

The Lifeline



July 2017

24-Hour Phone: 651-227-5502

Volume 53, Issue 7

Step Seven: Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

I had no idea that on January 21, 1999 my life was going to change forever. I was barely 15 years old and terrified I was going to die a horrific alcoholic death. I had been coming to AA and taking the suggestions, but my desire to drink overpowered the one to stay sober. So many nights I had promised my parents I would stay dry, but I got drunk despite my best intentions.

But on January 20, I got drunk for what I pray was the last time. I cried as I confessed my slip to my family and peers at my therapy group. I then rushed to an AA meeting, and while sitting there that day, I felt the grace of a Higher Power enter my spirit. I chose to believe because I wanted to have faith that this solution could work for me.

So why did I keep getting drunk if I was going to meetings, praying and calling other women in the program? Why did I have no defense after months of AA? Members of my home group had warned me about "people, places and things," but they didn't know what it was like to try to change all your friends as a high school freshman. But I finally realized they were right and began to listen.

I started going to 90 meetings in 90 days and drove with my home group all over New York to outgoing commitments. And I started doing the Steps right out of the Big Book. My sponsor Amy was the same age as my mother, but I respected her program. At young peoples' meetings, it was easier to focus on boys, chain smoking (since we were still able to smoke in meetings), or the next party—so I needed the stability of old-timers in my life. Slowly, things started to improve. But it was when I got to Step Seven that I began to really see and feel a change. I still consider Step Seven my favorite Step.

When I did Step Five with Amy, we were able to identify my patterns and behaviors. We made a list of my defects, and I went home and sat quietly for an hour making sure I was ready to move on. She felt I was holding on to some old behaviors and made me sit with Six and Seven for a period. Finally the pain of becoming "entirely ready" became unbearable. She was right. I didn't exactly want to stop stealing; I didn't want to stop sleeping around; I didn't want to start going to all my classes. Frankly, some of my defects still felt good. I certainly didn't want to have to start paying for things! Making changes was scary and hard. I was reluctant to try to start living a different way. I had no idea how or where to begin.

For the next few weeks, I acted out with my character defects. And I was painfully aware of exactly what I was doing as I was doing it. When I stole something, I knew it was wrong and I felt guilty. I felt regret after casual encounters with boys, and I began to recognize when they treated me poorly. When I had a fight and cursed at my parents, I felt remorse and saw how my actions hurt those around me. While sitting in Step Six, I came again to a jumping off point, but this time it was in sobriety. I felt if I didn't do exactly as my sponsor asked me, I would surely drink again.

One Wednesday night at the Leonard Park Group, I sat outside on the church's playground and cried and cried. I began to pray. I got up and called my sponsor and told her I was ready to have a Higher Power remove all these defects of character. As with Step One, my surrender had to be complete if I expected to continue in AA. Again, I made the choice to believe that the people in the rooms had a solution that could work for me. My sponsor and I came up with a list of substitute behaviors and traits that I could employ rather than defaulting to my self-destructive ones.

The effects I felt were immediate, and this is what I love about Step Seven. I could actually see what was changing in me. For months people in AA were telling me I looked and sounded better, but I didn't really feel any better. Once I started changing the way I behaved, my growth became visible. I felt different. I felt sober. I want to be clear: I did not take the Seventh Step and miraculously become a better person. I have battled with different incarnations of the same character defects throughout my entire sobriety. However, since that Wednesday night long ago, I think I have taken every single suggestion a sponsor has given me. Sometimes I kick and scream, but I do as I'm asked because I know that these women have my best interests at heart. I have done the Seventh Step more than once, and each time I do, I feel the freedom of surrendering these defects. I find new, sober, and estimable ways to behave that allow me to move gently through each day.

Today is my anniversary, and it is a relief to reflect on these last 15 years and celebrate all the changes. I am not the girl who came in here. I am a young woman who is filled with hope and does her best to carry that light into the world around me.

-Danna F., Warren, Rhode Island

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Office Hours: Monday through Friday — 9 AM to 6 PM; Saturday 9 AM to 1 PM

Tradition Seven: Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.

THE COST OF COFFEE

I came to AA in 1988. Members in that first meeting told their stories of recovery. They also stressed the importance of putting a dollar in the basket and the many things it covers. I was told that if I wanted a soda, there was a can in the refrigerator and to put 50 cents in for the pop. Coffee was also available, along with a coffee "kitty" to pay for it.

I have attended our area assembly for 20 years, and we've talked numerous times about the problem of not bringing in enough to cover the cost of coffee there. At our last assembly, it was reported that we were short \$10,000 in the past 12 years covering the cost of coffee. This money might have gone a long way in carrying the AA message. So we voted to relieve the area from being in the coffee business. Individuals could buy cups of coffee from the hotel where the assembly is held.

On the way home that day, I reflected on the fact that we who attend our assembly are considered trusted servants and leaders. In Concept IX in the AA Service Manual, our co-founder Bill W. states: "Our leaders do not drive by mandate, they lead by example," and "Good leadership never passes the buck."

I could not ask my home group for more money for the area when we were not practicing Tradition Seven, which states that every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting. The Big Book tells me my problem is selfishness and self-centeredness. I can no longer believe that anyone owes me anything, even a cup of coffee.

AA not only saved my life, but changed it for the better. My sobriety is worth more than I can pay. When the basket comes around, do I give generously or do I find reasons to hold back? When I came to AA, I attended 10 meetings a week for the first year. That meant I was contributing at least \$10 a week. Now I may attend two to three meetings a week, but instead of just two to three dollars a week, I should still be putting in at least \$10, if not more.

So when someone says the coffee is free, think about what that statement means, and think about what sobriety is worth to you.

- Ed M., Shawnee, Kan.

