

## Sharing Session Notes | EPGSA Panel 73

April 15, 2023

### Pre-Conference Sharing Session

Calvary Baptist Church, Allentown, PA



- The session began with opening remarks by the Delegate, who explained the purpose of the event and its importance - to help gain a “sense” of the Area’s group conscience before attending the General Service Conference the following week.
- The format of the event featured a presenter who spent up to 10 minutes briefly explaining the background of the agenda item, after which there was open sharing from the floor.
- For a few items there was just open sharing, without a presenter.
- For each agenda item on the program, the main ideas from the comments shared are noted below.

Agenda Item Topic	Comments from Open Sharing (M = Male, F = Female)
<b>Corrections Item C.</b> <b>Discuss</b> service piece, “Safety and A.A.: Our Common Welfare” (SMF-209) and its revisions.  Hugh H., Past Delegate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• F   Revert to 2021 version with stronger language – newer version seemed like “grudgingly” being inclusive – we should use it even if it might be controversial.</li><li>• F   Comment that 2021 was strong language but be patient with some of us as we learn. Was not really against it though. Not sure about language in latest version.</li><li>• M   No personal problem reverting to 2021 version. District and he have problem with some of the language used in background material. Did not like terminology talking about AA being full of white supremacists, anti- LGBT gay etc. Speaker noted he’d never encountered racism or anti-gay statements at meetings. Lots of discussion about issue at District.</li><li>• F   Considered 2021 version aggressive (not untrue though), and current version tempered. Feels 2021 will prevail and thinks the discussion was good. Noted office staff created the 2021 version.</li><li>• F   Does not understand what exactly the agenda item is. As a black person, she has felt uncomfortable at majority white meetings. She has seen racism.</li><li>• F   No strong opinion on the language, but strong opinion on the content. Need to keep putting out the message that AA IS inclusive. She has heard all different kinds of anti-inclusive actions/speech, whether covert or overt. We need a bold message of inclusion.</li><li>• M   Has heard objectional things, race, gender, LGBT etc., votes with his feet. Noted that last membership survey points out that our representation within AA does NOT match that of society. We need to do more.</li><li>• M   White and has felt uncomfortable at majority-black meetings but was made to feel comfortable. Basically, doesn’t feel that there is a problem - because all meetings are about alcoholism.</li><li>• M   Rules from “above” aren’t the best way to go about it. Homegroups need to have discussions about safety. Considers people talking over others as “violence”. Gay member walked out after someone else made “faggot” comment. He left group and never came back.</li></ul>
<b>Literature Item O.</b> <b>Discuss</b> cost effective media options that welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• M   Does not want to revise the pamphlet (it’s fine), nothing else needed.</li><li>• M   New to AA; has kid who’s 17. #1 place kid gets info is YouTube – he is #3. Maybe we should hire someone to get followers of what we have vs. new printing.</li></ul>

