

- Continue utilizing digital communication options; however, also continue non-digital options to ensure full accessibility and participation by members who may not have access to technology.
- Theme: “90 Years — Language of the Heart” / « 90 ans — Langage du Cœur » / “90 años — Lenguaje del corazón”

LITERATURE

Committee Considerations:

- The committee reviewed the 2022 matrix of A.A. recovery literature. The committee agreed to follow up with the Publishing department with suggestions regarding the usefulness and purpose of the recovery literature matrix and looks forward to reviewing the matrix at their meeting during the 2023 General Service Conference.
- The committee reviewed a draft pamphlet based on A.A.’s Three Legacies and offered additional suggestions for the trustees’ Literature Committee to consider. The committee requested that a draft pamphlet or progress report be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report on the update of the pamphlet “Too Young?” The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report on the update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Black and African-American Alcoholic.” The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report on the update of the pamphlet “A.A. for the Native North American.” The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report regarding development of a Fourth Edition of the book *Alcohólicos Anónimos*. The committee requested that a progress report or draft manuscript be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report regarding the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language. The committee requested that a progress report or draft manuscript be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.
- The committee reviewed a progress report regarding strategy to make current literature accessible in all possible formats. The committee encourages the trustees’ Literature Committee to continue in their efforts to make literature accessible in all formats and provided several suggestions for more e-literature and other accessible digital platforms, such as Liquid Mode PDF for mobile screens.
- The committee reviewed the Subcommittee Report on Tools to Access the Big Book (TABB) and several requests for development of study guides from the Fellowship. The committee also reviewed the minutes of the discussions on this item by the trustees’ Literature Committee. The committee noted that additional information would be needed in order to provide direction on these requests. The committee requested that the trustees’ Literature Committee provide further information regarding the purpose of the



proposals and examples of what Big Book or *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* study guides would look like.

- The committee reviewed a draft of the Literature Committee workbook and noted that the development of the workbook is moving in the right direction. The committee provided several suggestions regarding the length and content of the workbook and requested that a revised draft be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature for review.
- The committee discussed the changes to the text of the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* resulting from advisory actions of the 71st General Service Conference and took no action. The committee noted that there does not appear to be a consensus on the changes among A.A. members at the local level.
- The committee reviewed a progress report regarding development of a Fifth Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The committee requested that a progress report or draft manuscript be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Literature.

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

Committee Considerations:

- The committee reviewed the progress report from the Subcommittee on Equitable Distribution of Workload regarding year one of the three-year pilot. The committee noted that the plan allowed fifty more Delegates to participate more equitably in the Conference Committee process and appreciated the spiritual aspect of that accomplishment. The committee also noted the workflow, communication, and scoring tool challenges documented in the report, as well as the significant challenges to areas and to the group conscience process caused by moving up the deadline for submitting proposed agenda items to September 15. The committee hopes that whatever can be done to address these challenges will be done over the next two years of the pilot.
- The committee reviewed the GSO general manager's report regarding General Service Conference site selection, noting with appreciation the level of detail regarding specific sites considered. The committee requested that the next site selection report provide detail on the financial, logistical, and spiritual implications of holding the General Service Conference at other locations throughout the eight regions of the U.S./Canada service structure, perhaps in rotation with the New York City metropolitan area.
- The committee reviewed the dates for the 2026 General Service Conference. In order to provide additional flexibility to the General Service Office management in contracting the most cost-effective and appropriate venues for the General Service Conference, the committee agreed to select three proposed dates for the 76th General Service Conference. The committee selected the following dates in order of preference for

the 76th General Service Conference: April 26–May 2, 2026; April 19–25, 2026; and May 3–9, 2026. The committee noted that these proposed Conference dates do not conflict with any significant holidays and allow the Fellowship ample time before the Conference to review and discuss agenda items. The committee asked that all Conference members be notified of the final dates for the 76th General Service Conference as soon as they are finalized by GSO management.

- The committee reviewed with appreciation the progress report on the development of a process using virtual meeting technologies for polling the General Service Conference between meetings and looks forward to development of the process.
- The committee reviewed the Progress Report from the trustees' Ad Hoc Committee on the Participation of Online Groups in the U.S. and Canada Service Structure and expressed appreciation for the ad hoc committee's work. Given the Fellowship's interest in this topic and a desire for accountability to the Conference, the Policy/Admissions committee requests a progress report be provided as part of their background material in advance of the 73rd General Service Conference.
- The committee considered the request to revise the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" to reflect shared experience on service sponsorship and took no action. The committee felt that the topic of service sponsorship is already addressed well in the current version of the pamphlet "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" and in the current *A.A. Service Manual/Twelve Concepts for World Services*.
Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.

PUBLIC INFORMATION

Committee Considerations:

- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2022 Public Information Comprehensive Media Plan (CMP). The committee expressed support for the vision and architecture and reported that this version of the CMP brings a practical and implementable plan into vision. The committee agrees it serves as an inventory of ongoing work and plans, a guideline for the General Service Office and AA Grapevine Office in their work, budgeting processes, and HR planning to effectively support A.A. members in carrying the message to all who suffer from alcoholism.

The committee offered the following suggestions for the next iteration of the CMP to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.

- » Continue to focus on standardizing a unified stylistic approach in our messaging and media.
- » Create a synopsis or executive summary of the CMP as the complete document is detailed.

- » Now that we have a CMP that outlines many channels of work the committee requested the Trustees ensure we do not lose the work that is captured and avoid trying to branch off into too many directions and digital platforms.
- » Consider the creation of a short video capturing how a Comprehensive Media Plan can be a helpful guidepost as we seek to use new and existing communication platforms, in keeping with our Traditions.
- » The committee recognized that we are a Fellowship of varying technical abilities. The committee noted the importance of ensuring we are not leaving anyone with technical barriers behind.
- » Include additional information in the CMP on how Alcoholics Anonymous can connect with the professional community.
- » Use consistent A.A. language throughout the CMP versus more marketing or business terminology.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the trustees' PI Committee report on the usefulness and effectiveness of the AAWS YouTube account. The committee offered the following suggestions and looks forward to a report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.
 - » Staff continue to update the AAWS YouTube account to maximize its effectiveness as a social media channel to carry the message to the alcoholic.
 - » Improve the ability to search and locate our AAWS YouTube channel as members have shared it is difficult to find and many are unaware that we have a YouTube channel.
 - » Consider adding more Spanish video content.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2022 trustees' Public Information Committee report on the Google Ads performance. The committee encouraged GSO to develop an annual project calendar relating to Google Ads. The committee noted that the office should continuously optimize the Google Ads campaigns based on standard best practices in keeping with A.A. Traditions focusing on target audiences utilizing A.A. literature we currently have and that may be developed. The committee offered the following suggestions and looks forward to the report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information:

The GSO Communication Services department in cooperation with the staff secretary should make the following updates to the campaigns to ensure improved campaign performance.

 - » Evaluate and experiment with ad targeting
 - » Creation of more diverse content
 - » A/B test ad copy and design
 - » Add/remove keywords and negative keywords
 - » Change keyword match type

- » Test multiple landing page options
- » Approve/deny basic campaign suggestions provided by Google Ads
- » Review analytics on messaging to ensure it is reaching the target audience
- » Include keyword testing of AA Google Ads searches to ensure they are being made available to those seeking help with a drinking problem.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the GSO Communications Services department report on the AAWS Meeting Guide App. The committee looks forward to a report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information. The committee suggested that the Meeting Guide App keep its focus on providing information on locating A.A. meetings.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2021 annual reports from the trustees' Public Information Committee regarding aa.org. The committee finds the website is easier to navigate and user-friendly. The committee suggested that GSO continue to improve our search engine optimization, setting priorities and reasonable goals to move forward.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2021 annual report "AAGV/La Viña Website, Marketing and



Podcast” regarding aagrapevine.org. The committee finds recent modernization of the Grapevine website to be effective and inviting. The committee finds the AA Grapevine Podcast is well received by many A.A. members and an effective method for sharing the collected voices of A.A. members. The committee noted that the current hosts might limit attraction to all members, potential members, or professionals and to consider the full intended audience regarding diversity, attraction, and belonging.

- The committee reviewed and accepted the distribution and tracking information for the video PSAs:

1. Sobriety in A.A.: My Drinking Built a Wall
2. Sobriety in A.A.: When Drinking Is No Longer a Party.

The committee encourages enhancing our future tracking and distribution to include comparison analytics to other non-profits with public service announcement distribution.

- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2022 report on the “Relevance and Usefulness of Video Public Service Announcements.” The committee found the current Conference-approved PSAs to be relevant and useful. In assessing the need for a new video PSA, the committee did not see the need at this time.
- The committee reviewed and accepted the 2022 trustees’ Public Information Committee feasibility research on paid placement of PSA videos on streaming platforms and requested that further research be conducted. The committee offered the following suggestions and looks forward to a report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.
 - » Committee members would like to see additional research comparing paid versus donated media value ads and the effectiveness of these different approaches.
 - » Include research on Canadian streaming platforms to better understand PSA regulations and the specific streaming platforms found within Canada.
 - » Focus on obtaining A.A. member feedback from various age groups on the desire from the Fellowship to embark on A.A. paid placement ads on streaming platforms.

- The committee reviewed the progress report and GSO Podcast Plan and considered all the proposals, and the work completed this past year. The committee met with the Grapevine publisher, Communication Services staff, and Publishing staff who responded to key questions. The committee suggested that the trustees’ Public Information Committee, GSO Communication Services department, and AAWS Publishing department in cooperation with the staff secretary, focus on proposal one, to consider moving in the direction of creating a GSO Podcast using the AA Grapevine podcast experience.

The committee shared that the focus described in the 2021 Advisory Action “Podcasts providing sharing

within the Fellowship and information about A.A. to the public be produced and distributed by GSO in cooperation with the Grapevine Office,” is on target and that GSO can create episodes on many service-related discussion topics. The committee feels that the different topic focus will help avoid competing with the Grapevine Podcast. To support the successful continued development of the GSO Podcast the committee offers the following suggestions and looks forward to a progress report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.

- » Entrust GSO to manage the podcast’s creation and adherence to A.A. principles to allow the seamless production of a regular series of episodes.
 - » Ask the trustees’ Public Information Committee to research the best methods for future podcast episodes to be completed in Spanish and French.
 - » Develop the methodology to invite participants in recorded sessions based on topics to include our trustees, staffs, and members in the episodes.
 - » Establish internal and external resources to support the production of the GSO Podcast. It may be helpful to engage freelance support that brings experience on creative Podcast development and formatting.
 - » Implement analytics as described in the GSO Podcast Plan to report annually to the Conference Committee on Public Information.
- The committee considered the suggestion to revise the flyer “A.A. at a Glance” and requested that the trustees’ Public Information Committee and staff secretary focus improvements based on the following suggestions and looks forward to a progress report or draft flyer to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.
 - » Keeping most of the content messaging of this effective Public Information tool, modernize the look and language of the flyer.
 - » Remove any reference to the word “hopeless drunks” to focus more on the solution, not the problem in this communication.
 - » Update the contribution and self-support language to remove any reference to a dollar amount of contribution.
 - The committee considered the suggestion to revise the pamphlet “Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings” and asked that the trustees’ Public Information Committee move forward with the update. The committee asked that the staff secretary start with the draft pamphlet provided for review. In addition, the committee shared their own editorial revisions. Finally, the committee requested the staff secretary send a memorandum to the AAWS Publishing department of all changes and looks forward to a progress report or draft pamphlet to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.

- The committee considered the request to replace the “A.A. Fact File” with a service material version of a new digital P.I. Press Media Kit. The committee reviewed the new digital P.I. Press Media Kit and offered suggestions to the “Who are A.A. members” and the “24-hour plan” sections.
- The committee considered the request to create a new form of communication to address anonymity on social media by reviewing a draft survey developed to gather shared experience from the Fellowship. The committee requested the trustees’ Public Information Committee and staff secretary focus on distributing the survey to all age demographics, particularly a young population, and obtain results that will inform decisions on any future new form of communication. The committee looks forward to a progress report to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Public Information.
- The committee discussed the content and format of the PI Kit and Workbook. The committee noted the updated content list provided by the staff secretary and agreed to all the changes.

REPORT AND CHARTER

Committee Considerations:

- The committee accepted a report from the Publishing department outlining the General Service Office process for timely and accurate preparation and publication of the 2022 General Service Conference *Final Report*.
- The committee discussed the General Service Conference *Final Report* and noted the following:

The committee reiterated their support for last year’s committee consideration and appreciated the use of digital versions and encouraged the Conference coordinator to continue noting the availability of these in pre-Conference documents.

The committee noted the importance of the *Final Report* and encouraged area delegates to make its local reporting innovative and fun, especially considering the use of new digital technologies.

The committee also noted the importance and effectiveness of making use of Fellowship Connection to connect the trusted servants in the service structure to the digital version of the *Final Report*. The committee suggested that the following local efforts might be helpful in these initiatives:

- » An area or district thank you letter and an invite to the area assembly with a link to the *Final Report*.

(**Note:** Fellowship Connection lists GSRs and these trusted servants can be introduced to their DCM and/or area delegate and be invited to participate in the local district and area discussions of the General Service Conference.)

- » Areas consider making the *Final Report* accessible in newly digital formats.

- » The creation of a local anonymity-protected, voice-only PowerPoint.

(**Note:** The *Final Report* reflects Conference actions and discussions, therefore the committee wanted to express that the *Final Report* is an extension of the experience we learn about in *The A.A. Service Manual*.)

- The committee discussed the request to include the GSR preamble in the pamphlet “GSR: Your Group’s Link to A.A. as a Whole” and took no action. The committee agreed that the GSR pamphlet adequately describes the role and purpose of a GSR. The committee agreed that this statement is better left to local group autonomy.

Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter.

- The committee reviewed the progress report from AAWS Publishing on a new section to be added at the end of the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* titled “Amendments.” Bill W. references an Amendments section in the introduction to the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* and the committee wanted to reaffirm the 2021 advisory action that: “A new section be added at the end of the *Twelve Concepts for World Service* titled ‘Amendments,’ and that it contain an updated version of the Concept XI essay that incorporates the information in the current footnotes and endnotes, along with comprehensive descriptions of the current General Service Board committees.” The committee requested that the staff secretary work with AAWS Publishing on a draft update of the section to be brought back to the 2023 Conference Committee on Report and Charter.
- The committee reviewed several chapters of *The A.A. Service Manual* and wanted to note the following.
- *The A.A. Service Manual* can be utilized for all individuals involved in the General Service structure. The text is not limited to new people in service or only GSRs. Class A trustees, appointed committee members, nontrustee directors and other roles in general service should be able to draw upon the experience shared in specific chapters.
- The committee followed up on the 2021 committee consideration regarding updating and continuing to make available the print listing of Central Offices, Intergroups and Answering Services for the United States and Canada (Item F25). The committee discussed the estimated cost to fulfill this request as well as results of a poll involving 107 Intergroup/Central Offices and decided unanimously to request the General Service Office retire this document and remove it from aa.org. The committee noted that cooperation between local areas, districts and Intergroups/Central Offices is important in helping prospective A.A. members find Alcoholics Anonymous, highlighting that local services, coupled with data stewardship, can help ensure accuracy of Intergroup/Central Office locations. In addition, the committee encouraged communica-



tion and sharing of ideas through the ICOAA seminar and the General Service Conference. The committee recognizes an overdependence on GSO and recognizes that in some cases the necessity and importance of local relationships is overlooked.

- The committee discussed the request that the chapter titled “The Doctor’s Opinion” be returned to page one, as it was in the First Edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* and took no action. The committee noted that Bill W. was involved in the repagination of *Alcoholics Anonymous* for the second edition. It was also noted that such a change would impact other pieces of A.A. literature that reference pages in the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. The committee added that they did not recognize a strong “spiritual need” to revert to the original pagination.

Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Report and Charter.

- The committee discussed a possible edition of *The A.A. Service Manual* in American Sign Language (ASL). While aware of the long list of projects and current workload at GSO, the committee requested that the AAWS Board research the need for and feasibility of a translation of *The A.A. Service Manual Combined with*

the Twelve Concepts for World Service into ASL and asks that a report be brought to the 2023 Conference Committee on Report and Charter. In addition, the committee encourages local areas, districts, and Intergroups/Central Offices to make ASL interpretation and service opportunities more accessible to the Deaf community.

TREATMENT AND ACCESSIBILITIES

Committee Considerations:

- The committee discussed and accepted a progress report on the development of a revision to the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic.” The committee requested that the trustees’ Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee keep the following suggestions in mind:
 - » Include stories of only those who found recovery from the age of 60 years or older.
 - » Form a working group to help gather sharing from A.A. members who found recovery after age 60.
 - » Consider who is the target audience.
 - » Conduct a broader call out for stories through multiple distribution methods.
 - » Include stories of senior alcoholics with health issues, are hard of hearing, are immigrants, and have experience in finding recovery or barriers to online meetings.
 - » Consider a new format for the pamphlet that is more accessible, noting that the current foldable format is challenging to open and navigate pages for those who may have dexterity challenges.

The committee also provided additional notes on gaps in the stories to the committee secretary to be forwarded to the trustees’ Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee.

The committee requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought to the 2023 Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

- The committee reviewed and accepted a progress report on military audio interviews and suggested that the trustees’ Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee:
 - » Reach out to military senior leadership.
 - » Seek interviews from members in various military/armed forces branches.
 - » Consider broader distribution channels, through diverse communication methods such as AA Grapevine, La Viña, WhatsApp, and LIM.
 - » Distribute a questionnaire to interviewees for the audio-military project.
 - » The military consultants on the trustees’ Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibilities Committee develop a project plan that will include reporting to the entire trustee committee.



- The committee discussed the draft version of the A.A. Guidelines for Remote Communities and offered the following suggestions:
 - » The committee encourages GSO Publishing to continue to maintain the most current cultural terminologies.
 - » Remove the names from the sharing in the guidelines (though currently anonymity protected; highlight the message rather than the name).
 - » Remove the section “Three Challenges” and replace it with the title “Challenges in carrying the message to underserved populations” and include broader sharing with culturally sensitive language.
 - » Remove the current sharing on sponsorship from the section “Spanish-Speaking Women in A.A. Remote Communities” and include sharing that positively highlights the importance of sponsorship.
 - » Also include in the section “Spanish-Speaking Women in A.A. Remote Communities” information on special-interest meetings/groups, like what is shared in the Conference-approved pamphlets “Hispanic Women in A.A.” and “Women in A.A.”
 - » Expand the section and title on online group/meeting resources to include a broader cross-section of digital sharing and resources.

