

# theDAfocus

THE QUARTERLY WORLD SERVICE NEWSLETTER FOR THE FELLOWSHIP OF DEBTORS ANONYMOUS

## 2Q2021

## D.A. in the Post Covid World

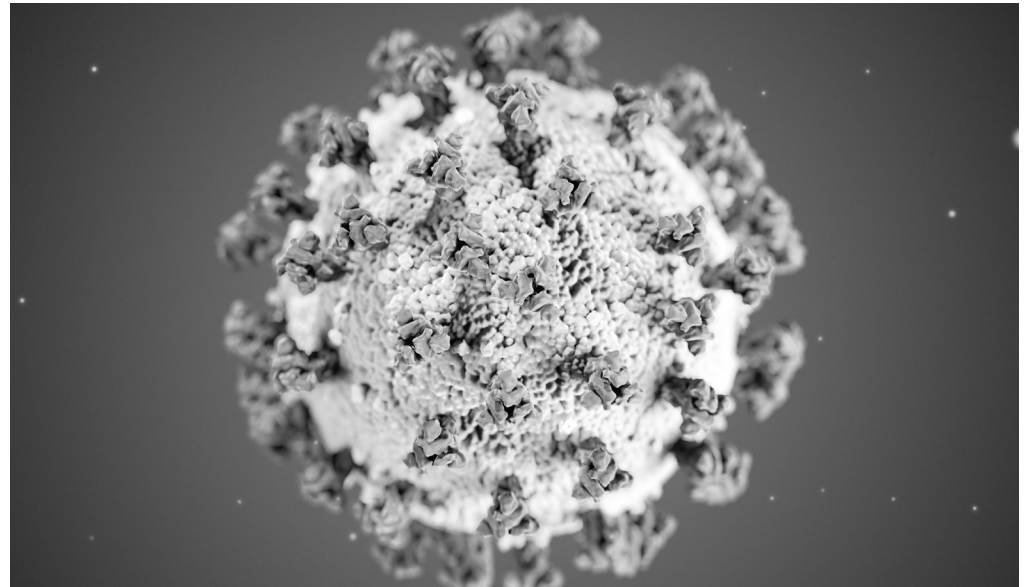
### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Mixed Blessings of COVID-19 .....	2
A Working Board of Trustees .....	3
From Our Parliamentarian.....	6
Meet the Trustees .....	8
From The Archives.....	10
D.A. Announcements .....	11

**The DA Focus** is the service newsletter published quarterly by the General Service Board (GSB) of D.A. It is available as a download from the official D.A. website at: [debtorsanonymous.org/share](https://debtorsanonymous.org/share)

The General Service Board seeks qualified trusted servants to fill a number of service positions. The positions are non-paying. Positions include Trustees and Appointed Committee Members. For details, email: [office@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:office@debtorsanonymous.org)

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It's finally happening! There is a light at the end of the Pandemic tunnel. People are getting vaccinated, going out to eat, to movies, to theme parks. Offices are reopening. And even some 12-step meeting venues.

I just got back from a long anticipated vacation, and one of the highlights was a 12-step meeting at the beach by the Caribbean Sea. It was not D.A., not even my program, but I was so happy to finally be in a face-to-face meeting after 13 months of Zooming. We all sat around in a big circle and shared. It was wonderful to feel that human connection again.

Today, I attended one of my regular D.A. meetings on Zoom. We used to meet at a church in Los Angeles that easily had room for 150 or more. The church has just now given us a date in July to return in person—only 60 people, masked, and fully vaccinated (using the honor system).

Because today was a business meeting, a motion was made to return to the church but we ran out of time to vote. Questions arose such as:

- Who should be allowed to vote for in-person meetings? Locals who would actually attend or everyone in the Zoom meeting, including people from all over the world?
- Will the meeting still continue on Zoom—become a hybrid meeting?
- Will the meeting split into 2 meetings—one face-to-face and the other on Zoom?

These are questions that everyone in D.A. will be dealing with in the near future. We've all gotten used to the idea that we can join any meeting in the

continued on the next page

# The Mixed Blessings of COVID-19

When the call came out for articles for the D.A. Focus, I added this to my list of items to bring to meditation as part of my 10th Step practice. What came up for me were the changes that have affected likely all of us due to the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. At this writing over 173,000,000 cases and over 3,700,000 deaths have been reported by the World Health Organization (June 2021). Among these numbers are people in our D.A. fellowship. I wish to acknowledge these people, their lives and recovery stories. Some were long-time members and others new to D.A. The illness and deaths of these people are sobering, painful, and at times staggering to think about. I know of people who died and of several members who were afflicted with the COVID-19 coronavirus, including those still struggling with long-term aftereffects. I pray for all these people. May they not be forgotten.

For some of us as we begin to see lessening of restrictions as the vaccines are distributed, there will be reminders of health and safety changes required by the pandemic. Not all countries are reopening at the same pace as some of the more developed and prosperous countries. Locally, there may be health measures in place restricting occupancy numbers in meeting rooms and buildings. Some public facilities may require registration to enable contact-tracing protocols which will challenge our program of anonymity. In some instances, people may be reluctant to use currency, preferring electronic payments which may affect 7th Tradition donations. There will be challenges as life in the 'new normal' unfolds. May our Higher Power guide us with grace, patience and generosity.

