

AREA 53 PRE-CONFERENCE REPORT ON THE 2020 GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

April 19-25, 2020

Hilton Westchester Rye Brook, NY

Conference Agenda Items with Background Overview

Prepared by the Area 53 Conference Agenda Committee

This Pre-Conference Report is posted on area53aa.org.

If any AA member in Area 53 would like more information about the background, has other questions, or wants to express his or her opinion on any agenda item, please contact me, Stephen S., Area 53 Delegate, at delegate@area53aa.org. You can also contact me if your group, district, or standing committee would like to meet to discuss any of the items. These meetings will be arranged on a first-come, first service basis, subject to the limitations of my scheduled commitments as your delegate.

The General Service Conference Overview

The annual General Service Conference meeting is the collective group conscience of U.S./Canada A.A. Voting membership of the Conference includes the ninety-three 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.

Business sessions run from Sunday through Friday. They include committee meetings, presentations, workshops, and new trustee elections. Reports will be made by the Chairs of The General Service Board, A.A. World Services, Inc., and AA Grapevine, Inc. There will also be a comprehensive Finance Report presented by the Treasurer of the General Service Board. Transcripts of these presentations will be printed in the Final Conference Report.

The Third Legacy Procedure is used to recommend candidates for open positions of general service trustee. In 2020, the open positions are for West Central Regional Trustee and Western Canada Regional Trustee. The Conference also reviews and recommends a slate of trustees and officers for the General Service Board, a slate of directors for A.A. World Services, Inc., and a slate of directors for AA Grapevine, Inc.

Each delegate serves on one of the thirteen standing Conference committees, which meet early in the week and do the principal work of the Conference. Each committee prepares a report which is presented to the full Conference. The report includes recommendations for consideration as Advisory Actions and items for which the committee made no recommendation to the full Conference (“Additional Committee Considerations.”)

At the end of the week, the Conference as a whole considers the recommendations of the various committees. Those that pass with substantial unanimity become “Advisory Actions.” On the day following the adjournment of the Conference, the General Service Boards meet to formally accept the recommendations of the Conference.

There are ninety-one items on the committee agendas for the 2020 Conference. Some of the agenda items are procedural or administrative in nature and apply primarily to the operation of the Board and the Conference. These include:

- Selecting themes for the 2021 Conference, workshops, and presentations.
- Reviewing evaluations of the 2019 Conference and evaluations of between-conference committee communications.
- Reviewing the Conference process and schedule.
- Discussing plans for the International Convention and Regional Forums.

There are also reviews of various “Service Pieces” - printed material produced by A.A. World Services, Inc. for the information of the Fellowship, and not requiring conference approval. Suggested changes to service pieces made by the Conference Committee are put forth as Additional Committee Considerations, not Advisory Actions. In 2020, the service pieces to be reviewed are:

- The “Self-Support Packet”
- “Kits and Workbooks” for the Area Standing Committees: Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections, Grapevine, Public Information, Treatment, Accessibilities, and Archives.

The remaining agenda items are arranged alphabetically by their assigned Conference Committee. For each, a brief overview of the background material has been prepared. At the start of each “Background Overview,” the number of pages of the full background material is given in parenthesis. (Note, there are a total of 1,068 pages of background material.)

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

(A) Consider request to develop a book on A.A. History from 1955 to the present.

Background Overview (15 pages). Area 29 and Area 55 requested that the Conference consider developing a new book covering A.A.’s history since 1955. The suggested title is *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age II* (AACOA II). Previous efforts to develop such a book proved unsuccessful. The idea was first introduced by a 1986 Advisory Action. Progress on the book was reviewed by the Conference Literature Committee in each succeeding year. A manuscript was reviewed and returned for more work in 1992. In 1993, work on the book was deferred for two years so a “new team can look at the History Book with fresh ideas.” The 1999 Conference Literature Committee concluded that “there were ample existing resources on A.A. history and that there was no compelling need to develop this project. In 2006, the Conference Committee took “no action” on a request for the book. The trustees’ Literature Committee took “no action” on book suggestions in 2008 and 2013.

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

(A) Consider a request to discontinue the pamphlet "A. A. in Your Community."

Background Overview (19 pages). Area 64 proposed discontinuing "Alcoholics Anonymous in Your Community" (P-31). This recommendation resulted from a review of the C.P.C. Kit. The group doing the review concluded that the "pamphlet is poorly constructed for the intended audience and mis-informative of our program." They found that the same information can be found in two other pamphlets in the Kit, "Information on Alcoholics Anonymous" (F-2) and "A.A. at a Glance" (F-1).

(B) Consider a request to create a pamphlet for mental health professionals.

