

FINAL REPORT
EAST CENTRAL REGIONAL FORUM
NOVEMBER 13-15, 2015
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

Dear A.A. Friends,

Please mark your calendar for the next East Central Regional Forum, which will take place in Springfield, Illinois, November 17-19, 2017 at the Hilton Springfield Hotel.

HOW TO CONTACT US:

A.A. World Services, Inc.
c/o General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
(212) 870-3120
Fax: (212) 870-3003
E-mail: regionalforums@aa.org
G.S.O.'s A.A. Web site: www.aa.org

ONLY LAST NAMES OF CLASS A (NON-ALCOHOLIC) TRUSTEES
AND NON-ALCOHOLIC EMPLOYEES APPEAR IN THIS REPORT

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
WORKSHOP REPORTS.....	3
PRESENTATIONS	3
PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING.....	18
"CLOSING REMARKS"	22

INTRODUCTION

The 2015 East Central Regional Forum was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Registration for the Forum was 380. This included 235 members attending their very first Forum—many were welcomed at the Forum Orientation on Friday evening.

WORKSHOP REPORTS

“La Viña: The La Viña Rep and More—Bringing our Message of Hope to Alcoholics” (Moderator: Paz P.) The workshop attendees discussed the following questions in answer to how to better promote awareness and participation in the magazine La Viña:

- How can I improve awareness about La Viña?
- Is the Grapevine Project available in Spanish?
- Is the daily quote available for the Spanish community?
- Is it possible to buy back issues of La Viña?
- How can I get more information about La Viña?

Members suggested doing workshops and offering raffles to improve the awareness about La Viña. The group also discussed tips on taking photos of the group. The Grapevine Project is available in Spanish, and members were made aware that histories were in the process of being gathered. In addition, the daily quote is available as the “weekly quote” from La Viña by email, as well as by text. Finally, it is possible to buy back issues of La Viña by contacting customer service or visiting the La Viña website. For more information about La Viña, check out www.aagrapevine.org.

“How Can We Make Service Work More Attractive?” (Moderator: Irene M. / Reporter: Scott G.) The group shared many ideas regarding how to make service work more attractive:

- Service work is what we do to stay sober. As active members of A.A., we are responsible for finding new people interested in being of service to our Fellowship.
- We should be accountable, dedicated and responsible members of our general service structure. It also helps to have a bit of humor about it all (and some humbleness) as we communicate the joys of service to our fellows.
- Explain your service position and ask new people to help you with your service position. In doing so, we show other A.A.s what we do.
- Inform the newcomers of the purpose of district meetings and area assemblies.
- Give service reports at group meetings. Publish district and area agendas prior to meeting day and have structured district meetings and area assemblies.
- Hold sharing sessions at area assemblies in regard to how the area can better serve the districts and groups.
- Invite members of the General Service Board to speak at your local district and area events.
- Finally, if necessary, your district map can be modified to better represent the groups within an area.

“Sponsorship” (Moderator: Kirk F./Reporter: Randy K.) The workshop attendees were asked to pick topics that discussed important facets of sponsorship. Members discussed:

- How to know when a sponsee isn't ready and it's time to move on.
- Should we move our sponsees through the Twelve Steps as quickly as possible?
- Service sponsorship

The group discussed how to know and what to do if a sponsee was not ready to stay sober. Group members shared, "When we, as sponsors, are getting to know a sponsee, we get a sense of whether or not they are ready." They also shared that they sometimes find it helpful to ask questions, such as "Are you ready to go to any lengths?" and "Do you believe you're an alcoholic?" A.A.s found it helpful to remember that: "It's our Twelfth Step, and if it's not working we can perhaps help them find a situation that will work. We remember, however, that our job is not to convince them, only to share our experience in how we stayed sober. The responsibility to stay sober is theirs."

The group also discussed whether or not to move a sponsee through the Steps quickly. The sense of the group was to use intuition on a case-by-case basis – sponsors can move a sponsee quickly or not as appropriate for them. Often, some said, moving too fast limits understanding, while moving too slow could be a danger. Ultimately, the newcomer's own discomfort will determine how motivated they are to move through the Twelve Steps.

Finally, workshop members discussed service sponsorship and shared their experience with this topic. Many said that in looking for a service sponsor, we should look for someone with a good service life. A good service sponsor will guide a sponsee through any pitfalls, as well as helping their sponsee learn and apply the Traditions. Acting as a service sponsor, the priority is to guide the sponsee into the Twelve Concepts. And finally, the group members shared that they were helped and rewarded in their service as a sponsor.

“The Twelve Concepts”: (Moderator: Russ L. / Reporter: Laura J.) The workshop moderator introduced the topic of The Twelve Concepts. It was mentioned that the Twelve Concepts for World Service was authored by co-founder Bill W. over 53 years ago and adopted by the 12th General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous on April 26, 1962. The 12 Concepts serve as an interpretation of A.A. world service structure. As written in its introduction, these Concepts aim to record the "why" of our service structure in such a fashion that the highly valuable service of the past, and the lessons we have drawn from it, can never be forgotten or lost. After reading the short form of the 12 Concepts, the members decided to discuss Concepts 3 - 5, 8, and 12 as their workshop topic.

Concepts 3 - 5 tie together and help the delegate be informed — not instructed — with the ability to participate and the right of appeal. This gives us the right to change our mind and be wrong. We should not micro-manage our trusted servants but we should send them to participate informed. As always, minority opinion is heard in all levels of A.A. structure.

Concept 8 gives the trustees the right to veto an action they feel is not good. Members had concerns that we are giving too much of A.A. to Class A nonalcoholic trustees. It was mentioned that the majority of the Alcoholic Foundation were not alcoholic, but, over time, the service structure transitioned to majority of alcoholics as trustees.

The discussion of Concept 12 revolved around the Warranties and how no punitive actions are taken – for instance, in stolen group funds. It was also mentioned that Warranties cannot be changed, but the Concepts can be altered. In all things in A.A., the groups are the ultimate authority.

“Singleness of Purpose” (Moderator: Calvin L./ Reporter: Ellen) The workshop members shared on two questions.

1. “How do you sponsor someone who identifies as an “alcoholic and an addict” when you (as sponsor) have no experience with drugs?”

