World Day of Prayer

"United in Prayer for Justice and Peace"

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

Prepared by WDPIC

March 5, 2027

Children's Program

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.

Program for Ages 4-7: "Together We Pray, Together We Care"

Opening Circle

Welcome & WDP Story

[Children sit in circle with world map/globe in center. Leader speaks.]

Welcome! Today we're doing something really special that kids have been doing for 100 years! A long, long time ago, some women saw that people around the world needed help. So they started a special day when everyone would pray together at the same time! Today, kids and grown-ups in 140 countries are praying together. Does anyone know what country we live in? Let's see if we can find that on the map.

[Kids look for their country on the map.]

So we are just one of the 140 countries that pray together on the same day every year - the first Friday of March.

But..World Day of Prayer doesn't have to be just one day. We can pray together all year long. And when we remember each other in prayer, it also reminds us to care about each other. Our prayers lead us to care together.

Repeat after me:

"When we pray together, we care together!"

Opening Prayer

Now let's pray together. You can repeat after me, so we all pray the same words together.

Dear God,
thank you for the beautiful world that we live in.
Thank you for helping us get to know each other in different parts of the world.
Thank you for how we can all care about each other.
Amen!

Story Time: Hannah and Mary's Prayers

Two Women Who Prayed to God

Now it's time for a story.

A long time ago, there was a woman named Hannah. Hannah was very sad. She really wanted something, but she didn't have it. Hannah wanted to have a baby. She waited a very very long time, until she had grown old.

Hannah felt alone, but she knew she could talk to God. She prayed and prayed. And God listened to Hannah, and helped her. Hannah was so happy, and she sang a song. It went like this.

Repeat after me:
"The Lord has filled my heart with joy."
"I am glad because you have helped me!"
"There is no-one like you."

Have you ever been really sad because you wanted something that you didn't have?

What did Hannah do when she was really sad?

Yes, Hannah prayed! And God helped her! God will help us, too, when we are sad.

Many years later, there was another woman. And her name was Mary. Mary was a young woman, maybe the same age as some of your older brothers and sisters! Do any of you have brothers or sisters who are teenagers?

So Mary was a teenager when she got some very surprising news. She was going to have a baby! She didn't know what to do, so she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was an adult, and Mary felt safe with Elizabeth.

Mary found out that Elizabeth had also gotten some very surprising news! And being around Elizabeth made Mary feel better. It lifted her up when she was feeling scared and uncertain. God does the same for us. When we are feeling scared and uncertain, we can go to someone else we trust, and share our feelings with them. And God will help lift us up.

And just like Hannah, Mary sang a song, too!

Repeat after me

"My soul praises the Lord."
"My heart is happy because God cares about me."

“God always helps those who need help.”

Both Hannah and Mary learned that God listens when we pray.

Both Hannah and Mary learned that God cares about us very much.

And Mary felt better when she was with Elizabeth - together they were stronger!

This is why it’s so great when we pray together with kids and adults from all around the world.

[Leader lifts up the globe, and invites all the kids to come around and touch the globe together.]

Repeat after me:

"Together we pray,
together we care!"

Activity Time

Craft: Paper Cup Seed Planter

Materials list

- Flower seeds
- Paper cups
- Dirt
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils
- Stickers representing different countries

[Give each child a paper cup to decorate. Then make holes in the bottom of the cup. Put dirt into the cup, and have the kids poke a hole in the dirt with their fingers. Place seeds inside the hole, and cover with more dirt.]

You can all take these planters home with you. Just like Hannah had to wait a very long time for her prayers to be answered, you might have to wait awhile for these flowers to bloom. But when we plant seeds, and take care of them, beautiful flowers will grow. It’s the same thing when we pray. When we pray together, beautiful things will happen in the world.

Movement Activity: Lifting Each Other Up

Now, let’s all stand up for a movement activity! Do you remember what Mary did when she was feeling scared and uncertain?

