

MARGENSER

Fostering Unity and Carrying the A.A. Message in Area 29 MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE

A Word About Opportunities

Nancy B, Panel 60 Delegate, Area 29

My time serving as your Panel 60 delegate will come to an end on December 31. I can't believe how quickly the time has passed. As your delegate I have had the opportunity to visit groups, districts, and Intergroups to talk on many topics, including the annual General Service Conference Agenda and ultimately the report of the actions from the General Service Conference. I get to meet many members in my travels; most working in various service positions, all of which are important to the unity of our fellowship.

I am reminded in our literature and in my experiences, of the importance of the work done by our service entities; and the constant need for committed trusted servants. Sometimes when I ask a trusted servant what they would like to do after they rotate from their current job; I hear them say, "Oh, I think I will step back for a while." That expression is almost as scary to me as, "...suddenly the thought came to mind..." describing what happened to Jim in the Big Book just prior to adding scotch to his milk. I have seen people "step back for a while" and never come back.

I know today that when I have been reluctant to make myself available for a service position, I was probably full of fear. I ask
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Too Much, Not Enough, or Just Right? You Decide

Bob C, Area 29 Treasurer

Recently two different General Service Representatives (G.S.R.s) asked, on separate occasions and as part of my service job, whether it's appropriate for Maryland General Service (M.G.S.) to run an \$8,000 to \$10,000 checking account balance, as we currently do. I'm not going to take a position on this question. Rather, this article is intended to provide you with information to determine your own answer as an informed Area 29 A.A. member.

Bill W. succinctly described A.A.'s "prudent financial policy" as "sufficient operating funds, plus an ample reserve" (Concept XII, Warranty Two). In the language of us regular folks, "sufficient operating funds" would be our checking account, and the "ample reserve" is our savings account.

Indeed, that is how M.G.S. divides its cash assets: checking (for current operating expenses) and savings (money set aside for

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Tradition Two – One Ultimate Authority

Tom R, As Bill Sees It Group, Berlin, MD

"For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority – a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern."

Tradition Two reminds me there is a Power greater than myself which guides the A.A. groups, just as Step Two revealed a Power greater than myself which could restore me to sanity. As my sponsor succinctly pointed out to me as I was pondering the concept of God, all I had to know about God is, there is one and I'm not it. Step Two presented the solution to my powerlessness over alcohol, and Tradition Two presented the solution to our unity as a group. The second half of Tradition Two reminds me that as a leader my position is to serve, and not to govern. As these thoughts are intertwined I have read them as two distinct statements in Tradition Two.

It has been my experience with nearly every service position I have found myself serving in in Alcoholics Anonymous that I had very little idea what I was doing when I started that position. Sometimes the question came to

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MARGENSER STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Area 29 MARGENSER newsletter is published to foster unity and facilitate communication among AA members, groups, districts, and intergroups within the Maryland General Service Area. The MARGENSER aims to be instrumental in carrying the AA message. This quarterly newsletter seeks to publish AA-related material, including personal stories of experience, strength, and hope. Material will be reviewed by the MARGENSER committee chairperson or by a member of the committee. Nothing published in the MARGENSER should be thought of as a statement of Area 29 or AA policy. Finally, publication shall not constitute endorsement by the newsletter itself, Area 29, intergroups, districts, local groups, or AA as a whole.

Big Book Bits - Part 2

Ron M, BYOL Easton

A continuation of a series intending to present the history of the Big Book As always comments welcome at rule62-@live.com.

As the completion of the book approached, the issue and challenge of naming the book reared its ugly head. Up to this point the movement was usually called "A Nameless Bunch of Drunks" but this did not seem appropriate as a final book title. A few initial offerings included "By Bill W" and "The B. W. Movement". These offerings did not sit well with the early members and after a few other names were rejected two names remained and a vote was taken. The finalists were "The Way Out" and "Alcoholics Anonymous" A vote was taken and "The Way Out" was the winner. A suggestion was made to check and see if there were any other books with the same name. This job was assigned to Fitz M., an early member who resided in Maryland. Fitz went to the Library of Congress to do the research and reported that there were twelve (12) books entitled "The Way Out" and none with the name of Alcoholics Anonymous. Not wanting to be the thirteenth book with "The Way Out" as the title "Alcoholics Anonymous" became the default winner.

