

2018

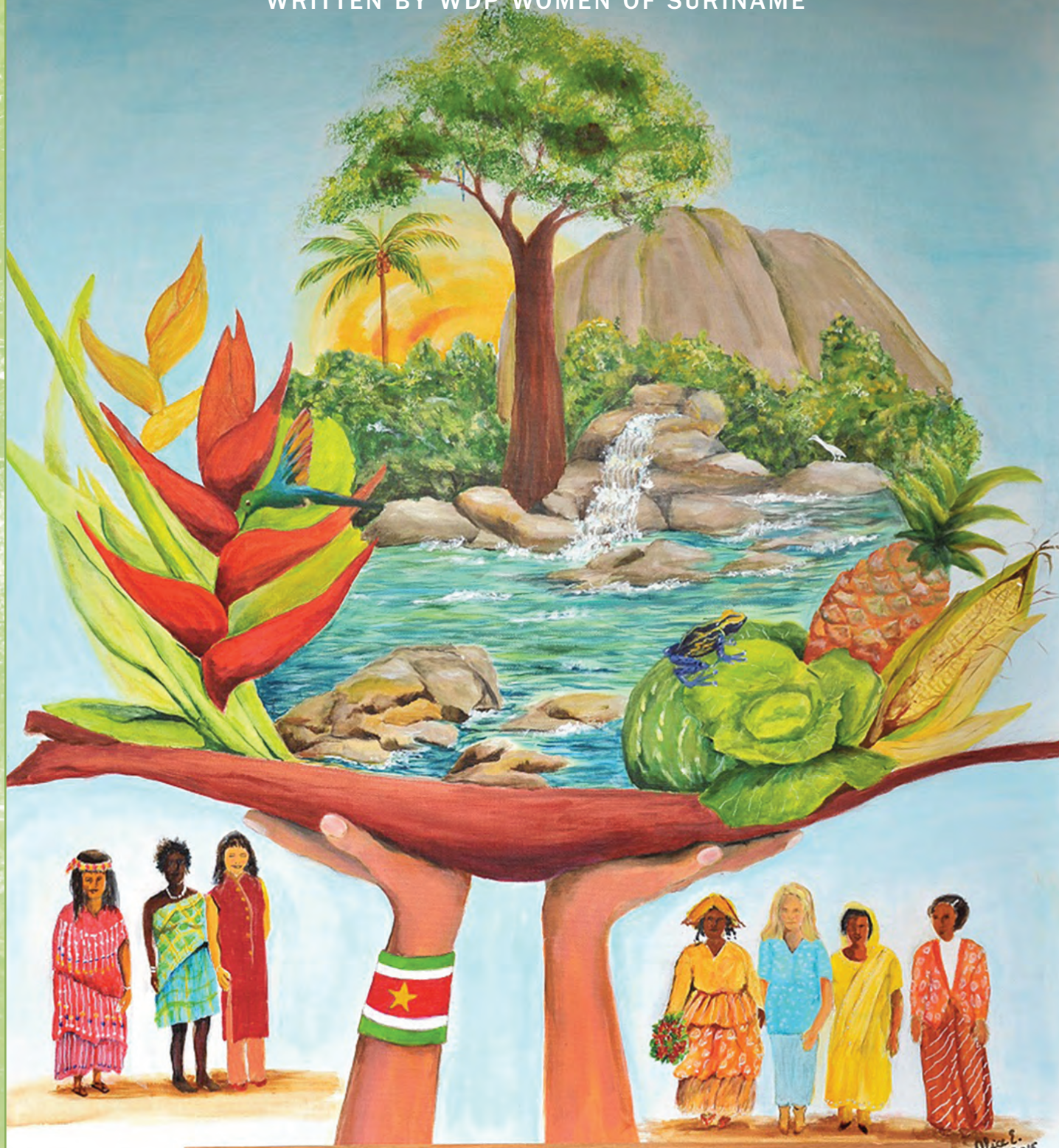
WORLD DAY OF PRAYER JOURNAL

Volume XLIV—A Publication of the World Day of Prayer International Committee



All God's Creation is Very Good!

WRITTEN BY WDP WOMEN OF SURINAME





World Day of Prayer Writing Committee, Suriname

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On the Cover: *The Divine Gift*, painting by Alice Pomstra for the program written by WDP Suriname.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Replace

BY LAURENCE GANGLOFF

Dear World Day of Prayer sisters and friends,

I greet you warmly on behalf of the World Day of Prayer International Committee!

This year, we opened our Bibles, to the book of Genesis for the Suriname WDP worship service. The story of creation was written during the exile period. While proclaiming God's power over all and everything, the Genesis writer focused on hope, faith, and respect. And indeed, this text still holds truth today!

The story says that God looked at what was done, and ALL was declared very good. We give thanks to our Surinamese sisters for presenting the environmental challenges in their own context as it helped us rise to the occasion. The message was contextualized and the responses reflected the different stages of environmental actions. For some countries, the Suriname worship service was the first step into ecological reflection and strategic actions.



Laurence Gangloff, Chairperson, World Day of Prayer International

While for others, who were already involved in campaigning for environmental care and ecological awareness, the worship service helped to expand their commitments. However, we were all leveled in the understandings that care for creation is a day-by-day awareness into action.

In Brazil, during the International Committee Meeting, we visited the Iguaçu Falls. I noticed a sign with this

saying: "For the planet, please: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, Replace."

Since then, I try to remember these "5 Rs" and make it an everyday personal rule. This is what I love about World Day of Prayer—it impacts my life! It takes me out of my comfort zone in the way I believe Jesus pushed people out of their spiritual comfort zone. We are encouraged to listen to unknown sisters, and to hear their deep cry. And then, in the proclamation of our faith, we are asked—what are you going to do about that?

Now, we are preparing ourselves for the next year World Day of Prayer worship service where we will pray with Slovenian women. With our sisters, we will learn how to say "Hello" (Dober Dan) and how to open our door to others and to invite them to our table as inspired by the Bible story. "Come. Everything is ready" is the theme for 2019.

We also want to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the formation of the International Committee for the

However, we were all leveled in the understandings that care for creation is a day-by-day awareness into action.



*I invite you to take a look
beyond your own country
or region and see the
amazing WDP presence
around the whole world.*

World Day of Prayer. It established a space for women from the regions of the world to come together in shared leadership. For that commemoration, we invited Eileen King and Helga Hiller to tell the story. Visit the WDPIC website to read the complete version of the article.

You are holding the Suriname Journal with photos, reports and experiences from all over the world. It is an overview of the global experience of WDP and it is like a marvelous bouquet of flowers, with many different colors. Let us take time to read and

discover the experiences, testimonies, commitments inspired by World Day of Prayer. I invite you to take a look beyond your own country or region and see the amazing WDP presence around the whole world.

Thank you to all the committees and groups who celebrated with WDP. Thank you to all who contributed to this beautiful Journal.

Peace and blessings to you, dear readers. Sisters and friends, thank you for your commitment to World Day of Prayer!

Worship Service Bible Text

GENESIS 1*

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light day, and the darkness he called night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

And God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

And God said, “Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear.” And it was so. God called the dry land earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, “Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seeds of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

And God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth.” And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.





And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.

And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the

ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth." God said, "See, I have given you every plant

yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

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"All God's Creation is Very Good!"

BY WDP WOMEN OF SURINAME

We could not have anticipated the powerful impact that being a writer country represents. We were honored and humbled by that realization. We were enthusiastic about having the whole world pray for our country; a country hardly known. We had the great responsibility of lifting up the care for creation, for the sustainability of our planet and the future of the next generations.

There were many lessons to be learned. The first one was that we, as women, do have a powerful contribution to make to the world. With God as our guide, we came together to bring the necessary changes to our communities. More than ever, we know now what it means to take care of God's creation. We look at all the different aspects of creation with adoration and appreciation, affirming the commitment to keep it as good as we can.

One of our initiatives was to reach out to government authorities to talk about the environmental situation of our communities. It was not easy to reach the top leaders, but we did not give up. We persevered and in the end they listened to us and supported our program in any way they could. Today, we see that there are many government and civil society



programs based on environmental awareness. There is a project to reduce or ban plastic bags by 2019 and educational campaigns on TV about climate change and what we can do to change it. The government also ratified the Niamatta Agreement. The ADEK University is creating green parking spaces and there is a project to restore the mangrove trees along our coast. Our WDP committee signed a petition to protect the sea turtles denying a company the access to collect the sand where the turtles lay their eggs. Work is being done to make a change.

Our WDP Committee created task groups to care for the different aspects of the program; for example, we had one group in charge of public relations, another to raise funds, and





until we approached the celebration date. We kept reminding ourselves that our initiative was not about ourselves, but it was about our country's needs and for the glory of God. We asked our special prayer group to bring this issue into prayer and we saw God's hand in it all. We are grateful for this amplified ecumenical support.

We come out of this WDP experience with a vision for the future of our committee. We will set up a training program for young and new members to learn about the Guiding Principles and the ecumenical purpose of World Day of Prayer. We will involve the young women on the committee board and create working groups for the members to have specific responsibilities that will contribute for the whole of the program. It felt wonderful to be in prayer with our people and the people around the world!

Website:

<http://wgdsuriname.wixsite.com/wgdsuriname>

Facebook: Surinaamscomite Wereldgebedsdag

another just to surround us with their prayers. The team work is what supported us when we felt the pressure for such a big task. Even more, we felt guided by the Lord in every step of the way. And our sisterhood grew stronger.

There were 25 celebrations with an estimated participation of 3,500 people. It was also broadcasted on TV and radio programs, and articles were published in the country's newspaper and church's newsletters. In July 2017, we distributed the materials to launch the preparations. One week before the celebration, the youth

group did a flash mob in three busy public spots in Paramaribo. We wanted to incorporate the practice of recycling and reusing in our events, so we used glassware to reduce the use of plastic. We gave away vegetables and fruit plants at the services to motivate the participants to grow their own food. We are already seeing the results, as we have received gifts from their harvest.

Certainly, there were obstacles. As much as we tried to involve several denominations in our initial planning process, we were not successful

Caribbean and North America



society by 2019. We hope to achieve this goal.

BAHAMAS

After hearing about the stormy conditions experienced by other countries that prevented them from properly observing the WDP, we gathered and gave thanks to our God for creation—the tropical environment of our beautiful country. We prayed and kept our northern sisters in our hearts, knowing that the spirit of WDP was with them.

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

The issue of a safe environment and its impact on a sustainable development was a core theme for our service. At preparatory meetings we discussed the challenges of garbage disposal and cleaning our surroundings as well as the citizen's responsibility towards the community's wellness. The environment is important for the good of our health and

livelihoods. We should actively encourage everybody to take care of it. Another topic of discussion was gender-based violence and how to assist families who have suffered through these situations. Our chairperson shared with us a video presentation titled 'A Call to Action,' which was very eye-opening. It was unanimously agreed to launch a project that addresses the violence in our

Our services had a common understanding that all of God's creation is good, but the creation of human beings was very good! How are we taking care of the people of Suriname? How are we taking care of our lands and waters? How we care for one another within our own countries and across countries speaks to how we care for God's greatest creation. God gave us the responsibility to treat



everything and everyone with love and care. The activities and development of human-made materials are damaging! It was suggested that for future gatherings the use of Styro-foam cups, plates, etc. will be forgone.

BARBADOS

One church hosted WDP for the first time this year and they were very excited to be part of the movement and learn about Suriname! One minister even dressed in the colors of the flag! There are several environmental issues currently affecting our country and this service was a call to action for our people to improve our environment. This is our home and it is essential to our lives and to those who come after us. Reading the story of creation out loud cemented the fact that God created everything good. No matter how we feel about ourselves or about the things around us, God made no mistakes - everything is good! As human beings we have the power to maintain the good in everything. We have the power to not be destructive towards our Earth. We have the power not to be abusive towards one another.



BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

We excitingly look forward to the annual WDP service! The various denominations work together to create a rich experience and truly enjoy worshipping as one body. The building of and the strengthening of the relationship is unifying. The ecumenical relations confirm Paul's view of the unity of the body of Christ. In Jesus, we hear the admonition to love one another. The congregation decorated the altar with baskets of cassava bread, herbs, and fruits that closely recreated the natural treasures of Suriname. There was a peaceful, inviting and warm atmosphere at the church. This heightened the sense of unity with our sisters from Suriname. There were two main services with over 100 participants. The bible reading was dramatized to bring the amazing story of creation to life. Our preacher emphasized how important human beings are in God's creation as well as the environment. We must care for our land and our neighbors!

CANADA

The overall theme and focus of the service really resonated with us. Such

issues like mercury pollution, deforestation, and sexual abuse are experienced by people all over the world. In our country, some indigenous communities are deeply affected by mercury contamination and other environmental damages that hurt their health and access to resources. Rising sea levels, flooding, and glacial melts are a danger to coastal and inland communities. Similarly to Suriname, our economy is dependent on companies who exploit natural resources through mining. It is important for our people to be aware of the actions perpetrated by these companies and demand they be held accountable for their effects on the environment and citizens. Advocacy on a municipal, provincial, and national level is essential. One pastor led a bible study that included a community walk that allowed for discussions on protecting creation on a local and global scale while getting in touch with their own surroundings.

Website: <https://wicc.org>

Facebook: WICCanada

Twitter: WICC_CA



GRENADA



GUYANA

GRENADA

We saw our struggles and experiences reflected in the worship service and felt a connection with the women of Suriname. There are people in our country who take advantage of the earth and deplete it of its resources. Our environment is threatened by sand mining, deforestation, and water pollution just like in Suriname. We recognize that we are the main contributors to the destruction of God's creation and actions must be taken to preserve this beautiful creation for future generations to enjoy.

We also recognized that the theme did not only focus on the environment but on all of God's creations. Not only do we deface the beauty of our planet but we deface the beauty of our brothers and sisters when we insult and harm each other. Domestic and sexual abuse is prevalent in our society as well as substance abuse. The damage we inflict on ourselves and others is the destruction



JAMAICA

we desperately need to change. All God's creation is beautiful!

GUYANA

Prayer is the backbone of the WDP movement and through our prayers we felt as though we were connected with our Surinamese sisters and truly a part of their community. It is often challenging to get women of different denominations to participate but we try to foster a positive network among us and enjoy the WDP celebration!

Our church had a collage depicting the various aspects of life in Suriname, with the artwork and flag displayed. Ginger beer, tamarind juice,

and baked pone were enjoyed by all participants. A skit was performed in order to educate the congregation on how to re-use and recycle certain waste and how littering should never be done. This skit was performed again for the children's service. It is important to teach children early the importance of caring for God's creation. They also thoroughly enjoyed playing the environmental game which was centered on proper waste management.

JAMAICA

The story of creation tells us that God did an excellent job of creating the world and all that is in it. However, we were entrusted with the care and preservation of creation and we have failed. We have not taken our responsibility as stewards seriously and have engaged in actions that have wreaked havoc on the environment. The Caribbean witnessed first-hand an increase in natural disasters. Recently, two hurricanes completely destroyed the island of Barbuda and



their waste properly - reduce, reuse, recycle!

ST. LUCIA

Women from seven different denominations joyously gathered together to worship and celebrate the country of Suriname. We had one church service with about 50 participants. It is usually challenging for us to get together because we are not an established committee but we still manage to celebrate WDP every year. We hope and pray that through God's will, we can bring more women and denominations together. The artwork, flag, and map were projected for our congregation to view while we learned about the Suriname's traditions and culture, and to reflect on the theme. God is always working towards repairing damaged communities. God provides us with the tools we need to better ourselves and our community so we must be more proactive in resolving our issues. Reflecting on this theme taught us the im-

portance of taking concrete actions as well as uplifting our prayers.

commitment to preserving the environment. Participants felt renewed to be good stewards and to continue working towards the preservation of our planet for the future. One of the services was held at a church that was surrounded by beautiful plants and flowers. The Suriname artwork was also laminated and put on display which all reminded us of the beauty and goodness in all of God's creation. We felt a mixture of excitement, sadness and humility in praying with our Surinamese sisters. It afforded us the opportunity to support them vicariously in petitioning for those who are suffering from the destruction of the natural environment.

TURKS & CAICOS

We faced a lot of challenges this year due to hurricanes Irma and Maria which hit our islands within days of each other. It was difficult restoring the electricity, phone services, and the trees and land were destroyed. Despite this, our communities rallied together to celebrate WDP and enjoy the service. We had participants from every denomination present – it was truly an ecumenical gathering.

The theme served as a lesson in making a more conscious effort to preserve the home God has provided for us. It made us realize how we have carelessly contributed to the effects of climate change and the degradation of the Earth. During the service we vowed to not only keep our surroundings clean but to accept and embrace those who come to our islands in hope of better opportunities. God has provided us with all the nec-



severely damaged other islands such as Dominica, Turks & Caicos, and Puerto Rico. The theme granted us a moment in which we could bring awareness to the significance of our role as stewards and what steps we can take to roll back some of the effects of global warming. Prayer and action are inseparable! We lifted up these issues in our service and encouraged participants to manage

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

The theme was most relevant to us. It served as a reminder of our responsibilities on caring for the environment and for ourselves. All in attendance reflected on their purpose and duty to God's creation and expressed their



essary provisions and it is our duty to help others in need.

US VIRGIN ISLANDS

We had a very difficult year after being hit by two hurricanes and almost had to cancel our WDP celebration. Many people were displaced and our church was destroyed. Despite all the destruction around us we held a worship service and connected with our sisters praying around the world. This situation made us realize how important caring for creation is, not only for the environment but for our neighbors in need. Communities banded together to provide food, water, electricity, and money to those who needed it most after the hurricanes hit. Our faith was really put to the test this year but we

did our best to keep the WDP spirit alive. The theme and story of creation was very meaningful for us as this time and we are glad to have celebrated with our Surinamese sisters!

USA

There were over 600 WDP services conducted across the United States with more than 18,000 participants. Some people had not heard of Suriname before so it was very exciting for them to learn about the people and their country. Others were very familiar with Suriname, having visited, and shared their experiences with their congregation. Participants enjoyed performing the creation story skit and children played a larger part in this years' service than previously, leading many churches to

combine the worship service and children's program.

The theme of environmentalism was wholeheartedly taken up. Many participants expressed concerns over our negative impact on the Earth and our responsibility for our actions, such as minimizing waste by recycling. Some churches had experts on ecology and climate change speaking at their services. Others discussed pollinators—what they need to survive and how we can help—an important issue considering the recent endangerment of bees.

Website: <http://www.wdp-usa.org>

Facebook: WorldDayofPrayerUSA

“The theme served as a lesson in making a more conscious effort to preserve the home God has provided for us. ”

Africa



ANGOLA

Across our country we had about 300 services and 3,000 participants. At one service there were members of at least 22 different churches. It was a great representation of our growing ecumenical relationship. Participants visited hospitals and prisons to bring the WDP liturgy to those in need. There was a sense of harmony in feeling the word of God through actions. The theme emphasized how humankind is the greatest of God's creations, and how we are called to love one another. We should make every effort to treat everyone with dignity. We thank the Suriname committee for sharing this worship service with us. The political and educational history of their country grabbed our attention. Our people have suffered colonial oppression as well and we felt a connection with them.

BOTSWANA

We promoted the WDP celebration on the TV, radio and internet, which resulted in services held across the country. We praised and rejoiced in the Lord as one body in Christ. Our committee has always adhered to creating a safe space where everyone is welcome and no one is silenced based on their opinions. We focus on respecting human dignity and building relationships as Christians. We felt this was greatly represented in the theme "All God's Creation is Very Good," since everyone is made in God's image and respect for one another is imperative. Nature is equally as deserving of our respect as it is God's creation and we are the custodians of the environment. After the service, we pledged to plant trees and avoid littering as our prayerful action. Rubbish can be recycled, reused, and reduced.

Christians are urged to stand up and take action.

Facebook: World Day of Prayer-Botswana

CAMEROON

God has blessed our rich and fruitful country but the WDP 2018 theme opened our eyes to the responsibility we have of maintaining it, which we are failing to do. We throw plastic bottles away in the streets knowing that later on, the rain will carry them further away and will create floods. We have noticed that our gutters are full of household wastes. We practice bush fire, knowing that it will impoverish the soil, and that later on, we will have to buy chemical fertilizer. Yes, our responsibility to engage in caring for God's creation is big! During the service, we asked participants for a concrete commitment and we

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO



got beautiful promises like: “I will plant 30 avocado trees” or “I will help keep the gutter in front of my house clean” or “I will get engaged in the district meetings and will inform all people around me.”

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

It was amazing to learn about the many different languages and the vast diversity of Suriname. We were surprised to learn that a country so far from our own could be facing the same daily life problems. We felt a close connection to our sisters and empathized with their concerns. The service proposed a modern play which we enjoyed performing. This play touched many of our women, especially since we were unaware of how to deal with waste management properly. Our women decided to initiate a project to manage household

waste and to educate the community about it. During the service we also took the opportunity to claim justice for our forests with our prayers. They are wrongly exploited by multi-national companies, without any benefit for our people.

GABON

This year, we celebrated on two days. On Thursday, we studied the resource materials and on Friday we prayed. It was difficult to plan a service this year due to work requirements but it is always a joy to get together for WDP. We took time to analyze how creation is connected with human health and development. For example, the beautiful butterflies protect some plants and are also pollen-bearers. The dangerous snake protects us from many little animals and the oil taken from its body is good for medication. Our women appreciated

a lot all those questions related to health and development. As we prayed, we understood that we were called to preserve God’s creation, as it is our environment.

GAMBIA

This year’s service commenced with a lot of preparations in the form of meetings, retreats and rehearsals by the committee with the women of the host church. Resource materials were distributed to church leaders, different women and youth organizations and Sunday school coordinators. The worship service was overwhelmingly attended by participants from different church groups, men, Muslim friends, and Sunday school children. The procession included church leaders and Sunday school children carrying fruits and vegetables with WDP Committee



members holding Gambian and Surinamese flags. We were really touched and empowered by the stories of the Surinamese women. We affirm through prayerful actions, faithful and firm commitment to take greater care, love and responsibility for all God's creation. As we strive for a new Gambia, the theme helped us make a difference in our lives, in our churches, in our country and the world at large.

GHANA

Issues regarding environmental justice and gender based violence are extremely important for us to lift up, which made the theme of "All God's Creation is Very Good!" relevant and powerful. Advocacy and education on things like illegal mining, human trafficking, and gender based violence is crucial. Our government is actively trying to prevent galamsey, illegal gold mining, which has destroyed bodies of water and the livelihoods of farmers, who are mostly women. On a local level, a symposium on the environment, sanitation, and climate change was held preceding the WDP

celebration. Environmentalists and activists gave presentations and held seminars focusing on the theme. Also, a cleanup campaign was organized at a maternity home in Accra and the theme was used at a prayer service in May to mark Africa Union Day of Prayer. On a local and national level we can make a difference and care for God's beautiful creation!

IVORY COAST

We learned to see that "God's Creation is Very Good" and that we are called to take care of it. The service challenged us to do something against all the unhealthy conditions we are facing in our own country. We appreciated the pedagogical play and the testimonies of the Surinamese women regarding their daily life. We felt connected as sisters. Through World Day of Prayer, we experiment every year the ecumenical sharing in our country, with women from different communities joining us. "Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action" is a reality for us, since we get informed and then can pray fully with the writer country. Our prayers

focus on getting more engaged in our communities and to follow through with concrete actions.