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young people to A.A. as an alternative to revising the “Too Young?” pamphlet.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Also has child who primarily gets info from YouTube. Thinks GV podcast serves a good need vs. a pamphlet, especially considering cost effectiveness.</li> <li>• M   Doesn’t see many young people in AA; maybe we need to do more to get them there.</li> </ul>
Kim B., ADCM D62 – issue is that we have resources, but don’t know how to find or use them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Thinks having a pamphlet in hand can be much more valuable than just mentioning a video.</li> <li>• M   Thinks pamphlets primarily cater to those outside of AA. Once in AA you don’t pay attention to pamphlets. You learn by being in AA. We need to make it easier to access our existing content. Pamphlet is like a stranger giving candy to a child.</li> <li>• F   Pamphlets are a good idea, not everyone is online.</li> <li>• M   People need to be in AA, not reading pamphlets.</li> <li>• M   Came in as young person w/o internet. Pamphlet was important for him to identify. Today though, young people don’t care about pamphlets – no purpose to revise something nobody is reading. Is important to make existing AA media more accessible.</li> <li>• F   Maybe we can just put QR code on existing pamphlets.</li> <li>• F   Need balance, but we could do more online, perhaps Living Sober blog.</li> </ul>
<b>Finance Item F.</b> <b>Discuss</b> new proposed agenda items (PAIs) regarding the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Group submitted agenda item to rescind change. Feels it was an outside issue, but even more we need to leave the original writings alone. Changing anything at all is hijacking the fellowship – if you don’t like it, go start your own.</li> <li>• M   Bill was against rigidity. We need to change with the times, if we don’t change, we won’t survive.</li> <li>• M   Traditionalists – Keep Bill’s words alone and put any changes in the footnotes. Example: rape today is <i>primarily</i> not considered to be about lust.</li> <li>• M   Was developed by heterosexual men 80 years ago. Things change; language changes; exact words are not sacred.</li> <li>• F   Young person, considers how young people do face issues with racism, sexuality, gender. We could be making things so far off-base (unrelatable with outdated language) that they can’t get sober using us.</li> <li>• M   He’s been to meetings and has seen plenty of gay men refer to their husband or <i>wife</i> - does not see a problem.</li> <li>• M   Don’t make any changes at all; we’ll get confused.</li> <li>• F   AA has reached a plateau of membership – that says something. If you have not been raped, you have no right to say anything about that experience. I should not need to start my own fellowship for this.</li> <li>• F   Needed to read original language; didn’t know all 7 deadly sins.</li> <li>• M   Since not everyone knows we made changes, maybe we didn’t do a good job.</li> <li>• F   AA is a living organism, and as such needs to grow and adapt. We need to try to be inclusive, language matters, and we need to show love and tolerance.</li> <li>• F   Maybe we need plain language 12x12 also; does not see an issue, since plain language BB will always be there, and it keeps the original language.</li> <li>• M   Shocked by changes, it was done “under darkness” and “in the middle of the night” and didn’t inform anyone. Everything was fine, if we start changing language, we’ll need to change everything. If the language makes a difference to you, you’ll go out anyway. Noted he was ready to start his own group and stocked</li> </ul>

Agenda Item Topic	Comments from Open Sharing (M = Male, F = Female)
	<p>up on original unchanged 12x12s.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   We must revert the changes.</li> <li>• F   It was a group conscience for these changes, everyone came together to make the decision.</li> <li>• M   We don't need any changes.</li> <li>• M   DCM in Panel 69 commented on <i>frequent</i> communication regarding agenda items in 2020, he sent multiple emails and explicitly noted controversial topics. Tried to interest GSRs in potential changes groups might care about.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literature Items G. and I.</b> (no presenter)</p> <p><b>Review</b> progress report regarding development of Spanish 4th Edition.</p> <p><b>Review</b> progress report regarding 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of BB.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Important to change stories for 5th edition</li> <li>• M   Interested in dialect of latest Spanish translation</li> <li>• M   Never change 1st 164; making it easier is "promotion".</li> <li>• F   Curious about forward to next edition.</li> <li>• M   Hopes new stories are a cross section of who we want to reach, not a cross section of the stories submitted.</li> <li>• M   Concerns about what happened during Covid, and getting more people involved. Bad communication.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literature Item E.</b></p> <p><b>Review</b> progress report regarding update of the pamphlet "A.A. for the Black and African American Alcoholic."</p> <p>Pat F., Past Delegate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Existing pamphlet has all titles talking about feeling welcome, that has not been her experience. More than a few rooms where she hasn't felt welcome, no one greeted her; at one group she was only considered "okay" after someone recognized her from service and said hi.</li> <li>• F   Question about the apparent limited number of stories received and how many are being considered.</li> <li>• M   Standing not so much as African American, but as a veteran. After visiting VA clinics, the big question is how to reach "us" meaning vets or other people.</li> <li>• M   Pamphlets are not for those of us in AA, they are for people NOT here. Sometimes they may seem divisive, but they are not, because the target audience is those not here; need to be more welcoming.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Information Item R.</b></p> <p><b>Consider</b> request to implement an Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Instagram account.</p> <p>Steve S., Past Alt-Del / Chair – we don't read our existing literature; non-print materials are needed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Anonymity concerns around "following" on websites; also important is the possibility of fake accounts.</li> <li>• F   Great idea.</li> <li>• M   Moderated comments and general idea makes him not excited and sounds boring. Photos from real alcoholics about living sober would be more interesting. Wants more info about communications audit – what he's seen so far is some of the best info ever seen about poor communication.</li> <li>• M   We are missing a lot of people compared to the number that studies say have alcohol problems; lots of people search while drunk for help to stop drinking; Instagram is among top 5 web sites.</li> <li>• M   Loves the idea, but ground rules are important. It's very easy to pull us into controversy. Comments are quite dangerous.</li> <li>• M   Spanish – Noticed lots of potential controversy between pamphlets and online. Do we want to help each other or get into controversy? Never saw LGBT pamphlet before.</li> <li>• M   Solving a problem that doesn't exist. People know AA is a solution, we don't need to try any harder to reach out to others. Questions if this is going to help</li> </ul>