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Notes From Your Office

Annual Open House

On Saturday, June 10th we hosted our annual Open House. Turn-out was very good, considering the 90 degree+ temperatures. About 100 visitors stopped by for fellowship, food, fun, and shopping: very similar to the turn-out at last year's 50th Anniversary Open House celebration, July 9th.

On another happy note, our sales were up noticeably (57%) from last year – we sold \$428.41 of merchandise compared to \$242.94 at the 2016 Open House. Our Seventh Tradition came in at \$85.00 up slightly from \$72.52.

New Grapevine Title & Pricing

We now have in stock the latest Grapevine publication, ***Making Amends***.

"*Making Amends* features 55 candid, first-hand stories from AA Grapevine magazine of members' experiences with Step Nine of the AA program. The book includes chapters on making amends to parents, children, family members, exes, financial institutions, friends and coworkers. These powerful stories illustrate how practicing Step Nine can help us, as AA's co-founder Bill W. wrote, 'know a new freedom and a new happiness.'"

Effective June 1st, our Grapevine prices increased in-line with the increases the Grapevine, Inc. enacted March 1st this year. We were able to hold-off raising prices as we were well-stocked when the new prices from the Grapevine, Inc. went into effect. Recently we placed our first reorder, and with the arrival of our new stock of books, our prices rose too. Most of the books increased between \$0.50 and \$1.50, and our present inventory includes every book currently published by the Grapevine, including the Spanish editions!

Bill S., Office Staff

The Lifeline: Purpose Statement

The Lifeline is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Incorporated. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition, or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of our A.A. experience.

Please email your article to lifeline@aastpaul.org, or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 608 Seventh Street West, St. Paul MN 55102. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

Thoughts From Your Board

Service: Definitions – “1. The action of helping or doing work for someone; 2. A system supplying a public need such as transport, communications, or utilities”

My service work started in my first AA meetings: setting up chairs, making coffee, cleaning ashtrays. I didn't realize then why I was doing those things. Later, I learned that we do whatever we can to help the still suffering alcoholic--to offer hope and belonging to the newcomer long enough for them to realize for themselves that they, too, can recover and live a life free from despair.

I have served St. Paul Intergroup in many capacities: as a group rep, as Secretary, as an at-large member, as NightOwl volunteer and committee member, and now as the Alternate Chair on the Board. When I worry about how I'm going to be a good leader or wonder why I signed up for a 3-year commitment, I only have to remember one thing: I live today because an AA member was willing to reach out their hand and offered me life.

If I can help even one person to live....I am honored to be here and willingly serve.

Thank you for this opportunity.

- Lesli D., Alternate Chair

West Central Region (WCR) Trustee Rotation

The end of the 67th General Service Conference marks many new beginnings for me as a trustee. While being a trustee is a 4-year commitment, several aspects of rotation take place yearly.

First, as a regional trustee and a member of the General Service Board (GSB), I am a member of three GSB trustee committees, and each year rotation on the committees takes place following the Conference. There are times when a trustee may be on a committee for more than one year, but it is not uncommon to be moved to different committees, too. For example, I was on the Public Information, Corrections and International committees over the past year. I received my committee assignments a bit after the Conference and for the next year I will be on Finance, Nominating and in this case, International for a second year. We were asked our preferences and that is but one variable that is used to determine the assignments.

A second significant rotation (for me) also took place with the end of the General Service Conference. The GSC approves the slate of members for the General Service Board as well as the two affiliate corporations, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS) and the AA Grapevine, Inc.(AAGV). A regional trustee is expected to serve on one of these two corporate boards for 2 years as a director in addition to being a member of the General Service Board. A significant departure from "normal" took place, which was that I was selected for a two-year term as a director for AAWS rather than AAGV. I recall only one other WCR trustee who was on AAWS rather than AAGV.

With this rotation onto AAWS, I become a director of this corporation, which has a board normally composed of nine members, two of which are regional trustees, two general service trustees, three non-trustee directors, the general manager of the General Service Office and the staff coordinator at the GSO. Because of the death of a General Service Trustee in December, a regional trustee that would have been rotating has been asked to serve a third year, so we will have one general service trustee and three regional trustees.

This new board membership brings along with it additional responsibilities. It too, has several committees to get its work done effectively. There have been five committees (Finance, Publishing, Technology/Communication/Services (TCS), Nominating, Strategic Planning, and just recently a sixth was added, which is a new Internal Audit Committee. I have been assigned to Finance, TCS and Nominating, plus I am the chair to the new Internal Audit Committee. The corporate boards meet before quarterly General Service Board meetings in NY, plus we meet between each quarterly meeting – normally in NY -- as well as conference calls. While an AAWS corporate board meeting is scheduled for a day, it is not uncommon to add a day or two to the visit for various reasons (GSB weekends are typically Thurs-Mon). For example, in June I go one day early for a director's orientation, just like I go a day early in July for the GSB Quarterly meeting for trustee orientation. Additionally, since I am on Nominating for both boards, I may need to arrive early or stay late for interviews.

So, in a nutshell, that is my rotation for 2017. With great anticipation, I look forward to this opportunity to serve AA as a servant and a custodian. We have many challenges, opportunities and a need to preserve the fundamental message of Alcoholics Anonymous and further its services. With profound understanding I realize this is a sanctified contract that the Conference and the fellowship agreed to with the adoption of the Charter and Concepts. I thank all AA members for the opportunity to serve the West Central Region and the entire fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous.

--Tom A., WCR Trustee

Saint Paul Intergroup's
2017 Annual
Ice Cream Social
&
Long-Timers Recognition

*Enjoy an Ice Cream Social and join in recognition
of those with more than a quarter century
of continuous sobriety!*

WHEN:

**Saturday, August 12th
4:00PM - 6:30PM**

WHERE:

**Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
285 North Dale St.
St. Paul, MN 55103**

Hear how they did it!



