

2022 FINAL REPORT

ANONYMITY-PROTECTED DIGITAL EDITION



“A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service”

The 72nd Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference of
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

The Seventy-Second Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous

“A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service”

2022 Final Report

New York Marriott at the Brooklyn Bridge,
Brooklyn NY, April 24-30

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Anonymity-Protected Digital Edition

This edition of the 2022 General Service Conference Final Report has been formatted to protect the anonymity of A.A. members (who are represented by first name and last initial only) in order to make the report more widely accessible to the Fellowship. Our many nonalcoholic friends, trustees and employees are noted by their full names.

On the front cover: Cherry blossoms and tulips signal spring just outside the hotel during the 72nd General Service Conference. On the back cover: A Brooklyn-themed mural in the hotel lobby.



■ The 72nd General Service Conference Convenes

To borrow a famous phrase from English literature, “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” In many ways, this phrase may best capture the mood and tone of the 72nd General Service Conference, held in Brooklyn, New York, April 24–30, 2022.

The idea of “Coming of Age” — noted in the Conference theme — implies overcoming a series of challenges, and, having crossed the threshold of adversity, being in position on the other side to face the many difficulties, no doubt, gathering just beyond the horizon.

In that sense, the Conference represented the best of times — having met and transcended the many challenges of the past few years, gathering in person for the first time as a Conference since 2019 — and yet, still under the influence of an unrelenting pandemic, the Covid-19 virus left an indelible mark on Conference members — before, during and after the Conference itself.

As noted by Kathi F., the rotating Pacific regional trustee, as she delivered the Keynote Address to the Conference on Sunday, April 24 (see page 6), “Much has changed in our world and in the way A.A. communicates our message of hope. From our Meeting Guide app, virtual meeting rooms, outside literature sales, podcasts, websites, Instagram, and our use of search engine optimization, we hope to be everywhere that alcoholics are looking for a solution. Since we ‘came of age’ and accepted our Conference structure as the link between the little-known boards and the rest of A.A., we have truly done what we were tasked to do so many years ago. The

Conference continues to be that link, and with today’s technologies each level of our structure is connected at a greater speed and depth.”

Nevertheless, as Kathi noted, there is still plenty of work to do — and Covid is not done forcing us to adapt our planning and to monitor our progress. Said Kathi, “We are here to have vigorous, loving, and informed discussions on matters affecting A.A. today. We are here to listen to our board reports and to ask questions and make suggestions. We are here to roll up our sleeves, be fully present and do our best, to think deeply, to bring the consciousness of the U.S. and Canada together, to debate in loving discussions and ultimately to hear our Higher Power express itself through our group conscience. It is important for all of us to take a good hard look at challenges and opportunities that are affecting A.A. today, of which there are many, and to carry these discussions back to those we serve.”

The imprint, however, of Covid on this 72nd General Service Conference began early, with two sitting delegates having to withdraw from the Conference due to Covid concerns, their alternates stepping in at virtually the last minute. Additionally, some G.S.O. employees who had been working on Conference preparations had to go into quarantine after contracting the virus. And, as the Conference continued, Conference members as well as guests and G.S.O. employees began to get sick, with at least 25 people infected by the end of the week and closer to 50 in the days following the Conference. With

no established protocols or plans in place to address the expanding infection rate, a series of ad hoc procedures were adopted to keep Conference members in the loop of the Conference itself. Recognizing Concept IV and the need to develop a means of communication for those Conference members quarantined in the hotel or who had chosen to leave the Conference over Covid concerns, an audio link was established to provide access to the deliberations of the Conference, though the full participation of these Conference members for discussion, voting and minority opinion was not possible.

Further complicating matters was the fact that the hotel had no room service capabilities. A volunteer system had to be set up to shuttle food to Conference members, employees and guests who were quarantined, some of whom had to stay on at the hotel for extra days and nights until they were cleared to return home.

The work of the Conference, however, continued despite the complications and the clear challenges of Covid. Additional rapid tests were procured; a growing number of Conference members donned masks and adhered to basic social distancing protocols; and extra chairs and tables were added to the main meeting room, allowing members to spread out more equitably. Discussion of agenda items continued, and debate changed the course of deliberations as unanimity was sought on the multitude of topics brought before the Conference.

Made up of 93 delegates, 26 trustees and corporate directors from A.A.W.S. and Grapevine, along with 14 General Service Office, Grapevine and La Viña staff members, the Conference worked its way through an agenda filled with items — some remaining from the 71st Conference — along with many new items submitted by the Fellowship over the past year. As an added wrinkle, in an effort to redistribute agenda items originally directed to specific committees, for the first time the Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW) plan was implemented through the trustees' Conference Committee, reallocating a number of agenda items to committees other than the one they were submitted to. An Advisory Action of the 71st General Service Conference, the EDW plan is in the first year of a three-year trial to balance the work of different committees and to provide a full hearing for all agenda items accepted for the Conference agenda.

With multiple opportunities for general sharing in a series of "What's on Your Mind?" sessions, delegates brought issues to the Conference floor for questions and further discussion. One issue mentioned throughout the general sharing was the translation of Conference agenda background material and the desire voiced by many delegates to have the material available in English, French and Spanish at the same time. The difficulties of timing between the deliberations of various trustees' committees, the finalization of background material by staff secretaries and a limited time for translation, and, ultimately, discussion of the material equally throughout the Fellowship were raised, with information and perspective supplied by GSO, employees and others. The question ultimately resulted in an advisory action approved by the full

Conference, recognizing the importance of equal participation in the Conference process regardless of language and serving as a harbinger for continued improvement.

Another issue of growing concern throughout the Fellowship, especially as brought to the fore by the pandemic, is the growth, importance and representation of online groups and meetings. In a presentation titled "Participation of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada Service Structure" (see page 119), Trish L., trustee-at-large/Canada, offered this perspective: "The sudden onset of the pandemic in 2020, as we all well know, created a brand new (for most) environment for Alcoholics Anonymous groups around the world — the virtual one. No longer able to meet in a face-to-face setting, the quick pivot to available, inexpensive meeting platforms using Internet technology by many groups has led to interesting new challenges and pointed up the need for new ways of thinking regarding the incorporation of this new platform into A.A. life in a manner that respects our Steps, Traditions and Concepts."

A number of delegate presentations examined elements of the Conference theme (see page 113), covering the topics "How Do A.A.s Go to Any Lengths to Recover, Unify and Serve?" and "Going Beyond Fear," as well as "How to Reach Anyone, Anywhere." Always interesting, the agenda also included a report on international matters, with the trustees-at-large for both the U.S. and Canada sharing their experiences in their talks, "A.A. Around the World" (see page 116).

A two-part workshop on the topic "The Warranties — Our Promise to the Fellowship and the World" (see page 93) emphasized the importance of communication as the key to inclusiveness and utilizing the six Warranties in Concept XII as a jumping-off point for matters ranging from the Seventh Tradition and its relation to literature sales, to transparency of the various A.A. bodies and communication between them, to speaking and acting with compassion rather than authority, both at Conference and beyond. Focused on innovations in attraction, inclusion and accessibility, a special update on publishing highlights (see page 122) was the final presentation of the Conference.

Spanning the final three days of Conference business, discussion, debate and voting on the many committee recommendations and considerations that had been developed over the first three days took precedence on the Conference floor and, with substantial unanimity, 35 Advisory Actions were passed (see page 77).

With the final business ultimately accomplished, the 72nd General Service Conference came to a close on Friday evening with a heartfelt round of goodbyes from rotating Panel 71 delegates. Expressions of gratitude were many, with comments heard such as, "I will never forget our journey. You changed me," "You've made me a better person," and "This experience started out with the language of the head and ended up with the language of the heart." One delegate, in quarantine — sharing his thoughts over a cellphone held up to the microphone by another delegate for all to hear — added, "It's been

a very interesting Conference: we got this done, that done... and then I got Covid.”

The last item on the Conference agenda was the closing brunch on Saturday morning featuring talks from this year’s group of rotating trustees. (Five new trustees were selected on Wednesday afternoon.) Representing many years of dedication and many, many miles of travel, Beau B., general service trustee; Jan L., Eastern Canada regional trustee; and Christine Carpenter and Nancy McCarthy, Class A trustees, all spoke graciously and gratefully of their time in service to the Fellowship. Kathi F., Pacific regional trustee, was unable to attend the brunch. Likening the service structure to “a quilt of dented cans,” Beau expressed the importance of “carrying the message to people we’ll never meet.” Sharing some of her experience as a drug court judge, Christine Carpenter related how she used to suggest the Fellowship to some of the people who were remanded to her court. “Try A.A.,” she would say. “Maybe it’ll help. It certainly can’t hurt ... or else you’ll go to jail.” Decker out in a Toronto Blue Jays cap and jersey, Jan L. reflected on the journey she has taken in sobriety: “When I think back to that woman standing in front of the dresser ... I was trying to pour a drink and I couldn’t pour the drink, and the vodka was pouring down the front of me. And I look at myself now and think, wow. And I know that my mom and dad are up there smiling down.” In closing, Nancy McCarthy may have spoken for all Conference members with the words, “Acts of kindness without regard for oneself...guide our steps and help shape who we are today.”

As noted in the quote from Charles Dickens, the 72nd GSC reflected both the best of times and the worst of times. And, following a group visit on Saturday afternoon to the General Service Office by delegates and their guests (the visit greatly reduced from its original plan due to Covid concerns), with many questions and uncertainties remaining about the pandemic, the thoughts of Conference members began to turn to next year’s General Service Conference, with its 2023 theme focused on our basic principles — “A.A.’s Three Legacies — Our Common Solution.” And, while it’s hard to predict what the future will bring, the security of our past and the strength of our primary purpose provide hope for the inevitable challenges that lie ahead.

Greetings

Welcome, Welcome, Welcome to the 72nd annual General Service Conference! It is so good to see all of you here — our first in-person Conference since the start of Covid! I offer a special greeting to the Panel 72 delegates — hang on for the ride of your life. You might be wondering HOW this thing works. Well, just like elsewhere in this Fellowship, we need to be honest, open-minded and willing to listen and learn. I learn from my mistakes, so I offer a suggestion to the Panel 72 delegates: One of you will be offering this greeting as delegate chair next year, so I encourage you to pay attention. I heard that advice last year and figured, “There are 93 of

us here, it won’t be me.” God does have a sense of humor!

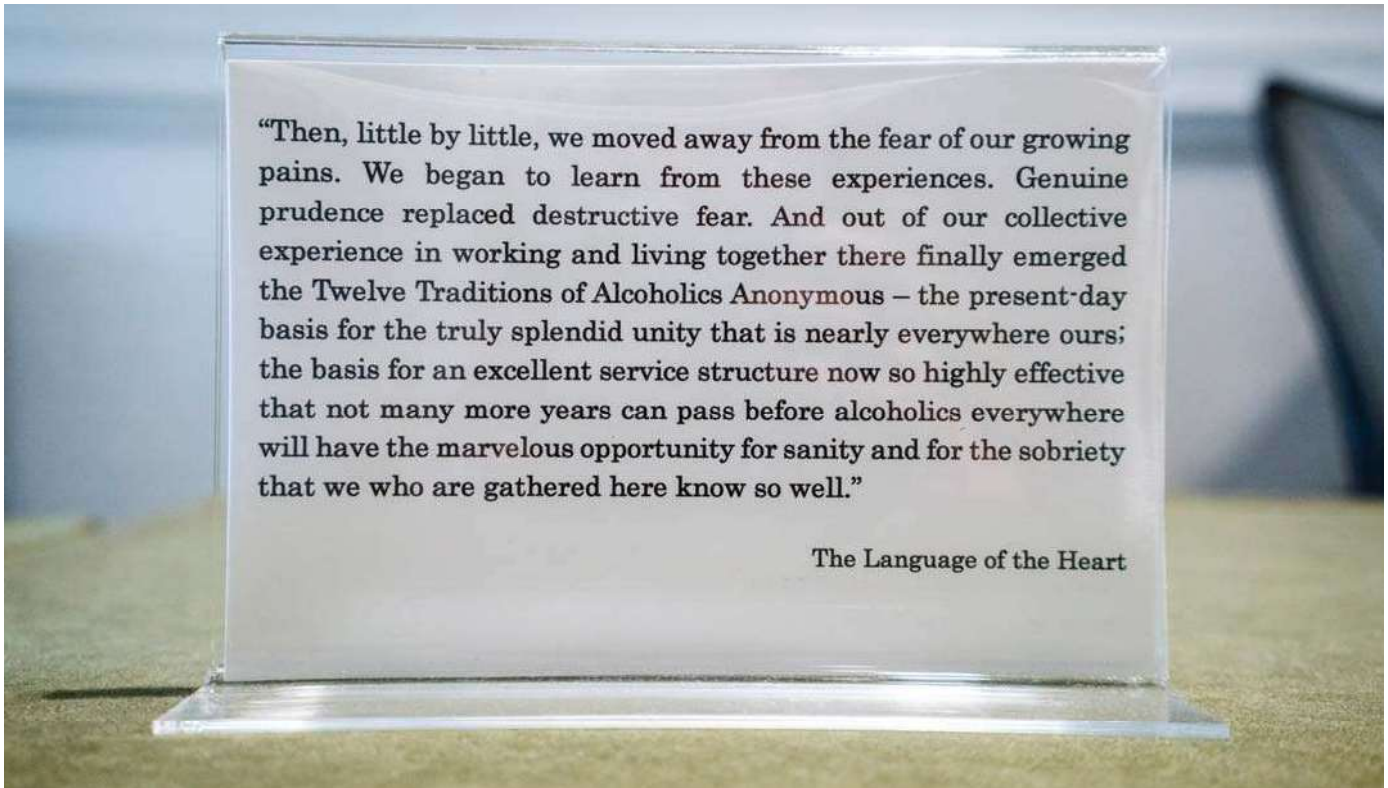
I’d also like to extend a warm welcome to the Panel 71 delegates, board members, directors, staff and trustees. It is so nice to see you all in person instead of on the virtual screens. I would be remiss if I did not also say welcome to our visitors from other conferences. Thank you for your interest and attendance at the United States and Canada General Service Conference.

You will find that we all come from different service cultures and throughout this Conference process, through give and take, with love and tolerance for our different backgrounds and opinions, we will somehow find substantial unanimity for the good of A.A. as a whole. We might not always get our way, we might not always be able to sway the Conference to our area’s way of thinking, but instead, we find we need to cheerfully compromise for the unity of A.A. and then carry the Conference conscience back to our groups with the assurance that the best decision was made for the whole Fellowship.

Our theme this year is “A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service.” Although we have been coming together physically and spiritually since 1951, the way our Fellowship works is changing. Service work is changing: Just look at the online meetings — newcomers are staying sober who have never attended an in-person meeting, we have had virtual forums, virtual service workshops, virtual area assemblies. My goodness, we are sending literature into jails via tablets! We communicate more by email and text than by phone calls and postal mail. I’ve heard some areas carrying the message into treatment facilities via Zoom or recorded meetings. Our Conference committees can now meet to get to know each other before the Conference even starts! The changes are enormous. A.A. Comes of Age 2.0 — indeed! But some things have not changed: Our love of A.A. and of each other, our love and deep desire to be of service, to want to help the still-suffering alcoholic remains our primary aim. In the midst of all these changes, our basic principles regarding service have not changed... love, patience and tolerance. To paraphrase Bill W.’s comments at the 1956 General Service Conference, “These principles can help [prevent] friction, indecision, and power-driving.” These are the principles we must practice this week. And to everyone, I hope we all keep in mind Rule 62 as the week progresses. I also hope we can all keep the sentiments of St. Francis in mind during our deliberations and conversations. (And if I may be so bold, I would like to add, “God, grant that I may be tolerant rather than be tolerated.”)

Finally, in all of Dr. Bob’s wisdom, let us remember the words of his farewell talk, “Our Twelve Steps...resolve themselves into the words ‘love’ and ‘service.’ We understand what love is, and we understand what service is. So, let’s bear those two things in mind. Let us also remember to guard that erring member the tongue... let’s use it with kindness and consideration and tolerance.” (*Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, pg. 338)

Pam K., Western Missouri, Delegate Chair



Keynote Address

Good morning Conference Members and welcome to the 72nd General Service Conference! My name is Kathi, and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is October 15, 1990 and my home group is Free at Last in Tucson, Arizona. I am in my final few days of service as the Pacific Regional Trustee and I remember that day when the Pacific Region Delegates called me from the 68th General Service Conference to let me know that I had been elected. I cried for days ... well, actually weeks in joy that I would get to serve Alcoholics Anonymous in this capacity. Thank you for your trust in me over these past four years. It has truly been amazing; an experience that will stay with me for the rest of my life!

I would like to take a moment to thank Steve, our Conference Coordinator, for the loving invitation to give the 72nd GSC keynote address. The theme for this year's Conference is "A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service." This is very appropriate for where we stand, as much has changed in our world and in the way A.A. communicates our message of hope. From our Meeting Guide app, virtual meeting rooms, outside literature sales, podcasts, websites, Instagram, and our use of search engine optimization we hope to be everywhere that alcoholics are looking for a solution. Since "we came of age" and accepted our Conference structure as the link between the little-known boards and the rest of A.A., we have truly done what we were tasked to do so many years ago. The Conference continues to be that link and with today's technologies each level of our structure is connected at a greater speed and depth.

This year there are 133 of us blessed to serve at the Conference. Each one of us chosen to be here by various methods and each one of us here as servant leaders with a great responsibility. We are here to have vigorous, loving, and informed discussions on matters affecting A.A. today. We are here to listen to our Board reports and to ask questions and make suggestions. We are here to roll up our sleeves, be fully present and do our best, to think deeply, to bring the consciousness of the U.S. and Canada together, to debate in loving discussions and ultimately to hear our Higher Power express itself through our group conscience. It is important for all of us to take a good hard look at challenges and opportunities that are affecting A.A. today, of which there are many, and to carry these discussions back to those we serve.

