

1.

Would Conference agree that a statement such as the following should be made at the beginning of every meeting and that a sign be made available requesting the same?

"To maintain the best possible spiritual atmosphere, to protect newcomers and AA as a whole, it is requested that mobile phones and any other recording devices are turned off until the meeting is over."

Terms of Reference No. 7 Issue is best addressed locally

2.

Can the Conference be broadcast via the internet by means of a webcast or podcast?

The intention is to provide more transparent operation of the service structure/conference. As I understand it there is no current facility for interested group members/members of the public to attend Conference and hear its deliberations. I think it would aid transparency and stimulate interest in the activities that occur in York/GSO if any interested parties could view or hear the proceedings on the internet.

Terms of Reference No. 6/7 Not possible to safeguard the anonymity of AA members at Conference and insufficient background material.

4.

What action could or should be taken by Groups to discourage the growing practice by some members who are acting contrary to the Traditions and are diverting, recruiting and encouraging new members to attend other bodies or organisations in place of attendance at AA meetings?

Terms of Reference No. 7 AA does not have an opinion on outside organisations and that this is a local issue, best addressed locally.

5.

Would Conference review the role of Conference delegates at Region? In particular, whether they should have voting rights in all matters at Region. Make recommendations.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Covered by existing AA literature and in view of Tradition 4 it is within the responsibility of local groups, intergroups and regions to decide on such matters.

6.

Would Conference consider changing the title of "AA Conference" to "AA GB National Conscience" and to updating all relevant literature at the next reprint?

Terms of Reference No. 7 Considered this to be impractical, if not impossible, for the current title is referred to and built into the Concepts and our Service Structure.

7.

Would Conference instruct the General Service Board to arrange with GSO for the final report of the annual Conference to be issued to the Fellowship within 2 weeks of the closing of Conference?

Terms of Reference No. 7 Timeframe impractical for GSO staff.

8.

Would Conference explore the feasibility of the Fellowship adopting an 0800 (free-to-caller) national number.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Telephone Sub Committee is already working on this and a report will be given to Conference.

9.

Should we be providing computers for the sole use of AA Service work, such as the Secretary and Treasury positions, within the Intergroups and Regions?

Terms of Reference No. 7 All groups are autonomous and this to be an issue best addressed locally.

10.

Should we be using Company computers for AA Service work?

Terms of Reference No. 7 Local issue, Refer to Electronic Communications guidelines.

11.

The pamphlet, AA for the Older Alcoholic, has good stories relevant to that age group.

Can we produce a pamphlet of AA stories for the newcomer, such as 'Freedom from Bondage' and 'He had to be shown' from the third edition of the Big Book and 'Grounded' from the fourth edition of the Big Book and about seven more AA Big Book stories.

A newcomer's chance of identification is then simpler and quicker and less costly for him.

Terms of Reference No. 7 The duplicating of AA literature is not in the best interest of our Primary Purpose.

12.

Would Conference consider removing the line "Fundamentally, though, the difference between an electronic meeting and the home group around the corner is only one of format", page xxiv the foreword to the fourth edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous.

In November 2001 the fourth edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous was released in the USA. The members disagreed with this sentence so much that it was voted at the General Service Conference in April 2002 to be removed. It was removed beginning with the 4th printing of the 4th edition.

I have spoken with the General Service Office in York and it has been confirmed that we follow most of what literature comes from the USA and certainly when the book Alcoholics Anonymous is reprinted so I was curious as to why we have not followed by taking the same line out. It is my belief that this line is erroneous as there is a massive difference between an electronic meeting and a home group around the corner.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Valid point and confirm that AA GB Big Book will follow the US Big Book and the matter is in hand.

14.

The Gift Aid Scheme entitles AA to claim 28p from the government for every £1 donated by an individual member of AA. Would conference consider that this is a breach of Tradition 7 since 28p comes from the government which is an outside contribution?

1. Gift Aid Explained says AA takes the UK taxpayer's contribution (on which you have already paid tax), and tax is reclaimed at the basic rate of 28%. Tax is a financial charge or other levy imposed upon a taxpayer (an individual or legal entity) by a state or the functional equivalent of a state such that failure to pay, or evasion of or resistance to collection, is punishable by law.

Tax has been used by the government for the enforcement of law and public order, protection of property, economic infrastructure (roads, legal tender, enforcement of contracts, etc.), public works, social engineering, subsidies, and the operation of government itself. Governments also use taxes to fund welfare and public services. These services can include education systems, health care systems, pensions for the elderly, unemployment benefits, and public transportation. An AA member, as a UK taxpayer, should expect the money they give for tax to be spent on what it is supposed to be spent on. Even though AA has been branded as a charity, Tradition 7 prevents AA from taking money from the government.

Conference 2007 discussed Gift Aid concluding that the use of "Gift Aid" remains a matter for the individual conscience. Committee 3 stated that Gift Aid "is a way for individual members who pay tax to make an additional personal contribution." The Committee did not understand the procedure of Gift Aid. The issue is that tax money is being given to AA by the government which is an outside contribution and clearly a breach of Tradition 7. This is not a matter for the individual conscience but it is a matter for the whole organisation of AA.