For More information, please contact St. Paul Intergroup: 651-227-5502



ASL interpretation available upon request. Please contact staff at Intergroup by Friday, August 1st to secure arrangements.

UPCOMING A.A. EVENTS!!

HOOTS!

Thanks to all the faithful Night Owl volunteers who helped to answer the phones during June. Great Job! We currently have no open regular shifts but can add your name to either the waiting list or the backup list. Please send me an e-mail at nightowl@aastpaul.org if:

You want to be added to the nightOwl volunteer waiting list

You have a night owl story that you want to share

Your group has a new NightOwl coordinator - we need their name and phone number

I wanted to let you all know that we have a few members of the Night Owl Committee. Welcome to Patti M., Paul C., and Connie M.! Lesli D. and Derrick R. have rotated off the committee. Thank you for your service!

Cheryl B., NightOwl coordinator

Suggestions for How to respond to persistent "Drunk Dialers"

Hello _____, we appreciate that you see Alcoholics Anonymous as an organization to reach out for help, but our experience shows that you cannot get sober over the phone.

We would encourage you to go to a meeting and work with a sponsor.

Please understand that this phone number is being answered by volunteers who give their time to make sure the phones are answered 24/7 for those that are truly seeking help.

We would encourage you to call us again when you are sober and ready to work with us. In the meantime, if you need the number for detox or a treatment program, call First Call for help (211 from a landline or 651-291-0211 from a cell phone).

HANG UP IMMEDIATELY

Group and Area News

New Meeting: *Old Dogs; New Tricks* has started meeting Tuesdays at 10AM at the Silver Sobriety Center, 5630 Memorial Avenue North - Stillwater, 55082. the meeting is an Open, Senior, revolving Topic/Discussion format.

Meeting Change: The *Lakeville Group* changed their meeting time to 7:00PM from 8:00PM. The group meets Sundays at the Family of Christ Lutheran Church, 10970 185th Street W in Lakeville, 55044. They host an Open, Mixed, All-ages Step Study meeting.

Meeting No More: *The Grind's Thursday 7:30AM Big Book* has ceased meeting. The Tuesday 7:30AM Open Mixed, All-Ages, Topic/Discussion meeting is still being hosted at Coffee Bene, 53 S. Cleveland Ave, St. Paul, 55105.

Meeting No More: The *11th Step FINE Group* is no longer hosting their Friday 6:00PM Closed, 11th Step topic meeting at the Redeemer Lutheran Church, 9925 Bailey Road, Woodbury 55129.

Your News?

We invite you to share your AA news here! Please send your items to lifeline@aastpaul.org. We look forward to hearing from you.



**Looking for a Service Opportunity?
Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl!**



**Upcoming Night Owl Orientations:
Saturday, July 15th, August 19th, September 16th**

Every Third Saturday from 10:00 - 11:00 AM

St. Paul Intergroup Office

608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102

To RSVP please call: 651-227-5502

St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes May 16th, 2017

Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and Jenni read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.
 Minutes from last month were reviewed, CJ motioned and Ken seconded, motion approved.
 Treasurer's Report, – Karen gave the report. The Treasurer's Report has been simplified. Bank account is \$23,248 and prudent reserve is \$45,019. Liabilities increased and receivables increased. Total contributions are up, group contributions are up and office sales are up. Expenses decreased \$3,270. See Treasurer's Report for full details. Contact Matt at treasurer@aastpaul.org.
 Office Report, Dennis – In-Office sales dipped a little in April. The Pink Can plan orders have started adding strong overall sales. Three new fancy medallions added this month, including Rule 62 medallion. The volunteer stream has been strong. Working on other projects for volunteers to help with. Dennis continues to spend time in Quickbooks and has already made good progress. Meeting is scheduled with Lutheran Church of the Redeemer to see about having events there again. The office bathroom floor has been repaired and the white wall slash fixed as well. Three new Grapevine literature titles will soon be in the office. Contact the Office at manager@aastpaul.org.
 Night Owl Report, Cheryl – Read the Hoots in the lifeline, still no shifts open. Night Owl reps for meetings should reach out to Cheryl so the contact list is updated for primary meeting contacts for reminders. Contact Cheryl at NightOwl@aastpaul.org or leave a message at the intergroup office for more information.
 Website Report, Jonathan gave the report. 689 meetings and 277 groups total. The number of groups remained the same and up 7 groups. There are 14 service opportunities and ZERO open Night Owl shifts per the website. The mobile site is up for parallel testing, the link is in the corner of the regular site. Contact Jonathan at webservant@aastpaul.org.
 Outreach Program, Carolyn M – Volunteers are still needed for visiting meetings. Refer to the Outreach Info Sheet for full instructions. For more information contact Carolyn M at outreach@aastpaul.org.
 Update from the Board, Lesli D, No relevant action. Contact the office for more information.
 Liaison Reports: District 8 Mike C, Preparing for June assembly; District 15, Bob Z- DCM & Alt attended West Central Regional. ; District 19, Brian M – Brian is new liaison to St Paul intergroup. Doing an inventory of groups in the District.
 Upcoming Intergroup Events
 Gopher State Intergroup Hospitality Suite (May 26th-28th) Sandy - Most shifts are full to fill the suite but still need 6-9pm Saturday. Contact Matt or Sandy to sign up.
 St Paul Intergroup Open House (June 10th) 11am-3pm at Intergroup Office. Free food and drink.
 Old Business: None
 New Business:
 Renee starting ASL committee to tackle issue of lack of ASL accessible meetings in St Paul
 Group AA Announcements:
 OMD 1st Fr 6/2 7pm potluck, speaker and medallion ceremony, 1221 Marshall Av. Speaker is Joe T.
 St Paul Speaker Meeting 7pm Sunday Nights, Central Presbyterian Church at 500 Cedar St. Use backdoor.
 Rule 62 Annual Potluck June 24th. Potluck dinner 6pm, speaker at 7pm. Speaker is Terry L. f/ Fox Hall Chapter 7. Located at Cavalry Evangelical Lutheran Church, 341 Hamline Ave in St Paul.
 Uptown House medallion ceremony 1st Saturday of each month at the Recovery Church. 7pm.
 Suggestions for next months's agenda: Dan suggested inquiring about handicapped parking spot for the office.
 Grapevine Report, Andrew.; volunteer for June, Mark
 Concept V review, Brian M; volunteer for Concept VI for June, Bob
 Mock Rep Report, Kevin.; volunteer for June, Travis
 Closed with the Responsibility Statement

