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WORLD DAY OF PRAYER JOURNAL

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Receive children. Receive me.

WRITTEN BY THE WDP WOMEN OF CUBA



World Day of Prayer Writting Committee, Cuba



On the Cover: *On the Threshold of Childhood*, painting by Ruth Mariet Trueba Castro for the program written by WDP Cuba.

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Who are the Children in our Midst?

MARK 10:13-16

BY CORINNA HARBIG

Dear World Day of Prayer sisters
and friends,

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

On March 4, 2016, in many coun-
tries, women participated in the
World Day of Prayer service written
by the Cuba WDP Committee under
the theme “Receive children. Receive
me,” based on Mark 10:13-16.

As you are holding the Cuba Journal
with photos, reports, and experiences
from all over the world, we would like
to send your national and local teams
our heartfelt thanks for your commit-
ment in making this happen!

In a historical moment and during
times of political changes, concerning
the relationship between the USA and
Cuba, we shared our prayers with the
Cuban people. The women of Cuba
invited us with the word of Jesus “Re-
ceive children. Receive me.” Jesus’
word touches our hearts and encour-



Corinna Harbig, Chairperson, World
Day of Prayer International
Committee

ages us to reach out to the most vul-
nerable in our neighborhood, our
country, and our world!

I have had the privilege of joining a
few workshops in different countries
in study and preparation for the
WDP program. It was very moving to
go into deep meditation and conver-
sation as we asked: Who are the chil-
dren whom Jesus embraces and blesses
while challenging us to receive them
like the Kingdom of God? Who are
the children in our midst? How can

we make our community a safe haven
in which everyone has a place?

We would like to express our gratitude
to our dear sisters of the Cuba WDP
Committee, for this wonderfully
touching and encouraging service.
And also for the artwork which beau-
tifully represented the theme and gave
us a glimpse into Cuba’s reality. We
will remain faithful to follow in the
footsteps of Jesus by receiving children
and with them, the most vulnerable
in our midst. And we will continue
our journey of “Informed prayer –
prayerful action.”

Now we turn ourselves to listen to the
Philippines WDP Committee who
invites us for 2017 to reflect on “Am
I Being Unfair to You?”

*Peace and blessings to all for your work and
commitment to World Day of Prayer!*

Worship Service Bible Text

MARK 10:13-16 *

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

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“Receive children. Receive me.”

BY WDP WOMEN OF CUBA

We thank God for having been chosen to be the writer country. It was an honor and a privilege to share with other countries our deep feelings for Cuba, our culture, and our spirituality. It was a wonderful opportunity for our country to be known, since we have been very isolated from the world, and news about our country is sometimes taken out of context.

In trying to describe our reality we felt as if we were drawing a self-portrait of Christian women in Cuba. We renewed our understanding of our own culture and the challenges we face. Being a writer country required us to open our doors and extend our hands to welcome anyone who wanted to know us. Now, we can appreciate better the work of our sisters from other countries, who had allowed us to know their realities through the WDP programs each year.

World Day of Prayer in Cuba has encouraged ecumenical relations among the churches. The program has managed to involve women from different churches, but still this is a challenge that invites us to seek and create new spaces that may unite us. We recognize the richness of our diverse ways of thinking. In this ecumenical writing experience we learned that we are not alone. We feel the support, prayer,



Artist Ruth Mariet Trueba Castro with her artwork *On the Threshold of Childhood*, created for the program written by WDP Cuba.

and the solidarity love of many women around the world.

We are a movement of women throughout our country, who are committed to prayer and action with women and the most vulnerable. But this experience made us recognize that the women in Cuba also need everyone's prayers even after Cuba is no longer the WDP focus country.

Sometimes the Christian formation does not encourage the importance of our identity, our successes or either our failures as a society. Usually, the liturgy or the praises emphasize

the divine so much that we forget the realities we walk with our own feet. Having highlighted the context and symbols of our communities has strengthened us spiritually. The service helped us realize how much we can contribute to the formation and enrichment of an authentic spiritual identity.

We did a process to learn, through prayer and action, how the Spirit is with us no matter the differences among generations or denominations. Prayer brought us together for this experience of inclusion. We have received a lot of feedback from different groups and individuals. They recognized their selves and their context in the program. In addition, there were positive comments for including the autochthone songs from Cuba. It enriched the liturgical experience.

In fact, upon receiving the theme of the celebration we were surprised. In general, children have an important place both in our families and in society in our country. But often we prioritize the material self and do not value the spiritual one, thus overlooking the gospel teaching as a way of bringing them closer to Christ. So I believe that God wanted this to be our goal—to pray for the children, and learn from them.



The program has moved us into a reflection and analysis of our adult centric attitudes towards children. The biblical story pointed out the importance of receiving children, and of recognizing them as representations of the most vulnerable. Thus, we understand that we need to change our approach to children. We realized the importance of continuing to develop the interdenominational children's choir with 50 participants from La Habana, which emerged as part of the World Day of Prayer 2016 Cuba celebration. The participation of children in these various services was something beautiful and much appreciated.

In addition, as a result of this experience there are other initiatives that will continue to impact the lives of children in our communities. In an ecumenical action involving the United Bible Societies, the Biblical



Commission, and the Women and Gender Program of the Council of Churches of Cuba, they have generated a project entitled "Healthy Relationships in the Cuban family." This initiative will be part of our campaign of non-violence. We know that the financial support for this project is the contribution of WDP committees from various countries to the Bible Societies.

We feel that the theme left us with hopeful feelings, something very meaningful at this time in our country. Hope is a need for the people and the church.

We thank all the countries and women who prayed for and with Cuba. This was the best gift!

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for and with Cuba. This was the best gift!***

Latin America



ARGENTINA

Our country has always been very close to Cuba, so we were very pleased to pray for them. The service impacted us dearly as it showed us that we have not done much for our children. We became more aware of the situations our children face in our country. Many of them are relegated, living in poverty and in the streets.

In October we had a retreat where we shared the worship service materials with the leaders. Then we met monthly to study the theme and prepare our programs. We used the Bible studies applied to our context. We were able to use the Cuban songs with a Cuban singer in one of our celebrations. The children were very active in the services. It was moving and we did learn a lot with their participation. With enthusiasm, every year a new



denomination wants to take part in the committee.

BRAZIL

“Receive children. Receive me,” has always been a very important theme. Today, when so many people are fleeing hunger and war, the service was an opportunity to lift up their plea. As Christians, we are called to receive these people with love, especially the children. The theme was

also appropriate for the communities that do not receive children well. Thus the scene where Jesus blessed the children really left a great impact in the hearts of the participants. All the children attending the service were invited for a prayer.

In one service, before the meditation moment, three women representing the elderly, the young adult woman and a youth entered the church to the sound of Cuban music. Then, they were interviewed. Using the background information prepared by the Cuban committee, they helped the participants learn more about how people live in Cuba. We thank God for the opportunity of walking together ecumenically.

Website: www.dmoracao.comunidades.net/



CHILE

People from India, Palestine, Europe, Asia and neighboring countries in Latin American are coming to Chile in search of economic opportunities for their family. They are targeted for very low wage jobs and indecent conditions, even though they can access free education and health services. When we walk on the streets, we realize that our city is now multiracial and multicultural. We believe that the problems in an unequal, multicultural, and globalized world tend to be similar in many places. However, we are committed to educating our children about acceptance; even though we, the adults, are sometimes unable to act without discriminating against immigrants.

In the service, we appropriated ourselves of the fears, pains, and joys of the Cuban people. It was very meaningful. The services were actually attended by the grandmothers, who in our society are caring for their grandchildren while the mothers are at work.

Facebook: DMO Chile



COSTA RICA

Thousands of Cubans were trying to reach USA traveling through Central America, but they could not cross the borders into Nicaragua. For months they were housed in schools, homes, and churches in Costa Rica. The participation of Cubans, Cuban friends or people who had visited Cuba, brought a very special meaning to the celebrations. This was the background context in which our prayers took action in our communities.

We had intergenerational programs as several families were involved in the preparations. Two programs were dedicated to the children, and we also had a children's choir in the celebration in Limon. In a school, the children felt so identified with the Cuban children that they continued to pray for them in their classes. We affirmed the importance of creating spaces that are not adult centric and value when children talk about family abuse. They need an environment of trust and communication.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

“Informed prayer and prayerful action” motivates us to be in communication and aware of what is happening around us, so we can unite in prayer and action. We are very concerned about violence in families, which affects both women and children in our country. It became clear to us that if we do nothing for the children, we would impede their entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

We learned with Jesus, who defended the children of his time by making them partakers of God's kingdom. Jesus placed them as examples of humility, love, and sincerity. “Receiving children” means to commit ourselves to their education and to



Churches can propose programs and actions in favor of children in our communities that will impact their lives forever.

their spiritual and moral beings. Churches can propose programs and actions in favor of children in our communities that will impact their lives forever. Actually, we did promote two services with children. We did learn from them.

EL SALVADOR

Our focus has always been the children. Thus, I was very happy when I realized that the Cuba program would have World Day of Prayer thinking of children. The reflection was dedicated to children taking into account the Bible story. We also used the program at our Sunday Bible school.

We placed a banner showcasing the theme in front of the Church. We invited the Cuban Ambassador to the service. She came with her colleagues and we had breakfast together with the community. The ambassador spoke about the situation of women



in Cuba. Her presence created the opportunity of solidarity with Cuba. Many participants gave testimony of the strength of Cuban people. The women in our country enjoy the WDP worship service. Once a week we have a prayer moment to find peace and harmony to cope with so much violence in El Salvador. God is with us.

GUATEMALA

We felt we were in Cuba. We created the right environment to live this experience. It gave us a greater understanding of their realities and we felt the joy of the Cuban women throughout the liturgy. We felt empathy for people that have suffered and continue to fight. We found it very important to learn about the country, to listen to the music and try their food. A place so close, yet so distant. We hardly hear any news of Cuba. Their issues are also relevant to us in Guatemala.

We were reminded of what it means when Jesus is receiving the children. Many times it is us who hinder them by ignoring the reality and situation that the children are living in. If we do not include them in our celebrations with an age appropriate program, for example, we are creating barriers for their full participation in churches.

“We miss out on valuable life lessons when we do not let children express themselves.”



HONDURAS

The theme and the suggestion for a children’s choir led to an enriching collaboration with a neighborhood preschool. The teacher was very welcoming and the children practiced their songs daily. They participated in the service along with their mothers. We continue to share new music with them. We built a great relationship. We love it!

brighter future for the new generations.

The day before our celebration, Berta Carceres, an indigenous environmental activist was murdered. Several people on our committee in La Esperanza worked with her and attended the wake following our celebration. It was a heavy time, but we affirm with the community that “Berta Vive. La

We focused on the children of our country. We have been identified as having the highest rate of unaccompanied minors migrating to the US. We prayed for the cessation of violence towards the young, for the increase of economic opportunities at home, and for a

lucha sigue.” (Berta lives. The struggle continues.)

MEXICO

In our churches, we give special attention to children. It is important that they receive and feel the love that comes from God, and that their parents keep this love alive in their hearts. In embracing them we demonstrate this love which is the perfect bond. Children are the future of every nation; it is painful to see them being mistreated, and even underestimated.

