

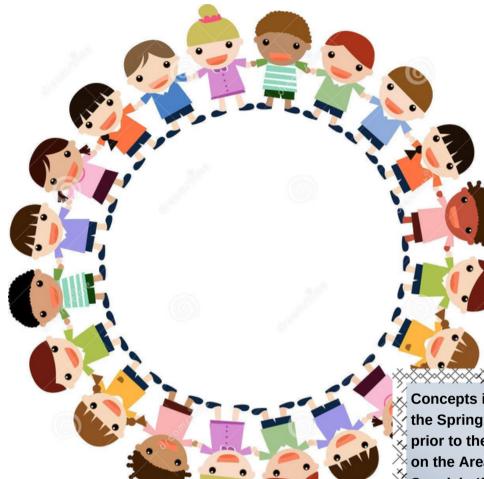
NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA LTD AREA 20 SERVICE LETTER

WINTER 2022 VOL. 4



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Concepts is published four times a year in the Spring, Summer, Fall , and Winter just prior to the Area's Assemblies. It is posted on the Area Website in both English and Spanish. If you would like to receive a copy via email please send your request to the Concepts Editor by clicking this link or using the Contact Us page of the Area Website. Happy reading.

GSR Preamble

We are the General Service Representatives

We are the link in the communication chain for our groups with the General Service.

Conference and the world of A.A.

We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God expressed in our group's con-

science.

As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups so that they can reach an informed group conscience.

As trusted servants, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength vital to our fellowship.

Therefore, let us have the patience and tolerance for listening while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our groups.

DELEGATES CORNER

Circles of Love & Service

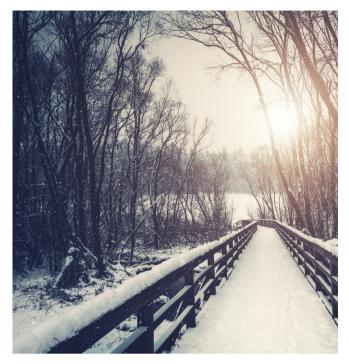
I recently had the opportunity to help facilitate the AAWS Membership survey within Area 20. In a nutshell, a proportional number of groups from each Area are selected by the General Service Office and are asked to answer survey questions that have been approved by the conference. These questions serve to give the Public Information committee a "pulse" of the fellowship on matters ranging from the use of a service sponsor, length of sobriety, the number of weekly meetings attended, and involvement in treatment programs before arrival at Alcoholics Anonymous, among a variety of other issues. For Area 20, approximately 15 groups were selected from cities including Bolingbrook, Crystal Lake, Elgin, W. Chicago, Palatine, Hinsdale, Antioch, and Kirkland and Henry (I know... where are THEY)??

In almost all cases, I contacted the groups' primary contact or GSR and arranged to visit the group on their normal meeting night to administer the survey after their meeting. This meant I had an opportunity to attend several meetings I'd never been to with people in our Area I'd never met, sometimes in cities that I had rarely (if ever) visited. I want to share here that these visits were lifechanging.

I have "circles" in AA. I have a home group with which I know the first and last names of the roughly 40 (ish) people that routinely attend that group. I have District, Area, and Regional "service circles" as well, and within those circles am grateful to have an opportunity to call an additional 200-300 folk "friends."And, of course, as Delegate, I've had an opportunity to expand that circle, even more, to include members from across the United States and Canada (and the world) while addressing matters regarding the General Service Conference. True, I've also had the opportunity to visit numerous districts and give reports, but the common thread in these circles is that, for the most part, the folks are all like me. They live in my town, they're interested in the structure of Alcoholics Anonymous, as am I, and they're committed to service within the fellowship in a way I can appreciate, understand, and share a love for.

But then I began to visit GROUPS that were not in my immediate area of comfort, almost all a significant distance from my house, and when that happened, something deep down inside of me happened. I felt a humbleness that was even different that when I stood on the floor of the General Service Conference for the first time. For many of us in service, we say things like "We get to do this", or "Grateful to be of service", but these visits to outlying groups for the sole purpose of being of service have filled my heart with such gratitude that I have to tell you about it.