The committee asked that the staff secretary revise

the service piece and looks forward to it being made available to Remote Committees once the updates have been made.

- The committee discussed the contents and format of Treatment Kit and Workbook. The committee noted with appreciation that the suggestions provided in the 2021 Committee Consideration will be implemented at the next Kit update.
- The committee discussed the contents of the Accessibilities Kit and Workbook and suggested that the section “Sharing Experience” in the workbook include experience on A.A. members with service animals.
- The committee discussed the content and format of the Kit and Workbooks. The committee encourages GSO to continue to explore and develop digital approaches to publishing and updating A.A. resources so that changes can be updated more quickly and efficiently with the most up-to-date resources for local committees. The committee also noted the importance that print versions also be made available to those who prefer to receive printed materials.
- The committee considered a request to remove the sentence “Nobody has ever died of lack of sleep” in the section “Getting plenty of rest” in the booklet *Living Sober* and took no action. The committee noted that the section includes this comment later in the chapter: “If the condition persists, it may be advisable to check with a good physician who understands alcoholism well.”

Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

TRUSTEES

Committee Considerations:

- The committee reviewed the résumés, and approved as eligible for election all Class B trustee candidates for the Eastern Canada and Pacific regions.
- The committee considered a request to revisit highlighting service roles at the group level in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” and took no action. The committee appreciated the discussion about the role and attitude of humility of trusted servants. They acknowledged that the phrases “holding office” and “officer” are used in several sections of the pamphlet, and have equivalent meaning to being a trusted servant. It was also noted that groups are free to adapt the inventory questions to suit their needs.

Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Trustees.

- The committee reviewed the pamphlet “Do You Think You’re Different?” and requested that the trustees’ Literature Committee begin to look at the accuracy and effectiveness of direct translation practices, result-

ing in an ineffective vehicle to presenting an authentic and culturally relevant message to linguistic communities.

- The committee also requested that AA Grapevine consider using “Do You Think You’re Different?” as a recurring theme. This would allow for the presentation of a diverse group of current voices finding a common identification.
- The report of the trustees’ Nominating Committee noted they had begun discussion of thread-based forums and that more discussion is needed. The Conference committee had a discussion on thread-based forums which could allow better communication throughout the Conference structure and is forwarding a summary of their suggestions to the trustees’ Nominating Committee.

Recommendations Not Resulting in Conference Advisory Actions

These recommendations were presented but did not achieve a majority.

LITERATURE

- The draft pamphlet “The Twelve Steps Illustrated” be approved with minor editorial revisions.
- A second volume of the book *Experience, Strength and Hope* be developed with stories dropped from the Fourth Edition of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and that a progress report be brought to the Conference Committee on Literature once development of the publication is in progress.

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

- The paragraph in the story “Freedom from Bondage” which was removed due to pagination issues from the fourth edition of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* be restored in all future printings and publications in which the story is included.

Note: As a result of the 2021-22 Equitable Distribution of Workload plan, this item was on the agenda of the Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions.

Recommendations Passed by Simple Majority

There were no recommendations passed on a simple majority vote that did not receive the two-thirds vote necessary to become a Conference Advisory Action.

Floor Actions Not Resulting in Conference Advisory Actions

- With the translation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language, that the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, and the Twelve Concepts, not be translated into plain language in any way: that these remain in the existing form in English as in previous editions of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. (***Conference declined to consider.***)

- The General Service Conference impose a one-year moratorium on any new agenda item received through September 15, 2022, with new agenda items held to be placed on the agenda for the 74th General Service Conference, allowing the General Service Board and its corporate affiliates time to adjust and align their processes to accommodate the 2022 Policy and Admissions recommendation to provide simultaneous translation of all background material. (***Conference declined to consider.***)
- The trustees’ Ad Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups develop a plan to create one or more non-geographic Areas for online and telephone groups in the U.S./Canada General Service Conference structure, with a progress report on the plan to be presented to the 73rd General Service Conference Committee on Policy and Admissions.
- That the following GSR Preamble be added to the pamphlet “Your Group’s Link to A.A. as a Whole”:

The GSR Preamble

We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A.

We realize the ultimate authority is a loving God as he may express Himself in our Group Conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along this group conscience, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship.

Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance to listen while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our group and A.A. as a whole.

(***Conference declined to consider.***)

- The trustees’ Committee on the General Service Conference evaluate the current process of developing Conference background material and bring back to the 2023 General Service Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions a plan that describes the process of developing background material, keeping in mind the Conference desire for background material to be targeted, balanced and with relevant historical content.
- The Advisory Actions from Panel 71:
 - Advisory Action 18 for changes to page 117 phrase “opposite sex” with the word “partner”
 - Advisory Action 19 changes to page 66, “No one wants to be angry enough to murder, lustful enough to rape, gluttonous enough to ruin his health. No one wants to commit the deadly sins of anger, lust or gluttony” in the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, be returned to the original text. (***Conference declined to consider.***)
- The 1995 Conference Advisory Action be reaffirmed that the first 164 pages of the Big Book, the Forewords, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “Doctor Bob’s Nightmare” and the Appendices remain as is.

■ Workshop Summary

This year, the trustees' Committee on the General Service Conference approved using the Fishbowl style setting to facilitate the 72nd General Service Conference Workshop sessions. Here is a summarized report on the Workshops.



Workshop 1: “Your Third Legacy”

On Sunday afternoon, participants in the workshop “Your Third Legacy” were tasked with assessing how the 72nd General Service Conference was fulfilling (or not fulfilling) Bill’s original intent for the General Service Conference. Members were provided with an excerpt from “The General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous: Your Third Legacy — Will You Accept It?” in which Dr. Bob and Bill W. lay out their reasons for proposing the establishment of the General Service Conference; what activities they suggested should take place; and how the event might serve the A.A. Fellowship at large. With that in mind, Conference members compared the actual experience of the 72nd General Service Conference with the Third Legacy as envisioned by the co-founders.

As participants engaged in wide-ranging sharing, the importance of communication as the key to inclusiveness emerged as a central theme. Much of the discussion began with the members’ frustration with the process of agenda item development and related background material and how this continues to hinder communication and a sense of inclusion. Members noted that “timing is everything” — and that the deadline for proposed agenda

items has become unreasonably early as a result of the EDW process. In addition, certain trustees’ reports are not included in the general background (some being for “committee eyes only”), which excludes participation by non-Conference members of the Fellowship. Some felt there was an issue of transparency, that Conference members should not have “to dig for information.” In addition, participants noted that portions were “incorrect or incomplete.”

Most problematic for participants was the translation of the background items, which arrives too late, making the translated background “hard to get out” to the groups, and “missing the boat” with respect to including French and Spanish speakers in meaningful discussions at the Area and group levels. Participants reported that Spanish- and French-speaking members — including those at the Conference — feel left out, and that this sense of “marginalization is unacceptable.” “We are all a part of the Conference, Puerto Rico included,” it was said.

Wanting to be a “part of the solution,” a few participants wondered whether there may be extraneous information in the background documents that could be left out to expedite the process. Participants also wondered if there was something they could do to help, including asking whether areas had their own interpretation/trans-

lation committees. (On the other hand, one member noted that delegates used to receive their background documents when they walked into Conference.)

The conversation about inclusion through transparency grew broader as members continued to stress that openness is essential to unity: “Information is our friend; a lot of the fear [in the Fellowship] is brought about by misinformation.” One member wondered whether poor communication may have contributed to what some describe as disunity within the Fellowship: “We are all proud of what we did at the 71st General Service Conference. Is the disunity of the Fellowship brought about by last year’s Conference Advisory Actions a problem of participation or communication?”

How to improve communication, then? Several individuals implied that rather than being focused on Conference members as the only communicators, delegates should “make sure that everyone in your Area knows they are a part of the Conference” and that “delegates should not be the only ones spreading information.” There is “accountability on all levels, including staff and the boards,” it was said; “The structure works when we use it!”

Online/virtual platforms and more are there to be leveraged as communication tools, participants added; certainly this was a lesson from the pandemic: “Technology has increased the ability to communicate with everyone.” “Areas felt like we were able to be more involved because of the pandemic and that we heard the actual voice of Alcoholics Anonymous,” another observed. Technology can’t solve all problems, of course: many A.A. members experience poor Internet connectivity, remote or challenging geography, and general lack of resources, all of which can create barriers to access.

Several workshop participants pointed out that any disunity that may have occurred following the 71st GSC had an upside: “It got people talking and getting involved in the discussion.” And, “The so-called backlash from last year was that Areas woke up — if you are unhappy with what went on, get involved and use your voice.” After all, members said, “We have to remember to not take things too personally — we are all here for our primary purpose, and when we disagree it is because we all love A.A.” “Alcoholics Anonymous is managed by human beings,” opined one delegate. “We did the best we could last year.”

Others added that forums should be created at Conference where real issues and differences of opinion — for example, Tradition breaks and gender-inclusive language — are brought into the open to be discussed. Some participants felt “space [should be made] for delegates to talk about problems in their areas.” “We need to keep talking about these items until we have all been heard,” said one member.

At the end of the day, members agreed, A.A. must become more open, more transparent, more inclusive. The question posed by one member was, “Can we adapt — without changing who we are?”

Workshop 2: The Warranties: “Our Promise to the Fellowship and the World”

At this Tuesday afternoon workshop, participants looked to the six Warranties in Concept XII as a jumping-off point to exchange views on 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.

The first issue Conference members discussed was the sale of A.A. literature as a means of self-support for Alcoholics Anonymous. “Are book profits spiritual?” they asked. Most agreed that books “end up in the hands of an alcoholic,” and therefore sales of them help fulfill A.A.’s primary purpose. There is additional spirituality in the knowledge that those sales help support the services GSO offers. Of some concern were sales to outside entities. “Will reliance on outside buyers backfire on us?” several members asked. Participants pointed out there had not been any problems thus far, and such sales have become an important element in supporting services.

From here, the conversation moved to finances more broadly, and how transparency regarding expenditures is critical for the Fellowship: “We need to keep in mind that the money belongs to A.A. as a whole,” and be clear,



for example, about how prudent reserves are being used. It was noted that groups are holding back funds when they “disagree with the collective group conscience.” Transparency also can mean communicating better with the Fellowship about the needs of GSO, with one member even suggesting, “Instead of \$5.14, let’s bring the amount up to \$10, which we can do in October [the 10th month] — so we have time to send!”

Underpinning much of the workshop was tacit agreement that various A.A. entities — including the Conference — could do better with respect to communication with the Fellowship. Several participants believed that improvement was not only possible, but necessary: “We have to keep trying; we have to keep listening!” “Let’s have conversations about communication. We’re very good at writing and talking, but we need to listen better to the Fellowship.” It was pointed out that Conference members need to put themselves in other members’ shoes and look out for setting themselves apart in any way.

There are a few challenges to this. One participant noted that some individuals in the Fellowship “think delegates have magical powers,” which can cause frustration for both delegates and non-Conference members. On the other hand, it was observed by a few participants that some trusted servants behave as if they have “unqualified authority.” Seeing past trusted servants behave in controlling ways, it was noted, can be “discouraging” to new trusted servants. “We can politely ask [such individuals] to step down if too much authority is being exercised,” responded one member. In addition, cautioned one Conference member, “We need to be careful not to project our opinions as facts.” Instead, *all* members of the

Fellowship “need to walk side by side with one another.” A few delegates chimed in, “[We need to] remind [ourselves] of our place in the upside-down triangle” and to “always look to our Traditions to find solutions.”

Even within the context of what some might consider “public controversy,” it was discussed that the same principles apply: “We need to treat each other with love and respect”; “we can share and inform... have conversations to identify the challenges and share collectively”; “how can we as a Fellowship be more loving and tolerant... not punitive?” Indeed, it was noted, “Sometimes we make a problem when there isn’t one.” Likewise at Conference: there will always be some disagreement on the floor or in the committee room — as a few participants noted, “we can be passionate” at times, and it is “important for us to be able to express ourselves.” That said, others emphasized, it’s equally important not to be “reactive during heated conversations” and remember the group conscience is the goal, that “discussion and substantial unanimity” take time. At the end of the day, it was said, “Our Three Legacies and our Traditions are the voice of God speaking through the group conscience. It is our job to own it, to stand behind an item once it passes.”

In their concluding thoughts, workshop participants reiterated the importance of the Traditions and the Warranties while at Conference, noting that the Warranties “remind us about how to treat one another — with empathy, humility, thoughtfulness and open-mindedness.” “Let’s keep in the front of our minds what it means to be in A.A. and part of the Conference.” “It’s not about you and me,” a member added. “It is the collective voice that is the whole. We are the Conference.”



■ Area Service Highlights — Panel 72 Delegates

(Only first-term delegates give Area Highlights, and, per a 2018 Conference Advisory Action, these highlights are lightly edited and presented “in their entirety.”)



Alaska: Area 02 covers the entire state of Alaska. Alaska is the largest state. It has more coastline (34,000 miles) than the rest of the United States combined. We share a border with Canada, and we are only two-and-a-half miles from Russia. The population is 731,000 people. On a hot, sunny day in New York, there are more people at Jones Beach than live in all of Alaska. Eighty percent of our villages and towns are not on the road system and are reachable only by boat or plane. A.A. is alive and well in Alaska. The first contact with A.A. was in 1940; a simple phone call reaching out for help and A.A. was there to render assistance. Today we have about 178 groups, 9 districts and 5 intergroups. Alaska itself is a remote community; therefore, we have a very active Remote Communities Committee. We have a statewide call-in meeting, and we organize Twelve Step weekend trip visits to remote villages. Because of Covid travel restrictions, this year we are planning to organize virtual visits and meetings in several remote communities to explain what our committee does and how we might assist them in carrying the message. Our corrections committee discovered a unique way to deliver A.A. pamphlets into a local facility. They found a willing social worker who said they could give the pamphlets to her clients. So, they met up in the parking lot, and the pamphlets were provided to the still-suffering alcoholics. Since the pandemic, our area has been rocketed into a tech dimension, which has helped us expand our reach to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. — *Tandy W.*

Alberta/Northwest Territories: Area 78 is the largest area of United States/Canada, serving 438 active groups in 48 Districts (39 represented by a DCM). We have yet to welcome a linguistic district. The seven corresponding committees are very active, along with our addition of Group Records, E-Services, and Remote Communities Committees. How big is big? Well, we cover 3,150,000 square kilometers, which translates, for those who don't speak metric, to 1,216,221 square miles. That is seven-and-a-half Californias! As the crow flies from the farthest northern district to the southern one, we span 3,678 kilometers (2,285 miles). Geographically, we have mountains, forests and prairies, and we go so far north we venture into the tundra, above the tree line. This has made choosing one nice, neat logo that could represent it all, interesting (to say the least). Our new logo captured our unity through a map of the area. Multiple locations, cultures and languages in our urban and rural communities allow us the privilege, and challenges, to expand and diversify how we serve our Fellowship. Given our great size and diversity, serving remote communities has played a critical role in both urban and rural needs. Long before online virtual meetings were all the rage, pioneering area representatives visited remote regions. In the '90s, weekly teleconference meetings were added. Then in 2014 the Spirit of the North meeting transitioned to online, offering three virtual meetings per week. They were cool before cool was cool. The “new norm” has upended how groups and districts meet and communi-

cate. Yet circumstances perceived as divisive actually opened our mind to possibility. And what felt insurmountable proved we are up to the challenge. If COVID has taught us anything, it is that we are resilient and adaptable. — *Tami L.*

Arizona: Area 03 consists of the entire state of Arizona or about 114,000 square miles. We have about 2,425 weekly meetings. We've added a Spanish liaison coordinator to our area ranks to support the entire area with better understanding of the linguistic and cultural differences that we have and to give us ways to better communicate in our area. We have 15 county districts and one statewide Hispanic linguistic district. We have four assemblies per year, an Agenda Committee, an Administrative Committee and a Website Committee. Here are some area highlights: Arizona Area 03 will conduct the 21st Corrections Conference later this year. Corrections Professionals together with A.A. volunteers continue to open the gate of cooperation. We celebrated the 71st Arizona State Convention last year along with four area assemblies, all on virtual platforms. Literature and Grapevine/LaViña committees have started to attend in-person events and are doing well with literature sales!! Our Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee continues the virtual monthly roundtable with statewide and inter-area participation. In July 2021 we hosted a virtual CPC conference. The Sixth Annual Hispanic Woman's Workshop was in Arizona in December of 2021. I listened in gratitude as I watched those women wield the power of A.A. with humor, grace and commitment to our Three Legacies. Area 03 continues to grow in carrying the message of A.A., and I am grateful to be a part of that. — *Kathy R.*

California (Mid-Southern): Area 09 was approved at the Eighth General Service Conference in 1958 and elected its first area officers in 1959. One of six areas in California, Area 09 spans four counties: Orange County, San Bernardino County, Riverside County, and part of Los Angeles County. The area includes Catalina Island off the Pacific Coast, portions of south Los Angeles, down the oceanfront from Manhattan Beach to San Clemente to the San Diego County border, reaching up north to Barstow and east past Palm Springs and Coachella Valley to Blythe on the Colorado River. With the health restrictions during Covid-19, online meetings for the area, district and groups substituted for many in-person meetings. The area meets 12 times a year, including three area service assemblies, six area service committee meetings, a pre-Conference workshop, a servathon, and our FORO, which is a jointly hosted event by Spanish- and English-speaking districts. The area consists of 24 districts, six overlapping Spanish-speaking districts. Most of our districts have subdistricts with both DCMCs and DCMs. From the new Friendship Connection, there are 2,027 active groups in Area 09, with 17 new virtual groups, where approximately 62,600 members attend. Area 09 is comprised of 19 standing committees, including Remote Communities, Technology, and Young People.

