**March 21, 2021**

**Summaries of Select Agenda Item Background for 71st General Service Conference**

**Prepared by trusted servants of Area 50.**

With gratitude, we would like to extend a special thanks to: Ann J., Jessie S., Kristy J., Liz W., Matthew H., Matthew T for their work on these written summaries.

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**Agenda J: Discuss a request to provide additional avenues for A.A. members to share input on General Service Conference agenda items.**

An A.A. member requested this item, suggesting that the conference committee recommendations be presented to the Area Delegates. This would take place *after* the Conference committee work and *prior* to the Conference debate and discussion. This would allow feedback from the areas to be gathered *prior* to Conference debate, discussion and voting.

There are some ways to potentially encourage more AA members to participate in discussions regarding GSC agenda items. First off, there are some barriers to consider that may prevent more group/member involvement in discussing agenda items. One barrier is the accessibility of the agenda items. How easy is it to find a list of agenda items? One solution may be to provide a central link on the [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org/) website for easier access to agenda items. Another suggestion is to have agenda items directly available to AA members through the Area delegate and Area committee chairs. Another potential solution could be to send agenda items to individuals, as opposed to the GSR or DCM. Language is another barrier for some. English speakers may be at an advantage at district and area meetings as they may offer English as the only language. Interpreters could be a solution to this concern.

Educating members on the agenda items could be addressed by offering workshops. Workshops can be an informative way to help motivate members to discuss and share their opinion on the agenda items they find most interesting. These workshops could be organized through the district, Grapevine/La Vina, or area committees. There is more than one way to obtain input on the agenda items. Lastly, it is vital to bring new ideas to the area committee in order to let your voice be heard.

Do you agree with this idea? What ideas do you have, and how could they be implemented?

Sources: 2021 NERAASA Presentations, Area 50-71st GSC Initial Summary, 71st GSC Background

**Literature A: Review proposed “A.A.W.S. Policy on Conversion of Written Conference-approved Literature and Service Material into Video Format.”**

**Background notes on above**

The A.A. World Services(A.A.W.S.) Board recognizes the ever-increasing demand for content in video and audio formats. In the board’s discussions regarding the importance of reaching the still-suffering alcoholic through the formats that information is being sought in and converting the abundance of Conference-approved and service material into these formats, the board has encountered some concerns, specifically around the conversion of written text into video (video can be a traditional camera video, graphics with a voice overlay, animation, etc.).

Concerns have been expressed that converting text to video could possibly change the content or meaning of the original text and that it would require careful oversight to perform the conversion appropriately, if at all. Among a number of responses to this concern is that the content of the written words does not necessarily have the same exact meaning to everyone reading them. Further, the meaning that a person may initially find in those words could possibly change over time for that same person as they have new experiences. So, the written word itself is open to changing meanings, regardless of the medium it is presented in.

In order to move forward we must find a policy approach that will allow us to keep our content available and accessible while ensuring that we do so within the scope of our Traditions and maintaining fidelity to the content of our lifesaving message.

**Literature B: Consider requests to revise the book Alcoholics Anonymous**

Add pages 3 through 41 of the pamphlet “The A.A. Group” as an appendix in the next printing.

**Background notes on above**

As many groups read from the text, “Alcoholics Anonymous,” it would be helpful to include “The A.A. Group” pamphlet its appendix. It is believed that having the pamphlet inserted would encourage best practices and participation in general service. Ultimately, this could help

improve our service culture to the benefit of the groups, the still suffering alcoholic, and

Alcoholics Anonymous as a whole.

Revise the first 164 pages.

**Background notes on above**

We recommend that the Conference form a study committee to audit the first 164 pages of the Big Book with the purpose of identifying changes that can be made to make the Big Book more reflective of the A.A. membership composition. The focus should be on identifying the following for possible change:

• Pronoun usage – where possible the gender-neutral form should be incorporated.

• Passages or sections that are no longer consistent with or relevant when taken in context of society in general or the A.A. membership composition.

• The chapters To Wives and The Family Afterward should specifically be evaluated for revisions to be more consistent with today’s membership.

Once items have been identified these should be prioritized both by the ease of editing and the possible impact to the context of the message. Changes to the overall message should be minimized or avoided entirely. Simplification of the vocabulary should not be considered and references to historical figures and events should remain unchanged.

Examples of changes consistent with the proposal:

Pronoun usage: The gender-neutral form is not the same as no gender; rather it is the generally accepted form of writing that does not assign specific gender to an action or uses a he or she format.

From the Big Book page 17, the sentence, “But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about himself,” could readily be changed to “But the ex-problem drinker who has found this solution, who is properly armed with facts about themselves,” without altering the meaning. This would be considered an appropriate change.

Passages or sections that are no longer consistent with or relevant when taken in context of society in general or the A.A. membership composition

The following is a passage from the Big Book followed by the section rewritten in a fashion aligned with the proposal. This was done in a single pass, with little thought concerning the precise words that could be used. Even so, the message seems consistent.