Committee 3 of Conference 2007 was in error in their discussion of "Gift Aid". Concept 5 states that "in the light of the

principle of the “Right of Appeal,” all minorities – whether in our staffs, committees, corporate boards, or among the Trustees – should be encouraged to file minority reports whenever they feel a majority to be in considerable error. And when a minority considers an issue to be such a grave one that a mistaken decision could seriously affect AA as a whole, it should then charge itself with the actual duty of presenting a minority report to the Conference.”¹

Concept 12 states that “in all its proceedings, the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the AA tradition...that no Conference action ever be personally punitive or an incitement to public controversy.”² “The Warranties of Article 12 are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to AA’s Twelve Traditions.”³ Conference has not observed the spirit of AA tradition with regards to Gift Aid. Concept 12 points out that “in an overseas area there was some rather bad publicity when a considerable section of the groups there became convinced they ought to accept money subsidies from their country’s government to promote AA work, the AA Tradition notwithstanding.”⁴ AA is doing this today by accepting Gift Aid from the government. Conference should be reminded that “we know that we personally

¹ The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, Concept 5, page 34

² The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, Concept 12, page 61

³ The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, Concept 12, page 61

⁴ The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, Concept 12, page 69

have to choose conformity to AA’s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions or else face dissolution and death, both as individuals and as groups.”⁵

We support ourselves by our own contributions.

“Both these principles we understand: that AA wants no charity, that we support our own services.” – Bill W., Language of the Heart, p 350

It wasn’t always that way. When AA started, the pioneers had grandiose plans. They would open up AA hospitals, pay special workers to go round 12th-stepping the still suffering, publishing books, pamphlets, organising massive ad campaigns to carry the message.

All this would take money. So they went around with the begging bowl. The millionaire, John D. Rockefeller, lent them a thousand dollars. Most of it was spent on the first edition of The Big Book.

But when the money ran out, they realised that not all donors would give money without strings.

Ever since then, AA has been totally self-supporting.⁶

2. References

Alcoholics Anonymous pp 561-566, pp 574-575; AA Comes of Age p 30, p 114, p 141, p 182, p187, p 192, p 204, p 208f; Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions pp 164-169; As Bill Sees It p 335; Twelve Concepts for World Service, The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 p 34, p37, p 61, p 69, p 72; AA Tradition-How it developed; Twelve Concepts Illustrated; Twelve Traditions Illustrated

Terms of Reference No. 7

Based on incorrect information and the CSC have asked the Honorary Treasurer to clarify Gift Aid at Conference in the Finance presentation.

15.

Would conference discuss underlining the words “as we understood him” on the AA banners produced by Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain like the American AA banners that were used prior to 2010?

Terms of Reference No. 7

Passed to Literature Sub Committee for consideration.

16.

Would Conference review the Guideline: The General Service Conference (pages 99-107 of the AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013), in particular the sections relating to the status of a delegate who has served a term as an alternate delegate. If it is agreed that these sections contain an anomaly, will Conference make recommendations to remove the anomaly.

Terms of Reference No. 5

Committee felt the point made does not contain an anomaly and the Service Handbook was reviewed and accepted at Conference 2013.

17.

Would Conference discuss and make recommendations: that as a Fellowship, we are failing to continue to raise awareness on an ongoing basis as is required by law, by not paying enough attention or challenging the unacceptable, inappropriate and unlawful sexual conduct by some AA members.

Awareness of this problem has been brought to the attention of Conference on numerous occasions throughout the years, but the truth is there are still a minority of people who continue to take advantage of the more vulnerable members of the Fellowship in a completely unacceptable manner.

As part of our service to the Fellowship we must protect our members and stay out of public controversy. Recent events within the UK have highlighted the need for all organisations to be dealing with problems such as these on an ongoing and transparent way.

The discussion document of 2000 was highlighted as a starting point only and in these current times it is essential we are able to demonstrate we have moved from the starting point, and ensure that every member of this Fellowship is reminded, on a regular and ongoing basis, of their individual responsibilities for their personal conduct.

I ask Conference to discuss and agree the issue for a reminder to all groups of the group conscience responsibility regarding their responsibility.

Background information

No member of the Fellowship is above the law of the land.

Terms of Reference No. 7

There have been several submissions covering this topic and a question has been selected that encompasses all areas of the subject matter with appropriate background material.

18.

Since reading page 13 in SHARE June 2012, I have found that 'Pineapple Peter's' statement leads me to ask the following question:

Why have Intergroups stopped reminding AA groups to include Guideline 17 in quarterly group conscience meetings?

All the guidelines are essential for those in service posts but Guideline 17 reminds all AA members that there is a duty to stamp out any sign of a return to the sick agenda that was curtailed by AA's national review in 2002; to protect newcomers from abuse, that caused some of them to seek help from outside authorities who demanded AAs should do something about it and so we should continue to do, for our own sobriety and AA unity.

Terms of Reference No. 6 Insufficient background information

19.

Can the Fellowship share experience and make recommendations that provide some specific guidance that both protects members, especially Newcomers from predatory sexual behaviour and existing members from mistaken allegations of the same thing.

Reason for submission:

There have been recent allegations of sexually inappropriate behaviour to newcomers from experienced AA members. These allegations bring the name of Alcoholics Anonymous into disrepute, whether accurate or not. The fact that they are made at all indicate that a Newcomer has felt vulnerable in a fellowship where they should feel safe. The members accused are powerless to defend themselves against a perception of inappropriate behaviour. Many newcomers have come from situations where they may have been abused and may easily misinterpret the innate friendship in AA as inappropriate behaviour.

Our current guidance in the Structure Handbook (pp 82-86) skirts around the issue of personal conduct, and does not specifically address sexual predation (alleged or otherwise), or how we should respond to this at Group, Intergroup and Regional level.

Background Information:

The AA Structure Handbook The Group, Section 5 (pp82-86).

Traditions: 1, 2, 4, 5, and 12. (*Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* 'Contents')

The Language of the Heart Tradition One, Tradition Two, Tradition Four, Tradition Five and Tradition Twelve

Report to Conference 2002 Guideline 17: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/.../107%20Summer>.

Terms of Reference No. 7

There have been several submissions covering this topic and a question has been selected that encompasses all areas of the subject matter with appropriate background material.

22.

Would Conference consider reverting to the original meaning of the term 'GSR', i.e. 'General Service Representative'?