Now it's not like I've never been to new meetings before or met new people in the fellowship. Still, as a rule, when I visit new groups "as an alcoholic in search of the message of recovery," I rarely (if ever) mention my service position, as I don't think it's relevant. However, in these visits on behalf of the General Service Office, it WAS relevant. To most of the members of the groups I visited, I was a messenger, a very well-received messenger, who had news from headquarters! I had news that General Service Office had randomly selected their group, and the office was interested in THEIR opinion. I was there to ask if they would be so kind as to fill out a survey so I could return their thoughts to New York.



This next part could come off the wrong way, but I wanted to share how incredibly grateful everyone was. Sadly, most groups had little involvement in the service structure within their districts only a few had ever heard of that "Assembly" thing with those "higher ups" ... That someone would bother to come and visit (and what's with the tie, sir?) and ask THEM what they thought made them feel "included" and a "part of." And I'm not going to lie, there were times when the reception was uncomfortably gracious....

On several occasions while driving home, often on dark empty country roads, I'd ask myself, how can a drunk like me, with all my flaws, be the recipient of so much love? What did I do to be so deserving of this type of hospitality, and how is it that "I get to do this"? To many, it will be apparent, and many reading this will understand, but some may not, and to those, I say, it's because of our 3rd legacy of Service in Alcoholics Anonymous. The rewards are exponential and life-changing when we expend just a little extra effort and give away what has been so freely given to us. To all those who may be reading this with whom I visited and to all who have welcomed me with open arms (in all my travels), please know that you changed me forever.

With a humble and grateful heart-

Chris D. Delegate P72/A20

FEAR, APPROVAL, & SELF-AWARENESS

What other people think of me is not my business...this is valuable information I learned, and you all have taught me. Before I got sober, I was so afraid of not being accepted that I always tried to be what I thought you wanted. If you were into cars, I was into cars. If you were into sports, I was into sports. I was raised in a "normal" loving family and always had their support, but from my peers, I was never a part of the group. I was always the kid my parents loved, but my peers were just there because I was part of groups by affiliation. My early love was hockey, and I had a certain talent for the game, so I focused on that. That was my identity, and I poured all of my energy into that. I stopped playing at the end of high school and found my new love...alcohol. I spent the next seven years on that steep decline into oblivion.

The reality was that in all of those years, I never let anyone know who I was. This was a great defense and allowed me never to create any meaningful relationships. I didn't realize that until later in sobriety. In working on my fourth step and identifying my defects, I found that fear was my number one. I was afraid of being accepted, I was afraid of failure, and I was even afraid of success. Being afraid of you knowing who I was and not wanting me left me always trying to fit in based on the insane notion that I knew what you wanted. That fear of failure also never let me try to my fullest so that if I failed, I could always know I could have done more instead of accepting that I just wasn't good enough.

I think those fears fueled that feeling of "terminal uniqueness." I thought I was different but did not let anybody know who I was. If you knew me, you clearly wouldn't like me because I didn't like myself. I couldn't fit in anywhere because I tried to fit in everywhere. That fear of not being loved and accepted kept me from being who I was. Sure, I had many "buddies" as I grew up, but never any real true friends.

Today I live in the spirit of a loving God and know that what I do is good enough. And when those fears creep back in, it's time to do some work to figure out what I truly fear.

In Loving Service, Rob Mefford Panel 72 Area Chair Northern Illinois Area 20

WALK THROUGH THE BIG BOOK

Chapter 5 How It Works – Part 1

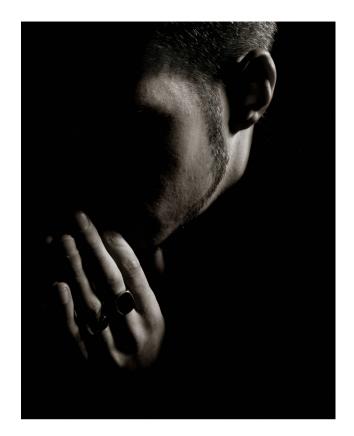
Bill has completed his description of the problem and given us an insight into the solution.

