

**Preconference – Southern Districts
2-29-2020**

Approximately 75 AAers in attendance.

Feedback is broken down by question. In some cases discussion is then categorized into DCM/Alt DCM comments and GSR/Alt. GSR and other members because that was the order in which discussion occurred. Comments are generally in the order spoken. Not all comments were captured but most were.

Delegate asked people to ask yourself when talking about the items below the following:

- What are reasons we shouldn't do this?
- What are reasons we should do this?
- Any unintended consequences?

1. Create a pamphlet for mental health professionals

DCMS and Alt. DCMS

- Person sponsored several people with mental health issues as well as alcohol issues. This person recommends to the sponsee to go back to the doctors after they have been sober for a while and relook at their medications. Would like to see something like that mentioned in the wording of the pamphlet.
- This is not aimed at people with mental health issues but professionals who work with patients who have mental health issues. It could help the professional to aid their client in finding us.
- "Love this and it's fabulous." Mental health professionals speak a different language than medical professionals. Lots of mental health professionals who need this information.
- Lot of misconception about AA. It's hard for mental health professionals to understand AA is not a fee for service. We all think everyone understands how AA works but really don't. They see a lot of people with issues that is alcohol induced issues. So many pros! Critical for this to be written in the mental health professional's language and not AA speak.
- Difficult finding an opposition argument – seems straight forward. There are misconceptions about AA within the mental health profession. It would be nice to help them understand us better. This could be a tool that helps us protect our anonymity and professionals understand us better. Any tool that helps us connect with another alcoholic is important.
- Mental health professionals believe AA is for everyone even if they don't have problems with alcohol. This could help with that misunderstanding of what AA is.
- Provide a better understanding to the professional community that alcoholism is a disease, craving and obsession.

GSRs, Alt. GSR and anyone else

- As a volunteer who answers phones at a service center shared about receiving calls from mental health professional and thinks having a pamphlet and a script would be helpful in talking with them.

2. Make an edit to the AA preamble to use pronouns which do not denote gender.

Preamble Discussion

DCMS and AltsDCMs

- It's a great idea and removes a barrier allows others to see themselves in AA.
- We are talking about taking historical documents, like the bill of rights or constitution, and tampering with them. This is a bad idea and a slippery slope.

- This change this has no effect on me but may benefit others. If changing this will help another alcoholic then I have no problem with it.
- This makes us more inclusive, then let's do it.
- Likes the idea to being sensitive to gender issues. Concerned people will fear change. By changing the preamble will not cause AA to fall apart.
- Could groups have their own conscience and make changes if a group wants?
- The preamble was first introduced in 1947 as a way to describe what AA is and is not to non-alcoholics. Concern if we the preamble do we have to change it in all pamphlets and the big book?
- This is a minimal change that will make people feel more inclusive.
- Concern that one change leads to other changes. Tradition 3 – the one thing we have in common is alcoholism. It's not about men or women but people. Looking at this takes away from our primary purpose. Does not think it should be changed. Picking apart something like this diverts us from our primary focus. We are all inclusive of alcoholics. It's not about men, women, people but alcoholics.
- This is not really about gender – it's about reaching alcoholics – maybe it should say alcoholics and not people. It and we are not about gender. If our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholic.
- Let's make sure we are reaching out to the newcomer and feeling included.
- Anything we change today doesn't change our AA History. Is it different now than it was in the 30's. Do we need to bring AA up to date? It feels like we give people an excuse for the big book language. Then we explain it into today's terms.

GSRs, Alt. GSR and anyone else

- Being a lesbian, has nothing to do with being an alcoholic, but lots of friends who don't fall into men or women category could feel different. I wouldn't have gotten sober if the big book was exactly the way it is. Keep an open mind to this topic but have mixed feelings. Just want everyone to feel welcome.
- As a heterosexual white female, it's hard to share on this topic, not everyone identifies as a man or women, so why not change it. It's the first thing we hear so if it helps someone feel welcome then yes. Have to get past the mentality that things can't change.
- Only requirement is a desire to stop drinking not to be an alcoholic. Like the idea of inclusiveness and if that leads to changes in the big book then that is ok.
- This topic is heady and splitting hairs. The preamble is suggested and doesn't have to be part of the meeting and we can change it ourselves.
- Remove the people and use the word "fellowship".
- Not every group reads the preamble.
- Not against inclusion. It's a person's job to reach out to someone for inclusiveness. Changing it to make people inclusive won't keep a person from drinking. Take out time in deciding this.

