

World Day of Prayer International Committee – June 16-18, 2022

Europe Regional Representative Candidates

Self-Introduction and Biography

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Name: Brigitte Hany

WDP Committee: Austria

Church Denomination: Lutheran Protestant

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My name is Brigitte Hany, I live in Klagenfurt, in the south of Austria. I am married and have two grown-up daughters. I was born in 1967 into an Evangelical/Lutheran parish family. My father was a pastor and chaplain for hospital and prison chaplaincy. Early on, my two sisters and I enjoyed helping in the parish. I encountered the World Day of Prayer at an early age and already as a teenager I accompanied the church services musically on the flute. After graduating from high school, I attended a college for fashion and clothing technology. With graduation I acquired the certificate of an

office clerk. For a brief time, I worked in the fashion industry until our daughters were born. After that I was employed as a secretary in two association offices.

In 2001, I started working as the managing director of the Protestant Women's Work in Carinthia and East Tyrol. Connected with this was the assignment to work for the World Day of Prayer in Carinthia. For 20 years now, I have been the regional person responsible for the World Day of Prayer in Carinthia, leading preparation meetings and being the person responsible in our parish in Klagenfurt for the celebration of the World Day of Prayer service.

Since 2005, I also participated in the preparation meetings in Slovenia, prepared by Corinna Harbig. With these weekends the World Day of Prayer was built up in Slovenia. In my own parish I am a member of the board. I lead the senior citizens' group, sing in the choir and took over the singing of the congregational songs in the church service during the time of the pandemic. From the beginning, the World Day of Prayer was an important part of my work and very soon an affair of my heart. I learned a lot during the preparations and the presentation of the respective country and the liturgy.

In 2014, I was part of the preparation group for the European Conference in Salzburg in Austria. Since 2016, I have been a member of the National Committee of the World Day of Prayer in Austria. In 2017, I was a participant in the WDP World Conference in Foz do Iguazu in Brazil. This conference gave me a good insight into the international work of the World Day of Prayer. With much joy and commitment, I am involved in the work of the World Day of Prayer. In my work as executive director, I am used to working independently, I look forward to meeting other people and I am also a reliable member of the team. I would be very happy to be part of this worldwide movement and to take responsibility as one of the representatives for Europe.



Name: Senka Sestak Peterlin

WDP Committee: Croatia

Church Denomination: Baptist

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I am from Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. I was born in 1962 in a Protestant family (Baptist), and I have deep Baptist roots. My great-grandfather was among the group of people who brought the denomination to this area in the late 19th century. I have been a widow for twelve years. I have two sons and two granddaughters. I studied the Croatian language and literature, and I currently work as an editor and proof-reader at a publishing company in Zagreb. I also studied Theology for two years.

For several years I was the editor in chief of “The Mirror”, a Christian magazine for women. I write articles for various magazines with a focus on the Bible and art, the Bible in a contemporary context, reviews, and short stories. I used to be a long-time leader and organizer of creative workshops, summer and weekend programs for children and youth (as part of the Scripture Union International team). I have co-organized conferences, panels, lectures and conducted thematic workshops for women at the Baptist Alliance and head the literary and theological forum “Christian Forum”.

I am currently in my second term as President of WDP Croatia and first term as WDPIC Regional Representative for Europe. My journey with WDP began fifteen years ago when I took part in a WDP service as a participant to support a friend. Two years later I became a member of the WDP Croatia committee. In 2012, I attended the WDPIC International Meeting in New York where I met women from all over the world and got an image of what the WDP movement was all about. I was thrilled about WDP and what I had learned inspired me to be more engaged with WDP in Croatia.

On behalf of WDP Croatia, and as a leader, I stand for good relationships with the countries in the region. I led the project aimed to establish WDP, in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was realized three years later, in 2021. A WDP online service was held there for the first time with women from six towns. In 2019, I led members of the Croatian executive committee to North Macedonia to meet members of WDP Macedonia, and some organizations related to them, to share ideas and possibilities for future collaboration.

Shortly after the pandemic paralyzed us, I wrote up a project proposal for a period of a year and half, which was approved, and so I successfully conducted two three-day conferences for women in our region, numerous online workshops and started the online series ‘Together in prayer’. As a regional representative I have also been involved in all the steps of preparing the WDP service. Throughout the years I have achieved cooperation with other ecumenical groups, organizations, and believers. Today we cooperate with 14 denominations.

