

# Sharing Session Notes | EPGSA Panel 73

April 06, 2024

## Pre-Conference Sharing Session

Reformation Lutheran Church, Philadelphia, PA



- Area Chairperson, Susan M., opened the session with the Declaration of Unity. District 25, Area officers, Past Delegates, special servants, and intergroup representatives were thanked for their service.
- 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. Sharing personal experiences was stressed.
- Hugh H., Past Delegate, explained that 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 would be open sharing from the floor. Hugh exhorted everyone to keep in mind what is right and wrong, not personal opinions on items.
- 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)
<p><b>Grapevine/ La Viña C:</b> Discuss the cost effectiveness and sustainability of continuing to print La Viña.</p> <p>A59 Grapevine/ La Viña Subcommittee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Feels it should definitely continue to be printed so the Hispanic community can have a 12<sup>th</sup> step tool. For funding, allow contributions directly to La Viña. English speaking members could buy subscriptions.</li> <li>• M   Asked why it should be self-supporting, when in 2001 at the Conference it was affirmed it was a service? LV did list it as a goal in 2010 to be self-supporting.</li> <li>• M   Pointed out that almost everything produced by AA is a “service”.</li> <li>• F   Wondered why the finances for GV can’t be used for LV?</li> <li>• M   Suggested producing fewer issues to help with the cost, since it’s never been self-supporting.</li> <li>• M   Feedback from district was to consider LV as a way for members to identify.</li> <li>• M   Favors the service as a good idea but pointed out that we have a problem in AA of trying to operate financially based on “dreams”, but it isn’t realistic. Wondered if this was the best use of funds and could all the money spent on it have had a better use.</li> <li>• F   Wondered if digital-only could be a possibility.</li> <li>• M   Passionately in favor of LV. Feels there is a lot of hearsay and disregarding of facts, and the reason for its existence is in the Service Manual.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Policy/Admissions C:</b> Discuss report on the Equitable Distribution of Workload process.</p> <p>Tom W., ADCM, D67</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Liked the presentation, but feels EDW is internal to the GSC and maybe better items could be on the agenda.</li> <li>• F   Relayed experience how prior to EDW the number of items given to literature was excessive compared to others. Feels it should be continued – you don’t need to be a committee “expert” to discuss an agenda item.</li> <li>• F   Wondered if EDW was intended to get agenda background out sooner or reduce agenda items. (Answer: the change in submission date was just to give more time to determine where items go, not get BG out quicker.)</li> <li>• F   Used to think it was just a complication; now can see the benefits. Maybe we can just tweak it some more. Does this process supersede the authority of GSB in what gets forwarded? (No.) Needs more clarity and fine tuning.</li> <li>• F   Would it be possible to put more people on Literature Committee and less on others? (Answer: Current requirements do not allow more members to be added</li> </ul>

