



AA in SA

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

Vol: 2017 / No: 3

MESSAGE FROM THE GSO CHAIRMAN

My departing message to the Fellowship is for you to keep doing what you are doing – the doors remain open throughout South Africa, some close, but new ones continue to spring up all over the place.

During my tenure, which ends on 31 December this year, we have been fortunate enough to see some other African countries join our structure. A spirit of AA co-operation on the continent via the SSASM mechanism is actively encouraging and supporting what can culminate in an African AA structure. We should embrace this developing concept as greater and wider unity can only be good for our primary purpose – that of carrying the message to the still suffering alcoholic.

It has been a pleasure and privilege serving the Fellowship at GSO level. I have been fortunate over the years to have had dynamic team members supporting me; my personal growth has been greatly enhanced and I have thoroughly enjoyed every moment of this service.

And herein lies the crux of the matter. If anyone, anywhere and at any time wants to do service in the Fellowship they ought to do so because they want to. Coercion is not a successful recruiting tool.

Service is gratitude in action, to be done willingly, with enthusiasm, with commitment, with loyalty to the Traditions, with joy and not as a chore. Carrying the message should not be a burden, it ought to be celebrated as a contribution to the well being of humanity – let's face it, if we don't do it, no one else will!

There can be no greater joy and satisfaction than to see suffering alcoholics getting the message – the effect on self-worth, self-esteem, own and inner confidence, the realization of the promises, enhanced work, family and social life is enlightening and delightful. The serenity of recovery and freedom from the enslavement bonds of alcohol can only but encourage the continuity of this life saving recovery vehicle.

Naturally, like anything else in life, to get results, this means we have to work at it – not only the programme, but also within service structures to ensure sustainability. So, go out there – serve your Fellowship! To the many who already serve in whatever capacity, thank you for your contribution, without you we would not be where we are today.

I would like to thank the GSO Committee, the Board, Area Assemblies and members for their support and entrusting me with this service position.

May you all have a safe, happy festive season and all the best to the incoming Chairman, Sandil M.

Joe P - (Outgoing) GSO Chairman

COMING SOON...

From time to time GSO has been approached by members who would like Rally and Convention shares in audio form to add to their personal libraries.

The GSO Committee recently resolved to provide this service to members. We have a collection of Rally and Old Timer shares from Archives material donated over the years. These cassettes are being converted to CD.

The plan is to compile a series of shares on a CD and sell them at a cost of R20 per CD on a "to order" basis. This means we will carry no stock and supply on a demand basis.

CD's will be available as of 2018 and members will be informed (via Area Offices) when orders can be placed.

GSO STRUCTURE CHANGE

Conference decided in 2016 that the imbalance between the membership, Board and GSO in so far as representation in voting exercises needed correction and resolved to increase the number of Delegates. This comes at a cost in material terms to the Fellowship and for GSO to fulfil its mandate in terms of prudent financial management, the Committee recently resolved to restructure its operations. As such, several positions have fallen away. The restructuring has a threefold advantage for the Fellowship:

- Conference costs are lessened
- Obviates the need for more delegates in the short term
- Balances out the voting power

GSO is comfortable that by doing away with and amalgamating portfolios it will still be able to render an effective service to the Fellowship at large. GSO currently has 11 portfolios – this will be

reduced to 7. Our AASA structures are such that there are four tiers mandated by the Fellowship to enact Conference decisions, projects and the like. Conference Committees should do and oversee project work emanating from Conference; Area Committees should assist and initiate their own projects while monitoring Group work. That leaves GSO and the Trustees (Board).

A little bit of re-focussing is required. National Secretaries have largely been monitors and as such each GSO portfolio does not need a National Secretary, one National Secretary monitoring all the service arms is sufficient. The main duties of a National Secretary are to follow up on Conference decisions and projects. Occasionally they may initiate ideas between conferences which, if no Conference approval is needed, they enact by sharing with Conference + Area Committees.

The National Office Administrator does the bulk of the literature work in any case given her proximity to the portfolio from an operational point of view. She receives and expedites orders, updates the inventories and liaises with AA World Services on behalf of AASA. The new structure will be implemented in January 2018.

8th SSASM

The 8th Sub-Saharan Africa Service Meeting was held at Sha Mani over the period 9th - 11th June, 2017. Great Britain provides the bulk of funding for the SSASM meetings and their General Service Board and the General Service Board of the United States and Canada are both represented at the meetings.

This year Great Britain was represented by Denise H, Trustee - Great Britain General Service Board, and Geoff H - Chairman, Great Britain General Service Board. The United States and Canada General Service Board was represented by Mary C, International Desk and Greg T, General Manager, GSO New York.

The Chairman for the meeting was Warren B, ably supported by Angus M, outgoing Secretariat, and Lizelle B, new Secretariat.

The following countries were each represented by two delegates: Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Geoff H delivered the Keynote Address entitled "Working with Others" which was the theme of the meeting. Mary C made a presentation on "Literature Translation and Licenses".

"Recent Reflections on A.A. Service in G.B. was the topic of Denise H's address.

Greg T brought up the presentations by our guests with "Self-Support: Why We Don't Accept Outside Contributions".

