

66th General Service Conference of AA - Highlights

Our Spiritual Way of Life:

Steps, Traditions and Concepts

April 17 - 23 @ Crowne Plaza Hotel, New York, NY



Why do we need a Conference at all?

One of the last things that Bill W. and Dr. Bob agreed on before Dr. Bob died was the need for a General Service Conference to provide final responsibility and ultimate authority to the groups themselves for the future of our Fellowship. Page S-20 A.A. Service Manual:

"...We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in A.A. that rebirth that brought us back to life."

From your delegate...

Mahalo from the bottom of my heart for the opportunity and honor of representing Hawaii, Area 17 at the 66th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous. Thank you for all your hard work. By bringing your **group's conscience to the Inform the Delegate Assembly, you provided me with valuable insight on agenda items** as I prepared for the Conference. I would like to share with you what I saw, what I heard and what I felt.

What I saw: I saw the same spirit of cooperation from the entire conference, 133 members including 93 delegates with widely varied experiences and backgrounds, the hard working people at GSO and a group of dedicated trustees.

What I heard: I heard passionate servants coming together in unity to make the best recommendations for AA as a whole and to continue carrying the message to those still suffering.

What I felt: A sense of awe and wonder at the collective commitment to carry on the work of Bob and Bill and to insure that AA is here for generations to come.

Here's some things I heard that touched me deeply:

'You can pretend to care but you can't pretend to show up.'

'Good is the enemy of the best but sometimes perfection is the enemy of progress.'

Several topics generated lengthy, lively, and loving discussion.

Translating the Big Book into plain language.

Removal of two paragraphs discussing men & women's duties from *Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

Implementing *Google-for-Non-Profits* and *Twitter* accounts for carrying message to the public.

The 66th General Service Conference approved:

A new corrections video called *A New Freedom* to replace *It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell*.

Revisions to pamphlets *Young People and A.A.*, *The Twelve Traditions Illustrated*,

Remember - *The agenda for the Conference comes from us. Bill wrote in Concept IX: "A fine plan or idea can come from anybody, anywhere." You, too, can submit an agenda item that could be considered by our whole fellowship.*

Mahalo from the bottom of my heart for my life filled with light, love and laughter.

Cheryl N., Delegate
Hawaii Area 17, Panel 65

Who makes up the conference?

Area Delegates - US & Canada 93 = 69.4%
 Trustees, A.A.W.S. & G.V. Directors 26 = 19.4%
 General Service & G.V. Staff 15 = 11.2%

Total 134 Voting Members

Delegate Statistics

Age		Sobriety		Service	
Average	57	Average	22	Average	16
Oldest	78	Longest	42	Longest	37
Youngest	32	Shortest	8	Shortest	5

Conference Schedule

9 AM - 9 PM+
 Early Sessions - Saturday
 1728 Meeting
 Remote Communities Workshop
Delegate's Meeting
 Opening day - Sunday
 Roll call
 Keynote addresses
 3 speakers
 Opening Dinner
 Monday - Friday
 Committee meetings
 Presentations
 Committee report-backs
 Trip to the G.S.O. on Tuesday
 Closing Day - Saturday
 Closing Breakfast
 Rotating Trustees say Farewell

Electronic Voting

The 66th G.S.C. uses electronic voting devices again this year. Committee recommendations were voted on Friday only, using electronic voting, without problems. Future use will be determined in 2017.



In Regions, Areas, Districts & Home Groups, The Year Long Process of the GSC Continues

- ◆ DECEMBER - First year delegates assigned a conference committee & serve for 2 years.
- ◆ FEBRUARY - Distribution of topics for the General Service Conference (G.S.C.) at committee meeting.

- ◆ MARCH - Pacific Regional A.A. Service Assembly (PRAASA) A.A. members from 14 areas meet for service sharing. Agenda items and background material are also distributed during this month.
- ◆ EARLY APRIL - Area 17 Inform the Delegate Assembly
- ◆ APRIL - General Service Conference is held in New York.
- ◆ MAY/JUNE - Delegates begin reporting back to their Areas.
- ◆ JUNE - Box 4-5-9 published with summary of GSC.
- ◆ OCTOBER - Final conference reports are distributed at Assembly.



