World Day of Prayer

"United in Prayer for Justice and Peace"

1 Samuel 2:1-10 & Luke 1:39-55

Prepared by WDPIC

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Telling the Story

INTENTION

Through our united prayers, we have made visible God's desire for justice and peace in every corner of the earth. Our century of informed prayer and prayerful action has brought us into participation with God's transforming work. We celebrate the joyful meeting of women across generations—from Hannah and Mary to the women who started a day of prayer for the world in 1887, to those who established a World Day of Prayer in 1927, to our global sisterhood today. The 2027 centennial marks not our beginning, but a significant milestone in a much larger stream of faithful witness that flows through history. Our prayers join this timeless chorus that transcends boundaries, singing of a God who transforms the world. When we gather, we experience the joy of Elizabeth and Mary—a recognition that something new is growing within our movement, bringing life and hope. For 100 years, our movement has refused to be silenced or discouraged, even during world wars and times of deep conflict. As we join the song for our next hundred years, we recommit to creating spaces where justice flourishes and peace takes root.

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PART 1: OUR ORIGINS

1a. Roots in Prayer and Mission

The soil from which the World Day of Prayer grew was the world missionary movement. Women were first part of it as wives who accompanied their missionary husbands to foreign lands. Conditions in foreign lands were reported back home through letters. Individual and common prayer became a way for people at home to overcome the sense of separation and to turn to God for help. At the same time, these reports revealed the dire conditions under which women and children lived. With the burden of their families, missionary wives were unable to take up teaching children and supporting women. What was needed were single women who could carry out these responsibilities.

From 1860 onward, denominational women's missionary societies were founded in the United States and Canada in order to find, train and financially support single women missionaries. These societies developed annual denominational days of prayer to unite the women for the work at home and abroad. Similar days were established for home missions that focused on immigrants, minorities and migrant workers in North America. The offering taken up at these days of prayer became an important part of financing these activities. Through the Days of Prayer, women developed joint projects and experienced more and more the benefits and joys of working together.

1b. Building International Connections

Cooperating and working together meant growing internationally as well. At an international missionary conference in London in 1888, women could attend and several women spoke about their experiences. The attending women who came from all continents decided to meet and realized how important it was for their own work to learn from one another. The outcome was the "World's Missionary Committee of Christian Women" and Abbie Child from Boston was elected Chairperson. They made a commitment for a common hour each week to pray for one another, to contribute to an annual written exchange of information, and to plan for the legal protection of widows in India.

Twelve years later, in 1900, during the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York, the "World's Missionary Committee" could meet again in person. Now they could discuss plans for the future face to face. The women came to the conclusion that they needed knowledge. Reliable written material on mission was seen as the most urgent need. They founded the "Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions" with a plan to provide a study book on mission topics every year.

1c. The Power of Education

The Central Committee set to work immediately. The first volume was a history of foreign missions from apostolic times to the present. It was published as early as 1901 and surprisingly sold over 50,000 copies within a year. For the next seven years the Committee planned studies on India, China, Japan, Africa and the Pacific Islands and a study on mission and social progress.

How effectively the women approached their work would become apparent in the following years. By 1927, the Central Committee had sold over 4 million study books.

A second amazing development was that many women studied these books by gathering in interdenominational study groups. Women learning together across denominational boundaries—this was revolutionary. Most women met locally during the winter. In 1903 women began organizing week-long summer conferences led by the authors of the study books and returning missionaries. The women attended in great numbers. This educational project was unique and most of all it laid the ground for strong local interdenominational groups and ecumenical councils.

1d. The Women's Jubilee Movement

What became the shining highlight of these years was the 50th Anniversary of the Women's Mission Societies. This anniversary reached hundreds of thousands of women at the grassroots level. The idea of celebrating the anniversary on a grand scale came from Lucy Waterbury Peabody. On the occasion of the anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the "Central Committee," her friend Helen Barrett Montgomery wrote "Western Women in Eastern Lands," a history of the women's missionary movement. Six weeks after its publication, 50,000 copies were already sold.

Although the time available for preparation was incredibly short, soon after the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, a series of major events began in the fall of 1910. By the spring of 1911 a great wave of inspiration and motivation was sweeping across the United States from the West Coast to the East Coast. A changing team of women speakers organized over 70 two-day and many one-day events, most of which were attended by thousands of women. Ecumenical women's teams of up to 400 women were responsible for the organization and public relations work on site. The expertise and experience that the women contributed and gained in the process had an impact far beyond the immediate event.

The verdict of two male commentators is representative of many: "The women commanded themselves and their voices effortlessly filled the largest halls… The time seems to be over when women cannot be heard" and "What a revolution! Peaceful, spiritual, and social! The whole nation is at the feet of these women."

Between 1861, when the first Woman's Board was founded, and 1911, the year of the 50th anniversary, the women raised the almost unbelievable amount of 41 million dollars. This corresponds today to over 970 million dollars.

1e. World War I and the Call for Peace

The experiences of cooperation and unity, learning from one another, grappling with various social problems—all of this was profoundly shaken when Europe entered World War I in 1914 and the United States entered in 1917.

The study book of 1916, "World Mission and World Peace," addressed the horrific realization that so-called Christian nations were at war with one another. The focus of mission took up a dual challenge: "As never before, Christians must work for peace for the sake of mission and as never before they must work for mission for the sake of peace." For the women, the work for peace meant to work together wherever they could.

1f. The United Day of Prayer Begins

When the war was over, these streams of praying, learning, and acting came together with new power. The Federation of Women for Foreign Missions and the Council of Women for Home Missions together called for a united day of prayer across the United States that was to be celebrated ecumenically in churches all over the country. It began in 1920 on the first Friday of Lent.

The response was overwhelming, and attendance grew every year. The Canadian women who started their united day of prayer in 1920 took the same day as their American sisters in 1922 and the same program by 1925.

The Federation and the Council shared responsibilities in the enormous work needed for this nation-wide united day. The office of the Council printed the programs and distributed them. A program committee of the Federation prepared the annual program, which for 1927 had the theme "Pray Ye Therefore," prepared by Chairperson Mary Hough.

PART 2: TELLING THE STORY, Part 1 (1927-1967)

2a. The Circle of Prayer Embraces the World (1927)

Theme & Writer (1927)

1927 - Pray Ye Therefore; Writer: Mary Hough, USA

A small committee of six women from The Federation of Women for Foreign Missions and the Council of Women for Home Missions had the inspiration to send out the 1927 program to all the missionary contacts that they had around the world. The immediate and strong response from many countries was also owed to the study book for 1927, which had already been published in 1926. This book by Mary Schaufler Platt described the devastating conditions under which children had to suffer worldwide, including immigrants and minorities in the United States. The call to join the Day of Prayer reached the leading women in China, Japan and Latin America who had already studied the book. Within an amazing four months, women from everywhere had responded to the call to join the Day of Prayer, and the Committee could print on the finalized program: "World Day of Prayer for Missions."

The echo was unexpected and overwhelmingly big. Unprompted, numerous, impressive reports came from India, Burma, China, Korea, Japan, South America, Africa, Syria, Europe and from the Caribbean Islands, Canada and the United States. In the words of Mary Hough: "We have made the great new experience that we pray with and set free the energies we need for mastering our big tasks."

For decades, women had been praying together, learning together, and acting together. They had built networks of support across denominations and across oceans. They had discovered the power of education and the strength of unity. Now, in 1927, these many streams flowed together into a worldwide river of prayer. The World Day of Prayer was born.

2b. A New Name and a Global Vision (1928-1929)

Themes & Writers (1928-1929)

1928 - Breaking Down Barriers; Writer: Mrs. M. H. Lichliter, USA
1929 - That They May All Be One; Writer: Florence G. Tyler, USA

The 1928 theme said it all: "Breaking Down Barriers." Written by Mrs. M. H. Lichliter from the USA, this service unleashed a tremendously strong movement that transcended barriers of denomination and race, and also of nationality, language and education. Praying together was becoming a joint action. At the same time, it was decided that from now on, the day would simply be called "World Day of Prayer."

In the same year, the World Missionary Conference was held in Jerusalem. Forty-two women participated and lived together for 15 days on the Mount of Olives, which included the experience of Holy Week and Easter in Jerusalem. One of the American delegates, Mrs. E. H.

Silverthorn, reported after the conference: "It became clear to us as never before that our Lord lived a human life, worked like us, walked the busy streets and roads. Thus, the separation between the sacred and secular world finally disappeared for us. He sanctified the whole world for us."

The possibilities for cooperation in the celebration of the World Day of Prayer were presented to the women at Jerusalem. All agreed that the worldwide participation of Christian women would prove to be a bond of unity among women of the world. Some countries had already joined WDP in 1927, but for the delegates at the World Missionary Conference, Jerusalem was the impetus for their participation in WDP in 1929.

2c. Expanding the Circle of Writers (1930-1937)

Themes & Writers (1930-1937)

1930 - That Jesus May Be Lifted Up; Writer: Helen Kim, Korea
**First service written by a woman from outside North America*
1931 - Ye Shall Be My Witnesses; Writer: K.W. McArthur, Canada
1932 - Hold Fast in Prayer; Writer: Helen Tupper, India
1933 - Follow Thou Me; Writer: C.C. Chen, China
1934 - Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem; Writer: Mrs. J.W.L. Hofmeyer, South Africa
1935 - Bear Ye One Another's Burdens; Writer: Baroness Van Boetzelaer van Dubbeldam, Holland
1936 - On Earth, Peace, Goodwill Toward Men; Writer: Laura Jorquera, Chile
1937 - Thou Art the Christ, The Son of Living God; Writer: Mabel Shaw, Missionary

A significant decision was made in Jerusalem: for the movement to truly become a global movement, writers were needed from different parts of the world. Helen Kim from Korea was asked to be the first woman from outside North America to write the World Day of Prayer service. Her 1930 service, with the theme "That Jesus May Be Lifted Up," opened in silence—women sitting together in prayer and meditation. The spoken prayers that followed were not comfortable or easy prayers. They confessed failures in national life, naming "class and race discrimination" and "lack of courage on moral questions." They confessed failures in church life, for being "institution-centered instead of Christ-centered." They confessed failures in international life, acknowledging "injustice and lack of brotherliness in international and interracial relations."

Helen Kim's service set a pattern that would continue: World Day of Prayer would not shy away from difficult realities. It would name injustice, confess complicity, and pray for transformation.

2d. The Shadow of War (1938-1940)

Themes & Writers (1938-1940)

1938 - The Church, A World Fellowship; Writer: Alice E. Henderson, New Zealand
**Service supported theological groundwork for World Council of Churches*

1939 - Let Us Put Our Love into Deeds & Make it Real; Writers: Presbyterian Young Women, USA

1940 - In Quietness and in Confidence Shall Be Your Strength; Writers: Muriel and Doris Lester, England

As the 1930s progressed, the shadow of another world war began to fall. In 1938, as nations prepared for war, women prayed a liturgy written by Alice Henderson from New Zealand, with the theme "The Church—A World Community." The women prayed: "As members of this great fellowship in the Church of the Living God, may we unite in prayer for a sense of real world brotherhood...may we be banded together in love and understanding."