"The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with women in a fashion we wouldn’t care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a wife gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could she be anything else? The husband begins to feel lonely, sorry for himself. He commences to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps he is having a secret and exciting affair with “the girl who understands.” In fairness we must say that she may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A man so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if he is married to a loyal and courageous girl who has literally gone through hell for him."

Revised text:

The chances are that we have domestic troubles. Perhaps we are mixed up with omeone in a fashion we wouldn’t care to have advertised. We doubt if, in this respect, alcoholics are fundamentally much worse than other people. But drinking does complicate sex relations in the home. After a few years with an alcoholic, a spouse gets worn out, resentful and uncommunicative. How could they be anything else? The alcoholic begins to feel lonely, sorry for themselves. They commence to look around in the night clubs, or their equivalent, for something besides liquor. Perhaps they are havin a secret and exciting affair with “someone who understands.” In fairness we must say that they may understand, but what are we going to do about a thing like that? A person so involved often feels very remorseful at times, especially if they are married to a loyal and courageous partner who has literally gone through hell for them.

Chapters: The chapters To Wives, and The Family Afterward and perhaps even To Employers are, for a variety of reasons particularly challenging. Perhaps applications of the first two revision criteria, which are essentially simple word substitutions, may result in improvement. However, the apparent revision level required for these chapters may result in rewrites on a paragraph-by-paragraph basis. The text would be recognizable but may differ significantly from the original text. Thus, it is outside the scope of this document to address what may be done in these cases.

What is not mentioned in the summary report is the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, the primary text of the fellowship. The first 164 pages were completed in 1939 and have remained largely unchanged since that time. There remain numerous passages that are cringe-worthy when read in mixed company. The chapter To Employers contains suggestions that may not be permissible in today’s environment. Considering that 38% of the fellowship are women, the chapter To Wives and some of The Family Afterward have ceased to be particularly relevant, as written, in the context of our current and future membership. It is difficult to ignore that the book is male-centric. Recognizing that many of the anecdotes contained in those pages are based on historical figures renders the possibility that simply changing pronouns and names will solve anything. However, a general shift to be more inclusive and references of women subservient to men would be much easier to address.

Some have suggested gender-neutral big book to maximize the inclusivity of text. That is part of the objective of the proposal. However, the gender-neutral notion, by some, refers to removal of all reference to gender. It seems likely though that efforts to make the first 164 pages of the Big Book more appealing to increasingly small segments of the population would paralyze the work as it has happened for the 2018 Membership Survey2. Thus, it seems important to be clear that this is not the objective of the proposal.

**Literature C: Consider proposals related to possible Fifth Edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous**

Develop a 5th Edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous with updated stories and revisions to Appendices III and V.

Add a proposed addendum to a Fifth Edition foreward of the book Alcoholics Anonymous at the time it is published.

**Background notes on above**

The Editions of the book Alcoholics Anonymous have been published in somewhat regular intervals.

The First Edition was published in 1939

16 years later came the Second Edition was published in 1955

21 years later came the Third Edition was published in 1976

25 years later came the Fourth Edition was published in 2001

We can update the stories to be more diverse. Some potential ideas for new stories from members who are: transgender (who possibly had struggled finding sponsorship), Asian-American (who need to break down barriers of cultural shame in order to take Step One),dually or cross-addicted, court ordered, those who use technology for 12 step work such as armed service members who use video chat to communicate with sponsors/sponsees, loners/

Internationalists, and people with disabilities who attend online meetings. None of this is intended to take anything

away but to add more stories to help the newer generation relate more to the book.

Reflect issues that people struggle with now: mental health, homelessness, social media, the modern treatment paradigm, using technology to get and stay sober, chronic relapse, cross-addiction, dual diagnosis, sex work, prescription meds, depression in sobriety, struggles with emotional sobriety.

Include stories from people with a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.

Add more to the pioneers' section, like women, people of color, etc.

Stories should emphasize current sobriety.

**Literature D: Consider development of a draft Fourth Edition of the book Alcoholicos Anonimos.**

**Background notes on above**

The first 164 pages of the Big Book, Alcohólicos Anónimos, the Preface, the Forewords, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare,” and the Appendices will undergo a complete review to assure accuracy of translation and consistency of style and tone throughout the text. As in translations of all languages, the Publications Department strives to reflect the best possible translation of Bill W.’s writings and does not require Conference approval.

Personal Stories:

• Retain selected stories from current Spanish-language Edition.

• Select stories from A.A.’s La Viña magazine.

• Select new stories from Spanish-speaking membership.

**Literature E: Consider requests to revise the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions**

To remove the phrase “opposite sex” from paragraph two on page 117 in the chapter “Step Twelve”. "Nearly every sound human being experiences, at some time in life, a compelling desire to find a mate of the opposite sex with whom the fullest possible union can be made -- spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical".

**Background notes on above**

AA has no opinion on outside affiliations, let alone stating gods will towards sexual preferences.

Tradition 3 tells us that the only requirement for membership is the desire to stop drinking. Telling any alcoholic that their lifestyle preference is not 'sound' or that it goes against Gods Will, says to them that they are different, and could have them question if they're accepted in the fellowship.

To reconsider use of the phrase “lustful enough to rape” in paragraph one on page 66 in the chapter “Step Six.”