I am dedicated to the WDP movement and devote my energy and hard work to it every day. I am analytical, creative, and innovative. I believe I have a strong ability to multitask and meet time-sensitive deadlines. I approach each task conscientiously and devotedly, in accordance with the requirements of the WDP principles. I have good verbal communication skills and can build and maintain positive

relationships in a group setting. The WDP motto of “Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action” leads me in all I have been doing these last ten years and it will, more than ever, in the times that are ahead of WDP, in a very challenging time.

The WDP story is truly one of the greatest in the history of one Christian movement led by woman in last 100 years. It is my great honour to be part of that story, to stand in line with brave women, visionaries, who have changed the world through prayer and action. It is very difficult to think about the next 100 years, even less. But we need to be visionaries. Technology is evolving at an immeasurable speed and runs our lives these days. The challenges we face are numerous and complex. Despite everything, we as WDP are called to look optimistically, to bring hope to the uncertain future and to the dark places and use all possible resources to make the world a better place.

I see WDP as a worldwide known organization, capable of acting, having all kinds of resources. I believe that the WDP is an amazing platform that empowers women for being active in today’s very challenging time, living by the Word of God to become a living-model, to support women, youth, and children. My vision is to have younger woman who believe in the guiding principles of WDP which may help others to join. With purpose and prayer, WDP leaders should come together to give their time, talent, and community of women who refuse to sit idly while any kind of problem burdens us. In the future I see many WDP institutions for the sick and elderly people, retirement homes, WDP schools and campuses, kindergartens, even hospitals whose work policy will be based on the WDP principles and motto, “Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action”.

To sum up, I want to believe that in the future great things are possible for WDP, that it will spread exponentially, because the world desperately needs visionary women who want to step up, to think outside the box, and who have the guts to continue the humble beginnings from 100 years ago. Great things are possible if you believe. I am so thankful for the opportunity to be one link in that chain that has lasted 100 years and looking forward to another hundred.



Name: Edith Hajnalka Toth

WDP Committee: Romania

Church Denomination: Evangelic Lutheran

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My name is Edith Hajnalka Toth, born 1968 in Sighisoara/Romania, mother of Raphael (22), church musician, music teacher and Life and Marriage Counselor (ICL) according to Individual Psychology by A. Adler. I have studied in Dresden/Germany church music, and I lived and worked during my life in various places in Romania, Germany, and Hong Kong. Since 1999, my home and working place is in Medias/Romania in my beloved St. Margaret Church.

It was in the 80's when I first got involved with WDP by singing the song "We are one in the Spirit". As a young girl in communist's time, we were not allowed to be part of an international movement, so all the WDP worship services were held in secret. To meet other young people from different churches in our city was dangerous. Thank God, we had a pastor, who was not afraid and so we could meet each other to pray and sing together. This was my first ecumenical meeting, where I was part of the organisation.

Ecumenism is one of my favorite words. Not too long ago I had surgery. I received a lot of messages. People prayed for me: in an orthodox monastery, in a roman-catholic monastery, in my Evangelic-Lutheran church, friends who are Baptist, Pentecostal, free Evangelical, and Methodist churches. As you can imagine, I was overwhelmed!

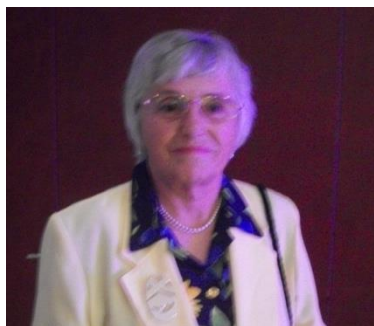
Since 2000, we have invited every church choir from our city to the "Concert ecumenic de Crăciun", the Ecumenical Christmas Concert. We also worship ecumenically all WDP services and the "ecumenical week of prayer" in January. I am involved in many ecumenical projects and workshops because I am the co-president of the Women Association of our church "Frauenarbeit der EKR".