Twelve people came to the microphone and talked about being helped and helping others “identify,” and about how and when to address other issues (in the Step process, one-on-one, etc.) Also shared were issues with not being able to identify with other issues; being kind and loving when addressing this; seeing this issue in meetings; hearing “a drug is a drug is a drug” and alternative perspectives. Members stressed the importance of being kind and honest so people can find the help they need. We have a solution for alcoholism. Another member cautioned against thinking A.A. can help everyone, and not misleading people. The example of the Washingtonians was shared. In short, opinions varied as to how to address this issue and how *not* to. It was an issue many were familiar with.

2. “Why is there all this insistence on singleness of purpose?”

Fourteen to fifteen people approached the mike to share their experience with this question. One member said, “Bill didn’t show up at the gatehouse and ask Bob if he had other afflictions.” Comments were consistent with the idea that A.A. does one thing well. Traditions were frequently cited and different facets of this topic were discussed: Meetings, meeting topics, groups, and districts. The importance of A.A. literature was mentioned, specifically “A.A. Group”; “Problems Other Than Alcohol”; the “Responsibility Statement” and others. There was much discussion about the importance of talking about alcoholism and letting people know if they were not doing so. Again, the Washingtonians were mentioned. Also shared was how to find and pass on information about other Twelve Step programs.

“More on the History of A.A.” (Moderator: Nancy M. / Reporter: Gail Z.) The workshop attendees discussed what special things groups could do for a 75th group anniversary. Some ideas were: Have a history presentation; include other groups in the district; make it a weekend event; include food and a speaker meeting; present a reading from Conference-approved literature like “Dr. Bob and the Good Old Timers” beforehand; have speakers share about A.A.s history of the area; show the movie “Journeys”; and include a little personal history with the area history.

Workshop members also discussed questions, such as “How did A.A. move across the country?” And “How did A.A. move across our region?” Members shared information and experience:

- If members phone ahead, Brown University has much information that can be accessed.
- Archives are becoming more important because A.A. is in its second and third generation—the first generation of A.A.s are gone.
- Archives need to be brought out and **shared** to get others interested in history.
- Original histories written are being updated (e.g. northern IL)

Members shared interesting facts that could be included in archive history, such as:

- Father Martin in Minnesota came through Wisconsin
- In Toledo, Ohio, eight men and one woman started a meeting, previously in Akron in 1940. A meeting on a hospital ward started in 1942. Interesting fact: They paid the rent with money made on poker games.

“Grapevine: The Grapevine Rep and More—Bringing our Message of Hope to Alcoholics” (Moderator: Ami B., A.A. Grapevine, Inc., Executive Editor/Publisher/ Reporter: David R.) The workshop attendees discussed participation in the A.A. Grapevine Magazine, such as how to use the magazine and how to encourage others to use it. Many topics and ideas were discussed, including:

- How to generate interest in the A.A. Grapevine Magazine
- Grapevine subscription raffles at home group
- Reprint GV articles to leave at meetings
- Bring a Grapevine flyer to your group
- Visit Grapevine webpage to get materials and a catalog
- Go to a statewide GV meeting
- Show excitement for the Grapevine
- Put on or go to a Grapevine Workshop
- Begin a Grapevine issue exchange
- Fill out the subscription form in the newcomer packs
- Dress up in a grape costume
- Display Grapevine literature/materials beside the magazine

The executive editor also discussed the story selection process. In addition, the components of an edition were shared (i.e. Special Sections, columns, issue content), as well as information about digital subscriptions, buying back issues of the Grapevine, and the GV audio story project.

“The 7th Tradition” (Moderator: Garwood/Reporter: Tim M.) Workshop attendees were asked to discuss, A.A.’s Seventh Tradition. Members were asked for sharing about whether “free rent” violates A.A.’s Tradition of self-support. The sense of the meeting was that groups accepting free rent were violating the self-supporting spirit or Tradition 7. However, A.A. does not have any vehicle to enforce it, as this area remains in the group’s conscience. In addition, what determines a “prudent reserve” was discussed. The sense of the meeting was that two month’s reserve of anticipated expenses was prudent. However, each group sets this. An agreement was reached that having too much money in reserve can create problems. Finally, the workshop discussed what kinds of actions should the group take to hold their group treasurers accountable for funds. The sense of the meeting was that some form of member accountability should be in place. Some had suggestions of money going into bank accounts, frequent treasurer reports at meetings, some controls over check signing, and when to spot potential issues with treasurer actions.

“Using the General Service Conference Final Report” (Moderator: Kim R. / Reporter: Derek T.) The workshop moderator gave a general overview of the General Service Conference Final Report as a tool. How do we use the Conference Final Report at the group, district, and area levels? Some ideas shared were:

- The Conference Final Report is most useful in conjunction with a preconference delegate’s workshop or forum.
- There is a lot of information in the report; use of a “hot topic” may generate discussion.
- Use it as a reference guide; use it to create a workshop.
- Using part of the report of as sharing topics at a meeting.
- Extract highlights and key ideas for presentations.

Members also discussed: How do we make financial reports understandable?

- The financial reports can be confusing to many. Some suggestions made by workshop members were to use slides of financial charts, graphs, etc. using layman’s terms, as well as using a highlighter to breakup reports.
- Find out what is the pertinent information that needs to be communicated. (i.e. asking the right question going into the presentation)
- If possible, use an A.A. member who is also a professional (i.e. a CPA) to help interpret the reports.
- Regular communication with others who are knowledgeable and have experience using the report will help expand our understanding.

“Contributions to G.S.O. — Why Should Groups Give?” (Moderator: Kristi H. / Reporter: Tommy B.) Before addressing the topic, group members cited examples and reasons why groups did not contribute to G.S.O. It was mentioned that a lot of groups can’t afford to give, as their Seventh Tradition collection barely covers meeting expenses. Also was mentioned was that some groups don’t have a G.S.R., so they don’t know why they should give — they are not connected to the service structure. Some workshop members shared that we need more good examples, and there are too many instances of ineffective or inadequate sponsorship. Others pointed out that some groups aren’t registered, and more people need to be informed why contributions are necessary to the health and work of A.A. Some groups lack structure, guidance, and information about how important their contributions are. While these conditions exist, contributions are most likely not forthcoming. Some workshop members cited the thoughts that some groups had, regarding contributing to the General Service Office: “GSO doesn’t need it. We take care of our own, let GSO take care of themselves.” Unfortunately, some people have resentments against GSO — they don’t agree with something GSO is or is not doing.