So, What Does G.S.O. Do?

Each year...

- ◆ Staff members respond to more than 90,000 emails, letters and phone calls from A.A. members, suffering alcoholics, distraught family members, professionals, students, the press and others interested in A.A.
- ◆ The Corrections desk answers over 6,500 letters - **that's 18 letters per day, every day!!**
- ◆ There are over 400 Alcoholics in extremely remote areas and G.S.O. coordinates and connects them to each other through a newsletter, Loners Internationalists Meetings (L.I.M.).

Last year **ARCHIVES...**

- ◆ Received 1,300 requests.
- ◆ Published 3 Markings eNewsletters.

Last year **SHIPPING...**

- ◆ Distributed 8 million books, pamphlets & audio materials.

Last year **CONTRIBUTIONS...**

- ◆ Received 71,000 pieces of mail.
- ◆ G.S.O. received ~8,000 contribution letters in the month of December alone.

Did you know?????

- ◆ AA.org received over 12 million visits last year, an increase of 35% over 2014.

- ◆ Currently there are 58 projects across 28 languages being shepherd-ed through the translation process.
- ◆ Notable languages / countries include (but are not limited to): Arabic, Croatian, Karen (Burmese immigrant populations), Farsi (Iran), Konkani (Goa, India), Maltese, Mongolian, Navajo, Russian, Somali, and Ukrainian.



Foreign Language Big Books

And from Grapevine/La Vina...

- ◆ Subscriptions of GV continue to decline slowly, LV shows slight increase.
- ◆ Expenses continue to grow slowly - 2 - 3% per year.
- ◆ Excerpt from Corporate Board Report: A.A. Grapevine, Inc. "Should the fellowship desire that Grapevine and La Vina continue into the future - for alcoholics and friends, many of whom may not know about A.A. yet - additional subscribers will be required. Organization wide support for A.A. is integral to this effort, to our history and to our future."

What is an Advisory Action?

Conference Advisory Actions represent recommendations of the Conference committees, or floor actions that have been approved by the Conference body as a whole with substantial unanimity (2/3 vote).

Advises the Trustees how "we" want them to serve the Fellowship
(pg S58 of AA Service Manual, 2015-2016 edition)

Conference Committees

Agenda

2017 General Service Conference

Theme: "Supporting Our Future"

Presentations:

- ◆ Growth:
 - ◇ Diversity-Outreach and Attraction
 - ◇ Safety-An Important Consideration
 - ◇ Communication-Today and Tomorrow
- ◆ Participation:
 - ◇ Fellowship vs. Membership

◆ Leadership: "I am Responsible..."

◆ Is Your Voice Heard?

◆ Contributions:

- ◇ Spirituality and Money
- ◇ Fully Self-Supporting Our Obligations
- ◇ Apathy and Power of the Purse

Workshop: "Anonymity - The Spiritual Foundation"

Advisory Action

- ◆ The General Service Office to post to the Conference dashboard, and regularly update information concerning the status of all proposed Conference agenda items.

Cooperation with the Professional Community

Advisory Actions

- ◆ Section on A.A. and medications be added to pamphlet "If You are a Professional..."
- ◆ Text added to first page of the pamphlet "Is there an Alcoholic in the Workplace?"
- ◆ Minor revisions to the pamphlet "How A.A. Members Cooperate with Professionals."
- ◆ Introductory paragraph be added to the pamphlet "Problems Other Than Alcohol" addressing dated language. Continued relevance of the 1958 pamphlet today was noted.

Considerations

- ◆ Took no action to discontinue the pamphlet "Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W."
- ◆ Suggested Trustees' Committee explore ways to integrate technology into C.P.C. exhibits, such as QR code on pamphlets and displays.

