

Pre-Conference Notes-All

Hi all! Thanks for making this a wonder experience helping me prep for the Pre-Conferences. Below are the combined notes from all the four Pre-Conferences. (Thank you Heather for taking the notes.) These represent the ideas and thoughts offered during the different preconference's. They are not the only idea – I'm sure there will be more coming from you.

Yours in Joyous Service,

Geene D

Item 1 - Committee: Policy/Admissions

Consider request regarding participation of online only groups in the General Service Structure

- Online meetings are here to stay – a whole range of newcomers who would never have walked into a brick and mortar AA meeting. To give these newer members an ability to have a voice and to serve is important.
- We need to find a way to give these groups a voice in the general service structure. We can't exclude them.
- What are we missing by not including online only meetings in our service structure – so many voices not heard.
- This issue is more layered than can these groups have access to service.
- The us/them concept I am not a fan of. We are one.
- Create a geographic area called World.
- Our district only asks you only participate in one district. So if an online only group wants to participate in our district we ask they only participate in our district. I think these online only groups could do something similar.
- Online only meetings are changing service work and we need to find a way to incorporate these changes – more linguistic meetings, more meetings for populations who do not feel safe or comfortable in in person meetings.
- World district/area?
- Action should be taken before we wait for GSO to tell us what to do.
- Timeshifters and nomads are underserved
- Online service structure.
- Online groups will be useful in serving virtual needs when we go back to in person meetings

- We are having a monthly meeting for online only groups who want to come talk about service and how these groups are serving.
- Online only groups came to my district wanting to participate and I did not know what to do. I think we should make them feel a part of.
- There is a need to recognize online only meetings. They address an accessibility need for those who are not able to get to in person meetings. Also very good for hearing impaired.
- Not allowing online only meetings to participate in our service structure limits the voices we hear.
- Participate via proxy @ assemblies?
- Too fast to make a decision now during Covid times. Wait to see what happens post-Covid.
- Safety in AA – elderly, identity theft, mentally ill and vulnerable – targeted in online meetings with info people can see in zoom and can get via chat with members in zoom.
- If we are all inclusive, we should allow all meetings a voice and those members who have not been able to participate due to accessibility issues.
- Change can be scary. Have a little faith.
- Covid has opened our eyes to those who we sadly have not been thinking about – those with accessibility needs. The time is now. This is relevant.
- Those online want to be of service.
- Everything is online – the newsletter is online, documents online, we are told to go online to get everything, but when we bring up the idea of online meetings participating in service we are like, nah I don't want to do that.
- I like the idea of an online area so that geography isn't as important. It won't matter where you live.
- Online groups are here to stay. Does it have to be a choice? Can't we have it all? Could there be an online area? Could an individual area have an online district within their area? Could a district have an online only meeting come to their district? If a group wants to participate, let them participate. There should be an avenue to do this.
- Online only groups need a district to be part of the upside down triangle to be a part of the flow of communication. I didn't receive the information about the preconference from a DCM because I am a GSR from an online only meeting and we are not part of a district. I just know where to find the info, but what about those groups/GSRs who don't know how to find this info on their own. They have no district/DCM.
- Online only groups have the right to fully participate per our traditions and concepts.
- Will quarterlies/assemblies need to be hybrid to accommodate online only groups/districts?
- Online only groups meet a safety need for some members. Service needs to be available to all members so we have a diverse perspective.
- Enfranchise online only meetings into the service structure. A lot of vulnerable populations only go to online meetings and should have the opportunity to serve.

