Good morning (or afternoon). Thank you for sharing the next hour with us as we present the results of our Task Force: Celebrating Our Differences and Our Common Purpose.

For many years, the World Service Conference (WSC) has been discussing topics via a spiritually based approach to more effectively communicate information to the membership. At the 2016 World Service Conference, there was a Presentation Task Force: Acceptance of Communities, Cultures, and Beliefs. As a result, Conference members requested additional ways in which to identify the spiritual principles that can be applied when looking at how our own biases limit our ability to accept and welcome all potential and current members, families and friends of alcoholics.

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We would like to present a skit to help members identify their own biases (known and unknown), and apply the spiritual principles of the program to move beyond our biases.

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ACT I

**Narrator:** It is often difficult to recognize when our own personal biases, either known or unknown, are preventing us from embracing and welcoming those different from us. Our biases can be triggered by physical appearance alone, but often they can run much deeper.

Let's listen to the "no more alone on the phone" Al-Anon meeting and literally "see" the thoughts of the members as they listen and participate in today's meeting topic, "Change."

**Phone meeting begins:**
**Secretary:** Who would like to share next?

**All three speak at the same time:**
**Michelle:** Hello I'm Michelle I would like to . . .
**Patricia:** Hello, my name is Patricia and . . .
**Mary:** Hello I'm Mary. Can I come in?
Secretary: I heard Michelle first, then Patricia and Mary. Come on in Michelle and I will mute.

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Michelle: Hi, I am Michelle from Alaska. Change? Every day on the homestead is the same. I get up, take care of my dad, the animals, and the vegetable garden, and I cook. If it wasn't for the phone meetings, I think I would have killed myself or my dad by now. I am working on changing my attitude by focusing on the gifts and talents I got from my dad instead of replaying resentments. Thank you, guys!

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**Patricia:** *(speaking with a heavy accent)* Hi, I am Patricia from Puerto Rico. A lot has changed for me. My five children are gone, and I have an empty house, except for my husband. His drinking is getting violent now and I am scared. I don't know what to do! My Sponsor asked me, "What is the lie that I am trying to believe?" Well, I kept hoping and hoping. I think it is time for action; hoping is not working for me anymore!

*<click>*
Mary: Hello, I'm Mary from Alabama. My Sponsor tells me that I am the problem and if I am not the problem there is no solution. I am powerless over other people, places and things. I can only change my thinking and my thinking determines how I feel.

Right now, I'm ready for my Ninth Step. I am feeling a lot of anxiety about my estranged children. Two live out of state and one is homeless. I want the freedom to be the mother to my grandkids that I wasn't to my kids, and I am praying for the willingness to be willing.

Secretary: Thanks, Mary. Who is next?  
Annette: Hi, I'm Annette. May I share?  
Secretary: Come on in, Annette. I will mute.

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Annette: Hi, I'm Annette calling in from San Francisco. I struggle with my boyfriend, Sage. He's totally absorbed in workouts and meetings. Change is hard. Living in the United States is so different from my home in Dubai. I'm in my first serious relationship and now I am trying Al-Anon, all because he said, "If you want to date me you need to go check out Al-Anon." No idea that I grew up in "alcoholism." There is ease and comfort in listening to your shares and yet it's scary. I hear the feelings. You all sound better than me. Yet, I heard don't compare your insides to others' outsides. So, thank you all for being real. I'm Annette.

Secretary: Who would like to go next?
Roger: Hi, this is Roger.
McKenzie: Hi, I'm McKenzie. May come in?
Secretary: Ok, Roger and then McKenzie. Come on in Roger, I'll mute.

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Roger: Hi, Roger here, from Utah. Thank you, ladies. I find it hard not to relate. After my wife's two near-death experiences, I've taken on many of the household chores. My work takes me away part of the month and I have a 15-year-old that asked me not to travel because she is scared. Daily on my knees, I ask for His will only and the power to carry it out. Now that's change! I made a program call the other day. It said 2 tsps. on the back of the mac and cheese box; You answered "2 teaspoons;" the laundry, whites came out with tiny holes; You said "1/4 cup bleach was enough." (teary eyed and sniffle) Thank you, ladies.