However, there is much that can be done to rectify this situation:

- Make sure literature is available to the newcomer.
- Read the long form of the 7th Tradition.
- When a group contributes, individuals learn responsibility.
- Read Dr. Bob’s four reasons to do Twelfth Step work and apply them to the 7th Tradition.
- Show gratitude by giving and in giving we receive.
- Give to express gratitude for the “we” and to give to those in need.

We give because we are responsible to guarantee “our” message is carried to those in need of hearing it. Finally, there is not a “them” and an “us” — it is “we.” **We** give to be a part of and **we** are responsible to make sure the money goes where it needs to go.

“How to Foster Service at the Group Level” (Moderator: Kris C. / Reporter: Randy K.) The workshop moderator shared a brief reading from the “A.A. Group” pamphlet and offered two reasons why many A.A.s don’t participate in service:

1. I don’t know how to.
2. I don’t need to.

Two topics came up for discussion within the workshop:

1. **How do we get group volunteers?** Many suggestions were offered by workshop members, including, but not limited to: acting enthusiastically about service, taking a group inventory, and using and offering effective sponsorship. The overall sense of the meeting was that enthusiasm and sponsorship were the main factors in getting more members involved in service.
2. **Service sponsorship.** The group members discussed having or being a service sponsor. Some talking points were: Service sponsors help with the use and application of the Traditions; they can help navigate through the tricky parts of service; and service sponsors help create an understanding of the benefits and responsibilities of service.

“How to Make Twelfth Step Calls” (Moderator: Barb W. / Reporter: Nancy H.) Workshop members listened to the Responsibility Statement at the start of this workshop: “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.”

Members shared some common experiences about making Twelfth Step calls, such as not going on a Twelfth Step call alone, trying to let men call on men and women call on women. Members also shared that it was important to maintain a good mindset and attitude: the reason we do Twelfth Step calls is so that we can stay sober. It is always useful to remember that we offer our experience, but we are not a taxi service. We also need to pay attention to personal safety issues — let someone know where you are going before you go on a Twelfth Step call. In addition, we ask the prospect if he or she wants to stay sober. We use the Big Book in our communications with the prospect, and ask the questions within the Doctor’s Opinion and we reread Chapter Seven. Workshop members shared that we can only guide new people — we cannot make someone willing. Other members shared that it is helpful to pray before going on a Twelfth Step call — to ask a Higher Power for help on what to share with the new person. Of course, members shared, it is always helpful and valuable to hold a workshop on how to do a Twelfth Step call.

PRESENTATIONS

Generating Interest in General Service—Cathi C., Panel 64, Area 23 Southern Indiana

“Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous activity.” (*A.A. Service Manual*, p. 34)

These words are as true today as they were when Bill W. wrote them more than fifty years ago.

Within our Fellowship there are countless numbers of A.A.s who possess the dedication, vision, and special skills that is required of G.S.R.s, D.C.M.s, and area officers. How do we find these people? And once we do find them, how do we go about sparking within them the willingness to become trusted servants? How do we generate interest in general service? As evidenced by Bill’s remarks, this is by no means a new issue.

More often than not we try to interest our fellows in general service through G.S.R. schools, workshops, seminars, and sharing sessions. How do we encourage tomorrow’s trusted servants to come to these functions, and how do we then inspire them to get involved in service?

Three interconnected concepts—communication, invitation, and motivation—stand out as key elements of this challenging and never-ending process.

In today’s fast-paced, short-attention-span environment, communicating effectively with potential service workers depends on both the content of our message and the means by which we share it. Our message carries best when communication is simple, direct, and frequent.

Fliers, mailers, and emails that describe workshops and seminars in terms newcomers can understand, explaining what they can expect to learn, are helpful.

When presenters speak enthusiastically about the work that A.A.’s trusted servants do, their messages have special significance. Sharing about service work requires the use of both the language from A.A.’s service material and the language of the heart.

Realizing that lecturing isn’t necessarily communicating and that “you don’t know what you don’t know,” informal sessions where could-be trusted servants ask questions and steer conversation toward what they want to know (rather than what we think they need to know) can be very effective and rewarding.

Today there are more modes of communication—mail, email, websites, text messages, and phone calls, to name just a few—than ever before. By using as many as of these message-carriers as we have access to, we honor A.A.’s heritage of inclusion and reach out to all who may be interested, rather than just those who happen to use the same technology we do.

Ultimately, though, the most carefully designed communication plan may result in failure if it does not include this crucial element: the simple act of one alcoholic asking another, “Can you please help?”

Those among us who have received email from the General Service Office that begins with the phrase “Dearest _____, Please accept this loving invitation . . .” will attest to the power of this simple yet compelling call to action. It is a direct, personal request for help. In professional terms it is a very effective “ask.”

Whether we are attempting to encourage our fellow A.A.s to attend a G.S.R. school, area open house, or standing committee orientation, a personal invitation such as this is arguably more compelling than any flyer, mass email, or bulk mailing could ever be.

In such a conversation our passion for general service can shine through. When we show how much we enjoy service work, we motivate our fellows to get involved. When we ask them to not only join us at a function but to help plan and participate in it, we may offer even more motivation.

Our *Service Manual* says, “Some stimulators are usually needed to get the attention of AA members—to show them that service can add a rich dimension to their sober lives and Twelfth Step work, and that their participation is vital to the future of AA.” (*AA Service Manual*, p. S-23) Note that showing our fellows what service can do for them is mentioned first; what they can do for A.A. comes second.

General service is not for everyone; the search for A.A.’s leaders of tomorrow is never ending. Mindful of this, we do the very best we can. We communicate with our fellows and invite them to learn about service work. In many instances they become motivated to join us. Most importantly, as trusted servants who do not govern; we leave the results of our efforts to our ultimate authority. After all, in A.A.’s first eighty years that authority has never let us down.

Concept Three—The Right of Decision—Tommy B., Delegate Panel 65, Area 19, Chicago

I confess, I have trouble sitting through lectures, regardless of the topic being presented, and without regard to who’s presenting it. Like many alcoholics, I just don’t care for being “talked down to”—or lectured to, for that matter. However, I *do* love a good story. And on this preference, much of A.A.’s success has come to pass. So what story can I tell to explain Concept Three, the “Right of Decision”?

At first, I tried to understand the Concepts by reading them, which didn’t work . . . at all. Yes, I “learned” about them (meaning that I could repeat what they said), and about how they were explained in the *A.A. Service Manual*. However, the understanding that I sought was still missing. In other words, I didn’t have a story that would let me explain to you (and to those who elected me) what, exactly, it was that I had learned. It makes no difference whether I’m discussing the Concepts, the Steps, or the Traditions—without action there is no experience, just as without experience there is no understanding. Understanding, at least for me, never arrives before I start taking action. Let me give you an example.

