

Area 53

Mini-Conference

March 10-12, 2017

**OUR
SPIRITUAL
WAY OF LIFE**
*steps * traditions * concepts*

Area 53 2017 Mini-Conference Final Report

Area 53 held its annual Mini-Conference at the Salt Fork Conference Center on March 10-12, 2017. This report responds to a request from a 2016 Area Inventory for more formal communication about the Mini-Conference process and results. It contains three sections: (1) introductory background material on the conference structure, (2) “facts and figures” about this year’s Mini-Conference, and (3) a summary of the advisory actions taken by this year’s Mini-Conference.

The General Service Conference Structure

The Conference Structure, our familiar upside-down organization found on page S16 of *The A.A. Service Manual*, is the framework in which our “general services” are carried out. The services include activities at all levels of the structure, not just the day-to-day activities of our delegates, trustees and office staff.

Communication throughout the structure begins with the groups selecting general service representatives (GSRs) and standing committee members. Active participation at the district, standing committee and area level are vital to the constant communication throughout the structure needed to balance the “ultimate authority...of our whole fellowship” [Concept I] and the “effective conscience” exercised by the General Service Conference [Concept II].

We have had a service structure since 1937 when the Alcoholic Foundation was created and a small service office was opened in New York. Until 1950, the job of keeping the collective needs of alcoholics at the forefront of the service structure fell to our founding members. As we grew it became clear that this structure was not sustainable.

Consistent with Tradition Two, a test of an annual “group conscience” of the structure began in 1950. The name of the Alcoholic Foundation was changed to the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous. The test was a success and the plan was unanimously adopted at the 1955 International in St. Louis. [See *A.A. Comes of Age* for the whole story.]

The General Service Conference Meeting (All quotes are from *The A.A. Service Manual*)

“While the General Service Conference operates all year round, the annual meeting... is the culmination of the year’s activities, the time when the collective group conscience of U.S./Canada A.A. comes together to take actions that will guide the groups in the years to come” (S54).

“Voting membership of the Conference includes the area delegates (who make up at least two-thirds of the Conference body), the directors and A.A. staff of A.A. World Services, Inc. and A.A. Grapevine, Inc., and the trustees” (S56).

The Conference meeting “considers matters of policy for A.A. as a whole.” Agenda items can originate anywhere in the conference structure. Regardless of source, all proposed items “follow the same path to the Conference Agenda” (Details are found on page S55).

Each Agenda item is “first considered and discussed by one of the standing Conference committees, then brought to the full Conference in the form of committee recommendations...Committee recommendations that are approved become Conference Advisory Actions” (Page S16). [See Chapters Seven and Eight for a full explanation of how the Conference and the Committees function.]

The Area 53 Mini-Conference

The Mini-Conference is a scaled down version of the Conference meeting. At this year’s Conference Meeting, there were ninety-two agenda items assigned to the thirteen conference committees. At our Mini-Conference, we considered twenty-one of agenda items from eight of the committees.

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2017 Facts and Figures

- The 2017 Area 53 Mini-Conference kicked off at 7 pm Friday March 10. It adjourned at 10 am on Sunday March 12.
- A GSR School was held at 4 pm Friday afternoon. At the same time, there was a panel presentation on the topic “Having had a spiritual awakening...”
- Friday evening’s session was short – introductions and an overview of the weekend. The Mini-Conference Committees met Friday evening from 8-10 pm and Saturday morning from 9am-noon. The full Mini-Conference met Saturday afternoon to consider the committees’ recommendations. A summary of the our actions follows on the next page.
- Steve S, General Service Office Staff Member, gave a GSO status report on Saturday night, followed by his lead. Our Delegate, Frank G, recapped the weekend on Sunday morning. John C, Area 55 Delegate, shared his story to close the weekend.
- There were 111 paid participants (including 11 scholarships) versus our projected 125. Registration income was about \$2,700. Expenses were \$2,800. The deficit of \$100 fell short of our break-even budget.
- Key non-meal expenses for the Mini-Conference include supplies and copies for registration (\$200) and for the committee meetings (\$500). Speaker expenses for travel, room, and meals were \$800.
- Not surprisingly, coffee was one of our largest expenses. We paid \$3.75 for each 8-ounce cup of coffee. A total of 25 gallons of coffee were consumed at a cost of \$735.
- Participants purchased 147 meals over the weekend, including 62 for the Saturday night banquet. Overall, the meal events were self-supporting.
- We tried something new this year – providing for-donation “full” meals for breakfast, lunch and dinner in the Hospitality Room. We hoped this would encourage participation by eliminating the cost of meals. In the past, we have limited hospitality expenditures to contributions received so that the hospitality room would be self-supporting.
- This year we set a budget at contributions plus \$500 from the general fund. We actually spent \$521 in addition to the contributions received. The program was successful in providing affordable meals, but there is no evidence that it increased attendance. The plan for 2018 is yet to be determined.

