

ASK-IT-BASKET QUESTIONS & ANSWERS FALL ASSEMBLY 2016

1. **Question;** Why is the Lord's Prayer used at meetings to open or close the meetings?

Answer; Refer to page 22 of our Service Manual. The last line of the suggested closing "Will all who care to, join me in closing with the _____ prayer?" It is suggested that groups close in a manner that is agreeable to the group conscience. Many groups say the Al-Anon Declaration after their closing. Also you might refer to Concept 5. "The rights of appeal and petition protect minorities and insure that they be heard." Perhaps having a Group Inventory would help.

2. **Question;** Why don't we send out the newsletter free of charge via email to everyone who requests it?

Answer; The Newsletter is an income source activity for the Area.

3. **Question;** What or where is the right place to hang a poster of a new group. (Dr's office? Health facility?)

Answer; Page 112 of the Service Manual. Publicizing Meeting Locations- "Meeting information may be printed in church bulletins, newspapers, and other venues for sharing public information." Group Autonomy- groups make the decision about where to place such a poster. There is no wrong place. The Best of Public Outreach on the World Service Website- Posters are considered public outreach. The guide for public outreach is Tradition 11. The meeting time and place can be posted/printed as long as there is not a member's name or personal phone number.

4. **Question;** Can you will your money to Al-Anon? What is the limit if there is one?

Answer; Page 96 of the Service Manual under Bequests. "The WSO may accept a one-time bequest from an Al-Anon member in **any** amount, provided it's use is not restricted by the donor." The pamphlet S-38 "Remember Al-Anon in Your Will, Your Legacy" is outdated and incorrect. It is no longer used.

5. **Question;** Is it customary at meetings to write your name and phone number in a sign in book?

Answer; This is group autonomy. For some groups it is customary and not for others, depending on their group conscience.

6. **Question;** Are members or newcomers expected to contribute to 7th Tradition? (We are self-supporting?)

Answer; Page 21 of the Service Manual under Passing the Basket. "At some point during the program, voluntary contributions are made following this statement by the Chairperson or Treasurer; "We have no dues or fees, but we do pass the basket to cover group expenses, including purchase of literature, support of our trusted servants, and Al-Anon service arms. According to our Seventh Tradition, Al-Anon/Alateen groups ought to be self-supporting through our own voluntary contributions. We are encouraged to contribute in gratitude for what Al-Anon/Alateen has given us. The amount is not important; what is important is that we give whatever we can. (Note to Chairperson: While no one is required to contribute, the opportunity should be available to all, including newcomers.)"

7. **Question;** In the Welcome to Newcomers opening- is it Conference Approved? And also can some of the wording be removed or changed?

Answer; Service Manual page 23 – Optional Readings. "The selections that follow are offered as suggestions for meeting topics or as optional readings in the group meeting format, as determined by the group conscience."

The binder, which my home group uses on occasion was sent out from WSO in 1997 and the reading in question is reprinted from the April/May 1990 issue of Inside Al-Anon (submitted by the First Step AFG, Glens Falls, NY).

Our Delegate, Jenny B. sent a letter to Barbara O., Director of Member Services at WSO. This is what she replied in answer to this question:

The Group Services Committee, comprised of Delegates, WSO Volunteers, and staff discussed members' communications about the Newcomer Welcome and decided to remove it from the Group Binder. Comments about the Newcomer Welcome included that it could be interpreted as directive and that it told potential members how they felt, which could be a roadblock for some potential members. The Group Services Committee encouraged groups to discuss how to welcome newcomers and determine their own way of welcoming which could include writing their own welcome, asking members to share about Al-Anon, etc. It is up to the autonomy of the group to decide how to welcome newcomers as long as the group abides by the Traditions. Groups can use the old Newcomer Welcome however I would encourage groups to have a discussion about the purpose of a welcome and consider if their group's welcome meets that purpose so they can make an informed decision about using it versus just hanging on to something that is familiar. Please also note that at each printing the WSO sends all groups a complimentary copy of *Groups at Work* (P-24) which has the meeting format, opening, closing, Legacies, and optional readings for meetings. The idea of printing P-24 as a separate booklet again was to encourage members to have this inexpensive resource to use at the group meetings so that all would be included. The group binders were discontinued several years ago. Currently three packets are sent to each new group during their first year, the first packet contains P-24.