By living on this complex border of Mexico/USA, we are saddened by the stories of families, men, and women uprooted from their hometown. In the midst of many difficulties, they are migrating to care for their families. We are dedicated, in the la Casa de los Pobres, to work for the migrants and deportees to be included in our societies. Children definitely made



this worship service relevant. With their movement, voices, and role playing they encouraged us to see them through their smiles and expectation to do well in their participation.

NICARAGUA

For many, children are the top priorities. We hold special children's services, have Sunday school, and whenever nutritional food is distributed children are the first to receive it. However, there are some communities who favor adults. We miss out on valuable life lessons when we do not let children express themselves. One girl said she had seen how happy her mother became when preparations for the WDP began, but she was always excluded! So, we extended our invitations to the children and they were very excited.

Cuba is like our sister island. We also had a revolution that impacted Latin America. It caused us to suffer a US blockade. Cuba helped Nicaragua when it was hit by the earthquake, and also through the brigades of doctors and educators. We know what the blockade feels like. This opened up a great intergenerational conversation.

It was with great joy that we prayed with the Cuban people.

PANAMA

We prayed with our entire heart and we felt the same joys, needs, and problems of the Cuban people. Their issues are relevant in our country as well. The environment of the activity was made to look like we were in Cuba among them as a family. The host church had a lovely Caribbean style of presentations and decorations. Flower and foods reflected the atmosphere of Cuba, including the welcoming coffee. God bless Cuba!

Children need to be embraced and blessed in order to feel that they belong and can be better citizens for the future. We organized children programs with a photo presentation and drama. They enjoyed this service very much. We had programs in churches and schools, including the School for the Blind. Still, two of our big challenges are to engage younger people in our World Day of Prayer committee and expand our ecumenical relationship and fellowship.

PARAGUAY

The service written by the Cuban women made us really think about the problems that exist in our own country, like violence against women, the corruption of the state, and the separation of families due to emigration to Argentina and Spain in search of better opportunities and jobs. The service encouraged us to act and do whatever we can to impact this reality.

In Naranjal, there is a group of WDP members who have come together to provide social assistance to their community. They have a bazaar of used clothing and the revenue generated also facilitates the participation of women in the WDP annual retreat. At the retreat, we learn about the country's situation, and then we study the Bible text. Those contents help us to be better prepared for the first collective reading of the worship service. When we leave that place, we are prepared to creatively organize the program at our local communities.

Website: www.diamundialdeoracion.com.py/

Facebook: DMO.Paraguay



The girls who participated in the procession were thrilled for having been taken into consideration. We had an intense ecumenical moment full of joy.

URUGUAY

The theme was a big challenge, as it obliged us to read the Bible story in its context and go beyond a superficial meaning like “Be kind to children! Celebrate their birthdays with presents!” It taught us to feel ashamed as the disciples must have felt when Jesus said to them “Unless you become like them...”

We also wanted to find the manner in which we could really include children in all of our activities. It was really difficult to find children who were ready to participate because of the given structures and habits in those places. For others it was significant to feel how their presence gave a joyful atmosphere to the service. We felt that the main concerns of our own communities were addressed in the prayers, except for the emigration from Cuba. But we prayed for the emigrants all over the world, especially in the Middle East.

VENEZUELA

In our faith communities, children and youth have received little atten-



tion. We learned that peace and solidarity, no discrimination and inclusion, love and intercession are themes crucial to us. The program was a great opportunity to promote inclusion and fellowship as a Christian community. The girls who participated in the procession were thrilled for having been taken into consideration. We had an intense ecumenical moment full of joy.

We realized that some participants had difficulties praying for Cuba due to the political situation of the coun-

try. The Cuban people are seen through stigmas. Others strongly affirmed our connection with the Cuban people. We understood that is important to be united in prayer, to overcome critical problems like the economic blockade against Cuba, war in the Middle East, and children's vulnerability. We reflected these difficulties and concerns and decided to get to know the Cuban communities in Venezuela.

Africa



ANGOLA

We had intense days leading up to the March celebration. We visited the municipality of Catabola where we camped with 105 women and young women of the region. We spent time visiting some needy families, conducting training seminars, and applying the Bible story of the Shunammite woman to the challenges women face in their family, society, and church in Angola. In all and each situation, women have an opportunity to improve their lives.

We also offered a reflection about the importance of World Day of Prayer, and women's contribution to evangelization. At the WDP Friday service, we had over 650 participants. We had the pleasure of hosting representatives of the municipal government, who had the opportunity to learn more about women's issues.



BOTSWANA

The service was an eye opener to our communities. We learned that children have to be received, loved, and appreciated. Children should not be neglected nor chased from the home, but they should be listened to. We are dealing with children who are suffering from substance abuse, who are affected by car accidents, and who have turned away

from Christ. We encouraged our communities to build stronger relationships with their children and teach them to love God. We prayed to God to help us forgive and embrace one another to bring peace to the communities.

In the past, Christian churches would not meet on such occasions but today we see them coming together under one roof to pray. Ecumenical relationships are being built by women who come together to share this experience. We were honored to have the participation of the Gender Affairs Department's director, a representative of the Prison Fellowship, the pastors and chiefs in our services.

CAMEROON

When a child is born there is a special celebration, known as "born house," organized by the com-



munity to officially welcome them. The child is passed around for everyone to place a hand on them as a sign of blessings and guests sing songs of love and prosperity. There is food and dancing and it is really quite a joyful time! It is important to realize that the future starts with children and what they learn from their parents will impact them for the rest of their lives.

We should all be involved, in some way, in helping our children and youth to come to Christ in faith. They are deeply impacted by the media and it is our duty to pull them closer to Christ. Cameroon is affected by poverty, lack of suitable water supplies, and a below average health system. Malaria, a treatable disease, is responsible for nearly a fifth of our children's deaths under the age of five. To help ease the pain of some families we paid for some of the prescribed medication for their hospitalized children.

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

We are connected with other denominations, which facilitates the preparation and exchange of ideas for WDP activities. Each sister

explains the experiences in their community with children. Then we translate the service in the local languages we have – El Mdowne, Fang, and Bubi. We photocopy and send the program to all the regions in our country. On the day of the celebration we go all dressed in white to worship and pray.

In our communities and in our country we receive children well. They have their time of worship where they play and hear stories. We learned that we have to give affection and love, let the children express themselves and participate fully in the church. Many children in our schools took part in the WDP service, and now they want to sing in the choirs. The girls were so happy that they want to come back. It has been a joy for our communities.

GABON

The children were in school and could not participate in the service on Friday. So, the adults took their place in the Bible story. It increased our understanding of the suffering that children might go through. A presentation was made on violence against children to materialize the suffering of

children. Further exchanges were made on immigration issues affecting our country. By acting on our concerns about violence against children, we are raising the awareness of parents, teachers, institutions, and all communities to prevent these situations.

We made the procession to the worship service carrying flowers on our right hands. They were deposited at the Altar like the Cuba World Day of Prayer program suggested. We felt closer to the people of Cuba by praying with them. It was like we were face to face. It is love in the Christian community.

GHANA

WDP has become a rallying point for women to share and learn in the spirit of ecumenism. When we come together we all leave our church doctrines and focus on the worship service and the writer country. This year we were afforded the opportunity to learn about Cuba, a place we have never been to before. It was a big joy to join them in prayer and reflect on the theme, which we discussed in the context of child rights. Many children are disrespected in our



community so this was a very relevant topic for us.

We also had three dialogue sessions with young adults on the impact of undocumented migration. The children mimed and performed different role plays depicting love, acceptance, and respect. After the service we put our prayer into action by donating to vulnerable communities of women and children, and supporting families who have become victims to child trafficking. Luckily, some of those children were rescued.

IVORY COAST

We focused on hospitality, sharing, and communication; because there are people who are alone and feel they have no one to talk to. In that way, we strengthen the National Committee at the Ivory Coast.

Despite the geographical distance, we felt in communion with the women of Cuba. A white tablecloth and flowers, accompanied by a sugar cane stick, were deposited at the altar. One



of the leaders was dressed in a bright yellow dress. The children took an active part in the official celebration through Bible readings, mime, meditation, and offerings. The celebration took place in all cities, bringing together over 600 women. An official celebration was held at the United Methodist Church in Abidjan, the economic capital of the country, where we invited the authorities of our church.

KENYA

Children are experiencing many hardships in our country, especially the males. Some live on the streets, some are involved with drugs, and some are living with HIV. These problems have become such a big issue

that the government had to implement programs to attend for their rights. In that sense, our WDP program spoke to the heart of our people.

Our service integrated adults and children which led to a great worship. The Bible story was very touching and reminded us of how important our children are. It also led us to lift up the situation of old women, orphans, widows and widowers. The Daily Nation Newspaper announced the service. The National Media in our country is beginning to recognize the problems children face. A day was set to campaigning for children, especially the street children. People were able to donate food and clothing to children in need.

MADAGASCAR

“I am pleased to participate in this worship service with my grandmother!” said one of the girls at our service. The young girl and her grandmother walked the procession together and read their parts as the child



and the mature woman very well. It was fantastic to see the representation across generations in the service. Joining hands joyfully to praise the Lord, to preach in unity in our diversity, and to love one another is a big task, but Jesus has shown us the way. In our committee, representatives from each region attend a monthly meeting where we worship together and bring material and financial help to those in need. It is our way of putting our prayers into action.

The program written by the Cuban women was very helpful. The music was used during the welcome café, the artwork at one of our retreat programs, and the children's service at Sunday schools. It was really an enjoyable service.

MAURITIUS

A WDP member found a school where children learn Spanish and their parents are familiar with the Cuban culture. A child sang the national anthem of Cuba in Spanish. They helped us to bring together Catholic, Anglican, and Orthodox priests. We are in a bond of love with

the Cuban people. Mauritians of all ages were touched by the history of Cuba. A place very far from our island; but Jesus has made the first move to bring together countries in the spirit of devotion to the needy and vulnerable as little children. Children are a gift from the Lord. They are real blessings.

We felt the spirit of solidarity by visiting the isolated and praying for the sick and marginalized. We acted on our prayers by helping students to integrate in our country and by helping the orphans whose parents are in prison. We also supported those living in nursing homes.

NIGERIA

Our Christian communities receive children with joy and thanksgiving. We have traditional naming ceremonies where four generations of the family come to witness the event, the oldest performing major actions to welcome the child with prayer and food. A Christian infant baptism may be performed shortly after. As the children grow they are gathered by the young adults and elders to listen to the "Tales by

Moonlight," where they learn Nigerian traditions. This is a veritable source of intergenerational bonding.

Fervent prayer has become a necessity in our country due to poverty and increasing child abuse or trafficking, and the devastating activities of fundamentalist groups like Boko Haram. The incident with the Chibok girls, who were kidnapped by Boko Haram, still haunts us. We are grateful for the worldwide campaign to Bring Back Our Girls, which has now expanded to the millions of children internally displaced. We trust and hope in God.