When I attended my first General Service Conference, I arrived with an understanding of how Area 19 felt about most of the agenda items. I gained that understanding as a byproduct of the Delegate’s Preconference Forum in Area 19, and the discussion of agenda items. I had notes on my laptop to which I could refer as those items came up at the Conference, and this proved

useful—but not always as originally intended. After I returned from the Conference, I was asked by one of the more-involved attendees at the Preconference Forum, “So what happened with the Twelve and Twelve and Twelve?” Area 19 was very much in favor of having the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts brought together into a single volume. But I had to tell this member not only that the motion for the combined volume did not pass, but that I had voted against it as well. “Why would you do that? I remember that we wanted that single volume. We voted yes, you were supposed to vote yes. What happened?” was the understandable response to my exercise of the Right of Decision.

I had to explain that when the agenda item came up, I had planned to vote yes—not just because it was the sentiment expressed at the forum but also because I agreed with that sentiment. But then the discussion started at the Conference. Initially, the delegates going up to the microphone expressed the same thoughts and opinions that Area 19 had expressed. And I still fully intended to vote yes, and I believed that we had thoroughly discussed this item.

Then came the first voice to speak against “us.” I remember thinking just that—that he is against “us.” I listened to what he was saying; I had no choice—how else could I find the flaw in his thinking? But as he proceeded, I found myself agreeing with his points and his reasoning. I’m condensing his objections here, but essentially, his argument was based on an analogy with the three legacies: 1.) The Twelve Steps stand alone as the foundation of our first Legacy—Recovery; 2.) The Twelve Traditions stand alone as the foundation of our second Legacy—Unity; but 3.) and this is a big “but,” the Twelve Concepts do not stand *alone* as the foundation of our third Legacy of Service. While the Concepts *are* vital to Service, many A.A. members perform Twelfth Step service work without reference to, or (more often than many of “us” would like to admit) even knowledge of, their very existence. By the time I grasped this argument, the estimated cost of \$150,000 for printing and manufacturing served only to confirm what had become obvious to me and many others. As a result, I felt I had no other option but to change my vote. With this experience, the idea that as delegate I represent the whole of Alcoholics Anonymous, and not just Area 19, came into much sharper focus.

Trust is earned. Area 19 believed they could trust me to vote the way they wanted me to vote, based on the information and discussion we had at our Preconference Forum. However, when I told them I had changed my vote I could sense their disappointment, if not their outright disapproval. But when I explained the new information I had received, and the more thoroughly informed discussion that took place at the Conference, they supported my actions, and, by inference, my judgment. I earned their trust, and as a consequence, I felt like more of a trusted servant than merely a servant.

As delegate I am not the only one that has the Right of Decision. The Third Concept tells me that, “insuring their effective leadership, it is here suggested that we endow each of these elements of world service with a traditional ‘Right of Decision.’ ” “Insuring their effective leadership” reminds me that I have to remember how easy it is to “trust” when I get what I want. When a committee of which I am not a part makes a decision with which I do not agree, am I able to “trust” that, based on all the information available to them, they made the best decision for Alcoholics Anonymous? Am I able to accept that I am but a small piece of a great experience, which is spiritual in nature?

I can think of no better conclusion to this presentation than to end with the words of Bill Wilson as written in our *Service Manual*: “Our entire AA Program rests squarely upon the principle of mutual trust. We trust God, we trust AA, and we trust each other. Therefore, we cannot do less, than trust our leaders in service. The Right of Decision we offer them is not only the practical means by which they may act and lead effectively, but it is also the symbol of our implicit confidence.”

G.S.R.s—Importance and Effectiveness—Paula E., Delegate Panel 65, Area 21 Southern Indiana

I would be curious, if we were to take a head count today, how many of those in this room would indicate that they were a new G.S.R. and/or that this was their first forum. The relevance to that question is, of course, useful in determining how many of us in this room are well versed in the term “service”—what it truly means in the context of this body, and all the implications that go with the very simple word.

Choosing this topic for a presentation was not a difficult decision. I believe there is no question as to the importance or the effectiveness of our G.S.R.s. The prevailing thought should be around how we can best reinforce this sentiment to the G.S.R.s themselves. There are not many D.C.M.s, delegates, or trustees, perhaps that were not at one time a G.S.R. In reflection, my thoughts went back to my term as G.S.R., the process by which I was chosen, and my knowledge of the position.

Our *Service Manual*, also fondly referred to by some as the “*Secret*” *Service Manual*, indicates that the General Service Representative has the job of linking his or her group with A.A. as a whole. Seriously, this sounds like a huge undertaking! Further, the *Manual* indicates the G.S.R. represents the voice of the group conscience, reporting the group’s thoughts to the district committee member (D.C.M.) and to the area delegate, who then passes them on to the Conference. It also states that the G.S.R. is responsible for bringing back to the group Conference actions that affect A.A. unity, health, and growth, and that only when a G.S.R. keeps the group informed and communicates the group conscience can the Conference truly act for A.A. as a whole.

The *Manual* states that experience shows that the most effective G.S.R.s have been active in group, intergroup, or other services, where they developed a desire to serve and encountered situations in which the Twelve Traditions have been called upon to solve problems. Duties, of which are many, are listed in the *Manual* as well. Hearing this, does this not sound like a huge and daunting task? How many of us in this room were even remotely aware of what the job of G.S.R. actually entailed?

Now, I challenge you with this question: Given the implied responsibilities, expectations, and duties of the G.S.R., does it not make sense that this position, possibly more than any other in the service structure, would benefit from education, coaching, mentoring, and ultimately the experience, strength, and hope of those that have held this position before? Unfortunately, in travels and discussions with G.S.R.s in at least my area, that is not the case. Rather, we laugh that, sometimes, people are appointed G.S.R. when they went to the bathroom or were put on the spot to take this position. The newly seated G.S.R. is then expected to wing it a lot of times, or figure it out on his or her own. Many of these people have never seen the *A.A. Service Manual*,

much less know all the valuable information it contains. Some have copies that are several years old, which is better than nothing.