KENYA

We thank our Surinamese sisters for bringing such an important theme to the WDP service this year! God created everything on Earth and all of it is good and beautiful. In our country, concern over environmental justice has grown over the last few years and our government has already taken some measures in combating issues, such as excessive use of plastic bags. Last year, a ban on the use, import, and manufacture of plastic bags was implemented. Every institution, school, and individual faces heavy fines, and even jail time, if they are caught using plastic bags. Our President also urged us to plant trees and flowers, collect garbage, and keep our homes clean. Plastic bags resulted in many blocked drains and the deaths of wild animals and livestock, so this ban was extremely necessary. The theme reminds us that although steps are being taken, there is still work to do in caring for God's creation.



MADAGASCAR



MALAWI

MADAGASCAR

Being in prayer with our Surinamese sisters was uplifting and the issues they highlighted in their worship service reminded us of the responsibility we have to love and care for God's wonderful creations, the earth and each other. Everyone was created in God's own image and we are good! We had several great services across our country in churches, schools, and hospitals. Children participated in the general service. A young woman taught participants how to make handcrafted items. We visited hospitals and prisons to share the good news and take care of those in need. One action that was brought up during the service was a reforestation plan to replant trees, especially fruit trees. We need to give back to the earth to balance for all that we have taken.

MALAWI

In the history of World Day Prayer in our country, this year was the first time the service was conducted in a stadium. The service took place at Silver Stadium in the capital city,



MAURITIUS

Lilongwe, where over 1,000 women attended. We were honored to have many guests attend the service including Her Excellency Prof. Gertrude Mutharika, First Lady of the Republic of Malawi. She encouraged women to respect God's creation as well as respecting each other by showing love, care and appreciating one another as Christian women. This was such a colorful and blessed day! All the women dressed in our WDP uniform, including our First Lady. We call it Chitenje in our language. The stadium was beautifully decorated with our WDP cloth and flowers. The

service was broadcasted on television and the radio. We thank the women of Suriname for reminding us of the importance of God's creation!

MAURITIUS

We came out of the service convinced that we have to respect the marvelous creation of God. We believe that the word "Creator" is dedicated to God alone, as we – humans – are "creative" when we use materials to produce something. After the service, some volunteers cleaned up their village and children committed themselves to finding plastic bottles and



recycling them. Our children love being a part of the celebration! Organizing the WDP service can be difficult during the lent season, as our churches are so busy with many other activities, so we took the opportunity on the following Sunday to inform the community about the challenges raised by the 2018 WDP Service.

NIGERIA

The affirmation of God's goodness at this point in time raises the hope of believers that our God is always watching over us. God reigns supreme and we pray that God grants us the wisdom we need to become stewards of creation. With God as our helper we in turn shall be as a city built on a hill that cannot be hidden but will continuously shed its light worldwide and be the salt to sweeten the bitterness that is overshadowing the entire world through insurgency and violence.

The phrase "cleanliness is next to Godliness" rings true through the theme of this service. Garbage in the streets of our city is a huge issue and



residents are at risk of being exposed to diseases carried by rodents and vermin. It was suggested that certain groups lead their communities in exercises that demonstrate the correct and safe way to recycle and dispose of waste.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The theme was good for us since we are also facing ecological problems. After a long period of war in our country, everything was destroyed and needed to be rebuilt. Little by little, we want to reestablish and restore what

has been destroyed. In this context, we want to take care of the environment. More and more churches have become aware about environmental justice and challenged us to be part of the process of change. We committed ourselves to respect God's creation; we promised to stop throwing away any little thing in the streets and decided to place trash cans near the church. The children composed a song related to the natural beauty of the Congo, which needs to be respected and protected. We were so impressed with the children!



SEYCHELLES

The theme was relevant for us being that we are a small island state surrounded by vast areas of ocean and our concern for preservation is very high. Our schools teach the importance of caring for the environment and the children have environmental clubs and programs they can be a part of and learn how to be stewards of God's creation. For our service we focused on the protection of sea turtles which are greatly affected by water pollution and illegal poaching. Keeping our oceans, beaches, and rivers clean is not only for our benefit but for the benefit of all the living creatures that inhabit those areas. They too are God's creation! Praying with the women of Suriname felt like praying for our own people and issues. When we looked at the pictures of Suriname we saw our own country reflected. It was solidarity in prayer!

SIERRA LEONE

We thank the Suriname committee for bringing this eye-opening service to us and unfolding the story of creation in a new dimension. Our country suffers from severe flooding

during the rainy seasons because our drainage system has been blocked by all kinds of rubbish. We performed a skit to illustrate the proper way to dispose of plastic bags and bottles. The effect was phenomenal and it was aired on the radio and television. We held a Women's Seminar to discuss issues surrounding creation. Some topics included: the goodness/values of creation, the use and misuse of creation, and women and creation. We realized just how big a role we have in upholding the values of creation. We had meaningful conversations about the bleaching of one's skin to change its color, women's sexuality, caring for the environment by planting trees, and organizing advocacy groups to bring awareness to others.

SOUTH AFRICA

Our country experienced a severe water crisis which caused dam levels to be extremely low. We also experience high levels of pollution, littering, poaching, and the mining of natural resources. The destruction is heartbreaking and harmful to the environment and to all of the living

creatures on Earth. The wellbeing of women and children is also at risk due to human trafficking, abuse, rape and murder. Because of all of this the theme of WDP this year really touched our hearts and inspired us to take more concrete actions. Discussions took place on practical ways to conserve water, to avoid littering, to care for the animals, to recycle, and to encourage people to start a vegetable garden in their home and create a space at their church to gather supplies for the less fortunate. Wooden turtles were given out to people to remind them to be cautious of their role in caring for God's creation.

Website: www.wwdp.co.za

SOUTH SUDAN

Our weakness in faith has caused a lot of destruction to creation. This calls for repentance and significant changes to our personal lifestyle and caring for the gift of creation that God has given us. The Suriname artwork served as a great representation of all the good in creation and of all the things we should be thankful

*We bless the Lord for
the opportunity to host
the WDP and look
forward to all
future events!*



for and protect. With prayer and action, peace in our country can be achieved. Through the worship service, we listened to the multicultural and multi-ethnic people of Suriname. We lifted up the issues presented by the women of Suriname as well as the problems faced in our country. As one of our Guiding Principles affirms “prayer is rooted in listening to God and to one another.” History is before our eyes! The flora and fauna are remarkable!

SUDAN

We felt honored to pray with the women of Suriname and learn about their country. We learned that there are a lot of similarities between our countries which made us feel like they are a part of us. We are all united as one in Christ! It is good for all of us to share our experiences and learn about one another's problems so we can handle them together. We believe that praying together can bring everlasting peace! Our focus is

on education for women and ending gender based violence.

We had three major services with thousands of participants including government officials and non-Christians. Committee members dressed in uniform and marched along with the choir. Children and youth members were entertained with various activities. Everyone enjoyed singing, dancing, and praising the Lord together!

UGANDA

It is acknowledged worldwide that prayer and action go hand-in-hand. Christian women of many cultures, traditions, and races around the world unite yearly in prayer. Over 3,000 participants celebrated WDP in our country including 50 members of the clergy from different denominations. During the celebration, we were fortunate to receive services from health organizations such as AAR, Mengo Hospital Blood Bank,

and the Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau. Women were able to check their blood pressure, get tested for hepatitis, and donate blood. We had several speakers at the service who emphasized the need for protection and care for all of God's creations. They challenged both men and women to be holistic in caring for creation and to recommit themselves to Christ. We bless the Lord for the opportunity to host the WDP and look forward to all future events!

ZAMBIA

We had many services within 10 provinces around our country with about 3,000 participants. This WDP was celebrated in 7 different languages in churches of different denominations. Children were a part of the service as well and some wrote poems based on the theme. An ecumenical and joyous experience! The worship service written by the women of Suriname was a good reflection on God's creation and our role in that



context. It taught us that we must not segregate ourselves but be united as one in Christ. We found the Surinamese women to be very enterprising and their spirit of achievement inspiring. Through capacity building and empowerment programs we hope to support women in our country and to promote their interest and participation in the political and educational sectors.

ZIMBABWE

Hundreds of worship services were conducted with thousands of

participants in our country. We've seen an increase in the interest of young people as they participated in the services by reading, ushering, and worshipping. The unity among the congregations and our sisters around the world during these prayer services is truly amazing! It is so important to have intercessory prayers for other countries as well as our own, to pray for their sufferings as we pray for our own.

The theme highlighted the need for appreciation of what God has made

in us and in the environment. God has given us dominion over all of creation and we must not let harm come to the creatures of this world nor to ourselves. An educational dramatization was performed during the service that showcased the dangers of littering and how to properly recycle and dispose of garbage.

The unity among the congregations and our sisters around the world during these prayer services is truly amazing! It is so important to have intercessory prayers for other countries as well as our own, to pray for their sufferings as we pray for our own.

Asia



BANGLADESH

Every year, the WDP services are joyous with incredible opportunities to strengthen relationships among different churches. The theme and bible study are analyzed and interpreted for our situation. We try to decorate our space just as suggested, which always provides for a colorful atmosphere that helps us understand and enjoy the foreign culture.

One big issue we are facing in our country is the increase of Rohingya refugees coming in from Myanmar. Last year when violence broke out in Myanmar's Rakhine State, refugees fled to our country, the majority of which are women, children, and the elderly. They have nothing and need everything! The WDP theme this year reinforced the fact that these people are our neighbors and part of God's creation. We need to accept them and love them as God loves us all. It was a



deeply meaningful theme to have during this time in our country!

HONG KONG

Before the service, we set aside a day in January to learn all about Suriname. We studied the multicultural background, history, and geography while praying for their people. Although the country seemed so far away and foreign to us, we affirmed that prayer and action are inseparable and both have immeasurable influence on the world. On WDP,

through prayer and action, we all made a commitment in unity to heal our wounded mother Earth.

During our service one moment stood out as most powerful. While our sinful acts against God's creation were read out, a roll of black fabric was stretched over the heads of the congregation as a symbolic experience of the darkness and gloom we have caused our Earth. After our communal confession the fabric was removed and it left a deep impression.

Website: <http://www.hkcc.org.hk>

JAPAN

Several hundred services were conducted all over our country despite unfortunate weather in the northern area. Churches decorated their altars with colorful fabric that represented the Suriname flag, flowers, musical instruments, candles, and crosses. This



ensured participants felt connected to Suriname and the theme. A simplified version of the service was conducted for children as well. It was joyous!

The theme directly connects with the present environmental situation experienced by us and others around the world. For example, our country experienced a tragic environmental disaster which caused many to develop Minamata disease, a disease caused by methyl-mercury poisoning. This was the result of waste water pollution by a plastic manufacturer many years ago but the effects are still prevalent today. Environmental injustices do not only harm the Earth but the millions of people who inhabit it. We must continuously work on rectifying these issues and end the suffering

Website:

<http://cloister171.blog.fc2.com/>

MALAYSIA

A preparatory bible study was conducted before the WDP service, as well

as an outreach program where hundreds of women of different denominations visited a village in Kampung Keniong Lama, Simunjan. There, they held the worship service and presented gifts to students in need. It was very informative and we were able to closely identify with the women of Suriname because their issues, multi-ethnic groups, and vegetation are similar to ours. The exploitation of land, environmental and water pollution, and overuse of plastic are dangerous to not only us but marine life and other beings of God's creation. As stewards of creation we have been very irresponsible!

We prayed for the environment and for children who face sexual or physical abuse. One of our ideas to combat children's sexual abuse is to hold workshops for teachers and parents in hopes of keeping our children safe.

PAKISTAN

Church women stood in solidarity with global sisters to uphold the

commitment to care for the environment by challenging the exploitation of natural resources, injustices, and violence inflicted upon the bodies of women. We shared the message of God's peace and love for all creation through drama performances and songs. It was reiterated that personal salvation needs to express care and love for all creation.