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Our World Day of Prayer committee is establishing itself with the Ecumenical Committee of Churches. We have representation from the Evangelical Church of Congo, Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Evangelical Lutheran Church, and Orthodox Church. We set the WDP celebration on March 4th to coincide with the Memorial Day for those who died in the detonations of heavy weapons from a military camp. We were able to bring together the political leaders and



SIERRA LEONE



ZAMBIA

leaders of our churches to that celebration.

SIERRA LEONE

It was noted, during our celebration, that the Kingdom of God belongs to children. We must emulate Christ's example by caring for our children and allowing them to grow in Christ. We put our faith into action by donating food and health kits to the children of the National School for the Deaf and Dumb in Freetown. It was received with great joy, but we were challenged by the needs of the school, such as special education teachers and meals for the students. State authorities, communities, and parents alike should come together for the welfare of the children and the schools.

Our objective has been to advocate and lobby for children who are rejected, neglected, and often looked over due to disability, and also foster children and victims of trafficking. We hope to provide moral and financial support to these children and to promote their educational rights.



SOUTH AFRICA

SOUTH AFRICA

In April, we hosted a workshop for women from all over the country to meet each other and start organizing services on local, regional, and provincial levels. It was a huge success in uniting women in prayer and sending them back to their communities with great enthusiasm. Many churches have intercultural or interdenominational services where the program is done in English, German, Afrikaans, and Zulu all in one sermon. It is heartwarming to see Christians worship together over barriers such as language, race, and culture.

In our country child abuse and neglect are critical. Extreme poverty has

State authorities, communities, and parents alike should come together for the welfare of the children and the schools.

left children on the street with no adult supervision. We donated to organizations that focus on the well-being of these children. Cuba was not well understood in our country before this service. Now we realize that their battles are universal and relevant to us. This changed our whole attitude as we prayed and we will continue to pray for them.

Website: www.wwdp.co.za/

ZAMBIA

It was challenging this year to hear about the children who are suffering through abuse, neglect, and war, and know that in some way we have



failed our families. A lesson was learned through this theme and we are striving towards a better way of life for our children and for us. We have an empowerment program that is dedicated to the wellbeing of women and uplifting them through Christ. We also have a program called “Putting Wheels to Prayer” which exists to teach homeless and struggling youth basic business management skills. We even give them a small startup capital to help them use the skills learned and to manage their small business.

The service was well prepared with a thought provoking theme and a

detailed explanation of Cuba’s history, culture, and traditions, that made us feel like we really got to know them.

ZIMBABWE

Jesus’ endless love has no boundaries. However, the disciples did not understand that. We must embrace everyone and recognize children as our equals regardless of their status. We should encourage each other to receive the children in our communities, and to learn with them to accept everyone no matter who they are. Jesus said that we must be like children, if we want to enter His kingdom.

One of the issues the people of Cuba are facing that is relevant in our own country is that of emigration. Most households are being headed by children as their parents have gone abroad to look for better opportunities. Another rampant issue is domestic violence and abuse towards young women in the form of child brides. Thankfully this year our government passed a bill to stop child marriages and allow these children to enjoy their rights.

We should encourage each other to receive the children in our communities, and to learn with them to accept everyone no matter who they are.

Asia



HONG KONG



JAPAN

HONG KONG

Cuba was quite unknown to us and it felt good to be able to learn about the country and pray for them. WDP has always been a good opportunity to consider the life and struggles of others and pray for them as we would pray for ourselves. During the service we also took time to pray for the refugees in the Middle East and Africa. We must treat everyone with respect no matter their faith or race.

Children especially are in need of our respect and guidance in order to grow in understanding of God's love. We were blessed to have a children's choir of 40 singers! Some children even led the congregational songs and stated afterwards, "I love to be a song leader!" The event was thoroughly enjoyed by all!

Website: www.hkcc.org.hk/



INDIA

INDIA

The theme served as a biblical reminder of how important children are to Jesus and therefore to us. It sparked great discussions about our prophetic duty to promote the rights of children and to strategize for change. In India, about 50% of children suffer from physical or sexual abuse, both boys and girls. However, young girls are targeted more often as they are seen as a burden and are deprived of basic needs, such as food and education. They are also at high

risk for child marriages and even infanticide.

Our churches have created programs dedicated to helping the destitute and poor, but more awareness needs to be brought to implement the Child Protection Policies. WDP theme reinforced the All India Council of Christian Women's campaigns such as "365 Days Zero Tolerance of Gender Based Violence: Make It Happen Now!" and "Thursday's in Black for a world free of Rape and Violence." We also discussed about Jesus type of Masculinity as a perspective to promote rights to life and dignity of children, girls and women.

JAPAN

The service was memorable. We had the honor of knowing Armin Kroheler, who is the brother of Lois Kroheler, the Presbyterian missionary that stayed in Cuba after the



MALAYSIA

revolution in 1959. Armin was a missionary for over 40 years in Japan. Through him we made contact with the Kroheler family and learned more about Lois' work in Cuba.

The Bible story showed us that we must receive children as Jesus did, because they are like those who are neglected and pushed aside in our society. We fulfill the WDP motto by our awareness, prayer and advocacy for "comfort women" all over Asia, who are demanding apologies and compensation. The United Nations recommended that the Japanese government recognize the rights of the women made into sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II. We are now requiring the government to recognize their responsibilities and compensate the victims.

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

MALAYSIA

We were happy for having been able to hold a children's service this year. We hope we can do it every year. Children also participated in the

worship service and acted out the scenes from the Bible reading.

We felt the theme was very relevant as it taught us to be humble, forgiving, and to love. In our society, children are received as individuals with their own rights, but still their rights can be neglected and violated. For example, boys are favored over girls. Also, many refugee children are being denied the right to an education. The neglect of those rights was lifted up in our service. We affirm that all children should be received equally, regardless of their sex or status, and education is very important for the future of refugee children.

PHILIPPINES

To be in prayer with the Cuban women has taught us that there are many people outside of our country who need prayer and action. WDP never fails to show us that we are not alone in our suffering just like Cuba is not alone. Our economy is in trouble, malnutrition is on the rise due to



SINGAPORE

poverty, the elderly are abused, and the children are used as soldiers and sex worker in pornography and prostitution.

All of our churches are fighting to help these kids by organizing children ministries. These ministries promote education, tutor children, and coordinate training sessions for young adults looking to improve their skills in order to find a job. Children are the future of the country and the church and we must do all we can to ensure they are cared for.

SINGAPORE

Many communities place great importance on children's development. There are many programs that offer educational grants to children. For example, the government provides financial support for the family's medical or educational expenses of their children.

SRI LANKA



It is a joy and a privilege to have people of different denominations worshipping together. Our committee meets regularly and prays for the betterment of our society, government, and the world. Our hearts are always with those who are suffering. Children participated in the service and did their parts very well. Watching them perform brought a whole new meaning to the theme. We had a good time decorating the altar and it looked very cheerful. The Cuban flag was draped over the altar with some of the Jasmine flowers. For some of our guests it was the very first time seeing the Cuban flag along with the national flower.

SOUTH KOREA

During the service, our congregation felt as though we were all one body and one mind. We are from

different denominations, which have different systems in worship, but through the WDP service we were connected. Our worship space was decorated as the Cuban women suggested which was full of powerful symbols. These decorations provided us with an interesting insight into the history, geography, and culture of Cuba. We felt closer to our Cuban sisters as we prayed.

In Korea, children are struggling to balance the demands of their everyday lives. Young children in school are being pressured to perform well and are given a lot of work. They are so busy they do not have time to enjoy their youth. Young adults are suffering from high unemployment rates leaving them stressed and uneasy about their future. Adults need to communicate with their children and recog-

nize the importance of their needs. We have learned this through God's love and guidance.

Website: www.kcwu.org/

SRI LANKA

One of the highlights at our service was the children's program. Children were given the opportunity to participate in every way possible and really enjoyed their time. They left the service knowing that Jesus loves them. For the first time we had children from the primary school for the blind participating and reading parts of the service in Sinhalese Braille. It was a real blessing to see the confidence and enthusiasm in these children.

At a service in Galle, a high ranking female police officer spent some time



educating everyone about how we can contribute towards minimizing the damage done to abused women and children. Our government opened up a dedicated unit for women and children in all Police Stations and our churches are being aware and extending help whenever possible. Our country is currently recovering from a civil war so it has been very meaningful to watch women from different denominations and communities work together on these issues.

TAIWAN

From the death of Syrian refugee children to the recent random killing of a 4 year old girl on the streets of Taiwan, we feel terrible about the increasing violence towards our children and those around the world. Children are innocent yet they suffer physically and mentally from

the selfishness of others. It is important now more than ever to receive children. This year we had a fundraiser for the Holy Word Foundation, a charity that builds homes for children and helps nurture them through the most crucial moments of their lives. It was our way of helping children with our own hands through the love of God.

During the service we lifted up issues that affect children such as physical and mental disorders, poverty, domestic violence, and excessive pressure to excel in school. Our children were happy to learn about the children of Cuba and see that there are others just like them living on the opposite end of the world.

Website: <http://women.pct.org.tw/>

Website: www.ywca.org.tw

THAILAND

WDP is not just a single day for us. We keep “informed prayer, and prayerful action” in our thoughts all year long. We have been keeping the women and children of Cuba in our prayers and will continue to do so. A sense of hospitality was communicated to us in their program and we deeply connected with it. Hospitality and sharing are values very dear to us.

Our worship space had a beautiful banner displaying the Cuban artwork and an altar decorated with the colors representing the national symbols. We felt that even though Cuba is a small country they were able to teach us so much, just like children can teach adults important lessons. Children are innocent and generous. What they offer us can seem small but can turn into a great blessing.

Children are innocent yet they suffer physically and mentally from the selfishness of others. It is important now more than ever to receive children.

Caribbean/North America



BAHAMAS

During the worship service the Bible passages were read in both English and Spanish. It was important for us to affirm that no matter the language, the message is still understood. Children are honest and straightforward. They do not discriminate or judge. They trust everything and everyone easily and it is through this trust that the capacity to trust God grows. We must take note of these attributes because it is how God wants us to be.

We were lucky to have several Cuban teachers and nationals present during the celebration. They shared stories of their experiences in Cuba. We learned about the lives of children and the educational system. Prayers were offered for the suffering of undocumented immigrants, for the concerns of poaching and illegal fishing, and for the Cuban nationals currently imprisoned in the Bahamas – that they may be released.

BARBADOS

The theme really illustrated the need for our church communities to make a conscious effort to reach children for the sake of the Kingdom of God. We must understand their struggles and protect them. Parents should be more aware of their duty to instill the importance of spiritual wellbeing in their children, not only in the household but within the community.

Many churches included teenagers in the leadership of the service. The impact was great on all who attended. They found that being in prayer with our Cuban sisters was very meaningful and it was especially interesting to try and sing the hymns in Spanish.

CANADA

Praying with the Cuban people feels natural to us as they have always been close to our hearts. We have frequently traveled to Cuba to volunteer, so we understand their struggles.