As we navigate these challenges, let us be mindful of our primary purpose—to be there to help the debtor who still suffers. The transition to virtual meetings in many areas of the world during the pandemic has given us many gifts. Some of these include: an abundance of meetings to join from one's residence; the ability to experience meetings based in other countries and languages; the opportunity to break out of the isolation of 'lock-down' by connecting with other debtors, sometimes daily; the welcoming of many new people to the rooms of D.A. who live in areas not served previously by face-to-face meetings; long-distance Pressure Relief Meetings and sponsorship;

and the removal of obstacles for people previously unable to attend meetings due to physical or mental health challenges and caregiving responsibilities. Some however have been challenged due to lack of technology skills, computer access, or internet connectivity. For many, the pandemic has been a period of tremendous isolation and loneliness.

Eventually we will return to face-to-face meetings, as some jurisdictions have already done. Other areas will require more time. In the enthusiasm to return to these meetings with our fellows where we can laugh, cry, see each other and return the physical touch of holding hands during the Serenity Prayer, let us not forget those who are unable to join us. Some groups may wish to consider 'hybrid meetings' that are face-to-face meetings with an electronic component to allow distance participation. Some meetings may not have the technology and infrastructure to support this, and some meetings or intergroups may retain or start new electronic meetings to meet the needs of those far away. In many ways the pandemic has delivered us gifts in allowing the recovery possible in D.A., and indeed in other fellowships, to be shared to those in underserved and/or remote areas. Our attendance numbers at our meetings in our Central and Eastern Canada Intergroup area have risen by an incredible amount during the pandemic. Hopefully, these people will stay with us on the journey of recovery.

Finally, the pandemic has taken a huge financial and health-care toll on many people. Some members who have been with us for a while have disappeared. Many others may be facing a return to compulsive spending and debting, behaviors made more acute by the pandemic and lockdowns. Others are nearing a 'bottom' and will be looking for us. Let us be there to welcome them as our Responsibility Pledge states: "I pledge to extend my hand and offer the hope of recovery to anyone who reaches out to Debtors Anonymous." Like some of our journeys in healing from our compulsions, we face a long, slow recovery. The impacts of this pandemic will continue for a long time. May we gracefully receive the lessons learned, grieve our losses, and apply new understandings of our unity as we move forward.

— Roger H.  
Oakville, ON, Canada

## D.A. IN THE POST COVID WORLD (continued)

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world without leaving our room.  
Can we go back to the way it was?  
Is there an easy and affordable  
technological solution to continue

Zoom meetings at the same time as  
in person meetings?  
It's a brave new world. And I

believe Higher Power will lead us in  
the right direction.

— Rob B.  
Los Angeles

## The D.A. General Service Board – A “Working Board” of Trustees

The D.A. General Service Board is composed of Class A (debtors) and Class B (non-debtors) who serve on our “working board” of trustees. While Class A trustees are debtors in service to the fellowship that often saved their lives, Class B trustees are usually members of other 12 Step fellowships who serve D.A. to support their own recovery. We are especially grateful for these dedicated trusted servants who provide service while not members of D.A.

Most Boards of Trustees provide oversight and strategic planning for their organizations, but because we are a relatively small organization with only two part-time employees, D.A. trustees also carry out much of the actual work needed to keep the not-for-profit 501 (c) (3) entity thriving and sustainable.

The board is responsible for financial oversight, risk management, and ensuring that staff and special workers act ethically and with integrity so D.A. can continue its mission of reaching debtors who still suffer. We are also charged with ensuring that our day-to-day operations follow the D.A. Bylaws while taking care to be aware that our organization must comply with laws and regulations of state and federal governments. The Board of Trustees has fiduciary duties, including the duty of care, duty of obedience, and duty of loyalty.

The Bylaws of Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, Inc., adopted September 1984, state:

*The Trustees are subject to the laws of the State of New York and are expected to exercise the powers vested in them by law in a manner consonant with the faith that permeates and guides the Fellowship, inspired by the Twelve Steps, in accordance with the Traditions, and in keeping with the Certificate and the bylaws.*

Preamble

Debtors Anonymous General Service Board, Inc. (the “Corporation”) is formed to serve the Fellowship of Debtors Anonymous (the “Fellowship”). It is a corporation created and designated by the Fellowship to maintain services for compulsive debtors who seek, through Debtors Anonymous (“D.A.”), the means to arrest the disease of compulsive debting through the application to their own lives of the Twelve Steps, adapted from the program of Alcoholics Anonymous, which constitute the recovery program upon which the Fellowship is founded.

Concept Two of the Twelve Concepts for World Service states, in part, “*The D.A. groups have delegated complete administrative and operational authority to the General Service Board.*”

Each volunteer member of the D.A. Board of Trustees

appreciates the tremendous responsibility we have been entrusted with as “trusted servants.” In making the best decisions for the Fellowship in all matters of administration and operation of D.A., we act slowly and prudently and listen to the will of the groups while carrying out the business of the D.A. Fellowship.

Most D.A. trustees are employed in full or part-time jobs and spend from five to thirty-plus hours per week in volunteer service. We serve on two to five committees, some of which have subcommittees, and spend at least six or more hours per month on scheduled committee and board meetings. Each board member also serves as a board liaison to at least one committee and some may also serve as the liaison for a WSC caucus. There is almost always additional follow-up work as action items are generated at those meetings.

Trustees spend considerable effort doing service work for D.A., and most of it is a labor of love. GSB trustees have an opportunity to participate in the day-to-day activities that keep the organization functioning. Some of the greatest challenges and recovery occur in navigating our working relationships with others: people in the Fellowship, other members of the board, and in our interactions with members of the public.