To pay tribute to our sisters of Suriname for preparing this year's theme, some women organized a stall full of handmade items from recycled products with its country flag on display. In addition to this, other Churches of the Lahore Diocese held services led by their women's groups in both rural and urban parishes. This day of celebration provided church women with an opportunity to advocate for global climate change and environmental justice.

PHILIPPINES

We usually have one WDP service but this year an additional two were held in other cities! It was great to



see an increase in the amount of celebrations and the participation of many denominations. Women enjoyed dressing up in the colorful costumes of Suriname as well.

Due to the geographical location of our country, we have no control over the occurrences of natural calamities, such as typhoons. Currently, we are experiencing heavy floods in Metro Manila and other areas. In Romblon, we are organizing training sessions to prepare the population for national disasters. One was attended by about 60 men and women where they learned basic life supporting techniques. They planted mangroves along the coastal area and set up a coastal clean-up and tree planting activities. A recognition and appreciation of each other's capabilities will hopefully lay the groundwork for a better and safer community.

SINGAPORE

We had three main services with over 300 participants from more than 50 churches! It was such a joy to experience members of various denominations praying together in one accord. The altar was decorated with fruits

and flowers, the Suriname flag and the artwork. People really enjoyed the decorations and took many pictures. It felt like our Surinamese sisters were with us and praying alongside them was very profound. We greatly identified with their passions and aspirations in becoming good stewards of God's creation. In the story of creation, God declares that all of creation is good therefore we should love all people from all parts of the world, especially the underprivileged who need our help. In taking prayerful action we decided to support the organization Star Shelter, which focuses on giving women and children shelter until they find a job and a home.

SOUTH KOREA

In our country around 1,500 people participated in the WDP celebration from 70 churches along with schools and other organizations. People decorated their spaces as suggested and this allowed them to learn about the culture and history of our Surinamese sisters. We lifted up many issues during our worship but for us the biggest one is the unification of

North Korea and South Korea and the denuclearization of North Korea. Along with caring for the environment and vowing to protect and heal the world, we pray for our people.

While building ecumenical relationships can be challenging, we have faith that bonds will form regardless. We may have different thoughts and experiences but we are one in Jesus Christ. This worship service reminded us of the importance of the beautiful world God created for us and how we are expected to preserve it.

Website: www.kcwu.org

SRI LANKA

This service was an important opportunity to raise awareness on issues that are harming our people and country and to show that we are not alone. That women all over the world face the same challenges. Our people were embroiled in a civil war that lasted 30 years and ended just a decade ago. During this time we neglected our responsibilities to care for God's creation thus the natural and human-made disasters have awak-



SRI LANKA



THAILAND

ened our consciousness. The biggest problem in our country is the disposal of garbage so we focused our prayers into finding a resolution. Last year, in Colombo, a garbage dump collapsed resulting in many deaths. This tragedy was a wakeup call to the reality and consequences of our actions. Individually, and as a government, we have been very irresponsible and it is our duty to work together for the redemption of God's creation!

TAIWAN

The struggle for economic development and environmental protection has always been a global problem. When we learned about the gold mining companies in Suriname that damage the land, abuse child labor laws, and jeopardize the health of residents we were reminded of the careless management of nuclear waste in Taiwan. We were encouraged to organize lectures on various environmental issues and we set up a "Community Clean Day," to get others involved.

We felt it was important to draw public attention to these issues since



TAIWAN

we all need to work together to protect the Earth. After seeing how, despite the challenges faced, the people of Suriname strive to preserve environmental justice we were greatly motivated. One pastor shared with us the 5Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Repair, and Replace) which we used as a foundation for our commitments. A series of environmental protection activities were also designed to promote the concept to the children during their service.

Website:

<http://women.pct.org.tw/ministry.aspx>

Website: <http://www.ywca.org.tw/>

Facebook: WDP Taiwan

THAILAND

Through the worship service we eagerly listened to the multicultural and multi-ethnic women of Suriname as they took us through their communities and concerns. They lifted up their voices to remind us that we are care takers of God's creation and it is important for us to evaluate how our actions affect our planet. A beautiful banner of the Suriname artwork hung in our church and it was uplifting to see the symbolic hands receive the divine gift and pass it on to the next generations. We live with hope and belief that people have the means, and increasingly, the will to focus on justice, peace, and the integrity of God's creation. We as Christians cannot be silent and must teach others to do their part. We want to use WDP activities to educate and campaign for climate justice. God's justice always meant love and caring for creation!

Europe



ALBANIA

From the beautiful mountains and rivers, to the incredible birds and fish, and to our loving friends and family, the theme really highlighted how generous our God is. God's creation was a gift and we must protect it for ourselves and for the future generation. A few years ago the Albanian government was on the verge of disposing dangerous foreign chemicals on our land which could have had adverse effects on our country and citizens. Our people stood up for our country and protested the government's actions relentlessly. Our government conceded and no harmful chemicals were brought to Albania. This is an example of how all of us can work together to demonstrate our rights and protect our land and people from environmental injustices. We believe in the power of the simple people. In order to make big changes you must start small, like



teaching children how to clean up after themselves. In time, change will come.

ARMENIA

The whole program was very educational and informative! The pictures we saw and displayed were very impressive and showed us the beauty of Suriname. Many of us had not heard of the country before so it was interesting to learn about their culture

and traditions as Christian women. As Christians we always pray for people around the world, especially those in need, but this service offered us an opportunity to focus on one country and the specific issues they raised up for prayers. After learning more about the women of Suriname we felt connected to them and lifted up their prayer requests—not only for them but for all those suffering from the same problems. We had people of different denominations—Evangelical, Apostolic and Catholic Churches—attending the service and women of all age groups participated. What a blessing!

AUSTRIA

Praying with the women of Suriname was a heartwarming experience because we were able to understand their situation and relate to the challenges they face. We were very interested in learning about the cultural

diversity and history of Suriname. Several preparatory meetings were held. During one special meeting a Surinamese woman, who is active in the WWDP, visited our office to talk about Suriname and how she experienced the celebration focused on her home country. Since the theme emphasizes God's creation, we also invited Austrian climate scientist Prof. Helga Kromp-Kolb to talk about climate change and faith – what responsibility do Christians have to save God's creation? The environment destruction is daily and it causes poverty, illness, war, hunger, and migration. It is important to respect creation not only for us but for the future generations!

Website: <http://weltgebetstag.at>
Facebook: Weltgebetstagderfrauen

BELGIUM

As we prepared for the service many people took great interest in the theme and the environment. During these preparatory meetings we exchanged thoughts and discussed ways of improving the area in which we live. We are currently involved in teaching and helping refugees in our country. We had several church services in our area with hundreds of participants. This gave us the opportunity to meet new people from other churches and grow ecumenical connections within the neighborhood. Children and youth participated by reading the liturgy. The worship service area was very colorfully decorated with fruits and flowers from South America which brought a lot of joy and enthusiasm into the atmosphere. It felt good to



be surrounded by a bit of Surinamese culture as we learned more about their beautiful and rich nature and prayed for their needs and struggles.

Facebook: WereldgebedsdagBelgie

BULGARIA

We are always happy to get together and meet for the WDP celebration in the spirit of Christian unity! It was exciting to pray with our Surinamese sisters and to learn about their country. We were impressed by the vast ethnic diversity and how each group is accepted and valued. It speaks to the high moral and spiritual maturity of the Surinamese and they are a good example for the rest of us.

The battle for the protection of God's

creation against human selfishness and greed is one that is so important for us to be relentless in fighting. Not only do we neglect nature but we neglect our neighbors, who feel lonely and abandoned. Our personal commitments aim to make a change. One woman said that she will plant a tree in her neighborhood. Another vowed to bring her own bags while shopping to avoid using plastic. The change starts with us!

CROATIA

We felt very united with the women of Suriname and found similarities between our two countries. That is one of the great things about WDP - it connects us on a global scale and underlines the Christian message that we are all one no matter how far



away we are from each other. The service reminded us of our responsibility to publicly bring awareness to environmental issues, to act accordingly, and to pray for people globally. All that God has created is perfect and it was all given to us as a precious gift that we have to cherish and respect. Since we have disrupted the balance in nature it is our duty to regain it and to be in harmony with it. We decorated our altar as suggested, with fruits and flowers, and added photos of polluted rivers and damaged countryside thus stressing the need for repair.

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/SMDhrvatska/

CZECH REPUBLIC

WDP is a good opportunity to meet people from different denominations and build relationships. In our country, WDP worship services are welcome and accepted widely because it is not about denominations but about Christian life in another

country. We are able to concentrate on the people of that country and their culture rather than focusing on ourselves. Therefore, we were very excited to worship with Suriname! We set up a display area with pictures and refreshments prepared according to Suriname's recipes. It is very important to us and we look forward to making new foreign recipes every year.

The story of creation resonated with us. God created us to care and protect creation and we have faltered. Protecting the environment has become a serious issue and we are being called to action. Let us pay attention and care for God's creation as intended!

Facebook: Světový den modliteb - český výbor

DENMARK

This service offered us an opportunity to learn so much about a country new to us. Before WDP, many of us



had never heard about Suriname and did not know where it was located. We did not know about their struggles and how big of an impact their little country has on the rest of the world. We loved being in prayer with the Surinamese women and wanted to stand by their side during their struggles and their joys.

While discussing the service and the theme, we focused on the enormous use of plastic in the world, especially when it comes to shopping, and how to reduce our use of it. We were encouraged to look for alternatives while shopping, to select items that are not wrapped in plastic, and to be actively aware of our overuse of materials at home, such as tinfoil. These actions can make more of a difference than we think.

Website: www.kvindebetedag.dk



ENGLAND, WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND



ESTONIA

ENGLAND, WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND

It was a challenging theme. The dangers of pollution and plastic waste in oceans have been in the news now more than ever. We live in a prosperous western country so the effects of climate change are not always apparent to us. This service opened our eyes to the real hardships faced by other countries due to our thoughtlessness. Many pledged to become better stewards of God's creation and among the suggestions were walking instead of driving and conserving energy by turning off appliances while not in use. One group plans to lobby supermarkets and members of Parliament about excessive plastic use.

Due to severe snowfall many of the WDP services were rescheduled. Some services will be held as late as September, making this an almost year long Day of Prayer! Those who had to cancel still made an effort to meet together or make a donation. The spirit of WDP is stronger than ever!

Facebook: Women's World Day of Prayer England Wales and Northern Ireland

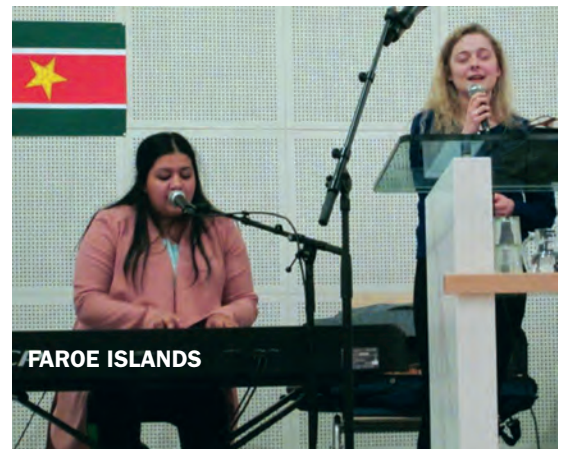
Website: www.wwdp.org.uk

Twitter: [wwdp@WWDPforEWN](https://twitter.com/wwdp@WWDPforEWN)

ESTONIA

Our service was held in a newly renovated Lutheran church which had a fresh new aura and smelled of new beginnings. It made everyone present very happy and eager for the service. WDP is not as well known in our country as it could be but we work hard every year to prepare the worship service. It is always exciting to find a new church to introduce to the movement. This year we had a new reader participate in the service. She is a Zimbabwean student at a university in Tallinn and part of the Methodist church. It was a very joyful experience!

It felt right to be in prayer with the women of Suriname. The issues they



FAROE ISLANDS

lifted up in the service were similar to issues we face in terms of nature and connections to economic growth. We must join the movement and produce less waste!

