

Utah Area 69 GSR School

My group elected me as their new
“GSR” ...



WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

“The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group and with the general service representative (G.S.R.) the group elects. I cannot emphasize too strongly the G.S.R.’s importance.”

-Bill W.

Welcome to the Area 69 General Service School

THE GSR PREAMBLE

“We are the General Service Representatives. We are the link in the chain of communication for our groups with the General Service Conference and the world of A.A. We realize the ultimate authority in A.A. is a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group Conscience. As trusted servants, our job is to bring information to our groups in order that they can reach an informed group conscience. In passing along this group conscience, we are helping to maintain the unity and strength so vital to our fellowship. Let us, therefore, have the patience and tolerance to listen while others share, the courage to speak up when we have something to share, and the wisdom to do what is right for our groups and A.A. as a whole.”

Welcome to General Service in Alcoholics Anonymous!

People in General Service - particularly the GSRs - are generally known as the Guardians of Our Traditions. You are now the voice of your groups' conscience and their link to A.A. General Service. You will represent your group within your District and at Area level functions. You will be a conduit between your group and the General Service Office in New York.

The A.A. Service Manual states: “General services grew to fill a need beyond the reach of the individual, Group and Intergroup. Today, the term general services is applied to all kinds of activities within the conference structure, carried on by area committees, delegates, trustees, and GSO staff. Usually the services affect the Fellowship as a whole. Almost always, they are part of A.A.'s distinctive unity, which allows the movement to function so well.” It further states, “Originally, the services performed by A.A.'s General Service Office (GSO). Today it means the work of anyone in the general service structure - GSR, committee member, delegate, etc.”

The Service Manual has also printed a quote by the late Bernard B. Smith given in his opening talk at the 1954 General Service Conference, “We may not need a General Service Conference to ensure our own recovery. We do need it to ensure the recovery of the alcoholic who still stumbles in the darkness one short block from this room. We need it to ensure the recovery of a child being born tonight, destined for alcoholism. We need it to provide, in keeping with our Twelfth Step, a permanent haven for all alcoholics who, in the ages ahead, can find in AA that rebirth that brought us back to life.”

“The strength of our whole A.A. service structure starts with the group and with the general service representative (GSR) the group elects. I cannot emphasize too strongly the GSR's importance.”

—Bill W.

Many believe that a GSR is the most important “job” in Alcoholics Anonymous. (No Pressure)

The General Service organizational chart is represented by an inverted triangle. The delegation of authority starts at the top with the groups, then to the Districts, then to the Area. Each Area elects a Delegate to represent the Area at the annual General Service Conference in New York City.

At the bottom of the triangle are two non-profit corporations: AA World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc. They are overseen by the General Service Board, which is comprised of 21 trustees.

Therefore, the structure, from the TOP DOWN is:

- The Group
- The District
- The Area (69)
- The Region (Pacific)
- The General Service Conference

This organizational structure may seem complicated and overly structured at first. It is really in accord with our principle of "least possible organization". It has been tested over time as providing the most balanced way to arrive at the only recognized authority in A.A., expressed in an Informed Group Conscience which must be communicated to others when they deal with issues affecting A.A. as a whole.

In addition:

- Your individual AA Group is part of a District.
- Your District is one of 12 Districts in Area 69.

Your duties as a GSR include, but are not limited to

- You are now the official contact between the General Service Office and your group. As such you will have your name listed in the Western United States A.A. Directory.
- You will take care to protect the rights of individual A.A.s to have their opinions acknowledged and heard no matter how much in the minority those opinions may be.
- By your active presence in General Service you will be helping ensure that A.A. will still be here for the future generations of suffering drunks praying for a way out. You are now engaged in Twelfth Step work in one of its very best meanings.
- This position is typically a 2-year commitment.
- GSR's conduct the group's monthly business meeting. Many GSR's guide the business meeting using a prepared agenda, this helps ensure a more effective use of member's time.
- Conduct a group conscience on General Service items and pass on your group's conscience to your District or to the Area.
- Make announcements to your group that require no vote but informs them of what is happening in AA General Service.
- GSR's must attend regularly scheduled General Service District meeting.
- Bring information about workshops, conferences and District and Area activities back to the group to invite them to participate.

