

## ROTATION AND CONTINUITY ORAL REPORT TO THE CONFERENCE

In 1989, the conference asked the Policy Committee to address the practice of rotation and continuity. Over the past year, the committee gathered and reviewed input and worked together in small groups to produce a report to the fellowship. This report was printed in the December *Fellowship Report*, and is available upon request from the World Service Office. The committee asked that it be presented to you, as part of the committee's report to the conference.

Rotation is the practice of electing new members to fill service positions, rather than re-electing them over and over again to the same position. We have good reasons for practicing rotation: there are benefits to be gained for the fellowship and for ourselves personally. The variety and breadth of experience found in our membership means that each member brings a different background to service. Our committees are enriched by that diversity. And rotation through different service positions allows each member to learn more, thereby becoming a better resource for the fellowship. Newly elected trusted servants also bring enthusiasm about service to their new positions. This motivation boosts productivity and enhances our services.

Participation in service allows us the opportunity to give something back to the fellowship that gave us life. This privilege should be shared among all members. Finding the balance between giving and receiving in service enhances our personal recovery, and the fellowship as a whole.

Anonymity of service lessens the danger of confusing service with our identity. In N.A., no one owns anything. None of us remains in a service position forever. When we complete our term of service, we move on.

Since we all move on, we have had to find ways to insure that services are provided in a consistent manner. This does not mean that we always have to do everything in the same way. We have found that the continuity of service we strive for can be achieved by following a specific plan. The plan should include four basic factors: trust and faith in a Higher Power; communication; documentation; and structure.

A conscious contact with a Higher Power is the first essential factor. We maintain faith as we do the footwork in our personal recovery program, and it is just as important that we maintain faith and do footwork in our service efforts.

Communication is the next step in achieving continuity. The wisdom and knowledge gained from experience is most useful when it is shared. We encourage anyone leaving a position of service to talk to those who replace them. Former officers sometimes act as consultants, answering questions and offering support. Learning days and similar presentations, held regularly, encourage this communication. Representatives and chairs are better prepared for an active role if they have participated as alternates and vice chairs.

Documentation is the next step toward continuity. Guidelines help us focus our work. They serve as a contract between the trusted servant and the fellowship. Guidelines should be studied carefully and updated on a regular basis.

Minutes are a documentation tool. Minutes of all committee and board meetings should be taken and kept in the archives. Knowledge of a committee's history is invaluable to newly elected servants. These new servants might find it helpful to review minutes of previous meetings. Archives belong to each individual committee or board, and are passed on to new trusted servants as they are elected.

Structure is the final factor in achieving continuity of service. Whenever possible, a committee or board should have enough members to carry out its work, enough members to ensure that the loss of a member will not cripple its ability to effectively serve. Some committees hold elections several months before positions actually change hands. This allows more experienced servants to work with incoming members. To make this structure hold together, we must choose qualified servants: responsible, capable, and willing to make a commitment to serve.

Continuity of service should be considered when defining the length of term for any position. Many positions are elected annually. Others may have different terms, to suit the needs of a particular project. For instance, an ad hoc committee to adapt guidelines might need only a few months to complete its task. We need to consider the best use of fellowship resources when we make these decisions.

Rotation is practiced differently in newly forming committees than in more mature committees. New service committees often start with a few interested members doing all the work. There may not be enough members to fill all the available positions, or to elect different trusted servants each year. It is not unusual for some members to hold several positions; anything to get the job done. This may be the only way that new areas or groups are able to provide services.

As the various service structures begin to grow, however, the members who have done all the work start to get tired. Enthusiasm wanes as we become burnt out. Service positions may become part of our identity, i.e., who we are instead of something we do.

As groups and areas grow, new members are attracted to service. Older members attract them by sharing about their experience with service, the benefits to be gained in life and in personal recovery. We find that there are enough members for each position, and then enough to elect alternates as well. Guidelines, minutes, and other archival material is passed on to newer members to help them step into new positions. In this way, continuity of service follows the rotation of members through service positions.

Sometimes a service committee decides to re-elect a trusted servant to a position in which he has already served. This happens most often when an alternate is unable to step into a position, and re-election seems the best way to meet the committee's needs. Members may be re-elected when there is no other member eligible, or in order to train a successor. Group conscience guides our service structures in this decision.

The needs of our service structures will help us find a balance between rotation and continuity. The use of sponsors, a Higher Power, and group conscience will help us remember that service positions are a privilege, not a possession.

Rotation of trusted servants supports our ability to provide services by utilizing our resources fully and efficiently. Our group conscience process will ultimately decide how we provide continuity of service: through re-election of the same member, or by rotation and election of new members. We are all encouraged, by the nature of group conscience, to take part in discussions about service. We try to choose qualified servants. Then we practice faith and allow a loving Higher Power to take over.