Coordinate committees include five Young People in A.A. Intergroups, 14 central offices (including six Hispanic offices), and eight Hospitals and Institutions (H&I) Committees, with 34 local H&I Committees. We regularly distribute information electronically and on a newly redesigned website to more than 1,100 present and past trusted servants, with about 220 actively participating at any given time, through online and in-person events. Area 09 is committed to having the heart and message of A.A. available, both in-person and online, for those who suffer and those in service who carry the message of hope and love. — *Mitchell B.*

California (Northern Interior): Area 07 is the largest of the six areas in California, stretching from the Oregon border south to Kings and Tulare counties. Our naturally diverse area includes the beautiful Trinity Alps and Mount Shasta in the north, Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks in the southeast, and the length of the Sacramento Valley to the San Joaquin Valley. The area is comprised of 29 districts, five of which are Spanish-speaking and include District 57, our newest addition. Area 07 has seven elected officers, eight appointed chairs, and two standing committees to serve the area's 878 in-person and nine virtual groups. We have four area assemblies each year and eight area committee meetings. In preparation for our pre-Conference assembly, the area officers and appointed chairs facilitate multiple workshops on agenda items throughout our area. As delegate, I have the privilege of listening to each group's conscience at our pre-Conference assembly. Over a day and a half, the collective conscience of our area coalesces as we listen to GSRs share at the microphone. Area 07 has shown remarkable resilience during the pandemic. The last event our area attended in person was the Pacific Region Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly (PRAASA) 2020, pivoting to a virtual platform the following week. Though we had hoped to return to our first in-person assembly in January, once again, our area showed that we could remain flexible as we made the difficult decision to stay on a virtual platform for the health of our members. It is an honor to serve the California Northern Interior Area 07 as the Panel 72 delegate. — *Jenn D.*

California (San Diego/Imperial): Alcoholics Anonymous in San Diego/Imperial is active and present on Zoom and in person. It's great being able to share with our members from the ocean to the desert, and from the mountains to the Mexican border. The Naval Base in the south and the Marine Corps Base in the north bring new people here year after year — it's how I got to San Diego. All this makes our A.A. meetings quite diverse. Our three Spanish-speaking districts have offered meetings to men, and now women, since 2016. Because Area 8 is so diverse, we've been compelled to reach out to all the cultures and language groups represented in San Diego and Imperial counties. The love for A.A. flows in and out of our conversations throughout the year. With five area assemblies a year, we get to introduce the Conference



agenda topics to our GSRs through well-prepared workshops and visitations. Our finance committee and area treasurer have consistently prepared budgets allowing Seventh Tradition funds to be available for additional Twelfth Step work through the committees and the groups. Area 8 continues to do its part in connecting with different communities that are underrepresented. These communities include indigenous people, LGBTQ+, Deaf and hard of hearing and Hispanic Women to highlight just a few. The newest we hope to reach is the Asian-American community. Because San Diego is renowned for its idyllic climate, 70 miles of pristine beaches and a dazzling array of world-class family attractions, many people visit San Diego each year. Area 8 wants the hand of A.A. always to be there and when the Meeting Guide app became available in early 2019, we were ready. This allowed more participation from visitors outside of our area. I love San Diego Imperial A.A. — *Monty C.*

Delaware: Our state is known by several nicknames, including “The First State” (to ratify the Constitution), the “Diamond State” (coined by Jefferson regarding our strategic location), the home state of President Biden, and finally as “A Small Wonder.” Our geographically small state has 13 service districts with almost 300 active groups registered. Alcoholics Anonymous groups first formed in Delaware in the early 1940s, after a doctor at the DuPont Company reached out for help. In 1944, “Shoes,” a legendary member of the Wilmington Group, asked Mickey M. to visit and he shared the “Wilmington Preamble,” which then became widely used. The first service entity beyond the home group to form in Delaware was the New Castle County Intergroup. Today, Delaware has three active intergroups that work to support busy Events, PI/CPC, Archives, Corrections,

and Literature committees. The Delaware Young People in A.A. group, DELYPAA has members involved at the area level but still continues to need support and encouragement to increase their membership. The Spanish-speaking meetings have increased to five active home groups. The Delaware Area General Service Assembly (DAGSA) has several robust committees, including our Archives Committee, which has been working to preserve our history, document assembly business, and is now encouraging home groups to record their histories for our future generations. DAGSA has also been focusing on helping committees, districts and home groups navigate technology changes while honoring the Traditions, through a series of virtual events and the resources provided by, and the example of, our website, delawareaa.org. Not all districts in our service structure are embracing technology with equal fervor, making communications challenging and the few in-person events even more rewarding. Area 12 is pleased to announce the return of our annual convention, to be held at the Rehoboth Beach Convention Center, May 21–22, 2022. — *Sally T.*

Georgia: Area 16 serves the entire State of Georgia. Area 16 has 52 districts (including our areawide Spanish-speaking district), 674 groups, plus eight virtual groups, and approximately 15,548 members. Our area has a strong service structure with active area service committees and dedicated leadership. We hold our Georgia State Service Assembly (GSSA) three times a year. These assemblies are held in January, May and September. Our DCMs have a planning meeting in November where they receive their committee assignments for pre-Conference. Our pre-Conference meeting with the DCMs, area committee chairs, and co-chairs is held the first

week of April. DCMs serve on their assigned committee in a roundtable session after having several weeks to review the material with the GSRs in their respective districts. They choose the chair that reports on their agenda items for their committee at the final part of the meeting. This process provides the delegate with an informed group conscience of the area. We have our prepaid state convention every year in October. This convention is supported by all the groups in Georgia that contribute through our Seventh Tradition, and no registration fee is required from any Georgia member. Area 16's webmaster, Web Committee, and Communications Committee have brought us through the last two years of virtual assemblies, our first virtual prepaid convention, and regular updates to our area website. They are a talented and dedicated service team. Our bimonthly newsletter, *The Georgia Message of A.A.*, keeps our members informed with reports from our area officers and service committee chairs. The Georgia Convention of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (GCYPAA) keeps our young people active, connected and engaged through planned events that are fun for everyone. We have an area office with our office manager/registrar who works diligently to keep up with all calls and emails, distributes literature, and coordinates the logistics for our area assemblies. I am incredibly blessed to serve Area 16 as their Panel 72 Delegate. — Tracy T. M.

Idaho: Area 18 is relatively small, but quite mighty. We are large geographically (roughly 62,000 square miles) and small in member numbers. Idaho Area 18 includes the entire southern portion of Idaho and a few small slivers of eastern Oregon, northern Nevada and western Wyoming. We currently have 11 active districts serving roughly 261 listed English- and Spanish-speaking groups.

Our Area 18 Committee consists of the area officers, special service committee chairpersons and the 11 DCMs. This year we have held our first area committee meeting in a hybrid format, which has proven to be successful thus far, particularly for our trusted servants living in the more rural areas with treacherous winter driving conditions. We have three area committee meetings, held in January, March and August. Idaho is small enough in numbers to allow for anyone interested in General Service to attend our area committee meetings where business is discussed, but no actions are taken. We save action for our two full-bodied area assemblies, which are rotated among the districts in May and October. We are unique in that we hold our assemblies in conjunction with an area convention, a practice that has become a challenge as we have traversed uncertain times. We continue to let our Higher Power lead us through each challenge along the way. Our pre-Conference process currently consists of district committee members drawing conference committees from a hat at the January area committee meeting, and when the conference agenda and background material are made available, the DCMs distribute their sections to their GSRs, groups, and members for collective study and research. The Saturday before the March Area Committee Meeting, Districts 2 and 10 traditionally host a pre-Conference workshop, where DCMs, GSRs and interested A.A. members share and discuss their findings to help the delegate become better informed. We continue to look at ways to further improve this process. We recently had an overhaul of our area guidelines, bringing our written guidelines into agreement with current practices. Idaho has seen greater participation within the LGBTQ+ community in the last few years, as we have had more and more inclusive meetings added to our roster. We have had success in



reaching out to treatment and corrections facilities, but we have the opportunity to improve our encouragement of Hispanic and Native American groups. Some new meetings that have been very successful focus on literature, both classic and newer. Our website continues to grow, and along with the Meeting Guide app, has been found to be an invaluable tool for newcomers. We do continue to adjust to our new pandemic reality. Like many other areas, we have seen a decrease not only in General Service participation, but also a decrease in participation on the group level as well. Fortunately, in Idaho, we are known for our tenacity and grit. We will make it through changes with determination, along with the guidance of a Power greater than ourselves. Idaho will continue to carry the legacy of those who have come before us by serving with love and enthusiasm! — *Candace C.*

Illinois (Northern): Area 20 encompasses all Northern Illinois except for Chicago and many of the suburbs surrounding the city, including such large cities as Aurora, Naperville, Joliet, Rockford, and Elgin (where I live). These suburban “concrete communities” account for two-thirds of the area’s 26 districts, three of those being Hispanic linguistic districts. Also contributing to the flavor of Area 20 are districts that span outward to the Wisconsin and Iowa border, connected via the familiar “grid patchwork” of open farmland. The area has no intergroups or central offices, but many districts have robust and informative websites that often draw from the area website where various reports are posted, and event notices and communications are consolidated. We embrace technology in Area 20, utilizing existing platforms as much as possible to better carry the message from one end of the area to the other. Recent Fellowship Connection data reports we have 1,149 active groups and 924 registered GSRs! Area functions include three one-day assemblies (all with Spanish translation), four committee meetings, a weekend spring conference and assembly, and a one-day Pre-General Service Conference Workshop, aimed at providing the delegate with the informed group conscience of the Fellowship. We rotate hosting the Annual State Conference every three years with the other Illinois areas and host a one-day Big Book Conference that has led to a blossoming relationship with Area 87 in Montreal, as they begin their own tradition of hosting a similar one-day event. Since the Covid outbreak in March 2020, all area events have been 100% virtual, though a recent assembly motion will now allow for hybrid committee meetings and assemblies in the future, when we return to in-person meetings. In normal times we have a deep pool of trusted servants to lead our area and service committees, which for the most part, align with the committees at the conference. It is truly an honor to be able to serve Area 20 as its delegate. — *Chris D.*

Indiana (Southern): Area 23 is the southern half of Indiana. Our geographical boundary is located just north of Indianapolis and extends to our southern border on

the Ohio River. We have approximately 12,000 members and over 700 groups; five of them are Spanish-speaking meetings. There are 25 districts serving our members with one district dedicated to the Spanish community in Area 23. We also have one central office and four intergroups, with one that serves the Spanish-speaking community. Area 23 provides American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters three times a week for members in Indianapolis who are Deaf. We provide ASL interpreters and translation equipment for our Spanish-speaking members at our assemblies and our state convention. The Covid restrictions had us meeting virtually online since March 1, 2020; however, we have recently begun hybrid assemblies. Our future assembly platform will be determined based on the needs of our area members. Area 23 continues its mission to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic through our fifteen committees. A complete overhaul of our guidelines was accomplished to ensure the continuity of our life-giving message through our committees. We conduct four assemblies each year: February, May, August and October. We hold our pre-Conference assembly in April, which is designed to mimic the General Service Conference as closely as possible to give members insight on how the conference process is accomplished in New York. GSRs and DCMs bring their home groups’ and districts’ group conscience regarding the GSC agenda items to share with the delegate. In October we hold our annual service weekend, full of workshops for GSRs and DCMs to better carry the message and increase their communication to the groups. Our state convention will be hybrid this year at Brown County State Park. The trusted servants in Area 23 respect and protect the autonomy and privilege of dissent of all A.A. groups in southern Indiana by continually striving to be the voice of informed group conscience, unified in love and service. — *Janet F.*

Kansas: Greetings from Area 25 Kansas, home to approximately 350 groups and 29 districts, two being Spanish, spread across 82,278 square miles. We are also home to over 150 treatment facilities, which include 20 detox centers. We are currently conducting two voting assemblies and two committee meetings annually, and every April at our committee meetings, we conduct a mock General Service Conference for each committee to be informed on the current GSC agenda items. Our Area 25 Conference is held every September, which always has the buzz of A.A. present. We have a great rotation of incredibly talented and enthusiastic trusted servants for this term. I have had the privilege of serving with many of them for years and know that Area 25 is in great hands. Our finances are in excellent standing, and our committees are eager to get to work. This last weekend we had our first area assembly for January 2022, and it presented all the challenges of a new rotation — not from a logistical standpoint but from a perpetual-motion standpoint of getting back to doing A.A. in person. Don M., past trustee, attended and facilitated an area Inventory for us. We appreciated his service and learned a lot about ourselves. Amidst a lot of administrative and organiza-

tional changes over the last five or six years, we are focusing on unity through the transition, and I know if we stick to the Traditions, we will continue to follow the path that God has cleared for us. We are also working on upgrading our website. Our goal is to make it more user-friendly and functional so that just about anyone rotating in as the web chair will be able to maintain and modify Area 25's ongoing responsibility to carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. — *Darin H.*

Kentucky: Area 26 serves all of Kentucky and portions of southern Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. Two fun facts: Kentucky is the birthplace of Henrietta Seiberling and bourbon, and there are nearly two bourbon barrels for every Kentucky resident. Cheers! Alcoholics Anonymous is thriving in the horse capital of the world. Area 26 serves 765 groups. We have 36 districts, one of which is a Spanish-speaking district. We have four quarterly meetings each year, two of which are assemblies where GSRs have a voice and a vote. Area 26 operates with 12 standing committees; chairpersons are appointed by the area chair and ratified by the area committee. Technology and accessibility have been our major focus. Therefore, an ad hoc committee has been formed to help us better serve our groups by successfully implementing hybrid meetings and increasing the effectiveness of our information-sharing capabilities. Area 26 publishes a digital quarterly newsletter, the *Kentuckiana News*. The *Kentuckiana News* committee has implemented QR code technology to subscribe to the newsletter. We have come a long way! We are looking forward to our third mock



conference and have embraced virtual meetings as an addition to our communication efforts. I am humbled and grateful for the opportunity to serve the Fellowship that saved my life. Thank you for allowing me to be of service. — *Jennifer S.*

Maine: Area 28 consists of the entire state of Maine and has 492 active groups. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Maine is the most rural state in the Union. That means that it is the state where people are the most widely scattered. It is traditionally known for three seasons: July, August, and winter. Maine has more coastline than California — and that's not counting its 3,166 islands. It makes up nearly half of New England and produces 90% of the nation's toothpicks. Maine is justly famous for its black flies and frost heaves. It ranks near the bottom of states to do business in, thanks to an aging population, transportation costs, and a tax base too small to maintain thousands of miles of roads. It is also a place of heartbreaking beauty and draws entrepreneurs and other independent sorts — the best way to find a job is to bring it with you. In 1810, 3% of U.S. citizens lived in Maine; shipbuilding and fishing dominated the economy. Shipping was the nation's preeminent form of transportation, and Maine produced the best sea captains. But after the Civil War, railroads took over and Maine became a remote frontier, a position it has occupied ever since. The battlefields of the Civil War, though far from Maine, took the lives of almost 10,000 of its citizens, 1.5% of the population. With the demise of seafaring, forest products and textiles were the remaining staples of the Maine economy. Many Mainers migrated westward in search of better opportunities. The nation's population has increased 10.5 times since 1860, while Maine's has only doubled. It now has half as many people as Chicago. Maine is the poorest state in the Northeast, but it is rich in trees! Of our 19.8 million acres, 89% are forested. Our state has 22 billion trees. That's 16,751 trees per capita (compared with just 117 in New Jersey). Maine produces 6.7 billion board feet of lumber, though we consume less than 17% of that. The rest gets exported. Remember all those toothpicks? — *Peter B.*

Manitoba: Area 80 is located in the province of Manitoba and covers 649,000 square kilometers (250,00 square miles) and a population of approximately 1.38 million, primarily concentrated in the southern half of the province. We have 14 districts in our area. In our northernmost district, District 10, many of the communities are not accessible by road — except in the winter when ice roads are used. If you've ever seen the show *Ice Road Truckers*, then you have an idea. A.A. began in Manitoba in 1943 when a Dr. Pincock heard about an organization called "Alcoholics Anonymous" from a member of the provincial government. Through a series of conversations and a visit to the Nicolle Group in Minneapolis, the first group of Alcoholics Anonymous was formed in Winnipeg in 1944. Three years later, a second group formed after a resentment stemming from allowing the women's auxiliary to use the clubroom. The Assiniboine



group was then formed. Three years after that, the New Dawn group was formed, and registered, in Stony Mountain Penitentiary. Today we have more than 120 meetings in the province, including two in Stony Mountain Institution. After the past two years, some are currently virtual, a few hybrid. But most are managing to remain open, with challenges. Despite the challenges, all our committees are active. In particular, our Bridging the Gap, PI/CPC and Corrections committees have been quite active. Our Corrections Committee has begun virtual meetings in two provincial jails, with plans to expand to other provincial institutions. Unfortunately, we are not able to carry the message into the federal institution, but the members inside are continuing to hold meetings in the minimum-security institution. Of late we have had difficulties in filling all positions at the area level. However, I have been in discussion with a few members who are considering returning to General Service. I'm certain at our next assembly in April we will have filled all positions. We have four assemblies per year: January, March/April, June, and October. I am truly humbled to serve Area 80 at the 72nd General Service Conference. — *Richard M.*

Maryland: Stretching from the Atlantic Ocean through the marshlands surrounding the Chesapeake Bay and the rolling hills of the center state to the Blue Ridge Mountains out west, Maryland is called “America in Miniature.” And with 941 registered active A.A. groups in 34 districts and 10 Intergroups, A.A. is alive and well in Area 29. Area 29, Maryland General Service, Inc., has 20 active service committees and cooperates with our local Intergroups providing services to over 15,000 members and those seeking information about our Fellowship. With five area assemblies and four area committee meetings yearly, we gather in fellowship and service.

