

FINAL REPORT

An aerial photograph of New York City at sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the city. The Empire State Building is prominent in the foreground, and the Manhattan Bridge is visible in the middle ground. The city's dense grid of buildings and streets is clearly visible, with the Hudson River and East River in the background.

**THE THREE LEGACIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA:  
Our Great Responsibility to the  
Alcoholic Being Born Today**

**ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS  
28TH WORLD SERVICE MEETING**

October 27-31, 2024



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THE THREE LEGACIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA:

# Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today

**28<sup>th</sup> World Service Meeting**

New York, New York | October 27-31, 2024

**FINAL REPORT**

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## Anonymity-Protected Digital Edition

This edition of the 28th World Service Meeting Final Report has been formatted to protect the anonymity of A.A. members (who are represented by first name and last initial only). Our many nonalcoholic friends, trustees and employees may be noted by their full names.

*About the Artwork:* The artwork used to illustrate this report was provided by individual members and support staff of the World Service Meeting.

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## THE THREE LEGACIES IN THE DIGITAL ERA:

# Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today



**W**ith the participation of 74 delegates from 49 countries or regional service structures around the globe, the 28th World Service Meeting (WSM) of Alcoholics Anonymous took place October 27-31, 2024, in New York City at the Westin Hotel in Times Square. The theme of the biennial gathering, “The Three Legacies in the Digital Era: Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today,” guided discussion and sharing throughout the week.

Established in 1969, in accordance with the WSM Statement of Purpose, updated by the delegate body at this meeting: “The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world, whatever the

language.” And further, “The World Service Meeting seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength, and hope of delegates who come together every two years from all parts of the world.”

Rotating meetings between New York City and locations outside the U.S., as selected regularly by the WSM itself, the 28th WSM was the first in-person gathering since the meeting in South Africa in 2018, as the 26th and 27th meetings were held by videoconference due to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Focused on A.A. in the Digital Age, delegates turned frequently to the impact technology had during the pandemic as countries and structures adapted to and emerged from this period of realignment and changing implementation of A.A.



**“The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world, whatever the language.”**

services, providing glimpses into the spread of A.A. around the world and the many challenges faced.

Travel to New York itself proved challenging for some, with visa issues delaying or preventing attendance entirely. Some delegates needed to travel outside their country by bus or airplane to get visas in another country, sometimes waiting for days and in several cases not getting the visa at all and having to rely on an alternate delegate. And there was also the divergence of one delegate from his luggage at the airport, leaving him dependent on the clothes he had on until his bags finally arrived at the hotel a few days later.

Good spirits prevailed, however, and delegates widely expressed their gratitude at being together in person, drawn in unity from distant parts of the globe to share their commitment to carrying the message of recovery to alcoholics wherever they might be.

Translated simultaneously into English and Spanish (the two official languages of the WSM) as well as Japanese and, as the week progressed, Hungarian, the meeting opened with a roll call by Bob W., general manager of the U.S./Canada General Service Office who served as co-chair along with Scott H., chair of the U.S./Canada General Service Board of trustees, the hosting structure. With participants from so many places speaking multiple languages, getting names pronounced properly became a weeklong endeavor, met with characteristic good humor and grace, and the occasional gentle correction.

Honored with a moment of silence, the memory of two 28th World Service Meeting delegates who had suddenly passed away recently — Anastasia from Russia and Giovanni from Italy — was noted, a loving recognition of the esteem they both enjoyed from their fellow service workers.

A heartfelt welcome from Scott H. was offered to all delegates, interpreters and supporting staff from the U.S./Canada GSO, followed by the keynote address from Elena S., the term-year delegate from Lithuania, who noted “The theme asks to reflect not only on our Traditions and how they have carried us so far, but also on our collective responsibility to the future. For we stand at a pivotal moment, where the digital age is rapidly transforming how we live, work, and — most crucially for us — how we reach the still-suffering alcoholic.”

In a number of sessions spanning the five days, delegates heard service highlights from each country or zone with news

of current experience and activities. They also heard 18 presentations covering a range of topics concerning new technologies and their effect on A.A. unity, recovery and service, how countries can sponsor each other in service, and the need to keep reaching out to alcoholics in diverse and changing communities. One presentation, from Class A (nonalcoholic) doctor Aris Ramos from the southern zone of Central America, inspired much sharing. Noting how alcoholism can interact with other psychiatric disorders, Dr. Ramos said “Alcoholic individuals who attend Alcoholics Anonymous groups but have dual pathology or psychiatric comorbidity often share with their sponsor or a group member about their condition... From my perspective as a mental health specialist, I believe that group members can be offered help in many different ways.”

Speaking slowly to accommodate translation and hoping to stay within the 3 minutes allotted each delegate to deliver their Country Service Highlights and avoid “the bell” from the session timekeeper signaling their time was up, many different experiences and strategies for reaching alcoholics, updating literature, utilizing technology and other resources connecting groups and individuals to service centers and each other were outlined. Born of actual experience around the world, the sharing helped to create a common language of service across the span of countries and structures represented.

Taking the phrasing of the Big Book to heart that “we are not a glum lot,” one delegate from Ireland remarked about the three-minute timeframe and the bell that it reminded him of “speed dating.” And the delegate from Turkey, whose baggage was diverted at the airport, noted that while he was wearing the same shirt every day “the important thing is that I am sober.”

With a number of question-and-answer sessions or “What’s on your mind?” segments throughout the week, the availability of the Plain Language Big Book — a years-long project of the U.S./Canada structure — arose. It was noted that the book was to become available a day or so hence on November 1. One delegate, however, lightheartedly indicated that — since Australia is a day ahead of the U.S. — could they get a copy now?

Another topic of interest that came to the surface, and was ultimately voted on by the delegate body, related to the way in which some of the reports are prepared, where specific sharing or experience could be attributed directly to the country or structure presenting it. It was felt by some that direct com-

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munication and interested follow-up would be facilitated and enhanced if reports could note what country the shared experience was coming from, while it was felt by others that not having their country name published allowed them to speak freely about their structure. It was a lively discussion, likely to continue in subsequent WSMs.

While many countries with long-established A.A. service structures have been participating in the WSM for many years, attendance varies with each meeting, some attending only recently, such as Hungary. Admitted in 2012, Hungary, however, had never attended before. It was a huge challenge because of the language barrier, until toward the end of the week when a volunteer translator stepped in. Yet, even with the language challenges, the Hungarian delegates felt attending the WSM to be an historical step for A.A. Hungary and for the future of the Fellowship in their country. With attendance from countries or regions both big and small — such as Slovenia, with membership in the hundreds, to India with membership in the thousands spread across multiple languages — the diversity of sharing and the value of experiences, no matter if the structure is old or new, big or small, is at the heart of each WSM.

At the breaks between the focused business of the WSM, delegates joyfully embraced each other and rekindled special friendships formed in A.A. service. The week's schedule also afforded delegates a chance to visit the U.S./Canada GSO, as well as a trip to Stepping Stones, the historic home of Bill and Lois W. in Bedford Hills, New York. Additionally, a number of delegates took advantage of the many A.A. meetings available in New York City and attended groups nearby. Pascal of Belgium reported attending a local meeting just blocks from the hotel with a group of delegates from Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Norway, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Italy, Finland, Lithuania, and Sweden, along with the Japanese interpreter and three Belgians. The meeting itself was small, and this visiting group of WSM members and guests easily outnumbered the locals in attendance.

During the meeting, however, one of the local attendees, just a few days sober and on the brink of homelessness, spoke openly of feeling suicidal. Yet, that night, said Pascal, "something incredible happened. A tangible, goosebump-inducing energy filled the room after he spoke, leaving everyone in quiet awe. By the end of the meeting, I noticed a new sparkle in his tearful eyes. He had felt the profound power of Alcoholics Anonymous and began to believe that the program could work for him, too."

In another anecdote, shared by the delegate from Brazil, the connecting thread linking one alcoholic to another surprisingly manifested when delegates visited the U.S./Canada GSO,

putting an exclamation point on the journey of one alcoholic from the streets to the WSM. During the visit, Fernando found himself seated next to Amalia, one of the Spanish translators covering the WSM. As Fernando introduced himself as the delegate from Brazil, Amalia noted that she had been in Brazil years before in 2007 accompanying and translating for the then U.S. trustee-at-large who was attending the REDELA meeting. Fernando indicated that 2007 had been an important year in his life also — the year he had gotten sober. Amalia then shared an interesting story of a walk she had taken with the trustee in Brazil, encountering some homeless people in the streets near the hotel where the REDELA was being held. Visibly among them was one who was probably not homeless but a drunk lying on the street. Amalia felt compassion for the scene and made a comment to the trustee. Kindly, the trustee made the following observation that Amalia related to Fernando: "Amalia," the trustee had said, "this is not just a drunk; with the grace of the Higher Power, he is a future International Trustee."

Upon hearing Amalia's recitation of the encounter, Fernando said, "I was immediately moved. At the end of 2007, I was rescued from the street by my daughter and my wife to be taken to a social reintegration center. That drunk was me.

"I spent the end of the year in the rehabilitation center and left in January — and in February 2008, I arrived at my home group in Araçás, Vila Velha, ES, Brazil.

"After holding various positions in the group, district and area, today I am the International Trustee of the A.A. structure in Brazil."

Three workshops on topics related to the WSM theme were held over the week, revolving around the Traditions and the impact of technology on A.A. individuals and structures. One issue that surfaced often during discussions was the question of anonymity online and the need to both maintain it as a fundamental principle of the Fellowship and to expand A.A.'s reach to those who might need our message without breaking it. The statement "We must be anonymous, but not invisible" summed up the realities faced by many of the countries as they continually seek to balance this important aspect of the A.A. program in their own structures.

Additionally, it was noted that while not every type of service is attractive to every person, members can be helped to identify aspects of service that might tap into their personal attributes or be encouraged to try new roles that may not come instinctively. Service sponsorship can play a role here.

Many countries also produce targeted literature for members who are BIPOC, LGBTQ, and/or women. Newcomers take hold of "different bits of rope" of experience and hope. Not everyone grabs the same piece of rope to get into the lifeboat.



A large portion of the meeting was devoted to committee meetings of the four principal committees of the WSM, with reports prepared and presented to the full body (see page 74), along with reports from the four zonal service meetings held prior to the WSM (p. 92), and the small but integral Site Selection Committee which evaluated bids to host the 29th WSM in 2026 and recommended to the 28th World Service Meeting that the site for the 29th World Service Meeting in 2026 be Portugal and that the alternate site be India. The recommendation was accepted unanimously with the theme to be: "Guided by all 36 Principles."

As the week came to a close, second-term delegates lined up at the microphones to briefly share experience, strength and hope, with reflections on their time in service at the WSM and in their home structures, followed by closing remarks from Scott H. and the Serenity Prayer recited individually in 31 languages, a testament to the power, reach and accessibility of A.A. around the world.

With a final closing dinner, featuring musical entertainment provided by an employee of AA Grapevine and an impromptu serenade from the South American delegates, attendees shifted their thoughts and energies to returning home and sharing the breadth of experience and information they had assimilated over the week, secure in the knowledge and example of A.A.'s truly international scope.

## Welcoming Address

My name is Scott. I am an alcoholic. It is my distinct privilege to serve the U.S./Canada structure of Alcoholics Anonymous as General Service Board Chair.

On behalf of our General Service Board, I welcome all of you to New York City and the 28th World Service Meeting.

It is also a very special privilege to be sharing the responsibilities of co-chairing this week with my good friend Bob W., General Manager of our General Service Office.

In part because Bob and I are good friends — a friendship that was forged when we served together as trustees-at-large on our Board and as our structure's delegates to the 24th World Service Meeting. Now we find ourselves at the 28th World Service Meeting in very different roles, but with a similar excitement to be with you and to hear the stories you will share about your structure's efforts to reach the still-suffering alcoholic in an ever-changing world.

As all of you know, our theme this week is "The Three Legacies in the Digital Era: Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today."

The Covid 19 pandemic has seen an acceleration of the use

of technology and the speed of communication in our Fellowship, which brings topics like our theme much more in focus in all of our structures.

In a Grapevine article from 1960, before some of us were even born, Bill W. had in mind the responsibility that A.A. had to members not yet born. He said that "we see that they [our Traditions] have two main characteristics, and we see that each of these aspects reinforces the other. The first aspect of the Twelve Traditions is protection, the second aspect is progress."

After outlining some of the protective aspects of the Traditions, he goes on to say, "But A.A.'s Twelve Traditions should provide us with far more than protection against mediocrity and dissolution — and they do."

And the quote that most of you will be familiar with is where he says, "nothing can matter more to the future of A.A. than the manner in which we use this colossus of communication. Used unselfishly and well, the results can surpass our present imagination."

In my view, the Fellowship did exactly this with virtual meeting platforms during the pandemic. We saw this "colossus" used unselfishly and well. We embraced the progressive characteristics of our Traditions to fulfill our primary purpose and saw not only the support of the recovery of our existing members, but countless new members find recovery through a virtual platform.

Maybe we do not always see all social media platforms used unselfishly and well.

But that does not mean we cannot do so. We can continue to talk about how technology can be used unselfishly and well.

Bill W. was a bold thinker. I believe that he and Dr. Bob tried to meet alcoholics where they were. The example of this that is most familiar to all of us is the idea of a higher power of our own conception. This boldness and concern to make our lifesaving message accessible to suffering alcoholics was also one of the reasons for the writing and publication of the Big Book, so that alcoholics who may not have contact with existing members could receive our lifesaving message.

It is important that we continue to take steps to fulfill this great responsibility we have with initiatives like our Meeting Guide App, and our AA Grapevine App, that brings both the magazine and podcasts right to our phones.

You may have already heard about this, but you will hear more this week, that our structure's General Service Conference has authorized a plain language translation of the Big Book. Note that this is not a rewriting of the Big Book, but a tool for reading the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

It is a bold and visionary decision, but it is also one that has been thoroughly discussed since 2016.

Bill W. has also been described as a man of great vision. If we are to meet our great responsibility to the “Alcoholics Being Born Today,” we must continue to make space in our Fellowship for the expression of new ideas that can be discussed without immediate criticism and judgement.

We can appreciate that not all new ideas will be good ones, but we cannot be so critical of all new ideas that we discourage a vision for the future of A.A. It requires considerable humility to remain open to new ideas.

Thinking that future generations will find A.A. the way we did is naive, at best. We want them to find the same message of love and hope, but we will need to work to be sure it is available where it can be found by those yet to come.

One of the most significant benefits I see coming from a forum like this is the ability to share ideas without criticism or judgment because we make no decisions here. We can explore not only what each of our structures is doing, but what we might do to manage this colossus of communication unselfishly and well.

We can look to the future, guided by both the protective and progressive characteristics of our Traditions, to find new ways to not only fulfill our primary purpose, but to carry our message to where the alcoholic being born today can find it.

In our structure, the political and social divisiveness that is affecting our society as a whole is creeping into Alcoholics Anonymous. It is beginning to undermine support for our collective group conscience.

Will we overcome this creep and find ways to continue to apply the principles found in our three legacies to fulfill this great

responsibility? I have faith we will. I have faith we will find the humility, but we will need the ideas of all of us.

I look forward to the opportunity we have this week to hear about the new and, perhaps, visionary ways you are finding to fulfill our responsibility to ensure that the A.A. message is available to the alcoholic being born today.

Again, welcome to the 28th World Service Meeting. Thank you to all of you for being here and for the tireless work done in your structures to make the hand of A.A. available to those who search for it anywhere in our world.

*Scott H. — Chair, GSB U.S./Canada*

## Keynote Address

Good morning. My name is Elena, and I am an alcoholic, sober since December 4th, 2010.

When, at the end of the last WSM, the theme for this year’s meeting was confirmed, the Lithuanian A.A. Service did not know whether it would be able to send delegates to the WSM this year and I didn’t have the slightest idea that I could be one of the presenters. Therefore, the invitation was more than unexpected, and surrounded by surprising circumstances. In A.A. I got not only sobriety and a chance to live a normal life, but I also learned how to deal with challenges. Of course, I am still learning — so I am truly grateful for this opportunity. This confidence is very meaningful and heart-warming not only for me, but also for the A.A. Service in Lithuania and for the whole Fellowship in our small country.

Today A.A. has around two million members globally in more



*Sprinkled throughout the agenda, these sessions offered opportunities for delegates to share their thoughts or ask questions on a wide variety of topics.*



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than 180 countries, A.A. literature is available in over 100 languages. When I was born, A.A. was spread around the world in about 60 countries and had about one million members. When I was nine years old, A.A. was founded in Lithuania. A.A. was spread around the world in about 114 countries. At the age of 13, after the death of my beloved grandmother, whose death was caused by alcoholism, I made a promise to myself — it will never happen to me, I will never drink and I will never become an alcoholic. In my twenties, I drank every day. I thought it was charming and ok, but my relatives were already giving me clear signals that it was not good to live the way I was living. After nine years, I was forced to call myself an alcoholic when I got into a detox hospital. Here I got my first knowledge of alcoholism, here I first held the Big Book in my hands, here I heard for the first time A.A. members sharing their experiences, from here I came to my first A.A. meeting. But then I decided that I would somehow miraculously manage on my own, without A.A.

I came back to A.A. almost two years later. I was lucky — the oldest A.A. group in Lithuania became my A.A. home group. Here I met the founder and the early leaders of A.A. in Lithuania, who took care of passing on the message of A.A., organizing the first services, publishing literature, etc. I came to a stable fellowship, with many A.A. meetings, translated and published A.A. literature, and a functioning service. I had excellent conditions for sobriety and recovery.

From the first days of my return to A.A., I was under the care of the old-timers — in my recovery, in my acquaintance with the Traditions and in the way A.A. works.

They guided me wisely, lovingly and confidently into service when I did not yet trust myself completely. They generously shared their experience and their time with me, and raised me in A.A. The members I found when I came to A.A. took responsibility for my future in A.A. as well as others who found their way into the Fellowship at a similar time or much later.

In my early days in A.A., and for many years afterwards, life and reality were very different — there were no social networks, no internet, no mobile phones.

People watched TV, listened to the radio, read newspapers and magazines, communicated with each other on the phone, sent telegrams and handwritten letters to each other. A slightly different reality was the subject of the movies and books. And of course, people travelled much less than we can now. Nowadays we can no longer imagine life without mobile phones and other devices, the fast internet, and a wide range of fast-changing, growing digital tools and technologies. The Covid-19 pandemic that swept the world a few years ago has forced us to adapt faster and much better to digital spaces. Now it seems old news — the world is alarmed by the terrible wars, political

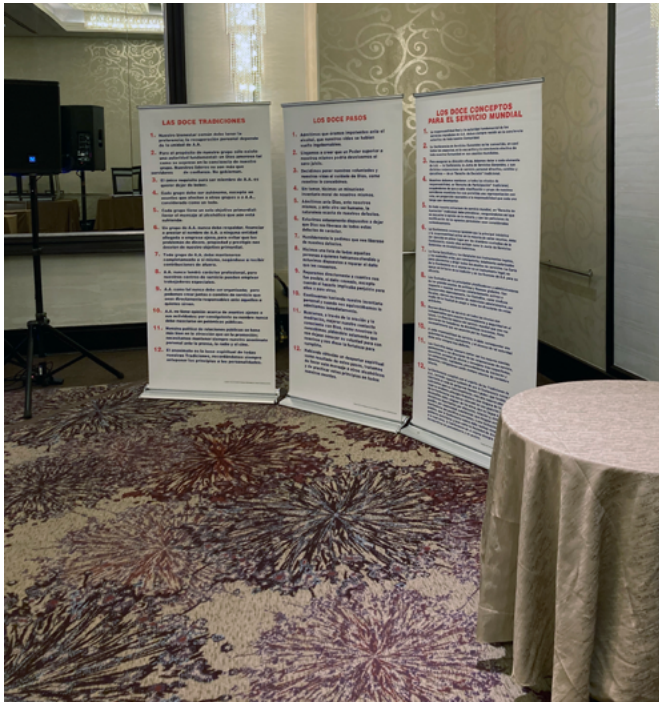
unrest and natural disasters taking place in different parts of the world. And in these hot spots, unfortunately, not always and not everyone has the opportunity to apply digital technologies in everyday life, but also in the most vital matters of life. Also, in A.A.

The theme “The Three Legacies in the Digital Era: Our Great Responsibility to the Alcoholic Being Born Today” asks to reflect not only on our Traditions and how they have carried us so far, but also on our collective responsibility to the future. For we stand at a pivotal moment, where the digital age is rapidly transforming how we live, work, and — most crucially for us — how we reach the still-suffering alcoholic.

The first legacy, Recovery, is the cornerstone of our program. The Twelve Steps have remained unchanged since they were written, and their timeless wisdom continues to save lives. In the digital age, how we present these Steps, how we make them accessible, is evolving. Today, many alcoholics first encounter A.A. not through a meeting in a church basement, but through a website, an app, or a social media post. This is where the seeds of recovery are first planted in the minds of those still trapped in the grip of alcoholism. A.A.’s responsibility is to ensure that when someone reaches out, even through a screen, the hand of A.A. is there to welcome them with the same love and understanding as it would in a physical room. Virtual meetings, online literature, and digital platforms are no longer supplementary — they are lifelines. For the alcoholic born today, especially in remote or underserved areas, these tools may be their first and perhaps only connection to sobriety. The pandemic underscored this reality, as virtual meetings became a haven for millions when in-person gatherings were impossible. Yet, as we embrace these digital tools, we must be vigilant in preserving the integrity of our program. The Twelve Steps are not mere suggestions, nor are they subject to modification based on convenience or technological trends. They are the blueprint for freedom from alcoholism, and our task is to ensure that no matter how A.A. is accessed—whether online or in person—the experience of recovery remains true to our principles.

The second legacy, Unity, binds us together as one fellowship, regardless of where we are or how we gather. It is our shared experience of recovery that brings us together. Unity gives us the strength to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers. In the digital age, unity has taken on a new and exciting dimension. We are more connected than ever before. With just a few clicks, an A.A. member in Lithuania can share their experience with someone in New York.

A newcomer in Riga can find support from a sponsor in London. The boundaries that once divided us — geography,



*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.*

language, culture — are dissolving, opening up new avenues for connection and fellowship. However, this increased connectivity brings with it new challenges. The ease of digital communication can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or the dilution of our principles. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that unity remains at the heart of everything we do, both online and offline. Whether in a face-to-face meeting or a virtual meeting room, we must remember that the principles of love, tolerance, and anonymity guide us. And we shouldn't forget the importance of physical meetings. While digital tools offer convenience and accessibility, in-person meetings provide a sense of fellowship and spiritual connection that technology cannot replicate. Our responsibility is to ensure that A.A.'s presence remains strong both in the digital world and in our communities, offering a variety of paths to recovery.

The third legacy: Service. It is through service that we live out our primary purpose: to stay sober and help other alcoholics achieve sobriety. In the digital era, the ways we can be of service are expanding rapidly. For those, who are seasoned members of the fellowship, the question becomes: How can we mentor and support new generations of alcoholics in their service work when the landscape is shifting beneath our feet? How do we ensure that the Traditions and practices that have kept A.A. alive for nearly a century are passed on in a way that resonates with the alcoholic of today?

Service in the digital age offers unique opportunities. We

can reach alcoholics in isolated areas through online meetings and forums. We can provide resources in multiple languages with the click of a button. We can use social media responsibly to share information about A.A. and demystify our program to the general public. But service also requires that we educate ourselves about these tools, so we can use them effectively and ethically. Moreover, it is essential to maintain our commitment to anonymity in a time when personal data is readily accessible and shared. Our responsibility is to safeguard the privacy of those who come to us for help, ensuring that they can trust in the confidentiality of our program, regardless of the medium through which they engage with A.A.

The alcoholic being born today will grow up in a world defined by technology and rapid change. They may struggle with challenges we cannot yet foresee. But the truth of our message will remain timeless: recovery from alcoholism is possible, one day at a time, through the application of the 12 Steps.

Our responsibility is to ensure that A.A. is here for them. The tools may change, but the A.A. purpose remains the same. As Bill W. wrote, "The responsibility for our future welfare and growth falls squarely upon each and every one of us." This responsibility is both a gift and a call to action. It is up to us to ensure that A.A. continues to thrive in this new digital era, staying true to the principles that have guided us thus far while embracing the opportunities that new technology offers.

The digital age gives us tools to reach more alcoholics, but we should never lose sight of the spiritual principles that are the heart of our program. Our great responsibility is to the alcoholic being born today — just as it was for those who came before us and those who will come after.

I am very grateful to be here with you today. I am sincerely grateful to A.A. for sobriety, to the founding fathers of A.A. here, in the U.S. and in Lithuania, and around the world. To those, who have guided me and continue to guide in my sober daily life and of course to the Higher Power.

These few days here will be full of emotions, the language of the heart and a wide range of experiences. I wish all of you to bring these experiences back to your countries to help A.A. reach its main purpose.

I'd like to finish with one of the legacies left to us by A.A.'s founding fathers:

"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."

Thank you for your patience, communion and service.

With love in service.

*Elena S. — Lithuania*



# Presentations



## International Literature Fund and World Service Meeting Fund

Since the inception of the International Literature Fund in 1990, the impact on the increase of the reach of our literature into the hands of hopeless alcoholics is incalculable. The generous contributions from around the world since that time are truly amazing — approaching three million dollars.

In 1992, the Literature/Publishing Committee of the World Service Meeting agreed that the International Literature Fund should be under the purview of the World Service Meeting Literature/Publishing Committee. The committee also suggested that "A.A. World Services (AAWS) use proceeds of (the) International Literature Fund to offset AAWS's expenditures for foreign literature assistance, and to reimburse similar expenses incurred by other overseas A.A. offices or boards." They further noted that "AAWS should have the latitude to prioritize the use of these monies based on the need as expressed by each GSO and World Service delegate."

Since that time, the General Service Office of the U.S./Canada has carried out the administration of this fund. Over the years the activity levels of assisting other countries with the cost of translating, producing and distributing literature has

been very robust. To illustrate this point, when the idea of the fund was born in 1990, the Big Book was translated into 17 languages and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* into three languages. Today they are translated into 72 and 51 respectively. And that's only the translation of two books! There are so many other titles and pamphlets that have been through the same process. You can imagine the hours and efforts that went into making this possible. Without this fund, we wouldn't have been able to come close to this achievement.

In 2016, the 24th World Service Meeting expressed the need for more detailed accounting of the ILF. The increase in detail the last few years has been notable, however, the accounting of the fund has, in my opinion, fallen short. Our reporting has been strong regarding contributions received, but the detail of the use of the fund has been lacking. When I was hired as general manager, I committed to infuse A.A.'s principles embodied in our Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions and Twelve Concepts, into the operations of our office. To this end, we have taken an inventory of our administration of this fund and realize we have fallen short. For this we offer our sincere amends and commit to more transparency as we move forward.

We have taken steps to draft detailed guidance to apply to all opportunities when these funds are utilized. We have instituted new accounting procedures that now allow us to better

## INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE FUND REPORT AS OF OCTOBER 22, 2024

	2023					2024				
	Quarter 1 Jan-Mar	Quarter 2 Apr-Jun	Quarter 3 Jul-Sep	Quarter 4 Oct - Dec	Full Year	Quarter 1 Jan-Mar	Quarter 2 Apr-Jun	Quarter 3 Jul-Sep	Quarter 4 Oct - Dec	Year to Date
Beginning Balance	30,008.25	35,855.22	34,434.68	35,890.23	30,008.25	42,363.47	42,877.57	71,259.63	120,366.83	42,363.47
Contributions	6,160.91	11,648.56	1,455.55	13,246.04	32,511.06	7,068.45	29,488.85	50,480.20	9,039.59	96,077.09
Withdrawn from Fund	(313.94)	(13,069.10)	0.00	(6,772.80)	(20,155.84)	(6,554.35)	(1,106.79)	(1,373.00)	0.00	(9,034.14)
Quarter Ending Balance	35,855.22	34,434.68	35,890.23	42,363.47	42,363.47	42,877.57	71,259.63	120,366.83	129,406.42	129,406.42
<b>CONTRIBUTIONS DETAIL</b>										
COUNTRY	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	FY 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	FY 2024
Argentina	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Australia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,020.63	0.00	0.00	3,020.63
Brazil	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	4,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Bulgaria	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Chile	0.00	0.00	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Colombia	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Costa Rica	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Czech Republic	0.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Denmark	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	29,947.55	0.00	29,947.55
Ecuador	0.00	0.00	0.00	300.00	300.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Finland	0.00	0.00	0.00	783.04	783.04	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
France	0.00	0.00	530.55	0.00	530.55	0.00	0.00	519.95	0.00	519.95
French speaking Europe	528.70	0.00	0.00	0.00	528.70	0.00	0.00	3,218.11	0.00	3,218.11
German speaking Europe	0.00	6,413.40	0.00	0.00	6,413.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
German speaking Switzerland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,687.69	0.00	0.00	2,687.69
Guatemala	0.00	0.00	225.00	0.00	225.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hong Kong	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	971.12	0.00	0.00	0.00	971.12
Iceland	0.00	0.00	0.00	980.00	980.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Ireland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,780.53	15,870.26	7,967.09	47,617.88
Japan	0.00	0.00	0.00	683.48	683.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lithuania	0.00	0.00	0.00	488.00	488.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Mexico	194.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	194.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
New Zealand	0.00	0.00	0.00	870.39	870.39	0.00	0.00	924.33	0.00	924.33
Online Intergroup of A.A.	0.00	4,713.00	0.00	0.00	4,713.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Peru	310.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	310.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Poland	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Slovakia	0.00	522.16	0.00	0.00	522.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Slovenia	0.00	0.00	0.00	497.08	497.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,072.50	1,072.50
Spain	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,152.40	2,152.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sweden	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,097.33	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,097.33
Switzerland	3,128.21	0.00	0.00	2,191.65	5,319.86	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>6,160.91</b>	<b>11,648.56</b>	<b>1,455.55</b>	<b>13,246.04</b>	<b>32,511.06</b>	<b>7,068.45</b>	<b>29,488.85</b>	<b>50,480.20</b>	<b>9,039.59</b>	<b>96,077.09</b>

WITHDRAWN FROM FUND DETAIL										
USE	Q1 2023	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	FY 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024	FY 2024
Guarani language literature review	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	225.00	0.00	0.00	225.00
Kenya translation of Big Book and 12 & 12	0.00	11,719.59	0.00	0.00	11,719.59	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Literature translation reviews	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,840.00	4,840.00	0.00	432.00	286.00	0.00	718.00
Marathi and Kannada language literature reviews	0.00	0.00	0.00	220.00	220.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Hebrew language literature review	0.00	0.00	0.00	330.00	330.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Haitian Creole translation	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,847.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,847.00
Literature sent to Kenya	0.00	403.75	0.00	0.00	403.75	2,114.50	0.00	898.00	0.00	3,012.50
Literature sent to Nigeria	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	592.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	592.85
Literature sent to Tanzania	0.00	770.40	0.00	403.75	1,174.15	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Literature sent to other countries	0.00	0.00	0.00	979.05	979.05	0.00	449.79	189.00	0.00	638.79
Bank fees	313.94	175.36	0.00	0.00	489.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total Withdrawn From Fund</b>	<b>313.94</b>	<b>13,069.10</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>6,772.80</b>	<b>20,155.84</b>	<b>6,554.35</b>	<b>1,106.79</b>	<b>1,373.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>9,034.14</b>

## WORLD SERVICE MEETING FUND INTERIM REPORT AS OF OCTOBER 22, 2024

	2023					2024				
	Quarter 1 Jan-Mar	Quarter 2 Apr-Jun	Quarter 3 Jul-Sep	Quarter 4 Oct - Dec	Full Year	Quarter 1 Jan-Mar	Quarter 2 Apr-Jun	Quarter 3 Jul-Sep	Quarter 4 Oct - Dec	Year to Date
Beginning Balance	36,484.65	36,720.15	36,573.46	37,204.01	36,484.65	61,878.86	61,878.86	64,398.81	73,168.07	61,878.86
Contributions	540.80	0.00	630.55	24,674.85	25,846.20	0.00	2,519.95	17,222.15	70,670.00	90,412.10
Withdrawn from Fund	(305.30)	(146.69)	0.00	0.00	(451.99)	0.00	0.00	(8,452.89)	(46,745.21)	(55,198.10)
<b>Quarter Ending Balance</b>	<b>36,720.15</b>	<b>36,573.46</b>	<b>37,204.01</b>	<b>61,878.86</b>	<b>61,878.86</b>	<b>61,878.86</b>	<b>64,398.81</b>	<b>73,168.07</b>	<b>97,092.86</b>	<b>97,092.86</b>
CONTRIBUTIONS DETAIL										
Australia	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	15,681.60	0.00	15,681.60
Costa Rica	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
France	540.80	0.00	530.55	0.00	1,071.35	0.00	519.95	0.00	0.00	519.95
German speaking Europe	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00	0.00	0.00	2,000.00
Japan	0.00	0.00	0.00	683.48	683.48	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Lithuania	0.00	0.00	0.00	488.00	488.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Slovenia	0.00	0.00	0.00	497.08	497.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,072.70	1,072.70
Switzerland	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,150.20	1,150.20
United Kingdom	0.00	0.00	0.00	23,006.29	23,006.29	0.00	0.00	0.00	68,447.10	68,447.10
New Zealand	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,540.55	0.00	1,540.55
<b>Total Contributions</b>	<b>540.80</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>630.55</b>	<b>24,674.85</b>	<b>25,846.20</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>2,519.95</b>	<b>17,222.15</b>	<b>70,670.00</b>	<b>90,412.10</b>
WITHDRAWN FROM FUND DETAIL										
Bank Fees	305.30	146.69	0.00	0.00	451.99	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Airfare	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,452.89	544.21	8,997.10
Delegate Fee Support	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	46,201.00	46,201.00
<b>Total Withdrawn From Fund</b>	<b>305.30</b>	<b>146.69</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>451.99</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>8,452.89</b>	<b>46,745.21</b>	<b>55,198.10</b>



account for both inflows and outflows of the fund in full detail. As we took our inventory, we noted the accounting of receipts to the fund have been accurate. Although we have been lacking in accounting of financial outflows, based on the many activities related to the international literature assistance we provided to other structures for literature, we are certain costs have been well in excess of the funds received. Of particular note is our investment in new computer systems to track translation and licensing activity, which allows us to assist countries more efficiently.

Moving forward, our new accounting and governance policies will allow more detailed and transparent reporting. These policies are just now being implemented, including a new separate bank account dedicated specifically to the International Literature Fund. This is a key step to allow for regular reconciliation of all activity within the fund. We will be prepared to provide interim reports to each of the zonal meetings next year and a full accounting of the activity between this and the next WSM in 2026.

I also wanted to share some thoughts regarding the World Service Meeting Fund. It was created during the 2018 World Service Meeting and is recent enough that we have full and transparent accounting. Similar to the International Literature Fund, we are creating a separate bank account specific to this fund. Attached to this report, I have included a preliminary accounting for this World Service Meeting as well as previous meetings. As you can see, our structure has underwritten approximately \$198,000 each year to hold these meetings. The virtual format of our last two World Service Meetings has allowed each of them to be nearly self-supporting. The format has also undoubtedly attracted more participation as we have 49 countries represented this year, which is the highest in history.

The decision to meet virtually in past meetings was a very difficult one and largely based on the uncertainties of the pandemic but also out of prudence toward our own finances. Like many of you, our structure is dealing with the challenges from the pandemic and the economy. Reductions in our literature sales and revenue combined with inflation have contributed to a significant deficit this year and are probably ongoing as well.

I believe there is great benefit to meeting face to face and it is my hope that we will be able to do that again in the future. I recognize reaching the goal of self-support will be challenging as we move back to this format, but I have faith we can find a way. All of us hold equal Seventh Tradition responsibility to the World Service Meeting Fund. The fund is a key component to achieving self-support.

The most important aspect of the Seventh Tradition is par-

ticipation. Contributions to each of these funds, no matter how small, all hold equal spiritual value. With this in mind, I want to express my sincere gratitude for the sacrifices so many countries around the world have made to participate. They have assisted so many counties in carrying the message to the still sick and suffering alcoholic.

Thank you very much.

*Bob W. — General Manager, GSO U.S./Canada*

## Licensing and Translation

My name is Beverly Jones-King and I have the honor to currently serve as the Director of Legal, Licensing and Intellectual Property, A.A. World Services, Inc. at the GSO office since August 2, 2022. Thank you to the International Committee for the invitation to speak with you about International Translations and Licensing. On behalf of our International Translation and Licensing team of the department, welcome.

A brief history of our department. Our International Translations and Licensing team was reorganized under the department (Legal, Licensing and Intellectual Property) on September 6, 2022. Our team members are Gesi Cinari, Jonathan Gomez and Rosa Rodriguez. We moved from the 8th floor to the 11th floor where we could work together in the same area, facilitating discussions on requests as needed. We have encountered a steady increase in the amount of international translation and licensing queries and requests handled by our office from the international community.

As of February 17, 2022, the International Translations and Licensing team prioritized efforts to catch up on the backlog of requests; actively attend to communication and file-sharing and implement a new streamlined system to serve the community. A new database system was installed and utilized for this benefit: the Translations Licensing Connection (TLC) portal. This portal system fully manages correspondence, file exchange, license signature and countersignatures, and record-keeping, all in one place. This system enables the international community to view the status and progress of their requests (country's literature permissions) and to contact the Translations and Licensing team. A total of 3,415 email communications were received (the backlog) resulting in 773 total requests. To process these requests (review communication requests received via email from the international country delegates) we implemented a batching system to input the requests into the database. Requests vary in type (license, translation, questions, or information). As of October 12, 2023, "the backlog has been completed" and we are current! We have processed and completed approximately 1,095 requests since January 2024, which includes 220 DocuSign versions of the licenses.

Now that we are current, in our efforts to extend the hand of A.A. around the world to the sick and suffering alcoholic and helping those who help alcoholics — via our literature, we have developed a multipurpose streamline licensing form. With the streamlining of our license form, various licenses can be included in one agreement and chosen on an à la carte basis. We are also adjusting language within the agreements to allow for automatic renewals and automating that process, which will tremendously reduce renewal processing time. As the demand for access for digital, eBooks and audio books has increased, new policies are necessary to meet these needs.

We have held more than 50 one-on-one virtual meetings with individual countries since the last meeting and we have made available a schedule for future virtual meetings with individual countries to help move our international translations and licensing projects forward. The purpose of the virtual meetings is to determine their needs for various materials regarding licenses, permits, printing and to familiarize them with our department and our processes. We invite literature and translation contacts from each country to continue to request these useful one-on-one virtual meetings.

Our collaboration with the International Desk is important as we continue to meet the growing demands of the international community. Meetings with the International Translation and Licensing team and the International Desk continue.

**Licensing Activity**

There has been a steady increase in the amount of international translation and licensing queries and requests handled by our office. The Translation Licensing Connection (TLC) portal is actively used by 51 structures as the primary source of all correspondence and processing. All requests sent to TL@aa.org are transferred to TLC. The TL email will remain to accommodate structures who may not have the ability to connect to TLC.

**9 US PENDING**

Translation Language	Publication Title	History:
India — Nepali	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Haitian Creole	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	RR — currently awaiting review from a local community. This is being handled by Intl Staff Seat assignment.
Albanian	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	RR — received multiple negative reviews. Needs new translator and lost communication with the previous contacts handling this project.
Bambara	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Ewe	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Macedonian	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Malaysian	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Vietnamese	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	
Armenian	T-001 Alcoholics Anonymous	

**Spreading the Word**

In our efforts to continue to spread the word of Alcoholics Anonymous to reach the still-suffering alcoholic, meetings with the TL team and the International Desk continue as well as our collaboration with other departments (Publishing, International, Accessibility/Remote Communities) to assist us in identifying the communities who have the need for new translations in languages and communities not represented by GSOs. Prioritization of pending translation requests will begin shortly. This entails reviewing the current translations, or locating a professional translation, creating a working group and creating guidelines.

**Current Pending Translations**

Pending translations of completing of the “Big Book” in Haitian Creole language and bringing the “Big Book” and pamphlets (“Is AA for Me?” and “How it Works”) into the Haitian community has begun. Translation of the Big Book “Alcoholics Anonymous” in Haitian Creole is under way and awaiting a review from a local community.

Research has begun on translations of the following languages:

1. Karin
2. Bambara
3. Somali
4. Kinyarwanda
5. Kazakh

We are currently working on contacting representatives from the countries regarding their pending translations.

**Literature Licensing Activity:**

**A. Big Book — 75 languages total (including English).**

The Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* is available in a total of 75 languages, which includes the original English. Fifty-seven (57) of the languages are printed and distrib-

## 14 INTERNATIONAL PENDING

Translation Language	Dist. Country	Publication Title	Lic Sign Date	Format	History:
Azerbaijani	Azerbaijan Republic	Alcoholics Anonymous	11/21/2023	Book	
Australian Sign Language	Australia	Alcoholics Anonymous	11/22/2023	DVD	
India — Malayalam	India	Alcoholics Anonymous	7/8/2020	Book	
India — Konkani	India	Alcoholics Anonymous	8/18/2023	Book	
India — Marathi	India	Alcoholics Anonymous	1/12/2021	Book	
India — Aasamee	India	Alcoholics Anonymous		Book	no history found in my email.
India — Tamil	India	Alcoholics Anonymous	2/2/2020	Book	
India — Hindi	India	Alcoholics Anonymous	4/15/2021	Book	
India — Khasi	India	Alcoholics Anonymous		Book	no history found in my email.
Indonesian	Indonesia	Alcoholics Anonymous		Book	no history found in my email.
Italian	Italy	Alcoholics Anonymous		Book	waiting on signed lic since 2021. will follow up
Maltese	Malta	Alcoholics Anonymous		Book	no history found in my email
Maori	New Zealand	Alcoholics Anonymous	11/14/2023	Book	
Serbian	Serbia	Alcoholics Anonymous	3/7/2024	Book	

uted by AAWS, Inc. and forty-nine (49) of the languages are licensed to be printed and distributed by local international entities abroad (31 of the languages are printed by both AAWS, Inc. and local international entities).

There are 23 Big Book languages in translation pending (9 US and 14 international). The translations are, at various stages of completion, including the new translation of Haitian Creole.

### B. Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions — 52 languages

There are 52 total languages available of the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, and 4 pending translations.

### C. T129 Licenses to reproduce and distribute

Licenses to reproduce and distribute AAWS, Inc. copyrighted works for 2024 stand at 129 licenses across 23 countries.

### D. 109 Languages

As of June 2024, A.A. items of literature (books, booklets, pamphlets, the Twelve Steps, and so forth) are available in 109 languages worldwide.

## CONCLUSION

The International Translations and Licensing team has prioritized licensing and translations to meet the growing demands of international community licensing. We are available to assist and respond to your license and translations requests wherever you are, via the TLC portal or through a Zoom meeting. We are happy to schedule a Zoom meeting with you at any time. Contact us, we are here to assist you in spreading the word.

*Beverly Jones-King — Director of Legal, Licensing and Intellectual Property, GSO U.S./Canada*

## Are Our Groups and GSOs Doing Everything We Can to Reach the Still-Suffering Alcoholic in Our Communities?

### Is Our Structure Prepared to Face the Change To Digital?

I had been sober and fairly active in A.A. for some years when this happened one Friday night, at an A.A. group where I served as secretary. For that meeting I had invited a speaker from a neighboring group, to share with us her experience, strength and hope. After the meeting, when some of us were finishing our usual service chores and as we were about to leave, my friend the speaker approached me privately. “Are you okay?” she asked, with an earnest expression on her face.

Her directness and the simple manner she spoke took me by surprise. “Why would she ask me that?” I wondered. “Did she see something in me which I’ve missed?” And so not wishing to give away how I truly felt, I simply said,

“Yes. Why?”

“Nothing,” she said. “It’s just that there’s something about you. Are you *really* okay?”

“Sure,” I said, still trying to hide my surprise.

“Okay then,” she said, “Just asking.”

Later that evening I realized I couldn’t stop thinking about what had happened. I felt as if she had cracked through my defense. I knew I *wasn’t* okay, and she had *seen* that. And it hurt my pride, although, or perhaps because, I *had* been sober for a while and *had* gone through the Steps with a sponsor, once.



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And yet something felt off, and I knew my friend saw in me that which I wasn't willing to see myself. And she took it upon herself, perhaps unintentionally, to point that out to me.

The next day, still reeling from the emotional turmoil the whole situation caused, I decided to message my friend and confess. I said that I wasn't actually okay, that something felt very wrong, despite my having experience with the program, sponsoring other people and being the secretary of the largest group in Riga.

My friend shared her experience with me. Among other things she said she could ask her sponsor, who was from somewhere in the States, to ask around her home group; perhaps someone would be willing to help me.

Two days later I received a phone call. "Is this Andrew?" a voice said. "My name's John. I heard you needed help." When I explained my situation, John asked, "Would you be willing to go through the Book again, starting from the title page?" I said I was, and so the process began. He warned me he wasn't particularly tech-savvy but that we could still try to make this work whichever way we could. In the following months and years, John would call me, sometimes several times a week, and lead me through the first 164 pages of the Book, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts.

The reason I am telling you this, is because I believe it directly pertains to the topic I was asked to discuss with you today, namely "Is our structure prepared to face the change to digital?"

In Concept IX, our co-founder Bill W. wrote, "No matter how carefully we design our service structure of principles and relationships, no matter how well we apportion authority and responsibility, the operating results of our structure can be no better than the personal performance of those who must man it and make it work. Good leadership cannot function well in a poorly designed structure. But weak leadership can hardly function at all, even in the best of structures."

I do believe that this particular question could as well have been raised — as I'm sure it has been, with the same urgency and relevance — ten, twenty, even thirty years ago. The change has been happening for decades now and I dare to predict that we will witness even greater change in the future. What we experience, I assume, is nothing extraordinary, as the challenges we face now are essentially the same challenges the Fellowship has been facing all along. What has changed is the packaging these issues come in. For example, the question "Will the online meeting kill the home group?" stems from the same place of concern as the decades-old questions, like "Will the treatment industry kill the program?"; or "Will the creation of the General Service Conference kill the informal spirit of the Fellowship?"

The question of prudence and preparation is essentially a recurring one, as Bill— being the visionary as he was—predicted back when he wrote, again in Concept IX, "With leadership we shall have a continuous problem. Good leadership can be here today and gone tomorrow. Furnishing our service structure with able and willing workers has to be a continuous activity. It is therefore a problem that in its very nature cannot be permanently solved."

Therefore, I think the answer to the question "Is our structure prepared?" is simple and obvious—perhaps deceptively so—as long as we acknowledge that the primary purpose of any service structure is *to serve*; that the structure is not an abstract thing, existing separately in its own realm. Any structure is necessarily populated by real people like us, and therefore its effectiveness is directly dependent on our readiness and willingness, and preparedness, to step up, to take responsibility, to be accountable.

