



Rebellion Dogs Blog

May 2019

Have your say at the 69th

General Service Conference of AA



Are you an AA member; a member of a group that has a General Service Rep? Do you know what (General Service) Area you live in? In case you feel or suspect that AA sees itself as a top-down operation, telling our groups what's best, what to read, how to apply AA in our life, well, the General Service Conference wants you!

The 69th General Service Conference (usually in April) will take a week in May to discuss what AA members want for the future.

Your opinion/experience is sought and would be appreciated. Ninety-three Area delegates in Canada and the USA have shared at your Area Assemblies, with our General Service Reps, the topics being discussed this year. My delegate – maybe like yours – has reached out to members

and groups for some directions in the decisions to be arrived at during this year's conference.

Have a look through some of the topics of this year's rendition of AA-as a whole's business meeting and see if there are any topics that you have a feeling about or opinion on. You might be skeptical that your opinion is/will be considered, but read on...

Here's some of what's on the table at the 69th General Service Conference:

Should we write/print a 5th Edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*?

Background: First printed in 1939, the 2nd Edition was 1955 featuring AA leading the world with affirmative action; one-third of the stories would be women AAs even though they made up less than 25% of our population. Added was a new "Foreword" and additional Appendices. I recall the 1976 the 3rd Edition being introduced without much fanfare. Early this century – 2001 – our current/4th Edition was published. Letters from four of our Areas have expressed an interest in a new *Big Book* with stories that better reflect our diverse membership. Of special interest is members who got sober before they reached 25-years-old. There is talk of a fourth section in the *Big Book* to accommodate these new stories.

In 80 years, there have been four editions; the last one was 18 years ago so is it time for something new?

There isn't much chance that the 164 pages of basic text will be changed. A vote in 2002 agreed that the writings of Bill W should not be changed. We could vote again, but that's not on the table at present. However, this would be a good time to add a new *asterisk* or two to give contemporary context to the 1939 view of alcoholism and AA recovery. Here's an example I suggested to my delegate:

What if when "God *as we understood Him*" was mentioned, an asterisk noted that today AA is made up of members that include atheists/agnostics as well as members whose spirituality doesn't fall into our monotheistic narrative. We have secular AA meetings today that members with alternative worldviews share about AA in their own language.

Will AA *bow to my demand*? It's not a demand; it's my two cents. Maybe others will express similar sentiments. But now the delegate voting for Area 83 knows how I feel and what I think would be good for AA as a whole.

Fact: I just learned this the Area 83 delegate, who was at the conference in 2001, was given a first printing Edition Four. I've included a picture of the end of the first printing Edition Four "Foreword." It contained a sentence that rose the ire of some of our AA members who felt at the time that online AA is second-rate to face-to-face(f2f) AA. They didn't like how AA World Services represented us and they demanded a change. An entire sentence was removed (in bold):

“The stories added to this edition represent a membership whose characteristics – of age, gender, race, and culture – have widened and have deepened to encompass virtually everyone the first 100 members could have hoped to reach.