In respect to the experience, strength, and hope of previous G.S.R.s in the instruction and nurturing of the new G.S.R.s, unfortunately, what I am finding is that experience is scant. The oldtimers just can't be found in numbers. And what I am finding is these G.S.R.s are HUNGRY! They are hungry for the knowledge of how to do the best job they can; hungry for the experience that can be given to them to help guide them in the challenges of being the voice of their group in these trying times, while trying to deal with outside issues, sometimes dwindling attendance, and trying to live up to the expectations of what's expected of them. They are hungry for resources, literature, books, tips, suggestions, and most of all, support. They need to know they are not alone, and that they are appreciated.

You see, the reality of it is, do we want people that barely know what the positions are, just to have them filled? Or do we want to have the best-qualified, best-informed members to be our groups' voices? These G.S.R.s that we have elected, goaded, pressured to take these roles *are* the future of our service structure. These are the same people who will either quit or drop out on their own, be asked to resign, or hopefully *want* to go on, *want* to continue their journey up the ranks, and ultimately become the voice of our General Service Conference.

What can we do as experienced service members of Alcoholics Anonymous? Let's think back to what worked for us, and what was less effective. Be that mentor that members want to turn to for help. Do I *get* to go to a forum, conference, or assembly, or do I *have* to go? Do I offer to be available, or have I decided that someone else will do it?

What I can tell you is that I am fortunate to have met so many G.S.R.s that are on fire. I can readily think of a couple that begged to be informed of when the *Conference Report* came out because they could *not* wait to read it from cover to cover! They wanted a copy of every piece of material I handed out. They are busy, have a service sponsor, and can't get enough. They are educated G.S.R.s, and as a result their groups are educated, informed, solid, and driven by our Traditions. They are sponsored and they are sponsoring people. But these people didn't come into the Fellowship feeling that excitement. It was a learned response to their service environment, how they were "raised up" in this Fellowship.

In summary, the G.S.R., as it has been implied, is the most important role of the individual group, if not the service structure as a whole. They are on the front line, keeping each individual member of their group informed, educated, and motivated. The G.S.R. relates the feelings, questions, and hopes and problems of their groups. They are the ones that their groups turn to, and they are the ones that we as delegates turn to. They are typically the least recognized and the most important of all the service positions. Are we doing all we can as a fellowship to attract them? If there is doubt about the importance and effectiveness of our G.S.R.s, look around. How many of us were G.S.R.s and where are we now?

In gratitude and respect,

Paula

Spirituality—How and Why—Betty M., Delegate Panel 65, Area 33 Southeast Michigan

Just before I came into the Fellowship, I became a disgusting, crying drunk. I'd call different family members to share that misery. Since they didn't have caller ID then, some unfortunate family member had to pretend to listen to me tell the same stories about my abusive childhood, awful marriages, and so on. One night a sister told me to talk to God the way I was talking to her. I was drunk, but I do remember asking Him, "Why was I born in the first place?" What I didn't know was that I was really asking God, "What is your will for me?" A few days later, my sister said that I called to tell her I decided to change my life. I must have been in a blackout; that was thirty years ago and I still don't remember having said that. I went to a treatment center after that phone call.

Walking into my first A.A. meeting, I saw something pleasant on the faces of the members, and I wanted what they had. Combined with all that happened up to that point, I felt capable of labeling what I felt. It was my first spiritual experience. I really don't know if I would have gone back out without that spiritual experience, but I do know that I stayed because of it. I started praying, on a semi-regular basis, at this point.

It was during my second year when a man in the program gave me a meditation tape. I learned to relax and clear my mind. I would read the thought for that day and meditate on it. I was waiting for God to reveal some hidden message in the reading. I didn't realize I was internalizing the message and growing in character. At my sponsor's house one day, while waiting for her to return, I picked up a pamphlet from her table. The title read, "Why do you keep meditating on things your eyes can see? There are ghosts in your house."

I became uncomfortable while reading the pamphlet's article, and decided to not read a passage before I meditated that day. Sometime later, I started to experience "flashbacks." With help from our outside friends, prayer and daily meditation, and fellowshipping with my A.A. family, slowly a terrible event was revealed that many of my character defects were related to. I believe then, as I believe now, that the God of my understanding removed my last excuse for drinking. After six years, that event became important, because it could be used to help someone else. At this point, I knew that God wanted me to be sober and that He was returning me to sanity. Forming a relationship with the God of my understanding became paramount in my life. That power that I had chased away with alcohol was restored.

For the first ten years of my sobriety, I attended a weekly progressive Step meeting. I prayed and mediated a lot. In retrospect, I was open and willing to apply the Twelve Steps in my life. I realized that God worked through people. I listened to others. I heard people say things I needed to hear. After about eleven years of sobriety, I asked my sponsor why a member hadn't asked me to sponsor them. She said it was because I was too honest. So, I realized that I was rigorously honest. I loved going to meetings. I knew I was growing spiritually. It had to be coming from all of the things I was doing.

There were just a few small problems, however. Just because I walked through the doors of Alcoholics Anonymous didn't mean my episodes of depression and feelings of persecution magically disappeared. The "committee" in my head didn't permanently adjourn. Emotionally, I was very damaged. I found refuge and comfort in my relationship with God and by talking to my sponsor. I believe that's why I stayed sober.

As the years progressed, I realized much of my spiritual growth came from everyday life experiences. These demanded rigorous honesty, openness, and willingness. The word *rigorous* means meticulous or painstaking. I have to say more than, "I told a lie." I have to tell every detail connected to the lie, including my motives. I have to remain open to the possibility that what I thought to be truth was not the truth. I must be willing to act on this new truth, and to sincerely thank the person who helped me to grow, regardless of how that person revealed that truth.

Spiritual growth is also obtained through adversity. I gained a great deal during a time in sobriety when I wanted to give up. I didn't want to drink; I wanted to give up on life. I heard someone say to me, "God's love is all sufficient." I didn't get overjoyed, but I didn't want to give up. It was a period of time that lasted for more than five years. Throughout that time, God sent profound blessings. My heart and eyes had to remain open to those blessings. At this stage of my spirituality, I communed with God. I was sick and couldn't go to meetings for two years; but somehow, I stayed in fit spiritual condition, thanks to His undeserved kindness. That's how I stayed sober. If not for the Fellowship, I would not have met the God of my own understanding, and I would have not grown spiritually to where I needed to be, to get through that awful period of time.

In the last eight years, I have served A.A. at the area level in some capacity. God pushed me out there. Although I really needed it, I was reluctant at first. Now that we understood each other, I knew He was sending me a lifeboat, and it was to my benefit to get in. Every time I get distracted, God reminds me that I asked, "What is your will for me?" So I knew I was going on another adventure.