Background Overview (11 pages). Area 11's C.P.C. committee proposed the creation of a "pamphlet geared towards mental health professionals specifically that would educate them about AA with the hope that they may be better qualified to help a person who has a desire to stop drinking." The proposed item is intended to address misconceptions and misinformation's about A.A. by Mental Health Professionals. Existing C.P.C. material targets medical professionals, but there is nothing that speaks directly to the mental health professional. The proposal includes 14 bullet points that specify AA-related information and suggestions that would better help the problem drinker if the professional had this pamphlet to give out.

(C) Discuss progress report on LinkedIn Page Implementation.

Background Overview (39 pages). This is a follow up to Conference reviews in 2017, 2018, and 2019 to develop a LinkedIn page as an additional digital offering where professionals can find information about A.A. and provide other benefits. The 2019 Conference Committee viewed the plans for LinkedIn and proposed seven suggestions to be included in the plan.

The LinkedIn Page was launched in November 2019. A Bookmark Page was added to aid viewing with a mobile device. For the November to January period, there were a total of 692 visits, with 165 resulting in a redirection to aa.org. The report includes more than 25 pages describing the process, progress and challenges encountered so far.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

(A) Review the pamphlet "Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix."

A.1 Consider a request to revise the pie chart percentages on page 12.

Background Overview (3 pages). Area 66 suggested changing the "Samples of Group Contributions" charts so that the suggested percentage contribution for each service entity is inversely proportional to the number of contributing groups. Because group treasurers place great weight on these sample contribution charts, this change would help carry the message locally. For areas with an intergroup (top pie chart), the suggested split for district/area committee/G.S.O./Intergroup would change from 10/30/30/50 to 30/20/10/40. For areas without an intergroup (bottom pie chart), the suggested split for district/area committee/ G.S.O. would change from 40/30/30 to 60/30/10.

A.2 Consider a request regarding contribution percentages to service entities.

Background Overview. (4 pages). Area 61 suggested removing the "Samples of Group Contributions" charts that suggest specific percentage contributions because they appear to "sanction" the suggested splits. This would leave only the top chart, where the individual group determines the percentage contribution. They further suggested adding the paragraph: "Duties of the entities notated above are described on page 7 of this pamphlet. Performance of these service duties vary from area to area. Please be sure to inquire which services these entities provide in YOUR area and contribute accordingly."

A.3 Consider draft language related to the “virtual basket.”

Background Overview (4 pages). The AAWS Finance Committee assigned this to the Conference Finance Committee as a follow-up to a 2019 Additional Committee Consideration to add language regarding group level electronic contributions (a “virtual” basket) to the “Self-Support” pamphlet. The Publishing Department proposed adding the following question to page 12 of the pamphlet: **“Some members of our group wanted to pass a “virtual” basket – to collect Seventh Tradition contributions digitally. How could we do this?”**

The suggested answer states that “there are different payment platforms to facilitate this service and it is up to the group to determine which one to use.” The answer also provides some information to consider in choosing a platform and “suggests that the treasurer is a likely choice to handle digital contributions,” but that some groups create a new service position.

GRAPEVINE COMMITTEE

(D) Consider revising the A.A. Preamble to use gender neutral pronouns. For example, “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other...”

Background Overview (3 pages). In 2018, the Silver Springs MD “Happy, Joyous, and Free” group submitted the “gender-neutral” request. The rationale is to use inclusive language that will “align Alcoholics Anonymous with our contemporary population and remove wording that may make it difficult for all to identify.”

(E) Consider a request to change the language of the first sentence of the A. A. Preamble as follows: “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people who share...”

Background Overview (23 pages). Requests to replace “men and women” with “people” were received from Areas 49, 13, and 27. The reasons given were inclusiveness and creating a safe environment for all seeking the help of A.A. The point was made that the Preamble is read at the beginning of most AA meetings and is often the first exposure a newcomer may have to A.A. There was also information included on the prevalence of alcohol problems in the LGBTQ+ population.

The Preamble was introduced in the June 1947 issue of the AA Grapevine magazine. It is copyrighted by AA Grapevine, Inc. Two changes were made to it at the 1958 General Service Conference. (1) the word “honest” was dropped before “desire to stop drinking” to make it consistent with the Third Tradition, and (2) the phrase “AA has no dues or fees” was changed to its current form: “There are no dues or fees for AA membership. We are self-supporting through our own contributions.” An effort to add a sentence to the end of the Preamble resulted in “no action” by the 1987 Conference Committee.

(F) Consider a request to develop an AA Grapevine pamphlet on how the AA Grapevine can be utilized to carry the A.A. message.