The meeting broke into four groups to do some workshops and then later discussed some more proposed workshop topics as a single group. Each country gave a short presentation about the status and history in their country. The 9th SSASM will be themed "Our 12 Traditions - AA's future in the modern world" and will be held in South Africa from the 7th to the 9th June, 2019. The Chairman for this meeting will be Gitau N from Kenya.

A comprehensive report of the 8th SSASM has been compiled by Lizelle B and is available in the SSASM folder in the Library section of our website.

CONVENTION 2018

Convention 2018 will be hosted by the Eastern Cape and will be held at the Nelson Mandela University North Campus in Port Elizabeth from 30 March to 1 April 2018. Arrangements and fundraisers are on track. Please contact the Port Elizabeth office for fundraiser raffle tickets. The theme is "Unity – The Heartbeat of AA".

Accommodation suggestions, speaker nomination forms, registration forms, newsletters and bank account details are available on the website – visit www.aasouthafrica.org.za for information.

YOUR GSO COMMITTEE 2018

Sandil M	Chairman
Doug D	Treasurer
Kathy T	Conference Coordinator
Divia G	National Service Arms Secretary
Suben N	Technology Coordinator
Eugene N	Publications Coordinator
Mandy J	Office Administrator

TREASURER'S REPORT

"From its earliest beginnings, A.A. has always incurred expenses — whether it be the cost of a pot of coffee or the price of a place to meet in the early days, these costs were often absorbed by individual A.A.s or non-alcoholic friends who offered their parlors and living rooms for A.A.s to meet in.

However, as A.A. outgrew the generosity of these early friends and members, the Fellowship's need for income became more and more apparent.

With the realisation that A.A. must steer clear of outside contributions in order to maintain its autonomy and independence came the understanding that the money necessary for A.A.'s survival would have to come from individual A.A. members and groups. As Bill W. put it in 1957, "Our spiritual way of life is safe for future generations if, as a Society, we resist the temptation to receive money from the outside world."

But this leaves us with a responsibility- one that every member ought to understand. We cannot skimp when the Treasurer of our group passes the hat. Our groups, our areas, and A.A. as a whole will not function unless our services are sufficient and their bills are paid.

When we meet and defeat the temptation to take large gifts, we are only being prudent. But when we are generous with the hat we give a token that we are grateful for our blessings and evidence that we are eager to share what we have found with all those who still suffer." (The Language of the Heart, p.221)

Twelfth Step work is the lifeblood of Alcoholics Anonymous — carrying the message to the next suffering alcoholic. Without it, the Fellowship would wither and die. Yet, even at its simplest level this vital contact between one alcoholic and another involves an investment of time and money.

"Now, where do A.A.'s services — worldwide, area, local — fit into our scheme of things?" asked Bill W. in an October

1967 article in the A.A. Grapevine. "Why should we provide these functions with money?"

According to Bill, "The answer is simple enough. Every single A.A. 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.... "

"Self-support begins with me, because I am part of us — the group. We pay our rent and utility bills, buy coffee, snacks and AA literature. **We support our central office, our area committee, and our General Service Office. If it were not for those entities, many new people would never discover the miracles of A.A....."**

The above are extracts from "**Self-Support: Where Money and Spirituality Meet**", and I am including them so that members can understand why we keep asking for contributions.

This time last year GSO's finances had dropped below its Prudent Reserves. Conference approved a proposal that GSO request members to make direct donations or special contributions via Groups to ensure that GSO is able to operate as a going concern.

I am delighted to report that a number of members responded to the call and have pledged donations or have contributed via Groups to help build up our reserves. Although we have not achieved our target, the results are very satisfactory.

For this, our grateful thanks to all of you who have assisted.

With the New Year approaching, we would like all of you to look at your budgets and see if you can help the still suffering alcoholic by adding your donation. Please remember that in terms of Tradition 7 (Long form) we will **not** "accumulate funds beyond Prudent Reserves for no stated AA purpose".

Doug D – GSO Treasurer

FESTIVE SEASON MESSAGE

In December 1970 Bill said and we quote: "Gratitude is just about the finest attribute we can have, and how deeply we of A.A. realize this... Together, we count and ponder our blessings of life, of service, of love."

It prompted the insertion of this little gem of a prayer – The Slogan Prayer:

Just for today let me listen and learn. Help me to think about what is before me and let me experience the answer to how important is it? Allow me to keep an open mind and begin applying easy does it as I let it begin with me. Give me strength to keep it simple as I begin to do first things first. Help me to be willing to accept responsibility for my actions and allow me to live and let live by allowing others to make choices and be responsible for their own choice. Please make me ready to let go and let God.

When reflecting on the year, think of these things and in counting your blessings pay homage to Bill's thoughts – be gracious and humble when expressing your gratitude for the peace, serenity and joy that sobriety has brought into your life. We truly do have a great deal to be grateful for and we thank Bill W who had the foresight, the vision, passion and energy to give the world the best recovery vehicle imaginable – Alcoholics Anonymous. We thank also the God of our understanding for bestowing the gift of humanity upon Bill W who used it to help drunks become useful members of society.

Be safe, be sober and enjoy the festive season responsibly.

The GSO team wish you and yours all the very best and thank you all for your continued support throughout years past.