- Bringing the problems and remedies that affect A.A. unity, health and growth back to their group.
- Join an Area committee. Each group is assigned an Area committee. Your Area Registrar will tell you which committee your group belongs to.
- Attend Area 69 Assemblies held in April, May and September each year. Optional events include the December Committee Meeting, February Area Committee Meeting, the Pre-Assembly Workshop held in August and the Fall Workshop.

Area Assemblies are the lynchpin for motivating and maintaining AA as a whole. If the lynchpin is removed, the wheels fall off and movement will stop. We are stronger united, our collective and cooperative work makes the 12th step possible. The services we support are not pretend, this disease is real. There are those still suffering that need us.

We become informed about what is going on by attending these meetings and discussing issues with others who are in a good position to have experience and information to share on most issues. In this way the Assemblies meet their purpose in strengthening A.A. as a whole in carrying our message in the best way possible for our Area. Again, participation by the GSR is the key link in the vital chain in the necessary two way communication between the members of their Group and the larger structure of A.A.

Just as a personal inventory helps us to maintain a healthy sobriety by revealing our strengths and weaknesses, so an annual "Group Inventory" can flag areas that may need some focused Group attention. Many GSR's bring the need for a group inventory to the attention of Home Group members. A good starting format for this may be found in the pamphlet, "The A.A. Group."

How to Make a GSR Report

It's important to get your group used to hearing a GSR report. We suggest your report should be weekly and brief. Break down the information you get from the monthly General Service District meetings and Area Assemblies into short bullet points. You will typically only need to report one or two of these bullet points each week. If there are items that require an informed group conscience, we suggest you hold a separate business meeting to discuss them and vote. It is best to plan for and announce this business meeting, as well as the topics to be discussed, at least 2-3 weeks beforehand, so members can think about them and plan to attend.

The suggestions above are guidelines to help you be successful. Use the approach that best suits you and your group's needs.

Informed Group Conscience

Concept XII, Warranty Four: "That all important decisions should be reached by discussion, vote, and whenever possible, by substantial unanimity."

"Here on the one hand we erect a safeguard against any hasty or overbearing authority of a simple majority; and, on the other hand, it takes notice of the rights and the frequent wisdom of minorities, however small. This principle further guarantees that all matters of importance,

time permitting, will be extensively debated, and that such debates will continue until a really heavy majority can support every critical decision.....”

What is the group conscience?

How does the group conscience differ from a group opinion or a majority vote?

The group conscience strives for unanimity through enlightenment, spirituality, and the practice of our principles in all our affairs. To be fully informed requires a willingness to listen to minority opinions through full discussion. On sensitive issues, the group works slowly, discouraging formal motions until the group has a clear sense of its views. Placing principles before personalities, the group is wary of dominate opinions. The group conscience is the aggregate of experience a group develops after applying the Traditions and Concepts to a question. The difference between a group conscience and a majority vote or group opinion is that one or more of the elements described above are missing.

Groups find their way past ignorance, prejudice and self-will on an individual basis by practicing the Twelve Steps which enable us to practice humility, patience, tolerance, kindness and love - emphasizing principles before personalities. Through the Steps, we learn to overcome self-will and open the way to a group conscience. When tempers flare, an informed chairperson postpones discussion until those tempers cool, allowing time for prayer and meditation. (One workshop mentioned the Serenity Prayer.) Knowledge of A.A. history and willingness to listen to experience were also cited as important factors. We can listen for a quiet minority voice which may be the true expression of a loving God by allowing time for all to share and, especially, the minority to be heard. The minority view is important and should always be heard by the group.

Tradition Two: For our group purpose there is one ultimate authority - a loving God as He may express Himself in our Group Conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants, they do not govern.

Informed Group Conscience Guidelines

- Involve as many members of the Group as possible
- Encourage the expression of the widest range of points of view on the subject
- Allow enough time for the members to take all the information into consideration before any final decision is made on an issue.

Remember, a GSR's job is primarily to assist the Group in coming to an INFORMED group conscience, rather than push a personal agenda.

Before you start:

- Put the process of voting on a poster board, on paper or explain it thoroughly.
- Ask for a motion, and then ask for a second.
- Allow time for discussion: You may want to limit it to 3 pro's, 3 cons, but remember, the goal is for an informed group conscience.
- Call for a vote:

The vote should result in substantial unanimity (all or almost all in agreement, usually two-thirds).

