



## AA in SA – The quarterly newsletter of AA’s General Service Office

### Striving to improve communication between GSO and the Members and Groups of the fellowship

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#### MESSAGE FROM THE GSO CHAIRMAN

There are many, many people in AA who profess gratitude to our members and the Fellowship as a vehicle for their sobriety, and for that, we are grateful – us ordinary members and trusted servants in Leadership positions. What is incongruent with the thanks being bandied about though, is the seeming lack of willingness to do service to *show* this gratitude.

There are more ways to be thankful other than just by expression or respecting the 7<sup>th</sup> Tradition, attending rallies, conventions, workshops and the like; serving the Fellowship in designated service positions yields more sobriety reward than you can ever imagine. It is a perpetual struggle to fill vacancies at Group, Area and National level. All Area and National vacancies are advertised and inevitably we end up headhunting (volun-telling) to fill these vacancies and still there will be those who choose to criticize the advertisers for their choice.

A seasoned servant of AA once told me, and I quote, *“if you want to change something in AA, do it from the inside”* ... in other words, don’t chirp from the side-line, get involved in service and strive to

make a difference which will benefit the Fellowship as a whole. Wise words indeed.

While some may view our rules and regulations as barriers for willing folk to do service, the prescribed time period guidelines for continuous sobriety are there for specific reasons as our experience has taught us not to burden the newcomer with responsibility until they are confident that they can live successful sober lives; in any event, these rules are mere guidelines and can be waived at the discretion of the group or area, provided there is someone who undertakes to sponsor, guide, mentor and monitor the “under age” volunteer; there are, however, very specific rules at National level which experience has taught us not to override. In the USA for example, a vacancy at Area or National level attracts thousands of applicants, not so here in good ol’ SA. *Why?*

This is a question I have been asking in my years in service – perhaps you the reader have some advice and to this end I am appealing to the Fellowship at large to write to us at GSO so that we can understand the issue better and come up with sustainable remedies to secure a vibrant culture of service.

Yours in sobriety, service and fellowship.  
Joe P – GSO Chairman

## GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The General Service Conference begins with the Group conscience. It also leads back to the Group, since the Group has final responsibility not just for initiating, but for implementing the decisions agreed upon by Conference. The General Service Conference is the practical means by which the Group conscience in South Africa can express itself in matters that concern the Fellowship as a whole. The existence of Conference is moreover a guarantee that the Fellowship will be able to function under all conditions; ensuring the continuity of the work within the framework of the Twelve Traditions.

Conference is a service workshop held once a year in May to reflect and learn on how we as a fellowship may be more effective in fulfilling our primary purpose. To fulfil our primary purpose; Delegates, General Service Board (Board), and the General Service Office (GSO) work together in one of five National committees on service projects throughout the year. These National committees are responsible for the implementation of National projects and conference decisions.

The Conference, representing the whole of our fellowship, delegates the necessary authority and responsibility to the Board to manage the affairs of A.A. in South Africa (AASA) during the year. The Board in turn delegates the necessary authority and responsibility to GSO to run the administrative functions of AASA. The three bodies - Delegates, Board, and GSO are accountable to each other at Conference by delivering reports back to Conference, and voting on proposals for the year ahead.

Thus the Delegates body represent the Groups in our fellowship throughout the year. The GSB is the legal representative body of Trustees who guide the fellowship and are custodians of our Traditions. GSO is the body that facilitates action and provides the fellowship with the practical means for the fellowship to carry the message and to support decisions made at Conference.

In conducting the business of AA at Conference we are guided by the conference charter and bylaws which is available in the service manual. In communicating and relating to each other at

Conference we are guided by the warranties and concepts for world service. As individuals at conference we are guided firstly by the conscience of the groups and members of our fellowship and finally by our own conscience in deciding what may be the best for our fellowship.

Conference will be held from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 2016 in Alberton, Gauteng.

## ARCHIVES

“The primary purpose of those involved in archival work is to carry the message of Alcoholics Anonymous. Archives service work is more than mere custodial activity; it is the means by which we collect, preserve and share the rich and meaningful heritage of our Fellowship”.

AA Guidelines, Archives, AAWS.

Some highlights in AA SA's Archives:

- GSO held an Archives workshop in February. Notes and worksheets are available at no charge on our website ([www.aasouthafrica.org.za](http://www.aasouthafrica.org.za)) in the Library section. Areas are encouraged to download these and host their own workshops.
- The 2016 Convention had a wide variety of archive items on display. If you could not attend, please do not miss the photos available on our website.
- The Johannesburg/West Rand Area's Rally of the South also proudly displayed archive items. Photos are available on our website.
- GSO has purchased new archive cabinets and our proud heritage will be on display to visitors soon.

## NEW LITERATURE ITEMS

Two new items will be available from your nearest Area Office by the end of April:

- Many Paths to Spirituality (leaflet)
- A brief history of the Big Book (booklet)

## TREASURERS' NOTES

### CONTRIBUTIONS

The contributions from groups have not started well, below the budget after the first two months. Contributions were R 49 364 against the budget of R 53 750. The 2015 equivalent was R 51 639. The year to date percentage of groups contributing is 31% -121 out of 391 groups.

### LITERATURE SALES

Literature sales for the two months are well below budget – Actual R 66 767 versus a Budget of R 112 500. GSO will be implementing a price increase effective from the beginning of May 2016. GSO is looking into ways of reducing the impact of the cost increases.

## NATIONAL CONVENTION 2016

The long-awaited convention set-up day finally arrived!

