

69th General Service Conference Report Back

Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Delegates report back from the 69th General Service Conference of AA. My name is Mike and I am an Alcoholic. I have the great honor and privilege to serve you as your Area 31 Delegate. I would like to thank the Roundup committee for their challenging work and months of planning to put on our 50th Roundup. What a job they have done! Thank you to Mary for supporting me in my efforts as Delegate and for being so understanding. Thank you to all the Mary's out there for allowing you to be of service! Of course, thank you to all of you, for all you do to keep our fellowship strong and united.

I would like to start with how my journey began, what it was like and what happened. Being like all the other Panel 68 Delegates, this was my second and final conference. Things seemed a little more familiar and comfortable, I am also a little smarter. Being smarter, I enlisted the services of my fellow and friend William to help me in getting my, not so alcoholically packed bag on the train. This saved me lots of back pain and allowed me to better focus on the task ahead. Thank you, William. Having the information from our Mini Conference in hand, and printed I was well prepared for uneventful train ride to Manhattan. The time used on the train was of vital importance in preparing me for the days ahead. Yes, I had well researched the background and felt I had a good grasp on what the Area's conscience was but a final review on my way to conference was invaluable to relieving any anxiety I might have. This year, again, I opted to go to Manhattan 1 day early, on my dime, so I could unplug from the world and get acclimated to my home for the next 9 days. This was a lesson I received from prior Delegates and how important it is to be relaxed and prepared. I strongly recommend you future Delegates do the same.

So here I am checked in and unpacked. Time to start thinking about supper. I got on the texting group the Nerd's have, Nerd's are the Northeast Regional delegates. Made up of the 18 Delegates that represent the Northeast Region of AA. Several of us agreed to go and get a bite to eat at the diner

around the block. We shared our war stories of getting to the city. After dinner most kind of went on their own way. I asked the other 2 delegates still with me if they wanted to go to a meeting. They agreed. I pulled out my trusty Meeting Guide App and looked at and assessed the options for meetings. We went to the meeting that was close and we could get to early. It was at the Rainbow Club. Yes, it was an LGBTQ meeting, but an AA meeting none the less. I found interesting that they opened the meeting identifying themselves as a special interest group of AA. Still, AA none the less, and we were welcome. I found it amazing that this group is charged \$94 per day for the meeting space. That's NYC for you! After the meeting a little walk through Times Square and back to the hotel.

The next morning, I got together with a few Panel 69s and 68's and went to breakfast, after which I offered to show them the lay of the land. Where they could find the grocery store and the pharmacy! I remember how important it was to me to know where those treasures were.

Saturday evening started with a meet and greet period. This offered the opportunity to get reacquainted the GSO staff and fellow delegates from across the country and Canada. We all exchanged trinkets from our areas. I also met my conference buddy, Matt D from Utah. This was my opportunity to reassure him that his area had elected him and to be confident in the role he was about to assume. I reminded him of the Area conscience, which was expressed to him at Utah's Spring Assembly Mini Conference, and the obligation to represent his area. Reminding him that in keeping with Three Legacies of service, we have the rights endowed to us under Concept 3 "The Right of Decision" and Concept 4 "The Right of Participation". Once again, reiterating that we are all here because our Areas chose us.

The meet and greet was followed up by the 1728 meeting. This is 12 x 12 x 12. A.A.'s Three Legacies of Service meeting. This meeting represents the triangle many of us see on chips and coins we receive for lengths of sobriety. The purpose is to familiarize the new Class A (amateur) Trustees with our Steps, Traditions and Concepts as they commence their journey of service in the AA fellowship.

Next up was the remote community meeting. These are members that may be faced with travel or geographic challenges or may face barriers such as language, cultural considerations and/or anything else that could separate a person who needs A.A. from our lifesaving program of recovery. A newsletter that has been created was presented to all in attendance.

Although no answers were given, the importance of being able to reach out to the still sick and suffering alcoholic was stressed. Which also touched on the importance of all of us and our committees being motivated in our efforts to reach out the hand of AA.

Concluding the evening was the Delegates only dinner. This is where 93 delegates got together to discuss what concerns we may have. This was a great opportunity for past delegates to make the new panel 69's feel more comfortable. They stressed not being afraid to go to the microphone and encouraged all the panel 69's to break the ice. Many questions went on about the conference processes and the best ways to report on the actions of the conference to our Area's. Stress once again was on Participation or Concept 4.

I know you are asking yourself "How did Mike get to know so much about the concepts?" The answer is simple. Our Area lovingly requests the immediate past delegate to facilitate the "What a Concept" meeting monthly. Everyone is encouraged to attend. It is held the 1st Thursday of the month at 474 Pleasant St in Holyoke. Remember a triangle has three sides. Recovery or the steps, Unity our groups, and Service, the concepts. Please embrace the Concepts so you too can enjoy the benefits of an even three-legged triangle.

The conference begins: The first order of business is the roll call. This, to me was a God moment.

Hearing Michael S., since this meeting is being recorded, I will not use my last name, Area 31 delegate.