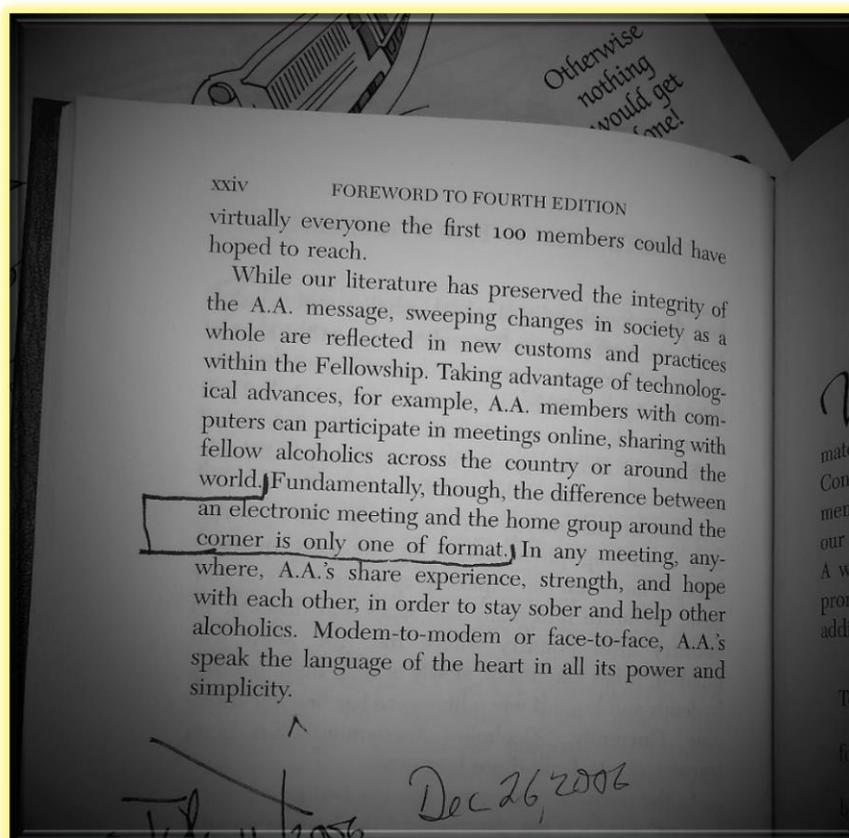
While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. Taking advantage of technological advances, for example, A.A. members with computers can participate in meetings online, sharing with fellow alcoholics across the country or around the world. **Fundamentally, though, the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group around the corner is only one of format.** In any meeting, anywhere, A.A.’s share experience, strength, and hope with each other, in order to stay sober and help other alcoholics. Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.’s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity.”

Check your own copy of *Alcoholics*

Anonymous, if you have one [or look here](#)! You’ll see that we removed a whole sentence.

I’m trying to remember back in 2001, did we have MySpace then? Maybe ICQ was the main platform of individual or group typing/ talking back and forth. I recall being part of an ICQ AA forum. When

MySpace did come on the scene it really attracted AA members (and the larger recovery community). We grouped up to share pictures, topics, discussion, discuss anonymity, break our own

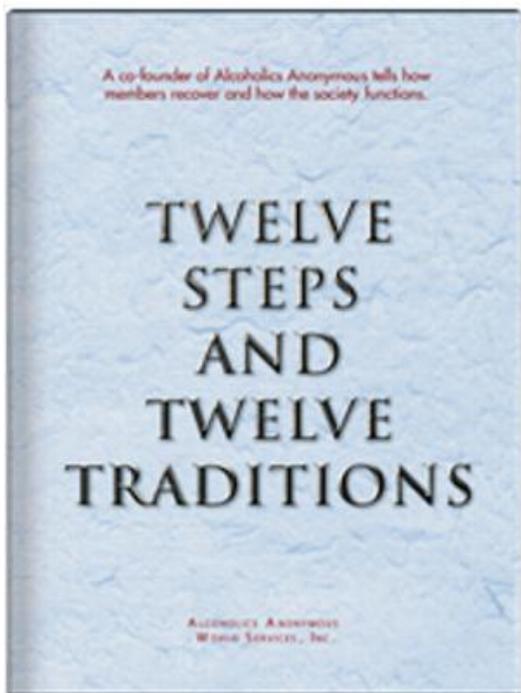


anonymity, out other AA members, etc. We were learning as we went along. Can you imagine the essays Bill W would have written in Grapevine about the internet?

Pre-Facebook and pre-Google Yahoo Groups was the best of interactive “anonymous” fellowship. There was a Yahoo Group called AAWR (A.A. Without Religion) and it was a collective of atheist/agnostic/freethinkers around the world starting topics about recovery and AA life.