I trust my God today. Even with my personality flaws, I'm free from the bondage of self. I don't fear people anymore. I know a power greater than myself did for me what I could not do for myself. I live in a spiritual realm.

Throughout this presentation, I have told you about how I grew spiritually. As I was preparing this, I kept asking myself, *did I really put that much effort into it?* God may have done something tricky we don't know about. Anyway, if you don't put anything in, you won't get anything out. This I know to be true. I also included details about *why* we should grow spiritually. Many of you knew these reasons already.

Fancy words and trying to impart profound wisdom isn't necessary. It is our presence that inspires people. It's what many new people see upon entering their first A.A. meeting. They look at our faces, and they want what we have.

Accountability: Holding Your Head Up in the Face of Controversy—Cheryl V., Northern Illinois Area 20, Panel 64

My first sponsor tried to teach me the idea of acting with grace and dignity. At the time I didn't know that she was giving me an actionable idea of how to "strive for spiritual progress." I thought she was just trying to make me act like a better woman now that I had found recovery. I didn't know that I would spend the rest of my recovery learning how to do this, often from the times I didn't. Nor did I know that this was something that I would need to carry into service work through the years.

Like many people, I thought that everyone came to recovery and started to work on getting better. They learned about the principles and eventually started practicing them in all their affairs. Since it was suggested that to be a G.S.R. you needed two years of sobriety in A.A., I figured that it was so you had taken the time to work the first eleven Steps, and were now working Step Twelve. I also thought that all sponsors helped the people they sponsor learn about the Twelve Traditions and how they related to the groups and service.

Over the years, I've learned that this isn't always the case. I've also learned that even when it is the case, we're all human and sometimes we stray from the principles. My first lesson came in my first service position, the one that still teaches me humility when I get the chance to do it. I didn't know it then, but as coffee-maker I got to learn about Concept Three and the "Right of Decision." When you make coffee for a group you just can't get it right for everyone. It's either too strong or not strong enough, or you bought the wrong kind of coffee, sweetener, or creamer, or you didn't make enough or made too much. But hey, no one tells you up front that people are going to complain. Fortunately there's always some oldtimer around the pot looking out for the new kid. They are the ones that tell you that it's okay, you can't mess up too much as long as there's coffee when the meeting starts. And they tell you to stand up to the ones who criticize and tell them they can do it next week . . . or for the entire year if they keep it up! By making coffee you learn your first lesson on how to face controversy in A.A.

As I stayed sober and moved toward becoming a "seasoned" member, I got a sponsor who told me that I was to start sticking my head up about the Traditions. Since I had been active in general service I was to become that person who supported the G.S.R. and made sure that they got to give their report at meetings. When members tried to intimidate the new G.S.R. to not give a report, I was to talk to them after the meeting, one on one, about why the report was important. It would be up to me to help smooth the way for the new G.S.R. to grow into the person they could be when they lead the discussion before voting on a topic. I was to start talking about the Traditions whenever business was discussed—not as an opinion, but as a point of consideration for whatever the topic at hand was.

Standing up for the principles isn't always the popular thing to do. At one point I was attending a group that wanted to elect a newer member as chairperson who only "identified" himself as an addict. In fact, before the meeting the person had been telling someone that they could drink because their real problem was drugs. I raised this as an issue for why the person should not be elected to chair the meeting. While the group conscience did not agree with me, I had at least taken the time to remind people about Traditions Three and Five. I wasn't well liked by all at the meeting after that, but I felt it was important to say what I felt were the principles of the issue.

I have found that it doesn't matter how long you've been sober, or at what level you serve—if you try and talk about the ideas you have, people will have something to say about it. Sometimes it will be from “newer” people, people who perhaps aren't as experienced in discussing controversial topics. Or they haven't had the chance yet to learn the Traditions or the Concepts. But it can also be from people who you may think “should know better” than to talk like that. When expressing our thoughts on topics, people sometimes feel it threatens their perceptions. Sometimes they believe in things so intrinsically that they can't see where another might think or feel differently. I've had a delegate at the General Service Conference tell me that I'm going to get drunk if I don't learn to like saying the Lord's Prayer in meetings. I think it's because they have a Christian belief that supports using the Lord's Prayer in closing. Yet I have known many people who are uncomfortable regarding this issue. Some struggle with it for years, some think they must comply to stay sober, and some serve as sober examples and gentle reminders that this is not a Christian movement, but rather a spiritual one.

I've also found that confrontation can come at you in different forms. Sometimes it will be in private, which means it can be, hopefully, an open conversation that brings about a deeper understanding by both parties. But sometimes it will be in a more public manner, like at the microphone at an area assembly. People that have been active in service for years can say really stupid things when passionate about a topic. We've all seen it and probably have done it at least once. But when the focus is on you and you're on the receiving end of someone's less-than-principled actions, it isn't always easy to act with grace and dignity. As people in general, our first thoughts often come from an instinct to defend ourselves. We sometimes find that we want to stoop to their level and show either how bad they are, or how superior we are. Neither of those options are in the best interest of A.A. They are not what will bring about a group conscience that seeks to allow God's will into the controversy.

Personal growth comes in many forms in recovery. Many tend to think that general service is about fighting over various topics. I thought those same things at first. Then I discovered two things: First and foremost, that the people who are involved in general service are passionate about A.A. They want the absolute best for the program and its future. The other thing I learned is that by being involved in general service I was going to grow on levels that I could not dream of. I was not only going to learn how to stand in front of a room full of people and do a presentation like this (quite an accomplishment in itself), but I was going to learn to stand up and be counted. I was going to learn how to handle controversy and confrontation—not always perfectly, but I would handle it. And sometimes I have been given the gift to do it with grace and dignity.

PAST TRUSTEES' SHARING

Dorothy M., past regional trustee, 2001-2005

I arrived at A.A. in 1974. During the 1980s, I heard about a regional forum, and I asked, "What is that about?" So I went. And I stayed. I was elected trustee and went to my first meeting in New York in July of 2001. But then something happened in September of 2001, in New York City. Fear hit me because I had to go back in October of 2001. I knew I would attend it, but I didn't know how I was to get there. Would I drive? Take a bus? I was afraid to fly. But then it hit me. All these years, my Higher Power had taken care of me. "What am I afraid of?" I thought. "I am going for service. I am going to help carry the message, and I am going to help represent the East Central region." That fear left me and I flew out in October and continued to do what I was needed to do.