Background

The term 'GSR' in the UK service structure stands for 'Group Service Representative'. However, the term originally stood for 'General Service Representative'. The word 'general' intends a more expansive and important role for the GSR; instead of the current role, which is largely concerned with organising service within the Home Group, and which is inward-looking. A general service rep is someone who plays an integral role in weaving together the 'grass roots' of AA into an effective group conscience. The current, inward-looking role of the GSR is ineffective – Intergroups seem distant from Regional Assemblies, which in turn appear distant from the General Service Conference, which is supposed to be the active voice and effective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

The World Service Manual states that the General Service Representative represents the voice of the group conscience, and that the GSR has the job of linking their group with AA as a whole, reporting the group's thoughts to the (Conference) Delegate. It goes on to say that only when the GSR communicates the group conscience can the Conference truly act for AA as a whole. The World Service Manual states that the qualifications of a GSR should include activity in a group, Intergroup or other service, i.e. doing service at Intergroup is background work to being a GSR. The GSR's real and substantive role is seen to be one that includes participation at meetings where the Delegates are elected. In this way the role of the General Service Representative is seen to link the grass roots of AA to the General Service Conference, which really would make it the 'most important job in AA'.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Group Service Representative is used in the Service Handbook approved at Conference 2013. Also cost implications.

24.

AA groups are being denied their basic right of membership in local Intergroups . This action also denies them participation in Region and Conference. Can Conference please clarify this situation and give advice so that minorities in AA are no longer banished from our Service/Conference structure and that their conscience is heard.

Background

- When these groups have asked the assistance of Conference in the past they have been told “it’s a local issue” and up to the “conscience of those concerned”. When the Conscience of those concerned deal with it, by fo
- Conference 2012 Comm 5 Qu 2 says that by being part of the group conscience and valuing the importance of love, tolerance and the right to participate, we can best strengthen the unity of the Fellowship.

Terms of Reference No. 6/7 Lack of clarity in the question and background material and that this is a matter to be decided locally.

25.

There has been a growing prejudice and willingness to try and expel or punish certain individuals or groups over the last couple of years. Can Conference please discuss ways in which itself and the GSB can show more leadership in assisting unity in areas where this attitude is prevalent?

Background

In some Intergroups, it is known that some Groups are being excluded, or their members are being prevented from taking part in Service. Often, this is because nominations are actively blocked, often leaving a variety of Intergroup Service positions vacant, rather than allow the election of a capable and willing AA from the ‘disliked’ Group.

Conference or the GSB could offer practical advice on how Groups could act in a more unified way, or in certain circumstances advise how those AA Groups having genuine concerns could highlight them to Conference or the GSB and ask whether it / they would be prepared to make the ‘offer of mediation’ (AA Service Manual combined with Twelve Concepts for World Service, 2004-2005 edition, p.72).

Traditions 1, 4 and 10

Terms of Reference No. 5/6 Similar question at Conference 2013 (Comm 5, Question 2). Lack of background material.

26.

Would Conference discuss whether the conscience of the group is properly represented when the current service structure in Great Britain does not allow GSRs a vote at regional level?

Background:

With ever - increasing vacancies in the service structure at regional level, delegates are being elected by an ever - decreasing quorum. There is a risk that the "actual voice and effective conscience" of the AA groups is not being carried.

References:

The 48th General Service Conference 2013 Report, Committee 4, Question 1: "The most successful methods were where groups have an active, well - supported and enthusiastic GSR who forms a vital link between the individual member and the wider fellowship."

AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013, pp.80-81

AA World Service Manual, pp.s15-s22

Concepts 1 & 9

Pamphlets: The Twelve Traditions Illustrated, The AA Group and Rewards of being a GSR.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Covered in existing literature.

28.

How can we improve the 12-step list, making sure it's regularly updated? Ensuring that Telephone Responders have current information so the telephone helpline operates efficiently and effectively. Also, due to lack of Telephone Liaison Officers and apathy of service, would Conference consider how we can encourage the Fellowship to be more pro-active in the telephone service?

Background

When Bill W made his first 12-step call to Dr. Bob he had been given a list of names to contact by telephone. This message should still be carried today. Would Conference consider revising and looking at the structure of the 12-step list and how it is monitored, throughout the telephone service.

Terms of Reference No. 6/7 Lack of background material and a local issue.

29.

Would the Fellowship please reflect upon the strengths and weaknesses of the Preamble for its use as an attractive description of AA as AA is in UK society today at the beginning of the 21st century and then conclude as to what action, if any, needs to be taken.

This writer is neither implying nor expecting that Conference 2015 should suggest a rewording of the Preamble but rather hopes that the question will create an opportunity for the fellowship to take inventory of an important piece of AA literature which is easy to take for granted.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Copyright is held by AA in United States.

30.

Would Conference revisit, discuss and make recommendations on violence and personal conduct?

In recent times it has become apparent that there is disharmony within the Fellowship with predators, bullies and violent members continuing to make members feel unsafe, frightened, intimidated and harassed.

In some situations police have been involved and arrests made. However, this does not stop the individuals from continuing with their unacceptable behaviour.

In some situations group conscience have discussed the safety of others and refused entry to such individuals, ensuring the group is not in conflict with the 12 Traditions and our way of life.

Background

AA Structure Handbook P82 Violence and Personal Conduct
 5.1 Violence
 5.2 Personal Conduct Matters
 P84 About Behaviour

Terms of Reference No. 7 There have been several submissions covering this topic and a question has been selected that encompasses all areas of the subject matter with appropriate background material.

31.

Would Conference consider whether attempts to make AA visible could sometimes conflict with the primary purpose or lead us to act contrary to the Traditions?