7TH TRADITION SELF-SUPPORT - 1996 - 2015



This is a chart of the percentage of listed groups that contributed to G.S.O. over the last decade. In 2015, 40.3% contributed, 26,500/65,741 groups. In 2014, 41.6% contributed, 27,103/65,222 groups. In 2015, 50.77% in HI contributed, 165/325 groups.

Corrections Committee

Advisory Action

- ◆ The video “It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell” be replaced with a new video titled “A New Freedom” be approved.

Considerations

- ◆ Suggested creating additional versions of the video “A New Freedom” in varying lengths.

Finance

Advisory Action No recommendation

Considerations

- ◆ Took no action on increasing the area contribution [currently \$1,600] for the delegate expense to the Conference.
- ◆ Took no action on increasing one-time limit of \$5,000.00 individual bequests.
- ◆ Suggested better communication within the fellowship concerning financial matters.

Grapevine

Advisory Action

- ◆ Delegate chair for Grapevine Conference Committee be allowed same participation at the January A.A. Grapevine Board Meeting as all other delegate chairs.

Considerations

- ◆ Suggested that the A.A. Grapevine Board produce in 2017 or later:
 - ◇ Stories by Atheist and Agnostic A.A. members (working title)
 - ◇ Steps Four and Five (working title)

	GV	LA VIÑA
Annual Print Subscription Price	\$28.97	\$11.97
Number of Issues per Year	12	6
Cost per Issue	\$ <u>2.41</u>	\$ <u>1.99</u>
Cost per Day for your Sobriety	\$0.08	\$0.03

Literature

Advisory Actions

- ◆ Trustees Literature Committee to develop sched-

ule for annual review of recovery literature.

- ◆ Revise the following pamphlets:

- ◇ **Young People and A.A.”** to include information about **young people’s conferences.**
- ◇ **“Young People and A.A.”** with goal to reflect experiences of young people today.
- ◇ **“The Twelve Traditions Illustrated”**
- ◇ **“Your AA General Service Office”**



Considerations

- ◆ Took **no action** on creating a plain language “Big Book.” While sympathetic to the spirit of the request, decided it was not appropriate at this time without wider support.
- ◆ Suggested the Trustees’ Literature Committee explore the need for expanding the availability of **“plain language” literature.**
- ◆ Progress noted for these pamphlets with draft copies/reports to be sent to 2017 G.S.C.
 - ◇ *A.A. and the Gay/Lesbian Alcoholic*
 - ◇ *A.A. for the Woman*
 - ◇ *Inside A.A.: Understanding the Fellowship and Its Services*
 - ◇ Literature for “A.A.s with mental health issues and those who sponsor them.”

Public Information Committee

Advisory Actions

- ◆ Proposal for implementing a *Google-for-Non-Profits* account for carrying the message of A.A. to the public be developed and brought back to P.I.in 2017.
- ◆ Proposal for the implementation of a *Twitter* account for carrying the message of A.A. to the public be developed and brought back to P.I. in 2017.
- ◆ The English- and French-language versions of the video P.S.A. **“Tengo Esperanza,”** be centrally distributed, tracked and evaluated at a cost not to exceed \$40,000.
- ◆ **The video P.S.A. “I Thought”** be discontinued.

Considerations

- ◆ Need for guidance using social media by A.A. members to carry message to the public.
- ◆ Committee reviewed and accepted the 2016 P.I. Comprehensive Media plan.
- ◆ Took no action on reconsidering 2011 Action on actors portraying A.A. members, feeling current policy is adequate.

Report & Charter Committee

Advisory Actions

- ◆ **A new section on “Local Forums” be added to** The A.A. Service Manual Chapter 9 after **“Regional Forums.”**
- ◆ Endnote 4 be removed from Concept XII on page 73 of the Twelve Concepts of World Service.
- ◆ **Text of two paragraphs discussing men’s and women’s duties be removed from Concept XI essay** on page 58 of Twelve Concepts for World Service.
- ◆ Endnote 10, page 59, be revised noting that the two paragraphs have been removed and are available upon request from G.S.O. Archives Department.
- ◆ The A.A. Service Manual be revised after the 2016 General Service Conference and new edition be published bi-annually (i.e., every two years), beginning in 2017 at a savings of approximately \$45,000 - 50,000 in alternate years.

