

Sober Times

Williamsburg, VA Intergroup Information

District 38

Summer 2016

Where Does the Money Go?

Tradition 7: "Every AA group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions"

The spirit of Tradition 7 tells us that we pay our own way -- that we are responsible to pay for our homegroup, local and area expenses as well as the services that we ask GSO to perform on our behalf to help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic. AA literature says that the basket is where spirituality and gratitude meet. Below is some information about how our basket contributions help carry the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

A significant expense for a meeting is rent. If the rent on a space is \$ 15/meeting and if there's 15 people at the meeting and if everyone contributed \$1 each, the basket contributions would cover the rent -- but nothing else. How would the other expenses for coffee, condiments, cups, chips, medallions and books and pamphlets be met? How would we stay connected to AA so that our group conscience could be heard? How would we continue to carry the message outside our own meeting or group? The answer is simple: If basket contributions only covered meeting expenses, the service entities that help carry the AA message beyond the meeting level would cease to exist.

In Language of the Heart, (page 85), in June 1948, Bill W wrote about our financial responsibilities to AA: "... the AA General Service office now costs us \$ 1.50 per member per year... If an AA happens to live ... where an intergroup is absolutely essential ..., he contributes ... about \$5 annually To pay the rent of his own group meeting place, and maybe buy coffee and donuts, he might drop \$25 a year in the hat..." He goes on to say: ... "For each of you these overhead expenses will never amount to more than the price of one bottle of good whiskey a month." (An inflation calculator values, \$1 in 1948 to be about \$10 in today's money).

Williamsburg Intergroup is funded solely by contributions from local groups and meetings. Part of the budget pays for rent and insurance for the Intergroup/District office where the intergroup, district and committee meetings are held. Other expenses include the AA phone so that alcoholics seeking help can get connected to another AA or find a meeting; funding to buy AA literature for alcoholics in our local jails, detention centers and institutions; expenses for our local web site and meeting lists that help get alcoholics to meetings; AA literature and meeting lists that are provided to professionals, including therapists, doctors and attorneys -- to help get the still suffering alcoholic into our rooms; and expenses for our alkathons, workshops, newsletter, July 4th picnic, and Gratitude dinner, that all help carry the AA message through our fellowship. Intergroup is charged with these tasks to help alcoholics find meetings, learn about our program of recovery, connect with the AA fellowship and stay sober during difficult times.

District 38 is a vital link and communication channel with AA in the US and Canada. It is through the activities of our District that our informed homegroup conscience is discussed and heard at the state level and brought to a national level by our Delegate. It is through our District that we have the opportunity to tell AA headquarters what services we want them to do to facilitate carrying the AA message to the still suffering alcoholic. A significant portion of our contributions to District support transportation, hotel and food expenses for trusted servants to the VAC assemblies and winter and summer meetings -- so that our informed group conscience can be heard. The remainder of the District budget is spent on rent for office space; preserving the history of Williamsburg AA; promoting Grapevine literature and conducting an "experience, strength and hope" workshop; and providing a forum where all AAs have access to a yearly report from our Delegate on the current issues impacting AA.

Many homegroups in Williamsburg also contribute to the Virginia Area Committee (VAC) in which our trusted servants participate at the state level. Twice a year the VAC has an assembly in different parts of

Virginia and General Service Representatives (GSRs) from nearly 1300 registered homegroups in Virginia are invited to attend. This is where issues impacting AA in the US and Canada are presented and discussed and GSRs have the opportunity to present their informed group conscience on matters effecting AA.

Our General Service Office (GSO) in New York also requires financial support. The pamphlet "Self-Support. Where Money and Spirituality Mix" says: "The 2014 service dollar was spent on the following activities: Group Services 32% (which includes various group contact-type costs in addition to Box 4-5-9; A.A. Directories; records and files; contributions processing; and French services); the General Service Conference, 12.2%; Loners, Internationalists, and Overseas Services, 6.1%; trustees' and directors' activities, 5.6%; Regional Forums, 6.7%; Archives, 10.3%; C.P.C., 4.5%; Public Information, 4.9%; Correctional Facilities, 4.7%; Treatment Facilities, 1.8%; Special Needs, 1.%, Nominating, 3.5%; World Service Meeting, 2.4%; and others, 0.3%."