After the vote:

- Ask the Minority if they would like to speak.
- Ask for a motion to reconsider:
- All vote on whether to re-vote:

If a simple majority votes for a re-vote, a second vote on the motion is taken. The re-vote is only done once.

If time does not allow:

- Announce that the issue will be voted on at the next meeting and consider bringing in someone with more information on the issue to speak at the next meeting.

What You Will Receive from the General Service Office

After your GSR registration is received, you will be mailed an information packet from the AA General Service Office (GSO). We suggest you read through these items. The packet contains the following resources to assist you in fulfilling your duties:

- AA General Service Manual and Twelve Concepts for World Service
- GSR: General Service Representative pamphlet
- The AA Group pamphlet
- Box 459 newsletter
- The AA Western Regional AAWS Directory (when available)
- The Twelve Concepts Illustrated

Note: Alternate GSR's do not receive the information packet from GSO.

Digital resources include the following websites:

aa.org - General Service Office in New York (GSO, AA World Services)

utahaa.org – Area 69 Website

aagrapevine.org - AA Grapevine

aagrapevine.org/espanol - AA La Vina

As indicated above you will also attend monthly District meetings. There are really very few completely new and original problems that develop in groups, so our continuity of experience is extremely valuable to the new GSR. The GSR's may share with their fellow GSR's and the DCM at the district meetings how they dealt with such matters and with what success. Their experience may be helpful to another group. Also, at the district meetings, agenda items that require action at the next area assembly can be discussed. This is a kind of middle ground where such discussion makes us better informed and able to take back to our group any business where a group conscience is needed. We can then take this conscience back to the assembly and make our voice heard.

A WORD ABOUT COMMITMENT

Commitment in terms of recovery, means recovering some of those basic principles which all of us were taught as children, but which we lost somewhere in pursuit of self. As members of the General Service Structure, those principles that we must now demonstrate as a Trusted Servant include willingness, self-sacrifice, honesty, consideration of others, thoughtfulness, love, tolerance and, most of all, basic etiquette.

- Do we show up when we say we will?
- Are we on time?
- Do we mark our A.A. commitments on the calendar and then work around them, or do we attend only if it doesn't interfere with our own pleasure?
- When we are unable to make an event in which the group should be represented, do we arrange for our alternate to be there?
- Do we keep our alternates well-informed and involved?
- Do we attend as many service activities as possible in order to become better informed, or do we do the least possible required?
- Do we tend to our responsibilities cheerfully or portray them as a drag?
- Are we able to offer criticism lovingly and based on the application of our three legacies, or do we let personalities get in the way?

All of these things are important to being committed to service in A.A., but the bottom line is this: are we giving in proportion to what has been given to us? Gratitude is an action word. It is something we show, not just something we talk about. If we give only a tenth of what has been given to us, we should all be shining examples of service and commitment in A.A.

Now, if you start doing all the things indicated above you'll be active and find yourself attending many meetings. Some of these may seem boring to you. This is not unusual. The main reason for this is that you are a "Newcomer" in a whole different sense. Remember how strange and confusing some of those first A.A. meetings that you attended seemed? Keep this in mind and it may make it easier. In addition, we do not always see eye to eye in General Service. Remember, we all have the same goal, to fulfill our primary purpose. Sometimes we don't agree on the way to achieve that goal. It is okay to disagree and engage in "much loving discussion." We are all passionate about this program that saved our lives and often find that it is through conflict in General Service that we experience a new kind of growth. In the end we all join hands in the circle and pray to a loving God of our understanding for the still suffering. You may not know any of the people there or not understand what is being discussed, possibly just as it was at your first meeting. But similarly, everyone there also was once a newcomer and knows what it feels like. Talk to people. Ask questions. Find out how to get information. You'll find that people involved in service are a friendly bunch and love to take time to share and explain this part of recovery with new people. Service work takes every bit as much energy as learning and working the Steps and is probably more difficult to explain and share with the general member. Only when we have all told enough people not currently in service what it is really all about, participating in an informed Group Conscience, the only recognized authority in A.A, will this dimension be a normal part of recovery for all of us.

It will seem frustrating at times because you may think that nobody in the Group is listening or cares about what you have to say. Then, sometime you will find yourself amazed by being asked a question relating to something you thought was dead and buried months ago. Or your Group asks you to deal with a question in terms of how it relates to the A.A. Traditions. Those times are part of what makes it all rewarding in the end.

