold.

In 1985 AA worldwide celebrated the 50th anniversary of the historic meeting of Bill W. and Dr Bob in Akron, Ohio and many special meetings and conventions were held throughout the UK.

It was now becoming increasingly clear that the continued siting of the General Service Office (GSO) in London was not feasible – a massive proposed rent increase being perhaps the major reason – and in 1986 GSO moved to new premises in Stonebow House in the centre of York. It was then subsequently moved to Toft Green in 2007. Also at this time a problem arose when AA in Great Britain in accordance with our tradition of self-support, had to refuse a substantial legacy. In order for AA to so refuse and yet to continue in its status as a registered charity and for this reason Parliament passed the AA Dispositions Act 1986.

In 1987 AA in Great Britain celebrated its 40th anniversary with regions and intergroups holding special meetings or conventions. Also in this year a computer was installed at GSO.

In 1988 Bill W’s widow, Lois, died and thus was lost the last remaining link with the past although the memory of Lois is continually recalled in the continuing growth of AA and Al-Anon in Great Britain and elsewhere. This was the year that Conference recommended the adoption of ‘Gratitude Week’ by all groups.

Following on from the success of the video “One Day at a Time” and in response to the increasing number of younger AA members, Conference 1990 recommended that a video for young people be made. This was done and the resulting “Message to Young People” became available at the end of 1991. To date over 500 copies of this video have been sold*.

In an effort to rationalise the expansion of the Fellowship in Great Britain, the Twenty Fifth Conference in 1990 recommended the introduction, where feasible, of multi-meeting groups. In 1992 the Twenty Seventh Conference introduced for a trial period a further tier between intergroups and region, to assist London Region with handling over 450 groups through 18 intergroups. The number of group meetings had by this time reached 3000.

As the result of a recommendation at the 29th Annual Conference in 1994 a pilot scheme for a single AA telephone contact number was instituted in the South-East Region in October 1994 and in two regions in Scotland in August 1995. It was known as ‘0345 scheme’ and ran for four years, with reports being given to Conference every year. This was then later changed to an 0845 number in 1998, and by 2022, it was used by regions. In 2015 the number changed again to an 0800 free phone number.

In 1994 the Fellowship was made aware of changes in the Charities Act and the Companies Act in Great Britain which, in order that AA in Great Britain could remain within their respective provisions, required the adoption of a Conference Charter and Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain (This was done by adapting the relevant sections in the then current The AA Service Manual).

Fifty years of Fellowship in Great Britain were celebrated at Blackpool in 1997, when members of AA, Al-Anon and their families gathered at the Winter Gardens and Boating Lake.

This was also the year that the GSB took responsibility for the Northern and Southern Service Offices to comply with legal requirements.

1998 saw the creation of the AA website, and by the year 2000, it was receiving more than 45,000 hits per month.

In 2001 the 4th edition of the British version of the Big Book was published. In 2003 the first advert for AA appeared on British television. In 2004, the ‘Blue Bonnet’ Convention received a 50-year recognition plaque from Dumfries and Borders Council.

In 2005, the first AA parliamentary event was held at Westminster followed quickly by events at the Scottish and Welsh parliaments. ‘Traditions Week’ became an annual event in AA.

Between 2005 and 2009, the GSB formed four new Sub Committees - Electronic in 2005, Health in 2006, Armed Services in 2008 and Probation 2009.

In 2010 to mark 60 years of co-operation of AA with Barlinnie Prison, a celebration event was held.

The end of 2012 saw the launch of Alcoholics Anonymous Awareness Month. Its intention was to raise AA's profile, and to increase public understanding of alcoholism.

In 2016, the 'Chat Now' function went on the AA website, opening up an entirely new access point in reaching out to the still suffering alcoholic, and attracting newcomers to the Fellowship.

In 2017, Great Britain's first AA museum exhibition, 'Darkness into Light', was hosted for four months at Kelvingrove, one of Scotland's leading museums. It was opened by Sir Philip Dundas's (credited with bringing AA to Scotland) daughter and granddaughter. The exhibition was a world first co-operation between AA and a National Body and has been visited by over 350,000 people.

The Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain Archive Cataloguing Project began at the Borthwick Institute for Archives at the University of York in 2018. Also in this year, there was an event in Winchester Cathedral celebrating the 100-year anniversary of Bill's visit to the graveyard, and his subsequent passage in his story regarding the Hampshire Grenadier.

In 2020, the COVID19 pandemic arrived, and the world changed. It meant the temporary closure of physical meetings. The Fellowship responded by changing their existing meetings to online, and in some cases, by the following week. The AA Conference was postponed and merged with the Conference held online in 2021.

In 2022, The Fellowship celebrated 75 years in Great Britain with a 75th Anniversary Convention in Leeds.

Televised in early 2023, the BBC 2 documentary 'I'm an Alcoholic Inside Recovery', a look inside Alcoholics Anonymous was the BBC's first ever access to an AA meeting using deep fake technology. There was an upsurge of inquiries to GSO by members of the public after this documentary.

* This is historical information as neither video is produced now.

3. AA's Legacy of Service by Bill W. (1951)

Extract from "The AA Service Manual"

Our Twelfth Step – carrying the message – is the basic service that the AA Fellowship gives; this is our principal aim and the main reason for our existence. Therefore, AA 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 may die.

Hence, an AA 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 AA's General Service Office for national and international action. The sum total of all these services is our Third Legacy of Service.

Services include meeting places, hospital cooperation, and intergroup offices; they mean pamphlets, books, and good publicity of almost every description. They call for committees, delegates, trustees, and conferences. And, not to be forgotten, they need voluntary money contributions from within the Fellowship.

These services, whether performed by individuals, groups, areas, or AA as a whole, are utterly vital to our existence and growth. Nor can we make AA more simple by abolishing such services. We would only be asking for complication and confusion.

Concerning any given service, we therefore pose but one question: "Is this service really needed?" If it is, then maintain it we must, or fail in our mission to those who need and seek AA.

The most vital, yet least understood, group of services that AA has are those that enable us to function as a whole, namely: the General Service Office, AA World Services Inc, the AA Grapevine Inc, and our board of trustees, known legally as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. Our worldwide unity and much of our growth since early times are directly traceable to this cluster of life-giving activities.

Until 1950, these overall services were the sole function of a few old time A.A's, several non- alcoholic friends, Doctor Bob, and me. For all the years of A.A's infancy, we old-timers had been the self-appointed trustees for Alcoholics Anonymous.

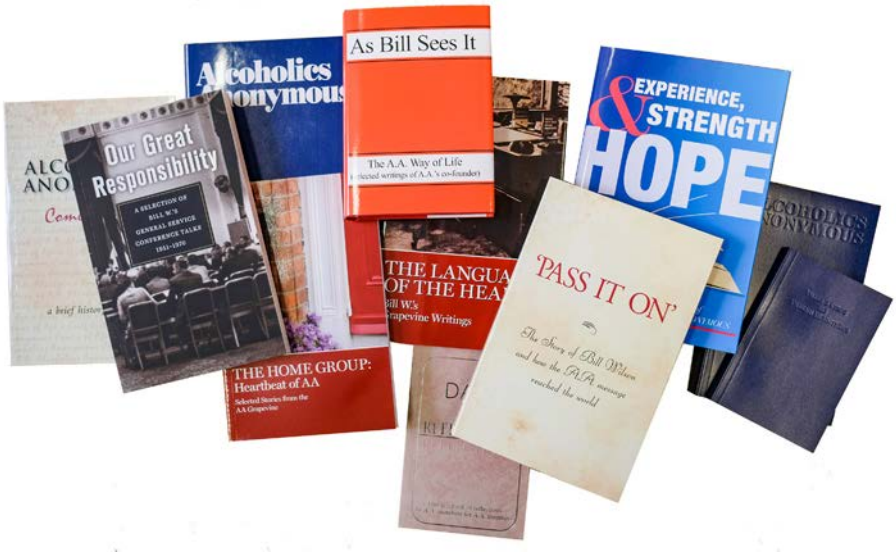
At this time, we realised that AA had grown up, that our Fellowship was ready and able to take these responsibilities from us. There was also another urgent reason for change.

Since we old-timers couldn't live on forever, newer trustees would be virtually unknown to the AA groups, now spread over the whole earth. Without direct linkage to AA, future trustees couldn't possibly function alone.

This meant that we had to form a Conference representing our membership which could meet yearly with our board of trustees in New York, and thus assume direct responsibility for the guardianship of AA tradition and the direction of our principal service affairs. Otherwise, a virtually unknown board of trustees and our too little understood service headquarters operations would someday be bound to face collapse.

Suppose that future trustees, acting quite on their own, were to make a serious blunder. Suppose that with no linkage to AA, they tried to act for us in time of great trouble or crisis. With no direct guidance from AA as a whole, how could they do this? Collapse of our top services would then be inevitable. And if, under such conditions, our world services did fall apart, how could they ever be reconstructed?

These, briefly, were the conclusions that led to the formation of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous.



The deliberative body known as the Conference is made up of elected area delegates from the United States and Canada – now numbering about 90 – together with the trustees, the directors of AAWS., Inc., and the AA Grapevine Inc, and GSO and Grapevine staff members numbering 40 or more. The Conference held its first annual meeting in 1951. Since then it has met annually in April in New York. It has proved itself an immense success – establishing a record of advisory actions that have served the Fellowship well during the intervening years of growth and development.

Reprinted with permission from The AA Service Manual 1998-1999 edition

4. Leadership in AA: Ever a vital need, by Bill W.

This is the original text of an article which first appeared in the April 1959 issue of 'Grapevine' and reprinted in 'The Language of the Heart'.

No society can function well without able leadership in all its levels, and AA can be no exception. It must be said, though, that we A.A's sometimes cherish the thought that we can do without any leadership at all. We are apt to warp the traditional idea of "principles before personalities" around to such a point that there would be no "personality" in leadership whatever. This would imply rather faceless automatons trying to please everybody, regardless.

At other times we are quite apt to demand that A.A's leaders must necessarily be people of the most sterling judgement, morals, and inspiration – big doers, prime examples to all, and practically infallible.

Real leadership, of course, has to function in between these entirely imaginary poles of hoped-for excellence. In AA, certainly, no leader is faceless and neither is any leader perfect. Fortunately, our Society is blessed with any amount of real leadership – the active people of today and the potential leaders for tomorrow as each new generation of able members' swarms in. We have an abundance of men and women whose dedication, stability, vision, and special skills make them capable of dealing with every possible service assignment. We have only to seek these folks out and trust them to serve us.

Somewhere in our literature there is a statement to this effect: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example." In effect we are saying to them "Act for us, but don't boss us."

A leader in AA service is therefore a man (or a woman) who can personally put principles, plans, and policies into such dedicated and effective action that the rest of us want to back him up and help him with his job. When a leader power-drives us badly, we rebel; but when he too meekly becomes an order-taker and he exercises no judgement of his own – well, he really isn't a leader at all.

Good leadership originates plans, policies, and ideas for the improvement of our Fellowship and its services. But in new and important matters, it will nevertheless consult widely before taking decisions and actions. Good leadership will also remember that a fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere. Consequently, good leadership will often discard its own cherished plans for others that are better, and it will give credit to the source.

Good leadership never passes the buck. Once assured that it has, or can obtain, sufficient general backing, it freely takes decisions and puts them into action forthwith, provided, of course, that such actions be within the framework of its defined authority and responsibility.

A “politico” is an individual who is forever trying to “get the people what they want.” A statesman is an individual who can carefully discriminate when and when not to do this. He recognises that even large majorities, when badly disturbed or uninformed, can, once in a while, be dead wrong. When such an occasional situation arises, and something very vital is at stake, it is always the duty of leadership, even when in a small minority, to take a stand against the storm – using its every ability of authority and persuasion to effect a change.

Nothing, however, can be more fatal to leadership than opposition for opposition’s sake. It never can be, “Let’s have it our way or no way at all.” This sort of opposition is often powered by a visionless pride or a gripe that makes us want to block something or somebody. Then there is the opposition that casts its vote saying “No, we don’t like it.” No real reasons are ever given. This won’t do. When called upon, leadership must always give its reasons, and good ones.

Then too a leader must realize that even very prideful or angry people can sometimes be dead right, when the calm and more humble are quite mistaken. These points are practical illustrations of the kind of careful discrimination and soul searching that true leadership must always try to exercise.

Another qualification for leadership is “give and take” – the ability to compromise cheerfully whenever a proper compromise can cause a situation to progress in what appears to be the right direction. Compromise comes hard to us “all-or-nothing drunks.”

Nevertheless, we must never lose sight of the fact that progress is nearly always characterized by a series of improving compromises. We cannot, however, compromise always. Now and then it is truly necessary to stick flatfooted to one’s conviction about an issue until it is settled. These are situations for keen timing and a most careful discrimination as to which course to take.

Leadership is often called upon to face heavy and sometimes long-continued criticism. This is an acid test. There are always the constructive critics, our friends indeed. We ought never fail to give them a careful hearing. We should be willing to let them modify our opinions or change them completely. Often, too, we shall have to disagree and then stand fast without losing their friendship. Then we have those who we like to call our “destructive” critics. They power-drive, they are “politickers,” they make accusations. Maybe they are violent, malicious. They pitch gobs of rumours, gossip, and general scuttlebutt to gain their ends – all for the good of AA, of course! Well, in AA at least, we have at last learned that these folks, who may be a trifle sicker than the rest of us, need not be really destructive at all, depending entirely on how we relate ourselves to them.

To begin with, we ought to listen very carefully to what they say. Sometimes they are telling the whole truth; at other times, a little truth. More often, though, they are just rationalizing themselves into nonsense. If we are within range, the whole

truth, the half truth, or even no truth at all, can equally hurt us. That is why we have to listen so carefully. If they've got the whole truth, or even a little truth, then we'd better thank them and get on with our respective inventories, admitting we were wrong, regardless. If it's nonsense, we can ignore them. Or we can lay all the cards on the table and try to persuade them. Failing this, we can be sorry they are too sick to listen and we can try to forget the whole business. We can think of few better means of self-survey, of developing genuine patience, than these usually well-meaning but erratic brother members can afford us. This is always a large order, and we shall sometimes fail to make good on it ourselves. But we must keep trying.

Now comes that all-important attribute of vision. Vision is, I think, the ability to make good estimates, both for the immediate and for the more distant future. Some might feel this sort of striving to be a sort of heresy because we A.A's are constantly telling ourselves, "One day at a time." But that valued maxim really refers to our emotional lives and means only that we are not to repine over the past nor wishfully fantasise or day-dream about our future.

As individuals and as a Fellowship, we shall surely suffer if we cast the whole job of planning for tomorrow onto a kind of Providence. God has endowed us human beings with considerable capability for foresight and he evidently expects us to use it. Therefore, we must distinguish between wishful dreaming for a happy tomorrow and today's use of our powers of thoughtful estimate – estimate of the kind which we trust will bring future progress rather than unforeseen woe.

Vision is therefore the very essence of prudence – a sound virtue if ever there was one. Of course, we shall often miscalculate the future in whole or in part. But even so, this will be far better than to refuse to think at all.

The making of estimates has several aspects. We look at past and present experience to see what we think it means. From this, we derive a tentative idea or policy.

Looking first at the nearby future, we ask how our idea or policy might work. Following this estimate we ask how our policies and ideas might work under the several differing conditions that could arise in the longer future. If an idea looks like a good bet, we try it on – always experimentally, when that is possible. Somewhat later, we revalue the situation and ask whether our estimate is, or may soon be, working out.

At about this stage, we may have to take a critical decision. Maybe we have a policy or plan that still looks fine and is apparently doing well. Nevertheless we ought to ponder very carefully what its long time effect will be. Will today's nearby advantages boomerang into large liabilities for tomorrow? The temptation will almost always be to seize the nearby benefits and quite forget about the harmful precedents or consequences that we may be setting in motion.

These are no fancy theories. We have found that we must use these principles of estimate constantly, especially at world service levels where the stakes are high. In public relations, for example, we must estimate the reaction of both AA groups and the general public, both short-term and long-term. The same thing goes for our literature. Our finances have to be estimated and budgeted. We must think about our service needs as they relate to general economic conditions, group capability, and the willingness to contribute. On many such problems we must very often try to think many months and even years ahead.

As a matter of fact, all of A.A's Twelve Traditions were at first questions of estimate and vision for the future. Years ago we slowly evolved an idea about AA being self-supporting. There had been trouble here and there about outside gifts. Then still more trouble developed. Consequently we began to devise a policy of no outside gifts. We began to suspect that large sums would tend to make us irresponsible and could divert us from our primary aim. Finally we saw that for the long pull, outside money could ruin us utterly. At this point, what had been just an idea or general policy hardened firmly down into an AA Tradition. We saw that we must sacrifice the quick, nearby advantage for long term safety.

We went through this same process on anonymity. A few public breaks had looked good. But finally the vision came that many such breaks could raise havoc among us. So it went – first a gleam in the eye, then an experimental policy, then a firm policy, and finally a deep conviction – a vision for tomorrow. Such is our process of estimating the future. Our responsible world leadership must be especially and constantly proficient in this vital activity. This is an ability much to be desired, especially among our trustees, and I think most of them should be chosen on the basis that they have already proved their aptness for foresight in business or professional careers.

We shall continually need many of these same attributes, insofar as they can be had, among our leaders of AA services at all levels. The principles of leadership will be just about the same, no matter what the size of the operation.

This discussion on leadership may look, at first glance, like an attempt to stake out a specially privileged and superior type of AA member. But this is not really so. We are simply recognizing that our talents vary greatly. The conductor of an orchestra is not necessarily good at finance or foresight. And it is even less likely that a fine banker could be much of a musical success. When, therefore, we talk about AA leadership, we only declare that we ought select that leadership on the basis of obtaining the best talent we can find, making sure that we land that talent, whatever it is, in the spot where it will do us the most good.

While this article was first thought of in connection with our world service leadership, it is quite possible that many of its suggestions can be useful to everyone who takes an active part in our Society.

Nowhere could this be more true than in the area of Twelfth Step work itself – something at which nearly all of us most eagerly work. Every sponsor is necessarily a leader. The stakes are huge. A human life, and usually the happiness of a whole family, hangs in the balance. What the sponsor does and says, how well he estimates the reactions of his prospects, how well he times and makes his presentation, how well he handles criticisms, and how well he leads his prospect on by personal spiritual example – well, these attributes of leadership can make all the difference, often the difference between life and death.

Thank God that Alcoholics Anonymous is blessed with so much leadership in each and all of its great affairs!

5. The Twelve Traditions (Long Form)

Our AA experience has taught us that:

1 Each member of Alcoholics Anonymous is but a small part of a great whole. AA must continue to live or most of us will surely die. Hence our common welfare comes first. But individual welfare follows close afterward.

2 For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience.

3 Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

4 With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

5 Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6 Problems of money, property, and authority may easily divert us from our primary spiritual aim. We think, therefore, that any considerable property of genuine use to AA should be separately incorporated and managed, thus dividing the material from the spiritual. An AA group, as such, should never go into business. Secondary aids to AA, such as clubs or hospitals which require much property or administration, ought to be incorporated and so set apart that, if necessary, they can be freely discarded by the groups. Hence such facilities ought not to use the AA name. Their management should be the sole responsibility of those who financially support them. For clubs, AA managers are usually preferred. But hospitals, as well as other places of recuperation, ought to be well outside AA – and medically supervised. While an AA group may cooperate with anyone, such cooperation ought never to go so far as affiliation or endorsement, actual or implied. An AA group can bind itself to no one.

7 The AA groups themselves ought to be fully supported by the voluntary contributions of their own members. We think that each group should soon achieve this ideal; that any public solicitation of funds using the name of Alcoholics Anonymous is highly dangerous, whether by groups, clubs, hospitals, or other outside agencies; that acceptance of large gifts from

any source, or of contributions carrying any obligation whatever, is unwise. Then, too, we view with much concern those AA treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated AA purpose. Experience has often warned us that nothing can so surely destroy our spiritual heritage as futile disputes over property, money, and authority.

8 Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional. We define professionalism as the occupation of counselling alcoholics for fee or hire. But we may employ alcoholics where they are going to perform those services for which we might otherwise have to engage non-alcoholics. Such special services may be well recompensed. But our usual AA Twelfth step work is never to be paid for.

9 Each AA group needs the least possible organization. Rotating leadership is the best. The small group may elect its secretary, the large group its rotating committee and the groups of a large metropolitan area their central or intergroup committee, which often employs a full-time secretary. The trustees of the General Service Board are, in effect, our AA General Service Committee. They are the custodians of our AA Tradition and receivers of voluntary AA contributions by which we maintain our AA General Service Office at New York. They are authorized by the groups to handle our overall public relations and they guarantee the integrity of our principal newspaper, the AA Grapevine. All such representatives are to be guided in the spirit of service, for true leaders in AA are but trusted and experienced servants of the whole. They derive no real authority from their titles; they do not govern. Universal respect is the key to their usefulness.

10 No AA group or member should ever, in such a way as to implicate AA, express any opinion on outside controversial issues – particularly those of politics, alcohol reform, or sectarian religion. The Alcoholics Anonymous groups oppose no one. Concerning such matters they can express no views whatever.

11 Our relations with the general public should be characterized by personal anonymity. We think AA ought to avoid sensational advertising. Our names and pictures as AA members ought not to be broadcast, filmed or publicly printed. Our public relations should be guided by the principle of attraction rather than promotion. There is never need to praise ourselves. We feel it better to let our friends recommend us.

12 And finally, we of Alcoholics Anonymous believe that the principle of anonymity has an immense spiritual significance. It reminds us that we are to place principles before personalities; that we are actually to practice a genuine humility. This is to the end that our great blessings may never spoil us; that we shall forever live in thankful contemplation of Him who presides over us all.

6. Twelve Concepts for Service

6.1. Introduction to Twelve Concepts for World Service by Bill W.

Adopted by the 12th Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on 26 April 1962. Bill W's Introduction to the essays on the Concepts is reprinted with permission of AA World Services Inc.

The "Twelve Concepts for World Service" [to be described in this Manual]* are an interpretation of A.A's world service structure. They reveal the evolution by which it has arrived in its present form, and they detail the experience and reasoning on which our operation stands today. These Concepts therefore aim to record the "why" of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable experience of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from that experience, can never be forgotten or lost.

Quite rightly, each new generation of AA world servants will be eager to make operational improvements. Unforeseen flaws in the present structure will doubtless show up later on. New service needs and problems will arise that may make structural changes necessary. Such alterations should certainly be effected, and these contingencies squarely met.

Yet we should always recognize that change does not necessarily spell progress. We are sure that each new group of workers in world service will be tempted to try all sorts of innovations that may often produce little more than a painful repetition of earlier mistakes. Therefore it will be an important objective of these Concepts to forestall such repetitions by holding the experience of the past clearly before us. And if mistaken departures are nevertheless made, these Concepts may then provide a ready means of safe return to an operating balance that might otherwise take years of floundering to rediscover.

There will also be seen in these Concepts a number of principles which have already become traditional to our services, but which have never been clearly articulated and reduced to writing. For example: the "Right of Decision" gives our service leaders a proper discretion and latitude; the "Right of Participation" gives each world servant a voting status commensurate with his (or her) responsibility, and "Participation" further guarantees that each service board or committee will always possess the several elements and talents that will insure effective functioning. The "Right of Appeal" protects and encourages minority opinion; and the "Right of Petition" makes certain that grievances can be heard, and properly acted upon. These general principles can of course be used to good effect throughout our entire structure.

[In other sections],* the Concepts carefully delineate those important traditions, customs, relationships and legal arrangements that weld the General Service Board into a working harmony with its primary committees and with its corporate arms of active service – AA World Services Inc. and the AA Grapevine Inc. This is the substance of the structural framework that governs the internal working situation of A.A's World Headquarters.

Concern has been expressed lest the detailed portrayal of our internal structure might not later harden down into such a firm tradition or gospel that necessary changes would be impossible to make. Nothing could stray further from the intent of these Concepts. The future advocates of structural change need only make out a strong case for their recommendations – a case convincing to both the Trustees and to the Conference. This is no more than would be required for the transaction and passage of any other important piece of AA business.

Save for an exception or two, it is noteworthy that the Conference Charter itself can be easily amended.

Perhaps one more precaution ought to be observed when a proposed structural change is to be specially far-reaching. In such an event, the alteration should for an appropriate period be labelled as "experimental". On final approval, an alteration of this character could be entered into a special section of this Manual which might be entitled "AMENDMENTS". This would leave the original draft of the Twelve Concepts intact as an evidential record of our former experience. Then it could always be clearly seen by our future service workers just what did happen and why.

[In other chapters]* great emphasis is laid on the need for a high order of personal leadership, on the desirability of careful induction methods for all incoming personnel, and upon the necessity for the best possible personal relations between those who work in our services. The Concepts try to design a structure in which all may labour to good effect, with a minimum of friction. This is accomplished by so relating our servants to their work and to each other that the chances of personal conflict will be minimised.

In the AA services we have always had to choose between the authoritarian setup, whereby one group or one person is set in unqualified authority over another, and the democratic concept which calls for "checks and balances" that would prevent unqualified authority from running unrestrained. The first approach is that of the "institutional" or authoritarian type. The second is the method of "constitutional" governments and many large business corporations in their upper echelons.

Well knowing our own propensities for power driving, it is natural and even imperative that our service concepts be based on the system of "checks and balances". We have had to face the fact that we usually try to enlarge our own

authority and prestige when we are in the saddle. But when we are not, we strenuously resist a heavy-handed management wherein someone else holds the reins. I'm the more sure of this because I possess these traits myself.

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.

Because of the large range of topics which had to be included, these Concepts have been difficult to organize and write. Since each Concept is really a group of related principles, the kind of abbreviated statements used in A.A's "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" has not been possible. However, these Concepts do represent the best summation that I am able to make after more than twenty years experience in the creation of our service structure and in the conduct of A.A's world affairs. Like the earlier written "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions", and the Conference Charter, these service principles are also the outcome of long reflection and extensive consultation.

It is much to be hoped that these Twelve Concepts will become a welcome addition to our "Third Legacy Manual** of AA World Service", and that they will prove to be a reliable working guide in the years that lie ahead.

* Phrases denoted thus are included for the sake of completeness of the original text but refer to the essays on the Twelve Concepts which follow this Introduction in "The AA Service Manual", not to material reproduced in this Handbook.

** "The AA Service Manual" is an outgrowth of the "Third Legacy Manual".

6.2. Twelve Concepts for Service in Great Britain

The Long Form of the Concepts is adapted with the permission of AA World Services Inc. In granting permission to adapt, AA World Services did not undertake to evaluate the contents of the adaptation and expresses no opinion regarding the adaptation.

The text following should be regarded as an appendix to, but in no way a substitute for, Bill W's Twelve Concepts for World Service as printed on the following pages. The appendix has been drawn up in order that the charitable company The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain)

Limited may properly describe the governance of AA in terms appropriate to the law of England and Wales, and was so adopted by the General Service Conference 1995.

Concept I
The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for British AA services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship in Great Britain.

Concept II
When, in 1995, the British AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our services and thereby made the Conference – excepting for any change in the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter – the actual voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain.

Concept III
As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relationship between the groups, the Conference, the General Service Board and its General Service Office, and of thus ensuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested we endow each of these elements of service with a traditional "Right of Decision"

Concept IV[1]
Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation", taking care that each classification or group of our servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

[1] In accordance with Conference 2009 decision GSO staff do not have the right to vote at Conference.

Concept V
Throughout our service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

Concept VI
On behalf of AA, in Great Britain, our General Service Conference has the principal responsibility for the maintenance of our services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognises that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain).

Concept VII
The Conference recognises that the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the General Service Board (Great Britain) are legal instruments: that the Trustees

are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the British service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document: that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final efectiveness.

Concept VIII
The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities. (a) With respect to the larger matters of overall policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to the executive services provided by the General Service Office, the relation of the trustees is mainly that of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to appoint staff who are charged with carrying out their policies.

Concept IX
Good service leaders, with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety.

Concept X
Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority – the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description, by appropriate charters or by legal instruments.

Concept XI
While the Trustees, acting together as the General Service Board (Great Britain) hold final responsibility for AA's service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible committees, service executives, staffs and consultants. Therefore the composition of committees and service assemblies, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

Concept XII
General Warranties of Conference: in all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA 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 principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; 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 shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

6.3. BILL W'S ESSAYS "TWELVE CONCEPTS FOR WORLD SERVICE" by Bill W. as adopted by the 12th Annual General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on April 26, 1962

Preface
The "Twelve Concepts for World Service" were written by Bill W in 1962. His introduction to that first printing, see section 6 above, explains its purpose, as relevant today as at that time.

Over the years the size of the Fellowship and the responsibilities of its service entities have grown immensely. Therefore, some details of the original text have become outdated and were changed in editions of the Concepts since that time, and a number of bracketed inserts were added.

Following the recommendations of an ad hoc committee of the AA General Service Board, the 1985 General Service Conference recommended that future publication of the Concepts in "The AA Service Manual" and the booklet "Twelve Concepts for World Service" be in the original 1962 version, with required factual changes provided as numbered footnotes at the end of each essay. The only exceptions are certain footnotes written by Bill W in the years following the first appearance of the Concepts: these are marked by asterisks that appear on the same pages as the text they refer to.

A "short form" of the Concepts was prepared by the 1974 General Service Conference for inclusion in the "AA Service Manual." It now appears in the Bylaws of the General Service Board, printed in that Manual, and also precedes the introduction to the Twelve Concepts.

AAWS General Service Office September 1985

CONCEPT I

The final responsibility and the ultimate authority for AA world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

The AA groups today hold ultimate responsibility and final authority for our world services – those special elements of over-all service activity which make it possible for our Society to function as a whole. The groups assumed that responsibility at the St. Louis International Convention of 1955. There, on behalf of Dr. Bob, the Trustees and AA's old-time leaders, I made the transfer of world service responsibility to our entire Fellowship.

Why, and by what authority was this done? There were reasons of stark necessity for it, and there were further reasons which have to do with AA's fundamental structure and tradition.

By the year 1948 our necessities had become clear enough. Ten years earlier in

1938 – helped by dedicated friends, Dr. Bob and I had commenced work upon a world service structure. Our first step was the creation of a trusteeship for AA as a whole. We called this body The Alcoholic Foundation; and in 1954 it was renamed The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

This trusteeship was designed to inaugurate and maintain all of those special services for AA as a whole that could not well be performed by single groups or areas. We envisioned the writing of a uniform AA literature, the development of a sound public relations policy, and a means of handling the large numbers of pleas for help that might follow in the wake of national and international publicity. We thought in terms of aiding new groups to form and of furnishing them with counsel based upon the experience of the older and already successful groups. We thought there would be a need for a monthly magazine and also for translations of our literature into other languages.

By 1950 nearly all of these dreams for world service had come true. In the dozen years following the creation of The Foundation, AA membership had jumped from 50 to 100,000. The AA Traditions had been written and adopted. A confident unity had pretty much replaced fear and doubt and strife. Our services had unquestionably played a large and critical role in this unfoldment. World service, therefore, had taken on crucial meaning for AA's future. If these vital agencies were to collapse or bog down, our unity within and the carrying of our message to innumerable alcoholics without, would suffer serious and perhaps irreparable damage. Under all conditions and at any sacrifice, we would have to sustain those services and the flow of life blood that they were pumping into the world arteries of our Fellowship. Among the AA groups it had been proven that we could survive great strain and stress. But could we stand heart failure at our world centre?

And so we asked ourselves: What further precautions could we take that would definitely guard us against impairment or a collapse? Nevertheless the period 1945 to 1950 was one of such exuberant success that many AAs thought that our future was completely guaranteed. Nothing, they believed, could possibly happen to our Society as a whole, because God was protecting AA This attitude was in strange contrast to the extreme vigilance with which our members and groups had been looking after themselves. They had quite prudently declined to charge Providence with the entire responsibility for their own effectiveness, happiness, and sobriety.

When, at AA's Service Headquarters, some of us began to apply this tested principle of "stop, look, and listen" to AA's world affairs, it was widely thought that we must be foolish worriers who lacked faith. Many said, "Why change? Things are going fine!" "Why call in delegates from all over the country? That means expense and politics, and we don't want either." And the clincher was always, "Let's keep it simple."

Such reactions were natural enough. The average member, preoccupied with his group life and his own "twelfth stepping "knew almost nothing of AA's world services. Not one member in a thousand could tell who our Trustees were. Not

one in a hundred had the least idea what had been done for AA's general welfare. Tens of thousands already owed their chance at sobriety to the little noticed activity of our Trustees and general services. But few realized that this was true.

Among the Trustees themselves, a sharp division of opinion was developed. For a long time most of them had strongly opposed calling together a representative Conference of AA delegates, to whom they would become accountable. They thought that the risks were immense and that politics, confusion, expense, and fruitless strife surely would result. It was true that the woes of much lesser undertakings, such as local AA services and clubs, had sometimes been great. Hence the conviction was widespread that calamity would be in the making if ever a Conference representing all of AA were assembled. These arguments were not without merit; they were difficult to contest.

However, in 1948, there occurred an event that shook us all. It became known that Dr. Bob was suffering from a fatal illness. As nothing else could, this news drove home the hard fact that he and I were almost the sole links between our virtually unknown Trustees and the movement they served. The Trustees always had relied heavily upon Dr. Bob and me for advice. They had taken a firm grip on money expenditures, but they necessarily turned to us every time that AA policy questions arose. Then, too, the groups of that time did not really rely much on the Trustees for the management of their service affairs; they were still looking to Dr. Bob and me. So here was a society whose total functioning was still largely dependent upon the credit and the confidence which, for the time being, its founders happened to enjoy.

The fact had to be faced that AA's founders were perishable. When Dr. Bob and I had gone, who would then advise the Trustees; who could link our little-known Board to our thousands of groups? For the first time it was seen that only a representative Conference could take the place of Dr. Bob and me. This gap simply had to be filled without delay. Such a dangerous open end in our affairs could not be tolerated.

Regardless of trouble or expense, we had to call an AA General Service Conference and deliver our world services into its permanent keeping. It took little imagination to see that future collapse would be the certain penalty if we did not act boldly and decisively. Thus propelled by events, we did take the necessary action. Now that the Conference is in its second decade, we find that our former fears of the troubles a Conference might involve were largely groundless. The results of the Conference have exceeded our highest expectations. It now stands proven that the AA groups can and will take the final responsibility for their world services.

There were other reasons for this basic shift of ultimate responsibility and authority to AA as a whole. These reasons centre around Tradition Two, which declares, "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."

Tradition Two, like all the AA Traditions, is the voice of experience, based upon the trials of thousands of groups in our pioneering time. The main principles of Tradition Two are crystal clear: the AA groups are to be the final authority; their leaders are to be entrusted with delegated responsibilities only.

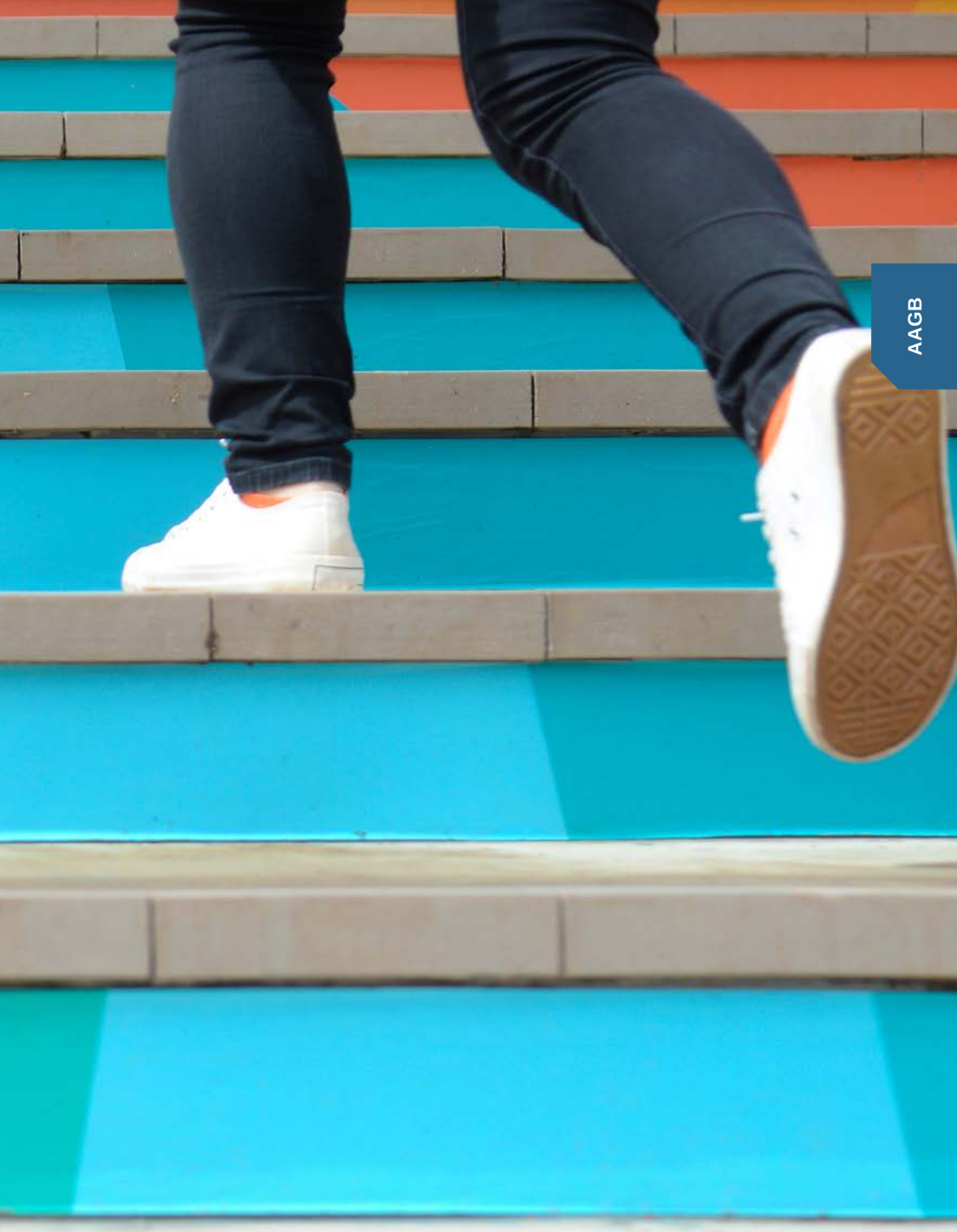
Tradition Two had been written in 1945, and our Trustees had then authorized its publication. But it was not until 1951 that the first experimental General Service Conference was called to see whether Tradition Two could be successfully applied to AA as a whole, including its Trustees and founders. It had to be found out whether the AA groups, by virtue of this Conference, could and would assume the ultimate responsibility for their world service operation. It took five years more for all of us to be convinced that Tradition Two was for everybody. But at St. Louis in 1955, we knew that our General Service Conference – truly representing the conscience of AA world-wide – was going to work and work permanently.

