



Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and became willing to make amends to them all.

READY TO SWEEP

When I was an active alcoholic, I caused physical, mental and spiritual damage to people. And as my drinking became more destructive, I isolated and alienated myself from others even more than usual, in an attempt to drink and drug without interruption or negative criticism. I'd then be overwhelmed with fear, shame, guilt and remorse. My self-loathing would spill over into all my relationships—the few that still remained, that is.

The Eighth Step gave me the toolbox I needed to explore these relationships more deeply. It enabled me to pinpoint those individuals whom I had harmed. And even if I was not actually ready to make direct amends to certain people, I was able to begin by writing out an amends list and praying for the willingness.

As I worked through my list, the essential question for me, as it says in the "Twelve and Twelve," was: "Whom have I harmed?" and in what ways. I was tempted to recall and list the ways these people had hurt me. In all honesty, there was perhaps harm on both sides. But I needed to focus on the harm I had produced. The Eighth Step does not depend on the character defects and shortcomings of others. I had to admit and acknowledge my own character defects and shortcomings. I needed to focus on "sweeping my side of the street."

When feelings of defensiveness began to emerge, I remembered that these individuals needed my forgiveness just as much as I needed theirs. But whether they recognized that need was not the issue. If I were to be serious about mending broken relationships, and I certainly was, I needed to let go of my resentments and, simultaneously, to forgive others.

The following questions were helpful to me as I worked on my Eighth Step:

- 1) How was I bad-tempered because of my drinking?
- 2) Did I avoid friends and family as a result of my obsession?
- 3) What damage did I produce by letting my self-will run riot?

These helped me gain valuable insights and discover other people to add to my list.

As I continued on my Eighth Step journey, it became apparent that I did much damage to myself as well. And it dawned on me that the most effective amends that I could make to myself was to stay sober and practice the Steps to the best of my ability. And if I keep not drinking just for today, I won't drink for the rest of my life.

In early sobriety, I would never have contemplated making the first move toward making an amend. But now I'm attempting to discern and apply the will of God in my life. I now take responsibility for my sobriety and for my relationships. Taking such a risk has become a possibility thanks to the Steps and my support network in the rooms of AA. The Eighth Step has given me the ability to maintain and develop a deep intimacy and involvement with significant others in my life. It also gives me emotional and spiritual balance.

—Gary T., Poughkeepsie, N.Y

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Tradition Eight: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

What dismays me about my early days in Alcoholics Anonymous is the extent of intellectual arrogance and grandiosity that I brought with me--defects that were quickly enlisted in what was to become an ongoing tournament: me vs. the Eighth Tradition.

The word "nonprofessional," in AA parlance, means that I ought to act in a way that neither affirms nor implies that I am something other than a recovering alkie in a Fellowship of recovering alkies. It means that if professional help is what I need, I should go where such help is available--outside AA. Seems clear enough. Yet before I was ninety days sober I had become legal advisor to a fellow newcomer who was then in the divorce court; I advised another AA to stop taking the medication that a qualified doctor had prescribed; and I counseled two AAs in a lover's quarrel.

I've learned enough since my entry into AA, in 1960, to stay out of those arenas, but there is still another that can take me by surprise. True, I no longer play doctor or therapist where medications or relationships are concerned, and I don't give legal advice, but I can still catch myself wondering whether the latest newcomer in my home group is really an alcoholic. On what basis would I question anyone's qualification? What else, except my expertise on AA and on alcoholism itself. Old habits die hard!

I try to be particularly careful when introducing newcomers to the Twelve Steps. It seems to me that one of the reasons the Steps were suggested in the first place was to avoid professionalizing them. In my zeal to encourage newcomers to get involved with the Steps I sometimes talk about them as if they were the be-all and end-all. Looking back at my own beginnings, I think that if anyone had told me, even by inference, that I had to get on with the Steps, I wouldn't have stopped long enough to remark, "What an order! I can't go through with it." I simply would've run like hell.

Sometimes I complain about the way officers conduct the business of my home group and set myself up as an expert on the AA group. Heaven help me, but there were times when I was so sure I knew everything there was to know about AA history that I would actually hook my thumbs in my vest like a nineteenth century politician when speaking from the podium.