I stood and said "Present" This is where I once again felt a chill come over my body and the feeling that I am exactly where I am supposed to be finally set in.

Greg T shared on the Mechanics of the Conference and the new summary of conference procedures was reviewed. This is commonly referred to as Robert's Rules of Order, with an AA twist. I have left a couple copies around if you would like to take a copy.

We then broke for lunch. I got to have lunch with my friendly NERDs once again. Now everyone has a glow about them. Please note that the glow was not that of EGO but that of love for AA. We were reminded at lunch that the work we are about to take part in is critical to the reach of AA to get out to the still sick and suffering and how to do this better worldwide. We were reminded we are now World Servants charged with working for AA as a whole. We also talked about the New AA app and potential rollout dates. No dates were given for the final rollout, but beta testing is ongoing. We spoke about the election process for the NERT position and what is going to happen. Orientation for new panel 89 delegates was also reviewed.

After Lunch the Northeast and Southeast Regions panel 69's gave their Area highlights. The highlights are timed, and you only have 2 minutes to give them.

After the Area highlights were given from the Northeast Region and the Southeast Region, we were given our first Presentation and Discussion in the Conference Hall. The presentation was on A.A. International. This was presented by Scott H. Trustee at Large Canada and Newton P Trustee at Large US.

Following the Presentation, we broke off into our Conference Committees. I sit on the Agenda committee which met on its own with the Trustees Committee on General Service Conference.

After introducing ourselves to each other. We reviewed the Trustees report on General Service Conference Committee. Our chair Roxanne shared her experience from the meeting of the Trustees committee in January. I added that it would have been nice for the committee to have had a conference call to go over what might take place on the weekend and if we had any concerns that she could verbalize for us as a committee. I also said that this would have been a great opportunity for our committee to get to know each other and build a rapport with each other. The meeting with the trustees ended shortly after. I was approached by a trustee and he said I made a good point. He went on to say that he wished when he was a delegate, that he knew that he could add such an item as a recommendation for consideration from our committee to the General Service Conference. The committee continues its session by laying the groundwork for our committees voting procedure which was substantial unanimity or a 2/3 majority. Our secretary was Patrick C. from GSO. He took his role of recording very seriously to not interfere with the committee discussions nor the thought processes. We discussed themes for the 2020 69th General Service Conference. This is where we all reviewed notes from our Areas and topics that our areas had discussed.

I was so grateful to have the highlight minutes of the Mini Conference that Steve M. had prepared for me and the questionnaires that everyone filled out at the Mini conference. I would like to thank Bobbi P. that facilitated the review of the Agenda committee's agenda items and created the questionnaires. In committee I felt very well prepared! Thank you to all who participated in informing me.

After this very busy day I got to go to my room to freshen up. What a pleasant surprise I saw the gift basket that the Area had put together for me. I felt not alone. I love Area 31... I kept saying between Lindt chocolate balls. I freshened up knowing that the Opening Banquet was the next event. I went downstairs to the hotel lobby where I ran into Bob W. and Paul H. They were both smiling like they had found their lost child. I had invited Paul down to the Opening Banquet of the 69th General Service Conference. It felt so good to see him. A friendly face from our Area. Bob W was busy catching up with

his old friends. I understood. Paul and I talked at length about the day, being careful to not disclose any committee business! We sat for dinner and enjoyed conversation with the others at the table. After dinner the AA meeting started. Several delegates were speakers. Paul at the end of the meeting went on to say it might have been one of the best speaker meetings he has attended in a while. I reminded him of where we were. Paul and I stuck around a little after the meeting to talk. Let me tell you, I felt so good about being able to share this momentous occasion with the man who has supported me as our Alternate Delegate. If you closed your eyes you could feel the presence of Bill W.

The start of the second day in Conference Committee and we tackle the Agenda item A the Theme of the 69th General Service Conference. We all reviewed the top 10 Themes presented to us by our Areas'. This year everyone had done their homework and were as well prepared as I. Unanimously, in committee, the Theme came to us. The theme for the 69th General Service Conference is 2020: A Clear Vision for You

Next up was the Presentation / Discussion topics for the 2020 General Service Conference. Once again lots of thoughtful discussion ensued. 3 topics came to the surface in an incredible God moment that left us all speechless. They are:

Recovery — Who Is Missing in Our Rooms?

Unity — Practicing Our Principles

Service — Keeping A.A. Relevant

We started to discuss Workshop topics however our three (3) hours of allotted time were at an end. The next day the Workshop Topic came to be:

Attraction Through Action

Lunch was next. I made sure to sit with a different group of people for every meal.

Lunch was followed up by everyone convening in the ballroom again. Area highlights were given by the Panel 69 Delegates of the Pacific Region, West Central Region, and Western Canada.

At the end of the highlights, Jesus from Southern CA got up to introduce the first-floor action of the conference. It was that "A draft Fourth Edition of the Spanish Big Book, Alcohólicos Anónimos, be developed and a progress report be brought to the 2020 General Service Conference" be committed to the trustees' Literature Committee.