Now the fledgling organization had a book with a title but had yet to have it reviewed and edited. It was decided to send copies to three basic groups. Naturally the current members were the first choice. Then the medical and religious were solicited to determine if there was anything they would object to. By a large margin the majority of comments and modifications came from the members. A number of years ago I was privileged to have the opportunity to review one of the original multiliths that was distributed. They were all numbered and #2 was sent to Jim B. (The Vicious Cycle). Jim came from Anne Arundel County and was brought into the fellowship by Fitz M. (Our Southern Friend). As years went by Jim B. retired to the San Diego area and when he passed away his wife Rosa sent his A.A. possessions to his nephew Jim M. of Anne Arundel County and when he passed on, his sister was the beneficiary of his historical documents. In 1993, while attending an A.A. meeting in

Davidsonville, Md., the sister was displaying her brother's A.A. belongings which included the original multilith and Jim B's original Big Book. One hundred (100) copies of the multilith were printed and distributed. Those persons interested in A.A. history quickly acquired a copy. In 2008, after a number of requests an additional 50 copies were printed and distributed to those interested parties. Of special interest in these copies was the fact that Jim B. had noted the names of the authors of all the personal stories in the first edition. In addition he included the names of the first members in the original New York and Akron groups.

One of the major and long lasting changes that was made pertained to the conflict and argument in the basic tone and focus of the book. Fitz M. the son of a minister wanted a heavy emphasis on God and Hank P. and Jim B. being atheists wanted to substantially tone down any reference to God. Eventually, it is reported that Jim B. suggested the phrase "God As We Understand Him". This seemed to be the acceptable neutral ground and was ultimately incorporated.

With corrections and modifications completed the next step was to print the book. With their major effort in hand Bill W., Hank P., Dorothy S., and Ruth (Bill's secretary) went to see Edward Blackwell of Cornwall Press in Cornwall N.Y. Since the book was to be around 400 pages and was to be sold for \$3.50 (around \$50-60 dollars today) they wanted the buyers to feel they were getting their monies worth so they picked the cheapest and thickest paper available and also told the printer to use large type and leave large margins. A review of the 1st edition, 1st printing will show that those directions were followed. Because of this, the name "Big Book" came into being and is used to this day.

It was not secret that money was scarce and anything to cut costs was used. The printer had some excess red binding material. A deal was struck and the red binding was used. This binding color was only used on the 1st printing. All of the subsequent printings had various shades of blue except for the 4th printing which was printed in three different colors (navy blue, baby blue and dark olive green).

-To Be continued-

Communications-Challenges

Arnold R

Communication has been, is, and will be the essence of A.A. Our fellowship's accepted task, our primary purpose, is to carry the message to the still-suffering alcoholic; to communicate with each new member about what we were like, what happened, and what we are like now; to communicate our experience, strength and hope to every individual constantly throughout their travels to sobriety and then on to recovery from a hopeless state of mind and body; to communicate with each other in such a way that we can work together on the problems which slow all of us down on our journeys towards being happy, joyous and free; to communicate our collective obligation to carry this message further along the Road of Happy Destiny with the knowledge that the common welfare of all must come first.

On the face of it, this looks like a straightforward process. One person communicating with another, passing on the message of how it works until a vast safety net for alcoholics is woven and stretches across the globe. But it isn't that simple or that straightforward. Communication might be the very thing that challenges us presently, in our 76th year of existence. It may very well be the most critical test which will decide whether we are made of the same stuff as those who made it possible for us to get here. The manner in which we handle our communication with each other might possibly be the most determining factor of whether we can meet today's pressures as the previous members met the pressures of their days.

If we look at Alcoholics Anonymous in 2011 in the context of our history, we are made aware that these early members built what we now have, a block at a time, as they faced issues which arose as they tried to carry the message effectively. They have left us with volumes of their shared experiences about dealing with such problems. Their pooled information and shared conclusions about what worked best, what got us into trouble, and what was plain useless up to that point in time is well documented for our review and examination. The early members recorded their experiences and conclusions masterfully. They seemed to have been looking at A.A. as always being in a state of becoming, never completed. In so many places in his writings, Bill is very explicit about their fears that we become rigid and thereby unable to realistically assess and meet new challenges.

He thought that the principles and procedures that had been developed to ensure the

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(Delegates Corner) continued from page 1...

often for that fear to be removed and I offer myself to the God of my understanding each day to build with me and to do with me as He will. Consequently, I find myself in the middle of doing a job; wondering what I was afraid of in the first place! I am grateful to those who have encouraged me to step outside my comfort zone. I have learned so much from those who served before and continue to serve today.