Another area where I am made particularly aware of the Eighth Tradition is in speaking to non-AA groups. I have found myself on panels with experts in the field of alcoholism and have been introduced as an expert myself. I make it a point to remember something I was told by a member of our local intergroup public information committee: We need to maintain our amateur standing. There is a practical side to this as well. Being nonprofessional means I don't have to worry about giving a letter-perfect presentation every time.

Tradition Eight also suggests that our service centers may employ special workers. Some of the experience that helped formulate this Tradition was played out in the days of the Forty-first Street Clubhouse when members had a hard time distinguishing between Twelfth Step work and office employment. This was in the early 1940s. The controversy was still all very new but I can just imagine the air turning blue with resentment as they tried to understand that the secretary, for instance, was not being paid to stay sober or to do Twelfth Step work but to answer the phone, write letters, keep records of business transactions, and so forth.

Newcomers still ask, as I did, why we have paid AA workers (professionals). As it was pointed out to me, the staff at our local intergroup office, for example, is not paid to do Twelfth Step work. By opening up and helping to keep open the doors to institutions and correctional facilities, by collecting data on local groups and publishing updated meeting directories, along with many other fundamental activities, the intergroup staff is paving the way for Twelfth Step work. It makes my Twelfth Step work that much easier. And carrying the message of hope and recovery is the real "business" of AA. But why a paid staff? Why not volunteers? To attempt to conduct such an enterprise on a solely volunteer basis would be highly impractical. As for hiring AAs, who better to hire than people who know AA best!

Just for today, it is a good idea for me to stick close to simple basic AA as I encounter it in my home group and at others. Every single recovering alkie at every single meeting tells me, by word or deed, that non-professionalism in AA is one of the best ideas we ever had. (Incidentally, my friends are quick to remind me of it whenever I get too big for my AA britches!)

-W.H., New York, New York

Thoughts From Your Board

The Spirit of Service Work

Writing this article is an example of service work. Anytime you share your experience, strength and hope is a type of service work. When I started my journey some 24-hours ago, my first sponsor volunteered me into my first service work. I would come early to the meeting and set up chairs.

Being a perfectionist, I carefully set the room to accommodate everyone. Chairs were in perfect rows, with leg space calculated to the inch for maximum leg room. People would come into the meeting and start moving the chairs! I could not believe it!! No consideration at all for my in-depth work to set the room up. Well, I eventually got over it.

The moral of the story is that the whole process got me out of myself. I took pride and I did get recognized for my service. That first type of service work opened the door; I made coffee and cleaned up after meetings. Not long after, I was trusted servant for my meeting which led to Chairman of my home group. This expanded to be a GSR at District 8, served as Finance Chair and eventually Treasurer.

You see, service today is a big part of my life. Service to my community, my family, work and let's not forget God. It is my honor to be of service at Intergroup as your Treasurer and service to you.

- Matt R., Intergroup Treasurer

Tradition Eight: Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.

Being of Service at Your Office

After volunteering to answer phones at the Intergroup office for some time, I was given the opportunity to work there as a Tradition 8 "special worker." Being semi-retired and living in close proximity to the office, I jumped at the chance. I get to fill in when Denny or Bill is off, or when extra help is needed.

I thoroughly enjoy the time spent there, taking care of what business I can. The best part of the job is interacting with the office and speaker volunteers, and getting to meet other A.A.s who come in to buy books, pamphlets, medallions, and other items offered for sale. In my previous work at a retail counter I found the public could be impatient, demanding or downright rude. In more than two years at the office (first at the Spruce Tree Building and now at the beautiful new location on West Seventh Street) that has never been a problem.

As our antiquated computers slowed to a crawl and then as I was adjusting to our new computers and learning the updated QuickBooks program, I could be pretty slow with customers. I would be nervous that customers might be frustrated at how long I was taking. It warmed my heart that there was never a cross word or a sign of impatience.

Regular interaction with AAs gives me a chance to see the program at work. The friendly people I meet truly show me that we AAs can be "happy, joyous and free."