So keep coming back and ask questions until you feel you have or know how to get an answer. Probably the most important thing that we can do as a GSR is become an informed one. This

serves both us personally and A.A. as a whole. The more you know, the more you can share from personal experience and the more credible your opinion will become. In order to fulfill the responsibility that our Group has given us we must become as knowledgeable as possible. If we are willing to learn and keep an open mind, we soon find that we are the ones who benefit. For more guidance the pamphlet Service Sponsorship is highly recommended. This pamphlet suggests that each GSR find a "Service Sponsor" to help with additional questions and problem solving. Ask an experienced individual in General Service to be your Service Sponsor or for their suggestions on who would be a good Service Sponsor for you.

THE GSRs' VOICE AND VOTE AT AREA MEETINGS

At the Assemblies the GSRs are both voting members and collectively form a majority of voting members and as such should make every effort to attend the Assemblies. All Area 69 matters that either have an effect on the Area's finances or a direct impact on all the Groups, whether raised on the floor of an Assembly or coming out of the Area Committee process, are presented and ratified, rejected or revised by the Assembly.

Each Area acts as a unit at "Area Assemblies" held periodically throughout the year to conduct such business as it may affect the entire Area, including:

- Inform the Delegate of the sense of the Area
- Receive the Advisory Actions of the Conference from the Delegate
- Conduct workshops dealing with various aspects of "carrying the service message".

At the Area Committee Meetings, only the DCMs and Area Officers have a vote. GSRs are welcome to attend and strongly encouraged to do so.

At the Fall Assembly an Election Assembly is held in each even numbered year to choose the Trusted Servants for the Area who serve a two year term starting the following January.

The following Officers are elected at this time, with their duties briefly described.

- Chairperson, whose responsibility is to schedule the business agenda for the Assemblies and Area Committee Meetings and to conduct these meetings.
- Secretary whose job it is to record the minutes of both the Assemblies and Area Committee meetings and to see that they are distributed to the Area Committee which consists of GSR's DCM's and DCMC's, Area Standing Chairs and Area Officers.
- Area Registrar who keeps track of all listed Groups and their respective contacts in the Area, keeps the list updated as well as updates the GSO database, the Fellowship New Vision (FNV).
- Treasurer who records and reports all Group contributions and other sources of revenue as well as all disbursements of funds and participates in the Area Finance Committee.
- Delegate who is mainly concerned with maintaining the two-way communication between the Area and GSO as well as ancillary duties such as participating in workshops or working with standing chair committees.
- Alternate Delegate who assumes the position of Delegate if the Delegate is unable. Acts as liaison to the Spanish Speaking District, District 12.

In addition, the following Standing Chair positions are elected for the Area 69 Committees

- Archives
- Agenda and Assembly

- Cooperation with the Professional Community (CPC)
- Corrections
- Grapevine/La Vina
- Literature
- Public Information (PI)
- Repository Archivist
- Treatment Facilities/Special Needs
- Communications

*Your District may also have many of these committees.

The outgoing Delegate or Immediate Past Delegate becomes the Newsletter chair.

THE GENERAL SERVICE CONFERENCE

The culmination of much of this activity occurs in April of each year when the Delegate we elect to represent our Area attends the week long General Service Conference in New York.

The voting members of the Conference are comprised of:

- 93 Area Delegates who form a voting majority just as GSR's do at Area Assemblies
- 21 Trustees of the General Service Board
- The staff of the General Service Office and Grapevine
- The Directors of A.A. World Services, Inc. and
- The Directors of The A.A. Grapevine Inc.

The policy of A.A. is decided at this meeting. The Delegates take to the Conference the consensus of the Groups in their Area Pre-Conference Assembly as expressed by the GSR's responses to the policies and issues to be discussed and acted upon.

General Service Conference Timeline

The Conference Process continues all year long. GSRs, DCMs and Committee Chairs play an active and important role throughout the process. An abbreviated version of the process is below:

- January - By January 15th Members, Groups, Districts, and Areas have submitted requests for a change in AA Literature or Policy.
- February - The Delegate presents a list of agenda items with background material. These are items about which the Delegate needs an informed group conscience from your group. GSR's can start presenting items to the Groups to begin forming an informed group conscience.
- March - At our Area Pre-Conference Workshop, GSRs and DCMs need to be ready to share their informed group conscience.
- April - Our Delegate attends the week long Annual Meeting of the General Service Conference together with the Trustees and GSO staff to discuss the Agenda Items in Committees and then to vote together on matters of policy affecting A.A. as a whole.
- May - Delegate's Report to the Assembly is a meeting at which you will be informed about what Actions were taken at the Annual Meeting of the Conference. GSRs are to report back these Actions to their Groups and listen to their reactions.