The primary purpose is to help people recover from alcoholism. Making sure that the public are informed that AA has a solution is important, but has the fixation on displaying the name of Alcoholics Anonymous here, there and everywhere overshadowed that primary purpose and led to a danger of counteracting the good, consistent, effective, straightforward, un-sensational PI work carried out throughout the Fellowship?

Reason for question

There is a concern about proposals to put banners in prominent places in the streets. Some feel this practice is promotional and that it could, particularly in small towns or communities, give an impression of AA which, rather than attract newcomers, could deter them from making contact.

Alcoholics Anonymous must be visible so that sufferers will find us but it is also special and different and not to be classed with organisations that tout for business or votes or whose chief concern is to get bums on seats.

There is also concern that PI initiatives carried out 'on the back' of non AA initiatives or personalities or officials, may also give the wrong impression of AA. When AA is contacted during press attention on issues regarding the treatment of alcoholism or on measures to combat alcohol abuse, an overriding wish to get Alcoholics Anonymous visible can lead to press coverage that implies that AA is part of the debate on the issue. Surely it is always best for AA to initiate articles or notices in the press (and to do so often) and not to let the desire to be noticed lead us into public controversy.

In the 1950s, the following was written, "While it is right and necessary that the work in AA should be widely known it seems the spread of this knowledge can best be accomplished by members and their friends and of course AA literature. Every effort should be made to keep that work free from the taint of sensationalism".

Terms of Reference No. 5 Discussed at Conference 2014

32.

Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on how best to ensure that once the group conscience has been established on a given issue, it is communicated to the group on a regular basis, and is then adhered to with love and kindness?

Terms of Reference No. 7 Local Issue. Tradition 4.

33.

A) Can we refer to members dead or alive in AA publications?

And

B) Does anonymity go to the grave and beyond OR does it stop at the grave?

This has a bearing on what publications such as Share, Roundabout and AA Service News print.

To expand on this question I have written three sections: Background, Potential issues and Possible solutions.

In particular I have called on my own experience as a proof reader for Roundabout however the issue will be relevant for any AA publication. Share, Roundabout and AA Service News spring to mind immediately. I think it would be of great benefit to the Fellowship and particularly those who help to proof read and edit articles if the Fellowship would share their experience. Hopefully some guidance can be given.

Background:

First some background on how this issue appeared. I will touch on my own approach to proof reading and experience. Roundabout magazine is "our meeting in print". Unless necessary I will not alter an article which a member has taken time to write in. Even though it may not be perfect prose or grammar. Most often it will not be altered. The ethos is that hopefully we can "hear" the reader sharing. I want to use the efforts of our writers. At times there can be an additional pressure of a shortage of articles. By not using an article could put strain on the team to fill the magazine. In short, not enough suitable articles then we have no magazine. We cannot however print anything which contravenes our Traditions or principles. Roundabout magazine has both Terms of Reference and Proof Reading Guidelines documents. I imagine there are similar for Share and other publications. After reading and using the guidelines and other AA literature my own conscience still bothered me with the following issue.

The issue:

The following example raises some questions. A writer might write:

"My late mother was a member of AA. She took me to my first meeting and her example was a great influence over me.

Jo Blogs Another meeting Scotland"

My own view is that the writer albeit they are sharing their own experience can not disclose that their mother alive or dead was in AA. What does the Fellowship think?

I realise that one often hears someone sharing at a meeting that a family member was or is in AA. In print this is different for a number of reasons which I have listed below:

- "The printed word assumes an authority not normally given to the spoken" to quote or own Roundabout Sub-committee terms of reference
- We can adhere to the yellow card when we leave a meeting.

- A magazine share is different. Roundabout magazines with the diary pages (which contain members tel no's) are torn out placed in hospitals, prisons etc. The stories however are not torn out. The magazines reach people who are not in AA.
- No member should disclose another member's (whether they are dead or alive) membership of AA.
- We also do not know if his late mother would have been happy to have it disclosed in print that she was a member of AA. Or if she is alive is she happy?
- We do not risk hurting our loved ones. Family members may not be happy to disclose that a member of their family was an alcoholic. To quote Step 9 we make amends "where ever possible except where to do so would injure them or others". Are we risking injuring a family member by printing this? Only the late mother would have been in a position to decide this.

I feel to print this with no alteration -

Breaks Tradition 12. Principles before personalities,

It may also

Breaks Tradition 11 - Anonymity at the level of press. Are Roundabout & Share magazine considered press?

Possible solutions:

We want to try to use as many of the articles as possible however if we accept that these lines cannot be printed. We need to consider, can we alter the text so that the article will fit with our principles and Traditions? Here are some options I have been deliberating:

- 1) Remove these lines from the article
- 2) Replace the words "late mother" with "late family member"
e.g. "A late family member was also was a member of AA. They took me to my first meeting and their example was a great influence over me.
Jo Blogs Another meeting Scotland"

This seems better however we may still risk upsetting a family member.

- 3) Print the article with no alteration however do not print the author's name or home group. I.E. an anonymous article. This on one level seems ok however it made me consider can we print anyone's story if we left it as anonymous?
- 4) My own conscience tell me. We need to try to carry the message. We are at times short of articles. So I feel it is OK to print the article provided
 - a) We alter it as in point 2 above
 - b) As in point 3 above we do not credit the article against a writer.

So we would print

"A late family member was also was a member of AA. They took me to my first meeting and their example was a great influence over me
Anonymous contributor"

I also suggest for courtesy and permission if possible before printing we contact the writer. To thank them for the article and explain why we would like to alter the article to fit with principles /Traditions.

Terms of Reference No. 7

Covered in existing literature.

35.

Can the Fellowship consider whether changes should be made to the system of phone response centres in AA service offices?

