

CONCEPTS

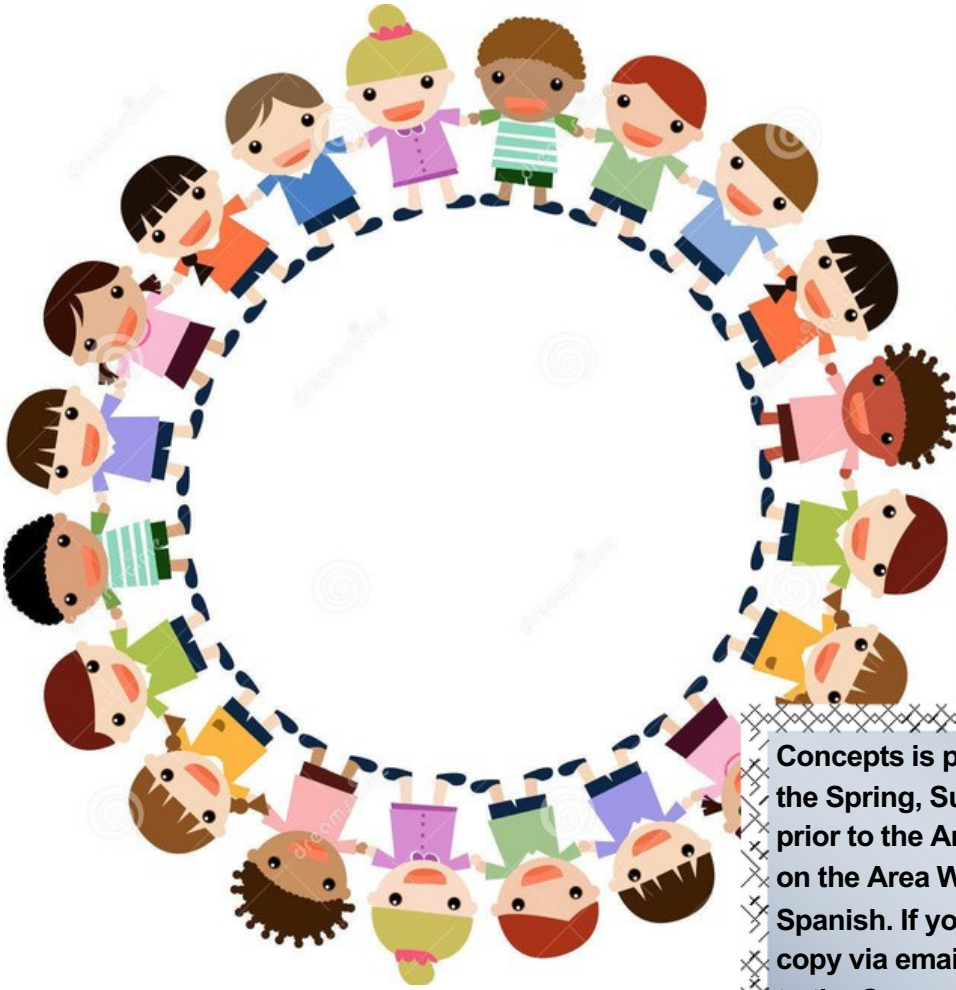
NORTHERN ILLINOIS AREA LTD AREA 20 SERVICE LETTER

WINTER 2023 VOL. XLVII NO.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 conscience.
- ◆ 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.

WALK THROUGH THE BIG BOOK

INTO ACTION

In my previous articles, I have covered everything through Step Nine. The Doctor's Opinion, Bill's Story, There Is A Solution, More About Alcoholism, and We Agnostics, all covered Step Nine. In the chapter Into Action, Bill talks about how we go about finding our solution, which is a Power greater than ourselves. First we have to acknowledge the Power and surrender to that Power, turning our thoughts and our actions over to the care of that Power whatever that Power might be for the individual. Then we go about the task of identifying those character defects that have been blocking us from the Power and then doing the work of having those defects removed so that we have access to the Power. If you think of it as a water pipe that has been filled with dirt and debris completely blocking the flow of water, what we have done is removed that dirt and debris so that the water can flow again. Having accomplished that we now have the task of keeping that dirt and debris out of the pipe so that the water can continue to flow. Bill refers to this as maintaining our spiritual condition. This is the work of Steps Ten and Eleven.