FAROE ISLANDS

It has been a tradition now for the last 10 years for our committee to host an Inspiration Day in preparation for the WDP celebration. During this time we had bible lessons in which we studied the text selected by the women of Suriname and had the



opportunity to talk about WDP on a Christian radio station. We felt greatly connected to our sisters around the world who come together from different denominations. It gives us strength knowing we are united as Christians. During the service we lifted up the pollution of the sea and the overuse of plastic. Our country is an island, thus the sea is vital to our daily life and a source for most of our people to make a living. It is our responsibility to take better care of our environment so we may pass it on to future generations.

FINLAND

The theme was very timely and familiar because in Finland recycling is very important. We are taking responsibility and caring for God's creation. Several worship services were held around the country with an estimated 400 participants. The participants of the worship service in Helsinki were eager to discuss the theme and very much enjoyed our little play where the emphasis was on how we behave as tourists in other countries—are we recycling and taking care of our waste there too?

The altar was simple and colorful. We decorated the area by carefully selecting various examples of waste to visualize the importance of recycling, with a touch of humor. Commitments were made by participants of the celebration to treat God's creation with more care and respect. This was inspired by the WDP service theme.

Website: www.ywca.fi

FRANCE

Creation is a wonderful gift! We do not own the earth, we have only inherited it. God entrusted us today with its management for tomorrow. We have been called to get involved and take action in caring for God's creation and for that we are thankful to the Suriname women for uplifting the story of creation. There is a movement within our country called "Green Church", supported by many ecclesial bodies, which focuses on respecting creation. People everywhere are finally aware of their responsibilities. A number of local communities organize cleanup projects such as cleanup operations by the beach, along the rivers and lakes, and in forests. Children and

youth enjoy participating in these events! They take part in the WDP celebration as well by singing in the choir and doing some readings. Actively participating in the service encourages them to return the next year, something we are very hopeful of.

Website: <http://jmp.protestants.org>

GERMANY

The theme was an eye-opener to the beauty of creation and of the severe damage we have done to it. Awareness has grown for personal responsibility and although the threat to the environment must be stopped through global political action, we believe that we can also make a difference by taking small steps each day. We have suggested reducing the consumption of meat and dairy, riding a bike when possible, and avoid cosmetics with micro plastic particles.

We are actively promoting workshops and seminars for WDP. The content focuses on the writer country, their social and economic issues, and the Bible study. This year we



© Zumbruch



invited several people from Suriname and missionaries who have worked in Suriname to present special aspects of the country. For the children's program, "Bausteine" programs were sold as an educational tool designed to present information to children in an appropriate manner for their age.

Website: <https://weltgebetstag.de/en/>

GREECE

This year's theme was an exceptional one! Everyone who participated was interested in how they could help. Many ideas were lifted up like replacing plastic bags, cups, plates, and plastic bottles with objects made from a material less destructive to the environment. People also suggested teaching children and family members to recycle properly. We are glad the women of Suriname brought light to such an international problem.



The children of the Armenian Evangelical church made a short film for the program: A lady threw a bag into the bin and a conscientious young man opened the bag to check it. The bag was mainly filled with plastic items. The young man explained that plastic left to itself in nature will take a few hundred years to degrade. Recycle or reuse is a better way to care for the environment. It was a great educational moment for the children and adults!

HUNGARY

Despite a severe snow storm on the 2nd of March, WDP was celebrated

all over Hungary. Everyone really enjoyed this year's pertinent theme. The WDP program showed, that we are facing the same problems all over the world, therefore only our combined prayers and actions will be able to bring a real solution. We have realized the importance of our personal responsibility and actions towards the preservation of the created

world. In order to symbolize the significance of recycling, many of our worship locations were decorated with reused and painted PET-plastic flowers. Personal commitments were written on turtle-shaped paper sheets reminding us of the protected animal of Suriname. This year we are funding a pilot project dedicated to supporting those who live in the countryside by strengthening their sense of self-care and changing their approach towards farming by teaching eco-farming techniques.

Website: www.vilagimanap.hu



ICELAND

The theme of environmental responsibility is very much the call of the time. Participants connected their own experiences of caring for creation with that of the Surinamese women and felt very moved. We try to learn as much about the writer country as possible by immersing ourselves in their music, food, and photos. Praying in unison with the Surinamese felt very natural for our people who understand the delicate nature of creation and the need to protect it for our own sake. Some suggestions for caring for creation that were brought up during the service were recycling, the use of reusable bags, mindful consumption of electricity and food to avoid excess waste, and avoid purchasing gold jewelry. Some women had never heard about how damaging the methods of gold processing could be. Learning about it now was eye-opening and many vowed to no longer be complicit in its production.



Facebook:

Althjodalegurbaenadagurkvenna

IRELAND

The service this year proved to be inspiring yet challenging. Due to a severe cold wave and unusually heavy snowstorms, dubbed the “Beast from the East”, many of our WDP services across the country were cancelled or postponed. This experience added to the relevance of the WDP 2018 theme and the growing concern over climate change and environmental justice. Those who managed to go forward with their services truly enjoyed the flow of it and the relevance for all ages. The prayerful meditation was a

blessing, leading the heart and mind to the focus of the theme. We even used a responsive version of the Lord’s Prayer from the Eco-congregation that incorporated elements of creation. We lit 7 candles, one for each day of creation, as we prayed together – ‘and God saw that it was good!’ An amazing service!

ITALY

Every year it is a joy to set up the worship service and try to interpret the spirit of the writer country. This year was particularly interesting to learn about Suriname, which we knew very little about. Worship spaces were colorful and inspiring! In a Milan service, the congregation found out that one of their choir members was from Suriname. He sang the Surinamese national anthem during the celebration and everyone felt closer to their brothers and sisters on the other side of the world! In a Merano service, children attended a special children’s worship service where they could see nature, hear animals, smell and taste

With great enthusiasm people decorated their spaces and dressed up according to the six ethnic groups depicted in the worship service. It allowed us to feel connected with our sisters.



the food of Suriname, while learning to appreciate and defend the biodiversity of our planet. The same issues that were lifted up by the women of Suriname were lifted up by our people and we vowed to take action towards a sustainable environment.

Website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/gmpitaliana/home>

LITHUANIA

The focus on “All God’s Creation is Very Good!” reminded us of how beautiful, harmonious and rich everything God has given us is. At the same time, how fragile and vulnerable it is to the actions of human beings. Things like wasting food and the overuse of certain materials negatively impact the world around us. It is good to be reminded of our role in God’s creation.

The WDP activities always bring joy to everyone, no matter what their denomination is. We forget about our

traditional differences and share a rewarding service together. With great enthusiasm people decorated their spaces and dressed up according to the six ethnic groups depicted in the worship service. It allowed us to feel connected with our sisters. People were also excited to learn about Suriname’s culture as well as getting informed about the ecological problems and difficulties they face.

LUXEMBOURG

The WDP celebration is a powerful moment that connects all of us from around the world together. It is very uplifting! Our committee is very lucky to be extremely ecumenical and celebrate WDP together without any issues. We are strategizing ways to organize WDP activities during the year and how to apply the WDP motto and theme to programs not necessarily organized by WDP. We want to effectively build relationships with other organizations and promote WDP.

We had services in churches and villages, including two children services which counted with their active participation. They learned about the environment and caring for God’s creation. Environmental justice is an essential focus point for everyone and we should be more aware of how our actions effect God’s creation. Even if we believe we are making an effort to change we should continuously reevaluate our efforts and acknowledge what can be done better.

Website:

<http://www.acfl.lu/de/weltgebetstag>

MACEDONIA

It is important to learn about the lives and circumstances of women from countries like Suriname. Without WDP we would never have known anything about these countries. It is very educational and we have the opportunity to pray for the people of these countries after learning their history and culture. Widening our horizons and working



together with women from other churches is always a joy and it enriches our faith. We feel hopeful knowing that we share similar problems with other countries around the world and are therefore not alone. We prayed very much for the protection of women and children who suffer from exploitation and for the protection of nature.

NORWAY

Where in the world lies Suriname? That was our first question when we received the worship service material. In one of our celebrations we were surprised when a woman shared with us that she had been a missionary in Suriname. She shared gripping memories of the people she met and of how beautiful the country was. It was very meaningful!

Our National Committee distributes materials for a great number of local committees and we are always impressed by the creativity among them. Spaces were decorated in Surinamese colors with pineapples and coconuts, and photos of the country projected



on the walls. In Drammen, prayer stations were decorated and set up for an unforgettable service. Around 14 churches of different denominations participated in the services. WDP is a unique opportunity to celebrate together and it is our annual highlight when it comes to ecumenical relationships and interactions. It truly inspires happiness!

Website: www.norgeskristnerad.no

POLAND

At one of our services the pastor gave all the participants a candle that they were supposed to light using one main candle placed on the altar. She talked about how one light cannot shine over all of the Earth, so when

Christians come together from around the world they shine brighter and better. This experience was really moving considering the theme of this years' service, and how we realized we are all part of God's creation and there is a plan for all of us. We are all in this together! Praying in unity with the women of Suriname showed us that the same problems are experienced around

the world and it is our privilege and duty to pray for those in need. We value the importance of education and teaching women and girls how to be independent, especially in a world that discriminates against them. We advocate for educational programs for women.

PORTUGAL

The theme for the 2018 service really awakened our awareness of the damage we have caused to the Earth and in turn to ourselves. Our country was seriously affected last year when a series of wildfires destroyed the forests and nearly took the lives of hundreds of people. Many families lost loved ones and became displaced. The pro-



gram's theme served as a reminder to watch over the wonderful gift God has given all of us. We directed our prayers towards God asking for forgiveness and guidance in becoming good stewards. We all made commitments to care for nature, avoid wasting water, stop littering, and refrain from exploiting animals for material satisfaction, such as the use of fur. The WDP celebrations are a great way for us to learn about other cultures and the problems they face. They are often similar to ours, so we feel united by the service.

ROMANIA

The women in our community are always eager to learn about a foreign country and their culture. The artwork was well-loved for its beautiful and expressive message and was printed on postcards for all participants. Traditional Surinamese dishes were cooked and served along with tropical fruit juices. These gatherings are very important because they allow us to socialize and learn together. While learning about Suriname we realized we face the same issues such as gold mining and illegal deforestation. Our prayers helped us



pay more attention to the message behind the Genesis story. Environmental protection and conservation are not only a global duty but also an individual task. Politicians have to keep fighting for the conservation of God's creation but we also have to be responsible as individuals by recycling, properly disposing of our waste, and by trying not to pollute resources while simultaneously using them carefully.

SCOTLAND

The women of Suriname wrote a wonderful service that everyone

could connect to, especially in the condition that the world is in today. It brought awareness to how we should be better stewards of creation. We are greatly concerned about the amount of plastic in our oceans and the amount of time it takes for rubbish in a landfill to decompose. During the service we had group activities like discussions on recycling, the environmental game for children, and a quiz on the decomposition time of certain items. Some actions suggested were the cleaning of local beaches, reducing the amount of plastic used, and encouraging young mothers to use terry nappies instead of disposable diapers.

We work together nationally, regionally, and locally to organize a memorable WDP. We had an overnight retreat allowing us to build relationships and share bible studies, focusing on our similarities rather than on our differences.

Website: www.wdpscotland.org.uk

Facebook: World Day of Prayer Scotland



SERBIA

The WDP motto “Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action” inspires us to share experiences and information with women around the world, which makes us feel unified. We did not know much about Suriname, but we learned that, despite many differences, we share similar ecological issues. Our beautiful country is an agricultural area and rich with minerals, so we could sympathize with them and understand their concerns. In 2014, we suffered heavy rain which left a third of our country flooded. Last year, we suffered an extreme drought! Natural disasters like these negatively impact people, especially farmers who end up losing their income and slipping into debt. We must do all we can to make a change, starting with personal decisions to care for creation. We also reflected on Roman 8:22 “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in pain.” We must acknowledge the painful groaning of God’s creation and act!