- I go to an online only meeting and am feeling disenfranchised and like my group is not legitimate.
- Groups need to come up with a consensus.
- Representatives from brick and mortar groups are the ones deciding if/how online only groups can participate.
- My basic thought was that if we were to adopt something, it would have be more than one Area for example because of the broad expanse of time zones that fall under the Conference (e.g. Guam vs New York).
- I don't see any reason why online only groups shouldn't participate in our service structure.
- Wherever the meeting is originating out of is where the online only meeting is the district and area they should be in.
- If a group is participating in the 7th tradition, they should participate.
- People with accessibility issues do so much better with virtual meetings. We want all members to have a voice in our service structure.
- If a group establishes a POB and address, can they get a group number?
- In online only groups, there are people from all over the state, country and even internationally... where do they fit?
- What do military members do who are stationed internationally? They go to meetings on base, they go to English Speaking meetings nearby or go to virtual meetings.
- Any two or three alcoholics gathered together can call themselves an AA Meeting – so these online meetings are legit and should be a part of our service structure.
- Are we sure online only groups want to participate? I think so, but do we know?
- We need to start somewhere, so let's get started. Groups should join districts and go from there.
- We need to figure out how these online only groups will serve.
- This is an organizational issue that is preventing a group from serving.
- We are an online only group and don't know who to send our 7th tradition to... just GSO? What district? What area?
- Online only groups also include the forgotten AAers. People with long term sobriety.
- If GSO wants this to come from the groups, how are these groups supposed to make this change when they are not allowed to participate.
- Brick and Mortar groups are allowed all the opportunities to participate even if they don't and when online only groups want to participate and they cannot.
- So online only groups are being talked about and they are not here to participate because we don't include them in the service structure. We should invite them to the table somehow.

Item 2 - Committee: Corrections

Discuss innovative ways of carrying the message to alcoholics in correctional facilities.

- Pen-pal
- Zoom meetings
- Inmates are being given tablets – are we able to get them literature electronically? Thru J-pay? All ebooks are free?
- Could meetings happen in the prison yard – outdoors?
- Direct ship literature
- Sponsorship of inmates by folks from the outside?
- Why does penpal have to go through GSO and not be handled more locally? Is it for security purposes? It just took me so long to get connected with a penpal going through GSO.
- Can CPC write the “bosses” in the institutions asking to let us back in. The people in the correctional facilities want us back in, but their hands are tied.
- Get virtual meetings into the facilities
- Being effective – more literature is not always the answer – especially when we hear the literature is piling up because it is not being used.
- Grapevine subscriptions
- Must keep communication lines open with the various facilities – wardens, sheriffs, chaplains, etc. Also, ask the right questions – learn how to communicate. Ask the why... i.e. we cannot deliver literature to the parking lot – significant restrictions right now, but finally after 11 months, I asked the right question and found out the administrator could meet me – not in the parking lot – and we got literature in!
- Intergroups/CSOs can help getting literature if you need for facilities.
- Use the resources we have already in place – be a pen pal with an inmate, Bridge program, etc.
- The facility can setup their own online meeting and invite those on the outside who have had background check cleared to come in to their meetings.
- Contact admin staff to get PSA on their internal system.
- Get a hold of chaplains
- Order literature and have it sent directly to facility. Need to understand the supply chain on the receiving end.
- Keep checking back with facilities about virtual meetings. Just because they said no last month, doesn't mean they will say no this month.
- Penpals
- Texting
- We've been able to establish a connection with the chaplain at the Clark county jail and were able to use all our pink can funds and send old grapevines.
- All correctional institutions is staying in Phase 1 for now.
- For people with less than a 1-year sentence, there are ways to be a penpal to those folks locally because they do not get to be included in the prison penpal program.
- It is important that whatever projects we do embark on we get that information back to our groups so they can participate.

- Make sure we are providing inmates who are being released know the when and where when they get out.

Item 3 - Committee: Report and Charter

Discuss the AA Directories (Canada, Eastern U.S., and Western U.S.)

- I used my directory when I was travelling in Canada in places where there is no cell service/internet service. Found it so helpful.
- It's not too handy to take travelling.
- It gets outdated so quick.
- Good for people living/travelling in their RVs.
- The only time I tried to use it was when I travelled to Nicaragua and they didn't have a contact for Nicaragua in there so it wasn't helpful.
- I only use it through service work are CSO/Intergroup.
- Each one of us gets our info in different ways.
- Maybe survey our CSO/Intergroups to find out their needs and how/if they use this.
- What is the cost to the directory? \$3100 Canada, \$6100 Western, \$7800 Eastern. It's not free, it costs to get one – like \$6 to get one. Breaks even.
- Print every couple years.
- As soon as it is printed it is out of date.
- Only additional info than meeting info is who the GSR is.
- It was nice to have in the past, but now online is more up to date than printed.
- Keep paper for the rest of humanity who is not as privileged as we are in Western Washington. Not everywhere has internet. Paper is good.
- Maybe just have the delegates info and then just the meeting info instead of the GSR info as those drop off a lot and get outdated real quick.
- I am concerned if we keep moving everything from paper to online. We need to have some things still be on paper.
- I don't see the use – go paperless.
- It would be nice to use after events like PRAASA to look up GSRs and connect with them post event.
- With the meeting guide app being run through GSO, do we need a printed directory? The only difference is the GSR info is listed in the printed directory.
- With it being printed every other year the information is way out of date really quick.
- I always go to my phone. Don't see the point in printing.
- This information would be helpful, but should be digital – digital could be updatable quickly.