- Ken S., Part-time Staff

The Lifeline: Purpose Statement

The Lifeline is the monthly newsletter of the St. Paul and Suburban Area Intergroup, Incorporated. It is about, by, and for groups and members of the A.A. Fellowship. Opinions expressed herein are not to be attributed to A.A. as a whole, nor does publication of any article imply endorsement by either A.A. or Intergroup. We welcome articles on a Step, Tradition, or Concept, in addition to descriptions of personal experience. We also welcome cartoons and drawings expressing the wry side of our A.A. experience.

Please email your article to lifeline@aastpaul.org, or send it by regular mail to Lifeline Editor, St. Paul Intergroup, 608 Seventh Street West, St. Paul MN 55102. Materials or articles mailed to us cannot be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope. Intergroup reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity, language, length, and content that might violate A.A.'s Traditions, etc.

*Saint Paul Intergroup's
2017 Annual
Ice Cream Social
&
Long-Timers Recognition*

*Enjoy an Ice Cream Social and join in recognition
of those with more than a quarter century
of continuous sobriety!*

WHEN:

**Saturday, August 12th
4:00PM - 6:30PM**

WHERE:

**Lutheran Church of the Redeemer
285 North Dale St.
St. Paul, MN 55103**

Hear how they did it!



For More information, please contact St. Paul Intergroup: 651-227-5502



ASL interpretation available upon request. Please contact staff at Intergroup by Friday, August 1st to secure arrangements.

Announcements & Updates

HOOTS!

Thanks to all the faithful Night Owl volunteers who helped to answer the phones during June. Great Job! We currently have only one open shift: **3rd Saturday 7pm - 9am (overnight)**

If you are interested in this shift, please send me an e-mail at nightowl@aastpaul.org

I would also like to hear from you if:
 You want to be added to the NightOwl volunteer waiting list
 You have a night owl story that you want to share
 Your group has a new NightOwl coordinator - we need their name and phone number

Cheryl B., NightOwl coordinator

From "Questions and Answers" (NightOwl manual)

Q: Can we give out phone numbers?

A: We can give out numbers for clubs or meetings that are listed in the directory, but never give out an AA member's personal phone number.

Q: What are the Night Owl shifts?

A: A list of all the shifts is on page 9 of the Night Owl instructions. You can also find this by going on-line.

Q: What if I need the username and password to access the Night Owl instructions?

A: Attend an orientation! It only takes one hour and we have them regularly scheduled the 3rd Saturday of each month. We recommend attending an orientation if you just want a refresher.

Q: What if the person who has the shift after me doesn't call me?

A: First of all, call the 651-277-5502 number to make sure you still have the phones rolled to your number. If you get a busy signal or a request to enter a code, you still have the phones and should call the Night Owl committee coordinator. The number for the back-up phone is in your instructions. Sometimes a volunteer will forget to call you to let you know they are forwarding the calls to their number.

Group and Area News

New Meeting: The *Arm Group* is hosting Thursday 6:00PM Beginners/Orientation meeting at the Eastside Club—1099 Payne Avenue, St. Paul, 55130. The Meeting is Open, Mixed & All-ages.

New Meeting: The *Eastside Club* added two new meetings to its schedule: one is a Monday 4:00PM Closed, All-Ages, Women's Big Book meeting; the other is a Wednesday 10AM Open, Mixed, All-ages, Step meeting.

New Meeting: The *Eagan, Burnsville Savage Groups* is now holding a Tuesday 6:30PM New-comer's Meeting—1959 Shawnee Road, Second Floor - Suites 6A & 6B, Eagan, 55122. The Meeting is Closed, Mixed, & All-ages.

Meeting No More: *Queers & Crackpots* is no longer holding it's Sunday 10:30AM meeting at the Emma B. Howe YMCA, 8950 Spring Brook Drive, NW, Coon Rapids, 55433.

Your News?

We invite you to share your AA news here!
 Please send your items to lifeline@aastpaul.org.
 We look forward to hearing from you.