- September - Final Conference Reports delivered to the Delegate who presents them at the Area Assembly. Bring a copy of the Final Conference Reports to share with your Group and make it available to every Member.
- October - Agenda Item requests can be sent to the Delegate or the GSO Conference Coordinator. In even years the Assembly elects a new Delegate from the current Area Committee members.

A.A. WORLDWIDE

Alcoholics Anonymous is a worldwide organization. There are General Service Conferences in many countries, each of which is autonomous. No attempt is made to have the General Service Office of the USA and Canada in New York be the "world capital" of A.A. Rather, the New York office is available to share experience, strength and hope with offices in other countries, mainly because it has been in existence a much longer period of time. Every two years a World Service conference is held with two Trustee Delegates from the United States and Canada attending. This Conference serves as the way that Alcoholics Anonymous establishes and maintains its worldwide communications links.

Common Terms and Acronyms

A.A.W.S. – Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. The publishing arm of A.A. that publishes all of our literature.

Archives – A collection of A.A. records and memorabilia.

Area – A geographic division within a state or province made up of Districts, there are 93 Areas in the US and Canada. We are in Area 69.

Area Assembly – A periodic meeting with all representatives to discuss A.A. affairs of the Area.

Area and District Officers – Elected officials of the Area and District

Area Committee Chairperson – Elected position that conducts Area business meetings.

Box 4-5-9 - The General Service Office publication that is produced quarterly and contains many articles of general interest to the entire fellowship. Since the GSR is the listed mail contact for the Group at GSO, they automatically receive a copy which should be read and then shared with your Group. For \$6.00 per year, a Group may receive ten copies of each issue.

C.P.C. – Cooperation with the Professional Community. C.P.C. committees at the District, Area, Trustee and Conference level carry the message through conference approved literature to professionals who work with Alcoholics.

Corrections – Standing chair position at the District, Area, Trustee and Conference level that coordinates meetings within correctional facilities as well as carries the message to inmates and staff through conference approved literature.

DCM – District Committee Member – An experienced GSR elected by the GSRs of that District to represent the groups of the District at Area Assemblies. DCMs coordinate service activities within their Districts. The primary purpose of the DCM is to stimulate as many Groups as possible to be an active part of A.A. as a whole through representation and participation.

DCMC – District Committee Member Chairperson – The head of a group of District Committee for which the primary purpose is to perform service functions.

Delegate – An AA member of the Area Assembly who is elected every other year to represent the Area at the annual General Service Conference in New York.

District – A geographical division of AA groups within an Area. There are 12 Districts in our Area, Area 69.

GSO – General Service Office – Our AA Headquarters in New York City.

GSR – General Service Representative – An individual elected by an AA group to represent the group in AA General Service.

GSC – General Service Conference – An annual meeting of 93 Delegates from Areas in the US and Canada, Trustees and GSO representatives, to discuss and vote on approved agenda items.

GSB – General Service Board – A group of 21 Trustees who oversee the two non-profit corporations, AA World Services, Inc. and AA Grapevine, Inc.

General Service - Applies to all kinds of activities within the conference structure, carried on by Area Committees, Assemblies, Delegates, Trustees and G.S.O staff. Usually, the service affects the Fellowship as a whole.

P.I. – Public Information committees at the District, Area, Trustee and Conference level carry the message through conference approved literature by working with the media.

PRAASA – Pacific Regional AA Service Assembly – A yearly meeting of all representatives held in different parts of the Pacific region of AA.

Pacific Regional Forum – A regional meeting with GSO and AA members.

Registrar – Elected position of Area 69 that maintains the database of group contact information through the group's GSR for GSO.

Secretary – Elected position within a Home Group, District and Area that takes and recites minutes at business meetings.

Treatment/Special Needs – Standing chair position at the District, Area, Trustee and Conference level that carries the message through conference approved literature to treatment facilities. In addition, this position attempts to make the message available to those A.A.'s with various disabilities.

