

68th GSC Delegate's Report –Rick M.

Rick began his report with a welcome and acknowledgement of all attendees at this 2nd assembly in 2018. Rick then thanked several individuals for their participation over the weekend and went into a few general comments before giving this detailed report:

Before going into my report this morning, I want to tell you all that I will not talk through every detail of what transpired at conference. I will detail what I think may be of interest to the "broader audience" and am happy to answer any questions you may have after my report. The full report will be published in my notes online for your reading pleasure and in the Final Report this September. I will detail for you the "historical" 23 Literature agenda items my committee tackled and the results. I will also detail for you the International Convention and Regional forums committee outcomes. What I want to tell you about is the experience I feel so privileged and honored to be a part of this year, an experience that brought me to tears of Joy at different times each day. Thank you all for allowing me to participate in this so rewarding responsibility. I would also like to thank my wife Joan for travelling with me and helping me with all the necessary arrangements every single day. She didn't see much of me but, I'm very grateful for all her help and assistance especially, keeping the refrigerator stocked and all the goodies she found for me in her travels each day throughout the city!

My assigned conference committees are Literature and International Conventions and Regional Forums. This year, the International Conventions committee met a day earlier (Saturday) in order to discuss the 2030 International Site Selection Bids. So, we arrived at the 68th GSC site in New York City on Thursday afternoon and checked into the Crowne Plaza Times Square hotel. This way, I would have a chance on Friday to see a little of New York before being totally immersed into a week of non-stop A.A. business. We walked up and down Broadway from Times Square to Central Park, taking in all the sites, people, and places that make New York City what it is. Later that evening we had dinner with a long-time friend Clement C. and his wife Marcia. Clement is a General Service Office employee working at the Communications Services desk. I'm so glad I did it this way. By the end of the Conference I would be "numb" and in need of winding down at "Stepping Stones".

Sunday, April 22nd at 10:30am was opening session. We had 136 attendees. It was here that I really felt the first of many spiritual experiences- answering to roll call and giving our Area 16 highlights (I was the first up for

the Southeast Region). I was incredibly grateful to feel a part of a much bigger historical experience happening at that very moment; nothing in my life's experience compares. We heard the Mechanics of the conference, review of the Agenda, a Key note address and an A.A. international presentation. Next, we had lunch with our regions followed by the area highlights. At 3:00pm we had our Joint Literature Trustee and Conference Committee Meetings. We were given the opportunity to ask the Trustees Literature Committee members any questions we had on their report and the work done by them up to this point. It was also the first time the entire 68th GSC Literature Committee would meet each other. We worked that afternoon until 6pm and decided as a committee with 23 Agenda items we would meet Monday and Tuesday at 8:00am instead of 9:00am. At 6:30pm Sunday we had our Opening Dinner followed by an A.A. meeting. Joan accompanied me and to my surprise, she knew and was welcomed by quite a few of the GSO staff. This was due to her time as our Area 16 Grapevine chair.

Monday and Tuesday mornings we were busy in our committee meetings until noon. Each afternoon the entire conference would have presentations on various theme topics and time for Questions and General Sharing. Monday we heard the rest of the Area Highlights and a great financial report by David Morris, General Service Board Treasurer (I have put this on our website as well

Tuesday evening, as a tradition, we were treated to Ice Cream by our Regional Trustees. This was a great time at the Stardust restaurant. Had some great sing-alongs with the singing wait-staff. And of course, great Ice Cream Dishes.

Wednesday morning, we took the subway to GSO for a tour of the offices and to meet the staff. I had several great conversations with staff members about recent and relevant topics for our Area. I was very impressed with the modern offices and the professional staff. Another spiritual experience. I especially liked the Archives area and need to get back so I can spend more time there. I am convinced our GSO is in good hands with the staff they have in place. After our visit, we headed back to the Crowne Plaza and had lunch with our region.

By Wednesday evening we started with the Conference committee report-outs. In between, we had several presentations and by Friday at midnight we were done! Before I get into the Agenda, let me give you some definitions: Conference Advisory Actions represent

recommendations put forward by the standing committees of the General Service Conference that have been discussed, voted on and approved by the Conference body as a whole during general sessions. Committee Considerations reflect items discussed by each committee that have been presented to the full Conference body in the form of each committee's report, but have not been presented for any additional Conference action. I have added some additional commentary where I thought appropriate or, for additional clarity. There are 56 total Actions of the 68th General Service Conference.