This is what I saw in my friend. This is what John was. And I'm sure this is what all of you are, for you wouldn't be here today if it wasn't for certain readiness, willingness, and preparedness.

*Andris K. — Latvia*

## **This shows the importance of regular review and inventory at all levels**

Greetings to all who are attending our 28th World Service Meeting. I am Miguel, trustee-at-large from the Northern Territory in the Mexican structure, and I am also an alcoholic.

Alcoholics Anonymous has but one primary purpose: to help the alcoholics who still suffer, and give them the spiritual tools at our disposal, so that they may recover and live a happy, joyful life, free from alcohol. However, there are many who have not yet received the message of hope that A.A. offers. Some people perhaps do not know that there is help available almost everywhere in the world, whereas others may face barriers which prevent them from seeking help. It is essential to recognize that each person who suffers from alcoholism does not only represent a life that may be transformed, but also a family and community that may experience significant benefits from that recovery.

From the time of its foundation in 1935, Alcoholics Anonymous has been a beacon of hope for millions of people around the world. However, to meet our primary purpose, it is crucial that we reach all of those who need help, regardless of their circumstances. This requires an ongoing commitment, constant review and adaptation to societal changes. We need to take advantage of new technologies and communication methods and be inclusive and open to people of all cultures, genders and backgrounds.

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We know that to carry the A.A. message, the joint effort of A.A. groups and the General Service Office (GSO) is paramount. We need to undertake service activities that allow us to reach those who still do not know about the recovery program, and to help them achieve and maintain sobriety and emotional balance.

### **Regular evaluations and inventories at every level**

It is important to remember that, at the Fifth General Service Conference in 1955, responsibility and authority were delegated to the groups of Alcoholics Anonymous, thus ensuring the continuity of our services.

Doing evaluations and inventories on a regular basis is essential for any organization that wishes to remain relevant and effective. In A.A., these evaluations allow groups and the General Service Office to reflect on their primary purpose and to ensure that they are aligned with A.A.'s primary purpose: to help alcoholics to recover. These procedures foster transparency, a key aspect to earn and keep the trust of members and the Fellowship at large. The General Service Office is the central body supporting A.A. groups in their mission to carry the message to those who still suffer. This includes providing literature and coordinating efforts to ensure that A.A. principles and procedures remain consistent in all activities.

A.A.'s success depends on good communication between the groups and GSO, since they both work together to spread the message of recovery in the right manner, making sure that each group remains autonomous, but receives the full support of the General Service Office.

The world is evolving constantly and, with it, the needs of the people whom A.A. is trying to reach also evolve. Regular evaluations and inventories allow A.A. to adapt to these changes. This may include the adoption of new technological strategies, the updating and creation of new literature so that it can be better understood by those who come to us. It is crucial that all levels of service in A.A. participate in the evaluation and inventory process, on a regular basis. This not only guarantees that we continue to meet our primary purpose, but it also fosters a sense of belonging and shared responsibility between the members and GSO.

This World Service Meeting will provide us with the opportunity to obtain valuable information from around the world that will allow for an objective inventory and review.

This way, we can strengthen unity worldwide and ensure the future of A.A. around the world.

As Bill said in a talk that is reflected in our book *Our Great Responsibility*, where he stressed the importance of inventories:

"So I think it is a historic moment here of no small importance when we have arrived at the time — not at my suggestion — when we say, 'Wouldn't a movement inventory be a good idea?' A frequent one, moreover, 'Wouldn't it be a good idea to get in some of our nonalcoholic friends who know the score in here, who have the detached view, and let them say what they really think, no holds barred?' I think it is a sign of growth that we will entertain such an idea."

*Miguel B. — Mexico*

## **How to Reach Young People**

Good afternoon, my name is Izabela. I'm an alcoholic, second-term delegate to the WSM and ESM, and chair of the Board of Trustees of A.A. in Poland. It's a privilege to be asked to share here on the topic "How to reach young people." A similar issue was discussed at the last ESM and 27th WSM, and now I want to add our experience.

At my first meeting in the '90s I saw a lot of older men (older than me), which scared me. After a few years in my city, a new group "Young of Heart" dedicated to every A.A. member, even the elderly, was set up. They are still in existence but now they aren't young. It was at the beginning of my sobriety, 17 years ago. Today on our list of A.A. meetings in Poland we have about ten groups in different cities carrying the word "young" in their name. The number of young people in A.A. has significantly increased in recent years. They are welcomed in every meeting, we help them understand what A.A. is and feel comfortable, take care of them, and sponsor them.

When we talk about young members in A.A. we have to mention the convention EURYPAA (European Young People in A.A.) which was held in 2020 in Warsaw. As a result of this international event, in Poland, POLYPAA — a nationwide convention of Poland Young People in A.A. — was created. Its first edition took place in 2021, online. After Covid 19 they started to meet in person, every year in a different place. The convention program is organized in the spirit of the principles on which the A.A. Fellowship is built and reflects these foundations. As they claim, "According to our definition, being young does not depend solely on age. The only condition for membership in A.A. is the desire to stop drinking. We welcome you, no matter how old you are or how long you have been in A.A. We approach A.A. and its message with passion. We want to spread the joy, energy, and love we have experienced by organizing an event like POLYPAA."

At the same time in the public information field, an idea of how to reach young people was raised. Some people were interested in rock music and rock concerts. This is the place where

a huge number of young people spend time. They tried to find out how to implement A.A. in this kind of event. The well-known concert in Poland is the “Pol’and’rock Festival” organized at the former airport. Firstly called Woodstock, this year the 30th anniversary of the festival was celebrated. This is the biggest non-commercial event in Europe. There are no entry tickets for festivalgoers and anyone willing to participate is free to join. The festival is an event open to all, and a place where everyone can experience music and freedom. The motto is: to promote the ideas of tolerance and peace. The festival usually hosts a crowd of over 1,000,000 people, either camping onsite, passing by to see a show, or visiting The Academy of the Finest of Arts (ASP).

“The Academy” is a space where actors, writers, comedians, and other well-known people are interviewed. At the “Academy,” they build a city of tents where non-governmental organizations (such as legal advisors, judges, and university representatives) share their ideas in workshops, lectures, leaflets, and bulletins. Alcoholics Anonymous also asked for permission to present their program of recovery. Members from the region where the Festival was held, asked the Board of Trustees for permission to attend. After a long discussion, they agreed and an organization committee was set up. The trustee asked young people from POLYPAA for help. The committee has prepared the agenda for our activity and sent it to the Pol’and’rock office for acceptance. The main goal was to attract people who have problems with alcohol. The second was to share information with other organizations. A crew of public information and journalists have wondered about all areas for meeting people, talking about A.A., answering the questions. Their skills and commitment to the Pol’and’rock event impressed our members from the board of trustees.

In the program, some A.A. meetings were included with topics such as:

1. Asking for help — weakness or strength.
2. The end of drinking is not the end of life. Connection with life without the bottle.
3. Sex, money, and rock and roll. How do I manage it sober?

After the festival, our members reported: “We had a lot of doubt about the validity of participation in this event because of the legend about drinking alcohol and taking drugs. That was a rock music festival (compared to Woodstock). Now we are sure that it was worth it.

“This is a place pleasant to everybody and every organization. There are no difficult topics. Instead of a few thousand different people, there was acceptance and unity. Even though there were some people drunk, or under the drug influence, we could feel peace and love. In my opinion, this is a great place

to carry the message to still-suffering alcoholics and to share information about A.A.

“Often we’ve heard opinions that we don’t fit the picture many have of alcoholics: sad people lying on the pavement, with red noses, and trembling hands.”

We’ve been there since 2022, this year it was the third time.

In conclusion, we can and should attract young people to A.A., because of their skills, energy, open mind, joy, fun, and creative ideas. They are our future, and “This we owe to A.A.’s future; to place our common welfare first; to keep our fellowship united. For on A.A. unity depend our lives, and the lives of those to come.”

*Izabela — Poland*

## Paths to Embrace the New

### A.A. in a Virtual World

Has the pandemic, and with it the proliferation of online groups that followed, been a curse or a grace? A look at the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, while not answering this question with absolute certainty, can at least give us hope that we can face it without fear.

Who would have thought that one day Bill would become sober and, what’s more, find in Bob the companion he needed to maintain his sobriety and lay the foundations for an association that today boasts some 2 million members with access to a Twelve Step program to enrich their sobriety?

Who would have thought that the first alcoholics, who “are people who normally would not mix,” would manage to remain unified in the face of adversity after gaining access to the Twelve Traditions?

Despite these principles, Bill knew that he and Bob wouldn’t be around forever, and that he needed to ensure their continuity. So, Bill wrote the Twelve Concepts empowering the groups through a structure with a balance of responsibilities between the General Service Conference and the General Service Board.

The introduction of the Twelve Concepts for World Service demonstrates Bill’s vision of the generational challenge these principles could face, but also his confidence in their rigor to meet that eventuality and safeguard the spirit of A.A.

Using a variety of mechanisms and social media, the A.A. community is constantly interconnected and finding new and innovative ways to communicate the A.A. experience, strength and hope for recovery.

In the U.S./Canada, the question hasn’t been whether we accept to integrate them, but how to go about it. We know that, in general, to make a change, we have to go through a period of discomfort. We all are flowers that have grown out of manure. I know a thing or two about that, as I was completely buried in



manure when I arrived at A.A. You, the great gardeners, knew how to bring out the flowers that were lacking air in my heart. And since then, you've never known what to do with me other than to love me by including me in your great bouquet. And so, my heart began to beat and, I dare to believe, to serve A.A. to the best of my knowledge. Why should it be any different with online groups?

With the onset of the pandemic, a new page appeared in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous, a page whose conclusion has yet to be written as the number of virtual groups exploded during the pandemic: in April 2022, 595 groups had already registered with our General Service Office; in June 2023, the registration list showed 1,236 groups and 797 GSRs.

At the 71st General Service Conference, two resolutions relating to online groups were passed. One of them was that "the General Service Board form a committee to study future possibilities for the participation of online groups in the General Service structure of the U.S./Canada."

The committee set to work exploring future possibilities for online group participation in the U.S./Canada General Service structure. This transition brings new and exciting challenges, as well as highlighting the need to open up new perspectives on how to integrate this platform into A.A. life, while respecting our principles.

To understand the development of online meetings and the different approaches to the issue of online group integration, the ad hoc committee drew up an initial survey.

The vast majority of those who responded replied they were participating in both the area and district levels. In general, local participation has adapted mostly positively to the inclusion of online groups. The development of hybrid formats has proved to be an excellent way of maintaining greater participation, while letting groups choose their own path.

The committee evaluated that it might be helpful for local sharing to be compiled by the General Service Office, and that the Group Services desk consider the creation of an A.A. Guide-line to encourage participation and provide shared experience for technological and logistical learned efficiencies.

The feedback from the survey was informative and also highlighted many ongoing questions, such as the need for guidance on what might differentiate an online meeting from a group, the benefits of participating in the service structure, and above all, observing the spirit of the Fourth Tradition by providing options for groups to choose from that feel responsive to their needs.

This transition brings new and exciting challenges, as well as highlighting the need to open up new perspectives on how to integrate this platform into A.A. life. Guided by our 36 spiri-

tual principles, we can fearlessly adjust to the winds of change while remaining sober and unified.

In conclusion, "We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and us. Ask Him in your morning meditation what you can do each day for the man who is still sick. The answers will come, if your own house is in order.... This is the Great Fact for us." (*Alcoholics Anonymous* p.164)

Thank you for the opportunity to present this report, and to be part of the process that will undoubtedly lead us to a successful conclusion.

*Robert L. — U.S./Canada*

## Finding balance between innovations and Traditions

Good morning, my name is Eduardo and I am an alcoholic. I am the second term delegate from Brazil. I am here to talk to you about the relationship between innovation and tradition and the importance of finding a balance.

Achieving and maintaining sobriety fosters the development of a new understanding of the world, in which we define a life purpose aligned with an understanding of reality. Our Fellowship fosters the development of the following skills: to have good communication, to be grateful, to know how to take care of ourselves and others, to live calmly and serenely day by day.

Alcoholics Anonymous is a large global organization, rich in values and very representative of society. In addition to principles, throughout its existence we also see culture and values. Our Twelve Traditions are our foundation, but they do not represent a closed mind. On the contrary, our mind opens up and considers new possibilities for our life together.

Technological innovation is the key to the evolution and sustainable growth of our organization, safeguarding our primary purpose: to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.

Finding the balance between tradition and innovation is not just a strategy, but a necessity to thrive in a dynamic environment. It is the ability to honor the past while building the future. By following this path, the Fellowship will not only be able to survive, but also to flourish in the midst of constant change.

Bill W. realized the need to establish guidelines to guide the Fellowship's internal and external relations in the midst of A.A.'s rapid growth and the need to maintain unity; to create a protection system for the newly created Fellowship and ensure its progress.

Bill began by calling them "Twelve Points to Ensure Our Future Survival." However, some of these points were already traditionally practiced by many A.A. groups that had accumulated experience, so these points came to be called "Traditions."

## Valuing our Traditions

Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole has a rich history, with core values passed down from generation to generation. These traditions set principles and are a remarkable asset as they create and maintain identity, trust and, above all, strong loyalty among our members and friends of A.A.

## Innovation has always been present

Innovation has been present in Alcoholics Anonymous since our founding, when people were using typewriters to produce their own flyers. And it evolved with progress. For us, embracing innovation does not mean abandoning our Traditions, but walking together. New ideas, efficient communication processes and up-to-date technologies are essential, in order to remain relevant in an ever-changing world.

Alcoholics Anonymous has a collective conscience grounded in a program of recovery, where pain is the touchstone of all knowledge. In the experience of our groups, we have created our own methodology that works for millions of people.

The challenge is as follows: Technology is presented as a tool that helps us to fulfill our purpose. How can we help alcoholics? How can we use technology for this?



*Some delegates brought a little bit of home with them in traditional garb.*

To do so, we have to strike a balance between our Traditions and innovation. We have to go further, something similar to the difference between being anonymous and being invisible.

## We must not be invisible.

Here are some examples: In the past, in order to call a district meeting or an area assembly, even when it was a regular meeting already scheduled in the calendar, the secretaries had to send the notice of the meeting by mail, well in advance. If the group or the GSR failed to receive it, due to a problem with the address or mail delivery, the secretaries were blamed.

Today we have agile tools, such as email or applications like WhatsApp, that allow everyone to receive information at the same time. What's more, many meetings are now virtual. With just one device, which can be our own cell phone, we can all participate. And we do this without going against any Tradition. All these new technologies can also be used in study meetings and workshops on various topics.

Brazil knows how to take advantage of these technologies. We are in the age of social networks, which are an extraordinary means of helping those who are looking for us. Therefore, we must learn how to use them. Wherever the innovations that technology makes available to us arrive, A.A. must be present, attentive, with passion and A.A. love.

## How to find the balance

**Respect for our Traditions:** Valuing the legacy left by our co-founders, maintaining the core values and unique culture that define them.

**Openness to change:** Being willing to adapt old methods and processes — most of them in the field of communication — to align with the current demands of the world, without losing the essence of the spiritual principles that underpin our entire structure.

**Leveraging professional resources:** We can introduce new perspectives through external consultants or advisors who bring new ideas, without compromising spiritual values.

**Investment in innovation:** Promoting a culture that encourages experimentation, continuous learning and investment in new technologies. Maintaining and establishing lines of communication for this purpose; but always remembering that A.A. time is different from the time in the world outside A.A.

## Success lies in the harmony between the past and the future

When the Traditions and technological innovation complement each other, A.A. can reach a greater number of alcoholics and perhaps even make our organization grow. Traditions offer stability and identity, while innovation drives growth and the ability to come to up to date, especially among the new generations.

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By finding the right balance, A.A. can honor the legacy of our origins while adapting to the needs of the contemporary world.

We face the exciting challenge of preserving the past while embracing the future!

Let us always remember to maintain anonymity; not to enter into controversies; not to receive external contributions — among other principles that ensure our survival.

And let's also remember that digital media: cell phones, online platforms and computers are no match for hugs, handshakes and kisses.

Thank you very much. I wish you twenty-four hours of serenity and peace.

— Eduardo M., Brazil

## Home Group: Action and Service Derived from Gratitude

### Gratitude in action at the grassroots level is enhanced by having a home group

When I first received this loving invitation, I felt happy and grateful, and I was sure I had a lot of things to say; the second thought — as a genuine alcoholic — was “You don’t deserve this invitation and you don’t have *anything* to say” (all those feelings of self-pity, so I started reading *As Bill Sees It*). Then I asked God to take all those negative feelings and make my heart speak for all those years in A.A. that I am full of gratitude for, the love and support that my sponsor and members gave and continue giving me in my home group.

“How much better it would have been had I felt gratitude rather than self-satisfaction — gratitude that I had once suffered the pains of alcoholism, gratitude that a miracle of recovery had been worked upon me from above, gratitude for the privilege of serving my fellow alcoholics, and gratitude for those fraternal ties which bound me ever closer to them in a comradeship such as few societies of men have ever known.” (*As Bill Sees It*, p.133)

This passage from Bill gets me back to the evening of my first meeting in A.A., which changed my life forever when I first felt the relief of the acceptance that I am an alcoholic.

The first suggestion at the end of the meeting was “Don’t drink and come again” and my first 90 days of meetings started on the 22nd of May in 2016. The frequency of meetings, the sharing of other alcoholics made me feel that I could also be involved in life again and make a new start. At that new beginning, from other members of my home group I received love, compassion and strength to continue going and started, for the first time in my life, feeling gratitude. My heart began to open and selfish thoughts and acts of being possessive and

manipulating were over. After 20 days in the program I was so desperate to be alone with my mind, I couldn’t stand it anymore and I admitted I was “powerless over alcohol — that my life had become unmanageable.” I even asked a woman to sponsor me. It was the best choice of my life to begin taking care of myself.

After six months I started coordinating meetings and after a year I took up a new service position assisting the treasurer of our Greek GSO with the bibliography and taking part in the meetings of our Greek GSO. Throughout the last eight years of sobriety I have never been without service in the Fellowship. As in the Third Step prayer, “God, I offer myself to Thee, to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help with Thy Power, Thy love, and this Way of Life. May I do Thy will always.”

I feel gratitude for the Fellowship, and this is enhanced by having a home group. Those people loved me when I was desperate and weak; they trusted me and gave me the opportunity to take responsibility for services and showed me the way to accept life on life’s terms and get involved in life again.

After two years of participating in my first home group, I started a relationship with a member who is my husband today! I had to leave my home group and find a new one.

This was difficult for me, as the program suggests having different groups. Denial came up on the front page; “Why me...? Why do I have to change?” But my Higher Power gave me the solution: a new group was founded near my house, so I got involved in this group which now has become my home group and being involved there, I created new fellowship connections and a safe environment for me and my sobriety. This group is now five years old and the gratitude and love I share with other members is received and appreciated.

Members of my home group responded to the loving invitation to share how they feel about the group:

**Stamatina, 77 days in the program:** “I feel gratitude for belonging in this group, for these beloved hugs that I had deprived myself of.”

**Jacob, six months:** “I received love and knowledge from fellow members, and I am extremely grateful to them even though I am not giving back as much as I would like to, because occasionally, I forget that I am an alcoholic and therefore, selfish.”

**Marisa, three years:** “When I came to A.A., I was terrified but when I found my home group, I felt gratitude for being involved with other members and felt safe. I became more active with services and finally found a constant reference point when I was insecure with my feelings. Fellows make me feel accepted — an acceptance that I didn’t have until now.”



"The stability of the group provides a rhythm to continue in my life."

**George, four years:** "It is important for me to have a home group with the same persons, common problems. My home group is the first commitment and relationship in my life that makes me feel secure and trains me to learn about myself."

**Maria, seven years:** "I am grateful to the Fellowship of A.A. which gave me the opportunity to lead my life with peace and serenity. I learn how to become responsible through commitment and service. My faith in the Fellowship does for me what I couldn't do for myself."

**Nana, 13 years:** "'Gratitude' was the word that unlocked the door to sobriety and spirituality after three years of relapses. Gratitude in action for me is attending meetings, service, sponsorship and showing love and compassion toward members. This is the way to return this gift to my home group and the whole of A.A., which I keep on doing unconditionally."

"The commitment, the faith in a Higher Power, to be present in services and take part in meetings, no matter who is going to be in a meeting, for me this is gratitude in action at the grass-roots level which is enhanced by having a home group. The home group makes me feel part of the Fellowship."

This quote from *As Bill Sees It* (p. 155) describes the Fellowship as a cathedral: "On its great floor we have inscribed our Twelve Steps of recovery. On the side walls, the buttresses of the A.A. Traditions have been set in place to contain us in unity for as long as God may will it so. Eager hearts and hands have lifted the spire of our Cathedral into its place. That spire bears the name of service. May it ever point straight upward toward God."

Service makes me get involved in a healthier way with other people and be an active and trustworthy person in the Fellowship. The Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions and the Twelve Concepts strengthen me as a person, and I have to give it back!

*Stamatina — Greece*

## Are we encouraging newcomers to serve by letting them know that they will share tasks with other A.A. members?

Before talking about service to newcomers in Finland we have to face a few phenomena that appear in the life of today. Newcomers of today are often not willing to commit themselves to anything else, but to go to the meetings. To do things together is not the way people live today; the world has changed. Many people spend hours by the screen, they communicate via cellular

phones and computers and when meeting each other in cafes, many have their phones on the table and when taking pictures they take mostly selfies. The pandemic isolated many people and especially the young ones, who already had difficulties in social contacts, becoming even more introverted. Staying alone caused problems with alcohol and drugs and the problem could be hidden when there was nobody to live with and to see it.

When these alcoholics contact A.A., we try to induce them to attend the meetings and create the atmosphere in the spirit of Tradition Three: "The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking," so that we would not be too intruding. Everyday life has changed a lot in the last twenty years and what used to be a privilege in A.A. — chairing the meeting, having the keys to the meeting rooms, making coffee, etc. — is now being seen more or less as a hindrance. I try sometimes when sharing and there is a newcomer present to talk about my own experience and how it helped me to have the key to the meeting room and to make the coffee almost immediately when entering A.A., so that I got a feeling of belonging to the group. Many alcoholics have the feeling of not belonging but to get a newcomer doing duties with others can make the loneliness disappear. It has been heard among newcomers that they wonder why they should serve; it is like giving something away from themselves and they think that instead of giving away, they need to get something back as they are in a poor condition when entering A.A.

They are not selfish; they only follow the way of making decisions. For example, when getting an invitation to a party, many youngsters cannot decide whether to go or not, as there could be a better invitation later on. One example is a young person, who goes on her holidays and is not willing to book the flight back — "I might want to travel a bit more." Then the whole holiday goes on wondering whether she should go home or continue to travel. What causes this phenomenon of indetermination has been examined in the department of social psychology at the University of Helsinki as it can be seen as a social problem as it makes young people's life more difficult and in certain ways affects the society too. Having these things in mind — the way many are conducted by the tendencies of today and the willingness to wait for something better — we in A.A. should do our best to show how we got balanced by accepting the facts in our life and also show how by committing us to service we get better equilibrium and more meaning to continue living a sober life. Our attitude in A.A. is very important: if we are not committed to serve, we cannot expect the newcomers to take any tasks. Unfortunately, in Finland the willingness to serve in A.A. is sinking, and maybe that is why we have created a slogan: "We are more together" ("*Yhdessä olemme enemmän*").

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To encourage newcomers, we need to be firm without being too harsh and show them the way A.A. functions. In A.A. literature we find many stories of A.A. members who have found a new meaningful life, and in all those stories we can see how the A.A. community has helped a drinking and desperate person to be sober and find a new life. There are no stories of a drinking person finding a sober life just by herself.

When we talk to a newcomer, we are doing A.A. work; we are serving and when the newcomer tells his story, he serves us by keeping us sober. Committing oneself to do more concrete service is just to take one step forward. We should not be too ambitious and give too much advice, as we could cause more harm than good. It has been said many times in A.A., "Our leaders lead by their example." To make a favorable influence we should follow what we are recommending: a good, quiet example speaks for itself. We should remember that a newcomer cannot see himself and A.A. as whole, but by staying and letting a person slowly take the first steps and, when sobering up, encourage him to go forward, do some tasks and let him feel how he becomes a member of A.A. Only those, who serve, know how it not only benefits the sobriety, but gives so much, that it is not possible to describe it to a person, who has never tried to serve.

To answer the question "Are we encouraging newcomers to serve by letting them know that they will share the tasks with other A.A. members?" I would maybe answer "No," as there is always something more we can do, but as the slogan says, "We are more together."

Laura K. — Finland

## To Serve — A Debt of Gratitude

### **A.A. saved my life: how do I give back to that which was so freely given to me?**

Good morning, my name is Miguel and I'm an alcoholic. I was asked to share my experience on: "A.A. saved my life: how do I give back to that which was so freely given to me?" and sharing the reason I've accepted it immediately is sharing all about this wonderful topic.

I came to A.A. full of paralyzing fears, most of them lived in me since I can remember. The fear of what others thought about me, the fear of doing things in a way that others might not like or approve, the fear of not being good enough... Some of the characteristics that would define me as a low self-esteem person, led me into drinking alcohol when I was around thirteen or fourteen years old. That magical substance made me, at the time, overcome all my deepest fears, allowed me to relate with others in a way I thought was impossible, and gave

me this false belief that it would always be there for me, to help me in every possible situation.

Far from my understanding was the fact that those monsters that alcohol was keeping away from me were at the same time being fed and growing inside, and alcohol itself was also becoming a monster that would soon reveal itself.

So, the time had come when I could not use alcohol anymore to overcome those frightened-to-death fears, because alcohol itself had become frightening-to-death. As stated in the Big Book, that was the time when I became unable to imagine life either with or without alcohol. The time when only death seemed able to solve my problem.

But then A.A. came into my life.

At first, it took away the urge for a drink when I was close to A.A. members, and the feeling around this was indescribable, a feeling of gratitude took over and another urge came up: the urge for helping people.

Soon I was proposed to serve the tea and coffee at my home group, and new fears came to light: would I remember who asked for tea and who asked for coffee? If I had to ask again, I would show my imperfection... Would I be able to serve without disturbing the meeting? Would I...? Would I...?

And then I forgot who asked for what, and I realized it was ok. And then I've somehow disturbed the meeting, and it was also ok. And then I started to believe that everything would be ok.

This feeling that everything would be ok came to stay, the faith in the A.A. program came to stay, and a new life, a life worth living, came to stay.

But this well-being faded about five or six years later, when I started to think that I was doing service in A.A. to give back to others what A.A. had given to me — and only for that reason — doing service with a sense of gratitude and obligation, not realizing that giving back was the only way I had to keep the sobriety I was being given.

At that time, I decided to not take any service position because I needed to focus on my profession, and at that point I almost relapsed, and even if I had never stopped attending A.A. meetings, I had become unable to admit my unmanageability and therefore, unable to work all the other eleven Steps.

When I realized where I was standing, how miserable my life had become again, it scared me and made me call for help at my home group again, telling the group at a service meeting that I was again available to serve, whatever the group thought I should be doing.

And immediately the group elected me as secretary, and immediately my life started to make sense again, and immediately my wellbeing started to improve.

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Since then, I've never tried to choose a service position, never again have I said I would not do something in A.A., never again have I placed secondary issues at the front of my life — my main purpose is staying sober one day at a time.

I've realized A.A. knows better than me how I can be of use to others, to the still-suffering alcoholic. And the most important thing was realizing that, no matter how many years I have being sober in A.A., no matter how many service positions I've been in, that still-suffering alcoholic is also me, when I fail to work the Steps, when I fail to give back what was so freely given to me.

So, back to the point where I've started — I immediately accepted the invitation to share about this topic, not because I was comfortable or knew what to say, but because I cannot say no to A.A., no matter what's being asked, no matter how big the fear I'm facing with my answer.

*Miguel L. — Portugal*

## Expressing our gratitude through service

Dear attendees of the 28th World Service Meeting, alcoholics and nonalcoholic friends. It is a blessing for me to share on the topic proposed to me. By the grace of God, I can be here today and express the awareness of my community and myself as an Alcoholics Anonymous member. This is how I introduce myself at meetings. Why? Because I recognize that I carry the disease, and the program of the 36 principles is fundamental, or "key," as our literature states. And indeed, it is! Just now, while writing and navigating the Grapevine website, I calculated my sobriety time: 34 years, 6 months, and 16 days — 12,619 days by the time I finish this sharing. A whole lifetime!

I was assigned to write about Gratitude. When I reflect on a topic, I first clarify the meaning of the words. I defined "Express": to convey through words or gestures what one intends.

"Gratitude": a feeling of debt or acknowledgment toward someone from whom one has received something valuable. And "Service": the action of performing a task for someone.

Sharing a bit of my story, when I needed help with my alcohol problem, I first received a service. Someone was waiting for my request to provide it. There was a community of people who, as a way of functioning, communicated to those in need that there was a way out, a solution to this serious problem. For me, it was my father, also an Alcoholics Anonymous member, who first conveyed that message. He gave me life once, and he did so again by showing me the way and passing on the message. Thus, he became my first sponsor— "a father that one chooses," in my understanding.

The journey was not easy, but I always had resources at hand, generously provided by the community, to grow and move forward. Time brought effects to my recovery, and the Twelve Steps served as my guide, my "Roadmap." Over time, I realized that "the right and perfect" was at work in my life. By placing my life in the hands of a Higher Power (which is God for me today) and letting the "Spirit of A.A." into my circumstances, what is stated in our Twelfth Step would be fulfilled: "in all my affairs."

I would like to revisit part of Dr. Bob's words about why he served. He spoke of four reasons:

1. A sense of duty.
2. It is a pleasure.
3. By doing so, I am repaying my debt to the man who took the time to pass it on to me.
4. Because each time I do it, I secure myself a little more against a possible relapse.

At the beginning of my recovery, I understood "Service" as something suggested to help others and, therefore, to benefit myself. I complied without question. I believe this helped me be receptive and fully benefit from it. Over time, I realized that I was actually practicing and rehearsing how to be useful in all aspects of my life; I applied it in the community through service tasks, and gradually it transferred to the rest of my life. I began to find pleasure in "doing what I had to do." This was enriching me as a person.

Service became a vital and integral part of my life. Those tasks could be: opening the group, preparing the table, coordinating a meeting, collaborating in support committees for activities, assisting in public information tasks, posting flyers in public places, and actively participating in all meetings I could, sharing strength and hope. There was always some task where I could ultimately serve, be useful, and be part of it.

I arrived at the community feeling a sense of "uselessness," which made me feel bad in many circumstances. Through service, performing tasks for others, I began to understand that I could be a useful person. This was a very important change for me.

I must mention the idea of "being part." Having felt so alienated for so long, integrating into the community was part of my healing process. As I went through my "natural" life processes — responsibilities and roles — I realized that A.A. was preparing me "for better and for worse." This was a value given to me without asking anything in return through Service.

Thus, being a son, friend, husband, father, citizen, and A.A. member allowed me to live through our recovery principles. And it has never failed.





*Even amid a demanding schedule, delegates found time for reflection and thoughtful contemplation of the powerful purpose of the WSM.*

Getting to know myself, understanding the disease, and discovering aspects of myself that I had no idea about were among the gifts promised to me if I stayed and continued on this path. A.A. opened doors to every opportunity for improvement to help me continue growing. It was reassuring to know I would understand and accept both the lights and shadows of my being. If I worked on my defects and enhanced my virtues, I could offer myself to others in the way my Higher Power had reserved for me. Alcoholism, as a disease, is incurable and leads to madness and death. Such a sentence is not easy to reverse; I would almost say it's "impossible." But I am no longer alone, and with the help of all my brothers and sisters in the disease, the impossible is becoming possible. As our Daily Reflections reading on January 1st states: "I am a miracle."

One of the resources the disease uses to survive in me is Ego or Egocentrism. I learned that Service is a highly effective antidote to combat it, fulfilling any task to be part of a whole and help those still suffering. I always seek sponsorship before taking on a service role. I do not start it without having that support. In particular, regarding this role of general custodian with a global delegate profile, I consulted my community mentors before applying to see if they, knowing me well, believed I

could be useful in this service. I was ready to hear any response.

For me, the debt allows me to be responsible. Following the meanings of the words, to express responsibility is to "give a response" and take charge. The truth is that every time I take action in this, I realize that I end up being the main beneficiary. The effect goes directly to my recovery, which today translates into my growth and development.

I have always felt that there would be opportunities somewhere for me to continue taking charge and being responsible for my debt. A dear companion in my country says he will never be able to repay the debt he owes to A.A. At most, he is paying "interest." I keep this in mind.

Not long ago, a companion shared a concept he had learned that stuck with me: "Service does not choose the qualified; it qualifies the chosen." Like everything I've learned in A.A. and continue learning every day, these ideas are pieces of a puzzle that fit perfectly as I follow this path of learning and development.

This is why I understood that "the teacher arrives when the disciple is prepared." In my case, participating in service is now part of my life. Gratitude is a way of living that I have also incorporated into my recovery. Some say it is a way to be happy and

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appreciate life as it is. I confirm this. That is why I constantly thank God for being alive, on this path of recovery, under the 36 principles of AA, and being part of a whole.

In conclusion, I ask myself the following questions:

How could I not serve?!!

How could I not be grateful?!!

How could I not do my part by the grace and inspiration of God so that others receive what was given to me with total generosity and love?

Therefore, I must dedicate a chapter to all those members who have given of themselves to allow me to be with you today, expressing gratitude through service. I am thankful to all who collaborated from their positions and according to their abilities. All are motivated by love for the community; they are examples and inspirations for me.

As Bill W. expresses in *The Language of the Heart*: "Let us consider for a moment the individual member of A.A. Faith alone does not save him. He must act; he must do something. He must carry his message to others, practice the principles of A.A. in all his affairs. If he does not do so, he will relapse, wither, and die. Each A.A. group, as such, must also function; it must do something. It must serve its assigned purpose; if not, it too will wither and disintegrate."

Thus, the great, simple, and powerful maxim: Serving is Living.

And as the great Chilean poet said, "Thanks to Life, which has given me so much."

I reaffirm that I am grateful to A.A. for giving me a full life, and I want my gratitude to be reflected in my service.

Daniel B. — Uruguay

## How to choose the right service for me. Is it what I like to do or am good at? Or will it help me grow as a person?

My name is René F. and I am an alcoholic from the Czech Republic. Thank you for the possibility to speak about this fascinating topic. I promise I'll keep it brief and to the point, as we A.A.s are supposed to when sharing: no philosophy, no theories, me and my experience. But please allow me at the very beginning just a short general statement: while there isn't a universally agreed-upon "natural ratio" for people willing to go the extra mile versus those who aren't, some psychological and behavioral studies suggest that a smaller percentage of people consistently go above and beyond in various aspects of life — whether at work, in personal relationships, or in community service. This idea can be linked to concepts like the *Pareto Principle* (also

known as the 80/20 rule), which suggests that roughly 20% of people or efforts often produce 80% of the results in many systems. While it's not a hard and fast rule, it implies that a smaller subset of people typically takes on more of the initiative or responsibility.

Personality traits, motivation, and external factors (like environment and culture) influence this as well. In teams or organizations, you'll often find a mix of people with varying levels of commitment and enthusiasm, but those who consistently go the extra mile tend to be in the minority. And that's more or less exactly what we see in Czechia — with membership around 1,500 (my humble estimate) there are about 200 serving in our committees, as secretaries, etc. The same faces rotating around — you know what I mean...

In my case it was very simple — the service chose me. Or perhaps my higher power did. Or, most importantly, a quite logical sequence of events took place. I started to go to A.A. meetings in September 2015, after decades of heavy drinking, after rehab and a number of lapses. And in January 2016 I attended the first General Service Conference, and still being the big mouth from my drinking days (oh these old habits...).

I couldn't resist and commented on just about everything they said. I'm a translator by profession and that's why I found a "mistake" on almost every page of the Big Book, which we call "The Blue Book." So here I am, a freshly dry know-it-all from a small township in Eastern Bohemia, giving advice to the Literature Committee... And guess what? I had come as an ordinary delegate and left as the Committee member. And I have loved the assignment ever since. Because it was exactly my cup-patea. Because I could learn about "the other side" of the book making business: the licenses, the proofreading process, the print works — all the stuff. But mainly because I could learn humility. Long gone were the days when I thought they had been doing lousy work. Nothing is as simple as it seems in publishing A.A. literature, right...?

From then on it ran quite smoothly — Organization Committee, Service Conference moderator, National Delegate and finally Board member. And all that time I've had countless moments to remind myself of how misguided my self-perception can be. I had been a consultant previously, time was money — no space for blah blah, say your thing and shut up, now let's move on. So, the A.A. horizontal structure, where nobody leads and everybody has the right to express their views, without being limited, and the voting system, where those opposed explain why they were against — I can tell you that gave me a really hard time. But again: after cooling down it gave me the chance to realize how long my journey towards humility still was. And THAT has been helping me to grow as a person. I've

been always more than happy to translate our texts. I've become used to the licensing process (now much better thanks to the online tools), I've even started to like long discussions with my A.A. friends on boring, but important topics — but what service actually gives me is the possibility to work on myself. Service doesn't make me a better translator, or interpreter, or teacher, but it does, or will (all fingers crossed) change me into a better person. And that makes me grateful squared — not just for the fact I've been sober since I joined A.A., but also for the opportunity to move forward mentally and spiritually.

*René F. — Czechia*

## Diversity in A.A.: Our Heritage of Inclusion

### Anonymity as a spiritual principle — we are all equal in A.A.

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts with you about anonymity as a fundamental principle for our fellowship and recovery.

### Understanding Anonymity

In Tradition One, it is written, "Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity." Anonymity is the first principle in A.A. and remains one of the most profound. In essence, anonymity means that our personal welfare is secondary to the shared goal of sobriety. This principle protects both the individual and the group, ensuring that our focus remains on recovery and cooperation through the sharing of experience.

### The Spiritual Foundation of Anonymity

Anonymity serves as the spiritual foundation of our Fellowship in several ways:

1. **Humility:** Humility is a crucial element in both individual recovery and the survival of the Fellowship. It helps to subdue the ego and reminds us that we are all equal members of A.A. regardless of personal stories or backgrounds.
2. **Unity:** Anonymity fosters unity within our groups. By removing personal recognition and distinctions, the A.A. message remains the primary focus. This unity is vital to our collective strength and the effectiveness of our mutual support.
3. **Selflessness:** Practicing anonymity is an act of selflessness. It requires setting aside the desire for recognition and personal gain and focusing on the well-being of others. This selfless attitude forms a solid foundation for our spiritual growth and recovery.

4. **Safety:** Anonymity provides a safe space for all members. Ensuring that A.A. remains a welcoming environment for anyone seeking help is crucial.

### Practicing Anonymity

When sharing in meetings, I always focus on my experience and hope rather than personal achievements or praise.

In service, I have received tremendous benefits as an A.A. member by serving others in A.A. without seeking recognition. However, when I attend fellowship gatherings that are not in any service capacity, I still find myself battling with the small personal failing of approval-seeking.

### The Japanese Societal Context

Perhaps due to the social norms of Japan, such as the desire to follow the rules, the desire for uniformity, and the aversion to taking risks, it seems that there are few cases of major anonymous breaks. There is also a tendency to interpret the Traditions in an excessively broad way, and to see them as rules.

For example, I would like to share an experience involving the National Corrections and Treatment Facilities Forum, hosted by the General Service Board, held last December in Okinawa and seek your opinions and feedback. The organizing committee members were featured in a local newspaper with a photo to promote the event. As you might imagine, this led to a lively discussion at the hosting district committee meeting on how to interpret "anonymity at the public level."

The trustee responsible for correctional facilities and the public information trustee joined the district committee meeting virtually. The district's conscience was "As a rule, do not post your picture in the media," "Reaffirm at each event about anonymity."

Additionally, at this year's 29th A.A. Japan General Service Conference, it was recommended that "the General Service Board should promote awareness of the Anonymity Letter," and the Trustees' Public Information Committee has already placed a statement on the JSO website regarding the treatment of A.A. members in the media.

### In Conclusion

When I first joined A.A., I was deeply confused by the concepts of anonymity and equality, which were so different from the societal norms I had known. Ultimately, I am incredibly grateful that I came to understand that anonymity is not just a guideline.

Anonymity has become a spiritual path, leading me to humility, unity, and equality.

As it says in Chapter 11 of the Big Book, "A Vision for You," on page 235: "No one is too discredited or has sunk too low to be welcomed cordially — if he means business."



"Social distinctions, petty rivalries and jealousies — these are laughed out of countenance. Being wrecked in the same vessel, being restored and united under one God, with hearts and minds attuned to the welfare of others, the things which matter so much to some people no longer signify much to them. How could they?"

Anonymity reminds us that we are all equal members of a united Fellowship of anonymous alcoholics on our journey to sobriety. By embracing anonymity, we cultivate an environment of acceptance, understanding, and shared purpose, ensuring that A.A. remains a refuge and a place of hope for all who seek it. I am grateful for this.

Thank you for allowing me to share these thoughts with you today. My spiritual awakening has come slowly over time. Through the experience of giving without expecting anything in return, I have received the priceless gift of a new awareness and existence. This program has reached me across the seas. Although I am a university graduate, I am unable to read or speak English well. Next year, Japan will hold its 50th anniversary convention. It has been 45 years since the Japanese translation of the Big Book was published. I am deeply grateful for the passion and service of those pioneers who were involved in the publication of the first Japanese Big Book, as well as for the financial support provided by the General Service Board of the United States and Canada at that time (of course, all funds were fully repaid). That book saved my life!

I look forward to hearing your thoughts and experiences on this important principle.

Let us continue to uphold the spirit of anonymity and equality within our Fellowship.

*Nori I. — Japan*

## Are we truly inclusive with atheists and agnostics?

Hello everyone, my name is Marie-Paule, and I am an alcoholic. What a privilege to be asked to speak on the topic "Are we truly inclusive with atheists and agnostics?"

Thank you for asking for my perspective, even though I must admit, after much research, I am left not knowing if we *are* truly inclusive or even if it is possible to be truly inclusive. I hope it will catch your interest and that you will bring it back to your conferences, to your intergroups, to your districts and to your groups. It is important to bring awareness and open people's reflections on the topic of inclusion.

The theme implies for me a question I need to ask myself: "Can secular members of the A.A. Fellowship feel welcomed by me? Do they know, through the message I pass, that I am not

judging them and that they truly have the right to be in A.A. as the short version of the Third Tradition of Alcoholics Anonymous states: "That the only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking"?"

I talked to people who confirmed that it was not an easy journey for them to feel included. They understood that they would only get sober if they had God in their life.

They thought that they were not good A.A. members because they could not believe in the same way it is described in our method. They imagined there was something wrong with them. They had to find their own way of making peace with this concept to find their place in the rooms of A.A. They often remained silent about it because indeed there were incidents where they were aggressed verbally and chased from the room for their way of seeing things. But they knew A.A. was the last house on the road for them and they choose to stay. Yet these people do great service work, are very involved, and have years of sobriety.

When they felt a source of moral guidance, love and wisdom, they were able to give their own meaning to the Steps, even where the word God was used. Along the way they also found people, often a sponsor, who played a big role in helping them receive the miraculous benefits of this program. These people emphasized to them the Third Tradition, that the most important thing is not to pick up a drink one day after another, that alcohol is stronger than they are, that the consequences of drinking have made life unmanageable, that they need to be kind, tolerant, honest, and loving, to recognize their faults and do what is necessary to repair them, to be of service, to learn to change their behaviors and their attitude and to apply the principles of the program. This is a good start for people who are struggling with the concept of God to help them get out of self-centeredness. I would say that they benefited from the slogan "Live and Let Live."

I was made aware by the General Service Office (GSO), of a group in France, which uses the term "Higher Power" when they read the Steps. An A.A. member wanted to know if this group followed the Traditions. I contacted the World Service Office (WSO) with this question, and this is the answer I received. They based it on the Fourth Tradition: "Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole." The only way this group would be breaking this Tradition is if they printed a new version of the Steps and diffused it. By reading them and using Higher Power instead of God, they are not breaking the Fourth Tradition. I later discovered that this group was created for agnostics, believers and atheists; all are welcome.

I do have experiences as a sponsor of members who have problems with the word God. This is either because they are in-

credibly mad at God, for theirs and the suffering in the world, or for others, because they have been so indoctrinated to believe that they and their behaviors are shameful in the eyes of God. This has left them with low self-esteem, guilt and inability to accept themselves as they are and their goodness.

To address this topic today, it does not matter if I am a believer or not. It matters that I do not impose my views onto others with my convictions. The principles of the program are loving. Our founders looked again and again for ways to accommodate people who might leave just because the word God is mentioned. In the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous, they describe it in many ways — Supreme Being, Creative Intelligence, Spirit of the Universe underlying the totality of things, Him, the Realm of Spirit, our own conception of God, Power Greater than myself, All Powerful Guiding Intelligence, Spirit of the Universe, Infinite Power and Love, the Father of Light, our Director, a New Employer, our Creator, etc. If this is the base of our program, it is because it is necessary to realize that self-reliance is what failed to get us sober. Otherwise, we would have done it a long time ago. Which logically means that we need to rely on something else.

To come and speak to you I did a Fourth Step on the question. I realized that I am not judging others' beliefs, but I see others as a threat to my safety when they have other ways of being, thinking, acting and believing, no matter what the topic might be. Can I remain safe when people practice the program differently than I do? The answer needs to be a resounding YES in order to practice being inclusive. It reminds me of something my sponsor said: "That if I am afraid that I won't get what I want (in this case that people agree with me) I am not believing that I am always cared for by God." This in a way makes me an agnostic even if I believe in a Power greater than myself.

To conclude I would like to leave you with the words that Bill W. wrote in 1965: "We have atheists and agnostics. We have people of nearly every race, culture and religion.

"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." ("The 'God' Word," page 5)

When we are inclusive as much as possible, it gives a chance to people to relate to what is being said. I can keep this in mind

as the newcomer, or the old-timer, join a meeting so that they can feel as they are finally home and have hope that they too can get sober.

*Marie-Paule M. — French-speaking Europe*

## How can groups help alcoholics with mental disorders and stay safe for everyone?

My name is Aris Ramos, and I am a Class A Trustee representing the Southern Zone of Central America (Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama). Since the beginning of my training as a resident doctor in psychiatry, I have felt a great love for this beautiful community. As a student I had early access to the knowledge of Alcoholics Anonymous, which led me to choose the specialty of psychiatry and addiction medicine.

Today, as a member of the American Psychiatric Association (APA), the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and the World Association of Dual Disorders (WADD), based in Madrid, I constantly seek to nourish myself with the latest studies.

According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, an estimated 283 million people worldwide will be living with an alcohol use disorder or alcoholism by 2021.

