



The World Day of Prayer  
invites you...

to be personally enriched by contact with other  
Christians, as you share their faith experience  
to learn at first hand of the situation of  
women in other countries worldwide  
to share the hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, needs  
and opportunities of women around the world  
to pray with them and for them  
to turn prayers into positive action

**You too can be part of the  
great wave of prayer!**

**World Day of Prayer**

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**World Day of Prayer**  
**A BRIEF HISTORY**

It all starts on the international dateline, in Samoa.  
Early in the morning, Christian women begin  
praying for their world. Then as the earth rotates, a  
great wave of prayer begins to build. It sweeps  
across the Pacific, touching Fiji and New Zealand.  
It rolls on through Asia - Japan, the Philippines,  
Korea, Bangladesh... The countries of Africa are  
next, and then the Middle East.

The wave reaches the shores of Europe as the day  
dawns there. Across the Atlantic it moves onwards  
- the Caribbean, all the Americas, and on to the  
Pacific again, until the sun finally sets over  
American Samoa, where the final service takes  
place, and a worldwide circle of  
prayer is complete.

**But where has all of this come from?**

# How it all started

## In the 19th century

In a day when mission boards were largely male, Christian women in North America began founding numerous, effective boards for foreign and home mission, working with women and children. Within these initiatives, and between them, women started praying with one another, and days (or even weeks) of prayer started to emerge within different Christian denominations.

## The 1920s: a vision of unity

Gradually the prayer projects became inter-denominational, and in 1910 a series of events across the USA, celebrating fifty years of women's missionary activity, drew people together across denominational divides. This led to two united days of prayer (one in Canada, one in the USA) on the first day of Lent in 1922. In 1926 the North Americans distributed their worship service to many other countries; the response was enthusiastic, and suddenly a World Day of Prayer had begun.

## The British Isles

Mrs Grace Forgan first heard of what was happening at an international missionary gathering in Jerusalem in 1928. She took the news back home to Scotland, and the first service there was held in 1930. England followed in 1932, Wales the year after, the Republic of Ireland in 1935 and Northern Ireland in 1943.

## After the War: the movement spreads

After 1945 growth was dramatic. By 1968, when 127 countries were participating, it was felt that there should be an international meeting every 4-5 years, with representation from every national committee in the world. And so now an international executive committee oversees the worldwide work, made up of women from the seven WDP regions: Africa, Asia, Caribbean and North America, Europe, Latin America, Middle East and Pacific.

## The date

The original date - the first Friday in Lent - has changed to the first Friday in March, which is more suitable for the Orthodox churches. Roman Catholic participation has increased steadily, especially since Vatican 2 in 1962.

## And now?

Today around 120 countries take part. The service is translated into more than 90 languages, including Welsh. In Wales, services may be in English, Welsh or sometimes both.



# WDP: the facts

## How are we organised?

There's a national committee for England, Wales and Northern Ireland; Scotland and the Irish Republic each have their own. The committee includes representatives from all the main participating churches, plus delegates from Wales and Northern Ireland. The national committee edits and publishes the service material each year, sending it out from the Tunbridge Wells office to about 3000 local branches. Money collected goes towards the work of WDP in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in grants to Christian projects worldwide.

## What about the rest of the rest of the world?

Each country has its own national committee. Regional conference are held as well as an international meeting every five years.

## Who plans the service?

Themes for future years are chosen at the international meetings by a process of discussion and sifting. Then countries are chosen to write the service and allocated a theme. A draft is submitted to the international executive in New York. When accepted the draft is sent to the national committees. Each national committee can amend the draft for their own cultural circumstances, but do so as little as possible. The whole process takes about three years from start to finish.

## What countries have featured recently?

From 2010 until 2026 the list is: Cameroon, Chile, Malaysia, France, Egypt, Bahamas, Cuba, Philippines, Suriname, Slovenia, Zimbabwe, Vanuatu, England Wales & N Ireland, Taiwan, Palestine, Cook Islands and Nigeria.

## What does the logo mean?

In 1982 Irish women from North and South prepared the service together. The logo was designed by an Irish man especially for the service and was then adopted internationally. In the centre is the cross, formed by praying figures from the earth's four corners. They are all joined together within the circle of the world, enfolded within the love of God.

## Is it just about one day of prayer?

Certainly not. Preparing the day, studying the materials, learning about another world culture in depth - all of these things help to create "informed prayer". But *informed prayer* must lead to *prayerful action*. And it is our goal to see exactly that happening through the work of WDP.