Perhaps many of us are still vague about the "group conscience" of Alcoholics Anonymous, about what it really is.

Throughout the entire world today we are witnessing the breakdown of "group conscience." It has always been the hope of democratic nations that their citizens would always be enlightened enough, moral enough, and responsible enough to manage their own affairs through chosen representatives. But in many self-governing countries we are now seeing the inroads of ignorance, apathy, and power-seeking upon democratic systems. Their spiritual resources of right purpose and collective intelligence are waning. Consequently many a land has become so helpless that the only answer is dictatorship.

Happily for us, there seems little prospect of such a calamity in AA The life of each individual and of each group is built around our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. We very well know that the penalty for extensive disobedience to these principles is death for the individual and dissolution for the group. An even greater force for AA's unity is the compelling love that we have for our fellow members and for the principles upon which our lives today are founded.

Therefore we believe that we see in our Fellowship a spiritualized society characterized by enough enlightenment, enough responsibility, and enough love of man and of God to insure that our democracy of world service will work under all conditions. We are confident that we can rely upon Tradition Two, our group conscience and its trusted servants. Hence it is with a sense of great security that we old-timers have now fully vested in AA's General Service Conference the authority for giving shape – through the labours of its chosen Delegates, Trustees, and service workers – to the destiny that we trust God in His wisdom is holding in store for all of us.



CONCEPT II

When, in 1955, the AA groups confirmed the permanent charter for their General Service Conference, they thereby delegated to the Conference complete authority for the active maintenance of our world services and thereby made the Conference – excepting for any change in the Twelve Traditions or in Article 12 of the Conference Charter the actual voice and the effective conscience for our whole Society.

It is self-evident that the thousands of AA groups and the many thousands of AA members, scattered as they are all aver the globe, cannot of themselves actually manage and conduct our manifold world services. The group conscience is out there among them, and so are the needed funds. The power of the groups and members to alter their world service structure and to criticize its operation is virtually supreme. They have all of the final responsibility and authority that there is. The operation is really theirs; they really win it. This has been true ever since the groups took over from the founders and old-timers at St. Louis in 1955. But an ultimate authority and responsibility in the AA groups for world services – if that is all there were to it – could not amount to anything. Nothing could be accomplished on that basis alone. In order to get effective action, the groups must delegate the actual operational authority to chosen service representatives who are fully empowered to speak and to act for them. The group conscience of AA could not be heard unless a properly chosen Conference was fully trusted to speak for it respecting most matters of world service. Hence the principle of amply delegated authority and responsibility to “trusted servants” must be implicit from the top to the bottom of our active structure of service. This is the clear implication of AA’s Tradition Two.

Even from the beginning, large delegations of service authority had to be the rule. It will be recalled how, in 1937, the Akron and New York groups authorized Dr. Bob and me to create over-all services which could spread the AA message worldwide. Those two fledgling groups gave to us the authority to create and manage world services. Following their action, we held both the final responsibility and the immediate authorization to get this project underway and keep it going. On our own, however, we knew we could do little, and so we had to find trusted servants who in turn would help us. As time went by, we found that we had to delegate to these friends a very large part of our own authority and responsibility. That process of delegation was as follows:

First of all, Dr. Bob transferred nearly all of his immediate responsibility for the creation of world service to me. In New York we stood a better chance of finding friends and funds, and we saw that our world service centre consequently would have to be located in that city. I started the search for trusted non-alcoholic friends who could help, and in 1938 The Alcoholic Foundation was formed as a small trusteeship of AA members and our non-alcoholic friends.

At first the Trustees of our new Foundation took jurisdiction over money matters only. Little by little, however, they were obliged to assume many other

responsibilities, because I alone could not discharge these on any permanent basis. Hence I gave the Trustees added responsibility and corresponding authority as fast as possible.

For example, in 1940, a year after the book “Alcoholics Anonymous” was published, we all saw that this great new asset had to be put in trust for our whole Fellowship. Therefore the stock ownership of Works Publishing, Inc.* (a publishing corporation which I helped to separately organize) was turned over to the Board of Trustees.

Nearly all of the income from the AA book was then needed to finance the overall service office that we had set up for AA The Trustees, therefore, presently took over the primary management of office operation, because they were now responsible for the funds upon which its support depended. Consequently, so far as financial decisions were concerned, I became an adviser only. Another sizable chunk of my original authority was thus delegated. When, in 1941, the AA groups began to send contributions to The Alcoholic Foundation for support of our over-all service office, the Trustees’ control of our world service monies became complete.

After some time it became apparent that AA’s public relations, a vital matter indeed, could not continue to be entrusted to me alone. Therefore the AA groups were asked to give the Trustees of the Foundation complete control in this critical area. Later on, the Trustees took jurisdiction over our national magazine, “The AA Grapevine,” which had been separately organized by another group of volunteers.

Thus it went with every one of our world services. I still functioned in an advisory capacity in our Headquarters operation, but the Board of Trustees was in full legal charge of all our affairs. As Dr. Bob and I looked to the future, it was clear that ample delegation to the Board was the only possible way.

Notwithstanding these delegations, Dr. Bob and I did quite properly feel that we still held an ultimate responsibility to AA, and to the future, for the proper organization and structuring of our AA world services. If anything were to go wrong with them, we would be held accountable, because the groups still looked to us, rather than to their then little known Trustees, for leadership in AA’s world affairs.

In the course of these developments the great difference between ultimate and immediate service authority became apparent.

As early as 1945 it began to be evident that the co-founders’ ultimate responsibility and authority for services should never be wholly vested in a Board of Trustees. Certainly our Trustees must be given a large share of the active and immediate responsibility. But the ultimate and final responsibility which Dr. Bob and I still possessed simply could not be transferred to a self-appointing Board which was relatively unknown among AA’s as a whole. But where, then, would our ultimate responsibility for world services finally be lodged? And what would

become of my own leadership in world service matters? AA's history now shows where the ultimate authority finally went. At St. Louis it went from Dr. Bob and me to the AA groups themselves.

But the groups' acceptance of ultimate service authority and responsibility was not enough. No matter what authority the groups had, they could not meet their new responsibilities until they had actually delegated most of the active ones. It was precisely in order to meet this need that the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous was given the general responsibility for the maintenance of AA's world services and so became the service conscience for AA as a whole.

Exactly as Dr. Bob and I earlier had found it necessary to delegate a large part of our active authority to the Trustees, so have the AA groups since found it necessary to delegate these same powers to their General Service Conference. The like say – the ultimate sanction in matters of large importance – has not been given to the Trustees alone.

By the Conference Charter, confirmed at St. Louis, this authority is now delegated to the AA groups and thence to their Conference, a body which is a representative cross section of our entire Fellowship.

Therefore the General Service Conference of AA – plus any later formed sections – has become for nearly every practical purpose the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

In making this momentous transfer, we old-timers deeply hope that we have avoided those pitfalls into which societies have so often fallen because their originators have failed, during their lifetimes, to properly delegate and distribute their own authority, responsibility, and leadership.

CONCEPT III

As a traditional means of creating and maintaining a clearly defined working relation between the groups, the Conference, the AA General Service Board and its several service corporations, staffs, committees and executives, and of thus insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional "Right of Decision."

Within the framework of their general responsibilities, whether these are defined by charter, by resolution, or by custom, it should be the traditional right of all world service boards, committees, and executives to decide which problems they will dispose of themselves and upon which matters they will report, consult, or ask specific directions. We ought to trust our world servants with these discretions, because otherwise no effective leadership can be possible. Let us consider in detail, therefore, why the need for a "right of decision" in our leadership is

imperative, and let us examine how this principle can be applied practically in all levels of our structure of world service.

We have seen how the AA groups, under the concept of the “group conscience” is today holding the ultimate authority and the final responsibility for world services. We have also noted how, by reason of the Conference Charter and the “trusted servant” provision of Tradition Two, the groups have delegated to their General Service Conference full authority to manage and conduct AA’s world affairs.

The Conference and General Service Board Charters in broad terms define the responsibility of the Conference to act on behalf of AA as a whole. In these two documents a necessarily large area of delegated service authority and responsibility has been staked out. These instruments, in a general way, describe the relation between the groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and the active service units. These broad definitions and descriptions are an indispensable frame of reference, and we could not function without them.

Nevertheless it has long been evident that these highly important Charter provisions cannot by themselves ensure smooth functioning and proper leadership at the several different levels of service which are involved. This has become crystal clear, and we need not seek very far for the reasons.

For example: knowing that theirs is the final authority, the groups are sometimes tempted to instruct their Delegates exactly how to vote upon certain matters in the Conference. Because they hold the ultimate authority, there is no doubt that the AA groups have the right to do this. If they insist, they can give directives to their Delegates on any and all AA matters.

But good management seldom means the full exercise of a stated set of ultimate rights. For example, were the groups to carry their instruction of Delegates to extremes, then we would be proceeding on the false theory that group opinion in most world service matters would somehow be much superior to Conference opinion. Practically speaking, this could almost never be the case. There would be very few questions indeed that “instructed” Delegates could better settle than Conference acting on the spot with full facts and debate to guide it. Of course it is understood that complete reporting of Conference actions is always desirable. So is full consultation with committee members and group representatives. Nevertheless the “instructed” Delegate who cannot act on his own conscience in a final Conference vote is not a “trusted servant” at all; he is just a messenger.

Now the Conference Charter does not actually solve typical problems like this. It is a broad document which can be variously construed. Under one interpretation, the groups can instruct the Delegates all they like. Under another, the Delegates and Trustees actually can ignore such instructions, whenever they believe that to be desirable. How, then, shall we practically understand and reconcile such a condition?

Let us look at two more illustrations: the Conference, as will be later demonstrated, is in a state of nearly complete practical authority over the Trustees, despite the legal rights of the Board. Suppose the Conference Delegates began to use this ultimate power of theirs unwisely? Suppose they began to issue hasty and flat directives to the Trustees on matters respecting which the Trustees would be far more knowledgeable than the Delegates? What then?

This same kind of confusing problem used to beset the relations between the Trustees and their wholly-owned active service corporations, entities which are nowadays partly directed by non-Trustee volunteers and paid service workers. But the Board of Trustees certainly does own these outfits. Therefore the Trustees can hire and fire; their authority is final. Yet if the Trustees were constantly to exert their really full and absolute authority, if they were to attempt to manage these operating entities in detail, then the volunteers and Staff members working in them would quickly become demoralized; they would be turned into buck-passers and rubber stamps; their choice would be to rebel and resign, or to submit and rot.

Therefore some traditional and practical principle has to be devised which at all levels will continuously balance the right relation between ultimate authority and delegated responsibility. How, then, are we going to accomplish this?

There are three possible attitudes that we might take toward such a state of affairs. We could, for instance, throw away all corporate charters, bylaws, job definitions, and the like. This would leave it entirely to each group of trusted servants to figure out what its authority and responsibility really is. But such an absence of any chartered structure would be absurd; nothing but anarchy could result.

Then of course we could take the opposite tack. Refusing to give our leadership any worthwhile discretion at all, we could add to our present Charters great numbers of rules, regulations, and bylaws that would attempt to cover every conceivable action or contingency. That would be altogether too much red tape-more than we AAs could stand.

The right AA solution for this problem is to be found, however, in the latter part of Tradition Two, which provides for “trusted servants.” This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders to decide, within the understood framework of their duties, how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises. This sort of leadership discretion should be the essence of “the Right of Decision,” and I am certain that we need not have the slightest fear of granting this indispensable privilege at nearly every level of world service.

There will always be plenty of ultimate authority to correct inefficiency, ineffectiveness, or abuse. If the Conference does not function well, the groups can send in better Delegates. If the Trustees get badly out of line, the Conference can censure them, or even reorganize them.

If the Headquarters' services go sour, the Trustees can elect better directors and hire better help. These remedies are ample and direct. But for so long as our world services function reasonably well – and there should always be charity for occasional mistakes – then "trust" must be our watchword, otherwise we shall wind up leaderless.

These are the reasons for my belief that we should forthwith invest in all of our service bodies and people a traditional "Right of Decision." In our structure of world service this "Right of Decision" could be practically applied as follows:

A Excepting its Charter provisions to the contrary, the Conference always should be able to decide which matters it will fully dispose of on its own responsibility, and which questions it will refer to the AA groups (or more usually, to their Committee Members or GSRs) for opinion or for definite guidance.

Therefore it ought to be, clearly understood and agreed that our Conference Delegates are primarily the world servants of AA as a whole, that only in a secondary sense do they represent their respective areas. Consequently they should, on final decisions, be entitled to cast their votes in the General Service Conference according to the best dictates of their own judgment and conscience at that time.

B Similarly the Trustees of the General Service Board (operating of course within the provisions of their own Charter and Bylaws) should be able at all times to decide when they will act fully on their own responsibility and when they will ask the Conference for its guidance, its approval of a recommendation, or for its actual decision and direction.

C Within the scope of their definitely defined or normally implied responsibilities, all Headquarters service corporations, committees, staff or executives should also be possessed of the right to decide when they will act wholly on their own and when they will refer their problems to the next higher authority.

This "Right of Decision" should never be made an excuse for failure to render proper reports of all significant actions taken; it ought never be used as a reason for constantly exceeding a clearly defined authority, nor as an excuse for persistently failing to consult those who are entitled to be consulted before an important decision or action is taken.

Our entire AA program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust AA, and we trust each other. Therefore we cannot do less than trust our leaders in service. The "Right of Decision" that we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but it is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.

CONCEPT IV

Throughout our Conference structure, we ought to maintain at all responsible levels a traditional "Right of Participation," taking care that each classification or group of our world servants shall be allowed a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

The principle of "participation" has been carefully built into our Conference structure. The Conference Charter specifically provides that the Trustees, the Directors of our service corporations, (AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc.) together with their respective executive staffs, shall always be voting members of the General Service Conference itself.

Exactly the same concept is borne in mind when our General Service Board elects the Directors of its wholly-owned active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. If it wished, the General Service Board could elect none but its own Trustees to these corporate directorships. But a powerful tradition has grown up to the effect that this never ought to be done.

For example, AA World Services, Inc. (which also includes the AA Publishing division) currently has seven directors, only two of whom are Trustees.1 The other five non-Trustee directors comprise three volunteers, both expert in office management and publishing, and two directors who are paid staff members: the general manager and his assistant. The general manager is traditionally the president of AA World Services, Inc. and his assistant is a vice president. For communication linkage, the editor or a staff member of the Grapevine or his nominee is invited to attend AA World Services, Inc. meetings.

Therefore the active management of AA World Services, Inc. and its publishing division is composed of Trustees whose mission is to see that these projects are properly managed; of volunteer experts who contribute their advice and professional experience; and of two paid office executives who are charged with getting most of the work done. It will be seen that each member of every classification, is a director, and so has a legal vote; that each corporate officer bears a title which, both practically and legally, denotes what his (or her) actual status and responsibility is.

Such a typical corporate business management easily permits a proper degree of voting "participation." Every skilled element to do the allotted job is present. No class is set in absolute authority over another. This is the corporate or "participating" method of doing business, as distinguished from structures so common to many institutional, military and governmental agencies wherein high-level people or classes of people often are set in absolute authority, one over the other.

We should also note that the seven2 AA Grapevine directors are elected on the same principle as those of AA World Services, Inc. Here too we see Trustees,

volunteer experts and paid staff members acting in concert as the active managers of that operation. And a world service nominee should be present at all GV meetings, both corporate and editorial.

The General Service Board, furthermore, rigorously abides by the principle of “Participation” whenever its chairman makes appointments to the Board’s principal standing committees. Numbers of non-Trustees and paid staff workers are customarily chosen for these important posts. As with the active service corporations, the same elements are nearly always present in these committees, viz., representatives of the General Service Board, non-Trustee experts, and one or more staff members who must do most of the leg work. All can vote, and therefore all can truly “participate.” When the time comes to ballot, there are no “superiors,” no “inferiors,” and no “advisers“.

To this highly effective and unifying principle of “participation” at all responsible levels, there is one regrettable but necessary exception. Members holding paid staff positions cannot become Trustees. This cannot be permitted because such a practice would interfere with the four-year rotation of the AA Trustees. And if ever the General Service Board had to be reorganized by the Conference, paid AA Trustees might prove to be a vested interest most difficult to dislodge.

Nevertheless our Trustees of today traditionally invite paid executives, staff members, accountants, and any others whose reports or advice may be required, to attend each quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. Thus the Trustees are put into direct communication with these workers who are thus made to feel that they are wanted and needed. Although they do not vote, these workers may freely participate in debate.

The preservation of the principle of “Participation” in our service structure is, to those of us who already understand its application and benefits, a matter of the highest importance to our future. Experience suggests, however, that some of each new generation of Delegates and Trustees will inevitably try to weaken, modify, or toss out the principle of “participation.” Every year, a few Delegates will question the “right” of the corporate directors, staffs, and even of the Trustees to vote in Conference. New volunteer corporate directors will ask why any paid woman staff member should also be a director and thereby have a vote as good as their own. Every now and then a move will be made to abolish AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. It will be urged that these separate corporations ought to become “departments” or “committees” of the General Service Board, mainly managed by Trustees. To my view, it is so vital that we preserve this traditional “Right of Participation” in the face of every tendency to whittle it down that we should here bring some of our pioneering experience to bear upon the problem.

In its early days the AA Headquarters was run on authoritarian and institutional lines. At that time the Trustees saw no reason to delegate their managerial powers or to work in voting participation with any others outside their own body. The result was often grievous trouble and misunderstanding, and it was out of this rough going that the principle of “Participation’ finally emerged. This lesson was learned the hard way, but it was learned.

We have seen how Dr. Bob and I had placed our Board of Trustees in full legal possession of all of our service assets. This had included our book literature, our funds, our public relations, and our AA General Service Office. This is how our early Trustees came to have all of the authority there was. But most of the actual responsibility for the conduct of AA's Headquarters nevertheless fell on me, my assistant, and her staff. On the one hand we had Trustees who possessed complete authority, and on the other hand there were founders and office managers who had great responsibility but practically no authority. It was a kind of schizophrenia, and it caused real trouble.

It was natural for the Trustees, who had all of the authority and all of the money, to feel that theirs was the duty to directly manage the office and to actively superintend practically everything that was done. To accomplish this, two Trustee committees were formed, a policy and an administrative committee. We at the office had no membership on these committees and hence no real "participation." Of course I could go to Trustee meetings to persuade or advise, and the same was true of the committee meetings. But my assistant, who really carried the greater part of the office load, couldn't get inside a Trustees meeting, and she was called into committee meetings only to make suggestions and reports, answer questions, and receive orders. Sometimes these committees issued us conflicting directives.

The situation was complicated by yet another wheel in the management machine. Our publishing company (then Works Publishing, Inc.) was of course wholly owned by the Board of Trustees. Except in one important particular, Works Publishing, Inc. had, however, become a pure "dummy." It had nothing to do with the active management except to issue checks for office and publishing expenses. An old AA friend of mine, its Trustee-treasurer, signed those checks. Once, when he was a bit out of sorts, he tore up all of our pay checks because my assistant had issued them a couple of days early so that the gals in the back office could buy Easter bonnets. Right then and there we began to wonder how much absolute authority over money and people any one of us drunks could handle. Also, how much of this type of coercion we alkies on the receiving end could sit and take. In any case it had become dead sure that our Headquarters could not be run by two executive committees and a dummy corporation, each able to issue point-blank non-participating directives.

The point may be made that nowadays we drunks can "dish it out" or "take it" better than we used to. Even so, I would sure hate to see us ever go back to a non-participating setup. Now that we have more service people involved and more money to handle, I am afraid the result would be much the same and maybe worse. There was really nothing exceptional about the incident of the torn-up checks. Every time an absolute authority is created, it always invites this same tendency toward over domination respecting all things, great and small.

It was years before we saw that we could never put all authority in one group and virtually all responsibility in another and then expect efficiency of operation, let alone real harmony. Of course, no one is against the idea of final authority. We are only against its misapplication or misuse. “Participation” can usually stop this sort of demoralizing nonsense “before it starts.

Let us look at another aspect of this participation problem. The final authority for services must lie in the AA groups; but suppose the groups, sensing their great power, should try to over- exercise it by sending in Delegates irrevocably instructed as to how to vote on most questions. Would the Delegates feel that they were participants, trusted servants? No, they would feel like agents and order-takers.

The Delegates themselves, of course, could also give the Trustees this same treatment. The Delegates’ power is so great that they could soon make the Trustees feel like rubber stamps, just as the Trustees unknowingly did to workers at Headquarters. If, therefore, the Conference ever begins to refuse the Trustees vote in it, and if the Trustees ever again refuse to let corporate service volunteers and staff members vote at the level of their own corporate and Conference work, we shall have thrown all past experience to the winds. The principle of allowing a proper voting participation would have to be painfully relearned.

One argument for taking away the Trustee and service worker vote in the Conference is this: it is urged that there is danger if we allow service people and Trustees to vote on their own past performance; for example, their annual reports. To a certain extent this argument is sound. As a matter of tradition, there is no doubt that Trustees and service workers alike should refrain from voting on reports on their own past activities.

But those who would do away entirely with the votes of Trustees and service workers in the Conference overlook the point that such reports of past performance constitute only a fraction of the business of that body. The Conference is far more concerned with policies, plans, and actions which are to take effect in the future. To take away the votes of Trustees and service workers on such questions would obviously be unwise. Why should our Conference be deprived of the votes of such knowledgeable people as these?*

*There is another very practical reason for not giving Conference Delegates absolute voting authority over trustees, service directors, and staff members. It should be borne in mind that our delegates can never be like a Congress in constant session, having its own working committees, elected leaders, etc. Our delegates cannot possibly function in this manner for the simple reason that they meet for a few days only, once a year. Hence they cannot have an extensive firsthand acquaintance with many of the problems on which they are expected to vote. This is all the more reason for allowing the sometimes better-informed minority of trustees and Headquarters people the balloting privilege in all cases where no self-interest is involved.

Perhaps someone will object that, on close votes in the Conference, the combined Trustees and service worker ballots may decide a particular question. But why not? Certainly our Trustees and service workers are no less conscientious, experienced, and wise than the Delegates. Is there any good reason why their votes are undesirable? Clearly there is none. Hence we ought to be wary of any future tendency to deny either our Trustees or our service people their Conference votes, except in special situations that involve past performances, job qualifications, or money compensation, or in case of a sweeping reorganization of the General Service Board itself, occasioned by misfunction of the Board. However, this should never be construed as a bar to Trustee vote on structural changes. It is also noteworthy that in actual practice our Trustees and Headquarters people have never yet voted in a "bloc." Their differences of opinion among themselves are nearly always as sharp and considerable as those to be found among the Delegates themselves.

There is another good reason for "participation," and this one has to do with our spiritual needs. All of us deeply desire to belong. We want an AA relation of brotherly partnership. It is our shining ideal that the "spiritual corporation" of AA should never include any members who are regarded as "second class." Deep down, I think this is what we have been struggling to achieve in our world service structure. Here is perhaps the principal reason why we should continue to ensure "participation" at every important level. Just as there are no second-class AAs, neither should there be any second-class world service workers, either.

The "Right of Participation" is therefore a corrective of ultimate authority because it mitigates its harshness or misuse. It also encourages us who serve AA to accept the necessary disciplines that our several tasks require. We can do this when we are sure that we belong, when the fact of our "participation" assures us that we are truly the "trusted servants" described in AA's Tradition Two.

1. Currently AAWS. has nine directors, of which four are trustees.
2. Currently nine

CONCEPT V

Throughout our world service structure, a traditional "Right of Appeal" ought to prevail, thus assuring us that minority opinion will be heard and that petitions for the redress of personal grievances will be carefully considered.

In the light of the principle of the "Right of Appeal," all minorities – whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards, or among the Trustees – should be encouraged to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect AA as a whole, it should then charge itself with the actual duty of presenting a minority report to the Conference.

In granting this traditional “Right of Appeal,,” we recognize that minorities frequently can be right; that even when they are partly or wholly in error they still perform a most valuable service when, by asserting their “Right of Appeal,” they compel a thoroughgoing debate on important issues. The well-heard minority, therefore, is our chief protection against an uninformed, misinformed, hasty or angry majority.

The traditional “Right of Appeal” should also permit any person in our service structure, whether paid or unpaid, to petition for the redress of a personal grievance, carrying his complaint, if he so desires, directly to the General Service Board. He or she should be able to do this without prejudice or fear of reprisal. Though in practice this will be a seldom exercised right, its very existence will always tend to restrain those in authority from unjust uses of their power. Surely our workers should cheerfully accept the necessary direction and disciplines that go with their jobs, but all of them should nevertheless feel that they need not silently endure unnecessary and unfair personal domination.

Concerning both “Appeal” and “Petition,” I am glad to say that in AA’s world services these valuable practices and rights have always been put to good use. Therefore I am committing them to writing only by way of helping to confirm and enlarge their future applications.

The Rights of “Appeal “ and “Petition “ of course aim at the total problem of protecting and making the best possible use of minority feeling and opinion. This has always been, and still is, a central problem of all free governments and democratic societies. In Alcoholics Anonymous individual freedom is of enormous importance. For instance, any alcoholic is a member of AA the moment he says so; we cannot take away his right to belong. Neither can we force our members to believe anything or pay anything. Ours is indeed a large charter of minority privileges and liberties.

When we look at our world services, we find that here we have also gone to great lengths in our trust of minority groups. Under Tradition Two, the group conscience is the final authority for AA world service, and it will always remain so respecting all the larger issues that confront us. Nevertheless the AA groups have recognized that for world service purposes the “group conscience of AA” as a totality has certain limitations. It cannot act directly in many service matters, because it cannot be sufficiently informed about the problems in hand. It is also true that during a time of great disturbance the group conscience is not always the best possible guide because, temporarily, such an upset may prevent it from functioning efficiently or wisely. When, therefore, the group conscience cannot or should not act directly, who does act for it?

The second part of Tradition Two provides us with the answer when it describes AA leaders as “trusted servants.” These servants must always be in readiness to do for the groups what the groups obviously cannot or should not do for themselves. Consequently the servants are bound to use their own information

and judgment, sometimes to the point of disagreeing with uninformed or biased group opinion.

Thus it will be seen that in world service operations AA often trusts a small but truly qualified minority – the hundred-odd members of its General Service Conference – to act as AA's group conscience in most of our service affairs. Like other free societies, we have to trust our servants, knowing that in the unusual event that they should fail their responsibilities, we shall still have ample opportunity to recall and replace them.

The foregoing observations illustrate, in a general way, AA's concern for the freedom and protection of individual members and the whole membership's willingness to trust able and conscientious servants to function in their several capacities, for us all. As the long-time recipients of this kind of trust, I am sure that many of AA's old-timers would like me to record their gratitude along with my own.

By 1951, when the General Service Conference was put into experimental operation, these attitudes of trust already were an essential part of AA life. In drafting the Charter for our Conference, therefore, we naturally infused that document with provisions which would insure protection and respect for minorities. This is exemplified, for instance, in our "Third Legacy" method of selecting Delegates. Unless the majority candidate can poll a two-thirds vote of his State or Provincial Assembly, he must place his name in a hat with one or more of the choices of the Assembly minority. By thus drawing lots, the minority candidates have an equal chance with the majority's choice.

Strictly speaking, a democracy operates on the will of the majority, no matter how slim that majority may be. So when making special concessions to the feelings and the often demonstrated wisdom of minorities, we occasionally may deny democracy's cherished principle of final decision by a simple majority vote. Nevertheless we actually have found that our Third Legacy method of electing Delegates has much strengthened the spirit of democracy among us. Unity has been cemented, cooperation has been increased, and when the Delegate is finally chosen, no discontented minority can trail in his wake. To increase the actual spirit of democracy by special deference to minority opinion is, we think, better than to follow blindly the rule which always insists on an unqualified dominance by a slight majority vote.

Consider another example: our respect for the minority position, plus a desire for unity and certainty, often prompts AA's General Service Conference to debate at length on important questions of policy, provided there is no need for an immediate or early decision. On many occasions the Conference has insisted on a continuing discussion even in certain cases when a two-thirds majority easily could have been obtained. Such a traditional voluntary practice is evidence of real prudence and courteous deference to minority views. Unless it has been absolutely unavoidable, the Conference has usually refused to take important decisions on anything less than a two-thirds vote.

This same kind of consideration for the minority position can be found in the Charter provision that no Conference vote can be considered binding on the Trustees of the General Service Board unless it equals two-thirds of a Conference quorum. This gives the Trustees a power of veto in cases where the majority is not great. By reason of this provision the Trustees, if they wish, can insist on further debate and so check any tendency to haste or emotionalism. In practice the Trustees seldom exercise this option. More often they go along with a simple majority of the Delegates, especially when prompt action on less critical matters is clearly needed. But the choice is always theirs whether to veto a simple majority or to act with it. Here again is recognition of the constructive value of a trusted minority.

If to such a generous recognition of minority privileges we now add the traditional Rights of "Appeal" and "Petition," I believe we shall have granted to all minorities, whether of groups or of individuals, the means of discharging their world service duties confidently, harmoniously, and well.

More than a century ago a young French nobleman named De Toqueville came to America to look at the new Republic. Though many of his friends had lost their lives and fortunes in the French Revolution, De Toqueville was a worshipful admirer of democracy. His writings on government by the people and for the people are classics, never more carefully studied than at the present time.

Throughout his political speculation De Toqueville insisted that the greatest danger to democracy would always be the "tyranny" of apathetic, self-seeking, uninformed, or angry majorities. Only a truly dedicated citizenry, quite willing to protect and conserve minority rights and opinions, could, he thought, guarantee the existence of a free and democratic society. All around us in the world today we are witnessing the tyranny of majorities and the even worse tyranny of very small minorities invested with absolute power. De Toqueville would have neither, and we AAs can heartily agree with him.

We believe that the spirit of democracy in our Fellowship and in our world service structure will always survive, despite the counter forces which will no doubt continue to beat upon us. Fortunately we are not obliged to maintain a government that enforces conformity by inflicting punishments. We need to maintain only a structure of service that holds aloft our Traditions, that forms and executes our policies there under, and so steadily carries our message to those who suffer.

Hence we believe that we shall never be subjected to the tyranny of either the majority or the minority, provided we carefully define the relations between them and forthwith tread the path of world service in the spirit of our Twelve Steps, our Twelve Traditions, and our Conference Charter – in which I trust that we shall one day inscribe these traditional Rights of "Appeal" and "Petition."

CONCEPT VI

On behalf of AA as a whole, our General Service Conference has the principal responsible for the maintenance of our world services, and it traditionally has the final decision respecting large matters of general policy and finance. But the Conference also recognizes that the chief initiative and the active responsibility in most of these matters should be exercised primarily by the Trustee members of the Conference when they act among themselves as the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Just as the AA groups find themselves unable to act decisively respecting world service affairs unless they delegate a great amount of active authority and responsibility to their Conference, so must the Conference in turn delegate a liberal administrative authority to the General Service Board, in order that its Trustees may act freely and effectively in the absence of the Conference itself

This critical need for Trustee liberty of action raises several important questions.* Next to the Conference, AA's Board of Trustees should be the most influential group of world servants that we have, and therefore we shall have to consider carefully the kind and degree of authority, responsibility, leadership, and legal status the Trustees must possess in order to function at top effectiveness over the years to come. We shall need to review and perhaps amend somewhat our present methods of choosing Trustees. We shall need to define clearly the several kinds of professional and financial skills that will always be required for a balanced trusteeship. Only by doing so can we permanently insure the Board's capability of future leadership.

In order to avoid continuous confusion, it will also be necessary to show precisely how the Trustees ought to be related to the Conference and just how they in turn should relate themselves to their active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. (including its division of AA Publishing) and the AA Grapevine, Inc., our monthly magazine. In a general way these relations already are indicated in our Conference Charter, and to some extent they have been discussed on preceding pages. Nevertheless there still remains a real need to interpret and spell them out in detail. Of course there is no desire to freeze these relations into a rigid pattern. However satisfactory and right our present arrangements seem, the future may reveal flaws that we do not yet envision. New conditions may require refinements or even considerable alterations. For this reason our service Charter is capable in most respects of being readily amended by the Conference itself.

It ought to be recalled, however, that all of our present arrangements, including the status of AA's Trustees, are based on a great amount of experience, which it is the purpose of these writings to describe and make clear. When this is done, we shall not be hampered later on by such a lack of understanding that we could be tempted into hasty or unwise amendments. Even if we do someday make changes that happen to work out poorly, then the experience of the past will not have been lost. These articles can then be relied upon as a point of safe return.

Let us therefore make a more specific examination of the need of a wide latitude of administrative freedom for the Trustees of the General Service Board.
As we have seen, the Conference Charter (and also the Charter of the General Service Board, and its Bylaws) has already staked out a large area of freedom of action for our Trustees.

And we have reinforced these Charter provisions by granting to all world service bodies, including of course our Trustees, the traditional Rights of "Decision," "Participation;' and "Appeal." A careful review of these legal and traditional rights can leave little doubt what the actual administrative responsibilities of the Trustees are; nor can there be any question that their authority in this area is large indeed.

Why should our Trustees be given this very wide latitude of judgment and action? The answer is that we AAs are holding them mainly responsible for all our service activities: AA World Services, Inc. (including AA Publishing) and The AA Grapevine, Inc. These entities (as of 1960) have combined gross receipts approaching one-half million dollars annually[1]. Our Trustees are also responsible for AA's worldwide public relations. They are expected to lead in the formulation of AA policy and must see to its proper execution. They are the active guardians of our Twelve Traditions. The Trustees are AA's bankers. They are entirely responsible for the investment and use of our substantial reserve funds. The very wide range of their activities will be still further seen under "Concept XI," wherein the work of their five standing committees is described.

While the Trustees must always operate under the close observation, guidance and sometimes the direction of the Conference, it is nevertheless true that nobody but the Trustees and their wholly-owned service corporations could possibly pass judgment upon and handle the very large number of transactions now involved in our total world service operation. In view of this very large responsibility, they must therefore be given a correspondingly large grant of authority and leadership with which to discharge it. We should quite understand, too, that the conduct of our world services is primarily a matter of policy and business. Of course our objective is always a spiritual one, but this service aim can only be achieved by means of an effective business operation. Our Trustees must function almost exactly like the directors of any large business corporation. They must have ample authority to really manage and conduct AA's business.

This is the basic corporate concept on which our structure of world service rests. We have deliberately chosen the corporate form rather than the institutional or governmental model, because it is well known that the corporation is a far superior vehicle when it comes to the administration of policy and business.

From top to bottom, our whole service structure indeed resembles that of a large corporation. The AA groups are the stockholders; the Delegates are their representatives or proxies at the “annual meeting”; our General Service Board Trustees are actually the directors of a “holding company.” And this holding company, the General Service Board, actually owns and controls the “subsidiaries” which carry on our active world services.

This very real analogy makes it even more clear that, just like any other board of directors; our Trustees must be given large powers if they are to effectively manage the principal world affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous.

* See Concept VIII for a definition of the Trustees’ powers and activities.

1 The 1997 revenue of A.A World Services and the Grapevine was over eleven million dollars

2 There are now eleven standing committees

CONCEPT VII

The Conference recognizes that the Charter and the Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments: that the Trustees are thereby fully empowered to manage and conduct all of the world service affairs of Alcoholics Anonymous. It is further understood that the Conference Charter itself is not a legal document, that it relies instead upon the force of tradition and the power of the AA purse for its final effectiveness.

This concept may appear to be contradictory; it may look like the collision of an irresistible force with an immovable object. On the one hand we see a Board of Trustees which is invested with complete legal power over AA's funds and services, while on the other hand we find that AA's General Service Conference is clothed with such great traditional influence and financial power that, if necessary, it could overcome the legal rights of the Board of Trustees. It can therefore give the Trustees directives and secure compliance with them – practically speaking.

This means that the practical power of the Conference will nearly always be superior to the legal power of the Trustees. This superior power in the Conference flows from the powerful traditional influence of the Charter itself. It derives from the large majority of group-chosen Delegates in the Conference. And finally, in any great extremity, it would rest upon the undoubted ability of the Delegates to deny the General Service Board the monies with which to operate – viz., the voluntary contributions of the AA groups themselves. Theoretically, the Conference is an advisory body only, but practically speaking, it has all of the ultimate rights and powers that it may ever need.

When we reflect that our Trustees have no salaried financial interest in their posts, we can be quite sure that such a Board would never think of legally contesting the clear and sustained will of the Conference Delegates and the AA areas they represent. If someday the chips were really down, there would be little chance of a stalemate. The Conference would find itself in complete control of the situation. As the conscience of AA, the Delegates would find themselves in ultimate authority over our General Service Board and also its corporate arms of active world service.