As part of the executive committee, I would first like to get involved as a musician. I see an opportunity to promote more original music of the countries, to improve cultural diversity and identity. I am an open-minded and curious person. I love to work in a group, not on my own. I like to create ideas together. I believe that I can see the skills of others and can encourage them to work together for our common goal.

My hope for the future is to create more connections with each other, even if we are all busy women. I imagine that we will meet regularly online at the regional level, discuss european problems, seek solutions, help, sing and pray together.

My role in the WDP Romania committee is to be the liaison between the different churches of my country. I also have contacts in german speaking countries in Europe and after the International Meeting in Brazil, I have contacts all over the world. One of my deepest experiences was a WDP online meeting where we sang together the songs of Vanuatu!

For the next 100 years of WDP I wish for: women who let themselves be guided by God's Spirit, who pass on the fire of the first WDP women, women who are aware that this movement has great power to change the world, women who are brave and work on themselves, who are working together in tolerance. And, of course, if they are good rooted in God and in their communities, they will have visions, they will know what to do and how to work.



Name: Marjorie Paton

WDP Committee: Scotland

Church Denomination: Church of Scotland, Presbyterian

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My name is Marjorie Paton. I am married to Iain Paton, who is a minister. We have 2 children who are both married, and they have two boys each, so, we have four grandsons, two live here in Scotland and two live in the USA. I was a schoolteacher at all stages and even taught

some with learning difficulties.

For two years my husband and I served in the Scots Church in Jerusalem which was a wonderful experience where I had the opportunity to get to know and work with members of all Christian denominations represented in the Holy Land. As a result, I feel that I went out there as a member of the Church of Scotland but came back as a member of a much wider Christian Church having realized that the Church is the same, wherever one is, despite small differences.

I have been very involved with the church both in my home church and nationally where I served as National Convener of the Church of Scotland Guild. I also served on two of the church's national committees for six years - Church and Society Council and Ecumenical Relations Committee.

I have always attended WDP services in Scotland, but I became involved with the Scottish Committee when they were looking for a representative from the Church of Scotland Guild. I joined the committee and became the assistant secretary, then secretary, which is a post that I have held for the last 12 years. That is the best decision I have ever made. I can truly say that acting as secretary of the Scottish WDP has become a very important and fulfilling part of my life. The European and World Meetings that I have attended have truly opened my eyes to this wonderful movement and the influence it has on so many lives. It has enabled me to meet interesting people which has led to world-wide friendships.

Having been secretary for 12 years, I have plenty of experience of connecting with people, using the internet and social media. Before I started as secretary, I studied for a certificate in computing to enable me to fulfil this role. Also, having been involved in the Church of Scotland National committees, I am happy to prepare for or lead chair meetings, discussions, etc. As someone who is retired, I have plenty of time to be a representative for WDPIC.

Recently, I established, with the help of the Scottish Committee, the concept of "10 Days of Prayer" leading up to the World Day of Prayer on the first Friday in March. Every day, we would post on the Scottish website and Facebook page a meditation led by a Moderator, Primus, Bishop, or Leader from 10 of the main Christian denominations in Scotland. This has considerably advanced the profile of WDP in Scotland. Last year our Zoom service on the World Day of Prayer attracted well over 1,000 people, some of whom had never attended a service at all. As a result, we are hosting another Zoom service this year.

Ever since the WDP Scottish committee was invited to and accepted the role of hosting the WDPIC International Meeting of 2022, I have gained new insight into how the international committee operates. I see the role of WDPIC Regional Representative for Europe as keeping all the committees around Europe informed not just about information coming from the WDPIC, but also to listen to any problems that any of the European committees are having and to take that back to WDPIC. Developing a

sense of trust with the European Committees is very important and I will be available so that their thoughts and fears will always be heard. Being more familiar with Zoom now, I would like to use that medium to enable me to meet with each committee on a regular basis and to help organize, if requested, workshops, prayer meetings and meetings for other requested areas.

Christian Fellowship is an essential part of the WDP movement. Here in the European area, we live in an increasingly secularised society, with many people living quite isolated and sometimes lonely lives. If this trend continues, then the role of organizations like WDP, which unites people, becomes increasingly important. For Europe, therefore, I see action, enthusiasm and growth in awareness as being of prime importance in the next 100 years.

