



AA in SA – General Service Conference Edition 2016

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

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MESSAGE FROM THE GSO CHAIRMAN

Conference - what a wonderful enlightening, invigorating and enriching experience.....service in action! Conference formally started on Friday evening preceded by the Delegates meeting that afternoon and the Board meeting on Thursday and Friday.

As always we welcomed some new trusted servants after bidding others farewell at the last conference. Namibia participated for the second time as a fully endorsed member with both Swaziland and Zimbabwe having an observer present.

The South Africa AA structure is working hard to admit more African countries and as such conference ratified Zimbabwe's membership which is effective immediately.

This type of expansion augers well for sub-Saharan Africa. It offers these countries a vast array of experience, strength and hope that may be shared by South Africa with them and we look forward to the exchange of ideas. It of course also means that the wider the message is carried, the more alcoholics can discover this beautiful recovery mechanism called AA, which offers hope to the many still-suffering alcoholics out there.

We are proud to be part of this and can only hope, trust and believe that all of us continue to serve our primary purpose collectively so that those who suffer from alcoholism can join in a life of sobriety with all its due rewards, provided of course that the programme is diligently applied in their lives.

We are also proud to announce that AASA will be bidding for the 2018 World Conference to be held in South Africa. The KZN Region has been selected to stage this event should the bid be successful. We wish them the very best of luck with the bidding process and remain confident of success.

We should never underestimate the value that the annual service conference brings to the fellowship at large.

The guidance which comes from conference is the result of collective experience analysing, debating, discussing and then deciding on the best and most suitable way forward in the interest of AASA as a whole. In the following pages you can judge this for yourselves and thank you, the reader, the member, for being in the Fellowship and helping others.

Yours in sobriety, service and fellowship.

Joe P. – GSO Chairman

GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

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.

Conference was held from the 20th to the 22nd of May 2016 in Alberton, Gauteng. What follows is a summary of some of the key decisions taken and projects approved for the year ending May 2017.

PLENARY SESSION

- Chairing of Conference to be rotated between GSO, Board and Delegate on Friday evening, Saturday, Saturday evening with closure by GSO Chair on Sunday.
- A sponsorship idea list to be compiled by GSO and distributed to Area offices for onward circulation to Groups.
- The proposal not to discuss matters already resolved within a three year period was rejected.
- An advisory note will be issued to Areas to hold at least one service workshop per annum where sponsorship, how conference works and the pre-conference requirements are explained.
- Literature Committee have been tasked with the continuation of the local SA version of the Big Book (only the stories will change!) and the story selection criteria is being refined.
- Conference did not approve GSO holding local workshops but did approve that workshop kits be compiled by GSO and sent to Areas to convene their own workshops per service arm.
- Social media guidelines were approved.
- Zimbabwe's membership of AASA was ratified and they will join the Northern Province Region.

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.

Significant strides are being made in this area but it remains a laborious task to digitize all the material in GSOs' custody. Conference approved a budget to purchase equipment enabling the conversion of written and voice recordings into digital format. Thankfully, we have an energetic and able archivist at GSO who will continue the good work of his predecessor.

ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURES

Conference approved a proposal that a trusted servant serving at national level waits a year before s/he can be appointed to another national service position.

The proposal to hold national convention on a weekend other than Easter was rejected, primarily because there is no other comparative long weekend in the annual calendar to accommodate this event – venues are more easily come by at Easter due to school / university / Technicon holidays and are thus cheaper than having to rent convention or related facilities; it also allows folk to travel without having to put in too much leave.

The proposal that Area Chairpersons attend conference was rejected for concern of undermining the delegate role.

Conference has approved a proposal to rectify the imbalance of the delegate representation vs GSO / Board participation in line with World Service guidelines. Over a period of seven years the number of delegates per area will be increased on a phasing in basis so that voting democracy will remain in the memberships' hands.

LITERATURE

The primary source of carrying the message is in our literature. There is a vast array of books, pamphlets and magazines to choose from; none more significant than the basic text as contained in what is fondly known as the Big Book.

The National Secretary for Literature had the pleasure of presiding over the launch of the first ever English Big Book produced in South Africa, under license from AA World Services. The book will still be sold at R150.00. As this is a significant milestone in our history, 250 copies will be numbered and sold at R250.00 per copy. Number 1 goes into our archives, number 2 was signed by all conference attendees and was sent to GSO in New York.

Also introduced at Conference was the new look Afrikaans Big Book, produced with a hard cover in the same blue and yellow jacket cover colours of the English version.