The rest of the afternoon was consumed by very informative but dry Board Reports. It started with David Morris Class A Trustee, General Service Board treasurer.

Although this is vital the PowerPoint report it was 140 slides long! Here is a sample: 2018 Financial highlights (1), 7th Tradition 2018 \$8.4 million (6), Percentage of Groups Contributing 2004 – 2018 (18). A Dollar is not what it used to be (20). The Hand of AA Is Always There. Services Supported by 7th Tradition – per member (39). GSO & AAWS Operating Results 2018 (46). AA Grapevine and La Vina Facts (49). Grapevine Actual vs Budget (51S4) includes a severance payment of \$126,303 and related legal expense, (51a) Also of interest her is that, since 1978, Grapevine has contributed aggregated cumulative funds of \$1,373,200 against aggregated cumulative withdraws of \$1,447,300. La Vina Statement of Activity (54).

As Far as the Pension goes. This is where I would like to share how this slide was presented so you get a taste of how you need to stretch your mind at conference. These are David Morris' words. (S55) this slide shows that the discounted defined benefit plan's projected benefit obligation (PBO) was \$35,238,092 at December 31, 2018, using a discount rate of 4.21%. The gross undiscounted PBO are nearly \$90 million, which are expected to be paid out over the next 90 years through 2110. Remember that when a stream of future liability payments, such as pension payments, is discounted back to its present value, an increase in the discount rate will have the counter intuitive impact of decreasing the

liability balance. Pension plan assets decreased to \$33,059,042 at December 31, 2018 from \$34,770,101 at December 31, 2017. This is a net decrease of \$1,711,059, or 4.9%, resulted from:

- increase of \$1,500,000 from the annual pension plan contributions made by the operating entities,
- decrease of \$1,652,075 from the pension benefit payments made to plan participants,
- decrease of \$2,153,015 in plan assets due to a 6.2% decline in the general stock market,

net increase of \$594,031 from dividend income less plan expenses. (57-S4) Impact of 2 transfers from Reserve Fund to Pension Fund. Uses of the Reserve Fund (S59-S3). Reserve Fund Ratio (61).

Although I am not a CPA. I found David Morris class A trustee presentation to be very insightful. He is truly an brilliant man. He impressed me with how he had memorized all the slides and the numbers contain therein. He did not present from a podium but walked the floor with a laser pointer. Truly amazing.

Shortly after this presentation a Delegate referred to slide 36 (36) that shows we are 73.4% self-supporting. (37) Slide 37 shows the statistic that Cost of Service per member is \$8.06 and challenged every member of the fellowship to donate \$8.06 by 8/6. Flyers have since been produced. It was also encouraged that if you know someone less fortunate, but that has been touched by the hand of AA, that you include them in your donation. Member donations can be made at AA.org.

Next up was the presentation of the AA Grapevine Board Report Summary presented by Cate Wittig.

Here are some the highlights from her report:

AA Grapevine, Inc. is one of two affiliate corporations of the General Service Board and the multimedia publisher of Grapevine magazine content, available on various platforms and in a variety of formats. AA Grapevine, Inc. also publishes Spanish-language content in La Viña magazine and its related books, CD and audio formats, as well as Spanish language web pages on aagrapevine.org.

By charter, the AA Grapevine Board consists of seven to 10 directors. Currently there are nine directors: two general service trustees; two regional trustees; three non-trustee directors; one Class A trustee; and the AA Grapevine publisher.

The purpose of the Grapevine Corporate Board is to serve the A.A. Fellowship in the following ways:

- To oversee the publishing operations of AA Grapevine, Inc.
- To provide sound financial management of the corporation.
- To establish corporate policies and set corporate priorities.
- To engage in the ongoing process of strategic planning.
- To operate in accordance with the principles of A.A. as expressed in the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts.

The board strives to engage the Fellowship, to ensure members' awareness of the international journals of Alcoholics Anonymous, Grapevine and La Viña, as tools to help carry the message.

Since the last Conference, AA Grapevine, Inc. has produced 12 issues of Grapevine, six issues of La Viña, an annual wall calendar and pocket planner, and three e-books. In response to a 2018 Conference action, La Viña is now being published in full color. In December 2018 Grapevine and La Viña made available for purchase magazine binders that can store up to 12 magazines. Each binder is labeled with gold foil Grapevine or La Viña stamp. AA Grapevine, Inc. distributed 103,420 Grapevine and La Viña

books, e-books, CDs, and other content-related items, including the translation into Spanish of the GV book One on One, featuring a collection of stories about sponsorship. AA Grapevine also produced two new collections of previously published Grapevine stories, AA in the Military and One Big Tent: Atheist and Agnostic AA Members Share Their Experience, Strength and Hope; reprinted 10 titles; and completed translation of the book Emotional Sobriety into French.

In July 2018, La Viña started the La Viña Story Archive Project, the first archive of original stories of recovery written by members of the Hispanic A.A. community and published in La Viña magazine. The expected completion date is Spring 2019.