The problem is we are different from other people when it comes to alcohol. We are not able to drink like normal people. Once we start, the phenomenon of craving takes place, and we are unable to predict what happens next. Maybe we will stop after one or two drinks but maybe not for one or two weeks, we don't know. Even more important, when we are not drinking, we have the obsession to go back to drinking no matter how long it has been. We cannot remember the suffering of even the day before, and we somehow mysteriously find ourselves drinking again, even if we have sworn off it.

The solution is that we have to be convinced of our inability to recover with any kind of humanitarian aid. Not on our strength or with anyone else's strength. There is no human strength sufficient to recover. We must find a source of strength outside human strength to rely on – a higher power. And, if you remember, Bill told us that is the whole purpose of the book to find a power greater than ourselves that can solve our problems (not problems but problems – not being a normal drinker).

Remember when Bill told us, "precisely how we have recovered is the main purpose of this book." Well, that is what he is about to do in this chapter. We have all read and heard read thousands of times the first few paragraphs of this chapter: "Rarely have we seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." A speaker once said, "I have NEVER seen a person fail who has thoroughly followed our path." I do believe that I can say the same. Take into consideration that the person is fully convinced that they are an alcoholic, the notion that they can, one day, drink like a normal person has been smashed, and they have not taken half measures but has worked the Steps as if their life depends on it. That is the essence of Step One. Admitting that I am an alcoholic, that my life is unmanageable, is the realization that there is no second chance, no going back; no I might be able to drink one day, but fully surrender to the fact that I can no longer drink ever. Plus, and this is just as important, I can't manage my life without the help of a power greater than myself. I think that this is where some people get sided tracked. If I stop drinking, everything will be ok. I can manage well without alcohol. But here again, time after time indicates that this isn't true. I don't just need a higher power not to drink, I need one to guide my ENTIRE life. Step Two provides further insight into this idea.

In Step Two, I believe that a power greater than myself can restore me to sanity. What does Bill mean by this? I believe that he is talking about my thinking and actions. I can make good decisions, which I have not been able to do previously, and follow through with them. I love that he starts it with "come to believe" because this is a process. It is a process of seeing the results in other members and watching it happen to me as I start. When I came in, I was told to ask God to keep me sober. I balked, saying I don't know that I believed in God, and if I did, why would he care if I was sober or not? I was told it doesn't matter do it anyway. When I started to make another objection, he stopped me and said, do it anyway. As I did that daily, I began to realize that it was working, and I slowly came to believe.



After Bill gets through with the section we read at the start of our meetings, he ends with the three pertinent ideas. (a) That we were alcoholics and could not manage our own lives. (b) Probably no human power could have relieved our alcoholism. (c) That God could and would if He were sought. This is the sum of Steps One and Two. In the original manuscript, Bill followed this with the instructions, if you are not convinced, then you need to re-read the book to this point or throw it away. The final version reads: "Being convinced, we were at Step Three, which is that we decided to turn our will and our life over to God as we understood Him."

In Step Three, I have to decide whether I will do this. This is my first real choice in the program. Will I put in the effort to change? Will I surrender to the idea of allowing this thing that is called God or a higher power to be my guiding influence? And, by the way, what is this turn my will and my life over? I love how Joe & Charlie describe this; it is my thoughts and actions. Here again, my problem resides in my head, in my thou³ghts which become actions. Here again, Bill hits us with the requirement to take Step Three: "The first requirement is that we be convinced that any life runs on self-will can hardly be a success," and he goes on to talk about the actor to ram home the idea that our lives are unmanageable; why else would we take action necessary to recover.

Our lives have been ruled by selfishness. Everything we have done is based on this, even when we thought we were being kind and giving, ulterior motions were involved. Bill tells us that we have to be rid of selfishness. "Above everything, we alcoholics must be rid of this selfishness. We must, or it kills us! God makes that possible. And there often seems to be no way of entirely getting rid of self without His aid." "We had to have God's help. This is the how and why of it. First of all, we had to quit playing God. It didn't work. Next, we decided that in this drama of life, God was going to be our Director. He is the Principal; we are His agents. He is the Father, and we are His children. Most good ideas are simple, and this concept was the keystone of the new and triumphant arch through which we passed to freedom."