The service made us contemplate our relationship with indigenous people retrospectively. There is a long history of abuse, racism, and isolation. Young Canadians are having difficulties acquiring jobs but those difficulties are doubled for the indigenous youth. High schools students are forced to travel far from home and educational programs are extremely underfunded. Change is coming as we try to educate our nation and to reconcile with the indigenous peoples, and pray for a better future. High on our list of prayers are the Syrian refugees. Canada really felt the crisis the refugees were experiencing when images of a deceased young boy on a beach surfaced while his extended family was awaiting him. There was an increase in prayers for forgiveness, justice, and peace.

Website: www.wicc.org/

Facebook: Women's Inter-Church Council of Canada

This service had inspired us to create a space for children to feel invited to participate in church and learn about God.



DOMINICA

The theme illuminated how Jesus expects us to behave as innocent as children do. It showed us that everyone needs to be embraced—the poor, the orphans, or the downtrodden—as they are all children of God. We must protect our children from all types of abuse. We receive children by embracing them through baptism, education in church schools, and programs like the scouts which allow them to grow.

We felt good to be in prayer with the Cubans who, for so long, did not have the amount of freedom of worship others do. We feel God is answering their prayers now that people are more open with their public worship and that the diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States are being established once again. We extended our invitation to the Dominica Council of Women so they could participate in the service as we discussed all these issues.

GRENADA

It felt good praying with the Cuban people. It showed us that we are all praying for the same issues and the more people pray the more possible it becomes to move past the issues and seek justice. This service had inspired us to create a space for children to feel invited to participate in church and learn about God. We also want to organize a program in which adults can care for distressed children.

One of our speakers emphasized the importance of bringing children to Christ. We need to understand them, feel their pains, and guide them towards Christ. Ms. Jean Buffong, a retired lay reader, urged us to receive our children and those throughout the world with humility. We support the Young Women Christian Association, which runs a program assisting less fortunate children and holds workshops or motorcades to create awareness against gender-based and domestic violence.

GUYANA

Joining women together from different denominations has always been one of our committee's greatest challenges. We are constantly reaching out to other congregations and distributing the worship service materials to various regions to ensure they are adequately prepared to celebrate WDP. Acceptance and updates from new congregations are very encouraging. It is important to us to continue building ecumenical relationships throughout our country.

At our service it was stressed how important it is to focus on helping children realize their worth and potential so they may grow with strong values and the necessary knowledge to function in society. There was an exercise done with children that allowed them to consider the feelings of others and how to make foreigners feel accepted and welcomed. This will be a great life lesson for them! Both women and children enjoyed the service. Women



wore costumes and the little girls had white jasmine flowers in their hair. We felt connected to Cuba.

JAMAICA

“It takes a village to raise a child.” After our service we challenged the women in our community to be vigilant and ensure the well-being of their children. We also encouraged them to treat every child as their own and report suspicious behavior that threatens the child. Children are very important in our society and are introduced into the church at an early age. Infants are baptized and as they grow older they move onto Sunday school and eventually confirmation. They are also encouraged to participate in groups such as Brownies, Boy’s Brigade, and Girl Guides.

The Children’s program was interactive, with a puzzle of the Cuban map and Cuban culture trivia. They also dramatized the Bible passage and truly enjoyed the service together. It was a

great experience to share in the service with our Cuban sisters despite our cultural and language differences. We serve the same God.

ST. LUCIA

We are all made in the image of God and we are tasked with preserving and honoring that image. We recognize that everyone is responsible for embracing and welcoming each other, beginning in our very own households and in our immediate social networks. Throughout the service, suggestions were made on how to improve intergenerational dialogue in order to give our children the attention they deserve. While praying with Cuba there was a sense of solidarity as we were able to identify with many of the situations the Cuban people are facing. We also felt incredibly thankful that there were some issues we have never had to face.

Our women were very eager to work together with the young women. The

altar was decorated with the Cuban colors and symbols which greatly enhanced the atmosphere and left indelible marks on the worshippers.

ST. VINCENT & THE GRENADINES

Children always have a place in our churches and we try to orchestrate inclusive activities. At one of our services, for example, teenagers did the readings and children held the processional items as the symbols of Cuba. However, the issues that plague Cuba are also relevant in our country. Violence against women, children, and the elderly are high. We lifted up these issues with our Cuban sisters.

At another service a participant, a principal at a primary school, shared her experience of working with abused children. She explained the signs and patterns in behavior to look for in children who are experiencing abuse and how to help them. Our women love coming together for the



SURINAME



TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

WDP service. From different churches and denominations they worship together and become good friends. Some groups have even established a group chat where they share daily greetings and stories. The WDP spirit continues even after the celebration ends!

SURINAME

Preparations for the service began weeks before the actual date. We had two Bible study sessions and a presentation for the whole committee where we projected the photos and narrated the Cuba's background information script. We also had a session dedicated to giving out ideas and examples of how the children's service

The WDP service was a success. We had a young Surinamese woman, who had studied in Cuba, pray the Our Father in Spanish. She also explained the significance of the colors and symbol on the Cuban flag. We recognized the similarities of our struggles. We prayed for them as we would pray for ourselves.

Website: <http://wgdsuriname.wix.com/wgdsuriname/>

TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

Jesus' reaction to the disciples when they shunned the children showed us that we must, indeed, welcome them into our arms and give them our blessings. We must not take them for

can be used effectively. It was wonderful to be able to prepare for this celebration among different denominations. Sometimes we felt like children in our joy!

granted but support and pray for them. We must carefully watch out for situations that expose children to abusers, and protect the children.

Young girls participated in the service and the impact they had on us was great. They read their parts with meaning and conviction. They were very excited to have been chosen to share in the service. There were also children that played the pan, our national instrument, during the service which brought excitement to the whole congregation. Many issues were lifted up but the sermon highlighted missing children and the rampant murdering of children in our communities.

TURKS & CAICOS ISLANDS

Our community sees children as the future leaders of the church. We seek them out, embrace them, and teach them to become children of the Lord. Our children are always encouraged to participate in worship



services and this year their willingness to take part in various roles was evident. The readings were performed by children from various churches. They did an excellent job and were very proud to represent their church during the service. We were happy to learn that in Cuba the children have a religious upbringing.

We all look forward to WDP every year and we pray for other members when they are in trouble, and experiencing loss or illness. We visit the elderly and share stories. At different times throughout the year various churches host activities like Game Night, Quiz Night, or Worship Night which brings us together to have fun.

UNITED STATES

Given the resumption of diplomatic relations between the US and Cuba and the ongoing changes between our two governments, we felt that the program this year was unusually timely. Services were held in almost every state in the country in churches, nursing homes, and even private homes. Many women were moved to learn more about Cuba. They seek members of their communities who had some relationship with Cuba to understand the culture and the situation of the women who live there.

Various congregations came together to worship and many children participated in the services. Working

together with other women is always a joy and a major goal for those of us who plan the services. As one participant put it, "It is so exciting to have a country like Cuba create the worship service. We are so close and yet not at all. Praying and worshipping with the women of Cuba will bring us closer."

Website: www.wdp-usa.org/

Facebook: World Day of Prayer USA

Various congregations came together to worship and many children participated in the services. Working together with other women is always a joy and a major goal for those of us who plan the services.

Europe



ALBANIA

We understood Cuba very well as Albania had, for a long time, a communist political system. In our country, women suffer violence daily and children have no opportunity to participate. Many workers are under 18 years old; and some are trafficked to work abroad. Parents often do not know where their children are. In our culture, the male figures are more honored in the family while girls are discriminated against, and depend on their father's or brother's permission to go to school or get married.

The theme allowed us to recognize our task of being an example to others and to receive children like Jesus did. Children were very important for Jesus, and should be for us as well. In the services, we prayed for those who are struggling with their life and cannot make decisions for themselves.



We would like to contact organizations that can support those in need.

AUSTRIA

Jesus devoted himself to the poor, the disadvantaged, the children, and those who needed the protection the most. We all share in the kingdom of God, thus we must meet those less fortunate with respect. For us the example Jesus set was a metaphor about tackling our social issues, helping the dejected, and not letting others prevent us from receiving those who need to be embraced.

It was an extraordinary feeling to share the desires of the Cuban women and wish for more intergenerational communication. We see children as dependent on others therefore we should always be there to help them. This is very relevant in our country right now as we are receiving an influx of Syrian and Afghani refugees, mostly unattended adolescents and children. We support a charitable organization that focuses on caring for these young people.

Facebook: weltgebetstag.at

BELGIUM

Every year we organize a "national day" event where we present the writer country to participating parishes and begin planning how the service will be done. It is a great time to come together ecumenically to share ideas, catch up with one another, and bond as sisters in faith.



Women from the Reformed Church, Catholic Church, Lutheran Church, Anglican Church, Baptist Church, and Evangelical Church came together to celebrate WDP. The country background information, music, and bible studies were the most used materials to enhance the service. We enjoyed the liturgy and praying alongside our Cuban sisters.

Facebook: Wereldgebedsdag Belgie

BULGARIA

In general, people care for their children as best they can. The children that suffer the most in our country are the Roma children. Our main concern is to make education accessible to them so they may have a better future. Some of our WDP sisters are working hard on that alongside others organizations.

It was great to be in prayer with Cuba and we felt a kinship towards them as

we have shared some of the same experiences. Our country was also under communist rule and during those times the only ones who dared go to church were the elderly. They maintained a relationship with the Christian faith that allowed their family to practice it more freely today. Emigration is another big issue we are facing. Some consider it a national disaster as so many of our young people are leaving in search of more opportunities. We go on praying for both Bulgaria and Cuba.

CROATIA

Family connections are highly valued in our country. Our children are loved and we try to learn from them as much as we ask them to learn from us. In the Bible story, Jesus is asking us to be pure hearted, like children, and it has caused us to become aware of our behavior and relationship in our daily lives. The greatest impact on the audience was made by

the children's involvement in the service which put an additional emphasis on the theme. One little girl said she was so proud and happy to be a part of the celebration that she could not wait for next year.

Our congregation lifted up issues relevant to our country like social injustice, unemployment, and emigration. We focused especially on children suffering from terminal illnesses. Funds were donated to the family members of sick children and to the children's hospital oncology department.

Website: www.wdp-croatia.com/

Facebook: World Day of Prayer Croatia

CZECH REPUBLIC

We really enjoyed the children's program. It was used during the service and then again in Sunday schools. We made great plans to



include the program in summer camp activities. The children had the most fun creating Toco paper birds and playing quiz games about Cuba. It was a really enjoyable service for both adults and children. Ecumenical meetings like this are fruitful and joyous for us. We love coming together, even after the service, at churches, hospitals, retirement homes, or schools.

The Cuban people and the issues they face were close to our hearts. During the communist era of our country many Cubans came to study and work in our factories. We were happy to have relevant information on their current situation and hope their journey towards freedom is victorious.

Facebook: Světový den modliteb—český výbor

DENMARK

What a joy it is to get across the daily church ‘borders’ every year! We all long for the time to meet and get ready to work together with a

new country. The planning, laughing, and sharing helps us understand that we all belong to God’s big family. We did our best to make the room smell and look like a part of Cuba!

