

Area-08 // 71st GSC
Pre-Conference WORKBOOK

CORRECTIONS

Item-B: Discuss innovative ways of carrying the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities/programs.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): New agenda item since pandemic, requesting full Fellowship discussion and an informed Conference to compile possible solutions and resources with which Groups are finding success in reaching alcoholics in correctional facilities.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Having an individual behind the bars call a friend outside at a meeting for teleconference participation.
- Grapevine & Literature drop-offs.
- Providing inmates w/ Tablets in order to access AA Stories.
- Variety of approaches to sponsorship for confined alcoholics

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. What non face-to-face options are available to individuals “behind the walls” for connection to A.A.?
2. What hurdles or special considerations need to be managed to exercise each option presented in question 1 above?
3. Reviewing “Doc.3” from the background on this item, what pathways towards effective sponsorship of confined alcoholics seem to be the most effective and why?
4. What new methods towards sponsorship of confined alcoholics are now available due to restrictions to meet face to face?

NOTES:

FINANCE

Item-A.2: Discuss how the pamphlet *"Self-Support" Where Money and Spirituality Mix* has contributed to the mechanization of Group contributions that has not worked well in these peculiar times.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): Experience has shown that once having decided on a contribution plan, a group generally does not re-evaluate their contributions (The exercising of their pie-chart becomes mechanized/automated). The re-submission of this item suggests that our Fellowship is better served by including in the pamphlet wording that emphasizes the need for frequent review of our plans considering communication from the service structure.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- The pamphlet has long been a grounded source of helpful information. However, seems to have fallen short of its intention during these challenging times
- The channel of contributions has “puddle jumped” from one entity to another (group → district → area → GSO) as entities have been incapable of properly putting the contributions into service due to the changes in receipts and other costs due to the challenging times. Monies are accumulating unnecessarily.

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. How has your group adjusted its pie chart or management of 7th Tradition contributions during the pandemic?
2. How is your group utilizing virtual baskets? What Traditions are challenged in this exercise?
3. Do individual online contributions to GSO undermine our groups “power of the purse”? Are we limiting the groups ability to support our primary purpose?

NOTES:

GRAPEVINE & LA VINA

Item-D: Review progress report on development of an Instagram account.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): A GV/LV Committee Consideration from the 2017 GSC requested AA Grapevine, Inc. to continue exploration of an Instagram account. In 2018, the Conference Committee reviewed the Grapevine social media report regarding Instagram, Facebook, and Google for Nonprofits and suggests that AA Grapevine, Inc. continue to explore social media strategy taking into account issues regarding **anonymity**, **security**, **affiliation**, outside contributions and privacy and promotion. The 2020 Conference Committee encouraged the Grapevine Board to continue this work and bring a progress report back to the 71st GSC.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- A reiteration of the Social Media Strategy is presented
- On **Implementation/Engagement/Time**: No major hurdles are presented... “sourcing content will not be difficult as there are plenty of opportunities to highlight existing content.” Approx. 8-12 hours per month.
- Anonymity “is the individuals’ responsibility”. Suggestions on how to manage one’s profile are presented.
- “Tell a Story: Every post should tell a story about Grapevine & La Vina and the stories they contain. Use the caption to expand on the image – develop the story a visitor may not know just from looking at the picture.
Bring Hope to Subscribers and Beyond: Hope is essential. A conscious effort to showcase hope and recovery makes a difference.”

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. Considering the items **bolden** and underlined above, does your group harbor concerns? Can you voice the details of those concerns? Please strive to use actual occurrences, data or experience vs. hypotheticals and conjecture.
2. Do any of your group members have experience with sourcing a message of recovery, hope and freedom over alcohol via social media? Please share these stories.
3. Have any of your group members discovered a negative message around recovery and affiliation with AA on social media? Please share these stories.

NOTES:

Item-E: Review suggested gender-neutral language options for changes to the A.A. Preamble.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): The A.A. Preamble was introduced in the 1947 issue of the AA Grapevine and was intended primarily to describe what AA is and is not. As time passed, it began appearing in Conference-approved publications. The A.A. Preamble is still often used for public information purposes as well as used in open meetings. In 2018 and 2019, AA Grapevine received six requests to revise the A.A. Preamble, to make it more inclusive, not exclusive (Tradition III).