Grapevine's average monthly print circulation was 66,857 in fiscal year 2018 (this is more than budget by 4,535 and less than 2017 by 2,392). Grapevine Online (GVO) averaged 3,390 subscribers in 2018. The average bimonthly circulation of La Viña was 9,635 (this is 447 greater than budget and 361 under 2017 levels).

Grapevine ended 2018 with net loss of \$153,500 against budgeted net loss of \$271,313. The loss was primarily due to costs incurred as a result of Leadership transition. ♣ Gross profit for the magazine and subscription products reached \$1,911,513. Gross profit on the magazine was ahead of budget by \$140,236. ♣ Gross profit on books and related items was \$562,436. Overhead costs were budgeted at \$2,042,590 versus an actual of \$2,065,013.

La Viña is published by AA Grapevine, Inc., with the shortfall between revenue and expenses made up by the General Service Board as a service to the Fellowship. La Viña had an average circulation of 9,635 per issue. Total income for the magazine for 2018 was \$80,375 with expenses at \$229,202. The net difference between revenue and expenses for 2018 was \$148,467 or \$2,658 more than was budgeted.

Grapevine continues to produce a complimentary Grapevine Daily Quote online, featuring excerpts drawn from the archives of classic Grapevine literature. Selections are posted daily on aagrapevine.org

and may be requested on an opt-in basis for daily email delivery. Subscriptions number 44,912 as of December 2018. The La Viña Weekly Quote, a weekly complimentary quote in Spanish extracted from classic Grapevine Literature and the La Viña Book Lo mejor de La Viña (The Best of La Viña) is posted on the La Viña web pages on an opt-in basis for email delivery to 1,468 subscribers. The La Viña Weekly Quote is also distributed via SMS on an opt-in basis to 2,327 subscribers.

In response to an advisory action from the 2018 Conference and with the cooperation of A.A.W.S., Grapevine has launched efforts into outside sales. A.A.W.S. customers have been contacted and informed of the availability for purchase of AA Grapevine books and related products. The efforts of the Grapevine board and management team continue to broaden awareness of the magazines, books, audio offerings and website to carry the message through service outreach efforts. The Grapevine board is always looking for ways to expand these efforts. To this end, in 2018 AA Grapevine undertook a Fellowship Feedback project both in English and Spanish, to find out the desires of the Fellowship.

Over 4,000 responses were received, from both subscribers and non-subscribers. This valuable input will help guide AA Grapevine, Inc. in their determination of future direction.

AA Grapevine continues to have an extremely cooperative relationship with A.A.W.S. at both the board and staff level. This is resulting in efficiencies in operations for both corporations, as well as expanded outreach opportunities for the Grapevine, as seen with our outside sales efforts.

The AA Grapevine Board and management team are committed to self-support and to AA Grapevine, Inc.'s continued financial vitality. The board's focus on financial health as demonstrated throughout 2018 will continue in 2019. To this end the board will:

- Continue to seek opportunities for internal cost reduction through operational review.
- Continue to work closely with A.A.W.S. to identify revenue opportunities and operational efficiencies.
- Work to improve Grapevine/La Viña customer service processes.
- Redesign the website and store to provide a more positive customer experience.
- Review and incorporate results of the Fellowship Feedback.

As a mirror of the membership, Grapevine both reflects and belongs to the Fellowship. For 75 years Grapevine has conveyed the “Voices of A.A.” as a tool for many in recovery, evolving over time and reliably carrying the message to anyone who reaches out for the hand of A.A. With the ongoing support of the Fellowship, it will continue to do so well into the future.

Following up Grapevine was The General Service Board Report Summary presented by Michele Ginsberg Chair, Class A Trustee.

Here are some highlights of her report.

In April 2018, following the 68th General Service Conference, the General Service Board welcomed two new Class B trustees: Jan L., Eastern Canada regional trustee, and Kathi F. Pacific regional trustee. We also welcomed Beau B., general service trustee, to the board. And, at the end of this year’s Conference five trustees will rotate: Northeast regional trustee Rich P, Southwest regional trustee Yolanda F., trustee-at-large/Canada Scott H., and Class A trustees David Morris and Ivan Lemelle. We are grateful for the dedication, self-sacrifice and tireless service these trustees have exhibited and the many miles traveled in fulfilling their duties on behalf of the Fellowship. I will miss working with them. Yet, as our principle of rotation keeps us moving ever-forward, later in the week, new trustees will be elected for these openings, and new slates of Class A’s and corporate officers will be presented, for disapproval if any.

Our two corporate boards, A.A.W.S., Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc. have been busy throughout the year, addressing a broad range of business concerns and developing plans for the future. You will hear from

each of these boards individually regarding their activities over the past year. In the interim, I want to report to you that communication among the three board chairs has been excellent during the year and is instrumental to the ongoing collaboration that has been developing among the three arms of our current corporate structure.