So, what are some of the challenges and opportunities we face? Well, I only have time to mention a few items that are on my mind as we go into this week. We have learned through our time in Alcoholics Anonymous, there are opportunities in every challenge.

I would like to begin with the question, does our A.A. membership reflect the population?

In past surveys, we have seen that the answer is no. There are still millions who suffer from alcoholism that don't know about A.A. or feel that A.A. is not a place for them. A couple of quotes from the Big Book chapter, "Working with Others," that can help us focus on those still suffering: 1) "To be helpful is our only aim," 2) "When you discover a prospect for Alcoholics Anonymous, find out all you can about him," 3) "Get an idea of his behavior, his problems, his background, the seriousness of his condition, and his religious leanings. You need this information

to put yourself in his place, to see how you would like him to approach you if tables were turned,” and a quote from “Into Action,” “Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us.”

We are inclusive in our hearts and minds, but are we doing our best to find out all we can about these suffering alcoholics? We ask ourselves: “If we were in their shoes, how would we like to be approached?” An experience I recall was asking a Vietnamese American woman if she knew about A.A. and she had never heard of it. She expressed during our conversation that alcoholism is a huge problem in her community and when I asked what is done about it, she said there is no hope and that most die. This is an example that there are still millions who do not know about us or don’t know that they are welcome in A.A. and that we are available to all. We have much work to do and the following is a great example of a grassroots effort: the Hispanic Women’s Workshop. Several years ago, a couple of women began this effort and then through the GSC asked for a La Viña book and pamphlet for Hispanic women in A.A. — tools to help one alcoholic carry the message to another. In December I attended the annual workshop and asked how many had gotten sober after these workshops began and more than two-thirds raised their hands. This focused cooperation between all levels of our upside-down structure has helped to save many lives.

I also ask, do our delegates, areas and boards reflect the population?

I ask myself when part of a body choosing our servant leaders: “Am I choosing those like me or am I choosing those who will do a good job and bring a diverse voice to the table, possibly a different view, religious or cultural perspective?” Those who are young, have a different point of view, are from a different culture, race or way of thinking are so important for the health and growth of Alcoholics Anonymous. Without diverse perspectives we will become stagnant. It is a natural tendency to choose those who are like us and it requires an open mind to bring other viewpoints to our servant leadership.

Another challenge is our Seventh Tradition and literature sales.

For years now we have been talking about our dependence on literature sales to pay for our services and that this may not be sustainable moving into the future. Print literature and magazine subscriptions are trending down. The last two years in a pandemic has truly shown us that we cannot count on literature income and that we need to continue moving toward self-support through voluntary group contributions. A.A. does not live in a bubble, and therefore supply chain issues and inflation are also affecting us and our costs. Literature is not always available due to paper shortages and is more expensive. Employee turnover and Covid issues are affecting our vendors being able to meet deadlines. There are also several trends that have affected our Seventh Tradition contributions. Although we have had record contributions, a

smaller percentage of groups contribute, individual contributions are rising, and during this pandemic, very large contributions from districts, areas and intergroups have come in because many have found themselves with an excess of money due to being in lockdown mode. Service participation is down and local committee work to carry the message has waned, which is another form of being self-supporting. With the uncertainty in literature sales and group contributions going down will we be able to afford the number of staff needed to carry out all the services that we have asked them for? Even now they are stretched very thin. There are opportunities in all of this, and it is up to us as a self-supporting movement to have vision and plan for our future.

And finally, the opportunities in virtual/online groups.

As a result of our worldwide pandemic, A.A. has truly stepped up to carry the message through virtual technologies. Although this is not really new, many meetings and groups have come about exponentially in the last two years. It is so important that we find paths for these members to participate in the decisions of Alcoholics Anonymous, but there are so many questions that need to be answered before we can truly make informed decisions. Some of these questions are: How do we deal with the international nature of so many of these groups? Where should their voice and vote be? If we have a U.S./Canada online Area will this affect other structures’ Seventh Tradition or participation? When the pandemic is not such an overwhelming concern, will many groups meet in person? Will the membership of the virtual groups begin to fade? How many meetings or groups that are virtual want to be groups within a geographical structure or an online structure of some sort? Are we talking about 50, 100, or thousands? I trust that Alcoholics Anonymous will find a path as a result of being fully informed over the next couple of years.

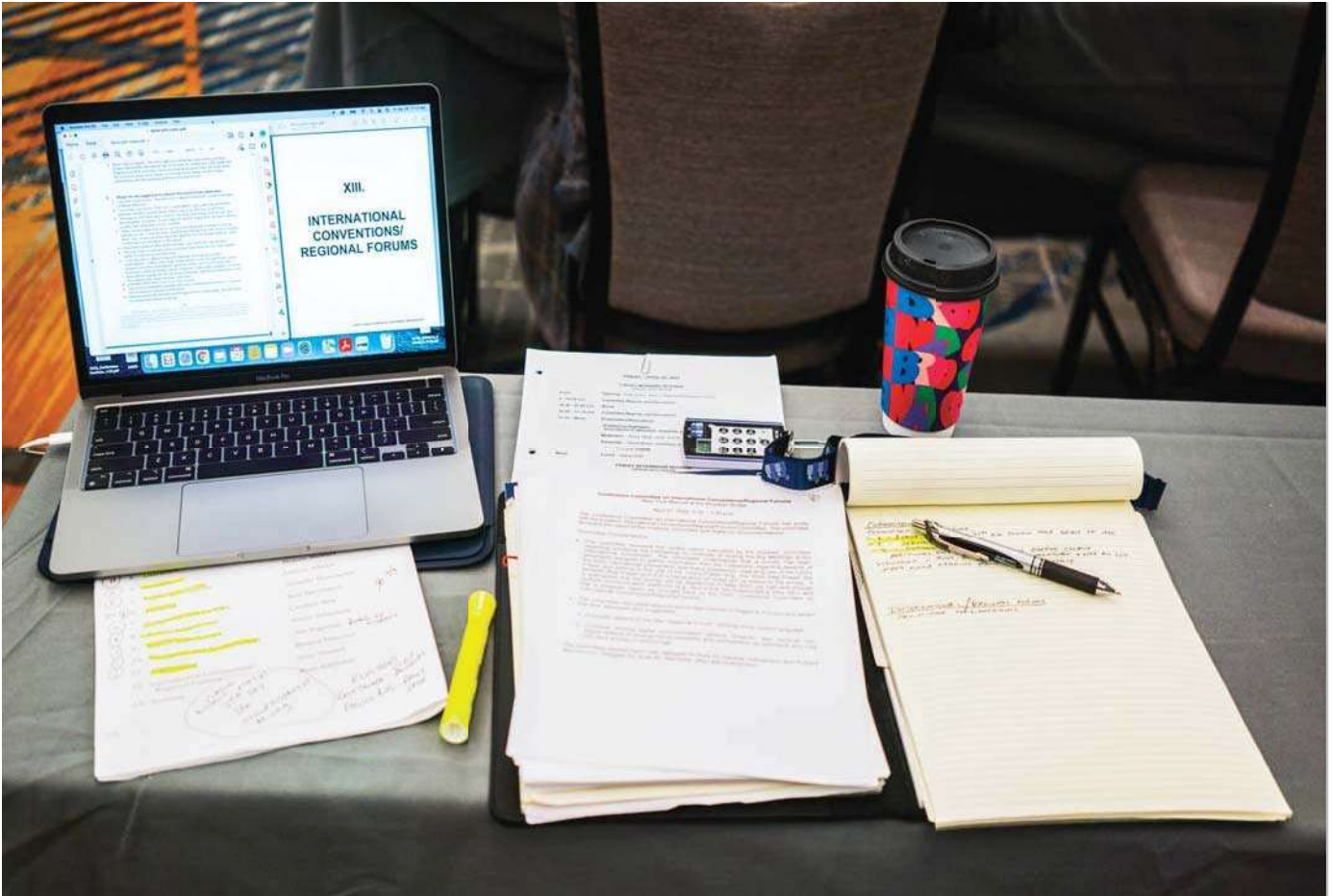
In closing, Alcoholics Anonymous has come such a long way since 1935, 87 years ago! A.A. is still the solution for this alcoholic and for so many others, so we all must remember that what saves our lives is the altruistic nature of our program. We need empathy and vision so that all who need help with their alcoholism know that there is a solution and that we find ways to make sure they feel welcome here. Let’s keep an open mind when choosing our servant leaders and make sure that we have a diverse voice at all levels. To be sustainable in the future, our participation in service and Seventh Tradition contributions requires the whole of A.A. to participate in the discussions and solutions; and let’s always remember to be as informed as we can be before making decisions that will affect A.A. for years to come.

I am grateful beyond words for all of you. Let’s do our best work for those entrusting us! We all need to roll up our sleeves and get to work for those who have not yet found the hope that we have.

With deep love and gratitude.

Kathi F.

■ Reports from the General Service Board, AAWS and Grapevine Corporate Boards



General Service Board Annual Report

For coming to the General Service Conference and serving as a member of the 72nd General Service Conference, thank you! If you take away nothing else from the speechifying this week, please know that your presence and your work are essential and appreciated. You are creating history by your diligence in attending the first “in-person” General Service Conference since 2019. Covid-19 has caused great damage to the connect-edness of our communities as a whole and, specifically, to beloved A.A. groups and meetings. I have read the latest statistics which are confirming the observation that there are troubling increases in the number of people who have a problem with alcohol. More than ever, the hand of A.A. is needed to help anyone, anywhere who wants help with a drinking problem. Let me say it again! Thank you! You are the brave ones who deny the world of woe and doomsayers. You stand tall as you suit up and show up.

It feels a bit strange to write this report weeks before we stand together. This will be my first General Service Conference since I rotated in 2003. I am glad to be back.

And I hold in my heart Bill’s recollection of Dr. Bob saying as Bill left him, “Remember, Bill, let’s not louse this thing up. Let’s keep it simple.” It is a wonderful reminder to not overthink problems. As the planning was underway for this Conference, I was not sure what was going to happen. “Simple” certainly was not the word that came to mind. And the other words are not printable. But there is comfort in the archives, and I would read letters written by Bill. I was reminded of how much discussion and effort it took to even have that first General Service Conference. I cannot begin to describe the efforts that have allowed for all of us to be in person at the 2022 General Service Conference. It has been neither a simple nor a foregone conclusion that we would meet again. The important part is that you pulled out the stops and the message was clear. We need to be working and meeting together.

At Conference this year, I encourage you to take into account the harmful impact of Covid. Please carefully consider your recommendations. I hope that your advisory actions will set priorities that are frugal and achievable. Committee meetings are not necessarily cheap nor effective.

In the years that I was a friend from the sidelines of A.A., I remained grateful for what I have learned from A.A. You know, there are no bosses in A.A. even in very difficult times. Coming back, elected as chair of the GSB on May 1, 2021, has been a very humbling and troubling experience. When I am visiting A.A. events and having a cup of coffee in quiet conversations, I have been struck by the dedication of the members of A.A. who I see at work in the districts and areas. I am sad and troubled when I am told about the meetings that will not happen and groups that have disbanded. I am saddened by some of the disagreeable attitudes and resentments. From 1997 to 2003, I was so very privileged to see A.A. in action where people did disagree without being disagreeable. (Well, most of the time!)

Technology and online are points of risk for disunity. I do not say this lightly because I have been an early lover and adopter of technology. I won't bore you with the battle I fought to get computers in the court. I will share with you about my teaching experience. I taught my first "distance learning class" in 2008. This semester, I am teaching a "virtual class." Some students do well in virtual classes. Other students do better with "in-person" classes. I learned from A.A. that when someone shares their experience, it is a good suggestion to take what you need and leave the rest. I ask my students to talk about what is working for them and what does not work for them. By talking about what works for them, we are more likely to find the right path for each one of them. Maybe, at the general service level, we can recognize that when it comes to the important things in life, like recovery, one size doesn't have to fit all.

Some of you may be wondering what the General Service Board is doing to better serve the Fellowship. Are we providing the right kind of support and the right amount of support so that the message of recovery is being carried? Are we helping the Fellowship find ways to attract newcomers without resorting to evangelism and promotion? My jury is still out. I am not sure what answer to these questions is a good answer. For sure, the General Service Board is not a group of old men hiding in the hills until the battle is over and then riding down to kill the survivors. In fact, the majority of GSB trustees are women. But more importantly, in August 2021, the Board approved an ad hoc committee to address the need for more people participating in service work. That committee, "Increasing Participation in the General Service Structure Through the Lens of the 3rd and 5th Traditions," will report back with ideas on how to attract more people of all descriptions into general service work which will, in turn, make the hand of A.A. more visible and available to anyone, anywhere, who needs help.

To be blunt, maybe we need to rethink how we use the resource so freely offered by those who do general service work. Those servants of A.A. bring their time, talent, and treasure to be used to help carry the message. Do we misuse that most precious resource of all — time — by having meaningless meetings? Is that committee meeting necessary? Is it efficient and time appropriate? Are the meetings more social and recreational than we want

to admit? We make a grave mistake if we are misusing time and discouraging people we need and want from participating in general service.

The board undertook to form two more new ad hoc committees for special issues and concerns. The new committees that were approved are:

1. Process for Development of Criteria, Design, and Initiation of the next GSO Location Study (Location Plus);
2. Trustees' Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the General Service Structure (in response to the Advisory Action of the 71st General Service Conference).

The General Service Board is working on the needs of the future. Yes, we are thinking about policy and practices going forward in the brave new Covid world. You may be asking *why?* In *Our Great Responsibility* in his talk to the 1959 Conference as reported on page 142, Bill W. predicted that "Our problem of the future won't be the problem of re-creating Alcoholics Anonymous, or taking those great long chances and heavy risks. Our problem will be primarily the presentation — or the preservation, the protection and the slow perfecting — of what we have."

In the Keynote Address to the 55th General Service Conference in 2005, John K., a trustee, elaborated on the clear and continuing concern:

The challenge of the next decade is to revitalize all parts of our service structure in order to better serve our groups. If each Conference exhausts itself on the minutiae of internal business, the shape and color of the ornaments we hang on each tree, rather than the overall growth and health of the forest, the work of A.A. will suffer, as will the spiritual basis of our Fellowship.

John K.'s remarks, in regard to the 55th Conference are even more applicable to the 72nd General Service Conference and the General Service Board. The Covid Comeback presents many challenges to all of us. I hope that "in-person" meetings of the General Service Board will help the board to avoid hanging ornaments on a tree. The board will be seeking ways to better address some of the more difficult and divisive questions in the coming year. The General Service Board, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, even the General Service Office should not be islands unto themselves. This recognition makes it obvious that more diligent attention and work on our communications will be required.

Speaking of communications, we get letters and emails. The board appreciates hearing from the Fellowship. Secretary Francis G. reports on the communications received at each meeting and distributes them to the board members for review.

Also, the board receives reports from the operating corporations, Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS) and Alcoholics Anonymous Grapevine, Inc. (AAGV) each meeting. Jimmy D., chair of AAWS, and Josh E., chair of Grapevine, and their boards have served the

Fellowship well through some difficult times this year. Their reports contain valuable information and can foster increased cooperation.

Another aspect in thinking about improved communications is how to engage the Fellowship in constructive ways. There are actually three communications for every communication. There is the report I wrote. There is the report I thought I wrote. And there is the report you are reading. The challenge of communication is to create a message that is the same in actuality as it is perceived by the sender and the recipient.

During the Conference week we will be working together to better support the carrying of the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. I will not be giving this report verbatim. You can email a request for the verbal version of this report to me at Linda.Chezem@Gmail.com. As we celebrate the theme of this 72nd General Service Conference — “A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service” — we recognize that many do not have internet access. Others may have illnesses such as mental health issues or other disabilities that prevent them from attending “in-person” meetings. Our Job One is to support making the hand of A.A. visible and available to anyone, anywhere.

Finally, in my first General Service Conference as board chair, I want to quote from the report given by the chair of the General Service Board at the 55th General Service Conference in 2005. One of my heroines, Elaine McDowell, PhD. (Class A trustee), was the first female and the first lady of color to serve as chair of the General Service Board. She was gracious and wise in her remarks as she shared her thoughts, set out below:

As I took time to reflect on our last year together, I was struck by the many gifts that trustees of the General Service Board receive from A.A. trusted servants. We are given the privilege of observing dedicated service on the front lines here at home in the United States and Canada, and in the far-flung areas of the world. We are able to observe the miracle of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous demonstrated in the lives and service of so many A.A. members. On behalf of my fellow trustees, I thank you for your service, for your recoveries in A.A. and for your lives.

What she said! Thank you!

Linda Chezem, Chair

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS) is a New York not-for-profit corporation whose board is comprised of nine directors. The members of AAWS are the 21 trustees of the General Service Board who exercise their oversight role by electing all directors of the corporation. The mission of service of the AAWS board is guided by A.A.’s Twelve Concepts for World Service to ensure it fulfills its responsibility for oversight of the General Service Office (GSO). This year’s board was comprised of two general service trustees (Beau B. and Deb K.), two regional trustees (Irma V. and

Jimmy D.), three nontrustee directors (Carolyn W., Vera F., and John W.), and the GSO General Manager (Bob W.) and staff coordinator (Jeff W.). All of these trusted servants have worked together in serving the Fellowship as directors of this affiliate corporation, investing tremendous amounts of time and energy toward forming group consciences around matters related to the fiduciary and legal duties of the director role while keeping front of mind the “spiritual handshake” between Fellowship and trusted servant in areas of delegated authority and responsibility.