"No one wants to be angry enough to murder, lustful enough to rape, gluttonous enough to ruin his health."

Why is it on the Agenda?

What your group might consider:

**Background notes on above**

Lust is not the cause of rape. The cause of rape is complex and multifaceted. Use of the words "rape" or "sexual assault" in one of our main pieces of literature, the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, are unnecessary. Words that have such potential to provoke trauma belong in literature that's more narrowly focused, like pamphlets.

**Literature F: Consider request to add a subtitle to the booklet Living Sober**.

**Background notes on above**

The booklet, Living Sober, is, perhaps, the best piece of literature for a newcomer who is trying to stay away from the first drink. Consider changing the title of Living Sober to be amended to: Living Sober -- How not to take the first drink.

**Literature G: Consider requests to revise text related to open meetings in the pamphlet “The A.A. Group.”**

**Background notes on above**

The pamphlet states:

"Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem 'have a desire to stop drinking'.”

Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous’ program of recovery from alcoholism. Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers.

Proposed revision:

Closed meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem and “have a desire to stop drinking.”

Open meetings are available to anyone interested in Alcoholics Anonymous’ program of recovery from alcoholism. Omit reference to "Nonalcoholics may attend open meetings as observers".

Telling a group how or in what matter people attending our meeting may participate is a clear violation of Tradition Four: “Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole."

**Literature H: Consider request to revise text related to self-support in the pamphlet “Frequently Asked Questions About A.A.”**

**Background notes on above**

"Membership in A.A. involves no financial obligations of any kind. The A.A. program of recovery from alcoholism is available to anyone who has a desire to stop drinking, whether he or she is flat broke or the possessor of millions.

Most local groups “pass the hat” at meetings to defray the cost of renting a meeting place and other meeting expenses, including coffee, sandwiches, cakes, or whatever else may be served.

Consider revising the "pass the hat" statement. The pamphlet should be directed towards people wanting information on AA. Is it necessary to tell them that AA is a catering service where we pay for cakes and

sandwiches and whatever else may be served? That paragraph is not part of the information that AA should be passing at large. And if really we have to inform the public of what the AA groups do with the seventh Tradition, let’s do it with the language of "Where Money and Spirituality Mix". Once they decided that they want what we have to offer, then, and only when, they become part of a group conscience, should we inform them of what is

being done with the 7th Tradition. Only mention the basic group expenses, for example, rent, refreshments, AA literature... no mention of items like cake, sandwiches or whatever else may be served.

**Agenda M.1:** Discuss draft update of the pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated.”

**Originated**

*Excerpt from the History and Actions of the trustees’ Literature Committee, 2016*

The trustees’ Literature Committee reviewed and agreed to forward to the 2016

Conference Committee on Literature a request to update the pamphlet “Twelve

Traditions Illustrated.”

The trustees’ Literature Committee undertake a comprehensive revision of the

pamphlet “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated” with a modernized presentation of

both text and illustrations to reflect contemporary A.A. experience. The committee

requested that a progress report or draft pamphlet be brought to the 2017

Conference Literature Committee.

Update – Where idea of not retiring original was introduced

*Excerpts from February 1, 2020 TLC Meeting Report:*

The trustees’ Literature Committee reviewed and **agreed to forward** an

updated draft version of “Twelve Traditions Illustrated” to the 2020 Conference

Committee on Literature.

The trustees’ Literature Committee requested that the Conference Literature

committee consider not retiring the current version of the pamphlet “Twelve

Traditions Illustrated” noting the wealth and depth of material contained in the

current pamphlet and its current distribution numbers.

*Excerpts from January 30, 2021 TLC Meeting Report:*

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2021 Conference Committee on

Literature the draft update of the pamphlet, “The Twelve Traditions Illustrated,”

with the working title, “Experience Has Taught Us: Our Twelve Traditions

Illustrated.” The committee noted that the revision suggestions from the 2020

Conference Committee on Literature were addressed.

**Literature M.2:** Consider not retiring the existing version of the pamphlet “The Twelve

Traditions Illustrated.”

*Excerpt from January 30, 2021 TLC Meeting Report:*

The committee discussed the request not to retire the existing version of the

pamphlet “Twelve Traditions Illustrated” and agreed that an existing version of

a literature item might remain in publication after a revised, updated version

has been approved.

The committee noted that the revised updated draft of the pamphlet, “The

Twelve Traditions Illustrated,” that is forwarded to the 2021 Conference

Committee on Literature is essentially a new item, largely resulting from the

complexity of revising the illustrations.

The committee agreed that the existing version of the pamphlet, “The Twelve

Traditions Illustrated,” might remain in distribution. The committee requested

that the 2021 Conference Committee on Literature discuss whether the

Submission for Pro continue printing

*Excerpt from January 2, 2020 email from Jimmy D., TLC member*

Beau and I discussed this verbiage to be included as part of our

communication to Conference Literature regarding retention of the existing

Twelve Traditions Illustrated pamphlet:

During committee discussion in July, 2019 and November, 2019 regarding

the revised pamphlet *Twelve Traditions Illustrated,* multiple references and

comments were made about the wealth and depth of material contained in

the current pamphlet. The Trustees’ Committee on Literature agreed to

forward to the Conference Committee on Literature their request to consider

retaining the current pamphlet as a resource for the Fellowship, rather than

follow the normal process of retirement of the existing piece of literature at

which time the Conference approves a revision. Trustees Literature

Committee noted that within the period 2014-2018 distribution of the existing

*Twelve Traditions Illustrated* totaled 242,561 English, 18,275 Spanish, and

7,617 French.