We were happy with the focus on Cuba and children. We see a bright future in all countries that value children. We feel very close to the Cuban people as we have been following the impact of the blockade. To have the voice of Cuban women, even from the ones living in Denmark, in our worship service was very uplifting. We focused and prayed for the refugee children that are currently coming into Europe, and for the children in the day care and schools in Denmark that are suffering cuts of staff and funds.

Website: www.kvindebodedag.dk/

ENGLAND, WALES & NORTHERN IRELAND

The enthusiasm for this year’s celebration was palpable. Some felt it was our best service yet! “The service was thought provoking with lively

music and quiet meditation,” said one member! Many areas were hit with a sudden snow storm which caused several services to be postponed but “a very cold day could not dampen the enthusiasm,” as stated by one of the attendees. Those who were able to attend thoroughly enjoyed the service and it was as if they had been transported from the iciness of Yorkshire to the warmth of Cuba.

The church was decorated with the colors and national symbols of Cuba. A café style seating arrangement was organized and coffee, tea, lemonade, and cookies were served. The music played in the background effectively creating an atmosphere that made everyone feel connected to our distant sisters. The experience reinforced the notion that every human being is unique and equally worthy of God’s love.

Website: www.wwdp.org.uk/

Facebook: Women’s World Day of Prayer—England, Wales, and Northern Ireland



FAROE ISLANDS

FAROE ISLANDS

It's fantastic that women from nine different churches can come together every year to prepare and pray for the writer country. It allows us to focus on the fact that we all serve the same God.

We heard a story from a young lady who traveled to Cuba with some other young adults from Denmark to distribute Bibles. They put their trust in the Lord and He was surely with them. We succeeded in bringing in a new group of worshippers to this year's service. This group had never celebrated WDP before and we invited them to join us in preparation and later in prayer. Our parish took the initiative, 10 years ago, to invite different churches to our celebration and to take turns in offering their place for the worship service. It has worked with many positive results.

FINLAND

The service was a successful integration of two cultures. The Cuban music, texts, and prayers were

adapted to our traditions and translated into the Finnish language. Before the service we distributed coffee and buns while the photo slideshow was shown in the background. We began the processional advancing with our hips moving and dancing along to the Cuban tunes. Each of us presented a symbolic object to the altar. Ruffled dresses and collars were replaced with flowers in the hair and floral patterned fabrics and shawls.

Participants were of all ages, men and women, and many stayed afterwards to discuss the issues that were lifted up and share their own experiences. We decided to donate to the people of Nepal who are still affected today by the devastating earthquake of 2015.

Website: www.ywca.fi/00010707-maailman-rukouspaiva/

FRANCE

“Who are welcome? What is the Kingdom of God today?” Here are some of the answers



FINLAND

from our friends. All children are God's children. Be they ours or migrants, children of divorced parents, victims of war or slave labor, and children with autism or Down syndrome. “Children” also represents the poor, unemployed, refugee, homeless, youth, single mother, and the mentally ill. Children grow up daring to explore new paths, but they cannot live without love. They invite us to trust, to hope, and to listen in a very difficult world. We are called to accept our differences because there is room for all in the heart of God.

The Kingdom of God begins with us and no one is excluded. It is invisible and even unpredictable. However, in situations like the recent attacks in France, candles and meditation demonstrated that people were praying to alleviate the immense pain of the affected families. Those are signs that God is present.



GERMANY



GREECE

Website: www.jmp.protestants.org/

Facebook: Journée Mondiale de Prière France—JMP

GERMANY

As we began planning and organizing the preparatory workshops for the service, Cuba was often seen in the news. Timely, WDP focus country had coincided with political, economic, and social changes presently happening in the country. This gave us great opportunity to expand WDP outreach in Germany. We showed a Cuban movie “Conducta—We Will Be Like Che”—at the Annual Church Film Festival, which was well received and then replayed at several preparatory workshops and local parish events.

During the Bible study sessions we looked at the global situation of children in which they are exploited by forced labor and human trafficking. We find that boycotting products produced under these unfair conditions is our small contribution to a better world. We have also been called on to help with the refugees who have



HUNGARY

entered our country, many who are children. Communities are offering child care, housing, and schooling in order to support their parents.

Website: www.weltgebetstag.de/

Facebook: Weltgebetstag

GREECE

Our people have been receiving and embracing refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Iran, and even Africa. About 50,000 refugees have landed in Greece and given our critical financial situation, we had responded with great urgency to their needs. Many churches and volunteers are doing their best to provide food, shelter, and basic medical assistance.

The children’s service was one of the most memorable we have ever had. The children had many questions about the lives of the refugees and the lives of the Cuban children. They were curious to learn more about another culture and how they could help. They led the service themselves and prayed for all the children they did not know personally but felt a connection to.

After the service, some were taken to a refugee center where they could meet some of the other children. It was a great experience for them!

HUNGARY

“In the realm of hopelessness, hope was stressed.” We feel fortunate to witness God’s goodness as US re-opened diplomatic relations with Cuba. As a former communist country we turned with sisterly compassion towards Cuba, as we still bear the effects of those times. There was a sense of joyfulness knowing that the liturgy was being used uniformly all over the world, uniting us into one community.

We are also grateful that the Cuban women put children in the spotlight.



It reminds us that they are a gift and we are responsible for their development. They are important to our future. As a community we strive to offer attractive events to children so they may begin building a relationship with Christ. Our service successfully attracted the attention of a church youth group whose members promoted and attended the service enthusiastically! We hope to bring more awareness of WDP to younger people and bridge a gap between generations.

Facebook: Ökumenikus Világhörm—WDP HUN

ICELAND

Participating in WDP is extremely important to our women. It is an important venue for ecumenical relations and it gives the women a sense of empowerment. Like in many other countries, men are represented in ecumenical councils far more than women are. WDP allows us to represent our churches and give a voice to other women.

WDP was celebrated in various areas across our country. In Vestmannaey-

jar, an archipelago off the coast of Iceland, women and men came together for their traditional prayer walk, beginning at an Evangelical Lutheran Church and ending at a Pentecostal Church. While the community walks together from one church to the other, they pray for their town and for people around the world. At their destination, a café had been set up where they served coffee and lemonade. There was a nice Cuban atmosphere and everyone enjoyed singing and lifting up prayers for their Cuban sisters.

Facebook: Alþjóðlegur bænadagur kvenna

IRELAND

We felt that the “Receive children. Receive me,” theme blended together beautifully with last year’s “Do you know what I have done to you?” theme about radical love. Christ’s teachings promote equality with no gender hierarchy and acceptance of all.

The women and children who were in attendance were empowered by the Bible studies and the worship service. The children’s program was a great

success. Children came to the church with their parents and found the service thought provoking. Demand for more junior services increased! We actively promote WDP and its focus on women’s and children’s issues in order to encourage greater interest among other denominations. We use our website, flyers, local press advertisements, and the local radio to spread the word about WDP’s goals.

Website: www.worlddayofprayerireland.com/

ITALY

Children are precious and very important for the survival of our communities. We care for our children deeply and this year we were called on to receive foreign children, those who were entering our country while fleeing Syria. We reflected on the role they have in our communities and came together to answer their cry for help.

The Federation of Protestant churches and Sant’Egidio, a Catholic group, started a project called “Mediterranean Hope,” which consists of “Humanitarian Corridors” aimed at



offering protection to migrants in need, especially those with children. This allows them to safely travel within Europe and avoid the criminals who manage human trafficking in the Mediterranean Sea. It is a wonderful experience to pray together and to act together to overcome the borders we build between ourselves and others of different backgrounds and races. In front of God we are all simply brothers and sisters.

Website: www.sites.google.com/site/gmpitaliana/home/

LITHUANIA

Our National Committee decided to lead a joint WDP celebration with the children, which lead to a more joyous worship service. It was very special to have up to four generations of families present and celebrating together. Grandmothers, mothers, children, and grandchildren all embraced one another feeling unified and blessed in common prayer. One issue we rarely face is failure to collaborate with different denominational groups. We feel that the ecumenical spirit prevails and we are always able



to get together and participate in various activities.

Children are given as much attention and care from the government as from their families. Our communities are very concerned about the children who are left in Children's Institutions. There is a campaign focused on advocating adoption of the young children in order to lessen the suffering. We lifted up this issue in our service.

LUXEMBOURG

Our service was modest but those who attended enjoyed themselves. Some of our members who had

traveled to Cuba were able to share some items they had brought back with the congregation. We served tropical fruits and decorated with tropical flowers.

Low attendance to our programs is something we have been actively trying to find a solution for. It is one of the many issues we face alongside lack of intergenerational dialogue and daily violence against women. In our modern society many people do not take the time to talk through their problems which makes finding a solution difficult. However, we still have hope and continue to pray on these issues.

Website: www.acfl.lu/de/weltgebetstag/

MACEDONIA

The theme got us thinking about how we are often so burdened by our problems that we forget to enjoy life more like children do, with joy in their hearts. During our service one of the readers began to sing and her three year old daughter joined her with a maraca in hand. The participation of the little girl was not planned and it made us smile with her joy.



ROMANIA



SCOTLAND

The world is experiencing quite a hardship now so we have prayed for the Syrian and Afghani refugees who pass through our country on their way to Western Europe. We prayed for the women who experience violence and the young people who emigrate in search for a better standard of living. We distributed informative leaflets about programs available to women suffering from abuse. We also encouraged the support of a local organization that provides meals for the elderly who were left behind when their children emigrated.

PORTUGAL

In our community children are well received because they are sincere, vulnerable, and cheerful –qualities Jesus wants from us. Recently the elderly and children have been among the most vulnerable in our country. They suffer greatly from poverty and mistreatment. The elderly do not have enough money to survive and the young adults cannot find jobs. Several communities are active in trying to alleviate their pain and have set up support centers where these children and



PORTUGAL

seniors can come and eat and engage in recreational activities.

During the service we all pledged to work in favor of the disadvantaged and be more attentive to those who call for help. One memorable moment from our service was when a little boy said that he learned we must love and care for all because they are all our brothers and sisters. The children ate biscuits and drank tea together with big smiles on their faces.

ROMANIA

The theme brought to our attention the importance of raising our children in faith. “Children do not do what we say, they do what we

do.” It is our responsibility to encourage our children to have a relationship with the church and with Jesus by praying with them and engaging them in the service. Jesus gave us an example on how to embrace children. As adults, we must understand that we are also the children of God and accept His kingdom with complete trust and childlike joy.

This year we held a countrywide preparation meeting where representatives of different denominations shared ideas, feedback, which enabled them to bring a colorful service back to their communities. It is touching that women belonging to different denominations can come together and pray for a distant country, for refugees, for the outcasts, and for neglected children. It is a good example of acceptance.

SCOTLAND

Approximately 600 services took place in churches, houses, schools, and hospitals all over our country. The material was used to create an informative and inclusive



SERBIA



SLOVENIA

service, which was even made available in large print and braille. We also started hosting an “Information Day” centered on the writer country to share creative ideas about WDP worship service. This greatly helped us build our ecumenical friendships!

Young adults participated in the general service and led the children’s service. Their participation hugely impacted the older generations who then realized how actions can effect and mold our children. Children and youth are not only our future but they are our present and their voices need to be heard. With this year’s theme, Jesus challenged our understanding of relationships and how we must care for the most vulnerable and build a compassionate community.