Background Overview (12 pages). The Area 39 Literature Committee proposed that this pamphlet be developed. The request suggested seventeen specific areas, such as Correctional Facilities, to be addressed. Each section would include a personal story of an A.A. member’s experience using the Grapevine to carry the message. The background material included copies of current AA Grapevine material addressing the Grapevine as a Twelfth Step resource. (1) “AA Grapevine Today [F-188], (2) “AA La Viña Hoy”, “How the Magazines Carry the Message”, “2020 Carry the Message Project”, and “Lleve el Mensaje.”

(G) Consider a request to change the name of the General Service Conference Committee on Grapevine to the Conference Committee on Grapevine and LaViña.

Background Overview (2 pages plus pamphlets). The Area 13 Public Information Committee suggested this name change be considered “to enhance the relationship between our ‘international journals’ and provide a positive display of unity.” Pamphlet P-52, “Grapevine and LaViña: Our Meetings in Print and Other Media” is available at aa.org.

(H) Consider a request for AA Grapevine, Inc. to establish an Instagram account in line with the Twelve Traditions.

Background Overview (11 pages). Additional Considerations from the 2017 and 2018 General Service Conferences suggested that AA Grapevine continue to explore social media strategy. A Proposed Instagram Implementation Plan would begin with monthly posts using existing content from the magazines, website and YouTube. Over time, new content could be solicited or created that is “Instagram-specific.” Five examples of possible posts from existing content are included in the background material.

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS AND REGIONAL FORUMS

(A) Discuss methods of closing the Big Meetings at the International Convention.

Background Overview (5 pages). Area 49 submitted the request to discuss the methods of closing the “Big Meetings” at the International Convention. According to the chair of the trustees’ committee: “For the last 4 Internationals, the closings for the Big Meetings have been Friday night: *Lord’s Prayer*, Saturday night: *Serenity Prayer* and Sunday morning: *Responsibility Statement*. The script for each of the meetings during the day on Friday and Saturday provides the meeting coordinator the option of closing with any of those choices. GSO has historically received communications in favor or against one or any of the closings. For the most part the communications have been evenly distributed. The current closing distribution hopes to include all views.”

LITERATURE COMMITTEE

(A-F) Review progress reports on pamphlets currently being developed.

Background Overview (25 pages). Each year, the Conference Literature Committee receives progress reports from the Publishing Department on pamphlets being developed or revised, as requested by previous Conferences, but that are not yet ready for review. In 2020, there are progress reports on four revisions: “The Twelve Steps Illustrated,” “The Twelve Concepts Illustrated,” “Too Young,” and “Young People and A.A.” There are progress reports on two new pamphlets: one on the Three Legacies and one for Spanish-speaking women in A.A.

(G) Review draft update of the video “Your General Service Office, the Grapevine, and the General Service Structure.”

Background Overview (3 pages). A 2018 Advisory Action asked the trustees’ committee on literature to “...undertake a comprehensive update to the video...to reflect a contemporary presentation of the...offices as well as a current portrayal of the General Service Structure.” The 2019 Conference Committee reviewed a progress report. A draft video will be reviewed by the 2020 Conference Committee. Initial estimated cost for the project was between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Total cost is now scheduled to be \$203,000.

(H) Review draft language regarding safety and A.A. to be included in *Living Sober* and “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

Background Overview (7 pages). The revision was requested in a 2018 Additional Committee Consideration. A subcommittee was appointed to review the scope and suggested text. The 2019 Conference committee reviewed a progress report and clarified that the desired language is meant to focus on safety at the group level. The Publishing Department’s proposed language for both publications will be reviewed by the 2020 Conference Committee on Literature.

(I) *“The Twelve Concepts Illustrated” pamphlet.*

I.1 - Discuss draft update of the pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

Background Overview (4 pages). This item originated with a 2016 Advisory Action for a comprehensive revision “with a modernized presentation of both text and illustration to reflect contemporary A.A. experience.” The 2019 Conference committee suggested a stronger emphasis on the importance of anonymity on social media, perhaps by adding an image of the Anonymity in the Digital Age poster, suggested specific language to include, and requested a progress report or revised pamphlet at the 2020 General Service Conference. An updated draft will be reviewed by the 2020 Conference Committee.

I.2 - Consider not retiring the existing version of the pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

Background Overview (3 pages). At its February 2020 review of the updated draft version of the pamphlet, the trustees’ Literature Committee, noting “the wealth and depth of material contained in the current pamphlet as well as its distribution numbers,” requested that the Conference Literature committee consider retaining the current version of the pamphlet as a resource for the Fellowship. This practice has been used in the past, with the pamphlet retired to the Archives to be provided for reference only and not for distribution.