SLOVAKIA

The celebrations in Slovakia were truly ecumenical! We are glad that Christians are becoming more inclusive and are able to put aside prejudices. In most places at least two denominations, Roman Catholic and Evangelical, were praying together. Quite often, Christians from several towns or villages lying close to each other decided to join in the celebrations. The WDP had a special meaning for Redemptorists (The

Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer) and their mission partners. This is because it was organized by women from Suriname, the country where Peter Donders had worked for 45 years tending to the native inhabitants and the lepers. Redemptorists are joining millions of people all over the world in prayers for environmental awakening, and mobilizing them to protect our common home. Children participated in the program by introducing the country and pray-



ing for a healthy environment and for children's access to education at all levels.

Website:

<https://sites.google.com/site/sdm-slovensko/>

Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/sdm-slovensko/>

SLOVENIA

The Suriname service was ecumenically celebrated in 6 locations across the country. It was our goal to include as many denominations as possible. We had a great example of good cooperation among the Evangelical and Catholic Church in Izola, but we are still looking for connections with our Serbian Orthodox sisters. We were happy that a service in Murska Sobota was taped and broadcasted on Slovenian national television during the Sunday religious program. We have been very busy, but excited, promoting Suriname and Slovenia WDP programs at the same time!

The theme served as an important reminder that we are all different but

created in God's image. We need to learn to live with the diversity around us and take care of nature. Big changes may not be in our hands but we can still make a powerful impact with our conscious actions.

SPAIN

We knew nothing about Suriname, so it was a joy to learn about the richness of their culture and the beauty of nature. We understood their history and listened in prayer to their sufferings, challenges, commitments and hopes. We became more aware of the connection of our faith with our responsibility towards the environment. We highlighted the contamination of the sea and river waters with plastics, and called people to avoid this by recycling and reducing the use of plastics. Participants wrote down on the sea turtle card their commitment to care for creation, and took it home as a reminder. We let the children decorate the extra sea turtle cards, and used it as an invitation for coffee to the African migrants supported by an NGO and our churches. We used the environmental game at a prepara-

tory meeting in Madrid. It made our meeting dynamic and fun.

SWEDEN

It was very uplifting to share in the prayers and concerns of our Surinamese sisters. It was also very exciting to learn that a nation with such a small population could show us so much diversity in culture and traditions. We were lucky to be joined by a female pastor who served in Suriname and was able to share her experiences before the worship service began.

The theme is extremely important for us as environmental issues are a major concern in our country. Instead of listening to a speaker, we decided to have small group discussions on how we can contribute to a more sustainable development. Some of the ideas and concerns raised were: alternatives to fossil fuels, how to reduce the consumption of meat and imported food products, how to recycle and reuse resources. The program presented by the women of Suriname helped us focus on our responsibilities towards future generations.



Website: www.svekumeniskakvinnor.se

Facebook: www.facebook.com/svekumeniskakvinnor/

SWITZERLAND

Hundreds of services were held in churches and homes across our country despite the very bad weather we experienced. We even managed to hold some services for children or include them in the general worship service. It was great to be in solidarity with our Surinamese sisters and to learn about their deeply diverse and multiethnic community. Our spaces were decorated as our sisters suggested. We tried to illustrate elements of nature which are in danger due to exploitation and

thoughtlessness. During the service, this topic was presented by means of role-playing and dramatizations highlighting the problems with littering. This has allowed us to have open discussions about the problems and possible solutions in taking care of the environment. Our “prayerful actions” will be to support local and global initiatives for better living conditions, especially for women and children.

Website: www.wgt.ch

UKRAINE

Services were held in churches, schools, and homes across our country with children and young adults actively participating. About 20

services were held with hundreds of participants! The decorations embodied the Surinamese culture and we felt closer to our sisters as we prayed with them and for them. We felt incredibly sympathetic as we lifted up the issues brought to light by the women of Suriname. Their struggles are our struggles. The celebration and theme, “All God’s Creation is Very Good!”, underlined the common responsibility of caring for our planet and all of God’s creations. We want to encourage the message brought to us by WDP and bring awareness to issues such as the consequences of littering, the value of recycling, and ways to properly sort out and manage waste in our communities.

It was great to be in solidarity with our Surinamese sisters and to learn about their deeply diverse and multiethnic community.

Latin America



ARGENTINA

ARGENTINA

March is our summer season and it is hot for us. A community in Buenos Aires decided to do the celebration outdoors. The local government provided lights at the park and an ecumenical choir performed. It was very impressive!

At another service, we had a visitor from Suriname, who enriched our celebration. Children in Misiones participated in the program while attending a church camping trip. Youths were readers in the program. While in prayer with the people of Suriname we realized that we are part of a network of mutual support. We discussed the forest devastation that is going on in Argentina. Out of our serious reflection, we made a commitment to educate our churches, families and communities to care for the environment. We are very concerned with gender violence.

Even though many churches and the government are campaigning to eliminate it, the number of women's death does not decrease.

Website:

<http://cedmo.blogspot.com/>

BRAZIL

Brazil shares its northern borders with Suriname. In Belem, they connected with the Consulate who let them use the Suriname flag and dolls representing the ethnic diversity of the country, and had a staff member attend the service with her family. In the south of Brazil, there is little knowledge about Suriname, and the program provided the opportunity to learn and feel the needs of our neighbors. It was exciting to be in prayer together for the same cause, which was the care for our mother earth.



BRAZIL

Environmental justice is a cause well promoted in Brazil, and it is always shocking to realize that we still need to further advocate for it. We reaffirmed that care for the environment is a Christian responsibility, and that God will judge us for what we have done to its creation. WDP celebrated its 80th anniversary. We are very grateful to God for that.

Website: <http://www.dmoracao.comunidades.net/>

CHILE

We had not heard about the country of Suriname before the WDP service. It was a surprise to see such beauty in their natural resources and diversity in fruits, flora and fauna. Our country is also beautiful and we felt compelled, like Suriname, to care for our resources. We were amazed by the program. In every corner of the world



there is something beautiful to be thankful for.

We felt that when we learn about the way people live and their needs, they look so similar to us. It helps engage the community in prayer. The enthusiasm for being participants of the changes God and the Holy Spirit will bring to Suriname greatly motivated the churches. We also talked and prayed about violence in the family, migration, and environmental education for children.

Website: <http://diamundialdeoracion.wixsite.com/chile>

COLOMBIA

We had a paper tree displayed for the participants to post their commitments on. With joy, a child placed her commitment to care for the environment on the tree. In our country, we are concerned about the resulting destruction of the natural resources by mining activities. The Páramos, high altitude eco-systems, have been greatly



impacted which affects the water resources. Our people also face deforestation and forced displacement.

We identified with Suriname in terms of this global problem, which is to preserve the environment. The program helped us see the overwhelming need to educate our families and communities about these injustices and to put into practice the preservation of the environment before our resources are depleted.

COSTA RICA

Waste of water, social violence, environmental destruction, the situation of children, mining, and the consequences of the use of chemical fertilizers on the pineapple production on

the land and on the population were some of the issues we discussed. Then participants wrote on their cards the commitments they would take to address those issues and to denounce injustices.

Children prepared the turtles with recycled materials to raise awareness on environmental care. Reusable bamboo straws were distributed. We demonstrated how to reduce, re-use and recycle.

We are praying and acting for the environment and for the respect and value of the diversity we represent as human beings in face of the recent political situation in Costa Rica where the LGBT community has been discriminated against and insulted. All of God's creations are good!

CUBA

As a follow up to the WDP 2016 Cuba service, the children's choir that was created then was named World Day of Prayer. They sing at WDP events and the group Generation with a



Purpose dances. This year we introduced a new symbol, it is a green stole embroidered with the WDP logo. The stole will be worn by the woman who will lead the meditation during the services.

We are grateful for the increased number of young women in our celebrations. Taking care of God's creation is a theme that many people in our churches are sensitive to, in particular, the issue of drinkable water. In partnership with churches in the USA, water purifiers have been installed in churches to make water available to church members and the community. Every time we pray for a different people it creates a fellowship connection that becomes indissoluble. We advance in unity and common concern as a response to the problems in the world.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

We are happy that we had around 40 children at one of our celebrations and for a teenager to reproduce



the painting in a larger size. Their participation was appreciated and we hope to continue this trend of including young people in the preparations for the service.

We should build relationships of hope, share joy, bring peace, and announce the gospel to a society living with no God. Hopeless people care for nothing, and we should respond with a culture of life, justice and peace. The WDP theme was promoted through our network of communication network through What's App. When we were in prayer with Suriname we felt that we were in prayer for ourselves. Our people go through the same situations, like the contamination of land and the lack of assistance.

GUATEMALA

Women from Cobán were deeply impacted by the conversation about recycling, even resulting in their behavior changing regarding disposing of trash. They learned with a local environmental leader about the initiatives related to the

Cahabón River and the women's cooperative.

In one spirit, united regardless of the distance, we are women with similar life situations searching for the well-being of our families and preservation of our waters and nature. Contamination of rivers and lakes, mining waste discharge, lack of public policies for recycling or functional sanitary landfills, persecution of women's human rights defenders, criminalization of the women and their families who are struggling against mining are some of the situations we face in Guatemala. We proposed to initiate a campaign to preserve water, decrease the consumption of products that contaminate nature and of materials that



cannot be re-used, and educate our churches about the damage of disposable materials to the environment.

HONDURAS

We had a wonderful service! A kindergarten class learned the song “Mi Moi Kondre” and preformed it for us. They wore little wrist bands with the Suriname flag on it, which was very cute. The topic of recycle, reuse, and reduce was discussed and certain activities were organized to raise awareness. The WDP services coincided with the celebration of Earth Day and some preparations overlapped. Our committee got creative designing posters and developing activities that engaged participants in identifying the proper rules of recycling. A reusable shopping bag was raffled off, and this evolved into a follow-up project in which we sew shopping bags, from previously used fabric items, to raise awareness in the community about the value of reusing materials and reducing the use of plastic. The stories and prayers of the Surinamese women truly inspired and motivated us.



MEXICO

We had a beautiful experience learning about the country and the people of Suriname. Some of their problems are ours as well. We joined them in prayer and awe for their natural resources. And we know that our prayers of intercession will be heard by God. We recognized that we need to emphasize the culture of caring for the environment by planting and watering the trees, disposing of trash in the right place, recycling, and protecting water resources. We have committed to do it in our communities. The participants took home the turtle cards with their ideas to care for creation to serve as an everyday

reminder. We invited girls and adolescents to read on behalf of the seven women of Suriname.

NICARAGUA

In the last weeks of April, we faced much suffering when the government responded with force against the demands of the college students and the people. About 63 students died and some disappeared. We created a What's App group to be informed and pray together for our people. We have also started organizing a National WDP Committee.

Our focus was to raise awareness in the churches, ecumenical organizations and rural communities about the care for the water sources and waste disposal. We want to educate children and youth, pastors and schools to care for our environment. We work together with CEDEPCA and CEPAD to build collaborations between women from the city and rural areas to take better care of the common house given to us by God. The children and youth dressed up with the colors that represent the



They decided to create this recycling project in three steps. First, garbage bins will be placed in the community, starting with the church yard. Second, the recycled plastic objects that were deposited in the garbage bins will be sold. Finally, they will apply the funds raised towards social projects. They also decided to collect batteries to dispose of them at the proper center.

Suriname flag and danced at the service.

PANAMA

In our country there is a big garbage problem. People do not dispose of their garbage properly and litter in the streets and in the rivers. This theme came at a time when we desperately need to recommit to our mission as Christians to guard God's creation and take responsibility for the environment. One suggestion given during the service was to orchestrate talks among the community to create a consciousness about our actions and how they affect what God has created for us.

As a united group of sisters and brothers we prayed for Suriname and all universal needs. Participants were very creative during the services and some even dressed in the traditional garments of the Surinamese women as they read the passages. The children who participated also dressed as children from Suriname and joyously sang songs about creation and caring for it. It was a wonderful service!