Treatment/Special Needs-

Accessibilities

Advisory Action

- ◆ **The term “Special Needs” be removed from committee name and throughout the committee’s** Composition, Scope and Procedure. New name to be the Conference Committee on Treatment and Accessibilities.

Trustees

Advisory Action

- ◆ If regional trustee vacancies occur after Sept 1st in first year to August of third year, then an election for remaining term and second term will be held at the next G.S.C.

Other Committee Considerations:

- ◆ Archives: Discussed ways of encouraging A.A. groups to write their group histories.
- ◆ International Conventions/Regional Forums:

Discussed ways to encourage interest in Regional Forums and attract first-time attendees.

- ◆ Policy/Admissions:
 - ◇ **Suggested trustees’ Committee and G.S.O.** explore ways to provide information to local translation committees and encourage coordination.
 - ◇ Took no action regarding Conference observers from other fellowships.

General Service Board has five new trustees.	
Two Class A (Non-Alcoholic)	Hon. C. Carpenter Nancy McCarthy
Three Class B (Alcoholic)	
General Service (Grapevine)	Carole B.
Western Canada Regional	Cate W.
West Central Regional	Thomas A.

Approved Floor Actions

- ◆ General Service Conference delegates be provided a copy of the final approved annual General Service Office and A.A. Grapevine budgets with the pre-Conference material for all future Conferences.
- ◆ The General Service Board develop a new policy and plan that enhances the G.S.C. agenda Review and Selection Process, providing delegates a role in vetting and selection of proposed agenda items for 2017 G.S.C.
- ◆ **The trustees’ Committee on the General Service** Conference create a plan to translate Conference background material, considering all possible methods, with a progress report to be forwarded to the 2017 Conference Committee on Policy/Admissions that describes the process and costs.

P.S.A. “Doors”

- ◆ **The P.S.A. “Doors” continues to be very popular.** Combined, the English and Spanish versions have aired a total of 32,038 times, with 247,485,434 audience impressions and \$9,307,531 in donated media values.
- ◆ **The “Doors” P.S.A. campaign has generated 50% more airings to date than the industry average.**



Conference Translation

Phase 1 of G.S.O.'s plan to translate pre-Conference and Conference materials into Spanish and French has been implemented.

Feasibility Study

Study addresses significant concern as projected publishing income decreases into the future.

- ◆ Improving Internal and External Communications
- ◆ Ideas for Increasing Revenues
- ◆ Ideas for Reducing Expenses
- ◆ Ideas on Organizational Structure

Conference members met in smaller groups to address one of the topics and reported back with summaries—just like we do at our Area Assemblies. Recurring themes were:

- ◆ Strong sponsorship, including service sponsors
- ◆ Communication about G.S.O. services provided is vital.
- ◆ Within service structure—DCMs, GSRs
- ◆ Use technology, a golden opportunity

Archives

During the tour of GSO on Tuesday afternoon, I viewed the 'vault' which holds the original documents along with copies from the very beginning. I saw the first correspondence from Hawaii in the early 1940's. What a thrill!!!



Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson, located in Katonah, N.Y., about 90 minutes from our hotel. On Saturday morning, many of us travelled to the inspiring property where we were able to tour the home where Bill and Lois lived from 1941 until their deaths in 1971 and 1988. I am **thrilled to have been able to view Wit's End, Bill's studio and sit at the very desk he wrote 12 Steps & 12 Traditions and many other historic works.**



Long range planning issues to watch:

- Finance:
 - Self-support
 - Impact of the move toward digital
 - Long term stability
- Lack of growth in the Fellowship
- Decline in literature sales and subscriptions
- Social media and anonymity

Remember - Finance has no importance in and of itself. Finance is simply a way to help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.