Our state convention, held in June of each year, brings together over 600 members from our area, as well as other areas, for a weekend-long celebration of sobriety and recovery. The past couple of years have been challenging for our area, as with others. Facing a global pandemic that resulted in shutting down many meeting places, we rose to the challenge. Embracing technology as never before, A.A. in Area 29 survived, and thrived. Recovery and service meetings went online, and we continued to carry our message of hope and recovery to sick and suffering alcoholics. This unexpected challenge also brought forth the opportunity to interact with recovering members and service workers around the country, and around the world — a true benefit. Over the last year, many recovery meetings, and some service meetings, have been able to resume live and hybrid operations, keeping safety in mind. And 2022 promises to be a year of more fully opening back up, although significant challenges remain. But we will continue to come together in support of one another. Please stop and join us when passing through our lovely state. And visit marylandaa.org for more information about our vibrant and committed area. — *Kurt W.*

Massachusetts (Western): Area 31 Western Massachusetts borders New York State in the west, Vermont to the north, Connecticut to the south, and our sister Area 30 to the east. We also have a few towns in Connecticut that are a very active part of Area 31. In fact, our Western Mass Roundup will be held in Enfield, Connecticut, a part of District 6. The first known meeting in Western Mass was June 3, 1942, but area meetings really took off in January 1944 with the Original Downtown Group in Springfield. We sent our first delegate to the 1952 conference with 318 listed members and established our first intergroup in 1953. It was not until 1964 that an area

committee was created. We now have six districts with just under 5,000 members and 300 groups. Area 31 now has two intergroups: the Berkshire Intergroup in Pittsfield in the western section of the area and the Western Mass Intergroup located in Holyoke, a more central location. We also are the original home of the current GSO manager. We presently have one group discussing registering with GSO as our first online group. As one of the smallest areas in the conference, we are a very tight-knit group. Members tend to rotate from one subcommittee to another at the area committee and intergroups, making for wonderful fellowship and friendships that are lasting. We began rotating our two assemblies through our districts the two years prior to the pandemic, and the result was a noticeable uptick in participation. We increased our Spring Mini Conference attendance by nearly double in 2019 because of the rotation. We have resumed rotating as the pandemic weakens and are hopeful for the future. It is a very exciting time in A.A. and Area 31 as we come of age in this virtual world! The Western Mass Young Peoples Committee hosted New England Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous (NECYPA) this past New Year's weekend as a live event for the first time in two years. It was a great success as more than 500 people registered, and it was self-supporting. I was fortunate to attend the event on my first day of service as the Area 31 delegate. That opportunity was a gift that I will always treasure! I was able to see for the first time the attraction my son and his friends have to the young people in A.A., and the energy and enthusiasm they bring to their events. I am very grateful and humbled to be of service to my area and A.A., as a whole, as a Panel 72 delegate. — *Mike B.*

Michigan (Western): Area 34 consists of the western side of the lower peninsula and the eastern end of the upper peninsula, from the Indiana border to the south all the way up to the shore of St. Mary's River between the U.S. and Canada. Area 34 consists of 19 districts; one is a linguistics district (Spanish) and two are new districts that formed over the past few years. Area 34 has three central offices: the Kalamazoo Central Office, Kent County Central Office in Grand Rapids, and the Northern Michigan Central Office located in Traverse City. They supply the local groups with A.A. literature and offer 24-hour A.A. help lines among many other services. We also have the Northern Michigan Inter-Area (NMIA), a service entity consisting of Districts 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16 and 18 of Western Michigan Area 34. They have a corrections committee that gets literature and meetings into the local county jails. They also host a Spring Roundup annually, except for the past two years it's been postponed. It will finally happen this year, the third full weekend of May. We are unified in service with the two other main areas of Michigan: 32 Central Michigan and 33 South East Michigan (Detroit). We meet quarterly at a statewide service meeting, with three service committees, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Grapevine, and Corrections. We rotate between the three areas hosting the Michigan State Convention and putting

on a corrections workshop. Area 34 Assembly meets the third Sunday of the month, except for June and December, rotating among the districts. The March assembly is our pre-Conference assembly in which we discuss General Service Conference agenda items, and we hold an assembly usually during the summer in the beautiful Upper Peninsula. Our area assemblies have become hybrid events, meeting in person and virtually, via a videoconference platform. While there are technical difficulties, sometimes the work that needs to be done gets done. Several groups in Area 34 fell victim to the pandemic, with meeting locations closing and groups just not able to get going again, although many virtual groups have formed and are looking to be a part of the General Service Conference structure. I'm grateful to be of service to A.A. — *Jim H.*

Minnesota (Northern): Alcoholics Anonymous began in Area 35, in Duluth and Hibbing, Minnesota, in March and July of 1941 after Jack Alexander's *Saturday Evening Post* article came out and just before the start of WWII. Area 35 consists of northern Minnesota. If you draw a line west from the bottom of Wisconsin's nose to South Dakota and include everything north of that line, including Superior, Wisconsin, this is our geographic area. We have 17 districts that consist of 511 groups with one virtual group. We are a heavily rural area with only two cities that have a population of around 100,000 people. The town I live in has fewer than a thousand souls. We needed to figure a way for the area to connect with the far rural corners and the inner-city groups. The *Northern Light*, the area's newsletter, has become the primary source of written communication for our area. We still have to address the lowest common denominator for communicating to the Fellowship. A difficulty we have is that not everyone is on the same technology level. We have people in service without an email address. Area 35 has a rotating system for assemblies and our area workshop. We divided the area into four zones; rotating assemblies to different zones allows for more people to have the opportunity to attend an area function. This has worked very well to bolster participation in our area. We also hold four area committee meetings between assemblies. So, the area meets every two months to discuss business. Area 35 has a full slate of action committees and support committees: WEB Master, NL Editor, Records Secretary (Registrar), and Audio Tech. Depending on how active each action committee is, service work continues to funnel back to the districts, the groups and group members. In my experience, active action committees promote participation in carrying the message to the suffering alcoholic. — *Steve L.*

Mississippi: Area 37 encompasses the entire state of Mississippi. There are 24 geographic districts in five zones. We serve 202 active groups. Our area assemblies are held four times per year in Pearl, Mississippi, which is centrally located in the state. We meet quarterly for a one-day assembly during the months of January, April, August, and November. We have ten standing service



committees that meet at each assembly. Our annual state convention rotates throughout the state by each zone; last year's was held virtually for the first time. Area 37 also has two central/intergroup offices in the state that provide phone hotlines and literature. In the past two years the pandemic created many challenges, limited face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings, hybrid meetings, and virtual baskets. We navigated through every situation and met each challenge with the spirit that A.A. has given each of us. Last year we had a hybrid mock pre-Conference workshop, a virtual pre-Conference assembly, and a virtual post-Conference report. Our area assemblies have returned to all face-to-face meetings since August of last year. Most of our groups have returned to face-to-face meetings. The greatest thing that we have learned from the pandemic is how Area 37 can utilize online meetings. The standing committees have started having virtual meetings between assemblies. This has added more involvement and enthusiasm by the

GSRs, DCMs, and groups. We are always looking for ways to improve our ability to communicate with the groups and fulfill our duties and responsibilities as an area. — *Charles T.*

Nebraska: Area 41 stretches across the entire state of Nebraska. If you were to start at one end and drive to the other, you would've spent eight hours in the car and would've seen the other end the whole time, not a single mountain in your way. Okay, that might be an exaggeration, but we're still flat out here. We have 30 active districts, including one Spanish linguistic district. Just like everyone else, we've spent the last few years doing our best to navigate the pandemic, to find grace between guidelines and personalities. Fortunately, our committees and groups adapted quickly to continue to carry the message. Our assemblies occur every quarter for a whole weekend — some committees are meeting more now that virtual meeting rooms have been introduced. We also host an annual state reunion that highlights the delegates report, speakers, and other fun activities every June. Accessibilities, Accommodations, Treatment and Remote Communities (a newly combined committee) has an active bridging the gap presence and is starting to seek out ways to reach our nursing homes and other "remote spaces." Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC) has created a business card to hand out at their annual state fair booth; it lists info from the Meeting Guide app to the information listed on area41.org. Oh, speaking of area41.org: Our website committee has been discussing embarking on building a new, more user-friendly website. The corrections committee has spent the past several rotations working hard to get Grapevines into the many institutions, and over the past year continues to keep an A.A. presence behind the

walls, even though we were physically locked out. Our literature committee has noticed an excess inventory of pamphlets and decided to disburse them to districts and committees to use in outreach materials. They even looked at an award for districts who bring the most GSRs to the area assemblies. Our Grapevine committee has started talking about ways to get the area more excited about the new podcast and to encourage local story submissions. While we might have more cows than people in Area 41, we do our best to carry the message to anyone who might be struggling. So next time you're planning on flying over, stop and have a cup of coffee; we'd love to host you. Nebraska, it's nice, but not for everyone. — *Cara G.*

New Brunswick/Prince Edward Island: Area 81, like most areas, is having its difficulties in getting together because of the Covid epidemic. Area 81 serves two provinces in Eastern Canada: Prince Edward Island and New

Brunswick. The area has not met in person since I was elected as alternate delegate in March of 2020. This year, we will have had our first in-person meeting for the pre-Conference, March 5, 2022. We have been shut down travel-wise since late March 2020. Meetings were shut down for lengthy periods of time early in the pandemic. The meetings gradually reopened, but when the Omicron hit, we were shut down again for a month. We did manage to have our area service meetings virtually through it all. Reaching out to do service in treatment centers, correctional centers and recovery homes was problematic. There are two separate jurisdictions with two somewhat different sets of guidelines. One province allowed visits; another did not, and at the time of this report still does not. We did manage to carry on. A.A. members who were computer-savvy and some of us who were not opened virtual meetings immediately, which was a gift to everyone. We did manage to have our area elections virtually as did the districts. Area 81 has one district that does not have representation at our area meetings. Hopefully after this pandemic is over and normalcy returns, service work will be renewed with enthusiasm and vigor. On May 13, 14 and 15, Area 81 will be holding the first in-person regional forum in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Check the flyer on the Area 81 website. Registration is free and will open online on April 18, or you can call 212-870-3120. — *Fred A.*



New Hampshire: On occasion, an event jolts us in such a way that we can clearly see our strengths and our weaknesses. For Alcoholics Anonymous in New Hampshire — Area 43 — the global pandemic was such an event. Developing and maintaining effective communication networks across the Fellowship has always been a challenge. The pandemic showed us how important it might be — and how difficult it really is — for Area 43, or any of our 15 districts, to quickly contact groups. Some A.A. groups in New Hampshire choose not to participate in the general service structure, and even for groups with a GSR, contact information is not always accurate and up-to-date. We are committed to overcoming this challenge, but there is a long way to go. The pandemic also revealed a significant strength. The 600-plus A.A. groups and 9,000-plus A.A. members in New Hampshire are resilient. We adapt in the face of change. Area 43 quickly pivoted to digital platforms for area meetings and events, held a virtual convention, added a virtual roundup to our annual statewide event calendar, and voted to continue using a virtual platform for our monthly area committee meetings. During the pandemic we undertook a yearlong review of our Area 43 hotline, which resulted in changed procedures, a new vendor, and much faster response to those seeking help with alcoholism. We also witnessed a dramatic and sustained increase to financial contributions in response to the area's call for support during the pandemic. After drawing from our prudent reserve in 2020, we were able in 2021 to replace those funds three times over, bringing us much closer to our prudent reserve goal than we have been in years. — *Grace F.*

New Jersey (Southern): Area 45 is one of two General Service areas in the state of New Jersey, located in the Southern region of the state. Area 45 consists of 27 active districts, and approximately 600 groups. The southern part of New Jersey is less populated, has large state forest acreage and miles of shoreline. There are some large cities, small rural towns, shore tourist area and farmlands. In the 1940s the first recorded A.A. groups started, growing into approximately nine-to-ten thousand members today. We have three intergroup/central offices in our area. Area 45 has a history of working closely with all three, and intergroup presence in area events is the norm. Intergroup invites area participation at all of their events as well. In the last two-plus years, our intergroups led the way in the virtual transition during the pandemic, and we have benefited from the technical deep dive that provided access and expertise using the virtual platform. During this time, making meetings available and allowing the service structure to conduct the business of A.A. has been critical. Participation dropped off at the district level during that time and is slowly increasing now. Although the virtual platform allows us to connect with more members interested and involved in service, in my experience what works are in-person visits from area panel members and committee chairs. Area 45 is divided into four sections that host area assemblies on a rotating schedule. At our winter

assembly a motion passed to invest in technology to host hybrid assemblies, district and area events moving forward. Non-connected groups and inactive districts will always be a challenge, but not as a result of past and present area efforts to carry the message of service participation and staying connected to A.A. as a whole. The life-changing break in normal in-person life has exposed a new way to communicate, not only for A.A. meetings, but allows more connectivity for service workers to share experience globally. As soon as the virtual format was stabilized, the Northeast Region was meeting regularly, all 18 areas and our Northeast Regional Trustee. This was invaluable to me, and we all learned much from the shared experiences of our many delegates and alternates. I'm honored to serve, and consider it a privilege to have this opportunity. — *Ken T.*

New Mexico: Area 46 is all of the state of New Mexico and part of the Southwest Region. Our neighbors are Texas and Oklahoma to the east, Colorado to the north, Arizona to the west, and Mexico to the south. Also known as one of the Four Corners states, this also includes the State of Utah. We have a diversity of people, cultures, and spiritual beliefs. As of the 2021 U.S. census, 2,115,877 people reside in New Mexico. According to the most recent census, the racial composition of New Mexico: Whites are 74.81% with Hispanics/Latinos being 49.3% of that number. Native Americans come in at 9.55% and other races at 8.63%. Here in New Mexico, we have 19 districts that serve 161,697 square miles, with 328 active A.A. groups and four that are strictly virtual, far less than the pre-Covid number of 375 groups. Two of our 19 districts are Spanish-speaking, Districts 17 and 19. They split New Mexico almost in half with the boundary line going from east to west below the town of Socorro, District 17 to the north with 17 groups and District 19 to the south with five groups. South of Las Cruces, there are seven more Spanish-speaking groups that chose to participate with El Paso, Texas. We have three assemblies a year. Our first of the year is in March. We call it our pre-Conference assembly, where we discuss some of the Conference agenda items. Our August assembly was just moved from September to accommodate the recent new deadline of September 15 to submit Conference agenda items, and we finish with a December assembly. In June we have our state convention and in July of the second year of our rotation, we have our Area 46 service forum, which is modeled after the Southwest Region service assembly. I will finish with this: Before Covid, we had around 8,000 members; today we really don't know the count of our membership. Covid took many of our members from us and changed our rooms



forever. It will be some time before we really know the true impact of it. I do know that Area 46 and our membership are doing our best to keep as many rooms open as we can and carry the A.A. message of recovery to the suffering alcoholic. — *Eloy M.*

New York (Northeastern): Geographically, Area 48, Northeastern New York or NENY (transitioning from HMB, Hudson, Mohawk, Berkshire), is the largest of the four New York State areas. It extends from the southern borders of Dutchess and Ulster counties, north to the Canadian border, and from Massachusetts in the east to Madison County in the west. In addition to wide-open spaces, rolling hills and farmland, Area 48 proudly houses Plattsburgh (mentioned in "Bill's Story"), the gravesite of Ebby T., Woodstock, the Adirondack Park, and our state capital. Add to that, in early 2020, our Northeast Regional Trustee calculated what he thought to be the geographic center of the Northeast Region as Gloversville, New York, located in District 4 and home of Club 24, which hosts a number of groups and meetings. Area 48 currently services over 800 registered groups, with more than 150 of them hosting virtual meetings, either exclusively or in conjunction with face-to-face meetings. The oldest group and first to form in 1939 is the Glens Falls Original Group. It is still in existence today. There are 19 districts serviced by the area, including the newly formed District 20, a fully virtual district serving the ever-expanding number of virtual groups and giving them a voice and a vote in the service structure. Area 48 is home to 40-plus state and county correctional facilities, including drug treatment camps. During the pandemic, Area 48 provided literature packages to all state facilities willing to accept them, as well as many county facilities. Treatment centers, too numerous to count, also receive support from Area 48 in the form of inpatient meetings. During the pandemic, the Treatment Committee was able to organize virtual speaker meetings that many of the centers welcomed with open arms. As the A.A. world begins

to transition back to face-to-face meetings, and incorporate hybrid meetings as well, Area 48 has ad hoc teams in place to assist with that process and serve as a resource of shared experiences by groups and districts that have already gone through the process. I could not have picked a better place to get sober and serve. — *Tammie E.*

New York (Western): Area 50, Western New York, spans the westernmost portion of New York State from Niagara Falls in the north to Pennsylvania in the south, including some A.A. groups in northwestern Pennsylvania. We are bordered by Lake Erie in the west and Lake Ontario in the north. Area 50 encompasses eight counties, comprised of 22 districts, and supported by four intergroups. Prior to the pandemic, we had experienced an increase in activity in previously silent and unrepresented districts, due to the A.A. service leadership vision of previous panels. As a result, 13 districts were regularly represented at area assemblies and committee meetings. While the area is experiencing the need to rebuild some of this participation, due to the effects of the pandemic, we are experiencing great and appropriate service and change. Through our loving God, miraculous spiritual events are happening with the purpose of reaching the suffering alcoholic. One district ran two A.A. public information billboards last month. Another responded to the changing meeting schedule brought on by the pandemic by creating bookmarks with a QR code to the A.A. meetings served by their district and intergroup. Two districts working closely together hosted a hybrid workshop on women in A.A. Yet one other district has led the charge in stepping up to host the in-person portion of hybrid assemblies, to allow some to meet in person, if warranted and if safe, while the pandemic lingers. Our Cooperation with the Professional Community and Accessibilities committees are pairing up to reach migrant workers in our farm communities. The Public Information Committee is reaching out to the community through churches, schools, and local publications. Treatment has several districts participating in bringing meetings to the facilities in our area. Corrections hosts a weekly virtual meeting to connect with members in a county holding center, standing ready for when we can visit in person with our members behind the walls. Our Archives Committee has been showing up in every corner of the area, with beautiful displays in tow. Finally, among the greatest of the happenings, our 330 active and registered in-person groups have been joined by two registered virtual groups, whom we welcome to our area service structure with open arms. In unity, the groups of Area 50 commence shoulder-to-shoulder on our common journey. Welcome to our family. — *Denise M.*

Ohio (Northwest): Area 55 started with one meeting in 1940, a flickering beacon of hope for the suffering alcoholic. Today Area 55 is struggling to gain control over the impact of Covid at meetings. The unfortunate consequence is that many A.A. members fear attending meetings in person. The size of meetings is smaller, but the

doors are still open. We lost long-term members. We lost some of the oldest groups in the area, the meetings closed forever. I am glad to tell you that from March 2020, when everyone was quarantined, our area did not miss any monthly assembly meetings. Tech-savvy members assisted with a transition to a virtual platform within days. We resumed in-person monthly assembly meetings in September 2021. The DCMs meet prior to the assembly and provide updates and reports on activities in their respective districts. I do see a disconnect from joining as a group member, a hesitancy to serve on committees, whether as a member or as chair, a malaise that spread in the area. So, this year's theme, "A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service," is both hopeful and timely. The theme is like a call to reboot our area. We were in the process of unifying our districts and redistricting when this pandemic hit. I know that it will take patience to reignite the districts, but I also know that it is possible. This reboot involves an ad hoc committee, the registrar, group services, our DCMC and the DCMs unifying their efforts to gather a clear, realistic understanding of groups in Area 55. Some have closed permanently, transferred to virtual platforms, or new groups formed but did not register with GSO in New York. May God continue to unify our efforts of love and service for the alcoholic who is sick and suffering today. — *Sherry S.*