Please incorporate this into our committee background for January GSB

Submission for Con continue printing

*Excerpt from the January 13, 2020 memo from G.S.O. Archives Director to G.S.O. staff*

*on the Literature assignment*

Here are three examples of discontinued pamphlets approved by the GSC:

**1988 Conference Committee on Finance:**

It was recommended that the cartoon supplement of the pamphlet “Supporting the A.A.

Support System” be discontinued immediately.

**2006 Conference Literature Committee:**

It was recommended that the pamphlet “Letter to a Woman Alcoholic” be discontinued.

**2017 Conference Committee on Cooperation with the Professional Community:**

It was recommended that the pamphlet “Three Talks to Medical Societies by Bill W.” be

retired.

NOTES: Looking at one example…“Letter to a Woman Alcoholic” pamphlet, in January

2006, the TLC discussed and “*agreed to forward a suggestion that the ‘Letter to a*

*Woman Alcoholic’ pamphlet be reviewed with the intent to not print it anymore and retire*

*it to archives, to the 2006 Conference Committee on Literature for consideration.”*

Upon request, Archives distributes a watermarked copy of the pamphlet stipulating that

the pamphlet is being provided as a resource for reference only and not for distribution;

we also include the year it was retired by the Conference in the text of the watermark. In

general, this is how we handle requests for retired pamphlets.

Depending on the outcome of any group conscience decision, a suggestion might be to

add a note in any recommendation that a single copy of the original is available from the

GSO Archives.

As far as I am aware, no pamphlet has ever been revised with the original version

continued on.

I remember looking into this topic in 2017 for the Conference Committee on CPC and

was also present during the committee’s meeting as a resource when this matter came

up on the agenda. Another reference is the 2016 Report and Charter advisory action

regarding the paragraph removed from one of the Concepts. I was also in the room as

resource and agreed to include this note as part of the advisory action.

**Literature N:** Review progress report regarding language on safety in *Living Sober* and

“Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

*Excerpt from the January 30, 2021 trustees’ Literature Committee report:*

The committee **agreed to forward** to the 2021 Conference Committee on

Literature the draft language on safety and A.A. to be included in the booklet,

*Living Sober*, and the pamphlet, “Questions and Answers on Sponsorship.”

The committee noted that care was taken to address accessible reading levels

in the draft language.

**Originated**

*2018 Additional Committee Consideration*

The committee reviewed the trustees’ Literature Committee report on

“Language Related to Safety in A.A. Literature.” The committee requested

that the trustees’ Literature Committee develop text regarding safety and A.A.

to be included in *Living Sober* and the pamphlet “Questions and Answers on

Sponsorship,” and bring back the draft text to the 2019 Conference

Committee on Literature.

**Suggested Revisions for Consideration.**

**QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SPONSORSHIP**

**Page 14 in the section "For the person wanting to be a sponsor" under the**

**heading "What does a sponsor do and not do?"**

Insert:

• Stresses the importance of A.A. being a safe place for all members and guides

the newcomer to service material available from the General Service Office such

as "Safety in A.A. -- Our Common Welfare."

**Page 23 in the section "For groups planning sponsorship activity" under the**

**heading "How does sponsorship help a group?" Add as final paragraph (#4) in**

**the section.**

Insert:

Sponsorship can also help a group to create a welcoming and secure environment.

Safety is an issue affecting all members and it is important for groups to remain

accessible to all who are seeking recovery. Sponsorship programs can help keep the

group focused on the common welfare.

**LIVING SOBER**

Proposed addition focused on Safety at the group level.

Chapter 29: Going to A.A. meetings

Section: Different kinds of meetings, page 76

New paragraph 5

Insert:

Of course, A.A. is a reflection of the larger society around us and problems found in the

outside world can also make their way into the rooms of A.A. But by keeping the focus

on our common welfare, groups can provide a safe and secure environment for all their

members.

**Literature Item T: Discuss progress report regarding pamphlet “Too Young?”**

-2017 floor action of GSC

 Pamphlet to be revised to reflect current collective experience of young people and their welcome to AA

-July 2018 TLC meeting report

 The Publishing Department says they are looking for a graphic designer & exploring the possibilities for producing an animated video format component to the pamphlet. The committee agreed to involve Katie H. (appointed committee member) at this stage.

 -Nov 2018 Katie H. Reports

 She Attended 3 regional Young People’s Committees in N. Cali and had 45 minute discussions about pamphlet as well as their recommendations and experiences with AA Literature.

• QR Codes on pamphlets linking to AA.org in order to view the pamphlets online and/or links to YouTube content. She noted that she brought copies of the pamphlet, however, everyone went to their phones to look up the pamphlet. Having this in a user friendly format would be great as the PDF is not .