**Looking for a Service Opportunity?
 Become a St. Paul Intergroup Night Owl!**

Upcoming Night Owl Orientations:
Saturday, Aug. 19th, Sept. 16th, Oct. 21st

Every Third Saturday from 10:00 - 11:00 AM

St. Paul Intergroup Office

608 Seventh Street West - St. Paul, MN 55102

To RSVP please call: 651-227-5502



St. Paul Area Intergroup Representatives' Meeting Minutes June 20th, 2017

Opened with the Serenity Prayer, introductions, and Jenni read the Primary Purpose of Intergroup.
 Minutes from last month were reviewed, Guillermo motioned and Ken seconded, motion approved.
 Treasurer's Report, – Matt gave the report. Bank account is \$19,784 and prudent reserve is \$45,019. Liabilities increased and receivables decreased. Total contributions are down, group contributions are down and office sales are down. Expenses decreased \$3,725. See Treasurer's Report for full details. Contact Matt at treasurer@aastpaul.org.
 Office Report, Dennis – The Open House went very well and over 100 people stopped by. Sales were up 57% from last year. The new Grapevine publication "Making Amends" is now available. Effective June 1st the Grapevine literature prices have increased as the inventory of old-rate-stock is gone. There are two extra supplements in the Lifeline: first is the Advisory Actions taken at the 2017 GSC written by our Area Delegate Curt K and the second is the Keynote speech from the General Service Conference by General Service Trustee Bill N. Instead of a Concept article we have included a piece by our West Central Regional Trustee Contact the Office at manager@aastpaul.org.
 Night Owl Report, Lesli – Congrats and thanks to Paul C, Patti M, and Connie M for joining the Night Owl Committee. Special thanks to Lesli D and Derrick R who have rotated off. No regular shifts are open. Contact Cheryl at NightOwl@aastpaul.org or leave a message at the intergroup office for more information.
 Website Report, Jonathan gave the report. 692 meetings and 278 groups total. Up 1 meeting and up 1 group. There are 14 service opportunities and ZERO open Night Owl shifts per the website. The mobile site is still up for parallel testing, the link is in the corner of the regular site. Contact Jonathan at webservant@aastpaul.org.
 Outreach Program, Carolyn M – Volunteers are still needed for visiting meetings. Refer to the Outreach Info Sheet for full instructions. For more information contact Carolyn M at outreach@aastpaul.org.
 Update from the Board, Lesli D, The ASL Interpreter policy was reviewed and is still up on the website. Thanks to the reps for showing up so well for the Gopher State Intergroup Hospitality Suite. Events are once again going to be regularly occurring at the Lutheran Church of the Redeemer on Dale St. Contact the office for more information.
 Liaison Reports: District 8 Mike C, Curt K presented at the District meeting ; District 19, Brian M – Curt K presented at the district meeting.
 Upcoming Intergroup Events
 Ice Cream Social – August 12th (JD) – 4pm-630pm at Lutheran Church of the Redeemer. Six speakers all with 25+ years of sobriety. See flyer for more details or contact JD.
 Old Business: None
 New Business:
 Handicapped Parking Spot – Asking the reps to collect group conscience to vote at next month's rep meeting. One-time cost of \$380 to get a sign installed on W. 7th in front of the office. Asked to consider Loading Zone spot rather than Handicapped spot, a Handicapped spot can be taken for up to 48 hours.
 Report from Area 36 Delegate, Curt K. Presentation, materials, and more information available at area36.org
 Group AA Announcements: none
 Suggestions for next months's agenda: None
 Grapevine Report for July, Mark
 Concept VI review for July, Bob
 Mock Rep Report volunteer for July, Travis
 Closed with the Responsibility Statement

Meetings Represented: District 8; East Side 12&12, St. Paul; The Firing Line, Roseville; Happy, Joyous & Free, Mahtomedi; Hole In The Doughnut, Roseville; Main Idea, St. Paul; Maplewood Alano Groups, Maplewood; Meeting of the Waters Mendota Heights; Midway, St. Paul; New Brighton Big Book, New Brighton; New Found Freedom, St. Paul; No Time Like the Present, Roseville; Outright Mental Defectives, St. Paul; Pocketing Our Pride, St. Paul; Problems & Solutions, St. Paul; Rule 62 Step & Tradition, St. Paul; St. Paul Speaker Meeting, St. Paul; Summit Hill, St. Paul; Third Edition, St. Paul; Uptown Groups, St. Paul; Up in Smoke, St. Paul.