Background:

In some cities, such as London, the AA service office is used to take calls to AA helplines and is staffed by volunteers. For some of the Intergroups on the outskirts of London, this can be quite a long journey. From our Intergroup area, the journey by train takes 90 minutes and the shift ends at 10pm. For someone without a season ticket, the cost is over £10 return.

It is difficult for us to get members to commit to doing phone service for this reason, and we feel that more people might get involved in this service if there were an option to log in from home.

With the number of members coming to AA through the phone helpline decreasing, is it time to consider whether using volunteer teams in service offices is the best way to continue?

Terms of Reference No. 7

Local issue. Tradition 4.

37.

"Is there any appetite to make some minor editorial changes to the Big Book and 12&12, partly to remove gender specific references which could nowadays be seen as off-putting and sexist, and partly to update terminology or references which have become outdated and/or are unlikely to be understood by a modern British audience? The aim is emphatically NOT to change the substance of either book, but merely to make some minor changes to wording which will make our core literature more accessible and help ensure that AA's message continues to be carried effectively. Not a lot is required, but examples would include:

1. Examples of irrelevance or outdated items, or vernacular unsuitability:
 - (i) Reference to "Alaska or Salerno beachhead" 12&12 p.40
 - (ii) "When all our score cards read zero" (what pastime does this refer to? – I have often wondered) 12&12 p.29
 - (iii) "Hen or egg..." 12&12 p.26
 - (iv) Electricity ("modern house", "strange energy so few understand" etc.) 12&12 p 37-38
 - (v) "...Einstein's theory, nuclear physics..." 12&12 p36
2. Examples of religious rigidity:
 - (i) "... vice-President of American Atheist Society..." 12&12 p,26
 - (ii) "... priest minister or rabbi..." Big Book p.87
3. Examples of unintentional sexism:
 - (i) "...we ask our wives or friends to join us..." Big Book p.87
 - (ii) "Better men than we..." big book p.85
 - (iii) The entire "mother and children vs. father" paragraphs of Big Book pp 124-131 and beyond

Terms of Reference No. 7 Alcoholics Anonymous Great Britain does not have copyright to these books.

38.

Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on how GSO reserves should be brought back in line with Guidelines, for instance whether the selling price of AA literature ought to be reduced or whether other actions to reduce reserves should be considered?

Background

- Tradition 7
- Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2013
- The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 p120
- Concept XII

The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 p120 suggests GSO hold 'a prudent reserve equivalent to the budget expenditure for the forthcoming year', this aim being underlined by the Reserves Policy in the Report of the Trustees. However, at 30 September 2013 reserves totalled £2,096,000 while annual expenditure was £1,228,000.

In the year to 30 September 2013 the General Service Board reported a surplus of £188,000, further increasing its reserves from a figure already over the Handbook's recommended position and the Trustees' aim.

Tradition 7 long form states that '... we view with much concern those A.A. treasuries which continue, beyond prudent reserves, to accumulate funds for no stated A.A. purpose.'

Additionally, Concept XII warns against becoming '... the seat of perilous wealth ...'

In the year to 30 September 2013 literature sales were £519,000 while costs as disclosed in the accounts were £182,000. Literature is therefore being sold at almost three times cost.

Reducing the selling price of literature would bring many benefits, such as:

- decreasing the Board's annual surplus and reducing reserves to bring them into line with Handbook and Trustees' aims to hold one year's running costs as a prudent reserve.
- helping groups and members to carry the message more widely at a lower cost.
- allowing AA groups to sell literature at a lower price than online bookstores, making this part of the fundamental attraction of meetings.

My intention behind asking this question is to address two significant issues revealed by the latest Accounts – those being that literature is being sold at a large profit, significantly hindering its vital role in carrying the message more widely, and the unnecessary and ever growing level of reserves which are in danger of compromising our primary spiritual aim.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Treasurer's report at Conference 2014 answers this.

39.

Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on whether, given recent negative publicity surrounding corporate tax avoidance and the use of tax havens, allowing the Board's investment managers to place A.A. reserves in various funds ultimately controlled from Luxembourg risks the fellowship being drawn into public controversy?

Background

- Tradition 10
 - Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2013
- The short form of tradition 10 suggests that '... the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy'.

The Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 30 September 2013 discloses, at note 14, the following investments valued at over 5% of the total invested :

'Global Select Corporate Bond XXVIII (market value £172,352)
Global Select Total Return Bond XU (market value £43,981),
Bluebay Investment Grade Bond Fund Lux Listing (market value £89,894)
Global Brands F I Morgan Stanley (UK) (market value £86,271)
Global Select SICAV Sol Glob EQ L(A) (market value £96,510)'

These funds are listed in Luxembourg, a low tax regime.

My intention behind asking this question is to address what I see as a very real threat to AA's noncontroversial stance. I strongly believe our reserves should be held in UK listed investments, in a mix of risk-free Government bonds and ethical investments. With public opinion as it currently stands, investing in Luxembourg assets is unwise.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Charities are not taxed on their investments.

40.

Would the Fellowship discuss, share experience and make recommendations on whether the intent behind Tradition 9 is being upheld when questions submitted for consideration by Conference are being rejected by Conference Steering Committee as being the responsibility of some other service board or committee?

Background

- Tradition 9
- Summary of questions not accepted for Conference 2014
- The Conference Charter-Great Britain, AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 pp104-107
- Concept IV and V

A number of questions submitted last year for Conference 2014 were rejected under submission category 7 as being the /responsibility' of some other service board or committee.

Tradition 9 states that 'AA, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.'

Pages 104 to 107 of The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013 state that 'The Conference will ... be the vehicle by which AA in Great Britain can express its views on all matters of vital AA policy and all hazardous deviations from AA Tradition' and that 'Since 1966 Conference has been for all practical purposes the voice and the effective conscience of the Fellowship in Great Britain'.