The history of this development is interesting and important. When in 1950 the Conference Charter was drawn, this question of where the final authority ought to rest was a very moot matter. Would the Conference have the last word, or would the Trustees? By then we knew for sure that complete and final authority over our funds and services should never continue to reside in an isolated Board of Trustees who had an unqualified right to appoint their own successors. This would be to leave AA world services in the hands of a paternalistic group, something entirely contradictory to the "group conscience" concept of Tradition Two. If the Trustees were to be our permanent service administrators and the guardians of AA's Twelve Traditions, it was evident that they must somehow

be placed in a position where they would necessarily have to conform to our Traditions, and to the desires of our Fellowship.

To accomplish this objective, we considered all kinds of devices. We thought of incorporating the Conference itself, thus placing it in direct legal authority over the Board. This would have meant that all Conference members would have had to have a legal status. It would have been much too cumbersome an arrangement, involving really the incorporation of our whole Fellowship, an idea which the Conference itself later repudiated.

We also considered the idea of country-wide elections for all Trustees. But this procedure would have produced a political shambles, rather than the top flight managerial talent the Board had to have. So that notion was abandoned.

We next inquired whether the Conference itself could not both nominate and directly elect our Trustees. But how could several scores of Delegates do this? They would come from all over the country. They would not be too well acquainted with each other. Their terms would be short and their meetings brief. How, then, could such a body nominate and elect alcoholic and non-alcoholic Trustees of a top managerial calibre? Clearly there could be no reliable method for doing this. Very reluctantly, we had to drop the idea.

It thus became obvious that new Trustee choices – subject to Conference approval – would still have to be left pretty much to the Trustees themselves. Only they would be capable of understanding what the Board needed. Except in a time of reorganization, this method of selection would have to continue – certainly as to the larger part of the Board's membership. Otherwise the Board could not be held accountable for management results. We might wind up with no effective management at all. For these reasons, the Conference was given the right to reject, but not to elect, new Trustee candidates.[1]

It was out of these considerations that our present Conference Charter was developed, a structure which clearly gives the Conference a final and ultimate authority but which nevertheless legally preserves the right of the Trustees to function freely and adequately, just as any business board of directors must. This arrangement is in strict conformity with the "trusted servant" provision of Tradition Two, which contemplates that our servants, within the scope of their duties, should be trusted to use their own experience and judgment. Trusted servants at all AA levels are expected to exercise leadership, and leadership is not simply a matter of submissive housekeeping. Of course leadership cannot function if it is constantly subjected to a barrage of harassing directives.

Up to the present time our experience shows that this balance of powers between the Trustees and the Conference is thoroughly workable. We have taken great pains to reserve final authority to the Conference by practical and traditional means. By legal means we have delegated ample functional and discretionary authority to the Trustees. We believe this balance can be maintained indefinitely, because the one is protected by tradition and the other by law.

Now we come to another interesting question often raised by new General Service Board Trustees. They say, “We Trustees have certain rights and duties which are legally established by our Charter. Are we not violating this Charter when we accept a Conference opinion or directive? We should have a perfect legal right to say ‘no’ to anything and everything that the Conference wants.”

Our Trustees certainly do have this absolute legal authority, but there is nothing in their Charter that compels them to use all of their authority all of the time. They are quite at liberty to accept advice or even direction from anyone at all. They can simply refrain from using their absolute legal right to say “no” when it would be much wiser, all things considered, to say “yes.” Just as the Conference should avoid the overuse of its traditional authority, so should the Trustees avoid overuse of their legal rights. The President of the U.S., for example, has an absolute legal right to veto congressional legislation. Yet ninety-nine percent of the time he does not do it, because (a) he likes a piece of legislation or (b) he does not like the legislation but believes a veto would nevertheless be unwise or impossible of success. Whether or not he will exercise his veto is determined by circumstances. It is just like that with AA’s Board of Trustees.

Clearly, then, our Board of Trustees does reserve a veto power over any Conference action; this is legally necessary and right in principle, even though the veto will seldom be used. At certain times, however, the Trustees’ veto could be of important and constructive use.

Here, for instance, are three typical examples in which it would be the duty of the Trustees to veto Conference action:

1. If, in a time of haste or heavy stress, the Conference should take an action or issue a directive to the Trustees in clear violation of its own Charter, or that of the General Service Board; or if the Conference were to pass any measure so ill-considered or so reckless as to seriously injure, in the judgment of the Trustees, AA’s public relations or AA as a whole, it would then be the duty of the Trustees to ask for a Conference reconsideration. In event of a Conference refusal to reconsider, the Trustees could then use their legal right to veto. And, if desirable, they could appeal the issue directly to the AA groups themselves.

2. Although traditionally the Trustees never should substantially exceed a Conference- approved budget without consulting the Conference, they should feel entirely free to reduce the Conference budget figure during any fiscal year, even though such an action might curtail or cancel special plans or projects initiated and directed by the Conference itself

3. If, by reason of unforeseen conditions, any particular plan, project, or directive of the Conference should become impractical or unworkable during a fiscal year, the Trustees should, without prejudice, be able to use their right of veto and cancellation.

If, therefore, in the years ahead, the Conference will always bear in mind the actual rights, duties, responsibilities, and legal status of the General Service Board, and if the Trustees in their deliberations will constantly realize that the Conference is the real seat of ultimate service authority, we may be sure that neither will be seriously tempted to make a “rubber stamp” out of the other. We may expect that in this way grave issues will always be resolved and harmonious cooperation will be the general rule.

1 Trustee elections are now held during Conference week for regional and at-large trustees; to that extent the Conference now chooses trustees according to the procedure described in the ‘Service Manual’.

CONCEPT VIII

The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

Since our Trustees bear the primary responsibility for the good conduct of all our world service affairs, this discussion deals with the basic concepts and methods by which they can best discharge their heavy obligations. Long experience has now proved that our Board as a whole must devote itself almost exclusively to the larger and more serious questions of policy, finance, group relations, public relations and leadership that constantly confront it. In these more critical matters, the Board must of course function with great care and deliberation. Here the Board is expected skilfully to plan, manage, and execute.

It follows, therefore, that the close attention of the Board to such large problems must not be subject to constant distraction and interference. Our Trustees, as a body, cannot be burdened with a mass of lesser matters; they must not concern themselves with the endless questions and difficulties which arise daily, weekly, and monthly in the routine conduct of the World Service Office and of our publishing enterprises. In these areas the Board cannot possibly manage and conduct in detail; it must delegate its executive function.

Here the Board’s attitude has to be that of custodial oversight; it cannot be the executive. Hence the Trustees are the guarantors of the good management of AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. They discharge their custodial obligation by electing the directors of these services, a part of whom must always be Trustees. By this means, the executive direction of these functions is securely lodged in the active service corporations themselves rather than the General Service Board. Each corporate service entity should possess its own charter, its own working capital, its own executive, its own employees, its own offices and equipment. Except to mediate difficult situations and to see that the service

corporations operate within their budgets and within the general framework of AA and Headquarters policy, the Board will seldom need to do more, so far as routine service operations are concerned.

This arrangement is in line with modern corporate business practice. The General Service Board is in effect a holding company, charged with the custodial oversight of its wholly-owned and separately incorporated subsidiaries, of which each has, for operating purposes, a separate management. We have demonstrated to our satisfaction that this corporate basis of operation is superior to any other.

This lesson, as we have observed before, has been learned the hard way. When discussing "Participation" in Concept IV, we saw that earlier attempts to manage the AA General Service Office and AA Publishing Company through a multiplicity of Trustee committees did not work well. These were really efforts to make our services into departments of the old Alcoholic Foundation (now the General Service Board). It was found difficult to define the powers of these several Trustee service committees respecting each other and respecting the work at hand. Responsibility and authority rarely could be kept in balance. Point-blank directives, rather than participating decisions, were the rule. In these committees nobody held titles that fully denoted what individual responsibilities actually were; and, naturally enough, those who handled money and signed checks assumed the greater authority. The control of money, therefore, too often determined AA policy, regardless of the views of the workers and volunteers at the office who sometimes understood these matters better.

But the moment we consolidated our service office function into a single and permanent corporate structure wherein officers and directors had legally defined titles and duties and responsibilities – the moment such a corporation was provided with its own working capital, employees, and facilities — the moment its directors could legally vote in proportion to their actual responsibilities – the moment we were able in this way to define clearly executive authority – from that moment we began to see great improvement. More harmonious and effective conduct of our business has been the result ever since.

We finally learned what the business world well knows: that we could not, at the level of top management, run a large, active and full-fledged business entity with loose-jointed committees and departments. For example, how could our Trustees function today if they were to become a mere "committee" or "department" of the General Conference instead of the legally chartered and carefully defined body that they necessarily are.

Neither can our General Service Board be made into an operating corporation. Any corporation conducting a large and active business always must have a single executive head who is familiar with every department, who is actually on the job most of the time, and who therefore can directly coordinate the several departments and mediate their differences. This would mean (if we tried it) that the General Service Board "divisions" would have to report to the General Service Board Chairman, as their chief executive. But unless he was an executive in fact, and constantly available to them, how could they do so? In the very nature of

our particular setup, our Board Chairman can never be such an executive. He is usually a non-alcoholic and could not give the required time. Nor, as a Trustee, could he be paid a salary for the work that would be required of him as the top executive of all our services.

Suppose, however, that the Trustees engaged a full-time manager who would actively conduct all three of our service enterprises as departments of the Board. An immediate difficulty would be that such a person could never be a Trustee and could therefore never be a Trustee and could therefore never act as the Chairman of the General Service Board. He would therefore have no real status. He would become a man of all work under the absentee direction of the Board Chairman. Consider, too, the fact that half of our Board of Trustees normally live out of town 1 and the further fact that we cannot well ask our non-alcoholic Trustees to give the active services close and continuous supervision. Altogether, these are weighty reasons why we should never turn the General Service Board into an operating corporation.

Nor would we be much better off if we formed one big subsidiary service corporation, wholly- owned by the General Service Board and designed to encompass under a single top executive all of our active services, including The AA Grapevine. This plan would also create executive difficulties because it would over concentrate executive authority, and finally, an individual executive having the many diverse talents required would be hard to find and hard to replace.

A further consideration is that we have always rigorously avoided any great money or executive concentration by placing our reserve funds with the Trustees and by dividing our total working capital between the AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc., each entity having its separate executive. There is always a powerful connection between money and authority. Whenever we concentrate money, we shall inevitably create the temptation for the exercise of too much executive authority, an undesirable condition for us. Therefore we should strenuously avoid placing too much money or too much authority in any one service entity. These are potent reasons for maintaining separate incorporations for each of our active services.

However, experience dating from our earliest days strongly suggests that future Trustees and service workers, in the supposed interests of accounting simplicity, tax savings, and hoped- for efficiency, will be periodically tempted to go in for concentrations and consolidations of one kind of another. Should this be again attempted, we know that the risk of making an administrative shambles out of the total operation will be great indeed.

These observations are not intended to bar any future needful change. It is urged only that we avoid unnecessary repetitions of those painful experiences and mistakes of the past which sometimes resulted from too much concentration of money and authority. It can only be left on the record that we still see no workable way to convert the Board of Trustees into an active, “all-purpose” service corporation.

CONCEPT IX

Good service leaders, together with sound and appropriate methods of choosing them, are at all levels indispensable for our future functioning and safety. The primary world service leadership once exercised by the founders of AA must necessarily be assumed by the Trustees of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous.

No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure. But weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures. But once we have created a basically sound structure, that job is finished, except for occasional refinements.

With leadership we shall have a continuous problem. Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous activity. It is therefore a problem that in its very nature cannot be permanently solved. We must continuously find the right people for our many service tasks. Since our future effectiveness must thus depend upon ever-new generations of leaders, it seems desirable that we now proceed to define what a good service leader should be; that we carefully indicate in each level of service, especially in our Board of Trustees, what special skills will always be required; and that we review our present methods of finding and choosing that leadership.

First let's remember that the base for our service structure rests on the dedication and ability of several thousand General Service Representatives (GSRs), several hundred area Committee Members, and nearly a hundred Delegates. These are the direct agents of the AA groups; these are the indispensable linkage between our Fellowship and its world service; these are the primary representatives of AA's group conscience. Without their support and activity we could not operate permanently at all.

When making their choices of GSRs, the AA groups should therefore have such facts well in mind. It ought to be remembered that it is only the GSRs who, in group assembly meetings (or in caucus) can name Committee Members and finally name the Delegates. Hence great care needs to be taken by the groups as they choose these Representatives. Hit-or-miss methods should be avoided. Groups who name no GSRs should be encouraged to do so. In this area a degree of weakness tends to persist. The needed improvement seems to be a matter of increased care, responsibility, and education.

As the GSRs meet in their Assemblies to name Delegates, an even greater degree of care and dedication will be required. Personal ambitions will have to be cast aside, feuds and controversy forgotten. "Who are the best qualified people that we can name?" This should be the thought of all.

Thus far our Third Legacy method of naming Delegates by a two-thirds vote or by lot has proved highly satisfactory. This system of choosing has greatly reduced political friction; it has made each Delegate feel that he or she is truly a world servant rather than just the winner of a contest. In Committee Members and Delegates alike, our Third Legacy methods have generally produced people of a high level of dedication and competence. In this area of service we are in good shape. Our Area Assemblies need only to continue to act with care and in selfless good spirit

It should be reported that some members still doubt whether choice by lot is ever a good idea. They say that the best man does not always win. In answer it must be pointed out that each time we have abandoned the “two-thirds vote or lot” in naming Delegates, there has been a sense of defeat and disturbance in the minority camp which is nowhere nearly offset by the advantage of naming the supposedly best man. Indeed the second-best man can often be as good a Delegate as the Assembly’s first choice; he may even be a better Delegate.

We now come to the principal theme of this particular Concept: How can we best strengthen the composition and leadership of the future Board of Trustees, the Board which in years to come will have to exercise AA’s primary leadership in world service administration, the trusteeship which will in fact have to assume most of my former duties and responsibilities in connection with AA’s world services?

As previously noted, the actual transference of authority and responsibility from me to the Trustees has been going on for a long time. I am still around and still serving as an adviser, and I have also been finishing a few remaining chores (for example, the development of these Concepts) which were left over from the 1955 St. Louis Convention. But the time approaches when I shall have to withdraw from nearly all world service activity. This is why I feel a great interest now in doing everything possible to strengthen the administrative composition and AA leadership of our General Service Board, so that future Trustees may be better able to cope with the problems and dangers which time will no doubt bring.

My admiration for what AA’s alcoholic and non-alcoholic Trustees have done for us all is boundless. During the time of our infancy and adolescence, nothing could have been structurally better than the setup we have had. Looking at this record, many AAs naturally feel that what was good for the past will surely be good for the future; that any change in the induction methods, in the Trustee ratio of alcoholics to non-alcoholics, or in the present composition of our Board will prove dangerous rather than beneficial.

But change has been pressing upon us right along, and it is still doing so. For example, our Board operated in all the years between 1938 and 1951 without the support of a Conference. But it was finally and reluctantly realized that this relatively unseen and unknown Board could not continue without a permanent linkage to AA, something that Dr. Bob and I could not give it forever. We did not like to face this change, but we had to. The trusteeship had to be securely anchored to AA or it eventually would have collapsed. The Conference simply had to come into being.

This change profoundly altered the position of the Trustees. Their former authority was modified; they were firmly linked to AA and were thus made directly accountable to our Fellowship. Nobody today questions the wisdom of that momentous change, because everybody can now see that it has provided an essential protection for the service effectiveness and security of AA's future. Experience has refuted the idea that changes which are needed to meet altered conditions are necessarily unwise.

We now stand on the edge of still another great change. Though we have already solved the problem of the Trustees' authority, their responsibility, and their linkage to AA, we have by no means solved, in my belief, the question of the Board's future role in service leadership. Hence it is my deep conviction that the administrative and AA leadership strength of the Board should be considerably increased; that these and other improvements can place it in a much better position, practically and psychologically; that such changes are truly necessary to meet the conditions which will be certain to follow when my own world service leadership has been terminated. Students of history recognize that the transference of the original leadership of a society to its successors in leadership is always a critical turning point. This difficult question of leadership, this problem of transference, must now be faced.

Let us finally consider what specific personal qualities a world service leader ought to have. For whatever use it may be to future generations of our trusted servants, I here offer a discussion on this subject published in a 1959 issue of "The AA Grapevine."

Leadership in AA: Ever a vital need

The text to this essay is in section 4 above

CONCEPT X

Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority-the scope of such authority to be always well defined whether by tradition, by resolution, by specific job description or by appropriate charters and bylaws.

Nearly all societies and governments of today exhibit serious deviations from the very sound principle that each operational responsibility must be accompanied by a corresponding authority to discharge it.

This is why we have been at such pains in preceding discussions to define the several authorities and responsibilities of the AA groups, the Conference, the Trustees, and our active service corporations. We have tried to make sure that authority in each of these levels is equal to responsibility. Then we have tried to relate these levels one to another in such a way that this principle is maintained throughout.

An outstanding characteristic of every good operational structure is that it guarantees harmonious and effective function by relating its several parts and people in such a way that none can doubt what their respective responsibilities and corresponding authorities actually are. Unless these attributes are well defined; unless those holding the final authority are able and willing properly to delegate and maintain a suitable operational authority; unless those holding such delegated authority feel able and willing to use their delegated authority freely as trusted servants; and unless there exists some definite means of interpreting and deciding doubtful situations-then personal clashes, confusion, and ineffectiveness will be inevitable.

The matter of responsibility and its necessary and co-equal authority is of such urgent importance that we might profitably recapitulate what has already been said, meanwhile taking a bird's-eye-view of our entire structure to better envision how this principle does, and always must, apply in our every activity and attitude. The first characteristic that any working structure must have is a point, or succession of points, where there is ultimate responsibility and therefore an ultimate authority. We have already seen how, for AA's world services, this kind of final responsibility and authority resides in the AA groups themselves. And they in turn have apportioned some of their ultimate authority to the Conference and the Trustees.

We have observed how the Conference Delegates, directly representing the groups, are actually in a position of ultimate authority over the Trustees. We have seen further how the Trustees are in ultimate authority over the General Service Board's wholly-owned service corporations-AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Likewise we know that the directors of these corporations are in ultimate authority aver their officers who, on their part, are in like authority over their staffs.

The principle of ultimate authority runs clear through our structure. This is necessary, because all of our service affairs and activities have to head up somewhere for final responsibility. Ultimate authority is also needed so that each worker or each classification of servants knows where and who the final boss is.

If however, ultimate authority is not carefully qualified by delegated authority, we then have the reverse result. Were there no delegated authority, the groups would be directing their Delegates on every important vote, the Delegates would similarly turn the Trustees into a timid committee which would receive point-blank direction on just about everything; the Trustees would then install themselves as the sole directors of the service entities and would commence to run them by directives. The corporate executives would become small czars, pushing the working staffs about. In short, such a misuse of ultimate authority would add up to a dictatorship wherein nearly every classification of AA servants would have large responsibilities but no real or certain authority, and hence no capability of effective decision and leadership with which to operate. Big or little tyrannies and buck-passing would be the inevitable penalties.

Therefore it becomes clear that ultimate authority is something which cannot be used indiscriminately. Indeed ultimate authority should practically never be used in full, except in an emergency. That emergency usually arises when delegated authority has gone wrong, when it must be reorganized because it is ineffective, or because it constantly exceeds its defined scope and purpose. For example, if the groups are dissatisfied with the Conference, they can elect better Delegates or withhold funds. If the Delegates must, they can censure or reorganize the Trustees. The Trustees can do the same with the service corporations. If a corporation does not approve of the operations of its executives or staff, any or all of them can be fired.

These are the proper uses of ultimate authority, because they rightly discharge a truly ultimate responsibility. The influence of ultimate authority must always be felt, but it is perfectly clear that when delegated authority is operating well it should not be constantly interfered with. Otherwise those charged with operating responsibility will be demoralized because their authority to do their work will be subject to arbitrary invasion, and because their actual responsibility will be made greater than their real authority.

How have we structurally tried to restrain the natural human tendency of those in ultimate authority to usurp and take over the needed operational or delegated authority? Well, this has been a large order, and several structural devices have been required. Let us review them, noting how they apply.

In our structure we have tried to create at each level accurate definitions of authority and responsibility. We have done this (a) by legal means, (b) by traditional means, and (c) by principles under which doubtful and seemingly or really conflicting situations can be interpreted and readily resolved.

Take the Conference Charter. It is not a legal instrument, but practically speaking it is the substance of a contract between the AA groups and their Conference. The Charter makes clear in a general way that the AA groups have delegated some of their ultimate authority and all needed operational authority to the Conference, which includes the Trustees and the active services. It is further suggested, in these present articles, that each Conference member on a final vote be entitled to cast his ballot according to the dictates of his own conscience; that the Conference itself also be granted, under the traditional "Right of Decision," the privilege of choosing which matters it will decide by itself and which it will refer back to the groups for their discussion, guidance or direction. These are the traditional definitions which can check the natural tendency of the groups to over instruct Delegates. This gives the Conference an authority equal to its real responsibility.

Consider next the position of the Trustees. In previous articles we have made it clear that although the Conference has the ultimate authority, the Trustees at most times must insist on their legal right to actively administer our service affairs. Their legal right has been further strengthened and its use encouraged by the traditional "Right of Decision." In these articles we also recognize that the Trustees have a legal right of "veto" over the Conference when, in rare cases, they feel this should be used. By these means we have guaranteed the Trustees an administrative authority equal to their actual responsibility. This has of course been done without denying in any way the ultimate authority of the Conference, or of the Delegates, should it really be necessary to give the Trustees directives or censures, or to reorganize the Board. It should also be noticed that the position of the Trustees is still further strengthened by their "voting participation" in the Conference and by the recognition that they are AA's primary world service administrators.

Much care has also been taken to guarantee the Directors of AA World Services, Inc. and the AA Grapevine, Inc. an ample operating authority that fully matches their responsibility for the routine conduct of our active services. The Charter provisions of their corporations legally protect their rights; the tradition that the Trustees must elect non-Trustee experts to these boards strengthens them further. Besides, the traditional "Right of Decision" adds still more substance to their position. In these Concepts the perils of turning the General Service Board back into a "departmentalized" operating corporation have also been emphasized.

These are the extraordinary precautions we have taken to maintain the operating authority and integrity of the active services themselves. These safeguards are necessary because the General Service Board owns these corporations. Therefore the authority of the Trustees over them is not only ultimate, it is absolute the moment the Trustees want to make it that way. They can elect new boards of directors at any time; they control the corporate budget; they can withhold operating funds. All these powers are needed and right. Nevertheless, so long as things go well, it is highly important that the Trustees do not unnecessarily interfere with, or usurp the operating authority of these entities. Hence the care we have taken in constructing these definitions of delegated authority.

To a considerable degree, the standing committees of the General Service Board-Policy, Finance, Public Relations, and the like-have a similar latitude. Under the principle of the "Right of Decision," each primary committee may choose what business it will dispose of on its own and what matters it will refer to the Board. The position of these committees is also fortified by the appointment of a generous proportion of non-Trustee members. Here, too, we try to make the authority of these committees equal to their responsibility.

Now we come to the matter of conflicting authorities and to the question of how these conflicts are to be resolved. Most routine conflicts in the active services are easily settled, because we have provided ready communication between all service corporations and the committees of the General Service Board. For example: at every meeting of The Grapevine Boards or staff, a representative of AA World Services, Inc. is present, and vice versa. The General Policy Committee always contains one or more members of the Finance and Budgetary Committees, and vice versa. Such interlocking provides easy communication. Each entity knows what the other is doing. This practical arrangement irons out many conflicts of authority - but not all.

Suppose, for example, that the framing and execution of an important AA policy is involved. In such a case the General Policy Committee naturally assumes the primary jurisdiction, taking on the job of planning and of making recommendations to the Board of Trustees.

Let us suppose, however, that a considerable sum of money will be needed. In such a case, the plan also will have to be placed before the Finance and Budgetary Committee. If this committee agrees that the expenditure is warranted and is in line with the over-all budget, it tells the Policy Committee to go ahead and make its recommendation to the Trustees. But if the Finance and Budgetary Committee objects, then it must file its objection with the Trustees, who will settle the issue. Or if they think it necessary, the Trustees will refer the matter to the Conference.

The principle of a primary and a secondary jurisdiction also works the other way round. If the Finance Committee, for example, proposes a large expenditure that may strongly affect AA feeling and policy, it must be sure to check with the Policy Committee, even though the main jurisdiction still lies with the Budget and Finance people.

In all matters of joint or conflicting authority, therefore, a senior jurisdiction must be established. The junior jurisdiction must be heard and, regardless of the question involved, there must be an understood point or body where a final settlement can be had. It is understood that lesser conflicts are not to be loaded upon the Trustees for final decision. But it should always be clear where the point of final decision is located.

A condition to be avoided at all costs is double-headed business or policy management. Authority can never be divided into equal halves. Nowhere does such split authority or double-headed management so bedevil a structure as in

its executive departments. The vital need of avoiding double-headed executive management will be fully discussed under Concept XI.

In addition to the methods we use to make delegated authority equal to delegated responsibility, we have two more guarantees-the “Right of Appeal” and the “Right of Petition.” As we know, a bare majority is apt to constitute itself as a pseudo-ultimate authority on many occasions when it should not do so. Likewise, executives are apt to over-boss their assistants. Therefore we use the concepts of appeal and petition to insure that every minority, and every worker doing a job, has an authority and a status commensurate with the responsibility involved.

To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to reorganize; but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in AA’s Tradition Two. Here we see the “group conscience” as the ultimate authority and the “trusted servant” as the delegated authority. One cannot function without the other. We well know that only by means of careful definitions and mutual respect can we constantly maintain a right and harmonious working balance.

CONCEPT XI

While the Trustees hold final responsibility for AA’s world service administration, they should always have the assistance of the best possible standing committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Therefore the composition of these underlying committees and service boards, the personal qualifications of their members, the manner of their induction into service, the systems of their rotation, the way in which they are related to each other, the special rights and duties of our executives, staffs, and consultants, together with a proper basis for the financial compensation of these special workers, will always be matters for serious care and concern.

The long time success of our General Service Board will rest not only on the capabilities of the Trustees themselves; it will depend quite as much upon the competent leadership and harmonious association of those non-Trustee committee members, corporate service directors, executives, and staff members who must actively carry on AA’s world services. Their quality and dedication, or their lack of these characteristics, will make or break our structure of service. Our final dependency on them will always e great indeed.

Far more than most of the Trustees, these servants will be in direct contact with AA worldwide, and their performance will be constantly on view. They will perform most of the routine labour. They will carry on most of our services. They will travel widely and will receive most visitors at the Headquarters. They will often originate

new plans and policies. Some of them will eventually become Trustees. Because this group will form the visible image of world service, most AAs will measure our service values by what they see and feel in them. Members of this group will not only support the world leadership of the Trustees; in the nature of the case they will be bound to share world leadership with them.

Fortunately we already have a sound internal structure of service in which a very competent group of non-Trustee servants are now working. Only a few refinements and changes will still be needed in AA World Services, Inc. and at The AA Grapevine, Inc., the latter being a comparatively recent comer to our service scene. The main outlines of this underlying structure are now defined, and the effectiveness of this arrangement has been well proven. Of what, then, does our underlying structure of service consist?

It is composed of the following elements: the five [1] standing committees of the General Service Board, plus our two active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. (including its AA publishing division) and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Let's have a look at each of these operations.

The standing committees of the General Service Board are Nominating, Finance and Budgetary, Public Information, Literature, and General Policy – the titles clearly denoting the direct administrative responsibilities of the General Service Board. These committees are appointed yearly by the General Service Board Chairman, and each committee, as we have seen, includes a suitable proportion of Trustees, non-Trustee experts in the work to be done, a Headquarters executive, and a staff worker.

The Nominating Committee: This committee aids the Trustees in discharging their prime obligation to see that all vacancies – whether within their own ranks or among key service directors, executives, staff members – are properly filled with members and workers of the greatest possible competence, stability, and industry.

The recommendations of this committee to a large extent will determine the continuous success of our services. Its members will have the primary voice in choosing our future Trustees and non-Trustee workers. Careful deliberation, painstaking investigation and interviewing, refusal to accept casual recommendations, preparation well in advance of lists of suitable candidates – these will need to be the principal attitudes and activities of this committee. All temptation to haste or snap judgment will need to be faithfully and constantly resisted.

Another problem that future committees may have to face is the subtle tendency toward deterioration in the calibre of personnel due to the very natural and usually unconscious tendency of those who suggest nominees to select individuals of somewhat less ability than themselves. Instinctively we look for associates rather like ourselves, only a little less experienced and able. For example, what executive is likely to recommend an assistant who is a great deal more competent

than he is? What group of staff members will suggest a new associate whose capabilities are a great deal above their own average? The reverse is the more likely. Government bureaus, institutions, and many commercial enterprises suffer this insidious deterioration. We have not yet experienced it to any extent, but let us be sure that we never do. All of us need to be on guard against this ruinous trend, especially the Nominating Committee, whose first and last duty is to choose only the best obtainable for each vacant post.

The Finance and Budgetary Committee: The main responsibility of this body is to see that we do not become money-crippled or go broke. This is the place where money and spirituality do have to mix, and in just the right proportion. Here we need hard-headed members with much financial experience. All should be realists, and a pessimist or two can be useful. The whole temper of today's world is to spend more than it has, or may ever have. Many of us consequently are infected with this rosy philosophy. When a new and promising AA service project moves into sight, we are apt to cry, "Never mind the money, let's get at it." This is when our budgeteers are expected to say, "Stop, look and listen." This is the exact point where the "savers" come into a constructive and healthy collision with the "spenders." The primary function of this committee, therefore, is to see that our Headquarters operation is always solvent and that it stays that way, in good times and bad.

This committee must conservatively estimate each year's income. It needs to develop plans for increasing our revenues. It will keep a cold and watchful eye on needless cost, waste, and duplication. It will closely scrutinize the yearly budgets of estimated income and expense submitted by AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. It will recommend amendments of the estimates when necessary. At mid-year it will ask for budget revisions if earlier estimates have gone too much wrong. It will scrutinize every new and considerable expenditure, asking "Is this necessary or desirable now? Can we afford it, all considered?"

This committee, in good times, will insist that we continue to set aside substantial sums to our Reserve Fund. It will pursue an investment policy in that fund which will guarantee the immediate availability of at least two-thirds of it at any time, without loss, thereby enabling us to meet hard times or even a calamity.

This is not to say that our Finance and Budgetary Committee constantly says "no" and fearfully hoards our money. I can remember an earlier day when we were so intent on building up the Reserve Fund out of book earnings that we let the office services run down badly for sheer lack of enough help to cope with our fast growth. Confidence was thereby lost out in the groups, and contributions suffered severely; they dropped by tens of thousands a year. By the time the office had been reorganized and confidence restored, we had used all our current book earnings and a large part of our Reserve Funds besides. This sort of false and unimaginative economy can prove very costly – in spirit, in service, and in money.

Future committees, therefore, will ponder the difference between real prudence (which is neither fear nor hoarding and which may indeed require us sometimes to run temporary deficits) and that kind of persistent recklessness which could someday result in the severe contraction or collapse of our vital services. The safe course will usually lie midway between reckless budget-slashing and imprudent spending.

The Public Information Committee: This one, too, is of top importance. Of course most of its members should be experts in the field of public relations. But emphasis should also be laid on the fact that sheer commercial expertness will not be quite enough. Because of AA's traditional conservatism, reflected in the maxim "Attraction rather than promotion," it is evident that the professional members of the committee should be capable of adapting their business experience to AA's needs. For instance, the techniques used to sell a big time personality or a new hair lotion would not be for AA The committee should always include a certain number of AAs who, because of long experience, really do have "AA sense,," that is, a thorough grasp of our total picture and what it needs public relations-wise.

At the same time let us not overlook the need for high professional skill. Dealing with the huge complex of public communications as it exists today is not a job wholly for amateurs. Skill in this area implies much technical experience, diplomacy, a sense of what is dangerous and what is not, the courage to take calculated risks, and a readiness to make wise but tradition-abiding compromises. These are the skilled talents we shall always need.

We are trying our best to reach more of those 25 million alcoholics who today inhabit the world. We have to reach them directly and indirectly. In order to accomplish this it will be necessary that understanding of AA and public good will towards AA go on growing everywhere. We need to be on even better terms with medicine, religion, employers, governments, courts, prisons, mental hospitals, and all those conducting enterprises in the alcohol field. We need the increasing good will of editors, writers, television and radio channels. These publicity outlets – local, national, and international – should be opened wider and wider, always foregoing, however, high pressure promotion tactics. It is to, and through, all these resources that we must try to carry AA's message to those who suffer alcoholism and its consequences.

This accounts for the importance in which we hold the work and the recommendations of our Public Information Committee. It is a critical assignment; a single large public blunder could cost many lives and much suffering because it would turn new prospects away. Conversely, every real public relations success brings alcoholics in our direction.

The Literature Committee: This body is charged with the revision of existing books and pamphlets; also with the creation of fresh pamphlet material to meet new needs or changing conditions. Broadly speaking, its mission is to see that an

adequate and comprehensive view of AA in its every aspect is held up in writing to our members, friends, and to the world at large. Our literature is a principal means by which AA recovery, unity, and service are facilitated. Tons of books and pamphlets are shipped each year. The influence of this material is incalculable. To keep our literature fully abreast of our progress is therefore an urgent and vital work.

The Literature Committee constantly will have to solve new problems of design, format, and content. Here our policy is to aim at only the best; we firmly believe that cheap looking, cheap selling, and poorly conceived literature is not in AA's best interest from any standpoint, whether effectiveness, economy, or any other.

Like other General Service Board Committees, this one must be expert in the work to be done. A key figure in its operation will necessarily be a paid writer and consultant. The creative work – that is, the initial form and draft and the final development of new undertakings – will be for this specialist to make. The role of the other committeemen will be of constructive criticism and amendment of the consultant's effort. Here, too, we should remember that the committee must certainly include persons of wide AA experience. This matter of getting the 'AA feel" into all our writings is absolutely vital. What we say so well by word of mouth we must also communicate in print.

The Literature Committee consequently will find it desirable to test carefully each new creation by asking a number of AAs who are sensitive to AA feeling and reaction to offer their criticism and suggestions. If the new material is to affect the non-alcoholic world, especially the fields of medicine and religion, a consultation should be held with those non-alcoholic Trustees or other qualified friends who are knowledgeable in these areas.

The General Policy Committee: Perhaps this is the most important of all of the General Service Board Committees, and it is regarded as the senior one. It can take jurisdiction of practically all problems or projects which involve AA policy, public information, or AA Traditions that may arise in the other committees or service corporations.[2]

Several years ago it became evident that the mass of business coming before the quarterly Trustees' meetings had become too big to handle. We therefore had to devise a committee that could filter all these matters, disposing of the lesser and fully examining the larger. The object was to break the jam at Trustees' meetings and to present the Board with carefully discussed recommendations, including minority reports, on the more serious issues. Thus the attention of the General Service Board could be accurately focused on what it really had to do. This committee, with ample time at its disposal, could also strengthen our process of planning and policy formation. It could avert blunders, both large and small, due to haste.

This was our original concept, and it has worked wonderfully well. Because this committee is designed to be super-sensitive to AA opinion and reaction, its hard core is composed of (a) the "out-of-town" AA Trustees, one of whom is traditionally named chairman, (b) two staff members of the World Service Office, (c) the president of the AA World Services, Inc., who is also general manager of the World Office, (d) the president of The AA Grapevine, Inc., who is the editor, and (c) those Trustees and service directors known to be long experienced with our Fellowship.

All other Trustees, committee members and directors and staffs are invited to attend meetings – the Trustees because they can thus get a preview of the questions that will confront them at their own meeting to follow – the committeemen and directors because in this way they will get a comprehensive picture of what other Headquarters units have been doing.

This is a large committee, and it operates "town meeting-style," requiring four to six hours each Sunday afternoon preceding the Monday quarterly meeting of the General Service Board. A carefully worked out agenda is always prepared. The committee issues to the Trustees a full report of its recommendations, together with any minority views. Its report also shows the actual disposition of minor matters.

This General Policy Committee has greatly strengthened our Headquarters unity. All participants get the feeling they are "on the team." The size of the meeting is no obstacle. Many minds, plenty of time, and real sensitivity to AA insure a remarkable effectiveness of policy and planning.

Again it is emphasized that none of these five General Service Board Committees are executive in character. They do not manage and conduct the active affairs of the service corporations. They may, however, make any recommendations they wish – to the service corporations themselves or to the Trustees. It will be noted that the General Policy Committee always examines the quarterly reports of the corporate services and such reports of the other General Service Board Committees as may be available at meeting time. The committee can and does comment upon these reports and makes recommendations respecting them. Next to be considered will be our active service corporations, AA World Services, Inc. and The AA Grapevine, Inc. Their activities probably represent nine-tenths of our direct Headquarters effort.

The General Service Board owns the stock of these entities.[3] Therefore the Trustees yearly elect all of their directors, seven (at present) in each corporation. This means that so far as the routine direction of our established services is concerned, the Trustees have fully delegated their executive function in these constantly active service areas.

