

Fall 2015

An Incomplete Spiritual Toolkit

“There is a solution. Almost none of us liked the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires of its successful consummation. But we saw that it really worked in others, and we had come to believe in the hopelessness and futility of life as had been living it. When, therefore, we were approached by those in whom the problem had been solved, there was nothing left for us but to pick up the simple kit of spiritual tools laid at our feet. We have found much of heaven and we have been rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence of which we had not even dreamed.”

-Alcoholics Anonymous, pg. 25

At the beginning of this year, I started in my district a service meeting called “The 12s,” where we study the many different facets of the twelfth step and beyond (“beyond” meaning the 12 Traditions and the 12 Concepts...not the 13th Step). And the number one question I am asked is: How does studying the Traditions and Concepts apply to my personal sobriety?

My immediate response is that just like there are spiritual principles behind the 12 Steps, there are spiritual principles behind the 12 Traditions and 12 Concepts as well. Often I hear people say “Oh, the Traditions are just about how meetings are run,” my immediate thought is, “Don’t you participate in meetings too?” As someone who hasn’t

Big Book Conference - Oct. 24

Alcoholics from throughout the Area will participate in the NIA Big Book Conference Oct. 24, in Palatine. With the theme of This Is the Easier Softer Way, the day-long event, hosted by District 21, will feature 16 panel discussions, four in Spanish, and two headline speakers.

*The conference will be held in the **Countryside Unitarian Universalist Church, 1025 N. Smith St., Palatine, Ill., 60067.** Registration begins at 8 a.m. and the program **starts at 9 a.m.**; the conference ends at 4 p.m. Register on-line at <http://bigbookconference.aania.org>; or on-site. The cost is \$20 including lunch or \$13 for the conference only.*

The guest speaker, Lisa L. from Grand Marais, Minn., served as NIA Recording Secretary in the early 1990’s and has been GSR for home groups both in the Rockford area as well as Minnesota where she has lived for nearly 20 years. Sober since 1985, Lisa will share her experience, strength and hope at this year’s Big Book Conference.

The Big Book speaker is Dick C., a retired accountant from the Twin Cities suburb of Orono, Minn., who got sober Jan. 5, 1981. For more than 20 years he and his wife have been conducting multi-week workshops that “enable participants to discover and follow the instructions for working the Steps as laid out in the Big Book.”

Moderators and panelists for the breakout discussions represent 13 Districts from various locations around the Area including the Spanish-language Districts.

For additional information or to volunteer contact Chuck S., chascsf@yahoo.com or Ed R., emsvents@yahoo.com.

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Concepts@aa-nia.org

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<http://www.aa-nia.org>

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From the editor

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

Melissa wrote an article on the importance of using all the tools of the program: Steps, Traditions, and Concepts. Alcoholics are basically a bunch of selfish, self-centered people. Study of Traditions and Concepts is necessary to spiritual growth. The Traditions and Concepts give clear guidelines on how to interact with other self-seeking individuals. Without them, alcoholics are standing toe to toe arguing with each other over whatever the ego dictates.

Gordon wrote a poem inspired by the 80th anniversary of International Conference. He dedicated it to Dr. Bob, Bill and all of AA. But the dedication had to be cut to make it one column. I was going a column and a half for Gordon's poem and then I found a prayer on Silkworth.net. So Gordon's poem lost the dedication line. And getting the byline in was tough. I had to mess with fonts, size and spacing more than most submissions. Hopefully the two poems will be worth it to the readers.

Mike and I looked over the cheat sheet Cheryl has been handing out with the Delegate's report. We thought the graphs on the Grapevine would be interesting to our readers, especially given that Grapevine was a subject of much discussion a few years back.

Over the years I have heard the relocation question so I thought there would be some curious minds who would be interested in that table. Cheryl gives a short explanation of the relocation table. Mike and I found the 'members services' table interesting. Cheryl and I both wrote on that. Writing 200-300 words is hard when one usually write 2500. ☺

Submissions for the next issue will be due November 14.

**Thank you for your submissions.
Heather S. Concepts Editor**

experienced an extreme amount of AA yet in my life, I can say that there have been plenty of times that people I see regularly in meetings have rubbed me the wrong way, and someone who has been around the tables longer than I has pulled me aside and explained the meaning of "principles before personality." Then I'm reminded of the true reason that the meeting is there- because both I and the person toward whom I am resentful both have the fatal disease of alcoholism, and we are both at the meeting to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. Suddenly my petty resentment is squashed; perhaps not immediately, but when I look at that reasoning.