One item of special interest was the invitation we received from the Cuban Health Ministry to participate in November 2018 at the Third International Meeting Against Drug Addiction, held in the city of Guantánamo, Guantánamo Province, Cuba. Dr. Peter Luongo, one of our Class A trustees whose experience in the alcoholism treatment field extends for over 30 years was asked to present on the topic “Healthcare Professionals and A.A.,” in which he outlined ways A.A. and the medical profession can work together to help address the problem of alcoholism. Scott H., trustee-at-large/Canada and Julio E., staff member at the General Service Office, also attended. They were accompanied by Hernán M., former La Viña editor, who acted as translator. A.A. in Cuba has an estimated 1,700 members and 100 groups, and this was a great step toward more active and effective relationships with Cuban professionals in the healthcare arena. In addition, a number of Cuban A.A. members were there as registered participants, and at one venue, local A.A. members spoke to the professionals about how A.A. works and shared briefly about their personal experiences. A.A. meetings were even held in the empty offices of the Health Ministry — a further example of the growing cooperation between health professionals and A.A.

Another important moment occurred this year with the completion of the translation of the Big Book into Navajo, a spoken language. The CD set of the Big Book was presented at the Red Roads Convention in Albuquerque, NM, to the President of the Navajo nation. The President spoke passionately about the need for the Big Book among his people. Many A.A. members from the Pacific region helped moved this

project forward over the last twenty-five years and Seventh Tradition dollars funded the project. I was honored to represent all of us in extending the hand of A.A. where a desperate need exists.

Additionally, the General Service Board hosted the 25th World Service Meeting (WSM) that was held in October 2018 in Durban, South Africa, with 72 delegates representing 45 countries or zones in attendance. Established in 1969 “to carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic, wherever in the world he or she may be...” the World Service Meeting has been held every other year since 1972, alternating between New York and a city outside the U.S./Canada structure, as chosen by the WSM itself.

The Final Report of the 25th WSM has been distributed in print form and an anonymity protected digital version was posted in February on aa.org. In October 2020, the 26th WSM will be held in Rye Brook, NY prior to the General Service Board weekend, with the theme “The Purpose of Our Service: Sobriety within Everyone’s Reach.”

Throughout the year, G.S.O. and General Service Board representatives also attended a number of other events around the world, including the 55th General Service Conference, in Buenos Aires, Argentina; the Hungarian National Convention, in Szolnok, Hungary; the Middle East Regional Committee of A.A., in Dubai, U.A.E.; and the 31st General Service Conference, in Moscow, Russia. These events, and others, marked important milestones for the A.A. Fellowship around the world and offered many opportunities to exchange valuable experience of how A.A. can continue serving suffering alcoholics, wherever they may be.

As we move closer and closer to the next International Convention in Detroit, Michigan in 2020, planning is gaining steam, and the board has been kept abreast of developments by A.A.W.S., which has been tasked with overseeing and managing the day-to-day details of the Convention.

The stated objectives of the International Convention are:

- To provide opportunities for a rededication of attendees to the primary purpose of A.A.
- To enable attendees to witness the success and growth of the A.A. program around the world.
- To let the world know that A.A. is alive, flourishing and available as a community resource, locally and internationally.

And so we look forward to Detroit in 2020 — and to Vancouver, British Columbia in 2025, and St. Louis, Missouri in 2030!

The theme of our Conference this year is “Our Big Book — 80 Years, 71 Languages.” Many of us here will remember just a few short years ago, in 2015 at the 80th Anniversary International Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, the 35-millionth copy of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, was presented to the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine, the religious order to which Sister Ignatia belonged.

If I May Interject a side note here.

Sister Judith Ann Karam one of the first understudies of Sister Ignatia has made herself available as a Class A trustee candidate. From what I hear she is an amazing individual and will be an asset to AA as a whole.

Adding to the celebration of our Big Book, we can also add publication of our first original book in three decades, Our Great Responsibility, a collection of talks given by Bill W. at General Service Conferences between 1951-1970. Perhaps we can all take a moment to pause and reflect on those powerful moments Bill shared with Conferences past, on talks held in rooms just like this, with trusted servants just like us. We are links in a powerful chain of recovery

Much of the board’s focus this year has been on communication, a key component of the board’s strategic plan. We have an overarching or “umbrella” goal of reaching out the hand of A.A. to all who suffer from alcoholism. One of the particular sub-goals is to improve the effectiveness of our

communications to the different populations we serve. We also have a goal of identifying new places and audiences where the A.A. message of hope can be shared. We see the link between effective communication and reaching new groups of suffering alcoholics with our message of hope. Finally, in the communications area we are committed to being more effective with all the service constituencies we serve, be it, as some examples: areas, individuals, boards, committees and office communications. As many of you know, this goal of the strategic plan led us to work with Impact Collaborative (IC), a professional communications firm, on a comprehensive communications audit. They undertook and completed such an audit in 2017 and one primary focus of the board throughout this past year has been on what the audit revealed, and what our part is in being more effective. From here, we plan on evaluating how over the next three years the office and staff, the boards and affiliate corporations can strengthen our communications. The '80s are over; the digital era is here. How do we use the giant colossus of communication to talk to each other and to reach the still-suffering alcoholic?