According to the American Psychiatric Association, alcoholism can interact with other psychiatric disorders, particularly mood disorders such as depression and bipolar affective disorder, as well as anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorders. The medical literature also refers to other comorbid psychiatric disorders such as personality disorders, psychoses, cognitive impairments (formerly called dementias), as well as suicidal and violent behaviors.

The term dual pathology is currently used for people suffering from an addictive disorder such as alcoholism along with another mental disorder. These problems, according to research, can occur sequentially or simultaneously throughout life.

Dual pathology is considered to be more the rule than the exception, and studies indicate that up to seventy percent of people who develop alcoholism may have a comorbid psycho-emotional condition or psychiatric illness.

The relationship between alcoholism and other mental disorders is complex and can develop in three ways:

1. the mental disorder may precede and increase the risk of alcoholism.
2. alcoholism may precede and increase the risk of developing a mental disorder.
3. mental disorder and alcoholism can develop independently due to common risk factors.

Compared to patients with a single disorder, patients with dual pathology of alcoholism and other psychiatric pathology experience more emergency room admissions, increased hospitalization rates, high prevalence of suicide, high relapse rates, and early mortality.

Alcoholic individuals who attend Alcoholics Anonymous groups but have dual pathology or psychiatric comorbidity often share with their sponsor or a group member about their condition, which should not be an impediment, as long as they remain stabilized.

From my perspective as a mental health specialist, I believe that group members can be offered help in many different ways. Of the following points, the first four are based on my observations of the A.A. Traditions.

1. Members of Alcoholics Anonymous should be clear that anyone can suffer from the disease of alcoholism, including the mentally disturbed.
2. No A.A. member should take on the role of doctor, since all assessment and treatment should be obtained from a qualified physician; however, we can reinforce adherence to medication and monitoring with the mental health specialists of the person affected by the two conditions.
3. We should avoid labeling members as addicted to “pills” if they have a mental disorder and have a treatment supervised by qualified physicians. This encourages the member to abandon their treatment with consequences that can range from suicide to psychotic symptoms in cases of major mental disorders (such as schizophrenia or bipolar affective disorder).
4. Direct confrontation should be avoided from the podium (e.g., in the case of a member suffering from major depression, this may cause the member to leave the group, or in the case of a paranoid member, it may cause a violent reaction).
5. Confidentiality must be respected in case the member is stable and decides not to share his/her condition with the rest of the group.
6. If the member with dual pathology shares that he/she is planning to commit suicide, family members should be contacted, and the member should be taken to an emergency room for hospitalization by mental health teams.
7. In open meetings, family members should be invited to learn more about strategies that can help in the case of a nervous breakdown.
8. The A.A. groups are based on a program of mutual support, one alcoholic helping another.

They should have emergency telephone numbers and main-

tain communication with the mental health teams near their area or zone, this will allow for fluid attention and quick responses.

Within the literature of Alcoholics Anonymous, we find the pamphlet published by AAWS in 2018 titled “A.A. for alcoholics with mental health problems — and their sponsors,” which shares stories of people with drinking problems, as well as mental health problems, that reflect their experience, strength and hope. The booklet also has a foreword on medication with suggestions for the member taking medication and the inherent risks if not supervised by a specialist.

In conclusion, regardless of whether the patient suffers from a mental or psycho-emotional disorder, if he or she is regulated and stable, and has the cognitive capacity to be able to take part in the activities offered by Alcoholics Anonymous, as members of this beautiful Fellowship we are called to fulfill the Third Legacy of Service.

*Aris Ramos — Southern Zone of Central America*

## Country-to-Country Sponsorship

### Face-to-Face sponsorship

Greetings to all my dear friends. My name is Amir and I am an alcoholic. It is my honor to be the second term delegate of Iran at the 28th World Service Meeting and to have been given the opportunity to share my experiences with you for a few minutes. I am very pleased, from the deep of my heart, that this opportunity was provided for me, and for that, I thank God and sincerely thank the servants of this meeting.

In the invitation sent to me, I was asked to share about “Face-to-face sponsorship.” So, let me start with a quote from the Big Book in the foreword to the second edition, page XVI:

Prior to his journey to Akron, the broker had worked hard with many alcoholics on the theory that only an alcoholic could help an alcoholic, but he had succeeded only in keeping sober himself. The broker had gone to Akron on a business venture which had collapsed, leaving him greatly in fear that he might start drinking again. He suddenly realized that in order to save himself he must carry his message to another alcoholic. That alcoholic turned out to be the Akron physician.

This physician had repeatedly tried spiritual means to resolve his alcoholic dilemma but had failed. But when the broker gave him Dr. Silkworth’s description of alcoholism and its hopelessness, the physician began to pursue the spiritual remedy for his malady with a willingness he had never before been able to muster. He sobered, never to drink again up to the moment of his death in 1950. This seemed



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to prove that one alcoholic could affect another as no non-alcoholic could. It also indicated that strenuous work, one alcoholic with another, was vital to permanent recovery.

As mentioned above, this subject shows the amazing effect of one alcoholic's message to another alcoholic. And only an alcoholic can understand another alcoholic well, because alcoholism has caused us alcoholics to sometimes behave similarly, and this causes us to identify with each other in meetings.

Now I want to talk a little about sponsorship and as stated in the pamphlet "Questions & Answers on Sponsorship." Alcoholics Anonymous began with sponsorship. When Bill W., only a few months sober, was stricken with a powerful urge to drink, this thought came to him: "You need another alcoholic to talk to. You need another alcoholic just as much as he needs you!" .... And he found Dr. Bob, who had been trying desperately and unsuccessfully to stop drinking, and out of their common need A.A. was born.

Many years have passed since Ebby T.'s visit to Bill in the fall of 1934, and during this time the message of Alcoholics Anonymous has reached many countries, penetrating borders and, regardless of language, race, culture, religion, skin color, etc., the message of A.A. has reached all corners of the world.

In Iran, A.A. was introduced years before the meetings were established, and the memoirs of one of the Seagoing A.A.s (the so-called Internationalists), are an example of this statement. Robert Lee M., who passed through Abadan (a port city in Iran) in November 1950 with the S.S. Stanvac ship, shows that the A.A. message came to Iran years before I was born. But the history of the first A.A. meetings in Iran goes back to the early '90s when some A.A. members who lived outside of Iran brought this message with them when they traveled to Iran.

Today, thanks to God, Alcoholics Anonymous has grown a lot in Iran and many meetings are being held. We deliver the message face-to-face, online and hybrid. We have messaging committees and in addition to committee work, this process is also going on individually. Most A.A. members, in line with the work of the Twelfth Step, are transmitting the message of A.A. and we usually transmit the message face-to-face, because we think that in this method, the message is understood through skin and bones. This method makes it possible to use other senses as well, and the good feeling of hugging a sympathetic friend will bring extra energy to the parties. Of course, nowadays, with the advancement of technology, we have benefited a lot from online meetings. For example, in Iran, where A.A. is entering puberty, this online environment has helped us a lot. With the start of the spread of Covid-19 in the world, online meetings were unintentionally imposed on us, and at first we made many efforts to reject this approach because we felt that

this type of communication lacked soul. But as time went by, our prejudices about it lessened and we held not only recovery meetings, but also many conventions online and were able to connect with countless alcoholics around the world. This led to the progress of A.A. in Iran.

But with all the help that the online environment has given us, I think that the communication between the sponsor and the sponsored is more effective in person and face-to-face if possible. Especially when working the Steps, because when we are together and in a peaceful environment, we feel safe and calm, and this causes us to receive God's message more effectively in our hearts.

Another advantage of face-to-face sponsorship is to prevent the power seeking and personalization of some members. In this way, equality and anonymity are shared among the members, and the rotation principle is observed in the Twelfth Step.

One of the problems that exists in our country is that some members gain power in the meetings due to having a large number of sponsees, and this problem manifests itself in the group conscience and in the business meetings and causes the spirit of democracy to disappear. Instead of fulfilling God's will, the personal will of some members can be advanced.

I think that the transmission of the A.A. message should be a combination of publications and personal experiences and focus on shared experience, strength and hope.

Regardless of the form of sponsorship, be it face-to-face, online or hybrid, the important thing is that we have to deliver this message. In addition, as a member of the big family of Alcoholics Anonymous, we have a duty to generously deliver the gift that has been given to us for free to alcoholics who still suffer. We have to stay in this cycle and have sponsorship as part of the Fellowship and be in daily contact with both our sponsor and the sponsored and this contact can be face-to-face, by phone call or online.

And finally, I will end my speech with a quote from the Big Book, chapter 2, page 17: "The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way out on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in brotherly and harmonious action. This is the great news this book carries to those who suffer from alcoholism."

*Amir S. — Iran*

## Online Sponsorship

My name is Radoslava S., and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is February 22, 2015 and I currently serve as International Delegate First Term and member of the General Service Board (GSB) of A.A. Bulgaria since 2023. I bring you warm greetings

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from A.A. Bulgaria. Thank you very much for the invitation to prepare this presentation.

I am delighted to be with you today and to share with you the Bulgarian experience in online sponsorship.

When I started preparing the presentation I remembered my life when I was a child.

With my parents, we lived in a house and we had only a land-line telephone. We didn't have mobile telephone, a computer or the internet. Then, when I was a student, I started working on a computer and using the internet. When I remember those facts I realized how lucky I am and feel gratitude for being here today because I know that the technologies are really helping lots of people in their recovery from that fatal disease called alcoholism. Online sponsoring helped me as well to stay sober and continue my recovery.

As alcoholics our main purpose in Alcoholics Anonymous is carrying the A.A. message to those who still suffer from alcoholism. Nowadays it is possible not only in face-to-face meetings but also online using the internet.

During the past decades, internet and online platforms developed rapidly all over the world, and that gave us the opportunity for sponsoring in order to help suffering alcoholics anywhere in the world. With the ability to use computers and to know how to work with the internet and multiple virtual programs, alcoholics became more confident and started looking for other opportunities for recovery and to help other alcoholics. In the beginning, all the meetings and sponsoring were face-to-face. The first meeting in Bulgaria was held on December 5, 1989, in the capital, Sofia, in one of the halls of the Psychiatric Clinic. Then over the years people started using online sponsoring, first on Skype, then using video chat.

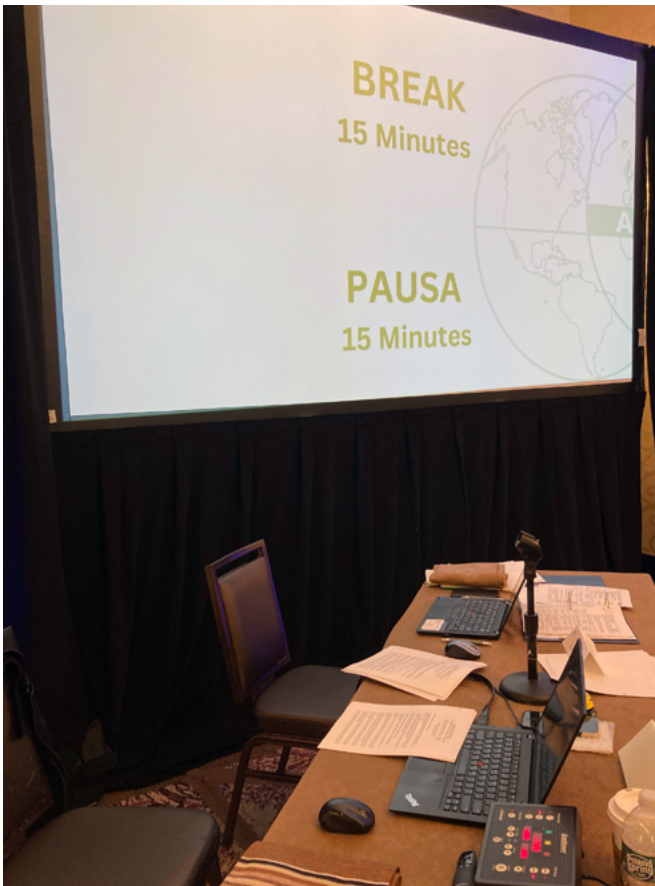
Through the years we continued working on the A.A. program also using tools such as scheduled meetings with a few alcoholics to read the A.A. Big Book or to work on the Twelve Traditions with a sponsor. Before 2020 many people had worked with their sponsors online when they lived in different countries or in small settlements. In the capital of Sofia many people preferred to meet their sponsor face-to-face and to work for their recovery. In the smaller settlements people preferred to work with a sponsor from Bulgaria or abroad online. The reason for this choice is that in the smaller villages (where, in most of the cases are usually living between 10 to 100 people), all the people know each other, and also the alcoholics, especially the newcomers, are afraid thinking of how to keep their anonymity. People are also afraid of losing their job or to be a subject of rumors; that is why they prefer to work with an A.A. sponsor online or by the phone.

The next stage, which is also important in the development of online sponsorship in Bulgaria, was the Covid-19 lockdown. During that period, face-to-face meetings were completely suspended from March to June 2020. Most of the face-to-face meetings took place online during this period. At that time online sponsoring became popular, and that allowed A.A. Bulgaria alcoholics to keep in touch with each other and share experiences of strength and hope for their recovery. Currently, the online sponsoring continues, but the focus is not on the constraints of holding meetings, but on the attitude to such sponsorship and the convenience of this type of meeting.

My experience in online sponsoring is not very strong for now — just a few years, but I could say that it helped me a lot in my recovery. I have been sober for nine years and seven months now, and with my first and second sponsors I have worked with face-to-face meetings. With my third sponsor, we have used online sponsoring because she lived in another town and we could meet each other very rarely. We used video online connections and it helped me a lot because I could see her, talk to her and feel her willingness to help me and her friendly care for me. We also read the Big Book and she was my sponsor on the Twelve Traditions as well. My experience helps me when I'm sponsoring a woman from A.A. I prefer face-to-face sponsoring but also use online sponsoring when needed. When the women I am working with live in another town we work only online. When we are working on the A.A. program online we are using video platforms, and I can see not only their faces but also talk to them and show them some books they could read and to create friendly connections between us, based on loving care and trust of each other.

According to Bulgarian sponsors I have spoken to, online sponsorship provides an opportunity to help other alcoholics when we live in different cities and we need to connect online, or when we work till late in the evening and can't see each other face-to-face. Most of the alcoholics prefer face-to-face contact instead of online sponsorship. Sometimes the sponsors are using hybrid sponsoring. Also, when sponsoring online, many sponsors implement working on the A.A. program online via video connection, because this keeps contact between us and communication is more effective. During these meetings, in addition to working on the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, reading of the Big Book takes place.

Online sponsorship has made it easy to find a sponsor and to receive the help you need anywhere in the world. Sometimes online sponsoring is the only way for Bulgarian alcoholics to recover speaking their mother language when they live abroad and are unable to return home often. It is much more impactful and emotional to be able to say your prayers or talk to a spon-



*Scheduled breaks at regular intervals allowed delegates to stay focussed.*

sor or friend in Bulgarian language because there are moments when every person feels nostalgia and searches for their roots.

Online sponsoring allows recovery when a person is traveling on a ship, when the alcoholic is ill, or when people have difficult accessibilities and cannot leave home. This is an opportunity that modern technology allows and is a necessity that I appreciate with all my heart. As I already mentioned I'm also sponsoring online and have had a sponsor online. This has given me an opportunity to bring to your attention the strengths and weaknesses of this type of sponsorship.

The strengths of online sponsoring are:

- Easy and fast communication between us — we can share with each other, or ask a question, getting support without delay;
- Conversations at a convenient time for each participant — gave us the opportunity to schedule our appointments with respect to each other's time and personalities;
- Access to a sponsor anywhere in the world — allows us to help suffering alcoholics when they live in different countries or continents;
- Easy exchange of literature, information, brochures, etc.;

- Video call — one of the most powerful and effective tools of our program is video call between us. In addition to the honest sharing of problems and difficulties, we have many happy moments and positive emotions; we become friends and feel accepted.

The weaknesses of online sponsoring are:

- Lack of face-to-face communication between us — online sponsoring really helps a lot, but in this case there is not the possibility to meet with the sponsor and to drink a cup of coffee or tea and just to talk to each other. The live contact between us is missing;
- Difficulties in communicating when the sponsored does not have an internet connection or a computer — in smaller settlements in Bulgaria, which don't have live meetings, or places with poor internet connection, or in the cases when the sponsored does not have a computer or ability to work with a computer, it causes difficulties in recovery of the alcoholics;
- Lack of motivation to work on the program when the sponsorship is entirely online — currently most of the sponsored prefer face-to-face contact with a sponsor to get to know and to build trust with each other, therefore when sponsorship is only online sometimes their motivation to work on the program decreases with time.

*Radoslava S. — Bulgaria*

## Hybrid Sponsorship

Hello, my name is Balys and I am an alcoholic. I came to A.A. in 2010 and I am very grateful that we already had a well-established fellowship in Lithuania.

A.A. in Lithuania started in 1988. Our first member, his name was Romas, was struggling to find somebody who could help him quit drinking. He tried various methods and failed again and again. Once he saw an advertisement in a local newspaper that Alcoholics Anonymous might help him. There was an address — Box 459, Grand Central Station, New York. He decided to write a letter, but he knew no English, so he did it in Lithuanian. It seemed like a crazy idea to ask somebody to translate a letter to this mysterious country of America saying that he was drinking too much. But he was really desperate, so he found an English teacher who could help him. As he met the teacher, she told him that she had recently been asked by a priest to translate some parts of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*. Coincidence you might say?

He sent the letter and received an answer pretty quickly. Romas was an artist so the International desk at GSO in New York even found an artist A.A. member in New York, with whom he



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could exchange letters. He also exchanged letters with some Lithuanian A.A. members living in the US. He managed to stay sober for a few months but then he drank again. He understood that he would not be able to stay sober only via mail. Some Lithuanian A.A. members from the US decided to get out of their comfy homes and fly over the Atlantic to meet Romas and start A.A. in Lithuania.

In summer 1988 three sober A.A. members from the US and three drunks from Lithuania met in Romas' apartment and they talked overnight. That was the first A.A. meeting in Lithuania. Later GSO helped Lithuania print our first books. They paid for printing in Germany and shipped the books to Lithuania. That's why we feel the duty to contribute to A.A.W.S. literature fund every year. A.A. members from the US and Canada started coming to Lithuania every year, they would even hire a bus and drive around going to hospitals trying to start new groups in different towns. Our archives hold a lot of correspondence with A.A.W.S. and private A.A. members from the US and Canada. That is a short story of hybrid country to country sponsorship before the digital era.

When I came to A.A. in 2010, we didn't have Big Book sponsorship in Lithuania. Of course we did have sponsorship, we worked the Steps, we lived the program, but we had no Big Book thumpers. Some ten years ago Big Book sponsorship came to Lithuania. The process of bringing this kind of sponsorship to Lithuania was also very much hybrid. As we didn't have many Big Book sponsors at home, some members found sponsors in other countries. They worked the Steps via Skype and met in person for the Fifth Step and maybe some other Steps. After these members worked the Steps in this hybrid way, they were able to sponsor members at their local home groups and now Big Book sponsorship is a common part of Lithuanian A.A. Digital means of communication helped it a lot and that was way before the pandemic turned things around.

Speaking of country-to-country sponsorship today, Lithuanian A.A. has good relations with our neighboring A.A. fellowships, especially Poland and Latvia.

Any time we ask Polish A.A. to help us with workshop speakers on various service topics, they are very willing to travel to Lithuania and do it. We always exchange invites to our General Service Conferences. At the moment we are working on rewriting our Service Manual. When the Service Manual committee approached the Polish A.A. with some questions on this topic, just again, a few of the Polish A.A. members, some of them who were involved in writing the Polish Service Manual, joined our committee and answered all their questions, only this time virtually. That is just one of many times when we had virtual calls or in-person meetings with our fellows from Poland.

Latvia is another country that we visit each other's General Service Conferences every year. In our country highlights I already mentioned the informal Baltic service meeting that we started this year. When we got the idea to start sharing service experience between our countries on a regular basis, our Latvian friends felt that we should invite Estonian A.A. members too. We still don't have Estonia neither at the WSM or ESM and their service structure is not so strong yet. At the moment two delegates from both Latvia and Lithuania and one from Estonia meet online to share experience on current things happening in our service structures and plan bigger themed meetings where we invite more members from the Fellowship in our countries. We hope that after a few online meetings we will be able to organize a face-to-face Baltic service meeting. Of course, virtual platforms allow us to save time and money, but at the same time I feel that a face-to-face meeting allows for a better human connection.

A couple of years ago we had some questions about A.A. helplines. We wrote an email to the ESM mailing list. A few days later we received an answer from A.A. Portugal — a country that is right on the other side of Europe, that we had no contact with before. Portuguese A.A. offered to have a virtual platform meeting in a couple of days. Of course, we met and A.A. members from Portugal were very kind to answer all our questions. As we met the international delegate from Portugal in person at the ESM last year, we told him we were very touched and inspired that they decided to get out of their daily routine and have a virtual call with somebody they didn't even know. His answer was that for them it was just the same as when a suffering alcoholic reaches out for help.

My time is limited here, and I can share just a couple of occasions of country- to-country sponsorship. In Lithuania we are very grateful to be part of the ESM and WSM as it gives us a feeling of being a part of the worldwide A.A. community. Not only by participating in the meetings, but also being able to get in touch with our fellows from other countries all year round via email, chat and video calls. Whenever we have a question, there are people to answer it, sometimes it's Denmark that picks up that virtual call, sometimes it's the UK that sends us a generous email loaded with service material, sometimes it's another one of the many loving and caring A.A. fellowships in the world. Thank you all!

And to end this scattered presentation I want to quote a sentence from the foreword to the fourth edition of the Big Book that was printed in 2001 and was read here at WSM on Monday morning: "Modem-to-modem or face-to-face, A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity."

*Balys K. — Lithuania*

# Country Service Highlights



*Delivered usually by first-term delegates, the Highlights offer glimpses into some of the challenges, successes and evolution of service around the globe.*

**Argentina:** Over the past few years, our Fellowship — Conference by Conference — has been incorporating parts of the US/Canada Service Manual and adapting its language to our country's legal framework and unique functioning features.

For the first time in Argentina, the chair of the GSB, a Class A trustee, lives in a part of the country other than the capital; he is the fourth consecutive nonalcoholic chair we have had in our Fellowship.

We have established two boards of directors: the General Service Board of Directors (JDSG) and the Board of Directors of our national magazine, *El Sendero*.

We are using virtual communication tools among trusted servants more often. At our Conference, 100% of the joint committee meetings and all committee work is being done virtually. We still meet in person for our voting sessions, and the members of the Conference get together at a hotel or retreat center for three days.

We have signed agreements of cooperation without affiliation with various sectors of society, in the areas of health, religion, correctional facilities, cultural institutions, etc.

We participate in international service: we have attended

the WSM and the Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), as well as various Conferences, meetings and Working with Others (WWO) activities and gatherings where we share experience with other structures.

As a by-product of our recurring interaction with other countries at international service events, we started an initiative called "Joining our borders with our neighbors." Some examples of structure-to-structure interaction are as follows:

We formally sponsor Uruguay. This has fostered motivation and cooperation on both shores of the River Plate. The international delegates from both countries get together regularly for consultation and to develop action plans. Both countries attend the other's Conferences and participate in other activities, such as the National Gathering of AA Areas in Uruguay.

We attend border region forums with Paraguay. Our Region III (Northeast) participates actively in activities in both countries. Argentina attends the Paraguayan General Service Conference as an observer and Paraguay attends our Conference. International delegates keep in close contact with one another.



There is a growing interaction among the border regions of Argentina (Region IV, Northwest) and Bolivia. We are looking forward to resuming binational gatherings.

In 2022, several members of our General Service Board resigned, which generated some confusion in our structure.

We have a new sponsorship and training plan for new Class A trustees and candidates, designed to enhance their understanding of A.A.'s language and the responsibilities they will be assuming.



*Argentina: When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.*

We have full participation in service meetings by trustees in all regions of our country through the use videoconferencing platforms. This has enhanced awareness and motivation and resulted in significant operating cost savings.

We have achieved greater participation of regional trustees in Board committees.

We need to do a better job at preparing our trusted servants so that information flows better within the structure, in both directions.

Our technology department has provided crucial support to service activities at the Conference, the GSB and GSO.

Our technology committee offers workshops at areas and committees about how to take advantage of technology and communications tools.

We have greatly improved the payment process for online contributions. We have enabled new payment features, such as automatic debit (autopay), QR payments, bank transfers and payment apps.

The North-South Connections Forum in 2021, which focused on remote communities, was a virtual event with participants from four countries: Chile, the United States, Canada and Argentina. It generated a wave of enthusiasm in Region VI (Patagonia) and has motivated members in our remote zones to join the service structure. We are working toward the formation of a virtual district for groups in the Patagonian region.

— Roberto R.

**Australia:** Alcoholics Anonymous had its beginnings in Australia in the month of March 1945 but Australia's first contact with Alcoholics Anonymous in the USA began in 1942.

Because of the war years it meant mail was very slow and none of our modern communication systems of today were in play. 2025 will mean 80 years of continuous A.A. within our country. As this is such a momentous occasion the planning has commenced for a national celebration of this significant occasion. The convention will be held in Sydney from 18th April to 21st April 2025.

We hope many overseas visitors will make their way "Down Under" to join us for all the activities to be held during this time ([aanatcon2025.com.au](http://aanatcon2025.com.au)).

The "Cochrane Report" has been extensively used and distributed throughout Australia and has become a very useful resource for A.A. This report can be found in the Cochrane Library at [cochranelibrary.com](http://cochranelibrary.com).

Another great resource that we have established in Australia is the Chat Now function, allowing anyone to contact and talk with a member online between 10:00 AM and 10:00 PM. We have our own online platform connected to our national



Website. The process of startup took two years to get off the ground with our conference body approving the idea and our start up committee jumping over a number of hurdles to get it underway, and the UK Chat Now committee was most helpful throughout the whole process.

We have had two very successful national conventions, 2023 in Perth, Western Australia and 2024 in Adelaide which is my hometown. I was able to serve on this committee as treasurer and vice chair, and the Adelaide convention saw over 1,000 members from Australia and the world in attendance, both raising substantial sums for our General Service Board.

Australia's current membership base is around 18,000 with over 2,100 meetings nationwide.

In 2023 we were able to host our national conference again in person and this was held in Sydney over three days and proved to be a great success.

Our primary new piece of literature which was made available at our recent national convention in Adelaide was the Message Stick which includes stories from our indigenous members as written by themselves. This book proved to be popular and over the weekend we sold 500 copies.

— Andy P.

**Belgium (Dutch-Speaking):** Belgium is a small country in north-western Europe with more than 11.6 million inhabitants. Its institutional organization is complex and is structured both regionally and linguistically. It is divided into three highly autonomous regions: the Flemish Region (Vlaanderen) in the north, the Walloon Region (Wallonië) in the south and the Brussels Capital Region in the middle. Belgium also has two major language communities: the Flemish Community, which accounts for about 60 percent of the population, and the French Community, which accounts for about 40 percent of the population. A small German-speaking community, which makes up about one percent of the population, exists in the East Cantons. The Brussels Capital Region is officially bilingual in French and Dutch, although French is the majority language and lingua franca. Belgium's linguistic diversity is reflected in its complex system of government, which consists of six different governments.

The Walloon Region is represented in the French-speaking European delegates to this GSC. We represent the Flemish region with about 314 registered groups in these post-Covid times.

In our region, Flanders, evolution is taking place in several areas:

#### 1. *Meetings are again going primarily physical*

After the Covid pandemic, in which many groups switched to online meetings, groups have resumed their physical meetings. However, some online meetings still remain.

#### 2. *Online information and communication*

A number of services switched their departmental meetings to virtual, saving considerable travel costs and time. The website was updated and made more user-friendly.

#### 3. *Collaboration*

A new dynamic has emerged in terms of cooperation with other organizations. There are now structured contacts with other organizations working within the addiction field. The Traditions are closely applied.

#### 4. *Literature*

The literature committee continued to work on updating pamphlets and gave a uniform and modern look to the layout.

The monthly magazine, '5 before 12', now also has a digital version.

The translation of "Pass It On" and "The Language of the Heart" into the Flemish language is progressing well.

A new book about the history of A.A. in Flanders and Belgium was released.

But although we have a good, organized A.A. structure, we're also facing a number of problems.

1. There has been a steady reduction in the number of groups. The groups that quit usually consist of older members and when no newcomers come, or stay, these groups become too small to continue to exist. At the beginning of 2024, there were 314 registered groups, compared to 363 groups 10 years ago.
2. Lack of group participation in Area and General Service Conference.  
Only half of them attend the meetings of the Area Service meetings.
3. Lack of trusted servants in all services.
4. Difficulty in reaching young people causing a steady decline in membership.  
Because of these aging members, young fellows hesitate to stay in these older groups and create a vicious circle doing so.
5. Lack of knowledge of sponsorship using the Big Book.

Therefore, a number of initiatives were taken:

- The GSO has decided that a working group around social media will be created to examine how A.A. can manifest itself in this medium while remaining faithful to the Traditions. Through this way we hope to better reach young people.
- But we are not only focusing on promotion, also on attraction. Therefore, the literature committee has

launched an initiative to raise awareness of the Big Book. And especially focusing on the message as passed on in the Big Book. More information on sponsorship will also be disseminated.

- A working group was formed to see how the services could be reformed to work more efficiently. Finally, AA-Flanders has established a hotline to report and follow up on transgressive behavior. Transgressive behavior will not be tolerated. Help-seeking alcoholics and recovering alcoholics should be aware of each other's vulnerability. Procedures are put in place to protect this vulnerability. This hotline will focus on prevention, trust, low threshold, confidentiality, independence, recovery and sustainability.

— Pascal D.

### **Bolivia:**

**Number of groups:** We currently have 100 A.A. groups throughout Bolivia, with approximately 1,000 members. We also have two groups in treatment facilities and nine groups in correctional facilities.

#### **Service structure:**

- 20 delegates (10 areas)
- 7 trustees (4 Class B and 3 Class A)
- 1 GSO manager
- 3 nontrustee directors

**Smartphone app (Doble AAp Bolivia):** A free Android app has been available since 2023. The app provides meeting information, such as times, days and locations of A.A. meetings throughout Bolivia, plus a calendar of national events and basic information about Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Website:** <http://www.alcoholicosanimosbolivia.org/>

This important means of communication continues to do "the heavy lifting" in terms of carrying the message at the national level. A nontrustee director who is an IT expert has helped to initiate the improvement and updating of our webpage in order to make it more dynamic and effective.

**Literature — Publications:** We are grateful to our senior structure in the US and Canada for having provided authorization for Bolivia to reprint over 35 A.A. literature titles. This helps us keep our costs down.

**REDELA:** For the first time, Bolivia will host the Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), in 2025, in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. It is a great privilege to be able to welcome all participants at this great event, where we will continue to learn about the growth and development of A.A. in the countries that make up our service zone.



#### **Books printed since 1988:**

- *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 5th printing, 1,000 copies
- *Living Sober*, 3 print runs of 1,000 copies each
- *Came to Believe*, 1 print run, 1,000 copies
- *Our Great Responsibility*, 1 print run, 1,000 copies
- *Daily Reflections*, 1 print run, 1,000 copies
- *AA Service Manual — Bolivia*, 2 print runs, 300 units

#### **Printing projects for 2024-2025**

- *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*
- *Alcoholics Anonymous*
- **Pamphlets:** *The AA Group... where it all begins; The Twelve Concepts for World Service Illustrated; The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.*

**Corrections:** Corrections work restarted in 2023 and nine groups have opened at a correctional facility in the Santa Cruz area. We want this project to expand to the entire country. The work was done with support from our Class A trustee who is a member of the Prison Pastoral Service. As a Fellowship, we are becoming aware of how important it is for A.A. to work with the professional community.

**Board of Directors of General Service:** The recent creation of the Board of Directors of General Service (*Junta Directiva de Servicios Generales*) is a new challenge in our structure. The new affiliate board started its activities on June 17, 2023. This board of directors will become the operating arm of the

General Service Board and its purpose is to oversee and advise the General Service Office within the framework set up by A.A. principles, as well as to publish A.A. books and pamphlets and our national magazine, *Volver a Nacer*.

**Country-to-country sponsorship:** Our sponsorship relationship with Colombia has been hugely beneficial for our Fellowship. Trusted servants from Bolivia attend the Colombian General Service Conference as observers, and our sponsors attend ours as well. Over the last seven years, we have been able to apply new procedures that have led to organizational improvements, working in harmony, and increasing the effectiveness of our annual meeting of the Conference. We are currently working on enhancing Conference work, so that it is ongoing throughout the year in the Fellowship as a whole.

**General Service Office:** It operates in the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and currently has one paid employee, a manager, who is an A.A. member.

— Ángel R.

**Brazil:** In September 2024, we celebrated 77 years since the arrival of A.A. in Brazil (1947).

Public information work has benefited greatly from all the new communication tools at our disposal. We had some tough times during the Coronavirus pandemic: we saw groups close and virtual meetings open. However, we are gradually seeing how our groups come back to normal and hold face-to-face meetings again.

We never ceased in our attempt to increase A.A.'s visibility vis-à-vis the professional community and society as a whole, fostering awareness about the unique role that Alcoholics Anonymous can play in helping other alcoholics, by sharing our

experience of recovery from alcoholism through the practice of A.A.'s spiritual principles.

At the last two General Service Conferences—in 2020 by videoconference, and in person in 2021—three new areas were approved. At the 2021 Conference we approved the following advisory action: *“that our structure apply to be the host of the World Service Meeting in 2026.”*

We currently have 3,856 groups, 566 districts, 79 Local Service Offices (ESG in Portuguese), 47 areas, 6 regions and our General Service Office. The latter has operated in the district of Tatuapé—in the city of São Paulo—in a four-story building, with ample space for the work of the board, the office and our committees, since August 2015.

**Literature and Publications:** We currently publish 23 books, 49 pamphlets and 10 service material items. We have translated the book *Our Great Responsibility* into Portuguese.

We have an online store for the purchase of literature, e-books and our digital magazine.

Brazil's A.A. magazine, *Vivência*, will celebrate its 39th anniversary in November 2024. It is published every two months and has a print run of 7,000 copies, which are mailed to all our subscribers. Aside from the print version, our magazine also has a digital version and a dedicated website: [www.revistavivencia.org.br](http://www.revistavivencia.org.br)

**AA in Brazil – official website:** This site has a modern design and lists all groups in our country. It had 1.5 million page views in 2023.

Our website provides instructions on how to find a group—with a map function—, as well as a list of virtual meetings, with their days and times. There is also a link that allows Internet users to talk to A.A. members, who may direct them to a face-to-face A.A. meeting. If needed, they may also invite visitors to participate in the program as loners. Volunteers take turns talking to Internet users through our website.

Our website also includes a store for purchasing literature. Our greatest challenge is keeping all our group information up to date. Some groups close or change their meeting times without letting us know, and it is sad when a person picks a meeting from our list and finds the doors closed.

**International Events:** We attended the 27th World Service Meeting via video conferencing. We participate in video conference meetings every month in our service zone, REDELA, and have also attended preparatory meetings for the WSM.

We attended the 13th Meeting of the Americas (REDELA) in person, in Medellín, Colombia, on October 8-13, 2023. We spent a whole week in unity with our fellow members, striving to meet our primary purpose, and it was a phenomenal experience.

Brazil has been contributing to the International Literature Fund every year since 2005.



*Brazil: When anyone, anywhere, reaches out for help, I want the hand of A.A. always to be there.*



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**Public Information:** Public Information work in Brazil has benefited tremendously from the use of communication tools in these trying times. We carried out various seminars organized by our 46 areas, geared at healthcare, corrections and education professionals.

We distribute our newsletters to all professionals who are duly registered in our database; they are our friends and help us spread our message by focusing on various topics. In the newsletters, there are links to the online store and our e-book catalog.

We currently have official social media accounts for Alcoholics Anonymous Brazil in Instagram, YouTube and TikTok.

**Group statistics in Brazil, 2023:**

Total number of face-to-face groups: 3,856

Total number of virtual groups: 91

Temporarily closed: 468

Meetings per week: 9,176

— Fernando U.

**Bulgaria:** A.A. Bulgaria expresses its great gratitude for the opportunity to participate, for the third time, in the World Service Meeting, represented by our first- and second-term delegates.

**History of A.A. in Bulgaria:** The first meeting was held on December 5, 1989, in the capital Sofia in one of the halls of the Psychiatric Clinic. The Twelfth Step program itself was introduced fully in 2005 by a Bulgarian — a member of A.A. living in Australia.

**Structure:** Currently, A.A. in Bulgaria has 41 groups that hold 36 live meetings and 10 online meetings with approximately 380 members in three regions. Meetings are held in 18 cities in the country. There are currently three English-speaking groups, two of which are hybrid meetings, and two Russian-speaking groups. Meetings are also being held in two state psychiatric clinics.

**Conference:** The General Service Conference is held once a year. In June this year, our 7th General Service Conference was held and a new Trustee, responsible for the Prisons Service Committee, was elected.

Composition of the A.A. Conference in Bulgaria: members of the General Service Board, nine delegates with voting rights and nine delegates without voting rights, Chairman of the Conference and three secretaries and observers from Bulgaria and abroad.

**General Service Board:** The General Service Board consists of five Class B Trustees, currently one Class A Trustee, two international delegates, and a website moderator.

In 2024 a new committee was created, aimed to cooperate

with the Criminal Justice institutions in Bulgaria — court, prosecutor's office, as well as probation services.

**General Service Office:** We do not yet have a General Service Office, but we have a postal address to which the correspondence of A.A. Bulgaria is sent. Through the provided national email address, as well as through the contact form on the website of A.A., Bulgaria operates a so-called "virtual office."

The 7th General Service Conference voted and confirmed creation of the warehouse for the books and literature of A.A. Bulgaria.

**National Telephone Number:** In 2022 the national number of A.A. in Bulgaria was activated and anyone who calls for help on this number is pointed to contacts to the local groups in their region and is provided with the necessary assistance. The number is published on the A.A. materials, located on our site, as well as on the world website of A.A. — aa.org.

**Literature:** At the 5th Conference, a new Trustee was elected. License for translation and distribution of the brochure "Questions and Answers on Sponsorship" was received from A.A. World Services in June 2024. Currently the members of the committee are translating the book "The Language of the Heart." At the 7th General Service Conference, the Literature Committee proposed approval of minor changes of the text in three Steps, as well as two of the Traditions and the changes were accepted.

**Finance:** The National Treasurer operates three bank accounts. These are as follows: Literature, 7th Tradition and National Convention. In 2023, there has been an increase of contributions from the sale of literature and also via the 7th Tradition contributions.

Despite this increase of contributions there is still a financial shortfall in A.A. Bulgaria's finances. At the 6th Conference "Gratitude Week" was approved for the first time so that everyone has the opportunity to contribute further in gratitude.

**Public Information:** Last year, the Trustee chairing the Public Information Committee submitted his application to withdraw from that service and this position is still vacant. From that point on, in the period between the two last Conferences, service in this area remained the responsibility of the individual regions or group level.

**Prisons Service:** In 2023 the Trustee Class A vacated the position due to personal reasons. At this year's General Service Conference, a new Trustee Class B was elected, who is part of the Prisons Committee. Currently the Committee prepares the 5th Annual Prisons Seminar. A.A. meetings are held in: eight maximum security prisons for men and the only prison in the country for women, seven open type prisons.

**Service Handbook:** For the period July 2023 — June 2024 the Committee for development and updating of Service Handbook of A.A. Bulgaria is actively working on editing, additions and updating of texts in the A.A. Service Handbook adopted by the 5th General Service Conference (GSC) in 2022. Translation of Bill W. articles. “Twelve Concepts for World Service”; Translation of the booklets: “The Group...Where It All Begins” — A.A. USA/Canada edition (updated 2019 version), “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” — A.A. USA/Canada edition (updated version 2021); “The Hat...where A.A. money and spirituality mix” — A.A. GB edition — licensed for translation and distribution by the World Service Office and the General Service Office in York GB were received in 2023 and 2024.

**Website:** The domain is [www.aa-bg.info](http://www.aa-bg.info). There is a contact form on the site that automatically directs the letters received to the national mail of A.A. Bulgaria.

**National Convention:** Traditionally, the National Convention is held at the end of the summer on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. At the Conference, an organizer of the upcoming National Convention is elected, with the right to form a committee for its organization, attracting volunteers for service — members of A.A.

**Relationship to Other Countries:** Bulgarian A.A. maintains very good fraternal relationships and sharing of experience with the A.A. Fellowship in Poland and Great Britain. This year’s international observer at Conference was from Slovenia, who shared her personal and her country’s valuable experience.

—Radoslava S.

**Central America Southern Zone:** Central America Southern Zone is made up of Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Panama. Panama is currently representing the zone, because of rotation.

### **Costa Rica**

**Current number of groups and size of the Fellowship:** Based on our last inventory, in 2023 we had 474 active groups. Out of those, only 25% cooperate with the service structure. We have approximately 5,813 members (5,688 men and 125 women) — an average of 12 members per group.

The pandemic caused a huge drop in our membership. Some members died and others stopped attending meetings due to old age. We believe the population of A.A. Costa Rica has aged and there are few young people in our groups. Many oldtimers do not like the young because they use other drugs.

**Literature:** We have a contract with Editorial Costa Rica for the production of 500 Big Books, and 500 copies of the *Twelve and Twelve*, which we have already received. Four other books

are waiting for PDF files from A.A. World Services: *Living Sober, Came to Believe, Daily Reflections* and *As Bill Sees It*.

**Special events or milestones:** Groups often celebrate the following activities:

**January:** “A.A. Message Week,” in memory of Bill W.’s death (1/24/1971).

**June:** Our “Big Week,” which commemorates the birth of A.A. (6/10/1935). July: “History of the arrival of the A.A. message in Costa Rica” (7/30/1958).

**November:** “Gratitude Week,” in memory of Dr. Bob. Gratitude Week closes with a major Gratitude Dinner, the largest celebration we have in Costa Rica, where all A.A.s in the country try to get together.

**Collaboration with other countries:** We import pamphlets and books that we still do not have the license to print and distribute, from other Central American countries. We are still in the process of getting the proper licenses from A.A. World Services.

### **Nicaragua**

**Current number of groups and size of the Fellowship:** We have 548 groups and approximately 16,000 A.A. members — an average of 30 members per group.

**New Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee:** We have started working with the professional community through our brand new CPC committee, which has been well received by universities and professionals in our country. We recently updated our Guidelines for cooperating with government institutions.

**Corrections and justice institutions:** We have improved our collaboration with the court system and with government institutions. Citizens who have broken the law under the influence of alcohol are being referred to A.A. groups. There is less resistance on the part of some members to accept court-mandated persons.

**Literature:** We are doing a feasibility study prior to starting the translation of our Spanish literature into Misquito (a native language in the Atlantic region), starting with Chapter VI of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, with help from GSO New York. We publish *Nuestra Voz* magazine, which comes out bimonthly, and has a print run of 1,000 copies and 250 subscribers. We also publish the 22-47 Newsletter every two months. Publication is handled by GSO Nicaragua.

**Technology:** We have an Internet presence through our website, which is open to the entire population looking for help.

**Special events or milestones:** 45th annual meeting of the Conference, March 15-17, 2024, in a retreat center located in

the city of Granada. We are working on the preparations to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our General Service Office (GSO) and of being available to the Fellowship in our country and worldwide. This celebration will take place in August 2024. We are currently working on the Second National Gathering of Intergroups and Twelve-Step Houses, which will be held on September 14 and 15, 2025.

## **Panama**

**Current number of groups and size of the Fellowship:** We have 113 groups based on the records from the last Conference (April 26-28, 2024). We have about 800 members.

### **Cooperation with the Professional Community:**

- Public health centers refer people with alcohol problems to our groups.
- Educational institutions allow us to bring the A.A. message into public schools.
- We have a successful collaboration with the University of Panama, its administrators, professors and students.
- We collaborate with the National Police.
- We carry the message to various private companies in Panama in various industries.
- We attend national psychiatric congresses in Panama and we are invited to their general assemblies every month.

**Corrections and justice institutions:** We collaborate with justices-of-the-peace and correctional facilities. We have been getting calls from the court system where people sentenced for misdemeanors — such as family violence or driving under the influence — are referred to A.A. groups.

**Literature:** We publish a national A.A. newsletter and we are working on trying to bring back our *Recuperación A.A.* magazine, which stopped printing during the pandemic.

**Technology:** During the pandemic we had seven registered online groups in operation, out of which, three meet using a hybrid format (face-to-face and virtually). We have just launched our website, [www.A.A.panama-osg.com](http://www.A.A.panama-osg.com). We are also using Facebook and Instagram.

**New initiatives by the boards:** At our 28th General Service Conference, two guidelines were approved: the National Training Plan for Public Information and the National Plan for Training Trusted Servants.

**Special events or milestones:** We celebrate forums, congresses, gatherings, the Anniversary of A.A., and A.A. dinner dances. We are organizing our VI National Convention.

— Aris Ramos



*The week long WSM overlapped with New York City's Halloween parade and celebration.*

## **Chile:**

**Groups and Structure:** Chile has 115 groups: 100 face-to-face groups, 10 online groups — with a GSR who serves in the service area of the group's choice — and five hybrid groups. We have a LIM meeting (Loners and Internationalists Meeting, called "RIS" in Spanish) which is organized by GSO and the Board of Directors of General Service, through its services subcommittee. This meeting has been ongoing for the past six-years and meets every night at 10 p.m. Chile time.

We have three service regions with three regional trustees, 10 service areas and three districts. We currently have nine area central offices in operation.

**General Service Conference:** Our General Service Conference meets annually in May in the capital, Santiago de Chile, where our General Service Office is located. Our GSO has two employees, a manager and a secretary. This year, the Conference was attended by 21 trusted servants: seven trustees, two nontrustee directors, one *Renacer* magazine editor, one manager, eight delegates and two Mexican sponsors. The secretarial committee is made up of five A.A. members who are not members of the Conference.



**General Service Board and Boards of Directors:** The GSB is currently made up of a Class A trustee, who serves as chair, plus six Class B trustees (three general service trustees and three regional trustees).

The Board of Directors of General Service is made up of three Class B trustees, three nontrustee directors and the manager of GSO.

The Board of Directors of Renacer Magazine started operating this year with two nontrustee directors, four Class B trustees and an executive editor. The magazine celebrated its 15th anniversary and publishes four quarterly editions. The magazine is still a committee, not a legal entity, but it manages its finances autonomously.

**New Public Information activities:** From 2020 on, we have incorporated the use of digital media in our PI activities. We rely on social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and a Spotify channel. Instagram is the platform we feed with posts (reels, posters, videos) and paid promotions, whereas Facebook is basically a mirror of whatever we publish on Instagram. With regard to content, we have set ourselves two goals:

1. Carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
2. Provide internal communications regarding events, workshops, activities by various committees and areas throughout the country.