So what do think about AAWS’s vision of 2001 AA? What do you think of AA as a whole’s outrage at the suggestion that online AA was just as good as f2f AA?

I don’t know; maybe it was little liberal mythology about how adaptive AA was and the General Service Office got a little ahead of our collective conscience. Certainly, GSO got an ear-full and in-box full of heated reaction to the “Foreword” and they took the sentence out that seemed to be causing the bulk of the dissention. I though it was fine the way it was but people like me that liked it, never wrote to tell anyone. So, the members asked for a change and they were accommodated.



Another literature issue is about adding something on the Twelve Concepts to *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (The 12 & 12) to complete the triangle of three legacies.

Recovery, Unity and now the Service version of a dozen principles are being discussed to thicken up your 12 & 12.

***The A.A. Grapevine* section: “Alcoholism at Large”**

Colloquially known as the Gray Pages, since 1948 we’ve reported medical, social, legal issues in the world regarding alcoholism. Uncle Bill W wrote, “The Grapevine should have freedom to print news articles relative to the whole field of alcoholism, excepting, however, those which might provoke needless dissension.”

Some AA members, be they fearful or hostile about outside influences, have tried to shelter the fragile newcomer from our holy writ. Our conference has had to review (and reaffirm) this section in 1974, 1984. The anti-AA-at-Large faction succeeded in having it removed in 1991 and it was brought back in 2007. New motions to toss these

contemporary doctors' opinions were brought to the floor in 2008, 2009 and 2014. Expect another round in May.

If you let your *Grapevine* subscription lapse with your *Life* and *Rolling Stone* magazines, don't worry about it. If you have a feeling about *Grapevine*, share your position with your Area delegate and/or email *Grapevine* right away.

The AA brand – what is the current perception of AA from pros and the public?

If you read the 68th General Service Conference Final Report, you'll see that we spent some money on an outside agency, Impact Collaborative, to advise us on our messaging. How well was AA communicating with the public? What can we alter or improve? Well, it's time to either take action or moth-ball the extensive report reveals through interviews and surveys what the current professionals and public perception of AA is. Here's a clue... no one but AA says, "If it works, don't fix it!"

"The trustees' Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community/Treatment and Accessibility (CPC/TA) discussed these items and asked the secretary to work with the consultant on the creation of a LinkedIn page."

Your delegate will have all the background information. There are shortcomings in our branding with professionals. Surveys came back with a range of positive and negative comments; "AA still exists?" was among the responses. The term "Cooperation with the Professional Community" sounds like AA thinks we're doing doctors and lawyers a favor – in their view. There are a lot of suggestions and ideas about modernizing our outreach and the awkward dance of maintaining online-anonymity and carrying the message whenever, wherever, blah, blah, blah. If you have concerns, questions, bright ideas, now's the time; talk to your delegate or General Service Rep.

But wait; there is more:

We AAs are looking at how we deal with our relationship with correctional facilities.

There is a limit to how much AA will accept from any member in a single year, including as a bequest. In 1967 it went up to \$200 from \$100. There were 1972, 1979, 1986, 1999, 2007 and 2018 increased – most recently \$3,000 to \$5,000. Should it be more/less?

What about anonymity and Public Service Announcement videos. There is a movement to hire actors to play AA members for a PSA. Is that a good way to carry our message?

The *Final Report* of the General Service Conference is under review. Any changes you'd like to see?

If you have new ideas, tell your delegate. They can make a floor motion and if others agree with your idea it will be discussed.



Nothing that takes place at AA's annual business meeting compels our groups or us as members in any way. The conference serves the groups and members – it doesn't tell us how to conduct ourselves or enforce changes or old or new rules. The conference's hope is to be the collective voice of AA. So, if you have something to add to the conversation, there's more that you or I can do than simply talk about

it at the coffee shop like we are Monday-morning quarterbacks that never get asked for our input about the big game.

Now's the time.

ⁱ https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/en_bigbook_forewordfourthedition.pdf