In October this year we will elect new officers to serve Area 29 and Maryland General Service. In addition to the elected positions of Delegate, Alternate Delegate, Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer; individuals will be needed to lead, or serve on, the standing and ad hoc committees of Maryland General Service. These are great opportunities to grow in our program and our lives! Once the election is complete, be sure to contact the new Area Chairperson to volunteer for a committee. I hope all members in the area will consider standing or volunteering. You won't regret it! I love the expression I heard years ago: *If you stay in the middle of the boat, you won't fall off when it starts to rock.*

Participating in service at any level takes commitment; something I always had when planning my next drink; so why not for this program that is saving my life? The hours, and the travel to wherever the need may be, are sometimes long; but the rewards are many, and worth it. I get to be sober one more day, help the still-suffering alcoholic, meet and eat with new and old friends, and participate fully in a process few ever get to experience.

The opportunities are there for all of us if we reach for them. I would have missed this one if I had not let go of my fears, not trusted my higher power, and not raised my hand. Let's see those hands up high!

* * *

Calling all GSRs and DCMs...

It is your right and your responsibility to participate in the election of Area 29 Officers to be held on October 22 in Frederick, MD. Mark your calendars and plan to attend. We'll see you there! 

...You Decide) continued from page 1...

emergencies or cash flow during lean times). In addition, M.G.S. currently maintains two "special reserves," where we save small amounts (\$500 to \$750) for stated A.A. purposes approved by our G.S.R.s.

M.G.S.'s 2011 budget projected only \$870 to remain in the checking account at the end of this year. However, because we started the year with about \$9,000 more than expected, M.G.S. has run a checking account balance of \$6,000 to \$10,000 for most of this year.

Whether this level of "operating funds" is simply "sufficient," or more than sufficient, is debatable. However, recent history suggests that a bit of a cushion in the checking account is a wise thing. In 2009, group contributions dipped temporarily but sharply, and M.G.S.'s "sufficient operating funds" dried up completely. To keep paying our bills, our treasurer dipped into M.G.S.'s prudent reserve fund (as delegated to her under Right of Decision) and transferred money from savings into checking. At one point that summer, M.G.S. got down to only \$4,000 to \$5,000 in the bank (total: checking + savings!). That experience suggests that we were indeed prudent in having a prudent reserve. Without it, many of M.G.S.'s bills would have remained unpaid and overdue until group contributions caught up with the need.

For the past several years, Area 29's G.S.R.s and the Area Committee have approved annual M.G.S. budgets with less than a 3-month prudent reserve (\$10,000, compared to annual cash flows of about \$45,000), with the reserve fund sequestered in a savings account.

While a \$10,000 prudent reserve may seem like a lot of money, it's actually less than 3 months' worth of M.G.S. operating expenses. In contrast, A.A. literature suggest 6 to 12 months' operating expenses as levels that are prudent (see the Finance Guidelines, the pamphlet "Where Money and Spirituality Mix," and A.A.W.S.'s prudent reserve fund policy). To even approach the lower end of that range, we must add our current checking account balance to our prudent reserve.

On a per-member basis, M.G.S.'s prudent reserve represents only about 67 cents for

every A.A. member in Area 29. M.G.S.'s total cash flow is about \$3.00 per member per year, and this provides a wide array of services to groups and services that make twelfth step work possible. These services are outlined in the recent pamphlet, "Services Provided by M.G.S.," available from your Finance Chair at finance@marylandaa.org. You can also obtain a copy of the current M.G.S. budget from the same source.

What do you think? Is M.G.S. complying with Bill's call for the various parts of A.A.'s service structure to practice "corporate poverty"?

(Communications...) continued from page 2...

effective operation of A.A. services should be recorded. At the 1960 General Service Conference Bill told the delegates that he was working on a series of essays for twelve "Concepts" which would attempt to "codify the principal needs and relationships" in our structure. He felt that the spiritual principles in our Twelve Steps had been extended to the Twelve Traditions, and now needed to be extended to "Concepts" for the conduct of our service affairs. Bill told the delegates that our spiritual principles had been set, and he wished to describe the manner in which they applied to our service structure. The Concepts, Bill assured the Conference, would not describe a new set of principles or suggest changes in the service structure as it then existed. The "how" of the service structure was described in the Service Manual; the Concepts would describe the "why."