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	<p>to an existing committee. We could add another committee or change the policy regarding committees.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Process seems like emptying a funnel into the ocean. More agenda items does not mean a better process. Maybe have a firm cap on the number of agenda items discussed in a year.</li> <li>• F   Why can't we have multiple committees such as "Big Book", "Pamphlet", etc.?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Finance A:</b> Consider a request that the General Service Board develop supplemental reporting focused on the actual and evolving costs of various services provided by the GSB.</p> <p>A59 Finance Subcommittee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Concerned about operating expenses – salary costs have gone up a lot. Literature revenue has gone up, but much of that is a one-time increase. Feels we need improved revenue reporting, especially for recurring.</li> <li>• M   Why were asked to contribute more when revenue has apparently gone up. Wants to know what revenue was gained from specific items.</li> <li>• M   Items to report on – should be everything. Quarterly reporting would provide a better snapshot of costs.</li> <li>• F   GSB should be transparent and report on any money coming in, and all going out. Would be a great idea to show potential cost of pamphlets before developed. Wants more info on what items have the most cost.</li> <li>• M   Thinks we have too many pamphlets and they are too expensive to produce.</li> <li>• M   Incredibly helpful suggestion to better decide what items should get priority.</li> <li>• M   Wondered if there is any real tracking of the costs for projects – it could range from no tracking to law firm level tracking. Feels there should be real-time tracking, so we can do a cost/benefit analysis.</li> <li>• M   Noted 12<sup>th</sup> Concept – we are willing to give any amount of our time, but when it comes to contributions, we fall short. Members could easily contribute more to allow us to fund everything. Pamphlets are the least read thing in AA.</li> <li>• M   Explained that agenda item is asking the entire board to develop additional reporting. How much are they already doing? A lot. In favor of supplemental reporting but need to make sure we don't overwork the GSB. (It was noted that the GSB would develop the process, but others would do the reporting.)</li> <li>• F   Believes it is important for Fellowship to look at. Suggests we have a quarterly budget including a forecast, even if only higher-level.</li> <li>• M   Feels this is of paramount importance. We need to consider the real cost of our services and allow group members to have an informed conversation. We currently have no idea what is happening.</li> <li>• F   Recalled how at our last Area meeting, there was a seemingly good idea, but once we found out the true costs, everyone realized it was not worth it. So financial transparency can make a difference.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Literature G:</b> Review progress report on the development of the Fifth Edition of the book Alcoholics Anonymous.</p> <p>James R., Secretary, D49</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Question: Is there any information about what stories will be retained vs. removed. (Answer: Trustees Literature Committee will make initial decision, then in theory the Conference could make final decision). His concern is that typically Conference doesn't directly decide.</li> <li>• M   Do we have enough people to properly decide which new stories. How is the selection process for stories carried out? (Answer: Likely discussion and vote.) His home group agrees with decision to not change 1<sup>st</sup> 164 pages.)</li> <li>• F   Listened to NERAASA recording, and there are 6 specific questions used to evaluate each potential new story.</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Finance C:</b> Review progress report reflecting shared experience from the Fellowship on possible future changes to literature written by A.A.'s founders.</p> <p>Video Presentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Concern of group is the change from “lustful enough to rape” to generic reference to the Seven Deadly Sins. Group has many agnostic members, and this change made them relate less.</li> <li>• M   Consensus was we should be careful when we change the language, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it, and it should not be at the District level. Want a longer period to consider such changes and feel it could be at the District level.</li> <li>• M   2 years for process of changes; preference no changes to writings; review should be at group level; some felt changes should remain, some should not; yes, to a new policy, but no changes to founders writing.</li> <li>• M   Changes should go down to the group level; feels removing all examples of 7 Deadly Sins lessens the impact of the following paragraph – we went too far.</li> <li>• M   Once we open the door to any single change, we are basically allowing too many possible changes. Feels founders writing should be protected by ¾ consent of all groups. Not happy with background material because it removes context and does not list specific agenda items.</li> <li>• F   District feedback: many groups don't want any changes, it worked for everyone else; changes create division; founders were open to others, we should consider that. Founders would embrace changes, but they would embrace it carefully, and be vigilant about how we do that. Some felt if they wrote something, they wouldn't want changes, others would welcome changes.</li> <li>• M   Attended online group and there was confusion about page differences between versions – different people were on different pages while reading. It was not clear to him exactly what changes were made; we need to show more clearly what has changed.</li> <li>• F   There should not be a new process, because that implies that we want change (which the group does not) so the answer is no. Remember the Washingtonians.</li> <li>• F   Group feels would not change founders' writings. If there is a proposed change, threshold should be 80% and a longer consideration period. Felt it was absurd to be asked what the founders would think because they aren't around.</li> <li>• M   Neutral about most changes, but don't touch 1<sup>st</sup> 164 pages. Good sponsorship is key. Plain language BB could help. 2-year process. Felt questions were vague. Concern that Right of Decision was being used to override voice of fellowship.</li> <li>• M   BB is one of the top books in the Library of Congress. Ranted against transgender people, and was angry about the Preamble change... ended by pontificating that you should trust God and faith and don't go against nature (by being transgender).</li> <li>• M   We should be following existing advisory actions, why are we even discussing?</li> <li>• M   Group conscience was no changes to founders' writings. However, if necessary, it would require 75%. Entire fellowship must be involved in changes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>CPC E:</b> Consider a request to develop a pamphlet on the unhoused alcoholic in A.A.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Myriad of reasons people are homeless, but it's most certainly not because they don't have a pamphlet. It's noble to want to get more people into AA but thinking that a pamphlet would solve anything is absurd.</li> <li>• M   Been attending meetings with people for 34 years who have been unhoused and has worked at a homeless shelter. The unhoused have access to AA literature already. We need to draw the line somewhere when it comes to pamphlets.</li> </ul>