PARAGUAY

The commitment to care for creation was taken seriously by the participants to the point in which a community designed a recycling project.

Ecumenism is a great challenge in Paraguay. It is possible in some communities and practically impossible in others. We value the decoration very much, and we creatively explore it during the Annual Preparatory Retreat. We created a space for children and adolescents to participate by inviting them to place the decorations during the prelude moment of the service.

URUGUAY

Before our services took place we had a brief explanation of the country of Suriname. We learned about their history, landscape, and culture which helped us have a more profound understanding of the theme and the



theology behind the Creation Story. This contextualization made it possible for us to feel closer to the women who prepared the celebration. At the same time, it led us to reflect on the treasures we have in our country and the responsibility to take care of them in simple everyday acts – which may sometimes seem insignificant – but they do make a difference.

The service was enjoyable for many! Our chapel was beautifully decorated with a variety of plants, fruits, flowers, and paper humming-birds. It was fun to learn how to pronounce the phrase “A heri grontapu di Gado, meki bun

doro, doro,” and meaningful to repeat it throughout the service.

VENEZUELA

We counted with an active participation of a representative of the Suriname Embassy in the planning and the celebration of our program. We learned directly from them about Suriname. The program, held at the Focolare Center, reaffirmed our commitment to recycle. We are educating the churches, schools and communities to collect recyclable waste and reuse it into crafts or utensils like water glasses. We cannot afford to have our streets, forests, and rivers

full of trash for lack of an environmental education. We agreed on a follow up to the celebration by promoting the culture of recycling, educating the youth and children, and offering arts and crafts training with recycled materials. To pray with our sisters let us experience solidarity and unity. We feel blessed as WDP helps us to strengthen our ecumenical relationship where women, men and youth come together to review the materials, plan, organize and celebrate.

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Middle East



EGYPT

The theme had a two-fold impact on participants. It led some to take action in helping preserve our natural resources and it incited many to start examining their own lives to see if they have been transgressors against God's creation. Some time ago, a major attack was launched against Christians in Sinai, Egypt and many had to flee and take refuge in neighboring towns. It was suggested during our service to send relief to those refugees struggling to rebuild after this attack. It is our duty as stewards of God's creation to help those in need.

In our country WDP is not as well-known as we would like, but by celebrating this event every year and inviting women from the YWCA and other ecumenical organizations we are increasing awareness. Services are held on Fridays which provides families with a golden opportunity to participate in the WDP service together, which many find enriching!



Website: <http://www.bethlehem-manuel.com/wdp.html>

LEBANON

Through WDP we learned a lot about Suriname and the issues they face, especially since they are relevant worldwide. The endangerment of the frog and turtle species in Suriname and the importance of the tropical rain forest in relation to the rest of the world were important topics to be brought into the light. We have to confess our guilt and negligence and start thinking about sustainability for the next generation.

Our committee decided to put our prayers into action by giving back to the Earth by planting trees. An olive tree was planted at the Near East School of Theology where our National Committee has met together for more than 25 years. In Beirut, 130 pine Mediterranean shoots were donated by the Ministry of Agriculture and distributed to WDP participants with care instructions. In Anjar, 100 small pine trees were distributed among the congregation. This gesture was a visible practice of our motto "Informed Prayer, Prayerful Action!"

PALESTINE

We welcomed with joy the 2018 service written by the women of Suriname. We thank our sisters, for reminding the world that "All God's creation is very good" at a time when human beings are exploiting, ravaging and destroying all that is good. Our focus throughout the service was the protection of the environment by



SYRIA



TURKEY

educating our own community about the ecological concerns.

As we face more challenges in our country, it is getting more difficult to rally people around concerns in other parts of the world even when we share the same pains and sufferings. However, we still had successful services! Our altar was decorated with the map and flag of Suriname, along with musical instruments and flowers. The music was played during the service and our female pastor read the Lord's Prayer in the language of Suriname. We really felt connected to our sisters!

SYRIA

From a war-torn country, we as Christian women once again remembered that we were created in the beautiful image of God. We never appreciate the grace of God sufficiently and yet the Lord forgives and renews us. This service challenged us to feel more responsible for the riches of our Earth and our brothers and sisters. We were introduced to serious environmental problems and the role we can have to avoid endangering ourselves and our planet further. We discussed issues

such as the negative effects of chemical cleaning materials, mobile phones, and overuse of water. Our services were held in several cities with three major denominations participating. It is difficult building ecumenical relationships but we are slowly learning to build bridges instead of walls. This is the only worship service that brings together all these women. We are truly blessed by this!

TUNISIA

Safeguarding our planet for future generations is something we have always generally thought about and tried to reinforce in our daily lives. But putting it in the context of our responsibility, as caretakers of God's creation, adds a new dimension to the issue. It has helped us become more aware and more willing to change our ways for the better. While we learned about Suriname we were able to separate ourselves from our familiar circumstances and consider how it can be for us to work towards change. Although we all face similar struggles, some of us have more opportunities than others to make a difference. If our Surinamese sisters can raise up their

voices against injustices, then we should all follow their example.

TURKEY

The people in our country are not sensitive to the environmental issues outlined by the service, so it was good to awaken their consciousness. People realized within their prayers the responsibility they have to care for God's creation. The short skit that was preformed also proved beneficial because people were able to visualize the importance of environmental justice and reflect on our actions. Participants threw garbage onto the floor and then were asked "Why do you do this?"

Our WDP community is multicultural and we learn a lot from different ways of worshipping, knowing that the Lord is in all of us. One of the services was held at a retirement house. We shared the service with the elderly in the chapel and then visited those who were unable to join. We prayed with them and offered them gifts from the celebration. It was an enjoyable experience!

Pacific



AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Many services were held across our country in churches and schools with thousands of participants! Suriname was not well known in our country before WDP, so it was exciting to learn about their history and culture. Learning and relating to another country was very uplifting and joyful. The music was fun to listen to and many women were encouraged to dance. Many groups also found decorating the altar and dressing up in the bright colors of Suriname very enjoyable!

We felt that the theme and topics highlighted by the women of Suriname were very relevant today. Many of these issues are an international concern and no country is immune to the consequences. During our service we focused mainly on plastic use and the need for more sensible use and disposal of the material. We want to

try and become less dependent on plastic and use alternative eco-friendly materials.

Website: <http://www.worlddayof-prayer.co.nz/>

AUSTRALIA

For many of us, Suriname was an unknown country, so everything we learned about them was an exciting discovery! We had much fun decorating the worship spaces. Some groups created displays that incorporated the natural landscape and wildlife found in Suriname. In keeping up with the theme and caring for the environment many groups used biodegradable tableware for their celebrations. All across our country schools the children's choirs participated in the celebration. We try to encourage youth groups to incorporate the WDP service in their regular activities as much as possible.



It is always a blessing to feel so connected in prayer with the people of another country and to see God's hand at work in the country before, during, and after the WDP service. We are looking forward to learning about the positive impact this WDP will have in Suriname and around the world!

Website: www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org

COOK ISLANDS

Regular meetings were held in order to explore and study the theme. We focused on the connections between the theme, caring for the environment, and domestic violence. At the worship service, we were able to lift up our prayers alongside our Surinamese sisters. We wanted to feel as connected to them as we could so we sang the song "San Gado Du, Reti Tru" in the Surinamese language! Al



though it was difficult, we managed to sing it. It was very meaningful!

The service served as a reminder that everything is created in God's image. The Earth, animals, and human beings need to be respected and treasured. One of the great ways WDP promotes this idea is by participating in the Thursdays in Black Campaign. After introducing this campaign to our congregation we decided that every Thursday afternoon we would take a moment and pray for those who are suffering from violence.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

We believe that the WDP motto of "Informed Prayer. Prayerful Action" is the cornerstone of our evolving ecumenical relationships. We joyously welcomed more young women to our services and to the WDP movement! We had the participation of large Marshallese communities living in five different states across the United States. We reflected on how many of our people had to migrate to the United States for better job opportunities and how the Surinamese face the same issue. The prayers really touched our hearts.

We also face climate change. Our island suffers from droughts and high tides, which destroy our resources. We are a small island and dependent on the food that grows on our land and on the seafood from the surrounding ocean. We thank the women of Suriname for reminding us to thank God every day. We have urged our government to be more proactive in protecting the environment.

NAURU

We enjoy WDP. Ecumenical gatherings like these are not frequently undertaken but WDP brings us closer together. We come together by the love of God. We learn and realize that we have the same problems and concerns as women from other countries. We learn about their cultures and share in our diversities. We are not often familiar with how women in other parts of the world manage their livelihoods so it is always interesting to hear their stories and we connect with them deeply.

People from the Middle East seeking asylum in the Pacific region are placed in Nauru as refugees. It is a cultural shock for them and for us as

well. Our committee is trying to find ways to support them, but we face barriers with the authorities. However, we will continue to raise awareness and hope more women will feel free to join us.

VANUATU

We had one major service on our island with over 100 participants. Working with a member of each church created a sense of unity. With cooperation and coordination of all programs within the framework of an ecumenical relationship, we were able to create an inviting and special service. We are so thankful to be a part of the WDP movement! It allows us to pray with and for our sisters around the world and uplift them from the pains they suffer. We felt connected through the Holy Spirit to the women of Suriname as we participated in the worship service, singing and praising God. Our altar was decorated just as they suggested which integrated a bit of their culture with ours. It was very powerful! The issues they face are similar to ours. We prayed for those affected by domestic violence, poverty, and natural disasters.

Leading Together

BY LAURENCE GANGLOFF AND VICKI MARNEY



Vanuatu Preparatory Workshop

The Writer Country Workshop for Vanuatu 2021 was held in Port-Vila, Vanuatu, from April 9th to the 13th. The workshop officially started the writing process and the world will discover the global result on March 5, 2021. WDPIC Chairperson, Laurence Gangloff, WDPIC Executive Director, Rosângela Oliveira, and WDPIC Pacific Regional Representative, Vicki Marney, led and facilitated the meeting. This workshop marks the beginning of an exciting journey to study and understand the Bible text, develop the theme, and create a stimulating service for World Day of Prayer!

The writing of the worship service and resource materials is an ecumenical and collective process. Each participant of the workshop is a potential member of the writing work-

ing groups. And each member of the extended community in the country is a supporter of the process through their prayers and wisdom.

For the women of Vanuatu, from different islands and different denominations, the time has come to gather together and to work ecumenically to develop the theme “Build on a Strong Foundation” and the program focus “Live Wisely”. For many participants, this was their first opportunity to represent and lead their denomination. As friendships were established, it was wonderful to see the denominational barriers broken down.

Women attending the workshop shared their stories of having to leave their homes under threat from volcanic activity. Some had travel plans disrupted by a cyclone looming off the coast. We learned so much about

our sisters and are eager to continue this journey with them and share their stories, their joys, their hopes and their struggles.

A decision was made among the committee that every Sunday morning they would come together in personal prayer and make this WDP writing process a priority.

Let us join these women in prayer, as they continue to work on the materials for 2021 and remember that we are all just sisters in Christ and God’s children.

Website:

<http://worlddayofprayer.net/latest-news/building-on-a-strong-foundation>

The story of the International Committee for World Day of Prayer 1927-1968-2018

“God gave hope a sister; her name is memory”

BY EILEEN KING AND HELGA HILLER



Founding meeting of the International Committee WDP, Vallingby, Sweden 1968

Women around the world celebrate this year the 50th anniversary of the World Day of Prayer International Committee that was founded in 1968. This anniversary is an opportunity to remember how it all began and how we got to where we are now. It is a chance to consider how the past is linked to the present and to understand how something that exists now took its shape then.