In reviewing the past Conference year we are able to note that some major projects have come to the point of successful implementation even as the ongoing pandemic continued to negatively impact deadlines and timelines and the full reopening of our General Service Office. Whether virtual, physical, or hybrid, AAWS has continued to endeavor to meet or exceed expectations in performing its four main functions:

- Services (to groups and members, professionals and the general public, and international structures and emerging A.A. efforts).
- Publishing (creating/editing/translating/distributing Conference-approved literature and service material communicating the message of A.A. and its purpose and mission within our U.S./Canada service structure and around the globe).
- Archives (maintaining for A.A.’s future the vast and rich repository of the collective experience of our past, responding to hundreds of annual requests for research/documentation/information, keeping permanent records of all board and committee meetings/GSC records, and constantly responding to internal requests from trustees, directors, and staff to help inform ongoing work in service to the Fellowship).
- Finance (ensuring that the Seventh Tradition contributions from the Fellowship to the General Service Board are prudently employed to support and advance A.A.’s service efforts through detailed budgeting/reporting and fiscal accountability to the membership).

We have continued to support the Fellowship’s firm resolve that when anyone, anywhere reaches out for the hand of A.A. we are responsible. It would be unconscionable to expect that A.A.’s “headquarters,” as Bill W. often called GSO, would not follow the lead of the movement in this, our very own flying-blind period. The employees of AAWS, directors of its corporate board, and members of the General Service Board have all found strength and solace in the steady forward pace exemplified by the membership. We are a society that formed from calamity and negative circumstance; we flourish in adverse situations; we participate more emphatically and with more enthusiasm when challenged. We have found without question that Alcoholics Anonymous is not an address or a time on a clock and that our spiritual principles can and will guide us through all manner of physical or material challenges.

Each year the directors serving on the AAWS board



GENERAL SERVICE OFFICE

A.A. WORLD SERVICES, INC.
AA GRAPEVINE, INC.

report to the General Service Conference on services provided by GSO, AAWS publishing activities, and other projects and actions undertaken by the board. It is the responsibility of AAWS and GSO to serve the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous, to respond to and fulfill requests from our Fellowship and Conference, and to support the Twelfth Step efforts of members and groups to assist in reaching the still-suffering alcoholic. In keeping with that tradition it is my privilege on behalf of the board to offer to you some of the highlights of AAWS activities over the past year.

The AAWS board met seven times since the close of the 2021 General Service Conference, which included one special meeting called in February 2022. In each of these meetings the board receives reports from various GSO departments, managers, and staff; reviews updates on services and gives input and guidance on how best to respond to the Fellowship's requests; monitors progress and advises on implementation and development of Conference and board recommendations; establishes pricing on new and revised publications in the spirit of providing literature as a life-saving message and not as a profit center; and ensures the integrity of the A.A. message held in trust for the Fellowship by reviewing requests from those seeking permission to reprint A.A. materials and literature. Not a single one of these meetings ended anywhere close to the time scheduled — attributable in part to perhaps less than stellar chairmanship but certainly the vast amount of ongoing work in the office was a contributing factor as well. In addition, the board held strategic planning meetings in September 2021, December 2021, and March 2022 with the March

meeting coordinated by our own Class A trustee Sister Judith Ann Karam. The AAWS board extends its gratitude to Sister Judith for the time and effort she invested in helping us formulate a working plan to help inform future endeavors of the AAWS board and the General Service Office. AAWS employs the committee system in order to function effectively in overseeing the many business and service matters that come before the board. The standing committees of AAWS are:

- Internal Audit, which reviews all internal audit processes and documentation and sets parameters that keep the board and office in alignment with state and federal laws and guidelines governing non-profit corporations while always keeping in mind A.A.'s set of guiding spiritual principles.
- Finance, which oversees budgeting and financial results of GSO and our publishing activities; utilizing our NetSuite system to produce detailed financial statements and analyses governed by the spirit of the Seventh Tradition regarding both the expressed need of the service and the most prudent way to bring the service to fruition.
- Nominating, which reviews résumés, conducts interviews, and makes recommendations to the AAWS board and trustees' Nominating Committee to fill vacancies for AAWS nontrustee directors and general service trustees.
- Publishing, which analyzes proceeds from literature and makes pricing recommendations, reviews progress reports for literature revisions and new literature items received via Conference advisory actions and

committee considerations, ensures A.A. copyrights are respected and Intellectual Property concerns are addressed on behalf of the Fellowship, and is informed about and exercises oversight of international requests for licensing and translation.

- Technology/Communication/Services, which addresses the digital content needs of all service assignments, reviews reports and makes suggestions to further GSO's efforts in carrying the message on digital/virtual platforms including aa.org, Meeting Guide, AAWS YouTube channel, and Google for Non-Profits internal technology and communication efforts utilizing the ERP/NetSuite system and other software solutions within the oversight role of this committee to continue to improve communication within AAWS/GSO and with the Fellowship we serve.
- Self-Support Subcommittee, which suggests, creates, reviews self-support materials and methods of communication to engage the Fellowship in our Seventh Tradition on behalf of the General Service Board which is the recipient of all Seventh Tradition contributions with AAWS/GSO as the beneficiary.

As we travel through this “year in review” it is important to note that all of these benchmarks and accomplishments have been effected while dealing with the ramifications throughout all of A.A. in adjusting to life during the pandemic. The Fellowship has not curtailed nor suspended its collective efforts in carrying the A.A. message, thus their AAWS Board and General Service Office can and will continue to provide whatever is requested to support those efforts. Over 7,600 phone calls were received at the main number 212-870-3400 in the time period from July 2021 through March 2022.

Reduced Shipping Charges/Mixed-Title Discounts — One of innumerable positive outcomes of the utilization of A.A.'s committee system in AAWS this year was the permanent implementation of a reduced shipping charge for orders from the webstore. The AAWS Delta subcommittee worked for several years, concentrating on evaluating various pricing structures of A.A. literature with the goal of making sure our literature services carried equal costs across various formats and languages and worked to develop shipping charges that would not penalize the small purchaser (single book for example, or smaller orders from A.A. entities or A.A. Intergroup/Central Offices), and one that would respect the spiritual exchange of literature plus experience that the IGCOs and local A.A. service bodies offer. Reduced shipping charges have been successfully implemented after a five-month trial period and make our literature more financially accessible to those who seek our help. Delta's initial work was also the source for the mixed-title discount six-month test period which began on March 31 with the support of Intergroups and Central Offices across the U.S./Canada structure. This plan enables groups, districts, areas, and local service offices to provide a broad spectrum of A.A. literature at a palatable price point for the member or potential member.



New Website Release — The multi-year efforts toward release of a new look/new feel/improved functionality www.aa.org came to fruition with the website release in mid-December. This project was coordinated through our Communication Services department and Technology department but almost every employee at GSO has significant material and spiritual equity in the finished product, which presents our program in a simple and easy-to-follow virtual environment. Considering there are tens of millions of visits to our website each year from both A.A. members and thousands of non-A.A.s, our Internet presence plays a vitally important role in making the A.A. message available. Work continues on resolution of various initial release issues and enhancements which have been made infinitely easier to perform and maintain on the new platform. Online access to A.A. literature, service material, and information about A.A. via a web interface that allows the user to quickly access materials relevant to their need gives enormous positive momentum to our Twelfth Step efforts as a Fellowship. *Daily Reflections*, Find A.A. Near You, and the online Big Book remain the highest traffic features of the website. A significant capital investment by the Fellowship in furthering our ability to carry our message, ongoing maintenance and application support of www.aa.org will be handled by a contract webmaster for fiscally prudent administration of this crucial Fellowship asset.

Fellowship Connection — Not unlike our individual journeys that resulted in membership in A.A., the Fellowship Connection project started with low air speed and altitude and less than stellar communication. Implementing a plan involving the engagement of area trusted servants and the formation of both internal and external working groups has resulted in a cooperative effort that has seen multiple releases and enhancements over the past year. While there are ongoing problems being addressed with the member and group data that was converted from our legacy systems to NetSuite, it is readily apparent that providing a platform and training for area registrars and trusted servants to maintain their own data has had a tremendously positive impact in both the ability of local trusted servants to maintain their own records and the reduced administrative overhead at our General Service Office. Over 7,729 group, district, and area record updates were performed via Fellowship Connection in the nine-month period between July 2021 and March 2022.

Corrections Correspondence Service — Since Warden Duffy's efforts at San Quentin we as a society have been actively engaged in carrying the A.A. message to our fellows behind the walls. All A.A.s are therefore vested in the successful development and implementation of a brand-new CCS system this past year, maintained by the Corrections assignment at GSO. Once again multiple

departments and working groups within GSO collaborated in seeing this project through to its successful launch and implementation. The legacy system had flaws in multiple areas including the matching of sober A.A.s on the outside with those on the inside which of course is root and branch of these efforts.

Member Services — As part of the ongoing efforts in AAWS/GSO to achieve maximum service benefits from the ERP/NetSuite environment and to further efforts to identify and implement efficiencies of scale, a new Member Services department was unveiled on June 28, 2021. This “one-stop-shop” approach consolidates functions that formerly resided in silos across GSO in the areas of records, contributions, and general member inquiry. Currently, a department of six employees, five of whom are bilingual English/Spanish and/or English/French, this small group is assisted by the technology of the Front application which has helped the department handle 22,400 unique email requests from the Fellowship, 4,381 phone calls, 26,800 literature orders, 5,582 group/district/area updates in the period from end of June 2021 through the end of March 2022. One substantial benefit of this new centralized department is in enabling the office and board to collect and analyze data around the types of inquiries received, which will inform future developments in order to continue to enhance response-time to questions and problems from the Fellowship and also determine new approaches to providing information via technologies such as thread-based forums, informational videos, etc. which have been subjects of Conference committee discussions and committee considerations in prior years.

Virtual Regional Forums — The logistics and execution of the General Service Board's Regional Forums is the responsibility of our General Service Office. Our ability to engage with one another in the virtual environment, which was a learning experience in 2020 during the first few months of the pandemic, “came of age” in 2021 to the point at which all four Regional Forums in 2021 were hosted virtually and implemented full Forum schedules. The success of these events could be gauged by the number of first-time attendees registered at each of the Forums held in the Northeast, West Central, East Central, and Southwest Regions of the U.S./Canada service structure. Thousands of forum “newcomers” attended these regional events and for the first time experienced the true spirit of our Third Legacy of Service as exemplified by the inverted triangle. An unexpected plus as a byproduct of the virtual platform was the tremendous number of Ask-It-Basket chat questions posed and answered in real-time during the forum weekend so while we may have sacrificed in-person ice cream we experienced a level of real-time communication that all hope to emulate in our return to in-person Regional Forum events in 2022.

Intergroups & Central Offices — Members of the AAWS Board, the general manager, Group Services Staff Member, and employees of the Publishing and Member Services departments joined with their fellows from the A.A.



Grapevine board, Grapevine employees, and Intergroup and Central Office special workers in the 36th Annual Intergroup Seminar held virtually in October 2021. Our common welfare as service offices in Alcoholics Anonymous has come more and more to the forefront of discussions around self-support, literature as a service rather than a profit center, and the resolve to support our common primary purpose to help alcoholics achieve sobriety. The AAWS chair and treasurer, general manager, and Group Services staff member have actively participated in the IGCO Communications Committee quarterly meetings, a precedent that began in 2020 and continues unabated. Increased understanding of one another's distinct roles and responsibilities to the common constituency of A.A. has been a byproduct of this increased level of communication.

International — While all international travel was suspended in 2021, the International staff member continued to coordinate international communications and ongoing service efforts worldwide with active participation in these efforts by our trustees-at-large. Our zonal REDELA meeting in 2021 was a hybrid affair which required much coordination involving the U.S./Canada structure. Remote community international A.A. efforts in our REDELA service zone continue to be ably supported by utilizing virtual technologies to reach those otherwise isolated by distance and geography. The North/South Connections event coming in July 2022 will link the A.A. experience across tens of thousands of miles. Our participation in the 27th World Service Meeting hosted by Tokyo, Japan will also be in the virtual space in October 2022. In-person international trips on a very limited scale resumed only recently with the general manager and trustee-at-large/U.S. traveling to Cuba in March and our trustee-at-large/Canada and International staff member traveling to Portugal in early April. Prudence has been the guiding principle as we return to in-person gatherings to share our experience, strength and hope.

Meeting Guide/YouTube Channel/Google for Non-Profits — The Communication Services department along with the support vendor Foster Made have continued to enhance the Meeting Guide app. We continue to see the application reach a broader audience as a service tool with estimates of over 200,000 subscribers. Meeting Guide also employs the power of cooperation among local A.A. entities and the General Service Office in gathering and publishing accurate A.A. meeting information. Meeting Guide has begun to expand its capabilities as an important communication tool in our Fellowship.

Our YouTube channel continues to evolve as a public information tool with guidance from the trustees' and Conference Public Information committees and the support and direction of the Communication Services department. There have been various technical challenges during the YouTube evolution which have been resolved as they present themselves by the diligent efforts of Communication Services staff and their tenacious resolve to use YouTube as a vehicle for the A.A. message.

We continue to see the improved presence of our A.A. resources online via participation in the Google for Non-Profits (Google Ads) program. Our two initial campaigns built around "Need Help" and "Find A.A." help to give precedence to resources available via www.aa.org as opposed to non-A.A. sources. The total campaign spend for 2021 was \$13,010.64, which of course is far below the maximum allowable spend of \$10K per month, but with the efforts of Communication Services and input from trustee and Conference committees we continue to evaluate/expand our keywords and "ticklers" along with suggestions for new campaigns to implement in the near future as this resource continues to improve and grow.

Financial — A complete picture of our 2021 finances will of course be part of our General Service Board treasurer's report. However, as GSO is funded in large part by the Seventh Tradition contributions of the Fellowship to the General Service Board with the remaining inflows coming from sales of A.A. literature (assets of the Fellowship held in trust by AAWS), our Finance department has implemented a robust budgeting process which actively engages department managers at GSO and also includes budget justifications to assist the AAWS board and General Service Board in executing their oversight role and fiduciary responsibilities.

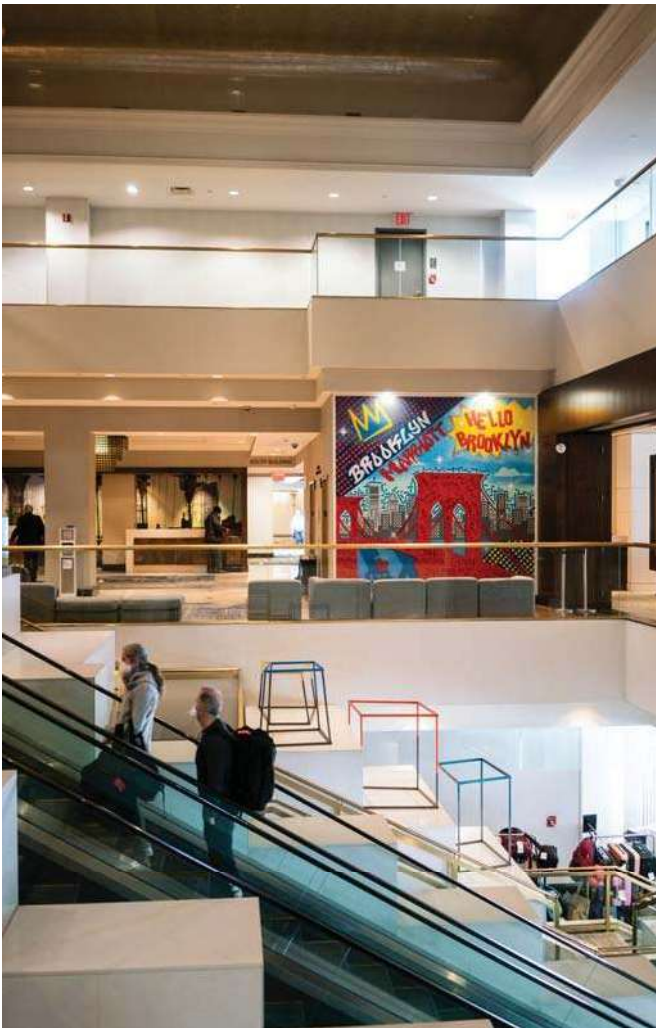
- Another record year for Seventh Tradition participation in the Fellowship with \$10,782,983 received from groups, members, and A.A. entities in 2021! 77% of these funds were received via postal mail (\$8.288 million) and 23% of contributions were made online (\$2.494 million). Partial implementation of the LockBox feature with Chase Bank starting in late 2020/early 2021 has helped our Finance department process postal mail contributions with much greater efficiencies of scale and certainly has benefited us during the pandemic. There were 30 "extraordinary" contributions from A.A. entities received during 2021 totaling \$570,413 (5.3% of the total amount contributed). We believe these contributions are a result of restricted local service activities during Covid which caused treasuries to exceed maximum prudent reserves.
- Literature sales in 2021 improved considerably from the dismal numbers in 2020. Gross sales net of discounts were \$11.352 million. Printing/shipping/warehousing expenses reflected a significant uptick from pre-pandemic levels and totaled \$5.054 million with net proceeds from literature in 2021 at \$6.297 million. While we saw a dramatic decrease in sales at the onset of the pandemic, with only marginal upward trends throughout 2020 followed by an encouraging positive trend over most of 2021, the month-to-month numbers have been unpredictable. The AAWS board and Publishing department have responded to this unpredictability with more conservative budget estimates for 2021 and 2022 and have also allowed these trends to help inform our discussions around our Seventh Tradition and being the best stewards possible of the A.A. dollar that is entrusted to GSO by the Fellowship through the General Service Board.