Meetings Represented: Defogged Men's Group, St. Paul; District 8; East Side 12&12, St. Paul; The Firing Line, Roseville; Happy, Joyous & Free, Mahtomedi; Hole In The Doughnut, Roseville; Main Idea, St. Paul; Maplewood Alano Groups, Maplewood; New Found Freedom, St. Paul; No Time Like the Present, Roseville; Outright Mental Defectives, St. Paul; Pocketing Our Pride, St. Paul; Rule 62 Step & Tradition, St. Paul; St. Paul Speaker Meeting, St. Paul; Summit Hill, St. Paul; Third Edition, St. Paul; Uptown Groups, St. Paul; West End Groups, St. Paul.

<u>2017 Steering Board:</u>		<u>Office Calls/Visitors—May 2017</u>	
Chair:	Jenni S.	Meeting information	75
Alternate Chair:	Lesli D.	Inventory/hours	20
Secretary:	Rob C.	12th Step calls	5
Treasurer:	Matt R.	Temporary sponsor	13
Alternate Treasurer:	Karen C.	Speaker request	33
Members-at- Large 2017:	J.D. & Carolyn M.	Special events	5
Members-at- Large 2018	Tom S. & Erik M.	Outside issues	10
Advisor to the Board:	Sandy K.	Info for professionals	2
Manager	Dennis B.	Administrative	110
		Other	40
		Total Calls	313
		Average Calls/Day	13.6
		Total Visitors	210
		Average Visitors/Day	7.3

July 2017 REPS' MEETING: Tuesday, July 18th @ 7:30 PM
 SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH
 398 West Superior Street; St. Paul, MN 55102

**7th Tradition
Suggestions for Groups**

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Conference-approved pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

50% St. Paul Intergroup
608 Seventh Street West
St. Paul, MN 55102

30% General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

10% Southern MN Area 36
Area Assembly
P.O. Box 2812
Mpls., MN 55402

10% District Committee

Ramsey County:
District 8, P.O. Box 131523
St. Paul, MN 55113

Dakota County:
District 19, P.O. Box 1466
Burnsville, MN 55337

Washington County:
District 15, P.O. Box 181
Lake Elmo, MN 55042

SE Ramsey County:
District 26, P.O. Box 75980
St. Paul, MN 55175

MAY CONTRIBUTIONS

Number of Group Contributors: 34
Total Group Contributions: \$4167
Number of Faithful Fivers: 13
Total from Faithful Fivers: \$188



District Meetings

District 8 (Ramsey Co.)
Fairview Community Center
1910 Co. Rd B, Rm 108
Roseville
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM

District 15 (Wash. Co.)
Christ Lutheran Church
11194 N. 36th St.
Lake Elmo
4th Mon., 7:00 PM

District 19 (Dakota Co.)
Rosemount Community Center
13885 South Robert Trail
Rosemount
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM

District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)
Grace Lutheran Church
1730 Old Hudson Rd.
St. Paul
2nd Sun., 7:00PM
www.district26-area36.org



**Thanks to all the Groups
that contributed in May**

- Amigos III
- Andover Day by Day
- Apple Valley Daily Reflections
- Apple Valley Monday AM Women's Mtg.
- Burnsville - Primary Purpose
- Cliffhangers I Thursday Night
- Como Ave Step & Topic
- Como Park BB
- Dakota Alano
- Dakota Alano SAT 11AM
- Dakota Alano SUN 8PM
- Eagan Burnsville Savage - Sat Speaker
- Eagan Wed Night Open Meeting
- Easy Does It
- Fireside Women's BB Group
- Firing Line
- Grovers Thursday Night
- Hastings Club
- Highland Park Groups
- Little Canada Happy Hour
- Live and Let Live
- New Richmond Sunday Night
- Pocketing Our Pride
- Ridge Runners II Sat 830 AM
- Rosemount Groups
- Steps to Freedom
- Stillwater Morning Groups
- Summit Hill
- Third Tradition Northfield
- Una Luz en el Camino
- Uptown Club
- Valley Step Group
- White Bear Wed AM Women's
- Women's 12 & 12 Monday



Thanks to all of the FANTASTIC Office Volunteers who helped in May:

Allyson K., Angie R., Bob P.,
Charlie B., Chrissie, Chuck L., CJ M., Connie W.,
Deb E., DeeDee S., Don C., Frank D., Henry O.,
Jeff T., Jesse V., Jim B., Jimmy D., John G.,
Liesl M., Marc S., Pat W.,
Sam B., Suzanne B., Ty K., Woody W.



Thanks to our AWESOME Night Owls too!

Acting in Support of the Advisory Actions of the 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

The 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous held in New York in April was the group conscience of our A.A. Fellowship in action. As your Delegate from Area 36, Southern Minnesota, I joined 132 other voting members of the Conference from across the U.S. and Canada. Together we acted collectively on behalf of over 100,000 groups organized into 93 Delegate Areas. Other voting members include our Trustees, non-Trustee Directors, and certain staff members of our General Service Office and A.A. Grapevine.