Yes, she went to visit Elizabeth! And that lifted her up! So for our movement activity, we're going to lift each other up. Let's all divide up into pairs, and we will lift each other up.

Now, who wants to be the first person in your group who gets lifted up? That person can lay down / sit down and the other child will gently help you get up.

[After this happens once, switch and have the other child lay down or sit down to be lifted up.]

When we help each other get up, it shows that we care about each other. Just like being around Elizabeth lifted up Mary, we can lift each other up, too.

Repeat after me:
"Together we pray,
together we care for each other!"

Game: Jumping for Joy

Now it's time for a game. The game is called Jumping for Joy! Both Hannah and Mary sang happy songs to God after God lifted them up. They were so happy that maybe they even jumped for joy! So we're going to jump for joy. And while we jump, we're going to shout together "Thank you God!"

[All the kids jump while they yell "Thank you God!"]

Closing Prayer
Okay, now it's time for a prayer. Repeat after me, and you can also do the gestures with me.

"God who lifts us when we are down" (start low, reach up high)
"We pray together" (fold hands together in prayer gesture)
"We care together" (hug self)
"Thank you for all the kids around the world…" (stretch arms wide)
"...Who are praying with us today!" (fold hands together in prayer gesture)
"Amen!" (jump together)

Take-Home

- Paper Cup Seed Planter with instructions
- Coloring sheet with children holding hands around the world
- Simple summary of the stories from today to read with their parents

Program for Ages 8-12: "Together We Pray, Together We Care"

Opening

Global Prayer Connection

[Start with the kids gathering around a world map that showing WDP countries.]

Let's see if you can find [name a country] on our map! How about [name 2-3 more countries]?

Great job! Just like we are gathering here today, children in all these countries are also gathering to pray!

WDP Centennial Learning Moment

In 1927 - 100 years ago - women from different churches decided to pray together on the same day. What's amazing? It has never stopped! Not during wars, not during pandemics, not ever!

Today we celebrate 100 years of 'Together We Pray, Together We Care.' God helps small things grow into something amazing when people work together.

Opening Prayer

Dear God, thank you for this beautiful world that you have created. Thank you for the people who can be different in color, race, speaking different languages, have different cultures and different abilities, yet so much all are created in love by you.

Scripture Stories: Two Women, Two Prayers

Hannah's Story (1 Samuel 2:1-10)

A long time ago, there was a woman named Hannah. Hannah had a deep sadness in her heart. She wanted something very special — a child — but she didn’t have one. She prayed and hoped for many years, but nothing seemed to change.

Even when it felt like no one understood, Hannah never stopped talking to God. One day, she went to the temple — a place where people came to pray — and she poured out her heart. She told God everything she was feeling: her sadness, her hopes, and her dreams.

And God listened.

In time, Hannah's prayer was answered, and she had a baby boy named Samuel. Hannah was so thankful that she sang a song of joy to God.

Let's say part of her song together:

"God has filled my heart with joy.
I am glad because you have helped me.
There is no one like you, God."

Hannah's story reminds us that we can be honest with God — even when we're sad or waiting for something that feels impossible. God listens.

Mary and Elizabeth's Story (Luke 1:39-55)

Many years later, another woman named Mary also prayed a song to God. Mary was young — about 13-16 years old...maybe not much older than some of you. One day, Marygot some surprising and even confusing news: she was going to have a baby — and this baby would be very special.

Mary wasn't sure what would happen next. She probably had a lot of questions and even some fear. So she went to visit an adult that she trusted — her cousin Elizabeth.

Elizabeth welcomed Mary with joy and kindness. And in that safe place, surrounded by love, Mary began to feel stronger. She remembered that God was with her, even when things felt uncertain.

So Mary sang, too — a song full of praise and hope:

"My soul praises the Lord.
My heart is happy because God cares about me.
God always helps those who need help."

Hannah and Mary lived hundreds of years apart, but their stories connect.

Both women trusted God when life felt hard.