One of our meetings in New York coincided with the World Service Meeting. There, I met a lady from South Africa, a country I always wanted to visit. The following year I was in South Africa, and the world service delegate that I'd met in New York was picking us up at the airport. I had no idea that by being active in service, helping to carry the message, and doing what my area and region asked me to do would allow me to fulfill many of my dreams. To the newcomer: Keep coming back — you don't know where your Higher Power will take you in service. I have grown up in A.A. My life today is much simpler, I am retired, but my days are very filled — I make 3-6 meetings a week and I am still very active. Thank you.

George M., past general service trustee, 2009-2013

There are two different kinds of service in A.A. There is group service and general service. They are both important but have distinct spheres in which they operate. To me, the most important service position in A.A. is greeter at the meeting. That is the first person that a newcomer meets. If he or she is made to feel welcome, that's getting them off to a good start. Group service, in my mind, also includes work with intergroup.

When I was about three months sober, one of the old guys came up to me and said, "Congratulations, we've elected you to be the chair of the meeting." I thought, Wow! All right! He said, "Let me show you your responsibilities," and he took me over to the broom closet and opened it up. He said, "Your job is to set up the tables and open the meeting." In those days — my sobriety date is April 1, 1974 — chairing a meeting involved setting up tables and chairs, and then putting them away, along with washing the coffee cups.

The service that we do — the 12th Step — has a premise: "Having had a spiritual awakening. . ." My mother used to tell a story. When I was five, during Christmas, she came into the room and saw that I had made a row of all my presents and rows for my sisters' presents. I lined them all up next to each other. I had the longest row. She said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Look, I got the most presents. I win!" She said, "Georgie, the winner is not the one who *gets* the most presents, the winner is the one who *gives* the most presents." Well, that was kind of a bummer. I was five years old — I hadn't gotten anyone anything. But she was a woman who dedicated her life to helping people less fortunate than herself. She was a sort of like Mother Teresa, except she could swear like a sailor. At the time, I had no idea what she had meant by giving is better than getting.

But we, in A.A., have this premise: “Having had a spiritual awakening” Today, when I come to A.A., it’s about the giving. In the beginning, it’s about the getting: Like when a newcomer asks, “Can you help me get sober?” But there comes a point, as we go through our sober life, that we begin to define our A.A. selves by not what we have gotten, but what can we give. When we cross that line, and A.A. becomes about giving, I think that’s the spiritual awakening of the Twelfth Step.

In the beginning, I knew nothing about general service. My group didn’t talk about it. But, through working with our intergroup, I learned about it indirectly. Our delegate came in with a copy of Box 4-5-9 and inside they had listed an opening for a nontrustee director. I had no idea what that was, but the thing that caught me was that it had a fairly low sobriety requirement, maybe 6 years. What that told me was that they weren’t looking for a long period of service in A.A. So, I sent in my resume, and that was my start. I got the A.A. Service Manual and read it before I went to New York. I believe that A.A. is about many people making small contributions, and that is what makes it work.

Bob M., past regional trustee, 2005-2009

When I was introduced to A.A., it was, at first, a rough journey. There was really not much Big Book, not a lot of talk about the Steps, and no service to speak of. I just went to meetings. I kept coming back, and I listened to folks. They kept saying, “Come back, it’s going to get better.” So I came back and I kept coming back, but my life wasn’t getting any better. There was a statement in the Big Book. It said that if I found that this wasn’t working, to go out and try it again. So I did. It only took me about three or four months to figure out that it wasn’t going to work that way. I came back to A.A., and that is when I started to look for and seek a solution. Along the way, I got into service. I was asked to be an alternate D.C.M. I had never even been a G.S.R. Our district had been dark, but it was getting organized, and someone said, “You’d be good at it being an alternate D.C.M.” I waited four months for a district meeting, but there was no phone call and no meeting. When the phone call came, the D.C.M. said he’d moved, and now I was D.C.M.

I got into service because I was told, “Do what is asked of you. Pay back.” I had many things to pay back to you folks. I wish I would have known where it was going—I would have paid closer attention to the jobs before mine. I would have taken notes. What I learned through being a trustee is this: In my life, there is not A.A. service work, there is not recovery work, and there is not spiritual work. It’s all one. As a trustee, I learned to mold it all together. A.A. *does* work, if you become willing to serve A.A., pay back what is given you, find a Higher Power, and work this program as it is outlined in the Big Book. I hear a lot of people talk about how service and recovery are two different things. They’re not.

I’d like to share a story about how service does carry the message to the suffering alcoholic. During one General Service Board weekend, it was late, and we were just getting done. Howard (another trustee) and myself were helping a staff member clean up and organize paperwork. A waiter was cleaning off the tables and he seemed really nervous around us. Finally, he whispered, “Is this Alcoholics Anonymous?” We said, “Yes.” He kept picking up glasses and clearing off the tables. He came back, a little while later, and said, “Is this really Alcoholics Anonymous?” Howard said, “Yup, it is.” And he said, “Oh. Okay.” He walked away again. I said

to Howard, "Oh, we got a live one, here! It's got to be!" Again, he approached us, and stood between us. He said, "This is Alcoholics Anonymous." We said, again, "Yes. Yes it is." He asked, "Well, what's going on in here?" We said, "This is a meeting for the General Service Board." He said, "So you help alcoholics, that's what you do?" We said, "Well, we are part of the structure that helps alcoholics." He said, "I just want to thank you." We thought, "What? Thank us?"

The man continued, "Five years ago, I was caught by my boss for drinking. I used to buy a fifth of whiskey and crawl in where the curtains fold up in here, and I'd drink and listen to your General Service Conference and to your General Service Board meetings and say, "Aw! They don't know what they are talking about." I'd have another and pass out. This went on for quite a few years. And then I got caught. Right away, I thought, 'I've got to go to Alcoholics Anonymous because they will help me.'"

"Today," he said, "I've been sober for five years and I am the G.S.R. for my home group. Someday, I would like to come in here, share, and pay back what you all gave to me."

Howard and I were speechless. This man heard the message of A.A. in our General Service Board meeting, and he stayed sober and got sober as a result of a business meeting. So, that's a result for someone who says, "Aw, it's just a business meeting. We don't need to go to them." You never know who is watching the Big Book that you are living in that particular moment.