With excitement, vigour and determination, the committee members and our amazing support teams hustled and bustled; laughing and joking as we sweated to oversee sound, marquee raising, prepared portions of delicious Cape Town- style pickled fish for Good Friday, Easter eggs for the closing meeting on Sunday and checked the flowers, meeting hall, signage, kitties, stock rooms, refreshments, souvenirs and literature stock for maybe the *billionth* time. Our final task was to welcome our travelling AA members bussed in from out of town, to provide them with a warm meal that our kind fellows from our local groups had thoughtfully provided.

So here's some of the numbers for our readers to digest that demonstrate the success of National Convention 2016; 885- AA members, 75- visitors, 125- treatment facility and 301 Al-anon. Can you imagine the buzz! Comments overhead and directly reported to committee members included;

*"This is the best convention I have been to", "The Cape Town committee have outdone themselves!", "Lets don't lose contact, what's your number?", "So much delicious food and amazing people". "I am so happy that I decided to work this programme!"*

Nothing, and I mean *nothing*, could stop the revelry, the good cheer and camaraderie of the biggest fellowship event- not even being rained-out on Saturday evening, for our American Auction went ahead with huge takings for the GSO pot and fellows cut- loose with dancing and late - hour fellow-shipping in the cosy cake and coffee shop.

At the opening meeting the traditional bag pipes- accompanied Amazing Grace and at every meeting the honest and hope-filled speaker shares sparked many a conversation for us alcoholics and we realised again the power of *"Alcoholics in Action,"*- the importance of carrying the message and living our primary purpose; this last feeling echoed in the spiritual closing speech by our committee chairman. R21, 000.00 was awarded to the chairman of Pretoria National Convention 2017. Warm feelings of accomplishment as AA servants welled in our hearts and the togetherness so tangible at these special events were felt as loud applause for contributions, sobriety and gratitude filled the hall.

If you have never had this ultimate of AA experiences, I urge you to give it a try- and you will soon see, you will want to "Keep Coming Back!"

Valerie R - GSO Publications Coordinator & Convention 2016 Committee member

## YOUR GSO COMMITTEE FOR 2016:

Joe P – Chairman  
Charles G – Treasurer  
Leon N – National Secretary: TF & CF  
Trevor S – National Secretary: CPC & PI  
Divia G – National Archivist  
Sylvan C – National Secretary: Literature & Publications  
Kathy T – Conference Coordinator  
Andreas G – National Webmaster  
Xandor S – IT Administrator  
Valerie R – Publications Coordinator  
Mandy J – Office Administrator

You can contact any member of the team by sending an e-mail to [gso@aaSouthAfrica.org.za](mailto:gso@aaSouthAfrica.org.za)

## REGMAKER

The first 2016 issue of Regmaker is now available. If you are not a subscriber yet, please send an e-mail to [gso@asouthafrica.org.za](mailto:gso@asouthafrica.org.za) to obtain details. A mere R 50-00 per year ensures that you receive 4 copies and you will even get one free back issue with your first subscription. This is your meeting in print and we would love to hear from you. Please send us your shares to the above e-mail address.

## MEDIA DEVELOPMENTS

In a fast paced ever changing world there is no doubt that technological advancements benefit us enormously in all aspects of life, and obviously this is a good thing. However, in the communication field, the advent of social media, which provides a wonderful connect with people, events, updates and the like, the phenomenon also poses a dilemma for our members.

For a while now there has been a clamour world-wide, not only in South Africa, for the Fellowship to have guidelines to assist members in guarding their anonymity on social media platforms. We are pleased to report that at Conference 2016, scheduled for May this year, a policy will be submitted for approval. If and when approved, GSO will publish this document in a special post conference edition of AA in SA alongside all decisions taken at conference so that members can update themselves on conduct within the social media context. The document will also be sent to Areas for distribution into Groups and will also be made available on the web site.

Tradition 11 stipulates that our public relations policy is to attract rather than promote; in order to attract it implies that a level of awareness needs to be present and to this end, so that we can carry the message, the Fellowship has embarked on various awareness campaigns in the past such as the doctors and pharmacies poster initiatives.

One Area has recently secured spots in some doctors' rooms on the internal TV network; the clip, which runs for 20 seconds every 20 minutes, creates an awareness of AA and gives contact

numbers for those seeking help or who just want to know more. This is an admirable initiative which can go national and as such is being explored by GSO on behalf of members; resultant information will be shared with all Areas who may then decide what to do.

Another avenue worth exploring is the PSA route – media companies, radio inclusive, offer all NPO's free public service announcement opportunities, and because it is offered to all on the same terms and conditions, the acceptance by us would not break traditions. GSO has recently secured a spot on a local Gauteng radio station which will air the clip floated on radio 702 some years ago.

Areas can consult with the National Secretary for CPC/PI should they wish do something similar in their neck of the woods.

Joe P – GSO Chairman

## WEBSITE [www.asouthafrica.org.za](http://www.asouthafrica.org.za)

Our website continues to grow with service information which could be of help to groups and members. The following service material is available at no charge in the Library section:

- The current AA SA Service Manual (printed copies can be ordered from your Area Office)
- Guidelines for the various service arms (TF/CF/CPC/PI/Archives)
- Guidelines for hosting Rallies and Conventions
- "What is Conference approved literature?" and other literature guidelines
- Group Treasurers' notes, leaflets and workshop material
- Suggested topics for discussion meetings
- Guidelines on how to run a Group Conscience meeting
- Concepts and Traditions check lists

Please note that you have to be registered as an A.A. member on the website to have access to these documents. Should you have any problems with registration, please contact GSO on [gso@asouthafrica.org.za](mailto:gso@asouthafrica.org.za)