



WORLD DAY OF PRAYER AUSTRALIA

Understanding World Day of Prayer – Some FAQs (frequently asked questions)

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The Biblical Imperative that energises us to be involved in World Day of Prayer

Christ promised that “where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there among them” [Mt 18:20] and that “whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours” [Mk 11:24].

Jesus reminded his followers, “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” [Jn 15:12] and “You shall love your neighbour as yourself” [Mk 12:31].

Daily we see or hear of situations in which vast numbers of people are suffering. Usually our only possible response is to pray with some understanding and to follow that informed prayer where possible and as led by the Holy Spirit, with action, to meet the needs of others. Jesus’ prayer was “that they (his followers) may be one ... that the world may believe” [Jn 17:21], so guiding us into prayer and action together, in unity.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is the World Day of Prayer?

It is a day – the first Friday in March each year - when co-ordinated services of Christian worship and prayer are held across the world in over 170 countries, directed by the international body – the World Day of Prayer International.

The program for the service is prepared well in advance by women from one focus country of the world.

Each service has an advertised theme and involves Bible readings, prayers and songs and a reflection.

What are the goals of the World Day of Prayer movement?

The motto of the World Day of Prayer is “**informed prayer and prayerful action**”.

The prayer day promotes **informed prayer** for the women of the focus country who write the service program. The WDP service presents their needs and concerns and their praise to God through the use of Bible passages and prayers and testimonies. The people around the world attending WDP services can then support them by participating in the service.

Hopefully too the service will generate subsequent **informed action** in support of the women of the focus country.

The Day of Prayer also encourages Christians of all traditions to join together and express community in prayer and praise to our God – locally and globally.

Why should I consider organising a WDP service/small group/meeting of friends?

1. You will meet people from local churches and the community. The experience of working together on a common service is active, participatory and inclusive.
2. You will show solidarity with the women in the focus country for the year.
3. You will pray with women from the focus country about their concerns through the medium of their service.
4. You will join with people from all around the world in prayer on the same day, expressing the same praise and making the same requests.
5. You will come before God as part of a world-wide group, where united prayer is going up around the world in the same 24 hour period.
6. You will be educated about the concerns of Christian women in other countries.

What are some of the different venues where the Day of Prayer has taken place?

- In public gatherings in churches and halls
- In school SRE (scripture) classes and chapel services
- In nursing homes
- In private homes between individuals– family members, friends, grandparents/grandchildren

How long does an average service go for if following the main service booklet?

About 1 hour.

What is the Statement of Faith of the World Day of Prayer?

They confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling to the glory of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Constitution, WDP)

How did the World Day of Prayer begin?

The origins of World Day of Prayer date back to the 19th century when Christian women of the United States and Canada initiated a variety of cooperative activities in support of women's involvement in mission at home and in other parts of the world. These activities related to the following areas:

Concern for women and children

Women had a strong sense of identification with the needs of women and children and searched out ways to provide appropriate support. In spite of strong resistance from all-male mission boards, in 1861 and the following years, women founded numerous and effective women's boards for foreign and home missions whereby they could work directly with and for women and children.

The role of prayer in mission work

Since 1812 women encouraged one another to engage in personal prayer and take leadership in communal prayer within their mission auxiliaries and associations. This emphasis on prayer led to annual days and weeks of prayer. In 1887 Presbyterian women called for a Day of Prayer for Home Missions and Methodist women called for a week of prayer and self-denial for foreign missions. A Baptist Day of Prayer for foreign missions began in 1891. In 1895, a day of corporate intercessions for mission was initiated by the Women's Auxiliary of the Anglican Church of Canada.

Women had a vision of Christian unity

that was seen as essential to their exercise of mission. By 1897 the women of six denominations formed a joint committee for a united day of prayer for home missions. In 1912 the Woman's Boards of Foreign Missions called for a united day of prayer for foreign missions.

Study was everyone's responsibility

Following the Ecumenical Missionary Conference in New York City in 1900, women organised an interdenominational Central Committee for United Study that prepared publications, summer conferences, study days and courses so that women could become informed about the lives of women in other parts of the world and could study biblical foundations and vital issues related to mission work.

Women organised interdenominational

structures that were effective and cooperative. For example, in 1908 women founded the Council of Women for Home Missions that took responsibility for joint work with immigrants and other social issues and for preparation of the joint day of prayer.

Women celebrated their commitment

In 1910-1911 women celebrated the 50th Anniversary or Jubilee of women's missionary activity by organizing a series of speaking engagements across the United States that provided women with a powerful experience of what they had achieved in ecumenical cooperation, in local and global linkage, in prayer and information sharing, and in biblical reflection. All of this had been in the hands of women. Out of this experience many local interdenominational women's groups were formed.

Women linked world peace with world mission

After the devastation of World War I, women incorporated the conviction that world peace was

intrinsically tied to world mission. Therefore, women renewed their efforts for unity.

