

Delegate's Report
October 2009 Assembly



Hello again to the North Florida Assembly. I'm glad you are here to help us take care of our Area business, as we also enjoy fun, fellowship, personal growth, hugs, and personal sharings. Can you believe we're almost through our first year already? I hope you're all learning, growing, praying, and laughing while on your current service journey. I certainly am!!!

Some of the information in this report is what I shared in my August AWSC report. My experience is that sometimes repetition is good as the more we hear something the more it sinks in.

How many of you have ordered your 2009 World Service Conference Summaries??? How many of you have read some of it?? Today, I will draw the names of twelve G.R.s who will receive his or her own copy. You can also continue to order the Summary from WSO and the cost is only \$3. The order form is available on the Members' website.

The Board of Trustees met in July for the quarterly meeting of the Board. They welcomed four new Trustees nominated after the 2009 World Service Conference and two Executive Committee members. As a reminder, the Conference gives Traditional approval of the nominees and the Board of Trustees elect the Trustees at the Board meeting immediately following the Conference in April.

Listening to the Conscience of the 2009 Conference, the Board formed two Thought Forces and one Task Force. The Thought Forces include, a Thought Force to consider issues related to the revision of the Regional Trustee resume' form. I'm excited as I get to be on this Thought Force! A second Thought Force will also be formed on the Current Conference Structure, to "continue the conversation as it relates to the needs of the fellowship". A Task Force will also be formed to assist Conference members to place items on the World Service Conference agenda, which relates to feedback at the Conference about the effectiveness of the "Chosen Agenda Items (CAI) process.

The Board also reviewed feedback given to them by Delegates regarding the continuation of Property ownership. More requested information will be forthcoming as it is completed. There are "Questions and Answers" regarding Property ownership on the Members' website. The discussion regarding continued property ownership will occur at the 2010 World Service Conference.

2010 WSC:

Speaking of the 2010 Conference, it will be the 50th anniversary of the World Service Conference. Mary Ann R., Chairman of the Board wrote, "We trust our Higher Power through our informed group conscience. The 2010 Conference Theme reflects that message:

Celebrate! Embrace the group conscience to expand our circle of hope.

—50 years of the World Service Conference

¡Celebremos! Acojamos la conciencia de grupo para ampliar nuestro círculo de esperanza.

—50 años de la Conferencia de Servicio Mundial

Célébrons! Intégrons la conscience de groupe afin d'élargir notre cercle d'espoir.

—Les 50 ans de la Conférence des Service Mondiaux.

This theme will be woven into many of the activities as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the World Service Conference.”

The equalized expense amount of the 2010 WSC has been set at US \$1,200; the full cost has been set at \$1,834 US.

The 2010 Conference was originally scheduled to be held April 11-15, at the Wyndham Virginia Beach Oceanfront Hotel in Virginia Beach, Virginia. However, due to a lighter agenda, the Conference may be one day shorter, starting on Monday instead of Sunday. Registration will take place the day before the Conference, with Thought and Task Forces and Committees also meeting the day before the Conference. The open Annual meeting of the Board of Trustees will be held Friday, April 16.

TEAM:

WSO reported they'd received their first request for a TEAM event by an Area, which is planned for this month. Remember that TEAM stands for Together Empowering AI-Anon Members. As we explore together, the possibility of a TEAM event in the future for our Area, we will look at others' experience as guides for us. WSO does now have the TEAM page up on the Member's website and will have it soon on the French and Spanish versions of the Members' website. Forms, questions to consider, and the timeline are there for your information. And perhaps we will have a motion later today regarding TEAM!!!!

ABUNDANT RESOURCES SKILLS SURVEY:

The Board of Trustees reported that The Unlimited Abundant Resources Work Group received over 290 responses from people who participated in the skills survey and were interested in having their information retained in a database so they could be called upon to participate in future projects. Interested members are encouraged to complete this survey, if they haven't yet done so. I have some fliers for the survey if you haven't yet gotten it. The Abundant Resources Survey is available on the Members' website.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY:

The 2009 Membership survey is now available on the Member's website as well. Please take a few minutes to complete it and help WSO help us as well as our entire fellowship.