Big Book – pronoun editing and updating chapters like "To the Wives." It's important for your groups to know that people are thinking about this. It's here to inform your group about this.
Question of scope. Do we have the right to edit a historical document?

DCMs and GSRs and others

- As an alcoholic I would feel offended about different things I read and heard in the program but the things that offended me the most helped me grow the most.
- It's important to step back and imagine this as a spiritual experiences. People don't like change. Question – are we hanging on to something that will fall apart things would fall apart. Don't think that is our truth. Lead us to do things different and help the alcoholic who still suffers. The point of coming together is to get connected. If I have to translate the book then is it useful.

- We have the King James bible and the Good news bible which is like a companion. This could be like a companion. It's hard to get the message when changing the pronouns when we read. Maybe need a companion book and not change the original.
- In favor of changing the preamble but not in favor of changing the big book (1-164). First 164 is Bill's written account of his spiritual experience and should not be changed. The things I disagree with in the book have been essential in my spiritual growth. There is something magic about how it's written.
- Until I sat down with someone going through the book, I didn't get the experience; the language of the heart. Don't want to see the first 164 changed. I would like to see a motion be brought to the area about not allowing AA GSO change the big book without written vote by all groups across the county.
- Clarification – what does it take to change the book? Is it the same criteria as the traditions? ***Delegate will look into this.***
- Irony – we feel this is a divinely inspired book but we still want to make change it.
- Stay mindful there is a difference between editing and changing. Editing doesn't change the message of the book. Do not believe by changing the pronouns will change the message.
- Should not change the first 164 pages because the way it is written saved my life.

3. Establish a Grapevine Instagram account

- Grapevine is our meeting in print. Current technology and keeping up. Jails – meeting with prints – digital and computers in the jails. If they have ability to connect with Instagram.
- Any concern for affiliation with the ads that will be on it?
- Sounds interesting but needs more information. Could like to our web page. No strong opinion on it.
- Already a YouTube and LinkedIn page – resistance may have already come down? Yes.
- Broad spectrum of members in the room – how many people in the room are regular Instagram users. (About 1/3 raised their hands).
- Content – Instagram would be a great platform for Grapevine. I don't affiliate with LinkedIn page because I don't want to break my anonymity. Could be a great way for PI to get the word out about us.
- What is the usage of the YouTube looks like? Low. Probably because people don't want to personally affiliate with those platforms.
- Have an Instagram but don't pay much attention to it but the younger generation does respond to Instagram. If it can help younger people then in favor of it. It's where young people are at.
- Being desensitized to the internet. There is nothing like the before and after meeting. People go to meetings and are with other alcoholics. Nothing replaces a traditional meeting.
- Being able to reach out to an online platform is inspiring when not able to get to a meeting. It's helpful.
- Young people use the internet for everything. All for it. This may help a young person or someone older.

4. Consider several Big Book it related to accessibility and relatability

Create a new translation of the Big Book, into Plain Language

- The Akron Pamphlet. Written that the newly written big book was too difficult for the average person to read. Pamphlets were completed and this literature is preconference and still used throughout the membership. This has been a concern since the book was written including Dr. Bob.
- This is a knee jerk reaction – we don't need to change a thing.
- We have high education levels in this area. Other people who don't live in metropolitan areas who struggle with the book. Look beyond our perspective are we considering making this

