



International Convention Alcoholics Anonymous

July 2–5, 2020 | Detroit, Michigan

Love and Tolerance is Our Code • Amour et tolérance, voilà notre code • El amor y la tolerancia son nuestro Código

November 22, 2019

Dear Delegates,

Hello to all. I hope you have had a productive six months since the 69th General Service Conference. I want to thank you again for your participation in the Conference and your terrific work. You tackled some difficult policy items with grace and tolerance. It was a joy for me to serve with you.

I am writing to update you on some of the General Service Board's planning work, and the General Service Office's progress in implementation of the Board's initiatives to meet our world-wide, public information responsibility in this digital age.

GENERAL SERVICE BOARD STRATEGIC PLAN

The General Service Board's (Board) mission is to serve the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous. As noted in the essay on Concept VIII, the Board devotes itself to "the larger and more serious questions of policy, finance, group relations, public relations and leadership that constantly confront it."

The Board's Strategic Plan (Plan) is a leadership tool the Board uses to provide a sense of direction and progress in support of our mission. The policies, goals, processes and actions contained within the Plan help guide our decisions, assist us as we evaluate our progress and help us determine what other actions might be needed or what actions may be ineffective or unwarranted. We also chart the activities undertaken by the General Service Office, as overseen by the trustees' committees, that result from the Conference Advisory Actions and align them with the Plan. Not surprisingly, many of the desired services, literature and policies generated by Conference fit well within the Plan. We would be very concerned if that were not the case and would feel compelled to reevaluate our Plan.

In my annual reporting to you on the Board's activity this past year, I outlined our six goals. These goals come from the Plan. Each July, at the first board meeting following Conference, the Board takes time to review the Plan to ensure the goals, processes and actions continue to be relevant to our mission and, equally important, continue to remain consistent with the Steps, Traditions and Concepts and with the recommended actions of the Conference.

Attached is the revised strategic plan which was just approved by the Board in November. We encourage you to review the Plan, share it with the Fellowship if you think it useful and provide feedback. Depending on the schedule and your interest, we may ask for some time at Conference for further discussion.

COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

In a new development, brought about as a result of the General Service Board's strategic planning, sharing sessions at the General Service Conference, the findings of the communications audit, ideas heard as Board members have travelled in the Fellowship and two years of discussion about the way G.S.O. might meet its obligation to provide robust public information services Fellowship-wide, the General Manager has formed a Communications Department within the General Service Office. A joint committee comprised of G.S.O. personnel and trustees has been working diligently to address issues and protocols necessary to the startup and first years of this department. As noted in the essay on Concept VI, "world-wide public relations" is the responsibility of the Trustees. This duty is delegated to the General Service Office. The Board supports the General Manager's right of decision in undertaking this focused approach to communications. Clement C., a highly knowledgeable media and public relations staff member, will lead us in the evolution of this department.

I encourage you to re-read Bill's talk to the 1960 General Service Conference, "A.A. in an Era of Change" (p. 101-113), which can be found in our new book: *Our Great Responsibility*. In it, starting on page 110, Bill asks some questions of the Conference:

This Conference is here to preserve what we've got in full measure, but how much more shall we need? In the way of communication with this procession [of alcoholics], how are we going to reason? How are we going to make them want to approach us? This probably is our single greatest problem.... Obviously, it is by better communication. And this means better, and bigger, public relations. It means a vast increase in the friends of this Society, in all the media of communications. What they've already done for us is beyond estimate, but this must be only the beginning. How can we first reach them more effectively and they, in turn, this melancholy and ever-flowing stream?... We ought to cast aside some of our early fears, however justified they were at the time, and try to increase our friendly cooperation with whoever and whatever is trying to tackle this field -- whether we agree with their methods or whether we don't.

The newly-formed communications department will assist the service desks as well as the boards in getting our message effectively heard, as Bill invites us to do, while maintaining adherence to our Traditions and the further guidance found in the Concept essays. This department will work on enhancing our relationships across all media and in more effectively using Class A trustees to assist in the efforts. Over time, the Board expects that the employees in this department will seek your input to



identify ways that we in the service structure can more effectively communicate with each other up and down the service triangle. And, of course, this department will be bound by Conference actions. This department is not a substitute for all the many creative efforts at the local level to extend the hand of A.A. Rather, this department is about how G.S.O. can do its delegated job of public relations in accordance with Bill's vision.

Thank you for your servant leadership. I look forward to seeing all of you either at Conference or, if you've rotated, at Regional Forums and other A.A. events, including, of course, our much-anticipated International Convention in Detroit.

Grateful to serve you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michele Grinberg". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Michele Grinberg
Chair of the General Service Board

c.c. Conference Members [all]
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Attachment

