

WORLD SERVICE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

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Dear Friends,

Our fellowship has for the last year formally begun addressing certain issues related to the language of our Steps and Traditions. The World Service Conference believes that certain key questions should be discussed by us all, prior to any decision being taken. Enclosed you will find the work developed by an ad hoc group, containing a statement on this whole issue and some guidelines which you may follow to assist you in your discussions. Unfortunately, due to time pressure and mainly budget constraints, these documents are only being issued in English. Please do not see this as a sign of disrespect for the members of your fellowship. We at World Services are quite aware of this insufficiency and will attempt to remedy this in the future. If you have any questions or input please write to *Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group*, c/o the WSO.

In loving service...

Chers Amis,

Notre fraternité a commencé, depuis l'année dernière, à discuter formellement quelques problèmes concernant le langage de nos Etapes et Traditions. La Conférence mondiale de service pense que quelques questions-clés devraient être débattues par nous tous, avant qu'une décision ne soit prise. Vous trouverez ci-joint le travail développé par un groupe ad hoc, qui contient un compte rendu de l'ensemble de ce problème et quelques lignes d'orientation que vous pouvez suivre pour vous aider dans vos discussions. Malheureusement, à cause de problèmes de temps et surtout en raison de contraintes budgétaires, ces documents sont uniquement sortis en anglais. S'il vous plaît, ne prenez pas cela comme une manque d'irrespect envers les membres de votre fraternité. Nous, aux Services Mondiaux, sommes bien conscients de cette insuffisance et essayerons de remédier à cela dans l'avenir. Si vous avez des questions ou des suggestions, nous vous demandons d'écrire à "Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group", c/o WSO.

En service aimant,

Caros Amigos,

A nossa irmandade tem ao longo do último ano começado a discutir formalmente alguns problemas relacionados com os nossos Passos e Tradições. A Conferência Mundial de Serviço acredita que há algumas questões-chave que deverão ser debatidas por todos nós, antes de ser tomada qualquer decisão. Junto se envia o trabalho desenvolvido por um grupo ad hoc, que contém o historial de todo este problema, opiniões expressas por membros e algumas linhas orientadoras que poderão ajudar-vos nas vossas discussões. Infelizmente, devido a problemas de tempo e sobretudo a impedimentos de orçamento, estes documentos estão a ser circulados apenas em inglês. Pedimos que não vejam isso como um sinal de desrespeito pelos membros da vossa irmandade. Nós nos Serviços Mundiais estamos cientes desta falta e tentaremos remediá-la no futuro. Se tiverem quaisquer perguntas ou sugestões, escrevam, por favor, para "Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group", a/c WSO.

Em serviço e com amor,



Liebe Freunde,

Seit dem vergangenen Jahr hat unsere Gemeinschaft formell angefangen, bestimmte Problembereiche, die den Wortlaut unserer Schritte und Traditionen betreffen, anzusprechen. Die World Service Conference ist der Ansicht, daß bestimmte Schlüsselfragen von uns allen besprochen werden sollten, bevor irgendwelche Entscheidungen getroffen werden. Beiliegend findet Ihr die Arbeitsmaterialien, die von einer Ad-Hoc-Gruppe entwickelt wurden und die eine Stellungnahme zu der gesamten Problematik und einige Leitlinien enthalten, die Euch bei Euren Diskussionen hilfreich sein können. Unglücklicherweise können diese Unterlagen aus Zeitmangel und insbesondere aus Geldmangel nur in englischer Sprache herausgegeben werden. Bitte betrachtet dies nicht als ein Zeichen von mangelndem Respekt für die Mitglieder unserer Gemeinschaft. Wir sind uns hier in den World Services völlig dieses Mangels bewußt und werden unser bestes versuchen, ihn in der Zukunft zu beheben. Wenn Ihr irgendwelche Fragen oder Eingaben habt, schreibt bitte an die "Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group", c/o World Service Office.

In liebendem Dienst,

Estimado compañeros,

Por el ultimo año nuestra confraternidad has estado trabajando formalmente con las temas en relación del lenguaje de los Pasos y Tradiciones. La Conferencia de Servicio Mundial cree que ciertas preguntas deben estar debatido por todos, antes de tomar una decisión. Adjuntados vas encontrar trabajo desarrollado por un grupo de Ad Hoc, que contiene informe sobre el asunto y algunas guías que les puede ayudar en sus discusiones. Infortunado, por falta de tiempo y constreñimiento de dinero, estos documentos están escrito solamente en Ingles. Les pedimos que no vean esto como falta de respeto para los miembros de nuestra confraternidad. Nosotros en la Oficina de Servicio Mundial estamos muy consiente de está necesidad y vamos a intentar a cambiar esto en el futuro. Si tienen cualquier preguntas o sugerencias sobre la Motion 88, por favor de escribir a "Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group, c/o WSO."