The foreword to this 1938 service talked about Christian leaders proposing to form a World Council of Churches. It explained: "it is fitting that the World Day of Prayer program be built around the church as the center of the world Christian community." This service would support the vision and theological groundwork for what later became the World Council of Churches.

2e. Praying Through World War II (1941-1945)

Themes & Writers (1941-1945)

1941 - Thy Kingdom Come; Writers: WDP Women of Shanghai, China
**Distribution in Korea led to arrests of missionaries and Korean women*

1942 - I am the Way; Writers: Refugee WDP Women in New York City
**Written by women displaced by war*

1943 - Father, I Pray That They May All Be One; Writers: Georgia Harkness and Sadie Gray Mays, USA

1944 - God Wondered That There Was No Intercessor; Writers: From statements of 150 nationals and repatriated missionaries from over 100 countries
**Compiled from voices across nations at war with each other*

1945 - The Church Universal; Writers: Representative of Women's WDP Central Committee for England, Wales and Ireland

Then the bombs fell. Towns, cities, and lives were torn apart. And yet, the raging war could not stop the World Day of Prayer. The liturgies of the World War II years were searing. They named the horrors without flinching: concentration camps, persecution, the machinery of war.

These prayers were not abstract—they were dangerous acts of witness. In Japanese-ruled Korea, Korean women and American missionaries distributed the 1941 prayer service to churches across the country to pray for peace. The authorities called the prayers anti-war and anti-national. American missionaries and Korean women were arrested, and the churches were investigated.

One stirring liturgy from the war years, 1944, had the theme "God Wondered That There Was No Intercessor." This service was compiled from the statements of 150 people from over 100 countries, many from nations at war with each other. They remembered the "sorrows of all the world," praying for "stricken people, ... destroyed cities," and the "unprivileged masses." They

lifted up "injustices of the long centuries." They prayed for their enemies and confessed their own complicity.

The movement survived a world war not because it was sustained in any single place, but because women everywhere refused to let it go.

By 1945, as the war ended, World Day of Prayer had proven its resilience. Women had continued to pray together across enemy lines, to lift up the suffering of the world, and to call for peace and justice even in the darkest hours. The foundation had been laid for the movement's next chapter of growth and development.

2f. Post-War Rebuilding and Growth (1946-1960)

Themes & Writers (1946-1960)

1946 - The Things That Make for Our Peace; Writer: Mabel Shaw, Missionary
1947 - Make Level in the Desert a Highway for our God; Writer: Isabel Caleb, India
1948 - The World at Prayer; Writers: Jessie M. Bader, Welthy Honsinger Fisher and Helen Smith Shoemaker, USA
1950 - Faith of Our Time; Writer: Michi Kawai, Japan
1951 - Perfect Love Casteth Out Fear; Writers: Else Niemoeller and Hildegard Schaeder, Germany
1952 - Christ, Our Hope; Writers: Migrants, Sharecroppers and Native Americans, USA
1954 - That They May Have Life; Writer: Sarah Chakko, India
1955 - Abide in Me; Writer: Jorgelina Lozada, Argentina
1956 - One Flock One Shepherd; Writers: Cook Christian Training School, Phoenix, Arizona, USA
1957 - Who Shall Separate Us…?; Writer: Serena Vassady, Hungarian in Exile
**Written by a woman living in exile*
1958 - The Bread of Life; Writers: WDP Women of Australia
1959 - Lord, I believe; Writers: WDP Women of Egypt
1960 - Labourers Together with God; Writers: WDP Women of Canada

As the world emerged from the devastation of World War II, women of the World Day of Prayer faced the challenge of rebuilding connections and healing divisions. The post-war years saw steady growth as the movement spread to new countries and deepened its commitment to international understanding.

The 1948 service, "The World at Prayer," was written collaboratively by Jessie M. Bader, Welthy Honsinger Fisher and Helen Smith Shoemaker from the USA. This service reflected the urgent need to rebuild a world torn apart by war and to strengthen the bonds of prayer that had sustained the movement through the darkest years.

In 1948, the World Council of Churches was founded, establishing as a core principle that "war is contrary to the will of God." World Day of Prayer women had been praying for peace and

working for reconciliation long before this declaration, and they continued to be a witness to these values in local communities around the world.

The services of this period addressed pressing social concerns. The 1952 service, "Christ, Our Hope," focused on migrants, sharecroppers and Native Americans in the USA. The 1956 service brought the voices of students from Cook Christian Training School in Phoenix, Arizona. These services demonstrated the movement's ongoing commitment to lift up the voices of marginalized communities.

2g. Marking Milestones and Moving Toward Structure (1961-1967)

Themes & Writers (1961-1967)

1961 - Forward through the Ages (75th Anniversary); Writer: Sue Weddell, USA
**Marked what was then understood to be the 75th anniversary*
1962 - For God So Loved the World; Writer: Violeta Cavallero, Uruguay
1963 - More Than Conquerors; Writers: WDP Women of South Korea
1964 - Let Us Pray; Writer: Madeleine Barot, France/WCC
1965 - What Doth the Lord Require?; Writer: Pearl McNeil, USA
1966 - You Are My Witnesses; Writers: WDP Women of Scotland
1967 - Of His Kingdom There Shall Be No End; Writer: Queen Salote, Tonga Islands

The 1960s brought important transitions for World Day of Prayer. In 1961, the movement celebrated what was understood at the time to be its 75th anniversary, with the theme "Forward through the Ages" written by Sue Weddell from the USA. This celebration included 37 Prayer Fellowships that brought together 2,000 women, mainly in the USA and Canada, but also in other continents. The goal of these conferences was to listen to women from different parts of the world and understand their concerns and wishes for WDP. The American women were clear that they wanted to put the responsibility for WDP as soon as possible into the hands of an International Committee, and the Prayer Fellowships were a significant step toward this goal.

The services of this period continued to address urgent social issues. The 1964 service by Madeleine Barot from France, who worked with the World Council of Churches, brought an ecumenical perspective with the theme "Let Us Pray." The 1965 service, "What Doth the Lord Require?" written by Pearl McNeil from the USA, challenged women to consider their responsibilities in a changing world.

As the decade progressed, the groundwork was being laid for a significant organizational shift. Women from around the world increasingly voiced the need for a truly international structure that would allow for shared leadership and decision-making. Two gatherings in 1967 proved decisive in making that vision a reality.

From June 19-24, 1967, 91 women — nearly half of them Roman Catholic — met at Taizé, France for an International Ecumenical Conference, convened in the spirit of renewed Catholic-Protestant collaboration following the Second Vatican Council. Their conversations made clear

that WDP was already being observed in an increasing number of countries by Catholic and Protestant women together, and that the time had come to seek a shared day and theme.

Just weeks later, from July 6-11, 1967, 125 women from 42 countries gathered in Anderson, Indiana at a Consultation on International Relations, invited by Church Women United. One of their three major workshops was devoted entirely to World Day of Prayer, and its recommendations proved foundational: the formation of national WDP committees in every country, the creation of an International Committee composed of their representatives, the designation of the first Friday in March as the date for the worldwide observance (instead of the first Friday in Lent), and the formation of a Provisional Committee to call the first meeting of the International Committee.

These two gatherings — one laying the ecumenical foundation, the other articulating the organizational vision — cleared the path for the founding meeting in Sweden the following year.

Provisional Executive Committee (1967-1968)

Chairperson: Rathie Selvaratnam, Sri Lanka

Members:

- Touran Ehteshami, Iran
- Jean Jolobe, South Africa
- Ana Cordova de Rodgriquez, Puerto Rico
- Edna Sinclair, United States
- Violet Williams, England

Alternates:

- Laura Luz Bacerra, Philippines
- Gudrun Diestel, Germany
- Olga de Ramirez, Guatemala
- Sylvia Talbot, Guyana

PART 3: TELLING THE STORY, Part 2 (1968-2027)

3a. The Formation of the International Committee (1968-1970)

1st International Meeting - Vallingby, Sweden (July 20-25, 1968)

In 1968, the Sveriges Ekumeniska Kvinnorad (Swedish Ecumenical Women's Council) extended an invitation that brought together 33 women from 23 countries at Hesselby Slott castle hotel in Sweden, organized in large part by Doris Strutz. Special visitors joined them each day, including the president of the Swedish Ecumenical Council. When a motion was made, seconded, and unanimously approved to create an International Committee for World Day of Prayer, the room broke into the Doxology — a spontaneous expression of gratitude for a dream realized.

The new International Committee adopted a constitution and elected an Executive Committee, giving the movement a global structure to support the local celebrations that had been held around the world for decades. Several foundational decisions were made: the first Friday in March was designated as the annual World Day of Prayer, replacing the first Friday in Lent to accommodate Orthodox women's participation. Church Women United was asked to continue administering the movement, and all National Committees were invited to share in the budget on a voluntary basis. Dr. Marga Buhrig of Switzerland was approved to represent the International Committee in discussions with the Union Mondiale des Organisations Feminines Catholiques, and the gathering recommended support for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, the YWCA Week of Prayer, and the Fellowship of the Least Coin — signaling from the outset WDP's commitment to the wider ecumenical movement.

Executive Committee (1968-1970)

Chairperson: Gudrun Diestel, Germany

Members:

- Esther Coker, Sierra Leone
- Laura Burnett, Canada
- Amal Halaby, Lebanon
- Sylvia Talbot, Guyana

Alternates:

- Eileen Dingle, Australia
- Margareth Dharma, Indonesia
- Ann Linde, South Africa
- Guadalupe de Ortega, Mexico
- Mary Ross, United States
- Gabriella Titta, Italy

Themes & Writers (1968-1970)

1968 - Bear Ye One Another's Burdens; Writer: Rathie Selvaratham, Ceylon (Sri Lanka)

1969 - Growing Together in Christ; Writers: WDP Women of West and Southern Africa
1970 - Take Courage!; Writers: WDP Women from Egypt, India, Jamaica, Philippines and USA

The 1968 service, written by Rathie Selvaratham from Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), had the theme "Bear Ye One Another's Burdens"—a fitting call as the movement took this step into more formal international cooperation. The 1970 service, "Take Courage!" was a collaborative effort from WDP women of Egypt, India, Jamaica, Philippines and USA, demonstrating the kind of international partnership that the new structure was designed to support.

3b. Encounters Across Faiths (1970-1974)

2nd International Meeting - Bangkok, Thailand (Sept 20-24, 1970)

Just two years after the formation of the International Committee, 53 women from 30 countries gathered at the YMCA in Bangkok, Thailand for the second International Meeting — held immediately following the Asian Church Women's Conference (ACWC) in Sukabumi, Indonesia. A highlight of the gathering was a lecture on Buddhism, "The Triple Gems," delivered by Princess Poon Pismai Diskul, reflecting the meeting's deep engagement with interfaith encounter. Messages were received from Pope Paul VI and Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother of England, and the women met with Khun Sangdao Sayamwala, Vice President of the Thai Muslim Women's Foundation and board member of the National Council of Social Welfare — a tangible expression of WDP's commitment to dialogue across faith traditions.