The 2020 Conference Committee discussed making suggested changes to the A.A. Preamble for gender neutral pronouns. The committee requested that the Grapevine Board consider developing examples of generalized language options and that a progress report or draft versions be brought back to the 71st GSC.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- All submitted agenda items on this topic are compiled with background on direct experience as well as commentary from the World Health Organization that gender...” influences a person’s risk-taking and health seeking behaviors...”
- Letter from Executive Editor, GSO reminding of the current AAWS Editorial Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other AA Materials. “We will be engaged in a Language Review that will include degenderizing, where appropriate, across all of our pamphlets.”
- Alternative Options:
 - “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of individuals...”
 - “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of members...”
 - “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship who shares...”
 - “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people...”
 - “We believe “Alcoholics Anonymous is a fellowship of people...” is the most inclusive option and least problematic.”

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. Do you agree with suggestions regarding possible language options for requested change? Why or why not?
2. What ideas does your Group have?

NOTES:

LITERATURE

Item-N: Review draft language regarding safety and A.A. to be included in *Living Sober* and “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): This began as a 2018 Additional Committee Consideration from the Conference Literature Committee. Draft language was brought to the 2019 GSC Literature Committee, and from this a request was made to the Publishing Department to develop text reflecting the focus on safety at the group level. Draft language was reviewed by the 2020 GSC Literature Committee, which requested draft language which took accessibility in mind as it relates to reading level.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Suggested insert to *Living Sober*:
Of course, A.A. is a reflection of the larger society around us and problems found in the outside world can also make their way into the rooms of A.A. But by keeping the focus on our common welfare, groups can provide a safe and secure environment for all their members.
- Suggested insert to “*Questions & Answers on Sponsorship*”:
 - Stresses the importance of A.A. being a safe place for all members and guides the newcomer to service material available from the General Service Office such as “Safety in A.A. -- Our Common Welfare.”
 - Sponsorship can also help a group to create a welcoming and secure environment. Safety is an issue affecting all members and it is important for groups to remain accessible to all who are seeking recovery. Sponsorship programs can help keep the group focused on the common welfare.

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. Does your group feel that this language reflects the focus of safety at the group level?
2. That it takes reading level accessibility into consideration?
3. Do you support the draft language suggested?
 - a. For inclusion in *Living Sober*?
 - b. For inclusion in the pamphlet “*Questions & Answers on Sponsorship*”?

NOTES:

Item-U: 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.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?):

Since at least the 1970s, the Fellowship has been discussing “Big Book Study Guides” and other interpretations of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. By 1977, numerous requests (from treatment centers and from AA members) to reprint portions of the Steps or the Big Book to create study guides to supplement the program led the AAWS Board to determine that permission should not be granted. The Board also decided to not publish any study guides because “there are no authorities in AA, and even a self-appointed ‘teacher’ has feet of clay. Hence, it is preferable that the individual member or prospect interpret the literature according to his own point of view.”

In the past few years, however, several proposals to simplify the language of the book, modernize the language into contemporary English, or create workbooks supplementing the AA program have been made. Included in the background are multiple proposals: one (from the San Diego/Interior Area) requests a translation of the book into a fifth-grade level; a second (originating in the North Florida Area) requests an individualized workbook to accompany the Big Book; and a third (from a group in New Jersey) requests that the chapters ‘To Wives,’ ‘The Family Afterwards,’ and ‘To Employers’ be removed from the Big Book. Other requests include removing the words ‘He’ and ‘Him’ from Steps 3, 7, and 10, and replacing them with ‘Higher Power’ or ‘God,’ asking Jewish Rabbis, Muslim leaders, Indian Ancient Vedas scholars to edit the book to encourage diverse spiritual language, creating a Big Book dictionary, and creating a workbook to study the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts.

Because so many of these proposals have been sent to the Board, an exploration into what underlying need was driving these requests was launched. The subcommittee tasked with that project reported that most of the need was driven by concerns about accessibility (because of literacy levels) and relatability (because of changes in culture and language). The detailed subcommittee report is included in the background. A video of the PowerPoint presentation from the 70th General Service Conference was made available in 2021, and the slides from that video are included in the background.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Please watch the following video (21min):
<https://vimeopro.com/user112910871/big-book-riptab/video/500617913>

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. What experience can your homegroup members offer with regards to overcoming literacy/learning hurdles with newcomers?
2. Would a workbook on studying our Steps, Traditions, Concepts be helpful?
3. Should we publish a Plain Language translation of the BB?