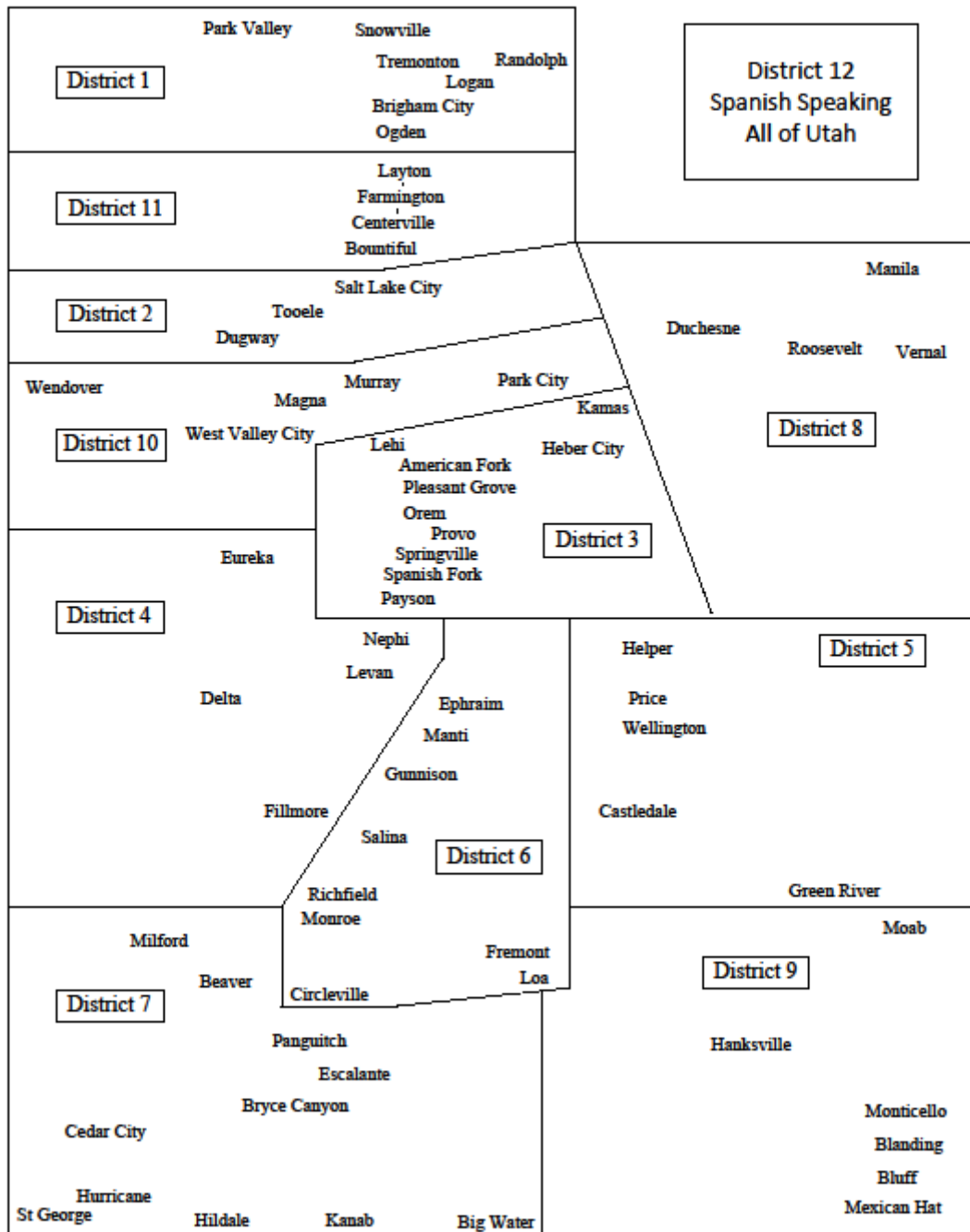
Trustees – Regional elected representatives to the GSB. There are 8 regions within the US & Canada.

Treasurer – Elected position within a Home Group, District, Area, GSB and Trustee who collects and allocates 7th Tradition money under the guidance of the group conscience of the fellowship.

Third Legacy Procedure – The election voting process. See Page S21 in The A.A. Service Manual for more details

Twelve Concepts of World Service – An interpretation of A.A.'s world service structure.

UTAH DELEGATE AREA 69 – DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



April 2011

