

World Day of Prayer (WDP) is a global ecumenical movement led by women in their communities. It creates an opportunity for building relationships, a spirituality of listening to each other and to God, a prayer informed by the context of women's lives, and a prayerful action expressed by sharing resources with communities in need.

Motivated by a common prayer on the first Friday of March, women lead workshops to learn about the focus country and to study attentively the Bible and the worship service. Together they plan the program for children in schools or churches. The interpretation of the annual theme in the local context and the envisioning of responses are creatively crafted and intensively promoted across the globe. The projects and organizations to support are selected carefully. Most of what we do is based on in-person events where building relationships is the first step of a long journey.

However, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the services planned to be held on the annual day of prayer, March 6th, were held except for in a few countries in Asia and Europe, which were already exposed to the COVID-19 outbreak.

WDP Worship Service: The Last In-Person Gathering Governments around the world set in place measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19, consequently churches and schools were closed for in-person events. Then, WDP activities planned for after March 6th were canceled or postponed, even in Zimbabwe. The committee still nurtures the expectation to hold the National Celebration at the Sports Center in Harare after the lockdown is over and it is safe to gather again, said Sylvia Marowa, "we really want to express our gratitude for the prayers for us from around the world."

In the Cook Islands, the worship service was held with restrictions, and the WDP celebration became the last gathering held in the Cook Islands before the lockdown. "We felt blessed to be able to come together as women of this country to give our thanks to the Lord. The theme is relevant because we have to rise, take up our mats and spread the good news in whatever way we can during the lockdown," voiced Henrica Marona.

The England, Wales and Northern Ireland committee began the Y-Pray Conference in 2016, which "is now held annually in May, to introduce a group of younger women to the movement. The Conference was canceled along with other events, such as Link Days," informed Elizabeth Burroughs. Also "canceled were the worship services planned to be held in Bethlehem, Ramallah and Jerusalem," informed Nora Carmi, from WDP Palestine. Manon Naidoo lamented the uncertainty of the well planned 90th Anniversary of WWDP in South Africa to be held during the Africa Regional Conference in October 2020.

Taiwan's experience with the SARS pandemic in 2003, led the government to take early precautions when made aware about the Coronavirus in China. Nancy Lin informed that "the government took over all mask productions and ensured that every single civilian had equal access to buying facial masks. Wearing a mask is required in public transportation and in all indoor public areas such as churches and stores. With masks and keeping social distance, the writing working groups are meeting to develop the worship service program for 2023." Maral Haidostian, from Lebanon, commented on the difficulties of adopting those precautionary measures for worship services.

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