From my experience, most people think of Step Ten as reviewing our day at the end of the day looking for those occasions where we did not behave properly and then going back and making amends for those times. That is really not what Bill describes in the book. Bill writes: "This thought brings us to Step Ten, which suggest we continue to take personal inventory and continue to set right any new mistakes as we go along." Notice the two times Bill uses the word continue, this implies it's an ongoing affair not a one time at the end of the day. "Continue to watch for selfishness, dishonesty, resentment, and fear. When these crop up, we ask God at once to remove them. We discuss them with someone immediately and make amends quickly if we have harmed anyone. Then we resolutely turn our thoughts to someone we can help. Love and tolerance of others is our code." This is Bill's first direction for how we live our daily life. Notice Bill uses the words continue to watch for. This does not sound like an end of the day activity to me. It sounds like something I'm supposed to do throughout my day. If I am truly going to keep my spirituality in fit condition. I cannot afford to wait until the end of the day. "It is easy to let up on the spiritual program of action and rest on our laurels. We are headed for trouble if we do, for alcohol is a subtle foe. We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day we must carry the vision of God's will into all our activities. 'How can I best serve the – thy will (not mine) be done.' These are thoughts which must go with us constantly." Here Bill gives us our second direction, "Every day is a day we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities." I know, for me, I can't afford to wait until the end of the day. If I am truly going to live a happy joyous and free life, I need to be practicing these principles all day every day.

Now to Step Eleven. "Step Eleven suggests prayer and meditation. We shouldn't be shy on this matter of prayer." In Step Eleven Bill gives us direction on how to maintain our contact with our Higher Power. Our first direction is: "When we retire at night, we constructively review our day. Were we resentful, selfish, dishonest or afraid? Do we owe an apology? Have we kept something to ourselves which should be discussed with another person at once? Were we kind and loving toward all? What could we have done better? Were we thinking of ourselves most of the time? Or were we thinking of what we could do for others, of what we could pack into the stream of life? But we must be careful not to drift into worry, remorse for morbid reflection, or that would diminish our usefulness to others.

After making our review we ask God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures should be taken." This is our end of day action. This is a specific review of how we behave throughout the day. Bill gives us very specific questions to ask ourselves. He also encourages us not to drift into worry remorse or morbid reflection. This is not about beating myself up for behaving badly, simply reviewing how I can be better tomorrow. And he gives us the very specific instruction to ask for God's forgiveness and inquire what corrective measures we can take for improvement. When I first read this I question why he started at the end of the day. But I soon realized it was because I can start this right now. The fact that I haven't been doing this up to this point, doesn't prevent me from starting right now. Our next direction is: "On awakening let us think about the twenty-four hours ahead. We consider our plans for the day. Before we begin, we ask God to direct our thinking, especially asking that it be divorced from self-pity, dishonest or self-seeking motives."

My experience tells me that most of us do some form of morning meditation. For me personally, this has become one of the most important parts of my day. I find that on those mornings when I skip this important direction my day goes worse than if I had done it. I review those things, from yesterday, where I needed improvement and I reflect on how I can do those better today. Asking for God's guidance, patients, and strength to do what is right no matter how hard that might be are crucial for my day to go well. Bill tells us "Our thought life will be placed on a much higher plane when our thinking is cleared of wrong motives." Bill continues: "In thinking about our day we may face indecision. We may not be able to determine which course to take. Here we ask God for inspiration, and intuitive thought or decision. We relax and take it easy. We don't struggle. We are often surprised how the right answers come, after we have tried this for a while. What used to be the hunch or the occasional inspiration gradually becomes a working part of the mind. Being still inexperienced and having just made conscious contact with God, it is not probable that we are going to be inspired all the times." I have found that over time I have gotten better at this. That's not to say I'm 100% God conscious, I still have a lot of room to grow, but I am much better than I used to be.

Bills next direction is: "As we go through the day we pause, when agitated or doubtful, and asked for the right thought or action. We constantly remind ourselves we are no longer running the show, humbly saying to ourselves many times each day "Thy will be done." This sounds similar to our instruction in Step Ten about continuing to look at where our thinking goes wrong. But it really is the other side of that coin preemptively looking at making sure our thoughts are right. Here Bill adds what I think are the best promises of all: "We are then in much less danger of excitement, fear, anger, worry, self-pity, or foolish decisions. We become much more efficient. We do not tire so easily for we are not burning up energy foolishly as we did when we were trying to arrange life to suit ourselves. It works – it really does."

Bill ends this chapter telling us that what we've done so far is not enough There is action in more action." He then tells us the next chapter is devoted entirely on Step Twelve, Working With Others.