We employ special workers, such as bookkeepers, accountants, attorneys, governance specialists, and other experts when professional assistance is needed to maintain the smooth day-to-day operations for the Fellowship.

As stated in The Tools of Business Debtors Anonymous, “We are willing to be in charge of and responsible for our business. Professionals who work for us, such as accountants, lawyers, and consultants, are not our Higher Power.” It is the responsibility of the GSB trustees to manage and oversee the work of special workers, and this can involve drafting contracts, setting schedules, delivering organized documents, reviewing deliverables, and assessing the ongoing working relationships.

Here are some examples of service work the GSB trustees have provided this year, both individually, but more often, as part of a team:

- Performed a physical inventory of our literature before the close of the fiscal year (June 30th of each year). Trustee members of the GSB Office Committee spent three days at the GSO in Needham in June and counted the literature: (we had 7,594 books, 51,950 pamphlets, 12,971 bookmarks, 9,567 cards, and 243 thumb drives included in our inventory at the end of this fiscal year!)

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## The D.A. General Service Board – A “Working Board” of Trustees

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- Assembled heavy-duty shelves for storage of additional literature in GSO. Assisted GSO staff with configuration of new office space. Organized the storage room for improved space utilization and workflow. Assessed need for new office equipment. Interviewed and hired general contractor to complete office upgrades. Met with building owner to discuss new space, lease, and insurance requirements.
- Collated all D.A. Conference-approved literature and formatted for electronic versions during COVID-19 pandemic. Investigated options for publication with multiple vendors and assessed pricing structure. Implemented process and made literature available electronically after establishing GSB group conscience on best options for the fellowship.
- With our GSB Literature Services ACMs, reviewed outlines of literature projects. Edited the Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA and reviewed the first draft of the proposed approach of D.A.’s Basic Text. Hired and wrote contracts for services for writers, copy editors, and proofreaders for D.A. literature projects.
- With the technology and communications ACMs, produced four issues each of the Ways & Means and the D.A. Focus, including layout and design, editing, and proofreading.
- Requested quotes, researched the costs, determined the logistics, and assessed the feasibility of providing simultaneous interpretation services in multiple languages at the WSC.
- With the ACM for International and Literature Translations and Licensing, worked with members outside the U.S. on literature translations and licensing projects in languages other than English. Assisted WSC International Committee to look for ways to provide literature for groups outside the U.S. who have difficulty getting D.A. literature.
- Interviewed candidates for GSB, ACM, and Project Contributor. Implemented streamlined online application process for GSB and ACM applicants. Developed credit card questionnaire for Class A trustee and ACM applicants. Encouraged members to consider opportunities at the world service level.
- Provided human resources training for our two part-time employees. Conducted employee performance reviews. GSB office liaisons conducted meetings with Office Manager (weekly) and literature fulfillment clerk (as needed).
- Six board members attended a seminar on “Inclusive Leadership” that had been recommended by a member of the UUOC. D.A. employees (were required to) and board members (voluntarily) completed 12-hour anti-racism training online (University of Colorado, Boulder). Several board members registered for additional anti-racism training courses.
- Evaluated whether the 2021 World Service Conference would be held in-person at the Newark Marriott as per our two-year contract, or whether the pandemic would preclude the in-person conference again in 2021. Kept abreast of the weekly New Jersey COVID-19 updates by email. Determined in February 2021 that the 2021 WSC would be held via videoconference. Negotiated the existing contract with the hotel to cancel the in-person event which resulted in no costs assessed to the fellowship.
- Maintained the Income and Spending Plan for FY 2020-2021 and prepared the 2021-2022 Income and Spending Plan for D.A. Worked with D.A.’s bookkeeper and accounting firm to prepare and review taxes and other legally-required yearly filings.
- Held multiple videoconference planning meetings with London, U.K. venue to plan 2022 WSC – the first WSC to be held outside of the U.S.!
- Consulted with other 12 Step fellowships about best practices during pandemic. Discussed possibility of co-hosting “Day of Sharing” for 12 Step fellowships (which is usually held in person at A.A. GSO in NYC) – by videoconference in 2021.
- Planned and assisted the WSC Conference Committee with the virtual 2021 WSC, including Orientation Sessions, Registration Packet, Mentor-Mentee program for delegates (new program, with WSC Conference Committee!), and compilation and distribution of Conference materials.
- Interviewed and hired videoconference specialists and event coordinator for WSC 2021.
- Developed spending plan for 2021 WSC.
- Responsible for all aspects of WSC registration process and facilitation of John H. Scholarship program. With the GSO, maintained records of payments, inquiries, refunds, and resolution of challenges.
- Upgraded and maintained D.A. website (with the assistance of our Project Contributor). Addressed and resolved “glitches” as they were identified.

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## The D.A. General Service Board – A “Working Board” of Trustees

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- Communicated with A.A. GSO and respectfully requested in writing that A.A. allow D.A. to adapt the Steps and Traditions to change male pronouns to gender neutral pronouns (awaiting response).
- Reviewed and updated Debtors Anonymous Manual for Service (DAMS) for changes before uploading the 2021 DAMS on the D.A. website. Replaced all gender-specific pronouns with gender-neutral pronouns.
- Consulted with governance specialist and African American parliamentarian for guidance and best practices to promote anti-racism.
- Investigated options for liability insurance required for the contract for the 2022 WSC in London (ongoing). This has presented a challenge because insurers have been hesitant to underwrite policies during the COVID-19 pandemic, given the emerging COVID-19 virus variants and the instability of the travel and hospitality industries.
- Reviewed insurance policies for the GSO in Needham: reviewed Business Insurance for contents and liability and

increased coverage based on addition of new adjoining office space. Reviewed D.A.’s workers’ compensation, directors and officers, and other insurance products.