Website: www.wdpscotland.org.uk/

SERBIA

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God” (Roman 15:7). We used this Bible quote to highlight the importance of acceptance and how we are constantly reminded of how we should treat others



SLOVAKIA

by our Father. We related this to the current migrant crisis we are facing and how we have a responsibility to receive everyone who needs our help. It is our most urgent issue besides the economic crisis and plunging unemployment rates, which are causing our educated youths to leave in what is known as the “Brain Drain.”

We have been zealously praying for improvements to our quality of life and that of the Cubans. We sympathize with the Cuban women as we too felt the hardships of a blockade in the 90s. The effects still impact our daily lives.

SLOVAKIA

There is a lot to be learned from the Bible story. Most people are afraid

of those who are different and sometimes fear can turn into hatred. We must learn how to be accepting and offer our love instead of hatred. Children know that there is someone bigger and wiser who will take care of them. In this, children are an example to us.

Cuba is a remote country to us, so we appreciated the opportunity to learn more about them. We could relate to some of their political issues. In our socialist past, Christians were persecuted and pastors imprisoned. Today, we are facing domestic violence against women and children, social inequality, and emigration. We lifted up these issues and prayed for justice and peace. We invited members of the Cuban embassy to join our celebration and they were moved by knowing that people around the world were praying for their country.

Website: www.sites.google.com/site/sdmslovensko/

SLOVENIA

As a small country, we felt when a large number of people from Middle East passed by causing a



religious, social, and financial debate. Most of our families have just two children. It seems that we need to learn more about acceptance including in the growth of our families. The celebration theme taught us how Jesus welcomes every one, which is an attitude we should adopt at home, in the streets, with foreigners, and refugees. This year we were happy to have two children's services. We have hoped for that for a long time and finally God blessed us. One service was at the Evangelical Church and the other at the Ursuline's Catholic kindergarten in Ljubljana.

We gave interviews for the biggest Catholic radio, the national radio and a well-known TV program in Slovenia. We shared our experience, knowledge, and information about WDP, and also our Christian values.

SPAIN

Our first action based on the program was to host, in a meaningful way, the Cuban community who are part of our parishes. Among them we had a Cuban organist who accom-

panied the celebration with a magnificent organ interpretation of the songs with Caribbean rhythms.

We have been fortunate enough to prepare and celebrate a specific worship service for children, with the participation of Cuban children. They passed on to us their joy and spontaneity. The service had a festive tone and was very pleasant for children. At the end of the two services, the children wanted to extend a gesture of solidarity and friendship with children living in precarious situations or in war, especially children of Syria. They made nice drawings that were mailed with affection. Our offering will be dedicated to a project coordinated by Medi-Cuba-Suisse that develops a national diabetes register for children and adolescents.

SWEDEN

Our country has received many migrants and asylum seekers from the Middle East and Afghanistan. Inspired by this year's theme, the WDP committee in Södertälje decided to focus on how children are received

in their city. A preparatory meeting was held in January for women from the various churches in Södertälje, where a teacher explained about the "Friendship Project" which linked pre-schools with few migrant children to pre-schools in migrant-dominated neighborhoods. This theme continued up to our celebration held at the Coptic Church.

We greatly appreciated being in prayer with our Cuban sisters. A Spanish version of the final blessing was included in the service, which made us feel incredibly close to them. WDP has always been a great opportunity for churches to come together as a community and for women of different denominations to plan and carry out the service together. It allows them to get to know and appreciate each other.

Website: www.sek-vbd.se/

SWITZERLAND

It was a privilege to be in prayer with the courageous women of Cuba in the midst of the changes occurring in their country. The situation



THE NETHERLANDS



UKRAINE

has had a lot of news coverage in the media but we were glad to get more information directly from the source. The children enjoyed the service and even decided amongst themselves to wear something that represented the colors of Cuba.

We prayed for them and all the issues they lifted up in the service. Some of those issues are relevant in our country as well, such as violence against children and minimal dialogue across generations. Others, like emigration, affect us differently. We are currently on the 'receiving' end of migration and are welcoming many migrants into our country. The information the Cuban women provided gave us insight into some of the reasons people leave their homeland which allowed us to reevaluate our attitudes towards them. We must be more accepting!

Website: www.wgt.ch/

THE NETHERLANDS

We felt close to the Cuban people, because we have met them

and we know well some of them who work and live here. Many of the problems occurring in Cuba are not a prevalent in our country. We don't have to endure blockade but we do have to face issues related to migration and domestic violence. Our young people are leaving our country while people of other countries are coming for work. This has generated anxiety in our people. Though medical treatment, social and economic security is well assured and people who need help are well treated.

We did pray and focus on the Cuban situation. We got a lot of positive reactions and we hear several groups, including children and teenagers, will keep on focusing on Cuba and are starting projects themselves to help Cuba. Rewarding and a sign the world isn't as bad as we sometimes think it is!

Website: www.wereldgebedsdag.nl

Facebook: Wereldgebedsdag Nederland

UKRAINE

Ecumenical meetings and common prayers bring us great joy and inspiration! We always try to get children involved in our services and this year many enthusiastically participated in the services with the adults. The children were involved in making the white flowers used for decoration and the writing of the commitments along with some of the other elements of the decorations.

Currently our country is experiencing a very hard time due to the war caused and supported by Russia in the eastern part of Ukraine. That caused many people to flee their homes. Our communities have been warmly accepting and supporting them. The issues that are plaguing Cuba also concerns our country. We are doing our best to support our refugees not only materially but psychologically, especially children. All of the money collected at the Kyiv community of WDP from Lutheran Church was given to a 10 year old refugee orphan.

Middle East



EGYPT

“Isn’t it great to be a favorite of the Lord Jesus?!” said one of the child in the service. Children are regarded as precious gifts in our culture. However, in some circles boys are preferred to girls, and when a girl is born, there is a period of mourning. As the service emphasized the place of children in Jesus’ heart, some WDP members have felt motivated to change this attitude by visiting families who are mourning the birth of a baby girl to pray with them and make much of the newly born with significant presents and relevant Scripture passages.

We read the Bible studies and the country background information. It really awakened the creativity in those responsible for the worship service. We had services in Arabic and English, including the Sudanese WDP in Cairo. We donate to the “Ersem



Basma” (Draw a Smile) project which focuses on children wellbeing.

Website: www.bethlehemmanuel.com/wdp.html/

JORDAN

Due to the current political situation and the number of refugees entering our country we have been organizing many prayer events and meetings. We hold these meetings in churches and houses to pray for all those who suffer.

Our country is currently hosting over a million Syrian refugees and half a million Iraqi refugees, half of which are children. We welcomed them into our church and tried to lift their spirits by having a spiritual day once a month specifically for them. We feel it is our duty to help and serve them in their time of need.

LEBANON

Being united in prayer with the Cuban people was wonderful, especially when we saw the historic meeting of the Pope Francis and the Russian Patriarch Kirill in Cuba.

A big challenge for us is to see all the Syrian refugee children in our streets. Although the families are receiving some help from people and organizations like the United Nations or churches, the reality is that the children are missing out on so much of their childhood. It is a big problem

and we lifted it up in our service. Our speaker highlighted the importance of accepting children by sharing a story of a teacher who every week offers a music class to refugee children. One day she asked one of the mothers why she was drawn to this church. She said, “The church accepted me just as I was.” She and her family were blessed, fed, and loved into the family of God.

PALESTINE

The theme reminded us that more than 400 children are in Israeli prisons, the youngest being a 12 year old girl released after 2 months. Also, of the violence youth and women suffer, when the army closes the entrance for the old city of Jerusalem on Friday, impeding them of their prayers in the mosque.

During the service we recited a special prayer devoted to the needy people in Jerusalem, Palestine West Bank, the Middle East, the refugees of Syria and Iraq, and to the end of Israeli occupation. The children were very active in the WDP program. A girl, dressed in the Palestinian national garb, sang Psalm 67 in Arabic and English. A boy sang the Magnificat. The Sunday school children made the flowers where people wrote their commitments on the petals. The children are taken care of in our churches. They have Sunday school programs and



youth camping retreats to guide the children through life with Christ.

TUNISIA

Our program was fully published in English, Arabic, and French. We felt that this reflected our unity in our diversity. Our community has been growing and we are glad to see young, dynamic Christians actively working to create a meaningful service. WDP is a great opportunity for women of different churches to spend time together and learn about the issues each church faces on their own.

The service was inclusive and warm-hearted. It served as a window into the life of the Cuban people, the issues

they face, and their strong hope in a better future. The Cuban region is not well known in our country so we felt that this service was a wonderful bonding experience with our sisters in Cuba. Some participants even brought Cuban specialties like Papas Rellenas and Tres Leches cake which we enjoyed before entering the service, as they suggested.

TURKEY

The Lord receives all those who search for him. To love Jesus is to love everyone around you especially children and those who are vulnerable. Our service was very diverse, with women from eight different churches and denominations. It was an amazing chance to learn more about different traditions between the eastern and western churches. We raised funds for a children’s program devoted to assisting the Syrian refugees who are within our country. Many members of our committee work voluntarily with refugees and the poor.

We decorated our space the way our Cuban sisters described and the speakers even wore different colored shirts that gave them the appearance of a rainbow. We also knitted ourselves the white flowers and distributed them to the attendees.

WDP is a great opportunity for women of different churches to spend time together and learn about the issues each church faces on their own.

Pacific



AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

Each year those who will be hosting the WDP services have to bring together the churches that will be participating. In some areas, where the churches do not mingle often, it is more of a challenge but we enjoy bringing everyone together for this occasion. Many services included children and young adults, and it was a wonderful experience for both. Some children mimed the readings and others distributed flowers. One church even had children, who were out celebrating a birthday, join the service.

When a country is very present in the news, the services become very meaningful. Issues affecting Cuba are universal and relevant to our country as well. We decided to contribute to these issues by donating portions of the WDP offering to charities around the world that focus on bettering their

community. We will be sending donations to Cuba, Haiti, Palestine, and the South Pacific, besides supporting our country.

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

AUSTRALIA

At one service a minister mentioned that twice Jesus became angry: when the Temple was used as a marketplace and when the children were kept away by the disciples. He said, "Jesus is never pleased when there is a barrier between Him and his flock." This resonated with us as we are concerned about the safety and educational opportunities for refugee children.

Always when preparing for an ecumenical celebration, we should remember the importance of tolerance,



caring, sharing, and helping each other. It was a privilege to pray for the Cuban people, especially at a time when political barriers are being broken. We enjoyed learning about the value of grandparents and their passing of the Gospel down to children. We added to the worship service material the Ideas for Youth—Contemporary Worship, large print service for Retirement and Nursing Homes, and service programs in Braille. For 2017, we will have new venues!

Website: www.worlddayofprayeraustralia.org/

COOK ISLANDS

Children share many stories with us and they are always honest, sometimes those stories expose family problems. We need to listen to their stories and be aware of the issues they go through. It is also a lesson to us to



be more honest and listen to each other, and to reflect on how we value children and our attitudes towards others. Women in situations of violence are very reluctant to share their experience for fear of how their own family or community will react. Our country is working hard on this issue, and it was lifted up in our services.