By using Google Analytics information regarding the number of visitors to our website ([www.alcoholicosanimos.cl](http://www.alcoholicosanimos.cl)) during 2022, we have been able to measure effectiveness. The results have shown that most queries come in during three different holiday periods and that is where we are focusing our digital outreach efforts, which have led to a significant increase in the number of visits to our webpage.

With an investment of about USD 2,000 per Conference year, spread over the three aforementioned holiday periods, we have reached over one million people (about 5% of the population in Chile). This method has been highly effective, but we are still trying to learn how to achieve a lower per click cost with our ads.

We use the A.A. Chile Spotify platform to upload A.A. member stories which were broadcast over local radio stations. All audiovisual materials produced by the PI committee (videos, radio announcements, etc.) can be downloaded from our website.

**Cooperation with the Professional Community:** Between 2023 and 2024, A.A. service areas have provided information talks about alcoholism to workers in the various correctional facilities in the country (about 450 workers are reached each

year). In 2024, our prison service, Gendarmería de Chile, developed a joint plan to open A.A. groups and transition groups in correctional facilities. The CPC committee also provides information to university students — our future professionals — regarding A.A.

We have given talks at educational institutions and the Goodyear company. CPC and PI have strengthened their service to Family Health Centers (CESFAM) and Mental Health Centers (COSAM) run by the Ministry of Health. At each activity, the committees hand out a copy of the Big Book, various pamphlets and A.A. meeting lists.

**Corrections:** In 2023-2024 two A.A. groups opened in a penitentiary south of Santiago and in the city of Nueva Imperial, and a transition group opened in a women's detention center in the metropolitan region. The Talca and Concepción committees are in talks with our prison system authorities in Santiago and those responsible for the facilities that have been chosen to host a transition group. The members of the committees in charge of these groups of persons under custody hold a weekly meeting by following the guidelines included in our workbooks, and they meet new members upon their release to help ease them into A.A. groups in the local area.

**Treatment Facilities Committee:** In 2023 and 2024 a transition group was opened, which has been holding two weekly meetings at the Addictions Treatment Service (SETA) belonging to the Psychiatric Institute. The point is to integrate patients who are being discharged into A.A. groups around Chile. At the Alberto Hurtado Hospital we give weekly talks to patients in the Addictions Treatment Unit (UTA), to help with the transition process upon release.

Transition groups have also been created in the centers associated with the Ministry of Health. Committees have established relations with professionals in these health centers, as well as with municipal and SENDA employees. We have made progress in terms of getting the Fellowship interested in CPC activities.

**Interaction with other Service Structures:** Our participation at REDELA starting in 2007 led to our being sponsored by Mexico. This sponsorship relationship began in 2008 and continues to this day. Participating at the WSM from 2012 on has gradually enabled us to create a better service structure. Although Chile has a small number of groups — which in turn causes financial challenges — we believe we have a well-structured Fellowship, which uses Bill W.'s Service Manual as its starting point, and we hope to keep developing.

— Juan José O.

## Colombia:

**Structure:** We currently have five regions, called A, B, C, D and E, which include 51 areas (40 of which are active), with 784 groups and 11,132 members, out of which 2,051 are women and 8,961 are men. We also have seven intergroup offices in the largest cities of Colombia. Odd-numbered areas elect a delegate in odd years and even-numbered areas elect their delegate in even years. This is done to make sure we have the same number of first-term and second-term delegates at the Conference. These delegates are elected at area assemblies, which are made up of group GSRs, district DCMs and area committee members.

**General Service Conference:** Our 60th General Service Conference took place in Rionegro, Antioquia, from April 28 to May 1, 2024, with the theme “Carrying the message ensures our future.” The Conference was attended by 40 delegates (65%), 12 trustees (19%), six nontrustee directors (10%) and four GSO staff members (6%), all with a voice and a vote. We also had guests from countries that we sponsor: a trustee-at-large from Peru and a general service trustee from Bolivia.

At this Conference, we presented the results of the plan to strengthen our structure; there were sharing sessions and workshops; we elected one Class B trustee; and we ratified four nontrustee directors. We also presented information about the 13th Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), which took place in Medellín in October 2023. The 12th National Convention of Colombia was held in June 2024 in the city of Medellín.

**General Service Board:** The General Service Board meets quarterly, for a total of four meetings a year. Our Statutes indicate that the General Service Board should have a total of 12 trustees: five Class B trustees (one per region); one general service Class B trustee; two Class B trustees-at-large (Southern and Northern territories) — a total of eight Class B (alcoholic) trustees and four Class A (nonalcoholic) trustees. We currently have a full General Service Board.

**General Service Operating Entity:** The General Service Board of Directors is made up of seven directors: two Class B (alcoholic) trustees, three (alcoholic) nontrustee directors, a paid staff member from GSO and the GSO manager. This board meets six times a year to discuss various matters, such as preparing budgets for service and publications operations, reviewing new and revised publications, GSO service activities, implementing Conference and General Service Board recommendations, and dealing with copyright issues and authorizations to reprint our literature.

**General Service Office (GSO):** It is located in the city of Medellín. Among its many functions, GSO helps resolve group

problems and keeps groups informed. It also provides free literature for new groups. They also support groups that meet in treatment and correctional facilities, as well as public information and cooperation with the professional community activities; they foster and motivate self-support plans; they cooperate on remedying anonymity breaks; coordinate logistics for carrying out the Conference and develop an Internet portal, among other functions.

**Website:** [www.aacolombia.org](http://www.aacolombia.org)

With a new design, we will try to include more services for visitors to the page, for our members and service entities from the various levels of the structure, with up-to-date information about everything related to the Fellowship.

**Finance:** We have various self-support plans, aside from income derived from literature sales.

Our prudent reserve is currently estimated at USD 54,400.

**Magazines and newsletters:** We print 2,500 *El Mensaje* magazines as well as the information and service newsletter published by GSO for A.A. members, and a newsletter geared at professionals.

**Country-to-Country Sponsorship:** Our trustee-at-large from the Southern territory participated as an observer at the 35th General Service Conference of Peru in May. We also hold virtual meetings whenever our sponsees (Peru and Bolivia) request them or ask for information about a specific subject.

— Ramón G.

## Czech Republic:

**Current A.A. Structure:** There are currently 69 active A.A. groups in 47 cities in the Czech Republic, altogether counting approximately 1,000 members. Most of the groups are smaller, having one meeting per week. There are daily meetings in the capital City of Prague.

There are three Skype-based and one web-based online groups.

**General Service Conference:** Our GSC is held annually, usually in January, and lasts three days, just like the last one in January 2024. In 2019, the GSC approved the first Czech Service Handbook/Manual. At the same time, the Articles of Association in accordance with Czech law and A.A. Traditions (this was discussed with an external lawyer) were also approved.

**Board of Trustees and General Service Office:** The General Service Board (the Board of Trustees) consists of seven alcoholics and two nonalcoholics. The Board of Trustees cooperates closely with all the committees and is responsible for A.A.’s financial policy, publishing and spreading literature, copyright, and publishing of a magazine *The Journey* (issued four times a

year, 32 pages). The Board of Trustees meets monthly via Skype and as a rule twice a year in person — at the A.A. Convention and, of course, at the General Service Conference.

Czech A.A.'s General Service Office is located in Hradec Králové (established in 2015). In 2019, GSC approved the very first paid employee of Czech A.A. The position is part-time for a few hours a week, though the current employee is a great help with the office work and the bookkeeping.

**Public Information:** The number of PI committee members varies between five and twelve over time. PI members meet on a monthly basis online, and twice a year in person. Current and former PI members started to actively attend the Czech Addictology Conference. We have become partners to doctors, alcohol-addiction specialists, and social workers. PI activities (including AT conference) planned a long time ago were afflicted by Covid-19 security precautions. Nevertheless, long-term cooperation with hospitals, rehabs, schools, clergies, prisons, and probation service continues, and we aim to develop the spreading of the message at the regional levels.

**Prisons:** The Committee for Prisons emerged out of the PI Committee, which was approved at GSC in 2019 as a result of a growing effort to work in this area. The Committee consists of nine members and meets regularly once a month via Skype (like all the other committees). However, our cooperation with prison facilities was interrupted by pandemic restrictions. Many activities had to be postponed for the future.

**Finance:** The Financial Committee was established at the beginning of 2017. Its main purpose is to create a financial budget for the following fiscal year, and support the Board of Trustees in making decisions related to unexpected expenses. The very first official budget was created for the fiscal year February 2018 — January 2019. The budget is regularly approved in January at the national GSC. See below how the percentage of annual income develops (and the effects of the pandemic):

Czech Republic	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Seventh Tradition	57%	37%	48%	54%	49%
Literature	43%	63%	52%	45%	51%
<b>TOTAL CR (ca.USD)</b>	<b>374,951</b>	<b>263,887</b>	<b>286,863</b>	<b>444,714</b>	<b>517,963</b>

We hope once the Covid-19 crisis ends, our financial situation will improve further.

Despite the pandemic, in 2020 we were able to donate contributions to the European Fund as well. Fortunately, we were able to cover our international delegate's fee USD \$1,000 for the virtual WSM meeting, as well as LF contribution in the same amount this year.

**Literature:** The current state of affairs in the Literature Committee is as follows:

Audio version of the Big Book was finally published through Audioteka service, which is capable of protecting the mandatory copyright. Electronic versions of A.A. literature are in the process of preparation. After several years we finally got the result of independent review from the US and the green light to publish the following titles this year:

*A.A. for the Older Alcoholic, Frequently Asked Questions about A.A., This is A.A., Young People and A.A.*

The Literature Committee's activities have been also affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Communication with the GSO seems to be luckily and finally reestablished.

**Relations with Other Countries:** Some of our members are regular attendees of foreign conventions and conferences, and we also keep inviting members from other countries to our conventions. We feel we have good and solid relationships with friends in Poland, Slovakia, and recently also with the UK, Russia, Bulgaria, and Portugal — we are successful in deepening the relationship and cooperation with these countries. We really appreciate continuous global support from the A.A. structures, and the opportunity to participate in ESM and WSM, which helps us to develop the A.A. Fellowship in our country.

— Karolina M.

#### Denmark:

1. AA Denmark is working to getting members of the Fellowship more interested in doing service on regional and national level. So far, we have made a more modern and easier webpage with information on the work going on nationally.
2. We are still trying to figure out the right way to incorporate the online meetings into our service structure and are discussing the different solutions that other countries have chosen.
3. Participating as observers in other countries' Service Conferences we have realized how much we need at least one nonalcoholic member on our GSB. Both to get her/his view as nonalcoholic on our work, but also to use him/her as public spokesperson when needed.
4. We have almost finished the digitization of the Big Book, and it will be published as audiobook and e-book this autumn. In the coming years all A.A. Literature will become available in digital formats. We have discussed the possibility of making the Big Book available to download for free.



5. As a test for the first time AA Denmark had the phone number for the service hotline and email address of A.A. on screen before the screening of a new Danish film called "Fuld af Kærlighed." Quite a clever title since "fuld" in Danish has two meanings: "full of" and "drunk." Therefore, the title can mean both "full of love" but also "drunk because of love." The movie's focus is on an alcoholic's family, and how alcohol affects the whole family, and the fact that the family needs treatment as well to get a normal family life again.

— *Flemming S.*

**Dominican Republic:** The Dominican Republic has 61 A.A. groups throughout the country, with a total of about 400 members. We have two (2) service offices, one in the capital, Santo Domingo (Central Office), and our GSO, based in Santiago de los Caballeros.

Starting in 2021, our entire service structure, at every level — and more specifically, the General Service Board — underwent a process of change, which started with a movement in all A.A. areas in the Dominican Republic, questioning the performance of most members of the Board. This questioning focused on the lack of reporting and transparency regarding crucial topics like Finance and Literature, as well as the failure to deliver results in the work relating to the Fifth Tradition. This movement culminated in a General Assembly of GSRs, representing the majority of A.A. groups in the country — more than thirty.

At this Assembly, the members of the Board, who were in attendance, were all removed, except for a Class A vice chair, as per the suggestion of a Mexican sponsor who was present. The Assembly's work led to the election of an interim management committee which — with the support of the groups represented at the Assembly — was charged with cleaning up and resolving everything pertaining to Finance and Literature issues, and with preparing the way for the election of a new board of trustees (one Class A trustee to serve as chair, plus six Class B trustees, including a trustee-at-large and two regional trustees representing the Northern region). Likewise, a trustee-at-large and two regional trustees representing the Southern Region were elected. The committee also set the date for the 28th Conference for the month of November 2022. At that Conference, advisory actions were voted on, to be carried out in 2023, and a GSO general manager was elected. During 2023, most of the advisory actions recommended by the 28th Conference were implemented, including the design and content development of the official web page of A.A. Dominican Republic, [www.A.A.dominicana.org](http://www.A.A.dominicana.org), in order to establish an official presence online and provide information about the Fellowship of

A.A. in the Dominican Republic as a whole. This led to a massive increase in the number of people who called asking for help or information about A.A., which resulted in increased membership at the groups.

The board of trustees managed the organization and celebration of our Fifth National Convention, held in Santiago de los Caballeros in September 2023.

At the end of 2023, we held the 29th Conference, with support from our Mexican sponsors. Two trustees were added — a regional Class B trustee and a Class A trustee — as well as two new delegates, from the Northern and Southern regions, respectively. We also made one of our regional trustees into a trustee-at-large, because of the resignation of the trustee-at-large from the Northern territory.

At the 29th Conference, we were able to review the advisory actions from the previous Conference and reaffirm those advisory actions that had not been carried out or needed to be kept, such as the advertising announcements produced by the Santo Domingo district in the Southern region, which were shared with the entire country.

In the Northern region, in the provinces of Puerto Plata and Espaillat, two workshops about service in the Northern region were held and two new groups opened in Area 2, in Santiago de los Caballeros, where our GSO is located.

We are particularly interested in participating at the 28th WSM because of our need to seek the necessary knowledge to strengthen our service structure.

— *Ysidro C.*

**Ecuador:** Alcoholics Anonymous, Ecuador, currently has 2,089 members.

**General Service Office:** Our General Services Office, GSO, moved to new premises in the city of Guayaquil. This was possible thanks to our economic growth, which allowed us to improve operations at the office and to have a comfortable space for literature, our members and collaborators.

**Finance:** We are self-supporting through the sale of literature (40%), Sobriedad magazine (20%), contributions from members and groups (30%), and other (10%), which includes events and anonymous contributions.

**Literature:** We currently have a stock of 27,634 items of A.A. literature and have managed to print several books:

- *Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*
- *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*
- *Our Great Responsibility*
- *The AA Service Manual*

We also print the following pamphlets:

- *A message to teenagers*
- *Do You Think You're Different?*
- *Circles of Love and Service*
- *Faith Leaders Ask About A.A.*
- *Let's Be Friendly with our Friends*
- *Is AA for me?*
- *A Member's Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous*
- *The Group Treasurer*

**Technology:** In 2024 we added a systems department in order to keep the social networks active (Facebook: Alcohólicos Anónimos del Ecuador; X: Alcohólicos Anónimos Ecuador Oficial; Instagram: Alcohólicos Anónimos EC). Our website is [www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.ec](http://www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.ec) and has information available to everyone. Our greatest challenge is to keep all our group information up to date.

**Events:** In 2023, we were able to hold our National Convention, with massive attendance, including fellow A.A. members from other structures. Following the recommendations of the General Service Conference, we have been able to hold two national forums, and a Gratitude Dinner is planned for November — a long-awaited event that unites the entire AA Ecuador Fellowship.

For 2025, we have scheduled a congress and the National Services Forum. The next National Convention of Alcoholics Anonymous of Ecuador will be in 2026.

**International Literature Fund:** The General Service Office

made contributions to ILF in 2023 and 2024, and intends to maintain the continuity of this 7th Tradition effort to carry the message around the world.

**Nominating:** We currently have 2 Class A trustees and 8 Class B trustees.

We are looking for 3 Class A trustees and 2 Class B trustees.

**Public Information:** To do this service work, we have developed a workbook, and we have flip charts and slides, which have allowed us to unify our PI tools for use at the national level.

— *Magdalena Y.*

**Finland:** Finland has two official languages, Finnish and Swedish, the second of which is spoken by about 6% of the people in Finland. So naturally we also have Swedish-speaking A.A. groups. Finnish A.A. was split into two from an unfortunate event, which happened in our Great Annual Meeting in 1997. Most Swedish speaking groups were part of the “other” unofficial A.A. in Finland. Now, when A.A. fortunately became united again last June (2023), we got the Swedish speaking groups back into the official A.A. Fellowship, with the right to publish our literature, etc.

Finnish A.A. is divided into 17 regions, of which only 15 are geographical and two are formed by languages: the Swedish-speaking in Finland which now hopefully can be pushed forward when they have an official status again. The other non-geographic region is the Finnish-speaking in Sweden. There was a time when many Finns went to Sweden to work, and they



Buffet lunches were provided by the hotel covering a range of cuisines.

created a Finnish-speaking A.A. there. Now many of these Finnish-speaking groups are dying down. The descendants of the Finnish emigrants speak fluent Swedish, and they go to Swedish-speaking groups, which leads to the fact that very soon we can see this lingual region disappear.

**Literature:** The Big Book was translated anew to update the language. Naturally, the new edition was opposed by many of the early A.A. members, but as we try to remember — our primary purpose is to carry the message to those who still suffer from drinking — and we need to have our literature abreast of the times so that it will speak to the newcomers. The first edition (1,500 copies) of the new translation was quickly sold out which showed that it was worthwhile to make the new translation.

The Big Book also came out as audiobook, and it can be loaded free of charge from Finnish websites — with a recommended donation of 10€. There were 1,500 downloads in the first three weeks after the audiobook was available, and as we have approximately 6,000-8,000 A.A. members in Finland, we could see that it was met with great interest.

**12th Step Work:** The question: “How to reach those, who still suffer from drinking?” is often discussed and we have noticed that the times have changed and that we should keep up with the times. The Internet/ Virtual groups were previously considered by many older A.A. members as unreliable with respect to anonymity, but during the pandemic the internet groups blossomed out and they came to stay and now we try to promote them in the way we can.

A YouTube-video has been discussed and partly also planned, but it has been postponed because of financial and personnel resources.

The Finnish A.A. Service has formed directions for “how to reach an A.A. group when abroad” or “how to act when drinking/using drugs has become a problem when being abroad.” These directions have been sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and it is to be hoped that there would be a link on the Ministry’s websites among all other directions (how to get a new passport, how to act when being robbed/ill, etc., when abroad). The directions describe what A.A. is and there is a QR-code attached to find the nearest A.A. group.

When A.A. members grow old, the access to the groups (many stairs, etc.) may bring difficulties when entering and we are trying to improve the entrances to be easier to enter.

— Laura K.

**French-speaking Europe** is an area made up of three countries: France, Switzerland (French and Italian speaking) and Belgium (French speaking).

Demographics:	France	Switzerland (FR/IT)	Belgium (FR)
Association Name	U.A.A.	A.A.S.R.I.	C.S.G.A.A.
Population (77.5)	70,000.000	2,500.000	5,000.000
Groups (762)	523	50	189
Density	1/133.800	1/50.000	1 / 26.455
Prison	11		5
Online meetings/wk	41	20	30
French	462	43	180
English	45	27 (A.A. UK)	1
Italian		6	
Polish	3		4
Russian	1		
Spanish	1	1	
German			4

**Post-Covid situation:**

- Groups have closed while new groups have opened; the situation is stable
- Online meetings have survived the end of the lockdown period and are now fully accepted
- Population of A.A. members is divided into physical-only, online-only and hybrid
- A significant and growing number of members are witnessing every year about the fact they were born as A.A. in an online meeting
- Literature sales have been greatly affected but they now are getting back to normal level

**Rotation of delegates for French-speaking Europe:** We have formally adopted a new rotation system to choose our international delegates for European and World Services meetings. Two people are now active in parallel for four-year terms, starting at two-years intervals, and leaving one country at a time without a delegate. Currently Marie-Paule, from Switzerland, is achieving her four-year mission, while Regis, from Belgium, is achieving his second year. France has just brought us the news that they are very confident to provide a new delegate in 2025 as a successor to Marie-Paule.

**Country-level collaboration:** France, Switzerland and Belgium have enforced their cooperation through the “C.E.F.E.” (European French-speaking Exchange Forum), which is part of all three national conferences. During those meetings, common projects are discussed and set up. Two additional online meetings are held per year.



Major current project :

- “European French-speaking Service Forum”: will be organized in 2026 after an initial event in 2022. The intention is to enforce international cooperation, erase borders, and bring to service those members who never got involved before.

**“Editions AA Francophones Européennes”:** It is the legal entity which takes care of purchasing, editing, printing and distributing A.A. literature in the three countries, on behalf of which it deals with copyrights granted by AAWS and Grapevine.

Initially set up under Belgian law structure, it has been recently made a distinct entity from the Belgian AAGSO (CSGAA) in WSO’s new computer system, but it has involved miscommunication and inappropriate literature deliveries over the last two years. However, it seems on the way to arriving at a solution.

The Editors would really appreciate to being automatically informed of any revisions made to publications. This would allow them to make the appropriate requests for revised files, in order to always publish the latest versions.

The publishing company wishes to be placed on a mailing list to receive the USA conference report in French. This would give them precise information on the resolutions concerning publications and the developments that can be expected.

**Collaboration with other countries:** We are regularly invited by other countries’ A.A. events (like the Polish Conference 2023) and doing our best to make those opportunities happen again. This gives us inspiration to try to promote new projects in our structure for the future, like the Conference Inventory.

**Treasury:** After having deeply suffered, the financial situations of the three countries are getting back to normal again. Literature sales and Seventh Tradition have recently increased to bring us to sustainable levels. Online groups still struggle to find a suitable way to raise contributions without physical money.

**National telephone helplines:** The three countries maintain national telephone helplines and do their best to make them available as much “24/7” as possible. Currently only Belgium answers 24/7.

**Media Campaign and communication:** A.A. France has launched a new media campaign in 2023, also revamping their website. Posters “*Entrez c’est Ouvert*” (meaning “Come in it’s open”) are subtly spreading the constant newcomers questioning about the necessity to “reserve” or “subscribe” to attend meetings. Switzerland has also promoted a new website, while Belgium has issued a new social network campaign by creating

video clips with the help of A.A. members being national television professionals.

**First Swiss National Congress:** AASRI will organize its first national Congress in 2026 in Fribourg to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the association.

— *Regis C.*

### **German-Speaking Europe:**

- The group attrition experienced during the Coronavirus pandemic has ceased.

Currently, the number of groups in Germany is stagnating at about 2,145, with 1,860 of them in person and 285 online. Austria/South Tyrol together have about 200 meetings, German-speaking Switzerland 112 meetings and 20 video meetings.

- There were respectively two German-speaking conventions, one in Munich/DE in 2023 (over 2,000 visitors) and one in Wels/AT in July 2024.

- Two GSCs took place in the reporting period — as before the coronavirus pandemic — in spring 2023 and 2024.

- After two lean years during the pandemic, our donations rose again to over €300,000 in 2022. This is the highest amount of donations during the last 15 years! In 2023, however, the volume of donations fell again to €249,716, returning to the pre-pandemic level.

- In the beginning of the year the German GSO will move from the Lower Bavarian province to the federal capital Berlin. The move had been postponed again and again due to financial bottlenecks as well as the pandemic.

- In former times Austria/South Tyrol and German-speaking Switzerland are represented by two trustees at our GSB. Following the rejection of the proposal for a new service structure in German-speaking Europe at the 24th GSC, German-speaking Switzerland will no longer send a trustee to the GSB until further notice.

- Germany is currently working on a new leaner service structure while Austria/South Tyrol and German-speaking Switzerland already have one.

- Due to persistent differences within the literature team and repeated disagreements over the choice of the correct translation, the GSB disbanded the literature team responsible for translating the English literature into German at its meeting in June 2024.

— *Karin F.*

**Great Britain:** Current registration with AAGB across its 16 regions (including the English-speaking Continental Europe Region, or CER) is around 5,000 groups, including online groups.

AAGB has applied to host the 2026 World Service Meeting. In December 2022 a documentary titled “I’m an Alcoholic: Inside Recovery” was produced by the BBC and was aired on television. The main contributors’ anonymity was protected by using ground-breaking deep fake technology and this was made a feature of the program. The positive impact of the documentary was immediate — the website saw a 53 percent increase in traffic, helplines and online services saw a big rise in calls from the still-suffering alcoholic and meetings had newcomers arriving.

Conference 2022 requested a new AAGB website, with emphasis on a more user-friendly experience and improved meeting finder, and the new site went live on 14th May 2024. The new site has significantly improved functionality, and a greater focus on the needs of the still-suffering alcoholic who is looking for help.

Recent publications that have been approved by Conference are the “Sponsorship Into Service” leaflet, a new leaflet for Young People, and a leaflet entitled “Who Else Looks Like Me in Alcoholics Anonymous?” which includes stories from people of color in the Fellowship. We have updated our Service and Structure Handbooks to make them more attractive and user-friendly, and they have been very well received by the Fellowship.

Copies are available for examination in the Literature display. Conference 2024 requested a new edition of the Big Book, incorporating stories from members in Great Britain and English-speaking Continental Europe, but obviously keeping the core original text.

Following the recommendation of Conference 2021 that all levels of service do more to increase diversity and welcome women, LGBTQIA+ members and racial minorities, the General Service Board has been working to create greater inclusivity. Since 2019, when the issue of diversity was first discussed at conference, the GSB has increased our number of black and female trustees, and there has also been a rise in the number of black Conference delegates since then. The work to improve diversity is ongoing, but we are making progress.

The “Race Today” working group has been continuing to hold online conventions, and now form part of our new “Inclusivity Committee” who will be looking at ways we can better carry the message of recovery to people of color, the LGBTQIA+ community, and people with disabilities and to help all people feel welcome at A.A. meetings and aiming to actualize our Third Tradition. As part of this work, new films were approved at Conference 2024, aimed at carrying the message of recovery to women and people of color, as well as a film for Public Information use in the emergency services. A film for the LGBTQIA+

community is now complete and will be presented to Conference 2025.

After positive feedback and a vote of approval from Conference 2024, Alcoholics Anonymous (GB) has launched a national advertising campaign. The campaign will be seen on electronic billboards in 42 locations in Great Britain, which will change with each campaign. The campaign will run for one week in July 2024, another week in late September or early October, a week at the beginning of December, and then five weeks from 26th December 2024. The text-only images have been designed to mirror life through the eyes of someone struggling with alcohol and indicate the clarity that A.A. can bring. We will be monitoring the website, our helpline and online services to assess the impact of the campaign, and the images will also be available for use by regions and intergroups for their primary purpose work. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the ‘go to’ source of “best practice” recommendations for all health practitioners, from GPs to surgeons in England and Wales. These include health and social care practitioners, service providers, commissioners, and most importantly, adults seeking help for an alcohol-use disorder. Evidence for the effectiveness of Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-Step programs was submitted, including the Cochrane Review (2020) and the 27 studies showed “that A.A. and facilitating the use of A.A./12-step fellowship, produced similar benefits to other treatments on all drinking-related outcomes except for continuous abstinence and remission, where A.A./12-step fellowship was superior.”

Based on this evidence, Alcoholics Anonymous is now included in the NICE quality standards. This NICE quality standard will be the gold standard and key evidence-based reference in England and Wales for the next ten years or so. A.A. will be able to refer to the NICE Guidelines in our interactions, particularly with health and social care practitioners.

AAGB continues to struggle to fill certain service positions but despite this, we are excited about the great work that is being done to carry the message of recovery.

— Holly A.

### **Greece:**

**The background:** The first groups in Greece started in the middle of ‘70s taking place in the American bases, especially for the American soldiers and all English-speaking alcoholics. The Greek-speaking groups started in 1981 in Athens, which in time spread all around the country.

**A.A. groups in Greece:** Nowadays, in Greece 26 Greek-speaking and 19 English-speaking groups are running. In Athens, there are 10 Greek, English, one Russian-speaking and four online groups.



*One of the many A.A. meetings located in cities around the world.*

We have two women's groups, the one through Skype and five online meetings are still being held.

**General A.A. Structure:** A.A. groups in Greece take part in the Greek Intergroup with representatives they vote themselves. Intergroup consists of five members of the Greek GSO and the group representatives. It holds meetings six times a year, every two months.

Every two years the five-member "Board of Trustees" is elected and holds separate online meetings six times a year, every two months.

The Greek A.A. decided in 2024 to create the first service conference in our country to adopt the present service structure. The service convention will take place online on 18, 19 and 20 October.

**Finances:** Every group has its own treasury, supported by the contributions of the members who can afford a small amount of money. Every group spends its money on activities supporting its primary purpose, as well as on the running needs of each group. The central treasury, due to the decrease in membership

of the physical groups after the Covid-19 pandemic, is facing financial problems as the groups do not have enough money to contribute.

**Internet and websites:** For almost 15 years we have had a registered website page with all the relevant information under the address [www.aa-greece.gr](http://www.aa-greece.gr), which has been included in the list of the municipality of Athens and the Ministry of Health.

At the time being some new books are being translated.

The committees of the Central Office inform the groups and members, after each meeting of the Greek GSO and its committees, through e-mail.

**Bibliography:** The recovery guides of A.A. handed out in Greek are: "Alcoholics Anonymous," "12+12," "Living Sober," "As Bill Sees It," "Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers," "Forming True Partnerships," "12 Concepts," "Daily Reflections" and several pamphlets, as well.

— *Stamatina C.*

**Guatemala:** On January 6, 2024, we celebrated 64 years of operation. We estimate that we currently have 950 groups throughout Guatemala, including four virtual groups, with an approximate membership of 20,000, including 500 women.

We currently have 17 members in our General Service Board: four Class A, and 13 Class B (nine regional trustees and five general service trustees). Standing committees do not have directors or secretaries.

Over the past year, Finance has implemented monthly meetings virtually with our regions to discuss projected contributions, which have helped to keep our finances in order.

We will celebrate our 51st National Convention in the city of Malacatán, San Marcos, on November 30 and December 1, 2024.

In 2026, Guatemala will host the 52nd Central American Convention and preparations are already underway.

We published the Second Edition of the *History of AA in Guatemala*, which was revised and expanded, with the goal of making our new generations aware of the history that our pioneer members experienced as well as the development of the structure in our country.

— *Rovin R.*

**Honduras:** Historically, Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador used to participate together at the World Service Meeting (WSM) under the name *Central America Northern Zone*. It was mostly a matter of leveraging our combined financial resources; all three countries would support the attendance of a joint representative. However, this method did not work out for us in the end. Guatemala and El Salvador decided to send their own



representatives individually. Fortunately, Honduras is back at this WSM.

We have also been able to participate at the Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), in 2017, 2021 and 2023 (the last REDELA took place in Colombia).

In 2022, we celebrated the 40th Central American Convention, which was very well attended and, more recently, we participated at the 41st Central American Convention in El Salvador. There, we were able to obtain the book *Our Great Responsibility*.

We decided to change the Preamble to include the word *persons*, and we have made this change in all our literature. The change was well received in our Fellowship, which sees it as signaling the protection and inclusion of our members.

Our service structure has four regions and 16 area committees; our Board of Trustees is made up of five Class A trustees and 10 Class B trustees.

Since before the pandemic, we had noticed a drop in the number of members of AA Honduras. Fortunately, over the past year, the trend has reversed, especially in terms of young people coming in. We currently estimate the size of our membership at 9,000.

We have reactivated the meetings we used to have among the countries that made up Central America Northern Zone. In those meetings we share how we overcome our weaknesses and increase our strengths. Our most pressing need is to have audiovisual material that we can use in service work in our PI, CPC and Institutions committees. This was discussed at our 52nd Conference and an advisory action was approved in this regard.

— José J.

**Hong Kong:** The main service body of Hong Kong is the Hong Kong Intergroup, which connects and serves the 17 active A.A. groups in Hong Kong.

While we have experienced a continued decrease in both attendance and Seventh Tradition contributions post-Covid, Hong Kong was still able to make charitable contributions to A.A. service organizations at the global and regional level that benefit less advantaged A.A. Fellowships.

The HKAA website received almost 70,000 visits in 2023. Also Hong Kong has maintained our efforts to educate the community about alcoholism via our Hospitals, Institution and Public Information (HIPI) committee. For example, we have hosted medical students from Chinese University of Hong Kong, and the Hong Kong Police Force Psychological Services Group at our meetings.

HKAA also has an ongoing cooperation with the KELY Support Group, which is focused on helping teenagers with

drug and alcohol problems, by sending members to visit local schools and participating in a video project for repeated use when live speakers are not available.

Leveraging HKAA's Tax-Exempt Status as a charity, the HIPI committee is continuing to work with the MTR Corporation (Hong Kong's subway), with new ads in both English and Chinese released just this month in local trains and stations.

This awareness-building work is essential because alcoholism remains a serious problem in the Hong Kong community. In 2023 we received over 400 incoming calls or messages to the A.A. hotline (excluding password requests for online meetings).

On a global level, Hong Kong sent two delegates to attend the Asia-Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM) in Fiji, myself included. One significant outcome is that our HIPI committee has collaborated with the Japanese GSO to reproduce their manga pamphlets in Chinese for outreach that is very relevant to the local market.

— Sheli B.

**Hungary:** A.A. has been operating in Hungary for 36 years. I joined the community 31 years ago. In Hungary today, 157



*A souvenir shop in Times Square, just blocks from the hotel.*

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groups hold 163 meetings a week, according to our records.

After the pandemic period, besides the decrease in attendance at meetings and service, unfortunately, even the attendance at Delegates' meetings decreased. We need to restore this.

Fortunately, we have had some positive things happen.

In 2023 we published our first Service Manual. This was written by several A.A. members — partly based on the A.A. Service Manual for Great Britain. This book describes in detail the structure of the Hungarian A.A., the tasks of the service staff at the different levels, the powers of the bodies, and the activities of the Association set up to ensure external relations. The book has been published in print — a copy is sent to each group — but it can be viewed and read on our community website.

We published another book this year called *They Succeeded*. This book contains the life stories of sober alcoholics in Hungary. The book is especially dear to my heart because my life story is included.

Over the summer we cleared up a misunderstanding, and we would like to have the stories from Hungary included in the next Alcoholics Anonymous book that we will be publishing.

A major structural change is needed in the life of A.A. in Hungary. The most important reason for this is that, according to information from abroad and a friend who is serving in A.A. in Britain, the creation of a tiered structure could significantly improve the proportion of people involved in decision-making, so that we don't have to worry about quorums. That would be very important.

In addition to this, the restructuring could address two situations that our peers have put in place with their own ideas, without the agreement of the community.

Online groups that proliferated during the pandemic recently announced the formation of an intergroup.

Our other problem today is the formation of a region, which was denied for a while by the founders, and then it was announced that the region had been in operation for nine years. These organizations are not the same as the organization of the A.A. community in Hungary. They break up the structural unit. We all know that breaking the structural unity can break the spiritual unity. This further reduces commitment to service, and that in turn reduces the chances of recovery. If that happens, the recovering alcoholics who come after us will die because we are dysfunctional.

In this we need to make much progress in a short time so that structural unity is restored, the resulting conflicts are eliminated, and we can once again focus all our attention on getting the message across as our primary goal.

— Sándor A.

**Iceland:** In Iceland are held over 300 A.A. meetings total in every week, and about 200 of them are in Reykjavík area. We have English-speaking, Polish-speaking and Icelandic-speaking meetings almost every day in the Reykjavík area. (Population in Iceland approx. 380,000 people).

The Annual Service Conference in May marks the beginning and end of our year for the GSO and many other committees. Delegates, committee members, general service representatives (GSRs) and the General Service Committee come together to share experience from the past year and discuss present and future service work, publications, and any ongoing business. This year the theme of the Service Conference was "Where do we come from and what does it mean for us today" (roughly translated) and there was a lot of focus on where our service structure is today in the spirit of the Seventh Tradition. Our service structure is considerably simpler than for the USA and Canada, but Iceland can be seen as one area assembly but with a General Service Board.

The General Service Board (LBN) has been working on reorganization and writing all the main protocols within the committee and subcommittee, to make all rotations easier in all committees that GSO is linked to. This work has greatly helped and increased organization and efficiency in all the committees that GSO is responsible for.

During the Covid pandemic virtual meetings increased a lot since there was a drop in members attending in-person meetings. For the last two years or so virtual meetings are still going strong and are getting bigger and bigger. Now the online community is starting to participate at our Annual Service Conference (LPR) in Iceland — A.A. in a digital age.

The General Service Board in Iceland is responsible for an open meeting held on the Good Friday every year to commemorate the arrival of A.A. in Iceland on that day back in 1954. This year A.A. in Iceland was celebrating its 70th year. It has been difficult to hold this meeting due to a high cost, but this topic was taken up for debate at our last General service conference in the spirit of our Seventh Tradition. This meeting was cancelled two years in a row due to Covid.

During the Covid period contributions to A.A. decreased drastically but recovered well in 2022.

The General Service Board still manages to run all its operation on contributions from A.A. meetings. Direct bank transfer contributions from group members at meetings are now more than 30% of total contribution and in some meetings it's over 70%.

The translation of the Big Book has been an ongoing process for several years now in the public information committee. This will be the third Icelandic version of the Big Book, but our

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first version came out back in 1976. Hopefully this version of the translations will be published within the next two years or so. Some other publications have been made, while this work has been ongoing, like some pamphlets and service material. The Twelve Concepts have also been translated into Icelandic now and submitted for approval at our last General Service Conference last May.

— *Páll S.*

**India:** India is a unique country, with a 1.4 billion population and a considerable presence of A.A. With 29 States and seven Union Territories, 31 major spoken and written languages, more than 20 minor languages and countless more dialects, India in itself is a mini-United Nations.

Thus A.A. India not only has the challenge but also the opportunity to carry the lifesaving message of A.A. in many different languages to a highly and densely populated audience.

Consequently A.A. India, as a Fellowship is not only one of the largest outside the U.S. and Canada (with more than 2,100 groups and an estimated 50,000 members) but is also one of the most diverse of the Fellowships with literature in 14 languages. Indian GSO publishes in many languages: Big Books in 13 languages, pamphlets in 26 regional languages, excluding English, and going forward, the number of languages is bound to increase.

We have a healthy and robust service structure with the General Service Board comprising of 18 Class B trustees and nine Class A trustees. Though this may seem large, it was necessary in view of the diversities of the country where the dialect changes every 50 miles, and the language changes every 100 miles.

In the last five to six years, after achieving a reasonable reach in terms of the number of groups as well as A.A. members to do the service, it is being concentrated on carrying the message of A.A. as a resource to relieve alcoholism.

Towards this end concerted efforts are being made at the local, state and national levels creating helplines all round in multiple languages so that the suffering alcoholic of any state, any language and any ethnic group gets the message of A.A.'s availability. Working with friends of Alcoholics Anonymous in medicine, public life, administration, and law enforcement, we are trying to reach out through various media — be it press, radio, television or public media.

From 2021, the GSC Advisory action of the Public Information (PI) committee of delegates and trustees' committees unanimously approved six MASS PI and 30 CPC PI, where a two or more language-speaking public gathers for a social cause & CPC the GSB approved free service literature worth INR 600,000 in a financial year (US \$7,200).

**Our Vision:** Every citizen of India should be able to define and describe Alcoholics Anonymous and every problem drinker who wants to, should be able to find the hand of A.A. within reach.

We also want to reach out to neighboring countries in Asia, the way the U.S./Canada Fellowship reaches out to A.A. around the world.

**Fellowship:** The road ahead is tough, and our tasks often seem difficult. A.A. in India has only a few carriers of the message and many a suffering alcoholic waiting for the lifesaving message.

Our GSC theme for 2024 is "Service: the real gratitude to A.A." To achieve this, we are encouraging every group to practice Tradition Five to start new groups across the country, eventually doubling the membership every year.

As part of this initiative, we have started to sponsor a neighboring country, Bangladesh, by contributing sufficient A.A. literature. Though much is achieved, a lot needs to be done with the kind of population and for the potential suffering alcoholics we have, which will definitely be the largest number in the world.

— *Eulogio G.*

**Iran:** It is a source of satisfaction and gratitude that since 1994 we have benefited from the existence of Alcoholics Anonymous. An association that has rightly brought healing to the lives of thousands of alcoholics with a message full of love and sacrifice at every moment.

Since the 27th World Service Meeting in 2022, the number of groups and members in Iran have increased significantly. The number of in-person groups has reached more than 400 and the number of members has reached more than 8,600. This is while, due to the significant growth of the use of virtual space after the pandemic period, online groups have reached more than 40 in all our areas, and there are about 18 hours of continuous meetings 24 hours a day.

Starting in 2022, we decided to create a consistent service structure to facilitate service, avoid confusion, and create unity, by model taking and utilizing the US/Canada Service Manual Structure. Using the ultimate efforts in implementation with the most adaptations in these two years have been achieved by 75%.

Currently, Iran's service structure consists of representatives of 19 areas based on six geographical regions, with 51 voting members, of which 38 are representatives, 11 alcoholic trustees (Class B) and two nonalcoholic trustees (Class A). The service conference in Iran holds three-day meetings every four months.



According to the number of groups in one of our areas, this area started to be districted last year. This was the first experience that we did.

Iran also has two intergroup central offices and an international virtual group which holds one English language meeting a week.

Iran's General Service Office is located in Tehran. The office, by hiring special employees, started to more exploit the virtual space. Making an application with the various sections including the addresses of in-person and online meetings, route finder for in-person meetings, sales of publications, audio files of members, notices of trustees, audio books.

Also, our official website ([www.iranaa.org](http://www.iranaa.org)) is available on Google play, has various sections and online sales of publications and meeting addresses available to all those who need help.

Preparing and publishing of a monthly recovery magazine currently by the name, TAAK (means Grape in Persian) is one other activity which is being done this year. It consists of various sections and deals with personal stories and messages of members from all over the world.

In recent years, the need to benefit from Traditions and Concepts for our members has become particularly important. Based on it, various workshops and meetings are being held online every week and Free Conference programs by inviting foreign speakers from other countries and local speakers to fill the void caused with the lack of transfer of Twelve Traditions and Concepts knowledge by the early members who brought the message of Alcoholics Anonymous to Iran at first years ago. So that we can gradually be witness of the maturity of association in our region by relying on 36 spiritual principles in facing the challenges and realities.

Currently, the service committees in our structure are consisted of 10 main service Committees: PI, Treasury, Workshops, Literature, Translation, Website, Holding conference, Recovery magazine, Admission and Archives.

Translation and editing of publications approved by the General Service Office after obtaining license with the purpose of maintaining trustworthiness in translation is done.

This committee has put in its utmost effort to be able to take an important step in conveying the message by maintaining the originality of the original literature during translation. Among the other actions of this committee is the re-review of books such as the Big Book and the Twelve Steps — Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous, although they have already been translated and licensed, but in terms of translation and editing in Persian, they still need to be revised and re-edited.



*A sign created by GSO employees reflecting the commitment of both A.A. and nonalcoholic service workers.*

The achievements of the translation committee as well as publications based on the obtained licenses are more than twenty publications including books and pamphlets. The main problem in translation committee is lack of access to the PDF files of the books; after obtaining the translation license, we face a challenge in this matter.

One of the challenges that is emerging in these years is the entry of drug addicts from other associations, who of course, sometimes have experienced alcohol as well.

Culturally and geographically, Iran is more susceptible to the prevalence of drug use than alcohol and the number of alcoholics who have only consumed alcohol is very small and most of them have experienced both, and for most of them drugs have been the main factor in reaching the point of surrender, so they have become members of other fellowships, but finally they consider themselves to belong to the Alcoholics Anonymous community.

Therefore, the observance of the Third, Fifth, Eighth and Tenth Traditions by these members is one of the main concerns, relying on love and empathy and using publications related to this issue.

In conclusion, as you know, there is a parallel structure in Mashhad under the name of Alcoholics Anonymous, and the only boundary of our separation is non-adherence to principles in compliance copyright laws in the publication and sale of publications approved by the General Service Board of US/Canada, but at the same time, the desire to create unity is observed by the groups, and we hope that in the not too far future by respecting fundamental ethics and relying on spiritual principles, we would be witness of this union by both our groups.

— Amir Z.

## Ireland:

**Online Meetings:** Groups all over Ireland responded to the pandemic by starting online meetings, which provided a vital connection for the maintenance of members' sobriety as well as for the sobriety of many newcomers. Although there has been a general return to physical meetings, many groups have also continued with online meetings and some Area, Intergroup and Conference business meetings are still being held virtually.

**Website:** The GSB operates the only official A.A. website in Ireland, which is for the use of members as well as serving as an aid to public information. Our freshly updated site displays times and venues for group meetings and includes maps giving the location of groups. The site includes many new features, including an online payment system which is particularly availed of by members all over the country in the evolving and ever-changing situation.

Group information can be updated online, which also has been very useful in recent times. Also displayed is a calendar of events from around the country and an online shop with price lists and order forms for literature available from GSO. Minutes from Conference meetings are made available in a members' area, and links to all officially required information, including a list of directors, annual accounts and company reports are included on the homepage.

This all ensures that there is transparency at the level of service in the Fellowship and publicly. There is an area for professionals in correctional or treatment facilities and healthcare fields and our film *The Road Back* is freely available to view and download.

**Literature:** A *Service Handbook for Ireland* was first published in 1978 and since 1992 has been updated to reflect Conference of Ireland decisions on a yearly basis. All Conference



*Wit's End: the writing studio at Stepping Stones where Bill W. composed much of A.A.'s literature.*

of Ireland decisions are updated into the *Service Handbook for Ireland*. Considerable work was put into updating the current handbook at Conference 2021 and it is now available online on the AA Ireland website.

**Service:** In meetings, physical and online, members are encouraged to get involved in the service structure firstly in their own group and then by attending Area meetings. All groups have official alcoholicsanonymous.ie email addresses. Each Group appoints two General Service Representatives to attend Area which, in turn, appoints four delegates to attend the Intergroup Meeting and from Intergroup four delegates are appointed to attend Conference.

**Finance:** Through the generosity of our members following the Seventh Tradition, Alcoholics Anonymous in Ireland is financially secure with a Prudent Reserve. We are 85% self-supporting from member contributions; the remainder comes from the sale of literature and convention surpluses. The Audited Accounts up to 2021 indicate clearly that although there was a dip during the initial period of the lockdown, there has been a balancing out. In addition, as Area, Intergroup, Conference and Board meetings were held virtually for almost two years, expenses for travel and sundries were considerably reduced. Many groups have set up online banking facilities to allow for members' contributions, which are then passed through the service structure. Contributions can also be made directly to the GSO.