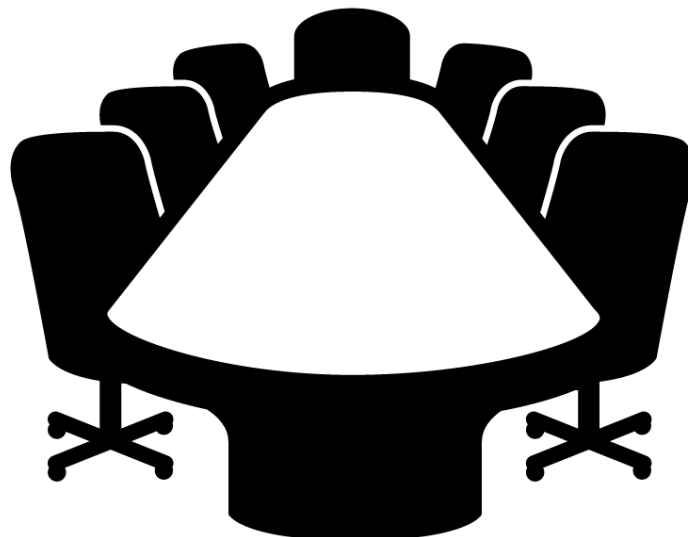
- Negotiated new leases and optional extensions for Needham office. Investigated options for possible relocation to Tier 1 cities based on interest from Intergroups.
- Investigated options for publication of Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA. Proceeded with publication for print-on-demand, available worldwide (in many locations), as well as ordering copies to be available to be sent to members from the GSO.
- Applied for new copyright for Step Study Guide for D.A. and BDA. Renewed Trademark and Copyrights for multiple D.A. assets.

- Planned and hosted four Ask the GSB fellowship-wide calls: (WSC 2020 Wrap Up, Solvency, Sponsorship, and Service, D.A. Literature and Literature Translations, and D.A.’s Finances).

In discussing D.A.’s *Step Twelve, the Twelve Steps, Twelve Traditions, and Twelve Concepts of Debtors Anonymous* (page 60) states, “At some point we realize that we can take our recovery to a new by volunteering to serve in Intergroup or at the World Service level. Local and international service bodies offer many opportunities to carry the message and share our experiences and gifts, and most members who do so report that they get much more out of it than they give. We welcome the opportunity to see beyond ourselves and our individual needs and to become part of keeping D.A. available, vital, and growing.”

We are humbled and honored to serve the fellowship of Debtors Anonymous.

— Sharon S.,  
GSB



# Meetings without Rules?

## Why business meetings with familiar procedures work well.

Arcane parliamentary terminology is easy to poke fun at. The old-fashioned and sometimes stilted wording used in the formulaic phrases can be alienating for the uninitiated. Someone attending a large, formally run association business meeting for the first time without any background may come away thinking that the procedures used to run meetings are complex, difficult to understand, and an unnecessary encumbrance to getting business done efficiently.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that there is no substitute for well-considered meeting ground rules. Such rules produce important products: group decisions that are backed by those affected because the process was transparent and fair.

Unfamiliarity with meeting rules can cause problems. In some organizations, the lack of established meeting procedures—or the failure to understand and abide by them—has allowed meetings to collapse into acrimony and discord, leading to continuing feuds among the members.

This is a problem that is due, in part, to modern times. Americans attend far fewer meetings on average today than they did fifty or a hundred years ago, when involvement in organized volunteer associations was at its height. Typical first-time meeting attendees have had fewer opportunities to learn those rules as they go along by regularly attending meetings of a variety of organizations. As a result, many people do not know what is going on when another member says, “Point of Order.”

The solution is education. Knowledge really is power.

A typical association, like any organized deliberative decision making body, needs some rules to process business efficiently while

acknowledging minority viewpoints and individual members. The larger the group, the more important it is to have a set of fair and well established ground rules for requesting the body to take action, recognizing who speaks when, and making decisions. In a very small group, fewer than half a dozen or so, group decisions can typically be taken by informal discussion and consensus decision making. As the group becomes larger and more diverse in its ideas and inputs, it is more important to have neutral rules that ensure that all are respected and that members have a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate. Similarly, the more contentious the issues under consideration become, the more formal the decision making process needs to become.

Even very large groups are typically able to take a number of actions by general consent without debate when they are uncontroversial. And even very small groups may need to use formal structure when there are major differences in opinion. Many people do not know that Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised (12th ed. 2020) (“RONR”), the most commonly used parliamentary authority (or meeting guide) in the United States and Canada, has a special informal meeting procedure for use in bodies with 12 members or fewer. RONR 49:21, pp. 464–65.

Without previously adopted rules, organizations can spend unnecessary time deciding on the procedures to use instead of concentrating their time on substantive discussions about the topic at issue. When procedures are adopted on the fly, the prevailing side can be accused of adopting procedures favoring their substantive position. When the procedures are adopted well in advance, and readily available to

all participants, it is much easier to accept the substantive decision as fairly made.