The directorate of AA World Services, Inc. (including the AA Publishing Division) is traditionally composed of two Trustees for custodial oversight, three nonTrustee

experts in the work to be done, and two executives, the general manager of the World Office and one of his staff assistants, who are president and vice president respectively. The two Trustee directors usually have seen past service on the Board as non-Trustee experts, and one of them is customarily named Treasurer. AA directors thus are those thoroughly experienced with these operations.[4]

The Grapevine situation is similarly structured, with two exceptions. The two Trustee directors of the Grapevine are (1) an ex-editor of the Grapevine, and (2) a finance man who has previously served on the Grapevine Board. The latter Trustee traditionally is made its chairman, and he presides at corporate meetings. This is because neither the editor, who is traditionally the Grapevine president, nor his staff member director, the vice president, ordinarily will have the needed business experience to chair the Grapevine corporate board. This arrangement also places the chairman in a favourable position to mediate differences that may arise between the editorial and business departments of the enterprise. The Grapevine also has an Editorial Board which names its own successors, subject to the approval of the corporate Board.[5] The Editorial Board assists the editor and his staff in determining the editorial policy, slant and content of the magazine. It relieves the editor (up to now, a volunteer) of some of his work load. It surveys and makes recommendations respecting Grapevine promotional material going to the groups. It gives our makeup men, artists and writers both status and coherence in their joint efforts. And it is a training ground for future editors. Our Editorial Board therefore is the chief guarantor of the magazine's quality and editorial continuity.

Every new generation of workers will raise certain questions about these two corporate questions: "Why can't both of them be consolidated into the General Service Board?" Or, "Why can't the Grapevine be merged into AA World Services, Inc., thus placing all active Headquarters operations under a single management?" These questions have already been discussed under previous Concepts. We have concluded that the General Service Board is an unsuitable vehicle for an operating corporation; that because the Grapevine is such a dissimilar operation, and because we ought not concentrate too much money and executive authority in a single entity, there should be no merger of AA World Services and The AA Grapevine. Upon these points we seem well agreed – at least, as of now.

But this question has some other variations. It will often be asked, "If it is desirable to separately incorporate dissimilar enterprises, why then shouldn't the AA Publishing division of AA World Services be separately incorporated and managed by a board of directors specially skilled in book and booklet publishing?" Offhand, this looks logical.

Today, however, AA Publishing is mostly a business operation. Unlike a commercial publisher, we do not have to ensure the selection, writing, and publication of a lot of new books each year. Most of our AA books are already written, and it is probable that not many more will be published. Of course we shall issue new pamphlets now and then, and revisions of older material occasionally are desirable. But this relatively small amount of creative publishing

work can be handled easily by the Literature Committee. Hence the operation of the AA publishing division of AA World Services, Inc., is now mostly a matter of printing, distribution, accounting, and finance. For management purposes there is therefore no present need for a separate corporation; it is only required that the books of AA World Services, Inc. show a separate accounting for its AA Publishing division. Only in the highly unlikely event of a large and protracted entry into the new book business would we really ever need a separate corporate management.

Another question will be this: “Why don’t we merge AA Publishing with The AA Grapevine, so placing all of our literature under a unified management?” The answer here is based on the complete dissimilarity of the two enterprises. The Grapevine has to produce a brand new quality product every month, on the dot. By contrast, AA Publishing success largely depends upon what has already been written.

In the Grapevine the paramount activity is therefore the creative. The Grapevine requires several paid staff members and the constant aid of a large number of specialized volunteers without whose help it could not operate. Why, then, should we load up these people with a lot more straight business activity? Obviously we should not.

Another question often is posed, “Why should AA World Services, Inc. not take over all the Grapevine’s accounting, finances, promotion, and distribution. Would not such a consolidation of financing, employees, and routine business be more efficient and economical? Would not this relieve the Grapevine of all business headaches?”

This plan, too, looks reasonable at first glance. Nevertheless the chances are it would work poorly. It has serious structural defects. It would violate the basic good management principle that whoever has the responsibility for a given task must also have the needed authority, funds, personnel, and equipment to carry it out. The AA Grapevine, Inc. unquestionably holds full responsibility for its own solvency, promotion, policy, and the management of its circulation. It is supposed to have four business directors, expert in these phases of magazine operation. The Conference and the General Service Board will always hold them accountable. If, therefore, any large part of the Grapevine business functions are transferred to a completely different corporate management over which the Grapevine has no authority, what then? This certainly would be double-headed management and a source of continuous conflict. The Grapevine Board would become virtually impotent.

Such a situation also would tend to demoralize the editor, his staff, and the Editorial Board, all of them specialized volunteers. This group now has a representation of three directors on the Grapevine Board. In such a corporate body it is now possible to reconcile the editorial desire for excellence in the magazine with the financial realities of the Grapevine situation. But if the business function of the Grapevine was transferred to AA World Services, Inc., the status and influence of the GV editorial people would be reduced to almost nothing.

World Service directors would be mostly interested in business efficiency and solvency, while the GV editorial representatives would still be looking for quality and magazine improvements. ‘There would be no practical way of reconciling these differences. The business directors of AA World Services, Inc. would dominate the editorial workers and therefore the editorial policy. The editorial group would find that they had become a mere committee, taking directions from AA World Services. “Who pays the piper calls the tune” would become the actual working arrangement. Having so split the management of the Grapevine in halves and having abandoned the principle of “Participation” it is doubtful if we could make this setup work at all, especially with all those volunteers. We might save some money, but we probably could not save the magazine.

Joint arrangements between The AA Grapevine and AA World Services for routine operations such as billing, mailing, etc., are not necessarily precluded, though to a lesser degree the same kind of frictions above described can be expected to develop unless there is the clearest possible understanding of “who controls what and when.”

We who now work at AA’s Headquarters are pretty much in agreement on the foregoing operations. They are recorded in some detail for whatever future benefits they may be. We deeply realize that we should be on guard always against structural tinkering just for money- saving purposes. These departures can often result in so much disharmony and consequent inefficiency that nothing is really saved, and there can often e a real loss.

A detailed description of the active operational side of our General Service Board Committees and active service corporations is too lengthy to set down here. But we should take note, however, of several more principles and problems which are common to both AA World Services, Inc. and to The AA Grapevine.

1. The status of executives – executive direction and policy formation distinguished: No active service can function well unless it has sustained and competent executive direction. This must always head up in one person, supported by such assistants as he needs. A board or a committee can never actively manage anything, in the continuous executive sense. This function has to be delegated to a single person. That person has to have ample freedom and authority to do his job, and he should not be interfered with so long as his work is done well.

Real executive ability cannot be plucked from any bush; it is rare and hard to come by. A special combination of qualities is required. The executive must inspire by energy and example, thereby securing willing cooperation. If that cooperation is not forthcoming, he must know when real firmness is in order. He must act without favour or partiality. He must comprehend and execute large affairs, while not neglecting the smaller. He often must take the initiative in plan making.

The use of such executive abilities implies certain realizations on the part of the executive and those who work with him, otherwise there is apt to be misunderstanding. Because of their natural drive and energy, executives will sometimes fail to distinguish between routine execution of established plans and policies, and the making of new ones. In this area they may tend to make new plans and put them into operation without sufficiently consulting those whose work is to be affected, or those whose experience and wisdom is actually or officially needed.

A good executive is necessarily a good salesman. But he often wants the fast sell and quick results on those very occasions where patient consultation with many people is in order. However, this is far better than timid delay and constant requests to be told by somebody or other what to do. The executive who overdrives can be reasonably restrained by the structural situation, and definitions within which he has to work. But a weak and wobbly executive is of little use at any time.

It is the duty of the good executive, therefore, to learn discrimination of when he should act on his own and when limited or wide consultation is proper, and when he should ask for specific definitions and directions. This discrimination is really up to him. His privilege of making these choices is structurally guaranteed by the "Right of Decision." He can always be censured after his acts, but seldom before.

In our world services we still have two more important executive problems. One is the lack of money to hire full-time top executives for AA World Services, Inc. and for the AA Grapevine. In our World Services Office, we can now afford only a part-time general manager. In the Grapevine we must rely on a volunteer.[6] Of course each of these executives has paid staff assistants. But the fact that one of our top executives can only give half his time and the other one considerably less is by no means an ideal situation.

A chief-executive-in-fact should be constantly on the job, and ours cannot be. Someday we may be able to correct this defect. Even then, however, we should not make the mistake of hiring full-time executives who, lacking the necessary

experience and calibre, are willing to work cheaply. No more expensive blunder than this could possibly be made. Outstanding ability in a volunteer, or a part-timer, is definitely preferable to that.

The second executive difficulty is inherent in our AA situation. Our key people at Headquarters are AA members; they have to be. Therefore the executives and their staffs are friends in AA, members of the same club. This sometimes makes it hard for an executive to give firm guidance and equally hard for his AA friends to accept it. Our AA executives find that they not only have to run a business; they must also keep their friends. In turn, those working under them have to realize seriously that we really do have a business to conduct as well as a cooperative spiritual enterprise to foster. Therefore a reasonable amount of discipline and direction is a necessity. Those who cannot or will not see this are not well suited for Headquarters work. Although excessive apartness or roughshod authority is to be rejected in an executive, nobody should complain if he is both friendly and firm. These problems are not insoluble; we do solve them right along, mostly by the application of AA principles.

Problems of this sort occasionally crop up, but General Service Headquarters is not constantly beset with them. Because of the exceptional dedication of our people, a degree of harmony and effectiveness prevails that is unusual in the conduct of an outside business.

2. Paid workers, how compensated: We believe that each paid executive, staff member, or consultant should be recompensed in reasonable relation to the value of his or her similar services or abilities in the commercial world.

This policy is often misunderstood. Many AAs no doubt regard AA world services as a sort of necessary charity that has to be paid for. It is forgotten that our particular charity is just as beneficial to us as it is to the newcomer; that many of those services are designed for the general welfare and protection of us all. We are not like rich benefactors who would aid the sick and the poor. We are helping others in order to help ourselves.

Another mistaken idea is that our paid workers should labour cheaply, just as charity workers often do elsewhere. If adopted, this concept would mark our service workers for unusual financial sacrifices, sacrifices that we would ask no other AAs to make. We AAs would be saying to each worker, “We send Headquarters $3.00 apiece every year. But it would be just great if you would work for AA at $2,000 a year less than you would be worth elsewhere.” Seen in this light, the low-pay theory appears as absurd as it really is, especially when we remember that AA’s world service overhead is about the smallest per capita of any large society on earth. The difference between fair and poor pay at World Headquarters is a matter only of a few cents a year to each of us.

We should also consider the well-known fact that cheap help is apt to feel insecure and be inefficient. It is very costly in the long run. This is neither good spirituality nor good business. Assuming that service money is readily available, we should therefore compensate our workers well.

3. Rotation among paid staff workers.[7] At AA'S World Office, most staff members' assignments are changed yearly. When engaged, each staff member is expected to possess the general ability to do, or learn how to do, any job in the place – excepting for office management where, because of the special skills involved, rotation may sometimes be limited to part of the AA staff. But the basis of compensating all staff members is identical. Pay increases are based on time served only.

In the business world, such an arrangement would be unworkable. It would practically guarantee indifference and mediocrity, because the usual money and prestige incentives would be lacking. In our entire operating situation, this is the sole major departure from the structure of corporate business. Consequently there should be proved and compelling reasons for such a corporate heresy, and there are.

Our primary reason for the adoption of rotation and equal staff pay was the security and continuity of the office. We once had the conventional system of one highly paid staff member with assistants at much lower pay. Hers had been the principal voice in hiring them. Quite unconsciously, I'm certain, she engaged people who she felt would not be competitive with her. Meanwhile she kept a tight rein on all the important business of the place. A prodigy of wonderful work was done. But suddenly she collapsed, and shortly afterwards one of her assistants did the same. We were left with only one partly trained assistant who knew anything whatever about the total operation.

Luckily a good AA friend of mine, a fine organizer, pitched in and helped to put the office in order. We saw that we had to install a paid staff that simply couldn't break down. Next time there might be no one around to give the necessary amount of time for its reorganization. Besides this breakdown had cost us much confidence out in the field – so much so that we must have lost $50,000 in three years of group contributions.

Thereafter we installed the principle of rotation in a considerably larger staff. Since then we have experienced sudden departures and collapses of AA staff members, each of which would have demoralized the place under the former conventional system. But since the remaining staff members always knew every assignment there was, no trouble at all was experienced. Under such a condition replacements can be carefully chosen and trained at leisure. And the usual tendency to select less able associates is largely overcome.

By thus putting our staff members on a complete parity, the removal of the usual money and prestige incentives did not really damage us at all. We AAs had what the commercial venture often lacks: a dedicated desire to serve which replaced the usual ego drives. At the same time many of the temptations to destructive competition and office "politicking" were also removed. The spirit of Headquarters improved immeasurably and found its way out into the Fellowship.

In the future – at those times when the rotation system does not work perfectly – there will be the natural demand to throw it out in the supposed interest of

efficiency. Certainly our successors will be at liberty to try, but past experience surely suggests that they may be jumping from the frying pan into the fire.

One more aspect of rotation: the matter of time. We already know that the more responsible the assignment, the longer the term of service must be, if we are to have effectiveness. For example, a group secretary can be changed every six months and an intergroup committeeman every year. But to be of any use whatever, a Delegate has to serve two years, and a Trustee must serve four.

In the World Service Office, we have found it impractical and unfair to set any fixed term of employment. A staff member has to have several years training. Are we then to throw her out, just as she is getting top grade? And if she realized that she could only serve for a fixed period, could we have hired her in the first place? Probably not. These posts are hard to fill because they require just the right ingredients of personality, ability, stability, business and AA experience. If we insisted on a fixed term of service, we would often be forced to engage AAs really not qualified. This would be both harmful and unfair.

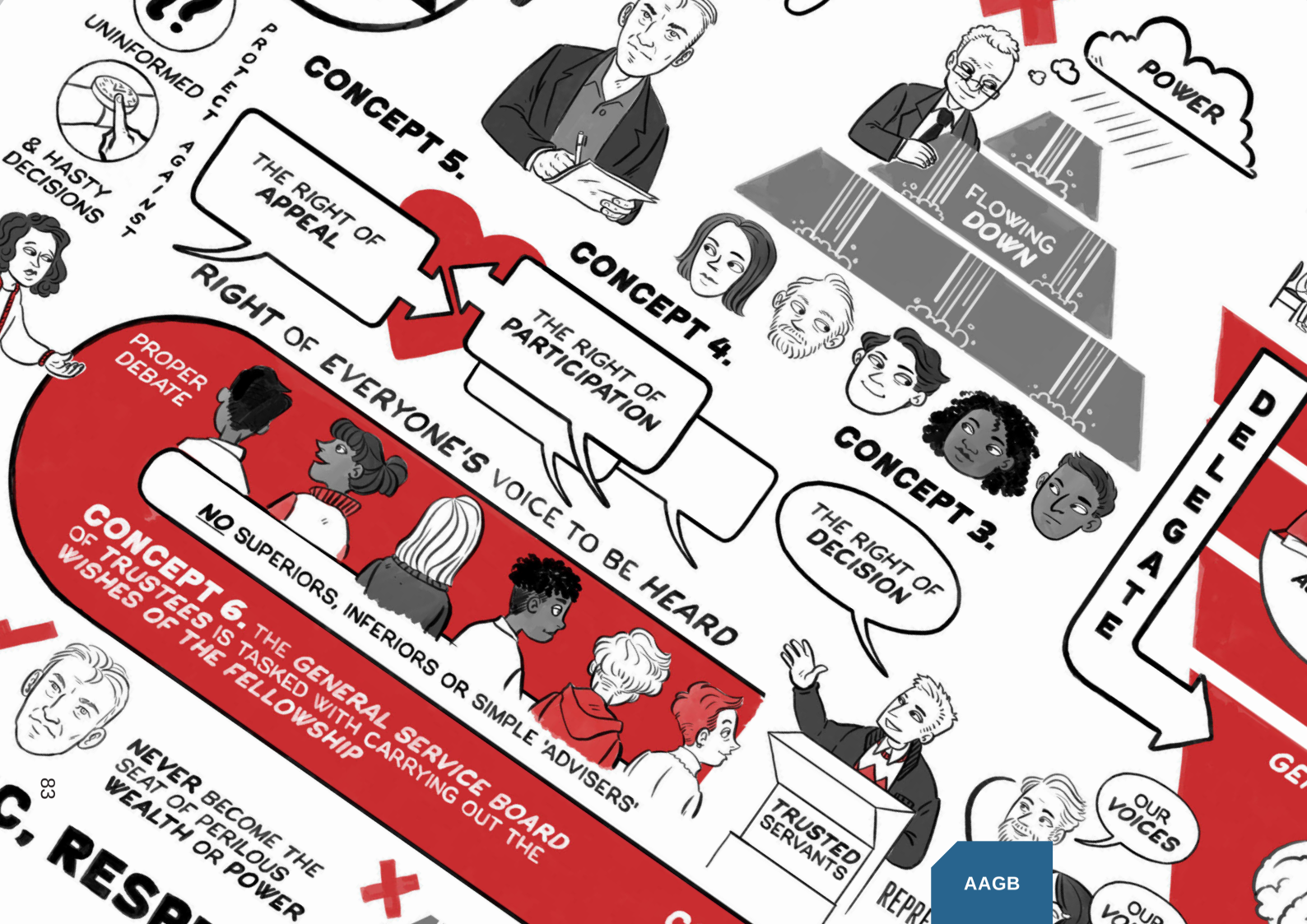
But we need not fear too many staff members' getting "old in the service." The emotional pace of "AA around the clock" is too strenuous for most of them to take for a very long period of time. Already they come and go for this and for other personal reasons. Within reason, most of them can and must rotate from assignment to assignment. But we should attempt no more rotation than this.

Because of certain unusual skills required, rotation among Grapevine staff members is more difficult. If the magazine ever gets a part-time editor who can insist on and help in their training, we may someday bring this about. But in the Grapevine there will never be safety in numbers, as in the World Office. The present Grapevine paid staff of two could serve a circulation of many times today's size.

4. Full "Participation" of paid workers is highly important: We have already discussed the necessity of giving key paid personnel a voting representation on our committees and corporate boards.[8] We have seen that they should enjoy a status suitable to their responsibility, just as our volunteers do. But full participation for paid workers cannot be established by voting rights only. Other special factors usually affect the extent of their participation. Let's see what these are, and what can be done about them.

The first is the fact of employment for money – the employer-employee relation. In human affairs, authority and money are deeply linked. Possession or control of money spells control of people. Unwisely used, as it often is, this control can result in a very unhappy kind of division. This ranges the "haves" on one side of the fence and the "have nots" on the other. There can be no reconciliation or harmony until a part of that fence is taken down. Only then can proper authority join hands with a responsible willingness to get on with the job.

In our AA structure of service we therefore must do more than give our paid workers a place at the AA council table. We ought to treat them in all respects as


UNINFORMED & HASTY DECISIONS
PROTECT AGAINST
CONCEPT 5.
THE RIGHT OF APPEAL
CONCEPT 4.
THE RIGHT OF PARTICIPATION
CONCEPT 3.
THE RIGHT OF DECISION
POWER
FLOWING DOWN
RIGHT OF EVERYONE'S VOICE TO BE HEARD
PROPER DEBATE
NO SUPERIORS, INFERIORS OR SIMPLE 'ADVISERS'
CONCEPT 6. THE GENERAL SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES IS TASKED WITH CARRYING OUT THE WISHES OF THE FELLOWSHIP
NEVER BECOME THE SEAT OF PERILOUS WEALTH OR POWER
TRUSTED SERVANTS
OUR VOICES
DELEGATE

AAGB

we would volunteers, people who are our friends and co-workers. So long as they work well, the fact that they are dependent upon the money they receive should never, consciously or unconsciously, be used as a lever against them. They must be made to feel that they are on the team. If, however, they cannot or will not do their jobs, that is something else again. We can and should let them go.

Women workers present still another problem. Our Headquarters is pretty much a man's world. Some men are apt to feel, unconsciously, that they are women's superiors, thus producing a reflex reaction in the gals. Then, too, some of us – of both sexes – have been emotionally damaged in the area of man woman relations. Our drinking has made us wrongly dependent on our marriage partners. We have turned them into our "moms" and "pops:" and then we have deeply resented that situation. Perhaps maladjustment has taken still other turns which leave us with a hangover of hostility that we are apt to project into any man-woman relatedness that we undertake.

It is possible for these forces to defeat the good working partnerships we would like to have. But if we are fully aware of these tendencies, they can be the more easily overcome, and forgiven. We can be aware also that any sound working relation between adult men and women must be in the character of a partnership, a non-competitive one in which each partner complements the other. It is not a question of superiority or inferiority at all. Men, for example, because they are men, are apt to be better at business. But suppose we replaced our six women staff members with six men? In these positions, could the men possibly relate themselves so uniquely and so effectively to our Fellowship as the women? Of course not. The women can handle this assignment far better, just because they are Women.[9]

Such are the realizations which we can all use every day of our working lives. Add to these the further thought that no organization structure can fully guarantee our Headquarters against the depredations of clashing personalities, that only the sustained willingness to practice spiritual principles in all our affairs can accomplish this, and we shall never need to have any fear for our future harmony.

1. In the years since this was written, seven other specialized committees have been added: Cooperation with the professional community, General Service Conference, Archives, International Convention/Regional Forums, Correctional Facilities, treatment Facilities and International.

2. The policy Committee is now known as the General Sharing Session, and its makeup and functions have changed, as explained on p47.

3. Both AA World Services, Inc., and the Grapevine, Inc. are now membership corporations; their members are the trustees.

4. The directorate of AA World Services, Inc. is now composed of: The G.S.O. general manager, who is president of AAW.S.; a G.S.O. staff member, who is vice-president; two regional trustees; two general service trustees, three nontrustee directors. Its rotating chairperson is a trustee.

5. Today AA Grapevine, Inc., has ten directors. The Corporate Board is publisher of the magazine; the chief operating officer is president. Two members of the board are general service trustees; two are regional trustees; one is a nonalcoholic trustee; five are

nontrustee directors. Production and management of the Grapevine are given over to a full-time paid staff. Two staff members are members of the Corporate Board.

6. Today there is a full-time editorial staff of two people and a part-time art director.

7. In order to meet the changing conditions since the writing of this section, AAW.S., Inc., with the approval of the General Service Board, has implemented a two-year rotation of assignments for most staff members.

8. As a director of the AAW.S. Board, the staff member serving as staff coordinator has a vote.

9. The restrictions no longer apply. In 1998, six women and four men serve as G.S.O. staff members.

CONCEPT XII

General Warranties of the Conference: in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA 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 principle; that none of the Conference Members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others: that all important decisions be reached by discussion vote and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity, that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy; 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 thought and action.

The Concept here considered consists of Article 12 of the Conference Charter. There are good reasons for placing it in this context.

Taken as a whole, our Conference Charter is the substance of an informal agreement which was made between the AA groups and their Trustees in 1955. It is the agreed basis upon which the General Service Conference operates. In part, the Charter is an elastic document; its first eleven Articles can be readily amended by the Conference itself at any time.

But Article 12 of the Charter stands in a class by itself. An amendment or a cancellation of any of its vital Warranties would require the written consent of three-quarters of all the directory- listed AA groups who would actually vote on any such proposals, and the considerable time of six months is allowed for careful deliberation. Although changes in the Warranties of Article 12 thus have been made difficult, they have not been made impossible.

It is clear that all of these Warranties have a high and permanent importance to AA's general welfare. This is why we believe we should permit change in them only upon positive evidence of their defectiveness and then only by common

consent of the AA groups themselves. We have ranked them therefore with AA's Twelve Traditions, feeling that they are quite as important to AA's world services as the Traditions are to AA as a whole.

The Warranties of Article 12 are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to AA's Twelve Traditions; that the Conference can never become the seat of great wealth or government; that its fiscal policy shall ever be prudent; that it will never create any absolute authority; that the principle of substantial unanimity will be observed; that it will never take any punitive action; that it never will incite public controversy; that it can serve AA only; and that it shall always remain democratic in spirit. These Warranties indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which our General Service Conference should always possess. Barring any unforeseen defects, these are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves.

There are significant aspects of these Warranties which should be considered. Notice, for example, that all of them are counsels of prudence – prudence in personal relatedness, prudence in money matters, and prudence in our relations with the world about us. For us, prudence is a workable middle ground, a channel of clear sailing between the obstacles of fear on the one side and of recklessness on the other. Prudence in practice creates a definite climate, the only climate in which harmony, effectiveness, and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved. The Warranties of Article 12 express the wisdom of taking forethought for the future based on the lessons of the past. They are the sum of our protection against needless errors and against our very natural human temptations to wealth, prestige, power, and the like.

Article 12 opens with this general statement: "In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA Tradition..." Of all bodies and groups in Alcoholics Anonymous, the Conference should above all feel bound by the AA Tradition. Indeed the Conference is named "the guardian of the Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous." The Traditions themselves outline the general basis on which we may best conduct our services. The Traditions express the principles and attitudes of prudence that make for harmony. Therefore AA's Twelve Traditions set the pattern of unity and of function which our General Service Conference is expected to exemplify at the highest possible degree. The Warranties of Article 12 are as follows:

Warranty One: "The Conference shall never become the seat of perilous wealth or power." What is meant by "perilous wealth or power"?

Does it mean that the Conference should have virtually no money and no authority? Obviously not. Such a condition would be dangerous and absurd. Nothing but an ineffective anarchy could result from it. We must use some money, and there must be some authority to serve. But how much? How and where should we draw these lines?

The principal protection against the accumulation of too much money and too much authority in Conference hands is to be found in the AA Tradition itself. So

long as our General Service Board refuses to take outside contributions and holds each individual's gift to AA's world services at a modest figure, we may be sure that we shall not become wealthy in any perilous sense. No great excess of group contributions over legitimate operating expenses is ever likely to be seen. Fortunately the AA groups have a healthy reluctance about the creation of unneeded services which might lead to an expensive bureaucracy in our midst. Indeed, it seems that the chief difficulty will continue to be that of effectively informing the AA groups as to what the financial needs of their world services actually are. Since it is certain therefore that we shall never become too wealthy through group contributions, we need only to avoid the temptation of taking money from the outside world.

In the matter of giving Delegates, Trustees, and staff enough authority, there can be little risk, either. Long experience, now codified in these Twelve Concepts, suggests that we are unlikely to encounter problems of too much service authority. On the contrary, it appears that our difficulty will be how to maintain enough of it. We must recall that we are protected from the calamities of too much authority by rotation, by voting participation, and by careful chartering. Nevertheless, we do hear warnings about the future rise of a dictator in the Conference or at the Headquarters. To my mind this is an unnecessary worry. Our setup being what it is such an aspirant couldn't last a year, and in the brief time he did last, what would he use for money? Our Delegates, directly representing the groups, control the ultimate supply of our service funds. Therefore they constitute a direct check upon the rise of too much personal authority. Taken all together, these factors seem to be reliable safeguards against too much money and too much authority.

We have seen why the Conference can never have any dangerous degree of human power, but we must not overlook the fact that there is another sort of authority and power which it cannot be without: the spiritual power which flows from the activities and attitudes of truly humble, unselfish, and dedicated AA servants. This is the real power that causes our Conference to function. It has been well said of our servants, "They do not drive us by mandate; they lead us by example." While we have made abundantly sure that they will never drive us, I am confident that they will afford us an ever-greater inspiration as they continue to lead by example.

Warranty Two: "Sufficient operating funds, plus an ample Reserve, should be its prudent financial principle.

In this connection we should pause to review our attitudes concerning money and its relation to service effort.

Our attitude toward the giving of time when compared with our attitude toward giving money presents an interesting contrast. Of course we give a lot of our time to AA activities for our own protection and growth. But we also engage ourselves in a truly sacrificial giving for the sake of our groups, our areas and for AA as a whole.

Above all, we devote ourselves to the newcomer, and this is our principal Twelfth Step work. In this activity we often take large amounts of time from business hours. Considered in terms of money, these collective sacrifices add up to a huge sum. But we do not think that this is anything unusual. We remember that people once gave their time to us as we struggled for sobriety. We know, too, that nearly the whole combined income of AA members, now more than a billion dollars a year, has been a direct result of AA's activity. Had nobody recovered, there would have been no income for any of us.

But when it comes to the actual spending of cash, particularly for AA service overhead, many of us are apt to turn a bit reluctant. We think of the loss of all that earning power in our drinking years, of those sums we might have laid by for emergencies or for education for the kids. We find, too, that when we drop money in the meeting hat there is no such bang as when we talk for hours to a newcomer. There is not much romance in paying the landlord. Sometimes we hold off when we are asked to meet area or intergroup service expenses. As to world services, we may remark, "Well, those activities are a long way off, and our group does not really need them. Maybe nobody needs them." These are very natural and understandable reactions, easy to justify. We can say, "Let's not spoil AA with money and service organization. Let's separate the material from the spiritual. That will really keep things simple."

But in recent years these attitudes are everywhere on the decline; they quickly disappear when the real need for a given AA service becomes clear. To make such a need clear is simply a matter of right information and education. We see this in the continuous job now being done with good effect for our world service by Delegates, Committee Members, and General Service Representatives. They are finding that money-begging by pressure exhortation is unwanted and unneeded in AA They simply portray what the giver's service dollar really brings in terms of steering alcoholics to AA, and in terms of our over-all unity and effectiveness. This much done, the hoped-for contributions are forthcoming. The donors can seldom see what the exact result has been. They well know, however, that countless thousands of other alcoholics and their families are certain to be helped.

When we look at such truly anonymous contributions in this fashion, and as we gain a better understanding of their continuous urgency, I am sure that the

voluntary contributions of our AA groups, supplemented by many modest gifts from individual AAs, will pay our world service bills over future years, in good times at any rate.

We can take comfort, too, from the fact that we do not have to maintain an expensive corps of paid workers at World Headquarters. In relation to the ever-growing size of AA the number of workers has declined. In the beginning our World Service Office engaged one paid worker to each thousand of AA members. Ten years later we employed one paid worker to each three thousand AAs. Today we need only one paid helper to every seven thousand recovered alcoholics.[1] The present cost of our world services ($200,000 annually as of 1960) is today seen as a small sum in relationship to the present reach of our Fellowship. Perhaps no other society of our size and activity has such a low general overhead.

These reassurances of course cannot be taken as a basis for the abandonment of the policy of financial prudence.

The fact and the symbol of AA's fiscal common sense can be seen in the Reserve Fund of our General Service Board. As of now this amounts to little more than $200,000 – about one year's operating expense of our World Office [2] This is what we have saved over the last twenty years, largely from the income of our books. This is the fund which has repeatedly prevented the severe crippling, and sometimes the near collapse, of our world services.

In about half of the last twenty years, AA group contributions have failed to meet our world needs. But the Reserve Fund, constantly renewed by book sales, has been able to meet these deficits – and save money besides. What this has meant in the lives of uncounted alcoholics who might never have reached us had our services been weak or nonexistent, no one can guess. Financial prudence has paid off in lives saved.

These facts about our Reserve Fund need to be better understood. For sheer lack of understanding, it is still often remarked: (1) that the Reserve Fund is no longer needed, (2) that if the Reserve Fund continues to grow, perilous wealth will result, (3) that the presence of such a Reserve Fund discourages group contributions, (4) that because we do not abolish the Reserve Fund, we lack faith, (5) that our AA books ought to be published at cost so these volumes could be cheapened for hard up buyers, (6) that profit-making on our basic literature is counter to a sound spirituality. While these views are by no means general, they are typical. Perhaps, then, there is still a need to analyze them and answer the questions they raise.

Let us therefore try to test them. Do these views represent genuine prudence? Do we lack faith when we prudently insist on solvency?

By means of cheap AA books, should we engage, as a fellowship, in this sort of financial charity? Should this sort of giving not be the responsibility of individuals? Is the Headquarters' income from AA books really a profit after all.

As this is written, 1960, our Headquarters operation is just about breaking even. Group contributions are exceeding our service needs by about 5%. The AA Grapevine continues in the red. Compared with earlier days, this is wonderful. Nevertheless this is our state in the period of the greatest prosperity that America has ever known. If this is our condition in good times, what would happen in bad times? Suppose that the Headquarters income were decreased 25% by a depression, or that expenses were increased 25% by a steep inflation. What would this mean in hard cash?

The World Service Office would show a deficit of $50,000 a year and the Grapevine would put a $20,000 annual deficit on top of this. We would be faced with a gaping total deficit of $70,000 every twelve months. If in such an emergency we had no reserve and no book income, we would soon have to discharge one-third of our thirty paid workers and AA staff members. Much mail would go unanswered, pleas for information and help ignored. The Grapevine would have to be shut down or reduced to a second-rate bulletin. The number of Delegates attending our yearly General Service Conference would have to be drastically reduced. Practically and spiritually, these would be the penalties were we to dissipate our Reserve Fund and its book income.

Happily, however, we do not have to face any such slash as this. Our present reserve and its book income could see us through several years of hard times without the slightest diminution in the strength and quality of our world effort.

It is the fashion nowadays to believe that America can never see another serious business upset. We can certainly hope and pray that it will not. But is it wise for us of AA to make a huge bet-by dissipating our own assets—that this could never happen? Would it not be far better, instead, for us to increase our savings in this period when the world about us in all probability has already borrowed more money than can ever be repaid?

Now let us examine the claim that the presence of our Reserve Fund discourages group contributions. It is said that the impression is created that AA Headquarters is already well off and that hence there is no need for more money. This is not at all the general attitude, however, and its effect on contributions is probably small.

Next comes the question of whether AA as a whole should go in for what amounts to a money charity to individual newcomers and their sponsors – via the selling of our books at cost or less. Up to now we AAs have strongly believed that money charity to the individual should not be a function of the AA groups or of AA as a whole. To illustrate: when a sponsor takes a new member in hand, he does not in the least expect that his group is going to pay the expenses he incurs while doing a Twelfth Step job. The sponsor may give his prospect a suit of clothes, may get him a job, or present him with an AA book. This sort of thing frequently happens, and it is fine that it does. But such charities are the responsibility of the sponsor and not of the AA group itself. If a sponsor cannot give or lend an A.A book, one can be found in the library. Many groups sell books on the instalment plan. There

is no scarcity of AA books; more than a half million are now in circulation. Hence there seems no really good reason why AA services should supply everybody with cheap books, including the large majority who can easily pay the going price. It appears to be altogether clear that our world services need those book dollars far more than the buyers do.

Some of us have another concern, and this is related to so-called book "profits." The fact that AA Headquarters and most of the groups sell books for more than they cost is thought to be spiritually bad. But is this sort of non-commercial book income really a profit after all? In my view, it is not. This net income to the groups and to AA's General Services is actually the sum of a great many contributions which the book buyers make to the general welfare of Alcoholics Anonymous. The certain and continuous solvency of our world services rests squarely upon these contributions. Looked at in this way, our Reserve Fund is seen to be actually the aggregate of many small financial sacrifices made by the book buyers. This fund is not the property of private investors; it is wholly owned by AA itself.

While on the subject of books, perhaps a word should be said concerning my royalties from them. This royalty income from the book buyers has enabled me to do all the rest of my AA work on a full-time volunteer basis. These royalties have also given me the assurance that, like other AA's, I have fully earned my own separate livelihood. This independent income also has enabled me to think and act independently of money influences of any kind of situation which has at times been very advantageous to AA as well as to me personally. Therefore I hope and believe that my royalty status will continue to be considered a fair and wise arrangement.

Warranty Three: "None of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others.

We have learned that this principle is of incalculable value to the harmonious conduct of our Conference affairs. Its application in our structure has already been extensively discussed under the Concept entitled "The Right of Participation," which emphasizes that our world servants, both as individuals and as groups, shall be entitled to voting rights in reasonable proportion to their several responsibilities.

Because this right of participation is so important we have made it the subject of this Warranty, thus providing insurance that Conference action alone can never overturn or amend this right. For any such purpose widespread group consent would be needed, which would probably prove difficult though not necessarily impossible for the Conference to obtain. We believe that our whole service experience fully justifies the taking of this strong stand against the creation of unqualified authority at any point in our Conference structure.

It is to be noted, too, that this Warranty against absolute authority is far more general and sweeping in its nature than a guarantee of voting participation. It really means that we of AA will not tolerate absolute human authority in any form. The voting rights urged under our concept of "Participation" are simply the

practical means of checking any future tendency to an unqualified authority of any sort. This healthy state of affairs is of course further reinforced by our concepts of "Appeal and Petition."

Many AAs have already begun to call Article 12 of the Conference Charter "The AA Service Bill of Rights." This is because they see in these Warranties, and especially in this one, an expression of deep and loving respect for the spiritual liberties of their fellows. May God grant that we shall never be so unwise as to settle for less.

Warranty Four. "That all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."

Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and on the other hand we take notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance, time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision that we are called upon to make in the Conference. When we take decisions in this fashion, the Conference voice speaks with an authority and a confidence that a simple majority could never give it. If any remain in opposition, they are far better satisfied because their case has had a full and fair hearing.

And when a decision taken in substantial unanimity does happen to go wrong, there can be no heated recriminations. Everybody will be able to say, "Well, we had a careful debate, we took the decision, and it turned out to be a bad one. Better luck next time!"

Like many very high ideals, the principle of substantial unanimity does, however, have certain practical limitations. Occasionally a Conference decision will be of such extreme urgency that something has to be done at once. In such a case we cannot allow a minority, however well- intended, to block a vitally needed action which is evidently in the best interests of AA Here we shall need to trust the majority, sometimes a bare majority, to decide whether Conference debate is to be terminated and a final action taken. In certain other cases, the majority will also have to exercise this undoubted right. Suppose, for example, that a small minority obstinately tries to use the principle of substantial unanimity to block a clearly needed action. In such an event it would be the plain duty of the majority to over-ride such a misuse of the principle of substantial unanimity.

Nevertheless our experience shows that majorities will seldom need to take such radical stands as these. Being generally animated by the spirit of "substantial unanimity," we have found that our Conference can nearly always be guided by this valued principle.

In passing it should be noted that the Conference will sometimes have to decide, with respect to a particular question, what the requirements of substantial unanimity are going to be – whether a two-thirds, three-quarters, or even a

greater majority, will be required to settle a particular question. Such an advance agreement can, of course, be had on a simple majority vote.

Concluding the discussion on this Warranty, it can be said that without question both the practical and spiritual results of the practice of substantial unanimity already have been proved to be very great indeed.

Warranty Five: "That no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy."