• Shorter format – “Young People in AA” pamphlet has all the stories and it is long. A shorter “visual” pamphlet would be more effective.

• “Keep it simple” – stories felt TOO specific. 3 people said “This character. This is me.” The rest did not identify.

• More focus on the Questionnaire piece.

• More emphasis that there are Young People’s meetings and conferences.

• Characters should be less stereotypical / more generic.

• Pamphlet too dark/gloomy

• Make more modern

• Development of YouTube videos to help young people find answers about alcoholism.

- July 2019 TLC report

 Committee discussed above report

 Decided Katie H. and others should attend International Young

 People’s Convention, gather experiences shared and report

 back Nov. 2019.

- Sept 2019 Katie H report of Convention

 Katie ran two roundtable style sessions

 Summary of Recommendations:

- Strongly recommend a modern design. The use of a single, bold color. No graphics. Modern, minimalist font.

- Recommend developing a design contest to create cover design and/or avatar from the YPAA community.

- Format change was well received.

- Consider adding quiz questions throughout pamphlet, especially if the current proposed format change is not adopted. Adding questions throughout would break up the stories and provide a visually appealing pamphlet.

 - Consider a new name for pamphlet or a provocative subtitle

 -November 2019 TLC Meeting Report

 The committee reviewed reports committee members related to gathering shared experience from A.A. Conferences. The committee supports Publishing Department to explore options for integrating art for the pamphlet as well as podcast versions of the pamphlets.

-Dec. 2019 Interoffice Memo

 Publishing Department has continued work on revision of the pamphlets, reaching out to graphic designers who have worked within the YPAA community, and look toward provide progress reports, draft pamphlets and/or samples of other potential formats of the pamphlet to the trustees’ Literature Committee at subsequent meetings in 2020.

-Feb. 2020 TLC Meeting Report

 The trustees’ Literature Committee reviewed and agreed to forward to the 2020 Conference Committee on Literature a progress report regarding the pamphlet.

-Aug. 2020 TLC report

 TLC requested Publishing Department to provide a progress report which includes estimated costs, projected resource requirements and project priorities at the October 2020 meeting.

-Oct. 2020 TLC report

 Agreed with the Publishing department’s suggestion to defer to 2021. Noted budget constraints and the potential video production expenses. Also noted difficulties of working with third-party video firms during a pandemic.

**Literature U: *Consider if proposed agenda items for plain language, simplified language, accessible translations and large print versions of the book Alcoholics Anonymous as well as workbooks to help study the program of Alcoholics Anonymous can be addressed with a common solution.***

Excerpt from January 30, 2021 TLC Meeting Report

“This idea of a new book is not meant to replace the Big Book, rather to overcome relatability and accessibility barriers so the A.A. message might reach more still-suffering alcoholics.”

Progress report from subcommittee:

It has as requested from TLC Aug 2020.

“1. Determined the specific literacy level of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous.

2. Continued exploring how non-Conference-approved literature is being utilized by A.A. members to carry the message for the purpose of better addressing any perceived gaps and their solutions at the local level for accessibility and relatability to the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.”

Excerpt from February 1, 2020 TLC Meeting Report:

“The trustees’ Literature Committee considered the following proposed agenda items and took no action:

• To consider the development of a contemporary and comprehensive new workbook to study the Twelve Steps, Traditions, and Concepts

• To consider a request to create a dictionary to complement the Big Book

• To consider a request allowing Jewish Rabbis and Muslim leaders and Indian Ancient Vedas scholars et al to have diverse spiritual language in the Fifth Edition Big Book rather than the current predominantly JudeoChristian language

• To consider a request to develop a Fifth Edition of the book, Alcoholics Anonymous with the removal of the chapters “To Wives,” “The Family Afterward,” and “To Employers”

While the committee took no action on these specific proposed agenda items, the committee noted that the items touch on what it considers to be an expressed, broader need that is reflected in similar requests. The committee is exploring this need through subcommittee efforts and by seeking wider group conscience discussions.”

*Sept 2018 excerpt from Letter to GSC Chair*

*From Panel 68 Delegate San Diego-Imperial Area Assemble*

GSC Agenda Proposal for a Plain Language Big Book submitted by South Oceanside’s Men’s

Group of Alcoholics Anonymous, (#101710)

“The South Oceanside Men’s Group states clearly in their Agenda Item proposal, that interest in a version of or translation of the Big Book, Alcoholics Anonymous, that can be adjusted to the reading level of someone who struggles to understand the language, the vocabulary and the context of this valuable piece of literature, is still warranted. Mind you, this is not a request to change the Big Book in any way. It would simply be a companion book to the Big Book, a translation if you will, that is written at about a 5th grade reading level. There are many books available that are abridged versions of the original publication so that less capable readers can handle them and our groups feel that for some of our members, the Big Book is one of those books.”

