



highlights of the 2021 WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE

topics

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Al-Anon’s largest representative group conscience, the World Service Conference, was held virtually April 12–16, 2021. The theme was “Moving Forward with Unity, Courage, and Perseverance.” The 61st annual Conference brought together 64 Delegates, two Alternate Delegates, and one past Delegate who represented the 67 Areas in the US (including Puerto Rico), Canada, and Bermuda. Other voting participants included members of Al-Anon’s Board of Trustees and Executive Committee, and voting members of the World Service Office administrative Staff. Office “Tech Team” and Events Staff attended to facilitate the meetings, including a virtual hospitality room. Each year, the Conference Leadership Team invites all General Service Offices (GSO) to send a representative to attend with voice and no vote. With the Conference being held virtually, a record-breaking 12 GSOs sent a representative, which was amazing!

Electronic Meeting Work Group Motions

The Electronic Meeting Work Group (EMWG) presented two motions to the Conference for consideration:

1. Update the World Service Handbook’s definition of Area to include non-geographically based groupings, such as Groups who meet electronically with members that represent no single geographic location such as an Area or Service Structure.
2. To eliminate the specific Policy on Electronic Meetings in accordance with Tradition Three that states “The relatives of alcoholics, when gathered together for mutual aid, may call themselves an Al-Anon Family Group” and to recognize these meetings as Al-Anon Family Groups.

These two motions were passed by the Conference Members and they now pave the way for Al-Anon Family Groups that meet electronically (formally known as Electronic Meetings) to elect a Group Representative (GR). These Groups and their GRs now can establish a service structure that supports all non-geographically based Groups, which will follow the “Area Procedures for Joining the Conference” according to the “Conference Procedures” starting on page 165 in the *2018-2021 Al-Anon/Alateen Service Manual (P24/27)* version two (2).

This is a historic moment for our fellowship, as we fully embrace the many ways Al-Anon members are able to find recovery—by attending meetings no matter the location; physical, virtual, or both—and members of groups meeting electronically become fully represented at Conference by their elected representative.



Discussions about Literature

The 2021 World Service Conference held three separate discussions regarding Conference Approved Literature, which were all based on recommendations from the Literature Committee. The first discussion considered the development of a new Alateen bookmark based on the *Just for Tonight* Al-Anon Bookmark (M-81). This suggestion was received from Alateen groups that love the bookmark and would like an Alateen version. Like the *Just for Today* Alateen Bookmark (M-13), its contents would come from the teens themselves. After thoroughly discussing the matter, the Conference voted in favor of creating the bookmark.

The second discussion centered on the book, *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (B-4), which was first introduced in 1967. Members of the fellowship have expressed that the book is outdated and needs revision. By using the Knowledge-Based Decision-Making Process and studying the pros and cons of various options, the Literature Committee eventually reached a solution. Rather than discontinue or update the book, the Committee proposed adding a new Preface to the book that would place it in historical perspective and develop a booklet made up of “gems” from the original, possibly including some new material. Following discussion, the Conference agreed with the Committee’s recommendation.

The final literature discussion was prompted by increased concerns from the fellowship about our first daily reader, *One Day at a Time in Al-Anon* (B-6) from 1968, and what some members consider the dated or non-inclusive language of the book. After considerable discussion, the Committee rested on the idea of creating a new introduction to the book, similar to its recommendation for *The Dilemma of the Alcoholic Marriage* (B-4). This could provide a historical perspective on the book, and at the same time, emphasize the timeless nature of Al-Anon’s spiritual principles that the book so wonderfully exemplifies. After having its own spirited discussion of the topic, the Conference agreed.

Revision of the Alateen Preamble to the Twelve Steps

The January 2018 Policy Committee reviewed background framing and archival information about the Suggested Alateen Preamble to the Twelve Steps. After discussion, the Policy Committee convened an Alateen Preamble Language (APL) Task Force led by WSO Staff and was assigned the following charge:

“To recommend to the Policy Committee changes to the Alateen Preamble that will ensure its language is welcoming to potential teenage newcomers who are affected by someone else’s alcoholism and can be translated into the three official AFG, Inc. languages.”

The Task Force consisted of six members: five currently certified AMIAS and one Alateen. The revised Preamble has been approved by the 2021 WSC and now reads:

“Alateen, part of Al-Anon Family Groups, is for young people who have been affected by alcoholism in a family member or friend. We help each other by sharing our experience, strength, and hope.

“We believe alcoholism is a family disease affecting everyone emotionally and sometimes physically. Although we cannot change or control the alcoholics in our lives, we can



detach from their problems while continuing to love them.

“In Alateen we focus on our own program rather than outside issues such as religion, politics, social media, or other Twelve Step programs. There are no dues for membership. Alateen is self-supporting through its own voluntary contributions. Alateen has one purpose: to help young people affected by someone else’s drinking. We are careful to protect each other’s anonymity as well that of all Al-Anon and A.A. members.

“By applying the Twelve Steps to ourselves, we begin to recover from the effects of the family disease of alcoholism mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. This allows us to encourage our alcoholic relatives and friends, and to give hope to other teens.”

Communication will be forthcoming on how to insert the new Alateen Preamble.

Simultaneous Interpretation

Marking the end of a three-year trial to provide simultaneous interpretation to French- and Spanish-speaking Delegates, Conference passed a historic motion to approve the ongoing availability of Spanish and French interpretation at future Conferences when requested by Areas to support their WSC Delegates. The AFG, Inc. Strategic Plan Envisioned Future states, “AFG, Inc. is a global organization with technology-based operations that support the delivery of on-demand, barrier-free access to the program, information, meetings, and Sponsors.” It is hoped this decision will widen the Delegate candidate pool by welcoming the contributions of many non-English-speaking trusted servants.

The Task Force noted Al-Anon has been trilingual from its very beginning; and quoted from the *Service Manual* and other Conference Approved Literature to highlight how Al-Anon principles pertain to the discussion. Conference members immediately acknowledged the importance of this step toward increasing unity within our WSC Structure and globally before focusing discussion on the financial implications of the decision.

The Board Interpretation Task Force shared estimated and actual in-person interpretation figures for the last three Conferences. The trial, approved by the Board of Trustees, had been funded from the Reserve Fund as a special project. Since ongoing funding as a special project would not be a prudent financial principle and a financial commitment from the WSO operating budget would not be sustainable, Conference members concentrated on the implications of allocating future costs evenly across the Areas as part of the equalized and full cost.

Based on 2021 estimates for an in-person Conference in New York, the full cost for a Delegate to attend the WSC would have increased by \$708, while the Equalized Expense would have increased by \$503. All costs, including interpretation, are higher when the Conference is held in New York due to increased travel expenses and higher rates. The Task Force clarified the incremental cost for future years could vary substantially depending on interpretation costs and Conference location.



2023 Al-Anon International Convention

Mark your calendar and join us in Albuquerque June 29–July 2, 2023 to celebrate recovery at Al-Anon’s Seventh International Convention!

Members from the New Mexico/El Paso Area will be on hand to welcome Al-Anon, Alateen, and A.A. members, and guests from all throughout the World Service Conference Structure and from all over the world.

We look forward to seeing you in Albuquerque.

More Information

For a more detailed account of the 2021 World Service Conference, see the *2021 World Service Conference Summary* (P-46). The electronic version will be available in July; print copies will be available in August for the cost of shipping and handling.