By recording the mistakes as well as the solutions, Bill wanted to document how the service structure had developed as it had, and why certain understandings had been reached. We would "thus be able to hold this experience before us" as our service structure grew and evolved. Bill recognized that there could be flaws in the structure and the future might make changes necessary. By means of recording the experience of the past, he hoped to forestall repetition of earlier mistakes. This was one more time our predecessors stressed the importance of willingness to change.

And what has this to do with challenges, communications, and 2011? In my view, this is a basic and crucial communication challenge – the challenge to communicate to those who follow us in A.A. a historically accurate sense of what A.A. is and how it works.

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A Good Day for Dist. 11 & C.P.C.

By Dean C and Pete S

Spotlight on Liability Insurance, Security, Rental Agreements, Courteous Behavior, New Rules

Churches, like so many of us, face new financial challenges and legal hurdles with ripples being felt by many A.A. groups that meet in churches. If these issues have not surfaced at your home group or district, be prepared.

District 11's Story

In Area 29's District 11—Cecil County, in the far northeast corner of Maryland bordering Delaware and Pennsylvania—we are working through some of these issues at the group and district level. We share this information with you to show how one group of A.A.s is working hard to build and maintain good relations with our professional church community.

The focal point of our story is the church home of six A.A. entities, including the district's monthly meeting attended by group General Service Representatives (G.S.R.s). Groups that meet there include one of Maryland's oldest groups—the longest-running group in Dist. 11. The recent mood in the parking lot before and after meetings, judging from the loudest voices, is of gloom and doom. "We're getting kicked out of the church," says

one. "It isn't working," says another. "It's time to move on—we're outta here!" says yet another.

Tale of Two Sickies—and one Pastor

One recent evening, moments before the start of an A.A. meeting at this location, two A.A. members—District 11's District Committee Member (D.C.M.) and the chair of Area 29's Cooperation with the Professional Community (C.P.C.) Committee—arranged a fruitful meeting with the pastor.

D.C.M. said to C.P.C.: "The pastor is standing downstairs in the hallway talking to church members. Let's go down and try to talk with him." We did—politely awaiting our turn to speak to the pastor.

We were surprised when the pastor quickly ended his conversation with church members to give full attention to us while church members waited at the side. D.C.M. politely introduced us as A.A. trusted servants.

C.P.C. then expressed A.A.'s gratitude and appreciation to the church, with a strong message of cooperation in trying to help control heating and cooling costs, to behave respectfully while on the premises, and to be good stewards of church property. We so enthusiastically presented the A.A. message that we forgot to encourage the pastor to speak (he listened supportively). "We're having a lot of security problems," the pastor said. "You've probably read about them in the newspaper.

(Tradition Two...) continued from page 1...

mind, "What in the world did I get myself into?" And on every occasion, as rotation was around the corner and the time had come to turn over the position to someone else, I didn't want to let it go! As I have finally figured out what it is I'm doing, I want to continue doing it with great proficiency. Perhaps, I ponder now, my ego has entered the scene. "I need to keep doing this so A.A. will run smoothly." "Can I, or should I stand for a second term?" I wonder to myself.

Bill W. writes in the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of a fictitious group founder, John Doe, and his group's leaders besieged with growing pains in the group and facing the inevitability of holding an election. "This brings us straight to the question, 'Does A.A. have a real leadership?' Most emphatically the answer is, 'Yes, notwithstanding the apparent lack of it.' Let's turn again to the deposed leader and his friends. What becomes of them? As their grief and anxiety wear away, a subtle change begins. Ultimately, they divide into two classes known in A.A. slang as 'elder statesmen' and 'bleeding deacons.' The elder statesman is the one who sees the wisdom of the group's decision, who holds no resentment over his reduced status, whose judgment, fortified by considerable experience, is sound, and who is willing to sit quietly on the sidelines patiently awaiting developments. The bleeding deacon is one who is just as surely convinced that the group cannot get along without him, who constantly

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THE MARGENSER IS YOUR NEWSLETTER

The Margenser Committee welcomes submissions. We are here to serve you. Submissions should be no more than 750 words and about service or recovery. Please include your first name, last initial and home group. Email all correspondence to Margenser@marylandAA.org or mail to Maryland General Services, P.O. Box 701, New Market, MD 21774. The submission deadline for the next issue is October 15, 2011.