IAGSM:

The next International AI-Anon General Services Meeting (IAGSM) will be held in the Virginia Beach Area in October 2010. The equalized expense amount has been set at US \$1,256; the full cost set at \$1,675 US.

The purpose of the IAGSM is stated on page 21 of the 2009 Conference Summary. "...to share the experience of Al-Anon national services around the world through its Delegates. The meeting encourages the growth of a sound service structure while maintaining worldwide unity through the application of the Al-Anon Traditions. It also represents an expression of a worldwide group conscience." The Summary goes on to say that there are currently 32 General Service Offices, and Al-Anon is present in over 130 countries. (Pg. 21, WSC 2009 Summary)

The Board of Trustees also voted to approve Ecuador as a trial General Service Office, as they have met the necessary criteria for a General Service Office (GSO).

Forum:

A Thought Force to increase readership and subscriptions has also been formed. "The charge for this Thought Force is to propose ways to better integrate *The Forum* into our shared recovery—to have more members share their recovery in its pages and to regularly discuss its content at their meetings and workshops. *The Forum* can help many members strengthen their program, but only if they are aware of what it has to offer.

The Thought Force's charge is NOT to make suggestions about how to change the format or content of the magazine. These changes would be noticed only by those members who already make the magazine a regular part of their program. The more relevant challenge is to find a more vital role for the magazine to play in our shared recovery.

The Thought Force will have five members. It will meet several times by telephone conference call. If you know anyone who might have some ideas to contribute, please ask them to contact the WSO *Forum* staff for a résumé.

We would like the Thought Force to be up and running by Oct. 31 and expect the work to be concluded by Dec. 31" (Bob Schneider, WSO).

For your information, I have attached several documents to the report given to the AWSC panel regarding frequently asked questions sent to WSO and the WSO response. The first relates to one of our Red Light Green Light topics for Sunday morning. There's also a response regarding the varied "chants" at the end of meetings, the reading of the Steps and Traditions as written, the use of daily readers in meetings, and the response regarding Al-Anon not having promises. (Attachments 1-5) Please share this information in your districts and groups. I have also attached a Conference Summary order form for members who may not have ready access to a computer. (Attachment 6)

This afternoon:

I remember in June after I gave my report and we discussed duties of a Trustee and looked at that power point, a member shared she was inspired to one day be a Trustee!

I hope you reach out and meet our Trustee guests visiting and participating in our Assembly. We have put them to work so you will hear from them in a few minutes and after lunch!

Also, many of you enjoyed the power point at the June Assembly on "Spiritual Abundance" and asked for a copy of it. I have attached it with my report. (Attachment 7) We will also do something a little fun on Spiritual Abundance this afternoon. And, we will draw the names of the lucky Conference Summary winners!

I've been doing a lot of thinking over the last several months, regarding the service you do, the enthusiasm and creativity many of you model, the struggles some are having, the dilemma of whether one is a "wanna be" or a "worker bee", and tearing down of the barriers to help you do your jobs effectively. As we continue on this journey, and learn and grow together, open communication, willingness to do our jobs as best we can, and "embracing of the group conscience" remain vital. Let us all remember to "talk to each other and reason things out" and to "assume good will" as we "share leadership and responsibility" to North Florida Al-Anon and Al-Anon Family Groups worldwide.

Love in service,

Terry Follett
Delegate
Panel 49

MEMORANDUM

TO: Conference Members
FROM: Executive Director
DATE: May 1, 2009
RE: Use of gender-specific references to a Higher Power in CAL

The WSO was asked at the 2006 WSC to send a copy of questions it receives from Conference members and our responses to all Conference members so that they can share leadership by responding to recurring questions in their Areas. The WSO believes that the following question and our response might be one of those topics.

Question: Why does our literature often refer to "God" using male pronouns, when for many in the program a Higher Power could never be a "he"?