Creating the General Service Conference was Bill W.'s solution to the inevitable passing of himself and Dr. Bob. With the longevity of the Fellowship in mind, Bill envisioned a structure that would allow the A.A. groups to take over and play the role of advisors to the Trustees of our General Service Board once he and Dr. Bob were gone. The Conference became the channel for the group conscience as described in Tradition Two – the ultimate authority of a loving God expressed through our trusted servants.

Through its discussion, debate, and decisions, the Conference strives to act at the policy level, providing guidance to the Trustees rather than involving itself directly in the day-to-day activities of the Board or the General Service Office. The Conference process begins with the agenda items that are submitted throughout the year by groups, Districts, Areas, Committees, Trustees, and even individual A.A. members. Any item that makes it onto the Conference agenda is first considered by one of the Conference Committees. If a committee so chooses, it can forward an item to the full Conference body to be discussed and voted upon. If approved, these items become Advisory Actions – the group conscience of the entire Fellowship funneled into specific guidance to the General Service Board.

Our Advisory Actions are high-level guiding principles and suggestions that the Conference passes along to the Trustees. Concept Six asks us to trust our Trustees. We show our trust by allowing the Trustees and, ultimately, the staff of the General Service Office to decide how to best carry out what we've asked them to do.

Delegation, not Abdication

The Conference structure allows our many groups to exercise their "final responsibility and the ultimate authority for A.A. world services" by offering guidance to the General Service Board and the General Service Office. By participating in the Conference, our groups have delegated their responsibility and authority, but they have not abdicated their responsibility and authority. As groups, we can and should continue to do our part to implement the Advisory Actions that the Conference adopts.

During the 67th General Service Conference, 45 Advisory Actions were adopted by the Conference. This is out of 92 agenda items that were originally circulated among the Fellowship. The items approved range from this one out of the Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC) Committee:

"The title of the pamphlet "Is There an Alcoholic in the Workplace?" be changed to "Is There a Problem Drinker in the Workplace?""

to this one from the Public Information Committee:

"A.A. World Services, Inc. create a Google for Nonprofits account, with use of the account limited to the YouTube Nonprofit Program and with a guarantee that comments not be shown on A.A.W.S. YouTube pages. The committee requested that a report including information from website analytics and the usefulness and effectiveness of the A.A.W.S. YouTube account be brought back to the 2018 Conference Committee on Public Information."

(Continued Pg. 2)

Acting in Support of the Advisory Actions of the 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

If we take these two items as examples, how would we in our groups take actions to support these Advisory Actions? The item from the CPC Committee seems straightforward. If it is simply a small editorial change to a pamphlet title, then isn't our work done? That might seem to be the case, but the amount of discussion around this item at the Conference gives us a sense that there may be larger issues at play. In this instance, the group conscience of the Conference was to change the title to make the pamphlet more accessible to someone who may be struggling with their drinking or who may know someone else who is struggling with their drinking. By removing the label "alcoholic" from the pamphlet title, we are lowering a barrier for those who may still hold some bias toward or associate some stigma with the term. This pamphlet is aimed at inviting potential alcoholics to consider our program as a solution. We can inform them about what alcoholism is once they seek us out. This change in pamphlet title aligns with our principle of not diagnosing anyone as an alcoholic, but instead leaving that determination up to the individual themselves. In this way, we can show our support of this Advisory Action by not diagnosing anyone as alcoholic and by being patient and accepting of newcomers or potential members who are struggling to determine if they are alcoholic or not.

Concerning the Advisory Action to establish a Google for Nonprofits account for A.A. World Services, the Fellowship has a variety of ways to act in support. This Advisory Action expresses our desire to make A.A. video content available to A.A. members and to the public via YouTube. We have developed several excellent videos to be used as public service announcements (PSAs) and for educational purposes. By establishing a YouTube account, these videos will be more accessible via the internet. To support and increase our public information efforts, as individuals and groups we can share links to these videos with potential members and with professional contacts. We can encourage our nonalcoholic friends and professionals to share these videos widely among their networks. This is an opportunity to ask our friends to recommend us. But we can also take guidance from the wording of this Advisory Action to practice and protect our Traditions where it concerns the internet and social media. The Advisory Action states clearly that we must have a guarantee that no comments could be posted to the YouTube account. This is to help us avoid controversy by avoiding the temptation or need to defend ourselves or the program should anyone use a comments section to disparage A.A. or spread misinformation. The Advisory Action is pointed specifically at the Google for Nonprofits account and YouTube, but we can practice these principles in all areas of the internet and social media:

- 1). Avoid controversy. We do not need to defend ourselves.
- 2). It's better to let our friends recommend us.
- 3). Getting the message of A.A. out to the world is vitally important.

Other Examples of Advisory Actions and the Questions They Raise

In the spirit mentioned above, there are Advisory Actions that affect our ties to the General Service Board and General Service Office while at the same time providing an example of issues that we may be facing at the group, District, and Area level. In the Finance Committee, the perennial issue of whether to raise the limits on various types of contributions was discussed. This included a proposal to raise the amount that is suggested for Areas to contribute towards each Delegate's portion of the General Service Conference expenses. Ultimately, the Conference approved this Advisory Action: "The suggested area contribution for delegate expense for the Conference be increased from \$1,600 to \$1,800."

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Acting in Support of the Advisory Actions of the 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

This would at first seem like a straightforward consideration. The cost of putting on the GSC is significantly more per Delegate than we suggest each Area contribute. But this decision brought many perspectives to the discussion. There are those who believe that Areas should be asked to pay the whole cost of the GSC, which would be between \$9,000 and \$10,000 per Delegate. There are some that believe the entire cost of the event should be paid through 7th Tradition contributions that are already coming from groups. My vote on this issue was not influenced by either of those ideas, but instead was a reaction to the process under which this idea came to the Conference for consideration.