The reports shared by women from around the world painted a vivid picture of the challenges and questions facing the movement globally: Christian-Muslim dialogue (Gambia and Sri Lanka), wealth inequality (India), respect for human dignity (Korea), relating to people of other faiths and preventing the isolation of Chinese Christians (Japan), young people's frustration with the church's indifference to oppression (Trinidad), wider Catholic involvement (Philippines), professional disillusionment among women trained abroad who returned to face dismissive church men (Guyana), engaging youth (Indonesia and Singapore), racial reconciliation (USA), interdenominationalism between Catholics and Protestants (Guatemala). Out of this rich and honest exchange, the meeting drew several shared conclusions: helping women understand their own dignity was the first priority; reconciliation among Christians would heal the Body of Christ; Christians must stand alertly against injustice and discrimination; and peace must be sought tirelessly.

Key decisions included opening the International Committee to greater Catholic participation — the World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations was invited to name two members to the International Committee at each international meeting. On a motion by Shanti Solomon of India, the Fellowship of the Least Coin was recognized as a movement of similar aim and scope to WDP. A formal vote of thanks was extended to Margaret Shannon of Church Women United, Administrative Secretary, for her leadership of the movement.

Executive Committee (1970-1974)

Chairperson: Gudrun Diestel, Germany

Members:

- Esther Coker, Sierra Leone
- Michiko Okuda, Japan
- Eileen Sheard, New Zealand
- Margaret Sonnenday, United States
- Sylvia Talbot (Co-opted), Guyana
- Jacqueline Stuyt*, England
- Dulcinea Rodrigues*, India

**World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations*

Alternates:

- Akhtar Azadegan, Iran
- Winifred Clark, England
- Young Nai Kim Kang, Korea
- Pramila Masoji, India
- Rathie Selvaratnam, Sri Lanka
- Grace Tsai, Taiwan

Themes & Writers (1971-1974)

1971 - A New People for a New Age; Writers: WDP Women of the Caribbean
1972 - All Joy Be Yours; Writers: WDP Women of Europe
1973 - Alert in Our Time; Writers: WDP Women of New Zealand
1974 - Make Us Builders of Peace; Writers: WDP Women of Japan

The services of this period reflected the movement's growing global consciousness. The 1971 service, "A New People for a New Age," was written by WDP Women of the Caribbean, bringing the voices and concerns of that region to the worldwide observance. The 1972 service, "All Joy Be Yours," came from WDP Women of Europe, while the 1973 service returned the authorship to the Pacific region with "Alert in Our Time" by WDP Women of New Zealand.

These years also saw important work on the theme that had defined World Day of Prayer from its earliest days: "Informed Prayer—Prayerful Action." The International Committee worked to support national and local committees in developing educational resources that would help women truly understand the contexts they were praying with and for. As the International Committee completed its first years of work, the structure was proving its value in supporting the grassroots movement while fostering deeper international connections.

3c. Women, Justice, and Global Solidarity (1974-1978)

3rd International Meeting - Mexico City, Mexico (Sept 26-30, 1974)

64 women from 37 countries gathered in Mexico City in September 1974 for the third International Meeting — a location choice that carried its own significance. That same city would host the United Nations' first conference focused solely on women in 1975, launching the UN Decade for Women. Women around the world were organizing, demanding justice, and creating networks of solidarity across borders, and World Day of Prayer women were part of that global movement.

The gathering included visits to the Anthropological Museum, the Ballet Folklórica, and CIDAL, a center for research on women in Latin America, as well as a fiesta with mariachi music and worship at the Cuernavaca Cathedral. The closing worship brought the meeting to a memorable end, with a ceremony of light, an Agape Supper, and a ritual in which each woman placed a leaf bearing her name on a tree of life — a beautiful expression of the unity they had experienced together. By this point, WDP materials were being sent to 77 National Committees and over 1,700 individuals around the world.

Key decisions reflected the movement's growth and ambition. A new Executive Committee and alternates were elected, and a greatly increased budget of $70,000 was adopted. Church Women United was asked to continue providing staff support, with Dorothy Wagner designated as Administrative Secretary. And looking ahead, the meeting voted to hold the next International Committee gathering in Africa — setting the stage for the 1978 meeting in Zambia.

Executive Committee (1974-1978)

Chairperson: Prakai Nontawasee, Thailand

Members:

- Regina Addo, Ghana
- Mary Fadel, Egypt
- Guadalupe de Ortega, Mexico
- Hildegard Seidel, Austria
- Avenell Tuttle (Co-opted), Canada
- Jacqueline Stuyt*, England

**World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations*

Alternates:

- Delphine Ramanonjy-Ratrimo, Madagascar
- Doreen Kirkcaldy, Jamaica
- Alder Hall, South Australia
- Margaret Williams, England
- Olga Nogueira, Brazil
- Julie Ang Kim Kiat, Singapore

Themes & Writers (1975-1978)

1975 - Become Perfectly One; Writers: WDP Women of Egypt
1976 - Education for All of Life; Writers: WDP Women of Mexico

1977 - Love in Action; Writers: WDP Women of German Democratic Republic
1978 - Community Spirit in Modern Life; Writers: WDP Women of Canada

The 1976 service, written by WDP Mexico, had the theme "Education for All of Life." This service opened with a powerful statement: "As Christians, we cannot shut our eyes and ears to what is happening in the world today. Education for the living of these days is not simply academic instruction. Everything that we know must be used as an instrument to make life more human in the place where we live."

The service then presented three scenes depicting three realities: the reality of poverty, with mothers carrying dirty water to their children while wealthy women showed no concern; the reality of relationships, with a wife caring for a sick child while her husband waited for dinner and took a nap; and the reality of repression, with a family listening to news of another military coup, the mother weeping as she remembered their pastor who was threatened for carrying a Bible verse about feeding the hungry. The service ended by asking: "Is it true that as Christians we have social and political responsibility?" The answer was: "Yes," followed by a prayer: "[God], forgive us because it is hard to understand the way of your liberating love, of your true salvation."

This service exemplified what World Day of Prayer had always insisted: informed prayer and prayerful action belong together. Women kept discovering that prayer demands we go, see, and act. Prayer does not allow us to close our eyes to suffering or be silent about injustice.

3d. Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action (1978-1982)

4th International Meeting - Lusaka, Zambia (April 22-30, 1978)

The fourth International Meeting brought 80 women from 43 countries to Mulungushi Hall, Lusaka, Zambia, with a special emphasis given to the idea of “Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action.” The official opening service was held at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, where President Kenneth Kaunda gave a moving address on the significance of prayer, declaring that prayer is the heart of action. Participants visited the State House, the University of Zambia, the Parliament House, and the botanical gardens. One evening, a powerful, soul-searching drama, “Soweto Revisited," was presented.

The meeting brought several revisions to the constitution: the preamble was rewritten to sharpen the articulation of WDP's purpose, the Executive Committee was expanded from 6 to 7 members, and new provisions were added for electing alternates to broaden geographical representation and ensure continuity when members were unable to participate. Funds were designated for printing and distributing a WDP brochure in English and Spanish. Special attention was called for in planning the 1979 children's services, in honor of the United Nations International Year of the Child.

The meeting closed with a journey to the Mindolo Ecumenical Centre in Kitwe, where three hundred women from across the Copperbelt welcomed the delegates with song and celebration — and where, that very day, potable water arrived at the Centre for the first time, the fountain

turned on in joyful commemoration. Most African delegates stayed on at Mindolo afterward for a Pan-African Consultation.

Executive Committee (1978-1982)

Chairperson: Mary Fadel, Egypt

Members:

- Florence Imathiu, Kenya
- Doreen Kirkcaldy, Jamaica
- Nancy Kwok, Singapore
- Mele Taufa, Tonga
- Margaret Williams, Scotland
- Beclee Wilson, United States

Alternates:

- Margaret Elliot, Canada
- Sr. Mary Alfred Farrugia, Cyprus
- Lidia Mansilla, Guatemala
- Christiane Nemet, Austria
- Alice Bimwala-Mabwidi, Zaire
- Olga Nogueira, Brazil
- Nancy Waters, New Zealand

Themes & Writers (1979-1982)

1979 - Spiritual Growth; Writers: Women of Africa at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation
1980 - Responsible Freedom; Writers: WDP Women of Thailand
1981 - The Earth is the Lord's; Writers: Native American Women, USA
1982 - The People Of God – Gathered in Worship, Scattered for Service; Writers: WDP Women of the Republic of Ireland and of Northern Ireland

The worship services of this period continued to address pressing concerns of justice and peace. The 1979 service, "Spiritual Growth," came from women of Africa at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, reflecting on the connection between spiritual depth and a commitment to justice. The 1980 service from Thailand carried the theme "Responsible Freedom," exploring what it means to live as free people in a world of constraint and oppression.

In 1981, Native American women in the USA wrote the service "The Earth is the Lord's," bringing indigenous perspectives on creation care and land rights to the worldwide observance. This service reminded the global community that justice includes care for the earth and respect for indigenous peoples' relationship with the land.

The 1982 service, written by WDP Women of the Republic of Ireland and of Northern Ireland, had the theme "The People Of God – Gathered in Worship, Scattered for Service." Coming from

a context of deep conflict and division, this service spoke powerfully about the challenge of being the people of God in places torn by violence, and the call to be scattered for service even when that service required crossing dangerous boundaries.

3e. A New Logo (1982-1986)

5th International Meeting - Tutzing, Germany (May 24-June 3,1982)

At the fifth International Meeting, 120 women from 65 countries gathered at the Evangelical Academy in Tutzing, Germany under the theme "Women Empowered in Prayer and Action." The Bavarian setting provided a rich backdrop: the women worshipped at the Theatinerkirche Roman Catholic church and were received at the Bavarian State House. An evening Bavarian feast with traditional music and dancing by a local youth group gave the gathering a festive character. Delegates could choose from excursions to the Rococo Church in Wies, Castle Linderhof, a farmhouse in Glenleiten, or Dachau — each in its own way a window into Germany's layered history and culture.

A memorable Bible study, "Women in the Wilderness — a Spiritual Journey of Silence, Solitude, Seeing," led by Beclee Wilson, invited delegates to bring scraps of cloth, which were stitched together during the session and presented as a quilt to the German Committee — a tangible symbol of unity across difference.

At this meeting, the symbol developed by the women of Ireland was adopted as the official logo of the International Committee for World Day of Prayer, presented by Joan Nicoll of Ireland. Its design brings together arrows converging from the four compass points, figures kneeling in prayer, the Celtic cross, and a circle representing the world — together expressing the movement's unity across all its diversity.

