

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and have fun!

III. Corrections

(2) Agenda Item III A. Consider request to create a pamphlet for inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration.

Background: The purpose of the Conference Corrections Committee is to suggest to the Conference such policies and recommending such activities as may help coordinate the work of individual A.A. members and groups who are interested in carrying our message of recovery to alcoholics behind the walls, and to set up means of smoothing the way from the facility to the larger A.A. community through prerelease contacts.

This proposal addresses the need for development of a pamphlet for sober alcoholic inmates prior to being released after long term incarceration. The revised pamphlet "It Sure Beats Sitting in a Cell" gives very little emphasis on the concerns of Inmates being released. The proposal to create a pamphlet for sober alcoholic inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration identifies multiple resources in existing A.A. pamphlets and literature which may be drawn upon and used to create the pamphlet targeting this specific need, including:

- (A) Flyer "Prerelease Contact Information" – For A.A.'s on the inside, available on G.S.O.'s A.A. website
- (B) Two Sample G.S.O letters to inmates who are soon to be released
- (C) Pamphlet "It Sure Beats Sitting in the Cell", available on G.S.O's A.A. website.

What the Delegate Needs to Know:

- A. Have any of your A.A. Group members participated in "Bridging the Gap" programs, district or area Corrections Committees or with "Hospitals and Institutions" service efforts to help sober incarcerated alcoholics make the transition from penal institution to participation in A.A. on the outside? What is their experience?
- B. Do the members in your A.A. Group think there is a need for the Fellowship to provide materials and resources to sober alcoholic inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration? Why or why not?
- C. Should the Conference create a pamphlet for sober alcoholic inmates who are to be released after long term incarceration? Why or why not?

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and have fun!

IV. Finance

(3) Finance Agenda Item IV A. - Consider developing a method to standardize increases to the limits on voluntary individual contributions and bequests to the General Service Board.

Background: A.A. is self-supporting and does not accept outside contributions. There is no limit on the amount an A.A. group or A.A. service organization can contribute to the General Service Office (GSO). However, in keeping with A.A.'s tradition of avoiding "perilous wealth or power" and the undue influence that could come from dependence on a wealthy class of individual donors, A.A. Limits the yearly contributions of its individual members.

From the 63rd General Service Conference Keynote Address: "We have, since the earliest days of A.A., relied on our publishing operations to supplement the financial support provided by our membership, allowing us to maintain our world services and to have a Reserve Fund adequate to assure [A.A.'s] financial health and stability. Although we continue to sell many printed Big Books each year, and have entered the world of digital publishing, *the hard reality appears to be that, going forward, we are going to be relying more and more on our Seventh Tradition contributions to meet our financial needs.*"

The last time GSO raised the voluntary individual contribution limit was in 2007. The limit was raised from \$2,000 to \$3,000. Historically speaking this limitation has been changed on an average of every eight years.

History of increases to the individual contribution limit by GSO:

1957 \$100	1967 \$200	1972 \$300	1979 \$500
1986 \$1,000	1999 \$2,000	2007 \$3,000	

The last time GSO raised the voluntary individual contribution limit by bequest (a donation received from the will of a deceased A.A. member) was in 2012. The limit was raised from \$3,000 to \$5,000. Historically speaking this limitation has been changed as follows:

History of increases to the limit by the GSO of donations by bequest:

1957 \$100	1967 \$200	1972 \$300	1979 \$500
1986 \$1,000	1999 \$2,000	2007 \$3,000	2012 \$5,000

The current proposal seeks to tie voluntary contribution limits to some standard annual adjustment to allow the Finance Committee more discussion time for other items, while ensuring that contribution limits keep pace with inflation.

What the Delegate needs to know:

Should A.A. tie voluntary contribution limits to some standard annual adjustment to insure that contribution limits keep pace with inflation? *Why or Why Not?*

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and have fun!

VI. Literature

(5) Literature Agenda Item VI A. - Consider proposed revisions to the Big Book of *Alcoholics Anonymous*:

1. Request to add an appendix reflecting recognition received from the Library of Congress
2. Request to add the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement
3. Request to add an endnote to Bill W.'s story acknowledging co-founder, Bob S.