(J.1) *Review “A.A.W.S. Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other A.A. Materials” approved in January 2020.*

Background Overview (52 pages). The AA “Policy on the Publication of Literature” states that all changes require Conference approval excepting “editorial changes.” In 2018, the Managing Editor at AA World Services, Inc., wrote a memo stating that the existing policy works well for our books but that it can be an “inhibiting or limiting factor” in dealing with changes to our pamphlets. The 2019 Conference Committee reviewed a revision to the policy “In order to continually review and update the growing inventory of existing A.A. literature in a timely fashion, A.A.W.S. will undertake revisions, as needed and as noted in this policy, to keep such materials current and relevant.”

The 2019 Conference committee supported the proposed policy and its intended impact to more effectively carry the A.A. message. A Floor Action was introduced on the Conference floor and the policy was recommitted to the trustees’ Literature Committee. The motion to recommit moves the discussion of the recommendation from the floor of the Conference to a trustee’s committee or corporate board. It neither approves nor disapproves the recommendation and it does not mean that the recommendation will be implemented.

The trustees’ committee forwarded the revised policy to A.A.W.S., which approved the revision which states: “Unless otherwise specified in the Advisory Action of the Conference approving a new or amended piece of Literature, A.A. World Services, Inc. will have full authority, without need of further Conference action, to (a) select the Format or Formats in which the approved Literature will be produced, (b) make, from time to time, needed Editorial Changes... (c) translate the approved Literature into any language, and in connection therewith to modify or replace illustrations, photos, and other visual art in a manner reasonably designed to conform them to the culture of the expected readership.”

(J.2) *Review proposed “A.A.W.S. Policy on Conversion of Written Conference- approved Literature and Service Material into Video Format.”*

Background Overview (6 pages). The trustees’ Literature Committee reviewed and agreed to forward to the 2020 Conference Literature Committee the proposed, “A.A.W.S., Inc. Policy on Conversion of Written Conference- approved Literature and Service Material into Video Format.” A.A. World Services recommends the following policy.

“Each year the A.A.W.S. Board will present to the General Service Conference for input, feedback and approval a full prioritized list of items slated for conversion to video in the following year(s). This list may include both Conference- approved and service materials as an opportunity for the membership to provide input regarding: Prioritization of which items to convert to video, key concerns to keep in mind during the development of any individual item, the membership’s desire NOT to convert a specific item to video, the membership’s desire to include items not on the list, and the estimated cost/time for each item.”

(K) Consider if proposed agenda items for plain language, simplified language, accessible translations and large print versions of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, as well as workbooks to help study the program of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, can be addressed with a common solution.

Background Overview (75 pages). Multiple requests have come in from different areas over the last several years for a supplement to the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Requests have been made for simplified language versions, supplemental workbooks, a complementary dictionary, a more spiritually diverse Fifth Edition Big Book, and a Fifth Edition Big Book with removal of the chapters “To Wives” and “To the Employer.” Several of these requests are based on the desire to help those who struggle with the language/reading level of the Big Book, including those with low literacy levels, native populations in remote regions of Canada, and those seeking recovery in prisons.

The General Service Board chair requested that the Trustees Literature Committee consider “if the proposed agenda items for plain language, simplified language, accessible translations and large print versions can be addressed with a common solution.” The Trustees Literature Sub-Committee formed to evaluate the issue identified two main themes: Accessibility (comprehension) and Relatability (modern language, gender and religion). The subcommittee also explored how non-Conference approved literature is being used by A.A. members to carry the message and address the perceived gaps and solutions at the local level for accessibility and relatability to the program. The trustees’ Literature Committee agreed to forward to the 2020 Conference Literature Committee the request for input and feedback on the initial findings and plans to explore this topic further.

(L) Consider requests to revise the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*:
(1) Add pages 3 through 41 of the pamphlet “*The A.A. Group*” as an appendix in the next printing,
(2) Revise the first 164 pages

Background Overview (10 pages). Two specific requests were proposed for consideration.

Area 13 proposed adding pages 3 through 41 of *The A.A. Group* pamphlet as an appendix in the next printing of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* for the purpose of encouraging “best practices and participation in general service,” and to help “improve our service culture to the benefit of the groups, the still-suffering alcoholic and Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.”

District 55 of Area 59 proposed forming a committee to audit of the first 164 pages of the Big Book to identify changes that would “make the Big Book more reflective of the A.A. membership composition.” The intent is to shift to language that is “more inclusive” and removes “references to women being subservient to men.” Further, redevelopment of chapters that have lost much of their relevance, such as *To Wives*, *The Family Afterward* and *To Employers*, should be considered. This proposal is not suggesting simplifying the Big Book but keeping as much of the original language intact while correcting gender issues within the current text.