Meeting procedures used in most organizations are based on common parliamentary law, a somewhat amorphous body of general knowledge that originated, like much of the common law of the United States and Canada, in England. Colonial legislatures, municipal governments, and voluntary associations modeled their conduct on the usages of the English Parliament because of its prestige as a deliberative body and its reputation for due process and fairness. That is why meeting procedure is typically called parliamentary procedure in the United States.

In other countries with a parliament as the legislative body, organizational meeting procedures are called meeting procedures, a far less daunting term. In those countries, parliamentary procedure is likely to refer to the procedures of the national (or provincial) legislature. In the United States, an expert in parliamentary procedure is called a parliamentarian. In other countries, that term is used for legislators, and meeting procedure experts are typically called meeting consultants.

The procedures evolved in the United States, with the state legislatures and Congress serving as new models. As the country was settled, this created chaos in the Western states, with settlers from different Eastern states battling over which of the rules they were familiar with were “correct.” Several authors attempted to tame these disputes by organizing and describing the meeting rules that most people agreed on.

In 1876, military engineer Henry Robert, who had been posted all around the United States during

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# Meetings without Rules?

## Why business meetings with familiar procedures work well.

continued from the previous page

his career and observed the procedural wrangling, published the initial edition of Robert's Rules of Order. It became an overnight sensation because it was the first book to prescribe default rules for those controversial procedural issues about which there was no consensus. Typically, if there were a variety of approaches to a procedure among various legislatures, Robert would choose the rule applied by the United States House of Representatives. Robert's premise was that it is sometimes more important to have a clear and practical rule than to await the evolution of the best possible rule.

Robert's organizational skills as an engineer and the brevity of the original "pocket manual" made it easy to find the relevant rule in the middle of a contentious meeting. And, if an organization wanted to change Robert's default rule, it could do so simply by adopting its own special rule.

In the 19th and early 20th Centuries, when volunteer activity was a primary source of both entertainment and charity, Robert's book took off. Robert's Rules became a byword for fair meeting procedure in the United States. Over time, however, subsequent editions of Robert's expanded to include more and more responses to questions. The current twelfth edition, published under the auspices of Robert's heirs, runs to 633 pages of text, not including the introduction, index, and tables. While that may seem daunting, the authors have published a companion book, Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised in Brief (3d ed. 2020), containing the most common rules for typical meetings. In Brief is only 179 pages long, much more manageable. But it uses all the same nineteenth century

terminology as the original book.

There are alternative meeting procedure guides in Canada based on the customs of the Canadian Parliament. But the strong US cultural influence in Canada and the large number of pan-North American voluntary membership associations have enshrined Robert's Rules as the leading meeting guide in Canada as well.

Jim Slaughter's Complete Idiot's Guide to Parliamentary Procedure Fast-Track (2012) is based on Robert's Rules but explains the concepts in more modern and approachable language. Two other alternative parliamentary authorities, American Institute of Parliamentarians Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (2012) and Ray E. Keesey, Modern Parliamentary Procedure (2d ed. 2018), provide modern language and more streamlined meeting procedure than Robert's. These guides differ about more than just terminology, so it is important to consider the pros and cons thoroughly before adopting one of them in place of Robert's. These are the most commonly seen alternatives, but there are many others, none with the prestige and wide use of Robert's.

The more modern alternatives have two primary drawbacks: (1) By simplifying the rules, they tend to vest more power in the chair and the majority of the members and less in individual members and minority positions. (2) Because Robert's is the most widely used parliamentary authority by far, those who have some exposure to meeting procedures are likely to have absorbed much of Robert's by osmosis attending meetings, whereas the positions of the alternative authorities (where they differ from Robert's) have to be

studied, something many members do not have time for.

Robert's built-in respect for minority positions is one of the reasons that Robert's is widely used as a meeting guide in the Twelve Step recovery movement. The Twelve Concepts, modified in each fellowship from the principles laid out in the Alcoholics Anonymous Twelve Concepts, are a governance guide that incorporates the unique ideas of substantial unanimity and the minority opinion into the more familiar meeting procedures laid out in Robert's Rules.

Lack of familiarity with parliamentary procedures is particularly uncomfortable for association officers and members when others use some of the more archaic terms and procedures for advantage. The solution is not the most common response—trying to run a meeting while ignoring parliamentary procedure. Inevitably, a meeting without rules and with more than about a dozen members descends into dictatorship or anarchy.

A meeting without an established meeting guide as a reference would run according to the common parliamentary law, which has the disadvantage of relying on case law to determine procedure when there is a disagreement, and case law is not readily available in the middle of a meeting. Common parliamentary law has the further disadvantage that, like the rule books before Robert's that were based on it, there are a number of circumstances where there is no settled answer. A good presiding officer and parliamentarian working with an established meeting guide, on the other hand, will ensure that the meeting is not subverted by anarchy or dictatorship, because the purpose of the rules is to serve

continued on page 9

# My Journey to the D.A. GSB

The road to becoming a Trustee of the Debtors Anonymous General Service Board in July of this year has been a long and winding one. (FYI, I am a Beatle fanatic!) Attending my first (official) D.A. meeting at the LGBTQ Center in Hollywood, CA one fateful day over 13 years ago, I could never have imagined the life I have today.