*There is an attachment with examples of original text and plain language text This letter comes from the Plain Language Group.*

He is a piece of that attachment: Results of Readability Test Using Flesch Kincaid Grade Level

1. ORIGINAL: Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path. Those who do not recover are people who cannot or will not completely give themselves to this simple program, usually men and women who are constitutionally incapable of being honest with themselves. There are such unfortunates. They are not at fault; they seem to have been born that way. They are naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty. Their chances are less than average. There are those, too, who suffer from grave emotional and mental disorders but many of them do recover if they have the capacity to be honest. (11th grade reading level)

PLAIN LANGUAGE: It’s rare for someone to fail if they follow this path. Those who don’t get better either can’t or won’t commit to this simple program. They truly don’t have the ability to be honest with themselves. We know such people exist. It’s not their fault. Perhaps they were born this way. As a result, they just can’t grasp the idea of living a life of total honesty. Without total honesty, their chance of recovery is low. Also, some people really do suffer from severe emotional and mental disorders, but many of them recover if they are honest with themselves and with others. (7th grade reading level)

2. ORIGINAL: At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way. But we could not. With all the earnestness at our command we be beg of you to be fearless and thorough from the very start. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas and the result was nil until we let go absolutely. Remember that we deal with alcohol – cunning, baffling, powerful! Without help it is too much for us. But there is One who has all power – that One is God. May you find Him now. Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked His protection and care with complete abandon. (6th grade)

PLAIN LANGUAGE: We tried to hide from some of these ideas. We thought we could find an easier. But we could not. With all sincerity, please be brave right from the beginning. Some of us have tried to hold on to our old ideas, but nothing in our lives improved until we let go completely. Don’t forget: We are dealing with alcohol and it’s sneaky, confusing, and very powerful! Few of us can do this without help. But there is a higher power to help you, and you can find your higher power now. Half-hearted efforts did nothing to make our lives better. We were at a crossroads. So we asked for protection and care from our higher power, and we gave up the idea of control. (4th grade)

3. ORIGINAL: Our book is meant to be suggestive only. We realize we know only a little. God will constantly disclose more to you and to 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. But obviously you cannot transmit something you haven't got. See to it that your relationship with Him is right, and great events will come to pass for you and countless others. This is the Great Fact for us. Abandon yourself to God as you understand God. Admit your faults to Him and to your fellows. Clear away the wreckage of your past. Give freely of what you find and join us. We shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit, and you will surely meet some of us as you trudge the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you - until then. (8th grade)

 PLAIN LANGUAGE: This book is meant only to make suggestions. We realize that we know very little. Your higher power will constantly reveal more to you. As you start each day, ask your higher power how you can help others who are still sick. If you are ready, the answers will come to you. But you can’t give something that you haven't got. So you must have a strong relationship with your higher power. If you do, great things will happen to you and to others. We call this the Great Fact. You must

• Give yourself over to your higher power as you understand it.

• Admit your faults to your higher power and to the people close to you.

• Clear away the damage of your past.

• Give freely of what you find.

• Join us. We are with you on this journey to a better life, and you will meet some of us as you travel the Road of Happy Destiny. May your higher power bring you peace and strength – now and always. (6th grade)

*This item was also suggested in 2016 by the Beyond the Bars Group in Centinela Prson in Imperial California. This request was accompanied by several citations Was agenda item A in 2016. BACKGROUND NOTES SHOW : “The Conference reaffirmed on several occasions that the writings of our co-founders not be changed”*

1st one being the Akron Pamphlets written at the request of DR Bob as he felt the newly written big book was too difficult for the blue collar worker.

2nd was a Educational Attainment piece which stated that in 1940 more than half of the US population had completed no more than an 8th grade education

The writing then goes through the decades and closes with 1991 stats of greater than 69% had completed high school.

*There is a letter from a David M of Canada from Oct 2018*

In this 9 page letter he states he was encouraged by two delegates and the reaction of the members in attendance at his presentation for a panel about AA in remote communities at the 2015 International Convention to submit this letter. He says there is no difference in translating BB into foriegn language or translating into plain language. He cites that the “King James Bible” has many plain language versions and a lot of AAs consider “Alcoholics Anonymous” to be our “bible”. He cites an example out of his experience with an individual having issues understanding the words “restore, power and sanity” He also states problem words in step one as being “admitted, powerless and unmanageable” And suggests that step one be re-written as “We agreed that alcohol was stronger than us-that our lives were out of control” He states he is qualified to discuss plain language in writing because he is a full time published writer. His full presentation from convention is a part of the letter starting on page 228 in literature background info.

*Starting on page 235 of Item U background information is a timeline of GSC actions regarding changes to the first 164, the Preface, the forwards, “The Doctor's Opinion”, “Doctor Bob’s Nightmare” and the Appendices. As well as some history and actions pertaining other to simplified easy to read literature. In ‘93,’95.’97.’98.9’9. 2000,and 2001 it was cited that the conference decided in keeping all these as is. Then several examples were given of pamphlets that were simplified.*

*A letter to GSO from Area 14 Delegate of panel 67 requested a motion in Oct ‘18*

*MOTION: Consider an individualized workbook to accompany the Big Book*

The letter starts on page 219 of background info and clearly states an opposition to changes to the first 164 pages but argues for the need for a workbook to help with comprehension of BB. This letter also references several times that there are regional guides that are made and the we make no money off of those.