- Expenses of GSO in 2021 totaling \$15.679 million were kept at or below budgeted figures in almost all categories. Substantive cost containment and non-essential project deferrals that began in 2020 have continued unabated in 2021 and have been given priority when developing the 2022 budget. Utilizing NetSuite budgeting capabilities and actively engaging all departments in the budgeting process at GSO has enabled the office to acknowledge the spiritual participation and material sacrifice of the Fellowship via our Seventh Tradition by examining all our service efforts using the benchmark of “Is this service really necessary?”
- Operating surplus for AAWS/GSO, which includes GSB Seventh Tradition contributions, was \$1.697 million compared to a budgeted net surplus of \$1.197 million. While the Income Statement bottom line reflects the record-setting level of support from the Fellowship and reflects the diligent efforts of board and office to meet the unpredictable financial environment during Covid, the GSB Treasurer’s report will go into much greater detail on how this very encouraging result only positively impacts our cash position by \$53,000 in 2021 because of cash outlays for capitalized expenditures which are not reflected on the Income Statement.
- Our 2022 budget has conservatively estimated gross literature sales at \$11 million, Seventh Tradition contributions at \$10 million, cost of goods at \$4.35 million, and expenses of \$18 million for a net deficit of \$1.33 million. The budget deficit will be funded by the net surplus from 2021 while understanding that regular and transparent communication within the Fellowship and shared ownership of the expenses related to providing services to groups and members has historically resulted in Seventh Tradition responses from groups and members to meet our needs.
- The Finance department at GSO has an oversight and reporting responsibility for our Reserve Fund on behalf of the trustees’ Finance Committee and the General Service Board. The Reserve Fund balance (net of Grapevine subscription liability) at December 31, 2021 is \$12,822,286.
- Our Defined Benefit and Post-Retirement Health liabilities (including both AAWS and AAGV retirees and former employees) are conservatively invested and monitored by the trustees’ Retirement committees charged with their oversight. These funds have benefited from prudent investment and positive market trends. It has not been necessary to commit cash to these liabilities in either 2020 or 2021 nor is any cash commitment expected in 2022, keeping in mind that a significant downturn in economic conditions will impact the value of assets in these funds.



Publishing — The department has faced many crises it could not postpone nor evade in the past year related to paper shortages, supply chain disruptions, and other unforeseen circumstances that are now part and parcel of existing in the time of the pandemic. Entire printing operations have been shut down for periods when impacted by Covid-19. The publishing team has employed foresight and fortitude in their commitment to make sure that A.A.’s message of hope is available to anyone, anywhere through the service of producing and providing our A.A. literature. Priorities have been set to ensure that the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is available in all formats when decisions have had to be made about the use of limited materials in print runs. A “digital first” approach has been adopted when thinking about delivery dates for Conference-approved literature and literature updates as requested by advisory action. Publishing has worked closely with our Finance department to stockpile paper, which is a treasured commodity in the pandemic world. In order to evaluate whether our efforts in the publishing area have been successful the Big Book phrase “let’s look at the record” is apropos.

The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, is currently available in 73 languages. There are 28 Big Book translations pending in various stages of development or completion. This includes 20 new translations and 8 revisions/re-translations. *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* is available in 51 translations with 3 new translations pending. *Daily Reflections* is available in 38 translations with 2 translations pending. *Living Sober* is available



in 37 languages with 5 translations pending. *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* is available in 20 languages with 3 translations pending.

Per the advisory actions of the 71st General Service Conference the newly designed A.A. Service Manual was completed and made available to the Fellowship. The “Hispanic Women in A.A.” and “Faith Leaders Ask About Alcoholics Anonymous” pamphlets were finalized and produced. Other pamphlet revisions were made in our three Conference languages as supplies exhausted and items came up for reprint, notably “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.,” “Questions & Answers on Sponsorship,” “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix,” and “The A.A. Group Treasurer.” A list has been compiled of all titles affected by the terminology changes in our Corrections-focused literature along with inventories of available stock in order to develop timelines for edits. Publishing has worked closely with trustees’ Literature and the TABB subcommittee in the ongoing work related to the publication of the plain and simple language translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

A language translation working group has formed in order to address the deluge of internal translation requests and assure parity in the availability of materi-

als in all three Conference languages, working toward improving timelines and cultivating resources to address systemic issues.

Publishing is currently undergoing an audit of our international licensing and translation procedures to identify areas for improvement and to evaluate technological solutions which should address and resolve some weak points in the many processes involved in executing and maintaining our copyrights and licensing agreements with A.A. structures and entities worldwide. AAWS holds in trust for the Fellowship over 1,600 copyrights/trademarks which are monitored and maintained by the Publishing department and our Intellectual Property staff member. There were 50 translation reviews across 21 languages performed by our contracted translation-evaluation services in 2021 (2020 saw 27 reviews across 14 languages); 2021 saw 222 licenses across 14 countries executed to reproduce and distribute AAWS copyrighted items (2020 totals were 73 licenses across 6 countries). Various titles across the broad spectrum of A.A. literature exist in 111 languages worldwide. These licenses ensure that the life-giving message of Alcoholics Anonymous is made available around the globe and their spiritual value is incalculable. The AAWS board will receive reports from the audit, with management planning to take immediate action to employ whatever tools are necessary in order to establish checkpoints to ensure the streamlined execution of agreements and accurate maintenance of the records pertaining to these Fellowship assets.

The department continues its efforts to fulfill the Fellowship’s request to make A.A. literature available in digital formats. As of November 2021 our enhanced digital distribution efforts resulted in 36,422 units distributed of which 13,113 were for our *Big Book*, 8,633 for *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, 4,210 for *As Bill Sees It*, and 3,529 for *Daily Reflections*. The three largest digital retailers are Amazon Digital, Apple, and Google. The audiobook unit count totaled 15,301 units with Audible the primary retailer of these products and the *Big Book*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and *Living Sober* the predominant titles. Contracts continue to be reviewed and executed with the myriad of vendors engaged by correctional facilities in the U.S./Canada structure in order to provide A.A. literature to our fellows behind the walls while ensuring that local CFC committees are informed about digital literature efforts and delivery.

Archives — While most members think of this department as a repository of all things germane to the history of our Fellowship, literally millions of pages of printed and handwritten material, photos, audio files, Conference and board records (and Bill’s couch), the Archives department also performs an integral role in the AAWS and GSB work performed at the direction of the Conference and Fellowship. Whereas we report “official” counts of responses to requests for various materials and research items from within the Fellowship and outside researchers/inquiring minds (which number in the hundreds approaching thousands per year) it is important to

note that whenever any committee or subcommittee of the boards works toward forming a conscience around a particular issue or area of concern, the Archives department is almost always engaged. The department oversees and maintains a voluminous amount of material on behalf of the membership. Archives continues to record and preserve the history of the Fellowship in real-time. A records management audit is currently in progress in the Archives department to ensure that our entire organization follows generally accepted guidelines related to the preservation of board and office records.

Communication Services — This department of the General Service Board plays a vital role in fulfilling Conference advisory actions and committee considerations as they relate to our internal communications and Public Information efforts. The absence of a director after long-time employee Clement C.'s retirement last fall did not diminish the department's ability to deliver the new www.aa.org, support ongoing enhancements to Meeting Guide, discuss ways to implement suggestions from the Conference and trustees' Public Information committees and AAWS. Technology and Communication Services (TCS) Committee related to LinkedIn and other public information efforts, publish new PSAs, adapt legacy-formatted materials for use on current platforms such as YouTube and the new website, and facilitate innumerable office and board requests for communication dissemination and distribution. New platforms are being implemented to collect analytics for the Conference, boards and management review of website visits, Google Ad saturation, and keyword implementation toward fulfilling the goal of making the A.A. message easily accessible in virtual environments. Communication Services has played a significant role in the development of the beta podcast produced by GSO for Conference evaluation this year. The department has also taken an active role in the ongoing discussions related to development of an A.A. service app and discussion around thread-based forums as board/office/Fellowship communication tools. A thorough search for a new director of the department resulted in Clorinda V.'s arrival at GSO in late February 2022. While not a requirement for the position, Clorinda's acceptance of the position ensures that a member of the Fellowship is guiding the ongoing efforts of this department and we look forward to her leadership and impact on our Communications department.

Technology Services — Vast strides have been made in the areas of technology at GSO in the past few years and 2021 has been no exception. It is certainly proof of concept and a compliment to this department's capabilities that when our office closed in March 2020 our ability to provide services to groups and members, albeit with some hiccups, continued unabated. Tech Services is actively engaged in the development of our business and continuity plan, utilizing real-time experiences during the pandemic to help inform this work. The department is leading the Board Communications Discovery Project to identify and evaluate a platform or platforms to replace or enhance internal tools such as our Dashboard to achieve more efficient and less repetitive communication efforts among

employees/staff, directors and trustees. Oversight and implementation of the ERP/NetSuite application and other task-specific application software across GSO are coordinated via Technology Services thus the department plays a significant role in implementing efficiencies of scale and improving our employees' work experience through technological advances. The ERP Roadmap effort is a typical example of careful planning and broad engagement of all those involved in software application and execution. By applying the methodical approach of using native application capabilities with minimal adaptation/modification has enabled this department to assist AAWS/GSO in reducing or eliminating the level of customizations and absence of end-user engagement that created a "do over" approach to software implementation. Over the past few weeks Technology Services and the general manager have collaborated with our consultants to develop the web portal that will receive submissions of members' stories for possible inclusion in the Fifth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. This web portal has been designed with the vision that it can be readily expanded to accommodate future submissions for new or revised A.A. literature such as the Fourth Edition of the Spanish Big Book, *Alcohólicos Anónimos*, and revisions to the "A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic" and "A.A. for the Native North American."





General Manager/Staff — GSO welcomed former trustee-at-large U.S. Bob W. as our sole executive on June 1, 2021. Since that time Bob has assumed the new role with the overarching theme of practicing A.A.’s spiritual principles in all our office affairs. Amplifying these efforts includes the implementation of a GSO 1728 meeting to better inform our nonalcoholic employees about Alcoholics Anonymous and encourage their alignment with our mission to serve the Fellowship.

There have been some rotations among staff over the past year with various assignments needing additional coverage or assistance while the hiring processes for new staff members is executed. Some of our past GSO staff have returned as contract employees to assist newer staff with executing their roles and responsibilities on service desks that are unfamiliar to them, rebuilding the long legacy of experience after the retirements of 2020. It is a tribute to the spiritual construct of our General Service Office that these former employees continue their willingness to assist when asked or when needed. It is with gratitude that the AAWS board recognizes the extraordinary commitment exhibited by our Tradition Eight special workers. Circumstances related to the pandemic have created complexities out of the most mundane of tasks — writing a letter or making a telephone call has sometimes been almost impossible if any source material was required that could not be accessed electronically. All of the assignments have endeavored to continue to support our efforts in carrying the A.A. message in both old and new ways, which has required a level of adaptability and intuition that would not have been imagined two years ago.

METS/Office Services/Mail Room — “METS” is A.A.’s events team — Meetings Events and Travel Services — a powerhouse of two employees, both nonalcoholic, who coordinate

all virtual and in-person board meetings, Regional Forums, and our General Service Conference. Their first in-person event for A.A. occurred with the October/November GSB weekend last fall and they have certainly proved their mettle in executing these events, which involve significant cost to the Fellowship, with prudence and efficiency. Office services has played a part in the important role of identifying possible cost containment within the office, an example of which is the renegotiation of our copier lease contracts which saved the Fellowship approximately \$25,000 this past year. The mail and shipping team is an integral part of A.A. and our office, ensuring that all requests, contributions, and submissions to GSO and AAWS find their proper destination. We are all aware that the adoption of the new P.O. Box to use for Seventh Tradition contributions to the General Service Board is not an overnight matter. The mailroom sorted and distributed almost 8,800 pieces of incoming mail and handled 4,700 pieces of outgoing mail in just the first two months of 2022.

Human Resources — Sareen Pearl (nonalcoholic) left GSO earlier this year and we have engaged an outside consultant to locate her replacement as Director of Human Services. Members of the AAWS and AAGV corporate boards who bring professional experience have been invited by management to participate in the interview process — an excellent example of those with different roles and responsibilities working together toward a common solution. This same process was followed by engaging the corporate board treasurers in the fall of 2020 when our now-not-new CFO was hired. The HR department has continued to serve our employees well in this interim leadership period. As of March 31 there are 81 full-time and 3 part-time employees at GSO, 45 of whom are exempt and 39 hourly. Ensuring that GSO and our office environment mirror the enthusiastic and energetic feelings within A.A.

has always been of primary importance, even when it was only Ruth Hock being paid in Works Publishing stock on Vesey Street in the tenuous beginnings of our movement. Parts of the GSO work experience over the past two years have mimicked that earliest of times in our history with all the attendant trials and tribulations. As in prior decades, we have worked to resolve challenges while supported by the boards and the Fellowship. The initial hybrid reopening of our office was impeded by yet another variant of the virus at the beginning of this year. These obstacles have been successfully addressed in large measure by the Return to Work task force and members of Human Resources. [As of this writing, our all-employee “huddles” and continuing open and frank discussions are helping support our movement toward a full reopening of the General Service Office.]

AAWS Board — It is fitting to conclude this report to you by addressing various topics that have come through our board agendas in the last Conference year as all these efforts have been supported by the various employees and departments within AAWS and GSO described above.

- Safety and Service Material (SMF-209). The publication of the service pieces last year related to safety in A.A., specifically the SMF-209 material, resulted in a significant amount of discussion and expressed concern within the Fellowship. The board engaged in lengthy discussions around this topic and determined at its December 2021 meeting that a review and revision of the material was in order, taking into account sharing from the Fellowship and members of the board. A working group of staff members was formed to execute the revision which was delivered in early January and sent for legal review. After receipt from the attorneys, the final copy was reviewed and approved by both the AAWS board and the internal working group in a special AAWS board meeting called in February 2022. The culmination of these efforts by board and office resulted in distribution of the revised SMF-209 and ancillary materials to all Conference members in early April 2022. Due to the lack of clarity among those parties engaged in the creation of service material, a subcommittee of AAWS was constituted and charged with review of the history of service material and how that has informed current processes, identifying how the collective experience of A.A. is gathered to warrant production of service material and asked to suggest possible improvements to that process, and determining what defines service material and what determines whether a broader conscience is sought prior to publication. This subcommittee will report to the AAWS board the results of its work in a future meeting.
- Alcoholicsanonymous.com. Discussions within the AAWS board related to this non-A.A. website have occurred periodically during the last year in an effort to determine the best approach forward to distinguish www.aa.org and the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous from this for-profit entity. All discussions have included A.A. Traditions and Concepts as gov-

erning principles and these conversations continue as more is revealed with the AAWS board making sure to regularly report the nature and substance of these discussions to the General Service Board.

- Discussion and support of a letter to Defined Benefit Plan participants. A recommendation from the Retirement Committee of the General Service Board was drafted to all Defined Benefit Plan participants stating that the current position of all three boards (GSB, AAWS, AAGV) would be to cease further consideration of selling/annuitizing the old retirement plan, and commit to engaging our retiree population if circumstances warranted having these types of discussion in the future. AAWS held multiple discussions around this topic to ensure the board’s position reconciled with our fiduciary duties and our commitment to our retirees and endorsed the letter by vote in the February 2022 special meeting.
- With the support and direction of the General Service Board and the AAWS board, AAWS/GSO has developed a viable path forward for the employment of Canadian citizens that does not involve establishing a business presence in Canada.
- The AAWS board and the AAWS Self-Support subcommittee requested sharing from the Fellowship around “virtual” baskets from the lens of our Traditions, in response to a Conference proposed agenda item forwarded to the board for consideration. This sharing was communicated to the trustees’ Finance Committee for consideration in updating related pieces of A.A. literature and service material reflecting this shared experience.
- The AAWS board, as a result of the work of the Internal Audit Committee, modified our internal budget policy for those items not considered part of the ordinary course of business to set a cap of \$50,000 on expenditures not requiring board approval in support of the board’s fiscal responsibility to the Fellowship.
- The board engaged in a thorough discussion around the Conference proposed agenda item regarding the pricing arrangement between AAWS and local Intergroups and Central Offices. Our ongoing communication with the IGCO Communications Committee and the active engagement of the Group Services assignment helped to inform the discussion. While no action was taken on the suggested item at the December 2021 AAWS meeting, a future IGCO Communications Committee meeting solidified our common purpose approach as service offices of A.A., and retired any ongoing discussion about unique pricing models. Our efforts in the areas of making reduced shipping fees permanent and implementing the mixed-title discount experiment supported our commitment to continued cooperation and support among local A.A. structures and AAWS.
- AAWS Nominating reviewed and discussed 36 résumés submitted for the 2022 nontrustee director position and conducted nine virtual interviews to select a nom-

inee to put forward to the AAWS board and trustees' Nominating Committee.

On behalf of your AAWS board, I want to thank each and every one of you for your support of our efforts in service to the Fellowship. Leadership, Bill said, is ever a vital need.

Jimmy D. — Chairperson

AA Grapevine, Inc.

In 1946 Bill W. wrote:

...The Trustees are the Conscience of A.A., the Central Office is the Heart of A.A., and the Grapevine is the Voice of A.A. When these functions are bound together into a working unit, we shall be able to relegate the founders of A.A. to the sidelines, where probably they long since should have been sitting...

At that point in the mid-forties Bill W. was in the process of the bringing the Grapevine newsletter into the formal structure of Alcoholics Anonymous while simultaneously planning the service structure we all now serve. That service structure and this Conference have taken their appropriate places together with your trustees as the Conscience of A.A. Our service office and its dedicated staff are wonderful examples of the heart of A.A. And Grapevine continues to grow in its mission to be your voice.

That was a time of great growth and prosperity for our Fellowship. The older members of A.A., and Bill in particular, were seeking the best possible organizational structure to protect the movement they had created, nurtured and grown. It would be years later, when the actual proposal to form the very Conference we all participate in this year was sent to the groups of Alcoholics Anonymous all around the country and the world in the pages of its magazine, Grapevine, in the December 1950 issue. The article began with this statement:

WE, who are the older members of A.A., bequeath to you who are younger, these three legacies — the “12 Steps of Recovery,” the “12 Traditions” and now the “General Services of Alcoholics Anonymous.” Two of these legacies have long been in your keeping. By the 12 Steps we have recovered from alcoholism; by the 12 Traditions we are achieving a fine unity.