Evolution of Bridging the Gap

DON'T CONFUSE THE METHOD WITH THE OBJECTIVE

This next step for Bridging the Gap (BTG) leads to the resolution of the loss of the BTG Volunteer Database that had to be shut down earlier this year. The new step exemplifies the spiritual power of cooperation, and the UNITY of Alcoholics Anonymous. It provides a new tool for the NIA to carry our message of recovery and hope to newcomers fresh out of treatment or correctional facilities. It allows the newcomer quicker access to help from an AA Member in the town nearest to them. It makes “the hand of AA” quicker, and easier to reach. A big thanks to the following Area Committees and Area Chairpeople for their help and cooperation in taking this next step to help newcomers: Answering Service, Technology, Corrections, and Treatment Committees, and to Rob M. our Area Chair for his help as well.

WHAT WE DID

We created a new, NIA Master QR Code, (QR) to centralize the contact info for all NIA Answering Services. (This is not a “meeting directory app”). This QR is the direct access link to a new dedicated page on the NIA website and will take the place of the outdated, inaccurate (from 2004) NIA Map posted on the NIA website. This new listing for all NIA answering service numbers is searchable by City name, and will be easily updated and expanded by future Trusted Servants as they see fit. This new QR code is printed on self-stick labels, and QR coded business cards. AA volunteers will affix these QR labels to the inside front cover by of all BBKs, 12+12's, and Daily Reflections books given out by the Area, and District, CF, and TF committees to the jails and treatment facilities. New QR code business cards were also created for use in any facility where AA books are not distributed, or by other AA service committees such as PI, CPC, or Accessibilities.

These self-stick labels and business cards will be available for pick up the Area TF & CF Chairs at the Winter Assembly on Dec 9, 2023. They will then begin handing out the labels and cards to their District counterparts for local distribution. When someone leaves a TF or a CF, with a QR label in an AA Book, or a QR coded business card in hand, they will find an AA Volunteer near them is just a phone call away. Our existing AA Answering Service volunteers are standing by to help these newcomers find their way into AA and recovery. *If you were a former BTG Temporary Contact Volunteer, be sure to sign up with your local Answering Service and continue to carry the message.*

BACK STORY

This year at the General Service Conference, the Delegates again decided not to create a separate AA Service Manual for the BTG Committee. A review of the background materials from the GSC reveals they have long thought BTG was simply a duplication of other existing AA service efforts by committees such as CF, TF, and the Answering Service. As such, in their collective wisdom, BTG did not need, nor require a separate service manual. Logic dictates that they are correct. All those committees are in-place at the facilities and are fully capable of performing all the conceivable BTG functions. Providing a contact person to someone coming out of a facility was just one part of the BTG objective. We have remedied that issue with this step in the evolution of BTG with the new QR code enabled materials.

Further steps in the evolution are needed and on the horizon. Be on the lookout for new Workshops on topics like: “Working with Wet Drunks”; “What to do on an old-fashioned 12 th Step Call”; “How to Handle a First Step Meeting at your home group in accordance with the instructions in the Big Book”. Someone₅ held out their hand to you. Now its your turn. The life you save may be your own.

Delegates Corner

“Looking Back”

Panel 72 is quickly coming to an end and so I thought I'd take this opportunity to share my recollections of the more interesting events and also wish the incoming panel the best of luck.

Panel 72 started brightly, coming on the heels of the pandemic with the conference Delegates once again meeting in person for the first time in almost three years. Both, second year Panel 71 Delegates as well as the brand-new first year Panels 72 Delegates (like me) would be in attendance. No one really knew what to expect as no one among us had ever been to an “in-person” General Service Conference before. We as a fellowship found ourselves wrestling with Literature questions consisting of whether the previous year's actions regarding the Preamble and the changes to the Twelve and Twelve would stand. Coupled with those significant decisions, the Conference also began to spotlight the financial situation, revealing what would later become a rather significant issue within the fellowship. And in the midst of all those spirited discussion the lingering effects of COVID we're still very much present, and several Delegates found themselves quarantined to their room, missing much of the conference. Throughout those circumstances the fellowship (Conference) decided that the prior year's literature changes would not be challenged and the P71's rotated out of service, replaced with P73 Delegates, but having had at least one in-person conference.

2023 then started off with a bang as during the January Board Weekend the General Service Board accepted the resignation of the Chair of the General Service Board. This of course set in motion the events of last spring which caused a great divide in our fellowship and tested to the brim our capacity to treat one another with compassion, empathy, and trust. With spirited discussion similar to that of the prior conference (and the literature decisions), the 73rd General Service Conference ultimately decided to support and accept the General Service Boards decision regarding the resignation, and also agreed that progress on the Plain & Simple Big Book should continue, and that a new Grapevine app should be supported. I mentioned these decisions not because they were easy but because of the amount of discussion that went along with each one. There was a time when I thought quote “oh boy” it seems to be getting a bit contentious in here but then I realized that difficult decisions come up year after year, panel after panel within the fellowship.

