

# **HOW WE RUN OUR AA GROUP WHILE CONFORMING TO THE SPIRIT OF THE TRADITIONS**

This pamphlet brings together information from approved sources - so that general misconceptions about Group Conscience meetings may be set aside – and in their place best AA practices adopted.

“Each group is as unique as a thumbprint, and approaches to carrying the message of sobriety vary not just from group to group but from region to region. Acting autonomously, each group charts its own course. **The better informed the members, the stronger and more cohesive the group** – and the greater the assurance that when a newcomer reaches out for help, the hand of AA always will be there.

Most of us cannot recover unless there is a group. As Bill said ‘realisation dawns on each member that he is but a small part of a great whole. ... He learns that the clamour of desires and ambitions within him must be silenced whenever these could damage the group. It becomes plain that the group must survive or the individual will not.’”

**GC = Group Conscience**

**TSM = Appointed trusted servants meeting**

**Robert's Rules of Order.** which is also widely known as parliamentary procedure, was developed **to** ensure that meetings **are** fair, efficient, democratic and orderly. A skilled chairperson allows all members **to** voice their opinions in an orderly manner so that everyone in the meeting **can** hear and be heard.

*Sources The AA Group, Twelve Concepts for world Service,*

*[www.aabeginners.com](http://www.aabeginners.com)*

## The Twelve Traditions

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. 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.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Alcoholics Anonymous should remain forever non professional, but our service centres may employ special workers.
9. A.A., as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Alcoholics Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the A.A. name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities

## **Group membership and responsibility to AA as a whole**

“Each AA group to conduct its internal affairs as it wishes – it being merely requested to abstain from acts that might injure AA as a whole”

Who is a member of the Group?

‘The only requirement for AA membership is a desire to stop drinking. Thus group membership requires no formal application. Just as we are members of AA if we say we are, *so are we members of a group if we say we are*”

Most members feel more at home in one particular group than in others and consider it their home group, where they accept responsibilities and try to sustain friendships.

*Members do not take part in the business or policy of groups which they visit, but in which they would accept no service assignment.*

## **Practical aspects of running a Group**

When any meeting is different from those around it, there is a tendency for the differences to be eroded steadily through successive GC and TSMs until it resembles all the other meetings in the area. There

are a number of things that a group can do to stop this process and protect the integrity of its message, by setting up a Group Ethos. At the TSM refer to this *Group Ethos* while considering Group inventory and any proposals submitted, which will go to a GC vote. This will ensure the integrity of the Group remains intact. - while at the same time allowing for some process of change and adaptation as the group develops and grows in size.

A committee of group officers in whom the GC has placed their trust, by their election, would normally deal with the run-of-the-mill weekly affairs of the group. Any member who has a problem should approach the Secretary, and if necessary follow through by raising their concern through one of the appointed trusted servants at the TSM in the prescribed manner.

“... The right AA solution for this problem is to be found, however, in the latter part of Tradition two, which provides for “trusted servants”.

This really means that we ought to trust our responsible leaders to *decide*, within the understood framework of their duties, *how they will interpret and apply their own authority and responsibility to each particular problem or situation as it arises.*

This sort of leadership should be the essence of *“Right of Decision”*.

...To sum up: Let us always be sure that there is an abundance of final or ultimate authority to correct or to re-organise, but let us be equally sure that all of our trusted servants have a clearly defined and adequate authority to do their daily work and to discharge their clear responsibilities.

All of this is fully implied in AAs Tradition 2. Here we see the ‘GC’ as the *ultimate* authority and the trusted servant as the *delegated* authority. One cannot function without the other...

*Twelve Concepts for World Service*

## Organising and running the Trusted Servants Meeting

Typically meetings are at regular intervals, they can be informal or along the lines of Roberts Rule of Order, an example of which we give here.

Quarterly TSMs are very practical and should suffice in a well run and healthy group.

Hold the TSM either before or after the scheduled meeting – *do not lose valuable 'carrying the message' time*

Two weeks ahead of the scheduled date for the TSM the Secretary will announce all details and make available the agenda so that everyone has a chance to think about it and once again consult sponsors and group old-timers. Members are invited to submit in writing, items for discussion drawn from the Group Inventory questions or other matters.

Such proposals need to be seconded - ensuring due consideration.