Item (1)

From the July 29, 2017 meeting of the trustees' Literature Committee: The committee discussed and agreed to forward to the 2018 Conference Committee on Literature a request (from Area 43, New Hampshire) to add an appendix (as Appendix 8) to *Alcoholics Anonymous* reflecting the 2012 Recognition received from the Library of Congress.

Background : The United States' Library of Congress, the world's largest repository of knowledge and information, published a list in June 2012 of the 88 most influential books in America. The list, entitled "Books that Shaped America," included the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Founded in 1800, the Library of Congress is the United States oldest cultural institution. Curators and experts from throughout the Library of Congress contributed their choices for "Books that shaped America." The Librarian of Congress hoped the list would prompt people to choose to read and discuss the books on the list. The list was also intended to recognize significant works that had influenced American society.

The language of the proposed appendix is secondary to its message. The message and its purpose are twofold. Firstly, this appendix would help readers understand the contemporary significance of a book written in 1939 which contains language that is often thought of as dated. Secondly, like the Lasker Award, this appendix will convey to readers that the program as outlined in the Big Book does indeed work as evidenced by its recognized influence on society.

Item (2) *From the October 28, 2017 meeting of the trustees' Literature Committee:* The committee reviewed and agreed to forward to the 2018 Conference Committee on Literature a request (from District 29, Texas) to add the A.A. Preamble and Responsibility Statement to *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Background: Prior Conference Actions Regarding Proposals to Add the A.A. Preamble and the Responsibility Statement to *Alcoholics Anonymous*

1993 - The Conference Literature committee considered a suggestion to add the Preamble to the Big Book and suggested that since most of the Preamble was taken from the foreword to the first edition of the Big Book, that no action be taken.

2011- The Conference Literature committee recommended that the A.A. Preamble be added to the front inside pages of the Big Book. *This recommendation did NOT result in Conference Advisory Action (requiring a 2/3rds substantial majority vote of the Conference members).*

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org

If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

2012 - The Conference Literature committee considered a request to add the "A.A. Preamble" to the front inside pages of the 'Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and took no action.

Note: Proposals regarding the Responsibility Declaration pertained to changing the wording; the Conference reaffirmed to leave the Responsibility Declaration as originally published. ***There have been no previous requests to add the Responsibility Declaration to the Big Book.***

Responsibility Declaration Reads: *"I am responsible. When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there. And for that, I am responsible"*.

Item (3) *From the January 27, 2018 meeting of the trustees' Literature Committee:* The committee considered and agreed to forward to the 2018 Conference Committee on Literature a request to add an endnote to Bill W.'s story in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, acknowledging co-founder, Bob S.

Background: This request came from an individual A.A. Member. *Remember, a good idea for improving AA literature, policies or finances can come from anywhere and anyone within our Fellowship.*

Suggested endnote: *"The story of A.A.'s other co-founder, Dr. Bob S., is found on page 171; "Dr. Bob's Nightmare."*

The requesting A.A. member writes: *Since Dr. Bob is one of our beloved co-founders, perhaps a little extra effort to point out his story is well-placed.*

What the Delegate needs to know:

Item 1 – Appendix

(A) Do you agree that the proposed appendix reflecting the 2012 Library of Congress Recognition of the Big Book as one of the 88 most influential books in America could help readers understand and appreciate the contemporary significance of a book written in 1939?

(B) Could the appendix help convey to readers that the A.A. program as outlined in the Big Book does indeed work as evidenced by its recognized influence on society. Why or why not?

(C) Should the appendix reflecting recognition received from the Library of Congress be added to the Big Book? Why or why not?

Item 2 – A.A. Preamble – Responsibility Statement

(A) Does the A.A. Preamble accurately describe the A.A. Fellowship? Should it be added to the Big Book? Why or why not.

(B) Are you familiar with A.A.'s Responsibility Statement? What does it mean to you? Should the Responsibility Statement be added to the Big Book? Why or why not?

Item 3 – Endnote to Bill W's story acknowledging co-founder, Bob S.

(A) Do you think it would be helpful or beneficial to add the suggested endnote to Bill W.'s story in *Alcoholics Anonymous*, acknowledging co-founder, Bob S.? Why or why not?

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and have fun!

VI. Literature

(6) Literature Agenda Item VI Q. - Consider request for the development of a new pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women alcoholics. Note: This Conference Agenda Item was proposed by Southern California Area 5.

