

Just for Today Group Inventory and Conscience Notes

Just for Today: 2021-2022 Ongoing Group Inventory Ongoing Minutes	
1. What is the basic purpose of our group?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A place where we learn to stay sober and help each another alcoholic to achieve sobriety • A place where we learn how to practice the 12 steps of AA • A welcoming place for newcomers • Learn the basic means of how to stay sober; the literature is a basic component of our group and is essential to learn how to do the 12 steps and to pass along the message of the 12 steps of AA • Learn how group members express and live the AA steps; we focus on the solution; we see each other actively learning and using the steps to address the problems in their lives • Our primary purpose is aligned with that identified in the traditions; the rest of the inventory will identify if there are areas where we are not meeting this purpose • In early days, a group member only went to open speaker meetings; this group provides a great learning possibility
2. What more can our group do to carry the message?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We don't have commitments, which might be a great way to carry the message to other groups • Perhaps at the virtual meetings we could encourage members to unmute to say hello and thank you to speakers, to make it more engaging and unifying • Consider adding commitments to our group • Need to consider some folks really need in-person virtual engagements • Consider other ops for fellowship, such as get-togethers after the TG breakfast, stickers on name tags identifying oneself as willing to be a sponsor • Consider communicating with local professionals who refer to AA that we are here and available; Chair described the Area 30 Cooperation with the Professional Communities, which is a committee that works with local professionals; there is also an Area 30 Corrections Committee that helps to bring the message to AAs on the inside of corrections institutions; conversation ensued about all the various Area 30 committees who would love to have any group member participation • We don't need to do carry the message as a group to these facilities since they already know about it. We need to respond to the request for AA not take AA to them • We could consider other ways of using the virtual meeting for doing workshops • We could mention this group to other groups • We could make our login information available online without folks having to request access; could extend our availability; we could list it on aa-intergroup.org • JFT contributes via the 7th tradition to central service, District 22, Area 30, GSO; these organizations work to carry the message in ways beyond that of the group • JFT is in District 22, which would love to have you attend; it meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month, 7:30-8:30 PM. Currently virtual and will go back to in-person hopefully next year • JFT appears a very strong and healthy group, meaning we are even more attractive to new people • In-person meetings seem to be accepting of the use of profanity at meetings, which may be the wrong message we want to convey to newcomers; one can get the "wrong" message that way
3. Is our group attracting alcoholics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual meetings tremendously increase accessibility for those with challenges attending in-person meetings due to health concerns, children, location, etc.

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<p>from different backgrounds? Are we seeing a good cross-section of our community, including those with accessibility issues?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a ramp at the hall, which helps tremendously for access for those with a cane or wheelchair; however, a group member who attended on crutches, it was noted that the doors are really difficult to negotiate without help • We are a tenant of this facility so we cannot get them to change; while it is not perfect here, it is a great location; we should all put salt out regularly • Let's keep it simple; the conversation feels complicated; I just want to keep it simple and act with kindness and support to one another • We need to keep up the salt on the parking lot and ramp for safety in winter • Our demographic is very homogenous; is that due to our community or are we not attractive to people who are different to those similar to us; is there a way we can be more attractive to a more diverse populous • Our demographics may be reflective of our physical community • The Area 30 Accessibilities Committee is a group of people who help to overcome barriers to attending and participating in AA meetings • Prior to the pandemic, couldn't get a seat in the room; perhaps will return to that post-pandemic • JFT may seem homogenous but, for me, I learn so much from everyone; but not sure we really attract to a real cross-section of the community • One member noticed that when a newcomer of color attends, they don't seem to come back. We may not be doing anything wrong, but are we welcoming?
<p>4. Do new members stick with us, or does the turnover seem excessive? If so, why? What can we as a group do to retain members?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to balance attraction with promotion • It seems like new members do stay and turnover does not seem excessive • The virtual platform has allowed us to expand our attraction to others • Each meeting seems to have different flavors, which works to attract different folks; however, it does seem like there are some issues at some meetings that are unappealing • Sponsorship helps to retain members • Just a reminder that we can speak up at this inventory if there are difficult topics—we can safely discuss controversial issues here today • Just a reminder that AA has literature available on group safety; perhaps we need to relook at that • What can we do anyway? We cannot regulate others' behavior. • Love and tolerance of others is our code; we need to let people find their own way • Should we re-examine the job of the greeter at the in-person meetings? • I recently returned to the 7am in-person meeting and I felt unsafe and stopped attending. Feel very sad about that. Has heard that my experience is not unique. • The evolution of recovery includes learning how to speak up and take care of oneself; sometimes we need to learn how to speak up and take care of ourselves • While I historically had taken the "hands off" mind one's own business approach, I have seen a group due to safety issues. AA has recently updated its Safety Information and we should consider ways to ensure the group is aware of this information and possibly distribute to the Steering Committees. AA takes safety seriously and we should be aware of if there is new information. • The JFT Group Service Representative (GSR) mentioned that she will send the new Safety Information to the Secretary; we could consider ways to implement that into the meetings or to the Steering Committees • Chair called for those who have not spoken yet to consider speaking. • One meeting attendee introduced himself that he doesn't necessarily consider himself a group member since he just attends the meeting