<u>2017 Steering Board:</u>		<u>Office Calls/Visitors—June 2017</u>	
Chair:	Jenni S.	Meeting information	88
Alternate Chair:	Lesli D.	Inventory/hours	14
Secretary:	Rob C.	12th Step calls	4
Treasurer:	Matt R.	Temporary sponsor	13
Alternate Treasurer:	Karen C.	Speaker request	36
Members-at- Large 2017:	J.D. & Carolyn M.	Special events	3
Members-at- Large 2018	Tom S. & Erik M.	Outside issues	9
Advisor to the Board:	Sandy K.	Info for professionals	3
Manager	Dennis B.	Administrative	90
		Other	57
		Total Calls	317
		Average Calls/Day	14.4
		Total Visitors	248
		Average Visitors/Day	9.2

August 2017 REPS' MEETING: Tuesday, August 15th @ 7:30 PM
 SAINT STANISLAUS CHURCH
 398 West Superior Street; St. Paul, MN 55102

**7th Tradition
Suggestions for Groups**

“Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.”

The Conference-approved pamphlet: “Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Mix” offers the following suggestions for the distribution of group funds after group expenses have been paid:

50% St. Paul Intergroup
608 Seventh Street West
St. Paul, MN 55102

30% General Service Office
P.O. Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163

10% Southern MN Area 36
Area Assembly
P.O. Box 2812
Mpls., MN 55402

10% District Committee

Ramsey County:
District 8, P.O. Box 131523
St. Paul, MN 55113

Dakota County:
District 19, P.O. Box 1466
Burnsville, MN 55337

Washington County:
District 15, P.O. Box 181
Lake Elmo, MN 55042

SE Ramsey County:
District 26, P.O. Box 75980
St. Paul, MN 55175

JUNE CONTRIBUTIONS

Number of Group Contributors: 34
Total Group Contributions: \$3444
Number of Faithful Fivers: 12
Total from Faithful Fivers: \$1405



District Meetings

District 8 (Ramsey Co.)
Fairview Community Center
1910 Co. Rd B, Rm 108
Roseville
3rd Wed., 7:30 PM

District 15 (Wash. Co.)
Christ Lutheran Church
11194 N. 36th St.
Lake Elmo
4th Mon., 7:00 PM

District 19 (Dakota Co.)
Rosemount Community Center
13885 South Robert Trail
Rosemount
2nd Wed., 7:00 PM

District 26 (SE Ramsey Co.)
Grace Lutheran Church
1730 Old Hudson Rd.
St. Paul
2nd Sun., 7:00PM
www.district26-area36.org



**Thanks to all the Groups
that contributed in June**

- 11 W. Bernard Group
- Amazing Grace Group
- Anoka Day By Day
- Children of Chaos Plus
- Cottage Grove Groups
- Dakota Alano
- Day by Dei Saturday
- Hampden Park Group
- Happy Joyous and Free - Mahtomedi
- Highland Park Groups
- Hole in the Doughnut Group
- Holy Redeemer Parish AA Group
- Joy of Living Group
- Lindstrom Groups
- Meeting of the Waters
- North Dale Group
- Ringmaster's Group
- River Rats
- Rivertown BB Group-Hastings
- Rosemount Groups
- Roseville Wed Night
- Saturday Morning Serenity Group
- Shoreview 12 x 12
- Sisters of Serenity
- St. Paul Sun Night Speaker Meeting
- Stepsisters of Northfield Group
- Summit Hill
- Third Edition Group
- Third Tradition Northfield
- This Simple Program
- Una Luz en el Camino
- Uptown Club
- White Bear Lake - Thursday Night Group
- White Bear SAT AM Women's Group

Thanks to all of the FANTASTIC Office Volunteers who helped in June:

Chrissie, Chuck L., CJ M., Connie W.,
Deb E., DeeDee S., Don C., Frank D.,
Henry O., Jesse V., Jim B.,
Jimmy D., John G., Jonnie A.,
Laura G., Liesl M., Marc S., Perry M.,
Sam B., Suzanne B., Ty K., Woody W.