Agenda

A. The theme for the 2019 General Service Conference be: "Our Big Book – 80 Years, 71 Languages."

B. The following be presentation/discussion topics for the 2019 General Service Conference:
Yesterday's World – Our Legacies Begin
Today's World – Demonstrating Integrity, Anonymity and Service
Tomorrow's World – Courage to be Vigilant

C. The following be the workshop topic for the 2019 General Service Conference: "Clarity of Purpose – Addressing the Needs of Our Meetings"

E. Discussed report on the Conference Agenda Process from the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference.

Additional Committee Consideration:

The committee requested the trustees' committee create a process for area delegate review of proposed agenda items that were not forwarded to a Conference committee and bring a report to the 2019 Conference Committee on Agenda.

Cooperation with the Professional Community

A. **Consider revisions to: "A.A. as a Resource for the Health Care Professional."**

At the bottom of page 7, ...even in jails, institutions or on military bases...

...On page 10, in the section "How to Contact A.A." Additionally, online A.A. meetings are available, which members of the military and others often use when they are ~~deployed~~ in places where there are no meetings nearby.

PASSED as amended (striking "deployed")

C. **Consider revisions to the pamphlet "Members of the Clergy Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous"**

Proposed insertion: What if you are a Chaplain in the Military? ...Online meetings...for those members of the

military who may be deployed, and chaplains can help get them connected electronically through correspondence groups.

PASSED as amended striking "deployed"

B. Consider revisions to: "If You Are a Professional

On page 5, in the last para. of the section "How to Make Referrals to A.A.":

G.S.O...for help and information....www.aa.org can aid in finding local resources...online A.A. meetings are available, which members of the military...often use when...deployed in places where there are no meetings nearby.

PASSED as amended striking "deployed"

D. **The committee recommended the A.A. World Services, Inc. develop a company page on LinkedIn with the following goals in mind:**

Offer an additional **digital resource** to aa.org, broaden reach of the **About A.A.** newsletter, raise awareness of exhibits at professional conferences, **expand the network of friends** and deepen the pool of Class A trustees, reinforce the continuing relevance and efficacy of A.A. to professionals.

Passed.

Committee Considerations

- The committee strongly suggested that those creating the LinkedIn company page consider adding some kind of disclaimer or explanation clarifying that A.A. is not affiliated with any of the organizations who appear in promoted content on the LinkedIn company page.

As you can see, CPC was also very busy!

Corrections

A. **Considered request to create a pamphlet for inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration.**

TOOK NO ACTION

Lots of discussion on this item. Suggestion: Add verbiage to make pre-release program more effective.

Committee Considerations

- The committee discussed the request to create a pamphlet for inmates who will be released after long-term incarceration and took no action. The committee suggested that correction service materials be revised for this purpose.
- The committee asked the trustees' Committee on Corrections to update the service materials, "A.A.

Corrections Prerelease Contact Information - For A.A.s on the Inside” and “A.A. Corrections Prerelease Contact Information - For A.A.s on the Outside” with excerpts from existing literature.

- The committee suggested that the trustees’ Committee on Corrections create a letter to corrections professionals to raise awareness about prerelease and Bridging the Gap volunteers.
- The committee noted that many correctional facilities have increased their security restrictions for paper materials and suggests the trustees’ Committee on Corrections continue to work with the Publishing Department to insure access to A.A. materials for incarcerated alcoholics.

We have an opportunity to put forth a recommendation to this committee for consideration in 2019.

Finance

It was recommended that:

14. The Conference-approved maximum annual contribution from an individual A.A. member to the General Service Board be increased from \$3,000 to \$5,000.

**Additional Committee Consideration:
Considered developing a method to standardize increases to the limits on individual contributions and bequests to the General Service Board.**

Took No Action

Committee Considerations

The committee reviewed the Self-Support Packet and made the following suggestions to the Publishing Department:

- Adding language regarding group level electronic contributions, passing the “virtual” basket, to the section Passing the Basket in the service piece “The A.A. Group Treasurer” and also be included in the pamphlet “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” and the Guidelines on Finance.

The committee requested that when A.A.W.S. develops an A.A. app that self-support information be easily accessible..