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Did she say her “partner” was a woman? That makes me uncomfortable.

McKenzie: Hi, I'm McKenzie from England. Life is perpetual change and God is my employer. The first time I "drove through" Al-Anon and left. The second time, I immediately got a Sponsor. Through the Steps, I learned how to keep the focus on me. I got out of her business and into running my own business. My wife is not well. Roger, thank you for your truth (sigh). I found out today that she's been embezzling money (crying). I love her (sniffle). I might lose my business (sniffle). I hate this disease! I am waiting for my Sponsor to call back and taking it one minute at a time. Love you all.

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ACT II (duration six minutes)

Narrator: At the next business meeting, the announcement of the Al-Anon International came up. The group decided to meet at the International and organize a face-to-face meeting. Now remember, they formed biases and opinions on what they heard on their phone meetings. Let's see their responses and thoughts at their first face-to-face meeting. We drop in just as the meeting starts.

Patricia: Hi, I'm Patricia. I am so happy for name tags. I am looking at strangers. I am adjusting my reality, because I realize I had made up pictures and stories of each of you that aren't true. I trusted my Higher Power and found a job; and a small studio apartment. Now, I feel like a powerful, self-supporting woman “through my own contribution.” A miracle is...my husband go to A.A.; HP work quickly; he go to A.A. only three weeks after I left. Today, we date and this is first time for me to travel outside Puerto Rico. Incredible!

McKenzie: (Storms in late...comes to a full halt and stares at Roger...as the only empty chair is between Roger and Mary...and sits down.)
Michelle: *(shyly in a soft voice)* Hi, I am Michelle. I am, like, so overwhelmed by the love at this International Convention. I’m sorry. It’s still hard for me to accept love swirling in abundance. I made up stories, too! Roger, my tattoos relate. I am totally a diverse person *(laughing while pointing at her clothing)* but I thought I was the only one who is so unique. When I look around, you guys are totally like an ethnic quilt of many pieces, fabrics and colors woven and stitched together by the common thread of alcoholism and translated into words by the language of love. *(crying and sniffing)* My dad died last week *(sniffle)* peacefully. Thanks to you and Sponsorship, there are no regrets. Thank you for loving me.

Roger: Hello, I’m Roger. Michelle, so happy to see you too, kiddo, and I am so sad to hear of your father’s passing. I never thought that a room full of women would save my life. I had one at home telling me what to do and I did not need a room full. You showed me courage and honesty in your sharing about economic insecurities. I thought only men had that. I had to look at my own gender bias and I am a richer man for it today. Your love healed my wounds and raised my girls. Oh, by the way, my wife says, “Thank you, ladies!” Al-Anon gave me a life, A.A. gave me a wife, Just for today! And, Alateen gave me my daughter. I just love you all!

McKenzie: Hi, I’m McKenzie. Well said, “ethnic quilt.” I am speechless looking at all of you. It’s a real distraction. I don’t think I would have stayed the first time and maybe not the second time if this was my meeting. I realize how much I would have missed out on! Diversity bonded by the disease of alcoholism and a common goal: “serenity.”

Roger, I can’t express the perspective you have given me in person *(looking at Roger and how he is dressed)*. Annette, you cured me of “adultism.” Patricia, to walk by faith instead of sight gives me courage and Mary, such humility. As for me, I am sad but okay. My wife passed away also. I am so grateful for Al-Anon.

Annette: My heart goes out to you, McKenzie, and to you, Michelle. I agree with McKenzie that I would probably have left if this was my first meeting, too. Thank God that I get to skip the “we are not all alike at first sight” part. Through your honesty, I saw my life and parents. Thank you for sharing your amends and forgiveness. You gave me the courage to talk openly with my parents and Sage.