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One member introduced oneself as new to AA so not speaking but happy to participate • A group member noted that it's hard to have an opinion on safety issues if one was not at a specific meeting where the issue occurred; while we do want to ensure folks feel safe • There was a regular meeting attendee that was a real problem; a group member called Central Service, who said if you kick out someone, we can take you out of the meeting list • Meeting cultures are very different, and cultures evolve, especially over the pandemic • Safety is perceived differently among all of us • Note was sent via Chat that in-person group members are not always wearing masks per the City of Arlington mandate, so this person feels unsafe to attend the in-person meetings • Chair reiterated the new AA safety literature and gave a brief overview, to encourage each of us to consider it. AA.org →What's New→ Safety.
<p>5. Do we emphasize the importance of sponsorship? How effectively? How can we do it better?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the 6am virtual meeting, there is a show of hands for sponsorship both at the beginning and end of the meeting, and at the midpoint of the meeting a show of hands for anyone 'up against a drink' • At the 7am virtual meeting, there is a show of hands at the beginning of the meeting but a suggestion made that the show of hands is done again at the midpoint of the meeting • Suggestions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ re-visit adding a newcomer liaison ○ ask anyone seeking a sponsor to raise their hand ○ add a statement that says something like 'our group supports sponsorship for newcomers' and a definition of what sponsorship means ○ add a one-way chat for a newcomer greeter / cohort ○ add something to the website around sponsorship ○ time/place/topic specific to newcomers (a step meeting referenced that goes back to step one whenever a newcomer joins) ○ Establish a new beginner's meeting
<p>6. Are we careful to preserve the anonymity of our group members and other A.A.s outside the meeting rooms? Do we also leave what they share at meetings behind?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of the statement 'what you hear here, let it stay here' means - personal details / stories versus general comments and spiritual intention of the word anonymity • Anonymity as it relates to virtual meetings and who/what is shown on a screen, comments related to the impact it has when people outside of the program are on the screen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was a question from a member (Janice) if she could invite her family to a virtual anniversary meeting • Chair mentioned that there are a couple of paragraphs in the A.A. Group pamphlet about the difference between open and closed meetings
<p>7. Does our group emphasize to all members the value of keeping up with the kitchen, set-up, clean-up and other housekeeping chores</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JFT Secretary asked if we can reframe this question to encompass all the service that takes place for all of our meetings, virtual and in person; Chair indicated that yes, people should interpret the question in a way that makes sense to them • Chair mentioned another group's inventory (linked here) and said that they looked at the question as 'since going virtual, how has the group's chores changed?'