Thanks to our AWESOME Night Owls too!



AAWS Board Meeting From the Newcomer-Director's Eyes

Orientation: As the West Central Regional Trustee, newly assigned as a Director to Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., I ventured to New York for my first meeting as a director on June 14th. I've had many of these "first meetings", starting with my first district meeting as a GSR in May of 1988, and here almost 30 years later, I was doing it again. Similar feelings always lead up to a new experience such as these: what does everyone else likely know but me, and how do I fit into the process without seeming to be a square wheel?

Fortunately, AAWS has instituted a full-day orientation process. It starts out with the Chair of AAWS (Rich P., NE Regional Trustee) covering the roles and responsibilities of a director, and a detailed explanation of all the meetings and committees of AAWS.

Following the Chair's presentation, three key managers at the General Service Office covered an array of services that they manage at the office. Albin Z, Director of Administrative Services reviewed his position's tasks and responsibilities, Eva S., Staff Coordinator explained how the 12 staff positions provide services to the fellowship, and Karen H., Senior Manager of Support Services and Records, enlightened us on the massive amount of unending work that flows into and out of the office to serve the groups.

Cynthia G., Director of Information Technology Services reviewed the internal and external aspects of wide array of software and database management services that take place at the office. Suffice to say, we could not function without a sound I.T. strategy. In fact, I'll share that there is a number of new initiatives taking place with technology that will have a direct effect on the groups and people seeking information on AA. Integration is an important issue, to make our services more efficient and accurate.

As a director, finances are always on the table, and Bob Slotterback, the new Director of Finance, reviewed financial statements, budgets, subsidiary reports – especially on contributions from the groups, and also shared his vision for a more robust reporting system that will allow more information to flow to the fellowship.

AAWS sells about 13 million dollars of literature every year, and this is one of the primary functions of AAWS – to produce the literature that the fellowship has determined is useful for carrying the message. The Director of Publishing, David Rosen, was very thorough in what we do in the publishing department. I would like to share with you that I was astounded at the amount of licensing and translation work that takes place at the office. I had thought AA a bit "mature" in new areas of expansion, but I was totally wrong on this assumption. Many countries are just getting their first round of our literature – even the basics like the Big Book or Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. Also, there is a hunger for our pamphlets, more than I have ever seen in "domestic AA" – AA in the U.S. and Canada. I came to realize how vital 7th Tradition contributions are to the growth of AA in places outside our conference structure.

As a Director, it was important to get a grasp on the Human Resources department of GSO, and Olga Mesonjnik, the HR Director, gave us an overview. The orientation wrapped up with a presentation on the Archives Department by Michelle M., our dedicated archivist.

AAWS Board Meeting: While 9 people make up the AAWS Board, there are likely about 25 people in the room for the Board meeting itself. All 12 staff members are there plus

(Continued Pg. 2)

AAWS Board Meeting From the Newcomer-Director's Eyes

department managers and sometimes their assistants. The day is divided into two sections: the committee meetings and reports (5) and then the Board discusses and acts on committee recommendations. If necessary, an executive session is held, and that is attended by only the AAWS Board members. It is a very busy day – more business than time to get it done, it seems, but we stay until the work is completed.

With a desire to be brief but informational, let me share some key highlights that affect everyone in AA:

Finance: for about 2 years and continuing, the AA has had a swelling of support to the GSO by the voluntary contributions from the groups. It's been consistent, it's been positive, it's been heartwarming! I have always felt we should be paying for the services we asked to get performed, and we have moved beyond the 80-percentile mark. With contributions up around 16% for the first quarter compared to last year, it will not be long before this ideal will be reached. Cost management has been a high priority by Greg, our general manager, and overall, we are below budget. A notable uptick: electronic contributions now comprise 12% of our total contributions. This method of contributing saves our fellowship money. We spend almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million dollars to process contributions to insure they are properly tracked and acknowledged, and doing it electronically streamlines the process.