Item 4 - Committee: Literature

This discussion is meant to sparks a conversation – Is there a problem with our literature that prevents someone from identifying with our common message? IF so, what?

- The language is painful at times to read. It is hurtful to leave people out who don't confirm to the language in the book – i.e. women, transgender, spirituality other than Christianity, etc.
- I have worked with a lot of people who don't have the understanding of the context of our literature and I have lost them – they have left the program.
- I can't believe we don't have a study guide of some sort.
- Baby step into these Paraná infested waters. Study guide/workbook to start.
- Different workbooks for different folks – women, transgender, different cultures, etc.
- Needing to have someone handhold you as you read through the book creates a scholarly class of those who can teach others the context in the big book.
- We need to allow a wife or spouse of an AA member re-write "To Wives" – we owe an amends to wives since Bill wrote this and it is patronizing.
- This video is victims grandstanding and slanted and offensive.
- Reading through the book with a newcomer can often be troublesome – the language is old, hard to understand, etc.
- Cliff notes or footnotes?
- There is something about reading the book and completely relating to what is in the book – even 80 years since it was written.
- Something like a study bible – text and then simplified version next to it.
- How would a gender neutral version change the message? It won't.
- 12x12 changes – all in for those!
- Illustrated pamphlets – YES! The traditions and concepts illustrated versions are what got me into the traditions and concepts.
- You can't be too dumb for AA, but you can be too smart.
- Be open minded to ways to be helpful to the still suffering alcoholic.
- If it ain't broke don't fix it... just because it's not broke for you doesn't mean it's not broke for someone else.
- Our fellowship is a movement is it is not a book. The book is not the only thing that has gotten me to where I am today.
- We are not the people to decide what is broken because we have found the solution. There is a fundamental arrogance in refusing to change with the times. We are putting all the responsibility on the newcomer.
- There is so much great literature out there to help. There is a pamphlet that shows me how to be a GSR and help me to educate my group on what a GSR is.
- When you are in a position of privilege equality feels like oppression.
- Problem with the Spanish Version of tradition 11. It doesn't say the word "policy" in the Spanish Version.
- Our primary purpose is not the preservation of text. It is to help the still suffering alcoholic.
- More literature to help people identify with our program.
- Language is outdated – we need a 5th addition with updated stories.

- Look at updating the language.
- We need to recognize the level of education people do or don't have when they get sober. Also, language has changed – words don't mean the same thing as they did when book was written. What about footnotes in big book with updates?
- Index/concordance put out by AA so there is consistency – consistent message.
- Include those who are not included.
- Pronouns – language carries meaning and the language we choose is an action. So the language we chose needs to be an inclusive action. Updated pronouns would a big step in inclusion.
- Is racial/gender/sexual identity really an outside issue? These could be important to show is stories as it relates to their alcoholism.
- As a sponsor – outdated language and pronouns and religious terms is one of the biggest conversations I have with sponsees.
- Love the idea of workbook.
- Digital video literature
- What does your group think? What does your group think beyond yourself?
- Lack of consistency allows us weirdos to latch onto this program.
- Worries more about the people coming in wet off the street – not educated, not through a treatment center, those who do not have a sponsor yet, what about them? What is their experience with our literature?
- I've lost sponsees because of the verbiage in the literature.
- The younger generation does not use pronouns like us – they are gender neutral.
- I agree with Bill about his reasons for updating the stories for the 2nd edition, we should update 5th edition stories.
- Translation that is non-binary and plain/current language?
- It was written when it was written and it is what it is.
- AA is not for me... I hear that a lot of times and people say it is because they cannot relate – gender terms, etc. I would like to see an *** acknowledging the language, culture, etc. of the times when AA was written. Just so it shows the AA program is aware of this and shows awareness.
- I am not convinced that “dumbing down” the literature is going to equate to more recovery.
- What do we do about people who get their hands on our literature without a sponsor?
- Gender is a part of people's identity – especially in the younger generations.
- Concerned we cannot change 1st 164 pages because then it becomes a Bible and then Bill and Bob are prophets. I don't want AA to become obsolete.
- I want our literature to be inclusive without losing the spiritual nature of our program.
- Concerned we are not reaching all demographics.
- Ask people in online meetings these questions.
- Plain language big book is well overdue. We need something accessible.

