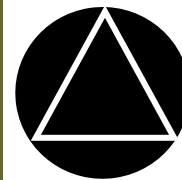


# Gratitude Gazette



## Informed Group Conscience

What is an Informed A.A. Group Conscience? The group conscience is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken. This is achieved by the group members through the sharing of full information, individual points of view, and the practice of A.A. principles. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions with an open mind.

On sensitive issues, the group works slowly—discouraging formal motions until a clear sense of its collective view emerges. Placing principles before personalities, the membership is wary of dominant opinions. Its voice is heard when a well-informed group arrives at a decision. The result rests on more than a “yes” or “no” count—precisely because it is the spiritual expression of the group conscience. The term “informed group conscience” implies that pertinent information has been studied and all views have been heard before the group votes.

## AA Group Inventory

Many groups periodically hold a “group inventory meeting” to evaluate how well they are fulfilling their primary purpose: to help alcoholics recover through A.A.’s suggested Twelve Steps of recovery. Some groups take inventory by examining our Twelve Traditions, one at a time, to determine how well they are living up to these principles.

The following questions, compiled from A.A. shared experience, may be useful in arriving at an informed group conscience. Groups will probably wish to add questions of their own:

1. What is the basic purpose of our group?
2. What more can our group do to carry the message?
3. Is our group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross section of our community, including those with special needs?
4. Do new members stick with us, or does the turnover seem excessive? If so, why? What can we as a group do to retain members?
5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do it better?
6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other A.A.s outside the meeting rooms? Do we also leave what they share at meetings behind?
7. Does our group emphasize to all members the value of keeping up with the kitchen, set-up, clean-up and other house-keeping chores that are essential for our Twelfth Step efforts?
8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?
9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?
10. Are we doing all we can to provide an attractive and accessible meeting place?
11. Does our group do its fair share toward participating in the purpose of A.A.—as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service?
12. What has our group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of professionals in the community—the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators, and others who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?
13. How is our group fulfilling its responsibility to the Seventh Tradition?

## A FEW HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR DELEGATES CONFERENCE REPORT

**The eBook Initiative**—A presentation was given on the new “app” GSO is developing which will enable digital downloading of the *Big Book* and *Twelve Steps & Twelve Traditions* onto iPads, iPods and iPhones, with a new projected rollout date of October 2011. The free app will give the purchaser a choice of two options: purchasing AA’s eBooks from an existing iTunes account or directly from AAWS via a link to our new online “eStore”. Under the current contract, when purchased through iTunes, 30% of the book’s purchase price will go to Apple, Inc. Purchasing through AAWS will not result in any third-party fees. This digital delivery system will enable AAWS to control the publishing, distribution, copyrights and pricing of AA’s eBook content. Apple currently has 300,000 digital apps available. Pricing of our eBooks has yet to be determined. Digital infrastructure costs are estimated at \$400K over a two-year period.

**The “Spirituality” Pamphlet**— Over the years several requests have come through the conference structure for development of literature focusing on atheists and agnostics in AA. At the 60th GSC a Floor Action was passed to “develop literature which focuses on spirituality that includes stories from atheists and agnostics who are successfully sober in Alcoholics Anonymous.” The Literature Committee reviewed the progress report on the pamphlet, including a draft introduction, and recommended that the Trustees’ Literature Committee continue to develop such literature, expressing “support for the trustees’ efforts to develop a pamphlet which reflects the wide range of spiritual experiences of AA members.” A friendly amendment to the recommendation resulted in deleting the word “successfully” from the motion, since the conference felt the term could not be satisfactorily defined. This recommendation passed. A separate agenda item requesting that the committee reconsider the 2010 Advisory Action to develop such literature was thoroughly reviewed, with the committee unanimously agreeing to “take no action.”

**Reduced Slate of Directors on the Grapevine Board**—One of the most hotly contested items concerned the General Service Board’s decision to leave two vacancies on the Grapevine board unfilled. Both positions would have been non-trustee directors, and candidates had already applied and been interviewed prior to the decision being made. By charter, the GV Board consists of 7-10 directors, but traditionally consists of nine. The outgoing GV Board Chair and an outgoing general service trustee and past GV board member were most vocal in their opposition to the proposed slate. The proposed slate was passed by the conference 92-34. A motion to reconsider failed by one vote. *Overall, it appeared that lack of communication between the AAWS Board and the Grapevine Board had been the primary source of this conflict, and the two corporate boards were encouraged and admonished by the delegates to improve their levels of communication and cooperation with each other.*