Communications/Technology/Services: AA's website is in the early stages of an entire re-write, and likely an app will be developed alongside the new web. Fellowship New Vision, our group records software, is also under the microscope for a re-write.

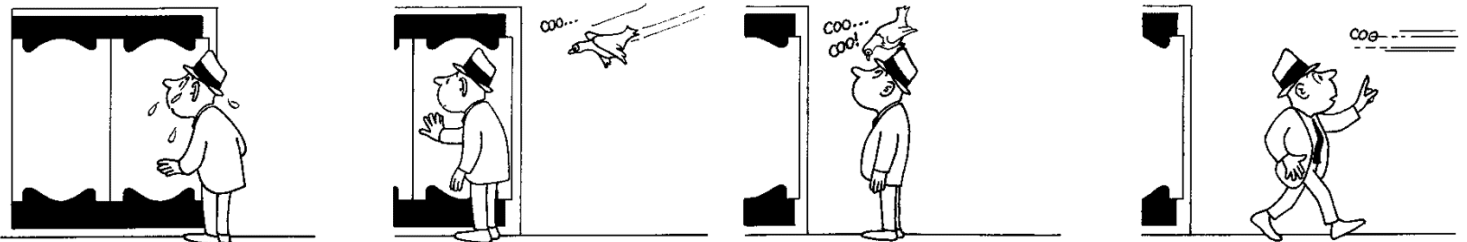
Publishing: A new "Safety Card" similar to the open/closed meeting card or 7th Tradition card is now available.

Internal Audit Committee: As chair of this newly formed committee, we are writing our Composition, Scope and Procedure. This is the first step that always takes place with committees. This is important to everyone because it will be a long-term mechanism to insure your AAWS Board is totally compliant with all internal and external processes, procedures and laws.

This is your AAWS Board in action. There is a vast amount of work that gets done, and it requires approximately 75 paid employees to perform the services we have agreed are needed to help carry the message and retain our fellowship's vitality and future. It all starts at the group, commitments and contributions that carry the message and simultaneously, keep us sober and wrapped in God's grace. We all trudge this road of happy destiny together, in our own ways, but may our paths continue to cross as we carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic.

Tom A.

WCR Trustee



Trying Hard Not to Limit God

As your Delegate recently returned from the General Service Conference (GSC) in New York, I see many ways our day to day A.A. lives here in Southern Minnesota are connected to that one annual event. Participating in our general service structure at the Conference was an encouraging and hopeful experience. I have a greater respect for the importance of the time and energy we spend in our groups, districts, areas, and regions trying to inform and gather our group conscience. In Tradition Two of our Twelve Traditions, it states clearly that "For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience." And the first two of our Twelve Concepts for World Service put the authority and responsibility for our World Services in the conscience of the whole Fellowship – the A.A. groups across the U.S. and Canada.

All this talk about our group conscience makes it clear that it's a big deal. Tradition Two basically says that the group conscience is where God shows up. If I have questions about whether my actions and ideas are lined up with God's will rather than just my own will, then maybe I should turn over my ideas to the group conscience and see what happens. For example, if I have a thought about a better way to reach potential alcoholics coming out of treatment centers, then it becomes my responsibility to share that idea in one of the places we practice gathering a group conscience. If others have an idea about how to improve an A.A. pamphlet by adding content about our Tradition of anonymity, then it becomes their responsibility to bring that idea in front of others to see what they think. This could be a group business meeting, a monthly district meeting, an Area Assembly, or a regional service conference. We each add our voices to the group conscience by sharing ideas, but it goes beyond us personally. Our participation becomes the expression of a power greater than ourselves – the way that God shows up is through our sharing.