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	<p>anyone. Homegroup is against social media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Seems like there is a problem with communication, Instagram could help with that. Wishes there was more online presence about AA, although we need to be careful.</li> <li>• M   Yes, we absolutely need an Instagram account, obviously. Thinks it may actually help us share more within AA.</li> <li>• F   Instagram would be amazing. Moderating comments would likely be a difficult task. 2 sponsees did 4<sup>th</sup> step via video blog. They will not be searching aa.org or area59aa.org. They will use Instagram. We are not meeting all of the alcoholics that exist today.</li> <li>• F   Repeated statement that membership has been stable at 2 million over 20 years. That is very concerning, and uncomfortable with “it worked when I got sober” – that isn’t good enough.</li> <li>• M   Very much in favor. On Instagram a lot, but anonymity is sacrificed somewhat. You can see who follows what and we need to keep it in mind. Need to consider public facing ramifications.</li> <li>• F   We are already on social media, so we need to do it. It’s about reaching the next alcoholic, not us. We need to be there instead of fake accounts (pretending to be the voice of AA).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy/Admissions Item E.</b></p> <p><b>Review</b> report of the GSB Ad-Hoc Committee on Participation of Online Groups in the US/Canada Service Structure.</p> <p>Caroline N., Past Delegate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Homegroup of 50+ years has decided to permanently stay on Zoom; another group of 70+ years also staying on Zoom. Does not think there needs to be a separate Area entity for online groups unless numbers increase.</li> <li>• F   Who are we to say virtual meetings don’t belong or kick people out? Her homegroup is virtual-only and decided which District to be a part of. Thinks it’s great to be online group with ability to go in person to events within their District or Area. It’s important to get views of virtual groups within physical areas.</li> <li>• F   Online here to stay; can see efficiencies with online Area.</li> <li>• M   Virtual-only but member of physical district. Like being able to be part of a geographic area and visit other parts.</li> <li>• M   His group’s hybrid attempts did not work. Meeting attendance went up from 20-25 to 40-45 when they went online. We need to figure out how to stay connected to each other and do service.</li> <li>• M   Homegroup is hybrid; grateful to assistance they received at beginning of Covid on how to do virtual meetings. Conversation on the issue is important.</li> <li>• F   Related experience that after meetings went online, we are serving new people who can’t go to physical meetings (or prefer virtual). Hybrid meetings help with accessibility. We can figure this out.</li> <li>• M   The sooner we split the 2 types of meetings the better. Online meetings are not up to par and have negatively affected in-person groups.</li> <li>• F   Very ambivalent, even though recognizes it’s essential. Online meetings can be amazing with huge geographic representation. Feels something is lost when you don’t have face-to-face communication. Strongly advocated for going to in-person meetings.</li> <li>• F   Homegroup is a mix of 2 live and 2 virtual meetings. Loves online meetings and has experienced more emotion vs. in-person.</li> <li>• M   Has been asking how online groups can be involved in service for 25 years. It’s</li> </ul>