Concepts IV and V give a 'right of participation' and a 'right of appeal' to all members of the

Fellowship.

My intention behind asking this question is to ask Conference to consider the intent behind the Traditions and the rights outlined by the Concepts, and for Conference to find a better way to uphold these when questions are being ignored by Conference Steering Committee and swept into an accountability vacuum between Conference and the Board of Trustees and, with Conference Steering Committee decisions only being revealed once per year, there being no right of appeal.

Terms of Reference No. 7 A new system is in place and the Terms of Reference of the CSC have been updated to reflect this.

41.

Would conference please give guidance as to the usage of public websites to lobby for national AA UK policies as an addition to the conference process itself?

Background

In the last few years there has been a growing incidence of UK-based websites run by AA members who publicise their views on various topics of AA UK service policy and officers, GSO and the GSB. They also encourage AA members reading the websites to lobby GSO and GSB with these views. They go through the conference-approved literature explaining where they believe it should be changed. They discuss various incidents they have heard of at GSO explaining where GSO or the board are at fault. Such blog posts are available to the general public. Password protected sites are easily available to set up. There is a UK service structure in existence that provide a process for lobbying and raising issues at the highest level. The use of public websites is maybe more likely to cause public controversy, and gets included in AA search results for the general public and professionals.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Fully covered by Tradition 10.

42.

Would conference give guidance as to how best to deal with AA lobbying websites likely to cause public controversy showing up prominently in search engines related to the search phrase “Alcoholics Anonymous”?

Background

It is generally considered that being on the first page of search results in Google makes you extremely relevant to the search phrase, and being in the first 3 pages makes you relevant. A large number of newcomers and professionals approach AA for the first time through Google and other search engines. Searches such as: Alcoholics anonymous South East UK, Alcoholics anonymous Bedfordshire, Alcoholics anonymous Essex, alcoholics anonymous Cambridgeshire, lead to one or more results in the first 2 pages which say that parts of AA are highly dangerous. Searches for Alcoholics Anonymous Aberdeen, Alcoholics Anonymous Kent, Alcoholics Anonymous Hampshire UK, Alcoholics Anonymous Middlesex give search results for these websites on the very first page presented. For the newcomer and professionals the publically accessible nature of these websites could confuse them or put them off from having anything to do with AA. This issue effects AA as a whole as internet searches are national. It is possible to create members-only websites which are less visible to search engines. It is possible to hire search consultants to help adjust search engine rankings to put such web results lower down the rankings.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Fully covered by Tradition 10.

43.

Would Conference consider updating the guideline on bullying and conduct in AA, as how AA members should best deal with being bullied or abused anonymously on the internet by AA members?

Background

There are public internet websites in the UK run by UK AA members which regularly name people in the UK fellowship who are identifiable to all members in their regional area. The current guidelines do not cover this eventuality. Members attacked in this way are in an unfortunate position as the internet is not only regional, but national. Also the attacks are by anonymous people so there is no recourse for response. This seems to be an area not covered by the guidelines but one which is causing great upset to a number of members, and disunity on a local and regional level. This is not a local issue as the websites are usually not written by AA members in a different area to that of the people they are bullying. There is national input into these websites, and national distribution.

Terms of Reference No. 7 There have been several submissions covering this topic and a question has been selected that encompasses all areas of the subject matter with appropriate background material.

44.

Would Conference like to give their approval (or otherwise) of individual members keeping their GPs informed of AA meeting in their areas. This is a very inexpensive way of spreading the message.

Background

It came about when my GP asked me some years ago whether there was a list of AA meetings. I gave her the green one (i.e. without any members' telephone numbers on it) and have since kept her up to date when a new one is issued. She seems pleased to have it. As you know it also gives our various helplines. It seems to be an effective and inexpensive way of keeping our GPs in the picture and since they presumably are aware of our states of health they will also hopefully observe how effective AA is.

Terms of Reference No. 7 A local PI issue – does not need Conference approval.

45.

Would Conference please discuss and make recommendations on the current wording in the A.A. literature and on the website regarding Open Meetings with a view to making it plainer that those attending A.A. meetings have some connection with alcoholism, either their own or somebody else's.

- 1) **Background material:** Open Meetings statement (see the national website);
Front covers of the London Where to Find and the
Where to Find A.A. Great Britain & English Speaking Europe.
The A.A. Preamble
Traditions 3, 5, 6 and 10.

2) Recommendation

The first paragraph of the website statement under the headings 'About AA Meetings' 'Open Meetings' states the case clearly that 'Open' meetings are for anyone wanting to solve a personal drinking problem, and for friends and families of those wanting to solve a drinking problem.

The statement on the front covers of the two meeting directories, "*Non-alcoholics may attend meetings listed as 'open'*" should I think for clarity and in keeping with A.A.s primary purpose, be changed and carry the same sentence or something similar.

Why?

The term and wording "*Non-alcoholics may attend meetings listed as 'open'*" on the covers of the two directories would seem not to serve our primary purpose as stated in the last two lines of the Preamble.

It is the case that many who have addictions other than alcohol go along to open meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous for their therapeutic benefit. Such individuals are not attending an A.A. meeting because they are supporting a family member or friend with a drinking problem, or because they have a desire to stop drinking (they may be moderate drinkers) they are attending because they have an addiction, and want to draw strength and comfort from our mature and strong Fellowship. Such individuals frequently share regardless of

the fact that alcohol may not be their problem. In this case I feel that Traditions 3, 5, 6 and 10 are being contravened.

In this era where the words "recovery" and "in recovery" have become umbrella terms for those sober from alcohol, clean from drugs or abstinent from sex/food/or rock and roll, Alcoholics Anonymous has a real obligation to hold firmly and clearly to our primary purpose.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Background material did not match question and is already covered in AA literature.