*Sept ‘19 letter from GSB Chair page 241 of background info.*

In short it is a request to consider grouping several items together

Workbooks ,Plain language Big Book, Modern language Big Book, Simple language Big Book and Large-print Big Book.

*Feb 2020 starting on page 245 is a huge report from Trustees’ Literature Committee Progress Report: “Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to the Book, Alcoholics Anonymous”*

This report has several inter office letters, history of conference literature actions back to 1969, literacy rates of different demographics, education levels and comprehension of the BB, and citations of non conference approved works that exist (Hazelden EZ Big Book).

*Aug ‘19 Request from Burlington Big Book Group of area 45 “That the General Service Conference consider creating a 5th Edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous with the removal of the Chapters ‘To Wives’, ‘The Family Afterward’, and ‘To Employers’.” Page 270 of background info.*

“We believe that the above mentioned Chapters served a purpose when the book Alcoholics Anonymous was published in 1939 and that they no longer serve the original purpose. We also believe that the information found in these Chapters is not inline with other information found throughout this book or with information found in our sister fellowship, the Al-Anon Family Groups. Just as the sections of stories in the second half of the book have been updated

several times to make the book more relevant to our society today, we believe that the first half has become antiquated and that these Chapters should be removed.”

*Background forwarded from the February 1, 2020 trustees’ Literature Committee meeting on a request to allow diverse spiritual background in the book Alcoholics Anonymous “*Proposed agenda items to change the Charter to change the wording of the steps please develop a new process. Example: If Rosa Parks succeeded please herald for the sake of all females and transgender people more than half the population to make this change itemized below. 1. Remove please the words He His and Him from steps 3, 7 and 11 and replace them with the word God 2. Please allow Jewish Rabbis and Muslim leaders and Indian Ancient Vedas scholars et al to have diverse spiritual language in the Fifth Edition Big Book rather than the current predominantly Judeo Christian language.”

*NOV ‘19 Topic Submittal Form*

“MOTION: I move that Alcoholics Anonymous create an Approved AA dictionary to compliment the Big Book. DISCUSSION: I have looked for an approved AA dictionary that would fit in the cover with my Big Book and have not found a dictionary however, I did find a dictionary from an outside source. I feel that the Alcoholics in Alcoholics Anonymous would benefit from creating an AA Approved Dictionary by having it available when purchasing the Big Book thus helping them to understand why and what the wording was meant for. By creating an AA Approved Dictionary, it could be added to their literature catalog. The AA Approved Dictionary could also be a financial benefit thru literature sales. “

*Also NOV ‘19 excerpt from a letter from area 71 Delegate FULL letter can be found on page 275 of background*

“The Virginia Area Committee requests that consideration be given to the development of a contemporary and comprehensive new work book to study the 12 Steps, Traditions, and Concepts.”

Many members expressed their love of our Big Book and our 12x12, but shared concern about a generation of members that struggles to relate literature that was published in 1939 (Big Book) and 1953 (12x12). One group member noted that Bill Wilson emphasized the importance of adding to our collective experience as time went on when he wrote, “We realize we know only a little” and “God will constantly disclose more to you and to us” on page 164 of our Big Book. Another point was made that Bill W. followed up on this by writing the 12x12, which introduced our 12 Traditions and expanded on the experience that was gained with our 12 Steps between when the Big Book was published (1939) and when the 12x12 was published (1953). The group members made it clear that they didn’t want any new piece of literature to replace any existing AAWS literature (e.g. Big Book or 12x12). The goal was to have a new piece of literature that built on our existing body of literature.

*Pages 285 through 314 of background contain powerpoint slides Titled “The Big BOOK: Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access 70th General Service Conference 2020*

Topics included are- • Intent and driving forces of current motions • Original purpose of the Big Book • History of agenda items • Literacy/reading level • Societal changes • What’s been done to address accessibility/relatability challenges

AND FINALLY IT CLOSES OUT WITH A SUMMARY OF ALL INFO.

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: RIPTAB II Progress Report to Trustees’ Committee on Literature 01.11.21*