- Being a young person coming into AA – I don't see how changing he/him to they/them is going to destroy AA. Same with having God right in your face. Stick to general spiritual terms.
- A plain language big book could just be an additional tool.
- A workbook would be really helpful!
- I am an ER case worker and I cannot tell you how many people I come across who say AA is not for them because of various reasons – literature is outdated, language is sexist, language is Christian, reading levels, etc. I know many of these people have since died.
- Bill even said we need to stay with the time in our communications. So it is obvious we need some change.
- I am not worried about those of us who are here and sober, I am worried about those coming in finding they can't relate.
- To Wives... I don't know any woman who takes their sponsees through that chapter without having to preface the conversation and explain the chapter, context, etc.
- Could grapevine come up with the workbook, a new "edition" of the big book, etc? Doesn't need conference approval per se, but still would be under the AA umbrella?
- To employers – almost all of this is archaic now.
- I can read at a very high level and I even have to look words up. This is really old language and many of the words have different meanings today.
- My group has such an issue with the pronouns we replace them with gender neutral terms. I have concerns since we don't have something from GSO we may be messing up the message.
- If it ain't broke don't fix it.
- Create a study guide.
- Literacy v. reading level – this is really important. The reality is most people cannot read and understand the big book.
- The use of the word God in all of our literature. The word God stirs deep emotion in others. Many newcomers have a physical reaction to that word and leave and never come back. We say we are a program open to other spiritual paths and ways yet we use God all the time in our literature. The language we use has meaning and we should use Higher Power instead of God to include ALL spiritual paths/ways.
- Bottom up approach. example: there's an LGBTQ trans AA group in Santa Cruz that already developed their own gender sensitive translation. Took them a year, and they use it. Why not start with groups and AA members like these for possible translations?
- We seem to discuss this a lot but nothing gets done. It seems like such an elitist and separatist point of view to not do anything. If we are carrying a message that can't be understood and related to then we are wasting our time.
- Why are new people expected to translate this book? Willingness or not, some people come in just don't have the mental capacity to translate our literature.
- It is a luxury that we who are in the program already and understand the message are deciding to make things more accessible/inclusive or not.

- Not making a translation into modern English it is like saying oh, we are not going to translate the big book into _____ language, they should just learn English!
- What are we really afraid of? Will creating a modern language translation really hurt AA? I don't think so! I think continuing to do nothing, more people will die.

Item 5 - Committee - Finance

Reconsider the 1972 G.S.C. Advisory Action stating "G.S.O. should not accept contributions from clubs, listed or known as such, whether or not composed solely of A.A. members.

Contributions are welcome from groups meeting in clubs as long as they are sent in the name of the group."

- Clubs are an outside entity
- If a club/large outside organization was to give a donation they could have a say on AA as a whole.
- Clubs are landlords – so if they can donate/contribute then all of our landlords should be able to. Just because clubs have a passion/focus on recovery/AA doesn't make them any less of an outside entity than any other outside entity.
- AA must always stay poor.
- Allowing clubs to contribute goes directly against our traditions.
- Where does the money come from? If the money is from members of AA then I have no problem.
- Clubs - you are usually dealing with the owner or landlord when it is a club contribution - where meetings do rent space from club. These clubs also rent to other groups – i.e. Al-Anon, NA, CA, etc. It would be like my church (landlord) contributing to AA. Don't open the door.
- Makes me think of the story in the 12x12 from the 7th tradition about the \$10K donation. We should stay poor.
- Also – know the difference between contribution (from members) and donations (from outside organizations) – contribution is good, donation is bad.
- Club is an outside organization. Even if most of the members are AA members. We don't accept donations.
- Clubs contributing would imply affiliation – which is against traditions. These affiliations could lead to public controversies.
- It doesn't sound like groups who meet at the club have a good understanding of our service structure and the traditions.
- Clubs are a business and get funds from a wide range of sources. They are landlords. If AA accepts funds from Clubs we are accepting funds from an outside entity.
- Clubs can contribute to GSO by buying literature directly from GSO.