We have to surrender. We have to quit playing God. If we are to live and live a life worth living, we have to do this. So Bill provides us with a start. A simple prayer to give us the words to say out loud for an act of surrender. "God, I offer myself to Thee – to build with me and to do with me as Thou wilt. Relieve me of the bondage of self, that I may better do Thy will. Take away my difficulties, that victory over them may bear witness to those I would help of Thy Power, Thy Love, and Thy Way of life. May I do Thy will always!" It is important to say this out loud. To say this on your knees. This is the posture of surrender as well as the words.

But now I have to take more action. I have actually to surrender. How do I do that? "Next, we launched out on a course of vigorous action, the first step of which is a personal housecleaning, which many of us had never attempted."

Part 2 in the next issue.

FROM THE CPC CHAIR

Greetings to All!

Holidays are around the corner. But there is even more to do!

My name is Jan S. I am the new CPC Chair for Area 20. I am excited about carrying the message and hope to find some enthusiastic people willing to join. The CPC Committee, or "Cooperating with the Professional Community," is the AA committee that lets professionals in your community know that AA is all about. We are not 12-stepping, but we are presenting AA to many professionals involved in law, medicine, education, faith, unions, governments, schools, fraternal organizations, and many more.

We need District CPC chairs as well as a whole lot of volunteers. We need to get out to the high schools in your district to "Carry the Message." The AA website has many resources available, including all literature. For the position of Chair, ideally, you have a year of sobriety and are familiar with the traditions. You will also be able to:

- 1. Attend your district meeting regularly.
- 2. Contact professionals for opportunities
- 3. Attend CPC-related workshops as well as the NIA assemblies and committee meetings.
- 4. Recruit volunteers with ideas and training
- 5. Comfortable with AA presentations
- 6. Always in training

For the position of Volunteers, you as well should have a year of sobriety and be familiar with AA Traditions. You will also be able to:

- 1. Accept opportunities that may come your way.
- 2. Attend CPC-related workshops
- 3. Attend your District meetings monthly
- 4. Comfortable talking in person to various professionals to explain what AA does and doesn't do.
- 5. Have creativity at your events.

The bottom line is that we need enthusiastic people to inform the professionals about AA and what it has done for you when needed. So, welcome the season and come join us. Nothing better than celebrating the planting of an AA seed. Please contact me and any questions. Be well.

Yours in service, Jan S. NIA 20 CPC Chair Jan41452@gmail.com

GRAPEVINE News



What's New For December 2022



What's New in Print and Online



Grapevine

Current Issue Spotlight:

This month's featured section is "Remote Communities & Sober Holidays," with stories by members about AA's remote communities. Also included are some memorable sober holiday stories.

Submit Your Story for Upcoming Issues:

Our Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions book (70 Wonderful Years!) – Our "Twelve & Twelve" book turns 70 this year! Tell us the ways this book changed your life and enriched your sobriety. What are your favorite passages and why? Share some stories. (stories due Dec. 15, 2022)

Prison Issue — We're looking for stories of hope about AA in prisons and

jails by incarcerated members and by those who bring meetings to them. Are you involved in correspondence service or prison sponsorship? We would love to hear your stories. (stories due Jan. 15, 2023)

Upcoming topics: Mid-Sobriety Challenges; AA in the Military, Remote Communities.

Important: We're looking for stories of experience with each Step and

each Tradition! (Pick a particular Step or Tradition and share your experience!) We also need your jokes!



La Viña

Current Issue Spotlight:

This month's featured section is the "LV Short Stories" issue.

Submit Your Story for Upcoming Issues:

Prayer and Meditation Annual Newcomer Issue Relapse

Important: We are always looking for stories on individual steps and traditions!

LV Editorial Advisory Board Rotation:

We are looking for volunteers to join the La Viña Editorial Advisory Board. If you are interested and would like to know more about this wonderful service opportunity, we invite you to contact us at: editorlv@aagrapevine.org



AAGrapevine.org

Make your plans and add your events to our online calendar at <u>www.aagrapevine.org/share</u>. Grapevine is always looking for stories, photographs, and illustrations. Please visit <u>www.aagrapevine.org/share</u> to learn more about how you can participate with Grapevine. To listen to La Viña audio story (in Spanish), visit: www.aalavina.org.