(M) Consider proposals related to possible Fifth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Background Overview (39 pages). Three specific requests were proposed for consideration by the 2020 Conference Committee on Literature.

1. Area 20 proposed developing a Fifth Edition book as proposed at the 2019 Conference. The Trustees Literature Committee recognized the priority of addressing whether or not a Fifth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* might be developed before addressing items of content and format changes.
2. Area 06 proposed updating the stories in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* to better reflect our changing society. Several areas made similar proposals based on the challenges of some alcoholics being unable to identify with any of the stories in the Fourth Edition due to the age of the stories. This proposal also includes updates to two appendices: Appendix III, “The Medical View on A.A.” - to include more information on mental illness, and Appendix V, “The Religious View of A.A.” - to include religions beyond those mentioned, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism.
3. District 10, Area 23 proposed adding an addendum to the foreword that would address the language of the book from a gender perspective. The addendum would describe the historical conditions in which the book was written, emphasize that alcoholism makes no distinction regarding age, gender, ethnicity, economics or other factors, and encourage readers to look beyond these issues and seek out the solution.

(N) Consider development of a draft Fourth Edition of the book Alcohólicos Anónimos.

Background Overview (10 pages)

A 2019 Conference Floor Action proposed: “A draft Fourth Edition of the Spanish Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*, be developed and a progress report be brought to the 2020 General Service Conference.” The Conference committed the motion to the trustees’ Literature Committee which forwarded it for consideration by the 2020 Conference Literature Committee.

The Second Edition was published in 1990 and the Third Edition in 2008. English and French versions both have a Fourth Edition. The background includes the history of the development of the Third Edition (2004-2008). Requests for corrections to translation “errors’ and “omissions” in the Third Edition were received in 2017 and 2018.

(O) Consider updating the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic.”

Background Overview (14 pages). A 2019 Floor Action requested: “The pamphlet ‘A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic’ be updated and a progress report and/or a draft be presented to the 2020 General Service Conference.” The motion was committed to the trustees’ Literature Committee. The pamphlet has not been updated since its publication in 2001.

The most recent membership survey (2014) indicates that only 4% of AA members are African-American. In the summer of 2018, several trustees held meetings with African-Americans AA members in service positions regarding how AA could better reach still-suffering African-American alcoholics. One suggestion was to update this pamphlet.

(P) Consider requests to revise the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions:

Background Overview (7 pages). Two specific requests were suggested for consideration.

1. Area 15 suggested removing the phrase “opposite sex” from paragraph two on page 117 in the chapter “Step Twelve.” It currently reads: “Nearly every sound human being experiences, at some time in life, a compelling desire to find a mate of the opposite sex with whom the fullest possible union can be made...” The revised sentence would read: “Nearly every sound human being experiences, at some time in life, a compelling desire to find a mate with whom the fullest possible union can be made.....”
2. Area 07 suggested reconsidering using the phrase “lustful enough to rape” on page 66 in the chapter “Step Six.” The relevant wording on p. 66 states: “No one wants to be angry enough to murder, lustful enough to rape, gluttonous enough to ruin his health.” The rationale for the change is that: (a) According to the latest academic understanding, “Lust is not the cause of rape,” (b) the understanding (or lack of understanding) of the causes of rape was very different in Bill’s time, and (c) updating the language will result in greater accuracy and more sensitivity to AA members who are survivors of sexual assault.

(Q) Consider request to add a subtitle to the booklet Living Sober.

Background Overview (2 pages). A Group from California proposed to add the subtitle “How to Not Take the First Drink” to the book *Living Sober*. The rationale is that this book is the “best book” for newcomers and that the purpose of that book is to show readers ways to avoid taking the first drink.

(R) Consider requests to revise text related to open meetings in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group.”

Background Overview (7 pages). Areas 14 and 60 both proposed that the language in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group”, Page 13, concerning open meetings be revised to omit the text “Non-alcoholics may attend open meetings as observers”. The current wording is: “Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous’ program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.”

Rationale: (1) The change would make the wording in the pamphlet consistent with the wording on the “Blue Card” (A.A. Primary Purpose Statement Card, F-17), (2) Groups should have autonomy in deciding how to address the issue of nonalcoholics at their open meetings, and (3) Silencing people at meetings potentially violates Traditions Three, Four and Five.

(S) Consider request to revise text related to self-support in the pamphlet “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.”