Immediately following the Conference last year, Michele appointed an ad hoc committee of the General Service Board comprised of trustees, A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine board directors, with staff representation from both operating corporations, to begin the process of evaluating the recommendations contained in the communications audit. This committee, in collaboration with the internal Core Team comprised of A.A.W.S. and AA Grapevine management and personnel who have been working with IC from the start of the audit, was able to review and categorize in a general way the recommendations and to provide some direction relative to ongoing discussion among the various A.A. entities involved and to develop some priorities to present to the General Service Board. Since then, and following additional meetings dedicated to discussion of the audit and what we might do, the General Service Board and the General Service Office and Grapevine have begun the development of a three-year strategic communications plan that will be our road map for how we will move forward to enhance

our ability to reach the still-suffering alcoholic. Along the way, we also hope to improve communication up and down the service structure.

Following this Conference, a new ad hoc committee comprised of the Internal Core Team plus a number of trustees will be formed. That committee will be tasked with preparing the plan which will be reviewed by the Board and shared with you for input. For now, these are the two key work items for the coming year: create a three-year communications plan and develop a plan for a communications hub which will coordinate external communications and be charged with overseeing the implementation of the three-year plan. The plan will include such things as protocols for Class A presentations with professionals; media plan to reach alcoholics in underrepresented populations; protocols for public relations messaging to the general public and friends of A.A.; and development of digital tools to reach the service structure.

Additionally, in our role as good service leaders (Concept IX), the board has been focused on other aspects of its strategic plan, presented in 2016, updated in 2018 and continuously reviewed by the board, to help us focus our limited time and energy. We have developed an informal grid of work undertaken by committees and boards in support of our plan objectives. I can report that the board, through its committees, is working on seven goals. The first goal is that we will model inclusivity and acceptance in accordance with the Third Tradition. Each trustees' committee with staff secretary is inventorying its relevant pamphlets and other materials to suggest what might need to be updated to be more welcoming. The International Conventions/Regional Forums committee and staff are looking at the presentations, handouts and email blasts with an eye toward being welcoming to all. They are also taking a close look at all the materials that will announce our International Convention to the world. If you haven't seen it, take a look at the video inviting you to the International. It's on the aa.org homepage.

The second major goal for the board is to work on our relationships with professionals — being friendly with our friends. The trustees' C.P.C. committee and staff have been working on identifying new nonprofit groups that might want to hear about A.A. The Grapevine outreach coordinator is working with C.P.C. to see how Grapevine publications and services may complement the information provided at professional conferences that we attend. The Corrections committee is looking at the training programs for corrections personnel to see if there is any way we might make presentations to them about what A.A. is. We recognize local committees do great work, but at the national level the Board and staff may be able to open doors that thus far have remained closed.

The third goal is effective communications.

The fourth goal is identifying new places and audiences to bring the A.A. message of hope. Some of this work also overlaps with the second goal. However, under this goal we are also looking at whether we might embrace more direct sponsorship of countries with emerging A.A. services. We also are exploring asking delegates and others to think about populations that could be better served. For example, I know one area that did an inventory and realized that they were not reaching the elderly living in facilities.

Bringing our message of hope and recovery has no age limits!

The fifth goal relates to improving internal communications among the three boards. This has led to discussions on our stated objective under this goal to explore alternative meeting cycles, revamp board weekends, consider more efficient use of resources across the three boards; and assuring good communications among the three entities and the office. We also have an objective to study the current size and composition of the General Service Board and each of the affiliate boards including the rotation schedule to find the most effective model to support our mission. The trustees' Nominating Committee has been working on this last issue and is developing an evaluation tool with regard to workload and effectiveness.

Our sixth goal is for the General Service Board to act as a role model in promoting the importance of our Tradition of anonymity as expressed in the Eleventh and Twelfth Traditions. We had good presentations and good discussion at the January board meeting on Anonymity and Social media, and on Unity and Social Media.

Finally, our seventh goal speaks to the financial health of the three boards and the office. While that is largely up to the Fellowship, it is important for the boards to continue to find ways to communicate the work that G.S.O. does as a result of Seventh Tradition contributions, including updating the Seventh Tradition flyer and adding a QR code so individuals can obtain more in-depth information on an item. We are also thinking about sharing more stories that the office receives about how individuals have been touched by our message of hope.

These, then, are just some of the highlights of a very active year — a year which has brought the future into greater focus and which culminates in the discussions that will take place here this week as we search for an informed group conscience on the many matters before us.

And so, as we begin our work, let us reaffirm our commitment to carrying A.A.'s lifesaving message. The General Service Conference is a gift passed on to us, and each of us has an obligation to keep the doors of A.A. open to those who so desperately need it — now and in the future — no matter who they are or where they are from, what their background may be, or what language they speak or sign.

Along these lines, here is a quote from Bill W. that has meant a lot to Michele over the past year:

In A.A. 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 A.A., so long as he or she declares.