Grapevine

It was recommended that:

15. AA Grapevine, Inc. allow sales of Grapevine and La Viña books, single-issue magazines (as available), and other products to non-AA entities, such as (but not limited to) hospitals, treatment centers and book stores. [Note: As a current practice, AA Grapevine, Inc. does not seek outside sales for magazine subscriptions.]

16. AA Grapevine, Inc. continue to seek opportunities to expand bulk sales. [Note: AA Grapevine, Inc. currently offers volume discounts and will respond to requests, rather than solicit sales from outside entities.]

17. AA Grapevine, Inc. provide notification to A.A. World Services’ list of non-A.A. entities to let them know that they can now purchase AA Grapevine and La Viña books, single-issue magazines (as available) and other products.

18. La Viña be published at its current frequency of six times per year as a service to the Fellowship, with perfect binding, at 68 pages, and in full color.

19. The revised pamphlet “AA Grapevine and La Viña: Our Meetings in Print” be approved and the title changed to “AA Grapevine and La Viña: Our Meetings in Print and Other Media.”

The committee agreed to forward to the AA Grapevine Corporate Board the suggestion that in the year 2019 or later Grapevine produce the following items:

1. Our Twelve Steps II (working title) Stories of experience by members about our Twelve Steps (our last Step book was in 2011).
2. All About Grapevine Reps (working title) Helpful and inspiring stories by A.A. members doing service with Grapevine and La Viña.
3. Prayer & Meditation (working title) A collection of stories by A.A. members about the many ways they practice Step Eleven.
4. A.A. & Families (working title) Stories by A.A. members that illustrate the many ways alcoholism and A.A. has touched our families.
5. Hispanic Members Doing Service in A.A. (working title) A collection of stories published in La Viña magazine by members getting sober and active, doing service and carrying the A.A. message.

FYI - Stories by Women in AA in Spanish coming in 2019/2020 (Birthday of La Viña!)

Committee Considerations

The committee reviewed the 2018 Grapevine social media report regarding Instagram, Facebook, and Google for Nonprofits and suggests that A.A. Grapevine, Inc. continue to explore a social media strategy in their forthcoming strategic plan, taking into account issues regarding anonymity, security, affiliation, outside contributions, privacy and promotion.

Literature

It’s at this point I want to say I completely understand why Bill wanted the “Committee System” for A.A. The literature committee had a record 23 agenda items at the start of conference. I am so grateful to say that everyone on the committee came well prepared. All had done their research, background reading, and prep work. We were able to get through all the agenda items in time to start our report out on Wednesday. All discussions were done thoughtfully and with complete thoroughness.

Cooperation and the willingness to do what was right for A.A. as a whole remained our goal from the start. As you'll see Literature was very fruitful in our work as a committee. As we finished up Tuesday, we held elections for next year's Committee Chair and Alternate Chair. I am humbled to have been picked as alternate Chair.

22. The revised pamphlet "A.A. for the Woman," retitled "Experience, Strength and Hope: Women in A.A.," be approved.

23. The revised pamphlet "A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic," retitled "Experience, Strength and Hope: LGBTQ Alcoholics in A.A.," be approved with minor edits provided by Publishing regarding use of gender specific language.

24. The revised pamphlet "Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and its Services" be approved.

25. The draft pamphlet "Experience, Strength and Hope: A.A. for Alcoholics with Mental Health Issues – and their sponsors" be approved.

E. Considered proposed revisions to *Alcoholics Anonymous*:

1. Add appendix reflecting Library of Congress recognition: **FAILED**
2. Add the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement: **TOOK NO ACTION**
3. Add endnote to Bill W.'s story acknowledging co-founder, Bob S.: **TOOK NO ACTION**

F. Requested: add a section on anonymity to the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship." **PASSED** – Progress report or draft to 2019 General Service Conference.

G. Requested change the subtitle of the pamphlet: "G.S.R. General Service Representative: May Be the Most Important Job in A.A." to: "G.S.R. General Service Representative "The Link Between Your Group and A.A. as a Whole." - **PASSED**

H. Requested: re-insert text that was removed from the book *Living Sober*. **PASSED**

I. Request to update the video "Your A.A. General Service Office, the Grapevine and the General Service Structure." **PASSED** – Progress report or draft updated video to 2019 General Service Conference

J. Requested that A.A. (U.S./Canada) publish "The God Word" (a pamphlet published by the General Service Board of A.A., Great Britain). (Area 14 too) **PASSED** – Adopted by AAWS with minor editorial changes

K. Request for the development of a pamphlet based upon A.A.'s Three Legacies.

PASSED – Progress report or draft to 2019 General Service Conference.