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	<p>important to figure out the right way to do it. Need to be very cautious about people from one Area comparing things (positive or negative) to how another Area does things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Mind was closed to virtual meetings, until PI work regarding deaf and hard of hearing opened her to ASL meetings online. Holy Moly, I never thought about that. We need their perspective in our service structure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literature Item H.</b></p> <p><b>Review</b> progress report regarding the translation of the book <i>Alcoholics Anonymous</i> (4th Edition) to plain &amp; simple language.</p> <p>Pete B., Delegate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Are they going chapter by chapter? Are they re-writing Bill's Story etc.</li> <li>• M   Quoted passage from 4<sup>th</sup> Edition Forward; defined for us the meaning of "integrity". It's "arrogance" to assume we can translate Bill W's words into plain language.</li> <li>• M   A person who didn't read was able to get sober by attending meetings and sitting next to someone who could read. Since he and the speaker got sober the "old fashioned" way, we don't need to change.</li> <li>• F   Overwhelming homegroup conscience is we need to do what it takes to make people find sobriety.</li> <li>• F   Currently sponsoring someone who has lots of trouble reading and writing, and she needs help every few sentences to understand the basics. This is vital; only concern is we need to make sure it's simple <i>enough</i>.</li> <li>• F   How does Delegate express concerns if he doesn't like something? Are people at an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level going to evaluate the draft version, and not just the "intelligent" ones?</li> <li>• M   Concern over changing 1<sup>st</sup> 164 pages, and also if an alcoholic is writing the plain language.</li> <li>• M   Self-described BB thumper who doesn't care if we change the language.</li> <li>• M   Came in on 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, made analogy between himself wanting to rewrite the big book as a newcomer with current efforts. (Idea was that we all think we "know better" when new.) Also, since the book is "precisely" how the first 100 recovered, that means we must never change anything. "Don't screw this up" quote from Dr. Bob is another reason we can't change anything.</li> <li>• F   Will the plain language edition include stories and appendices? (Answer: No.) Also wondered what the cost will be compared to regular BB?</li> <li>• M   Questioned whether it's just the "big words" being changed, or will it include "small" words that have also changed. (Answer: Comprehensive.)</li> <li>• M   Clarified book will have new name and not be called "Big Book". So, it will actually be another piece of literature in addition to the Big Book.</li> <li>• F   How will they decide the title of this new translation?</li> <li>• M   Spanish – Shared how his group couldn't find Spanish literature in 1967. Bought first BB in 1977, which was translated into Columbian Spanish. Finally realized the answer to alcoholism once he could read the book and didn't need to use a dictionary. The exact words don't matter for sobriety.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literature Item M.</b></p> <p><b>Discuss</b> new proposed agenda items (PAIs) related to the Plain Language Big</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   This book is critically needed and is a <i>translation</i>. There are people (such as those with autism) that could never understand the existing Big Book text.</li> <li>• F   It is imperative that we make our message available to as many people as possible. We also need to simplify Doctor's Opinion and appendices.</li> </ul>