Music is an integral part of the celebration as it inspires and touches people in many ways. At the European conference in The Netherlands in June 2019, the music was led by Edith Toth of WDP Romania, ably assisted by Elzbieta Pawlas of WDP Poland. If I should be elected as Regional Representative for Europe, I would be delighted to facilitate a European choir led by Edith and Elzbieta.

My husband and I lead weeklong retreats to Iona, The cradle of Christianity in Scotland, under the umbrella of McCabe Pilgrimages, the main pilgrimage company in the UK. We would be happy, as part of the worldwide celebrations, to lead a retreat for WDP ladies throughout the world.

A sense of history is very important, and we have much to learn from what has gone on before but now we look forward to the next 100 years with enthusiasm, joy and, in the words of a well-loved Scottish Hymn:

*Look forward in faith, all time is in God's hand,
Walk humbly with him and trust his future plan.
God has wisely led, his people by his power.
Look forward in hope, he gives us each new hour.*



Name: Nadja Tomšič

WDP Committee: Slovenia

Church Denomination: Protestant

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I am Nadja Tomšič from Kamnik in Slovenia. I was born 1968 in Germany to a German mother and a Slovenian father. I spent my first years in West Berlin with two younger siblings. At the age of eight we moved to Kamnik, which was in 1976 part of former Yugoslavia. Due to the divorce of my parents some years later I had the opportunity to get to know the school and university systems in Yugoslavia, Slovenia and Germany. I studied comparative literature and cultural studies. As a student I begun to work as a translator for German and Slovenian. In 1994, I married Philip, a schoolmate from Berlin and we have four children: a daughter and three sons, today we are also proud grandparents to two lovely little boys. I work part time as a private teacher for German and sometimes I still translate.

I was raised up in a political, atheistic family in a catholic surrounding. In Berlin, I first got in touch with Christian peers and then I remembered that I was baptized in a Protestant church because of family tradition. As a student in Slovenia I discovered through Yoga exercises that I have a soul and that God exists. Luckily we had a nice Catholic kindergarten in our neighborhood in Berlin, where we started our family life, and we got more and more involved with the nearby Evangelical church.

After we moved from Berlin to Kamnik we started to attend services in German language in the Protestant church in Ljubljana with Corinna and Horst Harbig. There I was first involved in the World day of prayer in 2003 when I was pregnant with our youngest child. Since then I was regularly part of the preparation team for the World Day of Prayer services in Ljubljana and since 2019 in my hometown Kamnik. In 2016, I was part of the preparation team for the WDP service from Slovenia 2019, also in the function of a kind of tourist guide for WDP delegations from Great Britain, Germany and Norway. Since then I am mostly involved with the trauma healing project in cooperation with the Bible society, first as a translator and now as a group facilitator. Tanja and I successfully facilitated regular trauma healing meetings since 2019 with a group of WDP women from Slovenia also during the pandemic. Due to my way of life I am bilingual and bicultural, since 1989 I have also two citizenships. German and Slovenian are my mother and father tongues, I am quite fluent in English and Croatian or Serbian and I could improve my Spanish from high school.

I am communicative, creative and caring. I like forests, gardening and swimming very much. I am very interested in any person and culture I am involved with. I love music, literature and arts almost of any kind. I am very interested in God and the world, in history, politics and I am very enthusiastic about the main ideas of World Day of Prayer as an ecumenical, international women movement. This attitude convinced the women of my little evangelical church in Kamnik to prepare our own World Day of Prayer services in our church. My involvement with WDP projects are enriching my daily and spiritual life, I've learned some things about singing and prayer, communication, organisation and improvisation.

Every year again and again I am overwhelmed by the connectedness I feel by the World Day of Prayer service, by the awareness that all over the world people are linked to one another through this service. This is a great experience, a very precious gift to me that I want to share with others. But how to reach more women to involve? As we all would be very happy to welcome young women, I would like to focus on them in my vision for the future World Day of Prayer. I suggest to organize at least one prolonged weekend seminar for young women including their children in the summer time each year in each local

group. The local services of WDP give the women a very good opportunity to work and pray together in an ecumenical and international project. It is helpful for the local WDP women to have a project together also in non WDP-times. In Slovenia, some of us yearned the company of each other after the WDP service and we do some other projects, too.