Area Chair / GVR Corner

Please let us know at EA@aagrapevine.org if your Area is planning any online virtual events.

To request Grapevine Complimentary materials, please download the request form www.aagrapevine.org/gvr-resources.



Grapevine Travel / Remote Events

December 02 – 04

Southeast Regional Forum

New Orleans, LA



If you attend area events we'd like to know!

Also, if you take anonymity-protected photos at events, we'd love to post them on the <u>GV Display Gallery</u>. Please send the information and photos to EA@aagrapevine.org.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1966, the Grapevine Conference Committee recommended "Delegates should lend their efforts toward increasing readership of the magazine in each area."

Need help with Customer Service?

Subscribers to Grapevine and La Viña If you or someone you know is experiencing delivery issues, please email or call 1.800.631.6025 or 1.800.640.8781 (Spanish). Email CustomerService@aagrapevine.org for English or Preguntas@aagrapevine.org for Spanish. We are pleased to be of assistance.

ABOUT THE SERVICE MANUAL

The Northern Illinois Area (NIA) 20 Service Manual, as we know it today, is a combination of various documents that were created and combined over the years. This manual is similar to the AA Service Manual but more specific to NIA.

Background and History

The original three documents were the GSR Handbook, the Committee Handbook, and the Service Guidelines, including the Duties and Responsibilities (D&R) of NIA, Trusted Servants. The GSR Handbook was first published in 1991 and written by then Concepts Editor Tex B. based on one that District 51 had created. It has some basics found in other AA literature and pamphlets, along with, more specifically, what goes on here in NIA. The Committee Handbook was an attempt to help explain how committees work, how we here in NIA loosely use Robert's Rules of Order, and how Third Legacy elections work. The third document was our Service Guidelines. These are very specific to NIA as they lay out what, when, how, and who. What and when our Assemblies and Committee Meetings are; who our Area Committee is; how we handle our finances; and the qualifications and responsibilities of our Area 20 trusted servants.

Managing Updates by Motions

Over the years, these documents have been changed and updated. Usually, when needed, but mostly when it has been noticed that they either need more information or are no longer in line with how we do things. Or, as alluded to in How it Works, sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly. Changes may be submitted by various members of the Area Committee, including individuals or committees. These changes are brought as motions to the Committee Meeting for general review. This allows the Area Committee to ask questions about the motions, and the DCMs present to take the motions back to their Districts and thus to the Groups. The motion is presented for consideration at the next Area Assembly. Here members can again ask questions and offer their thoughts on the suggested changes. These changes are then voted on and normally require a two-thirds majority to be passed.

The "best" motions relay the exact text that needs to be changed in the manual. Both the current verbiage and the proposed. This allows all present to fully see what is being suggested for change. If approved, the wording in the motion is replaced verbatim in the manual.

Sometimes motions presented don't have the exact wording, or the motion impacts other parts of the manual that need to be updated. In this case, the motion is turned over to the Report and Charter (R&C) Committee after Assembly approval. This committee will review the motion as it relates to other areas of our manual. This committee would then prepare and present a new motion for the Area to review and approve.

NIA Service Manual Custodian

In 2011 the R&C Committee submitted a motion to create an appointed position of NIA Service Manual Custodian to maintain the integrity of the manual. This person is proficient in Microsoft Word and can update our documents and keep the existing formatting. They provide our Web Administrator with a copy of the website that can be printed in 8.5" x 11" format. They also provide the Area Chair with a version that can be printed in the 5.5" x 8.5" size. The only changes they make are what has been approved by the Area Assembly.

Update Example

As an example of this effort, at the Fall Assembly, two motions were presented and approved to change the D&R of the Registrar, along with creating the same for the Alternate Registrar and to give a vote at Assemblies to the Alternate Registrar. The motion to give the vote was a simple change of wording in the Service Guidelines section, changing the word "or" to "and." The motion regarding the Duties and Responsibilities was much more detailed. It provided the exact verbiage of the role, using strikethrough font to call out what would be removed and adding in the new information. The changes from these motions were added to our NIA20 Service Manual and placed on our website. However, the approved changes did not reference changes that impacted the D&R of our Secretaries. Therefore, no changes were made to them. These changes must be submitted by either the Secretaries or Report & Charter. Only then, with Assembly approval, will those changes be made.