With gratitude for the opportunity to continue the work of this subcommittee, this report details the progress of our work to date during this conference-year cycle. After considerable study of all materials and shared experience (including fellowship submitted agenda items, sharing from Trustees Committees and GSO staff desks, letters, and sharing sessions), we find: 1) Continued review supports the observation that these agenda items and inquiries from the fellowship relate to barriers to accessing or relating to the program of recovery contained in the text Alcoholics Anonymous. 2) Within AA, over time the General Service Conference has directed the creation of material that is simplified or directed to specific populations of alcoholics to improve access or relatability. A host of additional tools, texts, and digital resources have been developed outside of A.A to this end. 3) Input from General Service Office service desks highlight the challenges that some potential and actual members have, as well as impact on our public relations (i.e., the perception of AA amongst the public, including professionals) that our basic text has. 4) Input from trustees’ committees also illustrate concern for reaching many still suffering alcoholics who do not have the benefit that many in the membership do, including not only those with literacy challenges but those who might have difficulty accessing resources to comprehend or apply the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. This includes populations with different literacy levels and from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds, some of whom also belong to remote or incarcerated communities. 5) The subcommittee humbly suggests that a strategy to address these barriers is needed for progress, as changing literacy and how people consume information changes over time. For longterm consideration, the Trustees Committee on Accessibility may wish to consider review of materials/formats for access and relatability at regular intervals. More immediately, recent and current agenda items might be organized and presented to the Trustees’ Literature Committee and Conference Committee on Literature for further study using a topical organization as outlined in Section D, or some other method of considering the thematic problems and solutions that have been proposed. 6) The subcommittee reviewed recent and current fellowship submitted agenda items, and found compelling strength and possibility in two approaches to impact barriers related to accessibility and CONFIDENTIAL: 71st General Service Conference Background 2 | Page CONFIDENTIAL: This is background for the General Service Conference, and as such may be a confidential A.A. document. Distribution is limited to A.A. members. Placement of this material in a location accessible to the public, including aspects of the Internet, such as Web sites available to the public, may breach the confidentiality of the material and the anonymity of members, since it may contain members’ full names and addresses. relatability. These approaches focus on the development of a) multi-media digital material and b) plain language content. Neither of these approaches would be designed to replace or supplant the current text Alcoholics Anonymous. With gratitude and respectfully submitted, the RIPTAB II subcommittee 2020-21 Trustees’ Literature Committee (TLC) Subcommittee on Researching Issues, Possible Tools and Access to the Book, Alcoholics Anonymous (RIPTAB II) Progress Report as of January 11, 2021

**Literature Z: Consider updating the pamphlet “A.A. for the Native North American.”**

Summary: Pamphlet (above mentioned) has been on a steady decline and verbiage “Native North American” may not be relevant in representing “Native North American” and using a more relatable description “Indigenous Peoples.”

Overall ensuring that the language is respectful and more effective at carrying A.A.’s message to all Indigenous Cultures.

**Item AA: Review G.S.O Publishing updates per the A.A.W.S. print policy pertaining to draft updates of the pamphlets:**

**“Is A.A. for You?”**

**“Is there an Alcoholic in Your Life?”**

**“Frequently Asked Questions about A.A.”**

**“This is A.A.”**

Summary: Proposed updates relate to de-genderizing language, the use of outdated references or terminology, the relevant focus on A.A. history, and how effectively each pamphlet addresses the audience to whom it is directed.

**Public Information A: Review 2020 annual reports from the trustees’ Public Information Committee regarding aa.org and aagrapevine.org.**

A.A. World Services suggested changes to [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) and [www.aagrapevine.org](http://www.aagrapevine.org) such as correcting errors and posting new/revised material published by G.S.O. These suggestions were forwarded to the A.A.W.S. Board after monitoring analytics, technology, and visitor activity. As per a 2004 GSC recommendation, the A.A.W.S. Board prepares an annual report (which summarizes quarterly reports) for the trustees’ P.I. Committee. Some of the changes in 2020 included the addition of a Corona (COVID-19) Landing Page, 7th tradition communication, new audio books/pamphlets, and the International Convention cancellation/virtual option. Updates were made in English, French and Spanish. There is a project currently in place to ensure sound technology strategies with a consistent presence across all platforms (i.e.. YouTube, Meeting Guide App, Google Ad/Grants)

Review the TCS summary reports of the websites, for updates on websites and happenings at the GSO and GV/LV.

Sources: 2021 NERAASA Presentations, Area 50-71st GSC Initial Summary, 71st GSC Background

**Public Information B *(See Finance H and background)*: Review the 2020 trustees’ Public Information Committee progress report on Google Ads performance.**

This began as a 2016 GSC Advisory Action: A proposal for implementing Google-for-Non-Profits account to carry the message of A.A. to the public be developed and brought back to in 2017 for review. The 2017 and 2018 GSCs requested that the trustees’ committee continue work on developing the use of Google AdWords and Google Grants.

In 2019, GSO was directed to apply for/implement Google AdWords/Grants “in-kind” donated services ad space, which is worth $10,000 of donated media value (not money) which is available to all nonprofits. Historically, A.A. has accepted “in-kind” donations for television PSAs. As there was a question about how this “in-kind” contributions would be reported on the financials, the A.A. auditor provided some guidance.

The 2020 GSC Committee was suggested to forward this report to the 71st GSC (see Finance H) as this report was not on the agenda for the 70th GSC.

A Google Ad/Grants trial period ran from 12/16/20-1/14/21. There were 2 ad groups: Find a Meeting (utilizing AA near you and the Meeting Guide App) and Get Help (utilizing AA for you and What is AA). Of the grant funds, $4560.46 was utilized during this trial period and the highest click through rates continued to relate to finding a meeting. The ads are reaching a wide range of age groups and genders. Men between 25-34 continue to be the top group interacting with these ads.

The Google AdWords Grants launch has been halted until the 71st GSC convenes and approves that launch.

How does your Group feel about the Google Ads Performance information and the example Google Ad?

Sources: 2021 NERAASA Presentations, Area 50-71st GSC Initial Summary, 71st GSC Background