Growing up in a town of 5,000 in landlocked Northern Saskatchewan, Canada, I had grandiose dreams of moving to a big city, especially one near an ocean. In the middle of the 9th grade my family moved to Kelowna, British Columbia. Much nearer to the ocean (180 miles) and much bigger—20,000 people! Wow!

As a child and much of my adult life, I escaped my bare-bones reality by day-dreaming and magical thinking. I was going to meet the Beatles! (Okay I did see Paul and Ringo live in concert a couple times) I was going to write a hit song that would make millions of dollars! And of course, I was going to win the lottery—for sure!

None of these fantasies ever happened. I did end up moving to San Francisco, where I lived a fabulous hippie life in the early 70's. Then to Los Angeles with my band in 1977 to make it big in the music industry. As fate would have it, I ended up joining a Hindu monastery in Hollywood at the age of 24. The ultimate undereaning job! When it came time to take my first vows—6 years later—I decided I could not live there the rest of my life. After the monastery, I formed another band (my third) and did it all over again. Still no hit record!

Fast forward several careers in many fields—insurance, mortgage, pension plan administration, film/television post-production, video/computer games, graphic design—at the ripe old age of 54, I looked around at my life. I had filed bankruptcy—not just once, but twice. I had no savings. I lived on

the financial edge all my working life. Always had a job but could never earn enough. I had a chronic disease but had no awareness of its existence. A performer friend of mine was in D.A., and she saw me clearly for the underearner/debtor that I was. I was open for suggestions of how to turn my life around so I went to a meeting. But it did not click at that time. It's all about timing!

I did end up going back to that same meeting a year or so later, and this time it was much bigger. And I recognized someone from the entertainment business. That made a big impression on me. Someone who I had worshipped from afar was in Debtors Anonymous! It must be the real deal.

At a meeting at the LGBTQ Center in February 2007, the deal was sealed. I got a sponsor. Started the steps. Did service. Got PRG's. And my life started to turn around. In 2011, I had a PRG which resulted in a “once in a blue moon” job offer—a year and half later! I still have that very abundant job that would have never happened without D.A., and I am on track to retire in two years, completely debt free.

D.A. was my first experience with a 12-step program, and it is still my only program. I will be here for the rest of my life.

Eventually, my home meeting became the Silverlake Sunday 7pm DA+ Meeting (now 6:30pm). After doing all the meeting service positions, including Intergroup Rep, I became the GSR for that meeting in 2011.

I really did not know what to expect at my first World Service Conference in Detroit (Romulus MI). As I had been using computer apps for post-production and music, I joined the Technology Committee. Good decision. These were my peeps. We elected the GSR from the largest meeting in the world

to be our Chair: Ron T. from the Miracle Mile meeting in L.A. What a wonderful experience to work with such an amazing group of people—so dedicated and supportive—including current GSB Trustee Matthew E.

One of the highlights of my three-year term as a GSR was heading a Subcommittee to create a proposal for a D.A. phone app. Who knew we were so far ahead of our time? And I still have that vision of a D.A. phone app. It's going to happen sooner or later. And I don't believe it is magical thinking!

My next chapter of my D.A. service began when Tom B. (a friend from my Silverlake home group and current GSB Trustee) forwarded me an email from the D.A. GSB seeking bids from Intergroups to host the 2019 and 2020 World Service Conferences. I immediately replied, “I think we should try to host them in LA. How would we even start the process?” And so began a two-year journey into the great unknown.

It took us (the SoCalDA Intergroup) about a month to prepare our bid for the GSB. During that time, we formed a solid core group that eventually morphed into the L.A. WSC Host Committee. We created a bid package which included a PowerPoint presentation. At the 2017 WSC in Dallas, the GSRs on our Host Committee formally pitched the Conference Selection Committee to host the 2019 WSC. On August 28, 2017, we were overjoyed to hear that Los Angeles had been officially selected.

A few months earlier, I had casually volunteered to chair the Host Committee and now it was really happening! I would never have volunteered if I had not already had the experience of ten years of service at various levels in D.A., from the meeting level to Intergroup to GSR. I knew absolutely that SoCalDA had the numbers, the experience, strength, and hope to

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## My Journey to the D.A. GSB

continued from the previous page

pull this off. Everywhere I looked in D.A. in Los Angeles, I saw Higher Power made manifest.

I went to the WSC in Minneapolis the following year to shadow the fantastic Carla J., the 2018 Host Committee Chair, and learn the behind-the-scenes operations of the conference in action. Whew! It was overwhelming. What did I get myself into?

From the start of our 2019 Host Committee work, there were many milestones: finding a venue for the conference; creating a logo; establishing where and when to have our monthly meetings; filling all Subcommittee Chair positions; planning Fellowship Day; on site at the LAX Hilton with Conference Registration, Hospitality Room, AV/Logistics, Tech Room, and the Convocation Team; and finally

a multilingual Fellowship Day attended by over 300 people, Keynote Speaker Lunch, and the Sanity Fair Gala. Throughout this journey, I witnessed a cohesive team of volunteers working together for the greater good. It takes a village!

The 2019 WSC was a complete success in every way, including financially. We were happy to distribute our remaining funds to our local intergroup, the John H. Scholarship Fund and the 2020 Host Committee. Needless to say, after that two-year commitment I was exhausted. My sponsor directed me to take a year off from any volunteer service and I did.

