

AA CONCEPTS

Northern Illinois Area, Ltd. Area 20 Service Letter

Spring 2017

Final Report

I have written a few of these articles in the past years and decided to do a totally different type of article this time. I would like to talk about the General Service Conference Final Report. I usually don't write about events at the conference since they are in my delegate reports. Every year a few months after the General Service Conference that is held in April in New York, a final report comes out that includes everything that went on in that week.

The report usually has anywhere from 80 to over 90 pages. The section that has information about the conference that I get asked most about are the Advisory Actions. These are found a few pages from the beginning. They represent recommendations made by the standing committees and approved by the conference body as a whole or recommendations discussed and voted on by all conference members during general sessions. These correspond to the agenda items that the area committees discuss at the Pre-General Service Conference Workshop. They also include floor

motions that were made at the conference. There are fourteen difference committees. The floor motions are made at the beginning of the session each day and are put on the agenda to be discussed at the end of the conference after all other agenda items have been discussed. Because of a 1990 advisory action that came out of the Report and Charter committee, items discussed, but no which action is taken or recommendation made, as well as committee

recommendations that are not adopted, are to be included in a separate section of the Conference Final Report. These items are known as Additional Committee Considerations. Most of the time we have additional committee considerations because there wasn't enough information available, or the committee believed the recommendation needs more work. A lot of the time you will see the same items on the agenda the following year or, sometimes it could be a few conferences thereafter.

Another nice section of the Final Report is the "Area Service Highlights," which is usually in the

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Comments, suggestions and subscription requests plus shares of experience, strength and hope, should be directed to the editor:

Concepts@aa-nia.org

All A.A. members are encouraged to see

Concepts on-line at:
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The current address is
NIA Treasurer
Northern Illinois Area, Ltd.,
P.O. Box 1056
Yorkville, IL 60044.

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From the editor

Hello Ladies and Gentlemen.

I got the General Service Conference Agenda and background material in my mailbox. That seemed important. As a GSR I would look at the Agenda and pick out the couple items I thought my group would find interesting and important. Then I would read them to the group and see what happened. Most of the time I got nothing. But once in a while someone cared and I would communicate that to the DCM. I should have reported it to the delegate but I didn't know. I thought my DCM carried my voice. Through hanging around I found out it was the delegate should be receiving my group's opinion.

For this issue I picked out one item that was an issue I have been following the last couple years. And with benefit of the background material, two issues that were more important than they read at first blush. Those two items are to be discussed by the committee that our delegate sits on. The point of the article is to show how the General Service Conference relates to the individual member of Alcoholics Anonymous. I don't know if I succeeded. You can read for yourself.

As always I invite responses to anything written and contributions.

**Submissions for the next issue
will be due May 13, 2017.**

Thank you for your submissions.

Heather S. Concepts Editor

middle of the book. These are the transcriptions of the two minute talks that first-term delegates give describing their areas. Since there are odd and even year panels, last year there were reports from 45 panel 66 delegates and this year there will be 48 panel 67 delegate highlights.

The Agenda Committee, which at the Area level would be the Group Service Representative (GSR), reviews suggestions for presentation/discussion topic ideas for the following GSC. This committee also selects topics for the theme of the conference and the various workshops. The presentations in 2015 were on three basic discussion topics, with three subtopics, for a total of nine presentations. Last year, 2016, the Agenda Committee selected "Supporting Our Future" as the theme for this year's conference.

There were also three presentation/discussion topics for this year with three subtopics, totaling nine presentations again.

The presentations are made by second year delegates, usually those who are not committee chairs or alternates. I received a loving invitation to present this year; my topic on the general theme of contributions, specifically "Apathy and Power of the Purse. Last year on

Sunday, Monday and Thursday the schedule included these presentations/ discussions which were to me like mini speaker meetings, they are also in the Final Report.

For all you numbers or financial people, towards the back of the Final Report are various financial reports, budget reports and contributions from groups, individual, specials, and special meetings, which are listed by delegate area.

There are also many reports from the General Service Board, A.A.W.S. and the Grapevine Corporate Boards. In the very back of the Report there is information about the Conference committees, Trustees' committees, and a few pages about our Nonalcoholic (Class A) Trustee and Alcoholic (Class B) Trustees.

My hopes are that you may pick up last year's Final Report to be a little more familiar with the contents and want to read this year's Final Report when it comes out.