As Dorothy Wagner prepared for retirement, the meeting opened discussions about WDP increasing its financial contributions toward staff services, at that point covered entirely by Church Women United, reflecting the movement's growing sense of institutional responsibility.

Executive Committee (1982-1986)

Chairperson: Margaret Williams, Scotland

Members:

- Joyce Tembo, Zambia
- Yook Sook (Eunice) Kim, Korea
- Dorinda Sampath, Trinidad
- Ruthild Brakemeier, Brazil
- Anakit Aksay, Turkey
- Alice Jean Finlay, Canada

- Nancy Waters, New Zealand
- Mary Breslin*, Rep. of Ireland
  **At Large Catholic Representative*

Alternates:
- Margaret Quist, Ghana
- Kamala Minoson, India
- Una Matthews, Guyana
- Helga Hiller, Fed. Rep. of Germany
- Lidia Mansilla, Guatemala
- Mary Massoud, Egypt
- Cora Sparrowk, United States
- Unaisi Matawalu, Fiji

Themes & Writers 1983-1986

1983 - New Persons in Christ; Writers: WDP Women of the Caribbean
1984 - Living Water from Christ Our Hope; Writers: WDP Women of Sweden
1985 - Peace Through Prayer and Action; Writers: WDP Women of India
**Direct expression of WDP's core motto*
1986 - Choose Life!; Writers: WDP Women of Australia
**Call to choose life in context of Cold War and nuclear threat*

The mid-1980s saw World Day of Prayer continuing to address urgent global concerns. The 1983 service from the Caribbean, "New Persons in Christ," explored themes of personal and social transformation. The 1984 service from Sweden, "Living Water from Christ Our Hope," reflected on Christ as the source of life and renewal in a world facing environmental and spiritual crises.

The 1985 service, written by WDP Women of India, carried the theme "Peace Through Prayer and Action"—a direct expression of the movement's core motto. This service emphasized that peace is not merely the absence of conflict, but the presence of justice, and that prayer and action for peace cannot be separated.
In 1986, WDP Women of Australia wrote "Choose Life!"—a powerful call to choose life over death, hope over despair, justice over oppression. This theme resonated deeply in a world still gripped by Cold War tensions and nuclear threat, reminding women everywhere that choosing life is both a spiritual commitment and a political act.

3f. A Statement of Conscience (1986-1990)

6th International Meeting - Stony Point, New York, USA (May 9-18, 1986)

The sixth International Meeting brought 152 women from 79 countries to Stony Point Center in New York — a gathering which was understood at the time to lead into a 1987 Centennial celebration of World Day of Prayer. Dame Nita Barrow from Barbados, who was one of the six Presidents of the World Council of Churches, gave keynote presentations on global realities and

signs of hope. Church Women United offered an "Americana" afternoon — a celebration of U.S. history and culture that included a drama tracing the voices of Sacajawea, Anne Hutchinson, Sojourner Truth, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. A full day in New York City included a visit to the United Nations, lunch at the Church Center for the UN, and dinner at the Canaan Baptist Church in Harlem.

The women at this meeting did not shy away from an urgent justice issue — apartheid in South Africa. Chairperson Margaret Williams and Joyce Tembo had visited South Africa in 1983 at the request of the 1982 International Committee, meeting WDP groups of all races across Pretoria, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and Cape Town. Building on this, the 1986 International Committee issued a formal statement declaring that "apartheid is wrong and sinful," and that "the power of informed prayerful action is needed" to bring it to an end. Delegates were urged to support the Harare Conference Recommendation to observe a World Day of Prayer and fast on June 16, 1986 — the tenth anniversary of the Soweto uprising — and to continue informing themselves, praying for the people of South Africa, and dialoguing with church and political leaders in their own countries to encourage steps toward equal rights and participation for all.

The meeting closed with a celebration at Riverside Church on May 18. The service included a dramatic presentation of WDP history featuring the three women then believed to be the movement's founders — Mary Ellen James, Helen Barrett Montgomery, and Lucy Waterbury Peabody — portrayed in historical costumes. A bagpiper led the processional down the center aisle playing "Amazing Grace," followed by the Omega Liturgical Dance Group, and a procession of incoming and outgoing Executive Committee members and national delegates carrying rainbow banners from every region. The offering was dedicated to the Fund for the Second Century — a new fund established at this meeting with a goal of $500,000, intended to provide stable, long-term funding for the programs and office of the International Committee.

Executive Committee (1986-1990)

Chairperson: Alice Jean Finlay, Canada

Members:

- Syria Kagoro, Zimbabwe
- Navamani Peter, India
- Rubye Gayle, Jamaica
- Helga Hiller, Fed. Rep. of Germany
- Isabel de Urdaneta, Colombia
- Mary Massoud, Egypt
- Jamie Pearson, United States
- Fataui Mata'afa, Western Samoa
- Mary Breslin*, Rep. of Ireland

**At Large Catholic Representative*

Alternates:

- Joyce Tembo, Zambia

- Lirio Victorino, The Philippines
- Paulette Holly, Haiti
- Pia Tiemersma, The Netherlands
- Alicia de Monti, Argentina
- Rena Musaad, Lebanon
- Sharon Thurston, Canada
- Dorothy Armstrong, Australia

Themes & Writers 1987-1990

1987 - Come and Rejoice!; Writers: WDPIC Executive Committee
**Celebrated what was then understood to be the 100th anniversary*
1988 - Open Doors; Writers: WDP Women of Brazil
1989 - Lord, Teach Us to Pray; Writers: WDP Women of Burma (Myanmar)
1990 - A Better Tomorrow, Justice for All; Writers: WDP Women of Czechoslovakia
**Written as country emerged from Communist rule*

Throughout 1987, there were major national celebrations around the world. The press coverage was enormous, and women of WDP reflected on their roles in their churches, realizing how much their competence in leading worship and conducting Bible studies had grown, and how much their knowledge about women in many countries had increased. With the participation of Roman Catholic and increasingly Orthodox women, WDP had become an inclusive ecumenical event worldwide.

The services of this period continued to address critical issues. The 1988 service from Brazil, "Open Doors," invited women to open doors of welcome and solidarity. The 1989 service from Burma (Myanmar), "Lord, Teach Us to Pray," explored the depths of prayer life in a country facing political repression. The 1990 service from Czechoslovakia, "A Better Tomorrow, Justice for All," came at a historic moment as the country emerged from Communist rule, offering a powerful witness to hope and the possibility of transformation.

3g. Learning to Work Across Cultures (1990-1995)

7th International Meeting - Kingston, Jamaica (July 28-Aug 6, 1990)

The seventh International Meeting brought 132 women from 71 countries to the campus of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. The Caribbean setting was warmly embraced — evenings were given to cultural and Caribbean celebrations, and a day trip to Ocho Rios included sightseeing and a warm welcome from women of the Baptist Church for lunch and a program. The International Meeting opened with a session on cultural diversity led by Mary D'Arcy of the Maryknoll Lay Mission Training Program, inviting women to reflect on how to work faithfully in cultures and situations other than their own — a fitting threshold for a meeting of women from so many corners of the world.

Several important developments marked this meeting. As World Day of Prayer had by this point established its own independent office and operations, separate from Church Women United's

administrative structure, Eileen King's title was formally changed from Administrative Secretary to Executive Director — a title that better reflected the movement's growing institutional independence. The Executive Committee was authorized to explore incorporating the international office as a not-for-profit religious organization, and an increase to 2% giving from National Committees was discussed for helping to stabilize the international office financially. A new working group, Strengthening National Committees, was created to respond to challenges arising in various national committees around the world. The meeting also clarified the role of regional gatherings — valuable for fostering cooperation, promoting WDP, and supporting spiritual growth among neighboring countries, but not decision-making bodies, with each region responsible for funding its own meetings.

Executive Committee (1990-1995)

Chairperson: Navamani E. Peter, India

Members:

- Syria Kagoro, Zimbabwe
- Stien Djalil, Indonesia
- Rubye Gayle, Jamaica
- Pia Tiemersma, The Netherlands
- M. Luiza Fagundes, Brazil
- Mary Mikhael, Lebanon
- Sherrolyn Riley, Canada
- Margaret Wilson, Australia

Alternates:

- Sara Kebreab, Ethiopia
- Ruth Kao, Taiwan
- Paulette Holly, Haiti
- Gisele Laurent, Belgium
- Alicia de Monti, Argentina
- Yousriya Loza-Sawiris, Egypt
- Mary Cline Detrick, United States
- Rebecca Akaruru, Cook Islands

Themes & Writers 1991-1995

1991 - On the Journey Together; Writers: WDP Women of Kenya
1992 - Living Wisely with Creation; Writers: WDP Women of Austria, Germany-West and Switzerland
1993 - God's People: Instruments of Healing; Writers: WDP Women of Guatemala
1994 - Go, See and Act; Writers: WDP Women of Palestine
1995 - The Earth is a House for All People; Writers: WDP Women of Ghana

This period witnessed several global transformations—the end of the Cold War, the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of apartheid in South Africa, and emerging awareness of environmental crises. World Day of Prayer services reflected these momentous changes and challenges.

The 1991 service, "On the Journey Together," was written by WDP Women of Kenya. This theme emphasized the movement's commitment to walking alongside one another through times of change and uncertainty. The 1992 service from Austria, Germany-West and Switzerland, "Living Wisely with Creation," addressed the urgent need for environmental stewardship and humanity's responsibility to care for God's creation.

In 1993, WDP Women of Guatemala wrote "God's People: Instruments of Healing," bringing attention to the wounds of war and violence in their country and the need for healing and reconciliation. The 1994 service from Palestine, "Go, See and Act," was shaped around women who were "moved and affected," "crying and lamenting," as they accompanied Jesus to the cross. This service included a Palestinian woman named Amal (whose name means Hope) telling her story of displacement since 1948, witnessing her brother being shot, and her son imprisoned for asking for his national rights. The service called on women to "see and act like the women of Galilee," stating: "It is the duty of all God's people to protect human life and to protest against every form of discrimination—racial, religious, political, social."

The 1995 service from Ghana, "The Earth is a House for All People," continued themes of justice and environmental care, reminding the global community that the earth belongs to all people and future generations.

3h. Discovering Our Herstory (1995-1999)

8th International Meeting - Melbourne, Australia (Feb 1-10, 1995)

The eighth International Meeting brought 132 women from 67 National Committees to Queen's College in Melbourne, Australia. A highlight of the gathering was a talk by Cathy Craigie on the Aboriginal struggle in Australia, grounding the international gathering in the particular history and justice concerns of the host country.

Several significant decisions shaped the future of the movement. National committee contributions were increased to 4%, and delegates were encouraged to support WDP through bequests and donations in memory of women they wished to honor. A Treasurer was added to the Executive Committee, with Donna Hunter — who had guided the International Committee through the process of becoming fiscally independent — appointed to the role. Discussions turned to two questions of enduring importance for the movement: the involvement of men, with a clear consensus that men should be welcomed to attend and educated about WDP but should not take over its leadership or planning, affirming that WDP is a women's movement that is a gift for men to learn from and participate in; and the inclusion of younger women, with practical brainstorming on how to draw them more fully into the movement. Strengthening national committees was also a focus, continuing the work begun at the 1990 meeting to support WDP's grassroots foundation around the world.