Both sang songs of joy when they saw God's goodness.

And both remind us that prayer isn't just about asking — it's about sharing our hearts and trusting that God is listening.

Mary also reminds us how important it is to find people we trust — people who make us feel safe, like Elizabeth did for her. God often works through those friendships and caring conversations.

That's one reason why we pray together — not just by ourselves, but with people all around the world. When we pray together, we remind each other that no one is alone.

Let's say this together:

"Together we pray, together we care."

Discussion Questions

- Mary went to Elizabeth when she needed support. Who do you talk to when you need help or advice?
- Both prayers talk about God helping people who are "down" or "lowly." Who are those people in our world today?
- When Mary and Elizabeth were together, they felt stronger. When have you felt stronger because you were with other people?

Activity Time
Craft: Peace Pole Creation

Materials list

- Wooden dowel or stick
- A list of how to say 'peace' in different languages
- Markers or paint (plus brushes if using paint)
- Optional: stickers, ribbon, or fabric scraps for decoration

[Each child gets a wooden dowel or painted stick to decorate. Encourage them to write 'peace' in at least one language on their pole. Talk about how people are doing this same program in over 100 languages around the world. Place them into the ground together, or let each child take theirs home.]

Hannah and Mary both prayed to God and trusted that God was listening. Hannah waited a long time to see how God would answer her prayer, and Mary said "yes" to God even when she didn't know what would happen next.

Both of them remind us that peace doesn't just appear all at once — it grows when we keep trusting God and caring for one another.

These peace poles are a sign of that hope. Every time someone sees them, they can remember that we are people who pray for peace and work for peace, just like Hannah and Mary trusted and sang their prayers to God.

Game: Sardines

1. Choose one person to hide. Everyone else closes their eyes and counts to 30.
2. When you're done counting, everyone spreads out to look for the hidden person.
3. When you find the person, don't shout! Quietly join them in their hiding spot.
4. Keep hiding together until everyone has found the group and you're all squeezed in one place — like a bunch of sardines in a can!
5. The last person to find the group gets to be the next hider.

[Leader debriefs by framing this game in terms of World Day of Prayer.]

At first, we were all separate, each looking on our own. But look how we ended up — all together! That's what happens in the World Day of Prayer, too. We start in different places and languages, but we come together to pray, to care, and to make peace.

Reflection & Prayerful Action Planning

Together We Pray, Together We Care: A Discussion

There's an African proverb: 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.' What does this mean for prayer and caring?

Hannah and Mary both talked about God helping people who are hungry, poor, or treated unfairly. How can we 'care together' about these problems?

What does 'justice' mean? (Everyone getting what they need to be healthy and happy)

WDP has been 'praying together and caring together' for 100 years. What should the next 100 years look like?

Prayerful Action Ideas

- Pack food bags together for people who are hungry
- Write letters to children in other countries participating in WDP
- Plant WDP tree together in church or community space
- Create prayer journals to use throughout the year

Memory Verse Practice

"God has brought down the powerful from their thrones and lifted up the lowly." (Luke 1:52)

God cares about people who need help - our prayerful actions are part of how God lifts up those who are hurting.

Closing Prayer Circle

Prayer Chain

[Children stand in circle. Leader invites them to participate in the closing prayer.]

We're connected with children all around the world. Let's say who we are praying with. I'll start by saying: God, we pray with...

[Examples: God, we pray with Argentina. God, we pray with Japan. God, we pray with Lebanon.]

Now let's say what we are praying for. I'll start. God, we pray for...

[Examples: peace, justice, friendship, families, food for hungry people, etc.]

Together we have prayed, help us together to care. Amen.

Closing Prayer (from your notes): "How wonderful, dear God that we can come close to you and through you we can also get closer to each other and even to many kids around the world. Thank you for the WDP."