Look! *(Hold up your hand and show them your wedding ring.)* *(Everybody is
hoooting and hollering congrats, Annette). You are showing me what kind of a woman I want to be, and that life is all about relationships despite looks, age... or isms! (laughing looking at the ring)

Mary: Hi, I'm Mary. I am so moved listening. I always thought of myself as just a cashier, whose husband left. A failed mother with a homeless daughter and no contact with the other two. I hid behind appearances. So here I sit "perfectly" and realize you all know me! And love me! The real me! Alcoholism knows no color, no gender, or age. First time in my life, on vacation with friends that I know, but have never seen. I am not my clothes, my job, my kid's successes or failures. I am real inside! I found so much more than I could have imagined; a brother from a different mother; sisters from different misters. My daughter knows I love her, my other two are coming for Christmas and my grandkids are now (laughing) "terrors" in Alateen! I get to live and be in this moment instead of surviving and getting through the moment.Appearances are illusions created by me to keep you away. Thank you, "no more alone on the phone" meeting!

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ACT III (duration 2 minutes)

Narrator: After the Al-Anon International adventure they decided to identify some of the spiritual principles that assisted them in celebrating their differences and common purpose!

Mary: *Unity and Participation*—Participation for me is the willingness to put our common welfare first and remember that everyone in a meeting has something valuable to teach me. I was so worried about being judged that I did not always participate fully. Recovery for the greatest number depends upon unity.

Annette: *Respect and Open-mindedness*—This makes me think about admitting that I am not all-knowing, and my way gets me on the highway to insanity with no speed limit! I am working on putting "principles above personalities" and looking for the common thread of experience, strength and hope in everyone's sharing.

Michelle: *Compassion and Understanding*—To have compassion I must let myself be vulnerable and remember that we all suffer from the effects of this
disease. When I can set aside what makes me different and really listen, I see that we share the same disease and celebrate the knowledge that we share a common purpose and an amazing program of recovery.

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Act III: Using Our Spiritual Principles

- Acceptance and Tolerance
- Honesty and Humility
- Spirituality and Trust

ACT III (duration 2 minutes)

McKenzie: Acceptance and Tolerance—I am working to stop fighting what is right here, right now and accept the reality of my life. Tolerance to me means looking for what I have in common with others instead of what makes us different.

Roger: Honesty and Humility—When I am living with humility and honesty, my thoughts, words and actions are aligned. I can see myself on the same level as everyone else, not the top of the heap nor the bottom. I remind myself that my Higher Power does not value money, property or prestige, but does value each of us regardless of our differences.

Patricia: Spirituality and Trust—For me, this is about trusting myself and the transformation my Higher Power is leading me through. I need to remember that everyone is at a different stage of spiritual growth and I must trust my Higher Power and myself, so I can begin to trust others.

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Facing Our Biases:
Taking Inventory

We hope that you enjoyed the skit and that it has given you some insight into your own personal biases.

You will find handouts titled "Facing Our Biases" at the end of each table.

Will you please distribute a copy to each person in your row?

Please take the next ten minutes to read through the handout, think about the questions presented and take your own "mini" personal inventory on your own biases (known and unknown) that prevent you from "celebrating our differences and our common purpose."

(After eight minutes) We will be closing off the exercise in two minutes so please begin to complete your inventories.

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For the next 20 minutes, we invite you to the microphone to share your insights, observations and experience from the skit and the inventory exercise just conducted.

Please begin to line up at the microphone now.

<Leave this slide up during the 20-minute group discussions, click to the next slide when the open mic sharing has completed.>

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Thank you for sharing.

Our diversity is our strength.

Using our spiritual principles builds awareness and self-knowledge of personal biases, and can help us to embrace those different from ourselves.

On behalf of our Task Force, we would like to thank you for the opportunity to participate in delivering this presentation.

We encourage you to share the skit and inventory handout in your Areas.

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