

History of A.A. International Conventions

International Conventions have been held since 1950. That year, 3,000 A.A. members, including Bill W. and Dr. Bob., gathered in Cleveland, Ohio. Attendance at Conventions has grown steadily since. Most recently, in 2015 an estimated 57,000 A.A. members attended in Atlanta, Georgia. The convention had 5,000 volunteers - some local, others from distant states and countries.

What is the Purpose of Conference? AA South Africa (AASA) is the guardian of the services, of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of AA in South Africa.

Tradition Two states that the only authority in AA is that which expresses itself through the Group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants who do not govern. This Tradition is the basic authority for all AA services, whether for Groups, Intergroups, Regions or for the Fellowship as a whole. The General Service Conference therefore 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. It is, in effect, the successor to the founders of AA, ensuring the continuity of the work within the framework of the Twelve Traditions.

WHY HAVE AN A.A. CONVENTION? It is clear that A.A. get-togethers beyond the group have become an established part of A.A. life. What makes an A.A. convention tick for its participants? It is probably not style or form that matters so much as the spirit and feeling behind it. As one member puts it, the best A.A. convention is "just a darned good A.A. meeting blown up big." Just watch enthusiastic members at any A.A. convention and you will get what he means. The atmosphere alone is worth the trip. Here you will find fellowship, laughter, warmth, and understanding — "heaped up, pressed down, and running over."

Conventions gives all members of AA, Alanon and Alateen an opportunity to reconnect, create new friendships and share in spirit of recovery. Here you will find like-minded people whom all share a common bond of recovery.

The atmosphere and fellowshiping at conference is nothing short of electrifying to the person practicing the 12 step God given programme, irrespective of how long you have been in the fellowship. Conventions also inspire newcomers to the programme and old timers who prove that that the 12 step steps of AA does work.

Having been held for 3 days over Easter weekend also means it gives many people the opportunity to experience what God has given us so freely i.e., AA 12 step programme of recovery. This is a celebration of life after being a slave to alcohol, and just the beauty of living a sober life.

ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS is a fellowship of people who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions.

A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization, or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any causes.

Our primary purpose is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

When first challenged to admit defeat, most of us revolted. We had approached A.A. expecting to be taught self-confidence. Then we had been told that as far as alcohol is concerned, self-confidence was no good whatsoever; in fact, it was a total liability. Our sponsors declared that we were the victims of a mental obsession so subtly powerful that no amount of human willpower could break it.

Relentlessly deepening our dilemma, our sponsors pointed out our increasing sensitivity to alcohol—an allergy, they called it. The tyrant alcohol wielded a double-edged sword over us: first we were smitten by an insane urge that condemned us to go on drinking, and then by an allergy of the body that insured we would ultimately destroy ourselves in the process. Few indeed were those who, so assailed, had ever won through in singlehanded combat. It was a statistical fact that alcoholics almost never recovered on their own resources. And this had been true apparently, ever since man had first crushed grapes. —Alcoholics Anonymous, pp. 22. Copyright © 1981 by Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc.