

## **Motion to write a letter to the General Service Board, requesting to amend the Conference Charter to include Founders Literature**

### **Motion**

Panel 64 Past Delegate moves to request that the Panel 74 NIA Delegate forward a letter to the General Service Board, prior to the 2024 deadline, with a request to amend the Current Conference Charter, Section 3, paragraph 2, to include the English versions of “Founders Literature” specifically *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. That the first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forwards, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare” and the Appendices remain as is, with no further changes in text other than updating footnotes.

That in addition to this amendment, the Conference consider any changes to the book the Twelves Steps and Twelve Traditions be returned to its written wording as updated with the new Forward based on the Conference Advisory Action of 2005.

### **Background**

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. (AAWS) should have a policy protecting the original writings of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous* and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. By placing these two books into the Conference Charter, a policy will be in place covering them for changes. This policy would be: “But no change ... may be made with less than the written consent of three-quarters of the A.A. groups, as described in the Resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention.”

The books *Alcoholics Anonymous*, first published in 1939, and the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, first published in 1953, were written primarily by Bill W, co-founder of *Alcoholics Anonymous*. They are, admittedly, dated in language. However, according to [aa.org](http://aa.org), “*Today, an A.A. presence can be found in approximately 180 nations worldwide, with membership estimated at over two million. There are more than 123,000 A.A. groups around the world and A.A.’s literature has been translated into over 100 languages.*” This implies that these two books are translated into multiple languages, for multiple nations. These countries, outside the U.S. and Canada, license our books, which allows them to print and distribute within their countries, which includes the translated versions. It is not the intent of this motion to prevent updating translations, nor the stories included in the books, but to provide guidance to AAWS, the Trustees, and the Delegates to honor the words as written by the founders of AA.

### **ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND:**

#### **Original Conference Charter, 1955, 3. Conference Relation to A.A., paragraph 2, page 115 & 118 of the current AA Service Manual**

*But no change in the A.A. Tradition itself may be made with less than the written consent of two-thirds of all the A.A. groups.*<sup>4</sup>

*Footnote #4: Revised by the 1957 Conference as follows: “Bill has suggested that the third article of the Conference Charter, i.e., Conference Relation to A.A. (Second paragraph page*

*58 of the Third Legacy Manual), be amended to read: 'But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in A.A. Tradition or in the Twelve Steps of A.A. may be made with*

*less than a written consent of three-quarters of the A.A. groups, as described in the resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention.' If this amendment*

*is made, the seventh paragraph on page 57 of the Third Legacy Manual must also be amended to read: 'excepting, however that any amendment of Article 12 of the*

*Charter or of A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions must have the consent of A.A. groups as provided in Article 3 of the Charter.' It was recommended that these*

*amendments be made." Subsequently revised by the 1969 Conference to replace the words "A.A. Tradition" with "The Twelve Traditions of A.A."*

**Current Conference Charter, 3. Conference Relation to A.A., paragraph 2, page 119 & 122 of the current AA Service Manual**

*But no change in Article 12 of the Charter or in the Twelve Traditions of A.A. or in the Twelve Steps of A.A. may be made with less than the written consent of three-quarters of the A.A. groups, as described in the Resolution adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention.2*

*Footnote #2: This applies to the original English version only.*

**Resolution Authorizing the General Service Conference, adopted by the 1955 Conference and Convention, paragraph 5, page 123 of the current AA Service Manual**

*AND IT IS UNDERSTOOD: That neither the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous nor the warranties of Article XII of the Conference Charter shall ever be changed or amended by the General Service Conference except by first asking the consent of the registered A.A. groups of the world. [This would include all A.A. groups known to the general service offices around the world.]3 These groups shall be suitably notified of any proposal for change and shall be allowed no less than six months for consideration thereof. And before any such Conference action can be taken, there must*

*first be received in writing within the time allotted the consent of at least three-quarters of all those registered groups who respond to such proposal.4*

*Footnote #3: Resolution: It was resolved by the 1976 General Service Conference that those instruments requiring consent of three-quarters of the responding groups for change or amendment would include the Twelve Steps of A.A., should any such change or amendment ever be proposed.*

*Footnote #4: Bill uses the term "registered." A.A.W.S. neither monitors nor oversees the activities or practices of any A.A. group. Groups are listed solely for purposes of accurate communications.*

**Conference Advisory Actions/Literature**

1986: "As the preface to the Big Book clearly states that the text was written in 1939 and that it has not been changed, no further explanation regarding out-of-date phrases and/or gender-oriented pronouns or chapter titles is necessary."

1993: “Because of strong sentiment against changes in the first 164 pages of the Big Book, the request to rewrite the first three chapters of the Big Book not be implemented.”

1995: “The first 164 pages of the Big Book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the Preface, the Forwards, “The Doctor’s Opinion,” “Dr. Bob’s Nightmare” and the Appendices remain as is.” (This Advisory Action was reaffirmed in 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001)

2002: “The text in the book, *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, written by Bill Wilson, remain as is, recognizing the Fellowship’s feeling that Bill’s writings be retained as originally published.”

### **Summary of Agenda items and actions 2020 through 2023**

There were two 2020 Agenda items, one to “form a study committee to audit the first 164 pages of the Big Book with the purpose of identifying changes that can be made to make the Big Book more reflective of the A.A. membership composition.” This request came from one District, although it is unclear if it was from a single person or if there was any voting at the District level. In addition, there was an agenda item to revise the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions to make changes to two pages in the book. The background regarding page 117 comes from a member of one group who made the request in July by letter, then a 2nd letter in December. This second letter states that the motion did not receive a 2/3 majority from the Area. The background for the second change, on page 66, is a letter from one Area and a Group within the Area. The Area did have the support of substantial unanimity.

These agenda items were sent back to the Trustees Literature Committee. The same background material was used for the 2021 Conference. Regarding the first item, the Conference Report states: “The committee considered a request to audit the first 164 pages of the book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, for necessary revisions and took no action. The committee agreed that the first 164 pages of *Alcoholics Anonymous* should remain unchanged.” The Agenda items for the two pages of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* were approved.

This topic of the *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* was again brought up in 2022 by an Agenda item which had several requests to rescind the changes, along with a

request to preserve the Big Book and 12 & 12. The Conference Report on this item states: “The committee discussed the changes to the text of the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* resulting from advisory actions of the 71st General Service Conference and took no action. The committee noted that there does not appear to be a consensus on the changes among A.A. members at the local level.”

In 2023 the Finance Committee had an Agenda item “Discuss new proposed agenda items (PAI’s) regarding the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.” This item had 92 pages of background and resulted in Conference Report under Committee Considerations: “The committee considered a request to discuss pro- posed agenda items related to changes to the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*. The committee suggested that the Trustees’ Literature Committee seek input from the Fellowship (including but not limited to Area delegate feedback) regarding any possible future changes to literature written by A.A.’s founders. The committee requested that a progress report be brought back to the 2024 Conference Committee on Finance. (Mindful of budgetary

restraints, the committee suggests financial prudence when determining how best to obtain Fellowship sharing.)

Questions to be considered might include:

- Should suggested revisions be subjected to a 2-year Conference review process.
- Should any future suggested changes retain the original writing with footnotes for text being updated or should founder's writings remain unchanged?
- Should there be a threshold for review (group, district, area)?
- Should the changes to the book Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions by 2021 General Service Conference remain?
- Should a new policy regarding Bill W.'s writing be created as a guide to future changes?"