Executive Committee (1995-1999)

Chairperson: Navamani E. Peter, India

Treasurer: Donna Hunter, Canada

Members:

- Rachel Tetteh (Deceased 1996), Ghana
- Sarie Jansen, South Africa
- Dipika Das, Bangladesh
- Dorinda Y. Sampath, Trinidad & Tobago
- Marty Voser, Switzerland
- Renée Carter, Paraguay
- Mary Mikhael, Lebanon
- Mary Cline Detrick, United States
- Taumua P. Toma, Samoa

Alternates:

- Karen Ngigi (Co-opted with vote), Kenya
- N. J. Vijayalakshmi, Sri Lanka
- Shirley Rose, Jamaica
- Alena Naimanovà, Czech Republic
- Inez Proverbs, Panama
- Yousriya Loza-Sawiris, Egypt
- June Dyer, Canada
- Yvonne Harrison, Australia

Themes & Writers 1996-1999

1996 - God Calls Us to Respond; Writers: WDP Women of Haiti
1997 - Like A Seed Which Grows into A Tree; Writers: WDP Women of South Korea
1998 - Who is My Neighbor?; Writers: WDP Women of Madagascar
1999 - God's Tender Touch; Writers: WDP Women of Venezuela

The services of this period addressed crucial global concerns. The 1996 service from Haiti, "God Calls Us to Respond," came from one of the poorest countries in the Western Hemisphere, calling women to respond to God's call with compassion and action. The 1997 service from South Korea, "Like A Seed Which Grows into A Tree," reflected on how small acts of faith can grow into movements of transformation.

In 1998, WDP Women of Madagascar asked, "Who is My Neighbor?" challenging the global community to expand their understanding of who deserves care and solidarity. The 1999 service from Venezuela, "God's Tender Touch," explored themes of divine compassion and human responsiveness to suffering. By the end of this period, World Day of Prayer had not only a

clearer understanding of its own history, but also a renewed commitment to the principles that had guided the movement from its beginning: informed prayer, prayerful action, and solidarity with women around the world.

3j. Reconciliation and the New Millennium (1999-2003)

9th International Meeting - Cape Town, South Africa (Apr 14-23, 1999)

The ninth International Meeting brought 199 women from 92 countries to Cape Town in April 1999. The meeting opened with a landmark presentation on the history of World Day of Prayer by Dr. Helga Hiller of Germany and Executive Director Eileen King, drawing on intensive archival research they had undertaken together since 1997 in denominational and ecumenical missionary archives in the United States. Their work had uncovered primary documents that revealed a more complete story of WDP's origins — clarifying that while 1887 marked the beginning of denominational days of prayer, 1927 was the year women around the world first responded together to a global call to prayer, making it the true centennial year. This research corrected the misunderstanding that had led to the 1987 centennial celebrations and gave the movement a firmer and richer sense of its own history. Dr. Hiller's book, *Ökumene der Frauen*, was published that same year, filling a significant gap in the knowledge of WDP's history worldwide and in Germany.

The theme for the Cape Town International Meeting was "In Christ, Global Partners in Reconciliation," introduced by keynote speaker Dr. Brigalia Bam, who drew on her own experience of Apartheid and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to explore the hard and painful work of reconciliation in South Africa and beyond. Dr. Mercy Amba Oduyoye from Ghana led three Bible studies deepening the theme, and women from Burma, Romania, Guatemala, and Palestine gave witness to the work of reconciliation in their own countries, affirming that listening to stories of oppression is an essential step toward healing.

One evening, Ntombentsha Matinisi and Bongi Zengele presented on the AIDS crisis in South Africa and their orphan care program Thandanani — meaning "Love and Care for One Another" in Zulu — a powerful reminder of the justice concerns at the heart of WDP's prayerful action. Cultural highlights included an African Regional Cultural Program at the City Hall featuring the choir "Libertas" and the Dizu Dancers, and an ecumenical worship service at St. George's Cathedral where the Xhosa Large Print Bible was launched by the Bible Society.

Executive Committee (1999-2003)

Chairperson: Yvonne Harrison, Australia

Treasurer: Karen G. Prudente, USA

Africa:
Sarie Jansen, South Africa
Karen Ngigi, Kenya

Asia:
Jung-Ok Lee, Korea
Shunila Ruth, Pakistan

Caribbean:
Waveney Agatha Benjamin, Guyana
Neva Edwards, Dominica

Europe:
Inge-Lise Lollike, Denmark
Alena Naimanovà, Czech Republic

Latin America:
Renée Carter, Paraguay
Inez Proverbs, Panama

Middle East:
Aida Haddad, Palestine
Nadia Menes, Egypt

North America:
Susan Shank Mix, United States
Sylvia Lisk Vanhaverbeke, Canada

Pacific:
Margaret Kenna, New Zealand
Gwen Tulo, Papua New Guinea

At Large Orthodox Representative:
Maria-Gabriela Trombitas, Romania

Themes & Writers 2000-2003

2000 - Talitha Kumi, Young Women Stand Up!; Writers: WDP Women of Indonesia
2001 - Informed Prayer – Prayerful Action; Writers: WDP Women of Samoa
**Direct exploration of WDP's core motto*
2002 - Challenged to Reconcile; Writers: WDP Women of Romania
2003 - Holy Spirit, Fill Us; Writers: WDP Women of Lebanon

As the world entered a new millennium, World Day of Prayer continued to address both longstanding and emerging challenges. The 2000 service from Indonesia, "Talitha Kumi, Young Women Stand Up!" focused on empowering young women and calling them to leadership. This service came at a critical time as the movement looked to engage the next generation.

In 2001, WDP Women of Samoa wrote what would become a defining service for the movement: "Informed Prayer – Prayerful Action." This service directly named and explored the

motto that had guided World Day of Prayer from its earliest days. Through the traditional kava ceremony—a ritual of welcome that transforms strangers into family—Samoan women taught that prayer requires true knowledge of those we pray with, and that knowing compels us to act. "We need to be informed when we pray," they explained, "and we need to be practical after our prayer. It is not prayer if we do not act."

The 2002 service from Romania, "Challenged to Reconcile," addressed the difficult work of reconciliation in post-Communist contexts and beyond. The 2003 service from Lebanon, "Holy Spirit, Fill Us," called on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower women in their work for justice and peace in a region marked by ongoing conflict.

Between 2000 and 2002, World Day of Prayer organized a series of workshops focused on reconciliation and response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. African women put together these workshops, creating spaces where they broke the silence around AIDS at a time when many churches remained silent and governments were in denial. They equipped one another on how to educate their local communities on this crisis, demonstrating once again that prayer demands we go, see, and act.

3k. Workshops Around the World (2003-2007)

10th International Meeting - Swanwick, Derbyshire, England (Aug 27-Sept 3, 2003)

The tenth International Meeting brought 215 women from 100 countries to the Hayes Conference Centre in Swanwick, England in August 2003. The theme, "Happy Are Those Who Strive for Peace," was brought to life by keynote speaker Nora Carmi, working with the Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre in Jerusalem, who shared her lifelong experience of seeking peace and justice in the midst of conflict. In a moving expression of the theme, each delegate brought a photograph of a woman or group who had been a peacemaker in their country. Women from Burma, Romania, Guatemala, and Palestine added their own witness to the demanding work of peacemaking in countries torn apart by military conflict. Dr. Ulrike Bechmann led Bible studies on the Daughters of Zelophehad, the Healing of Naaman, and Mary of Magdala, and workshops were led on women's engagement in peacemaking and on responding compassionately to the social and health consequences of HIV/AIDS across Africa.

Several constitutional amendments were passed, including combining the Caribbean and North America into a single region (CANA), and adding language that wherever possible, the expense of a liaison attending an International Meeting should be borne by the National Committee she represents. National committee contributions were increased from 4% to 5%. Service themes and writers were approved through 2011. The meeting also celebrated the rich work of the preceding quadrennial, during which the International Committee had conducted an extensive program of workshops around the world: Talitha Kumi young women's leadership workshops in Pakistan, Guyana, Madagascar, Chile, Mauritius, and Egypt; conflict resolution and HIV/AIDS workshops across Africa in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania, and Cameroon; a Pacific joint leadership training event bringing together WDP women from seventeen Pacific countries for the first time in Samoa; and a study seminar in Romania to strengthen ecumenical relationships with women

of the Orthodox churches, drawing participants from Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Russia, and Ukraine.

Executive Committee (2003-2007)

Chairperson: Sylvia Lisk Vanhaverbeke, Canada

Treasurer: Karen G. Prudente, United States

Africa:
Suzie Bayiha II, Cameroon
Assah E. Mgonja, Tanzania

Asia:
Junko Matsuura, Japan
Woranut Pantupong, Thailand

Caribbean/North America:
Waveney Agatha Benjamin, Guyana
S. Annette Poitier, Bahamas

Europe:
Inge-Lise Lollike, Denmark
Ewa Walter (Deceased 2006), Poland

Latin America:
Elisabeth Delmonte, Uruguay
Ormara Nolla, Cuba

Middle East:
Laila Carmi, Palestine
Nadia Menes, Egypt

Pacific:
Jannice Graham (Deceased 2003), Australia
Vaieli Fuiono Piita, Tuvalu
Joanna Matagi-Vilitama, Niue Island

At Large Orthodox Representative:
Maria Ciceva-Aleksic, Macedonia

Themes & Writers 2004-2007

2004 - In Faith, Women Shape the Future; Writers: WDP Women of Panama
2005 - Let Our Light Shine; Writers: WDP Women of Poland

2006 - Signs of the Times; Writers: WDP Women of South Africa
**Written from context of post-apartheid South Africa facing HIV/AIDS and inequality*
2007 - United Under God's Tent; Writers: WDP Women of Paraguay

The services of this period reflected World Day of Prayer's ongoing commitment to addressing pressing global concerns. The 2004 service from Panama, "In Faith, Women Shape the Future," emphasized women's agency and calling to participate in creating a more just world. The 2005 service from Poland, "Let Our Light Shine," called women to be witnesses to faith and hope in a world marked by darkness and despair.

In 2006, WDP Women of South Africa wrote "Signs of the Times," reflecting on how to read and respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. Coming from a country that had emerged from apartheid and was grappling with HIV/AIDS, economic inequality, and the work of truth and reconciliation, this service brought particular wisdom about discerning the signs of the times and responding with courage.

The 2007 service from Paraguay, "United Under God's Tent," explored themes of hospitality, inclusivity, and the call to create communities where all are welcome. This service reminded the global community that God's tent is spacious enough for all people.