REACHING OUT TO THE "DARK DISTRICTS"

Many of our neighbors do not actively participate in Area 29, nor are their voices heard within AA as a whole. We encourage you to reach out to those districts without active GSRs or DCMs, sharing your experience of service beyond the home group and carrying the message one-on-one. Area 29 welcomes your ideas on how we can best do this and offers our support.

SEND YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS TO...

In accordance with the 7th Tradition and abiding by the group conscience of your home group, you may send contributions in support of Area 29 to:

Maryland General Service, Inc.
P.O. Box 701
New Market, MD 21774

The 27th Annual Area 29

Fall Conference



October 27th - October 30th

Hosted by Maryland General Service

With Al- Anon Participation

ACTIVITIES

- AA and Al-Anon Workshops
- Alcathons - 12 x 12 Skit
- Ice Cream Socials - Game Night
- Halloween Parade - Costume Party
- Dancing and more...

LODGING INFORMATION

\$80.00 Room Rate
Guaranteed until
September 27, 2011

The Fall Conference will be held at the Clarion Hotel and Hager Hall Conference Center at 901 Dual Highway in Hagerstown, Maryland 21740. Their phone number is 301-733-5100 and their website address is www.clarionhagerstown.com. The room rates at the Clarion are \$80.00/night. Mention you are attending the MGS Fall Conference to get this rate. Other hotels within 1 mile of the event.

- (No convention rate negotiated)
- Hagerstown Hotel: 301-790-3010
- Comfort Suites 301-791-8100
- Days Inn 301-739-9050
- Hampton Inn 301-739-6100
- Sleep Inn & Suites 301-766-9449

MEAL SELECTION
DEADLINE OCTOBER 5, 2011

_____ X \$ 13.50 - Friday Sunrise Buffet Breakfast

All you can eat...Scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, country fried potatoes, and French toast sticks with warm maple syrup, freshly baked biscuits, Coffee and Tea.

_____ X \$26.50-Friday Lieutenants Buffet Dinner

All you can eat...Mesculin Garden salad, Oven baked Chicken, Roasted Turkey with Cranberry compote, chef's choice of starch and vegetable, warm rolls and butter, carrot cake, Coffee, Tea, and Iced Tea.

_____ X \$13.50 - Saturday Gettysburg Breakfast

All you can eat Assorted chilled fruit juices, sliced seasonal fresh fruits, basket of homemade breakfast breads, scrambled eggs and home fried potatoes, and sliced country ham, Coffee and Tea.

REGISTRATION
EARLY BIRD MAIL IN DEADLINE
OCTOBER 5, 2011

Name (s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (day) _____

Phone (evening) _____

Email: _____

Special Needs: _____

Attending:

- _____ A.A. X \$ 27.00 before October 5th
- _____ A.I-Anon X \$ 27.00 before October 5th
- _____ A.A. X \$ 29.00 after October 5th
- _____ Al-Anon X \$ 29.00 after October 5th
- _____ Other

\$ _____ TOTAL REGISTRATION

Participation and attendance for all convention events requires registration and a name badge

potatoes, and sliced country ham, Coffee and Tea.

_____ X \$30.00 - Saturday Dinner Buffet

All you can eat...Tossed garden salad, Imperial stuffed Tilapia, Chicken Alfredo, Roasted Red Potatoes, Sautéed Seasoned Vegetables, Strawberry fluff cake, Coffee, Tea, and Iced Tea.

\$ _____ TOTAL MEALS

\$ _____ TOTAL REGISTRATION
(From previous page)

\$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED:

Please make check payable to
MGS Fall Conference
P.O. Box 98
North East MD 21901

****Confirmation will be your deposited check****

(Communications...) continued from page 3...

We have the obligation to help those who came into A.A. after us to understand that A.A. is an ongoing process, not an end point, so that these new members can continue to meet challenges in the spirit of A.A., looking at new problems from a wide variety of perspectives, trying out all kinds of solutions (including traditional ones), keeping an open mind to the problem and open ears to each other, and finally choosing the solutions which are best for that particular problem at that particular place and at that particular time. Only with this kind of understanding of our history will A.A. continue as the vital and effective carrier of the message.