Immediately after my one year sabbatical ended, Tom B. asked me to consider joining the D.A. GSB. I thought long and hard about

it. I looked back at my service experience in D.A. and how it had transformed me in profound and subtle ways. Yes it was a major time commitment. Yes it was work. Yes it was frustrating and maddening at times. But service is what has helped me to recover the most. As the 11th Tool of D.A. states: "Service is vital to our recovery. Only through service can we give to others what so generously has been given to us."

Now on my 68th orbit of the Sun, I am grateful to be able to give back to D.A. what it has so generously given to me. I look forward to many more years of service and not debiting one day at a time.

— Rob B.

## FROM OUR PARLIAMENTARIAN

## Meetings without Rules? (continued)

continued from page 7

the will of the assembly, not to obstruct it.

There is a better solution: make it easier for association members to learn the procedures used by that organization. Meeting procedure is a basic element of civic education that empowers association members to participate actively. In the Twelve Step recovery movement, service in a governance role with the fellowship is governed by the Twelve Concepts. The Twelve Concepts rely on a knowledge of basic parliamentary principles as modified for the spiritual purposes underlying group service. At the world service level, that means that general service representatives (GSRs) and intergroup service representatives (ISRs) should familiarize themselves before a world service conference with the Twelve Concepts, the Conference Charter, and the Service Manual in order to serve effectively. Although the Conference Charters of the Twelve Step fellowships do not explicitly adopt a parliamentary authority, Robert's Rules of Order, as the most widely used and

most familiar parliamentary authority in North America, is typically used as a procedural guide to meetings in most fellowships at the world service level.

Just as association members need to know their governing rules (the D.A. Twelve Concepts, the D.A. Conference Charter, and the Debtors Anonymous Manual for Service in Debtors Anonymous) to understand their roles and responsibilities, they need to know the basics of parliamentary procedure to participate actively. It is true that the majority often gets its way. But wise association members will remember that a determined minority or a stubborn individual—armed with the knowledge of parliamentary procedure and backed by the governing rules—can often ultimately prevail.

— Michael E. Malamut,  
JD, PRP, CPP-T, CGC

# The Twelve Traditions: “For others more qualified”?

*Originally published April 2013*

A moving transformation occurred recently in a meeting, an evolution that is surely happening throughout our Fellowship. It was the fourth Wednesday of the month, a group's Tradition meeting. The format calls for a speaker, but that evening there wasn't one. Disconcerted at first, faces manifesting that strange mix of guilt and alarm that even the mention of the Traditions seems to inspire, the members nevertheless voted to read the long form of the Tradition from A.A.'s Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions and share on it. The Tradition—an episode of A.A.'s history—was passed around, each person taking a paragraph. Then came the sharing. One after another, members brought in specific examples from D.A.'s past and present. The expressions changed, became thoughtful, illuminated, confident.

D.A. worldwide is vigorous and maturing, growing in compassion for the debtor who still suffers and awareness of the debtor who doesn't know about D.A. Many groups have Traditions meetings in their line-ups. But many, many more do not, as if the Traditions were somehow optional, or arcanelly technical—as if the Twelve

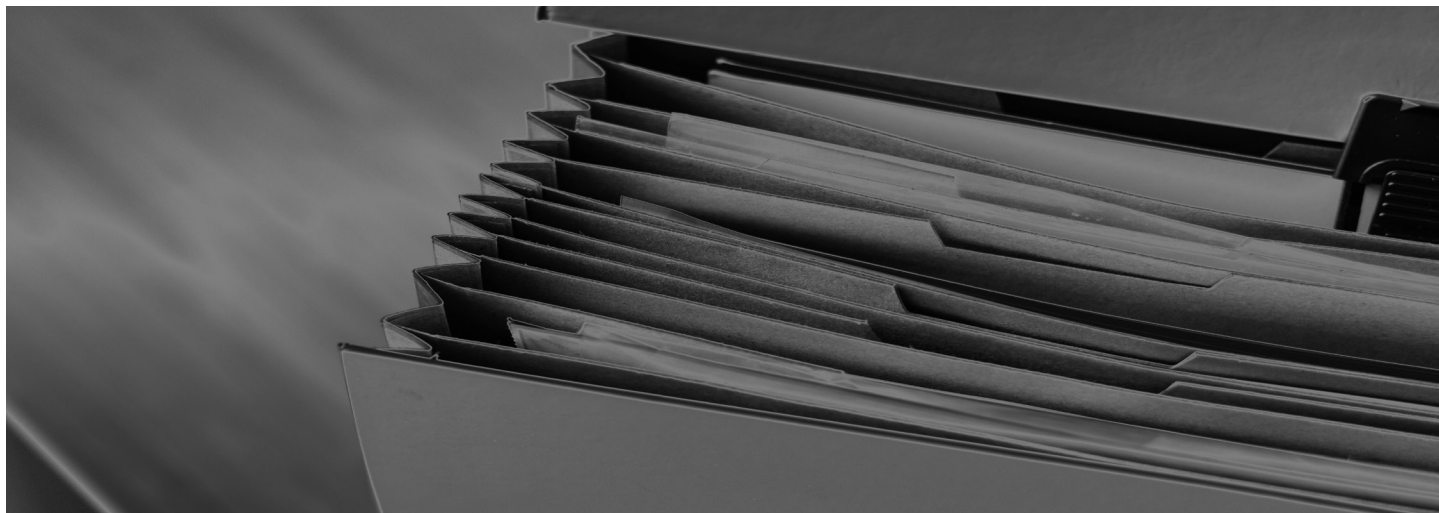
Traditions weren't in fact being practiced daily, by hundreds of groups and thousands of D.A.s.