Ohio (Southwest): Area 56 makes up the southwest portion of Ohio. This "boot"-shaped area spans along the Ohio River from east of Manchester, moving west to the border with Indiana and then north along that border for



approximately 150 miles. The I-75 corridor from Cincinnati through Dayton to Wapakoneta makes up the eastern portion of Area 56. There are approximately 485 active groups with no current Covid restrictions for meeting in person other than groups honoring the masking and social-distancing requests of some facilities. Some groups have folded because of Covid, many are meeting in person, and still others are meeting in a hybrid fashion, either by online platforms or phone conferences. A new phone meeting has recently become part of our Fellowship with representation by a GSR. There are two active intergroups in Area 56, which serve the Cincinnati and Dayton metro and surrounding areas. Until the last few years, the ten districts within the Cincinnati loop had not been active, but recent efforts have been successful in creating a multi-district service structure. As we move north, we enter the Miami Valley, which encompasses Dayton, Springfield, Middletown, and Hamilton. The groups that meet in the clubhouses in and around Dayton have been designated their own districts. Efforts to help activate them are underway to bring those groups into our general service structure. As we continue north, we leave the valleys for the flatlands and begin to see smaller towns dotted with active groups. The districts in these areas take a greater role in providing the groups with schedules, phone services, and jail meetings, acting in part as their own intergroups with many service opportunities. The largest district with the most beautiful farmland on earth is made up of four rural counties and provides a great service for the northernmost groups and communities. This is the district I live in and where I became active in general service, but it is the greatest honor of my life to represent *all* of Area 56 in southwest Ohio. — *Andrea H.*

Ontario (Northeast): Northeast Ontario is a sprawling expanse of wilderness covering 300,000 square kilometers (116,000 square miles) with a population of about 510,000. As you can see, we have a small membership spread over a vast area. The area is broken into seven districts consisting of 130 groups. Usually we hold three committee meetings on the first weekend of February, June and November in Sudbury because of its central location, and an assembly on the last weekend of September, which is rotated through the districts. In the past two years, all area meetings and assemblies have been virtual and have done well, though attendance was down. The last two years have brought on a new set of challenges, and new ways (to us) of carrying the message. Shortly after Covid started, the area began having a virtual meeting three nights a week, and quite a few groups moved to virtual meetings for the interim. This was a good thing because in Ontario we have several lockdowns where face-to-face meetings were not permitted. Regular face-to-face meetings are back up and running, though limited to only 25 members. I hope that some of the virtual meetings become permanent groups. We have seen a lot of new people from small communities and rural Ontario join us because there are no regular meetings anywhere near them. It would be nice to

■ Estimates of A.A. Groups and Members as of December 31, 2021¹

	Groups	Members
United States	64,541	1,350,415
Canada	5,074	86,036
Sub-Total²	69,615	1,436,451
Correctional facilities	1,522	38,299
Loners, Internationalist, Homers	1	208
U.S. & Canada Total:	71,138	1,474,958
Outside U.S. & Canada	49,317	492,655
Worldwide Total:³	120,455	1,967,613

1. The General Service Office does not keep membership records. The information shown here is based on reports given by groups listed with GSO, and does not represent an actual count of those who consider themselves A.A. members. The decrease in groups and members is not reflective of the pandemic, it is due to a more accurate database.

2. In April of 2021, at the 71st General Service Conference, it was recommended that the U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings." We currently have 309 Virtual Groups in the U.S. and Canada listed with the GSO.

3. We are aware of A.A. activity in approximately 180 countries, including 66 autonomous general service offices beyond the U.S./Canada. Annually we attempt to contact those GSOs and groups that request to be listed in our records. Where current data is lacking we use an earlier year's figures.

use this technology to get meetings and support set up in our remote communities, but the cost of internet and availability in these areas may work against us. It is an honor and privilege to be asked to serve as the Area 84 delegate — *Paul F.*

Ontario (Western): Area 86 currently serves approximately 960 groups, of which 617 groups are active with four being virtual. There are 10,500–11,000 alcoholics in Area 86. We are geographically situated in Western Ontario, Canada and are blessed to have three Great Lake shorelines, Huron, Erie, Ontario, and Georgian Bay, as predominant bodies of water within the area. Every year we host a pre-Conference spring assembly and a fall assembly. In the odd year at the fall assembly, we elect our five area officers. In even-numbered years we have three area committee meetings; in odd years we hold four area committee meetings with December being primarily for subcommittee elections (nine positions). If you have ever been curious about visiting Niagara Falls on the Canadian side, you would be standing in Area 86. There are many entry points available for our friendly neighbors to the south, and with bridges having names like Blue Water, Ambassador, Rainbow, and Peace, you know you will always be welcome in Area 86. We participate and support the ODC (Ontario Delegates Committee) meeting

and CERAASA (Canadian Eastern Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly), rotating biannually. We have a new initiative, the ECDO (Eastern Canada Delegates' Orientation), which is a virtual conference orientation-style meeting started by our Eastern Canada trustee Jan L. and includes all 10 areas of Eastern Canada. We also share the starting points with our neighbors to the East Area 83 as you begin your journey toward our scenic North Country to visit Areas 84 and 85. We are polite and friendly and love nothing more than helping the still-suffering alcoholic and welcoming our A.A. friends to Area 86 Western Ontario. — *Jeff S.*

Oregon: Area 58 is comprised of over 1,000 groups within 36 districts, three of which are Spanish-speaking districts. I'm also honored and excited to announce that we have added American Sign Language (ASL) groups to our District 16. In October we held a virtual ASL-translated GSR school with around 20 people in attendance. I am so proud of the work they continue to put in! Most of Oregon's population is on the I-5 Corridor, which runs north and south on the west side of the Cascade Mountains. Portland, Salem, Eugene, Medford, and most of Oregon's other larger cities are in this section of our state. Our other groups are to the east and west and throughout the Cascades, which tend to be more rural areas. We hold four service assemblies throughout the year, which we have been having virtually. We are eagerly looking forward to returning to our process of rotating locations throughout the state. February is our pre-Conference assembly; May is our post-Conference assembly. September is our General Service Assembly (when our area officers are elected). During our service assembly in November, our newly elected area officers and service committees rotate into their positions. Area 58 is a GSR-driven area, which well demonstrates our "upside-down triangle." We are fortunate to enjoy outstanding leadership from our DCMs, service committee members, area officers, and our collective past area servants. Our area actively participates in PNC (Pacific Northwest Conference), PRAASA (Pacific Regional Alcoholics Anonymous Service Assembly), and the Pacific Regional Forum. Many of our DCMs and GSRs are very involved in all these events, and as years go by their attendance increases. I'm honored to be a small part of our Oregon Area 58 family. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you all to come visit us (virtually or physically). — *Amber N.*

Puerto Rico: Area 77 is composed of seven districts, and within these districts are 73 Spanish-speaking groups. To this we add 12 English-speaking groups, which are a challenge to our area as we try to integrate them as a linguistic district. Efforts are continuing to accomplish a diverse but unified service area. Area and district meetings are held monthly, with area meetings rotating within each district and district meetings rotating among the groups. Every October we conduct a Budgetary Assembly, and every November on an odd year, we conduct an Electoral Assembly. In our area service office, both English and Spanish literature is available; Twelfth Step

FAST FACTS:

Of the delegates representing the 93 service areas across the U.S. and Canada, the average age was 57, with the oldest delegate being 80 and the youngest 35. The average length of sobriety for delegates was 22 years, with the longest being 43 years and the shortest being 8. The average length of involvement in service was 17 years, the longest being 37 years and the shortest being 6.

calls are answered and allocated. Group info is distributed, a part-time employee keeps track of contributions and responds to groups' activities, and supports the community to stay connected. With the coming of the pandemic times, a boom of virtual meetings started. However, more and more groups are opening their doors, resulting in six meetings still being virtual. This is a challenge to incorporate into the service structure. Another effect of Covid-19 has been a 35% membership decrease — another challenge to overcome. Still there's light at the end of the tunnel. Last but not less important is my area's need to catch up with technology. Knowing that it's here to stay, we are making efforts to stay in tune. In a changing world, our office is always ready to fulfill our primary purpose: carry the message to the sick and suffering alcoholic. — *Pablo R.*

Québec (Northwest): Area 90 began its activities in August 1976 and covers a vast territory located in north-western Quebec. Our territory covers from Ottawa in the east to Joliette in the west, more than 152 miles — and from the south, the northern part of Montreal to Kuujuaq, Nunavut, the northernmost point, more than 898 miles. We have a total of 374 groups in 24 districts. Although difficult to establish, we estimate about 8,000 members. We have more than 20 groups in correctional institutions and a dozen in treatment centers. Although mainly French-speaking, we are a diverse, multicultural and multilingual area. We have seven regional officers, six standing committees (corrections, treatment and accessibility, literature, public information, La Vigne A.A. [similar to Grapevine], and "Bulletin Heritage," our regional service bulletin). To this are added two working groups, the archives and the website. Our service calendar contains six regional meetings, two general assemblies, a welcome assembly for new servants or any member interested in service as well as a pre-Conference day and a day on the Concepts. Several service activities are added to this calendar, such as information session days (the GSR, the DCM, finance, etc.), and exchange-of-views sessions with the committees. All these activities keep our members in the spirit of service and stimulate interest in it. We have been able to adapt to the new reality, and many of our meetings are either in person or by videoconference, or even in hybrid. Area 90 is vibrant and healthy, thanks to service. — *Normand P.*

Québec (Southwest): Area 87 is the smallest area in the province of Québec. However, it has approximately 38% of the total membership. It is officially a bilingual area — French and English. Area 87 is located in the southwestern part of the province, just north of New York (Area 48) and Vermont (Area 70). In 1991, the area and the intergroup merged together. It was then that our administrative entity, Bureau des Services-Région 87, was born. We have 24 districts and 14 active committees. Before the pandemic, we had about 540 groups. Since then, some of them have already reported to us that they have completely ceased their activities. The postmortem of Covid-19 will force us to review our ways of doing things. The use of technology in our meetings has allowed us to make a new connection with younger members. The language of the younger generation does not mesh well with the language used in 1935 when A.A. was created. It is becoming urgent to communicate our message of hope to current and future generations if we want A.A. to be there for the still-suffering alcoholic. It is imperative that the broad principles that underlie our program remain in place, but we must use a language that is relevant to actual and future generations. For the first time, we had an assembly in February to prepare the delegate for the Conference with presentations by DCMs and GSRs. Although we only presented some of the questions pertaining to four committees, it was a great suc-



cess. Members asked that we do more next year. Reflecting on my responsibilities, this inverted pyramid that defines our structure made me realize that the delegate is nothing more than a servant, of servants of servants. — *Claude M. G.*

Rhode Island: Area 61 Rhode Island — our pint-size state has an expansive A.A. heart. For perspective, you can drive from our north to south tip in an hour, or east to west in 45 minutes. Diminutive size notwithstanding, Rhode Island boasts charming colonial towns, a beautiful coastline, and beaches. Our state motto, *Hope*, figures into A.A.'s history. It was hope that bloomed in 1934 when a Rhode Island native and patient of Dr. Jung, Rowland H., brought the message of the Oxford Group to Ebby T., who later sparked Bill W.'s journey in sobriety. Last fall marked 80 years of A.A. in Rhode Island. Today, Area 61 is comprised of slightly over 300 registered groups, 6,000 members, and 540 meetings per week. The area is divided into seven geographic districts and a linguistic district. Group contributions permit us office space where all monthly area and service committee meetings are held. The past few years have ushered in a new standing committee and a new special committee, Information Services and Rhode Island Service Committee for Young People in A.A., respectively. Five area officers ensure that all districts and standing committees are visited each month. In addition to the quarterly assemblies, we devote eight meetings a year, one in each district, to the "Joy of Service." The annual Rhode Island Convention is held in scenic Newport. Due to pandemic challenges, service meetings have suffered as a result of frequently changing locations. After going virtual for 15 months, we returned to hybrid or in-person meetings. More recently, meetings have reversed course back to hybrid or virtual. On a positive note, the assembly authorized the purchase of audiovisual and computer equipment and Wi-Fi service to support hybrid area committee meetings and service committee meetings at the office. Also advantageous, virtual pre-Conference roundtables and a web-based questionnaire were introduced for 2020 and 2021 Conference preparation. These efforts expanded accessibility and have been effective in reaching Rhode Island groups and gaining their input. — *Alison H.*

South Carolina: Twelve years ago, when I started my general service work in Area 62, our area was struggling with a low prudent reserve (due to high hotel meeting costs) and apathy, demonstrated by low attendance at the area assembly and bickering among ourselves at the business meetings. Five years later, we moved to a cheaper remote retreat location where everyone stayed on-site during the entire weekend of the assembly. There were no outside distractions. The agenda for the assembly was filled with service committee work, and more workshops were added to the assembly weekend. Casual conversations between meetings were about this program of recovery. The business meetings became a much smaller part of the event. It changed us. The number of attendees doubled. Contributions to Area 62 from



groups and districts doubled. We made more funds available to our service committees for service work. We became loving and tolerant and worked through our business issues with grace and love, almost always reaching substantial unanimity when votes were taken. From this experience, we found that any problems in the service structure of Area 62 and this spiritual, principled, and simple program can and will be resolved through practical and pragmatic solutions, so long as we apply the principles of this Fellowship and act with love, grace and tolerance. — *Jack M.*

South Dakota: Where can you find longtimers becoming video-conferencing professionals? Where can you find people shouting from the front of an un-airconditioned room on a hot July day so people in the back can hear over the fans? Where can you attend an area assembly from your tractor? Where can you find a fellowship that wonders if their delegate is wearing pajama pants to the GSC? Why Area 63 of course! With 169 active registered groups and one registered virtual group, the state of South Dakota encompasses Area 63. There are 14 districts; 11 of them are active with the area on a regular basis, and some pop into area events when they can. The pandemic had Area 63 meeting virtually for about a year, and we were able to learn and experience a lot during that time. We found that virtual meetings brought many new faces to assemblies, as well as a few faces we had not seen in a while. There were a few bumps in our virtual road, but we made it through, and it led to a new appreciation and

joy when the area resumed in-person assemblies. This experience was used when the fall assembly voted unanimously to alter our service schedule, beginning in the spring of 2022. We will have three assemblies throughout the year to conduct area business (one of the three will be virtual). The spring conference will be used to discuss GSC agenda items while informing and preparing the delegate for the GSC. The fall conference will be focused on Fellowship, Unity and Service, as well as holding area elections in odd-numbered years. Area 63 utilizes the committee system, similar to the GSC. Committee chairs are elected in odd-numbered years and serve a two-year rotation, apart from the archivist, who serves the area for six years. We are incredibly excited to be launching an updated fancy-pants website as well. The year 1996 called and wanted the old site back, so we decided to join the rest of the 21st century and utilize www.area63aa.com to help carry the message as best we can. Please give it a visit! If you are ever around, please stop by any of our meetings in Area 63. We take Rule #62 very seriously and welcome you to join us as we trudge both hills and plains to happy destiny. May God bless you and keep you until then. — *Katie B.*

Tennessee: Across the rolling hills of east Tennessee through the musical sounds of middle Tennessee to the smells of mouthwatering barbeque in west Tennessee, Area 64 has 613 registered groups that make up a total of 41 districts. We hold four quarterly assemblies annually that travel around the area. In odd-numbered years, we hold our area officer elections. Each of our assembly's host committees acquires a Spanish-speaking interpreter for our two Hispanic districts. Area 64 has eight standing committees and two appointed committees. These committees meet twice at each assembly and continue to do the work of Alcoholics Anonymous in their districts and groups. Some of these committees have chosen to hold workshops each assembly or have general sharing sessions to find better ways of how we can be most effective. We have a standalone archives building in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, which is centralized in our state for all to visit and see the history of A.A. in our area. We also have a strong relationship with young people's service committees, specifically TCYPAA (Tennessee Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous) and occasionally SERCYPAA (Southeastern Regional Conference of Young People in Alcoholics Anonymous). Our area strives to carry the message of Alcoholic Anonymous in all our affairs. I am truly humbled beyond belief to be capable of serving Area 64 in any capacity. — *Shannon C.*

Texas (Northwest): Northwest Texas Area 66 serves an area of 96,000 square miles, from Amarillo in the Panhandle, out southwest to El Paso, and down to the Big Bend area in Alpine. NWTA 66 is comprised of nine districts — three of them in El Paso, with two of those being Spanish-speaking. We have 582 groups registered and 245 are fully active. Our area officers consist of a chair, alternate chair, secretary, alternate secretary, treasurer,

alternate treasurer, and an alternate delegate. We have committee chairs in Archives, Bilingual, Cooperation with the Professional Community, Corrections Facilities, Finance, Grapevine/La Viña, Literature, Newsletter, Public Information, Treatment, and Website. The primary purpose of the Northwest Texas Area Assembly service guidelines is to complement the *The A.A. Service Manual* in items that are particular to our area service structure. The ultimate goal of NWTA 66 is simple: Continue to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic, having our primary purpose foremost in our minds, heart and conscience. — *Shellia D.*

Texas (Southwest): Southwest Texas Area 68 is big in size, population, and spirit! Our 34 districts carry the message in English and Spanish, and our 618 groups speak the language of the heart in English, Spanish, and American Sign Language. Eight of our districts are currently “silent” and without a DCM. Our Silent District Committee reaches out to the groups in these districts so they can remain connected to the rest of A.A. SWTA68 has returned to in-person assemblies and conferences, with each event hosted by a different district. Our online-only experience during the 2020–2021 pandemic was initially strong, but attendance dwindled as the pandemic stretched on and on. It was wonderful to see participation rebound to pre-Covid levels at the first in-person event in July 2021, and the same high level of participation continues into 2022. Interest in a hybrid format appears low at this time. We have nine standing committees: Archives, Bilingual, Correctional Facilities, Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community (PI/CPC), Newsletter, Grapevine/La Viña, and Treatment, plus our two newest committees, Accessibilities and Technology. We were very fortunate to create our Technology Committee at the final voting assembly of 2019 just before Covid struck. All area com-

munication is available in English and Spanish, and our Bilingual Committee translates “on the fly” during our area assemblies and conferences. I am so grateful to be a part of SWTA68 and to have the opportunity to serve as delegate. Our area is poised to grow and thrive for many years to come. — *Barbara R.*