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that are essential for our Twelfth Step efforts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do we emphasize that there is a real need for VMHs? Am I engaged in the meetings in the virtual setting, is my camera on, am I present? • Suggestions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Remind people of how to sign up to chair the onsite meetings (not everyone knows there is a book up front) ○ Come back to this question again next month as we're up against time
8. Are all members given the opportunity to speak at meetings and participate in other group activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphatic "yes"—newer group member definitely feels the virtual meetings offer the opportunity for all to share and participate • Yes, although have felt bullied in the past and wish the chance to read this pamphlet together had occurred then. • While we do have some great practices, there has been some "eye rolling" and pushiness to speed people up when they share too long; not sure we are really as inclusive to ALL as we may think we are • At the 6am in person meeting, we seem to have improved including those in the "back of the room" by not assuming they do or do not want to share, but going to the back of the room most days to try and include them • The in-person meeting offered a great chance for all to share since we went around the room; harder to apply online but different chairs have been trying to implement ways of sharing • The 6am virtual meeting does seem to have the same people sharing all the time but it seems to be working • When I attended the in-person meeting, I made myself sit in the circle to make myself share • I feel that the newcomer is the most important person in the room; maybe we could offer the chance to speak at the beginning of the meeting • I came into AA during the pandemic and, had I been forced to turn on my camera and speak, I would never have stayed. I really believe we should have the chance to participate in the level in which we feel comfortable. Its ok to offer the chance to newcomers, but do not want anything to feel forced. • I used to attend only in-person meetings, then missed a chunk of time once things shifted to virtual later in the pandemic, so I have had to adjust. The differences between in-person and virtual are real; "body language" is not really there, focus is entirely on the screen (less connections made), cannot feel the energy in the room in the same way virtually. Mentioned at the steering committee noted that so many people have their videos off, and hope people can be encouraged to attend as a person rather than just as a "pic" on their screen. • There has been some controversy at the 7am in-person meeting when some of the former meeting attendees have returned to the in-person meeting and people wanted to change the sharing path, and some of the participants who were loudest may have drowned out those who were less loud, and it may have felt unsafe I • Suggest we have standardized language for the Newcomer Liaison to use when reaching out to newcomers that is welcoming without feeling pushy or controlling
9. Mindful that holding office is a role of great responsibility not to be reviewed as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have not had competition for the officer roles, treasurer and secretary, in the past 4+ years; these officer roles have been filled by folks who volunteer (and are confirmed by a vote), so not a popularity contest • The culture has changed so much since we shifted to virtual; the perspective, how we communicate, so much change and perhaps not everyone can keep up

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<p>the outcome of popularity contest, are we choosing our officers with care?</p>	<p>with or understand how we function and how all can participate. The role of the steering committees has changed so much too.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We select our officers with process/procedure, which to me means it is done with “care.” We have also been very fortunate in who has volunteered for each officer role. • While not suggesting we make any changes, the roles of these officers has really grown and become incredibly more complex due to the shift from 2 in-person groups to 4 very different groups. • Note that we are a group with various meetings, for which there is precedence although it is indeed complicated. We have really grown over the years in our business meetings are more regular, folks are encouraged to participate. I got into service by being attracted to others doing the job; I also encourage others to participate in service. Its great we have the job descriptions on our website so people can see what is required and what they need to be able to do to accomplish the job. • Our group is a very well-oiled machine; we have been very fortunate in our volunteers. However, could we tolerate a officer to stand for a position without those skills or abilities? We have really high standards now and it might be hard to get folks in who have lesser abilities. Could we be encouraging and supportive to those in these roles with lesser skills and competencies? • Have taken jobs in other groups that in no way are similar to this group, but there are many other jobs at JFT available. We should continue to figure out how to divest responsibilities to multiple roles so as to reduce the expectations on one individual. • This has been a really healing meeting for me, thank you all for participating. I, too, have felt intimidated to take on some of the jobs (including chairing virtual meetings) but want to try. I have been observing how others are doing it. • I hope we can continue this specific discussion at our next inventory meeting since we have indeed worked really hard to divest so many of the officer responsibilities, but we need to continue to do so. We want the standards to stay high for this group, but it should be balanced with the jobs being appropriate amount of time investment and skills/competencies required, so please let’s continue the discussion. • Closed with appreciation on the “care” that went into the selection of the Area 30 Service Seminar chair! <p>Discussion/input continuation 22 April 2022:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group has done a great job to create opportunity of service, however, some of the roles have become enhanced over the past several years, particularly the Secretary and Treasury positions. • Believe that service positions are being filled by those who have the willingness and via sponsor’s tagging sponsee’s. In all of JFT meeting formats, the group have many service positions to keep people engaged and feeling a part of the group. • We are usually looking for people to fill the positions, versus popularity. All our different formats, onsite and virtual, be mindful we are servicing the whole of all meetings. When we are choosing people for service, make sure people are aware they are serving all 4 groups and the various platforms. • From experience, it’s been helpful for me to ask people directly to get people involved in service, instead of just leaving it up to someone to volunteer. It is