Being someday perishable, Dr. Bob and I now wish to deliver to the members of A.A. their third legacy. Since 1938 we and our friends have been holding it in trust. This legacy is the General Headquarters Services of Alcoholics Anonymous — the Alcoholic Foundation, the A.A. Book, The A.A. Grapevine and the A.A. General Office. These are the principal Services which have enabled our Society to function and to grow.

In March of 1946 Bill was still trying to work out the healthiest relationship between these principal services and servants and he wrote a letter to a lawyer named Royal Shepard, who was drafting the articles of incorporation for Grapevine in an attempt to lay out that vision. It included 12 points summarizing the vision of the found-

ers, the trustees and the Grapevine editors at the time for what our magazine should be.

In trying to think the Grapevine matter through, I have asked myself what would be the ideal relationship of the paper to the A.A. groups as a whole, to the Board of Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, and to the general public. After consulting the Grapeviners and most of the Board of Trustees, our collective thinking about an ideal for the Grapevine has taken on a fairly definite shape.

This document introduced goals like:

“The Grapevine should become the Voice of A.A. as a whole.”

“The Grapevine staff should be primarily responsive to A.A. Group opinion and tradition.”

“The Grapevine Editor should be the ultimate judge of what is to be printed.”

“...the Trustees should not have, under normal conditions, any power to dictate to the Grapevine staff so long as the paper conforms to the spirit of the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and keeps its financial house in order. Under ordinary conditions the Trustees should be able to suggest and advise — but not to command.”

“The Grapevine should have freedom to print news articles relative to the whole field of alcoholism, excepting, however, those which might provoke needless disension.”

Many of the points from this letter are often quoted as a foundational source for Grapevine's editorial autonomy and its publishing mission, or the expression of why we publish articles from non-A.A. sources about the field of alcoholism. But the document as a whole contains so very much more about our founders', early servants', and trustees' vision and hope for the relationship between all of the principal services and servants of Alcoholics Anonymous. I think it is such an important piece of our history that, with permission from our friends at Stepping Stones, I am attaching it in its entirety as an appendix to this report for your information, inspiration and hopefully your pleasure. (See page 23)

Back in 1946 six overworked volunteer members collected, wrote and published the experience of founding groups from around the country. Bud T., Lois K., Priscilla P., Chase H., Marty M., and Felicia Z. created and published each issue. They printed letters from groups and servicemen with whom they actively corresponded. They got the word out about the latest news from the office in New York and articles about alcoholism in the public sector. They printed proposals explaining the origins of our traditions and their subsequent need. They printed shared experience from groups and members far and wide so that all could see what sobriety looked like. It took six people to craft all eight pages.

In 2022 nine overworked paid employees and a few part time assistants publish two 64-page magazines, one monthly in English, the other bi-monthly in Spanish, with two unique websites, one for each magazine and each entirely in their respective languages. They record and publish the audio of every issue on the website.



Repackage and redistribute that audio as content on YouTube while collecting any videos submitted by the membership to publish. They create content for, and manage, two social media pages on Instagram, one in English the other in Spanish, and one weekly English-language podcast. At the same time they also publish a library of over 40 books across three languages and average one or two new collections annually.

In many ways we have come such a long way. In many others we continue to grow and fine-tune that balance that Bill speaks about in his letter to Royal. While the mission continues, and expands into a variety of new territories, we continue to face the challenge of transition from a print-first magazine company to a digital-first media company. We continue to try to chart our place in the broad communications network of Alcoholics Anonymous and live into Bill's vision to serve as the voice of A.A. as a whole.

In 2017 Grapevine presented to the Conference a vision of what we might look like in the future. We asked the seated delegates to imagine if Grapevine:

1. Had a podcast;
2. Had a blog;
3. Had accounts at Instagram or Twitter;
4. Revamped aagrapevine.org;
5. Had more audio and video content;
6. Increased our share-ability.

Our goal was to make it easier to find and connect with the message of Alcoholics Anonymous through its magazine and primary media outlet; to try to meet those potential alcoholics out in the world of devices and connectivity, publish our message in ways that they wanted

to consume information and entertainment based on their experience, strength and hope. As a magazine we saw that we had to move toward digital platforms and mediums, expanding our publishing wider in multiple formats to be relevant. Based on a steady loss of print subscriptions averaging roughly 4% a year over the last 20 years it was, and is, clear that while we continue to need a print magazine for those who want it, and particularly for service, we need to focus attention on our website, our story archive and making digital media available for daily reading and regular consumption.

Our secondary goal was to make these improvements and bring them to life in time for the 2020 International Convention in Detroit, Michigan. There would be no better time to enlist the support of such a large collection of enthusiastic members. Having identified some critical issues with our offering we set out to make an improved digital experience. By 2019 we had completely redesigned and launched the English website with audio and video capabilities, we had built a unique Spanish website for La Viña, had revised a failing app to a digital subscription, tagged two archives, one in each language, and built out a YouTube page that was growing every day. We were given an opening slot at the main meeting on Saturday and were prepared to introduce an audience of 80,000 loving members of our Fellowship to the all-new Grapevine. Then the world locked down.

Rather than focus on the lost opportunity of the International Convention, our publisher focused on how we could put the new site to good use immediately and offered free access to all of aagrapevine.org for the hundreds of thousands of alcoholics who were just cut off from in-person meetings. What had been dwindling par-



ticipation below 40,000 visitors a month shot up to over 200K at its peak and our YouTube page posted videos on how to set up Zoom meetings.

Our updated website has continued to see steady activity. We continue to average about 100,000 sessions a month. We added Instagram accounts for both Grapevine and La Viña, July 7 of 2021, just a month and a half after the Conference gave us the green light. We are at over 6,900 followers and growing, and received over 125,000 impressions in their first months. The podcast debuted in October. In this brief time we've seen over 80,000 downloads, and each month is more than the last. We see a regular cadence of download spikes on Monday indicating a regular following. All of these new channels have added up to more activity and participation with Grapevine. We more than doubled the active participants at the website. We have added hundreds of thousands of impressions across Instagram, YouTube and the podcast. Each of those impressions is a current or potential member who is seeing the message of A.A.

Web traffic metrics continue to be up year over year. Over half of all users come to the site directly (55%), and another 32% from organic search. These two channels account for almost 90% of all traffic to the site. Surprisingly

we see little to no traffic to our site from aa.org.

Active use of aagrapevine.org is up across the board. Users are up +30% year over year, sessions are up +35% and page views +18%. The Grapevine store is also seeing year over year increases across the board. 16k users, +21%, 23k sessions +27%, and 266k pageviews +34.

E-Commerce Performance has continued to rise as we add channels and content, \$135k in revenue +68% and an astounding 12.3% Ecommerce Conversion Rate +23%.

While we are seeing record numbers of participants using the sites, and active and encouraging engagement with our free digital content and above average sales in books, we continue to see a disconnect between the Fellowship's interest in using Grapevine, and its willingness in supporting Grapevine financially through regular monthly subscriptions. We are slowly waking up to the point where this Conference and our Fellowship are going to have to make a decision. Do we want to have a Grapevine? If the answer is yes we do, are we willing to support it financially, and how? I put my contribution in the basket, and I contribute \$4.99 a month to Grapevine through my recurring monthly subscription. How many monthly subscriptions do you maintain for apps, and games, and media players? The number one question I get at events, forums and talks is "How can I contribute to Grapevine?", or "Why don't you accept voluntary contributions?" The answer is you *can* contribute. Each and every one of us can set up a recurring yearly or monthly subscription to ensure that Grapevine can continue to grow and once again thrive.

I would like to end with another example of imagination like we did back in 2017. I would like to see if we all might manifest something powerful together in the years to come. If you read through the history of advisory actions for Grapevine, you will find numerous actions that read like an instruction manual for door to door salesmen.

1954 — That each delegate contact those groups in his area which do not have the Grapevine available at meetings and draw their attention to the importance and advantages of obtaining copies for the group either through monthly or yearly bulk orders;

1960 — The "share" or "quota" plan requested by the N.E. Ohio Grapevine Representative Committee for increasing Grapevine circulation for the coming year, by a minimum of 5,000 new subscribers, be adopted.

1961 — The quota of 5,000 new subscriptions as a continuing goal for 1961 be re-adopted.

1962 — Retiring delegates will become Grapevine Representatives and recruit other G.V.R.s in their areas, with the objective that each A.A. group have a G.V.R.

1963 — All retiring delegates will act as Grapevine representatives be reaffirmed and notice of this be placed in the Grapevine and the General Service Office Bulletin.

1969 — All delegates consider it a part of their responsibility to make the Fellowship aware of the Grapevine as a tool of sobriety, either through their own efforts or by recruiting others.

1970 — Plans to act as Grapevine representatives in their areas, to request past Grapevines for use in institutions and to carry the Grapevine message as a vital tool when making reports to areas be reaffirmed.

These advisory actions making it the responsibility of the delegates to “sell” Grapevine continue into the late '80s. The addition of Grapevine Reps created a service role that can often feel like a traveling salesperson announcing subscriptions are available for sale, etc.

Perhaps we're doing it wrong. What if instead of selling Grapevine materials our area Grapevine chairs were tasked with collecting content from the local districts and groups? What if chairing my area's Grapevine committee meant I was supposed to build a committee of local reporters, videographers, photographers and content creators? What if I was expected to coordinate and cooperate with the publishing staff in New York to submit new material from my area or region weekly and monthly? What if we built out our editorial staff and a grapevine.org to publish new material weekly? What if we published new material every single day? Can you imagine the potential good that could come of hosting a Grapevine writing workshop at an event for alcoholics who are Deaf, or an assembly of native peoples, and Grapevine was able to publish every story that was written within a week or two of the event? What if we could publish almost everything we received? All the diversity of experience and opinion, custom and recovery. The reality is we could. With a larger staff and some investment in technology we absolutely could. Imagine how attractive the voice of A.A. could become. Imagine how many more people that might reach. Imagine how many

more of us might want to subscribe to and engage with something that felt that new every time we connected with it.

I want to thank you for this gift that is sobriety. I want to thank you for allowing me to serve this Fellowship that I love. I want to thank you for taking a minute to imagine with me today. And I want to thank you in advance for the massive amount of effort and love you will all take out into our Fellowship on behalf of Grapevine when you leave this Conference and return home to where the real work begins.

I am at your service in love and gratitude.

Josh E., Chairperson

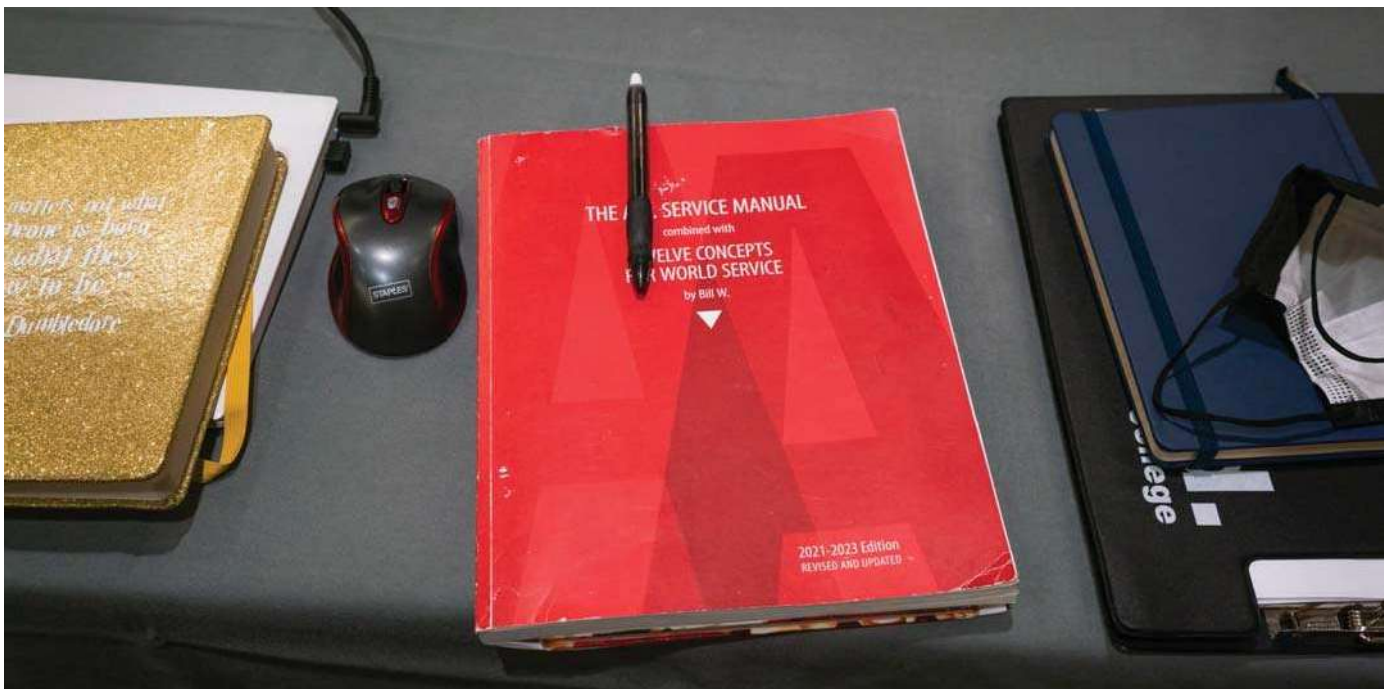
Bedford Hills, N.Y.
March 12, 1946

Mr. Royal Shepard
Naylon, Foster and Shepard
61 Broadway
New York 6, N.Y.

Dear Royal:

Thanks so much for your prompt and carefully considered response to my request that you draw the rough draft of a Certificate of Incorporation for the AA Grapevine. Though I haven't given it the intensive study it deserves, the first reading tells me that you have done a pretty fine job. While I agree heartily that we shall have to depend mainly on the quality of future Trustees and Grapeviners themselves, I still feel that the corporate structure within which they cooperate may prove vitally important should difficulties arise at some time in the future.

In trying to think the Grapevine matter through, I have asked myself what would be the ideal relationship of the paper to the AA groups as a whole, to the Board of Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation, and to the general



public. After consulting the Grapeviners and most of the Board of Trustees, our collective thinking about an ideal for the Grapevine has taken on a fairly definite shape:

1. The Grapevine should become the Voice of AA as a whole.
2. The Grapevine staff should be primarily responsive to AA Group opinion and tradition.
3. The Grapevine Editor should be the ultimate judge of what is to be printed. In this respect he ought to enjoy greater freedom than the editor of a commercial newspaper whose owners commonly hire a man favorable to their own opinions and hold over him the power of the purse.
4. The Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation are the final judges of national AA policy. As such, they should have power to intervene in the affairs of the Grapevine should the paper go wrong from a fiscal or National policy standpoint. But the Trustees should not have, under normal conditions, any power to dictate to the Grapevine staff so long as the paper conforms to the spirit of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and keeps its financial house in order. Under ordinary conditions the Trustees should be able to suggest and advise — but not to command. Such a relationship between the Trustees and the Grapevine would soon create a powerful AA tradition so that no individual or single group of individuals may ever dominate our National organ. The ultimate inspiration of the paper ought to arise from the AA Groups as a whole, the Grapevine staff with its country-wide correspondents being the mirror in which all Groups are reflected.
5. The Grapevine should feel free to print articles expressing the widest differences of opinion on all topics of a strictly AA nature. But it should be traditionally, perhaps legally, prohibited from printing anything of a controversial nature on topics having nothing to do with the primary aim of AA. Such, for example, as pieces touching reform, politics, social ideology, or sectarian religion.
6. Propaganda in aid of any person or cause, save AA itself, ought to be avoided. But the Grapevine ought never attempt to influence National or State legislation, even though the legislation might help Alcoholics Anonymous.
7. To further guarantee its integrity, the Grapevine should accept no paid advertising, nor seriously lend itself to any commercial venture however worthy.
8. The Grapevine should have freedom to print news articles relative to the whole field of alcoholism, excepting, however, those which might provoke needless dissension.
9. Though never to be operated for the profit of any individual, the Grapevine ought to be financially self-supporting. To insure its own continuity the Grapevine will need to maintain an office staff and eventually a paid editor. The Grapevine ought to be so priced that these expenses can normally be met without subsidies. In order that the Foundation may keep in close touch with Grapevine finances it is desirable that the Grapevine employ the same auditor as the Foundation.



10. The original Grapevine was wholly a volunteer effort. It is most strongly felt that an able volunteer staff should serve as editorial assistants. Volunteers serving in rotation would always insert new life blood into the Grapevine stream — they would tend to prevent over professionalization.
11. The managing directors of the Grapevine Corporation should be composed of two Trustees (or ex-Trustees) of the Alcoholic Foundation, two members of the volunteer Grapevine staff (or ex-volunteers), and the editor of the Grapevine — thus making a Board of five. The corporate stock of the Grapevine might consist of two classes, A and B. Class A would elect three managing directors. The Class B stock, electing two directors, would be donated to the Alcoholic Foundation. It should be stipulated that profit, if any, on the A shares should also go to the Foundation. Each Grapevine member of the Board would, upon his resignation, transfer his Class A share to his successor. His successor would be appointed by himself and his Grapevine associates on the Board. This arrangement should, under normal conditions, give the Grapevine staff managerial control of the paper. If there were ever any financial profit, the Alcoholic Foundation would receive it all. In case of difficulty it could be expected that at least one of the Grapevine staff on the Board would cast his vote with the Alcoholic Foundation Trustees, thus permitting the Trustees temporary management of the Grapevine if necessary.
12. To sum up: The Grapevine will be the Voice of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. Its editors and staff will be primarily accountable to the AA movement as a whole. The Grapevine will be carried on by a paid editor and a volunteer editorial staff, three of whom would be managing directors of the AA Grapevine, Inc. Under ordinary conditions the Grapevine should be financially self-supporting. The Grapevine Headquarters organization will be assisted by volunteer outlying editors and correspondents representative of all sections of the country, later on of the world. The Alcoholic Foundation, owning 97% of the stock, will guarantee the integrity of the Grapevine but will exercise no managerial control except in time of difficulty. Within the bounds of friendliness and good taste, the Grapevine will enjoy perfect freedom of speech on all matters directly pertaining to Alcoholics Anonymous. But it will be traditionally, perhaps legally, prohibited from taking sides, directly or indirectly, on controversial issues which do not concern AA as a whole. It will take no advertising, it will engage in no propaganda for any cause, however good. While the Grapevine will never become a general newspaper its news columns may cover the whole field of alcoholism on a strictly noncontroversial basis. The Grapevine will be a newspaper written by AAs and friends of AA. Like the Alcoholics Anonymous movement it is to mirror, there will be but one central purpose, viz.:

“The Grapevine will try to carry the AA message to alcoholics and practice AA principles in all its affairs.”