Background Overview (7 pages). Area 88 proposed that the second paragraph of the answer to the FAQ “What Does Membership in AA Cost?” (p. 17) be removed completely or edited. The phrase in question reads: “Most local groups “pass the hat” at meetings to defray the cost of renting a meeting place and other meeting expenses, including coffee, sandwiches, cakes, or whatever else may be served. Rationale: (1) The public and AA newcomers should not be told that groups may spend their money on refreshments. That information does not need to be public knowledge. (2) Encouraging groups to use their 7th Tradition funds for sandwiches and cake might detract from their contributions to the service bodies. (3) Our primary purpose does not involve feeding people.

(T) Consider revising the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

Background Overview (13 pages). Two specific requests were suggested for consideration.

1. Area 49 proposed changing the suggestion that sponsor and newcomer be of the same sex. The section currently reads: “In most instances, A.A. custom does suggest one limitation, already noted on page 10: If the group is large enough to allow a choice, sponsor and newcomer be of the same sex...” The proposed change is: “A.A. custom does suggest one limitation: sponsorship should be avoided wherever a romantic entanglement might arise between sponsor and newcomer.”
2. Area 44 proposed expanding the section on “Service Sponsorship” and retitling the pamphlet to include service sponsorship. The rationale provided stated: “By giving Service Sponsorship equal billing with Recovery Sponsorship, we will be making a powerful statement to the Fellowship that our Third Legacy is just as important as our First Legacy.” It further stated: “While expanding the section on service sponsorship is an important aspect to carrying this message of service, retitling the pamphlet to include “Service Sponsorship” is vital.” Two possible titles were suggested: “Questions & Answers on Sponsorship and Service Sponsorship” or “Questions & Answers on Sponsorship: Recovery and Service.”

(U) Consider request to include a G.S.R. preamble in the pamphlet “G.S.R.: Your Group’s Link to A.A. as a Whole.”

Background Overview (4 pages). District 14 of Area 21 proposed this change. Three reasons were given. (1) The G.S.R. Preamble is a clear-cut directive to G.S.R.’s regarding their responsibility, (2) Adding the G.S.R. Preamble to the pamphlet would provide consistency and thus unity across A.A. as a whole, and (3) If added, it would affirm Conference approval when read at District and Area meetings.

PUBLIC INFORMATION COMMITTEE

(B) Discuss a progress report on the A.A.W.S. Meeting Guide app.

Background Overview (4 pages). The trustees’ P.I. committee reviewed the G.S.O. Communications Services Department progress report and analytics on the A.A.W.S. Meeting Guide app and agreed to forward a progress to the 2020 Conference Public Information Committee. The progress report highlights include the August 2019 launch, Customer Support email categories, steadily increasing usage analytics, information pages added to aa.org, and a support website for participating entities and those entities desiring to participate. Next steps outlined include: 1) Guidance video for app on YouTube, 2) Finalizing Policies and Guidelines, 3) Discuss Internationalization and additional translations, 4) Schedule regular updates and development, and 5) Continue gathering feedback and prepare future updates.

(C) Review the 2019 trustees’ Public Information Committee progress report on the usefulness and effectiveness of the A.A.W.S. YouTube account.

Background Overview (10 pages). A 2017 Conference Advisory Action requested that A.A.W.S. provide website analytics information (usefulness and effectiveness) as part of a proposal to create a Google for Nonprofits account limited to the YouTube Nonprofit Program. Requests for progress reports were made in 2018 and 2019. The Trustee Committee on Public Information agreed to forward a progress report on the A.A.W.S. YouTube Account to the 2020 Conference Committee on Public Information Overall, the reports outline the trend of increased online traffic to A.A. through various forums.

(D) Review the 2019 trustees' Public Information Committee progress report on the use of Google AdWords/Grants to carry the A.A. message.

Background Overview (9 pages). A 2016 Conference Advisory Action requested a proposal for implementing a Google for Nonprofits account for carrying the message of A.A. to the public. A 2017 Conference Advisory Action requested the creation of a Google for Nonprofits account and requested further information from the trustee's Committee on Public Information regarding feasibility. In 2018, the committee requested more information related to implementation costs. In 2019, Conference Advisory Actions included completing applications and the implementation of Google AdWords/Grants. The trustee's Committee on Public Information asked that additional findings be reported to the 2020 Conference Committee on Public Information.

The trustee's Committee on Public Information has presented an update on the Google AdWords/Grants including focus, dialogue, best practices, and financial considerations (including donations, discounts, and subsidies).

(E) Discuss a request to adjust all A.A.W.S. video titles for search engine optimization (SEO).

Background Overview (2 pages). A 2019 Advisory Action asked that "All current video PSA titles be updated for search optimization purposes." The Communications Department requests that all remaining video titles – not just PSAs – be updated. The goal is to create new titles that are more descriptive of the content in the video and that identify the video as A.A. content, to make our video naming conventions consistent, and to make our content easier to find by search engines.