Our resolve to communicate effectively with each other both as listeners and speakers, and to bring forward what is best for the future of A.A. and our primary purpose should be our guideposts and the measure of our success.

Rounding up the Board Reports was the AAWS Board Report presented by David N. Chair.

Here are some of the highlights.

Committees of the A.A.W.S. Board are: Technology/Communication/Services, which addresses the needs of service assignments, reviews G.S.O. communications with the Fellowship, and oversees G.S.O.'s A.A. website; Publishing, which reviews sales results, format requests, reprints, international translations of literature and other publishing matters; Finance, which oversees budgeting and financial results and considers self-support matters; Internal Audit, which reviews all internal audit processes and documentation and sets parameters for any audit changes; and Nominating, which recommends candidates for A.A.W.S. non-trustee director and general service trustee vacancies.

Group Services – There were 1,641 new A.A. groups in the U.S. and Canada listed with G.S.O. Each new group's general service representative (G.S.R.) or contact receives A.A. literature and basic information to encourage the group to link with their local structure and support Twelfth Step activities. The service piece, "Services Provided by G.S.O./A.A.W.S.," describes in detail the services provided by the A.A. staff assignments and other employees at G.S.O.

G.S.O.'s A.A. Website – Oversight of G.S.O.'s A.A. website is the responsibility of the A.A.W.S. Board of Directors, acting through its Technology/Communication/Services and Publishing Committees and in accordance with the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous. The website received an estimated

total of 15,254,461 visits for the year 2018, an increase of 14% from last year's total of 13,396,071. A website design project has been underway throughout the year, led by an in-house working group with input from a number of professional consultants.

The board approved that a basic A.A. app, to include the Meeting Guide, Big Book, Daily Reflections and alert/messaging capabilities, be launched in conjunction with the new A.A. website.

YouTube Channel – The YouTube channel for A.A. World Services, Inc. and the General Service Office was launched in the summer of 2018. The purpose of the channel is to provide an additional platform from which A.A.W.S.-produced videos can be shared with a broader audience in order to enhance carrying the message to alcoholics, the general public and the professional community. Development of the channel began in early fall of 2017 as a response to an Advisory Action of the 2017 General Service Conference to create a YouTube channel with comments disabled that could be analyzed for effectiveness. Expansion of the YouTube collection is in process, with the ultimate goal of hosting all A.A.W.S. video content.

Publishing - International licensing and translation: The Big Book is available in 71 languages, which includes the original English plus 70 translations. The latest translation, now available as an audiobook, is the Navajo Big Book.

For the period January through December 2018, international translation and licensing continued to demonstrate a marked uptick of activity compared with the same period in 2017. A notable surge in activity includes renewal licenses issued and new licenses granted to reproduce and distribute items of translated copyrighted literature, with 265 total licenses fully executed in 2018, as compared to 73 in 2017.

Our Great Responsibility: A Selection of Bill W.'s General Service Conference Talks, 1951-1971:

Estimated availability of finished books in English, French and Spanish is on track for mid-April 2019. An

announcement flyer is in development and an introductory article for Box 4-5-9 is scheduled for the Spring 2019 issue.

Information Technology: The selection and development of a new office-wide enterprise resource planning (ERP) system to update G.S.O.'s software systems, especially accounting, contributions, record-keeping and email, has been underway over the past year. A major project, requiring in-depth training and user acceptance testing throughout the office, the project is on track for full implementation in the early months of 2019.

A.A.W.S. Publications Policy: The board reviewed the A.A.W.S., Inc. Policy on Publication of Literature with respect to A.A.W.S.'s ability to update and revise A.A. pamphlets and books and the Board forwarded a proposed revision of the policy along with background information for review by the trustees' Committee on Literature and the 2019 Conference Literature Committee.

Intellectual Property: With the expansion of digital media, the board has maintained a focus on its intellectual property policies, working with G.S.O.'s Intellectual Property Administrator and, as needed, outside counsel.

Administrative Services: Through a process requesting proposals from a number of vendors, G.S.O. management has been seeking new venues for meetings of the General Service Board/AA Grapevine, Inc./A.A. World Services, Inc. and the General Service Conference, with the possibility of adding an additional venue for meetings and events for 2019 and 2020, including the 2021 and 2022 Conferences.

Additionally, office space and room for expansion at G.S.O. continue to be a challenge. A number of single-person offices have been converted to two-person offices to accommodate and exploration of additional space in the building continues.

Service Material: The board discussed responses from the Fellowship to the yellow "Safety Card for A.A. Groups" service material and an internal group of G.S.O. staff members have been reviewing the card in detail with regular updates to the full A.A.W.S. board

I encourage all of you to read the 69th General Service Conference Final report. All the Presentations that I did not include in this report back where of tremendous value and very well researched and presented.

One of the highlights along the way for me personally was when I presented Brian O as our candidate for NERT. He did very well until the 2/3 cut. Debbie D. and Francis G. went forward. Ultimately Francis G of Area 30 was elected the new NERT.