When we were asked to write the story of the WDP International Committee, we had a double task: to go back to historical records like minutes, WDP services and reports, and at the same time form them into a narrative for WDP women that lead

us to what WDP is today. We did some research and writing that has not been done before. The records themselves helped us by offering vivid impressions. However, because we had to be short and the time period to cover was long, we had to merge steps and focus on the most important events. We regret that we had to leave out the many names of women that shaped our history in a special way. Nonetheless, the story of WDP is above all the story of millions of unnamed women that carried the movement then and still do today. The WDP story stretches from the vision of a World Committee and of shared responsibility that dates back almost to the beginning of WDP and

arrives at what is the World Day of Prayer International Committee today. We would like to share with you two sections of the text:

THE FOUNDING OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR WDP

From July 20–25, 1968, a renovated old castle in Vallingby near Stockholm became the place for the founding meeting of WDPIC. Invited by the Swedish Ecumenical Council, 33 women from 23 countries assembled in this charming environment. Thanks to the many steps that had led to the recommendations of the 1967 International Consultation in Anderson, Indiana, USA,



Participants at the 2007 WDP International Meeting, Toronto, Canada

with 125 women from 42 countries, and thanks to the thorough preparation by the Provisional Executive Committee elected then, the women gathered around the big table could begin their work with the decision to form an International Committee for World Day of Prayer. “The motion was unanimously accepted by a standing vote, after which the group sang the Doxology as an expression of gratitude for a dream realized.”

Among the decisions several stand out: the change of the date of WDP, guidelines for future WDP services and the acceptance of “Rules” that were actually the first WDPIC Constitution and criteria for National Committees that could be voting members of the International Committee.

Changing the date of WDP from the first Friday in Lent to the first Friday in March had been recommended by the Anderson Consultation. One consideration was that the date for the first Friday of Lent could be as early as February 9 and that women living on the Northern hemisphere were quite often prevented by ice and snow to attend the services. The main reason however was the differ-



Women advisors to WDP among the participants at the World Missionary Conference in Jerusalem 1928

ence in the liturgical calendars of the main Christian traditions. Orthodox Easter especially fell mostly on a date different from the Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions. The new date was a strong signal of ecumenical inclusiveness.

THE VISION OF THE WOMEN

The practice for ecumenical collaboration on the local level for preparing and conducting a public ecumenical worship that engaged many people, women, men and children, became the basis for expanding levels of coordination. The international committee that was formed in Vallingby in 1968 was the fulfillment of the vision of women of WDP for in-person, face-to-face international collaboration. The lived ecumenical local

experience could now continue up to the international level. The responsibility for the World Day of Prayer service was fully interconnected: local to national to international and back to national to local.

The vision of the women had persisted through a global economic collapse in the 1930s and two world wars. There were many intermediate steps, setbacks, frustrations, oppositions, constraints caused by limited financial resources, and sexism in society. However, the women of WDP showed that their faith in Jesus Christ, expressed in prayer that was conducted in public worship and linked to action carried them through to the formation of an international committee. When we remember them, we find strength to continue in our efforts and hope to find fresh expression of our legacy each year into the future.

Helga Hiller, former Liaison Person of WDP Germany

Eileen King, former Executive Director of WDPIC

To read the full story visit <http://world-dayofprayer.net/history.html>

From Eye-opener to Hands-on

BY ROSÂNGELA S. OLIVEIRA

Who does not want to take care of God's creation? Who does not love the Bible story of creation ever since we heard it as a child? Who does not feel confident knowing that what God does is good?

Then, why do we trash where we live? How come the water we drink is contaminated? Why are sea turtles endangered? Why is there so much violence among human beings and destruction of the environment? There is such a disconnection between what is believed and what is lived out.

Reading the Journal, we get a clear idea of how environmental care is a global concern. From climate change perceived by the droughts or high tides in the Marshall Islands, to sand mining, deforestation and water pollution in Grenada, to the connection of environmental crisis to gender based violence in Ghana, World Day of Prayer communities brought to the forefront of prayer and action the future of the next generations.

Raising awareness is one of the strongest contributions of World Day of Prayer to the women-led ecumenical movement. The sisters from Suriname established the connection between faith and life by demonstrating how



Pine shoots distributed to participants by WDP Lebanon

simple acts based on informed prayer can affect the global community. When a person lives in a community that lacks basic sanitation, waste in the streets should not be ignored. The situation may become a source for action, awareness and advocacy.

If one needs ideas about caring for the environment, please let the Journal's stories inspire you. In Germany, they have suggested reducing the consumption of meat and dairy, riding a bike when possible, and avoiding cosmetics with micro plastic particles. The awareness has grown from personal responsibility to the global political action. A difference can be made by taking small steps each day.

Guatemala wants to initiate a campaign to preserve water, decrease the consumption of products that contaminate

nature and of materials that cannot be re-used. Whereas in Lebanon, the committee distributed pine shoots to give back to the Earth.

We join Thailand's hope that people have the means, and the will to focus on justice, peace, and the integrity of God's creation. God's justice always meant love and caring for creation!

How can this awareness continue on the agenda of the local WDP participants beyond the 2019 program? Things to consider: World Day of Prayer is not just a day. It is a process that brings people from different backgrounds together for common prayer and action. It implies relationship building, learning, sharing, praying and giving. Remember you are not alone! You are part of a global community, who among other accomplishments, has strived for its 50 years to nurture women's leadership by the formation of the World Day of Prayer International Committee.

So, consider how World Day of Prayer connects the local community with global concern and the way around into your own community and make this process unforgettable!



WDP at a Glance



World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome all to join in prayer and action for peace and justice especially on every first Friday of March.

The 2018 Journal is based on the 108 reports out of the 146 countries that received the WDPIC worship service materials. It is estimated that 100,571 services were held in 88 languages, including versions in Braille and large print. The worship service's attendance was estimated at around 1,457,479 persons. The celebrations were held in churches, schools, hospitals, prisons, convents, and elderly homes. In a few countries, the worship service was broadcasted on national TV, radio, and via livestreams. WDP activities were announced in the cities or church's newspapers, posters, fliers, Facebook, website, and Twitter. Around 46 activities, especially for children and youth, were held in many schools and churches across the seven regions.

HOW WILL WDP OFFERINGS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SURINAME AND AROUND THE WORLD?

“Through the WDP offering women share their resources with women and children around the world.” (WDP Guiding Principles) WDP Suriname will share the offering to support an elderly home, a greenhouse project for people with disabilities, and women living with breast cancer. They will also support organizations that combat domestic violence against women, promote gender equality; and protect wildlife. The committee will engage in training young people and new members to lead World Day of Prayer.

The National/Regional Committees reported that this year's offering will be given to their local community and abroad for the following purposes:



Empower women, widows, children, migrant children, youth, and people with disabilities through education, mentoring, shelter, food programs, and prison visitations;



Support people displaced by war or natural/human made disasters, fund training for disaster preparedness, sponsor environmental protection programs, create environmental education campaigns, and finance eco-farming training and micro-projects by women farmers;



Provide toiletries for senior citizens, and mental health care for people living with HIV and AIDS, girls at risk, the homeless, victims of domestic violence, and former sex slaves during war;



Promote Christian education for children and youth, women's ministries, clergy women and women's theological formation, and Bible Society initiatives;



Build organizational sustainability of the WDP in local communities, in the writer countries, and provide for the regional and international coordination of the movement. Promote the WDP story by honoring a leader through the Fund for Tomorrow.



We have a new poster! It showcases 99 years of World Day of Prayer history. From 1927 to 2026, the poster displays the themes and writer countries which have motivated our prayers and actions.

Hanging this poster on your wall to promote WDP is a great way to start traveling around the world. The poster is an educational tool to talk about the issues that we have raised awareness and advocated for over generations. It also demonstrates where in the world women are leading this ecumenical movement.

Besides that, this year we incorporated expressions of WDP in the seven regions we are organized: Africa, Asia, Caribbean and North America, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and Pacific. You can invite the children and youth to match the photos with the theme and the region.

There are two ways that you can order the poster this year. You can order a printed copy from the WDPIC office (email—admin@worlddayofprayer.net) or you can order the art design and print the poster in your country.

The prices are:

1 to 10 printed posters = \$ 6.50 each poster plus shipping;

11 to 99 printed posters = \$ 5.50 each poster plus shipping;

Over 100 printed posters = \$ 4.50 each poster plus shipping;

Digital Art Design = \$100

EDITORIAL TEAM

The WDP Journal is an annual publication of the World Day of Prayer International Committee (WDPIC). It is based on the Annual Reports written by the WDP National/Regional Committees. It offers an overview of the global movement from its local context, and includes expressions of prayer and action based on the annual theme. WDPIC promotes the sharing of information, therefore the Journal can be freely downloaded from the WDPIC website, and it can be reproduced provided acknowledgment is given to the source of information. All photos were originally sent from WDP Committees with the understanding that they might be published.

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See you at the next International Committee Meeting in 2022!

SAVE THE DATE! RAISE FUNDS BY TELLING A WDP STORY!



WDPIC 2017 International Meeting

INTERNATIONAL MEETING IN SCOTLAND IN JUNE 2022

SAVE THE DATE!

Raise funds for your committee's participation.

Donate to the World Day of Prayer International Committee Travel Fund.

REUNIÓN INTERNACIONAL EN ESCOCIA EN JUNIO DE 2022

¡RESERVA LA FECHA!

Recauda fondos para la participación de su comité.

Contribuye al Fondo de Viajes del Comité Internacional del Día Mundial de Oración.

RENCONTRE INTERNATIONALE EN ÉCOSSE EN JUIN 2022

RÉSERVEZ CETTE DATE !

Préparez votre participation.

Faites un don au Comité International de la JMP pour le Fonds de Voyage.

SLOVENIA 2019

“Come—Everything is Ready”

March 1st, 2019

The WDP 2019 program was written by women in Slovenia, one of the smallest countries in Europe and a pretty young committee in the WDP movement.

At the core of the theme, an invitation—Come. And to enable the response—Everything is ready. Come to praise, thank, and proclaim the kingdom of love.

The invitation is grounded in the parable that Jesus told about a great dinner which was attended by the ones called off the streets, as the ones invited excused themselves. The community formed around the table is not enough to fill the house – there is still room. Who are missing from the table in your community? How would you invite and prepare the feast?

Throughout the worship service, we hear the stories of those who are coming to the table of bread, wine, water, and salt. Their stories reflect the political and economic situation from the time Slovenia was a socialist-communist state to today. Their stories are the voices of the refugee and migrant workers, the mothers, the grandmothers, the wives, and the Roma people. While listening to their stories, we ask for forgiveness for being silent in the face of injustice, and we pray that God open our hearts to compassion and understanding. And we leave with a blessing prayer to mutually support one another on the path of freedom, justice, and peace.

May the welcoming God enable us to set the table and fill the communities with hope, love, and joy!



ZIMBABWE 2020

“Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk”

March 6th, 2020

The country of Zimbabwe has been in the news recently. The newly elected president has been sworn in after a tense and disputed election. Churches and ecumenical organizations are actively promoting peace education and civic awareness to engage the communities in peaceful participation. Prayer vigils, election monitoring and dialogues between civil society and the government were organized to have political transparency, and to promote healing in a country that searches for peace and reconciliation.

This historical moment may express one of the contexts for the Zimbabwe theme. The WDP 2020 program is based on Jesus' encounter with a person who, although positioned for healing, had not acted upon the opportunities given (John 5:2-9a). Jesus asked –“Do you want to be made well?” You are faced with this life-changing question. What are you going to do? Use this opportunity to reflect with your WDP group, community and ecumenical partners. Prayer and action are what links us together around the globe.

“Rise! Take Your Mat and Walk,” said Jesus. Our sisters from Zimbabwe are taking Jesus' encounter to be a call to act in love for peace and reconciliation. “The action verbs suggest that we should not be afraid to act on the word of God. God is offering us the steps for personal and social transformation.” This is the time for change!

May we hear the words of this compassionate God and the Prince of Peace to act upon the healing of ourselves and our communities to bring peace and reconciliation into the world.



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