(G) Review a draft plan to create video shorts based on A.A. pamphlets.

Background Overview (10 pages). A 2015 Conference Advisory Action provided approval and guidelines for the creation and trustees/Conference committee review of audio/video material to be made available on aa.org. A 2019 Conference Advisory Action requested that the trustee's Committee on Public Information develop a plan to produce video shorts on current A.A. pamphlets that can be used with the public. This committee agreed to forward to the 2020 Conference Public Information Committee a draft plan to create video shorts.

The draft proposal for video shorts includes proposed initial projects ("A Brief Guide to A.A.", "Is A.A. for You?", and "A Message to Teenagers."). The proposal described the use of freelance copywriters, the creative right of decision, and the production process (voice-over talent, music, GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) creation and usage, art and illustrations, storyboards), and cost estimates.

(H.1) Review the 2019 Report on the "Relevance and Usefulness of Video Public Service Announcements."

Background Overview (2 pages). Per an advisory action in 2008: The Conference Committee on Public Information annually reviews current television public service announcements (PSAs) for relevance and usefulness, retiring a PSA only when it is no longer relevant and/or useful to the Fellowship and assesses the need for new television public service announcements. Before 2008, video PSAs were replaced with a new PSA after four years. The background includes Trustees' and Conference Committee reports for each of the years since 2007.

The trustees' Committee on Public Information found the three Conference-approved video PSAs still relevant and useful. The committee also noted that the audio PSAs "Contact A.A." section are in process to be updated to reflect the current ways that people search for A.A.

(H.2) Review the distribution and tracking information for the video PSA "Changes."

Background Overview (3 pages). Per a 2019 Advisory Action, the PSA "Changes" is now titled "Sobriety in A.A.: We Made Changes to Stop Drinking." The title was updated for search engine optimization purposes to include key words that people use when searching the internet for help with a drinking problem. The committee reviewed the PSA tracking and distribution report of "Sobriety in A.A.: We made changes to stop drinking." Combined, the A.A. U.S. and Canadian TV PSAs aired a total of 71,278 times with 584,893,597 impressions and \$21,011,517 in donated media value.

(H.3) Review a report regarding the new financial reporting system for PSA media valuations.

Background Overview (6 pages). The trustees' committee on Public information appointed a subcommittee to discuss in-kind contributions and how they are reported. There is a question about how they need to be reported on the balance sheet. The chair has suggested our auditors provide information on how we must report in-kind services, such as Goggle Grants, to better inform the Conference. We have historically accepted in-kind donations for TV PSAs but will continue looking into the best ways to report this information to the Fellowship.

(H.4) Review a progress report on the development of two PSAs.

Background Overview (1 page). The trustees' committee on Public Information discussed the 2019 Advisory Action that two PSAs be developed at a cost not to exceed \$50,000 for each PSA, and that if full-face characters are shown, to include an "actor portrayal" disclaimer on screen. The committee reviewed the Comprehensive Media Plan subcommittee report on the messaging and audience of each PSA. The committee looks forward to a progress report and/or professional storyboards to be reviewed at the August 2020 meeting.

(J) Discuss a request "to create a new form of communication" to address anonymity on social media.

Background Overview (8 pages). Area 29 submitted the request: "To create a new form of communication specifically addressing the use of social media and anonymity." The request noted that the "brief discussion of digital anonymity in the Sponsorship pamphlet is not enough to change the habits practiced by many of our members," and that a "new form of communication, beyond pamphlets and posters and service pieces, is needed." The stated intent of Area 29 is to get the conversation started about what needs to be done.

(K) Consider a request to develop a plan to create an A.A. podcast.

Background Overview (2 pages). Area 49 submitted a motion that an agenda item be added to the 70th General Service Conference to discuss the development of A.A. World Services or General Services Board podcasts. The Area 49 proposal for A.A. podcasts includes topical ideas, an idea for maintaining anonymity, and findings presented in the 2019 General Service Board communications audit which outlined current ineffectual, irrelevant, and manual processes that could be reviewed for improvement.

REPORT AND CHARTER COMMITTEE

(C) Discuss A.A. Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S. and Western U.S.)

Background Overview (11 pages). Historically, A.A. has maintained regional print directories for the Eastern, Western, and Canadian regions. In them, members can find contact information about groups, especially useful when traveling or living in remote locations. Since 1985, the Conference has discussed several times whether or not to suspend or discontinue publication of regional directories.

