

HOW DO THE WARRANTIES EFFECT GENERAL SERVICE?

The General Warranties of the Conference Charter stand in a class by themselves. The Warranties are a series of solemn undertakings which guarantee that the Conference itself will conform to A.A.'s Twelve Traditions. They indicate the qualities of prudence and spirituality which the conference should always possess. These are the permanent bonds that hold the Conference fast to the movement it serves and the members of our fellowship. They express spiritual principles which apply to all other AA entities as well.

I will start with the Conference Charter. Taken as a whole, our Conference Charter is the substance of an informal agreement, which was made between the A.A. groups and their Trustees in 1955. It is the agreed basis upon which the General Service conference operates and through which A.A. services function as a whole. It details the structure of the General Service Conference and the principles through which it operates are outlined in Twelve Articles. However, the Charter is an elastic document and its first eleven articles can be readily amended by the Conference itself at any time. That is not the case with Article Twelve of our Charter, the General Warranties. (This concept is pretty much set in stone, and I also saw it referred to as the "A.A. Bill of Rights")

Next, we have the Resolution and our Bylaws. In our Service Manual you will also see the Warranties referenced in both sections. Also written in 1955, the Resolution references the acceptance of the Charter and is now included in our Current Conference Charter. The Bylaws reference the Twelve Steps, the Twelve Traditions, which ensures the well-being of our groups and A.A. as a whole. Our Bylaws define the scope and direction of A.A. and how we regulate ourselves. They were amended in 1957 when the name of our foundation, Alcoholic Foundation, was changed to the General Service Board of A.A. They were amended to include the Twelve Concepts, once written, and have been amended several times since.

In 1962, Bill W. wrote the "Twelve Concepts for World Service". They are meant to simplify what is contained in our Conference Charter regarding the structure of the General Service Conference and to eliminate confusion over our different entities. They reveal the evolution of it's present form and the experience and reasoning for which our operation stands today. They explain the why's of our service structure, drawing experiences and lessons from the past, explaining relationships of our structure, and, above all, it's spiritual principles. It is a summary in fairly easy to read language.

The Twelfth Concept is drawn from Article Twelve of the Conference Charter. It consists of the General Warranties, and is devoted entirely to their six principles. It is very important to note that like the Twelve Steps and the Twelve Traditions, the Twelfth Concept is very difficult to make any changes to. To make any change whatsoever, to any of the these requires the written consent of three quarters of EVERY known AA group in our fellowship. The Groups are required to receive six months prior notice in order to allow time for careful deliberation. So, actually, it is not set in stone, but to overturn or make changes to the Twelfth Concept, the Twelve Steps, or the Twelve Traditions is extremely difficult.

It is said that the General Warranties are as important to World Service, as the Twelve Traditions are to A.A. as a whole. If you read through the six principles set forth in it, the answer does become clear. They represent the wisdom and experience which guides our program, and those of us who serve. They

are protection from needless errors, and protection against our very natural temptations to wealth, power, prestige, and the like. They guide us along that spiritual path to ensure that the choices and decisions that we have been granted the responsibility for voicing, are done with these six principles guiding us. All of them are counsels in prudence- creating the only climate in which harmony, effectiveness and consistent spiritual progress can be achieved. Article 12, of the Charter opens with this statement : “ In all its proceedings the General Service Conference shall observe the spirit of the A.A. Tradition.” It also states the Traditions set the pattern of which our General Service Conference is expected to exemplify at the highest possible degree. Article Twelve, the Twelfth Concept, and the General Warranties are all one and the same and they resonate throughout the General Service Conference to ensure that we are ALL responsible as guardians of the Twelve Traditions.

The SIX WARRANTIES IN CONCEPT TWELVE

Short Form: The Conference shall observe the spirit of A.A. tradition, taking care that it never becomes the seat of perilous wealth or power; that sufficient operating funds and reserve be its prudent financial principle; that it place none of its members in a position of unqualified authority over others; that it reach all important decisions by discussion, vote, and, whenever possible, by substantial unanimity; that its actions never be personally punitive nor an incitement to public controversy; that it never perform acts of government, and that, like the Society it serves, it will always remain democratic in thought and action.

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