Our service manual guides our area, and preserving the reliability of this document is enhanced by our timely maintenance. The manual can be located on the area website.

Cheryl V.

EDITORS NOTE

Concepts, our Area's Service letter has been faithfully published quarterly since 2004. We provide information about the area and upcoming events to meet our fellow member's needs. Articles our members write are most welcome, especially about service! Here are some questions to help you get started with short anonymity – protected article:

- · How did you get involved in service?
- · Who nudged you into service activities?
- What positions have you held?
- · How prepared were you for the service position?
- What did you think about your first assembly, and what do you think of them now?
- Have you been on a conference planning committee? What was it like? Will you do it again?
- How have the traditions helped you during a business meeting?
- What do you accomplish at your group's business meeting?
- · What motivates you in your service position?
- Do you have a service sponsor?

Shares on other AA topics are certainly welcome. The Editor cannot do it alone! We could certainly use a Co-editor. I will reach out in January to obtain some authors for the March issue! Have a wonderful Holiday Season in 2022, and Happy New Year 2023!

DID YOU KNOW ???????

AA has three newsletters for you to explore that are intended for various audiences! **Box 4–5–9**

• A quarterly news bulletin about A.A. service, literature, events, and sharing from groups, service committees, and individual U.S./Canada A.A. members.

About A.A.

• For professionals of all types who deal with alcoholics, including professionals in healthcare, law, corrections, and clergy.

Sharing from Behind the Walls

• Excerpts from letters sent to G.S.O. by people in custody for others involved in A.A. in correctional facilities.

You can read them online at <u>AA.org/newsletters</u> and subscribe to have them delivered to your email.



Is A.A. For You

Only you can decide whether you want to give Alcoholics Anonymous a try—whether you think it can help you. We who are in A.A. came because we finally gave up trying to control our drinking. We still hated to admit that we could never drink safely. Then we heard from other A.A. members that we were sick. (We thought so for years!) We found out that many people suffered from the same feelings of guilt and loneliness and hopeless- ness that we did. We found out that we had these feelings because we had the disease of alcoholism. We de- cided to try to face up to what alcohol had done to us. There are some of questions we tried to an-

swer *honestly (www.aa.org, search "Is A.A. for you"*). If we answered YES to four or more questions, we were in deep trouble with our drinking. See how you do. Remember, there is no disgrace in facing up to the fact that you have a problem.

What is NIA?

The principal function of Northern Illinois service Area 20 is to be a forum for effective communication between the Groups and the General Service Conference through its Delegate. In addition to counseling its Delegate about the collective Group Conscience of the Fellowship in Northern Illinois, NIA will assist its Districts, Groups and members to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers in a broad variety of ways, including but not restricted to conducting workshops, sharing sessions and seminars in all fields of general service.

NIA Statement on Self-Support

Our Seventh Tradition states that "Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contribu- tions." Northern Illinois Area 20 wants our fellowship to endure, and be ready for the still-suffering alcoholic to come. NIA makes this possible by taking care of its essential services such as website. The groups and dis- tricts in Area 20 fund this website thru their continued contributions and support. For additional information see the A.A. pamphlet regarding self-support.

NIA Statement on Singleness of Purpose

Our Third and Fifth Traditions state that "The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking." "Each Group has but one primary purpose – to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers. And as a Fel- lowship we do one thing only: "- share our program of recovery."



| First Name | Last Name | |
|---|------------|-----|
| Address | City/State | Zip |
| Email | Phone | |
| Please Specify: AA Al-Anon Alateen Guest | | |
| □ Registration \$30 □ Saturday Boxed Lunch \$15 | | |
| Banquet Dinner \$52 (Choose One) Chicken Vegetarian | | |
| Total: \$ | | |
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| Schaumburg, IL 60168 | | |
| Make Checks Payable to: 2023 Spring Conference | | |
| Special Needs/Accessibility Services (please describe) | | |
| Please submit registration together if you'd like to sit together for the hanguet (may 8) | | |