It was very uplifting to have many children in the service. The church was full of young children, young adults, adults, and seniors. The children and the older women together dramatized the Bible story. The children acted very well. It was a moving moment. We thank the women of Cuba for the inspiring and reflective theme.

MARSHALL ISLANDS

Our country is very small with thousands of small islands. Everyone is acquainted one way or another. We treat each other as family. However, many of our children are being adopted by foreign parents and then taken to live abroad. It has become a big problem. The theme really brought this issue to the attention of

young mothers, who have given up their children for adoption, and they expressed their feelings during the service.

The theme and service opened the hearts of the women in our country to come to worship together. In the past, women of different denominations did not want to participate in the WDP services. Today we have been able to create good relationships across the islands. We have seen the growth of the movement to the outlet islands. Also, for the first time ever, young girls took part in the service. It was a beautiful evening.

NIUE ISLAND

The theme “Receive children, Receive me” or “Talia E Tau Fanau Ikiiki, Talia Au” is one we will remember for many years to come. We will continue to pray for our children, not only in Niue, but all over the world. The media shows us every day the issues concerning children from other parts of the world and how they suffer. We pray that God’s love may save them from all this abuse.

Children are very special in our community and they are blessed to have access to free education. It was fascinating to learn about the Cuban women and their way of life since it is vastly different than ours. We continue to live out “prayerful action” by visiting the elderly at hospitals, praying and singing with them, and encouraging others to believe in the power of prayer.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The issues highlighted by the Cuban women are very relevant in our country, especially concerning children. We felt close to them as we lifted up these issues together. Our altar was decorated as they suggested and we felt it reflected beautifully the Cuban culture and their respect and honor to God. Our churches were encouraged by the theme to include children in our worship service and organize activities which had the children work together at a leadership level.

Some schools used the children’s program during the “International

SAMOA



Children's Day" as part of the spiritual activity of the day. They were even taught how to create one of the Cuban dishes. Our children often thought of Cuba as a faraway land where the lives of the children were vastly different and richer. After the service they learned that they are all equal and have the same struggles.

SAMOA

The message within this theme is very important for adults to

understand. We must not ignore our children's needs and constantly seek blessings from Jesus. Our future lies with our children so they must be well taken care of. In Samoa, education is extremely important. Every child goes to Sunday school, pastor schools, and primary school where they learn the basic tools to help them succeed in life. Girls also learn needlework and art.

The most inspiring and uplifting part of the service was the readings of the

young girls from the procession. Their voices reflected those in society who need to be received with love. In many parts of the world most children are struggling with no hope and they need us to pray for them. Praying with the Cuban women was a good opportunity to lift up the suffering of the children around the world.

*We must not ignore our children's needs and constantly seek blessings from Jesus.
Our future lies with our children so they must be well taken care of.*

Leading Together



SLOVENIA

Usually in January WDP Slovenia and neighboring countries meet to creatively prepare the next year's WDP program. However, this past January the meeting had a special flavor. All the Slovenian participants were expected to be involved in the writer country working groups, a process that started later in the year.

For the Strengthening National Committee Meeting held from January 8-10, in Moravske Toplice, there were 24 women from Slovenia, Croatia and Austria, and WDPIC Europe regional representative Laurence Gangloff and WDPIC Chairperson Corinna Harbig. The focus of the meeting was to study and prepare the worship service written by WDP Cuba under the theme "Receive children. Receive me". On Sunday morning, they celebrated the worship service, with the



understanding of Cuba's context and the theme based on the Bible study. As the participants were now equipped, they felt ready to organize the program in their own local region.

From April 7-10, WDPIC executive director Rosângela Oliveira, WDPIC chairperson Corinna Harbig, WDP Slovenia chairperson Tanja Povsnar led the Writer Country Workshop. Slovenia women are writing the worship service for the year 2019 under the theme "Come—Everything is Ready" based on Luke 14:15-24. The

program will focus on strengthening communities which includes considerations on how to build a community and who is invited into this community. Some of those communities were reflected into the workshop with German and Romani women and young women, and most of all—Slovenians.

The working groups were formed and they are now busy producing the worship service and resources materials for 2019! Blessings to them all!

SOUTH AFRICA, ZAMBIA, BOTSWANA AND ANGOLA

WDP representatives from South Africa, Zambia, Botswana and Angola together with WDPIC Africa Regional representatives—Joyce Steiner (Ghana) and Henriette Mbatchou (Cameroon)—gathered for the Southern Africa Sub Regional



Meeting in Angola from May 16-22. It was held under the theme: “Arise and Shine” based on Isaiah 6:9. There were about 25 delegates and an additional 12 members from Angola attending the meeting.

The opening ceremony was held at a Methodist Church in the capital city. Hundreds of women from all the churches were present including the Bishop and Ministers. Participating countries demonstrated colorfully their various cultures and some very nice songs and dances. In her keynote address, Ms. Joyce Steiner, noted that the theme was appropriate as God was calling Africa to service and to make a commitment by responding “send me Lord.”

Ms. Joyce Steiner explained the Guiding Principles of WDP and the concept of advocacy and leadership. She noted that for the movement to grow, the leadership skills of members must be enhanced especially for the younger generation so that the movement would expand the circle of praying for each other. On advocacy, she



noted that as a prayer movement we need to work for the vulnerable and advocate for the respect of their rights.

Reverends Ana Alfredo Vangola and Jaquelina Diavava led the Bible Studies and both called for action by Africa just as Isaiah responded to God’s call. The next Southern Africa Sub Regional meeting is scheduled for Zambia in 2018.

ZIMBABWE

After 60 years of being present in the country, women from Zimbabwe are getting ready to be the writer country for the celebrations in the year of 2020. From September 8-9, a Strengthening National Committee Meeting was held with almost 30

people in Harare. They came from different parts of the country and from different denominations. WDPIC executive director Rosângela Oliveira and WDPIC Africa Regional representative Joyce Steiner with the support of WDP Zimbabwe led the meeting.

The writing of the worship service and resource material is an ecumenical and collective process. Each participant of the workshop was a potential member of the writing working groups. And each member of the extended community in the country is a supporter of the process through their prayers and wisdom.

The workshop goal was to build an understanding of what will entail to develop and write WDP worship service and resource material for the annual celebration under the theme “Rise! Take your Mat and Walk”. Together we revised the Guidelines for a Writer Country to provide an overview of the complete writing process, components of the worship service and resource material package,



timeline and the skills needed to work on this intense and voluntary process. WDPIC will be back in Zimbabwe in 2017 to launch the writing process with the Writer Country Workshop.

Before leaving the country, there was an opportunity to attend the WDP Zimbabwe General Meeting, Sunday service at the Salvation Army, and listen to the Tuesday rehearsal of the Great Harare Women's Choir at a United Methodist Church. There are several choirs in the country involved in WDP celebrations. It is one of the highlights of WDP in Zimbabwe.

CENTRAL AMERICA

Creativity, participation, group working, diversity, understanding of the complete worship service and resource material, and new methodologies were some of the highlights of the Strengthening National Committee Meeting held in Cartago, Costa Rica. The meeting was held from November 19-23, 2015 with 14 denominations represented, 40 participants from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras.



The theme was "Receive children. Receive me," developed by WDP Cuba. WDPIC Latin America Regional representative Rebeca Cascante with the support of CEDEPCA team (Protestant Center for Pastoral Studies in Central America) and local members of WDP organized and led the meeting. Special attention was given to the situation of children in Central America, learning the Cuba worship songs, and studying the Bible text. The opportunity to understand the context of Cuba allowed the participants to reflect on the thousands of Cubans who were stuck in Central America trying to migrate to USA.

A follow up plan to build capacity of WDP through the planning of the 2016 celebration was developed. As a result of the plan, an evaluation meeting was held in May 2016 which accounted for the increasing of celebration sites to eight and participation to 344 people in Costa Rica, and the scheduling of a national workshop in 2017 to study and prepare the activities based on the Philippines theme. Also Guatemala participants had decided to organize a WDP national committee to function with the support of CEDEPCA.

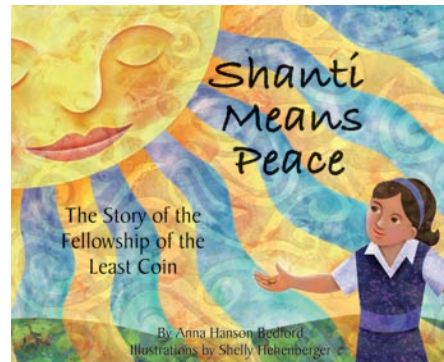


The Fellowship of the Least Coin at 60

BY CORAZON TABING-REYES
ICFLC EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

The Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC) is a worldwide Christian women's ecumenical prayer movement for peace, justice and reconciliation. It holds that when women pray for each other, within their own family and community, across countries and continents, we enter into a fellowship in prayer. When women pray, inner peace starts from one's self, then widening the circle of concern for abundant life for all peoples and creation. When women pray, our life is moved to act for what we pray for. This fellowship in prayer is symbolized by a least coin set aside every time one prays or a group prays. The least coin is what every woman, rich or poor, can give as token of commitment. The least coins are meant to accompany women's prayers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ through grants that support women's work for justice and peace—programs, projects, scholarships and disaster relief work.

FLC started in September 1956. Shanti Solomon of India was invited to be a member of the Pacific Mission Team organized by Dr. Margaret Shannon, on behalf of the women of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA, to visit Asian countries devastated by World War II. The mission aimed for peace and reconciliation



among church women in Japan, Philippines, Korea, and Hong Kong. Shanti Solomon was not given a visa to Korea and therefore decided to remain in the Philippines. As she reflected on experiences of women's sufferings, anger and alienation brought by war and Jesus' teaching on forgiveness and peace, she envisioned FLC. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Shanti's vision was accepted by the Church Women United Philippines and by the members of the Pacific Mission Team. Thus FLC was born!

Soon FLC became a partnership project of the Asian Church Women's Conference, organized in 1958, and East Asia Conference of Churches, organized in 1957, then of World Council of Churches Department on Cooperation of Men and Women in Church, Family and Society in 1962. FLC became global as prayers and least coins reached out to all continents.

The International Committee for the Fellowship of the Least Coin (ICFLC) was formed in 1979 to administer the FLC Fund and promote the FLC. Regional and global ecumenical organizations sent their representatives as members of this committee. The World Day of Prayer International Committee sent Dorothy Wagner to ICFLC's first meeting in 1980 in Manila, Philippines. Henceforth, the sisterhood of the two prayer movements—born from the East and from the West—was confirmed in obedience to Jesus' prayer *"That they may be one."*

At 60th Anniversary, the Fellowship of the Least Coin has connected many women, churches and communities all over the world . . . now engaging children in God's mission.* And in prayer and action, we continue to hope for what the psalmist said:

"Love and faithfulness have met; Justice and peace have embraced."
Psalms 85: 10

(Psalms Anew by Nancy Schreck and Maureen Leach)

*"Shanti Means Peace: The Story of the Fellowship of the Least Coin." A children's book written by Anna Hansen Bedford. Illustrated by Shelly Hehenberger. For more information visit www.flc.net.ph/.