Normally, items that make the agenda for the Conference have been finalized after the January General Service Board meeting. These items and their accompanying background material are distributed to the Fellowship through the Delegates starting mid-February. This gives Areas time to circulate the items among groups and Districts between February and late April when the Conference takes place. Making the items and background available encourages discussion, debate, and information sharing within Areas. It is a brilliant method of informing our Delegates – our way of ensuring that our Delegates are participating in an informed group conscience at the Conference.

Even though the issue of whether to raise the Area contribution towards Delegate expenses is usually always on the Conference agenda, this year it was not on the agenda when it was distributed in February. Instead there were a series of agenda items proposing that the issue of contribution limits be changed to an every-other year occurrence, rather than considering the same topics every year. The timing of when to consider possible increases was the only consideration. There were no actual dollar amounts or changes to dollar amounts listed as agenda items.

As the Conference dates approached, the General Service Board and/or General Service Office decided to restore the usual items about increasing contribution dollar amounts. In mid-April, the usual agenda items about contribution limits were added to the Conference agenda and made available to the Delegates. Because this posting happened a week after Area 36 had already had its Delegate's Workshop/Area Assembly, our Area had no mechanism for gathering group input on the issues. Given that I did not consider these items to be time sensitive or otherwise urgent, I voted against the increase to the Area contribution towards Delegate's expenses. My no vote and my minority opinion (I was one of only a few who opposed the change) were about the process and not the content of the issue. We Delegates, just like trusted servants at all levels of service, do have the "right of decision" as outlined in Concept Three. However, I would only support use of the right of decision when necessary or appropriate. If there is no urgency or other reason to act prior to seeking group input, then I would defer decision-making until after the topic is circulated to the groups, Districts, or Areas most involved for discussion and information gathering.

Is Social Media Really A Hot Topic?

Our Area has a tradition that once the final agenda items are made available in February, our Delegate selects a short list of Impact Items from among the full agenda. These Impact Items are agenda items that might have particular interest in the Area or might be significant issues facing the Fellowship as a whole. The point is to help focus the energies of the groups, Districts, and Area on agenda items that are likely to be discussed vigorously at the Conference.

This year I chose several items dealing with A.A. and social media. Out of the 92 agenda items, I chose eleven Impact Items, seven of which addressed social media. Because there were so many items dealing with social media, we understandably spent many hours discussing and debating these items. The conversations were full and passionate at the West Central Regional Service Conference in Cheyenne.

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Acting in Support of the Advisory Actions of the 67th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

Likewise, at our Delegate's Workshop in early April, there were many comments and considerations brought up about social media, especially where our Traditions were concerned.

Given how much time and energy our Area and Region focused on the social media agenda items, I was surprised at how few of these items actually made it out of committee and onto the floor for discussion by the full Conference.

Along with the Google For Nonprofits item mentioned above, the Public Information Committee also brought forth the following item that passed as an Advisory Action.

"The pamphlet 'Understanding Anonymity' be rewritten to include material from G.S.O. literature covering Tradition Eleven and to expand the discussion of humility in Tradition Twelve as it relates to anonymity and that a progress report or draft language be brought back to the 2018 Conference Committee on Public Information."

While this was not one of the Impact Items originally selected, the discussion of Anonymity in the context of our Traditions is one of the core principles at the heart of the debate around social media. Seeing an Advisory Action like this one should inspire us at the group, District, and Area level to discuss, debate, and inform ourselves about the importance of our Traditions, the fact that Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all of our Traditions, and how we must integrate the Traditions in all of our undertakings including social media.

While we may not have discussed the social media items as a full Conference this year, the items did not go away. Most of them were kept active by merely referring them back to the Trustees' Committees with which they are associated. This means that the Trustees of our General Service Board are continuing to plan and develop ideas around social media as is evident in the background materials for this year's conference. I spoke about this from the floor of the Conference, cautioning the entire group that we had stirred up a lot of valuable discussion about our Traditions and ideas about the proper use of social media, but because we were not debating any of these items on the floor we were not providing an outlet for the voice of the Fellowship on these issues. Because most of the agenda items on social media presented this year will resurface again next year, we can be proactive and gather our input as groups, Districts, and the Area and pass it along to the corresponding Trustees' Committees. There may not have been a time to discuss the issues on the floor of the Conference, but there are still channels of communication that can be used to funnel that hard work by our Area to the Trustees who are most actively involved in the topic.

How to Find Out More about the 67th General Service Conference

I am privileged to give reports to Districts and Intergroups across the Area about the Conference and the issues discussed and decisions made there. I invite you to attend any of the District or Intergroup meetings where I will be making full reports and answering questions. You can find my schedule on the Area 36 website, www.area36.org. You can also find a document there that contains the full list of Advisory Actions passed by the 67th Conference, along with Additional Considerations.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your Delegate,

- Curt K.

Delegate – Panel 67
Area 36 – Southern Minnesota
delegate@area36.org

2017 General Service Conference Keynote Address

Bill N., General Service Trustee

The theme of this year's Conference is "Supporting our Future," and for me there is only one way we can support the future of Alcoholics Anonymous, and that is by embracing the great Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. I say embrace because enforcement has never worked in Alcoholics Anonymous; it is only when a newcomer sees those who came before them embracing the Traditions that they will want to embrace them, too. I am speaking of embracing all Twelve Traditions, not picking and choosing which ones are convenient. One will never win a popularity contest by standing up against a popular idea because your gut tells you it goes against one of our great Twelve Traditions, but it is every A.A. member's responsibility to do the same and the duty of every leader in A.A. We don't embrace them out of fear but rather out of love for Alcoholics Anonymous, the only thing that has worked to arrest our alcoholism.