**Financial Support & Re-structuring of The Grapevine, Inc.**—The current state of the Grapevine Magazine, our “meeting in print,” dominated much of the discussion at this year’s conference. A recommendation passed which would allow the AA Grapevine, Inc. to utilize digital channels for the sale and distribution of the GV magazine, books and products, in a similar fashion to AAWS. While only 4.5% of our membership currently subscribes to the Grapevine, the recent GV Survey indicated that 97% of the fellowship wants to keep the magazine. Digital Grapevine sales will cut operating expenses and coincide with more aggressive “engagement” (aka marketing) to help the Grapevine become self supporting. The GV Budget in 2010 resulted in a net loss of \$394,335. This was a result of the Grapevine, Inc.’s “drawdown” from the Reserve Fund of \$588,000. (Traditionally the Reserve Fund is only used for “extraordinary expenses.”) In an effort to combat the financial woes of the Grapevine, the GV office staff has been reduced, a new Executive Publisher, Ami B., has been hired, and an overall re-structuring of the GV business model has begun. So far, belt-tightening and cuts have resulted in a 60% reduction in the projected deficit—\$94,000—for 2011. *75% of the Grapevine’s gross profits come from magazine subscriptions.* An agenda item requesting the GV be allowed to accept contributions resulted in a “No Action” from the GV Committee.

Yours in Service,

Laura V.

Panel 61/Area 38

[www.mostateconvention.org](http://www.mostateconvention.org)

WE are RESPONSIBLE for A.A.’s FUTURE –  
LET it BEGIN WITH US  
AUGUST 5<sup>TH</sup> TO AUGUST 7<sup>ST</sup>  
JEFFERSON CITY, MO

## AREA ARCHIVES

- The Area Archives Committee has started collecting material from Groups, Districts and the Area workshops.
- The Archives office is open every Wed. from 1-6 PM
- The Archives Committee is having work sessions on the 3rd Saturday of each month from 10-Noon.
- Contact Info:  
archives@eamo.org  
314-644-1130  
14 Sunnen Dr.,  
Suite 144

This year's Conference theme – "We are Responsible for A.A.'s Future – Let it Begin with Us." – expresses the heart of why we participate in AA service. It invites us to consider our roles and responsibilities for doing our part to help ensure the future health of AA.

At some point in our sobriety we are grateful and want to give back. Many of us become involved in general service. We feel a sense of ownership in AA – an increased connection with AA as a whole. We feel that we have a stake in the Fellowship. As we learned to take responsibility for our personal recovery, we then learned the importance of being responsible for AA itself.

During a presentation last month on "The History of Sponsorship," while speaking of the early pioneers in service to AA, the phrase "Sponsorship into the future" was mentioned. We learned a lot about the many trusted servants who prepared the way for us to find recovery in AA. We are forever thankful to them. Sponsorship into the future: Through service we work to help to keep AA always alive and well. As we have been sponsored and sponsor others in recovery, we are sponsored into service. We, in turn, sponsor others into service. We pass it on.

"Let it Begin with Us." It began with the early pioneers, who spent countless hours in service to carry the message. It continues to begin with all of us – the legacy has been passed forward. Our Responsibility Declaration, "I am responsible...", is our calling as AA members: to carrying the message to the suffering alcoholics, to working one-on-one helping someone recover, to our Third Legacy of service. Through participation we take personal responsibility for AA – now and into the future. We don't pass the buck. And we have fun doing it.

In love and service,  
Marge D., Area 38 Chair

## Literati

Do you know which AA pamphlet these quotes come from?

"Closed Meetings are for A.A. members only, or for those who have a drinking problem"

"Part of my commitment is to show up at my home group meetings, greet newcomers at the door, and be available to them—not only for them but for me."

"...the General Service Conference has recommended that 'family meeting', 'double trouble' and 'alcohol and pill' meetings not be listed in our A.A. directories."

"Naturally, alcoholics cannot be helped by A.A. unless they know A.A. exists, and where to find it."

"Among other things, anonymity in the Fellowship means that we forgo personal prestige for any A.A. work we do to help alcoholics."

"no member to be expelled from A.A.—membership always to be the choice of the individual."

See answer on back page

## HOW DID YOU GET INTO SERVICE?

### *A Whole Other World*

Like most Alcoholics that I've listened to, I resisted A.A., I resisted getting a sponsor, I resisted finding a home group, and I resisted the steps. As I look back, it's obvious that I have always resisted the things that would make my life better. Something my sponsor told me a long time ago helped me change my attitude. What he said was that I should be careful not to argue for my limitations. Another way to phrase that idea comes from "Spiritual Experience" in the back of the Big Book, and it essentially tells us that "contempt prior to investigation is the bond to everlasting ignorance."