En servicio con amor

WSC '94 MOTION #88

This paper is divided into three sections: a brief history of the issue, an issues statement, and fellowship forum guidelines. If at any time during the fellowship forum process you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to call us. You may reach us through the Fellowship Services Team at the World Service Office.

History

Discussions have been held within our fellowship for many years regarding gender specificity, the use of the words "God" vs "Higher Power", and the universality of our NA language. Key events have included:

- ♦ The 1987 WSC. This was the first time the issue of gender specificity was discussed at the conference.
- ♦ The 1991 WSC. The Upper Midwest Region brought a motion to the WSC regarding both gender specificity and the use of the word "God" in our literature. The motion read: "That all subsequent literature that is to be revised and produced to have non-gender specific language and that all references to God be changed to "Higher Power" or "Power greater than ourselves." This motion was committed to the WSB. In its position paper published in February of 1992 (Trustee Bulletin #19), the Board concluded: "As a result of our discussions, it is the opinion of the World Service Board of Trustees that no formal action should be taken on this motion at this time. We do, however, believe that these topics should be widely discussed throughout the fellowship."
- ♦ The WSCLC: 1989-Present. Based on discussions within the World Service Conference Literature Committee and input from the fellowship, this committee adopted a posture of eliminating gender-specific language and attending to and balancing the use of "God" and "Higher Power" in new literature development as well as in revisions to conference-approved literature. The style guide adopted by the Literature Committee reflects its intent to avoid gender-specific language.
- ♦ The 1993 WSC. At this conference, a motion was introduced by the Australia Region with specific recommendations designed to make references to God in Steps Three, Seven, and Eleven and in Tradition Two non-gender specific. At the conference, a working group was assigned to consider the motion. They stated, "Everyone was in agreement that the issues expressed in Motion 39 are bigger than the language used in Motion #39 and that there is a need for these issues to be discussed in depth for a period of time" and offered a recommendation. In their recommendation they proposed that the fellowship consider the following two questions, "1) Does the language of the Steps and Traditions truly reflect the principles of the program? 2) If not, what language does the fellowship feel would better reflect those principles? Furthermore, we recommend that these questions be a basis for discussion within the fellowship." Following recommendations from both the WSC Literature

Committee and the WSB that the issues need to be discussed widely within the fellowship, the Conference adopted the working groups' recommendation as a substitute to Motion 39, sending this to the fellowship for "...a two year process of review to be included in the 1995 Conference Agenda Report...."

At this same conference, both the WSB and the WSCLC recommended that the motion be discussed among the fellowship.

- ♦ The 1994 WSC. At this conference, a proposal (Motion #88) was adopted. This directed a working group to develop an issues statement to facilitate the necessary discussions throughout the fellowship. This group was charged to:

...develop and finalize an issue statement regarding Motion #39. This statement will include, but not be limited to, an explanation of the issue and the pros and cons regarding it based on existing fellowship input. In addition, guidelines for local forums will be developed to assist regions, areas, and groups in generating discussion of the issues.

Issue Statement

Recovery, as experienced in Narcotics Anonymous, is a spiritual process. Our program encourages us to explore and develop our own individual paths. The issue has been raised by some members that the use of wording such as "Him" and/or "God" may present a barrier to members or the still suffering addict from experiencing this spiritual process. When presented to the World Service Conference, it was agreed that widespread fellowship discussion of this issue is required.

The following statements and points have been made by members of the fellowship. We hope that these viewpoints, as well as the questions posed by the WSC '93 working group, will serve as a basis for discussions. There has been no attempt to categorize the following excerpts from fellowship input; rather, they are presented here to spark in-depth conversations.