I told you my name, my service position, and that I am an alcoholic, but let me clearly state what I mean when I say I am an alcoholic. I am not a heavy drinker, a binge drinker or someone even addicted to alcohol, rather I suffer from an "allergy" to alcohol, an allergy that is clearly described and defined in two specific chapters in the book Alcoholics Anonymous, "The Doctor's Opinion" and "More About Alcoholism." Every time I drink I have a reaction to alcohol that normal people do not; my body tells me I have to and need to keep drinking. On top of this physical compulsion, the next day or night when I grow uncomfortable in my own skin my mind tells me the only way to feel comfortable again is to have the first drink regardless of the consequences the last time I drank.

While the courts might believe they can mandate me to get better, others feel they can legislate it, and some doctors and scientists believe they can invent a vaccination or medicate my recovery, I have accepted that only a spiritual experience as the result of the Twelve Steps can arrest my alcoholism. I know today that you can't sentence a spiritual experience, you can't legislate a spiritual experience, and even as a sponsor I can't schedule a spiritual experience. You can simply just have a spiritual experience as a result of our Twelve Steps.

Just like a newcomer looks to the more experienced member for help with our Traditions, groups look to districts, districts to assemblies, and assemblies to the General Service Conference and General Service Board to set an example. A.A.'s leaders have a sacred duty to above all else embrace all Twelve Traditions. I do not believe we should ever look for a way around a Tradition, or try to make something work if it does not feel right. I firmly believe that you can't ask a newcomer to observe one Tradition while you ignore a few others. I believe it is time for many in Alcoholics Anonymous to stop using the Fourth Tradition to break other Traditions. History shows that the Fourth Tradition was not created to be a veto over the others, rather it was created to give group's flexibility regarding group "customs." If any group including an area assembly, area officers, the General Service Board or service corporations breaks a Tradition they are affecting other groups and A.A. as a whole.

Last year I heard about a group that caught my attention for sure because this group had decided to let nonalcoholics become members of their group and hold service positions. The group believed that the Fourth Tradition gave them this flexibility, and I could not disagree more. This group wanted the world to know that they used the Fourth Tradition to re-interpret the Third Tradition. I want to respect all of A.A., every different opinion, even the A.A. that is different than mine, but I can't support any group that wants to rewrite our Traditions or declare our Traditions out of touch and old fashioned. Nothing could be further from the truth.

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2017 General Service Conference Keynote Address

Bill N., General Service Trustee

(Cont.)

Some experts suggest that speakers should tell their audience something about themselves they would not expect, in order to keep their attention, so I will take a page out of that book in order to make sure I don't put you all to sleep. I am told some would not call me emotional or sensitive, so let me pull the curtain back a bit on my public perception. I am a big fan of singers on reality auditions shows. I am taken aback by the ones who nobody expects to be any good and wind up receiving a standing ovation from the audience. There are a few that have actually caused a hard-ass like me to have tears in his eyes. I wondered why I had these reactions; was it my love of music, is that what did it?

It took me a while to figure this out, but in the end, it is my love of the "underdog." I belong to a Fellowship, a great society called Alcoholics Anonymous, that is filled with underdogs, and I stand today in a room giving this talk to a room filled with underdogs. I stand today looking at an audience where most of those in attendance have two things in common with me, they suffer from this horrible illness called alcoholism and second, at one time in their life the rest of the world including their families and loved ones gave up on them. Right now, all over the world at the top of this hour our great Preamble is being read by some with just a few hours or days of sobriety on the front lines of Alcoholics Anonymous. All around the world about an hour ago great members of A.A opened church basements and clubhouses, turned the lights on and made the coffee.

Today all around the world people's lives will change and they have no idea just how important today is, the first day of the rest of their lives. They will attend their first A.A meeting. Some of those people next April will get their one-year cake and celebrate their first A.A. anniversary. At those meetings before they even speak their family members will have tears in their eyes, seeing that our Steps can heal what all the money and love in the world could not heal.

For those like me who suffer from alcoholism, we know it is indeed the war of alcoholism, the battle for our very lives. Like any war, the front lines look much different than this nice room we are gathered in today. I echo the great words of past Class A Trustee John Fromson who warned others not to confuse the well-dressed people and pretty rooms of N.Y. service meetings with the more important work on the front lines of Alcoholics Anonymous in home groups all around the world. Broken women and men of all ages have come to what we affectionately call "the last house on the block," the house you come to because you are not welcome anywhere else, and our doors welcome all alcoholics. The long form of our great Third Tradition states that our membership ought to include all those who suffer from Alcoholism.

For me listening to heavy metal music and drinking in the woods seemed perfectly normal. While others sat in school and dreamed about what college they would attend I just wondered how quick I could get back into the woods and listen to music and drink. After 13 years of living uncomfortably in my own skin I was introduced to what our book calls King Alcohol or John Barleycorn. Alcohol did not take me somewhere, rather it allowed me to leave my state of being uncomfortable. It was the solution to my problem, not my problem. At 13 years-old I had no idea that while it solved my living problem I also had a deadly allergy to this magic elixir I found for my life. While I sought out the relief of that first drink I had no idea that I had a compulsion that makes it impossible for me to stop drinking.

I have been taught there are no honors in Alcoholics Anonymous, just opportunities to serve the Fellowship that saved my life. Opportunities to pay back a debt that never goes away. A debt that actually grows as one's life is further put back together by the power of the Twelve Steps. A debt that

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2017 General Service Conference Keynote Address Bill N., General Service Trustee (Cont.)

can only be paid by giving service back to the Fellowship that gave us a second and sometimes 100th chance. The paradox in our great Fellowship is that the more you get the more you must give. At many service events, I have been asked how much one is paid to be a trustee and for a long time I would answer we are not paid.