I hope this information is useful to you, good luck and thanks for your service.

Barbara

8. **Question;** We have a member who seems to overpower newcomers, comes in with attitude and attacks one or two long time members at most meetings. Some members no longer attend because of this person. Are there any ideas to deal with this person besides doing a Group Inventory?

Answer; Page 54 of the Service Manual "...Al-Anon and Alateen members expect a safe and pleasant environment when they attend a meeting, and when one member causes unrest due to inappropriate or intimidating behaviour, the entire group could be affected. Groups are within their autonomy to establish group behavioural guidelines in a manner that reflects their group conscience and abides by the Traditions.

When the behaviour of any member impacts the group, members apply the Traditions to the problem, and determine how best to approach the individual(s) involved, to ask the member to change the behaviour in question. This can be an exercise in applying Al-Anon principles so that the message is not a personal attack, but rather a request based on what is best for the Al-Anon group. Service tools on conflict resolution are available. See the *Al-Anon Conference Approved Literature Catalog (S-15)* or *CAL Order Form (S-16)*."

The Committee discussed this and decided the best way to deal with situations like this was to have two long time members approach the individual together in private. Use this time to help the individual understand how their actions are harming the common welfare of the group as a whole. This gives them the opportunity to realize what they are doing and work towards changing without being embarrassed in front of everyone and without feeling singled out and attacked. It is our hope and belief that the individual probably doesn't realize the negative affect they are having and would do better when they know better. It would also be beneficial to call on your District Representative to possibly help. We can always make use of the experience of our Trusted Servants.

9. **Question;** A member from our group was wondering how the WSO has cut their costs (besides the free Forums for the groups being deleted). She has heard that WSO invested in the oil stocks and the stocks have gone down, therefore WSO of Al-Anon had lost invested money. Is this why WSO has lost money? What is their action plan for making this a remedy of sorts?

Answer; Jenny B. stated that she is grateful for this question because it reveals that this Al-Anon member read some of the details of the 2016 World Service Conference Summary- namely the 2015 Auditor's Report Section on pages 18-20.

A few ways that the World Service Office has cut their costs (besides the free Forums for the groups being cancelled) is:

- a) Delaying hiring some staff or filling some staff positions (which typically 60% of a non-profit's budget goes to staffing).
- b) Contracting out some work for some short-term contracts instead of hiring permanent employees.
- c) Having fewer copies of our Conference Approved Literature produced to reduce the inventories.
- d) Using "Go To Meeting" video conferencing and conference calls to reduce travel for some of the committees such as the Finance and Executive Committees which meet monthly. Page 194 in the Service Manual states "The Trustees are expected to spearhead the formulation of Al-Anon policy and it's proper execution. They have the ultimate responsibility for the preservation and prudent management of all Al-Anon's financial assets. They are accountable for the internal controls of funds received and the investment thereof....." Since our Trustees must function like the directors of any large business corporation, they must have ample authority to manage and conduct at Al-Anon's business."

On page 18-19 in the 2016 World Service Conference Summary, the following questions were asked and answered at the Conference:

Why are we investing in the stock and bond markets? Who makes the decision on how much we can invest? I have trouble understanding who makes the decision on how we spend investing in business outside of Al-Anon.

The Board of Trustees sets the amount at 60 percent. The money in the Reserve Fund and the money in the General Fund that is not needed for bills, is invested in the bond market. We paid off the mortgage on the building in 2010 with money from our investments. In the long run, we made substantially more in the stock market than in the bond market.

Our investment portfolio is diversified with cash, bonds and stocks. About 65% of the fund is in the stock market, 32% in bonds and 3% in cash and Treasury Bills.