Background: The Spanish-speaking woman alcoholic has been identified as an *under-represented group* in our Fellowship. There are many Spanish-speaking groups without alcoholic women members for newcomers to identify with. The pamphlet's purpose would be to extend the hand of A.A. to the Spanish-speaking woman alcoholic by letting her know she belongs in A.A. and that she is not alone.

While the pamphlet *A.A. for the Woman* addresses women alcoholics, there are issues specific to Spanish speaking women that the pamphlet does not address.

Listing but two of the many examples:

* There is often a deep rooted cultural shame associated with being a female alcoholic in the Spanish community.

* Because there are so few women in Spanish-speaking A.A. groups, these women often times find themselves alone in the rooms.

. . . This pamphlet would be in line with other pamphlets referred to as "*Third Tradition literature*" whose purpose is to provide shared experience and reach out to specific groups of people to let them know that they have a place in our A.A. Fellowship.

Often, the alcoholics that these pamphlets are written for do not readily find people like themselves when they first walk into our rooms. This is why pamphlets providing shared experience can help them to see that they belong, and that we do not have to be exactly alike to share in our common problem and common solution. A pamphlet specifically for the Spanish-speaking female newcomer would greatly help in carrying the message to these alcoholics, especially when no other women are present to welcome them, and hopefully help them to stay.

What the Delegate needs to know:

A. Do you remember your first meeting of Alcoholics Anonymous? Were you made to feel welcome? Were you able to find others in the room like yourself with whom you could identify?

If your answer to these questions is yes, can you put yourself in another's shoes and imagine how it would be for you if the answer was no?

B. Should the Conference develop a new pamphlet for Spanish-speaking women alcoholics? Why or why not?

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and have fun!

VI. Literature

(7) Literature Agenda Item VI N. - Consider request for the development of a new book combining *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

Note: This Conference Agenda Item was proposed by Southern California Area 5.

Background: An astounding number of our A.A. groups and members have no idea whatever about the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*, A.A. General Service, nor the work of the General Service Office, nor the Conference process that supports and unites and guides our Fellowship, provides the services required to carry the message of A.A. and the services promoting the health, growth and well-being of all A.A. groups and members. Nor do they have any idea that A.A.'s Twelve Concepts provide that the A.A. groups play an integral part and are ultimately responsible for the guidance of our Fellowship.

*This suggestion for a new book of 36 Principles is that it be virtually identical to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, except that at the point where the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* ends, the new book would continue with the contents of the book *Twelve Concepts for World Service*. This proposal does not suggest in any way that the original "Twelve and Twelve" or any other current books be replaced or discontinued.*

This agenda item has been proposed before by Area 05 and Area 72 (Western Washington) for the 65th General Service Conference. At the 65th Conference, the Literature Committee took no action, explaining in their Committee Considerations that: "*The committee reviewed a suggestion to produce a book combining "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" with the "Twelve Concepts for World Service" and took no action. The committee noted that the Twelve Concepts for World Service are suitably placed with The A.A. Service Manual and in a stand-alone volume.*"

While the Twelve Concepts for World Service are indeed suitably placed with the A.A. Service Manual and in a stand-alone volume, *it would also provide great benefit and access to our entire Fellowship to have them available in the proposed new volume, and that if it were published, the new volume would perhaps become the most suitable place for the Twelve Concepts as a book that would include Bill Wilson's essays on all of A.A.'s 36 Principles. The new book would expose the spiritual principles of the Twelve Concepts to a wider range of A.A. members, including many long-timers, and generate more participation in General Service and interest in the stewardship, growth and common welfare of our Great Fellowship.*

What the Delegate needs to know:

A. The Twelve Steps guide our Legacy of Recovery, the Twelve Traditions guide our Legacy of Unity, and the Twelve Concepts guide our Legacy of Service. Have you heard of the Twelve Concepts for World Service? Are you familiar with the Twelve Concepts of World Service? Would making the spiritual principles of the Twelve Concepts accessible to a wider range of A.A. members provide any benefit to the health and welfare of our Fellowship?

B. Should the Conference develop a new book of 36 Principles by combining *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions with Twelve Concepts for World Service*? Why or why not?

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 5th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and havefun!

VI. Literature

(8) Literature Agenda Items VI B & C.

B. Consider request that A.A. (U.S./Canada) publish "The God Word" (a pamphlet currently published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain).