In Canada, Presbyterian women called together representatives of women's missionary societies from five denominations in 1918 for united prayer and action. This committee, which now has expanded into the ecumenical Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada, organized the first national Day of Prayer in Canada on January 9, 1920.

In the United States, the first Friday of Lent was established as a joint day of prayer for missions, beginning on February 20, 1920. Due to the enthusiastic facilitation of local denominational and interdenominational women's groups, the day of prayer spread rapidly throughout the USA. Canadian women took up the same date in 1922.

World Day of Prayer comes into being

In the second half of 1926 the women of North America distributed the worship service to many countries and partners in mission. The response worldwide was enthusiastic. By the beginning of 1927 the call to prayer that was issued was for a World Day of Prayer for Missions.

In 1928 this statement came from the World Day of Prayer Committee:

It is with deep gratitude that we recognize the growing power inherent in our World Day of Prayer. The circle of prayer has expanded literally around the world. We have learned the great lesson of praying with, rather than for, our sisters of other races and nations, thus enriching our experience and releasing the power which must be ours if we are to accomplish tasks entrusted to us.

In 1928 during the International Missionary Conference in Jerusalem, women delegates from many countries agreed that worldwide participation would be a bond of unity among women. Helen Kim of Korea was chosen to be the first woman outside of the United States to write the order of worship for the World Day of Prayer in 1930.

In 1930 The Federation of Women's Board of Foreign Missions of North America co-opted ten women from all over the world as corresponding members. Plans for a world committee for WDP were proposed for 1932, but depressed economic conditions prevented its implementation.

In 1941 the coordination of World Day of Prayer within the United States became the responsibility of an interdenominational movement now known as Church Women United. Coordination with other countries was carried out by the Foreign Missions Conference of North America.

In 1969 The World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations decided to change their international day of prayer from March to May in order to take part in the World Day of Prayer.

It is from these roots that World Day of Prayer has taken its present shape. World Day of Prayer has moved with women wherever their lives have taken them.

From <http://www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/worlddayofprayer/international-origins.html>

Why are the service booklets written from the point of view of women?

The World Day of Prayer has its roots in 19th Century women's prayer groups for mission and later for women in general. After World War 1, this commitment to prayer for women across the world deepened. The movement has always acknowledged that women in many parts of the world have particular needs, and need the solidarity and prayers offered by women and men around the world. The Service program is therefore put together by women, so that others can join with them in prayer on the first Friday in March around the globe.

Why did the name change from 'Women's World Day of Prayer' to just 'World Day of Prayer'?

In February 1986, Australia changed the name in line with many countries endeavouring to be more inclusively welcoming to the annual WDP service.

In Australia, everyone is now welcome to join in the service – men and women.

The service is still written from the point of view of women.

The organising committees are still run by women.

What is the role of a World Day of Prayer State Committee?

Each State Committee prepares the relevant service materials for printing and distribution for their state.

Each State Committee is responsible for promoting the WDP so that an increasing number of people in an ever expanding number of venues are included in the services from all the Christian denominations in a suburb, town or region.

Each State Committee provides encouragement and new ideas and training for those people who are arranging a local WDP service.

Who is on the World Day of Prayer Committee in each state?

State Committees are made up of representatives from the following:

- Anglican Church
- Baptist Union
- Christian Brethren
- Churches of Christ
- Congregational Church
- Lutheran Church
- Pentecostal Churches
- Presbyterian Church
- Roman Catholic Church
- Seventh Day Adventist
- The Salvation Army
- Uniting Church
- Australian Church Women
- Indigenous representatives
- and others.

Any Christian organisation representing women, which subscribes to the WDP statement of faith and is keen to promote the WDP service may be included.

Elected positions on State Committees are President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. All positions are voluntary.

State Committee meetings are held as required throughout the year.

How are Australia-wide decisions made?

The states of Australia are listed in a set order.

Every 4 years the next state appearing on the list selects the **National Liaison Officer** of WDP Australia. She is the head of the Australian Working Committee for the next 4 years. That committee is elected by her State WDP Committee.

She connects with the International Committee of WDP and sets up a national working committee from her home state.

The current person holding the position is Barbara Arnold, representing South Australia. Her term extends from 2009 to 2013.

How are world-wide decisions made?

The international headquarters of WDP are in New York where there are two paid members of staff.

They oversee the process of selection of the themes for services and of focus countries, and also the preparation and distribution of the service material.

They bring together an Executive Committee which includes two representatives of each region of the world. They meet at least once every two years. Every four years they arrange a larger international gathering of representatives of all the countries involved.

How does the process of choosing the focus countries and the themes and the writing of the services work?

Every 4 years, an International WDP committee meeting is held.

Delegates come together from over 170 countries.

Any National Committee can submit a theme, with related Bible passages, for consideration.

They can also offer to write a service and be the focus country.

A Themes Group sifts through the suggestions, looking for common themes and passages.

A list of themes with Bible passages is drawn up by this small group, for future services.

These themes and passages are allocated to countries who offered to write services. The writing country does not choose its own theme.