Don W., past regional trustee, 1993-1997

I was a Panel 34 delegate from Area 34. Back then, the service meetings were held on 45th Street and Madison Ave. I had the pleasure of being in that hotel, where A.A. has so much history. My first weekend as delegate, I stood in that hotel, looking around, and I was remembering what I'd learned in the history books of A.A. A gentleman from Chicago walked in. He said, "You're in the right place, Don. Get to work!"

I came out of a mental institution in 1964 after doing four years. They were my childhood and teen years, so I had stuff to make up — and I made them up during the years I spent in my alcoholic world. I didn't drink every day, but when I did drink, I got drunk, I did things, and then I passed out.

I first came to Alcoholics Anonymous because I decided I wanted to do something about my drinking. I spent three days in the County Jail. There, some guy walked through, handed me a pamphlet, and asked if I had a problem. I said, "Yeah." But I didn't mean the alcohol problem, I meant the fact that I was in jail — *that* was my problem. But he handed me a pamphlet and I knew what it was because A.A. used to come to the mental institution on Thursday nights. They never failed to show. And I never failed to show because I got free donuts, cigarettes, and coffee — and it got me off the ward.

I am a pure alcoholic — I never did drugs or anything like that simply because I was scared to death of the drugs. I saw the thorazine shuffle, day in and day out, and I thought, 'That's what will happen to me if I take drugs.' Alcohol wasn't a drug to me, so I didn't care. It was a normal thing to do.

I came in 1970 and stayed for a year. I sat around, drank coffee, went out afterwards, and didn't change anything in my life. I still was up till 2 or 3 in the morning, and I didn't change anything. The only change was the liquid — I went from alcohol to caffeine. In 1971, I decided I had the program. I went a whole year without it and so I got two jobs. Guess what? Meetings got pushed aside because I was working two jobs. I drank again. In 1971, I had my last drink.

The opportunities to serve A.A. are anywhere you happen to be. And anyone you walk up to, if they ask you what you do, tell them. It's that simple. I served as the East Central regional trustee from April of 1993 to April of 1997. It's important for me to remember that I would not have done anything in A.A. if I hadn't been willing to work the Steps, turn my life over to a God as I understand him, and turn my life over to the people sitting around the tables who knew what they were talking about. By the grace of God I am able to stand in front of you and say I am grateful I am an alcoholic and I am here. Thank you for being here.

Linda Chezem, Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, 1997-2003

In 1976 I was the youngest judge in Indiana. A newspaper interviewed me about why I became a county court judge and about being the first woman in the state to be a county court judge. I answered all their questions and told them how I enjoyed it. "However," I told that local newspaper, "I can't figure out what to do with these alcoholics. They just keep coming back." And that newspaper reported it. A week or two later, the court reporter came in and said, "Judge, there are some people here from the CPC to see you." And I thought, "CPC? What in the world is CPC?" I asked her, "Well, what is it?" She said, "I don't know, but they're in ties and jackets, so you'd better talk to them." So, I did. And what I learned was that there was an A.A. meeting a block down from the courthouse every Tuesday night and these people know what to do about those drunks. If I would just send them there, they'll take care of them for me. And that sounded like a deal! So, I would say, in the courtroom, "I think you have a problem with alcohol. There is an A.A. meeting at 7 p.m. on Tuesdays. Here is the address. I suggest you go there and talk to those people from A.A. because they know what to do about you."

Now, let's fast forward. In my court, I kept seeing people who continued to have problems with alcohol, and so I started on what has turned out to be a forty-year odyssey trying to figure out what to do about problems with alcohol among those in the courts. That path has led me to some really interesting places. In Indianapolis, I had a meeting with A.A. They showed up with this big ugly brown thing they called the A.A. Service Manual. They handed it to me and said, "Read this. It tells you what you need to know about Alcoholics Anonymous." Now, I love reading statutes and legal opinions, but the A.A. Service Manual was somewhat convoluted to me! But I have learned to love the language of A.A. and the language of the heart. It is beautiful.

I learned about A.A. and had the wonderful privilege of serving a term as your Class A trustee. I learned the "A" in Class A stands for "Amateur." It took me long past that six-year term to get here today, and I have such a gratitude to all of you for helping me be better judge. I was appointed to the Indiana Court of Appeals, and after I resigned, I began working with students who need you and the work you do.

Your CPC work is important, because that is where you are going to grow your own future Class A friends. They don't all have to be trustees to be friends of A.A. — A.A. does need friends, and

we can help. We have a way of knowing how to introduce people to A.A., and we know those who work with A.A. professionally.

I just rotated off the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Advisory Council of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). I've spent time there, either working there as a special assistant to the director or as a special committee member. One of the most important things I can do as a friend of A.A. is to help the Institute — who pays 459 million dollars a year on alcohol research in this country — to understand A.A. a little better, and to help people understand what it is A.A. has to offer, what it is that A.A. does, and what it is A.A. *does not* do. And for that, I really believe you all have helped me to be a better person and to do my job better. For that, I thank you.

“CLOSING REMARKS”

Terry Bredient, Class A (nonalcoholic) General Service Board chairperson

“What does this mean to Jeremy?” That question was asked from the microphone. Jeremy can be any A.A. member. Each of us should ask this question of ourselves. What does service have to do with carrying the message? A.A. is a gift of life. We don't need to convince a drunk that A.A. works — that he needs help. Booze takes care of that. We don't need to convince the world that A.A. works. Because about two million A.A.s, as well as their families, partners, and employers across the world have done that. All we have to do is show up for a meeting, get a good sponsor, and a Higher Power will take care of the rest.

Today, every successful Twelve Step program in the world is modeled after yours. No other fellowship, anywhere, comes close to providing your kind of support to people suffering from a common problem. We cannot be complacent about technology if we want to be relevant in the 21st century. But as we buddy up with our tablets and smartphones, we should also not be complacent about isolation. How much sober time does this forum represent? 500 years? 1000 years? All — one day at a time. A characteristic of alcoholism is a tendency to relapse, no matter how much sober time one has. And to be sober, there is no room for complacency. Each of us has an obligation to those who are not here yet to keep the meeting doors open, for those who need A.A. so desperately, no matter who they are or what their background is. We warmly welcome the newcomer, but we also have an obligation to make sure the message stays clear and strong. What does this mean to Jeremy? Those most capable of gratitude are those who have emerged from the darkness of alcoholism into the light of sobriety. With deep gratitude we celebrate eighty years of A.A. — happy, joyous, and free throughout the world. We are grateful to a power higher than ourselves and for the magic of one alcoholic talking to another. Thank you for this incredible opportunity to serve.