Prior to the events I've described above we endured all of the COVID related difficulties and then the manuscript litigation issue before that. Through it all I've learned the fellowship continues to have decisions before it and we persevere because we are guided by set of traditions and concepts that keep us rooted in a spiritual solution. We rarely agree on all issues however more often than not we rise to the point where we are shining examples of this life changing program, not always but often. Think for a minute what a similar couple of years might look like in another “business”. The carnage and wreckage would surely be evident.

As I prepare to rotate out, I will remember the relationships, the wonderful people that this 3rd legacy of service has afforded me the pleasure to serve with. Very few of us come to service with any specialized skills in people management or critical task handling but adhering to our 36 principles we are guided along the path with grace. That has been exemplified by the people that I have been fortunate enough to serve with both at the Conference level and within the Area.

It has been the absolute pleasure of my life to serve as your Panel 72 Delegate and, knowing you all did not always agree with every decision I made, I hope you feel that you were informed.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish Eric and Lisa the best of luck in Panel 74. We are in great hands!! Once again-thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Chris D.
Delegate P72

FROM THE DESK OF DR. BOB

FROM SEPTEMBER 1965 (GRAPEVINE)

Humility

(Inscription on desk plaque of Dr. Bob S.)

Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, irritable or sore; to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised, it is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble.

District 41 Picnic

“The District 41 picnic started out in a mist. But the spirit of the 30 (or so) attendees was too much for pall of the precipitation; and a good time was had by all. Lora B. regaled the crowd with a brief archival history of the District. Food and drink of all types was delicious and plentiful. Next year will be even better and the weather will be perfect!”
-Tom M. (D41 Secretary)

District 41 had its first annual picnic on August 5th . All the other DuPage County Districts have them, why not us? We didn't really know what we were doing but we figured if we put it together then people will come! That's what happened. We were a little late to the planning game and many of the DuPage County Forest Preserves were spoken for. Mallard Lake Park, located just a few miles from District 41, in Hanover Park, was beautiful and ready for our event. It took several of our District members to plan and prepare; specifically, our DCM and Secretary, three Committee Chairs, an Alternate Committee Chair and several GSR's. We also had the help of family members and group members pitch in the day of. It is important to note that donated funds provided by our local groups and members made the event possible.


We presented the history of how District 41 came to be. We realized how fortunate we were to be close to Chicago, which was close to Akron, which sparked a steady growth of meetings in our area. It is clear in our history how incredibly hard our founders worked to create an opportunity - not only for us to stay sober by helping each other one day at a time but they protected AA through creating the Traditions and Concepts to preserve and guide the fellowship as it grew. We celebrated the fact that the first DuPage County meeting of record is Brandywine in Villa Park. It was listed in the 1944 Listing of AA Groups With the Alcoholic Foundation. At that time there were 59 active groups supporting 1,400 members across the USA. That Thursday night group still meets every Thursday at 8pm. It's now called the Villa Park Thursday Nite held at Anona Center East.

Our picnic was stocked with AA literature to share with our local groups along with great food and friendships. The need for GSR representation from our D41 group meetings was also discussed. GRS's allow our District to provide the most accurate group conscience to be given upward to Area 20 and then presented the General Service Conference by Delegate each year. Thank you to all who helped make this picnic possible! We will see you in 2024!

Interested in General Service? Join us the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7pm for our D41 GSR/Committee Meeting at Elmhurst Presbyterian Church located at 367 Spring Road in Elmhurst.

Want to read our History? Go to aa-nia.org and select Information from the blue bar of options then click on NIA History.

EMAIL NEWSLETTER



*Want to receive a daily
inspirational quote chosen from
the deep well of Grapevine
stories?*

https://www.aagrapevine.org/share_emails

*Please let your friends know and pass it on. We also have
options for weekly and monthly.*