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- F | Doesn't think the answer to this problem is another pamphlet. Maybe we should spend more money on outreach and delivering the message of AA. Would be offended if she was homeless and was given a pamphlet.
- F | Conversation on pamphlets is exhausting. This could be useful to people who don't have access to things like wi-fi and a mobile phone, but PI and other committees may be able to do a better job.
- F | Sees the need for this because we don't have other literature that addresses the specific concerns of the unhoused. The word "unhoused" gives a better idea of who this is targeting; it's a broad population.
- M | Has experience being homeless and feels a pamphlet would have been helpful and more connected to AA.
- F | Could be the target of at least 10 pamphlets, but a pamphlet isn't going to help. Pamphlets divide us instead of bringing us together.
- F | District in general is for this pamphlet. Pamphlets are not about us who are here already, it's for those who are not.
- M | There are 2 issues – the target audience vs. providing more info about that target population. It could create a tool for working with those who are unhoused. Feels the pamphlet *is* for us to better help the unhoused.
- M | Home groups should be taking care of this, not pamphlets.
- M | A consideration for any new material in AA does cost money. Given our current financial health as an organization, consider tabling any new literature for at least a year.

**Policy/Admissions E:**  
 Discuss revising procedures for electing the Delegate chairperson, Conference Committee chairpersons and their alternates.  
  
 Mike R., DCM, D23

- F | Doesn't feel this is relevant for members.
- F | Did not understand what this was about.
- Pete – this is more about who should be in the pool to be elected as Delegate Chair. Current process is after Committee Chairs and by lot, so the pool is smaller. Since the Delegate Chair has more authority and responsibility due to new sharing sessions, maybe we should take more care in their election.
- M | Agrees with this and feels it's very important.
- F | Confused about how this came about, the background, and what prompted this agenda item.
- F | Could we call it something other than "General Sharing Session".
- F | Thinks Delegate Chairperson should take priority.
- M | Why don't we have Committee Chairs be Delegate Chairs? (We don't do things that way in AA).
- M | This is still confusing, could we get a pamphlet on this? 🙄

**Literature F:**  
 Review draft manuscript of the translation of the book Alcoholics Anonymous (Fourth Edition) into plain and simple language.  
  
 A59 Archives Subcommittee

- F | Wants clarification on possible outcomes...if it was halted, we'd need to bring it back as an agenda item? (Answer: yes)
- M | Question about what it means to make gender more balanced? (Answer: it means there will be more female representation, but not targeting a specific number of he/him changed to she/her.
- M | Had discussions about if the language we have on websites is what we need to reach people, and feels this could help newcomers, especially those who walk out with a Big Book, and not a sponsor. Reading level of those sent home with a Big Book is less than what many can understand.
- F | Overwhelming support in her District. Had questions/concerns about

confidentiality statement those reading were asked to sign; seems to her its about protecting copyright and not sharing information about it.  
(Answer: Literature background is on 3<sup>rd</sup> revision. Original wording was too “legal” about not writing out entire pages and sharing them. Now the statement is not required, and the language is more about guidelines/suggestions.