**Conference Subcommittees:** At the 2021 General Service Conference of Ireland four subcommittees were formed to deal with pertinent concerns amongst members. Each subcommittee met over a period of six months and brought proposals back to a Special Meeting of Conference in September 2021 where they were passed. In summary: 1. Relevant literature and pamphlets will be amalgamated into a pack to help GSRs; 2. A Young Person's Liaison Officer post will be created for first time in Ireland. The YPLO subcommittee will continue to meet to provide parameters and guidelines; 3. Guidelines for Digital Online Meetings and an updated Meeting Format to include online meetings will be published in the Green Service Handbook; 4. In the Green Service Handbook emphasis will be placed on retired Conference Delegates to return to home groups to serve as officers.

— John T.

**Italy:** The AA Italy Conference, which was held in Rimini April 19–21, 2024, worked intensely to amend both the Bylaws of the Association and the Service Manual, with the aim of 1) making all decisions taken during online meetings legally valid and 2)

ratifying the existence of online A.A. groups and incorporating them into the service structure.

To make the decisions taken during the online meetings legal (e.g., the General Service Board), the Conference has modified the Bylaws of AA Italy, which is the legal instrument for recognition of the Association by the Italian Government and is kept by a notary. To ratify the existence of online groups and include them in the service structure, the AA Italy Service Manual has been modified, also as a consequence of the changes to the Bylaws.

Keeping in step with technical times to implement the changes adopted to the Service Manual, the online groups will be included in the official list of AA Italy groups, and their coordinates will be published on the national website. Furthermore, to include online groups in the service structure, an online Area will be created with the same functions as the already existing territorial Areas.

The online Area will have the opportunity to elect up to three delegates who will participate — in person — in the General Service Conference. The online Area will also have a bank account in the name of AA Italy, into which members' contributions will flow. The groups will meet virtually in rooms registered to the Association.

— Jody M.

**Japan:** There are about 560 A.A. groups in Japan, with about 5,300 members, about 30% of which are women. The decrease from the previous Highlights may be due to the impact of Covid-19.

The number of groups has decreased by seven percent over the past two years.

One of the measures taken to address this is the creation of a CPC (Cooperation with the Professional Community) Committee in 2022 to make A.A. more available as a social resource.

Although the number of groups is decreasing, many A.A. activities are moving online; the Japan Online Intergroup (JOI) was established in 2023, with 70 groups currently registered. The JOI is currently exploring how to participate in the General Service structure. The General Service Board also resumed face-to-face meetings after the pandemic, but the 2024 General Service Conference was held entirely online due to financial constraints.

Recent developments include the increased activity of the standing committees (currently 16), partly due to the availability of virtual meetings, making it easier to enlist the help of members with various talents from across the country.

Here are some of the topics that have been discussed in the last two years.

**Public Information:** A new Japan original video is now available on YouTube. Also, four AAWS P.I. videos with Japanese subtitles are on the Japan GSO website.

**Correctional Institutions:** The 1st National Correctional Institution Forum was held.

**Publications:** “Japanese Big Book—4th Edition” will be published soon. The entire process has taken seven years and includes 20 Japanese stories. There are also 60 translation updates.

**Planning:** Archives is preserving old timers' experiences leading up to the 50th anniversary of A.A. Japan in 2025.

**Tech:** The AAWS Meeting Guide app is now localized into Japanese for use by JOI and Central Office websites. Updates are in progress with the cooperation of the American and Canadian A.A.s.

**Finance:** Our GSO has been in the red for the last two years, with reserves dropping from 3.3 months to 1.7 months of expenses at one point. We have seen recovery since 2023 through cost reduction and calls for Tradition 7 support. The Finance Chair is proactively appealing at all regional meetings.

A.A. Japan's 50th Anniversary Convention is March 28-30, 2025, and will be held in the Tokyo area (Omiya). All Japanese members are excited to welcome you with gratitude. We look forward to seeing you there in person.

— Nori I.

**Latvia:** In 2023, Alcoholics Anonymous in Latvia celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The total number of Latvian A.A. members is estimated to be around 500 (Latvia is a small country with approximately 1.8 million inhabitants).

At the end of 2022, the A.A. group register was introduced in Latvia. According to it in 2023 there were 53 groups in Latvia — 21 of them located in the capital Riga. In general, A.A. groups are located in 25 different cities and towns of Latvia.

Four groups meet online and two groups function in hybrid format (face-to-face and online). Thirty-five groups are Latvian-speaking, nine Russian-speaking, one English, six bilingual (Latvian/Russian). The only Latvian/English group had been liquidated at the beginning of 2024. The Covid-19 pandemic and restrictions related to it have been a challenge for Latvian A.A. groups (in comparison, there were more than 60 groups in Latvia in 2018). However, it is also possible that several groups continue or have started their activities without being registered in the common register.

A process is underway to move to a regional system. Two regions (Latgale/Vidzeme and Kurzeme/Zemgale) have been established, and the region of Riga is in the creation process.



In 2024, the Conference decided to realize a one-year experiment switching to a regional delegate nomination system. According to the decision the experimental Conference, in 2025, will consist of 12 regional delegates (four from each region) and six other delegates: the 2nd term international delegate, the secretary of the Conference, the chair of the Board of Trustees, one Class A trustee, the editor of the Latvian AA magazine *Vīnoga* and the GSO manager.

By now the Conference membership consisted of group GSRs, and, since the adoption of the Conference Charter in May 2022, it included members of the GSB, the GSO manager, international delegates, and the editor of our AA Magazine.

In 2023, the website <https://aa.org.lv/>, which is the main informative source about A.A. in Latvia, was completely redesigned, including opening of the new easy-to-use online store where one can buy A.A. literature. It helped to double the donations for literature comparing to the previous year.

At the beginning of 2024, the Public Information Committee realized the widest public information campaign with informative posters about A.A. at public transport stops in Riga.

The Big Book first appeared in Latvian in 2004. Since then, the translation has been slightly re-edited and published again in 2018. For a few years, the Literature committee has been working on another re-edit of the *Alcoholics Anonymous* translation to bring the book's message closer to the original basic text from 1939. In 2023, the personal stories' working group also has been established, which works on selection of Latvian A.A. members' personal stories and selection of the U.S./Canada personal stories from the 4th edition of the *Big Book*. The previous translation of *Alcoholics Anonymous* in Latvian has been published without personal stories (*Doctor Bob's Nightmare* has been the only exception).

The Latvian A.A. magazine *Vīnoga*, an equivalent of *AA Grapevine*, has been published since 1997 and since 2021 the magazine is fully digital and can be found <https://www.aavino-ga.org/> (articles available in Latvian and Russian).

Since 2022 some articles are also recorded and published in audio format at <https://soundcloud.com/aa-v-noga>. Once every six months, the editorial board prepares a selection of articles in Latvian and Russian in pdf format. Every A.A. member is invited to print them and distribute in groups, prisons or treatment centers. These selections have become popular among A.A. members in prisons.

Since 2023, first activities of the Baltic Service Meeting (BSM) of Alcoholics Anonymous have been started. The purpose of the BSM is to encourage the exchange of service experience between the A.A. structures in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. The idea to come together in cooperation which could

eventually result in the BSM was first voiced by the Latvian and Lithuanian international delegates during the 22nd European Service Meeting in York, England in October 2023. In December 2023 the four delegates met virtually to further discuss the idea; one Estonian A.A. member joined soon. First online seminar was held in April 2024 and was dedicated to the topic of Public Information.

— *Maija T.*

**Lithuania:** A.A. Fellowship in Lithuania was established on June 30, 1988. On July 1, 2023, A.A. Lithuania celebrated its 35th anniversary.

There are currently a total of 140 A.A. groups in Lithuania. A.A. meetings are held mostly in Lithuanian, but also in Russian, English and Polish. Fifteen Lithuanian-speaking groups are in foreign countries (United States, England, Ireland, Iceland, Sweden, Norway).

In November 2022 our General Service Conference decided to make changes in our Service structure and to rewrite the Service manual. Changes in our service structure are effective from the start of 2023 with a transitional period of four years. A Service manual committee is meeting every week and working hard on rewriting the Service manual. The new Service manual will be presented at our GSC in March 2025. We needed to update the Service manual as some service positions (e.g., ESM/WSM delegates) were mentioned, but not described at all. Also, some service entities (e.g., region/intergroup committees) were described insufficiently. The Service manual committee is looking at the Service manuals of other countries and adapting foreign service experience to the Lithuanian A.A. structure and the needs of our Fellowship.

After the service structure changes, we will have three regions consisting of seven intergroups (formerly named regions). Each of the three regions has eight delegates at the Conference and each intergroup elects a different number of delegates according to the number of A.A. groups belonging to that intergroup. The General Service Board consists of six Class B trustees, two from each of the regions and we are looking for two Class A trustees. The Board holds quarterly meetings at our General Service Office. A.A. in Lithuania hires two employees, a manager of the General Service Office and a part time accountant.

In 2022 our GSC felt the need for a country-wide Public Information strategy as most of the PI work is done by groups and intergroups and very little is done nationwide. Up to 2022, the Board of Trustees didn't have a PI committee. A committee was formed by the board of trustees and the PI strategy was presented at our 2023 Service conference. The strategy includes

an overview of the current PI situation and a plan on how to make our PI work more effective nationwide. The Conference-approved PI strategy suggests eighteen fields where PI work could be done, for example: working more closely with our members and informing them about various possible P.I. activities; working with the media, religious communities, social workers, hospitals, etc.; making A.A. more accessible to people with disabilities; organizing a nationwide A.A. helpline.

One of the priority works mentioned in the PI strategy is to organize a Lithuanian A.A. member survey. It will be helpful to understand how new members find out about A.A. and how older members contribute to A.A. as a whole. Conducting the survey will be finished by the end of July 2024 and hopefully we will already have the results by the 28th WSM. The survey is completely anonymous, and members can take part in the survey either online or by filling in a printed form. The survey includes basic questions about age/gender/sobriety time, but also questions like: how did you find out about A.A.? did you seek professional help before/after coming to A.A.? sponsorship related questions and so on.

After the European Service Meeting in October 2023, Lithuanian and Latvian international delegates decided to start an informal Baltic Service Meeting (a place to share our experience on various A.A. service topics). Estonian A.A. members were also invited. The international delegates meet every one or two months online and make plans for a bigger meeting where we invite more members from the Fellowship. The first Baltic Service Meeting was held online on April 20, 2024. The topic of the first meeting was A.A. Public Information, and speakers from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania shared their experiences. Around 25 members participated from the three Baltic states.

Lithuanian A.A. GSO publishes General Service Conference-approved A.A. literature. The third edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, updated with stories of Lithuanian A.A. members, was published in June 2022. So far, we have published 22 pamphlets/brochures and eight books copyrighted by A.A.W.S. and one book written by Lithuanian A.A. members (*History of A.A. in Lithuania, 1998-2018*). At the moment we are preparing the fourth edition of the Big Book, which will include translations of all of the personal stories included in the A.A.W.S. published fourth edition. We have recently translated and printed the pamphlets *Women in A.A.*, *Twelve Traditions Illustrated* and *Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings*, and we are working on translation of *Behind the Walls* and revising of *Faith Leaders Ask About A.A.*

— Balys K.

## Mexico:

**Structure:** The General Service Structure of AA in Mexico currently has:

- 1,328 districts
- 14,712 groups countrywide
- 12,854 women
- 89,946 men
- 4,924 members with special needs
- 548 groups in correctional facilities
- 316 groups in health institutions
- 177 groups in educational institutions

**General Service Conference:** Our 58th General Service Conference took place on March 24 -29, 2024, in Mexico City, with the theme: "Service: A legacy for the new generations." There were 121 voting members (83 delegates, 18 trustees, six non-trustee directors, a GSO manager and a Plenitud magazine office manager, eight employees and four volunteers, who served as secretaries).

### Finance:

- We are working with our Annual Contributions Plan.
- This year we held the Fifth National Gathering of Finance Chairs and Treasurers.

### Treatment and Accessibilities Committee (CTA):

- Training provided to committee chairs at the national level.
- 15th National Week of Alcoholics in Treatment Institutions and Settings, October 21-27, 2024.



*Stepping Stones: the historical home of Bill and Lois W.*

### **Cooperation with the Professional Community Committee (CCCP):**

- The results of the National A.A. Member Survey 2023 revealed that we have very few women (8%) and young people (2%).
- From November 11 to November 17 of this year, we will celebrate the First National Week of Information to Professionals, with the intention of positioning Central Mexicana as the rightful and sole owner of the name and logo of A.A. in Mexico.
- We will also hold the 4th National Symposium of Information for Professionals.

### **Public Information Committee (CIP):**

- We had a press conference focused on the 89th anniversary of A.A. in the world.
- 15th National Week of Information on the Radio.
- We are developing an app called AAMéxico, which will have a group finder.
- From September 16 to September 22, we will celebrate the 12th National A.A. Week for Young People.
- 30th National Week of Information, "Sharing Efforts," January 20-26, 2025.

### **Corrections Committee (CIC):**

- 22nd Week of the Alcoholic Under Custody, June 17-23.
- We held the Third National Gathering of Corrections Area Chairs (a virtual event).

**Other Highlights:** The 14th National Convention of AA Mexico will be held in Mexico City.

"Proyecto Trébol" (*Clver Project*), involving CIP, CIC, CTA and CCP: Since we have accumulated more than 18 months in our Reserve Fund, the GSB decided to withdraw nine million Mexican pesos (approximately half a million US dollars) so that the Class A committee chairs can put together a project for carrying the A.A. message.

Mexico currently sponsors eight countries: Argentina, Chile, Venezuela, Nicaragua, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador and Costa Rica. We also sponsor other countries through REDELA. It is worth mentioning that we now have a professional online account with interpretation function capabilities for REDELA virtual meetings.

— José O.

**The Netherlands:** At present, there are approximately 300 groups in the Netherlands, and we count an extra 44 English-speaking groups. There are also multiple Spanish- and Polish-speaking groups. Interaction between these communities is quite positive. Due to the pandemic, Dutch A.A. has grown

exponentially through online meetings. Many of our newcomers are of a young age which took our average down at least 20 years in age.

Dutch A.A. is based on the Three Legacies. We have six A.A. regions, each with five delegates for the General Service Conference, and one delegate for the General Service Board. Our General Service Board schedules quarterly meetings to carry out the decisions of the General Service Conference. Daily operations are carried out by an Executive Committee with full support of the General Service Conference, thus ensuring the legal continuity of A.A. Netherlands.

The foundation's income at this moment is mainly generated by the sale of literature and less from contributions from A.A. groups. In the previous years there has been a significant decrease ( $\pm 60\%$ ) in 7th Tradition contributions.

Our General Service Office is a hub for all the services and information within Dutch A.A. Our service volunteers are available all week for the Dutch A.A. groups.

The Netherlands does her own translation, developing, and updating of all A.A. literature, such as books and pamphlets. The literature committee is currently reviewing and updating the translation of the Big Book and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* to ensure the message of recovery in upcoming printings.

The National Committee for Public Information oversees all requests for assistance and information from organizations outside A.A. and offers information for the public media. We are very grateful for the relentless dedication of our PI people and their efforts to reach out to the press, other media, healthcare institutions and correctional facilities.

Dutch A.A. cooperates with a growing number of professional organizations concerned with alcohol abuse. Many such organizations have based their programs on A.A.'s Twelve Steps.

It is estimated that our country harbors approximately 800,000 alcohol dependants. The main objective of A.A. is to reach the still-suffering alcoholics and to help them. We believe that greater familiarity with A.A. is necessary for the still suffering alcoholics to find us.

English-speaking A.A. flourishes in The Netherlands. It affiliates with York and conducts its own conventions. The Dutch A.A. Convention is held each year around the beginning of October and has been reduced to only one day (because of budgets cuts). Both conventions attract a large number of visitors from abroad.

— Jony F-T.

**New Zealand:** There are 544 meetings both online and in person, of which 74 meetings are online only, and 10 are hybrid (on-



line and in person). The remaining 460 are in person.

**Public Information:** Media advertising via radio and print is scheduled Feb., April, June and August, and focused campaigns during Awareness Week (October) and the Xmas/January period.

A poster campaign is also run through the year nationally using a Bill Poster company.

Additional funds have been allocated to run Public Meetings, specifically Breakfast Meetings with invited speakers and guests. A national newsletter for members has been set up with 2,000 subscribers to date, sent out using Mailchimp.

The website will soon include six A.A. member audio stories to add to the videos already available. These are for new members and as a CPC resource.

**Cooperation with the Professional Community, CPC:** New Initiative, Being Friendly with our Friends. Distribution at local level via delegates of Information packs to encourage local initiatives in this area. Packs were welcomed and have sparked renewed focus and discussion. CPC workshops held at Area Assemblies to accompany Information Packs.

An online forum is being set up to share resources and information nationally with members working in CPC.

New Initiative to set up multimedia resource for professionals who see us at our worst, with the message "This is what a recovered alcoholic looks like." Aim is to show what A.A. allows us to grow into.

**Treatment and Corrections:** TCF national standing committee are running online meetings for TCF local area members so all areas can share ideas amongst themselves. A redesign of the Prisoner correspondence poster that goes into prisons is being done with the prison correspondence email address.

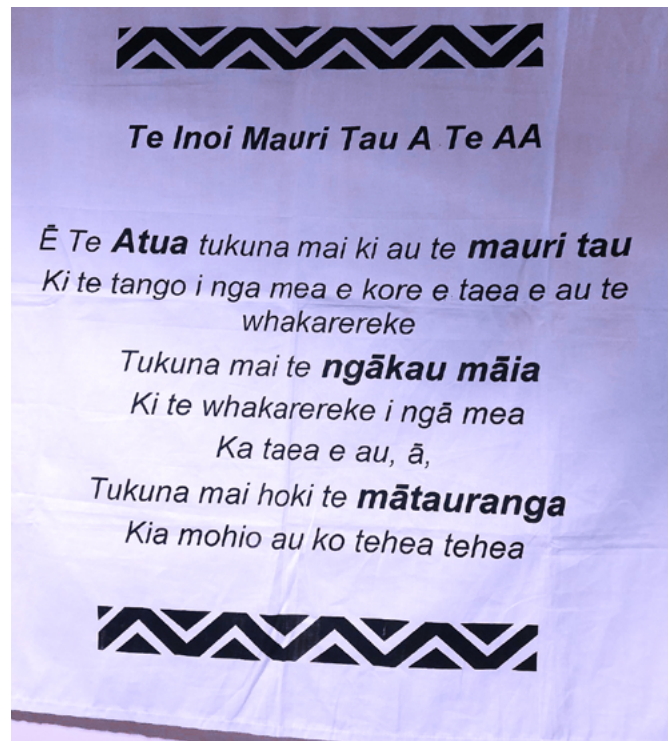
**Big Book Translation:** The Big Book's first 164 pages are to be translated into Te Reo Maori, an official language in New Zealand. This is to be presented to the Fellowship at the National Convention in Waitangi, Bay of Islands in January 2025.

**AOSM Fiji:** New Zealand presented the Fiji fellowship with 10 Big Books for distribution.

— Steve H.

**Norway:** We have moved our Service Office out of Oslo city center to a smaller town nearby.

This has made the Service Office more attractive to visit due to better parking facilities and the easy way to get there. We also have our service meetings there instead of booking conference meetings elsewhere and have to pay for that. So we are more cost efficient.



The Serenity Prayer in Maori — a banner from New Zealand.

Our annual autumn conference had a very high number of participants and is the most visited conference during the year. This is a work conference where we work during the weekend in groups with current actual topics for A.A. Most groups will invite the new member in their group, to assist for free.

Our new Big Book translation, from the fourth edition, is now for sale online and our members are agreed that we now have a good translation.

In our biggest area we have a very efficient intergroup/clinic group that recently has made it possible for us to attend meetings at the biggest hospital in Norway. We will attend every Sunday in one long term treatment and one short time treatment.

— Julianne L.

## Paraguay

**Literature in Guarani:** We have applied for a license to print the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions in Guarani (official indigenous language of Paraguay).

**Finance:** We continue to receive contributions from an average of fifteen to twenty groups on a monthly basis, and, from time to time, we receive Seventh Tradition income from literature events or workshops. We also earn some income from the sale of literature.

**Web page:** Our website is in the process of being reworked, but we have plans to migrate to a free platform in the coming months. We still need to catch up with technology.

**Communication by means of telephone and cell phone:** We continue to maintain our telephone contact numbers, which are now answered via the Internet, to keep in touch with those seeking help. We use the cell phone number to maintain communications with people who use the WhatsApp application, which allows for a more personalized and timely service.

**Creation of new groups:** Over the last few months we have been working to carry the message to more cities in the interior of the country, giving public information talks in distant locations, which has led to the creation of new groups.

**Creation of areas:** We have recently started to create areas (currently three):

#### **Area 1, Capital — Asunción**

It was created on December 13, 2023, and is made up of ten groups and two districts (Districts 1 and 10). This area has organized and participated in events and service activities, such as the “Two Borders Event” in Luque in 2023 and the celebration of the 48<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of the message of Alcoholics Anonymous in Paraguay, in January 2024. The area also participated in the Three Borders Meeting in Ciudad del Este, in February 2024 and in the XXX annual General Service Conference in Itauguá, on March 2 and 3, 2024.

#### **Other events in Area 1:**

- First Capital area literature event, in the city of Luque, on June 8 and 9.
- Participation in the JUNSGAAP (Paraguayan AA General Services Board) meeting, July 14 in Caaguazú.
- Second literature event, August 2 and 3, 2024.
- IP talk in the city of Lambaré.
- IP talk in Fernando de la Mora.

#### **Area 2, Central**

It was created on December 24, 2023, and is made up of twelve groups and two districts (Districts 2 and 3).

#### **Area 3, Interior**

It has seventeen groups and two districts (districts 4 and 5).

There are other AA groups in the north and south of the country.

— Pedro A.

**Peru:** Since the last World Service Meeting we have held the 34th and 35th General Service Conferences of A.A. Peru, with the themes: “Our great values: love and service” and “Unity, an expression of love in our services.” Both Conferences were held in person.

In Peru, we have 259 groups, 15 districts and 12 active areas (over the past two years we have seen a slight increase in the number of groups). We are working to activate three more areas.

Our General Service Board is currently made up of 10 Class B trustees and two Class A trustees. For the first time in our history, we have a full board, which is structured as follows:

#### **General Service Board:**

- 1 chair of the GSB, a Class A trustee
- 1 vice chair of the GSB, a Class A trustee

#### **Regional Trustees:**

- 1 trustee, region A
- 1 trustee, region B
- 1 trustee, region C
- 1 trustee, region D
- 1 trustee, region E
- 1 trustee, region F

#### **Territorial Trustees:**

- 1 trustee-at large, Northern Territory
- 1 trustee-at large, Southern Territory

#### **General Service Trustees:**

- 1 general service trustee, GSO Corporate Board
- 1 general service trustee, Serenidad Magazine Corporate Board

Both the General Service Office Corporate Board and the Serenidad Magazine Corporate Board are in operation, and are structured as follows:

#### **General Service Office Corporate Board (JCOSG)**

- 1 general service trustee
- 1 regional trustee
- 2 nontrustee directors
- GSO manager

#### **SERENIDAD Magazine Corporate Board**

- 1 general service trustee
- 1 Class A trustee
- 1 regional trustee
- 1 nontrustee director
- Vacancies: 1 editor and 1 nontrustee director

This year, we were able to sign a four-year cooperation agreement with the National Penitentiary Service (INPE), the public entity in charge of correctional facilities in our country. This is allowing us to work toward the formation of groups inside prison facilities.

We are currently doing the necessary paperwork to update the registration of our new board members in our Public Registry.

Last March we moved our GSO to a new location in the city of Lima. It is a three-story office, which has allowed us to improve the layout of our administrative department, our literature stock and our Archives. The new office has improved the Fellowship’s institutional image. We have been receiving more

visits from professionals and students who are interested in learning about how Alcoholics Anonymous works.

GSO has two employees: the manager and a nonalcoholic administrative assistant. Also, we work with an external accountant who, together with the secretary, keeps track of our finances.

This year we began working with a community relations manager, who is managing our social networks, to foster interaction with our Fellowship at the national level and with those who are looking for help.

Over the past two years, GSO contributions have increased. Little by little, our members are becoming more aware of the importance of gratitude in all services. Also, we are making efforts to expand and enhance group and member services.

Our GSO continues to donate literature to groups, districts and areas for their PI, CPC and Corrections committees, to help them fulfill our primary purpose.

We have received the appropriate licenses and digital files from A.A. World Services, which has made it possible for us to update our literature and keep a viable stock of each title.

We continue to develop our Reserve Fund, whose current balance is about 18,000 soles (around USD 4,800), which is less than one month of operating expenses. Our monthly expenses amount to approximately 21,000 soles (around USD 5,600).

We continue to make contributions to the International Literature Fund (ILF).

This year, we will hold the Third Forum for Professionals, to help us improve our outreach to professionals. At our last Conference, we established the date for this annual forum: November 15.

We want to celebrate six regional congresses every year. In 2023, because of our National Convention, we only had one congress, and this year, we had five.

The GSB organized our VII National AA Peru Convention in Pucallpa, Ucayali, August 25-27, 2023. Despite some last-minute mishaps, we worked in unity to resolve all the problems and were able to meet our goal. We acquired some experience, which we are putting to work towards our VIII National Convention, which will take place in August 2026 in the city of Cusco.

We are setting up an ad hoc committee to revise and update our 2022 Service Manual.

Over the past few years, our structure has consistently participated at the WSM and the REDELA, as well as at the General Service Conferences of Mexico and Colombia, to which we were invited. It is very important that we stay focused on the world vision of Alcoholics Anonymous through the sharing of experience.

— Paulo G.

**Poland:** The Poland A.A. service structure has over 3,100 groups within its 14 regions, covering the territory of Poland and Polish-speaking meetings in Europe.

Our Board of Trustees consists of 14 alcoholic Trustees, one from each Region, five nonalcoholic Class A Trustees, and two National Delegates. Each of the Regions sends four Delegates to our yearly General Service Conference, which has been moved permanently from autumn to spring.

Our Fellowship is supported by the General Service Office in Warsaw.

The A.A. structure in Poland is self-supporting with 37% of the costs of the GSO activities coming from members' contributions and 57% covered from literature sales. Six percent of contributions were dedicated to the 50 years' anniversary convention, held in 2024 in the city of Poznan. In the last two years, the sales of literature slowly have risen. The percentage of contributions compared to 2021 is almost at the same level, but the amount of money is higher.

A new pamphlet for employers was approved by Conference.

The *Twelve and Twelve* has been corrected to language similar to the fourth edition of *Alcoholics Anonymous* and was printed. We have a new position concerning Safety in A.A. We've started discussing this in A.A. A new pamphlet on the topic was printed.

For over 30 years we have been carrying the A.A. message into correctional facilities. We are still in the process with prisons and people in custody; most of our meetings came back to these places.

Two years ago, for the first time, a new ini-





tiative in the public information field was established. In 2022 a new idea was born to participate in a well-known rock music festival, Polandrock, attended by one million people of all ages. Our members there represented A.A., talked with people, answered questions, and held meetings.

In this year a young people's organization in A.A. named "Polypaa" presented the rules and the program of Convention, and asked for approval from the Board of Trustees. We are really proud that so many young people have come to A.A. in Poland, looking for help and wanting to serve.

New online tools of cooperation used in recent years have helped us intensify activities in country-to-country sponsorship. There were workshops on public information, helpline groups, and service manuals. We also were invited as observers to the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, and Kazakhstan, and in return we invited them. Our national delegate was in a second term and took part as an observer in the 73rd General Service Conference USA/Canada. It was a great honor for our Fellowship.

Our IT trustees subcommittee was built on the new website. The website is adapted to visually impaired members of our Fellowship.

After five years, GSB decided to carry out a second survey among A.A. members in 2023.

— *Izabela A.*

**Portugal:** In Portugal, the Conference service structure has now 25 years. The 1st General Service Conference of Alcoholics Anonymous Portugal was held in Colares, from April 30 to May 2, 1999, subordinated to the motto "Serve United to Grow." This Conference recommended that the National Day of A.A. be celebrated on 19th of March (date when, in 1994, all groups in Portugal were gathered for the first time in a service meeting).

**Structure:** Currently we have a total of 95 groups: 86 are face-to-face and nine are online groups.

Portugal has now 13 Areas. At the 2023 Conference an Area 13 was created with all the online groups. These groups send an in-person Delegate to the General Service Conference (all the groups belonging to a specific Area, through their GSRs, elect a Delegate).

At that Conference, and for the first time, an Area that is composed mainly by English-speaking groups, Area 10, sent a Delegate that did not speak or understand Portuguese, so a permanent interpreter was provided by the Conference so that he could fully participate.

Historically, the nonalcoholic Trustees have always been selected from our friends within the health community, doc-

tors, psychotherapists, etc., but the 2022 Conference has, for the first time, elected a nonalcoholic Trustee sourced from our media friends, a journalist.

Since the lack of service structure servants keeps being a problematic issue to deal with, a task group was created to fully analyze our Service Structure to suggest possible improvements to it. This is a two-year task where a preliminary report was presented to the 2024 Conference and a final report will be presented to the 2025 one. From 2024 to 2025 Conference, the Groups and members are analyzing and discussing the 2024 report.

**Literature and Publications:** This Committee has concluded the translation to European Portuguese of the Grapevine book "Language of the Heart," that will be presented on the II AA Portugal International Convention, that will take place from October 4 to 6, in Braga, on the North of Portugal.

**Public Information, Institutions and Cooperating with the Professional Community:** Last year, an audio Spot was produced and has been playing at RDP África, a national radio station that broadcasts to Europe and to the entire African Continent, and a video Spot has been playing at some TV stations, on the institutional reserved time.

**Events:** The 2023 and 2024 National Service Forums were hybrid, providing those Portuguese members who live outside Portugal and others that, for some reason, were not able to physically attend the event, the opportunity to contribute and participate on every reflection, enriching the Group Conscience.

This year, we will have our second International Convention that will take place along with the X National Convention, on October 4 to 6, 2024, in Braga, at the North of Portugal.

— *Miguel L.*

**Romania:** A.A. started in Romania in 1991 with its first group, "Grupa Una," consisting of two women. However, long time before, Jan and Fran of Spokane, Washington, in 1984, secretly started Group One and put down the groundwork that evolved into today's A.A. Fellowship in Romania. Jan and Fran's presence in Romania remains epic, extending from hearts joined in Love and Service and a visceral, life-giving belief in the Primary Purpose of A.A.

In Bucharest, two years later, during the summer of 1993, the A.A. Fellowship was established at the "Gheorghe Marinescu" Clinical Psychiatry Hospital. Its beginning was facilitated by Dr. Doina Constantinescu and two Americans, Patricia and Lee Robertson, whose contributions have persisted without interruption to the present day. The Fellowship has expanded over

the years, with nine groups plus an international A.A. group for English speakers at this moment.

There is a GSO, a GSB, three Intergroups (the Online Intergroup is now developing), and three Regions at the country level, for a total of approximately 60 groups.

**Current A.A. Structure:** The structure of A.A. Romania consists of 60 Romanian-speaking groups (one group for women only, five online groups), one international English-speaking group and one Hungarian-speaking group. Each group is represented at its local Intergroup and at General Service Conference by a GSR. There are three Regions corresponding to three Intergroups geographically arranged.

The General Service Conference is held annually in May. Representatives of all groups, GSB, and observers come together to take actions that will guide the groups for the next year. GSB has 15 members including one Class A Trustee.

Acting as a core of the A.A. structure, GSO unites the Fellowship at all levels, responds to inquiries, and works with its workgroups.

**Other Services; for example, Prisons, Hospitals, Public Information, etc.:** In November 2022, a National Workshop with the theme “The therapeutic chain in recovery from alcoholism” was held in Bucharest, attended by professionals from all around the country as well as members of the other 12 Step programs. We do not currently have any groups or collaborations in or with prisons.

A collaboration plan for 112 Emergency Service is still being developed, in which some alcohol-related ambulance calls should be terminated with the recommendation of the A.A. Recovery Program.

**Sobriety time required for service positions:** Recommendations for GSR/GSB/GSO Manager/ESM or WSM Delegates: a minimum of 1/2/3/3 years of sobriety period. Our A.A. Service Guide outlines the suggested minimum sobriety requirements and time frames for serving on various levels of the A.A. Structure.

**General Service Conference (processes, frequency, etc.):** The General Service Conference has been held annually in May since 2016 (with a pause due to the pandemic in 2020).

The Conference sessions are divided into four Committees: a) A.A. Literature, Prints and Archive; b) National and International Communication; c) Finance; d) Cooperation with Professional Community.

Representatives of all groups, GSB, and observers come together to take actions that will guide the groups for the next year.

**Service Manual (does your country have its own manual?):** Since 2008, our own A.A. Services Guide has provided us with

direction for the continuity of work in A.A. A new version of the A.A. Services Guide was approved in 2021.

**Literature/Publishing Overview (print/audio/video):** We have not yet been able to set up a process to sell A.A. literature outside the Fellowship.

A.A. Romania legacy has a selection of:

- Six translations of AAWS approved books (“Alcoholics Anonymous,” “12 Steps and 12 Traditions,” “As Bill Sees It,” “Daily Reflections,” “AA Comes at Age”).
- Two translations of AAWS approved booklets (“Living Sober,” “Came to Believe”).
- 25 (+ works in progress) pamphlets.
- “Noi Înșine” is the national journal of A.A. Romania Fellowship.
- “Pass It On” translation is in a draft version and needs to be edited for its approval, licensing, and printing.
- A project of a new version of “Alcoholics Anonymous” translation just started last year.

**Finance Overview:** Most of our funding comes from the selling of literature, as well as contributions from group/intergroup members.

Our operating costs are mostly those for printing and publishing, public relations, and convention planning.

**Relations with other countries:** (country to country co-operation, how does this work?)

“The 30th Anniversary of Noi Înșine Magazine” was a landmark of 2022 in A.A. Romania and a good occasion to celebrate with the Moldavian Fellowship while also strengthening our relationship with them in areas of A.A. literature and participation at events.

**Internet & Websites:** A.A. Romania virtual identity consists of:

- [alcoolicianonimi.ro](http://alcoolicianonimi.ro) — A.A. Romania website
- [noiinsine.ro](http://noiinsine.ro) — “Noi Înșine”, the national journal of A.A. Romania
- We are also present in the Meeting Guide Mobile App
- [Facebook.com/alcoolicianonimiromania](https://www.facebook.com/alcoolicianonimiromania) — A.A. Romania Facebook page

—Elena L.

**Russia:** The A.A. movement in Russia began in the late 1980s. As of August 2024, more than 1,000 groups are registered in the General Service Office in Russia. In the last two years, about 300 groups have been added. Most group meetings are held in large cities, but the geographic presence of A.A. is expanding to small towns and rural areas. About 50 groups hold online meetings (Zoom, Skype, Telegram). We also have a listed A.A. group for people with hearing problems.



**Tech crews at work throughout the meeting adjusting sound levels and audiovisuals.**

**Structure:** The General Service Conference currently serves 30 Delegate Districts, including the Delegate District of the Russian-language Internet and one Region “Eastern Siberia and the Far East.” In the last two years, there have been about eight new delegate districts established and one new region created. So far, the A.A. Russia General Service Board includes 12 Committees.

The General Service Conference is held annually in Moscow in April and lasts four days.

The 35th meeting was held April 4-7, 2024, under the motto “Our strength is in unity.”

At the last Conference meeting, more than fifty issues were discussed and a number of important decisions were made, for example, to create Nationwide Phone Helpline of the A.A. Russia +7 800 234 9920. Helpline is operating in all time zones around the clock.

Also, GSO is entrusted with the implementation of the project for the new A.A. Russia website based on a new platform, which will unite all regional sites in one style.

**Finance:** The A.A. structure in Russia is self-supporting, with 35% of the cost of GSO activities coming from A.A. groups and member contributions, and the remaining around 65% from literature sales.

**Literature:** The following Conference decisions were passed for the work of the GSO:

- Update the translation of the leaflet “If you are a Professional...”; the translation of the brochures “A.A. in Treatment Settings” and “A.A. in Correctional Facilities”;
- Prepare for publication and print the brochure “My group is my fortress. Safety in A.A.”;
- Print the brochure with corrections and additions: “To a prisoner who may be an alcoholic,” and also the brochures with corrections and additions “Stories of Russian alcoholics who were in prison”
- The translation of the book *Pass It On* has been completed, the final text is being edited.

Work on retranslation of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* into Russian is almost completed. The previous translation is dated 1989.

Assistance was provided in the printing of the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* in the Tatar language — *Anonymous Alcoholiclar* — at the expense of the Tatarstan A.A. The Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* is being translated into Bashkir, Yakut and Tuvan languages. Twice a year the Russian-language magazine of A.A. Russia “JAAR” is published with the supplements: “Women’s Stories” and “Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow.”

Regular sections of the magazine include: A.A. News, 12 Traditions, Crossroads of Opinions, Group/meeting/experience, My History, Book Reviews, A.A. Archive.

**Cooperation with Medical Institutions:** For several years, we have been taking part in their activities at the invitation of the leadership of national healthcare structures in the Nationwide Forum “The Health of the Nation is the Basis of Russia’s Prosperity,” the annual city event “Sobriety Day,” as well as scientific and practical conferences, the program of which includes speakers giving presentations on A.A. and publication of articles in the magazine “Narcology and Law.”

**Corrections:** Currently, eight agreements have been signed with correctional institutions of the penitentiary system of the Russian Federation, providing for assistance to former convicts in social adaptation and resocialization. In one of the regions of Russia, an agreement was reached with the Federal Penitentiary Service on creation of a library on the territory of a correctional institution. A.A. speakers are broadcast on internal radio. Self-help groups have been organized on the territory of correctional institutions.

**Military:** In order to carry the A.A. message to the Russian Armed Forces, we turned to the Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation — Head of the Main Military Directorate of the Russian Armed Forces, with a request for the place-



ment of information materials about A.A. on the territory of military units, hospitals, etc., as well as articles about A.A. in the military press, holding meetings and presentations of the A.A. Fellowship to military personnel, patients of hospitals and sanatoriums, about participation in events, conducted by the Ministry of Defense with a suitable topic, organizing A.A. self-help groups on the territory of units and divisions, broadcasting video and audio materials about A.A. on the media resources of the Ministry of Defense.

**Information Technology committee:** formed in 2022 for the development, support and coordination of the activities of A.A. Russia to carry the A.A. message in the online space. It promotes the formation and development of Russian-speaking online groups and the unification of Russian-speaking online groups in the delegate district of the Conference and develops thematic content in social networks, messages that correspond to the Traditions of A.A. with a link to the official website of A.A. Russia.

A.A. Russia website — A.A.russia.ru — contains information for Russian-speaking groups outside Russia about the way to pay for literature and send donations to the GSO account.

An online store has been opened on the website A.A.russia.ru.

**Relations with Other Countries:** GSO A.A. Russia is in contact with A.A. structures in Moldova, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Kyrgyzstan, Estonia, Great Britain. The Russian GSO also provides services for holding Russian-language meetings in Chisinau (Moldova), Pavlograd (Kazakhstan), UIA.A.nbA.A.tar (Mongolia), Mogilev (Belarus), Haifa (Israel), Stockholm (Sweden), Helsinki (Finland), New York (USA) and London (UK). We remain in constant contact with GSO in New York. Work is underway to coordinate licenses and printing of A.A. literature with A.A.WS. We sent literature to Kazakhstan, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova, as well as Germany, France and Spain. International delegates from Russia took part in WSM in 2022 (Zoom), AOSM in 2023 (Fiji).

Talks about service and A.A. structure in other countries are hosted with foreign speakers.

Meetings have been hosted on the International Committee's online platform on various current topics, such as the experience of taking a group inventory or the use of Traditions to resolve conflict situations in a group or service structure.

— Andrei M.

**Slovakia:** In 2024 the Slovak A.A. is celebrating its 33rd anniversary. We have 450 members, 52 GSO-registered groups. There is a Ladies' group and a Gentlemen's group working well. We have groups with meetings in English, Hungarian and Russian.

All structures are in place: Groups-Intergroups-Conference-

Board, plus, Supervisory Committee. All governed by the *Service Manual*. Sobriety requirements are applied whenever possible. The newsletter — almost 20 years of service.

Pandemic crisis: a rise of online meetings. Online meetings and online sponsorship have been saving and preserving sobriety in this difficult period. A significant number of newcomers found A.A., thanks to online meetings. Many of them went through the Steps solely online.

Relations with other countries: The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland — we had reciprocal attendance at conventions, General Service Conferences, workshops. Also, the United Kingdom and the United States — we had speakers at one another's conventions and seminars.

Literature: All essential literature and pamphlets available. *Pass It On* is being translated and finalized. Status of the *Twelve and Twelve* reissue — we are awaiting license from A.A. World Services.

— Marian B.

**Slovenia:** Slovenia is a country with a population of two million. The first A.A. group in Slovenia was established on November 6, 1989. As the membership and number of groups grew, there was constantly a need for some sort of connection between groups that had to be organized. An intergroup was established with an aim to exchange experience between groups, first of all concerning new members, public relations and anonymity. Soon the intergroup was too weak for the growing membership, and, in 2002, a decision was made to establish a democratic organization as it is in the U.S. and Canada, adjusted for possibilities, circumstances and conditions in Slovenia.

**A.A. Structure Today:** Today (July 7, 2024) there are 43 groups in person and seven groups online in Slovenia with approximately 600 members. In recent years the number of young newcomers has increased.

**General Service Conference (GSC):** takes place once a year. Each group elects one GSC delegate from among its members. All delegates gather at the Conference, listen to committee reports from the previous year and discuss the following year's program. Every second year, the delegates elect one third of the GSB members. Administrative and technical tasks for the Conference are done by GSO.

**General Service Board (GSB):** is responsible for all the activities accepted at the Conference. It consists of nine members. One third are nonalcoholics, who promote the management of alcoholism in various fields in society and support the activities of A.A., and two thirds are alcoholics who have been sober for at least five years, know well the functioning of the structure of A.A., are able to serve with their knowledge and have the ca-

capacity to lead and connect people. The members of the GSB are: the chairperson, who is a Class A (nonalcoholic) trustee, the secretary, two nonalcoholic members and five alcoholic members, who are also leaders of one committee (Public Relations, Publications, Finances, Electronic Communications, and A.A. Events). Each committee consists of three members with a four-year term. Past, present and future leaders rotate out of their posts every two years. (Past delegates cooperate with but are not members of GSB.)

**General Service Office (GSO):** is formed by the GSB members. They function also as administrative workers of the board. We don't have professional employees in GSO. The 24-hour service for the still-suffering alcoholics is covered by A.A. servants.

**Finance Committee:** takes care of the planning, disbursing and reporting to the Conference about finances once a year. Last year budget of Fellowship was 9000 €. The main incomes are from contributions (70%) and literature (30%).

**Relations with Other Countries:** runs mainly through the connections we established with our cooperation at ESM and WSM meetings. Past delegates supply our Fellowship with information and encourage members and our structure to make international connections and ask for experience. We are especially close to members in Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro.

- Online meetings make it particularly possible to have relations with other countries, more maybe for members from other countries.
- From 2012, we have organized an International A.A. Convention in Gozd Martuljk-Kranjska Gora, which is growing and is increasingly welcomed among members.

**Committee for Electronic Communications:** All information for the alcoholic who is still suffering is available by telephone: +386 69 665 478. There is also the website, [www.aa-slovenia.si](http://www.aa-slovenia.si), with relevant information and the list of meetings in Slovenia.

**Email addresses:**

[info@aa-slovenia.si](mailto:info@aa-slovenia.si)

[international@aa-slovenia.si](mailto:international@aa-slovenia.si)

— Carmen P.

**South Africa:** South Africa consists of nine provinces with its diverse cultures and 11 official languages. However, the primary medium of communication within the A.A. structures is English.

Groups and size of the Fellowship in South Africa do not necessarily represent the demographics of the country. This is due mainly to the geographical spread of the population. The structures in SA have formed in six geographic areas and are

represented by eight autonomous Area Offices.

These Area Offices serve approximately 368 A.A. groups which hold on average 458 in-person A.A. meetings per week and 83 online meetings. Feedback from our National Convention indicates that the number of members in the Fellowship in SA is approximately 5,000.

The long-established committees (both National and Regional) for *Cooperation with the Professional Community and Public Information (CPC/PI)* have been active over the years in ensuring our primary purpose is being achieved. Conference 2024 has approved a budget for a CPC/PI project to investigate, develop and implement the use of social media advertising platforms in carrying the message. Resources have also been allocated to ensuring that once implemented there will be no cost to the public, in respect to data and access.

*Correctional Facilities and Treatment Facilities* committees have continued with their service in carrying the message by the issue of "free" literature to organizations within the CF/TF fields. Conference 2024 has approved a planned information sharing session with the relevant organizational stakeholder at the CF/TF levels.

During the last two years, AASA GSO has obtained permission from AAWS for the printing of certain Literature locally. Currently, the Big Book (both in English and Afrikaans), *As Bill Sees It*, *Living Sober*, *Daily Reflections*, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *Came to Believe* are being printed locally. The decision to print this literature locally was taken due to the sometime unavailability of literature from AAWS and the increasing costs of importing.

Negotiations with local suppliers have yielded favorable results in the cost of literature to the Fellowship and we have seen steady growth in literature sales volume over the last two years.

Conference 2024 has approved the sourcing of South African stories from members sharing their experience, strength and hope for inclusion in a South African version of the Big Book.

AASA GSO and the GSB of South Africa has maintained a keen eye on *use of technology*. AASA continues to use existing technology in enhancing our communication with the Fellowship. GSO Services has upgraded its telephone management system to direct its "Help Lines" directly to volunteer members at the relevant Cities and Towns.

An e-Commerce portal has been added onto our local website, and we have commenced with e-Commerce transactions for literature sales.

The GSB of South Africa has continued to initiate workshops, committees and feedback sessions as they arise. Exten-

sive work has been initiated on legal compliance for the legal entity Alcoholics Anonymous South Africa NPC, with regards to the Protection of Personal Information. The Board has also discussed and issued guidelines on Copyright protection for A.A. Copyright literature. Through Conference 2024, the Board has communicated the safety and protection of all members, especially women, in A.A.

The GSB is in the process of developing a “Bridging the Gap” program, which looks at assisting patients from Treatment Facilities into the Fellowship and also to assist in integrating patients into all aspects of the A.A. program. The Annual National Convention is seen by many in the Fellowship as one of the highlight *Events* on the National Calendar. The National Convention is rotated annually to the six Areas and is supported by the Fellowship.

Conference 2023 had also piloted and encouraged the support for Regional Forums at the six Areas.

Our *collaboration with other countries*, mainly the sub-Saharan African countries is coordinated through the AASA GSO. Namibia and Zimbabwe have been included into AASA structures. Delegates from these countries are represented at the AASA National Conference.

The Structures within GSB and GSO in South Africa are generally well represented with service vacancies communicated in a timely manner, and the Fellowship encouraged to serve the Fellowship at all levels.