- Couldn't read the book when I first got sober –my sponsor gave me something else that was easier to understand instead of taking the time to walk me through the big book.
- By making this plain talk big book it is a cop out. The human connection is invaluable- it is better one person working with another and helping each other grow
- I just reread – there is a solution – the original purpose was mail order sobriety – we know it works better one person to another. Is this the purpose of the book? Is that the intent? If so is it functioning in that capacity.
- Readability is real a real issue. What is the problem we are trying to solve?
- Yes if this would be in addition to the big book but replacing the big book.
- Whoever does the translation we would trust them to do that. It is an interpretation just like into another language.
- AA gave me the gift of language to help me understand my disease. If we use different language to describe it then we risk losing the community building of a same language.
- I want to see a plain language translation. This is no different than translating the book into a foreign language. It would be valuable for those in remote language.
- Have helped spouses learn how to read using the big book. It would have been easier to have something they could relate to. There are so many people who don't know how to read.
- If I don't know how to read giving me a book with smaller words will not help me. I need someone to help me along. Maybe AA needs to add a glossary that is approved?
- Maybe we need to have a book study and teach people. Passing off the responsibility that is mine on to something else – it's up to me to help the person to understand it. Not dumbing it down.
- I am responsible statement is being overlooked. It's about one alcoholic helping another understand the book.
- If someone is alone and they cannot read – should there be something for that person?
- Reminds me of when I was in school and had to read Moby Dick but I went and got Cliff Notes. I read the cliff notes and understood it. Later I went back and read the original. Maybe the same thing would happen with the big book?
- Will they use a 1940's dictionary to help with the translation? We will end up with multiple versions of the big book type meetings.
- Concern that there are communications throughout the book that will not be translatable into plain language and the subtle nuances will be lost when translated.
- We do AA different all over. We use different literature throughout the country. In the west coast we use the big book. Different people use different things and have the same spiritual experience.
- Love the big book – 5th tradition – will this help someone get sober?
- 12x12 reason Bill wrote the 12x12 was to break down the steps to the newcomer. When translating they look at intent not exact language.
- I have a GED – I learned how to read and study when I got to AA in study groups. Reading out loud in a room – not easy. I had fortune that one alcoholic helping another alcoholic make sense out of getting sober. Plain language is dumbing it down. I was picked up by doing it as written.

Create a Big Book workbook or study guide

- There are lots of workbooks out there. Just because it isn't published by AA doesn't mean it's good.

5. Update the pamphlet AA for the Black and African-American Alcoholic

- There doesn't seem to be a lot reason not to do this.
- It's interesting that when you look around the room – there are not many people of color. How do you break down the barriers? Is it going to be white people writing it? White people approving it? Could

this be handled differently? We are here to help the people. There are times we have to move out of our comfort zone. We will never get anywhere if we don't get out of our comfort zone.

- First time I've read it – it makes sense to the pro doing it – but we need to reach out to the people we don't see at our table. The pamphlet doesn't id the struggles to fit at our table. Need to target it to the people struggling to fit at our table.
- Reading the background info I was floored. Do people look like me or not? My hope we update the pamphlet and we go further than that. We need to look for the people who are not at our table.
- Strikes me that this is the same issue as the other questions – we are a program based on white, male values. I have no answers but apricate the struggle to reach out to other people. I feel uncomfortable outside my comfort zone which gives me insight to how other people may feel when coming to our meetings.
- For updating it but it does bring a larger question. The GSO board is looking at who is in the room and are we accessible to these communities.
- Updating the pamphlet is good but is a bigger broader discussion – privilege of coming from diverse groups.
- If I don't experience it – it's hard for me to understand it. If I had experienced this it might be hard for me to be in AA. Reading from the background about the black delegate not being invited to districts because he was black, if it was happening to me it would be horrifying.
- Having gotten sober in other communities on the east coast, it wasn't until coming to Washington that I saw the disparity of numbers of our members who are people of color.

6. Create an AAWS podcast comprised of existing materials?

- What is a pod cast?
- A podcast is best suited with collaboration from the Grapevine. They already do interviews and have content would be compactable with a podcast.
- Maybe the Grapevine would be the primary contributor.
- There are already other apps out there that have speaker tapes.