Over the past years, we have gained a great deal of experience in carrying the message. From the outset the most effective passing of the message was through the words of one alcoholic to another. But almost from the beginning, we learned that non-alcoholics could also spread the message and transmit our program. Our history tells of many groups being started by concerned relatives or professionals. The written word has also served us well. The press wrote glowingly about us and thousands upon thousands knocked on our doors. Suffering alcoholics wrote to what is now G.S.O. and were told how to find a group, or, if there was no group, were supported in their efforts to form one or to work the program by themselves. The Big Book was often the only source of hope, shared experience, and information about the program. Now, there is an extensive body of literature to serve the still-suffering alcoholic as well as those who seek to reach and help him or her. We have made superb use of new media as they develop – tapes, videos, films, and lately, computer networking. We still use most of the methods which we used in the past but we have honed them and extended them. You would think we could rest on our laurels, but that is not the A.A. way. There are still alcoholics out there who we are not reaching. We are asking ourselves, how can we do a better job? Sometimes it seems to be due to a language barrier, and we have undertaken making translations of our basic literature. Sometimes it is because we have not yet made it possible for some alcoholics to identify with us.

Some of our challenges to communicate arise out of our great success. We are sent large numbers of suffering people, in such numbers that they threaten to overwhelm us. Some are alcoholics who want our help; many are alcoholics who are not ready or willing to come to us; and others have problems other than alcohol. We are faced with communicating to the

courts, to treatment centers, and to hospitals what we can and cannot do. We are faced with communicating to courts and treatment facilities that would make us an arm of their programs, what the boundaries of our help must be. We are faced with somehow meeting the needs of those who do not, or do not yet belong to us, who prove disruptive to our meetings and our ability to help each other and those who do want what we have to offer.

We have made constructive beginnings. Cooperation With the Professional Community (C.P.C.), Public Information (P.I.), Correctional and Treatment Facilities/Special Needs – Accessibilities Committees, armed with workbooks which provide them with our pooled experiences, are seeking to open up communications, to use tried and true A.A. methods for resolving misunderstandings, meeting with those who do not understand, trying to hear their problems and work out solutions for their problems with us and ours with them. We are experimenting with ways of orienting those they send to us so that we can serve them and yet continue to serve our own members and others who are ready for us. We are working on such concepts as Bridging the Gap sponsorship to connect their clients to us one by one instead of en masse. These ways keep communication channels open so that we can work together to meet the challenges.

Some of our experimental solutions, however, tend to close communication down. One hears of groups which have opted out of the challenge and withdraw in upon themselves. Some have resorted to classifying, judging who is a candidate to belong, making rules. All these cut them off from hearing and responding to the pain of people who come to them. One hears that we cannot help non-alcoholic sufferers, yet it is obvious that this is untrue. Twelve Step programs in myriad variety have followed our lead and have proved helpful to people with problems other than alcohol. Some groups have been hostile to such people. Some have heard the pain, understood the search for help, and guided them to the Twelve Step programs which are right for them.

These are only a few of the challenges to effective communication we face today. We need to think of more ways and we need to try them out. We need more communication with each other so that our pooled experiences can yield the best solutions, and it will take every one of us.

There is another major communication problem to be solved. What kind of communicating is necessary to persuade those groups who do not now contribute to the overall search for

solutions to join the service structure and do their part? What kind of communicating is necessary to ensure that each member of A.A. becomes a part of carrying the message to those who have not yet heard it, and of supporting those who have heard the message and are taking their early steps towards recovery?

Our predecessors met the challenges which, in their day, seemed equally overwhelming. Now, the challenge is ours. Can we continue the processes of communicating which have been passed to us? Can we work out solutions in the A.A. way to the problems we have now? Will we stand strong and united towards the problems still to come?

(A Good Day...) continued from page 4...

“Thieves broke into the church on four occasions, stealing valuable church property. At another church in our community,” said the pastor, “thieves stole sacred items including a gold cross and the holy consecrated tabernacle.”

“Is there any indication any of these break-ins are A.A.-related?” we asked delicately.

“No, not at all” said the pastor.

As the conversation went on, we A.A.s realized we were hearing a very different message than the one in the parking lot. We weren’t getting thrown out, by all indications. Instead, we were one element of a security issue leading to new insurance responsibilities whose costs must be shared.

Importance of Good Communication with Our Churches

We acknowledged with appreciation—and surprise on the pastor’s part—that this church hosts about one-fourth of the county’s A.A. meetings, making it the logical place for tensions and stresses to surface.