Excepting an urgent matter all points that arise from AOB will be considered as items on the agenda for the next TSM, subject to proposal and seconding in the usual way. This avoids decisions being made on the fly without due consideration.

The Secretary lets everyone know that while if say 1/2 of an hour is the full time allotted, it means that the Secretary must decide how long to give to each item and keep the meeting moving, and that nobody should speak twice unless everyone who wishes to has spoken once. If necessary he should cut short debate ask for a show of hands, *without debate*, on whether to take a vote now, or delay until the next TSM.

## **Typical agenda for a Trusted Servants Meeting**

1. Welcome and Reading of Traditions
2. Introduction by Secretary and explanation of who can vote and participate. Visitors may attend, they do not vote and only speak by invitation.
3. Report from the group secretary.
4. Report from the GSR
5. Report from the Treasurer
6. Report from the Literature Officer
7. Report from the Refreshments team
8. Report from the Greeters
9. Item XXX , proposed and seconded
10. Item YYY, proposed and seconded.
11. Resolutions for Vote – to be taken now and deemed a GC vote if attendance largely represents average weekly attendance. Otherwise see **section GC vote**.
12. AOB, Items for next agenda
13. Close with Serenity Prayer.

## **Group inventory questions to be used :**

1. What is the basic purpose of the group? Are we adhering to our ethos?
2. What more can the group do to carry the message?
3. Is the group attracting alcoholics from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross section of our community, including those with special needs?
4. Do new members stick with us, or does turnover seem excessive? If so why? What can we as a group do to retain members?
5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do it better? How effective is our sponsorship? How can it be improved?
6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other AAs outside the meeting room? Do we leave what they share at meetings behind?
7. Does our group emphasize to all members the value of keeping up with the kitchen, set-up, clean-

up and other housekeeping chores that are essential for our Twelfth Step efforts?

8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and to participate in other group activities?

9. Mindful that holding office is a great responsibility not to be viewed as the outcome of a popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?

10. Are we doing all we can to provide an attractive and accessible meeting place? Do we have adequate signage so new members can find us?

11. Does our group do its fair share towards participating in the purpose of AA – as it relates to our Three Legacies of Recovery, Unity and Service?

12. How is our group fulfilling its responsibility to the seventh Tradition?

*From AA the Group*

## Group Conscience Vote

As we have shown arriving at a GC decision is a process which begins before and around the TSM  
To recap:-

“Before a vote is taken, it is essential that all the members be given all facts relevant to the subject at hand. In many cases a few members may be asked to look into the pros and cons of the issue and present them at a further meeting.

Arriving at an informed GC in big matters and small is a process that may, and often should, take some time. But it is important that the minority or dissenting views be heard along with those of the majority. In some instances they may even turn the tide.”

"The GC is the collective conscience of the group membership and thus represents substantial unanimity on an issue before definitive action is taken” On this basis we fail to see that a “one person decision or objection can supplant a majority GC decision”.

We suggest that if attendance at the TSM only represents a small percentage of average Meeting numbers then the resolutions which have come from the BM are put to a further vote at Group

level. Such resolutions to be typed up, dated indicating whether they are unanimous or majority decision resolutions from the TSM. One copy to be placed on each seat in the meeting room. In this manner all parties should be satisfied.

We suggest that a record be kept in the Group File of all decisions implemented.

### **What is our Group Ethos Plus Group information ?**

Set up in a paragraph or two, something that best describes the ethos of your group, i.e.

“This Group advocates and endorses to the fullest possible extent the 12 Steps of Recovery and the 12 Traditions. As recovered alcoholics we are dedicated to the primary purpose of a Group, to carry the message to the alcoholic who still suffers and, brimming with enthusiasm and gratitude for our recovery, wish to share this with all who attend our Group”.

OR “This is a discussion Group centred on a page at each meeting from As Bill Sees it”.

OR “This is a step meeting using the 12 and 12 with one step each week being read out and discussed”,

OR “This Group studies the Big Book, the first 11 chapters with half a chapter each week being read etc....”

Then create, from this template your own Group pamphlet for ongoing use. All GC decisions should be recorded and kept as part of the history of the group along with Agendas etc.

## The Twelve Steps

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God *as we understood Him*.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God, *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.