L. Considered request development of a new book combining *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* with *Twelve Concepts for World Service*. **FAILS**

M. Request for the development of a new pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women alcoholics.

PASSED – Progress report or draft to 2019 General Service Conference.

Additional Committee Considerations (some) to Trustees Committee on Literature:

Request for the development of a pamphlet for atheist and agnostic members. **TOOK NO ACTION**

Looking forward to progress reports or draft pamphlets to 2019 General Service Conference:

"The Twelve Traditions Illustrated"

"Too Young?"

"Young People and A.A."

Committee Considerations

- The committee reviewed the trustees' Literature Committee report on "Language Related to Safety in A.A. Literature." The committee requested that the trustees' Literature Committee develop text regarding safety in A.A. to be included in *Living Sober* and the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship," and bring back the draft text to the 2019 Conference Committee on Literature.

Policy/Admissions

It was recommended that:

B. Process for polling the General Service Conference between annual Conference meetings. - **PASSED**

Additional Committee Considerations:

Date: April 25 – May 1, 2021 Accepted for the 71st General Service Conference

Develop a policy for the use of the Conference dashboard. Develop an information sheet that reflects shared experience and guidance on usage of the conference dashboard.

Public Information

It was recommended that:

36. The video PSA "Changes" be approved with the following revision: That the line "That's where A.A. came to my rescue" be replaced with "A.A. offered a solution."

37. In addition to the work of local committees, the video PSA, "Changes" be centrally distributed, tracked and

evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$42,000 and that the information gathered from the process be forwarded to the 2019 Conference Public Information Committee for their review.

38. The Young People's Video submission be approved.

C. 1. Revisions to the pamphlet "Understanding Anonymity" with expanded content on Traditions Eleven and Twelve and adds information related to safety in A.A. **PASSED**

40. The trustees' Committee on Public Information develop language reflecting that A.A.'s anonymity Traditions are not a cloak protecting criminal or inappropriate behavior and that calling the proper authorities does not go against any A.A. Traditions. A progress report or draft language is requested to be brought back to the 2019 Conference Committee on Public Information.

41. The updated pamphlet "A Brief Guide to Alcoholics Anonymous" be approved.

42. A progress report including website analytics and the usefulness and effectiveness of the A.A.W.S. YouTube account be brought back to the 2019 Conference Committee on Public Information.

Committee Considerations

- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2018 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan and noted the importance of the trustees' continued exploration of social media and social network platforms to carry the A.A. message to the public.

Report and Charter

It was recommended that:

A. The A.A. Service Manual, 2018-2020 Edition:

1. Considered adding "Panel" definition to the *Glossary of General Service Terms*. **PASSED**

2. Consider adding graphics on page S75, above the section *A.A. World Services, Inc.*, that visually display the positions on each of the three corporate boards. **PASSED**

3. Text to be added reflecting AAWS copyright statement on "The Blue People" graphic. **PASSED**

4. Any Committee Considerations be published in their entirety in both the printed Conference report and the anonymity-protected version. **PASSED**

5. Considered the plan for a revised editorial review process. **PASSED**

Additional Committee Considerations:

Considered removing the following statement: ... "Any group or district of the Fellowship is free to use the symbol of a circle and triangle on newsletters, meeting schedules or other A.A. material." **Took No Action**

Treatment and Accessibilities

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- A. Title of pamphlet Accessibility for all Alcoholics be changed to "Access to AA: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers"—approved with additional revisions. **PASSED**
- B. Scope of Committee expanded to include remote communities. **PASSED**

Very Large Emphasis on Military!