The Payoff

Our meeting ended when the pastor extended this welcome invitation: “We would like to invite you or another A.A. member to speak to our congregation on a Sunday morning—telling all of us how A.A. saves lives and is a valuable part of our community.” (The conference-approved A.A. pamphlet P-40, “Speaking at Non-A.A. Meetings,” provides guidelines.)

Today’s the Day

Today, we have a stronger and more positive relationship with our host church because we took the initiative to communicate our gratitude, our willingness to be good tenants, and to be responsible service providers to one of A.A.’s Professional Communities: Members of the Clergy. We will report back to you when Act III plays out. 

(Tradition Two...) continued from page 4...

connives for reelection to office, and who continues to be consumed with self-pity. A few hemorrhage so badly that – drained of all A.A. spirit and principle – they get drunk. At times the A.A. landscape seems to be littered with bleeding forms. Nearly every old-timer in our Society has gone through this process to some degree. Happily, most of them survive and live to become elder statesmen.” I have found myself falling into both classes. I have felt the need (or desire) to jump in and provide direction where direction is not needed nor had it been asked for. Later I have been completely satisfied to step back and remain on the sidelines until my help is requested (or not requested). In the loving spirit of rotation certainly everyone has the opportunity to serve, to learn and to grow in A.A. service. Further, Bill writes in *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age*, “Harder still to accept was the proven fact that the conscience of the group, when properly informed of the facts and issues and principles involved, was often wiser than any leader, self-appointed or not. We slowly realized that the old-timer was frequently faulty in judgment. Because of his position of assumed authority, he was too often influenced by personal prejudices and interests. With all his experience and good works, there was still nothing infallible

to him at all.” How often has my old way of thinking come to mind, that just because I thought it, (whatever “it” is), it has to be right? Now I have to convince you and everyone else that my brilliant thought is right? The concept of the group conscience, an informed group conscience, the openness and respect of listening to everyone’s input on a topic of discussion and debate, allows me to get out of my own way and put aside personal opinions, prejudices, and agenda, and allow a Power greater than myself in. Thus as I came to believe in a Power greater than myself in Step Two, I am no more in control of the A.A. group than I am of my life and will. One of my most spiritual experiences in sobriety occurred while serving at my first General Service Conference in 2008. While meeting in my Conference Committee of nine Delegates, we had some challenging and exigent Agenda Topics to discuss. As our Committee began to discuss these topics in our first session, we voiced strongly opposing viewpoints on these topics. Over a period of four days and over ten hours of meeting within our Conference Committee, I witnessed a loving God express Himself in our group conscience. By the end of our deliberations, we presented a Committee Report of Recommendations and Additional Considerations. Of these Recommendations and Additional Considerations, the Committee had voted on each unanimously. God

had entered the room and expressed Himself in our group conscience. Further reading on how the Conference acts as the effective conscience of our whole Society can be found in Bill W.’s essay on Concept Two.

Of equal challenge is the home group conscience when things don’t go “my way.” At a recent business meeting, the home group discussed the pros and cons of using intergroup funds for a specific and pricey public information expenditure. I expressed my view as many others did, citing A.A. resources, experience and thoughts. The group voted in favor of the opposite side of the issue as me, by substantial unanimity. Old behavior would have dictated that as I did not get my way, I would have gotten up, walked out, and found another home group! In the truest form of democracy, everyone had the right to participate in the discussion. I heard and understood every point of view presented. There was no cause to filibuster. I did not harbor resentment. Another spiritual experience!

The practice of Tradition Two in the group, in the Area, or in any level of A.A. service has not only ensured that a Higher Power is the guiding force in our groups, our service entities, as well as our own lives, but that I as one in any service position serve the Fellowship which has saved my life, rather than govern. 

MARYLAND GENERAL SERVICE, AREA 29 2011 CALENDAR

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|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Area Committee | September 24 | District 28/29 St. Mary’s Church 1 St. Mary’s Church Rd. Abingdon, MD 21009 |
| Area Assembly (Elections) | October 22 | District 40 Evangelical Reformed United Church of Christ 15 W Church St. Frederick, MD 21701 |
| Fall Conference Area Committee | Oct. 27-30 November 12 | Hagerstown, MD District 36 Lexington Park Methodist 21760 Great Mills Rd. Lexington Park, MD |
| Area Assembly (Rotation) | December 10 | District 31 Parish Hall Saint Martin’s in the Field 375 Benfield Rd. Severna Park, MD 21146 |

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