C. Consider request for the development of a pamphlet for atheist and agnostic A.A. Members.

Background Agenda Item VI B – "The God Word"

The trustees' Literature Committee has forwarded a request from both an area in Florida and a group in Kansas to publish or adapt "The God Word" (a pamphlet currently published by the General Service Board of Alcoholics Anonymous, Great Britain).

The area's rationale states: "There is a pamphlet that was approved by the General Service Conference of Great Britain Titled, *The "God" Word*, which consists of stories by A.A. members who identify as atheist or agnostic.

We would like to have the General Service Conference in North America Consider publishing this pamphlet to be made available for A.A. members in the United States and Canada.

The group's rationale states "*We would like to include [the pamphlet] in our newcomer's packets, but it is difficult and expensive to order from the U.K. The following is the link to the God Word pamphlet:*

<https://www.alcoholicsanonymous.org.uk/download/1/Library/Documents/Literature/Downloads/326/TheGodWord.pdf>

I understand there is a history of the General Service Conference adopting other pamphlets from Great Britain, and we believe this pamphlet will fill a need among the general membership of Alcoholics Anonymous in North America."

Background Agenda Item VI C – Pamphlet for atheist and agnostic A.A. Members

The trustees' Literature Committee forwarded a request from Area 93 in California and an individual member for the development of a pamphlet for atheist and agnostic members. The area's request states, "*This would not be a rewrite of the Spirituality Many Paths pamphlet, but a brand new pamphlet.*"

The full background material contains supportive rationale from Area 93, including:

- The Spirituality Many Paths pamphlet was a good start but that it had actually detoured from the original intent. The original intention was a pamphlet for the Atheist/Agnostic members and newcomers who had a big problem with "the God Thing".

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member (DCM)

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

- The delisting and refusal to list Atheist/Agnostic meetings in certain Central Office directories is not what A.A. is all about -- especially since we are "spiritual and not religious". The Toronto lawsuit is a prime example of Central Offices doing something that really goes against the principles of The Traditions.
- An A.A. pamphlet like this would go a long way to making sure that A.A. would have something to affirm that we are in fact *spiritual* and not *religious*.
- This literature would also go a long way to let those newcomers who come to A.A. that their belief or lack of belief is very much OK and they are welcome

A letter submitted by an A.A. member is included in the full background material.

Some of the points raised:

- The pamphlet "*Many Paths to Spirituality*," while addressing some of the issues atheists and agnostics experience when first encountering A. A., still leaves a lot to be desired. First, no atheist or agnostic would pick up (or click on at the A. A. website) a pamphlet entitled, "*Many Paths to Spirituality*," because to an atheist or an agnostic, "spirituality" and "religion" are the same thing
- Creating a pamphlet specifically for atheists and agnostics would go a long way to *dispel the misconception that A.A. is a religious institution*, and would increase the chances that an alcoholic atheist or agnostic will be able to find a path to sobriety.

The background material also includes a reference to past Conference Advisory Actions regarding the development of the Conference-approved pamphlet "*Many Paths to Spirituality*" which opens with Bill W's wonderfully comprehensive statement of AA's spirit of tolerance, respect and inclusion: "*Newcomers are approaching AA at the rate of tens of thousands yearly. They represent almost every belief and attitude imaginable. We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion. In AA we are supposed to be bound together in the kinship of a common suffering. Consequently, the full individual liberty to practice any creed or principle or therapy whatever should be a first consideration for us all. Let us not, therefore, pressure anyone with our individual or even our collective views. Let us instead accord each other the respect and love that is due to every human being as he tries to make his way toward the light. Let us always try to be inclusive rather than exclusive; let us remember that each alcoholic among us is a member of AA, so long as he or she so declares.*"

What the Delegate Needs to Know:

One of AA's very first "group conscience" compromises was reached between Bill W and Jim B with the literary employment of such terms as "power greater than ourselves", later leading to the adoption of AA's Third Tradition: "*The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.*"

A. *In your opinion, does one's religious affiliation, or lack of it; one's philosophical preferences, or none; one's theistic, or agnostic, or atheistic, or pantheistic, or virtually any relatively held notion or concept of a power greater than ourselves bear any relevance on one's membership in AA's Fellowship of the Spirit? Please share and explain.*

B. *In your opinion and experience, is A.A. sufficiently welcoming to atheists or agnostics or can A.A. do more to emphasize A.A.'s enduring foundational principle: that of flexibility and acceptance of differing viewpoints on spiritual matters? Please share and explain.*

C. **Should the Conference publish or adapt "The God Word" pamphlet? Why or why not?**

D. **Should the Conference develop a pamphlet for the atheist and agnostic A.A. member? Why or why not**

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

Your Area Delegate is interested in your thoughts on the following matters. A summary of your Home Group Members' reasoning is more valuable than a vote. In A.A. we make decisions only after much loving discussion and a thorough hearing of minority opinions.