Vermont: Area 70 has an aging population of people who perhaps feel less ease and familiarity working with computers and smartphones. Therefore, the move to virtual area meetings and assemblies over the past two years has sharply reduced attendance at service functions. Area 70 has yet to make a decision on resuming in-person service meetings, though many recovery groups continue to meet in person as well as virtually. We canceled our annual state convention in April and will be holding our pre-Conference sharing session and full area assembly via videoconference on March 20. The Area 70 Archives Committee chair has established an archives repository in a former mill property in Bennington, and the Area 70 Corrections Committee chair publishes a monthly newsletter. — *Michael K.*

Washington State (East): Formed in 1992 as the result of a “split” from Area 72, Area 92 is relatively large geographically, yet sparse in population. With 491 active groups, our boundaries reach north to the Canadian border, west to the Cascade Mountain range, east into a small northwest corner of Montana, and south into a small section of Oregon along its northern border. We have 25 districts, four of which are Spanish-speaking and are designated as non-geographic linguistic districts. Our districts bid on hosting two area assemblies and two quarterlies, as well as standing committee workshops held the month prior to each quarterly event. At these workshops, area committees support our districts in breakout sessions sharing ideas and information regard-



ing their Twelfth Step efforts. The March workshop focus is primarily on the GSC agenda in preparation for an “informed” discussion at the pre-Conference April assembly. As all of Alcoholics Anonymous, our area Fellowship stepped up to the challenge of the 2020 pandemic. We are emerging with a whole new opportunity before us in the use of virtual technology. Our new technology committee will help extend the hand of A.A. in carrying our message of hope. The potential to enhance communication with our Latino, Native American, and the many ethnic communities is an opportunity to be embraced. The advantages to this virtual component are just being realized. Exciting times lie ahead indeed! I am honored and humbled to serve the groups of this wonderful Area 92 as their Panel 72 delegate. — *Ben N.*

Wisconsin (Northern Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan): Area 74 consists of the northern half of Wisconsin and most of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. We have access to two great waterways, the Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers to the west, and the Great Lakes to the east and north. To drive from one end of the area to the other would be 475 miles and take about eight hours. We have 24 districts with 630 active groups and two active virtual groups. During the last two years, our Public Information Committee and our webmaster held a workshop on the Meeting Guide app and developed a system to assist the districts that did not have their own web page to upload their meeting information. As a result of this effort, the Meeting Guide app works in



most of the area. We have four assemblies a year and four area committee meetings, with a fifth being optional. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we held virtual service meetings until we held a hybridstyle delegates workshop in March of 2021. All the assemblies have since been hybrid and the area committee meetings have been both hybrid and virtual. There is currently a discussion in our area on “Where do we go from here?” Some of the questions we are wrangling with are: Do we continue with the hybrid format into the foreseeable future? How does a hybrid meeting fit into accessibility? Do we discontinue the hybrid format after the pandemic passes? More will be revealed to us as we discuss these issues at our assemblies. Our monthly newsletter, the *Now and Then*, has been in print since July of 1959. Today the *Now and Then* is delivered mostly electronically via email, but there are some special requests to mail hard copies via USPS. Overall participation in the Area 74 service structure has taken a dip, but the enthusiasm has not waned. We are still committed to carrying the message to the still-suffering alcoholic. — *Bryon B.*

Wyoming: Area 76 is the ninth-largest state in area and has the smallest population of any state. There is more to Wyoming than wind and road closures. Even more spectacular than the geographical beauty are the lives that have been transformed since A.A. got its start in Wyoming, in 1945, with one alcoholic talking to another in Evanston. We have twelve districts, 106 listed groups, and approximately 1,847 members who carry the A.A. message to the still-suffering alcoholic. There are two assemblies and one convention each year. We average 125 people at our in-person assemblies. Our assemblies mirror the General Service Conference (GSC). Area 76 contributes additional money to the General Service Office at the end of each year to offset delegate expenses at conference. The alternate delegate facilitates orientation for districts and new General Service Representatives (GSR). The area chair facilitates a monthly sharing session. With this rotation, our goal is to focus on the needs of the GSRs. The *Tributary* is the area newsletter that is distributed at each assembly and convention and posted on the area website. We are part of the West Central Region and participate in the yearly service conference and the forum every other year. In March 2020, our members reached out to local newspapers to ensure the public knew how to contact Alcoholics Anonymous when many of our meeting doors were closed. Members held tailgate meetings, various virtual meetings, met in the parking lot in case someone showed up, and a few groups continued to meet in person. Our assemblies were virtual, but we had in-person conventions. Most groups now meet in person, and some groups have transitioned to hybrid meetings and/or hybrid groups. Our members participate in two weekly virtual meetings with the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC). On behalf of Area 76, I would like to thank the West Central Region and the General Service Office for the many virtual opportunities they have provided to keep us connected and informed during the past two years. — *Mary M.*

■ Presentations



Going Beyond Fear

Greetings fellow Conference members! My name is Sheryl T., and I am an alcoholic. I have the privilege of serving Area 69, Utah, as their Panel 71 delegate. I want to thank Steve for sending me the loving invitation to present at this, the 72nd General Service Conference. My topic is “Going Beyond Fear.” What an order!

Our Big Book describes fear this way: “It was an evil and corroding thread; the fabric of our existence was shot through with it.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Fourth Edition, page 67) As a newcomer to A.A., I was afraid of everything and everyone. The biggest challenge I faced was that you spoke of God, and I was afraid of God. The God of my childhood was a punishing, scorekeeping deity to be feared. Alcoholics Anonymous helped me change my early conception of a higher power to one of unconditional love that will guide me, and help me to live a life of joy and purpose. I learned to take action to be rid of my fears. Working the Twelve Steps, lots of prayer, and working with other women helped me move from fear to faith.

It is hard to fathom the kind of fear our co-founders and early members dealt with when there was no Big Book with its Twelve Steps, and no guidance on how to manage the struggles that beset them daily. The early members did agree that dependence upon a power greater than themselves had relieved them of the compulsion to drink when their human desire to stop consuming alcohol failed them. There was no time for fear! These early ones worked together tirelessly to help others dying

of alcoholism. Their action led them to some successes and strengthened their belief that they had a message of hope and recovery to share. In 1939, they recorded this message in a text which continues to save countless lives around the world.

Do we have anything to fear in A.A. today? I would say that anything that threatens the unity of our movement is something to be feared. The past two years have seen outside issues and divisiveness, fueled by a global pandemic, become an “evil and corroding thread” trying to make its way into our Fellowship, attempting to take root and grow. In sharing with other delegates during these tumultuous times, I have learned that my area is not alone in these struggles. In some areas, fear has given way to anger and infighting among members of home groups, districts, and area committees. Why the fear and anger? Is it because of change? Is it because of technology? Is it because Alcoholics Anonymous had to turn on a dime and hold meetings and service events in different formats than the ones we grew up with? Are we not carrying the same message, just in new and different ways? When we are fighting with each other, are we not wasting the precious time we could be using to carry the message?

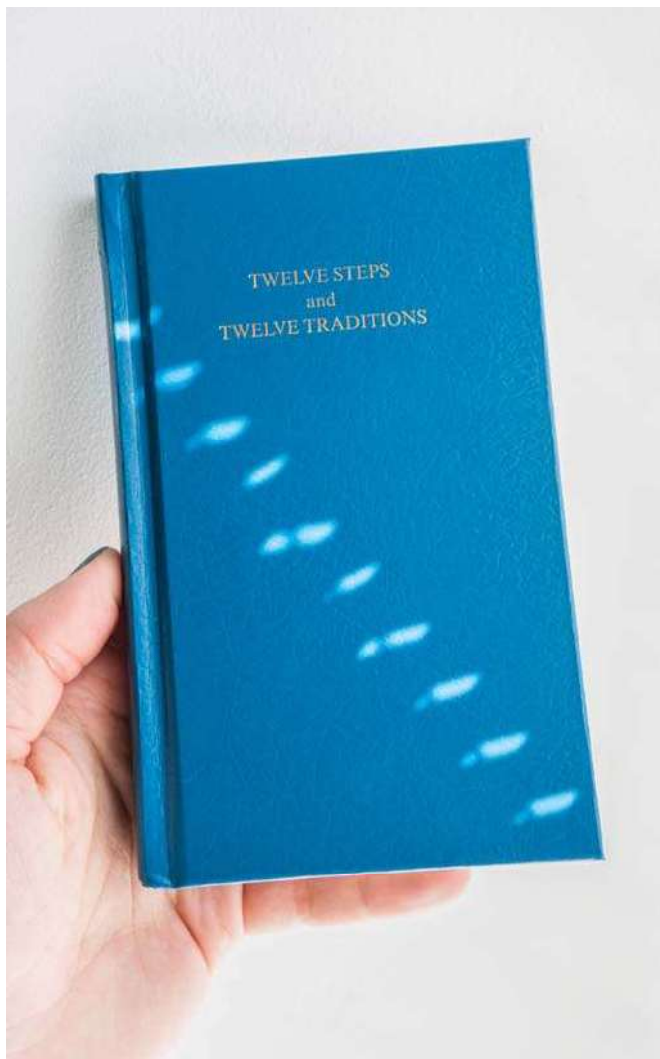
What are we to do? How are members today going to grow past these very real fears? Well, thanks to our co-founders and early members, we have Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts that give us a set of principles to help us weather any storm. We know that trust in a higher power and action are the solutions, just as they were for our forefathers. Again, there is no time for fear when our precious unity is at stake. We must

move past our differences and work to ensure our unity and our future.

How do we move past our differences? Dr. Bob was known to say that everything we do in A.A. boils down to Love and Service. We are all servant leaders. If we can treat each other with just a little more kindness, patience and tolerance, newcomers will get the same warm welcome to Alcoholics Anonymous we received. If we can be better examples of Recovery, Unity and Service and treat each other the way we would like to be treated, newcomers will want what we have. Our primary purpose will remain intact, and the message we share will continue to be one of hope. In the end, I believe we all want what is best for Alcoholics Anonymous, and that is for us to remain unified and strong, not fractured and full of fear.

In closing, I would like to share a quote from Bill W., which appears on page 322 in *The Language of the Heart*: “And above all, let us remember that great legion who still suffer from alcoholism and who are still without hope. Let us, at any cost or sacrifice, so improve our communication with all these that they may find what we have found — a new life of freedom under God.”

Sheryl T., Utah



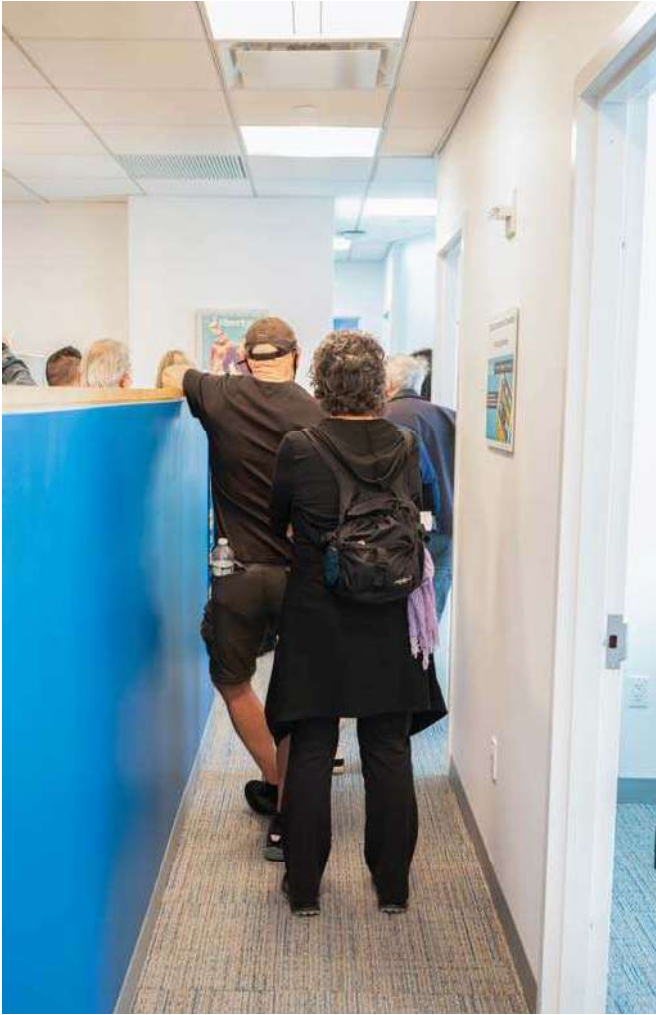
How Do A.A.s Go to Any Lengths to Recover, Unify and Serve?

Our General Service Conference theme this year, “AA Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service,” is quite appropriate for the shift in the ways we communicate that the Fellowship has experienced over the last few years. As our basic text states, “If you have decided you want what we have and are willing to go to any length to get it — then you are ready to take certain steps.” (*Alcoholics Anonymous*, p. 58) Members have found a multitude of ways (or “lengths”) to communicate to address the challenges of not being able to meet in person, whether it is for recovery, unity or service. We had begun to explore new technologies even before the pandemic physically isolated so many of us.

As Bill W. stated in 1960 (*Our Great Responsibility*, “An Era of Change,” p.104), “We live in an era of change. Our Twelve Steps probably won’t change; the traditions not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service — let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever.” So the ways we communicate have changed significantly and continue to change since Bill spoke those words in 1960, but as we often say “progress, not perfection”!

The importance of unity is highlighted in the Tradition One essay in our book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (p. 130), “Neither he nor anybody else can survive unless he carries the A.A. message. The moment this Twelfth Step work forms a group, another discovery is made — that most individuals cannot recover unless there *is* a group.” Home groups have adapted over the course of the pandemic including meeting outside with spacing, meeting virtually, meeting in a hybrid format, and meeting in-person. Masks have sometimes been required by the meeting locations at times, but may not require it at the moment, so some currently leave it to personal preference. It has been amazing to see how our home groups adapt to “new normals” even as they continue to change. So, many groups that already existed when the pandemic started have flourished and even grown through these adaptations such as my home group has. Also, we have seen a significant growth of virtual meetings even as restrictions eased here in Florida, even seeing some members who have never been to an in-person meeting in their sobriety. So that idea of “most individuals cannot recover unless there *is* a group” has been very supported as we have explored new forms of communicating.

In recovery, when we speak of “going to any length” in this new age of A.A., I believe we have seen a double-edged sword with the pandemic. Since we have some tendencies toward isolation, some of our members have taken the pandemic as an opportunity to isolate, while some of our members have jumped in with both feet with our new ways of communicating. For example, I have been able to attend virtual meetings based in different countries on the same day — it has been amazing! Even sponsorship utilizing virtual technologies is possible now, and I hear many stories of new multinational meet-



ings being well attended. I wouldn't have been able to imagine all of the possibilities now available to us, such as hearing speakers virtually that I may have only heard via a recording previously.

We are even working on new “manners of organizing” or, if you will, of serving, such as the new virtual groups and virtual districts being a part of the general service structure. We have, as an area, encouraged and helped virtual-only meetings get listed with the General Service Office and local service entities. Also, there has been an explosion of meetings and workshops on topics relating to service such as Traditions, Concepts and the Service Manual. The Fellowship has been able to enjoy and benefit from past (and current) trusted servants sharing on these topics, leading to a more well-informed fellowship. Our area has been meeting virtually for almost two years, although we are working toward in-person assemblies. We are also investigating the way we do business in light of our new experiences, including the possibility of conducting our business in a hybrid format using in-person combined with virtual meeting technology. The ability of committees to meet virtually between business meetings has increased communications incredibly; innovation and ideas are flowing!

I never personally considered the possibility of needing to find a meeting with the whole country shut down

due to a pandemic when my sponsor originally asked me that often repeated “Are you willing to go to any lengths?” Amazingly all aspects of our Fellowship went to the lengths to continue on carrying the messages of unity, service and recovery. From a Society that has a history of reluctant or, at a minimum, slow change, the past few years changes have been at warp speed. Our flexibility has grown by leaps and bounds, and hopefully it doesn't take other emergencies to continue making progress in these areas! We need to remain relevant and be willing, as a Fellowship, to go to any lengths. I am willing, are you? Thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Thomas W., South Florida/Bahamas/VI/Antigua

How to Reach Anyone, Anywhere

would like to start off by quoting the Responsibility Statement and giving a short piece of history behind it.

The Responsibility Statement reads:

I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that: I am responsible.

It was written for the 1965 A.A. International Convention in Toronto. A former A.A. trustee, Al S., is the author of the Responsibility Statement. In the souvenir book for the 1965 Convention, Dr. Jack Norris writes: “We must remember that A.A. will continue strong only so long as each of us freely and happily gives it away to another person, only as each of us takes our fair share of responsibility for sponsorship of those who still suffer, for the growth and integrity of our group, for our intergroup activities, and for A.A. as a whole. It is in taking responsibility that real freedom and the enduring satisfactions of life are found. A.A. has given us the power to choose — to drink or not to drink — and in doing so has given us the freedom to be responsible for ourselves. As we become responsible for ourselves, we are free to be responsible for our share in A.A., and unless we happily accept this responsibility we lose A.A. (“What is the history behind A.A.’s Responsibility Statement?” — GSO Archives, GSO Newsletter, Box 4-5-9)

So, how do we reach anyone anywhere? The answer lies within each of us. Who is anyone? Hopefully, we all answer that with “anyone who has an alcoholic problem.” This would include anyone, regardless of gender, race, sexual orientation, social status, etc.

Where is anywhere? Alcoholics are found everywhere but I believe the real question I need to ask is am I willing to go anywhere? I need to be willing to go where they are and make them aware of our program. We reach them by making A.A. available to them.

This is done in many ways:

Public Information — The purpose of PI service work is to provide accurate A.A. information to the public when requested. PI committees visit schools, businesses and community meetings for this purpose. They also serve as resources for our friends in the local media, emphasizing our Traditions of anonymity, singleness of purpose and

non-affiliation, as well as offering A.A. public service announcements to radio and television stations.