While these observations could be better stated, I think they fairly well represent our feeling about the future of the Grapevine. And I'm sure the Certificate of Incorporation you submitted covers practically all the ground that such a Certificate should. Nobody is a prophet, so we surely shouldn't hamstring our Grapevine charter with too many “do's” and “don'ts.” Many of the principles set down above would be better confirmed in our general AA literature and in a statement of editorial policy printed in each issue of the Grapevine.

In your letter of transmittal, you raised an important question about the General Policy Committee of the Alcoholic Foundation. You asked whether it was advisable to have our National Secretary and the Grapevine Editor sit with that committee. You felt the National Secretaryship should be a simple administrative job having nothing to do with national or group policy. You thought that both our Central Office and the Grapevine ought to be directly administered by the Foundation. Your feeling is a very natural one. I know it stems from your own sound thinking in the spheres of law and business. Not long ago I would have agreed with you at once. I would have given the Foundation complete authority over the Central Office and the Grapevine. Such a set up would seem to make for good sense and good administration. It would center unqualified authority in one spot.

But I now question that conclusion seriously. In the case of the Grapevine it is already clear that its editor, staff and outlying correspondents should have the privilege of disagreeing with the Trustees if they choose.

Suppose, for example, someone gave the Alcoholic Foundation of the future a million dollars. Suppose the alcoholics then on the Board were of the “salesman promoter” type. Suppose they absolutely convinced the nonalcoholic Trustees that the Alcoholic Foundation should, for example, immediately subsidize research, alcohol education, or commence construction of a large AA hospital in New York City. As the Trustees of the Alcoholic Foundation nominate their own successors (because elections among thousands of AAs are impractical) you can easily see how we might someday have a Board which, if it had enough money, would start thinking just like that — and with the best intentions in the world. If some future Board of Trustees started to spend money in such a fashion there would surely be a great uproar throughout the country. An enormous amount of controversy would develop. Group after group could split wide open on this wholly unnecessary issue. Though the Trustees spent money very wisely with respect to the particular project involved, the loss of group confidence in the Board might nevertheless be so great that the groups would stop sending their contributions to the Foundation. The damage could be immense.

Suppose, under such conditions, that the Trustees were able to control the Grapevine Editor. Suppose they had the authority to make him print what they thought he ought to print. We would no longer be hearing the

Voice of AA. We would only be hearing a Board of Trustees trying to promote a project, a project which might encounter little effective resistance because group opposition to it would have no place to focus.

As a lawyer, you know better than anybody that situations like these do arise. The history of religion is full of controversy about authority, prestige and money. The present Board of Trustees are men of such high purpose and intelligence that nothing of the sort could happen now. Our present nonalcoholic Trustees are often a bulwark against doubtful schemes. They have frequently slowed us alcoholics down. But someday the AAs on a future Board might persuade their associates to undertake a well-meaning, yet ruinous venture. Especially if the Foundation gets very rich — which God forbid. If that ever happened the Grapevine should be free to speak its mind. Who else could?

Viewed in this light, the structure of our Headquarters setup becomes terribly important. Of course, a legal instrument cannot, of itself, avert future trouble. But publication, in AA literature, of the nature of our Headquarters structure would create such a powerful tradition as to ultimately bind the Board of Trustees, the National secretary, and the Grapevine Editor into a working unity, each with certain prerogatives. Beyond which, however, none of them would think of stepping.

With some embarrassment, I have drawn these possibilities to the attention of our present Board of Trustees. At first I feared they might feel as though their personal abilities were doubted. Happily that is not the case. All of us realize that we are not talking so much about the present. We are pondering a design for the future which will withstand the utmost strain if the need comes.

The position of the National Secretary is, I think, somewhat different than that of the Grapevine Editor. As the Foundation received the money from the groups by which the Central Office is maintained, the Trustees are entirely responsible for its conduct. Theoretically, the National Secretary should be a paid agent of the Foundation, pure and simple. But there are some practical reasons, arising out of the nature of the situation itself, why this can never be quite the case.

To begin with, the National Secretary lives very close to the leadership of our 700 groups. Many hundreds of these she has helped to form herself — sometimes by contact with new leaders as they come to New York, but more often through her huge personal correspondence transmitting scores of thousands of words of suggestion and encouragement. The National Secretary has, therefore, a personal relationship to our national situation which no one else has. In the minds of the groups — though she is linked to the Foundation and represents it — she does have a personal status very much her own. The National Secretary has a dual function. She not only represents the Foundation, she represents the groups also — she is their secretary, too.

Moreover, the National Secretary corresponds with the groups on policy matters all day long — AA policy, public relations policy. Half of her personal mail and conversation involves these subjects. In the nature of the case the

National Secretary will always know more (and do more) about our policy than anyone else. In less matters she sometimes has to make policy on the spot because the Board of Trustees meets infrequently and its members cannot be reached quickly. Besides, the secretary has to interpret policy — has to make many decisions in the matter of particular applications. It's in the nature of the situation. There is no other practical way, that I can see, of handling policy at the Central Office. I used to look after many of these policy matters myself. Of course that should not be continued because our national Headquarters ought presently to stand on its own feet.

The actual relations between the National Secretary and the Trustees is, or probably ought to be, about the same as that which exists between the president of a large active business and his Board of directors. While no president can run hog wild, and while the directors are the court of final decision on matters of policy, the president has, nevertheless, to be given some real scope of his own. Within fair limits his judgment has to be trusted. And his voice has to be heard in directors meetings. Otherwise his Board of directors would be operating too much in the dark, too remote from the business. The president of a corporation is much more than an employee. Then too, while decision on large policy matters always rests with the directors of the company, it is most often the president who suggests what new policies are needed. He not only administers old policy; he very often initiates new policy in the Board of directors. The directors of a business concern can never actually manage the business. If they try to do so, over the head of the president, they are bound to demoralize the undertaking.

Of course this parallel is not a perfect one. A real business organization works more on the principle of authority than does our national Headquarters set-up. The Trustees, the National Secretary and the Grapevine Editor serve the AA groups. In fact they could not, the alcoholic being what he is, do anything but serve. In the end they must respond to group sentiment and wishes. They could never dictate for long.

Yet I am sure that in considering a future structure we ought to take a good look at sound business practice when we try to determine the relationship that had better exist between the Foundation, the Grapevine, and the National Secretary. Where business principles fit the situation they ought to be adopted. And where business practices do not fit, they ought to be flatly rejected in favor of what will work best. Alcoholics Anonymous is unlike most forms of society. In some respects it operates on the soundest of business and religious tradition; in other respects it has thrown tradition and precedent out the window wholesale. Trial, error, experience — they tell us the final story. One can, however, sympathize with our baffled friends as they observe our paradoxical behavior!

We are still in a process of testing what our eventual Headquarters setup shall be. Take, for example, the proposed General Policy Committee of the Alcoholic Foundation. It is to be composed of three Trustees, the National Secretary and the Grapevine Editor. On the face of it, I confess it looks like nonsense. Yet there are

quite practical reasons for its existence. Our Board of Trustees meets quarterly. These dates are too far apart to secure quick decisions on matters which the National Secretary feels too important for her to handle alone. At Policy Committee meetings three of the Trustees will be regularly brought face to face with the Grapevine Editor and the National Secretary. These two know the national situation, they will actually administer most of the policy, and of all people in AA they will be most familiar with our needs for new policy.

At these meetings at least three of the Trustees are bound to get intimately acquainted with those two people who represent the Heart and Voice of our national organization. I feel this personal acquaintanceship to be most important, in fact absolutely indispensable. The personal contact between the Trustees, the National Secretary, and the Grapevine Editor has been, in the past, far too remote. This is because I have been acting as a go-between; meeting now with the Trustees, then with the National Secretary, and occasionally with the Grapevine Editor. An arrangement like this can be no part of our permanent structure.

Someday, perhaps rather soon, I may have to step out

of the national picture entirely. In fact the doctors have just taken me out of it for the next six months. Yet it's still a fact that half our Board of Trustees have never met the Grapevine Editor, nor has the Grapevine Editor ever discussed national policy with the National Secretary or the Trustees. It seems most evident that we badly need a common meeting ground for these key people where they will be bound together by mutual activity, acquaintance, and confidence. These important elements of our Headquarters organization cannot live too far apart. Else they will someday be at cross purposes. To my mind the General Policy Committee is the answer.

The General Policy Committee has another important function. All major issues of policy, too large for them to handle alone, will be carefully considered and submitted to the quarterly Trustees' meeting for decision. This should have the effect of presenting the full Board of Trustees with a clear picture of the really important matters at issue. It will eliminate from our Trustees' meetings a certain amount of less important matter which usually proves time consuming and diverts attention from the things of large importance which the full Board should carefully ponder and decide.

To my way of thinking, the full Board of Trustees is something like the Supreme Court of the United States. Theirs should be the final decision on the few but terribly vital problems which now and then come into our foreground. The Trustees are the Conscience of AA, the Central Office is the Heart of AA, and the Grapevine is the Voice of AA. When these functions are bound together into a working unit, we shall be able to relegate the founders of AA to the sidelines, where probably they long since should have been sitting — interesting antiques, a little ripped at the seams — reminders of a time when AA was very young. That is the place for Dr. Bob S. and myself. I am utterly convinced.

But I do hope we shall be able to leave behind us a National Headquarters so dedicated to service, so soundly conceived in its checks and balances, so well compounded of good sense and pure spirituality, that the AA movement may dispense with highly personalized national "leaders" forever.

Alcoholics Anonymous faces a coming trial, the trial of great prosperity and success. It will be the greatest test of all. Can we weather that, the ravages of time may never affect us. Our destiny will be secure!

As ever,
William G. W.



■ Trustees' Committees and Staff Reports



ARCHIVES

Trustees' Report: The trustees' Archives Committee was established by the General Service Board and held its first meeting in October 1973. This committee is responsible for developing and implementing the policies that govern the Archives services. The committee makes recommendations to the General Service Board on Archives procedures and budget. Through its group conscience and guided by A.A.'s principles and professional standards, the committee undertakes and upholds its responsibility and authority for the maintenance and use of our Archives.

The committee supports the GSO Archives' commitment to permit access to members of Alcoholics Anonymous and others for research purposes. The committee, since the 71st General Service Conference, granted permission to nine researchers for use of archival material. The permission also included access to archival audio recordings, for limited use. Each request is carefully considered through recommendations from the Archivist and established Archives policies. The permission to conduct research is granted conditionally on a signed agreement to strictly maintain the anonymity of all members, alive and deceased, including A.A.'s co-founders.

The committee engaged in extensive discussions regarding a request to consult archival correspondence held in the Classified Collection specified in the signed Research Agreement. After lengthy and informed discussions, the committee denied the researcher's request to access these materials. In considering the request, the committee thoroughly examined current guiding policies, including the Archives "Classified Records Policy,"

a standing 1966 General Service Board policy regarding related inquiries and precedents from similar requests considered in the past. The committee also noted that the request did not align with the Archives Mission and Purpose Statement and lastly, the subjects of interest are outside of the primary spiritual aim of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The report of the 2021 Conference Committee on Archives was reviewed at the committee's meeting in August. The committee noted the Conference Committee on Archives committee consideration regarding the suggestions to add new text in the section "Guidelines for Collecting Oral Histories" in the Archives Workbook on ways to conduct ASL sample interviews with members who are Deaf to offer a greater diversity of sharing; and add sample interview questions relating to "vision for the future" in the subsection "Sample Interview Questions." In discussing the "Guidelines for Collecting Oral Histories" in the Archives Workbook, the committee also suggested the GSO Archives Oral Histories Kit be reviewed and updated, where necessary. Given that the "Guidelines for Collecting Oral Histories" section of the Archives Workbook is summarized in the "Oral Histories Kit," the committee suggested that a review and update to the Oral Histories Kit be accomplished first. The revised text in the "Oral Histories Kit" can then be incorporated into the Archives Workbook. In January 2022, the committee reviewed a draft of the Archives "Oral Histories Kit," which included the proposed new title, "Guidelines for Conducting Oral Histories," a new section titled, "Conducting interviews of A.A. members in American Sign Language (ASL)," and a number of other updates and revised text. Following discussion, the

committee accepted the draft work with the new title, “Guidelines for Conducting Oral Histories,” contingent upon editorial review by GSO’s Publishing department, a review of the new section on conducting interviews in ASL by a professional ASL interpreter, incorporation of new questions regarding interviewing Friends of A.A. in the section “Sample Interview Questions,” and other noted minor amendments.

The committee was kept apprised of the status of the updates to the Archives Workbook throughout the year. The senior archivist reviewed the Workbook for gender-specific language, updated resources, and made minor edits. In addition, the sharing submitted from local archivists, approved by the committee in January 2021, is currently being reviewed by GSO’s Publishing department. The new sharing will replace the current sharing in the Archives Workbook section titled “Archives Committee Activities: Shared Experiences” in a future printing.

The committee discussed a proposed agenda item to “Develop a book on A.A. history from 1955 through 1965, with similar books covering 10-year spans to be published in the future.” In considering the request, the committee noted that the Archives, in keeping with its Mission and Purpose, does not engage in writing history, but holds and preserves historical materials and provides these materials to those who may have an interest in writing such volumes. It was also shared that a similar agenda item was thoroughly discussed at the 71st General Service Conference, where the Conference Committee on Archives “took no action.” The committee also examined sharing obtained from a meeting between the chair of the committee and members of the 2021 Conference Committee on Archives to obtain feedback on the proposed agenda item, where it was reported that no new background information to support the proposal was provided.

Finally, at each of the quarterly meetings, the committee was kept apprised of projects completed by the Archives staff, projected goals for the upcoming year, as well as tabulated research inquiries handled by the staff.

The committee wishes to acknowledge the contributions of the archives staff. The mission and duties of the Archives require high levels of commitment, professionalism, and skill under normal circumstances, but during these pandemic times, restrictions of visitation, onsite review of archival requests, and implementation of novel initiatives to overcome barriers have presented extraordinary challenges. The chair of the committee joins other members in extending highest appreciation to Archives’ leadership and staff for continuing to function at such a high level of excellence throughout these hard times.

Al Mooney, Chair

Staff Report: The Archives staff provides resource material and service to A.A. members, researchers and others about A.A. history, responds to worldwide information requests, and offers professional support to local areas, districts or groups interested in researching their history.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the GSO staff worked

remotely from March 2020 through October 1, 2021, when the office reopened for employees. As a result of this unfortunate and unforeseen circumstance, we were compelled to redirect our planned goals but despite the setbacks, the department has had a productive year. In July 2021 we welcomed a new employee, Assistant Archivist, Kyle Zaczek (nonalcoholic) to the team. None of the work detailed in this report would be possible without the help of a diligent team of archivists, working to ensure that we fulfill the mission and goals of the GSO Archives.

We continued to respond to inquiries from the worldwide Fellowship and other professionals interested in A.A.; in 2021, we responded to approximately 850 requests for information, utilizing a combination of unpublished primary sources and published material maintained in the repository. We welcomed new local archivists and committee chairs serving either in the area or district position and furnished each individual with an Archives Workbook, Guidelines and other resources.

Since transitioning to a fully telecommuting environment, we have naturally had to adapt to working in a paperless environment, which was by no means a simple feat. We implemented a new procedure for archiving A.A.’s corporate boards’ vital records. Vital records are those “official” records, regardless of format, that are significant to the operation of a business, or continuation, should a disaster occur. The vital records for A.A. include all records generated by the three corporations (General Service Board, AAWS Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc.). As a result of the Covid-19-related experiences and working off-site, we decided to modify how we archived these records in the past. We now maintain two digital copies in two disparate servers, and one paper copy onsite, as opposed to double sets of paper copies. This new procedure will result in efficiency, enhance retrieval, reduce off-site storage cost, and reduce processing time.

One significant project undertaken in early 2021 was the transference of approximately 392 cubic feet of audio and visual materials from off-site storage to a storage room onsite. The holdings include digitized audio and film on CDs, and DVDs; analog recordings; microfilm; and other media-type material. The projected annual financial reduction is approximately \$26,000. Future planning around extracting the digital content to a secure server is being explored.

Digital preservation of paper records is an ever-continuing project and there is no shortage of paper records in the Archives! The Archives staff have completed an incredible amount of digitizing work this past year. They have organized, scanned, and preserved, as appropriate, background documents from various trustees’ and conference committees; documents from various ad hoc committees of the corporate boards; and approximately 50 cubic feet of materials from other departments. In line with our more pressing goals, we are primarily focused on processing the increasing backlog of boxes of papers. One project recently resumed since March 2020, when the office closed, is the digitization of Bill W.’s personal correspondence. We are a long way from completion as



it is indeed time-consuming, meticulous work, digitizing these fragile important documents.