What is the decision-making process for investments?

We have two investment managers. We meet with one twice a year, and sometimes have quarterly phone calls. We meet with the manager of the Bond portfolio once a year. We ask for information about the plans to get a feel for where we are going. Every five years, we review the managers. The Finance Committee looks at how the Standard & Poor's (S & P) has done and compare that performance to our investments. In the long run, we have done very well compared to the benchmark.

Are there any changes to our process for checking in with the investment managers? Can I report anything new to my Area regarding the procedures?

The procedures have not changed. We have talked with them about equity handling and we have sold some things, and rebalanced the portfolio in order to get into an investment structure we believe will be more profitable going forward. The process is the same. We talked more often because of the current market situation.

So- yes the WSO lost some money this year by realizing some losses on some investments that were cashed in. However, some of the loss is on paper only as of December 31, 2015 because those investments may rebound and possibly produce a profit. The reality is that members have started to give more generously given that expenses/costs have risen over the years due to educating members about costs per group and encouraging members to give abundantly.

10. Question; Has consideration ever been given to set the assembly and committee dates one or two years in advance?

11. Question; Is there a reason why the Al-Anon Assembly is held in early November?

Answer; Motion 27/08: Mary V. / Vanessa A. **CARRIED**

That Saskatchewan Assembly hold two Area Service Committee meetings per year – one to be held in March and one to be held in September, and two seminar weekends per year – one to be held in June and one to be held in November.

It is also difficult to set dates too far in advance as hotels are unable or unwilling to quote prices more than 1 year away.

12. Question; If a group conscious decides to change the name of their group, can it be done? What would be the procedure to follow?

Answer; Mary C contacted the Group Records Coordinator for WSO and this is what she replied:

A group doesn't need to re-register in order to change the group name. A GR-1 form needs to be submitted to the Area Group Records Coordinator or WSO with the new group name, and it would be processed as a group change.

13. Question; Group conscious question: If an Al-Anon group holds a supper/speaker meeting open to other Al-Anon groups and AA as well, are the funds collected in the 7th Tradition basket considered “outside contributions”? (from AA members)?

Answer; Page 97 of the Service Manual states: “Al-Anon and Alateen groups do not accept contributions of money, goods, or services from outside the Al-Anon membership in order to adhere to the Seventh Tradition of full self-support.” We also suggest you could put up a sign with the 7th Tradition stating that only Al-Anon members donate.

14. Question; Is it OK to have an Al-Anon meeting with a teen/or student, if there is only one Al-Anon member present?

Answer; Tradition 3 “The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of alcoholism in a relative or friend.” At an Al-Anon meeting it is OK but strongly recommended that there be at least 2 adults for safety reasons of all members at a meeting. Where a teen is concerned, it is recommended that another member be called so they can be present or else put a cell phone on “speaker” so they can listen in and contribute to the conversation.

15. Question; Why and how has it been decided to have the guideline that only Al-Anon members and not dual members be allowed to hold position of Archivist as this is not a position that would have a vote or be advancing beyond this Area level?

Answer; Page 82 of the Service Manual “Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA are eligible to hold office within their Al-Anon or Alateen groups. Active members of Al-Anon who are also AA’s may serve as the sponsor of Alateen groups by virtue of their Al-Anon membership. These are vital group services, and at all times emphasis should be placed on the Al-Anon interpretation of the program.

Because of the unique nature of both programs, Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also AA members do not hold office beyond the group level, as these positions could lead to membership in the WSC. The need to focus on the Al-Anon program and the possibility of a conflict of interest at Assembly and World Service levels led the WSC to its decision not to seat Al-Anon/Alateen members who are also members of AA. For these reasons AA members do not serve as Group Reps, District Reps, Area Coordinators, Newsletter Editors, Delegates and/or any of their alternates, nor do they sit on the WSO selected committees, whose chair can be Conference members.”

The Archivist is a Coordinator position and has vote at our committees as do all Coordinators.