The Literature arm will also have funds at its disposal to finance the distribution of 50 Zulu and 50 Xhosa big books into Correctional Facilities nationwide in a collaborative exercise with the TF/CF committee.

IT & FINANCE

Social media policy has been approved; a need has arisen for a broader spectrum document to be available in respect to online usage and to this end the committee will be formulating it in 2016 in order to submit at next years' conference.

Conference approved a budget for the website to be improved and for the national helpline system to be upgraded to eradicate the need of multiple calls before help is given which includes a sms contact system to be developed so as to keep newcomers and youth in touch with AA related matters.

REGMAKER

The second issue will be distributed in July and the Conference/Service edition will be distributed in September.

NATIONAL CONVENTION

2016

Cape Town hosted this annual event and recorded an attendance of 885 AA members, 75 visitors, 125 treatment facility patients and 301 AI- Anon members.

R21 000.00 was awarded to the chairman of Pretoria National Convention 2017.

GSO benefitted by a handsome sum of R128 500.00 and for this we thank not only the Convention Committee, but all the members who made this possible by virtue of their participation.

2017

Pretoria will be the host city. Details will be communicated by the Committee periodically in the run up to the event.

2018

Conference approved the application of Port Elizabeth to host.

CPC / PI

The Social Worker Project has been extended for another year. A budget has been approved to train assistants for the Class A Trustees thereby creating resources for outreach into schools.

The Facebook initiative is extended by a further year – so far 148 195 people have been reached resulting in 1 568 clicks on our web site; unfortunately there is no measurement tool available to check how many new members this campaign generates. An additional electronic medium will be tested during this year, namely Twitter.

CF / TF

Conference approved a project budget to enable 150 information packs to be devised for introduction into treatment and correctional facilities nationally where we have no visible footprint as yet.

The National Secretary has been instrumental in compiling a national data base of treatment facilities known to us at AA. Changes such as redundant or new facilities should be communicated to him via the GSO e-mail facility.

PROPOSALS REFERRED BACK TO AREAS

The purpose of listing these proposals is to encourage Groups, Districts and Areas to discuss them and is also a way of improving the knowledge of the fellowship in the workings of Conference, AA and service matters in general.

- Publishing a pamphlet depicting guidelines for organizing and arranging social activities for group members outside of AA meetings.
- 13th stepping problem: Conference has issued a statement and an advisory on how to deal with the issue in 2015.
- What can be done with members who ignore the blue card on singleness of purpose?
- Fundraising debit order pledges, is this subscription?
- Service Arm Structures within individual delegate areas: Can there be a directive in this regard to ensure a consistent approach enabling service at grassroots level as well as greater participation in this legacy?
- The use of electronic devices, texting etc. at meetings: How can this be curtailed to prevent disruptions at meetings?
- Do members have the right to force group members to attend group meetings and carry out group service?
- Translation of the Big Book into Sotho language: *A previous conference decision dictates that the community must do the translation, submit to GSO who will forward it to GSO World Services for checking, then AASA must apply for a licence to print locally; experience has taught us that although translations into ethnic languages do not sell well at all and since no one can guarantee just exactly what sales will be, careful consideration will have to be given to print-run quantities so as to avoid wasteful expenditure of members' money.*

Footnote

Conference accepts that it will never be able to please everyone but does give its assurance that matters placed before it will receive due consideration and that all decisions are made in the collective and within the best interests of AA as a whole.

BEQUEST AND CONTRIBUTION LIMITS FOR 2016:

Bequests R 176 223

Contributions R 35 245 (per individual member)

VACANCY: GENERAL SERVICE TRUSTEE

For the purpose of Trustee selection, the Board of Trustees resolved to adhere to the relevant guidelines as stipulated in the **“The South African AA Service Manual”**.

For the purpose of the election of Trustees, the Board resolved that the Board as a whole would act as the **“Trustees Election Committee”**.

The Board of Trustees hereby informs the Fellowship of Alcoholics Anonymous of SA that 1 (one) vacancies will be available in 2016. The portfolio is:

- **General Service Trustee: Literature and Publications**

The Board of Trustees invites applications for a General Service Trustees to be filled by members of the fellowship.

The return date for the submission of applications is **9 September 2016**. All nominations should be proposed in writing by the respective Area Assembly Office and be supported by the AA CV as well as the Professional CV of the candidate. Nominations should be addressed to the Chairperson of the General Service Office (gso@aasouthafrica.org.za) for the onward submission to the Trustees Election Committee.

All applications will be considered by the Board as soon as possible. The new General Service Trustee will be invited to attend the next Board Meeting after his/her appointment.

Keep coming back, it works if you work it.
So work it 'cause you're worth it!