SAVE THE DATE. We’ll be back at Salt Fork for next year’s Mini-Conference, March 9-11, 2018. We hope to see you all there for another successful send-off for our Delegate.

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Committee Reports and Mini-Conference Actions

Twenty-one agenda items were distributed among the eight Mini-Conference Committees. The committees were asked to “Consider” thirteen items, to “Discuss” six items, and to “Review” two items. The committees took “No Action” on four of the items they considered, recommending that the other nine be considered by the full Mini-Conference. The full Mini-Conference approved seven of the nine. Committee notes for the discussion and review items were summarized for our Delegate. Details by assigned committee follow.

Archives Committee (Chris J., Chair)

- The Committee recommended consideration of a new publication, *Unity in Action: Bill W's General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970*. (Working title). The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.

Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee (Dave C., Chair)

- The Committee recommended retiring the pamphlet “Three Talks to the Medical Societies” by Bill W. The Advisory Action failed following reconsideration by the full Mini-Conference.
- The committee recommended changing the title of the pamphlet “Is There An Alcoholic in the Workplace?” to “Is There A Problem Drinker in the Workplace?” The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.
- The Committee considered with appreciation adding a footnote to the pamphlet “Problems Other Than Alcohol” and agreed to take no action.
- The Committee considered with appreciation the development of a LinkedIn page for CPC committees and agreed to take no action.

Corrections Committee (Chris J., Chair)

- The Committee discussed with appreciation the Corrections Correspondence Service in the U.S. and Canada (C.C.S.). Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.
- The Committee discussed with appreciation carrying the message to incarcerated Native American/First Nation/Inuit people. Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.

Grapevine Committee (Donna K., Chair)

- The Committee recommended the suggested list of Grapevine book topics for 2018 or later. The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.
- The Committee considered with appreciation the reconsideration of the 2004 Conference Advisory Action on outside sales and agreed to take no action.
- The Committee discussed with appreciation A.A. Grapevine, Inc's continued exploration of a Google for Non-Profits account. Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.
- The Committee discussed with appreciation ways that groups can be kept informed about the Grapevine and LaVina when they don't have a Grapevine or LaVina representative. Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.

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Literature Committee (Brandi V., Chair)

- The Committee recommended producing a pamphlet that included personal experiences of group and individual solutions regarding safety issues in AA. The Advisory Action failed following consideration by the full Mini-Conference.
- The Committee recommended adding a question regarding safety under “Group Inventory” to the pamphlet “The A.A. Group.” The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.
- The Committee considered with appreciation a recommendation to retire the pamphlet “Too Young” and agreed to take no action.
- The Committee concluded that the background information was insufficient to review the pamphlet “Finding Acceptance: A.A. for the LGBTQ Alcoholic,” and tabled the discussion.
- The Committee concluded that the background information was insufficient to review revisions to the pamphlet “A.A. for the Woman,” and tabled the discussion.

Public Information Committee (Joy D., Chair)

- The Committee recommended revised text for the pamphlet “Speaking at Non-AA Meetings.” The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.
- The Committee discussed with appreciation suggestions to update the pamphlet “Understanding Anonymity” and agreed to take no action.
- The Committee reviewed the 2016 report from the Trustees’ Public Information Committee on the Usefulness and Relevance of Public Service Announcements. Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.

Report & Charter Committee (Matt P., Chair)

- The Committee recommended adding text regarding area websites to Chapter Four of *The A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts*. The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.

Treatment & Accessibilities Committee (Matt P., Chair)

- The Committee recommended adding text to “Composition, Scope, and Procedure” regarding the option to meet by conference call prior to the Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference. The full Mini-Conference approved the Advisory Action.
- The Committee reviewed with appreciation the revised draft pamphlet “A.A. for the Alcoholic with Special Needs.” Discussion notes were summarized for the Delegate.