Financially, the Fellowship in SA continues to recognize their important role in honoring their Seventh Tradition obligations, and through prudent operational and financial management GSB and GSO in SA have generated sufficient reserves to enable the Conference to fund conference-approved projects.

— *Salesh L.*

## Spain:

**Structure:** Spain currently has:

- 4 regions
- 24 areas
- 585 groups (33 in correctional facilities), 9,808 members\*
- 9 Spanish-speaking groups abroad (2 in Germany, 2 in the United Kingdom, 1 in Switzerland, 1 in Belgium, 1 in Australia and 1 in France).

\*The number of members was calculated based on the 2017 survey, by adding the average number of members per group multiplied by the total number of groups.

**Publications:** During 2023, the following titles were reprinted:

Reprints	Number of Units
Alcoholics Anonymous	2,000
A.A. Tradition — How it Developed	1,000
Members of the Clergy Ask about A.A.	1,000
A Newcomer Asks	10,000
Sponsorship	1,000
A.A. and Alcoholism Programs	2,000
A.A. in your Community	10,000
Is A.A. for you?	30,000
This is A.A.	3,000
44 Questions and Answers About A.A.	3,000
The A.A. Group	2,000
The Twelve Steps	1,000
Letter to a Woman Alcoholic	3,000
Is AA for me?	3,000
Bill writes about Faith, Fear, Honesty, etc.	1,000
Understanding Anonymity	2,000
A.A. for the Woman	20,000
Living Sober	2,000
Photograph of Bill W.	100
Photograph of Bob S.	100
Service Manual	500
Daily Planners	1,000
A Member’s Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous	1,000
A.A. for the Woman	1,000
Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions	1,000
Problems Other Than Alcohol	1,000
Do You Think You’re Different?	1,000
PI posters	20,000
A.A. as a Resource for Professionals	3,000
Serenity Prayer	3,000
Daily Reflections	1,000
What is A.A.?	12,000

**Newsletters:** As of the end of 2023 we had sold 1,602 Akron-1935 subscriptions, 32 more than the previous year.

Of the total subscriptions to Akron-1935, A.A. members accounted for a total of 1,228 (this also includes the newsletter *Compartiendo*). The rest of the subscriptions (374) correspond to people outside A.A.

**General Service Office:** Throughout 2023, correspondence was sent from GSO to groups, central service offices, delegates, Board members, GSO (US/Canada), government and non-government entities, interested persons, etc.



### **Groups:**

- Recommendations (Advisory Actions) from the 43rd General Service Conference
- Subscription forms for Akron-1935
- Literature order forms
- Monthly summary of contributions
- Preliminary Agenda for the 44th General Service Conference
- Correspondence regarding the survey of members and groups
- General Service Board Information Letters

**Central Service Offices:** Recommendations (Advisory Actions) from the XLIII General Service Conference

- Subscription forms for Akron-1935
- Literature order forms
- Monthly summary of contributions
- Preliminary Agenda for the XLIV General Service Conference
- Correspondence regarding the survey of members and groups
- General Service Board Information Letters

### **Delegates:**

- Working Agenda for the XLIV General Service Conference
- Recommendations (Advisory Actions) from the XLIII General Service Conference
- Preliminary Agenda for the XLIV General Service Conference
- Quarterly Reports sent by the General Service Board secretary
- Quarterly financial reports
- Minutes of the quarterly meetings of the General Service Board.
- Sundry information and correspondence.

### **Board Members:**

- Working Agenda for the XLIV General Service Conference
- Recommendations (Advisory Actions) from the XLIII General Service Conference
- Preliminary Agenda for the XLIV General Service Conference
- Notification of quarterly Board meetings.
- Quarterly Reports sent by the General Service Board secretary
- Quarterly financial reports
- Minutes of the quarterly meetings of the General Service Board
- Fluid correspondence and the necessary background for an informed discussion of the topics to be covered at quarterly and Board committee meetings.

### **GSO, New York:**

- Fluid and timely correspondence
- Regular delivery of our magazine, Akron-1935

**Official Entities:** A letter with the new composition of the Board was sent to the Ministry of the Interior.

Various public and private entities were informed by postal mail, e-mail, certified mail and telephone about the recovery program of Alcoholics Anonymous. In most cases, we followed up by sending specific literature and pamphlets.

Our GSO handles numerous calls, e-mails and letters from people requesting assistance. We typically put them in touch with the nearest area. We have forwarded literature with information about the A.A. program. GSO also handles various Twelfth Step calls, putting people in contact with A.A. members in the nearest area.

During 2023, 511 literature orders were sent to groups, area committees and individual members.

An audit of the financial statements for fiscal year 2022 was completed by a professional auditor.

— *Adolfo V.*

**Sweden:** A.A. in Sweden has approximately 430 groups. We have 15 online groups, fully incorporated in the Swedish A.A. structure with their own district, and service representative.

There are also English, Finnish, Icelandic, Polish, Russian and Spanish-speaking meetings and about 20 Swedish-speaking groups abroad. They can all be found on our website meeting list.

In cooperation with the professional community, we have been working toward the Human Resource (HR) department in different events since a couple of years now in addition to other ways to cooperate. We also have noticed an increase in starting up local information committees.

The approved A.A. literature today consists of 11 translated books and one book published by A.A. in Sweden (A.A.'s history in Sweden from the beginning up to 2012). This year we published the Big Book and "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions" for streaming from our homepage. Members can stream these publications at the same price as the physical book. There are 20 booklets and pamphlets, in addition to decals, shades, CDs, DVDs in Swedish. We have recently finished and published "The illustrated Traditions" and "The illustrated Concepts." Ongoing is to translate "Treatment Committee Workbook."

The Swedish website, [www.aa.se](http://www.aa.se), has been expanded and is an important link in the network of carrying the message. The new updated website is now working with the latest technology since August 2022. "Daily Reflections" are published on the website. The meeting list is available.



Delegates brought samples of literature published in their countries and structures for attendees to browse through.

In 2023 and 2024 the Swedish Country meeting was held as planned. In 2023 it was held in Sundsvall and this year it will be held in Uppsala. Attendance used to be around 300 – 500 from the Fellowship. The Country Meetings are arranged according to the new structure, by a District and approved by the General Service Conference.

Collaborations with other Countries: Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland have a history of collaboration via Nordic Meetings that alternated between the Countries each year. After a couple of years without these meetings they were restarted in 2022. Now in the form of Nordic Theme Meetings (NTM) virtually. The four countries take turns in hosting these meetings, all with a different theme that the hosting country chooses. We meet four times per year.

We also participate in each other's General Service Conferences.

We all agree that these are important events to share our experience strength and hope with each other.

In March 2024 the Swedish A.A. was invited to attend the German-Speaking Groups of Europe General Service Conference, to talk about the Swedish change in structure.

Thomas A. went and shared our experiences and knowledge about the whole process of making this transformation.

Change in the Swedish A.A. Structure: The structure committee having investigated the pros & cons of removing the Region Level for a year, came up with a proposition to the 2023 General Service Conference. The proposition also suggested that the GSB was connected to the District Chair, the commit-

tee for FRİK (committee for public information) was connected to the convening in the Districts SI committee, the Committee for Development and Knowledge was connected with the Service Delegates. The proposition to remove the level of Regions was accepted by the General Service Conference, to be implemented in a one-year time span. We are very happy and grateful to say that it all went according to plan. It took a year for A.A. Sweden to remove the Regions one by one. And at the 2024 General Service Conference we could state that the new structure was established! The GSB has had several online meetings during 2023-2024 with the district representatives (DCMs) to assist in the transformation and make it as smooth as possible. The main opinion during these meetings is that the change in structure has put the fellowship closer together and shortened the distance between Group-District-GSB. The increased responsibility laid on the District seems to also have increased the will to do service. The Districts now also elect their Service Delegate to represent the District at the General Service Conference.

— Thomas A.

**Turkey:** There are 28 Alcoholics Anonymous Groups in Turkey, we do not know the estimated number of alcoholics since we do not keep records.

Alcoholics Anonymous of Turkey became an association in 2018 and gained a legal identity in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Turkey, the name of our legal organization is Alcoholics Anonymous Sober Living Association.



As the General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous of Turkey, we regularly give A.A. messages in universities, hospitals, and prisons.

We operate in accordance with the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Alcoholics Anonymous in Turkey.

There are an incredible number of suffering alcoholics in Turkey, we are working hard to spread the A.A. message more. As A.A. Turkey, we organize International A.A. Turkey Conventions twice a year in May and September. We warmly welcome all our Alcoholics Anonymous world member friends to these Conventions.

— Nedim G.

**U.S./Canada:** Following the nomination process of the Trustee’s Nominating Committee, and the Board’s interviews and deliberations for the role of Chair of the Board, Scott H., a past Class B Trustee, was elected according to the Third Legacy Procedure. He is the first Class B (A.A. member) chair to serve the General Service Board. Scott, who by the way, was Trustee-at-large Canada, will serve as Chair of the GSB until the end of Conference 2027.

At the request of the 73rd General Service Conference, the General Service Board undertook an inventory. A subcommittee was formed which selected 23 questions to be distributed to Board members, then collated and compiled by January 26, 2024, when an external facilitator carried out the inventory.

Among others, the items which have been identified in the inventory that we plan to implement include holding a Board Retreat to conduct leadership training and strategic planning; implementing a workload management plan to relieve the overly heavy workload placed on the staff and Board. Finally, the item the Board needs help from the Conference on is creating a group of Conference members to identify improvements in our communication, and reporting between the Board and the Conference members.

At the 74th Conference, the draft manuscript *Plain Language Big Book: A Tool for Reading Alcoholics Anonymous* was approved. It generated much discussion at the past two Conferences, as well as in the Fellowship as a whole. A publication date has not been announced yet.

Grapevine magazine celebrates its 80th anniversary this year. From its beginning, in June of 1944, Grapevine’s history has run parallel to that of A.A. as a whole, and many of the critical events in the evolution of the Fellowship have been chronicled in the pages of Grapevine.

Throughout its history the magazine has been a forum for the varied and often divergent opinions of A.A.s around

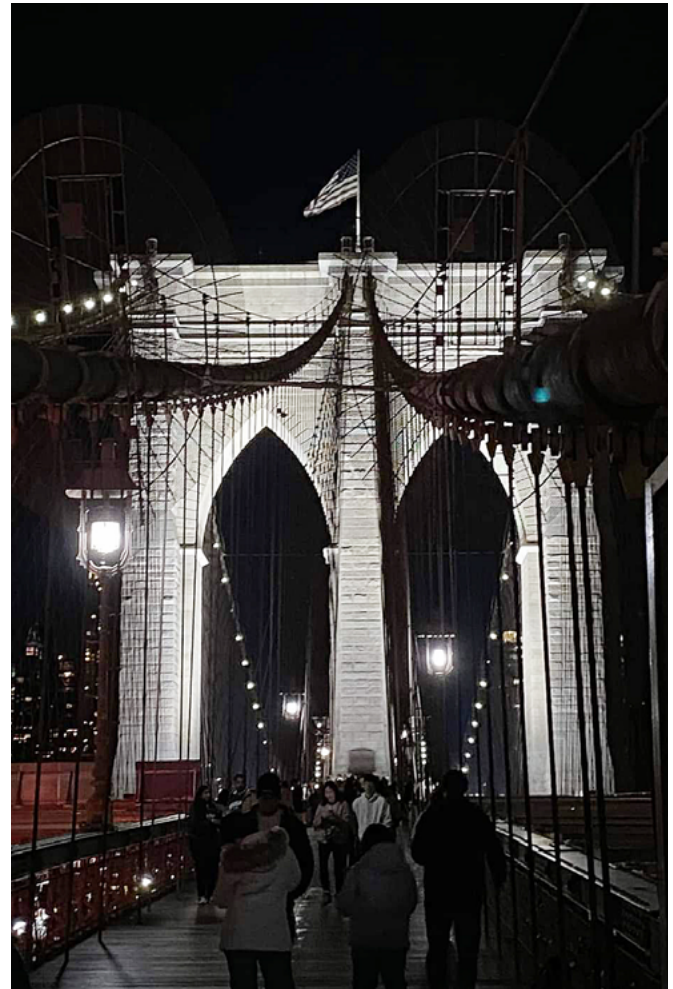
the world. Grapevine and La Viña both offer digital access to their content, both on the website and through the new Grapevine app.

Finally, the International Convention will be held from July 3 to 6, 2025, in Vancouver/Canada, to celebrate 90 years since the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous, under the theme *Language of the Heart*. We invite you all to join us in celebrating sobriety in Vancouver 2025.

— Robert L.

**Uruguay:** Our General Service Office serves 140 groups, distributed in 19 areas and 4 regions. It employs a salaried non-alcoholic staff member and a manager, whom we refer to as the GSO trustee.

According to 2018 data, we estimate that there are about 3,000 members in our Fellowship; this year, we plan to carry out a new information survey. However, attendance at face-to-face meetings has declined. In addition to these groups, we have eight virtual groups: three that meet via Zoom; three via Skype, and two via WhatsApp.



*Skyline from the Brooklyn Bridge.*



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We participated virtually at the 22nd Meeting of the Americas (REDELA), held in Guatemala, and, in person, at the 23rd REDELA, in Colombia, thanks to the generous support of the structure of the United States and Canada.

Our GSB is composed of ten trustees: three regional trustees, three trustees who chair our committees, one GSO trustee, one trustee-at-large — who attends international meetings — and two Class A trustees. Our legal entity is called *Fundación Alcohólicos Anónimos del Uruguay (FAADU)*, and is registered as a non-profit foundation. This foundation is overseen by two boards of trustees — including current and former trustees — and an oversight board. It has been difficult for us to maintain rotation in our services; no candidates are coming forward. (The AA Fellowship in Uruguay, through the GSB, has asked the trustees whose service was ending this year to continue until the next General Service Conference meeting in 2025.) The board meets monthly on a virtual basis.

Argentina's service structure sponsors us and we attend their General Service Conference meetings as guests.

For the first time, in 2024, we held a virtual forum with topics taken from *Our Great Responsibility*. There was very good attendance and participation.

We have three service committees: Literature and Publications, Finance, and Working with Others (which is responsible for public information and communication with the professional community and other entities).

Our Service Manual is currently based on that of the United States and Canada, which we have adapted to our regional organization, its composition and operation. In 2024, we will issue a call for a new Service Manual committee, with the purpose of analyzing the current manual and adjusting it to the structure of our country.

Thanks to our Higher Power, we were able to print — for the first time — the books *The Language of the Heart*, *'Pass It On,' Dr. Bob and the Good Oldtimers*, *As Bill Sees It* and *Our Great Responsibility*.

In 2024, A.A. in Uruguay celebrated its 50th anniversary. Unfortunately, we were unable to hold the National Convention we had planned for March. However, we will be holding various events to commemorate our anniversary.

We are grateful to our Class A trustees because they have done a great job of public outreach, both through informational talks and their participation in radio programs.

— Daniel B.

**Venezuela:** Our service structure consists of 162 groups — two of which are institutional — and 19 districts, with an estimated 1,600 members.

Our service activities are mainly organized around our National Public Information Strategic Plan, which maps out year-round outreach activities — both local and national — with messages aimed at specific groups: youth, women, senior citizens, people under custody, clergy, private foundations, academic circles, social workers, health personnel, etc., using all possible channels, such as radio, press, television, social networks and our Public Information chatroom. Also, the First Interregional PI Meeting, took place at GSO in Caracas, where we also had meetings with representatives of the justice system and the Caracas subway system, with the aim of collaborating with both entities. We also have a calendar of meetings, both for the Fellowship and for groups of professionals.

We intend to sign collaboration agreements with government entities — such as *Salud Mental Nacional* (the mental health branch of the People's Ministry of Health) — as well as private entities in various sectors, in order to be able to access their facilities with our message. We continue to work on obtaining the necessary authorizations to enter correctional and similar facilities.

We have implemented several online services: our websites for the offices and for our magazine, as well as virtual stores. We also have a directory of groups throughout the country that we provide through WhatsApp.

We created our prudent reserve fund.

To strengthen our three legacies in the groups, we carried out forums and workshops on the Big Book, as well as training activities for members on the use of social networks.

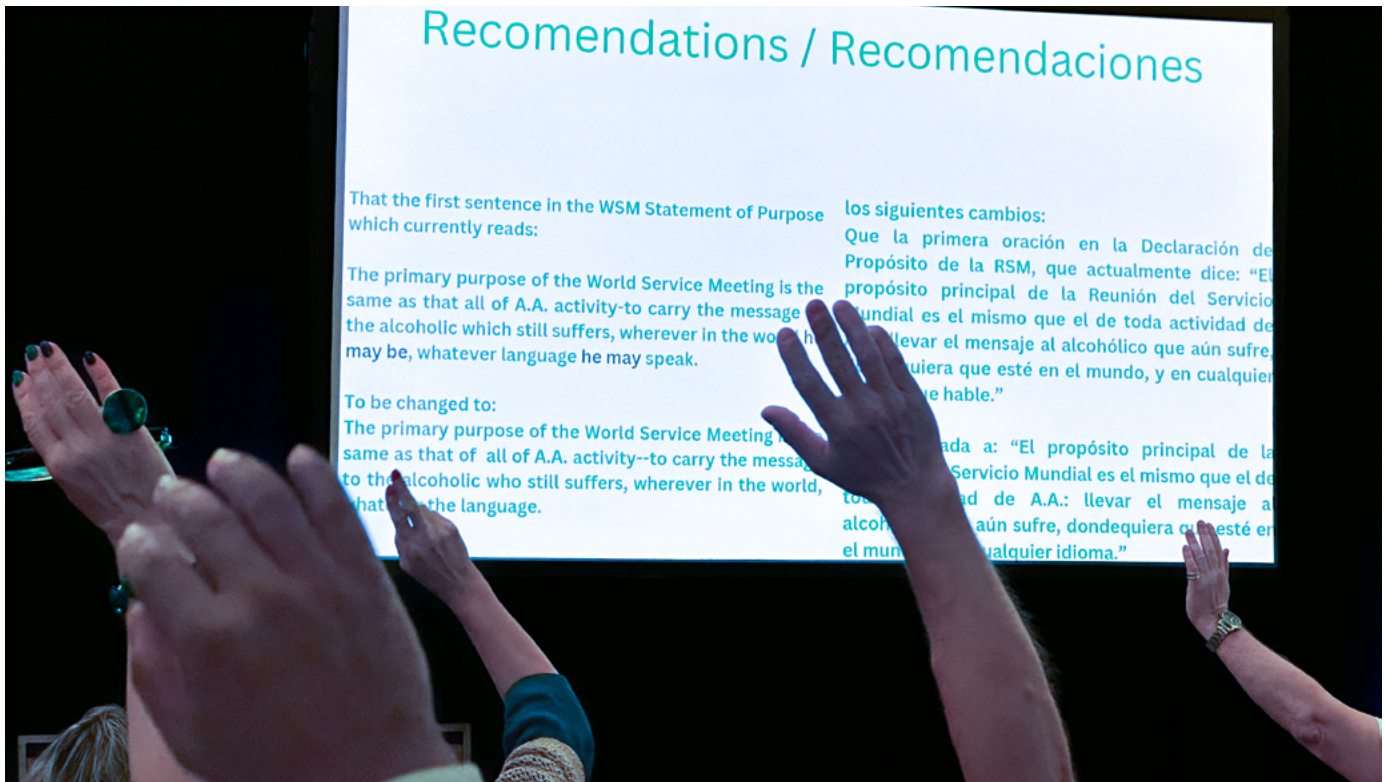
We have received requests for help from regions and towns where there are still no A.A. groups, especially in the eastern part of the country, including the Amazon region.

In terms of literature, in August we printed 1,000 copies of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and 1,000 copies of the pamphlet *The A.A. Group: Where It All Begins*, as well as 500 copies of our Service Manual. We prepared and presented to our General Service Conference a manual on the precautions to be taken regarding the use of social networks, and a pamphlet for their use in Public Information; both were approved by the Conference. We thank AA World Services, Inc. and Central Mexicana de Servicios Generales de AA, AC for their unconditional support in enabling us to reprint and distribute literature titles (from Mexico, their *National Literature Plan*) in Venezuela.

In 2025, we will hold several events for the entire Fellowship, starting with our National Convention, June 6-8, in the state of Nueva Esparta. We invite you to join us. If you wish, you can contact me and I can provide you with all the information you need.

— Santiago P.

# Committee Reports



As committees met throughout the week and discussed their individual agendas each committee report was presented to the full body.

## Agenda

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

The committee recommended the following theme for the 29th World Service Meeting: "Guided by all 36 Principles."

The committee recommended that the following presentation/discussion topics be included on the agenda for the 29th World Service Meeting:

1. **Steps:** Into Action and Recovery
  - a. "Practicing the principles in all our affairs
  - b. Humility through willingness
2. **Traditions:** Working Together in Unity
  - a. Traditions in my personal growth
  - b. Principles for group unity
3. **Concepts:** Interactions for Our Emotional Sobriety
  - a. Concepts for our spiritual stability
  - b. Concepts for our structural stability
4. **The Responsibility Statement**
  - a. Singleness of Purpose: How does it fit?
  - b. Putting these principles to work in all our affairs

## 5. Implementation of Rotation — Benefits and Challenges

- a. Lack of service commitment
- b. Principles before egocentricity
- c. Service sponsorship

## 6. Online Integration: Where are we now?

- a. How do online groups fit our structure?
- b. Online groups: a vision or a reality?

The committee recommended that the following workshop topics be included on the agenda for the 29th World Service Meeting:

1. How do We Listen to Online Groups within Our Structure and Conference?
2. Working with Public Information
3. Are We Allowing Outside Institutions to Direct Our Program?

The committee elected Páll S. of Iceland as chairperson and Ángel R. of Bolivia as alternate chairperson.

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## Literature/Publishing Committee

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes. The committee noted that Procedure 6 from the Composition, Scope, and Procedure was unclear:

“6. The chairperson will maintain correspondence and communication with the secretary of the committee, as well as with other members of the committee, throughout the interval between World Service Meetings.”

The committee noted that it would be helpful for the GSO U.S./Canada to provide future guidance on how to facilitate this communication.

The committee unanimously accepted the AAWS Report on the International Literature Fund.

The committee had a robust discussion relating their experiences not only with literature sales but also how the Covid-19 pandemic impacted their work as a service structure.

The delegate from Portugal shared how they have only recently increased prices.

While they have had the ability to order online, they have recently implemented new ways of digital payment which led to the updating of prices. They have also noticed benefits from online groups assisting users with ordering of literature.

Mexico reported that there were few interruptions in providing literature sales to their groups. The government was flexible, and offices and groups remained open. Little to no impact was felt.

The delegate from Brazil shared that they were greatly affected by the pandemic. They saw a 20 percent decrease in sales which is concerning because the structure relies heavily on sales of literature.

Great Britain reported that to the best of their knowledge, the pandemic did not have much of an impact on sales. Effort is being made to have the digital equivalent of “newcomer packs” as the spread of online meetings left a void in that aspect of carrying the message to newcomers.

The delegate from Belgium shared that they saw a significant impact during the pandemic as they were not set up with an online bookstore, which they set out to establish following the initial impact of the pandemic. Now that the pandemic is largely behind us, they are seeing a thirty-five percent increase in sales. This shift to online has a positive impact in overall operations and efficiency. Prices have increased but remain affordable. They are continuing to add publications to their bookstore. Belgium also reported they have produced and will continue to produce new material. One example is a biography of a fifty-year trusted servant. They seek to produce new material on their history and founders.

Paraguay reported that they were largely affected by the pandemic in terms of literature sales. Some groups never reopened. They still printed some literature and currently buy literature from Argentina. They have received permission from AAWS to print their first book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, which they are working to publish in the future.

The delegate from Bulgaria reported that they have not found a way to sell literature online; it needs more refinement. They mainly sell in person, thus sales during the pandemic dropped. Because it is a small country, they know each other and can request literature or connect each other with literature and send directly via delivery.

There is not a large profit margin.

The Slovenian delegate shared that sales are increasing slightly since the pandemic.

They have increased prices. Most sales are direct sales in groups, at events, workshops, and conventions, and not online.

The delegate from the Dominican Republic reported that due to various cultural issues it is difficult to sell any literature. Many of the young people don’t read books, have never read a book, and this is a serious problem.

Australia’s delegate reported that the pandemic caused great problems as they realized that a large percentage of profit came from literature. Combined with decreased meeting attendance they saw a significant decrease in available funds.

They now have an online bookstore, but it was met with some resistance. Due to the geographic size of the nation, they have seen some Central Offices struggle with sales, as groups order from the online bookstore at the GSO. They are working to alleviate this and encourage sales from local offices.

The delegate from Italy reported that sales are steady. They do not have an online bookstore. The English book is available free online, but the Italian is not. This is something they will look into in the future.

Venezuela reported that inflation is staggering, and costs inhibit sales of A.A. literature.

Members who can afford to buy literature offer it to those who cannot afford it. Often it is very hard for a newcomer to afford literature. But in the spirit of Alcoholics Anonymous, if they continue to work toward a solution, they will find one. Venezuela also shared that they are receiving help from Mexico and other countries.

Denmark shared they were able to move online quickly during the pandemic. They already had an online bookstore, and over time they adjusted their pricing to include shipping costs. This meant that a book that was listed for twenty-five dollars previously was now listing for thirty dollars. Since the base price went up, they benefited from large orders to treatment



centers and such. They are moving their entire catalog to digital and audio books. Sales have gone up since the pandemic.

The Slovakian delegate shared that due to the small size of the country the problem was not the distribution of literature but the low number of meetings. Since it is a small country, members and groups can order by phone and travel to the office to pick up orders. It worked that way throughout the pandemic, so there was no real disruption.

The delegate from Latvia shared that at the beginning of the lockdown there was no online bookstore, so it was difficult to connect with newcomers. In the last year they have instituted an online bookstore out of necessity, and it has been beneficial, doubling income from literature.

Greece reported that they continue to have problems selling literature but are starting to find a solution with the online store. They are seeking guidance from their accountant as to how they can make literature available by donation.

The delegate from Ireland reported that they have ceased to purchase the Big Book from AAWS and now buy from Great Britain's GSO. This is resulting in lower costs for Ireland and more readily available for newcomers, so this is a success. Their service structure encourages groups to buy books for new members and not give them away.

Since the pandemic they haven't seen much change, but some expenses have been reduced since they are utilizing more online sales.

The Argentinian delegate reported that the pandemic was tough on their office. They were closed, meetings were closed, sales plummeted. They dipped into their reserves after the pandemic and have stocked up on literature again, which was a big investment. They have three-hundred or four-hundred percent inflation, so prices go up every few months. They learned during the pandemic, as Seventh Tradition contributions declined, that they were relying too much on literature sales. They have learned from their Country Sponsors that groups need to contribute more. They are seeing improvements. Just last month they saw a fifteen percent increase. They have learned much from their sponsor, Mexico.

Uruguay reported that up to the pandemic they bought literature from Argentina, Colombia, AAWS and others. When the pandemic hit this became impossible. After the REDELA meeting they asked Argentina for sponsorship. They also requested files from AAWS and since they have a printing house, have begun to print literature in their country. Costs are lower, sales have improved, and sales are adding a bigger percentage to income. Nine titles are in print, and they now have access to the AAWS portal so they will be able to deal directly with AAWS for future publications.

The delegate from Czech Republic reported that when the pandemic hit the committee took the time to translate and publish A.A. literature in their language. Revenue was down significantly. Revenue for 2020 was fifty percent of what the revenue for 2023 was. They have only one employee for the entire Fellowship, who performs all the labor. They produce an audio book and an e-book. Due to inflation, they have seen prices of literature double.

French-Speaking Europe reported that they are doing relatively well. Members and groups are currently having no difficulty ordering books. However, since costs have increased in New York and in Europe, there will be an increase in the next few months.

During the pandemic, there were difficult times. The offices in the three countries loaned money to the French-speaking publishing company for rent, etc., and have been reimbursed as of today. They have no online shop but continue to have an order form that is filled out and sent to the office.

***Delegates had a lively discussion sharing the variety of experiences with ordering A.A. literature from AAWS and the AA Grapevine.***

**Purchasing:**

Ireland, instead of ordering from AAWS, they have been ordering from the Great Britain GSO, which prints their own literature.

Bulgaria orders from Great Britain as well, as they are unable to complete online orders with AAWS and the AA Grapevine because they cannot select their country in the online form.

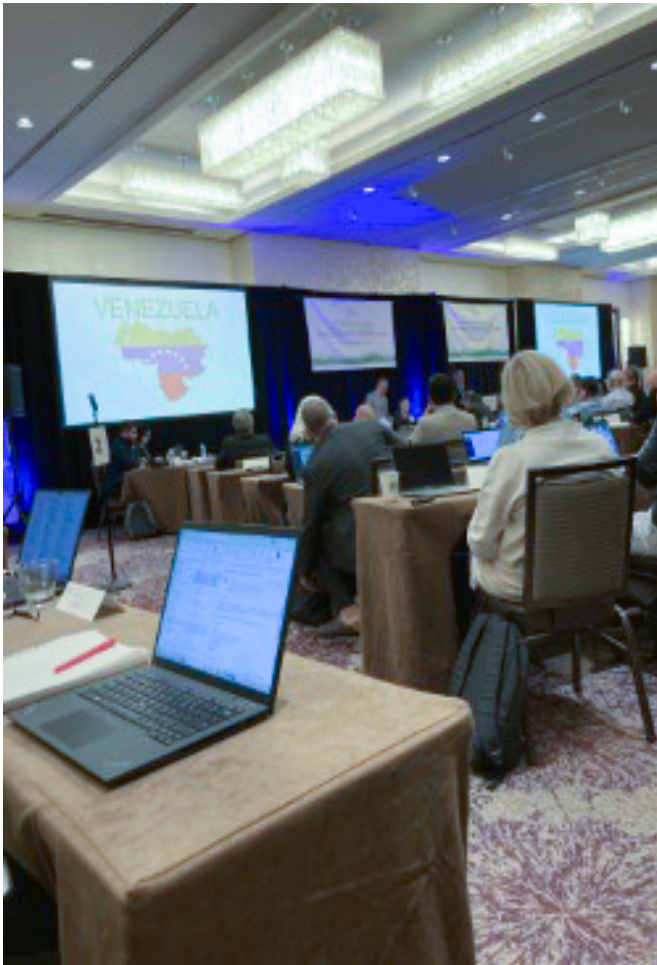
The delegate from Great Britain shared that the books they publish are the same as AAWS, with some different covers, etc. Pamphlets are different and produced independently.

The Slovenian delegate commented that they did not receive responses to emails sent to AAWS, and that questions remained unanswered about the status of their licenses.

Other delegates offered solutions to this by communicating with GSO and sharing guidance on how to access the Translation Licensing Portal.

The delegate from Australia shared that the office buys from AAWS, as it is more expensive to publish their own. They have discussed the option to self-publish and may do so in the future. They reported no issues with the payment process and the price increases didn't impact sales. The delegate commented that their sharing was limited as they only received the meeting agenda recently and were unable to gather shared experience from their countries' service structure.

French-Speaking Europe reported that some, not all, materials are ordered from AAWS. They also shared that French-



Speaking Europe also has the same issue as Bulgaria — they cannot order from the AA Grapevine because they are not able to select their country for delivery.

The delegate from Portugal shared they print their own literature. They have requested licenses and are beginning to publish the literature. They use the same covers as AAWS except for one title, *The Language of the Heart*, which although it has the same cover, also has an outer cover commemorating their recent International Convention.

India reported they order English books from WSO but print in their country any literature from one of 26 spoken languages.

The delegate from Hungary shared that due to the prohibitive costs of clearing customs, they do not order from AAWS.

In Denmark, it was reported they print everything.

The delegate from Flemish Belgium shared they print their own literature, translating the official A.A. literature. They publish about the history of A.A. in Belgium, and since it is created by them, they do not have to ask for permission from AAWS. They only require permission from the GSB of Belgium. The delegate shared they have an ageing A.A. population, 80% of the members are 50 years or older. Most of these members have

A.A. literature, and if they don't produce new items, they will have nothing to sell. New literature drives sales.

Latvia reported they do not buy from GSO, U.S./Canada.

The delegate from Greece shared they have books in English and Greek, translated with license from AAWS, and they print these in Greece.

French-speaking Europe's delegate reported they have their own publishing company that serves their structure; thus, they order some literature from AAWS but they also print their own. The orders arrive at the publishing company in Belgium and are then shipped to France and Switzerland. To aid in delivering, deliveries are made by car when the publishing company attends the Conference of the three countries.

In Venezuela, the delegate reported they print their own A.A. literature, with help from the sponsor country, Mexico, and that they do not order from AAWS.

The Dominican Republic reported they have help from their Mexican sponsor country with different buying options and have no issues with purchasing A.A. literature.

The delegate from Ecuador reported that after receiving licenses through the platform, their publishing situation has improved greatly and this helped with the contributions.

They previously purchased from Colombia and Peru, and this has lowered the costs, and this has been very well received.

Australia's delegate raised an issue related to global literature decisions and expressed there is a concern among some in Australia that when countries produce their own material it may not be aligned with A.A. across the globe.

A discussion followed among the delegates, and it was shared that AAWS has given permission for countries to create their own literature, that decision is up to each different conference.

This sparked a lively discussion, the delegate from Czech Republic shared that the issue is not how they are affiliated with other service structures but how to protect themselves. That while they have autonomy to produce basically whatever they want, it remains their responsibility to publish what is aligned with A.A.

The delegate from India shared they print literature in languages such as Urdu and Tamil and offer these to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, as their sponsor country.

The delegate from Ireland shared they have two self-produced publications, a Newsletter, and a magazine titled "The Road Back."

### **Licensing:**

Denmark reported that many problems have been solved and they don't need new licenses since they do not have new publications currently. They may need new licenses for audiobooks.

The delegate from Slovenia inquired about the Licensing Platform, and how to find out which licenses they held. A discussion followed that helped guide this issue and offered ways to use the portal and to contact GSO for any questions.

Additional questions were raised by various delegates:

- How long a license is valid.
- How to message the Legal, Licensing, & Intellectual Property (LLIP) through the portal.
- How to resolve waiting periods for licenses.

The delegate from Italy asked for shared experience about selling A.A. literature to non-A.A. members, i.e. bookstores, treatment centers, etc. A.A. Italy has been issued its own Value Added Tax (VAT) number which allows the Association to sell its texts externally as well as internally (allowing the ability to sell to nonalcoholics and the general public).

The guidelines state sales of A.A. literature may take place tax-free, "provided that in its total amount, the sale of such literature continues to be directed mainly to alcoholic members". A variety of experiences were shared by several delegates that they do in fact sell to the general public.

A discussion was held on the ways that various service structures offer audio and e-books and how those are made available, and thus could be available outside the Fellowship as there is no way to confirm if non-members were purchasing them. The delegate from the Czech Republic shared that the printed book is only available through their store.

Other delegates shared they sell or offer very little outside the Fellowship, and that the appearance of A.A. materials is not attractive outside the Fellowship. It was suggested to look at producing more modern, attractive literature. Another delegate shared that some A.A. literature was sold at Al-Anon or Narcotics Anonymous events.

### **E-books and audiobooks:**

The delegate from Czech Republic shared in detail the process they took to produce their audiobook. From cost saving measures; using A.A. members as voice actors and directors, and a friendly studio, and sourcing a vendor to offer it on a retail platform.

They kept the costs low and are very happy with the results. They had a bidding process to come up with the retail vendor.

Slovenia shared their audiobook features a journalist who is an A.A. member and the product is available on the website.

Denmark is just finishing the audio version of the Big Book. They hired an actor for the first 167 pages, then had several A.A. members with voices tested through a panel to do the personal stories. It cost around \$15,000 to make it to pay the actors and studio.

This should be finished by the end of the year and will be available through the online bookstore.

In French-speaking Europe, France and Belgium have many stories available on the website. In Belgium they made a few videos for Instagram. These are short, catchy videos that give the telephone number and website to find more information and are designed to attract young people.

The delegate from India shared that if they are offering audio literature for free, it could impact sales of printed literature, and they could suffer financially.

Others shared that audiobooks and eBooks can be welcoming and once an alcoholic joins the Fellowship, they will purchase literature. Still others shared that there are uses for those with limited access to read or listen, or even see. So, audio and sign language versions of A.A. literature help carry the message to those members.

Mexico has a Braille Big Book, which is very expensive. They only give it to certain foundations that serve the blind population, it cannot be bought, not available for sale or for groups and only donated. Because the texture is erased after storage or use, after so many uses the copies can't be "read."

### **Artificial Intelligence (AI):**

The committee noted that it might be valuable to consider including shared experience on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), as it relates to A.A. literature, in a future agenda.



*Delegate sharing is at the heart of the WSM.*



The committee discussed the timing of the posting of committee background. The committee suggested that background materials be distributed earlier so that the literature committee has ample time to review and facilitate a more informed group conscience.

The committee elected Pascal D. of Belgium as chairperson and Andy P. of Australia as alternate chairperson.

## Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee

The committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedure and made no changes.

The committee discussed with gratitude the Middle East Regional Committee of A.A. (MERCAA) request for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting. The committee noted that the MERCAA at this time is still in process to develop.

The committee reviewed with appreciation Fiji's request for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting and agreed that based upon the current qualification guidelines and the information shared by Fiji that they would not qualify at this time but encourages application in the future.

The committee approved Honduras's request for participation at the 28th World Service Meeting.

The committee reviewed the qualifications for countries participating in the World Service Meeting and noted the need to update the description of the process to review requests from countries for financial assistance from the WSM Fund to participate in the WSM.

The committee recommended that Item 7 which currently reads:

7. Before the due date for the election of World Service delegates, the secretary of the World Service Meeting will notify each country on the policy regarding the representation and the financial responsibility for countries participating in the World Service Meeting; and will inquire whether or not it wishes to participate in the forthcoming World Service Meeting and intends to fulfill the delegates' commitment and financial responsibility. If this commitment should be impossible, the Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee will consider each situation individually. The World Service Meeting Fund (which is maintained by A.A. World Services but is under the purview of the WSM Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee) was established in 2018 to provide financial assistance to countries that request funding and to support the World Service Meeting.

Be changed to read:

7. Before the due date for the election of World Service delegates, the secretary of the World Service Meeting will notify

each country of the policies regarding the representation and the financial responsibility for countries participating in the World Service Meeting; and will inquire whether or not it wishes to participate in the forthcoming World Service Meeting and intends to fulfill the delegates' commitment and financial responsibility. If this commitment should be impossible, each situation will be considered individually by the AAWS Finance committee. The World Service Meeting Fund (which is maintained by A.A. World Services but is under the purview of the WSM Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee) was established in 2018 to provide financial assistance to countries that request funding and to support the World Service Meeting.

The committee reviewed the qualifications for delegates and alternate delegates participating in the World Service Meeting and noted the need for better description of WSM delegates' role and responsibilities.

The committee recommended that the items which currently read:

1. Delegates are to be elected or appointed by the Fellowship or Board in their country/countries, and not be self-appointed.
2. Except where a delegate is serving two or more countries, delegates should be residents and preferably citizens of the country they serve.
3. Delegates should have a working knowledge of English or Spanish and, if they are A.A. members, it is desirable that they have at least five years current unbroken sobriety in A.A.
4. Countries that have no WSM delegate available with working knowledge of English or Spanish may choose to send an interpreter for that delegate at the expense of the delegate country.  
Delegates should have service experience at their national level. They should have demonstrated leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organizational ability, a knowledge and love of A.A., and time to attend the World Service Meeting fully informed on A.A. in their country/countries.
5. After returning to the country/countries they represent, delegates should have the time to present a report to the Fellowship on the World Service Meeting.

Be changed to read:

1. Delegates are to be elected or appointed by the Fellowship or Board in their country/countries, and not be self-appointed.

2. Except where a delegate is serving two or more countries, delegates should be residents and preferably citizens of the country they serve, in order that they may best represent the structure they serve, with current experience of the structure's successes and challenges. They should have time to prepare for the World Service Meeting and to take back the WSM experience to their structure's officers.
3. Delegates should have a working knowledge of English or Spanish and, if they are A.A. members, it is desirable that they have at least five years current unbroken sobriety in A.A. Countries that have no WSM delegate available with working knowledge of English or Spanish may choose to send an interpreter for that delegate (or find one local to the WSM location) preferably at the expense of the delegate country.
4. When selecting their delegate(s), countries may wish to consider potential challenges in obtaining visas for admission to the WSM host country.
5. Delegates should have service experience at their national level. They should have demonstrated leadership qualities, genuine service interest, organizational ability, a knowledge and love of A.A., and time to attend the World Service Meeting fully informed on A.A. in their country/countries.
6. After returning to the country/countries they represent, delegates should have the time to present a report to the Fellowship on the World Service Meeting.

The committee noted a concern from a minority of countries that discontinuing the practice of funding interpreters (other than English/Spanish) hotel and meal expenses by AAWS at short notice has greatly inconvenienced countries who, with limited time to budget funds, are supporting interpreters at delegates' personal expense. Concern was also expressed at the potential exclusion of countries from the WSM by focusing entirely on English and Spanish as the official languages of the meeting. The committee suggests that this be discussed by this committee at the next WSM.

The committee reviewed the preliminary finance report of the 28th World Service Meeting and an AAWS report on the history of World Service Meeting expenses and delegate fees.

In the spirit of Self-Support as outlined in A.A.'s Tradition Seven, the committee recommended that the delegate fee remain US \$2,000 for the 29th WSM and that a suggestion be made to those countries that can pay more or contribute more to the WSM Fund.

**Note:** At the first WSM held in 1969, the delegate fee was US\$200. The highest WSM Delegate fee was US\$2,900 at the 15th WSM in 1998.

The committee requested that errors in the 28th WSM Finance Report be corrected and also clearly report on the contributions made by the European Service Meeting in the fourth quarter of 2023 that are currently credited to Great Britain.

The committee had a lengthy discussion on a self-supporting World Service Meeting acknowledging that the current delegate fee and contributions to WSM Fund does not cover the expenses of the WSM. Broader concerns were shared regarding whether the WSM is relying too heavily on an expectation that the U.S./ Canada structure will supplement the costs with a larger WSM Fund contribution. This question extends beyond just monetary concerns.

The committee discussed how to establish a fair delegate fee to enable participation from smaller structures or countries that cannot fully fund their involvement in the WSM. It was agreed that maintaining a flat delegate fee, while encouraging countries that can contribute more to do so, is the best practice at this time.

The committee discussed the potential for a sliding scale fee and concluded that developing criteria to assess a country's financial situation for a fair implementation is not viable at this time.

The committee requested that the Site Selection Committee incorporate affordability as a criterion for future WSM locations.

The committee recommended that the 29th World Service Meeting take place in a location selected by the Site Selection Committee in October 4-8, 2026.

Following up on a proposal presented at the 27th WSM to degenderize the World Service Meeting Statement of Purpose, the committee recommended the following changes:

That the first sentence in the WSM Statement of Purpose which currently reads:

*The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that all of A.A. activity-to carry the message to the alcoholic which still suffers, wherever in the world he may be, whatever language he may speak.*

be changed to:

*The primary purpose of the World Service Meeting is the same as that of all of A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, wherever in the world, whatever the language.*

The committee elected Sheli B. of Hong Kong as chairperson and Sales L. of South Africa as alternate chairperson.

## Working With Others Committee

The chair welcomed everyone. Some changes were made to the composition of the committee to accommodate changes to the attendees of the WSM.

The Committee reviewed the Composition, Scope and Procedures and made no changes.

The committee added some additional discussion topics, To the committee agenda which included:

- Carrying the message through social media.
- How are public meetings conducted?
- What Audio and Video resources are used for internal and external audiences?
- How are we carrying the message to universities and training colleges (Cooperation with the Professional Community)?

### Carrying the message through social media

One country noted that a few years ago they began to have questions about social media, but they did not have a Public Information committee, so they started one. They have also noticed that older members tend to be less enthusiastic about social media and more concerned about Traditions.

One country shared that they have a national coordinator for social media and another one for Public Information. They noted that young people want text messages, and the national chat text line creates opportunities for connecting with them. They have very strict guidelines for how they run the chat line, and a roster of people who respond to inquiries (not Artificial Intelligence).

One country is getting a lot of calls to the Messenger app. It took four years to get authorization from Conference to start a Facebook page. The permission was granted just as Covid started. At the start of the pandemic, everything moved to Facebook. But people were very concerned about anonymity. Then people became more comfortable and nothing bad happened. But they noticed that young people don't use Facebook, just people over the age of 40.

They have been using Instagram in a way that people don't break anonymity. It is just one-way information about meetings, group changes, and events.

Another structure noted that their General Service Conference and Boards have been asking if they could make Facebook pages. In the meantime, the working group has created a Facebook page and Instagram account for their national convention. The pages are just for members.

One delegate asked a question — can purchased ads on Facebook or Instagram be used for Public Information? Is it

against the Traditions to pay for ads that will reach people with a Public Information message?

A committee member observed that a neighboring country, Brazil, has been a leader in using social media to carry the message.

One delegate noted that his country is careful about introducing new tools. When it comes to digital tools, they only have guidelines now for how to use the internet. Three years ago, at the General Service Conference, they decided to create a video for Public Information, then created four videos and a country-wide YouTube channel. They have not created ads for Facebook or Instagram.

Another delegate reported that they are putting Public Information ads on Instagram and Facebook. It is much less expensive than any printed media. They are getting the best response on Instagram where they include links to audio recordings of A.A. members' stories.

In one country, after the pandemic, they started Facebook, TikTok, Twitter and Instagram.

They spend the equivalent of \$80 each month. The more Seventh Tradition contributions they receive, the more they can spend on outreach to the still-suffering alcoholic.

One delegate shared that one of their strategic goals is to





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strengthen their financial position, so that they can improve the quality of outreach. When they have local and regional events, they use the radio and can get hundreds of calls. They also ask Class A trustees to create videos for TikTok.

One member noted that in his country, it is important to remember that anonymity for the member is different from how we communicate with the public about A.A. We don't have to be invisible.

A delegate reported that they have had a lot of success with wallet cards with a QR code and think this works better than having someone carry around a pamphlet, which can make people feel concerned about their anonymity.

Another country delegate noted that they have an annual gratitude month collection, — this year it was for social media, and they collected \$11,000. They encourage members to put a dollar in for each year of their sobriety.

A few delegates talked about how they don't have podcasts or Facebook. Some have a fear that Facebook's advertising or its methods might violate anonymity.

Another member shared that they try to take a lot of care with our Traditions. "We do not talk about politics or anything. If someone breaks anonymity on Facebook then we poke them a little, to remind them of Tradition 11." He noted that he thinks GSO will never have a Facebook for A.A. in that country. One delegate that the board of his service structure talks a lot about social media, but they always come back to anonymity. He noted that they are reluctant to use social media for the official A.A., but groups have private Facebook pages.

Delegates expressed gratitude for learning so much about using social media from each other.