Currently, less than 1/2 of GSO's approximate \$15 million budget is supported by our voluntary contributions. The remainder of GSO expenses are supported by profits from literature sales. AA contributions to GSO over the past several years have decreased slightly and literature sales are on a formidable decline. In 2017, GSO projects expenses to fall short of contributions by about \$500,000. Financial projections for future years are just as bleak -- indicating a necessary reduction in services to the still suffering alcoholic. There are many ramifications to that reduction of services, but I can't help wonder what it would mean to me if I knew a solution to my problem existed -- but, if I had to wait years before I could read the solution in my own language. Currently, there are about 20 requested translations of our Big Book awaiting funding, which means it may be years and years before alcoholics in those countries get what was freely given to me.

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Delegate's Report Hosted by District 38

On Saturday May 14th the VAC delegate Chris W. gave a report on the 66th General Service Conference, hosted by District 38 at St. Martin's Episcopal Church on Jamestown Road. The evening began with everyone in attendance singing Happy Birthday to Ben K., District 38 DCM and the MC of the event. Ben was celebrating both his "Belly Button Birthday" and his AA anniversary that week. Before the main event a pot luck dinner which included fried chicken, potato salad and many other homemade dishes was served. And, you guessed it, there was Birthday Cake for dessert.

Before the Delegates report there were two short presentations by members of the Archives and Grapevine committees of District 38. After which Ben introduced Chris and shared his knowledge of her long history of service to AA. The two have been friends in sobriety and service for many years. Chris's report was very interesting, informative and delivered with both humor and heart.

Chris was Chair of the Corrections committee and started her report by stating that the conference approved a new video to replace "It Sure Beats

Sitting in a Cell". The documentary style video is called "A New Freedom" and will be available soon for inmates. Other issues considered were the Corrections Correspondence Service which is hoping to expand to Canada but has some challenges with postage and also is currently in need of Spanish speaking members to correspond with Spanish-speaking inmates. Other highlights included: In the Finance Committee a recommendation to increase the limit of individual contributions from \$3,000 to \$5,000 annually failed. The committee also considered, but took no action on increasing the area contribution for Delegate expense to the conference and on the limit of one-time individual bequests to AA. The literature committee will revise the pamphlet "Young People and A.A." to include information about young people's conferences and update it to better reflect the experiences of young people in A.A. today. 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 was also advised. The Literature Committee considered but took no action on a request to develop a plain

language version of the "Big Book". Chris stated that the members don't believe that it is necessary for A.A. to do this since it is available by other organizations, but not conference approved.

The attendees had the opportunity to visit "Stepping Stones", the home of Bill and Lois Wilson in upstate New York, where Chris had her picture taken behind the desk where Bill did much of his writing. She shared her gratitude for having been a part of the Conference and all the hard work that goes into it.

In closing Chris referenced a statement made by the chairperson of the board of trustees at the Conference in 1954 which is printed in the A.A. Service Manual titled "Why Do We Need a Conference". She was visibly moved as she read in part "We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the Alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for Alcoholism. We need it to ensure changes within A.A. come only as a response to the needs and the wants of all A.A., and not of any few."

Where does the money go? (continued from pg 1)

To reverse this potential financial crisis, GSO will need a greater sustained level of contributions in order to do the work that we are requesting they do to carry the AA message to the alcoholic who still suffers. I heard recently, that if every AA in the US and Canada were to participate in the Birthday Plan and contribute \$1 for each year of their sobriety, the sum would be approximately the entire GSO yearly budget.

In an October 1967 article in the AA Grapevine, Bill W. asked: "Why should we provide these functions with

money? The answer is simple enough. Every single AA service is designed to make more and better Twelfth Step work possible, whether it be a group meeting place, a central or intergroup office...or the world service headquarters... Though not costly, these service agencies are absolutely essential to our continued expansion -- to our survival as a Fellowship. Their costs are a collective obligation that rests squarely upon all of us. Our support of services actually amounts to a recognition on our part that AA must everywhere function in full strength - -and that, under our Tradition of self support, we are all going to foot the bill".