Before I had any idea as to which traditions that entire scene referred to, the principles behind the 12 Traditions were working in my life. And now that I have looked at the Traditions purposefully, I am finding that I am able to see a little bit faster how they apply to me and my sobriety.

Furthermore, like the Steps, the Traditions also require "the self-searching, the leveling of our pride, the confession of shortcomings which the process requires of its successful consummation." Bill W. says in 'Why Alcoholics Anonymous is Anonymous' that each tradition requires the sacrifice of a character defect in order to see progress in A.A. itself. "Gradually we saw that the unity, the effectiveness, and even the survival of A.A. always would depend upon our continued willingness to give up our personal ambitions and desires for the common safety and welfare. Just as sacrifice meant survival for the individual, so did sacrifice mean unity and survival for the group and for A.A.'s entire fellowship (Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age, pg. 288).

And the AA principles don't stop there. There's another set of 12 principles that

in most meeting places are not even posted on the large posters on the wall- the 12 Concepts. Speaking as an AA toddler, the only real argument I have as to why the Twelve Concepts are of import to me, is to look at the bigger picture of AA...and remember that I'm a part of that bigger picture. The only example I can give at this moment is to simply parrot Concept I (The final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship), and say that's me. Also, anyone who participates in a meeting and follows Traditions 3, stating, "I'm ___ and I'm an alcoholic"- is part of the Fellowship too. I'm part of that collective conscience.

The point I would like to make is that without all three legacies of AA- recovery through the Steps, unity through the Traditions, and service through the Concepts- I am not fully "practicing these principles in all of my affairs." Though the Traditions and Concepts were not part of the first Big Book, the principles behind them were there during AA's formative years just as they were there when I was brand new to the program and the principles behind them were quoted to me before I knew what they were. I only had a partway full spiritual toolkit-I just wasn't aware of that yet.

There are, of course, many other reasons to study the Traditions and Concepts as well as the Steps: history is nifty, there's a big poster on the wall, they're in the back of the Big Book and the last halves of the 12 and 12 and the AAWS Service Manual so they must mean something besides an OCD fixation

on the number 12, an actual OCD fixation in the number 12, someone’s sponsor said so, etc.

But personally in my own sobriety, I can definitively give testament to how these principles -behind the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts-have worked in my life so far as an individual in AA. In looking at different ways to be of service to my fellow people, my Higher Power, the groups I attend, and AA as a whole, my world in and out of AA has opened up a lot and I have certainly gained a new freedom and am constantly shown more ways that I can be of service and actions I can take, and in return I get to be rocketed into a fourth dimension of existence. So far it has been a great deal for me. When I first came to AA two and a half years ago, I was introduced to a massive collective conscience that against all logic had the solution to what I believed to be an impossible answer: about how to stay sober. As I have more recently progressed in sobriety and started getting involved at different levels of service, I was again reminded that the collective conscience I had come to know was even really just a small piece of the collective conscience of the Fellowship. And more is being revealed to me as I go along. If book studies end in other districts end at Step 12, I would encourage the studying of the Traditions and Concepts as well. There are tools in them that are there for more than the betterment of me; they show how I can be a better AA.

Thank you, Melissa V.



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Grapevine (at the General Service Conference)