Prayer in Context

BY ROSÂNGELA S. OLIVEIRA

Three women and girls representing their generations gave us the context for prayer with Cuba through the worship service. The older woman carried a Bible. That generation of woman kept their faith alive and the church open, despite the social and political discrimination for believing in God and for gathering to worship.

As Rev. Dora Arce Valentin wrote about her childhood in 60s Cuba: “I learned, while very young, what commitment is, and how important it is to be present. Very few people attended churches. Every Sunday my grandmother woke me up to go to the Sunday school class. There, she was my teacher, and I was her only student for many years. Every Sunday was the same routine: my grandmother trying to make me understand I had to go; and I trying to convince her she could teach me in bed... Of course, I always ended up going to church but I will never forget some of her arguments: “People need to see you there. Some day we will have more children but one is enough for God. You have to be present!” I am almost sure my theological journey started from grandmother’s hand.”



A young adult woman represented the generation of women educated after the Revolution. They had gained access to professional careers, reproductive health services, economic independence, and equal constitutional rights. Midiam Lobaina, Council of Churches’ coordinator of the Gender Program, recognizes the change of women’s status, however she calls attention to the “many women that are abused in their homes and even in their churches, and they don’t tell anyone. They keep it a secret out of shame and the idea that “family matters” are not to be talked about in public. Some underestimate the seriousness of their situation, others don’t realize that they are in danger, and others reveal their secret only very confidentially. It is essential to train and raise the awareness of congregation leaders, so women will find help.”

The young woman reflected the youth among the 70 percent of the Cuban population born under the trade embargo, or blockade, as they prefer to say on the Island. Ormara Nolla, WDP Chairperson explains: “the policy imposed by the USA government on Cuba for more than 50 years is felt every day. We go to the pharmacy and there is no medicine. We go to the market and some essential

products are missing because they can’t be imported. The impact of the blockade is equivalent to a humanitarian crisis.”

Those generations of Cuban women instigated us to see that Jesus publicly received the children like someone who loves does. He blessed them even against the anger of the disciples. Jesus knew how to break down the patriarchy while the disciples knew how to stick to it. Jesus challenged the disciples to receive in love. This is like an inversion of the rules of the patriarch and even, global economy.

Let’s be united in praise for God’s presence in our midst and bring unto God the “dreams of the elders, the visions of the young, and the wisdom of the children.”



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 on every first Friday of March.

The 2016 Journal is based on the 98 country reports received. It is estimated that 22,415 services were held in 95 languages, including versions in Braille or large print. The worship service's attendance was estimated at around 1,048,092 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 livestream. WDP activities were announced in the city or church's newspapers, posters, fliers, Facebook, website, and Twitter. Around 40 activities, especially for children and youth, were held in many schools and churches across the seven regions.

HOW WILL WDP OFFERING MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN CUBA AND AROUND THE WORLD?

WDP Cuba will ecumenically support children with disabilities and their families; children and teenagers of addict or incarcerated parents; and campaign for a life free of violence for women and children. WDP National/Regional Committees around the world will:



Empower women, children, youth, and people with disabilities through education, mentoring, shelter, food programs, trauma counseling, hospital care, orphanages, and prison visitations;



Support people displaced by war or natural/human made disasters, Syrian refugees in Europe and Middle East; victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual abuse, such as the comfort women in Asia;



Provide care and medical supplies for people living with HIV and AIDS, breast cancer, drug addiction, diabetes and dementia;



Sustain the socio-political commitment for women's empowerment and race/gender justice; support migrant children, the homeless and garbage collectors in Egypt;



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.

WDP 1927–2021

THEME TIMELINE



The timeline of World Day of Prayer Worship service themes and writers is based on Blessed, the art painting, done by Chantal E.Y. Bentel, for the 2015 Bahamas celebration. The poster tells the story of women's global concern and theological approach through a movement of informed prayer and prayerful action.

Use the poster to tell the story of WDP in your community! Invite the children to find the writer country on the map! Ask the young people to identify the social justice issues on the timeline! Envision new themes and writers that ecumenically welcome all to join in prayer and action for peace and justice.

To order the poster, please email admin@worlddayofprayer.net. The cost of the posters is as follows:

1 to 10 posters = \$ 5.50 each poster plus shipping;

11 to 99 posters = \$ 4.50 each poster plus shipping;

over 100 posters = \$ 3.50 each poster plus shipping.

EDITORIAL TEAM

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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.

Editorial

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INTERNATIONAL MEETING
AUGUST 20-27, 2017

Venue: Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brazil

Theme: Seeking wisdom to care for God's creation (Genesis 1)

We trust that great care will be given in selecting the Voting Delegates and Alternates. They are to be women and young women who have undertaken responsibility for World Day of Prayer in their own country; have shown a vision for women's role in ecumenism, prayer and action; are committed to fully participate and represent their Committee in the Meeting.

Following our Guiding Principle that everybody has a gift to offer and to receive, we want to encourage you to prayerfully consider donating to the Fund for Tomorrow. The Fund for Tomorrow provides opportunities for women of all nationalities and generations to attend the International Meeting. The gifts enable younger women to join the WDP community to share their wisdom, and to engage in leadership roles in the movement.

You can send your donation to your National Committee. If you send a short bio of the honoree, WDPIC will post it on our website.

Please visit our website to read more about the Fund for Tomorrow:

Website: www.worlddayofprayer.net/donate.html/

ENCUENTRO INTERNACIONAL
20-27 AGOSTO 2017

Lugar: Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brasil

Tema: Buscando la sabiduría para cuidar la creación de Dios (Génesis 1)

Confiamos que realizarán con gran discernimiento la selección de las delegadas y suplentes. Serán mujeres y mujeres jóvenes quienes han asumido la responsabilidad por el Día Mundial de Oración en su propio país; han demostrado una visión sobre el papel de la mujer en el ecumenismo, oración y acción; y están comprometidas a participar de todo el programa.

En el espíritu de nuestro principio conductor de que cada persona tiene sus dones para ofrecer y para recibir, queremos alentarlas a considerar una donación para el Fondo para Mañana. El Fondo para Mañana proporciona a mujeres de todas las nacionalidades y generaciones la posibilidad de asistir al Encuentro Internacional. Las donaciones que ustedes hagan les darán a mujeres jóvenes la posibilidad de integrarse a la comunidad de DMO, a compartir su sabiduría y a comprometerse en roles de liderazgo.

Las donaciones se entregan a los comités nacionales. Estos se comunican con la oficina del CIDMO que se encargará de que el nombre, la foto y una breve reseña de la persona honrada se publiquen en nuestro sitio en internet.

Por favor, vayan al sitio del CIDMO y entérense de lo que contiene.

Website: www.worlddayofprayer.net/donate.html/

RÉUNION INTERNATIONALE
20-27 AOÛT 2017

Lieu: Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brésil

Thème: Chercher la sagesse pour sauvegarder la création de Dieu (Genèse 1)

Nous savons que vous accorderez une attention toute particulière à la sélection des déléguées votantes et de leurs suppléantes, qui seront des femmes, jeunes et moins jeunes, choisies selon les critères suivants: ont des responsabilités dans la JMP dans leur propre pays, ont une position visionnaire sur le rôle des femmes dans l'œcuménisme, la prière et l'action, et s'engagent à participer pleinement et à représenter leur comité national lors de la réunion.

En accord avec notre principe «chacune a la possibilité de donner et de recevoir», nous vous encourageons à faire un don pour «L'offrande de demain», fonds de solidarité internationale. Ce fonds offre l'opportunité à des femmes de toutes nationalités et de tous âges d'être présentes à ces rencontres internationales. Le don que vous faites permet d'inviter un plus grand nombre de femmes parmi les plus jeunes à rejoindre la Communauté de la JMP, partager ainsi leur sagesse et prendre des responsabilités dans le mouvement.

Vous pouvez adresser votre don à votre Comité national. En envoyant une courte biographie de la femme que vous désirez honorer, celle-ci sera publiée sur notre site web.

Ne manquez pas de le visiter pour en apprendre d'avantage sur «L'offrande de demain»!

Website: www.worlddayofprayer.net/donate.html/

PHILIPPINES 2017

Am I Being Unfair to You?

Mabuhay! Come to the circle and tell your story!

In the story Jesus told about the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 20:1-16), he saw no wrongdoing in giving equally. However, the workers who felt entitled to receive more greatly complained. This dialogue was turned into a question for the 2017 WDP theme—"Am I Being Unfair to You?" Questions like this help us get to the root of the situations we find ourselves in.

As we prepare for worship, women and girls from the Philippines enter carrying symbols with a story. Rowena "Apol" Laxamana-Sta. Rosa, listening to the reflection of the WDP writing groups, created a beautiful artwork. It tells the story of God's economic justice in contrast to the economy of the strong and powerful.

Merlyn, Celia, and Editha represent the lives of many Filipino women and girls who are victims of domestic violence or sex trafficking, migrant workers domestic or abroad, and women with deep wounds caused by disasters in the environment. How can we hear these stories and not realize the sinfulness of structures that consolidate economic inequality? So, we are called to confess and take on our responsibility and answer God's call for justice.

A traditional cultural practice, known as dagyaw, was introduced. Dagyaw is a communal way of laboring each other's farms and equally benefiting from the harvest, which is used more frequently among organic farmers for sustainable agriculture. "It is a good practice for building and sustaining a community, an actualization of compassion and care for each other." Maybe this is the key to a collective answer to "Am I Being Unfair to you?"



SURINAME 2018

All God's Creation is Very Good!

A heri grontapu di Gado meki bun doro, dóro!

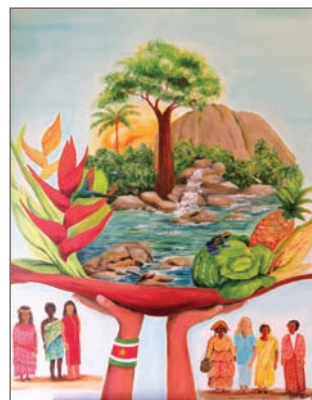
As in the beginning, God created from chaos. But everything that was created found its place in creation. All were related to each other—the earth with the light, the waters with the sky, the tree seeds with the living creatures, and the humankind with God. None could exist without the other, and the source of all was God.

There was goodness in that integrated system of relationships. But essential to that was the commitment to care. And we know that we are failing!

Women from Suriname lift up their voices to remind us that we are caretakers of God's creation! They are bringing to our attention the urgent need for caring at a time when more than 180 countries have signed the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. A commitment to keep the earth cooler depends on public policies implemented by governments, but also on our personal lifestyle.

As one of our Guiding Principles affirms "prayer is rooted in listening to God and to one another." Through the worship service, we listen to the multicultural and multi-ethnic people of Suriname. They take us to their communities and through their concerns. History is before our eyes! The flora and fauna are remarkable! The everyday life is weaved into the prayers.

How good is God's creation? That is the question to meditate and respond to with a personal commitment to care for creation. But it can also be an opportunity for the WDP motto "Informed prayer and prayerful action" to be affirmed in the community. What is it that we, as the WDP movement, can do to keep God's creation good?



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