Thank you for allowing me to serve,
Kelly L., Delegate

The chosen and still suffering

*In the eyes I see the sadness
of the pain life has inflicted...
I see the misery and madness,
of the tortured and afflicted.*

*I hear the whispering cries for help,
only the chosen hear...
For those of you still suffering,
I hear you loud and clear.*

*I know the pain that you are feeling,
for I have felt it too...
The secrets you're concealing,
are tearing into you.*

*Your eyes have shed a thousand tears,
and will a thousand more...
Cease your battles waged for years,
and surrender to this war.*

*You need not be alone,
as you suffer in your silence...
To thy self you must atone,
and be rid of self reliance.*

*I've walked a distant mile,
in the shoes that you now wear.
They may have been on different feet,
...but exactly the same pair.*

*God's hands and heart reach out to you,
take hold this gift He's offering.
He will be there to guide you through,
...the chosen and still suffering.*

Gordon R.
10/05/16

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Appointed Committees for 2017

I have filled the vacant positions for the Appointed Committees for 2017.

Everyone that I called was very positive and happy to be of service. One person needed a little coaxing (you know who you are). But the point that I want to make is that for the most part, we in this wonderful program know how to give back. We have been given so much.

I read a few articles from "Sharing From Behind the Walls" this morning which GSO sent to me. Does that ever make me grateful that I have the freedoms that I do have.

I have seen lapel buttons that say "Service is the Secret" and I believe that is very true. When I got into service I got better. Service has given me the push to grow beyond my comfort zone and do and be more than I ever have done before in my life. By the way, I like being Area Chair. Thank you for electing me.

I really see the growth in another lady. I have watched this person

grow for about 10 years. I'm sure that she is unaware of it but I see how she is so much more at ease in talking and presenting ideas than she was 10 years ago. Who would have known that by not drinking and working the steps we would not only stay sober but also be of service to others?

Hopefully more AAs in Area 20 will become involved with service and see how much it can do for them.

I went to my first Area Assembly in 1984. I was just a few months sober and the experience was overwhelming for me. Too many people and too much talking. However many years later I was invited to be a secretary for an Ad Hoc Committee for the Area. That was in 2005. I got hooked on being around the energy that is at "those" meetings.

I realize that service is not for everyone and I really respect that, but for the people who have never given it a thought, please come to one of our get-togethers.

A grateful member –
Marilyn F.

The General Service Conference

The annual General Service Conference is in April. Delegates from all over the US and Canada have discussed the agenda items with the members of AA in their respective Areas and will bring the group conscience of their Area to the General Service Conference. Some of you will be working under the mistaken idea that the General Service Conference has nothing to do with one alcoholic talking to another. To put that idea to rest a couple agenda items: "Discuss carrying the AA message to incarcerated Native American/First Nation/ Inuit people" and "Discuss the accessibility of the AA message for the Armed services veterans". These items are things we spend time and thought on how to do at the local level. How do we carry the message to people who are not getting the message of alcoholics anonymous? That is, after all, our primary purpose.

The delegates are more numerous and carry the experience of more members than an average group or district business meeting. So the chances of the delegates coming up with a solution might be greater. But all the ideas the delegates share to address reaching the still suffering come from their Areas. The people that participate in the process of preparing the delegate for the Conference have a direct, and

sometimes substantial, impact on the General Service Conference. The opinion of the individual matters. It matters because that is the only way our second Tradition works. God cannot speak if the person He is speaking through refuses to participate.

There are other real issues that face AA as whole that the delegates spend time discussing. And if the decisions made about the direction of AA as a whole weren't discussed AA might cease to exist. So there are agenda items for the General Service Conference that don't appear to impact one alcoholic talking to another. But in the light of the demise of AA as a whole those items do become essential to reaching the still suffering alcoholic.

Admittedly there appear to be many uninteresting items on the agenda. Items, in short term and/or uneducated analysis, have little to do with the individual member of AA. I have attended the pre-General Service Conference workshop with only one or two burning issues. With participation and information on the issues in each agenda item I find I have an opinion on many of the agenda items that I thought I didn't care about. I might not think that opinion is worthy of speaking out loud. But the delegate who hears that opinion may find it very appropriate for the issues embodied in the agenda item. If I am following the Traditions of AA, if I believe in

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the group conscience guided by a loving Creator I need to participate. Everyone's participation gives the group conscience its fullest expression.