Another country seconded the experience of having no social media and wondered if an emphasis on anonymity might make A.A. invisible in her country.

A member from another structure noted that on "X" (Twitter) you can pay for access to a particular demographic. He said that in a neighboring structure, the A.A. board was targeting people by geo-locating people who had attended a large music festival. The following Monday those who attended would get a text saying, "If Alcohol is a problem for you, call this number."

In one country they reported putting business cards in police stations, bus stations, banks, really any public place. They are more discreet than other literature. On the card is a QR code that connects the person to A.A.

Another member noted: Facebook is for old people. Even the audience for TikTok is aging." So, when you pick a social media site, you have to think about who you are trying to reach.

One delegate described how the web page for his country's

A.A. office has to be approved by their conference. You can go there and see a list of meetings organized by area, and it has events and activities.

Another country representative talked about how their most popular communication tool is Telegram. On Telegram they have about 2,000 speakers recorded that people can access. They also use Google Meet and have 7-8 meetings per day online in their main city.

One representative talked about an annual wellness event on a small island. A.A. volunteers wear a T-shirt that says, "I am an alcoholic — but I do not drink." This opens the door to communication with those who are interested.

One member noted that in his country they had a good discussion about how the definition of the word "promotion" has changed since the Big Book was written. He noted that "We think in current language, but in 1930s language, the terminology of promotion was more about individuals advocating for something based on their personal identity."

He said, "We need people to know that A.A. exists!"

### **How do we conduct public meetings?**

One delegate noted that in his structure they organize professional lunches and show the Cochrane report video. The video emphasizes the cost savings that can happen when people get sober in A.A. He noted the effectiveness of (showing the video) is seen in the call backs they get.

Recently, they had a lunch for medical students. They usually focus Cooperation with the Professional Community work on counselors, social workers, not doctors, who are too busy.

Another structure noted that they also used the Cochrane report video and shared it with treatment centers, who play it for new clients. It has the message: A.A. works.

One country representative recently held a public meeting for nursing students for Cooperation with the Professional Community/Public Information work.

He also explained how his board holds an annual corrections forum with the eight areas in their service structure. The location rotates each year so that they can connect with correctional institutions in every area. They invite professionals and use Class A trustees to reach out.

One member described how A.A. members continue to work on educating doctors, police, and people from the courts. He noted that they sometimes get negative pushback from a religious leader. He also noted that they are trying to bring the A.A. message to high schools, hospitals, and institutions. "We do the best we can."

A few delegates talked about meeting with addiction specialists and mental health professionals.

Another shared about going to hospitals and that they have a prisons committee, which is going well.

A delegate noted that their work in schools is not going well, because the Public Information committee members are “too old!”

One delegate shared that the public (police, justice, hospitals, institutions) has been inviting A.A. to come and share. So A.A. does not have to promote itself. When an organization needs help, they are always able to bring the message. “When a school asks, we have people in their 20s and 30s who are happy to go. We are also contacted from social media. They will reach out and ask if someone can come and speak. When we have requests from the press and media, we are trusted by members to share their experiences.”

In one country to get the message out to professionals, they rely on a committee within the board. Lately they have focused on human resources (HR). When they have events A.A. volunteers attend, but it is expensive, and they have not seen a big impact. So, they are looking for other ways.

One delegate talked about how their country is very secular, and so people might have concerns about A.A. and wondered if A.A. was being kept a secret as a result.

One representative noted that they have not had much luck with corrections or police, noting that there is a lot to learn from others here at the WSM. He noted that in his country, it is very uncommon for people to come directly from the street — most new members come from treatment.

In one country, the national Public Information committee is composed of Public Information trusted servants from each Area. Their online Area is starting to do some Public Information work in places where there is no A.A. group or very few.

### **Audio and Video — how are service structures working with audio and video for internal use and for external use?**

One country shared that they do not have any audio or video. They publish a magazine — for internal use. It gets shared with doctors, but since it is not attractive, it is not very effective.

One representative shared that in his country they think audio is very important because lots of people struggle with reading. They recently published a new book of stories from indigenous people but want to make audio recordings of the stories so people can listen to them.

The delegate from another country noted that they have created a television spot and that they have adapted videos from the UK. A radio spot airing on national radio was made with help from Class A trustees.

Another delegate noted that in her service structure, they do not have a trustee on the Public Information committee. She

noted that as a result, all the Public Information work happens on the level of groups and three regions. Every group has a secretary who makes a connection with media, radio or TV.

One delegate noted that in his country they are careful about anonymity and Traditions.

He noted “Maybe sometimes we are too strict, and it inhibits our action.” They have created one video: *Welcome to A.A.* And they have added subtitles in the local language to four US/Canada videos with permission.

One country noted that for the public they have made TV program with members’ voices, being careful with anonymity. They also made a radio program for interviews with members.

Another country delegate noted that they are making a library of videos: for young people, prisoners, old timers, and newcomers from treatment, and a number of audios of A.A. members’ stories.

He also noted that in his country, in one city, there is a one-hour meeting once a month on community radio with three members, each telling their stories.

One delegate described his structure’s videos for professionals directed toward healthcare, human resources, church (faith leaders), courts and education — all on their website.

A few members described how they had created audio files of members reading the Big Book and other literature (like *Living Sober*) in local languages.

One country reported having success with putting stickers with A.A. contact information up in metro stations, buses, doctors’ offices, and pharmacies. The stickers say:

### **“A.A. can help — if you have a problem with alcohol — call us.”**

He also said that A.A. communicates when they are giving food to homeless — that helps get the message out. But it is extra difficult to reach some professionals — especially religious leaders — it is almost impossible!

One country noted that they have been invited to put their message on some international radio broadcasts but must decline because these channels are so politicized, it might get A.A. in trouble.

One delegate reported a positive experience they recently had when a radio journalist attended their national convention. She interviewed people all weekend. After the convention, there was a 15-minute radio piece that was great — and so the fears vanished.

A lot of people heard the message.

Another member shared that in his country an important tool for internal communication is the internal magazine they publish. It’s very inexpensive and all the groups get it. They

print about 7,000 copies. He noted that they also print the conference report, but alcoholics don't want to read, they just want to share.

### **How are we carrying the message to universities and training colleges?**

One country reported that they have a couple of events at universities where they set up tables, but they don't get any interest from the students. So instead, they are looking for Cooperation with the Professional Community opportunities where they would be able to connect with faculty and administrators.

One country reported that they have an ongoing goal to intensify their Twelfth Step work.

They call it national week — for instance, there is a national week for A.A. with Young People. They also have a national week to carry the message to health care institutions.

One representative noted that normally they would bring literature displays of pamphlets and give them out and talk to university students. He said they get a good response.

Sometimes there are people who have problems, or maybe they have experience with a family member drinking.

In one structure, each area is in charge of creating their own materials. But she noted that they had discovered that people don't want to be seen taking information. One success they had was with nursing programs that are willing to have A.A. members come and talk to students. Or for continuing education credits, for professionals, A.A. can provide some information. The professional groups sometimes want to have these continuing education credits online, but the Area A.A. structure wants to remain in person because with online classes, you don't know if the people are even listening.

In some countries, they have been trying to get contacts with schools, but when the GSO provides literature to the schools, it works better when the institution invites A.A. (the Public Information committee) to come in and talk about their own experience.

One representative shared that "it is not easy in our country to talk openly about being in A.A."

In one country there is a National Day of Recovery. The day before that is for professionals and it's an opportunity to bring the information about A.A. and share our A.A. literature.

In one country, at the national level they make a Public Information package, but the actual activity of sharing those with institutions happens locally. They notice that it helps when there is a personal relationship between the A.A. members and local professionals.

One delegate reported that there is a national professional association focused on addiction in her country, and it is very

effective to build relationships between A.A. and those addictionologists.

One member asked, "Who is responsible for Public Information/Cooperation with the Professional Community in your home structure?" (meaning national/ regional/ local entities). A quick show of hands revealed that Public Information and Cooperation with the Professional Community work is about evenly spread between national, area (or regional), district and group-level work.

### **How do you cooperate with Local and National Law Enforcement?**

One delegate reported that in their country, there is an app that police use. The A.A. structure is working to get A.A. listed as a resource.

In one country, the GSO tries to work with the national police, and that includes focus on family courts and family violence. He noted that there is a lot of alcoholism related to domestic violence, and that it could be helpful to work with family police in the rural areas.

One delegate described how in his structure they have worked on a strategic plan to communicate with police and law enforcement — they wanted to create a framework that could be shared with all the regional structures.

In another country, they have begun to have weekly talks to the police. It's not a board job, it is the Area's work. When the area does not have enough trusted servants, the board steps in.

One delegate described outreach his structure is doing with the transit police — traffic police, who do operations for drunk driving tests. the A.A. members can help educate them.

One country reported that they believe the outreach to the police is better at the local level. The local referral is better at building a relationship with the professional or the potential member A member from one country reported: "Today it's wonderful. Twenty years ago, when members would say 'We are alcoholic,' they would be threatened with being sent to jail.

"They were put on a bus, and were brought to jail as sober members, but then the police started to understand that the members were not drunk. Now it is better. We even have A.A. board members who are part of those influential parts of our society."

A representative from another structure they talked about how groups and areas take on the service of reaching out. At the national level, there are three law enforcement agencies, and the national GSO works on some outreach to them.

### **Carrying the message to professionals in the military: armed forces officers, unit commanders or military chaplains**

One member talked about how in his country when the military gets training — A.A. brings a meeting every week, and offers to



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bring the military member who needs help to outside meetings. Another member said reaching the military is like reaching law enforcement, it's two-fold:

1. How can we in A.A. help you in the military help your own members who are suffering from alcoholism?
2. How can we in A.A. help you in the police or the military respond to alcoholics you encounter in your work? (this is more difficult).

### **Service work and online groups — how do we encourage it?**

Members from a couple of countries agreed that it is a challenge to integrate online groups with the service structure.

One country representative pointed out that in his country there is an online Area — and they are very involved in service. They are especially good for reaching remote members. Another representative reported that it is because they are a small structure, and they really encourage members to come in person.

A delegate reported that in his structure there is a question about whether online groups could do Public Information service? Right now, they are encouraged to work with the national Public Information committee.

In one structure, they have some members who say, "We are online, so we only want to do service online." So, they have not been incorporated into the service structure.

In another neighboring country, they made it flexible. They told the online groups, "We could create a structure for you but that will take some time, or you could just register in a district, and send a representative in-person to the meetings, then you can get connected and be represented in the structure." That worked! We just needed flexibility on both sides.

One member suggested that better communication is needed. He noted that when they talk about service in online groups, they are often talking about group level service.

Service to them is who is leading the meeting, watching for zoom bombers, handling the technology. But if we want to get them involved in general service — we need to start telling people that service in A.A. is so many things, not just group service.

### **How to find potential Class A nonalcoholic trustees (Friends of A.A.)?**

Almost all representatives said they have struggled to find people who would be willing to serve.

A member from one structure noted that they have had many problems trying to attract Class As. In recent years, there have been well-attended professional forums. That was how they met their current board chair, a Class A, and he is doing a great job, attending 20–25 events per year. He is bringing in

others to observe meetings and they might someday become Class As. He noted, "We want them to fall in love with us."

One member asked if any structures paid their Class A's. Members of the committee agreed that they did not.

There was one Class A in the room, who shared that some professionals do want to be paid. He noted that it is difficult to manage the travel as a Class A. In his country, he has to travel 9 hours to get to a board meeting.

One country said they have asked for help from all different professions but have had not success.

Another member noted that sometimes member of Al-Anon or the family members of alcoholics are a good possibility for Class As, especially if they have professional credentials.

The member from another country talked about how in his structure, the board chair is a psychologist who works in the prisons. She (the Class A board chair) is trying to find her own replacement, but it is challenging.

One structure put an advertisement on a website for people interested in board work, noting that A.A. service does not pay. But they have not had any success.

In one country their Class As have traditionally been professionals who deal with alcoholics — doctors, social workers, psychotherapists. But recently a person who was a journalist kept asking about interviewing members, and she was interested in learning about the solution, and so they invited her to become a Class A.

In one country, they call them Friends of A.A. They are great, even when they are not on our board, we can use their help to reach professionals

### **Sharing strategies to carry the A.A. message to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented immigrants**

One delegate shared that there are 125 million refugees worldwide and there is much work to do to reach the hand of A.A. out to those who need and want help. Another delegate agreed, saying that this is so important, it has been discussed at their GSB.

There are lots of immigrants, and we don't see them at meetings. We worry, "How do we reach them?"

One member shared that his structure had provided literature to a neighboring country that shares a language with his and where the political challenges made it impossible to stay in contact, but they heard that five people had gotten sober.

He also noted that there is a minority group of refugees in two countries that their structure is trying to support and that they are working to create a Big Book in the Kurdish language.

One country shared that there have been Russian-speaking members who have been in their country who were afraid to

come forward with their problem, but that the office was able to connect them to other Russian speakers who could help.

A delegate shared that in European countries there have been conflicts with A.A. members struggling when there are countries at war and people not wanting to be in meeting together.

A member suggested that for refugees, online meetings in their own languages could be very helpful.

Another member agreed, noting that there are many Ukrainian refugees in various countries, not all countries have resources in the languages that refugees speak. They worry that they don't have much to offer and hope that online groups would be helpful.

One member reported that in his country there are more than a million migrants from neighboring Venezuela, and because they share the language, they come to the same meetings. A.A. has welcomed them.

A member from one Central American country noted that their country experiences migrants who are passing through — people are on their way to somewhere else. He noted we don't do anything with people who are passing through. We don't have any organized efforts to reach migrants.

One delegate said people from his country have left and are a diaspora — they have become migrants in many different countries — and that makes the online meeting so important.

The committee also noted that they did not have enough time to finish this discussion on the topic of "*Sharing strategies to carry the A.A. message to migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented immigrants;*" and they would like it added as Old Business to the 29th WSM Working with Others Committee.

The committee elected Jony F-T. (Netherlands) as chair and Karolina M. (Czech Republic), as alternate chair.

## Workshop I

### Are Our Groups Really Practicing the Traditions?

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

**a. How can trusted servants encourage more understanding/ practices of the Traditions?**

When Traditions are presented as adhering to principles as guideposts rather than looking at Traditions as "rules," members can be more open to seeing the spirituality that derives from them.

The A.A. Preamble is a helpful introduction to discussing Traditions and reading the Twelve Traditions at the beginning of a meeting introduces them to new members.

Including the practice of the Traditions in personal life (family, friends, jobs, etc.) shows that the A.A. program is more than just Twelve Steps. Learning to connect all the Traditions to actions applied in our daily lives, provides a more practical way of seeing them as a guide to living.

When groups focus on only a few Traditions as being the "most important" there may be a tendency to overlook the others. Many delegates believe that unity is achieved when we practice and look to *all* the Traditions when searching how to apply them to situations.

Sometimes, people believe A.A. sponsorship is limited to only the Steps. Just as a sponsor encourages understanding and practice of the Steps, they can do the same with the Traditions.

At the heart of many problems or disunity in service can be a lack of understanding of Traditions. The Traditions create a roadmap to finding our way back to A.A.'s primary purpose.

Hosting Traditions workshops or forums, etc., can motivate understanding and enthusiasm. Those members who may not see the purpose at the beginning, are grateful afterward to have discussed this topic.

While every A.A. member can have a different interpretation about what it means to practice the Traditions, when groups exchange their experience with other groups, we can learn from each other's experience.

Stories from the book *Language of the Heart* can be helpful in sharing why and how Traditions came about. They came about out of the mistakes and lessons learned in our early history. We continue to benefit from those experiences.

The Twelve Steps bring us closer to ourselves, the Twelve Traditions bring us closer to each other and the Twelve Concepts keep us together with greater participation and understanding of our roles in relation to our primary purpose.

Some online groups have developed meetings for newcomers that are question and answer format, to allow people to share and ask questions about Traditions, about service and what service means and has to offer the newcomer. PowerPoint presentations about what A.A. is and what it is not, are a helpful way to understand Traditions.

In some countries, younger members are often sponsored by members abroad and get a good introduction to the Traditions.

It is important that General Service Representatives have a grasp and understanding of the Traditions and can then

serve as a resource at their group when questions arise. While A.A. Traditions are for A.A. and not for non-A.A.'s to adhere to, we do appreciate when the professional community, including the media, cooperate with A.A. within these guideposts. The general public's understanding of our principles can help avoid misconceptions about A.A. at the public level.

**b. *When appointing service positions in our groups, do we practice anonymity, or do we favor more experienced trusted servants?***

Some shared that the thread throughout service is the principle of anonymity.

When filling service positions, it is important to ask ourselves if we are driven by "personalities over principles." Are we choosing our trusted servants because they are "popular" or simply familiar? Another way to answer this is to ask ourselves if we adhere to the principle of rotation. Despite the lack of experience of new servants, it is important to encourage new people to serve.

While not every type of service is attractive to every member, we can help members identify aspects of service that might tap into their attributes or encourage them to try



new roles that may not come instinctively. As long as there is a willingness, we pass on our experience. Service sponsorship plays a role.

Some shared that it is important to avoid repeating service roles unless really necessary. Older servants should step back to allow new people to come through.

Some additional sharing included points such as the importance of refraining from cliques in meetings; being mindful that sobriety time is not always the best gauge to the most qualified person to serve; experienced service people can intimidate new people from wanting to participate; and having alternate service positions can be helpful in onboarding new people to service.

**c. *Do we trust the group conscience of service boards and committees?***

Often, by being in A.A. we learn to build on experience which includes our trusted servants. Many think that there is trust but when people allow personalities to get in the way, it creates mistrust. Ultimately outcomes are determined by an informed group conscience through God/Higher Power.

Good communication is vital, and boards need to be well informed to make correct outcomes. We trust the process.

Board inventories can be extremely helpful to review what needs improvement and what is going well.

In a group you can leave if you don't like what the conscience decides. As a trustee it is a legal obligation to voice dissent at the board level and not after as a criticism to your friends.

Often there is a perception that service boards are full of conflict and controversy. In reality, they mostly have good relationships. It is important to dispel the notion of disunity as it discourages people from volunteering.

Alcoholics tend not to trust the world in general. A.A. teaches trust in a higher power. When a group makes a mistake, it is an opportunity to learn the lesson.

**d. *How do we balance inclusivity and singleness of purpose?***

Groups taking a particular topic can motivate inclusivity while supporting singleness of purpose. Many groups can practice the Third Tradition by being tolerant about the different types of life experiences of newcomers who are seeking help with a drinking problem while being firm on our singleness of purpose.

By helping guide newcomers to understand what their primary addiction is we can direct people with other ad-



dictions to appropriate places of help. Groups have identified ways to communicate local experiences from A.A. members with how and where they have addressed problems other than alcohol.

In some countries, to participate in a group a newcomer needs to identify as someone with a desire to stop drinking. Though alcoholic we may also have other addictions. We have to agree and not protest our singleness of purpose.

We need to have patience when people with different addictions come into the group. Sometimes they get sober in A.A. and then leave to join or start other fellowships. Sometimes N.A. is not available so they join A.A. and later join N.A.

While we are focused on alcoholism and not drug addiction, open meetings are for everybody to learn about A.A. Countries produce targeted literature for members that are BIPOC, LGBTQ, and/or Women. Newcomers take hold of “different bits of rope” of experience and hope. Not everyone grabs the same piece of rope to get into the lifeboat.

We print a lot of different pamphlets. When one enters the room there may be no one there with a similar culture or experience. But when there is a pamphlet for such people, they feel they belong here and are seen. All alcoholics deserve a chance to participate in service.

## Workshop II

### Seventh Tradition: Self Supporting in the Digital Era

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

**a. How can we ensure that contributions are from A.A. members only?**

“We can’t!” One delegate shared that a newcomer got sober and then put a large amount in the basket.

Since some records are not kept in A.A. this can be a challenge. However, some countries use codes or group numbers to identify the origin of the funds. One office uses a third party to receive contributions, then the office confirms the source and verifies membership.

Some countries have imposed maximum amounts a member can contribute, others have not. Delegates shared various experiences on how they handle gifts from the family of deceased members, with some being accepted after thoughtful discussion. Others have been returned.

The office must account for contributions that we don’t know where they are from — not usually very much and usually able to identify where amounts come from. For a large amount — would check with a bank where it has come from. Generally, it is felt that we cannot control whether a non-member contributes, but it is unlikely that it will happen.

Some countries have very few online meetings, so they know that contributions are coming from members. On the website, include confirmation that the contribution is coming from a member. A “check”, if answered no, politely decline. In an online meeting, you will generally know who members are, and therefore their contributions can be accepted.

Be thoughtful in helping groups understand the Seventh Tradition as it relates to fundraising. The guidelines must be followed, if contributions are beyond the limits, they must be rejected.

Open meetings provide challenges because non-members may contribute to the basket or buy literature. Care should be taken to ensure at open meetings that only members can contribute. If the 7th Tradition is openly broken, then it is easy to address, otherwise it is a matter of public education of the 7th Tradition.

Do we take the contribution from the newcomer on their first meeting? What if they haven’t identified as a newcomer?

Bill W. wrote to not adhere to the letter of the law, but the spirit. There is a need to educate Class A trustees that they cannot contribute.

Each group can keep its own bank account for accountability. There must be transparency. Some countries report difficulty receiving contributions from groups, where most or all the money is kept at the group or local level. This can provide for difficult times. Some countries have made requests for additional funds for purposes such as attending the World Service Meeting.

One delegate reported most of the income comes from literature sales. During the pandemic literature sales dropped, but then contributions increased and became 55% of the income. However, despite a 4x growth in members, a relatively small percentage of members were making contributions. Low-income members were not contributing until education from the start that money is needed to run meetings and this helped to correct the lack of contributions.

**b. Is there a group conscience about how groups disperse their funds?**

Funds are generally spent after a group conscience. All groups are autonomous, so they can decide how to spend money, but they will decide how to spend within the group (rent, coffee, cookies, etc.) and how much to send down the service triangle.

It was reported in some countries that groups and service entities can rely on others for support when facing difficult times. This can extend from group to nearby group or across the service structure as well as when planning events and so forth.

In one country, 50% to 60% to Central office / Intergroup, since this is where support for the newcomer and public information happens, then lower percentages to the group, regional, or other service levels. No funds are accumulated, anything beyond prudent reserve is always handed up. Groups without a district service structure adhere to 70% of the service office, then 30% to the group.

Of note: some groups reported accumulating large sums for very ostentatious multi-day anniversary celebrations with bands, speakers, banquets, etc., which they see as a public information investment. There have been times when this money has been stolen by a trusted servant.

It was suggested to make self-support literature available. Guidance for groups is a really good idea. Explain to groups where the money goes and what it is used for, and why it needs to be sent through the structure. Some groups are prepared to contribute to local workshops and projects but don't send money through the structure. The treasurer should keep a record and report back to the group at every group conscience. Some countries have guidance on this.

Sometimes online groups contribute much more through structure than in-person groups due to low fixed costs. This is one of the advantages of online groups over in-person groups.

Several online groups are not part of the structure, so they don't contribute to GSO. Many countries are in desperate need of funds so it would be good if they did contribute to GSO.

The difference between Groups and meetings needs to be emphasized. A structured group is more likely to hold a group conscience. Too many meetings without a group conscience is a problem.

There is some experience of groups holding onto funds. Also, in some countries, groups send money to US/Can-

ada GSO. Some countries have reported a significant decrease in funds.

Often groups assume that GSOs have sufficient money and do not send money to the office. Groups and members should be reminded that any money collected in A.A. no longer belongs to the group — it belongs to A.A.

Monthly group consciences are recommended relating to finances. After expenses, the group conscience decided what percentage to keep from the group, what percentage for GSO, and what percentage for Intergroup. And that is then done for 1 year. Regular reporting by treasurer groups, intergroups, and regions.

- 60/30/10% principle seems to be common
- 60% to level below group
- 30% to level below that
- 10% keep for group

**c. Hybrid — how do online participants contribute?**

One country has an email account where a member requests contribution information and the office replies with instructions. Some groups also ask attendees to donate directly to the main office.

Other sharing on payment methods include:

- Swish — internet payment
- Bank transfer is another method
- PayPal is used often
- QR codes with link for payments are increasing in popularity
- Difficult for groups to get bank accounts so it's often an account that belongs to an individual member of the group
- Bank information/digital payment information in Zoom chat so members can make bank transfer
- Some groups tell members that if they cannot contribute online, to put extra into their home group pot

Some countries do not see it as a problem. In some countries where online groups are not part of the structure, there is a risk that they may set up their own structure.

The importance of a reason for the Seventh Tradition and ensuring that younger members were informed was emphasized.

**d. How are we discussing the need for support in online groups?**

One delegate reported that contributions decreased significantly once we went to online-only meetings.

If there is a shortfall, then extra discussion is helpful, a gentle reminder that the money is needed. A.A. members

are generous if they know why the money is needed. Education is key in all meetings.

To help ensure the safety of the account, two or three members may share a bank account.

Some Zoom meetings have no expenses as the Zoom account is paid for by GSO. Be conscientious of the accumulating funds.

Do online groups have needs that we are not aware of? It is important to let online groups know of the work that is done at GSO, etc. and why money is needed to help carry the message.

'Committee of Virtual Affairs' has been introduced in one country to look at the needs of online groups and make sure they are well supported.

Webmaster at GSO who has access to passwords for official accounts so they can help if they get lost trying to find meetings or run meetings.

One GSB agreed to create a tech committee to help facilitate setting up online groups in the pandemic. It operated for two years and grew until it became an online intergroup with 27 registered online meetings. Will be putting on an Assembly to help other groups find out how to set up online meetings. Guidance from experienced A.A. members to ensure principles are adhered to.

## Workshop III

### Online groups in the world: Here to stay

Workshop discussions were informed by the following questions:

**a. Have online meetings replaced face-to-face meetings?**

Many delegates thought the answer to this question was "No, online meetings have not replaced face-to-face meetings." However, a couple of delegates observed that for some people, online meetings have in fact replaced face-to-face meetings.

It was observed that online meetings are convenient, but nothing can replace a hug. Members agreed that online meetings will never replace the warmth of the physical meeting. Others shared that they thought members had more difficulty focusing and paying attention in online meetings.

It was acknowledged that during the Covid-19 pandemic, online meetings did replace the in-person because they were life savers. However, now in-person meetings are returning more and more. Some of the pandemic-era online groups have since stopped meeting.

There was consensus that online meetings are a great tool, especially where distance is a problem.

Also because of poverty and illiteracy in some countries, face-to-face meetings will always exist.

Not everyone who shifted to online meetings during the pandemic has returned to the face-to-face groups. Members also reported some mixed experience with hybrid meetings.

Delegates thought that there is a good balance now between online and face-to-face. A few members agreed that online meetings are useful for business meetings. Online meetings are also useful to cut costs for A.A.

Members shared that some kinds of meetings would not be easily possible face-to-face, for instance early morning meetings, late night meetings, meetings in less commonly spoken languages. Online groups are also helping to start face-to-face groups in remote locations.

It was noted that there are countries which have different languages every 100km you travel, so it is hard to find enough meetings with the same language. Online groups can help fill this gap.

It was also observed that online meetings can allow a safer place for women, older members, those who are homebound and those with accessibility challenges. Some shared that they can attend more meetings if they attend some online. Another member shared how people who are incarcerated can sometimes attend online groups.

Members reported that there seems to be a trend that young people tend to go to online meetings, the middle-aged group does a combination, while the older people do meetings online. In some countries they see more women online than at in-person meetings.

It was observed that we need to show new members why in-person meetings are so important; we need the new people in the rooms. Going to in-person meetings helps to build a strong community

One delegate suggested that we should stop differentiating between online and face-to-face meetings; they are the same.

**b. Virtual-only A.A. — are all newcomers in virtual groups getting exposed to our service structures and to A.A. literature?**

Most delegates agreed that newcomers in virtual groups are not getting exposed to our service structures or A.A. literature.

The workshop participants suggested that there could be communication from the General Service Boards to online groups, maybe providing a suggestion that each online group make a literature announcement.

At virtual meetings it is easier to provide the correct links



to A.A. literature. One member suggested that if newcomers are not immediately exposed to our literature, they will when they start to work the Steps.

Another member observed that the structure of the online group makes a difference. If the virtual meeting includes a literature service position, it is easier to share the A.A. literature with newcomers. However, not all virtual meetings present newcomers with an explanation of the A.A. structure.

Some virtual meetings have helped newcomers understand the A.A. structure by inviting them to in-person meetings. Others have tried methods like creating a slide presentation with links to the A.A. service structure websites and showing it in every meeting.

Some delegates agreed that in their experience, many of the people in online meetings primarily do service at the group level and may not even understand how they are connected to A.A. as a whole.

One delegate said that in her country online group members participate in all service structure levels. Some other delegates observed that they want to learn from each other about virtual districts, and how they are implemented in the service structure.

Some countries say that online groups send the most money to their GSOs.

One country saw the growth of online groups as an opportunity to create an online store for literature. Another delegate shared that his structure had no online literature, which makes it difficult to share with newcomers in online meetings.

Another delegate shared that in her country they send free books to newcomers in virtual groups. They have sent more than 5,000 books in the last two years.

One country created a committee to investigate how to involve online groups in the service structure. The delegate shared that they see it as our responsibility to teach online groups about our Three Legacies.

"We need to not preach, instead we need to be willing to help virtual groups if they ask for support."

#### **c. Challenges regarding service when members are from different structures**

Some members noted that it can be a challenge to know if a particular person is eligible to be of service. For example, if they are not an alcoholic (someone in an A.A. meeting who is from another Fellowship) or if they are from another country.

A delegate suggested that we may need to create guidelines to explain who is eligible for different kinds of service.

Members of an online group sometimes want the group to participate in more than one structure, and that would go against the principle of one member, one vote, one group, one vote, in a world context, but groups should decide which structure they wish to participate in.

One delegate described how smaller countries have fewer members, so when they are trying to find people to fill service positions, those nominated may not have sufficient sober time to serve in that position.

Some challenges of online groups include:

Online groups may use different preambles or different literature from different countries/groups.

Online post-meeting chat does not replace the meeting after the meeting.

People choosing sponsors from other countries encounter problems because the sponsor may not have understanding or awareness of the service possibilities in the sponsees' own structure.

Different currencies and payment methods in different countries cause people not to participate in the Seventh Tradition.

A delegate asked, given the differences between in-person and online meetings and the ways that people attend meetings from all over: "How do we keep our unity?"

#### **d. How does my online group do service work outside the group?**

One delegate shared that the challenges of getting people involved in service are the same for online groups as with in-person groups. It's just in another format.

Another delegate suggested that changes could be made to facilitate online meetings to participate in district activities and in the Fellowship as a whole. Online members should be welcomed in the same way as those from in-person meetings.

Some countries shared that they are trying to start online meetings in prisons. In other structures, the online groups host online meetings in hospitals.

One member shared that online groups can help face-to-face groups that are having difficulties with PI work, finding the entities to contact, making the contacts, helping with events.

Online groups can join face-to-face structures to financially support Hospitals and Institutions Committees, Public Information, Treatment, and Corrections Committees in their service work.

One member reminded everyone: "It's a digital age now, so we have to be flexible and welcome those online!"

# Reports of Interim and Zonal Service Meetings



## 15th Asia Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM)

### Nadi, Fiji

The *15th Asia Oceania Service Meeting (AOSM)* took place from July 6-9, 2023, at the Novotel in Nadi, Fiji, under the theme “Carrying the Message and Overcoming Challenges Within Borders.” While the full details are available in the 15th AOSM Final Report, which I am happy to share with anyone interested, this summary will provide an overview of the key points.

### Introduction

The Asia Oceania Zone covers an expansive and diverse area, representing one-third of the world’s population. This zone includes over 70 countries, stretching from the Middle East, South Asia, Eastern Asia, and the Pacific Islands, including Australia and New Zealand.

The AOSM has always aligned its efforts with this year’s theme—“Carrying the Message and Overcoming Cultural Challenges Within Borders.” A key focus has been

expanding involvement across more countries. In many of our member countries, such as Thailand, China, Indonesia, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, the Philippines, and MERCAA, the Fellowship primarily consists of the expatriate population.

We’ve found that it’s difficult for our numbers to grow significantly in these regions without reaching out to the local population, but this has been challenging due to the transient nature of expatriate communities. On the other hand, in countries like India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, and Iran, where the message has reached the local population, fellowships have seen substantial growth. This highlights the incredible diversity within the AOSM region in terms of the countries and the languages we serve.

### Participants and summary

Participants included 14 delegates, chairs, secretaries, and treasurers from 9 countries, along with two guests from the General Service Office (GSO) in New York: General Manager Bob W. and International Desk Coordinator Racy J. Of the 14 delegates, 7, or 50%, were women. Additionally, one interpreter from Japan and about ten observers from several countries participated. The host committee in Fiji, consisting of four members, warmly welcomed us and treated us to a traditional Lovo dinner on the final evening, featuring local dishes, followed by a beautiful Fijian dance performance.

Compared to the previous AOSM, held online due to the pandemic and saw participation from 30 delegates representing 18 countries, this year’s meeting experienced a significant decrease, with 14 delegates from 9 countries. Some fellowships could attend thanks to financial support from sponsoring countries or the AOSM fund. However, it appears that some countries with fewer groups or members opted not to participate and did not seek financial support. While this year’s meeting in Fiji was held exclusively in person, the Chair’s Meeting is currently exploring the possibility of adopting a hybrid format for next year’s AOSM.

Mongolia could not participate this year due to a scheduling conflict with their 25th Anniversary Convention. Since its inception in 1998, Mongolia’s AA has grown rapidly, with an estimated 4,000 members. The initial sponsorship from Japan, support from GSO New York, the publication of literature in Mongolian, the establishment of a General Service structure by Mongolian members, the opening of their GSO, and hosting the 2017 AOSM in Ulaanbaatar have all contributed to this growth. Additionally, Mongolia participated in the World Service Meeting (WSM) for the first time in 2022, making theirs a success story that demonstrates the effectiveness of both the WSM and AOSM in fulfilling their primary purposes.

The Middle East Region, comprising 10 Arabic-speaking countries under MERCAA, also grew, with a delegate from Egypt attending this year. We look forward to further developments in this region.



### About Fiji

At the time of the AOSM, AA Fiji Islands had 14 dedicated members. Despite being a small fellowship, they have made significant strides, establishing a foundation for their service structure by creating a GSO and organizing various service roles in 2018. Thanks to the ongoing support from Australia and New Zealand, and after participating in the last two AOSMs, Fiji proudly stepped up as this year’s host. Back in 2016, when Australia held its National Convention in Fiji, around 400 members from various countries gathered, and an AA Information Day held during the convention helped to boost AA’s visibility in Fiji.

I’m also pleased to share that on Monday, July 10, after the AOSM concluded, AA Fiji hosted a Professionals Workshop at the same hotel. This event was made possible with the cooperation of the AOSM Steering Committee and AOSM Delegates and visitors. Fifteen professionals joined us, including representatives from the Ministry of Health, doctors, pharmacists, legal professionals, corrections officers, clergy, the Salvation Army, and women’s rights activists. Bob W., General Manager of GSO New York, shared insights into AA’s history, others shared AA Fiji’s history, and we held a sample meeting, followed by roundtable discussions and a Q&A session over lunch. The warm and welcoming atmosphere made it a valuable and memorable experience for all of us AOSM delegates.

### Participants of the 15th AOSM

<b>Delegates</b>	Australia (2), Fiji Islands (2), Hong Kong (2), Japan (2), MERCAA (1), New Zealand (2), Russia (1), Singapore (1), South Korea (1)
<b>Officers</b>	Chair: Bertie S. (MERCAA) Secretary: Simon M. (NZ) Treasurer: Yasuhiko M. (Japan)
<b>Special Guests</b>	US/Canada G.S.O. International Desk: Racy J. US/Canada G.S.O. General Manager: Bob W.

### Language and Translation

The AOSM is conducted in English. Japan was the only country that required interpretation, and a translation booth was provided. The WSM delegates from Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore were all native English speakers residing as expatriates, so no additional translation was needed for them.

### Finances (Treasurer’s report)

Opening Bank Balance:	US\$2,418
Total Income:	US\$27,204
Total Expenses:	US\$21,364
Account Balance:	US\$8,258

Traditionally, the AOSM account has been managed by opening a new individual bank account in the country of the treasurer every four years when the treasurer rotates. However, using personal accounts poses risks, such as the account being frozen in the event of the treasurer’s death, and there are also inconveniences, such as limitations on online transfers. During this AOSM, it was recommended that we explore the possibility of establishing an AOSM corporate account in a country within the zone that has a GSO in order to mitigate these risks and improve efficiency. However, no GSO has yet shown a willingness to take on hosting the bank accounts.

Some of the key topics discussed:

### Keynote address

“Carrying the Message and Overcoming Challenges Within Borders”, Phylis G. (Past Delegate — Fiji Islands).

Sober for 49 years and having moved from the United States to Fiji four years ago, Phylis, a former AOSM delegate, has become a sponsor to several local Fijian women. She shared her deeply insightful and heartfelt experiences of carrying the message as a white American woman in Fiji, which helped set the tone for this AOSM. Here are some of the key points that left a strong impression:

- Western countries’ language, attire, authority, and culture do not always effectively convey the message in different locations.
- Issues related to stigma (shame, dishonor), cultural and religious values, and a lack of awareness of local community customs.
- The importance of language and communication—emphasizing the need to convey the message within the language and culture of the local area.
- However, despite differences in language and culture, there is an aspect of our message that transcends everything—this is encapsulated in the phrase, “The spiritual life is not a theory” (BB p. 83).



## International Literature Fund, Translations, & Licenses

Bob W., General Manager of GSO New York, shared valuable information on the new processes and systems introduced since 2022 to address long-standing issues related to the backlog of large-scale publishing and translation license requests. He also provided updates on eBook licensing and the International Literature Fund (ILF).

- In April 2023, the Translations Licensing Connection (TL Connection) was launched, significantly improving processing speed and efficiency. Currently, GSOs from 42 countries have access to TL Connection, and it is recommended that all GSOs register.
- Guidelines and processes for translation licenses.
- Experience in licensing and creating eBooks and audiobooks.
- Posting and distributing eBooks on websites.
- A status report on the International Publishing Fund as of March 2023.

## Presentations/Workshops

There was a rich exchange of experience, strength, and hope. Please refer to the agenda for details on each topic. The workshops were as follows:

- Understanding the Seventh Tradition—Overcoming Challenges to Supporting our Services
- Using Traditions to Find Solutions to Adversity and Maintain Unity

- Service Starts at the Group—Setting up structures. How having a structure can be helpful.

We follow the example set by the WSM and have four standing committees. The Chair's Meeting and each subcommittee continue to work regularly during the intervals between AOSM meetings. Below are some of the key recommendations from these committees.

## Policy, Admissions, and Finance (PAF)

- Develop a service manual to be used during AOSM orientation.
- Set the reserve fund at \$12,000.

## Site Selection and Agenda Committee (SSA)

- Singapore was selected from three candidate countries to host the 16<sup>th</sup> AOSM on October 15-18, 2025.
- Theme: "One Message — Many Languages — One Fellowship"

## Website, Literature, Publishing (WLP)

- Discuss with GSO New York whether A.A. publications from countries without a GSO can be posted on the website.
- Each committee elects its next chair. Unfortunately, the Russian delegate who was elected as the WLP Committee passed away suddenly this June at a very young age. She was supposed to attend this WSM as Russia's 2nd-term delegate. We were deeply shocked by this loss, and we extend our heartfelt condolences.



## Election for New Officers

- **Chair:** Doug G. (Japan) — Two years. Japan's first time to serve as Chair of the AOSM.
- **Treasurer:** Steve K. (New Zealand) — Four years.
- **Secretariat:** Simon M. (Hong Kong) — Reaffirmed for second two-year term (total four years)
- **Report to WSM:** Masaya O. (Japan) — selected to present the 15th AOSM report to 28th WSM, and then report back on this WSM to the 16th AOSM

## Conclusion

I am an alcoholic who couldn't stop or control my drinking. During my stay in New York for this WSM, I will be celebrating my 16th sobriety anniversary — a milestone I never thought possible. The memory of being together at the end of the 27th WSM, reciting the Serenity Prayer in 29 languages, is something I will carry with me forever. That profound sense of connection and unity is something I've felt at the AOSM as well.

I am deeply grateful to those who came before us, who tirelessly carried the message. It's because of them that a Japanese group with local members was born, and that AA literature was translated into Japanese, allowing me to embrace AA's principles in my own language, even when I couldn't speak English. Today, witnessing how this miracle of recovery is unfolding across the world fills me with a profound sense of responsibility — to carry this gift forward to others in different countries.

I am eager to bring back everything I've seen, heard, and felt at this WSM to next year's AOSM and to our Fellowship in Japan. I am truly honored and deeply grateful for this precious opportunity.

*Masaya O. — Japan*

## 22<sup>nd</sup> European Service Meeting (ESM)

On October 20–22, 2023, the 22nd European A.A. Service Meeting (ESM) was held in York, UK, with the theme "A.A. in a Changing World."

The ESM takes place once every two years and its primary purpose is the same as that of all A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever he may be, whatever the language he speaks.

The meeting was chaired and opened by Tobias D. from Denmark. At the meeting, delegates participated from 23 European countries — Austria, Flemish Speaking Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, French speaking Europe (France, Belgium, Switzerland), Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden. Unfortunately, represen-

tatives of Belarus, Hungary, Iceland, Russia and Ukraine could not attend the meeting due to bad weather and visa problems. Delegates from all countries had prepared reports on A.A.'s situation in their country. The reports, taken together, represented a diverse picture of the development of the Fellowship and its service structures throughout Europe.

Three committees worked within the meeting: the Service Committee, the Recovery Committee, and the Unity Committee, representing all three of A.A.'s historical legacies symbolically depicted in the A.A. triangle. Each committee discussed experiences of countries on different topics, elected a committee chair for the next meeting and proposed a theme for the 23rd European Service Meeting.

Various topics were considered in the committees, such as: "How does your country liaise with the media?", "How does your country involve nonalcoholics in service?", "How does your country help newcomers learn about the Steps?", "What is your country's experience of the role of social services in assisting alcoholics on the road to recovery?", "How do the members in our different countries view the idea of a gender-neutral language in our literature?", "How can relationships between the different fellowships (e.g. Al-Anon, ACA, NA, etc.) support unity within the community?"

Within the framework of the meeting, three workshops were also held, the participants of which shared experience from their countries on the following topics: "How do you take your group's inventory?", "Love and tolerance is our code" and "Keep the history alive." It was decided that the topics of the 23rd ESM workshops will be "How to lead by example," "Opinion of the minority," "Service — Keeping the Fellowship alive."

In the committees and workshops delegates shared experience, strength, and hope from their country's structures. In summary, answers to seemingly complex questions can still be successfully found in A.A. Traditions, Concepts, and literature. The most important thing is to remember the primary purpose of A.A. and to keep it simple.

Each committee and workshop chair reported back on the discussions held within their meetings to the full meeting. All the committee reports were approved unanimously.

Second day's evening established a little time for relaxation with the Sharing meeting on the theme: "We may refuse none who wish to recover: Inclusivity in A.A." Two question and answer sessions were also held over the weekend with many interesting discussions.

Representatives of the GSO USA/Canada, Irene D. and Bob W., also participated in the ESM. Irene D. was the keynote speaker and Bob W. gave a presentation on A.A. World Services translation, licensing and publishing issues, there was also

given a financial report on the International Literature Fund and the new World Service Meeting (WSM) account. Two key highlights were: The new reorganized department for licensing can work more effectively with a new portal called Translation Licensing Connection. And the international licensing and translations backlog has been completed.

Ranjan B., General Secretary of The European Information Centre, gave a short talk on the ESM Fund and highlighted a large surplus in the account resulting from the closure of a historic deposit account. After being properly proposed and seconded, it was agreed that the surplus of £28,279.23 be transferred into the WSM Fund.

It was voted that the theme of the 23rd ESM will be "Unifying and Safeguarding our Fellowship." Other topics suggested were "36 Spiritual Principles" and "Service in the Modern Age." Moira S. (Ireland) was elected a chair of the 23rd ESM.

To bring the 22nd ESM to a close all delegates were invited to take turns to share the Serenity Prayer in their native language, ending with all delegates speaking the Serenity Prayer in English as one.

Alcoholics Anonymous keeps moving forward in a changing world. While our literature has preserved the integrity of the A.A. message, sweeping changes in society as a whole are reflected in new customs and practices within the Fellowship. We may be separated by country, language or culture yet A.A.'s speak the language of the heart in all its power and simplicity. To quote the forward of the 3rd edition of our Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous: "In spite of the great increase in the size and the span of this Fellowship, at its core it remains simple. Each day, somewhere in the world, recovery begins when an alcoholic talks with another alcoholic: sharing experience, strength and hope."

Jony F-T. — Netherlands and Maija T. — Latvia

## 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Americas (REDELA)

The 23<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Americas took place on October 8–13, 2023 in Rionegro, Colombia. The theme was: "Unity and Diversity in A.A."

The following is a list of delegates who participated at the last REDELA:

<b>Argentina:</b> Roberto R.	<b>US/Canada:</b> Marita R. and Robert L.
<b>Bolivia:</b> Silvia Ch. and Jesús O.	<b>El Salvador:</b> Ítalo B.
<b>Brazil:</b> Eduardo M. and Ana Elisa L.	<b>Honduras:</b> Ignacio U.
<b>Costa Rica:</b> Cristina F. and Rodrigo P.	<b>Mexico:</b> Miguel B. and José Alfredo V.
<b>Chile:</b> William L.	<b>Paraguay:</b> Vicente L.
<b>Colombia:</b> Ramón Elí G. y Alfonso O.	<b>Peru:</b> Melchor R.
<b>Ecuador:</b> Jaime Patricio B.	<b>Uruguay:</b> Daniel G.
<b>Guatemala:</b> Edmundo P.	<b>Venezuela:</b> Sergio V.

Other REDELA attendees were Bob W., general manager of GSO, US/Canada; Everardo Domínguez, chair of the GSB of *Central Mexicana de Alcohólicos Anónimos*; Irene D., from the international desk, GSO US/Canada; Plinio B., manager, GSO Colombia, and Leticia Q., secretary, international desk, *Central Mexicana*. Hernán M. and Luciana C. were the interpreters.

### Workshops:

**Workshop 1:** "Living the Twelve Steps strengthens our structure"; presenter: Ramón Elí G., Colombia.

**Workshop 2:** "Alcoholics Anonymous and social media"; presenter: Miguel B., Mexico.

**Workshop 3:** "A good leader does not govern; he/she serves with love, tolerance and responsibility"; presenter: José Alfredo V., Mexico.