The Issues & Concerns available on the “Service” page at [www.debtorsanonymous.org](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org) reveal a Fellowship hungry and ready for the Twelve Traditions. Over and over, in these notes from the front, members request or demand that the General Service Board adjudicate the behavior of individuals and groups, that the Board make decrees about non-conference approved literature, declare this to be a debt or that not to be a debt. These questions arise passionately from the hearts and minds of people who know this is a matter of life and death for individuals and for groups. And over and over the reply from the Board is some variation on “Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.”

Government in the sense of Tradition Two, weakens our Fellowship, individuals and groups alike, whereas when we seek unity through the exercise of our group conscience we become stronger. Our widest group conscience takes place at Convocation at the yearly World Service Conference. (Our literature and service material,

products of this group conscience, provide answers to many questions about the nature of debting.) Increasingly, GSRs and ISRs remain on their committees and caucuses throughout the Conference year, performing extraordinary service and in the process constantly seeking the group conscience and turning to the Traditions for guidance. And increasingly D.A. groups are focused on our common solution—not incurring new, unsecured debt, a day at a time. Are these coincidences?

We often hear that the Twelve Steps are about the individual, while the Twelve Traditions are about the group. But a group is just a collection of individuals, and so every Tradition invites personal action. What greater gift can there be than the opportunity to continue the adventure of the Twelve Steps, improving our ability to work together, caring for others as well as ourselves? Preserving the groups that save us? The reality of our condition is that we can't afford to stop recovering. We can't even coast very long. Our lives and happiness depend on our reaching out and carrying the message. What comes after Step Twelve? Maybe Tradition One?



## ANNOUNCEMENT CORNER

Here are possible announcements for members—especially General and Intergroup Service Representatives (GSRs & ISRs)—to make during D.A. meetings:

1. Registration is open for the 2021 virtual D.A. World Service Conference! Dates are August 6-8 & 14-15. Early WSC Registration Discount deadline was July 4, 2021. Final Registration deadline (with additional fee) is July 25, 2021. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/wsc](http://debtorsanonymous.org/wsc)
2. Now Available: The Debtors Anonymous Twelve Steps Study Guide is for sale through the General Service Office and in many countries as a print-on-demand book online!
3. Fellowship-wide calls with live speaker shares use the U.S. call-in phone number: 1-605-472-5540, access code: 617093#. International phone numbers (and online access) are available at [debtorsanonymous.org/call-in-access](http://debtorsanonymous.org/call-in-access). The Online Meeting ID is darecovery1. Let members know to mark their calendars for these upcoming events:
  - Saturday, July 24, from 11 – 12:30 p.m. Eastern Time, “Pre-Conference Orientation Call: Overview of the World Service Conference,” presented by the GSB Conference Support Committee
  - Sunday, July 25, from 1 – 2 p.m. Eastern Time, “Ask-the-GSB: D.A. Finances,” presented by the GSB Long Range Planning Committee (LRPC)
4. The 2022 World Service Conference will be in London. The London Host Committee encourages groups to start saving money for their GSR/ISR to attend
5. Seeking member recovery stories for the D.A. Basic Text. We also request that anyone who submitted their story before January 1, 2021 to please resubmit their story to [basictextstories@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:basictextstories@debtorsanonymous.org) [Flyer]
6. Seeking member stories for the “D.A. Voices from the Black Community” pamphlet For more information, email [wsc.litcom@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:wsc.litcom@debtorsanonymous.org)
7. Consider serving at the World Level of D.A. as a General Service Board Trustee or recommend a member for service to one of the four (4) GSB positions currently open, as well as multiple Appointed Committee Member and Project Contributor positions. Visit [www.debtorsanonymous.org/service](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org/service)
8. The 2020 World Service Conference report with Convocation minutes is now available <https://debtorsanonymous.org/download/2020-wsc-report/?wpdmdl=124870>
9. The D.A. General Service Board of Trustees has released the following announcement regarding COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and the temporary reduced hours of onsite General Service Office operations: [https://mk0debtorsanonyxjebc.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/DA\\_COVID-19\\_Announcement\\_19May2021.pdf](https://mk0debtorsanonyxjebc.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/DA_COVID-19_Announcement_19May2021.pdf)
10. Make temporary updates to your meeting listing on the world D.A. website. Temporary updates—teleconference or video conference numbers, meeting closures, meeting contact info—will appear in red on your meeting listing and will revert back to the original listing upon request after your meeting starts up in person: [www.debtorsanonymous.org/temp-meeting-update](http://www.debtorsanonymous.org/temp-meeting-update)
11. Please share at your meeting: all D.A. pamphlets are now available on Kindle! Buy them separately for .99 cents or bundled together. Visit [debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks](http://debtorsanonymous.org/ebooks)

Have you signed up for **eNews**? Has your group?

Get connected to D.A. worldwide.

Receive newsletters, announcements, event info, and more.

To subscribe, visit:  
[debtorsanonymous.org/enews](http://debtorsanonymous.org/enews)

Share your personal story in **Ways & Means**, our meeting in print!

Have you been of service to a meeting by giving a **lead share**?

**Write it down**, send it in!

You can also email us your original photo, drawing, or poem that represents your recovery and/or vision in Debtors Anonymous.

Email your story/artwork to:  
[communications@debtorsanonymous.org](mailto:communications@debtorsanonymous.org)