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	<p>helpful to know someone who might be a good fit to rotate into a particular service position and talk with them directly about that role. This might aid in getting a person into a position that fulfills both needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As we get into more of these challenging roles, we usually sit around and wait for volunteers. I do a lot of volunteer facilitation, which involves a team of people who go and find people who might be a good fit. Since the Secretary and Treasurer roles contain a great number of responsibilities, including others, they carry through all of the JFT meetings. The question some of us have – the challenge of holding us together as JFT, when we have four different expressions of our primary purpose, each with their own culture, format, participants, and service. I don't have the answer, but we are naming some of the issues we hope will be expressed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do we hold every entity together with some attention, except in matters that make JFT as a whole? ○ Do we look at having an Asst Secretary, Asst Treasurer, Asst Webmaster, Asst....? Currently, the main service positions are taking a minimum of 10 hours. ○ A lot of what has happened over the last two years, facilitated primarily and therefore shaped by those in the virtual meetings. Concern at how we stay connected in the onsite meeting and does the onsite meeting feel disconnected from the online meeting? ○ Question – Are we representing how things are going for the onsite meetings? • We think we are doing 'great' due to the experience that people have in those service positions; however, some cannot consider taking on the responsibilities of the position due to the vast amount the role entails. Don't know how much one can divvy up these service opportunities, but it appears to be an issue to the group. • Observation – the word accessibly, are the group positions accessible to people? Do I need to have a certain requirement for these positions? • With the change of online/onsite, how we get our thoughts together and bring it center? Trying to do all of this under one person, where we have four service committees, can we eliminate some extra time if we restructure, maybe an Asst Secretary and Asst Treasure and have these people meet at a separate time. There are onsite/online, and some people do not cross paths. • The difficulty to have people do service work, limits potential audience and appears to be daunting and difficult for most. Not sure what we can do with that – but it is probably limiting accessibility. • Questions regarding time remaining for secretary and treasurer position was asked. JFT Secretary provided the link to the current Service Positions, indicating beginning and end of service timelines. The Treasurer position has the added responsibility of IRS 501(c)3 Organization and some Trustees are aiding. Secretary position ends in Sept 2022, commitment was made to go through the Group Inventory before releasing the role. In addition, the current GSR will end in 2022. From experience, it has been a challenge to fill the GSR position because of the lack of knowledge this role entails.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are now under one umbrella holding 4 meetings. I believe we will be okay moving forward because we have setup steering committees for each meeting, whereas each meeting will be able to move forward with its own governance by group conscience – it will be more an issue of communicating between meetings. We are in a good shape and kudos for the epic and amazing work done. • To be clear – we have one identity which is JFT A.A. We have one bank account, one GSR, one Secretary and one Treasurer. It’s that ONE place that holds it all together. • Can we sustain four meetings under one roof? Newcomers come into the meeting there is no way to verbally express we are one under four, that we are one group that we belong to. People wanting to belong to a meeting and make suggestions and then being told that they don’t understand how we are structured. It feels like, from a service selection and accessible aspect, it may behoove us to look at the fundamental structure and maybe restructure entirely? • Hesitant of taking Service Position for this group because of the four expressions. Questioning what happens if the group drops virtual meeting? In addition, limited connection to other members of the various meetings. Willing to step in but the question is - can I fulfill the position? • Are virtual meetings a forever proposition that we will always have these four potential meetings? • I have addressed this with some other people that worry about the same thing, as Bill Wilson stated, A.A. will exist as long as God needs us here. For me, the virtual world will continue to exist because those who have physical limitations and those who have lost licenses will not come to onsite meetings. As long as there is interest and as long as people sign up for virtual host/chair of the meeting we are in. • Seems like we are heading down the path of accessibility... what do you think of moving on to question 10, if we need to back track just chime in.
<p>10. Are we doing all we can to provide a safe, attractive and accessible meeting place?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair provided link to Safety and AA - https://www.aa.org/safety-and-aa-our-common-welfare • The idea of a Safety Liaison was brought up a while ago and I experienced incidents of bullying at the in-person. I am not aware if this is still an issue for others. Everyone has different perspectives, ideas on abuse - Angry with someone, body language, words etc. If there is a safety liaison that someone can go to – reason it out and get a different perspective. There is something in the A.A. Service Manual about approaching people to change their behavior, something I don’t hear a lot about. We can approach people to ask them to change their behavior. • Chair provided link to AA Service Manual - https://www.aa.org/aa-service-manualtwelve-concepts-world-services • As stated previously, we had a detail conversation related to safety – everyone’s perspective of safety is different. The issue we found, if someone is at risk of drinking, they need to feel comfortable. If someone feels unsafe/threatened, what do we do? Can’t hand them a pamphlet/card and say read this. Do we