**Workshop 4:** "Estructura de los grupos o reuniones virtuales"; presenter: Roberto R., Argentina.

**Workshop 5:** "Is there true unity in our structures?"; presenter: Ana Elisa L., Brazil.

**Workshop 6:** "Virtual groups: how to be inclusive in the structure"; presenter: Robert L., US/Canada.

### Presentations

"*Unity and diversity in A.A.*"; presenter: Ignacio U.; Honduras.

"*The importance of Class A trustees*"; presenter: Dr. Everardo Domínguez, chair of GSB, *Central Mexicana*.

"*International Literature Fund*"; presenter: Marita R.; US/Canada. "*Our literature and AA*"; presenter: Eduardo M.; Brazil.

"*Why is REDELA necessary?*" William L.; Chile.

"*27th World Service Meeting and North-South Connections Forum*"; presenter: Robert L., US/Canada.

"*How do we improve internal communications in A.A.?*" Sergio V.; Venezuela.

"*My experience as a Class A trustee and a vision for the future of A.A. in Latin America*"; presenter: Dr. Everardo Domínguez, chair of GSB, *Central Mexicana*.

"*Our responsibility as an A.A. structure*"; presenter: Marita R.; US/Canada.

"*Are we training our Class A trustees?*"; presenter: Bob W., general manager, GSO, US/Canada.

"*Does formal sponsorship between structures exist?*"; presenter: Miguel B.; Mexico.

### Agenda committee recommendations:

1. That the theme of the 24th REDELA be: "REDELA, our great responsibility."



2. That each structure submit at least one proposed theme to the 24th REDELA.
3. That each structure submit at least two presentation topics.
4. That the deadline for structures to submit their proposed theme and their two topics be September 30, 2024, at the latest.
5. That the workshop topics for the 24th REDELA be as follows:
  - *Sponsorship at virtual meetings.*
  - *Sponsorship of A.A. friends. Where should we improve? The A.A. Service Manual, a Third Legacy tool.*
  - *Communication from GSO to GSO.*
  - *Are we fulfilling Bill W.'s vision about carrying the message to the most remote corners of the world?*
  - *Are we preparing our future Class B trustees, beginning at the group?*
6. That the 24th REDELA presentations be taken from the book *Our Great Responsibility*:
  - *Group conscience and the trusted servant.*
  - *Alcoholics Anonymous in a time of change.*
  - *Gratitude, trust and joy.*
  - *Where did the ones who did not stay go?*
  - *Staying united.*

Lastly, the election of the chair and alternate chair of the Agenda committee was held, with the following results: José Alfredo V. from Mexico was elected chair and Rodrigo P. from Costa Rica was elected alternate chair.

**Policy/Admissions/Finance Committee recommendations:**

1. That the REDELA registration fee for the 24th REDELA be set at 1,000 USD.
2. That the REDELA Fund remain under the custody of a single country, and that country should be Mexico.
3. That Bolivia be the host of the 24th REDELA with El Salvador as the alternate host.
4. Develop clear guidelines and procedures for REDELA, including a glossary.

Lastly, William L., from Chile, was elected as chair and Cristina F., from Costa Rica, as alternate chair.

**Literature and Publications Committee:**

This committee issued no recommendations. An explanation was provided about the Licenses and Translations Department at GSO, US/Canada, about digital literature licenses underway and the difficulties that some countries have in processing the licenses. Edmundo P. from Guatemala was elected chair and Ramón Elí G. from Colombia, was elected alternate chair.

**WWO Committee:**

This committee issued no recommendations. There were discussions about the way WWO is handled in the United States and Canada, Mexico, Brazil and other countries, and some suggestions were made based on this information. Vicente L. from Paraguay was elected chair and Alfonso O. from Colombia was elected alternate chair.

*Alfonso O. — Colombia*

**11th Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting (SSASM)**

Africa has 54 countries, of which 46 lie within the Sub-Saharan region — this refers to the part of the African continent situated geographically south of the Sahara. The SSASM structure comprises of the mainly English-speaking countries, of which 12 are a part of this structure. Namely; Botswana, Eswatini (Swaziland), Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Meetings of the SSASM are held mid-year, biennially on the alternate year to the World Service Meeting. For ease of access and resources, meetings are held in Johannesburg, South Africa. We are grateful to the General Service Boards of U.S./Canada and Great Britain for their financial contribution in sponsoring these meetings as well as their support at the SSASM.



*Countries represented in the SSASM: When anyone, anywhere reaches out for help...*

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## SSASM Statement of Purpose

The primary purpose of the Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting is the same as that of all A.A. activity — to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers, whoever he or she may be, whatever language he or she speaks. The SSASM seeks ways and means of accomplishing this goal by serving as a forum for sharing the experience, strength and hope of delegates who come together from all parts of the Sub-Saharan Africa region.

## 2023 Meeting — Report Back

The question as to why other English speaking African countries such as Liberia, Nigeria, etc. do not form part of SSASM, was raised. Contact has been made with Nigeria (who has established a group in Lagos), as well as Liberia and Ethiopia. These groups request to join SSASM 2023 came in too late but it was suggested that they will attend SSASM 2025. After deliberating on this matter, the meeting unanimously agreed that Nigeria, Liberia and Ethiopia be invited to join SSASM 2025.

Other matters that have been discussed in this SSASM were:

1. How do we get more young people into AA?
2. How do and emerging technologies to carry the message?
3. The need to move towards establishing national structures as a pathway to autonomy.
4. How to tap into the experience of other countries who have done this before through sponsorship.
5. The need to apply the Concepts and Traditions.
6. The need to translate literature into more languages by tapping into the existing platform — “TL Connection.”

*The closing remarks of our new Chairperson Isha M., the delegate from Uganda:* The theme for the next SSASM is “Self-Support, Coming of Age.” It is my hope that over the next couple of months, this theme can be realized more, while we lean on the collective experience of our worldwide Fellowship.

## SA Delegate’s Report

Prior to the 2023 Meeting the General Service conference of South Africa decided it was time to withdraw our involvement with the organization and administration of SSAM, it is time we believed that the structure becomes self-supporting and a gradual handover to the structure was suggested.

After the 2023 meeting the feedback and enthusiasm from the meeting was such that the SA delegates asked conference to extend our administration commitment for at least another term (2 years), until the next meeting — this was agreed by Conference 2023.

Since that report the feedback has been less than enthusiastic with few to none of the targets being met or the agreed changes made.

However, a very positive consequences of our last meeting was the delegate from Kenya initiating the First Voices of A.A. Women in Africa (VAAWAC) Online Convention (see the report below). It is the writer’s opinion that we have been going about this from the wrong direction, in A.A. throughout the world it has always been the meetings that create the structure, the Traditional bottom-up approach. What we are trying to do in this instance is have the structure create the meetings, top — down approach.

The initiative VAAWAC is a striking example of this, here is a meeting of A.A.s carrying the message more powerfully and more directly than any administrative service meeting could achieve.

I strongly recommend that we reconsider our approach in this region — let us help create the group’s first and then allow the groups to create the structure.

While the sponsorship of SSA by the UK and the US/Canada is greatly appreciated, we might achieve a “better return on investment” in supporting and sponsoring initiatives like this.

## The First Voices of A.A. Women in Africa (VAAWAC) Online Convention 24th August 2024

### About the VAAWAC

This convention was a milestone — a space where women from across Africa and around the world came together to share their stories, strengthen our fellowship, and inspire one another. The idea for this convention was born out of a deep recognition of the unique challenges that women in Africa face in their journey toward recovery by Esther O. of Kenya who put together the planning committee to plan the convention. Esther is the current Chair of A.A. Kenya Intergroup and a delegate to the SSASM representing A.A. Kenya.

The convention broke new ground, not just by convening virtually, but by amplifying the voices of women who have walked the path of Alcoholics Anonymous in Africa.

We had 12 speakers from different corners of our continent Africa, each brought a story that was powerful as it was unique. Through their courage to share, we found strength; through their wisdom, we found guidance; and through their resilience, we found hope.

(12 Speakers — 41 countries — 333 Registrations)

Frank G. — South Africa

## SUMMARY: 28<sup>TH</sup> WORLD SERVICE MEETING EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE

*Sixty delegates attending the 28th World Service Meeting completed evaluation questionnaires to help with planning for the 29th World Service Meeting. A summary of their responses follows:*

### **Q. What presentations did you find most valuable?**

**A.** The presentations that delegates found extremely valuable were: "International Literature Fund / World Service Meeting Fund" (45); "Licensing and Translation" (41); "Are Our Groups and GSOs Doing Everything We Can to Reach the Still-Suffering Alcoholic in Our Communities?" (33); "Paths to Embrace the New" (35); "Home Group: Action and Service Derived from Gratitude" (31); "To Serve — A Debt of Gratitude" (46); "Diversity in A.A.: Our Heritage of Inclusion" (44); "Country-to-Country Sponsorship" (40). Respondents also noted that the Country Highlights (36) and Zonal Meeting Reports (34) were extremely important, as well as the General Sharing Sessions (41).

### **Q. What workshops did you find most valuable?**

**A.** The workshops that delegates marked as "extremely valuable" were: "Are Our Groups Really Practicing the Traditions?" (38); "Seventh Tradition: Self Supporting in the Digital Era" (38); "Online groups in the world: Here to stay" (37).

### **Q. Do you think we should continue Country Highlights and/or Country Reports?**

**A.** "Yes" was the overwhelming response (58), while there was less certainty about continuing with the verbal presentation of Country Highlights, with 46 "Yes" and 14 "No" responses.

### **Q. Do you think there is enough delegate participation?**

**A.** The majority of respondents felt there was enough (41), while others (19) responded that there was not enough.

### **Q. Was the communication and information you received prior to the meeting adequate?**

**A.** Most felt the communication was adequate (53), with 7 indicating it was not.

### **Other topics**

**OnBoard** — In general respondents found the use of the OnBoard software to be extremely useful or helpful (37) with a few (5) noting that they did not. Said one respondent, "Once we held the training sessions, I found it quite easy to navigate and a very valuable resource," while others suggested the 2-step verification was cumbersome and difficult to work with. This comment seemed to sum up many of the responses: "At first, I was re-

served about OnBoard. But now that I experienced the WSM with OnBoard I love it."

Regarding the pre-training for OnBoard, it was noted to be extremely useful/helpful (37), with others feeling it was useful/helpful (19), and a few responding that it was not useful/helpful (4). Regarding the use of WhatsApp, a majority found it to be extremely useful/helpful (40) or useful/helpful (17), with 3 responding "not useful/helpful." Some comments: "Onboard gives much more options but for a technical geek like me WhatsApp is easier to handle"; "I like all three ways of communicating





— OnBoard, email, WhatsApp. They each have their specificities"; "It was the only digital tool I had at the time of the WSM and it was a great help to be able to integrate and interact in the event."

**Tech Assistance** — With expanding use of technology at WSM, most delegates felt the technical assistance was either extremely useful/helpful (48) or useful/helpful (12), with no "not useful/helpful" responses.

### **Q. How can the World Service Meeting be improved?**

**A.** There were many comments/suggestions, such as:

"By involving the countries that couldn't participate and seeing how we can help them be a part of WSM."

"Integrating the assistance of more structures, for example African and Caribbean countries."

"I truly enjoyed the experience but feel the Red Ball meeting is not enough time to hear from other countries, so perhaps have two or three of these over the WSM."

"More of presentations and less country highlights verbal."

"Country-to-country sponsorship was missed opportunity — much content was on individuals sponsoring one another, not structures."

"It would be very important to encourage each of the countries attending the WSM to send their two international delegates and give them all the facilities to live and not miss this wonderful experience."

"Conduct follow-up meetings virtually, in order to measure the impact on the various structures."

"I know it's very expensive, but as it's held every two years, the meeting could be longer. Accommodation can be cheaper."

"The establishment of an online structure or group to initiate interaction before the WSM and to continue the interaction after."

"More group excursions would be great! Especially in Portugal!!"

"I understand that the budget is extremely high for organizing a WSM, and it was very useful to meet each other, but for the countries that don't have the budget to participate, we need to find a solution. Hybrid will work; we have to try it and discuss the results. I believe that a workshop must be organized before the next WSM to take the opinion of all the countries that participated in the 28th WSM."

"Extend the time to include more content."

"The concept is fine; it always takes time to get to know each other, therefore all Workshops and gatherings together are so important."

"One delegate asked about the possibility of participating via the internet as he could not sit in an aircraft because of his bad back."

"The possibility to physically meet other delegates and A.A. members from other countries is the absolute key! I do understand that it is difficult to be able to almost participate and then not, but still... I'm sure that the question of being able to follow a WSM from the internet will arise anew, but then it is not me to decide anymore. I was extremely happy with this physical meeting!"

### **Additional Comments or suggestions:**

"The 'W' in WSM stands for World. In order to be able to call it a World Service Meeting, we need to reach every region in the world with different languages. Delegates from every different language in the world need to participate in WSM. WSM needs to organize the work of arranging interpreters for every language in the world. I know that this is not easy at the moment. We need to be able to create a special large budget. If we think about it now and imagine it, our superior power will help us in this matter."

"That the reports of the countries be given in full, that the election of the headquarters be done in plenary by secret ballot and by the method of the Third Legacy, that the daily coordination be done by the delegates and not by the hosts, since this year only the president and the manager coordinated the food, that everyone be in the same hotel, because although there was \$\$\$, it was complicated."

"The whole event was extremely spiritually uplifting for me, and I will share it with my structure."

"I feel gratitude for the opportunity to participate and take all that knowledge of what happened in A.A. worldwide. I feel the meaning of fellowship deep in my heart and I will try to transmit that feeling in my country."

"Thank you for giving me a beautiful experience. It has been a privilege to be a part of this beautiful event."

"Organization and Logistics. Noble sense of service. Visibly well-prepared world representatives. Unity above any personalities. Well-structured world unity. Excellent topics covered. Challenges we face. Respect for principles. Keep it simple, with respect and dignity. Bill W.'s dream."

"My eternal gratitude. Improving for Portugal."

"The best experience in my A.A. life."

"Well done!!!"

## Delegates to the 28th World Service Meeting

49 Countries | 74 Delegates

<b>Argentina</b> Roberto R. (2nd Term)	<b>Greece</b> Stamatina C. (2nd Term)	<b>Paraguay</b> Pedro A. (1st Term)
<b>Australia</b> Andy P. (1st Term) Brian F. (2nd Term)	<b>Guatemala</b> Rovin M. (1st Term)	<b>Peru</b> Paulo G. (1st Term)
<b>Belgium (Dutch-Speaking)</b> Pascal D. (1st Term) Jacqueline D. (2nd Term)	<b>Honduras</b> José J. (1st Term)	<b>Poland</b> Ada Z. (1st Term) Izabela A. (2nd Term)
<b>Bolivia</b> Angel R. (1st Term)	<b>Hong Kong</b> Sheli B. (1st Term)	<b>Portugal</b> Miguel L. (1st Term) Leonor P. (2nd Term)
<b>Brazil</b> Fernando U. (1st Term) Eduardo M. (2nd Term)	<b>Hungary</b> Tamás T. (1st Term) Sándor A. (2nd Term)	<b>Romania</b> Elena L. (1st Term)
<b>Bulgaria</b> Radoslava S. (1st Term) Nevena B. (2nd Term)	<b>Iceland</b> Páll S. (1st Term) Gunnar A. (2nd Term)	<b>Russia</b> Andrei M. (1st Term)
<b>Central America/ Southern Zone</b> Aris Ramos (1st Term)	<b>India</b> Eulogio G. (1st Term) Nagadurga A. (2nd Term)	<b>Slovakia</b> Marian B. (1st Term)
<b>Chile</b> Juan O. (2nd Term)	<b>Iran</b> Alireza G. (1st Term)	<b>Slovenia</b> Carmen P. (1st Term)
<b>Colombia</b> Ramón G. (1st Term) Alfonso O. (2nd Term)	<b>Ireland</b> John T. (1st Term) Tom D. (2nd Term)	<b>South Africa</b> Salesh L. (1st Term) Frank G. (2nd Term)
<b>Czech Republic</b> Karolina M. (1st Term) René F. (2nd Term)	<b>Italy</b> Jody M. (1st Term)	<b>Spain</b> Adolfo V. (1st Term) Agustín S. (2nd Term)
<b>Denmark</b> Flemming S. (1st Term) Asger J. (2nd Term)	<b>Japan</b> Katsunori I. (1st Term) Masaya O. (2nd Term)	<b>Sweden</b> Thomas A. (1st Term) Lars D. (2nd Term)
<b>Dominican Republic</b> Ysidro C. (1st Term)	<b>Latvia</b> Maija T. (1st Term) Andris K. (2nd Term)	<b>Turkey</b> Nedim G. (1st Term)
<b>Ecuador</b> Maria Y. (1st Term)	<b>Lithuania</b> Balys K. (1st Term) Elena S. (2nd Term)	<b>U.S./Canada</b> Robert L. (1st Term) Marita R. (2nd Term)
<b>Finland</b> Laura K. (2nd Term)	<b>Mexico</b> José V. (1st Term) Miguel B. (2nd Term)	<b>Uruguay</b> Daniel B. (2nd Term)
<b>French-Speaking Europe</b> Regis C. (1st Term) Marie-Paule M. (2nd Term)	<b>Netherlands</b> Jony F.-T. (1st Term)	<b>Venezuela</b> Santiago P. (2nd Term)
<b>German-Speaking Europe</b> Guido H. (2nd Term) Karin F. (2nd Term)	<b>New Zealand</b> Steve H. (1st Term) Christine H. (2nd Term)	
<b>Great Britain</b> Holly A. (1st Term) Justin T. (2nd Term)	<b>Norway</b> Julienne L.L. (2nd Term)	

## GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers

### Argentina

*Oficina De Servicios Generales de Argentina*  
Aranguren 728 CABA, Buenos Aires  
Service Office: (54)9-11-5263-8621  
Email: osg@aa.org.ar  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.ar>

### Australia

*General Service Office of AA Australia*  
Unit 1 / 1 Garnet Street, Rockdale  
Service Office: (61) 2-9599-8866  
Email: gso@aa.org.au  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.au>

### Austria

*Anonyme Alkoholiker*  
Barthgasse 5, Vienna  
Service Office: (431) 799-5599  
Email: info@anonyme-alkoholiker.at  
Website: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.at>

### Belarus

*Belarusian Alcoholics Anonymous Service Centre*  
Dolgobrodskaya 10/2-2H, Minsk  
Service Office: (375)17-3958350  
Email: office@abelarus.org  
Website: <http://www.aabelarus.org>

### Belgium

*Algemeen Dienstbureau A.A. (Dutch Speaking)*  
Grote Steenweg 149, Antwerp  
Service Office: (323) 239-1415  
Email: info@aavlaanderen.org  
Website: <http://www.aavlaanderen.org>

### Belgium

*CSGAA ( French Speaking Belgium)*  
Rue des Pieds d'Alouette 42 B, 5100 Naninne Belgium  
Service Office: (322) 511-4030  
Email: bsg@alcooliquestanonymes.be  
Website: <http://www.alcooliquestanonymes.be>

### Belize

*Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office of Belize*  
114 Cemetery Road, Belize City  
Service Office: (501) 600-3796  
Email: aabelize.org@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aabelize.org>

### Bolivia (Plurinational State of)

*Oficina De Servicios Generales de A.A. de Bolivia*  
Barrio Gualberto Villaruel  
Calle Las Petas, Edificio Olga, Santa Cruz de la Sierra  
Service Office: (591)3-3329720  
Email: osgbolivia@yahoo.com  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicosanonimosbolivia.org>

### Brazil

*Junta de Serviços Gerais de Alcoólicos Anônimos do Brasil — JUNAAB*  
Rua Padre Antonio de Sa, 116-Tatuape, Sao Paulo SP  
Service Office: (55)11-3229-3611  
Email: aa@aa.org.br  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.br>

### Bulgaria

*Central Service Office Of A.A. Bulgaria*  
71 Zahari Knyajeski Str., office 14, Stara Zagora  
Service Office: (359) 887-399-887  
Email: aabulgaria@abv.bg  
Website: <http://www.aa-bg.info>

### Chile

*Oficina De Servicios Generales*  
Casilla 180  
Centro De Casillas, Santiago  
Service Office: (56)22-7771010  
Email: gerencia@alcoholicosanonimos.cl  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicosanonimoschile.cl>

### Colombia

*Oficina De Servicio General*  
Calle 50 #46-36  
Oficina 310, Edif. Furatena, Medellin  
Service Office: (574) 251-7887  
Email: aacolombia@aacolombia.org  
Website: <http://www.aacolombia.org>

### Costa Rica

*Oficina de Servicios Generales de Alcohólicos Anónimos para Costa Rica*  
Ave 3 calle 28 Edif. María Luisa Segundo piso, ó del Pizza Hut Paseo Colón 200 metros norte, San José  
Service Office: (506) 2222-52-24  
Email: aaosgcr@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aacostarica.org>

### Cuba

*Oficina De Servicios Generales*  
Calle19 #954  
Entre 8 y 10 Vedado/Plaza de la Revolucion, Habana  
Service Office: +011(53)7838-2553  
Email: osgcuba1935@gmail.com

### Czechia

*Sdru\_ení pro slu\_by Anonymní alkoholikum v CR*  
Kancelar Anonymních alkoholiku  
Ambrozova 729, Hradec Kralove  
Service Office: (420)773-138-303  
Email: international@aamail.cz  
Website: <http://www.anonymnialkoholici.cz>

### Denmark

*A. A. Hovedservicekontor*  
Thorsgade 59, 3.tv., 2200, Kobenhavn N  
Service Office: (457) 010-1224  
Email: aa@anonyme-alkoholikere.dk  
Website: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholikere.dk>

### Dominican Republic

*Oficina De Servicios Generales*  
Calle Beller 71, esquina Sully Bonelly (altos), Santiago  
Service Office: (809) 275-5842  
Email: osgparard@gmail.com

### Ecuador

*Corporación Alcoólicos Anónimos Ecuador*  
Lorenzo de Garaycoa 821 Y Av. Nueve De Octubre, 2do. Piso, Of. 208, Guayaquil  
Service Office: +593 98 423 4170  
Email: osg@alcoholicosanonimos.org.ec  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.ec>

### El Salvador

*Oficina De Servicios Generales*  
Apartado Postal No. 132  
16 Av Norte, 25 Calle Oriente Casa No. 10 Colonia Magaña, Barrio San Miguelito, San Salvador  
Service Office: (503)2225-9526  
Email: osgdeelsalvador@hotmail.com

### Estonia

*Eesti AA Teenindusburoo*  
(General Service Office A.A. of Estonia)  
Lastekodu 6 A, Tallinn  
Service Office: (372) 529-9955  
Email: teenindus@aaestonia.com  
Website: <http://www.aaestonia.com>

### Fiji

*General Service Office A.A. Fiji*  
77 Grantham Road, Suva  
Service Office: (679) 939-2190  
Email: aafijiinfo@gmail.com  
Website: <https://aafiji.org/>

### Finland

*Suomen A.A. Toimisto*  
Kylänevantie 2  
00320, Helsinki  
Service Office: +358 9 8387040  
Email: aa@aa.fi  
Website: <http://www.aa.fi>

### France

*Services Generaux A.A.*  
29 Rue Campo Formio, Paris  
Service Office: (33) 969-394-020  
Email: bsg@aafrance.fr  
Website: <http://www.alcooliques-anonymes.fr>

### Germany

*Anonyme Alkoholiker Interessengemeinschaft e.V.*  
Frankfurter Allee 40, Berlin  
Service Office: +49 030 206 298 20  
Email: sekretariat@anonyme-alkoholiker.de  
Website: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.de>

### Guatemala

*Oficina de Servicios Generales de Alcohólicos Anónimos de Guatemala*  
11 Ave No. 12-48, Zona 2  
Colonia Ciudad Nueva, Guatemala  
Service Office: + (502) 2254-6565  
Email: osg@aguatemala.org.gt  
Website: <http://www.aaguatemala.org.gt>

### Honduras

*Oficina de Servicios Generales De A.A. de Honduras*  
Apartado Postal 1206  
M.D.C., Tegucigalpa  
Service Office: (504)2238-7930  
Email: osgdehonduras@yahoo.es  
Website: <http://www.aadehonduras.com>

### Hungary

*Felepulok Egsegseguyi Anonim Egyesulete*  
PF 258, Budapest  
Service Office: (361) 251-0051  
Email: info@anonimalkoholistak.hu  
Website: <http://www.anonimalkoholistak.hu>

### Iceland

*National Service Office Of A. A.*  
Tjarnargata 20, Reykjavik  
Service Office: (354) 551-2010  
Email: aa@aa.is  
Website: <http://www.aa.is>



## GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers (cont'd)

### India

India General Service Office  
Bharat Shatrughna Com. Complex  
Above Htl Bhagat Tarachand Office no 116 (A, B & C),  
Near MAFCO Market Sanpada Sector 18  
Service Office: (91)86550-55134  
Email: info@aagsoindia.org  
Website: <http://www.aagsoindia.org>

### Iran (Islamic Republic of)

General Service Office Of Iran Alcoholics Anonymous  
145 No.- N. Iranshahr Str.  
Unit 5, Teheran  
Service Office: (+98)217-757-4663  
Email: iranana0@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.iranaa.org>

### Ireland

General Service Office Of Alcoholics Anonymous  
Unit 2, Block C  
Santry Business Park, Swords Road, Dublin  
Service Office: (00353)1-8420700  
Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie>

### Italy

A.A. Alcolisti Anonimi Servizi Generali  
Via Di Torre Rossa 35  
Scala B Int. 1B, Rome  
Service Office: (39)06-6636629  
Email: info@aaitaly.it  
Website: <http://www.alcolistianonimiitalia.it>

### Japan

AA Japan General Service Office  
Tsuchiya Building 3-F  
4-17-10 Ikebukuro, Toshima-ku, Tokyo  
Service Office: (+81)3-3590-5377  
Email: gsoj-int@ric.hi-ho.ne.jp  
Website: <http://www.aajapan.org>

### Kazakhstan

A.A. Service Fund of the Republic of Kazakhstan  
Business Center Zhar-Su,  
61 Makatayev str., Almaty, Kazakhstan.  
Service Office: +7 (707)-208-05-53  
Email: hello@aaorg.kz  
Website: <https://aaorg.kz>

### Korea (the Republic of)

Korea A.A. Office  
5F, Jung Woo Bldg 6  
Yeongsin-ro 20-gil/Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul  
Service Office: (822) 833-0311  
Email: aakoreagso@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aakorea.org>

### Latvia

Biedriba Anonimo Alkoholiku Sadraudziba  
Balta Iela 7, Riga,  
Service Office: (371)2-733-3523  
Email: aa@aa.org.lv  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.lv>

### Lithuania

Lithuania A.A. Service Office  
J. Basanaviciaus a. 16, Birstonas  
Service Office: (370) 685-05191  
Email: info@aalietuvoje.org  
Website: <http://www.aalietuvoje.org>

### Malta

AA GSO Malta and Gozo  
"Peter House" 51, Triq Nicoló Isouard, Sliema  
Service Office: (356) 795-05025  
Email: help@aamalta.org  
Website: <https://aamalta.org>

### Mexico

Central Mexicana de Servicios Generales de A.A.  
Huatabampo No. 18  
Colonia Roma Sur, CDMEX-Ciudad de Mexico  
Service Office: (52)55-52642588  
Email: cinternacional@aamexico.org.mx  
Website: <http://www.aamexico.org>

### Mongolia

GSO Mongolia  
Chingeltei district, 2 khoroo,  
Ikh toiruu, Rentalon LLC bld, 300A., Ulaanbaatar  
Service Office: (976)11-351-056  
Email: gso@aa.org.mn  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.mn>

### Netherlands

Algemeen Diensten Bureau A.A. Nederland  
PO Box 2633, Rotterdam  
Service Office: (31)10-243-0175  
Email: adb@aa-nederland.nl  
Website: <http://www.aa-nederland.nl>

### New Zealand

New Zealand General Service Office  
of Alcoholics Anonymous  
Unit 2, 30 Downer St, Hutt Central  
Service Office: (644) 472-4250  
Email: boardtreasurer@aa.org.nz  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.nz>

### Nicaragua

Oficina De Servicios Generales  
Costado Sur del Colegio Maria Mazzarello  
Barrio Altagracia Casa #8, Managua  
Service Office: (505)2266-2022  
Email: aaosgdenicaragua@hotmail.com  
Website: <https://aaosgnicaragua.org/>

### Norway

Stiftelsen Anonyme Alkoholikere I Norge Servicekontoret  
Skjærvaveien 10, 1466 Strømmen  
Service Office: (472) 246-8965  
Email: servicekontoret@anonymealkoholikere.no  
Website: <http://www.anonymealkoholikere.no>

### Panama

Oficina De Servicios Generales  
Avenida Central-Espana Perejil  
Edificio Rafael 1er Piso, Oficina 103  
Service Office: (507) 225-3585  
Email: aadepanama@hotmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aapanama.info>

### Paraguay

Oficina De Servicios Generales de Alcoholicos  
Anonimos del Paraguay  
PO Box 3033, Asuncion  
Service Office: (595) 983-847093  
Email: junsgaap@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.py>

### Peru

Junta De Servicios Generales de  
Alcoholicos Anonimos del Peru  
Jirón Domingo Nieto # 174  
Pueblo Libre, Lima  
Service Office: (511) 447-8666  
Email: gerenteaa.osgperu@gmail.com  
Website: <https://aajunta.org.pe/>

### Poland

Fundacja Biuro S. uzbyw Krajowej AA w Polsce  
ul. Pi. kna 31/37, Warszawa  
Service Office: (48) 22-828-04-94  
Email: aa@aa.org.pl  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.pl>

### Portugal

Associação de Serviços Gerais de Alcoólicos  
Anónimos de Portugal  
Praça Dom Miguel I, 3-C, Sto Antonio dos Cavaleiros  
Service Office: (351)21-7162969  
Email: info@aaportugal.org  
Website: <http://www.aaportugal.org>

### Romania

Asociația Biurul De Servicii Generale Ale Alcoolicilor  
Anonimi Din Romania  
Beclean str IL Caragiale nr 4, 425100 Jud Bistrita Nasaud  
Service Office: (40)770-225522  
Email: gsoromania@alcooliciianonimi.ro  
Website: <http://www.alcooliciianonimi.ro>

### Russian Federation

Central Service Bureau of A.A. in Russia (\_SB)  
15 Semenovskiy Pereulok  
Room 218, Moscow  
Service Office: 7(985)448-29-80  
Email: rsoaa@rsoaa.ru  
Website: <http://www.rsoaa.ru>

### Slovakia

Združenie Pre Služby Anonymym Alkoholikom  
Misijny Dom  
Kalvaria 3, Nitra  
Service Office: (421)37-6516235  
Email: alkoholici-anonymni@alkoholici-anonymni.sk  
Website: <http://www.alkoholici-anonymni.sk>

### Slovenia

Drustvo AA Slovenija  
Trg prekomorskih brigad 1, Ljubljana  
Service Office: (386)1-4338225  
Email: info@aa-slovenia.si  
Website: <http://www.aa-slovenia.si>

### South Africa

General Service Office  
28 Hennie Alberts Street, Brackenhurst  
Service Office: 27(11) 867-5950  
Email: gso@aaouthafrica.org.za  
Website: <http://www.aasouthafrica.org.za>

### Spain

Oficina De Servicios Generales de A.A.  
Avenida de Alemania, n.º 9 — Piso 3º Izquierda  
Aviles- Principado de Asturias, Asturias  
Service Office: (34) 629 317 868  
Email: aa@alcoholicos-anonimos.org  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicos-anonimos.org>

## GSOs and Literature Distribution Centers (cont'd)

### Sweden

A.A. Servicekontor  
Box 92121, Stockholm  
Service Office: +46 (0)8 642 26 09  
Email: service@aa.se  
Website: <http://www.aa.se>

### Switzerland

A.A. Suisse Romande Et Italienne  
Route des Arsenaux 3C, Fribourg  
Service Office: (41)22-344-33-22  
Email: info@asri.org  
Website: <http://www.aasri.org>

### Switzerland

Anonyme Alkoholiker Schweiz  
Grebelerackerstrasse 32, Zurich  
Service Office: (41)848-848-885  
Email: info@anonyme-alkoholiker.ch  
Website: <http://www.anonyme-alkoholiker.ch>

### Taiwan (Province of China)

GSO Taiwan  
8F-6 #189 Sec2 RD  
Keelung, Taipei City  
Service Office: (886)2-2377-7791  
Email: aataiwangso@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aataiwan.org>

### Trinidad and Tobago

General Service Office of Alcoholics Anonymous  
Trinidad and Tobago  
L.P. #52 Rivulet Rd  
Brechin Castle, Couva  
Service Office: 186-8229 AATT (2288)  
Email: aagsott@gmail.com  
Website: <http://aagsott.org>

### Türkiye

Turkey General Service Office  
Yeni\_ehir PTT  
Posta Kutusu 171, Çankaya Ankara  
Service Office: (+90) 532 341 00 99  
Email: ghosekreter@adsizalkolikler.com  
Website: <http://www.adsizalkolikler.com>

### Ukraine

Ukrainian Service Centre of A.A.  
116 Gerov ATO St., Corps 1  
attn: Yarosh Olena, Poltava  
Service Office: (380)99-9289378  
Email: aa.ua.gso@gmail.com  
Website: <http://www.aa.org.ua>

### United Kingdom

General Service Office Of A.A.  
PO Box 1  
10 Toft Green, York  
Service Office: 01904 644 026  
Email: mandytervet@gso.org.uk  
Website: <http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk>

### United States

General Service Office of U.S. and Canada  
475 Riverside Dr Fl 11  
Flr 11, New York  
Service Office: (212) 870-3400  
Website: <http://www.aa.org>

### United States

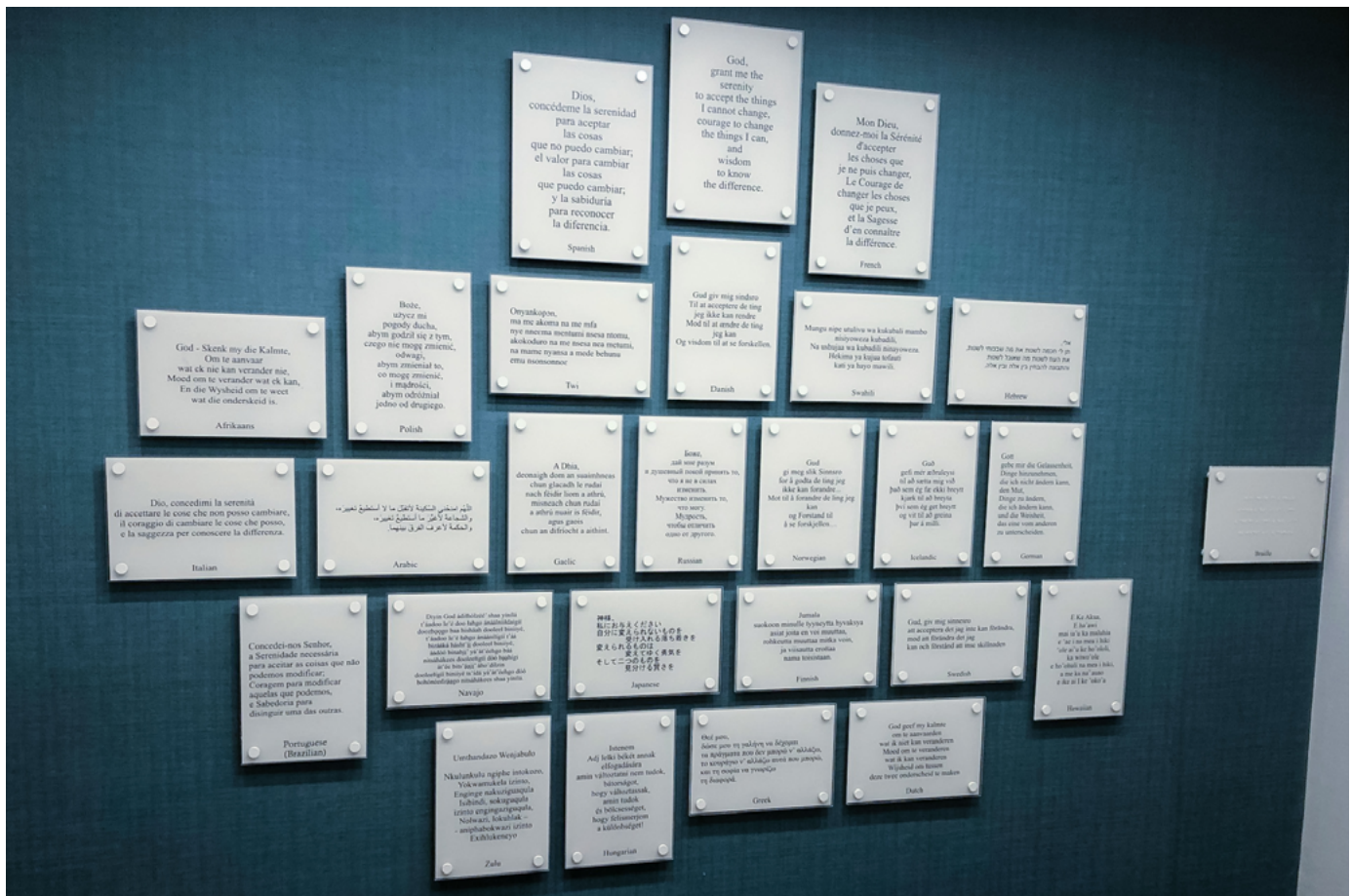
General Service Office of U.S. and Canada  
475 Riverside Dr Fl 11, New York  
Website: <http://www.aa.org>

### Uruguay

Fundacion A.A. Del Uruguay  
Brandzen 1956 ap 104  
Casilla de Correo 6791, Montevideo  
Service Office: (05) 982-400-3501  
Email: osg@alcoholicosanonimos.org.uy  
Website: <http://www.alcoholicosanonimos.org.uy>

### Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Oficina De Servicios Generales  
Oficina de Servicios Generales  
Apartado Postal No 3999, Caracas  
Service Office: (58) 212-541-88-94  
Email: lacorporacionaa@gmail.com  
Website: <https://www.alcoholicos-anonimos.org.ve>



## WORLD SERVICE MEETING ACCOUNTING HISTORY

	28th WSM 2024	27th WSM 2022	26th WSM 2020	25th WSM 2018	24th WSM 2016	23rd WSM 2014	22nd WSM 2012	21st WSM 2010	20th WSM 2008
	NEW YORK	VIRTUAL	VIRTUAL*	DURBAN	RYE	POLAND	RYE	MEXICO	NYC
	Unaudited	Budget	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Delegate Fee	\$2,000	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100	\$1,100
<b>Income</b>									
Delegates Fees	\$101,777		\$25,621	\$66,022	\$77,998	\$51,257	\$64,284	\$57,200	\$64,900
Contributions			\$8,878	\$68,486	\$68,486	\$72,117	\$44,009	\$27,240	\$71,897
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$101,777</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$34,499</b>	<b>\$134,508</b>	<b>\$146,484</b>	<b>\$123,374</b>	<b>\$108,293</b>	<b>\$84,440</b>	<b>\$136,797</b>
<b>Expenses</b>									
Technical Assistance	\$9,155	\$22,973	\$14,958	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Gratitude in Action	\$0	0	\$4,485	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Transportation - Delegates	\$27,924		NA	\$50,596	\$20,879	\$44,687	\$40,689	\$33,219	\$33,170
Hotel Expenses	\$343,480		NA	\$121,558	\$228,075	\$166,549	\$204,553	\$168,123	\$243,341
New York Staff Expenses	\$3,699		NA	\$66,922	\$1,017	\$5,812	\$13,018	\$23,040	\$9,328
W.S.M. Report	\$3,650	\$3,000	\$1,950	\$13,000	\$10,580	\$7,425	\$6,970	\$13,243	\$12,831
Other Expenses/Binder	\$1,349	\$17,000	\$17,088	\$63,734	\$46,649	\$31,458	\$36,739	\$33,691	\$35,941
Simultaneous Interpretation	\$8,959	\$9,760	\$4,380	\$15,150	\$21,957	\$26,137	\$18,826	\$18,718	\$19,525
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$398,215</b>	<b>\$52,733</b>	<b>\$42,861</b>	<b>\$330,960</b>	<b>\$329,157</b>	<b>\$282,068</b>	<b>\$320,795</b>	<b>\$290,034</b>	<b>\$354,136</b>
<b>RECONCILIATION</b>									
AAWS Expense	\$139,411	-\$52,733	-\$8,362	-\$196,452	-\$182,673	-\$158,694	-\$212,502	-\$205,594	-\$217,339
Transfer From WSM Fund	\$157,027	\$20,000	\$8,361	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Income	\$101,777	(\$32,733)	(\$1)	(\$196,452)	(\$182,673)	(\$158,694)	(\$212,502)	(\$205,594)	(\$217,339)
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$398,215</b>								

**Note:** In 2021, \$8,361 was transferred from the WSM Fund to cover the 26th WSM deficit. Prior to the 26th WSM, the U.S./Canada service structure covered WSM deficits.

## 28th WSM List of Delegates by Committee

### Agenda (14 Members)

#### First Term

Thomas A. (Sweden)  
Ramón G. (Colombia)  
Balys K. (Lithuania)  
Robert L. (U.S./Canada)  
Angel R. (Bolivia)  
Páll S. (Iceland)  
Ada Z. (Poland)

#### Second Term

Karin . (German-Speaking Europe)  
Frank G.\* (South Africa)  
Christine H. (New Zealand)  
Laura K. (Finland/Julienne L.L.\*\*)  
Norway Juan O. (Chile)  
Agustín S. (Spain)

\*Indicates Committee Chair

\*\*Indicates Committee Alternate

### Literature Publishing (22 Members)

#### First Term

Holly A. (Great Britain)  
Pedro A. (Paraguay)  
Marian B. (Slovakia)  
Ysidro C. (Dominican Republic)  
Pascal D. (Belgium (Dutch-Speaking))  
Eulogio G. (India)  
Jody M. (Italy)  
Carmen P. (Slovenia)  
Andy P. (Australia)  
Maija T. (Latvia)  
José Alfredo V. (Mexico)  
Maria Y. (Ecuador)

#### Second Term

Nevena B. (Bulgaria)  
Daniel B. (Uruguay)  
Stamatina C. (Greece)  
Eduardo De M. (Brazil)  
Tom D. (Ireland)  
Asger J. (Denmark)  
Marie-Paule M.\* (French-Speaking Europe)  
Leonor P.\*\* (Portugal)  
Santiago P. (Venezuela)  
Roberto R. (Argentina)

### Policy/Admissions/Finance (19 Members)

#### First Term

Sheli B. (Hong Kong)  
Nedim G. (Turkey)  
Tamás K. (Hungary)  
Elena L. (Romania)  
Salesh L. (South Africa)  
Andrei M. (Russia)  
Karolina M. (Czech Republic)  
Aris Ramos (Central America/ Southern Zone, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama)  
Fernando U. (Brazil)

#### Second Term

Sándor Á. (Hungary)  
Izabela A. (Poland)  
Nagadurga A. (India)  
Miguel B. (Mexico)  
Guido H. (German-Speaking Europe)  
Andris K. (Latvia)  
Alfonso O. (Colombia)  
Masaya O. (Japan)  
Elena S.\*\* (Lithuania)  
Justin T.\* (Great Britain)

### Working With Others Committee (19 Members)

#### First Term

Regis C. (French-Speaking Europe)  
Jacqueline D. (Belgium, Dutch-Speaking)  
Jony F.-T. (Netherlands)  
Alireza G. (Iran)  
Paulo G. (Peru)  
Steve H. (New Zealand)  
Katsunori I. (Japan)  
José J. (Honduras)  
Miguel L. (Portugal)  
Rovin M. (Guatemala)  
Radoslava S. (Bulgaria)  
Flemming S. (Denmark)  
John T. (Ireland)  
Adolfo V. (Spain)

#### Second Term

Gunnar Á. (Iceland)  
Lars D.\*\* (Sweden)  
René F. (Czech Republic)  
Brian F. (Australia)  
Marita R.\* (U.S./Canada)



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# The Twelve Traditions

- 1.** Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
- 2.** For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
- 3.** The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
- 4.** Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
- 5.** Each group has but one primary purpose — to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
- 6.** An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
- 7.** Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
- 8.** Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever nonprofessional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
- 9.** A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
- 10.** Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
- 11.** Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
- 12.** Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our Traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.



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# The Twelve Concepts for World Service

**I.** Final responsibility and ultimate authority for A.A. world services should always reside in the collective conscience of our whole Fellowship.

**II.** The General Service Conference of A.A. has become, for nearly every practical purpose, the active voice and the effective conscience of our whole Society in its world affairs.

**III.** To insure effective leadership, we should endow each element of A.A. — the Conference, the General Service Board and its service corporations, staffs, committees, and executives — with a traditional “Right of Decision.”

**IV.** At all responsible levels, we ought to maintain a traditional “Right of Participation,” allowing a voting representation in reasonable proportion to the responsibility that each must discharge.

**V.** Throughout our structure, a traditional “Right of Appeal” ought to prevail, so that minority opinion will be heard and personal grievances receive careful consideration.

**VI.** The Conference recognizes that the chief initiative and active responsibility in most world service matters should be exercised by the trustee members of the Conference acting as the General Service Board.

**VII.** The Charter and Bylaws of the General Service Board are legal instruments, empowering the trustees to manage and conduct world service affairs. The Conference Charter is not a legal document; it relies upon tradition and the A.A. purse for final effectiveness.

**VIII.** The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of overall policy and finance. They have custodial oversight of the separately incorporated and constantly active services, exercising this through their ability to elect all the directors of these entities.

**IX.** Good service leadership at all levels is indispensable for our future functioning and safety. Primary world service leadership, once exercised by the founders, must necessarily be assumed by the trustees.

**X.** Every service responsibility should be matched by an equal service authority, with the scope of such authority well defined.

**XI.** The trustees should always have the best possible committees, corporate service directors, executives, staffs, and consultants. Composition, qualifications, induction procedures, and rights and duties will always be matters of serious concern.

**XII.** The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.



Persian  
Swedish Romanian  
Turkish Norwegian  
Finnish  
Bulgarian Polish  
French German Latvian  
Slovak Czech Danish  
Italian English  
Japanese Russian Konkani  
Portuguese (Brazil) Spanish  
Lithuanian Flemish  
Dutch Greek  
Portuguese (Portugal) Te Reo Maori  
Telugu, Hindi





“ABOVE ALL, LET US REMEMBER THAT GREAT LEGION WHO  
STILL SUFFER FROM ALCOHOLISM AND WHO ARE STILL WITHOUT  
HOPE. LET US, AT ANY COST OR SACRIFICE, SO IMPROVE OUR  
COMMUNICATION WITH ALL THESE THAT THEY MAY FIND WHAT  
WE HAVE FOUND — A NEW LIFE OF FREEDOM UNDER GOD.”

—Bil W., “The Shape of Things to Come,” *Language of the Heart*