48.

Usually, there are 12 to 18 Conference Questions per year. Would the Fellowship ask itself whether this number could be lowered?

Background

- In my experience, there is quite some criticism concerning Conference and its perceived lack of relevance, expressed in statements like: "Waste of money", "AA management", "Feeding the machine", "It's a show", "It's a thing of the past, when AA was still in its infancy", "Have you ever been at Conference, and couldn't wait to phone your buddies back home with the answer to a specific question?", "Can you name just one Question that has had any impact at your home group?" and "Have you been a Delegate, and could you remember a single Questions your Committee had to answer, even a month after Conference?"
- These concerns are also frequently expressed in Conference Questions themselves. E.g., 2013, Committee 4, Question 1; 2012, Committee 5 Question 1 and 2010, Committee 1, Question 2 (having Conference every other year). However, it appears to me that these Questions have not mitigated these issues
- Although I fully support the Third Legacy, I have to concede that most Conference Questions seem of little relevance and often contrived
- I've understood that the usual number of 12 to 18 Questions per year, is a traditional figure, that is not evaluated periodically
- Reducing the number of Questions, would lower the costs of Conference, increase the quality of the Questions, while maintaining the continuity of Conference
- E.g.: With 1 Delegate per Region, Conference could process 2 or 3 Questions. With 2 Delegates per Region, Conference could process 4 to 6 Questions, and with 3 Delegates per Region, Conference could process 6 to 9 Questions.

Terms of Reference No. 7 Number of questions submitted by the Fellowship varies and their validity is determined by the CSC.

49.

Although the Facility for members contributing to AA via standing order and filling out a Gift Aid form, thus allowing the Fellowship to claim a further 25% of the donation from HMRC was approved at Conference 2007 and is documented on the GSO web site, it is not widely known.

Could Conference publicise this facility more widely in the Fellowship to increase our revenues?

Background

Conference 2007 Committee 3 Question 1

'Would Conference please discuss "Gift Aid" and whether it is in keeping with our Seventh Tradition?'

Terms of Reference No. 7 CSC have asked Honorary Treasurer to include this subject in the Finance Report given to Conference.

Big Book Pricing**Would Conference discuss whether the current pricing strategy for *Alcoholics Anonymous* (the Big Book) best supports our Primary Purpose?*****Background***

Our basic text, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, affectionately known as the “Big Book”, provides clear-cut, precise directions on how to recover from alcoholism.

“To show other alcoholics precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book.” Foreword to the First Edition

Broad distribution of the Big Book thus becomes a fundamental part of our Fellowship’s 5th Tradition, or Primary Purpose, and an essential element of individual members’ 12th Step activities. It is generally accepted that every AA member ought to possess a copy of the Big Book, and we are encouraged to make it available not only to still-suffering alcoholics, but also third parties such as the family, wives, doctors and employers. With permission from Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Incorporated, the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous (Great Britain) prints several editions of the Big Book and distributes them for sale. Our current pricing strategy is cost-plus; a profit margin over and above the costs of production. The General Service Board’s 2013 Annual Report provides the following figures:

Literature income: £ 518,608

Literature expenses: £ 181,839

From these figures we can estimate an average profit margin of 64%, which provides substantial flexibility to adjust our selling price to best meet the needs of the fellowship. Of course we understand some margin over the cost price is to be expected (in order to fund literature activities such as translations and the creation of new literature) but when evaluated against the importance of our fellowships’ primary purpose, the impact of our current pricing strategy with such a large profit margin on our basic text is worthy of our attention and continual review.

At least one independent publishing house has been set up in the USA to supply our basic text at cost price.

The Anonymous Press, for example, sells their “Mini Edition” for US\$0.89 (1000 pieces), which is approximately 53 pence per copy. In contrast, our own Pocket Edition Big Book costs £5, for which one could buy almost ten “Mini Editions”. For more information see <http://anonpress.org/store/mini.htm>

Copyright restrictions mean independent printing is not currently possible outside the USA. We also feel that buying literature from outside agencies would seem to contravene Traditions 6 & 7, as well as General Service Conference Literature Committee Advisory Actions, which recommended in 1977 that “A.A. groups be discouraged from selling literature not distributed by the General Service Office and the Grapevine” and again in 1986, that “A.A. groups be encouraged to display or sell only literature published and distributed by the General Service Office, the A.A. Grapevine and other A.A. entities”. However, we present this example to demonstrate that more affordable literature could be obtained, and that there is an existing demand for it. Therefore, we feel that Conference ought to discuss this issue, and as a Fellowship consider whether or not a new pricing strategy is required (i.e. competitive or demand-based) to best meet any underserved needs and supply our basic text at the optimum price, so as to encourage maximum purchasing and distribution of our message as contained in the Big Book into the hands of the still suffering alcoholic, and ultimately bringing more recovered alcoholics into the fellowship.

Note: If the current costs of production per unit were to exceed the optimum selling price as determined by the pricing strategy review, then we also suggest a review of the current printing processes.

General Service Board Annual Report 2013

Terms of Reference No. 7

Background information was misleading and CSC have asked Honorary Treasurer to include this subject in the Finance Report given at Conference.

Would the A.A. Groups of our fellowship consider a reorganization of the Conference committee tasks in such a way as to allow a more thorough review of the activities of the General Service Office, the General Service Board and the Fellowship as a whole over the preceding year?