Thanks and havefun!

XII. Archives

(12) Archives Agenda Item XII. A. Review draft of proposed publication, **Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951–1970.**

Summary of Actions: 2017 General Service Conference Advisory Action: A draft or a progress report of **Unity in Action: Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1970** (*working title*) be brought back to the 2018 Conference Committee on Archives for review.

From trustees' Archives Committee minutes, July 30, 2017: The committee heard a progress report on the writing project from [A.A.W.S.] managing editor, and reviewed sample archival photographs for inclusion in the new publication. The committee also discussed the use of unpublished archival images in the book.

From trustees' Archives Committee minutes, January 28, 2018: The committee reviewed and discussed the proposed publication [now tentatively titled] "**Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951 – 1970**" and expressed appreciation for the work. The committee agreed to forward to the 2018 Conference Committee on Archives, the proposed publication.

Background: *The never-before-collected General Service Conference talks of Bill W. provide a fresh and inspiring perspective on the history of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement and allow interested readers to read and appreciate more of his writing. The talks include important details of A.A.'s early history and later developments in the years following "A.A. Comes of Age" and the development of the General Service structure. Most of his talks (those that can be recovered and that are not wholly repetitive), as well as some key talks by important Class A trustees for historical context and perspective, are to be included in this unique collection – the first time ever in printed form.*

A Word about Review of Drafts on the Conference Agenda. Drafts! The proposed draft publication **Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951 – 1970** has now been submitted to the Conference.

The draft publication will be sent only to the members of the Conference Archives committee for review.

If approved by the Conference Archives committee as "ready for publication", the draft will be "reported out" to the general session of the entire Conference for vote and approval and publication. If more work is required, the draft will be sent back to the Trustees' Archives Committee and to publishing for further work and edits.

2018 General Service Conference Agenda Questionnaire

We know this can be frustrating for members of the Fellowship. They often wonder why they see an agenda item that says, "Review draft . . ." but they don't get to actually see the draft.

There are good reasons why we proceed this way. One is that widespread distribution of drafts of material that will ultimately be copyrighted could compromise our copyrights.

The other reason, arguably more important, is that it wouldn't be helpful to the Conference committee members to have hundreds or perhaps thousands of editing suggestions from all over the Fellowship.

Nevertheless, A.A. Members and A.A. Groups can provide helpful guidance to the Delegate by *sharing their input about their level of enthusiasm for the proposed new publication and expectations for the message in the literature that's being developed.*

What the Delegate needs to know:

The never-before-collected General Service Conference talks of Bill W. and key talks by important Class A trustees for historical context and perspective are intended to provide A.A. Members with a fresh and inspiring view on the history of the Alcoholics Anonymous movement in the years leading up to and following "AA Comes of Age".

Please share input about:

(A) Your level of enthusiasm for the proposed new publication. It has been several years since A.A. has published a new Conference approved book, and there has been no history book of the A.A. Movement since "Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age: A Brief History of A. A." was published in 1957. Through Bill W's Conference talks, and the talks of Class A Trustees for historical perspective, this publication will give readers a unparalleled front row seat to the challenges and triumphs of our movement in the years that followed.

What is your level of enthusiasm and interest in such a publication?

(B) *Our Great Responsibility:* Please share your expectations for the message in this new and important piece of A.A. Literature that's being developed.

Do you expect to be informed? To learn something new about A.A. and how it works? To be inspired? To be motivated to work with others to support and provide the services required to carry our message of hope and recovery to the millions of alcoholics we have yet to reach – to grow our movement -- and coming together to strengthen our common welfare and shape our Fellowship's course?

Please return this questionnaire to your DCM by April 7th, dcm@district5aa.org
If you would like additional background on this topic, contact your District Committee Member
(DCM)