Take-Home:

- Peace pole with planting instructions
- Family discussion questions about justice and peace

Program for Ages 13-18: "Together We Pray, Together We Care"

Opening & Context Setting

Opening Prayer

God of all generations, we gather today knowing that we are part of something much larger than ourselves. You call us together across countries, cultures, and generations. Help us understand what it means to truly pray together and care together. Open our hearts to your vision of justice and peace. Amen.

Check-In & Global Awareness

Before we start, let's acknowledge that right now, young people in countries around the world are gathering just like we are.

What's one thing happening in the world right now that you think needs prayer?

[Allow for discussion time.]

WDP Centennial Learning Moment

In 1927, women from different denominations said, 'We need to pray together across our differences.' What started small has grown into a movement active in over 135 countries. What's remarkable? This movement has survived two world wars, the Great Depression, pandemics, and countless conflicts.

God helps things grow that start small when people commit to working together. The theme has always been the same: Together we pray, together we care.Today we ask: What does this mean for today's time?

Scripture Deep Dive: Two Women, Two Prayers

Hannah's Story (1 Samuel 2:1-10)

Hannah's life was marked by a profound absence—the child she desperately wanted but couldn't have. For years, she carried this longing, a weight that shaped her daily existence. In her culture, a woman's identity was often tied to motherhood, making her pain not just personal but social. She faced misunderstanding, judgment, and the silent question that haunted her prayers: *Why?*

Yet Hannah refused to let her circumstances define her relationship with God. When she went to the temple at Shiloh, she didn't perform empty rituals or recite polite prayers. She brought her raw, unfiltered emotions—her grief, her anger, her hope—directly to God. The priest Eli initially misunderstood her intense emotion, mistaking her for being drunk. But Hannah was simply being brutally honest with God.

And God heard her.

When her son Samuel was born, Hannah kept her vow and dedicated him to God's service. Her prayer of thanksgiving (1 Samuel 2:1-10) became one of the most powerful songs in Scripture:

"My heart rejoices in the Lord; in the Lord my horn is lifted high... There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you."

Hannah's prayer wasn't just about personal gratitude—it was a declaration about God's character. She sang about how God reverses the world's expectations: the hungry are fed, the weak are made strong, the marginalized are lifted up. Her prayer became a template for understanding how God works in history.

Hannah's story challenges us: Can we be honest with God about our deepest struggles? Can we trust that our prayers matter, even when answers don't come quickly or in the way we expect?

Mary and Elizabeth's Story (Luke 1:39-55)

Centuries later, a teenage girl named Mary—likely between 13-16 years old—received news that would change everything. An angel appeared with a message that was simultaneously extraordinary and terrifying: she would bear the Messiah, the long-awaited savior of Israel.

Consider what this meant for Mary. She was unmarried. In her society, pregnancy outside of marriage could lead to public shame, rejection, or worse. She had every reason to be afraid. The angel's message wasn't just good news—it was disruptive, dangerous news that would require tremendous courage.

So Mary did something wise: she went to someone she trusted. Elizabeth, her older relative, was also experiencing a miraculous pregnancy in her old age. When Mary arrived, Elizabeth didn't judge or question—she affirmed and celebrated. She created space for Mary to process what was happening.

In that safe environment, Mary found her voice. Her song—the Magnificat—echoes Hannah's prayer from centuries before:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble."

Mary's prayer is revolutionary. She doesn't just accept her role passively—she actively interprets it. She sees her story as part of God's larger plan to challenge oppressive systems and lift up the marginalized. This teenage girl becomes a theologian, a prophet, declaring how God intervenes in human history.

The Connection

Hannah and Mary, separated by centuries, share a common thread: they brought their whole selves to God—fear, confusion, hope, and all. They didn't pretend to have it all together. They prayed honestly, trusted deeply, and found strength in community.

Both women also challenge our assumptions about who matters in God's story. Hannah was marginalized by her infertility. Mary was young, female, and poor—overlooked by the powerful of her day. Yet God chose to work through them in ways that changed history.