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	<p>have a group of people we can tag for safety? We cannot say you can't come in.... at least in person, so what do we do? It should be addressed right then and there and if we can do something in that nature that is what we would like to work on.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility is dependent on a number of things in the virtual world. People can find it and more attractive to newcomers. Physical and other safety is good on Zoom. Impressed by our website, a portal to our meetings – gets a high score. On the flip side, is the information and home page daunting to some visitors? Has the website become more then what it might need to be for those new to it and daunting by scope and range? • Doing service as Host, all of the material from meeting format and screen shares to the welcoming of newcomers and all other important tools are very accessible. Thanks to all involved in bringing this together. • Concern regarding how people show up at the virtual meetings with their video off. Everyone has their reasons for not having their video on during the meeting, but how does that appear to a newcomer... seems mysterious and why can't they be with us? Seeing faces is a big part of the fellowship for me and maybe have video on revisited? • Accessibility related to onsite meeting, which is another reason for retaining virtual meetings. Most A.A. meetings aren't physically accessible because they are in church basements. Even if there is a ramp/lift available, at some of the older meeting places if you are in a wheelchair, you cannot get into restroom. JFT is not able to provide access to those with wheelchairs, but it's possible due to the virtual meetings. • Concerned with videos off and not a name associated. Previously the group had people identify themselves if they didn't have their name, which was helpful. It would be better seeing a picture of the person, rather than just initials. The 07:00 virtual meeting has chat ability with the host/co-host so if there's a safety concern one can send a message. themselves during the meeting (co-host/host chat) • Sometimes on the 07:00 virtual meeting, there are 40 people but only 15 videos being displayed. Seems like more of a meeting when people can be seen. Although I do understand that while someone is driving, running, getting ready for work, etc. that is distracting. Not sure what the solution is, maybe encourage people to put their cameras on? • There's a lot for us to learn. I didn't like people not showing their faces, even a picture is okay. Realized in every meeting there are 'eyes', there are 'ears' and there are 'mouths'. I like to show up and show my face and that's how I get to know people. Some people are just listeners, they are the ears of the program. • Some people expressed concern about safety related to anonymity. Knowing what they are saying in the Virtual AA meeting is truly anonymous (utilizing earbuds/headphones); not seeing family member/others in the background.
11. Does our group do its fair share toward parti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

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<p>12. What has our group done lately to bring the A.A. message to the attention of professionals in the community — the physicians, clergy, court officials, educators and others who are often the first to see alcoholics in need of help?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
<p>13. How is our group fulfilling its responsibility to the Seventh Tradition?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Sources:

- *The AA Group* pamphlet in English: (https://www.aa.org/assets/en_us/p-16_theaagroup.pdf) and in Spanish (https://aa.org/assets/es_ES/sp-16_theaagroup.pdf)
- The AA Service Manual in English: (https://www.aa.org/assets/en_US/nopage/bm-31-aa-service-manual-combined-with-twelve-concepts-for-world-services) and here in Spanish (https://www.aa.org/assets/es_es/nopage/bm-31-aa-service-manual-combined-with-twelve-concepts-for-world-services)