If the expression of God is the group conscience, then we also have the responsibility to make sure that our group conscience is the fullest, broadest, and most inclusive expression of a loving God as is possible. The same sense of responsibility that motivates me to participate in the group conscience must also motivate me to seek out and encourage others to participate. If I truly believe that God shows up in the group conscience, then I don't want God to be limited by a group conscience that only represents a part of A.A. As tempting as it might be sometimes to prefer a group conscience made up of people who agree with me or support my ideas, I am better off and A.A. is better served if I act to encourage a broad-ranging group conscience. A stronger expression of God in the group conscience is one that includes perspectives and points of view from all sides of an issue. Of course, I must truly exhibit open-mindedness if I am to enjoy the benefits of diverse ideas. Otherwise I run the risk of paying lip service to the idea of a group conscience while in reality I work to defend my own ideas or gather others to my side in an argument. Taking sides has the unintended consequence of closing my mind to any new ideas.

At the Conference this year, I saw a wonderful example of our group conscience working to include a broad range of viewpoints and encourage greater participation. The agenda item discussed had to do with whether to translate the background material that accompanies the GSC agenda. At 1,277 pages this year, translating that material into French and Spanish would have been a challenging undertaking. But in discussing whether to make this information available to the many French and Spanish speaking A.A. members, groups, and districts who are already an active part of our Fellowship, the debate moved quickly beyond the usual worries about money to a larger concern. Instead of seeing it as strictly a budget issue, the concern expressed was that not translating these documents would harm the Fellowship by discouraging participation of many already active A.A. members. If we discourage participation by not translating the background material, we are inadvertently limiting God to only those A.A. members who speak English. If we are a predominantly English-speaking Fellowship, we limit God by not welcoming and including those A.A.

(Continued pg. 4)

Trying Hard Not to Limit God

members whose primary language is Spanish or French, or American Sign Language or Somali or other examples. And language is not the only limitation we could unthinkingly place on God and the group conscience. Likewise, if we are a predominantly straight Fellowship, we might unconsciously limit God by not welcoming and including those A.A. members whose gender identities and sexual orientations span a wide range of possibilities. If we are a predominantly white Fellowship, without giving it the proper attention we might limit God by not welcoming and including those A.A. members from racial, ethnic, and immigrant communities different from our own. Without thinking, we could also be limiting God by not welcoming and including A.A. members who face mobility challenges that require accessible meeting spaces and enhanced communication technologies.

Putting my trust in the group conscience of A.A. is a great responsibility that also has great rewards. When I put my trust in the group conscience, I am putting my trust in a process that leads to the clearest and strongest expression of God's will in our Fellowship. If I want the fullest, clearest channel for the God of my understanding to show up, I need to work hard not to limit God along the way.

Thanks for all your service,
Curt K.
Panel 67 Delegate Area 36 – Southern Minnesota
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Concept Eight: The trustees are the principal planners and administrators of over-all 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.

The Trustees of the General Service Board act in two primary capacities: (a) With respect to the larger matters of over-all policy and finance, they are the principal planners and administrators. They and their primary committees directly manage these affairs. (b) But with respect to our separately incorporated and constantly active services, the relation of the Trustees is mainly that of full stock ownership and of custodial oversight which they exercise through their ability to elect all directors of these entities.

It took me a while to find the underlying principle(s) in this Concept in order to apply it to my personal life. However, they are indeed there.

It really comes down to responsibility and trust. It is important that I understand, and meet, my responsibility to my family, my community and my employer. In each case there is a *primary* responsibility that I have legally agreed to carry out. This agreement is often spelled out in a marriage license, property agreement or employment contract. I need to understand what I have agreed to and carry it out.

On the other hand, there are situations, in the family, community and my employment, in which I have to trust other people involved to take a more direct hand than I ought to. I think this is part of developing a spiritual sense that I am simply one part of a greater whole—that I cannot fulfill the role of a “be-all and see-all” ruler.

The further I move into the Concepts from this point forward, I will see this interesting “balance” taking place which relies almost entirely on faith and trust.

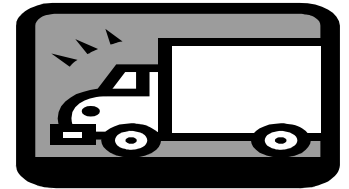
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