Due to Time constraints I will highlight the Agenda Item outcomes that were discussed at our Mini Conference. A full list is available upon request. There are a couple of handouts available here on the table.

So here is how the rest of the week went:

FINANCE

It was recommended that:

- Reviewed the current area contributions for delegate expenses. **TOOK NO ACTION**
- Recommended increase of maximum annual contribution from AA member bequests from \$5,000 to \$10,000. **PASSED**
- Consider increase in maximum annual contribution from individual member. **TOOK NO ACTION**
- Additional Consideration: Changes to the Green Card

GRAPEVINE

- Consider request to remove Alcoholism at Large section from the AA Grapevine. **TOOK NO ACTION.**
- Additional Consideration: Alcoholism at Large disclaimer be displayed more prominently and visibly.
- Considered and forwarded for approval books for future publication: The Early Days of AA; Getting Involved in General Service; Surrender and Hope (La Vina book)

POLICY/ADMISSIONS

- Recommend "Process for Polling the General Service Conference Between Annual Meetings" be modified to include time for discussion of the motion. **PASSED**
- The 71st GSC be held April 18-24, 2021.
- The 72nd GSC will be held April 24-30, 2022.
- The 71st and 72nd GSC will be held in Brooklyn, NY
- Considered a process for Conference committee to review proposed agenda items not forwarded to a Conference Committee and requested additional information regarding background material process be provided to the next Conference.
- Requested trustees' Committee on the GSC develop a process for approval of other guests to be presented 1 week prior to GSC for approval.
- Considered the 1986 Advisory Action and asked that it be re-implemented.

- Noting that a presentation on Equitable Workload Distribution was scheduled, the Committee requested a plan or progress report be brought to the 70th GSC.

LITERATURE

- Recommend a draft Fifth Edition of Alcoholics Anonymous be developed. **FAILED**
- Recommend “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship” (P. 13) and (P. 15) be revised to include references to anonymity. **PASSED**
- Recommend updates to “The Twelve Steps Illustrated”. **PASSED**
- Additional Consideration: Begin work on a Literature Committee Workbook
- Recommend text be added to the Forward to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. **FAILED**
- Recommend “Non-alcoholics” may attend open meetings as observers” be added to the “Open Meeting” side of the Primary Purposed (blue) card. **FAILED**
- Consider request to add information regarding safety to the pamphlet “The A.A. Group”. **TOOK NO ACTION**
- Discussed “Policy on Publication of Literature: Updating Pamphlets and Other A.A. Materials” and supported the proposed policy. (Later Floor Action re-committed this back to the Committee for review next year).
- Additional Consideration: the Trustees’ Literature Committee consider an update to the pamphlet “Is A.A. for Me?”

TREATMENT/ACCESSIBILITIES

- Recommend inclusion of deaf member’s story in the pamphlet “Access to A.A.: Members Share on Overcoming Barriers.” **PASSED**
- Recommend the pamphlet “A.A. for the Older Alcoholic – Never Too Late” be updated. **PASSED**
- Recommend the development of anonymity-protected audio interviews of military professionals as an online resource. **PASSED**
- Additional Consideration: Considered revising the pamphlet “Bridging the Gap Between Treatment and A.A. and requested a review of all treatment and correction literature with consideration of what might be combined.
- Additional Consideration: Review of draft Remote Communities Kit and suggested a guideline or workbook be developed for inclusion.

TRUSTEES

- Recommend the approval of the slate of trustees and officers for GSB, Grapevine Board, A.A.W.S., Inc. Board and A.A. Grapevine, Inc. Board. **PASSED**

- Additional Consideration: Reviewed draft procedures for a partial or complete reorganization of the GSB, the A.A.W.S. Board and the A.A. Grapevine Board. Suggestions were provided and a request was made to bring a revised plan to the 2020 GSB.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTIONS /REGOINAL FORUMS

- Recommend taking an anonymity-protected photograph of the flag ceremony at the 2020 International Convention. **PASSED**
- Recommend an anonymity-protected internet broadcast of the 2020 International Convention Opening Flag Ceremony. **PASSED**
- Recommend that anonymity protected video footage of highlights of the 2020 International Convention be produced for archival use.
- Additional Consideration: Discussed ways to encourage interest in Regional and Local Forums and provided a list of ideas.

CORRECTIONS

- Recommendation to modify Composition, Scope and Procedure. **FAILED**
- Consider review of Corrections-related literature to be more modern and inclusive. **TOOK NO ACTION**
- Consider Request to establish and maintain a database of Correctional Facilities. **TOOK NO ACTION**
- Additional Consideration: That Publishing prioritize Corrections pamphlets for publication without staples.

In Closing my overall feeling again is that AA is in good hands. I want to thank Area 31 for electing me to serve as Delegate. This has truly become the ride of a lifetime. I encourage all and everyone here to stand for service whenever the opportunity presents itself. The growth I have experienced personally and mentally I will cherish forever. Thank you again for my sobriety and allowing me to serve you.