NOTES:

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

Item-J: Consider requests regarding participation of online groups in the General Service structure.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): The committee agreed to forward to the 2021 Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions six proposed agenda items related to the topic of online groups not affiliated with a physical meeting space having a voice and a vote in the General Service structure. While each of the six agenda items are related to the same topic of the participation of online-only groups in the General Service structure, they are unique in how they are worded, their path to becoming an agenda item, and what (if any) background they have included with the submission. Although online meetings are not new, because of the pandemic the volume of online-only groups increased very rapidly in a short span of time. Online meetings and groups are recognized as AA meetings and meeting information is listed in directories, but because they are not tied to a geographic location, they are not affiliated with any Area, and thus have not been represented within the General Service structure. They are not assigned a group number and therefore do not have General Service Representatives to participate and vote in District or Area events.

The background includes six letters (two from different Areas, two from Districts, and two from individual groups) requesting this topic be considered at the Conference. Also included is sharing gathered from General Service Offices in other countries.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Extensive collection of submitted motions most citing current landscape of how meetings are gathering today in virtual space.
- Strong sentiment that virtual meetings be given the same rights & privileges at the GSC as are afforded to “brick & mortar” groups/meetings.
- Suggestion to create a 94th Area that would encapsulate all GSO registered online/virtual groups.

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. What benefits would a 94th Area bring to the collective body of the Conference?
2. What concerns/apprehensions does your group have/foresee?
3. Should online/virtual groups be offered equity to in person groups?
4. Should we approve the establishment of a 94th Area to capture all virtual/online groups? If yes, what policies ought to apply?

NOTES:

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Item-E: Consider draft plan to develop podcasts.

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): This proposal came from a member in Area 49 (South East New York) and a motion of support was passed at the Suffolk County Assembly to send it forward. The background includes the original motion from Area 49. The trustees' Committee on PI agreed to develop a plan and met several times since February 2020 to develop a *draft* plan to create podcasts. According to the plan, the Digital Product Manager of the Communications Services Department will be leading a working group to continue this analysis; this group will include members from all pertinent entities, including Grapevine, Staff, Publications, and the Communications Services Department. The podcast working group will support the development of a sustainable structure for GSO involvement in podcast media projects and a pilot podcast. Considerations around logistics, content, production, and the pilot are being discussed by the working group.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Current research is underway capturing entities from Grapevine, Staff, Publications & Communications Services Department.
- Detailed suggestions on the variables of:
 - Logistics & Sustainability
 - Content
 - Topics/Themes to Consider
 - Production

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. What benefits could a podcast bring to the efforts of carrying the message?
2. What concerns/apprehensions does your group have? If the concern is in the realm of our Traditions, please press for specifics.
3. What kind of topics would your group like to see developed for a possible podcast?

NOTES:

TRUSTEES

Item-F: Review the "Statement of Concern and Motion to Censure for Submission to the 71st General Service Conference."

Historical Context (Why is it on the Agenda?): The Statement of Concern and Motion to Censure the General Service Board (GSB) was submitted by some of the delegates who attended last year's Conference. The issues raised by those delegates are in the background and fall into two general areas: 1) Concern that at times the

GSB exerts too much control over the Conference; and 2) Concern that the GSB exerts too little guidance or oversight with respect to policies and management of our operating boards and offices.

The background also includes a number of documents intended to address the issues raised by the submitters of this item. If your group wishes to discuss this, members should read all of the background material.

Background Summary (Highlights and Points of Focus):

- Please reference the complete letter as submitted by those of us who drafted it. I cannot in complete honesty leave it absent from your attention as our Delegate and as such, representative to the GSC.

Questions to help guide discussion:

1. What questions or concerns does your group have with the points made in the submitted letter?
2. What suggestions or ideas for “next steps” can your group offer?
3. How would your group suggest I conduct myself on this topic at this point reflecting on the actions of the Board taken since its submittal to their attention?

NOTES:

Please be sure to encourage yourself and your homegroup members to look beyond this set of suggested items for discussion. If other agenda items beyond the set of items in this workbook resonate and your group members wish to discuss them, rest assured, we will be setting aside ample time for you and your groups feedback to be heard.

I look forward to your feedback! Do not hesitate to reach out with your questions as you develop connection with your group conscience.

Jerry S. - Delegate, Area 08 // Panel 70

E: area8delegate70@gmail.com

C: (760) 330-3506

**Pre-Conference Assembly
April 10, 2021
ID: 949 1673 5944
PW: GSC2021**