3l. Adopting Our Guiding Principles (2007-2012)

<u>11th International Meeting - Toronto, Canada (May 30 - June 5, 2007)</u>

The eleventh International Meeting brought 179 women from 95 countries to Seneca College in Toronto in May 2007. The theme, "I Shall Put My Breath in You and You Shall Live," drew from Ezekiel 37:14 and set the tone for a week of worship, study, and discernment. The keynote address was given by Mary Jo Leddy, social activist and theologian at Regis College, Toronto School of Theology, who spoke on radical gratitude as the most essential spiritual attitude — grounding her reflection in twelve years of living and working with refugees at the Romero House Community in Toronto. Three Bible studies were led by Dr. Ulrike Bechmann on the Book of Job, and Dr. Dorcas Gordon on the stories of Martha, Mary, and the Resurrection — texts connected to the upcoming WDP services. Workshops addressed HIV/AIDS in Latin America, the Pacific and the Caribbean, and the theme of Power and Empowerment. Judith Snowdon of the Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada composed a theme hymn for the meeting, and the gathering closed with Psalm 150 as its benediction. A day trip to Niagara Falls provided a joyful close to the week.

The WDPIC Guiding Principles were formally approved at this meeting, along with chapters on National Committees and the Executive Committee in their Region, to be incorporated into a WDPIC Resource Book. Young delegates — those 35 and under — gathered separately to propose strategies for deepening youth participation in WDP, including youth coordinators at national and regional levels and scholarships for young women.

Executive Committee (2007-2011)

Chairperson: S. Annette Poitier, Bahamas

Treasurer: Marcia L. Florkey, United States

Africa:
Véronique L. Lutatabio, Nigeria
Assah E. Mgonja, Tanzania

Asia:
Zenaida C. Maturan, Philippines
Sheree, Suk-Ling Wong, Hong Kong

Caribbean/North America:
Alison O. Carter, Barbados
Marilyn Fortin, Canada

Europe:
Jean Hackett, England/Wales/Northern Ireland
Corinna Harbig, Slovenia

Latin America:
Elisabeth Delmonte, Uruguay
Ormara Nolla, Cuba

Middle East:
Laila Carmi, Palestine
Lucy Ishak Guirguis, Egypt

Pacific:
Vaieli Fuiono Piita, Fiji
Pauline Smit, Australia

Themes & Writers 2008-2012

2008 - God's Wisdom Provides New Understanding; Writers: WDP Women of Guyana
2009 - In Christ There Are Many Members Yet One Body; Writers: WDP Women of Papua New Guinea
2010 - Let Everything that has Breath Praise God; Writers: WDP Women of Cameroon
2011 - How many Loaves Have You?; Writers: WDP Women of Chile
2012 - Let Justice Prevail; Writers: WDP Women of Malaysia

The services of this period brought voices from regions facing particular struggles. The 2008 service from Guyana, "God's Wisdom Provides New Understanding," explored how divine

wisdom guides us through challenges and uncertainty. The 2009 service from Papua New Guinea, "In Christ There Are Many Members Yet One Body," celebrated the diversity of the body of Christ while affirming unity in Christ.

The 2010 service from Cameroon, "Let Everything that has Breath Praise God," was a joyful celebration of life and creation, calling women to praise God even in difficult circumstances. The 2011 service from Chile, "How many Loaves Have You?" drew on the feeding of the multitude to challenge women to share what they have and trust in God's provision.

In 2012, WDP Women of Malaysia wrote "Let Justice Prevail," a service that directly addressed issues of corruption, inequality, and the urgent need for justice systems that serve all people fairly. This service called on women to work actively for justice in their communities and nations, demonstrating once again that prayer and action cannot be separated.

3m. Welcoming the Stranger, Seeking Justice (2012-2017)

12th International Meeting - New York City, NY, USA (June 10-17, 2012)

The twelfth International Meeting brought 225 women from 103 countries to New York City in June 2012, gathering at The Interchurch Center and the Manhattan School of Music. The theme of justice — drawn from Amos 5:24, "Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" — shaped every dimension of the week. A framework of transformative education, represented as a spiral of justice, guided the delegates through six moments: starting with their own stories, looking for patterns, broadening knowledge, visioning strategies for justice, taking action, and reflecting.

The justice issue at the center of the meeting was migration, and delegates ventured out into New York City to visit fourteen non-governmental and church-based organizations serving migrant communities, hearing firsthand the stories of those seeking shelter, education, legal advocacy, and dignity. Bible studies led by Dr. Ulrike Bechmann, presented as an interactive theatrical narrative, explored the stories of Hagar and the Samaritan woman, weaving threads of justice and encounter with God through the experiences of women on the margins.

The meeting marked a significant moment of transition, as Eileen King retired after twenty-five years as Executive Director — a tenure that had spanned the movement's historical rediscovery, its incorporation as a nonprofit, and extraordinary growth in global participation. Rosângela Oliveira from Brazil was welcomed as the incoming Executive Director, bringing new leadership into the movement's next chapter.

Executive Committee (2012-2017)

Chairperson: Corinna Harbig, Slovenia

Treasurer: Marcia L. Florkey

Africa:

Henriette Mbatchou, Cameroon
Joyce Larko Steiner, Ghana

Asia:
Sirirat Pusurinkham, Thailand
Vino Schubert, Sri Lanka

Caribbean/North America:
Alison O. Carter, Barbados
Marilyn Fortin, Canada

Europe:
Emmanuelle Bauer, Luxembourg
Laurence Gangloff, France

Latin America:
Rebeca Cascante, Costa Rica
Esther Susana Menke Renner, Brazil

Middle East:
Camelia Basta, Egypt
Nora Carmi, Palestine

Pacific:
Katea Lutui, Tonga
Sala Naveata, Fiji

Themes & Writers 2013-2017

2013 - I Was A Stranger and You Welcomed Me; Writers: WDP Women of France
2014 - Streams in the Desert; Writers: WDP Women of Egypt
2015 - Jesus said to them: Do You Know What I Have Done to You?; Writers: WDP Women of the Bahamas
2016 - Receive Children, Receive Me; Writers: WDP Women of Cuba
2017 - Am I Being Unfair to You?; Writers: WDP Women of the Philippines

This period saw World Day of Prayer continuing to address some of the most pressing global issues of the time, particularly migration and the treatment of refugees and displaced people. The 2013 service from France, "I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me," built an entire service around hospitality and welcome. Five immigrant women told their stories—of trafficking, discrimination, welcome, and new life. The service prayed "for the courage to face the reasons why people are driven from their homes: war, natural disaster, the damage caused by climate change, a failed economy." This vision of informed prayer and prayerful action found powerful expression in France's call to welcome the stranger.

The 2014 service from Egypt, "Streams in the Desert," reflected on finding hope and life in dry and difficult places. Coming from a country in the midst of political upheaval, this service spoke to the experience of many around the world seeking sustenance in desert times.

In 2015, the Bahamas wrote "Jesus said to them: Do You Know What I Have Done to You?" focusing on Jesus washing the disciples' feet as a model of servant leadership and mutual care.

The 2016 service from Cuba, "Receive Children, Receive Me," called attention to the vulnerability of children and the call to protect and nurture them.

The 2017 service from the Philippines, "Am I Being Unfair to You?" drew on the parable of the workers in the vineyard to explore questions of fairness, justice, and God's generous grace. This service challenged conventional understandings of fairness and invited reflection on God's economy of abundance.

3n. Caring for Creation, Weathering a Pandemic (2017-2022)

13th International Meeting - Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil (Aug 20-27, 2017)

The thirteenth International Meeting brought 188 participants from 81 countries to Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. The location at the meeting point of three countries — Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina — was itself a symbol of the gathering's spirit, and a group of young dancers and musicians from Paraguay offered a warm cultural welcome. The theme, "Seeking Wisdom to Care for God's Creation," set the context for a meeting deeply engaged with environmental justice. Bible studies were led by three theologians — Silvia Regina Lima e Silva on Genesis 1, Dora Arce Valentin on Proverbs 31, and Ulrike Bechmann on Luke 14 — each exploring how wisdom calls WDP women to transformation.

A presentation on the environmental context of Brazil's Amazon region gave grounding to the theme's urgency, and small thematic groups explored topics ranging from climate justice and indigenous women's land rights to welcoming refugees, responding to crises, empowering Orthodox women, and engaging young women. In an act of solidarity, participants wore black on Thursday in support of the Thursday in Black campaign against rape and violence.

Executive Committee (2017-2022)

Chairperson: Laurence Gangloff, France

Treasurer: Susan Jackson-Dowd, USA

Africa:
Henriette Mbatchou, Cameroon
Joyce Larko Steiner, Ghana

Asia:
Moumita Biswas, India

Vino Schubert, Sri Lanka

Caribbean/North America:
Ruth V.E. Phillips, Barbados
Lauren Wilks, Canada

Europe:
Emmanuelle Bauer, Luxembourg
Senka Sestak Peterlin, Croatia

Latin America:
Rebeca Cascante, Costa Rica
Esther Susana Renner, Brazil

Middle East:
Maral Barzkian Haidostian, Lebanon
Nora Carmi, Palestine

Pacific:
Vicki Marney, Australia
Henrica Nio Marona (Deceased 2021), Cook Islands

Themes & Writers 2018-2022

2018 - All God's Creation is Very Good!; Writers: WDP Women of Suriname
2019 - Come – Everything is Ready; Writers: WDP Women of Slovenia
2020 - Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk; Writers: WDP Women of Zimbabwe
2021 - Build on a Strong Foundation; Writers: WDP Women of Vanuatu
**Celebrated during COVID-19 pandemic with creative adaptations*
2022 - I Know the Plans I Have for You; Writers: WDP Women of England, Wales & Northern Ireland

This period witnessed both a growing urgency around environmental issues and the unprecedented global challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2018 service from Suriname, "All God's Creation is Very Good!" celebrated the goodness of creation and called for responsible stewardship of the earth. This service came at a time of increasing awareness of climate crisis and environmental degradation.

The 2019 service from Slovenia, "Come – Everything is Ready," extended an invitation to God's feast, exploring themes of abundance, hospitality, and readiness to receive God's gifts. The 2020 service from Zimbabwe, "Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk," called on women to rise up in faith and action, drawing on Jesus' healing of the paralyzed man.

In 2021, amid the global COVID-19 pandemic, WDP Women of Vanuatu wrote "Build on a Strong Foundation." This service, celebrated while many could not gather in person, spoke

powerfully about building lives and communities on the strong foundation of faith in Christ. The pandemic tested World Day of Prayer in new ways, as women found creative ways to observe the day—through online services, outdoor gatherings, and small groups—demonstrating the movement's resilience and adaptability.

The 2022 service from England, Wales and Northern Ireland, "I Know the Plans I Have for You," drew on Jeremiah 29:11 to offer hope and assurance in uncertain times. Coming after two years of pandemic disruption, this service reminded women of God's faithful presence and good plans even in the midst of challenge and change.