GRAPEVINE EDITORIAL CALENDAR 2024

- JAN **Emotional Sobriety** (stories due July 15, 2023)
Over time, how have you learned to use the tools of AA to gain serenity and peace? How has your life changed? Share some examples of emotional sobriety in your life today.
- FEB **Getting Through Tough Times** (stories due Aug 15, 2023)
A serious illness, divorce, the death of a loved one, a house fire, loss of a job, bankruptcy...How have you stayed sober through adversity? Tell us how the program and fellowship helped you.
- MARCH **Spanish-Speaking AA Members** (stories due Sept. 15, 2023)
This month we celebrate our Spanish-speaking AA members by translating and sharing some of the very best La Vina stories! We're also looking for stories of those doing service to reach out to our Spanish-speaking members in meetings, districts, areas or at events.
- APRIL **Favorite Big Book Stories** (stories due Oct. 15, 2023)
Grapevine celebrates 85 wonderful years of our beloved Big Book! What are your favorite Big Book stories or memories? What are your favorite chapters or passages and why? How did it help you as a newcomer? Feel free to include a photo of your well-worn Big Book!
- MAY **How the Steps Change My Life** (stories due Nov. 15, 2023)
Tell us how the Steps have changed your life and enriched your sobriety. Give some examples. What is your favorite Step? Which one surprised you most? Share your stories.
- JUNE **Happy Birthday Grapevine! (80 Wonderful Years!)** (stories due Dec. 15, 2023)
This June, Grapevine turns the big 80! Help us celebrate by sharing your very best memories with Grapevine. Why do you love Grapevine? Was there a story that once helped you? How did being a GV Rep help your sobriety? What did you learn? Share your best Grapevine memories!
- JULY **Annual Prison Issue** (stories due Jan. 15, 2024)
Looking for stories of hope about AA in prisons and jails by incarcerated members and by those who bring meetings to them. Did you find AA in prison? What is sobriety like inside? Are you involved in correspondence service or prison sponsorship? We would love to hear your stories.
- AUG **Dating & Relationships** (stories due Feb. 15, 2024)
Share your experiences learning to date in sobriety. How did it go? What were the challenges? Any sober tips? (Believe me, we all want to know!). Share what you've learned about having sober relationships. How is your marriage different in sobriety than when you were drinking?
- SEPT **Young & Sober (Release of the New GV & LV Apps!)** (stories due March 15, 2024)
Did you come into AA at an early age? What was that like? What were the challenges? Do you go to Young People's AA (YPAA) meetings, dances or conferences? How have they helped you?
- OCT **Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)** (stories due April 15, 2024)
Have you participated in CPC service (providing doctors, therapists, clergy, lawyers, teachers, parole officers and other professionals information about AA)? Did a professional help you find your way to AA because of CPC service work? Are you a professional who found out about AA from members doing CPC work?
- NOV **Classic Grapevine**
Our favorite stories from the AA Grapevine Story Archive.
- DEC **Remote Communities** (stories due June 15, 2024)
Do you live far from AA meetings? Are you a loner? Stationed far away? Do you have a language or cultural barrier? Are you homebound? Do you use online meetings? Is it difficult to find AA meetings where you live? Tell us how you stay sober. Are you involved in Remote Community service?
- Sober Holidays!** (stories due June 15, 2024) December is a great time of year to reach out to alcoholics and help others. What are the ways you stay sane and grateful during the holidays and New Year's? How do you navigate holiday parties and family gatherings? Share your best sober holiday stories!



2024 ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE

LOVE • UNITY • SERVICE

August 23rd - 25th

Hosted by Area 21
District 19

Speakers	Activities	Hotel Info	Questions
Friday Night AA Speaker John H St. Louis, MO	Literature Archives Workshops Alcathon Panels	Northfield Inn and Suites 3280 Northfield Drive Springfield, IL 62702 217-523-7900	Email: Michael R Mjreeves23@gmail.com or istc2024@gmail.com
Saturday AA Speaker Matt M Norman, OK	Entertainment Fellowship Hospitality Room Fun	Double queen or King \$92 +tax and fees	To register and pay online 
Alanon Speaker Malenie D Springfield, IL	Ice Cream Social (\$5 at door)	Cut off Date July 24, 2024 Reference Conference when reserving	
East Central Regional Trustee Cathi C			
G.S.O. Speaker James H			

REGISTRATION (One Person per Form)

First Name: _____ **Last Name:** _____

Group _____

Address: _____ **City:** _____ **State** _____

Email: _____ **Phone:** _____

Please specify: AA Alanon Guest

___ **Registration \$32**

___ **Banquet Dinner \$40** Roast Strip Loin of Beef Tuscan Parmesan Chicken Vegetarian

Total \$ _____

Mail to: 600 South 2nd Street. Ste 400 Springfield, IL 62704 (Attn: Illinois State Conference)

Make checks payable to: Illinois State Conference (Mail in must be received before 08/07/24)

To register AND pay online, use QR code above or go to website:

<https://istc2024.wixsite.com/registration>