Cooperation with the Professional Community — Members of these committees provide information about A.A. to those who have contact with alcoholics through their professions. This group includes healthcare, EAP and HR professionals; educators; members of the clergy; lawyers; social workers; military professionals; government officials; and those working in the field of alcoholism. Information is provided about where we are, what we are, what we can do, and what we cannot do.

Corrections and Treatment — The purpose of corrections, treatment, or combined institutions committees, is to coordinate the work of individual members and groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics in hospitals, alcoholism treatment and rehabilitation centers, and correctional facilities. In many areas, liaisons have been established among these committees — e.g., corrections, treatment, accessibilities and PI committees send a liaison to CPC committee meetings. There are many instances of overlapping responsibilities. It should be clearly established that A.A. committees are not in competition with each other. Local circumstances determine who does what (taking from the A.A. Guidelines for PI, CPC, Corrections and Treatment).

As A.A. continues to change to meet the needs of potential members, I believe we are reaching Anyone Anywhere. This begins with an individual member, group, district, area forwarding ideas to A.A. as an agenda item for the General Service Conference. As those ideas are discussed, voted on and become advisory actions, we see change in A.A. Perhaps sometimes they are unpopular to some members and groups. We A.A.s are not always quick to accept change. However, as time goes on we see the hand of God spoken through our voice. I need to ask myself what am I afraid of? Am I afraid that the A.A. I got sober in isn't the A.A. I now participate in? Thank God it isn't! I am of course referring to the Fellowship. I believe that you will agree that it is necessary to follow the path or, if you will, the clear-cut directions that are masterfully detailed within our Big Book. Therefore we can only hope that A.A. continues to change to meet those potential members that we will meet at the treatment centers, correctional facilities, at our home groups, through our doctors, lawyers, counselors, faith leaders, etc.

I would like to leave you with a quote of our co-founder Bill W:

“We live in an era of change, our Twelve Steps probably won't change; the Traditions, not at all likely. But our manner of communication, our manner of organizing ourselves for function, for service — let us hope that this goes on changing for the better, forever.” (Bill W., 1960 GSC talk)

Gordon N., Southern Illinois

A.A. Around the World

Greetings Conference members. My name is Trish L., and I am an alcoholic. I serve as the trustee-at-large/Canada and it is truly a privilege to be

among you today to talk very briefly (I was told five minutes and I will try to stick to five minutes) about “A.A. Around the World.” The theme of this year's Conference, “A.A. Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service,” is so very apt when talking about our current international work. It also provides much-needed hope in a troubled world, where we can all be grateful for the unity and principles of A.A. which allow us such grace.

As many of you know, to the best of our knowledge there are currently (and this information can be accessed on the aa.org web site under the “About A.A.” heading) more than 123,000 A.A. groups around the world; our literature has been translated into more than 100 languages; there is an A.A. presence in about 180 nations worldwide; and our membership is estimated at two million. That's the bare statistical information. What it doesn't convey is the love, the commitment and the respect for Alcoholics Anonymous, our message of recovery and our Twelve Steps, Traditions and Concepts that our compatriots around the world hold in their hearts, and the work they do to carry the message in their respective countries — many times in the face of obstacles that we in the U.S. and Canada could not even imagine.

That has been especially true during these pandemic years. While I light-heartedly refer to myself sometimes as the “trustee-at-small” (and my husband calls me the “trustee-at-home”) because of the little squares that we have been seeing each other in, those squares have nonetheless been the windows through which we have been able to see and participate in the larger A.A. world. I'm sure a lot of you have been to a number of international meetings by now. That untethered freedom of time and space has allowed each of us to have a sense of that “at-large” world. Your trustees-at-large though (one from Canada — that's me right now, and one from the U.S — that would be Marita R.) are given a special glimpse into the service structures around the world. We are given the opportunity to share and learn about carrying the message in ways both tried and true, and innovative. There are some 60 General Service Offices throughout the world, each of them unique, each of them serving their respective fellowships in the way that works best for their particular needs. While Bill's initial vision was for a central A.A. global future, he soon came to realize that local matters required local structures. So, although the General Service Conference Charter adopted at the St. Louis Convention envisaged that our Conference would eventually have “Sections” in foreign countries, each country instead developed its own, autonomous service structure. While more or less generally patterned after the U.S./Canada structure, they are all independent.

Since the last U.S./Canada General Service Conference, we have been able to respond to invitations and attend 19 service-related sessions, events or celebrations. All of that “travel” has been virtual. That is a high number, but it's also the breadth and nature of the events we have been able to attend that have been the silver lining in the pandemic cloud — the A.A. 2.0.

We have had an opportunity to witness events such as the first anniversary of the creation of a National

Archives in Chile, a labour of love that speaks volumes about the care for our A.A. history. I was able to attend a Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee meeting of the Asia-Oceania Service Meeting Zone, to share some World Service Meeting experience in that regard. We went to a celebration for the 52nd Anniversary of the formation of the General Service Office in Mexico. These types of events are ones that the virtual world has allowed us to be part of. In a “pre-pandemic” world, physical travel would not really have been feasible or practical (especially to the one-day events). I was especially moved to be able to attend the virtual Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (a zonal meeting) in Johannesburg, South Africa, in September. Normally, trustees-at-large do not attend zonal meetings — our office does. But again, the virtual world made this possible. The delegates had been brought to Johannesburg so they could have access to stable internet (something not available everywhere), and to hear the stories of their fledgling challenges was very powerful. How do you keep a home group together when the members struggle to get even a couple of days of sobriety? How do you carry the message in the many different languages of Africa? (And kudos here for the valiant work that our Publishing department does through translations and licensing — it’s a huge and vital job.)

The North/South Connection event held just after Conference last year was another example of being unified in love and service, by bringing together people from throughout our home zone structure, from Ungava Bay in the North to Antarctica in the South for one day (May 15, 2021), sharing experience, strength and hope in carrying the message to Remote Communities. And we are expanding that in 2022, with a Special Virtual Forum on July 16, working with our partner structures in Argentina and Chile to expand our discussion of remote to include

not just geography, but language and culture as well. Please join us as we extend the hand of A.A. throughout Canada, the U.S., Mexico, Central and South America.

At Marita’s suggestion, I did a tally of my virtual travel. It includes some multiple events (such as our monthly REDELA meetings which Marita will be talking about), and some special events like North/South Connection. The total is 432,318 km or 166,282 miles. That means I’ve virtually gone around the world more than 10 times. Believe me, as a chronic alcoholic, closeted away in my house drinking until I passed out every night, afraid of everyone and everything (especially my future) and not having any solution but alcohol, I could not have dreamed of being part of something so large, so vast, so spiritual and so humbling. Thank you all so much for that opportunity.

Trish L., Trustee-at-Large/Canada

**REDELA
(Meeting of the Americas)**

The 22nd Meeting of the Americas (REDELA) held last October in Guatemala is a body of 35 countries representing South and Central America, Mexico, U.S./Canada and the Caribbean which Trish L. and I as your trustees-at-large and World Service Meeting delegates, attended on behalf of our groups and the General Service Board. REDELA is an acronym for *Reunión de las Américas*. The theme “The Americas United Under the Three Legacies of A.A.” shined brightly during our discussions. Because of the restrictions on travel, we were not able to participate in person. However, because we sent our interpreters Hernán M. and Luciana C. with





technical equipment, we were able to participate remotely. Because we added the virtual component to REDELA this year, Brazil, Panama and Paraguay were also able to attend virtually. Like many things during these pandemic times, we can always find the opportunity to serve others if we look.

Many participants brought their national flags to display. As the week continued, I realized that although there were many flags in the room, there really are no borders involved in A.A. We share, serve and grow together.

Listening to each country's highlights, it became clear to me that the pandemic has had serious economic effect on all our service structures. While the delegates' ability to participate was difficult, there is an even greater need to share our experiences with each other.

Many of the topics are those we could hear in our service meetings. There was discussion about how to include the participation of women at all levels of service; how to list and integrate online meetings into the service structure; as well as ensuring safety and respect for all in our meetings. Our general manager, Bob W., gave a keynote address stressing the 36 principles. Trish did a wonderful presentation on "Communications in the Digital Age: threats and opportunities." Racy, our international desk staff person updated all on "A.A. advances in social media," while I was given the opportunity to present on "Our Seventh Tradition and how it is working now." We shared common challenges and new solutions in robust discussions.

The previous bi-annual REDELA was pre-pandemic and much has changed since then. The U.S./Canada service structure has had two virtual Conferences since then and we were able to share our experience with other structures, most of which had virtual conferences as well. Out of the need for sharing lessons learned, REDELA has

grown again. We now meet monthly via a digital platform in Spanish. Trish and I are full participants because of the excellent work by our interpreter Hernán using an audio app in conjunction with the virtual meeting. Discussion has been wide-ranging from Licensing and Literature issues, online meetings, and the growth of digital media during the pandemic. We have been able to learn from each other how to continue to carry the message in new ways. Brazil had led the way in Digital Media platforms and messaging; Mexico carries the message into Corrections facilities via a half hour weekly TV meeting; and other countries shared their best ideas with each other so that we can all grow.

An exciting item that has come from our monthly meeting has been the expressed need of a REDELA Fund. Like our Conference members sending in a contribution to defray some of the costs of this Conference, REDELA countries also contribute to defray the REDELA meeting. Many countries are unable to contribute in full for various reasons from difficult economic times, being a young service structure, or the pandemic reducing the contributions from the groups. Some countries fees are paid by their Country-to-Country sponsor but that also adds a strain as the sponsor country may be going through some of the same economic conditions. Our service structure has been covering the shortfall so that this meeting continues. The solution found by REDELA was to create a REDELA Fund where countries that have a little extra money can contribute to hold in an account for those countries who may need assistance. REDELA is on its way to becoming self-supporting, another Coming of Age moment for our home zone, and another moment to celebrate.

What I felt coming out of the REDELA meeting was the amount of work yet to be done. They have all the same

struggles we do — remote communities, local literature translations, and the need for sponsors to teach the love of serving the fellowship to their spouses. Roberto from Argentina may have summed up best the feelings of the delegates at the end of the conference when he said: “You open my heart and when my heart is open, we connect forever. Even when my memory fails, my heart will remember you.”

Marita R., Trustee-at-Large/U.S.

Trustees’ Ad Hoc Committee on Participation Of Online Groups in the U.S./Canada General Service Structure

Please note that the following progress report, submitted as background for the 72nd General Service Conference, will continue to be updated up until Conference. It will be presented at Conference with the latest information.

PROGRESS REPORT

SECTION 1 — Background

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 has 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.

Participation in A.A. life up to 2020 had logically relied on geographic structural organization, particularly for general service work. Has A.A. now outgrown a solely geographic structure? What new opportunities have arisen? What are we missing? What are the challenges? What are the constantly changing emergent concerns? The virtual reality will be with us long past the pandemic, and we need to be looking to the future.

These and many other questions were top of mind for delegates to the 71st General Service Conference. A result were two advisory actions directly pertaining to the topic:

- I. *The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group’s preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group’s primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as “International Correspondence Meetings.”*
- II. *The General Service Board form a committee to explore future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada General Service structure.*

An office working group was formed to respond to Advisory Action I, regarding the listing of virtual groups.

Advisory Action II, led by the General Service Board chairperson constituted an ad hoc committee of the GSB to explore the participation of online groups in our U.S./Canada general service structure. The following is a progress report from the ad hoc committee on our efforts.

It is important to note in the progress report that when we say “virtual,” we are referring to not only online groups but also telephone groups including the various formats our groups choose to use such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, What’s App, email, etc.

As an ad hoc committee, we have developed a Composition, Scope and Procedure document, approved by the General Service Board, to guide our work. An important part of our scope is to be useful to groups as they list and to learn how to support changes, make improvements and provide services needed. We are in the gathering of information phase — the experience that we will need to draw on is being created as we work on this. Since the ad hoc committee was formed in August 2021, and after the Composition, Scope and Procedure document was developed and approved, the committee has met seven times, thoughtfully moving forward with the subject. Since this is new territory, without a parallel, our research is of necessity forward-looking rather than historical. We have therefore been meeting with other entities to try and gather shared experience, strength and hope from many perspectives.

As a committee, we are also keenly aware of our international responsibilities and perspectives. While our committee is looking at participation specifically in the U.S./Canada structure, we are also mindful of any impact that policy and/or procedural decisions may have on other service structures. It’s important to the Board and to this ad hoc committee that there is always global unity and strength as the A.A. message is carried around the world. We as an ad hoc committee understand that we can learn from our friends around the world in terms of their experience.

SECTION 2 — Existing tools to help the Fellowship

A number of possible agenda items were submitted to the General Service Conference coordinator for consideration as agenda items for the 2022 General Service Conference. The Conference coordinator forwarded these items to the appropriate trustees’ committee, and that committee chose to forward those items to this ad hoc committee. All of these possible agenda items were discussed, and while the trustees’ General Service Conference Committee ultimately did not recommend the forwarding of the items as agenda items, they did give a snapshot of current ideas and thinking. Primary among them was the formation of virtual areas. The current process for forming a new delegate area is outlined in the Service Manual, pages 108 and 109, and there is an extensive application form that can be found online on aa.org.

Another important document is the updated New Group Listing Guideline Form, which has been developed by the GSO Working Group. This document can also be found online on aa.org.

SECTION 3 — Shared experience that we have been able to gather so far:

SOURCES: GSO Working Group

This group has been tasked with implementing the advisory action mentioned before: The U.S./Canada General Service Structure recognize online groups and encourage their participation, listing those groups who ask to be listed within the group's preferred district and area, with the default option being the location of the group's primary contact. This supersedes the 1997 Advisory Action that designated online groups as "International Correspondence Meetings."

The ad hoc committee was grateful to attend one of the working group's regular meetings and heard from Craig W. (Group Services coordinator), Jeff W. (staff coordinator) and Racy J. (International coordinator) about the progress they have been making.

As part of the implementation of the advisory action, there was a thorough review of the New Group Form and a new one was created. This new form is both service material and a listing form in one. Discussion points include listing in the U.S./Canada service structure, meeting lists versus listing for communication purposes throughout our service structure, the recent advisory action regarding online groups, suggestions for how new groups can make a good start, helps inform the discussion of a group versus a meeting and of course the form itself which assists all groups including virtual groups listing with GSO.

The working group has consistently come across the question of geographic service structure with non-geographic groups and how to help most effectively facilitate that conversation. From an international perspective, the office continues to get inquiries from members from other countries wanting to weigh in on our Conference and list with us. The working group has also frequently been asked about how to allow an international member to be a GSR. Considering we are a U.S./Canada structure and as far as listing goes, we only have the capacity to list those trusted servants in the U.S. and Canada. The biggest challenge the working group has come across is an advisory action that gives direction but also asks the GSO to list groups in districts and areas we have not even had the chance to communicate in detail with or they themselves are just starting to have conversations about. Again, we are all learning...

Online Intergroup of A.A.:

Virtual meetings are not new — far from it.

From the OIAA website *"The first A.A. meetings online used Bulletin Boards and were around 1986. Email groups started forming in the early nineties and the development of the worldwide internet rapidly fueled the growth and variety of groups. The first online A.A. group, Lamp-lighters, was formed in 1990, and has met by email continuously since then. Now there are hundreds of A.A. groups with thousands of members, connected together through this Online Intergroup. Using various mechanisms such as video conferencing, phone conferencing, message boards, email*

list-serve, and chatrooms, the A.A. community is constantly connecting and finding new, creative ways to communicate the experience, strength and hope of recovery in Alcoholics Anonymous.

Ad hoc members attended, along with our staff resource person, a meeting with the Unity Committee of OIAA. We were to find out more about OIAA and their current concerns and experiences. There were about 45 participants in the meeting, coming from very different perspectives and experiences. It was quite international — there were at least four countries other than the U.S. and Canada in the meeting. If there was a common concern, it was expressed as a certain amount of frustration at a lack of recognition of the value and place of virtual meetings, particularly at the district level. It has active service committees, with a Twelfth Step Committee, PI Committee, Website Committee and others. While it cannot offer groups participation in the General Service structure (and there was some frustration voiced in that regard), it does provide service opportunities.

Other Twelve Step Fellowships

The Group Services desk stays in communication with other Twelve Step fellowships both through regular communication, and through the Day of Sharing (last held on December 7, 2021). Some fellowships are in the same position as we are, transitioning and going through growing pains. Others are further along a path forward. Here is some shared experience. Please note that each of the fellowships have their own structure — and all of them are different from our A.A. structure. Many of them for example, have a single World Service/General Service structure, so their experiences and solutions may not be directly applicable to the U.S./Canada situation. All fellowships agreed that the virtual world is part of a permanent reality.

Al-Anon Family Groups: Al-Anon recently formed an electronic area with 640 groups with 920 meetings. There are over 200 GRs (equivalent to GSRs). A temporary area chairperson was elected and will facilitate the assembly with elections for a delegate, chairperson and secretary. The virtual groups include Zoom, Second Life, phone, Discord, What's App, Skype, Jitsi. The process was in place for a couple of years and the plan is to have the newly elected delegate come to the GSC in April for official seating. Each area is discussing what their process is and how they will connect their local structure and the virtual groups. International groups are allowed to participate currently but where in the International Structure there is willingness to list virtual groups, they are encouraged to create their own areas in their respective country. The group's contact needs to communicate in English, Spanish or French.

Narcotics Anonymous: NA has been collecting survey data to find out what is happening in its communities in terms of needs. They want to continue discussing how virtual meetings are connecting to NA by listening at this point, before developing policies and tools. That's very similar to where we are.

Overeaters Anonymous: OA has a virtual region with its own trustee in its structure. They have had online meetings since the late 1990s. It was decided in 2018 to create a virtual region, with a dedicated trustee (their current trustee lives in Brazil). Since March 2020, virtual activity has of course exploded. Virtual groups have the choice to affiliate with a land-based service board or intergroup, rather than a virtual one. Anecdotally, many, if not most of the current virtual meetings are affiliated with land-based service boards — they went virtual only due to the pandemic. It's not clear what may happen with these pandemic-related virtual meetings once they have the option of face-to-face meetings again.