Practically all societies and governments feel it necessary to inflict personal punishments upon individual members for violations of their beliefs, principles, or laws. Because of its special situation, Alcoholics Anonymous finds this practice unnecessary. When we of AA fail to follow sound spiritual principles, alcohol cuts us down. Therefore no humanly administered system of penalties is needed. This unique condition is an enormous advantage to us all, one on which we can fully rely and one which we should never abandon by a resort to the methods of personal attack and punishment. 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.

For much the same reason we cannot and should not enter into public controversy, even in self-defence. Our experience has shown that, providentially it would seem, AA has been made exempt from the need to quarrel with anyone, no matter what the provocation. Nothing could be more damaging to our unity and to the worldwide goodwill which AA enjoys, than public contention, no matter how promising the immediate dividends might appear.

Therefore it is evident that the harmony, security, and future effectiveness of AA will depend largely upon our maintenance of a thoroughly non aggressive and pacific attitude in all our public relations. This is an exacting assignment, because in our drinking days we were prone to anger, hostility, rebellion, and aggression. And even though we are now sober, the old patterns of behaviour are to a degree still with us, always threatening to explode on any good excuse. But we know this, and therefore I feel confident that in the conduct of our public affairs we shall always find the grace to exert an efective restraint.

We enjoy certain inherent advantages which should make our task of self-restraint relatively easy. There is no really good reason for anyone to object if a great many get sober. Nearly everyone can agree that this is a good thing. If, in the process, we are forced to develop a certain amount of honesty, humility, and tolerance, who is going to kick about that? If we recognize that religion is the province of the clergy and the practice of medicine is for doctors, we can helpfully cooperate with both. Certainly there is little basis for controversy in these areas. It is a fact that AA has not the slightest reform or political complexion. We try to pay our own expenses, and we strictly mind our single purpose.

These are some of the reasons why AA can easily be at peace with the whole world. These are the natural advantages which we must never throw away by foolishly entering the arena of public controversy or punitive action against anybody.

Because our General Service Conference represents us all, this body is especially charged with the duty of setting the highest possible standard with respect to these attitudes of no punishments and no public controversy. The Conference will have to do more than just represent these principles; it will frequently have to apply them to specific situations. And, at times, the Conference will need to take certain protective actions, especially in the area of Tradition violations. This action, however, never need be punitively or aggressively controversial at the public level.

Let us now consider some typical situations that may often require Conference consideration and sometimes definite action.

Let us suppose that AA does fall under sharp public attack or heavy ridicule; and let us take the particular case where such pronouncements happen to have little or no justification in fact.

Almost without exception it can be confidently estimated that our best defence in these situations would be no defence whatever – namely, complete silence at the public level. Unreasonable people are stimulated all the more by opposition. If in good humour we leave them strictly alone, they are apt to subside the more quickly. If their attacks persist and it is plain that they are misinformed, it may be wise to communicate with them in a temperate and informative way; also in such a manner that they cannot use our communication as a springboard for fresh assault. Such communications need seldom be made by the Conference officially. Very often we can use the good offices of friends. Such messages from us should never question the motives of the attackers; they should be purely informative. These communications should also be private. If made public, they will often be seized upon as a fresh excuse for controversy.

If, however, a given criticism of AA is partly or wholly justified, it may be well to acknowledge this privately to the critics, together with our thanks – still keeping away, however, from the public level.

But under no conditions should we exhibit anger or any punitive or aggressive intent. Surely this should be our inflexible policy. Within such a framework the Conference and the Headquarters will always need to make a thoughtful estimate of what or what not should be done in these cases.

We may be confronted by public violations of the AA Traditions. Individuals, outside organizations, and even our own members sometimes may try to use the AA name for their own private purposes. As AA grows in size and public

recognition, the temptation to misuse our name may increase. This is why we have assigned to our Conference a protective task in respect to such conditions. The Conference, as we know, is the “guardian” of the AA Traditions. There has always been some confusion about this term “guardianship,” and perhaps we should try to clear it up.

To the minds of some AAs, “guardianship” of the AA Traditions implies the right and the duty on the part of the Conference to publicly punish or sue every wilful violator. But we could not adopt a worse policy; indeed such aggressive public acts would place the Conference in the position of having violated one AA Tradition in order to defend another. Therefore aggressive or punitive action, even in this area, must be omitted.

Privately, however, we can inform Tradition-violators that they are out of order. When they persist, we can follow up by using such other resources of persuasion as we may have, and these are often considerable. Manifested in this fashion, a persistent firmness will often bring the desired result.

In the long run, though, we shall have to rely mainly upon the pressures of AA opinion and public opinion. And to this end we shall need to maintain a continuous education of public communications channels of all kinds concerning the nature and purpose of our Traditions.

Whenever and however we can, we shall need to inform the general public also; especially upon misuses of the name Alcoholics Anonymous. This combination of counter forces can be very discouraging to violators or would-be violators. Under these conditions they soon find their deviations to be unprofitable and unwise. Our experience has shown that continuous and general education respecting our Traditions will be a reliable preventive and protection in the years to come.

Feeling the weight of all these forces, certain members who run counter to AA’s Traditions sometimes say that they are being censored or punished and that they are therefore being governed. It would appear, however, that AA’s right to object calmly and privately to specific violations is at least equal to the rights of the violators to violate. This cannot accurately be called a governmental action. Some deviators have suffered rather severe personal criticism from individual AA members, and this is to be deplored. However this is no reason for us to stop reminding all concerned of the undesirability of breaking AA’s Traditions before the entire public. It can be said in all fairness that the difficulties of those who contravene the Traditions are chiefly troubles of their own making.

Another kind of problem that merits consideration is the occasional severe internal disagreement among us that comes to unwelcome public attention. For example, we once hit the headlines with a pretty hard bitten lawsuit wherein two factions of AAs were competing for the possession of the AA name for intergroup use, the name having been incorporated by one of them. In another instance in an overseas area there was some rather bad publicity when a considerable section of the groups there became convinced they ought to accept money subsidies from their country’s government to promote AA work, the AA Tradition

notwithstanding. This internal difficulty should not have surfaced before the public because there was certainly nothing about it that mutual understanding and good temper could not have readily handled.

Fortunately this sort of episode has been infrequent and relatively harmless. But such difficulties do pose certain questions for the future. What should our General Service Conference do about this sort of thing?

Always remembering group autonomy and the fact that AA's World Headquarters is not a police operation, the most that can be done in most cases is to make an offer of mediation. What the Tradition in this respect means, and what our experience with it has been, can always be offered as a matter of information. We can always urge the avoidance of any breakthrough of such disagreements at the public level. All parties can remember that unfavourable criticism or ridicule which might ensue from such conflicts can so reflect upon AA as to keep new prospects from joining up.

Then, too, a great many of these difficulties with the Tradition are of strictly local concern, there being no serious national or international implication. Many of them represent honest differences of opinion as to how the Tradition should be interpreted: whether a lenient or strict observance would be the better thing. Especially when operating below the public level, our experience with the Tradition reveals grey areas, where neither white or black interpretations seem possible. Here the violations are often so debatable and inconsequential they are hardly worth bothering about. Here we usually refrain from offering suggestions, unless they are insisted upon. We feel that these problems must be solved chiefly by the local people concerned.

There is, too, a grave problem that we have never yet had to face. This would be in the nature of a deep rift running clear across AA – a cleavage of opinion so serious that it might involve a withdrawal of some of our membership into a new society of their own, or in their making an alliance with an outside agency in contravention of the AA Tradition. This would be the old story of split and schism of which history is so full. It might be powered by religious, political, national, or racial forces. It might represent an honest effort to change AA for the better. But it would certainly pose the Conference a question of what to do, or not to do.

Such a development is hard to imagine. We AAs usually assume that we have too much at stake and too much in common to succumb to this very ordinary ailment of the world about us. Yet this comforting assurance is no reason for refusing to give this contingency some calm forethought. If it ever came, such a development might be a terrific surprise and shock. Suddenly aroused passions could flare, making any truly constructive solution immensely difficult, perhaps impossible.

Because society everywhere is in such a state of fission today, many of us have given this subject a great deal of consideration. Our considered opinion is this: that the best possible Conference attitude in such a circumstance would be that of almost complete non resistance – certainly no anger and certainly no attack. We have no doctrine that has to be maintained. We have no membership that

has to be enlarged. We have no authority that has to be supported. We have no prestige, power, or pride that has to be satisfied. And we have no property or money that is really worth quarrelling about. These are advantages of which we should make the best possible use in the event of a threatened major division; they should make a calm and considered attitude of non-resistance entirely possible and highly practical.

Indeed we have always practiced this principle on a lesser scale. When a drunk shows up among us and says that he doesn't like the AA principles, people, or service management; when he declares that he can do better elsewhere – we are not worried. We simply say, "Maybe your case is different. Why don't you try something else?"

If an AA member says he doesn't like his own group, we are not disturbed. We simply say "Why don't you try another one? Or start one of your own." When our actors and cops and priests want their own private groups, we say "Fine! Why don't you try that idea out?"

When an AA group, as such, insists on running a clubhouse, we say "Well, that sometimes works out badly, but maybe you will succeed after all." If individual AAs wish to gather together for retreats, Communion breakfasts, or indeed any undertaking at all, we still say "Fine. Only we hope you won't designate your efforts as an AA group or enterprise." These examples illustrate how far we have already gone to encourage freedom of assembly, action, and even schism. To all those who wish to secede from AA we extend a cheerful invitation to do just that. If they can do better by other means, we are glad. If after a trial they cannot do better, we know they face a choice: they can go mad or die or they can return to Alcoholics Anonymous. The decision is wholly theirs. (As a matter of fact, most of them do come back.)

In the light of all this experience, it becomes evident that in the event of a really extensive split we would not have to waste time persuading the dissenters to stay with us. In good confidence and cheer, we could actually invite them to secede and we would wish them well if they did so. Should they do better under their new auspices and changed conditions, we would ask ourselves if we could not learn from their fresh experience. But if it turned out they did worse under other circumstances and that there was a steady increase in their discontent and their death rate, the chances are very strong that most of them would eventually return to AA.

Without anger or coercion we would need only to watch and to wait upon God's will.

Unless we make a problem where there really is none at all, there need be no difficult . We could still go about our business in good cheer. The supply of drunks in our time will be inexhaustible, and we can continue to be glad that we have evolved at least one formula by which many will come to sobriety and a new life.

We have a saying that "AA is prepared to give away all the knowledge and all the experience it has – all excepting the AA name itself." We mean by this that our principles can be used in any application whatever. We do not wish to make them a monopoly of our own. We simply request that the public use of the AA name be avoided by those other agencies who wish to avail themselves of AA techniques and ideas. In case the AA name should be misapplied in such a connection it would of course be the duty of our General Service Conference to press for the discontinuance of such a practice – always short, however, of public quarrelling about the matter.

The protection of the AA name is of such importance to us that we once thought of incorporating it everywhere throughout the world, thereby availing ourselves of legal means to stop any misuse. We even thought of asking Congress to grant us the unusual favour of a Congressional incorporation. We felt that the existence of these legal remedies might prove to be a great deterrent[3].

But after several years of deliberation, our General Service Conference decided against such a course. The dramatic story of this debate and its conclusion may be found in our history book "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age' " Those early Conferences believed that the power to sue would be a dangerous thing for us to possess. It was recognized that a public lawsuit is a public controversy, something in which our Tradition says we may not engage. To make our legal position secure, it would have been necessary to incorporate our whole Fellowship, and no one wished to see our spiritual way of life incorporated. It seemed certain that we could confidently trust AA opinion, public opinion, and God Himself to take care of Alcoholics Anonymous in this respect.

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."[4]

In preceding Concepts, much attention has been drawn to the extraordinary liberties which the AA Traditions accord to the individual member and to his group: no penalties to be inflicted for nonconformity to AA principles; no fees or dues to be levied – voluntary contributions only; no member to be expelled from AA – membership always to be the choice of the individual; each AA group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole; and finally that any group of alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group provided that, as a group, they have no other purpose or affiliation.

It is probable that we AAs possess more and greater freedom than any fellowship in the world today. As we have already seen, we claim this as no virtue. We know that we personally have to choose conformity to AA's Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups.

Because we set such a high value on our great liberties, and cannot conceive a time when they will need to be limited, we here specially enjoin our General Service Conference to abstain completely from any and all acts of authoritative government which could in any wise curtail AA's freedom under God. The maintenance of these freedoms in our Conference is a great and practical guarantee that the Conference itself will always remain democratic in action and in spirit.

Therefore we expect that our Conferences will always try to act in the spirit of mutual respect and love – one member for another. In turn, this sign signifies that mutual trust should prevail; that no action ought to be taken in anger, haste, or recklessness; that care will be observed to respect and protect all minorities; that no action should ever be personally punitive; that whenever possible, important actions will be taken in substantial unanimity; and that our Conference will ever be prudently on guard against tyrannies, great or small, whether these be found in the majority or in the minority.

The sum of these several attitudes and practices is, in our view, the very essence of democracy-in action and spirit.

Freedom under God to grow in His likeness and image will ever be the quest of the Alcoholics Anonymous. May our General Service Conference be always seen as a chief symbol of this cherished liberty.

To a man, we of AA believe that our freedom to serve is truly the freedom by which we live-the freedom in which we have our being.

1. 1997-about one to fifteen thousand, U.S. and Canada
2. In 1997, the $7,719,000 Reserve Fund would have covered about 9 months' operating expense.
3. However, the name Alcoholics Anonymous and the abbreviation AA were all legally registered in 1972.
4. Bill here, apparently inadvertently, used the phrase "in action and spirit," instead of "in thought and action," that appears elsewhere in both the Conference Charter and the statement of Concept XII.

7. AA Money

Most of AAs revenue in Great Britain consists of the voluntary contributions of members at group meetings. The remainder comes (predominantly) from literature surpluses, from interest on investments and from convention surpluses. There has been, and still is, other money in the form of gifts, bequests and legacies. The annual value of this money was significant, and notwithstanding the second part of Tradition Seven, the General Service Board was legally bound to accept them.

On 25 July 1986, therefore, a private Act of Parliament was obtained, known as the Alcoholics Anonymous (Dispositions) Act 1986, empowering the General Service Board to disclaim all, or part, of such donations. The Board has set an upper limit of £10,000 per year direct personal contribution to the General Service Office and a “one-off” contribution by way of a legacy to the amount of £20,000. Money, whatever its source, is AA money and should be spent only to further our primary purpose of helping the still suffering alcoholic. All who are trusted with the responsibility of handling AA money at every level should remind themselves constantly of this simple traditional principle. Responsibilities at the various levels of service are outlined in the following sections.

Money, expenses and spirituality

An AA service is anything whatsoever that legitimately helps us to reach our fellow sufferers.

- There is a vast array of these services, rolling endlessly from emptying ashtrays, through telephone calls, travel, meeting places, literature, delegates, committees, Conference and on to the General Service Office. They add up to our Third Legacy.

Without its essential services AA would soon become a formless, confused and irresponsible anarchy.

- It is agreed that no expenses are paid for individual face-to-face Twelfth Step work. But it is also widely held that trusted servants should be reimbursed for reasonable expenses even if they are subsequently returned to the pot. Such claims should be made and accepted lest the less privileged feel denied the right of participation.

The Group

1. Group Meetings
2. Group Officer
3. Group Service Representatives
4. Group money
5. Safeguarding and Personal Conduct
6. Addressing Safeguarding Issues Tradition 12
7. The New Member
8. About behaviour

1. Group Meetings

The Traditions have these words to say on groups in AA.

Tradition Three (Long Form). Our membership ought to include all who suffer from alcoholism. Hence we may refuse none who wish to recover. Nor ought AA membership ever depend upon money or conformity. Any two or three alcoholics gathered together for sobriety may call themselves an AA group, provided that, as a group, they have no other affiliation.

Tradition Four (Long Form). With respect to its own affairs, each AA group should be responsible to no other authority than its own conscience. But when its plans concern the welfare of neighbouring groups also, those groups ought to be consulted. And no group, regional committee, or individual should ever take any action that might greatly affect AA as a whole without conferring with the trustees of the General Service Board. On such issues our common welfare is paramount.

Types of meetings

Although a group is free to hold any type of meeting its members decide, groups must work within AAs Traditions and Guidelines. Our experience indicates that we must exercise certain precautions at our meetings or risk collapse.

The Closed Meeting;
is intended for alcoholics and for those with an alcohol problem who have a desire to stop drinking.

The Open Meeting;
is intended for alcoholics and non alcoholics e.g. family, friends and anyone interested in AA.

The Multi-Meeting Group is an AA group that accepts responsibility for providing more than one meeting per week. The General Service Conference has recommended the establishment of such groups where favourable circumstances exist and the group conscience approves. Examples of such circumstances are where:

- premises are already shared by groups or where a number of groups meet in the same area
- group conscience has decided that the group has developed to a point where further weekly meetings are needed and could be maintained
- there is a shortage of group officers – e.g. in rural areas with a number of small groups. Because multi-meeting groups require a fewer total number of officers they are also an effective means of freeing members to become involved in other service activities.

The meetings that constitute the multi-meeting group are assisted in fulfilling the needs of the group by a Steering Committee comprising group officers and representatives from the meetings belonging to the group. These Steering Committee Officers – Chair, Treasurer, Literature Sec. etc. as set out in 1.2 Group Officers below – are elected from members of the group's meetings at a group conscience meeting attended by members or representatives of all the meetings in the group.

To protect the unity of the multi-meeting group and to ensure that each constituent meeting of the group accepts and implements decisions made at the group conscience/business assemblies, it is vital that all of the constituent meetings be represented at these assemblies.

It has been found that there is Unity in multi-meeting groups providing that the application of the principle of rotation of steering-committee officers is observed in order to avoid personalities becoming established at the expense of the groups' welfare: also, that regular conscience and business meetings are held.

Disadvantages have been found when group conscience has permitted personalities to compromise Unity or where geographical location has compromised close liaison.

The Group Conscience and Business Meetings are sometimes overlooked but they play an important part in our group progress. Some groups schedule these meetings several times a year. Depending on the wishes of the members, they may precede or follow the normal meeting or separate sessions may be

arranged. It is suggested that groups have a policy on eligibility for voting and that the Traditions are read before proceedings. Promotion of understanding of the Concepts is also recommended.

Business Meetings provide an opportunity for group officers to report on such matters as progress, future plans, intergroup matters and the financial position. The group may also take this occasion as an opportunity to appoint its officers and to conduct a group conscience meeting – which usually takes the form of a group inventory.

A Home Group is the group for meetings in which members feel most at home. In such groups they accept service responsibilities, sustain friendships and celebrate anniversaries. They are encouraged to participate fully in group conscience meetings. 'It is a privilege to vote on issues that affect AA as a whole' (AA Service Manual for World Service, S25), and it is recommended that group members consider both when and how to vote, and how the principle of 'One Member, One Vote.' might apply. In order that representation is proportionate, it is inappropriate for members to vote more than once on matters concerning the Fellowship as a whole e.g., feedback on Conference Questions. Members visiting other groups are encouraged to adhere to the principle of One Member, One Vote, by not taking part in that group's business or policy decisions. In this way, groups maintain autonomy and avoid members of other groups influencing decisions.

The Public Meeting places emphasis on informing the general public about AA. These are speaker-type meetings. Invitations are issued to persons who may have a specific interest, such as doctors, social workers, spiritual leaders and others who may have cause to refer to AA in the course of their daily work. In addition to the member-Chair and speakers, a guest is usually invited – frequently a friend of AA, whose professional work involves them in the field of alcoholism – or perhaps an Al-Anon member to outline the family aspect. Such a meeting is an excellent way to celebrate group anniversaries.

The Shared Platform Meeting is an AA meeting where non-AA speakers are involved and should be chaired by an AA member. Tickets and programmes should include a statement as to whether Al-Anon/Al-Ateen speakers are involved.

The Anonymity Tradition

At open, public and shared platform meetings, it is considered advisable to stress the importance of AA's Tradition Eleven on Anonymity as a precaution, should any members of the press or other communication media be present.

AA members remain anonymous in public for two reasons:

- our promise of privacy to the still-suffering alcoholic and to the family
- a spiritual reason summed up in Tradition Twelve or in the word "humility".

Participation

The sole purpose of an AA group is to offer sobriety through the teachings and practice of the Twelve Steps. To help achieve this aim as many members as possible who wish to take part in the discussions and service should be encouraged to do so.

The meeting most likely to attract and keep members is the one which starts on time, which has its stock of literature well displayed, where the seating is ready and where members of an unofficial "welcoming committee" are ready to help pass the message, each in their own way. There will be a warm welcome for all comers and in particular for the newcomer, ensuring that the newcomer is made aware of the possibilities and promises contained in the programme. Ultimately, the strength of any meeting depends on the support and involvement of the entire group.

Cooperation between the Fellowship and treatment centres may increase attendance at AA meetings which is beneficial to the clients and can help our Fellowship to grow. However, it may affect the group's finances if their clients do not carry money to put into the pot; also they may describe themselves as addicts rather than alcoholics. These issues can usually be overcome by adhering to the Traditions and their associated literature.

Administrators of treatment centres cannot be expected to understand the dynamics of AA groups or how they function. The Steps, Traditions and Guidelines are the responsibility of AA members, and so dialogue between the group and treatment centre may help to resolve any problem areas. Professionals in the field of alcoholism are usually receptive to approaches from AA that are conducted in the spirit of cooperation, and usually welcome information about AA when it is offered in this way.

All members should feel safe to share their experience, strength and hope. Interruption, unsolicited advice or direct comment are often referred to as 'Cross-Sharing', and this is to be avoided.

Where to Find AA

'Where to Find AA' is the national meeting directory for Great Britain and the Continental European Region and as such is an invaluable source of information for the new member and the travelling member. In order to ensure that it remains accurate, all groups ought to update the Group Information – Group Registration and Update Meeting Form annually. Link to the Registration & Update Meeting Form. Keeping the Where to Find up to date is not simply an administrative exercise. Keeping up to date is an integral part of carrying the message within the Fellowship. There has to be a deep understanding that making it "easy to find" is an essential tool of recovery. Group secretaries, or those responsible are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

Members whose names appear in the Where to Find should be prepared to take full responsibility as contacts and delegate where necessary. This implies that such a telephone number will be freely available within the Fellowship and that the contact is prepared at any time to:

- accept a call for help
- give information to a professional e.g. a GSO number
- guide a family member to the right source for help e.g. to Al-Anon
- speak to members of the Fellowship enquiring about meetings.

Our Primary Purpose and Problems other than Alcohol

Tradition Five (Long Form) quotes Bill W's words "Each Alcoholics Anonymous group ought to be a spiritual entity having but one primary purpose – that of carrying its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Where problems arise from the attendance of non-alcoholics at AA meetings, it is suggested that the above words are remembered and the following extract from the AA pamphlet 'Problems other than Alcohol' is read out and, if appropriate, printed copies are distributed:

"Now there are certain things that AA cannot do for anybody regardless of what our several desires or sympathies may be. Our first duty as a society is to ensure our own survival. Therefore we have to avoid distractions and multi-purpose activity. An AA group as such cannot take on all the personal problems of its members let alone the problems of the whole world. Sobriety – freedom from alcohol – through the teaching and practice of the Twelve Steps is the sole purpose of an AA group. Groups have repeatedly tried other activities and they have always failed. It has also been learned that there is no possible way to make non- alcoholics into AA members.

We have to confine our membership to alcoholics and we have to confine our AA groups to a single purpose. If we don't stick to these principles, we shall almost surely collapse, and if we collapse, we cannot help anyone."

Although these words were written by Bill W. in 1958 they continue to offer sound guidance on this difficult subject

2. Group Officers

This Guidance is based on the pamphlet The AA Group which shows new officers new members and other interested AAs, many of the good and proved-by-experience ways other members have used in their groups to fulfil our primary purpose of staying sober and helping other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

All sorts of jobs have to be done to service an AA group and to keep it going; this is why we need officers. Tradition Nine states that “AA as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.”

The officers or trusted servants needed within the group are usually chosen by the group members for limited terms of service. The jobs they do may have titles but titles in AA do not bring authority or honour; they describe services and responsibilities. These are ways of carrying the message. They are forms of Twelfth Step work an AA member willingly undertakes, primarily to help personal recovery. Many AA members have found group duties an excellent way to strengthen their sobriety.

The various jobs or services requiring to be done to run a group successfully can be allocated over the responsibilities of group officers as set out and outlined below: two or more services may be combined under a single officer when the group is a small one. For example, a group may have the following officers:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Speaker Secretary
- Treasurer
- Literature Secretary
- Share / Roundabout Representative
- Refreshment Helpers
- Group Service Representative

Each group, being autonomous, selects the officers its members feel are necessary for the smooth running of the group. Group officers usually serve for a year, since the principle of rotation of officers is important in order that each member should be given an opportunity to serve should they be willing. Each nominee is usually approached by other members in the group and, if they agree, that name is put forward at a business/service meeting, so letting the group conscience decide the election.

Qualifications of Group Officer

Most groups make sure that their officers have had a known period of continuous sobriety, at least one year, and have shown themselves willing and available to give dependable service through regular attendance at meetings. It has generally been found that giving a member a job solely to help that member stay sober does not work.

The group's welfare is of primary concern in choosing officers and in this sense, a mention of Traditions 1 and 2 is helpful at election times as is also an appreciation that familiarity with the 12 Steps, Traditions and Concepts for World Service helps officers to do a better job

Chair

Some groups have no Chair because the Secretary serves as the group's principal office . In practice, it doesn't seem to matter which group officer does which job as long as they all get done without confusion or conflict. It is however very important for everybody to understand who does what.

While one year's continuous sobriety may be sufficient to undertake some other duties, the group's principal office , i.e. Chair or Secretary should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and have had other group experience.

- Co-ordinates group activities, preventing confusion or misunderstanding in group affairs
- Opens all regular group meetings then turns them over to a speaker who is leader for that session only
- Has final responsibility for the smooth functioning of the group and also conducts group Conscience and Business Meetings

Secretary

- Arrives some time before a meeting is due to start in order to arrange the room, usually with the help of other members and the refreshment helpers
- Encourages the meeting to start punctually
- Makes any AA announcements at the end of the meeting (e.g. news of conventions, new meetings, new literature)
- Practises Tradition Seven by passing the pot and then asking the speaker or Chair to close the meeting with the Serenity Prayer
- Keeps a confidential list of those members willing to do Twelfth Step work and passes on any calls for help
- Ensures, with the Treasurer's help, that the rent is paid
- Helps the Treasurer to count and keep a record of the group's collections
- Informs the intergroup secretary and GSO of the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the group officers, together with up-to-date group telephone contacts and of any changes in these or in the group's venue. In this way the correct information is always available for inclusion in 'Where to Find AA'.
- Provides safe keeping for such group records and correspondence that exist, thus preserving anonymity at all times. In addition, the Secretary, as well as other group officers, has a special responsibility for seeing that newcomers get help, are made welcome on arrival and receive a starter pack on departure

Speaker Secretary

- Finds suitable speakers for each meeting who have a known period of sobriety, books them well in advance and informs them of the time, date and address of the meeting
- Explains to the speaker the usual format of the group, e.g. length of the share or discussion and what time the meeting ends
- Tries to visit other groups in order to book ahead a variety of speakers who are able to present a good cross-section of AA recovery

Treasurer

- Collects the money obtained from passing the pot at group meetings, counts this with a responsible member's help and enters the amount into a cash book or balance sheet in the group accounts book
- Makes regular reports to the group showing how money has been used. After paying the approved expenses, e.g. rent, refreshments and literature and retaining a prudent reserve of one month's running expenses, any surplus should be sent to the intergroup treasurer – preferably by cheque or by electronic bank transfer and without delay. Blank signed cheques should never be issued. This is a recommended precautionary measure taken on behalf of both the group and the treasurer and applies to cheque payments and/or electronic bank transfers at all levels.
- In effect, covers the cost of all legitimate group expenses from group funds, but does not use funds to reimburse members' expenses in relation to direct Twelfth Step work.

The treasurer should keep the group's funds in a separate group bank account. All cheque/or electronic bank transfer transactions, should be secured by two of the three duly nominated persons signatures and or by bank approved secure electronic devices. AA experience clearly shows that it is not a good idea for a group to accumulate large funds in excess of what is needed for monthly rent and bills. It is strongly recommended that, apart from a prudent reserve, all surplus money be sent promptly to GSO via the local intergroup treasurer.

Further information on the role of group treasurer is in section 4 Group Money below.

Literature Secretary

- Ensures that the group has available its own copy of the Big Book (Alcoholics Anonymous). Orders and keeps the group supplied with books and pamphlets published by AA and available from GSO
- Puts together selected packs of literature for newcomers and makes sure stocks are replenished
- Ensures that literature is on display and available to members at group meetings, encouraging members to buy from the collection
- Makes available the current edition of 'The AA Service and Structure Handbooks' for Great Britain, especially at business meetings
- Passes any accounts for payment of literature to the Treasurer
- Helps the Secretary to circulate 'AA News', convention flyers, notices from GSO, etc.

Share/Roundabout Representative

- Is responsible for promoting Share/Roundabout, by ordering sufficient copies for the group members. Displays and sells copies as they arrive and encourages members to submit articles for inclusion in future issues

Greeter

- The role of greeter is important and in many groups the greeter is an established service position. Greeters provide a welcome to newcomers and visitors and can explain the function of the group, the format of the meeting and point out that AA is a spiritual and not a religious organisation. Ideally there ought to be male and female greeters at the entrance of the meeting venue.

Refreshment Helpers

- Many AA members have reported they get almost as much good out of coffee and conversation before or after a meeting as they do out of the meeting itself. AA members consider sharing over coffee at these times a vital part of AA routine
- Often AA members say they first felt they belonged when they began helping with the chairs, tidying the room, making the coffee and tea or doing washing up. Some newcomers find such activity helps them to talk to other members. For many of us this experience is our first contribution to AA service
- Any expenses for refreshments may be reclaimed from the group treasurer
- After each meeting the room should be left clean, tidy and in proper order

Group Service Representative (GSR)

The GSR's responsibilities are fully explained in section 3 below.

Bill W. said "The strength of our whole structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative that the group elects. By choosing its most qualified man or woman as GSR a group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole."

To be chosen to represent a group is to be given the opportunity to take part in AAs Third Legacy, that of service, and to have the chance to become a trusted servant. The GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety and should serve for a minimum of two years.

The Traditions

While the above sets out how an ideal group may operate, the conscience of each group decides for itself how much it will do and the best way of getting it done. There are many ways of living up to Tradition Five, which says "Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers."

Tradition Two reminds us that "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."

3. Group Service Representative (GSR)

Bill W said, "the strength of our whole structure starts with the group and with the General Service Representative (GSR) that the group elects".

Working via the intergroup the GSR is the groups` link with the General Service Conference, through which groups share experiences and voice AA's collective conscience.

More from Bill W… "The GSR – as the general service representative is known – has the job of linking his or her group with AA as a whole. The GSR represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the groups' wishes to the committee member and to the delegate, who passes them on to the Conference and to the movement.

For this, GSRs need the confidence of the group. They also need a good ear for listening. We all realize whatever "authority" there is in AA resides in the group conscience. Because of this, a GSR can determine exactly what a group needs, what a group thinks about a situation, and can pass this information along to where it will be most useful in policy-making.

This is a two-way street, allowing the GSR to bring back to the group the problems and remedies that affect AA unity, health, and growth. To the extent that a GSR keeps the group informed, then expresses the group conscience, only to that extent can the Conference feel it is acting for AA as a whole". (From The AA Service Manual).

Responsibilities

The suggested responsibilities are:

- Share with their group all Fellowship mail, communication and news items.
- Keep members informed about local service activities
- They may be contacts for referral to carry the AA message
- GSRs can also help their group solve problems by drawing upon the facilities of the General Service Office in York where the staff is ready to relay helpful AA experience from all over the World
- They can help see that up-to-date group information for the AA directory is sent promptly to GSO
- The GSR is the vital link in the chain of two-way communication between the group and intergroup. Each represents their group at intergroup service assemblies, sharing experiences with neighbouring GSRs in workshops and sharing sessions
- Prior to attending intergroup meetings, fully discuss agenda items with the group
- Represent and express the group's conscience at all intergroup meetings. The GSR should faithfully express the group's opinions whatever their feelings may be, thus putting principles before personalities
- Following intergroup, report back to the group
- The GSR has a responsibility to attend all such meetings and, if this is impossible, to brief thoroughly an alternate, chosen by the group to stand in
- Encourage observers to attend intergroup in order to foster their interest in the Fellowship and sponsor other members into Service
- Only GSRs and members of the intergroup committee are entitled to vote at intergroup meetings
- It is the GSR's responsibility to know the group so well that should unexpected matters come before the intergroup meeting he or she will have a fair idea of group's conscience

Qualification

Groups should take due care in electing their GSR, giving particular regard to the following:

- It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two or three years' continuous sobriety and preferably not hold any other group office. (It should be remembered that the GSR may be eligible for candidature as a regional representative or as a Conference delegate)
- The GSR should have a working knowledge of the AA publications referred to in the introduction

- The GSR should have a good knowledge of the structure of AA
- The GSR should be a regular weekly attender at their own group and therefore be able, should necessity arise, to stand in for any other officer of the group who is unable to be present
- The GSR should be prepared to serve for a minimum of two years
- By choosing as GSR one of the group's most qualified individuals the group helps its own future and the future of AA as a whole. It is suggested that groups should also elect an alternate representative who would attend meetings should the need arise. The GSR is the first vital link in the communications chain between group, intergroup, region and the General Service Board, carrying the group conscience to intergroup and the intergroup conscience to the group. Groups should take care in electing their GSR's. It is suggested that the GSR should have at least two years' continuous sobriety, as a GSR may be elected to intergroup office. The GSR needs to be familiar with the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and be prepared to uphold them, as well as being conversant with the following books: Alcoholics Anonymous, AA Comes of Age, the latest edition of The AA Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain, The AA Service Manual, and the pamphlet The AA Group.

4. Group Money

Every AA group should be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

The job of group treasurer is one which requires honesty and reliability. As with any other trusted service, the task should be carefully specified and its measure of authority and responsibility made clear and well understood. Responsibility and a reasonable period of continuous sobriety (preferably at least one year) are important.

- Treasurers should keep good, simple records, which should be open to inspection, should report on the group finances at least once a month and encourage the group to talk about financial matter
- Experience has shown that the use of a current account or building society account in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous and the group (see Governance section 5 General Service Board) is recommended for good financial management of the group funds. The bank statement then provides an additional record of the group's finance
- All cheques and/or electronic bank transfers should be secured by two of the three duly nominated persons' signatures/or by bank approved secure electronic devices. Blank signed cheques should never be issued. This is a recommended precautionary measure taken on behalf of both the group and the Treasurer and applies to cheque payments at all levels
- Contributions should be collected by passing the pot at group meetings and the Treasurer should count and record it with the help of another responsible group member

- The Treasurer should enter the amount into a cash book and pay the money into the group's account at the earliest opportunity
- After paying the approved expenses, e.g. rent, refreshments and literature and retaining a prudent reserve of one month's running expenses, any surplus should be sent to the intergroup treasurer – preferably by cheque and/or electronic bank transfer and without delay.
- For those groups who do not hold a bank account, it is recommended that a paying in book is used to deposit funds directly into their local intergroup account
- Expenses do not include the use of group funds for social purposes such as dances, bus trips and birthday cakes. Accumulation of large funds is inefficient, wasteful and a denial of Tradition Seven.

5. Safeguarding and Personal Conduct

5.0. Introduction

The welfare of the individual, anonymity and our primary purpose are at the core of our understanding that safeguarding is for everyone.

The aim of this guidance, is therefore, to provide the background and a general framework for AA groups seeking to tackle safeguarding issues.

NB the General Service Board has its own separate Safeguarding Policy Document accessed via AAGB website Microsoft Word - Safeguarding 3 May 2024.docx or by contacting GSO.

Tradition One

Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon AA unity

The unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most cherished quality our society has. Our lives, the lives of all to come depend squarely upon it. We stay whole or A.A. dies. Without unity, the heart of A.A. would cease to beat, our world arteries would no longer carry the life-giving grace of God. His gift to us would be spent aimlessly. Back again in their cave, the alcoholic would reproach us and say, "What a great thing A.A. might have been!"

"Does this mean," some will anxiously ask, "that in A.A. the individual doesn't count for much? Is he to be dominated by his group and swallowed up in it?" We may certainly answer this question with a loud "No!"

We believe that there isn't a fellowship on earth which lavishes more devoted care upon its individual members; surely there is none which more jealously guards the individual's right to think, talk, and act as he wishes. No AA can compel another to do anything; nobody can be punished or expelled.

Our Twelve Steps to recovery are suggestions; the Twelve Traditions which guarantee A.A.'s unity contain not a single "Don't." They repeatedly say, "We ought…." but never "You must!

Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions

5.1. History and Background

In order to help protect and safeguard our AA Fellowship, the General Service Board (GSB) of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain (AAGB) was tasked by The AAGB General Service Conference in 2019 to produce a safeguarding guidance for the AA Fellowship.

This guidance, the Safeguarding and Personal Conduct Document, can be accessed via the AAGB website, **Safeguarding-and-Personal-Conduct-Version-3.pdf** or by contacting the General Service Office (GSO) to obtain a copy . A continuing function of the GSB as custodian of the Traditions is to inform and guide the Fellowship as a whole. The GSB of AAGB is a charitable organisation and as such, has a responsibility to the Charity Commission to report safeguarding incidents under active investigation by legal authorities.

Every AA group makes an open invitation to its meetings to any member of the public having a desire to stop drinking. In terms of AA Traditions, it is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that carrying the message to all prospective new or established members, is done honestly and decently. We also understand that our Twelve Traditions, including that of group autonomy, do not place groups or members above the law, and that when individuals act injuriously to others, they are legally accountable. Our First Tradition reminds us that all members and groups have a responsibility for the common welfare and safeguarding of the individual member.