Answer: Al-Anon is a worldwide fellowship with an extremely diverse membership. Our literature, based on the personal sharings of our members, expresses a wide array of concepts of a "Power greater than ourselves." The words "as we understood" were included in the Steps so that all members could define for themselves the Power referred to in Step Two. In Al-Anon each of us is free to understand and identify this Power in our own way. Throughout our literature we are reminded of the tremendous freedom each member has to interpret "Higher Power" or "God" according to his or her own understanding. Pages 13 and 211 in *Courage to Change* (B-16), page 146 in *Hope for Today* (B-27), and page 49 of *How Al-Anon Works for Families & Friends of Alcoholics* (B-22) all reiterate this idea.

Our literature is comprised of two different elements that need to be considered when discussing changes to gender references to a Higher Power. One element included in most of our literature is our three Legacies--the Steps, Traditions, and Concepts of Service. Our Steps were adopted almost word for word from Alcoholics Anonymous. Over the years people have suggested changes to them, but despite this, to date no motion has come to the floor of the annual World Service Conference, Al-Anon's largest group conscience. Because Al-Anon's Three Legacies are considered the foundation of our program, they can only be changed by written agreement of three-quarters of all registered Al-Anon groups. Any decision to attempt such a change has to be begun by the Conference. If the Conference should decide to propose a change, a poll would have to be taken of all groups worldwide. The difficulty of this process is reflective of its importance.

The other element is the inclusion of personal stories from our members. Although stories are often edited for grammar or length, the Literature Committee has repeatedly stressed the need to retain the flavor and ideas expressed by each member. In writing to us, some members of our inclusive fellowship use the pronouns "Him" or "He," while some use "Her" or "She." Others do not assign a gender to their Higher Power, or use another term to describe their idea of a Power greater than ourselves. The Literature Committee has concurred in the past that when quoting these sharings, we respect the intent of the members who wrote by preserving their personal interpretations without alteration, unless it advocates a specific religious tenet or philosophy. Specific religious discussions are advised against in the "Three Obstacles to Success in Al-Anon."

Is there an official answer on the “chant” or “cheerleading” following the closing prayer in meetings?

Concern over the length of meeting closings because of the additions of chants was a discussion topic at the 2001 World Service Conference. The Conference members concluded that it is not appropriate for the WSO or the Conference to make a policy or issue a statement regarding the use of chants in the closing of a meeting. Conference members were in agreement that it is within group autonomy to determine the use of chants and/or prayers at the end of a meeting by making a group conscience decision that abides by the Traditions. The group conscience decision could then be stated at the end of the meeting. Conference members were reminded that our cofounder, Lois W., said, “It doesn’t matter what [prayer] we close with, but we close with a spiritual moment.” Details of this discussion can be found in the *2001 World Conference Summary*, page 21.

So there is no official policy regarding chants; how groups close their meetings is the decision of an informed group conscience. The only reference to the closing at the end of a meeting in the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* is the **Suggested Al-Anon/Alateen Closing** on page 24 (2006-2009 edition). It states at the end of the **Suggested Closing**: “It is suggested that groups close in a manner that is agreeable to the group conscience.” (The *Service Manual* can be found on the Al-Anon/Alateen Members’ Web site: www.al-anon.alateen.org/members under the “Group Services” tab. The password to enter the Members’ site is your group name followed by AFG, e.g. *Easy Does It AFG*.)

Some additional things to think about regarding “chants”:

- Chants are not part of Al-Anon and came into the program from treatment centers and other 12 Step programs.
- When looking at the faces of newcomers when members are chanting and pumping their arms, they are clearly left out of the process.
- Such chants and behaviors may reinforce the idea that Al-Anon is a cult when we know that it isn't nor do we want it to be perceived to be.
- The experience of some groups has been that adding the Al-Anon Declaration at the end of their chosen closing prayer seems to replace the chants. In 2006, every group was sent a table card to display the Declaration, and it is printed in the “Groups at Work” section of the *Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual* (page 24 in the 2006-2009 edition).