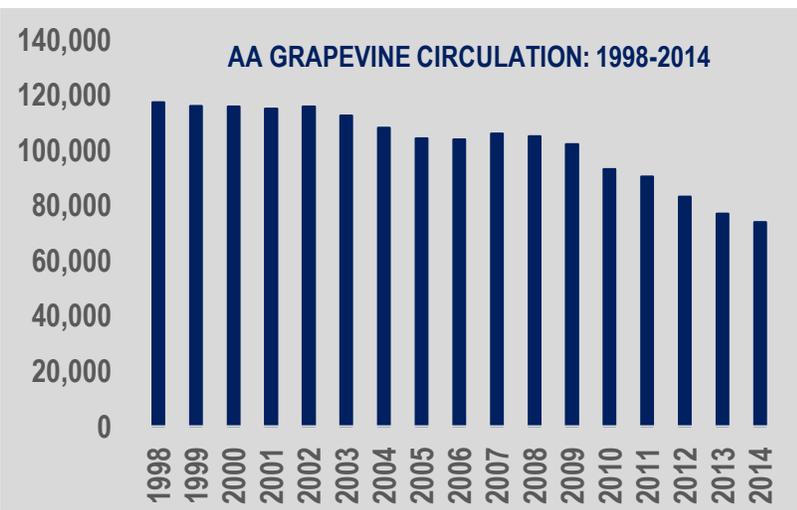
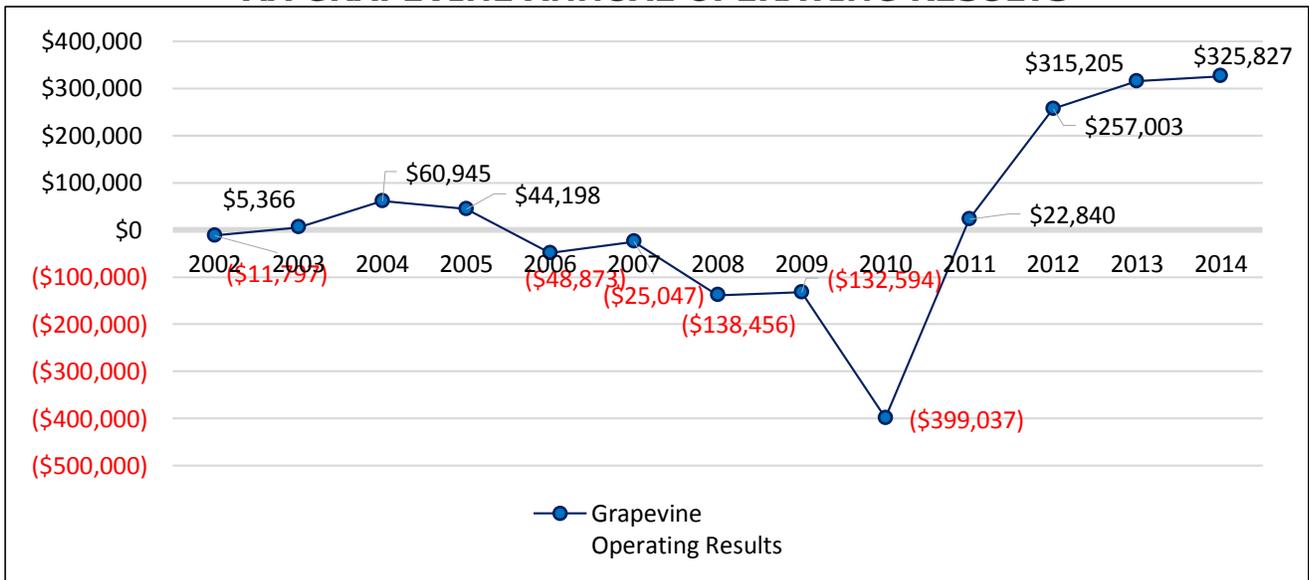
Advisory Actions

- Revised the pamphlet "A.A. Grapevine and La Vina: Our Meetings in Print" was approved

Considerations

- La Vina is published as cost effectively as possible.
- Implement a communication plan to the fellowship clarifying La Vina's unique status as a service that strives to be self-supporting.
- Encouraged purchase of Subscription Gift Certificates by local service committees, groups and members to provide magazines to people in prison, treatment centers and nursing homes.
- Suggested that the AA Grapevine board produce two books:
 - Armed Forces Members' AA Stories (working title)
 - Voices from Early AA (working title)

AA GRAPEVINE ANNUAL OPERATING RESULTS



Grapevine: 12 issues/year

Annual Subscription \$28.97

Cost per issue \$2.41

Cost per day of sobriety \$.08

LaVina: 6 issues/year

Annual subscription \$11.97

Cost per issue \$1.99

Cost per day of sobriety \$.03

Grapevine Subscription Challenge

<http://www.aagrapevine.org/grapevine-challenge>

Rule 62

A sponsor walked into a meeting one evening to see his sponsee reading the Big Book. "I'm happy to see you reading the book, Joe," the sponsor said. "I'm looking for loopholes," Joe responded. — Bob M., Green Valley, Ariz. From Grapevine.org



(For the habitually lazy.)

Tongue-tied

I am a DCM for a district in Northern California and was asked to chair our District meeting while our DCMC was out of town. At one particular meeting, right before one of our area assemblies, some controversial subjects came up for discussion. After quite a bit of "loving discussion," I suggested that we take a short break. After the break we always reopen the meeting with the Serenity Prayer. So with all our heads bowed, I began. "Let's get started with a moment of violence followed by the Serenity

Prayer." The room erupted in laughter. Needless to say, the rest of the meeting carried on in a much more lighthearted manner.

December 2012 Grapevine

The great Canadian physician, Sir William Osler, was lecturing one day on the effects of alcohol.

"Is it true," asked a student, "that alcohol makes people do things better?"

"No," replied Sir William, "it just makes them less ashamed of doing them badly."

Grapevine.org

Clara T.



"I may not be living in the past, but I'm still making payments on it."