We suggest that AA groups recognise and accept responsibility for dealing with unacceptable behaviour and protect the Fellowship and the reputation of AA.

Many of us who join AA have a chequered past and this is only to be expected. With recovery we can be restored to society and lead a fruitful life. Society has become progressively more concerned with safeguarding the rights of the individual and these concerns have been reflected in recent changes to the law. The Protection against Harassment Act 1997 and the Human Rights act 1998, together with the Care Act 2014, are specific examples.

Neither the GSB nor AA groups are regulated care providers, but Tradition One requires that we understand good safeguarding practice, and the duty to care for others in the group.

The potential damage to AA's unity and reputation arising from any wrongful or criminal acts of individual members, and of course the associated publicity, is of natural concern to the Fellowship.

To be clear, no member of AA is above the law for any offences committed prior to joining AA or any offences committed whilst attending AA. We as a Fellowship believe that Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions (Tradition Twelve), but this does not mean that we allow the protection of anonymity to anyone to exploit or abuse our Fellowship, or any individual member of AA.

5.2. What Constitutes a Safeguarding issue?

Abuse and exploitation in all its forms, some examples of which are listed below, should not be tolerated at any level of the structure; our members have the right to feel secure in meetings and whilst going about AA service / business.

- Abuse or exploitation may include cyber abuse, direct physical or emotional abuse, or negligent treatment. People may be abused or exploited, for example, because of their disability, religion, ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, age, stature, appearance etc.
- Bullying or harassment
- Data breaches
- Disparaging behaviour
- Exploitation (criminal, commercial, financial or otherwise
- Forced marriage
- Health and safety issues
- Modern day slavery or human trafficking
- Offensive language, or behaviour within meetings and online
- Racism, sectarianism, extremism or radicalisation
- Sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- Threatening behaviour
- Violence

It is important to note that one need not be the direct object of such behaviour to feel concerned. A person witnessing such an event may deem it necessary to take appropriate action to stop such behaviour.

6.0. Addressing Safeguarding Issues Tradition 12

Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

Groups, through their conscience meetings, may establish contingency plans to deal with safeguarding issues and be mindful of the Safeguarding Policy Document produced by the GSB of AAGB. It may be that groups appoint a safeguarding representative at either group, intergroup or region level. An experienced, respected AA member may be best suited to this role. For example, safeguarding issues that come through our on-line services may be forwarded to our General Secretary, who then may wish to discuss a particular issue with the Board's Executive Committee. This would be done in a manner that respects anonymity.

We believe that individual welfare coupled with anonymity are central to the Fellowship's safeguarding responsibility. We suggest that any response be consistent and supportive. It is not our place to discuss, investigate or judge. We have one primary purpose, and we will always suggest recourse through outside agencies when appropriate.

In dealing with any unacceptable behaviour the response must also be measured and reasonable, given all the circumstances. Members should neither place themselves in danger physically, nor open themselves or the group to legal repercussions. If an incident cannot be defused quickly and safely, members and groups may have to consider involving appropriate outside agencies.

In cases of persistent inappropriate / predatory sexual / threatening / violent behaviour that prevents the carrying of the AA message, groups may refer to the following by Bill W:

This amount of charity does not mean that we cannot exclude those who disturb meetings in progress or seriously interfere with the functioning of the group. Such people can be asked to quiet down or go elsewhere, or, to come back when they are better able to participate.

(Letter from Bill W 1969)

6.1. Personal Action on Unacceptable Behaviour

- It is often sufficient for the recipient of behaviour they feel is inappropriate to raise the difficulty with the person creating the problem by pointing out that the conduct is offensive. Anyone has the right to challenge unacceptable behaviour from any other members of AA at any stage, and request that the behaviour stop.
- Support and help – it should be possible for the recipient to prepare for this conversation with the help of their sponsor or another member if they wish. If they find it too difficult or embarrassing to raise the issue with the person creating the problem, it may be appropriate for the recipient to have the conversation with their sponsor or another member present, such as the group's safeguarding representative.

6.2. Group Action

- When a personal approach fails or the recipient feels that this method is inappropriate, the recipient may approach another group member or trusted servant for help and guidance, feeling secure in the belief that any safeguarding issue will be considered as a serious matter.
- The alleged offender should be told of the complaint as soon as possible.
- If the situation is sufficiently serious or complex, it may be necessary to involve members from outside the group.

- If the group conscience decides it necessary, unacceptable behaviour may result in temporary exclusion from the group. The ultimate decision on the return of the offender rests with the group conscience.
- The reporting of safeguarding instances to the appropriate outside agencies may be required

6.3. Group Meetings

- Members are encouraged to choose a home group in which true bonds of Fellowship will lessen the need to fear behaviour they might find offensive.
- It is suggested that Group Conscience meetings be held regularly plus additional conscience meetings as they become necessary.
- Where safeguarding issues occur in a group situation, as described in 5.2 above, members in recovery have a responsibility to ask for the offending behaviour to stop.
- We suggest that an explanation of the dangers of unacceptable behaviour in AA be given at the time, or at the end of the meeting.
- Offensive behaviour cannot be condoned. Failure to challenge and stop inappropriate behaviour implies that the offender has permission to repeat the offensive behaviour and can encourage others to follow suit.

6.4. Service Meetings

Our experience has shown that it is important to remember that groups are encouraged to participate within the AA structure to foster unity and to provide support.
Collective experiences have highlighted instances where individual members and groups have actively tried to dictate the conscience of service meetings through abusive and threatening behaviour.

When these instances have occurred, experience shows that it is perfectly acceptable for a trusted servant to stop the meeting, remind all attending of our primary purpose and our need to allow God, as we understand him, to express himself through our group conscience.

If the above suggestion does not have the desired effect, there may be a need to involve the appropriate outside agency.

6.5. Primary Purpose Service in Institutions

Organisations expect any member of AA attending prisons, hospitals or any institution requiring security clearance, to abide by the rules of the organisation and follow their safeguarding guidelines. Should groups be asked to introduce a chit-type system for specific offenders, please make sure that both safeguarding, and anonymity are considered. Guidance on the chit system can be found in our Service Handbook.

In addition to the above, we suggest that each service within AA has its own safeguarding guidance within the terms of reference.

6.6. Safeguarding Children and Juveniles

There are times when children or juveniles will be in attendance at AA open meetings or AA conventions. It is the responsibility of the group members to agree safeguarding policy. Parental responsibility is essential.

If there are safeguarding issues involving children, we suggest that a trusted servant act in accordance with the GSB's current Safeguarding Policy Document, and consider whether it is necessary to report their concerns to the appropriate outside agency.

6.7. Minors Attending AA

Minors are defined as children and young people under the age of 18, although this legal definition may vary from country to country.

If, however, the Fellowship uses it as a guideline, we can better ensure the safeguarding of these younger members.

We want to help minors who believe they may have a drink problem, but we must respect the law.

Consideration should be given to laws protecting minors where best practice is for written parental or guardian consent to be obtained. It should also be understood that minors do have the right to make their own informed decisions.

7.0. The New Member

Often when a new member joins AA a feeling of hope and the lifting of despair can lead to thinking that every AA member has their best interests at heart. Experience shows that most AA members will offer great support but a few may not.

7.1. Sponsorship

Within AA good sponsorship is vital for both our recovery and service. We have a pamphlet – Sponsorship Your Questions Answered – which can be very helpful. We suggest that groups have this readily available on their literature table. A man for a man, and a woman for a woman has often been suggested as working best. Today, however, we recognise that sexual and / or romantic attraction, regardless of sexuality or gender identity, can be problematic and may create safeguarding issues.

Good sponsorship involves making the sponsee aware that sponsors are not trained counsellors. All we have is our own experience of recovery from alcoholism. We believe that most sponsors would want to make the sponsee aware of the importance of personal confidentiality and trust.

Concerning Step Five, all or any part of this can be taken with whomever the sponsee feels most comfortable, and this need not be the sponsor.

As individuals we decide whether we are alcoholic, and again, we as alcoholics choose our own sponsors. Some groups offer temporary sponsorship to new members which can be helpful in the beginning.

7.2. AAGB Staff Members and Members of the Public

AAGB staff have the same rights and responsibilities as AA members regarding safeguarding. No AA staff member need tolerate abuse or exploitation in any form, and likewise, none need be tolerated from AA staff members.

In regard to members of the public coming into contact with AA, be that at Public or Open AA meetings, or for any other reason, they are entitled to the same level of safeguarding as any member of AA.

8.0. About Behaviour

All forms of abuse and exploitation being acted out are negative and unacceptable. Discrimination of this kind is in conflict with AA Traditions and our way of life in recovery. All such behaviour needs to be taken seriously, and sober AA members must deal with it as it arises. Whether or not the behaviour is intended to be hurtful is irrelevant, the important point is that it is offensive.

AA members within their groups need to recognise the power of their behaviour in their relationships with other members of the Fellowship and with potential newcomers. Members in recovery will understand that our behaviour influences others. Recognising that we can control our behaviour, we have a responsibility to set a good example.

Members have a right to expect that they will be safe at a group meeting. It is the responsibility of the group holding the meeting, through its members or trusted servants, to ensure that no member or visitor is subjected to, or experiences, unacceptable behaviour of any kind.

8.1. Personal Conduct Matters

The final report of the General Service Conference 1979 (Committee 1, Attraction by the Individual) contained the following statement:

The importance of the individual member in drawing the suffering alcoholic to the way of recovery was stressed. By guarding his/her own behaviour, morals, dress, ethics, tolerance, sympathy, compassion and understanding of all human beings [a member] carries the message or leaves a slur on the name of AA.

Should someone speak to you about your unacceptable behaviour, listen to their criticism, think about what they have said and respond appropriately. You may even at a later stage wish to thank them for pointing it out to you!

Conclusion

It is an historical fact that practically all groupings of men and women tend to become more dogmatic; their beliefs and practices harden and sometimes freeze. This is a natural and almost inevitable process. All people must, of course, rally to the call of their convictions, and we of AA are no exception.

Moreover, all people should have the right to voice their convictions. This is good principle and good dogma. But dogma also has its liabilities. Simply because we have convictions that work well for us, it becomes very easy to assume that we have all the truth. Whenever this brand of arrogance develops, we are certain to become aggressive; we demand agreement with us; we play God. This isn't good dogma; it's very bad dogma. It could be especially destructive for us of AA to indulge in this sort of thing.

Newcomers are approaching AA at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In AA we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering.

Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of AA, so long as he or she so declares.

Bill Wilson, Toronto International Convention, 1965.

Suggestions at Group Level

Your group conscience meeting may consider discussing and agreeing upon a clear statement for display, for example:

Safeguarding in AA

This group wants all members, whether new or long-standing, to be kept safe while participating in meetings and other AA activities. We seek to follow the recommendations in our AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain (The Group, Section 5)

None of us is above the law. If an issue is within the law, our Traditions apply; if outside the law, then contact outside agencies

This Group does not tolerate:
• Bullying •
• Harassment •
• Discriminatory Behaviour •
• Or any other form of abuse of exploitation •

Personal Conduct Matters!

Bad Language often offends…

But its absence never does

Tradition Eleven

Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films

Reference: Within this guidance we have highlighted three of many legal documents which relate to safeguarding. These can be found under Annex C in the AA Structure Handbook Great Britain.

The Intergroup

1. The Intergroup

2. Intergroup Officer

3. Regional Representatives

4. Intergroup Money

1. The Intergroup

The first intergroup in Great Britain was formed in 1957, some ten years after Alcoholics Anonymous came to London, and incidentally in the same year that the General Service Board was incorporated in the British Isles.

These landmarks in our AA history were the initial steps towards the formation of a sound Service structure, which has over the years evolved and grown to help us meet our ever increasing responsibilities.

The Fifth and Tenth General Service Conferences reviewed the purpose and work of intergroups and from time to time committees at other Conferences have suggested activities which should be undertaken at intergroup level. This Guidance gathers together these recommendations.

Aims

The aims of an intergroup are to aid the constituent groups in their common purpose of carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic and, by using their combined strength and unity, to improve and maintain good relations with all organisations in the community.

Areas

When exercising their voluntary choice to cooperate within the AA service structure, groups take into account that service activities are made more difficult where Health Service and local government boundaries do not coincide with intergroup boundaries, and that their ability to play their part in intergroup will be affected by this and by the proximity of other groups. Practice has shown that boundaries evolve without the overlapping of neighbouring areas. Where two or more intergroups fall within a local authority area their liaison officers co- operate in trying to carry the message (e.g. prisons, hospitals etc.)

Meetings

Intergroup meetings should be held regularly, wherever possible six times a year. It should be remembered that these are business meetings and should therefore be conducted in a businesslike fashion having particular regard to the guidance in the Traditions and the Twelve Concepts.

One meeting in the year should be set aside for the Annual General Meeting at which the year's accounts are reviewed and approved, and upon which date the rotation of officers should come into effect. A suitable agenda prepared by intergroup officers should be sent to all groups in good time so that the group can discuss the subjects to be raised and make known their views to their GSR.

Observers are welcome at intergroup meetings but may not vote and it is suggested may only express their views at the invitation of the Chairperson.

2. Intergroup Officer

An intergroup should appoint a chair, vice chair, secretary, treasurer and members with other responsibilities as its officers. These officers should have an established period of sobriety, ideally not less than two years. It is recommended that they should serve for not less than two years and not more than three years. Careful consideration should be given to staggered rotation so that in the interest of continuity all the officers do not terminate their service at the same time. In the event of a vacancy occurring among the officers before the expiry of their term of office, a member may be co-opted for a limited period of time until the next intergroup meeting. At this meeting the member co-opted, along with any others, could be recognised for formal nomination and possible election to this post.

The officers can co-opt a member or members, either from GSRs or from groups to perform a specific service such as organising a convention or convening a public meeting. The intergroup may establish sub-committees for specific purposes.

Duties of Officer

The Chair has the responsibility of convening and conducting the meetings, and approving the agenda and minutes before they are published.

The Vice Chair has the responsibility of conducting the meeting in the absence of the Chair.

The Secretary has the responsibility with the Chair for preparing the agenda and minutes of meetings and for distributing these documents to the groups well before meetings so that there is ample time to discuss the contents. The Secretary deals with all correspondence, passing for example requests for speakers to outside organisations to the Public Information Officer or a suitable member. The Secretary keeps in touch with the General Service Office making sure that it promptly has a copy of the minutes and notice of any change of office.

The Treasurer has the responsibility for keeping a proper account of all intergroup finances and ensuring that funds are available for its essential current requirements. An annual budget exercise should be carried out to ensure that appropriate prudent reserves are maintained. The Treasurer reports to intergroup against the budget. Surplus funds should always be transferred promptly to GSO, ideally via the region treasurer.

The accounts should be open for inspection and presented to intergroup at each meeting. group contributions should be clearly listed so that GSRs can confirm their group's contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail. Having been audited or independently checked, annual accounts should be presented by the Treasurer to intergroup for approval at the AGM.

The chair will carry the executive authority of intergroup but should account for any action taken at the next meeting.

Other Responsibilities

It is suggested that Liaison Officers work together through a service committee structure.

A Prison Liaison Officer should gather and collate all information about the prison groups in their area (including open prisons, Young Offenders Institutions etc.) and forward the information to their regions and to GSO. He or she should also keep informed via their region and GSO on Home Office and Conference policy with regard to special subjects, such as parole, the use of AA tapes and other AA published material, to help prison sponsors with any problems which may arise in the area. The General Service Office and General Service Board maintain excellent contact with the Prison Department of the Home Office, and intergroups should communicate with GSO regarding any problems which may arise.

A Public Information Officer is responsible for ensuring that information about the AA message and programme of recovery is conveyed to outside organisations to the best possible advantage. The provision of a panel of members to comply with requests for speakers is an important part of this activity. (See Service Handbook).

A Health Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing links with health professionals and co-ordinating all aspects of carrying the message within the healthcare system (See Service Manual).

An Employment Liaison Officer assumes responsibility for liaising with all sectors of commerce and industry. (See Service Manual).

A Probation Liaison Officer/Social Services AA Liaison Officer is responsible for establishing links with the probation services in England and Wales. In Scotland, Social Services are responsible for probation services (See Service Manual).

Share/Roundabout Liaison Officers provide the essential contacts between members, groups and the editorial teams. They actively encourage the contribution of articles and letters and the promotion of the magazines

A Telephone Liaison Officer co-ordinates the working of the Telephone Service as recommended in the Service Manual.

3. Regional Representatives

Regional Representatives and alternates should be elected by their intergroup as carefully as Group Service Representatives. They should be chosen as a general rule from amongst serving GSRs but any member, who has the necessary qualifications, even if not at the time serving as a GSR, may be elected. Such a representative will attend all intergroup meetings to report from the region and to hear from the intergroup their wishes to be expressed at the next regional meeting.

Qualification

- It is suggested that at least three years' continuous sobriety are necessary since it is hardly possible for a person to gain enough intergroup and group service in less time than that, to be of real use to the region
- They should have a good working knowledge of the following AA publications: Alcoholics Anonymous, The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, the latest edition of The AA Structure and Service Handbooks for Great Britain, The AA Service Manual
- They should have good knowledge of the structure of AA
- The Regional Representative would, in the interest of continuity, serve for three years, after which he or she must retire and cannot be re-elected for at least one year
- It is suggested that three Representatives per intergroup be elected to the region since this would give proper continuity

4. Intergroup Money

In addition to the guidelines suggested for a group treasurer the following points should be considered seriously by the intergroup treasurer:

- A current bank account in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous and the intergroup is recommended for running the intergroups' finances. All cheques/ or electronic bank transfers should be secured by two of the three duly nominated persons' signatures/ or by bank approved secure electronic devices. Normally these would be the Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. In the interest of safety, blank cheques should never be signed
- The intergroup treasurer should produce a statement of accounts in writing including a list of all contributions, at least quarterly with copies available for all GSRs in the intergroup
- Intergroup treasurers, by means of workshops, discussions on sound AA financial practice, patience and tolerance, should encourage all component groups to contribute to intergroup on a regular basis. Intergroup treasurers should not be reluctant to approach non-contributing groups
- The accounts should be open to inspection and be properly audited or independently checked once a year
- Experience shows that the treasurer when making any payments, whenever practical, should do so by cheque. Receipts should be received for all cash payments and retained
- It is suggested that a prudent reserve for an intergroup is three months' running expenses
- Intergroups should bear in mind that regularity and evenness in the flow of cash to the General Service Office, ideally via their region, is essential for GSO to meet its day-to-day obligations and operate in an efficient and economical manner

The Region

1. The Region

2. Regional Assembly

3. Conference Delegates

4. Regional money

5. Regional Forums

6. Maps of Great Britain

1. The Region

In October 1965 an exploratory meeting was held to discuss the need for a General Service Conference in the United Kingdom. A formal conclusion included this statement: “The Conference would hope to further the aims and ideals, namely Recovery, Unity and Service, and ensure the healthy growth of an expanding Fellowship by fostering closer ties and greater co-operation throughout these Isles”.

This Guidance on regions is one further step on the road of growth, development and co-operation.

The Tenth General Service Conference in 1975 made a recommendation that intergroups should consider the formation of regions – an assembly of neighbouring intergroups – to prevent fragmentation which could follow group growth and the formation of more intergroups. This created the opportunity for the maximum amount of participation, involving more and more active and experienced members and strengthened communication as the fellowship grew. The Fifteenth General Service Conference in 1980 approved and established regionalisation throughout Great Britain. Following further Conference recommendations in 1981, 1987, 1988 and 2004, a total of 16 regions in Great Britain were established.

The growth of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain & Continental Europe was sure and steady, and this growth accompanied by a service structure that evolved to meet the need. So, in response to changes in the local service structure, in 2026 the Scotia Region voted to dissolve itself and the number of regions fell to fifteen.

A brief history of the growth in AA in this country can be found in the introduction to this handbook.

Aims

- To promote communication and cooperation between neighbouring intergroups, thus implementing our Tradition of Unity and creating service boards or committees where needed
- To ensure that the region recognise areas that are sparsely served by the Fellowship do not remain isolated but become part of that region's responsibility
- To share intergroup experience in the field of co-operation with outside agencies, prisons, health services, schools, social services, alcohol abuse agencies, churches, courts, Probation Service (Criminal Justice Services in Scotland), industry, and any other appropriate institutions and areas of society
- To increase opportunity for members to participate in our Third Legacy of Service
- To enable members with particular experience to serve a wider area

Composition

It is suggested that a region should comprise a convenient number of intergroups in a convenient geographical location with common internal and external interests (Committee 4, 1975). It is therefore likely that some regions will be large territorially but not large in terms of population, while some will be relatively small territorially in densely populated areas.

Workshops

The following suggestions have been prepared to assist those planning workshops.

Finance workshops are an excellent method of emphasising that carrying the message incurs costs by all parts of the service structure.

- Workshops should be well-structured with a commitment to planning
- One format, which appears to work well, is using multiple speakers sharing on the topic, breaking into discussion groups, and reconvening for a report-back session with everyone
- They should be publicised well in advance utilising flyers and service representatives to promote them
- To maintain interest, they should be regular, using experienced speakers from outside the immediate intergroup/region area. Consider using PI Committees to organise them
- Workshops might be considered for part of a convention/mini convention
- Consider publicising "discussion meeting" rather than "workshop"
- Intergroup/region officers should lead by example, by attending workshops and by offering transport to those who might not otherwise be able to attend
- Time permitting; Regional Assemblies should hold workshops and these should be minuted as an agenda item. Experience shows that morning workshops lead to a better attendance
- Those attending should be welcomed and encouraged to get involved in the discussions. Make it clear that everyone has a right to be heard

- Workshops should be fun as well as informative
- It is suggested that reports on region workshops should be submitted to AA News whenever possible. A summary should be given of any workshop and circulated to all those attending
- Service representatives should try to make reports interesting and informative and, if necessary, ask for more time to give their report

This Guidance has been produced as the result of experience to date, but possibly in time modifications may become necessary.

"When we get into questions of action by groups, by areas, by AA as a whole, we find that we must to some extent organize to carry the message or else face total chaos. And chaos is not simplicity." Bill W. (Letter 1966)

2. The Regional Assembly

It is suggested that a regional assembly should comprise up to three regional representatives from each participating intergroup, who should be prepared to serve for a term of three years. Provision should be made for rotation to preserve continuity. It is recommended that regional representatives should have at least three years' continuous sobriety and sufficient intergroup experience. An important factor is the availability of elected members to devote time to the work without adversely affecting their family or careers.

Regional representatives should elect their officers from members of the Assembly. These should consist of:

- The Chair, who takes the meeting
- The Vice Chair deputises for the chair and often takes responsibility for workshops and forums.
- The Treasurer, who attends to finance matters, more information on which is given in section 5, Region Money.
- The Regional Secretary is the channel of communication for their region. Suggested duties may be found in section 3, Administrative Responsibilities

These officers, and others, if decided by a region, may form an Executive or Steering Committee that meets as required between assemblies to deal with urgent matters and to prepare for the assembly. Any one or more of these members may be a co-signatory for region funds.

The agenda for the regional assembly, the minutes, and other pertinent documents are reviewed collectively by this group. Executive committee members are jointly responsible for securing the venue, setting dates for, and ensuring the smooth running of regional assemblies, including the AGM, although this may be undertaken primarily by the regional secretary. They should participate in encouraging attendance at assemblies and act as service sponsors, by demonstrating the value of service.

In addition, members should be elected, taking into consideration their experience or interest, to the following positions:

- Archivist
- Armed Services Liaison Officer
- Electronic Communications Liaison Officer
- Employment Liaison Officer
- Health Liaison Officer
- Prison Liaison Officer
- Probation/Criminal Justice Liaison Officer (Scotland)
- Public Information Liaison Officer
- Share/Roundabout Liaison Officer
- Telephone Liaison Officer
- Young People's Liaison Officer

It is recommended that these officers should serve a maximum of three years and be confirmed annually.

The regional assembly may also co-opt a member of the region, not necessarily a regional representative, to carry out a specific task as a non-voting member of the assembly for the duration of the work involved (e.g., convention convenor, archivist).

Having served three years a regional representative should retire by rotation, thus providing a place for another to gain regional experience and so enrich experience of service in the Fellowship. They could then be eligible for re-election after a minimum period of one year. When the regional representatives of an intergroup are depleted because one of their number has been elected to serve as an officer, then another suitable member may be elected by the intergroup concerned to take their place.

It is suggested that a regional assembly should comprise two or three regional representatives from each of its constituent intergroups, together with its elected officers and General Service Board (GSB) member. These are the sole holders of voting rights. Observers and visitors are welcome but may not participate unless invited by the chair.

It is suggested that the assembly should meet 4 times annually. The meeting should be called in a proper manner with a settled agenda, and minutes should be circulated after the meeting with copies to interested persons such as General Service Office (GSO), the GSB and neighbouring regions for information as an additional means of sharing experience.

3. Administrative Responsibilities

A regional secretary is a channel of communication for the region, with its intergroups, with GSO, members of the regional assembly, or other regions. They also support the passage of relevant information between members and outside bodies with whom AA deals. The regional secretary should be approachable, use clear language, and keep within our Traditions.

They work with all regional liaison officers (LOs), passing on enquiries and communications such as AA News and notifications of regional LO meetings, and encourage timely reports for the regional assembly.

They maintain accurate records, observing GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations).

https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/

These may include:

- Regional assembly agenda and minutes (and forwarding copies to GSO)
- Summary from the regional assembly for intergroups and groups
- Register of regional officers and contact details
- Digest of decisions
- Register of members who have served at region, and of members who have served a full term at Conference.
- The regional secretary is also responsible for:
- Regional officer registration with GSO (required for aamail.org email addresses and access to the Confidential Directory)
- Conference delegate and alternate delegate registration with GSO
- AAGB Sub Committee applications, GSB nominations, and letters of support

Any correspondence with outside organisations is usually in collaboration with the regional chair and other appropriate members – specific liaison officers or members of the executive committee.

The regional secretary establishes eligibility to vote and the quorum at the assembly and conducts ballots appropriately.

It is suggested that when time permits and business is completed a sharing session on some specific subject is held in which observers may participate, the object being to forward our primary purpose and improve services in the region.

It is suggested that:

1. Each region holds a regular inventory.

2. The regional inventory generates a list of ideas and actions to be used as a yardstick.

3. The region considers using the inventory list as a regular item on their agendas.

4. The inventory questions and answers of that region be shared with other regions and the GSO / GSB for wider distribution to the Fellowship, e.g., through AA News and the Regional Chairs´ Meetings.

Service structure

Committees may be formed to support region officers in their roles, allowing for shadowing and sponsorship into service positions.

The formation of committees may be along the lines adopted by the GSB as listed in The General Service Board, section 1, or to address the region's requirements. Here are some examples:

- Finance
- External Communications
- Executive

There should be named liaison or contact officers for specific areas of service at all levels to enable contact with neighbouring regions, as well as intergroups and GSO. It is recommended that all officers use AAmail addresses, for example archivessw@aamail.org or chair.fenland@aamail.org.

4. Conference Delegates/Alternates

A region is entitled to send six delegates to Conference. These should be from suitably experienced members able to conform to the requirements (set out in the section of "The General Service Conference", section 1.5 in this handbook), who have been nominated either by the member intergroups or the regional assembly for election by the regional assembly. They should be elected well before Conference so that their names may go forward when required by GSO so that they will have time to absorb the relevant papers and re-read the suggested literature.

Quality of sobriety and service record should be the guiding principles when electing delegates. It is recommended that delegates have a minimum of 5 years continuous sobriety and that before electing a delegate, a region satisfies itself that the member has demonstrated a commitment through service to the Fellowship.

Potential delegates should be made aware, before election, of the commitment this post entails. In order to be elected as a delegate a member need not be a serving member of their region at the time of the election but an elected delegate becomes a full member of region.

While remembering that the best person for the job should be elected for the sake of AA as a whole, consideration should be given to ensuring that intergroups have easy access to a Conference delegate.

A Conference delegate's duties do not finish with the end of the Conference. In fact this is only the beginning. They should be available and willing to report back fully to the region and also be willing to travel to intergroup and group meetings. Conference delegates' duties are fully explained in General Service Conference section 1.5 in this handbook.

5. Region Money

The regional budget is financed by member intergroup contributions.

The Treasurer should present an annual budget based on activities that region has elected to fund during the coming year. These activities must include sufficient funds to pay Conference delegates' expenses and previously agreed service commitments. The cost of officers attending national meetings should also be included.

An annual budget should be prepared and presented so that intergroups may have awareness of the contribution they are suggested to make to their respective regions.

Having been audited or independently checked, annual accounts should be presented to and accepted by the regional assembly. Intergroup contributions should be clearly listed in the accounts so that region representatives can confirm their intergroup's contributions have been received. This is a fundamental part of the audit trail.

Any money surplus to a prudent reserve should be forwarded promptly to GSO. Money should be kept in a bank convenient for the Treasurer and payments made by cheques/ or electronic bank transfers, that should be secured by two of the three duly nominated persons' signatures/or by bank approved secure electronic devices.

For the important position of trust as a regional treasurer it is recommended that candidates have had previous experience of a Treasurer's role at group and intergroup level.

To facilitate the running of region finances, a current bank account in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous and the name of the region is recommended (see Governance section 5 of General Service Board of this Handbook).

The accounts should be audited or independently checked once a year. The region treasurer should also seriously consider, for personal protection as well as the safeguarding of AA money, the prudence of not sending or issuing blank signed cheques.

An important item in any region accounts is the expense incurred in sending Delegates to Conference. This should reach GSO by 31 December for the forthcoming year. Another item of significance is the cost of sending a variety of region trusted servants to national meetings in York concerned with a range of service activities.

At the Thirty Third General Service Conference, it was agreed that the recommended system for funding the national telephone number would be for groups to continue to fund intergroups, intergroups to fund regions, and for regions to take the responsibility for payment of the telephone accounts.

Regions should bear in mind that regularity and evenness in the flow of cash to GSO is essential for it to meet its day-to-day obligations, and operate in an efficient and economical manner.

6. Regional Forums

"Regional Forums assist in furthering AA's Legacy of Service."

Regional Forums originated in 1975, they are basically sharing sessions designed to improve communication and to encourage direct communication and personal contact between members in service including current Board members and those who may wish to become involved in service. All services in AA have one purpose and that is to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

A Forum in no way affects the role of the annual General Service Conference which remains the decision making body within AA. Forums provide a unique opportunity to share valuable experience, ask questions and to encourage members to participate in service work within the Fellowship. It may also be of assistance to a region to discuss any problems concerning the development of services, internal and external communications, Conference, finance, archives and other matters relating to sponsoring into service.

Provision is made to hold three forums per year. A region may apply to hold a Regional Forum every five years. The location and agenda for a Regional Forum are decided by the region and it is suggested that the agenda is flexible enough to be adjusted to any needs that may arise during the meetings/workshops. It is suggested that the Regional Board Member may be in a position to help and to offer guidance.

Requests to hold a Forum should be forwarded to GSO for consideration by the General Service Board well in advance of the planned date in order to avoid clashing of dates with other planned events. It is recommended that a number of suitable dates be submitted for consideration by the Board to give the Board time to consider each request and to advise the availability of Board members who may be invited to attend. A maximum of two Board trustees should be invited to attend with consideration being given to the topics to be covered at the Forum.

There is not normally a registration fee for Regional Forums although some thought should be given to a budget covering any expected expenditure. This is best determined by the region concerned. The General Service Board will cover all expenses in relation to the attendance of Board members and Staff. The arrangements regarding the venue, hotel accommodation and programme for the Forum are the responsibility of the region or organising committee.

The most common format for a forum is workshops (2 or 3) to discuss/share on particular matters/topics which are relevant within the region. Forums are intended to be one day events but in special circumstances Forums have been held over a two day period at the request of a region. It is recommended that these should be agreed well in advance in consultation with the trustees of the General Service Board.

It is suggested that the most appropriate times to hold a Forum would be around May, June or November. The planning of Forums and dates is essential to avoid disappointments in a very busy calendar of scheduled events throughout the AA year.

Suggested Format for a Forum (one day):

Forum co-ordinator or committee to liaise with the regional trustee regarding the format, venue, programme and approximately how many members are expected to attend, to outline the most relevant topics for discussion at each workshop and to agree the proposed timetable for the Forum.

Opening session to last approximately one hour (10 minutes for each of the guest speakers) for introductions and opening remarks.

The body splits up into two-three workshops (allocating members to workshops) which could be colour coded for easy identification. Each workshop to have a Chairperson/Secretary, experience suggests that it is best that the speakers rotate and address each workshop in turn, answering questions for one hour and then move on to the next workshop. In this way the skills and service experience of the Board members and GSO staff can be utilised and everyone would have had the opportunity to share and/or to ask questions.

The Chairperson and Secretary prepare a summary report for their workshop and present a report to the body of the Forum. Time permitting further talks could be given and/or further discussion of the selected topics.

A final report should be prepared for circulation to intergroups and one copy sent to the General Service Office. It is not necessary to report all discussions – only the subject and the "sense of the workshop" need be reported.
Suggested Topics to cover all service disciplines and principles:

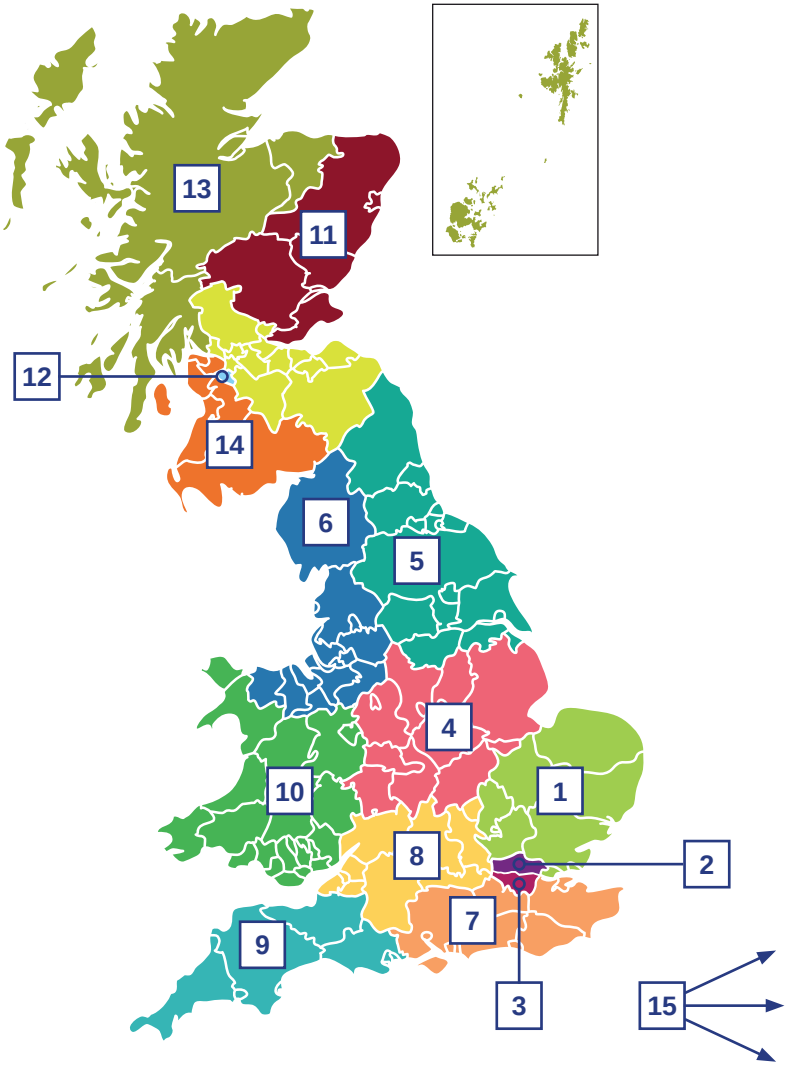
1. AA News
2. Concepts
3. Electronic Communications
4. Employment
5. Health
6. Prisons
7. Public Information
8. Telephone Communications
9. Telephone Service
10. Traditions
11. Warranties
12. Young People

In the past workshops have been held to discuss particular subjects e.g. Traditions, Concepts, finance and archives and in some instances have been incorrectly described as Regional Forums. It is important to identify the major difference between a forum and a workshop and it may be useful to describe a forum as a series of structured workshops to discuss mutually agreed service topics to meet the needs of members in the groups, intergroups and/or region.

Why Do We Need Service Entities Other Than The AA Group?