Their stories also highlight something crucial for your stage of life: the importance of trusted relationships. Mary sought out Elizabeth. She needed someone who would understand, who wouldn't dismiss her experience, who would help her make sense of what God was doing. Who are the "Elizabeths" in your life—the people who create safe space for you to process hard things?

Prayer isn't just a solo activity. It's something we do together, across time and space. When we pray, we join our voices with Hannah's, Mary's, and millions of others who have trusted God through uncertainty, pain, and hope.

Discussion Questions

- Why do you think Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months? What do you think Elizabeth offered Mary that someone her own age couldn't?

- Both Hannah and Mary were completely honest with God—Hannah about her pain, Mary about her uncertainty. What keeps people from being that honest in prayer?

- Hannah and Mary both sang about God reversing social hierarchies—giving power to the powerless, food to the hungry, dignity to the dismissed. Where do you see (or wish you saw) those reversals happening today?

WDP History & Impact Study

Research Activity: WDP Through Crisis and Change

World Day of Prayer has survived wars, pandemics, political upheaval, and technological revolution over the past hundred years. Each generation has faced the question: How do we keep praying together when the world is going through crisis and change?

[Divide into small groups, each exploring a different era using the "Telling the Story" resource. Discuss the questions in the small groups, then come back to the larger group to share.]

- **Group 1: 1927-1945 – Praying Through World Wars**

  Focus question: How do you think WWI and WWII impacted World Day of Prayer?

  Today's challenge: What conflicts exist in our world today? Why does a global day of prayer matter amidst these conflicts?

- **Group 2: 1950s-1960s – Breaking Down Barriers**

  Focus question: Why do you think it was such a challenge for Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox Christians to pray together?

  Today's challenge: What are the barriers between Christians today? How can they be overcome?

- **Group 3: 1970s-1990s – International Meetings**

  Focus question: What difference do you think it made for WDP participants to actually meet people face-to-face from other parts of the world (rather than just reading about them)?

  Today's challenge: What's exciting AND what's challenging about meeting people from different cultures and countries?

- **Group 4: 2000-2027 – The Digital Age**

  Focus question: How did WDP change as a result of changes in technology?

  Today's challenge: What is lost and what is gained by using technology to connect for prayer and worship?

Real-World Application: Justice and Peace Today

Current Issues Brainstorm

Hannah and Mary both prayed about justice—about God lifting up the marginalized, feeding the hungry, and reversing oppressive systems. Their prayers weren't vague or generic; they named specific realities. So let's do the same.

Guiding questions:

- What does injustice look like today?
- What issues keep coming up in the news or on social media?
- What do you see happening around you that feels wrong or broken?
- What do your friends worry about or struggle with?

[Brainstorm together and organize issues into three categories.]

- Local (in our community, school, neighborhood)
- National (in our country)
- Global (around the world)

[Examples might include: food insecurity, climate change, war and conflict, economic inequality, mental health crisis, racism, refugee crises, educational inequity, etc.]

Towards Prayerful Action

WDP has always believed that 'informed prayer leads to prayerful action.' When we truly pray with people—learning their stories and hearing their voices—we start to care deeply about what they care about. And when we truly care, we're moved to act.

[As a whole group, choose one issue from the brainstorm that resonates most deeply. Then design a response together that includes both prayer AND action.]

1. Prayer Component - How will we pray with (not just for) people affected by this issue?

- How can we learn their stories first?
- Whose voices do we need to listen to?
- Can we invite them to pray with us?

2. Action Component - What's one concrete thing we can do together?

- Be specific and realistic
- What can we accomplish in the next 2-4 weeks?
- How does this action flow from what we learn through prayer?

Closing Prayer

Let's pray together. Going around the circle, each person complete one of these sentences:

"Together we pray for..."
"Together we care by..."

[After everyone shares, all say together:]

God of justice and peace, thank you for the example of Hannah, Mary, and Elizabeth. Help us continue their legacy of honest prayer, mutual support, and action for justice. Together we pray, together we care. Amen.

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