Grapevine.org

Glasses may have an amazing effect on a person's vision--especially when they have been filled and emptied a number of times. -- Utah Alcoholism Review from Grapevine.org

Relocation Study

- ♦ Geographic Metro Areas: Los Angeles, Dallas, and Indianapolis

- ♦ Recurring Summary

NY	LA	DAL	IND
\$6,879,715	\$6,820,575	\$6,071,536	\$5,359,720
savings	\$59,140	\$808,179	\$1,519,995

- ♦ Non-Recurring Summary

NY	LA	DAL	IND
\$209,563	\$8,752,713	\$8,200,490	\$8,476,660

- ♦ Indianapolis = 6 year recovery of costs

Many people ask why the General Service Office (GSO) stays in New York. The thinking is that the expense of New York is high, so it would be cheaper to move.

The answer to that is yes... and no.

On a regular basis (roughly every 10 years) GSO conducts a study to decide if remaining in New York is the best solution for AA as a whole. This study covers many aspects.

In 2014 a relocation study was conducted focusing on the financial aspects of a move. Three geographically diverse metropolitan areas were considered: Los Angeles, Dallas, and Indianapolis.

Two distinct cost aspects were considered, recurring costs, and one-time costs. Recurring costs are things like rent, utilities, salaries, etc. These are the things that would have to be paid no matter where the office was. In all cases the recurring costs were lower in the other locations. These savings

ranged from as little as \$59,000 per year to \$1.5 million a year.

They also looked at the one-time fees that a move would cost. Things like severance for employees who did not move out of New York, recruiting fees to replace those employees, and bonuses to try to keep key employees from leaving. There would also be legal fees to pay, broker's fees for new rental property, relocation fees not just for the office but also for the people, and various other items.

It was in these one-time costs that the decision became very clear that staying in New York still makes the most financial sense for AA. In all three locations the moving cost would be over \$8 million dollars. Even in Indianapolis where we would save the \$1.5 million per year, it would take 6 years to recover those costs.

One woman's commentary on
'Membership Services' table on p. 9

So above is table that breaks down the costs of each member and group to the General Service office. If each person sent a dollar for every year the person was sober the book Alcoholics Anonymous would cost approximately \$3. That is the cost of printing. The cost of the book is directly tied to the financial health of AA as a whole. In my 24 years the Big Book has gone down in price one time. The prudent reserve became too high and the Board of Trustees made a decision to lower the price.

I do not agree that less expensive is better. The human mind attaches value based on price. Our Big Book is our most precious material commodity and if monetary value were solely based on utility Alcoholics Anonymous and the 12 Steps and 12 Traditions would be outside the financial reach of most.

The fluctuation of the price of the Big Book is an excellent indicator of how well members are participating financially in AA as a whole. Is the price of the Big Book and 12&12 staying relatively level when compared against inflation? At a glance it appears so to me. But I had to beg to get a D in economics so I could graduate. Can we do better? Absolutely. Would a less expensive book make the newcomer more likely to read it? I don't think so. But we can look at the steadily rising cost of the books as a possible indicator that AA is stagnating. And the Big Book tells us we must keep growing if we are to survive. Just one woman's opinion.

Heather S.

**Delegate's commentary on
'Membership Services' table on p. 9**

The cost to provide the services of the General Service Board (GSB) is a bit over \$9.7 million dollars a year. That's a number that most people have trouble wrapping their head around.

In an attempt to help make more sense of the amount, David M. our Class A Trustee (non-alcoholic) and GSB Treasurer broke down the numbers to something that maybe we can understand more easily. What it would cost per member or per group if everyone donated equally.

Currently in AA there are approximately 1.3 million members. If we wanted to make AA fully self-supporting through contributions it would mean that every member would want to donate \$7.08 to cover costs. However on average we are only donating \$5.02 per member.

If you were to take that same thought and do it by the almost 65,000 groups, we would need to donate \$146.96 per group, instead of the \$106.75 per group.

Some questions might be, why should this matter? Why not just keep covering the costs of services in the price of our literature?

One of the long-term considerations is whether this business model is going to be sustainable. It certainly seemed to work for Bill & Bob, after all, that was part of the reason they printed and sold the Big Book to start with.