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<p>Book Translation.</p> <p>Dave H., Past DCM and PENNSCYPAA XXIV Treasurer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   The presenter's overview was slanted in favor. Angrily noted that his group's PAIs were not accepted two years in a row. Felt this is a horrible thing being pushed since the 1970's by outside forces. Also complained about Delegate at 2021 GSC going "against" Area group conscience by being in favor. (History: Area opinion at PCCS was mixed and neither strongly in favor nor against. GSC vote was 110 in favor and 19 opposed. After minority opinion, motion to reconsider failed 27 to 103. Thus, passed at GSC with substantial unanimity.)</li> <li>• F   Read an excerpt from last year's sample translations to point out the goal of this effort.</li> <li>• F   It's probably needed by someone.</li> <li>• F   Translations into other languages are already not using the exact words – it's the message that matters. What are we afraid of?</li> <li>• F   Made point this has been kicking around forever. Process is slow enough. Consider this: "When I attempt to explain it to others, am I putting opinion into it?" We could all be mindful of that.</li> <li>• M   Interested in what translation looks like. Homegroup concern is that it may supplant regular BB.</li> <li>• F   Heard from many teachers/educators about how difficult our BB is to read. Also pointed out we don't submit agenda items in support of things already going on. (So, number of negative agenda items doesn't really indicate lack of support.) Our BB isn't going anywhere.</li> <li>• M   BB not going anywhere. Simple BB is not a replacement, it's an addition.</li> <li>• M   Noted (in boastful way) about how he took two 12<sup>th</sup> step calls already during event. Felt we are wasting our time here and not helping alcoholics. (Did not understand anything about PCCS or GSC.)</li> <li>• M   In Panel 67, PCCS committee who read all of the background were unanimously in favor. (This was an earlier and similar agenda item.)</li> </ul>
<p><b>CPC Item D.</b></p> <p><b>Consider</b> retiring the pamphlet "A Member's-Eye View of Alcoholics Anonymous."</p> <p>Andy H., ADCM D36</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Excerpts presenter read make her uncomfortable and seem overtly religious.</li> <li>• F   After actually reading entire pamphlet, commenter feels overview (of pamphlet) was presented unfairly.</li> <li>• M   Don't take things (from pamphlet) out of context; we need to keep older messages.</li> <li>• M   This pamphlet is one of many, and it's important to keep other diverse viewpoints.</li> <li>• M   Pamphlet is clearly oriented toward a specific religion. If pamphlet said "Allah", would we want it?</li> <li>• M   Has heard much support for this pamphlet, why are we throwing it out?</li> <li>• F   Could professionals actually use this in today's environment? Not likely.</li> <li>• F   ABE Intergroup literature chair – suggestion is to keep and update it.</li> </ul>
<p><b>IC/Regional Forums Item C.</b></p> <p><b>Discuss</b> update report on methods of closing the Big Meetings at International Convention.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   At IC in Atlanta, amazed at large number of countries, but we closed with the Lord's Prayer. Is it okay to close international conference with an American-centric prayer. Found experience jarring.</li> <li>• M   Made humorous self-deprecating remark, then said: 190 countries, what can we do, how could we possibly satisfy everyone?</li> </ul>



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(no presenter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Serenity Prayer is the way you end it and remove conflict.</li> <li>• M   Atlanta was a mess. We need to focus on being spiritual and not religion. Why do we need to worry about changing all this stuff?</li> <li>• M   Read excerpt from Lord's Prayer – says it is for alcoholics, not religious at all.</li> <li>• F   Use Responsibility Declaration or remove "God" from prayer.</li> <li>• F   Had to make effort to focus on meaning behind Lord's Prayer (and not the words), but at IC convention, we need to be more inclusive.</li> </ul>
<b>Grapevine / LaViña Item D.</b> <b>Consider</b> request to provide all alternate delegates the same Conference materials as sitting delegates. (no presenter)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   When he was alt-delegate, had no access and could not have supported A59 at conference. As delegate, was told not to share with alternate, which he feels is unconscionable.</li> <li>• F   Very important for alternate to have access.</li> <li>• F   Absolutely alternate needs access. Why would you not want to share the info?</li> <li>• M   In the NE region alt-delegate gets lots of information from NE trustee. Recently found out about a last-minute alt-delegate who needs to attend conference, so is in favor of keeping alternate as informed as possible.</li> <li>• M   Surprised it is not standard practice.</li> <li>• F   Sees importance of alternate filling in due to sharing of knowledge; she noted that when she served as alternate for a service position, the information shared by her counterpart really helped.</li> <li>• M   Noted his wife is DCM; feels this request is important for transparency.</li> <li>• F   Asked question: Why it isn't common practice?                (Answer: Each Delegate gets to decide, but only one login allocated. Some are confidential due to having personal information, copyrights, etc.)                After hearing answer, she feels it should be shared across the board.</li> <li>• F   Noted that current practice does respect Area autonomy.</li> </ul>