Without the discussion and background material I usually see one or two items that are interesting to me. I am a bit of a service geek so the issues that I pick to highlight you may not think are interesting. Hopefully when I share my view on the issue you will become interested enough to share your opinion. Or you may take the time to look at the Agenda and discover another issue that is important to you.

The item I would like to discuss is something the General Service Conference has been discussing over the last couple years: the participation of delegates in the Agenda selection process. The Agenda item reads "Discuss the process of posting the grid of proposed Conference agenda items on the dashboard."

The more input the delegates have on the Agenda process the better. I have the perception that the trustees have become a seat of perilous power. This is my opinion and not necessarily a fact. The Concepts state the ultimate authority in AA lies in the groups. For the delegates to have input on Agenda items is a check on the trustees. If the trustees decide a submitted item is not worthy of Conference discussion the Agenda item can be submitted to the

elected trusted servants of AA for review. Perhaps the delegates make the same determination as the trustees, maybe not. But the whole of AA, through the delegates, has made a decision. This process is more in line with the structure of AA as a whole. We make our decision, at every level, as a group.

So on reading this agenda item I come to the conclusion that this is a good thing because it appears to me the delegates will be getting more information on the process, and hopefully have more input. The selection process for Agenda items is less than transparent sometimes. There has been some change in that the delegates have a "dashboard" that they can see items being considered.

Upon reading the background material I changed my mind about supporting this item. The Conference coordinator appears to be requesting that some of the background material be withdrawn. The request is based on the following reasoning: 1) The Conference had not requested them. 2) The communications were background for the trustees' committees who were considering the proposed agenda items. When these items were forwarded to a Conference committee, they would become part of the background for the Conference committee and available for wider distribution. 3)

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The submission letters as they were posted had not been made suitable for wide distribution because they include personal information. 4) While the grid was translated into French and Spanish, the submission letters and accompanying documents were not.

I want the delegates to have more information on the Agenda item selection process. That the Conference hasn't requested information doesn't seem like a good reason to cut off information. I often don't know that I don't know. My friends will bring to my attention things I should have been paying attention to, like when is the last time I showed up. The idea that the delegates shouldn't receive the information because they will receive it later seems to inhibit participation in the process. Without all the relevant information the group cannot make an informed decision. But the idea of publishing personal information, even on a limited basis, doesn't appear to be in line with the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. And the translation issue is relevant but I don't know how to address it.

And so I come to a place, by myself, I have no firm conclusion. Then I sit in groups and the item is discussed. Different aspects of the issue are shared by others. I get a new view on the Agenda item. Through the second Tradition, the group conscience: a solution that I

had not thought of, will be reached. Very similar to when my sponsor and fellow AA members suggest a solution to a problem I thought was insurmountable.

And so AA functions. As individuals we couldn't get sober. As an individual I can't stay sober. But with the group I can stay sober. With AA as a whole I can reach the still suffering, where I didn't have the tools to reach someone before. Where would my twelve step work be if I couldn't hand a newcomer a meeting schedule, a book, or some pamphlets? It would certainly not be as effective.

This Area's delegate sits on the Grapevine committee. So the voices of our Area will go directly to the committee that will make the recommendation on the Agenda item. Some of the items she will be discussing are: the spiritual value of the Grapevine and LaVina. She will be discussing an Instagram account and Facebook page. Our delegate will be discussing the continued exploration of a Google not for profit account. There will be a discussion of possible book topics for 2018. My district has a group that studies Grapevine books. So it is easy for me to see how this Agenda item will impact my world directly.

There is an item that says reconsider a 2010 Advisory Action (Advisory Action being the strongest possible suggestion to the addressed body).

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Since I didn't know the Advisory action of 2010 regarding LaVina I have printed it here: "After thoughtful and lengthy discussion, the Committee recommended that LaVina achieve spiritual parity with the AA Grapevine, beginning in the following manner:" The following manner turns out to be 64 perfect bound black and white published pages. Content and substance be of primary importance. And this will begin immediately in a trial year. So at first glance I don't think much of this Agenda item that our delegate will be discussing at length. Then I read the background material. I find a well thought out email discussing the difference between material parity and spiritual parity. I discover that financially LaVina parity with the Grapevine is a tall order. And I find a report that Spanish speaking members of AA feel that LaVina is the poor sister of the Grapevine. So on the surface there seems to be nothing of interest in this particular item. But upon reading the background material I find there are issues of expression of spirituality, equality, discrimination, and finance vs reaching the still suffering alcoholic. I don't have any answers upon this writing because I am reviewing these things by myself. I am completely stymied as to solutions. But if AA comes together and discusses the issues an equitable, financially responsible solution will be found. The second Tradition will work.

