

“Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action”

As we prepare for each Day of Prayer we are encouraged to learn about the lives of the women who prepared the order of service. Through bible study we come to understand better what the theme for the year means to the writers as well as ourselves. Then ‘informed prayer’ should lead to ‘prayerful action’.

On a more ongoing level many countries have prayer partners. For several years our prayer partner was Zimbabwe. We prayed for the women there as they struggled with the everyday issues of their lives. Our international prayer partner now is Antigua and we look forward to a mutually rewarding and prayerful relationship with the women there. In addition, we are linked as prayer partners to two European countries, namely, Estonia and Bulgaria.

Sometimes regional conferences are held where women of a particular area can get to know each other better. European conferences are held every four years. Even within one continent there are such differences of history, culture and religious traditions.

Through Women’s World Day of Prayer, women are encouraged

- to become aware of the whole world and no longer live in isolation.
- to be enriched by the faith experience of Christians of other countries.
- to take up the burdens of other people and pray with and for them.
- to become aware of their talents and use them in the service of society.

We rejoice in the lives of dedicated women throughout the world who have enabled the original vision to grow and blossom. We thank God that we have the privilege of sharing in this precious gift of **Women’s World Day of Prayer** and we pray that it will continue to bind women together throughout the world in the love of Christ.

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Women’s World Day of Prayer

A worldwide Movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer on the first Friday in March each year.

HISTORY



In the beginning ...

The origins of Women’s World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women in the USA and Canada, in spite of strong opposition from all-male mission boards, founded numerous and effective women’s boards for foreign and home missions, whereby they could work directly with and for women and children. For some time women had been encouraging one another not only to engage in personal prayer, but to lead communal prayer within their mission auxiliaries and associations. This led to annual days and even weeks of prayers within individual denominations

But women had a vision of Christian Unity

By 1887 women from different denominations were joining together in organising days of prayer for missionary work, both home and overseas, and in 1910 women celebrated 50 years of women’s missionary activity by organising a series of events across the USA that provided a powerful experience of ecumenical cooperation. In 1922 two separate united days of prayer, one in Canada and one in the USA, came together with a common date - the first Friday of Lent. In 1926 the women of North America distributed the worship service to many countries and partners in mission – the response worldwide was enthusiastic and the **World Day of Prayer** came into being.

Women’s World Day of Prayer reaches the British Isles

Women, whose lives took them to other countries, spread news of this special day around the world. Mrs Grace Forgan heard about it at an international missionary gathering in Jerusalem in 1928. Immediately she felt that women in her native Scotland would want to get involved. The first service was held in Scotland in 1930, then in England in 1932, in Wales in 1933 and Ireland two years later.

International Committee

After the 2nd World War the movement grew dramatically. By 1968, no fewer than 127 countries were participating. It was decided that an international committee should be set up to undertake the work previously being done by women in USA. This international committee would comprise representatives of all national committees and should meet about every four years - 1970 Bangkok, 1974 Mexico, 1978 Zambia, 1982 West Germany, 1986 New York (Centennial), 1990 Jamaica, 1995 Australia, 1999 South Africa, 2003 England, Canada 2007.

At this meeting an international chairperson is elected and an international executive committee is also elected to oversee the work of the movement worldwide. This executive committee is made up of representatives of the eight regions of the world - Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America and Pacific.

The International Order of Service

It is also at these international meetings that the **themes** and **writers** for future years are chosen. Suggestions from all over the world are sifted through, common ideas drawn out and then themes selected.

These themes are then allocated to countries that have expressed a desire to prepare an order of service. Countries are chosen so as to give as wide a geographical variation as possible - 2000 Indonesia, 2001 Samoa, 2002 Romania, 2003 Lebanon, 2004 Panama, 2005 Poland, 2006 South Africa, 2007 Paraguay, 2008 Guyana, 2009 Papua New Guinea, 2010 Cameroon, 2011 Chile, 2012 Malaysia, 2013 France, 2014 Egypt, 2015 the Bahamas.

The national committee of the chosen country prepares a **draft order of service**, which it submits to the international executive. The New York office, through its Executive Director, Eileen King, then sends the accepted draft to national committees worldwide. Each national committee is at liberty to amend this (as little as possible) as they think suitable for their own country.

National Committee

Our national committee covers England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Scotland has its own committee, as of course has the Republic of Ireland. Our committee is made up of representatives of all the main churches that take part in the Day of Prayer, plus representatives from Wales and Northern Ireland. It is the work of the national committee to edit and publish all the service material and distribute it through the office in Tunbridge Wells to more than 3,000 local branches. The offerings collected are for the work of the movement in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Surplus money is allocated to Christian literature societies, Christian educational projects, and World Day of Prayer literature.

International and Interdenominational

WWDP came such a long way in the last century. What started as separate days of prayer organised by individual denominations in America has become a truly international and interdenominational World Day of Prayer.

The original date of the first Friday in Lent was changed to the first Friday in March, a date more suited to the Orthodox churches. As more countries joined, Roman Catholic participation grew, especially after the Second Vatican Council in 1962. Our national committee elected its first Roman Catholic chairperson in 1984.

Today more than 170 countries and islands take part. The international order of service is translated into more than 60 languages and 1000 dialects. In Wales some services are held in Welsh, some in English and some are bilingual.

Logo

The logo was designed in Ireland in 1982, the year in which Irish women from both Northern Ireland and the Republic prepared the service. It was later adopted as the movement's international logo. In the centre is the Cross formed by praying figures from the four corners of the earth. All are joined together within the circle of the world and enfolded in God's love.

Mexican Wave of Prayer

The Day of Prayer begins on the international dateline. The first service is held at dawn in Queen Salote's Girls' School in Tonga. Then, as the earth rotates, a great "Mexican Wave" of prayer rises in the Pacific reaching countries like Fiji and New Zealand. It continues through Asia in countries such as Japan, The Philippines, Korea, and Bangladesh. It rolls on to the countries of Africa including Egypt, and then to the Middle East. It continues on to Europe east and west. Across the Atlantic it goes to the Caribbean, Latin, Central, and North America, and on to the Pacific again till the last service of the day is held on the island of Samoa.

*"As o'er each continent and island
The dawn leads on another day,
The voice of prayer is never silent,
Nor dies the strain of praise away".*