Other service entities are needed within the Fellowship to perform the services that the groups cannot perform for themselves: e.g. public information, prison and health liaison, probation and employer liaison and internal/external communication. Helping new groups to get started, sharing with them the experience of already established groups, handling pleas for help, publishing a national magazine and carrying the message in other languages into other

7. Maps of Regions of Great Britain

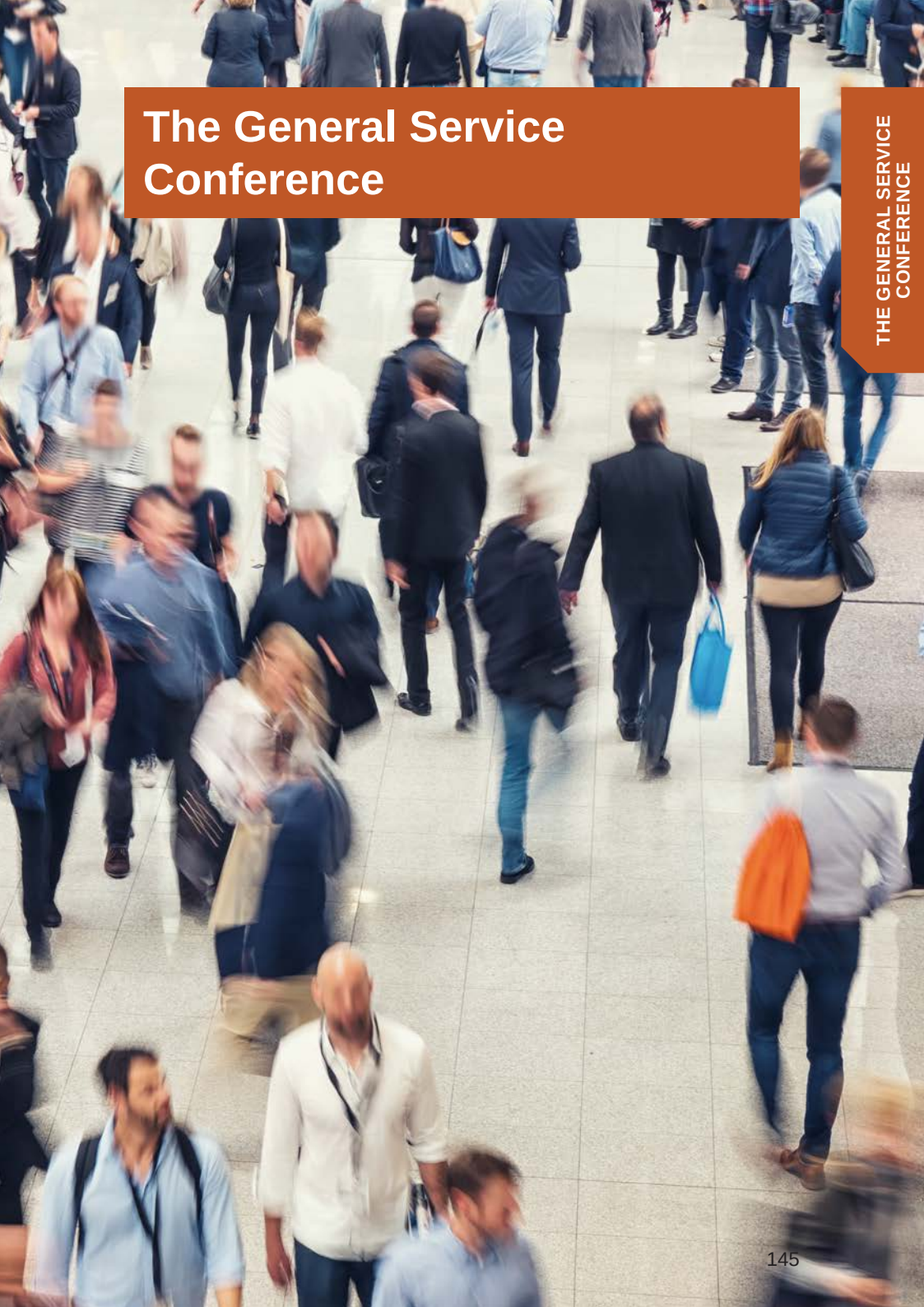


1. Eastern Region
2. London Region North
3. London Region South
4 Midlands Region
5 North East Region
6. North West Region
7. South East Region
8. South Midlands Region
9. South West Region
10. Wales & Borders Region
11. Eastern Scotland Region
12. Glasgow Region
13. Highlands & Islands Region
14. South West Scotland Region
15. Continental Europe Region

CER Online Intergroups

Please note: CER contains an Online Intergroup. Czech Republic, Hungary, Turkey are also part of CER Region, and participate regularly, but they don't have an intergroup due to its size.

The General Service Conference



1. General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain

2. Conference Steering Committee

3. The Conference Charter – Great Britain

4. Conference Report

1. General Service Conference of AA in Great Britain

The exploratory Conference held in Manchester in October 1965 concluded that the time had come when the responsibility for safeguarding the continuance and growth of AA within the Twelve Traditions should be spread more broadly. It was therefore agreed that a General Service Conference, representative of AA throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland, should be set up.

This brought together the General Service Board and the intergroups and groups throughout England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and provided a means of sharing experience and ideas. In this way the Conference hoped to further the Three Legacies, namely Recovery, Unity and Service, and ensure the healthy growth of an expanding Fellowship by creating closer ties and greater co-operation throughout these Isles.

Tradition Two states that the only authority in AA is that which expresses itself through the group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants who do not govern. This Tradition is the basic authority for all AA services, whether for groups, intergroups, regions or for the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Conference therefore begins with the group conscience. It also leads back to the group, since the group has final responsibility not just for initiating, but for implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference. The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the group conscience in Britain can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole. The existence of Conference is moreover a guarantee that the Fellowship will be able to function under all conditions. It is, in effect, the successor to the founders of AA, ensuring the continuity of the work within the framework of the Twelve Traditions.

As its name implies, the Conference is primarily a service body, not a government for AA in Great Britain . Its decisions therefore relate to the services provided by AA, particularly those administered from the centre, and they are addressed in the first place to the General Service Board as the body responsible for any action that may be required as a result of resolutions approved by Conference. A simple majority vote by Conference is a recommendation to the Board to take any necessary action; a proposal which is carried by a two-thirds majority of those voting at Conference is binding on the Board, provided that in each case

the Board is legally competent to act. In this sense only, Conference acts as the legislative body of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. For the rest, Conference can only make suggestions to the Fellowship. Any suggestion by Conference is an expression of the national group conscience and must therefore carry considerable weight. Conference has itself adopted the following procedures (points 1-8 below) for the conduct of its affairs.

The Fifteenth Conference in 1980 approved the establishment of 14 regions, 9 in England and Wales and 5 in Scotland (Ireland left the General Service Conference in 1980).

The Twenty-Third Conference in 1988 approved the establishment of a fifteenth region – AA Europe: English Speaking – which Conference 1995 agreed would be renamed Continental European Region. At Conference 2004 a second London Region was approved, bringing the number of regions up to 16. From Conference 2027 15 regions attend after Scotia Region folded.

1.1. Conference Elements

There are three essential parts to a General Service Conference:

- Firstly, there is a comprehensive report on the previous year's activities dealing particularly with the major policy decisions that were taken by the previous Conference. The principle of accountability to the Fellowship by its servants is of great importance, therefore the Conference Steering Committee (CSC) allocates time for the careful consideration of reports by the General Service Board.
- Secondly, part of each Conference is spent in the consideration of a major subject (or subjects) of importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way. Any subject that is chosen for review should not be looked at in an abstract way, but as a matter of vital importance affecting our primary purpose to stay sober ourselves and carry the message of sobriety to the still-suffering alcoholic.
- Thirdly, Conference draws together in its Final Report the decisions it has reached in the form of clear directions to the servants of the Fellowship so that they may be quite sure about the action they have to take over the coming year. Conference must give accurate guidance to those who will carry out its wishes and then check whether its proposals are being put into effect.

1.2. Location of Conference

Conference will continue to be held in York in person. Following the pandemic, use of technology to carry the message has become commonplace across the Fellowship. A hybrid option will be provided in each committee for delegates who are unable to attend in person at York.

1.3. Composition of Conference

a. Each region shall be represented by six delegates, regardless of the

number of intergroups in the region.

b. It shall be for regions to select their own delegates to the Conference, bearing in mind such considerations as the need to ensure continuity of representation from year to year and the desirability of ensuring that one of the officers of the region is given the opportunity to attend, if possible.

c. Members of the General Service Board shall be counted as full members of the Conference.

1.4. Election of Conference Chair

a. Each Annual Conference shall elect from among its third-year delegate members, a Chair for the following year's Conference. Also eligible for election will be those delegates who came to Conference as alternates and are attending their third Conference. This procedure keeps the spirit of rotation. The Conference Chair shall be closely involved in drawing up the agenda from the beginning.

b. Nominations for the Chair of the following year's Conference shall be put forward at the Friday evening session of each Conference, and the list of nominations then closed. A period should be set aside during the opening of Conference (Friday) for nominees to give a summary of their experience in AA service. The election of next year's Chair shall be held during the Sunday morning (or final) session of the Conference. **See Annex D Third Legacy Procedure.**

1.5. Delegates

a. Qualification

Quality of sobriety and service record should be the guiding principles when electing delegates. It is recommended that delegates have a minimum of five years continuous sobriety, and that before electing a delegate, a region satisfy itself that the member has demonstrated a commitment through service to the Fellowship. Potential delegates should be made aware, before election, of the commitment this post entails. In order to be elected as a delegate, a member need not be a serving member of their region at the time of their election, but an elected delegate becomes a full member of region. These recommendations apply equally to Conference delegates and alternates.

b. Rotation

1. Delegates shall be elected by regions to serve for a maximum period of three consecutive years. If a delegate is unable to attend any Conference during the period of appointment, the place may be taken for that Conference by an eligible alternate delegate. A delegate may serve as an alternate once only, but the eligibility of an alternate delegate to attend later Conferences as a full delegate will not be affected by previous attendance as an alternate.
2. Any attendance by an alternate delegate will count as part of the three-year term of the delegate whose place is taken and may not have the effect of

extending the term of the delegate originally elected.

3. When a delegate has completed the three-year term, they may not at any future time be elected for a further term as a delegate or appointed as an alternate delegate, either for the region which elected them or for any other region. They may however attend Conference as a member of the General Service Board, if so elected.

c. Preparation

Each delegate shall prepare for these responsibilities by:

1. becoming thoroughly familiar with such basic AA literature as the Big Book, Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, AA Comes of Age, The AA Service Manual (US) and Twelve Concepts for World Service, the Structure Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain and the Service Handbook of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain , if necessary by reading them again;
2. studying the proposed agenda for the Conference in the light of their understanding of AA principles, and making sure that they thoroughly understand what the agenda is about;
3. discussing the agenda in the group, intergroup, region and among individual AA friends in order to come to the Conference prepared to represent the views of the Fellowship as a whole as well as their own personal views on the matters that will be discussed;
4. getting to know how the Conference works by discussing these matters with another delegate who is familiar with Conference arrangements;
5. going to the Conference with a clear understanding that they will be there for the primary purpose of making it easier to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, and to help the sober alcoholic maintain sobriety.

d. Reporting Back

1. Delegates shall, on their return, report the conclusions of the Conference to the region which elected them.
2. Delegates shall also make available reports on the main conclusions of the Conference to the intergroups and groups in their area.
3. Delegates shall remain active in pursuing the aims of the Conferences they have attended during the periods between Conferences.

1.6. Observers from Abroad

A warm invitation shall be extended to all countries in which AA is established to send observers from their respective Fellowships to attend the Conference at their expense; and invitations to this effect shall be addressed, as the case may be, to the Chair or Manager of each national service organisation by the General Secretary in York. (These invitations should be sent out as soon as the dates for the Conference are decided.)

1.7. Conference Finances

The expenses arising from Conference shall be charged to the General Service

Board other than hotel and travelling expenses of delegates which regions will pay.

1.8. Implementation of Recommendations

a. The General Service Board shall be responsible for taking any action that may be required arising from the resolutions adopted by the Conference, and a report on such action shall be presented to the General Service Conference the following year.
b. The Fellowship shall be informed of action that may have been taken by means of publication in AA News.
c. The CSC should monitor progress of Conference recommendations rather than delegate responsibility to General Service Board (General Service Conference 1997, Committee 5, Question 4).

2. Conference Steering Committee

Conference 2001 adopted the recommendation that the Fellowship be served by a revised Conference Steering Committee (CSC) comprising as follows:

Structure

a. The annually elected Conference Chairperson, acting as Chair.
b. All the annually elected Committee Chairs (6)
c. Two Board Members for guidance, support and continuity
d. General Secretary (non-voting)
e. Conference co-ordinator (non-voting)

The CSC will continue to rely on the General Service Board, the General Service Office, the General Secretary and Conference Co-ordinator for support, advice and assistance with the development of the Conference programme. This ensures continuity and is necessary for the success of the Conference Steering Committee's remit.

Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference are reviewed annually by the CSC, being mindful always to observe our Traditions, Concepts and Warranties. They are distributed to the Fellowship with AA News and published on the AAGB website.

Topics/Questions (referred to as items below) for Conference

All items received by 31 August will be reviewed fully by the CSC. In assessing their suitability for Conference, the Committee will be guided by the criteria set out in the Conference elements above, – "a major subject or subjects of topical importance affecting the Fellowship in the widest possible way..." together with criteria established through Conference recommendations.

In making a decision on an item, the CSC will place it in one of the categories laid

out in the annually revised Terms of Reference.

Any items generated during their discussions and considered as suitable for Conference, if not already submitted, may be submitted by the Committee members. The Committee will do its best to obtain relevant background information to the prospective item, whenever possible, to ensure the spirit of it is understood. The Committee will, before non-acceptance of any item under the 'three year rule' that had a Conference recommendation for Board action, check through its Board members that action was taken or is planned. The Committee will submit comprehensive reasons for the non-acceptance of any Conference item to the sender. Receipt of all Conference items will be acknowledged by the General Service Office.

- All items for each year's Conference should be sent to the General Service Office as soon as possible and no later than the 31 August to allow the CSC sufficient time to consider the submissions and to respond accordingly.
- All items to be addressed to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO with the sender's name and address on the item itself.
- If acknowledgement hasn't been received within 14 days, phone or write to Conference Co-ordinator at GSO.
- All items are passed to the CSC with no information about who sent them in.
- Items from an individual member or group/intergroup/region are treated the same.
- All items received by 31 August from individuals, groups, intergroups or regions are dealt with according to the current Terms of Reference. Special consideration will be given by the Committee to any matters of major importance that have remained unresolved from previous Conferences or have been referred for further deliberation by a Conference.

Items which are accepted together with support material and background information will be distributed by the end of December to:

- Conference Delegates
- Regional Chairs and Secretaries
- Intergroup Secretaries
- Trustees

The accepted topics/questions will be published in AA News and on the AAGB website.

The Conference Programme is part of the remit of the CSC and will be reviewed annually. Any further resolutions from individuals, groups, intergroups or regions must be submitted to the Board at least two months before the Conference for possible inclusion in the final agenda.

Questions regarding any of the Board reports and literature amendments should be sent to GSO by the end of March.

3. The Conference Charter – Great Britain

Adopted by the General Service Conference, Great Britain, 1995

Article 1. Purpose
The General Service Conference (Great Britain) of Alcoholics Anonymous is the guardian of the services and of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA in Great Britain.The Conference shall be a service body only; never a government for Alcoholics Anonymous.

Article 2. Composition
The Conference (Great Britain) shall be composed of six delegates from each region and the Trustees/directors of the General Service Board ex officio. Conference may invite from time to time non-voting foreign observers.

Article 3. Conference relation to AA
The Conference will act for AA in Great Britain in the perpetuation and guidance of its services and it will also be the vehicle by which AA in Great Britain can express its views on all matters of vital AA policy and all hazardous deviations from AA Tradition.

Delegates should be free to vote as their conscience dictates; they should also be free to decide what questions should be taken to group or intergroup level, whether for information, discussion, or their own direct instruction. But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in the Twelve Traditions of AA or the Twelve Steps of AA may be made with less than the written consent of three quarters of all registered AA groups worldwide.

Article 4. Conference relation to the General Service Board and its corporate services
Since 1966 Conference has been for all practical purposes the voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain. A quorum of Conference shall consist of two thirds of all the Conference members registered. Conference decisions will be addressed by the General Service Board as the body responsible for any action that may be required as a result of resolutions approved by Conference.

To give effect to this purpose, and as a matter of tradition, it will be understood that a simple majority vote by Conference constitutes a recommendation to the General Service Board to take any necessary action; and that a two-thirds vote of the Conference shall be considered binding upon the General Service Board (provided that in each case the total vote cast constitutes at least a Conference quorum) except where this shall conflict with the General Service Board's legal obligations as a charitable company; and no such vote ought to impair the legal rights of the General Service Board and the service entities to conduct routine business and make ordinary contracts.

It will be further understood, regardless of the legal prerogative of the General Service Board, as a matter of tradition, that a three-quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganisation of the General Service Board and the directors and staff members of its service entities if or when such reorganisation is deemed essential.

Under such a proceeding the Conference may request resignations, may nominate new trustees, and may make all other necessary arrangements regardless of the legal prerogatives of the General Service Board.

Article 5. Regional Assemblies, composition of
Assemblies, designated as Regional Assemblies, consist of the elected representatives from a workable number of intergroups in a convenient geographical location and with common internal and external interests. Consequently some regions may be large territorially but relatively small in terms of AA population and vice versa.

It is suggested that a Regional Assembly should comprise two or three regional representatives from each of its constituent Intergroups, together with its elected officers and General Service Board member. The aforementioned are the sole holders of voting rights.

Regional Assemblies may co-opt a member, or members, of the Fellowship to carry out specific tasks

Article 6. Regional Assemblies, purpose of
Regionalisation throughout Great Britain was established in 1980 following the approval of the Fifteenth General Service Conference.

Regional Assemblies are a link in the chain of communication between groups, intergroups, Conference and the General Service Board. Their primary function is to help their member intergroups by offering co-operative co-ordination of service activity in Great Britain.

Each Regional Assembly may elect six delegates to the General Service Conference of Great Britain irrespective of the number of its member intergroups.

Article 7. Regional Assemblies, methods of electing Officers and Conference Delegates
Whenever practicable, regional officers and Conference delegates are elected by written ballot from the current membership of the Assembly.

Variants of, or approximations to, the Third Legacy procedure, as provided in “The AA Service Manual”, have been employed from time to time for such elections.

Article 8. Regional Assemblies, terms of office for officers and Conference delegates
Unless otherwise directed by Conference, tenure of office shall be for a three year period.

Article 9. The General Service Conference meetings.
The Conference will meet yearly in the City of York, unless otherwise agreed upon. Special meetings may be called should there be a grave emergency. The

Conference may also render advisory opinions at any time by a mail or telephone poll in aid of the General Service Board or its related services.

Article 10. The General Service Board: Composition, jurisdiction, responsibilities.
The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited is a company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital, and is a registered charity composed of alcoholic and non-alcoholic trustees who appoint their own successors, subject to approval by Conference, from nominees presented by the Regional Assemblies. According to its Memorandum and Articles of Association the number of members with which the company proposes to be registered is unlimited. In practice, the number of alcoholic members is determined on the basis of one per region and the number of non-alcoholic members by the requirements of the Fellowship at a particular time. The General Service Board is the chief service arm of Conference and is essentially custodial in character.

Excepting for decisions upon matters of policy, finance or AA tradition liable to seriously affect AA as a whole, the General Service Board has entire freedom of action in the routine conduct of the policy and business affairs of the AA service entities in Great Britain, and may name suitable committees and elect members to its subsidiary service entities in pursuance of this purpose. The General Service Board is primarily responsible for the financial and policy integrity of its subsidiary services and for such other service entities as the Conference may decide to form.

Except in a great emergency, neither the General Service Board nor any of its related services ought ever to take any action liable to greatly affect AA as a whole, without first consulting the Conference. It is nevertheless understood that the Board shall at all times reserve the right to decide which of its actions or decisions may require the approval of the Conference.

Article 11. The General Service Conference, its general procedures.
The Conference will receive an annual report from the General Service Board on policy and finance including the accounts for the previous financial year. The Conference will advise on all matters affecting AA as a whole, engage in discussion and debate and make recommendations for the advice or direction of the General Service Board and its related services.

Article 12. General Warranties of the Conference.
In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA 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 principle; that none of the Conference members shall ever be placed in a position of unqualified authority over any of the others; that all important decisions be reached by discussion, vote and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that no Conference action ever be personally

punitive or an incitement to public controversy; 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 shall always remain democratic in thought and action.

4. Conference Report

This report is a record of the current year's Conference and consists of:

- A record of delegates attending, which includes Conference Chair, members of the General Service Board, General Service Office staff, representatives from Share and Roundabout and the regional delegates who make up the six Committees
- Chairperson's opening and closing remarks
- Trustee presentations of Service Board Reports
- National Conventions Update
- Report of the Open Forum
- Conference Steering Committee Report
- Committee responses to Conference Topics/Questions, and the results of voting on the outcome of these and proposals brought to Conference
- Election of next year's Chair
- Names of next year's Committee Secretaries and Chairs
- Ratification of Board Members-Elec

At the conclusion of the committee proceedings the Committee Chairs submit responses to the topics/questions submitted to them by the Fellowship to the Conference Convener and the General Service Office Staff present. From the responses, and to enable the delegates to consider them, a preliminary report is compiled and given to delegates at the close of the Saturday evening plenary session.

The six committees' recommendations are presented to Conference during the final plenary session; they are discussed, voted on and a final decision reached. The outcome forms part of the General Service Conference Report which is distributed to the delegates, groups, intergroups and regions. The reports are also posted on the AA Website. The previous ten years reports may also be found in the Document File on the website.

The General Service Board

1. The General Service Board

2. Executive Committee

3. GSB Members

4. The AA Publications

5. Governance

1. The General Service Board

The General Service Board, whose full title is “The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited” consists of both alcoholic and non-alcoholic members. The Board is responsible to the General Service Conference for carrying into effect the decisions taken by the Conference on service matters and is required to give an account of its stewardship to the Conference annually.

The General Service Board is the custodian of the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. As such, it has a responsibility to ensure that the Traditions are preserved intact and that the Fellowship of AA in Great Britain acts in accordance with the Traditions.

Specific services carried out by the General Service Board and for which it is responsible to Conference include:

1. The administration and operation of the General Service Office at 10 Toft Green, York, which serves Great Britain and English-speaking AA groups throughout Europe (Continental European Region) and the Northern and Southern Service Offices
2. The printing and publishing of AA books and pamphlets (AA published and Conference approved), where applicable under copyright and licence agreements with AA World Services Inc.
3. The distribution of books and pamphlets in Great Britain, and English-speaking AA groups throughout Europe (Continental European Region).
4. Appointment of a Trustee to National Convention Committees in order to ensure that the Convention programme is in conformity with the spirit and the Traditions of AA and to oversee all financial accounting. (All surpluses from National Conventions are to be paid over to the General Service Office.
5. On their appointment to the General Service Board, alcoholic members simultaneously become full members of the Regional Assemblies which nominated them and, as trustees of the General Service Board, are expected to attend such Assemblies.
6. Co-operation and guidance in Conference arrangements and Agenda.

7. Internal communications; sharing and liaison with AA in the United States and in other countries throughout the world; collaboration, representation and active participation in World Service Meetings; the production and publication of Share and of Roundabout and the production and publication of 'AA News'.
8. External communications; liaison with outside agencies in the field of alcoholism at national level and the provision of speakers. There are many such agencies, and those with which we currently co-operate most intimately include the Medical Council on Alcoholism, the Society of Occupational Medicine and Alcohol Concern, as well as prisons and hospitals. Maintaining relations with the news media – the press, the television and radio authorities; and providing speakers for these and other appropriate bodies.

The General Service Board (GSB) operates through three types of committee or working group:

a) Committees composed of GSB members and the General Secretary
- Finance
- Nominations
- Executive (See 2 below)

Supporting the GSB to carry out work as recommended by Conference are AAGB Sub Committees and Working Groups

The Board of Trustees may by general resolution delegate to committees or to officers of the General Service Board such powers as they deem appropriate in the service of the purposes to which the General Service Board is dedicated.

b) AAGB Sub Committees, with a trustee chair and Fellowship members interviewed and appointed by the Nominations Committee
At present, these are:

- Archives
- Armed Forces
- Employment
- First Response Online
- Health
- Literature
- National Telephones
- Prison
- Probation / Criminal Justice
- Public Information & Electronic Communications
- Roundabout
- Share
- Survey
- Young Persons

Vacancies on these sub-committees are posted in AA News and on the AAGB website, along with eligibility criteria.

A sub-committee may be formed to work on a specific project for a limited time, e.g. 75th Anniversary Convention.

The term served on a sub-committee is usually 4 years. Members are expected to attend at least two meetings in York and two meetings online.

c) **Working groups may be formed to address specific issues, with members co- opted for their experience and insight, e.g., Diversity, Race Today.**

In all cases, these committees and sub-committees are to advise, and not to instruct the GSB. Members of these committees serve on behalf of the Fellowship as a whole, and do not represent the regions from which they come. Trustees with specifically designated service areas serve on the appropriate committees. Committee reports are presented to the full GSB meeting for consideration.

2. The Executive Committee

1. Composition

a) Chair, Vice-Chair, Hon.Treasurer and General Secretary.

b) Any Trustee, employee or other person may be requested by the Executive Committee to attend a meeting, or part of a meeting, of the Executive Committee if this is considered necessary by the Executive Committee to facilitate the discharge of their responsibilities. Any Trustee or employee may submit a request to bring matters before the Executive Committee through its agenda or in person if appropriate.

2. Function

a) To monitor and co-ordinate on-going Board projects

b) To act on behalf of the Board when matters arise and must be dealt with between meetings of the Board

c) To act as liaison between the Board and its General Service Office through the General Secretary, and

d) To carry out specific delegated tasks set by the Board. By law, authorisation of such projects must be recorded in the Board minutes.

3. Reporting

It is required by law that business delegated to individuals or working groups be reported to the Board. To this end, the Executive Committee should take notes or minutes of their business, and a report of relevant items from these notes or minutes given as a standing part of the agenda at all Board meetings. The report should preferably be given by the Vice-Chair of the Board. The Executive Committee is strictly a facilitating committee of the Board and makes reports only to the GeneralService Board

3. GSB Members

Desirable Qualifications for Alcoholic Trustees

Background and experience

Many Trustees have brought extensive business or professional experience to the

Board, which has been of the greatest value in shaping the structure of the affairs of the General Service Board itself, of Conference and of the administration of the General Services of AA. In particular, it is difficult to imagine how Conference could have been brought into being and developed so quickly into its present strength and sense of high responsibility without such members. Equally, the assumption by the Board of responsibility for the services followed by the rapid and progressive broadening of their range of activities, their sphere of influence outside the Fellowship and the preparation and establishment of a structure designed not only for the present but also for future growth, would not have been feasible without their trained and experienced services.

It is therefore important if we are to provide for a future of growing service to a growing Fellowship that we look for the following qualities in our Trustees.

a) **Leadership**
In AA this includes qualities of enabling a member to help their group or city or area to grow with a minimum of friction and a maximum of good feeling.

b) **Grasp of AA structure**
Some members of our Fellowship have a special aptitude for the AA structure and are thoroughly familiar with all of its elements, from group to General Service Board and Conference. They are usually good 'students' of the movement, familiar with its history and the trends that affect its future.

A Trustee with these attributes can bring useful perspective to Board discussions.

In addition, there are basic considerations which experience has shown to be important to all Trustees.

One is maturity or "time-in". Ten years continuous sobriety and previous experience, full term or about to complete, as a delegate to the General Service Conference is essential. If in exceptional circumstances a delegate is unable to complete their 3 year term the sponsoring region may, at their discretion, permit the delegate to complete their term.

Another basic is resoluteness – having the courage of one's convictions. The chosen candidate should bring to Board Meetings good judgement, objectivity and the courage to express themselves.

Another important basic is availability. How much time does the candidate have to devote to the work of the Board without hurting family or career? Are they available for meetings nationally, to attend Conference and to give extra time in their own area when necessary?

Composition of the General Service Board

The Articles of Association of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited state: "The number of members with which the Company proposes to be registered is unlimited." In practice, the number of alcoholic members of the General Service Board is determined by the requirements of the

Fellowship at a particular time, the availability of suitable members in the light of the qualifications described above, and the number of regions in Great Britain, including Continental Europe.

If a region will not have had a trustee on the GSB for at least two years at the time of ratification at Conference, then a single candidate may be nominated by that region for interview by the GSB's Nominations Committee. Best practice will still be for a minimum of two candidates to be put forward. It should be remembered that the Nominations Committee can already recommend that no proposed candidate is accepted and that a single candidate might not be recommended to the GSB.

As a condition of election as a member and election as a Trustee of the General Service Board, each person shall before qualifying to serve as a member and Trustee, execute appropriate instruments addressed to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, stating that they have no bar to becoming a Trustee and agrees to comply with and be bound by all the terms and provisions of the Articles of Association.

Appointment of new members of the General Service Board

Alcoholic members of the General Service Board are appointed on the basis of one from each of the 15 regions.

In addition, a region whose Trustee is elected to serve as Chair, Vice-Chair or Treasurer of the Board shall be entitled to submit new nominations for another Trustee to take the place of the member elected to serve in one of these offices. Trustees appointed under this provision shall serve a full term of membership.

At least six months before the retirement of an alcoholic member, the Secretary of the Board will notify the region which the retiring member represents, and invite the region to submit the names of suitable candidates for consideration by the Board. This invitation will be accompanied by nomination forms and reference copies of The Good Trustee Guide and Introduction to the Board.

Regions are requested to nominate at least two candidates in order to afford the Board the opportunity to select the candidate whose personal qualities are most needed at a particular time. This may mean that an excellent candidate whose experience and aptitudes are already matched in the existing membership may be less suitable than another candidate who could make a unique contribution to the work of the Board.

If a region will not have had a trustee on the GSB for at least two years at the time of ratification at Conference, then a single candidate may be nominated by that region for interview by the GSB's Nominations Committee. Best practice will still be for a minimum of two candidates to be put forward.

It should be remembered that the Nominations Committee can already recommend that no proposed candidate is accepted and that a single candidate might not be recommended to the GSB.

In considering who to nominate, regions should bear in mind the service of former office bearers who may no longer be active but whose experience would make them especially suitable for Board membership. Regions will wish to give careful consideration to the suggested qualifications for Board membership outlined in previous paragraphs.

The Nominations Sub-committee will make its recommendations to the General Service Board which is empowered to make an appointment to the Board or to decline any or all of the nominations. The appointment of an alcoholic member will be submitted to the next General Service Conference for confirmation and will take effect immediately after such confirmation. Ideally, nominations of new alcoholic members should be approved by the General Service Board at the meeting immediately prior to the General Service Conference.

New members of the General Service Board are required to attend a formal 'Introduction to the Board' at which they receive copies of the Introduction to the Board, Good Trustees Guide, Charity Leaflet CC3 and GSB policy documents explaining their responsibilities as Trustees.

When an alcoholic member moves away from the region which nominated them as a Trustee, the region and the Trustee concerned should consider whether they should resign from the Board. Vacancies resulting from such resignations, or from resignations for other reasons, will be filled by the procedure described above.

Non-alcoholic Trustees are appointed to the General Service Board for the special contributions they are able to make by virtue of their personal experience and background. Such appointments are made by the General Service Board on its own initiative and are subject to confirmation by the General Service Conference. The Fellowship of AA owes a deep debt of gratitude to our non-alcoholic Trustees who have helped us very greatly over the years by opening many doors which might otherwise remain closed to the message of AA. They come from many different walks of life and gladly and voluntarily share in the work of spreading the AA message.

Rotation

Alcoholic Trustees are initially elected for a maximum term of four years. Alcoholic Trustees elected to the Executive Committee may serve a maximum term of six years as a Trustee.

NAT's (non-Alcoholic trustees) serve for four years with an option of a second four-year term, by mutual agreement, giving a maximum of eight years under all circumstances.

In principle, the term of office on the Executive Committee should be a maximum of four years.

Officers of the General Service Board

The Officers of the General Service Board (The Executive Committee) consists of:

- The Chair
- The Vice-Chair
- The Treasurer
- The Secretary

The Chair, the Vice Chair and the Treasurer are elected by the members of the General Service Board from among their own number. On the expiry of their term of office each officer ceases to be an officer and is not eligible for re-election at any time.
The Vice – Chair does not have the automatic right of succession to the Chair.
The Secretary to the General Service Board is also General Secretary of the General Service Office. The holder of this joint appointment is the principal paid official for the Fellowship and is responsible to the General Service Board for the day-to-day management of the General Service Office and of the Northern and Southern Service Offices. The Secretary is appointed and employed by the General Service Board under a formal contract of employment.

The Term of Service of GSB Officer

Continuity and effectiveness have been addressed by the Board to maintain a high standard of officer service. The tradition of sponsorship is employed with officers-elect being given the opportunity wherever possible to shadow outgoing officers for a period of up to nine months.

These guidelines are compatible with the Articles of Association.

4. The AA Publications

Copyright/LOGO Guidelines

Copyright
The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain is granted permission under licence to publish and distribute AA Published and Conference Approved literature.

The AAW.S. and General Service Board of the US/Canada delegates direct responsibility for copyright protection to the General Service Board and General Service Conference of Great Britain.

Conference Great Britain 1996 recommended that no literature be reproduced by individuals, groups, intergroups or regions for either internal or external use and that non-AA literature should not be reproduced for internal and external use.

AA Published and Conference Approved literature is so called because it reflects the overall AA thinking on a given subject, rather than individual or group opinion. The Fellowship is reminded that copyrighted material must not be copied by any means [including electronic scanning], as this would be in violation of the copyright.

Many local internal publications quote from AA literature such as the Big Book, the “Twelve and Twelve”, The AA Service Manual and Conference-approved pamphlets. When this occurs, please include the proper credit line in order to ensure that the copyrights of AA literature are protected.

Logo

Two logos have been registered by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain and these are:

The logo with the words Recovery, Unity and Service may be used as follows:

- Documents, correspondence, pamphlets, etc from the General Service Board and General Service Office
- Minutes and reports prepared by regions and their elected officer
- Minutes and reports prepared by intergroups and their elected officer
- Convention, forum and workshop announcements sponsored by intergroups or regions
- Communications by Service Liaison Officer with outside professional bodies to assist our primary purpose
- ‘Share’ and ‘Roundabout’

NB Permission for any other use can only be granted, in writing, by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain.

The logo with the words ‘General Service Conference’ can only be used by Conference. This logo is used in relation to Conference approved material.
The logos, as they appear above, are the only ones recognised by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain. They are not intended to be used for commercial or private purposes.

Where to Find

'Where to Find AA' is the national meeting directory for Great Britain, including English speaking groups in Continental European Region and as such is an invaluable source of information for the new member and the travelling member. In order to ensure that it remains accurate, group secretaries are requested to keep the General Service Office informed of any changes in the address of the meeting place, the starting time of the meeting or the telephone contact numbers for the meeting.

'Where to Find' may also be found on the AA website, where names and personal numbers are not shown.

AAGB Website

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous GB was tasked by Conference 1998, Committee 6, to provide and maintain a presence on the Internet on behalf of the Fellowship of Great Britain .

The national AAGB website is located at www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk, and is administered on behalf of the Fellowship by the General Service Board via the Electronic Communications Sub Committee (ECSC) and by the General Service Office (GSO) of Great Britain.

In addition to the ECSC and GSO staff, the website services are supported by Third Party Suppliers for server hosting. Technical support work may be outsourced by the General Service Board.

Alcoholics-Anonymous.org.uk is a multi-function site with dedicated areas allocated to fulfilling our Primary Purpose and to providing services to the Fellowship

In accordance with Conference 2013 decision, the following external links should be allowed (using an appropriate disclaimer):

- The websites of other national AA General Service Office
- Mapping software, to aid searches for meetings
- Language translation software, to aid people for whom English is not their first language
- Secure payment services websites, to allow members to use the online shop
  All other external links will require Conference approval.

5. Governance

Adopted by the General Service Conference, Great Britain, 1995

Relationships between the Board and its supporters and consultation mechanism

The Conference Charter (Great Britain) was adopted at the 1995 General Service Conference in order that the charitable company, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Ltd. may properly describe the governance (i.e. the relationship between the Board and its supporters, and consultation mechanisms) of AA in terms appropriate to the law of England and Wales where the company is registered.

The Board is a limited company regulated by its Memorandum and Articles of Association as laid down in the Companies Acts. This instrument is a legal document which has a bearing only on the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited.

The Board is the servant of the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and in common with other groups of Trusted Servants depends upon the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, the Twelve Concepts for Service and the Charter of the General Service Conference to guide its policies. Because the Board is a charitable company registered in England and Wales these instruments must be appropriate to their application in Great Britain and written in language which makes it clear that the Board recognises its responsibilities under the law of England and Wales.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a Fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for AA membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. AA is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes. Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

AA members meet as groups which form elected, representative service bodies, intergroups and regions whose purpose is to facilitate the carrying of the AA message by the groups to the still-suffering alcoholic. This service structure nominates persons for election to the General Service Board. The General Service Board serves the Fellowship by providing central services of various types and is a registered charity.

The groups, intergroups and regions are recognised by the Charity Commissioners as informal, autonomous “affiliated groups” which have no independent constitution. As such, these bodies are not held to be accountable to the General Service Board or to the Charity Commission but have the right to submit nominations of persons to serve as Trustees on that Board.

The governance of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain is based on the voluntary instruments: the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, Twelve Concepts for Service and the Charter of the General Service Conference.

Consultation between the main charity, the General Service Board (GSB), and its supporters (the groups, intergroups and regions of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain) takes place on a regular basis through service forums and workshops and annual General Service Conference comprising elected delegates from each of the regions in Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) and the Trustees of the Board.

The Charity Commissioners and their lawyers have agreed that the groups, intergroups and regions of Alcoholics Anonymous will be regarded as “affiliated groups” which are autonomous, informal bodies having the right to submit nominations of persons to serve as Trustees of the main Board. Provided that groups, intergroups and regions are not formally established by constitution and do not seek funding from outside agencies they will be ignored by the Charity Commissioners.

In the above we have a position which allows us to maintain our Traditions and our Guidelines. In other words we are being allowed to continue, more or less, as before the new legislation. In order for this special treatment to continue, the groups, intergroups and regions must:

1. ensure that they do not have a constitution* which identifies them as an independent body
2. not hold themselves out to be a charity in their own right and must not use the Board’s charity registration number for any purpose (this is already the case) and
3. if funds are kept in a bank account, ensure that the account is in the name of Alcoholics Anonymous

* Constitution. Our advisors tell us that the setting up of a document describing how the group, intergroup or region is set up e.g. how committees are elected is acceptable but any such document must not contain objects which are the same as the main charity or set themselves up as stand-alone bodies independent of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain). The advice also suggests that it might be safer to drop the term “constitution” and give the document some other title.