There is also another Agenda item for Grapevine that caught my interest for this writing because the Agenda item, as written, seems of no interest to the average member of AA. The item is: Reconsider the 2004 Advisory Action on outside sales. The essence of that Advisory Action is the Grapevine library cannot be sold to outside organizations. The letter submitted afterward was telling and lent weight to the need for further discussion of this Advisory Action. The Grapevine cannot function as a regular magazine. It can only be sold by Grapevine. Other outlets for the magazine are not acceptable. So newsstands cannot carry the Grapevine or LaVina, etc. In the background material the valid point is made that this policy is a barrier to people accessing the message of alcoholics anonymous. If treatment centers cannot purchase the books for resale then the collected experience in those books is being withheld from people who want and need that experience.

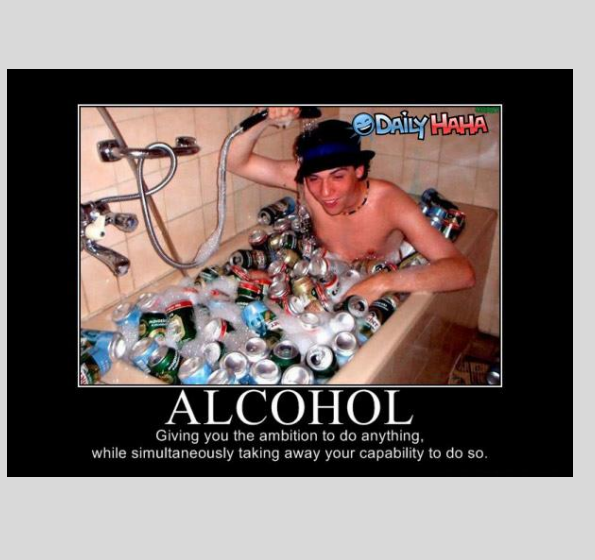
And so the simple sentence "Reconsider the 2004 Advisory Action on outside sales." develops many more facets. Are we withholding our experience, strength, and hope from the still suffering alcoholic? Are we affiliated with other outlets if we allow other outlets to sell our books? Can we fiscally maintain such a narrow view of who can and cannot sell our unaltered printed material? I do not know the answers to any of

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these questions. I just see that the Agenda item I thought was of no importance to AA as a whole has the struggle of every AA member: confidentiality and anonymity versus reaching the still suffering. This is an item our delegate will be discussing. She needs our informed group conscience. If we don't participate God's will may not be so easy to see.

So my point in this article was not to make you care about the issues that I care about. It is to make the Agenda of the General Service Conference more personal. I hope that this article helps members of AA see that the Conference directly impacts how effectively the individual member carries the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to the still suffering individual alcoholic. That our second Tradition cannot work without participation. That Kelly, our delegate, needs to hear your voice.

Heather S. Concepts Editor



Rule 62



Wine- noun- an alcoholic drink made from fermented grapes and therefore officially counts as a serving of fruit.

ALCOHOL:
The best "night-time",
speech slurring, headache
causing, dehydration
making, drink spilling,
charm killing, "so you
think you can dance?"
medicine...

Warning: consumption of alcohol may leave you wondering what the hell happened to your clothes.

God writes a lot of comedy... the trouble is, he's stuck with so many bad actors who don't know how to play funny.

Announcements

Alcoholics Anonymous: www.aa.org

NIA 20: www.aa-nia.org

Pre-General Service Conference Workshop **Apr 8** @ 9:00 am @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

67th General Service Conference **Apr 23 – Apr 29**

Spring Committee Meeting **May 13** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Fox Valley Open **May 20** @ 7:00 pm @ Fox Valley Presbyterian Church

Summer Assembly/Post-GSC Report **Jun 10** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Summer Committee Meeting **Aug 5** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Illinois State Conference **Aug 11 – Aug 13**

Fall Assembly **Sep 16** @ 9:00 am – 3:00 pm @ Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Marshall-Putnam King's House AA group 50th anniversary party on **Aug. 26th**, 2017. At noon at the Putnam County Conservation District Shelter, 4526 E. 1000th St, Hennepin, IL. Contact Gregg C. at 815-488-8719



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