Unlike many other fellowships, AA asks very little of me. I am a member if I say so and I have no membership requirements. AA teaches me to live by spiritual principles and to be responsible. Steps 4 and 10 encourage me to take inventory and Tradition 7 encourages me to be financially responsible. Now is an opportunity for me to put my gratitude for the life that AA has provided me into action and re-evaluate my financial responsibility and commitment to AA. Please consider doing the same.

By: Anonymous AA

The Language of Recovery

Experience, Strength, and Hope

When I met with my sponsor for the first time, I remember him saying very directly that: "I am just another drunk trying to stay sober...I don't have any magic answers." My first reaction was a resentful thought like, "well if he is not going to tell me how to fix my life, then what good is he." I thought next that if he told me what to do, I probably wouldn't do it anyway." After more than 10 years in the program, I have only recently fully realized the wisdom of his statement.

I know the reason AA has worked for me lies in the notion that everything is a suggestion. I am not required to do anything. I am big on language and sensitive to the words people use (I think I would like to have been an English Professor at UVA in another life). When someone shares in a meeting and they are continually using the pronoun YOU, I immediately tune them out. Or in some of my more hostile (spiritually sick moods), I'll get resentful. Defiance is the

outstanding characteristic of many an alcoholic" (page 31, "12 and 12") an I am. If I get told what to do, I am like a 2 year old and I don't do it or I'll do it my own way. A friend of mine once called me a contrarian. I guess that's defiance in action.

I am giving instructions when I share and use the pronoun YOU. I think this is my disease at work. I know what **YOU** need to do. God knows that when drinking, I knew what everyone else in the world needed to do. And I would tell them (my poor ex-wife). I was the "Actor/Director" the Big Book talks about on pages 60-62. My disease likes to keep me from taking responsibility for my actions. How better than to always tell You what to do by speaking in the 2nd person "YOU" (here is the English professor part). Even when I think I am including myself by sharing from the WE (1st person Plural), I am still diluting my involvement. Only when I speak from the "I" am I truly owning my words and story. For example, I listened to a man share at a meeting that, "I threw my shoes under the bed each night so that in the morning I'd have to get on my

knees to get them and so then I could pray." I heard that. If I was told, "You need to throw your shoes"... I would have mentally said NO, not me.

Getting back to my sponsor and the "I'm only a drunk trying to stay sober", the wisdom lies in the notion that he is not going to direct me to do anything. He shares from his own experience, strength and hope. Consequently, I listen carefully to what he says. My experience with my own sponsees is that I am most helpful to them when I communicate in the "I", not the "WE" and most especially not the "YOU". So when I do my little 10th step inventory in the morning, I reflect on what pronouns have dominated my language in the past 24 hours.

What Is Heard At Meetings Compared To The Program of Alcoholics Anonymous

Heard: "It really doesn't make any difference what your problem is, AA has the best program"

BB: "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." AA, pg 564. What part of "only stop drinking," do so many people not understand? "Each group has but one primary purpose- to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers." AA, pg. 564. An AA group is for Alcoholics only (Tradition Five). We all have problems other than our drinking, but alcoholism is our only common problem.

Heard: "We learn to live life on life's terms."

BB: "Our real purpose is to fit ourselves to be of maximum service to God and the people about us." AA pg 77. It would appear from this that we are to learn to live our life on God's terms.

Nominees needed for our Intergroup Elections coming in December!

Positions Available:

Chair

Co-Chair

Secretary

Treasurer

Committee Chairs for each of the following committees:

- Δ Archives
- Δ Newsletter
- Δ Phone Committee
- Δ Special Events
- Δ Treatment and Corrections
- Δ Co-Operating with Professional Community/Public Info
(CPCPI)
- Δ Website

*Sobriety delivers
everything alcohol
promised...*

**Williamsburg Area
Intergroup**
4925 Centerville Road
Williamsburg, VA 23185
757-253-1234



July 4th AA Cookout

Monday, July 4th, 2016 from 10 am – 2 pm

Chickahominy Riverfront Park

1350 John Tyler Highway, Williamsburg, VA

AA's and their families and friends are all invited.

Chicken, Hamburgers & Hot Dogs

and Soft drinks will be provided.

Please bring a Covered Dish or Dessert to share

Food and Fellowship from 10 – 12:30

Speaker Meeting at 1