For many years, I also resisted service work in A.A. I was comfortable hiding out in my home group, local meetings, and the occasional A.A. convention. I never really worried much about who printed what or what self-support meant beyond rent and coffee. I'd heard all those committees and workshops and assemblies were mostly just a bunch of "political hoey". Occasionally, our group would appoint (or connive) someone into being a GSR. And if they actually attended "those service things" few of us really listened to what they had to report. Folks like me were a lot more interested in the food and fellowship after the A.A. meeting.

Then, on my twentieth A.A. birthday somebody brought one of those giant chocolate chip cookies with my name on it to the meeting. As great as that was, I sat there and thought of an old Peggy Lee song titled "Is that all there is?" What I didn't realize was that I had all those years of sobriety without much of an investment. Oh sure, I'd always put money in the basket and I'd had most of the home group duties from setting up and taking down to treasurer and chairing the meeting. But my A.A. world was limited. I had not given much thought to what really keeps A.A. going and what keeps it from changing into something that would not work.

Almost by accident, I attended my first Area Assembly. There I saw a lot of folks who had less time in sobriety than myself, but who were totally committed to maintaining the purity of our message of recovery to the still suffering alcoholic. They were not only committed, they were happy to be there and involved in what has kept our books and literature in print. And in their various assignments and committees they ensured our message continued to reach alcoholics. Like a fella' once said "we can't just sit and wait for alcoholics to wash up on our shores." Did they argue about stupid stuff sometimes? You betcha'!. But they always got over it because in the end they realized everyone of us has the same "primary purpose." Besides who else besides another "alkie" understands our tendency to feel self-righteous or indignant and forgives us for such behavior? And after all, what better place to get over ourselves?

The ultimate payoff for A.A. service has always be an investment in my own recovery. But there is more. Through service work I have expanded not only my knowledge of A.A., but friendships that now exist in other states and other countries. Our book tells us that "...there exists among us a fellowship, a friendliness, and an understanding that is indescribably wonderful." I never felt that sensation anywhere more than I do in service meetings. I have never gotten as mad, laughed as hard, been as frustrated, been more relieved, or felt more welcome and complete than in an A.A. service meeting. A.A. service truly is a "whole other world" and it is right there waiting for us if we reach back and grab a little of that "honesty, open mindedness, and willingness" that paid off so much at the beginning!

Carl B,  
District 51

Literati Answer: The AA Group...Where It All Begins

### **Activities Around the Area (for people who would not usually mix)**

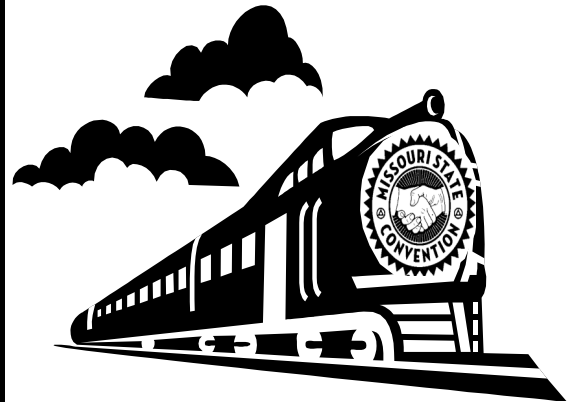
07/09/2011- Into Action 20th Anniversary Meeting @ 7:30pm - Southminster Presbyterian, E. Watson Rd speaker Clancy I.

07/16/2011- SMICYPAA Event, Tower Grove Park, Cypress South Pavilion @ 3:30pm - Speaker, BBQ & Kickball

08/5-08/07/2011—60th Missouri State Convention, Jefferson City, MO - Capital Plaza Hotel

9/2-9/04/2011- 28th Annual Fall Classic, St. Louis, MO - Airport Marriott Hotel

10/7-10/09/2011 - Southwest Regional Forum, Wichita, KS - Hilton Wichita Airport Executive Conference Center



**Take the train to the Missouri State Convention Jefferson City August 5-7 2011**  
[www.mostateconvention.org](http://www.mostateconvention.org)

**Congratulations Clayton V.!**  
**The Trustee candidate that our Area chose to send forth is now our new Southwest Regional Trustee.**

**Thank you for serving.**