

## first thoughts, post-Conference

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Our Spring Assembly is notably later than normal, and I'm hoping that some of you are as excited to hear updates following the General Service Conference as I am to share them. Please feel free to print this, or share it electronically with members of your districts and with people who attended the PreConferences. Those events were so meaningful to me, such a valuable opportunity to hear other voices and form other thoughts. I hope if you do share this letter, that you also share my gratitude for the participation, thought, and commitment of our Fellowship

There is much more spirit and detail to share, so please encourage participation and attendance at our Spring Assembly. If you are interested in holding a local event post-Conference, please let me know. And if you have any advice for balancing the desire to get information out while preserving the integrity of the Delegate's Report at the Assembly, please let me know.

Last year was easily characterized through the activity of the Conference, through the Advisory Actions passed, and some bold action. AA in a Time of Change. This year was a much different event, though thematically just as much on target. AA Comes of Age 2.0: Unified in Love and Service. I believe this year is best characterized through an understanding of the process, of the spiritual principles involved. The Conference expressed itself less through formal charge and mandate via Advisory Action, and more through the spirit of discussion expressing the clear will of the Conference. This was a Conference of "slow down and consider," and a Conference which emphasized the time, talents and treasures contributed by our groups and trusted servants. It was a Conference where God's voice was alive in the discussion, where the promise of our Warranties was made manifest.

And it left with me with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and trust. Gratitude for transformation, for the opportunity to participate, for such a strong sense of belonging. And trust for the future, represented in our process and within the current and future servant leaders we are blessed to have. You are that present and that future, as much as any Conference member.

This is by no means a complete list of Conference Actions, just a few points of note. More information will be coming detailing Conference actions, no-actions, and rationales. In the meantime, if you have particular questions, feel free to ask. And if you hear things which you want to clarify, I'm here for that too.

- There were many more Committee Considerations coming from the Conference Committees, and much fewer Committee Recommendations. Committee Considerations are requests for additional information, development, or sharing. Conference members can ask clarifying questions to better understand what information might be missing, the character of the discussion, points of consideration, etc., but these are not action items. Most if not all will be returning to the Conference Committees at the 73<sup>rd</sup> GSC. I'll be getting into the clarifying questions during my report at the Assembly.

- There were a number of small but meaningful changes and additions to pamphlets, ranging from "Q&A on Sponsorship" to "Understanding Anonymity". Other pamphlets were approved as larger redesigns, like "Young People and AA." "Twelve Steps Illustrated" was not well received, and feeling that the draft needed significant rework was recommitted to the Trustees' Literature Committee.
- Here is a link to a video from the GSO in England. It gives a good example of direction for pamphlets and presentation going forward. This video was approved to be adapted as used within the US/Canada. <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/About-AA/12-Concepts>
- We are moving forward with a membership survey. Final details depend upon an upcoming meeting, but this is long overdue, and the Conference has accepted a plan for conducting the survey.
- There was a lot of discussion about anonymity online, some of which is reflected in changed language in the "Understanding Anonymity" pamphlet. There was also a lot of discussion about online-only groups, both regarding our tradition of anonymity, as well as their inclusion within the US/Canada Service Structure.
- There was a lot of discussion about the translation of background for the General Service Conference. There was a Committee Recommendation that background be released on February 15<sup>th</sup>, simultaneously in English, French, and Spanish. Within the current timeline establishing the Final Conference Agenda at the January Board meeting (5<sup>th</sup> weekend of each year), the 2/15 deadline is not achievable. To accomplish the spiritual ambition of equity and equal access to information and material, the Conference approved the simultaneous release of background in all three languages, but without specifying a date of release. There was a great amount of further discussion about reassigning responsibilities from the January to October Board meetings, discussion about the nature and composition of background, about the simplification and concise presentation to expedite translation, and other possible improvements. Keep in mind that we just finished the first year of a 3-year trial on the Equitable Distribution of Workload process. More information will be forthcoming, but there should be a single release and equal access to background next year, regardless of language. There may be some discomfort to traditional Area processes for Mock and Pre-Conferences. But there will be no prohibitive difficulties, and we will all be equally sharing the discomfort previously left to our Spanish members (who had to wait until 3/28 this year, while English material was available on 2/16).
- There was a floor action to place a one-year moratorium on new agenda items. This motion did not get considered, missing the chance to hit the Conference floor by 2 votes. It's a complicated topic, that I felt was at least worth discussion. More on this to follow, but I wanted to include at least that general reference because I felt it reflected an important understanding by some Conference members about pace and workload.
- There was a floor action to develop a plan for creating one or more non-geographic Areas for online and telephone groups in the US/Canada service structure. This led to several hours of discussion, before ultimately failed to pass. The inclusion of online-only groups is a notable need and concern, but considering efforts already underway to develop a purposeful solution, and an interest in avoiding being prescriptive to the Trustees' ad-hoc Committee addressing this, the Conference felt it better to leave options open.
- There was a floor action to undo two Advisory Actions from the 71<sup>st</sup> GSC which made changes to essays in the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. This floor action didn't have sufficient support to be heard by the full Conference. The Conference Committee on Literature put forward a Committee

Consideration supporting the stance that there was not yet adequate sharing or shared sentiment within the Fellowship regarding these changes. And I took the Conference's declining to consider this floor action to be a case of "lesson learned" from engaging last year's floor action on Preamble revision, rather than listening to the consideration from the Conference Committee.

- The Conference Committee on Grapevine/La Vina made a similar Committee Consideration regarding its discussion on the wide-ranging impact of the Preamble Change. Their Consideration said that "the committee felt that after careful consideration of Fellowship feedback, it would be premature to quantify the impact when many AA members are still either uninformed or ambivalent about the change. The committee emphasized that at every level of our Conference process, there is a reciprocal responsibility of all AA members and trusted servants, of participation and communication, to embrace the guiding principles of trust and transparency."
- And there was a floor action to reaffirm the 1995 Advisory Action "that the first 164 pages of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forewords, "The Doctor's Opinion," "Doctor Bob's Nightmare" and the Appendices remain as is." After hours of discussion, this item failed to secure the necessary support to become an Advisory Action. There was a clear sense of the Conference that most of these things remain as is. But the Preface begins by saying "This is the fourth edition of the book "Alcoholics Anonymous," and the Conference felt that should be changed for the fifth edition. There is concern that Appendix VI does not list a phone number, email addresses, or the [aa.org](http://aa.org) website as methods for "How to get in touch with AA. While there was essentially unanimous support for the idea of preserving the first 164 pages, we felt that the 1995 Advisory Action was too restrictive. And we felt that the intention of this floor action was adequately represented at the 71<sup>st</sup> General Service Conference, which approved that "a fifth edition of the Big Book *Alcoholics Anonymous* be developed, including an update of stories to better reflect current membership, keeping in mind the 1995 Advisory Action."

Please do not think that the Conference decision not to reaffirm the action from 1995 is a significant statement of opinion. There was only one sharing heard which referenced value in making changes to the Big Book. And that person went on to say that she no longer felt that way, since the 71<sup>st</sup> Conference had approved the production of a plain and simple language translation

I love you all. Thank you for allowing me to serve, and thank you for your service to the Fellowship and Program which saved my life. Much more to come on this high road to a new freedom

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AA-ing-ly,

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