3o. Looking Toward the Centennial (2022-2027)

<u>14th International Meeting - online (June 16-18, 2022)</u>

The fourteenth International Meeting was held virtually by Zoom on June 16-18, 2022. Originally planned as an in-person gathering in Edinburgh, Scotland, the COVID-19 pandemic led the Executive Committee to move to a virtual format. WDP Scotland, which had prepared so generously to host the gathering, knitted around 15,000 prayer squares and mailed them to all National Committees in advance, giving every delegate something tangible to hold during the virtual meeting. The theme, "New Heart, New Mind, Called to Hope," based on Ephesians 1:18, grounded the gathering in a spirit of prayer and forward-looking courage. A Bible dialogue offered by Dr. Ulrike Bechmann and Viola Raheb deepened the meeting's spiritual reflection. The gathering paused to honor the memory of Henrica Marona of Cook Islands, a beloved Pacific Regional Representative who passed away in February 2021.

A "Young Women Talking" session offered young delegates a space to speak about hope — including a tribute to Ruth Trueba Castro of Cuba, a gifted artist and WDP leader who had been killed in a tragic accident the previous year. Ruth had illustrated prayers during the pandemic, led a Global Conversation on drawing as an act of prayer, and served as president of WDP Cuba. Her loss was mourned across the movement.

Key decisions from the meeting included a renewed emphasis on 100% participation by all National Committees in the 5% annual contribution — an expression of solidarity with the international movement regardless of the size of the gift. Delegates affirmed the Fund for Tomorrow as a vital means of carrying the movement into the future, and committed to building the movement's online capacity, which had expanded significantly through the pandemic years and opened new possibilities for connection across the global network. WDP committees were called to deepen their engagement with climate justice, safe water, food security, migration, and the elimination of violence against women, reaffirming support for the Thursday in Black campaign. A new Centennial Working Group was formed to begin laying the groundwork for the celebration of WDP's Centennial in 2027. Among the ideas the Centennial group offered were: creating a special centennial logo, inviting musicians and poets to compose songs inspired by the 2027 theme, organizing special ceremonies to honor committed women, planting trees as living symbols of WDP's roots and future growth, and placing children and young people at the heart of the celebrations — widening the circle of the movement toward its next hundred years.

The meeting marked a significant leadership transition as Rosângela Oliveira retired as Executive Director after ten years of service, and Katie Reimer was welcomed as the incoming Executive Director. Joyce Larko Steiner of Ghana was elected as the new Chairperson — a historic moment as the first African woman to hold this role.

Executive Committee (2022-2027)

Chairperson: Joyce Larko Steiner, Ghana

Treasurer: Deanne Newland, USA

Africa:
Rosalie Akoue ep Adze, Gabon
Queen Bridget Chisha, Zambia

Asia:
Devika Ukwatte, Sri Lanka
Jyoti Singh Pillai, India

Caribbean/North America:
Ruth V.E. Phillips, Barbados
Stephanie McClellan (stepped down in 2025), Canada

Europe:
Edith Toth, Romania
Senka Sestak Peterlin, Croatia

Latin America:
Maria Laura Tolu, Argentina
Reeba Imola Webster Bennett, Honduras

Middle East:
Maral Barzkian Haidostian, Lebanon
Emel Susin, Turkey

Pacific:
Vicki Marney, Australia
Amanda Sanele Iosefo (stepped down in 2022), Samoa
Maselina Tuioti (invited; voice but no vote), Samoa

Themes & Writers 2023-2027

2023 - I Have Heard About Your Faith; Writers: WDP Women of Taiwan
2024 - I Beg You... Bear with One Another in Love; Writers: WDP Women of Palestine
2025 - I Made You Wonderful; Writers: WDP Women of Cook Islands
2026 - I Will Give You Rest: Come; Writers: WDP Women of Nigeria

2027 - United in Prayer for Justice and Peace!; Writers: WDPIC
**Centennial service marking 100 years of World Day of Prayer*

As World Day of Prayer approached its centennial year, the services continued to address urgent contemporary concerns while looking back with gratitude and forward with hope. The 2023 service from Taiwan, "I Have Heard About Your Faith," explored what it means to live faithfully in contexts of political pressure and uncertainty.

The 2024 service from Palestine, "I Beg You... Bear with One Another in Love," came from women living under occupation and ongoing conflict. This service called for patience, endurance, and love in the midst of struggle and violence. The women of Palestine invited the world to bear witness to their suffering and to pray and act for justice and peace.

In 2025, WDP Women of the Cook Islands wrote "I Made You Wonderful," celebrating the unique gifts and wonder of each person and culture. This service from a small Pacific island nation reminded the global community of the beauty and diversity of God's creation and God's people.

The 2026 service from Nigeria, "I Will Give You Rest: Come," offered an invitation to find rest in God amid the pressures and exhaustion of contemporary life. As the centennial year of 2027 approached, the 2027 service, "United in Prayer for Justice and Peace," was written by WDPIC International to mark this historic milestone—100 years of women around the world praying together, learning together, and acting together for justice and peace.

3p. Our Centennial Year (2027)

As World Day of Prayer approaches the centennial of the first worldwide day of prayer in March 1927, the movement is preparing to mark this milestone with celebration, reflection, and renewed commitment to the future.

<u>"Root, Reflect, Rise"</u>

A special call is going out to the worldwide movement as we honor our Centennial year:

- Root — Plant a special Centennial tree in your community as a living symbol of WDP's growth and presence in the world, taking root now for the next hundred years.

- Reflect — Write the history of World Day of Prayer in your country, interview elders in the movement, and recover the stories of women whose faithful work has sustained WDP through the decades.

- Rise — Support the newly established WDPIC Young Women's Fund, a dedicated fund to create opportunities for young women in the movement. Initiate local fundraisers, gifts, and donations as you invite the worldwide movement to build the resources needed to carry WDP into its next century.

Centennial Projects

- Music Book — Approximately 25 songs that have emerged from the WDP movement over the last hundred years — a musical treasury of the movement's voice across cultures and generations.

- Prayer Book — One hundred prayers from the hundred years of World Day of Prayer, bearing witness to the depth and breadth of what women have lifted up to God in their common prayer.

- Conversation Circles on the Guiding Principles — A series of recorded dialogues, one for each of the 9 Guiding Principles, each bringing together three voices from across the WDP movement.

WDPIC Young Women's Leadership Institute

As part of the Centennial year, WDPIC is planning a Young Women's Leadership Institute — a special opportunity for young women ages 21-35 from all regions of the WDP movement. Selected participants from across the worldwide network will gather together in the Fall of 2026, deepening their leadership and their connection to the global ecumenical movement they are being invited to help carry forward.

Centennial SNC Grants

Each National Committee in the movement may apply for up to $750 USD to support their work in building up World Day of Prayer during the Centennial year.

15th International Meeting — Accra, Ghana, June 21-28, 2027

The fifteenth International Meeting will gather in Ghana from June 21-28, 2027 — and because of the special significance of the Centennial year, the meeting is opening several new categories of participation:

- Stewards Program — Young women between the ages of 21 and 35 are invited to attend, bringing the next generation into the heart of the movement's international gathering.

- WDPIC Choir — A category for voices from across the movement to join together in leading worship throughout the week.

- Observers — We warmly welcome those who wish to witness this historic gathering and encourage many throughout the movement to consider joining us for this once-in-a-century occasion.

In 1927, a small committee of women sent out a call to pray, and women around the world answered. One hundred years later, that circle has grown to encompass women in more than 135 countries, praying together on the first Friday of March in countless languages, traditions, and contexts. The centennial is not only a moment to look back with gratitude — it is an invitation to widen the circle once more, to pass the light to the next generation, and to trust that the seeds planted now will bear fruit for another hundred years.

PART 4: WHO WE ARE

4a. Our Guiding Principles

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide movement of Christian women of many traditions who gather in local communities for a common day of ecumenical prayer on the first Friday of March. In our partnership, we are guided by these principles, which were approved at the 2007 International Meeting:

1. Starting Point: Christian Women

a. We recognize Christian women as competent to express their faith and to speak about their lives in prayer and worship before God and in community.
b. Christian women see themselves and one another as Christians before God coming from different theological and church traditions in which they respect one another.
c. They turn to their faith in Jesus Christ and to the Bible as a common basis from which to shape their prayer and worship.

2. Listening and Speaking

a. Prayer is rooted in listening to God and to one another. On World Day of Prayer, we listen to the Word of God and to voices of women sharing their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their opportunities and needs.
b. In a climate of attentive listening, women find their voices and can speak from their experiences. We can "hear one another into speaking." (Nelle Morton, *The Journey Is Home*, Boston, Beacon Press 1985).
c. The commitment to speak and to listen provides the basis for genuine dialogue.
d. Dialogue in WDP takes place between women far apart from one another and among women at home. The voice of far away women is primarily received in written form and asks us for creative ways for how we can enter into dialogue with them. Careful preparation of the WDP service is necessary to enable local communities to join their voices in informed prayer on the first Friday of March.

3. Being Faithful and Creative

a. WDP calls women to be faithful to the worship service that they receive and to the women who wrote it.
b. Within the demands of translation into different languages and interpretations into different contexts, women strive to be faithful to the texts that they received and so to make heard the voices of women of a different country.
c. Faithful listening also opens our eyes and leads to creativity in building a bridge between different contexts.
d. WDP encourages creative celebration of the WDP service which expresses your own response to the theme, the Bible texts, and the points of connection between women in different parts of the world.
e. Faithful creativity in celebrating WDP widens the horizons of all who participate. It fosters vital ecumenical prayer and strengthens ecumenical solidarity at the local level and worldwide.

4. Stretching Beyond What Is Familiar; Becoming Inclusive

a. It takes some risk to understand one another from where the other person is rather than from where I am.
b. Stretching asks us to move through our own resistance and to overcome obstacles and to cross borders.
c. It brings renewal when there is stretching out to far away women and to those who live nearby and to new generations of young women.
d. To be inclusive offers the possibility to encounter the breadth and depth of the Christian experience.

5. Sharing Acknowledges That All Have Something to Give and to Receive

a. Each year the women of a country share their faith and lives in the worship service with their sisters around the world.
b. Taking turns in writing the service emphasizes that all are able to give and receive.
c. In sharing prayers, culture, music, art, we discover commonalities and differences that can be celebrated and can be enriching.
d. Sharing resources has many expressions: gifts, talents, skills, hospitality, care, time, commitment, reliability, persistence, and other forms of assistance.
e. Through the WDP offering women share their resources with women and children around the world.

6. Developing Global Ecumenical Sisterhood; Building Trust with One Another

a. We begin on a personal level with respect and being open-hearted.
b. This openness helps to establish relationships which make further steps possible.
c. In an atmosphere of trust, barriers that divide can be overcome.
d. God's trust in us enables and encourages us to trust one another.
e. Trust is also a key attitude in building authentic ecumenical relations.