Associate Archivist Steven D'Avria (nonalcoholic) continues to listen to and catalog audio recordings of past General Service Conferences. Since March 2020, when the project was first assigned to Steven, he has built a comprehensive catalog of recordings of this record series from 1971 to 1993, comprising over 650 audio recordings on compact discs.

In 2021 we proposed a plan to review and update the existing Records Management Retention Schedule (2018 version) for GSO and AA Grapevine, with a projected completion by spring 2022. This task involved holding workshops and training sessions with stakeholders (Staff, managers and supervisors) followed by a series of individual meetings with each department for the purpose of conducting an inventory of existing records schedules, recordkeeping requirements and practices. The updated schedule will reflect recent organizational changes, new departments, and/or new functions generated from these changes. We are consulting with a certified Records Manager to ensure that the Schedule conforms with recordkeeping requirements as directed by state and federal laws.

Upon our return to the office in October 2021, the Senior Archivist, April Hegner (nonalcoholic), immediately focused on curating a series of new exhibits for display in the Archives exhibit space. We had dismantled all the exhibits during the office closure, and it was a welcome pleasure to revivify the exhibit room once again. Some of

the exhibits on display now are, "Treasures from the GSO Archives," "A.A. Around the World," "A pictorial record of Covid-19 pandemic — GSO and AA Grapevine," "60 Years of A.A.'s Twelve Concepts," and "GSO Archives Celebrates 46 Years."

Throughout the year, the Archivist and Senior Archivist participated in several teleconferencing activities such as service workshops, groups' anniversary celebrations, Archives Workshops and other online service events.

Finally, we extend gratitude to those members and others who have generously donated material to the Archives within the past twelve months.

Michelle Mirza, Archivist

AUDIT

Trustees' Report: The trustees' Audit Committee, formed by the General Service Board in 2003, is composed of a minimum of three and a maximum of five trustees who are appointed by the chair of the General Service Board.

The committee was created to assist the General Service Board in fulfilling its fiduciary obligation of prudent corporate governance. Under New York State Nonprofit Law, the committee has specific responsibilities that are set forth under the law, some of which are stated in this report.

The committee meets at least twice a year with the outside independent auditors and GSO and Grapevine management; separately with the auditor; and in executive session without the auditor. Typically, the committee meets in January to plan the financial statement audit and in April to review the audit report. In 2022, the committee met on January 19 to plan the audit and on April 18 to review the audit report.

The Audit Committee reports to the General Service Board and reviews such items as audit process, audit results, internal controls, best accounting practices, and management integrity. The Audit Committee also recommends appointment of the auditors to the General Service Board.

Kevin Prior, Chair

COMPENSATION

Trustees' Report: The trustees' Compensation Committee, formed in 2006 by the General Service Board (GSB), consists of at least four trustees. As originally envisioned, the newly formed committee reflected an initiative-taking measure to assist our GSB in fulfilling its fiduciary obligation of prudent corporate governance (i.e., the processes, structures and practices to effectively manage our affiliate corporations).

The Compensation Committee reports to the GSB, reviews and advises A.A. World Services, Inc. (AAWS) and AA Grapevine, Inc. (AAGV) on such items as overall compensation philosophies and policies, compensation best practices, etc. The Compensation Committee serves in an advisory capacity with no decision-making authority regarding any individual's total compensation.

Rather, by monitoring a set of compensation policies and reporting its observations to the operating corporations' boards and the GSB an informed group conscience can be reached — consistent with good corporate practices, compliance with federal and state laws, and application of our spiritual principles.

To this end, our consultant, SmithPilot Compensation Solutions for Nonprofits, conducted analyses of salary structures and overall compensation for our full-time positions at AAWS and determined them to be reasonable (i.e., compared to the market data evaluated, AAWS's compensation averages at 100% of the median). In addition, it is SmithPilot's formal opinion that the remuneration currently being provided to our general manager, and other top executives at AAWS, is necessary to carry out our exempt organization's purpose (i.e., within reasonable levels and does not represent excessive compensation). At this writing, AAGV has requested that SmithPilot similarly evaluate the salary structures and overall compensation for our full-time AAGV employees and publisher in 2022.

Francis G., Chair

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

Trustees' Report: Summary of 2021–22 trustees' General Service Conference Committee recommendations to the General Service Board:

- a) The trustees' General Service Conference Committee recommended and the General Service Board agreed to the following:

The two new Scope items, 9 and 10, be added to the

trustees' General Service Conference Committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure that read as follows:

1. The 71st GSC advisory action that the Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW) process be implemented for the 72nd GSC on a three-year trial basis. The committee will provide a progress report to the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions each year during the three-year trial period.
 2. Annually appointing a subcommittee on the GSC Committee Workload, on a three-year trial basis beginning July 2021. The subcommittee is tasked with performing analysis of the proposed agenda item scoring tools and creating an Equitable Distribution of Workload plan for the full trustees' committee to review and approve at the winter Board weekend.
- b) The requests for two persons from A.A. in Brazil, Maria Z. and Ana L., Board of Trustees "Class B," as well as for one person from A.A. in Argentina, a trustee, were approved to attend the 2022 U.S./Canada General Service Conference as observers.

The committee discussed the recommitted recommendation to invite Panel 70 delegates to attend a future in-person GSC. The committee noted the unusual circumstances resulting from the pandemic so that delegates participated in virtual versus in-person Conferences. It was discussed that the role and experience of participating as a non-voting attendee may not accomplish the delegate's



desired outcome. This action could cause inequity, if delegates pay their own way, as some delegates might not be able to pay these suggested out-of-pocket travel expenses.

The committee recommended a further review of the proposal: To extend an open invitation to all Panel 70 delegates to attend a future face-to-face General Service Conference as a non-voting observer with each delegate to cover their own expense for the trip. The General Service Board voted not to extend an open invitation to Panel 70 delegates to attend a future face-to-face GSC at their own expense.

- c) The committee discussed the 71st GSC advisory action regarding implementing the Equitable Distribution of Workload (EDW) process. The committee reviewed the general process outlined for this effort and noted the importance of ongoing evaluation of the process during the first-year implementation.

The chair appointed a subcommittee on the General Service Conference Committee Workload to include Beau B., chair; Cathi C., Jimmy D., and Carolyn W. The committee noted that the staff secretary will provide the subcommittee chair with regular updates as the implementation of the process unfolds and that the subcommittee will meet as needed to address any issues.

Per the committee's request the staff secretary worked with the chair to create and distribute a communication on behalf of the committee which supports Fellowship-wide notification of the new submission deadline of September 15 for 2022 GSC proposed agenda items.

- d) The committee reviewed the progress report of the 2021–2022 Subcommittee on EDW and recommended to the General Service Board that the 2021–2022 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan be implemented for the 2021–2022 General Service Conference.

The committee requested that the staff secretary forward the EDW progress report as background for the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions' review of the EDW plan.

The committee discussed challenges related to the timing of proposed agenda items and the January Conference Call and noted that ongoing consideration is needed to sort out this topic in light of the EDW process. The committee noted that the timed estimations or recordings of agenda items in committee did not present value for the EDW approach as they developed the plan. The committee also discussed the possible arrangements for Joint Committee meetings during Conference in light of the complexities presented by the EDW and having agenda items from more than one trustee committee.

The committee looks forward to receiving sharing from meetings of the 72nd General Service Conference and agreed to continue discussions at the July 2022 meeting.

The committee recommended and the General Service Board agreed that the 2021–22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan be implemented for the 72nd General Service Conference.

Activity related to 71st GSC advisory actions:

Process for polling the GSC between annual meetings that makes use of virtual meeting technologies: The committee discussed the 71st GSC advisory action for the trustees' General Service Conference Committee to develop a process for polling the GSC between annual meetings that makes use of virtual meeting technologies, in order to enable real-time discussion and debate, broad participation, and greater efficiency than the current process.

The committee noted that the "Process for Polling Conference Between Meetings" and any revisions to date have been Conference-approved. However, the current request to consider changes to the procedures is requested to be implemented during the current Conference cycle. The committee discussed the importance of the polling to support the complexities of the group conscience decision-making process as much as possible.

The committee agreed to move forward to explore developing and implementing a procedure that makes use of virtual meeting technologies, to improve the polling approach in a way that is compatible with the group conscience process. The committee agreed that background from a GSB ad hoc committee on bylaws would help inform this discussion.

The committee requested that the staff secretary develop a draft plan to include background on the bylaws for committee review. The committee noted that efforts for this undertaking are paused as a result of prioritization of workload, plus this year's single topic for polling could best be handled with the standard process.

The committee requested that the staff secretary provide an update on the designs for a process at the July 2022 meeting.

Trustee activity related to 71st GSC Simple Majority Items:

- The committee discussed the 71st GSC item, which did not become an advisory action but gained simple majority, for the General Service Conference to invite appointed committee members from trustees' committees to attend the 71st General Service Conference, except sessions designated for delegates or trustees only, on a one-year trial basis, as non-Conference members to share points of information and took no action.

The committee agreed that if the attendance of appointed committee members at the Conference on a trial basis is valued then the item may be proposed for a future Conference agenda.

- The committee discussed the 71st GSC item, which did not become an advisory action but gained simple majority, to revise the floor action process and took no action. The committee expressed appreciation for the Conference process and noted that the item received simple majority but not substantial unanimity.

Additional committee activity:

Timing of the January Conference Call: The committee reviewed and discussed a delegate’s suggestion to adjust the timing of the January Conference Call that provides Conference committee members a voice in evaluating the trustee and corporate board disposition decisions on proposed agenda items, including the idea to move the call to the fall board weekend instead of winter.

The committee noted that the current Equitable Distribution of Workload process is in a trial period and that, by board policy, the January Conference Call will take place. The committee noted that the Conference committee chair and trustee committee chair have ongoing communications between Board meetings which can support this suggestion.

Additionally, the committee discussed the possibility of background on proposed agenda items being provided members of each corresponding Conference committee for the January Conference Call. The committee noted that availability of the background provides for informed perspectives related to the possible disposition of proposed agenda items.

The committee also noted that the Equitable Distribution of Workload efforts shift the timing of review of proposed agenda items. The committee agreed that background on proposed agenda items be made available for an October conference call. The committee requested that the staff secretary work with the committee chair to send a memo to trustee committee chairs and staff secretaries with the request to schedule October calls with corresponding Conference committees and for background on proposed agenda items to be available to those on the call.

The committee agreed to forward this suggestion to the subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload for their review. The committee requested an update from the subcommittee on the approach as part of their report at the October committee meeting.

The committee noted that the purpose and timing of the January Conference Call has been impacted by the September 15 deadline for proposed agenda items as part of the EDW process.

The committee noted that October conference calls were conducted this year to fulfill the purpose of receiving delegate perspectives on proposed agenda items for the 2022 General Service Conference. The committee noted that the January Conference Call will still take place especially with Panel 72 delegates being available through rotation.

The committee agreed to continue discussions on the conference calls for proposed agenda items at the January 2022 meeting.

The committee discussed that the EDW process changed the submission deadline and review timing for proposed agenda items. So the annual January Conference Call was held in October 2021 to provide area delegate members of Conference an opportunity to weigh in on whether to forward proposed agenda items to Conference. This adjustment was made with

the awareness that 2021 Conference committee members would weigh in on some newly proposed agenda items that were in response to outcomes of the 2021 Conference.

The January Conference Call was also conducted in 2022 with Conference committee members of the 72nd General Service Conference even though the decisions about the proposed agenda items were already made.

The committee noted the importance of participation in the first year of the three-year EDW trial period and acknowledged the need for the timing of the January Conference Call to be reviewed as part of the overall review of the EDW process.

The committee looks forward to receiving sharing from meetings of the 72nd General Service Conference and agreed to continue discussions at the July 2022 meeting.

Conference Evaluation: The committee requested that the appointed subcommittee on Conference Improvements review the 71st GSC Evaluations, the Post-Conference Sharing Session notes, and the draft 2022 Conference Week Schedule as part of their scope. The committee understands there is a significant amount of evaluation information to review and lessons to be learned that can enrich the General Service Conference experience and its schedule for next year. The subcommittee can use this information as they complete their work.

The committee reviewed the draft version of the 72nd General Service Conference evaluation form in light of the review of the form from the 71st GSC by the Subcommittee on Conference Improvements (SCI).

The committee discussed the suggestion to include a question on the evaluation form related to the Equitable Distribution of Workload. The committee agreed to revise the form as follows:

Equitable Distribution Workload

In what ways, pro and con, did the EDW pilot affect your experience of the Conference?

- Not valuable
- Somewhat valuable
- Very valuable

Comments:

The committee requested that the revised evaluation form be implemented for the 72nd General Service Conference.

Adding an open comment section to the General Service Conference evaluation form: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Agenda’s 2021 suggestion to consider adding an open comment section to the General Service Conference evaluation form.

Per the committee request, the staff secretary modified the 72nd GSC Evaluation Form template to include an open comment section for every question or request for information.

Draft 2022 Conference Week Schedule: The committee reviewed the draft 2022 Conference Week schedule. The committee expressed appreciation for the SCI's ongoing work related to this topic.

The committee discussed the proposal to include an additional workshop-like session. The committee agreed to include a workshop "Your Third Legacy" on Sunday during the Conference.

The committee discussed the format of the standing workshop schedule and expressed appreciation for diverse set of roles in the setting. The committee also considered a variety of settings and agreed to a fishbowl setting for the workshop session.

The committee also noted that the schedule's joint meetings would need to be adjusted to accommodate changes to support Conference committees receiving EDW items from the trustees' Literature Committee.

Per the committee request, the staff secretary, Irma V. and Kathi F. updated the Conference week schedule to include these changes for the 72nd General Service Conference.

Year-over-year statistical and comparative analysis of each evaluation category: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Agenda Committee's 2021 suggestion to consider a year-over-year statistical and comparative analysis of each evaluation category. The committee agreed to forward this suggestion to the subcommittee on Conference Improvement for their review.

The committee reviewed the request to consider a year-over-year statistical and comparative analysis of

each evaluation category in light of the SCI progress report. The committee agreed that current evaluation approaches are effective.

Yearlong Conference Process Calendar: The committee discussed a yearlong Conference process calendar as new business related to discussions about improvements and the Conference week calendar.

The chair formed a subcommittee on the Yearlong Conference Process Calendar and appointed Carolyn W., chair, and Beau B. and Jimmy D. as members. The subcommittee will review the yearlong calendar process for the Conference implementation to understand the cadence of activity in order to inform discussions on matters related to the General Service Conference.

The committee received a verbal report that the efforts continue related to the yearlong Conference process calendar. The committee agreed to continue discussions at the July 2022 meeting.

Consider including background material on all proposed agenda items for the January Conference Call: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Agenda Committee's 2021 suggestion to include more background material on all proposed agenda items discussed at this meeting.

The committee discussed the possibility of background on proposed agenda items being provided to members of each corresponding Conference committee for the January Conference Call. The committee noted that availability of the background provides for informed perspectives related to the possible disposition of proposed agenda items.

The committee also noted that the Equitable Distribution of Workload efforts shift the timing of review of proposed agenda items. The committee agreed that background on proposed agenda items be made available for an October conference call. The committee requested that the staff secretary work with the committee chair to send a memo to trustee committee chairs and staff secretaries with the request to schedule October calls with corresponding Conference committees and for background on proposed agenda items to be available to those on the call.

The committee noted that the January Conference Call, per board policy will still take place.

The committee noted that the purpose and timing of the January Conference Call has been impacted by the September 15 deadline for proposed agenda items as part of the EDW process. It will be decided during the 2021 fourth quarter Board weekend which proposed agenda items are being forwarded to Conference. This change impacts the purpose of the January Conference Call. In the EDW's first year, an October Conference Call was held to receive delegate perspectives on proposed agenda items.

While the committee agreed to provide background for the October Conference Call, the chair noted that the decision was made in their August meeting which was not reviewed by the Board, so the background was not provided from those calls.





Considering the impacts of the EDW process, the committee agreed that the January Conference Call overall needs ongoing review.

The committee recognized its scope does not provide the authority to make the decision on this topic for all trustees' committees and the AA Grapevine Board. The committee agreed that ongoing discussions of this idea are needed especially in light of the changes and challenges presented by workload, as well as the trial period of the EDW.

The committee looks forward to receiving sharing from meetings of the 72nd General Service Conference. The committee requested that the staff secretary prepare information about the work required to meet this request for possible implementation in October 2022. The committee agreed to continue discussions at the July 2022 meeting.

Consider forwarding the sharing from January Conference Call: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Agenda committee's 2021 suggestion for survey results on the sharing from the January Conference Call to be gathered annually and forwarded to the Conference Committee on Agenda.

The committee noted that the January Conference Call provides committee members a voice in evaluating the trustee and corporate board disposition decisions on proposed agenda items.

The committee also noted that a 2021 survey like the one completed in 2019 is scheduled to be provided as background to the Conference Committee on Agenda. The committee noted that during the more structured implementation phase a more frequent surveying was warranted. For ongoing purposes, the committee agreed that surveys about the January Conference Call will be conducted as needed rather than annually.

Creating a Conference committee chair workbook or guideline: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Agenda's 2021 suggestion to consider creating a workbook or guideline about the role of a Conference committee chair, including a forwarded list of suggestions.

Per the committee's request the staff secretary consolidated material that supports the Conference committee chair efforts and utilizes the Conference dashboard with a folder for committee chairs.

Producing videos of board chair reports on a quarterly basis: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Agenda's 2021 suggestion to explore the feasibility of the three chairs of the corporate boards creating snapshot anonymity-protected videos after each quarterly board weekend and took no action.

The committee considered that the videos could be like the prerecorded board videos completed for the recent virtual General Service Conferences and that these videos could include current project updates and provide details that are synchronized with and enhance the quarterly reporting that is distributed and reported out by regional trustees to delegates. The committee also noted that regional trustees and delegates could share such videos locally providing enhanced communication up and down the service structure.