However, some things have changed in 75 years. One of these is that

Member Services & Statistics

	2014 Actual	2013 Actual	2012 Actual
Number of Members	1,373,497	1,389,602	1,388,727
Cost of Service per Member	\$7.08	\$6.84	\$6.66
Self Support Contributions per Member	\$5.02	\$4.97	\$4.72
Cost of Service NOT covered by Contributions	\$2.06	\$1.87	\$1.94
Number of Groups	65,222	64,694	64,414
Cost of Service per Group	\$149.11	\$146.96	\$143.67
Self Support contributions per Group	\$105.76	\$106.75	\$101.80
Cost of Service NOT covered by Contributions	\$43.35	\$40.21	\$41.87
Percentage of Groups Contributing	41.6%	42.5%	42.4%
Number of Groups that Contributed	27,103	27,841	27,332
Self Support contributions of Groups that contributed	\$254.51	\$248.06	\$239.92

Continued from p.8

our membership is flat. We are simply not growing AA in the manner that it grew in the early years. From 1993 to 2006 membership remained at about 1.2 million, and since that time has stay around 1.3 million.

The other aspect that is concerning is that print material seems to be out of fashion. Younger people are not buying books. Without our book sales we would find a shortfall of about 30% of our service costs needs.

These figures represent the bigger picture of AA, the needs at the level of AA World Services (AAWS), the General Service Office (GSO) and the General Service Board (GSB), plus

any additional support that Grapevine and La Vina might need when they are unable to be self-supporting. They do not consider what it costs per member to support the services of our local AA Districts or Northern Illinois Area. These services are generally not supported through literature sales.

Cheryl V.



I don't know where I'd be...
 If it weren't for you

I had this Malady...
 You showed me what to do

You gave my life direction...
 You provided strength and hope

A spiritual connection...
 The tools I need to cope

You've given me the Principles...
 By which I do abide

In me you'll see the miracle...
 This program does provide

You've given me such inspiration...
 You're the gift that keeps on giving

You lifted me from desperation...
 You gave this world a design for living

Today I am the man...
 That God wants me to be

I reached up for his hand...
 And he reached down for me

You've given me the strength...
 To carry-on each day

I go to any length...
 On this I'll never stray

We're in this thing together...
 We share a common bond

We trudge this road forever...
 There is no magic wand

We have some simple steps to follow...
 This is the softer way

It's a different kind of pill we swallow...
 To get us through our day

You've given me a purpose...
 To live my life today

So truly grateful to be of service...
 Thank you God, Bill, and Dr. Bob, for the
 program of AA.

Gordon R.

*Indian Prayer From (N.A.I.G.S.O.)
 The Native American Indian General
 Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous
 Web Site.*

*Oh Great Spirit
 Whose Voice I Hear in the wind,
 Whose breath gives life to the world,
 Hear me,
 I come to you as one of your many
 children,
 I am small and weak,
 I need your strength and wisdom;
 May I walk in beauty,
 Make my eyes behold the red and
 purple sunset;
 Make my hands respect the things that
 you have made,
 And my ears sharp to hear your voice,
 Make me wise so that I may know the
 things That you have taught your
 children;
 The lessons that you have hidden in
 every leaf and rock.
 Make me strong . . . not to be superior
 to my brothers but to be able to fight
 my greatest enemy, . . myself.
 Make me ever ready to come to you
 with straight eyes so that
 When life fades as the faded sunset,
 My spirit will come to you without
 shame.*

- Anonymous



Announcement

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org

NIA 20: www.aa-nia.org

Sept 12 New Hope Group Open AA Family Picnic Mt. Carroll, IL for more information see aa-nia.org.

Sept 12 District 42 Slogans, Sayings and Suggestions Workshop Villa Park, IL. For more information see aa-nia.org.

Sat Sept 19 Fall Assembly/ Area Elections Faith Walk World Outreach Center, East Moline.

Sat Oct. 10 A Way Out annual anniversary party at the Libertyville civic center in Libertyville. A free dinner followed by a speaker: Bob D. from Las Vegas.

Sat Oct 17 Fall Committee Meeting 9 am @ Lord of Life SE corner Rte. 38 & La Fox Rd, La Fox. Elburn for GPS devices

Sat Oct 24 22nd Big Book Conference from 9-4 pm @ Countryside Church Unitarian Universalist 1025 N. Smith St. Palatine, IL 60067. Contact Chuck S 847-770-8200 chascfs@yahoo.com

Nov 13-15 East Central Regional Forum @ Crowne Plaza Milwaukee Airport Hotel

Sat Nov. 14 Kankakee Mini-conference @ Kankakee Civic Auditorium 803 S. 8th St Kankakee IL 60901 Registration at 9, program from 10-4 Contact Steve R. 815 263 0184

Feb. 12-14, 2016 2016 E.C.R. Conf. of Delegates Past/Present Milwaukee, WI

April 1-3, 2016 NIA Spring Conference and Assembly Rock Island, IL. Please print the flyer from aa-nia.org under the events tab and take it to your meetings.