Trudging The Road

It would indeed be premature to imagine that, having served in all or most of the capacities listed in this guidance, the end of the AA road has been reached. For the road of AA Service is one that has no end. One day at a time, the future will unfold in a way that today we cannot imagine. Let us therefore be ready at all times, as we have been each day during our period of sobriety, to remain a trusted servant, in whatever capacity is asked of us.

In conclusion, regions, intergroups and groups should always bear in mind the value of keeping the experienced members in view for further service or as a backup in consultation on service matters, ever being mindful of the principle of rotation. At both intergroup and regional level, use should be made of service committees which should contain a blend of members of varying degrees of experience and newcomers to service, whilst being careful not to deny the newcomer service opportunities.

The experienced member should be given the opportunity to talk at workshops designed to introduce the newcomer to service, encouraged to share from the top table and to write to 'Share' and 'Roundabout' magazines about the benefit of service, and for a period work in tandem with their successor. Many such members would be delighted to assist in service so the direct approach is often the best. Ask them!

The General Service Office

1. The General Service Office

2. European Service Meeting

3. World Service Meeting

4. GSO Money

1. The General Service Office

10 Toft Green, York, has been the home of the General Service Office since early 2007 and houses the main administration and distribution centre for AA information in Great Britain and English speaking Continental Europe. It is the registered office of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) Limited. Visitors are always welcome and most weekends see one or more national service meetings taking place.

The GSO serves as the central point for co-ordinating, storing and passing on the wealth of AA experience that has been gathered over the years and provides a wide variety of services to the Fellowship. It is from GSO that Conference approved literature is published and distributed, where the resources of AA are managed and the national Archives of AA in Great Britain are housed. The Annual Report of the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain is legally required and is produced and distributed by GSO.

The main functions centred in the GSO are the publication and distribution of literature, financial controls, group registry, production of Share and Roundabout, co-ordination of national events, professional exhibitions and conferences, the co-ordination of AA's national Conference, maintaining service databases, for example the prison sponsor listing, supporting and organising the work of the General Service Board. All these functions are based on sound business principles.

GSO is the centre of communication for over 4,500 groups, 138 intergroups, including 19 in Continental European Region and 15 regions in Great Britain and Continental Europe (as at conference 2026).

The GSO serves as the European Information Centre, and as such communicates on a regular basis with other General Service Offices in most of Europe. Organises the biennial European Service Meeting which brings together representatives from European countries to share service experience to help carry the message within the growing Fellowship in Europe.
Communication with the AA service structures throughout the world is also regularly maintained.

Northern and Southern Service Office

The two satellite offices of the General Service Office – the Northern Service Office (NSO) and the Southern Service Office (SSO), which were set up in 199 – provide a more localised service to the Fellowship and serve to smooth the flow of information from and to the groups, intergroups, regions, GSO and the General Service Board.

The NSO is situated in Glasgow and one of the areas of work in the NSO is that of supporting the Roundabout Team. The staff also provides information to the public and professionals, particularly in Scotland, and answer queries from members of AA and the public.

The SSO, in London, also serves to pass on and gather information from the AA structure in the South. The office itself provides a space for the London Telephone Service and the staff supports the Responder Teams in their service work.

The GSO, NSO and SSO are not in any way an authority in Alcoholics Anonymous. The small team of staff, whether members of the Fellowship or not, have a common understanding of the primary purpose of AA and every activity in the three offices is directed to this end. Each staff member is conscious of their responsibility to the individual member as well as to the Fellowship as a whole. They are always ready to pass on the vast amount of experience gathered over the years in response to the queries that are posed by members of the Fellowship.

The services provided by all three offices cannot be fully described here but members who do request information, who want help with a problem, any professional who wants information on AA, any member of the public who may be worried about a relative or friend will be given the care and consideration that is a major element of Alcoholics Anonymous.

2. European Service Meeting

The Fifth World Service Meeting (WSM), held in 1978 in Finland, recommended the setting up of a European Service Meeting (ESM). Concern was expressed that many countries that might most benefit from AA experience could not send delegates to the WSM, and it was therefore suggested that countries with less developed structures be invited to the ESM. The first such meeting was held in Frankfurt in October 1981

Delegates are elected by, and answerable to, the Fellowship of AA in their respective countries. Only elected delegates are allowed to attend the ESM, and it should be possible to adhere to these principles even where a formal AA structure has not yet evolved. No delegates should pay their own expenses. Those countries which can afford to pay in full should do so, and those countries which can afford to pay only a portion should pay that portion. The ESM encourages the growth of our self-support tradition. The ESM, and in the longer term the European Information Centre (established 1978), should be fully supported by voluntary contributions from the various countries in Europe.

The General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) agreed to administer the ESM Fund as a restricted fund designated for the ESM and associated AA service activities in Europe controlled by the Trustees of the General Service Board through the Executive Committee. This Fund exists to cover any shortfall experienced by the ESM as well as any ongoing AA services provided.

Bill W. suggests we should "enlarge those overseas services. To eliminate the distressing garble that has plagued many distant AA groups for years, we shall need to furnish far more and better translations of our basic literature. Sheer lack of an understanding of AA's Twelve Traditions has routinely created chaotic conditions in many a land." (AA Grapevine 1960.)

The ESM acts as a forum and encourages the widest possible sharing of experience and co-operation between countries, in particular working with and sponsorship of the new and developing structures, and assisting in the planning of sound structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries throughout Europe. The ESM can also represent an expression of the group conscience of the Fellowship in Europe. This is achieved through the sharing of experience, the ongoing work of the three standing committees, and general sharing in three workshops. Themes, topics and questions for discussion at the three workshops are considered and determined by the delegates. An Agenda Committee was formed in 1990 comprising the elected Chair for the next ESM, three delegates and the Secretary of the ESM. The structure of the ESM complements that of the WSM and the continuity is facilitated by the three standing committees, as follows:

1. Agenda, Policy, Admissions and Finance
2. Working with other countries
3. Literature Publishing / Media Communications

The primary purpose of the ESM is the same as that of all AA activity – to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever they may be, whatever language they speak, and the exploration of expanding AA services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication and co-operation with other countries.

3. African Service Meeting

The inaugural African Service Meeting (ASM) will be held in Nairobi November 2026 after invitation from the Kenya Intergroup to assist in their development in 2025 led to a number of online workshops hosted by AAGB on topics such as electronic communication, PI, Prisons, Telephones and Governance, with members of Kenya Intergroup, Egypt, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Burundi, South Sudan, Ghana, Seychelles and Madagascar all learning and sharing experiences. This initiative has also been supported by attendance of trustees and staff members of AA World Services. The conscience of these meetings was to create a physical forum to reengage fledgling African Fellowships which had struggled and some of which had fallen back following the cessation of the Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM) as the South African Board of Alcoholics Anonymous expressed their wish to become a self-supporting forum of the Southern African Fellowships and were no longer funded by AA World Services (AAWS) and AA Great Britain (AAGB).

The primary purpose of the African Service Meeting is that of all AA activity - to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever they maybe and whatever language they speak. The ASM seeks to accomplish this by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates who come together from all over Africa.

The SSASM which the ASM replaces, was held bi-annually from 2003 to 2019 in Johannesburg and online in 2021 and 2023. Delegates were mostly poor and from areas where there was no AA money to help them. One man walked 21 kms to the airport to get his plane to Johannesburg. Another had borrowed a fine white suit to wear as he had no decent clothes of his own. The meeting was funded by AAWS and AAGB. The plan was to get at least one dedicated AA telephone number in each country for the suffering alcoholic in need of help.

AAGB and AAWS also donated literature and funded translations of the Big Book and other AA literature into Swahili (Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda), Luganda (Uganda), Twi (Ghana), Xhosa, Zulu and Afrikaans (south Africa), helping those pioneer AA's carry our message to communities suffering from alcoholism and with little means of assistance. This enabled fledgling AA groups and structures thrive and become part of our Global Fellowship.

The African Service Meeting therefore seeks to bring together representatives of fledgling and developing AA fellowships, speaking indigenous languages as well as English to help each other to build a coherent service structure, assist with further translations of the Big Book and other AA literature, develop telephone and web services and generally utilise newer technologies, all to better carry the message of recovery directly to suffering alcoholics as well as through health care, education and criminal justice systems throughout Africa.

4. World Service Meeting

The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting (WSM) is the same as that of all AA activity – to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world they may be, whatever the language spoken. The WSM seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world.

(Currently Great Britain sends two delegates.) It can also represent the conscience of the Fellowship worldwide.

Experience teaches us that developing a sound structure enables us to deliver our services more effectively. The WSM encourages the planning of sound service structures suited to the needs and capabilities of the various countries and the exploration of expanding AA services to reach the alcoholic through internal communication, literature distribution, sponsorship, public information, community relations and work with institutions.

5. GSO Money

- All groups, intergroups and regions should accept responsibility for the funding of the General Service Office. The financial operations at GSO, the methods of accountability to Conference through the Board, and the board financial strategies adopted on behalf of the Fellowship, are all subject to continuous review.
- The Management Accountant at GSO is central to the day-to-day financial operations and also participates fully in the policy discussions and recommendations of the regional treasurers' meetings, the Finance Committee and its working groups. Computerised accounts (based on cost centres), and financial statements are prepared monthly following the recommended

Conventions

1. Local Conventions

2. National Conventions

Conventions offer an opportunity for members to gather and share their experience, strength and hope.

“Each Group has but one primary purpose -- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers” (Tradition Five)

Separate social events may add to the enjoyment of a convention, promoting fellowship.

The following offers basic guidance for all conventions. A planning checklist follows in Annex A, and suggested Terms of Reference in Annex B.

1. Local Conventions

Organisation
The decision to hold a convention is usually made by the group conscience of the appropriate intergroup or region (the sponsoring body). A committee should be elected for the purpose of planning, organising and running the event. The Convention Committee should:

- Have overall responsibility and be accountable to the sponsoring body for financial and all other matters
- Bear in mind the need for conventions to be self-supporting
- Appoint a chair, convenor or both
- Follow the normal principle of rotation across the whole of the Convention Committee

Children and babies: Conference recommends that accompanied children should not be excluded from conventions. Organisers must therefore be mindful of relevant safeguarding issues.

Finance
In all financial matters Tradition Seven should be adhered to:

“Every AA Group ought to be self-supporting, declining outside contributions”

Where it is felt necessary to charge a registration fee, the organising committee should have the final decision. All projected costs should be covered through the

registration fee, remembering that the “pot” is traditionally AA money used for primary purpose work and not to be used to cover expenses.

Funding of the convention: The sponsoring body should provide the committee with sufficient funds to start organising the convention. Thereafter income from registration fees should be used. If excess funds are generated, the sponsoring body may consider retaining a prudent reserve to fund the next convention. All accounts should be independently audited.

Chairperson and Speakers
Conventions usually invite chairs and speakers to participate well in advance. If speakers are invited from outside the local area, and their reimbursement for travel is to be paid, this should be borne in mind when assessing the registration charge.

Fees should not be paid to AA speakers, as to do so would imply professionalism and violate the spirit of Tradition Eight. When planning the programme, committees may wish to consider the various types of AA meetings outlined in section 1 of Group Meetings above and consider sharing platforms by inviting speakers from Al-Anon and Alateen.

At each meeting during the convention, the chair should remind the audience of the importance of Tradition Eleven by reading the AA anonymity announcement:

“There may be some here who are not familiar with our tradition of personal anonymity at the public level: ‘Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press radio and films.’ Thus, we respectfully ask that no AA speaker – or any AA member – is identified by full name and that no photograph is published or broadcast in reports on our meetings. This includes taking photographs and/or videos at convention social events (as well as the meetings) and publishing on social media. The assurance of anonymity is essential in our effort to help other problem drinkers who may wish to share our recovery program with us, and our Tradition of anonymity reminds us that AA principles come before personalities.”

Literature
Literature stalls should be attractive and well stocked with AA conference-approved literature. The sponsoring body is responsible for ordering, and for payment. Ideally, orders should be received at GSO at least one calendar month before the event. Final payment should be made within the same period after the event. When considering the sale of literature, the sponsoring body should be aware of the importance to AA finances of revenue from the sale of conference-approved publications. If non-AA material is to be sold, separate facilities should be provided for its display: AA money should not be used to purchase this material.

Souvenirs
Conference 2022 reconfirmed the following recommendation from 1980, recognising that it is not possible or desirable to attempt to interfere with the buying of souvenirs by individuals for their personal use or for gifts for others.

However, the committee recommended that the convenors of conventions and the officers of intergroups and groups should examine the motives of individuals for the sale of souvenirs and the profits involved, taking into account the Traditions of A.A. Private individuals should be discouraged from making profits from A.A. members. Any money from the sale of souvenirs should be used for A.A. purposes.

Recording at Conventions
The sponsoring body and the organising committee should decide whether to record the convention; they should consider legal and financial issues, and bear in mind that recording can be a difficult, expensive and a time-consuming task; a high level of expertise may be required. No video recording should take place.

Advance publicity should indicate that the convention will be recorded and chairs, speakers and reserves should be advised individually of the recording well in advance of the convention. A thorough briefing of each speaker is vital to ensure that no inadvertent breach of anyone's anonymity occurs.

The sponsoring body and the organising committee have the right to edit recordings.

Safeguarding
It is strongly recommended that all applicable safeguarding guidance is adhered to.

Catering Arrangements
Convention organisers usually elect an individual to take overall responsibility and form a sub-committee to deal with catering.

Where food or drinks are supplied, costings and sales prices should be established and prices displayed. If outside caterers are used, it would be prudent to discuss provisional costs. Some Conventions invite participants to bring their own lunch.

2. National Conventions

The General Service Board (GSB) is responsible for the appointment of a trustee to National Convention Committees (NCC), in order to ensure that the convention programme is in conformity with the spirit and the Traditions of AA and to oversee all financial accounting.

All surpluses from National Conventions are to be paid over to the General Service Office (GSO).

NCC meetings are reported back to the GSB. The following National Conventions are financially supported and serviced by their local regions:

- Southern National
- Northern National
- Scottish National
- Welsh National

At the national level each NCC elects its own chair or convenor from experienced members. A local GSB member serves in an ex-officio capacity on the committee of each National Convention. The GSB suggests that trustees attend at least two meetings, or as agreed with the committee.

National conventions can use either the AAGB website or create their own websites for the purposes of online marketing.

ANNEX A – Check List for Convention Committees

The following list is not exhaustive but it is intended to be an aid to cover all conventions from mini one day to National:

- Ensure that all decisions taken lie within AA's Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts
- Gain support of the sponsoring body and establish a regular system for reporting
- Define broad principles, venue, cost and theme
- Investigate the facilities available at the venue
- Consider safeguarding implications
- Set target dates for task completion and try to stick to them
- Set budget, business plan, and theme
- Assess transport and any parking details
- Publicity
- Agree a detailed plan on AA meetings and workshops:

1. Entertainment
2. Al-Anon and Alateen participation
3. Printing and publicity flyers, possibly to include a location map
4. Publicity on national, regional, and intergroup websites
5. Convention details to Share and/or Roundabout, being aware of copy deadlines
6. Health and safety implications, fire precaution
7. The overnight security of collection monies, literature money, and books
8. Raffle tickets in accordance with the gaming law
9. Convention design: banners, top table arrangements
10. Registration area
11. Accommodation and refreshments
12. How and when any collection is to be passed
13. Literature stands, and ordering from GSO
14. Archives and security thereof
15. Raffle ticket sales and a secure display of prizes
16. Information stand for newcomers
17. Technical systems: communication, light and sound systems
18. Access and facilities for the disabled

ANNEX B – Terms of Reference for Convention Committees

Convention committees are formed by intergroups and regions to plan and execute conventions in accordance with the recommendations of the General Service Conference. The following terms of reference may be adapted for use by all Convention Committees.

1. Convention Committees comprise delegates elected from the regions or intergroups that sponsor the convention. Their objective is to prepare and provide for a convention to promote our primary purpose within an agreed budget and according to Tradition Seven.
2. These committees are accountable to the sponsoring intergroups and regions, which exercise their responsibility for the Convention by the provision of elected delegates for the committee and through the regular reporting back of these, at their assemblies, and the auditing of accounts.
3. An appropriate number of members are elected as delegates to serve for three years on the Convention Committee. The committee elects its officers from these delegates to serve for a suitable term, ensuring the principle of rotation.
4. Committee officers rotating out of service are ineligible for re-election during the next three years. Other delegates rotating out are ineligible for re-election during the next twelve months.
5. Delegates who miss two consecutive meetings without adequate explanation, or who miss three consecutive meetings, are deemed to have resigned.
6. The frequency and location of committee meetings is at the discretion of the Committee, but costs and cost-effectiveness should be borne in mind. All expenses should be approved.
7. Dates proposed for conventions by the committee ought to be checked for possible clashes with other significant AA events.
8. All meetings should be reported, and copies of minutes sent to the secretaries of the sponsoring bodies and to GSO.
9. All conventions should be run in accordance with this guidance.

The Relationship between AA and Al-Anon

The Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups have a unique relationship. They are naturally drawn together by their close family ties. Yet the Twelve Traditions, the General Service Boards, and the General Service Conferences of both Fellowships suggest that each functions more effectively if it remains separate, co-operating but not affiliating with the other.

Each Fellowship has always had its own General Service Board, General Service Office, Conference, publishing company and World Directory. Each has established its own policies and maintained its own services. This separate functioning has served both AA and Al-Anon Family Groups well. As a matter of fact, AA's policy of 'co-operation but not affiliation was established as long ago as the early 1950's, and both Al-Anon and AA recognised at that time the importance of maintaining separate Fellowships.

However, from time to time, questions come to both AA and Al-Anon General Service Offices indicating confusion as to how AA and Al-Anon may best co-operate in the area of groups, intergroups or central services and Conventions and get-togethers. Trustees of AA and members of Al-Anon have met and discussed these questions. The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain approved the following suggested guidance.

Separate Groups

Since the primary purpose of the AA group is to help the sick alcoholic to recover, and the primary purpose of the Al-Anon Family Groups is to help the Al-Anon to live with herself or himself as well as with the alcoholic, they should not be combined but remain separate groups. This should enable both Fellowships to function within their Twelve Traditions and to carry their message more effectively. Thus, the group name, the officers, and the meetings should be either AA or Al-Anon but not both. Naturally, all are welcome at open meetings of both AA and Al-Anon groups. The word 'family' is part of the Al-Anon Fellowship's incorporated name, and should not be used in an AA group's name.

Combined Intergroup Services

Both experience and the Twelve Traditions of AA and Al-Anon suggest that each Fellowship will function more effectively if each retains separate committees, separate staff and facilities for handling telephone and personal calls as well as separate telephone answering services, intergroup activities, bulletins, meeting lists and all types of Twelfth Step services. Members who are involved in a service committee or office should be AA members, if it is an AA facility and Al-Anon members if it is an Al-Anon facility.

Where AA telephone services exist, only the national contact number for Al-Anon should be made available for partners, family, or involved friends enquiring. AA members on telephone duty should never attempt to deal with calls which are matters connected with the family and which should rightly be dealt with by Al-Anon.

Conventions and Mini-Conventions

In accordance with the Twelve Traditions, a Convention would be either AA or Al-Anon – not both. However, most AA Convention Committees invite Al-Anon to participate by planning their own programme, and the Committee arranges for facilities for the Al-Anon meetings.

If AA invites Al-Anon to participate in this manner, all expenses involved in the Al-Anon meetings are paid from the funds of the AA Convention Committee.

Since Conventions and Mini-Conventions are primarily for AA members and do not seek to attract the general public, the meetings will no doubt be either "Closed" or "Open" and reference should be made to group meetings above. At an "Open" meeting, the Chair and speaker are, of course, all members of AA but in any subsequent discussion, participation by non-members is welcome. Al-Anon have produced their own Guideline for co-operation with AA at national Conventions or local Mini- Conventions.

If an Al-Anon member is invited to attend an AA Convention Committee meeting, it should be remembered that Al-Anon have agreed procedures for dealing with such requests. Requests should therefore be directed to the Al-Anon District involved and not in the first instance to an individual Al-Anon member.

Convention Finance

In accordance with the self-support Traditions of both Fellowships and to abide by the concept of 'co-operation but not affiliation', it is suggested that AA should not make gifts or contributions to Al-Anon from the financial profits of a Convention. By the same token, AA should not accept contributions from Al-Anon. Any collections at Al-Anon meetings belong to Al-Anon funds.

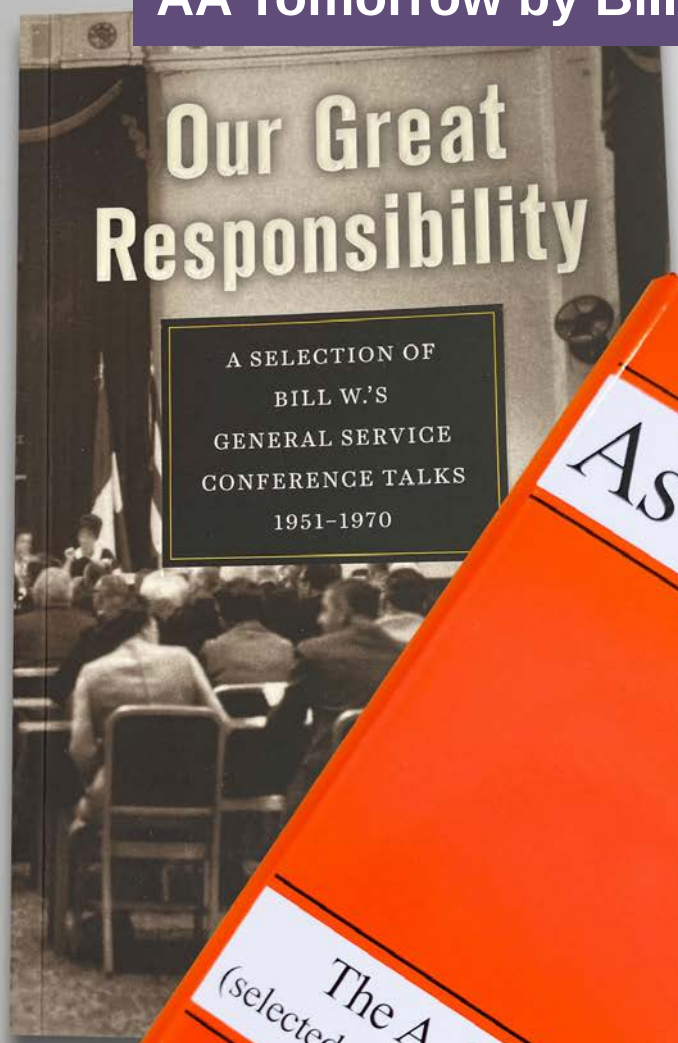
Alateen

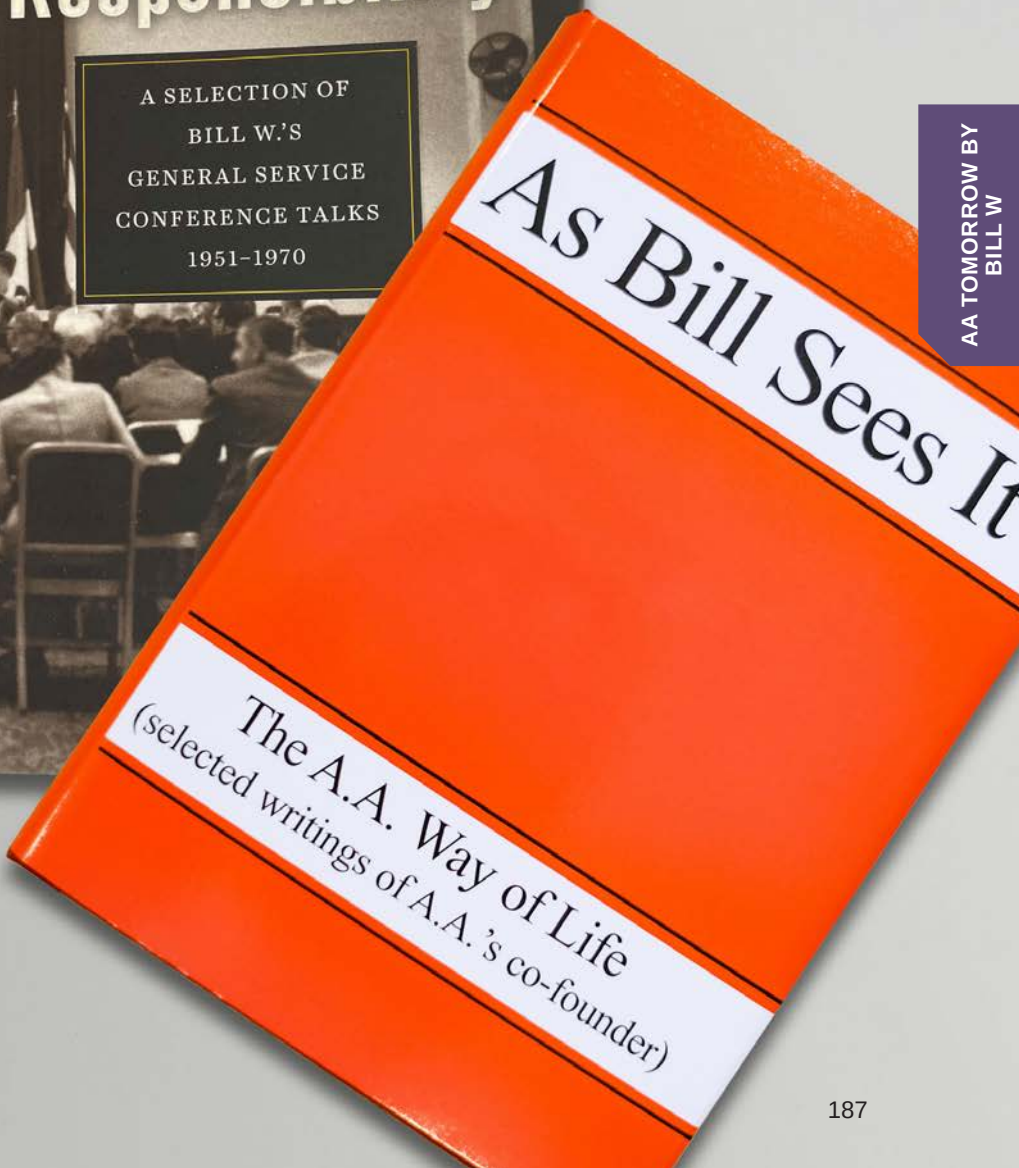
These groups are part of Al-Anon Family Groups, and their formation and servicing is not an AA function or responsibility.

It was the desire of the Fifteenth General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous in Great Britain to place on record and confirm the relationship between Alcoholics Anonymous and the Al-Anon Family Groups and to acknowledge AA's debt of gratitude to the Al-Anon Family Groups, and it unanimously approved the following resolutions:

"It is RESOLVED that Alcoholics Anonymous recognises the special relationship which it enjoys with the Al-Anon Family Groups, a separate but similar Fellowship. It is further RESOLVED that Alcoholics Anonymous recognises the great contribution which Al-Anon Family Groups have made, and continue to make in assisting the families of alcoholics everywhere."

AA Tomorrow by Bill W





Our co-Founder sums up after twenty five years of AA and looks into the future we are now living. The following excerpts are reprinted with permission from the book AA Today published by The AA Grapevine, 1960.

"This book has given us some wonderful glimpses of the panorama of AA at work in the twenty-fifth year of its founding.

Now comes the question: Where do we go from here and what is our responsibility for today and for tomorrow?

Clearly our first duty to AA's future is to maintain in full strength what we now have. Only the most vigilant caretaking can assure this. Never should we be lulled into complacent self-satisfaction by the wide acclaim and success that is everywhere ours. This is the subtle temptation which could stagnate us today, perchance disintegrate us tomorrow. We have always rallied to meet and transcend failure and crisis. Problems have been our stimulants. How well, though, shall we be able to meet the problems of success?

During the last twenty-five years, it is quite certain that twenty-five million men and women throughout the world have suffered from alcoholism. Nearly all of these are now sick, mad, or dead. AA has brought recovery to something like two hundred and fifty thousand.

The rest are still out of reach or else gone beyond recall. An even larger generation of drunks is right now in the making. Facing the enormity of this situation, shall any of us sit comfortable and say, "Well, people here we are. We hope you hear about us and come around. Then maybe we can give you a hand?"

Of course, we shall do nothing of the sort. We know that we are going to open wider and wider, every conceivable means and channel through which these kinfolk of ours may be reached. We shall remember Dr. Bob and his marvellous co-worker, Sister Ignatia – how they worked at Akron. We shall remember the many years of Dr. Silkworth's unstinted labour for us. Ten thousand AAs still around will remember how they literally owe their lives to these three people. Each of us will remember his own sponsor, the one who cared enough. As the inheritors of such a tradition of service, how many could ever say, "Let George do that Twelfth Step job; he likes to work with drunks anyhow. Besides, I'm busy." Surely there could not be many! Complacency would be impossible.

Our next great area of the future responsibility may be this one: I'm thinking about the total problem of alcohol and about those who still suffer the appalling consequences of alcoholism. Their number is astronomical.

While we appreciate that AA itself cannot very well get into alcohol education or into any of the related activities that touch the total problem, we do know that, as peculiarly well-informed citizens, there is plenty we can and should do in these fields.

Enterprises of this sort – governmental, state and private – have been springing up everywhere in recognition of the fact that alcoholism is a top-priority problem of health.

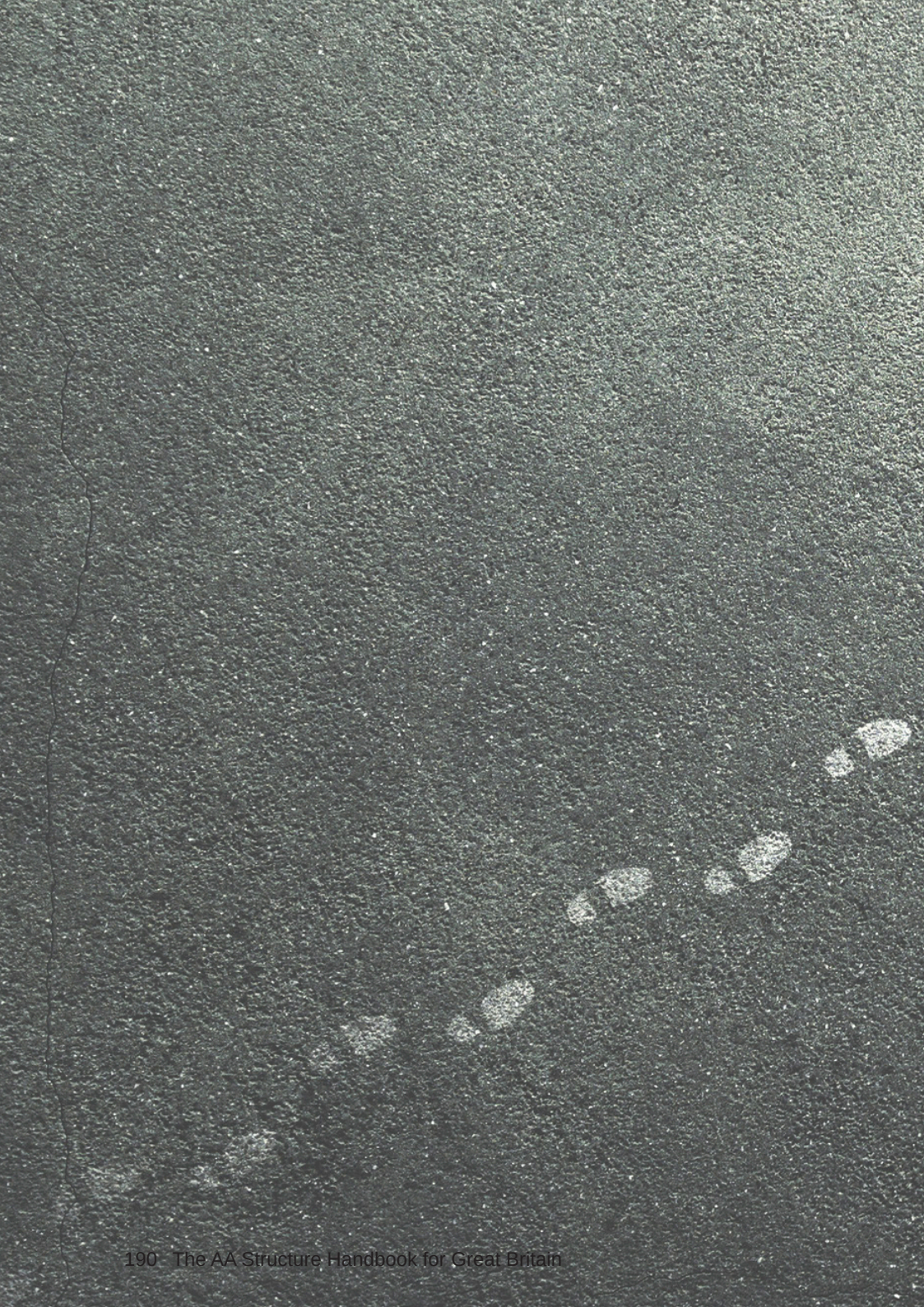
Nevertheless, I gather the impression that many of us are so intent on their few errors, especially the errors of those AAs associated with them, that we often fail to give these dedicated people the encouragement they much need. Now that we AAs have so amazingly unified around our "single purpose" and Twelve Traditions, the risk that we could be much hurt by anything done in these outside ventures is virtually nonexistent.

Could not still more friendly and widespread cooperation with "outside agencies" finally lead us to countless alcoholics who will otherwise be lost? Maybe we are beginning to stand in our own light. Perhaps we are blocking a communication that has a tremendous potential. Shouldn't we therefore have a fresh look at this?

Nearly all of us, when we think about it, agree that we are a long, long way from being anywhere near grown-up, from almost any point of view. We can clearly see that our job as individuals and as a Fellowship is to keep right on growing by the constant use of our Twelve Steps.

Our Fellowship has been permitted to achieve – though still in miniature – the "one world" dream of philosophers. Ours is a world in which we can hotly differ, yet never think of schism or conflict as a solution.

For so long as we remain sure that our "one world of AA" is God's gift rather than any virtue earned or created by ourselves; and for so long as our "one world" continues to be ever more inclusive of those in need; and for so long as we speak and try to perfect the language of love – for just so long may we count upon making whatever rendezvous with destiny that God would have us."



The Twelve Steps

1 We admitted we were powerless over alcohol – that our lives had become unmanageable.

2 Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

3 Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.

4 Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.

5 Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6 Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.

7 Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

8 Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.

9 Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.

10 Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

11 Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.

12 Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps we tried to carry this message to alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions

1 Our common welfare should come first: personal recovery depends upon AA unity.

2 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.

3 The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking.

4 Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or AA as a whole.

5 Each group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

6 An AA group ought never endorse, finance or lend the AA name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.

7 Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

8 Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non- professional but our service centres may employ special workers.

9 AA, as such, ought never be organised; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.

10 Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the AA name ought never be drawn into public controversy.

11 Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.

12 Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

Structure Handbook Glossary

AA	Alcoholics Anonymous
AAGB	Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain
AAWS	Alcoholics Anonymous World Services
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ASM	African Service Meeting
CER	Continental European Region
CSC	Conference Steering Committee
ESM	European Service Meeting
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GSB	General Service Board
GSR	Group Service Representative
GSO	General Service Office
GV	Grapevine
NAT	Non-Alcoholic Trustee
NCC	National Convention Committee
NSO	Northern Service Office
SA	South Africa
SSO	Southern Service Office
SSASM	Sub-Sahara Africa Service Meeting
WSM	World Service Meeting

ANNEX C: Safeguarding References

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees - Charity Commission and https://www.scie.org.uk/safeguarding - Social Care Institute for Excellence.

For legislation mentioned in the final document – The Protection against Harassment Act 1997, the Human Rights act 1998, the Care Act 2014, the Equality Act 2010, plus those alluded to the Slavery Act 2015, GDPR 2018, you may also with to share screen with links to those, and / or share screen of the acts themselves.

- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/42/contents - Human Rights Act 1998
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/40/contents - Harassment Act 1997
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted - Care Act 2014
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents - Equality Act 2010
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents - Slavery Act 2015
- https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/contents/enacted - Data Protection (GDPR) 2018

ANNEX D: Third Legacy Procedure

Purpose

A.A.'s Third Legacy Procedure is a special type of electoral procedure, used primarily for the election of the chair of the General Service Conference but also may also be used for election of Regional and Intergroup officers.

Procedure

1. The names of eligible candidates are posted on a screen / board. All voting members (of the area or Conference body) cast written ballots, one choice to a ballot. The tally for each candidate is posted on the display.

- The first candidate to receive two-thirds of the total vote is elected.

2. After the 1st ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, candidates with less than one-fifth of the total vote are withdrawn -except that the top two candidates must remain. (In case of ties for second place, the top candidate and all tied runners-up remain as candidates.)

3. After the 2nd ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the candidate with the smallest total is withdrawn, except the top two candidates remain. In case of ties for second place, the top candidate and all candidates tied in second place remain.

4. After the 3rd ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the candidate with the smallest total is automatically withdrawn, except that the top two candidates remain. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and all tied second-place candidates remain.

5. After the 4th ballot, if no candidate has two-thirds of the total vote, the candidate with the smallest total is automatically withdrawn, except that the top two candidates remain. In case there are ties for second place, the top candidate and all tied second-place candidates remain

- At this point, the chairperson asks for a motion, second, and a simple majority of hands on conducting a final ballot.
- If this motion is defeated, balloting is over and the choice is made by lot -"going to the hat" -immediately.
- If the motion carries, a fifth and final ballot is conducted.

6. If after the fifth ballot no election occurs, the chairperson announces that the choice will be made by lot (from the hat). At this point, the top two candidates remain. In case there are ties for first place, all tied first place candidates remain. In case there are no ties for first place, the top candidate and any tied second-place candidates remain.

7. Lots are then drawn by the teller, and the first one "out of the hat" is the delegate (or trustee or other officer).

Notes

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