- ◆ *"...If the language in the steps and traditions truly reflected the principles of our program, no one would be offended..."*
- ◆ *"...I do not at this time feel our principles imply or indicate any bias or prejudice. Our lack of knowledge of them makes it appear so to us..."*
- ◆ *"...The words in our steps are masculine..."*
- ◆ *"...It doesn't leave unlimited spiritual freedom but (rather) guided direction..."*
- ◆ *"...I always wanted my earthly Father to love me but He couldn't. I now have a spiritual Father who loves me no matter what..."*
- ◆ *"...Our perception of the truth sometimes changes, but our steps are unchanging values, that in the interest of unity remain the same..."*
- ◆ *"...The changes in language would in no way change these principles. All these changes would do is truly allow all of us the freedom to find a God of our understanding..."*
- ◆ *"...Changing the program is not the answer. The 12 Steps and 12 Traditions have given me courage to change myself..."*
- ◆ *"...If changing the language in our steps and traditions can benefit one person by facilitating their experience in finding and thereby developing a relationship with a God of his/her understanding, then I too benefit..."*
- ◆ *God translates only in the masculine gender in many languages (e.g., German, Portuguese, French, Spanish). In Japanese, God has no gender. Changes in the English language would not be able to occur in some other languages or would have no impact on others.*
- ◆ *Many believe the steps were written from a Christian perspective for a reason.*
- ◆ *The word "God" does not always translate into an equivalent word in all religious beliefs (e.g. God does not translate to Buddha).*
- ◆ *In Taoism "God of your own understanding" is not a viable concept.*
- ◆ *The use of "as we understand Him" was an attempt to tone down religious connotations.*
- ◆ *The program has worked for many people for many years.*
- ◆ *Some people don't stay long enough to learn it's a spiritual program because of the perceived religiosity of the steps.*
- ◆ *We suggest in our literature that in one's search for a "God of your own understanding" that it be loving and caring.*

- ◆ *The pursuit of a spiritual path is not the same thing as the practice of a religion.*

The statements offered on the previous page are samples of prevalent lines of thinking submitted by members of the fellowship as input regarding the language of the Steps and Traditions. The following list of questions was prepared by this year's working group to help you in your discussion of the question, *"Does the language of our Steps and Traditions truly reflect the principles of the program?"*

1. How might the term "God" be universally accepted to mean any Higher Power of anyone's choice? How might the use of the term "God" limit a person's identification?
2. How does or doesn't the use of the pronoun "Him" or the term "God" imply endorsement of religion or of a particular religion?
3. How does the wording in the Steps affect one's understanding of a Higher Power/God?
4. Does our principle, "Regardless of...", relate to this issue, and if so, how? Explore how the language in the Steps and Traditions does or does not reflect universality, allowing for diversity of beliefs?
5. How does our language affect our ability to carry the message to the addict who still suffers?
6. Does the wording of the Steps and Traditions reflect the principles in the Third Tradition? Given that, in part, our understanding of the principle of anonymity is that as addicts we are all equal and that our "differences" dissolve in the face of our common bond, explore how the language in the Steps and Traditions does or does not reflect the principle of anonymity.

We want to wish the fellowship well in the process of conducting these local forums. It is our hope that you will insure participation as wide-spread as possible. Our hope for a spiritual consensus and fellowship-wide conscience is through the participation of every member who so wishes. It is our sincere hope that growth and unity will be the end result.

Guidelines for Local Forums

The WSC '94 motion #88 working group realizes that the issues which have evolved from the original WSC '93 motion #39 proposal go beyond the scope of that motion. We agree with the 1993 WSC working group that this is a crucial issue, with ramification beyond the mere wording of our Steps and Traditions. This makes widespread and in-depth fellowship discussion of this issue of utmost importance. We make the following suggestions to assist you in your discussion forums:

- ◆ In order for the fellowship to benefit from your discussions please forward your input to the Motion 88 Ad Hoc Group c/o the WSO and to your RSR. To facilitate this, you may wish to ask for a volunteer(s) to take notes.
- ◆ Settings in which you may wish to discuss this could be special home group meetings, convention workshops, area forums, regional forums, etc.
- ◆ Address this issue over a period of time rather than attempting to answer all of the questions in one meeting. Many members who have previously been involved in difficult or potentially controversial discussions realize that it usually takes some time for us to become open-minded enough to listen to the perspectives of others.
- ◆ It is likely that you may only be able to consider one or two questions in one forum. Spread the opportunities for discussions by scheduling several forums and questions throughout the year. This will also give time to more amply discuss the issue.
- ◆ Rather than answering "yes" or "no" to each item, elaborate on the reasoning behind opinions.
- ◆ If other relevant questions are raised during your forums, please let us know what they are so that we can share them with other members. You may send any input to Motion 88 c/o the WSO.
- ◆ You will notice that these questions relate to the first question posed by the 1993 working group ("Does the language of the Steps and Traditions truly reflect the principles of the program?"). We know it may be tempting to look at the second year discussions for alternative solutions and or motions; however, we want to encourage you to keep the focus on the discussion of the principles underlying the motion.
- ◆ Attendance can frequently be increased by flyers with a catchy or humorous flavor, refreshments available, and a generally friendly environment presented.
- ◆ Smaller groups with plenty of time for everyone to participate encourages more members to be involved.
- ◆ Aim for shorter times, start and end on time--people want to be involved but attention spans and stamina are limited. A few hours (2 or 3) can be very productive.