Trustees

Committee Considerations

The committee thoughtfully reviewed a proposal to censure the General Service Board and after seeking extensive additional input from the general manager of G.S.O., the chair of the General Service Board, and additional General Service Board trustees, agreed to take no action. The committee recognized that the litigation regarding the Printer's Copy Manuscript of Alcoholics Anonymous has caused many in the Fellowship to have strong feelings on all sides of this issue. The committee believes that the unity of Alcoholics Anonymous is the most important treasure we have as a Fellowship. The committee also recognizes that the General Service Board and the Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Board have many legal responsibilities and must sometimes make use of the right of decision, but in the spirit of A.A. unity, the committee asks the General Service Board, A.A. World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc. that:

- All major decisions made by A.A. World Services, Inc., AA Grapevine, Inc., the General Service Office or AA Grapevine management be promptly and fully reported to the General Service Board, as appropriate.
- If the General Service Board, the A.A. World Services or AA Grapevine boards need to initiate a legal proceeding as a plaintiff, that whenever possible, they will consult the members of the General Service Conference before starting such a proceeding, being ever mindful of A.A. unity and A.A.'s financial prudence. However, the committee understands that sometimes this might not be possible.
- The committee reviewed a proposal to reorganize the A.A.W.S. and General Service Boards and took no action. The committee noted that although a reorganization was not considered necessary at this time, the committee requested that the trustees' Committee on Nominating develop procedures for a partial or complete reorganization of the General

Service Board, the A.A.W.S. or AA Grapevine boards and that a report be brought back to the 2019 Conference Committee on Trustees, including all possible options.

Archives

It was recommended that:

A. The proposed new publication, *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951 – 1970* be approved with minor editorial changes.

This should be available in about a year – contains 18 talks!

International Conventions/Regional Forums

Saturday morning April 21st, 8:30am, I attended my first General Service Conference committee meeting; the **2030 International Site Selection Committee**. At this meeting we heard from four cities bidding on the 2030 site; Houston, St. Louis, New Orleans, and Indianapolis. Each had its Convention and Visitor's Bureau representatives and Area Delegate there to give a 10-minute presentation, followed by questions from our committee. Following all the presentations, the committee then went into the work of rating each city to narrow the finalist down to 2-3 cities. Of special note during this meeting was the statement that we normally entertain 10-12 bids. This year was only four. We need to further examine why this is. We finished our initial ratings and had lunch together with directions to reconvene on Wednesday evening for a final vote.

At 5:30pm Wednesday I went back into the International Conventions and Regional Forums committee meeting and dinner. At this meeting we narrowed the list of 2030 International Convention sites down to two; St. Louis and Indianapolis. We also discussed the 2035 (100-year Anniversary) date and timing considerations. We also discussed the Regional Forums and how to increase participation. At the conclusion of this meeting we held elections for next year's Committee Chair and Alternate Chair. I am humbled to have been elected as Chair of the International Conventions/Regional Forums committee for next year and look forward to the experience.

20. The following two cities, expressed here in alphabetical order, be considered as possible sites for

the International Convention in 2030: Indianapolis, Indiana; St. Louis, Missouri.

21. Up to 21 non-A.A. speakers be invited to attend the 2020 International Convention at A.A.'s expense.

Committee Considerations

The committee requested that the trustees' Committee on International Conventions/Regional Forums review the Guidelines for Site Selection for the 2035 A.A. International Convention and explore expanding the window of dates in which the 2035 International Convention could be held. (*100-year anniversary*)

Floor Actions

There were 8 proposed Floor Actions. #1, #3, #5, #7 the Conference declined to hear. #8 was withdrawn.

1. Area Service Highlights be published in their entirety in both the printed Conference *Final Report* and the anonymity-protected digital version
2. Page 18 of the pamphlet "Members of the Clergy Ask About A.A." now reads: "Please check your local telephone directory or newspaper for the number of Alcoholics Anonymous."

Be revised to read: Alcoholics Anonymous can be found on the Internet at aa.org and in most telephone directories by looking for "Alcoholics Anonymous." Additionally, online meetings are available, which members of the military and others often use when they are in places where there is no meeting nearby.

We finished by Midnight; exhausted. The next day we were off to Stepping Stones – Home of Bill & Lois Wilson. Such a fantastic way to end the week! Bills Desk at Wit's End, their home with the Table Ebby & Bill sat at, all the household items - I could linger there forever Sally and her team did an excellent job of hosting all of the delegates with a lunch and tours.

I will never forget the 68th General Service Conference; it is forever stamped into my heart and soul. I especially wish to thank all of you, A.A., and my higher power for this opportunity to serve Area 16, a pocket of enthusiasm that continues to "Carry the A.A. Message".