Reasons for discontinuing include: (1) the cost of maintaining accurate information in the directories, (2) the cost of the publication of the actual directories, (3) the cost of mailing and distribution, and (4) the accessibility of some of the directories' information through other means like the Meeting Guide App and local intergroup websites. In considering alternatives to the directories, the report discusses the possibility of maintaining "some sort of digital solution," but the devising of such an alternative will prove to be complicated.

The report suggests that "the best alternative" may be to use "the phone numbers of local offices and hot-lines" in combination with "the leaflet-size directory of *Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services for the U.S. and Canada* (F-25)," of which a digital version exists and could be built up to do the work of the current directories.

(D) Consider restoring the two paragraphs and the footnote in the Concept Eleven essay of The Twelve Concepts for World Service that were removed by an advisory action of the 66th General Service Conference.

Background Overview (6 pages). In 2016, the Conference removed endnote 4 from Concept XI on page 73 of the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*. In it, Bill discusses the “problem” of “women workers” in the Central Office, concluding: “Men, for example, because they are men, are apt to be better at business. But suppose we replaced our six women staff members with six men? In these positions could the men possibly relate themselves so uniquely and so effectively to our Fellowship as the women? Of course not. The women can handle this assignment far better, just because they are women.”

In removing the endnote, the committee was in part attempting to update the *Twelve Concepts* to better reflect more contemporary norms and expectations about sex, gender, and the workplace. But members from Area 60 suggest that A.A. has historically decided to preserve Bill’s original words in the face of changing times and standards. To not keep Bill’s original wording, so argue these members of Area 60, is to risk both A.A.’s “historical integrity” and “institutional memory.”

(E) Consider amending a sentence in Article 4 of the current Conference Charter.

Background Overview (4 pages). The trustees’ Nominating Committee forwarded this agenda item to the Conference Report and Charter committee. Article 4 of the current Conference Charter states that “a three-quarters vote of all Conference members may bring about a reorganization of the General Service Board.” The proposal would amend this to require “a three-quarters vote of all Conference members **participating in the vote.**”

(F) Review the draft of the A.A. Service Manual, 2020 to 2022 Edition.

Background Overview (4 pages). A 2018 Advisory Action requested that the A.A.W.S. Publishing Department undertake a thorough evaluation, update, and redesign of the Service Manual. The 2019 Conference Committee agreed on the goals as: user-friendly, attractive and inviting in look and tone, simple, targeted to the user/reader, and focused on relevant information.

Publishing has produced Draft 4 which will be read by the members of the 2020 Conference committee. Their comments will guide Draft 5, which will be finished by early April and shared with all the members of the 2020 General Service Conference.

TREATMENT AND ACCESSIBILITIES COMMITTEE

(A) Discuss the report on the review of materials related to Bridging the Gap activities.

Background Overview (17 pages). The 2019 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities Additional Consideration “requested that the trustees’ Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities consult with the trustees’ Committee on Corrections to review all treatment and corrections committee literature from G.S.O. related to bridging the gap and temporary contact activities,” and that a report be brought to the 2020 Conference Committee.

The Publishing Department developed draft language for a “Bridging the Gap” pamphlet and other service material describing the Bridging the Gap service from correctional facilities, inclusive language to describe alcoholics that may request this service, and recommendations for combining and discontinuing existing materials.

(B) Consider request to develop a Bridging the Gap Workbook.

Background Overview (24 pages). The District 10/Area 69 Bridging the Gap committee submitted a motion to develop a Bridging the Gap Workbook to help district and area BTG efforts. They included a copy of their existing District Workbook.

The Bridging the Gap (B.T.G.) committees are known within the Fellowship as “Tradition Nine” committees, similar to the Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) committees. They focus on providing temporary contact for an alcoholic’s transition from a Treatment or Correctional Setting. Workbooks are service pieces that provide detailed shared experiences on topics related to a specific service area. Typically, Treatment and Corrections Workbooks are provided for free to a district, area or intergroup committee chairperson. Otherwise, Workbooks are available for purchase.

(C) Review progress report regarding the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic."

Background Overview (2 pages). A 2019 Advisory Action asked that the pamphlet "A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never Too Late" be updated and that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought back to the 2020 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities. A request for stories was sent on August 12, 2019, with a deadline of December 15, 2019. A total of 44 stories submissions were compiled, it was noted that the stories submitted had an equal participation of female and male A.A. members, as well as a broad regional representation.

If any AA member in Area 53 would like more information about the background, has other questions, or wants to express his or her opinion on any agenda item, please contact me, Stephen S., Area 53 Delegate, at delegate@area53aa.org. You can also contact me if your group, district, or standing committee would like to meet to discuss any of the items. These meetings will be arranged on a first-come, first service basis, subject to the limitations of my scheduled commitments as your delegate.