I have come to the conclusion that this was an improper answer because I have never been paid more in my life than I have for freely giving service to Alcoholics Anonymous. While Doctor Silkworth would be shocked to see how large the recovery economy has become I feel confident that our founders smile down from above knowing that A.A. is still for fun and for free. All the gold in Fort Knox would not come close to equaling how much I have been paid.

A.A. clearly has some challenges in front of it as we are barely into the 21st century. Using some modern language of our times it is easy for one to get a few years and "go negative." I speak from experience and no opinion here, and I can assure anyone that nothing productive comes from "going negative." Our history is filled with stories around "fear," fear of everyone and everything. Fear that different is bad, fear that change will end our very existence.

We are a Fellowship of paradoxes, starting with the first one: you have to admit you are powerless in order to get power. However, we have other paradoxes. We tell the membership we need more people involved in service, but then ask them when they

accept our invitation to leave their good ideas at home? Do we get fearful of change? On the personal recovery side, we tell newcomers that they have a choice - "Change or Die" - and yet the slightest change proposed at a group, district, or assembly is often looked at as heresy, and always because of our great "Rule 63," "We have always done it this way." And I am not talking about change to our great 36 spiritual principles; I speak most of how people find us, and how we communicate to let them know where to find us.

Close your eyes if you wish and think back to the 1950s after the Jack Alexander article. Imagine if we as an organization had not embraced the technology of the telephone. An old A.A. phrase was "telephone therapy," or the saying, "the phone does not weigh 10,000 pounds." How many people came to A.A. as a result of the telephone, how many came to A.A. because their sponsors came to A.A. because of the telephone? Let's go back to the spring of 1935, when Bill W. took his trip to Akron, Ohio.

In 1935 the telephone, in particular the pay telephone, was found in every hotel lobby. Imagine if Bill W. had no telephone to use that fateful day in Akron. It would be like someone looking for a meeting today and staying in a hotel with no Wi-Fi, no computer in the lobby or business center. I think it is clear from my words that I support and believe we must use all available technology to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous and make sure we are where those with alcoholism look for help. I say this with one important reservation, and that reservation is that everything we do must fit within our twelve great Traditions.

I look at the future twenty years from now and think about "Anonymity" and "Affiliation." Anonymity is half of our name, and a subject so important it has two Traditions dedicated to it. Many speak to the Anonymity of "Press, Radio, and Film" found in the Eleventh Tradition but it seems we don't talk enough about the Anonymity found in the Twelfth Tradition centered around "Humility." It is not in the DNA of the real alcoholic to be famous for being sober; our spiritual malady can't handle fame based on sobriety.

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2017 General Service Conference Keynote Address Bill N., General Service Trustee (Cont.)

I looked through our history to see the last time we as a Fellowship had to examine a new means of technology where some thought the benefit of that technology was so great it was worth ignoring our Traditions. I want to bring you all back to the early days of the VCR, the Video Cassette Recorder. These were the days at the end of the "Betamax" phase, hard to believe technology has changed so much in this relatively short amount of time. Many in A.A. thought we would be able to video-record the best speakers in A.A., and those groups that could not afford to fly in a speaker could instead have an Audio Visual service position, much like the coffee maker, and play the speaker for their members. What an incredible way to carry the message; however, our Fellowship, after many informed discussions decided that videos of speakers showing their full face did not fit within our great Twelve Traditions.

Why did we do this? After all, only A.A. members would see the video, no personal anonymity would be lost at the level of Press, Radio, and Film. Instead, we as a Fellowship embraced the lost anonymity-related Tradition, our great Twelfth Tradition. The Twelfth Tradition speaks of humility in relation to anonymity. It gives us a warning much like the warnings that we find all through the book Alcoholics Anonymous: we who suffer from alcoholism are not wired to be famous or receive accolades because we are sober. This may be different for the heavy or binge drinkers, but not for those of us who fit the description of membership found in our great Third Tradition.

I want to close talking about Traditions One and Two. Our Unity as a Fellowship must take the first seat out of all twelve seats. Without Unity, our doors will not remain open, and our job as a service structure is to keep the doors open, the coffee warm, our literature available, and to make sure there is at least one cold seat open for the new woman or man who enters our Fellowship. After that to make sure that the new person witnesses a meeting where members share A.A. in an A.A. meeting.

That's where Tradition Two appears; only an informed group conscience allows us to decide what is good for A.A. and not good for A.A. A.A. Comes of Age made clear to me that the group always knows better than me, whether that is an A.A. group, a district, an assembly, the General Service Conference or the General Service Board, my job and duty is to carry out the group conscience. In a few rare circumstances, I might need to exercise my right to a minority opinion or appeal, but that is a rare circumstance. The spiritual growth that my life depends on comes with me accepting that the group always knows better than me.

I myself have my own opinions on items this Conference will decide. Will I leave next Saturday ready to carry out the group conscience decided this week or will I spend my nights planning how to change it later? I speak from experience knowing that my life and sobriety are enhanced when I leave here ready to carry out the informed group conscience, particularly those that did not go my way.

I leave you with a little math example I use in relation to leadership in A.A. Our Concepts talk about the following four qualities for a leader: Tolerance, Responsibility, Flexibility, and Vision. For me and my personal experience, Tolerance + Flexibility + Vision = Responsibility; and Intolerance + inflexibility + lack of Vision = IRRESPONSIBILITY.

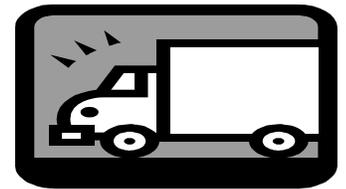
- Bill N., General Service Trustee

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