Cocaine Anonymous: CA's history with online and virtual meetings goes back to the early nineties. Their online groups were supported by IT services based in Southern California and when they decided to petition Conference to be recognized as an area they joined the Pacific South Region, even though the group's membership was spread across the globe. The Online Service Area (OSA) stayed fairly static at about 20 groups until the pandemic. What has become a little contentious is where the various types of groups "should" be aligned within the service structure. Some members of the OSA thought that all "Online Groups" should be part of that area. Within the first three months of the pandemic the OSA grew to approximately 80 groups. There was some reaction to this quick growth and groups started contacting the regional trustees asking if they really had to leave their areas to join another area aligned to a region on the other side of the world. During the pandemic the Board tried to steer away from any decision-making that wasn't absolutely necessary, both to avoid creating governance and to allow the situation to play out. Holland and the UK have both created online districts, aligned to areas within which their membership resides. There is an Online Service Area Manual, and at the next CA World Service Conference, a suggestion to form an Online Services Committee may be put forward.

International Experience

European Service Meeting (ESM): The trustees-at-large/U.S. and Canada attended the European Service Meeting, October 22–24, 2021, specifically to see if other countries are incorporating virtual groups into their service structure. Much as we are finding here, many ESM countries are unsure at this point what integration into a structure will look like. One comment that had a lot of heads nodding was that these questions will answer themselves, a solution will be found, and structures will be created to support those solutions. Ireland has agreed to incorporate virtual groups into its structure. Portugal is still seeking a way to do that. It was noted that the Central European Region — the English-speaking meetings of Continental Europe, which are part of the ESM, have long had both online meetings as well as regional participation in service as virtual groups. Their "First164yp" groups have been meeting using virtual technology for a number of years, and they send two representatives to regional assemblies.

REDELA (Meeting of the Americas): The countries in our home zone are in very different places in terms of their discussions about virtual groups (and meetings). Acceptance of them has not been universal, so for some countries, incorporation into the service structure is not an issue that is even on the radar yet. Other countries are, like us, seeking ways to make sure groups' voices are heard. In Brazil, many virtual groups want to become part of the structure, but there is also some resistance to the idea. Their GSB is working to find a way to build discourse. Other countries, such as Uruguay, are finding that virtual groups are participating through contributions, and are beginning to have group representatives. Argentina is, like us, working on a way to have virtual groups in the structure. The U.S. and Canada trustees-at-large meet with their REDELA colleagues monthly and will be updating as situations change.

SECTION 4 — What data do we have? What data do we need?

Here's what we have:

Currently in the GSO database there are over **595** active virtual groups in the U.S./Canada general service structure. All these virtual groups, like any other A.A. groups, have a district and an area they are listed with. Out of these over **595** virtual groups more than **300** have a GSR and more than **10** of those have an Alt. GSR. There are approximately **350** groups in our database that are in the process of being contacted regarding what district/area they would like to be a part of since there is no address associated with them currently. This is because of the previous practice of listing virtual groups prior to the most recent General Service Conference advisory action.

Here's what we know:

The highest number of groups in any given area is 2,300. The lowest number of groups in any given area is 159. The average number of groups per area is currently 765. As seen, the current number of virtual groups, spread across all 93 areas, is over 595. The Group Services desk reports there has been an increase in virtual listings consistently since the 2021 General Service Conference. It seems based on experience that this pace of virtual groups being listed, and the virtual groups still left to be contacted without a district or area, will easily reach the current "average" number of groups in an area in less than a year.

And here's what we really need:

Information/data from Area Delegates: We have some suggestions that may help create informed discussions locally. We also have a few questions we can send to the area delegates in survey form.

a. Suggestions for delegates:

- If you do not already have your "read only" access to Fellowship Connection, please contact memberservices@aa.org to get that.
- Once equipped with the "read only" access, please work with your area registrar to become aware of how many virtual groups there are in your area.

- Please contact these virtual groups and gather some information regarding participation in the U.S./Canada service structure.
- b. Questions for delegates:
- What discussions regarding participation of virtual groups in your area/districts have taken place?
 - Are your area/districts welcoming participation of virtual groups?
 - What motions around this subject have been made/ passed?
 - What is your area doing as far as participation at district meetings and area assemblies for virtual groups? Hybrid?
 - What is the cost to facilitate virtual group participation?
 - Does your area have virtual districts?

SECTION 5 — From submissions for consideration at the General Service Conference

As noted, a number of submissions for agenda items concerning virtual groups came to the Conference desk in September 2021.

Since the 71st General Service Conference passed an advisory action for the GSB to form this ad hoc committee to explore possibilities, it was felt that bringing these items to Conference at this point in time might work against a full exploration of the issues.

While the trustees' General Service Conference Committee did not forward them to the Conference, they were forwarded to this ad hoc committee to inform our discussions, and the committee is grateful for the time and thought that went into the submissions.

Some excerpts follow:

Hypothetical Scenario 1: A virtual group consists entirely of A.A. members in Connecticut. If the group decides to be listed as a group in Nebraska, even though all its members live in Connecticut, the 71st GSC advisory action indicates that this group would be listed in Nebraska.

Hypothetical Scenario 2: A virtual group consists of seven A.A. members — six from Connecticut and one from Tennessee. The group makes no preference about which district in Area 11 (Connecticut) to join. The one member from Tennessee serves as the group's primary contact and registers the group with the General Service Office. The group is now registered in Tennessee because the address of the group's primary contact serves as the default location.

Hypothetical Scenario 3: A virtual group has existed for many years and has thirty different members living in thirty different areas throughout the United States and Canada. Which district or area makes sense for them to be part of?

“How does a new area usually form? How does a new area form when it is not separating from an already-existing area? How do various international service structures differ from the U.S./Canada service

structure? What is the value of being registered with the General Service Office as a group and why do group records matter? How does an Intergroup/Central Office differ from an area? What are the different reasons members belonged to virtual groups prior to the Covid-19 pandemic? What is a linguistic district and how do the needs of virtual groups differ? What are some of the ways that different areas are autonomous in how they are structured, and how might that be relevant for a virtual area? **What exactly makes an A.A. group an A.A. group, anyway?”**

“(An international group) started on June 10th, 2019, on the WeChat platform as an English-speaking group. We moved to the Zoom platform in January 2020 with one meeting which focuses on the Steps, Traditions and Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous. Today we have two other meetings. ... We are a group which has homegroup members, active in service, from 16 countries across the globe. We are not limited by one geographical location and have no physical address. Therefore, we are not eligible to participate in the existing service structures based on national or language guidelines. We are self-supporting through our own contributions.”

SECTION 6 — Moving Forward

Yes, we still have far more questions than answers.

This committee will continue with its exploration and research into future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the U.S./Canada general service structure. While many of the ideas that have come forward concern virtual areas, is there some broader, bigger, visionary thinking that we are missing? Perhaps the online groups might want to form their own service structure, not attached to any geography? (Something along the lines of what our Board chair called “Intergalactic A.A.”)

We will continue to report to the Board and to the Conference as we work together, in unity and with respect, to chart new territory in carrying the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. We cannot do that without you, and we thank you for your part in it.

Respectfully submitted by the GSB Ad Hoc on Participation of Groups in the US/Canada Service Structure, February 23, 2022.

Trish L., Trustee-at-Large/Canada

Publishing Highlights: Innovations in attraction, inclusion and accessibility

My name is David R., and I am an alcoholic. As many of you know, they call me “the Publishing Guy.” I have served in the professional position as publishing director of A.A. World Services, Inc. since mid-2016, and celebrated my eighth year in the office this past March.

I'm delighted to share with you today a brief presentation on:



What's new in A.A.'s global publishing efforts: innovations in attraction, inclusion and accessibility — with a focus on digital distribution

Let's begin with. . . the “why”

Why do we do what we do?

Why do we focus all of this painstaking attention to items of our literature, carefully attending to the integrity of the message, to the precision of words, to the accessibility of receiving this design for living, to the accuracy of translations, and more? To the copyrighting, licensing and distribution of literature within our international structures? Why do we do all of this?

One simple answer:

We work together to help ensure that the message of hope that we carry is not “garbled,” to use one of our co-founder Bill W.’s favorite phrases.

We do this in keeping with our primary purpose and our great responsibility to keep the doors of A.A. open.

We extend the hand of A.A. to the next sick and suffering alcoholic — and to help those who help alcoholics in recovery everywhere.

“I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. . .” and we in the Publishing circles like to believe that in that hand, there may be found an item of literature, say, a Big Book, or perhaps a pamphlet that “speaks” directly to a suffering individual’s own experience.

The “what”

In particular, we are making great strides forward with our items of literature in the significant areas of *accessibility, inclusion* and *attraction*.

Around the world and in the U.S. and Canada, our working groups, service committees, translation committees and the rest — are all working together, hand in hand in teams with writers, designers and production

professionals. Many folks are immersed in dozens and dozens of translation and distribution projects — each one moving forward in efforts to ensure that the powerful message of hope that our program of A.A. offers can be most effectively shared.

The emergence of digital and online access

In this “great colossus of information,” there’s been one major notable development, and it is no secret. What has become most apparent since the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic in early 2020 — and what appears to have followed the necessity of connection and increasing levels of comfort with *online participation* among our Fellowship — is the subsequent increase in expressed need for materials to be made accessible and available in digital formats (via PDFs, eBooks, audiobooks and other formats, some of which may not even be known yet).

All of this uptick in expressed need, we have found, is *in addition to and not a replacement* for print materials.

For the past couple of years — during this disruption of the pandemic and our collective search for connection and participation, as we await “a new normal” — we in Alcoholics Anonymous have participated in the astonishing resilience of our Fellowship in action, connecting on platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams, providing vital access to A.A. meetings, workshops, workgroups, committees, conferences, conventions and other gatherings focused on service.

This is also important to note: We are mindful that not all people everywhere have access to digital or online communication devices and gadgets, WIFI, personal hot spots and all the rest.

But more and more, data in the world at large and in A.A. in particular show that many more folks of all ages and backgrounds *are* becoming comfortable in the digital arena.

Enhanced Ebook Digital Distribution

From mid-January to February, 2021, AAWS, Inc. reached a major milestone in the effort toward enhanced ebook and audiobook distribution, the result — addressing expressed need from the Fellowship and under the fiduciary oversight and encouragement from the AAWS board — of more than two years of research into industry best practices for digital distribution and a painstaking review of vendors, along with intensive collaboration across GSO departments (Publishing, Finance, Member Services, Tech Services, Staff Services).

Thanks to these efforts, our Conference-approved, AAWS, Inc.-copyrighted ebooks and audiobooks are now available for purchase on the platforms where most ebook readers and audiobook readers/listeners in the United States and Canada are accustomed to finding digital literature — platforms that serve individual readers, libraries, educational institutions, professional portals, subscription services and more.

These vendors include 38 major ebook platforms (Amazon, Apple, B&N, Kobo, Google Play books, BibliU, Hoopla, Libri, Mackin Education, Scribd, OverDrive, VitalSource and others).

Tangible Results — carrying the message digitally

We have charted an increase of 41 percent of eBooks and audiobook units distributed for the 12-month period 2021 as compared to 2020, and an 86% increase in units since 2019.

Libraries

OverDrive is the market-share leader go-to for library distribution (public, educational and so on). A cohesive outreach to local PI committees and to libraries on the availability of our ebook and audiobooks is in the planning stage, with OverDrive as a first step having spotlighted AAWS and AAGV titles available in *Content Wire*, its industry newsletter serving libraries, earlier this year.

Corrections and prisons

After more than four years of diligent research — first spearheaded by the AAWS Publishing professionals in response to expressed need from the Fellowship and publishing-industry best-practices consultants, and now fully in collaboration across departments and with colleagues in the AAGV team — we are pleased to report that our Conference-approved AAWS-copyrighted ebooks and audiobooks are for the first time made available on tablets and desktops in corrections venues, prisons and jails, and can now be accessed by people who are incarcerated and by the professionals who serve them. Contracts are in place and content has been uploaded and tested and books are now being delivered via the market-share leaders in this very specific distribution channel, Jpay, Edovo and GTL.

Edovo (GTL)

Reporting from Edovo/GTL has been made available with detail on items accessed, venue/state/area, and currently shows distribution among 27 distinct areas and 78 facilities. As of mid-March 2022, more than 800 individual

“starts” of AAWS-copyrighted ebook items of literature have been accessed.

Jpay (Securus)

Since mid-February 2021, all 27 available Conference-approved AAWS-copyrighted ebooks are available via tablets in 248 locales throughout the U.S., available on a pool of more than 200,000 tablets accessed by people who are in custody and the professionals who serve them.

Current ebook conversion project:

Our Great Responsibility

(in English, French and Spanish ebook editions)

Our ebook publishing program continues to move forward, with our books and booklets nearly all made available in EPub3 format. Based on expressed need, as there are more and more study groups, service workshops and A.A. literature meetings using this title, approved for conversion from print to ebook is *Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970*, which should be available in our three languages in the second quarter 2022.

Translations

Let us now turn to our miraculous homegrown translations of A.A. literature...

For more than a decade now, the A.A. World Services Publishing department has seen a steady surge in translation and licensing activity worldwide.

We say “homegrown” because almost every new international translation of our literature begins with a local A.A. group or local service committee expressing a need and moving a project forward.

Today, our office is immersed in the continued surge of activity in licensing, translation and distribution for items to be distributed globally:

a) in print, as previously — and, also b) *digitally*

We are seeing a marked increase in queries coming to the General Service Office and our AAWS Licensing Administrator regarding digital, ebook and audiobook formats.

Our Big Book

The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, published in English in the United States in 1939, and currently in its English-language Fourth Edition (with a Fifth Edition call for stories now in progress), is translated into 72 languages worldwide... *and counting*, in addition to the original English (so it is available in 73 approved languages total), which includes the two latest translations: Tatar (Russia) and Oriya (India). Fifty-six (56) languages are printed and distributed by AAWS, Inc., and 46 languages are licensed to be printed and distributed by local entities abroad, with 29 printed by both AAWS, Inc. and international entities.

There are 28 Big Book language translations pending, at various stages of completion, which includes 20 new translations in progress and eight revisions/re-translations.

Along with the Big Book, our items of literature range across more than 1,000 items in print, digital, audio, video and other formats. All told, these items are translated into more than 111 languages *...and counting*.

A word about this total number of languages

Note: This total of 111 languages includes rough drafts of indigenous, Native American and First Nations languages that we have collected in the office, for which we invite local A.A. members to help polish and move through the translation and review process, as was accomplished by a local committee achieving an approved and published Navajo Big Book in 2018.

Digital licensing

We are participating now in a rapid increase around the world in requests for ebook licenses; licenses to post AAWS-copyrighted works on official websites; and licenses to reproduce and distribute audiobooks.

Important to note: We have received sharing from many countries that confirms — consistent with the data on the sales of all books worldwide, at large — ebook sales do not replace or “cannibalize” print sales.

Uptick in requests for new items of literature

One marked area of uptick in worldwide requests is for the licensing for printing and distribution in English, French and Spanish — as well as for translating into local languages (Farsi, Polish, Portuguese, Swedish and Slovenian, among others) — of our beloved 2019 title *Our Great Responsibility*, plus the pamphlets “The ‘God’ Word,” “Hispanic Women in A.A.” and “Experience Has Taught Us: An Introduction to Our Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

Our prioritized efforts to streamline the translation and licensing process

In efforts to address the sizable flood of requests for translations and licensing, which has exponentially increased the challenge of executing new licenses and renewals with expedience, a prioritized effort both *a) to triage backlogged and current requests* and *b) to streamline and automate our processes* for more efficiency is afoot.

The Publishing Licensing team currently has email contact with more than 100 international countries/entities, and we have charted Outlook emails received by Publishing from more than 65 countries in the last year alone.

With support of the AAWS board, assistance from our trustees-at-large U.S. and Canada, and under supervision of General Manager Bob W., a focused cross-department project bringing together Publishing, Tech Services, Staff Services, the ERP Steering Committee and NetSuite working groups is establishing use-case scenarios and implementation tools (accessing NetSuite native capabilities and limited customization) for improved data management, process workflow, tracking, communication with international contacts, and reporting. In tandem, a seven-week Licensing Process Audit is being conducted by industry best-practice consultants specializing in

International Licensing Rights & Processes.

General Manager Bob W. worked with the Publishing department to craft and share a letter communicating our efforts on February 17, 2022, which was sent to all international A.A. contacts. We have implemented an easier-to-access email address for all Translation and Licensing requests, and this is communicated in Bob’s letter: TL@aa.org. Forensic fact-finding and organization on licensing and automation is in progress on improved records and data management, including country-by-country licensing history, expired licenses, active licenses and renewals — culled from our records maintained currently only on spreadsheets.

A word about the International Literature Fund (ILF)

As we know, AAWS administers the ILF. Notable use of these funds to help carry the message internationally via our items of literature have included Big Books for distribution in prisons in Zimbabwe; distribution of Big Books and “Twelve and Twelves” with new approved translations in Turkey; continuing the translation of the Haitian Creole Big Book with help from a local committee in Palm Beach Area 15, District 8; a new translation of the Kinyarwanda Big Book, a language spoken in A.A. in Rwanda, Congo, Tanzania and Uganda; and providing Big Books for prisons and corrections in Ukraine — as well as sending Ukrainian translations of literature to Poland, to help carry the message to refugees and folks in Ukraine.

Accessibility and attraction — in language, content and design

Newly redesigned, revised and updated A.A. Service Manual 2021–2023: As you know, our service manual has been redesigned, revised and updated, having been approved by the 71st General Service Conference of the U.S. and Canada. As of mid-March 2022, we have distributed nearly 30,000 copies total (in three languages), at the list price of \$4, earning \$97,288 in gross revenue.

Inclusive language updates to literature per the 71st GSC: Formatting and language changes to the “Twelve and Twelve” have been implemented in English, Spanish and French in almost all formats, as well as in Braille. The revised Preamble continues to be included throughout our items of literature with every reprint, in English, French and Spanish; other changes to language per the 71st GSC — including new titles and revised text for Corrections-related material — are also well underway in our three U.S./Canada languages.

Other innovations

Audio and video formats of A.A. material: These are also being actively pursued, including leveraging the experience of our Class A trustees for short videos; audios from A.A. members in the military; AAWS — and AAGV-originated podcasts and others.

- *New Big Book audio recordings in CD set format:* Latest research shows that many remote populations, cultural groups and underserved populations experiencing a “technology access divide” continue to access audio