The committee agreed that improved communication between board meetings could be helpful and that perhaps existing report items could be leveraged while various formats for presentation are considered, including video and podcasts. Per the committee's request the staff secretary worked with the committee chair to forward a memo to the three board chairs expressing this consideration. The committee expressed appreciation for the follow-up on this communication.

Consider new ways to present “How the Conference Operates”: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Agenda committee’s 2021 suggestion to consider new ways, such as creating short videos, demonstrations, or visual workflows, to communicate the information in the opening session that describes how the Conference operates and the process for floor actions so that all Conference members may understand them and effectively participate in the annual meeting and took no action.

The committee noted that the Conference presentation of “How the Conference Operates” needs to be voted on, will be delivered live at an in-person Conference and will continue to be supported by print material pre-Conference.

Explore feasibility of providing translated Conference background sooner: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Agenda committee’s 2021 suggestion to explore the feasibility of the translated Conference background being completed sooner than the current advisory action deadline of the first week of March (French and Spanish).

The committee noted that process improvements have been taken, and continue to be considered, for the Conference “background” material to be made available in all three Conference languages as expediently as possible. The committee also noted that a GSO survey is scheduled to be undertaken to gather sharing from the Fellowship on this topic which will inform later discussions starting with the subcommittee on Conference Improvements.

Explore a process for a Conference committee to review, discuss and act on a proposed agenda item: The committee reviewed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission’s 2021 suggestion to explore a process for a Conference committee to review, discuss, and act on a proposed agenda item. The committee noted the concern that the Equitable Distribution of Workload process may result in the lost opportunity during the January Conference Call for Conference committee members to review, discuss and act on proposed agenda items.

The committee noted that the current Equitable Distribution of Workload process is in a trial period and that, by board policy, the January Conference Call will take place. The committee noted that the Conference committee chair and trustee committee chair have ongoing communications between Board meetings which can support this suggestion.

Additionally, the committee discussed the possibility of background on proposed agenda items being provided to members of each corresponding Conference committee for the January Conference Call. The committee noted that availability of the background provides for informed perspectives related to the possible disposition of proposed agenda items.

The committee also noted that the Equitable Distribution of Workload efforts shift the timing of review of proposed agenda items. The committee agreed that background on proposed agenda items be made available for an October

conference call. The committee requested that the staff secretary work with the committee chair to send a memo to trustee committee chairs and staff secretaries with the request to schedule October calls with corresponding Conference committees and for background on proposed agenda items to be available to those on the call.

The committee agreed to forward this consideration to the subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload for their review. The committee noted that chairs of trustee committees and the Grapevine Board met with their corresponding Conference committees’ members in October. Area delegate members on these calls weighed in on whether or not proposed agenda items might be forwarded to the 2022 General Service Conference.

Consider revising the “Process for Approving Observers to the Conference”: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Policy and Admission Committee’s 2021 suggestion to revise the “Process for Approving Observers to the Conference” and took no action.

The committee noted that the revision aims to enable the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions to approve routine requests for admission from general service structures outside the U.S. and Canada without requiring a Conference advisory action.

The committee agreed that this item is under the purview of the General Service Conference.

Discuss the report on the Conference Committee Assignment Application: The committee reviewed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission’s 2021 suggestion and noted agreement that the app provided absolute randomization while saving time and reducing human error and also looks forward to the app’s continued evolution.

The committee noted that the staff secretary is planning the work on a Phase II application project with the main goals of determining the best place to host the application and development of key improvements. Ongoing updates are included in the staff secretary reports to the committee. The app was successfully updated and utilized for the 2022 General Service Conference committee selection.

Consider gathering sharing from the Fellowship related to the “Report on Translation and Interpretation of the General Service Conference Material”: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission’s 2021 suggestion to gathering sharing from the Fellowship related to the “Report on Translation and Interpretation of the General Service Conference Material.” The committee noted agreement with progress being made and the idea to make full use of the budget if it affords translated background being made available earlier.

The committee noted that process improvements have been taken, and continue to be considered, for the Conference “background” material to be made available in all three Conference languages as expediently as possible.

The committee requested that the staff secretary conduct a survey including the five questions provided in the

Conference Committee on Policy and Admission's 2021 suggestion and forward the results to the subcommittee on Conference Improvements for their review.

The committee noted that the SCI is discussing this topic and looks forward to a progress report at the January 2022 meeting.

The committee noted the importance and the ongoing efforts to get Conference background posted in all three languages as soon as possible and as close to simultaneously as possible.

The committee noted that the effort to gather sharing on this undertaking is paused as a result of prioritization of workload and anticipation of impact on translation efforts from the EDW process. The undertaking is slated for consideration again for some time between January and July.

The committee looks forward to receiving sharing from meetings of the 72nd General Service Conference and agreed to continue discussions at the July 2022 meeting.

Consider an annual survey on Conference improvements: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Agenda's 2021 suggestion to consider an annual survey on Conference improvements and noted the goal of obtaining delegate input to the Conference week schedule and the sessions planned.

The committee requested that the staff secretary forward a copy of the September 2020 Conference Improvements survey as background for the 2021 subcommittee on Conference Improvements for their review and consideration of an annual improvements survey.

The committee noted that progress was not made on a 2021 survey. Prioritization of workload which extends beyond resources and results in not every undertaking being completed as well as the consideration of impacts by the first year of the Equitable Distribution of Workload were cited as factors in the circumstances.

Consider wider use of the digital, anonymity-protected version of the Conference Final Report: The committee reviewed the Conference Committee on Report and Charter's 2021 suggestion encouraging the use of the digital anonymity-protected version of the Conference Final Report. The committee reviewed the noted decline in the distribution of print copies, the need to make the print version accessible and the suggestion that the Conference coordinator note these points in pre-Conference documents.

The committee noted that the staff secretary annually reviews Conference Final Report ordering documentation to determine if

improved language can support Conference delegates' efforts to accurately assess their area's print version needs at the time of submitting an order for Conference Final Reports.

Discuss the availability of "Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services for the United States and Canada": The committee reviewed the Conference Report and Charter Committee's 2021 suggestion that noted the value of "A.A. Near You" on GSO's website, aa.org.

The committee discussed the importance of continuing to make available the print and digital versions of "Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services for the United States and Canada" along with the request that this item be added to the GSR and DCM kits, and the A.A. Group Handbook while noting the value of "A.A. Near You." The committee noted that this request will be considered by GSO's Group Services assignment.

Delegate voter selection for the 2022 regional trustee elections: The committee conducted delegate voter selection for the 2022 regional trustee elections. A random process resulted in the selection of Pam K., Delegate Area 39 Western Missouri, Southwest Region.

Per the committee's request the staff secretary provided a memo with the selected voter to the Nominating coordinator.

Consider request to notify Conference members of 75th General Service Conference when dates are finalized: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission's 2021 suggestion for all Conference members to be notified of the final dates for the 75th General Service Conference as soon as the dates are finalized by GSO management.

The committee noted with appreciation the additional flexibility provided to the General Service Office



management in contracting the most cost effective and appropriate venues for the General Service Conference, with the following selected dates in order of preference: May 4 – May 10, 2025; April 27 – May 3, 2025; May 11 – May 17, 2025. The committee noted that these proposed Conference dates are the best choices and do not conflict with any significant holidays.

The committee also noted that the secretary of the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions sent a memorandum to the general manager, Conference coordinator, and the Meetings, Events and Travel Services department to share the selection of date choices for the 2025 (75th) General Service Conference. The staff secretary will notify Conference members of the final dates for the 75th (2025) once contracted by GSO management.

Consider including more details on possible General Service Conference sites: The committee reviewed and discussed the Conference Committee on Policy and Admission's 2021 suggestion that future General Service Conference site selection reports include more details on the specific sites being considered. The committee noted agreement with the overall goal of reduction or containment of total Conference costs, the suitability of sleeping and meeting rooms, and an improvement in the convenience and cost of transportation to and from airports.

The committee noted that the secretary of the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions sent a memorandum to the general manager and Conference coordinator that the committee requested that future site selection reports include more details on specific sites considered.

Discuss 2024 General Service Conference (GSC) Site Selection report: The committee received a verbal report from the general manager regarding the 2024 GSC site selection report. The committee expressed appreciation for the efforts to date. The committee requested that the general manager continue development of the site selection report and forward it as background for the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions.

Proposed Agenda Items for the 72nd General Service Conference considered by the trustees General Service Conference committee:

Discuss approval process for visitors to the Conference from other General Service Structures: The committee reviewed the proposed agenda item and agreed to forward it to the 2022 General Service Conference.

The committee forwarded the proposed agenda item, including the Scoring Tool, to the trustees' General Service Conference Committee for review by its Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload. The process resulted in this item being on the Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions.

Consider providing "background" material in our three official languages at the same time: The committee discussed a proposed agenda item to "consider providing all its Conference members, the General Service Conference 'background' material in our three official languages at

the same time, allowing for all its Conference members equal opportunity and time to be prepared, and therefore well informed."

The committee noted that process improvements have been taken, and continue to be considered, for the Conference "background" material to be made available in all three Conference languages as expeditiously as possible. The committee also noted that a GSO survey is scheduled to be undertaken to gather sharing from the Fellowship on this topic which will inform later discussions.

The committee continued the discussion at the October 2021 meeting and took no action.

The committee noted that a forthcoming survey on the translation of Conference material may provide better perspective on the topic going forward, especially considering that timing versus the exact replicating of material might be worth a careful review of the process as a whole. The committee also noted that discussions need to continue on this topic along with various related committee considerations while noting that more time is needed to gather information and see the impact of the EDW plan on the translation of background process.

Consider request for all Conference member communications and information to be provided in all three languages year round: The committee discussed a proposed agenda item to "consider that when communicating with all its Conference members, before and after, as well as throughout the year, all information, shared documents, presentations and other forms of written communications (emails, for example) be sent to Conference members in our three official languages, eliminating the need for Conference members to request a French or Spanish translation for any of the above material" and took no action.

The committee noted that there used to be a lag time between the availability of assignment material in English compared to in Spanish and French. However, starting in 2021, the translations of these Conference "assignment" materials are being distributed simultaneously with a focus on equity for all Conference members. GSO management implemented the new procedure with a focus on equity for all Conference members.

Consider alternating GSC between a virtual and face-to-face format: The committee discussed a proposed agenda item to "consider the request to alternate the GSC between virtual and face-to-face formats." The chair appointed a subcommittee on Conference Improvements to include Irma V., chair; Christine C. and Carolyn W.

The committee requested that the staff secretary forward this proposed agenda item for consideration by the subcommittee as part of its scope. The committee discussed the subcommittee progress report at the October 2021 meeting and took no action.

The committee noted the importance of cost-saving approaches and supports ongoing ways to do so by using virtual technology wherever effective in the context of in-person Conferences which are topics being considered by the subcommittee on Conference Improvement.

Discuss online meetings and whether they are upholding or violating our Traditions: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that there is no central authority, whether groups meet in-person or online, to review their practices to see whether or not they are violating any Traditions.

Discuss request to explore using virtual technology to improve the Conference process: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the SCI is exploring this topic and requested that the staff secretary forward the submitter's background to the subcommittee to inform their ongoing discussions. The committee looks forward to the SCI progress report at the January 2022 meeting.

Consider accommodating for an increased number of service entities participating in the Conference process: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that this topic is within the scope of areas to decide whether or not it's best if they split into additional areas.

Discuss request for worldwide participation for considerations related to Bill W.'s writings: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee acknowledged that the U.S./Canada General Service Conference advisory actions may have impact on worldwide efforts to carry the message through A.A. literature. The committee also noted there is not delegated authority for the U.S./Canada General Service Board to make decisions affecting groups on an international level.

The committee also noted that numerous requested changes to Bill W.'s writings in A.A. literature would undo a number of past advisory actions and contradict the recent acknowledgement and acceptance on the AAWS print policy.

Discuss suggestion for a General Service Conference Long Range Planning Committee: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that there are numerous mechanisms in place addressing the need expressed, including the trustees' General Service Conference Committee and the three corporate Boards which conduct strategic planning.

Consider discontinuing including the A.A. Preamble in AAWS, Inc. literature: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that this action would be contrary to numerous advisory actions approving AAWS literature items that include the A.A. Preamble. The committee also noted that the Preamble serves as a great introduction to A.A. and is helpful to have included in the pamphlets.

Discuss request for changes to the "A.A. Service Manual and Twelve Concepts for World Service" be Conference-

approved and tracked: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the current process of Conference approval for these items and the approach to tracking changes are effective and are the result of previous advisory actions of the General Service Conference.

Consider request for group level review and vote on the final draft of the plain language version of the book Alcoholics Anonymous: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that such an undertaking would not be prudent to implement. The committee also noted that the current Conference process includes the opportunity for groups and members to participate with a voice and a vote on agenda items through their groups, districts, areas and various service gatherings.

Consider request for changes to all literature be reviewed through the Twelve Concepts and Twelve Traditions: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the current Conference process includes applying the principles reflected in the Traditions and Concepts to considerations for literature changes.

Consider Third Legacy procedure for Conference Committee Chair elections: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the delegates already have the option to elect chairs by Third Legacy procedure.

Discuss request to send proposed literature changes to individual groups: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the current Conference process includes the opportunity for groups and members to participate with a voice and a vote on agenda items through their groups, districts, areas and various service gatherings.

Discuss request to rescind the Equitable Distribution of Workload Process: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the EDW is in its initial phases of a three-year trial period as a result of a 2021 advisory action of the General Service Conference.

Discuss request to rescind the discontinuation of A.A. Directories: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that full debate occurred and the A.A. Directories were discontinued as a result of a 2021 advisory action of the General Service Conference.

Consider a change in the Floor Action procedures at Conference: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that the request is similar to the current practice of Floor Actions.



Consider providing Conference area delegate consciences as background to Conference committee: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that mechanisms are already in place for collective sharing.

Consider change to 80% for a passing vote: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item to consider changing to an 80% majority for a passing vote, especially with respect to Floor Actions, and took no action.

The committee noted that the policy for voting which is in place is effective and includes the opportunity for minority voice. Additionally, 80% for a passing vote would unduly limit the rights of the majority.

Consider creating a virtual area for virtual groups in the United States/Canada service structure: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an advisory action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Discuss establishing and testing virtual area(s) for the United States/Canada online groups utilizing time zones rather than geographical locations: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an advisory action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Consider adding a new area to the service structure as a virtual-only area: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an advisory action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Consider proposal for including online international groups (OIGs) into the United States/Canada general service structure: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee noted that there is not a process to accept proposed agenda items from outside of the U.S./Canada service structure. The committee also noted there is not delegated authority for the U.S./Canada General Service Board to make decisions affecting groups on an international level.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an Advisory Action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Consider request to rescind advisory action to explore participation of online groups in the service structure: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an Advisory Action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Discuss request to create two non-geographic areas — one in the United States and one in Canada — for virtual meetings or groups to elect delegates: The committee discussed the proposed agenda item and took no action.

The committee agreed to forward the background to the General Service Board to inform discussions of its ad hoc committee exploring additional ways for virtual groups to participate in the U.S./Canada general service structure. This Board's ad hoc committee was formed as a result of an Advisory Action of the 2021 General Service Conference.

Kathi F., Chair

Staff Report: The Conference coordinator is the GSO contact for General Service Conference members. The Conference process continues throughout the year and the coordinator corresponds regularly with delegates and alternate delegates who cooperate to make the annual Conference responsive to the needs of the Fellowship. The annual meeting of the General Service Conference, which first met in April 1951, is the closest thing A.A. has to a group conscience in the U.S. and Canada.

A.A. members are encouraged to submit topics through their area structures for consideration by the Conference. Suggested topics may be forwarded to a trustees' committee for consideration and, where appropriate, referred directly to a Conference committee. Occasionally topics are submitted that are more appropriately under the purview of either the General Service Board, AAWS or Grapevine Boards. These items are accordingly forwarded to those boards for their attention.

The Conference coordinator is responsible for:

- Serving as secretary to the Conference Agenda Committee and the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference;
- Assembling suggestions for the Conference theme, presentation/discussion and workshop topics that are reviewed by the Conference Agenda Committee, which makes selections that are recommended to the Conference for approval;



- Working with the GSO staff and general manager on planning and coordinating each phase of the Conference program, agenda and scheduling;
- Working with the Publishing department to schedule, assemble and coordinate translation of Conference material;
- Working with the Publishing department on the summer edition of *Box 4-5-9* and the print and anonymity-protected digital copies of the Conference *Final Report*;
- Cooperating with the Technology Services department to develop and maintain necessary digital platforms for transmission of Conference material to Conference members.
- In recent years, the planning and execution of the General Service Conference has been completed entirely with a remote GSO workforce and via video-conferencing technology. Ideas continue to be considered for how the Conference members can complete all Conference business as the 2022 Conference is scheduled to be fully in-person.

Steve S.

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY/TREATMENT AND ACCESSIBILITIES

Trustees' Report: The trustees' committees on Cooperation with the Professional Community and Treatment Facilities were combined by action of the General Service Board in April 1998. In August of 2009, the trustees' committee expanded its scope to include service to Special Needs-Accessibilities Committee and oversight of Special Needs literature. The title of the committee was changed to Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment/Special Needs-Accessibilities in 2009. In November 2015 "Special Needs" was removed from the committee's name and throughout the committee's Composition, Scope and Procedure.

The trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities met three times since the 2021 General Service Conference, in addition to numerous teleconferences involving subcommittees throughout that period. The committee undertook the following tasks this past year:

COOPERATION WITH THE PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY (CPC)

The committee reviewed the list of 2021 Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community advisory actions and committee considerations pertaining to the committee.

Pamphlet for mental health professionals: The committee discussed the 2021 CPC advisory action "That the trustees' Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee develop a pamphlet directed to mental health professionals..." The committee discussed the request to develop a new outward facing pamphlet geared toward the mental health