- M | Words have meanings. It’s a rewrite. Issue is not about making things more accessible. Any literature that could possibly supplant our founders’ writings is an abomination!
- M | Remembers how powerful an experience it was for our Delegate when he read it last year. Noted that the cost for the writer is appropriate since they are a professional, not a random person with a word processor.
- M | 1. Identity politics is still politics. (Moderator: YOU are bringing politics into it; this is not about politics.) 2. Consider security since he saw leaked pages. 3. Bill W. is practically Shakespeare, and we are on a slippery slope in changing such beautiful writings.
- M | Major concerns about calling this the “Big Book” since our actual “Big Book” is called “Alcoholics Anonymous”, and it could lead to confusion.
- F | Shared experience on how a brain injured sponsee has an incredibly difficult time getting through the Big Book. This could really help her, and possibly even allow her to be able take sponsees through the steps. She would probably never be able to comprehend the existing Big Book as written.
- F | Totally for this version; there are plenty of people who can’t understand the original. Maybe people at a lower reading level could actually understand things a bit more, without *requiring* the use of a sponsor.
- F | Doesn’t understand the Conference process at all and has many misconceptions about how it works. (Delegate reiterated that we are following the same process we always have for new literature.)
- F | Two points: 1) Currently has a Big Book “dictionary” – if we don’t do a plain language version, do we want someone outside of AA to? 2) At Conference the Delegate needs to consider every Area, not just ours.
- M | This piece of literature is a *tool*. Is afraid that changes to this fellowship will make AA not available to his daughter...we need to keep in mind this is a tool, and you still need to “work” the original Big Book.

**Trustees F:**

Discuss guidelines or parameters for deadlines of Conference agenda items.

A59 Structure Subcommittee

- M | Likes the idea of an agenda item cap.
- M | Maybe we need to slow things down. Try to simplify what we have in front of us. We need a Plain and Simple Conference. The most important time of the year seems to be the shortest time. It’s not enough time. We should either have more time to discuss agenda items or have a cap on the number.
- F | Agrees with pulling back on the agenda. Thinks there could be an additional virtual GSC.
- F | GSR, it’s really challenging to explain this at the group level and have them devote enough time to it. Important to remember our primary purpose and to share that at every level. Starts with informing home groups how to be a responsible group and participate.
- F | Likes the idea of a cap on agenda items because it’s so hard to discuss all of them thoroughly.
- M | We need to be good stewards of our time. Capping the number of items would



Agenda Item Topic	Comments from Open Sharing (M = Male, F = Female)
	<p>allow more GSRs to passionately discuss things and be more effective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• F   Thinks caps are good but hasn't been in such a position...thinks we could simplify the process. It would be helpful to simplify the information that goes out to GSRs.</li> <li>• M   You <i>can</i> learn this stuff. We need to promote service sponsorship enough. We don't talk about this stuff enough in home groups.</li> <li>• F   Feels like 2 months was not enough time.</li> <li>• M   His group divided up agenda items by person and then they went off and discussed with others, and then brought back the group conscience.</li> <li>• M   Area 59 does a great job of getting information out, but there is a short timeframe. Consider discussing agenda items at our EPGSA Convention.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Corrections D:</b> Consider a request to develop a pamphlet on the transgender alcoholic in A.A.</p> <p>Adrew D., ADCM, D66</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M   Is my alcoholism different than others here?</li> <li>• M   Mixed opinions on this. 2% in last survey came here because of literature. If we changed the Preamble, does it make sense to say no to this? Maybe a single pamphlet would better serve all those within marginalized communities.</li> <li>• F   This pamphlet is something that is needed, not just for those alcoholics who are transgender. We need this to help members who are not transgender understand more about the community and how to sponsor.</li> <li>• M   This is like the proposed pamphlet on the unhoused and might not be the best way to reach the target community. This is more about following the Traditions and being inclusive of all and it needs to start with them. We may have better uses for our resources other than pamphlets.</li> <li>• M   In the past he gave presentation on diversity in AA, and at that time there were 18 separate pamphlets. Noted these proposed new pamphlets are not <i>for</i> the target community, but <i>on</i> that community, so it's for us.</li> <li>• M   Thinks we could save money by adding to the existing LGBT pamphlet vs. creating an entirely new one.</li> <li>• M   Thinks this pamphlet is all political. Mentioned a movie in which a gay person was chemically castrated and that's an outside political issue.</li> <li>• M   Why not? There is a whole neighborhood in Philly called the "gayborhood", so doesn't it make sense to support the community in our Area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ask-it-Basket / Comments</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• M &amp; F   Sponsorship – what's important is not having a sponsor who you are romantically attracted to.</li> <li>• M   We talked about caps on agenda items...do we really want an agenda item about that and have it come back to us.</li> <li>• M   We all want to help the still suffering alcoholic. Both proposed new pamphlets could. There is an issue getting our pamphlets to the right people.</li> </ul>