

Area 53 2020 Mini-Conference
Committee Agendas & Background

CPC/International Conventions Committee

CPC Item 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).

CPC Item 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 and specifically 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.

CPC Item 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.

Convention- Item A: Discuss methods of closing the Big Meetings at the International Convention.

Background Summary (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.”

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Finance/Report & Charter Committee

Fin Item 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.

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

Background Overview (6 pages). Area 66 suggested changing the “Samples of Group Contributions” charts so that the greater percentage contribution is suggested for the service entity with the smaller 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.

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.”

Fin Item 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 an Additional Committee Consideration to add language regarding group level electronic contributions (a “virtual” basket) the “Self-Support” pamphlet. The Publishing Department proposes 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.

R&C Item B: 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 U.S., Western U.S., 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.

The report suggests that “the best alternative” may be to use “the phone numbers of local offices and hotlines” 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.

R&C Item C: Consider restoring the two paragraphs and the accompanying 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 part to have the language better reflect contemporary norms and expectations about sex, gender, and the workplace. The removed section discussed the “problem” of “women workers” in the Central Office, concluding: “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.”

Members from Area 60 requested the language be restored, pointing out 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.”

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Grapevine Committee

GV Item 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 (17 pages). Requests to replace "men and women" 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 transgendered 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 Conference Committee in 1987.

GV Item 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). 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.

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

Background Overview (4 pages). Additional Considerations from the 2017 and 2018 General Service Conferences suggested that AA Grapevine "continue to explore social media strategy ... taking into account issues regarding anonymity, security, affiliation, outside contributions and privacy and promotions." 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."

Archives Item A: Consider request to develop a book on A.A. History from 1955 to the present

Background Overview (15 pages). Area 29 (Maryland) and Area 55 (Northwest Ohio) 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 Archives 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.

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Literature 1 Committee

Lit Item L- Consider requests to revise the book Alcoholics Anonymous...

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.

Lit Item 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. As one area noted, “As the last edition was published in 2001, and there have been vast changes in our society in the intervening years, current stories do not reflect societal experience.” 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.

Item 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.

*Lit-Item 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.

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Literature 2 Committee

Lit Item 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 to 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.

Lit Item 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-American AA members in service positions regarding how AA could better reach the still-suffering African-American alcoholics. One suggestion was to update this pamphlet.

Lit Item 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”. They provide references to scholarly articles to back this up, (b) The understanding (or lack of understanding) of the causes of rape was very different in Bill’s time, and (3) Updating the language will result in greater accuracy and more sensitivity to AA members who are survivors of sexual assault.

Lit Item 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.”

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Public Information Committee

PI-Item B: Discuss a progress report on the A.A.W.S. Meeting Guide app.

Background Overview (4 pages). On February 1, 2020 the trustees' 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 to the 2020 Conference Public Information Committee a progress report on the A.A.W.S. Meeting Guide app.

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.

PI-Item 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.

Item 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 creation and usage, art and illustrations, storyboards), and cost estimates.

Item J: 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.