Four committees to review the activities of the General Service Office, the General Service Board and the Fellowship as a whole and two committees to discuss topics or questions submitted by the Fellowship:

- a. One committee to review the activities and work of the GSB with special attention to how effectively the GSB has aided groups in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic over the past year.**
- b. One committee to review the activities and work of the GSO with special attention to how effectively the GSB has aided groups in carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic over the past year.**
- c. One committee would review activities and work within the Fellowship as whole, with attention to Regional, Intergroup and Group levels with special attention to carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.**
- d. One committee would review the full financial report by the GSB for the previous fiscal year with focus on any large expenditures or commitments and in addition review administrative procedures and decision making processes.**
- e. Two committees would work on Topics or Questions submitted by the fellowship as all six committees now do, this would allow for four to six Topics or Questions per Conference.**

Background and Intention of the topic:

Intention:

The question of the content and relevance of Conference Topics and Questions is raised regularly, both in topics submitted to Conference itself as well as at Group, Intergroup and Region meetings.

It is possible that one issue which contributes to this recurrence is that there are so many Topics & Questions. In the need for between 12 and 18 'questions' we often resort to issues that barely touch the lives of our members in their everyday lives. Participation in the Conference process, essential for a proper functioning of the process is low.

Groups, Intergroups and Regions often express experiencing a distance or disconnection between themselves and Conference, the GSB and even GSO.

Changing the content and focus of (some of) the committee work, putting more emphasis on review and discussion of the current affairs and activities of GSB and GSO may lead members at all levels of our Fellowship to better feel their Ownership, and Responsibility for these levels of service. It is meant to be a true expression of the opening phrase of Concept One "Final responsibility and Ultimate authority for A.A. world services should reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship" at the level of The General Service Conference of Great Britain.

It is not the intent that this become a vehicle to unfairly criticize or nitpick at either the GSB or GSO. Nor is this intended to preclude or override the responsibilities and duties of GSO, the GSB, their staffs and consultants. The process should be one of Respect and Consideration with awareness of Tradition two foremost in our minds. Furthermore all involved need to be focused on that which is the Very Best for Alcoholics Anonymous rather than on matters of personal prestige or personalities rather than principles.

Recent discussion of this issue or of similar issues.

Conference 2104, no. Conference 2013, no. Conference 2012, No . Conference 2011, No.

Similar or older discussions:

2010, Committee Four, Topic 2 – regarding the intention behind the Topics or Questions

2010, Committee Three, Topic 2 – regarding how Conference may be made more attractive to the membership as a whole.

2010, Committee Three, Topic 2 – regarding how we may better participate in the process of generating and formulating Topics or Questions for Conference.

2010, Committee One, Topic 2 – regarding the frequency of Conference, annual or Biannual (every other year).

2009, Committee Five, Topic 2 – regarding recording and uploading plenary sessions of Conference.

2009, Committee Two, Topic 1 – regarding Conference taking a regular Inventory of itself

Background:

1. Concept One
2. Alcoholics Anonymous comes of Age , page 217-218:

"On their first day, the delegates inspected our Headquarters, got acquainted with the service staff, and shook hands with the Trustees. In the evening there was a briefing session under the name of "What's on your mind?" We answered questions of every description. The delegates began to feel at home. Seeing their quick understanding and confidence, our spirits rose. We all sensed that something momentous was happening; this was a historic moment.

One strenuous session followed another. The delegates inspected A.A.'s finances and listened to reports from the Board of Trustees and from all services. There was warm but cordial debate on many questions of A.A. policy. The Trustees submitted several of their own serious problems for the opinion of the Conference. With real dispatch the delegates handled several tough puzzlers about which we at Headquarters were in doubt. Though their advice was sometimes contrary to our own views, we saw they were frequently right. They were proving as never before that A.A.'s Tradition Two was correct. Our group conscience could safely act as the sole authority and sure guide for Alcoholics Anonymous. As the delegates returned home, they carried this deep conviction with them."

3. The Fellowship as a whole has "Final responsibility and ultimate authority" for AA services. How can we then determine to what extent we are living up to that responsibility at the various levels of service in terms of the past year?
4. A recurring theme in Conference inventories at Regional and Conference level, as well as in questions themselves, concerns the perception of Conference, the GSB and GSO by the general membership. There is often dissatisfaction with the content of conference questions and reports as being of little relevance to the individual group or member.
Having the majority of the committees review the work of the past year and make recommendations would result in a clearer perception that The Groups themselves are the 'owners' of AA and that they truly do bear 'Final responsibility and ultimate authority' in more than lip-service level.
These reviews should not be overly politically correct or polite, but they do need to be done in the spirit of Love and Service. There should be a realization that if there are problems at any level of A.A. then it is WE, the Groups, who bear the responsibility. There is no Us and Them, only WE. There need be no fear of overly critical or personal attacks as the committees will approach their remit with attention to mutual respect.
5. Possible Working Guidelines:
Love and Tolerance of others is our code
Trust God, Clean House, Help Others
Love and Service
Big Book, page 164: - "Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order. "
B.B. page 124 - "This painful past may be of infinite value to other families still struggling with their problem. We think each family which has been relieved owes something to those who have not,"
Bib book, page 86 : "Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life?"

Terms of Reference No. 7

Process is already in place.

53.

1. **In this ever changing world we live are the recommendations contained within the Structure Handbook 2013 (pages 82- 85) robust enough in dealing with inappropriate and threatening behaviour including aggressiveness and sexual harassment, currently being experienced by a cross section of the Fellowship?**
2. **Does the Fellowship agree that there is sufficient clarity within The Structure Handbook for Groups regarding the steps that may be taken when complaints are made regarding inappropriate behaviour by individuals?**
3. **Can the Fellowship confirm whether a Group, following a Conscience Meeting, has the authority to deny entry to an individual following an incident involving unacceptable behaviour?**

Background

- A. Tradition 1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity
- B. Tradition 4. Each Group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole
- C. Pages 82-85 of 'The AA Structure Handbook for Great Britain 2013'

Terms of Reference No. 7

There have been several submissions covering this topic and a question has been selected that encompasses all areas of the subject matter with appropriate background material.