These focus countries are chosen to give as wide a regional representation as possible.

Then a long process of consultation begins, in which drafts go back and forth to the International committee.

The whole process is finished 18 months before the date of the service.

Finally the Service is sent to each national committee, such as ours in Australia.

We may edit the material for Australian conditions, whilst at all times maintaining the integrity of the original. It is then printed and distributed locally.

The focus country usually suggests some music and songs, which we try to include, adding our own local music.

In all, the service is translated world-wide into over 60 languages and 1000 dialects!

Has Australia ever written a WDP service?

Yes, twice.

- 1958 – theme: ‘Bread of Life’
- 1986 – theme: ‘Choose Life’

Which countries are writing the next few services and what are the themes?

- 2011 Chile ‘How many loaves have you?’
- 2012 Malaysia ‘Let justice prevail’
- 2013 France ‘I was a stranger and you welcomed me’
- 2014 Egypt ‘Streams in the desert’
- 2015 The Bahamas ‘Jesus said to them: ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’

These countries and themes were allocated at the 2007 international committee meeting of WDP.

What does the World Day of Prayer logo mean?

The symbol for World Day of Prayer was developed by the women of Ireland and adopted as the international logo in 1982.

Its design is made up of arrows converging from the four points of the compass, persons kneeling in prayer, the Celtic cross, and the circle representing the world and our unity through all our diversity.



Practical helps

Can I access a previous year's service booklet to see what it is like?

You may contact your state contact for World Day of Prayer via the website to request a copy of a previous year's WDP service.

Are there any guides on how to organise a WDP service?

A set of Guidelines Ideas & Suggestions for Local Coordinators is available on the WDP Australia website or you may request that a copy be posted through your state WDP contact.

There are also training days provided in November for service organisers. Check the website for locations and details.

What materials are available to help me to run a WDP service on the first Friday in March?

1. Orders of service – main version and abridged version. (You can order as many booklets as you need. Please note, due to copyright on the hymns and songs, the service booklets cannot be photocopied.)
2. Guidelines for a contemporary service.
3. Children's Service booklets - aimed at Primary aged children.
4. Music CD with music from the focus country.
5. Powerpoint presentation featuring the focus country.
6. Guidelines Ideas & Suggestions for Local Coordinators.
7. Background Bible studies for use outside the service.
8. A template for a poster to advertise local WDP services.
9. Sample Media Release and paragraphs to insert in local church Sunday Bulletins during February.

What do the booklets and other items cost?

They are free; the printing and postage costs come out of the offerings given in the services the previous year.

The music CD and the DVD Powerpoint Presentation may involve a small charge, or can be downloaded free of charge from the website.

How do I order the materials for running a World Day of Prayer service?

Materials can be ordered for the coming year through each State Committee from April to September. Orders are generally distributed during October. Most material is also available on the website.

a. If you are new to running a service:

Go to the World Day of Prayer website : www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org and click on the link to your state. Email the contact person to say that you will be running a service and requesting an Order Form for materials. (Some States will have a Registration & Order Form that can be downloaded). The State Contact person will also want to note the location and time of your service. Some States list the Location of Services on the website.

b. If you are part of a local roster for running services:

Check that you are listed with the state office as a co-ordinator for the year in question. Check with the previous year's co-ordinator what materials were ordered on your behalf. Email the office if you wish to vary that order.

Is it OK to alter the Service programs?

No-one checks up on how the booklets are used.

However, the focus country who wrote the service hopes that the integrity and the emphases of the service are kept, and that the speaker chosen for the service will follow the theme and set readings.

A huge history of consultation goes into producing the final form of the service.

The Australian organisers who are co-ordinating and sponsoring the day hope that participants will honour the intent of the first Friday observance in March, sharing as closely as possible in the service as prepared by the focus country, along with all those other people praying around the world.

Do we need to report back to the State Committee after our service?

Yes.

Participants are asked to complete a short Report Form and send/email it to their State Committee for feedback, thanksgiving, planning and accountability. The forms to complete and where to send them are delivered with the WDP Orders of Service, and are also available on the WDP web site: www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org then follow the links to your state.

Money is collected on the day in an offering. Do we have to send the money to the World Day of Prayer state committee? What is it used for?

Yes – the offering in a World Day of Prayer service is very important, as it is a major source of support for the Bible Society and other interdenominational projects. Offering totals needs to be reported (a Remittance Form is given) and banked with the WDP State Committee as per instructions – clearly saying what service locality they originate from.

The financial accounts of each State Committee are audited each year and are available for public scrutiny.

Each country and each state is free to decide in committee how to distribute this money.

In most Australian States the bulk of the offering is given to the Bible Society.

Money from the offering is also used to cover the costs of service preparation, printing of resources and distribution. About 6% of the total Australian offering is also given to the international budget of WDP for administration and 1% for sponsoring delegates to international meetings.

What is the World Day of Prayer website address?

www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org

Follow state links for local information.