7. Being a Christian Neighbor in a Multi-Religious World

a. Our prayer on WDP is Christian prayer taking place in a multi-religious world.
b. Called by Jesus Christ to love our neighbors, Christian women seek to live in community with everyone around them including people of other faith traditions.
c. While today the search for ways to hold inter-faith prayer is happening on various levels, WDP is keeping its focus on strengthening ecumenical relationships through Christian prayer.
d. If people of other faiths wish to attend WDP services or women wish to invite neighbors of other faiths, they are welcome as guests to whom we extend Christian hospitality.

8. Committed to Learn; Striving for Wisdom

a. Each year WDP brings to women a stimulus to learn and to study. Women welcome the occasion to reflect on the significance of the annual WDP theme and to learn about the lives of people in other countries. They are keen to discover new understandings about cultures, expressions of Christianity, causes for social problems, urgent world issues, ways to address them, and more.
b. WDP furthers an attitude of learning that is open to new perspectives and that helps to grow a body of knowledge that can build on the years before.

c. WDP fosters the use and development of appropriate educational materials that range from written texts to new media.
d. WDP understands learning as a mutual process of learning together and from one another. Together we strive for wisdom that shapes our understandings and guides our actions in our daily lives.
e. WDP helps us to recognize better what is our own and to appreciate and respect what is other than our own. To differentiate is an important part of our learning process. Thus, we build a global perspective that resembles a rainbow of many colors and that is different from forces that drive "globalization" in a way that devalues people's lives and cultures.
f. Each year the WDP theme and worship service take up a different aspect of Christian theology in an ecumenical endeavor. Thus, WDP contributes to ecumenical learning and a fuller understanding of our Christian faith.

9. Moving into Responsible Action

a. In WDP every woman is invited to be engaged and to bring in her talents. All the time, skills, services that are contributed; all the study undertaken and all the trust that is being built become the basis for ongoing action. This active participation takes up the WDP motto: informed prayer—prayerful action. We need the depth of prayer and meditation so we can freely risk ourselves in love and action.
b. WDP encourages responsible action that grows out of the worship service and its theme, and that is wisely discerned and appropriate for women who engage in it.
c. The steps toward action begin wherever women are in their everyday lives in their communities and can reach as far as the everyday lives of women in other countries.
d. When women move forward step by step they express both courage and hope. Being willing to look at the problems that affect the world and cause suffering requires courage. To take small steps and proceed one step at a time is an expression of hope even when confronted by many difficulties.
e. WDP has grown from small seeds into a global ecumenical movement, a tree that grows every year. The trust that we have is in God who gives the seeds the strength to grow and the tree to bear fruit. God empowers us on our journey as we walk step by step with one another.

<u>Prayer to Guide Us:</u>

God, source of our strength, we thank you.

You transform the seed into fruit.
You feed and sustain us.
You are with us on easy and difficult paths.
You enable us to walk with one another.

We ask you, help us to trust your strength that cares for what is small
and that can create something marvelous from timid beginnings.

Be near us, guide and move us.
As the grains from many fields become bread,
so make out of us one community sign of hope in this world. Amen.

4b. *Informed Prayer—Prayerful Action*

From its earliest days, World Day of Prayer has been guided by a fundamental conviction: prayer and learning belong together, and both prayer and learning must lead to action. This principle shaped the movement long before it was formally articulated as a motto.

Roots in the Study Movement

When the women of the missionary movement founded the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions in 1900, they were acting on their belief that effective prayer requires knowledge. They produced study books—selling over 4 million copies by 1927—because they understood that women needed to know about the conditions, cultures, and challenges facing people in mission lands in order to pray meaningfully for them.

Local women gathered in interdenominational study groups throughout the year, learning together about different countries and contexts. Then when they prayed, their prayers were rooted in real understanding. And when they acted—supporting missionaries, funding schools and hospitals, advocating for justice—their actions grew directly from what they had learned and prayed about.

This pattern continued as World Day of Prayer became a global movement. The 1927 service calling women to prayer worldwide was preceded by Mary Schaufler Platt's 1926 study book documenting the devastating conditions under which children suffered globally. Women who had studied the book knew what they were praying for when they joined the Day of Prayer.

Informed Prayer—Prayerful Action as Explicit Motto

While the practice of informed prayer leading to prayerful action had always characterized the movement, it was given explicit voice in the 2001 service written by WDP Women of Samoa. Their service, titled "Informed Prayer – Prayerful Action," explored this principle directly, teaching that "we need to be informed when we pray, and we need to be practical after our prayer. It is not prayer if we do not act."

Through the traditional kava ceremony—a ritual of welcome that transforms strangers into family—Samoan women demonstrated that true prayer requires genuine knowledge of those we pray with, and that knowing compels us to act.

What the Motto Means

Informed Prayer means:

- Learning about the lives, contexts, and struggles of women in the country writing the service

- Studying the biblical texts and themes with care
- Understanding the root causes of injustice and suffering
- Preparing our hearts and minds through education before we pray

Prayerful Action means:

- Action that grows directly from prayer and reflection
- Decisions and commitments made in God's presence
- Steps taken with courage and hope, trusting in God's strength
- Work for justice and peace that is sustained by ongoing prayer

As the 9th Guiding Principle states: "We need the depth of prayer and meditation so we can freely risk ourselves in love and action."

Living the Motto

Throughout World Day of Prayer's history, this motto has taken concrete form:

- Women studying Country Backgrounds and preparing carefully for the annual service
- Local groups taking action on issues raised in the service—from supporting refugees to advocating for environmental justice
- The WDP offering supporting projects that address needs women have learned about
- National and international committees discerning how to respond to urgent global crises

The motto "Informed Prayer—Prayerful Action" captures the movement's conviction that prayer, learning, and action cannot be separated. Each strengthens and shapes the others. Together, they form the rhythm of the World Day of Prayer's life and witness in the world.

4c. Our Structure

We Are Global Because We Are Local

One of the World Day of Prayer's most profound insights is this: we are global because we are local everywhere.

The beating heart of World Day of Prayer is found in tens of thousands of local groups gathering in communities around the world. In wooden pavilions open to the air, in rural churches nestled in valleys, in senior homes and hospitals, in suburban parishes and soaring urban cathedrals—wherever women gather on the first Friday of March, there is World Day of Prayer.

These local groups are not branches of some distant organization. They are World Day of Prayer itself, made visible and tangible in each place. When women in a village in Kenya study the worship service written by women in the Philippines, they are not receiving instructions from headquarters—they are receiving a gift from their sisters. When women in Germany translate the service from Paraguay, they are not implementing a program—they are building a bridge between two communities.

Every structure in World Day of Prayer exists for one purpose: to serve and support these local groups. National Committees exist to help local women receive and prepare the annual worship service. Regional Representatives exist to strengthen National Committees so they can better serve local groups. The International Committee exists to coordinate the selection of writers and themes, to facilitate communication, and to ensure that the movement maintains its integrity and vision. The WDPIC office in New York exists to support all of these layers in their service to local women.

The structure is designed so that strength flows from the grassroots up, not from the top down. Decisions about how to celebrate the worship service, how to prepare communities, what actions to take in response to prayer—these decisions are made locally, by the women who know their own contexts best. The structures above the local level coordinate, facilitate, connect, and resource. They do not control or dictate.

This means that the World Day of Prayer looks different in different places, and this is exactly as it should be. Women celebrate in their own languages, with their own music, in spaces that are meaningful to them, addressing issues that affect their lives. The worship service provides a common framework, but each community makes it their own through faithful and creative celebration.

When local groups send their offerings to their National Committees, when National Committees send reports and contributions to the International Committee, when women from around the world gather at International Meetings—all of this flows from the local level. The local groups sustain the entire movement. We are global because we are local everywhere.

Ecumenical at Every Level

From its origins, World Day of Prayer has been carried by women working across denominational boundaries. This ecumenical character is not an add-on to the movement—it is woven into the very fabric of how we organize and work.

At the local level, women from different churches—Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and others—come together to prepare and celebrate the annual worship service. They meet in one another's church buildings, taking turns hosting. They learn from one another's traditions of prayer and worship. They discover that they can pray together even when they worship differently. In many communities, World Day of Prayer is the primary ecumenical event of the year, the one time when women from all churches gather as one.

National Committees are intentionally ecumenical in their composition. They bring together women delegated by different denominational women's organizations and churches. The committees strive for balance, ensuring that different Christian traditions are represented. When these committees make decisions about translating the worship service, producing resources, or allocating offerings, they do so across denominational lines. They work together not in spite of their differences, but in appreciation of what each tradition brings.

The Executive Committee of the International Committee deliberately ensures representation of the world's major Christian traditions—Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant. When necessary, a Member-at-Large is elected specifically to include a tradition that would otherwise be absent from the Executive Committee. This commitment to inclusivity means that when the Executive Committee makes decisions affecting the worldwide movement, those decisions are informed by multiple theological perspectives and church experiences.

The ecumenical character of World Day of Prayer is more than structural—it is relational and spiritual. Women build trust across denominational boundaries through years of working together. They learn to listen to theological languages different from their own. They come to appreciate worship practices they did not grow up with. They discover that unity does not require uniformity, and that the richness of different traditions strengthens rather than weakens their common prayer.

World Day of Prayer demonstrates year after year that Christian women can work together effectively, joyfully, and faithfully across the boundaries that too often divide the church. In doing so, the movement contributes to the larger ecumenical movement and offers a glimpse of Christian unity.

How Themes and Writers Are Selected

One of the most important decisions the World Day of Prayer International Committee makes is selecting which country will write the worship service and what theme that service will explore.

- The process begins at an International Meeting, where delegates from National Committees gather to consider suggestions for themes and writer committees submitted by National Committees around the world. Which themes are most pressing? Which countries are ready to write? Which regions have not written recently? After prayer and discussion, the International Committee selects countries to write worship services for years into the future—usually planning at least six to eight years ahead.

- Once a writer committee is selected, the National Committee gathers for a Strengthening National Committee workshop 4 years ahead of time to plan for the process. A second workshop is organized for the following year that brings together women representing different regions, denominations, and perspectives within their country. This team studies the theme deeply, grounds it in Scripture, connects it to their local context, and shapes a worship service that will speak both from their particular experience and to the universal church.

- Throughout the writing process, the writer committee works in partnership with the WDPIC Executive Director, discussing how to express their context in ways that will be understood globally. When a draft is ready, it is sent to members of the Executive Committee—representing all regions of the world—for study and feedback. The writer committee considers this feedback and makes revisions. The service goes through multiple drafts until it is authentic to the writer country, theologically rich, globally accessible, and faithful to the vision and guiding principles of World Day of Prayer.

- Finally, the completed worship service—along with Bible studies, country background information, children's service, and other resources—is sent to all National Committees about 18 months before the celebration. National Committees translate, adapt, and prepare to celebrate together.

This careful, collaborative process ensures that every part of the world eventually has a turn to speak, to share their faith, and to tell their stories. A small island nation gets the same opportunity as a large country. Women facing occupation can share their experience. Women celebrating creation can call the global community to environmental stewardship. Each year, the worship service carries the genuine voice and witness of the writer country while serving the needs of the worldwide movement.

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